

Western Europe, Universal Values, and Activation of the “Comprehensive” Security System: Focusing on the Mediterranean in the 1970s and 1980s*

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Abstract

Western European security today has fulfilled its function of maintaining order by emphasising universal values such as freedom and democracy in addition to military aspects. This article discusses events from the late 1970s to the early 1980s, focusing on the Mediterranean, which became the focus of national policy coordination, while also referring to developments in international organisations such as the Western Alliance and European integration. The region was a strategic point of confrontation in the Cold War in Europe, and during this period, the political and economic agendas of the Western powers were also linked to security issues due to the political changes of the preceding period. The existence of such normative concepts, which also played a strong role in Cold War strategy and alliance cohesion, provided the ideological basis for the southern enlargement of European integration, which converged as an important policy objective of Western European security. In this sense, the broad alliance management in the Mediterranean and the deepening and widening of European integration during this period can be positioned as a milestone in the activation of the “comprehensive” Western European security that has continued to the present day.

Introduction

The world today is witnessing drastic changes in the security environment, making it particularly important to reexamine its underlying history. In Europe, after more than a quarter of a century of relative stability, the changes are shaking up national sovereignty and other principles that have established the international order since the modern era and have been accepted for better or worse. This trend would be immeasurably shocking and expected to have a major global impact, which at the same time makes it all the more necessary to understand the history of the formation of this order.

In the period between the late 1970s and the 1980s, the contemporary European security system in the above context underwent key changes that led to its current form.¹ The international order at the time, coupled with regional issues and the involvement of international organisations,

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¹ For reviews of contemporary European security, see David Galbreath, Jocelyn Mawdsley and Laura Chappell eds., *Contemporary European Security* (London: Routledge, 2019); Roberta N. Haar, Thomas Christiansen, Sabina Lange and Sophie Vanhoonacker eds., *The Making of European Security Policy: Between Institutional Dynamics and Global Challenges* (London: Routledge, 2021).

such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Community (EC), predecessor of the European Union (EU), contributed to shaping the unique political dynamics that defined Western European relations during this period.²

This immediately brings to mind the Cold War that swept across the world in the latter half of the 20th century.³ Many scholars share the understanding that the period of eased tensions in the 1970s, namely *détente*, was followed by renewed intense East-West confrontation in the 1980s.⁴ In the context of the Cold War in Europe, while military tensions escalated once again, efforts to maintain *détente* continued, and such events had significant meaning, including laying various groundwork for terminating the Cold War.⁵

Furthermore, Western European relations during this period cannot be discussed without acknowledging the importance of universal values, such as freedom, democracy and human rights regarded as semi-evident assumptions in the current international order. Needless to say, NATO and the EC were the twin pillars that supported post-war Western Europe.⁶ This period is defined by deepening and widening European integration, with support from the North Atlantic alliance.⁷ As discussed later, the policy objectives of different countries converged through international organisations, invoking the above normative concepts, along with a shared understanding that economic integration and political stability contribute to security. Such political dynamics formed the “comprehensive” Western European security system that has continued to this day.⁸ However,

² In this article, the term “Western Europe” is broadly used to refer to the liberal bloc in Europe, which generally overlaps with the territories of NATO and the EC at the time and includes states not belonging to either organisation.

³ As a recent comprehensive work, see O.A. Westad, *The Cold War: A World History* (London: Allen Lane, 2017).

⁴ Major studies on this period include Leopoldo Nuti ed., *The Crisis of Détente in Europe: From Helsinki to Gorbachev, 1975–1985* (London: Routledge, 2010); Kiran Klaus Patel and Kenneth Weisbrode eds., *European Integration and the Atlantic Community in the 1980s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Kristina Spohr and David Reynolds eds., *Transcending the Cold War: Summits, Statecraft, and the Dissolution of Bipolarity in Europe, 1970–1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Martin Klimke, Reinhild Kreis and Christian F. Ostermann eds., *Trust, but Verify: The Politics of Uncertainty and the Transformation of the Cold War Order, 1969–1991* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

⁵ For example, Mark Gilbert, *Cold War Europe: The Politics of a Contested Continent* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), chaps. 9 and 10.

⁶ On the relationship between NATO and the EC during the Cold War, see works such as Martin A. Smith and Graham Timmins, “The EU, NATO, and the Extension of Institutional Order in Europe”, *World Affairs*, vol. 163, no. 2 (Fall 2000), pp. 80–84. While the term “European Economic Community” (EEC) is also frequently used in previous studies and primary sources, the “EC” is used throughout this article as it focuses on the period after the EEC evolved into the EC.

⁷ N. Piers Ludlow, “From Deadlock to Dynamism: The European Community in the 1980s”, in *Origins and Evolution of the European Union*, ed. Desmond Dinan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 218–232; Wilfried Loth, *Building Europe: A History of European Unification*, trans. Robert F. Hogg (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), chap. 5.

⁸ In this article, the term “comprehensive” is used to mean the Western European security framework in the 1970s and 1980s that extended beyond strictly the military dimension and encompassed the maintenance of political and economic order, incorporating issues of universal values. In other words, this article focuses on examining the ideological nature underlying the phenomenon of this period, rather than on expanding the definition of security to include economic and social aspects. Although a detailed conceptual analysis of this phenomenon is beyond the scope of this article, it resonates with scholarly interest in post-Cold War European security. For discussions on the cooperative relationship between NATO and the EU, see works such as Jolyon Howorth, “EU-NATO cooperation: the key to Europe’s security future”, *European Security*, vol. 26, no. 3 (2017), pp. 454–459; Nele Marianne Ewers-Peters, “Positioning member states in EU-NATO security cooperation: towards a typology”, *European Security*, vol. 32, no. 1 (2023), pp. 22–41.

Western European policies on universal values were coordinated only after the various constraints of earlier periods had been removed. Under what conditions and through what processes was the “comprehensive” Western European security system activated?

This article examines the issues surrounding security in Western Europe in the late 1970s and the 1980s in connection with the Western alliance and European integration.⁹ In doing so, particular attention is paid to the Mediterranean, a strategic area of historical importance and a priority for the Western alliance during the Cold War. As will be discussed in detail, the political and economic stability of the region was closely connected to security challenges. With the manifestation of universal values, the Mediterranean became an area around which Western European countries coordinated their policies. This article looks at Western European postures in the Mediterranean during this period and attempts to deduce the origin of the European order.

Advanced studies have long been conducted on political, diplomatic and international history focusing on the 1970s and 1980s, benefiting from the declassification of archival documents in various countries and institutions. Research on Europe has also made remarkable strides,¹⁰ with many historians taking keen interest in the political and diplomatic developments at the end of the Cold War, a pivotal period in world history.¹¹ Meanwhile, few have discussed the interaction between security in Western Europe and European integration from the prism of universal values.¹²

⁹ The holistic consideration of NATO and European integration was also inspired by the latest literature including Leonard August Schuette, “Shaping institutional overlap: NATO’s responses to EU security and defence initiatives since 2014”, *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, vol. 25, no. 3 (August 2023), pp. 423–443.

