

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University-Institute of European Studies

Tinatin Gabelia

## Framing Effects on Voting Behavior

Case study of France's 2005 Referendum on the Treaty Establishing a

Constitution for Europe

MA in European Studies

Tutor: Sergi Kapanadze

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## ანოტაცია:

2005 წლის 29 მაისს საფრანგეთის მოქალაქეებმა ისტორიული გადაწყვეტილება მიიღეს. მათ რეფერენდუმზე, ყველასათვის მოულოდნელად უარი განაცხადეს საკონსტიტუციო ხელშეკრულების მიღებაზე; მოვლენების მსგავსი განვითარება ექსპერტებსაც კი ვერ წარმოედგინათ. საფრანგეთის როლი ევროკავშირის ისტორიის შექმნაში მართლაც დიდია. ის წარმოადგენს დამფუძნებელ წევრს, და უფრო მეტიც- სწორედ ფრანგებს ეკუთვნოდათ იდეა ევროპული სახელმწიფოების იმგვარი ინსტიტუციონალური კავშირის დაარსებისა, რომელიც შეუძლებელს გახდიდა ომის წამოწყებას ამ კონტინენტზე.

აღსანიშნავია რომ კონსტიტუციის მიღების იდეა 2000 წლიდან ძალზედ აქტუალური გახდა. დაგეგმილი გაფართოება, რომელსაც - ცენტრალური და აღმოსავლეთ ევროპის ქვეყნების ისტორიული დაბრუნება უნდა უზრუნველყო “ძველ ევროპაში” და ამით ისტორიული სამართლიანობა აღედგინა, ევროკავშირის ინსტიტუციონალურ განახლებას საჭიროებდა. სტრუქტურათა და ხელშეკრულებების გამარტივება, სახელმწიფოებსა და ევროკავშირს შორის კომპეტენციების უფრო ზუსტი დელიმიტაცია, ფუნდამენტური უფლებების ქარტიის სტატუსი, წევრი ქვეყნების პარლამენტების როლი, ევროკავშირის ქმედების მექანიზმების და ინსტრუმენტების როლის გაზრდა, გადაწყვეტილების მიღების ეფექტურობის გაზრდა და ევროკავშირის დემოკრატიულობა, რაც გულისხმობდა კავშირის და მოქალაქეების დაახლოებას, ევროკავშირის ახალ მიზანს წარმოადგენდა.

2003 წელს დაარსდა კრება ევროპის მომავლის შესახებ, რომელმაც დაიწყო მუშაობა ტექსტის შედგენაზე და საბოლოო შედეგი პროექტი ევროპის საკონსტიტუციო ხელშეკრულების დაარსების შესახებ - სამთავრობათშორისო კონფერენციას წარუდგინა, საიდანაც 2004 წელს მთავრობების მიერ ხელმოწრილი დოკუმენტი რატიფიკაციისათვის წევრ ქვეყნებში გადაიგზავნა. მას მოყვა 2005 წლის 29 მაისი, ისტორიული დღე, როცა საფრანგეთში ევროპის საკონსტიტუციო ხელშეკრულების დამფუძნებელი დოკუმენტი სარეფერენდუმო რატიფიკაციას შეეწირა.

აღსანიშნავია, რომ ფრანგები ყოველთვის კეთილგანწყობილნი იყვნენ ევროკავშირის კონსტიტუციის არსებობის იდეის მიმართ. ამას რეფერენდუმამდე, და მის შემდგომ ჩატარებული ევრობარომეტრის მონაცემებიც ადასტურებს. სწორედ

აქედან გამომდინარე ვაყალიბებ კითხვას: **რამ განაპირობა ფრანგების მიერ საკონსტიტუციო ხელშეკრულების უარყოფა?** კითხვაზე პასუხის გაცემისას უდიდეს ყურადღებას ვუთმობ წინასწარფერენდუმო კამპანიას და მისი მიმდინარეობის დროს უარყოფისა და მხარდაჭერი კამპანიების მიერ დაკავებულ პოზიციებს. აღსანიშნავია რომ, ეს ორი მხარე სრულიად სხვადასხვა სტრატეგიით მოქმედებდა. მაშინ როდესაც პრეზიდენტი შირაკი და მხარდამჭერი კამპანიის სხვა წარმომადგენლები ცდილობდნენ იდეოლოგიური არგუმენტები წამოეწიათ წინა პლანზე, უარყოფის მხარდამჭერებმა სრულიად სხვა ტაქტიკა აირჩიეს. სწორედ მათი სტრატეგიისადმი დრუცკმანისა და ნელსონის “აქცენტების გადატანის თეორიის” მისადაგებით აიხსნება ის გარემოება, რომ ფრანგებმა ევროკავშირზე კი არ შეიცვალეს შეხედულება, არამედ იმ თემებისადმი დააფიქსირეს უარყოფითი დამოკიდებულება რეფერენდუმზე, რომელიც უარყოფის მხარდამჭერებმა გაააქტიურეს. “ჩვენ ყველას გვაქვს ჩვენი მიზეზები უარის სათქმელად”- ამბობდნენ მემარცხენეები და მათთვის მომგებიან თემებზე გადაქონდათ აქცენტები.

კონსტიტუციის უარყოფის მხარდამჭერებს აქცენტი გადაჰქონდათ არა საკონსტიტუციო შეთანხმების მიერ შემოთავაზებულ ცვლილებებზე, არამედ საფრანგეთის სოციალურ პრობლემებზე, პრეზიდენტის არაპოპულარობაზე, თურქეთის შესაძლო მიღებაზე ევროკავშირში და მიგრაციის იმ უზარმაზარ ტალღაზე, რომელსაც ეს ნაბიჯი გამოიწვევდა. უარყოფის იდეის მომხრეები გამუდმებით ხაზს უსვამდნენ იმ ფაქტს, რომ 29 მაისს უარის თქმა არ იყო ევროპის წინააღმდეგ მიმართული უარი, არამედ პირიქით, ის ქმინდა ახალი, სხვაგვარი, უფრო სოციალური ევროპის შექმნის შესაძლებლობას. ის ფაქტი, რომ ნელსონისა და დრუცკმანის თეორია ნადმვილად იყო გამოყენებული საკონსტიტუციო ხელშეკრულების უარყოფის კამპანიის წარმმართველთა მიერ, თუნდაც იმით დასტურდება რომ, ისინი გამუდმებით საუბრობდნენ უარის შემთხვევაში, ხელახალი მოლაპარაკებების შედეგად უკეთესი ხელშეკრულების მიღებაზე, ყურადღებას ამახვილებდნენ თურქეთის შესაძლო წევრობასა და სოციალურ პოლიტიკაზე. აქცენტების გადატანის თეორიით აიხსნება ის ფაქტიც, რომელიც დაფიქსირდა რეფერენდუმის ჩავარდნის მომდევნო დღეებში: ევრობარომეტრის კვლევების თანახმად, მოსახლეობა ისევ უჭერდა მხარს ევროპის კონსტიტუციის მიღების იდეას.

დადგენილია, რომ აქცენტების გადატანის თეორიის ეფექტები მაშინათვე ქრება, როცა ეს აქცენტები იხსენა, სწორედ ეს ფაქტი დაფიქსირდა რეფერენდუმის შემდგომ ჩატარებულ გამოკითხვებში.

ზემოთ მოცემული მიმოხილვის შემდგომ, ისმევა კითხვა: რატომ ვერ შეძლო საკონსტიტუციო ხელშეკრულების მხარდამჭერმა კამპანიამ “აქცენტების გადატანა” მათთვის მომგებიან საკითხებზე? ამ კითხვაზე პასუხის გასაცემად უნდა გავიხსენოთ ის ფაქტი, რომ ევროკავშირის შესახებ დისკურსი ფრანგულ ელიტასა და ხალხს შორის არ მიმდინარეობდა აქტიურად. ის მტკივნეული რეფორმები, რომელიც აუცილებელი იყო, საფრანგეთში ევროკავშირის სახელით ჩატარდა, და მასზე პასუხისმგებლობა არ აუღია ხელისუფლებას, მაშინ როცა პოპულარულ შედეგებს ევროინტეგრაციისა, საკუთარ დამსახურებად წარმოაჩენდა. სწორედ ამიტომ გაუჭირდა მხარდამჭერ კამპანიას ზოგიერი საკითხის წამოწევა და არგუმენტაცია.

მაშინ როდესაც მხარდამჭერი კამპანია უფრო მეტი საეთერო დროით სარგებლობდა, მათ წააგეს სტრატეგიული ბრძოლა უარყოფის კამპანიასთან, რომელიც ეკრანზე მცირე დროით და იმის სათქმელად გამოჩნდებოდა ხოლმე, რომ ევროკავშირი მართლაც კარგია, არავინ დაობს ხელშეკრულების მნიშვნელობაზე, მაგრამ... ხალხმა უნდა უთხრას არა შირაკს! არა თურქეთს! არა ლიბერალურ ევროპას! არა იმიგრაციას! - სარეფერენდუმო კითხვაზე პასუხის გაცემისას, და ამგვარად უთხრას დიახ სხვაგვარ, უკეთეს ევროპას!

სწორედ ამ აქცენტებმა განაპირობეს ის უარი, რომელიც 2005 წლის 29 მასს დაფიქსირდა და ამგვარად გამოიკვეთა რომ საფრანგეთის რეფერენდუმის შედეგები პოლიტიკური ფსიქოლოგიის თეორიით, კერძოდ კი ნელსონისა და დრუცკმანის მიერ შესწავლილი “აქცენტების გადატანის თეორიის” აიხსნება.

## Abstract:

The research deals with the rejection of the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe (TEC) in the founding member state of the European Union (EU) – France on may 29<sup>th</sup> 2005.

The EU entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century with an ambition of widening and deepening which required the subsequent treaty reforms. The work of the Convention on the Future of Europe, approved by the Inter-Governmental Conference of 2003-04 produced the TEC which had to be ratified by the citizens' of France through the referendum.

Being overwhelmingly positive about the membership and favoring the idea of having a constitution for the European Union before and after the referendum, it seems extremely difficult to find logic in the negative voting behavior of the French. However, this thesis embarks upon outlining the reasons of the rejection, and more specifically it is tracing the determinants of the “Non”. Consequently the research question put in the study asks:

### **Which factors have determined the huge opinion swing leading to the negative voting behavior on the TEC referendum in France?**

The research answers the question by taking a close look at the referendum campaign and the role of the proponents of “Oui” and “Non”. It examines the strategies chosen by the each side and proves that the negative outcome of the referendum is the result of the frames, used by the “No” campaigners during the referendum campaign.

Thus study finds relevant and applies The Theory of Framing Effects proposed by Druckman, Chong and Nelson to the case study in order to provide a theoretical basis for the findings.

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## **Abbreviations**

BBC - The British Broadcasting Corporation

EC -European Communities

EEC-European Economic Community

ECSC- European Coal and Steel Community

EU – European Union

TEC –Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe

## **Yes/No Campaign participants**

AN - National Assembly (Assemblée Nationale)

ATTAC-, an anti-globalisation collective headed by Jacques Nikonoff, campaigned for a "No" vote,

CGT- Confédération Générale du Travail

CNPT - the hunting lobby as represented by the *Chasse, Pêche, Nature et Tradition*  
(hunting, fishing, nature and traditions)

LCR - the Communist Revolutionary League (Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire)

LO - Workers' Struggle (Lutte Ouvrière)

MNR- National Republican Movement (Mouvement National Republicain, )

MPF - Movement for France (Mouvement pour la France)

FN - National Front (Front National)

PCF – French Communist Party (Parti Communiste Français)

PS -Socialist party

RPF - the Assembly for France (Rassemblement pour la France)

SA- Conseil Superieur de l'Audiovisuel - Official media watchdog

UMP - Union for a Popular Majority (Union pour une Majorité Populaire,)

UDF - The Union for French Democracy (Union pour la Démocratie Française)

## **Introduction:**

The thesis deals with the cornerstone event in the history of the European Union which took place in 2005 in the founding member state of the most successful European project- France.

On May 29<sup>th</sup> EU citizens in the name of the French rejected the project of the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe (TEC); thus pioneering to be the first among the six founding member states to reject the EU Treaty in national referendum. The outcome had a spillover effect on the referendum in the Netherlands on 1<sup>st</sup> June, thus ending the story of the European Constitution as two rejections in three days is too much for any treaty and even for Constitutional one to survive.

