ANANTAM IAS · OPTIONAL NOTES

History Optional
Unification of Europe

Paper 2 · Unit 26

From the Schuman Plan to the euro: 60 marks in four years, always as a twenty marker, and the best marks-per-page in the whole Paper 2 syllabus.

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UPSC SYLLABUS

Unification of Europe: post-war foundations, NATO and European Community; consolidation and expansion of the European Community; European Union.

Why Europe integrated after 1945

Motive first, because every question in this unit rewards an answer that explains the drivers before it lists the treaties.

- Two world wars in thirty years, both beginning in Franco-German antagonism, made the **containment of Germany** through integration rather than punishment the founding purpose.
- Versailles supplied the negative lesson, since punitive reparations and exclusion had produced the conditions for the second war, and post-war planners were explicit about not repeating it.
- **Marshall Aid** from 1948 required recipients to cooperate on distribution, and the **OEEC** created to administer it was the first institution to accustom European states to joint economic decision-making.
- Soviet pressure supplied urgency, and the Berlin blockade of 1948 to 1949 convinced western governments that economic recovery and collective defence had to proceed together.
- **Benelux**, the customs union of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg agreed in 1944 and operating from 1948, was the working proof that small European states could merge tariffs without losing sovereignty, and it supplied both the model and several of the founding negotiators.
- Relative decline was the honest background, since Britain and France emerged victorious but exhausted, and Suez in 1956 demonstrated publicly that neither could act without American consent.
- **Decolonisation** removed the imperial alternative, and as colonies became independent through the 1950s and 1960s, the European market became the obvious substitute for imperial preference.
- **Council of Europe**, founded in 1949 with the European Convention on Human Rights, is a separate and wider body often confused with the Union, and knowing the distinction is worth a mark whenever the question mentions European institutions.
- American policy actively encouraged integration, since Washington wanted a strong western Europe as a bulwark against the Soviet Union and pressed for it consistently.

NATO and the security foundation

Named in the syllabus alongside the European Community, and the 2026 paper asked about NATO's core principles directly.

- Signed in Washington in **April 1949** by twelve founding members, the North Atlantic Treaty created a collective defence alliance linking western Europe to the United States and Canada.
- **Article 5** is the core principle: an armed attack against one member in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all, and each will assist by such action as it deems necessary.
- That last qualification matters, since Article 5 does not automatically commit any member to war, and the obligation is to act rather than to fight in a specified way.
- **Article 4** provides for consultation whenever a member's territorial integrity, political independence or security is threatened, and it has been invoked far more often than Article 5.

- Lord Ismay's summary, that NATO existed to keep the Russians out, the Americans in and the Germans down, is the standard compact statement of its threefold purpose.
- German rearmament within NATO from **1955** was the mechanism that made West German military recovery acceptable to France, and the Soviet response was the **Warsaw Pact** in the same year.
- **France under de Gaulle** withdrew from the integrated military command in 1966 while remaining a treaty member, which illustrates the persistent tension between Atlanticism and European autonomy.
- Article 5 has been invoked exactly once, by the United States after the attacks of 11 September 2001, which is worth knowing because it inverts the expected direction of the guarantee.
- **Out of area** operations from the 1990s, in Bosnia, Kosovo and later Afghanistan, transformed NATO from a purely defensive alliance for its own territory into an expeditionary one, which is a change of function rather than of treaty.
- Enlargement eastward after 1990 brought former Warsaw Pact members in and became the principal source of friction with Russia, which connects this unit to the post-Cold War world.

KEY TERMS

Article 5 — NATO's collective defence clause: an attack on one is an attack on all, with each member assisting by such action as it deems necessary.

From the Schuman Plan to the Treaty of Rome

The 2024 paper asked to trace the stages of European economic integration. This section and the next are that answer.

