

**Prepared Statement  
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Chairman Keating, Ranking Member Kinzinger, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing and giving us the opportunity to consider with you the challenges, threats and opportunities facing NATO within the context of its Open Door policy.

This year, 2019, is a milestone year. In two days we will celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of NATO with a meeting of foreign ministers here in Washington DC. And in October we will mark 30 years since the Berlin Wall -- the physical barrier dividing East and West Berlin, and the communist East Bloc from the democratic West -- was breached by people eager for democracy and freedom. And yet, our international system, NATO, and democracy in America and around the world have never been in graver danger since the Cold War than they are today.

Today, the United States, we Americans, and our democratic allies worldwide, are in a standoff against autocratic dictators working to destroy our democracy and to thwart our domestic and international objectives. First and foremost among these adversaries is the Russian government led by Vladimir Putin. Russia is our greatest threat; the Kremlin is not satisfied solely by threatening our international interests. It also seeks a corrupt, weak and undemocratic America.

### The Threat

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Kremlin have one main objective -- to stay in power, to maintain the corrupt, autocratic, Kleptocracy running Russia today. To achieve this objective, Putin has determined he must demonstrate to the Russian people that he is making Russia great again; indeed, after Russia's economic growth tapered off in 2011, he has found it useful to distract Russians with military adventurism abroad. Putin seeks to re-establish a sphere of influence for Russia, which includes the territory that comprised the former Soviet Union, and if

he can get away with it, the former East Bloc as well. He and his Kremlin cronies don't want an international order based on existing multilateral institutions which have served democracy, human rights and the United States so well. Instead, Moscow seeks the old 19<sup>th</sup> century balance of power system, where nations live in a state of mistrust, arms races and cycles of protectionism and war.

Meanwhile, Putin believes that the United States, the strongest diplomatic, economic and military power in the world, continues to seek to spread democracy, including to the Russian Federation. Therefore, Putin is determined to make America weak, unable and unwilling to support democracy for oppressed peoples. This incidentally, is a major component of what is at stake in Syria and Venezuela. (The other dimension, again, is Putin's strategic interest in global influence, an operational need for bases and ports for his military.)

In order to achieve his objectives, Putin and his government have repeatedly violated international law and norms and human rights. They invaded neighboring Republic of Georgia in 2008, and continue to occupy 20 percent of its territory. In 2014 Russian invaded Ukraine, illegally annexing Crimea, and igniting a separatist war in another part of eastern Ukraine. The Kremlin has murdered a list of its enemies in other countries including the United Kingdom, France, Ukraine and likely the United States<sup>1</sup> and has used chemical and nuclear materials to do so. Russian fighters shot down Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 over Ukraine, killing 298 innocent persons. Russia has interfered in elections in Western and Eastern Europe and the United States and continues to conduct information operations aimed at sowing discord and division and eroding confidence in democracy. We learned last year, Russian cyber actors have infiltrated our energy and water grids and have inserted malware to facilitate potential future attacks.

Russia has violated the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty and several conventional arms control agreements. Its military continues to conduct unprofessional risky air operations, buzzing U.S. and allied ships and aircraft. Russian military jets have encroached upon U.S., European and Japanese airspace at levels not seen since the Cold War, necessitating defensive military maneuvers by our aircraft in response. And the Russian government and its forces have assisted the Syrian military in its deliberate bombing of hospitals, innocent civilians and a UN convoy.

Russia is no longer a status quo power. Together with China, which seeks to co-opt rather than destroy the international order, Moscow aims to return to a 19<sup>th</sup> century sphere of influence international disorder. We know from history that this alternative to the current global order leads to great power military competition, economic protectionism and ultimately, war. Russia would like nothing better than a United States uncoupled from the alliances that have brought us unprecedented economic, military and diplomatic success. NATO, our only operational collective security alliance is in the sights of Putin's Russia.

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<sup>1</sup> "Former Putin Advisor had Neck Fracture at Time of Death in Washington Hotel," *Associated Press*, March 16, 2019.

Yet, in this moment of danger, NATO remains strong.

In the decades since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, NATO expanded in territory and mission. In 1999, the first former East Bloc members – the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland-- joined the Alliance and five years later, in 2004, seven other Eastern European states joined. In 2009, the enlargement took a southern turn, admitting Albania and Croatia and two years ago Montenegro became the 29<sup>th</sup> NATO member. With the historic and courageous agreement between Greece and North Macedonia regarding heritage and names, the 30<sup>th</sup> member will be the Balkan state previously known as Macedonia. I urge the administration and Congress to move expeditiously to approve North Macedonia's accession.

At a time when NATO is being directly challenged by the Russian government, both politically and militarily, and its value is publicly questioned by the president of the United States, the accession of these two new Balkan members is a dramatic endorsement of NATO's enduring attractiveness and value.