¹⁰ On recent specific contributions, see Diego A. Ruiz Palmer, “The NATO-Warsaw Pact competition in the 1970s and 1980s: a revolution in military affairs in the making or the end of a strategic age?”, *Cold War History*, vol. 14, no. 4 (2014), pp. 533–573; Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, “Steering Europe: Explaining the Rise of the European Council, 1975–1986”, *Contemporary European History*, vol. 25, no. 3 (2016), pp. 409–437; N Piers Ludlow, “More than just a Single Market: European integration, peace and security in the 1980s”, *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2017), pp. 48–62; Angela Romano, “Re-designing military security in Europe: cooperation and competition between the European community and NATO during the early 1980s”, *European Review of History: Revue européenne d’histoire*, vol. 24, no. 3 (2017), pp. 445–471; Frederike Schotter, “Mitterrand’s Europe: functions and limits of ‘European solidarity’ in French policy during the 1980s”, *European Review of History: Revue européenne d’histoire*, vol. 24, no. 6 (2017), pp. 973–990; Matthew Ford and Alex Gould, “Military Identities, Conventional Capability and the Politics of NATO Standardisation at the Beginning of the Second Cold War, 1970–1980”, *The International History Review*, vol. 41, no. 4 (2019), pp. 775–792; Benedetto Zaccaria, “Jacques Delors, the End of the Cold War and the EU Democratic Deficit”, *Journal of European Integration History*, vol. 26, no. 2 (2020), pp. 285–304; Susan Colbourn, “Debating détente: NATO’s Tindemans Initiative, or why the Harmel Report still mattered in the 1980s”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 43, no. 6–7 (2020), pp. 897–919; Flavia Canestrini, “Economic sanctions and new strategies in East-West economic relations in 1981–1982”, *The International History Review*, vol. 44, no. 3 (2022), pp. 675–693.

¹¹ Frederic Bozo, Marie-Pierre Rey, N. Piers Ludlow and Leopoldo Nuti eds., *Europe and the End of the Cold War: A Reappraisal* (London: Routledge, 2008); Svetlana Savranskaya, Thomas Blanton and Vladislav Zubok eds., *Masterpieces of History: The Peaceful End of the Cold War in Europe, 1989* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010); Mary Elise Sarotte, *1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe*, updated ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

¹² For example, Robert Pee and William Michael Schmidli eds., *The Reagan Administration, the Cold War, and the Transition to Democracy Promotion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) excludes Europe from its subject; the link with security issues is not fully examined in Anna Michalski, “The Enlarging European Union”, in *Origins and Evolution of the European Union*, pp. 271–293. On the other hand, Emma De Angelis and Eirini Karamouzi, “Enlargement and the Historical Origins of the European Community’s Democratic Identity, 1961–1978”, *Contemporary European History*, vol. 25, no. 3 (August 2016), pp. 439–458 covers a slightly different period but raises similar issues as this article.

As for the Mediterranean, which is the main focus of this article, there are pioneering multifaceted works on the transformation of international relations and regional order in this region, including the neighbouring Middle East.¹³ However, they primarily address security issues of the Cold War, with limited linkages made to issues related to universal values.

This article therefore takes a comprehensive look at the political and economic agendas of Western European powers and international organisations, mainly relating to security issues in the Mediterranean, as well as discourses on universal values such as freedom and democracy. Drawing extensively on archival sources from major countries and organisations, it aims to take a holistic view and provide an outline of Western European relations during this period. In doing so, the article seeks to illustrate the process by which the above elements interplayed with each other in Western Europe in this period and shed light on its historical significance.

1. Security Issues in the Mediterranean

(1) The Mediterranean's Strategic Position in the Modern Age

To begin the discussion, this article briefly presents the contemporary history of the Mediterranean and European strategy.¹⁴ It is Britain that exerted dominance over the Mediterranean through the peak of the 19th century and continued to have a prominent presence well into the latter half of the 20th century.¹⁵ Due to its geographical characteristics, the Mediterranean remained the focus of modern European international relations where imperial rivalry unfolded among the great powers. In the catastrophic two world wars in the 20th century, intense battles were fought over sea control in the region. After the Second World War, the Mediterranean gained further strategic importance in the emerging landscape of the Cold War. As epitomised by the Truman Doctrine of 1947, the Eastern Mediterranean was one of the focal points in the East-West confrontation at the beginning of the Cold War.¹⁶

The Mediterranean during the Cold War was deemed not only a cornerstone for alliance strategy but also NATO's vulnerable Southern Flank.¹⁷ When a series of events occurred in the mid-1970s, as discussed later, Western European powers grew deeply concerned about the situation in the region.¹⁸ In this context, Britain's reduced worldwide engagement due to economic stagnation and decolonisation had a substantial impact, both politically and militarily. At this time, control over the Mediterranean shifted from Britain to the United States, according to some narratives, including "Americanization of the Mediterranean" discussed by a prominent contemporary

¹³ Elena Calandri, Daniele Caviglia and Antonio Varsori eds., *Détente in Cold War Europe: Politics and Diplomacy in the Mediterranean and the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016).

¹⁴ For an overall history of the Mediterranean, see profound monographs such as Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, 2e éd. (Paris: Armand Colin, 1966); David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (London: Allen Lane, 2011).

¹⁵ Robert Holland, *Blue-Water Empire: The British in the Mediterranean since 1800* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).

¹⁶ Elena Calandri, "The United States, the EEC and the Mediterranean: Rivalry or Complementarity?", in *Détente in Cold War Europe*, p. 33. The historical context of the Truman Doctrine—Britain had become unable to continue supporting the legitimate government of Greece during the civil war and thus asked the United States to replace it as the provider of assistance—is also suggestive.

¹⁷ Dionysios Chourchoulis, *The Southern Flank of NATO, 1951–1959: Military Strategy or Political Stabilization* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015).

¹⁸ *Documents on the British Policy Overseas [DBPO], Series III, Volume V: The Southern Flank in Crisis, 1973–1976*, pp. vii–xxxvii.

historian.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the British presence did not disappear entirely,²⁰ and as the regulating force of the Cold War diminished, the fact that even the United States, the leading power of NATO, gradually reduced its involvement, cannot be overlooked.²¹

In other words, the upheavals in the Mediterranean implied the temporary emergence of a “power vacuum” that would unsettle the Western alliance. In response, Western European countries began attempting to stabilise the situation as stakeholders.²² Within this context, issues surrounding universal values surfaced, and together with the security agenda, they characterised Western European relations under the transformation of the Cold War. However, certain conditions still needed to be met for these issues to bring about policy coordination among Western European nations.