According to the experts “the rejection of European Constitutional Treaty (TEC) by French and Dutch voters in the spring of 2005 in effect sounded the death knell for the European Constitution. (Hobolt.2009.204). Indeed the unexpected “Non” has sent a shockwaves among the EU as “France was the first country to reject the Constitutional Treaty by referendum on 29 May 2005, with nearly 55 per cent of the electorate voting “no”. ( von Carbone.37)

Although the convening of the referendum was not obligatory according to the Constitution of France, once convened, the referendum was legally binding in this country.

It is important to note that when president Chirac has decided to ratify the TEC by the referendum, the public opinion was much in favor of the TEC. Even more, according to the *Eurobarometer* opinion polls six months after the failure of the referendum, over two-thirds of French respondents still agreed that the EU should have a constitution. (*Eurobarometer 62.Autumn 2004/Flash Eurobarometer. June 2005/Eurobarometer 65. 2006*) At the same time the TEC was in the best interests of the EU, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing the head of the European Convention and former President of France stated that Constitution had favored so many French interests, indeed more than the partners were initially willing to accept.([www.ena.lu](http://www.ena.lu))

Relying on the positive statistics before and after the referendum and taking into account France's role in the construction of the EU, as well as the benefits of France from the TEC, the thesis elaborates the determinants of the swing of the attitudes of citizens during the referendum campaign on TEC.

So the question follows: Which factors have determined the negative voting behavior in France on the TEC?

The proposed answer on the question is that the referendum campaign is to blame in the U turn of public opinion for the referendum day.

More concretely, paper suggests that the shift of opinion could be explained by extensive reliance on the Theory of Framing Effects by "Non" campaigners, who have used the abovementioned tool of the political psychology during the dynamics of the referendum campaign.

Framing is a tool of making the particular assumption more salient and in contrast to the time-consuming and sometimes impossible persuasion or belief change it is much easier way-out for reaching a goal by guiding voters to framers' preferable answer through the referendum campaign frames.

The following points document the evidence that the rejection on the referendum day is caused by the framing effects:

- Seven out of ten voters declared that they have decided on the issue on how to vote during the course of the referendum campaign.
- The no campaign used the importance change model thus directing peoples' minds on social policy, Turkey's chances for accession and unpopular governments in France while the TEC and the EU being not the subjects of discussion by the no campaigners.
- The No campaign put emphasis on the salience of the issue at stake, by constant frame messages emphasizing the possibility of renegotiation for "more social Europe".
- The fact that the framing effects were in action on the referendum day could be proved by the fact that citizens were not persuaded on TEC being a bad thing, but rather persuaded to vote on issues that were not the subject of the referenda.

- The limited time horizon of the frames suggests that its effects disappear soon after the frames are removed. Post-referendum opinion polls (*flash Eurobarometer, June 2005*) show that the citizens have returned to their initial position on the very next days of the referenda which mean that they did not change their positive beliefs about the EU, but rather followed the frames as a guide on voting behavior.

The follow-up question asked by the thesis is: Why the Yes campaign failed to use frames and their effects in advantageous ways in contrast to the No campaign?

The proposed answer to the question is:

- The government which was the main proponent of “Oui” had limited ability to frame the issue in an advantageous way due to the “blame game” or the shift of the responsibility for unpopular policies to the EU prior to the referendum and lack of discourse between the elites and citizens on the process of Europeanization.
- The internal division in “Yes” camp on many issues, most notably Turkey’s accession made their messages ambiguous for public, thus they have failed to construct the path to the “Oui” in contrast to their opponents.

To sum up this part it should be mentioned that the issue to be elaborated is: The determinants of NO votes in France on TEC referendum.

The factors influencing the issue at stake are: the dynamics of the referendum campaign during which: framing of the issue by NO campaign, low salience of the No emphasized by “No” camp, the inability of the Yes campaign to control the dynamics of referendum were outlined.

It should be noted that the study of the voting behavior during the referendum, and outlining the shapers of “No” or ‘Yes” becomes more and more important. The issue is particularly of high salience for the further widening and deepening of the EU. DeVreese and Sametko suggest that “future developments of the EU are contingent on the referendums, which makes it necessary to [...] understand more about the dynamics of referendum campaigns”. ( Schuck and De Vreese .2008.121). Indeed, it is a democratic tradition of the EU to consult its own

citizens on watershed events, thus the study of the process which leads to the voting behavior is of outmost importance.

The paper is based on the case study and adjusts the theory to the findings made by research. Thus the outcome could be successfully generalized and applied to the cases where the sides use the tools of political psychology, specifically framing, for achieving their goals and guiding the citizens to the answer fostered by them.

## 1.1. Aim

The aim of the research is to explain the rejection of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe on referenda in France -founding member of the EU. In this country the public opinion was in favor of European project before and after the referendum based on the *Eurobarometer* survey. So it is interesting to outline the reasons of negative voting behavior, which is explained in this research by the Theory of Framing Effects.

The paper also aims to document the link between the referendum campaign and the outcome of the referendum, arguing that under the framing effects citizens do not vote according to their prior hold opinions but rather follow the framers' logic on the salience of the issue.

## 1.2. Research Question

The main research question of the study reads as follows:

**Which factors have determined the negative voting behavior in France in 2005 on the TEC?**

The supplementary question is:

**Why the Yes campaign failed to use frames and their effects in advantageous ways in contrast to the No campaign?**

### **1.3. Hypothesis:**

**1: The negative voting behavior was determined by the referendum campaign, during which the elites leading the “Non” campaign won by clever framing, thus benefiting from framing effects.**

**2: The Yes campaigners’ failure to control the dynamics of the referendum was due to the national governments’ shift of blame to the EU for unpopular reforms and not mentioning the EU’s pivotal role for popular ones.**

**Thus absence of discourse on the Europeanization prior to referendum between French elites and citizens as outlined by V.A. Schmidt, contributed to the lack of capacity for framing advantageously for the “Oui” side , the main representative of which was President Chirac and his party.**

**This factor was contributed by the interval division on essential issues among the campaigners for “Oui”.**

### **1.4. Delimitation:**

The thesis does not examine the text of the TEC closely in order to link the outcome to it. Paper deals only with the issues raised by the proponents and opponents of the treaty that were mostly discussed during the referendum campaign.

Although there was a second rejection of the TEC in referenda on June 1<sup>st</sup> 2005 in the Netherlands, the paper does not deal with it due to the time limit of the research, neither claiming nor denying the usage of Framing Effects by “Nee” campaign in the Netherlands.



## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Method**

In the research the deductive research strategy is used, the aim of which is to test the proposed hypothesis and make a theoretical adjustment.

The concerned study will take a stance of following a qualitative research, not excluding the usage of quantitative data to some extent.

Neuman defines Qualitative researchers as the users of a language of cases and contexts, who examine social processes and cases in their social context, and look at interpretations or the creation of meaning in specific settings; looking at social life from multiple points of view and explaining how people construct identities. “Qualitative data are empirical. They involve documenting real events, recording what people say (with words, gestures, and tone), observing specific behaviors, studying written documents, or examining visual images.” (Neuman .2007.89)

It is very important for my research that Neuman, when stating that Qualitative researchers emphasize the social context for understanding the social world draws attention to the issue that some qualitative researchers take and closely scrutinize photos or videotapes of people or social events. She also suggests that qualitative researcher builds theory by making comparisons (Neuman .2007.89). During the research phase the goal was set to look deeply into the processes developed in France during the referendum campaign. For understanding the mood of the sides involved in the campaigning for one side or another, the goal was to trace their messages, written on billboards, pictured and placed on the internet later. The examining of cartoon used for sending of political and strategic messages by both sides has been the author’s pleasure during the intensive work on the thesis.

As the presented research deals with the case study of France referendum on European Constitution in order to outline the determinants of voting behavior in referendum on European integration, it is crucial to provide the definition of the concept.

According to Neuman in Case Study a researcher examines features on many people or units and measures several common features on them, often using numbers. In case-study research, a researcher examines, in depth, many features of a few cases over a duration of

time with very detailed, varied, and extensive data, often in a qualitative form. The researcher carefully selects a few key cases to illustrate an issue and study it (or them) in detail and considers the specific context of each case. (Neuman .2007.20)

The same author also gives the definition of Content Analyses, and describes it as a technique for examining information, or content, in written or symbolic material such as pictures, movies, song lyrics. The system might include counting how often certain words or themes occur. This technique lets a researcher discover features in the content of large amounts of material that might otherwise go unnoticed. According to Neuman researchers can use content analysis for exploratory and explanatory research, but primarily it is used for descriptive research. (Neuman .2007.20-21)

## **2.2. Materials**

The materials used in the concerned work are mainly written sources such as books, peer reviewed articles from academic journals as well as other forms of publications. The official sites of the European Union dealing with the statistics and survey data, as well as the texts of the treaties were used.

As for statistics they are also extensively invoked in the thesis due to their relevance for answering the research question. At the same time in order to understand the mood of the “Yes” and “No” referendum campaigns the web-sites of the concerned interest groups are explored by the author of the thesis.

In selection of the material the priority was to explore the books and articles written by scientists well acknowledged in the field of dynamics of the referendum campaign, the determinants of voting behavior, the referendums on European integration and more precisely on the rejection of TEC in France.

It is relevant to mention that in order to understand the mood of the campaign dynamics in France the content analysis of the tools for campaign tolls is made.

### **3. Literature review:**

The rejection of the TEC in France is a widely addressed issue among the researchers. It should be noted that in general the negative result is interpreted in two main ways: as the outcome of the “second-order elections” and “issue voting”.

The division of theories on elections into different classes “First-Order” and “Second-Order National Elections Theory” is provided by Schmitt and Reif. According to their definition First-order Elections decide who is in power and what policies are pursued and every electoral system disposes first-order election. They contrast this type of theory by broader class which they call Second-Order Elections. The latter are perceived to be less important, because there is less at stake thus this type of elections among other features are characterized by low participation and mobilization. (Schmitt.2005.651).

The Second-Order Elections Theory is applied to France 2005 TEC referendum by Ivaldi. He suggests that the outcome was greatly influenced by the exceptionally high levels of unpopularity of both the Prime Minister and President following a steady downward trend that started in early 2003. A week before polling day, government popularity reached its lowest point ever since 2002 with only 39 and 21 per cent of positive ratings for Jacques Chirac and Jean-Pierre Raffarin respectively as opposed to 60 per cent for both of them in January 2003. Discontent with the incumbent government had already been strongly expressed in the 2004 regional and European elections where the right-wing Union pour un mouvement populaire (UMP) suffered large electoral losses. (Ivaldi.2006.49).

However Qvortrup opposes the assumption that “Non” was the result of Chirac’s unpopularity, suggesting the explanation that the negative voting behavior was caused by two main factors: disquiet among the socialist voters, and opposition to the EU from unskilled and low-waged employees. (Qvorteup.2006.96). Indeed, the division inside the Socialist Party should be taken as the serious factor that has sent the ambiguous messages to the members of the party and general public.

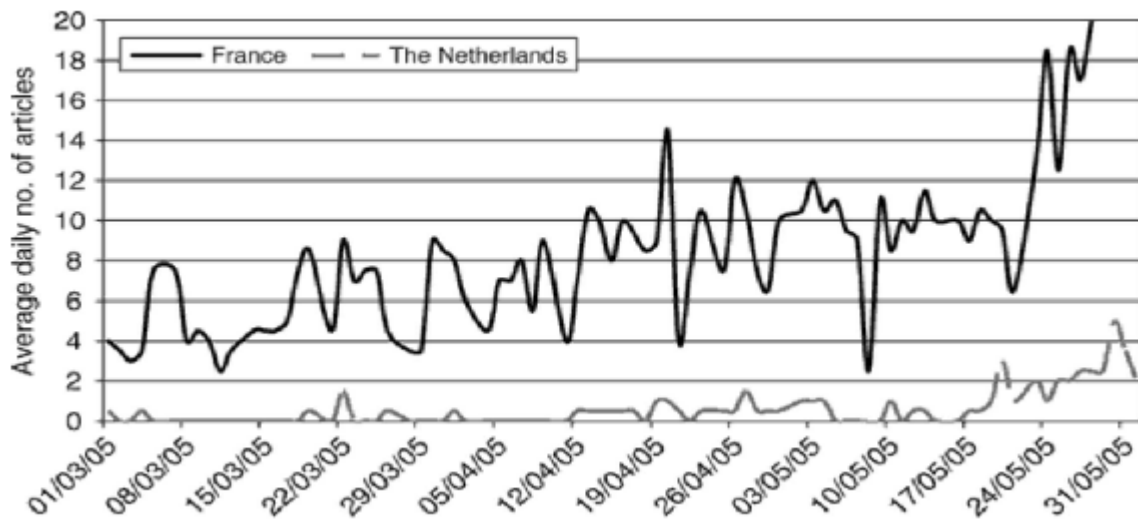
The internal division was also in Green Party; which would have an effect on members, despite the fact that the internal referendum was won by the yes side in this party, the other side was forbidden to use the symbols of the party while campaigning for “Non”.

