

Union of the West as a French Initiative

by Doménec Ruiz Devesa
with Ira Straus

Doménec Ruiz Devesa is an Economist at the World Bank. He wrote this article in his personal capacity, not for the Bank, and is solely responsible for the views expressed here. Ira Straus is co-translator of the book of Balladur and former Executive Director of the Association to Unite the Democracies.

Pour une Union occidentale entre l'Europe et les Etats-Unis
Edouard Balladur
Paris, Fayard, 2007
121 pp.

The idea of setting up a Union among the Atlantic nations is not a new one, certainly not for the readers of *Freedom and Union* or to anybody who remembers Clarence Streit's *Union Now*¹, a book that gave rise to a popular Atlanticist movement for the one and only time in history. That movement, in turn, provided inspiration and backing for the Marshall Plan, with its dual progeny, the EU and OECD, and for the formation of NATO. There is today, thanks to this, an institutionalized West already in existence. Why, then, is a book calling today for a *Union of the West*, even if by a former Prime Minister of France, of any interest?

The short answer is that the unity of the West is neither complete nor in a finished form. The steps already taken to unite the West make a genuine Union more feasible but by no means unnecessary. Western unity is moving forward in interesting ways at this time; it could still also move backward.

Western unity is fairly effective in the military sphere and the economic sphere while it is dangerously weak in the foreign policy sphere. The foreign policy unity or disunity is the most important factor. It determines most of the value of the military unity. It also determines whether the economic weight of Europe and America should be measured together on the assumption of their cooperation or against each

other on the assumption that they are mutually competing economic powers.

Timeliness of the book

Balladur's book is a call above all for a foreign policy union of the West, coupled to be sure with the military and economic aspects of unity; in sum, a "new", closer and "true" union. It could not be more relevant at a time of rethinking after the sharp divisions over Iraq, and a time of facing hard problems of foreign policy coordination in a mound of situations around the world, each of them unique yet all of them mortally important in the struggle with Islamist extremism.

The book also comes in a moment of significant internal changes and challenges in the Atlantic world. The European Union faces an ongoing institutional crisis as a consequence of the dichotomy between enlargement and further integration, which has yet to be solved by the Lisbon Treaty. Nevertheless the EU is considerably stronger both in its authority and in its size than it had been before the Eastern European revolutions of 1989; and it wields a euro whose global importance grows with every new fluctuation of the dollar, underscoring the fact that even the economic unity of the West is far from complete. NATO is engaged in a critical fight in Afghanistan against the Taliban, where its credibility as a military alliance is on the line. And the U.S. is in the midst of electing a new president, who will be in need of solid allies to help manage financial imbalances that have reached

near-crisis level and large remaining problems in Afghanistan and Iraq. Meanwhile the West continues to face imminent external threats from local and global terrorist movements, long-term risks of unpredictable scope from the rise of China, new trouble with Russia, and shifts in the global balances.

Why from France?

Equally important with its timeliness is the fact of the book's authorship. Edouard Balladur is of course French. It has been half a century since Atlanticism was last a popular intellectual current in France. President Sarkozy has nevertheless made the rebuilding of the transatlantic relationship a top priority of his government. There is again talk of France rejoining NATO's military structure.

Balladur has been close to Sarkozy for years. Balladur was the leader of the wing of the French Gaullist movement within which the young Sarkozy rose, and not too long ago the roles were reversed: Balladur was Prime Minister and Sarkozy was his spokesman. Balladur's long-standing insistence on a pro-EU and pro-U.S. posture, personally drawing the mainstream of Gaullism out of its former unfriendly attitudes toward both, goes far toward explaining the shift in French policy under Sarkozy. The significance of having a French political figure of this stature publicly advocating a Union between the European Union and the United States should not be underestimated.

A comprehensive diagnosis and prescription

Balladur's book treats its subject concisely but comprehensively. It provides a diagnosis of today's international relations and the trend of the world order, a discussion of what it means for the West, a justification of a renewed Transatlantic relationship, a look at the alternatives, and a partial institutional blueprint for achieving Western union.

