

# Clarence Streit and the Intellectual Origins of the Atlantic Alliance

DR. CHARLIE LADERMAN

*Cambridge University, Ph.D. in International History*



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ANALYSIS PAPER SERIES No.1

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Global Relations Forum Young Academics Program  
Analysis Paper Series No.1

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This paper entitled “*Clarence Streit and the Intellectual Origins of the Atlantic Alliance*” is authored by Dr. Charlie Laderman as part of the *GRF Young Academics Program Analysis Paper Series*. GRF thanks him for his contribution and commitment to this effort.

GRF convened the following group of distinguished members to evaluate and guide Dr. Charlie Laderman’s paper:

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GRF is grateful to all members who participated in the evaluation commission for their invaluable insights, informed guidance as well as for the time and effort they dedicated to the program.

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**Dr. Charlie Laderman** is a Research Fellow at Peterhouse, University of Cambridge. His research focuses on 19th and 20th century America and its relations with the wider world, with an emphasis on the intersection between US and International History, the interconnection between US foreign policy and domestic politics, and the relationship between imperialism, humanitarianism and liberal internationalism. He was previously a Fox International Fellow at the Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies, and Smith Richardson Fellow in International Security Studies, both at Yale University, and an AHRC Fellow at the Kluge Center, Library of Congress. He is currently a Harrington Faculty Fellow at the University of Texas, Austin.



# Clarence Streit and the Intellectual Origins of the Atlantic Alliance

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## Abstract

This paper explores the writings of Clarence Streit, whose conception of Atlantic Federalism helped inspire the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Through his books, articles and editorship of the journal, *Freedom and Union*, Streit stimulated an attachment to a larger Atlantic Community among a generation of Americans and Europeans. His ideas underpinned the coalitions and institutions established by the United States and its allies to address the challenges emerging out of the Second World War and the Cold War. With the Atlantic Community beset by a series of new challenges, both internal and external, at the turn of the twenty-first century, an exploration of Streit's career offers insights into the intellectual origins of NATO and a conceptual basis for reinvigorating the Alliance today.

## 1. Clarence Streit and the Intellectual Origins of the Atlantic Alliance

**These few democracies suffice to provide the nucleus of world government with the financial, monetary, economic and political power necessary both to assure peace to its members peacefully from the outset by sheer overwhelming preponderance and invulnerability, and practically to end the monetary insecurity and economic warfare now ravaging the whole world.<sup>1</sup>**

*Clarence Streit, Union Now: A Proposal for a Federal Union of the Democracies of the North Atlantic (1939)*

**If there hadn't been *Union Now*, I don't think there would have been a NATO treaty. A lot of people got hold of that book and read it. From here came the whole idea of Atlantic Unity.<sup>2</sup>**

*Theodore C. Achilles, interview with Ira Straus, 18 March 1983, at the Atlantic Council in Washington D.C.*

At the outset of the twenty-first century, the Atlantic Community is under great strain. The Western alliance is facing numerous challenges. Russia's President Vladimir Putin, fresh from overseeing the first forcible annexation of territory in Europe since the Second World War, continues to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty by sponsoring an insurgent campaign among Russian speakers in the east of the country. This has alarmed Ukraine's Baltic neighbors, who are NATO members and also have large Russian-speaking populations. To the south and southeast, civil wars in Europe's unstable Middle Eastern and North African peripheries have resulted in an influx of refugees into the continent. Syria's ongoing civil war means that many are seeking to enter the continent via Turkey, which is bearing the brunt of the largest refugee crisis since World War Two. Over the past year, terrorist attacks have struck cities across NATO nations, from Paris to Istanbul and Brussels to Ankara.

In addition to these myriad security threats, the alliance is also confronting a series of political crises. In the United States, President Donald Trump has declared that he is disinterested in whether Ukraine is admitted to NATO, suggested that he would "get along very well" with Putin who he declared was a real "leader," and claimed that Europe's conflicts "are not worth American lives" and "pulling back

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<sup>1</sup> Clarence Streit, *Union Now: A Proposal for a Federal Union of the Democracies of the North Atlantic* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1939), p. 7

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Ira Straus, "Atlantic Federalism and the Expanding Atlantic Nucleus," *Peace & Change*, 24 (3), July 1999, p. 291

from Europe would save this country millions of dollars annually.”<sup>3</sup> While opinion on Trump is divided, to say the least, his anger that the United States is forced to shoulder 72% of NATO’s annual budget is shared by many Americans, who are growing tired of underwriting what critics have termed a “military welfare state.”<sup>4</sup> As the former US Defense Secretary Robert Gates cautioned Europeans in 2011, their refusal to invest sufficient funds in their own defense risks dooming the alliance to a “dim and dismal future.”<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, this comes at a time when the sovereign debt crisis in the eurozone remains unresolved and threatens the European Union’s survival.

The technocratic response to the euro crisis has only exacerbated the fundamental democratic deficit at the heart of the European project. This threatens the entire Western security structure. NATO member Greece, which has been at the heart of the eurozone and refugee crises, is already flirting with an entente with the Russians. Correspondingly, Britain’s decision to leave the EU could precipitate another referendum on Scotland’s place in the British union. It is highly plausible that Scotland could vote for independence, presenting a further dilemma for the European Union and NATO to resolve.

