

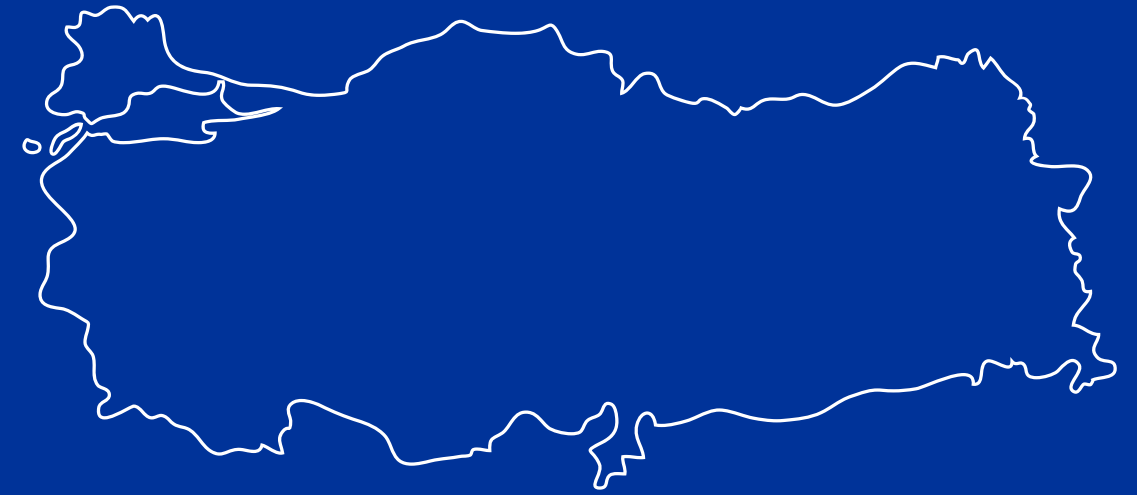


SouthEast European Studies

Politics, History, Economics

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens / Master's degree

The role of international institutions in managing and/or resolving inter-state conflict in Southeast Europe: *NATO and the European Union vis-à-vis the Greek-Turkish conflict*



I. Brief historical overview of the Greek-Turkish conflict throughout the 20th century

II. NATO's role in the Greek-Turkish conflict: conflict between two member-states

- Greek perspective
- Turkish perspective

III. EU's role in the Greek-Turkish conflict: conflict on the borders of the EU

- Before 1999
- After 1999: Helsinki European Council (1999) and Brussels European Council (2004)
- *Hard borders vs. open frontiers*

IV. NATO vs. EU: More effective role?

- *Strength of norms and level of credibility of each institution*
- *Socialisation process*

V. Bibliography

I. Brief historical overview of the Greek-Turkish conflict throughout the 20th century

- 1923: Treaty of Lausanne – population exchange
- 1930's: Period of reapproachment between the two states, promoted by Greek PM Eleftherios Venizelos and Turkish President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk – Friendship Pact (1933), Balkan Pact (1934, together with Romania and Yugoslavia), Montreux Convention (1936)
- 1952: Greece and Turkey join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
- 1970's: Debut of Aegean dispute
- 1974: Greek Junta-sponsored coup d'état in Cyprus and Turkish invasion in Cyprus
- 1981: Greece joins the European Economic Community (EEC)
- 1987: Crisis in the Aegean, Turkey applies for EEC membership
- 1995: Greece ratifies the Convention for the Law of the Sea (territorial sea 12 nm), Turkey – *casus belli*
- 1996: Imia/Kardak Incident
- 1999: Turkey is granted EU candidate member status at Helsinki European Council



Aegean dispute
Cyprus issue

II. NATO's role in the Greek-Turkish conflict



conflict between two member-states

- Greece and Turkey join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in 1952
- Problematic role due to its exclusive focus on operational stability rather than conflict resolution: while it has promoted liberal democratic norms externally, it has failed to enforce strong norms or incentivize Greece and Turkey to resolve their disputes
- NATO's weak regulatory approach allowed both countries to prioritize national interests over alliance priorities
- NATO's influence during the Cold War period: largely limited to maintaining operational stability within the alliance; NATO's credibility suffered due to U.S. favouritism in military aid (*7 to 10 policy* in regards to military sales and aid)
- Post-Cold War period: NATO's shift toward expanding its influence in Central and Eastern Europe further marginalised Greece and Turkey, weakening NATO's role as a platform for resolving their conflict; Greece aligned more with the EU for security, while Turkey strengthened bilateral ties with the U.S.
- NATO's norms: primarily regulative, rather than transformative – focused on governing specific areas such as military coordination and standardisation rather than fostering a deeper sense of collective identity between Greece and Turkey; norms directed only at the elites (military and political) rather than at broader society

II. NATO's role in the Greek-Turkish conflict



conflict between two member-states

Greek perspective

- NATO: not viewed as a genuine security provider but rather as a mechanism to contain Turkey's ambitions
- Turkish invasion of Cyprus (July 1974): perception reinforced when Turkish troops, using NATO-supplied weapons, occupied part of the island – proof of NATO's inability to act as a guarantor of Greek territorial integrity
- PM Konstantinos Karamanlis withdrew Greece from NATO's military command in protest
- Greek military policies: defense spending was often dictated more by Turkish military activities than by collective NATO objectives
- Anti-NATO and anti-American sentiment: enduring feature of Greek political discourse, extended across Greek political spectrum

