

Greece at a crossroads: from the fall of Damascus to the first months of the Trump administration

By Aris Marghelis, associate researcher at the FMES

Despite a lull in relations with Turkey, the fall of Damascus and the “Trump method” on international issues have thrust Greece into uncertainty. From a strategic perspective, the combination of these elements has allowed Turkey, without resorting to confrontation, to storm Greece’s strategic assets: its defence partnerships; its maritime jurisdiction; its air superiority; its European sanctuary. How can Greece halt this process? Defend its rights at sea with more determination; attempt to reestablish leverage over the evolution of European defence; reinvigorate its relations with the United States and Israel; reassess the Russian factor in its strategic calculations: these are all options to consider.

Two recent developments have reshuffled the cards for Greece. First, the capture of Damascus by Turkey’s Islamist proxies, which has shifted the balance of power in the Middle East and is impacting both the Eastern Mediterranean and the way Europe perceives Turkey. Second, D. Trump’s approach to the Ukrainian and Palestinian issues, which has crystallized subversive practices in international politics, which are *a priori* favourable to Turkey’s way of behaving on the global stage. Combined with the current Greek-Turkish appeasement, these two elements have led to a strengthening of Turkey’s position in the European and regional strategic landscape. The stakes for Greece are considerable and the current period is risky. Where have we come from? What situation is emerging? What are Greece’s options?

The 2019-2023 period

Against Turkey’s aggressive posture in the Eastern Mediterranean in 2019-2023, Greece adopted a proactive regional policy. It forged defence partnerships, notably with France, Egypt, and the Gulf monarchies. By effectively highlighting Turkish actions and thanks to the support of the US Congress, it contributed to the drying up of Turkish-Western relations in the field of military equipment. In addition, it established itself as a regulator of Euro-Turkish relations, while striving to make the protection of its borders a European affair and to draw a parallel between Russian and Turkish threats in order to raise awareness in Eastern Europe on its own security issues (in essence: “Turkey is to me what Russia is to you”). Finally, given the uncertainties raised by Turkey’s stance on the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, Greece positioned itself as a Western energy, military and logistic pivot located halfway between these two theatres. This effective policy allowed to contain Turkish expansionism and gain precious time to relaunch its military modernization and its economy, while increasing its geostrategic footprint.

The 2023-2024 period

The seismic disaster of February 2023 and Greece’s solidarity with its neighbour put a stop to Turkish aggressive posture. This phase culminated in December 2023 with the “Athens Declaration on Friendly Relations and Good-Neighbourliness” — which is not legally binding though — in which the two states agreed to refrain from actions and statements that could disturb the appeasement. However, this thaw in bilateral relations did not allow for progress on the real issues: maritime delimitations and regional strategic order. The year 2024 was that

of a slow and imperceptible slide toward a lull that became an end in itself and not an organized dynamic of resolution. There was hidden the danger that Greece misjudged. Relieved by the decrease in tensions, it turned a blind eye to the increasing ambiguous signals from Turkey: a weakness well-spotted by Ankara. In this context, the capture of Damascus and D. Trump's duties assumption had an accelerating effect, effectively changing the terms of Greek-Turkish appeasement in Turkey's favour.

The effects of the fall of Damascus

The December 2024 capture of Damascus by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham forces reshuffled the cards in the Middle East. Turkey strengthened its influence there, and the parameters of the Kurdish question — the only truly existential one for Ankara — shifted in its favour, both in Syria and at home, a process that culminated in the dissolution of the PKK in May 2025. To consolidate these new gains, dilute the Syrian Kurds' usefulness to the West, and extricate militarily the Americans from Syria, Turkey—which had once supported various Islamist groups¹, including the Islamic State² — attempts now to portray a calm situation and to establish itself as a champion of the fight against terrorism by proposing to set up a regional coalition for this purpose³. It should be noted, however, that several Israeli analysts see in this manoeuvre a Turkish plan to encircle Israel by creating a Sunni axis which would replace the Iranian Shiite axis.

Undoubtedly, Turkey's satellization of Syria on the Libyan model is a negative development for Greece. Following the capture of Damascus, Turkish officials have mentioned a maritime delimitation agreement in the making⁴. Modelled on the 2019 Turkish-Libyan agreement that ignores the presence of Greek islands, this one would ignore the presence Cyprus, against all rules of maritime delimitation. This is why Athens and Nicosia initially agreed to only a partial suspension of European sanctions on Damascus (recently, the EU finally lifted them all). Turkey, for its part, was from the beginning demanding their complete and *unconditional* lifting.

