

***La Francophonie:* From the Postcolonial to the Post-Cold War Eras**

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The year 2010 was an important one for *La Francophonie*. Symbolically, it marked the fiftieth anniversary of the decolonisation of French-speaking African nations. Institutionally, it was a year in which the francophone movement, deemed to have been inaugurated with the establishment of the *Agence de coopération culturelle et technique* (ACCT) at the Niamey Convention of March 1970, celebrated forty years of existence. In the intervening years, institutional *francophonie* had undergone many changes, particularly since the 1990s. From its postcolonial beginnings as an African-based association for regional cooperation among newly independent states, which were also seeking to maintain economic and cultural links with the former *mère patrie*, it has evolved, both geographically and politically, into a broad international organisation striving to adapt to the post-Cold War era of globalisation. It is this evolution that will be the focus of the present article, notably concerning membership of the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* and the biennial Summits held under its auspices.

The origins of the francophone movement can be traced back even before the 1970 Niamey conference, and not only in Africa.¹ In 1966 the Heads of State of the *Organisation commune africaine et malgache* (OCAM), which had been established the previous year at a conference in Nouakchott (Mauritania), met in Tananarive (Madagascar) and, under the impulse of the Senegalese President Léopold Sédar Senghor, proposed the creation of a “communauté francophone”.² This was defined as a “communauté spirituelle

¹ Developments also occurred in the wider French-speaking world: for example, the AUPELF (*Association des universités partiellement ou entièrement de langue française*) was set up in Montreal in 1961.

² This organisation had its own forerunners: the *Union Africaine et Malgache* (UAM, 1961), which in 1964 became the *Union Africaine et Malgache de Coopération Economique* (UAMCE). The fourteen signatories to the OCAM Charter were: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Congo-Kinshasa, Côte d’Ivoire, Dahomey (Benin), Gabon, Malagasy Republic (Madagascar), Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo, Upper Volta (Burkina Faso). Mauritius joined in 1970. Various countries withdrew during the following decade, including Madagascar; in 1982 OCAM was renamed the *Organisation commune africaine et mauricienne*, before being disbanded in 1985.

de nations qui emploient le français, que celui-ci soit langue nationale, langue officielle ou bien langue d'usage".³ The following year saw the establishment of the AIPLF (*Association internationale des parlementaires de langue française*).⁴ In February 1969, the first intergovernmental conference of francophone states took place in Niamey (Niger), with Senghor again playing a leading role, supported by Habib Bourguiba and Hamani Diori, then respectively presidents of Tunisia and Niger, all concerned to create a "Commonwealth à la française".⁵ Whilst agriculture and other development issues were important, culture was also strongly promoted. In Senghor's celebrated metaphor, the French language was the "Soleil qui brille hors de l'Hexagone".⁶ It was therefore not by chance that this conference was held under the patronage of André Malraux, then de Gaulle's Minister of Culture, who spoke of the abiding and inclusive values that could prevail thanks to the French language and its unique spiritual dimension. In the eyes of Malraux, this combined the features of universality and respect for difference, of ancestral culture and modernity:

Seule, la culture francophone ne propose pas à l'Afrique de se soumettre à l'Occident en y perdant son âme; pour elle seule, la vieille Afrique de la sculpture et de la danse n'est pas une préhistoire; elle seule lui propose d'entrer dans le monde moderne en lui intégrant les plus hautes valeurs africaines [...] Nous attendons tous de la France l'universalité, parce que, depuis deux cents ans, elle seule s'en réclame.⁷

For the art historian with a passion for ancient civilisations and metamorphosis, even the imagined "death" of France could not extinguish the spirit that offered to the world a "culture de la fraternité":

Messieurs, en ce temps où l'héritage universel se présente à nos mains périssables, il m'advient de penser à ce que ce sera peut-être notre culture dans la mémoire des hommes, lorsque la France sera morte; [...] Alors, peut-être trouvera-t-on quelque part une inscription semblable

³ See Albert Ekue, "L'Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 6: 3 (October 1968), 421–425.

⁴ In 1998 this body was renamed the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF).

⁵ As Senghor put it a decade later, "j'entendais, j'entends toujours: entre nations qui emploient le français comme langue nationale, langue officielle ou langue de culture" ("Discours de réception à l'Académie des Sciences d'outre-mer", 2 October 1981). Cambodia's Prince Norodom Sihanouk was also an early supporter of this concept. See Papa Alioune Ndao, *La Francophonie des pères fondateurs* (Paris: Editions Karthala, Collection "Tropiques", 2008).

⁶ Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Le français, langue de culture", *Esprit*, 311 (novembre 1962), 844.

