

Center for Strategic and International Studies

**To the Warsaw NATO Summit and Beyond: The Value of U.S.
Alliances in the 21st Century**

Keynote Address and Discussion

Keynote Address:
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HEATHER A. CONLEY: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. My name is Heather Conley. I direct our Europe work here at the state – at CSIS. And on behalf of – I almost said the State Department. (Laughter.) Tony, I'm getting there, I'm getting there.

ANTONY J. BLINKEN: Good.

MS. CONLEY: And on behalf of my colleague, Dr. Kath Hicks, who directs our International Security Program, we are delighted to welcome you here, and especially two very distinguished visitors, Deputy Secretary Tony Blinken and General Breedlove.

We're here today to release a new report that CSIS has concluded, which is the second phase of a study which evaluates the future of U.S. force posture in Europe. And of course, when envisioned this discussion, we thought it was a particularly timely moment because it was going to be nine days before the NATO summit in Warsaw. We wanted to have a broader discussion about the value of our alliance system, an alliance system that was created by the United States in the aftermath of the Second World War, and that continues to be an important contribution to U.S. national security.

And this is a particularly important moment, because there are increasing questions about the value of this alliance system, the cost of this alliance system. But six days ago, this conversation gained even greater importance, with the results of the U.K.'s referendum on its membership in the European Union. And suddenly, the post-World War II structures and their founding purposes are under profound strain. I have to confess, I share Dr. Kissinger's view, which he so eloquently articulated in *The Wall Street Journal* today, that we have to take this moment as an opportunity of catharsis and prepare ourselves strategically for the significant changes that lie ahead.

And of course, less than 24 hours ago, our NATO ally, Turkey, was savaged again by terrorism. And we are standing in full solidarity and sympathy with our ally. And it reminds us of the most recent terrorist attacks against NATO members Belgium and France. Our alliance today remains under great threat.

So again, this sobering background we have a rich morning of conversation ahead of us. And we could not be joined by a better person to help us understand these challenging moments than Tony Blinken, deputy secretary of state, a position he assumed January of last year. Prior to that, Secretary Blinken was principal deputy national security advisor to President Obama, and prior to that served as Vice President Biden's national security advisor. Prior to these positions he has served with distinction at the Department of State, as well as on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as Democratic staff director. But, Tony, we have to confess, our favorite title is senior fellow at CSIS – (laughter) – which he was from 2001 to 2002.

So we welcome you back to CSIS. We have so many questions for you. We're so grateful that you could take your time to come with us. And I know our audience is looking

forward to the discussion that follows. With that, please join me in welcoming Tony Blinken. (Applause.)

MR. BLINKEN: Well, good morning. And thank you all very, very much. I do want to start this morning with just a brief moment to reflect on the horrific events in Turkey yesterday. Our friend, our partner, our NATO ally, Turkey, once again the victim of terrorist attack. And this is unfortunately a scenario that we've seen repeat itself all too frequently in recent months in Turkey. What we saw yesterday was not the act of a martyr, it was the act of a murderer, and murderers. And we stand in very strong solidarity with our friends in Turkey. And I know that our thoughts are with so many of those friends and colleagues across the water.

Heather, thank you for a wonderful introduction. It is very, very good to be back home at CSIS. I have to say, the house looks a little bit better than when I was first here. We were in a different building then. This is a marked improvement. But it's especially good to be here I think at this time, because what you're doing, what Kathleen Hicks is doing, and particularly what my great friend and mentor, John Hamre, is doing in trying to bring insight and wisdom and council to the challenge we face is more important than it's ever been. And it's a particularly great honor to share this room today with General Breedlove, who served his country for nearly 40 years in uniform. Truly extraordinary. General, it's an honor to be with you. Thank you.

We certainly do live in interesting times. Last week, the forces of change battering our world found expression in the vote of the British people to leave the European Union. And next week 28 nations, including the United States, and 22 EU members will gather in Warsaw for the NATO summit to underscore the enduring strength of our transatlantic alliance in protecting the interests and values that we share. So in a sense we stand here today confronting a profound and pronounced tension between the desire to resist global change by turning inward, and the imperative to harness it to our aims by facing boldly outward.

