

*"The arrogance of Mark Steyn
knows no bounds."
—Prince Turki al-Faisal,
Saudi Ambassador to the United States*

*New York Times
BESTSELLER*

AMERICA ALONE

THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT



MARK STEYN

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AMERICA ALONE

THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT

MARK STEYN

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FOR CECI, HECTOR AND RALPH

“When people see a strong horse and a weak horse, by nature they will like the strong horse.”

*OSAMA BIN LADEN
KANDAHAR, NOVEMBER 2001*

“If we know anything, it is that weakness is provocative.”

*DONALD RUMSFELD
WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 1998*

Prologue

To Be or Not to Be

We know what we are, but know not what we may be.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, HAMLET (1601)

Do you worry? You look like you do. Worrying is the way the responsible citizen of an advanced society demonstrates his virtue: he feels good about feeling bad.

But what to worry about? Iranian nukes? Nah, that's just some racket cooked up by the Christian fundamentalist Bush and his Zionist buddies to give Halliburton a pretext to take over the Persian carpet industry. Worrying about nukes is so eighties. "They make me want to throw up....They make me feel sick to my stomach," wrote the British novelist Martin Amis, who couldn't stop thinking about them during the Thatcher Terror. In the introduction to a collection of short stories, he worried about the Big One and outlined his own plan for coping with a nuclear winter wonderland:

Suppose I survive. Suppose my eyes aren't pouring down my face, suppose I am untouched by the hurricane of secondary missiles that all mortar, metal, and glass has abruptly become. I suppose all this. I shall be obliged (and it's the last thing I feel like doing) to retrace that long mile home, through the firestorm, the remains of the thousand-miles-an-hour winds, the warped atoms, the groveling dead. Then—God willing, if I still have the strength, and, of course, if they are still alive—I must find my wife and children and I must kill them.

But the Big One never fell. And instead of killing his wife Martin Amis had to make do with divorcing her. Back then it was just crazies like Reagan and Thatcher who had nukes, so you can understand why everyone was terrified. But now Kim Jong-il and the ayatollahs have them, so we're all sophisticated and relaxed about it, like the French hearing that their president's acquired a couple more mistresses. Martin Amis hasn't thrown up a word about the subject in years. To the best of my knowledge, he has no plans to kill the present Mrs. Amis.

So what should we be cowering in terror over? How about—stop me if you’ve heard this one before—“climate change”? If you’ve seen Al Gore’s acclaimed documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* you know that it begins with a searing, harrowing nightmare vision of the world to come:

One day Chicken Little was walking in the woods when—KERPLUNK—an acorn fell on his head.

“Oh my goodness!” said Chicken Little. “The sky is falling! I must go and tell the king.”

Whoops, my mistake. I must be mixing Al’s movie up with a previous eco-doom blockbuster. There come rolling in like rising sea levels in the Maldives. You may have seen yet another example of the genre, the film *The Day After Tomorrow*, in which (warning: plot spoiler) a speech by Dick Cheney brings on the flash-freezing of the entire northern hemisphere. I’m not a climatologist so I’ll take Dennis Quaid’s word for it that that’s scientifically possible. But the point is that from Chicken Little to Al Gore to Dennis Quaid, respected figures have been forecasting the end of the world pretty much since the beginning of the world. In Professor Little’s day, the sky was falling. In Vice President Gore’s time, it’s the Earth that’s falling apart. *Plus ça change* of direction, *plus c’est la même chose*. But, if you can’t beat ’em, join ’em. So let me put it in a nutshell:

It’s the end of the world!! Head for the hills!!!

No, wait. Don’t head for the hills—they’re full of Islamist terrorist camps. Let me put it in a slightly bigger nutshell: much of what we loosely call the Western world will not survive the twenty-first century, and much of it will effectively disappear within our lifetimes, including many if not most European countries. There’ll probably still be a geographical area on the map marked as Italy and the Netherlands—*probably*—just as in Istanbul there’s still a building known as Hagia Sophia, or St. Sophia’s Cathedral. But it’s not a cathedral; it’s merely a designation for a piece of real estate. Likewise, Italy and the Netherlands will merely be designations for real estate.

That’s just for starters. And, unlike the ecochondriacs’ obsession with rising sea levels, this isn’t something that might possibly conceivably hypothetically threaten the Maldivian Islands circa the year 2500; the process is already well advanced as we speak. With respect to Francis Fukuyama, it’s not the end of history; it’s the end of the world as we know it. Whether we like what replaces it depends on whether America can summon the will to shape at least part of the emerging world. If not, then it’s also the end of the American moment, and the dawn of the new Dark Ages (if darkness can dawn): a planet on which much of the map is re-primitivized.

