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Does French Matter? France and Francophonie in the Age of Globalization

by Jody Neathery-Castro and
Mark O. Rousseau

THE ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE DE LA FRANCOFONIE (OIF) increasingly acts as a powerful French-speaking voice in defense of both French culture and language and in advancing French-speaking nations' multiple global, political and economic interests. While the OIF includes developed as well as developing¹ nations, its policies and financial resources come from its wealthier and more economically powerful members, fueling charges that it exists to represent those members' interests. The OIF is unique among international organizations in propounding economic policies based on assumptions different from those espoused by the World Trade Organization (WTO). These differences become most apparent in OIF's strong stance supporting cultural exceptions in international trade. This article examines the claims pursued by the OIF, the issue of whose interests are being served, and prospects for its future.

The Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie

From the founding of the *Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique* in 1970 the OIF has evolved its organization and mission over the past thirty years. The *Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie* (AIF) serves as the principal operational arm of the OIF, carrying out the missions developed at the biennial conferences of heads of state and government of Francophone nations. OIF membership numbers over fifty states, some of whom have French as the national language and others in which only a small portion speaks French. The 1997 Hanoi Summit created the position of Secretary General of the OIF, held until the 2002 Beirut Summit by Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former Secretary General of the United Nations, and now by Abdou Diouf, former president of Senegal.

A clear division of membership exists in the OIF between the wealthy industrial nations and developing Francophone nations. OIF financing and policy initiatives rest primarily (70%) in the hands of France and Canada.

We argue that the OIF reflects the differential definitions of its purpose held by developed and developing nations. While France is seen by some as an advocate of developing nations' concerns, others, including critical Francophone intellectuals from the developing world, argue persuasively that France attempts to preserve a neo-colonial influence in Africa, both economically and linguistically.

France: Language Policies and Politics

Does the standing of French in international economic and language markets matter? It certainly does to powerful political, economic and language elites in the *Métropole* itself. Since the growth of the central state in the sixteenth century, France's language policies have played a prominent role, particularly in the unification of the nation (Eloy). In a similar vein Safran writes that matters of language and culture have been major concerns of public policy in France since the *Ancien Régime*. While French has been a major force for cultural and political integration, this unity today is challenged by the rebirth of regional languages and dialects within France, the economic and cultural integration occurring in the European Union (EU), and the world economy of technology, trade and culture integrated under the WTO and utilizing English as the international *lingua franca*. As Safran (62) and others note, international language prominence is closely associated with economic power and technological leadership. In this regard, at least since World War II, French has been surpassed by English, as the United States emerged as the world's leading economic, political and military power.

As the major proponent and leading nation in the World Trade Organization, the United States commenced remaking the global economy under the aegis of the WTO. While globalization is largely praised in the corporate media, thoughtful critical analyses of its economic, social and environmental consequences are not wanting. Nobel Prize-winning and former World Bank chief economist Joseph Stiglitz defines globalization as "the closer integration of the countries and peoples of the world which has been brought about by the enormous reduction of costs of transportation and communication" (9). Stiglitz extensively critiques globalization as currently practiced under the aegis of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. He characterizes today's global economy as an excess of "triumphant capitalism American style" (5) in which commercial and financial special interests have set the rules, to the great detriment of the developing world. Stiglitz asserts that collective economic exchange is desirable and wants "to make globalization work, and work not just for the well-off and the industrial countries, but for the poor and the developing nations" (252).

Critics (Sassen, Tabb) assert that the dominant neoliberal paradigm of globalization as an irresistible tide of new technologies and market forces

functions as a deliberate ideology designed to undermine the legitimate social functions of the state to the benefit of private corporate profits. Thus deregulation results not so much from any technical necessity of an international economy, but from deliberate political choices resulting from the victories of capital over labor. Our analysis includes a critical assessment of globalization, considering its social and economic consequences. Increasingly, populations in Europe and the United States evidence awareness of the social impacts of the global trading regime, apparent in the increased frequency and size of public protests at international meetings of the World Trade Organization, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund.

While French corporations benefit from the international export of goods, and France boasts the world's fourth largest economy (U.S. Bureau of the Census 831), it is also home to some of globalization's most vociferous and thoughtful critics. Chief among these is recently-deceased sociologist and social activist Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu forcefully asserted that the global economy and the institutions represented by WTO have little to do with market forces and universal practices, but result from the U.S. imposing its own economic model on the rest of the world as a universal experience. As a result, the U.S. reaps important competitive advantages—financial, economic, political, military and linguistic. English has become the universal language of international economy and society.

