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I am delighted to be here today to continue the discussion on Europe which began in the last session. On the stage, we have the President of Estonia, Toomas Ilves. Bartholomew I, His High Holiness, from Constantinople/Istanbul, is the Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome, and the Ecumenical Patriarch. We then have Fu Ying, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, from China and Kemal Dervis, who is currently at the Brookings Institution and was formerly a politician in Turkey and in international institutions.

I am going to begin the conversation by putting three issues on the table and I will then hand it over to my co-panellists to get us started. The first proposition is that in the world towards which we are headed regions will be more important players in international politics than they have been, partly because of the diffusion of power to new quarters, which were some of the issues that Kishore was talking about over lunch. As a consequence, regional organisations such as the European Union, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Association of Southeast Asian States (ASEAN) and Mercosur – there are many of them around the world – will be more important players. In some ways, the EU was a trailblazer and when the GCC, Mercosur and ASEAN were being formed they looked to Europe and attempted to draw lessons from Europe for their own regions.

The first issue that I would like to put on the table for discussion is therefore when you look at Europe what lessons do you think are exportable to other parts of the world and what lessons do you think were unique to the European experience? Secondly, what do you think Europe got right and what did it get wrong? Where do you think that the critical turning points were that other regions should pay careful attention to as they attempt to deepen integration and create the economic integration and zone of peace that the EU has been so successful in creating?

The second issue that I would like to put on the table, partly because we have such a diverse panel, is the role of culture, ethnicity and religion. I think that it is safe to say that regions, as imagined communities, in part represent cultures and people who feel that they belong to a region that is not just geographic but also has cultural content and content as a magnet of identity. The EU has, in one respect, overcome some of those cultural dividing lines. With the possible exception of Northern Ireland, Protestant versus Catholic is no longer an issue for Europe. At the same time, as we have seen just in the last two days, language, ethnicity and a sense of nationality identity still matter. I would be interested to hear your thoughts on how this question of identity, language and culture affects the regions in which you reside.

The final question that I would like to put on the table has to do with my own sense that the crisis that Europe has been experiencing and that perhaps I would not say was resolved over the last two days, but where an attempt has been made to move the ball forward, is not a crisis that is unique to Europe and that when you look across the liberal democracies of the West there is a crisis of governance that has befallen all of us. As has already come up several times in this meeting, the United States is passing through a period of political polarisation that is arguably unique to American history. Europe has been experiencing a re-nationalisation of its politics. The Japanese political system has no wind in its sails.

One possible explanation of this is that all our societies are going through a social dislocation born of globalisation in which our middle classes are suffering and income inequality is rising and to some extent the fundamental social compact of the post-war period is now up for grabs. This is making life for advanced liberal democracies particularly difficult and poses for Europe what is perhaps its most significant crisis in the post-war period, and the jury is out on how that crisis is going to unfold in the coming months.

Let us turn to those issues and others that you would like to raise in our opening statements.

