

Republics, Revolutions and Racialisation: The South African Republic at the 1889 Paris *Exposition Universelle*

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Abstract

This article documents and analyses the South African Republic (ZAR)'s participation in the 1889 Paris *Exposition Universelle*. Celebrating a century of the French Revolution and industrial development, the ZAR's presence as an official exhibitor served as an information hub for furthering commercial and diplomatic interests in South Africa in an increasingly Anglo-German-Portuguese dominated imperial sphere. Initiated and coordinated by the French Consulate in Pretoria as a timely opportunity to alleviate the industrial uncertainties faced by Johannesburg's mining complex, the ZAR's participation as part of the Colonial Exhibition served as a propaganda tool for settler colonialism and the subjugation of non-Western societies. Situated among dehumanising 'ethnographic villages', the ZAR's pavilion supported France's vision of republicanism, industrialisation and racialisation at the height of the Scramble for Africa. Viewing the 1889 Paris *Exposition Universelle* as a major trade and information hub for industry, ethnography and imperial politics, this article analyses the ZAR's diplomatic attempt to portray itself as a prosperous settler republic aspiring to become the world leader in the goldmining industry. As an important feature of the exhibition, the ZAR was presented as a French republican partner and symbol of colonial collaboration between a European settler society and African economies.

Keywords: South African Republic; France; universal expositions; colonialism; industrialisation; gold mining; republicanism; racialisation; Franco-Afrikaner relations.

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Opsomming

Hierdie artikel dokumenteer en ontleed die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek (ZAR) se deelname aan die 1889 Parys *Exposition Universelle*. Ter viering van 'n eeu van die Franse Rewolusie en industriële ontwikkeling, het die ZAR se teenwoordigheid as 'n amptelike uitstaller gedien as 'n inligtingsentrum vir die bevordering van kommersiële en diplomatieke belange in Suid-Afrika in 'n toenemend Anglo-Duits-Portugees gedomineerde imperiale sfeer. Geïnisieer en gekoördineer deur die Franse konsulaat in Pretoria as 'n tydig geleentheid om die industriële onsekerhede te verlig wat Johannesburg se mynbedryf teëgekome het, het die ZAR se deelname in die Koloniale Uitstalling gedien as 'n propaganda-instrument vir setlaar-kolonialisme en die onderwerping van nie-Westerse samelewings. Die ZAR se posisie, geleë tussen ontmenslikende 'etnografiese dorpië', het Frankryk se visie van republikaanse, industrialisasie en rasse-onderskeid tydens die hoogbloei van die 'Stormloop vir Afrika' ondersteun. Met die beskouing van die 1889 Parys *Exposition Universelle* as 'n belangrike handels- en inligtingsentrum vir nywerheid, etnografie en imperiale politiek, ontleed hierdie artikel die ZAR se diplomatieke poging om homself uit te beeld as 'n welvarende setlaarsrepubliek wat daarna gestreef het om die wêreldleier in die goudbedryf te word. As 'n belangrike deelnemer aan die Koloniale Uitstalling, is die ZAR uitgebeeld as 'n Franse republikeinse vennoot en simbool van koloniale medewerking tussen 'n Europese setlaarsgemeenskap en Afrika ekonomieë.

Keywords: Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek; Frankryk; wêreldtentoonstelling; kolonialisme; industrialisasie; goudmynbou; republikaanse; ras; Franco-Afrikanerverhoudinge.

By the mid-19th century, South Africa's political geography was a complex patchwork of British colonies, Boer settler societies and African states. Of all the regions on the African continent, the presence of competing settler polities and identities in southern Africa had the most profound effect on the racialisation of land ownership and labour relations.¹

Divisive colonial policies and continued settler expansion between the Cape Colony and Limpopo River left most of the African population with limited access to productive land. The turbulent period of the mfecane between 1815 and 1840 resulted in the death and forced migration of thousands of Africans.² It was during

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1. R. Ross, 'Settler Colonialism in South Africa, 1652–1899', in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, eds E. Cavanagh and L. Veracini (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 209–222.
 2. E.A. Eldredge, 'Sources of Conflict in Southern Africa, c. 1800–30: The Mfecane Reconsidered', *The Journal of African History*, 33, 1 (1992), 1–35; N. Etherington, 'The

these violent years that the two largest Boer settler republics, the Orange Free State (OFS) and the South African Republic (ZAR), were formally established. Of the two Boer republics, the ZAR's independence was more diplomatically divisive and fragile. Since its establishment after the Great Trek in 1852 in terms of the Sand River Convention, tensions between the South African Republic (*Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek Benoorden de Vaalrivier*) and Britain, including her territorial possessions in southern Africa, were high.³ After regaining its de facto independence from Britain as part of the 1881 Pretoria Convention that ended the First Anglo-Boer War, the ZAR re-emerged as a bankrupt Afrikaner settler state in an increasingly Anglo-German-Portuguese dominated southern Africa. Although, temporarily at least, the ZAR managed to maintain its independence, this came at a significant economic and social cost.⁴ Generations of historians promulgated hagiographic accounts of Paul Kruger's political life,⁵ but it was indeed his election as state president in May 1883 and the diplomatic mission to the London Convention in early 1884 that redefined the ZAR's commitment to republicanism and Afrikaner cultural identity as a counter to British imperialism.⁶

The gold discoveries on the Witwatersrand in the early 1880s, together with Johannesburg's rise as a mining and financial centre, transformed the ZAR from a small agricultural economy into an independent Boer republic on the brink of an industrial revolution.⁷ Gold mining presented the ZAR and the whole southern African regional economy with a long-term economic future and new prospects for industrialisation, but the industry was heavily dependent on extensive capital investments and a coercive, racialised labour regime. In a calculated move to stabilise the international market for South African mining securities during the turbulence of Johannesburg's 1889 financial slump, Kruger's government was presented with a unique opportunity to popularise the early development of the ZAR's gold industry to the international investing public at the Paris 1889 *Exposition Universelle*.⁸ Although President Kruger's attitude to Johannesburg's political and economic

Great Trek in Relation to the Mfecane: A Reassessment', *South African Historical Journal*, 25, 1 (1991), 3-21.

3. P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: 1688-2015* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 344-345.
4. See C.W. De Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa, Social and Economic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), 114; S. Trapido, 'The South African Republic: Class Formation and the State, 1850-1900', *Collected Seminar Papers, Institute of Commonwealth Studies*, 16 (1973).
5. See: P. De Klerk, 'Die Politieke Beskouinge van Paul Kruger-interpretasies oor 'n Tydperk van 125 Jaar,' *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, 46, 2 (2006), 171-183.
6. H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (London: C. Hurst, 2003), 234. It was after the signing of the London Convention in February 1884 that the Transvaal once again had official approval to call the state the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*.
7. See M. Lukasiewicz, 'From Diamonds to Gold: The Making of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, 1880-1890', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 43, 4 (2017), 731.
8. Lukasiewicz, 'From Diamonds to Gold,' 731.

endeavours were often labelled as ‘anti-capitalist’ and his contempt of the Rand’s mining magnates is well documented,⁹ the ZAR’s participation at the Expo presented a unique, albeit isolated case of cooperation with the mining sector. As the only non-French territory from Sub-Saharan Africa invited officially to participate at the Expo, the ZAR was able to use the international event to promote its industrial development and accumulate cultural capital on the highest diplomatic stage.

World’s fairs and similar expositions hosted in different cities around the world were among the largest cultural and political events of the industrial age. Along with the carefully choreographed forms of informal diplomacy and economic networking, they were seen increasingly as vehicles for promoting consumption – of both goods and ideas – throughout the last quarter of the 19th century.¹⁰ The most significant ideas popularised at such international fairs throughout the second half of the century were those showcasing industrialisation, colonialism and race. Almost without exception between 1851 and 1949, major international exhibitions and trade fairs were sponsored by industrialising nations with colonial dependencies. They presented the ideal opportunity to display their colonies, colonised subjects and internally colonised peoples to a paying public.¹¹ Although the 1889 exhibition in Paris was not the first World Exposition since the 1884 Berlin Conference that had formalised the ‘Scramble for Africa’ and sanctioned the partitioning of Africa by European imperial powers, the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* placed colonialism and industrial consumption atop the modernist agenda in a highly racialised exhibition space. The event simultaneously hosted the first French *Congrès Colonial International*, which represented a radical departure from previous imperial propaganda efforts.¹² The colonial invention and imposition of racialisation was a defining element of the 1889 Expo, where ethnographic ‘colonial villages’ reproduced a dehumanising racial hierarchy for the European public.¹³ The Colonial Exhibition, hosted by the French Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Colonies, was conceptualised to display (and perform) the intersectionality of race and settler

9. S. Marks and S. Trapido, ‘Lord Milner and the South African State’, *History Workshop Journal*, 8, 1 (1979), 50-80.

10. See, for example, M. Filipová, *Cultures of International Exhibitions, 1840-1940: Great Exhibitions in the Margins* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015); D. Raizman and E. Robey, eds, *Expanding Nationalisms at World’s Fairs: Identity, Diversity, and Exchange, 1851-1915* (New York: Routledge, 2017); L. De Caeter, ‘The Panoramic Ecstasy: On World Exhibitions and the Disintegration of Experience’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 10, 4 (1993), 1-23.

