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THE SEA STORY AND GLOBALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

The European program of liberalization launched by the Single European Act (SEA) of 1987 is commonly seen as a powerful instance of world-wide 'globalization' trends of economic integration and liberalization. This article revisits the origins of the SEA to highlight that its liberalizing program depended on a causally distinct push for European institution-building. A retracing of patterns of mobilization behind the SEA greatly strengthens broader statistical and theoretical challenges to the notion of strong trends of globalization. It points to a partial reversal of the common notion that the EU represents a particularly advanced case of global trends to deregulation. The impression of a global pattern of liberalization derives to an important degree from a regionally-specific institutional project in Europe.

KEYWORDS

Globalization; integration; liberalization; regionalism; European Union; Single European Act

The Single European Act (SEA) occupies a remarkably prominent place in the political-economy literature of the past twenty years. The current lines of scholarship on European integration—one of the best-developed subfields in political economy—formed largely in debates about how to explain the “Single Market 1992” program that the SEA inaugurated. After crises in the 1960s and 1970s brought on “Euro-pessimism” and academic disinterest in the early 1980s (Haas 1975; Taylor 1983), both the European Economic Community (EEC) and the literature about it were reborn with the institutional reforms and deregulatory agenda agreed in 1986.

Some scholars attributed the SEA initiative largely to the entrepreneurial leadership of the supranational European Commission, which ostensibly persuaded domestic groups and national governments to take up Europe-wide deregulation. This claim reformulated the moribund “neofunctionalist” approach of the 1960s into what can be called today’s “institutionalist” school of integration theory (Sandholtz and Zysman 1989; Cameron 1991; Fligstein and Mara-Drita 1996; Pierson 1996; Sandholtz and Stone-Sweet 1998; Jabko 1999, 2006). In response, Andrew Moravcsik (1991) recast early realist analyses of European integration to produce a “liberal intergovernmentalist” (LI) account. He presented the SEA as a bargain between governments whose economic interests converged on deregulation irrespective of Commission proselytizing. Driven by national interest groups, governments endorsed deregulation and then accepted EEC institutional reform—mainly increased use of majority voting—to facilitate it. Though Moravcsik (1998, 1999) later admitted a minor Commission role in the SEA story, he developed his basic SEA analysis into the most systematic approach to European integration in general. Today the debate between

intergovernmentalists and institutionalists remains the common point of departure for EU scholarship.¹

Beyond Europe, arguments about the SEA have also informed thinking about broader trends in international political economy. When added to the early shift of “Anglo-Saxon” countries to liberalizing policies and to developing countries’ neoliberal turn around the debt crisis of the 1980s, the SEA’s move to deregulate the European continent fueled impressions of a powerful global pattern. Moravcsik’s account of the SEA effectively added European data points to those who argued that politics everywhere is increasingly dominated by structural trends to expanding deregulation.² Institutional work on the SEA, by contrast, suggested to varying degrees that European deregulation only went so far because pre-existing EEC institutions channeled economic pressures in a particular direction. By extension, the apparent advance of market liberalization worldwide reflects a contingent conjuncture of national or regional institutional projects more than a structural inevitability. Thus contrasting accounts of the SEA fed directly into the central debate in all of political economy, between generalizing theorists who tend to see similar or converging market conditions and particularistic theorists who see enduring “varieties of capitalism” (Berger 2000; Fligstein 2001; Hall and Soskice 2001; Berger and Dore 1996; Kitschelt *et al* 1999).

This article argues that neither of the dominant accounts of the SEA captures its main dynamics, and that this claim has important implications for broader views of globalization.

¹The European Economic Community (EEC) was renamed the European Community (EC) in 1987 and then became the core of the expanded European Union (EU) in 1993. I refer to these institutions as the EEC when I am discussing history through the Single European Act, and as the EU when speaking of them more generally.

²Broad-audience expressions of this view are Ohmae 1990, Friedman 1999; Friedman 2005, Giddens 2000, Greider 1995, and Forrester 1996. For more academic treatment of similar themes, see Frieden and Rogowski 1996, Frieden 1991, Milner 1988, Rogowski 1988, Hiscox 2001, Castells 1996, Webb 1991, Kurzer 1993, and Andrews 1994.

Both structural and institutionalist views capture some of the story, of course, but miss its most basic lines. The structural view is right that an SEA-like deal depended on convergence in domestic economic policies. The famous “U-turn” in French economic policy in 1983, away from Keynesian expansion and toward austerity and eventually deregulation, created a viable European “bargaining space” for new initiatives. But a partial convergence in domestic economic policies was not the same thing as the endorsement and implementation of an immense deregulatory agenda within a broad transfer of regulatory power to European institutions—and Moravcsik’s argument fails in the steps between the two. Major Europe-wide deregulation depended historically on a *separate* but simultaneous push to “relaunch” the European institutions. This disconnect is clear in the basic pattern of bargaining around the SEA. The main champions of deregulation, like British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher or the French Gaullists (who had a brief period of deregulatory zeal in the 1980s), were the greatest opponents of institutional reform and EEC activism. The main champions of institutional reform, like French President François Mitterrand and certain Italian and German leaders, remained largely indifferent to deregulation. While partial domestic-policy convergence meant some Europe-wide deregulation was likely in any case, the remarkable extent of the deregulation enabled by the SEA over the next decade depended on a compromise between distinct neoliberal and European agendas.

The institutionalist view is right that Commission officials played a role in filling in the content of a compromise between deregulators and EEC reformers. But it is wrong that the Commission fundamentally altered government’s broader preferences across these two elements through either direct persuasion or the mobilization of societal actors. Only national actors with pre-existing preferences for a more supranational Europe found Commission proposals for reform appealing. Only liberalizing national leaders gave much

credence to Commission proposals for deregulation. Supranational entrepreneurship defined important elements of the SEA package, but did not actually change anyone's mind about whether or not to empower the EEC institutional framework to take on a major new project.

This reinterpretation of the central episode in EU scholarship adds to the arguments I make elsewhere (Parsons 2003) for a partly “ideational” account of EU history. We need to take the ideology of Europeanism seriously to explain the elaboration and implementation of the SEA's deregulatory program. In this article, however, I focus on the patterns of who pushed for institutional reform or liberalization, without engaging theoretical and methodological debates about the material or ideational sources of these actions. These patterns alone sustain important observations about the role of regional “Europeanization” in what are often perceived as more general patterns of liberalization and “globalization.” Neil Fligstein and Frédéric Merand (2002), John Zysman (1998), and others have noted that expanding intra-European trade, cross-border mergers, and liberalization account for a large proportion of these “global” patterns. I fill in the concrete historical foundations for their observations by showing that even within Europe, the pattern of support behind the main liberalizing program was much more distinctively “European” than is commonly understood. The major point is that this close retracing of patterns of mobilization behind the SEA strengthens a re-interpretation of general global evolutions. It reverses the common notion that the EU represents a particularly advanced case of global trends to deregulation. Instead, the impression of a global pattern of liberalization derives to an important degree from a regionally-specific institutional project in Europe.

IS GLOBALIZATIONAL GLOBAL?

It is fair to say that most scholars and practitioners subscribe to some common wisdom about international political economy in the past four or five decades. Its core narrative is that three pervasive and linked processes have dominated this period: globalization, liberalization, and the rise of international institutions. Global trends of increasing trade integration and economic interdependence have created widespread pressures or incentives for domestic liberalization and for the development of international institutions to manage “flows” across borders. The EU enters this common wisdom simply as the place where these general trends have manifested themselves most acutely. Postwar Europe already featured high economic interdependence and had long stood at the core of global economic flows; as trade and financial flows expanded, it led the way in developing an international framework for greater openness. In the Moravcsik version of EU history that undergirds this view, the EU displays “normal politics” in a globalizing context (Moravcsik 1998: 4).

Thomas Friedman (1999: 178, 269) reproduces this notion in one of the best-known wide-market discussions of globalization, portraying the EU as a regional “version of the Golden Straitjacket” that states put on to “survive in the globalization era,” and Europe’s monetary union as “maybe the biggest example in the world today of globalution [*sic*] imposing standards from beyond...” Moreover, academic and popular political economy writing from a very wide range of viewpoints is riddled with assertions that the EU showcases the global future. Moravcsik (2001: 122) calls it “a possible harbinger of future global political structures...” From a deeply different theoretical perspective, John Ruggie (1993) presents the EU as the leading edge of a process of international transformation, where “the process of unbundling territoriality has gone further than anywhere else” and underscoring its usefulness as “a lens through which to view other possible instances of international

transformation today.” Anthony Giddens (2000: 98) suggests in passing that the EU is “pioneering a form of transnational governance” and “forging a way that could, and very likely will, be followed in other regions as well.” These examples could be extended ad nauseum.