⁷ André Malraux, "Discours prononcé à la Conférence des pays francophones", Niamey, 17 February 1969. <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/actualites/dossiers/malraux2006/discours/a.m-niamey.htm>

aux inscriptions antiques, qui dira seulement: “En ce lieu naquit, un jour, pour la France et pour l’Europe, puis pour la France, l’Afrique et le monde, la culture de la fraternité.”⁸

A year later, on 20 March 1970, the second Niamey Convention saw twenty-one francophone states, now including France, sign a *Charte* that gave birth to the aid-assistance body, the *Agence de coopération culturelle et technique* (ACCT). This body was given a clear cultural mission: “de promouvoir et de diffuser les cultures des Hautes Parties contractantes et d’intensifier la coopération culturelle et technique entre elles”.⁹ In 1997, at the *Sommet de la Francophonie* in Hanoi, the ACCT became the *Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie* (AIF). This served effectively as the secretariat of the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF), created the same year, and, as such, assumed responsibility for administering the OIF’s multilateral programs. In November 2005, at the *Conférence ministérielle de la Francophonie* in Tananarive (Antananarivo), the city in which the “communauté francophone” had been created nearly forty years earlier, a new *Charte de la Francophonie* was adopted, streamlining the institutional changes made in Hanoi. Henceforth, the *Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie* became merged with the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* and took the latter’s name.¹⁰

The increasing integration of the various francophone bodies into a formal, over-arching political and administrative structure to direct development programs was also accompanied by regular inter-governmental ministerial meetings and Summits of Heads of State and Government. A consideration of these Summits, and their implications, allows us to see how the Francophone Movement has sought to adapt to the post-Cold War era of globalisation.

⁸ Malraux, 1969.

⁹ http://www.elysee.fr/elysee/elysee.fr/francais_archives/les_dossiers/la_francophonie/le_monde_de_la_francophonie/convention_de_niamey_du_20_mars_1970. In honour of the date of the signing of this *Charte*, the day of 20 March became, in 1988, that of the annual *Journée internationale de la Francophonie*.

¹⁰ Article 2 of the Charter of the OIF stipulates three decision-making bodies: the Summit meetings of Heads of State and Government, the *Conférence ministérielle de la Francophonie* (CMF) and the *Conseil permanent de la Francophonie* (CPF). Its “opérateurs directs” are: the *Agence universitaire de la Francophonie* (AUF); TV5 Monde; the *Université Senghor d’Alexandrie*; l’*Association internationale des maires et responsables des capitales et des métropoles partiellement ou entièrement francophones* (AIMF).

Francophone Summits: institutional change

The first *Sommet de la Francophonie* was held in 1986, at Versailles, with forty-two participants. There followed Quebec City (1987), which gave full recognition to the province of Quebec. This Summit took place twenty years after de Gaulle made his famous speech of July 1967 (“Vive le Québec libre!”), and ten years after the adoption of the “Loi 101”, the “Charte de la langue française” that strengthened the position of French in the *belle province* whose motto had become “Je me souviens”.¹¹

The Dakar Summit (1989), held just a few months before the fall of the Berlin Wall, was a pointer to the future. It was mainly devoted to questions of education and training, which were given prominence in the Summit’s Final Declaration as a “domaine stratégique d’intervention”. This went beyond a bilateral or even multilateral conception of development aid to individual members by deciding to create the *Université internationale francophone Senghor* of Alexandria. Inaugurated at the end of the following year, this is a postgraduate university for upper echelon cadres from francophone countries, notably from sub-Saharan Africa. Designed to link the Arab world with the African continent, Islam with the West (the French *académicien* Senghor himself having been a Senegalese Christian), the Classical past with the future of developing countries, it is thus a concrete instance of French cultural largesse – and influence – in action: a French-built, French-language university on Arab soil named after the Christian leader of an African Muslim country.

The Paris (Chaillot) Summit of 1991 showed that, whatever new-found vision *La Francophonie* might have regarding the geopolitics of development, events on the African continent had the potential to disrupt the Movement’s agenda. That year’s Summit had been scheduled to take place in Kinshasa, but the venue was hastily changed due to international pressure resulting from human rights abuses under the Mobutu regime, notably following the bloody repression of student protests at the Lubumbashi campus.¹² This Summit also

¹¹ The then President of Senegal, Abdou Diouf, later to be Secretary General of *La Francophonie*, described the Quebec Summit, which decided on the biennial framework for future Summits, as a “rampe de lancement” for the Francophone Movement: *Actes de la deuxième Conférence des chefs d’États et de Gouvernement des pays ayant en commun l’usage du français* (Québec: La Liberté, 1988), p. 300. According to Stéphane Paquin, the Quebec Summit (and indeed the Francophone Summits more generally) took place only after Brian Mulroney had replaced Pierre Elliott Trudeau as Canadian Prime Minister, the latter having always opposed Quebec nationalism and the Province’s desire to assert an international presence: Stéphane Paquin, *Histoire des relations internationales du Québec* (Montréal: VLB, 2006).

