

## FRANCE'S DOUBLE-TALK ON GLOBALIZATION

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France has become a worldwide champion of antiglobalization. France is home to José Bové—sheepfarmer turned McDonalds' wrecker and, in the process, world famous antiglobalization activist. France is also home to ATTAC, a vocal organization originally designed to promote the so-called "Tobin tax" on financial transactions, but which has since become a powerful antiglobalization lobby present in over 30 countries. France is a country where intellectuals have long denounced the cultural and economic shortcomings of US-led globalization, and where newspapers and other media outlets have endlessly documented how France was threatened by foreign entertainment, customs and values. In short, criticizing globalization "sells" in France. French politicians have understood and embraced this trend. On the Left as on the Right, for the past few years, political figures have loaded their speeches with rhetoric critical of a phenomenon that gets a lot less attention in other European countries and in the United States.

Yet at the same time, France is a country whose economy and society have adapted to this much-criticized globalization. Before the current economic downturn, the French economy thrived under Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin's tenure precisely because of globalization—that is, the increasing speed, ease, and extent with which goods, services, capital, technologies, people, information and ideas now cross borders. Thanks to profound, structural reforms of the economy, under the twin pressures of Europeanization and globalization, macroeconomic performance in France was unequivocally positive: growth picked up; foreign investment soared; and high levels of unemployment finally started to fall down.

While the French economy has adapted to globalization, this adaptation has taken place quietly, as if the only version of globalization that the French could tolerate was "globalization by stealth."<sup>1</sup> Both Jospin and conservative President Chirac took major steps in ensuring that France be well positioned

to take advantage of the opportunities offered by globalization, but both of them covered their tracks by holding a very public, almost interchangeable discourse about the need for globalization to be "managed" (Jospin) and "humanized" (Chirac). Interestingly, for all its media presence and seemingly acute importance in the past few years, the issue of globalization was quasi-absent from the official electoral campaign. Because this double-talk on globalization had been co-opted by the mainstream Left as by the mainstream Right, it was as if the issue was just better left alone for the time being.

Why this double talk? Why this disjuncture between words and actions? This article explores the paradoxical French attitudes towards globalization, analyzing why it is socially acceptable in France to denounce the ravages of liberalism but taboo to sing its praises. I argue that although the debate on globalization was quasi-absent from the electoral campaign, the issue did play a major, yet unnoticed, role in producing the surprising outcome of the elections. This article also reflects on whether the double-talk on globalization is politically sustainable in the long-run—and what options remain open today on the issue for the main political parties.

### France's Double Talk on Globalization

In recent years, globalization has become an omnipresent topic in France—spurred on, among others, by Bové and his actions; by some prominent factory closings by multinational companies in France; by the successes and later debacle of France's most famous CEO, Jean-Marie Messier and his company Vivendi; by the debate over new technologies like the Internet and biotechnology; by the World Trade Organization (WTO) rulings allowing sanctions on traditional French products like cheese and *foie gras*; and by the spread of "mad cow" and "foot and mouth" diseases across Europe.

From this, and the posturing of French politicians on the issue of globalization, it might seem fair to conclude that France is experiencing a backlash against globalization, and even taking the lead in a growing international movement to slow or contain the phenomenon. To an extent this is true. The French really do worry about the effects of globalization on their society, economy, and culture, and they are receptive to proposals to regulate the phenomenon. But if it is true, it is also only half of the story. For at the very time that French leaders are talking about the need to contain and regulate globalization, and the French public is expressing its misgivings, the country is also adapting to globalization.

#### *The Globalization of the French Economy*

The real story of the French economy of the past twenty years is not so much how the state has maintained its traditional grip, but rather how the country has gradually, and quietly, adapted to the requirements of the global economy.

The driving forces in bringing about this change have been the related processes of Europeanization and economic globalization, both of which require the state to reduce its role in economic life and allow the market to work. The transformation of the French economy has happened quietly, because it remains a taboo to sing too loudly the praises of liberalization and globalization. Since the French still look back fondly on the role of state planning and intervention in creating such a prosperous and attractive country with generous social protections, they remain wary of the sorts of neo-liberal doctrines that have been embraced in the United States or Great Britain. In France, even today, it is more popular and acceptable to denounce the ravages of "jungle capitalism" or the "dictatorship of stockholders," than it is to praise the free market. Yet while they call for the state to mitigate the negative side-effects of capitalism, French political leaders—and even more its business community—have realized that a dominant state role in running the economy is no longer possible in a European single market and a globalizing world.

