

## **Needed: A Committee for the Defense of Democracy**

**March 6, 2017**

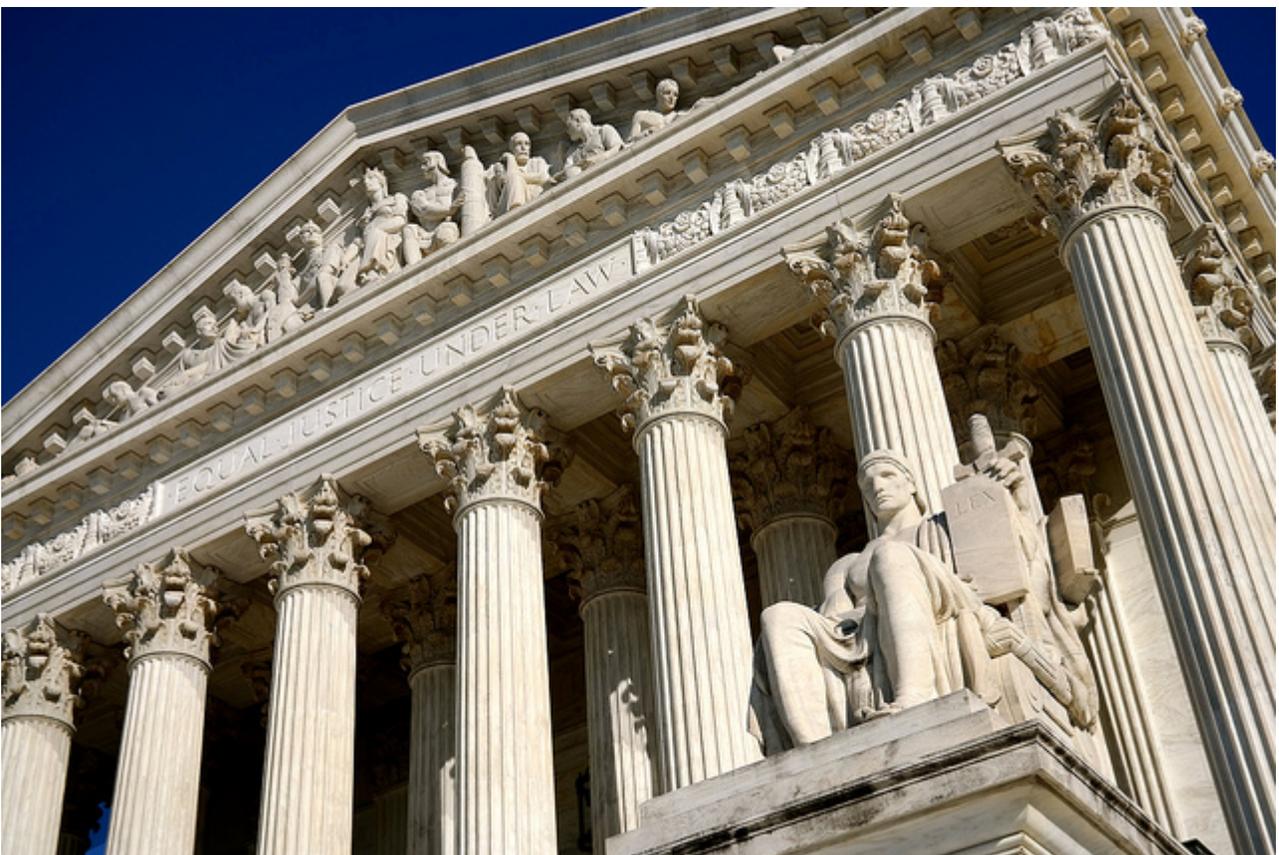


Photo credit: [Davis Staedtler](#), [Flickr Creative Commons](#)

### **Forthcoming Event**

Amitai Etzioni will give a lecture at Bar Ilan University on "A liberal communitarian treatment of populism: individual rights and social responsibilities."

**Date/Time:**

March 14, 2:00pm

**Location:**

Bar Ilan Law School, building 306, room no. 200  
Bar Ilan University  
Ramat Gan

## Editorials

### [What We Need Is A Committee For The Defense Of Democracy](#)

We need a new association of people who are willing to work together to protect the American democracy from assaults by the Trump Administration (other nations may need similar committees). The association's agenda will be sharply limited and focused on protecting the right to vote; freedom of the press and the need to keep the public informed; the courts' independence; and stopping the abuse of public office for private gains.

