

<sup>29</sup>The Council published a resolution on November 18 on electronics. See *Agence Europe*, November 22, 1991.

<sup>30</sup>There was thus bound to be little clarity and less peace. When ATR-DHC was just coming onto the agenda in early summer 1991, for example, Brittan brought a very controversial proposal for obliging public sector manufacturing firms to provide extensive financial data to the Commission as a matter of routine in order better to track state aid. The Commission was deeply divided about this and discussed it, in various fora, at great length. Later, at the very moment when ATR-DHC reached its boiling point, there was another quiet struggle going on about the deregulation of public utilities. Cardoso, in charge of energy, had proposed opening up protected national gas and electricity networks to "third party access."

<sup>31</sup>We have written about the ATR-DeHavilland case in "Europe and De Havilland," in *Canadian Forum*, March 1992.

<sup>32</sup>The Commission estimated that the Japanese would quickly take nearly 30 percent of the European market, other things being equal. See "Impact of Japan's EC auto deal," *Financial Times*, September 26, 1991.

<sup>33</sup>The famous MIT study of car production was devastating in its assessment of European efficiency. See James Womack, Daniel Jones, and Daniel Roos, *The Machine That Changed the World* (New York: Macmillan, 1990).

<sup>34</sup>The "agreement" was, in fact, a series of different documents and bargains. The fullest exposition of the deal was published by the French parliament. See *Agence Europe*, no. 5647, January 16, 1992. See also Jean-Pierre Lehmann, "France, Japan, Europe and Industrial Competition," in *International Affairs*, March 1992.

<sup>35</sup>The proposal, phrased in the by-now routine "horizontal framework" language of the *Industrial Policy* paper, proposed extensive harmonization, training, and R&D help to facilitate a transition to "lean production." Despite all the high prose about horizontalism, the Single Market, and competition policy, however, the paper essentially gave the car firms money to retrain workers within the companies themselves. It also inched towards the use of R&D money for product development, as opposed to "precompetitive" research, one of the goals of DG III and DG XIII, but anathema to Brittan and DG IV. In the elegant phraseology of *Agence Europe*, this text was "prepared in close cooperation with bodies representing the motor vehicle industry, given that most of the efforts to be made will be the responsibility of the firms...." *Agence Europe*, no. 5720, April 30, 1992.

<sup>36</sup>For a concise and "official" statement of the general outlook, see Alexis Jacquemin and Jean-François Marchipont, "The New Community Industrial Policy," in *Revue d'Economie Politique* 102,1 (January-February 1992).

## Idealism and Interest in the European Community: The Case of the French Referendum

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In no western country are popular perceptions of the nation's status in the world and objective measures of that status more strikingly at odds than in France.<sup>1</sup> Although French economic and political influence in the international system has been modest and steadily declining since World War II, the rhetoric of leaders from Charles de Gaulle through François Mitterrand has encouraged the French public to think of foreign policy as an area of *voluntarisme*, in which expressions of the general will and the visions of political leaders continue to shape not only the power and prestige of France but the future of Europe and the world. Therein lies much of the unique fascination of postwar French foreign policy for those who study it.

In this regard, the recent Maastricht referendum campaign was typical of the discourse of modern French foreign policy. An impassioned discussion about the implications of the treaty riveted the electorate, but rapidly succumbed to rhetorical hyperinflation. The remarkable last-minute declaration of Jacques Lesourne, director of *Le Monde*, in a front-page editorial, that "a No could be for France and for Europe the greatest catastrophe since Hitler's rise to power" hardly seemed out of place in the overheated environment.<sup>2</sup> The sense of the Maastricht treaty's momentous importance, fueled by this debate, has subsequently spread throughout Europe, only to feed the widespread sense of disappointment at the ambivalence of public support for its provisions in France and Denmark. Today many commentators herald the advent of a new period of pessimism and stagnation in the European Community (EC).

In this essay, I will argue that both the excitement generated by the recent referenda in France and Denmark and the malaise that has followed their inconclusive outcomes result from a fundamental misconception about the EC, namely that its development is powered by, or substantially constrained by, the level of popular consensus in favor of its policies. Only if one accepts this premise is it possible to conclude that the French referendum was, or could have been, a decisive event in the evolution of the EC.