(2) Cold War Strategy and Universal Values: The Mediterranean as a Focal Point

How did Western Europe turn universal values into its policy objectives during this period? In reality, political and military aspects heavily influenced the circumstances surrounding normative concepts, such as democracy and human rights, and policies were coordinated and aligned among countries following a highly complex process.

Respect for universal values was enshrined in the preamble of the North Atlantic Treaty signed in 1949 and was a major condition that member states were expected to accept. In other words, normative principles were part of the terms of NATO, an alliance of liberal democratic states.²³ Nevertheless, military considerations repeatedly took precedence over the treaty’s ideals and principles under the Cold War. The military imperative was unquestionable, from the inception of the Truman Doctrine through the accession of Greece and Turkey in 1952,²⁴ creating a troublesome phenomenon: states that did not necessarily have solid democratic foundations were unavoidably incorporated into the alliance for Cold War strategy.

Moreover, there were numerous instances in which universal values took a backseat even

¹⁹ Ennio Di Nolfo, “The Cold War and the transformation of the Mediterranean, 1960–1975”, in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume II: Crises and Détente*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 256–257.

²⁰ For Britain’s political and military involvement in the era of decolonisation and after, see Ito Nobuyoshi, “Beyond the ‘master-narrative’ of decolonisation: Reconsidering the end of empires in the 20th century”, *ACTA 2021, Independence Wars since the XVIII Century: XLVI International Congress of Military History (29 August–3 September 2021, Athens), Volume 2* (2022), pp. 319–335.

²¹ Jussi M. Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 489.

²² Effie G.H. Pedaliu, ““A Sea of Confusion”: The Mediterranean and Détente, 1969–1974”, *Diplomatic History*, vol. 33, no. 4 (September 2009), pp. 735–750. The EC’s Mediterranean policy in the same period was also an important political project. Christophe Berdat, “L’avènement de la politique méditerranéenne globale de la CEE”, *Relations internationales*, no 130 (2007), pp. 87–109; Guia Migani, “La politique globale méditerranéenne de la CEE, 1970–1972”, dans *L’Europe sur la scène internationale dans les années 1970: à la découverte d’un nouveau monde*, dir. Antonio Varsori et Guia Migani (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2011), pp. 193–210; Elena Calandri, “Understanding the EEC Mediterranean Policy: Trade, Security, Development and the Redrafting of Mediterranean Boundaries”, in *Europe in a Globalising World: Global Challenges and European Responses in the „long” 1970s*, ed. Claudia Hiepel (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2014), pp. 165–184.

²³ Specifically, the preamble reaffirms the parties’ “faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace”, and proclaims to safeguard the freedom, rights, and civilisation common to humanity. North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO], Official Text, “The North Atlantic Treaty”, Washington D.C., April 4, 1949.

²⁴ Chourchoulis, *The Southern Flank of NATO, 1951–1959*, chap. 1.

in Western Europe where freedom and democracy were espoused.²⁵ In particular, authoritarian regimes persisted in the Iberian Peninsula, despite being regarded as part of the Western bloc, and cooperating with Iberian states was seen as a necessary evil for Cold War strategy. Portugal, under António Salazar's *Estado Novo* regime, was among NATO's original members. Although Spain, under Francisco Franco's dictatorship, was barred from the North Atlantic alliance, it established strong ties with the West through a bilateral agreement with the United States. In addition, a military junta was established in Greece in 1967, and serious repression of human rights and freedoms became rampant.

For NATO, these developments represented a significant deviation from the ideals of the alliance and became an easy target for critique from the Eastern bloc. Yet the Western alliance could not simply dismiss these countries considering strategic and military interests. Furthermore, as authoritarian regimes often resolutely claimed "anti-communism" to assert loyalty to the alliance, Western Europe's criticism of these regimes became largely half-hearted.²⁶ Thus, the Mediterranean came to be viewed as a vulnerable region for NATO, and this instability was exposed in dramatic form in the mid-1970s.

2. The Mediterranean during the Turning Point in Western European Security

(1) Political Changes in the Mediterranean and the Manifestation of Universal Values

In the 1970s, referred to as the transformation period of the Cold War, *détente* progressed between the United States and the Soviet Union and in Europe, respectively.²⁷ The Helsinki Final Act, adopted at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) in August 1975, became a symbol of European *détente*. Additionally, it is well known that Basket III on human rights in the Final Act later played a historic role in an unintended manner.²⁸

Besides, there was a series of major shifts in regional order in the Mediterranean during this period. The aforementioned Southern European countries with authoritarian regimes underwent

²⁵ For details on Portugal, Spain and Greece discussed below, see Helen Graham and Alejandro Quiroga, "After the Fear Was Over? What Came after Dictatorships in Spain, Greece, and Portugal", in *The Oxford Handbook of Postwar European History*, ed. Dan Stone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 505–511.

²⁶ This tendency was particularly pronounced in the United States, the leader of the Western alliance. David F. Schmitz, *The United States and Right-Wing Dictatorships, 1965–1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

²⁷ Jussi M. Hanhimäki, *The Rise and Fall of Détente: American Foreign Policy and the Transformation of the Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2013).

²⁸ Andreas Wenger, Vojtech Mastny and Christian Nuenlist eds., *Origins of the European Security System: The Helsinki Process Revisited, 1965–75* (London: Routledge, 2008); Angela Romano, *From Détente in Europe to European Détente: How the West Shaped the Helsinki CSCE* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2009); Poul Villaume and Odd Arne Westad eds., *Perforating the Iron Curtain: European Détente, Transatlantic Relations, and the Cold War, 1965–1985* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2010); Michael Cotey Morgan, *The Final Act: The Helsinki Accords and the Transformation of the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018). For the role of the CSCE through the end of the Cold War, Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Matthias Peter und Hermann Wentker Hrgs., *Die KSZE im Ost-West-Konflikt: Internationale Politik und gesellschaftliche Transformation 1975–1990* (München: Oldenbourg, 2012); Poul Villaume, Rasmus Mariager and Helle Porsdam eds., *The 'Long 1970s': Human Rights, East-West Détente and Transnational Relations* (London: Routledge, 2016); Nicolas Badalassi and Sarah B. Snyder eds., *The CSCE and the End of the Cold War: Diplomacy, Societies and Human Rights, 1972–1990* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019); Jakub Tyszkiewicz ed., *Human Rights and Political Dissent in Central Europe: Between the Helsinki Accords and the Fall of the Berlin Wall* (London: Routledge, 2022).

democratisation in dramatic fashion.²⁹ The Greek military junta collapsed due to its self-destructive intervention in the Cyprus conflict, and a civilian government returned. Portugal, after Salazar's exit, overcame the turmoil of the Carnation Revolution (Revolução dos Cravos) and an attempted coup by the radical left, and a new government was established through democratic elections. In Spain, Franco's death raised the momentum for democratisation, leading to the establishment of a new regime under the king and civilian politicians. Subsequently, each of these three countries sought to accomplish their accession to integrated Europe as a diplomatic priority. Spurred by the EC's willingness to accept their application, they all participated in European integration in the 1980s.³⁰

The political shift in Southern European countries and the southern enlargement of the EC, which occurred as a political consequence of the transformation, are portrayed in a positive light by a prominent historian, who refers to them as “democracy triumphs”.³¹ However, it should be noted that the importance of democracy and other normative concepts upheld by Western Europe was frequently cited in this context.³² As Western European countries explored the possibility of coordinated external policy, they increasingly prioritised universal values amid the mood of European *détente* and the international environment, premised on the antagonistic structure of the Cold War. This marked a clear departure from earlier years when Western European countries had to tacitly tolerate authoritarian regimes within the bloc, due to the Cold War strategy.