In a similar fashion, Meunier analyzes what she calls the "French exception," noting that France is the leading international critic of globalization (2000). She suggests that many French intellectual and cultural elites remain inhospitable to the neoliberal economic agenda because WTO practices threaten the historic role of the central state in France and infringe on domestic policies like environmental regulation, labor rights and food inspection. Meunier suggests that Francophonie becomes a vehicle for promoting French and slowing the onslaught of English.

Continuing concern over the standing of French in Quebec prompted the government to convene a special Commission on the Situation and Future of the French Language in Quebec. In its report *Le Français, une langue pour tout le monde* (2001), the Commission considers the relative competitive stance of English and French in the global economy and the role the OIF plays in advancing the economic, political and cultural interests of Francophone nations. It states that economic advantages accrue to the United States and other Anglophone nations when English serves as the sole language of the market. Non-Anglophone nations face added costs for English language training, monies that Anglophone nations can invest directly in information technologies, research, and scientific development. The Commission advocates that all four major New World languages in the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) be recognized under a legal statute guaranteeing official status for each (Spanish, Portuguese, French and English). It likewise endorses the posi-

tion taken by the OIF at the 1999 Moncton Francophone Summit that all member states of WTO have the right to develop their own linguistic and cultural policies, including state subsidies for cultural products.

Taking the Offensive: France, WTO and International Solidarity

Domestically and internationally France, and through its urging the OIF, have engaged in a number of actions designed to address these varied concerns. We briefly examine several French domestic initiatives and then focus on international policies and relations.

Because France had earlier adopted the Minitel system, its initial presence on the Web was minimal. More recently the French government and leading cultural actors have come to recognize the absolute importance of a strong Web presence and have taken multiple steps to recover from a slow start (Bloche, Attali). In a recent address to the Paris convention of the AATF, Jacques Attali outlined initiatives France must pursue to enhance French in the world and offered an alternative economic vision to that of the United States and WTO. He urged acceptance of initiatives to develop rapidly a virtual Web-based Francophone university and a much more robust French presence on the Web. Attali urged France, in cooperation with the OIF, to continue its global lead in defending the cultural exception and to continue extending technical aid and financial support to the many Francophone developing nations, particularly in Africa (Attali). While France historically exhibited ambivalence about participation in the European Union, increasingly it uses its influence there as a way to mediate some of the harsher impacts of globalization (Meunier). Under France's influence, the EU has taken a more critical stance toward globalization, particularly its social and environmental costs.

In both the international arena and in the OIF, France has actively supported a number of initiatives to fortify French in the world as well as counter some of the consequences of WTO-mandated policies (Attali, Safran). In the OIF view, cultural products represent more than commodities of international trade, they reflect and assert the national identity. *L'exception culturelle* articulates the right and necessity of individual states to subsidize their culture industries, television, film and publishing. This position was affirmed in the final *Déclaration* of Summit IX in Beirut in October 2002:

Nous confirmons notre volonté de ne pas laisser réduire les biens et services culturels au rang de simples marchandises. Nous réaffirmons le droit qu'ont nos États et gouvernements de définir librement leur politique culturelle et les instruments qui y concourent.

The *Déclaration* further notes that the OIF will push UNESCO to adopt an international convention on cultural diversity guaranteeing governments the right to subsidize their cultural industries.

Increasingly France and the OIF utilize the broader, more inclusive concept of "cultural diversity" rather than cultural exception (Vedrine and Moïsi 24). This formulation assumes a state's right to subsidize its culture industries but embraces a more inclusive cultural pluralism, including language diversity, opening the possibility of alliances with other language communities having similar concerns. In March 2001 Paris hosted the first meeting of five international organizations representing Spanish, Portuguese and French speakers (*Trois Espaces linguistiques*). This conference began a dialogue among the three language communities and produced a number of recommendations including: the development of an international treaty for the protection and promotion of cultural diversity; the creation of a working group charged with developing an agenda for the next meeting in Barcelona in 2004; the continuing creation of online communities; and a vow to use their combined economic, political and cultural resources as they face the challenges of globalization.²

