

Coalition Building and Intelligence Cooperation between Greece and Israel

John M Nomikos
(RIEAS Director)

Copyright: @ 2026 Research Institute for European and American Studies (www.rieas.gr)
Publication date: 1 April 2026

Note: The article reflects the opinion of the author and not necessarily the views of the Research Institute for European and American Studies

Note: The author wishes to thank the participants of the project on Israel-Greece-Cyprus defense relations for their insightful remarks. This project was funded by Israel's Ministry of Regional Cooperation and conducted in 2025 through a collaboration with Tel Aviv University and the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS). The views expressed in this piece are solely those of the author.

Introduction

As the intelligence community inexorably concludes the first quarter of the twenty-first century and looking forward, it faces an unprecedented array of security and intelligence sharing information challenges. The chaotic world environment of the post-Cold War Era (Hamas attacks against Israel-2023, Israel – Iran war-2025, Ukraine-Russia war-2014, Libyan civil war-2014, Syrian civil war2011, India-Pakistan conflict-2015, break up of Yugoslavian crisis-1990 and Iraqi crises – 1991, 2003) offers a wide range of different issues to be understood, and a variety of new threats to be anticipated. The rapidly developing information age presents advanced and complex information technology and methodologies to be mastered and integrated into the intelligence process. (1)

This interconnected world demands a radical rethinking of how to organize the structure of intelligence agencies and regarding conditions, of how to define and implement the modalities of sharing intelligence information and choosing personnel to be charged with carrying out the cooperative effort. By necessity, those selected to face the complexities of this brave new world must be “the best and brightest”, to borrow David Halberstam’s famous expression. (2)

This policy paper focuses on cooperation, intelligence and coalition building between Greece and Israel and offers recommendation on how to enhance primarily the intelligence information sharing to produce substantial reports to prevent emerging threats in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean region.

As old adage is that the value of any intelligence information is only as good as the capabilities of those who are charged with its analysis. Therefore, great care must be exercised in choosing personnel according to the tasks at hand and equal care must be devoted to building the structure these specialists will inhabit. These elements are keenly important to the currently developing effort of Greece, Cyprus and Israel to build intelligence information sharing, the key component of assuring effective cooperation and information security as well as the cultivation of a common narrative to “connect the intelligence cultures” of the Greece, Israel and Cyprus. (3)

Greek and Israeli Intelligence Culture

The intelligence traditions of Greece and Israel are quite different. Israel’s birth and its immediate menacing by Arab enemies resulted in a productive effort to defend Israel at all costs. Between the actual battled field and the global intelligence war, Israel has forged a culture of defending the homeland and iron tenacity and moral convictions. Israel’s foreign intelligence service, Mossad focused primarily on Israeli security targets, have repeatedly benefited broader Western security interests and the pursuit of stability. (4)

Greece, in contrast, has a long history of unstable politics, partisan divisions, dictatorships, foreign occupations by Germany and economic crises in the last decades. It is significant to point out that Greece has not constructed a security and intelligence culture. Until the early 1970’s, Greece’s intelligence matters were dominated by the effort to suppress the Communist Left, a task conducted mainly by a military coup (1967-1974)-controlled intelligence organ, which was structured and funded by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and called it the - Kentriki Ypiresia Pliroforion or Central Intelligence Service (KYP or CIS). After 1974, the efforts of former Prime Minister Constantinos Karamanlis’s conservative government to modernize the Greek Intelligence Service (CSI-KYP) yielded few results. In the 1986, a former Prime Minister, Andreas Papandreou’s socialist government changed the name of the Greek Intelligence Service from the Central Intelligence Service to the National Intelligence Service (NIS-EYP). Unfortunately, the socialist government brought NIS-EYP under control by assigning political party officials to it. The intelligence service was thereby paralyzed under the burden of political patronage. (5)

How to promote mutual confidence on intelligence sharing between Greece and Israel

Greek Intelligence Service (NIS-EYP) must be reformed in a way that it will be able to perceive its mission and reach mutual confidence that touches upon the core security issue of sharing secret information under any and all circumstance. Building confidence can be a treacherous exercise since it touches on deeper psychological traits and operational experiences. In any

cooperative effort participants almost always begin by nurturing their own preconceptions about the credibility and stability at their opposites.

These preconceptions can be overcome only by building new “hands on” experiences in the cooperative environment. Cultural stereotypes linked to the nebulous concept of “national interest”, and observation of a participant’s conduct in both domestic and international politics, can be powerful determinants of how mutual confidence develops or fails. And confidence, as a key ingredient of coalition building is not static; it may surge under particular circumstances or wane during a crisis when a partner appears indecisive or reluctant to commit to urgent common goals which will be necessary for operational integration and strengthening of personal cooperative bonds.