Balladur argues that the rising powers, China, India and Russia, pose significant economic and strategic challenges to the Atlantic powers, while threats such as Islamic fundamentalism, poverty in developing countries and global warming are already affecting the West. He foresees a world where the Atlantic countries would be less and less relevant if Europe and the United States do not unite and work together. "History", he warns, "is starting to be made without the West, and one day it could be made

against it" (p. 9). There is a sense of urgency in this call, but the unity of the West is not seen here as confrontational vis-à-vis the Muslim world, or the rising powers in Asia and Latin America, even though that is how it might be viewed by some of its proponents on the Right and opponents on the Left. Balladur believes that acknowledging the distinctive features of the West does not mean accepting or promoting a clash of civilizations. In this regard, the author says that "to defend [the West's] personality and interests does not feed the clash of civilizations (...) to the contrary, this contributes to a new equilibrium in an unstable world" (p. 16).

However, accepting that the world is becoming more complex in the age of globalization and that new sources of political power are emerging *vis-à-vis* the older democratic powers of the Atlantic does not necessarily mean that Europe and the United States should unite. Strategic concerns, while important, are not the only ones in his argument. Balladur also writes about the exceptionally strong economic ties between the two shores of the Atlantic², and the common history and values that link them.

Europeanism and Atlanticism rejoined

In a way, Balladur is coming back to the Transatlantic tradition of the 1950s and early 1960s, somewhat forgotten in the later decades of the Cold War and more recently in the squabbling over the invasion of Iraq. This Transatlanticism was basically an optimistic movement that, despite concerns over mounting ideological and strategic dangers coupled with mushrooming means of mutual destruction, saw a closely integrated West as one whose democracy and market economy would prove a better and more sustainable system than the Soviet one. Men like William Clayton,

George Ball, Jean Monnet, John Foster Dulles, Theodore Achilles, David K. E. Bruce, and even George Kennan and Dean Acheson were behind one or another version of Transatlantic unity.

Balladur's essay clearly owes to this tradition, and particularly to its Europeanist wing. It does not envision an Atlantic community composed of a number of nations and led by the United States as the major power, as has also been widely advocated and to some extent already exists; nor a Union based on the individual citizens and nation states. To be sure, Balladur does not reject the existing Atlantic institutions or

The unity of the West is neither complete nor in finished form. The steps already taken to unite the West make genuine Union more feasible, not unnecessary.

their enhancement. He approves of the global extension of NATO tasks. He recalls fondly the G-7 currency coordination agreed in 1985-7, in which he had had a hand. But he portrays the relation on this level as fatally limited by its inequality. He writes that a more effective united Europe would deprive Europe of its excuses for its failings and, in a rare instance of over-optimism in his book, that it would clear the way for immediately making all the reforms and adaptations needed in NATO for the new era. Following in the line of the two pillar approach advanced by Monnet and many others, the author advocates a Union consisting of the European Union and the United States as the founding powers.

The trans-Atlantic level of this complex structure was long viewed by Europeanists as a future second step, after the first step was taken by creating a united Europe. The first step turned out far from simple and began stretching from years into decades; the second step began to look like an ideal relegated to a future so distant that it might no longer be relevant when it arrived. Today, however, the existence of a European Union, incomplete though it is, makes the “second step” a present-day task, not just a distant dream. Europeanists on a number of levels, including the highest levels of the EU, have begun once again speaking of trans-Atlantic construction as a matter for the here and now.

This is important because Balladur discusses the inner workings of the European Union in depth, indeed he devotes an entire chapter to it. It reads almost like a separate essay, written on a basis of years of previous work on the subject. It also reads like an excursion through the spiritual odyssey of French Gaullists from a bitterly nationalistic, anti-federalist outlook to an acceptance of the basic reality always put forward by federalists: that the nation state is inadequate for the problems of the present, and the European nation states are inadequate even for a dignified relation with their friend and ally America. This is the reality that Balladur keeps repeating that people have to look in the face. He holds that the EU suffers from fatal limitations in the approaches it has been following and needs reform to allow dramatically greater flexibility and more varied levels of integration, in order for the major powers of Western Europe to be able to proceed on their own to unite their powers in a strong form and thereby create a genuine European Power. This full-scale Europe is in turn, he says, a precondition for creating a Union of the West: “anything less than this, and the Union of the West will not see the light of

day.” (p. 86)

