Statement before the

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"The Historic American Alliance with Europe"

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Chairman Keating, Ranking Member Kinzinger, and distinguished members of this sub-committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today on the historical importance of allies and alliances to the security and prosperity of the United States. But perhaps most importantly, thank you for the opportunity to underscore the importance of preserving this unique American strength and asset in the future. I am so grateful that you are holding this hearing, as I fear many Americans—including senior leaders in our own government—have either forgotten or through abject neglect are destroying the extraordinary inheritance that we received from the "Greatest Generation." As this generation, which fought and won the Second World War, leaves us, we must honor their sacrifice by rededicating ourselves to the task of renewing the transatlantic alliance so that it is available to future generations.

The eve of the 70th anniversary of NATO is a timely moment to reflect on this rich inheritance. I am delighted to offer some brief reflections on the origins of the transatlantic partnership and to offer tangible examples of how this partnership has uniquely benefited the United States. But I would also suggest that we view this anniversary not simply as an opportunity to reflect, but as a clarion call to action by Congress to strengthen and deepen this essential alliance. For far too long, American leaders, many of them in this chamber, have spoken eloquently about our historic alliance with Europe while at the same time endorsing actions that have weakened it. We cannot have it both ways. Grand statements ring hollow without leadership and sacrifice, just as transactional actions fall flat when devoid of values, principles, and integrity.

We see this conflict play out in U.S. policy today: while the United States focuses heavily on military strength and might, we are diplomatically and economically undermining and eroding our core strength—the transatlantic alliance. As Secretary Mattis stated clearly in his resignation letter, and as any military officer will tell you, fighting alongside allies is the most difficult and painstaking political and military work one can do, but it is essential to ensure our prosperity.

The 'Cost' of National Survival

In 1940, Winston Churchill told the House of Commons in his first address as Prime Minister that "without victory, there is no survival."[1] Churchill knew perhaps better than any other leader that the United Kingdom could not achieve victory without the support of its allies, and certainly not without the aid of the greatest military power, the United States—despite our great reluctance to fully enter the conflict at that time. The survival of a nation is guaranteed by an alliance structure that will fight and make sacrifices for the survival of its members. At times, this sacrifice can be enormously high, as the American military cemeteries in 16 foreign countries attest in their silent dignity, and as evidence by the reverence with which citizens of these countries view these hallowed grounds. Allies ensure our survival as a nation.

But for a nation that enjoys unmatched global military and economic power in the world, how can America's defense and survival depend on other countries? The United States does have

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[1] "Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat," International Churchill Society, https://winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1940-the-finest-hour/blood-toil-tears-and-sweat-2/.

remarkable power, but it is not unlimited. When America's allies join the United States in any task, our power is amplified and we are able to accomplish our objective. When the United States chooses to go it alone, we may have sufficient resources to accomplish the immediate task, but we will not achieve a durable solution nor can we bear the costs alone.

The cost of America's alliances has been a topic of much heated debate for decades. But it has become a particularly potent political argument today, as some in our country have concluded that allies are not "worth the cost" to the United States. Yet how can the American people appropriately weigh the "acceptable" costs of alliances without understanding their intrinsic value? This is where our conversation with the American people must begin anew: in an era of great competition where adversaries actively seek to weaken our allies and alliance system to weaken the United States itself, what are our alliances worth to us and to our national survival?

<u>Made by America</u>

America's alliance structure in Europe began to crystallize over a century ago during the First World War, when France, Italy, the British Empire, and the United States developed the concept of alliance warfare. These structures were further developed during the Second World War and continued to center on maintaining a unified political purpose and a unified theatre of operations and command to restore national sovereignty. For an alliance to be successful, both elements were understood as essential: unified political will *and* the capability and means to accomplish the task.

At the end of the Second World War, these developed political and military structures were quickly called back into service as the Soviet Union rapidly transformed from wartime ally to postwar adversary. Europe's weakness and exhaustion following two devastating conflicts required American leadership to conceive and build new and more durable structures to meet the challenges of the Cold War. The 1948 Berlin Airlift, a massive U.S. and allied humanitarian effort to save people in West Berlin from the Soviet blockade, was a foretaste of the role that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization would play to ensure the survival and freedom of the people of Western Europe.

A year later in 1949, the preamble of NATO's founding document, the Washington Treaty, clearly stated the unity of purpose that binds the Alliance: "*to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.*" Notice how similar it sounds to the Declaration of Independence. The preamble and the simple, straightforward articles of the Treaty are the flexible operating system of a durable and growing alliance (12 members in 1949, soon to be 30 in 2020). In 1949, the unified political objective for NATO was to safeguard freedom from Soviet aggression, and the Alliance developed adequate military capabilities to fulfill that objective. In 2019, its political objective is to safeguard the alliance's democracies from Russian aggression but also against threats that emanate from the Middle East, Africa, and the Indo-Pacific region.

Throughout the Cold War, NATO had to manage great tensions among members, unilateral decisions taken by members, and even members that temporarily lost their democratic credentials. There are many examples: the 1956 Suez Crisis, the 1966 French decision to remove its forces from NATO's unified military command, the advent of the junta in Greece in 1967, the introduction of the concept of Östpolitik or *détente* with the Soviet Union, U.S. calls to downsize its forces in Europe, and the 1983 Pershing missile crisis. But despite these crises, NATO endured and was able to respond flexibly to each challenge in large measure due to binding agents: the existential challenge posed by the Soviet Union, strong and confident American leadership that understood our security was tied to that of Europe's, and an alliance based on democratic values and principles.

