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International Recognition Regimes and the Projection of France

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Abstract:

The recent turn to substantial theories of 'recognition' in international relations is of considerable interest for the study of international cultural relations. France provides a revealing case-study due to the historical importance of culture as such in its foreign policies. Its 'diplomacies of influence' can be understood as forms of recognition-seeking across shifting international 'regimes of recognition' (Ringmar). France once played a leading role in shaping the global templates for cultural recognition between states. In recent decades, it has had to adapt to the terms of new recognition templates established elsewhere, either via forms of institutional imitation, or by seeking to inflect these new templates (notably in a self-ascribed role as global champion of cultural diversity). These dynamics can be traced in a series of official reports on France's external cultural policies, notably across the sectors of language policy, arts diplomacy, higher education mobility and global news projection. The reports' deliberation on these processes opens a space for critical discussion concerning the contemporary operation of international regimes of recognition.

I will propose the prism of 'recognition-seeking' in this article as a way of illuminating dynamics in international cultural relations. France provides a useful test-case for this approach for at least two reasons. Firstly, it played a pioneering role from the 1870s in the institution of cultural instruments for augmenting or preserving international recognition. Secondly, the high profile it has given to such instruments means that it 'reveals' all the more clearly, often in a critical light, the pressures of new global recognitive dynamics that have challenged in recent decades its erstwhile dominance.

Notions of recognition have recently been subject to renewed consideration in general international relations theory. Such work has looked to extend its scope beyond the long-standing preoccupation in international law with the 'thin' recognition through which states acknowledge each other's legal existence to the 'thicker' forms of recognition predicated on deeper mutual knowledge or common purpose.[1] Such moves have not as yet been taken up in any comprehensive way into the study of international cultural relations. Of course, one could say that this latter area of study has, since it first came into being, been concerned with the enduring value of 'thick' relations of mutual recognition, whether this has been thematised in these terms or not. Joseph Nye's concept of soft power has been highly influential in such studies, and Nye himself has, without explicit recourse to notions of recognition, highlighted the importance of two-way relations in the effective channelling of such power:

> With soft power, what the target thinks is particularly important, and the targets matter as much as the agents. Attraction and persuasion are socially constructed. Soft power is a dance that requires partners. (Nye 2011, 84)

At the same time, and in opposition to some of the term's more enthusiastic proponents, Nye stresses that 'not all soft power looks so soft to outside critics' (13), and that there is nothing inherently ethical about recourse to such power ('it is not necessarily better to twist minds than to twist arms' (81)). Likewise, I would like to foreground the harder edges of recognition-seeking between states. It may indeed be, as Axel Honneth as suggested, that a greater emphasis on the work of mutual recognition would be a pacifying force in world politics (Honneth 2010, 194-201). However, to extend in a less irenic direction Nye's metaphor as cited above, there are not necessarily just two equal dancing partners involved in such scenes. Who (if any of them) chooses the dance and sets the rhythm? What are the costs of refusing to dance, or dancing yesterday's steps? What if the dance is a competition, a struggle for recognition, and you are being judged by a third party?

Rather than focusing on specific dyads of mutually recognising partners, I would like for the purposes of this article to take a more 'structural' approach to recognition dynamics. For the case in hand, I will examine how globally effective pressures and constraints have affected French strategies of recognition-seeking. In order to bring out this globally 'structural' dimension, I will adapt Erik Ringmar's notion of 'recognition regimes':

> Recognition regimes exist in all social systems, including international social systems that take states as their subjects. When learning how to recognize another international actor, we are guided by the principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures that the recognition regime provides. Understanding this logic is crucial to a state's survival. Unless political leaders understand another state's behavior, they will not be able to take the necessary precautions. Or, looking at this logic from the point of view of the state being recognized, it matters greatly how you present yourself to others. Recognition regimes have rules regarding self-presentation. Before

we can be recognized, we must make it possible for others to identify us. (Ringmar 2015, 50)[2]

I would like to distinguish for the purposes of this article between two broad 'levels' of recognition regime. Firstly, one can posit 'generalised' recognition regimes that govern the normative expectations for practices of recognition (and non-recognition) between states. I will tentatively sketch out traits of two succeeding generalised regimes of recognition insofar as they illuminate the case at hand. I will analyse France's pioneering strategies to secure cultural recognition within a period of 'restricted international modernity' (when France understood itself as a 'great power' belonging to a minority of self-consciously modernising states in the world). I will then analyse how these strategies have been refashioned within a period of 'extended international modernity' (characterised by a proliferation of self-consciously modernising states and expectations of equal respect).[3] These analytic constructions are necessarily abstract and provisional, but they are designed at least to indicate how particular recognition-seeking strategies are embedded in broader global normative structures.

Secondly, one can posit 'sectoral' recognition regimes that inform specific domains of inter-state collaboration and competition. These revolve around specific 'templates' of predefined traits and forms to which a given institution or performance must conform if it is to be perceived and to 'count' in a given domain of international competition. It is such templates that determine the shape that a university, a news channel, or a language must take if it is to be recognised as 'counting' within particular fields. The forces behind such templates are not necessarily individual states as such (they are more likely today to be transnational rankings and ratings agencies or intergovernmental bodies). However, these templates, which are relatively rigid structures, set the terms for international recognition for

particular domains in ways that individual states cannot simply ignore in their self-presentation. The relations between generalised overarching 'regimes of recognition' and these domain-specific regimes are best conceived in terms of historically contingent assemblages rather than tightly meshed systems (given templates may be put to work in ways that do not match the norms of a wider prevailing recognition order).