Moreover, the Greek government's effort to familiarize the population to the idea of a — even flawed — Greek-Turkish compromise (a sign that the dynamic was being taken seriously in Athens) was immediately halted. Indeed, one of the arguments put forward was that, given the difficulties Turkey would likely encounter on its southeastern flank, it might be tempted by an honourable deal with Greece, and that there is therefore an opportunity to seize (hence the desire to maintain a positive dynamic despite the accumulation of ambiguous signals on Turkey's side). However, this Greek argument was swept away in the Syrian whirlwind, leaving Athens facing an appeasement that Ankara skilfully turned into a strategic trap.

The Trump effect

D. Trump's return to power has crystallized unconventional practices in international politics: the unthinkable is trivialized; U-turns become normal; the objective is no longer to untie the

¹ “10 Things to Know About Turkey's Interventions and Influence in Syria”, [FDD](#), 24/2/25.

² “An Enduring Challenge: ISIS-linked Foreigners in Türkiye”, [ICG](#), 28/2/23.

³ “Türkiye is the most capable country in the world in combatting terror”, [Turkish Presidency](#), 1/3/25; “Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Jordan aims to jointly tackle Islamic State, Ankara says”, [Reuters](#), 5/2/25; “Turkey says he will join with neighbors to fight the Islamic State group in Syria”, [AP News](#), 2/2/25; “Turkey, Jordan, Syria, Iraq to discuss security cooperation in Amman, Turkish source says”, [Reuters](#), 8/3/25.

⁴ “Turkey aiming for maritime agreement with Syria, transport minister says”, [Reuters](#), 24/12/24.

Gordian knots but to cut them. In short, the watchwords are henceforth *speed* and *simplified approaches* of international issues. These are the consequences of the United States' transition from a strategy of revitalizing the status quo (J. Biden) to a subversive and voluntarist strategy aiming at emerging as the dominant actor of a world doomed to reorganize itself according to new power relations and therefore to new rules (D. Trump). D. Trump's endorsement of al-Sharaa — who was until recently wanted by the US — is a good example of this trend.

However, Greece has its own Gordian knots with Turkey, notably maritime delimitation in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Cyprus issue. In both cases, a political solution outside the established framework (the Law of the Sea for maritime delimitations; UN Security Council resolutions for Cyprus) is precisely what Turkey has long been seeking.

In essence, the Trump method theoretically favours the Turkish modus operandi. However, this does not automatically imply a favourable stance towards Turkey in all fields, as American transactionalism could also benefit Greece if the latter finds its place in the equation of US interests. Developments in this field are still expected, since Washington remains opaque both about its intentions in the Eastern Mediterranean and with regard to Turkey, despite an increasingly favourable posture towards Ankara since April-May 2025.

A Greek-Turkish appeasement skilfully manipulated by Turkey

Precisely because of Greece's ability to render Turkish aggressivity costly, R.T. Erdogan understood that easing tensions could offer more opportunities to try to empty Greece of its strategic substance.

First, Turkey has reestablished its relations with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt, with whom Greece had developed strong security and defence synergies in 2020-2021. Besides, the situation in Syria and Gaza forces those same states to take Turkey seriously into account so as not to give it free rein. Thus, if the need arose, it would be now more difficult for Athens to rally its Arab partners since Turkey has tactfully undermined these relations. In addition, the search for new balances with France on issues of Turkish interest (including the Eastern Mediterranean and Syria, but also the Black Sea and Ukraine) is evident (although the outcome is still uncertain). Hence H. Fidan's recent visit to Paris and the fact that R. T. Erdogan no longer directly attacks France (this duty has been taken on by Baku).