II. NATO's role in the Greek-Turkish conflict



conflict between two member-states

Turkish perspective

- NATO's norms and rules: primarily internalised by the Turkish military rather than by civilian authorities – the military had a strong position in Turkish politics (and was reinforced by constitutional provisions giving it an outsized role in governance)
- Turkey: deep military integration into NATO structures – paradoxically, it also delayed the process of democratisation
- The US actively cooperated with Turkish military regimes during the Cold War (several defense and economic agreements)
- Reliance on the military as NATO's primary interlocutor – while Turkey was socially integrated into the Western defense system, it lagged in adopting broader democratic norms
- Post-Cold War period: NATO began advocating for democratic principles and civilian control over the military, particularly in Eastern and Central European states – these efforts had little success in Turkey, where the military remained the primary force shaping foreign policy
- Turkey's participation in NATO peacekeeping and peacemaking operations served more to enhance its strategic importance in the eyes of the US rather than to deepen its European identity

III. EU's role in the Greek-Turkish conflict



conflict on the borders of the EU

- Greece joins the European Community in 1981, while Turkey is granted EU candidate status in 1999

Before 1999

- The EC was “exerting rather weak norms over the disputants about the management and/or resolution of their conflict”
- Hesitancy/indifference to intervene in disputes over national issues had negatively affected its “third-party” capacity as well as its credibility to act as a honest broker for the resolution of the Greek-Turkish dispute and its overall ability to have a positive impact on the conflict
- Imia Crisis (1996): more involvement from the European Community through its institutions – normative pressure on Turkey
- Dutch Presidency’s conflict-resolution: “Committee of Wise Men” – EU as a neutral mediator; followed by Madrid Declaration (July 1997) – new, innovative and persuasive stance
- Luxembourg European Council (1997): conditionality in the EU’s approach to the Greek-Turkish conflict – stable relations with Greece as a prerequisite for Turkey’s EU ties, did not offer candidacy as an incentive

III. EU's role in the Greek-Turkish conflict



conflict on the borders of the EU

After 1999

Helsinki European Council (1999)

- Late 1990's: as the EU prepared for Eastern enlargement, it became more supranational, post-sovereign, and demanding – aimed to export its model of peace and stability by requiring candidate countries to undergo deep political and economic reforms (democratisation, rule of law, human rights, policy alignment with liberal-pluralistic democracy) – Copenhagen Criteria
- Breakthrough in how the European Union intervened in the Greek-Turkish conflict: Greece withdrew its veto on Turkey's candidacy and Turkey was granted candidate member status
- Clear and strong position with regard to the dispute between a member state and a candidate for membership
- Conflict resolution as a community principle, rejecting short-term fixes – ICJ designated as the final forum for resolving the Greek-Turkish conflict, setting a 2004 deadline; ad hoc compromises swapped for long-term solutions
- Introduction of positive conditionality: incentive of future membership – Turkey's EU candidacy linked to resolving its border conflicts with Greece

III. EU's role in the Greek-Turkish conflict



conflict on the borders of the EU

After 1999

Brussels European Council (2004)

- Severe damage to the EU's ability to apply strong norms and its credibility to positively affect the conflict
- Accession negotiations would start in October 2005
- The EU decided (with Greece's concession) to remove the Helsinki deadline for conflict settlement or ICJ referral – Turkey's accession no longer directly tied to resolving its disputes with Greece; it was now simply asked to commit to good neighborly relations and resolve any outstanding border disputes in conformity with the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the UN Charter, including if necessary jurisdiction of the ICJ
- Incentives for both sides to seek a solution were reduced – the conflict resolution was pushed outside the EU framework, relying on Greece's willingness and Turkey's future Europeanisation



III. EU's role in the Greek-Turkish conflict

conflict on the borders of the EU

Hard borders vs. open frontiers

- Minimal institutional ties
- Weak economic/political integration
- Identity-based separation (e.g., *Europeans* vs. *outsiders*)

- Fuels antagonism and distrust
- Encourages members (e.g., Greece) to use EU as leverage
- Weakens EU's ability to mediate conflicts

- Closer institutional ties
- Economic integration (customs union, free trade)
- Shared identity (e.g., *Europeanising* outsiders)

- Fosters cooperation and peace
- Reduces the perception of existential threats
- Encourages conflict resolution through EU norms

IV. NATO vs. EU: More effective role?



NATO's parochial role vs. EU's promising role

Strength of norms and level of credibility of each institution

- focused on regulative norms aimed at securing operational stability rather than enforcing strong, long-term solutions
- exclusive and military-focused, primarily targeting the elites of member states rather than their broader societies
- credibility has been questionable due to its perceived hands-off approach and favoritism towards strategic allies
- normative strength lies in military coordination and security stabilization, but it lacks a strong conflict-resolution framework

- strong normative influence, particularly through its enlargement process and conditionality attached to membership
- both constitutive (focusing on democracy, the rule of law, and human rights) and regulative (requiring economic and administrative reforms to align with EU standards)
- Helsinki European Council (1999): the EU linked Turkey's accession process to the resolution of border disputes with Greece + conditional rewards – Turkey was incentivized to adopt democratic reforms and adjust its foreign policy to EU standards

IV. NATO vs. EU: More effective role?



NATO's parochial role vs. EU's promising role

Socialisation process

- narrow and elite-driven, focused on military and strategic cooperation rather than societal transformation
 - norms have been directed towards military and political elites rather than broader society
 - delayed democratisation process during the Cold War, due to NATO guarantees strengthening military control over politics
 - non-interventist approach limited its ability to socialise member states into a collective security identity
 - its arms transfers and military policies at times exacerbated tensions
- comprehensive and multi-levelled (domestic institutions, elites, and society) socialisation process, engaging both elites and broader society
 - *acquis communautaire*: reference point, enabling de-securitisation of foreign policy and reducing military dominance
 - civil society and pro-European coalitions were empowered by EU's legitimacy and funding
 - influence through strong normative mechanisms (democracy, rule of law, human rights)
 - conditionality as socialisation tool
 - requires long-term commitment

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Thank you!