Recent scholarship features two prominent challenges to this common wisdom. One targets the basic pattern of globalization itself, offering statistical evidence that economic integration is a more regional and erratic phenomenon. Fligstein and Merand (2002) offer the strongest case, arguing that “Much of what people call ‘globalization’ is in fact ‘Europeanization’” (p. 8). They point out that almost half of “global trade” is trade within western Europe.³ Moreover, European trade has long been more intra-regionally focused than that of other regions, and this focus deepened significantly as of the mid-1980s (with roughly 60% of European exports staying in Europe around 1980, and roughly 70% today) (Fligstein and Merand 2002: 8).⁴ “A huge part of what is driving the increases in trade in the world economy,” they conclude, “is accounted for by the changes going on in western Europe.” Other studies of patterns of globalization make similar points unconsciously. *Foreign Policy*, for example, produces an annual “globalization index” of the “most global nations.” Fourteen of the top twenty-five are EU countries, and two more are small economies effectively embedded in the EU (Switzerland and Norway). Otherwise the top twenty-five includes Singapore, Hong Kong, and Malaysia, Anglo-Saxon liberal economies (US, Canada, New Zealand, Australia), and the odd case of Israel (Foreign Policy 2007). These observations do not deny that growth in international trade has generally outpaced

³Intra-European exports ranged between 40 and 48% of world exports between 1980 and 1999, and intra-European imports between 39 and 45%.

⁴They also provide data showing the relative Europeanization of foreign direct investment by multinationals.

economic growth overall around the world for many decades, of course. They simply question how strong the “globalization” pattern looks if Europe is taken out of the picture.

The second challenge targets the connection between globalization and the liberalizing policy responses that such a context ostensibly requires. It takes two main forms. First are studies that accept the notion of a globalizing context but suggest that it does not dictate any particular policy response. Broad statistical versions of this claim show that openness and economic integration do not correlate to any sort of “race to the bottom” in regulation, state spending, or societal equality (Garrett 1998; Rodrik 1998). Case-study versions argue historically that liberalizing responses to globalization have depended on certain institutional channels that permit or encourage certain policy options (for broad statements, Katzenstein 1978, 1985; Steinmo *et al.* 1992; Hall and Soskice 2001; Berger and Dore 1996; for an example on regulation, Vogel 1996; on welfare states, Pierson 1994; on labor markets, Thelen and van Wijnbergen 2003). Thus the particular organization of national economies and states favored radical deregulatory turns in Thatcher’s Britain or Ruth Richardson’s New Zealand but much more gradual and piecemeal liberalization in France, Germany or Japan. At the EU level this claim arises in the institutionalist argument that the Commission—itsself an institutional legacy from early EU projects—made the crucial connection between broad economic pressures and an extensive program of liberalization across Europe’s diverse national arenas (Sandholtz and Zysman 1989; Cameron 1991; Fligstein and Mara-Drita 1996; Jabko 1999, 2006). The other major form of this challenge is constructivist, arguing that the perception of unavoidable economic pressures for liberalization reflects socially-constructed norms and discourse. Both the extent of globalization and its ostensible pressure for liberalization are subjective constraints we have invented for ourselves (Hay 1998, 2004; Blyth 2002; de Goede 2005; Rosamond 2008).

In my view both these challenges weaken the common wisdom considerably, but the globalization-liberalization-institutionalization view is very resilient. An image of Europeanization within global patterns of integration could still be logically consistent with the core analytical thrust of simple globalization views. Global trends of integration may be less evenly distributed than some accounts suggest, but where economic integration has taken place the most—Europe—liberalization and international institution-building have indeed apparently followed. As long as globalization theorists acknowledge that the EU has more of a lead than they have recognized, the EU could still be seen as the avant-garde of worldwide processes. Arguments about the institutional or socially-constructed contingency of responses to globalization also have a hard time winning the battle. Skeptics tend to see institutionalist arguments as a lag or residual on the materialist common wisdom. Certain national or EU institutions may defer the full impact of globalization for a while, or may give it some local flavor with decorative flourishes, but the globalization-liberalization-institutionalization logic will ultimately prevail. Constructivists confront the same retort, strengthened by more general skepticism about the causal relevance of their approach.

This is why a focused historical retelling of the SEA story is important even for readers who are not directly interested in Europe. I show that in the European arena where the globalization-liberalization-institutionalization logic appears to have operated the most, the extent of these changes actually derived importantly from a regional project whose support was quite starkly separate from economic concerns. My argument in this critical European case provides robust foundations for Fligstein and Merand's broad statistics and the case studies of institutionalists and constructivists. Collectively we make a statistically strong, theoretically-grounded, historically-concrete argument that the common wisdom on globalization gets important steps of its narrative backward. Rather than Europe exhibiting

the leading edge of global patterns, the apparent global patterns exist thanks to distinctively European developments.

EXPLAINING EUROPEAN LIBERALIZATION

My challenge to the common wisdom on European liberalization requires two steps. First I show that the SEA itself, which gave the European institutions an expanded liberalizing mandate and new powers, resulted from an explicit compromise between significantly distinct liberalizing and Europeanist agendas. This argument is not based on any claim to superior interpretive insight into the deep nature of the SEA or its *Zeitgeist*, but on a straightforward tracing of the positions of powerful actors. The main proponents of liberalization opposed the institutional reforms that most scholars and actors see as critical to its later implementation; the advocates of institutional reforms ranged from ambivalent to mildly enthusiastic about liberalization. A fairly small number of players did endorse both goals, but for them one goal did not lead to the other: everyone in this category had long supported EEC institutional reform, but they came in the 1980s to varying degrees of support for deregulation. Nor were these individuals—at the Commission, in Germany, and some in the Benelux—close to sufficient to carry a deal. The process that brought the advocates of more distinct liberalization or institutional-reform positions together did not see either side change its views during the negotiations. Instead a deal was struck between these two agendas.

Second I address the counterfactual objection to this argument that derives from the common wisdom on globalization: that reforms to the EEC institutions and mandate were largely inconsequential, and extensive European liberalization would have taken place even without the SEA deal.

A quick summary of the basic SEA story is useful as a point of departure. The EEC reached a historical nadir around 1982-1983. Its agenda was bogged down in stalemates over the EEC budget, reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the accession of Spain and Portugal. Exacerbating these distributional battles was a pervasive sense of European decline. The worst global recession since 1945 was bringing a doubling of European unemployment rates from 1979 to 1985. Europe's global market share was tumbling in innovative sectors like electronics and information technologies, and in industrial sectors like automobiles (Buigues and Goybet 1989; Tsoukalis 1991: 45; Rollet 1991). EEC member-states had also responded in widely divergent ways to these problems of "Eurosclerosis." Margaret Thatcher was dismantling Britain's Keynesian "postwar consensus" in favor of neoliberalism, François Mitterrand was attempting "socialism in one country," and Helmut Kohl's Germany was focused on economic rigor (but not deregulation). At EEC meetings the British and Germans showed no interest in French proposals for a *dirigiste* European industrial and technology policy. The French and Germans showed no enthusiasm for British-style liberalization.

All accounts of the SEA recognize the importance of the French "U-turn" of 1983 in unraveling this impasse. Facing rising unemployment, inflation, trade and budget deficits, and a falling franc that could not maintain its commitments in the European Monetary System (EMS), Mitterrand made a now-famous decision to replace the French Socialist expansion with fiscal austerity. In late 1984 austerity was followed by moves toward deregulation, beginning with financial markets. At the same time, Mitterrand used the French EEC presidency in the first half of 1984 to launch a sudden flurry of deal-making which resolved the main distributional conflicts at the Fontainebleau European Council in June 1984. Mitterrand also began calling for supranational-style EEC reforms, even endorsing (if

ambiguously) a “Draft Treaty for European Union” drawn up by Euro-federalists in the European Parliament. Meanwhile, the European Commission produced a proposal for a “Single Market 1992” project of 300 new deregulatory directives, which the member-states approved in March 1985. In June 1985, over British, Danish, and Greek objections, the French, Italians, Benelux, and Germans voted to convene an Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) to revise the EEC treaty.