Second, Turkey is attempting to methodically catch Greece in terms of air power, by putting its eggs in both the European and American baskets so as to increase its chances of success. On the one hand, Ankara seeks to acquire 40 Eurofighters and equip them with METEOR missiles, which would cancel out the Hellenic Airforce's advantage provided by the Rafale fighters already equipped with METEOR. Yet, the technological advantage in the air is Greece's main tool to counterbalance Turkey's structural quantitative advantage. On the other hand, Turkey still wants to get 40 new F-16 Block 70 (the upgrade of the 79 F-16s will likely be entrusted to its domestic defence industry). Banking on D. Trump's transactionalism, Turkey is also redoubling its efforts to reintegrate the F-35 program and end US sanctions on its defence industry. However, despite progress, none of these programs are currently definitively underway, even if the pressure from the new NATO Secretary General to lift all arms restrictions between members of the Alliance portends a positive outcome for Ankara⁵.

⁵ "Turkey's new role in the Trump era", [Kathimerini](#), 15/5/25.

Third, each time Greece has attempted to enjoy its rights beyond its six-mile territorial waters, the Turkish naval presence has deterred it, without Athens, still hoping to maintain positive momentum, daring to escalate. The result is that the Greek government has backtracked — temporarily, it claims — on its plans to create natural parks in the Aegean Sea and on laying the Crete-Cyprus-Israel undersea electricity cable.

Fourth, Turkey besieges Greece and Cyprus's still-inviolable shelter, the European Union. It has thus broken down several doors, notably through its defence industry, which then allows for the expansion of areas of cooperation and the establishment of long-term interdependencies. Eastern Europe, whose awareness Greece sought to raise on its own concerns, has been methodically targeted by the Turkish defence industry⁶. In particular Poland, with which Greece submitted a joint anti-aircraft shield project in 2024, is now displaying an immense enthusiasm for the idea of cooperating with Turkey on defence industry⁷. Thus, Athens can only witness the failure of its attempt to put the Russian and Turkish threats on the same level. On the Mediterranean axis, where Greece has tried to establish a community of like-minded countries against Turkish threat⁸, Turkey also made a breakthrough in 2025. Drone producer Baykar (led by R. T. Erdogan's son-in-law) acquired the flagship of the Italian aeronautics industry Piaggio and is also setting up a co-production with the Leonardo company, while in late April 2025, R. T. Erdogan and G. Meloni ostensibly confirmed their strategic partnership⁹. The Portuguese Navy, for its part, has opted for Turkish auxiliary vessels. Finally, confirming its Turkish tropism, Spain is acquiring Hürjet training aircraft and intensifies its military exercises with Turkey, one of which simulates an amphibious landing in the Aegean¹⁰. The latter took place precisely at a time when Turkey is further increasing its — already considerable — troops and landing means against the Greek islands, according to an offensive and not defensive posture.

In what concerns European defence, Turkey now appears to be an integral part of the landscape in the name of strategic urgency, even if the parameters of this relationship have yet to be fully established. Athens and Nicosia's ability to set the terms of this partnership is thus reduced, particularly because the framework is not exclusively that of the EU. At the same time, debates on the abolition of the sacrosanct right of veto on EU foreign policy issues are increasingly uninhibited.

Thus, Turkey is on the verge of breaking the “Greek lock” in its relationship with the EU. To drive the point home, Ankara is now presenting its EU membership as its main strategic objective, asserting that European security without it is “*inconceivable*”; moreover, it presents itself as the only country that can truly ensure the security of Europe and make it a global player, while evoking (the words are important) “*the preservation of the positive atmosphere that we achieved with Greece, our neighbour*”¹¹.

⁶ “Estonia shops Turkish armored vehicles for \$211 million”, [Defense News](#), 10/19/23; “Romania picks Turkish armored vehicles in \$940 million deal”, [Defense News](#), 7/10/24; “Poland receives final TB2 drone delivery from Turkey's Baykar”, [Defense News](#), 17/5/24.

⁷ “Tusk hails Erdogan meeting as “historic breakthrough” as Poland, Turkey commit to joint defense, arms production work”, [Intellinews](#), 13/3/25.

⁸ “Statement following the 7th Summit of the Southern EU countries”, [French Presidency](#), 10/9/20; “[Declaration of the 8th summit of the southern European countries](#)”, 17/9/21.

⁹ “Turkey and Italy strengthen ties with trade and defense agreements”, [The Independent](#), 29/4/25.

¹⁰ “Türkiye-Spain Bilateral Amphibious Operation Training”, [Turkish Defence Ministry](#), 3/3/25.

