

English version

PBA : Welcome to this new episode of podcast with Paris Baby Arbitration. Today we have the pleasure and the honor to be with Mr. Jean-Rémy de Maistre. Hello !

Mr de Maistre : Hello to both of you.

PBA : You are a lawyer, a specialist in international law and above all co-founder and CEO of Jus Mundi, a legal tech company offering lawyers its multilingual search engine in international law and arbitration. Thank you for welcoming us to your offices for this interview.

Mr de Maistre : Thank you for coming, because with the strike I imagine it was not easy. And maybe a little clarification: I am not a lawyer in France. I practiced with Professor Alain Pellet but I don't have the title of lawyer in France

PBA : Thank you for this clarification. So, "artificial intelligence (AI)"... The expression is a victim of its own success, it is on everyone's lips. But what does it actually mean?

Mr de Maistre : That's a very good question, because it's true that everyone has been using this expression a little bit wrongly these last few years. Artificial intelligence, I think we can define it as a set of techniques that allow us to reproduce a reasoning close to the one of the human being. And perhaps to give you a concrete example of problems that we solve with AI, we have developed an algorithm at Jus Mundi that allows us to identify the legal references in arbitration awards, to know which award refers to which paragraph of which award, to which article of a treaty or of an arbitration rule. We have two approaches, the more traditional one is to tell the machine, to give rules to the machine and to tell it that if we find that, it means that and that's how computer science has worked for a long time. Artificial intelligence for a case like that is what we call Natural language processing, automated language processing and there we will be able to go further by having a comparative approach, that is to say that we will show the machine a hundred references and we will tell it hundreds or even hundreds of thousands, if we can, and we will be able to say to it here is what these references mean and the machine will draw conclusions by itself. It will consider that they are similar for this or that reason and it will be able to find the reference by itself without being given precise rules. So we learn by mimicry which is like the reasoning of human beings.

If I show you a car, you know it's a car if you've seen so many in your life that you can tell it apart from the rest. It's the same approach and that natural language processing in law will really revolutionize the way we practice, I think like the invention of printing was able to revolutionize the practice of law because we were able to publish codes, collections of jurisprudence and the NLP, yes in the coming years, decades will really change things.

PBA: As you said, you worked for several years alongside Professor Alain Pellet representing States before the International Court of Justice. And it is this experience that allowed you to become aware of the difficulties, linked to legal research, that many specialists in international law were facing. Can you tell us more about this?

Mr de Maistre : To tell the truth, I discovered this problem a little earlier when I was a student. I discovered international law already. I found it fantastic because it is true that at the beginning we think that beyond our borders there is no legal order, that it is the law of the jungle. In fact it is not quite true because for decades we have consecrated an international legal system and that is great but then of course we realize that it is very limited and that we are at the very beginning, and in particular the first job that I had with Alain was a research of jurisprudence on the way in which the French courts applied the international law. And there I realized that it was totally subjective, evolving and it remained only in French law whereas we are talking about the application of international law, of treaties that are signed by hundreds of States. And I didn't find that normal, I wanted to know how these treaties were applied by other countries, I thought that French judges should be interested in how these treaties are applied by other countries, that if there was a simple access to the whole of international law, it would allow a fortification of international law, it would allow all the lawyers and judges to use it and that's in fact where the idea of Jus Mundi was born, except that of course I didn't have any idea of how to do it, how to tackle this problem. Then I worked with Alain and the first thing I was taught when I joined the team was Google advanced search to really use all the possibilities of Google and to search on the Court's website at the same time. It was useful but very limited because Google doesn't understand the legal concepts, we don't have filters, we don't have all that and that's when I realized that even in practice, even when we practice before the CIJ, it's complicated. A little later I discovered investment arbitration, I realized that it was the same. So that's where I saw a first potential project in international investment law, in public international law, to then go on to everything else and with Jus Mundi we don't

want to stop at arbitration, we want to do all the law that makes sense at international level.

PBA : And precisely you have created Jus Mundi to make this international law and this jurisprudence accessible to the largest number of legal practitioners and in particular accessible to specialists in international arbitration. Moreover, we can see today that your turnover is quite substantial. Is this the confirmation that you were not mistaken? That the needs in this field are going to crescendo?

