

## South-North Relations in the French-Speaking World

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### Abstract

Beyond the French-speaking world, when we speak of North and South, we immediately think of emancipation in the North and backwardness in the South, production and consumption, science and unconsciousness. The North is automatically assimilated to areas of freedom, of advanced technology, of space conquest, of an ultra-developed health system, of dominant military power. The South is seen by the North as a reservoir of natural resources, deposits of all kinds, spaces to explore and grow, societies to emancipate.

This vision of the North and the South is not peculiar to the citizens of the North who possess the Power in all its greatness. Southerners see the North as the comforts they lack, the freedoms they are deprived of, the working conditions they envy, the dreams they cannot even conceive of, and a distant role model to emulate.

Even the southern intelligentsia are convinced that they still need help from the North. Renowned professors from the South are regarded as anomalies by their colleagues themselves. And we continue to send endless cohorts of trainees to the laboratories and universities of the North.

The idea of a French-speaking space of solidarity, of rapprochement between peoples and cultures and of equitable development was born in 1960 under the leadership of Léopold Cedar Senghor, Habib Bourguiba, Hamani Diori and Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia. But over time, that space has diluted a bit; the laudable objectives of the departure were subject to the inescapable influence of eras, influences, sometimes misunderstandings and new rules of membership in the French-speaking world.

This article analyzes the misunderstandings and errors in the South-North relationship in the French-speaking world and attempts to propose a new vision based on a real sharing of tasks, a mutual understanding of the contributions of each operator and a recognition of the capacities of each. to produce and make its contribution.

**Keywords:** *South-North Relations; Francophone Space; Equitable Sharing*

### Introduction

In the French-speaking world, French policy always recalls that the relations between the members (and in particular the North-South relations) meet a philanthropic need for cooperation and protection against globalization on the one hand, the hegemony of the language. English on the other hand or against terrorism. To fight terrorism, we do not hesitate to send troops and mobilize opinions. Concretely, many current questions push the citizen of the former colonies to wonder about the construction of a "Francophonie" free from all the misunderstandings, the innuendos here and there, the supposed interests of the ones and the others, influences, beneficial or harmful, of the North on the South (cultures, modes and models of consumption, the unavoidable dependencies of each other or of each other).

But, what is the North and what is the South? The countries with high income and high comfort of life are generally located in the Northern hemisphere and the North would then designate these so-called advanced countries in culture, in freedoms, in fashions, in technology, in Knowledge in general (the conquest of space, the exploitation of the oceans and the poles, the military industry, governance, health and many other disciplinary fields). Poor or developing countries are generally found in the Southern Hemisphere and the South would refer to these countries as such. This distinction has however evolved because the distinction between North and South refers to social, economic and political differences and countries of the Southern hemisphere make an effort to stand out from the lot of poor countries and therefore of the Southern “region”. In addition, countries of the South were assimilated to black societies by reference to predominantly black African areas; but the poor countries are not all located in Africa and the South would not have a single black skin colour.

With this clarification, it is important to understand the meaning of other terms and expressions, especially what is meant by cooperation. The dictionary of the French language defines the term “cooperation” as the action to cooperate, to collaborate in a common action. For the term “cooperate”, the dictionary gives the definition: to work jointly, to act in collaboration, to collaborate without ulterior motive. The Larousse dictionary defines the expression “collaboration” as the act of participating in a work with others.

From these definitions we must retain three things: i) the idea of joint work, that is to say together and therefore in consultation, ii) the idea of participation with others in a common work, the common term is very important here; it expresses the belonging of the common work to the participants without exclusion and without ambiguity, iii) and finally the expression “without ulterior motive” which must have a strong weight in any cooperative action; without ulterior motive assumes that the terms of cooperation have been clearly defined to avoid any misunderstanding; this also assumes that each partner respects these definitions and the established cooperation rules “to the letter”.

In reality, North-South cooperation refers to the fact that a developed country supports economically (or in any other form) a less advantaged country. This is the result of a pervasive ulterior motive assuming that the North is developed, rich and strong and that the South is poor, undeveloped and weak. The most telling examples are in the case of financial or material assistance in the event of natural disasters or humanitarian crises.