I wish to challenge this view by defending the following counterfactual claim: *regardless of whether the French electorate had rejected the treaty decisively, approved it by a large majority or, as they did, endorsed it by an unconvincingly thin margin, the referendum could neither spur nor impede the medium- and long-term evolution of the EC.* Although I concentrate primarily on the most difficult counterfactual challenge, namely the possibility of outright rejection of the treaty, one implication of the conclusion that public disapproval would not divert the long-term trend is that the current round of Europessimism is equally, perhaps even more, misplaced. Although there may be underlying reasons to doubt the fundamental viability of some common European policies, such as monetary union, the prospects for European integration after the referenda remain better than much current commentary suggests.

Three arguments support the view that neither a negative vote nor the current ambivalent outcome could significantly alter the long-term prospects for European integration. First, the specific substantive and institutional provisions of the Maastricht treaty are not strongly pro-integrationist. Second, nonratification is unlikely to alter significantly the long-term prospects for monetary integration. Third, on the level of symbolic politics, shifts in public opinion are almost never intense, enduring, or decisive enough to create decisive constraints on the foreign policies of West European governments. Let us consider each argument in turn.

#### THE ESSENTIAL CONSERVATISM OF THE MAASTRICHT TREATY

My first major contention is that *very few of the provisions of the Maastricht treaty directly promote further European integration.* The Maastricht treaty is, in fact, a profoundly conservative document. Aside from the agreement to move forward to Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), to which we shall return subsequently, nearly all of its substantive provisions restate the status quo; some expressly limit future developments. Many require unanimous approval in the Council of Ministers, which affords each government a de facto veto. The provisions for foreign and security policy coordination, EC Ambassador to the U.S. Andreas van Agt recently observed, remain crucially dependent on unanimous voting for more precise definition—a provision that formalizes current practice, rather than going beyond it.<sup>3</sup> Majority voting on social policy provisions is limited to worker health and safety, on which there is substantial consensus (outside of

Britain), while the more sensitive matters of industrial relations remain subject to the unanimity rule.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, common asylum policy, with the sole exception of short-term visa policy after 1996, is to be set only by unanimity. The various amendments to Article 130, which authorize the EC to act in the areas of public health, research and development, industrial policy, the environment, consumer protection, and education do not move far beyond current practice under Articles 130 and 235, generally requiring unanimity.

Institutionally, the treaty marked a similarly modest advance over the Single European Act of 1986, if not, indeed, a retreat. Most of the new clauses under Article 130 contain unprecedented language limiting the authority of the European Court of Justice to expand Community competence. Some new areas, such as police cooperation, remain firmly intergovernmental, outside the legal order to the EC. In these areas, the Commission is denied the unique power of proposal. Unprecedented references to the decentralizing concept of “subsidiarity” were added to the treaty, although their precise legal significance remains unclear. The British, moreover, were granted an unheard of opt-out clause in the areas of social and monetary policy. Most promising among institutional innovations was the new codecision procedure for the European Parliament. While significant in the limited domain to which it applies, however, the Parliament’s new power falls far short of what the German, Italian, and Dutch governments advocated.

The essential conservatism of the treaty has been obscured by the politics of ratification by referendum. The recent electoral campaigns in Denmark, Ireland, and France had the perverse effect of forcing politicians and publicists, whether for or against the treaty, to act *as if* it were an important step forward in European integration, thereby disguising the essential modesty of its provisions. But we should not forget that immediately after it was negotiated, the Maastricht treaty was widely viewed as a victory for John Major and the British Tories. At the time many supporters of the EC hoped openly for renegotiation or the swift convocation of another intergovernmental conference. French nonratification could thus have had little *immediate* effect on the nonmonetary policies mentioned in it.

#### THE RHETORIC AND REALITY OF MONETARY INTEGRATION

The analysis has so far neglected a provision which many, quite rightly, consider to be the treaty’s most important innovation, namely the explicit

commitment, backed by a timetable, to move toward a common currency. With regard to this provision, I would like to suggest, as my second major contention, that *the French referendum could not significantly influence the prospects for economic and monetary union within the timetable set forth in the treaty.*

For reasons having to do with the impact of financial interdependence on domestic economic policy, each of the major governments in Europe, with the partial exception of the British, is currently committed in principle to EMU, but is prepared to move ahead in practice if and only if it can be achieved at a tolerable political and economic cost.<sup>5</sup> This cost reflects, above all, the adjustment necessary to reduce and then maintain underlying levels of preexisting inflation (and inflationary expectations) in certain economies. The history of European monetary cooperation since 1969 strongly suggests that a necessary precondition for monetary integration is the existence of convergent domestic macroeconomic policies and performance. It follows that monetary integration succeeds where the policies necessary to adjust it can be sustained domestically and fails where they cannot be. While the existence of a European monetary institution may contribute to policy credibility, its primary source is domestic.<sup>6</sup>

