Is there something new out of Africa?

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„Today’s Africa has a new face: The continent is becoming more democratic, Africa’s civil society is developing, Africa’s women are more and more involved in the political life, human rights are increasingly respected and grave conflicts are on the retreat. A new generation sincerely committed to responsible action in both the political and economical sphere is taking the fate of the continent in its hands.“ Javier Solana, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and Secretary-General of both the Council of the EU and the Western European Union (WEU).¹

While some actors as the above-cited Javier Solana are optimistic about the future of Africa, there is in popular western media still a rather pessimistic view dominant. The task of the scientist is quite simply to avoid naïve stereotypes and to analyse the position and relevance of African societies in the transforming world society. There is of course plenty of work that already has been done. This paper attempts to focus on some aspects that however have been rather neglected. It starts by looking at the relevance of Africa for the world society and some of the consequences for neo-patrimonial states. While there is concern about the rise of authoritarian and radical states, there is also good news, as some African Presidents were stepping down voluntarily or accepted defeat at elections. This is however not changing the system and should thus not lead to unfounded optimism. Catching up economic development is possible, but there is no recipe to copy the successful developmental states. There are also some doubts about the capability of civil society to provoke lasting social change. Africa is clearly economically marginalised. However, out of chaos and even criminal activities sometimes highly successful legal economic activities rise. This is exemplified by the example of the Nigerian video industry.

**Africa is on the international agenda**

Global media stars as singer Bono from U2 or actress Angelina Jolie obviously discovered Africa. These stars do not only sometimes adopt African children or give birth to their children in Africa, they also act as representatives for international organizations and self-proclaimed advocates for the poor people, always in the spotlight of the international media.

¹ Neue Zürcher Zeitung, July 12, 2006, p. 7, translated from German by the author.
These media could report more than just news of western stars and southern misery, as there is also some good news. The absolute number of people having access to food and education was never as big as it is nowadays.\(^2\) Of course, we are concerned with the high relative share of people having to live with less than a dollar per day. Combating poverty and ensuring basic education for all are the most prominent goals on the international agenda. There is no need to go into details, as the “Millennium Development Goals” and the “World Declaration on Education for All” are well known.\(^3\) Most countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and this restriction is generally used in this paper, are far away from reaching these goals.\(^4\)

The international community seems to get used to goals not attained. The aid commitments after the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien were not respected and the same is true for the commitments after several major catastrophes as the floods in Mozambique and Bangladesh, the earthquakes in India and Iran and the hurricane Mitch. Some current initiatives as debt relief have a high news value, but the media, as most scholars, neglect the question how the repeated accumulation of debts for useless projects is going to be avoided in the future. It is thus easy for neo-patrimonial states to find new sources to aliment the system. Furthermore, there is a lot of development aid money poured into Africa. Our own research focuses on education. Donor induced curriculum reforms and the neglect of upper secondary education as a consequence of the priorities of the international community lead to several forms of privatization in the educational system, fueled by quality problems and strikes in the educational systems.\(^5\) As a consequence, the educational gap within African societies is rather increasing. As the economic and administrative system of many African countries is distorted, the favorable effect of educational expansion on conflict and thus the “second dividend” of expanding education are lacking.\(^6\)

\(^2\) The same is true for communication technology: with the advent of mobile phones, the absolute number of people having access to phones has skyrocketed in Africa, of course very uneven throughout the continent. In 2005, there were 100 million SIM-cards in Africa! See Patrick Sandouly (2005): Brancher un Africain sur trois. In: Jeune Afrique/L’intelligent, Nr. 2360, p. 50 – 60.

\(^3\) Primary education for all is by the way a very old goal, as already the conference of Addis Abeba in 1961 was formulating a plan for universal and free primary education in Africa by 1980.


