

Mark Steyn Interview - April 26, 2010  
**This is an unedited transcript of the interview**

Peter: Welcome to Uncommon Knowledge. I'm Peter Robinson. By the way, please be sure to follow us on Twitter at [Twitter.com/UNCKnowledge](https://twitter.com/UNCKnowledge). The best selling author of [America Alone: The End of the World as We Know It](#), Mark Steyn publishes regularly in National Review, the Washington Times, Investor's Business Daily, and in venues in Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom. A one-man Commonwealth Association and he is a frequent guest host for Rush Limbaugh. Mark, [The End of the World as We Know It](#). First question, you mean that as a provocative overreach to get everyone's attention?

Mark Steyn: No, I think, I think we are at the end. Like all Cassandras, you write a book warning about the Apocalypse in hopes that you can ward it off. But I think whether we do ward it off or not, we are at the end of the post World War II global order and a lot of things have to be rethought as a consequence of that.

Peter: Segment one, the numbers. Let's just lay out the demographic argument. I'll quote from [America Alone](#). "This book is about the larger forces at play in the developed 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 United States, Canada, and beyond." The key factors are 1) demographic decline, 2) the unsustainability of advanced Western social democratic states, and 3) civilizational exhaustion. So we will take each of those in turn. Demographic decline. The argument.

Mark Steyn: Well, Europe has simply given up for the most part having children. If you take the Mediterranean countries, for example, we tend to think of them in our stereotypical way as big fecund cultures. Big Italian mamas, big Greek mamas, My Big Fat Greek Wedding, big fat Greek loving family. In fact, they have collapsed birth rates. Germany, Japan, and Italy are already in net population decline. They have upside down family trees. There are four grandparents with two children and one grandchild. That doesn't have to go on for a long time until you're in serious trouble and you reach a point beyond which you can't recover. And that's what a lot of European countries are at now. Now some of them have just gone out of business. If you look at Eastern Europe some of the countries that were until 20 years ago part of the Soviet block, they gave up having children and they're in population decline and there's no successor population. What happened in Western Europe is slightly different. In effect, Western Europe imported a large Muslim population to be the children it couldn't be bothered having themselves.

Peter: And the Muslim birthrate is?

Mark Steyn: Well the Muslim birthrate is said to be, because you know in a politically correct culture, they don't keep a lot of official figures on this, but compared to the average ethnic European birthrate where they have 1.3 children per couple the Muslim, the estimated Muslim population is 3.5. Now the official British statistic from the official British government statistics office says the Muslim population of the United Kingdom is growing ten times faster than the general population. That doesn't have go on long for the numbers to even out. If you say you have...I mean, people think it takes a long time, but if you say have a 90 percent population that is...let's not make it any kind of racial thing let's call them the Munchkins. So 90 percent Munchkins and they have 1.3 children per

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couple and then you have a 10 percent ethnic minority you can call them the Ruritians call them whatever you want, but they have 3.5 children. That 90 percent and that 10 percent will have roughly the same number of grandchildren. So in other words in two generations is all you need and you have caught up.

Peter: Now you write in American Alone: "Today's," and I am quoting you, "Today's high Muslim birthrates will fall and probably fall dramatically as the Catholic birthrates in Italy and Quebec have." Question, what is your underlying theory of what drives birthrates? Why would the Muslim birthrate fall?

Mark Steyn: Well, uh, I think there's two kinds, two kinds of things that drive birthrates. One is it's basic kind of economic improvement. Uh, people move from a primitive agricultural society where you do not need large numbers of children to work the farm into more developed societies where you need fewer numbers of children. What has happened in Europe has gone beyond that. In effect, the social democratic state has said, "You don't need to worry about children or grandchildren or anything like that any more. You're taken care of from cradle to grave." There is a relatively high price in taxation to be paid for that and that is why having a child is expensive in the modern world today. So people have fewer children because it is an economic liability. So if you don't have to have them, why have them? Forty percent of German female university graduates are childless. We talk about the maternal instinct, but evidently it isn't that instinctive, not if you're German.

