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Mark Steyn: America Alone Study Guide

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MARK STEYN: AMERICA ALONE

STUDY GUIDE, 2009

Steven Alan Samson

PROLOGUE: TO BE OR NOT TO BE

Study Questions

1. How did the relative demographic position of the developed world change between 1970 and 2000? Identify three key factors that have weakened the developed world?
2. Why are we “witnessing the end of the late twentieth-century progressive welfare democracy?” [HINT: What kind of glue does it take to bind us together?]. [Question: Have Americans become the “quiche-eating surrender monkeys” they mocked in the lead-up to the Iraq War?]
3. What is the real problem behind the federal “deficit”? What do the enemies we face in the future have in common? Why are September 10 institutions like the UN and EU inadequate? What is the significance of the “intersection of demography and will?” What evidence does Steyn provide when he says that “America is the most **benign hegemon** in history?” Where do you think America has gone wrong?
4. What does Shelby Steele think about the tentativeness of our performance in Iraq? Why does Steyn object to the “long war” rhetoric? How does he characterize the lengthening demographic, economic, and geopolitical odds? Why are Al Gore’s and Paul Ehrlich’s solutions only a symptom? What is the real problem? Why is Steyn’s a “doomsday book with a twist?” What is the alternative to avoiding “an apocalyptic scenario” with less government?

Review

changing demography of the developed world key factors that weaken the developed world
federal deficit America: “benign hegemon” torpor of the West

PART I: THE GELDED AGE: DEMOGRAPHY, DEMOCRACY, DESTINY

CHAPTER ONE: THE COMING OF AGE: BIRTHS VS. DEARTHS

Study Questions

1. What is the single most important fact about the early twenty-first century? BTW, as *The Weekly Standard* put it in November 2009, “decline is a choice.” What does the US Social Security system assume? What does Steyn mean when he says: “The progressive Left can be in favor of Big Government or population control but not both?”
2. **The Math of the Map** What is the significance of Britain being the first country to conquer infant mortality in the nineteenth century? Who will send their surplus youth around the world today? [This is the phenomenon of what Gunnar Heinsohn calls “the youth bulge”]. What are some of

the “non-problems that terrify us beyond all reason.” What is the most important dwindling resource? [Perhaps we really need a “people depletion allowance].

3. **The West Runs Out of Stock** What countries are the global fertility leaders? How many European countries are now at “lowest-low” fertility? What is the feature of much of the “**progressive agenda**”? What is the design flaw of the radically secularist Eutopia? Where did **Paul Ehrlich** go wrong in his 1968 doomsday scenario? What is the future of such trends as outsourcing manufacturing and “fleecing the Third World of its doctors and engineers?” [Indeed, what is the inescapable logic?]. What options will talented people by 2020?
4. **East Meets West** What is the fastest growing religion in the West? What is happening in areas of traditionally moderate Islam? What do Europe and America get rather than a melting pot? What have European feminists help ensure through “a woman’s right to choose?” When did Islam begin to coast? What books are among the few that are translated into Arabic? What is some of the evidence that Western Muslims subscribe to an alternate version of reality? What advantage do most Muslim countries have of turning into free states over most European countries of remaining free states?
5. **The Seventh Age** In terms of Shakespeare’s seven ages of man, who is at an advantage and who is not? What does the European welfare society require?

Review

Bosnian Serbs
conquest of infant mortality
unintended consequences of feminism

Bosnian Muslims
design flaw of the secularist Eutopia
book translations

CHAPTER TWO: GOING . . . GOING . . . GOING: DEMOGRAPHY VS. DELUSION

Study Questions

1. In what ways does Japan offer “the chance to offer the demographic death spiral in its purest form?” What are some signs of its infantilization?
2. **Red Sales in the Sunset?** What was an unintended consequence of showing *The Silent Scream* on Russian TV? Why should the Russian male be placed on the endangered species list? What are some of the factors that make Russia the (new) sick man of Europe? What are some of the assets that might keep Russia as some kind of player? What are some of the consequences of China’s one-child policy? What is the logic of “Russo-Chinese support for every troublemaker on the planet?”
3. **Les Feuilles Mortes (Song: “Autumn Leaves”)** What did Benjamin Franklin observe about the futility of the British war effort in America? Prior to 9/11, what was the chief characteristic of Europe’s home-grown terrorist problems? Does Islam need to become a statistical majority in order to function as one? What has happened to Sint-Niklaas since the author’s childhood visits? [BTW, Sint-Niklaas → Sinterklaas → Santa Claus].
4. **The Rain in Spain** What did March 14, 2004 reveal about the people of Spain? What is Steyn’s practical definition of **appeasement**? [This is reminiscent of the lotos-eaters in *The Odyssey*]. Who will fight for a country that has no future? What is the difference between America’s and Europe’s fight? Who are the most effective Islamist warriors? How does Mullah Krekar sum up the Muslim advantage?

