The Projects of Europe: Philosophical Origins and Institutional Evolution from the 17th-18th Centuries to Contemporary Integration

Gjergj SINANI

Abstract

European integration remains the paramount objective for the Balkan states, not merely as a political aspiration, but as an affirmation of democracy and the rule of law, foundational principles for any truly integrated community. The central question addressed by this paper, titled "The Projects of Europe: Philosophical Origins and Institutional Evolution from the 17th-18th Centuries to Contemporary Integration", is: When did these 'projects' for Europe first emerge? This study argues that the concept of Europe as an ideal has its origins in the 17th and 18th centuries, especially among French cosmopolitan philosophers, whose ideas played a crucial formative role. It then explores how these philosophical projects were actualized in the postWorld War II era, shaping Europe not simply through economic or political cooperation, but as a moral and political ideal rooted in Enlightenment thought. Although in its early expressions the idea was utopian, revisiting it offers critical insight into the institutions of contemporary Europe. The paper concludes that modern Europe is the cumulative outcome of successive intellectual traditions and practical actions. It contends that misunderstandings persist when Europe is reduced to its material dimensions such as monetary union or free movement and argues instead that its essence lies in civic liberty, solidarity, and responsibility. At its core, peace and security remain the guiding political principles; these are inseparable from the values of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law, which together constitute Europe's enduring pride.

Keywords: *Projects for the Europe, Rule of law, Democracy, European integration, Ideas, Institutions.*

The Origin of the European Projects

The origin of many projects for Europe must be sought in the cosmopolitanism of European intellectuals. Voltaire, Rousseau, d'Alembert, Montesquieu, and other authors of the Encyclopédie are the most distinguished representatives of this cosmopolitanism.

Voltaire's cosmopolitanism was distinctly European, since, for him, the peoples of Europe possessed principles of humanism that were not found in other parts of the world; they were deeply connected among themselves, they had laws that were common, all sovereign houses were allied, their subjects constantly traveled and maintained reciprocal relations. "Christian Europeans," he wrote, "are like the Greeks; they wage wars among themselves, but in these quarrels they preserve such correctness… that often a Frenchman, an Englishman, a German meeting together seem as if they had been born in the same city"(Voltaire, 1990, p. 814). Perhaps Voltaire would not have written these lines had he witnessed the last two world wars.

Rousseau, in The Government of Poland, wrote: "Today there are no longer French, Germans, Spaniards, nor English; there are only Europeans. All have the same tastes, the same passions, the same customs, because none has taken a national form through a particular institution" (Rousseau, 1975, p. 347). Yet, while Voltaire, in the beautiful passage we just cited, is pleased with this Europeanization, Rousseau, as always bitter in his remarks, despised it. In *The Government of Poland* he would write again:

"Today there are no longer French, Germans, Spaniards, nor English; there are only Europeans. All have the same tastes, the same passions, the same customs, because none has taken a national form through a particular institution. All, under the same circumstances, will do the same things; all will pretend to be disinterested and will be devils; all will speak of the public good and will think only of themselves; all will praise mediocrity and will wish to be a Crœsus; their only ambition will be luxury, their only passion gold: assured that they have in it everything that entices them, they will sell themselves to the first who wishes to buy them. What does it matter to them whose lord they obey, whose state's laws they follow? Provided they find money to steal and women to corrupt, they are everywhere at home"(Rousseau, 1975, p. 347).

Montesquieu too was a cosmopolitan. He refused to propose to his prince something useful for his own country but destructive to another. "I am a human being before being a Frenchman," he declared. A thing useful for the fatherland but destructive for others would be a crime; a thing useful for Europe but prejudicial for humanity would likewise be a crime. Similarly, Diderot spoke of "small heads,

ill-born spirits, indifferent to the fate of humanity and so concentrated on their little societies, their nation, that they see nothing beyond their own interest. These people want to be called good citizens, and I agree, provided they allow me to call them wicked men."

Thus, for the philosophers of the 18th century, it was entirely natural to speak of mankind first, and then of Europeans. "Our Europe," wrote Voltaire in the "Essay on Customs", though belonging to a "fatherland," to a "nation," remained troublesome (Voltaire, 1990). Certainly, this subject is complex, for the times in which these things were written were themselves complex. In the dichotomy Us–Them (Europe = liberty; Asia = tyranny), he brings forth the figure of Skanderbeg as the personification of the value of Europe (Liberty) and criticizes "Raison d'État" as the basic concept of international relations, since Europe would otherwise face uninterrupted wars. In this way, he made Skanderbeg part of European consciousness. But how was this European consciousness formed, and why can Skanderbeg be considered a part of it?