11. B. Benedict, ‘International Exhibitions and National Identity’, *Anthropology Today*, 7, 3 (1991), 5-9.

12. S.M. Persell, *The French Colonial Lobby, 1889-1938* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983).

13. See L.A. Sánchez-Gómez, ‘Human Zoos or Ethnic Shows? Essence and Contingency in Living Ethnological Exhibitions’, *Culture & History Digital Journal*, 2, 2 (2013), 1-22.

colonialism to a cosmopolitan audience.¹⁴ As an event that celebrated the century of the French Revolution and European industrial progress, it was no coincidence that Pretoria was invited to use the Paris World Fair between May and October 1889 to popularise South Africa's mineral revolution and President Paul Kruger's republican vision of settler ethnocentrism dictated by white, enfranchised 'burghers'.¹⁵ Additionally, with France lagging behind Britain in its imperial race after the loss of considerable territories in the Americas, the Paris Exposition would, it was hoped, reinvigorate French imperial expansionism in Africa.¹⁶ Insofar as it supported France's anti-British stance and settler colonialism, the French Third Republic found an ideal exhibitor in the ZAR.

Viewing the Paris *Exposition Universelle* as an information hub for industry, ethnography and imperial politics, this investigation traces the ZAR's attempt to present itself as a 'modernising' settler republic aspiring to become the world leader of the goldmining industry. The historical literature on Franco-Afrikaner relations has emphasised the agency of high finance and the mining industry in facilitating official diplomatic ties between Paris and Pretoria.¹⁷ With this historiographical factor and premise, the main empirical objective in this article is to analyse the ZAR's participation in the 1889 Paris Expo as a means to expose the origins and contexts of the political, economic and cultural entanglements between France and the ZAR in the final quarter of the nineteenth century. Based mainly on studies of contemporary reports, press accounts and official government publications from Paris and Pretoria, it argues that the ZAR's participation in the 1889 exhibition supported France's vision of republicanism, industrialisation and racialisation in a globalising world. With most of the primary documentation on the exposition coming from French sources, the study is admittedly skewed towards assessing the ZAR's diplomatic and cultural relations from a largely French perspective.

The rest of the article is structured as follows. First, the ZAR's political and economic context is considered as part of diverging settler polities and mineral revolutions within the imperially contested region of southern Africa. Second, the French Third Republic's political and cultural revival is analysed through the lens of the 1889 *Exposition Universelle*. Third, the political, cultural, and economic entanglements between France and the ZAR, particularly those that prompted the

14. Persell, *The French Colonial Lobby*, 8.

15. See T.D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 26-29.

16. Persell, *The French Colonial Lobby*, 8.

17. See, for example: D. Bach, *La France et l'Afrique du Sud: histoire, mythes et enjeux contemporains* (Paris: Karthala, 1990); J.J. van Helten, 'La France et l'Or des Boers: Some Aspects of French Investment in South Africa between 1890 and 1914', *African Affairs*, 84, 335 (1985), 247-263; and G. Hull, 'The French Connection in Africa: Zaire and South Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 5, 2 (1979), 220-233.

‘young republic’s’ official participation in the 1889 Expo, are examined. Fourth, the ZAR pavilion’s functions, contents and ethno-political symbolism as part of the Colonial Exhibition are explored. The final section asserts the impact and legacy of the ZAR’s participation at the 1889 Expo on Franco-Afrikaner relations during the final stage of the ‘scramble for southern Africa’.¹⁸

The settler republic and its mineral revolution

The political and social history of the ZAR is closely linked to the changing nature of settler colonialism and the dispossession of Africans’ land north of the Vaal River.¹⁹ Examining settler colonialism in southern Africa as a specific structure of political domination working to restrict Africans’ access to natural, physical and political resources offers deeper insights into the history of colonial governance and the ‘frontier tradition’ of South African historiography.²⁰ The formal colonisation of the Cape Colony by Britain in 1806 altered the complex and violent interaction between European settlers and Africans in and beyond the colony. This was particularly evident in the cultural divergence between British and Afrikaner settlers.²¹ Although this is not the place for an extensive analysis of the key factors that promoted the Great Trek, the northward expansion of Dutch-speaking Afrikaners from the 1830s markedly affected the context within which European settlers came to dominate the economic and political development of southern Africa.²²

The establishment of the Boer settler republics (the OFS in 1854, the ZAR in 1852, and the short-lived Natalia Republic in 1839) formalised the political conditions for a wider contestation of settler colonisation in southern Africa. With growing British, Portuguese, German, and French imperial ambitions in southern Africa, the landlocked Boer republics were highly vulnerable to external pressure and influence. Within this imperial context, the continued settler expansionism beyond the Kei and Vaal rivers led to the internal displacement and economic migrations of thousands of Africans throughout southern Africa. There was little room for African state-building which challenged British political and economic interests, and restricted territorial

18. See D.M. Schreuder, *The Scramble for Southern Africa, 1877–1895: The Politics of Partition Reappraised* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

19. E. Cavanagh, *Settler Colonialism and Land Rights in South Africa: Possession and Dispossession on the Orange River* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

20. See L. Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); M. Mamdani, ‘Settler Colonialism: Then and Now’, *Critical Inquiry*, 41, 3 (2015), 596-614; M. Legassick, ‘The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography’, *Collected Seminar Papers, Institute of Commonwealth Studies*, 12 (1972), 1-33.

21. R. Ross, *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony, 1750–1870: A Tragedy of Manners* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

22. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*, 42.

sovereignty for the Boer republics.²³ Although the expansion of agriculture and pastoralism allowed many Africans in the OFS and ZAR to compete, and even flourish, in colonial markets, the combined effects of increasing settler populations and ecological constraints put further socio-political pressure on access to, and ownership of, productive land.²⁴

The ZAR's independence was particularly unstable and at the mercy of British colonial administration in southern Africa. Although it was recognised by other colonial governments throughout the British Empire, the republic was not in full control of its territory, population or economy.²⁵ Continued problems with state finances throughout the early 1870s led to a severe debt crisis that brought the Boer republic to the brink of bankruptcy.²⁶ As many African workers moved off to the diamond fields in Kimberley after the discoveries in 1867, the ZAR began to experience significant labour shortages in the agricultural sector, putting great pressure on production and food security. More importantly for the region's already fragile social fabric, the early history of Kimberley diamond mining was marked by institutionalised racism linked to competition over claim ownership, the diamond trade and migrant labour from Pediland, Tsongaland and Basutoland.²⁷ The racialisation of the regional settler economy and labour relations was further exacerbated when the indenture system was adopted, a government-sanctioned kidnapping of Africans, including women and children, for use as forced labour on farms.²⁸ Using Pretoria's fiscal crisis as a pretext to extend British control beyond the colonial frontiers that were regularly contested by armed Boer and Zulu groups, the ZAR was annexed as a British colony in 1877. The formal colonisation of the ZAR greatly affected the historical development of Anglo-Afrikaner-African relations and forged a new republican Afrikaner identity.²⁹ The restoration of the ZAR after the battle at Majuba in early 1881 fed into the Afrikaners' belief in divine protection and destiny.³⁰ The accepted use of the ethnonym 'Afrikaners' as an expression of

23. Feinstein, *An Economic History of South Africa: Conquest, Discrimination, and Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

24. See P. Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us: The Pedi Polity, the Boers, and the British in the Nineteenth-century Transvaal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); C. Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1979).

25. R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 65.

26. De Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa, Social and Economic*, 72.

27. R.V. Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 29-31.

28. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, 184. See, also: Aborigines Protection Society, *The native policy of the Dutch Boers in the Transvaal* (Westminster: P. S. King, 1881)

29. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, 189-190.

30. A. Du Toit, 'No chosen people': The Myth of the Calvinist Origins of Afrikaner Nationalism and Racial Ideology', *The American Historical Review*, 88, 4 (1983), 920-

identifying them as white Africans and London's approval to use the South African Republic (as opposed to the Transvaal) as the official name of the state, was indeed a political signal of the settlers' growing sense of belonging and republican citizenship in the southern African region.³¹

The ZAR regained its independence and republican status in terms of the London Conventions of 1881 and 1884, largely as a measure to limit imperial defence spending.³² However, the agreements did not grant them complete sovereignty and the state was still on the verge of bankruptcy. Despite President Kruger's diplomatic efforts to expand the borders and grant more land to the Boers, the ZAR's economy remained too dependent on colonial investments to unite Afrikaner settlers within the self-governing republican state.³³ As the political and economic fate of southern Africa would have it, the discoveries of gold in the ZAR in the early 1880s, with Johannesburg soon at the centre of the new gold rush, came at a critical time during the 'scramble for Africa' and presented Kruger's government in Pretoria with the necessary revenue to bankroll its independence from Britain. Just as the Kimberley diamond industry coincided with the onset of responsible settler government in the Cape Colony and underwrote the financing of numerous railway projects,³⁴ the gold discoveries intensified the pace of economic and social change by attracting foreign capital, manufacturers, and settlers, and by drawing more migrant wage labour from African communities.³⁵

With respect to its transformative effect on the politics, society and the economics of the regions, the importance of the 19th century 'mineral revolution' has long been recognised as the central factor in South Africa's violent and racialised history.³⁶ The discovery of the world's richest diamond deposits in the late 1860s in Griqualand West marked the beginning of this period of upheaval, and from the 1880s, gold discoveries ensured that the ZAR, and soon enough the whole southern African regional economy, experienced a socio-economic transformation which came to be dominated by industrial capitalism and international finance.³⁷ More

952. See also I. Hexham, 'Dutch Calvinism and the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism,' *African Affairs*, 79, 315 (1980), 195-208.