Breaking with its mercantilist and *dirigiste* past, France has since the early 1980s converted to market liberalization. Most of the traditional tools of state control over the economy have disappeared in the past two decades: price and credit control, industrial policy, monetary policy. Even on job creation, there is only so much the French state can do nowadays, since it is no longer as big an employer as before: the share of public employment in total salaried employment in France dropped from 10.8 percent in 1982 to 5.3 percent in 1999.<sup>2</sup>

Whereas the French state used to own large sectors of the national means of production, partly to keep them out of foreign control, large shares of companies formerly owned by the French state have now been privatized—and sometimes turned over to foreign interests. The Socialist-Green-Communist coalition led by Prime Minister Jospin, supposedly sympathetic to a statist economy, was indeed very instrumental in this liberalization—privatizing some 36 billion euros worth of state enterprises, more than the past six French governments combined.

In spite of its protectionist reputation, France is actually a very open country, mostly but not only to the rest of Europe. French trade—exports plus imports—as a share of GDP has increased from a level of just 24.9 percent in 1962 to a record 49.4 percent in 1997, a level as high as Germany's (49 percent) and twice as much as the United States (25 percent) and Japan (21 percent). France is the world's fourth largest exporter and has enjoyed trade surpluses since 1993.

France is also very open to foreign direct investment. Forty percent of the value of the Paris Bourse is now held abroad, with some of the best known "French" companies such as TotalFina, Alcatel, and Aventis now majority-owned by foreigners. Other leading French companies—including Michelin, Dassault, and Axa—derive more than 75 percent of their turnover from international sales.<sup>3</sup>

Against all odds, at least superficially, France has also converted to the "new economy" in the financial sphere. The development of the practice of stock options, once widely seen in France as an example of Anglo-Saxon style jungle capitalism gone awry, is further evidence of this conversion. France is now the European country with the highest levels of stock-option distribution, second worldwide only to the United States. To be sure, the reliance on stock options remains controversial in France, especially in the wake of the Vivendi debacle, but still, their prevalence has been an unexpected development.

#### *Rationales for France's Double-Talk on Globalization*

If the French economy has, overall, benefited from globalization, why do French citizens, and by extension French politicians, feel obliged to deliver a double discourse on globalization? Is this double discourse sign of collective schizophrenia, or a "psychiatric case," as American economist and Nobel laureate Robert Solow has written?<sup>4</sup> Is it evidence of a cynical cover-up by politicians? Or is it a sign that it is possible to support some aspects of globalization while rejecting others?

France, of course, is hardly the only country where globalization has become an issue and where the population is concerned about its potential effects. Particularly since the WTO debacle in Seattle, consumer groups, environmentalists and human rights activists all around the world have brought attention to the dangers of unchecked globalization—such as the undemocratic nature of the trade regime, the social failures of the free market, and the real risks of environmental degradation. From the United States to Japan, from Brazil to Italy, substantial sections of public opinion are now seriously questioning globalization and looking for ways to control it.

Yet if globalization is now an issue everywhere, it is a particular challenge for France for several reasons.<sup>5</sup> First, globalization directly challenges the country's *dirigiste* political and economic tradition. Because globalization increases the role of the market as compared to the role of the state in the determination of economic relationships, it is particularly difficult for a society that is used to looking to the state to provide jobs, redistribute incomes, protect against unwanted imports, and promote prestigious industrial sectors and perceived national interests. Therefore it is difficult, if not suicidal, for French politicians to tell the public there is nothing they can do in the face of global markets and trends. This is true whether the issue is job losses when London-based Marks & Spencer closes its Paris branches, or the invasion of movies from Hollywood.

The second reason globalization is so difficult for France is that the French are strongly attached to their culture and identity, which many in France feel is threatened by a globalization they equate with Americanization. The spread of the Internet and other communications technologies; trade liberalization in agricultural goods, intellectual property, and services; and the dominant role of the United States (and thus of the English language) in global business all combine to make the French worry about their cultural, linguistic, and culinary tra-

ditions—in short, their national identity.<sup>6</sup> The recent uproar over the cultural exception issue is a reminder of the limits to France's adaptation to globalization. It shows that France is not prepared to sit back and accept all aspects of a globalized, Americanized world. Indeed, it may well be that it is precisely because France is adapting so significantly in the economic domain, where state control is nowhere near the level it was twenty or even ten years ago, that the French are all the more determined to protect their culture.

