

Association After Sovereignty? Canadian Views on Economic Association with a Sovereign Quebec*

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Cet article présente une analyse de l'opinion publique au Canada anglais au sujet de l'appui à une association économique entre le Canada et le Québec, si ce dernier devenait un pays souverain. Plusieurs sondages révèlent un appui significatif à l'idée d'association économique au Canada anglais, mais le plus récent indique un certain durcissement. L'analyse des déterminants de l'appui individuel à l'association porte à croire que la volonté des Canadiens d'accepter une association économique avec un Québec souverain s'explique par la logique du réalisme international et par leurs opinions sur la nature même du Canada.

This article analyses public opinion in English Canada on the issue of whether Canada should enter into an economic association with Quebec if the latter declares itself a sovereign country. Surveys indicate that there has been significant support for this idea in English Canada, although the most recent poll suggests a hardening of positions. Analysis of determinants of individual support for association suggests that the willingness of Canadians to accept economic association with a sovereign Quebec can be explained on the basis of the logic of international realism and perceptions of the nature of Canada.

Let us suppose that, after a referendum sometime in the near future, Quebec declares itself a sovereign state. Immediately, Quebec leaders offer to initiate negotiations on economic association with Canada. What next? Would Canada accept such an offer? The least one can say is that there is no consensus on this question. Most of those who predict that sovereignty would lead to an economic catastrophe assume that Canadians would refuse any kind of association. Sovereignists in Quebec doubt this assumption. 'Money talks,' Parti Québécois leader Jacques Parizeau often says; and thus, he assumes, Canadians will set hard feelings aside to negotiate a deal with Quebec when they realize that the

costs of an acrimonious rupture would be, to a large extent, mutual.

What would actually happen is not altogether clear, but forecasts of the long-term impact of Quebec sovereignty are contingent on whether Canada would accept an economic association with Quebec. On this question, the opinions of analysts in the Rest of Canada (or ROC, for short) tend to converge: In essence, although we can assume that government officials might be inclined to act 'reasonably,' public opinion would never accept the idea of association. For example, Philip Resnick writes:

The pressure of public opinion within English Canada might be averse to concessions to Que-

bec, even if, as in the economic field, these might be seen as serving English-Canadian interests as well (Resnick, 1992:84).

Similarly, Richard Lipsey, argues that,

although statespersons would see the mutual benefit of an amicable separation, public hostility in ROC might demand that the former province be punished in some way (Lipsey, 1991:63).

In the same vein, during the 1992 referendum campaign, John McCallum reminded Quebec sovereignists that,

in the aftermath of a No vote by Quebec, the idea of sovereignty-association, or even a common market, would be a non-starter in English Canada ... Only the most casual understanding of English-speaking Canadians is needed to understand that such a proposal would be received by laughter and ridicule, or, if there was any chance it would happen, with massive opposition (McCallum, 1992).

Rather than another set of predictions, this article takes a comprehensive look at the available survey evidence and then asks a simple question: What explains the willingness (or unwillingness) of Canadians to co-operate economically with a sovereign Quebec? This question can help us assess the prospects for sovereignty-association, but it is also relevant to central theoretical debates on the conditions that make international co-operation possible.

The first section discusses the notion of sovereignty-association and the positions taken on this issue by political leaders. In brief, English-Canadian politicians reject association after sovereignty, while Quebec sovereignists see this rejection as a bluff. The second section looks at overall public support for association. Several surveys have shown that a majority of Canadians were favourable to economic association with a sovereign Quebec, but a June 1994 survey suggests a reversal toward a hard-line approach. The third section looks at determinants of opinion on association. The

willingness of Canadians to envision an economic association with a sovereign Quebec can be explained on the basis of the logic of international co-operation and perceptions of the nature of Canada.

What would this mean for the eventual future relations between two neighbours who used to share the same house? I conclude on a cautious note: public opinion on hypothetical events only offers a blurred image of its future orientations; in addition, as was the case with the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), public opinion may not be a sure indicator of how governments decide in commercial or economic matters.

I The Context of Opinion Formation

As Quebeckers prepare to decide their constitutional future, the reaction of English Canada cannot be completely set aside. Quebec opinion on sovereignty is such that, in order to reach a majority of positive votes in a referendum, many Quebeckers would have to believe that an economic association with Canada is likely.

Before the 1980 referendum, Parti Québécois (PQ) strategists knew that their only chance of winning a majority of Yes votes was to make economic association a prerequisite to sovereignty (Cloutier, Guay and Latouche, 1992:49-58). Naturally, politicians from the ROC intervened in the 1980 campaign by dismissing any willingness to negotiate after a Yes vote. Ontario Premier William Davis, for example, said that he would not negotiate with Quebec, even if it might cost Ontarians thousands of jobs (Anonymous, 1980). In a 1977 survey, however, 53 per cent agreed that the 'rest of Canada should negotiate an economic agreement if Quebec becomes independent' (Ornstein and Stevenson, 1981: 761). Only 36 per cent disagreed. Among elites, there was a majority of opposition from small-business owners and politicians. Thus, even if it was clear, before 1980, that sovereignty-association would flound-

er in the face of ROC opposition to association, the public displayed a 'far less intransigent attitude toward negotiating an economic agreement with an independent Quebec than was conveyed in the public rhetoric of spokesmen for governments and business' (Ornstein and Stevenson, 1981: 765).

Through the constitutional tribulations of the 1980s and early 1990s, expectations of economic costs of sovereignty have decreased in Quebec public opinion (Pinar, 1992). In the late 1980s, doubts about the economic viability of a sovereign Quebec were partly allayed and, since then, there has been a growing confidence in Quebec's capacity to succeed in an open world economy. Indeed, sovereignists tend to see the FTA and NAFTA as an institutional framework for international economic relations that makes Quebec less dependent on the ROC's acceptance of economic association (Martin, 1994; Meadowell, 1993). Also, many Quebecers no longer make association a *sine qua non* condition of sovereignty. André Blais and Richard Nadeau (1992:94) found that Quebecers' perception of the likelihood of an economic association increases the probability of their favouring sovereignty, but the significance of this variable disappears in a multivariate analysis.

Thus, since the Meech Lake fiasco of 1990 and the rejection of the Charlottetown Accord in 1992, sovereignist leaders have adopted a substantially different strategy than in 1980. Sovereignty is not necessarily contingent on the *prior* realization of an economic association. For the Parti Québécois, the interdependence between Quebec and the ROC makes association a logical, indeed a necessary, choice for the latter (Parti Québécois, 1993:79-84).

