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Dear Fathallah, it is a great pleasure to have you with us. As Morocco's former economy and finance minister, a former mayor of Rabat and the author of many highly regarded books—the last one, to my knowledge, was about China—you are well known to the World Policy Conference. Currently, you are a senior fellow at the Policy Center for the New South in Rabat, Morocco. You have the floor.

Fathallah Oualalou

Thanks for having me Thierry. Congratulations for the success of this edition.

The conclusion I can draw from these three days is that we are in a bipolar world, and that is not a good thing. It is even a dangerous, uncertain, fragmented world, and it is disturbing.

A bipolar world based on a new bipolarization, different from that of the 20th century, between the United States and China. I would like to refer to two documents published in October 2022.

The first is American and deals with short-term national security strategy. President Biden wanted to counter Russia, which had attacked Ukraine, to demonstrate that the United States is and remains the world's strongest power and the leader of the West. But the document is mainly about China because China has the economic and technological clout to change the Western-dominated world order. The United States wants to contain China technologically, as it did the USSR in the 1980s strategically.

The second document is President Xi Jinping's speech to the 20th congress of the Chinese Communist Party, a key moment, when he said, "The party must be stronger so that China becomes the world's leading power in every area."

This bipolarization appeared in Bali, where the meeting between Xi and Biden overshadowed the G20 Summit. They discussed their differences on Taiwan and other matters. At the same time, they agreed that it is important for them to work together to prevent their disagreements from escalating into a direct confrontation. In the end, interdependence prevailed over decoupling.

The world is uncertain because four crises have followed one another in 22 years—September 11, 2001, the 2008 financial meltdown, the pandemic in 2020 and the war in Ukraine—and because the world faces four challenges:



- Global warming
- Increasing inequality and poverty
- The rise of various forms of radicalism and separatism
- The harmful effects of new technology.

This morning we covered a lot of ground about the negative impact of new technology.

What's more, the rise of protectionism, mainly in technology, on the part of China and the United States, and now Europe as well, increases uncertainty.

The world is uncertain, bipolar but also fragmented. In addition to China and the United States, with the war in Ukraine we have seen that the emerging countries in the G20, the BRICS, in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, want to be actors. They, too, want to have influence, starting of course with Russia, which is a major nuclear power and seeks revenge for what it calls "the humiliation of the USSR".

Russia is moving away from Europe and towards China, but the relationship will be unbalanced, with China holding the upper hand.

India is in a major strategic conflict with China but wants to maintain their economic interdependence. Japan, South Korea and Australia, which are part of the West but also Asia, have interdependent economic relations with China. So does Turkey, which wants to restore its Ottoman heritage, and Saudi Arabia.

Soon, dear Thierry, you will meet the foreign affairs minister of Saudi Arabia, which has many strategic relationships with the United States but has demonstrated that it is still the leader of OPEC with Russia. It demonstrated this three days ago. As in 2016, Riyadh hosted Xi Jinping, but this time not only on Saudi Arabia's behalf, but also on behalf of the Gulf states and even of the Arab countries.

Indonesia, which wants to maintain good strategic ties with the West, is keen on its economic relations with China. It should not be forgotten that Indonesia hosted the G20 and hosted Bandung in 1955.

Besides that, of course, there are other countries outside the G20. I am thinking of Israel, which is a technological power but needs to settle the Palestinian question for its own long-term equilibrium. I can also think of a number of other countries that can act.

So we have a sort of fragmentation. This fragmentation is ominous. Bipolarization is dangerous. The world needs something new; the world needs multipolarity. I think Europe can fill those shoes, but under three conditions, which might be an illusion.

The first condition is to strengthen its integration.

The second is to become relatively autonomous vis-à-vis the United States.

The third, and to me the most important, is to take an interest in its geography, in other words the South, Africa, the Arab world and the Mediterranean, so that, with the Mediterranean, a third pole of balance and sharing can be created alongside the other poles. Multipolarity would steer



us away from the dangerous effects of bipolarity and reverse the worrying trends of uncertainty and fragmentation. Thank you.

Thierry de Montbrial

Thank you very much, dear Fathallah. What you just said at the end coincides with my idea of idealism, in the good sense of the term. We are far from it, but it is exactly that.

Since His Holiness, the patriarch, is with us, we are going to pray for the Holy Spirit to give Europeans the practical ideas they need so that Europe ceases to be the soft underbelly it is now and moves towards becoming a power. Being a power that takes into account the vital aspect of its relationship with what is called the Southern flank and the Western flank, in other words Africa and the Middle East, is necessary in order to act.

Thank you very much for your contribution. I thank each of you for your talks. I will stop here because we must start the last session on time. It is on U.S. foreign policy after the mid-term elections and will begin in a few minutes.

The last real session with the Saudi minister must start at 6 p.m. We must finish on time in order to take our tour of the Louvre Abu Dhabi.

Thank you very much. All these ideas will be taken into consideration when planning future editions of the WPC.