31. S. Dubow, *Apartheid, 1948-1994* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 17.

32. N. Parsons, *King Khama, Emperor Joe, and the Great White Queen: Victorian Britain Through African Eyes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 17.

33. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, 179.

34. A. Easton and A. Gwaindepi, 'Colonial Extractivism and Development: The State and Private Diamond Extraction at the British Cape Colony, 1870-1910', *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 8, 3 (2021), 12.

35. Feinstein, *An Economic History of South Africa*, 3.

36. J. Davenport, *Digging Deep: A History of Mining in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2013), 17. See also S. Trapido, 'South Africa in a Comparative Study of Industrialization', *The Journal of Development Studies*, 7, 3 (1971), 309-320.

37. Lukasiewicz, 'From Diamonds to Gold'.

importantly, as a source of deepening social and racial inequality, the settler republic – encouraged by Johannesburg’s leading mining companies and the Witwatersrand Chamber of Mines – committed itself to the creation of an African working class and ‘white labour aristocracy’.³⁸ The Rand, as it became colloquially known, became the industrial heart of southern Africa and shifted the regional economic prospects in favour of the ZAR, fuelling Kruger’s quasi-religious convictions that Afrikaner republicanism set the settler state on a messianic path of political, economic and cultural redemption from British colonial rule.³⁹

With most of the economic potential centred on Johannesburg and all its political authority in Pretoria, the ZAR’s political unity remained fragile at best. During the year of 1887, the ZAR’s state revenue almost tripled as a result of the economic and financial developments in Johannesburg.⁴⁰ State finances were largely dependent on the Rand’s goldfields, but left President Kruger suspicious of Johannesburg’s financial sector and the arrival of mining prospectors from all over the world.⁴¹ It was also within the political context of Johannesburg’s growing international community of mining prospectors and financiers that Pretoria needed to establish diplomatic relations with other states and allow them to set up diplomatic missions in the ZAR. According to the Pretoria Convention, the British High Commission for Southern Africa held suzerainty over the ZAR, but the republic was allowed to establish its own Foreign Ministry and consular representations in other countries.⁴² By the end of 1888, Britain, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the Ottoman Empire, Portugal and Switzerland had official representation and missions in Pretoria.⁴³

France, especially, viewed the political developments in the Boer republics as an opportunity to extend its imperial influence south of the Zambezi River and challenge the unity of the Anglo-Portuguese alliance to counter Germany’s increasing colonial presence in southern Africa.⁴⁴ Since the arrival of French

38. H. Wolpe, ‘The “White Working Class” in South Africa’, *Economy and Society*, 5, 2 (1976), 197-240; J.L. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 2: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 217.

39. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, 234-238.

40. F. Jeppe, *Jeppe’s Transvaal Almanac and Directory for 1889* (Cape Town: The Argus Printing and Publishing Company, 1889), 51.

41. M. Lukasiewicz, ‘Bourses, Banks, and Boers: Johannesburg’s French Connections and the Paris Krach of 1895’, *Economic History of Developing Regions*, 36, 2 (2021), 129.

42. ‘The Convention of Pretoria. 3 August 1881. Convention for the Settlement of the Transvaal Territory’, in D.M. Schreuder, *Gladstone and Kruger: Liberal Government and Colonial ‘Home Rule’ 1880–85* (London: Routledge, 2018), 489-496.

43. Jeppe, *Jeppe’s Transvaal Almanac for 1889*, 123.

44. M. Maubrey, ‘Les Français et le ‘Veau d’or’: La Question Sud-Africaine (1896–1902)’, in *La France et L’Afrique du Sud Histoires, Mythes, et Enjeux Contemporains*, ed. D. Bach, (Paris: Karthala, 1990), 37-40. See, also: P.R. Warhurst, *Anglo-Portuguese*

Huguenots at the Cape in the 17th century, French diplomats kept a close watch over developments at the southern tip of Africa.⁴⁵ After Britain's seizure of control of the Cape Colony during the Napoleonic Wars, French politicians drew close parallels between South Africa and the identity politics of settler colonialism in Canada.⁴⁶ Parisian banks also monitored the political developments in Britain's settler colonies in southern Africa closely, making their own investments in the Cape Colony's wool and diamond sectors from the early 1860s.⁴⁷ However, the first attempts by the French to establish commercial relations and representation beyond the British settler colonies and in the Boer republics, came in 1875 with Herman Toubeau's proposal to open a French trade office in Pretoria.⁴⁸

Direct French diplomatic interest in the commercial affairs of the ZAR were formalised with the establishment of the French Consulate in Pretoria in March 1887.⁴⁹ Accordingly, a professional diplomat, Victor-Stéphane Aubert, was sent to Pretoria in December 1886 after 24 years' experience in the Netherlands.⁵⁰ Well-acquainted with the workings of the financial sector from his time in Amsterdam, Aubert was convinced that Johannesburg's mining and finance industries were central to the future economic development of the settler republic and he urged Paris to safeguard Pretoria's independence.⁵¹ France's Foreign Ministry immediately recognised President Kruger's republicanism as a key political strategy to counteract British colonial policies in southern Africa, and instructed Aubert to confer the *Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur* on President Kruger in a grand ceremony held in Pretoria on 6 June 1888.⁵² Although initial diplomatic support was geared towards facilitating greater French private investments in the ZAR's transportation and telecommunication infrastructure, Paris' growing interest in the Witwatersrand meant that it directed the diplomatic mission to focus on the numerous investment opportunities in the mining and finance sectors.

Relations in South-Central Africa: 1890-1900 (London: Longmans, 1962); U. Lindner, *Koloniale Begegnungen: Deutschland und Großbritannien als Imperialmächte in Afrika 1880-1914* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2011).

45. D. Bach, *La France et l'Afrique du Sud: histoire, mythes et enjeux contemporains*, 29-31; and O. Stanwood, *The Global Refuge: Huguenots in an Age of Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).
46. R. Page, 'Canada and the Imperial Idea in the Boer War Years', *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 5, 1 (1970), 33-49. See also J. Aron, *Canada Transvaal* (Paris: Albert Savine, 1896).
47. Van Helten, 'La France et l'Or des Boers', 248.
48. National Archives Repository, Pretoria (hereafter NARSA). Herman Toubeau to State Secretary. TAB SS 193. 26 July 1875.
49. Archives diplomatiques du ministère des Affaires étrangères, Paris (hereafter ADA). Correspondance Commerciale Pretoria, Tome 7, 3 March 1887.
50. Maubrey, *Les Français et le 'Veau d'or': La Question Sud-Africaine (1896-1902)*, 59.
51. Aubert, *Exposition universelle de 1889 à Paris. La République Sud-Africaine, situation économique et commerciale en 1889*, 34.
52. ADA, *Correspondance Commerciale Pretoria 1887-1895*, Tome 7, 15 June 1888.

French revival and the *fête du progrès*

After its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1871, France experienced a decline in its political and economic position in Europe. With Alsace and Lorraine ceded to the new German Empire, it lost significant influence in the coal, iron and steel industries.⁵³ The defeat was also a humiliating show of military ineffectiveness, seeming to confirm that the *Grande Nation* was beginning to fall behind in its industrial development. It also brought an end to France's Second Empire and the abdication of Napoleon III. Following the military, political and economic humiliation, French *Revanchism* became a new diplomatic strategy.⁵⁴

The Third Republic, officially established during the war on 4 September 1870, represented an attempt to restore the spirit of the French Revolution by extending citizen participation and bolstering the diminished economy. On the international stage, the leadership of the new republic sought to make France stronger in Europe and challenge Britain and Germany as a global colonial power.⁵⁵

Africa now became the central pillar of the Third Republic's imperialist ambitions.⁵⁶ Although France's presence in West Africa can be dated back to the early 17th century, it was not until the 19th century that it made significant efforts to expand direct territorial control into the interior of the continent.⁵⁷ In a process that was already initiated by the occupation and colonial settlement of Algeria in the 1830s, the Third Republic was determined to acquire new territories to maintain what had been termed 'Greater France', and, more decisively, to leverage imperial confrontations with Britain and Germany to justify the growth of its own colonial empire.⁵⁸ France's military invasion of Madagascar in 1883 was indeed a catalyst for renewed aspirations to challenge Britain, Germany and Portugal in southern Africa.⁵⁹

The ideological motivations behind nineteenth-century French imperialism were as varied as monarchism, Bonapartism and internationalism, and were far more

53. A. Conklin, S. Fishman and R. Zaretsky, *France and its Empire since 1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 27-8.

