

The Choice of Francophonie in Postcolonial Africa, 1960-1970

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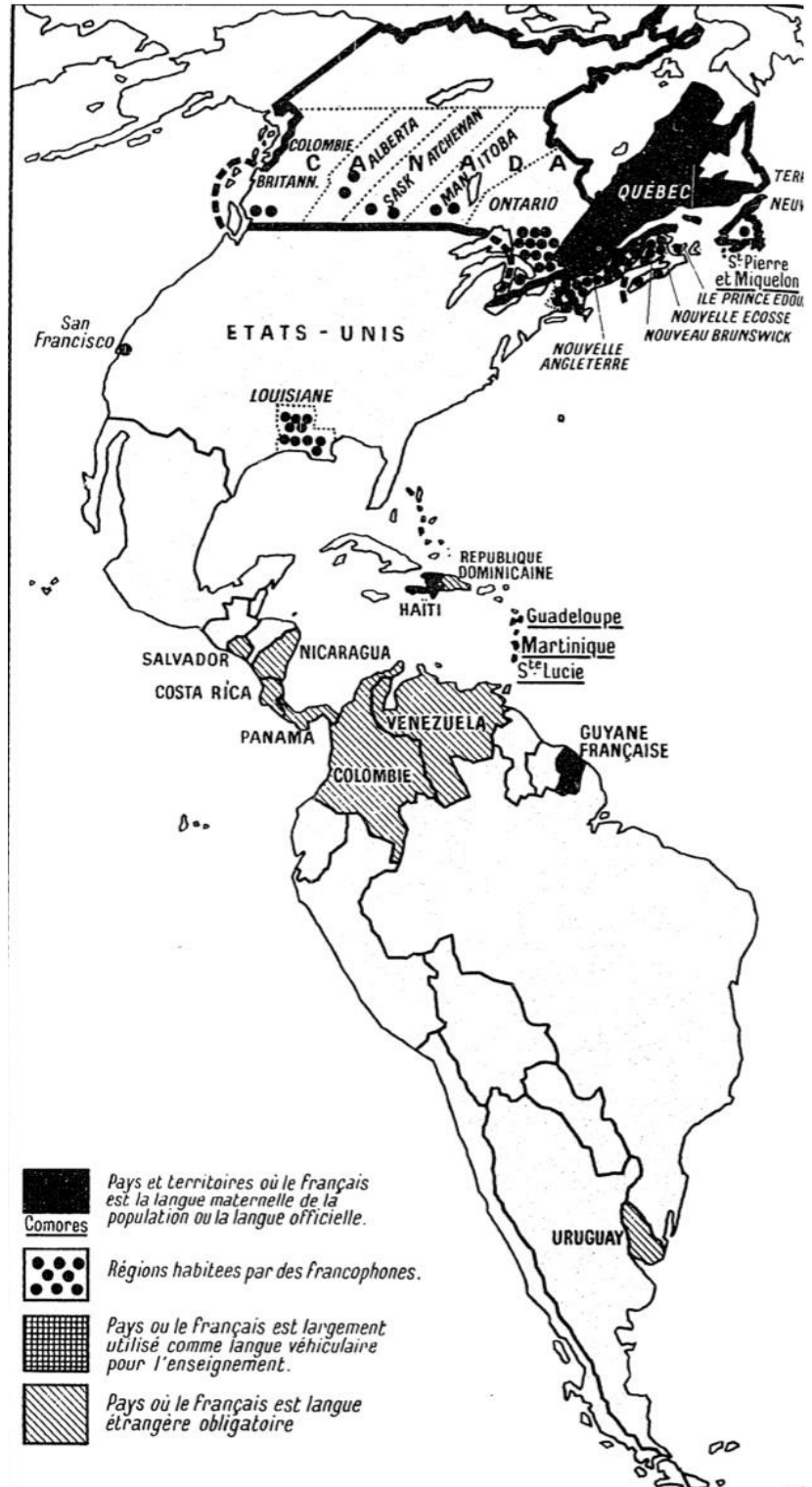
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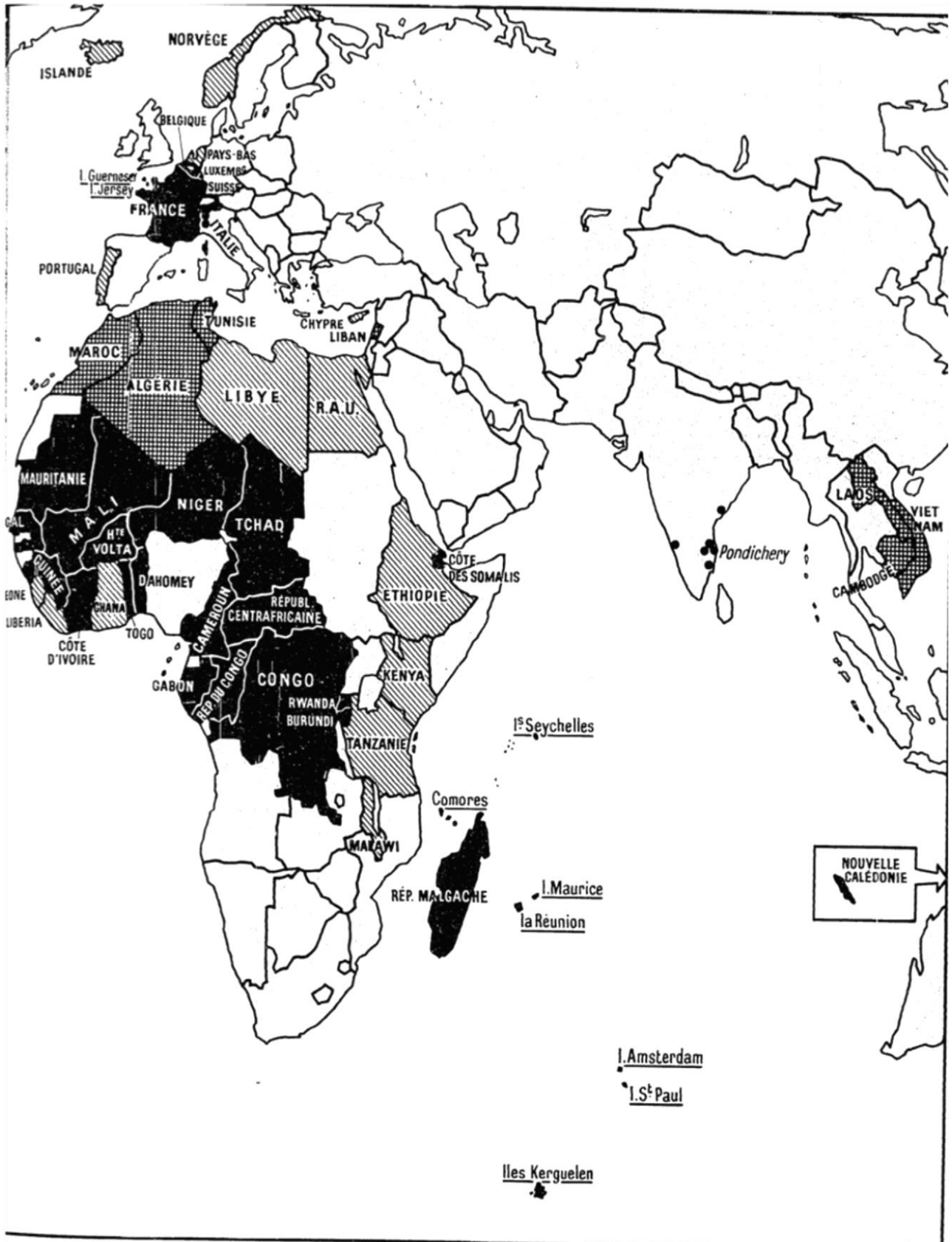
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Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache, "How to Organize Francophonie," *Africa Report* (June 1968): 12.



Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache, "How to Organize Francophonie," *Africa Report* (June 1966): 13.

INTRODUCTION

In a speech given at the University of Dakar on November 24, 1965, Tunisian president Habib Bourguiba announced his interest in the establishment of a community of French-speaking states. “Francophonie in Africa is a reality,” he insisted. Joined by their shared use of French as an official language, African states occupied the same cultural space—one that would hopefully inspire them to find even further points of unity. “It is therefore a sort of Commonwealth that I would like to see established among them,” argued Bourguiba, “. . . a sort of community that respects the sovereignties of each state and harmonizes the efforts of all members.”¹ Bourguiba’s speech launched the project for *Francophonie*, an intergovernmental organization founded in 1970 that championed the sharing of the French language and culture among French-speaking states as a means for multilateral cooperation in political, economic, and cultural contexts.

The African choice of Francophonie as a means for postcolonial political community is unique in that it occurs during a postwar era largely defined two international currents: decolonization and the Cold War. The years following World War II had witnessed the dismantling of European empires in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, creating new states that were both politically and economically vulnerable. Though known as members of the “Third World” for their initial lack of alignment with neither the Eastern nor the Western bloc within the Cold War, such states were ripe for outside intervention by Cold War powers. The Soviet Union, seeing these new nations as ideal fields for the dissemination of their Communist ideologies, hurried to provide the Third World with economic aid in exchange for the adoption of Communist politics. The United States, viewing the spread of communism as a threat to modern capitalism, sought to counter the Soviet Union’s influence with their own ideological expansion

¹ Pierre Biarnes, “M. Bourguiba Souhaite La Création En Afrique D’un ‘Commonwealth à La Française’,” *Le Monde*, November 26, 1965, 9.

into the Third World, offering aid to nations that aligned with American political interests in order to keep such states away from the Soviet bloc.

Leaders of the Third World, well aware of competing superpower interests in their national development, often pandered to one superpower or the other in the hope of reaping the greatest economic benefits. Indeed, historian Odd Arne Westad argues that the Cold War and the Third World were inextricably linked, with the interventions of Cold War agents in Asia, Africa, and Latin America pushing Third World leaders to shape their political agendas around the model of development favored by either the United States or the Soviet Union.² But in a context where political self-definition was largely determined by subscription to the ideology of one or the other of the superpowers, how can we account for the rise and development of Francophonie—an organization of francophone states that looked neither to the United States nor to the USSR for political and economic aid, but instead turned to France and to each other.

In this thesis, I propose to explain the African choice of Francophonie in the years following African independence. While highlighting the organization's clear roots in the French colonial empire, I will emphasize the importance of Francophonie as an *African* initiative, particularly in the context of decolonization and the Cold War, which offered significant, international alternatives to francophone alignment. Given the distinctiveness of the African choice of French language and culture as a means for postcolonial solidarity, I will address the various justifications for an African-led Francophonie, underlining the organization's potential for political, economic, and cultural assistance on national, pan-African, and international levels. However, in my discussion of the 1970 iteration of Francophonie, which included not only France and its African postcolonies, but also other francophone countries like Canada, Belgium,

² Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Haiti, and Lebanon, I will endeavor to explain the conflicts that led the organization to limit its political aims in favor of a more cultural orientation.

Rather than attributing this shift in goals to any one actor in Francophonie—French, African, or otherwise—it is my contention that the framework for the organization was unviable from the start. As this thesis will demonstrate, beneath the superficial umbrella of shared French language and culture, the member states of Francophonie harbored a wide diversity of political and economic goals that were difficult to reconcile with one another. Linguistic unity simply was insufficient to inspire the complete harmony of political interests. Such differences in opinion presented serious tensions within Francophonie, resulting in the dampening of political and economic goals in the interest of compromise. In the absence of stronger political ambitions, Francophonie fell back on the ideological least common denominator of all of its members' interests: the international promotion of French language and culture.

It is important to note that “francophonie” was not a neologism specific to early postcolonial French-speaking Africa. In his 1883 work *France, Algérie et colonies*, French geographer Onésime Reclus coined the term “francophonie” to describe the global community of people living in regions that use the French language in public life. Reclus used his conception of francophonie to champion a grand vision for French colonial expansion. Unlike most of his contemporary advocates for imperialism, who employed economic and social Darwinist arguments to advance their expansionist claims, Reclus favored a linguistic approach. Rather than race or religion, he viewed *language* as the root of all empires, the unifying link among peoples. Reclus, ever the patriot, believed that through the dissemination of the French language, France might achieve the global influence that he felt it rightfully deserved. Reclus suggested

that France concentrate on expansion into Africa—an undeveloped continent rich in natural resources, whose colonization was well within France’s abilities. “As we are incapable of developing a comprehensive policy in neither Europe nor the world, let us scale the work to the worker through the diligent practice of a policy focused on Africa.”³ By virtue of the French language, Reclus hoped that African communities might be united as one people. “Once a language has consolidated a people, all of the ‘racial’ elements of this people are subordinated to the language. It is in this sense that we have said: *the language makes the people*.”⁴ The use of the French language was to transcend differences among the diverse peoples of the French colonial empire, bringing them together in glorification of ‘Greater France.’

While Reclus did not explicitly posit a theory of linguistic nationhood, his ideas recall the famous 1882 essay by philosopher Ernest Renan, “*Qu’est-ce qu’une nation ?*” In that work, the French philosopher reflected on the criteria that determine nationhood, exploring the facets of race, religion, and language. To Renan, while all of these factors may have influenced a nation’s character, they did not fully describe national identity. More significant than these more superficial indicators was a people’s shared understanding of their nation’s past, coupled with their firm desire to live together in the future—a “daily plebiscite,” as he termed it. A nation was defined by its specific historical memory, and it owed its existence to a communal interest in its continuation and preservation.⁵

Francophonie founds itself upon an overtly Reclusian notion of linguistic community. An ensemble of 21 nations in North America, Europe, Asia, and Africa, Francophonie was

³ La Ligue des Droits de l’Homme - Section de Toulon, “Onésime Reclus, Inventeur Du Mot ‘Francophonie’ Et Militant De L’expansion Coloniale,” *LDH-Toulon*, November 13, 2004, <http://www.ldh-toulon.net/spip.php?article393>.

⁴ Onésime Reclus, *Un grand destin commence* (Paris: La Renaissance du livre, 1917), 116, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k72918f>, quoted in La Ligue des Droits de l’Homme - Section de Toulon, “Onésime Reclus, Inventeur Du Mot ‘Francophonie’ Et Militant De L’expansion Coloniale,” *LDH-Toulon*, November 13, 2004, <http://www.ldh-toulon.net/spip.php?article393>.