Although monetary integration rests on a foundation of convergent interests, there nonetheless remains considerable disagreement over the specific terms of the monetary agreement, in particular the question of whether low inflation or high inflation countries should bear most of the adjustment cost of convergence. On this issue, the terms agreed to at Maastricht reflect German government preferences. It could not be otherwise. Bargaining outcomes in the EC generally reflect the value of the agreement relative to the best alternative—in the language of negotiation analysis, its opportunity cost. More specifically, governments that gain the most from a policy (relative to alternatives) must give up the most to achieve it—either in the form of linkages to other issues or, more commonly, in the form of specific concessions within the issue in question.<sup>7</sup> The German government, which enjoys the greatest degree of monetary policy autonomy under current arrangements, gains the least from the general move to full monetary union. It therefore enjoyed considerable bargaining power over the precise terms of that union. Whatever the differences between Chancellor Helmut Kohl and the Deutsche Bundesbank on this issue, German negotiators during the run-up to Maastricht did not hesitate to employ their power to impose their own

macroeconomic policy preferences on their neighbors. The German government enshrined its macroeconomic preferences in the strict convergence criteria noted in Article 109(j) and specified in a Protocol to the agreement, as well as the commitment, found in an adjacent Protocol, to create an independent European central bank strictly committed to low inflation. Only the final step of moving to irrevocable monetary union can perhaps be attributed to idealism or geopolitical calculation on the part of the German leadership, a far from insignificant contribution to the successful outcome, but such idealism could be indulged in only once the economic risk had been minimized.<sup>8</sup>

On this ground, it might plausibly be argued that the Maastricht treaty does little more than make explicit basic underlying realities of power and interest that would persist even in its absence. Governments that can meet the convergence criteria and that accept an independent central bank would probably seek monetary coordination anyway, while their neighbors would have little reason to exclude them. Conversely, any government that cannot meet these standards would probably be unable to join without suffering great domestic dislocation and would, therefore, rightly be viewed with suspicion by its partners. A certain amount of ambivalence is thus to be expected. Economic fundamentals, not treaty commitments, matter most, and economic fundamentals offer little reason to believe that more than half of the EC's member-states will be in a position to move to EMU by 1996 or even 1999. The French referendum could have little effect on their underlying structural constraints.

There is much truth in this soberly structural view, but it remains incomplete. Monetary politics is not just a game of fundamentals but also of political perceptions. In particular, it is a game of commitment. A governmental commitment to an exchange-rate target, if perceived as credible, can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. By committing to the Maastricht treaty, it is argued, EC governments are really trying to alter the expectations of private economic and political actors—most notably domestic workers and international speculators—increasing their confidence in the commitment of governments to maintain a strict monetary policy.

Yet the recent history of monetary integration suggests that the contribution of international institutions to policy credibility is limited. Politically induced shifts in market expectations could do little to relieve weaker

participants, such as Italy and Britain, whose current exchange rates vis-à-vis the Deutschmark were judged by the markets to be unsustainable, despite the Italian government's enthusiastic advocacy of the treaty. (While the currency crisis appeared to many as a significant turning point, it was actually in large part inevitable. Indeed, from the perspective of the longer-term interest of the EC, it might be argued that the devaluations came better sooner than later.) Further support for this conclusion comes from econometric analyses, which have found little evidence that membership in the EMS in any way increases the long-term effectiveness of anti-inflationary policies, nor that it mitigates their social cost.<sup>9</sup> The most that one might speculate is that it reduces the political costs by permitting heads of government to invoke the commitment to Europe as a justification for austerity and overvalued exchange rates. But even so, the evidence suggests that compliance with the rules of the EMS remains more consequence than cause of domestic monetary discipline.

For those governments that find themselves in a less manifestly untenable position than Britain or Italy, it might be objected, the game of commitment and perceptions remains decisive on the margin. This may be the contemporary predicament of France. French macroeconomic policy is widely viewed as fundamentally sound, though the country nonetheless faces nagging political difficulties related to the weakness of underlying export performance and the persistence of high unemployment. In this ambiguous situation, it was widely argued that rejection of the treaty in France could have sparked a speculative attack on the franc, thereby irreparably undermining market confidence in French policy and precluding movement to European monetary union according to the timetable set forth in the treaty.

