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More than just a Single Market: European integration, peace and security in the 1980s

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More than just a Single Market:
European Integration, Peace and Security in the 1980s

It is tempting to see the 1980s as the decade where the economic underpinnings of European integration were most self-evident. Central to the disagreements of the first part of the decade, after all, was that most narrow of squabbles about money, namely the dispute over the British budgetary contribution. Similarly, the wider impasse over the finances of the Community centred on calculations of economic self-interest on the part of the member states, rather than on lofty political ambitions. The same was also true of the two other dominant internal disputes of the period, the quest to regain an element of control over expenditure on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and French obstruction of Iberian membership. And if economic self-interest lay at the heart of the four years of internal bickering with which the decade began, it was equally prominent in the revival of Community fortunes from 1984-5 onwards. The core project around which Community Europe seemed to rediscover the dynamism and élan that had proved elusive ever since the 1960s, was fundamentally economic, the establishment of a Single Market by 1992. The winning formula turned out to be a return to an updated version of the economic agenda that had proved so effective during the Community's first decade or so of operation. Flanking this new central objective, was a crucial push to resolve the budgetary deadlock, first with the series of agreements on the British rebate and CAP financing agreed at the Fontainebleau Council of June 1984, and then, more boldly, with the so-called Delors I budgetary package of 1988. And by the decade's end, the very success of this economic focused revival had led to renewed ambitions to attain another primarily economic target, economic and monetary union (EMU), the push for which would come to dominate the EC/EU's fortunes throughout the ensuing quarter of a century. Bill Clinton's famous if unofficial campaign slogan, from the 1992 presidential election, 'It's the economy, stupid', seemed an equally good answer to the question of what drove the European integration process throughout the 1980s.

Such a conclusion would also suggest that by the 1980s it was increasingly implausible to talk about the integration process being centrally connected to the promotion of peace and the avoidance of war. The profit motive, rather than the quest for peace appeared to be its core driver. It was perhaps no coincidence that by the decade's end, the very idea that quest for European unity had ever been driven mainly by the peace motive was under sustained historiographical attack by revisionist historians like Alan Milward.(Milward, 1984; Milward and Brennan, 1994) If there were question marks over whether building Europe had ever been an endeavour connected to the avoidance of renewed European war, how much more convincing was such scepticism when applied to a decade like the 1980s when virtually all that the European Community did seemed motivated by, and fixated upon, maximising European growth rates and promoting prosperity? And this was all the more so, given that the 1980s was the first postwar decade when most countries in Western Europe were ruled by leaders who had not experienced combat in either World War (French President, François Mitterrand being the principal exception.) As the memory and shadow of the Second World War receded, so too did the importance of the promotion of peace as a motivation for the integration process.

This article, however, will suggest that even during this seemingly unpromising period of European integration history for those seeking to demonstrate a linkage between quest for peace and that for unity, important aspects of the peace motive remained strong. Four particular examples will be highlighted. The first was the way that multiple European leaders continued to aspire to common approach to foreign policy so as to counter the continent's relative marginalisation and powerlessness in international level discussions of peace and security, whether regarding East-West relations or the Middle East. To many Western European politicians, integration and the coordination of European foreign policies could be a means of exercising influence over international negotiations from which they would otherwise be excluded. And this hope remained surprisingly strong, despite the gloom surrounding the integration process more generally during the early 1980s, and the rather patchy results of the European Political Cooperation (EPC) mechanism designed to

coordinate the foreign policies of EC member states. A very political reading of European integration's potential thus continued to drive many of the reform efforts undertaken during the first half of the decade. A second illustration of the enduring importance of the peace argument was its centrality to the rhetoric, the symbolism, and the international acceptability of Europe's most important political partnership, that between France and Germany. French and German interaction with each other throughout the decade, and the acceptance by other member states of this potentially disruptive close partnership at the heart of the EEC, was profoundly marked by the consciousness of past Franco-German enmity. Third, it will be argued that the diplomacy of German unification offers a degree of vindication of those who had maintained that integration could contribute to the preservation of peace and stability. The peaceful manner in which Germany regained its position as Western Europe's largest state, highlighted the continent's ability to withstand a potential shock of great magnitude without experiencing the type of disintegrative forces that had twice triggered global conflict in the first half of the twentieth century. Reinforced integration, moreover, and especially the Maastricht treaty, became the continent's collective solution to the emergence at its heart of a larger and more powerful Germany. And fourth it will be contended that both in the early 1980s, and again towards the end of the decade, there were signs of the Community's ability, witting and unwitting, to promote democracy and stability in its 'near abroad'. In the case of Greece, Spain and Portugal, all of which were engaged in a process of seeking Community membership as the decade began, the effort to stabilise the three countries' fledgling democracies was quite conscious and involved a coalition of civil society actors, many of the individual member states, and the European institutions. For Eastern Europe, by contrast, deliberate engagement only began belatedly at the very end of the decade, but the Community's gravitational pull had arguably started exercising an influence some time before. This too would suggest that even in the 1980s, European integration was more than a purely economic experiment, but instead an exercise that was still seen by many of its protagonists as having a much wider impact, including political stabilisation and the consolidation of peace within Western Europe. Interestingly, however, these remaining instances of European

integration promoting peace as well as prosperity, had much less to do with the stuttering progress of Europe's ostensible foreign policy mechanism, the EPC, but instead were connected with the core activities and political mechanisms of the European Community itself.

