

Communitarian Observations

I often write about rather different matters, but in my mind they all deal with one core question: the guidance our shared values, especially the common good, provides to our public policies.

Upcoming Events

On Monday, September 8 at 5:00 PM, Kurt Campbell, former Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs and current Chairman/CEO of the Asia Group, will give a lecture entitled “US Policy on Asia: Where Do We Go From Here?” Mr. Campbell’s lecture will be followed by a discussion with Amitai Eztioni and with the audience. This event is free and open to the public, but registration is required. To register, send an email to icps.gwu.events@gmail.com.

On Thursday, September 18 at 5:00 PM, Peter H. Schuck, Simeon E. Baldwin Professor Emeritus of Law at Yale Law School, will give a lecture entitled “Why Government Fails So Often.” Mr. Schuck’s lecture will be followed by a discussion with Amitai Eztioni and with the audience. This event is free and open to the public, but registration is required. To register, send an email to icps.gwu.events@gmail.com.

Shorter Pieces

“No More Land Wars.”

“There is a growing consensus that the United States should not engage in another major land war in Asia or Africa, a view encapsulated in the catchphrase ‘no more boots on the ground.’ Indeed, currently the US is either refraining from taking military action, or is limiting itself to drone strikes, covert operations, ‘capacity building’ of local forces, and advising. This consensus, we shall see, is based in part on a fundamental misunderstanding of the course of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In fact, the US won both easily, quickly, suffering few casualties and low costs—causing rather limited collateral damage.” (Read more of “No More Land Wars” at [Small Wars Journal](#) or at the [ICPS blog](#).)

“Grant Kurdistan Arms and Independence.”

“In dealing with Iraq, the U.S. and its allies would benefit from drawing on an important axiom of economics, that of ‘sunk costs.’ It suggests that contrary to common intuition, how much you have invested in a property (or policy) in the past should not affect your decisions about future investments. The decisive question is whether the property is currently in good shape, or is falling apart. It makes no sense to invest in a sinking Titanic, however much it cost to build. U.S. President Barack Obama and many others are moved by the huge sacrifices in life, money and political capital that were made in Iraq. [...] Meanwhile, in order to shore up this very long bet, Obama has refrained from picking a more reliable answer: supporting the Iraqi Kurds.” (Read more of “Grant Kurdistan Arms and Independence” at [the Diplomat](#) or at the [ICPS blog](#).)

“Hillary Clinton’s China Policy”

“Hillary Clinton’s book *Hard Choices* reaffirms what critics have long stated about President Barack Obama’s China policy: that there is none but merely vague generalizations, and that the administration

is largely reactive rather than proactive.” (Read more of “Hillary Clinton’s China Policy” at [the Diplomat](#) or at the [ICPS blog](#).)

I Read

Sonia M. Suter. “[Did You Give the Government Your Baby’s DNA? Rethinking Consent in Newborn Screening.](#)” *Minnesota Journal of Law, Science & Technology* 15(2). Spring 2014.

Ira S. Rubenstein. “Voter Privacy in the Age of Big Data.” Working Paper. Available [at SSRN](#).

“Back to Iraq.” *The Economist*. August 16, 2014. Excerpt: “[President Obama] is the fourth American president in succession to bomb Iraq. In order to break that sequence, it is not enough to unleash another round of shock and awe. The jihadists would only regroup. A politically stable Iraq is needed, run by a government that is broad-based and popular.”

Matt Apuzzo. “Chinese Businessman Is Charged In Plot to Steal U.S. Military Data.” *The New York Times*. July 12, 2014.

Lew Daly. “Our Mismeasured Economy.” *The New York Times*. July 7, 2014.

“Oh! You pretty things.” *The Economist*. July 12, 2014. Excerpt: “The amount of time parents devote to child care has increased significantly[.] Today, working mothers spend almost as much time on child care as stay-at-home mothers did a generation before. Data from the Multinational Time Use Study—a collection of surveys from 20 countries—shows that in 1974, mothers without jobs typically spent just 77 minutes with their young children each day, while employed mothers spent about 25 minutes. By 2000 that had risen to 161 minutes and 74 minutes respectively. According to William Strauss and Neil Howe, authors of various studies of the ‘millennial’ generation, children born in the 1970s and 1980s were mostly raised by baby-boomer parents who married young, had children quickly and were often rather blasé about the consequences. The suburbs they moved into—and the inner cities they left derelict and unwanted—were breeding grounds for isolation and disaffection. By the late 1980s that generation was giving way to a new group of parents who waited longer to have children and paid more attention when they did. In the 1970s the average American mother had her first child at the age of just 22. That has since increased to around 26. Today’s young adults were thus raised by a generation of parents who had fewer children later in life, and took the process more seriously.”