While it is undoubtedly true that rejection of the treaty—or the slim approval that occurred—might create short-term monetary instability for France, as we may be observing today, the prospect of monetary union envisioned in the treaty is *long-term*, spanning five to ten years, or more. There is reason to believe that long-term trends in policy credibility, based on domestic commitments, are relatively immune to short-term speculative fluctuations. This conclusion is supported by recent French experience with speculative attacks on the franc. A similar situation to that which France faces today arose in January 1987, when speculators forced the French government, despite solid macroeconomic fundamentals, into an EMS realignment. While there was some temporary dislocation, this event had an

imperceptible influence on the longer-term trend in French policy. The long-term real interest-rate differential between France and Germany (a standard measure of credibility) continued its steady decline, reaching parity just two years later.<sup>10</sup> Although the evidence is not unambiguous, these considerations suggest, on balance, that there is little reason to link approval of the referendum with the future course of monetary integration.

### THE SYMBOLIC POLITICS OF MAASTRICHT

My first two contentions concern the substantive provisions of the treaty. It might be argued, however, that its intent, and therefore the potential effects of its rejection, are largely symbolic. In this view, the Maastricht treaty was designed primarily to maintain political momentum for further integration. It follows that rejection or ambivalent acceptance might undermine the "political will" for future steps toward a united Europe. It is arguably these considerations of symbolic politics, more than concern about substantive issues, that underlie the current post-Maastricht malaise in Europe.

In regard to the symbolic politics of the treaty, I submit as my third major contention that *there is little reason to believe that public opinion constitutes a direct constraint on French foreign policy in general, and its European policy in particular*. In almost every advanced industrial country, including France, public opinion generally imposes no more than a very loose constraint on foreign policy. Individual citizens experience great difficulty in calculating the effect of specific foreign policy initiatives on their concrete interests—a condition which distinguishes most foreign policy issues from matters like tax policy, inflation, industrial relations, and social welfare policy. Public mobilization in matters of foreign policy tends to be both manipulable and ephemeral. It is worth recalling that Charles de Gaulle reshaped, more than reflected, French public opinion on foreign policy matters, and that the large mobilization of opposition to the Euromissiles in the early 1980s, like its counterpart in the late 1950s, left only a secondary and transient legacy.

EC institutional reform constitutes precisely the sort of foreign policy issue in which uncertainty about the real implications stymies public mobilization. In 1954, for example, the French Assembly rejected the European Defense Community treaty, as enthusiastic representatives sang the *Marseillaise*; yet three years later, the Assembly voted overwhelmingly to found the European Economic Community, a powerful supranational

organization. Since then, European integration has proceeded with popular sentiment providing a relatively passive "permissive consensus," within which it is difficult to discern any close relationship between public opinion and public policy.<sup>11</sup>

The general conclusion that public opinion imposes only a loose and unstable constraint on European integration is confirmed by the specific circumstances of the recent French referendum. The rhetoric of opposition to (as well as support for) the Maastricht treaty had strikingly little to do with its specific provisions; on the contrary, like the decision to call a referendum itself, it reflected in large part the specific domestic political circumstances under which it took place and the precise form in which the issue was presented to the public.<sup>12</sup> In part this reflected an appreciation, largely correct, on the part of the electorate that nothing substantial was at stake. Indeed, it was above all the fact that few politicians could give a coherent account of the treaty's content that led the electorate to inject into the debate many peripheral issues, including personal dissatisfaction with François Mitterrand and the Socialists, obscure worries about sovereignty, opposition to CAP reform, and vague fears of German domination—the latter if the treaty were to be ratified or if it were not, depending on the individual. Yet, despite the complex and vocal opposition to the referendum, subsequent French polls suggest that underlying support for the EC, particularly its fundamental institutions, remains strong. Even French opponents of the treaty like Philippe Séguin and Jean-Pierre Chevènement were careful to reiterate their support for the EC itself.

It might nonetheless be argued, finally, that the major effects of the referendum lie in the domestic political realignments it might spark. Any sign of weakness on the part of the French electorate might embolden opponents of the treaty in those countries, Great Britain and Germany, with the weakest support, respectively, for federal institutions and monetary union. In France, it might embolden Gaullist politicians like Séguin, who have now staked their political careers on the limitation of European integration. A related effect of rejection, or even narrow ratification, would be to reduce Jacques Delors's (admittedly modest) chances of becoming the future president of France, as appears to have occurred.

