

Session: NATO

Date/Time: April 25, 2018 / 10:45-12:15

Rapporteur:

Cho Eun A, The Asan Forum

Moderator:

Lena Schipper, *The Economist*

Speakers:

Daniel Fried, Atlantic Council

James M. Lindsay, Council on Foreign Relations

Vasil Sikharulidze, Atlantic Council of Georgia

Alexander Vershbow, Atlantic Council

Session Sketch:

Daniel Fried opened this session by laying out the historical context of NATO, describing its three objectives: 1) keeping Russia out, 2) keeping the US in, and 3) keeping Germany down. He contended that these objectives are crucial to understanding the NATO expansion in the 1980s, which he deemed a positive development. While expressing skepticism about the prospects of a regional security architecture in Northeast Asia, he argued that the NATO model should be considered in any such initiative.

James M. Lindsay argued that NATO was the most well-developed expression of the liberal international order, and that without NATO, the sustainability of this order is inconceivable. According to him, NATO today faces three problems: 1) Russian pressure, 2) rise

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of illiberalism among NATO member states, and 3) Donald Trump, who holds a fundamentally different world view. Yet, he found reasons to be optimistic about the future of NATO, as public support is strong and growing, and European leaders recognize more acutely the significance of the problems they face.

Vasil Sikharulidze outlined the three pillars of the free world post-World War II, namely security, economic development, and democracy. He contended that the principle of collective defense is at the heart of democracy, while stating that the momentum for peace in Europe has stalled due to the euro-crisis, rise of nationalism, and confusion and polarization within societies. With regard to Russian aggression, he argued that NATO is ill-prepared to counter the political dimension of its hybrid warfare against Europe, aimed at spreading propaganda and corruption.

Alexander Vershbow saw the political role of NATO as more important than its military one. As the security pillar of the liberal international order, NATO helped denationalize defense among its member states, laying a stable framework of European integration through U.S. leadership and the Marshall Plan. As new challenges emerged, however, NATO has adapted more militarily than politically, adding that a key obstacle to updating its political program has been a lack of political will. With regard to NATO’s relevance to Northeast Asia, he noted that NATO has not reciprocated the level of contribution its Asian partners have provided; yet, he asserted that without their demands, NATO will not voluntarily initiate a deeper engagement in the region, given its more pressing commitments in Europe.

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