

Liberals have pined too much for a culture less individualistic than America's reality is, according to Galston. "As FDR did

three-quarters of a century ago, we must mobilize and sustain a popular majority with the freedom agenda our times require."

## *In Your Face*

"The New Videomalaise: Effects of Televised Incivility on Political Trust" by Diana C. Mutz and Byron Reeves, in *American Political Science Review* (Feb. 2005), American Political Science Assn., 1527 New Hampshire Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

It's become fashionable to blame television shoutfests such as *The O'Reilly Factor* for Americans' growing disaffection with politics. But why should a bunch of shouting heads be such a turnoff?

To find out, political scientists Mutz and Reeves, of the University of Pennsylvania and Stanford University, respectively, corralled a group of hapless volunteers and sat them down—some with electrodes attached—to watch two versions of a political talk show created by the researchers.

In one version, the actors carried on a polite discussion, while in the other they interrupted each other, rolled their eyes, and generally misbehaved. All of the viewers found the "uncivil" show more entertaining, but differences emerged when they were given an opinion survey shortly after watching the two programs.

On the whole, those who saw the uncivil show suddenly recorded decreased levels of trust in politicians and the political system generally. (Interestingly, however, trust *increased* slightly among viewers who were identified in psychological tests as prone to conflict in their own lives.) Among those

who watched the civil show, there was no change. So, contrary to a lot of speculation, it's not political conflict that turns off Americans. It's incivility.

And it's not just incivility, but the particular form it takes on television, according to Mutz and Reeves. Television's "sensory realism" makes the shoutfests very much like real-life encounters. But in real life, people who fall into arguments tend before long to back off, physically as well as rhetorically. On talk shows, conflict brings the cameras zooming in for a screen-filling look at the combatants, while the host works to ratchet up the antagonism. It's a "highly unnatural" experience for viewers, and, as the electrodes Mutz and Reeves attached to some viewers showed, one that produces a physiological reaction much like the one created by real conflict. That, the two researchers conclude, is the source of the turnoff: "When political actors . . . violate the norms for everyday, face-to-face discourse, they reaffirm viewers' sense that politicians cannot be counted on to obey the same norms for social behavior by which ordinary citizens abide."

### FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

## *What Does North Korea Want?*

"North Korea's Weapons Quest" by Nicholas Eberstadt, in *The National Interest* (Summer 2005), 1615 L St., N.W., Ste. 1230, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Most discussions of how to deal with North Korea's quest for nuclear weapons begin with the assumption that it's largely a problem of diplomacy. Pyongyang's aim is to obtain as much food, fuel, and other benefits as it can through international blackmail, this logic goes. Indeed, by crying nu-

clear, North Korean leader Kim Jong Il has extracted more than \$1 billion from the United States since 1995. Eberstadt, an American Enterprise Institute scholar, argues that the Communist North Koreans are playing a far more brutal game that many observers recognize.