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## EXTERNAL CONTRIBUTIONS

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## **Africa: ambiguous transitions...**

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Afro-optimists, who see in Africa '*the next China*' (1), versus Afro-pessimists, who consider the future of the continent '*without hope*' (2) live off their sterile factional quarrels, which are out of touch with the real state of a group of countries with situations that are too diverse to be labelled: the countries of sub-Saharan Africa (excluding island states) certainly share some characteristics, but above all have too many singularities to allow this kind of generalisation.

With complexity coming back into fashion, it is now advisable to distinguish at least six categories in terms of development (a country may belong to several of them at the same time):

- The continent's good pupils, namely the emerging countries of Botswana, Rwanda, Ghana and Ethiopia (all English-speaking, incidentally, with Rwanda now also being led by an English-speaking elite, and the appointment of Louise Mushikiwado (3) as head of the International Organisation of La Francophonie will not change this).
- The outrageously oil-dependent states (Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Congo-Brazzaville, Nigeria, Angola), which have lived off a rent that has neither been distributed nor reinvested, and which have been all the more affected by the fall in oil prices as there had been no diversification of the economy upstream (to the point of an atrophy of the agricultural sector).
- The Sahelian strip is a source of great concern (4), whose fragile situation is exacerbated by its demographics and global warming, with the corollary of opportunistic pseudo-terrorism more akin to murderous banditry.
- Two giants already with one foot in chaos, but for different reasons, and which may partially drag their neighbours into it, Nigeria (5) and the DRC (6).
- The failed states (Rotberg, R. (2011). *Failed States, Collapsed States, and Weak States: Causes and Indicators*): Somalia, Central African Republic, South Sudan.
- The weakest, that is to say all the others, who scrape by while waiting either for the explosion or the miracle; increasingly urban, increasingly populated, they are the main providers of migrants, their uncertain future will depend on the decisions taken (or not) and applied (or not) by their leaders, financed by an international community (UN, EU, IMF, WB) as helpless as it is helplessly waiting.

As far as democratic practices are concerned, once again there are the good pupils such as Senegal, Benin and Botswana, there are the dunces (Sassou, Bongo, Obiang, Eyadema, Kabila, Afewerki etc.), and there are the weaklings of the (poorly) established democracies. Once again, the dunces are mainly French-speaking. They obsess French diplomats and journalists, thus obscuring a silent (r)evolution taking place simultaneously in five countries, which constitutes the greatest wave of upheavals on the continent since the end of the Cold War (the year 1994 in particular, with the end of apartheid, the La Baule speech, the devaluation of the CFA franc and the Rwandan genocide).

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