The rapid negotiations from June to December 1985 focused on six themes. All participants accepted the basic “Single Market 1992” plan, with various caveats. French pushes for European social policies, a European industrial policy, and more supportive monetary-policy coordination were killed by British and German opposition. It was agreed to bring foreign policy consultations formally, if loosely, into the EEC framework. The EEC institutions were reformed to expand majority voting, allow for “mutual recognition” of national regulatory standards, and extend the powers of the European Parliament. This effectively revoked the “Luxembourg Compromise” imposed by French President Charles de Gaulle in 1966, which was essentially an informal rejection of majority voting. British, Danish, and Greek hostility to these reforms was overcome when the other states threatened to proceed without them. The resultant Single European Act was signed in February 1986. The European states had overcome underlying economic divergences, an intricate bargaining impasse, and long-standing institutional obstacles to “relaunch” European integration.

The main explanations of this outcome will be familiar to many readers. Andrew Moravcsik rose to dominance in EU studies on the basis of a rationalist, structural argument that the SEA reflected economic imperatives (1991, 1993, 1998). He started from observations about rising economic interdependence. In France, for example, international

trade rose from 14.5% of GDP in 1960 to 23.9% in 1985 (OECD 1990: 126 – 129). The intra-EEC share of French exports grew from 30% to 47.6% in the same period.⁵ Beginning in the 1970s, financial ties expanded even more quickly. International banking markets increased at almost twice the rate of trade growth (21.4% annually, versus 12.7% for trade) from 1972 to 1985. Capital flows in exchange markets grew exponentially, from a few billion dollars per day in the early 1970s to \$100 billion in the late 1970s, and \$650 billion by the late 1980s (Goodman and Pauley 1993). Not only did this give Europeans incentives to cooperate in liberalization, ran Moravcsik’s argument, it left them little choice. Cross-border trade limited fiscal autonomy because domestic expansion swelled imports, particularly if neighbors were practicing fiscal austerity. The availability of international finance to domestic firms undercut monetary autonomy, as national finance systems were essentially forced to compete to lend. Combined with a growing sense of economic failure—most painfully showcased by a steady rise in unemployment that did not take place in America or Japan—this restructuring of international markets deeply threatened Europe’s national economies.

For Moravcsik, the result was a “pan-European trend” to free markets, which then encouraged institutional changes in EEC. As the last major country to effect a shift in this direction, France's U-turn made European bargains possible. The key intermediate step was the 1984 French program of financial liberalization. After the U-turn, the Socialists began to worry that French firms were disadvantaged by capital controls and other limits on domestic finance. In liberalizing domestically, argues Moravcsik, they signed on to the Single Market plan to bolster this agenda. They pushed EEC institutional change—majority voting, mutual

⁵For EEC as a whole, intra-EC trade grew from 34.5% of total exports to 52.1% from 1960 to 1985 (de la Torre and Kelley, 1992: 20; Sapir, 1992; Lawrence, 1996: 59).

recognition—to facilitate it: “Backed by business leaders, the French government committed to international liberalization, for which Europe served as a technocratic means and as a source of political legitimation” (Moravcsik, 1998: 332). The specific SEA deal reflected intergovernmental bargains: France, Germany, and Britain all approved of the Single Market plan, but an Anglo-German alliance blocked additional French proposals for greater cooperation in monetary policy, industrial policy, and social affairs.

Moravcsik’s main critics focus on the channeling role of institutions to contest the rational automaticity of both liberalizing policies and a European deal. Institutionalists accept pan-European trends to liberalization as the background to the SEA, but argue that the structural story overlooks the Commission’s role in guiding liberalization into a framework for European institution-building. They claim that governments did not spontaneously strike the Single Market deal. Instead, the Commission took advantage of a broad national convergence to sell further integration as the best way to liberalize. In 1983 and 1984, the Commission assembled a wide array of directives—some long blocked—into a package deal that appealed to everyone. The plan was presented unobjectionably as “*completing* the Single Market,” though it went far beyond earlier European ambitions. Behind the slogan of “Europe 1992” (the proposed deadline), Delors created an “elite social movement” of politicians, bureaucrats, and businessmen (Fligstein and Mara-Drita 1996). Their interests were subtly redefined by Commission persuasion, recasting the European bargain in a plan that governments alone were unlikely to produce (Sandholtz and Zysman 1989: 106; Jabko 1999, 2006). The implication is that both liberalization and European federalization were greatly advanced by Commission action.

THE SEA: INSTITUTIONAL REFORM MEETS DEREGULATORY PUSH

This section traces which major players supported the Single Market program, which supported EEC institutional reform (especially to extend majority voting), and when and why they shifted (if they did) what they saw as desirable or acceptable. My account draws partly on interview research with French and British participants in the process, whose special importance for the story will become clear below.⁶ But I rely mostly on descriptions of national positions and bargaining processes in the secondary literature. My main claim is not to have uncovered major new evidence. I simply argue that a retelling is strongly supported by a careful assembly of basic, largely uncontested observations on the content and timing of actors' positions and demands. Many empirical points come from the accounts whose theoretical conclusions I contest.

Emergence of the Single Market program

The deregulatory program that became the guts of the SEA had humble beginnings. In 1981, the European Commissioner for the Internal Market, Karl Heinz Narjes, began to gather existing (but stalled) proposals into a package of 30 directives to decrease intra-EEC trade barriers. Though the Internal Market was ostensibly the main business of the EEC, at this point there were no regular Council of Ministers meetings on Internal Market issues (as opposed to the regular “Councils” that existed in other areas: the Council of Agriculture Ministers, Council of Health Ministers, etc.). In 1982 Narjes persuaded his colleagues to create an Internal Market-focused Council, since he “wanted to have his own Council—just

⁶Interviews in 1997-1998 with all major foreign-policy advisors to François Mitterrand and several diplomats in the French SEA negotiating team; interviews in 2007 with four ministers in Margaret Thatcher's government and multiple members of the British SEA negotiating team.

like the other Commissioners” (Cowles 1994: 208).⁷ The meetings began in January 1983 and attracted little attention. The French were represented by junior Minister for Consumption Catherine Lalumière, who was chosen to attend precisely because she was the least important member of the government (Interview, Brussels, April 1997). German officials endorsed the notion of Internal Market discussions but “without great enthusiasm” (Moravcsik 1998: 330). A Narjes proposal that Internal Market directives be given a special “fast-track” process received little support and was officially blocked by the French.⁸

In 1983 and 1984 Narjes’ office continued to elaborate a broader package of measures, hoping that a wider deal would allow member-states to trade off the various barriers they defended. Narjes and others at the Commission also established contacts with big business—most notably the European Roundtable of Industrialists (ERT), which formed in 1983 under the chairmanship of Pehr Gyllenhammer of Volvo. But the ERT did not focus spontaneously on the kind of deregulatory agenda Narjes was envisioning. Several major firms, especially those from France, had joined the ERT specifically because they saw it as committed to lobbying for EEC industrial and research policies rather than Thatcherian-style deregulation (Cowles 1994: 231). The ERT’s first written proposal to the Commission in June 1983 called for initiatives tied to longstanding French calls for more *dirigiste*-style transnational “grands projets.” Their main emphasis was on funding for collaborative infrastructural, research, and venture-capital projects and R&D tax credits. While they also mentioned deregulatory elements—more open public procurement, lowering of barriers to transnational mergers and acquisitions, industrial standardization—most of their members

⁷The German government apparently supported this proposal fairly strongly, though whether it did so out of enthusiasm for the Internal Market or just to gain a Council for the German Commissioner is unclear.