Moreover, Brexit and Trump’s election victory have emboldened Marine Le Pen of the National Front ahead of this year’s French presidential election. Le Pen has threatened to withdraw from both NATO and the EU. Like Trump, she has embraced Putin’s Russia, whose financial institutions are bankrolling her presidential bid. All in all, the structures that underpin the Western alliance, which have helped ensure the defense and stability of the Atlantic world for the past half century, are looking increasingly vulnerable. Above all, the normative basis for an Atlantic Community, based on shared history, values and interests, is in danger of losing its resonance and appeal.

A new intellectual and political framework is required to ensure greater Euro-Atlantic unity and encourage closer cooperation on the common security threats that the West faces. In pursuit of this goal, this paper will explore the writings of Clarence Streit, whose ideas on Atlantic Federalism helped underpin the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It is difficult today to appreciate the power of the movement for Atlantic Union, particularly during its peak years between 1949 and 1963. Streit’s books and the journal that he edited, *Freedom and Union*, helped to foster a powerful sense of Atlantic identity, one that infused the institutions established by the Western democracies to confront the challenges posed by Nazism and Soviet Communism. As we face new challenges in the twenty-first century, Streit’s ideas can help us develop more accountable transatlantic institutions and encourage greater cooperation between the democratic nations of the North Atlantic in order to counter these threats.

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<sup>3</sup> For Trump quotation references see: Cillizza, Chris. “Donald Trump on ‘Meet the Press,’ Annotated.” The Washington Post, August 17, 2015. Accessed November 28, 2016. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/08/17/donald-trump-on-meet-the-press-annotated/>; “Donald Trump: I’d ‘get along Very Well With’ Vladimir Putin.” CNN. October 11, 2015. Accessed November 28, 2016. <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/10/11/politics/donald-trump-vladimir-putin-2016/>; Trump, Donald, and Dave Shiflett. *The America We Deserve*. Los Angeles: Renaissance Books, 2000

<sup>4</sup> “NATO must rediscover its purpose, or it will end up losing a war,” *The Spectator*, 6 September 2014

<sup>5</sup> “Defense Secretary Warns NATO of ‘Dim’ Future,” *The New York Times*, 10 June 2011

## 2. Union Now

Streit would recall that his own “road to Union” began in April 1917, following the US declaration of war on Germany. Determined to “aid the cause of democracy against autocracy” and to work towards “a league to enforce peace” after the conflict was over, the twenty-one year old Streit served in an engineer regiment on the Western Front before transferring to the Intelligence Service and then assisting the American Peace Commission at the Paris Peace Conference. His experience at the negotiations disillusioned him. He was opposed to the Treaty of Versailles imposed on Germany, believing it was too punitive, and was uninspired by the new League of Nations, regarding it as too weak. However, his greatest disdain was reserved for his fellow countrymen, in the US Senate and among its press, who failed to recognize that the world was now increasingly interconnected and that consequently, America’s security was inextricably tied to affairs in Europe. Streit would later come to commend President Woodrow Wilson as an enlightened statesman for pioneering the creation of the first world organization. However, he would also come to regard the League as fundamentally flawed because it did not put democracy at its core, failing to establish a direct relationship between citizens and the institution and instead fetishizing national sovereignty.<sup>6</sup>

Yet this was in the future. Soon after the war, having won a Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford University, Streit travelled to the Near East in 1921 to cover the Turko-Greek war as a journalist for the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*. He was one of the first foreign journalists to visit Ankara at the height of the Turkish War of Independence, and became the first international correspondent to interview Mustafa Kemal after his election as President of the Grand National Assembly. During his stay, Streit published a series of articles in the American press. Even though Mustafa Kemal’s forces were then in retreat, Streit prophesied that “history will recognize in Mustafa Kemal Pasha the founder of the new Turkish state.”<sup>7</sup> Streit expounded on his positive analysis of Mustafa Kemal’s nationalist movement in a manuscript entitled *The Unknown Turks* but no publisher in the United States or Europe would take it. He believed that this was because many Americans and Europeans viewed the Turkish nationalists as unruly upstarts who would soon be defeated.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, Streit would continue to write favorably about Mustafa Kemal and the nationalists while covering the Lausanne Treaty Negotiations in 1922-3 and during the following two years while serving as a foreign correspondent in Istanbul. One of Mustafa Kemal’s associates, the journalist and Columbia University Ph.D., Ahmet Emin Yalman, would recall that Streit was “instrumental in breaking the blockade of silence which muzzled Turkey” after the end of the First World War and helped provide a fresh interpretation of Turkey to the American public.

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<sup>6</sup> Clarence Streit, *Freedom’s Frontier: Atlantic Union Now*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), pp. 296-305

<sup>7</sup> Heath Lowry (ed.), *Clarence K. Streit’s Unknown Turks: Mustafa Kemal Pasa, Nationalist Ankara & Daily Life in Anatolia, January-March 1921*, (Istanbul: Bahcesehir University Press, 2011), p. xii

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xi-xii

Yalman would claim that Streit's assistance to the Turkish nationalist movement in its fledgling stage was the introductory phase of Turkish-American cooperation during and after World War Two.<sup>9</sup> The young American even wrote a column for the Istanbul daily *Vatan* that Yalman edited, under the heading "Had I been a Turk," providing recommendations on Turkey's political future. Yet the most direct, long-lasting relationship that Streit established during his Turkish trips was with the village of Keskin Mumunlu, where he stayed during his 1921 visit and which he continued to aid in subsequent years by sending modern farm equipment to its inhabitants.<sup>10</sup> Ultimately, Streit's experiences left him with the strong conviction that a modern, democratic Turkey should have a close relationship with the North Atlantic democracies. This would continue to shape his outlook as he developed his plans for Atlantic Federalism in the succeeding decades.