NATO's founding document the North Atlantic Treaty enshrined within its Article 10 the "Open Door" principle, declaring that NATO membership is open to any "European state in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area."<sup>2</sup> NATO membership – if states can meet the political and military criteria – will earn them security, stability and greater economic prosperity. In exchange, because new members must have resolved border or other disputes with neighbors and internal ethnic conflicts NATO allies can expand the European territory that is "free and at peace." Expanded peace and democracy means more commerce within Europe and across the Atlantic. Individual states, the region and all NATO allies benefit.

The threats have changed, but NATO has maintained its relevance because collective security is almost always better than going it alone, even for large politically, economically and militarily strong states like ours. As Secretary General Stoltenberg put it at a recent German Marshall Fund event, "Let us remember that alliances do not stand in the way of strong and independent nations...NATO exists precisely to ensure the freedom and prosperity in which sovereign countries and peoples can thrive."<sup>3</sup>

NATO did not grow in size solely to deter Russia, though for most initial members that was a motivation. NATO primarily enlarged to the East to strengthen democracy and free markets. New members demonstrated they were capable of managing domestic and regional ethnic and political tensions and committed to further democratic, economic and military reform. They accepted the responsibilities of Articles 3 (self-defense) and 5 (collective defense). They subsequently contributed to the NATO common budget and to deployments from Kosovo to Iraq, Afghanistan and to the Counter-ISIL effort focused in Iraq and Syria. And

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<sup>2</sup> NATO, *The North Atlantic Treaty*, signed April 4, 1949, Article 10.

<sup>3</sup> "NATO Alliance Marking 70 Years, Looks to Counter Threats". *US Department of Defense*, March 18, 2019, <https://dod.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1788045/nato-alliance-marking-70-years-looks-to-counter-threats/>.

all members endorsed and participated in the effort to forge a new relationship with the Russian Federation, as enshrined in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, which included commitment to sovereign borders and a ban on “substantial and permanent” new deployments to NATO’s new eastern members.

### The New NATO Agenda

Today deterring Russia is, once again, at the top of the NATO agenda. Russia violated the Founding Act with its military invasions and occupations in Georgia and Ukraine and with its cyber and information operations against almost all, if not all, NATO members. NATO has responded with assistance to the aspirant countries on its periphery, and strong conventional deterrence on NATO territory. The U.S. contribution to this effort in the form of the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) is invaluable. I commend the Trump administration for providing lethal defensive weapons to Ukraine and for increasing the amount of EDI. But I urge Congress to reconsider the proposed 2020 cut to that funding. Now – when Russian naval forces continue to violate Ukrainian freedom of navigation rights and to illegally hold 3 vessels and 23 sailors seized in November – is not the time to ease up on support to our eastern allies and partners.

Russia has consistently and aggressively worked to counter the efforts of Balkan countries to join NATO, including attempting to assassinate the Montenegrin prime minister and through disinformation operations in North Macedonia. Russia exerts influence in Serbia through energy and other business deals and its military intelligence presence at the south Serbian base in Nis. The Kremlin actively works to exacerbate ethnic division and encourage separatism in Bosnia and is encouraging the Serbian government to push for a dangerous, ill-considered land swap with Kosovo.

Meanwhile, China is also working to extend its economic and political influence to Europe, actively working to develop 5G communications networks in Europe, which would likely leave NATO members more susceptible to Chinese espionage, sabotage and blackmail. This comes on top of existing Chinese “Belt and Road Initiative” projects which have threatened to put European countries into “debt traps,” where they are beholden to Chinese entities for decades.

NATO, its new and old members, must focus on countering threats from autocracies like Russia, and China and other threats, in the following fashion:

**NATO as an institution must provide military support and advice to Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova**, partner nations located on Russia’s periphery that are all subject to Russian military occupation. NATO exercises should continue in Georgia and Ukraine and these aspirant countries should continue to be invited to other exercises, including those with a hybrid or asymmetric warfare component. Military assistance should include lethal defensive ground, maritime and air systems; the prospect of potential losses is the best potential means to stop further Russian military aggression in the Black Sea and Caucasus regions. NATO assistance and

that of member states should come with requirements for accountability and transparency in defense spending, military procurement and personnel management.

**NATO must work more actively to prepare the two remaining Balkan aspirants for membership: Bosnia and Kosovo, and to neutralize the threat posed by Russian influence and presence in the region.** Bosnia has taken key steps to qualify for NATO membership, including registering some of its defense properties; the alliance has demonstrated flexibility by approving activation of a Membership Action Plan (MAP) of advice, assistance and targets for Bosnia to reach in order to qualify for membership. Bosnia's political and ethnic fragmentation remains the obstacle to the state agreeing to the MAP. Resistance by the Bosnian Serb leadership is routinely strengthened by Moscow. NATO members must counteract those forces by supporting constitutional reform in Bosnia and providing assistance to combat corruption in the military and defense sector.

