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I think that there was an important proposition there that economics is really driving the process of integration – or geo economics, as it were. We will now have a Chinese perspective on developments in the region from Manyuan Dong, who is Vice President of the China Institute of International Studies.

Dong Manyuan, Vice President, China Institute of International Studies (CIIS)

Thank you. This topic is in fact too difficult for me because my research scope is before this. However, I will try my best to make a contribution to this session. The Eurasian continent is the largest continent in the world and it has great strategic importance, which is why the major powers have become deeply involved in its affairs, both in Cold War Europe and in the 21st century. Geopolitically speaking, 2014 witnessed the Ukrainian crisis, which is very complicated and sensitive, with regional and international repercussions. In my opinion, the Ukrainian crisis is very bad news for the international community with its multiple negative effects on many stakeholders, including neighbouring countries and outside powers that have political, economic and cultural interactions with Ukraine.

First of all, the Ukrainian crisis is seriously hurting the mutual trust between the United States and Russia and between the European Union and Russia, which is not beneficial for peace and stability on the Eurasian continent. If there were no Ukrainian crisis, the United States and Russia and the European Union and Russia would have a larger space to manoeuvre for improved relations. Secondly, the Ukraine crisis has a negative impact on the various forms of economic interaction and cooperation on the Eurasian continent as economic development is imperative for all countries on the continent. Thirdly, the Ukrainian crisis has created political hurdles for cultural and people to people exchanges on the Eurasian continent, which are necessary for building a peaceful and harmonious world.

Where, then, is the way out of this? My argument is that the international community should come together to push through a political solution which already has a reasonable basis. For example, all parties concerned in the Ukrainian crisis have accepted the results of the General Elections in Ukraine and the Ukrainian Government and the Eastern militias signed the Minsk agreement.

The situation in Ukraine is influenced by inevitable elements and therefore calls for a comprehensive and balanced solution through dialogue and negotiation, while respect should be shown for the legitimate rights and interests of all those in the various communities and regions. It is an urgent priority that all parties refrain from making threats and imposing sanctions as it is not helpful for the parties concerned to take actions against each other.

I will now turn to the geo economics of Eurasia. It is true that the economic cooperation on the Eurasian continent currently faces a number of geopolitical and non traditional challenges. However, the potential here is huge and the future could be promising for the following reasons. Firstly, economic and social development remains a fundamental option of Eurasian countries. In order to meet this goal, countries must engage in economic cooperation with neighbouring countries. Secondly, even though the European Union (EU) countries have taken part in the sanctions on Russia led by the United States, half their oil and gas relies on Russia and that situation cannot be changed in a short period of time. The economic interdependence of EU countries and Russia cannot therefore be cut off.

Thirdly, room is increasing for the United States and Russia to improve their relations as certain hotspots cannot be addressed by the United States alone and cannot even be addressed by the US and its regional allies without

cooperating with Russia, such as the peace and nuclear issue in the Korean Peninsula, Afghanistan, the Iranian nuclear programme, the Syrian crisis and Daesh/Islamic State and so on.

Fourthly, regional, trans regional and sub regional economic cooperation frameworks and initiatives have gained a strong momentum which will push the Eurasian continent towards economic rejuvenation. Some emerging economies such as Turkey, Kazakhstan, India, Poland and Saudi Arabia play a very important role in this regard. There are also some possibilities and potential for economic convergence and engagement between the United States, the European Union, Russia, China, South Korea and Japan.

Fifthly, President Xi Jinping proposed a cooperation initiative through the Silk Road economic belt cooperation initiative. It brings about new opportunities for economic cooperation on the Eurasian continent and has been welcomed by the majority of countries that lie alongside the continent. This initiative involves infrastructure connectivity and connections for oil pipelines and gas pipelines as well as for railways, roads and an electricity grid. It also involves policy coordination and people to people exchanges.

This one belt cooperation initiative is open to all countries, both alongside and outside the Eurasian continent. Any country in the world whatsoever that is interested in taking part on the cooperation will be welcomed and accommodated. Some of the countries on the Eurasian continent can also take part in another cooperation initiative, which is the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, and this is also open to all countries. In order to create a better geopolitical and geo economic environment for peace and stability and development and cooperation on the Eurasian continent, the international community must abide by the United Nations (UN) Charter, international law and the respect each another's sovereignty, social system choice and territorial integrity.

Finally, we must hammer out international cooperation to fight against religious extremists, separatists and international terrorism, including Daesh, Al Qaeda, the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, the Uzbekistan Islamic Movement and Chechen terrorist forces.