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I will be the moderator of this panel today, which is entitled The geopolitics and geo economics of Eurasia. The panel will be focused on a vast region which is difficult to define. However, we have a very distinguished group of people to help us define the region and explore of its political, security, economic and governance challenges.

As moderator, I would like to raise a few questions in advance on governance, which is one of the principal themes of this conference. As many of you will know, the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), which is a political and economic pact that was signed in May 2014 between the leaders of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia, will formally come into effect next month. Armenia signed an agreement to join the EEU in October and later this month Kyrgyzstan will also be signing a treaty for a roadmap to its accession.

The EEU will create a single economic market of 170 million people that has a gross domestic product of USD 3 trillion. The idea for it was first pitched in 1994 by the President of Kazakhstan. It has evolved to the Eurasian Economic Union over the past few decades and in January 2012 the three founding countries committed themselves not only to the functioning of an effective common market, but also to establishing the Eurasian Economic Commission, which is closely modelled on the European Commission.

I think that it is important to note that the Eurasian region has witnessed a number of other cooperative governance initiatives in both the economic and security spheres. In September 2013, President Xi Jinping of China in a speech that he delivered in Astana proposed that China and Central Asia should join hands to build what he called a Silk Road economic belt in Eurasia to boost cooperation. He offered quite an ambitious vision of the Silk Road that would eventually boast a population of 3 billion people and a market in size that is unparalleled in scale and potential.

Yesterday, in her remarks to the forum, we heard President Park Geun hye describe her own Eurasian initiative to deepen Korea's linkages with the region and she mentioned a number of cooperative projects that Korea will pursue with Russia and China, including the development of transportation and energy networks. In the area of security, as you all know, there is the Shanghai Cooperative Organisation (SCO) which was founded in 2001 and as that organisation has evolved it has expanded to include military cooperation, intelligence sharing, counter terrorism and joint military exercises.

For outsiders, including myself, a number of key questions come to mind, which I hope that our distinguished panel will entertain. The first of these is what do we make of these different initiatives and cooperative governance arrangements? Is there less or more than meets the eye here and do they address the fundamental economic, social, political and security challenges of Eurasia?

Secondly, what is their future trajectory? Will they merge or remain independent initiatives? The membership of the Eurasian Economic Union is almost identical to the Shanghai Cooperative Organisation, with the exception of China. How will so called middle power initiatives, such as Korea's Eurasian initiative slot into this mix? More fundamentally, what explains the demand for governance as reflected in these new arrangements? Is the new regionalism or institutionalism of Eurasia driven, as the programme suggests, by a desire to establish spheres of influence à la Monroe Doctrine, by realist balance of power motivations, which is to say a response to the so called American pivot to the region, or, as Schumpeter might have said, an atavistic response to the Soviet past? Is it all about energy, economics and transportation?



Finally, for those of you who still remember the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), whatever happened to it? Is it going to fade away into irrelevance in the current political climate and with the emergence of these new Eurasian governance arrangements?

There are therefore a lot of questions and we will begin with Michel Foucher, the Chair of Applied Geopolitics at the College of World Studies, a former French ambassador, a director of policy planning and a very distinguished French practitioner and intellectual. Michel is a geographer and he will begin by telling us something about how we should think about the geography of Eurasia.