Economic impasse

It is certainly the case that a great deal of the impasse that characterised European integration in the early 1980s centred on economic issues. This applies to the debilitating and immensely time-consuming row over Britain's budgetary contribution to the Community – an issue that dominated a succession of European Council meetings from 1979 through to 1984 obstructing progress elsewhere. (Wall, 2008, pp. 5-40; Ludlow, 2016, pp. 207–224). It also true of the wider budgetary dispute by which the Community was beset in this period, a row which revolved around the question of whether the Community would or should exceed a ceiling on its total expenditure set at 1% of Community GNP. (Bussière et al., 2014, pp. 249–253) Economics was at the centre of the related disagreement over run-away expenditure on the CAP, a burden that a times in the early 1980s threatened to overwhelm the Community budget.(Bussière et al., 2014, pp. 322–323) And economic considerations lay at the heart of the deadlock over the Community's membership negotiations with Spain and Portugal. The blocking by France of advance towards Iberian membership, a policy first signalled by President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in a speech delivered to French farmers in June 1980, was largely attributable to anxiety within the French agricultural sector about possible competition from Spain in particular. (Trouvé, 2008, p. 333) Had *The Economist's* notorious prediction of the Community's imminent demise in March, 1982 been accurate, many of the ailments that had led to its death would indeed have been attributable to economic factors. (*The Economist*, March 29, 1982)

This state of affairs was not something that Europe's political class was content with, however. Nor were the solutions to the deadlock viewed as purely economic. The Belgian Foreign Minister Henri Simonet's complaint that Margaret Thatcher was acting like a 'fille d'épicier', a 'grocer's daughter' in her campaign to get her money back was undoubtedly snobbish, and probably sexist.

(Jenkins, 1989, p. 529) But it also reflected a widely shared belief that Europe should be about more than 'pounds, shillings and pence'; a process further-reaching than pure calculations of narrow economic self-interest. Such aspirations to transcend the impasse over how much each member state paid into the common coffers are also apparent in many of the European reform attempts of the early 1980s. Initiatives like the 1981 Genscher-Colombo plan did not seek to resolve economic squabbles simply through economic means; instead the hope was to revitalise the integration process in part through institutional reform and partly through a reassertion of its political worth. In particular, the Italian and German foreign ministers who put forward the plan hoped to bolster the impact of the EPC, Europe's mechanism for coordinating the foreign policies of its member states, thereby highlighting how much could be gained from Europe speaking with a single voice on global affairs. (Bonvincini, 1989) Similarly the Stuttgart Declaration of 1983 sought to expand the scope of European foreign policy cooperation, specifically referring to 'security' as a field in which joint European action was permissible for the first time. (Bonvincini, 1989) Once more, therefore, an important part of the solution to Europe's economic disagreements, was seen as being a revitalisation of Europe's political role. And even the British, a little earlier in the decade, had sought to redirect attention from the budgetary rows that they were perceived as having caused, by demonstrating their willingness to allow Europe to seize the initiative on the Middle East – a change of position that went a long way to permitting the Venice Declaration of 1980. (Dab, forthcoming) Foreign policy advance and engagement with pressing questions of peace and international security, was hence being used as a mechanism to counterbalance internal squabbling over economics.

In order to understand all three of these instances, it is important to recall the context. In the early 1980s, most West European countries felt seriously wrong-footed by the deterioration in relations between the two Superpowers. *Détente* may have become a dirty word in the United States, denounced by conservative commentators, and increasingly avoided even by Democrats, but in Western Europe it was still regarded as something of value. (Njølstad, 2010; Young, 2010) The incentive to maximise Europe's effectiveness in the foreign policy field was therefore sharpened by the increasing disjuncture between US

and European positions on the key security issue of the era. If Western European countries were to resist US pressure to impose economic and other sanctions on the Soviet Union in response to its invasion of Afghanistan or the Declaration of Martial Law in Poland, and to encourage Washington to resume the dialogue and negotiations with the Soviet leadership, their best chance of doing so appeared to be to maximise their own unity on the issue. (Patel and Weisbrode, 2013) The coordination of European foreign policy positions was not just a luxury therefore, but instead something that could contribute significantly to avoiding a situation in which tension between Ronald Reagan's America and the Soviet Union endangered Western Europe's own security.