⁵ Ernest Renan, “Qu’est-ce Qu’une Nation ?” (La Sorbonne, 1882).

established to foster political cooperation among states that used French as a language of government, proposing that those who share a language would feel a natural solidarity that transcended differences of race, religion, and territory.⁶ The oft-acclaimed universalism of the French language, moreover, would unite its speakers in their shared respect of its humanist values. Because of this linguistic kinship, the union's member states were expected to cooperate with one another, both politically and economically.

But within Francophonie, there also exists a subtle, more Renanian understanding of community. In addition to French language and universal values, nearly all of the African member states of Francophonie share a similar historical memory—the experience of French colonial rule. Their francophonie stems largely from the rigorous propagation of the French language by French colonial officials. Through French-language government administration, education, literature, and news media, France's African postcolonies were dominated by French, the language of their former colonizer, at the expense of the development of African national languages. In this sense, while a Reclusian conception of linguistic community might have brought these states together, it also recalled their historically difficult relations with France.

In any assessment of Francophonie, it is important to note three key definitions. The word *Francophonie*, with a capital “F,” denotes the ensemble of governmental and intergovernmental institutions that use French as their language of administration and, by extension, work to promote French language and culture in the world. The term *francophonie* refers to the ensemble of people who use the French language. Given the philosophies of the institutional form of Francophonie, some scholars argue that the word *francophonie* also has an inherently spiritual component—a sense of belonging to a community, a feeling of solidarity that springs from the

⁶ Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, “Qui Sommes-nous ?,” *Organisation Internationale De La Francophonie*, 2012, <http://www.francophonie.org/Qui-sommes-nous.html>.

humanist values shared among francophone people. It is this notion of a ‘francophone spirit’ that drives the movement for Francophonie.

However, while Francophonie posits a community of speakers of French, the term can be somewhat of a misnomer. During the years between 1960 and 1970, French was used as an official language in all of the member states of Francophonie. But the rates of *actual* francophonie—which is to say the percentage of French-speakers in each nation—demand discussion. According to a 1965 statistical survey conducted in Senegal, the oldest site of French colonization in Africa, only between 7 and 21% (depending on the province) of the nation’s inhabitants understood French, with rates of non-francophonie even higher among women.⁷ In Africa as a whole, Jean-Pierre Dannaud, former director of cultural cooperation within the French Ministry of Cooperation,⁸ estimated that 10% of the inhabitants of ‘francophone’ Africa and Madagascar understood French and that only 1 to 2% could speak it fluently.⁹ Indeed, despite increased rates of post-independence school enrollment, the vast majority of the population of former French Africa remained illiterate, with the highest rates of literacy in Côte d’Ivoire (45%) and Senegal (30%).¹⁰ Given their low rates of francophonie, could any African nation really be considered “francophone”?

The level of francophonie in francophone Africa, therefore, calls to question the theorists of this so-called African movement for postcolonial solidarity. Just who were these African proponents of francophone community? Critics have rightfully shown that the leaders of

⁷ Marc Blancpain, *Les Lumières de la France: le français dans le monde* (Calmann-Lévy, 1967), 72, cited in Jeffrey Robert Rosner, “‘Francophonie’ as a pan-movement: the politics of cultural affinity.” (Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, 1969), 72.

⁸ French president Charles de Gaulle established the Ministry of Cooperation in 1959 to facilitate the development of the newly independent nations of the former French colonial empire. The ministry was later integrated into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1999.

⁹ Blancpain, *Les Lumières de la France*, 72.

¹⁰ Vincent Monteil, “Le Problème Linguistique En Afrique Noire,” *Esprit* (November 1962): 798; Rosner, “‘Francophonie’ as a pan-movement,” 72.

Francophonie skewed toward the elite.¹¹ Having studied in the French system and worked within the French government, francophone African leaders like Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal, Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia, and Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire were inclined to assign a value to the French language that was not necessarily shared by their non-francophone compatriots. And in the postwar era, a time during which the French language was in decline relative to the rise of English, francophone elites were even further motivated to encourage francophonie so as to preserve their relevance on the international plane. As a result, the movement for Francophonie was (and still is) colored by the ambitions of the minority of French speakers in African states, rather than fully representative of the interests of these states' populations at large. But because the interests of francophone elites largely shaped the politics of early postcolonial African states, movements like Francophonie are still well worth historical analysis. As former French minister of foreign affairs Jean de Broglie once put it in a November 1966 article in support of the institutionalization of Francophonie, "...Francophonie is not limited to the French language... Francophonie is much more than *francophonie*."¹² Any examination of the movement, therefore, must go beyond more literal interpretations of francophonie and focus on its more political and philosophical ramifications.

The most comprehensive study to date of Francophonie is Michel Tetu's *La Francophonie: Histoire, problématique et perspectives*. Published in 1987 with a preface written by Léopold Sédar Senghor and a foreword by Quebecois journalist Jean-Marc Léger, two of the most significant theorizers of Francophonie, Tetu's work outlines the origins of Francophonie as a concept and a movement. It highlights the efforts of Senegalese president Léopold Senghor,

¹¹ See Philip M. Allen, "Francophonie Considered," *Africa Report* 13, no. 6 (June 1968): 6–11; B. Weinstein, "Francophonie: a Language-based Movement in World Politics," *International Organization* 30, no. 3 (1976): 485–507.

¹² Jean de Broglie, "La Francophonie," *Dialogues* no. 35 (November 1966): 20.

Tunisian president Habib Bourguiba, and French president Charles de Gaulle to establish Francophonie as an official organization, as well as the various issues facing the institution on linguistic, cultural, geographical, and historical levels.¹³ Tetu's research is incredibly comprehensive, and this thesis draws heavily from his work—as do nearly all contemporary publications on Francophonie. However, Tetu's role as former director of various francophone organizations serves to skew his assessment of Francophonie, reducing its capacity for critical analysis.¹⁴ Moreover, the breadth of his work tends to obscure some of the nuance of the emergence of Francophonie as a movement. Consecrating only a chapter to Francophonie's institutional development, Tetu's *La Francophonie* is limited in its ability to address the crucial shift in the goals of Francophonie that occurred during the conceptualization of the organization in the years between 1960 and 1970.

As its title would imply, Marine Lefèvre's *Le soutien américain à la Francophonie: Enjeux africains, 1960-1970*, narrows its focus to the decade of Francophonie's emergence as an organization. Lefèvre's thesis is both original and provocative, arguing that the United States pushed for the creation of Francophonie as a means to keep the states of francophone Africa within the Western bloc during the Cold War. American support for the organization demanded the strategic cession of authority on the African continent to France, a political and economic rival. But by pushing for the inclusion of Canada in Francophonie, the United States secured the representation of North American interests in the organization. Lefèvre's assessment is unique in that it removes Francophonie from its usual French, African, and Canadian contexts, opening it to examination in a more international light. But in broadening the scope of her analysis, Lefèvre

¹³ Michel Tetu, *La Francophonie: Histoire, Problematique Et Perspectives*, 3rd Ed. (Guerin litterature, 1987).

¹⁴ From 1977 to 1982, Michel Tetu served as joint secretary-general of the *Association des universités partiellement ou entièrement de langue française* (AUPELF), an organization of francophone states dedicated to the promotion of the French language in university education. In 1992, he directed the publication of the *Année francophone internationale*, an annual revue of events and debates occurring in the francophone world.

neglects to emphasize the distinctiveness of the African choice of Francophonie, particularly during a time when francophone African states easily could have followed their neighbors (Ghana and Guinea, among others) in the solicitation of US or Soviet aid.¹⁵

Lefèvre's work credits much of its inspiration to a 1969 political science PhD dissertation written by Jeffrey Rosner, "*Francophonie*" as a *Pan-Movement: The Politics of Cultural Affinity*. The text assesses Francophonie as a "cultural pan-movement," comparing it to similar movements like the British Commonwealth and Pan-Hispanism and efforts at cultural solidarity between Portugal and Brazil. Though it focuses on Francophonie's existence as a cultural organization, Rosner's work is critical in that it acknowledges the clear political implications of Francophonie present since 1965, when the first proposals were made for the organization. Rosner's argument for Francophonie's development as a cultural organization due to disagreements about its more explicitly political goals is central to this work.¹⁶

In addition to the significant body of secondary work on the subject of Francophonie and contemporary news coverage and analysis of the movement, my thesis will draw on essays written by the organization's chief (or at the very least, most prolific) theorists, Senegalese president Léopold Sédar Senghor and Quebecois journalist Jean-Marc Léger, and speeches given by prominent francophone activists like Tunisian leader Habib Bourguiba, Nigerien head of state Hamani Diori, and French president Charles de Gaulle. In my discussion of the institutionalization of Francophonie, I will make particular reference to documents produced by the *Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache* (OCAM), the main political force behind the institutionalization of Francophonie, and the *Association de Solidarité Francophone*, a Paris-

¹⁵ Marine Lefèvre, *Le Soutien Américain à La Francophonie : Enjeux Africains, 1960-1970* (Les Presses de Sciences Po, 2010).

¹⁶ Rosner, "'Francophonie' as a pan-movement."

based organization that studied and promoted the idea of cooperation among French-speaking communities.

This thesis will be divided into four main chapters. The first will address the roots of Francophonie in French colonial rule in Africa, citing the 1958 French Community as the structural and theoretical inspiration for postcolonial institutionalization of francophone cooperation. The second chapter will offer a survey of possibilities for political community in francophone Africa, beginning with the Négritude movement of the 1930s, moving to efforts at pan-Africanist politics in the 1960s, and culminating with the founding of OCAM in February 1965, which would spearhead the movement for the establishment of Francophonie. The third chapter will assess specific African motivations for Francophonie over alternate modes of political community, and the fourth will highlight the tensions within Francophonie that brought the organization to deviate from the goals originally put forth by its African leaders.

A deeper understanding of the choice of Francophonie would shed light on how francophone African states viewed themselves with relation not only to each other, but also to the rest of the world. Francophonie still exists as a political community today, hosting biennial summits in any one of its now 77 member states. At its most recent summit, held in Kinshasa in October 2012, secretary-general of Francophonie and former Senegalese president Abdou Diouf proclaimed Africa as “the future of Francophonie,” citing that in 2050, 85% of the world’s 715 million speakers of French would be African.¹⁷ Though such a statistic would suggest a more African-centered Francophonie, the role of France in the organization remains an issue.

Postcolonial relations between France and its former African territories, incarnated in the portmanteau “*Françafrique*,” have been notoriously corrupt, sparking serious debate on the

¹⁷ Agence France-Presse, “Abdou Diouf: ‘L’Afrique Est Le Futur De La Francophonie’,” *Jeune Afrique*, October 10, 2012, <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/actu/20121010T113914Z20121010T113911Z/>.

future of French-African relations. Knowledge of early Francophonie, therefore, would offer valuable insight into the needs and ambitions of francophone states in their continued pursuit of French-African solidarity.

CHAPTER I: French Community and Francophonie

The role of World War II in the dismantling of the French empire is often misunderstood. Far from an overt ‘prelude’ to decolonization, World War II inspired France to tighten its hold on its empire through increased integration of economic policy and political representation between its colonies and the *métropole*. In contrast with their initial goals for colonial self-sufficiency, as officials had originally refused to invest taxpayer money in colonial efforts, administrators established programs like FIDES, or the *Fonds d’Investissement pour le Développement Économique et Social*, which coordinated investments to fund the construction of roads, bridges, and ports in French African colonies.¹⁸ Politically, French officials sought to give colonial territories greater autonomy in local affairs, and by extension, greater responsibility in fiscal decisions. In the French empire, therefore, decolonization constituted the greater integration of overseas territories into the French political system, rather than an overt push toward independence.¹⁹ By further embedding itself, both politically and economically, into its overseas empire, France drew its colonies even closer to the *métropole* in the hopes of avoiding the conflicts of colonial disengagement.

The African experience following World War II was more ambivalent toward the role of the French government in African territories. African soldiers (known *tirailleurs sénégalais*) recruited to fight in the French army had met with countless injustices at the hands of the French administration that would inspire later anticolonial movements.²⁰ At the same time, French-

¹⁸ Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France’s Successful Decolonization?*, First Edition (Berg Publishers, 2002), 63.

¹⁹ Michael Crowder, “The Second World War: Prelude to Decolonisation in Africa,” in *The Cambridge History of Africa*, ed. Michael Crowder, vol. 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 44, <http://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/histories/chapter.jsf?bid=CBO9781139054621&cid=CBO9781139054621A005>.

²⁰ The most notable French offense against the *tirailleurs sénégalais* is surely the 1944 massacre at Thiaroye. Former West African prisoners of war returning to the military camp at Thiaroye, a town outside of Dakar, Senegal,

educated African leaders like Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal and Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire had come to realize the potential merits of collaboration with the French administration, as it could lead to social and civil reforms—most importantly, the acquisition of the right to vote in French elections and to representation in the French *Assemblée nationale*. In the years that followed World War II, therefore, francophone African leaders struggled to determine the nature of their relations with France. Would they attempt to further integrate into the French political system, or would they seek complete independence from French colonial rule?

Though most francophone African states attained independence from France by 1960 (with the important exceptions of Tunisia, Morocco, Guinea, and Algeria), the preceding years were marked by a decided African *dependence* on the French state—a relationship that was generally encouraged by the French government. Both France and its African colonies sought to revise their relationship such that France would be able to preserve its colonial empire and its African territories would gain greater political autonomy. They sought to achieve this goal through participation in the 1958 French Community, a reconfiguration of the French Empire that established a system of French-African federation in which African nations functioned as autonomous states under the French umbrella.

The complex stakes of French decolonization offer a useful parallel to the decisions later faced by the leaders of Francophonie. An organization frequently maligned for its apparently neocolonial overtones, Francophonie draws much of its structural and philosophical inspiration from the institution of the French Community, the final effort at French-African federation under

staged a mutiny against the French army, demanding salaries and pensions that had long been withheld by the French government. French soldiers responded by opening fire on the mutineers, killing 35 soldiers. This tragedy prompted a huge outcry among members of the African community, inspiring an upsurge in the existing anticolonial movement.

French colonial rule. A closer examination of African actions during the late colonial period, therefore, will serve to rationalize African leaders' later relations with France in their proposals for Francophonie. The understanding of French decolonization is critical to any interpretation of motives for Francophonie, for it underscores the tension in African decision-making between further integration into the French state and the pursuit of later independence. As this brief history of the events of French decolonization will endeavor to make clear, African efforts in the final years of colonial rule focused largely on increased incorporation *into* the French system, rather than on achieving greater liberty from it. Though disagreements among African leaders would quickly bring the French Community to its demise, interests in francophone political community would persist well into the postcolonial era, inspiring the development of organizations like Francophonie.