Throughout the 1920s, Streit served as a correspondent for *The New York Times* in Europe. Unlike the majority of his countrymen, who had become convinced that America's intervention in the First World War had been a mistake, Streit's experiences reaffirmed his belief that the conflict had led to an advance in human liberty and international cooperation. He was confident that the defeat of autocratic governments in Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire had led to the establishment of more ethnically homogeneous successor states and polities with more representative systems of government. Furthermore, the war had led to the creation of transnational institutions that were beginning the work of regulating conflict, commerce, labor and laws between nations. Streit would have the opportunity to witness these organizations in action when *The New York Times* sent him to Geneva in 1929. In Switzerland, he would observe as the League and its leading members struggled to deal with resurgent nationalist forces in Europe and Asia. Streit quickly came to realize that although the creation of the League had begun the work of stabilizing a disorderly world, it was woefully under-equipped to confront the threat posed by Nazism and Fascism.

As Western statesmen continued to appease Hitler's demands in Europe, Streit was at work on a proposal to combat Nazi aggression. After the Munich Agreement sanctioned Germany's annexation of the Sudetenland, Streit returned to the United States with a manuscript that contained his proposal for thwarting Hitler's ambitions. Streit was convinced that only a federal union of the democracies could defeat the Axis powers. Streit's book, entitled *Union Now*, called for a union of 15 nations - the United States, the British Commonwealth nations (including the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa and Ireland), France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland. Its model was the union of the original 13 states of the United States in 1787. For his own union of democracies, Streit proposed that the "founder democracies" delegate to the federal government the powers guaranteeing common citizenship, defense, currency, the regulation of commerce between nations, and enable it to establish uniform postal, transportation and communication systems. Streit believed that the democratic union would offer

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<sup>9</sup> Ahmet Emin Yalman, *Turkey in My Time*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), pp. 71-73

<sup>10</sup> Lowry, *Clarence K. Streit's Unknown Turks*, p. 163

Germans, Italians and Japanese an alternative to military autocracy, encouraging them to overthrow their rulers and unite with the “Great Republic.” Even if that prophecy did not prove accurate, he argued that if the democracies pooled their resources, then, they would possess a preponderance of military, economic and social force that would deter the Axis nations from starting a war. He illustrated this by demonstrating that the 15 democracies together had a population of 280 million compared to the 89 million citizens of the Axis nations and that if colonies were included the difference was 914 million to 264 million. In land mass, the advantage was roughly 62 million to 6 million square kilometers. In raw materials and bank deposits, the lead was similarly overwhelming. Most critically, their defense expenditures were \$3.3 billion to \$1.3 billion, respectively. The democracies had double the amount of tons of naval vessel displacement, over one million more men under arms and an air force that was superior by 14,000 to 8,500. This was powerful evidence at a time when confidence in democracy was low across the Western world and there seemed few means for preventing the continued expansion of Fascism.<sup>11</sup>

Initially circulated as a privately printed edition to 300 people in the Summer of 1938, *Union Now* was published in New York and London in March 1939, the same month that Nazi Germany overran the rest of Czechoslovakia. It quickly became a sensation, going through seven editions by 1949, including Swedish and French translations. A group of enthusiasts encouraged Streit to found an organization, Federal Union, dedicated to advancing the ideas contained in *Union Now*. In Britain, an organization by that name had already been established in the aftermath of the Munich crisis and the book supported their cause. Winston Churchill’s offer of British union with France on 16 June 1940 helped reinforce the perception that Streit’s *Union Now* was the idea of the moment. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR), who was seeking to convince his isolationist fellow countrymen to recognize their stake in the European conflict, invited Streit to the White House to discuss his ideas.

The Federal Union movement would attract many high profile adherents, including future Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, FDR’s speechwriter Robert Sherwood, the pro-Ally publicist William Allen White and US Supreme Court Justice Owen J. Roberts, some of whom remained committed to the idea for the rest of their careers. Yet Streit’s influence on the US government during the Second World War was limited and when FDR brought the United States into the conflict, he did so as part of a wartime alliance, rather than the union that Streit envisaged. Furthermore, Streit’s ultimate goal of securing one million members of Federal Union proved illusive and the organization, having declined as a popular movement during the war, consequently disbanded in 1945. Nevertheless, Streit’s tome had inspired the founding of the modern world federalist movement and many former Federal Union members would continue to work for this goal in the post-war years. Streit, however, would focus his energies on building up the Atlantic portion of this union. And as victory over Hitler loomed, Nazi Germany was replaced by the Soviet Union as the principal enemy against which Streit’s Atlantic Federalism was directed.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Streit, *Union Now*, pp. 6-7, 86-113, 171-83

