

CHEIKH TIDIANE GADIO

President of the Institute for Pan-African Strategies, Peace-Security-Governance, Special Envoy of the OIF, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Senegal

Thierry de Montbrial, Founder and Executive Chairman of Ifri and the WPC

Now I give the floor to Tidiane Gadio, who has many years of diversified experience in Africa behind him. Dear Tidiane.

Cheikh Tidiane Gadio

Thanks Thierry. I want to talk to you about Africa's place and role in global geopolitics. I think many efforts have been made at the World Policy Conference. This year, we had a plenary session and a workshop. That is very good. But we can do better for several reasons.

Let's talk about illusions. I think Africa still needs to dream and when there is a need to dream, there is a need to keep alive certain aspirations that others call illusions.

When the African Union was founded in the early 2000s, many people thought Africa would join the squad of emerging powers like India, China and Brazil and have a shot at belonging to what are called the World Global Players. Unfortunately, that is not what happened.

We lurched from crisis to crisis, for example, when I criticized my friends in the Obama administration when Obama decided to move his large warships from the Atlantic to the Pacific because, for him, the Atlantic was no longer that important.

I sent his National Security Council messages saying that they were making a big mistake because Africa would continue to matter in the world, even if it did not immediately have the role it deserved. I told them, "In the Pacific, you will counter the Chinese, but along the way you will meet Chinese going to Africa. That will be a contradiction for you. You need to improve your cooperation with Africa, your respect for the Atlantic and the African continent."

There is a second point that seems crucial to me. I think we must do away with our false hopes rather than our illusions. They are two different things. False hope is when Africans were made to believe they were independent and sovereign. They played that card. The African Union is a union of sovereign independent nations. I am for countries that are sovereign but interdependent and accept interdependence.

The consequence is that we have not moved African unity forward. We have found ourselves saddled with an enormous amount of problems and in a battle where African youth just about



everywhere has stood up against what is called sovereignty and independence. They deny everything and denounce everything today.

How is it possible that Africa, with 1.3 billion people in 54 United Nations member states, is still not a permanent member of the Security Council, 70% of whose agenda deals with African crises and African issues? Africa has no power except for a few non-permanent member seats.

I think that if this does not change soon, the United Nations system as we know it today will be gone. Across our continent, voices are being raised to say that if we do not get a permanent seat on the Security Council, we will pull out of the United Nations or campaign for a new global system because the present one fails to meet our needs. I think this request is legitimate.

From this perspective, I applaud the fact that our event, one of the world's leading foreign policy and geopolitical conferences, has shined a spotlight on Africa this year. However, I think there should be more women, especially from Africa.

A great Tanzanian intellectual said something magnificent. I will put you in touch with her because she is invited all over the world to speak. "If you want something done, ask women," she says. "If you want something talked about, ask men." I think this issue is extremely important. If many more women—I am not saying a majority—but if more women contributed to our discussions, all of us would benefit.

The other point I want to make is that everybody here must back Africa's bid to get a permanent seat on the Security Council.

Joe Biden has already suggested giving the African Union a seat at the G-20 and reviewing Africa's request for a permanent seat on the Security Council. But this also comes with its problems. The African Union will represent not one, two or three countries but all Africans. First, imagine how hard it would be for 54 countries to reach a consensus on a point of view to present at the G-20 or the United Nations! Second, it means that the Security Council would start admitting bodies as permanent members. First the African Union, then the European Union, ASEAN, etc., and it would never stop.

The same reasons that France, Britain, Russia, China and the United States can sit as five permanent members in an organization that needs reform mean that Africa must be able to designate a country, Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Senegal, Ghana, whatever country, to represent Africa and work under the mandate of the African Union. You do not need to bring in a whole organization. Either you reform or you do not.

The last point that seems very important to me and warrants further discussion is that the whole world seems to downplay the gravity of the security crisis in Africa. In 2021 there were 2,200 terrorist attacks leaving nearly 10,000 people dead. It was recently announced that in Nigeria, from 2009 to today, 40,000 people were victims of terrorism. If "Black Lives Matter", so do "Black African Lives". Forty thousand dead is an appalling number.

The president of Burkina Faso told the world and his citizens that they have almost lost their territory. "Do you know that we have lost our territory?" he said. When the jihadists started in southern Algeria, went down to Cabo Delgado and are doing what they are doing to Africa, is the world sufficiently aware? Now they are fighting us with drones. Where do they get the money

to buy drones, and without any traceability, allowing them to start committing genocide against Africans?

Not to mention cultural genocide, their attacks on the mausoleums of our saints and the historic manuscripts in Timbuktu. There are too many victims, too many dead. Everybody knows that the main targets of my criticism are Africa and African leaders. When you have a problem, do not wait for the rest of the world to come running to your aid. Get organized and join forces. Fight back and others will be willing to support you.

The last point is that we face a new situation. Russia's presence in Africa, with its system of influencers, is pulling the rug out from under everybody, France, the West and African States. We are waking up to the realization that our young people are now influenced by Russians who sway them to say and do anything.

This is not pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism is not about replacing old masters with new ones. Pan-Africanism is about Africans being at the heart of African policies, defending their continent and taking their destinies into their own hands. Thank you.

Thierry de Montbrial

In substance, there are many things in what you have just said. Tidiane, you are known as a pan-African activist in the best sense of the term. I think that in some respects, you are an idealist. I would like to make three brief remarks.

On Security Council reform, a discussion with any international law expert coupled with a dose of political realism would be enough to see that it would be impossible in the foreseeable future. One can deplore it, but it would be as likely as seeing the chair that Riad Tabet is sitting on in the first row start levitating.

We must be aware of this, and it is a question that we could discuss another time. Perhaps we need to go through a major crisis to achieve a reform of the charter. We must be aware of this.

Second, you talked about states wanting to be sovereign, which is totally legitimate and indeed a cornerstone of international law. Sovereignty means having the legal capacity to be the master of one's decisions. It does not mean actually having it. It is the legal capacity, not necessarily the real capacity.

A distinction must be drawn between sovereignty and sovereignism, a doctrine that in a way is a rejection of interdependence and the consequences of delegating sovereignty. I think that this point also merits further discussion at another time.

Lastly, you stressed the importance of security and terrorism. I was thinking about what Anwar Gargash told us yesterday about the top priority of the UAE's foreign policy, which is the top priority of any state's foreign policy: ensuring the state's prosperity and security within the framework of values and principles that underpin the state in question.

From this standpoint, security is a key issue in Africa that needs to be more thoroughly addressed in future editions of the WPC.

Thank you, Tidiane.