¹² The same country, which had changed its name from Zaïre to the *République Démocratique du Congo* following the overthrow of the Mobutu regime, subsequently boycotted the 1997 Hanoi Summit. Its new leader, Laurent Kabila, accused France of

made some institutional changes, establishing a *Conseil permanent* whose duty it would be to organise the biennial *Sommets de la Francophonie*, and a *Conférence ministérielle* that would meet annually and provide strategic direction.

The Mauritius Summit (1993) made a significant modification to the Charter of *La Francophonie* that would have far-reaching effects. It was at this Summit that the definition of members of the Movement changed from being those “ayant en commun l’usage du français” to those “ayant le français en partage”, the latter being, in the words of the Francophone Movement, a “formule plus conviviale que celle qui avait prévalu jusqu’alors”.¹³ This justified, for instance, the admission to full membership of the three countries that had had observer status at the previous Summit – Bulgaria, Cambodia and Romania – just as Moldavia was now present as an “invité spécial”, resulting in the presence of forty-seven participants in Mauritius.

This extension was also accompanied by another development, the introduction of the notion of “la diversité culturelle et linguistique”, that was subsequently to play a major role in the politics of *La Francophonie*, as discussed below. As the Mauritius Declaration put it in the imperative mood: “affirmons, en raison de ce regain d’intérêt pour la multilatéralité, la nécessité de faire entendre la voix de la Francophonie dans les grands débats internationaux et de contribuer au respect de la diversité culturelle et linguistique, historique, économique et sociale, facteur d’enrichissement pour l’humanité”.¹⁴

At the Cotonou Summit (1995) Moldavia in turn became a full member, as did Sao Tomé and Príncipe, bringing the total membership to forty-nine. This broadening of the base of membership was a sign of the developing political intention of *la Francophonie*, as expressed in the Summit’s Final Declaration, referring to: “notre volonté renouvelée de consolider la Francophonie comme instrument de dialogue et de coopération multilatérale en lui donnant les moyens juridiques, matériels et humains à la mesure de son ambition politique, notamment par la création d’un Secrétariat général de la Francophonie”. A further indication of this was the presence, as guest, for the second consecutive Summit, of Boutros Boutros-Ghali, then Secretary General of the United Nations, who made a speech calling for a greater political voice for the movement. In line with this, the Cotonou Declaration called

“néo-colonialisme” (author’s personal transcription at Closing Press Conference), as did, subsequently, Laurent Gbagbo, the head of the Ivory Coast who has boycotted the past four Summits, including the 2004 Summit in neighbouring Burkina Faso. The latter was not only host to the Francophone Summit but also implicated in the civil war that had been raging in the Ivory Coast for the previous two years.

¹³ <http://quebec2008.francophonie.org/spip.php?rubrique89>

¹⁴ http://www.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/declaration_Maurice93.pdf, p.23.

for institutional reform of the Movement and provided for a revision of the Niamey “Charte de l’ACCT” in a new “Charte de la Francophonie”.¹⁵

It was at the Hanoi Summit (1997) that *La Francophonie* confirmed its intention to increase its political visibility in the post-Cold War world by creating a new structure, the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF). According to the Final Declaration, this Summit, the first to be held in Asia, underlined “la dimension universelle de la Francophonie” at the same time as it recognised the new challenges, “face aux défis liés à une mondialisation accélérée et à la nécessité d’en tirer le meilleur parti afin d’écarter les risques d’uniformisation réductrice”.¹⁶ Henceforth, a new unified Secretariat would combine the functions of coordinating the permanent *Conseil de la Francophonie* and those of the *Agence de la Francophonie* dealing with aid and cultural programs. It was Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who had been supported by France in the face of US opposition in his failed attempt to renew his UN mandate, who was now appointed the first permanent Secretary General of the francophone movement.¹⁷

Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s mandate lasted until the Beirut Summit (2002) when he was succeeded by Abdou Diouf, the ex-President of Senegal. This election at the close of the Summit did not go off without some commotion, due to the fact that Henri Lopes, from the Congo, maintained his candidacy right up until the last minute, something uncharacteristic of the francophone movement where decisions tend to be taken *à l’unanimité*. In the event, of course, Diouf, who had served for twenty years as president of his country (1981-2000), and is a former head of the Organisation of African Unity, simply had too much political weight for Lopes, seen not as an ex-Prime Minister of the Congo and long-time Assistant Director of UNESCO, become Ambassador for his country in Paris, but as “un écrivain” – given the Francophone Movement’s desire to give itself an increased political role on the international stage.¹⁸ Diouf, who had accepted his defeat in Senegal’s

¹⁵ http://www.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/declaration_Cotonou95.pdf, p.28.

