



Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Valérie Gauthier

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and social networks, Jean-Pierre Lacroix maintained that *'we need to communicate proactively, tell positive stories and do a better job of detecting information.'* Caroline Ziadeh looked back at the disinformation campaign against one of her colleagues, who was wrongly accused in 2018 of being a Russian spy. This *'required a campaign of clarification and investment in fact-checking to develop defence mechanisms.'* Satu Koivu echoed the arguments of other international officials, stating that *'we have a responsibility to lead the narrative, to check the facts, so that people understand the action of the Blue Helmets.'*

The diplomat, based in Pristina, went on to detail her efforts to rebuild confidence in her mission, including the meeting with Kosovar civil society stakeholders to inaugurate *'the Barabar centre, a place for dialogue and inter-community exchange.'* In turn, the Police Commissioner justified the setting up of various *'committees on health, crisis management, etc. to find solutions to all the challenges.'*

Lastly, Jean-Pierre Lacroix stressed the importance of including women in all these processes, *'because it considerably improves the working environment of the missions and because the vulnerable populations are mostly women who no longer want to see armed men.'* *'Statistical studies show that the more women there are, the better the results, with less exploitation and abuse'*, continued Lise Howard. *'Unfortunately, China and Russia often block Security Council resolutions that include women's rights, so we have to go through the General Assembly to vote on them.'*

The Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations concluded the discussion by explaining that *'although the missions are not equipped to combat global warming, the resulting scarcity of resources is having a major impact on conflicts, and we must take this into account.'*

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Lise Howard

with local allies, political and religious leaders and young people to change the public discourse', she says.

The American political scientist briefly recalled the multidimensional mission to Namibia in 1989–1990, the aim of which was to *'change the political atmosphere in a country with a complex history (genocide, apartheid, civil war) but with a lot of resources and a difficult post-colonial democratic transition.'* *'That's why it was important to talk directly to the Namibians and see what they expected from the Blue Helmets'*, she concluded.

Faced with the growing misinformation made possible by NICTs (New Information and Communication Technologies)



Watch the full debate on YouTube

DEBATE

AFRICAN RESISTANCE

29 September 2 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. – Nacre Room



Drissa Traoré, Niagalé Bagayoko, Sonia Le Gourrielec, Didier Awadi and Newton Ahmed Barry

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Fight against imperialism and dictatorships

While coups d'état have multiplied in Africa – Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger, Gabon – in the last two years, the continent is experiencing a new wave of popular protests, announced Sonia Le Gourrielec. But *'how and against whom is this resistance being organised today?'*

Senegalese musician and activist, Didier Awadi, pointed out that all forms of resistance are different, whether cultural, political or armed. Having long fought for political pluralism in his country, the rapper explained that today we must fight against all the models being imposed, against imperialism, against populism and for Africa.

To understand the political unrest in Africa, Newton Ahmed Barry said we must look at

the profile and rhetoric of the insurgents and their partners. In Burkina Faso, three insurrections have marked the country over the past 25 years: the first in 1998, following the assassination of journalist Norbert Zongo, was linked to attacks on press freedom; the second in 2011–2014 was motivated by the need for democratic accountability; the third in 2022 was an insurrection of despair in the face of the onset of terrorism in the country.

All these military coups are the consequences of institutional coups

Didier Awadi

MODERATOR:

Sonia Le Gouriellec, Lecturer at the Catholic University of Lille

SPEAKERS:

Didier Awadi, Senegalese musician and activist

Niagalé Bagayoko, president of the African Security Network

Newton Ahmed Barry, journalist committed to freedom of expression and former president of the CENI (Burkina Faso)

Drissa Traoré, responsible for the Sahel programme in the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

In this tense political context, Drissa Traoré is primarily concerned about the repercussions on respect for human rights. Even if coups d'état officially use security and imperialist threats as a pretext, in addition to the failure of political elites and the failures of democracy, we need to ensure that the civic and democratic space is not too narrow. Resisting means *'finding how to stop the harmful effects of these coups and multilateral policies'* he explained.

According to French political scientist, Niagalé Bagayoko, each political event must be analysed in its own context and without generalisations. The coup d'état in Chad in April 2021, however, marks a turning point because it was not recognised as such by France and the African Union (AU). The non-intervention of the French armed forces in Chad and the absence of sanctions imposed by the AU have created a precedent for the continent. The coups followed very quickly afterwards: in Mali in May 2021, in Guinea in September 2021, in Sudan in October 2021, in Burkina Faso in January and September 2022, in Niger in July 2023, in Gabon in August 2023, etc. These latest reversals also benefit from a certain amount of popular support, which suggests a major authoritarian and nationalist wave. These soldiers in fact embody a break with the liberal democratic order imposed from the outside, in addition to a patriotism which turns a blind eye to measures that are detrimental to freedom and a strong social conservatism. We must also stop seeing Russian

interference in all these events, as this echoes the neo-Pan-Africanist speeches, which systematically blame France, but this is insulting because it suggests that African actors are only puppets yet they have their own agendas and their own opportunistic calculations. According to Niagalé Bagayoko *'we must read the attractiveness of the powers which constitute foils to the West in the light of this conservatism and this nationalism'*. Whether it is Russia, armed Islamists or religious conservatives, Muslims, Pentecostals or evangelicals, the influence of alternative players is growing in Africa.

We must let African people decide on their democracy, their values and their principles

Drissa Traoré

'All these military coups are the consequences of institutional coups,' added Didier Awadi. In Mali, Guinea-Conakry or Burkina Faso, democracy has not been respected by those in power and when a president wants to stay in power, the new



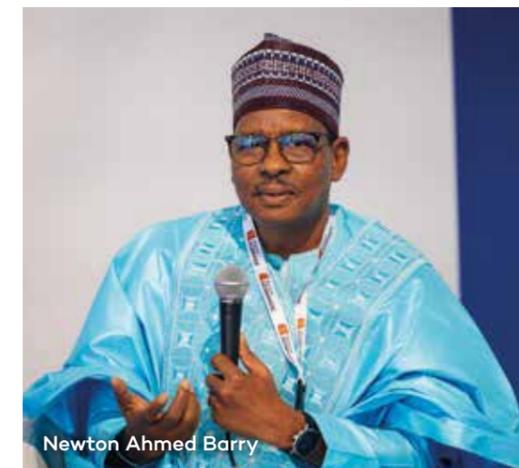
Niagalé Bagayoko

African youth say no. But although the military always takes advantage of this to claim the right to resolve the problem, the musician quoted the Burkinabè leader Thomas Sankara: *'A soldier without political and ideological training is a potential criminal.'*

Drissa Traoré pessimistically underlined the cyclical nature of these coups in Africa, which are repeated despite periods of political transition and democratic elections. *'Without violating human rights, we must let African people decide on their democracy, their values and their principles,'* he insisted.

Newton Ahmed pointed out that each of these upheavals must be assessed on a case-by-case basis, that there are no matrix elements that allow us to argue and highlight common points of division. *'There is no African or Western democracy – it is only a value of governance; the real problem is that Africa has democracies without democrats,'* he concluded.

In these difficult contexts, *'music is a tool of combat'*, underlined the Senegalese musician, *'we defend the ideas of Sankara, Nkrumah, Fanon or even Malcolm X, and the people in power today are fed up with it'*. These are the same people who are using these ideas to define a new populist Pan-Africanism. The same populist tendencies can be found in Europe and the United States, who accuse us of an-



Newton Ahmed Barry

ti-French sentiments, when, in fact, they are first and foremost anti-Françafrique. We oppose the neocolonialist model, not France and the French.

In response to a question from the audience, Niagalé Bagayoko returned to the general rejection of Africa's political classes, caused by the perpetual interplay of alliances and the back-and-forth between those in power and those in opposition, revealing the endless recycling of the same elite. In addition, there is a certain lack of programmatic function for African politi-

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Drissa Traoré

cal parties, which play as much on identity and community belonging as on the international relations or socialist and liberal allegiances. *'Most of the opponents of African regimes have become dictators themselves, hence the distrust of citizens,'* added Drissa Traoré. In Africa, we do not vote and the people don't really participate in the choice of president, as evidenced by the participation rates, which don't exceed 30% in Mali. *'We haven't found the formula to interest people, and especially young people, in the elections'* added Newton Ahmed Barry, saying this means that *'the buffer of legitimacy of elected officials isn't thick enough'*. Sonia Le Gouriellec concluded this debate by noting the importance of pedagogy in overcoming these crises: *'to educate oneself is to resist,'* she asserted.



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the full
debate on
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