Third, globalization challenges some of the most fundamental principles and values on which the French republic was built. Whereas the French republic is based in theory on rationality—the enlightened state playing a prominent role in an effort to improve the collective destiny of the French people—globalization is a messy and disorderly process that interferes with the state's ability to play that role. The United States, proud of its individualism and with a population deeply skeptical of government, thrives in such a chaotic world, and willingly accepts the combination of great successes and relative inequalities it creates. But France is uncomfortable with such a direct challenge to the notions of *égalité* and *fraternité* that are more than just slogans.

Finally, globalization is a particular challenge for France because it is seen to threaten the global stature and role of a country that has long prided itself on its international prominence. Whereas smaller European countries largely abandoned global geopolitics after World War II, France has never given up its desire for global influence. But globalization threatens this influence by reinforcing the dominance of the country that most stands in France's way in its quest for diplomatic influence—that is, the United States, even more so today, in the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> world. Not surprisingly, in a public opinion survey asking people in different European countries what first comes to their mind when they think of "globalization," the top French response was "US dominance," which was the response of 25 percent of the French (though only of 8 percent of the Italians, 6 percent of the British, and just 3 percent of the Germans).<sup>7</sup>

Contrary to popular perceptions, in fact only a minority of the French actually oppose globalization and want to reverse it (or believe it can be reversed). The opponents of globalization, however, have significant political influence because of their high degree of political activism. Their influence is also augmented by the fact that their concerns about globalization—that it threatens French identity, that it creates economic inequalities, or that it undermines France's geopolitical standing—are shared even by the many in France who believe globalization is both inevitable and largely beneficial. These factors explain why French political leaders must tread so carefully even as they take steps, such as liberalizing the French economy and limiting the role of the French state, to adapt to the requirements of globalization. This is also why, in the mainstream Left as in the mainstream Right, politicians have adopted a cautious rhetoric emphasizing the need to "manage" globalization, not surprisingly in a country where people traditionally look to the state for guidance and protection.

## Globalization and the French Elections

Over the years, French politicians perfected the art of double-talk on globalization. Whereas only the extremes of the political spectrum have called for the process to be halted, mainstream politicians from the Left and the Right have argued for measures to regulate and temper some of its perverse effects. Both former Socialist Prime Minister Jospin and Conservative President Chirac have often spoken of the need for alternatives to unregulated markets for goods, money and people, and have demanded more "rules" to govern globalization. Reconciling pro-globalization actions with antiglobalization rhetoric is particularly tricky for the Left, which has had to cross over a longer intellectual distance to embrace global market capitalism.

Mainstream French politicians may have thought that by avoiding to put the debate on globalization in the public eye during the campaign, especially since the positions of Jospin and Chirac seemed so close, their double-talk could escape unnoticed. But French voters were not duped and this double-talk had direct political consequences. Indeed, I will argue that France's tortured political discourse about globalization contributed directly to Jospin's defeat and indirectly to Far-Right National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen's strength.

In the wake of the shocking results of the presidential elections, whose first run eliminated Jospin and pitched Le Pen against incumbent president Chirac, few analysts realized how the confused discourse of mainstream politicians on the globalization issue had been translated into the election results. It is easy to understand why it was overlooked. For all the seeming intensity of public feeling aroused by globalization, it barely emerged as a topic of debate in the campaign for the presidential election. And yet antiglobalization candidates obtained a remarkable score—42.5 percent if one adds together the votes for Besancenot, Chevènement, Gluckstein, Hue, Laguille, Le Pen, Mégret and Saint-Josse (48 percent if Mammère is included).

Jospin was especially adept at "globalization by stealth." His government adapted the French economy and society to the requirements of a globalizing world, but without being straightforward about it. Thus, the Socialist-led government accelerated the privatization of state enterprises, significantly cut France's historically high rate of taxation (even the top rates), and made France home to the world's second highest volume of executive stock options. At the same time, the government covered its tracks with such apparently antiglobalization measures as the 35-hour workweek and rhetorically embraced several of the pet themes of the "left of the left" and the antiglobalization movement—such as the Tobin Tax on financial transactions. In 2002, three ministers of the Jospin government made the trip to the World Economic Forum in New York, but six attended its antiglobalization counterpart, the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Jospin and his allies thereby sent the message that globalization was potentially bad and that they did not really know where to stand on the issue.