¹¹ “It is high time for global decision-making mechanisms to adapt to the changing dynamics of the world”, [Turkish Presidency](#), 3/3/25.

The plan is becoming clear: the aim is to maintain Greece's neutralization for as long as possible under the guise of appeasement, so as to establish roots in the European security landscape without first renouncing any expansionist ambitions. Then, once levers on European defence are secured and Athens' ability to use the EU filter to curb Turkish strategic ardour is defused, Ankara will be able to close the trap on an isolated Greece.

This state of affairs is so profitable to Turkey that even one of the inspirers of the Turkish maritime geopolitical doctrine — the implementation of which implies nothing less than Greece's strategic vanishing — insinuates that Turkish claims must continue to be kept quiet until Greece is completely isolated. Thus, admiral Djihad Yaïdji appears surprised that Greece is alarmed by Turkey's acquisition of military equipment, stating that "*Türkiye is a NATO member, and Greece is also a NATO member. How can one NATO member be considered a threat to another? It's unbelievable*", while adding that "*In fact, we seek the prosperity of our neighbour. This is a Turkish tradition*"¹².

How can Greece reverse this process?

1) Defend its rights at sea with greater determination

Greece faces the following dilemma: either keep a low profile and hope to emerge unscathed from this major strategic reshuffle led by the United States and in which Turkey holds a major regional role; or react by regaining the initiative in the hope of shaping this dynamic. Both scenarios carry risks, but the first carries more, because it is unlikely that inaction in the face of a hyperactive Turkey will produce positive results. The second involves the danger of an escalation by Turkey, to which Greece will have to respond to remain credible.

On the other hand, it is precisely because Turkey is on the verge of integrating the European security architecture that Greece should promote its rights in the Eastern Mediterranean with more determination, and not the other way around. On the one hand, because this will force Turkey to react and take risks: will it dare to resume tensions with Greece that would jeopardize its ability to integrate into the European security landscape, while the full terms of this integration are still to be negotiated? On the other hand, because if this new security situation takes shape without Greece having previously secured its rights, the possibility of doing so later will be reduced.

Recent government statements that work on the Crete-Cyprus-Israel undersea electricity cable will resume regardless of Turkey's warnings, as well as the initiation of the debate on setting as a condition to accept Turkey in the EU defence process the lifting of the Turkish *casus belli* in case of extension of Greek territorial waters in the Aegean (according to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea), suggest that Athens is choosing the latter option. However, Greece traditionally pursues its own interests *via* wider vectors (EU, United States, regional synergies). In the current period of uncertainty (particularly with regard to American intentions and to Europe's almost exclusive focus on Ukraine/ Russia), this strategy is ineffective. Hence the temptation to remain inactive by fear of facing alone a Turkey that is on the lookout for any false step and which, due to its objective strategic weight, its NATO membership and its friends within the EU, retains a considerable harming ability. Aware, however, that inaction in the current context is a false option, Greece has sought support from France. This is all the more

¹² "Why Türkiye's Meteor missile deal has unnerved Greeks", [TRT](#), 2/25.

important since Paris plays a leading role in establishing the terms of the European defence, something that Ankara cannot ignore if it wants to integrate it. French defence minister's Lecornu visit to Athens in mid-April 2025 served to reassure Athens, but it remains to be seen whether France is willing to deter Turkey by covering with a naval presence (even discrete) the Greece-Cyprus-Israel cable-laying work, in which it has direct financial interests. Meanwhile, following to a timing that is not incidental (contrary to what the government claims), Greece published its maritime spatial plan for the European Commission, in an apparent effort to reinvigorate the EU vector in Eastern Mediterranean affairs.

Greece's desire to rebalance the terms of the appeasement with Turkey by a relaunch — albeit cautious — of the game is obvious. The results are yet to be seen.

2) Push towards a tighter EU framework for European defence

While Greece is entirely and consistently committed to the idea of European defence, the current process entails several sizeable challenges.