Does that make me sound as nuts as Al Gore and the rest of the eco-doom set? It’s true the end of the world’s nighness isn’t something you’d want to set your watch by. Consider some of Chicken Little’s eminent successors in this field:

- In 1968, in his bestselling book *The Population Bomb*, distinguished scientist Paul Ehrlich declared: “In the 1970s the world will undergo famines—hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death.”
- In 1972, in their landmark study *The Limits to Growth*, the Club of Rome announced that the world would run out of gold by 1981, of mercury by 1985, tin by 1987, zinc by 1990, and petroleum by 1992, and copper, lead, and gas by 1993.
- In 1976, Lowell Ponte published a huge bestseller called *The Cooling: Has the New Ice Age Already Begun? Can We Survive?*
- In 1977, Jimmy Carter, president of the United States (incredible as it may seem), confidently

predicted that “we could use up all of the proven reserves of oil in the entire world by the end of the next decade.”

None of these things occurred. Contrary to the doom-mongers’ predictions, millions didn’t starve and the oil and gas and gold didn’t run out, and, though the NHL now has hockey franchises in Anaheim and Tampa Bay, ambitious kids are still unable to spend their winters knocking a puck around the frozen Everglades. But that doesn’t mean nothing much went on during the last third of the twentieth century. Here’s what *did* happen between 1970 and 2000: in that period, the developed world declined from just under 30 percent of the global population to just over 20 percent, and the Muslim nations increased from about 15 percent to 20 percent.

Is that fact less significant to the future of the world than the fate of some tree or the endangered sloth hanging from it? In 1970, very few non-Muslims outside the Indian subcontinent gave much thought to Islam. Even the Palestinian situation was seen within the framework of a more or less conventional ethnic nationalist problem. Yet today it’s Islam a-go-go: almost every geopolitical crisis takes place on what Samuel Huntington, in *The Clash of Civilizations*, calls “the boundary looping across Eurasia and Africa that separates Muslims from non-Muslims.” That looping boundary is never not in the news. One week, it’s a bomb in Bali. The next, some beheadings in southern Thailand. Next, an insurrection in an obscure resource-rich Muslim republic in the Russian Federation. And then Madrid, and London, and suddenly that looping, loopy boundary has penetrated into the very heart of the West. In little more than a generation.

1970 doesn’t seem that long ago. If you’re in your fifties or sixties, as many of the chaps running the Western world today are wont to be, your pants are narrower than they were back then and your hair’s less groovy, but the landscape of your life—the look of your house, the layout of your car, the shape of your kitchen appliances, the brand names of the stuff in the fridge—isn’t significantly different. And yet that world is utterly altered. Just to recap those bald statistics: in 1970, the developed nations had twice as big a share of the global population as the Muslim world: 30 percent to 15 percent. By 2000, they were at parity: each had about 20 percent.

And by 2020?

September 11, 2001, was not “the day everything changed,” but the day that revealed how much had already changed. On September 10, how many journalists had the Council on American-Islamic Relations or the Canadian Islamic Congress or the Muslim Council of Britain in their Rolodexes? If you’d said that whether something does or does not cause offense to Muslims would be the early twenty-first century’s principal political dynamic in Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and the United Kingdom, most folks would have thought you were crazy. Yet on that Tuesday morning the top of the iceberg bobbed up and toppled the Twin Towers.

This book is about the seven-eighths below the surface—the larger forces at play in the developing world that have left Europe too enfeebled to resist its remorseless transformation into Eurabia and that call into question the future of much of the rest of the world, including the United States, Canada, and beyond. The key factors are:

1. Demographic decline
2. The unsustainability of the advanced Western social-democratic state
3. Civilizational exhaustion

Let’s start with demography, because everything does.

PEOPLE POWER

If your school has two hundred guys and you're playing a school with two thousand pupils, it doesn't mean your baseball team is definitely going to lose, but it certainly gives the other fellows a big starting advantage. Likewise, if you want to launch a revolution, it's not very likely if you've only got seven revolutionaries. And they're all over eighty. But if you've got two million and seven hundred thousand revolutionaries and they're all under thirty, you're in business.

I wonder how many pontificators on the "Middle East peace process" ever run this number: the median age in the Gaza Strip is 15.8 years.

Once you know that, all the rest is details. If you were a "moderate Palestinian" leader, would you want to try to persuade a nation—or pseudo-nation—of unemployed poorly educated teenage boys raised in a UN-supervised European-funded death cult to see sense? Any analysis of the "Palestinian problem" that doesn't take into account the most important determinant on the ground is a waste of time.