The results of this fudging were felt in the election results. The Socialist government's doublespeak had several effects:

1. *A splintered Left.* First, the socialist government's less-than-clear position on globalization helped splinter the Left. The common wisdom is now that Jospin owes his defeat to the multiplicity of candidates on the Left. Indeed, if you add all nine of them, the Left obtained 44 percent of the votes—that is, 7 percent more than in the last presidential election and the same total as in the 1997 legislative elections, which brought the Jospin government to power. If this multiplicity appears to explain to a large extent Jospin's downfall, it is, however, only a symptom of the problems encountered by the Left, not the real cause. In the first round of the presidential election, where the stakes do not usually seem high, many voters cast their ballots for Trotskyist candidates (11 percent) and for former Socialist minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement (5 percent), all overt adversaries of globalization. Why vote for a pale, hesitant copy when you can get the original?

The Socialists could have argued that the good performance of the French economy was in large part due to its openness. Most French people do not know that despite its protectionist reputation, France's economy is twice as open as that of Japan or the US; or that the best-known French companies—such as Michelin, Alcatel and LVMH—derive more than 75 percent of their revenues from abroad. By failing to engage in a massive pedagogic effort designed to emphasize the positive aspects of globalization for France and reverting instead to "*vielle gauche*" ("old left") rhetoric, Jospin and his allies were responsible for legitimizing the far-left discourse and de-demonizing the far-left vote.

2. *Abstentionism and protest vote.* The omnipresent critiques of globalization in recent years have focused in particular on the powerlessness of the state in the face of global constraints. To counter these accusations, policymakers must demonstrate that they are still solidly in command of the French economy. Jospin experienced this first-hand. In 1999, when tire-maker Michelin announced massive layoffs amidst record profits, Jospin declared that the French cannot expect everything from the state, and that there was nothing he could do in that case because it was no longer the state's duty to administer the economy. This statement triggered an outpouring of negative comments from Jospin's own camp. The same situation presented itself two years later, when food giant Danone announced layoffs while remaining extremely profitable. This time, instead of appearing to abdicate to the global economy, Jospin pulled out of his hat a bill on "new economic regulations," which, if passed, would have prevented companies from laying off workers unless on the verge of bankruptcy.

But French voters were not duped by this double discourse, as they showed forcefully in the first round of the presidential election. If citizens feel that it is Brussels or stateless shareholders, instead of their national policymakers, who control the levers of the economy, why bother to choose between the Left and the Right? This explains the record-breaking rate of abstention

(voting participation was 71.6 percent, the lowest in a presidential election under the Fifth Republic) and protest vote in the first round, which in turn explains Le Pen's upset of Jospin.

3. *The legitimization of Le Pen's discourse.* If the duplicity on the globalization issue helped Jospin lose, it also helped Le Pen win, and not only by default. The widespread critical discourse on globalization in France only reinforced the attractiveness of Le Pen's decades-old message on borders, national identity, and external threats. The fact that this obsession with globalization was not accompanied by a real debate on the issue during the campaign—one that would have pointed out to the vices as well as virtues of globalization—further legitimized the National Front's traditional thesis of a France threatened by the outside. For Le Pen, it was easy to put in parallel, or even link, the flux of immigrants with globalization. Indeed, one of the new highlights of his presidential campaign was the denunciation of "*Euromondialisme*"—a pejorative term coined by the National Front to express a fear of what is not French but dictated to France by remote strangers. Moreover, the fact that on the right side of the political spectrum none of the moderate parties offered an outlet to those voters critical of European integration, with the electoral absence of a right "*souverainiste*" candidacy of Pasqua or de Villiers, made Le Pen into the natural recipient of these protest votes.

4. *New cleavages in French politics?* Finally, the debate on globalization has contributed to a mixing-up of the traditional political categories of Left and Right. Today, some of the traditional cleavages separating the Left from the Right—religion, capitalism, communism, education, and others—are giving way to, or at least are supplemented by, new divisions and alignments, driven by the consequences of globalization. To be sure, the basic party structure of the Fifth Republic remains in place, and it is still broadly accurate to talk about "the Left" and "the Right." But globalization is helping to realign these movements and contributing to the "mixing up of traditional political-ideological categories."<sup>9</sup> Where the debate about globalization is concerned, as was already the case in the debate about Europe in the early 1990s, the extremes on each side of the spectrum have more in common with each other than they do with the Center. Now Communists, Greens, *Chevènementistes*, civic movements and the left wing of the Socialists stand together with the National Front and some right-wing Gaullists in their staunch opposition to globalization, while mainstream Socialists, centrists, and moderate Gaullists all agree on the need to accept and manage it. Only a small element of liberals, backed by France's business community, enthusiastically embrace the free flow of goods, people, capital, and ideas associated with globalization.