Also other actors (re)discovered Africa. The access to oil is of course an important motive, but also other raw materials shouldn’t be neglected. Also the information society is heavily depending on some raw materials for the production of the hardware and thus raw materials are not going to lose importance. For China and India, Africa is also an interesting sales market for manufactured goods. Together with the USA, those two countries are clearly getting more important actors in Africa, while Japan is somewhat secondary. Also the old European powers, far from being a homogenous block, rediscovered their interest in Africa, beside France and Great Britain this is also true for Belgium and Portugal. This allows African countries, democratic or autocratic, to play off one country against another and to squeeze out rent income similar to the money paid for “good conduct” during the Cold War. Again, the future looks bright for the rulers of neo-patrimonial states seeking rent income.

As long as they see a superior policy interest, none of the powers scrambling for Africa is very demanding when it comes to the democratic standards of their African partners. This double standard causes a decline of credibility when western powers claim democracy. The doubts over the legitimacy of international organizations like the UN are also on the rise after the passive reaction on Israel’s attacks against Lebanon. This feeds the rise of a political Islamism in countries as the Comoros and Somalia, but also in Sudan, Puntland and other regions. Other countries as Senegal, Mauritania or Djibouti could follow one day. There is even an astonishing amount of Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein T-Shirt circulating in unsuspicious countries like Togo or Benin among others. Their origin and distribution system has yet to be studied. Furthermore, there are concerns about different forms of authoritarianism on the continent. There is also a certain tendency of dynasty-building, where sons of presidents take over power. Sometimes, there is a direct succession like in Togo or in the DR Congo; sometimes the succession is taking a while, like in Zanzibar or Mauritius. Of course, the same phenomenon can be observed in the USA and several Arab and Asian

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countries. The list of African countries with attempts for such a succession is even longer and includes countries like Botswana, the DR Congo, Gabon, Kenya, Uganda, Chad and Zambia. The image of the autocratic or even despotic African president is well known.

**Off the screen: Democratizing governance**

Yet there are more and more examples of African presidents stepping down voluntary or involuntary due to a change of power at elections. But one had to read the newspapers in Europe quite carefully to hear of Joaquim Chissano stepping down in Mozambique (2004), Sam Nujoma joining him in Namibia (2005), Mathieu Kérékou and Benjamin Mkapa doing so in Benin (2006) respectively in Tanzania (2006), Azali Assoumani stepping down in the Comoros (2006); or of Paul Berenger accepting electoral defeat in Mauritius (2005), to name but a few recent examples. Yes, such things happen also in Africa! But, as a common saying in Guinea-Bissau warns: “A new driver is not solving the problems of an old car!”8 It is simply naïve to believe that a new president can sweep away problems that are deeply rooted in the preferences of different groups of actors. The state class as the most important actor in neo-patrimonial states has a certain interest in neglecting the majority of the population in order to keep the biggest part of the rent earnings.9 The election of a new president is not a priori changing these preferences. A sophisticated analysis of rents shows the wide range of possible rent earnings. The state-class can use different mechanism to generate rent earnings for the maintenance of this political system and the consolidation of the neo-patrimonial state. Of course, those endogenous factors have to be linked with exogenous factors. The end of the Cold War and the political and economic liberalizations imposed by the world-system limit the base of rent earnings, but don’t remove them entirely. Some states have developed counter-strategies in order to deal with these situations. The states living on rent earnings are prone to economic failure. Furthermore, as the mass of the population is not important for the preferences of the state class, social development is neglected.

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The question remains why African countries are prevalent in the periphery. Colonialism alone is not sufficient to explain this, as countries outside Africa have also been colonized. At the moment of their integration into the world-system, Sub-Saharan African societies have been less complex than other societies.\textsuperscript{10} This is explained by the fact that their technologies of subsistence were less complex. The innovation and diffusion of complex technologies was impeded especially due to several natural conditions.\textsuperscript{11} The potential of animals and plants suitable for domestication is plainly smaller than in other continents and the quality of the soils as well as the existence of the tsetse-fly hinders the evolution of plough agriculture. African societies therefore are often limited to horticultural technologies. This historically emerged limited complexity of the structure of African societies limits their potential of defense against the external challenges of slave trade and colonialism. African societies are integrated into the world-system as raw material suppliers and rent economies.

