

AThe Future of NATO@

Testimony Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

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Mr. Chairman, Senator Biden and Members of the Committee:

It is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the future of NATO and the accession of seven new Central and East European members to the North Atlantic Treaty. This is a historical moment. The vision of a Europe whole and free stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea set out a decade ago is now within our reach.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the leaders and peoples of each of the seven countries invited to join the Alliance at the Prague summit last November. This is a very special moment for them and a vindication of their hard work and perseverance over many years. While they have been part of the West in spirit for a long time, they will now join the West's premier military alliance to help us defend the territory and interests of the Euro-Atlantic community. As a result, Europe will be more peaceful, democratic and secure.

It is also a special moment for those Americans who have worked with these countries to help make this day become reality. I would like to congratulate the Administration as well as this Committee for its leadership and support of NATO enlargement. Many members of this Committee know how much work and heavy lifting was also required here in the United States to make this day possible. Were it not for the leadership,

perseverance and skill demonstrated by Washington, including by the leadership of this Committee, I doubt we would be here today.

We are also meeting at a time when the Alliance is in trouble. While we celebrate the extension of the boundaries of freedom and security eastward, we know that the trans-Atlantic relationship faces one of the deepest crises in its history. The United States is fighting a war in Iraq and many of our key NATO allies are not with us. An Alliance that has committed itself to dealing with the problems of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction as a core mission, finds itself unable to find common ground on how to confront that challenge in the real world in the form of Saddam Hussein. As a result, NATO is divided and marginalized at a time when Western unity, solidarity and support are very much needed.

One only has to read the newspapers to see the growing doubts on both sides of the Atlantic about NATO's future viability. Indeed, in recent weeks I have often been asked why we are even bothering to enlarge the Alliance further when many people consider it to be in a process of decline. My answer has been that it is still in America's interest to successfully complete this round of enlargement in spite of current trans-Atlantic differences. Let me explain why.

First, we must not lose sight of what we set out to accomplish by opening NATO's door to Central and Eastern Europe. From the beginning, the purpose of NATO enlargement was to help lock in a new peace order in Europe following communism's collapse and the end of the Cold War. We wanted to promote a process of pan-European integration and reconciliation that would make the prospect of armed conflict as inconceivable in the eastern half of the continent as it had become in the western half.

To a remarkable degree, we have succeeded in doing so. For much of the 20th century, Europe was the greatest potential source of conflict anywhere in the world. It was there where the great wars of the 20th century had started, and where we feared the Cold War could become a hot one. Today, the continent is more peaceful, democratic and secure than at any time in recent history. And strategic cooperation across the Atlantic between the U.S. and Europe through NATO is a big part of the reason why.

When I was in the State Department, I often told my staff that our goal was to integrate all the countries from the Baltic to the Black Sea within a decade of communism's collapse. If the West failed to achieve this, I told them at the time, future historians were likely to condemn us as having failed to seize this moment of history and rightly so. But today we can be proud of having achieved that goal on the timeline we set for ourselves -- and we did so without the confrontation with Russia or any of the other dire scenarios so many critics predicted.

Second, America made NATO enlargement a top priority for moral and strategic reasons. The moral imperative was to help those new democracies who had liberated themselves from communism and turned to us to help them anchor their countries once and for all to the West. But the strategic imperative was equally important. Simply put, that imperative was to ensure that America never again had to fight another major war in Europe. We wanted to use the window that had opened after the end of the Cold War to lock in a durable peace in Europe. As Americans, we wanted to be able to face future security challenges elsewhere in the world knowing that security in Europe was assured.

Third, we also hoped and believed that as Europeans felt increasingly secure within their own borders, and no longer had to worry about conflict with Russia or ethnic strife

in their own back yard, they would start to broaden their strategic horizons and focus with us on a new set of challenges from beyond the continent. In other words, we hoped that in addition to locking in a new peace in Europe, we could gain new allies who would join us in addressing the new threats of the post-Cold War era. And it is certainly no secret that it was also our hope that new allies from Central and Eastern Europe, having fought hard to regain their freedom and independence, would also bring fresh blood, ideas and enthusiasm to NATO and help us transform it for a new era.

I believe that events since September 11th have validated each of these points. Just imagine what the world would be like today if the United States B in addition to the war in Iraq and a budding crisis in North Korea B also faced an unstable Europe? There is not a day that goes by where we should not be grateful that today the President of our country B for the first time in nearly a century B does not have to worry about a major conflict breaking out on the European continent that could draw in the US. And I know it has not gone unnoticed in this Committee that among those European allies supporting us on Iraq today are many Central and Eastern European countries.