In the introduction to his work *Twenty-Eight Centuries of Europe*, Denis de Rougemont (1990) writes:

"1. Europe is much older than the nations. It risks disappearing because of division and of ever more illusory claims to absolute sovereignty… 2. Europe has exercised, since its birth, a function not only universal but, from this fact, universalizing. It has stimulated the world… 3. A united Europe is not merely a modern economic or political device, but an ideal approved for a thousand years by the best spirits" (p. 9).

Thus, Europe is the result of the labor of such great spirits as Montaigne, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Immanuel Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Victor Hugo, and many others.

In this context, what is called "European consciousness" implies the distinction of Europe, as a political and moral entity, from other entities—that is, from other continents or other groups of nations. The concept of Europe was meant to indicate something different from non-Europe, acquiring its characteristics and becoming more precise through confrontation with the non-European—an idea rooted in Greek thought. During the Persian wars and the time of Alexander the Great, the meaning of a Europe opposed to Asia was first formed, in terms of customs and, above all, political organization. Thus was shaped the basic paradigm that would accompany all European discourse: the idea of a Europe representing the spirit of freedom, in contrast to Asiatic despotism.

How does this paradigm appear when Europe confronted the Turks? Before the arrival of the Turks, East and West were not so foreign to one another. "Eastern Rome" had managed, for 1523 years, to resist the assaults of Asiatic peoples thanks to its diplomatic resources. It was the Crusades that weakened the Byzantine state, leaving it unable to resist Turkish attacks. When Mehmed II entered the basilica

of Hagia Sophia on horseback, converting it into a mosque, the entire Christian world was shaken. The Ottoman advance heightened Western anxiety, since they did not stop at Constantinople. They advanced into Hungary, reached the Adriatic, conquered mainland Greece, and clashed fiercely with Venetian possessions. This was the "Turkish terror," according to a contemporary author.

What were the possible attitudes toward this danger? One was uncompromising war, through union and crusade. Another was compromise—even the use of Turkish force to serve European rivalries. Should they resist at all costs, or withdraw before them? "Poor Europe," wrote the poet Ronsard in his poem "The Fortunate Isles" in 1553, seeking refuge in those happy islands. Many European and Mediterranean powers sought compromise. Indeed, a portrait of Mehmed II was painted by Gentile Bellini, sent by the Venetian Signoria to the sultan at his request in 1479. Moreover, according to Voltaire, Mehmed II gave the painter "a gift of a golden crown, a golden necklace, three thousand gold ducats, and dismissed him with honors"(Voltaire, 1990, pp. 817-818). From all sides the Italians offered lavish praise to this sultan, and not without reason, since many cities and minor princes, such as Malatesta of Rimini, profited from trade with the Turks. Lorenzo de' Medici even struck a medal to thank him for delivering one of the authors of the Pazzi conspiracy. On one side of the medal was Mehmed II's portrait, and on the other he appeared triumphant on a chariot. The engraved legend proclaimed him "Sovereign of a blessed memory." It must be emphasized that only the humanists clearly perceived the Ottoman threat to Europe—not so much the princes or statesmen. We underline this in order to understand why humanist literature, and later romantic literature, focused on and glorified our hero. And this literature was not limited to the Mediterranean basin, but characterized all Europe, including the northern countries.

In Voltaire's major work, "Essay on the Customs and the Spirit of Nations, and on the Principal Facts of History from Charlemagne to Louis XIII", the first volume contains a short chapter entitled "On Skanderbeg." After explaining Europe's situation facing two powerful sultans, Murad (whom Voltaire writes as Amurat) and Mehmed II, who "dreamed more of imitating the valor of his father than his philosophy" (Voltaire, 1990, p. 814), Voltaire turns particularly to Skanderbeg. Here are some passages from this chapter:

"Another warrior no less famous, whom I do not know whether to call Ottoman or Christian, checked the progress of Amurat and for a long time was an obstacle to Mehmed II's victories over the Christians: I mean Skanderbeg, born in Albania, part of Epirus, a land celebrated in the times called heroic and in the truly heroic times of the Romans. His name was Jean Castriot" (Voltaire, 1990, p. 814).