It should therefore not come as such a surprise that the second round of the presidential election pitted one antiglobalization and anti-Europe candidate against a pro-globalization (although in a "managed" form) and pro-Europe candidate. Perhaps this is the shape of things to come in France if the obsession with globalization continues unabated.

### Is Double-Talk Sustainable?

According to a recent opinion poll, French worries about globalization, already very high compared to their European neighbors, are increasing—today, 63 percent of the French population feels “worried” about globalization (against 55 percent after the “battle of Seattle” in 1999), whereas only 10 percent feel “confident” (against 21 percent in 1999) and 2 percent “enthusiastic” about globalization.<sup>10</sup> These figures suggest that the issue of globalization, which has slowly made its way in the public perception of politics throughout the 1990s, is not about to depart from the French political landscape.

Yet globalization is an issue that has left mainstream politicians uncomfortable and, therefore, reluctant to address. It seems unfortunate that the governments of the late 1990s did not take advantage of the good economic situation of that time to undertake greater reforms and more pedagogy with the electorate. Why didn't the moderate Left openly admit that globalization has a positive side that should be encouraged even if it is necessary to protect France from its more negative effects? And why did it prefer to reform the French economy and society by stealth while demonizing globalization? A large number of leftist voters decided instead to back candidates who openly abhorred globalization. And why didn't the Right dare to openly defend liberalism, instead of hiding behind ambiguous rhetoric? It is not surprising that many of its voters chose to listen to Le Pen's alarmist rhetoric about a France in national decline threatened by immigrants, Eurocrats, and globalization.

Given the current context of global economic downturn and global crisis of faith in capitalism, it appears that this double discourse cannot be sustainable over the long run. If mainstream politicians continue the “ostrich policy” of doing nothing about reconciling their acts with their words, French voters will likely sanction them again. So, what are the options available to French politics, and French politicians, to confront the paradoxical French attitudes towards globalization? The options seem clearer for the extremist rather than for the mainstream parties.

1. *The extreme Right.* Beyond the boost offered by the theme of rising crime and insecurity, what enabled the far-right vote to progress in the 2002 elections was Le Pen's ability to canalize the hopelessness and anger of the closed society, “the France *d'en-bas*” (the “downstairs France”), which only experiences the negative side-effects of globalization (job losses, salary reductions, no true price decreases to accompany rises in productivity) without being able to enjoy its positive aspects. In order to exploit this new “globalization cleavage” fully, the National Front's strategy should be to keep emphasizing the issues of borders and sovereignty—whether the external threat comes from immigrants, Europe, or globalization.

Indeed, focusing on the dangers, real and potential, of an “open society” has so far proven a winning strategy for the far Right. Since the early 1990s, the National Front has theorized that in order to gain ground, it had to expand

its reach by being at the vanguard of populism, nationalism, anti-Europeanism and antiglobalism. From the 1992 referendum on Maastricht to the 1994 conclusion of the Uruguay Round of GATT to the birth of the antiglobalization movement after the strikes of 1995, the National Front has capitalized on the emergence of a new cleavage in French politics (an open versus a closed society) and on the absence of alternative political outlets on the Right to channel the protests of the losers of globalization.<sup>11</sup>

Candidate Le Pen followed this strategy fully during the 2002 elections, which succeeded in attracting a large number of votes from workers, the unemployed, and small business owners. Indeed, in the days following his spectacular score in the first round of the presidential elections, Le Pen openly appealed to all of those who suffer from globalization: “I call upon the patriots, the *souverainistes* and the authentic republicans to converge around my candidacy in order to oppose Brussels' technocratic Europe and to create a true popular force to defend national independence and opposition to globalization.”<sup>12</sup> As long as no other political force is able to articulate so forcefully the despair of those who feel victimized by globalization in all its dimensions (economic, cultural, and social), we should expect the National Front to keep emphasizing this theme in the years to come.

2. *The extreme Left.* Although the far Left is divided into many distinct families and sensibilities, its common opposition to capitalism and neoliberalism make one strategic choice seems evident: capitalize on the popularity and visibility of the antiglobalization movement.