We're operating in a strategic environment that is more fluid and fraught with complexity than ever before, certainly in my experience over about 25 years in government. We see power shifting among, below, and beyond nation states, urged on by the rapid pace of technological change, the growth of economic interdependence, the scale of global connectivity. This requires governments to be more accountable to sub-state and non-state actors, from the mayors of megacities, to corporate chieftains, to super-empowered groups and individuals. All of us are now linked in unprecedented ways, incentivizing new forms of cooperation, but also creating shared vulnerabilities.

Among those vulnerabilities that we know all too well, the weakening of state authority, greater ungoverned spaces, the mass migration of people, the rise of extremist parties, slow economic growth, polarizing politics, challenges of integration. All of these things are leading many to question the merits of the international order and institutions and alliances that sustain it. But against this tide there is another, just as strong if not stronger, one that has lifted billions of people out of poverty, extended the mantle of democracy to more people than ever before, created new middle classes, new consumers from the Americas, to Africa, to Asia, and beyond.

Overall, people are healthier, wealthier, better educated, and more tolerant than they have ever been in human history. As President Obama says, if you had to choose any moment in history to be born, you would choose today, regardless of nationality, gender, economic status. You would still choose today. Indeed, for all of the violence, for all of the tragedy, for all of the hardship that persists, the world overall is enjoying an unparalleled period of peace and prosperity. And that seems to confound us when we think about the headlines that we're reading every day.

So the question we have to answer for ourselves, at a moment when many are asking fundamental questions about our role in the world and the system that shapes it, the question is why are we actually overall succeeding even more than we know or believe or understand? What explains the long peace that we've enjoyed for seven decades? And at the same time, what explains the discontent with, the confusion about, indeed the rejection of the very system that helped produce this progress in the first place? With so much at stake, it's imperative that we ask these questions honestly and openly, because the answers are profoundly consequential to the health, strength, and security of our societies today.

Heather alluded to this, but 71 years ago, out of the rubble of war and the pain of unfathomable national loss, our predecessors wrestled a new and wiser course from the currents of history. They were determined to avoid the mistakes of the 1920 and '30s, when countries turned inward in the face of rising hostility and aggression. They resisted the temptation to concentrate authority in the hands of victors, or pull up the drawbridge to the rest of the world. Instead, they built an international system of institutions, of rules, of norms that gave everyone a stake and a say in the running of world affairs. This was not an act of blind faith. It was an expression of deep pragmatism.

Their purpose was to prevent for all times a return to war between and among great powers, and to create a safe, more stable environment in which countries could develop to the benefit of all of their citizens. Of course, and we know it all too well, this system didn't eliminate all turmoil, all trouble, all conflict, all inequity. It did not. It could never insulate societies fully from the pain of social and economic change. But standing at a remove of 71 years, I think it's fair to say that it got the big picture right, averting new global cataclysms, ending the Cold War peacefully, creating the space and stability needed for countries to grow and to prosper.

And for the United States, the new global power at the time, giving others a voice and a vote in this order helped prevent what usually happens when one country rises above the others, and that is the bandwagoning of those other countries together to check the rise of the emerging power. Indeed, the post-war system that we took a lead in shaping and developing grew by attraction rather than coercion, as the desires of others to join in further deepened and strengthened its roots.

International law, environmental protections, child labor laws, human rights safeguards, public health systems, trade regulations, maritime rules, international financial institutions, peacekeeping forces, the nonproliferation regime, and so on. Today these norms, these institutions work in concert to the advantage of every aspect of our modern life, and restrain

some of our darkest demons. That's what we mean when we refer in shorthand to the liberal international order. But by repeating it so often we don't always take the time to connect the overarching logic to the tangible benefits that we enjoy today.

Every aspect of this order is deserving of its own speech, but this morning I'd like to focus on the one indispensable foundation of it all, our alliances and partnerships. Everyday a network of U.S. alliances and partnerships operates overtime to deter aggression, enable the free flow of people, goods, and ideas, and facilitate international cooperation to meet transnational threats. Now, we enter these relationships, first and foremost, for ourselves, for the interests, for the safety, for the security of the American people. But this network also extends its benefits to others, a virtuous cycle that repays us with interest and further strengthens our position of global leadership.

Now, we have important, sincere disagreements in and between our societies over how best to address the complex security, economic and political challenges we face and, indeed, whether our alliances and partnerships are delivering the value that we need. And there are those who suggest that alliances are simply more of a burden than a benefit. They cost too much. They achieve too little. They encourage free riders. They risk embroiling us in other people's problems. They distract us from investing at home. They generally leave us with the short end of the stick. Even as it gains traction, this argument remains, in my judgement, fundamentally flawed, overstating the cost of alliances while underestimating the risks of turning inward and abandoning them, and certainly downplaying their benefits and virtues.

