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**NATO 2030:
A Celebration of Origins and an Eye Toward the Future**

Chairman Keating, Ranking Member Fitzpatrick, NATO PA President Connelly, and NATO PA Vice Chairman Turner,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you and the members of the subcommittee and assembly.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is the most successful military alliance in history. What accounts for this historic success? Two factors stand out. First, as an international organization, NATO has demonstrated remarkable political cohesion over the years. Part of the reason for this political cohesion is that the Alliance unites a group of countries with shared values and a commitment to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. But it is also because the United States, its largest and most powerful member, has been willing to carry a disproportionate share of the burden for maintaining peace and security throughout the North Atlantic area. Allies, in turn, have regarded Alliance unity as critical to sustaining NATO and the U.S. commitment on which their security depends.

A second, and equally important factor accounting for NATO's success, especially after the Cold War ended more than thirty years ago, is the Alliance's remarkable capacity to adapt to changing circumstances. Indeed, as an institution founded at the onset of the Cold War with the explicit purpose of defending its members against Soviet communism, many assumed that NATO's utility would expire once the Soviet Union withdrew its military forces from Europe and Germany and Europe were reunited. But far from disintegrating, NATO survived, indeed prospered, in subsequent years, even as it adapted to new security realities.

Now, in its 73rd year, NATO again faces the need to adapt to changing security circumstances. This month's Brussels Summit recognized that need when Alliance leaders [adopted](#) "NATO 2030—A Transatlantic Agenda for the Future." That agenda is ambitious and will require significant adaptation and commitment on the part of all NATO members. However, if history is any guide, the Alliance will likely succeed in its adaptation.

An Adaptable Alliance

NATO has proven to be a remarkably adaptable organization, changing its ways as circumstances warranted even as it retained its essential character as an alliance of democracies committed to defend their common interests, security, and values through cooperative action. Indeed, with NATO 2030, the Atlantic Alliance is undergoing its fifth major transformation in 70+ years.

- **NATO 1.0.** The North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 emerged from a demand of European countries for the United States to help defend the continent, or at least its western half, against the surging Soviet political and military threat from the East. Washington acceded to the request, signing on to a treaty commitment that, at its core, intertwined Europe's security with that of the United States and Canada. The organization evolved

over the subsequent 40 years, both as an integrated military bulwark to thwart Soviet ambitions in Europe and as the political foundation for foreign and security policy on both sides of the Atlantic. Its overall success was attested by the fact that the Cold War ended on western terms—with the unification of Germany, the end of the Warsaw Pact, and the ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union itself.

- **NATO 2.0.** Rather than wither away after the Cold War, NATO found new purpose in trying to achieve for central and eastern Europe what it had so successfully helped to accomplish for western Europe—a continent where all countries enjoyed the freedom and prosperity that only liberal democracies could provide. NATO, followed by the European Union, opened its membership to welcome into the Alliance those European countries that had been caught behind the Iron Curtain and were now willing and able to embrace liberal democracy and a market-based economy as their own future. Indeed, it was the prospect of joining the western club of democracies and their defensive alliance that provided the necessary incentive to these countries to change and adopt the characteristics that had made their western European cousins so successful. The result was the creation of a Europe that was more united, more free, and more peaceful than in any time in history.
- **NATO 3.0.** Even as NATO enlarged (bringing in first three, then seven, and finally another four members) it already took steps for a third adaptation—this time into becoming a more operational alliance. NATO’s first foray into actual military operations started in the Balkans, with air campaigns to end fighting in Bosnia and Kosovo, followed by large-scale, multinational peace enforcement operations. By the first decade of the new century, NATO had embarked on a host of military operations. The largest of these was the mission in Afghanistan, which at one point encompassed more than 150,000 troops from almost 50 countries operating under a unified NATO command. Others included an anti-terrorism maritime operation in the Mediterranean Sea, an anti-piracy operation off the coast of Somalia, an air policing operation over the Baltics, peacekeeping operations in the Balkans, and a UN enforcement operation in Libya. Where once NATO’s focus had been deterrence, by 2011 the Alliance deployed more than 200,000 troops in no less than six simultaneous operations, in three continents, including some as far away as 7,000 km from NATO’s headquarters in Brussels.
- **NATO 4.0.** The Russian invasion of Ukraine, including its illegal annexation of Crimea and its continued, direct support for separatist forces in eastern Ukraine, forced NATO to adapt once more—this time by returning to first principles. Whereas NATO, in its 2010 Strategic Concept, had given equal weight to its three core tasks (collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security), the first of these now needed renewed emphasis. And that’s what NATO did. Members committed to reverse cuts in defense spending, adapt their military postures, and bolster deterrence, notably in the East. The Alliance adopted a Readiness Action Plan that provided for increased readiness of the NATO Response Force, the deployment of NATO troops on a continuous basis in the Baltic states, Poland, and elsewhere in eastern Europe, the creation of a rapid reaction