In January-February 1944, French officials gathered in Brazzaville to discuss the future of the French colonial empire. The terms of World War II had not favored the French government, which had suffered a difficult defeat by the German army in 1940. Recognizing its potentially weakened position in a world that would soon be dominated by the postwar superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union, the French administration clung even more tightly to its colonial possessions, seeing its empire as the sole means to maintain its international standing. But given the difficulties the French government had begun to experience in reestablishing its authority in Indochina and Madagascar after the war, officials understood the necessity to renegotiate the terms of interactions with its colonial subjects in order to preserve

the French colonial empire. Determining the exact association between France and its African territories, however, would prove to be a complicated task.²¹

Instead of seeking to withdraw from its colonies, the French government pursued policies that further entrenched its influence in its two regional territories: French West Africa (known in French as *Afrique occidentale française*, or AOF) and French Equatorial Africa (*Afrique équatoriale française*, or AEF). At the 1944 Brazzaville Conference, French administrators expressed their interest in a form of French-African federation governed by an assembly of representatives from both the French *métropole* and its overseas African territories. This new arrangement would grant local African governments far more autonomy in its political and economic affairs, yet as the Brazzaville Declaration made clear, French leaders firmly opposed the possibility of future African independence: “The aim of the work of civilization accomplished by France in the colonies, rejects any idea of the autonomy, all possibility of evolution outside the block of the French Empire; the eventual constitution, even in the distant future, of self-government in the colonies is to be rejected.”²² Though somewhat counterintuitive, France sought to draw its colonies more deeply into its empire by allowing them greater freedoms. By reducing its explicit political obligations to its African territories, France hoped to refashion its empire into one better suited to the postwar era.

African leaders were equally interested in greater integration in the French colonial administration, but they would soon encounter difficulties in maintaining a favorable balance of power with France. With African support, France continued its restructuring efforts through the establishment of the 1946 French Union. Reconfiguring France’s political and economic relationship with its African colonies, the French Union granted local governments greater

²¹ Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 50.

²² *La Conférence Africaine Française, Brazzaville (30 Janvier 1944–8 Février 1944)* (Algiers: Ministère des Colonies, 1944), 35, quoted in Robert O. Collins, *Western African History* (M. Wiener Pub., 1990), 117.

autonomy, while still maintaining French dominance over the new imperial organization. Nevertheless, the organization of the French Union largely favored French interests over those of African subjects. Newly empowered African *députés* actively pursued a number of radical constitutional reforms, abolishing forced labor in the colonies through the Houphouët-Boigny law, guaranteeing equal citizenship to all residents of ‘Greater France,’ and securing representation in the French *Assemblée nationale*.²³ African *députés* saw the acquisition of these rights as a means to stimulate growth and development in African territories, as their presence in the French parliament would give a voice to African affairs. In this sense, African leaders envisioned the future of African territories within the larger structure of the French empire, rather than outside of it. But when faced with the reality of African enfranchisement, French deputies balked at the prospect of France becoming what Édouard Herriot famously referred to as “the colony of its colonies.”²⁴ Deputies like Herriot harshly attacked overseas deputies’ proposals for constitutional reform, thus limiting the degree of African political integration into Greater France.²⁵ Therefore, though African leaders secured significant civil and political rights through the French Union, the new colonial organization maintained the status quo of African subordination to French rule.

Given the disconnect between the interests of French and overseas deputies, the structure of the French Union struggled to implement effective reforms. French officials, fearful that the lack of progress would drive African leaders toward thoughts of independence, sought to establish a form of French-African federation that would grant African colonies greater agency within the French Union, while lessening French obligations toward their development.

²³ Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 63–64.

²⁴ Édouard Herriot, “Discours Prononcé Par Édouard Herriot à l’Assemblée Nationale Le 2 Juin 1946” (Paris, February 6, 1946), <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/histoire/biographies/IVRepublique/herriot-edouard-05071872.asp>.

²⁵ Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 65.

Legislators in the National Assembly saw the 1956 *loi cadre*, or ‘framework law,’ as a step toward this federal goal. Reorganizing the structure imposed by the French Union, the *loi cadre* would revise the nature of France’s relations with its African colonies. The law would divide the administrative regions of French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa into individual, semi-autonomous territories under the governing umbrella of the French Union. Rather than interacting with a federal African executive, the French government would handle its colonial dealings on a territorial basis.²⁶

Whereas the French government clearly stood to benefit from this arrangement, the fortunes of its African constituents were less favored. The terms of the *loi cadre* would allow the French government to maintain political and economic control over its African colonies while reducing its obligation to provide them with financial support. In transferring internal budgetary authority to local African governments, France left African leaders to make difficult decisions regarding their territories’ economic growth and development, without the funding to make their goals a reality.²⁷ French African leaders greatly resented the ‘territorialization’ of French West and Equatorial Africa. In choosing French federation, poor African territories had sought to increase their access to developmental resources, hoping to benefit from association with both France and other African territories.²⁸ Regrettably, not only did the *loi cadre* limit African access to European resources, but it also reduced internal cohesion among African territories. Without the collective benefit of a federal structure, ‘balkanized’²⁹ territories were forced to negotiate

²⁶ Ibid., 166–169.

²⁷ Ibid., 166–167.

²⁸ Frederick Cooper, “Alternatives to Empire: France and Africa After World War II,” *The State of Sovereignty: Territories, Laws, Populations* (2009): 109.

²⁹ Léopold Sédar Senghor, “Discours Prononcé Par Léopold Sédar Senghor à l’Assemblée Nationale Le 29 Janvier 1957” (Paris, January 27, 1957), http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/histoire/sedar_senghor_1957.asp.

with France as individuals, thereby encouraging competition among colonies and reinforcing the “heritage of divisive colonialism.”³⁰

The 1958 Referendum would inspire even further frustration in French African leaders. With the bloody Algerian War for Independence from France still raging forward, the French government recognized the need to revisit the terms of the French Union and revise their relationship with their overseas territories if they wished to avoid further warfare. In the effort to preserve the French Empire, President Charles de Gaulle proposed the French Community—a means for organizing the French empire according to the new constitution for the Fifth Republic. Under the terms of this constitution, African territories would function in confederation with France as autonomous states, responsible for the making of the majority of their own local and national decisions. As members of the French Community, African leaders would meet with the French prime minister (chair of the Executive Council of the Community) to discuss the future of the Community at large.

Despite the confederal terms of the Community, inequality persisted in the interactions between France and its African territories, as only the French government had the resources—particularly its superior military, bureaucratic, and economic development—to implement projects advanced by the Community’s members.³¹ Though France would continue to send economic aid to African territories within the French Community, French assistance would not be sufficient to secure the complete equality of French-African relations. Indeed, though African states would now have the freedom to make local decisions regarding the political and economic futures of their polities, their lack of funding would continue to subordinate them to France. Thus, in keeping with the effort toward political and economic divestment initiated by 1956 *loi*

³⁰ Sekou Touré, *Experience Guinéenne Et Unité Africaine* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1959), quoted in Robert O. Collins, *Western African History* (M. Wiener Pub., 1990), 121.

³¹ Cooper, “Alternatives to Empire: France and Africa After World War II,” 109.

cadre, the French Community further limited French ‘responsibility’ for the development of weaker African territories, while perpetuating the unequal partnership characteristic of colonial relations between Africa and France.³²

Any decision taken on the 1958 Referendum would be a conflicted one, as neither choice offered ideal circumstances. Participation in the French Community would not offer the advantages of French-African cooperation originally imagined by African leaders. Yet President de Gaulle had made it clear that France would not oppose African territories’ future independence from the French Community (albeit at an unspecified date). Those who rejected the new constitution, on the other hand, would suffer harsh consequences—namely, the loss of economic assistance from France.³³ By 1958, few African leaders harbored illusions about the viability of French colonial rule in Africa, easily envisioning their future independence from France. Still, no one could deny continued interest in French economic aid. They faced a difficult decision: to join the French Community, despite its decided lack of multilateral relations with France, or to declare independence, risking the complete loss of French political and economic support.

After much debate, nearly all francophone African territories voted ‘yes’ in the 1958 Referendum, agreeing to join France as member states of the French Community. Nevertheless, the Referendum inspired mixed reactions among African leaders. Though they shared the understanding that participation in the French Community would function as a conduit toward eventual independence, they disagreed on how best to harness political and economic relations with France to prepare for their future autonomy. African territories that opted into the French Community were divided on the key issue of political organization: would member states enter

³² Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 166–167.

³³ *Ibid.*, 174.

the French Community as a united African federation, or as individual territories, politically unaffiliated with one another?

Félix Houphouët-Boigny, leader of Côte d'Ivoire, actively rejected the possibility of African federation within the French Community. As the most prosperous territory of French West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire had long resented the hindrance to its economic advancement presented by its West African neighbors. The French government originally had created the regional unit of French West Africa as a means to reduce administrative expenditures. By grouping poorer territories with wealthier territories, France allowed the richer areas to finance the needs of the poorer ones, thereby minimizing the need for French aid.³⁴ Thus, in entering the French Community, Côte d'Ivoire refused to continue to sacrifice its own economic potential for the sake of its fellow territories. "The Ivory Coast position rests on a profound sense of economic grievance—that it has been, as its leaders say, the cow that the other territories never tired of milking."³⁵ As a member of the French Community, Côte d'Ivoire would eagerly seek bilateral relations with France and would settle for nothing less.

Unlike Houphouët-Boigny, Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal believed that a federal form of the French Community would be critical to African states' steady path toward independence. In "Nationhood: Report on the Doctrine and Program of the Party of African Federation," he criticized the choice of direct independence, asserting, "A purely nominal independence is a false one. It may satisfy national pride, but...it cannot resolve the concrete problems confronting the underdeveloped countries: housing, clothing, feeding, curing, and

³⁴ Elliot J. Berg, "The Economic Basis of Political Choice in French West Africa," *The American Political Science Review* 54, no. 2 (June 1, 1960): 402, doi:10.2307/1978301.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 403.

educating the masses.”³⁶ In this sense, Senghor argued for pragmatism in French African states’ responses to the referendum. He could picture the independence of a federal African state—a Negro-African nation, as he termed it—yet he understood that joining the French Community would facilitate the *eventual* creation of a strong, unitary nation, whereas the choice of immediate independence would only produce weak, individual territories.

Though Senghor’s commitment to the French Community was genuine, his championing of the benefits of French-African federation is misleading. Of all African territories that voted in the 1958 referendum, only Guinea, led by political and trade union activist Sékou Touré, rejected the terms of the French Community. Though Touré is often described as a radical anticolonial leader, far removed from the moderate politics of his francophone African peers, his views on African federation were in accordance with those of Senghor. Sékou Touré strongly supported confederation in French West Africa, heavily criticizing the territorialization advocated by men like Félix Houphouët-Boigny.³⁷ Touré, like Senghor, understood the critical importance of both federal relations among African states and African confederation with France. But unlike Senghor, Touré was unwilling to accept the unequal terms of the French Community. In the effort to preserve Guinean relations with France, he urged President de Gaulle to revise the constitution to include more favorable terms for African states, but de Gaulle refused to alter the structure of the Community.³⁸ Therefore, in opting into the French Community, Senghor had not made a definitively positive choice, but rather, had compromised his vision for French-African federation.

³⁶ Léopold Sédar Senghor, “Nationhood: Report on the Doctrine and Program of the Party of African Federation,” in *On African Socialism*, trans. Mercer Cook (Praeger, 1964), 21–22.

³⁷ Elizabeth Schmidt, “Anticolonial Nationalism in French West Africa: What Made Guinea Unique?,” *African Studies Review* 52, no. 2 (September 1, 2009): 5, doi:10.2307/20638906.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

Senghor's advocacy of a 'yes' vote in the 1958 referendum set an important precedent for future African pragmatism in its relations with France. In voting in favor of the French Community, Senghor compromised his federalist goals for French-African relations. From an African perspective, the terms of the French Community were far from perfect, yet nearly all francophone African leaders (with the notable exception of Sékou Touré) agreed that the advantages of continued relations between France and Africa were worth the sacrifice of a degree of African agency. The economic inequality that skewed the French Community in favor of France was unavoidable. Leaders like Senghor merely hoped that the cooperative nature of federal rule would help African states to develop so that upon their independence from the Community, they would be prepared to interact with France as equals.

The later demise of the French Community can largely be attributed to internal conflicts among francophone African territories. The question of African federation, never fully resolved during the discussions that preceded the 1958 referendum, remained a significant point of contention among new members of the French Community. Senghor and his supporters remained committed to the ideal of African unity, which they believed could be achieved through the restructuring of French-African federation and later through independence.³⁹ Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire still adamantly refused to enter into a federal relationship with its French-African neighbors. Focused on the development of the Ivorian economy, Houphouët-Boigny saw little benefit in the involvement of Côte d'Ivoire in the affairs of other francophone territories. However, the views of Senghor and Houphouët-Boigny on African federation were hardly polarizing, as the leaders of Soudan, Upper Volta, Niger, and Dahomey all supported varying paths to federation and independence. In the end, only the leaders of Soudan, Upper Volta, and Dahomey joined Senghor in Dakar on January 14–17, 1959 to form the Mali

³⁹ Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 180.

Federation within the French Community under the leadership of Soudan's Modibo Keita and Senegal's Mamadou Dia.⁴⁰

The Mali Federation, however, quickly fell victim to anti-federalist pressure from Houphouët-Boigny and French colonial administrators who feared that the establishment of an African federation might result in secession from the French Community. Within three months of the organization's founding, both the territories of Upper Volta and Dahomey dropped out of the Mali Federation, leaving Senegal and Soudan as the federation's sole members.⁴¹ This revised state of affairs only added further pressure to the already fragile Mali Federation, which suffered from contradictory political views espoused by Senghor and Keita, "the former moderate and conciliatory, the latter radical and more implacably anti-colonial and anti-French."⁴² Eventually, these tensions would be too much for Senegal and Soudan to bear, prompting the territories' leaders to follow their African peers in declaring independence from the French Community. The year 1960 would come to be known as the 'year of independence.'