Now, it's true. Alliances and partnerships give every member a stake in the success of one another. But it is the shared stake, supported by our courageous men and women in uniform and our diplomats and development professionals in the field, that has kept the long piece and enabled new generations of Americans to pursue their dreams and ambitions. Today, these alliances and partnerships, and the international order that they safeguard, are so embedded into the reality of our lives that we tend to take them for granted. The generations who first fought and sacrificed for them to take root are not the strongest or loudest voices in our great policy debates anymore. As our memory of the past fades, we're left to only imagine the consequences of losing what we have always and so easily counted on.

But our predecessors knew, just as we do deep down, that the mere belief in freedom is not enough. We must steadfastly defend it and protect it. That's why the United States maintains a strong, stable network of Atlantic and Pacific allies, and global partners that is the envy of our adversaries. That's the reason we're the world's preferred security partner, the first pick at dodgeball. It's not simply because everyone just likes being around us. It's because the world respects the power and predictability of our commitments, the value of which accrues dividends over time for our security, our prosperity, our values, our capacity to overcome even the greatest global challenges.

Every day our allies and partners serve as the frontline of our defense, enabling us to stay ahead of our enemies and project our presence without the even higher cost of permanent footprints in every corner of the globe. Put simply, the world is safer for the American people when we have friends, partners, and allies. Now, there are those who believe that our nation's

overwhelming military superiority means we should and could operate unilaterally, and that corraling others is much more trouble than it's worth. But we know well – and General Breedlove can certainly speak to this directly – there is very clear tactical, as well as strategic and political value, in not having to fight alone.

We gain accesses to bases. We hold regular joint planning, training and exercises. We develop overflight and deployment agreements. We deepen intelligence sharing. We strengthen interoperability, which is what melds different nations with different procedures, different languages, different systems, into one cohesive and might force. We defray the high cost of modern warfare and community stabilization among many partners. We draw strength from the experiences of dozens of different uniforms planning at one table. And we gain legitimacy from the dozens of different flags working toward one mission.

Our own effectiveness is improved when we know how to operate, and how others will operate, in any theater. And our own reach is amplified when we can preposition equipment and stage from any region of the world. Just imagine how much more difficult it would be to fly sorties over Daesh positions in Syria if our aircraft carriers had to return home to refuel. Above all, these ready-made coalitions are our insurance policy, worth the cost of their premiums for the moment when we need them most.

Now, for those who doubt the value and credibility of our alliances, consider that NATO has invoked Article 5, the solemn obligation that all members make to the defense of one another, only once. And it was invoked in defense of us, the United States, on September 12th, 2001. In the years since, over 1,000 allied personnel had lost their lives and made the ultimate sacrifice, alongside U.S. and Afghan forces.

Today, the flags of 39 nations, including 26 allies and 13 partners, fly over the mission in Afghanistan. Romanians, Macedonians, Georgians, provide force protection on the ground. Ukrainians support NATO's trade, advise, and assist mission in western Afghanistan. Turks are helping Afghans reduce corruption and manage their financial systems. Australians, Brits, the Dutch, others are helping Afghan officers outline the future of their own security forces. We've shared the fight, the costs, the losses, and the leadership in Afghanistan.

But one of the least-appreciated benefits of our unrivaled alliance network is not its role in fighting wars, but in actually preventing them. Without our security guarantees, advanced nations like Japan and South Korea would seek to develop their own nuclear arsenals, plunging the world into regional nuclear arms races, something that administrations of both parties have worked so hard to prevent for decades.

We also continually work to modernize and adapt our alliances to ensure that they reflect today's challenges and adequately distribute costs and responsibilities. In the Asia-Pacific, just in the last three years we have updated the guidelines for our defense cooperation with Japan to expand its contributions to international security. We've concluded new host nation support agreements with both Japan and the Republic of Korea to help support our military presence in both countries. We signed a force posture agreement with Australia. And we concluded a

landmark enhanced defense cooperation agreement with the Philippines, which gives U.S. forces and equipment access to key military bases throughout the region.

