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The French Print Media and Their Influence on Public Opinion: An Enduring Trend?

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in the
Foreign Languages Department

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Under the mentorship of Dr. David Seaman

Abstract

The French print media, “la presse”, are a diverse and rich method of mass communication. As media are a driving force behind the formation of public opinion, this study looks at the influential role of French print media on public opinion in France, a trend that began with the Dreyfus Affair in the late nineteenth century. Through investigating two relatively recent events and their place in French print media, the formation of the European Union and the millennial economic crisis, we can assess the durability of this trend into the modern era of mass communication. With worldwide newspaper readership declining and the onset of the 24-hour television news, do print media still influence French public opinion?

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Introduction

Through issue salience and presentation, the media focus the attention of the public on certain issues, and have the ability to sway the public's perception by the way they cover these issues. In the words of the scholar Bernard Cohen, "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about." This influence is not necessarily exercised deliberately, but nevertheless, the press shapes public opinion. Today, the dominance of the print media, "la presse" in France, has come under question as newspaper circulation decreases and technology changes the way that the public accesses the news. As a country with relatively high newspaper readership (readership described as subscribing to a newspaper), with 16.4% of adults getting their news from print media in France compared with just 9% in the United States, France is an interesting case for the changing influence of "la presse." Additionally, the complexity of French print media with its strong regional press, national dailies, influential weeklies (les hebdomodaires), and political opinion titles, contributes to its intrigue in the study of print media and public opinion.

Domestic politics became a topic of interest in French media following the Revolution in 1789, and continued to be covered throughout the political flux that dominated the 19th century. One event that remains important to the history of print media, The Dreyfus Affair, was a landmark event in the relationship between the press, current events, and shaping public opinion. Aggressive, partisan, and widely circulated, the print media took this controversy and fanned the flames by manipulating public opinion and polarizing the debate. The Dreyfus Affair, marked by the publication of

Emile Zola's "J'accuse" in *L'Aurore* newspaper, was the first, and still one of the most poignant, examples of print media's influence on public opinion. Today, print media continue to hold popularity in France, with circulation of a daily newspaper hovering around 49%. But do print media still shape public opinion the way it did during the Dreyfus Affair? This paper explores the trend of French print media's influence on public opinion by examining two more recent socio-political events, the formation of the European Union and European Economic Area as well as the European Economic Crisis.

The Press and Public Opinion: Research Method

The idea that public opinion is influenced by the media has been widely studied and agreed upon by most scholars. It has been proliferated from one of the first studies in the 1920's, by Walter Lipmann (cited by McCombs, pgs. 3, 71), in which he looked at contemporary cases to deduce that the news media are an outlet through which the public formulates opinions on issues that are beyond direct experience, to the more recent studies in 1996 by Zaller that stress the flow of information from mass media on changing political attitudes of the public. In order to better understand the relationship between the print media in France and its role in public opinion, we must look at this relationship in general. To assess news media's effect on public opinion, public opinion polls gauge whether the public has an opinion on a topic and to what degree and then these poll results are cross-referenced with the contents of pertinent news articles. In addition to the content of the article in print media, there are also basic cues that, consciously or not, the public uses to form their opinions. Through article placement (i.e. front and center on the first page or on an inside page), using different font sizes and types, and article length, the public's perception of an event is influenced. Additionally,

the media exert influence through *framing*, the media's presentation of an issue from one perspective to the exclusion of the other perspective (Boydston and Glazier), and through the use of consistent one-directional information flow (day-to-day presentations of the same issue with the same general connotation).

This study places emphasis on article content, whether through media framing or one-directional information flow, and the attitudes and actions of the public to draw a historical trend of the media's influence on public opinion. In addition to public opinion poll data, information from historical accounts and secondary sources will be drawn upon to examine the correlation between print media and public opinion with regard to the Suez Crisis and the Formation of the European Union. These outlets of public opinion will be cross-referenced with articles from France's most widely-known and respected newspaper, *Le Monde*, to which readership by both national leaders and the general public, was considerable during the time periods in question. The aim of this paper is to map the trend of print media's influence on public opinion beginning with analysis of the Dreyfus Affair in the late 19th century, and test its endurance into the television/internet news era by examining the formation of the European Union and European Economic Area (1990-1993) as well as the European Economic Crisis (2007-Present).