France presented little opposition to African independence. By this point, the maintenance of the French empire had proved to be more of a burden than a benefit, and French president Charles de Gaulle was more than happy to recognize the "evolution" of francophone African territories toward autonomy. In a speech given at Saint-Louis in Senegal on December 12, 1959, President de Gaulle asserted the French understanding that "with Senegal, the other African countries, and Madagascar, France [owed] it to itself and to its brothers to establish an ensemble of free, strong, and efficient nations."⁴³ He confirmed that France would continue to offer political support to its former colonies and expressed his hope that new francophone

⁴⁰ Ibid., 181.

⁴¹ Ibid., 182.

⁴² Ibid., 185.

⁴³ Charles de Gaulle, "Allocution Prononcée à Saint-Louis Du Sénégal," quoted in *Francophonie Des "Pères Fondateurs"*, ed. Papa Alioune Ndao (Paris: Karthala, 2008), 241.

African nations would continue to associate with France on the international plane.⁴⁴ Though internal African rivalries had brought the French Community to an end, France and Africa would continue to find ways to interact as independent nations.

Despite its flaws, the legacy of the French Community would do much to influence the later development of Francophonie. As will be described in Chapter III, the layered federal administration of the French colonial empire on territorial, regional, and international planes would be strongly reflected in later institutionalization of francophone community. Leaders of Francophonie strove to emphasize the value of French influence on the national level, as a practical solution to linguistic diversity; on the regional level, as a path toward African solidarity; and on the international level, as a means to secure critical political alliances and economic aid from Western nations—particularly from France. Though their efforts at federation with France through the French Community had not succeeded, African leaders continued to insist that francophone cooperation offered the surest path to the growth and development of independent African states. Through Francophonie, they hoped to achieve the perfectly balanced French-African federation that the French Community had failed to establish.

Given its roots in French colonial rule, it appears that Francophonie was fated to incite divisive reactions from the start—an unfortunate destiny for an organization intended to inspire unity among its members. But as analysis of the terms of the French Community makes clear, the terms of francophone cooperation were dictated as much by African leaders as they were by French colonial officials. Just as the 1958 referendum posed the *choice* of French Community to African territories, so also would the institution of Francophonie require a communal decision in favor of francophone unity. The colonial foundations of Francophonie, therefore, do not negate

⁴⁴ Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 183.

African agency, but rather, highlight the decidedly African quality of the choice of French-African political community.

CHAPTER II: From Négritude to Francophonie

On July 22, 1966—six years after the ‘year of independence’ in francophone Africa—Senegalese president Léopold Sédar Senghor announced his interest in a new project for what he termed “Francophonie.” What was this Francophonie? “The expression of a certain culture, a certain humanism, ways of thinking and acting, a manner of asking questions and finding solutions.”⁴⁵ Though a form of cultural and linguistic unity, Senghor argued that Francophonie would not impinge upon existing national cultures or cultural pan-movements, as its ideals were universal. When queried by *Le Monde* journalist Philippe Herreman as to how he planned to develop his proposal for Francophonie, Senghor had a simple answer: “Francophonie already exists.”⁴⁶ To clarify this statement, Senghor referenced various institutionalized forms of francophonie founded in the 1960s, the first years of independence in most French-African states. Citing cooperative meetings on educational and economic affairs between the French government and its French-African counterparts, Senghor explained that whether they realized it or not, francophone states supported the notion of Francophonie—they simply needed to organize it.

Senghor’s advocacy of francophone community marked the culmination of a series of experiments in cultural and political community in francophone Africa. Since the emergence of African anticolonial politics in the late 1920s, African leaders had theorized a number of possibilities for the development of African communities for solidarity outside of the context of colonial rule. In so doing, they looked not only to valorize African culture, but also to imagine a form of political community that would align more closely with African needs. This chapter will offer a survey of the theories and forms of community that arose in francophone Africa, from the

⁴⁵ Philippe Herreman, “La France Veut Éviter Que La ‘Francophonie’ N’apparaisse Comme Une Nouvelle Forme De Tutelle”, Déclare Au ‘Monde’ M. Senghor,” *Le Monde*, July 1966.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

onset of the anticolonial movement to the early postcolonial era. It will begin with a discussion of the 1930s Négritude movement, one of the first articulations of a shared African identity. It will then move to an analysis of the pan-Africanist politics that prompted the creation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. To conclude, this chapter will address the 1965 founding of the *Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache* (OCAM) and its role in the establishment of Francophonie.

In putting forth this brief history of political community in francophone Africa, the goal of this chapter is to explain the institutional emergence of Francophonie in the decade between 1960 and 1970. While the discussion of African interests in the 1958 French Community in the previous chapter certainly demonstrates the political context that made the notion of francophone community *conceivable*, this chapter will endeavor to outline the moments in francophone African intellectual and political history that made the organization of Francophonie *possible*.

Founded in Paris in the 1930s, Négritude was a philosophical and literary movement that proposed the universality of the black experience. Its three main theorizers—Léopold Senghor of Senegal, Aimé Césaire of Martinique, and Léon-Gontran Damas of French Guiana—had all met in Paris as francophone students interested in questions of black identity under French colonial rule. As residents of three different French colonies, Césaire, Senghor, and Damas realized the commonalities of their experience, as well as their capacity for unified action against French colonial oppression. Together, they developed the philosophy of Négritude, which emphasized the importance and universal nature of black culture and called for solidarity among the inhabitants of Black Africa and its diaspora in opposition to Western oppression.

The movement for Négritude formed itself in opposition to the racist theories of French colonialism. Such theories posited the existence of a racial hierarchy among global populations, assigning peoples of African ancestry an inferior status with respect to those of European heritage. French ethnologist Arthur de Gobineau's 1853 work *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* offers an important example of this form of scientific racism. In this work, de Gobineau claimed that of the human races, "the darker skinned race is the most humble and lies at the bottom of the scale."⁴⁷ He emphasized the sensual nature of the black race, insisting that those of darker skin were driven solely by desire, rather than by reason. This lack of sensibility would preclude members of the black race from attaining the level of civilization enjoyed by those of the white race, who occupied the highest rank on the scale of human development.

Instead of rejecting de Gobineau's claims outright, Léopold Sédar Senghor reappropriated them. Turning de Gobineau's negative portrayal of the African race on its head, Senghor celebrated African emotionality, arguing that it was their irrationality and reliance on instinct that made Africans the most creative and talented artists.⁴⁸ Rather than insisting on African equality to European races, Senghor asserted that the African culture was fundamentally different from that of Europe, but affirmed the legitimacy of both modes of existence. Whereas Europeans lived according to reason, Africans simply operated more intuitively. As he phrased it in his work *Négritude et humanisme*, "Emotion is Negro, as reason is Hellenic."⁴⁹

Having justified the value of black culture through Négritude, Senghor went on to propose that all people of sub-Saharan Africa and its diaspora possessed a shared black identity. "Négritude is the simple recognition of the fact of our blackness, and the acceptance of this fact,

⁴⁷ Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (Paris: Librairie de Firmin-Didot, 1853), 205.

⁴⁸ See Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Qu'est-ce Que La Négritude?," *Études Françaises* 3, no. 1 (1967): 3–20.

⁴⁹ Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Négritude et humanisme* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964), 24.

of our destiny as black people, and of our history and culture.”⁵⁰ In the black community, therefore, Négritude functioned at once as a validating and liberating force—a means for solidarity throughout the African diaspora in the face of colonial domination. Though it would later give way to more institutionalized attempts at the development of political community, Négritude would inspire an entire canon of philosophical and literary work that championed the humanity of black people and affirmed the value of their contribution to global civilization.

In its evocation of black universalism, Négritude very clearly inscribed itself in the pan-Africanist movement of the time. More overtly political than Négritude, pan-Africanism championed not only the humanity of black peoples, but also their *rights*. Calling for racial solidarity among black peoples all over the world, global activists of the pan-Africanist movement organized meetings like the five Pan-African Congresses; established organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); produced journals that advanced black culture like *Légitime Défense* and *Présence Africaine*; and inspired intellectual movements like the Harlem Renaissance and of course, Négritude.⁵¹ The objective of such efforts was to theorize and establish a form of African political unity—the aspiration of nearly all Africans, despite the general skepticism presented by non-Africans toward the project. Committed to the notion of racial solidarity among African peoples, pan-African leaders sought to institutionalize this sense of unity, with the eventual goal of articulating an African political identity that could stand equal to its European and American counterparts.⁵²

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) was the product of this goal. Founded on May 25, 1963 at a conference in Addis Ababa, the OAU hoped to develop a sense of continental cohesion among its 32 member states. Leaders present at the conference articulated their interest

⁵⁰ Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Négritude et civilisation de l'universel* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977), 269-70.

⁵¹ See Léopold Sédar Senghor, “Qu’est-ce Que La Négritude?,” *Études Françaises* 3, no. 1 (1967): 3–20.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 3–4, 16–17.

in African solidarity, inspired “by a common determination to promote understanding among [their] peoples and cooperation among [their] states...in a larger unity transcending ethnic and national differences.”⁵³ In this way, the OAU posited a form of cooperation based on member states’ shared African identity. By harnessing common ideals, the OAU, true to its name, hoped to establish unity among the nations of the African continent.

Under the aegis of the OAU, there existed a number of smaller regional groupings of African states. Though Ghanaian president and staunch pan-Africanist Kwame Nkrumah asserted that “regional groupings of any kind [were] a serious threat to the unity of Africa,” most states did not oppose the development of federations within the OAU, with some even seeing their potential to increase cooperation among African states.⁵⁴ The participation of the *Union Africaine et Malgache* (UAM), however, presented a potential political conflict. As an organization established to promote political, economic, and cultural cooperation among *francophone* African states, the UAM had expressly political goals that leaders at Addis Ababa feared might compromise the integrity of the OAU. When the UAM announced that it would continue to meet in regional conferences after the establishment of the OAU, leaders feared even more the threat that the UAM presented to the internal harmony within the OAU. Though some leaders of the OAU like President Hubert Maga of Dahomey insisted on the capacity of the UAM to complement the goals of the OAU, it was only with unease that the OAU would continue to recognize the role of an explicitly francophone political grouping within the pan-African community.⁵⁵

Political tension in francophone Africa would inspire the further development of francophone political community within the OAU. Galvanized by Cold War reactions to the

⁵³ Organization of African Unity, “Charter of the Organization of African Unity,” 1963.

⁵⁴ Wallerstein, *Africa: The Politics of Unity*, 68.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 68–69.

conflict in the ex-Belgian Congo⁵⁶ and the rising Chinese Communist influence in the more radical states of West and Equatorial Africa, 13 francophone African nations met in Nouakchott on February 10–12, 1965 to discuss the possibility of unity among French-speaking African states—specifically, the establishment of a politically functional iteration of the now-defunct UAM. While the states in attendance were largely uninvolved in the Congo crisis, the November 1964 military intervention led by Belgium and the United States in Stanleyville (modern Kisangani) to put down the “Simba Rebellion” against President Moïse Tshombé had brought moderate francophone states to realize that they would soon have to make significant political decisions regarding the civil war in Congo.⁵⁷ Those less concerned by the Congo crisis still had the “Chinese peril” to Africa with which to contend. Many African leaders felt threatened by the presence of Chinese Communists, who were believed to train rebel groups to inspire revolt against the governments of Hamani Diori in Niger and Ahmadou Ahidjo in Cameroon. According to Victor Du Bois, “In such circumstances, the moderate leaders of French-speaking Black Africa felt they must quickly take action to halt the rapid erosion of political stability in the continent. They were convinced that only joint action by the several moderate states could achieve this.”⁵⁸

Though the African heads of state present at the Nouakchott Conference were committed to securing unity among francophone African states, differences plagued the leaders. After five years of autonomy from France, francophone African states found that their political and

⁵⁶ See Sergey Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War: The USSR in West Africa and the Congo, 1956-1964* (Stanford University Press, 2010).

⁵⁷ The Congo crisis was a multifaceted political conflict that took place in the Democratic Republic of Congo in the years following its independence from Belgium between 1960 and 1966. At different moments throughout the crisis, this period was characterized by a war for decolonization, the secession of the Katanga province, the intervention of the United Nations as a peacekeeping force, and a proxy war between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

⁵⁸ Victor D. Du Bois, “The Founding of the Organisation Commune Africaine Et Malgache (O.C.A.M.),” *American Universities Field Staff Reports Service* 8, no. 3, The Search for Unity in French-speaking Black Africa (June 1965): 3.

economic interests were even less united than they had been during the 1958 referendum on the French Community. “The ties which bound the leaders of ex-French Black Africa—their French language and culture and earlier fellowship in politics—were still significant, but now much more relaxed and informal. The abrasions of a dozen individual nationalisms, each carefully forged to fit local circumstances, had worn away the basis of their old consensus.”⁵⁹ Having come to develop unique national personalities since independence, the francophone African states present at Nouakchott were in many ways more united by their interest in political moderation than by their shared francophonie. Frustrated by the dominance of the Organization of African Unity in pan-African politics, the representatives at the Nouakchott Conference hoped to establish an organization that would lend greater visibility to moderate francophone African voices on the international plane.⁶⁰

Despite differences of opinion regarding the critical issues of the civil war in Congo and rising Communist Chinese influence in sub-Saharan Africa, the 13 francophone states present at the Nouakchott Conference successfully created the *Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache* (OCAM) as a means for postcolonial francophone solidarity. Though support for moderation in Congo was not universal and francophone African interactions with China ranged from outright denunciation to semi-open diplomatic relations, the new member states of OCAM agreed to “blacklist the ‘Cold War’ in all of its forms,” advocating non-aligned moderation in a world increasingly polarized between the superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union.⁶¹ Marking an important division between “revolutionary” and “moderate” African states,

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 5.

⁶¹ Philippe Decraene, “La Conférence De Nouakchott a Créé l’Organisation Commune Africaine Et Malgache,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 1965.

the founding of OCAM would herald the renewed interest of moderate francophone African states in asserting their distinct identity within the larger pan-African sphere.

Having established itself as an organization of French-speaking African states, OCAM sought to promote solidarity and cooperation among member states along their paths toward mutual economic, technical, and cultural development.⁶² OCAM interest in the project for Francophonie should therefore come as no surprise. Though individual activists for Francophonie had announced their interests in francophone community as early as November 1965, it was OCAM that would come to spearhead the movement. During a May 1966 OCAM summit at Tananarive (known today as Antananarivo), Senegalese president Léopold Sédar Senghor articulated his interest in the institutionalization of francophonie. He maintained the potential of Francophonie to support African development and unity on more than just the cultural plane: “Francophonie must go beyond its strictly cultural framework and return to economic and financial realities... It must play a deciding role in the improvement of economic and financial relations of the different countries involved.”⁶³ Through cultural solidarity fostered under the French umbrella, Senghor believed that francophone states could and should develop economic ties. By virtue of their shared espousal of the French language’s universal values, nations would feel obligated to support the collective growth of Francophonie.