Despite our serious concerns with the political situation in Thailand today, the result of which we are not – as a result of which we are not conducting business as usual, nonetheless our oldest treaty partnership in the Asia-Pacific continues to enhance the ability of military forces in the region to work together on peacekeeping, anti-piracy, humanitarian response. And next week in Warsaw, we will strengthen and update the most effective military alliance the world has ever known.

In order to navigate 21st century challenges, NATO allies understand the importance of contributing their full and fair share toward our common security. Five allies already spend up to 2 percent of GDP on defense, the standard that we have set, and over two-thirds will increase defense expenditures in 2016.

We still have a lot more to do, including strengthening our overall deterrence and defense posture to counter emerging challenges from the east and the south; ensuring rotational land, sea and air presence along NATO's eastern edge; maintaining NATO's open door to nations that meet our high standards; sustaining our commitment to Afghanistan, including making a pledge of an additional three years of financial support to Afghan security forces through 2020.

But we won't have to tackle these challenges alone. We've invited the EU to join us in Warsaw, where we will deepen cooperation between the two organizations, especially on bolstering security in the Mediterranean and countering hybrid cyber and terrorist threats. Now, more than ever, we must confront our challenges as a united trans-Atlantic community, integrating our diplomatic, military and economic tools to meet the full range of our shared threats.

The assurances of security also set the conditions for commerce to thrive and nations to develop in an open global economy, whose rules and standards are not only fair, predictable and known, but also reward transparency, innovation and plain hard work.

It's a nexus of stability and growth that has proven itself time and again in the formation of NATO, which protected the reconstruction of post-war Europe and the creation of a common European market, our single-largest trading partner; in the enlargement of the EU and NATO and the subsequent trade and investment opportunities to the United States; in the deepening of our U.S. presence in the Pacific, alongside the rapid rise of East Asian countries and economies, home to three of our top-10 trading partners and soon to be home to two-thirds of the world's middle class; and in the development of the rules-based international financial and trading system that has underpinned global economic growth and propelled billions out of poverty.

That's why agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which project American leadership and update trade rules for the 21st century, are so important. In every region of the world, the absence of major power conflicts has allowed nations to devote their time, their energy, their creative talent to developing their own economies instead of fighting wars. And of

course the converse is also true. The bonds of commerce discourage conflict because nation's now have far more to lose.

Roughly 90 percent of global trade is carried across the sea from the Horn of Africa to the Straits of Malacca. The United States Navy patrols and protects these sea lanes that are vital to regional stability but also to our own growth and prosperity. It's not an act of charity. Ninety-five percent of the world market is beyond the borders of the United States. Cutting ourselves off would be shooting ourselves in the foot.

The ability of U.S. corporations to ship their goods abroad, to set up shop in different countries depends on our system of alliances and partnerships that permits us to operate around the world, calming the waters for the free flow of commerce and capital, creating an international environment ripe for innovation.

Now, we know all too well the gains are not always equitable, or even, or secure for all. This task, to do more to ensure that they are, remains ours to meet. But as the world's largest trading nation, the United States continues to reap the greatest benefits. And if we're not taking the lead in writing trade's rules and shaping its contours to the highest standards, someone else will, and we will find ourselves in a race to the bottom, not to the top; a race to the bottom that will be to the detriment of our workers, our shared environment, our intellectual property, and the transparency and integrity of a globalized world that we could not escape even if we wanted to.

Our alliances also acquire their potency not only from our military capabilities or economic ties but also from our democratic ideals – from our belief in human dignity and our respect for human aspirations. NATO's founding treaty, in fact, emphatically states that our collective defense alliance is also a community of values – and I quote – “founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.”

It is the attraction of these universal values that has inspired movements across the world to shake loose the chains of authoritarianism and undertake the painstaking work of building and safeguarding the fundamental institutions of a democracy: a free press, civil society, political parties, accountable police forces, judicial independence, transparent governance, the rule of law, representative parliaments.

In Europe, the prospect of joining NATO and the EU has propelled this journey forward, requiring new members to have stable democracies, encouraging them to peacefully resolve disputes. These feats may seem almost unremarkable today, but they remain Herculean in the context of history on a continent that was once governed by nationalistic blood feuds.

In East Asia, it is also no surprise that our strongest allies are the region's most robust democracies, and our relationship with new partners like Myanmar and Vietnam grow as their commitment to democracy increases. At a time when state bullies, proxy regimes and violent extremists seek to prey on our differences, erode our unity, suffocate space for civil society, our alliances stand as irrefutable proof that democracies are not the source of global vulnerability and insecurity. To the contrary; they constitute our greatest reservoir of strength and stability.