History

First, we must take a look at the evolution of French print media and how it became a dominating force in shaping public opinion. What factors set the stage for The Dreyfus Affair? From the outside, the French press is a complex organism producing a

rich and varied print media environment. It includes local, regional, and national outlets, covers a range of interests, and is published daily, weekly, monthly, and periodically. Reflected in it is France's social, economic, political, ideological, and geographic diversity. From the first periodical, *La Gazette*, published in 1631, French print media have burgeoned into a multi-faceted staple of French culture.

Early French Print Media

In the period from 1631 to the French Revolution, print media remained largely for the elite class. The contents of *La Gazette* and other periodicals of the time, such as *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques*, would today be termed as a type of “fait-divers”, the trivial daily happenings or often a salacious story of priestly exploits. It was not until 1777 that the first daily newspaper appeared, *Journal de Paris*, published and circulated in Paris. Print media for the more common man, not quite bourgeoisie yet not the rural field worker, did not see its heyday until after the French Revolution in 1789. Enlightenment, “Lumieres”, attitudes meshed with post-revolutionary fervor to create a culture more adept and interested in reading the news, and subsequently the number of titles in circulation grew significantly. Adding to the growing information flow was the relatively cheap cost of publication and the technological advances in printing, such as movable type and the printing press. Also, due to this sense of post-revolutionary fervor, politics remained quite the subject of conversation and domestic politics became widely covered by the new abundance of print media. Naturally, as more people learned about politics, the more polarized they became, making way for the openly partisan journalism that is still felt in modern French print media. However, with time distancing the realm of interest from the Revolutionary spirit, many of these newly circulating titles proved

ephemeral and disappeared. The interest in of the public in the news died down, resurfacing with the Revolution of 1848, and then fading away with the repression of the new political power of the Second Empire (1851-1870).

The Golden Age: 1870-1914

In 1870, a new governing body came to power, the Third Republic. The Third Republic was the first French government to encourage the press and to pass laws that were favorable to it. Newspapers, dailies and periodicals alike, became “un produit de consommation”, products of consumption and a method of mass communication. The era from 1870 to the beginning of World War I became known as the golden age for the French press. Newspapers began to penetrate the lower classes and spread from city centers to provincial areas. Not only was the legal environment a catalyst for this change in readership and scope of influence, technological advances and educational reform played a part as well. Industrialization revolutionized and expedited the publication process, while the telegraph allowed for the speedier information gathering. Meanwhile, the Jules Ferry legislation made education more accessible and increased literacy rates. The public demand for information was growing and technology was able to supply it. In just ten years, from 1870 to 1880, the overall number of newspapers in circulation nearly doubled, and the period from 1870-1914 saw the largest number of newspapers in circulation in the history of the French press (Refer to Table 1.1). It is here, in a climate of a vim mass audience willing and able to read the news and cheaply produced, widely circulated print news sources that the Dreyfus Affair falls into the timeline. So, we see the factors that led to the historic climax of print media’s influence on public opinion in

France; however, what historical factors, if any, perpetuate this trend into the modern era?

The Modern Era of the French Press: 1945 – Present

After the German Vichy government's takeover of the press during the Second World War, the French had to rebuild and revitalize. In the Ordinance of June 15, 1945, it was declared that the rights of the press established in 1881 be reestablished and the edicts, constricting the press, that had been set by the Vichy government nullified. The next thirty years saw the nationalization of the press and the creation of the Agence France-Presse (AFP), as well a decrease and centralization of the number of newspaper titles. The Fourth Republic believed the Golden Age press laws to be too laissez-faire, too dominated by industrial-capitalists, and not far-reaching enough to prevent conglomeration and control of information by these "press bosses." However, leaders of the Fourth Republic's approach crippled the press industry, boosting the costs of subscriptions and newspaper copies as well creating an environment for regional monopolies to dominate the provincial press. In addition to the censorship of information by the AFP and the decrease in circulating titles, the 1950's brought two technological developments that detracted from the sphere of influence of the print media: the radio and the television. During the 1980's, after the Left gained control of the government, the print media underwent a phase of liberalization. The AFP relinquished much of its censorship power and ownership transferred slowly from national to private. However, some, including Charon (author of *La Presse en France*), would argue that the damage had already been done. The decline in titles and increase in prices of the post-war era had decreased readership, and as data shows, circulation has not rebounded. Nevertheless,

