

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

By Camilla Burkot and Terence Wood
7 August 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.

About the author/s

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Camilla Burkot was a Research Officer at the Development Policy Centre, and Editor of the Devpolicy Blog, from 2015 to 2017. She has a background in social anthropology and holds a Master of Public Health from Columbia University, and has field experience in Eastern and Southern Africa, and PNG. She now works for the Burnet Institute.

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Link: <https://devpolicy.org/weekend-links-the-middle-east-fao-debate-the-private-sector-and-more/>

Date downloaded: 26 April 2024



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