These supports are generally philanthropic but they can have the objectives of asserting the power of the North against the South: this is the case for interventions in the framework of the defence of the freedoms or the rights of peoples (Libya, Iraq are some of them. examples). In the field of research and higher education, South-North cooperation generally consists of welcoming young generations of future university teachers in laboratories and universities in the North as part of scientific internships or doctoral preparations. Erasmus, Erasmus +, Tempus, OIF, ACIDI and others constitute cooperation and mobility frameworks largely financed by the North to “support” the development of the South. The countries of the South often and in part contribute to the financing of these cooperation programs: local support for mobility within the framework of research programs and grants to beneficiaries of internships or scientific stays in a laboratory or a university in the North. The question is then to know when we could finally admit the rising capacities of the South in scientific production and finally accept the principle of a North↔South flow in research and higher education.

When we talk about bilateral scientific cooperation, it is not uncommon to find, in the sites of certain universities in the South, the name of the French professor at the head and that of his colleague from the South in second position in bilateral cooperation programs where the two professors have the same university degree and probably a lot of publications from each other. Is this recognition or alienation? Regardless, this makes us ask all the questions that fuel the mistrust of a Francophonie supposed to be free from the objectives of particular interests or domination (supposed or real) over one another; a Francophonie truly geared towards cooperation considering Man, whether from North or South, whether white or black, as an element capable of producing, accepting and giving; a cooperation which definitively excludes the idea that the countries of the South are only capable of providing the grounds for scientific and technical experiments and the Toyotas to access them. In any case: cooperation “without ulterior motive”.

South-North cooperation in the French-speaking world is still marred by innuendos and incomprehension. The colonial period weighed heavily on these relations. The colonization of the territories and societies of the South by the North initially had an objective of exploiting natural resources and the local workforce to guarantee the comfort of the societies of the North. There was obviously an underlying philanthropic goal of emancipation, even evangelization, of local societies. It is certain then that things must change; the countries of the South are starting to bring out individuals and also teams allowing them to place themselves, finally, at the level of the countries of the North, at least in some disciplinary fields of Knowledge. Indeed, as early as the 1960s and 1970s, when the global socio-economic climate was set in the context of the Cold War, developing countries began to look for ways to chart the course of their own development and for alternatives. to the existing economic and political order. To this end, and already in 1980 Ripert J [1] underlines that the dimension of the current crisis shows that it is necessary to proceed to a structural modification of the economy and international regulatory institutions in collaboration with the countries of the South. The author adds that the relaunch of global negotiations at the United Nations must overcome organizational difficulties and lead to progress which will give the North-South discussions a new dynamism. In Council of Europe document 8281 of December 16, 1998, we can also extract resolution 981 (1992) on new North-South relations, in which the conditions essential for development aid in beneficiary countries are listed. need them, namely respect for human rights, the will to introduce economic and social reform - in particular for the advancement of women-, reduction of military expenditure, protection of the environment and disasters natural resources requiring emergency assistance.

In addition, G. Bublex [2] notes: "The model of the center which overexploited the countries of the periphery, made up roughly by the former colonies, is in the process of transformation. The countries of the South, which are very diverse, tend to move away from relations of economic dependence. "Gilbert Etienne (2007) notes: Over more than half a century of North-South relations, the movements of the pendulum swing between effective remedies and chimeras, or errors of judgment. The latter have been particularly fertile for the past fifteen years. After the missionaries who aspired to save the souls of poor Africans and Asians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the new missionaries from the West want to convert them to democracy, good governance, the development of local communities, and fight against poverty in focusing on education and health". JJ Gabas [3] notes: This is not about going back to the genesis and etymology of terms. Rather, it is a question of showing that between its original use and that which is made of it today, the changes are imposing and certainly help to raise the perverse elements which appear in the act of cooperation. In chapter 5 of his book, the author introduces the idea of dependence and reciprocity in the issues of North-South cooperation and the concept of "global public goods" to give meaning to international cooperation, including that of North-South.