The potential for domestic political realignment on the Europe issue constitutes, in my view, the most serious potential consequence of the lack of

popular support for the Maastricht treaty. Nonetheless, it is far from self-evident that these symbolic developments constitute a constraint on substantive policy developments that would further European integration. The potential effects of a popular backlash can be divided into three categories, none of which would be likely to have this effect.

First, nonratification would be unlikely to create strong "negative spillover" effects, undermining previous integration, since the single market agenda set forth in 1985-1986 in the Single Act and the White Paper was largely implemented and legally protected, regardless of the outcome of the Maastricht ratification procedures.<sup>13</sup> The issues most likely to be controversial in the next few years—reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and enlargement—were not mentioned in either set of treaty amendments. Moreover, the potential anti-European coalition in France—consisting of the Communists, dissident Socialists, one-half of the Gaullists, and the Front National—is unstable and unelectable.<sup>14</sup> Ironically, French Gaullists have now committed themselves to the strongly pro-EC expedient of defending the CAP. Indeed, much of the "opposition" to the EC in France (and the urban-rural cleavage that has received so much recent attention) may well reflect the willingness of farmers to strive for influence over EC policy by casting strategic votes against the treaty.

Second, shifts in popular opinion would be unlikely to influence elite support for monetary integration. Britain's participation is, as we have seen, already highly questionable on economic and political grounds. In Germany, it remains to be demonstrated that the mobilization of interests resulting from a French rejection or near-miss would, over the long term, favor anti-European over pro-European forces. The course of the French referendum itself, in which the "yes" vote surged in the final weeks, seems to suggest that the resources of pro-European elites could have been brought to bear even more effectively than they have been. Moreover, much of the German position is firmly grounded in national self-interest. Public support for monetary union in Germany is soft, but strong organized opposition among elites has failed to emerge and remains unlikely to do so as long as European arrangements continue to guarantee monetary stability.

Finally, some maintain that the Maastricht debate has had the unprecedented effect of making European integration in general, and monetary integration in particular, into a *domestic* policy issue.<sup>15</sup> But here the same problem

arises. Although western electorates may sometimes cast their votes in response to the short-term macroeconomic effects of monetary policy, few voters comprehend the abstract details of monetary institution-building, as the issue was posed by the Maastricht treaty. Since publics today demand little direct say over domestic monetary arrangements, it would be odd to suppose that they will impose tighter constraints on monetary institution building at the more remote European level. In short, electoral support for the treaty tells one little about real sources of public opposition to further European integration.

#### CONCLUSION: IDEALS AND INTERESTS IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

The three considerations presented above—the conservatism of the treaty's nonmonetary provisions, the lack of a clear link between the treaty commitments and the political or economic credibility of the commitment to EMU, and the instability of public opinion in matters of European integration—suggest that the French referendum could have little effect on the medium- and long-term evolution of the EC. EMU is a difficult and costly goal, and there is a substantial body of economic analysis casting doubt on its underlying justification. There are, therefore, important reasons to believe that it may not occur as foreseen in the treaty.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, what movement toward EMU there is will be determined primarily by long-term trends in domestic economic policies, rather than by the nature of preexisting institutional commitments.

This conclusion has implications beyond the single case of the French referendum. It suggests that in analyzing spectacular EC events, such as ratification of the Maastricht treaty, two dangers must be avoided: temporal myopia and the focus on intangibles. The temptation of temporal myopia leads us to exaggerate the importance of current events over stable, if less spectacular, long-term trends. The temptation to focus on intangibles, to which much newspaper commentary on the referendum succumbed, leads us to invoke amorphous concepts, such as "momentum," "political will," "popular opinion," and "perceptions" over the careful analysis of more stable concrete interests. Those who would advance claims for the importance of intangibles, and particularly the claim that Maastricht marks a fundamental turning point in attitudes toward the EC, should assume the difficult burden of

demonstrating that such attitudes actually influence future concrete policy decisions.

Much recent commentary implicitly views the EC, as did many in the French public debate, as a triumph of farsighted idealism over interest. This analysis implies, conversely, that while many distinctive features of the EC—especially its institutional structure—bear the imprint of idealism, it is above all a community of interest. Both the temptation of myopia and of the focus on intangibles are best opposed by embedding analyses of the EC in deductively coherent, historically tested theories of international interdependence and institutions—theories that apply to global regimes like the GATT or the G-7, as well as to the EC. Such theories may capture little of the charm, the subjective meaning, or the immediate excitement of events like the recent referendum, but they do offer a sobering reminder that the French, like the rest of us, do not make history under conditions of their own choosing.