Senghor’s interest in francophone cultural community was not without precedent. The November 1962 issue of *Esprit*, a French intellectual journal, documented the intellectual turn toward francophone community in a special edition entitled, “*Le français, langue vivante.*” Publishing their issue just four months after Algerian independence, the editors Camille

⁶² Hyacinthe de Montera and Xavier Campion, “Organisation Commune Africaine Et Malgache (O.C.A.M.),” *Dictionnaire De La Francophonie* (Paris: Association de solidarité francophone, 1969), 86.

⁶³ François Martin, *Le Niger du Président Diouri : 1960 - 1974* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1991), 170, quoted in Salifou, “Hamani Diouri,” 86.

Bourniquel and Jean-Marie Domenach sought to examine the future of France's postcolonial international presence, as examined through the lens of the French language. In what may have been the first articulation of a francophone identity since French geographer Onésime Reclus' coinage of the term in 1886, the editors of *Esprit* recognized the possible unifying effect of the French language on France's postcolonies: "...in the new linguistic space that has been defined between communities that vary in race, climate, and social status, can we hope to feel a sense of solidarity or shared responsibility?"⁶⁴ Rather than limiting the French language to only national significance, the intention of the journal was to situate the language in a global context—a means to transcend religious, cultural, and political boundaries on the international plane. Though the publication did not overtly posit the emergence of Francophonie, it marked the beginning of an important discussion of francophone political community that would inspire its later institutionalization.

At the urging of francophone activists, OCAM officially recognized the project for Francophonie at a conference in June 1966, where it charged Léopold Senghor of Senegal and Hamani Diori of Niger with the task of "making useful contacts for the carrying out of Francophonie in cultural and economic domains."⁶⁵ From this conference onward, OCAM would coordinate meetings among French-speaking ministers from France, Africa, and the rest of the francophone world to discuss the potential for a politically, economically, and culturally-motivated organization of Francophonie. Diori and Senghor (with the help of Tunisian head of state Habib Bourguiba, whose role in development of Francophonie will be discussed in Chapter III) would work to promote the institutionalization of Francophonie across the African continent. Much like French president Charles de Gaulle's efforts to encourage a 'yes' vote from African

⁶⁴ Jean-Marie Domenach and Camille Bourniquel, "Le Français, Langue Vivante," *Esprit* (November 1962): 562.

⁶⁵ De Montera and Campion, "Organisation Commune Africaine Et Malgache (O.C.A.M.)," 86.

territories to the 1958 referendum on the French Community, these OCAM leaders worked diligently to convince their African peers of the merits of Francophonie.

After over three years of ardent campaigning, the leaders of OCAM successfully organized the first and second Conferences of Niamey—two meetings of francophone leaders designed to create an organization for cultural and technical cooperation among French-speaking states. At the first conference, which took place from February 17-20, 1969, OCAM President Hamani Diori opened the meeting by commenting on the great diversity that existed within the francophone community: “...they have realized their membership to the same spiritual community, despite geographic distance and racial, religious, and economic diversity, despite the links at all levels—particularly economic and legal ties—that connect them to other communities.”⁶⁶ United by their shared use of the French language, representatives presented proposals for a flexible form of francophone cooperation that would inspire member states to work toward communal interests. On March 16–20, 1970, delegates from 29 different francophone nations met to officially establish the *Agence de coopération culturelle et technique* (ACCT), later renamed the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*. African leaders had succeeded in their mission. To quote Nigerien president Hamani Diori once again:

*Vive l'Agence de coopération culturelle et technique !
Vive le monde francophone !*⁶⁷

Having charted the transition from Négritude to Francophonie over the course of this chapter, the capacity of francophone African leaders to espouse two seemingly contradictory philosophies is worth discussion. Anticolonial leaders of francophone Africa championed the

⁶⁶ Hamani Diori, “Allocution Du Président Hamani Diori (Niger), Président En Exercice De l’Organisation Commune Africaine Et Malgache” (presented at the Première conférence de Niamey, Niamey, Niger, February 17, 1969), quoted in Ndao, *Francophonie des Pères fondateurs*, 212.

⁶⁷ Hamani Diori, “Allocution De Son Excellence Le Président Diori Hamani” (presented at the Deuxième Conférence de Niamey, Niamey, Niger, March 16, 1970); Ndao, *La francophonie des Pères fondateurs*, 216.

Négritude as a means to promote African values in a colonial context that enforced African cultural inferiority. But in the postcolonial era, francophone African politicians like Senghor could not deny the merits of the French language as a means to secure economic assistance, as the African espousal of French cultural values would surely facilitate an alliance with France. Given African postcolonies' interest in monetary aid, how could francophone African states not leave room for French values in their public policy?

The writings of Léopold Senghor do well to justify the philosophical transition of the French language from its role as a symbol of French linguistic hegemony to its status as a means for francophone cooperation. To reconcile his French-oriented political motivations with his commitment to Négritude, Senghor articulated his philosophy of the *Civilisation de l'Universel*. Inspired by the work of French philosopher Teilhard de Chardin, this theory argued for the essential unity of all creation. Though the world was home to a diversity of cultures, each could make a significant contribution to global civilization—the *Civilisation de l'Universel*. This philosophy affirmed the merits of a unique *africanité*, but also demonstrated that, far from isolating the African continent, the specificity of African culture allowed it to participate on the world stage.

In terms of Francophonie, Senghor's theory of universal civilization translated into a form of linguistic universalism. As he argued in *Liberté I: Négritude et Humanisme*, "...any child placed in a foreign country at a young enough age learns the language as easily as the natives do. This is to imply the malleability of the human spirit, such that each language can express all of the human soul."⁶⁸ The use of the French language, therefore, would not contradict the principles of Négritude, as African culture could be expressed in any language. Moreover, by articulating African culture in French, francophone Africans amplified the reach of the Négritude discourse,

⁶⁸ Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Liberté I: Négritude Et Humanisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1964), 362.

as the French language was far more widely spoken than any of those indigenous to Africa. In this way, African francophonie did not nullify the values of Négritude, but rather, complemented the African cultural heritage. Completely compatible with Négritude, Francophonie could exist as a form of political community that represented both the French and African dimensions of the francophone African identity.

CHAPTER III: African Motivations for Francophonie

Though Francophonie was an African-led initiative, it was not without African critics. Just as Guinean leader Sékou Touré had advocated a ‘no’ vote in the 1958 referendum on the French Community, so also did he reject Francophonie: “It is an attempt to betray African interests...an old desire to maintain the colonization of countries that want to free themselves from exploitation...an act that consists of granting independence with one hand to better take it away with the other.”⁶⁹ According to Touré, Francophonie negated the terms of African independence, returning French-speaking African nations to a state of colonization by France. Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah was equally critical of the French-African relations embodied in Francophonie, often describing the francophone African leaders of OCAM as “‘lackeys,’ ‘stooges,’ and ‘puppets’ of the colonial regime.”⁷⁰ Unable to understand or accept francophone African leaders’ feelings of solidarity with France, Nkrumah even went so far as to support subversive acts against moderate francophone African governments.⁷¹ To Touré and Nkrumah, Francophonie was nothing if not a renewal of colonial rule, a return to subjugation rather than a step toward progress.

Why then did African leaders choose Francophonie? Were they blind to the problems of latent colonialism outlined by Touré and Nkrumah? Or did they simply see advantages in Francophonie that their critics did not? While aware of accusations of neocolonialism, the champions of Francophonie felt that their promotion of the French language and culture as means for French-African political community would only benefit African nations. Their decision hinged on the understanding that the choice of linguistic and cultural solidarity with France was the most practical and efficient option available to secure national stability, pan-

⁶⁹ Rosoux, “Le Général De Gaulle Et Francophonie,” 71.

⁷⁰ Du Bois, “The Founding of the Organisation Commune Africaine Et Malgache (O.C.A.M.),” 9.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

African unity, and international aid in a world increasingly defined by the politics of the Cold War. As Bourguiba wrote in July 1966: “A francophone community?... It is an ideal.”⁷²

African leaders were very conscious of the stakes of the Cold War in their development of Francophonie. Through this form of “cooperative non-alignment,” moderate francophone states sought to avoid entrapment in the Cold War binary.⁷³ Having witnessed the effects of the Cold War proxy war that had helped to create divisions within Congo during the early years of its independence, francophone African nations had little interest in being caught in the same conflicts of alignment. As mentioned in the discussion of the creation of OCAM in Chapter II, francophone African states entertained a diversity of relations with the US, USSR, and China. But in choosing France as their main ally in the postwar era, members of Francophonie sought to establish a relationship based on explicitly African needs, rather than on the more abstract terms of the Cold War. In an international context so polarized between East and West, moderate francophone states somewhat ironically looked upon France, their former colonizer, as a more neutral ally. Despite the potential for French exploitation of francophone nations, proponents of Francophonie saw alignment with France as a more pragmatic choice relative to the risks of Cold War affiliation.

In *On African Socialism*, Senghor elaborated on francophone interests in non-alignment. Though politically moderate, Senghor generally opposed US influence in Senegal⁷⁴, fearful of

⁷² Tetu, *La Francophonie*, 70.

⁷³ Léopold Sédar Senghor, “La Francophonie Comme Culture” (presented at the Conférence à l’occasion de la remise du diplôme de Docteur honoris causa, Université Laval, Québec, 1966); Ndao, *La francophonie des Pères fondateurs*, 198.

⁷⁴ In *Le soutien américain à la Francophonie: Enjeux africains, 1960-1970*, Marine Lefèvre highlights the unique relationship of the United States with Francophonie. Despite Senghor’s opposition to American involvement in African affairs, the United States in fact supported the institutionalization of Francophonie as a means to keep moderate African states from following their neighbors in Guinea, Ghana, and Mali in alignment with the Soviet bloc.

the “South-Americanization” of Africa.”⁷⁵ ⁷⁶ As the work’s title would suggest, Senghor favored socialism over communism in Africa; however, he refused to join to the anti-communist movement, stating that such a “witch hunt” could only produce a dangerous result: “increased tension between East and West and a continuation of the Cold War with the obvious risk of unleashing a third global conflict from which humanity would not recover.”⁷⁷ Instead, Senghor championed the development of an African path toward socialism, unimpeded by the interests of the United States or the Soviet Union. Again drawing on the work of Teilhard de Chardin, Senghor emphasized the need to articulate a distinctly African socialism so as to clearly define the African continent’s contribution to global civilization. And for the African member states of Francophonie, the use of the French language to communicate their brand of socialism would only enhance the expression and dissemination of their unique philosophy.

The founders of Francophonie, particularly Tunisian president Habib Bourguiba, were also aware of the development of a competing movement for linguistic and cultural solidarity in Africa: pan-Arabism. Calling for unity among Arabic-speaking states, pan-Arabism sought the eventual creation of a pan-Arab state. Though efforts to achieve this goal ultimately failed, the notion of Arab solidarity persisted, drawing the loyalty of Algeria and Morocco—former French colonies that would have been welcome additions to Francophonie. Philippe Herreman described the exception of North African states in an August 1966 assessment of the state of Francophonie: “...if the nations of black Africa have good reasons to join a francophone community, it is not the same for the countries of the Maghreb—whose natural family is the Arab League—which do

⁷⁵ Philippe Herreman, “Le Projet De ‘Francophonie’ Est Accueilli Avec Méfiance Par Plusieurs États Africains,” *Le Monde Diplomatique* (August 1966): 4.

⁷⁶ In his fear of “South-Americanization,” Senghor no doubt alluded to controversial US interventions against left-wing leaders in Latin America, such as US support in 1973 of a coup in Chile against democratically-elected socialist president Salvadore Allende; US marine intervention in 1965 in the Dominican Civil War to prevent the *Constitutionalistes*’ potential creation of a “second Cuba”; and a military coup in Brazil in 1964, which ousted democratic president João Goulart.

⁷⁷ Senghor, “Nationhood: Report on the Doctrine and Program of the Party of African Federation,” 45.

not find it desirable to establish relations with France over other existing forms of cooperation.”⁷⁸ As ‘natural’ as proponents of Francophonie believed the solidarity among French-speaking states to be, so also did Arab-speaking states feel a similar pull toward language-based cooperation.

While Habib Bourguiba felt the same pull toward Arabism, as demonstrated by the bilingual language policies he would later enact in Tunisia, economic factors pushed him toward Francophonie. Following the Tunisia’s May 1964 nationalization of former French colonial lands and vineyards, France withdrew its aid from Tunisia, leaving the newly independent nation without economic support. In promoting francophone community, Bourguiba sought to reestablish French aid to Tunisia, particularly in the interest of funding bilingual education initiatives and developing relations between francophone universities and parliaments. Having strayed from France in its first years of independence, Bourguiba now attempted to return to France through cultural initiatives, in the hope that Tunisia’s display of loyalty to the French language would inspire a renewal of economic assistance from France.⁷⁹

The African choice of Francophonie, therefore, inscribes itself in the larger context of the Cold War and pan-Arabism. Though both currents would draw French-speaking states away from francophone affiliations, the majority of francophone states chose Francophonie as their primary means for cooperation on the international plane. The choice of Francophonie, then, deserves to be given greater significance than it has traditionally received in histories of its emergence as a movement. In search of postcolonial solidarity, French-African leaders chose to affiliate neither with the USSR nor the United States. Instead, they looked to their fellow French-

⁷⁸ Herreman, “Le Projet De ‘Francophonie’ Est Accueilli Avec Méfiance Par Plusieurs États Africains,” 4.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

speaking states—all profoundly influenced by the experience of French colonial rule—in the hope of establishing a uniquely francophone African brand of political community.

To be clear, the African founding fathers of Francophonie—Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia, Hamani Diori of Niger, and Léopold Senghor of Senegal—felt few concerns about postcolonial relations with France. As Hamani Diori articulated in his speech at a February 1969 OCAM conference in Niamey, the colonial roots of Francophonie were not cause for shame among the organization’s proponents. “We feel no embarrassment [about Francophonie’s roots in French colonial expansion]—no more than the European world would feel ashamed of the Greco-Roman culture that was imposed upon it by conquest.”⁸⁰ French colonial rule was an incontrovertible fact of African history. Rather than trying to undo its effects, supporters of Francophonie accepted the influence of French colonialism on their culture and politics and sought to make their mixed cultural heritage work in their favor.