In contrast with René Lévesque's original vision, the level of association sought by a sovereign Quebec in the mid-1990s is likely to be minimal, somewhere between a European-style common market and the existing NAFTA - but probably closer to the latter. For Jacques Parizeau, it makes

little sense to propose an association so constraining for the ROC that it would amount to 'asking Canadians to overturn their political institutions radically, when they always refused to grant the slightest additional power to Quebec'. Indeed, Parizeau does not want to grant the ROC a virtual veto over Quebec sovereignty by 'demanding the moon from English Canada,' and by making sovereignty contingent on Canada's willingness to give it (Parizeau, 1993). For the PQ leader, the NAFTA and the World Trade Organization would preclude Canada from inflicting economic reprisals on Quebec. He emphasizes that Quebec would not necessarily need to negotiate anything prior to sovereignty, and would be viable even without an elaborate economic association with the ROC: 'Let's not fool ourselves,' Parizeau has argued, 'there will be no vast negotiation ... We have to put ourselves in a position where we are not vulnerable' (Séguin, 1994).

The views of the Bloc Québécois are similar. For Bloc leader Lucien Bouchard, the rejection of association by the ROC is a tactical ploy that would not be sustained after sovereignty:

We should expect, of course, that the political elites of English Canada will pretend to ignore Quebec's offers of association until the aftermath of a referendum favourable to sovereignty. Then, politicians in English Canada will have to adopt, instead of their tactical attitudes of refusing dialogue, a behaviour marked by political realism and economic responsibility (Bouchard, 1993:95).

In sum, sovereignists envision an association of limited scope, and their scenarios of co-operation are premised on a perception that the Canadian government would base its own future actions primarily upon a concern for the welfare of citizens in the ROC.

Still, politicians in the ROC reject the association scenario. The leaders of the federal Liberal and Conservative parties have always negated the possibility of a favourable vote on sovereignty. In contrast, Re-

form Party leader Preston Manning has acknowledged this possibility, but has warned that he sees no room for compromise between his own vision of federalism and 'independence, pure and simple'. 'There is no willingness outside Quebec,' in Manning's view, 'to even consider the kind of sovereignty-association proposed by Parizeau and Bouchard' (Dion, 1993).

This opinion, voiced during the 1993 election campaign, echoes several declarations by provincial premiers since the failure of Meech Lake. One of the most outspoken advocates of the hard line toward sovereigntists has been Newfoundland's Clyde Wells: 'Quebec can declare itself sovereign if it wants to,' Wells has said, 'but it should not count on English Canada to reward it with the gift of an association' (Boisvert, 1990). Alberta's Don Getty warned that 'there would be no economic union between Alberta and an independent Quebec'. Although he denied using threats to deter Quebecers from making their own choices, Getty added:

I think there will be a strong feeling of alienation among Canadians if they see their country torn apart; I don't want people going into making decisions in Quebec thinking it's all going to be a cosy, warm feeling afterward (Anonymous, 1991b).

In the spring of 1994, British Columbia premier Michael Harcourt claimed to express the 'mounting impatience with Quebec' in western Canada, declaring that if Quebecers decided to opt for sovereignty, Quebec and BC would be 'the worst of enemies' (Cernetig, 1994:A1). Ontario's Bob Rae has also declared that 'if Quebec wants to choose the option of complete independence ... there should be no assumption on their part that association will flow automatically' (Anonymous, 1991a). More recently, however, the Rae government, responding to pressures from the Ontario business community, devised an 'action plan' to 'explore ways of reaching out to a sovereign Quebec in a bid to continue the

longstanding economic relationship between it and Ontario' (Ferguson, 1994).

There are, to be sure, more moderate opinions in the ROC. While some of the inflexible rhetoric may be discounted as a form of bluff, the politicians' opposition is based on the more or less explicit assumption that the Canadian public would be antagonistic to the idea of economic association with a sovereign Quebec.

II English-Canadian Public Opinion on Association

What does the Canadian public think of association with a sovereign Quebec? The assumption that the idea is a 'non-starter' is indeed strong and enduring. The report of the Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future (the Spicer Commission), for example, suggested that there was little support for association among participants. One rapporteur from an Ontario discussion group summarized the feelings of participants: 'It was felt Quebec is like a teenager who wants his own room, telephone, and so forth, yet still expects an allowance from "Dad". If Quebec goes, *it must go all the way* without keeping one hand in Canada's "pocket"' (Citizens' Forum, 1991:60). Like politicians, some members of the public seem to adopt the strategic hard line: Quebecers must accept federalism as it is or leave; no middle ground. Are these views representative?

The most recent survey shows a majority of 52 per cent opposed to economic association, which supports the general perception of rejection in the ROC (Angus Reid Group, 1994). Other available surveys, however, tend to blur the picture. In 1977, Ornstein and Stevenson (1981) observed that 60 per cent of decided respondents were favourable to an economic association. Since the revival of the sovereignty option after the failure of Meech Lake, several surveys have asked Canadians to express their opinion on the issue of an eventual association after sovereignty. Figures 1 and 2 summarize the results from available sur-

