

The Foreign Policy Association
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Former NATO Official and Ambassador to Russia, South Korea Shares His Views on How to Improve East-West Relations

Scribed by Mason Jerden
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Former Ambassador Alexander Vershbow shared his views on how to improve worsening relations between NATO countries and Russia, as well as create stability in areas such as Ukraine, at a gathering of more than 200 members and guests of the Foreign Policy Association of Harrisburg.

Vershbow was the featured speaker at the FPA's third annual President's Speakers Series held November 30 at the West Shore Country Club.

For four years ending in October 2016, Vershbow was deputy secretary general of NATO. Among several other diplomatic posts, he also served as U.S. ambassador to NATO (1998-2001), Russia (2001-2005), and South Korea (2005-2008). He currently is with the Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security in Washington, DC.

Vershbow cited, as major areas of conflict, Russia's annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea in 2014 and the Putin government's attempt to influence the outcome of the U.S. presidential election in 2016.

Vershbow said the U.S. must share some of the blame for the current state of East-West relations because we tended to ignore Russia following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.

In order to improve relations, both Russia and the U.S. must maintain open communication with each other and discuss issues before acting in an aggressive manner, Vershbow said.

NATO must remain firm in ensuring that the Russians honor previous agreements regarding the sovereignty of Ukraine and other Eastern European countries, once part of the Soviet bloc, he added.

Vershbow said it may take time and patience, but he believes that relations between Russia and NATO can improve. Meanwhile, NATO allies must increase military spending and strengthen defenses so that Russia will be discouraged from any additional aggressive behavior.

Vershbow's special appearance was made possible through the auspices of the FPA and the generous sponsorship of the following FPA members: Dr. Thomas H. Malin, Dr. William M. Anderson, David and Jeanne Reager, and Lynn Ahwesh and Louis Thieblemont, all of Camp Hill, and Herbert and Melba Bomberger, Dillsburg.

2017-18 Program Topics / Schedule

- Dec. 13** Addressing Foreign Policy Through the Private Sector Overseas Private Investment Corp. (OPIC)
Note date change to a Wednesday
- Jan. 25** The Sunni / Shia Divide
- Feb. 22** India - Pakistan Relations
- March 22** Defense Strategy in the 21st Century
- April 26** Foreign Policy Challenges and Opportunities
- May 17** The Koreas
- May ??** Embassy Trip to be Determined

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