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Europe and the European Union Are Not One and the Same

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America has no better partner than Europe.

—Barack Obama¹

During the presidential election, Barack Obama called for America and Europe to embrace new forms of multilateralism for the 21st century. Despite having experienced a strained, and sometimes hostile, working relationship with President Bush, the EU has indicated it is ready and willing to accept the President-elect's offer of moving toward a stronger partnership and increased cooperation. Obama has highlighted climate change, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and genocide as "dangerous currents" that Europe and America should confront together.² His choice of Hillary Clinton as America's top diplomat has been greeted warmly in Europe, and Obama has said that he intends to use the goodwill garnered from the many nations of Europe to usher in a new era in EU–U.S. relations.³

However, the President-elect must not view Europe and the European Union as one and the same. America's bilateral relationships with its European allies are just as important as America's relationship with the European Union, if not more so. Foreign policy currently remains a nation-state competence, with each European country having diverse histories, interests, values, and needs. Although there will surely be chances for America to work in concert with the EU, the new Administration must first and foremost seek to nurture its bilateral relationships.

Advance the U.S.–UK Special Relationship.
America has found its strongest, most enduring alli-

ance in its Special Relationship with Great Britain. This relationship has been defined by consistent and recurring cooperation, systematic engagement, and enduring bilateral relations. Wherever America is doing good things in the world, Britain will be by her side, and this is unlikely to change under the new Administration. For instance, when the President-elect asks Europe to increase its NATO commitment to Afghanistan, it is likely that Britain will be among the first to respond, having already increased numbers by 300 troops just last month,⁴ in addition to the 230 troops sent in summer 2008.⁵

However, the Special Relationship is threatened in various ways, especially by increasing levels of anti-American sentiment in Britain. Favorable opinion toward the United States has dropped from 83 percent in 1999–2000 to 56 percent in 2006⁶ to just 51 percent in 2007.⁷ Through public diplomacy and high-level visits, the new Administration should invest significant political capital in the Special Relationship and put forward a strong public case for demonstrating the effectiveness and substantial value of close British–American cooperation.

A second challenge to the Special Relationship, as well as to America's bilateral relations more broadly, is posed by the development of a common

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EU foreign policy. President-elect Obama has stated that “in this century, we need a strong European Union that deepens the security and prosperity of this continent.”⁸ A European Union that is predicated on an intergovernmental union of self-determining and independent nation-states, voluntarily cooperating on vital foreign policy issues, will lead to increased security and prosperity. However, EU governance is currently based on a model that lacks legitimacy, credibility, transparency, and democratic accountability. This model has inevitably fostered bad public policy and has frequently led to foreign policies that stand at odds with U.S. interests and global cooperation.

As Europe develops the tools of military adventure and a foreign policy specifically around the idea that American power must be constrained, Washington will find its interests increasingly marginalized in Europe and, consequently, that it is unable to form valuable bilateral relationships.

Value the NATO Alliance. NATO remains central to transatlantic security and is the crowning glory of America’s alliance architecture. There are few formal alliances, if any, that can boast the successes that NATO has enjoyed throughout its history. However, the primacy of NATO is under threat by the evolution of a duplicate security alliance within the European Union—the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP). The ESDP not only threatens to decouple America from Europe but has

also spectacularly failed to increase European defense spending. Just four of the 21 EU–NATO members spend the NATO benchmark of 2 percent of gross domestic product on defense, and average EU defense spending has significantly decreased over the past 10 years.

Obama has stated: “In this new century, Americans and Europeans alike will be required to do more—not less. Partnership and cooperation among nations is not a choice; it is the one way, the only way, to protect our common security and advance our common humanity.”⁹ However, the U.S. should not confuse its desire to see European countries take on more security and defense responsibilities, both in Europe and in the wider world, with the negative ramifications of European military integration. Creating a second defense alliance in Europe, with its own operational headquarters, security strategy, and military staff will inevitably come at NATO’s expense. America’s endorsement of a separate, independent defense identity would represent the greatest geopolitical shift in the transatlantic alliance since the end of the Second World War and would fundamentally undermine the NATO alliance and the Anglo–American Special Relationship.