Likewise, the salient feature of Europe, Canada, Japan, and Russia is that they're running out of babies. What's happening in the developed world is one of the fastest demographic evolutions in history. Most of us have seen a gazillion heartwarming ethnic comedies—*My Big Fat Greek Wedding* and its ilk—in which some uptight WASPy type starts dating a gal from a vast, loving, fecund Mediterranean family, so abundantly endowed with sisters and cousins and uncles that you can barely get in the room. It is, in fact, the inversion of the truth. Greece has a fertility rate hovering just below 1.3 births per couple, which is what demographers call the point of "lowest-low" fertility from which no human society has ever recovered. And Greece's fertility is the healthiest in Mediterranean Europe. Italy has a fertility rate of 1.2, Spain, 1.1. Insofar as any citizens of the developed world have "big families" these days, it's the Anglo democracies: America's fertility rate is 2.1, New Zealand's a little below. Hollywood should be making *My Big Fat Uptight Protestant Wedding*, in which some uptight Greek only child marries into a big heartwarming New Zealand family where the spouse actually has no siblings.

As I say, this isn't a projection—it's happening now. There's no need to extrapolate, and if you do you get a little freaky, but, just for fun, here goes: by 2050, 60 percent of Italians will have no brothers, no sisters, no cousins, no aunts, no uncles. The big Italian family, with papa pouring the vino and mama spooning out the pasta down an endless table of grandparents and nieces and nephews, will be gone, no more, dead as the dinosaurs. As Noel Coward once remarked in another context, "Funiculi, funicula, funic yourself." By mid-century, Italians will have no choice in the matter.

Experts talk about root causes. But demography is the most basic root of all. Many of the developed world's citizens gave no conscious thought to Islam before September 11. Now we switch on the news every evening and, though there are many trouble spots around the world, as a general rule it's easy to make an educated guess at one of the participants: Muslims vs. Jews in "Palestine," Muslims vs. Hindus in Kashmir, Muslims vs. Christians in Africa, Muslims vs. Buddhists in Thailand, Muslims vs.

Russians in the Caucasus, Muslims vs. backpacking tourists in Bali, Muslims vs. Danish cartoonists in Scandinavia. The environmentalists may claim to think globally but act locally, but these guys live locally. They open up a new front somewhere on the planet with nary a thought.

Why? Because they've got the manpower. Because in the seventies and eighties, Muslims had a baby boom (those self-detonating Islamists in London and Gaza are a literal baby boom) which Westerners took all those silly doomsday tomes about "overpopulation" seriously. We still do. In 2005, Jared Diamond published a bestselling book called *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. A timely subject, so I bought a copy. More fool me. It's all about Easter Island going belly up because they chopped down all their trees. That's why they're not in the G-7 or a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Same with the Greenlanders and the Mayans and Diamond's other curious choices of "societies." Indeed, as the author sees it, pretty much every society collapses because it chops down its trees.

Poor old Diamond can't see the forest because of his obsession with the trees. Russia's collapsing and it's nothing to do with deforestation. It's not the tree, it's the family tree. It's the babes in the wood. A people that won't multiply can't go forth or go anywhere. Those who do will shape the age we live in. Because, when history comes a-calling, it starts with the most basic question of all:

Knock-knock.

Who's there?



WELFARE AND WARFARE

Demographic decline and the unsustainability of the social-democratic state are closely related. In America, politicians upset about the federal deficit like to complain that we're piling up debts on our children and grandchildren will have to pay off. But in Europe the unaffordable entitlements are in even worse shape: there are no kids or grandkids to stick it to.

In my town in New Hampshire, the population peaked in 1820 and then declined until 1940, when it started edging up again until it stands today almost at what it was two centuries ago. The opening up of the west killed Granite State sheep farming, and young people fanned out across the plains, or to the mill towns in southern New England. It's sad to see cellar holes and abandoned barns and meadows reclaimed by the forest. But it didn't kill my town because we had no extravagant social programs which our old-timers had become partial. Similarly, in the post-Gold Rush Yukon, one minute the saloons are bustling and the garters of the hoochie-koochie dancers are stuffed with dollar bills; next they're all shuttered up and everyone's skedaddled out on the last south-bound dogsled. But the territory isn't stuck trying to figure who's going to pay for the hoochie-koochie gals' retirement complex. Unlike the emptying saloons of White Horse and Dawson City, demography is an existential crisis for the developed world, because the twentieth-century social-democratic state was built on a careless model that requires a constantly growing population to sustain it.

