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Europe vs. Democracy, Round 14

Are we heading to another showdown in Italy?

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In Italy's national elections on March 4, almost half of voters supported euroskeptic parties. It may take these parties some time to form a government, and maybe there will be fresh elections later in the year. But one fact is clear—Italian voters have turned against the European Union.

Sooner or later the EU will have to respond. Will it listen to the democratic will of the people? Or will it fight against it?

A new book argues that the EU is bound to reject democracy and become an empire.

A review of the EU's recent history reveals its antidemocratic nature:

- **June 2001:** In a referendum, Irish voters reject the Nice Treaty, which is designed to transfer more power to the EU.
- **October 2002:** The Irish hold a second referendum on the Nice Treaty, this time getting the answer "right."
- **May 2005:** French voters reject a proposed EU constitution in a referendum
- **June 2005:** Dutch voters reject a proposed EU constitution in a referendum
- **December 2007:** European leaders unveil a "new" treaty, the Lisbon Treaty. It is actually the EU constitution with a few cosmetic changes and a new name.
- **February 2008:** France ratifies the EU constitution (thinly disguised as the Lisbon Treaty), this time without a referendum.
- **June 2008:** The Irishhold a referendum on this new EU constitution (Lisbon Treaty). They reject it.
- **July 2008:** After promising the British people a referendum on the EU constitution, the British government approves Lisbon without a referendum because now it's a "treaty" not a "constitution."
- **September 2008:** The Netherlands ratifies the new EU constitution (Lisbon Treaty) without a referendum.
- **October 2009:** In a fourth referendum on the EU constitution and the second on the Lisbon Treaty, the Irish approve.
- **August 2011:** The European Central Bank (ecb) sends secret letters to Spain and Italy, demanding changes to their labor laws. (This is something a central bank has no business doing). Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi refuses. The ecb stops buying Italian debt, and Berlusconi is forced from office in a "backroom coup d-etat".
- **October–November 2011:** Then Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou calls for a referendum on the terms of an economic bailout. The European Union applies heavy pressure, and he cancels it. The resulting backlash forces him to

step down.

- **July 2015:** Greece rejects the terms of the EU's bailout. The EU applies heavy pressure, and days later, the Greek government accepts the conditions.

The EU has a long history of not letting democracy stand in its way.

Another sign of the EU's anti-democratic nature comes in the pay and perks of its employees. The more democratic a body is, the more reasonable its pay and perks tend to be. Taxpayers don't like fat cats helping themselves to their money, and if they can stop the leadership from indulging itself, they will.

Over 10,000 EU staff members make more money than Britain's prime minister, and all EU staff pay special reduced tax rates. Members of the European Parliament receive a general expense allowance (which can be used for anything, no receipts required), a travel allowance residence and even an allowance of €300 per day (us$368) that they show up in Parliament, even if they are only in the building for five minutes. They ride in chauffeur-driven Mercedes cars, eat fine food, and drink fine wine free in the European Parliament, along with many other perks. They also spend ample allowances for office staff, allowances that have been riddled with scandal. Dutch reporter Tom Staal put together a couple of entertaining videos exposing these generous perks, taking a few hits, literally, frommeps who resented the publicity.

This is just scratching the surface. European bureaucrats fiddle with the money in many other ways. For instance, one mep reported that they are reimbursed for their flights to EU headquarters in Brussels not according to the actual cost of their plane tickets but a rate based on the most expensive ticket on that route. And since this is an "expense," it is tax free.

If you live in the EU (as I do) it is frustrating to be paying for all this. But this is a symptom of a much deeper problem. In a properly functioning democracy, voters would not allow this to happen.

In his book *La Nation Contre le Nationalisme*, which has caused a stir in France, political scientist and professor Gil Delannoi warns that the EU is becoming an empire.

Ambrose Evans-Pritchard describes the theme of the book in the*Daily Telegraph:*

His verdict is blistering. The EU is acquiring the form and character of an empire, albeit a soft variant akin to the Heiliges Römisches Reich [Holy Roman Empire].

But there is an implacable difficulty: No empire in history has ever been democratic. And the problem with soft empires is that they remain soft only until they meet resistance. At that point they must persist with a despotic logic—and we saw flashes of that in the eurozone crisis—or recoil and release their grip. …

Just weeks earlier, Belgian historian David Van Reybrouck issued a withering broadside on similar lines, comparing EU's high-handed treatment of member states to the "colonial administrations" of the Belgian, Dutch, British or French overseas empires in the interwar era. These regimes had their showpiece "councils of the people" but real power resided in a remote imperial executive, while repressed anger seethed below.

These are not the first to make these accusations. Publications from the*Financial Times* to *Der Spiegel* have said the EU is an empire.

Take an honest look at the EU today. Its rulers function not as democratic servants, but as wealthy participants of a bloated and somewhat aristocratic bureaucracy.

With a nation state, citizens share a common bond. They accept some level of shared hardship, believing that if part of the nation suffers it's only fair that the rest help them out.

The EU has no such shared identity. Difficulties for one region become a fight over funds. The whole thing is kept together only by the central bureaucracy imposing its wills on the regions.

This also explains the EU gravy train.meps are elected, but the European Parliament has very little actual power. It cannot initiate or repeal laws. No one feels connected to his or her mep in Brussels. They passionately protest perceived abuses of power by their own national governments—witness Britain's expense scandal—but few know or care about Brussels.

The Bible forecast this imperial character of the European Union.

The Bible prophesies of a modern European power. The day after World Warii ended, Herbert W. Armstrong prophesied that this would be next for Europe. He even used the term "European union."

The Bible prophesies that it will be a power made up of 10 nations, or groups of nations. This is where the EU is heading. But it also says that this power will be a continuation of what went before—a resurrection of an earlier empire.

Europe's history is full of attempts to re-create the Roman Empire. Emperor Justinian reconquered Rome and tried to revive the empire in the East. Charlemagne was crowned Emperor of the Romans by the pope. So too was Otto the Great and his successors, and then the rulers of the Hapsburg Empire. Napoleon conquered the Holy Roman Empire but modeled his own empire and even his coronation after Rome and Charlemagne—making Rome his empire's second city. Mussolini portrayed

himself as a new Caesar, ruling a new Roman Empire. When Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia, he proclaimed that he had “resurrected” the Holy Roman Empire. He moved the crown jewels of the Holy Roman Empire to Germany and even modeled his now-infamous führer salute on the Roman one.

It is no coincidence that mep Otto von Habsburg declared that the crown of the Holy Roman Empire is a symbol for all citizens of Europe. The Bible says this coming European empire will be a continuation of these earlier empires. It will be far less democratic than it is even now.

Exactly how the EU’s showdown with Italian voters will go is unclear. But its history, its current traits and Bible prophecy guarantee that it will not cave in to the will of voters.

The EU will shrink down to 10 nations, which implies it has a pretty rocky future. But a transition to democracy, or even a simple breakup, is not on the cards.

Our free book *The Holy Roman Empire in Prophecy* goes though the history I’ve discussed in much greater detail. It also explains what the Bible says about this empire. It is your best guide to what’s coming next in Europe. ▪

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