

get 27 countries to agree on common positions. The consequence is a weak, insipid lowest common denominator policy.

Finally, the European Union suffers from a democratic deficit. The perception throughout Europe is that the European Commission—which is unelected—effectively runs the European Union. It's not as simple as that. The commission recommends policies to the ministerial councils made up of the governments of the member states. But it does issue directives

based on council decisions and they can be controversial. The elected European Parliament has increased its powers over the years but it is still seen as little more than a talk shop.

In the world of European politics, perceptions of democratic deficits count. That's one of the reasons the European Union is failing to impress an increasingly sceptical European public.

The European Union has a future but not a very bright one. Its design has marginalised a region that was once the centre of global power.

DOES EUROPE HAVE A FUTURE?

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I take no pleasure in saying that Europe now seems set on a path of steady—even accelerating—decline. These are gloomy days indeed for Europe's economies, its social welfare albatrosses, its legalistic overburden, its cultural decline, and above all, its demographic death wish—reflecting a wider loss of faith in Europe about its future.

Some observers would add that beneath all this lies the effective abandonment of Christianity, but that would be going too far afield.

Europe's demographic death wish is evident first in the catastrophic fall in net reproduction rates among women of child-bearing age in almost all European countries. Simultaneously, those countries have permitted growth within them of increasingly large—and highly fertile—Muslim communities that are determined not to integrate into their host communities but avail themselves of all the social welfare benefits the latter offer.

In the last 20 years, one new, predominantly Islamic state (Kosovo), and another (Bosnia-Herzegovina) inexorably heading in the same direction, have become established, with the purblind assistance of the Western powers. Other countries may join them in the decades ahead.

The European Union, originally conceived to end forever the blight of Franco-German warfare, is now marked chiefly by a Brussels-based bureaucracy steadily bent upon centralising power at the expense of local democracy.

The Eurozone—a sub-set of the EU membership—has been from its inception an accident waiting to happen. (This is not hindsight: I predicted it in 'Losses of Sovereignty,' *The Adelaide Review* (February 1999)). Its now ongoing demise will continue to cast a pall over the world of international finance, and hence, over the world economy generally.

The Eurozone apart, there can also be no solution to Europe's economic problems while its nations labour under the weight of their social welfare systems—and the taxation and debt levels those systems have inexorably created. Nor can there be any solution to those problems while their labour markets remain even more sclerotic than our own *Fair Work Act*-governed one.

Culturally, Europe has given the world (including Australia) so much. But with the Muslim hordes once again not merely at its gates, but being blindly admitted within them in ever-increasing numbers, how long will it be before the great cathedrals—like Sancta Sophia

after the fall of Constantinople—are transformed into mosques?

Meanwhile, Britain groans under a Coalition government that shows no signs of facing up to the task confronting it; France will shortly elect a new socialist president; while even the Germans show no signs of abandoning Europe's 'social democracy' model.

Can these various forces be halted and reversed? Will some great legal figure arise to sweep away the 'progressive' lawyers determined on placing increasingly nebulous 'rights' ahead of common sense? Is there somewhere in waiting a latter-day Charles Martel, who turned back the Moors at Tours in 732AD?

Regrettably, I don't think so.

'EUROPE'—CERTAINLY! BUT IN WHAT SHAPE OR FORM?

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Europe's defining characteristic is non-centrality. In its political, cultural and economic pluralism—and the diversity of its peoples, languages and customs—it contrasts with the big empires of old. Europe emerged from the collapse of that excessively centralised bureaucratic monster, the Roman Empire. The competition between peoples and nations gave rise to the 'European Miracle.'¹ Yet, there are now Europeans who want to replace this specific quality of Europe by a 'harmonising' bureaucracy and a monetary, environmental, educational, social, taxation, fiscal, transfer, and even liability union. What are the chances for such an ambitious project, being pushed in particular by the (theoretically) universalist German Social Democrats, the Greens, the Left Party, prominent Christian Democrats, and even some Liberals? What has become of the devolution of powers, subsidiarity and competition? Instead, we hear talk of a 'United States of Europe.'

Since its origin in 1958, the European Union has grown into an affiliation of 27 states, but it is not a state, for it lacks the essential characteristic of a state: political power to enforce

'the monopoly of legitimate physical coercion,' as Max Weber famously put it. The European Union has neither a police nor a military force; it lacks powers to tax and take direct recourse on the citizens; and it doesn't have a unitary language or a European public. Above all, there is no European nation. It exists only as a multiplicity of associated nations—and has no genuine democracy. The European Parliament does not conform to democratic standards in the way it is elected and composed, or in its powers.

Besides, 'Europe' goes beyond the borders of the European Union, let alone the monetary union, which is a separate construct. The 'Schengen area' (within which people can move freely) is yet another arrangement that includes, for example, Switzerland, which is not a member of the European Union. Then there is NATO, which reaches beyond Europe with its numerous bilateral associations. 'Europe' cannot be confined to the Brussels bureaucracy.

The decisive elements of a federal state (a degree of homogeneity) in the United States of America or Switzerland are also missing in the European Union. The United States were not settled by any one defined nation, but by