You might formulate it like this:

Age + Welfare = Disaster for you

Youth + Will = Disaster for whoever gets in your way

By “will,” I mean the metaphorical spine of a culture. Africa, to take another example, also has plenty of young people, but it’s riddled with AIDS and, for the most part, Africans don’t think of themselves as Africans; as we saw in Rwanda, their primary identity is tribal, and most tribes have no global ambitions. Islam, however, has serious global ambitions, and it forms the primal, core identity of most of its adherents in the Middle East, South Asia, and elsewhere. Islam has youth and will. Europe has age and welfare.

We are witnessing the end of the late twentieth-century progressive welfare democracy. Its fiscal bankruptcy is merely a symptom of a more fundamental bankruptcy: its insufficiency as an animating principle for society. The children and grandchildren of those Fascists and Republicans who waged a bitter civil war for the future of Spain now shrug when a bunch of foreigners blow up their capital. Too sedated even to sue for terms, they capitulate instantly. Over on the other side of the equation, the modern multicultural state is too watery a concept to bind huge numbers of immigrants to the land of their nominal citizenship. So they look elsewhere and find the jihad. The Western Muslim’s pan-Islamic identity is merely the first great cause in a world where globalized pathologies are taking the place of old-school nationalism.

For states in demographic decline with ever more lavish social programs, the question is a simple one: Can they get real? Can they grow up before they grow old? If not, then they’ll end their days as societies dominated by people with a very different worldview.



FIGHTING VAINLY THE OLD ENNUI

Which brings us to the third factor—the enervated state of the Western world, the sense of civilizational ennui, of nations too mired in cultural relativism to understand what’s at stake. As happens, that third point is closely related to the first two. To Americans, it doesn’t always seem obvious that there’s any connection between the “war on terror” and the so-called “pocketbook issues” of domestic politics. But there is a correlation between the structural weaknesses of the social democratic state and the rise of a globalized Islam. The state has gradually annexed all the responsibilities of adulthood—health care, child care, care of the elderly—to the point where it has effectively severed its citizens from humanity’s primal instincts, not least the survival instinct. In the American context, the federal “deficit” isn’t the problem; it’s the government programs that cause the deficit. These programs would be wrong even if Bill Gates wrote a check to cover them each month. They corrode the citizen’s sense of self-reliance to a potentially fatal degree. Big government is a national security threat: it increases your vulnerability to threats like Islamism, and makes it less likely you’ll be able to summon the will to rebuff it. We should have learned that lesson on September 11, 2001, when big government flopped big-time and the only good news of the day came from the a

There were two forces at play in the late twentieth century: in the eastern bloc, the collapse of Communism; in the West, the collapse of confidence. One of the most obvious refutations of Francis Fukuyama's famous thesis *The End of History*—written at the victory of liberal pluralist democracy over Soviet Communism—is that the victors didn't see it as such. Americans—or at least non-Democrat-voting Americans—may talk about “winning” the Cold War but the French and the Belgians and the Germans and the Canadians don't. Very few British do. These are all formal NATO allies—they were, technically, on the winning side against a horrible tyranny few would wish to live under themselves. In Europe, there was an initial moment of euphoria: it was hard not to be moved by the crowds sweeping through the Berlin Wall, especially as so many of them were hot-looking Red babes eager to enjoy a Carlsberg or Stella Artois with even the nerdiest running dog of imperialism. But when the moment faded, *pace* Fukuyama, there was no sense on the Continent that our Big Idea had beaten their Big Idea. With the best will in the world, it's hard to credit the citizens of France or Italy as having made any serious contribution to the defeat of Communism. Au contraire, millions of them voted for it, year in, year out. And with the end of the Soviet existential threat, the enervation of the West only accelerated.

In Thomas P. M. Barnett's book *Blueprint for Action*, Robert D. Kaplan, a very shrewd observer of global affairs, is quoted referring to the lawless fringes of the map as “Indian territory.” It's a drop of humor, a joke but a misleading one. The difference between the old Indian territory and the new is this: no one had to worry about the Sioux riding down Fifth Avenue. Today, with a few hundred bucks on his ATM card, the fellow from the badlands can be in the heart of the metropolis within hours. Here's another difference: in the old days, the white man settled the Indian territory. Now the followers of the badland's radical imams settle the metropolis. And another difference: technology. In the old days, the Injuns had bows and arrows and the cavalry had rifles. In today's Indian territory, countries that can feed their own people have nuclear weapons.

But beyond that, the very phrase “Indian territory” presumes that inevitably these badlands will be brought within the bounds of the ordered world. In fact, a lot of today's “Indian territory” was relatively ordered a generation or two back—West Africa, Pakistan, Bosnia. Though Eastern Europe and Latin America and parts of Asia are freer now than they were in the seventies, other swathes of the map have spiraled backwards. Which is more likely? That the parts of the world under pressure will turn into post-Communist Poland or post-Communist Yugoslavia? In Europe, the demographic pressures favor the latter.

