

PANELISTS' DEBATE

Thierry de MONTBRIAL, Founder and Chairman of the WPC

I think we have heard two very interesting, very precise and quite complementary talks, in the sense that they are realistic. In other words, beyond the swinging pendulum Nathalie mentioned, I think there's a lot of coherence between the two talks. At the same time, something else struck me, which is that many non-Africans, starting with Nathalie Delapalme and Christine Desouches, have a sort of love and deep understanding of Africa, but without being too indulgent, with a severity, a certain awareness. What I'd like to do in the 20 minutes we have left, because we really have to finish on time, is talk a bit about the future. We made an observation. I think Tidiane and Nathalie have also made an observation.

What can we expect in the next five years from very strong influences, good or bad? More exactly, I'd like to ask both of you about the role of foreign powers. Some even talk about new forms of colonisation, such as farmland being bought up, or other forms, forms that are very different from what they were in the 19th century. I'd like to hear from you about that. What are the positive and negative prospects in the next five or 10 years with regard to the role of foreign powers? I mainly have China in mind, because we are obviously, and rightfully, talking about China's interest in Africa, to simplify things, because Africa is not the only place the Chinese are interested in. I am even thinking of India, which has also shown a lot of interest in Africa, and naturally the Western powers.

Let's start with Tidiane again.

Cheikh Tidiane GADIO, President of IPS, Former Foreign Minister of Senegal

Thank you. Unfortunately, I think Africa is becoming a battleground for the world's great powers. The tragedy is that Africans are often sitting on the sidelines. It is hard to comprehend, as somebody once said, that Africa is potentially the world's richest continent but has the poorest people. What can be done to change that? How can Africans be made to understand that they have one-third of world's proven natural resources? Perhaps, when we discover everything, we will realise that Africa has even more potential than that. Every day that God makes, oil or natural gas is found in an African country such as Senegal. Senghor always used to say we do not have oil, but we have ideas.

A philosopher friend of mine says that after we found oil we ran out of ideas. Senegal, like other Gulf of Guinea countries, has been discovered to have oil. Africa has huge potential. But the biggest potential is human potential. Europe is ageing, Asia is ageing, America is ageing. It's not bad to say that because growing old is a very good thing, because a lot can be done with experience. All the continents complain about the ageing of their populations. Only Africa, by the grace of God, is getting younger. Young people account for over 60%, perhaps 70% of the continent's population. What do we do with that? Instead of making it an asset, it is starting to become a drawback, a problem, a burden, even though, with all the continent's riches, all its immense hydric resources, as Thierry just said, Africa can make it, because Africa has the water it needs, the land it needs and the people it needs.

What is Africa missing? I often tell African students in my lecture courses that Africa has three problems: leadership, leadership and leadership. They are surprised but interested. The main problem that Africa has not solved is leadership. Leadership means having African leaders capable of mobilising their societies, of tapping every resource, including civil society, of putting a vision across and of proving they have a development strategy for their countries. A country I like a lot and often hold up as an example is Morocco. I am personally convinced that Morocco has a vision



and a strategy. Whenever we visit Morocco, we never see the same Morocco twice. Every time, we find that the country has taken a few more steps forward. Perhaps that's the model that should spread across the African continent.

Now I beg to differ with my friend Nathalie, and by the way, we've been friends for a very long time. I doubt we will be able to settle this disagreement in Doha. We will take the time to do it. She says that Africa is 54 countries with 54 different histories. I say the opposite. I think that by wanting to build 54 separate, independent, sovereign States, Africa fell into a trap leading to its present situation. What is the different reality between Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Mauritania, most of which once belonged to what we at home call the Gabou Empire? Identical realities, countries that should have lent each other a hand and worked together. Senegal and Mali in a federation would have practically been a sub-regional power. In West Africa, we need big groupings today. The fake, artificial differences that have been manufactured between the countries of Africa must not be encouraged.