⁸The Narjes push received a little more support in the European Parliament, where the so-called “Kangaroo group” of MEPs called in 1983 for the abolition of all non-tariff barriers and passed an EP resolution to this effect in 1984. But it must be remembered that the EP was an extremely marginal institution at the time.

found the notion of a set of deregulatory measures “dull and boring” well into 1985 (Cowles 1994: 244-5; Moravcsik 1998: 355-6).⁹

Not until early 1985, with the arrival of a new Commission, did the “Single Market 1992” proposal emerge. The new Commission President was Delors—previously the powerful French Finance Minister, and a strongly pro-EEC figure. He had also been the most economically liberal member of Mitterrand’s Socialist government, which was why several other member-states (most notably the British) had accepted his nomination to lead the Commission. Eager to take an active role in Brussels, he toured EEC capitals in late 1984 to measure national leaders’ support for various “big ideas.” His personal preferences (like those of most French elites) were for enhanced monetary cooperation and industrial and social policies. But he was discouraged by reactions outside of France, and found that the one substantive idea without major opposition was “completing the Internal Market” (Cowles 1994: 235).¹⁰ Once in Brussels he worked with Narjes’ successor, British Commissioner Lord Cockfield, to rapidly assemble a more grandiose Internal Market package. In a few months Cockfield drew up the now-famous *White Paper on Completing the Internal Market*, annexing a timetable for passage of 279 directives by the end of 1992. It was submitted to the governments on June 14 and approved with little discussion at the outset of the European Council meeting in Milan ten days later.

What exactly were national positions on the Internal Market at this point? The idea had provoked little disagreement among the governments, but varying levels of enthusiasm. All accounts agree that the British government in particular was broadly excited at the prospect

⁹The lone major exception was Wisse Dekker, CEO of the Dutch electronics giant Philips, who was an early champion of an Internal Market-focused initiative.

¹⁰This is not to say there was tremendous interest in this idea; Commission documents in December 1984 pointed out that enthusiasm for such a plan was decidedly modest.

of more Europe-wide deregulation. All accounts agree that the French government was, by early 1985, committing to a domestic course of liberalization that made them at least open to a parallel European project. Almost all French politicians and officials hoped, however, that deregulatory steps would be embedded in more coordination of national social and monetary policies—a constant goal of French negotiators in the EEC since the 1950s (Parsons 2003). Though little is written in detail about the Italian or Benelux positions, all mentions of which I am aware hold that they largely shared French positions. As usual the Netherlands voiced a somewhat more liberal, British-like priority on free trade (Grin 2003).

The German position, unfortunately, has received less scholarly attention than those of the other big governments (though see Gaddum 1994; Stark 2004). At first glance this may seem to hint at a bias among English-language academics (including me): all agree that the French story is pivotal to the SEA, and otherwise Britain is the large country that is easiest to research, so we end up with heavily Franco-British narratives. But the literature also suggests substantive reasons for less detailed attention to Germany. The German government clearly occupied the center of the “bargaining space” for the SEA, at least with respect to liberalization. No one contests Moravcsik’s summary that the Kohl government was “ambivalent” on pushing for the Single Market (1998: 329). Though Germany had long championed free trade and the Kohl government espoused fairly liberal rhetoric on free markets, they were less sure about how their “Social Market economy” fit with the elimination of non-tariff barriers and internal deregulation targeted in the Single Market plan. Unlike Britain or France, Germany would not see major domestic moves toward liberalization until after the Single Market plan created pressure for them (Dyson 1992; Vogel 1996). Thus Kohl’s government seems to have been consistently inclined to accept but not aggressively push the “1992” project.

In sum, a lukewarm consensus endorsed the White Paper in March 1985. This is reflected in a scholarly consensus, though it can be hard to see through the rhetoric of clashing approaches. All accounts, including the most institutionalist ones, agree that distinct national policy developments (above all the French U-turn and steps toward liberalization) created new space for a deregulatory deal. All accounts, even Moravcsik in his later work, agree that Cockfield and Delors drew clever substantive and rhetorical connections in packaging the White Paper. If Moravcsik only admits a “significant, if still decidedly secondary, influence on the SEA” for Commission entrepreneurship (1999: 292), no one in the debate offers precise enough causal claims for us to judge if there is more than rhetorical disagreement on “primary” and “secondary” causes.

As summarized above, the literature further agrees that some mix of these causes—broad imperatives to liberalization and Commission entrepreneurship—persuaded a sufficient number of governments to see EEC institutional reform as important for the Single Market plan. To understand the institutional-reform debates and their relationship (or lack thereof) to the Single Market proposal, we must back up and trace their historical thread forward.

Origins of institutional reform

The early 1980s saw a modest upsurge in the perennial proposals from Europhiles to give more power to the EEC institutions, but no serious negotiations. In the background since the 1970s were occasional calls from a variety of actors for greater use of majority voting in the Council of Ministers. While formal EEC rules provided for qualified majority voting (QMV) on some Internal Market issues, the Luxembourg Compromise of 1966 had established an informal right to national vetoes that effectively maintained unanimity. Pro-

EEC actors thus called periodically for at least living up to the letter of the treaties. The EEC business association UNICE (*Union des Confédérations de l'Industrie et des Employeurs d'Europe*), for example, reiterated its support for greater use of majority voting at a few points early in the decade. Still, there was little sense of a serious business push for institutional reform; the QMV issue was largely ignored in the substantive proposals of the ERT. Support from certain governments was more obvious. The German, Benelux, and Italian governments had always officially opposed the Luxembourg Compromise, and called for majority voting sporadically through the 1970s. More ambitiously, in 1980-1 the Italian Euro-federalist Altiero Spinelli initiated discussions in the EP to redraft the EEC treaties entirely. The Parliament approved an ambitious (many said utopian) treaty in February 1984 and called upon the member-states to ratify it. But the EP was not taken seriously by any national government, and the call was initially ignored except for an approving resolution in the Italian parliament. The closest that governments came to discussing EEC reform prior to 1985 was in reaction to the “Genscher-Colombo” proposal of 1981. The Europhile German foreign minister, Hans Dietrich Genscher, called with his Italian counterpart for reforms that included more majority voting (though they focused more on stronger cooperation in foreign policy). They received a lukewarm reception from the other governments, however, and the plan was shunted into a hortatory “Solemn Declaration on European Union” in Stuttgart in 1983. While the declaration suggested that member-states should informally limit their recourse to the Luxembourg Compromise—invoking vetoes only on very important issues—the French, British, Danish, Irish, and Greeks quickly issued statements reaffirming their right to use the veto as they saw fit (Teasdale 1993).

Like with liberalization, it was a French shift that altered the possibilities. In late 1983 and early 1984—in the aftermath of the economic U-turn of March 1983—President

Mitterrand surprised everyone by shifting several of his country's longstanding EEC positions. His public and private Europeanist rhetoric escalated steadily in 1983. Upon his return from the failed Athens European Council of December 1983, he announced to his aides that he had decided to "pull Europe out of the mud" during the French EEC presidency in the first half of 1984 (Favier and Martin-Roland 1990: 198). He appointed his friend Roland Dumas as Minister of European Affairs and began a flurry of diplomacy to resolve the EEC's distributive deadlocks. By the Fontainebleau Council that concluded the French presidency in June 1984, all the major issues were resolved, "in each case largely owing to an unexpected French willingness to compromise" (Moravcsik, 1991: 28). Mitterrand agreed to pay Thatcher a permanent "rebate," accepted limits on CAP subsidies, and ended French stalling on the Iberian enlargement. In parallel, Mitterrand introduced EEC institutional reform as a constant theme in the thirty-odd meetings he held with national leaders during these six months. At Fontainebleau, Mitterrand proposed at the last second to create a new committee on EEC institutional reform and treaty revisions, modeled explicitly on the "Spaak Committee" that had launched the EEC negotiations in 1955-1956.¹¹

The temporal connection between the French U-turn and Mitterrand's European push is no coincidence. To my knowledge no one contests that the French President felt that he needed to recast his political identity after abandoning "socialism in one country"; that the EEC had itself contributed to his dilemma through the crises in the EMS; or that the simple presence of the EEC offered a rather obvious and tempting focus for Mitterrand's new agenda (his "new political utopia," as one advisor described it in early 1984: Attali 1993). But

¹¹There was no time for discussion of this proposal, and it was included in the meeting conclusions "on the authority of the Presidency" (Pryce 1984).

this does not mean that the European turn was a broadly-perceived *French* conclusion from the economic shift, though much of the literature makes that leap. For Moravcsik, Mitterrand made “a virtue out of necessity” (1991, 31) in turning to Europe, and supposedly followed diffuse electoral incentives for a European initiative. Historian Piers Ludlow argues (2006: 226) that after the EMS-induced U-turn, “France in general and Mitterrand in particular acquired a strong incentive to see the EC deliver....” The problem with these claims is that Mitterrand’s logic was demonstrably not shared by most French Socialists, French economic policy-makers, or French business at the time. The lack of domestic demands for Mitterrand's European turn is clearest in the failure of his allies and advisors to note them; his foreign-policy advisor Hubert Védrine’s account of the Mitterrand years explicitly emphasizes that no one around Mitterrand suggested a new focus on Europe in late 1983 or 1984.¹² As I document elsewhere, French diplomats and economic bureaucrats remained largely opposed to EEC institutional reforms for majority voting or EP powers through the SEA negotiations (Parsons 2003: 187-191). Electorally, if French voters were vaguely positive about Europeanism, this had no relation to voting. PS support was low and declining before and after Mitterrand's new European stance (Duhamel & Parodi 1984). In the EP elections in June 1984, the Right won its largest victory under the Fifth Republic (57.6%, to the Left's 35.7%). The PS electorate abstained in particularly high numbers, and 19% of Mitterrand's 1981 voters supported the Right (Christofferson 1991, 146). This electoral failure would continue through the whole SEA story, with a landslide legislative loss for the PS just after the SEA was signed in 1986. If Mitterrand's shift was electorally motivated, notes one account, it displayed a “maladroitness” atypical of his political career (Haywood 1993: 134; Stevens 1986).

