Review of *Day Of Reckoning: How Hubris, Ideology, and Greed are Tearing America Apart.*
By Patrick J. Buchanan. St. Martin's Press. 294 pp. $25.95

Pat Buchanan is nothing if not consistent. Since he stopped seeking the Republican presidential nomination, the syndicated columnist and TV talking head has become America's Chicken Little, beating his drumstick to warn white Christians that the sky is falling. His recent books—*The Death of the West,* *State of Emergency,* and, now, *Day of Reckoning*—announce that the United States is "coming apart, decomposing." If the nation continues on its current course, he predicts, it won't make it past mid-century.

*Day of Reckoning* repackages Buchanan's three signature themes. Acting as the planet's policeman, he argues, imperious post-Cold War presidents have tried to impose a "world democratic revolution" on nations in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Their imperialistic overstretch is wrecking the republic. Meanwhile, the free trade policies pursued by Republicans and Democrats have destroyed the dollar, American preeminence in manufacturing and technology, and the nation's economic independence. Finally, more than twelve million illegal immigrants pose the greatest threat of all. Thanks to passive and politically correct politicians, they have sliced and diced America into encampments "of suspicious and hostile tribes quarreling viciously over the spoils of politics and power."

A former speech writer in the Nixon White House and Ronald Reagan's director of communications, Buchanan knows how to push a hot button. He has identified the issues that almost certainly will dominate the presidential election of 2008. Unfortunately, he brings more heat than light to them. *Day of Reckoning* is full of sound bytes and simplistic slash and burn bombast. A faux "realist," Buchanan is actually a ferocious ideologue. Despite his denials, he is an isolationist and a xenophobe. The Americans he reveres believe "in the superiority of their
Christian faith and English culture. They reject and resist diversity, equality, and democracy. The United States is their land, "not anybody else's."

Reaching out to the left as well as the right, Buchanan blasts the Bush foreign policy. Preventive war and nation-building in the name of a democratic New World Order, he argues, sacrifice American national interests for ideological ends. His definition of America's interests however, is breathtakingly shortsighted. Since no nation poses a serious military threat to the United States, he insists, spreading democracy and human rights is not "our concern." Since America's presence on foreign soil and "our one-sided support of Israel" are the principal causes of terrorism, the U.S. should withdraw its troops from the region and use naval and air power to keep the oil flowing. Al Qaeda, presumably, will find some other Great Satan. Sunni and Shia, Iranian and Iraqi, Palestinian and Israeli, will work things out—or not—and stay in their own sandbox.

Buchanan wants to repeal "commitments without end" in the rest of the world as well. By allowing countries in Eastern Europe to join NATO, he claims, the United States unnecessarily antagonizes Russia, which is entitled to its own Monroe Doctrine. America should "review every alliance and terminate virtually all of them." U.S. forces should get out of Europe and South Korea. If a war breaks out "the United States will decide, through its constitutional processes, whether to become involved." About America's international role, short of war, he has little to say.

Buchanan also has an instant ready-to-wear remedy for the distressed American economy. He declares that free trade, "a serial killer of manufacturing and the Trojan horse of transnational government," is the problem. And protectionism is the solution. The United States should not "kowtow" to nations which protect their home markets, manipulate their currency,
employ slave labor, and steal our technology. Our problems with China, he suggests, could be solved “in a single meeting with their trade minister:" the threat of a 20% tariff on all imports from China would jolt "Beijing bolt upright." Applied to the European Union, Mexico, and Japan a Border Tax Equity Act, he promises, without acknowledging any adverse economic consequences, would shrink the trade deficit, strengthen the dollar, and start "a mass movement of plants and factories back to the United States."

Buchanan is apoplectic about protecting the borders from people as well as products. Raising the prospect of "race suicide," he indicates that "the American majority is not reproducing itself" while the numbers of Asian, African, and Latin American children are soaring. To keep the United States predominantly Christian and European," Buchanan advocates no amnesty for illegal aliens; a security fence across the border with Mexico; an end to grants of citizenship to children of "illegals;" a "time-out" on legal immigration; cessation of "chain migration," which allows legal immigrants to bring relatives to join them; and a declaration that English is the official language of the United States.

Not normally a friend of Israel, Buchanan endorses its immigration policies. Convinced that religious and ethnic identity, not ideology or democracy, make a nation, he writes, Israelis restrict immigration to Jews and place restrictions on ownership of land by non-Jews. According to Buchanan, "millions of Americans" agree that the melting pot in the United States "is cracked and broken," that Mexican immigrants "bear an ancient grudge against us," and that people from "The Third World" don't want to—or can't—assimilate.

This incendiary rhetoric about "the invasion" of America ignores or distorts some significant facts. The United States was never a "Christian nation." For centuries, moreover, members of racial, religious and ethnic groups deemed "unmelttable" have become proud,
productive, and patriotic Americans. Retaining one's culture, customs, and even language are not necessarily incompatible with assimilation into American society. Most important, perhaps, immigrants continue to contribute mightily to American society.

Unsecured borders and illegal immigration pose significant challenges that remain largely unaddressed in the United States. But America is scarcely about to unravel. As it always has, the nation's future depends on whether its citizens use humility or hubris in defining the word "we."

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