First, the strategic overweight of Eastern Europe, which is reflected in the White Paper, makes the Russian threat the *raison d'être* of European defence. This is in Turkey's interest. On the one hand, because it holds a particular role in the Ukrainian issue and in the Black Sea, and thus becomes *de facto* an element of the Euro-Russian equation. On the other hand, because the exclusive focus on Russia marginalizes the issues on Europe's southeastern flank, allowing Turkish expansionist ambitions (which remain intact) to go under the radar. Yet, setting Russia as the central target of the European defence also carries the more general risk of seeing this process unravel in the long term, when the parameters of Euro-Russian and Euro-American relations will have evolved. The circumstantial aspect (the Ukrainian issue and D. Trump's policies), however strong it may be today, is not in tune with the ambition supposed to be that of an EU defence: strategic independence and the protection of Community borders as a natural outcome of the EU's building.

Second, the association of non-EU actors is taking place without clear preconditions. This is reflected in the “Coalition of the willing”, but also in the White Paper: while the latter mentions NATO, it does not mention Article 42.7 of the Lisbon Treaty (the mutual defence clause between EU members), which is critical for Athens. In reality, Greece wants a European “security mix” based on an EU pillar and an American pillar. The current scenario of an American withdrawal compensated by the hasty association of non-EU members is precisely a bad one for Greece, which perceives the danger of seeing both the American and EU guarantees fray, in a strategic configuration that opens up large spaces for Turkey.

Yet, Ankara remains focused on its revisionist projects, as shown by its low degree of alignment with European foreign policy: 8% in 2022, 10% in 2023¹³ and 5% in 2024¹⁴. This raises real questions that go beyond issues of strictly Greek interest, since a defence policy only makes sense when paired with the foreign policy it is supposed to serve. Furthermore, some EU members' strong desire to involve Turkey is also done in the hope of seeing it deploy troops in Ukraine as part of a (hypothetical) ceasefire, playing on its ambivalence, since it is the only NATO member to be “Russia-compatible”. This would allow the Europeans to veil their strategic powerlessness by declaring victory without taking real risks (sending troops on the ground), arguing that Russia has ultimately been forced to accept the deployment of NATO

¹³ “Key findings of the 2023 Report on Türkiye”, [European Commission](#), 8/11/23.

¹⁴ “Türkiye Report 2024”, [European Commission](#), 30/10/24, p. 82.

forces on Ukrainian soil — a red line for the Kremlin. On the Russian side, it can be assumed that the sending of Turkish troops is the only scenario in which — due to Turkish exceptionalism — a NATO military presence in Ukraine could theoretically be considered (although Moscow has not, to date, evoked the possibility of such a scenario).

In short, these European initiatives aim at fixing a real error: that of choosing the easy way out through structural over-dependence on the United States. However, haste and lack of discernment and long-term vision lead to the same error: choosing the easy way out by developing dependence on a transactionalist, revisionist, and rule of law-defying Turkey. The contradiction is more than significant, and these are the accumulated consequences of the EU's chronic strategic laxity, with Greece and Cyprus facing now the risk of paying the entire bill.

The challenge for Greece is therefore that Turkey's integration to the European defence landscape be conditional on its security. Otherwise, it is Turkey's integration into the European defence landscape that will determine the evolution of the Greek-Turkish dispute, on terms that will inevitably be unfavourable to Greece. In this respect, what are Athens' options?

A first vector is to reinforce the EU framework in defining the terms of European defence. This is precisely what K. Mitsotakis brought the attention to during his successive visits to Rome and Berlin in May 2025, advocating that the association of non-EU partners should be done on the condition of their alignment with the EU's foreign policy, otherwise the strategic autonomy and reliability of the EU, as well as the security interests of some of its members, will be jeopardized. He also suggested that non-EU partners sign a defence cooperation agreement with the EU prior to their association; obviously, this would allow Greece to set its conditions upstream of the process. Yet, F. Merz appeared to be rather in favour of partnerships without preconditions, while G. Meloni, who had hosted Turkey's president a few days earlier, preferred keeping silent on this issue. Greece therefore currently seems incapable of setting obstacles to this Turkish momentum.

A second vector is to bring its own concrete added value to European defence, because if Turkey has been able to make such a breakthrough towards Europe, it is because it offers possibilities against which Greece has nothing comparable to oppose. In this context, the timing (April 2025) of the announcement of the Greek military modernization plan 2025-2036¹⁵ is not incidental. Indeed, this plan fits with European defence initiatives *via* three main axes:

- Technologization and massive dronization, in line with European ambitions and facilitated by the financial provisions set in the White Paper.
- The bolstering of the Aegean's defence thanks to the "Achilles' Shield", a five-level (anti-drone, anti-aircraft, anti-naval, anti-submarine, anti-missile) equivalent of the Israeli "Iron Dome"¹⁶. By integrating it to the European system, one of the objectives is to place the territorial integrity of Greece under a European umbrella, and therefore to *de facto* set the respect of Greek borders as a condition to a Euro-Turkish security

¹⁵ "La Grèce investit 25 milliards d'euros dans sa défense et lance un dôme de protection aérienne, le « bouclier d'Achille »", [Le Monde](#), 4/4/25.