Peter: So give me, by the way, this business about the Muslim birthrate falling I have the feeling in reading America Alone you almost toss that to the opposition. Because even that need not necessarily be the case.

Mark Steyn: Well, what I...

Peter: As witness, say, in the Church of Latter Day Saints in Utah. Salt Lake City is a completely modern town, but it has the highest birth rate in the United States.

Mark Steyn: Yes.

Peter: It's not necessary.

Mark Steyn: No, no, and that is why the Mormons have spilled the banks of Utah and why Mitt Romney can be running as a Mormon candidate for president from Massachusetts. They have outgrown the state in a basic sense. And I think you can see similar things in Britain. For example, Pakistani immigration went down, Pakistani birthrates went down for the first generation of Pakistani immigrants in the 1970s. Something very odd happened then in the 1980s and '90s that it started creeping back up again. In other words, as soon as there was a big enough Pakistani population in northern England to be able to live in a kind of Pakistani culture, they resumed Pakistani-style fertility rates. So I accept and I concede that point immediately that the more, that certain Muslim birthrates are falling, but which ones are they? They're generally speaking the

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more moderate ones, the Tunisian fertility rate is a western fertility rate. In Turkey, why is Turkey, why is Kemal Ataturk's Turkey turning into just another Islamist society? Because the Kemalist westernized Turks have a western birthrate and that great vast Turkish rural hinterland in the east retained a traditional Muslim birthrate, spilled its banks like the population in Utah and moved into the cities. And that is why whatever happens to Turkey, Kemalist Turkey is dead, gone, over. And if the Pentagon and the State Department do not get that then they should not be in those buildings.

Peter: Segment two: The unsustainable habits of the west. Again, from America Alone "The European welfare state depends on economic growth AND population growth. The former is now barely detectable and the later is already in reverse." Explain why the welfare state in Europe depends on both economic and population growth, first your premise.

Mark Steyn: Well, if you don't have welfare, a declining population is not a big problem. I mean, it's a problem in a kind of cultural sense that you won't have a very hip pop music business if you've got very few young people. But, personally that would suit me just fine. I do not want a lot of young people.

Peter: You and I would be happy with Frank Sinatra.

Mark Steyn: Yeah, yeah, I would be happy to have Doris Day and trade Lady Gaga to where ever she wants to move to. So if you lose your young people you have some cultural consequences.

Peter: Right.

Mark Steyn: But, not necessarily economic ones. I mean, my town in New Hampshire, the population peaked in the 1810 census. And then what happened the sheep farming industry in New Hampshire collapsed, people moved out to the west, people moved to the mill towns in southern New England and my town's population declined all the way to the 1940 census. But it didn't matter because we didn't have a welfare state predicated on the basis that there would be sufficient young people to pay for the retirements of the old people. Now when we say retirement by the way we are talking about a problem that most societies before us never had. If you look at Greece something like the best part of 300 professions in Greece you are allowed to take retirement at fifty. Fifty. So in other words, you work from, you know, from 20-something to the age of 50 and then you spend three decades living at somebody else's expense. Well, who is going to be that somebody else? If you don't have any children you've got to import somebody else and the people that Europe decided to import were Muslims.

Peter: Almost every issue facing the European Union, I am quoting again from America Alone "From immigration rates to crippling pension liabilities has at its heart the same root case a huge lack of babies." Give me a kind of a summary statement if you can on why France as we know it cannot survive under the current birthrate?

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Mark Steyn: Well, it depends on what you think a nation is. If a nation is just a zip code, if a nation is a gate at LAX and it just happens to be an accumulation of the people who are standing around in the gate waiting for whatever until their flight is called. Then yes there will be a France and there will be a Netherlands and there will be an Italy and a Germany. But, if you think that a nation is the accumulated inheritance of its past then there will be no France and there will be no Germany and there will be no Italy. It is just a couple of days ago a prominent politician in Angela Merkel's party in Germany called for the removal of crucifixes from German schools. Germans are post Christian like most of Europe, but it is part of their cultural inheritance that you will still see crucifixes displayed in German schools. This Muslim lady is making the point that this now...

