



## ARE THE FRENCH BECOMING ANGLO-SAXONS?

The very term “Anglo-Saxon economy” was mainly conceived in direct contrast with the French way of business. After all, Anglo-Saxons came from Germany originally, so there is hardly a strong contrast there, and most other European economies do not see themselves in any significant way as competitors with English-speaking countries. Although “Anglo-Saxon economy” is supposed to refer to the large English-speaking countries, including the United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the Republic of Ireland etc., from the French point of view the only one that matters in this sense is the United Kingdom. If the French want to talk about the U.S., they will refer to it as America. When they say “Anglo-Saxon”, they mean England. This is their age-old nemesis, the arch-enemy with whom they have been at war far longer than with any other rival. The two countries have invaded each other, with long-lasting consequence. Both countries are aware of the number of English families buying property and living in France, with books and television programmes testifying to this phenomenon. It is less widely known that there are at least as many (some sources claim even more) Frenchmen living and working in the UK (almost 200,000; this has been seen as a kind of brain drain by President Sarkozy, who urged them to “come home” to help France).

What France has been facing recently is that the Anglo-Saxon way seems to be succeeding better than the traditional French way. The response to this is that the French have started to become more Anglo-Saxon. In the past, they strongly resisted the invasion of English words; now it is a flood of them, especially in business. “Challenge”, “design”, and “management” have become proper loanwords. A one or two hour lunch, preferably at home, is giving way to a quick sandwich at the desk. They have elected an America-friendly non ethnically French president, who seems to epitomise a dynamic Anglo-Saxon approach, including an interest in personal physical fitness. The French press has undergone a radical change from remaining discretely silent about the personal lives of politicians, to a vigorous “presse-people” eager to report every gossip. The French economy, like Britain’s, is turning away from manufacture, and focusing more on service and finance. At what point did France accept its fate of reluctantly becoming Anglo-Saxon? Could it be reflected in the look of disappointment when they lost what looked like a surely successful bid to host the 2012 Olympics in Paris? The look was really more than disappointment, it was shock; because the city they lost the bid to was: London.

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