

STEVEN VAN HECKE  
KAMIEL VERMEYLEN



# Why Europe?



*An Integration History From  
A(denauer) to Z(elensky)*

**Lannoo  
Campus**

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# Why Europe?

**‘Without my relentless attitude,  
we would have doubtlessly been  
trampled underfoot.’<sup>2</sup>**

**D**uring dinner on Monday evening of 9 December 1991, at the fairy-tale, baroque Dutch castle *Château Neercanne* on the Belgian-Dutch border, no one is in the mood to give in. Ruud Lubbers, whose turn it is to host, has just proposed a package deal regarding the old and new institutions of the European Union (EU). Included in the documents is a solution for the so-called seat issue, the question of which city will henceforth house the European Parliament: Brussels or Strasbourg.

Lubbers is at the top of his game as Dutch Prime Minister. At the European summit in Maastricht a definite step towards a federal Europe is about to be taken, with a single currency, European citizenship, and a common foreign and security policy. Convincing the Brits without making too many concessions is crucial. As treaty amendments require each Member State to concede alongside scoring points, Lubbers also hopes in the process to find a definitive arrangement for the seat of the European Parliament.

Wilfried Martens, known for his outspoken pro-European stance, is in the twilight of his days as Belgian Prime Minister. In his view, the Treaty of Maastricht falls short, seeing as there is no talk of an actual political union. All the same, as a fellow Christian democrat Martens wholeheartedly supports his Dutch colleague – except when it comes to the seat issue. In his memoirs he is adamant. With the anchoring of Brussels as European capital, the national interest of Belgium is at stake. This is why Martens is unwilling to blink, fully aware of the implied risks. ‘Diplomats doubted the persistence with which I kept to my position, and the effectiveness of my strategy. By aiming this high, Brussels stood to lose everything.’<sup>3</sup>

The acceptance of the Treaty of Maastricht, on which agreement is reached on 10 December 1991, was hard fought. Thirty years on, both proponents and opponents are nonetheless agreed that “Maastricht” has proven to be a landmark in the history of European integration. As regards the seat issue, two years after the Summit at the Maas, Martens’ successor, Jean-Luc Dehaene, came to an agreement that still applies today: both Brussels and Strasbourg are the seat of the European Parliament.<sup>4</sup>

One does not expect a Belgian Prime Minister to push Belgium’s national interest quite so vociferously alongside a strong plea for more European integration. Herein precisely lies the paradox: by unabatedly opting for one’s own gains of cooperation, the collective reaps the benefits, and progresses.

That the collective has progressed is beyond a shadow of a doubt. Barely five years after World War II ended, on 9 May 1950, in Paris's *Salon de l'Horloge*, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Robert Schuman, presented the birth certificate of what today is known as the EU. No one could at the time have imagined that 70 years later the current President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, would address directly elected representatives of the European Parliament with an annual State of the Union. This book's journey starts with a national minister who floats the idea of increasing cooperation between countries and this culminates in a political system in which the head of the European executive power provides chapter and verse to Members of the European Parliament from 27 different Member States. What kicked off as a limited international organisation in the 1950s has expanded into a system with federal, confederal, national and supranational characteristics, one in which nation states have evolved to Member States, potentially even to federated states.

This book explains the evolution of that process in two ways: thematically and chronologically. Each part sets out to explain the 'why' whilst simultaneously sketching the time period these events unravel in. In this way we combine our marvel at the successes and failures of the history of European integration, with a story that tells the most important events, the main protagonists, and key developments. After all, the current shape of the EU is strongly linked to decisions previously taken by various generations of policy makers. Those choices have seen the Union grow from merely a Western European initiative to a pan-European organisation. Moreover, the Union has grown to impact countless domains, exercising a great influence on the lives of its citizens. This result of years of ever-expanding integration did not come about without a struggle, and neither does the current endpoint lack controversy.

Before we address the 'why' question and the various episodes of the process of European integration, we suggest it is important to reflect on the history of the EU as a whole. How can we attempt to summarise the evolution of the Schuman Declaration in 1950 to the State of the Union of Ursula von der Leyen? Three "lenses" allow us to contemplate the previous 75 years in one fell swoop.