54. F. Brown, *The Embrace of Unreason: France, 1914-1940* (New York: Anchor Books, 2014), 8.

55. M. Hewitson, 'Germany and France before the First World War: A Reassessment of Wilhelmine Foreign Policy', *The English Historical Review*, 115, 462 (2000), 581-582.

56. G. Bourgin, *La troisième république, 1870-1914* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1967) and M. C. Andersen, *Regeneration through Empire: French Pronatalists and Colonial Settlement in the Third Republic* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 25-28.

57. C. Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa, 1860-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 8.

58. Conklin, Fishman, and Zaretsky, *France and its Empire since 1870*, 72-3.

59. See G. Campbell, 'Currency Crisis, Missionaries, and the French Takeover in Madagascar, 1861-1895', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 21, 2 (1988), 273-289.

complex than the supposed pragmatism resulting from the post-war economic, political and social changes that had taken place within the country.⁶⁰ Republicans insisted that by the virtue of its unique culture and history, France had a duty to extend the *mission civilisatrice* to the rest of the world.⁶¹ As the term implied, an almost religious fervour had taken root in France, an imperative to export the values of the Enlightenment and revolutionary ideals through education, assimilation, metropolitan identity and, where necessary, also violence.⁶² Furthermore, the *mission civilisatrice* was based not only on France's own sense of cultural supremacy, but drew increasingly on European theories of racial superiority and domination.⁶³ France's own dawn of 'scientific' racism, spurred by the economic importance of slave-based colonies in the Caribbean, has been traced to the Bordeaux Royal Academy of Sciences' notorious essay contest, held in 1741, that was commissioned to explain the origins of African physical traits.⁶⁴ The Third Republic, a period that finally applied the 'universal' Rights of Man, ironically became the very era when so-called 'scientific racism' became deeply institutionalised and embedded in metropolitan France.⁶⁵ For French republicans, there was no contradiction between universalism and racism, with the colonial *mission civilisatrice* invoked to delineate and justify excluding colonial subjects from full political rights as French citizens.⁶⁶ The new chapter of French republicanism, now conceived as a cultural self-legitimation programme, presented the Third Republic with a conflicting mission to both educate the non-European world and subjugate humans in the name of the French Revolution.⁶⁷

Although the Third Republic was forging a new identity for France's domestic and foreign affairs, cosmopolitan Paris remained the European capital of the 19th century.⁶⁸ The urban restructuring programmes that transformed the city under

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60. C.M. Andrew, 'The French Colonialist Movement during the Third Republic: The Unofficial Mind of Imperialism', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 26 (1976), 143-166.
 61. See D. Costantini, *Mission civilisatrice. Le rôle de l'histoire coloniale dans la construction de l'identité politique française* (Paris: La Découverte, 2008).
 62. H. Fischer-Tiné and M. Mann, eds *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India* (London: Anthem Press, 2004), 4-6.
 63. See P.M. Lorcin, 'Imperialism, Colonial Identity, and Race in Algeria, 1830-1870: The Role of the French Medical Corps', *Isis*, 90, 4 (1999), 653-679.
 64. H.L. Gates Jr and A.S. Curran, eds *Who's Black and Why? A Hidden Chapter from the Eighteenth-century Invention of Race* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2022), x-xi.
 65. E.J. Amster, *Medicine and the Saints: Science, Islam, and the Colonial Encounter in Morocco, 1877-1956* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), 51.
 66. Amster, *Medicine and the Saints*, 51.
 67. See Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).
 68. W. Benjamin, 'Paris, Capital of the 19th Century', *New Left Review*, 48 (1968), 77-88. See, also: D. Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

Baron Haussmann were now directed towards creating a functional urban environment for the economic regeneration and consumption needs of Paris's growing rentier class.⁶⁹ With its new boulevards, arcades and monuments, the city served as a material expression of French cultural revival.⁷⁰ Although France still lagged behind Britain and Germany in economic terms, the growing role of Paris as Europe's trade capital allowed French authorities to capitalise on the presence of international financial intermediaries for strategic political gains.⁷¹ *Fin de siècle* Paris was a place and time where the relationship between commerce, industry and consumerism re-defined public life. The institutionalisation of this predominantly bourgeois commercial space for political and economic gain came in the form of world expositions.⁷² At the time, World Fairs were major events where Western states promoted their national identities and economic aspirations in carefully choreographed cultural exchanges.⁷³ In the second half of the century, Paris hosted four world trade expositions (in 1855, 1867, 1878 and 1889), each of which drew millions of international visitors and made Paris a global centre of technology, trade and tourism.⁷⁴ It was, however, the 1889 Exposition that reinvented national identity for the industrial and imperial age.⁷⁵ Coined as the *fête du progrès*, the 1889 Expo was intended to unite a celebration of the French political and industrial revolutions with the republican motto of 'science, modernisation and industrialisation'.⁷⁶ Indeed, it was after President Jules Grevy's re-election in 1886 that Gustav Eiffel was given the task – and the budget – for completing the tallest industrial structure in the world as the main highlight of the exhibition and a symbol of the Industrial Age.⁷⁷ With the Eiffel Tower looming in the background, the *Exposition Universelle de Paris* was designed to celebrate European and Western modernity in the era of industrialisation and colonialism.

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69. D.H. Pinkney, 'Money and Politics in the Rebuilding of Paris, 1860–1870', *The Journal of Economic History*, 17, 1 (1957), 45–61; T. Piketty, G. Postel-Vinay and J-L. Rosenthal, 'Inherited vs Self-made Wealth: Theory and evidence from a Rentier Society (Paris 1872–1927)', *Explorations in Economic History*, 51 (2014), 21–40.
70. Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, 89.
71. A. Yates, 'Investor Letters and the Everyday Practice of Finance in Nineteenth-Century France', *French Historical Studies*, 44, 2 (2021), 279–305.
72. F. Ichikawa, 'Expositions Universelles as Sacred Places: A View from Modern Paris World Expositions', *Senri Ethnological Studies*, 82 (2013), 113–122.
73. Raizman, and Robey eds, *Expanding Nationalisms at World's Fairs*, 1–2.
74. France. *Bureau International des Expositions (BIE)*. <https://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/france> For a quantification of Parisian Expos, see: Ichikawa, 'Expositions Universelles as Sacred Places'.
75. W. Kaiser, 'Vive la France! Vive la République? the Cultural Construction of French Identity at the World Exhibitions in Paris 1855–1900', *National Identities*, 1, 3 (1999), 227.
76. P. Ory, *L'Expo universelle 1889* (Paris: Karthala, 1990), 9; Conklin, Fishman and Zaretsky, *France and its Empire since 1870*, 27–8.
77. E. Monod, *L'Exposition universelle de 1889: grand ouvrage illustré, historique, encyclopédique, descriptif* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1890), 3.

Participation in World's Fairs and international expositions was seen as a vital diplomatic component for states to showcase their industrial potential and celebrate their ties to the host country.⁷⁸ However, mixing diplomacy with economic opportunities was made particularly problematic for many imperial powers by the official decision to include the celebration of the centenary of the French Revolution at the 1889 Exposition. Most European monarchs refused to participate in an international event that celebrated the overthrow of a monarchy, resulting in numerous official boycotts of the event. The countries with official representation were Andorra, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, the Kingdom of Hawaii, Honduras, Japan, Morocco, Mexico, Monaco, Nicaragua, Norway, Paraguay, Persia, Saint-Martin, El Salvador, the Kingdom of Serbia, Siam, the South African Republic, Switzerland, the United States of America and Uruguay.⁷⁹ Despite boycotting the event officially, European imperial powers such as Britain, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, the Ottoman Empire, Portugal, Russia and Spain were loath to miss out and still organised their national pavilions as official trade delegations.

The 1889 Expo was officially opened on 5 May by President Sadi Carnot and continued until 31 October 1889. Covering an area of 96 hectares, it featured more than 61 000 exhibitors housed in 35 national, 18 colonial, and 30 private pavilions.⁸⁰ The exhibition grounds centred around the Champ de Mars, Palais du Trocadéro and Esplanade des Invalides. The purpose-built Palais des Machines was the showground for the very latest examples of steam and electricity powered machinery, which were displayed producing goods such as farming tools, textiles, clothing, various food items, paper and musical instruments.⁸¹ The iron and steel industries shared the spotlight in celebrating the scientific power of engineering, but it was the ethnographic display of colonial societies and economies that drew the largest crowds and generated the most controversial debates.⁸²

Beyond the Eiffel Tower, the Palais des Machines and the Palais des Beaux-Arts, it was the *Rue du Caire*. This exhibit attracted the most fee-paying visitors and quickly became the disputed cultural symbol of the exposition. Overflowing with orientalist

78. B. Schröder-Gudehus, 'Les Grandes Puissances Devant L'Exposition Universelle De 1889', *Le Mouvement Social*, 149 (1989), 15-24. See also: A. Geppert, J. Coffey, and T. Lau, *International Exhibitions, Expositions Universelles and World's Fairs, 1851-2005: A Bibliography* (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2006).

