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President Bush Is Right to Recognize the Value— and Values—of the Anglosphere

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On January 13, President Bush presented the Presidential Medal of Freedom to former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, former Australian Prime Minister John Howard, and Colombian President Alvaro Uribe. The medal is the highest civil award the United States can bestow. It is given in recognition of exemplary achievement in the service of freedom and carries with it the deepest respect of the American people.

In presenting the medals, President Bush paid tribute to Blair, who after 9/11 “was there ... to affirm the special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom,” and to Howard, who “was a faithful steward of Australia’s alliances and a sturdy friend in a time of need.” Together with Uribe, both were “true friend[s] of the United States” who provided “lasting example[s] of statesmanship at home and abroad.”¹

In honoring Blair and Howard, President Bush also offered tribute to the value of the Anglo-American Special Relationship. He recognized that this alliance is also the cornerstone of broader ties between the English-speaking nations of the world, known collectively as the Anglosphere.² These ties are of the greatest importance to the United States.

The Advent of the Anglosphere. The Anglosphere is defined by the values that flowered in Great Britain and were spread by British emigration in the 18th and 19th centuries. They are the values that have created the modern international state system, of which the U.S. and Britain are leading members.

Like the other members of the Anglosphere, the U.S. is founded on the values of liberty, self-government, the rule of law, and the right to private property, values that have found their safest home within the Anglosphere. The Heritage Foundation’s 2009 *Index of Economic Freedom*, in which English-speaking states occupy eight of the top 10 places, emphasizes yet again the connections between national income, economic freedom, and social well-being.³

Winston Churchill, the first honorary citizen of the United States and the founder of the Special Relationship, was the most distinguished advocate and chronicler of the unity of the English-speaking peoples. After World War II, he published his four-volume *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*. His purpose was to deepen their awareness of their shared inheritance and so to encourage them to stand united in the face of the Soviet threat and the unknown threats that would come after Communism was defeated.

Churchill’s vision was realized during the presidency of George W. Bush. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Britain and Australia stood side by side with the United States, supporting it diplomatically and militarily in the response that brushed aside the

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Taliban regime in Afghanistan. And like the U.S., they recognized that 9/11 required a broader response, that mass Islamist terrorism was enabled and fed by the repression and tyranny endemic in the Middle East. Consequently, the war that brought Saddam Hussein to justice had their courageous support against opposition at home and abroad.

Today in Afghanistan, the battle against the Taliban and al-Qaeda continues, even as most of the world cowers on the sidelines. Many of the NATO allies seek shelter in the north regions of the country, protecting themselves against doing their duty by applying national caveats to the use of their forces. But the U.S., Britain, Australia, and Canada fight together on the front lines to defeat a hostile foe that bases its ideology on the most primitive rejection of civilized values.

Shared Values, Shared Interests. In the months and years to come, if President-elect Barack Obama carries out his promise to continue and reinforce that fight, he will find himself forced to rely on the Anglosphere. Other nations may speak; only the Anglosphere will act. This commitment to action is born of the fact that this broadest of all special relationships reflects not simply the will and leadership of Presidents and prime ministers—at its core, it stems from shared values and the shared interests such values create. To withdraw from the Anglosphere would be to abandon foundational principles.

But the value of the Anglosphere rests not only in the support its members give freely to one another. It also rests in the example and the assistance it provides to other states around the world. The award of the Medal of Freedom to Uribe spoke eloquently to this point. His great contribution has

been to return the rule of law to Colombia, a nation dominated for too long by an alliance of drug cartels and Marxist terrorists.

Supported by unstinting American assistance through Plan Colombia, President Uribe has brought the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia to the brink of collapse.⁴ This is an accomplishment in the tradition of the Anglosphere, one that would not have been possible without its aid. The special ties between its members pose no bar to close relations with other states that advance its values.

Bush was right to recognize Blair and Howard for their distinguished contributions to the cause of freedom and to include Uribe in the same ceremony. It was a fitting close to an Administration marked by its recognition of the value of the Anglosphere and by reliance on its members. Regrettably, in her opening remarks in her confirmation hearing as secretary of state, Senator Hilary Clinton (D-NY), while referring to the importance of the United States' relationship with Saudi Arabia, could muster nothing but a passing mention of Great Britain.⁵

The Truest Friends. President-elect Obama should recognize that the relations between the members of the Anglosphere have flowered under President Bush for a reason. If Obama does not turn willingly to them now, he will find himself forced to do so by the pressure of events. The incoming Administration is eager to make friends abroad. It must not forget its truest friends in the Anglosphere.

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1. Press release, "President Bush Honors Presidential Medal of Freedom Recipients," The White House, January 13, 2009, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2009/01/20090113-7.html> (January 16, 2009).
2. James C. Bennett, *The Third Anglosphere Century: The English-Speaking World in an Era of Transition* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 2007), at <http://www.heritage.org/bookstore/anglosphere.pdf>.
3. Terry Miller and Kim R. Holmes, *2009 Index of Economic Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation and Dow Jones & Company, Inc., 2009), at <http://www.heritage.org/index>.
4. Peter Brookes, "Flashpoint: FARC's Fading Fortunes," *Armed Forces Journal*, September 2008, at <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2008/09/3702809> (January 16, 2009).
5. Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY), "Opening Statement in Confirmation Hearing for Nomination as Secretary of State," made before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, U.S. Senate, January 13, 2009, at <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2009/01/13/raw-data-hillary-clintons-statement-senate-confirmation-hearing> (January 16, 2009).