What the Alliance had not anticipated was its own success. The fall of the Berlin Wall 30 years ago and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union removed one of the main unifying elements in NATO's political and military purpose. But as it was at the end of the Second World War, NATO was quickly called upon to respond to a European conflict, this time in the Western Balkans. Though this was not on a member's territory, NATO had decided to redefine its purpose as expanding freedom, peace, and security in Europe and it understood this in the broad geopolitical sense—instability near member states risked instability *in* member states. The Alliance expanded its mission to safeguard freedom in Europe by enlarging its membership, which has simultaneously benefitted and challenged NATO.

Post-Cold War Stress Fractures and Strategic Drift

NATO's ability to understand that instability outside of its immediate borders was a growing challenge paved the way for the Alliance to address its defining post-Cold War moment: the terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001, which led the Alliance to invoke Article 5 for the first time in its history. NATO has deployed and sustained forces in Afghanistan for the past 18 years, at great human and financial cost: over 3,500 NATO and other coalition partners' soldiers have been killed since the beginning of the U.S. offensive in Afghanistan.[2] NATO allies have collectively spent around $2.3 billion to support the NATO-Afghan National Army Trust Fund, a key tool to support the country's security forces and institutions.[3] Although we seldom hear these numbers when American officials discuss the "costs" of NATO, no one should doubt that our allies have responded when the security of the United States was at risk.

Yet over the course of these 18 years, NATO lost its balanced approach to political strategy and military means. Tactical military operations and force generation requirements overshadowed a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the Alliance's political objectives. Divisions grew among NATO members during the 2003 Iraq war in which only some allies participated, though NATO did ultimately support a training mission in Iraq. This lack of unity extended into the late

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[2] "Afghanistan Fatalities," iCasualties, http://icasualties.org/App/AfghanFatalities.
[3] "NATO and Afghanistan," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, March 5, 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm.

2000s and early 2010s: allies drew different conclusions from the 2008 Russian-Georgian conflict and the Alliance's further expansion, and in 2011 the United States, France, and the United Kingdom decided to intervene militarily in Libya against Gaddafi's brutal repression of popular unrest under the mandate of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973—an offensive that was hastily transitioned to a NATO operation but exposed weaknesses in both political unity and sustainable military capability. Stress fractures began to form within NATO as the alliance grappled with rapid technological change, missile defense capabilities, cyber warfare, disinformation, and energy insecurity.

Russia's 2014 military intervention in Ukraine, both in Crimea and the Donbass, stemmed some of this fracturing and returned NATO to its founding mission and purpose, though it also exposed NATO's political and military atrophy in the face of a revisionist and aggressive power. U.S. leadership of NATO had been in decline for over a decade; the robustness of NATO's political dialogue had diminished; the Alliance lacked a common threat assessment, with some members seeing the preeminent threat emanating from the east and others from the south; it faced a gross underinvestment in adequate European defense and war-fighting capabilities that had been honed for counter-insurgency in the desert; and the United States lacked war-fighting capabilities in Europe because until 2014, it had viewed Europe not as a theater of operation but rather as a place to develop partner capabilities and as a launching point to the Middle East and Africa.

A Return to Safeguarding Freedom

NATO's return to its founding mission and purpose in the past five years and the unwavering bipartisan support of Congress to enhance transatlantic security is a critical opportunity to restore America's strategic understanding of the value of alliances to our national security. There is little time to lose as we have entered a particularly precarious moment in transatlantic history, one in which we risk taking NATO for granted so much that we could seriously jeopardize its future.

NATO's purpose, as it was in the 20th century, is to safeguard freedom in Europe and North America. NATO must protect its members from external threats, while increasingly guarding itself from internal threats to freedom driven by ethno-nationalism and illiberalism. NATO's fundamental task is therefore once again to stabilize Europe as it manages historical transformations from Brexit, the uneven development of German leadership balanced by French ambitions, Turkey's movement away from Euro-Atlanticism, and growing internal fragmentation. NATO must also manage American retrenchment, an increasingly unstable Russian Federation, terrorism, migration, China's economically driven influence, global economic and climate insecurity, and technological change.

It is an understatement to say that current and future demands placed on NATO are great in the quest to safeguard freedom. This is why the United States, while remaining a global security actor, must return to Europe: (1) physically through an enhanced security posture; (2)

diplomatically with strong, confident, patient, and *quiet* diplomacy that is guided by democratic and value-based principles; and (3) economically through an enhanced trade and investment partnership. During the Cold War, values-based American leadership developed a policy of non-recognition of the Soviet occupation of the Baltic states that kept faith with captive nations until they were rightfully restored to the Euro-Atlantic community. It is patient American diplomacy that after 27 years created the conditions through which the Republic of North Macedonia could join NATO with Greece becoming the first NATO member to ratify their membership. And someday, it will be a more confident American leadership that will challenge the growth of illiberalism and nationalism within NATO, not coddle it.

NATO, like the United States, was built on the sturdy foundations of *"the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law*." It has always been NATO's vocation to safeguard freedom in an increasingly dangerous world. Victory is required, for our national survival is at stake.