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Five Conservative Principles That Should Guide U.S. Policy on Europe

Nile Gardiner, Ph.D., and Ted Bromund, Ph.D.

The Obama Administration has attached little importance to the transatlantic alliance, and Europe has barely figured in its foreign policy. The Administration's highly touted "pivot to Asia" is simply a belated admission that it has less interest in Europe than any post-1945 U.S. Administration. While Europe is the home of some of America's most important allies, the Administration has weakened the American alliance with Great Britain while undercutting allies in eastern and central Europe in an attempt to appease Russia.

A strong transatlantic alliance should be at the heart of U.S. foreign policy. Washington should reinvigorate partnerships with America's key friends and allies in Europe. It should adopt policies that advance national sovereignty and economic

freedom across the Atlantic, rather than subvert them.

The Failure of Centralization.

The financial and economic crisis enveloping the eurozone has exposed the fundamental flaws of the European Project. For several decades, the European Union has pursued "ever closer union," a growing centralization of economic and political power, with little or no concern for enhancing economic freedom, national sovereignty, and democratic accountability. Today, the future of the European single currency is in doubt, as economies from Greece to Portugal to France struggle to deal with massive debts, skyrocketing unemployment, and plummeting economic competitiveness.

The United States must end its support for political and economic integration in the EU, which has only encouraged the drive toward the creation of a fundamentally undemocratic federal Europe that is frequently anti-American in outlook. Europe needs greater freedom and self-determination rather than supranationalism and big government. As Lady Margaret Thatcher famously remarked, "That such an unnecessary and

irrational project as building a European superstate was ever embarked upon will seem in future years to be perhaps the greatest folly of the modern era."

Guiding Principles. The following conservative principles should guide U.S. policy toward Europe:

- 1. The United States must support national sovereignty in Europe.** A politically unified Europe is not in the interest of the United States, and the executive branch and Congress should not back "ever closer union" within the European Union, including in the critical areas of foreign policy and defense integration. A Europe of independent nation states would best advance U.S. interests in Europe, a robust and enduring transatlantic alliance, and democracy inside Europe. Washington should actively promote strong bilateral relationships with individual European capitals. This must include strengthening the vital U.S.-U.K. partnership, supporting the development of a comprehensive missile defense program in Europe, and backing the expansion of the Visa Waiver Program.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at <http://report.heritage.org/ib3524>

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The Heritage Foundation
214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20002-4999
(202) 546-4400 | heritage.org

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2. The United States must back economic freedom in Europe.

Unlike the creation of the European single market, which dismantled trade barriers within Europe, the European single currency is an inherently political project designed to centralize both political and economic decision making across the EU without regard for democratic accountability. On the ongoing European financial crisis, America's stance should be guided by the defense of national sovereignty, opposition to U.S. and EU bailouts of governments or financial institutions, and committed leadership in advancing economic freedom. The United States has nothing to gain by propping up the euro, which is increasingly likely to break apart. Washington should play no role in keeping it on life support.

3. The Anglo-American Special Relationship must be at the heart of U.S. foreign policy.

The U.S. historically has no closer friend than Great Britain. Both nations are liberal democracies that have been willing to use force to protect their interest in a free and open economic and political order. Today, the U.S. and Britain continue to cooperate closely in the realms of defense and intelligence, and they continue to share a fundamental interest in economic freedom and a belief in personal liberty. Instead of building on this relationship, the Obama Administration has indulged in a series of petty insults against Britain while taking the side of Argentina in its provocative

campaign against British sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. A strong Anglo-American alliance is no obstacle to good U.S. relations with its many other allies around the world, but a weak relationship is the betrayal of a friend as well as a stark reminder of America's tendency to forget that it cannot expect to keep its allies if it refuses to take their concerns seriously.

4. NATO must remain the pre-eminent transatlantic security institution.

Washington must underscore the central importance and role of the NATO alliance in underwriting transatlantic security. It should warn against the dangers posed to U.S. interests by the development of a European Union defense identity and EU military command structures. At the same time, the U.S. should make it clear that the future survival of NATO depends on the development of increased defense capabilities by European member states, as well as on the willingness of all NATO member states to stand up to Russian efforts to re-establish a sphere of interest in the independent states of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

5. Washington must maintain a commitment to U.S. bases in Europe.

The U.S. has approximately 80,000 service personnel based in Europe, spread across 28 bases. The U.S. presence demonstrates the American commitment to the security of Europe, helps to build European capacity by conducting training exercises, and allows the U.S. to respond rapidly to crises in the broader

Eurasian and Middle East regions. Continued reductions in the size of the U.S. military presence in Europe are dangerously short-sighted: They reduce the flexibility of American responses, result in no savings, and imply that Europe can and should be solely responsible for its own security, an implication that directly threatens the existence of NATO.

What the U.S. Should Do. In the aftermath of World War II, the U.S. supported European integration in the hope that a more unified Western Europe would be a stable partner and a bastion of economic freedom and political democracy in the struggle against the Soviet Union. Once the Cold War ended, the logic for American support of European integration also collapsed. The EU's steady transfer of power to Brussels has badly eroded its claim to stand for democracy, and its drive for fiscal centralization undermines economic freedom. Today, its efforts to defend the euro are creating political instability. Yet U.S. policy remains unchanged. The time has come to remember that U.S. support for European integration was not an end in itself; it was a means to an end. Now those ends are best secured not by continuing American support for integration—but by opposing it.

—*Nile Gardiner, Ph.D., is Director of the Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom, a division of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies, and Ted R. Bromund, Ph.D., is Senior Research Fellow in the Thatcher Center at The Heritage Foundation.*