Review

Japan
appeasement

Russia

China's "one child" policy

CHAPTER THREE: MEN ARE FROM VENUS: PRIMARY IMPULSES VS. SECONDARY IMPULSES

Study Questions

1. What are the secondary impulses of society? What are the primary ones? What happens "if you don't 'go forth and multiply'?" What has happened to Abraham Lincoln's "mystic chords of memory" since 1945? What is the paradox of "social democracy?" Why does Steyn maintain that "socially equitable communitarianism" is a prescription for selfishness? What is Steyn's practical definition of **social democracy**?

NOTE: "Polybius's historiographic writings in the period 220-144 BC revealed his early concise formulation for the **theory of demographic transition**. He cited the practice of men's desire not to marry or, if they did, to rear only one or two children. This desire to raise the children in affluence revealed Greece's state of avarice, indolence and pretentiousness which he condemned."

For as men had fallen into such a state of pretentiousness, avarice, and indolence that they did not wish to marry, or if they married to rear the children born to them, or at most as a rule but one or two of them, so as to leave these in affluence and bring them up to waste their substance, the evil rapidly and insensibly grew. For in cases where of one or two children the one was carried off by war and the other by sickness, it is evident that the houses must have been left unoccupied, and as in the case of swarms of bees, so by small degrees cities became resourceless and feeble. About this it was of no use at all to ask the gods to suggest a means of deliverance from such an evil. For any ordinary man will tell you that the most effectual cure had to be men's own action, in either striving after other objects, or if not, in passing laws making it compulsory to rear children. Neither prophets nor magic were here of any service.

-- Polybius, *The Histories*, VI.

Source: <http://www.fertilitycommunity.com/fertility/polybius-on-fertility-control-in-ancient-greece.-.html>

2. What is the reality and what are some of the ironies associated with the redefinition of the relationship between citizen and government? What makes this a moral more than a fiscal issue? How long can a soft culture survive? Why do France's impoverished ghettos display more cultural confidence than the wealthiest enclaves of the capital?
3. **Moral Health** What did *The Economist* conclude about **soft paternalism** in 2006? Why doesn't Europe need an enemy? What do Fascism, Nazism, Communism, and the European Union have in common? What is the curse of the Continent? [Another variant of Minogue's "ideology"].

NOTE: The furor over the non-election by the top offices in the European Union (November 17, 2009) is one illustration; the cooperation between the old EEC, British Labour Party, and Gorbachev (as revealed in Soviet archives spirited out of Russia by Vladimir Bukovsky and Pavel Stroiлов) is another. See MEP Nigel Farage's blistering attack on the EU leadership (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8y2VrhjWj9E>) and MEP Gerard Batten's call for an investigation of the former Labour leader, Lord Kinnock, for treasonable dealings with the Soviets in the 1980s. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVx0E7aV3as>

4. What does the phrase "public interest criteria" mean in practice? But is Euro-statism the real

issue? What is the ultimate line of defense that is weakened by government social programs? How is it that “Euro-Canadian socialized health care is, in essence, subsidized by American taxpayers?”

Review

social democracy soft paternalism performance of the United State
socialized health care as a subsidy

PART II: ARABIAN NIGHTS: BELIEVERS, CONVERTS, SUBJECTS

CHAPTER FOUR: FLYING THE COOP: BIG MO VS. BIG MAC

Study Questions

1. What is the biggest globalization success story of recent years? What is the largest bloc on the UN Human Rights Council? Who is Abdurahman Alamoudi? What gives the jihad its global reach? What is the state religion of Saudi Arabia? How is it that American taxpayers are funding both sides of the war on terror?
2. **Global Take-Out** What is some of the evidence that the threat of Islam has been long known? [Mehmet Ali, the 19C ruler of Egypt, tried to destroy the sect]. How did William Taylor characterize the “Wahabees?” The **phylarch** is the leader of a tribe, such as a tribune or one of the heads over the people appointed by Moses. What has the House of Saud done with the two trillion dollars that flowed into its treasury? What could the Germans and Japanese could have done in the 1930s if they had established a Wahhabi-style educational system inside the United States? [Nobody seems to understand how a Fifth Column gets established]. How far back does the “honored Arab tradition” of the **jilbab** date back?
3. What is the prevailing assumption about **assimilation** and immigrants today? [Victor Davis Hanson’s *Mexifornia* spells it out in much greater detail]. What is happening to the more moderate Sufi Islam from South Asia?