As for the other approach to the analyzing of outcomes of French TEC referendum, it is dominated by the “issue voting” explanations. Hobolt defines an issue voting as voting according to one’s values and opinions. When researching the French case she measures the competence of voters, their vote behavior according to party affiliations and the intensity of media coverage, she argues that : “it was convenient for both opposition leaders and European politicians to blame Jacques Chirac and the Dutch government for the outcome of the referendum, since that absolved the EU from any culpability.” (Hobolt.2009.205).

Hobolt measures intensity of the campaign by the survey she undertakes with the comparison of leading French and Dutch newspapers and the frequency of the appearance of articles in them on the issue of referendum by systematic content analysis of two national print media: *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* in France, and *De Volkskrant* and *De Telegraaf* in the Netherlands. This content analysis focuses on two main aspects of the campaign: the intensity of the campaign, measured as the average amount of daily coverage of the referendum, and the content of the campaign, measured by counting the issues addressed in each article. (See graph 1.)

According to Hobolt the figure clearly illustrates the higher intensity and longer duration of the French campaign compared to the Dutch. The French campaign began soon after the ECT was signed in June 2004, and it was therefore well underway on the 31 December 2004 when President Chirac confirmed he would call a referendum on the ECT. (Hobolt.2009.208). Thus she suggests that the effects of the referendum campaign were higher in France, rather than in the Netherlands.

Graph 1. The intensity of campaign coverage in France and the Netherlands



Source: Hobolt, Sara Binzer, Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: May 2009. Europe in Question .Referendums on European Integration. Available at:

<http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/oso/public/content/politicalscience/9780199549948/toc.htm>  
]. Page 208.

As for Vivien A. Schmidt, she ascribes the negative vote on the TEC, not so much on the factors mentioned by other researchers, but to the “failure of political leaders to develop sufficiently legitimating discourses about European integration and globalization and their impact on the national economy and polity. (Schmidt.2007.993). She underlines the need of the discourse in the country on the way to Europeanization.

One can note that the various authors emphasize different factors as the determinants of the NO vote, but the majority of them converge on the assumption that the internal division in the Socialist Party and Green Party had a great effect in shaping the minds of the citizens during the referendum campaign.

Finally, Milner assumes that the course of the campaign has revealed several paradoxes that led to “Non”, more specifically he underlines the fact that “many proponents of the “non”

sounded more pro-Europe than those of the "oui." Thousands of posters and hundreds of op-eds told us: "Oui a l'Union; non a la Constitution." (Milner.2006.257).

So the explanations of the failure of the TEC on referendum in France are manifold, mainly following the trends of "Second-Order Elections" or "Issue Voting" theories. This paper does not follow any of these ways directly for seeking the answer on the question, but rather puts emphasis on the referendum campaign, during which the "Oui" and "Non" camps have used the strategies well detected by the political psychologists; with the use of them proponents and opponents of the TEC have guided the voters towards the voting behavior. The referendum results have revealed that "No" side's strategy of using framing was absolutely decisive, as they managed to achieve a huge swing of opinion (see graph 2) for the referendum day and guided citizens successfully to the "Non" vote.

The next chapters bring evidence how the opponents of the TEC framed the issue during the referendum campaign.

#### **4. Referendum and Referendum Campaign**

The use of the referendum is highly debated issue among the experts. They emphasize that convening of the referendum could be explained variously. Hug and Schulz consider them to be strategically used by the national governments, rather than being the opportunity for direct democracy. They propose two hypotheses: “Countries with an electorate preferring the status quo and a referendum announced before the end of the IGC realize more negotiation gains, independent of the other domestic ratification constraints” and “Independent of the domestic ratification constraints, the initiator of the negotiations reaps more gains than the other negotiators.”(Hug and Schulz.2007.182). This idea is also carried forward by Walker, who states that referendums are used by political actors for achieving their goals. According to him “They do so deliberately and sometimes manipulatively with respect to the general public.” (Walker.2003.1).

In a similar mood Closa mentions that Referendums are not the most common instrument of democracy in EU member states. He argues that “In spite of this, the negotiation of the EU Constitution prompted a number of governmental choices of this mechanism for ratification of the new treaty and no less than ten governments announced their intention to use it. The reasons for these choices must be looked for in domestic political circumstances and, more precisely, in the non-existence of solid parliamentary majorities and disputes within the ruling parties, as well as in the perception of an electoral advantage on the part of government parties.” (Closa.2007.1312).

The another approach is highlighted by Morel, who suggests that it is less and less true that most government-initiated referendums are government-controlled and governments today are often left with a tortuous dilemma – to have or not to have a referendum – which was definitely Hamletian in the recent case of the French president.(Morel.2007.1063).

Although the claims that governments use the referendums in order to maximize their goals could be proved in some cases, it is less probable in the EU that the strategy of the national government would be upheld by citizens. This is due to the unpredictability of the outcome as the well-calculated anticipation of citizens’ voting behavior could prove to be far from real choice on the referendum day.

In order to understand the high probability of surprises from citizens on the referendum voting behavior it is necessary to outline the factors that have the possibility of reversing the voters' choices.

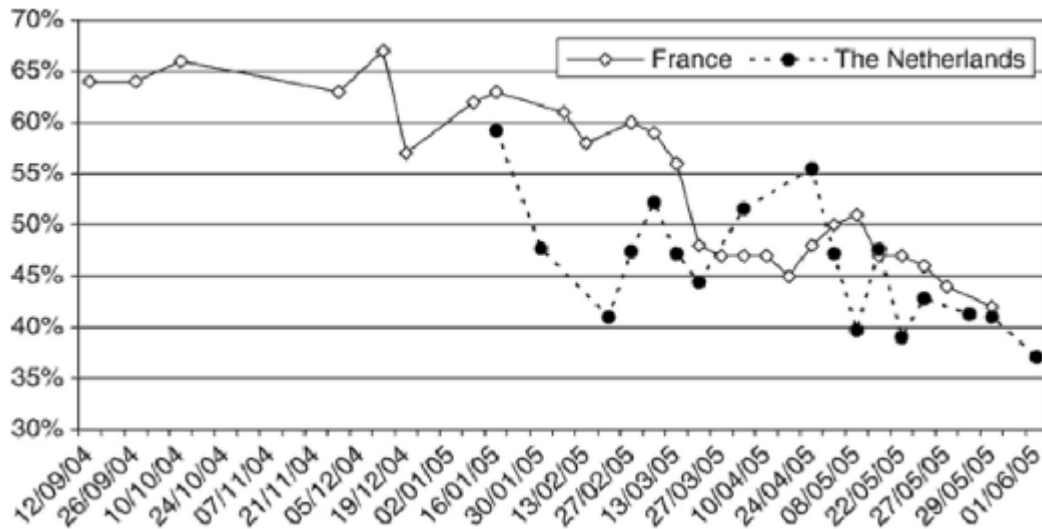
A significant number of scientists documenting their findings through the various case-studies assume that the results of the referendums are determined by the referendum campaign and could not be anticipated in a clear way. According to LeDuc "When a governing party opts for a referendum strategy, it generally does so in the expectation that it will win or that its position on a particular issue will be sustained. However, such a strategy can easily fail, because the uncertainties of a campaign can place at risk even the most carefully structured referendum proposal." (Leduc.2002.724 ).

LeDuc distinguishes between three types of referendums: Opinion formation-when the issue to be voted on the referendum could not be considered to have well formed opinions on and the issue has not previously been a subject of public debate in other political arenas. In this case the much volatility is expected in outcome. **Opinion reversal** is the kind of a dynamic of the referendum, where well-known issue begins to take a new direction over the course of the campaign. This dynamics occur when the opposition group is successful in changing subject of the campaign or is raising doubts about the issue at stake. Leduc mentions the third type as well and characterizes it as the uphill struggle, in which opinion is much firmer and less subject to rapid change and sudden reversal. (Leduc.2002.727-728).

In the case of the French referendum, the second type could be well adjusted to the dynamics of the referendum campaign. The opinion reversal of the French is well documented in the following graph (graph 2) that reveals the changes in the voting intentions in France and the Netherlands.



Graph 2. Voter intention in France and the Netherlands.



Source: Hobolt, Sara Binzer, Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: May 2009. Europe in Question .Referendums on European Integration. Available at: <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/oso/public/content/politicalscience/9780199549948/toc.htm> . Page 212.

The great swing of public opinion from positive to negative considerations for the referendum day could be best explained by the dynamics of the referendum campaign. The assumption follows: despite the reasons for convening the referendum by the government, it cannot determine the voter choice in the referendum.

Some political psychologists claim that short period of referendum campaign could not be used for the persuasion or belief change; thus the best strategy for guiding the voter to the Yes or No answer is the framing strategy during the campaign. Hobolt also argues that “Given the volatility of voters in referendums and the relative unfamiliarity of most citizens with the

issue of European integration, framing should matter more than in other electoral situations. (Hobolt.2009.110).

The study of the role of the referendum campaign has increased greatly in recent years. As the referendums in number of countries ended with the unexpected results, political psychologists started examining the determinants of the voters' choices and have put unexplored questions on the agenda. One of them concentrated mostly on the role of referendum campaign.

The considerable effect of the referendum campaign on the citizens' choice is highlighted by several authors. LeDuc assumes that over the course of the campaign, public opinion can often shift dramatically. According to him: Voters cannot generally be expected to have well-formed opinions on an issue that has not previously been the subject of any broad public debate. In such circumstances, the degree of change in opinion over the course of even a short campaign is potentially large, because there is the way of stable social or political attitudes which might anchor opinions on the issue of the referendum. (LeDuc.2002.717-718).

In contrast, when the referendum concerns a familiar, much debated issue, the chance for opinion reversal or rapid change is diminished to minimum. LeDuc concludes that the lack of the information drives to the late decision which stance to take and becomes highly unpredictable.

Hobolt in her study about voting behavior in her book "Europe in Question" suggests that the campaign environment in EU referendums acts both as an informer and a mobilizer and influences patterns of behavior. (Hobolt.2009.85)

The considerable fact is that as neither candidate nor parties are presented during the referendums in contrast to elections, voters have to decide under the circumstances of uncertainty, so the degree of volatility is very high: "Given that referendums are held on a specific issue, the learning process about the issue is critical for voters' understanding of the opinions. For well known issues, the process of learning may be less important, given that voters draw on previous knowledge and experiences, so their vote may be mostly driven by prior predispositions or well-established attitudes. For less salient issues, such as foreign

policy or issues pertaining to European integration, voter may be more dependent on information that they obtain during the course of the campaign.” (de Vreese. Sametko. 2004).

## 5. Theoretical framework

The theoretical part of the research will be based on Theory of Framing Effects. Invoking this theory in the study is absolutely crucial for finding a sustainable and valid answer to the research question about the determinants of the negative voting behavior in France on the TEC.

Generally framing is defined as “a process during which a communication source constructs and defines a social or political issue for its audience”. ( Nelson and others.1997.221). It should be mentioned as well that: “Framing effects constitute one of the primary means by which elites influence citizens’ behavior.” (Druckman and Nelson.2003. 730).

Many misunderstand the concept of framing using it interchangeably with persuasion or belief change, which is not the essence of the concept. Based on the referred authors I draw a clear distinction between these two concepts and prove that the referenda outcomes in France was the result of the campaign, during which the No side has used the strategy of political communication - framing instead of persuasion (belief change), which has determined the rejection of the TEC.

