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I'm going to make seven points, all of them brief. First, the terrible situation we're in must not make us forget that turmoil and problems have been rocking the Middle East for 50, 70, even over 100 years! Let's avoid thinking that extremely serious problems have suddenly erupted in a previously peaceful region. That's not the case. We must take a historical, long-term view.

Second, a background internal to Islam must be kept in mind: what seems to be a long struggle for decisive influence between a fundamentalist, if not extremist, minority and a tiny modernist minority. This colours the whole picture. On top of that there's the antagonism between Sunnis and Shiites, which the breakdown process has awakened. That's lurking in the background but it makes each of the other problems worse.

Third, we're witnessing Schumpeter's process of creative destruction, which, we hope, will eventually be creative but has started with destruction. It's blatant in the case of the civil war in Syria, a tragic caricature of what was naïvely called the Arab Spring. But it's also been the case in Iraq since 2003, perhaps also on account of Saddam Hussein's prior mistakes. In both cases, we are witnessing the breakdown of State structures dating back to the late Ottoman Empire, especially the Sykes-Picot accords, that created the chaos in which ISIS has developed. This wouldn't have happened without a string of blunders that recruited troops to the movement. But ISIS wants to settle down. That's another scenario. Something's got to come out of all this. We don't know what yet. With regard to the Kurdish question—you talked about Kurdistan—how far will opportunity go for the Kurds? Autonomy, yes. But if the Kurds let this conjuncture carry them all the way to independence, they'll recreate a coalition against themselves. Will they manage to sufficiently rein in their ambitions?

Fourth, there are other strategic uncertainties. The first, in my opinion, involves US policy. What will US policy on each issue in this region become? Iran springs to mind, of course. In my view, everything depends on whether or not an agreement with Iran is eventually reached. If one is not, the situation isn't neutral because the various players will draw conclusions from the failure to reach a settlement, which will strengthen the toughest hard-liners' hand. And there could be reactions to that. If an agreement is reached, that will rather quickly and substantially reshuffle the cards, which obviously worries others, starting with Saudi Arabia. It's very important to know how Saudi Arabia will react to an agreement, if any is reached, but signs are already in the air. There are other uncertainties as well. You mentioned the first one, Turkish policy, which is characterised by double-dealing, if not triple-dealing. Turkey's real priority is to prevent the establishment of an independent grand Kurdistan. But it also has other, contradictory goals. Another strategic uncertainty involves developments in Israel. Will the inner dynamics of Israel's domestic policy, which flows from its electoral system, eventually, rule out any hypothetical settlement of the conflict whatsoever? And what will Israel become in that context? I would add another question: if the Ukrainian problem were settled, could we imagine the Russians changing their game plan with regard to the Iranian question, the Syrian question and the Kurdish question? That's neither immediate nor likely, but it's part of the picture.

My fifth, and perhaps thorniest, point is the impotence of the usual powers. Powers outside the area are a bit like volcanologists who analyse ashes from a volcanic eruption after they come back down to earth. Where are the levers of political, military and economic action? Is there a willingness to intervene? Do the powers have the domestic ability, in terms of public opinion and the political system, to sustainably intervene? The question comes up more and more, in any case for the democracies. Tocqueville was right. It is increasingly difficult for democracies to have foreign policies when they are conditioned by domestic policies. As for the European Union, well, I won't even get into that.

Sixth, there is a real risk of escalation, of things getting out of hand, of not being completely under anybody's control. Take ISIS, for example. We see that various military actions can contain but not eradicate ISIS. If the coalition really wanted to wipe it out, it would have to impose a credible, lasting political replacement solution in Syria and Iraq. But

then we collide with our contradictions. What should be done with Iran? How far should we go? What can be done about the Syrian regime?

My seventh and last point is: this successful forum organised by Thierry de Montbrial focuses on the idea of best governance. But what does "best governance" mean? Let's say we manage to reach an acceptable agreement with Iran. Would that be something for its neighbours to worry about? What if the Middle East peace process gets back on track? All that seems pie-in-the-sky. And then there's the Sunni-Shiite issue! Dare we dream that one day the Middle East will have the equivalent of the Treaty of Westphalia, which Richelieu and Mazarin brokered to organise the peaceful coexistence of different political systems and religious beliefs—lasting cohabitation based on non-interference in each other's affairs? Is such a thing conceivable? When we try to reason in terms of best governance, or to take up your word "Taïkoon" , the goal is clearly very far off. So I think we need to reason one step at a time.