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Preston Baratta, *The Politics of World Federation*, (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2004), pp. 53-4

### 3. Freedom and Union

In the 1939 version of *Union Now*, Streit's principal concern was to counter the threat posed by the Axis powers and, consequently, he devoted little attention to the challenge posed by the Soviet Union. The book was published prior to the announcement of the Nazi-Soviet Pact (concluded in the Summer of 1939) and Streit, like almost everyone else, had not envisaged these sworn ideological enemies making common cause. While the Soviets were not included in Streit's original union of democracies, he stressed that, as its communist system was not based on the divine right of kings or on racial supremacy, the USSR was not as fundamentally at odds with his project as the Axis powers. However, Streit's 1943 edition of *Union Now* was far more critical of the Soviet Union, even though it was now fighting against Nazi Germany alongside the United States and the British Empire. He warned that "the only serious possibility of Soviet Russia quickly overrunning the world lies in the continued disunion among the democracies."<sup>13</sup> By the time Streit published his 1949 volume of *Union Now*, just as the Cold War was beginning to hot up, the Soviets had replaced the Nazis as the enemy against which the union of democracies was organized. Communism was now dismissed as incompatible with Streit's goal of world federalism. Streit still believed that utopian vision would begin with a core of Atlantic democracies and that this movement would be led by the United States, its power and position in the world transformed by the war.<sup>14</sup> Streit's former comrades in the Federal Union movement, unwilling to settle for anything less than the universal goal of global federalism, were quick to dismiss his more restricted Atlantic Union as an ideological, anti-communist tool for the United States in the developing Cold War.<sup>15</sup> However, Streit was adamant that federal union should be limited to liberal democracies. He hoped that the peoples living in illiberal, undemocratic polities would ultimately be brought into a larger union. However, until those regimes were transformed, he was committed to defending the Atlantic democracies from the Soviet threat through working for a closer union between them.

In the early years of the Cold War, Streit dedicated himself to editing his own monthly periodical, *Freedom and Union*. The publication was committed to working towards a "union of the free." For Streit and his fellow enthusiasts for Atlantic Federalism, this ideal appeared to move a step closer with the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949. The two Americans most intimately involved in the negotiations over the North Atlantic Treaty, John D. Hickerson and Theodore C. Achilles of the US State Department's European Desk, were both sympathetic to Streit's ideas. In his memoirs, Achilles recalls

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<sup>13</sup> Clarence K. Streit, *Union Now: Why Freedom and Peace Require the Atlantic Democracies to Begin World Federal Union* [Wartime ed., with three new chapters] (Washington, D.C., Federal Union, Inc: 1943) pp. 86-155

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 226-7, 281, 313-20

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Preston Baratta, 'Clarence Streit and the Idea of the Union of Democracies,' *The Federalist*, Year XXIX, 1987, Number 2, p.125



that he and Hickerson had read *Union Now* and it had left a lasting impression on them. Both “shared enthusiasm for negotiating a military alliance and getting it ratified, as a basis for further progress toward unity.”<sup>16</sup> Nor were the Americans alone in appealing to a common Atlantic identity. At the negotiations over the treaty in Washington, which began in the Summer of 1948, representatives from the US, Canada, Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the UK expressed themselves in the language of “common interests, democratic values, Atlantic civilization and the threat of Communism.”<sup>17</sup> While there were differences among the delegates over the form the alliance would take, the British diplomat Sir Oliver Franks noted that all the members shared a “conviction that the state existed for the individual” and the Soviet challenge was a “collective concern for all members of the North Atlantic community.”<sup>18</sup> The notion of a common community, united by fundamental values, was enshrined in the NATO charter, which emphasized the “common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.”<sup>19</sup> Achilles was in no doubt that Streit had helped foster this sense of a community and a concurrent commitment to individual rights. Looking back almost forty years later, Achilles was adamant that *Union Now* was indispensable to the drafting of the NATO Treaty as it was from this text that “the whole idea of Atlantic Unity” derived.<sup>20</sup>

The negotiators of the Treaty initially entertained ideas for a union that went beyond mutual defense. The most vocal supporters of collaboration on non-military issues were the Canadian representatives. They were convinced that a peacetime alliance needed to rest on a political foundation in order to prove durable, offer a compelling alternative to communism, further strengthen transatlantic political and economic integration, and enhance cultural cooperation. Lester Pearson, a future chairman of NATO and later Canada’s prime minister, argued that the institution “should have a positive and not merely a negative purpose” of providing collective defense against the Soviet Union.<sup>21</sup> Pearson’s perspective was initially echoed by George Kennan, the Head of the US State Department Policy Planning Staff and intellectual author of the containment strategy against the Soviet Union.