The enemies we face in the future will look a lot like al Qaeda: transnational, globalized, locally franchised, extensively outsourced—but tied together through a powerful identity that leaps frontiers and continents. They won't be nation states and they'll have no interest in becoming nation states though they might use the husks thereof, as they did in Afghanistan and then Somalia. The jihad may be the first, but other transnational deformities will embrace similar techniques. September 11 institutions like the UN and the EU will be unlikely to provide effective responses.

I never thought I'd find myself in the Doom-Mongering section of the bookstore, and, to be fair to myself, there is one significant difference between what you're about to read and the frostbitten population explosions-foraging for zinc scenarios above. I'll come to that difference in a moment because it's critical to understanding the central equation in human development: the intersection of demography and will. Demography is mainly a matter of number-crunching, dry statistics. The second

phenomenon—will—is a little less concrete, but just as important.

When Osama bin Laden made his observation about people being attracted to the strong horse rather than the weak horse, it was partly a perception issue. You can be, technically, the strong horse—plenty of tanks and bombs and nukes and whatnot—but, if you're seen as too feeble ever to deplete them, you'll be kitted out for the weak-horse suit. He wasn't thinking of Europe, whose reabsorption within the caliphate Islamists see as all but complete. Rather, he was considering the hyperpower. In late September 2001 Maulana Inyadullah was holed up in Peshawar awaiting the call to arms against the Great Satan and offered this pithy soundbite to David Blair of Britain's *Daily Telegraph*: "The Americans love Pepsi-Cola, we love death."

Compare Mr. Inyadullah with the acclaimed London novelist Margaret Drabble, also speaking to the *Daily Telegraph*, just after the Iraq war. She feels the same way, at least about carbonate beverages: "I detest Coca-Cola, I detest burgers, I detest sentimental and violent Hollywood movies that tell lies about history. I detest American imperialism, American infantilism, and American triumphalism about victories it didn't even win."

Look at Ms. Drabble's list of grievances. If you lived in Poland in the 1930s, you weren't worried about the Soviets' taste in soft drinks or sentimental Third Reich movies. America is the most benign hegemon in history: it's the world's first non-imperial superpower and, at the dawn of the American moment, it chose to set itself up as a kind of geopolitical sugar daddy. By picking up the tab for Europe's defense, it hoped to prevent those countries lapsing into traditional power rivalries. Nice idea. But it also absolved them of the traditional responsibilities of nationhood, turning the alliance into a dysfunctional sitcom family, with one grown-up presiding over a brood of whiny teenagers—albeit (demographically) the world's wrinkliest teenagers. America's preference for diluting its power within the UN and other organs of an embryo world government has not won it friends. All dominant powers are hated—Britain was, and Rome—but they're usually hated for the right reasons. America is hated for every reason. The fanatical Muslims despise America because it's all lap-dancing and gay porn; the secular Europeans despise America because it's all born-again Christians hung up on abortion; the anti-Semites despise America because it's controlled by Jews. Too Jewish, too Christian, too godless, America is George Orwell's Room 101: whatever your bugbear you will find it therein. Whatever you're against, America is the prime example of it.

That's one reason why its disparagers have embraced environmentalism. If Washington were a conventional great power, the intellectual class would be arguing that the United States is a threat to France or India or Gabon or some such. But because it's so obviously not that kind of power the world has had to concoct a thesis that the hyperpower is a threat not merely to this or that rinky-dink nation-state but to the entire planet, if not the entire galaxy. "We are," warns Al Gore portentously, "altering the balance of energy between our planet and the rest of the universe."

Think globally, act lunarly. The "balance of energy" between Earth and "the rest of the universe" You wouldn't happen to have the statistical evidence for that, would you? Universal "balance of energy" graphs for 1940 and 1873? Heigh-ho. America is a threat not because of conventional great power designs, but because—even scarier—of its "consumption," its way of life. Those Drabble-detested Cokes and burgers are straining the Earth in ways that straightforward genocidal conquerors like Hitler and Stalin could only have dreamed of. The construct of this fantasy is very revealing about how unthreatening America is.

But others cast the hyperpower's geniality in a different light. Visitors to America often remark on that popular T-shirt slogan usually found below a bold Stars and Stripes: "These Colors Don't Run." To non-Americans, it can seem a trifle touchy. But for a quarter century the presumption of the country's enemies was that those colors did run—they ran from Vietnam, they ran from the downed choppers in the Iranian desert, they ran from Somalia. Even the successful campaigns—the inconclusively concluded 1991 Gulf War and the air-only 1999 Kosovo war—seemed manifestly designed to avoid putting those colors in the position of having to run. As Osama saw it, those colors ran from the African embassy bombings and the Khobar towers, just as Zaqawi figured those colors would run from the Sunni Triangle. Being seen not to run—or, if you prefer, being seen to show "resolve"—should be the indispensable objective of U.S. foreign policy. Were these colors to run from Iraq, it would be the end of the American era—for why would Russia, China, or even Belgium ever again take seriously a superpower that runs screaming for home at the first pinprick?

