Weekend links: the Middle East, FAO debate, the private sector, and more...

Author: Camilla Burkot and Terence Wood

Date: August 7, 2015

If you're pondering the sad state of affairs in Iraq, Syria and much of the rest of the Middle East, Hugh Roberts has some excellent analysis in the LRB. Meanwhile, if you're wondering whether the Iran inspections deal was a good idea, have a listen to Robert Wright and David Frum debate it (in heated form).

Sticking with debate, a post on the FAO's malnutrition numbers by Jason Hickel in The Guardian generates some fascinating argument in the comments section between philosopher Thomas Pogge and the FAO's chief statistician, Carlo Cafiero (among others).

On a different kind of number, Vox reminds us that we each get about 80,000 hours in our working lives. This magic number is the jumping off point for Will MacAskill, founder and president of a group that researches how people can do more good through their careers. MacAskill is also the founder and vice-president of effective altruist group Giving What We Can.

It's paywalled sadly, but Jonathan Glennie has a good review of William Easterly's Tyranny of Experts and Ben Ramalingham's Aid on the Edge of Chaos in the Journal of Development Studies.

And the New Yorker has a sad article on the brutal extra-legal police crackdown on gangs in El Salvador.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is often hailed as a good -- but is there a risk that it can start to undermine governmental responsibilities? In Foreign Policy [registered users can access 5 articles free per month], Rupa Subramanya charges that India's policy of mandated CSR risks replacing, rather than complementing, government programs.

And lastly, on a similar note, The Economist offers a fairly glowing appraisal of the low-cost private schools that are cropping up across the global South. Private school pupils now account for more than 20 per cent of total primary school attendees in low-income countries -- compared to just over 10 per cent in high- and middle-income countries.