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<sup>16</sup> ‘Oral History Interview with Theodore Achilles,’ Washington D.C., November 13 and December 18 1972, Conducted by Richard D. McKinzie, Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, <<https://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/achilles.htm>>

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Sean Kay, *America’s Search for Security: The Triumph of Idealism and the Return of Realism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), p. 55

<sup>18</sup> Sean Kay, *NATO and the Future of European Security*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), p. 23

<sup>19</sup> *The North Atlantic Treaty*, Washington, DC, 1949, p.1, available online at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm) (accessed 30 November 2015)

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Ira Straus, “Atlantic Federalism and the Expanding Atlantic Nucleus,” *Peace & Change*, 24 (3), July 1999, p. 291

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Kay, *NATO and the Future of European Security*, p. 24

Kennan observed that “the community of interests of the participating governments was wider than military, it was traditional, historical and would continue... Association was necessary entirely aside from the troubles of the moment and might well go far beyond the military sphere.”<sup>22</sup> However, the delegates in Washington were not prepared to recommend such a broad conception of Atlantic unity. The British authorities did not want to undermine plans to establish closer European integration through the Brussels Pact and the French government was focused on their primary goal of securing military assistance against a threat to their nation’s security. Nor was President Harry Truman willing to endorse any plans for deeper union, aware that even military coordination was not certain of passing the US Senate, where concerns were already being voiced about intrusions on national sovereignty. After the Senate ratified the treaty in August 1949, Achilles did recommend to US Secretary of State Dean Acheson that the next step should be “full Atlantic federal union.” Acheson did not dismiss this out of hand, although his immediate ambitions were more circumscribed: “I’d rather start with Britain, Canada and ourselves.”<sup>23</sup> He also publicly declared that the North Atlantic Treaty was the “product of three hundred and fifty years of history” and stemmed from the development on America’s Atlantic coast of “a community, which has spread across the continent, connected with Western Europe by common institutions and moral and ethical beliefs.”<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, a politician as shrewd as Acheson recognized that closer union had little chance of securing the support of the American executive or the legislature.<sup>25</sup> Ultimately, NATO did not become a supra-sovereign institution. Sovereignty resided with the member states and it was their governments that would decide how the alliance was used to best serve their needs.

Nevertheless, emboldened by the unprecedented coordination between the Atlantic states enshrined in the North Atlantic Treaty, Streit continued to lobby, write and campaign for a political union between the nations of North America and Western Europe. In the same year that NATO was established, Streit helped found the Atlantic Union Committee to lead a national campaign for Atlantic integration. It was launched by 800 leading Americans with the goal of establishing a “union of Atlantic democracies much more integrated than the Atlantic Alliance.” Former Supreme Court Justice Owen J. Roberts chaired the Committee. Its Vice Presidents were former Secretary of War Robert Patterson

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<sup>22</sup> Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Kennan) to the Secretary and Undersecretary of State (Robert Lovett), April 29, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, 3:108-109. Kennan’s support for greater Atlantic integration would wane as he became concerned that the alliance would focus Soviet attention on military competition and permanently enmesh the United States in European politics. For more on Kennan’s vision of US relations with Europe see John Lamberton Harper, *American Visions of Europe: Franklin D. Roosevelt, George F. Kennan and Dean G. Acheson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp. 135-235

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Theodore C. Achilles, “Fingerprints on History: The NATO Memoirs of Theodore Achilles,” *Occasional Papers I* (Kent, OH: Lyman L. Lemnitzer Center for NATO and European Community Studies, 1992), p. 13

<sup>24</sup> “The Meaning of the North Atlantic Pact,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 20 (March 27, 1949), 385

<sup>25</sup> For more on Acheson’s evolving views on transatlantic relations see Harper, *American Visions of Europe*, pp. 235-331 and Cushing Strout, *The American Image of the Old World* (Harper & Row, Publishers: New York, Evanston and London, 1963) pp. 235-51

and former Under Secretary of State Will Clayton, who helped devise the Marshall Plan that supplied American aid to rebuild European economies after World War Two. Clayton's conviction that the United States should establish closer ties to Europe and help stimulate its economic recovery was informed by his reading of Streit's theories on Atlantic Federalism. The Atlantic Union Committee was the most committed and well-organized civil society supporter of the ratification of the North Atlantic Treaty. Streit even featured on the cover of the popular American weekly, *Time* magazine, and his fame added to the Committee's public influence. By stressing that together the Atlantic democracies possessed a preponderance of power that would deter any future aggression, the Committee contributed to the discrediting of isolationist sentiment in the United States in the early years of the Cold War, just as Streit had done with *Union Now* prior to US intervention in World War Two.

One of the objectives of the Marshall Plan had been to encourage the closer integration of Western Europe. While the Atlantic Union Committee continued to lend cautious support to the growing movement for European federation, they made clear that it must occur within a wider Atlantic framework. Streit's *Union Now* had a profound influence on a generation of European federalists. However, they were not so keen on his belief that a European Union must be part of a larger Atlantic Union. The French resistance leader Charles De Gaulle and his supporters resented the idea of France assuming a minor role in an Atlantic Union. Even committed pro-American European federalists did not necessarily regard the creation of the United States as an example for Europeans to follow. Moreover, they were convinced that political union should be confined to the Europeans and were concerned that a larger union would lead them to become vassals of the more powerful United States. For his own part, Streit was opposed at this time to the creation of a separate continental European union, convinced that it required the stabilizing influence of the British Commonwealth and the United States. He doubted whether the European union would be economically self-supporting and was concerned that "politically, the European union would be torn by existing factions and splinter parties and could never have the stability of the broader Atlantic Union." There was also the possibility that in the event of conflict with Russia, "the European union might be swung by expediency into an alliance with Moscow."<sup>26</sup>