Peter: The official was a Muslim?

Mark Steyn: ...yes this is a Muslim member of Angela Merkel's party in Germany and she is making the reasonable point that these crucifixes no longer speak to what Germany is and more to the point what Germany will be in twenty years so they are going to go. I mean, it doesn't even have to be anything that basic. If you look at British pubs, you look at the English village pub. Is there going to be a need for an English village pub? or I mean, you know English villages well from your university days, Peter. Now if you go to those villages in Oxfordshire, you will have a tiny little main street on which there will be six, seven, eight thriving pubs. Now once that population becomes 20, 30 percent Muslim, how many of those pubs are still going to be in business? So it affects everything. It transforms. You can't have this kind of population transformation without having a broader cultural, socio-economic and political transformation too.

Peter: Okay, so let me tell you what I think of France; 1) Nominally, but still nominally Catholic. 2) Rigid separation between church and state. The laicite [accent over e] policy. 3) A vivid sense of playing, having played a role in European history. Some sense because the French educational system is pretty good at history as best I can make it out. The kids will understand Napoleon and the Revolution and the long line of French kings through Louis IX all the way back to Pepin. So they will place themselves in relation to the long story of European history. Give me what France will look like, how those three aspects of what I think of as French, will be changed in 20 years, say?

Mark Steyn: Well...

Peter: Or is 20 years too little? Am I being, taking...

Mark Steyn: No, no, I do not think so. I think in 20 years time, I think, I mean, just to take you mentioned schools. I mean, if you take for example, Antwerp in Belgium. Forty percent of the children in Antwerp elementary schools select Islamic studies as their religious studies class versus 26 percent for Catholic and roughly the same number for non-confessional studies. So in other words that is the future of Antwerp. So 20 years time all those grade schoolers are going to be in their late 20s and early 30s. So you are not wrong. That is the time frame we are talking about. And in France, most of those Catholic schools, most of those Catholic churches are going to be closed. Maybe some of

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them will be retained as heritage sites, but they are not going to be living Catholic churches. If you think of what was once St. Sophia's Cathedral in Istanbul it is now a museum. So you can go and see, you can go and see what was once there, but it's no longer a growing concern. And that is what those Catholic churches will be like. You talk about the history that is taught in French schools. They are not going to be teaching the Second World War in French schools because it is going to be problematic.

Peter: The Turks were on the wrong side.

Mark Steyn: Well and the, beyond that, the whole question of the Holocaust becomes contentious when you are teaching it to Muslim school children. That is why Dutch schools, for example, decide discretion is the better part of valor and it is easier just to skip the whole Second World War. British schools increasingly find it is easier to skip the Crusades. So when you have this kind of essentially population transformation, it changes not only the present and the future, but it even changes the past. Because the past has to be retrospectively brought into line with a, some kind of new national narrative.

Peter: Segment three: Civilizational exhaustion, again America Alone "A suicide bomber may be a weak weapon, but not against a weak culture." Explain that.

Mark Steyn: Yeah, the, essentially Islam has bet that we have expensive toys. We have got the best kind of aircraft carriers. We have got the best kind of tanks, we have got the smart bombs. But that is a short term advantage, if you want to pick a fight on a battlefield. If you want to pick a fight that is slightly more ambiguous, that does not actually, never actually calls out the force you up against onto the battlefield for a big tank battle. Then what matters is will. What matters is will. And they have bet that the west does not have the will to defend itself. And they see that every day of the week. For example, in the way Comedy Central just a couple of days ago caved in and censored the show South Park. I don't really know much about South Park. I don't watch particularly, I don't have TV reception worth speaking of. But I, but one thing that I do know is that ten years ago South Park was able to do a Muhammad joke and it went on the air and it was broadcast and nobody threatened to kill anybody over it. What has happened since then is that we have taught these people the lesson that if you threaten to kill and you threaten to murder and you threaten to intimidate, you don't actually have to kill or murder anyone. The culture will just cave anyway.