comparatively, France maintains a higher newspaper readership than other western countries. Are the print media still influential in shaping public opinion for the 16.4% of the French population that continue to use it as a media source?

Table 1.1 Number of Daily Newspaper Titles 1788-1990¹

<i>Year</i>	<i>Paris</i>	<i>Provinces</i>	<i>Total</i>
1788	2	1	3
1803	11		
1812	4	4	8
1815	8		
1825	12		
1831-32	17	32	49
1846	25		
1850		64	
1852	12		
1863	16	60	76
1867	21	57	78
1870	36	100	136
1880	60	190	250
1885		250	
1908	70		
1910	73		
1914	80	242	322
1917	48		
1924	30		
1939	31	175	206
1946	28	175	203
1952	14	117	131
1972	11	78	89
1975	12	71	83
1980	12	73	85
1983	13	74	87
1985	12	70	82
1987	12	67	79
1990	11	62	73

¹ Kuhn, Media in France

The Dreyfus Affair

The Dreyfus Affair is one of the most publicized events of nineteenth century French history, noted for the striking public response that occurred following Emile Zola's "J'Accuse...! Lettre au President de la Republique par Emile Zola" letter published in *L'Aurore* on January 13, 1898. Historian Michael Burns estimated that "more than one thousand works now in print have described, analyzed, quantified, and deconstructed almost every aspect of the affair", and in the twenty years since this estimation scholarly work on the topic has continued. Far more than a simple media event, the Dreyfus Affair was muddled by the military's role in the scandal and growing anti-Semitism in France at the time. Beginning as a seemingly uneventful morning meeting among military officers, the Dreyfus Affair was exacerbated into an international news story.

First, before discussing the media influence and public's role in the affair, a brief summary of the events:

On the morning of October 15, 1894, Captain Albert Dreyfus met with General Charles Le Mouton de Bosideffre and other civilian and military personnel under the false pretense of a general staff inspection. Upon completing a letter dictating to him in this meeting, he was accused of and arrested for treason. The scandal truly begins many months hence, with Major Esterhazy, a French officer with a debt problem and a German-sympathetic heritage who agreed to sell French military secrets to a German military attaché located in Paris. In order to maintain the image of the French military

hierarchy, Dreyfus presented an easy scapegoat to blame for the treason. Being Jewish, he was not seen as “truly a Frenchmen”, due to growing anti-Semitic feeling in France. This kept the French reputation clean, casting blame on a societal outcast. Regardless of the lack of substantial evidence, fabricated documents presented in the trial in the form of a “dossier secret”, and the failure of the military prosecution to make a definitive case against Dreyfus in court, he was convicted in December 1894 and sentenced to life imprisonment on the French prison camp Devil’s Island, located in French Guyana.

The media were abounding in the early days of the trial, with leaks to the press occurring near the end of October 1894. An article was published in the anti-Semitic leaning newspaper, *L’éclair*, on October 29, denouncing Dreyfus and supporting the accusations against him. As the most effective way to reach the largest audience, it is no surprise that the press became involved in the case. By the end of the trial most of the country believed Dreyfus to be guilty, so involved was the public that part of Dreyfus’ sentencing included a public shaming on January 5, 1895 that included no shortage of attendance.