In addition to Streit's appeals for an Atlantic, rather than a purely European, union, *Freedom and Union* published practical proposals for a federation of democracies from leading transatlantic thinkers and practitioners. Notably, it publicized Lester Pearson's proposals for NATO to establish formal, consultative forums for addressing non-military issues.<sup>27</sup> The renowned British historian Arnold J. Toynbee, at the height of his fame after the publication of his

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<sup>26</sup> "Streit Thinks European Union Hazardous," *Eugene-Register Guard*, 9 April 1952, p. 10. For more on Streit's views on European union see Clarence K. Streit, "Prudent Limits to an American Commitment on European Political Union," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 342, American Foreign Policy Challenged, (July 1962), pp. 111-122

<sup>27</sup> Lester Pearson, 'Interdependence and Religion,' *Freedom and Union*, November 1955, Vol. 10, No. 10

monumental *Study of History*, also lent his weight to the federalist cause by affirming that “we are headed toward an inevitable union - in the near future, toward a union of the peoples of our Western community, and then, beyond that, sooner or later, toward a union of all mankind.”<sup>28</sup> Toynbee believed that Atlantic federalism was the next stage in the history of mankind because it was the only way to ensure the Western nations could compete in a world where they constituted only one fifth of the global population. Moreover, the development of the atomic bomb threatened the outbreak of a third world war, more devastating than any conflict that had preceded it. Toynbee was convinced that the only way to avert this was to ensure the West’s unity. This would deter its enemies from precipitating an apocalyptic war that would threaten the survival of liberty. In Toynbee’s mind, it was “union today by agreement in preference to union tomorrow by force.” Toynbee anticipated that the union would evolve from British-style standing committees rather than Streit’s preference for an American inspired federal convention of Western democracies. Nevertheless, both agreed that cooperation between the agents of separate national governments was insufficient and that Atlantic union was dependent on the establishment of a united democratic community. Furthermore, Toynbee and Streit both regarded the union of the original 13 states of the United States, and its successful incorporation of additional states over the succeeding two centuries, as the model that the NATO States should follow.<sup>29</sup>

Toynbee and Streit also shared the conviction that the Union should expand and admit new states when they showed themselves capable of establishing democratic governments. And both pointed to Turkey as an example. Writing in 1952, the year that Turkey joined NATO, Toynbee declared that it had “clearly demonstrated its eligibility in 1950, when it performed the notable democratic feat of passing, without bloodshed or revolution, from a one-party to a two-party regime as the result of a genuinely free election.”<sup>30</sup> Streit had already begun alerting Americans to these developments in 1949 when he commissioned his old friend, Ahmet Emin Yalman, to write an article on “Turkey Today” for *Freedom and Union*. Yalman began by criticizing the “arbitrary dictatorship” that had been established in Turkey after 1925, the ruling People’s Party had established a regime that was “wrapped up in entirely democratic form [but] the actual practice was decidedly totalitarian.” However, change was now occurring in Turkey and it was undergoing a “speedy transformation ... from totalitarianism to real democracy without sacrificing order and stability.”<sup>31</sup> Streit himself congratulated Turkey for its transition to a two-party electoral system in an article for his journal in May 1953 that celebrated “Turkey’s 500 Years at Constantinople.” Focusing on the first 50 years of the twentieth century, Streit proclaimed that, “in Turkey a democratic republic has arisen, with the most inspiring record that has yet been made by the various republics which have replaced all the autocratic dynasties

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<sup>28</sup> Arnold Toynbee, ‘Union of the Free Inevitable,’ *Freedom and Union*, December 1952, Vol. 7, No. 11, pp. 19-23

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ahmet Emin Yalman, ‘Turkey Today,’ *Freedom and Union*, October 1949, Vol. 4, No. 9, pp. 21-24

that ruled Europe.” Recalling his own experience in Turkey in the 1920s, he commended Mustafa Kemal for presiding over “one of the most thoroughgoing revolutions in democratic history” and transforming the image of the “Terrible Turk” into the “Terrific Turk.”<sup>32</sup> Toynbee, Yalman and Streit alike held up the Turkish story as an inspiring example for all nations struggling under despotism. All three stressed the importance of a democratic Turkey to the security of the West and the ultimate spread of representative government. Moreover, Streit’s embrace of Turkey was further evidence that his plans for a world federation of democracies stretched beyond the English-speaking commonwealths of the Atlantic seaboard and the old republics of Western Europe.

## 4. Atlantic Union Now

Streit’s most active interventions in US politics during the Cold War revolved around his 26-year campaign to pass an Atlantic Union resolution in Congress. This resolution, which was first introduced in the Senate in 1949, called for the US President to “invite democracies that sponsored the North Atlantic Treaty to meet in convention to explore how far they can apply among their people the principle of free federal union.” The campaign was led by the Tennessee Senator Estes Kefauver and won the support of such prominent figures as future President Richard Nixon and future Vice-President Hubert Humphrey. These elite level supporters were buttressed by Gallup opinion polls at the time, showing a majority of Americans favored an exploratory Atlantic Union meeting. However, while Truman’s administration supported the spirit of this resolution, they were skeptical as to its utility. The State Department was particularly hostile, concerned that the resolution risked ratcheting up tensions with the Soviet Union and threatened to undermine American efforts to make the Europeans take on increased responsibility for their own security and economic recovery. After a number of meetings between the Atlantic Union Committee and high-level officials, including the President himself, Kefauver and Streit agreed to shelve their resolution in order to allow plans for a European Defense Community (EDC) to take shape. This was intended to be a “complete merger of men and equipment under a single European political and military authority.”<sup>33</sup> The EDC had the backing of the US government and would reinforce the Western defensive posture against the Soviets. The military integration of Europe also had the potential of establishing a mighty union along the lines of the one formed by the American states in the 1780s.