**Developmental states as role models?**

Catching up economic development is in principle practicable, but is based on the emergence of a developmental state with a developmental bureaucracy autonomous enough, but embedded in society. Until now, Botswana and Mauritius are the only two developmental states in Africa, both being small states. Developmental states, whether in Asia or in Africa, have certain common characteristics:\textsuperscript{12}

- There is an elite committed to development.\textsuperscript{13} Of course, this elite is not always homogeneous, but might consist of shifting coalitions of divergent interests. The elite is a rather small group of experienced civil servants and politicians, the later often being former civil servants. There are strong links to the president or prime minister. This


\textsuperscript{13} The origins of this orientation are rather unclear, as external or internal threats might cause this orientation without always doing so.
leading figure is a strong personality committed to development without reigning in the “personal rule” style.

- This elite is autonomous from particular interest groups and can decide for the superior national interest, but this autonomy is embedded\textsuperscript{14} into the society “in a dense web of ties with both non-state and other state actors (internal and external) who collectively help to define, re-define and implement developmental objectives“\textsuperscript{15}. This socially rooted autonomy has its source either in revolutionary and/or military power or in a commanding (de facto) single-party.
- This elite is supported by a bureaucracy with the capacity and the resources to play a leading part in the process of development, often with one pivotal ministry.
- The developmental state, having both strength and embedded autonomy, was built and consolidated at a crucial moment and has the capacity for an effective management of private economic interests and is not dominated by them.
- While the developmental state is strong, civil society is rather weak.
- There is repression and violation of human rights. This repression is not arbitrarily, but guarantees law and order. The personal property and safety is assured and the state is seen as legitimate as long as the economy is growing and the population sees development achievements.

While the early developmental states were states without important raw material deposits, some of the newer developmental states had raw materials, but nevertheless could avert the „resource curse“. This was possible due to „inclusive pacts“ and a coordination of interests between different groups in society, and sometimes even across religious and other lines. It is obvious that a developmental state is quite something different then a neoliberal state. The case of Botswana as an economically quite successful country is rather exceptional in Africa as it is a developmental state although its wealth is based on rent earnings from diamonds. This needs to be explained. During the colonial period, the traditional system in Botswana was rather weakly penetrated and traditional rule hardly delegitimized. The traditional elite


was guiding the country into independence and was able to follow a development oriented policy based on expatriates having a certain autonomy but being under pressure to legitimise their presence. They did this with an efficient administration and a consultative mechanism tied to the traditional system of the “kgotla” (village assembly). The good news thus is that catching up is possible, the bad news is that there is no recipe to copy.

Civil society: The panacea for Africa?

