
AN ALLIANCE BETWEEN GREECE, TURKEY, AND ISRAEL?

This article attempts to present an overview of the relations between three key players in the Mediterranean, offering proposals for ending regional disputes and creating a legitimate partnership which will be referred to as the “Triad Strategic Alliance” between Greece, Turkey, and Israel. This triad has strong incentives to come together, since the three countries face many shared emerging threats and challenges.

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Emerging international threats and challenges disrupt the balance of power between regional and global powers. This is also observed across the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Ongoing events such as the Arab Spring, the civil war in Syria (with a possible spillover to Lebanon and other neighboring countries), and a possible military intervention against Iran are issues and concerns that threaten regional and international security, and stability. Consequently, growth and development are at stake. This picture fosters speculation about the future of regional and international strategic alliances.

Existing and emerging threats are affecting current international and regional balance of power, which will eventually have to be swiftly tackled. Otherwise new balances will be created and new regional actors will take the lead.

This article argues that when the interests of nation-states concerning an international challenge are similar, a strategic multilateral alliance may be formed. This is a practical measure to counter existing or emerging threats. When the incentive for a strategic alliance is present, the sole questions remaining are: for how long will the strategic alliance last, and what will their parameters be. Rather mathematically, this article will aim to lay out a formula that will enable the resolution of disputes and serve joint “triad” interests.

This article does not represent any official position of a government, ministry, nor does it carry any political or party affiliation. The opinions of this article piece solely represent those of the author’s, and are strictly professional. The notion of a new “triad” strategic relationship between Greece, Turkey, and Israel suits the interests of the regional, and also international community of democracies. It would enable a viable and long lasting resolution to current and emerging threats and challenges in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, which threaten to spill over to other parts of the world such as the Southeastern Europe. This article accordingly predicts and proposes a joint framework of cooperation between this triad of states.

Triad of a Possible “Glamorous” Geostrategic Alliance

A strategic alliance between Greece, Turkey, and Israel is pragmatic, imminent, and more importantly “doable”, given the threats and challenges of the region.

The current regional threat assessment appears to be similar at least for Israel and Turkey.¹ For both Israel and Turkey, the Syrian civil war –as well as the possibility of a spillover to Lebanon– is an imminent threat to their national positions. For Turkey’s political momentum, the possibility of a spillover may result in greater changes in relations with Iraq and cross-border terrorist threats. For Israel, a possible spillover may result in more influence of Hezbollah within Lebanon and thus an effective engagement of Iran’s policy, not only of Syria but also of Lebanon, making a possible military action of Israel against Iran more imminent.

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Relations and threat assessments are not likely to change, nor reverse. The threat assessments of the three countries have similarities, as do their political and cultural relations. As long as threat assessments and interests remain similar between the triad, a new balance of power will be created. Similar interests for the three will lead to joint decision-making and increase of positive relations – allowing, in practice, to counter existing and new challenges collectively, politically and where needed militarily.

As Turkey’s relations with Israel are not at their best, they are yet to show a strategic movement towards the creation of a possible triad alliance. The only connector in this case is Greece as a regional third player, particularly suited for the purpose of mediating for a new cooperation between Turkey and Israel.

The strategic alliance between Israel and Greece² can be turned into a triad or triangle when supplemented with the alliance between Greece and Turkey, which is currently on different levels³ under the framework of NATO’s banner.⁴ Given

1 Yaphe S. Judith, *The Middle East in 2015* (Washington D.C: National Defense University Press, 2002).

2 “Greece, Israel: Small Countries that can have a Big Impact,” *Jerusalem Post*, 12 September 2012.

3 Greece and Turkey signed 21 agreements of cooperation during Prime Minister Erdoğan’s Visit, <http://www.investin-greece.gov.gr/default.asp?pid=25&la=6&n=441&pg=7>

4 Marina Skordelli, “The Way Forward: Sixty Years from the Accession to Greece and Turkey to NATO,” *NATO Review Magazine*, 2012, <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2012/Turkey-Greece/Greece-Turkey-60-years-NATO/EN/index.htm>

shared challenges and incentives, the creation of a strategic alliance is possible in practice.