¹⁶ "Hellenic dome? Greece touts 'Achilles Shield' air defense system to free up ships, fighter jets", [Breaking Defense](#), 22/4/25.

synergy. Another key objective is to avoid Turkey's participation in European defence from eventually evolving into military co-management of the Aegean area, which is critical to Greece's very existence.

- A 25% participation of the domestic defence industry in all new arms procurement (instead of the current 3%), which is a highly ambitious objective that now remains to be met. The production of competitive equipment will enable Greece to provide measurable added value. In this regard, and despite decades of laxity in this field, several elements suggest readiness to take the plunge: the creation of the Hellenic Center for Defence Innovation S.A. (HCDI-ELKAK); the government's willingness to coordinate with the *private* Greek defence industry (which, modest but efficient, remains exclusively oriented towards export); several synergies (or announcements of synergies) for arms co-production, notably with France and the United States, but also Israel¹⁷ and Italy.

3) Reinvalidate the relationship with the United States

Although drowned in extravagant communication that has caused consternation in Europe, a two-pronged Trump strategy is emerging vis-à-vis Moscow. First, the desire to reestablish leverage over Russia. This necessarily involves relaunching cooperation to restore certain interdependencies¹⁸ with a view to slowing down the dynamics of reorientation of the Russian economy towards non-Western partners, since the isolation of Russia and the sanctions have obviously not had the expected effects. Second, the desire to disrupt the Russia-Iran-China synergy by trying to open a breach *via* Moscow, in parallel with a policy of pressure on Iran (strikes on the Houthis, attempts to tame the new Syrian regime, imposition of sanctions on Tehran while negotiating). Aware of the manoeuvre, V. Putin raises the stakes by ostentatiously confirming the tripartite synergy with China and Iran¹⁹, while indicating the price that Western companies will have to pay to hope coming back to Russia²⁰.

In addition, it is worth pointing out that if turbulences in the transatlantic relationship are *a priori* favourable to Russia, this does not necessarily play into the Kremlin's hands. Depending on how the negotiations progress, V. Putin would probably prefer that whatever he agrees with Trump automatically trickles down to the rest of the "Collective West" so as not to have to deal with a European dissonance that could become cumbersome.

In this uncertain Euro-American context, Greece has carefully avoided criticizing Washington, given that the consolidation of its role in the Eastern Mediterranean security architecture will depend on several factors, all involving the United States:

- Maintaining the "3+1" energy and military cooperation scheme (Greece-Cyprus-Israel + United States) established during D. Trump's first term.

¹⁷ "Increased Israel-Greek defense ties opening options for Israeli firms", [Breaking Defense](#), 12/5/25.

¹⁸ "US, Russia Discuss 'Cooperation' on Arctic Exploration, Trade Routes", [Kiyv Post](#), 27/2/25; "Russian and European officials see US interest in Gazprom ties", [Bloomberg](#), 13/3/25.

¹⁹ "China, Iran and Russia hold joint naval drills in Mideast as tensions rise between Tehran and US", [AP News](#), 12/3/25; "Joint Statement of the Beijing Meeting between China, Russia and Iran", [Russian MFA](#), 14/3/25.

²⁰ "Joint news conference with President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko", [Kremlin](#), 13/3/25.