Review

Wahhabism assimilation.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE ANYTHING THEY’LL BELIEVE IN: CHURCH VS. STATE

Study Questions

1. What makes “moderate Muslims” a “non-visible minority?” What does it mean for a Muslim to speak out against Islamists? Ask Nonie Darwish or Ayaan Hirsi Ali or Wafa Sultan. **Syncretism** is a blending of different religious traditions: a form of heterodoxy or heresy. What support does the West give to those who speak out against the Islamists? What factors have contributed to the existence of moderate forms of Islam? According to Fouad Ajami, are radical Islamism compatible with nationalism and citizenship

2. What is atheistic humanism and how does it affect Europe's prospects for survival?

Review

principal discourse of the advanced democratic state root causes of terrorism
radicalized ghetto culture gay marriage and polygamy syncretist forms of Islam
reverts Henri de Lubac

CHAPTER SIX: THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE EUPOCALYPSE: EUTOPIA VS. EURABIA

Study Questions

1. What did Hilaire Belloc recognize as the long-term cost of welfare? *Immobilisme* is a French term that means the same as gridlock does in DC parlance. What does Steyn mean by calling Europe bicultural rather than multicultural? Azedine Berkane, who attempted to assassinate the Parisian mayor, Bertrand Delanoë in 2002, was sent to a psychiatric hospital after doctors no longer considered him a threat, but he escaped in 2007.
2. What is the significance of the Battle of Poitiers? [The Gates of Vienna in 1683 represents the last major Islamic military offensive into Christian Europe]. What happened to **Ayaan Hirsi Ali**, the Dutch parliamentarian who went into hiding following the murder of Theo van Gogh (with whom she had made the film "Submission" about the abuse of Muslim women)? Since this book was published she has returned to the Netherlands as a citizen but lives under protection.

Review

European Union (EU) National Intelligence Council Hilaire Belloc
bicultural societies Charles Martel Battle of Poitiers
Ayaan Hirsi Ali

PART III: THE NEW DARK AGES: AND HOW TO LIGHTEN UP

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE STATE-OF-THE-ART PRIMITIVE: THE KNOWN UNKNOWN VS. THE KNOWINGLY UNKNOWNING

Study Questions

1. Why will there never be a free Tibet? What is "stability" in the Middle East? Who was hurt by the **containment** of Communism in the Soviet empire? Why are stability and containment poor strategies in the Middle East?
2. The term do-nothing kings (*les rois fainéants*) refers to the Merovingian monarchy from Clovis II to Louis V (same name, different spelling). The real power was exercised by the mayors of the palace (majordomos). Pepin IV, the son of Charles Martel and his successor as majordomo, appealed to the Pope, who granted him the throne. Why are China, Russia, Europe, North Korea, and Islam weak powers?

3. What evidence does Steyn provide for what Robert D. Kaplan calls “re-primitivized man?” What is Thomas Friedman’s Golden Arches theory? [It is a variation on Michael Doyle’s observation that liberal democracies do not fight liberal democracies and owes a lot to Francis Fukuyama’s “end of history” thesis]. What are the three strategies Islam deploys against a dying West?
4. Sudan was the site of the Mahdist uprising that began in the early 1880s. A British army, led by “Chinese” Gordon, was massacred after a two year siege of Khartoum in 1885. Although the self-proclaimed Mahdi died soon afterwards, the Mahdists ruled until the British returned under Herbert Kitchener (Winston Churchill was an officer/journalist reporting on as well as participating in “The River War”).
5. **The Look** Where do Arabs and Jews coexist? Along with the assassination of the prime minister of Jordan in 1971, the king of Jordan was assassinated in 1971 and this son, King Hussein, survived multiple assassination attempts.
6. **What Part of “Know” Don’t We Understand?** What are the “known knowns” of Iran? How did it happen that (Iranian-sponsored) Hezbollah attacks took place on Argentinian soil in 1993 and 1994?
7. **Our Word Is Our Bomb** “Men of intemperate mind can never be free; their passions forge their fetters” (Burke). Burke also wrote about “armed doctrines.”

