

## NSHUTI MANASSEH

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

I now give the floor to Nshuti Manasseh, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in Kigali. This is a good way to transition because we see that it is not so much military aid with boots on the ground, French ones for example, that the Sahel and West African countries are increasingly requesting, but help and support with training and undoubtedly aspects like air support as well. One country has acquired indisputable experience in this area: Rwanda. International relations analysts have noted the part it has already played in Mozambique, and today's discussion is about how it could play a role supporting Africa more generally. The goal is to help African countries learn to help themselves, if I could put it that way. Mr. Manasseh has the floor.

### **Nshuti Manasseh**

Thank you very much, esteemed participants. First of all, what is the situation in Sahel? Of course, as my colleagues have put across, it is a very dangerous place to be right now. It is dangerous of course because of violent extremism, which by the way could be exported across the borders. Extremism has no boundaries or borders and although they have a region, they are extremely versatile. I think we need to look at them as they are sometimes defined by academic standards, but we do not understand what we are talking about except when we are affected by extremism. As I explained, these extremists have implications for Sahel and beyond. Of course, they have political and economic implications and social instability, completely destroying the environment in which they operate.

Rwanda has been in this "business" for more than 14 years and when Rwanda took off this type of assignment, it was out of our own country philosophy. Indeed, it is a policy that was born out of the past genocide, as you all know very well, and we said we are going to help not only ourselves but also our brothers across the borders where there are threats or security problems. It is a commitment of our country not only to the continent and we have done that beyond our continent. That is because we know the consequences, we have borne and felt them, we have breathed them. Some of us were born in that type of environment so we actually know what they are like.

While the situation in Sahel might be a terrorist environment, it has one issue we must be aware of, which is it lacks an integrated and coordinated security development approach. I think my colleagues have also explained that we lack an integrated and coordinated approach to the problem. By the way, these terrorists are coordinated, you hear of them in Mozambique and

Sahel, sometimes in the Middle East, and they are coordinated, but we are not. They have the upper hand on coordination, and we do not, that is the experience of Rwanda and in a moment, I will tell you what we have learnt as a country. If we are not coordinated what is missing? First, in the Sahel we have neighbors, and they are not coordinated, as I think my colleagues have explained. We have a coordinated threat, coordinated terrorists, killers, but the states are not coordinated to address the problem, so there is no coordination beginning from there. Because of that problem, we also do not have a collective approach, it is as if we think it is in another country and it will not reach us. That assumption is wrong because it is at point X but tomorrow it will be at point Y, they are extremely versatile. Therefore, we need a coordinated and collective approach to the problem.

Of course, then the problem is that we should not only define this problem in terms of military means. Why should we not address it with military means? Because this problem has root causes and I can tell you, some of those are about governance, and absence of governance is a fertile ground for extremism and terrorism. Our experience in Rwanda has taught us that when you have an absence of government, another government takes its place, which is extremism. We need to address the issue of governance in what you call extremist areas, because the absence of government means that there will be another government, which unfortunately is havoc to everybody.

Two, service delivery: Because of lack of governance there is no service delivery, people do not have essential services. These terrorists come in and address that problem, that missing link, the missing state and say that they will provide the services, which of course, they do not. There are also socioeconomic issues that the government cannot address and that provides fertile ground for terrorism, which again, comes in its place. Unfortunately, compared with what I have set up, there is a financial incapacity and lack of a timely response to a problem, so we normally act too late to respond to the problem. We have a problem in country X, but our response takes time and the more time we take, the bigger the problem becomes. I will tell you what, we have an even bigger problem with those who have the means but lack the will and those who have the will but lack the means. The problem here is those who have the means but do not have the will when the problem will reach them tomorrow or I do not know when, then there are those who have the will but lack the means. That is a mismatch, and we need to try to match the two, so that those who have the will and those who have means have to come to the table because the problem is a common problem, it is an international problem.

Of course, we are all members of the UN but the experience in Rwanda showed us that the UN response to problems is usually ineffective and mainly fails to give us results when we need them. I will tell you why this happens. If I tell you about our experience in Rwanda, we have had commitments to head up Sahel and as a country we want to do that under the umbrella of the African Union Fund, and we have come aboard to do that. We had the support of the G5, to fight radicalism in Sahel, and our government has made a commitment to do that. This commitment is not simply something that is being said, when Rwanda makes a commitment, it is committed to actually solve their problem. I will tell you why we have usually succeeded. One, we analyze the problem and the context, why the problem is there and how we can respond to it. I will give you examples of two of our interventions, of which there are many in the world. I will start with Mozambique where, as you know, in 2021 terrorists took over Cabo Delgado, a province three times the size of my country. Mozambique officials asked us to come and give

them a hand and of course we intervened. First, we sent in 1 000 troops, which was not enough, so we sent another 1 000, and now we have 3 000. We intervened here to sort out the problems that had been there and had grown into bigger problems and sooner could be much bigger than we thought we could have. I am not saying the problem is over but at least for now, it is contained. What I am trying to put across is that the intervention has to be timely once there is a problem. Two, for us to intervene effectively we have to understand the context of the problem. Another example of where we have intervened is the Central African Republic, which in 2020 had completely gone. There were supportive elections that could not have happened, and I am not trying to boast, if we had not intervened there was no election. Again, we had the presence of the UN, with as you know very well, an intervention mechanism which has to be approved in New York. They intervened but again, not effectively, so the government of the Central African Republic approached the government of Rwanda, and we sent a parallel force. We had one force under the UN. Then there was another very mobile force that was able to contain the situation and it was possible to have elections in the Central African Republic. So far, so good but of course, the question is: are these intervention mechanisms, successful as they are, sustainable? I would say, again, only if we are coordinated as an international community, if we are coordinated and see the problem as international rather than country-specific.

Here, I must admit that sometimes bilateral engagements are more effective than multilateral ones but the two kind of work together, so you can have a blend of the two. Bilateral engagements can be effective because we respond in time to a problem we understand. Multilateral engagements take time with bureaucracy, when the problem is not bureaucratic, so we need a blend of the two types of interventions. More important, as we try to intervene, one thing we must address or understand is the political/historical context of the problem. We do not simply get our guns and go and wave them about, no. Back home we try to understand the problem. What is the political/historical context of this problem? By the way, it is our policy not to intervene if we do not understand the problem. I can tell you here that in our interventions, whether in Mozambique or in Central Africa, no help has come from the international community, it has literally been the government of Rwanda's finances; we have not been paid a dollar by anybody, we have done it out of our own donation. We appreciate what the EU has done, and they are trying to foot some of the bills in Mozambique. As you can imagine, our intervention has been expensive but that is our political commitment to our brothers and sisters on the continent. Therefore, understanding the context is very important and most of the time we address the consequences and not the cause of the problem. If you do not understand the cause, we simply run around without finding a solution. I think in Rwanda we first sit down and say what is the cause of the problem and then we intervene to address the root cause. Our contribution is alive and well, and I mentioned that we need to be coordinated, it has to be collective, and it has to be on time. Thank you very much.

### **Thierry de Montbrial**

Thank you very much for your extremely important and interesting viewpoint as a Rwandan on the problems of the Sahel and West Africa.