The refusal of Spain, Romania and Slovakia to recognize Kosovo's statehood, because they fear the separatist precedent is a NATO failure. The reasons for their stance have nothing to do with Kosovo's unique history and its UN-mandated and approved independence process. All NATO members must recognize Kosovo as it is – a sovereign state under international law, with a seat at the United Nations. NATO must maintain security in Kosovo through its Kosovo Force (KFOR) deployment, but must work with the European Union to bring a durable resolution to the conflict between Kosovo and Serbia. Given the ethnic map in Kosovo and Serbia, a land swap is unlikely to be the solution. Moreover, in light of Russian (and Chinese) challenges to territorial borders any alterations in the south Balkans will serve to encourage separatism in Budapest and elsewhere. Let's not forget that the first European leader to express sympathy for Russia's military operations in Ukraine was Hungarian prime minister Victor Orban, whose nationalist agenda exploits the issue of Hungarian minorities in Hungary's neighboring states. Separatism is exactly what the non-recognizers of Kosovo fear; Russia knows this and seeks to further inflame intra-NATO disagreement and to perpetuate Kosovo's status outside NATO, denied even aspirant member status.

Serbia is not a NATO aspirant, but it aims to join the European Union. Yet at the same time the Serbian government, plagued by nationalist politics, is an easy target for Russian manipulation. Serbia is beholden to Russia for energy and is a willing host to Russian intelligence operatives, allowing Kremlin influence in Serbia to increase. Belgrade continues to welcome European and American investment, but so long as the Kremlin targets the EU and its members Serbia's situation will remain untenable. Serbia must eventually choose democracy or go the route of autocracies like Belarus, firmly under the Kremlin's thumb. NATO and its members can encourage Serbia to pick democracy, by promoting military modernization; the Serbian armed forces know NATO is the military "gold standard." The U.S. should continue the robust exercise program it has with the Serbian military, but demand more publicity and acknowledgement of this work, at least to match the level of hoopla that accompanies the few bilateral engagements between Russia and Serbia.

**NATO members must all contribute more to building military conventional and asymmetric capabilities.** This means that all allies, including new allies, should honor their Wales Defense Investment Pledge to spend 2 percent of their GDP on defense and to invest 20 percent of that in “major capacities” (as opposed to personnel or other base operating expenditures) by 2024. All allies need to improve readiness by fully manning designated combat units, properly maintaining equipment and participating in more exercises. The Eastern European allies who still have legacy Soviet/Russian equipment in their inventory need to transition to NATO-interoperable platforms soonest. NATO should establish a fund to help the newest members achieve this objective. Continued reliance on Russian systems is a vulnerability Moscow is only too happy to continue to exploit.

NATO must do more to counter bad cyber-actors such as Russia, China, Iran and North Korea.<sup>4</sup> The Alliance should define cyber-attacks or hybrid (“little green men”) operations that would trigger Article 5 in order to dispel the current ambiguity Russia and other adversaries can and do exploit. The Supreme Allied Commander must be directed to develop more exercises for defensive cyber operations and contingency plans for hybrid operations.

**NATO must work more actively to protect its military cutting edge and competitiveness vis-à-vis China, in particular.** The United States should devote more resources to the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) process, and help its allies establish similar procedures for vetting foreign investment for impact on national and collective security. Allies should increase coordination to prevent investments that could endanger national security and to prevent cyber-and other industrial espionage.

**NATO members must all be required to “renew their vows” to liberal democracy, a free and fair market economy, and the alliance must be prepared to call out governments working counter to the bedrock principles of the North Atlantic Treaty.** Democratic backsliding cannot be ignored, especially in the current environment where Russia works every day to cripple NATO’s cohesion and resolve. The governments of Hungary, Poland and Turkey must be held accountable. The United States and other allies should increase funding for civil society, independent media and organizations focused on anti-corruption in all eastern European member states. Secretary Pompeo recently signaled an interest in doing so in Hungary.<sup>5</sup> Congress should ensure that the resources and resolve meet the challenge.

In the United States as well, we would be wise to heed the warning of the authors of How Democracies Die.<sup>6</sup> Democracies die when leaders: 1) refuse to play by the democratic rules; 2) delegitimize their opponents; 3) tolerate or encourage violence, and; 4) are prepared to curtail the civil rights of political opponents and the media. We must shore up our democracy, improve the processes and functioning of institutions and ensure civility and democratic culture. We

<sup>4</sup> Sophie Arts, “Offense as the New Defense: New Life for NATO’s Cyber Policy,” *German Marshall Fund of the United States*, December 13, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> “Press Availability with Hungarian Foreign Minister Szijarto,” Secretary of State’s Remarks, *U.S. Department of State*, February, 11, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*, (New York: Crown, 2018).

must also fight corruption and improve our capitalist system to increase transparency, opportunity and provide for a common basic health and wellbeing for all Americans.

Any alliance is only as good as the sum of the parts. So long as countries still want to join NATO we know we are doing something right, but we can't take the success of the Alliance for granted.

Thank you.