These three studies show us that apprehending North-South cooperation is not easy and above all that this cooperation is not "without ulterior motives".

The present work aims to analyse the situation of South-North scientific cooperation in the French-speaking area, to identify the shortcomings, to pose often embarrassing questions and to propose ideas for scenarios to build frank and fair cooperation.

### Scientific cooperation in the French-speaking world: Initiatives and hopes

The institutional Francophonie charter specifies the objectives, in particular the intensification of the dialogue between cultures and civilizations, the bringing together of peoples through their mutual knowledge and the strengthening of solidarity through multilateral cooperation actions in order to promote the development of their economies. Here the concepts of cooperation and solidarity are linked. One could almost imply the idea of solidarity cooperation which would imply what we recalled in the introduction: a solid cooperation without ulterior motive. However, we are talking here about multilateral cooperation; in practice, it is mainly a question of North-South cooperation in the perspective of aid to the South, supposedly destitute, by the rich and emancipated North.

The OIF has put in place effective instruments at the service of North-South cooperation: thematic networks in particular, the AUF as operator of the Francophonie Summit for higher education and research, sharing of knowledge and know-how, TV5, French-speaking

television, and all development aid programs in the South in terms of training and research. To this end, it promotes solidarity between higher education establishments. According to its 2017 - 2021 strategy, it proposes to support higher education and research institutions to meet three major challenges:

- The quality of training, research and university governance
- Professional integration and employability of graduates
- Involvement in the overall development of societies.

Expressed in this way, these three challenges obviously seem both logical and realistic; the third point seems to us however more complex and subject to ambiguities and misunderstandings in its formulation as simple as mentioned above; the term “involvement”, associated with “overall development”, can indeed suggest the idea of interference in internal affairs. It is essential to specify the limits of the intended involvement and to clarify what is meant by “comprehensive development”.

At the organizational level, each network is led by a coordinator and a multilateral network committee representative of the different geographic areas of La Francophonie.

We must also point out the various instruments in the field of multimedia: i) SYFED (Francophone Publishing and Diffusion System), ii) REFER (Francophone Electronic Network for Education and Research) and iii) the virtual university. At the current stage, there are around thirty SYFED centers, spread over 25 countries (including Lebanon). REFER is integrated into the Internet and facilitates networking between researchers, scientists and academics from French-speaking countries. The objective of the Francophone Virtual University (UVF) is to enable academics and researchers from Francophone countries in the South to broaden the scope of their knowledge, to have easy (and rapid) access to scientific information, and to share know-how and academic data with the French-speaking scientific community.

Finally, it should be remembered that TV5 was born from the alliance of five public television channels: TF1, Antenne2, FR3, RTBF (French-speaking community of Belgium) and TSR (Switzerland). TV5 was joined in 1986 by the Quebec Canada public television consortium. China has been called TV5Monde since 2001.

### Scientific cooperation in the French-speaking world: Hopes, errors and handicaps

#### North-South cooperation according to the OIF

In 1961 the Association of Partially or Entirely French-Speaking Universities (AUPELF) was created and in 1967 AUPELF created the International University Cooperation Fund (FICU) with the objective of attracting the necessary funding from both states and governments. as private companies to facilitate the realization of cooperation operations between French-speaking universities.

In 1987, a project for an exchange university was presented to the Summit of Heads of State and Government having in common the use of French; the idea is to create a set of French-language university networks around training and research; AUPELF then takes the name AUPELF-UREF. The principle is to set up a set of thematic French-language university networks around research and higher education. These networks organize periodic Scientific Days alternately in the North and in the South, publish member directories and set up “libraries for all” programs consisting in providing universities in the South with a set of documents and books in support of higher education. These networks also launch North-South collaborative research projects.

In 1989, during the Dakar Summit, AUPELF-UREF joined the institutional Francophonie by becoming the direct operator of the Francophonie Summit for higher education and research.