It should be noted that Chong and Druckman also identify two primary ways in which frames operate: ‘the importance change model’ and ‘the content change model; which means that according to the former frames operate by making certain beliefs more relevant and applicable to the issue at stake; so in ” importance change model” framers affects opinion suggesting that certain considerations are more important than others; this kind of frame pushes citizen to weight the issue from the point of importance, and although she/he might hold the positive attitude towards the issue at stake, she/he will follow the frame by shifting not the belief about the issue, but will reweight its importance. “The content change model” is about introducing new arguments and information and makes individual to think about them.” (Chong and Druckman.2007.116-117).

It should be mentioned that “the impotence changing model” is widely used by the mainstream authors of the theory of framing effects, when the “content change model” is less prominent among them. In my research I am applying the “importance change model.

## 5.1. Framing - Making Particular Considerations More Salient

The literature on political psychology documents that framing is the concept of great importance and it holds outmost value in the study of public opinion. It is evidenced through the various surveys, experiments, from the close look at the political campaigns that public opinion often depends on which frames elites choose to use. (Druckman.2001.1041.)

There are number of definitions of framing and its effects; in my research I use the following definition by Nelson which speaks that: "Framing is the process by which a communication source constructs and defines a social or political issue for its audience."(Nelson and others.1997.221). Nelsen and other in the article "Towards a Psychology of Framing Effects" focus to outline the effect of the communication content on opinion. The authors agree with the definition of frames presented by Gamson and Modigliani, stating that: "A frame is a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue" (1989, p. 57). The supplementary definition of the same concept defined by Entman reads as follows: "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (1993, p. 52).

Several types of frames are identified by the bulk work that analyses the frames and their effects. Most wide separation in them exists between Frames in Communication and Frames in Thoughts. Druckman states that "Frames in communication and frames in thought are similar in that they both are concerned with variations in emphasis or salience. However, they differ in that the former usage focuses on what a speaker says [...] while the latter usage focuses on what an individual is thinking." (Druckman.2001.228).

De Vreese highlights the most important aspect about the frames by stating that their potential lies in the communicative process; the latter in it being a rather dynamic process which involves the frame building and frame-setting. In other words he looks at the process how frames emerge and later how they interplay between media frames and audience predispositions. (De Vreese.2005.52)

As the frames serve like the bridges between elite discourse about the problem or issue and popular comprehension of that issue the most important thing in order the frames to have an effect is their communication to the public. It is the highest task of the political elites to promote the frames set by them to sound through timing of press conference or television debate thus influencing the way the news is presented on the air. (Nelson and others.1997.224).

One could ask why frames are considered of the utmost importance in the referendum campaign. Hobolt answers this question relying on Nelson and Druckman thus stating that: “Whereas changing people's fundamental beliefs is a tall order for most politicians, they can more easily attempt to mobilize voters behind or in opposition to a proposal by encouraging them to think about the proposal along particular lines.” (Hobolt.2009.113)

### **5.1.1. Strong Frames**

Chong and Druckman also give the definition of **strong frames**; they suggest that strong frames emerge from public discussion as the best rationales for contending positions on the issue. These frames strike opinion leaders and audiences as being more compelling than alternative arguments. The typical political strategy used for the strengthening of the frame is connecting it to a proposal with a positive idea or value that is widely available and acceptable in the population. (Chong and Druckman.2007.116)

## **5.2. Frames in Media**

In the 21st century time is much more money than it ever has been. This statement applies to media, as well as to citizens, and elites of course. Appearance of long discourses on television by elites is comparatively decreasing. So elites experience numerous hurdles in their attempt to “get the message across” to general public so they have learned an advantageous ways for getting through in such circumstances. The outcome that works is the framing of the issue in advantageous ways in contrast to choosing a thorny way of trying to

change the public beliefs by offering the evidence or logical argumentation. The latter is a very time consuming and sometimes unachievable exercises in contrast to former. Thus “the media depend upon frames to help organize and lend coherence to relatively brief treatments of complex subjects.” (Nelson and others. 1997. 237).

Nelson and others suggest that representatives of the organized interests supply framing devices such as sound bites, slogans, analogies, and imagery to shortly, clearly and efficiently convey a specific construction of an issue – of course from the point that is beneficial for them (their interests). A specific frame may narrow the range of considerations the audience member brings to bear on the issue. When certain sources are relied upon heavily, the range of frames might also be narrow. Ultimately, public debate on the momentous issues of the day is constrained. According to the same source the rhetorical elements usually turn up in the news, already constituting the part of the issue concerned. “Journalists’ reliance on elite sources for material means that even if they dispute the source's assumptions or conclusions, they still construct the story in terms established by that source.” (Nelson and others.1997. 237-238)

### **5.3. Frames vs. Belief Change**

Although framing is characterized as a tool that persuaders use to influence the opinion, it differs greatly from the standard persuasive argument.

Framing concerns changing the individuals weights the concrete information. So those who make frames, tell people how to weight conflicting considerations that are deliberated in everyday political life. Frame may supply no new information about the topic, but influence the public opinion through the effect on the perceived relevance of alternative consideration. “Framing effects are not reducible to the new information that the framed message provides. Instead, frames operate by activating information already at the recipients' disposal, stored in long-term memory.” (Nelson and others.1997.225 - 226).

When dealing with the frames it is important to outline the setting in which they are operational, or more precisely to make clear statement that identifies whom do frames lead towards the change of choice or who could be influenced by them.

The literature on political psychology and various experiments conveyed by number of researchers in the field give contradictory results to the question: Could sophisticated citizens, with high level of knowledge in politics be influenced to that extent that will make him/her to reverse the choice; do only less sophisticated citizens fall under the strata that experience framing effects? The below mentioned experiment obviously reveals the fact that the framing effects are operational not only upon those who have lack of knowledge of the issue at stake but its effects are more considerable on sophisticated audience.

#### **5.4 The Experiment**

The experiment, conducted by Thomas E. Nelson, Zoe M. Oxley, and Rosalee A. Clawson described in details in the article: "Toward a Psychology of Framing Effects" testes the very interesting hypothesis, which is relevant to know in order to understand the effect of the dynamics of referendum campaign and more specifically the effects of framing on the voting behavior of French in the referendum on the TCE. In this experiment the authors test the hypothesis that sheds a light on the interaction between framing and audience sophistication.

When it comes to the sophisticated individuals and the possibility of their persuasion, the literature on the change of belief takes two different stances: some argue that this kind of individual/group of individuals is not susceptible or is highly susceptible to persuasion. So there is no unanimity on this issue among the proponents of change in belief. But when it comes to the framing, the argument of the authors of theory is that: "sophisticated recipients should be just as susceptible to framing effects as less sophisticated recipients, if not more."

The authors do not expect sophistication to dampen framing effects. " It becomes critical for [our] experiment to establish that more- and less-sophisticated subjects do not differ in their comprehension of the framed messages." (Nelson and others.1997.227).



For testing the above mentioned hypothesis about the differences between framing and belief change, the experiment was conducted involving 116 Ohio State University undergraduates who received extra course credit for their participation to see if sophistication about the welfare debate would moderate the impact of framing.

The key outcome of experimental survey supports researchers' proposed psychological model of framing effects, which helps reinforce the claim that framing is a process distinct from traditional persuasion via belief change. "That framing effects were stronger, not weaker, among respondents already familiar with the frame's content sustains the idea that recipients respond quite differently to frames than to messages directed toward changing their beliefs. Frames appear to activate existing beliefs and cognitions, rather than adding something new to the individual's beliefs about the issue." (Nelson and others.1997.235-236).

The experiment also has revealed another fact that mass media, as well as other institutions of mass political communication, influence public opinion "even without any overt attempt at persuasion or manipulation [...] they cannot escape the fact that their approach to a story implicitly teaches the public how to understand the central issues. These effects may be wholly unintended, but they are real nonetheless". (Nelson and others.1997. 236).

As the clear frontline is drawn between persuasion and framing, the latter should be also separated from concept of priming, which is about "making particular considerations temporarily more accessible". (Nelson and others.1997. 236). Not all the accessible ideas are taken into account, so priming does not hold the explanatory power in many cases, as "Like primes, frames may call to mind (make accessible) a specific consideration, but they also lend additional weight to an already accessible concept by influencing its perceived relevance or importance." (Nelson and others.1997. 236).

## **5.5. Time Horizon of Framing**

It is obvious that framing has an immediate effect but what is its time horizon?

Druckman and Nelson examine the longevity of frames; the follow up experiment conducted by them reveals that : “The elite framing effect disappear after ten days even in the virtual absence of other elite information”. (Druckman and Nelson.2003, 741).

Frames turned out to be fleeting thus putting a question mark on the robustness of the framing effects. The claim that frames have limited time-effect on the public is well-proved in the case of France, where the post-referendum data could be used as the perfect example of concerned issue.

## **5.6. The Salience of NO Vote**

One more determinant of the voting behavior is the saliency of the issue, usually referred as the cost of No. Hobolt in her book “Europe in Question” depicts her research which she conducted as a survey experiments to investigate framing effects in referendums. By organizing hypothetical referendums she set the referendum on joining the European single currency, the euro, and other one concerning the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty.

Both survey experiments were carried out in Britain and the results show that: when the negative consequences of a no-vote are highlighted, more people favor the proposal, and when the negative consequences of a yes-vote were presented to respondents, more people decided to oppose the proposal. So when the No vote is framed as an irrelevant more people tend to reject it as they are sure the outcome would be renegotiation.

## **5.7. Definition of the concept**

### **“Blame Game”**

Not all EU policies are popular. Some of them are marginalized by the interest groups emphasizing the negative consequences of the policy concerned (emphasis framing). Some countries do not involve their public in the communication discourse over the policy, thus making for them understandable the net gain of the country but rather ascribe the unpopular issues from the EU policies to the Brussels thus trying to ascribe to themselves the popular outcomes of policies. Vivien A. Schmidt mentions that “National leaders, first and foremost, need to stop blame shifting and credit-taking as per their convenience in their communicative discourses to the public. The referenda made clear how deleterious this has been to the EU” (Schmidt.2006.271) .

## **6. Case Study- France TEC Referendum**

### **6.1 France in the EU- Historical Discourse**

The negative vote in the referendum on the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe was of utmost importance as throughout the history the pace of European integration much depended on “Oui” or “Non” from French elites and citizens; although it could be debated when the voices of elites and citizens were in dissonance on the issue of European integration and who was the “news-maker” on the way of widening and deepening, one thing is clear: in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the EU, usually referred as a “success story” of European nations was rejected by the citizens of France in right to have a Constitutional Treaty. This was a pivotal answer, not the one French elites asked for but one that “was expected to precipitate into one of the most serious crises of its 50-year history [... which] predicted lethal effects, however, failed to materialize.” (Carbone.2010.1).

In order to access the weight of the France’s rejection of the Constitutional Treaty it is crucial to recall the starting point of grand project the necessity of which has arisen from a bitter experience called the Second World War. The marching of the national armies on the continent in the pursuit of glory or need of defense and the follow-up destruction led to the dream to make peace unchallengeable on the European continent.

As reconstruction started and Franco-German reconciliation had no alternative, there was still a deep understanding that in order to preserve peace and preclude the possibility of war there was a need for systemic approach, that would make war beyond the possibility in the region; the foundations were laid in 1951 by establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which was followed in 1957 by the European Economic Community (EEC). For going beyond a customs union “[...] member states agreed to share sovereignty or national authority in certain policy areas.”(Dinan.2005.2)

Without France these attempts of regional integration would have been a non- event, but being inspired by the founding fathers-French foreign minister Robert Schuman and outliner of the project-Jean Monnet, the endeavor has become a historic adventure, which has resulted in the European Union (EU) of 27 member states.

From the ECSC of 1951, European Economic Community (EEC) of 1957, through the European Communities (EC) of 1965 to the European Union of 1992 the French were always

involved in the issue at stake with the decisive voice - constantly playing a central part in the history of the European integration but not always consistent one. For example European Defense Community (EDC) had been both initiated and defeated by French revealing the complex attitudes towards European project, characterized by regular ups and downs and evidencing no sign of fully-fledged attitude.

The fact of having a complex attitude towards the EU was revealed in 2005 again. The French were consulted on the further deepening as EU entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the Nice Treaty and the ambition of enlargement from 15 to 27 member states.

The Laeken declaration has outlined the challenges of the EU and emphasized the need for reform. The agenda was set by the leaders: bringing citizens closer to the European design and the European institutions, organizing politics and the European political area in an enlarged Union and developing into a stabilizing factor in the multipolar world were the ambitions of the EU. (Laeken Declaration.( <http://european-convention.eu>).