79. Schröder-Gudehus, 'Les Grandes Puissances Devant'.

80. S. Ageorges, *Sur les traces des expositions universelles: Paris, 1855-1937: à la recherche des pavillons et des monuments oubliés/textes et photographies* (Paris: Parigramme, 2006.), 76-9.

81. J.W. Stamper, 'The Galerie des Machines of the 1889 Paris World's Fair', *Technology and Culture*, 30, 2(1989), 330-353.

82. V. Smil, *Still the Iron Age: Iron and Steel in the Modern World* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2016), 35-45.

stereotypes of the Middle East and Islam, the *Rue du Caire* was a crude representation of colonial Cairo, complete with an oriental bazaar, mosque, Ottoman cafes, belly dancers and donkey carts. It was this ethnographic reproduction of prevailing Western ideas of orientalism and colonialism that dominated the 1889 Exposition to the great satisfaction of European crowds. Located within the same exhibition space as the Eiffel Tower and the Palais des Machines, the Colonial Exhibition, hosted by the French Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Colonies depicted a rigid racial hierarchy.⁸³ This state-sanctioned visual spectacle unmistakably reinforced Eurocentric and hegemonic patterns of knowledge production.

The argument here is that ethnographic exhibits presented and indeed intensified racialised power relations between the colonisers and the colonised.⁸⁴ More broadly, the idea of ‘human zoos’ that was clearly enacted in Paris corresponded to the objectification and commodification of human bodies in the economic context of colonial encounters.⁸⁵ For the host city, the reconstitution of colonial territories and colonised peoples in racially charged *villages coloniales* was meant to justify France’s *mission civilisatrice* to local and international visitors.⁸⁶ France had just strengthened its presence in West Africa by colonising the Côte d’Ivoire and it now opened the *École coloniale* a short distance from the colonial exhibits explaining that this was a significant advance as part of republican efforts to train a new generation of colonial administrators and local collaborators. More importantly to the organisers, who were driven by profit and the need to attract paying visitors, the visual framing and performance of colonialism was integrated into the popular culture of Paris’s new middle class. History, geography and racialised ethnography were presented in terms that the public could understand, fostering feelings of pride in the French Empire.⁸⁷

From Pretoria to Paris: *la jeune République* at the expo

The Boers’ victory at Majuba and the re-establishment of the ZAR’s independent status in 1881 provided a unique opportunity for the French Foreign Ministry to re-

83. P. Young, ‘From the Eiffel Tower to the Javanese Dancer: Envisioning Cultural Globalization at the 1889 Paris Exhibition’, *The History Teacher*, 41, 3(2008), 357.

84. See Z. Çelik and L. Kinney, ‘Ethnography and Exhibitionism at the Expositions Universelles’, *Assemblage*, 13 (1990), 35-59.

85. See W. Putnam, ‘“Please Don’t Feed the Natives”: Human Zoos, Colonial Desire, and Bodies on Display’, in *The Environment in French and Francophone Literature and Film* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 55-68; K. Arnold, ‘Fashioning an Imperial Metropolis at the 1896 Berliner Gewerbeausstellung’, *The Historical Journal*, 65, 3 (2022), 698-9.

86. A. Bouyer, ‘Exotisme et commerce: Les «villages noirs» dans les expositions françaises (1889-1937)’, *Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire*, 90, 338 (2003), 273-291. L. Godineau, ‘L’économie sociale à l’exposition universelle de 1889’, *Le Mouvement social*, (1989), 71-87.

87. Persell, *The French Colonial Lobby*, 8.

shape its political and economic agenda for southern Africa.⁸⁸ The opening of the French Consulate in Pretoria in 1887 was indicative of deepening cultural and political ties between the two republics, but it was the financial investments in Johannesburg's gold industry that provided the stimulus for widespread French interest in the ZAR.⁸⁹ Paris quickly became home to financial intermediaries specialising in the sale of South African mining stocks and French investors became increasingly concerned with gaining faster access to financial intelligence coming out of Pretoria and Johannesburg.⁹⁰ French chambers of trade and commerce, interested in the ZAR's burgeoning industrial potential, followed the October 1887 negotiations closely and were enthusiastic about the first trade treaty signed between the two states.⁹¹ Throughout the years 1888 and 1889, the French Consulate in Pretoria acted more like a colonial agent and lobbyist for French industry than a diplomatic mission. Following up on the search for a 'Second Rand' from British media, the French Foreign Minister, Eugène Spulle, personally requested that Aubert provide Paris with more information about commercial opportunities to the north of the ZAR in Matabeleland and Mashonaland.⁹²

The Parisian financial sector in particular, followed Johannesburg's gold production and first speculative boom with great interest.⁹³ Just as they had done before with Cape Colonial securities, French investors became significant holders of ZAR mining shares during the early days of the Rand.⁹⁴ The early economic development and accompanying financial speculation throughout 1887 and 1888 was, however, hampered by the discovery that the oxidation processing methods used at the surface of the main Johannesburg reefs had very little impact on the ore to be found below 100 feet. At the beginning of 1889 it was confirmed that gold in the ore mined at a deep-level resisted amalgamation with the old method of using mercury. More significantly, for the future development of gold mining in South Africa, it became increasingly apparent that the only way forward was to create a new deep-level industry built on the common interests of financial, mining and trans-imperial political networks.⁹⁵ However, the brief downturn in the ZAR's first mining boom did not deter French investors and even prompted French banks such as Parisbas and Credit Lyonnais to give active support to the formation of what would become known as the 'group system', whereby individual mines were incorporated into large international holding companies.⁹⁶

88. ADA, Afrique Australe, 1862-1887, Tome 1, IMD/103.

89. ADA, Correspondance Commerciale, Pretoria, 1887-1895, Tome 1, 31 January 1887.

90. Lukasiewicz, 'Bourses, Banks, and Boers, 124-148.

91. ADA, Correspondance Commerciale, Pretoria, 1887-1895, Tome 1, 5 October 1887.

92. ADA, Correspondance Commerciale, Pretoria, 1887-1895, Tome 1, 4 August 1889.

93. Van Helten, 'La France et l'Or des Boers', 251.

94. C. Lamy, *Annuaire Français des Mines D'Or: Transvaal, Sudafrique* (Paris: Charles Lamy, 1896), 12-14.

95. See R. Kubicek, 'Finance Capital and South African Goldmining, 1886-1914', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 3, 3 (1975), 386-395.

96. Archives historiques de Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas (hereafter PBA), Wernher,

The growing entanglement of commercial and political interests between Paris, Pretoria and Johannesburg was ultimately confirmed by France's eagerness to include the ZAR in the 1889 *Exposition Universelle*. The joint lobbying by the mining magnates who formed the Chamber of Mines and a number of Parisian banks prompted the French Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Colonies to invite the ZAR to the 1889 *Exposition Universelle*.⁹⁷ The French consulate in Pretoria discussed the republic's participation with Kruger's government throughout the second half of 1888 and advertised the explicit involvement of Johannesburg's mining and finance industries.⁹⁸ The French-initiated and coordinated effort to include the ZAR also dispels any suggestion that it was Pretoria's government that was actively promoting the international ambitions of Johannesburg's mining industry. The presence of the 'young republic' as an official exhibitor at the exposition was to serve specifically as an information hub for furthering commercial and colonial interests in southern Africa.⁹⁹ Additionally, and more importantly for the propaganda objectives of the Colonial Exhibition, the participation and portrayal of Boer settlers, who were ironically minimally involved in Johannesburg's mining and finance sectors, perfectly complemented the French colonial ministry's efforts to idealise settler colonialism in Africa.¹⁰⁰

The acceptance of the invitation to participate in the exposition was a significant diplomatic development. An official delegation committee was formed in the ZAR in May 1888, headed by state attorneys De Villiers and Van der Burg.¹⁰¹ With much at stake for any industrialising economy, the ZAR's pavilion was organised and managed under the personal supervision of Aubert.¹⁰² The ZAR government subsidised the pavilion with an official budget of £3 000.¹⁰³ This was a relatively modest budget for a national participant, even in comparison to much smaller delegations staged by Bolivia, Greece, Guatemala, Morocco and El Salvador.¹⁰⁴ In France, the ZAR government's contribution was nonetheless seen as significant for a settler republic that was invited to participate for the first time and had less than nine months to prepare.¹⁰⁵

Beit et Cie to Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas, 11DFOM/221/34, 10 July 1894.

97. South African Chamber of Mines Archive (hereafter SACMA), *Witwatersrand Chamber of Mines Annual Report 1890*, 1891, 11.

98. ADA, Correspondance Commerciale Pretoria, 1887-1895, Tome 7, 15 June 1888.

99. *Les merveilles de l'Exposition de 1889* (Paris: A la librairie illustrée, 1889), 907.

100. See: *Recueil des délibérations du congrès colonial national, Paris, 1889-1890*, Tome 1 (Paris: Congrès colonial international, 1890).

101. A. Picard, *Exposition universelle internationale de 1889 à Paris*, Vol. 7 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1892), 360.