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If a triad alliance is forged and grows due to the constant challenges posed by Iran, it can be a long-lasting one. It can create the necessary credentials, interoperability of forces, and tactical cooperation and preparedness to counter any symmetrical or asymmetrical challenges including terrorist threats. Although it would be seen as a regional alliance, the triad’s direct representation in international organizations or strong alliances at a bilateral level will

bring more attention to the decisions made by Athens, Ankara, and Jerusalem. In turn, this can add pressure for more cooperation by the international community of democratic states.

The aim of a strategic alliance is “to practically develop and increase the impact factor of security attentiveness in a period of difficult social, economic and political circumstances around the Euro-Atlantic and the Euro-Mediterranean area.”⁵ Innovative policies, attempts, methodology, dissemination of knowledge, know-how, and above all trust are the key characteristics for a lasting partnership between the triad.

A strategic alliance between the three countries would aim to increase political and military effectiveness, knowledge, and most of all tactical experience. It would consolidate accountability and trust between the partners, while creating the grounds for political and military preparedness for a prospective Euro-Atlantic enlargement in the future, namely for Turkey to the EU and Israel to NATO. Moreover, an alliance would add pressure and political viability to look for a resolution for the standing issues, namely the Cyprus Problem, and other unresolved issues between Greece and Turkey, as well as between Turkey and Israel.

A robust cooperation through “flexibility, openness, strategic and tactical orientation and preparedness is the way forward” for a successful counter-challenge

⁵ Marios Efthymiopoulos, “On the Future of Cooperative Security,” *WE-NATO.org*, 3 May 2012, <http://we-nato.org/2012/05/03/on-the-future-of-cooperative-security/>

response in international and regional security issues and joint threats.⁶ These should be the triad's policy objectives. Such an alliance would be welcomed by the international community and international organizations. Through the development of civilian and military programs, joint political objectives to effectively counter the aforementioned threats and challenges can be devised. A political and military framework of cooperation and enhanced engagement entails collaboration between all parties on multiple levels. The members of this "Triad Strategic Alliance" should become partners for peace, but also partners against current and future challenges and threats.

In practice, a cooperative security plan entails; (a) the creation of a long-term practical conceptual plan of cooperation; (b) framework of engagement; (c) security "template" on procedures and proceedings; (d) standardization agreement of theater operations through tactical preparedness; and (e) methodology of knowledge dissemination for operatives and public policy cooperation for associated civilians.

This policy framework or template can be agreed on and substantiated for collective engagement. Standardization, a policy for tactical military interoperable preparedness, should be equivalent to synchronization, policy methods, approaches to the international military concerns, and implementation of policies through civilian public policy outreach. Cultural and religious exchanges will also be meaningful given the alliance's mixed heritage of Christian Orthodoxy, Judaism, and Islam.

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In an age of technology, where social media and e-networking are the new key words, steps for the civil and political support of this triad should be adopted accordingly. A plan for communications will describe the need for cooperation on current and future emerging challenges through partnerships. A branding or marketing plan should also be created. It should be simple in political terminology, and also be friendly to social media (Twitter, Facebook etc.).

⁶ Efthymiopoulos (2012).

Concluding Remarks

A triad alliance would be based on security cooperation, making use of an international “tool box” towards achieving regional stability and international multilateral cooperation, as well as accurate responsibility sharing. Countering current and emerging regional threats, finding solutions to long-standing issues, enabling tactical preparation and policy orientation, this alliance can ensure avoiding any “domino” outbreaks in the region. All sides have an incentive for this, because their stability, prosperity, growth, and development are at stake.

Emerging challenges and threats are not results of natural causes. Instead, they are associated with a game of political chess between the so-called “good and bad people”. A triad alliance is a pragmatic option, and a possibility with a direct positive impact in international, regional and global affairs. An alliance between the three, will allow leaders to jointly negotiate solutions for long-standing affairs in the region, as well as engage collectively in global affairs.

Ultimately all governments should carry their share of responsibility to pursue choices that will serve the interests of their people most effectively. This article attempted to challenge common assumptions of the problems and choices the sides currently face, or may face in the future.