Published in *The Huffington Post*; [click here](#) to read the full article.

### [China Needs More Than Exhortation to Break With North Korea](#)

The media has been too distracted with what happened (or didn't) in Sweden and how many days it took Trump to express his feelings about antisemitism to pay much attention to a major announcement by China recently. Beijing said that it would be suspending coal imports from North Korea for the rest of the year in response to the expansion of the latter's testing of an intermediate range missile, part of North Korea's nuclear armaments program. The test had led the former head of the CIA, [R. James Woolsey](#) to warn "Don't underestimate North Korea's nuclear arsenal" and that it is "likely more advanced and dangerous than many experts think."

Published in *The Diplomat*; [click here](#) to read the full article.

### [China: The Accidental World Leader?](#)

The outlier president of the United States evokes outlier responses. His calls for isolationism and protectionism have led a large number of foreign policy mavens and media talking heads to look for a new source of world order. They have been quick to nominate China as willing and able to become the new world leader and source of world order.

Published in *The Diplomat*; [click here](#) to read the full article.

### [Will the Yemen Raid Become Trump's Benghazi?](#)

The father of William Ryan Owens, a Navy Seal killed in the raid in Yemen, asked for an investigation of the circumstance that led to this loss. The same operation, the first military operation President Trump authorized, over dinner, also killed thirty civilians, including ten children and women, and injured three other Americans fighters. It pushed the local tribes—including those that in the past supported the United States—toward aligning themselves with Al Qaeda. And it showed, once again, the US's weakness in this kind of warfare.

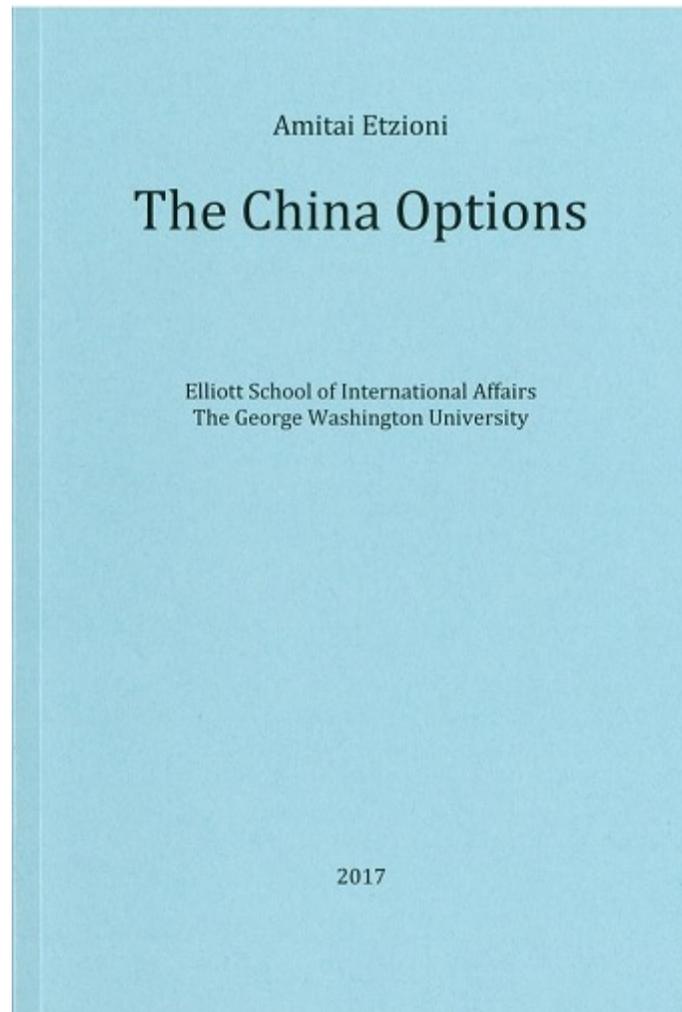
[Click here](#) for the full text. Different versions of this article were published in *The National Interest* and *The Huffington Post*.

## Academic Articles

### [The China Options](#)

A variety of strategies have been suggested for how the U.S. should respond to China as a rising power. The publication analyses the underlying assumptions of these strategies. The strategies are grouped into three categories: 1) Strategies that call for China to be integrated into the liberal international order. The study finds that there are significant divergences in the requirements imposed, contingent on different views of what such integration entails, and hence, differences in their chances of success. 2) The study compares strategies that call for the application of (primarily military) power to either brake or reverse the rise of China, or to limit it, or to allow for some increasing influence and U.S. retrenchment. 3) The study compares the scope of shared and complementary versus conflicting core interests of the two powers (and those of their allies) and weighs the role that tension reduction measures can play in dealing with these conflicting interests as compared to negotiated settlements, based on salience differentials. The publication closes by asking what differences emerge if the 'end state' one seeks is a peaceful, stable order or also a liberal, democratic one.