Similarly, a working group jointly commissioned by France and Quebec, and charged with analyzing the feasibility of an international treaty on cultural diversity, issued its report in 2002 (*Groupe de travail*). The group examined current international treaties for means to allow the regulation of commerce in cultural goods and services; identified legal solutions that might permit the adoption of such an international treaty; and attempted to identify approaches that would make the proposed treaty consistent with the regulations of the WTO. The group maintained that the global marketplace threatens cultural diversity since the initiatives of WTO take precedence over national law and practice, diminishing the powers of national states to enact social policies that do not constitute obstacles to WTO's trade policies. The Working Group noted that the vast majority of economic treaties ignore cultural diversity and affirmed that the primary goal of an international treaty on diversity would be to assure the preservation and promotion of diverse languages and cultures in the face of the U.S.-led global economy, including the prerogative of states to subsidize their arts industries. New OIF Secretary-General Abdou Diouf, following both plans enunciated at the Beirut Summit and the groundwork laid by the joint French-Quebec group, recently appointed an OIF workgroup charged with preparing recommendations for an international treaty on cultural diversity to be submitted to UNESCO (Diouf).

French possesses tangible material value to cultural, political and economic elites in the Francophone developed world (Safran, Meunier). Beyond that, it has measurable market value to Francophone blue-collar workers, documented explicitly in the case of Francophone laborers in Quebec (Vaillancourt, Rousseau 1999). These economic and cultural concerns are more consequential for privileged Francophones in the industrial core nations (France, Canada, Quebec) than in poorer Francophone countries. Since France, Canada and Quebec play prominent roles in the OIF, based in part on their funding, they can steer OIF policies in direc-

tions that take account of these concerns, fueling legitimate suspicions among developing nations about French and Canadian motives for OIF participation (Neathery-Castro and Rousseau).

French self-interest is also visible in the Bloche Report to the French Prime Minister, which observes that most French see the Web as an opportunity to reinforce the international presence of France, but remain reluctant to link it to international Francophonie, especially the concerns of Francophones in the developing world (Bloche Part C, 1). The Bloche Report implicitly demonstrates that, culturally and economically, France depends on the OIF and has its own agenda, not always congruent with the concerns of Francophone Africa.

Similarly, the testimony of Jean-Louis Roy to Quebec's language commission evokes the diminished standing of French globally and speaks of the *bataille linguistique* that the Romance languages confront in the face of English language competition (Roy 5). He recognizes that Francophone Africa requires development aid from France and the OIF, then argues that a robust French presence internationally depends on the Francophone nations of the South, particularly Africa. Both Bloche's and Roy's conceptualizations clarify that France has its own agendas for the OIF, which are periodically at odds with those of the Francophone developing world.

Francophonie and the Developing World

Attitudes toward the OIF in the developing world are mixed, with some states enthusiastically endorsing the organization while others remain resentful of French influence. Within developing states, there is often a divide between political leaders and the population at large, with citizen groups frequently more critical of the OIF. We next enumerate the primary positive consequences of the OIF for poorer Francophone nations, and then examine criticisms from the developing world, which emphasize the argument that the OIF perpetuates the self-interest of its most powerful members.

Economic development

The redistribution of resources, especially to impoverished French-speaking countries, is an explicit goal of the OIF. While more emphasis was put on social and cultural development in the early years, economic development has been a primary goal more recently. The OIF has fostered antipoverty programs, sought a rebalancing of international trade (especially via incentives for private initiatives), and encouraged growth-promoting governmental frameworks (including institutional structures to secure the rule of law). The 2005 Francophonie Summit to be held in Burkina Faso will have a special focus on sustainable development.

One of the reasons it is difficult to measure OIF development efforts in monetary terms is the emphasis on bilateral aid programs between member states, rather than multilateral aid programs under the banner of the OIF. France, in particular, has backed bilateral cooperation over the multilateral cooperation advocated by Canada and many African countries.

Promotion of democracy

The OIF reflects French moral pride in its historic democratic legacy and sees promoting good governance and democracy among its members as one of its purposes. Since 1998 the OIF has partnered with other international organizations like the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the UN, and the Commonwealth to oversee elections in 30 member states having a shaky record of democracy. Since 1998, the OIF has launched eleven diplomatic missions to resolve conflicts in member countries. However, the OIF has been reluctant to interfere much in the internal sovereignty of its members, even when their governments are clearly undemocratic.

The final Declaration of the 2002 Beirut Summit asserts continuing determination to adhere to the principles of democratic practice established for the OIF in the Bamako Declaration of 2000, making Francophonie and democracy inseparable (see human rights discussion below). Illustrative of this commitment, the OIF recently condemned the coup d'état in Central Africa, instructed the OIF's General Secretary to negotiate a ceasefire with the rebels, and called for the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) to intervene (Central Africa). Beyond this, Canada has pledged one-half million dollars to the OIF to be used in support of the principles of Bamako (Canada).