¹⁶ <http://www.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/decl-hanoi-1997.pdf>

¹⁷ Boutros-Ghali saw his desire for *La Francophonie* to play a greater international political role realised in December 1998 when the General Assembly of the United Nations recognised the International Organization of la Francophonie as an Observer. See http://www.undemocracy.com/generalassembly_53/meeting_93/; <http://www.undemocracy.com/A-53-701.pdf>.

In fact, this was a transfer of the Observer status previously accorded to the ACCT in November 1978 (see <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/360/36/IMG/NR036036.pdf>). In an interview in February 2010, Boutros-Ghali reflected on other political initiatives he had taken soon after becoming Secretary General of the OIF: “La première année de mon mandat j’ai lancé une collaboration avec l’Union européenne et l’Union africaine (à l’époque l’OUA), mais aussi avec le Commonwealth et la Ligue arabe.” See http://www.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/Dossier_MFI-OIF_40e-2.pdf (10 February 2010).

¹⁸ As one diplomat put it to me in Beirut, it is not only in the literal but also the

presidential elections of late 2000, was presented as a model of democratic behaviour, something that is not always evident in francophone African countries. Senegal also has the advantage of being both a pro-Western country (its founding father and first president, Léopold Sédar Senghor, was one of the founders of *la Francophonie*) and also a country of great linguistic and cultural diversity, with 85% of the population being Muslim. The wheel had thus turned full circle, with the *filis d'Afrique*, Diouf, Senghor's spiritual and political heir, being elected to the helm of the movement that the *père* had done so much to create.

Human rights

In spite of its new-found political will and its intention to play a role similar to that of the Commonwealth, the closing Press Conference at the Hanoi Summit showed how conceptions differed over the implications of this new-found political will. Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien affirmed that, with many troubled areas in the francophone world, it could be useful for the Movement to apply sanctions as the Commonwealth itself had done on occasions (for example, in relation to South Africa and Nigeria). For President Chirac, on the other hand, to impose sanctions was not part of traditional behaviour in the *espace francophone*: “convaincre, non contraindre” was his motto.¹⁹ For her part, Madame Ngyuen Thi Binh, the Vietnamese Vice-President chairing the session, quickly intervened to put an end to any speculation about sanctions by reading out the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states, laid down in the movement's charter.²⁰

Despite such misgivings, the Moncton Summit (1999) undertook to address questions of human rights abuse among member countries more actively than had been the case in the past. Amnesty International was publicly critical of the human rights records of more than thirty of the fifty-two francophone countries represented, and the Canadian press lambasted the Chrétien government for laying down the red carpet to a number of “criminals”.²¹ In the event, the Youth Ambassadors of *La Francophonie* (the theme of the Moncton Summit being “la jeunesse”) went so far as to set up

figurative sense that “Paris est plus proche de Dakar que ne l'est Brazzaville” (personal communication).

¹⁹ Jacques Chirac was quoted in similar vein in an article that appeared in *Le Monde* of 4 September 1999, on the eve of the Moncton Summit: “Les sanctions ne sont pas dans la tradition de la francophonie; elles relèvent de la compétence de l'ONU. Ce que nous voulons, c'est convaincre, pas contraindre.”

²⁰ Article 1.1 of the *Charte de La Francophonie*, adopted in Hanoi and revised at the Ouagadougou Summit as part of a “Cadre stratégique décennal”, stipulates that the OIF “observe la plus stricte neutralité dans les questions de politique intérieure.” http://www.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/Cadre_strategik_10al.pdf

²¹ Author's notes at Moncton press conferences.

their own parallel press conference on the subject of human rights, particularly when the proposal for an *Observatoire sur les droits de l'homme* (or *droits humains*, as the Canadians put it) remained little more than a vague notion. The year following the Moncton Summit, however, the Bamako Declaration (November 2000) provided an institutional framework for consideration by the OIF of issues of democracy, rights and liberties in the *espace francophone*.²²

The 2002 Summit in Beirut reaffirmed the link between democracy and development and indicated its commitment to implementing the Bamako Declaration. This was taken a stage further at the 2006 Ministerial Conference held at Saint-Boniface, which produced the Boniface Declaration on conflict prevention and human security.²³ An *Observatoire des Droits humains* was then established, charged with writing report cards on the state of affairs in the member countries, and provision was finally made for the possibility of sanctions, including suspension of member states. Indeed, in 2008, the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the OIF suspended Mauritania following a *coup d'état* in that country just prior to the Summit that had overthrown the government of President Sidi Ould Cheik Abdallahi, who had gained power the year before in the first fully democratic elections held in the country since 1960. At the end of 2009, Madagascar, which was due to host the 2010 Summit, was suspended in the midst of political turmoil in that country, and Guinea was also suspended in 2010. Moreover, Niger was placed *sous examen* at a *session extraordinaire* of the OIF in March 2010, at which the Bamako Declaration was invoked.