Don't take Osama's, or Saddam's, or Mullah Omar's, or the Chinese politburo's word for it. Consider those nations who (a) regard themselves as broadly well-disposed toward America and (b) share the view that Islamism represents a critical global security threat, yet (c) have concluded that the United States lacks the will to get the job done. You hear such worries routinely expressed by the political class in India, Singapore, and other emerging nations. The British historian Niall Ferguson talks about "the clay feet of the colossus." Admiral Yamamoto's "sleeping giant" has become harder to rouse—the La-Z-Boy recliner's a lot more comfortable and pampering than the old rocker on the porch. In Vietnam, it took 50,000 deaths to drive the giant away; maybe in the Middle East, it would only take 5,000. And maybe in the next war the giant will give up after 500, or 50, or not bother at all. Our enemies have made a bet—that the West in general and the United States in particular are soft and decadent and have no attention span. America has the advantage of the most powerful army on the face of the planet, but she doesn't have the stomach for war, so it's no advantage at all. After all, if you were a typical viewer of CNN International (which makes CNN's domestic service look like a 24/7 Michael Savage channel), what would have made the biggest impression on you since September 11? That America has the best, biggest, and most technologically advanced military on the planet? Or that the minute you send it anywhere hysterical congressmen are shrieking that we need an "exit strategy"? The corpulent snorer in the La-Z-Boy recliner may have a beautifully waxed Ferrari in the garage, but he hates having to take it out on the potholed roads. Still, it looks mighty nice parked in the driveway when he washes it.



ALTERNATIVE REALITIES

If Europe's dwindling manpower and will are a one-way ticket on the oblivion express, number plus will is the most potent combination of all: serious people power. What does it mean when the fastest-growing population on the planet is a group that, to put it at its mildest, has a somewhat fractious relationship with the characteristics of a free society?

Can the developed world get more Muslim in its demographic character without becoming mo

Muslim in its political character? And what consequences does that have for art and culture, science and medicine, innovation and energy. . . and basic liberties?

Perhaps the differences will be minimal. In France, the Catholic churches will become mosques; in England, the village pubs will cease serving alcohol; in the Netherlands, the gay nightclubs will close up shop and relocate to San Francisco. But otherwise life will go on much as before. The new Europeans will be observant Muslims instead of post-Christian secularists, but they will still be recognizably European. It will be like *Cats* after a cast change: same long-running show, new actors. Or maybe the all-black Broadway production of *Hello, Dolly!* is a better comparison: Pearl Bailey instead of Carol Channing, but the plot, the music, the sets are all the same. The animating principles of advanced societies are so strong that they will thrive, whoever's at the switch.

But what if it doesn't work out like that? In the 2005 rankings of Freedom House's survey of personal liberty and democracy around the world, five of the eight countries with the lowest "freedom" score were Muslim. Of the forty-six Muslim majority nations in the world, only three were free. Of the sixteen nations in which Muslims form between 20 and 50 percent of the population, only another three were ranked as free: Benin, Serbia and Montenegro, and Suriname. It will be interesting to follow France's fortunes as a fourth member of that group.

We can argue about what consequences these demographic trends will have, but to say blithely that we have none is ridiculous. In his book *The Empty Cradle*, Philip Longman writes:

So where will the children of the future come from? Increasingly they will come from people who are at odds with the modern world. Such a trend, if sustained, could drive human culture off its current market-driven, individualistic, modernist course, gradually creating an anti-market culture dominated by fundamentalism—a new Dark Ages.

Mr. Longman's point is well taken. The refined antennae of Western liberals mean that whenever one raises the question of whether there will be any Italians living in the geographical zone marked Italy a generation or three hence, they cry, "Racism!" To agitate about what proportion of the population is "white" is grotesque and inappropriate. But it's not about race; it's about culture. If 10 percent of your population believes in liberal pluralist democracy, it doesn't matter whether 70 percent of them are "white" or only 5 percent are. But if one part of your population believes in liberal pluralist democracy and the other doesn't, then it becomes a matter of great importance whether the part that does is 90 percent of the population or only 60 percent, or 50, or 45 percent. Which is why that question lies at the heart of almost any big international news story of recent years—the French riots, the attacks on Danish embassies and consulates over the publication of cartoons of Mohammed, the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, Turkey's membership in the European Union, Pakistani riots over *Newsweek's* Koran-down-the-toilet story. Whenever I make that point, leftists always respond, "Oh, well, that's typical right-wing racism." In fact, it ought to be the Left's issue. I'm a "social conservative." When the mullahs take over, I'll grow my beard a little fuller, get a couple extra wives, and keep my head down. It's the feminists and gays who'll have a tougher time. I say, three of the five judges on the Massachusetts Supreme Court are Muslim, what are the chances of them approving "gay marriage"? That's the scenario Europe's looking at a few years down the road.