¹²Védrine 1996: 295, and interviews.

We need not look far to see why Mitterrand turned to Europeanism but most of his compatriots did not. By Occam's razor, we might take seriously the direct reason he gave himself in public and private comments at the time: that he believed stronger European institutions would benefit France in a variety of ways. He was a lifelong advocate of European integration, but had shied away from strong public opinions on the EEC since the 1970s because they tended to split his hard-won coalition of the Left (Haywood 1993; Parsons 2003). As that coalition and its agenda fragmented, he turned to European goals. Other notable French advocates of the EEC like Delors or Mitterrand's great electoral rival Valéry Giscard d'Estaing quickly supported the new focus. The notion of an economic motivation for the European push might seem to survive in the observation that Delors and Giscard were both fairly liberal centrists who supported liberalization as well. But it is simply wrong to see a broader pattern connecting economic liberalism to Europeanism across French politics. Again, most French diplomats and economic bureaucrats, who tended toward centrist views politically and clashed regularly with the pre-1983 Socialist agenda, opposed Mitterrand's concessions at Fontainebleau and his steps toward EEC reform (Robin 1985). More strikingly, in the early 1980s Jacques Chirac's Gaullists (RPR) had undergone a conversion to Reaganesque language on deregulation, and by 1984 freer markets were their main focus. Yet they saw no link between this agenda and EEC institutions. Chirac and other RPR leaders maintained their hostility to EEC reform, especially on majority voting and the Luxembourg Compromise (Shields 1996; Saint-Ouen 1986). The collaborative Right platform established in 1985 for the 1986 elections, which drew open support from the main French business association, similarly called for national and European deregulation but explicitly ruled out EEC reform.¹³

¹³See the 1985 document from the RPR-tied "Club 89"—but with prominent UDF endorsement—calling for

In late 1984 and early 1985, then, the discussion of EEC reform that Mitterrand had launched went forward quite separately from discussion of or support for liberalization. As his personal representative in the “Spaak II” committee Mitterrand appointed Maurice Faure, the ultra-Europeanist negotiator of the original EEC Treaty. Though this body became known as the Dooge Committee after its Irish chair, Faure informally dominated the meetings (De Ruyt 1987: 51; Meenan 1985; Keating & Murphy 1987; interviews). To the horror of the British, who had expected the French to help block proposals for institutional reform, Faure soon endorsed the “maximalist” position supported by the Benelux, Germans, and Italians, calling for a clear shift to majority voting and expanded EP powers. He also proposed and won majority voting within the committee itself, leaving the “minimalist” British, Danish, and Greek minority to register objections in footnotes. When the Dooge Report was circulated, a high-level committee of the French Foreign Ministry agreed with British reservations and argued against treaty revisions (Haywood 1989; interviews). But Mitterrand approved the report, and so a call for institutional reform came before the European Council at Milan in June 1985.

If Faure and Mitterrand took more Europeanist positions than most of the French government preferred, the Dooge Committee’s deliberations better indicated other governments’ positions at Milan. The British government strongly opposed treaty reform. They consistently argued that informal return to the QMV rules and limited recourse to the Luxembourg Compromise (the content of the Stuttgart Declaration) were sufficient for effective EEC decision-making. They also strongly preferred that any strengthening of foreign-policy cooperation—another running discussion—take place outside the formal EEC treaties. Behind these positions was some contestation in Westminster: Foreign

formalization of the Luxembourg Compromise. Club 89, *Une stratégie de gouvernement* (Paris, 1985), 173.

Secretary Geoffrey Howe (though an architect of economic Thatcherism) was substantially more favorable to the EEC overall, and to compromise with other countries' positions, than Thatcher (Howe 1994; Thatcher 1993: 551; Budden 2002). But Howe was no federalist; their differences were more over what was acceptable as a compromise than about treaty reform as an unnecessary and undesirable step. The Danes and Greeks were similarly opposed to treaty reform. The Italians and Benelux governments were largely represented by “devoted integrationists” who sought a broad EEC institutional upgrade and enthusiastically endorsed the Dooge conclusions (Grin 2003: 125). The German position, lastly, was less centrist than on liberalization, but again somewhat ambivalent (and relatively under-researched, partly for that reason). German governments had long supported more use of majority voting and a stronger role for the European Parliament. Kohl's Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher was a noted federalist who regularly advocated institutional reforms. But Kohl himself was known as a wily provincial politician who seemed less invested in Europeanism than he later became.¹⁴ Indeed, in June 1985, just before Milan, Kohl allowed a shocking German invocation of the Luxembourg Compromise to block a fairly trivial decrease in cereals prices.¹⁵ Overall, there was little doubt that the Germans would support a discussion of institutional reform, but they were seen as unlikely to take the lead in insisting on it.

Whichever position these actors took, they perceived the Single Market plan and institutional reform as separate in the approach to Milan. A few days before Milan Delors hinted in a press conference at linking the two, but he continued to worry that a connection to conflicts over institutional reform might kill the Single Market plan (Moravcik 1998: 362).

¹⁴The British expected Kohl to be more open to their views on Europe than Genscher, as reflected in their invitation to him for a private meeting with Thatcher—pointedly without an invitation for Genscher—in May 1985 to talk about options for the Milan Council. See Howe, 408-9.

¹⁵*Le Monde*, 2 March 1985.

In the clearest manifestation of the perceived disconnect, at the Milan meeting itself, there was initially confusion over whether the Dooge Report majority (France, Germany, Italy, Benelux) were proposing their institutional reform plan as an *alternative* to the Single Market initiative (Ross 1995: 73; Haywood 1989). After reassurances to the effect that the two plans were not incompatible, the Italian chair called a vote on opening negotiations on treaty revisions. Mitterrand, Kohl, and the Benelux and Italian leaders supported the idea. The British, Danes, and Greeks complained that a vote by majority was “illegal,” a “coup d’état,” and political “rape,” but opted to participate because the pro-reform majority hinted that they would proceed without any hold-outs.¹⁶ Thus the separation between liberalization and institutional reform was near complete. The French, Italians, and Germans—ranging from ambivalent to weakly positive about the Internal Market plan and sharing no other substantive preferences (on industrial, monetary, or social policies)—had opened treaty revisions by threatening to exclude the British, who favored liberalization and little else.¹⁷ In a post-meeting interview, Thatcher said it was “ridiculous” to think that an IGC could agree on reforms that so divided the governments.¹⁸

The Bargain

Not until the IGC bargaining began did these two historical threads connect. At first glance, admittedly, the process seems to fit an institutionalist account about Commission

¹⁶But the EEC Treaty required only majority vote to discuss treaty revisions. On Milan, de Ruyt 1987: 62; Keating and Murphy 1987: 233. On the French-led threats to proceed without any hold-outs (which had also been issued in the months before Milan), Moravcsik 1998: 360-3.

¹⁷As Kenneth Armstrong and Simon Bulmer (1998, 14) summarize, “This linkage [between the White Paper and treaty reform at Milan], it should be pointed out, came about in part by accident. There was no grand plan to assemble this package; rather, the component parts happened to be ‘on the negotiating table’ in Milan. If it had not been for the decision of the Italian presidency at the meeting to force through the convening of an IGC (in which the SEA was negotiated) through a majority vote, the course of history might have been quite different.”