force capable of deploying 30 battalions, 30 squadrons, and 30 naval vessels in 30 days, new command headquarters to oversee the new deployments, and other reinforcement measures. NATO, in short, was back to focusing on deterrence and defense of its members' territory, sovereignty, and independence.

NATO 2030

Today, NATO again faces change in the security environment, which will require the Alliance to be adapted once more. Alliance leaders recognized this need at their Summit earlier this month in Brussels. There, they agreed on a new transatlantic agenda for NATO 2030 (or NATO 5.0), which will build on the prior military and political adaptations, further strengthen its ability to execute the Alliance's three core tasks, and make the Alliance ready to meet all future challenges.

Three major factors drive the NATO 2030 agenda and the Alliance's further adaptation:

- **China.** For the first time, NATO recognized the security challenge posed by a rising China. Though geographically far removed from the North Atlantic area, NATO countries understand that China's growing regional and global ambitions can no longer be ignored. China is in Europe, not only as an economic actor, but increasingly as a country that carries strategic weight. Its naval forces have conducted joint exercises in the Mediterranean, its expanding naval base in Djibouti gives Beijing growing strategic reach into Europe, and its rapidly advancing interest in the Arctic is of increasing concern to NATO countries in the region. Its defense investments are second only to those of the United States, and its nuclear, missile, and power projection capabilities are rapidly expanding. Even if China isn't (yet) a direct security threat to NATO countries, the Alliance can no longer afford to ignore its rise and the challenge China presents as a systemic rival and security risk.
- **Cyber.** For more than a decade, NATO has recognized the danger of cyber threats to the security of its members and adapted its cyber defenses accordingly. Today, however, "cyber threats to the security of the Alliance are complex, destructive, coercive, and becoming ever more frequent," as the [Brussels communiqué](#) put it. The increasing sophistication and destructiveness of cyber mean that NATO now must be prepared not only to defend such attacks, but to actively deter and counter the entire spectrum of cyber threats, including by recognizing the possibility that an attack can amount to an armed attack necessitating the invocation of Article 5. "If necessary, we will impose costs on those who harm us," Alliance leaders have now agreed. "Our response need not be restricted to the cyber domain." These are important statements that aim to strengthen deterrence against such attacks.
- **Climate.** The largest and most far-reaching threat facing NATO and, indeed, all countries in the world, is the growing climate crisis. Already today warming global temperatures are responsible for massive disruptions in local climate conditions—from historic droughts to more intense hurricanes and storms to unprecedented floods to rapidly

melting ice caps on the earth's poles. NATO has long recognized the danger of the climate crisis but has left it to the individual members and other international organizations to respond. Until now. At the Brussels Summit, leaders agreed that NATO needs to aim to become "the leading international organization when it comes to understanding and adapting to the impact of climate change on security." This represents a bold, and ambitious, entry into the international field of fighting the climate crisis.

NATO leaders tasked the Secretary General to lead the effort to draft a new Strategic Concept for their approval next year. That is a tall order, for the new concept will need to take account of the many changes that have propelled the Alliance's adaptation since 2010, which was when they agreed the current Strategic Concept.

