

chusetts Institute of Technology: “Two dangerous fantasies afflict American homeland security: the idea that we are all at great risk and the idea that all preparation for risk helps to avert it.” With its national color-coded alert system, its warnings that all Americans should “make a plan for what you will do in an emergency, [and] make a kit of emergency supplies,” and its official declaration that even native Alaskan villages and other obscure sites are potential terrorist targets, the Department of Homeland Security is only whipping up irrational fears—and playing right into terrorists’ hands. If they assessed threats rationally, Friedman says, Americans would worry a lot more about their diets and a lot less about suicide bombers.

The irrationality of the current approach is reflected in the government’s \$50 billion homeland security budget, which has provided \$58,000 for the town of Colchester, Vermont, to buy “a search and rescue vehicle that can bore through the concrete of collapsed buildings,” and a formula for “first responder” aid that gives Wyoming \$35 per resident while New York gets \$5.

We’re spending too much on homeland security, Friedman believes, and not enough on the things that would do the most good—hunting down terrorists and curtailing the supply of weapons they would turn against the United States. “If we are all afraid of terrorism,” he declares, “we are all its victims.”

Military Myths

“A School for the Nation?” by Ronald R. Krebs, in *International Security* (Spring 2004), Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Univ., 79 John F. Kennedy St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

The idea that the armed forces can serve as a “school for the nation” was born in 19th-century Europe and has since been embraced everywhere from tsarist Russia to the contemporary developing world. In the United States, a small group of intellectuals on both the left

and the right tout a revived draft or mandatory national service as a way to forge a stronger sense of national community and overcome the divisions of race, class, and culture.

It may work in those old World War II movies, in which groups of wisecracking guys



Building better citizens? World War II-era recruits are sworn into service.

from all over America are transformed by a tour of duty, but real life offers more chastening evidence, says Krebs, a political scientist at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

Military service may stiffen an individual's spine and instill more self-discipline and a greater sense of purpose, but hopes of social transformation are exaggerated. After World War II, "the soldier did not come home to reform America," noted Samuel A. Stouffer in *The American Soldier* (1949). And African-American veterans seemed more averse to change. A study of black veterans in the late 1970s found them heavily concentrated in the business world and underrepresented in the ranks of community and civil rights leaders.

Friendships formed in the foxhole don't always last, and rarely shape attitudes toward larger groups of people. Old beliefs and prejudices die hard. And sometimes familiarity does not breed good feelings. Despite the experiences of World War II and Korea, white Americans weren't moved to abandon racism and segregation. Lessons about the limits of military socialization come from all over the world: The Red Army was supposed to create a "new Soviet man," and the Yugoslav People's Army an "all-Yugoslav identity." Their failures were predictable, says Krebs. How can a few years in uniform accomplish what families, schools, the media, and other agents of socialization cannot?

The Neocon War

"In Defense of Democratic Realism" by Charles Krauthammer, in *The National Interest* (Fall 2004), 1615 L St., N.W., Ste. 1230, Washington, D.C. 20036.

An unlikely war of words erupted this summer between two prominent neoconservative thinkers over the U.S. decision to invade Iraq. As we reported in last issue's *Periodical Observer*, political scientist Francis Fukuyama fired first, with a scathing critique of columnist Charles Krauthammer, whose views were said to have strongly influenced the Bush administration's pre-invasion thinking.

Fukuyama criticized the air of unreality that he claimed surrounded Krauthammer's rhetoric, charging that neither Iraq nor Al Qaeda posed a threat to the existence of the United States. The columnist replies that Fukuyama fails to grasp that "Arab/Islamic radicalism" does pose an existential threat to America. "When Hitler marched into the Rhineland in 1936, he did not 'currently' have the means to overrun Europe. Many Europeans believed, delusionally, that he did not present an existential threat. By Fukuyama's logic, they were right." And what if terrorists get their hands on nuclear weapons?

Fukuyama underestimates the power of religion, according to Krauthammer. Grounded in Islam, which has a billion adherents, Islamic radicalism has a ready supply of recruits and can draw on a long tradition of messianic zeal and a cult of martyrdom. Fukuyama also has an interest in upholding the "end of his-

tory" thesis that made his reputation. The thesis, "if it means anything, means an end to precisely this kind of ideological existential threat."

Pace Fukuyama, Iraq was and is "central" to the war against Islamic radicalism, Krauthammer maintains. Everything was changed by 9/11. "We could continue to fight Arab/Islamic radicalism by catching a terrorist leader here, rolling up a cell there. Or we could go to the heart of the problem, and take the risky but imperative course of trying to reorder the Arab world." The fact that many allies opposed the invasion didn't make it any less necessary, Krauthammer writes.

Fukuyama found it strange that his fellow neoconservatives, who had long warned of "the dangers of ambitious social engineering" at home, were so confident in America's ability to foster democracy abroad. Krauthammer replies that when the stakes were high enough in the past—as in Germany, Japan, and South Korea—the United States succeeded in doing just that. "The rejection of nation-building, whether on grounds of American incompetence or Arab recalcitrance, reduces the War on Terror to cops-and-robbers. It simply does not get to the root of the problem, which is the cauldron of political oppression, religious intolerance, and social ruin in the Arab-Islamic world."