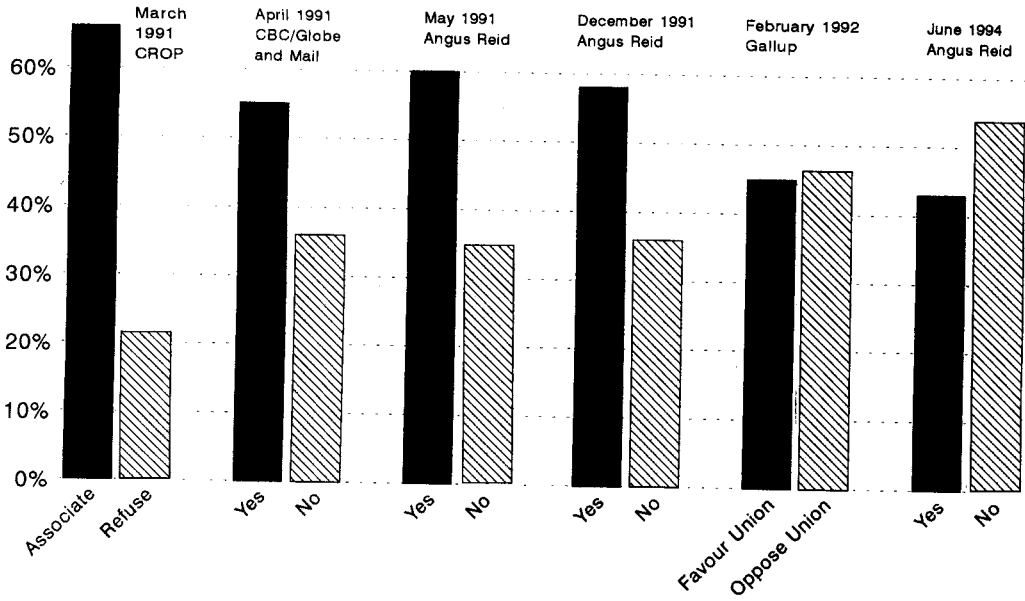


Figure 1 Support for economic association after sovereignty in English Canada

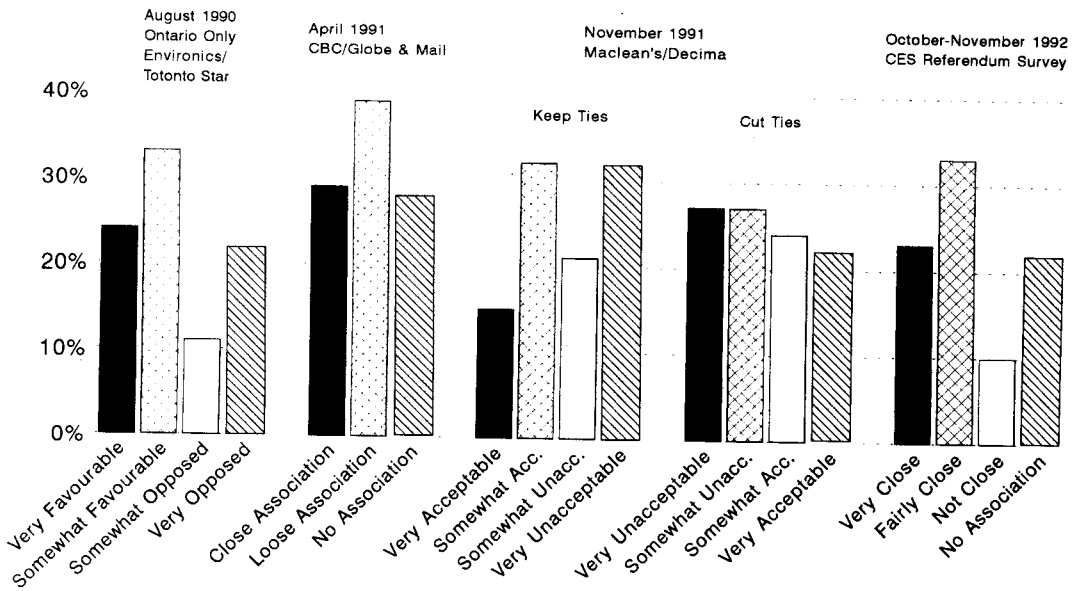


Figure 2 Support for economic association after sovereignty in English Canada

veys as of October 1994 (the detailed data are reported in the appendix).

These results indicate that the rejection by a margin of 52 to 43 per cent observed by Angus Reid in June 1994 followed a period of reasonably consistent support for some form of economic association with a sovereign Quebec. In the surveys prior to

1993, the results depended in part upon the wording of questions and the options for response. The Gallup question refers to an 'economic union' between Quebec and Canada, which may be construed as more constraining than 'economic association' and thus, perhaps, may elicit lower support. The Maclean's/Decima survey shows even

lower support when the questions refer to 'maintaining' or 'cutting' *present economic ties between Canada and Quebec*. The more negative attitude about the maintenance of 'present ties' may be related to a perception that Quebec would act as a spoiled teenager 'keeping a hand in his parents' pockets' if it sought to negotiate association before achieving sovereignty.

In other surveys prior to 1993, when the question referred to 'economic association' after sovereignty, the public tended to support association. Overall, 11 different measures of opinion in the ROC were found: seven show a majority supporting economic association (one in Ontario only); three, including the most recent, display a majority of opposition; one reveals a tie.

There is also strong support for association in Quebec. Regardless of the question, at least three-quarters of Quebecers would favour an economic association if Quebec became sovereign (see appendix). Surveys also asked whether respondents believed that an economic association after sovereignty was likely. In April 1991, 61 per cent of Quebecers and 47 per cent of Canadians outside Quebec believed it was likely, and the proportions climbed to 65 and 62 per cent in October 1992.¹

Angus Reid's 1994 poll, however, revealed a hardening of opinion in English Canada, which is most evident in preferences for the approach that governments should take in post-sovereignty negotiations. The earlier Angus Reid surveys found that the proportion of respondents in the ROC who would favour a give-and-take approach to negotiation (46 or 47%) was nearly equal to that of hard-liners (49 or 48%). In June 1994, however, the hard-line approach was favoured over compromise by 63 to 31 per cent. Moreover, 77 per cent of hard-liners in the ROC claimed that they would favour the uncompromising approach even if it meant a reduction in their standard of living. Also surprising (in the 1991 surveys) is the difference between Quebec and ROC respondents' expectations of what the other side's approach to

negotiations would be. More than two-thirds of respondents in the ROC expected to face intractable Quebec negotiators, while less than half of Quebecers expected the hard-line treatment from the ROC.²

On balance, surveys show that English Canadians expect their government to negotiate hard in the event that a sovereign Quebec knocks at their door, but are not necessarily unwilling, a priori, to accept a co-operative economic arrangement. The cool reception given to the notion of 'economic union' suggests that there are limits to the range of economic activities that would be covered by institutions managing the bilateral relationship. Indeed, a survey of 621 business people in the ROC in December 1990 and January 1991 showed that 79 per cent supported a 'free-trade zone,' 55 per cent supported an 'economic association,' while only 46 per cent approved a 'shared currency,' 37 per cent a 'shared central bank,' but only 26 per cent would accept a 'supra-national parliament'.³

There remains an obvious caveat here: There is quite a difference between an answer to one of several dozen questions asked by a stranger over the phone and the real opinion that would develop in the emotionally charged context of a post-referendum negotiation. It is not clear, however, that the acrimonious feelings expected to emerge in the event of a Quebec secession have not already been present, to some extent, in Canadian opinion since 1991. Clearly, though, the drop in support for association after sovereignty, in the spring of 1994, can be linked in part with a hardening of almost all indicators of attitude toward Quebec. For example, the June 1994 Angus Reid survey was the first in which more respondents in the ROC 'would rather see Quebec leave' (47%) than 'make concessions to keep Quebec in Canada' (44%).⁴

The immediate context of the June 1994 survey might explain some of this evolution. In their interpretation of the results, Angus Reid analysts observe that the hard-

ening of feelings toward Quebec and toward sovereignist leaders was in part due to the negative reaction, widely amplified in English Canadian media, to Lucien Bouchard's peregrinations in Washington and, particularly, in France, less than two weeks before the survey was taken.