Expansion of membership

At its inception in 1970, the francophone movement had twenty-two members; this figure has now increased to seventy-five; fifty-three are full members, three are associate members, and nineteen have observer status. Not all members are independent states. Canada, for instance, has three representatives: the

²² http://apf.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/decla_bamako-2.pdf. Article 3.1 proclaims that "Francophonie et démocratie sont indissociables". It is true that the following paragraph is more nuanced: "pour la Francophonie, il n'y a pas de mode d'organisation unique de la démocratie et que, dans le respect des principes universels, les formes d'expression de la démocratie doivent s'inscrire dans les réalités et spécificités historiques, culturelles et sociales de chaque peuple" (3.2). However, for the first time this Declaration provides for direct action, including the suspension of member countries: "proposition de suspension du pays concerné de la Francophonie. En cas de coup d'Etat militaire contre un régime issu d'élections démocratiques, la suspension est décidée" (5.3).

²³ <http://www.francophonie.org/Declaration-de-St-Boniface.html> Article 31 states emphatically: "**Soulignons** l'importance de promouvoir le respect de tous les droits de l'Homme et du droit international humanitaire, de prévenir et de sanctionner les violations graves ou massives de ces droits, et de traduire en justice les auteurs de telles violations."

Federal State, and the Provinces of Quebec and New Brunswick. Belgium is another country to have more than one representative – both the Federal State and the French Community of Belgium are members, making up an even unlikelier duo than the Canadian trio.²⁴

Despite such idiosyncracies, it could be said that from its foundation in 1970 until the late 1980s, that is, from the post-colonial era to the post-Cold War world, the members of *La Francophonie* were all French-speaking in the traditional sense, or at least that French was either an official or significant language of its member countries. The term “francophone” subsequently came to be taken in a much broader sense, however. As stated above, the Mauritius Summit of 1993 devised the notion of members having “le français en partage” rather than “le français en usage”. This gave rise to the notion of *l’espace francophone* – a virtually boundless geography, emphasising a certain assumed kindred spirit of cultural endeavour, rather than an area determined by colonial history or linguistic heritage narrowly defined.²⁵ This in turn has enabled a number of countries which are not normally thought of as French-speaking in any traditional way to join the Movement in recent years: Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Hungary, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldavia, Poland, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Slovakia. The recent Montreux Summit (2010) has now added to the list by admitting Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, Montenegro and the United Arab Emirates . . . In the eyes of many African states, such developments confuse, to their detriment, *francophonie* and *francophilie*, the latter being potentially boundless, the former linguistically circumscribed. Indeed, at the final press conference at the Moncton Summit, President Kérékou of Benin made an impassioned plea for understanding of the African continent, which he claimed to be subject to ignorance and neglect. And as one African diplomat told me, whilst the speeches of some of the Slavic – and other – leaders might have

²⁴ As a Federal State, the Kingdom of Belgium participates in *La Francophonie* only in so far as it attends the biennial Summits. It makes no financial contribution to the francophone Movement. It is the *Communauté Française de Belgique*, one of the three “Communautés” of the country under the Belgian constitution, which both supports the Movement financially and is an active member of all its bodies. See Michel Tétu, *Qu’est-ce que la Francophonie?* (Paris: Hachette, 1997), pp. 108-110.

²⁵ As the frontispiece, “Au lecteur”, of *L’Année Francophone Internationale* puts it, “l’espace francophone” represents “une réalité non exclusivement géographique ni même linguistique mais aussi culturelle [qui] réunit tous ceux qui, de près ou de loin, éprouvent ou expriment une certaine appartenance à la langue française ou aux cultures francophones. Cette dénomination, bien qu’apparemment floue, est certainement la plus féconde. Elle recouvre des situations très variées.” It is worth noting that, for the first time since its creation in 1991, and commensurate with the growing importance of the extension of the francophone movement, the 2003 edition of *L’Année Francophone Internationale* carried the subtitle, *Le point sur l’espace francophone*.

been written in flawless French, it was not clear that such leaders could all easily understand all the subsequent compliments paid to them on that account.