This article is a provisional first cut at deploying such a framework. In the presentation of France's pioneering strategies within restricted international modernity, I will use material drawn from existing historical accounts. In exploring France's endeavours to adapt to the contemporary conditions of extended international modernity, I will draw on a substantial corpus of some 17 official reports extending from 1979 to 2017. The purpose of this corpus, as used here, is not to provide a full description of France's current instruments for external cultural action, which can be found elsewhere.[4] Rather, I want to trace how the normative pressures issuing from contemporary generalised and sectoral recognition regimes work their way into the thinking of those groups charged with steering French outward-directed policies for culture. The evidence for these normative pressures are certain recurrent seams of 'recommendations' issuing from the reports, which I will highlight as such, while also indicating how some of these seams have corresponded to substantial institutional reform. The groups in question consist of a wide range of issue-focused elected politicians and some public intellectuals, collectively charged with representing certain 'ideas of France'. I concentrate in particular on the key areas of language, arts diplomacy, higher education and global news media.

France's pioneering recognitive strategies within restricted international modernity (c. 1870-1960)

France was for most of the period 1870-1960 a member of Europe's and thus (to a decreasing extent) the world's 'great powers', but its status as such was increasingly beleaguered. Major military defeats and Pyrrhic victories at home and abroad (Franco-Prussian War, World Wars I and II, Indochina, Algeria) underscored the decline of its military *puissance* at the same time as they accentuated the comparative waning of its economic standing. It was no coincidence that it was drawn precisely over this same period to an emergent 'cultural' dimension of foreign policies, and indeed that it devised a range of new bodies and instruments to institutionalise this dimension.[5] This might have been presented as a continuation of the kinds of expansionist national *rayonnement* associated with the ages of absolute monarchy or Empire, or the equally expansionist but universalistically cast mission issuing from the Revolution. But it also served as a form of damage-limitation, helping to maintain a profile and a presence as a recognisable great power even if other attributes associated with such status were increasingly insecure.

France was in effect playing the suit in which its cards were strongest. For reasons to do more with the consolidated dynamics of various artistic fields than with intentional government policies, Paris was for much of the period widely viewed as the centre and cutting edge of the visual arts world (Chaubet and Martin 2011, 25-33), and the 'Greenwich Meridian' of world literature (Casanova 2004). Especially in the decades after World War II, it appeared as the breeding ground for the boldest new ideas in philosophy and the human sciences (existentialism, structuralism, and what appeared to the outside world as poststructuralism). Its language maintained in many spheres its dominant or co-dominant status, not least as a gateway to the artistic and intellectual productions just mentioned

(though some date the beginnings of its eclipse from 1919, when the Versailles treaty was drafted in English as well as French). The turn to a cultural component of foreign policy was not a purely administrative device designed to generate energy *ex nihilo*, but could capitalise on the uncommon vitality and international profile of an interlocking set of artistic fields. It looked to channel and amplify the energy of a current that was already in flow.

There were thus powerful motivations both positive and negative which induced France to foreground a dimension of foreign policy which up to that point had received relatively little concerted reflection or institutional attention. It was this that led it to work as a pioneer in the development of an apparatus for international cultural projection. By the second half of the twentieth century, France had acquired an unparalleled array of classic cultural diplomacy tools. These had accumulated in so many layers: schools abroad since the end of the nineteenth century; university exchanges and an expansion of cultural institutes since the beginning of the twentieth century; book donations and lecture tours since the 1920s, following the example of the *Alliance Française* founded in 1883 as a private organisation nonetheless aligned with the Republic's cultural and linguistic aims; an emphasis on theatrical tours, travelling art exhibitions and film projections after 1945 (Chaubet and Martin 2011, 89). There was also a dedicated culture department within the Foreign Ministry, which assumed a particularly significant dimension after 1945 with the introduction of a 'General Directorate for Cultural Relations' (absorbing nearly 50% of the Foreign Ministry budget by 1968 (Vaïsse 2009, ch. 9)). Finally, one should not forget, towards the very end of this period, the 'invention' of the first Ministry for Cultural Affairs in the Western democratic world, which André Malraux would use as a base for some resonant international gestures and pronouncements, and which would eventually become a staple component of governmental organigrams in democracies across the world. Indeed, Malraux would try unsuccessfully to turn this new Ministry into the nation's prime instrument of

international cultural projection, inaugurating a boundary-defining competition with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs that has resurfaced intermittently since.[6]

In an international context where only a restricted number of countries recognised each other as modern major powers, France worked as a precursor to fashion the templates informing regimes of recognition played out with increasing deliberateness on cultural fronts. De Gaulle himself was notoriously hard-headed from the early 1940s about the underlying weakness of France's position, and thus about the importance of what for other contemporary leaders would have appeared as 'softer' instruments of international leverage (Frank 2012a, 376; Larkin 1991, 111, 120) Historians have suggested that this long-term strategy did pay some dividends, attributing the allocation of a place on the UN Security Council to France's residual cultural sway with Latin American voting countries (Chaubet and Martin 2011, 121). Likewise France was able to propose Paris as the quasi-natural home for UNESCO in 1946 (Singh 2011; Maurel 2010). However, as developments in both the UN and UNESCO would highlight in subsequent decades, the world order was about to change significantly, and with it the regimes of recognition at work in globalised cultural domains.