The relations between the “left of the Left” and the antiglobalization movement have not been that easy in France until now. Between 1998 (mobilization against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment) and 2002, the antiglobalization movement developed independently from political parties, in mutual suspicion.<sup>13</sup> During the 2002 electoral period, Arlette Laguiller's *Lutte ouvrière* (LO) made clear its mistrust of the antiglobalization movement. The *Ligue communiste révolutionnaire* (LCR) and its then unknown presidential candidate Olivier Besancenot (who received 4.2 percent of the votes in the first round), showed more sympathy for the new social movements and antiglobalization in particular, but still they did not suggest any alliance. As for the antiglobalization movement itself, many of its leaders and spokespersons have not shown much inclination to being allied with or “recuperated” by any specific political party—on the contrary, they have made a point to keep their distance.

Nevertheless, it seems that a certain “*rapprochement*,” even informal, may now be in the works. At the first European Social Forum, in November 2002 in Florence, diverse representatives of European left parties met formally for the first time with leaders of the antiglobalization movement, who were united in their condemnation of social democracy for having conducted the same liberal economic policies as the Right. The antiglobalization movement insisted that they could only collaborate with those left parties that clearly reject

reform in favor of radicalism.<sup>14</sup> In France, the LCR has been trying to propose some unification of the "left of the Left," precisely around an antiglobalization agenda. Besancenot contrasts the existing "*gauche d'alternance*" (that is, the Socialists and the "plural Left") to the "*gauche alternative*," a yet-to-be-built political force regrouping those who stem from the new social movements and partake in the spirit of Florence.<sup>15</sup> Even if such a rapprochement were to occur, however, it is yet unclear how many votes a "left of the Left" (excluding LO) could muster—in particular whether it could tap into the "*souverainiste* of the Left" reservoir of votes until then represented by Chevènement.

3. *The moderate Right.* In large part through Chirac's rhetoric, the moderate Right has been guilty of the double-discourse on globalization. Yet its ideological stretch is not as big a challenge as it may be for the Left. After all, the Gaullists have evolved over time into timid backers of economic liberalism, so recognizing the benefits of neo-liberal market globalization while advocating the need for the worst effects of globalization to be corrected is not fundamentally contradictory.

After the Right's legislative victory in June 2002, the new Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin talked about globalization as one of his four major projects. But so far, not much has changed, and one should not expect further changes anytime soon, for various reasons: the feeling that capitalism is in crisis (especially since the Enron collapse); Messier's shameful debacle and the unleashing of negative comments on the adequacy of French capitalism that ensued; and a fear of losing voters at the right extreme of the spectrum.

For the new UMP, officially founded in November 2002, there is therefore no urgency in addressing upfront the issue of globalization. Still, the moderate Right will eventually have to confront its own ambiguities on the question. In particular, the UMP will have to decide whether to take into account the views of the "*souverainistes*" who, in spite of their meager showings in recent elections and their personality clashes, may represent a potentially rich reservoir of antiglobalization and anti-Europeanization votes. The conclusion of the European constitutional convention in 2004 may represent the ultimate test of where the moderate Right stands on the twin issues of Europeanization and globalization.

For the moment, the *souverainistes* are splintered. On the issue of enlargement, William Abitbol believes that it is undesirable for Europe to enlarge to the East because it would lead to political chaos and social crisis, whereas Charles Pasqua and Philippe de Villiers favor enlargement, which might temper any federalist push in Europe. The most urgent disagreement, however, is on political strategy. For Abitbol, the *souverainistes* should not integrate the UMP because in 2004 they would have to say "no" to the European treaty creating the constitution, when Chirac and Raffarin will likely say "yes." For Abitbol, to create a *souverainiste* movement within the UMP would be "like to create a pro-American current within Al Qaeda!"<sup>16</sup> But other *souverainistes*, such as Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, have decided instead to integrate the UMP in

order to reach out to the former RPF supporters and those who are skeptical of Europe.

4. *The moderate Left.* While globalization has contributed to the Left's defeat in 2002, it is now becoming the focal point of a Left in search of rebuilding. Most of the Left agrees on the fundamentals: the question is not whether one is for or against globalization; regulation is necessary but not sufficient; globalization creates economic, social and environmental insecurity; and the Left must help the losers.<sup>17</sup> But globalization raises fundamental issues, as Dominique Strauss-Kahn has argued, such as the nature of socialism (reform or radicalism?), the strategy of the Socialist Party ("plural Left" or two different lefts?), and the tools to deal with globalization (Europe?).<sup>18</sup>

The ambiguous position of the Jospin government on the issue was to globalize not only without acknowledging it, but also while castigating globalization in a language sometimes reminiscent of the rhetoric of the far Left. This double-talk strategy, which for a while may have passed as brilliant political stratagem, did not pay off in electoral terms.<sup>19</sup> The Socialists, out of power for many years, can now pursue two strategies for the longer run in order to avoid the electoral trap of the double-talk on globalization. Either they align their actions with their rhetoric or their rhetoric with their actions.