Most West European powers felt similarly disillusioned with US leadership over policy towards the Middle East. Here too was an issue where Europe had vital interests – the region was geographically close, had traditionally been a zone of European influence, and provided most of the continent's energy supplies – and yet had been largely forced out of the diplomatic debate by US dominance. (Möckli and Mauer, 2011) Once more, therefore, the adoption of a common European stance – ideally backed up by coordinated European diplomacy – might help the Ten (in other words the then 10 members of the EEC) regain a voice over another issue where Europe's own peace and security were very much at stake.

This being so, the references to the preservation of peace in both the Genscher-Colombo plan and the Stuttgart declaration were not just window-dressing or token references to a facet of European integration long since overtaken by events. Instead, they reflected a genuine concern about the continent's stability, and a hope that common action might begin to reduce the dangers.

The threat to peace that needed to be addressed was external, of course, rather than internal. As such, it differed significantly from the peace rhetoric of earlier decades, where integration had been presented as a cure for internal feuds and rivalries more than external threats. (Although given the Cold War context, the external threat had never been entirely absent.) But the basic pattern of thought was similar: once again more intensive European cooperation was seen as both a response to a generalised sense of powerlessness vis-à-vis

actions being primarily decided by others, and as something beneficial in its own right. (Di Nolfo, 1992)

In terms of effectiveness, neither Genscher-Colombo nor the Stuttgart declaration achieved anything like the outcomes that their initiators had hoped for. If the Superpowers turned away from the path towards confrontation upon which they seemed bound in the first years of the decade, this had little to do with Western European misgivings, individual or collective, and much more to do with changes within the Reagan administration and, still more importantly, within the Soviet leadership. (Brown, 2010; Fischer, 2010) Peace remained stubbornly elusive in the Middle East, meanwhile, with Europe still condemned to a walk-on part in the international discussions designed to address the region's difficulties rather than the central role that the Ten periodically aspired to. (Hollis, 1997, pp. 18–19) Nor was there much sign of a qualitative leap forward in terms of European foreign policy cooperation during these years, despite the worthy sentiments expressed. (Gainar, 2012) (Although I suspect that one of the historiographical trends of the next few years will be a gradual reassessment of the generally negative verdict reached on the EPC process; it still fell a long way short of the lofty aspirations sometimes expressed, but it almost certainly accomplished much more than was noticed by the press and by the general public at the time.) But for the purposes of this article it is not the effectiveness that matters. What is important is the reminder that rhetoric about Europe as a peace project was still alive and well even during one of the more depressing moments of the integration process and the way in which this line of thought underlines how many of those who would later be centrally involved with the economically-centred relaunch in the mid-1980s retained a deeply political view of what Europe was and should be about.

In the short term this search for a political or foreign policy-centred solution to the European Community's difficulties did not lead at once to the hoped for breakthrough – indeed it arguably led many would-be saviours of the integration process into fruitless cul-de-sacs. Genscher may claim in his memoirs that the Genscher-Colombo initiative was the first stage of a three stage European rocket, the second stage of which was the Single Market programme (and the third the Maastricht Treaty), but most analysts would be sceptical about the tangible

outcomes of the German-Italian initiative or the direct causal link to the mid-1980s relaunch. (Genscher, 1995, p. 368) The Stuttgart Declaration was equally devoid of immediate effects. But the survival throughout the early 1980s of a highly political view of European integration meant that a significant number of those politicians and other actors who rallied behind the Single Market project from 1985 onwards did not *just* want to encourage economic liberalisation, but also aspired to a more generalised advance towards European unity. This was true of both the French and German governments, and of the Italians and Benelux leaders as well, to say nothing of the European Commission. As a result, they were always likely rapidly to part company from their temporary allies like Margaret Thatcher who genuinely saw European economic liberalisation as the end goal of the process. Even at the moment when the push for economic integration became most determined, in other words, a substantial part of that coalition that united behind the cause of economic advance were doing so as much for political motives as they were for economic ones. And within this political vision of Europe, there persisted an enduring faith in European integration as a mechanism for creating and preserving European peace. The ideal lived on, even if tangible results were slow to arrive.

