

## PANELISTS DEBATE

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

Thank you very much, Mr. President, for these introductory remarks to launch the debate. I will ask you two questions. The first one is related to the first part of your speech, that is the health related issues, pandemic, vaccination, etc., and the second one is to further explore the situation in Mozambique.

On the first one, I think that you have delivered in Rwanda, if I may say so, what some experts – especially in Singapore, people like Kishore Mahbubani, whom you know – like to call functional efficiency. I think functional efficiency is a good concept. It is the capacity of a government to deliver. This issue, of course, is closely related to the debate on democracy versus more authoritarian regimes and the like. If we look at this from a non-ideological viewpoint, could you comment a little bit more on how you proceeded? You have achieved a number of objectives and made progress where many other governments in Africa are not able to do so. It is a provocative question, but I think it is a very important one. Maybe we could start with this one.

### **Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda**

Thank you. First of all, we start from a point where we consider ourselves blessed human beings, as the rest of the world, with values, aspirations, energy and intellect to do what society demands that we should do, and to do it within and with society. This is the starting point.

Secondly, there is this interaction that should take place between leaders of all kinds in society and those they lead – mainly, the citizens. There must be that interaction that delivers, therefore, on values and aspirations, and whereby everyone also has a chance to not only participate, but also to benefit. This is on the theoretical side and it is easy, of course, to say or define. The problem comes in the area of practice, when you have to do things so that, indeed, the society benefits and moves forward.

Of course, other complications come in the way it is not just about one country operating, its society, its leaders and its citizens; it is also about what I pointed to earlier, the kinds of interests that crisscross borders and go beyond continents, if you will. There is a society, in a country, in a nation that is trying to achieve something or trying to express itself in the way they think is best fit for them; and then there is also the demand from outside, where those who are powerful want to shape those values and interests or what you should be. In most cases, somebody will tell you that you should be like them. This is what creates a kind of political conflict, if you will.

In fact, this happens to the extent that delivering on those aspirations, desires and values that a society may define, is completely forgotten. Of course, there are weaknesses in every country – we talked about it – without exception, by the way, but power has come to set the course of events where those who are powerful talk about it and want to load it on the others, but others should not talk about their problems. Their problems remain their problems and they will be left to sort them out. You cannot interfere but they have the right, on the basis of the power they hold, to interfere with your problems.

In saying that, I am not in any way trying to excuse the problems that we may have on our own continent, in our own countries. I am saying that having problems may be normal, because we see even those who try to penalize you or force you from one direction or another because they think what you are doing is wrong, are actually doing wrong themselves in their own settings. They have the right to do what is wrong or there will be things that need to be corrected anyway, but they reserve the right to use your own problems as an excuse to cover up theirs. It goes on and on, but for a specific case in Africa, or in Rwanda, these are the struggles we go through.

I have said several times that if something is going wrong in any country – there are countries where the governance is so bad that it affects the citizens, the citizens are complaining – where things are going wrong you cannot hide it. It actually may be a matter of time. It goes to a level where you cannot hide it, so it is clear that it is wrong and it is no longer just the responsibility of the leaders of that country; it becomes the responsibility of the international community, or any other country can say, “There is something wrong here”. That is justified.

Each country is trying to do the best they can, that is granted, and we try to work together. I think the best chance we stand is for Africa to work together. That is what gives rise to some of the things you refer to and that you have seen. For example, Rwanda is involved in Mozambique, as you mentioned, in the Central African Republic, in South Sudan, under different arrangements. Some of these are United Nations arrangements, others are bilateral, or both in one case. This is all done in search of trying to resolve these problems.

In the case of Mozambique, we were asked by the Mozambican leaders or government for a problem that had existed for about four years. The province, Cabo Delgado, is in the north-eastern part of the country and it is three times the size of my country. It had been taken over by terrorists. Of course, to reach this point, they must have exploited certain weaknesses, and one of them is the lack of cooperation, because even from the beginning, what the Mozambicans did not have ~~was~~ maybe a neighbor or region, the one they find themselves in, ~~that~~ should have helped ~~them~~.

It got to that point, so they asked and we helped and the region, SADC, the Southern African region, is also helping, or beginning to help. I am told we are at a point where even the European Union is about to help, in terms of training their troops to be able to stand on their own and prevent terrorists taking over territories again; or needing a friend or neighbor to come and help them with their problem. That is the stage where it is. It is the same process in the Central African Republic.

Well, we are able to contribute, having gone through the worst of times ourselves in Rwanda. We went through a very tragic situation. After that, we picked up our pieces, even with partners who assisted us, but we insisted – this is where the trick is. Some of the help we got



would come under dictation of how we should use it, whether or not it serves our medium or long-term interests, as well as the direction we should take. There was always this interaction to say, “We absolutely appreciate the support we are being given but you must give us a chance to determine where we need the support the most. That will especially enable us to stand on our own feet to deal with our future problems, so that we do not need you perpetually”.

In fact, this is the same conversation, for example, that we have with the Mozambicans when we go to assist them. We tell them, “We can only do so much. The rest is really for you”. Therefore, even working with other partners, when the European Union wants to help or begins to help, it is to help Mozambique to stand on its own and does not need us because we cannot be there forever. Whether it is Rwanda or the European Union, you cannot be in a country like Mozambique forever.

For us, we learned our lessons and we did not miss the opportunity to build on these lessons we learned by saying, “We fell short and we had a situation like we had in 1994. This is our problem and it is a big problem. Going forward, we need help, but we need help to help ourselves”, and that is where we stand now.

**Thierry de Montbrial**

Thank you very much. I think you have answered my two questions.