

comings of current policies,” Mayer points out. “If a candidate is arguing for a major change in government policy, his first responsibility is to show that current policies are in some way deficient.”

The information and analysis provided in “negative” speeches or ads can also be valuable in themselves, he contends. The electorate needs to know about “the abilities and virtues [candidates] don’t have; the mistakes they have made; the problems they haven’t dealt with; the issues they would prefer not to talk about; the bad or unrealistic policies they have proposed.” Only their opponents will air those issues.

And the candidate’s character and behavior “are entirely relevant issues, more important than many policy questions,” Mayer argues. People may disagree about which particular character traits are most significant, but especially in elections for executive offices such as president, governor, or mayor, “where character flaws can have such important repercussions, I think we are well advised to cast the net widely. Certainly there is no reason to preclude a priori any discussion of a candidate’s sexual behavior or intellectual honesty.”



Finally, the threat of negative campaigning, Mayer points out, acts as a beneficial restraint on candidates. If they “always knew that their opponents would never say anything critical about them, campaigns would quickly turn into a procession of lies, exaggerations, and unrealistic promises.”

Not *all* mudslinging is good, Mayer admits. The bad sort, he says, is bad because it’s misleading (taking votes or actions out of context, for example), or deals with matters of dubious relevance, or is uncivil in tone. But being negative is not bad in itself.

The Communitarian Fallacy

“Communitarian Dreams” by Roger Scruton, in *City Journal* (Autumn 1996), Manhattan Institute, 52 Vanderbilt Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017; “Belonging in the Past” by Michael Ignatieff, in *Prospect* (Nov. 1996), 4 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3RA.

Communitarianism is the latest star in the political-intellectual firmament, attracting the rapt attention of the White House and the mainstream national media. The communitarians are unconservative critics of liberalism who denounce the ethos of rights without responsibilities and commend the virtues of community as a corrective to unrestrained individualism. That is all well and good, argues Scruton, editor of Britain’s *Salisbury Review*, but when push comes to shove, communitarian thinkers such as Charles Taylor, Michael Walzer, and Michael Sandel show themselves to be, beneath their sentimental “rhetoric of fellow feeling,” liberals in disguise.

In *Sources of the Self* (1989), for instance, Taylor attacks the contemporary cult of self, but then urges a community with “a decidedly liberal aspect,” Scruton writes. “He defends ‘multiculturalism’ against the tyran-

ny of majority values, the welfare state against the ‘selfishness’ of unbridled capitalism, and ‘participatory democracy’ against the shadowy machinations of institutional power.” Similarly, Walzer and Sandel make the welfare state “the very symbol of ‘community.’” Missing from that equation, Scruton claims, is “any appreciation of the real communities that give meaning to our lives, the associations and attachments that go today by the name of civil society.”

In *The Spirit of Community* (1991), Amitai Etzioni, chief movement publicist, contends that the liberal emphasis on rights “encourages people to ask but not to give,” Scruton notes, and that America must “wake up to the duties of citizenship, if it is not to degenerate into an anarchic crowd of welfare dependents, tax dodgers, and disloyal egoists.” Though conservatives would agree, Scruton writes,

they also “would point out that much of the damage to the sense of community in America has issued from liberal reforms that Etzioni and his followers seem to endorse. Communitarians regard sexual conduct as a private matter and liberal legislation on such matters as essential. They are ‘caring’ people who do not wish to disturb or interfere with anybody’s chosen life-style or to take an ‘authoritarian’ attitude toward the problems that freedom creates.” And they are wary of “the spirit of community as it tends to show itself in ordinary people,” for that spirit “seeks to impose a common morality, a common culture, and a common respect for basic social norms.”

In this internal division, however, communitarians may be like most people today. “Modernity’s core value is freedom, especially the freedom to fashion one’s identity and one’s life as one will,” argues Ignatieff, author of *A Just Measure of Pain* (1989). Yet most continue to long for community. Finding a balance between these two desires is difficult, Ignatieff argues, but to seek a restoration of community through politics is a fool’s errand—and one that can only feed the modern disillusion with politics. Through politics, society can be made fairer, more just, and more efficient. That, Ignatieff believes, ought to be quite enough.

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Dangerous Images

“The Satellite Revolution” by Charles Lane, in *The New Republic* (Aug. 12, 1996), 1220 19th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036; “The Art and Science of Photoreconnaissance” by Dino Brugioni, in *Scientific American* (Mar. 1996), 415 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017-1111.

At the height of the Cold War, notes Brugioni, a retired Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) official, reconnaissance photographs taken from high-flying U-2 airplanes and satellites in space “repeatedly provided timely intelligence, sometimes even helping to bring the superpowers back from the brink of conflict.” Now, writes Lane, a senior editor at the *New Republic*, high-resolution photos taken by ultra-sensitive U.S. imaging satellites are about to become “available to anyone in the world who can afford to pay for them.” It is unclear whether this will make the world safer—or less safe.

In 1994, President Bill Clinton, over the protests of the Pentagon and the CIA, authorized American aerospace firms to market satellite photos with a resolution of up to one meter. The first American satellite for this commercial purpose is scheduled to be rocketed into orbit next December by Space Imaging, a spin-off of Lockheed-Martin. Though the most advanced photoreconnaissance technology, “capable of telling a small cluster bomb from a soccer ball,” remains a monopoly of the intelligence agencies, Lane says, the one-meter-resolution photos are 10 times more precise than anything now commercially available.

By the first decade of the 21st century, he points out, news media and human rights organizations using the satellite-imaging firms’ services will be making it much harder for dictators and violent movements to hide their crimes

from the world at large. “No human rights monitor has ever been allowed into North Korean territory; now the rumored North Korean gulag can be documented from space. Ditto for China’s prison camps, or Cuba’s.” Brugioni told Lane that he has been retained by an unnamed human rights organization to interpret the new photos.

But the satellite imagery can also be used for military ends. “In theory,” Lane notes, “Islamic Jihad could get its hands on a one-meter resolution picture, of, say, a U.S. Air Force general’s headquarters in Turkey, convert the shot to a precise three-dimensional image, combine it with data from a Global Positioning System device you can buy at Radio Shack and transmit it to Baghdad, where a primitive cruise missile purchased secretly from China could await its targeting coordinates.” Critics say that the satellite-imaging companies’ biggest customers are likely to be foreign governments.

Despite the dangers, Lane argues that Clinton had little choice in his decision, because Russian and French satellite companies were reportedly planning to enter the market themselves. “America’s economic and national security interests lie in having the maximum number of satellite photo customers dependent on U.S. companies before foreigners catch up with U.S. technology. At least this way most of the market will be subject to U.S. law and regulations.”