If Africa cannot be united, it must be at least united into strong regional groupings. Imagine West Africa united around the leadership of Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal, etc. Imagine those four countries pulling West Africa up. We have enormous resources in West Africa and soon we will have a half-billion people. Then, we will be able to talk to the United States. We will be able to talk to Europe. We will be able to talk to China. But what can Senegal do alone with China in a meeting? What can Gambia do alone? It does not make any sense and that futile reality is what we must try to change at any price. I used to say that during meetings between China and Africa, there's one Chinese foreign affairs minister surrounded by 54 African foreign affairs ministers, all telling him exactly the same thing. Overall, I'd say the African foreign affairs ministers are outnumbered. The Chinese foreign affairs minister is alone, but he's the one in charge. He's the boss. He's the main attraction.

But if the Africans delegate two ministers per region, that would make 10 African ministers bringing regional dynamics to talks with a world power like China, the United States, the European Union, etc. I honestly think Africa's development paradigm must change. The paradigm is flawed. Great African leaders like Ghana's Nkrumah and others showed us the way. We ignored them. In the 1970s, the scholar Cheikh Anta Diop predicted that in 40 years Africa would be the theatre of all the world's conflicts and security challenges. That's when he uttered his famous words, "security precedes and at the same time serves development". He wanted Africa to solve its security problems, because we have so many resources that we're going to be a battleground of global conflicts. The pity is that Africa is not ready to meet those challenges and that must change. Thank you.

Thierry de MONTBRIAL, Founder and Chairman of the WPC

Thank you very much. One of your qualities, dear Tidiane, is the consistency of your ideas. I remember a long discussion several years ago in Dakar on exactly this subject: the wrong turn, in your opinion, that was taken after decolonisation.

Nathalie DELAPALME, Executive Director, Research and Policy, Mo Ibrahim Foundation

Tidiane, we completely agree. The continent's integration is absolutely crucial. If China were made up of 54 countries, it would not be China. It's obvious that the number one response is regional integration. But on what foundations? Should the economy come first? Or defence? Or both? To what extent can the European Union serve as a model for Africa today? To what extent can the European model serve as a lesson of what *not* to do? This is obviously a complex, or in any case multifaceted, response, but there would certainly be good practices to adopt.

Africa's rising number of partners reflects the continent's potential. They are not there for the sake of historical loyalty or duty, but interest. Their considerable interest in Africa's resources extends well beyond mineral resources. But

African countries must also take control of their own resources and of processing them. Otherwise, Africa's growth will continue to be growth that creates few jobs and many inequalities, which leads to major crises.

I am struck by Africa's ability to "leapfrog", partly because of its demographic structure. Mo Ibrahim made a fortune because, as he often says, he went straight from the tom-tom to the mobile phone. Africans were the first to develop mobile banking, and today they make massive use of new technology in the areas of health, agriculture and democracy. That is really a potential worth developing.

I would like to say some final words, if I may, about regional integration. Something that seems important to me is solidarity between African countries, not "North/South" solidarity. European integration is based on the idea of solidarity. African countries, which have unequal revenues and unequal situations, must find a solidarity mechanism that works, and not just in times of crisis.

Thierry de MONTBRIAL, Founder and Chairman of the WPC

Thank you Nathalie. We have to stop in exactly nine minutes at the most. We really have to stop right on time for reasons having to do with the evening schedule. But allow me to make a quick comment on integration that can be developed later, on other occasions. If we look at China and India, unification took centuries, through successive and successful empires. Empires have come and gone. The British Raj was itself preceded by many other empires. And geography obviously made things easier.

Today, we're trying to integrate Western Europe on a voluntary basis. In the beginning, integration was driven by the pressure of the Cold War. Today, we see how tough things get when there is no longer any strong outside pressure. The issue of Africa's integration is undoubtedly very complex. I suggest we come back to this topic, which will surely be on the agenda next year. Perhaps we could try to make it a major WPC theme, because personally I have always wanted Africa to have an important place at the World Policy Conference.