The first one involves the creation and the content of the **European treaties** – the legal foundation on which the European project was built and

still rests today. New treaties or amendments have continuously expanded the impact of the European institutions and policy making and at the same time expanded the powers of the EU. What started in 1952 with the Treaty of Paris – which gave birth to the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) – is today reflected in the debate as to which role the EU should play in the domain of public health. For in the absence of a treaty base, the EU institutions could not claim a leading role in the COVID crisis, to name but one example. Nonetheless, the Member States have transferred ever more decision-making power and ever more competences to the European level in successive treaty amendments. There is no example to date in which those competences or that decision-making power was returned to Member States. They can, however, in some cases decide not to participate in further steps towards deeper integration, with the eurozone or the Schengen zone as the most obvious examples. The close attention paid to the treaties as legal foundation for that European integration also serves as a reminder that the EU is, after all, an international organisation, and so not a state, despite quite a few of its features bearing a resemblance to one (e.g., a parliament, a currency, a flag).

A second viewpoint is the **geographic expansion**. Even more than the systematic broadening and deepening of the treaty basis, the size of the EU has become downright impressive. Schuman and his contemporaries had most likely never expected this success. From six relatively similar Member States in Western Europe, the EU has expanded into a pan-European organisation that encompasses almost an entire continent. By means of various enlargement rounds, the European integration process blossomed into an agora where countless heads of state and government leaders, ministers, diplomats, members of parliament and representatives of all kinds of interest groups continuously put their heads together. The war in Ukraine has once again launched enlargement to the top of the political agenda. The many countries that want to become candidate countries remind us how attractive the EU remains.

Finally, over and above the successive treaty amendments and enlargement rounds, there are the innumerable **moments of crises**, which to this day serve as fuel for the European integration process. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and uniform rules for the transport sector exist not so much because Lithuanian farmers have a soft spot for Portuguese truck drivers, but rather because the Member States concluded that they

could not adequately handle problems in various policy domains or because existing cooperation was insufficient. Integration is triggered by crises at a national level, usually in the form of failure or shortage. Driven by the promise, hope and calculation that cooperation produces more benefits than costs, Member States decide to pool their sovereignty and to intensify their cooperation. This has its advantages and disadvantages, and frequently the chosen path proves to be suboptimal. This is sometimes called 'falling forward', or in other words the process through which the EU tackles problems more efficiently along the way. It is not a thrilling tale, but it does illustrate that the Union undergoes a continuous learning process which slowly but surely progresses.

History is no logbook. Be it consciously or not, we always interpret and study events with contemporary perspectives that illuminate certain aspects and obscure others. This is also the case for the European integration process and the way in which we describe it in this book. Besides the treaties, the enlargement and the crises, there are many alternative lenses through which the history of the EU can be examined. Gender for one: despite the influential roles of amongst others Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (UK), and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the history of European integration is chronicled as a process driven primarily by men, starting with those not coincidentally known as the founding fathers. To a considerable extent, that is due to the prevailing cultural and socio-economic circumstances of the past. Although the first directly elected European Parliament appointed a woman (French politician and Auschwitz survivor Simone Veil) as its president, it took until 1989 for France and Greece to nominate a female European Commissioner. Thirty years later the Commission, composed now of eleven women and sixteen men, is headed by its first female president, Ursula von der Leyen.

An additional limitation is the Western European focus when detailing the history of European integration. This too is inextricably linked to reality. Of the six founding countries, five are entirely located in the west of the European continent. Even so, much of what happened in the east of Europe has also had an enormous impact on the formation of the European project as we currently know it. From the Hungarian uprising in 1956 and the civil war in Yugoslavia to the Russian annexation of the Crimea: to this day these developments reverberate into the heart of European capitals and

institutions. To a great extent, this is also true of the events that have been unfolding since 24 February 2022. The former colonies are also overlooked from time to time. At the same time as the founders of the EU grandly proclaimed “cooperation” as a salutary and necessary condition for peace, the countries and Member States involved were committing outright atrocities in many colonies. In contrast to what is often written in classical historiography, from the outset the European integration process was riddled with the colonial ambition to perpetuate European power with the largest possible landmass in the context of a bipolar world. For example, the original version of the Schuman Declaration – which is often “sanitised” – contains a passage in which it is explicitly stated that economic integration must contribute to the economic development of Africa. The colonies are hence attached to this new era of European politics. In any case, the EU still maintains “special relations” with many former colonies of Member States.