After describing how he ended as a hostage in the sultan's court and the unknown fate of his brothers, Voltaire says that Amurat "loved him and in war kept him by his side. Jean Castriot distinguished himself to such a degree that

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the sultan and the Janissaries gave him the name Scanderbeg, meaning Lord Alexander" (Voltaire, 1990, pp. 814-815). Speaking of Skanderbeg's engagement against the despot of Serbia, who had risen against the sultan, Voltaire writes: "Skanderbeg, then only twenty years old, conceived the plan to have no master above himself and to reign." Thus, for Voltaire, this warrior could not accept vassalage, but preferred liberty.

Voltaire accepts the version of the capture of the fortress of Kruja by coercing the sultan's secretary and then seizing all Albania. Here it is worth noting Voltaire's judgment of the Albanians: "The Albanians were regarded as the best soldiers of those lands. Skanderbeg led them so well, knew how to draw so many advantages from the rugged and mountainous terrain, that with few troops he always repelled the great Turkish armies" (Voltaire, 1990, pp. 814-815).

Even in the chapter describing the fall of Constantinople and the shock it produced in Europe, Voltaire writes: "In Europe there were only two princes worthy of attacking Mehmed II. One was Hunyadi, prince of Transylvania, who could scarcely defend himself; the other was the famous Skanderbeg, who could rely only on the mountains of Epirus, much as once Don Pelayo did in the Asturias when the Mohammedans subdued Spain." (Voltaire, 1990, p. 820).

Voltaire also mentions our hero when describing how the knights of Malta halted Mehmed II at Rhodes: "The knights, who are today the knights of Malta, had, like Skanderbeg, the glory of driving off the victorious armies of Mehmed II." (Voltaire, 1990, p. 827).

From these passages we may draw several conclusions:

First, Voltaire saw Skanderbeg as the embodiment of liberty in the face of tyranny. Instead of accepting a despotic order in which pashas were sultans where they governed, but with their heads always at risk on the sultan's platter, Skanderbeg chose freedom. Let us not forget that the paradigm of Europe as the land of liberty is essential in Voltaire's thought, even when he criticizes Europe's vices.

Second, Voltaire emphasizes not so much "Christianitas" as Europe itself. If many European princes chose compromise with Turkish despotism, Skanderbeg represented the statesman who did not rely so much on "raison d'état" in political relations, but on higher spiritual values. Thus, more than Christianity, Skanderbeg saved Europe.

Third, in order to revive the spirit of liberty threatened by Eastern despotism, Voltaire deliberately appeals to European consciousness through the figure of Skanderbeg—not merely through his heroic deeds, but through his moral virtues. The idea of peace, being central in philosophical thought, led to projects that reveal a connection between European cosmopolitanism and certain forms of utopia. Many of them have European resonances. Let us consider some of these projects.

In 1693, William Penn wrote "An Essay towards the Present and Future Peace

of Europe". He was concerned about peace in Europe and believed that the means to peace was justice, not war. He held that peace in Europe could be secured and preserved. For this reason, he presented his project for the present and future peace of Europe. In Section IV, "For a General Peace, or the Peace of Europe and its Means," he wrote: "Now, if the Sovereign Princes of Europe, who represent that society, or the independent condition of men that was before the obligations of society, for the same Reason would engage the People first into Society, that is, the Love of Peace and Order, then agree to meet by their Deputies, to constitute in a General Diet, Estates, or Parliament, and there establish Rules of Justice for Sovereign Princes to observe one towards another; and thus meet yearly, or once in two or three years at least, or as they shall see cause, and be stated in the Imperial Diet, Parliament, or Estates of Europe; before which Sovereign Assembly shall be brought all differences depending between one Sovereign and another, that cannot be made up by private Embassies, before the Sessions begin; and that if any of the Sovereigns that constitute these Imperial States shall refuse to submit their Pretensions to them, or to abide and perform the Judgment thereof, and seek their Remedy by Arms, or delay the Execution of their Resolutions, beyond the Time prefixed in their Determinations, all the other Sovereigns, united as one common Force, shall compel the Submission of the Parties that shall so refuse. By which means, Europe will quietly obtain the desirable and necessary Peace, for its harassed Inhabitants; there being a Sovereignty in Europe, and a Power, that no one can show a Will to resist; and consequently, Peace must be secure and durable in Europe." (Penn, 1693, p. 406).