American hopes for the EDC were dashed in the mid-1950s following France’s refusal to support it. After that project collapsed, the Atlantic Union Committee issued the Declaration of Atlantic Unity of 1954. The Declaration was signed by

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<sup>32</sup> Clarence Streit, ‘Turkey’s 500 Years at Constantinople,’ *Freedom and Union*, May 1953, Vol. 8, No. 5, p. 26

<sup>33</sup> Plevan Plan for EDC, 1950

244 leading citizens of nine NATO countries - including Truman, Marshall and Acheson for the US. It urged a large-scale reinforcement of Atlantic institutions after the downfall of the EDC. Consequently, Kefauver reintroduced the Atlantic Union resolution. The Atlantic Union Committee had high hopes of receiving support from the new Eisenhower administration, particularly as Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had come out in favor of Atlantic Union when he was running for the New York senate. However, Dulles was now opposed to the resolution, on the grounds that it might damage diplomatic relations with France and Germany. Undeterred, Kefauver and Streit established a new, international group, the International Movement for Atlantic Union, which soon began to gather support in Europe. Streit's transnational group of federalists was one of a number of private organizations working to promote Atlantic unity. Others included the Atlantic Treaty Association, the Congress of European-American Associations and the Bilderberg Group. As the historian Frank Costigliola has noted, these groups helped foster an Atlantic identity "centred on an exaggerated sense of sameness - in particular a democratic heritage ostensibly common to Portugal and Turkey as well as to Britain and France - and a magnified sense of difference from the Soviet bloc."<sup>34</sup>

Streit's International Movement for Atlantic Union was determined to capitalize on this growing sense of Atlantic kinship. It convened the NATO Parliamentarians Conference, a forum that still exists today.<sup>35</sup> In 1959, it arranged a meeting in London of 650 delegates from all the NATO nations to explore ways of fostering greater Atlantic union. The 130 American delegates returned home to work for official sponsorship for the next meeting from the US Government. In 1960, just before the end of the Eisenhower administration, a bill calling for an Atlantic convention finally passed Congress and was signed into law by the President.<sup>36</sup> Convinced that his dream was on the verge of fulfillment, Streit rushed out a new, updated version of his seminal text, under the title, *Freedom's Frontier: Atlantic Union Now*. By this time, Streit had sold over a quarter of a million copies of the earlier editions. In this new edition, Streit's core arguments remained the same: the nucleus of the union should be confined to a small number of democracies, together they should possess a preponderance of power that would enable them to overcome any dictatorial opponent, without necessarily resorting to war, and the ratio of experienced to inexperienced democracies in the union should be weighted to ensure a strong guarantee of individual freedoms. However, Streit made clear that the union now should begin with all 15 current NATO members. Streit again emphasized the significance of having Turkey as a member of this union. Even if not a perfect democracy, Turkey was the nation that linked Europe and Asia, the one that had already

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<sup>34</sup> Frank Costigliola, "Culture, Emotion, and the Creation of the Atlantic Identity, 1948-52," in Geir Lundestad (ed.) *No End to Alliance: The United States and Western Europe: Past, Present and Future* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998) pp.21-25

<sup>35</sup> It also created the Atlantic Institute think tank in Paris, which operated until the end of the Cold War, and encouraged the emergence of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1961

<sup>36</sup> In the Senate, it passed by a narrow margin of 51 to 44 but with the support of both candidates for President, Nixon and John F. Kennedy, and the Majority Leader, Lyndon Johnson. In the House of Representatives, it passed by an overwhelming 288 to 103

“led in the westernizing movement that has now swept through all Islam, and in the emancipation of women that has advanced so far in Asia and Africa.”<sup>37</sup> Ultimately, for Streit, the problem of how to order the international system boiled down to these questions:

“How to put more and more of the world’s power under freedom? How to put enough moral and material power behind it soon enough to eliminate present dangers, and long enough to enable the host of young nations to develop themselves educationally, industrially and politically, and to permit freedom to spread and grow all over the world?”<sup>38</sup>

His answer to those questions was unchanged from the thesis he first outlined in 1939:

“Federate the freest fraction of mankind in a Great Union of the Free, and thereafter extend this federal relationship to other nations as rapidly as this proves practicable, until the whole world is thus eventually governed by freedom and union.”<sup>39</sup>

A Convention of Citizens of the North Atlantic Democracies eventually met in Paris in January 1962. Following Streit’s proposal, the Convention was explicitly modeled on the Philadelphia Convention of 1787. It attempted to do for the Atlantic nations what the Philadelphia Convention had done for the 13 states. Proposals included a Permanent High Council with legislative and executive powers, an Atlantic Assembly, an Atlantic High Court of Justice and an Atlantic Economic Community.