Vision for an economic alternative to US/WTO hegemony

The OIF has taken an increasingly high-profile role in challenging global trade rules, most notably those of the WTO. The OIF helps its members, the majority of whom are African, present a common front in international forums, especially in negotiations on the economic order (Joannidis). For example, the conference of ministers of culture from OIF countries held June 2001 in Cotonou, Benin adopted a declaration and action plan reinstating its commitment to defend and preserve cultural diversity:

Nous estimons que, dans les conditions actuelles, la façon de préserver la diversité culturelle demeure de s'abstenir de prendre des engagements de libéralisation en matière de biens et services culturels, notamment dans le cadre de négociations d'accords internationaux de commerce, comme à l'OMC.

Nous convenons que la Francophonie doit aussi appuyer le principe

d'un cadre réglementaire international à caractère universel favorable à la promotion de la diversité culturelle. Cet instrument international consacrerait la légitimité des Etats et gouvernements à maintenir, établir et développer les politiques de soutien à la diversité culturelle. (Déclaration de Cotonou, section 9)

Members from the developing world are empowered by the OIF's challenge to the world economic system. A member of the Tunisian Parliament voiced the North African sentiment that,

with America monopolizing global power, Arabs have had to look for other friends particularly in Europe. Because of its maturity, France has stood the strongest candidate. France sought to invite as many Arab countries as possible to join the Francophonie. It was thus that Africa turned from a battlefield in a Cold War between East and West to a heated theater of competition between the US and France, and with economic and cultural interests clashing simultaneously. (Shaqroun)

In January 2002, Secretary General Boutros-Ghali denounced the use of economic sanctions, a policy the United States applies to various states around the world, asserting that the poor people of those nations should bear the economic burdens of such policies.

The United States maintains "soft power"³ in the world, through values, culture, language, and ideas. For example, more international students choose to pursue higher education in the U.S. than in any other country—over 580,000 in 2002 (Open Doors). The significance of soft power has not been lost on France, which introduced the government-funded EduFrance initiative in 1998 with a goal of attracting 500,000 students (Schneider 4).

Developing World Criticisms of OIF

The developing world advances four main criticisms of the OIF, all of which assume the underlying self-interest of its most powerful members: 1) neocolonialist tendencies; 2) contrived language bond; 3) willingness to exert geopolitical power in competition with English; and 4) hypocrisy with regard to human rights.

Neo-colonialism

The largest group of critics in the developing world suspects that France remains reluctant to surrender its colonial influence. "The French, ever so clever, have invented *la francophonie* and evolved a whole discourse aimed at rallying the former subjects of their empire to the cause of French culture and civilization, which presumably also belong to those who were once colonized by the French" (Charles 150–51). These critics note that good will directed toward Africa is merely the means to an

end—one in which France will nicely profit at the expense of African members. One observer notes that [former French Minister for Cooperation] “Debré and the representatives of eternal France are now reminding us of how indispensable we are to the great destiny which is its own. Africans have never been anything but hostages” (Kom).

Critics of France’s colonialist tendencies frequently cite the prolific François-Xavier Verschave’s exposés (1994, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002) of French neo-colonial oppression of French Africa after independence (“French Author Wins . . .”, Godoy, Porsia). He accuses current and former French and African political leaders of fostering African countries’ acquiescence to French interests in return for power and support from France.⁴

Developing nations in the OIF note the strong-handed way that France dominates the OIF agenda. Despite the fact that most member countries chose the former president of Benin, Emile Derlin Zinsou, as the first secretary-general of the organization, France decided to give the post to Egyptian Boutros Boutros-Ghali (Daoud). Already criticism has emerged over the selection at the 2002 Summit of former Senegalese President Abdou Diouf as the new Secretary General of OIF. One newspaper in Cameroon accuses France of manipulating Diouf’s victory by forcing the withdrawal of the single opponent, Congo Brazzaville’s ambassador to Paris, Henri Lopez.

Human rights hypocrisy

Throughout its history, the OIF has confronted accusations that it embraces dictatorial leaders, failing to hold them accountable to international standards of human rights. Canada particularly has been a vocal proponent of getting tough with human rights abusers within Francophonie. The Paris OIF summit of 1991 was originally to take place in Zaire, but Canada refused to participate and insisted it be moved out of Mobutu Sese Seko’s dictatorial regime (Fraser A2). High expectations that Francophonie would get tough with human rights abusers in its ranks at the 1999 Moncton summit were not met. No mention was made in the summit’s final declaration and action plan of moves to discipline regimes abusing citizen rights. According to Amnesty International, 32 of the 52 countries in attendance regularly violate the rights of their citizens.⁵ Canadian Prime Minister Chrétien argued that the time has not yet arrived when Francophonie can effectively discipline its members. “In terms of suspensions or expulsions, as has been the case with the Commonwealth, I don’t think it’s in the cards at this moment,” he said (Gordon A1).