For insuring the outlined goals the Convention on the Future of Europe was organized which brought together representatives of the Member States, European Parliament, national parliaments and Commission, headed by the ex-President of France (1974–81), Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. Their hard work has produced "The Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe", accessed by Norman as "the Accidental Constitution". (Norman.2005.313).

The work of the Convention was submitted to the European Council in July 2003 and the negotiations in the Inter-Governmental Conference in 2003-4 has finalized the work on the Constitutional Treaty; after being signed in October of 2004 by 25 heads of state and governments in Rome the only thing that separated the EU from the historic event of having the Constitutional Treaty was the approval of the citizens of 10 member states who were directly consulted by their governments through referendums. (von Carbone.2010.216).

The reasons for using the referenda in the countries where the government could stick to the parliamentary ratification, thus avoiding the hurdles of the referenda campaigns, could be ascribed to the fact that TEC was presented to the public as watershed step in the history of the EU that "completes the process which began when the Treaty of Rome established the

basic framework for European integration [...and ] like the Treaty of Rome, it will serve for many years as the foundation of a Union at the service of its citizens". (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/>).

The main innovations introduced by the Constitutional Treaty concerned the single legal personality accorded to it and the transformation of the institutional framework. Most importantly a new "double majority" was introduced which set the new rules for voting in the Council. The size of the College of Commissioners would be reduced to two-thirds of the number of member states and would function based on the system of "strictly equal rotation". Constitutional treaty also envisaged enhancing the role of the parliament as a result of extension of policy areas covered by the co-decision procedure, including agriculture and home affairs. The "co-decision" procedure would become "the ordinary legislative procedure". The TEC aimed to insure policy continuity and enhancing the EU's role in the international arena. For this reason the rotating presidency would be replaced by team of members to work for 18 months. The President of the Union would be elected by member states for the period of two and a half years, renewable one. (Church and Phinnemore.2006.4-5).

The new post of the European Foreign minister would be created by merging of the posts of High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Commissioner for external relations; the new double hat actor would chair the Foreign Affairs Council and act as the Vice President of the Commission. (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu>).

As the intended changes by the Constitutional Treaty were considerable the ratification through referenda seemed to be most appropriate way-out as it would end the allegations by some researchers in the field of European studies referring to all kinds of deficits (democratic, legitimacy and recently even to responsibility deficits) when accessing the EU's "business as usual".

In France, there was no legal requirement set by the French Constitution for the country to hold a referendum on the EU text. The convening of the referendum by Chirac was perceived as the factor that would strengthen the argumentation on the legitimacy of the TEC and this decision was not anticipated as containing the threat of rejection by the president and his

supporters. Hainsworth suggests that Chirac, among being pressurized by public and elite opinion to hold the referendum also was influenced by the public opinion polls that were indicating a comfortable majority of 55%–60% in favor of ratifying the EU Constitution. In addition, there were other favorable signs: Spain had voted Yes on 20 February and the results of internal referendums inside the Socialist Party (PS) and the Greens pointed in the same direction. (Hainsworth.99.2005).

Experts too did not predict unexpected U turn during the referendum in France. Interestingly the surveys and opinion polls held before and after the referendum proved the loyalty of the citizens towards the European project, the overwhelming majority of whom perceived the membership of the union as a “good thing”. Great majority in France were in favor of the idea of the constitution for Europe and surprisingly enough the French even after the rejection of the treaty returned to the same position.(Eurobarometer 62/64.France. National Reports)

In order to understand the reversal of the opinion among French citizens, it is of pivotal importance to look through the three phases of that are connected with the referendum on 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1005. These three phases are: the period before the referendum, the aftermath of it, and the one connected with the referendum dynamics.

## 6.1. Before the Referendum

The announcement from ten EU governments that they planned to hold referendums to ratify the EU Constitution was unexpected. (Closa.2007.1312).The decision was interpreted in many ways. The idea of referendum was explained with the logic of appropriateness in France as the Convention has named the outcome of its work as Constitutional Treaty. “The reason these governments gave for their decision was precisely the historic nature of the Constitutional Treaty, the very fact that the EU and EC treaties, and all related acts and treaties, would be rescinded once the Constitutional Treaty came into force, thereby strengthening the argument for a referendum to ensure due legitimacy”.( O’Neill.2009.334).

One thing is clear: when planning to organize a referendum there was a perception of success among the French elites, including president Chirac, as there was a ground for believing that French would vote “Non”. In order to make this argument salient the statistics is provided below, which gave the ground to the proponents of the treaty about successful ratification of the Constitutional Treaty through referendum.

The fact that the attitudes of the French were positive towards the process of European integration was revealed in the public opinion polls held by the *Eurobarometer 62/64* before and after the referendum. The survey data included in *Eurobarometer 62* on France shows that:

Public opinion between 14<sup>th</sup> to 30 October 2004 in France appeared to be more “European” than the EU-25 average. Interestingly enough, support for the European Union has never been so high since the beginning of the new century. 56% of respondents considered their country’s membership to be a good thing; only 18% a bad thing and 28% as neither good nor bad.

According to the 54% their country has benefited from being a member of the European Union.

It should be mentioned that France is most loyal to the common currency- Euroand its suppot for enlargement has grown, accounting to 39%.

French citizens are among support for a common foreign policy with overwhelming 69% and stand for a common security and defense policy with 81%.



89% of the French think that in the event of an international crisis occurring, the member states of the European Union should agree on a common position and 85% feel that European Union foreign policy should be independent of that of the United States.

French public opinion is thus one of the most favorable in the Union as regards a European defense policy. Most interestingly the French strongly support the idea of a European Constitution: 70% of them are in favor, although it should be mentioned that they were not asked about the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe, but about the idea of having the constitution. On the issue of the having a constitution surprisingly, identical support levels are found whatever respondents' political affiliation: 73% of left-wing voters, 73% of centrist and 73% of right-wing voters are in favor of a European Constitution.

(Source of the data is Eurobarometer62.2005).

*Eurobarometer 65* held in spring 2006, after the failure of the Constitutional Treaty in a French referendum reveals that in contrast to and despite the “no” victory, 62% of the French support the idea of a European Constitution and 69% think that the Constitution should be renegotiated. (*Eurobarometer 65.2006.Spring*).

After looking through the positive statistical which reveals the pro-EU feelings of the French people the question arises: Which factors have determined the negative outcome of the referendum in France, the citizens of which were in favor of the EU integration and liked the idea of the constitution for Europe before and after the referendum. So what happened in between? Which factors have influence the reversal of the citizens opinion during the referendum campaign that led to the no vote?

### 6.3. France - Referendum Outcome: Analysis of Flash Eurobarometer data

May 29, 2005 referendum in France was characterized by the high turnout.

According to the official results, the mobilization of voters was 69.3% and the decisive number of citizens 54.7% applied the negative voting behavior on the referendum day despite the prior statistics that gave ground for absolutely different prediction.

Thus the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by the citizens of the founding member of the EU was unexpected and was interpreted by many as the bringing political crisis and sending a shockwaves across the EU. The talks about the democratic deficit and legitimacy crisis followed. But in order to realize why the French voted NO, I will provide the data by flash Eurobarometer which was held in France after the referendum on 30 and 31 May, 2005.

One of the most valuable information for this research is revealed by the post-referendum survey, which asks about the time –when the individuals decided to cast their votes.

It turned out that only 29% of French citizens had a prior formed opinion on the issue how to vote as fast as referendum was announced as they say they have made their minds on how to vote in the beginning of the campaign.

Interestingly enough one in five electors made their decision in the last week before the date of the referendum (20%) and 14% of the electorate made their decision in the final weeks of the campaign.

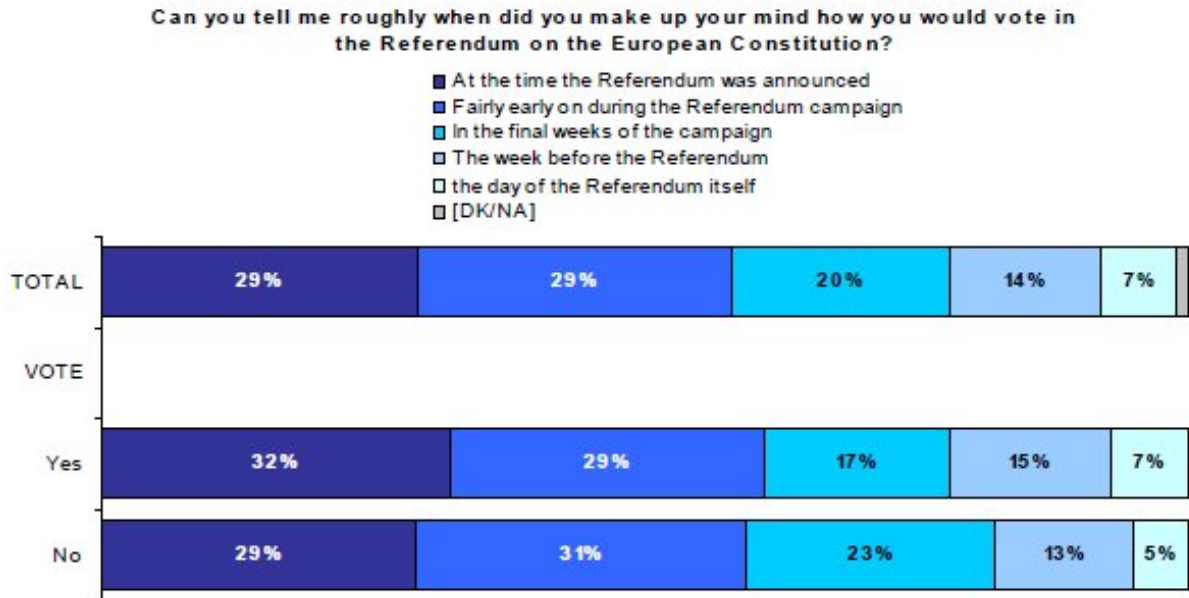
And there were some who made their decision on the issue of voting on the very day of the referendum and the number of them accounted to 7%.

The analysis incurred from the above-mentioned statistics is that, the dynamics of the referendum campaign was one of the determinants of the voting behavior, as 7 voters out of 10 most likely were influenced by the calls from the campaigners to vote “Yes” or “No”.

According to the survey data from the same source, more “no” voters declared that they made their decision in the final weeks of the referendum campaign, which leads the conclusion that

the NO campaign was more convincing and had a serious impact on the voting behavior. (see figure 3).

Figure 3: timing of the decision to vote “Yes’ or “No”.



(Figure 3. Flash EB171 "The European Constitution: Post-Referendum France" – Report p. available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/flash/fl171\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl171_en.pdf) Page 13. 2005)

It is also important to note that the lack of information was one of the reasons for abstention, but it has not determined the voter choices in France. Consequently the majority of the French citizens think that the debates on the European Constitution started either at the right time (39%) or too early (15%).

It should be mentioned that even the majority of those, who think that the debate on the Constitutional Treaty started too late, consider that they had necessary information to base their opinion on.

At the same time, one more important factor is that those who voted NO have made their mind to do so in the final phases of the referendum.

The survey confirms that 61% of those who made their decision during the final weeks of the campaigns voted against the Constitution.