The political and technological conditions of new recognition regimes (c. 1970 to the present)

The first factor changing the generalised conditions of inter-state recognition was doubtless the sheer increase in the number of self-consciously modernising and mutually communicating states in existence across the world. This was reflected in the membership of the United Nations (51 member states in 1945, 99 in 1960, 144 in 1975, 188 in 1999, and 193 in 2018), as well as UNESCO. The main drivers of this increase were, of course, the waves of decolonisation from the 1950s to the 1970s, and then the new nations emerging in the

aftermath of the Cold War from the 1990s. Moreover, the demise of the Cold War's structurally simplifying zones of influence paved the way for the atomised multiplicity of the contemporary world order. Two initial effects flow from these changes as regards the conditions for inter-state recognition. Firstly, with so many more players in the recognition game, it becomes much harder for any one player (putting to one side the one or two mega-players) to secure the attention of others. Secondly, the move to an extended rather than restricted order of international modernity makes it much harder for former powers to justify any apparently privileged position, particularly if they do not have materially backed capacities to force an issue. Such erstwhile great powers, having become middle powers ('puissances moyennes'), are obliged to present themselves in terms of a new space of justifications, as assumptions of deference yield to a rhetoric of utility.

Secondly, the relative 'democratisation' of relations between states was accompanied by a relative if uneven democratisation of conditions within most states. This gave greater potency to the views and affinities of 'civil societies' in relation to governing authorities, and indeed gave societies as such the capacity to enter into relation with other societies and their products without necessarily passing via their own governments. In this regard, as is well known, international relations became as much wider 'inter-society' relations as intergovernmental and inter-elite relations (Badie 2016; Frank 2012b). This changes the strategic calculus of cultural influence. Recognition of one's refinement or avant-garde credentials by an elite must be weighed against the attraction to one's symbolic wares or ways of life of wider populations, which has come to operate on an altogether larger scale and in terms of very different templates.

Thirdly, the rules of contemporary international recognition regimes have been radically transformed by a series of technological upheavals. On the one hand, these have been produced by what we might call after Debray a series of 'mediological' revolutions

(radio, television, internet) (Debray 1991). Such technologies of transmission have operated not simply as neutral conduits for the more efficient processing of identical messages and patterns of projection. Instead they have created new ecosystems in which some artistic genres and symbolic styles flourish while others perish, wither away, or simply lose comparative potency. At the same time, there has been a proliferation of what we might call, after Foucault, transnational 'technologies of government'. Particularly relevant among these, for our purposes, are the multiple data-based ranking systems which calibrate, according to expressly constructed templates, national performances across broadly cultural domains such as education, attractivity, cultural import and export, brand salience and so forth. These are not necessarily produced by governmental agencies, but when they 'lock in' as a shared reference, they start to impose new terms for state strategies in recognition-seeking.

Within this new, multiply determined assemblage of recognition regimes, France can no longer figure as a 'great power', and nor can it assume as it once did a pre-established cultural eminence. Certainly, the aspiration towards *grandeur* persists in the national debate as a kind of ingrained *conatus* (the tendency, according to Spinoza, of entities to 'persevere in their being'): thus the former French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing has taken to describing the nation as a 'great middle power' (*une grande puissance moyenne*). Despite its involuntarily comic effect, this collocation is a useful guide for understanding some of the tensions and challenges involved in France's adaptation to a new symbolic order. On the one hand, we can read in such adaptations anxious attempts at status maintenance, informed all the while by the awareness that this status is diminishing, and that the nation's erstwhile achievements are no longer recognised. On the other hand, we can also discern endeavours to carve out a new kind of profile for itself, a particular way of playing the role of a 'middle power' (like all roles, this role could be performed 'greatly' or poorly). Putting aside the populations of China, India and the USA, one might say that the majority of the world's

population will soon be living under greater or lesser 'middle powers'. In this respect, it can be instructive to consider how one particular middle power, somewhat haunted by ideas about its own exemplariness and equipped with a heightened self-consciousness around cultural policy, has endeavoured to negotiate the changing waters of global cultural recognition.

Chasing recognition: France's contemporary instruments of influence

Transforming strategies for cultural projection is not as straightforward as putting a hammer back in the toolbox and taking out a screwdriver adjusted to the job. Agents are invested in the instruments they have learned to use, and indeed they have fashioned themselves as instruments of a certain sort in their own right. There is thus a fair degree of hysteresis at work in the fields of cultural diplomacy and influence – that is, the deployment of schemes internalised in one set of historical circumstances in the context of a later set of circumstances in which they no longer fit.[7] This is not necessarily bad: agents can have good reasons to remain attached to these schemes, and the present need not be the measure of all things. However, as regards the analysis we are conducting here, evidence has accumulated over decades that France's erstwhile cultural strategies have misfired in the context of newly prevailing regimes of recognition. We will explore in this section how this has led to a diffuse endeavour to refashion the nation's instruments and rationales for cultural projection across four domains: language policy; arts policies; the international dimension of higher education; global news production.

For tracing both the residual existence of former schemes of perception and the gradual collective fashioning of new instruments and rationales, I have gathered a corpus of some 17 reports, spanning the period 1979 to 2017, and focusing on French outward-directed culture and language policies (Rigaud 1979; Bloche 1998; Tavernier 2000; Duvernois 2004;