The first strategy is a radical one—swinging back sharply to the Left, becoming more antiglobal and anti-Europe, balking at profound reform of the state, and refocusing on traditional leftist demands, such as a higher minimum wage. This is the option proposed specifically by Henri Emmanuelli and Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who have created the new "*Nouveau Monde*" current in the Socialist Party in September 2002. The goal of their movement is to anchor the Socialist Party firmly to the Left, especially on issues such as taxation, public services, Europe and globalization. The Jospin government failed, according to their analysis, in trying to "accompany globalization"—when instead it should have denounced liberalism clearly and promoted a true alternative. According to Mélenchon, "one cannot argue a thesis and its opposite, be both in Davos and in Porto Alegre. If the Socialists do not clarify their position, the party will die."<sup>20</sup>

The second strategy is the reformist one—reforming and modernizing, moving away from the left of the Left. This is the option advocated by François Hollande and Dominique Strauss-Kahn, among others. At the extreme is the "current" led by former Prime Minister Laurent Fabius, grouping those who openly favor a market economy, including, when needed, privatizations and the liberalization of a market logic in some parts of the services sector. Supporters of Fabius and his social-liberal vision do represent 20 percent of the *Parti socialiste's* leaders.<sup>21</sup> If the Socialists choose the reformist strategy, they will have to confront and accept their own economic conversion and teach their electorate to like globalization, even if it is a "managed" version. They also will have to be creative in elaborating new tools to regulate the domestic consequences of the global economy. This political strategy is more risky in the short run, since it would alienate and radicalize the far Left.

It is still unclear which strategy the PS will adopt. So far, every component of the Left is still seen courting the antiglobalization movement. At the first gathering of the European Social Forum, taking place in Florence in November 2002, the French Left showed up en masse: Alain Krivine and Olivier Besancenot for the LCR, many members of the *Verts*, François Hollande for the Socialists, and many members of the Communist Party. Unlike in Porto Alegre, however, neither Chevènement, nor Chirac's special envoy, Jérôme Bonnafont, made the trip to Florence.<sup>22</sup>

### Conclusion

Globalization has the potential for becoming the new focal point around which French politics may crystallize. It does provide a new fault line, one that divides a "*société ouverte*" from a "*société fermée*"—an "open society" ready to benefit from the broader cultural horizons and consumption possibilities that globalization has to offer, versus a "closed society" unable or unwilling to enjoy these while standing in the first row of those who suffer from its plagues: unemployment, delocalisation, pauperization, loss of identity.

In the current context of economic crisis and international political uncertainty, however, mainstream politicians may feel skittish about confronting their own ambivalence and hypocrisies about globalization. Judging by the lynching of Messier and the reactions to his demise, one can wonder what will happen to the new French capitalism and to those few who were arguing for a clearer position on the vices and virtues of neo-liberal capitalism. The Messier fiasco may reinvigorate the many in France who believe that the state should be the ultimate arbiter of important economic questions. As *The Economist* asked, "will the recent pro-market move be reversed, or will the French elite find that it cannot force the *laissez-faire* genie back in its bottle?"<sup>23</sup>

Globalization may well provide a new defining cleavage in French politics, but at the same time it may also serve to reinforce the old Left/Right divide. In a November 2002 report, the World Economic Forum (organizer of the Davos annual meeting) estimated that in one year France slipped from the twentieth to the thirtieth place in the world for competitiveness—which is intended to forecast long-term growth potential.<sup>24</sup> The outrage provoked in France by the publication of this report had the consequence of reopening the debate on how to reinforce the attractiveness of France to outside investors—and, therefore, of relaunching the debate on globalization. Faced with an open, global economy, French voters and politicians will have to make hard choices between measures that improve economic flexibility and measures that answer demands for social protection. This should force the Right and the Left to reevaluate where they each stand on the economic/social equilibrium, which has defined them in relation to the other for so long.

To some extent, the tortured discourse of mainstream politicians on globalization reflects the tortured, conflicted views of French citizens on the issue. According to a recent CSA poll, while 63 percent of the French feel "worried" about globalization and 60 percent associate it with frankly negative criteria (such as inequality between rich and poor), 51 percent also acknowledge its positive aspects (such as cultural exchanges and the free movement of persons).<sup>25</sup> Indeed, it seems that different cocktails of pro- and antiglobalization coexist within most French people. Everyone is, to some extent, a subtle, and different, mix of José Bové and Jean-Claude Trichet. By using double-talk, criticizing globalization but adapting to it, French politicians only mirror their constituencies' own insecurities on the issue.