**The most popular reasons for positive voting behavior were more on the ideational side than material:**

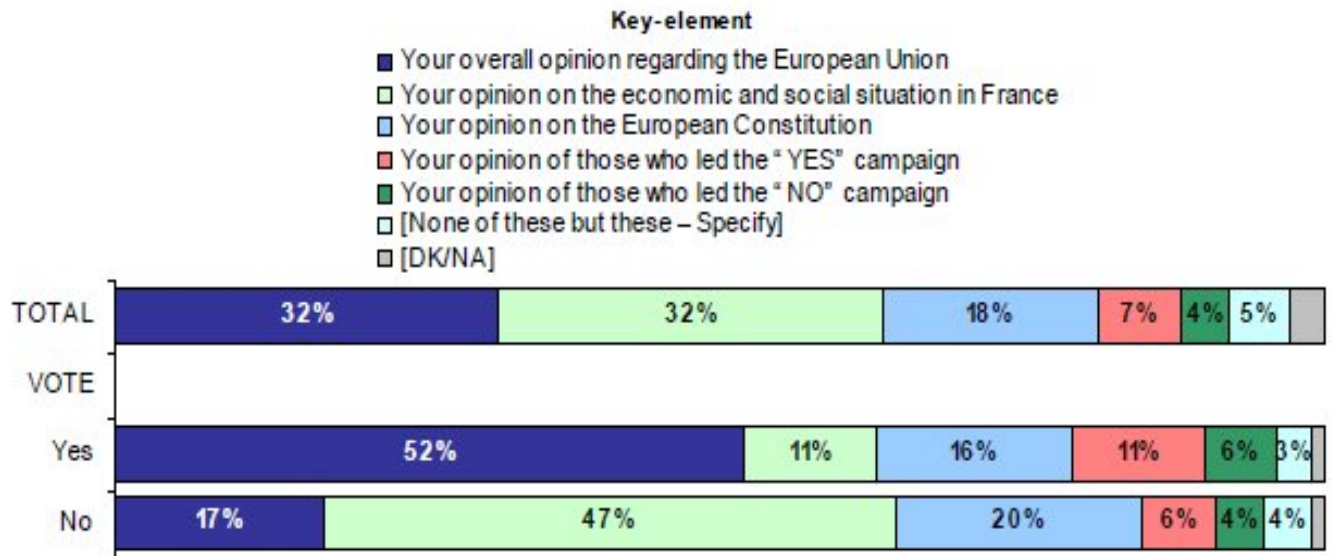
- the 39% of yes voters declared their choice was determined by their attitude towards the European Constitution and considering it as the “ Essential in order to pursue the European Construction” (39%).
- The second most popular reason for Yes vote is against the ideational side of the story, with the 16% of voters declaring, they voted yes for the TEC due to the fact that they “ always been in favor of the European construction”.
- The third and the fourth arguments of Yes voters, with the corresponding 12 and 11% were their beliefs that TEC “Strengthens the role of France within the Union/in the world” and it “Strengthens the EU over the United States”
- All other reasons rank below the 8%.

**The reasons for the negative voting behavior on the referendum on TEC were mainly linked and derived from the themes emphasized by the No campaign.**

In contrast to the motivations for the Yes vote, the rejection of the treaty had much more diversified reasons and was extensively determined by the material considerations, than ideational issues. The top three reasons for the No vote were socio-economical; with

- 31% having in mind that TEC “will have negative effects on the employment situation in France/ relocation of French enterprises/loss of jobs”,
- 26% directly judging from the domestic employment rate, claiming that: “The economic situation in France is too weak/ there is too much unemployment in France”.
- As for the third answer it reads as: “Economically speaking, the draft is too liberal”.
- The lack of social Europe is another reason with 16%

. Interestingly enough 18% of no voters claimed that by rejecting the TEC they voted against the president, national government or specific party. The threat of Turkish accession was mentioned by the low margin of 6%, and loss of national sovereignty and lack of information referred as the reason for denial by 5 %. The key elements determining voters' are summed up in figure 4.



(figure 4. Flash EB171 "The European Constitution: Post-Referendum France" – Report p. available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/flash/fl171\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl171_en.pdf) Page 20. 2005)

The post referendum survey makes it absolutely clear that framing effects have influenced the voter choice. The above-mentioned data reveals that the question of the referendum on the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe was framed, as according to the post-referendum survey-data only 32% of voters voted on issue of European union and the opinion on the actual text of the European Constitution motivated only the way in which a fifth of the "no" supporters voted (20%) and 16% of the "yes" supporters.

Despite the NO vote and satisfaction with it after the referendum, the overwhelming majority of French were very positive about the European integration in post-referendum environment,

as 99% of yes voters and 83% of No voters have expressed positive attitudes about the France being a member state of the EU.

Most surprisingly despite the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty 75% of the interviewed individuals supported the idea of the European Constitution and viewed it as having no alternative for pursuing European construction .

This idea was held not only by the 90% of “yes” voters, but also by 66% of “no” voters as well. So what’s the logic of rejecting the TEC when having highly positive attitude towards the EU and the idea of having the constitution?

The possibility of renegotiation could be considered as the most influential factor in this case. This doubt is confirmed by the survey data, revealing that the greatest majority of those who were surveyed were sure that the rejection of the TEC would have been followed by the renegotiation which would end up with the better text of the TEC more oriented on social Europe. Again here it is impossible not to detect the arguments of the “No” side that worked extremely reassuring on the voters’ choices. The proponents of the “Non” were inclined to mention at every opportunity that the no vote on this referenda had absolutely no salience; they emphasized the fact that rejecting the treaty could not bring any negative consequences for France, as well as Europe, but rather on the contrary – Voting No would mean the yes for the more social Europe. “This positive element was provided by left-wing opponents of the Treaty who claimed that a “non” vote constituted a statement of hope about the kind of EU France wanted.” (Milner.2006.258).

## 7. The Dynamics of the Referendum Campaign in France

“Everyone was aware from the outset that one or more Member States might fail to ratify the draft Constitutional Treaty. Nobody, if truth be told, thought that it would be France.”

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing ([www.ena.lu](http://www.ena.lu))

The French referendum campaign took a start after the signature of the Constitutional Treaty in June 2004, and consequently it had accelerated from 4th of March, when President Jacques Chirac announced that France referendum on the European Constitution to be held on 29 May 2005. (von Samuelsen.2005.15).

Chirac's statement came less than two weeks after the Spanish people had voted overwhelmingly in favor of the Constitution; it should be mentioned that the outcome of the referendum in France is binding, while it is not obligatory for the French government to convene the referendums. So the question arises why did the president of French decide to choose the “thorny” path of ratification?

According to Dominique Moisi one of the factors for scheduling the referendum was determined the Gaullist tradition of referendums, which means that it is appropriate to organize the direct call on the people to decide on matters that are judged to be essential for the future of the nation. (von Samuelsen.2005.15).

The President of the European Convention Valéry Giscard d'Estaing stated that “Since the Treaty sought to establish a Constitution which would have given the European Council a permanent Presidency and laid down new rules for the adoption of European laws, the French President was justified in calling a referendum. This was in keeping with the wishes of France's various political classes, myself included, but involved certain risks: experience shows that votes in referendums are influenced by factors which bear no relation to the question posed.” [www.ena.lu](http://www.ena.lu)

As the real reasons for convening the referendum could be debatable, it is clear that Chirac did not expect French citizens who before the referendum campaign favored the Constitutional Treaty by the majority of more than 60%, would reject it on the referendum. But Chirac failed to calculate the role of the campaign and internal division of the parties on TEC.

In order to understand the pulse of the referendum campaign dynamics in France, it is essential to give an outline of the Yes and No campaigns, together with the media role. Before the close examination of the referendum campaign the general conclusion should be stated; the best summary of it was put forward by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who states “A brief review of the campaign reveals that there was hardly any dispute over the constituent part of the Treaty.” ([www.ena.lu](http://www.ena.lu))

## 7.1. Framing Effects and the Referendum Campaign

### 7.1.1. Campaigning for “Oui”

The most notable proponents of the Constitutional Treaty were among the **Union for a Popular Majority** (Union pour une Majorité Populaire, UMP), which was the party of Chirac. The role of the Raffarin was also considerable in the operating of this party and the referendum campaign for “Yes”. (Weidenfrld.2007.89).

On 6 March 2005, the UMP’s national council supported ratification of the EU Constitution by 91% in internal referendum on the TEC. Despite the small number, still “ in UMP there were some voices and pockets opposed to the EU Constitution, notably Nicolas Dupont-Aignan’s Debout la République—representing republican, social, national and Gaullist ideas.” (Guibert.2005).

The argument promoted by Chirac was that vote against the text would be disastrous - it would damage the European project and destroy the country's influence in Europe “**Yes would be the "best possible" choice for France,** and that the French people had nothing to fear from it. “ (<http://news.bbc.co.uk> ).



President Chirac started campaigning for Oui” with the biggest strategic mistake: Every citizen of France was presented with a 191-page booklet encompassing 448 articles, 36 protocols and 50 declarations of the TEC. Many voters felt threatened by what they perceived as an intimidating document. This reinforced the negative attitude of all those who had already been told that the Constitution was ‘too complicated’. The document was comprehensible only to specialists. Surely the unintelligibility of certain details masked hidden dangers. The president of the European Convention, who has struggled for the Constitution- Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, stated that he was unhappy with this decision and had an attempt to reassure the president Chirac by making a phone call and warning him about the risks involved. “The document is far too long,” I told him, “It will antagonize voters. They should be sent only the constitutionally binding part, i.e. the first 15 pages and the five-page-long Charter of Fundamental Rights, which are relatively easy to read!”- said Valéry Giscard d’Estaing but his suggestion went unheeded. ([www.ena.lu](http://www.ena.lu))

The smaller Centre-Right party, **The Union for French Democracy** (Union pour la Démocratie Française, UDF) of Francois Bayrou, created by Giscard d’Estaing in 1978 has also come out in favor of ratification claiming that **"No" vote would mean the end of Europe as a political force.** (<http://news.bbc.co.uk> ).

However, both parties were sceptical of Turkish membership of the EU. The president of the UMP, Nicolas Sarkozy popular politician at that time and current French president has emphasized his position extensively that he is against the Turkish membership of the EU. , this mood was shares among the UMP members as well. But Chirac was a proponent of the Turkish accession to the EU despite the fact that his position was not even shared by the members of his party, not even mentioning the public.

François Bayrou, too, has declared that Turkey has no place in the EU.

In other parties there was a great division of the members among proponents and opponents of the TEC. The one of the examples of twofold attitude is the **Socialist party (PS)** “With an internal poll in December 2004 showing 59% of the militants opting for the "yes" vote but a minority of leaders campaigning actively for the "no" vote, the vote on May 29th is considered

a major defeat for the Socialist Party's Secretary-General Francois Hollande. "( Brouard and Tiberj.2006.263).No side was backed from this party by Laurent Fabius- the former prime minister declared the conditions under which he would support the EU constitution : if President Jacques Chirac pushed through a series of modifications to compensate for the constitution's "grave shortcomings."( <http://www.euractiv.com>).

According to the same source Fabius declared that he would not oppose the TEC under the circumstances when the president would ensure new employment policy put in place that would guard against jobs going abroad. He meant the reform of the EU's Stability and Growth Pact which holds down levels of public spending and borrowing; to increase EU budget for research, training and investment; to ensure tax harmonization across the 25 members to stop delocalization across the EU; to adopt a directive protecting public services. " Fabius' opposition to his party's line on the EU Constitutional Treaty was resented greatly within the PS as an act of treachery, and there were calls for his expulsion." (Hainsworth.2005.101).

According to Wagner "these divisions are one of the factors that led to the popular rejection of the Constitution. The cues provided by parties have a powerful effect on voting behavior in referendums; however, such cues are far weaker if the party is visibly divided". (Wagner.2008.271).

**The Greens** divided over the issue of the Constitution and have held their internal referendum on 13 February 2005, and the outcome was closer than in the PS, "Green Party internal referendum produced a narrower majority (53% against 42%) in favor of the Yes option." (Hainsworth.2005.101)

As a result, on 13 March 2005, they forbade all party members to campaign against the ratification using the name or the logo of the Greens. In parallel the party members were forbidden to participate in campaign events at which other parties also take part. According to Hobolt there were many voices of dissent within the party.(Hobolt.2008.208).