In the three Southern European countries that had shed authoritarianism, consolidating democracy and achieving political stability became urgent tasks. The idea that they would contribute to Western European order as a whole was closely tied to the policy interests of Western Europe. During this period, the EC actively promoted political cooperation among its member states,³³ which also signified the strengthening of Western European security. Coupled with the unique circumstances of *détente*, the situation surrounding Western Europe changed significantly, and issues of universal values emerged as a multilateral policy agenda.

(2) The Destabilisation and the Continuation of European *Détente*

European *détente*, which reached its peak in Helsinki, entered another transitional phase in the late 1970s. As a reconciliation between the United States and the Soviet Union shifted from destabilisation to collapse,³⁴ concerns arose over the potential retreat of European *détente* and the

²⁹ Mario Del Pero, Víctor Gavín, Fernando Guirao e Antonio Varsori, *Democrazie: L'Europa meridionale e la fine delle dittature* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 2010); Encarnación Lemus, Fernando Rosas y Raquel Varela coord., *El fin de las dictaduras ibéricas (1974–1978)* (Sevilla: Fundación Centro de Estudios Andaluces, 2010); Jörg Ganzenmüller Hrsg., *Europas vergessene Diktaturen? Diktatur und Diktaturüberwindung in Spanien, Portugal und Griechenland* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2018); Maria Elena Cavallaro and Kostis Kernetis eds., *Rethinking Democratisation in Spain, Greece and Portugal* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

³⁰ For example, William I. Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe: The Turbulent History of a Divided Continent, 1945 to the Present* (New York: Random House, 2003), chap. 10. See also Christian Salm, “Diffusing Democracy in Europe: The European Parliament and European Community Enlargement Policy 1974–79”, *Journal of European Integration History*, vol. 27, no.1 (2021), pp. 99–120.

³¹ Ian Kershaw, *Roller-Coaster: Europe 1950–2017* (London: Allen Lane, 2018), pp. 293–307.

³² De Angelis and Karamouzi, “Enlargement and the Historical Origins of the European Community's Democratic Identity, 1961–1978”, pp. 454–457.

³³ Maria Găinar, “Aux origines de la diplomatie européenne: Les Neuf et la Coopération politique européenne de 1973 à 1980”, *Relations internationales*, no 154 (2013), pp. 91–105.

³⁴ In terms of Western European security, the failure of U.S.-Soviet negotiations on nuclear disarmament came

resurgence of confrontation in Europe.³⁵ Among other things, the United States' waning credibility to Western Europe, especially with regard to nuclear deterrence, created a serious rift in U.S.-European relations, and vast political resources were expended to eliminate this divide.³⁶

In contrast, in the 1980s, the contradictions and limitations of communism became evident in Eastern European satellite states. In Poland, for example, activities by the innovative trade union Solidarity (Solidarność) prompted frequent strikes and demonstrations. In December 1981, the Polish government declared martial law, and carried out a crackdown on Solidarność and imposed significant restrictions on civilian life. Although fears of military intervention by the Warsaw Pact grew, the Soviet Union, strained both militarily and economically, ultimately refrained from invading Poland.³⁷ Solidarność endured severe repression and went on to lead the Polish democratisation movement.

Additionally, the continuous and foreshadowing effect of European *détente* cannot be overlooked when discussing the nature of this period. The CSCE's confidence-building mechanism, known as the Helsinki Process, played a critical role in facilitating ongoing East-West dialogue. In terms of Basket III of the Helsinki Accords, the CSCE follow-up meetings held intermittently from the late 1970s through the 1980s functioned as a buffer in the European Cold War.³⁸

Of course, the realities of European international relations at the time posed troublesome constraints on the Helsinki Process. The first CSCE follow-up meeting held in the late 1970s could not overcome differences on human rights in Eastern Europe. The following meeting, which started in 1980, was fraught with disputes over the Polish situation. However, it eventually resulted in an agreement to hold the Conference on Disarmament in Europe (CDE),³⁹ and including persistently addressing human rights in the East, the follow-up meetings achieved outcomes that would impact events in later years. Unlike U.S.-Soviet relations, European *détente* retained its vitality into the 1980s, with the CSCE continuing to serve as a framework for maintaining order in the region.⁴⁰ Under these circumstances, issues related to the Mediterranean began to emerge as a political issue

as a considerable shock. Letter from Weston (Washington) to Mallaby (Head of the East European and Soviet Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office [FCO]), January 10, 1980, FCO 28/3984, EN 020/4, *DBPO, Series III, Volume VIII: The Invasion of Afghanistan and UK-Soviet Relations, 1979–1982*, No. 30.

³⁵ Therefore, this period is often described as the decline of European *détente*. In recent years, however, historians have emphasised its continuity as well. Maria Eleonora Guasconi, "'Keeping Détente Alive': European Political Cooperation and East-West Dialogue during the 1980s", *De Europa*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2019), pp. 87–101. For a work that examines European *détente* from a longer perspective, see also Oliver Bange and Poul Villaume eds., *The Long Détente: Changing Concepts of Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1950s–1980s* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2017).

³⁶ For example, Marilena Gala, "'The essential weaknesses of the December 1979 'Agreement'': the White House and the implementing of the dual-track decision", *Cold War History*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2019), pp. 21–38; Andreas Lutsch, "The zero option and NATO's dual-track decision: Rethinking the paradox", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 43, no. 6-7 (2020), pp. 957–989.

³⁷ *DBPO, Series III, Volume X: The Polish Crisis and Relations with Eastern Europe, 1979–1982*, pp. xii–xxi. The Polish government's hardline response also appears to have been aimed at preventing the deployment of Soviet troops.

³⁸ Angela Romano, "More Cohesive, Still Divergent: Western Europe, the United States, and the Madrid CSCE Follow-Up Meeting", in *European Integration and the Atlantic Community in the 1980s*, ed. Kiran Klaus Patel and Kenneth Weisbrode (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 39–58.

³⁹ For CDE, see Kosaka Hirofumi, "Overcoming the Second Cold War: The Conference on Disarmament in Europe and the Relaxation of East-West Tensions, 1983–1986", *The International History Review*, latest article (2023), pp. 1–19.