Inherent in our network of alliances and partnerships is also a profound recognition that the United States simply cannot solve all the world's problems, and we cannot fully solve any of them alone. We need friends to share the burden, because the challenges we face – to state the obvious – do not stop at borders, do not distinguish by nationality. This is a world where epidemics cut swiftly across frontiers and hackers across firewalls; where violent extremists scar our communities and climate changes our planet; where an unprecedented number of migrants and refugees risk their lives every single day to try to find economic opportunity or sanctuary from war.

These global challenges demand fundamentally new solutions informed by the tools, the expertise, the experience, the imagination of a wide range of partners. But international cooperation on urgent and complex global issues doesn't come easily or automatically. It actually requires a foundation of trust and an alignment of interests that develops over years, if not decades, of engagement. And here again, our alliances provide ready-made relationships to mobilize others against common threats.

When Daesh's campaign of terror emerged in the shadow of ungoverned spaces in Syria and Iraq, we built a coalition of 66 partners, including all 28 NATO allies, to bring every political, diplomatic, economic and military tool to bear against this threat, undermining the very foundations of Daesh's self-declared caliphate and revealing its cause for the savage lunacy that it is.

When Russian aggression violated the sovereignty and territorial integrity of an independent, democratic Ukraine, the United States and the EU imposed coordinated sanctions. It's no coincidence we were joined by Australia, Japan, Norway and Canada – our allies.

Our continued unity on sanctions has sent a strong signal to Russia that we will not allow borders to be redrawn at the barrel of a gun. And as Ukraine continues on its reform path, despite continued Russian aggression by separatists in the Donbas, it is more important than ever that we maintain our sanctions until Russia lives up to its commitments that it made when it signed the Minsk agreements.

When we saw Iran's nuclear program speeding ahead while the window for preventative action was closing, the European Union stood firmly by our side on sanctions and helped spearhead diplomacy toward a historic deal that makes the world safer.

When Ebola ravaged parts of West Africa and threatened communities from the United States to Europe, we coordinated an intensive military and civilian response with France and the U.K. and rallied contributions from all across the world. Our race against the clock was aided by having our closest allies at our side.

When a tsunami devastated South and Southeast Asia, extensive experience working closely with Australia, India and Japan helped orchestrate a multinational life-saving humanitarian response.

Now think about this for a minute, and think and imagine how difficult it would have been to have any of these coalitions coming together as quickly or as effectively as they did without the habits and norms of cooperation fostered over years of partnership and years of alliance. Today, it is this flexible geometry of collaboration – resting on decades of alliance-building – that equips us to face new security issues from cyberspace to outer space.

It's hard to fully grasp what our world might look like without the advantages that U.S. alliances and partnerships provide, what it would mean to make our way in this world without a community of like-minded friends we can call on in times of trouble.

It would mean building ad hoc arrangements every single time that we want to act – an extraordinary diplomatic lift that would distract us from the real challenges at hand.

It would mean a world where goods are fewer and more expensive; where travel is harder, education exchanges tougher, international research collaboration near impossible.

It would mean anarchy on the high seas, with pirates, drug traffickers, smugglers and sanctions violators sailing freely, and a global power vacuum filled by those whose values look nothing like ours.

It would mean a world in which our adversaries are more emboldened to challenge us, where nuclear weapons spread, where an unintentional war is far more likely and small crises grow more easily into big ones.

In other words, it's a world unhinged – a scary world not only for future generations, but for this generation right now. That is why now is not the time to abandon the core of our liberal international order. This is the time to strengthen it.

We have to start by much more clearly acknowledging and much more effectively addressing the legitimate concerns of so many of our fellow citizens who feel left behind by a system that doesn't work for them. You can't really call it progress if too many of our fellow citizens do not believe they share in it.

And there is no doubt that this order is under tremendous stress. We see it in the convulsions of doubt, a lack of self-confidence, a search for identity in our own trans-Atlantic community. We see it in the concerns amplified by election-year politics here in the United States. And we see it, of course, in the United Kingdom, where the British people voiced their will in an outcome different from the one that we would have wished.

As Secretary Kerry said a couple days ago in London, "Good friends are important all of the time. They are especially important in complex times." Our special relationship remains as strong ever and the bedrock of U.S. security and foreign policy. The U.K.'s leadership is essential on every single global issue we face today. Nothing can, nothing will, change that fact.