The peace ideal and the Franco-German relationship

Such peace rhetoric remained central to the core political partnership of the integration process during the 1980s, namely the Franco-German relationship. This article is not the time or the place to launch into a lengthy exploration of either the pattern of Franco-German relations during the 1980s, or a discussion of their importance. A substantial literature exists on both issues, emphasising both the degree to which France and Germany had to work hard to maintain a high level of cooperation and to overcome numerous disagreements and divergences over their European priorities, and the concrete results obtained when continental Western Europe's two largest countries were able to agree. (Simonian, 1985) But what is more relevant to our theme is to recall how vital a currency, both in the internal debate between the two countries, and in the external justification of this most exclusive of partnerships, the theme of reconciliation and the redressing of past conflict remained. In 1983, for instance,

it is revealing that in the first meeting between a new pair of French and German political directors, Jacques Andréani and Franz Pfeffer, the latter chose to open their exchanges with an allusion back to his father, who, he claimed had been a major supporter of the attempted Briand-Stresemann rapprochement of the late 1920s. (Ilse Pautsch et al, 2014) Less than a year later the weight of history was even more apparent in the celebrated moment when Kohl and Mitterrand held hands at a ceremony at Verdun, designed to commemorate the most bloody of Franco-German battles during World War One. Similarly the 1987 decision by Kohl and Mitterrand to launch a Franco-German brigade was quite deliberately presented as a gesture to overcome history, rather than simply a move intended to boost Western Europe's military capabilities. Former German Chancellor, Willy Brandt's description of the move as 'symbolic' spoke volumes. (*Financial Times*, June 25, 1987)

Such allusions back at France and Germany's traumatic past still mattered. They mattered to the protagonists, with the desire to overcome the divisions of the past, a powerful lubricant in a relationship that was seldom easy or natural, given the multiple differences of interest, instinct, and governmental tradition between the two countries. A strong dose of idealism in other words was needed to keep the Franco-German show on the road – and certainly to make it as effective as it would prove during the 1980s. (Germond, 2012) But such backward references also mattered to the rest of Western Europe, in as much as they helped justify – even sanctify – a close bilateral relationship that could easily have been viewed as disruptive or damaging to a multilateral integration process.

The European system after all is meant to be one in which tactical alliances and partnerships are constantly shifting, and where information flows easily and fluidly between all of those taking part. It was hence not an environment in which one would normally expect to encounter so close a bilateral relationship as that which existed between France and Germany, nor one where France and Germany's partners were so accepting of this internal power couple. This is all the more so, since the British, the Benelux countries, and the Italians have all had periods of their history when they have felt threatened by the emergence of too close a link between Paris and Bonn. The

British had been angered in the 1960s by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's failure to stand up to Charles de Gaulle and to help put pressure on the French leader to abandon his opposition to UK membership of the EEC. A cartoon from early 1963 portrayed Harold Macmillan as Wellington and de Gaulle as Napoleon confronting one another at Waterloo, with Adenauer as Blücher heading, arms outstretched, towards the French leader. The caption read 'My God! Blucher's arrived on time – but he has gone over to the enemy.' (Jouve, 1967) Partly as a result, one of the early objectives of Edward Heath's government, when it finally managed to negotiate its way into the EEC in 1973, was to turn the Franco-German axis which had dominated EEC affairs, into a triangular relationship between London, Paris and Bonn. This attempt met briefly with success before being undermined by Heath's fall from power and the European ambivalence shown by the subsequent Labour government. (Möckli, 2009)

Belgian and Dutch anxiety about too exclusive a Franco-German relationship had been an important factor in their original decision to propose a six country EEC. (Serra, 1989) It also resurfaced periodically during the 1960s and was one factor behind both countries' enthusiasm to see Britain enter the Community. (Dumoulin, 1999; Harryvan, 2009) The Italians meanwhile have also always been ambivalent about overly close Franco-German collaboration within the EEC, fearing that their exclusion from this could relegate them to a European second division. (Varsori, 2010) In both the 1960s and again in the late 1980s they tried experimenting with a Rome-London axis designed to counter-balance the links between Bonn and Paris, only to run up against a strong British sense that Italy was not a worthy partner in terms of status. (Ludlow, 2009)

Despite such periodic outbursts of anxiety, however, a great deal of the resentment towards the Franco-German partnership that might have been expected on the part of other member states was stilled by a widespread awareness of the historical importance of this awkward Franco-German embrace. (de Schoutheete, 1990) It was true of course that for the Italians and the Benelux countries at least, such acceptance was also motivated by self-interest and by the realisation that the European Community was most likely to be able to advance in the direction that both the Italians and the Benelux leaders wanted, if France and Germany were close rather than at loggerheads. But extra

potency and poignancy was added to these calculations, by the awareness of the symbolic importance of this very public spectacle of reconciliation, and by consciousness that Franco-German unity was not something that had always been possible to take for granted. Given the centrality of Franco-German cooperation – and joint Franco-German plans – for the whole history of the European relance of the latter half of the 1980s, anything that lubricated this bilateral relationship and made it more acceptable to France and Germany's other partners within the EC, was also something of importance to the wider process of integration. Anthony Eden's pithy comment that 'on balance I had rather see France and Germany in a confused but close embrace, than at arm's length' made in 1952, would have applied to many subsequent European statesmen across the latter half of the Twentieth Century. (Bullen and Pelly, 1986, pp. 846–847)