Moreover, observers expected the summit to establish a network of independent human-rights observers. While Chirac claims France remains committed to the idea, no formal commitment from the summit for its eventual realization occurred. The summit also failed to adopt a proposal

condemning the conscription of children to fight in civil conflicts. Instead, it offered an "optional protocol" on the involvement of children in wars (Gordon A1).

More positively, the OIF did adopt the Bamako Declaration (November 2000), which details the OIF's experience of democratic practices and human rights during the prior ten years and admits that many members still fall short of democracy and human rights standards. This represents a "broadening of the mandate of the OIF, which, until now, has dealt exclusively with cultural and technological cooperation" (Provost). Clause five of the declaration "provides a procedure for institutional reaction on the part of the OIF in the event of any crises of democracy or serious violations of human rights, leading potentially to the suspension of a member state." While OIF members reaffirmed their commitment to the Bamako Declaration at the 2002 Beirut Summit and vowed to penalize violators, they failed to create a rapid response mechanism to implement punishment. The Canadian Secretary of State for Africa, Denis Paradis, has since pushed for the creation of a watchdog entity modeled on the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, which would have the power both to investigate claims of human rights abuse and to recommend the suspension of member states. Movement toward this goal advanced at the recent Francophone conference on Human Rights held in Brazzaville, Congo in April 2003. Following the Bamako declaration, the Brazzaville conference under the sponsorship of the OIF put into place a Francophone communication network to monitor human rights in the OIF and to insist on "la dévolution du pouvoir politique par voie d'élections libres, fiables et transparentes" (TV 5).

Contrived language link

Fraser (1991) claims that Francophonie was born more out of two political exigencies on the part of the major players in the organization, than out of a conscious linguistic community. First, French President François Mitterrand lagged in the opinion polls and hurriedly organized the first francophone summit in order to capture international media attention (his Socialists lost the election anyway). Second, in Canada the federal government under Mulroney had assented in 1995 to Parti Quebecois Premier Pierre-Marc Johnson's demand for official Quebec status at future francophone summits. This reversed former Prime Minister Trudeau's refusal to allow Quebec's participation in international diplomacy, and Quebec was anxious to assert its newfound power (Fraser A2).

Much criticism of the OIF focuses on the tenuous claim that the French language binds the members together. Of the world's 120 million francophones, only 70 million claim French as their mother tongue. Of these, almost 60 million live in France, and another 7 million are Canadian (Fraser A2). As a cynical observer stated, the OIF

claims that 500 million people on five continents speak French, of whom 113 million are real French speakers. Presumably the other 387 million know how to say *bonjour*. Speaking French is not a serious requirement: Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and the Czech Republic are the newest of La Francophonie's 55 member states. (Marlowe 10)⁶

On the other hand, one study that examined the representativeness of contemporary global organizations observed that Francophonie and the Commonwealth are much more inclusive of diverse countries and economies than are the more powerful G8 and OECD groups. As it expands its attempted influence on international trade rules, the OIF may claim greater legitimacy.

English/French competition

Some critics of the OIF charge France with caring more about "beating" Anglo-Saxon English language hegemony than with promoting the development and well-being of poorer OIF members. As evidence critics point to statements that appear to confirm this proprietary attitude, such as the one below by the former French Minister for Cooperation:

Dans moins de dix ans, les Africains parleront anglais, la technologie qu'ils emploieront sera américaine, leurs élites seront éduquées aux États-Unis, nous resterons quant à nous coupés de nos racines africaines, recroquevillés sur une Europe frileuse, incapable alors d'être une puissance écoutée. (Debré as quoted in Kom)

African members in particular are wary of their role in the English-French competition, based on France's foreign policy history on their soils (Kom). Multiple writers (De Heusch, Verschave 1995) have pointed to the recent Rwandan genocide as proof of France's indifference to the violent consequences of its quest for linguistic and political influence in Africa.