He was even more concrete when he proposed the composition of this "imperial state": "I suppose that the Empire of Germany shall send Twelve; France, Ten; Spain, Ten; Italy, which falls to France, Eight; England, Six; Portugal, Three; Sweden, Four; Denmark, Three; Poland, Four; Venice, Three; the Seven Provinces, Four; the Thirteen Cantons, and the neighboring petty Sovereigns, Two; the Duchy of Holstein and Courland, One (today Western Latvia); and if the Turks and the Muscovites are admitted, as seems but right, they shall have Ten. In all Ninety. A great Presence, when they represent the Fourth, and now the best and richest part of the known World; where Religion and Learning, Civility and Arts have their Seat and Empire." (Penn, 1693, p. 409).

The project implied avoidance of corruption, since if any of the deputies of this high and powerful form were so vile, false, and dishonest as to be influenced by money, "they have the Advantage of taking their Money, which they shall give, and voting against their Principal;" thus making use of their inclinations for the greater good. Finally, regarding the language "in which the sessions of the sovereign states should be held, to be secure it must be in Latin or French; the former would be very suitable for civilians, but the latter easier for men of quality." (Penn, 1693, p. 410).

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Taking into account the above ideas, we also find in this project several practical suggestions regarding how the Assembly should conduct its work and reach decisions. He proposed a rotating presidency with a modern echo, such as secret voting (to prevent or reduce corruption), record-keeping (with safeguards to prevent falsification), and the use of Latin or French as the official language. At that time, English was certainly not the global language it would become in the 20th century. Nevertheless, the fact that Penn did not mention his own native tongue, and that he allocated six votes to England in the Assembly (half that of Germany, and fewer than the ten given to France or the eight to Italy), demonstrates his fairness and objectivity. As an honest Quaker, he could not be accused of having drafted a scheme intended primarily to advance the interests of his own country (a suspicion or accusation that has rightly been raised in regard to certain other schemes for perpetual peace). Decisions were to require three-quarters of the total votes, in order to reduce the likelihood of corruption. Except in cases of conflict, princes would retain full sovereignty. Moreover, disarmament could be undertaken to enable the development of agriculture, commerce, science, and education. The reputation of Christianity would be preserved, thus allowing for unity against the Turkish threat (Tavares da Silva, 2009).

One might think that he was merely a dreamer without political experience. Yet more than ten years before writing his Essay, William Penn founded the colony of Pennsylvania (named after his father, at the insistence of King Charles II) so that his fellow believers, as well as other persecuted sects, could emigrate and practice their faith without fear of persecution, living in a tolerant society governed by law and creating a community with advanced liberties. In 1682 he drafted his "Frame of Government" for the colony, limiting governmental power and guaranteeing many fundamental freedoms of Penn's "Holy Experiment," which survived for the next seventy years (1680–1750). One of its key features, which made it famous at the time and later, was the harmonious relations between settlers and the native Indians. Fully consistent with the Quaker view of the equality of all human beings, they were treated with dignity and honesty—something to which they were unaccustomed, and for which they praised Penn and his fellow Quakers. As governor of the colony, Penn not only drafted its constitution but also designed the city of Philadelphia—the "City of Brotherly Love"—ensuring that houses had gardens and that the city preserved green spaces, while also protecting the natural environment from ruthless exploitation. Penn also outlined a constitution for the union of the thirteen colonies that would later inspire the American Constitution. He was a man of vision, but also of practical wisdom. (Tavares da Silva, 2009).

Thus, Penn is also an important figure in the history of both England and the United States; indeed, together with Benjamin Franklin, a century later, he is considered a founding father of the American Republic. Penn and Franklin, from

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their residence in Philadelphia, made America great. This is another reason to remember William Penn today.