Containing German unification

The third reminder of the enduring relevance of Europe as a peace mechanism arrived at the very end of the decade with the potential crisis generated by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the rapid move to German unification, and the end of the Cold War. The historiography of these events remains very superpower centred, despite a welcome push over the last decade or so to reassert a degree of West European agency – German of course, but not just German – to the end of the Cold War story. (Bozo et al., 2008) But even this last still tends to focus more on the actions and reactions of individual Western European states, rather than on the European Community story of 1989 to 1990.

It is true of course that one could interpret the 1989 interaction between Germany and its partners in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall as an illustration of how the integration process had not succeeded in embedding trust or mutual toleration between EC member states. After all, the emphasis in Helmut Kohl's recollections of the European Community level diplomacy of late 1989 is placed on the ungenerous and frankly suspicious reactions that the German Chancellor received from his European partners. As he puts it rather plaintively in his memoirs, when confronted with the reactions not just of Thatcher, but of the Italian Prime Minister, Giulio Andreotti, the Dutch leader

Ruud Lubbers, and even Mitterrand, he could not believe that these were the same people with whom he had been interacting in a friendly fashion for the last two decades. (Kohl, 2004, p. 1015) The Strasbourg Council meeting of December 1989, held in the immediate aftermath of Kohl's ten point plan, is likewise described by the German leader as the most unpleasant European meeting he had ever attended, an occasion where he felt himself in the dock assailed by many of his erstwhile partners for his failure to consult, and accused of pushing towards unity in a reckless, even dangerous, fashion. (Kohl, 2004, p. 1011)

It is not necessarily wise, however, to take these German lamentations entirely at face value. Instead, it is worth reflecting briefly on how profound a shock the events of 1989 were to the balance of 1980s Western Europe, and how potentially dangerous the situation could be seen to be. Perhaps the clearest indication of this sense of dancing close to the edge of a precipice was the sudden proliferation, in both public commentary and private political exchanges of alarming parallels between the transformation of Germany underway and various earlier and darker dates in Germany's history. François Mitterrand is reported to have compared the situation to 1913, for instance, in a tête-à-tête conversation with Thatcher ((Salmon et al., 2009, pp. 215-9), whereas the *Kanzleramt* were particularly incensed by an opinion piece in *The Times* entitled 'Beware the Reich Resurgent'.(Schwarz, 2012, p. 557) Equally symptomatic were the frequent allusions back to the Rapallo Treaty of 1922 and the implied fear that a Germany once freed from its Cold War shackles might again become a major threat to European peace. (Salmon et al., 2009, p. 68)

In the light of such alarmist talk, what is surprising is not the somewhat bruising exchanges between Kohl and his fellow European leaders in Strasbourg. Rather it is the fact that these verbal outbursts were not allowed seriously to disrupt either intra-European relations or the ongoing process of ever-greater integration. Thus the short-term outcomes of Strasbourg were a grudging but real endorsement of unification, provided it happened peacefully, and the start of Community level efforts to prepare the EC for a transformation of its relationship with eastern Germany. The European Commission was thus asked to begin to revisit the trade relationship with the GDR, an effort that would quickly become the discussion of a *de facto* enlargement of the European union to include the

territory and citizens of the German Democratic Republic. (Conclusions of the Presidency, European Council, Strasbourg, 8 and 9 December 1989) The months after Strasbourg – if not the summit itself – meanwhile saw the rapid realisation on the part of virtually all Western European leaders (with the solitary exception of Thatcher) that the best way to cope with an enlarged Germany in their midst, was a stronger and more integrated Europe to contain it. By the time that Kohl and Mitterrand met again at Latché, the French President's house in the country, in early 1990, both were in full agreement, for instance, that unification was to be welcomed, but that progress towards German unity needed to be accompanied by a rapid acceleration of the integration process also. (Küsters and Hofmann, 1998, pp. 682–90)

When confronted, in other words, with a genuinely powerful external shock – and one that could easily have reawakened all sorts of tensions and demons that had been lying quiescent for the previous decades – the reaction of Germany's European neighbours was profoundly shaped first by the opportunity to air their misgivings and anxieties in a multilateral forum where Kohl and Genscher could attempt to sooth their fears, however uncomfortable and disconcerting for the two German leaders this experience proved. And second and more importantly by the pre-existence of a flourishing integration process that was quickly identified as the best possible collective response to Europe's new challenge. (Ludlow, 2017)

European integration thus proved its usefulness as a mechanism for dousing potential internal tensions and played a highly significant role in enabling the rest of Europe peacefully and rapidly to accept and to come to terms with a huge increase in the potential power and weight of Germany. This is made all the more remarkable by the many indications that Germany's European partners were already anxious about the country's growing economic dominance and centrality to the system even before the Wall came down. Much of the debate about monetary integration for instance was fixated on the alarming dominance of the *Deutsche Mark*.(Dyson, 1994) Such anxieties made still more worrying the increase in German wealth and power that unification seemed likely to bring, to say nothing of the greater geopolitical freedom that the Federal

Republic would enjoy once freed from the limitations imposed upon it by its position as a divided, front line state in the Cold War.

