



DEBATE

Thierry de MONTBRIAL, President and Founder of the World Policy Conference

We will have a few minutes for questions and answers and I will then launch this very short debate with one observation and two short questions. The observation is that we will have a plenary session this afternoon on Europe as a laboratory for global governance. That looks a little paradoxical in this time of crisis, but the reason why I decided to have a roundtable of this kind was exactly the reason that Kishore talked about, which is that Europe is an area today where there is not only absolutely no wars but absolutely no prospect of war, and I think that that is a very nice way of formulating this. However, I would add that if the European Union ever started to dismantle, in a few years' time we might again find a situation where the probability of war would no longer be zero. That is why the immediate stakes are so high and it is where the euro itself enters the picture. That is my observation.

I now have two quick questions, one which is very short term and the other very long term. The short-term question is that Kishore said that after Dominique Strauss-Kahn's resignation from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) there was an opportunity that was missed. My question is who is responsible for that? Is it not the emerging countries themselves, who were unable to decide on a candidacy? I think that it would be interesting to you have your viewpoint on this short-term issue. The long-term question is that you say that you are optimistic for the next 10 years, but when you dream of the world in, let us say, 2100, how do you see it?

Kishore MAHBUBANI, Dean and Professor in the Practice of Public Policy of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore

I must thank Thierry for asking me two very difficult questions. The first one is actually the easier. If you are a candidate for an emerging country running for the IMF and the voting is on the basis that you have one country, one vote then you have a chance of winning because you could easily get 100 votes or more from the emerging countries out of 193 votes. However, the voting system in the IMF is such that the United States has 17% of the vote, the European Union (EU) has 32% and the rest of the West – Canada, Australia and New Zealand – has 3%. The West, which has 12% of the world's population therefore has 52% of the vote as the race starts. If you do your calculations, as an emerging country candidate you will ask what the point of it all is and think that you are going to lose and that there is no way that you can get the 52% of the Western vote. The system has therefore got to be changed. I think that Jacob mentioned in his remarks earlier that you have got to change the fact that 12% of the world's population holds 52% of the IMF vote, and I think that that will come.

However, in terms of where I see the world in 2100, first of all I am quite confident that I will not be there. However, I have increasingly become – and here I have to acknowledge a fact that Thierry mentioned earlier – more arrogant, or even more arrogant. I believe that what we will see is not just the Asian century, but the Asian millennium. Asia has always had the world's largest population, but it has also always had the world's largest pool of brains. However, even though we had the world's largest pool of brains we also had the world's largest pool of unused brains. Now the world's largest pool of unused brains is being used in Asia and, believe me, you will be absolutely astonished by what is going to come out of Asia in the next 100 years. I have therefore become far more bullish about the future of Asia in the next 100 years.



Thierry de MONTBRIAL, President and Founder of the World Policy Conference

Why do you never mention Africa?

Kishore MAHBUBANI, Dean and Professor in the Practice of Public Policy of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore

I am very glad you mentioned that because one of the things that I really enjoyed seeing on my flight here was a copy of *The Economist*. As you know, you receive it on the flights here and the cover story is *Africa Rising*. I have become far more optimistic about Africa, partly because, incidentally, more and more African leaders are coming to visit Asia and the fact that they can see that in 1965, when Singapore became independent, we had the same per capita income as Ghana. Today our per capita income is higher than that of our colonial masters, the United Kingdom. If you want to learn how to do it, go to Asia.

Dominique MOISI, Special Adviser at the Institut Français des Relations Internationales (IFRI)

That was a brilliant presentation, but I cannot resist the temptation to try to take you out of your non-Western, non-democratic comfort zone. When you are presenting the weaknesses of the West I can only agree with you. American democracy has become dysfunctional. Victocracy is endangering democracy and China has two strategic advantages vis-à-vis the West. It can act quickly because it is not democratic and think long term because it is Chinese. We cannot act quickly or think long term.