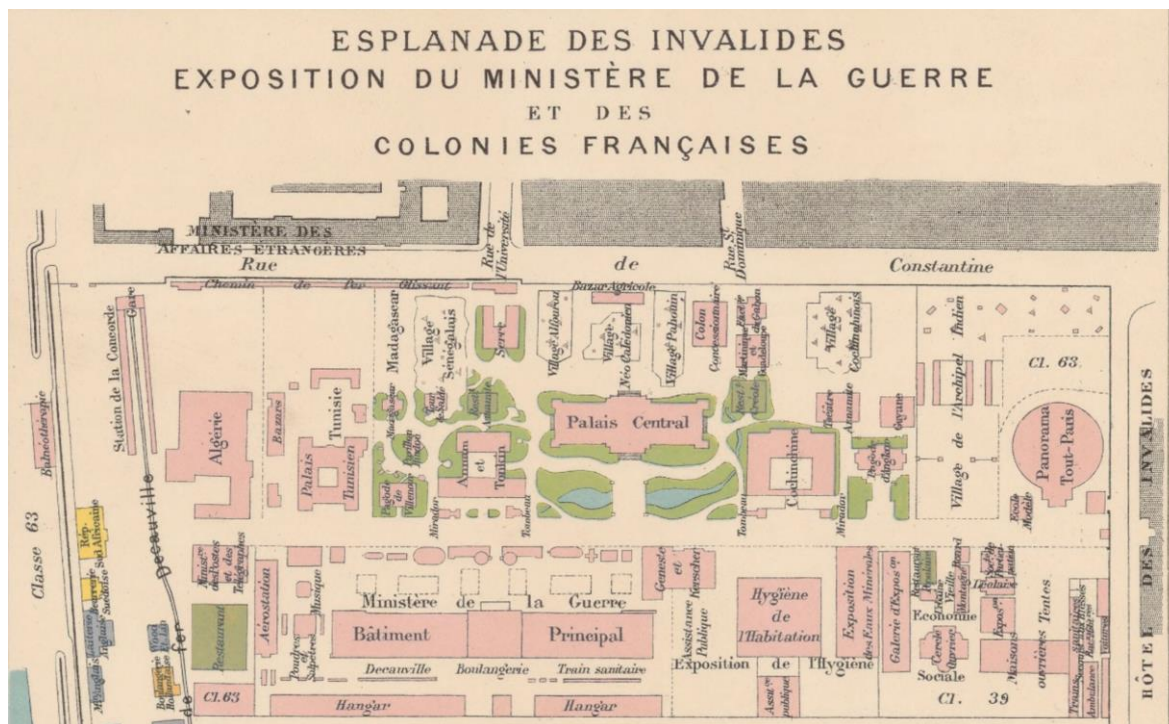
102. See V-S. Aubert, *Exposition universelle de 1889 à Paris. La République Sud-Africaine, situation économique et commerciale en 1889* (Paris: G. Chamerot, 1889), 5-8.

103. Picard, *Exposition universelle internationale de 1889 à Paris*, Vol. 7, 360.

104. Picard, *Exposition universelle internationale de 1889 à Paris*, Vol. 7, 360.

105. Afrique du Sud. Worldfairs.info. https://www.worldfairs.info/expopavillondetails.php?expo_id=6&pavillon_id=2507

Figure 1: General plan of the Colonial Exhibition



Source: (In Public Domain) *Exposition universelle de 1889. Plan général des divers palais*. Paris: Erhard Fres, 1889. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b530251127/f1.item.r=exposition%20universelle%20de%201889.zoom> (ZAR pavilion on far left.)

Johannesburg’s financial and geological setbacks in early 1889 served as the economic backdrop to the gold mining sector’s urgent attempts to mobilise the industry to improve its international reputation. With clear economic opportunities for Johannesburg’s mines at stake, France’s invitation came at a time of heightened political tensions between the Rand’s mining magnates and Pretoria’s Ministry of Mines. In addition to the financial infrastructure, the most significant organisation for Johannesburg’s mining sector to emerge in the final months of 1887 was the Chamber of Mines.¹⁰⁶ Despite Carl Jeppe, Joseph Robinson and several other members of the Chamber’s Executive Committee having strong commercial and political connections to President Kruger, as an industry representative organisation, the Chamber of Mines was virtually powerless against the government’s policies for the Witwatersrand. The Minister of Mines, Christiaan Joubert, was critical of the Chamber, stating that its leaders were unfit to hold office, and were showing no intention of cooperating with the Ministry of Mines in any way that would benefit the economic and social development of the ZAR.¹⁰⁷ At this stage, the Chamber of Mines had no official recognition or political status in Pretoria, and it was indeed the Ministry of Mines that represented the ZAR’s mining sector at the Paris exposition.¹⁰⁸

106. ‘Organisation and Administration of the Witwatersrand Gold Mining Industry’, in C.W. Jeppe Biccard, *Gold Mining in SA* (London: Todd Publishing, 1948), 77-83.

107. ‘Truth and its Statements’, *Standard and Diggers News*, 18 May 1889, 2-3.

108. ‘Concerning Mining’, *Standard and Diggers News*, 9 April 1889, 3.

With all the political power of the ZAR residing in Pretoria's government institutions, Johannesburg's mining interests rested with the government's desire to showcase itself as an equal among other exhibiting nations and to promote settler colonialism at a critical period of industrial development.

Inside the pavilion

The ZAR's pavilion was officially inaugurated on 7 June 1889 by George Berger, the director general of 'foreign sections' at the expo.¹⁰⁹ It was positioned on the outskirts of the French Ministry of War exhibition where French colonies, protectorates, and mandated territories surrounded the main Palais des Colonies.¹¹⁰ As the only non-French territory, the ZAR's pavilion was however an important addition to the portrayal of settler colonies in Africa. It claimed to provide a visible contrast to the animation aligned with the 'colonial villages' as opposed to the ethnographic villages where participants lived and 'performed' for the visitors. The ZAR pavilion was only open for a few hours per day and served as a direct point of contact with the Pretoria government.

The total surface area assigned to the ZAR's exhibition space was 264 m².¹¹¹ In terms of size, the small yet varied exhibition was said to represent a 'vigorous diplomatic effort' by a new settler republic in Africa and that it was an industrialising state.¹¹² The pavilion was designed by Alphonse Marchegay, a celebrated mining engineer from Lyon, and claimed to be a close replica of a Witwatersrand mining company headquarters. It was built entirely of wood and consisted of 'one large twelve by nine metre quadrangular hall and an extensive veranda bordered by light-blue balustrades'.¹¹³ The corrugated iron roof, ventilation shafts running up to the ceiling and the typical sash windows reminiscent of mining camps were chosen to convey an informal structure, albeit with a definite industrial purpose.¹¹⁴ The raised veranda stretched the entire length and sides of the building, representing the Pretoria-styled *stoep* that was used as a transition area between the public and private space. The simple, functional design was to make it easier to transport the exhibit to the Netherlands where it was to be re-used in an industrial fair in Amsterdam at the end of 1889.¹¹⁵

109. 'Courrier de l'Exposition', *Le Figaro*, 8 June 1889, 2.

110. A. Fauser, *Musical Encounters at the 1889 Paris World's Fair* (London: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), 158.

111. Picard, *Exposition universelle internationale de 1889 à Paris*, Tome 3, 149.

112. Afrique du Sud. Worldfairs.info. https://www.worldfairs.info/expopavillondetails.php?expo_id=6&pavillon_id=2507

113. *Guide illustre de l'Exposition Universelle 1889* (Paris: L. Danel, 1889), 150.

114. Picard, *Exposition universelle internationale de 1889*, Tome 2, 240.

115. Picard, *Exposition universelle internationale*, Tome 2, 240.

Figure 2: The South African Republic's official pavilion



Source: (In public domain). Huard, Charles-Lucien. *Livre d'or de l'Exposition 1889*. Boulanger, 1889, 333.

For the exhibition's organisers, southern Africa's ongoing mining revolution was central to the portrayal of the ZAR vis-à-vis European colonies in Africa. The politicised representation of the ZAR's republican exceptionalism in southern Africa was reinforced by the causal link between the mining industry and intensified settler colonialism. Corresponding with French republican ideals being institutionalised at the *Congrès Colonial International*,¹¹⁶ the ZAR reflected the prevailing relationship between colonialism, industrialisation, and the racialised economy. Visitors to the pavilion were led through a wooden archway decorated with official insignia, flanked by heroic-style paintings depicting Boer settlers on horseback. This settler colonial theme celebrating Boer 'heroism', economic ingenuity and resistance to British colonialism was visually contrasted with the subjugation of African peoples and the racialised division of labour.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, and in a manner that was indicative of the ZAR's early political, social, and economic development, the production and representation of these settler identities transpired within a hyper-masculine organisational space. Catering to the hierarchical intentions of the colonial exhibition and the ZAR's own ethnocentric reinvention, Boer settlers were ethnically and socially elevated to an equal status with other European settlers in the colonial world.¹¹⁸

116. R.F. Betts, 'The French Colonial Empire and the French World-view', in *Racism and Colonialism*, ed. R. Ross (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1982), 65-77. See, also *Congrès Colonial International De Paris, 1889-1890*, Ministère du Commerce, de l'Industrie et des colonies (Paris: A. Challamel, 1890).