Successful developmental states had at the beginning a rather weak civil society that became stronger only when these state were consolidated. Interesting enough, there is still a lot of hope connected to civil society. Civil society is unfolding in many African states, but still in many places rather weak compared to other regions. The concept of civil society is of western origin and widely used, but often barely defined and there is no authoritative definition. Civil society is here seen as the sphere between state and market or in other words as the part of the society that is non-governmental and not for profit without necessarily being in the public interest. While the state is dominated by the logic of coercion and the market is based upon competition, civil society is founded on voluntary cooperation. Another important characteristic of civil society is the public character of its activities which addresses mainly but not solely the state. By contributing to a public opinion, civil society creates a public sphere and a counter-power to the state, limiting and controlling the power of the state. Collective actors such as NGOs, associations, self-help groups and others are not automatically part of civil society, but their membership should be subject of empirical analysis. In the West-African state of Benin, there are allegedly 4,000 NGOs in a country with a population of roughly 7 million. Most of them are tax-free one-man businesses operated as self-employment projects by jobless academics or as side-projects of civil servants and politicians seeking to tap the flow of development aid oriented towards non-governmental actors. Their legitimacy is often doubtful. The same question remains with the local subsidiaries of international NGOs, often having a very small local basis with few African members. There are only a few advocacy NGOs with a certain number of African members and a high legitimation to represent a certain segment of society.
There is often a limited potential of autonomy for participation as well as for the organisation and aggregation of interests as African societies are characterized by the straddling or the interpenetration of the state and other parts of society. Furthermore, African societies are often vertically segmented along ethnic, local and familiar loyalties, but there is little vertical cooperation even if those forms are gaining importance. The emergence of civil society might miss its impulse for change as state classes are prone to co-opt protagonists and create new clientelist relations in order to widen their base of power. The likelihood for toppling state classes by civil society is rather minor as its potential of protest and refusal is too small. In neo-patrimonial states, manpower is a bargaining chip only to a limited degree. Nevertheless, there is a certain potential of pressure through the creation of a public sphere by collective actors in the African civil society.

**Hip Hop movements in Africa**

William Martin is right to state that „at moments of global instability such as these, movements have proven to be effective shapers of worlds to come“. It is thus worth looking at the margins of African societies for emerging movements. An important marginalized group in society is the group of young people. Even if in most African countries at least half of the population is younger than 25 years, they are marginalized as they have no access to power and other resources. Among those young people, Hip Hop movements were gaining massive popularity especially with the social crisis of the 1990s, even if Rap music was known in Africa before. Hip Hop and especially Rap music is popularly seen as a global culture of American origin. It is omnipresent in Africa south of the Sahara. Whether at the fringe of the Chalbi Desert in Kenya, at the court of a traditional Baariba-King in northern Benin, in Gabon’s capital Libreville or at the border post between Namibia and Botswana: Signs of the Hip Hop culture can be found everywhere in Africa. It is not just an adoption of the American model, but this global culture is locally adapted and used to respond to global challenges. Hip Hop artists represent a local scene in a comprehensive movement that can be interpreted as a politico-cultural movement. The impact Hip Hop as a politico-cultural

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16 Martin 2006: 27.
movement can have is open to dispute. At the moment, the Hip Hop movements criticize the society, but generally limit themselves to this corrective function. This opening of a new channel for criticism is not to be underrated and more than other forms of protest music reached. Its main function thus is the creation of a public sphere for a once excluded social group, the young urban males.

This criticism by the way is absolutely noticed by the state class, as several examples show. There are also two examples, where Hip Hop artists contributed to the mobilization of young voters and the change of power: the elections in Senegal in 2000 and the elections in Kenya in 2002. Rappers criticize commodification and capitalism from within without being able to change the system.\(^{18}\) They stand certainly for different values and norms, but don’t present a counter-concept to the neo-patrimonial state. Hip Hop movements will most probably not be the bases of an alternative society and a widening of the social base of the movements for example by a close collaboration with other movements is not very probable. There is even a certain potential for conflicts as national and international NGOs and organizations try to instrumentalize Hip Hop movements. Hip Hop movements are not a signpost for the future, but could wake agency among the young urban Africans and be therefore a medium of empowerment. Hip Hop is not just a call of a resigned youth, but often linked with mobilization and the appeal to take charge of life in order to change things and the hope for improvement: “As long as there is life there is hope”.\(^{19}\) As leading African rapper and Porto Alegre participant Didier Awadi (2004) picking up the slogan of the anti-globalisation movement to name his album puts it: “Another world is possible!”\(^{20}\)

**Chaos and creativity on the periphery of the transforming world society**

There is no need to repeat numbers underlining the economic marginalization of Africa; even if most of this evidence is based only on the formal sector of the economy and thus neglects

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\(^{18}\) For an interesting example of this criticism, see the lyrics of „J’accuse“ by Senegalese Rapper Didier Awadi in the Appendix of this paper.