- **Jean Monnet** conceived and **Robert Schuman** announced the plan of **9 May 1950** to place French and German coal and steel production under a common High Authority.
- Its brilliance was strategic rather than economic: pooling the industries of war would make conflict between France and Germany, in Schuman's phrase, not merely unthinkable but materially impossible.
- **European Coal and Steel Community**, created by the Treaty of Paris in 1951 with six members, established the institutional template of a supranational authority, a council, an assembly and a court.
- Failure of the **European Defence Community** in 1954, rejected by the French National Assembly, showed the limits of integration in matters of sovereignty and redirected effort back to economics.
- **Treaty of Rome in 1957** created the **European Economic Community** and Euratom, establishing a customs union with a common external tariff, and the four freedoms of movement for goods, services, capital and labour.
- **Institutional architecture** established at Rome and carried forward comprises the Commission proposing legislation, the Council of Ministers representing states, the Parliament, and the Court of Justice whose rulings in Van Gend en Loos and Costa v ENEL established direct effect and the primacy of Community law.
- **Common Agricultural Policy**, operational from 1962, guaranteed farm prices and consumed the majority of the budget for decades, and it is the clearest case of integration driven by domestic political necessity rather than economic logic.
- Monnet's method, usually called **functionalism or the Monnet method**, held that integration in one sector would spill over into others by practical necessity rather than by grand constitutional design.

- **De Gaulle vetoed British entry** in 1963 and again in 1967, on the ground that Britain was too Atlanticist, and the Luxembourg Compromise of 1966 preserved the national veto after his empty chair crisis.

Enlargement and the single market

Consolidation and expansion are named separately in the syllabus, so treat widening and deepening as two distinct processes that sometimes pull against each other.

- First enlargement in **1973** brought Britain, Ireland and Denmark, after de Gaulle's departure removed the obstacle, and Norway's electorate rejected membership.
- Mediterranean enlargement took in **Greece in 1981 and Spain and Portugal in 1986**, and all three had recently emerged from dictatorship, which established membership as a mechanism for consolidating democracy.
- **Single European Act of 1986** set the target of a genuine internal market by the end of 1992, extended qualified majority voting, and is the moment integration accelerated decisively after the stagnation of the 1970s.
- **Jacques Delors** as Commission president from 1985 drove both the single market and the plan for monetary union, and his period is the most consequential in the Community's institutional history.
- Trade creation and diversion is the economic framework to cite, drawn from **Jacob Viner**, and it lets you assess enlargement analytically rather than descriptively.
- The 2025 question about free trade contributing to the European Union is answered here: the customs union built habits of cooperation, the single market required harmonised regulation and therefore common institutions, and monetary union followed from the logic of a single market with volatile exchange rates.
- **Eastern enlargement in 2004** admitted ten states, mostly former communist, followed by Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 and Croatia in 2013, taking membership to twenty eight.
- **Copenhagen criteria** of 1993 set the conditions for accession, requiring stable democratic institutions, the rule of law, a functioning market economy and the capacity to adopt the acquis, and they became the Union's most effective instrument of external influence.
- Widening and deepening pulled against each other, since a larger and more diverse union made unanimity harder, which is why successive treaties extended qualified majority voting.

Maastricht, the euro and a Europe without frontiers

The 2026 paper asked about the ambition to create a Europe without frontiers, which is a question about Schengen and the single market together.

- **Maastricht Treaty of 1992**, in force from 1993, created the **European Union** on three pillars, the existing Communities, a common foreign and security policy, and justice and home affairs.
- It also created **European citizenship**, conferring rights of residence, of voting in local and European elections, and of consular protection, which is the legal core of a frontier-free Europe.
- **Schengen**, agreed in 1985 and implemented from 1995, abolished internal border controls among participating states and is the most tangible expression of the phrase the 2026 question uses.

- Britain and Ireland remained outside Schengen while several non-EU states joined it, so the Schengen area and the Union have never been coterminous, which is a detail that separates informed answers.
- **Euro** notes and coins entered circulation in **2002** after the convergence criteria of Maastricht and the creation of the European Central Bank, and the eurozone remains smaller than the Union.
- Monetary union without fiscal union is the structural flaw that the **sovereign debt crisis from 2009** exposed, since Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Cyprus could not devalue and required bailouts with severe conditions.
- **Lisbon Treaty of 2007**, in force from 2009, followed the rejection of the proposed constitution in French and Dutch referendums in 2005, and it created the permanent Council presidency and the High Representative.
- **Eurozone versus Union membership** should be kept distinct in an answer, since Denmark and Sweden remain outside the single currency by choice while several smaller states use it, and the two circles have never coincided.
- **Brexit** is the reversal, with the referendum of 2016 and departure in 2020, and it is the first contraction in the Union's history and the answer to any question about the limits of integration.

Assessment: how far has Europe unified

Every question here is finally an assessment, so prepare the judgement rather than the chronology.