Another disciple of Penn, John Bellers, proposed to the British Parliament a project entitled *"Some Reasons for an European State, 1710, Proposed to the Powers of Europe by an Universal Guarantee and an Annual Congress, Senate, Diet or Parliament, To Settle Any Disputes about the Bounds and Rights of the Princes…"* Unlike Penn, he believed that this system should primarily be directed against France, which at the time was almost continuously at war with the whole of Europe. Once peace was achieved, France could then be admitted. The "status quo" that would be established by the treaty could no longer be altered, and all members would solemnly renounce their claims. Europe would be divided into five provinces, each of which would provide the League with either 1,000 soldiers, or ships, or funds. The states would remain in existence. He envisioned as many representatives in the Diet as there were provinces. The procedure for compulsory arbitration would be the same as Penn's.

In conclusion, he wrote: "The Muscovites are Christians, and even Mohammedans have the same capacities and reason as other men… But to leave their minds aside, to exclude them from meaning, would be a great mistake and would leave Europe in a state of civil war; whereas the more this civil union can be expanded, the greater will be peace on earth and goodwill among men" (Bellers, 1710, as cited in Tavares da Silva, 2009, p. 20).

These projects did not have any great resonance. This was not the case, however, with the three large volumes published by the secretary of Cardinal Polignac, one of the French representatives at the Peace Conference of Utrecht. This was the abbé Charles-Irénée Castel de Saint-Pierre, between 1713 and 1717. Already in 1712, at Cologne, he had written a short work entitled "Mémoires pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe". The second volume was entitled "Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe", and the third: *"Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle entre souverains chrétiens"*(Saint-Pierre, 1713/2019). One notices the dilemma between the idea of Europe and that of Christianity.

Abbé Saint-Pierre believed that a Confederation should be created solely for Europe (Saint-Pierre, 1713/2019). Only such a confederation could secure a peace that the balance of power between France and Austria had failed to maintain. Sovereigns would form a "European Association" and would send permanent representatives to a permanent Congress or Senate. The Association would prohibit any use of violence. If any sovereign were to commit aggression, the Association would dispatch an investigative commission as well as troops. Sovereigns pledged to maintain the *status quo* and could not proceed with territorial exchanges or sign treaties without the approval of Congress by a three-quarters majority. To prevent any power from becoming too dominant, no sovereign, except the Emperor, could rule over more than one state. Problems relating to commerce

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would be regulated by “Chambers for the Preservation of Commerce,” created in different cities. The abbé envisaged an association composed of 24 European members, but it could be formed as soon as 14 princes agreed to adhere. From that moment on, any prince who refused to join would be considered an “enemy of Europe.” The members would wage war against him, and if he persisted, he would be expelled from his state. Any war, aside from these collective military sanctions, would be prohibited and would expose its author to the aforementioned penalties.

Unlike Penn’s project, which based the number of delegates on the wealth of states, the abbé proposed that each of the 24 members should have only one delegate. By contrast, financial contributions would be proportional to the revenues of the states. All of this, comprising the “fundamental articles,” could only be amended unanimously. Other provisions, designated as “important articles” and “useful articles,” required a three-quarters majority.

The “important articles” proposed that the seat of the Congress should be Utrecht, that the Association should have an ambassador in every member state and a “resident” in each major province. The Association was also tasked with studying colonial rivalries so that they would not become causes of war.At the end of the project, he wrote: “If this project is proposed to sovereigns during war, it will facilitate peace. If it is proposed during peace conferences, it will ease their conclusion. If it is proposed after peace has been achieved, it will contribute to its duration” (Saint-Pierre, 1713/2019, p. 589).

That this plan was utopian is evident from a letter sent to the author in 1715 by the German philosopher Leibniz. The expression “perpetual peace” seemed to him unrealistic. Moreover, how could it be imagined that princes would consent to abandon an essential part of their sovereignty and all their ambitions simply by reading a book? This well-intentioned illusion may be compared with what Frederick II wrote in his testament of 1768: “There is no great prince who is not possessed by the idea of expanding his own power.” Nevertheless, if the abbé’s influence was at the time of a purely intellectual nature, in the future he inspired many statesmen such as Necker, Napoleon, Metternich, and later, the men of the League of Nations, who revived some of these ideas, such as compulsory sanctions, controlled disarmament, an association of sovereign states (and not of peoples), etc. His concern with commerce, which was to be regulated by the Senate, may perhaps have influenced the creation of the “Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.” Likewise, he opposed secret treaties, since the Association was to approve, not merely register all treaties signed by members. Two centuries later, it would be Wilson who would demand the non-recognition of secret treaties in the regulation of international peace.