Finally, in this book we approach the history of European integration primarily from a top-down approach, namely on the basis of the protagonists and the most important Member States. This too is to a certain degree a reflection of reality. Especially in the early years, European integration was a prerogative reserved for a select few eminent figures with whom the ordinary man or woman in the street had little affinity. Until the Treaty of Maastricht, a so-called permissive consensus prevailed amongst the general population regarding the entanglement of the Member States and the emergence of supranational institutions. Citizens tacitly accepted, as it were, what was going on in a kingdom far, far away. As powers increased, however, and the impact of European policy grew, the European machine seeped ever further and ever more overtly into everyday life. For instance, European issues used to pass simply via the Minister of Foreign Affairs, or the State Secretary of European Affairs, as though Europe was concerned only with external policy. Nowadays almost every single politician at every single level of government encounters the EU, just like most companies, civil society organisations and interest groups. As a result, there is a growing realisation that this European integration emanates ever more political authority, which raises all kinds of questions regarding its legitimacy and accountability. Rightly so, it has to be said.



In the epilogue of this book we revisit this question, and we reflect upon the provisional final balance and the significance of the recent war in Ukraine. Before we get to that, we answer the following questions that lead us through the process of European integration, from A(denauer) to Z(elensky).<sup>5</sup> Why is there no European army yet? Why is the internal market never completed? Why do the British want to set their own course? Why do we pay with the euro? Why do new countries keep joining? And why does every crisis seem to strengthen the EU?

# 1

## Why is there no European army yet?

‘Savez-vous quelle est la base de notre politique? C’est la peur. La peur de vous, la peur de votre Gouvernement, la peur de votre politique.’<sup>6</sup>

**A**cross from the Eiffel Tower, in the *Palais de Chaillot* right by the Seine, the third General Assembly of the United Nations is being held. The Belgian Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Paul-Henri Spaak, addresses the delegation from Moscow with an unmistakable message. The socialist politician is sitting on the fence regarding the United States and the Soviet Union. Spaak is not eager to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and he is initially lacklustre regarding the economic help that the United States offers European countries, through the Marshall Plan. Nonetheless, Spaak comes to the conclusion that the contradictions between the United States and the Soviet Union are irreconcilable and that he is forced to choose sides. *'Savez-vous pourquoi nous avons peur? Nous avons peur parce que vous parlez souvent d'impérialisme. (...) Nous avons peur à cause de l'usage et surtout à cause de l'abus que vous faites du droit qui vous a été reconnu à San Francisco: le droit de veto. Nous avons peur parce que dans cette Assemblée, vous vous êtes fait les champions de la doctrine de la souveraineté nationale absolue. (...) La vérité, c'est que votre politique étrangère est aujourd'hui plus audacieuse et plus ambitieuse que la politique des Tsars eux-mêmes.'*<sup>7</sup>

## The Cold War

Prior to the famous *'Nous avons peur'* speech by Spaak, there is a growing hope for more constructive international cooperation in the aftermath of World War II. With the United States and the Soviet Union as key players, the Allies had already decided how they would sculpt the post-war international order once they had defeated Nazism and the fascism of Germany, Italy, Japan and their allies. In October 1943 the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom, and the Chinese ambassador to the Soviet Union gather in the Russian capital Moscow. The four of them recognise the need for a new international organisation, based on the principle of sovereign equality between peaceful states. An organisation that above all had learnt from the mistakes of the League of Nations, which had collapsed in the inter-war period due to internal strife. The stage is set.

After meetings in the Iranian capital Teheran and the American capital Washington D.C., the Allies lay the basis for an international organisation whose aim it is to bring about peace, security, cooperation and friendly

relations. The idea for the establishment of the United Nations (UN) is first proposed. At the Yalta Conference in February 1945, Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill gather to discuss the spheres of influence regarding the organisation of a post-war Germany and broader Europe. Stalin confirms the participation of the Soviet Union in the UN, an essential condition for the success of the new international organisation. On 25 April 1945 (the day American and Russian soldiers bump into each other for the first time by the Elbe), 850 representatives from 50 countries meet to formally establish the United Nations. Crucial to their credibility and effectiveness is the role of the UN Security Council with China, France, the Soviet Union, the UK and the United States (US) forming the five permanent members with veto rights, alongside six rotating non-permanent members that alternate every two years. In 1965, the number of non-permanent members is increased to ten.