Clayton and Christian A. Herter, who had served as Secretary of State between 1959 and 1961, led the US Citizens Commission. It also featured prominent leaders of the European federalist movement, including the French MP Maurice Faure and the Belgian politician Paul-Henri Spaak. Jean Monnet, the chief architect of the European Union, supported its goals, declaring: “What is necessary is to move towards a true Atlantic Community in which common institutions will be increasingly developed to meet common problems.”<sup>40</sup> The Convention issued a “Declaration of Paris,” a broad appeal for enhanced cooperation between the Atlantic states, and called for the governments of the member states to draw up blueprints for the creation of a unified Atlantic Community. It placed particular emphasis on realizing an aspiration voiced by the new US President John F. Kennedy for a trade partnership to be formed between the United States and the nascent European Economic Community. To the delight of the delegates, six months later, Kennedy outlined his “Grand Design” in Philadelphia, suggesting that the unity of the 13 American colonies could inspire the construction of a truly interdependent Atlantic partnership. It soon became clear, however, that Kennedy’s rhetoric was not backed up by concrete commitments to federations

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<sup>37</sup> Streit, *Freedom’s Frontier*, pp. 29-56

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Livingston Hartley, *Atlantic Challenge*, (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publication, 1965), p. 71



or new institutions. His speech did not even refer to the Atlantic movement or the Paris convention. Kennedy's special adviser on European affairs, McGeorge Bundy, made clear that the President believed "a partnership makes more sense than a full-blown Atlantic Union, which is still constitutionally and psychologically out of range for the people of the United States."<sup>41</sup> Even that spirit of partnership was soon undermined by De Gaulle's attempt to plot an independent course for France and the growing determination of some European federalists to forge ahead with continental union, detached from a larger Atlantic community.

Despite their disillusion, Streit and his Federal Union movement continued their campaign into the 1970s. Following the end of the Vietnam War, a bill calling for the United States to send an official Atlantic Union delegation to a convention of NATO nations with a view to establishing a federal state passed the Senate but failed in the House. Soon after, *Freedom and Union* ceased publication and after 1975, no further attempts were made to pass an Atlantic Union resolution. Nevertheless, Streit continued to tirelessly devote himself to his federalist vision through the Association to Unite the Democracies, the new name that Federal Union adopted in the early 1980s and the one that it still goes by today. Shortly before Streit's death in 1986, at the age of 90, US President Ronald Reagan saluted him for his lifelong pursuit of closer cooperation between the North Atlantic democracies. Reagan maintained that *Union Now* had "foreshadowed the Atlantic Alliance of World War Two and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, through which we and our democratic allies have resisted the spread of totalitarianism." The President's peroration provided a fitting tribute to Streit's life work and encapsulated his enduring legacy:

"Today, when it is taken for granted that democratic governments must work together closely for mutual security, prosperity, and the protection of our God-given human rights, it gives me great pleasure to salute you, Clarence Streit, as an early advocate of such cooperation and a true champion of individual freedom."<sup>42</sup>

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the peaceful end of the Cold War vindicated Streit's original faith in the power of the Atlantic democracies to deter and ultimately transform the Soviet Union without resorting to war. His belief that the core community of established North Atlantic nations would ultimately expand to incorporate emerging democracies, just as he had argued that it should be extended to include Turkey, offered a rationale for broadening the membership of NATO beyond its Euro-Atlantic base after 1989. The post-Cold War world, however, has brought fresh challenges. Indeed, today, the Atlantic alliance faces the most dangerous international situation since the Second World War.

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<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Max Beloff, 'The Prospects for Atlantic Union,' *The Times*, 2 February 1962

<sup>42</sup> Ronald Reagan to Clarence Streit, 17 January 1986, [http://streitcouncil.org/uploads/PDF/Reagan\\_on\\_Streit.pdf](http://streitcouncil.org/uploads/PDF/Reagan_on_Streit.pdf)



Thirty years after his death, the Atlantic nations continue to possess, as Streit originally envisaged in 1939, “the financial, monetary, economic and political power necessary both to assure peace to its members peacefully from the outset by sheer overwhelming preponderance and invulnerability, and practically to end the monetary insecurity and economic warfare now ravaging the whole world.”<sup>43</sup> What is lacking today is a public conception of an Atlantic community based on common values. Furthermore, greater political commitment is required to enhance democratic accountability within transatlantic institutions, ensure deeper cooperation between them and to work for the ultimate extension of this community to democratic nations beyond the Euro-Atlantic region. These are principles that animated Streit’s work for almost half a century. For contemporary policymakers seeking to revive the Atlantic Community, re-reading Streit’s writings would be a good place to start.

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<sup>43</sup> Clarence Streit, *Union Now: A Proposal for a Federal Union of Democracies of the North Atlantic* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1939), p. 7

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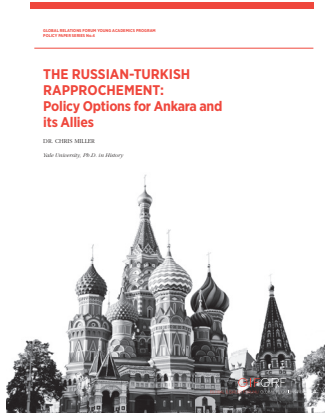
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