<sup>1</sup>I wish to thank Anne-Marie Burley, Paul Pierson, and Alec Stone, as well as the participants in a September 1992 roundtable on the French referendum at the Harvard University Center for European Studies, for their comments.

<sup>2</sup>*Le Monde*, September 19, 1992, p. 1. I am grateful to Alec Stone for suggesting this quotation.

<sup>3</sup>Teleconference on the New Europe (December 2, 1992).

<sup>4</sup>Peter Lange, "Maastricht and the Social Protocol: Why Did They Do It?" *Politics and Society* (forthcoming).

<sup>5</sup>This analysis is supported by my *National Preference Formation and Interstate Bargaining in the European Community, 1955-1986* (Harvard University, Department of Political Science, Ph.D. dissertation, January 1992), Chapter Four, which surveys European monetary integration from 1969 to the present.

<sup>6</sup>John T. Wooley, "Capital, and the EMS: Policy Credibility and Political Institutions," in Alberta Sbragia, ed., *Europolitics: Institutions and Policy-making in the "New" European Community* (Washington: Brookings, 1992), pp. 157-190.

<sup>7</sup>See *National Preference Formation*, Chapter One.

<sup>8</sup>Here I am speaking of government preferences as they have been revealed during the past decade. The stability of these preferences is more difficult to assess.

<sup>9</sup>For a recent summary, see Daniel Gros and Niels Thygesen, *European Monetary Integration: From the European Monetary System to European Monetary Union* (London: Longman, 1992), Chapter Four.

<sup>10</sup>Long-term real interest-rate differentials are commonly employed as a measure of the credibility of anti-inflationary policies, since capital markets generally charge a real premium on loans denominated in currencies in which inflationary expectations are high and devaluation likely.

<sup>11</sup>Martin Slater, "Political Elites, Popular Indifference and Community Building," in Loukas Tsoukalis, ed. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 21 (September-December 1982): 69-86 (Special Issue: "The European Community—Past, Present and Future").

<sup>12</sup>Although Alec Stone concludes that Maastricht marked a major turning point in French domestic politics, much of his evidence supports the interpretation presented here as well. See his article, "Ratifying Maastricht: France Debates European Union," in this issue.

<sup>13</sup>For a recent argument reviving linkage analyses of the EC, see Lisa L. Martin, "Institutions and Cooperation: Sanctions During the Falklands Islands Conflict," *International Security* 16 (Spring 1992): 143-178.

<sup>14</sup>I am grateful to Alec Stone for suggestions on this point.

<sup>15</sup>See Stone, "Ratifying Maastricht."

<sup>16</sup>Barry Eichengreen, "One Money for Europe?" *Economic Policy* 5 (April 1990): 118-187.

## Democratic Deficit or Democratic Surplus? A Reply to Andrew Moravcsik's Comments on the French Referendum

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The public debate that surrounded the French referendum on the Maastricht treaty in the summer of 1992 was passionate, virulent, and traumatic. As the possibility of a "no" vote loomed closer, political commentators and politicians campaigning in favor of the "yes" articulated an apocalyptic vision of the consequences of a French rejection of the treaty. What if, by repudiating Maastricht, the French were to end abruptly the ambition of a peaceful, prosperous, and united Europe? This dramatic vision of the potential impact of the French vote on the future of the European Community (EC) seems, a posteriori, largely to have been exaggerated. But is it possible to argue, as Andrew Moravcsik does, that a decisive rejection of the treaty by French voters would have been insignificant for the furtherance of the process of European integration?

Whatever its outcome, Moravcsik claims, the French referendum "*could neither spur nor impede the medium- and long-term evolution of the EC*" (p. 46). He suggests that one can have expected a negative referendum to have decisive consequences on the evolution of the EC only if one believes that progress toward further integration is constrained by public opinion—a premise which, in his view, has no historical foundation. We disagree with his analysis of the possible consequences of a popular French "no." The French referendum was, indeed, a decisive event in the history of the EC and, had it resulted in a rejection of the treaty, could have entailed a temporary but serious halt to the momentum of European integration. The French referendum was, we suggest, a watershed because it triggered the first real public debate in France on European integration, clarified the controversy between the economic and the political nature of the EC, and provided for a moment of collective reflection on issues of identity and belonging. Let us review these questions more closely.