Peter: You identify a couple of sources of this civilizational exhaustion. Let me try to ask you for an explanation of each. Again I am quoting from America Alone "Most main line Protestant churches are to one degree or another post-Christian. They hold," actually I am quoting this sentence just because I love this sentence, deep breath. "They hold that if Jesus were alive today, he would most likely be a gay, Anglican bishop in a committed relationship driving around in an environmentally friendly car with an 'Arms are for Hugging' sticker." The west is exhausted because it has ceased to believe.

Mark Steyn: Well I think it is has ceased to believe in anything. And by that, I mean, it is not necessary for everyone in a Western nation to be a believing and an observant

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Christian. But, you have to understand, I think, that your civilization springs from a relatively narrow foundational source. I find that I like atheists, but I must say that I find the quality of atheism has deteriorated dramatically over the last century. If you go back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century when Nietzsche declared that God is dead, he at least respected God enough to want to pick a fight over his existence or not. That is something slightly more sophisticated than if you were to look at Richard Dawkins or for example, Christopher Hitchens, a smart guy a man I like very much. A man who is on the right side on most things. But, Christopher Hitchens says, "Religion poisons everything." I do not think I do not understand how you can look at most of the great artwork of Western Civilization. I don't understand how you can listen to Mozart or Brahms and say that. You, it is not necessary to be an observant Christian to hear the beauty in a great European Requiem Mass that springs from that Christian tradition. So the idea of trashing our civilization in the interests of I think a multicultural nullity has been a disaster. And I think it has left a great big hole where our identity ought to be.

Peter: Second cause of civilizational exhaustion. You argue and I quote again from America Alone "The populations of wealthy democratic societies expect to have total choice over their satellite TV packages yet think it perfectly normal to allow the state to make all the choices in respect of their health care. The torpor of the west derives in part from the annexation by government of most of the core functions of adulthood." Explain that one.

Mark Steyn: Well I do not think it is very difficult. If you take a picture of the average 13-year-old in California today and then you take a picture of a 13-year-old from, say, my part of New Hampshire circa 1878. Just put those photographs side-by-side, which one would you be willing to leave your house to if you were to go away for a weekend. I do not think it is, I do not think it is a very difficult question to answer there. Now that is fine when you are 13. But what happens when you extend adolescence? The President of the United States has just told us that if you are 26 years old, you can stay on your parent's health insurance, health insurance plan. So he has basically said at 26 you are still a child.

Peter: Childhood extends to 26.

Mark Steyn: On your 27<sup>th</sup> birthday you have got to finally shape up and finally move out of your parent's insurance agency. But until then you are a child. What, the problem with that is that we have essentially created a society of permanent adolescence. Where the important business, healthcare...healthcare, why is it that people can make their own healthcare arrangements 50, 100, 200 years ago, but that now the state has to do it for us. And what does that say about us? What kind of, when you insulate people from, when you insulate your citizens from almost all the basic pressures of life what kind of citizenry do you wind up with? And that is why I do think we are creating essentially a society of permanent adolescence. Where we talk about our iPods, we talk about the music we listen to, we talk about our cable packages, whereas, everything important the decisions are made for us by the government.

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Peter: Segment four: Steyn and his critics. *The Economist* magazine called your book “An alarmist’s screed.” *The Guardian*, one of Britain’s leading newspapers said, “Steyn’s book is indeed alarmist.” *The Macleans* magazine for which you write...

Mark Steyn: My magazine.

Peter: ...*The Macleans*, the Canadian magazine called the book once again alarmist. Why can’t you put your argument more calmly? You have something important to say. Why not say it in a way that appeals to the intellectuals who have their hands on the levers of power?

Mark Steyn: Because I think it is actually happening so fast that if we want to do anything about it we need to do it quickly or the entire Western World is going to be out of business. What I find fascinating really after publishing the book is, is that the progressive mind denies that there is anything to argue about. You know, some people will pick a fight with me and say, “Oh the idea that Europe will be Muslim by the year 2030 is absurd, maybe by 2070 or 2100.” So in that case we are not arguing about the destination, we are only arguing about the length of the journey. But more and more people say, “Well what would be so wrong if the Western World did become Muslim.” And that I think is the self neutering result of the multicultural mindset. Do you remember Mayor Nagin in New Orleans he, when...it turned out a lot of people moved away and didn’t want to move back and he got all worried about that because he said, “New Orleans has always been a chocolate city.” Because who lived there made a difference to what the city was. Why can’t you make that point about Italians in Milan? Why can’t you make that point about Swedes in Malmo, why can’t you make that point about Dutch people in Rotterdam? That is what I find fascinating that the leftist progressives say, “Well what is the big deal if the whole world becomes Muslims what would be wrong with that?”

Peter: Right.

Mark Steyn: And I think what the response to that is, “Well look, well, OK, which currently Muslim city would you want to live in?”

Peter: Exactly.

Mark Steyn: I like the Muslim world, I spend a lot of time in the Muslim world. I love Amman, I love Cairo, I love visiting, but would I want to raise a family in Cairo, would I want to try to do business in Cairo? Would I want to try and exercise my right to free speech even in Jordan, which is a supposedly moderate Muslim state? No. I am very happy to visit them, but I am very happy to come home to free, pluralist, Western societies.

Peter: Let us move on to a critic of yours who plays fair to the extent that he certainly does not want all of Europe to become radical Muslim and understands that something is at stake, Christopher Hitchens. “Steyn makes the same mistake as did the late Italian

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journalist Oriana Fallaci considering European Muslim populations as one. Little binds a Somali to a Turk or an Iranian or an Algerian and considerable friction exists among immigrant Muslim groups, argument one. Argument two: more over many Muslims have come to Europe for the advertised purposes: seeking asylum and to build a better life.” Calm down. Those 40 percent in Antwerp do not get along that well with each other in the first place and some of them are there because it is Antwerp. They get to be less Muslim and more secular.

Mark Steyn: Well I think the way to look at that is uh, with respect to Christopher Hitchens is I think that was true a couple of generations back. I think for example, if you take a Pakistani immigrant to Scotland that just happens to be an example, a real life example I happen to know, 1950. That Pakistani immigrant in Scotland would have a broadly similar education to the guy in Scotland. In other words, he is coming to a land that he is being raised in a sense to live in. He is coming to the imperial metropolis from the fringe. So he is already comes semi-assimilated. Now you take a Pakistani immigrant that comes in the year 2010 he will have been educated in a madrasah. He will know Islam, but not much else. He is far more foreign in that sense to Scotland than he would have been 50 or 60 years ago. Also I think there is a difference uh, and this is where the numbers come into play. It is simply not possible to live in a Muslim world in a city Scotland in 1950. Whereas it is now. What you see in Malmo, Sweden where Jews are fleeing in the most progressive society in Europe. Social democratic Scandinavia, Jews has concluded that there is no future for them in Malmo and they are getting the hell out of there. Why? Because it is a Muslim city. And in a sense there were so many Muslims in Malmo that Sweden has assimilated with Islam rather than the other way around. So I think with respect to Christopher Hitchens he profoundly under estimates, over estimates westernization. And Christopher should know this. There is a fascinating series of pictures that was published on the internet a couple of months ago showing the female graduating class from Cairo University in 1958, 1979, and I think 2004. Nineteen fifty-eight, they are all bareheaded women. They look like, they look like young women more or less not terribly different from young women you would have seen at the time in Western Europe or anywhere else. By 1979, half of them are covered, 2004, they are all covered. It is the arrogance even of the left to assume that the societal pull is always in the direction of westernization. In the Muslim world that is not the case. It has gone backwards and I think you can see evidence that it is going backwards in northern England and other heavily Muslim parts of Europe.

Peter: Segment five: Your title America Alone you sum up European disdain for the United States by quoting the British journalist Brian Reed who writes that American's are, “Self-righteous, gun totting, military loving, sister Mary, abortion hating, gay loathing, foreigner despising, non-passport owning Rednecks.” To which Mark Steyn replies...

Mark Steyn: I think you left out the most colorful bit of that.

Peter: There is a bit that is...

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Mark Steyn: There is a bit that is rather vivid mixture \_\_\_\_\_ (00:27:56) yeah. You think that God gave them the most, the biggest manhood in the world, I am being discreet there, so that they could urinate on the rest of the planet, it is something like that.

Peter: To which Mark Steyn replies, "If one were to formulate it less disapprovingly Brian Reed's anatomy of Americans equals," I am quoting you now, "Culturally confident, self-reliant, patriotic, procreative, religious, democratic, constitutional Rednecks, who believe in national sovereignty rather than ineffectual 'poseur' multilateralism." What makes the United States different?

Mark Steyn: I think the United States IS still different. I think it is clear that there is a big slab of the population here that is attracted to the idea of being like Europe. Europe has only been able to be like Europe for the last 60 years because the United States has served as the guarantor of last resort. In effect, Germany does not need an army because the U.S. Army lives in Germany and so Germany is being free to spend its defense budget on socialized health care and all kinds of other things. In effect, U.S. tax payers pay for the German health care system.

Peter: In 2010, this year, we still have 50,000 troops what 60 some years after the end of the Second World War we still have 50,000 troops in Germany.

Mark Steyn: Right, which is ridiculous and any time anybody talks about withdrawing them as Secretary Rumsfeld does the argument, the argument now that was advanced at the time that the closure of those bases would be devastating for surrounding German supermarkets and restaurants. So that is why the United States taxpayer pays to keep this vast army in Germany is because otherwise those supermarkets and restaurants would go out of business. So if America goes down the European path who is going to be the sugar daddy for America in the way that America served as the sugar daddy for Europe, there is not one. But what heartens me is that American is not yet European. I was very despondent by the results of the as you can imagine by the results of the 2008 election. But was interesting to me is the nature of the rebellion against that. There was the financial crisis, which happened in a lot of countries. And a lot of places from Iceland to Bulgaria, you had massive demonstrations of people pounding on the door of Parliament saying, "Why didn't you the government do more for us?" This is the only country in the Western world where a mass protest movement rose up saying, "Why don't you do less for us? Why don't you get the hell out of our pocket? Why don't you keep out of our lives Big Government and we'd do just fine." It is not clear to me whether it speaks for 50.001 percent of the American people, but it speaks for a significant chunk of them and that differentiates the United States from most of the other western nations.

Peter: You write, Mark, "There are three possible resolutions to the present struggle," again I am quoting from American Alone "One, submit to Islam, but that would mean the end of Western Civilization. Two, destroy Islam, but 'The slaughter would change American beyond recognition.' Three, reform Islam but, 'Ultimately only Muslims can reform Islam. All the free world can do is create conditions that increase the likelihood of Muslim reform.'" What kind of conditions are those?

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1. Mark Steyn: I think historically Islam has only been moderated by the overarching society. I mean, to an extent the British Raj moderated Islam and India and had problems with Wahhabis violence in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. They assassinated a Viceroy and a Chief Justice in imperial India. But generally speaking, you know, the British Raj did have a moderating impact, the Indonesia dictatorship had a moderating impact on radical Islam, the Soviet Union did. The central Asian "stan's" were very agreeable places to be when the Soviet Union busts up. They have this disgusting alcohol they drink there. They are the world's most relaxed Muslims drinking this hooch uh, vapors and company. What happened was that the Iranians and Saudis then spent a ton of money radicalizing those people. So that teaches us a lesson. The lesson here is if you are not playing, if you are not on ideological offense, you are going to get rolled. This idea that somehow our difference to Islam prevents us from, to make the Christian Hitchens point, identifying the various Mom and Pop strains of Islam around the planet that we are in favor of or just letting the House of Saud and the Iranian mullahs annex anything that takes their fancy is a recipe for disaster. Uh, none of those, none of those precedents are attractive to Americans because Americans do not think the Indonesian dictatorship or the Soviet Union or the British Raj are terribly attractive. So they are not in the ideological game.