The prevailing feeling is that of the dawn of a new era in which countries live together in peace after the havoc and destruction sown by fascist regimes worldwide. Sadly, the opposite is the case. The course of World War II and its conclusion planted the seeds of a Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, which would grip the European continent for almost half a century. During World War II, Stalin specifically felt that the United States and the United Kingdom held off on opening a Western front on the European continent for too long, whilst the Soviet Union had already been in a direct and permanent confrontation with Hitler's troops since the middle of 1941. Only at the opening of such a western front in the form of the landing on the beaches of Normandy was German pressure on the Soviet Union significantly alleviated. This suspicion led to considerable distrust about the motives of the West in Stalin's mind despite all the conferences and agreements regarding the United Nations. Had Washington and London been waiting, only to pounce once Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union had exhausted each other?

Nevertheless, Stalin holds some pretty good cards with regards to the West. Due to their pivotal role in defeating Nazi Germany, the communists enjoy great prestige in the immediate aftermath of the war in countries such as Belgium, France and Italy. Their parties fare very well in elections, and in Belgium they are even included in multiple governments. Despite – or rather, precisely because of – these good results, the West also grows suspicious. Just like Stalin during the war, the Western powers get the impression that they are being double-crossed. Before the war had even ended, the Soviet Union

had already annexed the Baltic states and a piece of Finland. After the war, Moscow becomes involved in the Greek Civil War and the communist coup in Czechoslovakia, and it makes liberal use of its veto power in the core of the United Nations. In former Persia, a Soviet prime minister comes to power and in Turkey the Russians support the territorial ambitions of Armenia and Georgia. However, the broadly carried optimism towards the communists steadily disappears as snow before the sun.

Under the impetus of this perceived Soviet threat, twelve Western countries decide to meet in the White House in April 1949, half a year after Spaak's speech. Here, American president Harry Truman and eleven ministers of Foreign Policy establish NATO by signing the Treaty of Washington. The focal point of this North Atlantic Treaty is the collective defence arrangement, whereby aggression against one of the members situated above the Tropic of Cancer signifies an attack on all allied countries.<sup>8</sup> The first signatories are Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States. The birth certificate of NATO formalises and consolidates the transatlantic relations between Western Europe and the United States. Whilst the latter opted for prolonged isolationism after World War I, they no longer do so after World War II, particularly to guarantee the safety of Western Europe against the threat of the Soviet Union out of economic and political self-interest. When Greece and Turkey also accede to NATO two years later, Moscow feels completely surrounded by the United States and its allies. In reaction, the Soviet Union and communist countries – Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia – create the Warsaw Pact in 1955 as a counterpoint to NATO with their own collective defence arrangements. The Cold War has thus been institutionalised along both sides of the Iron Curtain.

## **Pan-Europa**

In the period after World War I, all kinds of initiatives start to emerge to establish a new, more peaceful Europe. In cultural terms this idea of European unification sprouts from a cosmopolitan viewpoint that existed before the rise of nationalism. Politically the drive for unification gains steam as the conviction is held that the nation state alone is under-equipped

## A Divided Europe after WWII (1955)



to tackle the current issues, as José Ortega y Gasset describes in *The Revolt of the Masses* (1930, English translation 1932). From an economic perspective the initiatives for more integration are propelled by the motivation that Europe has to remain competitive with the Soviet Union and the United States. Thus, the Austrian-Japanese author and politician Count Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi launches a pan-European movement in 1923 in which European countries can join forces through economic cooperation in the ore, coal and mining industries and so avert the convergence between the

German Weimar Republic and the Soviet Union. Four years later, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Aristide Briand, at that point in time honorary chairman of the pan-European movement of Coudenhove-Kalergi, initiates a new project with his American colleague Frank Kellogg that leads to the so-called Kellogg-Briand Pact. Through this, both ministers try to bind the whole world to choose peaceful solutions as an alternative to warfare when conflicts emerge. Though these attempts appear futile at the start of World War II, people's minds had already been primed to change the configuration of Western Europe for a while, at the least within a part of the powers that were. The pioneers of European integration after the Second World War could make good use of these political and intellectual reflections.