Extension of membership continued unabated, however, and it could be seen that France was positioning itself to bolster its influence in the former East and Central Europe as the European Union continued its cautious but clear expansion eastwards. The Beirut Summit (2002) took place on the very same weekend on which the Irish held a referendum on the Treaty of Nice II concerning enlargement of the European Union eastwards. Ireland ratified the Treaty, the last member of the EU to do so, with the six east-European states which subsequently entered the EU in May 2004 having already acceded to membership of *la Francophonie* (the Czech and Slovak Republics, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia). The 2006 Summit held in Bucharest confirmed this trend. It was not without irony that this was the centenary of the birth of Léopold Sédar Senghor, marked by numerous celebrations in honour of the ex-President of Senegal. The *Journée Internationale de la Francophonie* in March was dedicated to his memory, as were many cultural and scholarly events that took place throughout the year under the banner of *les francophonies!*

The year 2006 was also, however, the twentieth anniversary of the biennial *Sommets de la Francophonie*, and the Bucharest Summit was the first to be held in Europe outside France. Senghor celebrations and the reign of the *filles d'Afrique*, Diouf, notwithstanding, this saw the confirmation of a geo-political shift in balance away from Africa towards Europe. At the inaugural Summit in 1986, twenty of the twenty-nine members of the movement were African countries. After the Bucharest Summit, less than one third of the OIF's members were from the continent of Africa. Moreover, the significance of the 2006 Summit's setting, in one of the capitals of the former Eastern Europe, was all the greater in that, on the eve of the Summit's opening, the European Commission confirmed the admission of Romania and Bulgaria to the European Union from 1 January 2007. The two events were linked in that the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, made the trip from Brussels to deliver a speech at the opening ceremony of the Francophone Summit. This development meant that fourteen of the EU's twenty-seven members were now also members of the OIF. Of the twelve new members to enter the EU since 2004, nine were now also part of the OIF, and Latvia and Estonia have also since joined, in 2008 and 2010 respectively.

Paradoxically, the Secretary General of the OIF, Abdou Diouf, claims to accommodate, even welcome, in the name of "ouverture" and "diversité culturelle", the fact that only about half the member countries are French-speaking in any real sense. His view is that there are many African countries that are members of more than one organisation: the Commonwealth, the Arab League, the Organisation of Lusophone Countries, and so on. Indeed, he proclaims that this can be a very good thing if it combats the scourge of "l'hégémonie culturelle et linguistique". More paradoxically, Abdou Diouf sees

the extension of the francophone movement to non-francophone countries in Europe as a positive development, even linguistically, claiming in Bucharest that “cela prouve que la langue française n’est pas en déclin dans le monde”.²⁶

However, this situation can produce some quirks, not to say absurdities. At the final press conference in Bucharest, for example, Diouf himself was deprived of the possibility of dialogue. Like many others in the room, he did not come equipped with a headphone for simultaneous interpretation. This was necessary in order to understand the speech made by President Traian Basescu, who spoke only in Romanian, telling his audience how proud he was that his country was hosting the *Sommet de la Francophonie*. This resulted in the tragi-comic scene of the *secrétaire-général de la Francophonie* not being able to understand what the leader of the host country was saying about him and the francophone movement, given that President Basescu did not feel sufficiently comfortable to express himself extemporaneously in French. However, Diouf recognised as a problem the situation whereby OIF member states make widespread use of English at international fora. The Bucharest Summit had produced a *Vade-mecum* on the use of the French language in business and international affairs, and the Quebec Declaration also tried to address this concern by making a number of remarks and recommendations on the subject, but their generality could be seen to be too vague to ensure the implementation of any specific measures.²⁷

It was not by chance therefore that the host of the Quebec City Summit (2008), Jean Charest, Prime Minister of Quebec, wished to place the question of the French language at the heart of the proceedings. It might seem strange that there should be concern for the French language in the city that had hosted, two days before the Summit began, the visit of the recipient of that year’s Nobel Prize for literature, J. M. G. Le Clézio. But the foregrounding of the French language as a theme of the Summit was not only due to Quebec cultural and linguistic identity. There is a growing sense of malaise within the traditional members of the OIF – Quebec and the African countries in particular – about the situation of French, not only in the world at large but also within the movement itself. Of the seventy countries that now formed the OIF, less than half have French as an official language. The Congolese writer and diplomat Henri Lopes, a sometime plenipotentiary for the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* (for example, in Niger in April 2010) and who has chaired the committee to select the Movement’s *Prix des Cinq*

²⁶ Interview with the on-line journal, *Le Petit Journal*, www.lepetitjournal.com

²⁷ At the recent Montreux Summit (October 2010) Quebec assumed the responsibility to follow up on this vital issue. The Montreux Declaration (point 37) states: “À cet égard, l’OIF organisera, en collaboration avec le gouvernement du Québec, un Forum mondial de la langue française au printemps 2012.” http://www.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/SOM_XIII_DECL_Montreux_LOGO.pdf.