If a reader were to take this last dictum literally, he or she would have to draw a simple conclusion: that the Union of the West will not see the light of day. To be sure, this is contradicted by Balladur’s actual proposals for developing the larger Union, which put forth realistic ways for upgrading trans-Atlantic integration in a matter of months and years. Balladur is realistic about most things; it is necessary to be realistic about yet one more: that even if all his proposals for the EU

were adopted, the EU would not become the equal of the U.S. in military and security matters for decades to come. Nor would it become as he writes a Union as solid and cohesive as the United States; for this is a degree of solidity that it took the U.S. an entire century after its Constitution to achieve. And this means that, for all the reasons Balladur gives elsewhere, it is useless to complain about the inequality between America and its allies, more than half a century after America began pressuring the allies to unite and overcome the inequality. It means that the transatlantic relationship is going to continue to rely heavily on the multilateral structures that exist on the level of NATO and OECD. It means that the bilateral structure Balladur proposes, as an upgrading of U.S.-EU relations, could at this stage of history be only a supplement to the multilateral ones, not a replacement for them.

This is not to deny the importance of European integration for Atlantic unity, or for its further development. The above-mentioned policymakers argued decades ago that the West in general and the United States in particular require a strong, unified Europe. For this very reason, presidents Truman and Eisenhower supported the creation of the European Communities, and encouraged European integration to go farther than it actually did, particularly in the military field. In this regard, Balladur, who has valiantly fought against the habit of unfairness to America in French discourse, is for one moment himself unfair to the U.S., perhaps confusing the policy towards Europe of the eleven previous administrations with that of portions of the present Bush Administration in its first term. He accuses the U.S. of “always” favoring a widening and dilution of the EU not a deepening of it. Actually the U.S. has almost always supported deepening of the EC and EU. It was the U.S. that pressed in the 1950s for a European Defense Community; it was the French Gaullists who, along with the Communists, led

The significance of having a French figure of this stature advocating a Union of the EU and the U.S. should not be underestimated.

the fight that defeated its ratification. Today Balladur, the Wise Man of the Gaullists, favors a larger role for military spending and planning in Europe precisely in order to make the European Union a more credible partner for the United States. At the same time, in the tradition of George Kennan or currently David P. Calleo³, Balladur sees a critical role for Europe in helping America craft a course that stays clear of both isolationism and imperialism. Mistakes like the invasion of Iraq prove to Balladur that the United States need a strong ally and the ability to listen to its friends.

Interestingly enough, Senator John McCain, the Republican nominee for President said, in the op-ed pages of the *Financial Times* on March 18, 2008, that “our great [American] power does not mean we can do whatever we want whenever we want, nor should we assume we have all the wisdom and knowledge necessary to succeed”. This is in sharp contrast with the policies of the Bush Administration in its first term. He also welcomes “European leadership to make the world a better and safer place. We look forward to France’s full reintegration into NATO. And we strongly support the EU’s efforts to build an effective European Security and Defence Policy”.⁴

Balladur’s argument here is two-fold. First, a genuine and effective Atlantic community has to be rooted in a strong European Union as well as a strong U.S; an ally must be strong in order to be trusted and listened to.

Second, there is no contradiction between a strong NATO and a European strongly united in the European Security and Defense Policy, or at least need be no

contradiction unless it is artificially created by one opposing the other. In a larger sense, there is no inherent opposition between Europeanism and Atlanticism, and moreover, the first is instrumental for the second.⁵

It is also important that he sees France as likely to play a key role both internally in Europe and *vis-à-vis* the United States in the path to Atlantic unity. In this regard, Sarkozy’s policies are a sign that Atlanticism is coming back into the political mainstream in Europe, and this is welcome development.

A clear path to Economic Union

Balladur’s work has two other very important aspects. First, he pays careful attention to international economic and financial cooperation, a sphere where he has particular personal competence. Second, he devotes a full chapter to the institutional aspects of a Union of the West.