- Its ability to become an energy hub, as an entry point for American LNG and a producer of hydrocarbons involving American companies, so that Washington endorses Greek maritime jurisdiction in critical areas. This is what is suggested by Chevron's recent request to explore the areas south of Crete, according to the delimitation advocated by Greece and not by the Turkish-Libyan agreement (which prompted Ankara to send its spy ship *Ufuk* in the area).
- The degree of recognition that the Americans will grant Turkey as a regional power, and therefore their willingness to continue playing the Greek card to counterbalance excessive Turkish power that would render Ankara uncontrollable. And this is in a context in which Turkey has become a vital player in Syria as attested also by the fact that the US ambassador to Ankara has also been appointed special envoy for Syria (meanwhile, US ambassador to Athens — a former Fox News presenter — has yet to take office), and useful to the Americans in hindering the emergence of a Sino-Russian condominium in Eurasia.
- On the realization of the IMEC (India-Middle East-Europe Corridor), supported by D. Trump, with Greece hoping to become the first continental European entry point of this corridor. In this regard, Athens shall pursue its engagement with New Delhi, which has been experiencing an upturn since 2023²¹. Especially given that N. Modi gets along with D. Trump and India is engaging with other partners of Greece, including France²² and Saudi Arabia²³, while its views with suspicion Turkey's attempt to break into the Indo-Pacific²⁴, given also that the latter confirmed its historic alliance with Pakistan during the latest Indo-Pakistani clashes.

4) Strengthen the relationship with Israel

Israel now shares *de facto* borders with Turkey in Syria: Frictions between Turkish and Israeli air forces were reported²⁵ and Israel targeted a military base in Palmyra, which the al-Sharaa government reportedly considered handing over to the Turks. Athens and Jerusalem therefore have a new common interest: to hinder further Turkish reinforcements in Syria, which would lead, along the lines of the Turkish-Libyan model, to a maritime agreement damaging to Greece and Cyprus, coupled with a security agreement dangerous for Israel.

The Jewish state therefore also has an interest in maintaining the “3+1” framework in the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as in the implementation of the IMEC; the recent visits of K. Mitsotakis (March 2025) and the Cypriot President Christodoulidis (May 2025) to Israel confirmed this community of views. It should also be noted that Israeli equipment is an

²¹ “Su-30, F-16, and Rafale ‘attack’ enemy air defense over Greece”, [Bulgarian Military](#), 10/4/23; “Indian Navy Ship « Chennai » undertook Passage Exercise in Crete”, [Greek MFA](#), 29/7/23; “Greece Makes Its Mark: Hellenic Air Force Lands in India”, [Indian Defence Research Wing](#), 30/8/24; “Press brief on completion of the visit of chief of the naval staff to Greece”, [Indian MFA](#), 1/10/24; “Passing Exercise of HS HYDRA with Frigate TARKASH of Indian Navy”, [Hellenic Navy](#), 25/2/25.

²² “India, France to Sign Contract for 26 Rafale Marine Fighters”, [The Diplomat](#), 22/4/25.

²³ “Saudi Arabia ‘one of India’s most valued partners, a trusted friend and a strategic ally,’ Indian PM Narendra Modi tells Arab News”, [Arab News](#), 21/4/25.

²⁴ “Turkey donates TCG Volkan Missile Boat to Maldives, Signaling Strategic Shift in Indian Ocean”, [IDRW](#), 24/4/2025.

²⁵ “Syria – Turkish Presence in Military Airports and Aerial Friction with Israel”, [ALMA](#), 25/3/25; “Report: Turkish fighter jets scrambled toward Israeli aircraft over Syria”, [Israel Hayom](#), 4/5/25.

essential component of the “Achilles’ Shield” and that, in parallel, training involving the Israeli and Greek air forces continues²⁶. Rightly or wrongly, Greece is also counting on the influence of B. Netanyahu and the pro-Israeli lobby on the US state apparatus and D. Trump, including to delay the lifting of limitations in arms deliveries. Because if the Greeks do not want to see Turkish F-35s over the Aegean Sea, the Israelis do not want to see them over Syria as long as their strategic relations with Turkey remain unstable. The current disruption in the personal relationship between D. Trump and B. Netanyahu is therefore not good news for Greece, although hasty conclusions should not be drawn from it.

On the other hand, one cannot rule out a mutually beneficial sharing of Turkish and Israeli influence in Syria, something that B. Netanyahu and R. T. Erdogan — who dislike each other but speak the same language (that of strength coupled with pragmatism and personal ambitions) — would be capable of. The mediation of Azerbaijan, with which Israel has excellent relations and which serves as a “strategic VPN” between Ankara and Jerusalem, shows that, while not simple, this scenario is plausible.

