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Good morning, everybody. As a veteran who was present at its creation in 2008, first of all I would like to congratulate Thierry de Montbrial and his extraordinary team for giving us the chance to see each other again in person. After this terrible crisis, it is wonderful to meet again.

The preceding panel focused on economic trends, although they touched on some power questions looking at the relationship between China and the world. This panel will focus on power relationships in present international politics. There are a lot of noise and many tumultuous events, but we want to look beyond them to identify how various key actors and regions, the United States, Europe, Russia, China, are affected by the tectonic shifts in the geopolitical structure and how they shape them. A typical example of a lot of noise and a tumultuous event, is the withdrawal from Afghanistan, but what we have to ask ourselves is what the geopolitical meaning of that withdrawal is. Who will gain? Some argue that the United States lost, others that it gained from this withdrawal. Similarly, the AUKUS pact between Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom, caused an enormous shock, consternation, disappointment, hurt feelings, accusations of breach of trust, etc., but we have to look beyond it. Is there a new constellation of power, a new power balance emerging between China and a group of Western states led by the US? Where do France or the European place themselves in this? What role does the United States accord to Europe? What do we have to think about the notion of European autonomy in this context? What does it mean? Is it real? Is it a genuine alternative?

Looking at the somewhat inept way the US pulled out of Afghanistan and organized the AUKUS agreement, how is the US under the Biden Administration going to balance what the *Economist* called the ferocious complexity of reconciling confrontation and conflict with China on one hand and the need for cooperation on global issues such as climate or health, on the other. If you look at Russia, again we have to go beyond the present conflict which is definitely virulent and relations with the West are really at their lowest point. We have to look beyond that and ask the geopolitical questions of the future and the Russians do that too. Is it in the West's interest to have a Russia that remains a satellite of a powerful and rising China? Is it in Russia's interest? As we sit here, the Trade and Technology Council created between the European Union and the United States to reset their economic relationship, is actually meeting in Pennsylvania. Are the two blocs – still the most important power blocs in the world in terms of economics – going to reformulate and redo the order and regulations of a liberal world order at a time when the Biden Administration has not discarded many of the protectionist and “America first” ideologies of the Trump Administration? These are open questions and to



conclude, I have two general questions. Is the emerging conflict with China going to structure and dominate the world in the same way as the old Cold War with its bipolar structure between the United States and Soviet Union once did? In its combination of confrontation, interdependence, and cooperation, how does this conflict differ from the preceding Cold War conflict and how does this affect the likelihood of war? After all, the Cold War avoided that, thank God.

With these questions, I turn to the panel where we have a gathering of wonderful expertise. I am not going to introduce them with all their background because you can read that in the introduction. Since our time is limited, please confine yourself to six or seven minutes and I will hold up my watch when the time comes.