⁴⁰ Colbourn, "Debating détente", pp. 903, 912.

for security in Western Europe.

3. The Prerequisites of a “Comprehensive” Security System in the Mediterranean

(1) The Strategic and Military Landscape of the Mediterranean in the 1970s and 1980s

Establishing a strategic environment in the Mediterranean was a prerequisite for Western Europe to pursue a “comprehensive” security system through universal values. Such a strategic environment was likewise indispensable to the period examined in this article. A broader look at the circumstances of this age reveals that there was repeated manoeuvring between the United States and the Soviet Union across various fronts, and that the countries remained strongly conscious of the region’s importance to Cold War strategy. Basically, NATO had its preponderance in the Mediterranean supported by the U.S. Navy’s 6th Fleet, and the Soviets challenged it in every possible way—and tactics during this period unfolded in a similar manner.

Offensive campaigns by the Soviet Union in the Mediterranean often targeted NATO as a whole: for instance, the Soviets argued that NATO’s forces in the Mediterranean posed a severe threat to Eastern Europe,⁴¹ and therefore, the United States was the one truly responsible for arms control negotiations. The demand for the U.S. Navy’s complete withdrawal from the region was inconceivable not only for the United States but also for its allies like the Federal Republic of Germany, which directly faced Eastern Europe on the frontlines connected by land.⁴²

Wariness of the Soviet Union was particularly pronounced over nuclear weapons. During this period, the modernisation of NATO’s theatre nuclear force was considered an urgent necessity. As Western European countries deepened their reliance on U.S. extended deterrence, it was highly concerned that potentially vulnerable Mediterranean countries might succumb to Soviet military intimidation and undergo “Finlandization”.⁴³ Furthermore, aircraft carriers and bombers of the U.S. Navy, responsible for nuclear deterrence in the Mediterranean and Atlantic, were strategically indispensable, leaving NATO with no room for concessions. Nonetheless, the Soviets intensified their critiques of NATO and the United States, stating that the very existence of such forces impeded East-West disarmament.⁴⁴ Similarly, in the context of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) negotiations, the Soviets suddenly proposed the creation of a nuclear-free zone that covered the Mediterranean. All of these challenging issues that demanded significant compromises required NATO to react with caution.⁴⁵

It was the Secretary General of NATO, 6th Baron Carrington, who increasingly worried

⁴¹ Gespräch des Bundesministers Genscher mit dem sowjetischen Außenminister Gromyko, 220-370.70 SOW-2068/79, November 22, 1979, *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland [AAPD] 1979*, Dok. 343.

⁴² Memorandum of Conversation, New York, September 28, 1981, *Foreign Relations of the United States [FRUS] 1981–1988, Volume III: Soviet Union, January 1981–January 1983*, Doc. 90; Gespräch des Bundeskanzlers Kohl mit dem amerikanischen Sonderbotschafter Nitze, November 19, 1982, *AAPD 1982*, Dok. 311.

⁴³ Gespräch des Bundeskanzlers Schmidt mit Premierminister Callaghan, Präsident Carter und Staatspräsident Giscard d’Estaing auf Guadeloupe, Januar 5, 1979, *AAPD 1979*, Dok. 3; Note of the Prime Minister’s Talk with the Belgian Prime Minister, M. Martens, at 10 Downing Street, September 12, 1979, PREM 19/15, The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew, London [TNA].

⁴⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, Geneva, January 26, 1982, *FRUS 1981–1988, Vol. III*, Doc. 137; Gespräch des Bundesministers Genscher mit dem sowjetischen Außenminister Gromyko in Wien, 220-371.76 INF-2282/83, Oktober 15, 1983, *AAPD 1983*, Dok. 303.

⁴⁵ Memorandum from the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (McFarlane) to President Reagan, Washington, March 26, 1984, *FRUS 1981–1988, Volume XI: START I*, Doc. 87.

about the risk of easy concessions to Soviet demands targeting the Mediterranean. Having served as Defence and Foreign Secretary under the British conservative governments, Carrington stressed the importance of the U.S. role in Western European security and sounded an alarm over the situation. He noted that the issue of nuclear weapons could not be resolved by Europe alone, and that the United States could not remain indifferent if the Soviet military threat increased in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean.⁴⁶ His warnings inadvertently highlighted Western Europe's structural dependence on U.S. nuclear deterrence.⁴⁷

Conventional forces also became a focal point of the East-West confrontation in the Mediterranean. During the Cold War in Europe, NATO's military capabilities were always in question—how NATO could maintain balance and credibility through U.S. nuclear deterrence—relative to the overwhelming superiority of the Warsaw Pact's conventional forces. This sobering recognition was vividly reflected in a NATO publication comparing the military capabilities of the two alliances during this period. The sections related to the Mediterranean stated as follows.⁴⁸ Land forces viewed a conventional offensive against the central Mediterranean—specifically northern Italy—as the greatest concern for NATO. Its naval forces were to cover a broad area, entering the Mediterranean from the Iberian Peninsula via Gibraltar and sailing toward Turkey. This required countering not only the Soviet Navy's Mediterranean Fleet but also the Black Sea Fleet. However, the U.S. Navy was also engaged in missions outside NATO, such as in the Indian Ocean, and an imbalance in forces between the two alliances was inevitable. As for air forces, the geography of the Mediterranean made securing its sea lines of communication important. Accordingly, it was thought that the two alliances competed in both air-land and naval-air operations.

In short, the general understanding within NATO at the time was that, even in the Mediterranean where the West held a comparative advantage, the situation of direct military confrontation with the Warsaw Pact remained unchanged whether by land, sea or air. The perception of being outmatched by conventional forces in the region was a real threat that was widely shared among the allies.

(2) The Mediterranean as a Focus of Alliance Management

During this period, the Mediterranean was also recognised as a critical region by Western Europe for alliance management. On the assumption that the severe international environment of the Cold War significantly influenced the preferences of various actors, this section reassesses a series of events from the perspective of political dynamics within the alliance and their inherent factors.

From a geographical standpoint, the importance of the Mediterranean as a nexus for NATO was repeatedly emphasised. For example, a 1980 publication described that NATO linked Western and Northern Europe and North America through Southern Europe, namely the Mediterranean.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ NATO, Speech by Lord Carrington, "Why NATO?", the Dallas Assembly and the Dallas Citizens Council, October 9, 1985.

⁴⁷ This point resonates with discussions emphasising the U.S. role in European integration. Geir Lundestad, *"Empire" by Integration: the United States and European Integration, 1945–1997* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁴⁸ The following extract is based on NATO Information Service, *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Force Comparisons*, 1984.

⁴⁹ For details, see NATO Information Service, *Aspects of NATO: Cultural Co-Operation, the NATO Research Fellowship Programme*, 1980.