Schneider and Rochebloine 2007; Védrine 2007; Juppé and Schweitzer 2008; Legendre and de Rohan 2009; Kristeva 2009; Colot and Rochebloine 2010; Loncle and Schmid 2013; Amirshahi and Rochebloine 2014; Attali 2014; Mancel, Terrasse, and Marsac 2015; Baumel and Guibal 2015; Jahshan 2016; Duvernois and Lepage 2017). Most of these are reports by the standing Foreign Affairs or Culture commissions of the National Assembly or the Senate, but the corpus also contains some ad hoc specially commissioned and often high-profile reports (Rigaud, Bloche, Juppé, Vedrine, Attali), as well as two reports by the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (Kristeva, Jahshan). While the reports may be attached to the name of a *rapporteur* or chair, most are collectively researched and produced. Moreover, they tend to be the work of long-term parliamentary or Senate 'specialists' who are particularly invested in the issues, along with a handful of high-profile ex-ministers or public intellectuals. This is not, of course, a demographically representative sample, but it is a significant sample insofar as such agents are officially positioned at strategic nexuses within policy-elaborating processes, and are offically charged with 'representing' a certain idea of the nation. The commissions in question are not directly tied to the executive, and are cross-partisan, which allows for a certain freedom of manoeuvre in pointing up gaps and deficiencies across policies (as Hubert Védrine has noted, divisions on French foreign and globalisation policies do not in any case follow conventional left-right lines (2007, 31)). In many ways they constitute an ideal terrain on which to pick up changing attitudes to French cultural projection and the gradual but not uncritical alignment of such attitudes with the overall recognition regimes at work in the wider world. As noted above, I am particularly interested in the normative pressure exerted by such forces insofar as this is evidenced by recurrent thematic seams in the recommendations proposed by the reports (I will indicate also how some such recommendations have worked their way into recent major institutional reforms).

A number of general leitmotifs run through the corpus as a whole. There is an increasing awareness, after Jacques Rigaud's seminal report of 1979, that the domain of cultures and languages across the world is a site of ever-increasing 'competition' between states and also other entities (Duvernois and Lepage 2017, 19). There are the worries that other nations are not only 'imitating' the templates or methods France initially invented, but are overtaking it and inventing new methods (Rigaud 1979, 17; Kristeva 2009, 12). There is the insistent anxiety that France's inherited cultural and linguistic positions are not only fragile but 'ambiguous' (Kristeva, 7) and often unjustifiable (Schneider and Rochebloine 2007, 21-2), and that new modes of self-presentation are required. We will trace the work of these concerns across our four related domains.

Language Policy and Francophonie

Rigaud already in 1979 was urging his readers not simply to accept that France had indeed long lost the struggle to be the world's dominant language to global English, but to realise also that it was counterproductive to imagine the future of French only in terms of a dyadic relationship with English (Rigaud 1979, 18, 39). Twenty years later, we find Bloche repeating the message, and indeed asserting that it must continue to be 'tirelessly repeated', as a widespread but now wounded 'mystique' attached to the French language itself inhibited policy reflection (Bloche 1998, 11, 85-6). Nonetheless, we see emerging over the course of the corpus a consolidated realisation that the language's former status was based on recognition regimes endowing it with a 'privileged status among [other nations'] elites, in domains as varied as diplomacy, law, sport, and obviously arts and literature' (Schneider and Rochebloine 2007, 15). It was no good adopting simply a 'plaintive' attitude (Amirshahi and Rochebloine 2014, 10) as this status was eroded in various global forums. Instead, a new

justificatory frame for the language's global significance had to be articulated. We can discern three broad moves at work across the corpus in this regard.

Firstly, France is urged to relinquish exclusive ownership of one of its defining attributes (Tavernier 2000, 16; Duvernois and Lepage 2017, 23). The language is no longer to be defined by France as its orthodox 'centre', but instead in collaboration with its francophone partners (with a recurrent trope being the forecast of a shift in its 'centre of gravity' within a few decades to Africa (Baumel and Guibal 2015, 160; Amirshahi and Rochebloine 2014, 17)). *Francophonie* has of course quite a venerable history as a somewhat sprawling institutional entity. It was launched in the 1960s by a handful of newly independent African leaders (with de Gaulle reluctant to become actively involved for fear of neo-colonial associations), and assumed clearer political shape from the 1980s, with its various operators coming under the direction of a coordinating agency named from 2005 the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* (Deniau 2001; Mancel, Terrasse, and Marsac 2015, 13-22). The term is used in the corpus to refer either to this institutional archipelago or to the sociolinguistic reality of French speakers across the world (the OIF now contains 84 state adherents, but many of these have a rather questionable attachment to French, and it does not contain Algeria, which holds the second largest number of French speakers in the world after France). A proposal which gains traction in the corpus is that France should take a more active role in defining an 'inner core' of francophone countries (numbering around 30) where either French is an official language or more than 20% of the population speak French (Amirshahi and Rochebloine 2014, 13; Duvernois and Lepage 2017, 43). In other words, it should recognise the real geopolitical frontiers of its language, and also the multiple loci of sovereign authority within those frontiers.

The reports note recurrent resistance to such proposals. Within France, they point to opposing but self-reinforcing arguments that, on the one hand, France itself is the authorised