The basic demography explains, for example, the critical difference between the "war on terror" for Americans and Europeans: in the U.S., the war is something to be fought in the treacherous sands of the Sunni Triangle and the caves of the Hindu Kush; you go to faraway places and kill foreigners. B

in Europe it's a civil war. Neville Chamberlain dismissed Czechoslovakia as "a faraway country of which we know little." This time around, for much of Western Europe it turned out the faraway country of which they knew little was their own.

As for America, Shelby Steele sees the tentativeness of our performance in Iraq as a geopolitical version of "white guilt," a "secular penitence" for the sins of the past. Even while waging war, our culture has internalized the morbid syndromes of the age: who are we to liberate the Iraqis? We represent imperialism and all the other evils.

On that point, I wish we did represent imperialism, at least to this extent: there's a lot to be said for a great nation that understands its greatness is not an accident and that therefore it should spread the secrets of its success around; conversely, there's not much to be said for a great nation that chooses to hobble itself by pretending it's merely one vote among co-equals on international bodies manned by Cuba and Sudan—the transnational version of "affirmative action," to extend Shelby Steele's thought.

As clashes of civilizations go, this one's between two extremes: on the one hand, a world that has everything it needs to wage decisive war—wealth, armies, industry, technology; on the other, a world that has nothing but pure ideology and plenty of believers. Everything else it requires it can pick up at Radio Shack: cell phones and laptops, which, along with ATM cards and some dime-store box-cutter were all it took to pull off September 11.

For this to be an existential struggle, as the Cold War was, the question is: are they a credible enemy to us?

For a projection of the likely outcome, the question is: are we a credible enemy to them?

You may recall a pertinent detail during the bogus controversy over the "torture" of prisoners at Guantánamo Bay: U.S. guards at Gitmo are under instructions to handle copies of the Koran only when wearing gloves. The reason for this is that the detainees regard infidels as "unclean." But it's one thing for the Islamists to think infidels are unclean, quite another for the infidels to agree with them—and, by doing so, to validate their bigotry. Far from being tortured, the prisoners are being handled literally with kid gloves (or simulated kid-effect gloves). The U.S. military hands each jihadist his complimentary copy of the Koran as delicately as white-gloved butlers bringing Her Majesty Lordship the *Times* of London. It's not just unbecoming to buy in to Muslim psychoses; in the end, it's self-defeating. And our self-defeat is their surest shot at victory. Four years into the "war on terror" the Bush administration began promoting a new formulation: "the long war." Not a good sign. In a short war, put your money on tanks and bombs—our strengths. In a long war, the better bet is will all our manpower—their strengths. Even a loser can win when he's up against a defeatist. A big chunk of Western Civilization, consciously or otherwise, has given the impression that it's dying to surrender to somebody, anybody. Reasonably enough, the jihadists figure: hey, why not us?

The longer the long war gets, the harder it will be, because it's a race against time, against lengthening demographic, economic, and geopolitical odds. By "demographic," I mean the Muslim world's high birth rate, which by mid-century will give tiny Yemen a higher population than vast empty Russia. By "economic," I mean the perfect storm the Europeans will face within this decade because their lavish welfare states are unsustainable with their post-Christian birth rates. By "geopolitical," I mean that if you think the United Nations and other international organizations are antipathetic to America now, wait a few years and see what kind of support you get from a semi-Islamified Europe.

I said above that there is one difference between me and the other doom-mongers. For Al Gore and Paul Ehrlich and Co., whatever the problem, the solution is always the same. Whether it's global cooling, global warming, or overpopulation, we need bigger government, more regulation, higher taxes, and a massive transfer of power from the citizen to some unelected self-perpetuating crisis lobby. Not only does this not solve the problem, it is, in fact, a symptom of the real problem: the torpor of the West derives in part from the annexation by government of most of the core functions of adulthood. Even in America, too many Democrats take it as read that the natural destination of an advanced Western democracy is Scandinavia. If it is, we're all doomed. Every successful society is a balancing act between the private and the public, but in Europe and Canada the balance is way out of whack. When the foreign policy panjandrums talk about our enemies, they distinguish between "rogue states" like Iran and North Korea and "non-state actors" like al Qaeda and Hezbollah. But those distinctions apply on the home front too. Big governments are "rogue states," out of control and lacking the wit and agility to see off the threats to our freedom. Citizens willing to be "non-state actors" are just as important and, as we saw on Flight 93, a decisive part of our defense, nimbler and more efficient than the federal behemoth. The free world's citizenry could use more non-state actors.