That is why, from an American perspective, this round of NATO enlargement remains strategically crucial. If the last enlargement round firmly anchored Central and Eastern Europe's core B Poland, the Czech lands and Hungary -- then this round will achieve something just as historic: the resolving of the Baltic question in the north, consolidating democracy in the heart of Europe by bringing in Slovakia as well as Slovenia; and the anchoring of two key countries like Bulgaria and Romania in southeastern Europe at a time when that corner of Europe is playing an increasingly important role in the war against terrorism. There are objectives that are clearly in American interest.

Of course there is another side to enlarging NATO -- the increased risk and responsibilities that we, too, are assuming. The United States is making the most sacred of all commitments -- a pledge to go to the defense of these countries in a future crisis. Moreover, there are some potential risks in bringing a large group of countries like this into the Alliance. This enlargement round consists of a larger group of countries, some of which are smaller and/or perhaps weaker than those countries invited to join in 1997.

Let me be absolutely clear. I believe that each of the seven countries has earned its invitation through the combination of its domestic performance and its strategic cooperation. If one could quantify how much reform ground these countries have covered from where they started a decade ago, many of them have covered as much ground as their predecessors if not more. They have already acted as allies with us in conflicts ranging from Bosnia and Kosovo to the war against terrorism. But we also know that none of these countries are perfect and that they, like their predecessors, still have a long way to go before they mature into full-fledged NATO allies.

I therefore support the Administration's decision to pursue what has become known as a "Big Bang" round of enlargement. I know there is some nervousness in the Senate about what one might call the "rotten apple" scenario -- i.e., the danger that a country turns out to have real problems down the road that we do not anticipate today. While we have worked hard to ensure that is not the case, we cannot exclude that possibility with total certainty. Indeed, we all know that several of the countries included in the last round have had a harder time integrating into NATO than many imagined. But this is not, in my view, an argument to not enlarge but rather a reason to take a close look at how we can update our policies to help them stay on track once they are in.

I mention this since some voices, in the Senate as well as in the academic community, have suggested amending the Treaty to allow the Alliance to sanction or even suspend a member should their performance be inadequate. This issue was debated in 1998 and I suspect it may be raised again. Let me just say that while I understand the intent of such efforts, I oppose such a step because I do not think it will work given how NATO works in practice, an issue we might be able to come back to during questions.

This brings me to the final issue I would like to address today: what do we do, apart from enlargement, to address the very real crisis across the Atlantic? We cannot ignore the reality that we have just witnessed a trans-Atlantic train wreck over the issue of Iraq. How do we revitalize NATO once the war in Iraq is over and the dust has settled?

Let me start with a small historical footnote. When this Committee, as well as the Senate as a whole, debated and ratified the past round of enlargement, many of the most lively arguments and discussions centered not only on the specific qualifications the invitees. Instead they revolved around the question of where the Alliance was heading and what it was becoming. That question is even more pressing today. I therefore think it is appropriate that our debate on the merits of enlargement again include the question of how to ensure that a larger NATO is a stronger alliance.

The core question facing NATO today is simple: what should be this Alliance's main mission in a world where Europe is increasingly secure and many if not all of the major threats we are likely to face in the future will come from new sources beyond the continent? Should NATO's job be limited to maintaining the peace on an increasingly secure continent a worthwhile objective but hardly America's only or most important

concern? Or should the Alliance retool itself to address new threats to its members security irrespective of where they emanate from? To be blunt, do we and our allies want NATO to have a significant role in the future Afghanistan and Iraqs that we will inevitably face?

This question of NATO's missions was debated at length during the ratification of the last round of NATO enlargement. At that time, an overwhelming majority of Senators voted in favor of an amendment by Senator Jon Kyl that clearly stated that the Alliance had to face these new threats if it was to remain central in American strategic thinking. Since then the Alliance has, with increasing clarity, embraced that goal of being willing and able to meet the new threats of the 21st century. And it has done so because people realize that if NATO is not relevant to the central strategic questions of the day, it will cease to play a central role in our thinking or policy.

The terrorist attacks of September 11th were a watershed in this regard. They started to convince many previously skeptical European governments that such a strategic shift was necessary. In Reykjavik last summer, NATO Foreign Ministers crossed a Rubicon by finally ending the debate over the so-called ›out of area‹ issue. And at the Prague summit, heads-of-state embraced a set of capability initiatives that, if successfully implemented, would help NATO turn the corner in terms of having some modest capabilities to play a larger role in such conflicts.