guardian of its language (Duvernois and Lepage 2017, 23), and, on the other hand, that to promote French abroad is indeed a neo-colonial impulse (Tavernier 2000, 17). At the same time, the reports anticipate resistance abroad to a project aiming to promote French for its own sake. Thus, in a second broad move, they turn to a championing of multilingualism (Duvernois and Lepage 2017, 20). There are bluntly pragmatic considerations behind this. In the context of the EU, the promotion of French as a foreign language in other countries' education systems is a lost cause unless pupils learn a second foreign language in addition to English. Thus France has been keen to promote 'plurilinguism' within the EU, notably through the 'one plus two' model for foreign language learning adopted as an official EU 'priority' in Barcelona in 2002 (Schneider and Rochebloine 2007, 39). In the context of Africa, the key variable in the spread of French is also its take-up in education (though here with the issue being education in French rather than of French). The optimistic projections in some quarters that French might have as many as 770 million speakers by 2060 (Attali 2014, 53) are predicated on the massive spread of basic and secondary education across Africa in the coming decades, and on the proposition that much of that education will take place in French (as Baumel notes across his report on francophone Africa, neither premise can be taken at all for granted (Baumel and Guibal 2015, 40-2, 91-8)). Yet here as well, the objectives shift from an exclusive promotion of French to the cultivation of a multilinguistic framework within which French can find a place. It would be unacceptable, in terms of the generalised contemporary protocols of cultural recognition, for France to set itself up in direct competition with the multiple local and (sub)national languages of Africa.[8] Instead, current programmes like *School and National Languages* (ELAN), designed to promote bilingual teaching capacity in francophone Africa, are conceived in terms of managing relations *between* local languages and a global language in the context of a multilingual educational experience (Amirshahi and Rochebloine 2014, 23-4).

The theme of multilingualism comes also to be treated in more expansive terms in the reports, being celebrated as a second-order value in its own right over and beyond its invocation as an expedient dictated by necessity. Thus Amirshahi, in the context of deliberations in international forums, invokes broad potential alliances based on mutual recognition between the 'Xphonias' of the world (hispanophonia, lusophonia, germanophonia…) as a way of resisting the intellectual impoverishment of monolingual deliberation (Amirshahi and Rochebloine 2014, 97). Likewise Julia Kristeva suggests that we see 'translation', being a 'stranger within a language' and 'polyphony' as 'fundamental human experiences', and argues that the assertive defence of French as an accumulated capital on which others can draw is a valuable contribution to this newly conceived global good of linguistic diversity (Kristeva 2009, 11, 36). In Joseph Nye's terms, this might be seen as the integration of French language policy within a 'global public good narrative' (Nye 2011, 221). We will develop further in the next subsection the repositioning of French cultural projection in the context of the more general 'recognition' of cultural diversity.

The third broad move made across the corpus is to underline the importance of the language's bottom-line 'usefulness'. Its status has long rested on a quasi-automatic cultural recognition, but reports stress that this 'privilege' can no longer be taken for granted (Schneider and Rochebloine 2007, 21), and that even where the aura it enjoyed in a previous recognition regime survives, it may have little effect on the linguistic choices made by new generations and wider populations. The situation in this respect is thus compared indirectly, and also often directly, to a 'market' where the French language is a 'product' that must show its worth in terms of economic access and social mobility (Schneider and Rochebloine 2007, 57; Baumel and Guibal 2015, 161; Duvernois and Lepage 2017, 19).

Beyond these three moves specific to the language policy domain, the reports also negotiate the twin concerns of external readability and rankability, which we will find again

across the other domains considered here. We can see both concerns as direct symptoms of international 'regimes of recognition' at work. Tavernier worries in 2000 that the 'francophone' label attaching to various dispersed initiatives does not impose respect (it is 'postiche', like an unconvincing wig); Kristeva in 2009 thinks that the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* needs a more arresting common logo if it is to be perceived within the general flux of global communications. Assuming the institutions of French as a global language are indeed perceived and recognised in the first place, there is then the attendant anxiety as to the language's subsequent 'ranking' among other established and emerging global languages. This ranking starts to take on a more scientifically elaborate quality over the timespan of the corpus, and is on its way to becoming quite a mature domain-specific regime of recognition in its own right. Duvernois refers to the pyramidic classificatory systems of world languages developed around the turn of the millennium by Graddol and de Swaan (the latter places French, amidst a handful of other languages, as a 'supercentral' language beneath the 'hypercentral language' of global English and above the 'peripheral' and 'central' - usually national - languages making up the vast bulk of the world's idioms) (de Swaan 2001; Graddol 2000). The French linguist Louis-Jean Calvet has more recently adopted an apparatus for comparing the 'weight' of different languages in a global context. This has the scientific advantage (as do those of Graddol and de Swaan) of going beyond the raw comparison of native or fluent speakers. It also has the political advantage of extensive customisability. It allows the 'weight' or coefficient attributed to different factors to be adjusted between zero and one, thus allowing users to assign different kinds of importance to issues such as numbers of native speakers, vehicularity, internet presence, numbers of international literary prizes awarded, dispersion across states, etc. (Calvet and Calvet 2013). One can understand the attractiveness of Calvet's apparatus for advocates of the French language in the world, as it allows them to calibrate more than is

sometimes possible the 'terms of recognition' governing the proposed status of the language. Indeed the OIF's *Observatoire de la langue française* takes up a set of Calvet's criteria as a way of proposing a 'label' that would recognise some languages officially as 'world languages' (Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie 2014, 33; Duvernois and Lepage 2017, 12). We see here francophone agents both engaging with the new 'regimes of recognition' shaping perceptions in the contemporary world, and trying at the same time to inflect those regimes.

