2 The Origins of Postwar European Integration

The 1940s saw the emergence of the two factors which shaped postwar European security cooperation: the Soviet threat and the superpower squeeze, leading to the ‘third force’ syndrome and the origins of the search for an independent European voice between the superpowers.

What took place between 1945 and 1950 was not authentically European integration, but more an activity of bloc building, undertaken or encouraged by the superpowers as a function of their opposing alliance systems. Consequently, the division of Europe, initiated by external variables, in some cases hindered and in some cases encouraged security cooperation in Western Europe. External dynamics accounted for much of the integration process. Although internal dynamics such as the pursuit of national interests by the Western European powers themselves did play a role, this took place within the confines of the overall frame imposed by external factors: the division of Europe, dependence on the US for economic recovery, and the emerging Soviet threat. Within this period there were four issues for which Western European integration became a means for accommodating a solution: economic recovery, war avoidance and the future maintenance of peace in the continent, the emerging Soviet threat, and the future of Germany – involving the issue of checking German rearmament and ways of integrating Germany into Europe.

In relation to these four issues, a movement towards European integration emerged at the end of the war. This was propelled by five motives:

1) The idea of a European federalist movement pursued by the wartime European resistance leaders.
2) The US multilateral aid programme launched as the Marshall Plan, which put forward European integration as a condition for reconstruction to be successful.
3) The conception of the idea of a third force to form an independent Europe following a neutral path between East and West, with the emergence of the Cold War.
4) The development of inter-European alliances to curb the threat of future German aggression and rearmament in Europe, which was the main reason behind the Dunkirk Treaty of 1947, and to some extent the
Brussels Treaty of 1948, although the latter was mainly concerned with German rearmament.

5) The development of the Atlantic partnership which brought together the Western European allies into a pact of security and defence cooperation against Soviet expansion with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty.

Efforts to integrate Europe for different reasons were precipitated by these five factors at different times between 1945 and 1950.

THE FEDERALIST MOVEMENT

Postwar federalism was engendered by wartime resistance movements who had lost all faith in a return to the prewar system of nation states. Their plans for a federation incorporated security cooperation in the form of a European army to be placed under the authority of a supranational government.

The idea of a European federation had already surfaced among intellectuals both during the First World War and in the inter-war years, especially when the shortcomings of the newly established League of Nations became apparent. It was in the 1920s that federalist thought began to emerge as a means of preventing a second major war on the continent. The most notable of these was the work *Paneuropa*, by the Austrian Count Coundenhove-Kalergi, who founded the Pan European Union in 1923. But organisations such as this were made up mostly of intellectuals and did not make progress towards replacing the system of nation states, nor did they gain mass public support.

Apart from these movements, an attempt was also made to form a federation of Europe within the framework of the League of Nations. This was born out of an initiative put forward by the then French foreign minister, Aristide Briand, in 1930. It was significant in being the first official formulation of European integration in a concrete political form. However, as an early attempt at federalist integration it was not received with enthusiasm, and was completely abandoned when the Nazis gained electoral success in 1933 and when Briand himself died in 1932.

After the war, the failings of the League of Nations and earlier attempts at integration became more significant in the eyes of those who had fought against Nazi aggression. Resistance leaders from various European countries urged the need for a supranational order in Europe because they believed that the League of Nations had failed in preventing the Second World War for two reasons: