The Perils of Immigration
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In the wake of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, there has been much discussion in the media and in the academy regarding Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington's provocative book, The Clash of Civilizations (1996), which predicts the demise of conflicts between nation states and the rise, instead, of conflicts over religion and culture. The recent terrorist attacks remind us of why such conflicts cannot be easily discounted. In The Death of The West, Patrick Buchanan, no shy warrior in contemporary cultural conflicts, warns readers why for America and the West it may already be too late to prevail in such a clash of civilizations.

Mr. Buchanan describes several factors contributing to what he terms “the death of the West.” One factor is a declining white Christian population in western Europe, Russia, and America as women refuse to bear children in significant numbers. “Outside of Muslim Albania,” Buchanan tells the reader, “no Euro-

European nation is producing enough babies to replace its population.” The evidence is staggering. Citing United Nations population data, he reports that women in western European nations, such as Great Britain, Italy, Spain, and Germany are having children at rates below replacement levels for the population. Buchanan argues that prosperity, popular culture, abortion, feminism, and the decline of the family wage are all variables. And yet such situations existed before. During the industrial revolution entire families worked to eke out a precarious living. Social pressures, like anti-Catholicism in the United States, worked against cohesiveness, but families remained stable and couples had children. What is at the root of such a crisis in family life today?

The most compelling answer lies in the revolutionary theories advanced by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. In Prison Notebooks, written before his death in Mussolini's jails in 1937, Gramsci argued that Christianity needed to be overthrown before communism could be successful. Communists should work to control the culture; once the culture was changed, a revolution would be a simple prospect. Gramsci's theory was absorbed by the Frankfurt School, a group of German refugees from fascism who disseminated their doctrines in American universities during the 1950s and 1960s. Apostles of revolution like Herbert Marcuse, Theodore Adorno, Paul Goodman, and Erich Fromm provided the basis for the cultural revolution of the 1960s, their ideas absorbed by the New Left and counterculture before trickling down to the society as a whole. As Buchanan argues, such gnostic doctrines have had a pernicious impact on the West, not least of which has been the decline of Christianity and the weakening of the traditional family. A further side effect is alienation and pessimism among young people, indoctrinated in schools by such witless prattle. It is not uncommon for students to be exposed to homo-

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sexuality as a lifestyle choice, sex education, and other doctrines of "liberation" as early as the fourth grade, long before they have a clearer understanding of what is being described to them. In elite colleges and universities it gets worse. Courses leading to the making of pornographic movies, feminist physics and other absurd fare are regular offerings to bored and deracinated students, and their equally bored and deracinated professors.

It is odd, then, that Buchanan leaves behind a fuller discussion of the effects of such doctrines and how the middle class has been victimized by such beliefs. Instead, he discusses the impact of unchecked immigration on the West. The effect of high levels of immigration, combined with native population decline, especially when considered against the desire to maintain comfortable living standards for an aging and longer-living population (and to pay increasingly expensive benefits—social security, health care—to care for them), is another factor contributing to the death of the West. European nations have tolerated high levels of immigration, primarily from the Middle East and Africa, to provide workers to pay the munificent state benefits of childless Europeans. Such a situation has altered the national identity of Western Europe and is weakening western civilization. Minarets have replaced cathedral spires in many cities of western Europe. In the suburbs of Paris, Muslims outnumber Catholics, and they are dedicated to their faith and beliefs, unlike secular Europeans. For the latter, worshiping Christ has taken a back seat to the worship of mammon; the Calvinist Dutch have endorsed euthanasia, even for depressed teenagers, provided that two physicians agree on a young person's "illness." A young person can now commit state-sanctioned suicide if he or she suffers from typical adolescent angst. Roman Catholic nations are little better. Nominally Catholic Italian, Spanish, and French women have given up having large families, comfortable in the knowledge that the state will provide for them in old age. Abortion rates in Catholic nations are as high as anywhere else in western Europe. Such facts are indisputable; however, Buchanan tends to blame the "invaders." Is this fair if no one is interested in defending the culture and nation from invasion?

In America things are not much different. Immigration, both legal and illegal, is altering the face of American society. Mexican immigrants pose the greatest threat for Buchanan. Why? Are they threatening because of racial or religious difference? While that is part of Buchanan's concern, he sees the main threat arising from immigrant eligibility for generous welfare state benefits, such as medical care, food stamps, education, and other benefits. The economic costs of immigration are astronomical. Buchanan also
cites evidence showing the high rate of crimes among immigrant populations and their failure to assimilate to American society. Why should they? Elites in government, education, and social services have all failed in their duty to require assimilation. Jane Addams at the turn of the century helped immigrants in Hull House on the near west side of Chicago, but she also insisted that immigrants divorce themselves from their culture, learn English, and become middle-class citizens of a republic. In the age of identity and grievance politics such efforts at forcing assimilation are depicted as racist.

How can one blame the immigrant for taking advantage of a system that perpetuates the idea that Americans, and whites generally, have committed crimes against all minorities. White Americans not only owe American Indians and Black Americans (people with at least some legitimate claim to victim status), but Laotians, Tartars, East Sumatrans, and any people of color who are deemed worthy of their munificence. Many Americans have been conditioned to feel guilty about being derived from the West and about being Christian by years of re-education in educational institutions committed to diversity and multiculturalism. In this sense, increased immigration is another manifestation of cultural Marxism at work. In perhaps the most free society ever constructed in human history lives the oppressive white American supposedly dedicated to the subjugation of colored people throughout the globe. Yet, amazingly, minorities are flocking to the country in the highest numbers in the nation's history and most (especially the educated), are contributing as productive citizens. How does Buchanan explain such facts?

The key idea Buchanan raises is that American nationalism, dependent as it once was on Christianity, constitutional government, a common language, and culture, is under assault both internally (by Marxists, identity politicians, feminists, Leftists, and others committed to taking over the culture) and externally by waves of immigration. While most Americans favor some control over immigration, not out of native prejudices but rather out of fear of whether such high numbers can be assimilated, the elites in government, universities, and business favor such immigration, just as, according to Buchanan, they favor the continued globalization of the world's economy. There is an economic benefit to cheap labor, whether it involves the poor Guatemalan raising the children of the wealthy or the poor factory laborer in China making Nikes for basketball stars. For conservatives who applaud the global character of early twenty-first century capitalism—the fruits they believe of our Cold War victory—such a circumstance should be seen instead as profoundly, and radically, destabilizing. Yet as long as elites shape the policy, to the detriment of American workers in (once) American factories, and to the towns, cities, and cultures such workers once supported, there will be little change in immigration policy.

Buchanan owes much in his book to the work of James Burnham. Burnham's *Suicide of the West* (1964)—a book similar in content to Buchanan's—explored how modern liberalism had contributed to the West's loss of confidence in itself, allowing its civilization to retract from commitments throughout the world. The rise of Third World radicalism and the retreat of empire were for Burnham symptoms of the "suicide of the West." Conservative author Samuel Francis has written about a middle American radicalism that contributed to Buchanan's populist campaigns for the presidency in 1992 and 1996. Buchanan's hope in *The Death of the West*, as in his earlier works, is to enlist this powerful constituency into action. If America's national identity and the culture that undergirds it are to be saved, then it is up to Americans to take back the
culture. While there are some signs that this has begun (the Supreme Court decision upholding Cleveland's school voucher program is a hopeful sign, as are religious groups' decisions to secede from the culture), there is still a long way to go. As politicians in Washington worry more about the stock market, global capitalism, and the war on terror, rather than the effects on society of a generation of radical cultural policies that have undermined traditional mores, it may be up to middle Americans, increasingly distressed by the effects of such wholesale change on their communities and beliefs, to prevent the death of the west.

Ironically, Buchanan and Francis embrace the Trotskyite ideas of Burnham, especially his argument in *The Managerial Revolution* (1940) concerning the emergence of a managerial society in which government and business managers shape the destiny of the "masses" through bureaucracies and large corporations. The divorce between the people and those who rule them can be blamed on the rise of such a managerial society in America and in the West. Buchanan's conservatism relies on a Trotskyite social theory manifestly critical of the development of such a society. Since World War II the managerial state has focused on issues like diversity, multiculturalism, and gender equality, to the detriment of traditionalists who believe such concerns are beyond the concerns of governmental bureaucracies.

One problem I have with the book is that Buchanan makes much of the "greatest generation"—accepting the argument that there was something unique and special about the American generation raised in the Great Depression who also fought in World War II. He fails to grasp adequately the idea that it was leaders within this generation who helped produce the society he finds so repellent today. The death of the West may be owed to recent cultural decline, but the process was well under way, as conservatives like Richard Weaver and Russell Kirk realized, long before the 1960s. It is strange that Buchanan accepts so readily the idea that there was a marked difference between the World War II generation (Hugh Hefner, for instance, was part of this generation, as were moral misfits like the aforementioned Frankfurt school theorists) and generations to follow. Conservative acceptance of the flaws in human nature would preclude such distinctions.

Are such middle Americans prepared to resist and to roll back the cultural changes that have already occurred? Buchanan remains optimistic, believing that the managerial elite is loyal to no one and therefore does not receive loyalty in return, and arguing that the preconditions for cultural radicalism and liberation are beginning to change. (He cites the AIDS problem as a manifestation of this, arguing that "the sexual revolution has begun to devour its children.") Buchanan believes that a long twilight struggle against the cultural radicals can succeed in retrieving the nation. What took a generation to create will take a generation or more to roll back. There are no quick solutions to the cultural and moral degradation of our times. Buchanan still believes it possible to prevent the death of the West. But time is running out.