Artistic Expressions: Instituts Français and UNESCO

For much of the twentieth century, as already noted, French artistic culture was seen as internationally pre-eminent across multiple genres (visual arts, literature, philosophy, cinema). This ensured Paris's ongoing 'undisputed' status as a global 'cultural junction and site for the recognition of talent' (Rigaud 1979, 63).[9] Even outside Paris, the aura of this artistic scene stretched out to the most ramshackle film showing or improvised lecture tour across the world (Chaubet and Martin 2011, 125). With the ebb of the belief in France as the incarnation of the global avant-garde (itself largely a symptom of the erosion of the belief that world culture even has something like an avant-garde or cutting edge), the ectoplasmic waters sustaining that aura have withdrawn. This is often experienced inside and outside the nation as the 'death of French culture', to cite a polemical book whose title is mentioned by various reports (Morrison and Compagnon 2010; cited at Legendre and de Rohan 2009, 7; Kristeva 2009, 15) – though it actually has almost nothing to do with the intrinsic vitality or otherwise of French artistic and intellectual life, which would belong to a different discussion. If the phrase nevertheless rings true at a certain level, it is because it describes the 'mortifying' experience of a relatively abrupt withdrawal of recognition. Thus Paris now has

to fight for its place in an ever more intense competition among the capitals of the world (Kristeva 2009, 65).[10] And reports recurrently describe a network of cultural centres and institutes across the world as suffering from an 'ambient malaise' and a pervasive crisis in confidence (Duvernois 2004, 76). Inherited from previous cultural epochs, this vast material infrastructure, whose extent is often described as 'unique in the world', appears often to be bereft of a sustaining 'raison d'être' (Colot and Rochebloine 2010, 29).[11]

The responses developed across the reports and integrated in due course into policy have worked to draw France into contemporary cultural diplomacy's prevailing regimes of recognition. Without the unifying charge of a strongly identified body of content, the diverse array of France's cultural institutes, centres and ambassadorial cultural services came to seem dispersed, motley and 'unreadable'. This accounts for the move consolidated in the major 2010 law on the State's 'external action', which brought all France's cultural outposts under a common identity (Lane 2016, ch. 2).[12] There was some hesitation over the best name, ranging from proper names such as 'Victor Hugo' institutes to a proposal to merge this network with that of the semi-official *Alliance Française* under the latter's name (Colot and Rochebloine 2010, 42). The abiding concern, however, was always to endow France's 'network' with a recognisability that could compete on the terms already established by the strongly unified entities that populated the field (the British Council, the Goethe Institute, Confucius Institutes…). In the end, the name adopted was the *Institut Français*, which designates both the central 'operator' established in Paris to oversee arts projection and exchange, and the actual institutes located overseas. Of course, this administrative and brand realignment has not ended the diffuse malaise diagnosed amidst a network whose methods were elaborated under different recognition regimes and earlier mediological conditions. A report in 2013 acknowledged the 'dynamism' behind the arts promotion at work in the network (it reportedly produced 5 times more events than the Goethe Institute and 20 times more than the

British Council). However, that same report suggested there was something frenetic and 'febrile' about this promotion, with all the 'agitation' producing limited results in terms of enduring 'visibility' (Loncle and Schmid 2013, 43). Likewise, reports have argued that the extensive and unrivalled material infrastructure of imposing buildings, once the pride of France abroad, may have left the network flat-footed for an age where so much cultural exchange has become 'dematerialised' and virtual (Juppé and Schweitzer 2008, 93; Loncle and Schmid 2013, 46-7).

The reports increasingly seek to articulate a different cultural diplomacy role for France, given that its network can no longer content itself with supplying a content imbued with its own justificatory aura. This tends to revolve around a style of presence in the world setting out to be 'mediatory' rather than 'imperialistic' (Duvernois 2004, 11, 45). Indeed, for Kristeva, France does indeed have a 'message of substance' for the world, but of a second-order nature (that is, transcending any particular cultural content): it is based on its long-term advocacy for the importance of nations' cultural policies as such, and its more recent embrace for the twin values of 'diversity' and 'translatability' (Kristeva 2009, 8-12, 34). The reports often celebrate in this context France's 'pioneering' role as national policy entrepreneur in the process culminating in the ratification in 2005 of UNESCO's 'Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions'. This Convention was, of course, a 'recognitive' collective act in its own right – it revolved quite explicitly around the 'recognition' of the world's cultural diversity as a collective good, and of nations' rights to uphold cultural policies that maintain their share in that diversity. The ambiguities and limits of the Convention have been amply discussed elsewhere (for an ironic perspective from a French cultural diplomacy insider, see Olivier Poivre d'Arvor (2011, ch. 8)). From our perspective in this article, we can note how the persistent reference to the Convention allows France to straddle, somewhat ambivalently, different epochs in the regimes of international

recognition. In so doing, an older singular French rhetoric of cultural 'exceptionalism' has become overlaid by a newer global discursive template of cultural diversity (for an early instance of this move, see Trautmann 2002). France's 'initiative' in this respect symbolises its departure from the old schemes of imperialistic *rayonnement* – but, as this passage from the start of Legendre's report suggests, it preserves at another level, through its very self-positioning as a 'champion' of mediation, the satisfactions of a reframed *rayonnement*:

> If it is doubtless excessive to evoke France's cultural and linguistic *rayonnement* abroad as a substitute for the loss of military and economic power, the adoption in October 2005 of the UNESCO Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, drawn up on the initiative of France, illustrates all the importance attached by our country to its cultural diplomacy (Legendre and de Rohan 2009, 7)

The writer perhaps betrays despite himself the importance of 'importance' for the 'great middle power' that is France, and the attendant self-expectations that persist from one epoch of recognition to the next.

Higher Education and Global News

For all the differences between the two sectors of higher education and global news, we can see analogous moves across both domains to mesh French platforms with prevailing regimes of recognition which largely failed to register the nation's prior historically established institutions. We thus see the reports recommending and then endorsing the remodelling of these institutions in terms of the templates established elsewhere in the world, while

demonstrating intermittently acute anxieties regarding the preservation of a distinctive French identity in the context of such alignment.