Deploy U.S. Missile Defenses in Poland and the Czech Republic. The “third site” deployment of 10 interceptors in Poland and a radar in the Czech Republic is a deal that President-elect Obama must

1. “Remarks of Senator Barack Obama: A World that Stands as One,” Berlin, Germany, July 24, 2008, at http://www.barackobama.com/2008/07/24/remarks_of_senator_barack_obam_97.php (December 2, 2008).
2. *Ibid.*
3. Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, warmly welcomed Hillary Clinton’s appointment. See Jeff Mason and Caren Bohan, “Obama Pledges Fresh View on U.S. Role in the World,” *Reuters*, November 21, 2008, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/politicsNews/idUSTRE4AK0GC20081121> (December 2, 2008).
4. “UK to Increase Troops in Afghanistan,” *Epolitix.com*, December 15, 2008, at <http://www.epolitix.com/latestnews/article-detail/newsarticle/uk-to-increase-troops-in-afghanistan> (January 7, 2009).
5. “Extra UK Troops for Afghanistan,” *BBC News*, June 16, 2008 at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/7456551.stm (January 7, 2009).
6. Pew Global Attitudes Project, “America’s Image Slips, But Allies Share U.S. Concerns over Iran, Hamas: No Global Warming Alarm in the U.S., China,” June 13, 2006, at <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=252> (December 5, 2008).
7. Pew Global Attitudes Project “Global Unease with Major World Powers,” June 27, 2007, at <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=256> (December 5, 2008).
8. “Remarks of Senator Barack Obama: A World that Stands as One.”
9. *Ibid.*

stand behind. Concluded in the final months of the Bush Administration, the third-site deal represents a boon to transatlantic security and a valuable complement to NATO's work on missile defense.

Unfortunately, Obama has given no assurances that he will stand behind the Bush Administration's deal. In fact, he has implied that ballistic missile defense programs are either ineffective, too costly, or both.¹⁰ At NATO's foreign ministerial summit in Brussels in early December 2008, all 26 members of the alliance re-endorsed the third site deployment, having concluded a "breakthrough agreement" at the Bucharest Summit in April 2008, which unequivocally backed the deal.¹¹ Since the Bucharest Summit, there has been a solid acknowledgment within the alliance that missile defenses add to European security and that NATO should pursue its own missile defense system in conjunction with the third-site installations.¹² It would be a huge mistake for Obama to begin his presidency by tearing up the Bucharest communiqué and turning his back on America's allies in Europe. Furthermore, it would seriously undermine his efforts to rebuild a strong NATO and a vibrant transatlantic alliance.¹³

French President Nicolas Sarkozy's recent call for a temporary moratorium on the planned deployments should not be interpreted as speaking for Europe as a whole. It is also worth recalling that France was signatory to both NATO communiqués endorsing the third-site deal. Although it has been a long and at times arduous journey, America has found solid friends in Poland and the Czech Republic while negotiating the third-site agreement. Both Poland and the Czech Republic con-

tinue to stand behind their commitment to the U.S. deployment, and both have invested tremendous political and diplomatic capital in holding up their ends of the bargain. Equally, Sarkozy went far beyond his limited mandate as president of the European Union to criticize the third-site deal, and his pursuit of a soft policy toward Moscow's ambitions should be borne in mind when pondering his motivations. The European Union should not hold a veto over U.S. security policy, or America's bilateral alliances with European countries. To subject American policy to EU approval would seriously weaken American security.

Toward Increased American Security and Transatlantic Cooperation. The European Union is currently facing a profound internal debate about its future role in the world. It continues to defy public opposition to the further centralization of power, moving forward with a policy agenda designed to counter the American "hyperpower."¹⁴ The new Administration must therefore take a hard look at U.S.–EU relations if it is to fashion a transatlantic relationship that serves American interests. The European Union does not currently have the power to determine member states' foreign policies, and America must respect the principle of national sovereignty. It must also nurture its bilateral relationships in working toward increased American security and transatlantic cooperation.

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10. "Barack Obama and Joe Biden on Defense Issues," at <http://www.barackobama.com> (December 8, 2008).

11. Matthew Lee, "Bush Wins NATO Nod on Missile Defense," *Associated Press*, April 3, 2008.

12. "NATO: Euro Missile Shield Worth Pursuing," United International Press, November 25, 2008, at http://www.upi.com/Top_News/2008/11/25/NATO_Euro_missile_shield_worth_pursuing/UPI-84441227627985 (December 8, 2008).

13. Barack Obama stated during his campaign that he is committed to "rebuilding a Strong NATO and rallying European support for Afghanistan." See "Barack Obama and Joe Biden: A Stronger Partnership With Europe for a Safer America," at www.barackobama.com (December 8, 2008).

14. Former Socialist French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine (1997–2002) coined the word *hyperpuissance* ("hyperpower") to define America's political, military, and economic strength after the Cold War.