\(^{20}\) Didier Awadi (2004): Un autre monde est possible. Dakar: Sankara. [CD. Senegal]
the vibrant informal sector.\textsuperscript{21} Also for most other indicators, scholars working on Africa are used the check the unpleasant end of the statistics. The importance of the informal sectors and even of criminal activities – in the western perception of what is criminal and what not – is also well known.\textsuperscript{22} There is even a whole fraud industry called “419” after the article in the Nigerian penal code for fraud with an estimated 3 billion Dollars obtained in 2005 alone.\textsuperscript{23} It is however important to realize that these activities, undesired as they are, can also have creative aspects. The Nigerian video industry is an example of a whole new legal industry growing out of a once illegal piracy sector.\textsuperscript{24} It is also an interesting example of import substitution and once more an evidence for the local adaptation of global cultural influences. The Nigerian video industry known as “Nollywood” is producing roughly 1,200 full-length movies mainly for domestic video consumption each year, which is more than twice as much as Hollywood and also more than its Indian counterparts “Bollywood” and “Kollywood”.\textsuperscript{25} Of course, the Nigerian videos are cheaply produced and fail to meet the western notions of movies and culture in general. But those movies do sell very quickly an average of 50,000 copies, successful movies even up to 300,000 copies. A conservative rough calculation of the annually turnover would thus multiply 1,200 videos with 50,000 copies for 200 Naira each and yield 12 billion Naira or nearly 100 million Dollars. They sell in Nigeria, the biggest


\textsuperscript{23} Jean Foglizzo (2006): Arnaque à l’africaine. In: Jeune Africe, Nr. 2372, p. 20 – 23. They victims come from all over the globe and Nigerians often don’t pity them, as they were greedy for quick money. This kind of fraud makes increasingly use of international financial arrangements and new communication technologies. It bases paradoxically enough on Nigeria’s image as a corrupt and criminal place.

\textsuperscript{24} Brian Larkin (2005): Nigerian Video: The Infrastructure of Piracy. In: Politique Africaine, 100, p. 146 – 164. Of course, there are a lot of well known negative effects of media piracy that don’t need to be repeated here.

market in Africa, but also in other countries across Africa. This whole market is organized on a private basis without any western capital involved and employs thousands of people.

The whole capital needed for this industry as well as the professional expertise was accumulated during the oil boom with the illicit mass importation of foreign films in the framework of a complex system based on trust and international trade networks.²⁶ Those pirated movies reached the Nigerian market within one week after the première of the movie in India or the USA. Without piracy, the Nigerian market would be marginalized by the official distribution networks. Piracy was thus a prerequisite for rather than an excess of the consumption of globalizing media contents. Since the end of the 1980s, there has been a shift and some of the former producers and distributors of pirated films are now engaged in what was to become a whole new industry with specific film genres, forms of reproduction and distribution. There is even some kind of market segmentation, as the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo sub-genres have different characteristics: While both the Yoruba and Igbo videos focus more on urban life and problems of modernity, Hausa films are mostly about love and marriage in an Islamic society. The draw on different traditions: while the Hausa movies are based on Hausa popular literature and Indian movies, Yoruba films developed out of the Yoruba traveling theater tradition. On a smaller scale, there is also a video industry in Ghana, even if the term Gollywood has yet to be coined.

