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Comment:
American anti-Europeanism

As a result of the calamitous invasion of Iraq, anti-Americanism will be the main legacy of George W. Bush.

In westem European countries many people count the days, fearing that, before departing from the White House, he will order a further act of even greater folly in the Middle East. In Islamic countries, including Pakistan and Indonesia, resentment of the United States will not be overcome in the foreseeable future.

Visitors to the US who drop into bookstores find tables piled high with books that inveigh against the Bush regime: documented claims that the decision was taken to invade Iraq before the atrocity of 11 September 2001, linking the decision to American oil interests; ruthlessly honest reporting of the civilian death toll during the initial 'shock and awe' bombardment, and of the deliberate degradation of the country's basic infrastructure, as well as savage criticism of the unbelievably stupid decisions taken in the first days of the occupation.

No one can be more ferociously critical of Americans than their fellow Americans.

Among Europeans who admire the freedom with which Americans criticize one another, it should not take long for Bush-created anti-Americanism to subside.

American anti-Europeanism is another matter. Of course most Americans seldom if ever even think about Europe – why should they, they have a vast fabulous continent to themselves, few own a passport, they have little reason to travel abroad. The men who fought in Europe sixty years ago remember, and are remembered. Now, however, what happens in Europe is of little interest – check the columns of even the most internationally minded newspapers.

On the other hand, the same bookstores have piles of books with titles like *While Europe Slept*, *The West's Last Chance*, *Our Oldest Enemy*, and *America Alone* (seldom as heavy weight intellectually as the self-critical books, admittedly). For the minority who read and write and hold forth in the media, on the other hand, Europe has become a regular target of doom-laden judgment (see *The Economist*, 28 April 2007: 58).

There are three repeated claims. First, the birth rate is far below replacement level: Europe is committing 'demographic suicide'. Second, unlike the United States, Europe is an increasingly

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post-Christian society. Some think there is a connection. In his book *The Cube and the Cathedral: Europe, America, and Politics without God*, the eminent Catholic thinker George Weigel links this 'demographic suicide' with the collapse of Christianity. (The 'cube' is the Great Arch of *La Défense* in Paris and the 'cathedral' is Notre Dame: Enlightenment humanism versus Catholic faith). The empty cradles and the Christian vacancy are being filled by immigrant Muslims. Bernard Lewis, born and educated in London, widely regarded as the most eminent Islamic scholar in the US, asserts that by the end of the twenty-first century Europe will have become the western half of the Muslim empire: 'Eurabia'.

These claims have implications, political and military, as *The Economist* notes. Europe has lost confidence in its own identity, its destiny, and its Christian inheritance. Europe will become less and less effective and reliable an ally against Islamic extremism, in the 'war on terror'. European politicians will be too afraid of the Muslim populations in their midst to be trusted to act alongside the US. Indeed, one Tony Blankley, a journalist who once worked for Newt Gingrich, claims that 'the threat of the radical Islamists taking over Europe is every bit as great to the United States as was the threat of the Nazis taking over Europe in the 1940s'.

Of course that is overstating. Americans, anyway, paid little attention to the Nazi threat until the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour and Hitler declared war on the US.

More seriously, Muslims constitute 4% of the population in Europe. Several countries have raised barriers to further immigration. Allowing Turkey into the European Union (as the Bush administration and its allies in Europe want) or rejecting the application (as the Pope and the traditionally Catholic countries would do) might be a turning point. Even now, a significant number of the professional elite among British born Muslims are emigrating, so unwelcome do they already feel in the United Kingdom. Then, several governments, including that of the UK, are enacting family-friendly legislation, not that the birth rate could ever equal late nineteenth-century figures.

Yet such considerations should not exempt us in Europe from taking seriously these anxieties that some Americans have about our future.

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