Beyond simple conjecture about the evolution of public opinion after a hypothetical secession, a more useful way of understanding this issue is to analyse the structure of opinion about association after sovereignty. The data analysed here date from April 1991 and immediately after the 1992 referendum, when Canadians did not rule out the probability of imminent secession. In 1991, 47 per cent of respondents in the ROC believed that a majority of Quebecers would say Yes to a referendum on sovereignty if it was held later that year; 42 per cent believed Quebecers would vote against. In the same poll, 53 per cent of respondents in the ROC believed likely that 'Quebec will eventually separate from Canada'; 44 per cent believed it was unlikely (Canadian Facts, 1991).

III Economic Association after Sovereignty: The Structure of Opinion in English Canada

The question of relations between Quebec and Canada after sovereignty can be seen as a case of prospective international relations. There has been some talk of military intervention by Canadian forces to repress a Quebec declaration of sovereignty, but this idea is rejected by a sizeable majority of Canadians and Quebecers.⁵ Moreover, although democracies are not necessarily less likely to fight or initiate wars than non-democracies, an open military conflict between two established liberal democracies would be historically unprecedented (Doyle, 1986; Russett, 1993).

There would, nevertheless, be several areas of potential contention between the ROC and a self-declared sovereign Quebec and, according to a few commentators, it is not inconceivable that disputes over terri-

tory might lead to violence (Bercuson and Cooper, 1991). Native territorial claims, for example, are often mentioned as a possible source of friction (Turpel, 1992). Although these issues are worthy of close attention, this article focuses particularly on economic relations. Understanding how public opinion in the ROC perceives economic co-operation after sovereignty can be an indicator of how Canada-Quebec relations would develop in the new North American configuration.

The data analysis addresses four general questions. First, who are the proponents and opponents of association? Second, can theories of international relations tell us something about differences between individuals on this issue? Third, are Canadians taking cues from political leaders in forming their opinions on association? Fourth, to what extent are respondents' opinions on association tied to their vision of Canada as a country, or to their sympathy or antipathy toward Quebec?

The question used in these analyses was asked in a survey held in April 1991 and sponsored by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and the *Toronto Globe and Mail*: 'If a referendum in Quebec supports sovereignty and then Quebec tries to negotiate an economic association with the rest of Canada, would you favour a close association, a loose association, or no association at all?' (Canadian Facts, 1991; see appendix).⁶ The effect of each relevant variable is assessed first in Table 1, and then included in a multivariate regression analysis (Table 2) that allows control for the presence of other factors. Although correlation does not prove causality, these methods allow assessment of the effect of factors that could plausibly influence opinion on association.

Who Are the Supporters and Opponents?

Given the extent of economic interdependence between Quebec and its immediate neighbours, one could predict some amount of regional variation in the support for association in the ROC, with support concen-

Table 1
Explaining support for association: contingency tables

Variable types	Close association	Loose association	No association	N of cases
Survey questions				
Response options	%	%	%	
Overall sample	31	41	28	1083
A) Descriptive variables				
Region (a)				
Atlantic	32	35	33	123
Ontario	32	41	27	543
Prairies **	25	44	32	244
BC	36	39	24	173
Age ****				
Under 40	34	43	24	570
40 and over	28	38	34	489
Sex				
Women	30	44	26	522
Men	32	38	30	561
Family income (a)				
Less than \$35,000	30	43	27	394
\$35,000-\$75,000	31	42	27	452
More than \$75,000	31	36	33	119
Education (a)				
No high school diploma **	25	39	35	218
High school or technical college	32	42	27	532
University	34	39	26	328
B) Prospective international relations				
Absolute gains after sovereignty ****				
ROC loses	39	38	23	245
ROC stays same	31	43	26	702
ROC gains	12	33	55	113
Relative gains ****				
ROC worse off than Quebec	46	35	19	37
ROC equal to Quebec	40	40	20	369
ROC better off than Quebec	27	44	30	526
ROC gains & Quebec loses	9	33	58	89
Opinion on Gulf War ****				
'Hawk'	28	40	32	565
'Dove'	39	42	20	398
C) Political parties (a)				
Liberal	32	41	28	286
PC *	35	40	24	139
NDP	36	39	25	297
Reform	24	39	36	94

Table 1 (contd.)

Variable types Survey questions Response options	Close association %	Loose association %	No association %	N of cases
Overall sample	31	41	28	1083
D) Ideas about Quebec's place in Canada				
Having two official languages adds to what's good about Canada? ****				
Adds to	38	41	21	448
Makes no difference	30	45	25	342
Takes away from	20	37	43	266
Should the federal government continue to provide services across the country in both English and French? ****				
Yes	37	40	23	651
No	21	42	37	400
Should the ROC agree to give Quebec more powers if that's what it takes to keep Quebec within Canada? ****				
Yes	47	38	16	208
No	26	42	31	831
Quebec and the ROC really don't have much in common. ****				
Agree	20	45	35	263
Disagree	35	40	26	794
Any new constitutional deal must recognize the multicultural nature of Canada. ****				
Agree	32	43	25	912
Disagree	24	26	50	143
Statistical significance (chi-square): * < .10; ** < .05; *** < .01; **** < .001				

Note: (a) For these variables (region, income, education, party), the chi-square significance test is based upon a comparison between each category and the average responses for all other categories.

trated in Ontario and the Atlantic provinces. The latter, in particular, should have an incentive for maintaining access to Canadian markets through Quebec routes. In fact, the data show very small inter-regional differences, which goes against this expectation. The lowest levels of support are found in the Maritimes and the Prairies, but only in the latter case is the difference statistically significant (Table 1A). The dichotomous variable for the Prairies, however, loses its significance in the multivariate analysis, which suggests that lower support in that region can be explained by other attitudes, notably those about the

place of Quebec within Canada (see Table 1D).

