

NATO's First Enlargement

A reassessment

Edited by
Evanthis Hatzivassiliou and
Dimitrios Triantaphyllou



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This volume discusses the entry of Greece and Turkey to NATO in 1952 from the perspective of history and international relations. The chapters were originally collected in 2012 to mark the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the accession of the two states to NATO. The focus is not on the diplomatic/political events that led to the accession (a subject that has already been extensively discussed in the available bibliography), but expands on a reassessment of this event for the two states as well as for the Balkans, covering aspects of the wider post-war period and providing perspectives for the policies of Turkey, Greece and NATO until the present day. This book was originally published as a special issue of *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*.

Evanthis Hatzivassiliou is a Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Athens, Greece. He is the author of *Greece and the Cold War: Frontline State, 1952–1967* (2006) and *NATO and Western Perceptions of the Soviet Bloc: Alliance Analysis and Reporting* (2014).

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First published 2016
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN, UK

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 13: 978-1-138-68144-6

Typeset in TimesNewRomanPS
by diacriTech, Chennai

Publisher's Note

The publisher accepts responsibility for any inconsistencies that may have arisen during the conversion of this book from journal articles to book chapters, namely the possible inclusion of journal terminology.

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Citation Information

The chapters in this book were originally published in *Southeastern European and Black Sea Studies*, volume 12, issue 4 (December 2012). When citing this material, please use the original page numbering for each article, as follows:

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Introduction: Apropos NATO's first enlargement

Evanthis Hatzivassiliou and Dimitrios Triantaphyllou

Southeastern European and Black Sea Studies, volume 12, issue 4 (December 2012)
pp. 467–469

Chapter 2

Greek–Turkish relations in an era of regional and global change

F. Stephen Larrabee

Southeastern European and Black Sea Studies, volume 12, issue 4 (December 2012)
pp. 471–479

Chapter 3

Turkey's quest for NATO membership: the institutionalization of the Turkish–American alliance

Şuhnaz Yılmaz

Southeastern European and Black Sea Studies, volume 12, issue 4 (December 2012)
pp. 481–495

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Greek perceptions of NATO during the Cold War

Dionysios Chourchoulis and Lykourgos Kourkouvelas

Southeastern European and Black Sea Studies, volume 12, issue 4 (December 2012)
pp. 497–514

Chapter 5

Revisiting NATO's stabilizing role in south-eastern Europe: the Cold War experience and the longue durée

Evanthis Hatzivassiliou

Southeastern European and Black Sea Studies, volume 12, issue 4 (December 2012)
pp. 515–531

CITATION INFORMATION

Chapter 6

NATO and Turkey in the post-Cold War world: between abandonment and entrapment
Serhat Güvenç and Soli Özel
Southeastern European and Black Sea Studies, volume 12, issue 4 (December 2012)
pp. 533–553

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Sinem Akgul Acikmese and Dimitrios Triantaphyllou
Southeastern European and Black Sea Studies, volume 12, issue 4 (December 2012)
pp. 555–573

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Thanos Dokos
Southeastern European and Black Sea Studies, volume 12, issue 4 (December 2012)
pp. 575–590

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INTRODUCTION

Apropos NATO's first enlargement

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This Special Issue aims to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the entry of Greece and Turkey into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization at the ninth session of the North Atlantic Council held in Lisbon in February 1952. The accession of both countries represented the first enlargement of the Atlantic Alliance in an environment very different from the contemporary one. Nevertheless, the interplay between the two countries in their independent yet related quests to join western political and security structures after the end of the Second World War is still relevant and pertinent to this day. As Southern flank states with perilous external borders facing a variety of threats, both real and perceived, the NATO connection has served to glue them to the West. As Hatzivassiliou states in his text:

from the start, NATO was more than a simple military arrangement: it was a union of sovereign states, based on common values, political and cultural; NATO was a crucial aspect of the institutionalization of the post-war West.

As Güvenç and Özel brilliantly suggest that the fears of abandonment and entrapment have shaped the motivation of Turkey to join and remain in the Alliance to this day; the same concepts could be applied to Greece to explain its incentives regarding NATO. In other words, the need to belong to wider processes shaping and defining the West (be it NATO or the almost parallel development of European integration via the institutionalization of the European Union) best explain the perseverance of both countries to remain in and help shape a role within the Atlantic Alliance.

Though the contradictions between the two countries remain, there were times when one has supported the other in its quest to stay in the West. The Turkish opposition to British plans for Turkey to be part of a Middle East defence organization in the early 1950s rather than join NATO (as described by Yılmaz) was strongly supported by Greece (as posited by Chourchoulis and Kourkouvelas, and Hatzivassiliou) which feared being left to take care of the Southern Flank on its own.

