



Vive le Califat **Does European Islam mean Islamic Europe?**

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It's human nature to recoil from the saddest or most distressing sights. If there's another side of us that is fascinated by disaster, there are lots of disaster stories competing for attention. Cable news and the Internet make it all too easy to switch over or click on to the latest breaking tale of woe. To keep us focused on the most alarming underlying trends, we need a really entertaining writer.

So here's Mark Steyn, with all his trademarked verbal slapstick and clowning. And his new book is intensely sobering. Most of it has been said before--and by no one more insistently than Steyn himself in his regular columns in America, Canada, and Britain. But with the space now to keep spinning out the impli-

cations, Steyn offers a warning that is riveting.

The challenge starts with demographic trends. European birthrates have fallen way below replacement levels. In today's Italy, for example, there are barely half as many children under the age of five as there were in 1970. As the proportion of old people increases and the proportion of young workers declines, European welfare states face financial strains that make our own problems with Social Security look mild and manageable.

Immigration, once seen as an answer to this problem, now poses an even more intense challenge in much of Europe. Immigrants from Muslim countries have maintained

high birthrates and concentrated in major cities, so large parts of major cities are now preserves of immigrant cultures. Complacent talk of multiculturalism has allowed European governments to ignore the challenge of winning the loyalties and attachments of immigrants. For children of immigrants, who have no strong attachments either to their old or new countries, extremist ideology often fills the void.

In practice, Steyn warns, Europe is trending toward societies that are not so much multicultural as bicultural--split between a growing minority that embraces Muslim discipline and identity, and a bewildered, anxious, aging population that does not. Bicultural societies are rarely stable.

Europeans scoff at the idea that Iraq could become a pluralist democracy, but then imagine that European social democracy can ensure happy harmony with people fired by some of the same zeal as Iraqi "insurgents."

You think Kurds and Arabs, Sunni and Shia are incompatible? What do you call a jurisdiction split between post-Christian secular gay potheads and anti-whoring anti-sodomite anti-everything-you-dig Islamists? If Kurdistan's an awkward fit in Iraq, how well does Pornostan fit in the Islamic Republic of Holland?

Sure, Western decadence has an appeal, even for children of Algerian immigrants in the *banlieux* of Paris. But restless young people may well combine the worst aspects of West-

ern decadence with the worst impulses of Islamist extremism: "Whether in turbans or gangsta threads, just as Communism was in its day, so Islam is today's identity of choice for the world's disaffected."

A reform of Islam? "What if the reform has already taken place and jihadism is it?" Steyn puts the challenge very sharply: "Those who call for a Muslim reformation in the spirit of the Christian Reformation ignore the obvious flaw in the analogy--that Muslims have the advantage of knowing (unlike Luther and Calvin) where reform in Europe ultimately led: the banishment of God to the margins of society."

In some places, gradual but relentless accommodation to the new culture will steer societies along a path where "there's very little difference between living under Exquisitely Refined Multicultural Sensitivity and sharia." Elsewhere, there may be resistance, triggering street violence or political upheaval. Amidst worsening economic trends and increasing instability, more and more educated young people will seek their futures in more promising countries--hastening the dissolution of the old society. So Steyn foresees "societal collapse, fascist revivalism, and then the long Eurabian night, not over the entire Continent but over significant parts of it. And those countries that manage to escape the darkness will do so only after violent convulsions of their own."

Even if that nightmarish vision is too extreme, the strategic point re-

mains: No matter what rhetoric our State Department adopts, European nations are not going to be confident, capable partners for American international aims. Would France help us thwart the nuclear plans of the mullahs in Tehran? The "quai d'Orsay can live with Iran becoming the second Muslim nuclear power. As things stand, France is on course to be the third."

Steyn still expresses hope for the effort in Iraq, and not just as a way of emphasizing the hopelessness of coming conflicts in Europe. In many Muslim countries, people may think about their own future more soberly or reasonably, because they're not viewing things through the perspective of mounting conflict with hedonists across town. Meanwhile, Russia, China, and Japan face their own demographic crises. The utter incapacity of international institutions will discourage smaller countries from thinking about anything more than their own immediate interests. So on Steyn's telling, we are heading to an era of ongoing crisis, an era when the world cannot bring itself even to constrain the spread of weapons of mass destruction, much less focus concentrated condemnation on such "depravities" as suicide bombing.

The United States really will be "alone" in fundamental ways. It is the one nation in the developed world that is not facing demographic decline, the one nation for which the challenge of Islamist extremism remains largely external. What is out there, of course, can come crashing into the heart of

American cities as it did on 9/11. And meanwhile, we continue pouring billions of petrodollars into the coffers of Middle Eastern regimes that still seem content to recycle that immense stream of wealth into extremist religion in Europe and around the world.

Steyn offers little in the way of policy prescriptions. He argues that American self-confidence owes much to our tradition of keeping government in bounds and encouraging the self-reliance of individuals. So he ends up warning that proposals for emulating European welfare states--as in extending government guarantees for health care--will have momentous strategic consequences. Maybe. But I'm not sure invoking the imperatives of national defense in every debate about domestic spending or regulation is really a good way to get people to take defense concerns more seriously.

Steyn's main point remains. The collapse of existing political structures in Europe will require not just a reassessment of strategic calculations--NATO and all that. It will require a very considerable psychological adjustment. A calm and reasonable future is not, after all, guaranteed by the advance of technology, by the expansion of trade, or by the softening of old ideologies in the advanced countries.

The threat is not that a new caliphate will rule the world, but that the world will revert to medieval chaos and wretchedness. The United States certainly can't expect to restore

the world as it was in the 1990s, but it also can't pretend that everything will be fine if we let history take its own path. We may find unexpected allies, including some in those Muslim countries that don't want to be dominated by jihadist visions. But whatever we do, we can't assume

that old allies in Europe will be there for us.

Steyn's conclusion is not a joke: "To see off the new Dark Ages will be tough and demanding. The alternative will be worse."