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After such a presentation, it is difficult for me to express myself in my own language, but I shall do so in any case. I may not have anything original to say, but I shall say it in the language of Molière to end this session.

The major problem we find ourselves facing is that we have been talking about multi-centricity for years now, but we have not taken on board the strategic consequences of what multi-centricity means and we find ourselves facing what I shall call the meeting of a denial of reality on the part of the United States and a denial of responsibility on the part of the emerging powers.

We now find ourselves in an intermediate phase between two worlds, where we know that the rules of the game of the old world no longer exist and can no longer be reasonably applied, but we have not yet worked out how to define the rules of the game of the new world.

Going back to what Hubert Védrine said yesterday, I would say that for me the major problem is not only that America is no longer what it once was, but that in fact, contrary to what Obama's words would lead us to believe, it does not really accept the changes that have taken place. It talks about multilateralism, and even revels in it. It talks about multi-centricity, but does not accept its consequences. It is certainly fair to say that nothing in the world, today any more than in the past, can be done without America, but today, much more than in the past, nothing in the world can be done by America alone. Fundamentally, what we are witnessing today in Afghanistan and Pakistan is a painful transition into a multi-centric world.

What do I mean by that? Let us take three major conflicts: Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and North Korea. None of these conflicts can be resolved by the West. It is not the 35,000 men – which is marvellous, courageous and admirable – that Europe has sent to Afghanistan who are going to make the difference. America does not have the military, let alone the political, resources to engage at the level that would be required in Afghanistan.

In fact, the key country in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region is, without doubt, India. Pakistan, and in particular the key player, the Pakistani army, needs to be convinced that its enemy today is no longer India but the Taliban and Al-Qaida. This presupposes a change in Indian diplomacy, which must accept its responsibilities in full and understand that it must become a diplomatic and not simply an economic power.

In North Korea, the key player, the Korean people itself, says that it is China that needs to emerge from a certain kind of opportunistic and “wait-and-see” attitude”. And in Iran, we know only too well that without Russia and China, no serious diplomatic pressure can be applied.

Yet we are not ready to take these messages or the reality they represent on board. The most interesting book on this, published a few years ago, Farid Zakaria's *The Post-American World*, says something which is partly true. He says, “Others are on the rise,” but he does not say



“America is in decline”. But America is in decline. It is in a phase of relative decline. The comparison with Vietnam and Afghanistan is no doubt false on a strictly strategic level, but it is based on common political weaknesses. In a way, what strikes me is that whilst Afghanistan is perhaps a less significant threat at a military level than Vietnam may have been, the America of today is no longer the America of the past.

The fall of Lehman brothers on 15 September 2009 confirmed the consequences of 11 September 2001, when the twin towers fell. The torch of history is gradually being passed from the West to Asia, but I am not sure that we understand the logic of it. We recognise that something is happening but we have not really taken it on board. And if we have not really accepted it, based on a mixture of opportunism and a denial of responsibility, then neither have the emerging powers taken on board the consequences for themselves of the relative decline of America, because they limit their diplomatic calculations to the very short term.

The good news, in fact, is that neither China nor India are revisionist powers. They remain satisfied with a *status quo* that seems to be in line with their own history, unlike Russia, perhaps, which wants to return to a world that has now disappeared and which it will not find again. But in being satisfied that history is moving in the way they want, China and India have not yet taken on board the responsibilities that are rightly theirs. And we find ourselves in this flawed, unbalanced multi-centric system, caught between two worlds where the rules of the old world have disappeared and the rules of the new world have not yet been established.

Within this system, as a European, I am struck by the slow pace at which we accept and assimilate the changes taking place in the world. In fact, over the last few years, we have devoted ourselves to problems that at the end of the day are minor and have caused us to waste ridiculous amounts of time: defining our borders and defining our institutions. Just at the point when the history of the world has been accelerating, the history of Europe has been going nowhere. There is a major contradiction here too, between the ambitious words we use and the political practices we adopt. Appointing the key figures who will represent Europe in the world in the future will without doubt be an initial test of Europe’s willingness to play a role in this multi-centric world.

Do we really want to have a part to play or are we simply happy to say that we want to? Will we choose these key figures on the basis of merit or on the basis of their limitations? I think that is the big question. I will stop there so that we can make up a little time. Thank you very much.