Out of something looking at first glance rather destructive can grow something new and creative worthy of closer analysis. These success stories are yet not enough and for many Africans, economic problems prevail. Migration is increasingly seen as the only way of social mobility. In the face of thousands of refugees dying while trying to cross the Sahara desert or the sea on their way to Europe, it is quite obvious that the future of Africa is also affecting the future of Europe in a world society. Of course, migration is expensive enough to be out of reach for the poorest in Africa. On the contrary: There are several forms of migration by skilled workers. The drain of nurses and doctors out of Africa in western countries is well known and seriously affecting the health systems of several African states.²⁷

²⁶ Larkin 2005: 147.
²⁷ See Martin (2006) for some evidence. There could be easily evidence added from other mainly Anglophone countries. It is interesting to note that, in principle, the National Health Service in Great Britain has guidelines excluding the recruitment in developing countries.
Another form of skilled migration is the increasing “body drain” in sport, especially in soccer. This is a form of contemporary body trade reflecting market forces in a neoliberal global economy. While important resources of skilled talents are in the south, the sport sector is extraverted towards the countries in the northern hemisphere, where the purchasing power is. The beneficiaries are mostly agents from the north, even if there are some African agents in addition to the collaborators in the milieu of the African soccer associations and sport ministries, indispensable for the whole system. Some highly paid stars playing for a few big clubs beside, most African players in Europe are not only exploited as cheap workforce, but also object of a speculation strategy seeking to realise a surplus. It is an example of a transnational network and stands also for a trend towards denationalisation. Some African countries joined this trend and started to naturalize foreign players coming for example from South America. In Rugby, players without the proper passport are eligible under certain conditions to play for national teams. It is therefore also important to realize that analytical categories as “African” become increasingly fuzzy. Africans can become important actors for Africa even when living abroad. This is surely true for all those Africans sending money back to Africa. The recorded money remittances roughly double official development assistance and amount to 232 billion Dollar in 2005. This is the equivalent of the world’s poorest 33 states GDP. Including the non recorded money remittances would add another estimated 100 billion Dollar. Money remittances are highly targeted form of development aid and sometimes even of foreign direct investment. Yet, this important flow of money in the world-system is

29 One could add other forms of migration as for example prostitution.
30 Raffaele Poli (2005): Réseaux transnationaux de footballeurs africains: quel nexus entre migration et développement? In: Anne Mayor, Claudia Roth and Yvan Droz (eds.): Sécurité sociale et développement. Soziale Sicherheit und Entwicklung. Le forum suisse des africanistes 5 – Werkschau Afrikastudien 5. Lit Verlag, Münster, p. 265 – 280. This modern form of exploitation was shyly put on the agenda during the latest Soccer World Cup in Germany, but those voices were fairly unheard during this multi-billion business event. The World Cup was also a platform for the resurgence of some old stereotypes, as for example the raising doubts of South Africa’s capability to organize the next World Cup in 2010 or the cliché of the cheerfully, but ineffectively playing African teams.
rather neglected in macro-level world-system analysis by comparison with the other sources of external financing, especially official development assistance, foreign direct investment.

![Graph showing Remittances as an Important Source of External Financing in Developing Countries](source)

Conclusion

In a speech to the European Parliament, South African President Thabo Mbeki was discussing the old saying “Semper aliquid novi Africa affert”, “Africa always brings forth something new”.³² Mbeki contested a newspaper report stating that “out of Africa there is always something depressingly familiar.” He furthermore contested another report arguing that “Europe must dispatch expeditionary forces to our Continent to rescue the hapless African masses from weak states.” Mbeki then emphasized the commitment of Africa states to settle conflicts on the continent. Unfortunately, the examples named by Mbeki seem to be far from being settled almost two years later. Of course, it is the inalienable right and even duty of

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African states to settle conflicts. They may fail with their attempts just as western countries did fail. Nevertheless, Mbeki was right, as the example of the video industry showed. Sometimes, there is really something new out of Africa.
Appendix: Lyrics of “J’accuse”\textsuperscript{33} by Didier Awadi\textsuperscript{34}

To give an idea of the outspokenness of many rappers and their critical lyrics, a rough translation of Senegalese rapper Didier Awadi’s “J’accuse” annexed.