¹⁸IRN radio interview, 29 June 1985, <http://www.margarethatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=106084>, consulted 11 August.

persuasion. At the outset of the IGC, Delors and the Commission made the new claim that not just usage but extension of majority voting was critical to implement the Single Market plan (Delors 1985). In what Renaud Dehousse and Giandomenico Majone call “the turning point” in the SEA story (1994, 100), the Commission’s initial proposals made “the linkage between the Single Market and institutional reform” by introducing the notion that majority voting be extended to all issues raised in the White Paper. The proposal both defined the Internal Market more broadly than the existing treaty and widened the scope of majority voting to cover harmonizing regulations—not just broad directives—for all Internal-Market issues except movement of persons. Jean de Ruyt’s detailed account similarly underscores the novelty of this connection in September 1985, and sees it as the core reason for the success of the IGC (1987, 71): “Seen from this angle, the passage to qualified majority in decision-making took on a purely economic justification and lost its allure of ‘institutional challenge.’ It is in large measure thanks to this new presentation of things that... the principled objections at Milan melted away.”

The institutionalist account draws broad support from the fact that the bargaining sorted out along fairly clearly once this connection came onto the table as the core of a deal. One focus of deal-making concerned the limits on majority-voting rules within Internal Market issues. The Danes and Greeks continued to oppose majority voting per se, but the British quickly decided to accept Internal-Market-related majority voting but to hem it in with limits (in taxation, fiscality, health controls, and other areas) (Howe 1994: 456; de Ruyt 1987: 74; Corbett 1987). The French submitted a full set of articles that basically sought to cut back the scope of the Internal Market area, and several other countries sought more specific limits (for example, the Germans wanted to retain unanimity on the organization of professions). The Italians largely supported French stances, and the Benelux were closest to supporting

the original Commission draft. The other major focus of bargaining concerned treaty clauses beyond the Internal Market plan. The Commission proposed articles on research and technological development and the environment, cohesion and cultural policy, and monetary policy. Governments submitted texts on their special items of interest: the French on social and monetary policies, Greece and Ireland on cohesion policy, Denmark on the environment, Germany on extended EP powers. The British only submitted a text on foreign policy coordination, where differences were fairly small between a UK model with less institutionalized coordination and Franco-German, Italian, and Dutch plans with modestly stronger mechanisms. The ultimate outcome arrived unsurprisingly in the middle of these bargaining spaces. Though the British and Germans had different degrees of enthusiasm for deregulation, they agreed to limit the main content of the deal to the Internal Market, blocking broader French ideas. The conflict was well summarized in an internal memo to Mitterrand in preparation for the final bargaining in Luxembourg in December 1985:

An Anglo-German front has formed against French positions on three essential subjects: the Internal Market, monetary policies, social policies. At Luxembourg, you are not certain to be able to count on German support, as has been the case so far.... In terms of the creation of a great Internal Market, our positions in favor of a *rapprochement* of policies in all areas—fiscal, monetary, social—are still running into the free-trade approach of our British and German partners (Favier and Martin-Roland 1991: 216).

Agreement at Luxembourg was reached only in last-minute redrafting by Mitterrand, Kohl, and Thatcher themselves. The ultimate result created a new treaty article, 100(a), which effectively authorized the Commission to propose whatever broad directives or specific

regulations it saw as necessary to complete the Internal Market, to be passed with Council majority voting and EP “cooperation”—with exceptions for taxation, fiscality, and a smattering of the other caveats various governments had sought. The French won a minor concession on vague monetary language. Otherwise the British basically relented on the German push for expansion of EP powers and on the inclusion of all the issues in a single treaty document (dropping an attempt to hive off a foreign-policy deal that was distinct from the supranational Community). A decision-deferring compromise on cohesion and environmental policies allowed for future unanimous decisions to use majority voting (Corbett 1987; de Ruyt 1987).

Obviously this story contains elements of both intergovernmentalist and institutionalist accounts. There was hard bargaining between distinct national preferences, but Commission proposals were central to defining a bargain and encouraging compromises. Most crucial for the core logic of either argument, however, is to demonstrate that some governments came to favor a combination of deregulation and reform due to either economic imperatives or Commission entrepreneurship. If proponents of deregulation never concluded that more institution-building was functionally good for their economic agenda, the entire logic of Moravcsik’s explanation of European integration falls apart. If governments merely coalesced around Commission proposals as a workable solution but were not sold on the notion of EEC authority for a grand Single Market, institutionalist claims must be substantially downgraded.

The crucial evidence, then, concerns movement in the French and especially the British positions. The other actors were either on record having supported something like the final deal all along—so their positions did not change much—or were marginal players (and

whether or not they changed their positions or just went along with more powerful players does not greatly affect the overall logic of the SEA story). In the first category were Germany and the Benelux. Again, the Germans were fairly central on both major issues. They favored the Internal Market plan (with a few of their own exceptions) more than the French and less than the British. They wanted some institutional reform but were of mixed views except for strong support of the European Parliament. The Benelux were most favorable to the original Commission proposals which survived, in watered-down form, as the final deal. In the latter category were the Italians, who were largely willing to follow the French lead (as was typical historically), and the Danes and Greeks, who disliked the whole process but did not want to be shut out.

Were the French persuaded by the end of 1985 of a new view of European authority or free markets? Not most French diplomats or economic bureaucrats, whose gripes about the emerging deal (mostly about institutional reform) were repeatedly ignored or overruled by the *Élysée*. Mitterrand himself, like Delors and some other scattered French elites, had favored institutional reform independently from this process, and (as we have seen) independently from patterns of French support for liberalization. They certainly ended up accepting a more starkly liberalization-based deal than they had originally sought, but they were quite explicit in words and action thereafter that they had made concessions in a bargaining process and still favored a more “embedded”-style European market. Mitterrand wrote in 1986 that he was disappointed with the “timid advance of Luxembourg,” adding, “I will not hide that the transaction, which rallied general support, remained very far below what I would call the vital minimum for Europe” (Mitterrand 1986: 332). Mitterrand, Delors, and their closest collaborators spent the next 10 years pursuing the European monetary and social policies that they had failed to launch in the SEA. In so doing they were carried along

by a complex institutional process that pushed liberalization forward, as Nicolas Jabko has shown the best (2006). But if the institutional consequences of the SEA deal were far-reaching, I see no evidence that the top French leaders significantly changed their understanding of what they wanted *at the time*. Similarly, later change in the views of Chirac and the French Right followed from the consequences of the SEA, not from a persuasive process in 1985. As I show elsewhere, the free-marketeting RPR that took over government in March 1986 remained mostly opposed to the SEA. They only choked down the SEA ratification because pressure from President Mitterrand and pro-EC minorities in their own coalition made it unavoidable (2003, 195-199). There is indeed an institutionalist story to tell about how all French elites were carried to new views by the consequences of the SEA—as many of them realized it was difficult to undo and rationalized going along with it—but that is quite different from *explaining* the SEA itself as the product of change in French positions in 1985.

The British case is even more important to intergovernmentalist or institutionalist claims. After all, Thatcher's government opposed even discussing reforms, but then accepted the principle of QMV on Internal Market issues early in the talks, and ended up accepting a good deal more. But here the evidence even more strongly suggests a bargaining process, not internal updating of preferences or persuasion. Indeed, Moravcsik's own interpretation of the British logic in accepting the opening of the IGC and the Commission's White Paper-QMV linkage is that they had "little to lose from qualified majority voting on the internal market program" (1991, 41).¹⁹ That is different from arguing that anyone in Britain ever saw

¹⁹Though Howe and Thatcher's memoir accounts describe the British position in the negotiations as supportive (and even "enthusiastic": Howe 1994, 456) about QMV on Internal Market issues, this must be placed alongside their repeated formal and informal assertions, before and after the SEA deal, that informally relying more on existing treaty rules (limiting the Luxembourg Compromise) would deliver effective decision-making and treaty reform itself was undesirable.

majority voting as functionally necessary to the implementation of deregulation. Even given this calculation, Moravcsik also emphasizes that the British remained until the end “the major obstacle to an initiative linking internal market liberalization and procedural reform” (Moravcsik 1991: 31). Moreover, in Thatcher’s press conference in Luxembourg just after midnight on December 4, 1985, she was explicit that she had not been persuaded that reform was desirable, but had made a calculated trade-off. Though she first explained that the internal market could move forward better with majority voting, she then underscored that this explained why Britain agreed to QMV, not that Britain wanted it: “We could have done a great many of the things which have been done here with treaty changes, we could have done without treaty changes, had we agreed to go about it that way. Now, people very much wanted an intergovernmental conference, so they had one.” Then she repeated, as her final remarks, “I think we could have done what we have done ... that we could have done by agreement without it ... but if they wanted to do it this way, so be it.”²⁰ Biographers report various views on Thatcher’s thinking from interviews with her collaborators, but they only range from being tricked into seeing the institutional reforms as inconsequential (“We were diddled,” said her advisor Charles Powell) to taking a “calculated risk” on the reforms (in the view of her press secretary Bernard Ingham) (Campbell 2003, 311). As with the French, many British views surely changed as the Single Market plan went forward after 1987. But I see no evidence that the people who decided Britain’s position endorsed the SEA in 1985 because either economic imperatives or supranational entrepreneurship persuaded them of a functional link between deregulation and EEC reform.