Continents for literature, expressed his concern at this situation in an interview he gave to RFI in February 2010:

En cas d'élargissement de la Francophonie, nous avons le plus souvent des points communs en ce qui concerne les droits de l'homme, la culture. Mais il ne faut pas perdre de vue le socle fondamental qu'est la langue française. L'actuel secrétaire général Abdou Diouf a lancé à Bucarest le vade-mecum concernant le français qui n'est toujours pas véritablement mis en œuvre. Ce que nous risquons, c'est de glisser de l'Organisation de La Francophonie vers une Organisation de la Francophilie!²⁸

Yet the fact that “French” is no longer a “given” at Francophone Summits is not purely a linguistic question. As the 2008 Quebec Summit opened, Rwanda announced that it was taking the radical step of replacing French with English as the language of the education system and the administration. According to President Paul Kagame, English is better for business and would help the country's development, especially by facilitating its integration in the East-African Community whose members are all English-speaking (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania). Kagame himself grew up in Uganda, where his family was living in exile, was trained in the military in that country and the United States, and it was from Uganda that he led the successful invasion force that overthrew the Rwandan Hutu regime in 1994. Rwanda had been a member of *la Francophonie* ever since the Movement's foundation in 1970, but henceforth French would be taught only as a second language, alongside Kinyarwanda, the national language of ten million Rwandans. Following the British Institute's setting up of an office in Kigali, at the same time as the Ecole Française Internationale and offices of French firms were closing there, in November 2009 Rwanda was the fifty-fourth country to be admitted to the Commonwealth. The perennially “optimistic” Diouf saw even this as a sign of adherence to the values of . . . *la Francophonie*, that is, as something to be encouraged.

Finally, and conversely, there is a major French-speaking country that remains absent from *La Francophonie*, if not from Francophone Summits: Algeria. During the Beirut Summit of 2002, the fortieth anniversary of the end of the Algerian war of independence, and as relations between Algeria and France seemed to offer the promise of something like normality, the Algerian

²⁸ http://www.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/Dossier_MFI-OIF_40e-2.pdf (12 February 2010).

Others, like Robert Chaudenson, have publicly expressed more strident criticisms over what they see as the growing disparity between the rich, diverse and dynamic nature of *la francophonie* (lower case “f”) on many continents, and its increasing marginalisation within the institutional life of *La Francophonie* (upper case “F”). See Chaudenson's *La Francophonie aujourd'hui: réflexions critiques* (Paris: L'Harmattan, Collection “Langues et développement”, 2008). It is also true that Henri Lopes has made very strong statements to me on the subject at several *Sommets de la Francophonie* over the past decade.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdelaziz Belkhadem, announced his government's intention to apply for membership of the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*. He, like President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who was also in attendance, paid homage to the Cotonou meeting of Culture Ministers of Francophone Nations in June 2001, whereby *la Francophonie* recognised the importance of national languages other than French within the *espace francophone*. All this was quite a change for a movement that had previously been considered by Algeria to represent a "vestige du néo-colonialisme". For President Chirac, Algerian membership of *La Francophonie* was, however, something already *acquis*, in spirit and principle if not in fact, as he made plain in his address: "L'Algérie est chez elle dans la francophonie, même si elle n'a pas rejoint l'organisation." The following year, 2003, was *l'année de l'Algérie* in France and, conversely, President Chirac made an official trip to Algeria. In Beirut Algeria's membership of *La Francophonie* could therefore seem to be merely a matter of time. Indeed, at the following Summit in Ouagadougou (2004), where Bouteflika made the trip as an "invité spécial" of Burkina Faso's President Baraouké, after having been the guest in Beirut of the Lebanese President Emile Lahoud, the OIF's Secretary General Diouf expressed the hope that Algeria would become a member of the Movement, affirming that this development was "inscrit dans l'Histoire: l'Algérie est plus francophone que la plupart des membres actuels de la francophonie".²⁹

The stark fact remains, however, that Algeria is still not a member of the francophone movement. The vicissitudes in the political fortunes of *La Francophonie* were apparent at the Bucharest Summit in this regard. For the third Summit in a row, the Algerian president was invited as the "personal guest" of the host nation. This time, however, President Bouteflika did not attend, sending his foreign minister instead; indeed, the possibility of Algeria joining the ranks of the francophone movement seemed now less likely than before. The French parliament's insertion of a reference to "les effets positifs du colonialisme" in article 4 of its law of 23 February 2005, not to speak of the social crisis in France as a result of the explosion of *la banlieue* in late 2005, had meant a stalling of any settlement concerning historically sensitive issues such as France's relations with Algeria.³⁰ The French Foreign Minister, Philippe Douste-Blazy, for example, returned empty-handed from Algiers in March

²⁹ Author's notes.