Rousseau took great interest in this project. His plan closely resembled that of the abbé. On the one hand, in 1761 he published a short text entitled “Extrait du projet de paix perpétuelle de M. l’abbé de Saint-Pierre. “On the other hand, he

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appended to the work his" Jugement sur la paix perpétuelle," which was published in 1782, four years after his death. Rousseau's plan resembled that of the abbé in the sense that the philosopher of Geneva, like his predecessor, believed that since war was a matter of princes, only through a federation of princes could it be avoided. He adopted the same technique of a permanent structure, with 19 members instead of the abbé's 24, including Russia and the Pope. Like the abbé, he relied on the idea of the effectiveness of military sanctions.

The difference between them lies in their style of writing. Unlike the abbot's work, which was voluminous and heavy, Rousseau's writings were distinguished by sharp logic, clarity, and precision. Yet, in Rousseau, another strength was evident. While the abbot based his project on the goodwill of princes to pursue the well-being of their subjects, Rousseau—who harbored no sympathy for princes—believed they would adhere to such a plan only insofar as it coincided with their own interests. Essential to his reasoning was the conviction that everything would proceed favorably only if princes were replaced by states founded upon the principle of the national will.

Between 1786 and 1789, Jeremy Bentham wrote an essay, published posthumously in 1843, entitled *A Plan for Universal and Perpetual Peace*. (Bentham, 1927). The term "universal" implied that any instigator of war would be deemed unworthy by Europe. Central to his essay was the foresight of a "world tribunal," whose decisions would be published by a free press and thereby secure the support of public opinion. The utopia here did not consist in constructing a cumbersome apparatus to restrict the sovereignty of rulers, but rather in the belief that public opinion itself would have the force to ensure compliance with the tribunal's decisions and to impose disarmament. Since Bentham further stipulated, as a precondition, that nations renounce their colonies, the project had very little chance of acceptance.

The most significant plan of that century was Emmanuel Kant's, published in 1795 in Königsberg under the title *Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View*. Kant was inspired by the Treaty of Basel in 1795, just as Saint-Pierre had been by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. This project, too, belongs among the utopian schemes of the eighteenth century. Like his predecessors, he proposed the creation of a general confederation of European states. Moreover, like them, he opposed secret treaties, permanent armies, and the use of force for national advantage. Influenced by the rising tide of nationalism, he added the principle that no independent state could be subordinated to another. It is worth recalling, in this regard, that the third partition of Poland occurred in 1795.

Kant's system rested on a novel idea: that to secure perpetual peace, state regimes had to be republican. In a republic, the consent of citizens was indispensable to wage war. Kant distinguished between the republic, where executive power is separated from the legislative, and "democracy," where this

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separation does not exist and which, in his view, corresponded to "despotism." In making this distinction, he had in mind the French revolutionary experience of Jacobin terror.

Although far more ambiguous than previous schemes regarding the mechanism of confederation, Kant's project was less utopian. The conditions he set for the realization of such a confederation revealed that it was not yet ripe to be born. Let us pause more closely on Kant's idea, which would later inspire President Wilson after the First World War in his conception of the League of Nations.

In his seventh proposition, Kant affirms: "*The problem of establishing a perfect civil constitution is inseparably linked with the problem of establishing regulated external relations among states, and cannot be solved independently of the latter*" (Kant, 1990, p. 79). According to Kant, just as individuals are compelled to unite yet retain individual freedom, so too does each community, in its external relations that is, in its dealings with other states, enjoy an unrestrained liberty. Thus, every state must expect to suffer at the hands of others the same evils that weigh upon individuals, compelling them to enter into a civil state governed by law. Once again, Kant tells us, nature has employed the discord among men and the antagonisms among great societies and political bodies as a means to generate, within their unavoidable conflicts, a condition of tranquility and security. Hence, through wars and the miseries they bring upon states—even in times of peace—nature, in its endeavors, at first imperfect, then through many devastations, collapses, and the radical exhaustion of their internal resources, drives states to accomplish what reason would have taught them to do without such painful trials: *namely, to emerge from the archaic state of savagery and to enter into a League of Nations*. "There, each state—even the smallest—would secure the guarantee of its rights and its security, not merely through its own power or its own estimation of its rights, but solely through this League of Nations, through a united force and a judgment rendered according to laws grounded in the concord of wills (Kant, 1990, p. 79). This, he argued, is the only way to prevent men from plunging one another into misery, and to compel states to accept the solution of renouncing their brutal freedom in order to seek peace and security under a lawful order. "*Thus, one day, partly through the establishment of a civil constitution as adequate as possible within, and partly through a common convention and legislation without, a condition of affairs will be instituted which, as a universal civil society, may be regarded as a kind of moral automaton*"(Kant, 1990, p. 80).