[Click here](#) to read it on SSRN.



### **Donors: Give — Ok; Get — Not**

The current state of campaign finance laws is undermining the democratic system, yet various limits on the amounts that can be donated were considered by the Supreme Court to violate the First Amendment. This article proposes that instead of focusing on limiting what people can give to politicians seeking office — limiting what they can get in return for their contributions. Cases of mutually-beneficial exchange should be treated as bribery, so long as the benefit applies to the contributor in a discriminatory manner. For this approach to be successful, the current interpretation of quid pro quo corruption needs to be modified.

[Click here](#) to read the paper and comments on SSRN.

### **Feedback: Campaign Finance**

Four scholars responded to Donors: Give—Ok; Get—Not. Excerpts of their comments are

included below. Their full commentaries are included at the end of the paper on [SSRN](#). If you have any comments you would like to share, please send them to [icps@gwu.edu](mailto:icps@gwu.edu).

**Robert G. Boatright, Professor of Political Science at Clark University and Director of the National Institute for Civil Discourse Research Network**

It is clear that we are in need of fresh thinking about campaign finance laws, and there are many appealing features to like in this proposal: among them, the clear recognition that campaign contributors have diverse motives, that these motives should be recognized and afforded different normative standing, and that the straightjacket imposed by the court's minimalist definition of corruption must be rethought. I am not, however, convinced that a focus on the real or implied quid pro quo relationship inherent in campaign contributions is the most prudent way of rethinking the role of money in elections. I do not think the discussion of money in politics is best served by a battle over what "corruption" means.

**Paul S. Herrnson, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Connecticut**

Etzioni's essay breaks new ground in the realm of campaign finance reform. Although I have voiced some reservations, I am confident it will stimulate additional creative thinking on the subject. It also serves as an important reminder of about the role of money in American politics. Campaign contributions and expenditures do not guarantee a tax break, regulatory relief, or a federal appropriation, but as Etzioni reminds us there are advantages to be gained by participating in the financing of elections.

**Michael Bailey, Professor of American Government, Georgetown University**

I am broadly sympathetic with the idea that contributions can corrupt our democratic system and that we may need to think creatively about new ways to counter such influence. Hence, the idea that we should bar any efforts to influence specific actions to benefit donors is intriguing and worth considering even as there is little to no evidence that the political system is willing to implement such dramatic change. However, I am not convinced that the proposal in this paper is the right approach for conventional reasons – the practical complications are immense – and for an unconventional reason – that the proposal could actually exacerbate the influence of the wealthy. I discuss each in turn.

**Lee Drutman, Senior Fellow in the Political Reform Program, New America**

Under what possible circumstances would members of Congress possibly vote to enact such a law? Even if they were concerned about the role of money in politics (and many are), such a law would make it almost impossible to legislate. How, one wonders, could a member of Congress conduct due diligence on every contributor's possible benefits from every single consequence of legislation? To implement this law would be to create a chilling effect on Congress performing its basic legislative functioning. Or alternately, to construe the quid pro quo exchange so narrowly as to be meaningless.

## Incorporating Ethics into Artificial Intelligence

ICPS hosted a workshop March 3-5 on artificial intelligence. Topics of discussion included whether smart machines can act as moral agents, the concept of AI as a mind vs. AI as a partner, "ethics bots," lessons from the Trolley Problem, job collapse, and autonomous weapons. We are looking for someone to build an ethics bot along the lines of the one described in [AI assisted ethics](#), published in *Ethics and Information Technology*. The event was moderated by Amitai Etzioni.