| J'accuse les USA de complot contre l'humanité, | I accuse the USA of conspiracy against humanity, of not respecting the resolutions of the Security Council, |
| De non respect des résolutions du conseil de sécurité, | I accuse America of interference into private affairs, |
| J'accuse l'Amérique d'ingérence dans des affaires privées, | |
| Quand ils vont en Somalie, où est le respect de la dignité ? | When they go to Somalia, where is the respect of dignity? |
| Moi j'étais très content de voir les somaliens les jeter. | I’ve been very happy to see the Somalis throw them out. |

On devrait juger Truman pour crime contre l'humanité, Comment peut on accepter de telles atrocités? Hiroshima, Nagasaki, les séquelles sont toujours là ancrées. J'accuse George Bush d'être un véritable boucher, Mentir sur les armes chimiques, où est donc la moralité?

Tribunal Pénal International, fils laisse moi rire! Instrument de propagande pour une politique de salir. Pour Nixon, pour Bush, pour Clinton c'est devenu moral ; Mais pour Saddam, Milosevic et Pinochet, là, c'est immoral, Je ne juge pas, je ne dis pas que ces hommes c'est des saints, Mais je n'accepte pas d'être formaté CNN, ABC, c'est malsain.

J'accuse les USA de se prendre pour les gendarmes du monde, Arrêter Noriega, Président d'une république c'est immonde. Je somme l'Amérique de reconsidérer la peine africaine, Regardez, vos pays, votre peuple, vos esclaves, je le dis sans haine. Je continue j'accuse la France de crime contre l'humanité,

Trop de morts en Centrafrique, je ne pourrais pas les oublier. Vous oubliez, un peu trop vite, tous les tirailleurs sénégalais ; De force enrôlés, déportés, aujourd'hui expulsés... Ils sont venus, ils se sont battus, ils ont vaincu, votre pays détruit, ils sont revenus et ils ont reconstruit. Ils sont venus, ils se sont battus, ils ont vaincu,

\textsuperscript{33} Of course, the title is a reference to the article published on February 7, 1898, by French novelist and political activist Émile Zola. Zola accused the French government of anti-Semitism, after military officer Alfred Dreyfus was arrested for treason and jailed under doubtful circumstances.

\textsuperscript{34} Didier Awadi (2004).
votre pays détruit, ils sont revenus et ils ont reconstruit.

Refrain

J'accuse la France d'irresponsabilité devant l'histoire.
Trop de coup d'état en Afrique sont commandités par eux dans le noir : Au Comores, au Dahomey, au Congo, au Rwanda, je m'arrête là.
Mais la France fait trop de dégâts,
C'est pour ça que j'accuse Giscard d'être un complice de Bokassa,
Bokassa paye sa dette, Giscard est libre et pourquoi ça?
Je dis que la France est très ingrate quand elle parle de visa,
Quand nos pères sont partis mourir pour elle, il n'y avait pas de visa.
Non, il y avait pas de visas.

(…)
J'accuse toute l'Afrique d'irresponsabilité chronique,
Nos présidents, nos dirigeants d'être égoïstes et cyniques,
ils veulent du pouvoir encore du pouvoir tout le pouvoir.
Une fois au pouvoir, promettent des choses sans le pouvoir.
Ils ont vendu l'Afrique ses richesses et même ses plages,
Ça signe des bails, des accords et ce qui m'énrange :
Quand tu vas dans une banque si elle est bien c'est qu'elle est étrangère,
Tu te crois indépendant ? Rêve ! C'est le colon qui gère.
Gère même la monnaie, dans les coffres de la banque de France,
Gère même notre or, dans les coffres de la banque de France
Voilà pourquoi on dévalue, voilà pourquoi moi j'évalue,
Mes chances à zéro, je me libère et j'évolue.
Je me libère et j'évolue,

Refrain

J'accuse les jeunes africains, donc moi y compris,
D'être des fous, des naïfs et de n'avoir rien compris.
Tant qu'on sera là à dormir et rêver de sortir du pays,
On laissera la place aux coopérants, aux néo-colons qui pillent.
Maintenant j'accuse les présidents africains d'être des fachos,
Des faillots à la solde de l'occident des collabos,
Entre ceux qui ne veulent pas de l'indépendance, et ceux qui ne veulent pas de l'unité,
je me demande tous les jours comment me sortir de ce merdier.

destroyed, they came back and have rebuilt.