However, let us come to Asia, and I see two problems. The first problem is that the more successful you become, the more Asia will want to live like the West. You may not want to be governed like us but you will want your values to look a bit more like ours in terms of the treatment of inequalities and respect for human rights. For the moment, I do not see people dreaming of becoming Chinese or Singaporean. You still have many people in the world who want to become American or even today to join the European dream.

I therefore think that you have a problem in the long term with universalism. I agree with you that the torch of history has moved from the West to Asia, but you have structural disadvantages which you have to face.

Kishore MAHBUBANI, Dean and Professor in the Practice of Public Policy of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore

I am glad that my good friend, Dominique, has asked me a very challenging question. By the way, I would like to emphasise this. When you give a 20-minute speech you cannot obviously go into all the nuances and qualifications and so on. However, I can tell you that the rise of Asia will not be one straight line going upwards. It will be up and down and up and down and there will be many challenges that the Asian states will have to overcome, which are the same geopolitical challenges that there are in the rest of the world. I therefore acknowledge all the difficulties.

However, on the question of values, I hope that Dominique does not mind if I give him a rather spirited response. He is a good friend, so I know that I can do that with him. There is a perception in the West that the most civilised societies in one way or another are in the West and that the job of the rest, the remaining 88%, is to try to become as civilised as the West. That is a kind of hidden assumption that comes out in the questioning.



In response to that I recommend a book written by an Indian academic who teaches in Harvard, Amartya Sen— and you all know who he is. The book is called *The Argumentative Indian* and is a series of essays. In one of his essays he points out with great historical detail how many of the values that the West claims to be ‘Western’ actually came from the East, including tolerance, the acceptance of diversity and so on. Therefore, do not take my word for it; take Amartya Sen’s word for it.

Asians are like any other human beings in the world. I always emphasize this. Asians do not like to have their fingers pulled out, to be shot in the head or imprisoned arbitrarily. All the values in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are values that Asians clearly also want. However, they will be balanced.

This is what is interesting the dialogue that is going to happen, and I hope that it will be a dialogue among equals within the East and the West. The reason why the Asian states are succeeding is because they have always taken the best of the West and tried to use it, but they will also take the best of the East. In the future, if we can combine the best of the West and the best of the East then I think that we will have a better world coming our way, and I think that it can be done.

Jacob FRENKEL, Chairman, JPMorgan Chase International, former Governor of the Bank of Israel

Thank you very much for this fascinating lecture. My remark really addresses the long-term perspective and connects with the question on Africa. Demographers tell us that the world’s population will be larger in the next 20 years than what it is now by about 1.5 billion, of which almost all will be in the emerging countries. However, it is not only Asia. In fact, China will have about 150 million+; India about 250 million+; and Africa about 450 million+. China is aging; India has a beautiful Gosean age distribution; and Africa is a question mark. The 450 million will be there if the issues of health and governance and the topics that are being discussed this afternoon are addressed. If they are not, it will be a huge tragedy, of course. However, if they are addressed then we will have the unique opportunity of the world’s youngest population becoming a huge power. We know very little about Africa. When we think about Africa we typically think about it as a place of natural resources and exploitation and so on.

Along with you, I am therefore optimistic about the future, but I wonder about the division between Asia and potentially Africa.

Kishore MAHBUBANI, Dean and Professor in the Practice of Public Policy of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore

Let me begin by confessing that I am not an expert on Africa so whatever I say about Africa please take with a pinch of salt. The first book that I ever published was called *Can Asians Think?* and I remember that soon after I published it I received a request from an African in South Africa asking me if I could write a book called *Can Africans Think?* I said that only an African could write that book. An Asian can write the book *Can Asians Think?* Each continent will have its own destiny and the African continent will have to work out its own destiny. Africa will have a lot of assets and challenges, but I think that fundamentally there is absolutely no reason why any African society cannot perform as well as any Asian society.

If you want proof of that and if you want to understand how much our world has changed, I can tell you that even though some people may be supporters of President Obama or opponents of him his election changed world history dramatically because it showed that the son of an African father is good enough to become the President of the United States of America, one of the most difficult jobs in the world. If the son of an African father can become President of the United States of America, the other sons of Africa can do anything in the world. That is why I am optimistic.