In arriving at a workable form of intelligence sharing based on mutual confidence, Israel and Greece should arrive to plan for the unknown. How does each partner normally approach contingencies that require immediate action? What are the operational principles of quickly conceptualizing a sudden situation with only scant information? What are the procedures of taking control and distributing assets in order to avoid a crisis? Are contingencies plans in place to tackle logistical and information dissemination requirements? What level of integration of government ministries and agencies is able to assure that an event is interpreted pragmatically and proactively? (6)

Recommendations: A Coalition Sharing Group (CSG) between Greece and Israel

By definition, partners in a cooperative unit complement each other, irrespective of who is objectively “better” at the job. The author of this policy paper believes that any intelligence sharing scheme requires careful “brain-to brain coupling.” The term borrowed from neurosciences (cognitive intelligence) has a particularly practical meaning when applied to the selection of individuals to be entrusted with exchanging privileged information and deciding how the information shall be distributed and shared.

Sharing intelligence requires processes amenable to an adaptation to, and appreciation of, the opposite party’s sensitivities and priorities, and a willingness to make adjustments as necessary and acceptable. Avoiding the temptation of using sensitive information in political infighting or in establishing a preponderance over the other is required. In addition, necessary is the pursuit of cooperation that capitalizes on the strengths of each other and the uniqueness of each other’s particular experiences. Organizing the intelligence information sharing group (CSG) could adopt some of the following recommendations: (7)

- Given the nature of the developing Greece-Israel intelligence information sharing as a long -term commitment, individuals chosen for the job should have intelligence skills in order to participate as members of a coalition sharing group (CSG). The coalition sharing group should be a top-tier instrument sitting between the prime minister and cabinet ministers and all subordinate cooperation organs. The CSG would be responsible for

- disseminating regular reports to the partners (Greece, Cyprus and Israel) which would then decide on further distribution.
 - The CSG should agree internally on routine operating procedures and a code of conduct regarding deliberation, assessment and conclusion about the value of particular intelligence information. The CSG should also make advice on the possibility of briefing officials beyond the main list of need to-know persons.
 - The CSG should examine and decide on intelligence relevant to the regular analytical components of the partners' priority targets.
 - The CSG should be expected to deal with both time-sensitive intelligence and long term assessment in connection to Greece-Israel and Cyprus strategic forecasts and planning requirements.
 - The CSG should ask to “federate” the resources of Israel, Cyprus and Greece via a group comprising no more than six members, two from each side, (2 for Greece, 2 for Israel and 2 for Cyprus), holding the proposed portfolios of Political-Diplomatic, Intelligence, Security, Defense Intelligence, and Economic and Resource Intelligence.
 - Once the coalition sharing group is operational, the first order of business should be to conduct a detailed discussion in using common language of the partners based on mutually agreed semantics and pragmatics. This is perhaps the most basic organizational CSG target before its full deployment.
 - The CSG should be an “online” entity capable of reaching key decision-makers in real time. In a networked world, this is the only way to go.

Concluding Remarks

The Greece-Israel-Cyprus “quasi alliance” could not come at a more critical point in time. Between the changes in Syria, and Turkey’s gradual, but apparently irrevocable abandonment of Kemalist secularism and the clashing of religious nature in Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean-Middle East cauldron is rapidly heating up, with unforeseen consequences. Against this backdrop, Greece, Israel and Cyprus share common key strategic and security interests and the determination to face the adventurism of hostile regional actors with strengthened joint action. With Turkey ratcheting up its militaristic threats against Athens, Jerusalem and Nicosia, it requires “quasi alliance” that will be ready and able to preserve, secure, and promote the vital interests of Greece, Israel and Cyprus.

In conclusion, it is significant that Greece and Israel intelligence community motivate their personnel to coordinate their actions and to adjust to a team work mentality in order to prevent prospective major threats in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean region.

References:

- 1) John M Nomikos, “The Greek Intelligence Service and Post-9/11 Challenges”, Journal of Intelligence History, vol 4, no 2, pp: 75-83, 2004.
- 2) David Halberstam, “The Best and the Brightest” pp: 5-89 New York, Random House, 1972.
- 3) John M Nomikos and A. Th. Symeonides. “The Coalition Building, Cooperation, and Intelligence: The Case of Greece and Israel”, International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence, no.32, no 4, pp: 677-690, 2019.
- 4) Ibid
- 5) John M Nomikos, “The Internal Modernization of the Greek Intelligence Service (NIS-EYP)”, International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence, no. 17, p: 437, 2004.
- 6) Ibid, John M Nomikos and A. Th. Symeonides. “The Coalition Building, Cooperation, and Intelligence: The Case of Greece and Israel, pp: 684-685
- 7) Ibid – Also see the “State and Civil Security Apparatus in the Service of the General Secretariat of National Security – Diagnosis of the Current Language and Future Prospects” on <https://www.rieas.gr/researchareas/editorial/4974-state-andcivil-society-security-apparatus-in-the-service-of-the-general-secretariat-ofnational-security> (published on 19 July 2025, Athens, Greece).