Peter: So what is the program for the United States? If you could simply, if we set Barack Obama to one side and make you President or let us do it better, for experimental purposes of a mental experiment, let us make you a dictator. What should the United States do?

Mark Steyn: Well for a start I would end ideological subversion of the United States and the western world.

Peter: You tell the Saudis you stop supporting, exporting Wahhabism now.

Mark Steyn: Yeah, yeah because basically the Saudis export ideology, not oil. Oil simply funds the export of ideology. And I would stop that and I would do everything to stop it. I think the tragedy is that the Saudis are reaching the point that they have just about bought up everything they need to buy up in the western world. Secondly, I do think that unless you are, unless you have real serious culture confidence you should not have mass Muslim information. My view on that, I say that with regret because I would like to believe that all societies...

Peter: We can handle it.

Mark Steyn: ...can bring people there and create Americans, create Canadians, uh, create Englishmen, create Dutchmen. But, if you look at England, I mean, Englishmen whose families have been living there since 1066 and are no longer English in any meaningful way. So the idea that you can take some child bride off the boat from Mirpur and turn her into a functioning British subject in any way is I think highly dubious. And

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so I do think at that, I do think that at some point we have to grasp the nettle of mass immigration, which is always a sign of societal weakness. Uhm, what ever one feels about it in theory, a dependence on mass immigration is a sign of structural defect in society.

Peter: Final question, Mark. Let me, this will take a moment or two to set up, but I think it is evocative to make it worthwhile. Two assessments of the future; Malcolm Muggeridge, the great, late British journalist who in his later years used to tell young people when he was lecturing in this country, as indeed he told me, that we would soon find ourselves in the position of St. Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo, North Africa who writes The City of God as news of the sack of Rome reaches him. This flower of classical civilization, St. Augustine, who in his own lifetime watches it all slip away. That is assessment one. Assessment two: The present Pope, Benedict XVI, you write yourself again in America Alone "The future implicit in then Cardinal Ratzinger's name for his papacy Benedict XVI." St. Benedict was born in Umbria 480 [C.E.] just 50 years after the death of Augustine and St. Benedict ensured, and quoting you, "That critical elements of civilization were preserved and that they would emerge as the basis for Europe and western civilization." Pope Benedict the XVI once quoted a Benedictine motto "pruned it grows again." So you have Malcolm Muggeridge, "Sorry chaps, it is the end." And you have got Benedict XVI who seems to be suggesting that after its period of struggle, rebirth.

Mark Steyn: I think it was easier in the original Benedict's day. I am worried that we are delivering, we are essentially delivering western technology, which can peer into every nook and cranny of our lives. Uh, and we are creating transnational institutions that will end up being run by profoundly illiberal sources. If you look at the biggest voting block of the United Nations it is the Organization of the Islamic Conference. It is an interesting name. You, what would the left make if there was a group of nations called the Organization of the Christian Conference?

Peter: Right.

Mark Steyn: They would be hopping mad about it. But they are not about the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Fifty-eight nations who make the running especially in things like the Human Rights Council at the UN. So in other words these international institutions that were set up mainly by the United States in the late 1940s because the U.S. did not want to be an imperial superpower, so created these transnational institutions that have now, that are falling remorselessly in the hands of the enemies of liberal societies. And I think that, I think that gives the second Benedict a tougher job than the first Benedict has. I do not want to subscribe to the Malcolm Muggeridge defeatism. I am a happy warrior but, to turn this thing around is going to be a hellish work and I think at a certain point we are going to find little citadels, little citadels of light on what is otherwise a very dark planet. In other words, I think pruned it grows again, maybe, but the pruning is going to be far more severe than we yet know.

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Peter: Mark Steyn, author of American Alone, thank you very much. I'm Peter Robinson. For Uncommon Knowledge and the Hoover Institution, thanks for joining us.