We will continue to work together shoulder-to-shoulder with allies, partners, friends to adapt our international order to better reflect the new realities that its founders could not have

imagined more than 70 years ago. We will continue to strengthen our alliances, work with like-minded emerging powers, impose costs on those who seek to assert their will by force. And we will continue to empower new young leaders, new voices, new representatives who can demonstrate the benefits of this order for a wider range of communities.

This is a responsibility not solely for nations but for each and every one of us. And especially – especially for those of us in the foreign policy community who need to do a better job communicating the purpose of our work and connecting its value to the experiences of those outside our capital cities to make it real and relevant in their lives, in the lives of our fellow citizens.

There is a story that we like to tell – and I’m not sure if it is true or maybe a little bit apocryphal – about former Secretary of State George Shultz and his new ambassadors.

Just before a new ambassador would head out on assignment from the State Department, Secretary Shultz would invite them to his office. And he’d walk them over to a very large globe near his desk and he’d ask the ambassador to point to their country. And of course, the ambassador would spin the globe, and he finally found his or her new posting and put his finger on it. And Secretary Shultz would then gently move the finger to the United States: That’s your country.

A quiet reminder of the responsibilities that we as public servants share to represent the best American values and interests every single day. In an increasingly complex world, it is our alliances and partnerships that help us to do exactly that.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MS. CONLEY: Secretary Blinken, thank you so much. That was an incredible tour de force, so comprehensive.

And I know our time is very short, so I thought I would just pool one or two questions –

MR. BLINKEN: Sure.

MS. CONLEY: – and then we’ll take one or two questions from the audience.

I have to say, the State Department and I remember the story a little different.

MR. BLINKEN: OK.

MS. CONLEY: It was not Secretary Schultz. I always recall that story was Secretary Jim Baker that did that. So we will have to research that story.

MR. BLINKEN: We’ll have to – we’ll ask.

MS. CONLEY: But I'm so glad you mentioned Secretary Schultz, because there is one thought that he had during this tenure that I remember very carefully. He talked about the hard work of American diplomacy "tending the garden." So my question is about the U.S. role as we look at the aftermath of the U.K. referendum.

Seventy-one years ago, in the aftermath of the Second World War, European unity was in great question. It took an enormous amount of U.S. diplomatic energy – much more than tending the garden; I would say plowing it, helping to fertilize it – to grow the European project that we see today. What will the future U.S. diplomatic role be here? We tend to look at it, we're concerned by it, but do you see that good old American roll up your sleeves and tending the garden role to manage this transition period?

And then my second question sort of gets to where we are with – we have incredible international legal norms; a wonderful, powerful system, yet that system requires enforcement when those rules are violated, whether that's the territorial integrity of Ukraine, whether that's freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea.

Do you sense that there is still a willingness to sacrifice, to harm our own economies through sanctions, to put our men and women in harm's way to enforce those rules? Or as, again, Dr. Kissinger noted in his – this very interesting op-ed today that, so, you know, he senses there is a lack of willingness for that shared sacrifice.

So with those two questions I'll let you respond to those, and then let the audience think about a question or two –

MR. BLINKEN: Great.

MS. CONLEY: – and we'll end with that. But thank you for your comments.

MR. BLINKEN: Well, thanks. Those are great and, in many ways, profound questions. It's hard to do them justice in a short period of time, but quickly a couple of thoughts.

First, when it comes to tending the garden, I think the answer is both our role is indispensable but it's also different than it was 71 years ago. It's indispensable because our voice matters. Our voice carries. And it can have a calming and, to some extent, even shaping influence on these events. And indeed, in recent days you've heard clearly from the president about Brexit. You've seen Secretary Kerry go to Europe, go to Belgium – the European Union – go to London, engage with the leaders.

And our main message is, first, in a democracy people make decisions, they make choices, and we respect them. Second, our fundamental partnership and special relationship with the United Kingdom will not change. It will remain as vital as it's been. And the United Kingdom of course remains a vital ally in NATO, a vital partner on the Security Council of the United Nations, a strong presence in so many international organizations, and a strong partner with us around the world. That's not going to change, but nor will the relationship with the

European Union, which has actually become increasingly important to the United States in advancing our own interests.