Balladur’s analysis of financial and monetary issues has been fortunate in its timing. Since the summer of 2007 the West has been living in a serious financial turmoil. The bursting of the housing bubble, the subprime mortgages default, the stock markets losses, the devaluation of the U.S. dollar to unprecedented levels, rising oil prices, and the global food shortages are problems on a scale that remind us of past crises. We can recall how the past crises were deepened among other things by lack of forceful international economic cooperation, particularly within the Atlantic world. The 1973 crisis comes readily to mind, with its combination of rising food and energy prices and the devaluation of the dollar.⁶

Balladur pays special attention to the problem of exchange rates. He says “it is time to put an end to the unrestricted floating of currencies that threatens the world’s prosperity and that in due course will destroy even economic liberalism itself” (p. 89). The divergence of European and American monetary policies has contributed to a fluctuation of the dollar *vis-à-vis*

the euro on a scale that should be of great concern.⁷ Balladur is advocating a harmonization of monetary policies and coordinated intervention in the currency markets in order to bring the US dollar-euro fluctuations within defined ranges. This will certainly help. The author calls also for better regulation of financial markets to discourage speculation and the quest for short-term profits.

It is worth reiterating here that Balladur is an economic liberal, which means, in American language, a conservative, and in his capacity as economics minister in the 1980s, was responsible for important pro-market reforms in France. He joined at the time with James A. Baker III in building agreements on currency and monetary cooperation between America and its G-7 partners -- the then-famous Plaza and Louvre accords -- which he views as a model for what should be done today between the dollar and the euro. However, he wants it to be done on a more permanent basis, with institutional foundations to prevent

its being forgotten, as happened in the late 1980s. The recently-created Transatlantic Economic Council could provide some of the institutional support he advocates; beyond this he advocates a broader political U.S.-EU Council, building on the present U.S.-EU summits.

The tougher problem: Political Union

Had Balladur only called for a renewed spirit of trans-Atlantic partnership in the aftermath of the squabbling over Iraq, his essay would not be very different from the timely papers published by experts in transatlantic relations such as Dana H. Allin, Daniel S. Hamilton, Erik Jones⁸ or David P. Calleo. The value added resides not only in who he is, but in the institutional aspects of the proposals Balladur puts forward, and in the very name “Union of the West” that he is ready to put his name to. This is what connects Balladur with the profound Atlanticist vision of Clarence Streit.

Many of the Euro-Atlanticists of the 1950s and 1960s cited earlier were vague about the institutional aspects of an Atlantic Union. Some of them put it off to a distant future after European unity was completed, although in practice they almost all contributed to building the Atlantic structures alongside the European ones. In the case of NATO, it was formed before there were any significant European structures. Jean Monnet himself got his start on international integration by building supply structures for the Atlantic alliance during World War I; yet ideologically he was a Europeanist who wrote at times that European Union must happen first. Conversely, William Clayton wrote at times that Atlantic Union must take precedence, yet it was he who was most responsible for the Marshall Plan with its requirement that the European countries begin moving toward economic union, and who personally delivered the demarche to European governments that they must set up a permanent organization for economic collaboration, not just a temporary committee for using the Marshall Plan funds. Europeanism and Atlanticism grew up as common projects, they were mutually reinforcing on the ground, the same political leaders were building them, and some of the same people were staffing them. As long as both were moving forward, there was very little jealousy between them in practice: it was a single equation of Euro-Atlanticism, no matter what some of the theorists of each side of the equation said about how it

must have priority over the other.

The theoretical divisiveness got a new lease on life in the 1960s, however, when De Gaulle obstructed progress on both European and Atlantic levels, and at the same time introduced an element of anti-Atlantic spirit into the European level. Actual Atlantic construction faded out of the language of most Europeanists; the discussion of an “Atlantic partnership of equals” degenerated into talk only of the need for equality, not of any structured partnership.

Today one can see this situation once again changing back. Europeanists are once again taking a constructive approach, or perhaps one should say constructivist approach, to Atlantic structures. The complementarity of the two levels is being emphasized rather than their competition or contradiction. Actual progress is again taking

place on both levels. Institutional construction is being advocated for the Atlantic level. One can see it in the very person of Balladur, at one and the same time the leading Europeanist and the leading At-

It is necessary to be realistic: Even if all his proposals for the EU were adopted, the EU would not become the equal of the US for decades to come. The transatlantic relationship will continue to rely heavily on NATO and OECD; the EU-US structure Balladur proposes would at this stage be a supplement.

lanticist among the Gaullists.

