

Once Again, Britain Dominates Europe

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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Here in America, July 1, 2005, passed without a great deal of stir. It was the beginning of a new quarter and—other than for personal milestones and the fact that it was the last workday before the Independence Day holiday—the date held little significance for most people.

In Europe, however, July 1 was a day for concern for some, if not for real fear. For it was on this date that the United Kingdom—Britain—ascended to the six-month rotating presidency of the European Union (EU). To those of us across the pond, the internal politics of the Continent make little impression, so we lack the sensitivity to perceive just how significant euroskeptic Britain's taking of the EU's reigns is. We might argue—and quite convincingly—that EU presidents never succeed in their proposals for the bureaucratic behemoth that is the EU, so why should British Prime Minister Tony Blair be any different? And we would be right—except that the future of Europe has already been decided in favor of the British model of the EU.

This is where the fear begins for many across the English Channel.

Peter Zeihan, in his "Victory Before Battle: The U.K. Presidency" (Stratfor Geopolitical Intelligence Report, July 5, 2005), makes this case. He argues that, though Blair's stated agenda for the presidency is a non-starter in all respects, Britain's Prime Minister will direct the transition from the primacy of the Franco-German model to that of the British model. The previous EU President, Luxembourg's Jean-Paul Juncker, commented following the disintegration of the June 17 EU summit:

[Europe] is in a deep crisis. During this budgetary debate there were two conceptions of Europe that clashed and will always clash. There are those who, in fact without saying it, want the big market and nothing but the big market, a high-level free-trade zone [the British model], and those that want a politically integrated Europe [the Franco-German model]. I have felt for a long time this debate would blow up one day.

France, in particular, is the country that most fears this development, and her fear is based almost entirely on geopolitical realities. Over the years since the Revolution, Paris has learned that her nation lacks both the population and resources to dominate Europe by itself. However, during the presidency of Charles de Gaulle, the French realized—with both Germany and Italy on the long road to recovery from defeat in World War II—that in a Continent-wide political and economic union, France would be top dog. No one would have the stature to oppose them in setting the agenda and the pace of progress. France would be the *de facto* head of a superpower.

But her old nemesis, Britain, has played the spoiler once again.

The British have always known that the only real threat to Britain is a united Continental power, so the various British governments over the past few centuries have commonly held to the balance-of-power principle. When the EU began to rear its head as a possible successor to Napoleon and the Axis Powers, Britain sought to join it—not to help it along—but to *hinder* its development into a political, military powerhouse, while benefiting from its economic advantages. Suspecting this, de Gaulle vetoed Britain's ascension to the European Economic Community every time it came up while

he lived, but eventually Britain was allowed to join. Ever since, London has successfully blocked French aims in forming a stronger, more political union. Zeihan explains:

The real genius in London's strategy is its support for the steady expansion of majority voting on EU developments, while carefully limiting veto power on issues that would actually allow Europe to function as a unified entity. . . . France not only agreed to such voting structures, but actually was responsible for proposing most of them, in the name of European integration.

Meanwhile, British opposition has ensured that the tools that would allow Europe to function as a multi-state country—such as centralized discretion over foreign affairs and tax policy—remain firmly in the hands of national governments. . . .

The end result is that the EU, as it stands now, poses minimal threat to the United Kingdom from a political and military point of view, but represents a massive threat to the French economic model. Under current EU voting strictures, the United Kingdom—along with the new members, which tend to be more liberal in their economic outlook—can outvote the French four-to-one. France's efforts to build a superpower have instead stitched its own straitjacket.

From this ensues the French fear of being sidelined in the union it founded and forged during more than half a century of tough maneuvering. With the defeat of the European Constitution, the French citizenry, along with the Dutch, have decided they favor the "Anglo-Saxon" economic union over the Franco-German political union. The vote also revealed that the EU is not a popular dream but an elitist vision designed to consolidate power among a select few in the political class.

Once again, the descendants of Joseph's younger son Ephraim have pushed the peoples of Europe to conform to their desires (Deuteronomy 33:17). However, do not count the rest of Europe out just yet. History shows that "pushing" eventually goes both ways.