- Peace between France and Germany after a century of war is the founding objective and it has been achieved, which is the strongest single argument for the whole project.
- Economic integration is genuinely deep, with a single market of some four hundred and fifty million people, a shared currency for most members, and regulatory standards that shape global trade.
- Political integration has consistently lagged, and the common foreign and security policy has been weak whenever members' interests diverged, as over Iraq in 2003 and over the Balkans in the 1990s.
- **Democratic deficit** is the standing criticism, since the Commission proposes legislation without direct election and the Parliament's powers, though expanded, remain limited relative to national legislatures.
- **Subsidiarity**, the principle that decisions should be taken at the lowest effective level, was written into Maastricht precisely as an answer to that criticism, with contested success.
- Sovereignty is the durable objection, and Euroscepticism has grown in both older and newer members, with Brexit the clearest expression and Hungarian and Polish disputes over rule of law another form of it.
- The Indian comparison examiners appreciate: the European Union is a union of sovereign states pooling competences by treaty, while the Indian Union is a federation created by a constituent assembly, and confusing the two is a common error.
- **Migration and the 2015 crisis** tested the frontier-free principle hardest, since several members reimposed internal border controls, and the tension between free movement inside and control outside remains unresolved.
- Verdict worth arguing: Europe has unified economically far more than politically, the project has been driven by elites and endorsed unevenly by publics, and it remains the most successful voluntary pooling of sovereignty in modern history despite those limits.

Answering the questions

Three questions in four years, all twenty markers, all essentially the same question in different words. Build one structure and reuse it.

- Open with **motive**, meaning Franco-German containment, American pressure, Soviet threat and post-imperial economics, since that explains everything that follows.
- Give the **stages** compactly: Schuman 1950, ECSC 1951, Rome 1957, SEA 1986, Maastricht 1992, euro 2002, Lisbon 2009.
- Name the **mechanism** rather than just the treaty, so customs union, then single market, then monetary union, each requiring more institutional depth than the last.
- Add the **counter-currents** every time, including de Gaulle's vetoes, the Luxembourg Compromise, the failed constitution of 2005, the debt crisis and Brexit, because an unbroken success story reads as propaganda.
- Where a question names a specific institution, as the 2026 one did with NATO, resist the urge to write the whole integration story and answer the institution asked about, giving its founding, its core articles, its purpose and its evolution.
- Close with an **assessment** that separates economic from political integration, which is the distinction that makes the answer analytical.

Last-mile revision

- Motives: contain Germany, Marshall Aid and OEEC 1948, Berlin blockade, Suez 1956, decolonisation, American pressure.
- NATO April 1949; Article 5 collective defence with the as it deems necessary qualification; Article 4 consultation; invoked once, after 9/11.
- Schuman 9 May 1950, ECSC 1951 by the Treaty of Paris, EDC fails 1954, Treaty of Rome 1957 with EEC and Euratom, CAP from 1962.
- De Gaulle vetoes Britain 1963 and 1967; Luxembourg Compromise 1966; enlargement 1973, 1981, 1986, 2004, 2007, 2013.
- Single European Act 1986 under Delors; Maastricht 1992 creates the EU, three pillars and citizenship; Schengen agreed 1985, implemented 1995.
- Euro in circulation 2002; debt crisis from 2009; Lisbon 2007 in force 2009 after the 2005 referendum rejections; Brexit 2016 and 2020.

Common errors to avoid

- Saying Article 5 obliges members to go to war. Each assists by such action as it deems necessary, which is deliberately weaker.
- Treating the Schengen area and the EU as the same thing. Britain and Ireland stayed out while non-members joined.
- Dating the euro to Maastricht. The treaty is 1992; notes and coins entered circulation in 2002.
- Writing an unbroken success story. De Gaulle's vetoes, the failed EDC and constitution, the debt crisis and Brexit all belong in the answer.

- Comparing the EU to a federation without qualification. It is a treaty-based pooling of competences among sovereign states.

Mains Practice

The European Union sought to create 'Europe without frontiers'. Elaborate.

20 marks · 250 words · 2026

To what extent did the concept of free trade of the European Economic Community contribute to the formation of the European Union? Examine.

20 marks · 250 words · 2025

Trace the different stages of European economic integration.

20 marks · 250 words · 2024