Balladur goes into some detail on the question of the institutions needed for the Union of the West; he devotes his penultimate chapter (chapter VII) to this. To be sure, he acknowledges great obstacles to building adequate institutions. He raises several critical questions about the main institution he proposes, questions that he chooses not to answer lest his answers prove premature and “chimerical” (p. 102). Nevertheless he emphasizes several times that the Union of the West will need institutions with real weight. It will be a construction no less grand, he says, and deserving no less praise, than of the European Union itself, which has involved truly heavy lifting on the part of statesmen to achieve its transfers of building blocks of power from national to joint structures.

Despite his caution about details, Balladur has plenty of specifics. He envisions a truly unified Atlantic market, along lines similar to the European Common Market. This requires the abolition of all trade barriers between the U.S. and the E.U., a customs union or setting up of a common external tariff, the monetary arrangements discussed earlier, and the adoption of common rules in competition, tax and labor laws (p. 89). This is a huge task. The last portion of it has already been assigned to the aforementioned Transatlantic Economic Council, created

in the spring of 2007. Balladur builds on the program agreed to at that time but goes well beyond it.

In addition to supporting the project of an internal Transatlantic market and giving it a more comprehensive form, Balladur calls for the creation of the position of Coordinator of Transatlantic affairs within the Presidency of the European Council, and of a permanent secretariat to follow-up on Atlantic economic integration (p. 87 and 88).

An Executive Council of a Union of the West

Finally, and most important of all in his own view, Balladur calls for the creation of an Executive Council of the Union of the West composed by the President of the United States and the E.U. leaders that would meet at the summit level every three months to make possible the principle of mutual and permanent consultation on all foreign policy matters, and will be fully staffed (p. 101). This builds on the existing U.S.-EU summits, upgrading them in terms of frequency and in terms of staffing for preparation and follow-through in the interim periods, and, what may well be of equal importance, giving them a name and identity bearing an intention of becoming a genuine Union.

Balladur admits that it is hard to specify any real powers the new Council could have from the start. He raises questions about whether its authority should go beyond mere consultation. He mentions upgraded forms of consultation that have been discussed over the years for the EU Council, such as putting time limits on it to reach a decision, but leaves such questions to the future. He also consigns to the future to figure out what kind of voting the Council could have, with what weights and requirements for decision.

In this regard he fails to face up to the fact that it is not a problem of timing but of structure: there is no possible formula for voting between only two entities, either there is consensus or there is no decision. The matter is different if third parties such as Canada or Japan or Turkey or Russia are brought into the room alongside the U.S. and EU; or if there is a joint Parliament of the U.S. and EU in which the division might more often fall along lines of the various political parties than the oceanic geographical line separating the two continents. Should the two entities, America and Europe, refrain from any action until a consensus has been

reached in the Council? Balladur at one point edges toward giving in to this thought, but on most occasions argues in the opposite manner: that America's power is to be respected not condemned, power must sometimes act, the West must act, Europe must be something better than a mere heckler of America or think it can merely veto American actions, and America cannot be expected to defer to Europe if heckling or the veto is all Europe has to offer. This leaves him with, for now, a purely consultative Council. The only obligation he can specify would be to consult before acting. He says that even this would be great progress, but it seems a weak point: in NATO's North Atlantic Council there is already constant consultation on the broad range of foreign policy issues. Usually the consultations come well in advance of separate national actions, and if any common action is requested, even if merely for marginal supplement to a national action, the consultation tends to be long, sometimes inordinately long. To be sure, on the occasions when an action is in the end taken separately by the U.S., the parties dissatisfied with the action usually say the consultations should have continued longer; but this is only to underline the point that a purely consultative arrangement tends to leave a fair measure of dissatisfaction.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to dismiss Balladur's Council as just a duplication of what already exists. His Council would provide a consultation in a different, potentially more intimate context than NATO's: a context of a special relation of the U.S. with one other entity, the EU, rather than around a large table of more than two dozen separate nations, and could engage the Chief Executives with greater frequency. It would deal with specific U.S.-EU programs such as the Transatlantic Market as well as general foreign policy questions. As such, it does bring value added and has some potential for further development.

Europeanists are once again taking an active approach to the Atlantic, proposing institutional construction for the Atlantic level. The complementarity of the two levels is being emphasized. One can see it in the very person of Balladur, both the leading Europeanist and the leading Atlanticist among the Gaullists.

