



# PASCAL COUCHEPIN

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Seneca said that luck is a confrontation between preparation and a random occurrence. I think that Thierry de Montbrial is lucky to organize this meeting at such a crucial moment in the history of humanity. I would like to congratulate him for this.

Thierry de Montbrial in his introduction stated that we shared universal values, i.e. human rights, democracy, of course the way in which these values were enforced in different countries were nonetheless different. Getting out of this context of unilateralism or even the temptation to do so, has not always been easy. So, what is the link between this attempt and the universal values?

Ironically, we could almost say that the United States have a form of Marxist conviction. In other words, the Bush administration acted as if the infrastructure determined the superstructure. Concretely, the prevalent belief was that if there is a parliament in a country which is traditionally not democratic, if we just hold elections in a non democratic country, if we create courts and tribunals in a country not used to the role of law, automatically democracy would start existing and there will be the respect of human rights. Of course this is seldom the case. Unilateralism had a certain form of idealism as it's driving forth but we all know now that things cannot possibly occur in this fashion that we live in a multilateral world and we have to take on board all forms of interests and diverse situations.

Now in reality, what is the situation? I know it is always better to separate politics from economics, economics from human rights and the environment, and so on. But if we just look at the political arena, the things are not that bad after all in the world. We haven't really found the solution to all the crises, far from it. But we have learned to manage or mitigate these crises to a certain extent, like in Georgia etc. Certain mechanisms have automatically been implemented to make sure that the crisis is contained. We try to look for solutions as quickly as possible. Most of the time, we find this solution which is something rather positive. This is something which is a source of confidence because at least we can say that in the political field, the world has now more or less learned to manage such crises, at least the political ones.

We also know how to manage progress and human rights. We have certain bodies set up for this. They don't work perfectly but they have the merit to exist. Can you imagine that many countries have to report to Switzerland, Geneva, concerning their efforts in the field of human rights? They have to make an appraisal of the human rights situation in their own country. I think we've made progress there as well. And I think that by moving ahead and by implementing the necessary reforms, we are moving to a good form of world governance.

However there are a couple of fields where a lot still needs to be done. Environment for one. Environment is a major issue and it will remain so in the next 50 years to come. We are looking for solutions through the Kyoto Protocol but currently, with the financial crisis, no one seems to pay much attention to this. Luckily we didn't have to arbitrate between the environment and another fields in a crucial manner. I think that the environment given recent events has no longer been on the agenda, whereas I think that it should be a priority once again, because it is going to be a key issue in the next ten or twenty years to come. The same holds for energy.



Now what about the economic field? We saw the problems with the failure of the WTO negotiations. With the current diversity within the WTO, is the institution still able to function on an unanimous bases? I think someone was talking about a two-tier WTO. And at that time, Pascal Lamy who represented the EU said that politicians would love this but businessmen would hate this, hate WTO moving at two different speeds. So I think we'll have to look for new solutions and new methods to move ahead with the WTO.

And there is also the financial field. I am quite nonplussed by the total silence on the part of the IMF. The IMF was silent before the crisis. It seems to be particularly silent even now. And I hope it will ultimately come out of its silence. There's going to be a meeting in Washington in the days to come. But coming back to the IMF, the IMF is a very powerful financial institution. It has funds, it has expertise, it has experience but it has remained silent.

And there is the G8. It is always preferable that the people should speak to (or with) each other, rather than not communicate with each other. Very often in these summits, there are handshakes exchanged, photo opportunities, etc. and then everyone goes home. One of the problems of the G8 is that big emerging countries like China are not present. Concerning the present crisis, we can be grateful to China: If China decided to withdraw its savings from the different banks, the crisis would become a catastrophys. But so far China has been silent as well. . It is a responsible attitude on the part of China so far. I think the main problem is to build governance in the economic field, not a super-state but an efficient instrument that sets up all the safe guards necessary to avoid such crisis, including all the financial leaders, ministers, etc.

Now how can we restore confidence? There is no miracle solution. There is no single solution for this. I think confidence has to be built over time. And I believe that if there is a positive lesson to be learnt from this crisis, there will be just one lesson, that is, that it will force statesmen over the world whatever their colour to be responsible and to act in a sustainable manner, to make promises that they can keep. Politicians must say what they do and do what they say. So in the future, let us hope that we will keep our promises and that we will, once we've given our word, stick to it. But of course this idea of restoring confidence cannot be achieved overnight.

Thank you very much.