

## [L'État, c'est moi](#) <sup>[1]</sup>

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It was the absolutist Louis the XIV who extended the Palace of Versailles to all that it is today. It is therefore an ironically appropriate setting for the French government to ignore the wishes of its people. Both houses met to change the French Constitution, so that by the weekend the other Constitution (under the guise of the Lisbon Treaty) can be signed and sealed by President Sarkozy.

Despite general support for a referendum throughout France, those protesting outside the Palace were sadly the anti-globalization posse. It is a shame to see the debate again framed as a battle between those on the extremes of the political spectrum against those in at the centre. This is a misunderstanding by many as to what is at stake. The fundamental concern with the latest move towards the EU's ever-closer union should be that largely unaccountable European institutions are undermining national liberal democracy.

The central problem is that the Lisbon Treaty centralizes decision-making power, taking it away from the places in which that power is exercised. This has opened up the corrupting tendencies so apparent in Brussels, with lobbyists ? whether business or NGOs ? pumping in money to sway unaccountable decision makers. Corrupt as politics appears in this country, at least it does appear: the media and the public are mostly interested. Last November the EU failed its annual independent audit, with the auditors claiming in the report widespread financial abuse both within Brussels and member states. As this is now the thirteenth time in a row that the EU has failed the audit you would think there should be a Europe-wide outcry.

It is not just us who are impacted. Given that the annual budget of the EU is €121.9 billion, the way it spends our money can have a terrific impact on the lives of many around the world. Around 43 percent of the budget goes on the needless protection of European agriculture, restricting free trade with poor countries, with devastating impacts on the prospects of the developing world. Isn't it time that the anti-democratic injustices thrown up by the latest European Treaty/Constitution (delete as appropriate) be made the centre stage of the debate?

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