Can Balladur's Union be formed in this generation?

If Balladur's Council proposal is compared with Streit's original design, it is evident that it not only lacks initial powers, but there is also no trace of common judicial or parliamentary bodies. Balladur does not even mention the Congress-European Parliament meetings, or the NATO Parliamentary Assembly that has existed since the 1950s. However, additional bodies are not ruled out by Balladur.

The author nevertheless believes that the Executive Council would set the seed of a relationship that is at

once equal and serious, and if it worked well, Western leaders would learn from the experience and become disposed to add deeper institutional arrangements: "If this succeeds, the Union of the West could go even farther. But frankly, I do not see this happening right now... This will be the task of the next generation".

This is a fair enough conclusion, at least for his proposed Executive Council. There is little interest extant in creating genuine joint powers for such a new trans-Atlantic body. Balladur's book presumably exists for the sake of spurring this interest, at least among persons involved in government who feel a sense of responsibility for such things. Until the interest evolves, responsible officials will not want to take initiatives that look doomed to fail.

But the conclusion also has an element of despair, given Balladur's premise: that we have twenty years to prepare for great shifts in global power, and that Union of the West is indispensable to prevent destabilization of the world even in the interim.

It would also be fair to point out that the despair may be undue if Atlantic structures are viewed more broadly. The existing transatlantic structures, from NATO to OECD and various lesser institutions, already have more than merely consultative functions. Their functions could be realistically upgraded in the present period in ways that involve more genuine authority than Balladur finds it prudent to propose for a new U.S.-EU Council.

This suggests that it would be well for Balladur's Council and his bilateral U.S.-EU economic steps to be supplemented by the steps that can be taken in the existing multilateral Atlantic institutions. These institutions already have many other major steps already under the belt, so to speak.

Adding these several institutions and various steps together would be to the benefit of Balladur's proposal; indeed, it is the only way to arrive at any Union of the West that could be proclaimed a Union at all in this era. The Union would necessarily be two-level: the embryonic EU-U.S. bilateral level and the well-developed NATO-OECD multilateral level.

Balladur's hope would presumably be that the bilateral level, with its image of equality, would evolve and accrue greater importance with time, perhaps even some day swallow up the multilateral level or merge with it.

For now, what would be needed is a preliminary connection between the bilateral and multilateral levels of institutions, to make it easier to conceive of them both as parts of the same Union. Dr. George Modelski has suggested that the bilateral U.S.-EU Council could act informally as an engine, when the two parties are agreed, for the wider Atlantic multilateral institutions, much as France and Germany acted for several decades as an informal bilateral motor for the development of the EC. It is a realistic suggestion. The EU is already fully present at G-8 meetings. Balladur's goal of gaining a presence for it at the NATO Council is not yet realistic, as he acknowledges would make sense only when the EU has genuine common military authority and capability, but it could one day come to pass and enable the U.S.-EU Council to play a role of driving engine for NATO as well.

Counting all the existing West-West institutions, and acknowledging all of Balladur's criticisms of their gaps and defects, there is in fact enough integration in the West, that, if supplemented by the proposals he makes, the Whole can be considered a Union, one that can exist in this era. Not a completed Union; but far more than just a consultative Council that one would have to merely hope would grow into something noticeable decades down the road.

Which West to include in the Union

Lastly, there are a few inconsistencies in Balladur's essay. He defines the West as North America, including Canada, and Europe. However, his discussion and proposed Union of the West goes around the United States and the European Union, excluding not only Canada but also European countries that are not members of the E.U. Similarly, equating the West with the geographical Atlantic world might be somewhat problematic, since countries like Australia and New Zealand certainly are Western countries, and indeed Atlantic countries in a historical and cultural sense. That is why they were included in the original proposals for trans-Atlantic Union in the early 1900s. In a significant sense, Japan is also Western. These holes in the logical ground, or perhaps we should say geographical ground, could be repaired by the correctives we suggested for other reasons a paragraph above:

Is Union urgent, yet the task of the next generation? That sounds plausible but despairing. The despair is undue if Atlantic structures are viewed more broadly. Existing structures, NATO and OECD, already have major functions and authority. It would help Balladur's US-EU Council to be supplemented by steps taken in these older structures. Adding all these institutions and steps together would benefit Balladur's proposal: It is the only way to arrive at any Union of the West that could be proclaimed a Union at all in this era.

by viewing the Union of the West as multi-level, consisting not just of a new U.S.-EU Council but also of the existing trans-Atlantic institutions, some of them purely Atlantic, others extending westward across the Pacific as well, still others extending eastward across Eurasia.