More generally, the double-talk on globalization raises a fundamental question about the role of politicians in modern democracies: is a politician's duty to represent voters or to guide them? If the role of politicians is to relay the desires of their constituencies to the policy-making level and to then translate these desires as best as possible into policies, then the double-talk on globalization should be interpreted as a faithful reflection of French citizens' conflicted feelings about globalization, rather than as hypocrisy or duplicity. However, one can also argue that politicians have a quite different role: that of producing explanations, rendering the complex world intelligible to the voters, and engaging in a pedagogic effort with the electorate. The day when French politicians realize that they have to take up seriously this second duty as well, one can expect a quite different position on the issue of globalization—one that will paint the image of a France in dire need of the globalization it currently decries, but one that will stand on firmer ground when it then proposes concrete steps to tamper its worst side-effects.

### Notes

1. Phillip H. Gordon and Sophie Meunier, *The French Challenge: Adapting to Globalization* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2001).
2. Constance Baudry, "Changer la vie en 2007," *Le Monde*, 18 October 2002, Dossier on "La difficile recomposition du Parti socialiste."
3. Gordon and Meunier, *The French Challenge*.
4. Quoted in Elie Cohen, *La Tentation hexagonale: La souveraineté à l'épreuve de la mondialisation* (Paris: Fayard, 1996), p. 117.
5. Section based on Gordon and Meunier, *The French Challenge*.
6. Phillip H. Gordon and Sophie Meunier, "Globalization and French Cultural Identity," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 19, 1 (Spring 2001).
7. See "West Europeans Tend to View Globalization Positively," European Opinion Alert, Office of Research, Department of State, November 20, 2000.

8. A similar argument is made by Pierre Martin, "L'élection présidentielle et les élections législatives de 2002," *Commentaire* 99 (Fall 2002).
9. Eddy Fouger, "Les trois voix: Mondialisation, gouvernance et politique," *Accès* (July 2002).
10. Nicolas Weill, "Vers la fin de la 'mondialisation heureuse'?" *Le Monde*, 8 October 2002. CSA poll conducted 24-25 September 2002.
11. On this new cleavage, see Pascal Perrineau, "Le vote d'extrême-droite en France: Adhésion ou protestation?" *Futuribles* 276 (June 2002).
12. Press release of Jean-Marie Le Pen, candidate for the presidency of the French Republic, Saint-Cloud, 23 April 2002.
13. On ATTAC, see Marcos Ancelevici, "Organizing against Globalization: The Case of ATTAC in France," *Politics and Society* 30, 3 (September 2002): 427-63.
14. Laurence Caramel and Clarisse Fabre, "A Florence, les anti-mondialisation rencontrent les partis de la gauche institutionnelle," *Le Monde*, 10 November 2002.
15. Daniel Penny, "M. Besancenot oppose la 'gauche alternative' à la 'gauche d'alternance'" *Le Monde*, 21 November 2002.
16. Christiane Chombeau, "Les souverainistes de droite à la recherche d'une organisation et de nouveaux adhérents," *Le Monde*, 3 November 2002.
17. Clarisse Fabre, "La gauche à la recherche de 'sa' mondialisation," *Le Monde*, 1 October 2002.
18. Dominique Strauss-Kahn, "Parti socialiste: l'union et la clarification," *Le Monde*, 3 October 2002.
19. On the double-talk as a general strategy of the Jospin government, see Christine Mihal and Erik Izaelewicz, *Monsieur Ni-Ni: L'Économie selon Jospin* (Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, 2002).
20. "Emmanuel et Mélenchon unissent leurs forces," *Le Nouvel Observateur* (28 September 2002).
21. Edouard Philimin, "Les chantiers de la réforme," *Le Monde*, 23 October 2002.
22. Laurence Caramel, "150 000 militants à Florence pour le premier Forum social européen," *Le Monde*, 7 November 2002.
23. *The Economist*, 5 October 2002.
24. World Economic Forum, *The Global Competitiveness Report 2002-2003*, see <http://www.weforum.org/gcp>.
25. Nicolas Weill, "Vers la fin de la 'mondialisation heureuse'?" *Le Monde*, 8 October 2002. CSA poll conducted 24-25 September 2002.