Review

containment
re-primitivized man
Islamic strategies

New Dark Ages
Golden Arches theory
where Arabs and Jews coexist

decapitation
Thomas Friedman

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE UNIPOLE APART: AMERICA VS. EVERYONE ELSE

Study Questions

1. What did Steyn discover when he arrived in Fallujah in 2003? According to British military historian and strategist, **Basil Liddell Hart**, what is the object of war? What are the strengths and weaknesses of America’s way of making war? What’s at issue in the Iraq War for the rest of the world? What does strategic deterrence require?
2. How does the reference to George Washington’s Farewell Address apply to America’s relationship with modern Europe? What form does this mutual slavery take? What unites America’s allies-*fainéants* and enemies is a mutual interest in changing the subject or changing the battlefields. What is the *jizya* (a head tax) and why is it a cause of the lack of economic innovation in the Islamic world? How has this concept been extended worldwide?
3. **The Fainthearted Hyperpower** The great English historian **Thomas Babington Macaulay**, who served on the Supreme Council of India from 1834-1838, wrote a memo in 1835 that recommended: “It is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from

the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.” Contrast the British example with America’s paradox as a non-imperial superpower. What is the chief danger posed by failed states? Why does Steyn believe that America’s problem is definitely not “imperial overstretch?”

3. What are some of America’s huge advantages? What does Goh Chok Tong believe to be the key issue?

Review

Basil Liddell Hart

George Washington

jizya

Thomas Babington Macaulay

CHAPTER NINE: THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EXCEPTIONAL: CITIZENS VS. DEPENDENTS

Study Questions

1. **Cradle to Grave** What does Steyn believe is the most important action in reacquainting individuals with a larger sense of life? What is the chief characteristic of our age?

Review

chief characteristic of our age

CHAPTER TEN: FALLING CAMEL: LAST LEGS

Study Questions

1. How did Charles Napier deal with the Hindu custom of **suttee**: burning the widow on her husband’s funeral pyre? In his *Manual of Political Ethics*, Francis Lieber cited suttee as well as polygamy, both of which he regarded as incompatible with the morality and liberty of free people. Have Americans become the sort of “incautious people” about which Simeon Howard spoke in his election sermon to the local artillery company? What is the rule of thumb known as “**obsta principiis**?” Jonathan Mayhew, pastor of Boston’s West Church, similarly observed in 1766:

Power is of a grasping, encroaching nature, in all beings, except in him, to whom it emphatically belongeth; and who is the only King that, in a religious or moral sense, ‘can do no wrong.’ Power aims at extending itself, and operating according to mere will, wherever it meets with no balance, check, control or opposition of any kind. For which reason it will always be necessary . . . for those who would preserve and perpetuate their liberties, to guard them with a wakeful attention; and in . . . just and prudent ways, to oppose the first encroachments on them. ‘Obsta Principiis.’ After a while it will be too late.”

The entire paragraph that straddles the end of page 196 and the beginning of page 197 is worth careful meditation in view of *Obsta Principiis*. How do great nations die? “Bit by bit, until one day you wake up and you don’t need to sign a formal instrument of surrender because you did it piecemeal over the last ten years.” Remember the opening of Garet Garrett’s “The Revolution Was.” This entire exercise has been a meditation on the political and cultural implications of Revelations 2:5: “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works. . . .”

2. The term **moral inversion** to which Melanie Phillips refers was coined by the philosopher Michael Polanyi to describe men “whose moral passions [are] diverted into the only moral channels which a strictly mechanistic conception of man and society left open to them.” Mark Mitchell describes it as “a combination of skeptical rationalism and moral perfectionism, which is nothing more than the ‘secularized fervor of Christianity.’” Here is a context for understanding the missionary zeal, the evangelistic and crusading spirit, even the intolerance of political correctness. Moral inversion is what Kenneth Minogue has called political moralism. It is a perennial dissatisfaction with the whole order of things: a betrayed sense of entitlement that undergirds Roger Scruton’s culture of repudiation.
3. What is the real assimilation problem today? What is the effect of multiculturalism? What will decide the future in the absence of cultural confidence? What does Steyn mean by a societal **Stockholm Syndrome**? The concept of the Stockholm Syndrome stems from a bank robbery in 1973. It has been defined as “a psychological response sometimes seen in abducted hostages, in which the hostages show signs of loyalty to the hostage-taker, regardless of the danger or risk in which they have been placed.” The same occurred with Patricia Hearst later that decade. Steyn’s point is that the same is happening in Europe and the West generally.
4. What option does Steyn recommend? What is the greatest threat to U.S. power?

Review

Simeon Howard’s advice

obsta principiis

moral inversion