³⁰ It is true that President Chirac subsequently ordered the removal of this clause; furthermore, just before the Bucharest Summit, he announced that he was going to increase the retirement pensions of some 80,000 former soldiers who had fought for France, in order to bring them in line with those received by metropolitan war pensioners – an announcement that coincided on the same day with the public release in French cinemas of Rachid Bouchareb's film *Indigènes*.

2006 in his attempt to have the Algerian President sign a *Traité d'amitié*, and no further step towards this was taken in Bucharest.

Conversely, whilst a number of leaders of member countries were noticeably absent from the Quebec Summit, there was the notable presence of one absent member, that of Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, once again an “invité spécial” of the host. In Quebec City, Bouteflika showed a very open attitude to the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*, declaring in his speech that “l’usage de la langue française . . . constitue un outil essentiel de communication et d’échange”.³¹ Witness to this is the fact that forty-five of Algeria’s universities are members of the *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie*. Nonetheless, whilst the past three Summits (Bucharest, Quebec and Montreux) did admit a raft of new members – respectively, Albania, Andorra and Greece, Cyprus and Ghana, Mozambique, Serbia and Ukraine; Armenia, Latvia and Thailand; Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, Montenegro, the United Arab Emirates, countries in which the French language is very far from playing a dominant role – the glaring fact remains that the OIF still cannot coax into its ranks the major francophone country of the Maghreb with still one of the largest number of real French-speakers outside France.³²

In his book *Demain la Francophonie*, Dominique Wolton sees in *la francophonie* an opportunity to promote cultural diversity as a key element of globalisation. In this sense, it could provide a laboratory *par excellence* for cultural exploration in the contemporary world, allowing Wolton to present an idealistic vision for *la Francophonie*:

[...] tenir ensemble histoire et utopie; pays riches et pays pauvres; Etats et grandes entreprises; pays peuplés et moins peuplés. Avec tous les climats et tous les reliefs. Il y a là, dans cet ensemble hétéroclite, des facteurs de richesses culturelles insoupçonnées.³³

³¹ Author’s notes.

³² It is remarkable that in the OIF’s publication, *La Francophonie dans le monde 2006–2007* (Paris: Nathan, 2008), p. 7, one can read, without qualification, that “les pays où l’on trouve le plus de francophones et francophones partiels pour l’Afrique du Nord, sont le Maroc en nombre et la Tunisie en pourcentage de la population totale”. Also in 2008, Alain Joyandet, the then *Secrétaire d’état chargé de la Francophonie* referred to Algeria as having seventeen million francophones, in an article in which he called for that country (and Israel) to join the OIF: see “Pour une Francophonie ambitieuse”, in Didier Billion (ed.), *L’Avenir de la Francophonie, Revue Internationale et Stratégique*, 71 (automne 2008), 30. However, the recent publication by the OIF, *La langue française dans le monde 2010* (Paris: Nathan, 2010), p. 9, shows a decline in the figures for Algeria, to 11.2 million in 2008, whereas the same publication records an increase, to 220 million (a “calcul minimaliste”, p. 9), in the worldwide number of “francophones de façon certaine” (p. 9).

³³ Dominique Wolton, *Demain la Francophonie* (Paris: Flammarion, 2006), p. 189.

Yet the same author recognises that the politicisation of cultural diversity is also accompanied by disputes about colonial memory and, in France, the question of the place of immigrants within the Republic, both of which concern Algeria: "Si l'Algérie n'a pas encore rejoint l'organisation internationale de la francophonie, c'est aussi parce que cet indispensable travail commun n'est pas encore achevé."³⁴

It remains to be seen whether institutional *Francophonie*, such as it has evolved as a geopolitical organisation in the post-Cold War period, is able to fulfil the grand aspirations announced for it by Dominique Wolton. Whilst conceptually it may have moved beyond the postcolonial period that gave rise to its existence, in its attempt to have influence in the age of globalisation it will need to ensure that its colonial legacy is fully integrated into its own history if it is to avoid the twin perils of internal contradiction and external irrelevance.

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³⁴ Wolton, p. 11.