So this is a doomsday book with a twist: an apocalyptic scenario that can best be avoided not by more government but by less—by government returning to the citizenry the primal responsibilities that it's taken from them in the modern era.

The alternative is stark: Europe has all but succumbed to the dull opiate of multiculturalism. In its drowsy numbness, it stirs but has no idea what to do and so does nothing. One day, years from now, as archaeologists sift through the ruins of an ancient civilization for clues to its downfall, they'll marvel at how easy it all was. You don't need to fly jets into skyscrapers and kill thousands of people. As a matter of fact, that's a bad strategy, because even the wimpiest state will feel obliged to respond. But if you frame the issue in terms of multicultural "sensitivity," the wimp state will bend over backward to give you everything you want—including, eventually, the keys to those skyscrapers. Thus, during the Danish "cartoon jihad" of 2006, Jack Straw, then British foreign secretary, hailed the "sensitivity" of Fleet Street in not reprinting the offending representations of the Prophet.

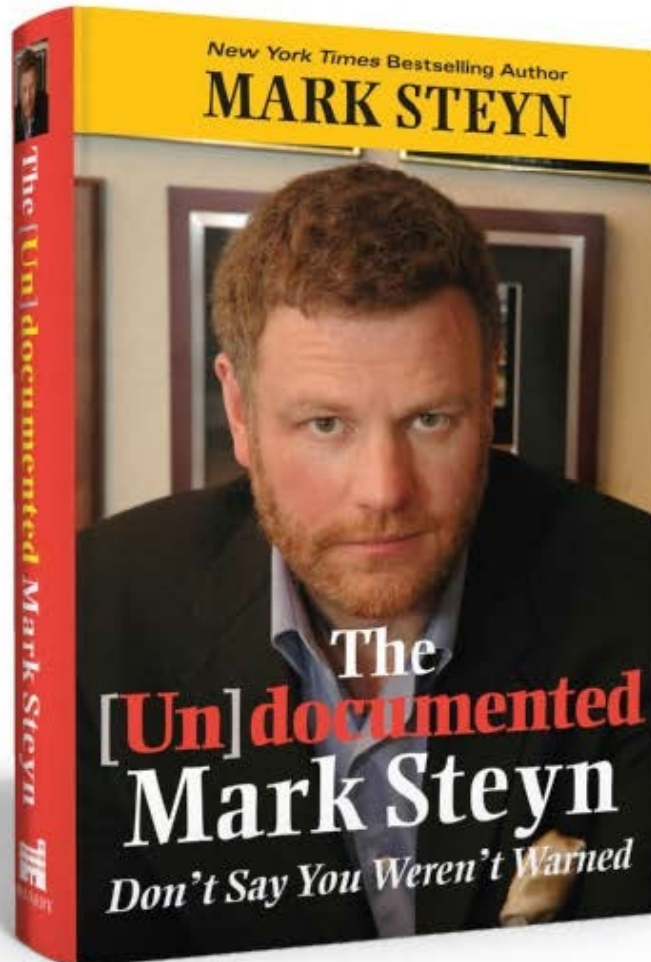
No doubt he was similarly impressed by the "sensitivity" of Burger King, which withdrew its cream cones from its British menus because Mr. Rashad Akhtar of High Wycombe complained that the creamy swirl shown on the lid looked like the word "Allah" in Arabic script. I don't know which sura in the Koran says, "Don't forget, folks, it's not just physical representations of God or the Prophet but also chocolate ice cream squiggly representations of the name," but ixnay on both just to be "sensitive."

And doubtless the British foreign secretary also appreciated the "sensitivity" of the owner of *France-Soir*, who fired his editor for republishing the Danish cartoons. And maybe he even admired the "sensitivity" of the increasing numbers of Dutch people who dislike the pervasive fear and tension in certain parts of the Netherlands and so have emigrated to Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

One day the British foreign secretary will wake up and discover that, in practice, there's very little difference between living under Exquisitely Refined Multicultural Sensitivity and sharia. As a famously sensitive non-cartooning Dane once put it: "To be or not to be: that is the question."

And, in the end, the answer to that question is the only one that matters.

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Part I

The Gelded Age

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