In short, to escape the wars to which the "barbarous liberty of states" leads, a rational organism must be created, grounded in the principle of equality in action and reciprocal reaction, so that states do not destroy one another. "*Though this political organism is, for the moment, still only a very general sketch, a sensibility is already apparent among all its members; what matters most is the preservation of*

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collectivity. What gives hope is that, after many revolutions and transformations, the highest end of nature will ultimately be achieved: the establishment of a universal cosmopolitan state, the hearth where all the initial dispositions of the human species may develop"(Kant, 1990, p. 79).

Europe after the Second World War

These ideas resurfaced after the Second World War, when the process of remodelling Europe began. For this reconstruction to succeed, ideas had to be incorporated into human communities. Great creations emerge from great ideas. The transmission of these ideas is indispensable to understanding what transpired in Europe after 1945. Here, we must bear in mind three elements: the role of circumstances, the existence of creators, and the supporting tendencies within human communities.

The circumstances of 1945 are well known. Europe was not only devastated by war, but also gravely wounded morally. At the same time, the advance of the Red Army led to the division of the continent into two sectors separated by an "iron curtain." For the West, this represented a threat—at least for the majority—since communists and sympathizers existed who desired, if not the advance of the Red Army, then at least revolutions that would establish regimes analogous to that of the USSR. For a long time, the situation remained uncertain, particularly in France, Italy, and Greece, due to the prestige and heroism of communists in these countries.

To most Western populations, the threat corresponded to the danger of establishing Stalinist-type regimes, where individual liberty was sacrificed for the triumph of the proletariat, according to norms dictated by its vanguard, the Communist Party.

Out of the ruins and the menace emerged, indirectly, another circumstance: the advent of an entirely new American policy. The United States abandoned its traditional isolationism, entered the great war, and emerged as one of the two "superpowers." The dilemma arose: would it return to its earlier stance, retreating once more into the "American fortress"? Yet, after Yalta, the alliance with the other "superpower" broke down, leading toward the Cold War. What was to be done? Should concessions be made to the USSR in order to preserve the alliance, or should it be countered and restrained? The appointment of General Marshall to the State Department in 1947 marked the victory of the latter tendency.

It is well known that after war, the natural inclination is to return to normalcy—to bread, peace, and liberty. To this aim, the Marshall Plan was devised. Another circumstance was the decline of nationalist fervor. France, in its 1946 Constitution, even introduced the principle of renouncing parts of national sovereignty in favor

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of reciprocity. Thus, chauvinistic nationalism was broken in Europe. This was also evident in European intellectual movements: suffice it to mention the creation of various associations such as the "European Union of Federalists."

This movement developed among conservatives (Churchill), Christian democrats (the New International Teams), and socialists (the Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe). It also took political and economic forms, such as the European League for Economic Cooperation. In 1947, Count Coudenhove-Kalergi initiated parliamentary advocacy for a "European Parliamentary Union." In the intellectual realm, as early as 1947, the "International Committee for Cooperation of Movements for a European University" was established. In 1948, a spectacular congress was convened at The Hague, attended by numerous ministers in office. From this arose the idea of uniting all groups in a "European Movement," formally founded in October 1948, with Churchill, Léon Blum, Paul-Henri Spaak, and Alcide de Gasperi as presidents. European institutes were established in Bruges, Turin, Saarbrücken, Nancy, and many other centers. The idea and the circumstances awaited the right individuals.

The initiative was taken in July 1948 by Georges Bidault. Impressed by the Hague Congress, he proposed the convocation of an elected European assembly. This project was taken up with vigor by Robert Schuman, his successor as foreign minister. The proposal was well received by Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, which accepted the idea of an assembly endowed with certain supranational powers. Britain, under a Labour government that prioritized the Commonwealth, presented a counter-project rejecting supranationality and proposing instead a Committee of Ministers. By the end of the negotiations in 1949, the "Council of Europe" appeared as a compromise between the French and British positions, since it consisted of a Consultative Assembly and a Committee of Ministers. In reality, however, the British thesis prevailed, for supranational power was not accepted. The difference from the prewar stance was that Britain now acknowledged the existence of a specifically European body, while still applying in practice the policy of a return to normalcy.