It reaffirmed the significance of the region for NATO that encompassed the liberal Europeans.⁵⁰ Member states bordering the Mediterranean were expected to contribute in a manner befitting their role in regional security. Countries such as Italy, Greece and Turkey, which comprised NATO’s naval forces together with the U.S. and Britain and sent personnel to standby forces, were assigned a special contribution to keep the strategic environment in the Mediterranean to the West’s advantage.⁵¹

The dramatic changes in the situation in the Middle East neighbouring the Mediterranean also had a vast impact on broader security issues.⁵² Particularly, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 was deeply shocking. In response, U.S. President Jimmy Carter sent a letter to British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, calling for greater cooperation in coordinated engagement in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean.⁵³ Notwithstanding the involvement of direct interests, the impact on the Southern Flank of NATO could not be ignored by member states.⁵⁴ At the ministerial session of the North Atlantic Council meeting in June 1980, Secretary General Joseph Luns addressed this issue in his opening speech, suggesting that security concerns related to the broader order enveloped NATO as a whole.⁵⁵

Conversely, it could be said that NATO seized the opportunity presented by the major changes in the Middle East and the resurgence of East-West confrontation to reaffirm the strategic importance of the Mediterranean.⁵⁶ Maintaining political and military order in this region inevitably emerged as a crucial challenge facing NATO at this time.⁵⁷ With all the talk of the Soviet naval buildup, and with U.S. response capabilities being limited, the cooperation of countries bordering the Mediterranean was essential for maintaining Western dominance.⁵⁸ It also became critical to strengthen relations with extra-regional countries, and so NATO explored wide-area cooperation that included Middle Eastern countries wary of Soviet activities in the Mediterranean.⁵⁹

Underlying the series of processes was the strong sense of alarm toward regional security

⁵⁰ Countries not bordering the Mediterranean also closely followed the issue of regional alliance management. Botschafter Wieck, Brüssel (NATO), an das Auswärtige Amt, 114-6745/81, Fernschreiben Nr. 2041, Dezember 7, 1981, *AAPD 1981*, Dok. 350.

⁵¹ NATO, *European Defence: 12 years of the Eurogroup*, 1980; NATO, *Aspects of NATO*, Series 1, No. 11, “Air Defence”, 1982.

⁵² Amin Saikal, “Islamism, the Iranian revolution, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan”, in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume III: Endings*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 112–134.

⁵³ Letter from Carter to Thatcher, Undated, Thatcher MSS, THCR 3/1/5, Churchill Archive Centre, Cambridge [CAC], available in Margaret Thatcher Foundation [MTF].

⁵⁴ Botschafter Pauls, Brüssel (NATO), an das Auswärtige Amt, 114-1084/80, Fernschreiben Nr. 16, Januar 8, 1980, *AAPD 1980*, Dok. 6.

⁵⁵ NATO, Speech by the Secretary General at the Opening Ceremony of the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Ministerial Session in Ankara, June 25, 1980.

⁵⁶ NATO, Press Communiqué M-DPC-2 (80) 27, Final Communiqué, December 10, 1980.

⁵⁷ Some literature points out that the U.S. has tended to view the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean holistically. Osamah F. Khalil, “The Crossroads of the World: U.S. and British Foreign Policy Doctrines and the Construct of the Middle East, 1902–2007”, *Diplomatic History*, vol. 38, no. 2 (April 2014), pp. 299–344.

⁵⁸ Memorandum from Acting Secretary of State Stoessel to President Reagan, Washington, July 11, 1982, *FRUS 1981–1988, Vol. III*, Doc. 195; Remarks of the President and Prime Minister Bettino Craxi of Italy Following Their Meetings, October 20, 1983, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, Simi Valley, California [RRPL].

⁵⁹ Gespräch des Bundeskanzlers Kohl mit König Hussein in Amman, Oktober 6, 1983, *AAPD 1983*, Dok. 291.

by Western Europe. The Mediterranean, affected by the Soviet's expansionist moves and an unstable situation in the Middle East, was critically important for alliance management by NATO countries, which regard political freedoms and economic stability as prerequisites for security. They proposed cooperative policy agendas through the NATO framework and strongly advocated for support to Mediterranean countries. The countries named were newly democratised nations like Greece, Spain and Portugal.⁶⁰ Upholding freedom and democracy, Western Europe closely monitored security in the Mediterranean also from the perspective of alliance politics.

As illustrated above, during a period of renewed East-West confrontation in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Mediterranean remained unneglectable as a focal point of European security. Ensuring political stability in this region became a key issue for the North Atlantic alliance. Universal values then became intertwined, laying a foundation for a “comprehensive” security system in Western Europe.

4. The Nexus of Security and Universal Values: The Political Dynamics of a “Comprehensive” Security System

(1) Security in Western Europe and European Integration: Universal Values as “Catalysts”

From the mid-1970s, the stabilisation of NATO's Southern Flank emerged as a key policy issue for Western Europe not only on the military but also on the political and economic fronts. Following political changes and democratisation in the three Southern European countries that triggered these developments, Western European postures in the Mediterranean became increasingly “comprehensive”, linking political economy and security, while incorporating universal value discourses.⁶¹ This section discusses primarily the broad trajectory leading to the EC's southern enlargement and the universal values that unfolded against this backdrop.

The accession of Greece, Spain and Portugal to the EC in the 1980s represented a “political” project for “economic” integration. Incorporating economically underdeveloped states was not necessarily an obvious choice for the EC, an association comprised primarily of advanced nations that achieved recovery and economic growth after the Second World War.⁶² The fact that these three Southern European countries acceded to the EC in a relatively short period suggests a logic beyond economic rationality. In other words, the EC's southern enlargement materialised because the three countries' aspiration to “return to Europe” through democratisation aligned with the agenda of Western Europe, which regarded the consolidation of democracy in Southern Europe as a political interest.⁶³

The wave of democratisation that swept Greece, Spain and Portugal in succession embodied political maturity and the noble ideals of democracy. To underpin it, expectations rose for a “twofold solidarity—European and Atlantic”.⁶⁴ In this context, these three countries' applications

⁶⁰ Assembly of Western European Union [WEU], *Proceedings of 24th Session, 1st Part, June 1978, Volume II, Official Report of Debates*, Recommendation 313 on Security in the Mediterranean, 3rd Sitting, June 20, 1978, Historical Archives of the European Union, Firenze [HAEU].

⁶¹ NATO, Press Communiqué, M-DPC-1 (80) 11, Final Communiqué, May 14, 1980.

⁶² Agricultural issues and economic disparities became the primary focus of the southern enlargement of the EC. Nicos Poulantzas, *La crise des dictatures: Portugal, Grèce, Espagne* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1975).

⁶³ Graham and Quiroga, “After the Fear Was Over?”, pp. 516–518.

