

CHEIKH TIDIANE GADIO

Vice President of the National Assembly of Senegal, President of the Pan-African Institute for Strategies, Peace-Security-Governance

Robert Dossou, President of the African Association of International Law, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Benin, former President of the Constitutional Court of Benin

I now give the floor to Cheikh Tidiane Gadio, Senegal's former Foreign Minister and President of the Pan-African Institute for Strategies, which we helped to set up. I give Mr. Gadio the floor.

Cheikh Tidiane Gadio

Thank you, Mr. President. If I may, I would like to take 30 seconds more than the seven minutes allotted to me in order to make a proposal. I think it is good to have an Africa workshop, but there is also a dialogue between the continents taking place on the main stage. It would be nice if we could also be involved and take the floor in the plenary sessions. For example, Africa has an opinion on the debate over Australia and the Pacific Ocean. When Mr. Obama was thinking about what he referred to as "pivoting", his close friends, myself and others told him it would be a very serious strategic mistake, since coming to this part of the world to counter the Chinese risked an encounter with the Chinese, among others, who are moving towards Africa and the Atlantic. It is not a good idea to keep isolating ourselves. The Atlantic Ocean is just as strategically important to us as it is to the rest of the world.

We have an opinion on these issues and it is a shame to leave us out. I think dialogue must be established between Africa and the other continents on the main stage to discuss all the major geostrategic issues without exception. We must submit this suggestion to our friends at the World Policy Conference.

Getting back to the allotted time, I have said on several occasions that I think Africa's number one, number two and number three problem is leadership. I think Africa is going through a deep leadership crisis that has led us to where we are now. We refuse to change our development paradigm even though it has proved to be erroneous and has led to a dead end for decades.

The results are clear: 60 years after independence, no African country is emerging, while countries that were in the same condition as us, like South Korea, today weigh as much as 25 African countries. What have they done in 60 years to achieve this? I think there are several things to consider, but good leadership has undeniably been a key to their success.

It seems to me that the development theories that have been implemented, which have not worked and never will, are still applied incoherently and very inconsistently. A plan gets started and two or three years later it is changed: the Lagos Plan, Abuja Treaty, Vision and Missions of the African Union, NEPAD, individual countries' emergence plans and the unbelievable Agenda 2063. There are uncontestedly too many changing, incoherent and inconsistent plans, which means it is time for Africans to wake up and put things in order at home.

I also think that one of the main issues needing discussion – it is talked about everywhere but it needs to be discussed – is whether Africa has decided to betray its youth. Has African leadership betrayed African youth? Young people account for 70% of the population. Most countries have a minister of Youth and in all the rest, generations have failed to meet the development challenge.

It is time to make room for African youth and understand their dismay. They have no prospects. In my view, when a continent betrays its young people, it betrays its future because there is no prospect of having a bright one.

Everyone has hailed Africa's resilience. So do I, but I think the profound leadership crisis is especially obvious in the area of security. What is happening in Africa today is utterly unacceptable. Terrorism is the continent's number one threat.

Terrorists want to grab "their share of Africa". Terrorism is spreading across the continent: first in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, then down to the Sahel. Today, terrorists are in the Great Lakes region. They are in Mozambique. They have a very coherent plan and attack us from everywhere.

What is Africa's response? We had planned to hold a terrorism summit. It was postponed due to Covid. That is not a good excuse because this is an emergency. Farmers, women and children are being slaughtered across the Sahel. Our states are not rising to the challenge. The global epicenter of terrorism is shifting to Africa, and absolutely unacceptable things are happening.

After the pullout from Afghanistan, the whole world talked about it for days. What about the African lives that are lost every day? "Black African lives matter too." It is important to say that, because when 40 or 60 farmers are killed in the Sahel countries, it does not make headlines, as if it were a normal or almost acceptable occurrence. It is not.

Once again, I blame no one because African leaders, our leadership, must address the issue first. Have they understood the gravity of the threat? Have they understood that these people go everywhere and are looking for an outlet to the sea? They are interested in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal. That is where they are setting their sights. The leaders of the Terrorist International are intellectuals, cadres, well-trained people who have left the Middle East to link up with some of their comrades here in Africa.

We must respond to this security crisis. But the governance crisis makes it worse. We have gone through extraordinary times in Africa, with elections everyone knew were disputable. ECOWAS has just certified them and says everything was free and fair, but we know that is

not true. Then there was a military coup d'état. Then ECOWAS condemned the coup, froze assets, imposed sanctions, etc.

The African public does not fall for it. They say that if you manipulate constitutions, you should be condemned by the community. If you shoot your citizens for electoral or other reasons, you deserve as a leader to be shunned by the community, condemned and isolated by your peers. ECOWAS and the African Union have reached their limits. They cannot go further and are not even reformable. How many times have reforms been attempted and failed? I think we need to create new organizations with new goals.

I will end with the African Union. In November, France convened a summit on Libya and invited Germany and Italy. There was no reaction from the African Union, no recalling that Libya is in Africa, not Europe. How is it that Turkey asked its parliament for a resolution authorizing it to go to war in Libya? Has Africa suddenly become a no-man's-land? Can we continue being ignored when it comes to managing and settling our own conflicts? Why is the African Union not even invited to meetings where Libya's problems are solved and Libyan and North African issues are discussed?

The African Union is based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, a country that is symbolically important for all Africans, but whose Prime Minister, who is highly respected and received the Nobel Peace Prize, decided to wage war in his own country in a region where there were already threats of regional conflicts with almost all its neighbors. What can be done about this? If it continues, I think Africans should take the bull by the horns and do what they did with the ADB, temporarily moving it out of Côte d'Ivoire. If the conflict drags on, the seat of the African Union should momentarily leave Addis Ababa because it is unacceptable when the leader of the country where we are building peace, security and the future of Africa goes to war, asks people not to talk about it, and even gets angry at any person or organization that speaks out about it.

To sum up, lack of leadership is one of Africa's great tragedies. This must be discussed. Leaders cannot have 1.2 to 1.3 billion people, 70% of whom are young and the lifeblood of their countries, and a third of the world's natural resources and continue making Africa a land of desolation and despair, while at the same time opening Africa's door and windows up to global terrorism, which has taken root. Terrorists covet our land, forests, water and natural resources and think they must or can build their Islamic caliphate almost anywhere in Africa.

Security is my issue. As Cheikh Anta Diop said, Africa cannot develop without settling the matter of security: "Security precedes development". He was absolutely right and that has not changed.

Thank you.

Robert Dossou

Thank you, Mr. Gadio.