

tutions are weak, poverty is rampant, and intergroup tensions are acute.”

“Despite Zakaria’s talk of constitutionalism and individual rights,” contends Marc F. Plattner, coeditor of the *Journal of Democracy*, writing in *Foreign Affairs* (Mar.–Apr. 1998), “he seems to wind up taking the much more familiar view that authoritarian capitalist development is the most reliable road to eventual liberal democracy.” It is implausible to think that autocracies such as Singapore and Malaysia “more reliably protect individual rights or have more independent and

impartial judiciaries than the Latin American democracies that Zakaria describes as ‘illiberal.’”

Zakaria overstates the disjunction between democracy and constitutional liberalism, Plattner maintains. “While many new electoral democracies fall short of liberalism, on the whole, countries that hold free elections are overwhelmingly more liberal than those that do not, and countries that protect civil liberties are overwhelmingly more likely to hold free elections than those that do not. This is not simply an accident.”

Deforming Foreign Policy

“The Protestant Deformation and American Foreign Policy” by James Kurth, in *Orbis* (Spring 1998), Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1528 Walnut St., Ste. 610, Philadelphia, Pa. 19102-3684.

Though scholars often have completely ignored its influence, Protestantism has long shaped U.S. foreign policy. But today, argues Kurth, a political scientist at Swarthmore College, a heresy of the original religion holds sway—and under its spell, U.S. foreign policy is provoking “intense resistance and even international conflict.”

In the three centuries after the Reformation began in 1517, the Protestant rejection of hierarchy and community with regard to salvation spread—particularly in the United States—to the economic realm (the free market) and the political realm (liberal democracy), Kurth says. A written contract and a written constitution, each “a version of the written covenant among individual Protestant believers,” provided order in the respective secular domains.

Driving this expansion, Kurth contends, was a dynamic within Protestantism itself, as the original idea of salvation through grace gradually gave way to increasingly secular beliefs. By the early 20th century, even the genteel abstraction of Divine Providence (itself a substitute for Christ and the Holy Spirit) disappeared, and “the various Protestant creeds were replaced by the American Creed,” a secular vision of “free markets and equal opportunity, free elections and liberal democracy, and constitutionalism and the rule of the law.”

Overseas, Kurth says, this translated after World War I into a peacetime foreign policy of “realism” (or “isolationism”) toward

strong powers, and “idealism” toward weak ones, whom the United States “sought to remake . . . in the image of the American Creed.”

In the 1970s, maintains Kurth, Protestantism’s inner decline reached its final stage, with the transformation of the American Creed into a creed of universal human rights. American political and intellectual leaders promoted this notion as a fundamental goal of U.S. foreign policy. In the decades since, America has become “a new kind of political society,” with “expressive individualism” as its ideology. “The Holy Trinity of original Protestantism, the Supreme Being of Unitarianism, and finally the United States of the American Creed have all been dethroned and replaced by the imperial self,” Kurth declares. He calls this the “Protestant Deformation.”

Today, freed by the end of the Cold War from the need “to show some respect for and make some concessions to the particularities of hierarchy, community, traditions, and customs in the countries that it needed as allies,” the United States is pursuing a foreign policy of emphasizing universal human rights. That policy has created conflicts with other nations, notably those with Islamic or Confucian traditions. But Kurth points to another danger: “The Protestant Deformation, because of its universalist and individualist creed, seeks the end of all nation states and to replace loyalty to America with gratification of oneself.” As

the United States zealously promotes the Protestant Deformation throughout the

world, it may be simultaneously promoting its own self-destruction.

Women at War?

“Feminism and the Exclusion of Army Women from Combat” by Laura L. Miller, in *Gender Issues* (Summer 1998), Transaction Periodicals Consortium, Rutgers Univ., 35 Berrue Cir., Piscataway, N.J. 08854-8042.

The perennial agitation to put women in U.S. Army combat positions has yet to convince a rather significant group: most army women.

“Enlisted women and women of color particularly are likely to *oppose* assigning women to combat military occupational specialties,” reports Miller, a military sociologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, who conducted interviews and surveys during 1992-94 at various locations here and abroad. “Many express resentment toward officers and civilian activists who are attempting to open combat roles to women.”

Some three-fourths of more than 960 army women surveyed said that women who wish to volunteer for the infantry or other combat arms should be allowed to do so, provided, many added, that they can meet the physical requirements. Nearly half would extend the voluntary option to men. Few of the women—only 11 percent of enlisted women, 13 percent of noncommissioned officers, and 14 percent of the officers—would volunteer themselves for combat roles, however. When a smaller sample of women were asked to choose between the status quo and requiring women to serve in the combat arms in the same way men do—the option the feminist activists prefer—65 percent stuck with the status quo, and 24 percent opted for the gender-blind assignment policy. (The

other 11 percent were neutral).

Female officers, who are college graduates, predominantly (70 percent) white, and career oriented, are more likely than enlisted women to favor a combat role for women—in part, no doubt, believing that exclusion from combat hinders their careers. Miller suggests that civilian feminists, who have a similar background, identify with the officers. But 84 percent of all the women in the army are enlisted soldiers, who typically enter with only a high school diploma, are mostly either black (48 percent) or other minority (11 percent), and are less likely to make the military a career. The enlisted women also would be more likely than the female officers to be killed in combat.

Miller suggests that feminist activists alter their strategy and adopt a compromise position. “Most Army women would support a policy that allows women to volunteer for the combat arms if they qualify [physically] but would not involuntarily assign them.” Instead of rejecting that policy because it would treat women and men differently, she says, feminists should accept it as an advance over the status quo. The subsequent performance of the exceptional women who were interested and qualified would probably dispel the myth that all women are unsuited for combat, she says. And the gap between the activists and the majority of women in uniform would be narrowed.

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

Chasing the Flat Tax Dream

A Survey of Recent Articles

As April 15th nears each year, many taxpayers struggling to find their way through the labyrinth of IRS definitions and dicta angrily conclude that there must be a better, simpler way. In recent years,

this recurrent dream has acquired a name: the flat tax.

The brainchild of Stanford University economist Robert Hall and political scientist Alvin Rabushka, the flat tax was strong-