A deeper, perhaps longer term issue is that the Latin American democracies are also in substantial part Western in their cultural roots and history; and that westernization has become a worldwide phenomenon, giving all countries, no matter how non-Western their origins, an element of Western overlay. A related question is the relation of the structures of Atlantic unity or Union to the Community of Democracies that brings together a hundred or more democracies in a loose world coalition, and proposals for additional similar coalitions.

Balladur's geographical-cultural definition of the West has this truth: The North Atlantic is the core of the Western world, and also the core of westernization in the wider world. The problem is to reinforce the core without exaggerating the lines of distinction, which could undermine its attractive power on others and foster conflict. Nor would one want to narrow the core in a self-defeating way that divides the West from some of its own countries, or consigns semi-Western countries to develop a separate international identity.

A Sarkozy Opening for Union?

These questions notwithstanding, Balladur has made an important intellectual contribution that is likely to have a policy impact. It brings together the best traditions of Atlanticism and Europeanism. It lays out a perspective

of Union that is well grounded historically and empirically, and is practical and realistic in its means. And it is connected intimately to the Europeanist and Atlanticist policies of the current President of the French Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy, which have been of critical importance for the renewal of Euro-Atlantic integration in the last year and may lead to further major steps in the year or years to come.

As John Vinocur observed in *The International Herald Tribune*, Sarkozy likes to play for big stakes, and Atlantic Union should be a stake to his liking. Sarkozy was willing to invest a huge personal diplomatic effort into creating a Mediterranean Union, even if it is largely just for the sake of giving Turkey an alternative to membership in the EU, as he knew this in turn was, for most of the citizens of the EU, a precondition for accepting further steps toward EU federation. He is already working to bring France back into the NATO military structure.

Who is to say that he would not be willing also to invest some effort into upgrading the U.S.-EU summits into a formal Council, supplementing the Transatlantic Market program with the dimensions of currency coordination and a customs union, combining France-in-NATO with other upgrades and adaptation in NATO, OECD, and G-8, and wrapping it all together under the name of a Union of the West?

NOTES.

1. Clarence K. Streit, *Union Now: A Proposal for a Federal Union of the Democracies of the North Atlantic*, Harper Brothers, New York and London, 1939. After the end of the Cold War, ideas of Atlantic unity were revived by some authors as well. See in particular Charles A. Kupchan, "Reviving the West", *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 1996, and various writings by John Ikenberry. The rushing of the former Eastern bloc countries into the Euro-Atlantic institutions was taken as a confirmation of Streit's perspective.
2. It has become commonplace to state that the U.S. and E.U. are the most important trade and investment partners of one another. For more on the transatlantic economy, see the annual reports published by the SAIS Center for Transat-

lantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C.

3. See, for a discussion of Europe's role as a friendly balance to the U.S., David P. Calleo, "Unipolar Illusions", *Survival*, Vol. 49, No. 3, Fall 2007.
4. John McCain, "America must be a good role model", *Financial Times*, March 18 2008.
5. See Domenec Ruiz Devesa, *Atlanticism or Europeanism*, MA Thesis, The Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, May 2005, for a discussion on the intellectual and political connections between these two currents.
6. Some economists think back to the 1929 depression, see Paul Krugman, "Partying Like It's 1929", *The New York Times*, March 21 2008. For

other interesting analyses of the current crisis see Nouriel Roubini, "The Coming Financial Pandemic", *Foreign Policy*, March/April 2008, and *The Economist*, "Briefing: Wall Street Crisis", March 22nd-28th, 2008.

7. I may refer the reader also to my earlier article in these pages, "From Atlantic Market to Atlantic Polity?", *Freedom and Union*, Vol. II, No. 2, Fall 2007.

8. For a good example see "The Transatlantic Relationship", *International Affairs*, Volume 80, Number 4, July 2004.