117. S. Patterson, *The Last Trek: A Study of the Boer People and the Afrikaner Nation* (London: Routledge, 2004), 38.

118. Aubert, *Exposition universelle de 1889 à Paris. La République Sud-Africaine, situation*

A total of 43 exhibitors were invited by the ZAR's government to present their wares and products to the international public.¹¹⁹ Most of the exhibits displayed had been submitted previously to Pretoria's Department of Mines by the Chamber of Mines. It was felt imperative to display how gold mining was transforming the settler republic, with a view to enticing international investors. Large samples of iron, lead, copper, zinc and silver were displayed around the centrepiece of a large golden obelisk that housed multiple bars of South African gold weighing a reported 10 000kg. Viewers were informed that the display represented the monthly gold production on the Witwatersrand. Gold bars and nuggets of various sizes were chosen from all mining regions of the ZAR, showcasing the variety and abundance of minerals to be found throughout the republic. Although gold was the main focus of the exhibit, the ZAR also emphasised the availability of large coal deposits needed for the development of industry. Surface coal mines from the regions of Heidelberg, Sandfontein, and Wakkerstroom submitted samples to illustrate their geological diversity and convenient proximity to Johannesburg's gold industry. In addition to these exhibits, the technology and chemical processes used in the extraction were also visualised with models, engineering plans and photographs provided by Fredrich Jeppe, the ZAR's state cartographer and geographer.¹²⁰ Project plans and photographs were also on display, showing the almost completed railway line linking the coalfields of Boksburg with Johannesburg. The rail link was celebrated as a significant industrial milestone. Given the ZAR's rising demand for iron and steel, another special display was used to encourage foreign investment in a project to initiate the ZAR's first steelworks.

The display of the ZAR's manufactured goods was less extensive, but the products were carefully selected to indicate the variety of production and consumption in the urban areas of Pretoria and Johannesburg. In addition, several producers who had been granted special government concessions, exhibited samples of manufactured goods, such as candles, soap, paper, and chemical products for the tanning industry. Processed food items such as dried fruit and vegetables, teas, roasted Natal coffee, and several chicory coffees were also available for visitors to taste. The largest display was reserved for the ZAR's first manufacturing plant, aptly named the *Eerste Fabrieken in de Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek*.¹²¹ Opened in 1883 in partnership with some of President Kruger's loyal concessionaires, the factory was a distillery and presented a broad selection of spirits, including gin, brandy, various fruit

économique et commerciale en 1889, 2-5.

119. Picard, *Exposition universelle internationale de 1889 à Paris*, Tome 3, 75.

120. See J. Carruthers, 'Friedrich Jeppe: Mapping the Transvaal c. 1850–1899', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 4 (2003), 955-976; L.F. Braun, 'An Agent in Pretoria? Fred Jeppe, the Cartography of the Transvaal and Imperial Knowledge Before 1900', *The Cartographic Journal*, 55, 2 (2018), 111-120.

121. C. van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh: Everyday Life on the Witwatersrand 1886-1914* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2001), 7.

liquors as well as tinned products and perfumes.¹²² The ZAR's tobacco industry was represented by Johannesburg's Aaron & Steinweis Cigar Company, which displayed a selection of dried tobacco varieties from the De Kaap Valley as well as finished cigars and cigarettes. The clear intention behind these displays was to present the ZAR not only as a producer of a range of manufactured goods but also as a growing market for imports of textiles, clothing, shoes, jewellery, ironware, weapons, explosives and especially mining machinery.¹²³

A separate agricultural section showcased the variety of crops farmed, harvested and processed in the ZAR. Here, the aim was to celebrate the ZAR's early agricultural growth and its ability to sustain production for the growing population.¹²⁴ This display was once again prepared by the ZAR government and included samples of maize, wheat, rye, corn, barley, spelt, sorghum and ground flours. A highlight for many Parisian visitors to the ZAR pavilion was the display devoted to animal products for the fashion industry. Strategically catering to Europe's growing taste for consumer goods, the assortment of leather, hides, wool, and feathers were intended to make an impression on Parisian tastes for high fashion.

The Pretoria government made a conscious effort to emphasise the racialisation of the ZAR's agricultural industry and produce markets. Although, unlike most pavilions at the Colonial Exhibition, the ZAR did not feature a living exhibition with performers and dancers. Instead, a small ethnographic section in a separate room focused on the ZAR's African population. A display of photographs and artefacts was used to create a visual experience that contributed to the prejudice and discrimination used to entertain the overwhelmingly European public. Given that the exposition was designed to propagate the superiority of Western materialism and explicitly denigrate colonial cultures, the ZAR's exhibition of African produce was arranged to portray an ancient and incomprehensible civilisation.¹²⁵ The display in this section was grouped in accordance with the catalogue. For the most part, light manufactured goods were displayed such as furniture, music instruments, household ceramics, farming tools, woven baskets, and tobacco pipes.¹²⁶ Traditional weapons that were used in battle and important cultural ceremonies were shown as a visual

122. C. van Onselen, 'Randlords and Rotgut 1886-1903: An Essay on the Role of Alcohol in the Development of European Imperialism and SA Capitalism, with Special Reference to Black Mineworkers in the Transvaal', *History Workshop*, 2 (1976), 39. On business links between A.H. Nellmapius, the Lewis brothers, and Sammy Marks, see R. Mendelsohn, *Sammy Marks: The Uncrowned King of the Transvaal* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1991).

123. Jeppe, *Jeppe's Transvaal Almanac and Directory for 1889*, 45.

124. Aubert, *Exposition universelle de 1889 à Paris. La République Sud-Africaine, situation économique et commerciale en 1889*, 6.

125. Picard, *Exposition universelle internationale de 1889*, Tome 3, 140.

126. Aubert, *Exposition universelle de 1889 à Paris. La République Sud-Africaine, situation économique et commerciale en 1889*, 197-9.

contrast to the Boers' armed cavalry. The ethnographic display did not distinguish between the unique cultures, diverse economies, and social groups of the region and misrepresented the facets of daily life by amplifying differences between rural and urban ZAR. This strategic portrayal of a homogenous identity served the ideological needs of a subversive settler society that reduced urban Africans to low wage workers in what was still a labour-intensive mining industry.¹²⁷ Personal objects such as daily and ceremonial clothing, copper and iron jewellery, religious ornaments, toiletries, and eating utensils were represented as belonging to a uniform culture that was in stark contrast with the urbanisation of the goldfields.¹²⁸

Reception and significance

The ZAR's participation in the 1889 Paris Universal Exhibition was recognised as a successful step towards showcasing its economic, cultural and diplomatic resurgence to the European public.¹²⁹ According to official reports, the 'new republic' presented a political novelty when compared to other colonial territories in sub-Saharan Africa.¹³⁰ Contrasting the ZAR's industrial development with that of European colonial territories in Africa and Asia, the republic was described as a young state that grew out of the mineral revolution and the commercial undertakings of European settler communities.¹³¹ An important function of the pavilion was also to popularise the epoch of state formation in a colonial pioneer narrative and it was indeed this portrayal of settler colonialism that set the ZAR apart from other pavilions. Ironically, French commentators sought to legitimise colonialism in Africa by celebrating the establishment of the ZAR as a valiant effort to overcome European imperialism in southern Africa. Boers were portrayed as pioneering republicans of French and Dutch descent determined to safeguard their independence amidst growing pressure from British, German, and Portuguese colonial expansion in southern Africa.¹³²

As with most official participants at the exposition, national pavilions were used to celebrate deepening ties with the host nation. Although the symbolism of these short-term diplomatic courtesies should not be over-interpreted as a convergence of political interests, the ZAR's first participation in a world exhibition was most certainly a foundational event in Franco-Afrikaner diplomatic relations. The exposition's official report claims that France felt great sympathy for the new republic, portraying it as 'guided towards civilisation by French emigrants from

127. Trapido, 'South Africa in a Comparative Study of Industrialization'.

128. Aubert, *Exposition universelle de 1889 à Paris. La République Sud-Africaine, situation économique et commerciale en 1889*, 7.

129. 'A L'Exposition', *Le Petit Parisien*, 8 June 1889, 2.

130. *Les merveilles de l'Exposition de 1889*, 907-12.

131. *Les merveilles de l'Exposition de 1889*, 907-12.

132. Aubert, *Exposition universelle de 1889 à Paris. La République Sud-Africaine, situation économique et commerciale en 1889*, 5.