But that is all on paper. The divide across the Atlantic on Iraq now threatens to destroy that limited progress. NATO thus far has failed to find common ground on addressing these new threats. The Alliance worked during the Cold War because there was a shared sense of risk and responsibility across the Atlantic. That was the glue that kept the Alliance together. During the 1990s the common ground that

brought us together was a consensus that NATO's new job was to stop bloodshed in the Balkans, anchor Central and Eastern Europe to the West and try to build a new partnership with Russia as part of its new mission of stabilizing Europe as a whole. Today we lack that common sense of risk and shared responsibility. Somewhere between Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. and much of Europe lost each other. The United States, NATO's lead power, feels more threatened than many of our allies in Europe. That sense of urgency about confronting potential new threats is not shared by many of our European allies, at least not yet. Some leaders understand this imperative -- which is why Prime Minister Blair, Aznar and some other European leaders support us on Iraq in spite of considerable domestic political risk.

But it is clearly not shared across the continent as a whole, and especially not in France and Germany. Moreover, the sad truth is that today there is no systematic strategic dialogue taking place across the Atlantic that would enable us to reconnect and heal this rift. A growing number of Europeans, including some of America's closest friends for decades, believe the United States has or is in the process of giving up on the Alliance and Europe. Here in the U.S., many people are baffled over European hostility to the war in Iraq and the depth of resentment directed against the Bush Administration.

I know some have suggested that a quick fix to get us out of the current crisis might be for NATO to revisit how it operates and to consider moving to a new system of decision-making to replace the current consensus system. Such suggestions have been fueled in large part by resentment over France's position on Iraq and its refusal, along with Belgium and for a time Germany, to support steps like prudent defense planning for Turkey. I very much hope that wisdom prevail on this issue. We need to be very careful not to do anything foolish that would damage NATO even more in the longer-

term. There may well be ways in which we can streamline NATO decision making that we should explore. But the Alliance's commitment to consensus has, on balance, been a source of great strength over the years and it should not be abandoned. The answer to NATO's problems is to fix the current divide across the Atlantic, not to try to find some way to get around it.

One of these days someone is undoubtedly going to write a great book about how and why the Alliance has gotten itself into its current quandary. But the real question we need to focus on is not apportioning blame, but rather on finding a way out of the current crisis. Once enlargement is ratified, I believe the Administration as well as this Committee must focus quickly on this issue of how to pick up the pieces and rebuild the Alliance. And it must do so with the same degree of intensity and commitment that the enlargement issue has received over the last decade. If ten years from now historians look back at this round of Senate ratification and conclude that we enlarged NATO only to have it fade into irrelevance, then we all will have truly failed.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore that it is critical for the U.S. Senate to ratify this round of enlargement expeditiously and enthusiastically. It is a critical step in completing the work of the 20th century by securing a Europe whole, free and at peace. It will send a powerful signal that America is still committed to and cares about its friends and alliances in Europe at a time when many question that commitment.

At the same time, I would urge the members of this Committee to start thinking now about how to repair the Alliance once the war in Iraq is over -- and to pursue that goal with that same degree of dedication and perseverance as you pursued NATO enlargement. U.S.-European strategic cooperation is one of the major reasons why the second half of the 20th century was so much better than the first half. And no one can

doubt that the prospects for making the world--and the Greater Middle East in particular--a better place in the 21st century will be much enhanced if the U.S. and Europe once again find common strategic ground.

Can we still do it? My answer is yes. Will it be easy? No. But a common strategy across the Atlantic during the Cold War didn't materialize instantly like magic. It was created by far-sighted leaders who understood the strategic need to find common ground and who ordered their best and brightest to harmonize different views and needs. Unless we learn from the mistakes of recent months, come up with the right leadership and back it up with the kind of ties that successfully created common ground in the past, we may be destined to stumble from one crisis and train wreck to the next.

Former U.S. President Harry Truman once remarked that the accomplishment he was most proud of was the creation of the Atlantic Alliance and the transformation of former foes into allies. Truman would be aghast if he could see the damage done in recent weeks and months to the trans-Atlantic relationship today. It would be the ultimate indictment of our leaders on both sides of the Atlantic if the need to deal with Saddam was to undo Harry Truman's greatest legacy.