

Is Europe Dying?

by David C. Grabbe

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For several years now, various media sources and analysts have been discussing how the European Union (EU) seems to be languishing—or treading water, at best—while the U.S. continues to surge ahead. This is not to suggest that either of these trends will continue indefinitely; America certainly has much to answer to God for. However, a number of recent events beg the question of how viable the EU really is.

Columnist Mark Steyn, in "The Strange Death of the Liberal West" (*The Telegraph*, March 22, 2005), puts it this way:

Almost every issue facing the EU—from immigration rates to crippling state pension liabilities—has at its heart the same glaringly plain root cause: a huge lack of babies. . . . [H]uman inventiveness depends on humans—and that's the one thing we really are running out of. When it comes to forecasting the future, the birth rate is the nearest thing to hard numbers. If only a million babies are born in 2005, it's hard to have two million adults enter the workforce in 2025 (or 2033, or 2041, or whenever . . .). If that's not a political issue, what is? To cite only the most obviously affected corner of the realm, what's the long-term future of the Scottish National Party if there are no Scottish nationals? . . . The hyper-rationalism of post-Christian Europe turns out to be wholly irrational: what's the point of creating a secular utopia if it's only for one generation?

Steyn also noted three months later, "A political entity hostile to the three principal building blocks of functioning societies—religion, family and wealth creation—was never a likely bet for the long term" ("My Virility Doesn't Matter—the EU's Does," *The Telegraph*, June 28, 2005). It should be noted that, of the three tenets that Steyn identifies, the U.S. is tenaciously holding onto only the last.

According to a report by the New Frontiers Foundation, there is as much truth as wit in Steyn's statements. Fertility rates in America, India, Indonesia, and the Philippines suggest that these populations will grow significantly over the next fifty years. Yet, Europe's population, on its current trajectory, will decline by almost 10%. The working-age population of the Eurozone will have fallen from 203 million to around 160 million. Assuming that the same proportion of the population will be working (62%), this implies a fall in the workforce from 127 million to roughly 100 million. The Eurozone will essentially lose 27 million workers while simultaneously gaining 35-40 million retirees, looking for a government pension that its governments may not be able to pay. This is a large part of the reason the governments of the EU favor very loose immigration policies—to help pay into the public coffers. But in addition to defying logic—Europe already has more people than it can employ—unchecked immigration has brought on its own crisis as the various cultures fail to integrate.

Even as the demographics of the EU paint a gloomy picture, the very bedrock of the Union—the EU Constitution—is crumbling, and may in fact be finished. On May 29, 2005, France held a referendum on whether to accept the EU Constitution. Fifty-seven percent of the citizens voted against the Constitution. A few days later, the Dutch rejected the Constitution by a margin of 62 to 38. Exactly what happens now is uncertain. The EU Constitution may be allowed to die altogether. Alternatively,

the French and Dutch may get to vote again—until they "get it right." Or, their respective legislatures may simply deem the referendum as non-binding and pass the Constitution anyway. Nevertheless, even if the Constitution is somehow rammed through, it is not lost on Europe—or the world—that when the people were given a voice, they soundly rejected the bloc's founding document.

On the economic front, things are not faring much better. The EU recently agreed to weaken the fiscal rules that underpin the euro, allowing France and Germany in particular to take on more debt without penalty. While this may help some countries in the short term, the larger issue is that this move demonstrates to the financial world that the EU is not willing to abide by its own rules when it would benefit the more influential nations in the Union. The result is that the euro is seen as slightly less reliable. In addition, in the first week of April, the European Commission slashed the economic growth forecasts for 2005 from a slow 2% down to a weak 1.6%. This is on top of the low-to-no growth of the past few years.

These factors, taken along with a German unemployment rate unrivalled since the lead-up to World War II, as well as the popular unrest resulting from the myriad immigration issues—particularly the utter failure to integrate Muslim immigrants into a "Christian"/secular culture—make it easy to see why some commentators and analysts are already talking about "post-EU Europe."

None of this is to say that the Beast of Revelation 13 and 17 will *not* arise out of the continent of Europe. However, as with the Axial Period of the sixth century BC, new powers often arise only when the current ones fall. It seems highly probable that, if the Beast is to come out of Europe, he will not come from the institutions of the European Union—but from its dust and ashes.