Today, both countries recognize their divergences in a number of bilateral issues and other concerns such as Cyprus. The NATO membership has contributed over time to keep many of these from leading to a complete breakdown. The Imia/Kardak incident of 1996 is a case in point as is the potential instability from the

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evolving hydrocarbon resource developments in the eastern Mediterranean. Yet, as Larrabee notes, albeit their different fortunes both countries find it in their interest to avoid a serious deterioration of relations.

Other stakeholders have also played a key role in defining the position of Greece and Turkey within NATO and the western alliance structure as a whole. Almost all authors refer to the USA and its impact throughout the 60-year period in shaping and affecting the multilayered and complex relationship of the two countries in the Alliance. The other defining factor has been the European Union to which Turkey is an aspirant and since the end of the Cold War it has been attempting to develop a defence dimension and cooperate with NATO for the use of its assets. According to Acikmese and Triantaphyllou, the stalled Berlin plus arrangements between NATO and the EU have much to do with the Cyprus issue to which Greece and Turkey are on opposite sides.

The texts encompassing this Special Issue combine both historical research and international relations analysis as their authors attempt to study, explain and define the role and place of NATO in the policy choices and orientations of Greece and Turkey. Stephen Larrabee provides an overview of relations between Greece and Turkey since the start of the Cold War and their impact on relations with the USA and NATO. The author also discusses possible new challenges and how these could impact the relations between the two countries.

Şuhnaz Yılmaz provides a historical analysis of Turkey's quest to join the Alliance in 1952. For the author, the primary motivating factors for Turkey were the pursuit of security, Westernization and the institutionalization of its relationship with the USA through its membership in NATO. For Yılmaz, the aforementioned factors are a cornerstone of Turkey's foreign policy to this day.

Dionysis Chourchoulis and Lykourgos Kourkouvelas provide a historical profile of Greece's perceptions of NATO. They explain why the country has stuck with the Alliance in spite of periodic misgivings about NATO's perceived impartiality with regard to the state of Greek-Turkish relations and the Cyprus issue in particular. The authors show the diachronic value of the Alliance in terms of Greece's Western identity commitment.

Evanthis Hatzivassiliou argues that the coming of the Cold War alliances in Southeastern Europe played a major role in the stabilization of a region tormented by ongoing nationalist disputes stemming from the Eastern Question. He makes a case for the convergence in policy choices by both Greece and Turkey in joining NATO amid the cleavages of the cold war. The author also assesses the Alliance's role as a deterrent in the periodic escalation of the bilateral differences between the two countries.

Serhat Güvenç and Soli Özel present a historical overview of the factors shaping Turkey's membership in NATO and explain the security dilemmas that have led the country to vacillate between the pursuit of autonomy and Westernization. In their analysis of the challenges faced by Turkey since the end of the Cold War, the authors consider the relevance of the dynamics of geography and regional considerations, the transatlantic context, NATO's restructuring and transformation, and Turkey's domestic milieu to explain the strategic choice of the current elite to remain committed to the Alliance.

For their part, Sinem Akgul Acikmese and Dimitrios Triantaphyllou examine how the Cyprus conundrum continues to affect the relationship between NATO and the European Union, and how Turkey finds itself in the middle of the deadlock

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between the two. Although the Cyprus factor is not the sole determinant of the inability to advance with the security arrangements that are necessary to be implemented between the EU and NATO, the authors conclude that only with the accession of Turkey to the European Union could the differences in the NATO–EU tandem be resolved.

Thanos Dokos assesses the security situation in the Eastern Mediterranean, and projects it about a decade into the future, evaluating NATO's possible roles, and presenting the view from Athens. He argues that the region remains one of the most disturbed areas of the globe, and will continue to be part of an extremely fluid political, economic, demographical and technological environment. The Eastern Mediterranean touches upon NATO's security interests; therefore, the alliance will need to be active in subjects in which it maintains high quality expertise (such as hard security problems), and at the same time further its own better understanding of the strategic perceptions of the region and the global south generally.

A careful reading of all contributions suggests that the rationale of membership by Greece and Turkey to NATO 60 years ago is still valid to this day as both define their strategic choice through the search of belonging to the West and not being left on their own to deal with their strategic challenges in a part of the globe which remains disturbed, dangerous but also interesting for the student of international relations. Both countries have had periodic misgivings about the value of membership as they have perceived, justifiably or not, that the Alliance has not always best served their interests or defended their positions, in particular, though not exclusively, vis-à-vis each other. Nevertheless, albeit the subdued celebrations in both Athens and Ankara honouring the Alliance's first enlargement 60 years ago, the imperatives for membership have not changed for either country. Neither have the misgivings.