The fact that the purpose of the referendum was hijacked from the outset could be ascribed to the moves of the Yes camp. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing States those proponents of the "Oui"

were handicapped on two fronts: “expecting an easy victory, it was taken by surprise; it had given no thought to formulating an overall strategy and failed to galvanize the general public with an inspired vision for Europe. Hence the discreet maneuvering by some to distance themselves from those ‘great’ Europeans, former European Parliament and Commission Presidents, who were thought to be overplaying the importance of Europe in the debate. As long as victory seemed within easy reach for the ‘Yes’ camp, the main concern was claiming the credit ahead of the forthcoming presidential election.”([www.ena.lu](http://www.ena.lu))

### 6.1.2. Campaigning for a “Pro-European “Non”?!

**“We all have our reasons to vote no!” De Villiers** (von.Grossman.2008.14).

The groups **campaigning for “Non”** were much more numerous in number. According to Hainsworth No camp constituted veritable groups of different, small-scale parties and of elements within mainstream parties of government. (Hainsworth.2005.102). Most serious opposition to the TEC was revealed from the extreme Right and the extreme Left. What they did was the linking the TEC with the grave problems of France, speaking about the “ultraliberal” content and establishing a link between the Constitution, competition, enlargements, company relocations and unemployment. According to Valéry Giscard d’Estaing: “In a country that has suffered from unacceptable levels of unemployment for the past 20 years, this line was always likely to receive an audience. It was done in a cynical and dishonest manner which would have commanded respect had it been used to defend a just cause!” ([www.ena.lu](http://www.ena.lu))

The rejection of the treaty was promoted by the following groups:

- Dissident from the Socialist Party: Lauren Fabius who “claimed that **voting “no” was really a “yes”** for Europe since the Treaty could and should be renegotiated for a more “social” Europe.” (von Grossman.2008.14).
- This group consisted of the the National Front (Front National, FN) headed by the Jean-Marie Le Pen ; they argued that the removal of barriers to migration between member states has helped keep unemployment high by allowing into the country too many foreign competitors for work severely emphasizing the “Polish Plumber” low paid worker, taking away jobs from French.(Schlesinger,2007,79).
- National Republican Movement (Mouvement National Republicain, MNR) led by the Bruno Mégret’s.
- Right-wing ‘souverainistes’, conservative advocates of national sovereignty among whom were Philippe de Villiers and his Movement for France (Mouvement pour la France, MPF),
- The Assembly for France (Rassemblement pour la France, RPF) and Philippe Seguin, a member of the UMP.
- Moving further left, Jean-Pierre Chevènement’s Republican and Citizens’ Movement (Mouvement Republicain et Citoyens, MRC).
- At the same time parties from extreme Left, the French Communist Party (Parti Communiste Français, PCF), The Communists claimed that the EU being a creeping liberalism, has stripped away employment rights under the guise of free trade. They said the “social model” cannot survive alongside EU legislation.(Schlesinger,2007,79)
- The Communist Revolutionary League (Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, LCR)
- The Workers’ Struggle (Lutte Ouvrière, LO) also opposed the Constitution. (<http://news.bbc.co.uk> ).

FN and Left coalition of PCF and LCR were the most dedicated in influencing citizens ‘choice.

Civil society actors and several Trade Unions were actively involved in reshaping the attitude towards the TEC. The unions, traditionally divided in France, are also split on the issue of the referendum.

- Left-wing Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) changed the stance and joined the group of opponents of the TEC as well.
- The anti-globalization group ATTAC whose 84 per cent of its members came out against the Constitution in an internal vote on 12 December 2004 also was a considerable force against the TEC. It is evident from this list that “No” side was extremely outnumbering the “yes” campaigners, and was much more diverse in composition.

Among the Trotskyist and Communist voters, the "no" vote appeared certain. They said rejecting the treaty would pave the way for negotiations to create "another Europe", which is less economically liberal and less in thrall to big business. (<http://news.bbc.co.uk> ).

Even among the Greens, as well as the Socialist Party the internal division played in favor of “Non.” .

ATTAC an anti-globalization collective headed by Jacques Nikonoff, campaigned for a "No" vote, saying that the constitution would give "neo-liberal" economic policies a constitutional basis. 2005 they did not express their opposition to Europe as a whole, but rather they argued in favor of Europe "but not this one." Their goal is a Europe capable of developing strong protection against globalization and the promotion of a continental version of the French social model.” “( Brouard and Tiberj.2006.263).

At the same time within the non-mainstream No camp, there were still some standing in favor of NO.

- (CNPT) -“The hunting lobby as represented by the Chasse, Pêche, Nature et Traditions (CNPT) (hunting, fishing, nature and traditions) organisation declared: ‘For

the defense of hunting, ruralism and the Europe of Differences, there is only one solution: to vote No in the referendum” (Hainsworth.2005.100).

Most notably the theme of discussion fostered by No campaign has focused on the low saliency of no vote. The consequences of a ‘no’ were reinterpreted as containing no harm neither for France nor Europe.

At the same time ‘yes’ campaign wanted to make it sound that the rejection would be dangerous, emphasizing that the “Non’ would lead to the crisis and possibility would be followed by chaos and institutional paralysis of the enlarged EU.

Strategically the left-wing ‘no’ campaign did not try to reassure the public the no vote would lead to crisis, but instead framed the nature of the crisis, saying that if the crisis occurs, it would have a healthy outcome.

The previous experience with the Danish “Maastricht Treaty” and Irish “Nice Treaty” gave a fertile ground to the argument that the renegotiation of the Constitution was a real possibility, and would lead to the more advantageous outcome in terms of finding outcomes for social issues through including in a TEC a substantial social component. The argument that ratifying the Constitution the way it was would lead to the worsening of existing social problems and emphasized the preference for the status quo and aversion to the unknown, possibly and most likely jeopardizing the situation.

The FN, for instance, campaigned on the slogan **‘No to the Constitution, No to Turkey’** and the MNR and MPF had the similar rethorics.

In order to see if the party cues mattered, Hobolt has measured the voting behavior by party affiliation. See the figure 5 presented bellow.

Figure 5. Vote choices by party affiliation in France

	Seats in Parliament	Party position	Yes (%)	No (%)
Union for a Popular Movement (UMP)	357	In favour	76	24
Socialist Party (PS)	141	In favour (divided)	49	51
Union for French Democracy (UDF)	29	In favour	73	27
Communist Party (PCF)	21	Against	5	95
Extreme left	13	Against	32	68
Greens	3	In favour (divided)	38	62
National Front (FN)	0	Against	16	84
No party	—	—	33	67

Source: Hobolt, Sara Binzer, Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: May 2009. Europe in Question .Referendums on European Integration. Available at: <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/oso/public/content/politicalscience/9780199549948/toc.htm> I. page 212.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in his article "Some thoughts on why the French public has gone sour on Europe " has emphasized the fact that in contrast to Yes side, "Non" campaigners opted for a campaign of harassment, involving strikes on what it deemed to be easy targets, and paid scant attention to the factual basis of its assertions. Two of its arguments had disastrous consequences.([www.ena.lu](http://www.ena.lu))

## 6.2. The Control of the Campaign

It should be mentioned that Nuria finds a very interesting trend among the voters: "Yes" voters across countries seemed generally to prioritize values and a symbolic attachment to the European project more than considerations of the material benefits of supporting the Constitutional Treaty" ( Nuria.2008.310-311).

He suggests that opponents to the Constitutional Treaty managed to exploit the opportunity provided by the low levels of government popularity during the pre referendum months and

succeeded in sidelining ideationally based arguments and giving saliency to EU issues, often unconnected to the Constitutional Treaty itself.(Nuria.2008.313).

This argument strengthens the assumption made in the beginning of the thesis that the No campaign used the framing as a strategy. This could be read in their slogans as well, which were all around the streets and on numerous web-sites administered by small groups in order to promote “Non”. When the proponents of the “Oui” came up with the slogan clamming that **“Europe deserves Yes”** the counter slogan activated by No side did not try to persuade citizens about the importance of the European integration itself, but claimed that “different Europe was Possible”. “Oui side was also deprived to frame as according to Valéry Giscard d’Estaing “Over the past 15 years, the habit of conveniently blaming Europe for all that was wrong with failed domestic policies, particularly on growth and unemployment, has killed off any noble European aspirations. The inability to advocate and defend a ‘grand design’ for Europe was all the more regrettable in that it could well have been one of the campaign’s driving forces.”([www.ena.lu](http://www.ena.lu))

The No side had also linked the Constitution with the issues of immigration, accession of Turkey to the Union, and threat of European integration to French identity and sovereignty. Unlike the far-right campaign, the left-wing no-message was not anti-EU, but rather a condemnation of a particular kind of Europe—a Bolkestein's Europe which threatened French workers and the social model. Fabius, in particular, stressed during the campaign that a no-vote was not a vote against Europe, but a vote for a more social Europe (Hainsworth 2006).

Social and economic issues clearly dominated the no-campaign, both on the left and the right, with particular emphasis on the perceived neo-liberal, ‘Anglo-Saxon’ model allegedly promised by the Constitutional Treaty. The “Non” camp on the left criticized the EU's neo-liberal economic model that would leave French workers vulnerable to the free-market capitalism and globalization, and the naysayers on the right attacked the open borders and free-trade liberalism promoted by the Union. (<http://news.bbc.co.uk> ).

In order to outline to what extent and in which direction has the No side used framing strategy during the referendum campaign it is important to look through the agenda of the referendum campaign. The research carried out by Hobolt makes it vivid that “Non” side has managed to



focus people attention and underline the salience of the following issues: national government, domestic economy, effect of the EU on domestic economy, more concretely on social policy. (See figure 6)

**Issue in the Referendum Campaign.**

<i>% of total referendum coverage</i>	France
Government/Procedural issues	24
Foreign referendums	12
European Constitution	11
Domestic economy	23
Effect of EU on the economy/social model	14
EU enlargement	9
Immigration	1
National identity	5

*Sources: Le Monde, Le Figaro, De Volkskrant and De Telegraaf.*

Figure 6. Source: Hobolt, Sara Binzer, Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: May 2009.

Europe in Question .Referendums on European Integration. Available at:

<http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/oso/public/content/politicalscience/9780199549948/toc.html>  
[I. page 210](#)

According to LeDuc “often, an important part of the dynamic of a referendum campaign involves changing and redefining the subject matter of the referendum through the campaign discourse.” (Leduc.2002.714 ). It is obvious that the no side was particularly aware of this issue and seized the control of the referendum campaign.

### 6.3. Media Coverage

It is important to mention that according to the BBC News during the 14-day of official campaign, each party represented in the National Assembly (Assemblée Nationale, AN) got a small amount of airtime on TV and radio for campaign publicity. (<http://news.bbc.co.uk> ).

But it is more interesting who used the air-time more wisely. According the President of the European Convention Valéry Giscard d'Estaing at no point did anybody attempt to forge a consensus on how best to promote a 'Yes' vote. The result was an uncoordinated media campaign. While the Constitution's left-leaning supporters waged an admirable and bold campaign, the 'Yes' camp was reduced to the uninspiring role of refuting the clever but spurious arguments coming from the Treaty's opponents. To the very last, the main concern was not the overriding importance of actually ratifying the Treaty but the individual players' roles in the ratification process. ([www.ena.lu](http://www.ena.lu)).

Hainsworth states that on April 14, Chirac made his first formal intervention in the campaign, debating with French youth on television and admitting a failure to understand their concerns. This initiative by the President was seen critically in the media as an unsuccessful one. On the issue of Turkish membership of the EU, too, the President was out of step with his party and public opinion, which are hostile to it. (Hainsworth.2005.104)

During the campaign that followed Chirac's decision, coverage of the constitutional process in the French media was intense. According to the BBC News official website although most French newspapers and magazines did not come out openly in favor of the "Yes" campaign, they tended to follow official party lines, which were generally in favor. Only the far-left national communist paper, l'Humanite, came out against the TEC. The same source says that the country's highest court rejected an appeal by the "No" campaign for more "fairness" in the media coverage after they produced evidence that state and privately-owned media were giving massively disproportionate coverage to the "Yes" campaign. According to the BBC News "No" campaign relied on word-of-mouth, the internet, blogs and fly-posting to get their message across. (<http://news.bbc.co.uk> ).

Maatsch suggests that the sides were engaged in a discursive struggle to influence the debate. This struggle not only took the form of positive or negative evaluations, but also involved attempts to foreground those issues that would best support the respective politicians' positions." (Maatsch.2007.276)

But it is also true that during this discourse the "Non" was more successful. Why could not they frame advantageously? Schmidt suggests that as the French elites have failed to be involved in the "communicative action" with the society on the policies of the EU, thus being involved in the "coordinative discourse" and shifting the blame for the unpopular policies to the Brussels and ascribing the "fruits" of the Europeanization to their smartness, they have much lost the opportunity of framing the issue for the referenda on TEC. <sup>1</sup>

A noteworthy point regarding the French referendum campaign highlighted again by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing is the lack of interest shown in the allocation of competences between the European Union and its Member States, despite this being an issue of paramount importance! The term itself, "competence", appeared to have been misunderstood. In answer to the question: 'Do education, health care, social security arrangements, civil law and so forth still fall within the competence of national governments?' the Constitution replied 'Yes'. Unlike the German people, however, the French showed little interest in such questions; this highlighted their inexperience in federal matters. They are more familiar with a centralized, nanny-state society than with a decentralized system characterized by personal responsibility. (www.ena.lu)

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<sup>1</sup> On the issue of Discursive Institutionalism and French elites failure to engage in "communicative discourse" see Schmidt A. Vivien.2006. Democracy in Europe - the EU and National Policies. Oxford University Press.