However, the Affair did not escalate to a major media event, until after Emile Zola’s “J’Accuse” was printed in *L’Aurore* in 1898. It is true that the trial had not become passé in the three years following Dreyfus’s sentencing. In 1896 an article had been printed in an English newspaper falsely claiming that Dreyfus had escaped. This news spread to France and public pressure to monitor Dreyfus pushed the government to order that he be chained in his cell at all times. Although the case still rippled through the news at times, with intellectuals like Lazare and Zola publishing articles denouncing anti-Semitism in France, but not directly the Dreyfus trial results, in the interim. As most of

the public remained anti-Semitic in belief during this time, public demands for the cessation of publication of *Le Figaro* following Zola's earlier articles had even led them to refuse to publish anything else by him in 1897, hence the publication of "J'Accuse" in *L'Aurore*. Despite these other articles, the definitive moment of media explosion arrived with "J'accuse." Zola's article, along with previous more vague pro-Jewish articles in *Le Figaro*, bolstered the Affair into a divisive public issue. It was no accident that "J'accuse" reached the attention that it did. Editor of *L'Aurore*, Clemenceau, and Zola put mechanisms in place to elevate the readership of the paper on that particular day and ensure that this article would sway public opinion. Extra paperboys were employed, posters advertising the article were posted in public venues throughout Paris, and 300,000 copies of the paper were printed. The papers sold, 200,000 copies in the first hour, and "J'accuse" propelled The Dreyfus Affair into a media spotlight far more reaching than the three months of coverage during the trial. Here were born the "Nationalists" and the "Dreyfusards," the public identifying so fully with the case that they donned these titles and hotly debated their side of the story, petitioning for re-trial and rioting in the streets. The public reaction to the "J'Accuse" article is perhaps best noted by historian Michael R. Marrus (quoted in Begley):

Immediately following the publication of Émile Zola's J'accuse, there were anti-Jewish uprisings in virtually every city in France. Not only were Jewish stores and places attacked and burned but Jews were assaulted in the streets. The police seemed to be either ineffective or in league with the rioters. . . . According to police reports the crowds were not only crying slogans related to the Dreyfus Affair, but also "Death to the Jews!" In Paris the mob burst out of its traditional battle ground in the Latin Quarter to attack Jewish stores on the Right Bank. In Nantes, it was reported, a number of soldiers joined in the demonstration, and in Bordeaux pitched battles were fought in the

vicinity of the synagogue. Significant outbreaks were reported in Marseille, Lyon, Nancy, and Versailles. Even smaller towns, Clermont-Ferrand, La Rochelle, Poitiers, Angoulême, and Saint-Flour[,] had incidents of violence and anti-Semitic demonstrations. In Algeria, where for several days the police did nothing to prevent the clashes, the riots were particularly bloody; several people were beaten to death in what could only be described as a pogrom.

As we can see from Marrus' depiction, the letter had quite the impact on the public. The Dreyfus Affair was the first time in French history that a newspaper article incited such a response from the general public. Newspapers continued to cover the affair and surrounding events, including the libel trial of Emile Zola and the appeal process of the military tribunal decision that found Dreyfus guilty. Finally, on June 5, 1899, following a trial conducted under much public scrutiny, the Dreyfus decision was reversed and Captain Albert Dreyfus left Devil's Island prison camp to return to France. Had *L'Aurore* never published Zola's letter, the Dreyfus case would have remained closed, far from the minds of the French public.

Formation of the European Union and European Economic Area

After World War II, Europe began to lay a plan for peace and unity, beginning with the formation of the European Steel and Coal Community on May 9, 1950. This energy and resource focused body opened the door for later cooperative bodies, the common market and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom). Six member states formed these early European communities: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, until their first enlargement in 1972 to include four more members. Economic and political cooperation continued, and in 1990 two treaties, the Treaty of the Political Union and the Treaty of the Economic and Monetary Union

were consecrated by the Intergovernmental Conferences of the European Community. These treaties were later combined to become the Maastricht Treaty, the treaty that officially formed the European Union².