And finally, I think the message that you heard, which is so important, is that, look, this is not the outcome that we would have preferred. It's obviously caused a moment of deep concern and deep questioning about the implications, not just in the United Kingdom, not just in Europe, but around the world. It's had a near-term effect on financial markets. But we believe that this can be managed – deliberately, carefully, smartly – so that everyone lands on solid ground.

And these are decisions, first and foremost, for the United Kingdom and the EU to make, working together. But because both the United Kingdom and the EU as an institution, and the countries that make it up, look to us, engage with us, work with us every single day, we will play a role, I think, in helping them to navigate this transition. And I am convinced we will land, and they will land, on solid ground because the fundamentals remain so strong.

That said, again, this is not 71 years ago. And what's different is other countries are in different places than they were then. We had emerged from the war as the dominant global power. And other countries were not only not as dominant; they were in profoundly weakened positions. And as we talked about a few moments ago, I think one of the greatest things that our predecessors did was they approached that moment with tremendous wisdom in making sure not to use our power to dominate and to subjugate and dictate, but to actually buy others into the system that we were helping to develop.

And the great benefit of that, and one of the great results, is that now so many other countries have emerged to positions of strength and prosperity. And so while we remain, by far, still the leading power in the world along so many measures, there are other voices, other countries that we have to work in, listen to, engage with in shaping these decisions. And of course the EU and the U.K. are among those.

On the question of sacrifice, look, I think the answer remains yes, but there are a couple of things that are worth pointing to.

First, when it comes to sacrifice, a very, very, very, very small percentage of Americans who serve in uniform are on the front lines doing that every single day. And it is their extraordinary courage and service and willingness to take on that burden that creates, for the rest of us, so many opportunities and advantages. So first and foremost, it's clear that that will is still there, but it's found, first and foremost, in those young Americans, and also in their colleagues around the world with whom we're in alliance or partnership.

Second, we have demonstrated that we're willing to inflict some pain on ourselves in order to sustain and advance basic principles that need to be sustained and protected in order to protect the order that we've helped develop, and Ukraine is a good example. Companies around the world, including in the United States, have borne a burden of sanctions. Economies in Europe have not done as well as they otherwise might have as a result. It's marginal but it exists. And so there's a willingness to do that.

Similarly, we see, in the Middle East now, 66 partners come together to deal with the threat posed by Daesh, by ISIL: flying planes, training forces, equipping them, and many – more than a dozen countries on the ground in Iraq training Iraqis.

So I think the will is still there, but we also have to think about it in this way: I believe, looking around the world, that the United States is more engaged in more places in more ways than at any time before, and yet there is this narrative somehow of disengagement. But I think what the argument is really about is not whether or not we're engaged; it's how we're engaged, the nature of our engagement. That's what's really going on.

And those who define “engagement” primarily by large, open-ended military deployments or interventions are going to be disappointed. That's not our definition. We have a broader definition of what engagement means, drawing on all of the sources of American strength – yes, our military, but also our economic might, also the power and determination of our diplomacy, and also and especially our human resources and some of the attributes that, more than anything else, continue to make the United States the most attractive country on earth: science, education, technology, innovation.

The president just came back from the final global entrepreneurs summit in California, where we had young entrepreneurs from around the world come to the United States, the source and center of so much innovation and entrepreneurship, to learn, to network, to engage.

And when I go around the world, I can tell you this: We're in countries every single day where some of our policies are not exactly popular, but the one constant that remains is this incredible attraction of our education system – of science and technology, of innovation and entrepreneurship. We have tried to draw on those strengths in our engagement as well, and I believe that that course is both one of greater strength but also greater wisdom.

MS. CONLEY: Thank you so much.

We have just a moment or two. And I'm going to beg the audience's forgiveness. I'm going to take two questions. They have to be exceptionally short.

MR. BLINKEN: And I'll try to be shorter.

MS. CONLEY: And I apologize for that.

So I'd like – if I have Dr. Charles Gatu (ph) there. And then we'll take one – is there one from this side in the room? Ambassador we'll take there.

Charles, please.

Q: Mr. Secretary, I'd like to ask you about the NATO summit coming up in Warsaw. Specifically, some of the countries represented there as NATO members today, if they were not members and they applied today probably would not become members because of their democratic backsliding, to which you referred and which you discussed at great length a few

weeks ago in Warsaw itself. I am talking about Poland itself, Hungary, Slovakia, Turkey – I'm sorry to say this today – and some other countries as well.