All products of the French educational system, Bourguiba, Diori, and Senghor strongly believed in the inherent philosophical value of the French language. Despite their upbringing under the oppression of French colonial rule, they viewed French as a language of liberty, not of domination. Inspired by the great philosophical texts of Rousseau and other Enlightenment thinkers, they saw the French language as the perfect means to express their anticolonial rhetoric and national identity.⁸¹ As Bourguiba proudly proclaimed in a 1968 speech in Montréal, “It is through the French language that we have forged a new representation of our national interest. [It is through the French language] that we have been able to communicate it, disseminate it,

⁸⁰ Diori, “Allocution Du Président Hamani Diori (Niger), Président En Exercice De l’Organisation Commune Africaine Et Malgache”; Ndao, *La francophonie des Pères fondateurs*, 212.

⁸¹ Habib Bourguiba, “Une Double Ouverture Au Monde” (Montréal, May 11, 1968), in Papa Alioune Ndao, *Francophonie des “Pères fondateurs”* (Éditions Karthala, 2008), 160–161.

make it heard, and make it understood.”⁸² Rather than an instrument of oppression, the French language was a means for *ouverture*. Through the French language, Tunisia and its fellow francophone states would be able to communicate their postcolonial interests to the world.

By the same token, proponents of Francophonie considered their national promotion of the French language to be a pragmatic decision, not a “war machine mounted by French imperialism” or a sign of a postcolonial inferiority complex.⁸³ The founding fathers understood the value of the French language as an international mode of communication. For recently independent nations interested in foreign economic assistance, French offered the most familiar and readily available opportunities for aid. Those who denied this fact, according to Senghor, were merely “irresponsible idealists.”⁸⁴ As Tunisian president Habib Bourguiba passionately argued, French was far too valuable a diplomatic tool to be thrown away under the pretext of linguistic emancipation:

We are all too aware of the necessity for seriousness and realism that this adventure in the exercise of liberty requires and that...the construction of the State and the structuring of the economy represent. For a country with scarce natural resources, to risk turning back to a single culture on some hypothetical pretext [would be] to succumb to the illusions of a sentiment that has been the generator of regression.⁸⁵

The French language presented to African states a tremendous opportunity for growth, not a renewed potential for exploitation. In a departure from the imbalanced relations that characterized French colonialism, Francophonie would give African states the chance to control the terms of the interaction as independent nations.

⁸² Habib Bourguiba, *Discours*, vol. Tome XVIII (Tunis: Publications du Secrétariat d’État à l’information, 1979), 302; Foued Laroussi, “La Francophonie Bourguibienne,” in *La Francophonie Des Pères Fondateurs*, ed. Papa Alioune Ndao (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2008), 16–17.

⁸³ Senghor, “La Francophonie Comme Culture”; Ndao, *La francophonie des Pères fondateurs*, 198.

⁸⁴ Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Liberté IV : Socialisme Et Planification* (Paris: Seuil, 1983), 621.

⁸⁵ Bourguiba, “Une Double Ouverture Au Monde”; quoted in Ndao, *La francophonie des Pères fondateurs*, 162.

No one denied the horrors of colonialism, yet all three of the founding fathers demonstrated a profound desire to move forward, to develop their budding nations using whatever resources were available to them. The French language, as Senghor so elegantly put it, was one such resource: “In the ruins of colonialism, we have found this splendid tool—the French language. [...] Colonization was an incredible adventure. Like all adventures, it carried along with it both dirt and gold. Why should we have to hold onto only the dirt and not retain any of the gold nuggets?”⁸⁶ In this context, proponents of Francophonie believed that their promotion of French language and culture only served to complement their African heritage, not to replace it. Rather than negating their national identities, the French language *augmented* them, allowing French-speaking states to express their cultures to the larger francophone world. The postcolonial francophone identity was incontrovertibly dual, a *mélange* between African and French cultures. To the leaders of Francophonie, the answer to questions of francophone identity was simple: “...above all, for us, Francophonie is culture.”⁸⁷

Confident that their use of the French language was devoid of neocolonial overtones, Bourguiba, Diori, and Senghor concentrated on the promotion of the organization among their peers. Their goal was to explain the practical merits of Francophonie, emphasizing the cultural, political, and economic benefits that the organization stood to offer to African member states. Francophonie was the logical solution to the many challenges that fledgling African nations faced in the postcolonial era, bringing together French-speaking states in perfect balance by layering its influence on national, pan-African, and international planes. While Chapter IV will detail the exact configuration of the member nations of Francophonie, this chapter will describe

⁸⁶ Jacques Barrat, Questions au professeur Jacques Barrat, October 1, 2010, <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/dossiers/francophonie/peres-francophonie.shtml>.

⁸⁷ Senghor, “La Francophonie Comme Culture”; Ndao, *La francophonie des Pères fondateurs*, 198.

the specific arguments put forth by Bourguiba, Diiori, and Senghor in favor of Francophonie as a desirable solution for the postcolonial concerns for political community among francophone African states.

On the national level, the choice of francophonie was largely pragmatic. In African states marked by ethno-linguistic diversity, the French language presented a convenient workaround for problems of governmental organization. Instead of initiating a complete realignment of French systems of administration, new African governments could *adapt* them, retaining certain positive aspects of French organization while reforming others. In this way, francophone African leaders could simply repurpose the existing structures for their postcolonial needs. Moreover, given that the majority of francophone African leaders had begun their careers either as *cadres* in the French civil service or as teachers in French colonial schools, it seemed most practical to preserve the French system of administration, as it was the form of government that African leaders knew best.

Of course, while African states had not experienced the same sort of Herderian linguistic nationalism that had swept Europe during the 19th century, French-African leaders certainly understood the necessity of the promotion of indigenous languages in the formation of national identity.⁸⁸ In their essays and speeches, Habib Bourguiba and Léopold Senghor frequently referenced the need for the development of African languages, aware of the potentially harmful sociolinguistic effects of the continued use of French, a colonial language, in the postcolonial African public sphere. Indeed, as French anthropologist Vincent Monteil noted, the question of African identity was a critical concern: “When one lives in black Africa, one is struck by the importance that French-speaking Africans (students or otherwise) place on three fundamental problems: their authentic history, their mother tongues, and their African personality (which

⁸⁸ Andrew Simpson, *Language and National Identity in Africa* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 12.

some call *négritude*).”⁸⁹ If language and culture were so inextricably linked, as proponents of la Francophonie insisted, African leaders would have to develop both indigenous languages *and* French.

Tunisian president Habib Bourguiba framed his interests in national language promotion in terms of bilingualism. He considered French to be “nearly equal to [Arabic, the Tunisian] mother tongue,” seeing no conflict between his support for *francité* and the existing Arab culture in Tunisia.⁹⁰ In championing Tunisian francophonie, Bourguiba did not deny Tunisian Arabism, but rather, amplified its voice on the international plane and facilitated its entrance into the modern world. For Tunisians, French was a *choice*—the appropriation of the language of their former colonizer and the integration of it into Tunisian culture. Using French didn’t diminish the ‘*tunisieneté*’ of their identity or imply any sort of linguistic inferiority complex. And given the 1964 withdrawal of French economic aid to Tunisia, the choice of the French language was merely a practical decision. While affiliation with Arab states certainly would have been in keeping with Tunisian cultural identity and Arabic linguistic solidarity, it would do little to encourage the Western aid that Bourguiba sought to attract through Francophonie.

Though Léopold Senghor of Senegal also favored a bilingual approach, the terms of language choice in Senegal were decidedly more complex. Unlike Tunisia, where the majority of the population were speakers of Arabic (with Berber languages spoken by only a small minority), Senegal was home to approximately 39 African languages, including Wolof, Pulaar, Serer, Diola, Malinke, and Soninke.⁹¹ As Senghor articulated in his 1958 essay, “*Le problème des langues vernaculaires ou le bilinguisme comme solution*,” the establishment of bilingual

⁸⁹ Monteil, “Le Problème Linguistique En Afrique Noire,” 796.

⁹⁰ Bourguiba, “Une Double Ouverture Au Monde”; Ndao, *La francophonie des Pères fondateurs*, 159.

⁹¹ “Senegal,” *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, accessed March 4, 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/534445/Senegal/55048/Languages>.

systems of administration would require the explicit choice of a national language, to the exclusion of other indigenous languages. Just as Senghor viewed the French language as inextricably linked to French culture, so too did he understand that African national languages were linked to African cultures. But while French could easily remain the official language of Senegal, simply carrying over from the colonial period, the choice of an African language for a truly bilingual environment would not only require more effort, but would also necessitate the selection of a unitary national language. In this context, French functioned as the most neutral of linguistic choices, as it would not give undue preference to any one ethnic group.⁹²

Both Bourguiba and Senghor understood that their postcolonial African governments should strive to promote national languages, yet their commitment to Francophonie led them to maintain the French language as an administrative lingua franca. As president, Bourguiba initiated the “Arabization” of Tunisian administrative structures, declaring Arabic as the official language of Tunisia. Still, he continued to champion the use of French in Tunisian education and media as a means for modernization. On this front, Senghor’s task as president of Senegal was more difficult, as it required the development of national languages that lacked standardized orthographies. In the case of postcolonial Senegal, it was more practical to retain French as the official national language and integrate national languages into national systems of education and governance more slowly.⁹³

⁹² The ‘nonaligned’ role played by colonial language in Senegal and other linguistically diverse francophone states is not unique to territories of the former French empire. In postcolonial India, a parallel debate regarding the use of English in public life arose in the 1960s. Many states of northern India advocated the establishment of Hindi, an Indo-European language, as the official national language of India as a means to ‘decolonize’ the Indian public sphere. Others, however, opposed the institution of Hindi as an official language of state, as it would alienate residents of southern India, who traditionally spoke languages of Dravidian origin. Officials therefore chose to continue the use of English, as it would maintain a degree of linguistic neutrality within the Indian government.

⁹³ After establishing French as the official language of Senegal in the nation’s 1960 Constitution, President Senghor released a decree on May 21, 1971 that standardized the written forms of Wolof, Serer, Pulaar, Diola, Malinke, and Soninke. Only in the Constitution of 2001 did the Senegalese government make explicit reference to the relationship between French and the national languages of Senegal: “The official language of the republic of Senegal is French.

If linguistic diversity was a point of contention on the national level, then efforts at linguistic cooperation on the regional level proved even more complicated. Life in the postcolonial era presented African leaders with the critical challenge of bringing a diversity of ethno-linguistic groups to feel a sense of belonging to the same political community.⁹⁴ Choosing a single language of communication for all of former French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa was a daunting task, and just as French offered a neat linguistic solution in Senegal, so also did it seem to be a viable solution on the regional level. The French language had bound African states together for decades during the colonial period. Why not continue to use it as independent nations as a means for postcolonial solidarity?

By integrating French into their postcolonial reality, francophone African states would incorporate French into their political life as a language of collective identity. As former territories of the French Empire, these states were all marked by the experience of French colonial rule. France's abusive treatment of its colonies, its blatant exploitation of African resources, its imposition of its language and culture under the guise of a "civilizing mission"—all of these factors had come to shape francophone African states' postcolonial personality. Instead of choosing to forget the injustices of their exploitative colonial relationship with France, French-speaking African states embraced their common history.

On the larger pan-African level, linguistic cooperation among French-speaking African states gave a stronger voice to moderate francophone interests. According to Du Bois, francophone African leaders who generally ascribed to a sort of non-Communist non-alignment were frustrated by the dominance of more 'radical' states like Ghana, Guinea, and Mali who had "arrogated to themselves the right to speak for all of Africa at the United Nations and at

The national languages are Diola, Malinke, Pulaar, Serer, Soninke, Wolof, and all other national languages that are eventually standardized."

⁹⁴ Simpson, *Language and National Identity in Africa*, 1–2.

international conferences,” as well as within the Organization of African Unity (OAU).⁹⁵ As described in Chapter II, francophone African states had formed the *Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache* (OCAM) to better promote their more moderate point of view on the African and international planes. As a regional grouping within the OAU, OCAM asserted the particular identity of francophone African states, while continuing to uphold the pan-African principles of the OAU.⁹⁶ In this way, francophone organizations like OCAM not only promoted inter-African cooperation, but also aligned with Senghor’s vision for the development of an African contribution to the *Civilisation de l’Universel*.

On the international plane, proponents of Francophonie championed the French language as a means for securing political alliances and economic aid, particularly from France. In a December 1966 televised interview with André Blanchet, a journalist for the French public broadcasting agency, *Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française* (ORTF), Léopold Senghor admitted the African continent’s need for French assistance: “France doesn’t need Africa, but, as I have often said to General de Gaulle, we Africans need France in order to solve our problems.”⁹⁷ Senghor understood that the future growth and development of francophone African states depended on French aid, and by continuing to promote French language and culture through Francophonie, Senghor and his fellow African leaders demonstrated that their nations were open to French assistance. Moreover, whereas the use of African languages was likely to limit the scope of their political interactions to the African continent, French would allow African states to solicit aid from the wider francophone world. And given the status of French as an official language of the United Nations, the promotion of African francophonie

⁹⁵ Du Bois, “The Founding of the Organisation Commune Africaine Et Malgache (O.C.A.M.),” 4.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4, 18–19.

⁹⁷ Philippe Decraene, “M. Léopold Senghor Se Fait L’avocat Du Projet De Francophonie,” *Le Monde*, December 21, 1966, 6.

would augment the significance of the African continent in international relations. In an international context, therefore, the French language would open francophone African states to a wealth of political and economic opportunities that the exclusive reliance on African languages would not allow.

While Chapter IV of this thesis will demonstrate that Francophonie was not without flaws, the advocates of the organization understood it to be the most viable solution to the conflicts they faced in the postcolonial era. To be sure, the views of Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia, Hamani Diori of Niger, and Léopold Senghor of Senegal toward Francophonie were colored by their personal relationships with the French language. Nevertheless, as leaders of newly independent nations, these proponents of Francophonie could do little but to make the political and cultural choices that they found most expedient. And on the national, pan-African, and international levels, Francophonie presented the surest path toward postcolonial political community.