⁶⁴ Assembly of WEU, *Proceedings of 23rd Session, 1st Part, June 1977, Volume II, Official Report of Debates*, 1st Sitting, June 20, 1977, HAEU.

to participate in the EC were welcomed as a milestone for establishing democracy in the region.⁶⁵ Against this backdrop, stabilising the regional order in the Mediterranean and ensuring security in Western Europe were linked to including Southern Europe in the EC as an economic unit, alongside NATO’s military strengthening. Functioning as its “catalysts” were universal values, such as freedom and democracy.

Of course, the pathway to the EC’s southern enlargement was not without obstacles. In Greece, Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis led a centre-right New Democracy (Nea Dimokratia: ND) government, and fervently sought to participate in European integration as a way to break free from the negative legacy of the military junta. For Karamanlis, European integration was the only option for rebuilding and stabilising democracy in the country.⁶⁶ Following an agreement with the EC in 1979, Greece officially acceded in 1981.⁶⁷ However, in the general election that same year, the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (Panellinio Sosialistiko Kinima: PASOK), led by the leftist politician Andreas Papandreou, defeated ND. He launched an openly anti-Western European campaign, calling for a reversal of EC accession and withdrawal from NATO’s military structure. PASOK’s seizure of the government raised concerns about a deterioration in Greece’s relations with the EC and NATO.⁶⁸ In the end, Papandreou quickly backtracked on his previous statements after becoming Prime Minister, maintaining Greece’s EC membership and its relations with NATO, though friction caused by his political grandstanding left a lasting impact.⁶⁹

Similarly, in the case of Spain and Portugal, security considerations in both countries strongly played a role in their accession to the EC, despite severe conflicts of interest over agricultural issues. Particularly in the context of the gradual transformation of the “special relationship” between the United States and Spain,⁷⁰ the latter’s new position as a member of Western Europe was also important for NATO. The U.S. administration under Ronald Reagan supported the Spanish “return to Europe” following democratisation, and aspects such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law were emphasised.⁷¹ Conversely, it was feared that if membership negotiations in the Iberian

⁶⁵ Assembly of WEU, *Proceedings of 24th Session, 2nd Part, November 1978, Volume III*, Document 790, “Draft Recommendation on Europe’s external relations”, Report submitted on behalf of the General Affairs Committee by Gessner (Rapporteur), November 2, 1978, HAEU.

⁶⁶ Omilia tou k. Konstantinou Karamanli tin imera tis ypografis ton symfonion entaxis tis Elladas stin EOK, Athina, Maiou 28, 1979, available in Centre virtuel de la connaissance sur l’Europe, Université du Luxembourg [CVCE], also in *Konstantinos Karamanlis Archeio: Gegonota kai keimena, Tomos 11: I Ellada stin Evropi 1977–1980, Periodos B’, 1 Ianouariou 1979–15 Maiou 1980*, sel. 143–144, 146.

⁶⁷ Despoina I. Papadimitriou, “Episkopisi tis istorikis exelixis tis ellioikis koinooias kata too 20o aiooa”, sto *I Ellada ston 19o kai 20o aiona: Eisagogi stin Elliniki Koinonia*, E’ Ekdosi, epim. Antonis Moysidis kai Spyros Sakellariopoulos (Athina: Ekdoseis Topos, 2017), sel. 234–236. See also Eirini Karamouzi, *Greece, the EEC and the Cold War, 1974–1979: The Second Enlargement* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

⁶⁸ CC (81) 33rd Conclusions, October 20, 1981, CAB 128/71, TNA.

⁶⁹ For details, see Eirini Karamouzi and Dionysios Chourchoulis, “Troublemaker or peacemaker? Andreas Papandreou, the Euromissile Crisis, and the policy of peace, 1981–86”, *Cold War History*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2019), pp. 39–61.

⁷⁰ Misael Arturo López Zapico, “Las relaciones hispano-norteamericanas desde la Segunda Guerra Fría hasta la crisis del comunismo soviético: de la cuestión de la OTAN al nuevo marco de cooperación”, *Pasado y Memoria: Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, núm. 19 (2019), pp. 19–49. On the U.S.-Spain relationship in the post-Franco era, see also Morten Heiberg, *US-Spanish Relations after Franco, 1975–1989: The Will of the Weak* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018).

⁷¹ NATO, Speech of Minister Perez Llorca before the Atlantic Council, December 10, 1981; Remarks of President Reagan and President Felipe Gonzalez Marquez of Spain Following Their Meetings, June 21, 1983, RRPL.

Peninsula failed, it would fuel serious political instability in both Spain and Portugal and might heighten security concerns. Notably, the question of the Spanish membership in NATO became a domestic point of contention, and the developments were closely watched also vis-à-vis the EC.⁷²

Overall, however, the southern enlargement of the EC was viewed noticeably positively as not only stabilising democracy in Southern Europe, but also contributing to strengthening and safeguarding Western Europe that valued freedom, and mutual communication intensified on political cooperation, particularly on external policy.⁷³ The integration of the three Southern European countries into Europe followed a complex process involving not only economic interests but also a security agenda and political intentions. Throughout this process, universal values upheld by Western Europe, such as freedom and democracy, were espoused and drove up support for the southern enlargement. These developments were made possible only after the wave of democratisation in the 1970s. In this sense, the early 1980s marked a turning point in international relations in Western Europe.

(2) Alliance Cohesion and Universal Values: Tensions and Limitations

As noted earlier, by nature as a military alliance, universal values often took a backseat within NATO due to the practical need to counter the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, but this situation as well changed in the early 1980s. Out of an extended period of exclusion, momentum developed for Spain to join NATO following its return to democracy, which would fully link the Mediterranean and the Atlantic and was expected to bring significant strategic benefits.⁷⁴ Spain's accession to NATO was finally implemented in May 1982—the inclusion of the entire Iberian Peninsula into the North Atlantic alliance marked an important achievement for Western European security.⁷⁵

However, even at that time NATO members did not necessarily share all universal values or display strong cohesion as an alliance.⁷⁶ While Spain's accession reinforced the alliance in the Western Mediterranean, instability persisted in the Eastern Mediterranean. Greece and Turkey, which had long been in conflict despite being NATO allies, frequently came to the brink of armed

⁷² *Diario de Sesiones del Congreso de los Diputados*, Sesión Plenaria núm. 191, 27 de octubre de 1981, pp. 11295–11338, available in CVCE. See also Giulia Quaggio, “Walls of Anxiety: The Iconography of Anti-NATO protests in Spain, 1981–6”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 56, no. 3 (2021), pp. 693–719.

⁷³ Assembly of WEU, *Proceedings of 26th Session, 1st Part, June 1980, Volume I*, Document 833, “25th Annual Report of the Council to the Assembly of Western European Union on the Council's activities for the period 1 January to 31 December 1979”, March 28, 1980, HAEU.