The French army's information service could not fail to note that the Tutsi aggressors who came from Uganda spoke English, putting in danger the great visionary project for a francophone African space which, in Paris, seems to constitute the modern vision of the French colonial empire in the minds of a number of strategists. (De Heusch 7)

Our analysis began with a provocative question—does French matter, and if so, why? On balance we answer that question in the affirmative, for several reasons. First, the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* is the only international organization of its kind to address the challenges of globalization and directly oppose major WTO policies.

In particular, the OIF has taken to the world stage its claim that culture deserves protection. It affirms that unless those guiding the process proceed with care, the general course of globalization and trade liberalization can threaten the ability of countries and governments to take

measures to support culture and cultural diversity in their public policies (Beaudoin 2).

At the same time that we detail the OIF's attempts to raise its profile as a global player, we remain skeptical of its ultimate power for several reasons. The OIF has had trouble changing public perception that it is merely a defender of the French language, driven largely by the interests of the French government (Fisk, Fraser, Gordon, MacCharles, Meunier, Marlowe "From Promoting French"). While this criticism does not appear to be entirely without merit, our analysis demonstrates that it sells short the ambitious scope of the OIF's activities, in political and economic reform, diplomacy, and development, particularly in developing countries. Additionally, the OIF has been plagued by suspicion about its ends among those very countries. There is no doubt that France has a national interest in retaining close ties (in French) with its former colonies and territories, and the OIF is a convenient tool for doing so.

In conclusion, we say with confidence that, at the very least, French is *trying* to matter in the world. The OIF is an unusual international organization that is part altruism, part self-interest. It has taken important steps in recent years to raise its profile on economic, social and political issues apart from the defense of the French language. But its success will ultimately be judged both by its political diplomacy in the troubled countries of the developing world, and by how influential its policy positions become in the bilateral and multilateral treaties and institutions that connect the international economic and political spheres.

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA, OMAHA

Appendix

GLOSSARY OF ORGANIZATIONS

| <u>Organization</u> | <u>Founded</u> | <u>Description</u> |
|--|----------------|---|
| Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique (ACCT) | 1970 | Predecessor of the OIF |
| Agence Intergouvernementale de la Francophonie (AIF) | 1998 | Secretariat of the OIF |
| Communauté Economique et Monétaire de Afrique Centrale (CEMAC) | 1964 | Organization of six central African nations |
| Commonwealth | 1931 | Organization of 53 nations with English in common |
| European Union (EU) | 1993 | Single European market |
| Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) | | Expansion of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) |
| Organization of African Unity (OAU) | 1963 | Organization of African nations |
| Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) | 1998 | Organization of nations with French in common |
| United Nations (UN) | 1945 | Organization of all world nations |
| World Trade Organization (WTO) | 1995 | Successor to General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs |

Notes

¹Following dominant practice, we use the terms “developed” and “developing” to distinguish between the wealthy industrial nations of the North and the poor, less developed nations of the South. We nonetheless believe the term “developing” is misleading, as the actual net flow of wealth is from South to North (Braun).

²The three language groupings represented at the meeting include 79 states and governments comprising approximately 1.2 billion persons.

³“Soft power” is a term coined by Joseph Nye, Dean of Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government (32), to recognize an alternative to the conventional conception of “hard power” as military or economic strength. It argues that the universalism of a country’s culture and its ability to establish a set of favorable international rules and institutions are critical sources of power.

⁴This finding is consistent with world system theory, which maintains that leaders in developing nations typically become dependent upon the multinational corporations that do business there, allowing them extensive tax breaks, permitting them to export profits, and maintaining low wages, all to the detriment of local populations (Kerbo 567).

⁵It must likewise be noted that, for some twenty-five years, Amnesty International has repeatedly and severely cited the U.S. for its arbitrary, discriminatory and cruel policies on the death penalty, which it characterizes as the ultimate denial of human rights (Amnesty International).

⁶Bulgaria, an OIF member since 1993, illustrates a typical member state having a small number of fluent Francophones (estimated at about 100,000 who use French regularly). France has clear interests in supporting French in Eastern Europe and maintains numerous joint institutional relations in Bulgaria. For its part, Bulgaria has pursued a vigorous policy of Euro-Atlantic ties and cooperation, including WTO membership and pending applications for NATO and EU membership (<http://www.mri.gouv.qc.ca/francophonie/pays/bulgarie.html>; <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3236.htm>). In this context, OIF membership becomes a further tie to the West, providing Bulgaria yet another voice in an international organization, a voice that provides some check against the economic policies of WTO and U.S. hegemony. It is reasonable to believe that numerous other states with small numbers of fluent Francophones find OIF membership compatible with varied foreign policy goals.

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