Overall, opponents of association tend to be older and less educated (gender and income have no significant effect). Respondents without a high school diploma are less likely to support association, while those with a university education are more likely to do so. The differences are not large, but they suggest that a favourable position reflects a capacity to appreciate the potential negative economic consequences of a refusal to co-operate with a sovereign Quebec. In the multivariate analysis (Table 2), the age variable (Over Forty) and the 'No

Table 2
Explaining support for association: linear regression

Variables (a)	Regression coefficient B	Standard error	T statistic
Age Over Forty	-.046	(.024)	-1.90 *
Prairies	-.021	(.029)	-.73
Woman	-.009	(.024)	-.39
Not Completed High School	-.085	(.032)	-2.61 ***
University Education	-.010	(.027)	-.38
Impact of Separation for ROC	.005	(.064)	.08
Relative Impact of Separation	-.327	(.101)	-3.25 ***
'Hawkish' Opinion on Gulf War	-.085	(.026)	-3.31 ***
Support for Reform Party	-.004	(.043)	-.09
Two Official Languages Good	.114	(.032)	3.57 ***
Give Quebec More to Keep It In	.104	(.030)	3.44 ***
Quebec & ROC Not Much in Common	-.088	(.042)	-2.08 **
Constant	.762	(.063)	12.05 ***

R-squared = .121 Adjusted R-squared = .110 N = 961

Significance (two-tailed test): * < .10; ** < .05; *** < .01

Notes: (a) The variables are defined as follows:

Support for association (dependent): 0 if 'No Association'; .5 if 'Loose Association'; 1.0 if 'Close Association.'

Age Over Forty: 1 if Over 40; 0 otherwise.

Woman: 1 if woman; 0 if man.

Not Completed High School: 1 if respondent did not complete high school; 0 otherwise.

University Education: 1 if attended university; 0 otherwise.

Impact of Separation for ROC: 0 if standard of living in ROC goes down; .5 if ROC stays same; 1.0 if standard of living in ROC improves.

Relative Impact of Separation: 0 if ROC loses and Quebec gains; .25 if ROC loses and Quebec stays same, or if ROC stays same and Quebec gains; .5 if ROC and Quebec are equal; .75 if ROC gains and Quebec stays same, or if ROC stays same and Quebec loses; 1.0 if ROC gains and Quebec loses.

'Hawkish' Opinion on Gulf War: 1 if approved use of force in Iraq; 0 otherwise.

Support Reform Party: 1 if would vote for or is leaning toward Reform Party; 0 otherwise.

Two Official Languages Good: 0 if that having two official languages takes away from what is good about Canada; 0.5 if it makes no difference (or missing); 1.0 if thinks it adds.

Give Quebec More to Keep It In: 1 if thinks ROC should give Quebec more to keep it in Canada; 0 otherwise.

Quebec & ROC Not Much in Common: 0 if strongly disagree; .33 if agree; .67 if disagree; 1.0 if strongly agree.

High School' variable remain significant.

In sum, this first-cut analysis shows that simple demographic or geographic variables do not explain much of the differences between the typical supporters or opponents of association. Some theory is required to make sense of the complexity of opinion, starting with theories of international co-operation.

Economic Association as Prospective International Relations

There have been some recent attempts to analyse the relationship between Quebec and the ROC with the use of game-theoretic

cal models (Young, 1992a; 1992b; Imbeau, 1992). These models assume that each state is some approximation of a rational unitary actor, evolving within a structure represented as a prisoners' dilemma. This perception of potential Quebec-Canada relations is particularly evident in Robert Young's contributions. Young emphasizes the fact that, after an eventual breakup of the federation, Canada and Quebec would have to manage their economic relations just like any two interdependent states would, a situation which he aptly describes as a prisoners' dilemma.

In this kind of interaction, actors (states)

have a collective incentive to co-operate mutually, but an individual incentive to withdraw from co-operation. It has been demonstrated, however, that stable co-operation can develop in spite of this structure, notably in the case of economic relations between states, if one assumes that actors seek to maximize their own absolute gains, or minimize their losses. Co-operation, under these conditions, can emerge from an implicit norm of reciprocity, whereby actors replicate their *vis-à-vis* last move in a 'tit-for-tat' manner (Axelrod, 1984). Although Young argues that the hypothetical Quebec-Canada relationship could evolve toward co-operation along these lines in the long run, he emphasizes that, in the short run, a vote for sovereignty in Quebec would be considered as a 'defection,' against which a retaliation by the ROC would be a rational reaction.

The controversy in international relations stems from the often uneven distribution of gains from co-operation. To summarize, international liberals assume that co-operation can be achieved if states are primarily concerned with the absolute gains resulting from co-operation (their own utility). Realists, however, insist that the anarchical nature of the international environment compels states to be concerned with relative, or positional, gains (utility is defined in part by how well one is doing compared to others). Consequently, in the logic of realism, actors attribute more weight to positional concerns. This emphasis upon relative gains tends to make co-operation among states more difficult (Baldwin, 1993; Grieco, 1988), although not impossible (Snidal, 1991).

The question here is whether the willingness to accept association after sovereignty (co-operate) is related to these two logics of absolute or relative gains. Here, we can envision each respondent in the ROC formulating a position about association as if he or she were a state engaged in a situation similar to a prisoner's dilemma. Table 1B shows strong relationships both for the measure of absolute gains

in the ROC and for the indicator of relative gains between the ROC and Quebec.⁷

First, on the liberal side, what matters is the consequence of secession on the ROC itself (absolute gains). Most analysts agree that, without any economic association, the severance of all ties of economic interdependence would inflict some costs on the ROC. In the survey used here, only 22 per cent of respondents perceived costs for the ROC, but a more recent Gallup poll showed that 44 per cent expected that Canada's economy would be worse off after secession.⁸ Following the liberal logic, as the public realizes these costs to themselves, they should tend to accept some form of economic association with Quebec.

The data lend partial support to this interpretation: Support for a close association increases when individuals believe that Canada would lose economically from Quebec's secession, and opposition increases markedly for the relatively small proportion of people who believe that Canada would be better off economically without Quebec. More recent surveys by Gallup (1994) and Angus Reid (1994), however, suggest that the prospects of economic costs for the ROC in the event of Quebec secession seem to have become more pessimistic, while opposition to association has grown, which would tend to make the liberal case less compelling.

For realists, what matters most is the relative distribution of the costs and benefits. Table 1B shows that perceptions of relative gains are closely related to opinion on economic association. When the ROC is perceived to end up worse than, or equal to, Quebec, support for association hovers around 80 per cent (with more than 40% in favour of a close association). In the small group that sees the ROC gain while Quebec loses, however, opposition to association shoots up to 58 per cent. According to the 'realist' logic, one would infer that, although the ROC could suffer losses after secession, if Canada were to do comparatively better than Quebec (or not quite as badly), Canadians would be more inclined to resist

association.

Multivariate analysis (Table 2) suggests that the realist logic would be more closely tied statistically to the structure of opinion on association than the liberal logic. When both variables are entered into the equation, the 'absolute gains' variable drops out of significance.⁹ There is additional support for the hypothesis that the rejection of association is partly driven by this 'realist' logic. In April 1991, the *CBC/Globe and Mail* survey probed the opinion of Canadians on the recently ended Gulf War.¹⁰ Table 1B shows that respondents who endorsed the use of force in that war ('hawks') were moderately more prone to oppose association. Multivariate results confirm the significance of this relationship, suggesting that the refusal to consider association is associated with a 'realist' outlook on international relations, while acceptance is linked with a more liberal perspective.

What does this mean for the prospect of association after sovereignty? The answer depends upon which of the two logics, or which 'culture of foreign policy,' would guide the actions of the Canadian government in the aftermath of Quebec sovereignty. If the well-established Canadian tradition of liberal internationalism and compromise in foreign policy predominated, the liberal logic would be more likely to prevail. The rejection of the use of military force by a sizable majority of Canadians, cited above, would seem to corroborate this perception. Another factor which might work in favour of economic co-operation is the possibility that the economic agents or groups who have most to lose from the severance of economic ties – particularly exporters to Quebec – would be likely to lobby vigorously against a hard-line approach that would result in lost markets for their products.

In the realist perspective, losses to oneself matter less than the relative distribution of gains and losses, and one actor may be satisfied with 'losing less' than the other. If this logic predominates, the data suggest that opposition to association

might become easier to sell to the public. I now turn to those who might be doing the selling.

Are Canadians Taking Cues from Anti-Association Leaders?

Movements in public opinion often depend on messages sent to the public by leaders, on which individuals depend in forming their opinion on complex issues (Page and Shapiro, 1991). This idea is not new. Anthony Downs (1957) argued that, because gathering information on complex issues is costly, 'rational' voters defer to trusted leaders when they face complex decisions, thus sometimes taking positions different from their objective interests. In the case of sovereignty after association, as was shown above, there has been no shortage of interventions by various 'experts' and by political leaders. Economists and political scientists, among other experts, have argued that people *would* reject association, but not that they *should*. Politicians, however, have been much more forthright in condemning the idea in very normative terms. How much of this condemnation is rubbing off onto the public?

The effect of opinion leaders on what the public thinks is difficult to assess here. Understandably, no political leader in English Canada publicly praises the prospect of an economic association between Canada and a sovereign Quebec. To complicate matters, the public in the ROC tends to doubt the legitimacy of federal leaders from Quebec negotiating with Quebec on their behalf.¹¹ But there still might be a limited way to test the argument, because one leader is well-known for his hard line toward Quebec sovereignty: Preston Manning, of the Reform Party.

Respondents who favoured the Reform Party were, in 1992, less likely than others to support association (margin of 9%).¹² Another test consists of measuring approval ratings¹³ for Preston Manning across groups defined by opinion about association. If opponents of association have a higher assessment of Manning, then one

Table 3

Explaining support for association: difference of means between groups defined by support for association

Level of economic association preferred	Mean rating (On Scale of 0-100) How does respondent feel about:		
	P. Manning	Quebec	Immigrants
Very close	38.2	67.9	69.6
Fairly close	42.7	59.9	64.4
Not very close	41.6	53.1	63.4
No association	40.5	51.0	62.4
Overall	40.9	58.8	65.2
F-statistic:	2.0	29.9 ***	5.6 ***

Significance (analysis of variance): * < .10; ** < .05; *** < .01.

might infer that his leadership on the issue had an effect on opinion. Table 3 reveals no difference between opponents and supporters of association in how they perceived Manning. This, of course, does not mean that Manning would have no role in mobilizing opinion if Quebeckers opted for sovereignty; it only suggests that he did not seem to make a difference on this issue in 1992.

In fact, opinion leaders can have a very concrete influence on public attitudes. For example, an analysis of the movement of public opinion during the 1992 referendum campaign has shown that Pierre Elliott Trudeau's 'Egg Roll speech' denouncing the Charlottetown Accord was responsible for a significant part of the drop in public support for the constitutional deal (Johnston, Blais, Gidengil and Nevitte, 1993; forthcoming). In the 1988 election campaign, opinion on the central issue of free trade was also influenced by the actions of leaders, but to a lesser degree (Johnston, Blais, Brady and Crête, 1992:149-52).

Finally, recent data would suggest that the hardening of opinion toward Quebec was not only a symptom of the epidemic reaction to the Bloc Québécois, as mentioned above, but that it was perhaps in part due to positions taken by English-Canadian leaders. For example, Angus Reid observed that 70 per cent of respondents in the ROC agreed with British Columbia premier Michael Harcourt that Canadians

should make Quebeckers pay for choosing sovereignty.¹⁴ Again, it is unclear whether this rhetoric is aimed at capitalizing on the anti-Quebec feelings of home constituencies or instilling fear in Quebec. Whether this attitude will materialize into solid opposition to association among political leaders, who might prefer to ride a wave of anger against Quebec after sovereignty, also remains to be seen.

Visions of Canada and Opinions on Association

The issue of association after sovereignty is – or, at least from a 'rational' standpoint, should be – a matter of level-headed economic calculation. Individual opinions, however, seldom develop from purely rational considerations. Rather, political opinions 'reflect the web of allegiances and antipathies that individuals develop toward groups' (Kinder, 1983:405). Indeed, sentiment toward groups can structure political opinions (Blais and Gidengil, 1992; Brady and Sniderman, 1985). Thus, it follows that support for association may be related to a feeling of empathy toward Quebec.

Table 1D presents a series of strong relationships (more could have been selected) which serves to make a basic point: People in the ROC who oppose bilingualism, who are reluctant to make constitutional concessions to Quebec, or who just don't feel good about Quebec, are more likely to reject

association. The strong relationship between the feeling toward Quebec and opinion on association in Table 3 supports this interpretation. Multivariate analysis (Table 2) reinforces the claim that a respondent's opinion on the association issue depends upon his or her vision of Canada.