### **French-German rapprochement**

The moral bankruptcy of the Holocaust, which included the transport of minorities such as Jews, Roma, Sinti, LGBT and immigrants on trains of death to the concentration and extermination camps, left a heavy mark. It is without doubt the absolute rock bottom of a quick succession of European war-mongering after the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871) and two World Wars, all of which takes place in a timespan of merely 75 years. Three generations of young men are sacrificed on European battlegrounds in a bid for European supremacy, a tragedy which leaves a deeply entrenched trauma. The relationship between France and occupied Germany is therefore extremely delicate after World War II. So delicate that prominent Christian Democrat politicians of both countries deem it necessary to convene in utmost secrecy on neutral territory in the Swiss city of Geneva. These so-called *Genfer Kreis* include the meeting of future Chancellor Konrad Adenauer with various leading French Christian Democrats and Robert Schuman's fellow party members. Additionally, various channels for informal contact between delegations of Western European Christian Democratic parties are opened. This leads to the creation of the federate *Nouvelles Équipes Internationales* in 1947 under the guidance of 80 delegates from twelve countries. The liberal and socialist ideologists also reach out to each other, which among others results in the creation of the Liberal International and the *Mouvement Socialiste pour les États-Unis d'Europe*. These transnational political networks are as yet fairly weak and spur-of-the-moment. However, they do form a vital switch

for the European integration process to gather massive momentum a few years later, if only because the leading actors of various Western European countries at the negotiation tables are not complete strangers to each other's personalities. Later on, these constructions would evolve into the more structural, overarching networks that exist to this day.

With these meetings French and German politicians give heed to the speech Winston Churchill gave in 1946 at the University of Zürich. The then former British Prime Minister is known to be an ardent supporter of close political and military transatlantic relations. As the leader of the only Western European country that was not overrun by German forces, Churchill enjoys quite some political authority on the European continent. Therefore when he speaks, ears are pricked. This is definitely the case in Zürich. Instead of underlining the role of the United States or the United Kingdom in Europe, barely sixteen months after the war Churchill argues in favour of rapprochement between France and Germany as a necessary means for a 'United States of Europe'. 'I am now going to say something that will astonish you. The first step in the re-creation of the European family must be a partnership between France and Germany.'<sup>9</sup> With his plan Churchill hopes to reintegrate West Germany into the game between European powers. France must play first fiddle within this context to neutralise its distrust of West Germany but also to protect West Germany from itself. There is no role for the United Kingdom in this constellation in Churchill's view. On the other hand, close relations with France could serve as leverage to guarantee British influence on this Franco-West German relationship.

**Konrad Adenauer** (1876–1967), born at the time of Imperial Germany, is a prominent Catholic politician during the Weimar Republic, an opponent of the Nazi regime and the material and spiritual founding father of the Federal Republic of Germany after World War II.

As a young man Adenauer studies law and political sciences at Freiburg, Munich and Bonn. Immediately after his studies, he becomes politically active in his birthplace Cologne, where he is elected mayor in 1917.



In the 1930s Adenauer is constantly at odds with the NSDAP, Adolf Hitler's national socialist party. As such, he refuses to hang national socialist flags, to shake the hands of Nazis and to host Hitler in the town hall of Cologne. When Hitler removes him from office in 1933, Adenauer decides to go into hiding. He is arrested, released and arrested again. In 1944, at the end of World War II, he is detained for nine weeks because the NSDAP suspects him of involvement in a botched assassination attempt on Hitler.

Pretty much immediately after the war, Adenauer makes it to the position of chairman of the newly established *Christlich Demokratische Union* (CDU) in 1946. Three years later at the age of 73 he is elected the first chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany.

With the help of his Minister of Economic Affairs and future chancellor, Ludwig Erhard, Adenauer quickly manages to breathe new life into the West German economy. This remarkable success has become known as the *Wirtschaftswunder*. As a counterweight to unbridled capitalism, which in part ignited the stock collapse in 1923 and the subsequent success of national socialism, Adenauer and Erhard lay the foundation for a socially responsible market economy in an ordoliberal model in which the state creates a framework for a relatively free economy to benefit society as a whole.