European religious wars'.¹³³ President Kruger was celebrated as a visionary, a republican who was prepared to make significant concessions to ensure the ZAR's survival and safeguard its progress despite constant British attempts to expand its imperial presence in southern Africa.¹³⁴ Although the fragmented nature of the sources make it difficult to quantify the volume of trade that was facilitated at the expo, the French investing public was presented with direct access to ZAR government-sanctioned enterprises. Official communication between the French Foreign Ministry and the Pretoria consulate does, however, confirm that at the expo, French railway companies were indeed able to secure the ZAR government concession for operating a line between Pretoria and the OFS capital, Bloemfontein.¹³⁵

As the colonial section of the *Exposition Universelle* demonstrated, the racialised exhibits were a modern manifestation of Western imperialism born out of a legacy of slavery, colonialism, and racism.¹³⁶ The clear racial bias and prejudice was apparent in the ethnographic performance of colonial life and history. Boer settlers were explicitly referred to as a '*forte race*' that had been able to master pastoralism, hunting, and military skills in a hostile environment.¹³⁷ Significantly, for the direct connection to the French state and culture, with surnames such as Joubert, de Villiers, Du Plessis, Marais, and Malherbe, the Boers were appropriated as direct French descendants who played a pivotal role in the settlement and economic development of South Africa's interior.¹³⁸ This racialisation and ethnicisation of society supported France's own political subjectification of Africans at the peak of the Scramble for Africa.

Ultimately, the most important and immediate significance of the ZAR's participation at the Paris Expo was the renewed European financial confidence in the future of Johannesburg's mining industry.¹³⁹ The ZAR's mining exhibit was said to be a testament to the work, sacrifices, and risks taken by settlers in their quest to transform the industry to meet the new demands of deep-level gold mining. Although the dominance of British financial capital and capitalists in Johannesburg was viewed with suspicion by the French government, Pretoria's administration of the goldfields

133. Picard, *Exposition universelle internationale de 1889 à Paris*, Tome 3, 140.

134. ADA, Correspondance Commerciale Pretoria, 1887-1895, Tome 7, 27 September 1889.

135. ADA, Correspondance Commerciale Pretoria, 1887-1895, Tome 7, 27 September 1889.

136. J. Smalls, "Race" as Spectacle in Late-Nineteenth-Century French Art and Popular Culture', *French Historical Studies*, 26, 2 (2003), 351-382.

137. Aubert, *Exposition universelle de 1889 à Paris. La République Sud-Africaine, situation économique et commerciale en 1889*, 6.

138. Aubert, *Exposition universelle de 1889 à Paris. La République Sud-Africaine, situation économique et commerciale en 1889*, 2.

139. 'Causerie Financiere,' *Le Petit Parisien*, 10 December 1889, 3.

was praised as the driving force behind the ZAR's industrial development.¹⁴⁰ More significantly for French investors' rising interest in South African mining securities, the exposition proved to be a significant networking event for French mining investors to bypass London-based financial intermediaries who specialised in the South African mining market. With the subsequent establishment and participation of French syndicates that traded in South African stocks and shares, Paris's capital market was opened up to new portfolios of ZAR mining stocks.¹⁴¹

At a broader political and diplomatic level, the ZAR's participation in the Paris Exposition facilitated a reappraisal of settler colonial polities and imperial contestation in Africa.¹⁴² For French politicians and colonial functionaries who were increasingly preoccupied with settler nationalisms of the 'colons' in 'oriental' North Africa,¹⁴³ the ZAR's economic and political development represented the justificatory theories of settler colonisation and racial disparity.¹⁴⁴ French industrialists and financiers continued to invest heavily in the Rand's mining sector, but it was not until after the Dreyfus Affair and Rhodes's failed Jameson Raid on Johannesburg in 1896 that French diplomatic engagements in the ZAR were intensified to support other European consulates in securing more rights for their citizens residing in the 'Petite Republique'.¹⁴⁵ Drawing on parallels between Québécoise and Afrikaner settler identities, the French public was exposed increasingly to the ZAR's republican struggle against British imperial domination of South Africa.¹⁴⁶ The ZAR (together with the OFS) even managed to participate officially in the 1900 Paris Exposition during the South African War (1899-1902).¹⁴⁷ Despite official French neutrality in the war, it was Ambassador Aubert who in September 1900, personally organised President Kruger's evacuation and secured diplomatic assurances for his passage to Europe on the Dutch warship *De Gelderland*.¹⁴⁸ Kruger arrived in Marseille on 22

140. 'Causerie Financiere,' *Le Petit Parisien*, 10 December 1889, 3.

141. Lukasiewicz, 'Bourses, Banks, and Boers', 9.

142. *Congrès colonial international. Recueil des délibérations du congrès colonial national*. Paris, 1889-1890. Tome 1, 344.

143. See: D. Cummings, 'Civilising the settler: unstable representations of French settler colonialism in Algeria', *Settler Colonial Studies*, 8, 2 (2018), 175-194; M.S. Omri, 'History, literature, and settler colonialism in North Africa', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 66, 3 (2005), 273-298.

144. See: Comité d'action de la jeunesse française en faveur du Transvaal, *Les français au Transvaal* (Paris, 1900)

145. ADA. 15 April 1897. Consulat de France a Pretoria au Ministère des Affaires étrangères.

146. See: M. Maubrey, 'Les Français et le 'Veau d'or': La Question Sud-Africaine (1896-1902)'; P. Venier, 'French Foreign Policy and the Boer War 1'in *The International Impact of the Boer War*, ed. K.Wilson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), 65-78.

147. Alfred, *Exposition universelle internationale de 1900 à Paris. Rapport général administratif et technique*, T.5, 88-9.

148. ADA. 24 April 1900. Vice-Consulat de France a Johannesburg au Ministère des Affaires étrangères.

November 1900 to enthusiastic crowds waving the *Tricolore* and the ZAR's *Vierkleur*, and would attend an official reception in Paris before travelling to Germany to seek assistance in the war from Kaiser Wilhelm.¹⁴⁹ By the end of 1901 the British occupation and colonisation of the ZAR was a *fait accompli* and Afrikaner settler republicanism lost its place in the 'scramble' for southern Africa.

Conclusions

Nineteenth century world's fairs were indeed trade shows where a mainly Western public imagined national, international and imperial identities in an increasingly globalised and industrialising economy. Celebrating the centenary of the French Revolution in the face of various diplomatic challenges, the 1889 Paris Universal Exposition was designed as both a celebration and manifestation of French republicanism, industrialisation and European imperialism. Characterised by ethnographic displays, monumental architecture, technological innovation, scientific militarism and luxurious consumerism, the Paris Expo showcased global industrialisation. It sought to legitimise European imperialism by dehumanising indigenous African peoples and cultures.

Initiated by the French Consulate in Pretoria as a timely opportunity to help alleviate some of the financial and political uncertainties faced by Johannesburg's mining complex, the strategic participation of the ZAR as part of the Colonial Exhibition served as propaganda tool for endorsing settler colonialism and the subjugation of non-Western societies at France's first *Congrès Colonial International*. The newly recreated ZAR was presented as a valuable French republican partner and symbol of colonial entanglements between a European settler society and African economies. Celebrating its own revolution, albeit an economic one based on the exploitation of minerals such as gold, diamonds and coal, the ZAR's participation and role in the exposition amplified the supposed connections between Eurocentric notions of industrial progress, settler colonialism and racialisation at the height of the British-dominated 'scramble' for southern Africa.

Viewing the 1889 Paris Universal Exposition as an information hub for industry, consumerism and imperial politics, the main objectives of this investigation were to analyse the origins, organisation and representation of the ZAR as a key partner at the colonial exhibition. The connections and contradictions between competing visions of socioeconomic organisation in Pretoria, Johannesburg and Paris mapped the ZAR's political structure as a settler republic on a quest for diplomatic recognition in colonial Africa. Furthermore, by documenting the chronological and

149. H. Daragon, *Le président Kruger en France: Marseille, Dijon, Paris (22 novembre-1er décembre 1900), enthousiasme populaire, discours, réceptions, industrie du bibelot, chansons, cartes postales, musées* (Paris: H. Daragon, 1901).

thematic connections of French diplomatic engagement with South Africa, the article sheds new light on Franco-Afrikaner relations at the height of European imperialism. The ZAR's first official appearance at a world exhibition should to be viewed as foundational event in Franco-Afrikaner diplomatic relations. This article concludes that in 1889 the ZAR's pavilion in Paris attempted to legitimise political past and economic future of the ZAR using the rhetoric of industrial capitalism, settler colonialism and racial discrimination.

An important feature of ZAR pavilion at the exposition, was to provide an opportunity for Western states to establish official trade relations with the Boer republic. The ZAR presented a combination of material and non-tangible goods designed to showcase the settler republic as a wealthy state on course towards industrialisation, urbanisation and land-intensive agriculture. Framed as a Western-orientated settler state and strategically placed beside the exhibits by Algeria and Tunisia, the ZAR's pavilion showcased South Africa's mineral and agricultural riches in a carefully choreographed display intended to legitimise Afrikaner settler colonialism in Africa. The Boers were portrayed as heroic settlers who maintained republican values in a politically hostile colonial environment. With the great majority of the pavilion devoted to the ZAR's mining industry, the strategic exhibition space emphasised the republic's independence in a global economy underwritten by the availability and value of gold. At a political level, the immediate legacy of the display was to indicate France's diplomatic support and solidarity towards President Kruger's anti-British policies on the eve of the South African War.

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