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Good afternoon, and good morning for those who are still jetlagged. We have already discussed the Middle East twice, yesterday with His Royal Highness Turki Al-Faisal, and at lunch with the debate between Joe Nye and Richard Haass, but we are returning to it this afternoon because of its tragic centrality, I would say.

I would say there are three words that characterise the 'new' new Middle East: fragmentation, with the risk of territorial explosion which is already taking place before our eyes, radicalisation, with its particularly sad religious connotation, spreading all over, starting in Jerusalem, one would say, in symbolic terms, and the third word would probably be expansion, in geographic terms, as if the Middle East were no longer a geographic expression but nearly a state of mind or an emotional reality, with young people from Europe to the US converting to a certain radical vision of Islam and joining the fight in the Middle East with the impression that to kill means to exist, that to become a martyr gives them a sense of identity.

Beyond those three words, it seems that there are three key questions we should be dealing with. The first one is clearly how you contain, repel and eventually destroy what I will call from now on faesh, an expression that I like very much, all the more so in that I do not know exactly what it means, but it sounds good and serves a clear purpose, to delegitimise this challenge of an awful nature. There is a subtopic within the issue of fighting faesh, which is what we are to do in Syria. There seems to be a consensus, at least in London and Washington, that family change is the right alternative to regime change. However, is that realistic given the competitive ambivalence on the subject of Syria by so many countries? One in particular, which is not represented in this panel, is Turkey. What is Turkey's priority, to fight faesh or to contain Kurdish nationalism? During the time of the siege of Kobani, we might have seen hesitation on the topic.

The second key subject, of course, is the core Middle East conflict, the Israeli-Palestinian problem. When we speak of a two-state solution, are we paying lip service to an ideal? Are we really striving for an achievable goal, or is it too late, given the radicalisation of internal politics on both sides, given Hamas, given the movement to the right of Israeli politics, given also the weakness of American pressures and influence on that topic in particular?

The third question, of course, is the issue of Iran. Have we overestimated the political influence of the moderate? Have we again been in a field of illusion?

Looking at the Middle East, and in particular at the Arab-Israeli conflict, we can have two approaches. One would be following a Jewish tradition, the phrase tikkun olam, which means to repair the world. The world has been broken, and it is our responsibility to repair it, and there is no better place to start repairing it than in the Middle East. However, there is also another tradition, which is to look at it as a Greek drama, a Greek tragedy, where the gods have decided to punish men for their impudence and arrogance. We are in fact always hesitating before these two approaches, the wish to act upon the reality or the despair leading to cynicism and passivity.

We have five excellent speakers to deal with those issues of the Middle East today, representing different approaches and positions. The first one will address us in French, and it is Hubert Védrine, former French Foreign Minister and one of the best analysts of world politics.