Thanks to this British stance, the Council of Europe played only a limited role, serving primarily as a meeting ground and forum for cooperation. This did not satisfy the advocates of European unity. A new constellation of circumstances demanded a reconsideration of the issue. Chief among these was the reemergence of Germany as a subject—no longer merely an object—of diplomacy, with the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949. As long as a German state existed, so too would claims persist regarding divided German territories. The most significant was the Soviet zone and territories annexed to Poland; yet more immediate was the Saar, politically detached by France and joined to its own economic zone. Robert Schuman sought Franco-German reconciliation. How could the Saar problem be resolved without creating conflict between France and Germany? Could this be linked to the problem of European unification?

The solution was found by Jean Monnet, in the idea of integration. Long before, Schuman had proposed, in 1950, the plan that bears his name, marking a decisive step forward. The Schuman Plan envisaged the creation of a "European Coal and Steel Community," founded upon a common market, shared objectives, and joint institutions. Let us recall two phrases from the preamble of the treaty: *"Considering that world peace can be safeguarded only by creative efforts commensurate with the dangers that threaten it,"* and, further: *"Considering that Europe can only be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity, and through the establishment of common bases for economic development."*

What was revolutionary in the idea of integration was the synthesis of two simple concepts: supranationality and concrete economic realities. This synthesis indicated that Europe could be united only if the economies of its members were first integrated, thereby creating a real unity before proclaiming a legal one. This idea also provoked an irresistible tendency toward political unity.

Jean Monnet had understood the importance of this synthesis through his own political experience. He had directed the Franco-British supply mission in 1939–1940, and was among the initiators of the Franco-British union project of June 1940. In 1941, in the United States, he put into effect the "Victory Program" for military production. In 1943, he contributed to reconciling the two Frances—that of de Gaulle and that of Giraud. He became High Commissioner of the French Planning Office of the Fourth Republic. Planning, reconciliation, synthesis—that is, the combination of clarity of vision with imagination—were the hallmarks of his personality. Many authors argue that without Jean Monnet, today's Europe could scarcely be conceived. Indeed, no one was better intellectually prepared or more practically tested to make the seemingly simple, yet profoundly fruitful, discovery of integration.

The creation of the Coal and Steel Community opened a new perspective. Integration was also attempted in military affairs (the European Defence Community), though unsuccessfully; but with success in the peaceful use of nuclear energy (Euratom) and the European Common Market.

Thus, the Council of Europe and the European Union were born from the same idea, the same spirit, and the same ambition. At their foundation lie the cosmopolitan projects and the circumstances created after the Second World War. All converge on the point so eloquently formulated by Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi: *"A divided Europe leads to war, oppression, and misery; a united Europe to peace and prosperity."* The European project advanced by gaining the trust of its citizens. Democracy and the rule of law constitute the continent's pride. The spread of democratic principles, human rights, and the supremacy of law remains an unfinished task, for Europe's thinkers have always emphasized the need to beware of illusions—that democracy, once established, is unshakable. Democracy must not degenerate into an empty ritual. The tendency of political classes and

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state structures to distance themselves from citizens constitutes a permanent danger to democracy. Democracy is like a living organism: once established on solid foundations, it requires constant adaptation in order to respond effectively to the demands of its citizens.

If, at the outset of our reflection, we began with the projects elaborated in the eighteenth century, and then leapt forward to the aftermath of the Second World War, we have passed over many important periods in the elaboration of the idea of Europe. Our purpose has been to show that contemporary Europe is the product of a long endeavor of thought and concrete political action. Above all, simplistic misconceptions about Europe must be avoided. It is neither a drawer of funds nor merely a zone of free circulation of goods and persons. Europe is, first and foremost, a space of civic freedom, solidarity, and responsibility.

At the foundation of both thought and practical action for Europe lies, as we have seen, the idea of peace and security. From this derive the principles of liberty, democracy, and the rule of law, ideas that constitute the pride of Europe.

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