In 1998, invoking a better visibility of La Francophonie, the name AUPELF-UREF was changed at the request of the Secretary General of La Francophonie and became AUF (Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie). The AUF has a Rectorate in Montreal, a Rectorate and central services in Paris and ten regional directorates which lead AUF's interventions in the field as shown in the figure opposite.

In 2008, the Francophone Space for Research, Development and Innovation was founded as a research and development consortium working to promote and strengthen South-South and North-South cooperation in the fields research, sustainable development and innovation by pooling data and expertise disseminated across the French-speaking world.

### Examples of mistakes to avoid

The organization mentioned in the previous paragraph should lead to the establishment of solid and lasting cooperation in the French-speaking world. Sometimes certain blunders mar this laudable project; we will cite two:

- AUF's thematic networks periodically organize Scientific Days alternately in the South and in the North. When these days are organized in a southern country, a "folklore" evening is always planned; it allows colleagues in the North to get a feel for the local culture. While preparing the JS in France of one of the networks, the Board of Directors did not consider it useful to plan an evening on the local culture, however rich. The remark by a member of the committee representing a southern region shocked the members of the colleagues from the North. The cultural evening had not been organized in the northern country host the days. This difference in treatment could seem trivial; it is highly discriminatory in the sense that the societies of the South are considered as a folkloric "attraction".
- The director general of AUPELF-UREF (Mr. Guillou) declared, during the conference "Business, Enterprises and Francophonie", held in Ho Chi Min City on November 25 and 26, 1994 [4]: "We wish for Viet Nam, Cambodia, Laos, a modern, realistic Francophonie,... Our priority actions are simple: train Francophones by opening bilingual classes and by increasing the number of courses in higher education, have Francophone media available to the public, promote the feeling of belonging to the Francophonie". The director general of AUPELF-UREF welcomes the conclusion of an agreement with the Vietnamese government for French to be taught in a large number of primary and secondary schools. This discourse, starting from an honest and altruistic feeling of working in the legitimate interest of AUPELF-UREF, can be perceived by some as a desire for conquest made concrete by forming it as Francophones with a Francophone thought and culture in place and place of indigenous cultures. Obviously, and we are convinced of this, the director general of AUPELF-UREF has no expansionist or colonialist vision; but history is there, misunderstandings can tip the most humanistic actions and fears are always present: the fear of losing one's identity is the greatest.

**South-South cooperation:** South-South cooperation refers to technical cooperation among developing countries in the South. It is not supported as such by the OIF in its particular conception of multilateral cooperation. The research programs of the thematic networks of AUF, operator of the OIF, generally include a country in the North: France, Canada, Belgium for example. Higher education and scholarship programs are also initiated for applicants from Southern countries who have to complete their internships in a Northern country; it was not possible for us to find in these programs candidates from the North going to improve in the South. The countries of the South have tried to find a solution. Indeed, during the 1960s and 1970s, as the global socio-economic climate was set in the context of the Cold War, developing countries began to look for ways to chart the course of their own development and alternatives to the existing economic and political order. Technical cooperation among these southern states began as a pioneering effort to strengthen their diplomatic and international negotiating power through political dialogue. What is now called South-South cooperation arises from the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for the Promotion and Implementation of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (PABA) by 138 Member States of the Nations. United in Argentina, September 18, 1978.

We must recall here the memorandum of understanding between the OIF and the UN, signed on September 25, 2018 in New York. This memorandum emphasizes the importance of building South-South cooperation capacities as well as better sharing of South-generated development solutions. The objectives of this cooperation should be to support the strengthening of South-South cooperation and to promote innovative practices emanating from the French-speaking area for the benefit of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and by being part of the implementation. implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, For the Secretary General of La Francophonie: “in these times of fragmentation and polarization, the OIF resolutely prioritizes cooperation and solidarity, and reiterates the urgency of renewed multilateralism, equipped with mechanisms leading the UN and international and regional organizations to act in a more concerted and coordinated manner for greater impact and efficiency”. It is to be hoped that we hear here the enhancement of the scientific and technical skills of the countries of the South to achieve a real honourable level of development [5,6].