Adenauer wants the Federal Republic to mature within the confines of the contemporary Western community, which is no easy task. Due to successive armed conflicts, there is a great degree of distrust in other Western European countries. Adenauer realises that he needs to overcome this suspicion if West Germany wishes to fully integrate into the Western community. The ECSC in 1952, NATO membership in 1955 and the European Communities in 1957 provide him with the ideal opportunities to integrate the Republic into the West by means of structural cooperation.

In 1952 the chancellor survives an assassination attempt in Munich. That same year he turns down an unexpected proposal by Joseph Stalin to reunite Germany as a neutral power. Domestically, his *Westbindung* often provokes criticism that he neglects the eastern federal states of West Germany. Additionally, the chancellor

often draws fire for perceived leniency in the handling of the prosecution of former SS officers, the so-called *Entnazifizierung*. In the twilight of his days as head of the German chancellery, both the construction of the Berlin Wall and the *Spiegel* affair (a major post-war press scandal) hit him hard. Just before he steps down, he signs the Franco-German treaty of friendship with French president Charles de Gaulle.

Although Adenauer initially desires to run the country for only two years, he remains chancellor until 1963. From the then capital Bonn, he leads five successive governments. Until a year before his death – his age earns him the nickname *Der Alte* in popular speech – Adenauer remains chairman of the CDU. At the age of 91 Adenauer passes away in his home in Rhöndorf, on the border between North Rhine-Westphalia and Rhineland-Palatinate, where he is also buried.

### **Benelux as an example**

In the meantime, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg have not been dilly-dallying. Traumatized by World War II, which drew them in against their wills and saw them united in exile in London, they are working on an integration project of their own. The three countries manage to put aside their mutual rivalry and come to an accord as early as 1943 and 1944 regarding a uniform payment system, increased economic activities and a unified tariff community. The three are inspired by the Belgium-Luxembourg Economic Union (BLEU), which was created in 1921, and through which Brussels and Luxembourg City strive to achieve a single currency and customs union. In September 1944 the Benelux is established as an international organisation. This is remarkable as at that moment in time Belgium and Luxembourg are still facing the Ardennes Offensive and, in the Netherlands, only the south has been liberated. The Benelux Treaty becomes effective in 1948: as of now, the three countries form a single customs union. Ten years later the Benelux is transformed into an Economic Union, geared towards a common trade policy with regards to third countries, the coordination

of economic, financial and social policy and the free movement of goods, services, persons and capital.

The new organisation can count on a lot of interest from abroad. It is the first time after World War II that three sovereign countries decide to work together in specific sectors in an international organisation of their own volition. However, an attempt to draw in France and Italy – a possible Fritalux – fizzles out. As of its inception the organisation has relatively autonomous institutions: a ministerial committee, a general secretariat, a courthouse and a parliament. This cluster can be seen as the embryo for the four institutions that later would be created in the ECSC and today form the epicentre of the EU. In other words, much of the significance of the Benelux for the European integration process lies in its pioneering and exemplary role. As Jean-Charles Snoy et d'Oppuers, Chairman of the Council of the Economic Union of the Benelux between 1946 and 1959, remarks: 'The Benelux has progressed step by step along the path of least resistance. Had we wanted to follow the path of logical process and predetermined visions, it would not only have been impossible to advance so quickly, but even to succeed. (...) It is in this way that, on a pragmatic and experimental level, the first great attempt at economic integration in twentieth century Europe was launched.'<sup>10</sup>

## **Marshall Plan**

The intense cooperation between European countries after World War II is not all that surprising. They have utterly ruined both their economies and their militaries. Treasuries are depleted, soldiers dead, and stomachs empty. Western Europe is vulnerable and ripe for the picking by Stalin's Red Army, stationed less than 500 kilometres from Brussels. Soviet troops have even been active on European soil beyond occupied territory in Germany and Austria, in what Churchill coined the 'Iron Curtain' in 1946. The United States might have withdrawn its troops from the areas they liberated, but they do not feel like just handing them over, for in the immediate aftermath of World War II American banks have many outstanding loans to Western European governments, which they would like to see repaid in the long run. Besides, the American economy has to make the shift from a war economy to a consumption-based industry, and a wealthy Western Europe would be a logical marketplace for American fridges and Fords.