Philippe MOREAU DEFARGES, Researcher at Ifri and co-editor of its annual report, RAMSES

Thank you for your exposé, which was fascinating. However, I have two questions. You did not mention the ecological question of how we are going to live with the over-exploitation of resources. The second question is an adjective question. What are you going to do about the gap between men and women? In China and India, one of the big issues is the gap between the number of women and men. How are you going to manage that?

Kishore MAHBUBANI, Dean and Professor in the Practice of Public Policy of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore

I am sorry but I did not totally understand your second question.

Philippe MOREAU DEFARGES, Researcher at Ifri and co-editor of its annual report, RAMSES

In China today, there are 115 men to every 100 women. What can be done about this gender gap?

Kishore MAHBUBANI, Dean and Professor in the Practice of Public Policy of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore

On the ecological issue, I mentioned that one of the greatest challenges that we face in the world is global warming and we obviously need to handle the problem of global warming. There is going to be a tremendous explosion of the middle classes who want to have the same kinds of washing machines, refrigerators and cars that there are in the West and the question is that the world cannot afford to have 3 billion new consumers of that kind and so on. That is a reality.

We all therefore have to make sacrifices. The big challenge and the reason why, for example, the meeting in Durban is struggling is that if the world's richest countries, especially up to now in historical terms, the world's number one emitter of greenhouse gases, the United States of America, refuse to make a compromise then you cannot expect the poorer countries to lead the way. We therefore need a new historical bargain and a grand compact on climate change. However, the richest countries have to demonstrate that they are prepared to show by leadership what is to be done. Unfortunately, unless that happens you will not get a solution on climate change, and that is a problem.

On your second question on demography, you are right. The imbalance between the male and female ratio is going to become a huge problem for these countries. I hope that education will finally teach these Asians, who stupidly believe that a son is more valuable than a daughter – and I can say that as an Asian. I think that that is wrong and they will wake up to realise that this is a complete prejudice from the past. With education, I think that they will overcome this prejudice in the years to come.

Anil RAZDAN, Former Power Secretary of India

You talked about the Asian domination that is coming in the next two or three decades and probably in the century. Do you believe that this domination is going to be based only on economic might or will it also be military might or a combination of the two? In respect of the economic development and might of Asia, I think that a very significant point is the ongoing negotiations at Durban. If growth is going to be stop or arrested by a non-equitable climate treaty, which bases itself merely on cutting down emissions and not on per capital emissions, how do you see the growth engine of Asia developing?



Kishore MAHBUBANI, Dean and Professor in the Practice of Public Policy of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore

I will give you two very brief responses, but I am glad that you asked the question. Firstly, I want to emphasise that the end of the era of Western domination of world history will not be replaced by an era of Asian domination. There will be no Asian domination. I want to emphasise that. There is no desire on the part of the Asians to try to go out and conquer and colonise the world in the way that the West did for 200 years.

The hope is that the leadership that will be provided by the Asian countries will be one of example. While military expenditure by Asian countries will continue, the prospect of war in Asia is going down by decade by decade. Therefore, in East Asia, we do not have a zero prospect of war, as there is in Europe, but, believe me, in the region where you have seen the biggest three wars with the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the Sino-Vietnamese War, the guns are silent. I think that the silence of the guns will continue in Asia and there will be no military conflicts in that region.

As regards your second question on the ecological and environmental challenges, they will be enormous. I think that the biggest mistake that Asian countries will make will be to underestimate these environmental challenges. For example, if you go to Beijing and experience the quality of air there, it is just plain awful. They have got to do something about that. If the Asian countries decide to make the environment an agenda priority up front, that will be the smartest thing that they can do in the next 10 to 20 years and I am reasonably confident that they will do it.

Thierry de MONTBRIAL, President and Founder of the World Policy Conference

Thank you very much, Kishore, for that outstanding presentation and discussion. We will continue after lunch with feedback from the European Council meeting and there will then be the workshop on Europe as a lab for global governance, followed by the other workshops.