



WHY NATO HAS BECOME A FLASHPOINT WITH RUSSIA IN UKRAINE

Date: November 21, 2022

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KEY EVENTS

On November 21, 2022, Dr. Charles Kupchan, senior fellow with the Council of Foreign Relations and School of Foreign Service and a professor of International Affairs at Georgetown University, presented on *Why NATO Has Become a FlashPoint with Russia in Ukraine* at the 2022 Annual CASIS Vancouver West Coast Security Conference. The key points discussed were North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) roots in liberal democracy, NATO's role within the Ukrainian-Russian war and their collaboration with the European Union, the future threat of a potential Russia-China alliance, challenges to address within the near coming future regarding Ukraine, and NATO's role within the strength of democracy.

NATURE OF DISCUSSION

Presentation

Dr. Kupchan presented briefly on the historical foundations of NATO, as well as their values and how they have evolved from the past to the present with the ongoing Ukrainian-Russian war. His presentation also included details of NATO's role in the Ukrainian-Russian war and discussed what short and long-term goals and challenges look like for the organisation.

BACKGROUND

Presentation

Dr. Kupchan began his presentation with a brief summary of the values of NATO. He highlighted that NATO is a long-standing alliance and their durability stems

from the fact that it is an institution that reflects values and not just interests. NATO protects territory and liberal democratic values and has the ability to adapt with expansion and advancements of military technology. For example, post 9/11, NATO focused on the threat of terrorism, and now, NATO is adapting to keep pace with cyber-based threats. Dr. Kupchan believed that NATO was in good shape when Russia invaded Ukraine, which is why the response has been so effective. He explained that NATO working with the EU has provided great benefits, such as: the arming of Ukraine, enabling the nation to defend and rebuff; the effort to bolster the Eastern flank; and the sanctions against Russia.

Dr. Kupchan noted that NATO is returning to its original goal and is now a collective defensive organisation focused on protecting its territory. Although currently, NATO has been slowing its pivot towards Asia, the collective is not only facing a hostile Russia, but a potential Russia-China block spanning from Eastern Europe to the Asia Pacific. Dr. Kupchan explained that as NATO moves forward, it not only has to calculate Russia, but China's partnership with them as a greater long-term threat.

Dr. Kupchan reflected back on the conditions under which NATO was formed and speculated that perhaps a two-block war, such as the Cold War, may occur. However, the difference between now and then is that much of the world will not clearly align themselves, and he noted that the modern world is multipolar and regime type may not be a good predictor of alignment.

Dr. Kupchan then described both the short- and long-term challenges that NATO faces. He voiced that the Ukraine war has inspired confidence and the defence on Ukraine's side has been uplifting, proving power, strength, and determination. However, NATO members have decisions to make about when and how to bring the war to an end, and some questions in need of answers include:

- How do we manage the risk of escalation? When do we introduce diplomacy? Or territorial settlement?
- With regards to global inflation problems and energy issues, as well as host countries taking in Ukrainian refugees: Will there be Ukrainian fatigue and if so, how do we manage that?
- What is the ultimate geopolitical status of Ukraine?

Dr. Kupchan pointed out long-term challenges that need to be considered as well, highlighting the long-term relationship with Russia and China as significant. Presently, the world is globalised and interdependent, thus working with the Chinese and Russians present the issue of how to tackle global challenges and

stand up to autocracy and aggression. He also questioned how the future will look for NATO's democratic and liberal foundations, suggesting that the strength of democracy starts at home and that political polarisation makes it harder to deal with external threats. Kupchan notes that ordering economic and political domestic affairs is a priority, and through this NATO and the democratic community will stay strong and prevail against external threats.

KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

Presentation

- NATO has strong roots in liberal democracy and defending territory.
- NATO's role in collaboration with the EU has helped Ukraine in the war effort against Russia.
- A potential alliance between Russia and China is a long-term threat for NATO.
- NATO needs to address short-term challenges with Ukraine, such as the nation's geopolitical status and the risk of escalation.
- Strength of democracy starts at home and enables NATO and the democratic community to stay resilient against external threats.



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