

The State Of The Union

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For centuries now, non-Catholic Christians have been keeping an eye on Europe, expecting the ancient Roman Empire to revive and fulfill prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. Seemingly on cue, since the end of World War II, Europe's configuration has been continually shifting, growing into an increasingly more unified entity—a "European state"—that could begin to challenge the United States' position as sole-superpower. However, recent events and trends in Europe indicate that something else is happening.

After two devastating world wars, the leaders of European nations cast about for a way to restrain European savagery. In 1949, the Council of Europe was established, and the next year France proposed an economic community. The idea was that, if all the economies of Europe could be joined together, it would be counter to the interests of the individual states to go to war with one another. With the signing of the Treaty of Paris (1951), the Treaty of Rome (1957), and the Maastricht Treaty (1992), a framework was gradually created to bind Europe together via economic interests.

Many of the European elite, dissatisfied with the free-trade zone that the present EU is, are trying to turn it into a full-fledged state. Yet, doing so requires a founding document—a constitution—that defines the state and its government and lays out authority for unified foreign and defense policies, as well as other facets of a fully-functioning regime. In 2005, the first attempt at a European Constitution was put before the citizens, and it was rejected by the Dutch and the French (see "Is Europe Dying?" *Forerunner*, July 2005).

The Brussels bureaucracy, determined to push ahead with its vision, made some changes to the document, renaming it the Lisbon Treaty—for a treaty must be signed only by the governments. Eighteen EU members did so, but Ireland—despite not being required to—allowed her citizens to vote on it in a referendum. The Lisbon Treaty, like the Constitution before it, was rejected.

The message is clear: The people of Europe may put up with the EU bureaucracy, and may enjoy the economic benefits of the tariff-free zone, but they do not want a European regime. They are not willing to subjugate their national identities entirely (or even mostly) to a supranational government that does not have their best interests in mind. Every time the question is put to the people, they vote against a European state.

For the Lisbon Treaty to have been ratified, all 27 member states would have had to agree on it. Yet, now the EU is no closer to statehood than before—and it is becoming increasingly clear that European political union is unlikely to happen. The EU's mixture of members has economies grounded in distinctly different sectors (e.g., agriculture, industry, service), and many spent half of the last century on different sides of the Iron Curtain. National views on politics, trade, and defense vary widely, and trust is not especially high among a number of states who spent a large part of the last century at war.

In short, they can agree on basic, common economic interests, but the union seems to have achieved all it can. Now there are indications that some of the ties that have bound them together are beginning to loosen again as the states begin looking to their own interests.

The smaller EU states do not have enough clout to push through a governing document and oversee the formation of a true regime. It took the substantial heft of Germany to bring the Lisbon Treaty this far. France will hold the presidency beginning in July, but it sees itself as being in a better position if policies are loosened rather than bound together. France will not try to oversee a new constitution /treaty. The next heavyweight country to hold the EU presidency—Britain—will not do so until 2017.

However, what will the EU look like in nine years? Present demographic trends suggest that the next nine years could bring about a sea change in the constituency of Europe.

Across the board, life-expectancy in the EU is increasing. However, the bloc has a total rate of only 1.5 births per woman—far below what is necessary to keep the population level stable (2.1 births per woman). Spain has the lowest at 1.15; the citizens of Italy are close at 1.18. France is at the high end with 1.88. With fewer people dying, and fewer babies being born, the overall population of Europe is aging—quickly.

The biggest challenge Europe faces will be maintaining the working-age population needed to support the retired population. With so few babies being born, the only other source of new workers is immigration. To keep the EU's labor force at its present level, 1.5 million immigrants are needed annually. But to keep pace with providing for the retired populace with longer life-expectancy, 3 million immigrants per year will be needed.

Thus, by 2017—when the EU would be in a position to try to form another government—if it is to keep its current workforce and support its retirees, it will need to "import" between 13.5 and 27 million immigrants. To date, immigrants have mostly been coming from Middle Eastern and North African (read: Muslim) nations. In nine years, then, in order to maintain the status quo, France will have needed to augment its immigrant population by 1.6%-4.7% (France is already 8%-10% Muslim); Germany, by 5.4%-8.9% (currently 3.7% Muslim); and Italy, by 5.6%-10.7% (currently 1.5% Muslim).

As the cartoon riots and nightly car burnings in the Paris suburbs in 2005 plainly showed, cultural integration and assimilation is not Europe's strong suit. A culture war is taking place that, though relatively quiet right now, will only increase in its intensity as more Muslim immigrants are brought in to solve the demographic problem and prop up the EU's bloated pension system. If the EU continues for another nine years, ratifying a super-state constitution may be the least of its concerns.