Kareem Fahim. “Where Killings Are Common, Death of Activist Stuns Benghazi.” *The New York Times*. June 26, 2014. Excerpt: “The killing [of Salwa Bugaighis] has stunned a nation where assassinations, kidnappings and explosions have intruded on life with a dulling regularity in the turbulent years since Libya’s revolt against the dictator Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi. Judges, police officers, journalists and bystanders have died, but for many, the killing of Ms. Bugaighis represented a terrible new low.”

From My Diary

I am delighted to learn that Michael Boylan, Michael L. Gross, Jonathan Marks, Daniel A. Bell, Nikolas K. Gvosdev, Kai-Man Kwan, and Lawrence Quill have vastly expanded on some of my ideas in *Society’s August 2014 edition*, which was dedicated to communitarianism.



In a [recent obituary](#) for Chief Samuel Adebisi Adedeji, the author mentioned Amitai Etzioni and communitarianism and described Adedeji as having “put the cherished theories of communitarianism into a courageous practice.”

“Chuck Hagel’s World.” *The Economist*. August 16, 2014. Excerpt: “Mr[.] Hagel does not fear isolationism as much as ‘insulationism’: the temptation to think that America can turn inward and be safe. He cites a 1945 speech by Franklin Roosevelt in which the dying president summed up the lesson of the world war: that America’s well-being ‘is dependent on the well-being of other nations far away.’ Speaking in Chicgo earlier this year Mr[.] Hagel came up with his own formulation, urging America to see that global leadership is an advantage not a burden, and declaring: ‘We do not engage in the world because we are a great nation. Rather, we are a great nation because we engage in the world.’”

In a recent article from the *New York Times*, Thomas Kaplan reports that Governor Andrew M. Cuomo gave a lieutenant colonel of the Israeli Defense Forces a pair of cuff links emblazoned with the New York State seal. This gesture was surely well-intentioned but foolish: men's shirts in Israel have nowhere to put cuff links!

One *New York Times* article by Farhad Manjoo documents an interesting trend in the United States. Car-sharing pseudo-taxi apps Uber and Lyft are introducing ways for people traveling in the same direction to share a ride. Could this portend a shift away from the expensive and wasteful practice of driving solo, succeeding perhaps where HOV lanes and regular carpooling schemes have failed?

The cover story for the July 19 issue of the *Economist* was "America's lost oomph"—illustrated by an American flag-clad jockey trying in vain to whip an enormous tortoise into action. The article bemoaned the loss of the New Economy of the 1990s and noted that the "recovery from the recession of 2008-2009 has been the weakest of the post-war era."

According to one story in the July 19 issue of the *Economist*, "62% of those polled in China worry that its border disputes could lead to armed conflict[.] Some 67% of Americans say the same thing."

One op-ed by Linda Greenhouse published in the June 26 edition of the *New York Times* opines, "The Fourth Amendment's prohibition of unreasonable search and seizure has given rise to a complex body of law, dense with precedents that can be maneuvered in just about any direction."

In a review of Robert Gates' recent memoir, Robert Jervis remarks in *Political Science Quarterly* on Gates' ironic lack of self-awareness. Gates recalls being offended by the assumption that he would write about "sensitive matters" in his forthcoming memoirs—"I was put off by the way the president closed the meeting. To his very closest advisors, he said, 'For the record, and for those of you writing your memoirs, I am not making any decisions about Israel or Iraq. [Joe Biden], you will be my witness.' I was offended by his suspicion that any of us would write about such sensitive matters." However, of course, he went ahead and did just that. Jervis wryly writes, "It is a mystery how a sentient being could write the last sentence. The first one was bad enough."

New Endorsers of the MAR Position Paper

John Grierson, Falmouth University Graduate School

Watch the latest videos from the Communitarian Network, including [remarks at Tel Aviv University School of Law](#), "[The Poor Outlook on Work in the U.S.](#)," and "[You Don't Need to Buy This](#)," through our [YouTube Channel!](#)

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