Mr de Maistre : Yes, I think we were not mistaken in the sense that there is indeed a need. Afterwards, between the idea and the realization, we realize that it is very different. The development of the tool is complicated. Today Jus Mundi employs about 30 engineers in computer science, data science and natural language processing, plus about 15 lawyers who work with these engineers to explain to them what to do, and all this means very high investment costs, and this is only the beginning, I mean we still have a lot of things to do so we realize that the project is very complicated and the commercial part is not easier because you will discover it if you work in law firms, law firms are very complex structures, so selling them anything is not easy. The decision is often collective, the firms are international and many of our clients are abroad by the way. We have 40% of our clients who are American firms and we have to go and find them all over the world, so it's not easy. So yes, I think that Jus Mundi has been very successful so far, but we still have a lot of things to do, a lot of challenges to face, which is also very exciting.

PBA : Yes, to follow up on what you just said, and the idea was put forward by Professor Jean-Baptiste Racine in an article he devoted to the question, are we going to see the emergence of a real profession of lawyer-informatician?

Mr de Maistre : So that's a very good question. Yes, I think that today it's the most powerful, I mean today if you have both competences in one person, you can be autonomous, you can create, you can really understand the need and so yes clearly. Beyond the computer lawyer, what we have a lot of at Jus Mundi is the lawyer who is more of a designer, the lawyer who works in a product team, i.e. the person who understands the user's needs and who is able to transcribe them to the tech team. I did it at the beginning of Jus Mundi to create the product, but you have to be able to understand the basics of technology to be able to communicate with the rest of the team. Today, we recruit this type of profile, generally people who have done arbitration before and yes, this is a job that is really developing.

PBA : It is quite known that arbitration proceedings are pretty expensive. Can artificial intelligence help reduce the costs?

Mr de Maistre : Yes, definitely, it definitely reduces a lot of time of research. As a matter of example, the conflict check is usually a very long task, and might last for days for each conflict check. Using the platform Jus mundi, this conflict check can be done almost instantly. IA is a way of proceeding that promotes efficiency and therefore helps to go straight to the point. Moreover, technologies of e-discovery, help review factual documents in a much quicker way, therefore is a tremendous time and money saver.

PBA : Regarding the designation of arbitrators , we can notice a rise in power of diversity in arbitration. Here again, we think IA can help pick the most suitable arbitrator that would be congruent with the factual situation.

Mr de Maistre : Jus mundi helps to find lawyers or arbitrators other than the big names that usually appear when research is conducted. In our directory, we implemented several filters, such as gender, experience, languages, to help find the most qualified person that would meet the needs of the client.

Indeed, we are conscious of the fact that it is not easy for both parties. For the one that needs visibility, and for the one who is searching for the perfect match. For example, if a party is looking for a peruvian arbitrator who speaks chinese and who has knowledge on construction and compliance, it is important to have access to a platform that would make this selection process more straightforward.

PBA : If we direct our perspective into the future, do you think that machines will be enabled to replace arbitrators ? If yes, is it desirable ?

Mr de Maistre : I think there's a great distinction between what is possible and what is desirable. If we look onto what's possible, I think there's an infinite scope of possibilities. Along this way, you can just flip a coin and then decide it is a machine that took the decision and called it that way. However this way of proceeding would neglect a large amount of substantial information. For now, machines are not sophisticated enough to make relevant decisions.

One of the main attributes of justice is to be able to adapt to certain specificities, and machines are definitely unable to do that. Therefore, it is far from being desirable that machines would replace arbitrators.

From my perspective, IA is suitable to collect data and analyze a situation as a whole, but not look into specific details and choose a situation over another, at least for now.

PBA : What is the future for jus mundi ?

Mr de Maistre : First of all, I would like to emphasize the fact that jus mundi hasn't been exclusively created just for arbitration. Our ambition is that ten years from now, all types of laws would be digitized, and that national concepts would be apprehended by strangers quite easily, with no concept or language barriers. We're only at 5 percent of what we're able to achieve.

PBA : Thank you, and hope to have you in another episode.