⁷⁴ Botschafter Wieck, Brüssel (NATO), an das Auswärtige Amt, 114-2967/81, Fernschreiben Nr. 745, April 21, 1981, AAPD 1981, Dok. 110. See also Mark Smith, *NATO Enlargement during the Cold War: Strategy and System in the Western Alliance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), chap. 5.

⁷⁵ However, the accession was not without adverse effects: neighbouring Portugal, a founding member of NATO, expressed dissatisfaction over the increasing presence of Spain. Gespräch des Bundeskanzlers Schmidt mit Premierministerin Thatcher in Versailles, Juni 5, 1982, AAPD 1982, Dok. 175.

⁷⁶ During the same period, the rise of so-called “Eurocommunism” and socialism stood out in Western Europe, raising concerns about their impact on the North Atlantic alliance and European integration. While a detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this article, recent works on this subject include Ioannis Balampanidis, *Eurocommunism: From the Communist to the Radical European Left* (London: Routledge, 2018); Francesco Di Palma, *Trouble for Moscow? Der Eurokommunismus und die Beziehungen der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED) mit den kommunistischen Parteien Frankreichs (PCF) und Italiens (PCI) 1968–1990* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021). As literature taking the same perspective as this article, Nikolas Dörr, “NATO and Eurocommunism: The Fear of a Weakening of the Southern Flank from the mid-1970s to mid-1980s”, *Journal of European Integration History*, vol. 20, no. 2 (2014), pp. 245–258.

hostilities.⁷⁷ Additionally, the U.S. inaction in the Cyprus crisis in summer 1974 brought about the backlash from Greece and caused its withdrawal from NATO’s military structure. The Greek government applied to rejoin four years later as part of the “return to Europe”, but the debate grew complicated due to Turkey’s tenacious opposition.⁷⁸ NATO, both a military alliance spanning the Atlantic and the Mediterranean and an international organisation, became a hotbed of power politics in the Eastern Mediterranean, causing a situation that could undermine its cohesion and credibility.⁷⁹

On the one hand, Turkey’s actions noticeably disrupted the unity of the alliance, but on the other hand, its geographical importance was unmistakable. Secretary General Carrington praised the role of Turkey, which opened to both the Black Sea and the Mediterranean and is advantageously located for strategic operations against the Soviet Union.⁸⁰ Even if Turkey’s presence had adverse effects on alliance cohesion, it could not be disregarded for NATO’s Cold War strategy and alliance management, and cooperation with Turkey was essential also for European integration. The country experienced some setbacks in its democracy, such as military coups, and Turkey’s instability constantly remained a challenge for Western Europe, which began to confront the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe based on universal values.⁸¹

As such, military agendas and strategic considerations remained central to alliance management, and there were indeed limitations to aligning member countries through the lens of universal values. Generally, however, it is undeniable that, following political changes since the 1970s, the stabilisation of NATO’s Southern Flank and the southern enlargement of the EC became an imperative and were promoted by various actors, which were also thought to benefit the alliance as a whole.⁸² The argument that Western European relations at this particular period were at a significant turning point provides insight for understanding the characteristics of this time.

Conclusion

In the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the transition marked by the destabilisation of European *détente* and the resurgence of East-West confrontation forced Western Europe to reorient their security agenda. Security became closely intertwined with political economy, not only to confront

⁷⁷ NATO, Press Communique M1 (80) 14, Final Communique, June 26, 1980. See also Christos Kassimeris, “NATO and the Aegean Disputes”, *Defense & Security Analysis*, vol. 24, no. 2 (June 2008), pp. 165–179; Sotiris Rizas, “Managing a conflict between allies: United States policy towards Greece and Turkey in relation to the Aegean dispute, 1974–76”, *Cold War History*, vol. 9, no. 3 (August 2009), pp. 367–387.

⁷⁸ Press Office Bulletin, “Visit of Greek Prime Minister”, October 23, 1979, Ingham MSS, INGH 2/2/2, CAC, available in MTF.

⁷⁹ Furthermore, when the northern part of Cyprus, *de facto* divided state since 1974, declared its “independence” in 1983, concerns grew that it would cause a serious fissure in both NATO and the EC. CC (83) 34th Conclusions, November 17, 1983, CAB 128/76, TNA.

⁸⁰ NATO, Address by Lord Carrington, “NATO: A Partnership for Peace”, Ankara University, Turkey, November 5, 1985.

⁸¹ Assembly of WEU, *Proceedings of 29th Session, 1st Part, June 1983, Volume II, Minutes and Official Report of Debates*, 1st Sitting, June 6, 1983, HAEU; Record of a Meeting at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office between the Minister of State, Baroness Young, and a United States Congressional Delegation, January 23, 1984, PREM 19/1404, TNA. See also Ayşegül Sever, “Turkish Perception of the Mediterranean and Euro-Mediterranean Relations in the 1980s”, *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2015), pp. 53–68.

⁸² NATO, Press Communique M-DPC-1 (81) 7, Final Communique, May 13, 1981; NATO, Press Communique M-1 (84) 10, Extracts for Publication from the Minutes of the Ministerial Meeting of the Council, May 31, 1984.

the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe but also to reinforce unity within their own bloc. The “catalysts” were universal values, such as freedom and democracy, embedded in NATO and the EC and, as components of the Cold War in Europe, significantly influenced alliance strategy. Western Europe also explored universal value-driven multilateral cooperation in the political and economic spheres, which was believed to serve security interests as well. That is why issues of universal values emerged as a key policy challenge for Western Europe during this period.

This phenomenon signified a decisive shift from condoning grave contradictions to the ideals championed by the liberal bloc. The driver of this shift—the upheaval in the Mediterranean in the mid-1970s, namely the collapse of authoritarian regimes and democratisation in the three Southern European countries—abated the search for political stability and security imperatives in the region and became a factor that firmly established subsequent Western European international relations. The Mediterranean gained attention for the broader alliance management and the deepening and widening European integration, and Western Europe sought to coordinate its policies around the Mediterranean through NATO and the EC.

The above historic developments suggest that active political dynamics involving NATO and the EC were in play in this period. Security issues and politico-economic challenges became mutually complementary. In addition, policy objectives that concerned all of Western Europe were established, ideologically underpinned by universal values, such as freedom, democracy and human rights. Despite inherent tensions and limitations, these concepts were discussed with a degree of substantive authenticity, which has still characterised the security system in contemporary Europe. In the late 1970s and the early 1980s, Western European security was activated into a multilayered structure that cut across multiple international organisations and evolved into a “comprehensive” system.

There is a splendid sentence on international relations by a Japanese prominent scholar: “Each sovereign country comprises a system of power, a system of interests, and a system of values”.⁸³ To borrow this quote, the experience of Western Europe with the Mediterranean during this period marked a pivotal moment when these three systems converged. The significance of the series of events, for that matter, can only be fully understood within the historical context of Western European security.

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⁸³ Kosaka Masataka, *International Politics and the Search for Peace*, trans. Carl Freire (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture, 2023), p. 31.

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