What should astonish about the European diplomacy of 1989 to 1990 is not therefore that Kohl and Genscher had to put up with a certain amount of anxiety and disquiet on the part of their fellow leaders. Rather, it is that this anxiety faded so quickly and that the pre-existing pattern of intensifying collaboration reasserted itself so vigorously. To take this line is not of course to assert that, in the absence of the integration process, Europe would have been plunged into outright war in 1989. This is much too far-reaching a counter-factual speculation and one that totally ignores the multiple other factors that helped make Europe much less of a tinder-box in 1989 than it had been in 1913 or 1939. These complementary stabilising factors include NATO and the US security guarantee, the profound alteration in attitudes towards the use force in most European societies and first and foremost in West Germany itself, and the example of acquiescence in peaceful change being remarkably and surprisingly set by Gorbachev and most of his counterparts in the Eastern Bloc. (Savranskaya, 2008) But the fact that integration was not the only factor helping Europe ride out so smoothly what in another time and era could easily have been a profoundly disturbing external shock, should not blind us to the important role in calming potential fears played by the European Community structures and by the possibility that they offered of binding the new Germany solidly into an ever more unified Western Europe.

In the early Cold War, so-called *Westbindung*, was a process where Germany's leaders sought to bind themselves to the West so as to protect themselves from being drawn Eastwards and into some unstable intermediate position between the Blocs. Tying the fragile new Federal Republic to the West through structures of multilateral cooperation was Chancellor Adenauer's preferred means to ensure that neither his allies could sell West Germany out, concluding some sort of deal with the Soviet Union, nor his successors compromise the FRG's Western alignment in the pursuit of rapid reunification. (Granieri, 2004) As the Cold War came to its end, the same concept was reinvented as a process that Germany's partners – and Germany's own government - used to bind the newly free country into the Western system and

to prevent its new found power destabilising the whole continent. Integration was as central to the *Westbindung* strategy in 1989-90 as it had been in the 1950s.

Exporting democracy

One of the features of the European Community in the course of the 1970s had been its gradual, and almost accidental, discovery that it could play a role as a promoter of democracy in its near abroad. (De Angelis and Karamouzi, 2016) This was not a function that the Community structures had been designed for. Nor had there initially been unanimous agreement amongst European leaders that the leverage gained over neighbouring states through the EEC's powers of economic attraction should be used conditionally, with the benefits of closer links or even full membership restricted to those states that were democratic. In the early 1960s both the French and German leaderships had seemed ready to establish closer ties with Franco's Spain, although the idea had been forcibly criticised by the European Parliament and rejected by some left-of-centre politicians. (Anaya, 2002) But in the course of the subsequent years, messily and unevenly, a strong consensus had gradually developed that a degree of democratic conditionality could and should be employed by the European Community, with the promise of full membership restricted to those states that had fully operational democratic systems. By the late 1970s, the whole process of membership negotiation underway with Greece, Spain and Portugal, all three of which had only recently emerged from authoritarian rule, was regarded by both the Community institutions and the member state governments as a vital means of strengthening the young democracies and preventing them sliding back into dictatorship. As Roy Jenkins, the Commission President, said to the Council of Ministers in October 1977:

I speak first of our attitudes towards enlargement.... As you know the Commission believes that any reply which we might give to the candidate countries [Greece, Spain and Portugal] which rejected their applications, even implicitly or indirectly, would not be acceptable. A straight refusal would be a severe blow to the fragile democratic regimes which have emerged with the open encouragement of the Community and which are already to some extent dependent on us. Moreover any reply which, while pretending to be positive, tied the opening of the negotiations to complete solutions to problems which have long perplexed the

Community would constitute a tacit refusal and would be so interpreted by the applicant countries. [Jenkins' statement to the Council, 18.10.1977, Tickell Papers, All Souls College, Oxford, File 7]

Responding positively to the Greek, Spanish and Portuguese membership requests was thus a geopolitical imperative, a means not just of consolidating the three young Southern European democracies, but also of strengthening Western Europe's security.