Chorus

I accuse France of irresponsibility before history,
Too many coup d'état in Africa are sponsored by them in the dark:
In the Comoros, in Dahomey, in Congo, in Rwanda, I stop here.
But France has done to much damage,
This is why I accuse Giscard of being an accomplice of Bokassa.
Bokassa paid his debt, Giscard is free and why this?
I say France is very ungrateful when she speaks of visa,
When our fathers went to die for her, there wasn’t any visa.
No, there wasn’t any visa.

(…)
I accuse the whole Africa of being chronically irresponsible, our presidents, our leaders of being selfish and cynical.
They want power, once more power, all the power.
Once they came into power, they promise things without being capable.
They sold Africa and her wealth and even her beaches,

Guarantees are signs, agreements and what makes me raving: If you go to a good bank, it is because it is a foreign one,
You think you’re independent? Dream! It is the colonial master administering.
Administering the money, in the chest of the French bank.
Administering even our gold, in the chest of the French bank.
That’s why we devaluate,
that’s why I judge
my chances as being zero, I free myself and I develop.
I free myself and I develop.

Chorus

I accuse the young African, thus including myself,
As being idiots, naïve and understanding nothing.
As long as we are here sleeping and dreaming of leaving the country, we leave the place for development aid workers, for neo-colonial masters pillaging.
Now, I accuse the African presidents of being fascists,
Serving the occident as collaborators,
Between those that don’t want independence and those that don’t want unity,
I ask myself every day how I can get out of this pigsty.
J'accuse les pays membres du conseil de sécurité,
De semer la zizanie dans nos pays sous développés :
Pompiers pyromanes, ils vendent des armes ils sèment
la mort,
Ils sèment des génocides, ensuite on vient les
condamner.
J'accuse la Belgique d'avoir tuée Lumumba,
Car non content de nous tuer, comme des chiens on
nous abat.
Leader indépendant ? Le colon il n'en veut pas,
Il va envoyer son frère le descendre on a vu Sankara,
on a vu Sankara.
Je continuerais bien de les accuser encore pendant des
heures,
mais ce n'est pas ça qui changera quoi que ce soit à
leurs erreurs.
Mon but est d'éveiller les consciences, provoquer des
réflexions,
histoire que toi et moi on trouve des solutions.
Ce texte est donc un requiem pour toute l'humanité,
Ce texte est donc la plainte d'un prolétaire qui est
exploité.
Ce texte est écrit avec le sang des opprimés,
Ce texte est gravé sur la pierre tombale d'un opprimé
C'est consigné
J'arrête ici ma plaidoirie, mais ici même dans la salle,
j'vois encore la hyène qui rit.
J'vois encore la hyène qui rit.

I accuse the countries being members of the Security
Council of sowing the seeds of discord in our
underdeveloped countries:
Pyromaniac fire fighters, they sell arms and sow the
seeds of death,
They sow genocides and then come to condemn them.
I accuse Belgium of having killed Lumumba,
Because, not happy of killing us, they slaughter us like
dogs,
Independent leader? The colonial master don’t wants
that, he is going to send his brother to get him down
We have seen Sankara, we have seen Sankara.
I will continue to accuse them again for hours.
But this it what is going to change whatever their
mistakes are.
My goal is to awake consciousness, provoke
reflections,
So that you and I, we find solutions.
This text is thus a requiem for the whole humanity,
This text is thus the complaint of an exploited
proletarian.
This text is written with the blood of the oppressed.
This text is engraved on the gravestone of an
oppressed. This is put down in writing,
I stop here my speech, but even in this hall
I see again the hyena laughing,
I see again the hyena laughing.