



Executive Memorandum

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AN OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN AMERICA'S SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH BRITAIN

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President Bush will soon have an opportunity to put one of his foremost foreign policy priorities—strengthening America's alliances—into action when he meets with British Prime Minister Tony Blair in Washington on February 23–24. The highly public forum will allow President Bush to communicate directly with both the decision-makers and the people of the United Kingdom, historically one of America's most stalwart allies. The President should take advantage of this opportunity to outline the most pressing defense and economic concerns facing both nations and to explain the initiatives he will push to address them.

Though President Clinton and Prime Minister Blair enjoyed a close friendship, President Clinton allowed a number of issues to fester and damage the pivotal relationship between the U.S. and Britain. It is important that issues relating to ballistic missile defense (BMD), the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), trade, and the future political shape of Europe be discussed and U.S. positions explained. This diplomatic clarity is essential to ensure that any policy differences between the United States and the U.K. are dealt with in such a way that this critical geopolitical link is not endangered.

Support for Deploying Missile Defense Systems. Britain stepped closer to backing President Bush's effort to deploy missile defenses following a meeting between Secretary of State

Colin Powell and British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook on February 5, 2001. Cook hinted that Britain would help the United States if it decided to upgrade the U.S. Fylingdales radar station in North Yorkshire. While indicating that Britain had not been asked to cooperate, he said that, as America's closest ally, the United Kingdom would respond to such a request as one would expect an ally to respond. It is time to put these positive words to the test. When he meets with Prime Minister Blair, President Bush should formally request the upgrading of the radar facility, which will prove essential to the deployment of land- and sea-based missile defense systems.

Asking and obtaining Britain's support in this way demonstrates to America's allies and the world not only the seriousness with which the Bush Administration views the need for missile defenses, but also the inevitability that such a system will be deployed. It is this sense of inevitability that is tempering European objections to the project.

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A Shared Vision of European Defense. The members of the Intergovernmental Conference of the European Union (EU) that met in Nice, France, on December 7, 2000, wisely decided that an EU defense force must complement and not conflict with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) defense structure. At a December 1998 conference in St. Malo, France, European members of the alliance agreed to a proposal for heightened defense cooperation under the auspices of the EU. Known as ESDP, such an initiative, through the use of economies of scale, will help rectify the burden-sharing divide between U.S. and European military capabilities. However, the EU had neglected to address Turkey's concerns that the body might use its new institutional power to intervene in Cyprus. As a result, Turkey vetoed the Nice outcome because it did not want to give the EU assured access to NATO's planning capabilities. The EU, while agreeing to consult with Turkey in cases involving Ankara's interests, refused to give Turkey (a non-EU country) a veto over ESDP operations.

The United States and Britain have complementary interests in resolving the current diplomatic impasse and allaying Turkish fears so that the Nice outcome can be codified at the NATO ministerial meeting in May 2001. To that end, President Bush and Prime Minister Blair should issue a joint statement declaring that the ESDP project will further the NATO alliance's efforts to provide for European defense, providing:

- NATO retains the right of first refusal to participate in a crisis,
- Planning for interventions is not duplicated and is done through NATO headquarters, and
- ESDP is designed to redress the real European deficiencies in capability that have long burdened the NATO alliance.

The Global Trade Agenda. Due to the current customs union nature of the EU, and despite the United Kingdom's long-held free trade proclivities, Britain has had to watch as trade disputes have increased between the United States and the EU. To set the record straight and pressure the EU to pursue policies more suitable for advancing free trade, the President and Prime Minister should issue a

joint statement declaring that they favor free trade initiatives by any means and that their governments will support global, regional, and bilateral trade negotiations so long as they further that cause.

The Future Political Construction of the EU. While welcoming Britain's role as a bridge between the United States and Europe, President Bush should make clear to the Prime Minister, both privately and publicly, that the United States does not favor the creation of a largely protectionist, federal super-state on the continent of Europe. European states are currently debating the future political construction of Europe; by signaling America's preference for an outcome based on democratic choice and national sovereignty, the Bush Administration will bolster the efforts of allies in Europe who have been dismayed by Washington's past rhetoric that closer integration in Europe is in U.S. interests. The ultimate form that the EU takes, of course, is up to the Europeans, but that form will play a major role in U.S. strategic calculations. Any entity that focuses inward and promotes protectionist, anti-American policies will serve neither U.S. strategic interests nor those of the United Kingdom or their allies. This dose of clarity should help America's European allies change the nature of the debate within the EU itself.

Conclusion. When it came to securing a commitment to BMD, bolstering a shared vision for ESDP, furthering the global free trade agenda, and setting the record straight about America's interests in Europe, the Clinton Administration left a series of vexing issues unresolved. Yet each issue offers President Bush and Prime Minister Blair the opportunity to improve relations significantly. By clarifying U.S. policy positions, the new President can secure for another generation one of America's most durable and important alliances.

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