What is going to be our attitude, our expressions? What is President Obama likely to say about countries that defy values they had when they entered NATO and defy values that we hold very dear, including yourself?

MS. CONLEY: Mr. Secretary, if you can hold back.

MR. BLINKEN: Sure.

MS. CONLEY: If I can have a microphone to the ambassador, please? And, I'm sorry, please introduce yourself.

Q: Thank you. I'm the ambassador of Georgia. It's always great to see you.

MR. BLINKEN: Nice to see you.

Q: You are well aware that Georgia is a steadfast partner of NATO. And as we are getting closer to the NATO summit, Georgia expects its progress towards membership is duly reflected in any decisions of the summit. But the question is about a common wisdom, which is about the deep – a sharp correlation between the health and strength of NATO and health and strength of the European Union.

And given the difficulties which we have been observing in the Union, starting from 2008, starting from euro crisis to migration crisis and rising of the fundamentalists and nationalists, sentiments in the Union and the divisions which are multiplying in the Union, and now Brexit, with its clear or unintended consequences, how would you see the interdependency of the health and strength of NATO and health and strength of European Union, how this will affect NATO's future? Thank you.

MS. CONLEY: In some ways, both questions are connected: the health of the alliance, the health of our values community.

MR. BLINKEN: Well, first, thank you very much to both of you.

And, Charles, first to you. The one thing I've learned in working for President Obama, or for that matter President Clinton before that for many years, is never get ahead of your president. So I'm going to let him speak to these questions as he will during the NATO summit.

But let me just say this: We see, among many of our partners, challenges to some of the democratic principles that we hold dear. And we're engaged with virtually all of those countries on those issues every single day in ways, big and small, public and private, encouraging them, pressing them, working with them to reassert the principles that are at the heart of the alliance and at the heart of what actually joins us together.

So this is not the conversation of one moment or one summit. It's an ongoing conversation that we're pursuing every single day. But I suspect the president will have something to say when he's in Europe, so let me leave it to him.

Look, the strength of the alliance is going to manifest itself, or not, in the decisions and actions that the alliance takes. And in particular, will we demonstrate, as I believe we will, that we are putting the alliance together in a position to contend with new challenges, some from the east, some from the south, and indeed some, in a sense, internal, as you alluded to, to Europe itself.

There is a long and strong agenda at the summit. Again, I don't want to get ahead of it, but I believe that we're going to demonstrate in a week's time that, in fact, the alliance is doing what's necessary to adapt itself and address itself to these new challenges.

And, in fact, there is, in a sense, a new energy and a new vitality to NATO that has been, I think, the product of having to respond, and then to think ahead and get ahead of some of these challenges. And I believe that's something that's going to be clear from the summit itself.

Look, we already have, from the last summit, countries standing up in difficult economic times to put more effort into defense and security. That's reflected in their budgets. It's reflected in the technology they're acquiring. It's reflected in even deeper and more constant cooperation and collaboration. It's reflected in the actions that we've already taken to deal with concerns about stability and aggression from the east in terms of NATO's own positioning on a regular rotational basis – air, land and sea. We see it in the work that NATO is increasingly doing to address challenges from the south.

And as I mentioned earlier, the EU will also be present in Warsaw, and I'd like to see – I think we'd like to see even greater collaboration and cooperation between the two institutions. And of course there's significant overlap, as you know, in membership.

Finally, I have to say it's very vital that NATO make clear and demonstrate that its door remains open to new members who meet the standards of membership. And we have a number of countries that are not members that have done well more than their fair share in standing with and serving with NATO in some of the most difficult places in the world, none more so than Georgia.

So I believe we will demonstrate that we're further deepening our partnership and collaboration, and we'll also be demonstrating with Montenegro that the door, in fact, remains open.

MS. CONLEY: Secretary Blinken, that's a perfect segue into the next part of our conversation –

MR. BLINKEN: Great.

MS. CONLEY: – which you have so ably given us an important framework for that discussion.

MR. BLINKEN: Thanks.

MS. CONLEY: Thank you for your leadership. Thank you for being here. These are important words for these very difficult days. So we are very grateful for your input. We look forward to the president's trip to Europe, which will be very historic in itself, next week.

And please, will you all join me in thanking Tony Blinken for a wonderful discussion?
(Applause.)

MR. BLINKEN: Thank you. Thank you very much. Thanks. Great to be with you. Appreciate it. Thank you.

(END)