As one of the six founding members of the body that grew into the European Union, France played an instrumental role in its formation. Under the leadership of Francois Mitterand (1981-1995), France became a major diplomatic power in settling disputes in the European Community, as well as creating fiscal policy and supporting collaborative research and development. Additionally, France's bilateral leadership with Germany toward the successful completion of the goals set forth in the Single European Act of 1986 was an important step toward the political and economic integration of Europe³. The Intergovernmental Conferences of 1990 took place in Paris with several French political and administrative leaders at the heart of the negotiations: Mitterand, Dumas, Guigou, Beregovoy, de Boisseau, and Trichet.

With France assuming such a crucial role in the development of the European Union, it is no surprise that related news stories saturated national print media during this formative period. The French government actively supported the Maastricht Treaty, and two main tenets seem to be at the center of the French platform: liberalizing the market while strengthening monetary cooperation and strengthening political cooperation without strengthening defense cooperation. By analyzing print media articles on these three topics and gauging public reaction through the use of public opinion polls, we can

²History summarized from Cartou

³ From Moravcsik

examine the print media's effect on public opinion during the formation of the European Union, nearly one hundred years after the Dreyfus Affair.

Excerpts from *Le Monde* put an emphasis on “le projet français” the French project, pitting it against “le projet anglais” the English project, which did not emphasize a monetary union or a liberalized market. For example, in an article from January 1991: “The French, noting that a monetary union is not possible without effective convergence of economic performance, advocate, without changing the institutions, the rise of a true community economic power.” (Translation mine) The strengthening of a monetary union is emphasized again in an article from January 1993 entitled: “La Libre Circulation des Marchandises, des Capitaux, et des Services Bulletin—Du concret malgré tout.” In this article the free circulation of goods, capital, and services is observed in spite of “recalcitrant” Great Britain and Denmark. Another 1991 *Le Monde* article sheds positive light on the work that France was doing toward an economic and monetary union describing France as “perfectly faithful” to the concept, and giving Great Britain's disagreement a quick blurb at the end of the article.

In general, based on support for a 1992 French referendum on a common currency and other united monetary policy, French public support was less in favor of strengthening the Economic and Monetary Union than the government expected. According to the 1991 Eurobarometer reports, France was among the countries with the highest support for a single currency and European Central Bank with 64% of citizens in favor. However, public support was strongly split among social class and income levels. Public opinion surveys show that support for the 1992 referendum mostly came from the

highly educated and those living in a higher income household⁴. Similarly, according to a European Journal of Communication study⁵, newspaper readers are more likely to be from those same groups. It is difficult to prove unquestionably that the heavily positive print media spin on strengthening a monetary union influenced this segment of the population to support the new European monetary policy. However, given that research shows that public opinion is shaped by the media, it is also difficult to write this correlation off as a coincidence.

European Economic Crisis (2007-Present)

In late summer 2007 a global economic crisis, triggered by issues in the United States' subprime market, was beginning to be felt in Europe, and grew into deepest economic recession there since the 1930's. The first signs of crisis came when European bank BNP Paribas failed to provide redemptions for three different investment funds, claiming it was unable to value structured products. A landslide of failed and almost failed banks began in spring 2008 with the failure of United States institution Bear Stearns and two European banks Northern Rock and Landesbank Sachsen. The downturn in the financial market, including liquidation of assets by investors and a plummeting stock market, was quickly matched in the real economy with falling business investment and household demand. In 2009, EU real GDP shrank by a reported 4%, the largest contraction since its formation. The global credit crunch continued to adversely affect Europe with a sovereign-debt crisis settling in in late 2009, pre-cursed by the staunch reduction in inter-bank lending in 2008. The sovereign-debt crisis resulted in spikes in

⁴ http://cepii.com/PDF_PUB/wp/1995/wp1995-09.pdf

⁵ <http://www.sagepub.com/mcquail6/Online%20readings/16a%20Elvestad%20%20Blekesaune.pdf>

bond yield spread (the spread among EU countries was historically around 0%) with the spread in Greece reaching nearly 50% at its worst in January 2012, a serious indicator of internal debt issues. From May 2010 to April 2011 three EU countries were bailed out of the bond market by a joint EU/International Monetary Fund effort: Greece, Ireland, and Portugal. In broader terms, the sovereign-debt crisis has affected the Eurozone with large public deficits, lack of economic growth, and high unemployment in the years since 2009.