²⁰Record available at <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=106187>, consulted 11 August 2008.

Some people in Europe in 1985 did favor both liberalization and EEC institutional reform. Some of them had an important role in the SEA process, most notably Delors. But these actors were not even sufficient to get the SEA process rolling, much less to deliver the outcome that we see with hindsight. Though Cockfield, Delors, and some like-minded people scattered around national delegations deserve credit for brilliantly shepherding a complex negotiation along, that negotiation came together around them between very powerful leaders—chiefly in France and Britain—who reluctantly agreed to a deal that combined elements they desired with elements they would accept. Europeanism and liberalism were distinct ideas with distinct (if, again, partly overlapping) patterns of support. Together they relaunched Europe and, eventually, recast its political economy.

BUT DID INSTITUTIONAL REFORM MATTER?

The common wisdom on globalization presents an important counterfactual objection to the preceding section's implications. Even if the SEA deal reflected separate pushes for deregulation and institutional reform, all EEC governments agreed in Milan in 1985 to endorse the "Single Market 1992" program. Why should we think that implementation of the Single Market program over the next decade depended on changes in the institutional rules? Major European liberalization might well have taken place without explicit institutional reform.

This counterfactual is rendered explicit by scholars who argue that the SEA's institutional changes actually had little effect on EU decision-making. Jonathan Golub has shown that if we look at how long it took the EU to pass directives, the SEA's ostensible shift to more majority voting produced little measurable improvement (Golub 1999). Golub's statistics further suggest that the expansion of EP powers slowed EU decision-

making (since much legislation now used the “cooperation” procedure). Pointing also to a supposed “collective determination” to liberalize flowing from a convergence in national economic preferences, and to the informal shift in the Single Market program to a more streamlined “new approach” of mutual recognition to harmonize national standards (of which more below), Golub suggests that liberalization might have proceeded at least as well without institutional reform:

If it were not for the institutional drag exerted by the cooperation and co-decision procedures—in other words, if there had been no reforms at all—this determination, along with the member state decision to pursue a "new approach," might have allowed the Council to accommodate legislation (including “important” legislation) as well as, if not more successfully than, it actually did (Golub 1999: 758).²¹

Moreover, it is well known that even since the ostensible revocation of the Luxembourg Compromise in the SEA, most decision-making in the Council of Ministers has continued to operate formally by consensus. Votes are not called very often. Tracking available information on Council votes from 1994 to 2002 (which only tracks successful legislation), Dorothee Heisenberg (2005) estimates that votes occur in only about 20% of cases where QMV legally applies. She concludes, echoing Golub, that formal voting rules in the Council do not matter very directly in EU politics. By implication, the institutional side of the SEA package was not terribly important to later substantive developments. She and Golub both suggest that political scientists have missed this because they have abstract theoretical reasons to expect that institutions matter.

²¹The strong EP powers under the “co-decision” procedure were introduced later, with the Maastricht Treaty of 1991.

Golub and Heisenberg deserve credit for pushing us to scrutinize the impact of EU institutional reforms. In my view, however, they approach that complexity with simple measures and jump to conclusions that do not stand up to either broader or more detailed evidence. To be fair, Golub notes some problems in taking time of passage as a proxy for institutional output. Yet the most important challenges to his argument lie outside even a more robust demonstration of rare and slow majority voting after the SEA.

First is the fact that real political actors care so much about the rules. We have seen that the main fight at Milan in 1985 was over whether to revise the EEC treaties, with a shift to majority voting as the key item of dispute. This remained the case during the SEA negotiations, where voting-rule issues were left until the last meeting of heads of state and government, and violently bargained out between them. The same point holds across all of EU history. From the 1950s to the bargaining over the European Constitutional Treaty and its Lisbon Treaty successor, voting rules have been the most contentious issues (see Parsons 2003 for many historical examples). Unless we portray the actors as highly irrational or as engaged in some sort of symbolic electoral politics—which is frankly implausible in many of these cases of closed-door, low-domestic-salience negotiations—this poses problems to Golub’s and Heisenberg’s main arguments.

Moreover, there is little mystery in why actors care about infrequently-used voting rules. Golub and Heisenberg are right, of course, that consensual norms have dominated EU decision-making before and after the SEA. Even powerful actors work hard to find broadly-acceptable deals and to avoid isolation of explicit minorities. But this hardly means that formal rules are irrelevant. As a very senior official at the Council of Ministers told me in 2003, “Nobody wants to call a vote; everybody looks for a compromise, and we usually find

one. But who compromises is obviously influenced by the potential for a vote. The players do calculate how votes would go.”²² The Permanent Representative of a major member-state echoed to me more recently, “We certainly try to avoid putting anyone in minority in QMV areas. But if you’re very stubborn, you always know that there is the possibility that someone will call a vote.”²³ These statements point to problems with Golub’s focus on timing. The introduction of formal QMV within enduring informal norms of consensus may not speed up decision-making, but it can generate leverage for more substantial compromise (or shifts in compromises to different outcomes). This point is made repeatedly by some of the most concrete and well-informed EU-watchers, such as Helen and William Wallace, Wolfgang Wessels, and Fritz Scharpf (Scharpf 1997: 191-3; Maurer and Wessels 2003: 48; Wallace and Wallace 1996: 139-40).

It is also difficult to read the now-massive literature on the Single Market program as a display of effects that flowed simply and directly, with a high degree of consensus and “collective determination,” from an underlying convergence in national preferences. Case studies of policy change and EU decision-making in sectors like finance, electricity, telecommunications, environmental policy, or transport consistently emphasize significant and enduring divergence in national-government preferences, and elaborate political machinations and arm-twisting to produce results (for a few examples, Eising and Jabko 2001; Levi-Faur 2004; Thatcher 1997; Sandholtz 1998). Under such conditions, the “shadow of majority voting” dynamic should be important. Golub’s own more qualitative work on environmental policy provides a good example. His detailed account of the bitter fight over

²²Interview, Berlin, November 2003. The same official remarked to me in April 2005 that he wished he had a computer program to calculate majorities under the complex Nice Treaty formula, since “we’re always trying to figure out” what possible majorities are.

²³Interview, Brussels, April 2005.

the Packaging Waste Directive, in which two formal QMV votes were called under Article 100a, stresses that in the EU, “power ultimately lies with the national representatives in the Council of Ministers—more precisely, with a qualified majority of these ministers” (Golub 1996: 329). While the outcome in this instance was that a Council majority united to downgrade ambitious proposals to a “lowest common denominator,” Golub does not argue that this resulted from effective unanimity. To the contrary, he argues clearly that it resulted because a Council majority forced movement to a more modest directive. The implication is not that lowest-common-denominator, unanimity-style decision-making is the rule, but that a more ambitious directive could have resulted if a majority favored it.

The notion of little change in the output of EU decision-making after the SEA is also generally contradicted by the impressions of real actors and less abstract observers of European politics. The effects of the Single Market program are now the subject of a vast literature, much of it empirical enough that it seems unlikely to be an artifact of abstract theories about the importance of institutional rules (Crouch and Marquand 1990; Woolcock *et al.* 1991; Swann 1992; Smith and Ray 1993; Dreyfus *et al.* eds., 1993; Keeler and Schain 1996; Katzenstein 1997; Armstrong and Bulmer 1998; Egan 2001; Wessels *et al.* 2003; Jabko 2006). One of the most striking and widely-quoted facts is that by end of the 1980s, thanks to activity around the “1992” plan, a majority of the legislative acts being passed through national parliaments were measures to implement EU legislation. Again, Golub and Heisenberg deserve credit for warning us not to take the SEA reforms as a simple institutional “big bang.” Trying to code the change in output in a more detailed quantitative way would be a valuable undertaking. But actors and policy experts widely perceive institutional reform as having contributed to a major increase in the scope and depth of EU-initiated legislation in the years immediately following the SEA.