The Syrian game therefore remains extremely open and proves to be a “barometer” of regional power and influence reshuffling. In this context, the strengthening of Greek-Israeli ties is a logical choice for both parties, despite the fact that Greece has also to manage the increasing criticism of the EU against B. Netanyahu’s Gaza policy.

5) Re-evaluate the Russian factor

Despite the still low level of acceptability of such an approach, Greece would gain from putting Russia back in the landscape of its strategic calculations.

Indeed, the poor results of the Western policy of isolating Russia, combined with a potential Russian-American appeasement, cannot be ignored for long by Athens. Especially since Moscow has not left Syria and is strengthening its position in Libya, where Greece has immense interests (due to Turkey’s presence there and to maritime delimitations issues south of Crete) but no leverage. This is despite the fact that the Libyan situation is undergoing new developments. Tripoli, towards which Greece is gradually turning after having tried the Haftar card, is experiencing destabilization due to clashes between militias. At the same time, Cyrenaica — until now the main obstacle to Turkish influence — is considering an opening towards Turkey, as suggested by the visit of Haftar’s son to Ankara²⁷, while the latter confirms its privileged relations with Russia²⁸.

Finally, a hypothetical resumption of Russian-European relations and a reduction in US military flows to Europe in the event of a ceasefire in Ukraine cannot be ruled out, even in the medium term. This would raise questions about the viability of the Aegean-Baltic energy, military, and trade axis fuelled by the break with Russia and which has been profitable for Greece. Such a scenario requires to start thinking of alternative scenarios and therefore to explore the ways and means for a possible resumption of Greek-Russian contact.

The question of the Greek community of Crimea, the Sea of Azov (Mariupol region) and Donbass could provide such a basis. Indeed, this falls within the humanitarian-cultural domain and does not necessarily imply an early recognition of the new territorial realities (just as

²⁶ “This Greek Air Combat Exercise Was A Low-Level Fighter Flying Paradise”, [The War Zone](#), 15/4/25.

²⁷ “Saddam Haftar’s visit to Ankara marks shift in Turkey’s Libya policy”, [Defense News](#), 15/4/25.

²⁸ Igor Delanoë, “Libye : la Russie avance ses pions », [Observatoire France-Russie](#), 12/5/25.

several Western countries maintain representations in the area of Cyprus occupied by Turkey without this implying recognition of the secessionist entity). Especially since the scenarios that consider a return of the lost territories under Kiev's rule seem increasingly remote. In a recent study by the EU Parliamentary Research Service, only one among five scenarios evoke a return under Kiev's control of all these territories; this would happen following an amicable Russian-Ukrainian agreement in 2045 (for the 100th anniversary of the UN) on the condition of a Finlandization of Ukraine²⁹. In other words, the Greeks that still live in these regions will remain under Russian rule, a reality that Athens will have to deal with sooner or later.

Despite the erosion of its relations with Greece, Russia will not necessarily be hostile to such an initiative. Particularly with regard to Crimea, the Russians emphasize its Greek heritage. This can be seen as a way to counterbalance the weight of the Tatar factor, which Moscow knows Turkey is seeking to exploit as a vector of influence and potential destabilization. In this regard, Ankara invariably condemns the annexation of Crimea³⁰. Not so much on principle, but because a Crimea in Ukraine would make easier to develop influence *via* the Tatar vector. Indeed, on March 21, 2014, five days *after* the referendum that marked the annexation of Crimea to Russia, the Ukrainian parliament recognized the Tatars as an indigenous people. This is a status that the Rada had previously hesitated to grant the Crimean Tatars for fear of stimulating their separatism in the context of Ukraine's multiethnic composition and fragile statehood, while it was in 2015 that it recognized the deportations of 1944 as genocide. In this legal context, a hypothetical return of Crimea under Ukrainian rule would open up great prospects for a solid Turkish establishment on the other side of the Black Sea, much more than a Crimea anchored in a Russia that remains vigilant against undesirable intrusions into its non-ethnic Russian and non-Orthodox communities.

There may therefore be fertile ground here for a resumption of low-intensity Greek-Russian political contact in anticipation of a more substantial rapprochement when the situation allows.

²⁹ "The future European security architecture", [EPRS](#), March 2025, p. 100-106.

³⁰ "Regarding the Eleventh Anniversary of the Illegal Annexation of Crimea", [Turkish MFA](#), 16/3/25.