As the Eurozone's second-largest economy, the global economic crisis and sovereign-debt crisis are concerning issues for France. France is one of the contributors to the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF), so the bailouts of other Eurozone economies have put financial strain on France. Additionally, France was not sheltered from the contagion of sovereign-debt issues that pervaded the EU, experiencing high public debt, negative consequences in the housing market, and increasing unemployment rates. The adverse economic effects in France have spurred much media attention to the sustainability of the Euro, as well as domestic issues.

In order to evaluate the media's effect on public perception with regard to the economic crisis, we will review articles from *Le Monde* that reference domestic and Eurozone unemployment and the sovereign-debt crisis (i.e. growing bond spreads, durability of the Euro) from the period of September 2007 to December 2013 in comparison with public opinion data related to those topics. *Le Monde* and its journalists do not attempt to hide the severity of the crisis for the French economy, instead it attempts to keep its citizens well-informed about the dimensions of the crisis domestically and in the Eurozone. For example, an August 2008 article from the

Economy section states, “For the French economy, 2008 and 2009 present themselves as years of all the dangers. With growth of 1.5% in 2008 and 1.2% in 2009, inflation at around 3.5%, rising unemployment, a double commercial trade deficit of around € 50 billion and public around 3% of GDP.” (Translation mine) Additionally, the tone of the newspaper shows support for France’s role as savior through the EFSF, “But it, [the crisis] will require the scrutiny over the funds and budgetary management of other European countries “speak of money and constraints”, sums Jean-Louis Bourlanges, President of the Center Party. The French are ready to accept? Nothing is more certain.” (Translation mine) In an article entitled, Grèce: "Le danger, c'est la contagion à l'ensemble de la zone euro" (“Greece: The danger is contagion to the rest of the Eurozone”), the interview further shows support for France donating funds to help bailout Eurozone countries with phrases like, “to let Greece or another member of the euro zone default on its debt is not a service to yourself.”

In addition to the topic of sovereign debt, *Le Monde* featured no shortage of articles concerning domestic and Eurozone unemployment. Although the dramatic statistics of unemployment in Greece and Spain were perhaps more emphasized, the French problem was also discussed. The numbers appeared quite frequently as the situation of French unemployment continued to “degrade” and “pass the bar of 10%” in November 2011. Later that same month a headline questioned “Incurable: le chômage de masse?”, or “Mass Unemployment: Incurable?”, as it reiterated employment rates and their growth of 1.2% in one month and 4.9% in one year. Other articles sought to play to emotional side of the French citizenry with stories about elderly people who were unemployed after their work was outsourced, now employed “like an intern, to make photocopies”, as one did in January 2012. Yet others featured the magnitude of the

situation for France and the Eurozone alike. An article from December 2011 stated, “Chaque mois un nouveau record tombe...” (Each month a new record falls), and addressing the situation for young people and senior citizens noting that the French percentage of unemployed persons in these categories was above the EU average of 22% at 24.2%. Another in February bolstered the headline “La zone euro compte quelque 16,5 millions de chômeurs, presque l'équivalent de la population des Pays-Bas” (“The Euro zone has 16.5 million unemployed, nearly equivalent to the population of the Netherlands”). And, as the increasing unemployment rate appeared to become more moderate in 2013, *Le Monde* continued to print the numbers and economic forecasts:

“Unemployment would continue to rise, but at a slower pace: estimated at 10.1% of the labor force in late 2012 (10.7% including the overseas departments (DOM), the unemployment rate are estimated to be 10.7% in France and 11.1% including DOM, in late 2013.” (Translation mine)⁶ and,

“FRAGILE IMPROVEMENT:

Curve inversion, no, but Mr. Holland and his Labor Minister Michel Sapin, can indeed console themselves on one point: there is a slowdown in the rise of unemployment. If one observes the quarterly figures, Mr. Sapin hastens skillfully to highlight, this movement is even amplified in 2013, with an average of over 30,000 newly unemployed per month in the first quarter, 18,000+ in the second, 5,500+ in the third. In October and November, the decline is expected to be 1,350 per month.” (Translation mine)⁷