Higher education has long represented for France a channel for international influence. Although it tends to come around fourth in international tables based on volumes of foreign students (after the US, the UK and Australia), it is not quite in the same 'market' as those three countries. As Kristeva notes, the low level of university fees tend to mean that foreign students figure as a 'cost' rather than a source of profit in direct accounting terms, and thus can be understood in terms of a policy of influence and/or development rather than as a contribution to the economy (Kristeva 2009, 44). Moreover, some 50% of these students come from francophone Africa, where France does indeed dominate the field (Amirshahi and Rochebloine 2014, 129). Nonetheless, as the volume and importance of the global marketplace in higher education has become ever greater, we see expressed over the course of our corpus the worry that France's higher education provision has become invisible, unrateable or provincialised.

One abiding concern is that France's higher education system is too complex, idiosyncratic and fragmented to be understood adequately from abroad either by human beings, search engines or data-ordering agencies (Bloche 1998, 44-53; Kristeva 2009, 44-5). An initial response has been to set up a single 'shop window' operator with a clear identity rather as happened with the *Institut Français* (the iteration of this agency set up by the aforementioned 2010 law is called *CampusFrance*). This may give the system a recognisable interface with students abroad, but it does not help with France's near invisibility in the most influential higher education league tables such as the Shanghai or the Times Higher Education university rankings. This is because such tables are engineered to 'recognise' elite institutions shaped according to the template of classic anglo-saxon research universities. In France, the highest performing students in many sectors do not even go to 'universities' as

such, but to the 'grandes écoles', or elite teaching colleges, which may not specialise in research; while much leading research has traditionally taken part in dedicated research institutes without significant quantities of students. There has been a major concerted legislative and budgetary endeavour over the last 15 years to merge *grandes écoles*, universities and other higher education institutes, and to mesh these with existing research agencies so as to create new (very unwieldy) mega-institutions (Musselin 2017). The principal motivation for so doing has been to create nominal 'universities' that can indeed be recognised as such by international ranking agencies.

On the one hand, within our corpus, such moves, giving greater autonomy to expanded and more 'university-like' entities, are seen as a necessary step in the contemporary higher education order (Kristeva 2009, 45-6). On the other hand, there is much anxiety and a degree of disagreement on the extent to which such institutional mimeticism will erode the very features that make France recognisable as France.[13] While authors are happy to endorse the projection of French brands like the 'Sorbonne' abroad, they are less happy to find anglo-saxon brands insinuating their way into France itself ('the Toulouse School of Economics') (Amirshahi and Rochebloine 2014, 56). Key disagreements focus on the 2013 Fioraso law allowing courses to be taught under certain conditions in English – is this a necessary step in the attraction of global talent (Kristeva 2009, 46; Attali 2014, 35), or a surrendering precisely of one of France's sources of attraction and competitive advantage (Amirshahi and Rochebloine 2014, 55-8)?

We can see a similar dynamic, along with similar anxieties, in the process leading to the founding in 2006 of *France* 24, the nation's own television channel for global news. I have analysed this process at length elsewhere (Ahearne 2014, 121-51), and so will here simply pick out the most relevant aspects for the present discussion. There was for long a hesitation about adopting for France's own purposes what came commonly to be called a

'French-style CNN' (Bloche 1998, 140). This appellation itself captures something of the initial ambivalence of French elites in relation to such a venture, given that France already had a well established international radio service (RFI) and had been prime funder, since the 1980s, of a multilateral francophone television channel (TV5). Yet after the turn of the millennium (and particularly around the time of the Iraq War in 2003), it became clear to a succession of French presidents and foreign secretaries that France had become too 'invisible' and inaudible on the global media scene. Its established radio network was of limited use for the image-driven dynamics of the global videosphere, and the very multilateralism of TV5 inhibited its use as a platform for French projection as such (there were thus limits to the multilateralism that France was energetically pursuing across other domains). Chirac and his foreign minister Villepin expressly wanted an organ that could compete with CNN, the BBC and Al Jazeera (even if these were not direct governmental tools), and also channels launched by other powers like Russia, Iran and China. France was arriving quite late to this particular game, and would have to adapt to the institutional and stylistic templates already established by other players. The slow and quite painful emergence of *France 24* is nonetheless endorsed by reports in the corpus as allowing France to overcome the fragmentation and 'unreadability' of its outward-facing media apparatus, and to acquire a recognisable voice within the global public sphere (Duvernois 2004, 80-1, 98-108). Indeed, the emergence of *France 24* accounts for one of the few clear rises in State spending on outward-directed policies for culture in the last decade, as the requirement to catch up with competitor states became inescapable.[14]

Such anxieties as subsequently emerged tended again to revolve around the extent to which the institutional mimeticism in question would erode those clusters of features that made a French identity recognisable as such. Thus Sarkozy originally refused to countenance the idea of publicly funding a news channel that would broadcast in anything but French,

before having to concede to his foreign minister Kouchner that multilingual broadcasting was the only way (as Kouchner hubristically put it) to 'conquer the narration of the world' (Kouchner 2007). Likewise its first director proposed that he would organise *France 24*'s provision around the four basic 'entry points' bringing viewers to global news channels (security, the economy, weather and sport) but would supplement this with a fifth element (culture and *art de vivre*) with the aim of giving a French twist to the global formula (Blet 2008, 196). We see here with particular clarity the two-step process of template adoption and marginal distinction that characterises the formal dynamic through which nations today internalise international domain-specific regimes of recognition.