Golub's counterfactual contains one strand that offers a distinct logic for European liberalization even in the absence of the SEA institutional reforms—but in a way that ultimately bolsters the logic of my reinterpretation. He notes the “new approach” to liberalization that emerged independently well before the SEA deal with the European Court of Justice's innovation of “mutual recognition.” In the 1979 *Cassis de Dijon* case, the ECJ strengthened earlier rulings (notably the 1974 *Dassonville* case) that hinted that liberalization need not proceed through the cumbersome process of elaborately-bargained directives that “harmonized” national regulations. The EEC Treaty (Article 36) permitted states to impede free trade only if necessary for a defined list of other policy objectives. The *Cassis* ruling stated more broadly that products or services that met one states' reasonable regulations could not be excluded from others' markets. In principle this implied that many regulatory trade barriers could be erased simply by noting that certain products or services fell under mutual recognition, without negotiating common EU policies at all. Some scholars have argued that it was the shift to this practice that most accelerated liberalization in the 1980s (Jacquot-Guillaumod 1989). Others add that the *Cassis* ruling largely reflected big-state interests which derived from clear economic incentives—thus capturing this line of argument for Moravcsik-style logic about liberalization and institutionalization following rationally from economic conditions (Garrett and Weingast 1993; Garrett 1995). By implication, extensive liberalization would have taken place even without the subsequent SEA bargain.

But the most careful analysis of the *Cassis* decision, by Karen Alter and Sophie Meunier-Aitsahalia (1994), contests this structural-economic counterfactual in two ways. First they show that the *Cassis* decision did not reflect what the key national governments perceived as their interests at the time. The legal experts of the German government in particular (against

whom the opinion was delivered) were “stunned” by the decision (Alter and Meunier-Aitsahalia 1994: 540). Moreover, on the basis of interview research they note that French and German elites were among the chief skeptics of mutual recognition into the 1990s. As large, high-standard countries, they felt they had the most to *lose* from mutual recognition. Second, most importantly for my argument, they argue that the ECJ’s decision by itself would not have unleashed a burst of liberalization had it not been taken up by the Commission and enshrined in the SEA’s treaty revisions. If the ECJ decision had not been quickly championed by the Commission as a major shift in strategy—which many legal experts did not see immediately in the *Cassis* ruling—the case alone would just have strengthened the Court’s leaning toward a mutual-recognition principle. The Court would surely have ruled on more such cases, but the inherently slow, piecemeal process of “judge-made law” would have limited the effects. Even given the Commission’s activism, the *Cassis* decision did not bring a jump in similar cases in the 1980s, and the piecemeal rulings it did make simply “did not greatly increase the free circulation of goods” by themselves (Alter and Meunier-Aitsahalia 1994: 548). The legal decision gave the Commission the opportunity to boldly promote a broader mutual-recognition strategy, but further Commission action was necessary to advance that strategy as part of the SEA revisions, against considerable member-state reluctance (Alter and Meunier-Aitsahalia 1994: 549-550).

This glance at the politics around the *Cassis* decision does not simply undercut the notion of an “equifinal” route by which economic imperatives were bound to bring major European liberalization. It also suggests that I understated above how much such an outcome depended on the European context. My account of the SEA bargaining focused on displaying what I have called the Europeanist side of the deal. I allowed that EEC member-states were converging on more pro-liberalization positions, but stressed that it took a

distinct push for EEC reform to connect the “Single Market” liberalization goal to institutional change that rendered implementation much more likely. Alter and Meunier-Aitsahalia’s account of the *Cassis* decision suggests that the liberalization side of the SEA deal, when considered by itself, also depended on European institutional features that were distinct from underlying economic pressures or national-government demands. The emergence of a new, broader mandate for liberalization followed from two separate assertions of supranational entrepreneurship that most member-states contested at the time: first from the ECJ, then the Commission. This further weakens structural-style accounts of European liberalization, and further strengthens the core of my reinterpretation of the SEA episode. Europe’s unique supranational institutions marshaled a diffuse turn toward liberalization into a coherent, ambitious program. Europeanist national leaders were at most mildly interested in this program, but were willing to make a deal with proponents of the liberalization agenda to relaunch their supranational project. Far from bubbling up directly and generically from increasing economic interdependence, the resultant wave of liberalization relied heavily on distinctively European institutions and ideas.²⁴

THE SEA AND GLOBALIZATION

Previous accounts of the SEA deal make rather basic mistakes about the positions and process that produced this outcome. Reinvigoration of the EEC institutions—reforming them to give the supranational Commission more tasks, increase majority voting in the Council of Ministers, and involve the European Parliament in meaningful policy-making—did not follow from agreement on a deregulatory agenda, as Moravcsik’s structural account

²⁴I should stress again that this causal dependence is factual, not counterfactual. We can see the advancement of the liberalization agenda passing through these institutional and ideational conditions. The structural-economic account about this case is substantially counterfactual: all these conditions were not crucial and similar outcomes *would have* resulted in their absence.

asserts. Though convergence in national economic policies after the French U-turn of 1983 was a prerequisite to any major bargain, it did not extend to priorities for the EEC. The economic convergence certainly made Mitterrand and other pro-reform actors more open to deregulation, but this shift did not dictate their EEC reform goals. Most of them (especially in Germany and Italy) had long advocated such reforms. Mitterrand was a long-standing personal supporter of supranational institutions. More proximately, he decided to pursue a European initiative in late 1983, before his government added liberalization to its initial post-U-turn focus on austerity (Moravcsik 1991: 31). The lack of a connection from economic policies to EEC reform is even clearer on the other side of the bargaining. The actors who most wanted deregulation continued to oppose institutional reform through the negotiations. If Margaret Thatcher quickly accepted majority voting on Internal Market issues, and eventually a good deal more, she repeatedly said that she did so for bargaining reasons rather than because she saw them as functionally necessary for deregulation. The same pattern frustrates the strongest claims of Moravcsik's institutionalist opponents. Just as structural imperatives demonstrably did not lead a sufficient group of actors to see liberalization and EEC reform as desirable in 1985, so neither did Commission persuasion. The connection was made in bargaining between what the actors perceived as largely distinct agendas. Commission and ECJ action was crucial in assembling the liberalization content of the SEA, but its implementation required the separate push from Europeanist leaders.

In this article I am most interested in the global implications of this regional episode. My retelling of the SEA story adds to other scholars' case for a substantial recasting of global economic history of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

The main global implication of this retelling of the SEA story is to deprive advocates of the common wisdom of what is arguably the most crucial case for their broad logic of change. Convergent national economic policies were bringing at least some liberalization to 1980s Europe in any case, but most actors at the time simply did not see this conjuncture as pointing toward the deep, broad liberalization and powerful international institution-building that followed in the Single Market project. If we imagine the considerably less liberalized Europe toward which national-policy convergence alone would have led, the globalization pattern of integration, liberalization, and international institution-building would look much weaker. Patterns of liberalization would be much more clearly dominated by countries with unusual market positioning or ideological relationships to markets: the Anglo-Saxon economies and relatively small entrepôt or exporting-platform countries. Patterns of international institution-building would plausibly be even more different—and not just because the EU would occupy a less extreme data point itself. To some degree the SMP is acknowledged as one of the impulses to other regional projects of liberalization in NAFTA, MERCOSUR, and ASEAN (De la Torre & Kelly, 1992; Buelens, 1992; Grayson, 1993; Anderson & Blackburn, 1993; Mace & Thérien, 1996; Pastor, 2001). From the time of this relaunch in the mid-1980s, the EU became the most-cited inspiration for the spreading notion of an international economy organized in regional economic deals that were also “building blocks” or “stepping stones” for a globalized economy (Gamble & Payne 1991; Frankel 1997; Drysdale & Vines 1998; Hettne et al 1999; Stubbs & Underhill 2000). The more we catalog the repercussions of the SEA inside and outside Europe, I suspect, the more we will see that the common portrayal of the EU as an advanced case of global trends reverses the actual flow of history. The widespread sense that our era features powerful

global trends of integration and liberalization is built to a substantial degree on the distinct foundations of Europe's regionally institutional project.

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