In order fully to appreciate the security dimension of this southern enlargement it is worth recalling just how acute, in the mid-1970s, the crisis of NATO's 'southern flank' was seen as being. With revolution in Portugal, a major crisis in Greece, and Franco on his death-bed in Spain, Henry Kissinger, the US Secretary of State had spoken in blood-curdling manner about both NATO and the European Community beginning to 'unravel' and about the huge dangers that would arise were communist parties to come to power in any of these vulnerable states. (Del Pero, 2009, p. 23) The United States, moreover, was in a poor position to respond, since it was widely discredited in the eyes of the Greek, Portuguese and Spanish populations for having been too close and too friendly to the previous authoritarian regimes. One of the first actions of the new Karamanlis government in Athens following the fall of the colonels' regime, for instance, was to bow to the huge levels of popular anti-American sentiment and to withdraw the country from NATO's integrated military command. (Karamouzi, 2014, pp. 18–20) In such circumstances, European engagement, initially led by civil society and non-governmental actors, but rapidly followed by governmental overtures and the promise of closer links to the European Community, filled a real strategic void. (Muñoz Sánchez, 2016) Indeed, there is strong evidence that the United States' government encouraged the Europeans to play this stabilising role. (Karamouzi, 2011) Thus in its own eyes, in the eyes of the political elites within Greece, Spain and Portugal, and in the eyes of the Western superpower, the European Community's opening to southern Europe had become a key element in strengthening democracy, prosperity and western alignment in the whole region.

This role as promoter of stability and democracy in southern Europe had extended into the early 1980s. Greece, it was true, had been admitted as a

member state in 1981, although its western alignment still looked fragile, especially once the eccentric regime of Andreas Papandreou came to power. The first few years of Greece's Community experience were a testing time, for both Athens and the other EC member states, as the PASOK government, elected on a Eurosceptic platform, sought to renegotiate in all but name the conditions and terms of its European involvement, and to challenge multiple other features of Western status quo. But with the benefit of hindsight, EC membership arguably helped keep Greece firmly anchored to the West, despite its government's periodically alarming rhetoric and populist tendencies. (Clogg, 1993) And Spain too still required a strong European anchor in the first part of the decade. In February 1981 there was an abortive military coup in Madrid; and the following year the regime overcame another major test with a general election that brought the socialists to power. In both cases, the main roots of the regime's resilience were domestic. (Preston, 2001) The ongoing desire to follow the Greeks into the European Community, however, also played a stabilising role. Spain and Portugal, it was true, were being made to wait longer for EC accession than almost certainly should have been the case, largely because of the stance towards enlargement taken by France. (Trouvé, 2008) But neither country ever seriously wavered in their determination to join, giving each a clear external reference point and goal during the frustrating and difficult years between 1980 and the unblocking of the membership talks in 1984.

By the latter half of the decade Spain, Portugal and Greece were all inside the EC and in the case of the two former countries beginning to prosper economically, thanks in part to the influx of European investment and funding. The southern flank crisis seemed entirely resolved. But unnoticed by most observers at the time, a new set of European neighbours were beginning to be deeply affected by the European Community's success – this time, the states of Central and Eastern Europe. How this happened is still something that we know too little about. A big research project is just starting up in Florence to investigate the interaction between the European Community and both governments and dissidents in the last two decades of communist Eastern Europe.

<http://www.eui.eu/DepartmentsAndCentres/HistoryAndCivilization/Research>

[AndTeaching/ResearchProjects/PanEur1970s.aspx](#)) But it is already clear that the increased interaction between the two halves of the European continent that had been one of the great gains of détente, played a significant role in weakening the socialist regimes and contributing to their eventual downfall. Even more than had been the case with southern Europe there was much that was unplanned and accidental about the Community's engagement with Eastern Europe. Nobody in Brussels seems to have set out with the intention of undermining the Communist bloc. (Romano and Romero, 2014) And as with southern Europe much of what the Community did was merely following a trail of engagement blazed by non-governmental actors and by the member state governments. (Cerami, 2010) Multilateral diplomacy is too slow and cumbersome to take a policy lead in so sensitive an area. But by the latter half of the 1980s, if not earlier, there were multiple varieties of contact between the Community institutions and the Eastern bloc. Indeed, in June 1988 the EC and CMEA signed an umbrella agreement; the following year, the Soviet Union appointed its first (and only) ambassador to the European Community. (Hanson, 1990, p. 61) More importantly, the easier flow of information across the Iron Curtain ensured that both the communist governments and their internal opponents were well aware of the contrast between the largely stagnant economies of Eastern Europe and the economic boom being enjoyed by the European Community. Exactly how such knowledge affected the events of 1989-90, is largely still to determine. But the rapidity with which the post-Communist governments turned their gaze towards the multilateral structures of the Western half of the continent and made the attainment of EC, and soon EU, membership one of the key priorities of their transition processes tells its own story. Also significant is the rapidity with which the EC began directing money towards the Eastern European states. The PHARE programme, the first of several schemes designed to channel money towards the transition countries, pre-dates the fall of the Berlin Wall albeit only by a few months. (Financial Times, 1.8.1989) Similarly, the European Commission had been asked by the G7 to oversee the allocation of aid to Eastern Europe as early as July 1989, a step which may well have had much to do with the US governmental hope that the main burden of assistance would be shouldered by the Europeans rather than by