CHAPTER IV: From Political to Cultural—Tensions within Francophonie

In a conference on December 21, 1965, former French prime minister Michel Debré declared that the African project for Francophonie expressed both “a feeling of nostalgia and a feeling of hope.”⁹⁸ The sense of nostalgia was clear: while francophone African states appreciated their new independent status, nearly all of them now desired the advantages of French-African cooperation that they had experienced during the final years of colonial rule. As a hope (ostensibly for political and economic assistance), however, the stakes of Francophonie were more complex. French-speaking African states sought to increase their international presence through Francophonie, but the politics of their participation lacked internal coherence, with various groups advocating different approaches. Indeed, as Debré concluded, “This idea must remain above all on a spiritual basis, as the community cannot go very far politically, given the dissension that exists among its states.”⁹⁹

While Debré was correct to highlight the existence of such divisions, his attribution of full responsibility to francophone African states for the limited political capacity of Francophonie misses the mark. Francophone African leaders had headed the movement for Francophonie, but they were not the sole factors contributing to its creation. Though plans for Francophonie initially articulated through OCAM had focused on the role of African states within the organization, Francophonie was intended to form a community for *all* speakers of French. The majority of these French speakers were indeed inhabitants of former French African territories, but a significant portion of the francophone population came from a different set of states with a non-colonial relationship with the French language: Canada, Belgium, Switzerland, and Luxembourg. The divergent political and economic orientations of these states, when

⁹⁸ “M. DEBRÉ: Le Projet Africain De Communauté Francophone ‘Exprime Une Nostalgie Et Une Espérance’,” *Le Monde*, December 23, 1965.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

coupled with the motivations of the French nation itself, served to restrict the possibilities for political community within Francophonie. Unable to knit together all of the political and economic interests of its member states, Francophonie shifted its focus to French language and culture—the only factors, it appears, that continued to bind these states together.

In an article in the August 1966 edition of *Le Monde diplomatique*, “The project of ‘francophonie’ is welcomed with suspicion by several African states,” Philippe Herreman outlined the divisions, highlighting the factors that motivated each state’s interest in Francophonie. Though all states generally supported the notion of a French-influenced organization for cultural and linguistic solidarity, their interests and methods for achieving it varied greatly. As Herreman put it, the project for francophone community “not only responds to political imperatives and economic interests, but also to a conscious necessity to give a name, a form, and a framework to the historic, cultural, and linguistic links that have tied the former *métropole* to the countries that remain in its circle of influence.”¹⁰⁰ Francophone African states sought to define, once and for all, the relations that existed amongst themselves and with France. Though they all anchored their desire for political community in their mutual espousal of French language and culture, African efforts at developing a coherent Francophonie would reveal conflicts that linguistic unity would do little to mitigate.

Divisions within OCAM effectively demonstrate divergences in economic ideology among proponents of Francophonie—differences that were largely consistent with the politics they had elaborated nearly ten years earlier during debates over the 1958 French Community. Led by Ivorian president Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the members of the Conseil de l’Entente (a subgroup of OCAM whose members included Côte d’Ivoire, Upper Volta, Dahomey, and Niger)

¹⁰⁰ Herreman, “Le Projet De ‘Francophonie’ Est Accueilli Avec Méfiance Par Plusieurs États Africains.”

were suspicious of plans for multilateral cooperation with France. Concerned that association with other African states would impede the development of their own industry and markets, the members of the Conseil de l'Entente favored a system of bilateral relations so that French benefits could be tailored to each state. By contrast, Léopold Sédar Senghor and the members of the Senegal River Union (which included Mali, Guinea, and Mauritania) saw federal cooperation as the key to African unity. These African leaders saw their collective bargaining power as an African federation as critical to making demands from France. Though Senghor understood that the economic diversity within an African federation would complicate relations with France, he insisted that collective action was the sole way to stimulate growth and development in all member states.¹⁰¹ Both holding onto politics elaborated in the late 1950s during the final restructuring of the French colonial empire, Houphouët-Boigny and Senghor butted heads over the economic policies to be pursued by OCAM and, consequently, by Francophonie.

Economic interests weren't the only factors motivating the African choice of Francophonie. Indeed, as Herreman framed it, Senghor's enthusiasm for Francophonie was mainly culturally based. Hoping to join the tenets of the Négritude movement with those of Western culture, Senghor imagined Francophonie as a means for cultural *métissage*, eventually culminating in his ideal of the *Civilisation de l'Universel*. But beyond this vision of global civilization, Senghor also conceived of Francophonie as a way to weaken the political and cultural influence of the United States in Africa. As discussed in Chapter III, Senghor feared US influence in Africa, preferring ties with France to the prospect of introducing American 'imperialism' to the region.¹⁰² Therefore, while Senghor felt comfortable reinitiating relations with his nation's former colonizer, he was highly suspicious of American interests in Africa. In

¹⁰¹ Georges Chaffard, "L'Afrique Francophone Dix Ans Après La Loi-cadre: Les Régimes Mis En Place Au Lendemain De L'indépendance Ont Connus Une Relative Stabilité Politique," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, July 1966.

¹⁰² Herreman, "Le Projet De 'Francophonie' Est Accueilli Avec Méfiance Par Plusieurs États Africains."

the context of the global Cold War, Senghor saw US involvement in Africa as incontrovertibly colored by its competition with the Soviet Union for influence in the Third World. The choice of France and Francophonie offered African states a ‘Third Way’ between affiliations with either of the superpowers.

Despite the diversity of their motivations for francophone community, all francophone African states were committed to organizing an institutional form of Francophonie. The integration of a new set of French-speaking states into the project for francophonie, however, would come to further complicate matters. Led by journalist Jean-Marc Léger, the Canadian province of Quebec also expressed interest in Francophonie. The Canadian government based in Ottawa was hesitant to recognize Quebecois interests in francophone community, as it feared that participation in Francophonie would galvanize the existing separatist movement in Quebec.¹⁰³ Despite Ottawa’s qualms, Léger continued to promote Francophonie, founding the *Association des Universités Partiellement ou Entièrement de Langue Française* (AUPELF) in 1961 to encourage cooperation among French-speaking universities around the world.¹⁰⁴

In “*Une responsabilité commune*,” an article in the November 1962 edition *Esprit*, which addressed the role of the French language in the postcolonial era, Léger explained the stakes of the promotion of French language and culture on a global scale. Citing the decline of France’s political and economic influence in the postwar era, Léger argued that it was the task of its recently independent territories to promote the French language in the face of the dominance of English brought about by the United States. Whereas French had once been the uncontested

¹⁰³ Emerging in the 1960s, the Quebec separatist movement advocated political sovereignty for Quebec due to its cultural and linguistic differences from the majority of Canadian provinces. This political movement is generally attributed to the heightened sense of nationalism following the Quiet Revolution, a period of unparalleled economic and social development in Quebec.

¹⁰⁴ AUPELF is known today as the *Agence universitaire de Francophonie* (AUF). Operating in 782 member institutions in 98 different countries in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas, the AUF was integrated into Francophonie in 1989 to continue its work to promote French-language higher education and research.

language of intellectual humanism and political diplomacy, the emergence of the US and the Soviet Union as world superpowers had altered the role of French as a global language. The francophone citizens of France's postcolonies were obligated, therefore, to promote the French language and culture in order to maintain their own global standing. Already, Léger asserted, francophone communities had begun to form international trade associations. "And why shouldn't all of these associations one day call for their organization under the form of a vast confederation—the instrument of coordination and the sovereign expression of the immense community of French speakers?"¹⁰⁵

Jean-Marc Léger's article offers a critical perspective on the stakes of francophonie in the postwar period. Though initiatives for francophone community had their roots in French-African federation, the political significance of the French language transcended the bounds of France's former colonial empire in Africa. The French language and culture had permeated communities all over the world, meaning that efforts for the establishment of Francophonie would have to function on an international plane. Aware of the linguistic link that existed among them, francophone countries throughout the world hoped to use their shared language to develop new forms of cooperation and solidarity.¹⁰⁶ Over the course of the 1960s, therefore, as francophone leaders moved toward the institutionalization of Francophonie, the fact of the global reach of the French language would play a significant role in determining the stakes of the organization.

It is important to highlight the difference between the interests in Francophonie espoused by Quebec (as well as by other economically developed francophone regions like Belgium, Switzerland, and Luxembourg) and those of African advocates for francophone community.

¹⁰⁵ Jean-Marc Léger, "Une Responsabilité Commune," *Esprit* (November 1962): 571.

¹⁰⁶ André Salifou, "Diori Hamani," in *Francophonie Des Pères Fondateurs*, ed. Papa Alioune Ndao (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2008), 85.

Whereas the interests of underdeveloped African nations were more explicitly motivated by economic factors (with Senghor's interest in cultural community standing as an important exception), developed francophone nations saw the promotion of French as a means to increase their relevance on the global stage. Because these developed states required a different form of Francophonie from their African counterparts, their presence would shift the stakes of the institutionalized form of the organization. Instead of focusing primarily on economic cooperation among francophone states, Francophonie would now feature even further cultural initiatives to accommodate the 'soft power' diplomatic needs of its more developed states.

In the December 1966 issue of its official journal *Nations nouvelles* (later translated into English and republished in *Africa Report* in June 1968), OCAM outlined its plan for the organization of Francophonie to account for the inclusion of both economically developed and underdeveloped states. It defined Francophonie as “a spiritual community of nations using French as a national, official, or customary language,” asserting that the act of speaking French implied a specific worldview marked by its rational humanism.¹⁰⁷ Speakers of French were present throughout the world—in North and sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, Europe, and the Americas—but their francophonie would only serve to *complement* local civilizations, not challenge them.¹⁰⁸ This brand of francophonie-as-cultural-*métissage* already existed (most notably theorized by Léopold Senghor), but it lacked organization. In institutionalizing Francophonie, OCAM sought to establish a strong international framework based on multilateral agreements among its member states.

Francophonie would consist of three “concentric circles of solidarity.”¹⁰⁹ The centermost

¹⁰⁷ Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache, “How to Organize Francophonie,” trans. S. Maggio, *Africa Report* (June 1968): 12.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

circle, known as Francophonie A, would include France and the francophone states of sub-Saharan Africa and Madagascar. This level of cooperation would emphasize both educational development and economic assistance. Whereas educational cooperation would largely address the expansion of French academic and technical training programs, economic cooperation would focus on *development* rather than outright economic aid. In its report, OCAM articulated a very specific vision of what this form of development would entail:

Not an increase in the economic and financial aid provided by France, for this is not just a question of *economic growth*—of increasing the yearly income per capita. Rather, it is *the development of the whole man simultaneously with the development of the nation in all its aspects*. Development in this sense is predicated much more on the quality of technical cadres than on the quantity of money invested in the country. In other words, what the developing states need the most is *technical assistance* in order to train their cadres, and above all to *train their trainers*.¹¹⁰

Citing the work of the UN Conference on Trade and Development, the report explained that French aid alone was insufficient to improve the fortunes of third world nations. More important would be to open francophone states to trade and economic systems from other developed nations. In this sense, Francophonie expressed two explicit economic goals—to increase trade between its constituent states and to present an allied front for underdeveloped states at the UN Conference on Trade and Development.¹¹¹

This verbalization of Francophonie's economic aims presents a significant elaboration on the goals demonstrated in earlier proposals for the organization. Prior to the publication of this report, proponents of Francophonie had always highlighted the organization's economic interests, but had never explicitly specified the form that French-African economic cooperation would take. Just six months earlier, Hyacinthe de Montera, the French Secretary-General of the

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 15.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Association de Solidarité Francophone, had argued for francophone community as a justification for aid: “Cultural solidarity must come in between the excessive rigidity national solidarity and the vagueness of international solidarity: francophone solidarity—the basis of a future community and the justification for mutual aid and economic cooperation.”¹¹² Indeed, given the parallels drawn between Francophonie and the 1958 French Community, it had been easy to assume that an institutionalized form of francophone community would feature the regulation of explicit monetary aid from France to its African postcolonies. This report, however, shows that the economic arm of Francophonie would focus on economic development and technical assistance rather than outright financial aid.

Though the report insists on the *necessity* for development over economic aid, another report for OCAM by French civil servant Christian Lambert suggests that the multilateral structure of Francophonie was simply incompatible with the solicitation of French aid. Citing the uneven distribution of resources among members of the francophone community, Lambert demonstrated the difficulties in developing a uniform plan for French aid within a group whose yearly per capita income ranged from \$45 to \$2,000, with an average per capita income of \$104.¹¹³ Moreover, though the OCAM report suggested that developed francophone nations like Canada and Belgium provide aid to third-world francophone countries, Lambert noted the potential inability for such states to supply aid, given that the francophone portions of these nations were economically dependent on the non-francophone groups within their countries: “...Quebec is in a serious situation of dependence with regard to the Canadian, British and American economies, and Wallonia is losing momentum with respect to Flanders... It is much

¹¹² Hyacinthe de Montera, *La “Francophonie” En Marche: La Guerre Des Cultures* (Paris: Société des Éditions modernes, 1966), 79–80, quoted in Jeffrey Robert Rosner, “‘Francophonie’ as a pan-movement: the politics of cultural affinity.” (Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, 1969), 90.

¹¹³ Christian Lambert, *La Francophonie* (Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache, 1968), 67; Rosner, “‘Francophonie’ as a pan-movement,” 91–92.

the same for the francophone minority of Switzerland when compared to its German majority.¹¹⁴ The negotiation of economic relations between France and Francophonie A, therefore, would be far more complicated than the 1966 OCAM report implied.

Francophonie B, the second level of cooperation within Francophonie, would introduce relations between France and Haiti, Lebanon, and the francophone countries of North Africa and Indochina—states where the French language was more likely to come into conflict with an existing national language. In Haiti it was Creole; in Lebanon and the North African Maghreb, it was Arabic or Berber; in Indochina, it was Vietnamese, Khmer, or Lao. Despite this point of difference, the member states of Francophonie B still were not so different from those of Francophonie A, most notably in that they both shared the “historically common destiny” that resulted from their status as former “colonies, protectorates, or trusteeship territories” of France.¹¹⁵ As such, these states continued to use French as both a language of instruction in their education systems and as a means for international communication. Cooperation within Francophonie B, therefore, would solicit collaboration between francophone states on governmental and parliamentary levels, establishing meetings between heads of state, ministers of education, youth, and culture, and ministers of finance and economic affairs.¹¹⁶

Cooperation within Francophonie C welcomed Canada, Belgium, Switzerland and Luxembourg into the organization’s “concentric circles of solidarity.” As economically developed states where French was spoken as a national language, these countries would shift the stakes of Francophonie. Unlike circles A and B, which were in need of economic and technical assistance from France, the member states of circle C would be able to interact with France as economic equals. In cooperation with France, therefore, Francophonie C would work

¹¹⁴ Lambert, *La Francophonie*, 59; Rosner, “‘Francophonie’ as a pan-movement,” 93.