Key Issues

Alliance leaders recognized in Brussels that the "NATO 2030 agenda sets a higher level of ambition for NATO." And so it does. But will the Alliance meet that new level of ambition? The answer depends on how NATO Allies will address and agree on a host of complicated issues— including how to effectively counter the threat from Russia, whether and when to enlarge its membership, where and how it sees itself operating militarily post-Afghanistan, how to adapt to and incorporate advanced technologies such as AI and robotics into their military forces, and so much more. Ultimate success, however, will depend on how NATO addresses three critical issues: China, cyber, and resources.

- **China.** While recognizing that NATO for the first time noted the rise of China as a concern for the Alliance, mentioning the challenge it poses is very different from agreeing on how to respond to that challenge. Even on the particulars, Alliance members do not all agree on the character and extent of the security challenge China to NATO. The Brussels communiqué states that "China's growing influence and international policies *can* present challenges that we need to address together as an Alliance"—*can*, not *does*—though later the leaders agree that "China's stated ambitions and assertive behavior present systemic challenges." NATO will have to agree on the extent to which China poses a direct security challenge and how that challenge should be met collectively. That includes the possibility of dialogue and deeper cooperation and partnership with democratic allies in Asia. But it will also need to include greater intelligence and information sharing, closer coordination of maritime and other military activities as China encroaches on the North Atlantic area, and contingency planning and exercises geared to prepare for a possible conflict. It is not clear that all NATO countries are yet willing to undertake any, let alone, all these measures.
- **Cyber.** NATO has taken important steps to address the growing cyber threat to its security, including recognizing as early as 2014 that a cyberattack could trigger Article 5's collective defense commitment—and it extended these commitments in Brussels. It has also done much over the years to strengthen cyber defenses, including the ability to assist allies subject to attack. Yet, the cyber domain continues to evolve in complex and

dangerous ways, and in this domain, it is often the case that the best defense is a good offense. President Biden, in his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin and afterwards to the world's press, [noted](#) that the United States has significant cyber capabilities and, if attacked “will respond in a cyber way.” While NATO has now agreed that it could respond to a cyberattack with other means, it will also need to develop the doctrine and capabilities to employ cyber capabilities offensively to enhance deterrence of such attacks. Though NATO cyber thinking and policy has evolved quite a bit in recent years, it is not clear that the Alliance can agree on this next, critical step to address the rising cyber threat.

- **Resources.** Finally, it comes down to money. Burden sharing has been a perennial issue for the Alliance—ever since President Truman castigated the European Allies for not deploying enough divisions to defend NATO against possible Soviet attack. Congress has been regularly involved in mandating increasing resources from the Allies, from the Nunn amendments in the 1970s to more recent calls to abide by the 2% commitment. Presidents have repeatedly warned Allies that failure to meet commitments could undermine political backing for U.S. troop deployments in Europe. The need continues today. Yes, NATO countries other than the United States have increased defense spending quite a bit over the past seven years—\$260 billion overall. Yet, these increases do not come close to compensate for the precipitous decline in defense spending over the preceding 15 years or the still greater under-investment in much-needed advanced capabilities. The success of NATO requires a greater degree of balance—with Europe taking on an ever-increasing share of the overall burden and responsibility for ensuring security of the continent. That need is less about the overall percentage of spending, than it is about devoting the resources that are necessary to meet the increasing security challenges that NATO now faces. Will European and Canadian Allies step up?

NATO's Success

Most people who reach the ripe age of 72 are ready for retirement. But NATO isn't. It still fulfills a fundamental purpose of uniting allies across the Atlantic in common defense of common values and territory. NATO has faced its challenges before—and always adapted, emerging stronger as a result.

It has just weathered one of its gravest crises in its history—as its leading member sought to call the very value of the Alliance into question. The Brussels Summit demonstrated America's enduring commitment to common security and collective defense, through NATO. Now, it needs to continue what it has done so successfully in the past: continue to adapt to the new challenges that have emerged.