themselves, but which also acknowledged the rapid emergence of the EC as an actor in its own right in the Cold War endgame. (Hutchings, 1997, p. 69) While the European Community did not set out to undermine the Eastern Bloc, its existence and very evident success almost certainly had some impact on the collapse of the Communist regimes, and its gravitational pull undoubtedly exercised a profound influence upon the policy choices made by the new post-Communist regimes. (Mastny, 2008)

Conclusions

On closer inspection, therefore, the 1980s are not a decade when the association between European integration and peace became an irrelevance in an ever more economically driven and motivated Europe. Instead, a powerful vein of idealism about Europe's political purpose remained, feeding into multiple abortive attempts to restart the integration process in the early years of the decade before combining with economic factors to produce the successful relaunch from 1985 onwards. Political idealism and the belief that European integration was a means to distance Europe from its own bloody past, also served to justify in both the eyes of the protagonists and those of their partners the most potent bilateral relationship in the 1980s Community, namely that between Germany and France. Without France and German cooperating as they did, and without this cooperation being allowed, even welcomed, by the other EC member states, the internal development of the European Community during this period would have been very different indeed.

The Community, furthermore, continued to be a contributor to internal and external security during the 1980s. The former was best illustrated by the way in which the EC became not only a forum within which Germany was able to reassure its European partners over what was happening in the months leading up to German unification, but also, more importantly, a mechanism the strengthening of which became Western Europe's collective answer to the potential problems raised by a larger Germany in its midst. For Kohl and many of his counterparts, more Germany could best be contained by more Europe. It was therefore important that the unification story took place against the backdrop of a flourishing integration process, and that the plans were already

largely in place for a large-scale acceleration of the integration process. The Maastricht Treaty was not just a product of German unification or the wider geopolitical earthquake of 1989-1990. Indeed, a strong case can be made that Western Europe was on a trajectory leading to something very much along the lines of the eventual Treaty on European Union even before the Berlin Wall came down. (Ludlow, 2013) But the speed with which Germany was reunited might well have been considerably more disruptive to Europe's internal balance and stability had the integration process not offered both the German government itself and the majority of its European partners a ready-made and exciting instrument with which to respond. Maastricht *became* Europe's collective response to 1989-90, even if its longer-term origins have little to do with either German unification or the end of the Cold War.

As far as the Community's role in exporting security is concerned, the 1980s saw a shift in focus from Southern to Eastern Europe. As the decade began, attention was still directed towards Greece, Spain and Portugal, where democratic rule remained fragile. The Community's capacity to help the two Iberian countries had admittedly been limited by the delays to membership imposed by the French. But for so long as the goal remained possible – and the French were careful never to oppose the medium-term ambition of enlargement even while doing their utmost to stop it occurring in the short-term – the EC retained a valuable degree of leverage. Once Spain and Portugal did belatedly join in 1986, moreover, they were able to benefit at once from both the return of generalised economic prosperity to Western Europe, and from a surge forwards of the integration process. That one of the central pillars of this was a major increase in the sums of money that the EC was able to redistribute towards its poorer members helped matters still more. Spain and Portugal both became major recipients of the structural funds that began to flow in the late 1980s. By this time, though, the countries of Eastern Europe also were feeling the effects of booming Community next door. Quite how important a factor this would turn out to be in the fall of the communist regimes is something that needs to be investigated historically in much more detail. But what is beyond dispute is the power of attraction that the Community exerted over the new democratic regimes as soon as the communists were ousted from power. The trajectory of

much of Central and Eastern Europe through the 1990s and beyond, was hence deeply influenced by the coincidence of timing between the fall of communism and the highpoint of the integration process's fortunes. The urge to 'return to Europe' as the slogan put it was always likely to be felt as soon as Poland, Czechoslovakia and all the other countries threw off communist rule, but it was felt that much more strongly because Western Europe was flourishing economically and seemed headed rapidly towards greater integration. The urgency of gaining access to the EC/EU rose accordingly. And this in turn gave the Community/Union enormous scope to influence the direction and manner of the transition processes across the region. The transformation of Central and Eastern Europe is primarily a story associated with the 1990s and the first years of the 21st century. But even before the 1980s had come to an end, it was already becoming more likely that change would occur and that the European Community would be closely involved with this change.

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