These results are not entirely surprising, but they might reflect a deeper source of opinion formation. Indeed, the relationship could be spurious. It could be the case that both these measures of affect and the support for association are caused by a third factor: tolerance. Opinion about multiculturalism (Table 1D) and the feeling toward immigrants (Table 3), both correlate significantly with support for association, which would give some credibility to this hypothesis. But then, the question becomes: Would some measure of tolerance still be there after sovereignty? Would English Canadians be willing to hang on to a hard-line approach at any cost? The answers to these questions cannot be found in surveys based on hypothetical questions. What the foregoing analysis suggests, and the recent hardening of opinion would seem to confirm, is that in the immediate aftermath of sovereignty, if feelings towards Quebec become sour, economic association may not elicit enthusiasm in the Canadian public.

It is also possible, as Quebec sovereignists assert about political leaders, that a priori rejection of association by the public is a form of bluff. In that case, stubborn opposition would give way to reason as soon as the issue moves from the realm of constitutional politics to that of international economics. This hypothesis is logical and it could find support in the game-theory literature, but it cannot be tested with the available data.

IV Conclusion

Association after sovereignty remains a politically sensitive, as well as an analytically nebulous issue. If Quebecers opt for sovereignty, I asked at the outset, would Canada accept or decline the new state's

offer of economic association? Predictions are hazardous, as the saying goes, especially when they concern the future; all the more, one could add, when this future remains hypothetical. There are, of course, serious limits to what one can project from survey data on hypothetical events. Thus, I leave the reader to make his or her own predictions, while emphasizing a few specific observations.

First and foremost, even taking into account the most recent survey results that suggest a hardening of opinion, public support for association after sovereignty in the ROC is far from absent. In the short run, in the event of a unilateral declaration of sovereignty, one cannot easily dismiss the possibility of an emotional reaction against Quebec in the ROC. In the longer run, however, the survey evidence, taken as a whole, suggests that Canadians would not necessarily reject a fair economic arrangement with Quebec. In short, public support for association may be 'lukewarm,' it may be fragile, but it is there.

Some observations can also be made about the structure of opinion. Above all, although politicians may well be bluffing, as Quebec sovereignists like to think, there is no sure way to predict the direction that public opinion would take in the event that real choices have to be made. The analysis of the determinants of support suggests plausible predictions about this direction, but it does not command any.

First, this article indicates that opponents to co-operation respond to a logic similar to that of international realism. If sovereignty turns out to be a losing proposition for Quebec, it is not inconceivable that Canadians would be satisfied with 'losing less'. It may well be the case that, as Quebec poet Félix Leclerc once sang, 'le plaisir de l'un c'est de voir l'autre se casser le cou'. Still, the fact that a majority of those who perceive losses for the ROC after sovereignty support association, and the fact that 'realism' does not have deep roots in Canada's culture of foreign policy both suggest that the liberal argument is

plausible.

Second, respondents who favour some form of association seem to be more tolerant of differences and more open toward Quebec. The bad news for partisans of sovereignty, perhaps, is that this capital of sympathy might not necessarily be counted on immediately after the breakup.

In sum, there is no sure way to predict what would happen to the economic relationship between Quebec and Canada in the aftermath of a hypothetical Yes vote in a Quebec referendum, or what role will be played by public opinion in this process. In the meantime, however, two things remain clear: Quebec sovereignists should not be taking English-Canadian public opinion for granted; but neither should their opponents.

Notes

- * An earlier version of this article was presented at the 1993 meeting of the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States. I am indebted to André Blais, Stéphane Dion, Patrick James, Antonia Maioni, Richard Nadeau, Alain Noël, Robert Young and three anonymous reviewers for their useful comments, and to Diane Carignan and Catherine Rioux for their research assistance. Thanks are due to Scott MacKay, of the Angus Reid Group, who provided survey reports, and to my colleague André Blais, who gave me access to data sets. Funding from the Université de Montréal (CAFIR) is gratefully acknowledged.
- 1 The question was: 'If a referendum in Quebec supports sovereignty and the government of Quebec then tries to negotiate an economic association with the rest of Canada, how likely do you think it is that Quebec and the rest of Canada could agree on an economic association?' (Canadian Facts, 1991). The Question in the Canadian Elections Study 1992 referendum survey was: 'If Quebec separates from Canada, how likely is it that Canada will form an economic association with Quebec?'
 - 2 The questions asked by Angus Reid were as follows: (1) 'If Quebec votes for independence and various issues do have to be worked out, how do you think (Non-Quebec: the rest of Canada; Quebec: Quebec) should approach these negotiations? Should we enter into these talks willing to compromise to resolve issues quickly, or should we take a hard-line approach even if it means the issues won't be resolved for a long time?'; (2) 'And

how do you think (Non-Quebec: Quebec; Quebec: the rest of Canada) would approach negotiations to work out the details of independence - do you think they would be willing to compromise to resolve the issues, or do you think they would take a hard-line even if it meant the issues wouldn't be resolved for a long time?'; In May 1994, Angus Reid did not ask the question about the expected attitude of the other side, but asked this question of those favouring a hard line: 'Suppose that taking a hardline in these negotiations causes economic instability and results in a 10 percent decline in your standard of living. Would you favour taking a hardline?'

- 3 The results were based on 621 questionnaires mailed in by readers of *Report on Business Magazine* (Duhamel, 1991); 47% of respondents were presidents or owners of their enterprise, 41% were vice presidents and 11% were in the high management category.
- 4 The question was: 'Thinking about the possibility of Quebec choosing to leave Canada to become an independent country, are you personally prepared to see some concessions made to keep Quebec in Canada, or would you rather see Quebec leave than make concessions?' In prior surveys, Angus Reid found majorities of 56 to 67% favourable to concessions. In 1994, resistance to concessions was strongest in the Prairies and the Maritimes.
- 5 Angus Reid asked this question: 'Suppose there is an intense dispute between Canada and Quebec over an issue such as control and ownership of former federal government assets or properties. Do you think Canada should use its armed forces to seize the disputed assets, or should the use of military force be out of the question?' In the ROC, 73% opposed the use of force and only 22% approved it; in Quebec, 92% rejected the use of force (Angus Reid Group, 1992:15).
- 6 This question was preferred to another in the same survey which involved a conditional proposition (Appendix, D); except for a few variables in the multivariate regression analysis, undecided respondents or missing values were excluded from the sample.
- 7 The analysis is based on the responses to the following two questions, asked in succession in the *CBC/Globe and Mail* poll (with percentage of responses in the ROC in parentheses): 'If Quebec were to separate, do you think the standard of living in Quebec would remain about the same as it is now (16%), would be better than it is now (2.4%), or would be worse than it is now (75%)?'; 'What about the rest of Canada. If Quebec were to separate, do you think the standard of living in the rest of Canada would remain about the same as it is now (64%), would be better than it is now (10%) or would be worse than it is now (22%)?' The first question is used to represent the idea of absolute

gains. The intersection of the two questions is used to construct a new variable assessing perceptions of relative gains, which produces four observed categories: 4% expected ROC to lose and Quebec to stay the same or expected ROC to stay the same and Quebec to gain (ROC < Quebec); 36% expected ROC and Quebec to be equal (both lose, both stay the same or both gain, ROC = Quebec); 52% expected ROC to gain and Quebec to stay the same, or ROC to stay the same and Quebec to lose (ROC > Quebec); 9% expected ROC to gain and Quebec to lose (ROC >> Quebec). Note that neither of these two questions mentions the presence or absence of economic association as a prerequisite to evaluating costs or benefits.