Conclusion

France is by no means a typical nation as regards the issues discussed in this article, but neither is it as 'exceptional' as it has sometimes portrayed itself to be. It has, as a collective agent, placed an unusually high emphasis on culture as part of its international profile – but culture itself has in recent decades become increasingly prominent as a stake in inter-state relations more generally. Moreover, the templates underpinning the cultural dimensions of those relations have been radically remodelled, across areas as diverse as language policies, arts diplomacy, higher education student mobility and global news projection (to cite just the four considered in this article). France's attachment to and insistence on its cultural singularity makes it all the more striking as a 'revealer' for the gravitational pull of the new international regimes of recognition to which it is subject. Its intermittent anxieties and discontent about the operation of these regimes, as expressed across the various commissions of its national representatives cited above, are also fertile in their own right. It has, often slowly and with quite a high degree of self-consciousness, negotiated paths between the

mimetic adaptation to global templates and the preservation of its own distinguishing features. It has also channelled, albeit somewhat ambiguously, some of its earlier aspirations for *rayonnement* (a *libido radiandi*) into a role as a champion for the recognition of cultural diversity. And its ongoing deliberations open a space where we can ask critical questions about the recognition of regimes of recognition.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

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[1] On legal recognition, see Kelsen 1941; for the distinction between thin and thick recognition, see Wendt 2003, pp. 511-12; for overviews of the turn to recognition in the study of international relations, see the edited collections by Agné et al. (2013), Daase et al. (2015), and Lindemann & Ringmar (2016).

[2] Alternative terms for approaching the structural dimension of recognition practices are Axel Honneth's 'recognition orders' (*Anerkennungsordnungen*) (e.g. Fraser and Honneth 2003, 135-60), though Honneth does not apply this specifically to interstate relations, or Ringmar's own 'recognition game' (2002).

[3] I borrow and adapt the terms of 'restricted' and 'extended' modernities from Wagner (1994).

[4] See e.g. Lane 2016 or 2013.

[5] On culture as a 'fourth dimension' of foreign policy, see Coombs (1964).

[6] See e.g. Vaisse 2009, ch.9; Martin 2010; and also note 12 below.

[7] On hysteresis, see Bourdieu (1979, 158).

[8] On the hypercomplex linguistic landscape of Africa and its relations to French (often an official, vehicular or educational language due to its bridging capacity within or across fragmented and overlapping linguistic patchworks), see Calvet (2010).

[9] For a long historical perspective, see Charle (2009).

[10] For an extensive overview of competition and imitation among the capitals of the world, see Therborn (2017).

[11] France has traditionally invested significant sums in its cultural diplomacy network, with Bry noting a thirteen-fold real-terms increase between 1950 and 1990 in the overall budget for the Foreign Ministry's cultural department (to 5 billion francs) (Bry 1999, 251-254). More recently, the budget effectively available for the network itself has come under duress given generalised constraints on public spending, although its precise evolution is not straightforward to track. There is a separate programme (P185) for 'cultural diplomacy' within the new national accounting system introduced in 2006, which was originally designed to hold all related expenditure headings (in practice, some significant cognate items feature in other budget programmes related to actions for international development, research, or, most substantially, audiovisual policy, which will be discussed below). The sums available for this programme can appear at first view to have remained relatively buoyant between 2006 and 2018, moving from 519 million euros in 2006 to 595 in 2010, 759 in 2011, 749 in 2013, and

718 in 2018 (figures taken from the *Loi de Finances Initiale* budget breakdowns available at https://www.performance-publique.budget.gouv.fr/). However, more than half of this sum is devoted to France's network of schools abroad, and detailed commentaries show how the constant overall levels mask declines in funding at ground level, as significant proportions of the budget following 2010 were taken up with the structural reforms associated with the major reforms of that year, while Programme 185 has more recently started to include credits attributed to tourism policy (Cour des comptes 2013, 27-33; Duvernois 2015, 10). Nonetheless, overall credits attributed to cultural diplomacy and projection remain high by international standards, with the Cour des Comptes estimating that these amounted, when taking all relevant headings including media into account, to 1.339 billion euros in 2013, compared to 0.48 billion for the UK and 1.6 billion for Germany (when central and federal contributions were aggregated for the latter) (2013, 29).

[12] The effect of this law was to transfer practical responsibility for sectors of outward-facing culture policies to dedicated 'operators' (the *Institut Français*, *CampusFrance*, and *France Expertise*), to which one might add previously existing distinct operators for areas such as schooling abroad or external media. The Foreign Affairs ministry retains responsibility for overall strategy and nearly all funding, though a number of other Ministries, notably the Ministry for Culture and Communication, are also involved to a lesser degree in the funding and co-direction of specific sectors and actions (for a tabular breakdown, see Cour des Comptes, 2013, 28). A recent further instance of turf wars between Foreign and Culture ministries concerned responsibility for international dimensions of 'commercial' cultural industries, which were finally withheld from the responsibilities of the *Institut Français* in favour of the Ministry of Culture (Cour des Comptes, 22).

[13] For an analysis using the neo-institutionalist terms of 'mimetic', 'normative' and 'coercitive' isomorphism, see Musselin (2017).

[14] Spending on external audiovisual provision progressed relatively steadily from 286 million euros in 2007 to 319 million euros in 2012 and 342 million euros in 2018 (figures taken from budget breakdowns for each year's *loi de finances initiale*, available at https://www.performance-publique.budget.gouv.fr/). The figures include funding for RFI, TV5 Monde and France 24, and have to be aggregated from streams in different 'programmes', though this operation has become easier since 2015 when dedicated programmes (844 and 847) were assigned to *France Médias Monde* (a holding organisation whose principal components are RFI and France 24) and *TV5 Monde*. This improved internal visibility of contributions to international audiovisual programmes is itself a sign of their higher profile.