¹¹⁵ Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache, “How to Organize Francophonie,” 15.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

to advance French as an international language through the development of educational and cultural initiatives, including the expansion of existing organizations like AUPELF. All members of Francophonie would benefit from the international promotion of the French language. By encouraging interest in French, Francophonie would naturally draw attention to its constituent states. For the economically underdeveloped members of circles A and B, this promotion would hopefully result in increased aid from developed nations. For the members of circle C, greater international use of the French language would increase their status as francophone states on the global level. The French nation only stood to benefit from that advantages enjoyed by circles A, B, and C, as Francophonie would significantly improve France's international standing through its 'soft power' cultural and linguistic diplomacy.

The organization of Francophonie described in *Nations nouvelles* presented a clear framework for relations among francophone states that effectively accounts for the participation of all three levels in Francophonie. Yet as Jeffrey Rosner, author of the 1969 doctoral thesis, "Francophonie' as a Pan-Movement: The Politics of Cultural Affinity," argues, it is possible that the structure of Francophonie was merely a tactic to preserve unity in an increasingly divided francophone community: "...the division into circles is a reflection of the difficulties which were becoming apparent in gaining support for the Francophone Community. *Generally*, the wider the circle to which a state is assigned, the greater is that state's reticence; the greater a state's reticence, the less deeply it is asked to become involved. Thus the OCAM plan is an attempt to be as accommodating as possible."¹¹⁷ In this sense, the adaptation of an originally African Francophonie to include more developed states like Canada diluted the political and economic goals of Francophonie, which had already been diminished by conflicts of interest among francophone African states. The diversity of the members of Francophonie made it such

¹¹⁷ Rosner, "Francophonie' as a pan-movement," 84.

that instead of exclusively pursuing the political alliances and economic aid championed by its French African founders, Francophonie was obligated to give greater weight to the organization's least common denominator—French language and culture. In the absence of economic unity, the organizers of Francophonie had little choice but to increase their focus on cultural diplomacy.

This assessment of the structure of Francophonie also revealed the role of France, a nation known for its reserve with regard to the organization. In the report, all of the relations within Francophonie were described with respect to France, which implies that France would play a more important role in Francophonie than its reticence on the subject would suggest. Indeed, if Francophonie was to be divided into concentric circles of solidarity among francophone groups A, B, and C, then who else could stand at the center but France? The central position of France within Francophonie raises a critical question: could France ever play a junior role within organized Francophonie?

Over the course of the organization's development during the late 1960s, French president Charles de Gaulle generally avoided any explicit pronouncements for or against Francophonie. Given his critical role in the decolonization of the French empire, de Gaulle was perhaps one of the most important figures in the shaping of the francophone world. It seems strange, then, that he would feel so hesitant to support Bourguiba, Hamani, and Senghor in their efforts. In an endeavor to rationalize de Gaulle's reserve, Jean-Marc Léger has argued that de Gaulle's interest in France's postcolonies lay mainly in cultural diplomacy, rather than overtly political relations: "For de Gaulle, la Francophonie was and essentially had to remain

cultural...he believed that its translation into the political sphere ran the risk of being more harmful than beneficial.”¹¹⁸

According to Léger, while General de Gaulle certainly negotiated numerous bilateral accords with francophone states post-independence, he feared that any larger-scale attempt at cooperation would result in accusations of neocolonialism. His past experience with federation only served to confirm his concerns. His 1958 proposal of the French Community had not only failed, but it had also suffered harsh criticism from both his Western contemporaries and his anticolonial adversaries in francophone Africa. By keeping matters cultural, Charles de Gaulle maintained a strategic ambiguity with regard to France’s postcolonies. Without explicitly encouraging or discouraging efforts at francophone community, de Gaulle kept France’s international policy francocentric. He accepted the possible benefits of Francophonie, while distancing himself from its disadvantages.

Nevertheless, many of de Gaulle’s actions suggested at least a tacit support for the organization. While de Gaulle publically restricted his approval of Francophonie to the cultural plane, his politics of international aid to Third World countries certainly did not *exclude* France’s African postcolonies. “A country like France can’t abandon its role in giving international aid. It doesn’t have the right [to do so], or otherwise it wouldn’t be the France that it is. Consequently, the money that we give as aid to under-developed countries is not wasted from any point of view. I would even consider it a very wise allocation [of funds].”¹¹⁹ In seeking to lend economic support to newly independent nations, France hoped to offer a ‘Third Way’ between the paths

¹¹⁸ Jean-Marc Léger, “De Gaulle Et La Francophonie,” *Encyclopédie De La Francophonie*, 3, accessed June 28, 2012, http://agora-2.org/francophonie.nsf/Documents/Charles_de_Gaulle--De_Gaulle_et_la_francophonie_par_Jean-Marc_Leger.

¹¹⁹ Charles de Gaulle, *Oeuvres Complètes: Discours Et Messages VI, Pour L’effort (août 1962-décembre 1965)*, vol. 6 (Paris: Éditions Rencontre, 1970), 430–431, cited in Claude Caitucoli, “Charles De Gaulle Et Francophonie : Un Père Fondateur Ambigu,” in *Francophonie Des Pères Fondateurs*, ed. Papa Alioune Ndao (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2008), 121.

established by the world superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union. Envisioning itself as “the intermediary between rich and poor countries,” France sought to carve a niche within the bipolarized politics of the global Cold War.¹²⁰ Having already expressed their interest in French civilization, the African member states of Francophonie were ideal candidates for French aid, thereby allowing France to maintain its influence in its former colonies and improve its standing as a world power, yet hopefully lessen accusations of overt neocolonialism.

But once France began to involve itself financially within this modest organization, its political and economic superiority to all other member states inevitably brought it to dominate Francophonie. With a budget of less than \$10 million, Francophonie received the majority of its funding from France, as budgetary contributions were intended to be proportional to each member state’s income. Though Francophonie would make collective decisions regarding its cultural initiatives, only France and the handful of developed nations involved (Canada, Belgium, Switzerland, and Luxembourg) had the money to implement cultural and educational reforms related to the francophone project.¹²¹ Therefore, while not necessarily intended, French dominance of Francophonie was in some ways unavoidable.

Still, the potential for French exploitation of Francophonie remained clear. In a speech in 1967, Tunisian ambassador Mohamed Masmoudi questioned French interests in Francophonie, highlighting the idea that Francophonie had one connotation for its rich participants and another for the poor, thereby establishing a sort of “double Francophonie.”

When we see how eagerly talented Frenchmen campaign for French to become the official language of the European community, ...we come to ask ourselves if France is simply looking to use francophone Africa to increase its weight in Europe and to more quickly and assuredly achieve a francophone European community, [which is why it] encourages Africans to build for themselves an inferior community. Thus, there would be...a double Francophonie: a

¹²⁰ Caitucoli, “Charles De Gaulle Et La Francophonie : Un Père Fondateur Ambigu,” 121.

¹²¹ Weinstein, “Francophonie,” 497.

francophonie for rich countries, led by France, and another for poor countries, led by any old under-developed nation.¹²²

Masmoudi was not wrong about the political and economic advantages of French economic relations with African states. Through the preferential trade relations established within Francophonie, France not only assured itself of access to African commercial markets, but also maintained the cohesion of the Franc zone, a monetary union of francophone African states whose currencies were linked at a fixed rate of exchange guaranteed by the French treasury.¹²³ France hoped to leverage its relationship with francophone Africa in order to promote greater francophonie on the European continent, and by extension, raise its status within the emergent European Economic Community. Moreover, by linking African economic interests to its own, France secured additional votes within the United Nations, as members of the Franc zone would be inclined to follow France's lead on economic matters. And because France left African states to manage their own efforts at francophone community, it was able to deflect accusations of neoimperialism. Such initiatives established France as the most dominant European authority in francophone Africa, allowing France to maintain significant influence in the region.

What was the true cause of the diversion of Francophonie away from its original political and economic aims and toward its eventual cultural connotation? Was it the fault of francophone African leaders, who could not agree on the form that Francophonie would take? Was it the inclusion of the states of Francophonie C, whose presence shifted the stakes of the organization toward cultural diplomacy? Or was it France, whose participation in Francophonie was incontrovertibly colored by its political and economic dominance and its role as a former

¹²² Mohamed Masmoudi, "La Francophonie" (Speech presented at the Club Démocratie Directe, Boulogne-sur-Seine, January 11, 1967); Rosner, "'Francophonie' as a pan-movement," 179.

¹²³ Tetu, *La Francophonie*, 222.

colonial power? In the case of Francophonie, it is evident that a multitude of factors influenced the organization's turn from more explicit political and economic aims to a more cultural orientation. In the face of conflicting needs and interests regarding the political economy of Francophonie, the organization fell back on the one goal that united all member states, regardless of economic status—the promotion of French language and culture.

CONCLUSION

In 1969, nearing its official institutionalization as an organization, Francophonie took up the following phrase as its motto: “Equality, Complementarity, Solidarity.” Though a weak maxim compared to the well-known French slogan, “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,” to which it clearly alludes, the motto of Francophonie evokes a set of ideological principles specific to the organization that merit discussion. Given the conflicted terms of the cultural shift of the organization addressed in the previous chapter, an examination of its motto may offer a useful lens through which to assess the success or failure of Francophonie as an institution.

If there existed an “equality” of relations within the 1970 iteration Francophonie, this thesis has demonstrated that it was in theory alone. While the organization posited an equal partnership among its members, economic differences clearly set certain states apart from others in their capacity for action within Francophonie. France, along with Canada, Belgium, and their fellow members of Francophonie C, came to dominate the organization in their ability to implement the political, cultural, and economic reforms advanced by the organization. By contrast, the states of francophone Africa, impeded by their limited funding, could do little to carry out the goals of Francophonie. Instead, African states were forced to rely on their more developed peers for economic aid—a form of assistance that few states other than France were prepared to offer.¹²⁴

The dependence of African states on economic support from France calls to question the degree of “complementarity” among the member states of Francophonie. At first glance, it appears that all parties within Francophonie stood to benefit from its particular brand of intergovernmental cooperation. Through the promotion of French language and culture

¹²⁴ Lambert, *La Francophonie*, 59; Rosner, “‘Francophonie’ as a pan-movement,” 93.

throughout the world, Francophonie would raise the profile of French-speaking states, wielding the “soft power” of linguistic and cultural dominance to give greater weight to their global presence. The states of francophone Africa would benefit indirectly from these cultural initiatives, as the organization claimed that increased interest in French language and culture would naturally channel aid toward underdeveloped francophone states.¹²⁵ The economic development of francophone Africa would in turn increase the global clout of Francophonie.

But in the context of the Cold War, the delivery of such economic assistance could never be completely disinterested. Indeed, francophone African membership in the “Third World” signaled their state of poverty, which implied that they were ideal candidates for aid from the economically developed states of the “First World.” The term “Third World,” however, was originally coined by French demographer and economist Alfred Sauvy and used to describe the group of states unaligned with either the US or the Soviet Union. Like the Third Estate of the French Revolution, members of the Third World desired political autonomy, as they were weary of their role as objects of Cold War manipulation.¹²⁶ Therefore, while the terms of economic assistance outlined in Francophonie appeared to be based solely on the “complementarity” within francophone cooperation, its evocation of First and Third World divisions demonstrates its capacity, though latent, for exploitation.

As a means for solidarity, however, it appears that Francophonie achieved its goal. Holding fast to the universalism of their shared French cultural ideals, the members of Francophonie consistently emphasized their existence as a linguistic community. Despite significant political and economic differences, member states maintained their commitment to French language and culture, citing it as the overarching philosophy of Francophonie. While this

¹²⁵ Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache, “How to Organize Francophonie,” 15.

¹²⁶ “Tiers-Monde,” *Larousse*, accessed April 4, 2013, <http://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie/nom-commun-nom/tiers-monde/97289>.

ideological unity appears to be a positive basis for francophone community, it is possible that the shared espousal of French cultural ideals merely served to mask the many points of disunity among the members of Francophonie. Relying on their linguistic and cultural commonalities, theorizers of Francophonie did little to account for the diversity of political and economic interests among francophone states. The result was the creation of an organization that was held together by superficial linguistic ties and was consequently too weak to achieve its more critical goals of political and economic cooperation among its constituent states.

To return to the ideological underpinnings of Francophonie evoked in the introduction to this thesis, it appears that in the attempted establishment of a political and cultural community, Francophonie accepted the linguistic nationhood championed by French geographer Onésime Reclus and ignored the importance placed on shared history by Ernest Renan. While proponents of Francophonie remained committed to the linguistic solidarity articulated by Reclus, it appears that they neglected to address the common historical experience cited by Renan as instrumental to national cohesion. Joined by the memory of having suffered and triumphed together, members of a nation shared the desire to continue to live in the same community, transcending differences of race, religion, and, yes—even language. Whereas the African member states of Francophonie had all felt the oppression of French colonial rule, states like Canada, Belgium, and Switzerland were never touched by French imperialism in the same way. Therefore, from a Renanian standpoint, one could argue that the lack of shared history among the member states of Francophonie precluded its viability as a political community.

Despite its lack of accordance to Renanian nationhood, Francophonie exists today. Though it has maintained its emphasis on linguistic and cultural ideals, Francophonie has struggled to remain relevant in contemporary society. Known primarily for its support of cultural

initiatives regarding the production of French-language media and the development of francophone education, the organization has done little to encourage its constituents' continued interest in French as a political tool. In 2009, the Rwandan government reformed its education system to promote the study of English, with Gabon following suit in 2012. Both governments cited the political and economic advantages of the English language, particularly in the interest of attracting foreign investment.¹²⁷ Nevertheless, if continued African participation in the organization's conference summits is any indication, the African commitment to Francophonie demonstrates a continued interest in the development of French-African relations. As Francophonie remains a conscious choice of political community among African states, further research may reveal a more nuanced understanding of African motivations in its relations with France.

Word Count: 18,038

¹²⁷ Ayoola Alabi, "Speaking the Same Language? Africa and the Future of La Francophonie," *Think Africa Press*, November 1, 2012, <http://thinkafricapress.com/politics/africa-future-la-francophonie>.

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