Attendees were:

**Stefano Albrecht**, The University of Texas at Austin; **Michael Anderson**, University of Hartford; **Susan Anderson**, University of Connecticut; **Thomas Arnold**, Tufts Human-Robot Interaction Laboratory; **Peter Asaro**, The New School; **Ajay Bawa**, Avanade Inc.; **Thomas Burri**, University of St. Gallen; **Vincent Conitzer**, Duke University; **Louise Dennis**, University of Liverpool; **Virginia Dignum**, Delft University of Technology; **Amitai Etzioni**, The George Washington University; **Robert Finkelstein**, Robotic Technology Inc.; **Mark Finlayson**, Florida International University; **Noah Goodall**, Virginia Transportation Research Council; **Noreen Herzfeld**, St. John's University; **Matthew Hutson**, Freelance Science Writer; **Joseph Jerome**, Center for Democracy and Technology; **Sara Jordan**, Virginia Tech; **Benjamin Kuipers**, University of Michigan; **Derek Leben**, University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown; **Neil McBride**, De Montfort University; **Robin Murphy**, Center for Robot-Assisted Search and Rescue; **Ugo Pagallo**, University of Turin; **Jana Schaich Borg**, Duke University; **Bart Selman**, Cornell University; **Bryant Walker Smith**, University of South Carolina; **John Weaver**, McLane Middleton; **Bendert Zevenbergen**, Oxford Internet Institute

## Forthcoming Book

**AVOIDING**



**WAR WITH**



**CHINA** **AMITAI  
ETZIONI**

**University of Virginia Press  
May 2017**

Are the United States and China on a collision course? In response to remarks made by Donald Trump's secretary of state, China's state-run newspaper Global Times asserted, "Unless Washington plans to wage a large-scale war in the South China Sea, any other approaches to prevent Chinese access to the [disputed] islands will be foolish." Some experts contend that conflict is inevitable when an established power does not make sufficient room for a rising power. In this timely new work, renowned professor of international relations Amitai Etzioni explains why this would be disastrous and points to the ways the two nations can avoid war.

With insight and clarity Etzioni presents our best strategy to reduce tension between the two powers, mapping out how the United States can accommodate China's regional rise without undermining its core interests, its allies, and the international order.

# I Read

Ugo Pagallo's book *The Laws of Robots: Crimes, Contracts, and Torts* explores the legal ramifications of distinguishing between robots as tools versus agents.

In *The Wall Street Journal*, Naomi Duguid wrote a [review](#) of Emily Esfahani Smith's book *The Power of Meaning*, which proposes looking outward, toward those around us, to find meaning in life. "It is others who give meaning to our lives, by giving us community and connection" writes Duguid. Smith's book asserts that searching for happiness is a hopeless and self-centered pursuit: finding meaning, not happiness, is what will fulfill us. For related work, see [Happiness is the Wrong Metric](#) on SSRN.

## From Our Communitarian Reporter

### Local Currencies, Stronger Communities

The expansion of global markets and the liberalization of trade over the last few decades has made it easier and cheaper to access an ever-expanding range of goods. First, big box stores made it easier to buy everything in one stop rather than visiting multiple smaller, more specialized retailers. Now, Amazon makes it possible to buy everything without ever leaving home, and to have anything delivered the next day, or sometimes even the same day. But all of this has led to the closure of countless local businesses in communities around the world. Even many of us who are concerned about the health and vitality of communities find it difficult to support local businesses when large, multinational retailers are able to offer convenience and significantly lower prices, thanks to their economies of scale.

A number of communities in the UK have implemented alternative local currencies as a way to stem the tide; Liverpool was the most recent to join the movement, with the introduction of the Liverpool Local Pound. These alternative local currencies operate alongside the pound sterling, but are usually only accepted by participating local retailers; thus, the Liverpool Local Pound can only be spent in Liverpool, the Bristol Pound can only be spent in Bristol and so on. Because these currencies are only useful in particular communities, they insure that the money continues to circulate within the local economy, rather than going to some faraway corporate headquarters. In theory, a large chain retailer could decide to accept a local alternative currency, but because it's only valid in that city, the money would still have to be reinvested locally. Moreover, because these alternative currencies cannot earn interest, they insure that money continues to circulate rather than accumulate or encourage speculation, which can severely distort the economy. Most of the alternative currency projects were initiated not by local governments, but by community organizations and local business groups. However, some local councils and utilities have begun to accept tax and bill payments in local currency to encourage more local businesses to participate. Often the local currency can be converted into pound sterling, but at a penalty.

In addition to encouraging shoppers to support local merchants, many of these local currencies have other communitarian benefits. In seeking out participating businesses, residents become more familiar with their community and get to know local merchants. And by incentivizing local merchants to source their wares from local producers, these local currencies can help to foster more resilient and self-sustaining communities.

Examples of active alternative local currencies in the US include “BerkShares” in the Berkshire region of Massachusetts, and the Baltimore BNote.

*-David Kroeker-Maus*

## Video

[Click here](#) to watch our video, We Are What We Celebrate, on YouTube!

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