Obviously the no camp managed to reverse the citizens' opinion about the European Constitution. They did it with putting salience on the issue of Turkish accession, raising the theme of the Bolkestein directive, and initiating the public services – all issues that shed a bad light on the Constitution. According to Milner: “the directive, which raised fears of low-paid Polish plumbers taking the jobs of French tradesmen, proved a godsend to the "Non" forces. **Bolkestein became the Frankenstein of the "Non,"** and the directive's repudiation by the Chirac government gave credence to the alleged link of the directive with the Treaty.” (Milner.2006.259).

The opponents of the TEC seized the discursive agenda, by forcing the “Oui” side into a defensive position, especially the French president who constantly tried to react to new allegations and redirect the debate to focus on substantive constitutional issues; but he failed to frame the issue in an advantageous way.

Table 6 reveals that Jacques Chirac was the first among the top ten leaders extensively mentioned during the Constitutional debate, followed by Nicolas Sarkozy and Laurent Fabius.

The question is why Chirac failed together with the other proponents of the Constitutional Treaty retain the level of support towards the TEC that existed before the referendum campaign? According to Vivien A. Schmidt the outcome reflects a long-standing problem related to the failure of political leaders to develop sufficiently legitimatizing discourses about European integration and globalization and their impact on national polity. She argues that French elites tended to shift the blame to the EU for unpopular policies while taking the credit for popular policies without even mentioning the EU's role.”(von Grossman. 2008.2)

Imposition of painful structural reforms in the name of EU, not taking the full responsibility at the national level made it extremely difficult for yes side to counter the attacks of numerous grassroots groups that were agitating for “Non”. This rejection was a painful lesson for EU; the officials have immediately responded to the developments in France. The Joint Declaration of May 29, 2005 by the President of the European Parliament Josep Borrell Fontelles, President of the European Council Jean-Claude Juncker and President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso on the results of the French Referendum on the European

Constitutional Treaty was issued. The declaration emphasized that EU officials regretted this choice, as it was coming from a Member State that has been for the last 50 years one of the essential motors of the building of EU common future. The official representatives of the Union declared that: “The tenor of the debate in France, and the result of the referendum also reinforce our conviction that the relevant national and European politicians must do more to explain the true scale of what is at stake, and the nature of the answers that only Europe can offer. [...] We must ask ourselves how each among us – national governments, European institutions, political parties, social partners, civil society – can contribute to a better understanding of this project, which cannot have its own legitimacy without listening to its citizens.” (<http://www.ena.lu>)

As the research has revealed the pre-referendum campaign was easy set for the No side for framing the issues in their interests. Hobolt argues that “Domestic themes thus played an important role, as the second-order model would predict, but in this campaign the troubles of the French economy and welfare state were linked to the liberal economic model promoted by the EU. The no-side thus managed to relate the fears over the pressures of globalization and the decline of the French social model directly to the issue of the Constitutional Treaty.” (Hobolt.2009.210).

The study of the campaign makes it clear that “Proponents of the “No” fueled voters with fear of a more powerful European Union where France no longer has influence, and of an increasingly “Anglo-Saxon” and “ultraliberal” Europe where free-market capitalism runs wild.” (<http://www.nytimes.com>) This was also the angle media covered the issue from, and there was little emphasis on the very important, I would say crucial clarification that the media should have had fostered, but did not.

The president of the European Convention knows it better than anyone else what was really at stake in Constitutional treaty, he says that: “It was Part III of the Treaty that was the main area of contention and drew the most fire from the opposition. The debate was strange, surreal almost, since, and I repeat, the document was simply a legal instrument enabling the Union to pursue policies that were adopted when the existing Treaties were signed! Everyone is familiar with these documents: the Treaty of Rome has become almost sacred! The

Maastricht Treaty was ratified by referendum in France; the Treaties of Amsterdam and Nice were signed by left-wing coalition governments which included Communist Ministers! These Treaties were given no expiry date. Any renegotiation would require a unanimous decision. And the draft Constitution included no changes to the arrangements for any future renegotiations. To cite just one example: Article 210 of the Constitution on 'social' policy is, quite simply, word for word, the same as Article 137 of the Treaty of Nice on the same subject, which reproduced and supplemented Articles 117 and 118 of the Treaty of Amsterdam. ([www.ena.lu](http://www.ena.lu))

It is absolutely clear that if media had concentrated on the views of experts, like the one that is provided above, and have chosen the way of avoiding the frames sent by the campaigners, it would have been much more clear for the citizens of the France on what question they were answering on may 29<sup>th</sup> of 2005 in the referendum.

## 7. Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was to explore the reasons for the failure of the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe on the Referendum in France. More specifically the research question asked: Which factors have determined the negative voting behavior in France in 2005 on the TEC?

The analysis of the statistical data and the examining of the slogans used by the proponents and opponents of the Treaty has revealed that the negative voting behavior in France was determined by the dynamics of the referendum campaign, during which the Yes side managed to frame the issue in a clever way thus linking the choice between “Oui”/ “Non” to the issues on the economic situation in France, the popularity of national government, to the possibility of further enlargement to Turkey, Bolkenstein Directive and number of topics that were not directly connected with the Constitutional Treaty.

The government on its side was not successful to frame the issue in an advantageous way, despite the fact that it had more opportunity to prime the issue, by making it more accessible from mass media. This aspect of the referendum campaign was very well explained by the “Blame game” or responsibility shift for unpopular policies to the EU from the national governments, thus being unable to frame the issue by themselves and were mostly defensive, trying to avoid frames set by the “No” campaign. At the same time the fact that Chirac was in favor of the Turkey’s accession to the EU, without having the support of this idea even among his party members and other groups campaigning for “Oui” , complemented to the ambiguity of cues send by the proponents of the treaty, thus making it impossible to frame advantageously for them.

The strategy of the NO campaign was framing the issue, rather than priming. Framing turned to have absolutely positive effect for the goals of the “Non” side as they did not try to persuade the citizens that the EU was bad, which would have been a daunting task, but rather they have used the strategy of making certain issues more salient.

The research has proven that the negative voting behavior in France was determined by the frames used by the proponents of “Non” during the referendum campaign. “We all have our

Reasons to Vote No” was particularly catchy slogan, and the signs of framing are obvious in it.

At the same time the claim that the “Non” to the Constitution would have had an effect of “Yes” to Europe, to a different and more social Europe seemed to have its effects on the vast number of citizens who have admitted during the post-referendum survey deciding on the issue in final week of the campaign.

The usage of Framing Effects by “Non” campaign substantially documented by the presence of the following facts:

The NO side permanently underplayed the importance of the referendum, by stating that it had a low salience and the “No” would be a possibility for renegotiation of the Treaty and thus the way to the better, more social Europe. They claimed that “Non” vote on 29<sup>th</sup> of May was on the another side of the continuum and did not deal with the Hamletian dilemma “to be or not to be”.

As provided by the Framing Theory the “No “campaign did not change the belief of the citizens, who before and after the referendum expressed the positive attitudes towards the EU membership and the idea of the constitution for Europe, but rather put salience on the other issues. The temporary shift of the opinion is well explained by the highlighted theory, which says that the influence on the frames are very limited in time and its effects disappear when the frames are removed.

The research has proved the suggested hypotheses that:

The rejection of the TEC was determined by the referendum campaign, during which the elites leading the “Non” side won by advantageous framing, thus benefiting from framing effects.

The Yes campaigners’ failure to control the dynamics of the referendum was due to the national governments’ shift of blame to the EU for unpopular reforms and not mentioning the EU’s pivotal role for popular ones.



Thus absence of discourse on the Europeanization prior to referendum between French elites and citizens as outlined by V.A. Schmidt, contributed to the lack of capacity for framing advantageously for the “Oui” side, the main part of which were President Chirac and his party. The ambiguous cues sent out by them limited the possibility of framing as well.

In sum, the research has proved the validity of the proposed hypothesis and documented the immense role of the referendum campaign and influence of the Framing Effects on French citizens' voting behavior thus outlining the determinants of the rejection of The Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe.

9. Annexes:

Figure 7. French Mass Media Constitutional Debate

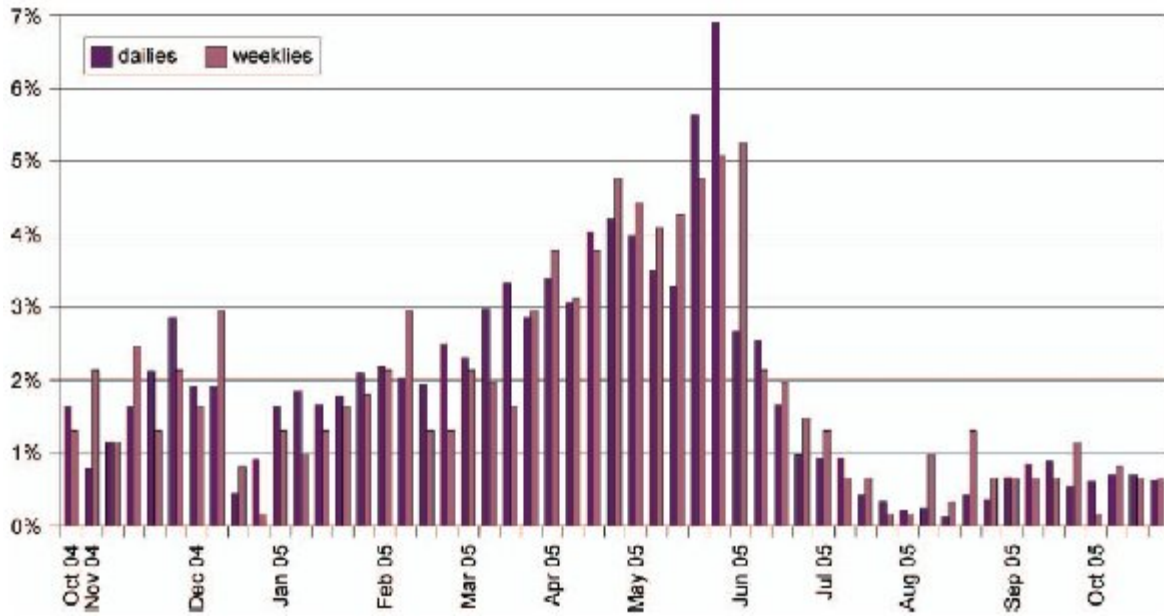


Figure 1. Media coverage of the constitutional debate in France by week, October 2004 to October 2005. Note: Based on the dailies *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde* and the weeklies *L'Express*, *Le Nouvel Observateur* and *Le Point*; all articles included the search terms 'constitutionneuropeenne' and/or 'traiter constitutionnel'

Source: Maatsch.2006.263.

Figure 8. Top 10 named actors

Actor name	French Party	Position	Origin	Occurrence*		No. of articles**	
				Total	in % of total	No.	in % of articles
Chirac, Jacques	(UMP)	for	F	22	10	9	35
Sarkozy, Nicolas	UMP	for	F	18	8	6	23
Fabius, Laurent	PS	against	F	16	8	6	23
Villiers, Philippe de	MPF	against	F	16	8	9	35
Hollande, Francois	PS	for	F	11	5	6	23
Le Pen, Jean-Marie	FN	against	F	10	5	6	23
Raffarin, Jean-Pierre	UMP	for	F	8	4	3	12
Zapatero, Jose Luis		for	E	8	4	3	12
Barroso, Jose Manuel		for	EU	7	3	4	15
Juncker, Jean-Claude		for	LUX/EU	6	3	1	4
Total				213	100	26	100

\*No. of times the actor was coded in the articles.

\*\*No. of articles that include the respective actor.

Source: Maatsch.2006.265. The Struggle to Control Meanings: The French Debate on the European Constitution in the Mass Media

Picture1. Source: <http://www.europeplusnet.com>. Promoted by NO campaign.



Available from: [http://www.europeplusnet.com/IMG/pdf/EUROPE\\_NET\\_n1bis.pdf](http://www.europeplusnet.com/IMG/pdf/EUROPE_NET_n1bis.pdf).

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