- 8 The questions asked by Gallup were as follows: 'If Quebec was to separate from Canada and become an independent country, do you think Canada's economy would be better off [ROC: 13%; Quebec: 7%], worse off [ROC: 44%; Quebec: 53%], or remain the same? [ROC: 32%; Quebec: 30%]' 'How about Quebec's economy? Do you think it would be better off [ROC: 5%; Quebec: 35%], worse off [ROC: 74%; Q:37%], or remain the same? [ROC: 10%; Quebec: 18%]' (Gallup, 1994).
- 9 Caution is advised in interpretation, however, given the very close correlation between the two variables; $r = 0.75$.
- 10 The question, aptly coded Q8, was: 'The Gulf war ended the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and successfully enforced United Nations resolutions. On balance, do you think the expulsion of Iraq from Kuwait was worth the cost, in loss of life on both sides, and in physical and environmental damage to the region?' (yes = 51%; no = 37%).
- 11 The CBC/*Globe and Mail* poll asked respondents whether they agreed with the following statement: 'A federal Prime Minister from Quebec cannot adequately represent the interests of Canada in constitutional deals with Quebec.' 52% agreed, 39% disagreed, and 9% had no opinion. If every other English Canadian held this opinion with Quebec still in the federation, it is fair to assume that even more would hold it after sovereignty.
- 12 Note, however, that a majority of Reformers still supported association. Data from the 1992 Canadian Election Study (CES) *Referendum Survey*; see Appendix, H.
- 13 The measure of approval used in the CES 1992 post-referendum poll is a scale from 0-100. Respondents were asked the following question: 'I am going to name some people and ask you how you feel about them on a thermometer that runs from 0 to 100 degrees. Ratings between 50 and 100 are positive. Ratings between 0 and 50 are negative. You may use any number from 0 to 100 ... How do you feel about Preston Manning?'
- 14 The questions were: 'Recently, Michael Harcourt, the Premier of British Columbia, has said that, if

Quebec decided to separate, the people of B.C. would be very angry and the process of separation from the rest of Canada would be bitter and nasty. Generally speaking, do you agree or disagree with what Mr. Harcourt has said?' (agree: 71%; disagree: 24%); 'Some people feel that it is good for English Canadians such as Mr. Harcourt in British Columbia to speak out on possible negative consequences of independence. Which of these two views is closest to your own?' (good: 70%; bad: 23%) (Angus Reid Group, 1994).

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Appendix

Survey Data on Support for Economic Association After Quebec Sovereignty in English Canada

A) *Environics/Toronto Star*, August 1990 (Ontario only): 'If Quebec separated, would you favour an economic association between Quebec and Canada?'

Response options	% (N = 1008)
Very favourable	24
Somewhat favourable	33
Somewhat opposed	11
Very opposed	22
No opinion	10

B) CROP, March 1991: 'Imagine for a moment that Canada's refusal to consider an association with Quebec would provoke economic problems in Canada. In that case do you think that Canada should ...?'

Response options	% (N = 813)
Associate with Quebec	66
Refuse Association	21
No opinion	13

C) *Canadian Facts/CBC/Globe and Mail*, April 1991: 'If a referendum in Quebec supports sovereignty and then Quebec tries to negotiate an economic association with the rest of Canada, would you favour ...?'

Response options	% (N = 1145)
A close association	29
A loose association	39
No association at all	27
Not sure/Don't know/refused	5

D) *Canadian Facts/CBC/Globe and Mail*, April 1991: 'If you believed that Canada's economy will suffer if there is no association with a sovereign Quebec, would you support an economic association with Quebec?'

Response options	% (N = 1145)
Yes	55
No	36
Not sure/Don't know/refused	9

E) Angus Reid Group, May and December 1991: 'If Quebec were becoming independent, do you think Canada and Quebec should enter into an economic association, or should there be no formal economic union between the two if Quebec chooses independence?'

Response options	% (ROC)		% (PQ)	
	May (N)	Dec. (1115)	May (806)	Dec. (387)
Yes, ec. assn	60	58	81	74
No, no formal ec. union (Unsure)	35	36	15	21
	5	6	4	5

F) *Decima/Maclean's*, November 1991: 'If Quebec did decide to form a separate country, people have made different proposals about what should happen next. Would you find the following suggestions very acceptable, somewhat acceptable, somewhat unacceptable, or very unacceptable?' 'Canada and Quebec would cut all monetary and economic ties.' 'Canada and Quebec would keep present monetary and economic ties.' (total N = 1697)

Response options	% (ROC)		% (PQ)	
	Cut	Keep	Cut	Keep
Very unacceptable	21	31	42	9
Somewhat unacceptable	24	21	31	14
Somewhat acceptable	27	32	20	53
Very acceptable	27	15	4	23
No opinion	1	1	3	1

G) Gallup Report, February 1992: 'If Quebec separates from the rest of Canada, are you in favour or opposed to forming an economic union between Quebec and the rest of Canada?'

Response options	% ROC (N = 775)	% (Quebec) (N = 262)
Favour union	45	79
Oppose union	45	10
Don't know	10	11

H) Canadian Election Study, November 1992: 'If Quebec Separates, should Quebec and Canada form an economic association that is very close, fairly close, not very close, or should there be no economic association at all?'

Response options	% ROC (N = 1251)	% Quebec (N = 859)
A very close	23	36
A fairly close	33	44
Not a very close	10	4
No economic association	24	8
Don't know / Refused	8	8

I) Angus Reid Group, June 1994: 'If Quebec were becoming independent, do you think Canada and Quebec should enter into an economic association, or should there be no formal economic union between the two if Quebec chooses independence?' (same question as in part E)

Response options	% (ROC) (N)	% (Quebec) (806)
Yes, economic association	43	79
No, no formal economic union	52	17
(Unsure)	5	3

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