⁶ Excerpt from “Pour l'Insee, la courbe du chômage ne s'inversera pas en France en 2013” *Le Monde*, June 21, 2013

⁷ Excerpt from « Chômage : le déni de François Hollande » *Le Monde*, December 27, 2013

Now, we must examine the public opinion data on the topics of the status of the economy, unemployment, and the sovereign debt crisis throughout the time period September 2007 to December 2013. The sovereign debt crisis will be observed through statistics on “the economic situation” and fear of inflation. First, the French opinion on domestic economic conditions in general: according to the Autumn Eurobarometer 2007, 58% of people believed that domestic economic conditions were bad, in Spring 2010 that number had increased to roughly 87%, and in May 2013 it rose to 91%. In late 2007, when perhaps the full scope of the impending crisis was not yet realized, 42% of the French agreed that the economic situation in the EU was “good” or “very good”. However, five years later in 2013 this number had decreased drastically to only 20%. In 2007, Unemployment was seen as the most pressing economic issue with 38% of the French viewing it as number one, inflation was second with 27%, and the economic situation was fourth with 19%. In 2013, inflation had replaced unemployment with 41% of the French agreeing that it was the largest economic issue, the economic situation was second with 38%, and unemployment was third with 35%. Additionally, a 2013 Pew Global Attitudes report, found that 80% of French people think that unemployment is a “very big” problem. Since the worsening of the sovereign debt crisis, public support for the Euro has declined. In 2010 only 34% of the population viewed the Euro as a handicap and in 2012 that number rose to 45%. However, only 36% of the population thought that country would be better off without the Euro in 2012. Additionally, the number of French people who are favorable to the European Union have declined from 64% in 2010 to 58% in 2013. Whereas in 2007 87% of the population showed favorability by responding that

they thought joining the EU was a “good choice” or “not a bad choice”, while only 12% thought it was a “bad choice” (1% responding that they “did not know”).

Obviously, from the years 2007 to 2013 the French population showed a significant decline in confidence in their domestic economy and in the European Union. In correlation, throughout the period, the print media featured innumerable articles on the worsening economic situation, with respect to the sovereign debt situation and domestic economic issues. However, a cause and effect relationship is far less evident in the case of the economic crisis than in the case of the formation of the European Union. Perhaps this issue is so pervasive in French society that there is no clear relationship causal relationship between print media and public opinion. The only trend that seems evident is that the print news media and public opinion reflected the same attitude of negativity.

Conclusion

In 2012, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, a newspaper associated with *Le Monde*, reported that 35 million French people (a little over half the population) read a newspaper daily, often the free dailies and other free versions. Free daily newspapers saw the largest increase in number of titles since 1945 between the years of 2007 and 2011. *Le Monde* and other subscription newspapers continue to lose their readership. However, this does not mean that their media presence is decreasing. Many of the major newspapers, including *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*, have mobile and online versions where people can read recent (usually those within 30 days) articles for free. It is difficult to argue that 35 million newspaper readers is not an impressive number for the television dominated media age.

For the 16.4% of French subscribers and the 35 million who read a newspaper daily, it is no doubt that the print media affect their knowledge of political and economic world around them. From the two case studies in this paper it can be seen that the print media and public opinion follow a similar vein of attitude. However, although the general connotation and subject of print media articles positively relates to public opinion it is difficult to prove a causal relationship after examining both cases. Additionally, globally, print media and society would not be recognizable to the citizens of 1898 that experienced the media power of the Dreyfus Affair. Print media have declined in influence, which is why it is expected that public reaction in the two case studies would not be nearly as great as it was in 1898. The Dreyfus Affair is simply a basis, one of the first models for print media's effect on public opinion. France's complex and varied print media system will not soon fade from the cultural conscience of the French public, and while it may not have the riot-inciting presence of the past, it still remains a relevant and impactful media source.

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