### Conclusion

The OIF has equipped itself with effective tools to promote cooperation in the French-speaking world. In theory, we can only applaud. In daily practice, many actions have indeed contributed to bringing the North and the South together; these actions have also succeeded in helping higher education and research institutions to increase their scientific production capacities. It suffices to cite here the establishment of centers of excellence in certain countries of the South, shared research programs, scholarship programs for the benefit of doctoral students, teachers and researchers from the South, minimal library programs. for universities in the South.

However, and as we have recalled, all these actions cannot be immune from errors or clumsiness generating the South’s mistrust of the North. The biggest fears are i) first that the South will be considered as a definitely underdeveloped area and still needing the North in terms of funding but also intelligence and ii) the loss of local identity in favor of ‘an imported identity, reputed to be more modern, more emancipated, more free. The societies of the South, in particular their young people, certainly aspire to a better comfort of life, more freedom, more resources because the information superhighways allow them to discover a world that was sometimes closed to them, even unknown to them. Will they be able to accept this change at any cost? This is less certain and must be taken into account.

We first looked for the rankings of universities in the South for African universities among themselves. To this end, the “TOPAFRO” site (<https://topafro.com/les-10-meilleures-universites-dafrique-edition-2020>) gives, in its 2020 edition, the ranking of the top 10 universities in Africa: 7 first in the ranking are in South Africa. Eighth place goes to the University of Nairobi in Kenya, ninth place again goes to South Africa and tenth place to Ghana (University of Accra). Thus, the first places are taken in majority by South Africa which approaches the so-called “advanced” countries.

We then looked for the ranking of universities in the South compared to the world ranking on the World university ranking website, 2020/2021 edition. The University of Nairobi, top 10 African universities, appears only between 800<sup>th</sup> and 1000<sup>th</sup> place. Yesouj University in Iran is between 401<sup>st</sup> and 500<sup>th</sup> place. The Institute of Chemical Technology of India is between 501<sup>st</sup> and 600<sup>th</sup> place. The universities of Cairo, Isfahan in Iran, Punjab in India, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdallah (Morocco), Al-Balqa Applied University (Jordan) fall between 601<sup>st</sup> and 800<sup>th</sup> place. All the first places are occupied by universities and institutes of the countries of the North.

We also sought to understand the meaning of international cooperation in universities in the South. And we started with the universities that appear in the top 10 African universities. The University of Nairobi website does not provide information on international or regional cooperation; no summary on international or regional cooperation either on the University of Accra website.

In Algeria, the university presents itself as an internationally open university. The number of universities with which it has agreements or joint projects is 63 for Europe, 4 for America, 2 for Asia and 18 for Africa. Going further in the analysis, we find that the 18 African universities are 10 nationally, 4 for Morocco and 4 for Tunisia. Concerning Europe, of the 63 European universities, 42 are French, or 66.66%.

In Morocco, the University of Agadir is also open internationally, but of the 12 European universities, 5 are French, or 41.66%. African cooperation is limited to Egypt and Tunisia.

The University of Ndjama in Chad is also showing its international openness. The number of international projects actually concerns 9 African countries and two European countries (France and Turkey); four languages are used in higher education, according to the university website.

Consulting other sites of universities in the South does not give us any information on international cooperation. Two important conclusions stand out here: i) the fact that universities in the South are struggling to place themselves in the world ranking is probably due to the inadequacy of the means allocated to higher education and research but also to living and working conditions, teacher-researchers and the global governance of universities; ii) the weakness of South-South cooperation can be found in the lack of means of communication in the regions of the South and specific funding to strengthen South-South cooperation, the visibility of research institutions in the South, but also of a willingness to seek experience and knowledge in advanced laboratories. iii) the colonial past has forged, whether we like it or not, links between the countries of the South and those of the North: the language of communication, doctoral training, geographical proximity, as long as these difficulties are not objectively analysed and resolved, the international cooperation of the South will turn to the North.

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