Article

Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies

European View
1–14
© The Author(s) 2026
DOI: 10.1177/17816858261444211
journals.sagepub.com/home/euv
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The Eastern Mediterranean: Beneath blue waters, strong currents reshape the balance

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Abstract

The Eastern Mediterranean has acquired growing strategic importance for the EU. It is not only the Union's easternmost external border, but also a gateway to the Middle East, the Gulf, the Maghreb, the Balkans and, beyond them, Eastern Europe, the Black Sea and the Caucasus. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the discovery of hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean basin generated expectations that the area would undergo a positive geopolitical transformation. Many analysts assumed that economic incentives and shared energy interests would serve as catalysts for cooperation in a region long marked by instability. Türkiye, however, continues to project itself as a regional hegemon, a view shaped by perceptions of its size, history and imperial legacy. Through assertive diplomacy and military power projection, Ankara is seeking to impose its strategic preferences and signal that regional developments require its consent. This article examines the drivers of Türkiye's assertive policy in the Eastern Mediterranean and analyses the responses of regional and foreign actors striving to safeguard their strategic interests.

Keywords

Eastern Mediterranean, Türkiye, EU, Israel, Assertive diplomacy, Offensive doctrines, Energy

Introduction

At a time of mounting geopolitical pressure and rising international tensions, Europe is recalibrating its external posture and reassessing its role in the global order. The era of complacency and strategic hesitation appears to be ending. EU member states are

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confronted with a polycrisis that directly and indirectly affects the security, prosperity and long-term prospects of their societies.

The political community once described as 'the West', bound by shared principles and strategic visions, now operates in an increasingly fragmented environment. The EU's security challenges extend across its entire zone of vital interests, from the Arctic to the Mediterranean and from the Atlantic to its eastern borders.

Recent tensions between long-standing allies on both sides of the Atlantic, most visibly the crisis over Greenland, have exposed vulnerabilities within traditional alliances. These fractures risk becoming deeper if left unaddressed, with potentially far-reaching consequences for the post–Second World War international order. For Europe, NATO without an honest and predictable US commitment no longer guarantees the same level of security as in the past. This evolving landscape underscores the need for a more autonomous and credible European security strategy, including hard-power capabilities.

Long before tensions over Greenland and the Arctic Ocean appeared, instability in warmer waters had already brought other NATO members to the brink of confrontation. The Eastern Mediterranean—particularly the Republic of Cyprus, an EU member state—has for decades been a bone of contention between Greece and Türkiye. Maritime disputes in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean have further exacerbated this bilateral antagonism.

Over the past fifty years, this rivalry has brought the two NATO allies to the verge of armed conflict on five occasions (in 1974, 1976, 1987, 1996 and 2020). While some analysts interpret Greek–Turkish relations as a controlled, low-intensity conflict managed through US or other friendly intervention, this assumption is increasingly doubtful (Tasiopoulos 2017). Under the current circumstances of international unpredictability, the US can no longer be regarded as a reliable mediator.

Moreover, the transactional and assertive ethos that the current US administration seeks to reintroduce into international politics has encouraged autocratic and revisionist powers to pursue more ambitious roles within the global balance of power. Türkiye is a prominent example. Under President Erdoğan, and largely supported across party lines, Ankara has pursued a strategy aimed at establishing itself as a regional hegemon and, at times, as a quasi-great power. Its dynamic foreign policy operates in South-East Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond, employing diplomatic pressure, military presence and coercive signalling to expand its regional leverage. These actions have alarmed multiple state actors, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean (Soler i Lecha 2021).

Historically, the region has been an arena of great-power competition. During the Cold War, players' strategic attention focused primarily on the Middle East, often overlooking the Eastern Mediterranean's importance as secondary. Since the early 2000s, however, gradual great-power disengagement, combined with the discovery of offshore hydrocarbon resources, has revived the region's geopolitical significance, intensifying legal disputes and economic competition.

Stretching from the eastern coast of Libya to the coastal front of the Levant, the Eastern Mediterranean borders Egypt, Greece, Türkiye, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the Gaza Strip. It is a region of exceptional historical and cultural depth, connecting three continents, Europe, Asia and Africa. Strategically, it lies at 'the apex of two important geographic triangles: one formed in the north and north-east with the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, and the other in the south and south-east with the Middle East and the Persian Gulf' (Karakasis 2024, 109).

This article examines the drivers of Türkiye's assertive policy in the Eastern Mediterranean and analyses the responses of the regional and foreign actors seeking to safeguard their strategic interests.

Türkiye: partner, adversary or prisoner of its imperial past?

Türkiye is a central actor in contemporary international politics, with growing geopolitical weight. For Western states, it offers clear advantages. It functions as a buffer zone between Europe and the conflictual Middle East, constitutes a large market with a young and dynamic population, possesses NATO's second-largest military, and maintains an extensive diplomatic presence and influence across territories once governed by the Ottoman Empire (Filis 2019; Ivanovic 2022).

These assets are well understood by Turkish political elites. Under Erdoğan, Türkiye has adopted an increasingly assertive and revisionist policy in regions it defines as part of its vital strategic space. At the core of this approach lies a drive for greater strategic independence. Ankara has shown itself willing to pursue its interests through both diplomacy and coercive means, shaping outcomes on the ground as well as at the negotiating table (Filis 2020).

In recent years, the Eastern Mediterranean has become a case study of the international system's broader regionalisation process. Power vacuums created by partial great-power disengagement have allowed medium-sized and smaller states to advance their interests without strict alignment with major powers (Tziarras 2020). Within this context, the region displays features of an unbalanced multipolar order. Türkiye emerges as the dominant actor, followed by Israel, Egypt, Greece and, to a lesser extent, Syria, Lebanon and Cyprus (GFP 2026).

In line with the theory of offensive neorealism, the strongest state in a region is incentivised to pursue regional hegemony to ensure its survival in an anarchic system. When full hegemony is unattainable, maximising relative power becomes the alternative (Karakasis and Barboutev 2025). In either case, such behaviour generates insecurity among neighbouring states, often prompting the formation of counterbalancing coalitions. Regional competition then evolves into a prolonged struggle between opposing camps, marked by political, diplomatic and military attrition.

This dynamic is clearly visible in the Eastern Mediterranean. In its surrounding seas, Türkiye has frequently relied on 'gunboat diplomacy', intimidation tactics and naval

deployments to advance its claims and ensure that no regional arrangement develops without its approval. These tactics have put Egypt on the alert and driven Greece and Cyprus, both EU member states, into closer strategic alignment with Israel. The discovery of hydrocarbon reserves in the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of Israel and Cyprus has consolidated this trilateral cooperation into a robust strategic partnership, aimed less at expansion than at deterring Turkish ambitions by raising the cost of unilateral action (Iseri and Çağrı Bartan 2019).

Ankara has repeatedly sought to obstruct major regional infrastructure projects, including the Great Sea Interconnector (GSI) and the Eastern Mediterranean gas pipeline (EastMed), through military exercises and operational disruptions (Walker 2025). The objective has been to marginalise other regional actors and assert de facto dominance. In doing so, Türkiye openly challenges the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), making expansive and legally unfounded maritime claims across large parts of the Mediterranean. This policy undermines Western strategic interests, threatens the EU's energy diversification efforts and constrains the region's economic potential. It is a strategy that will lead to long-term instability and 'perpetual conflict' (Evriviades 2025).

Türkiye's assertiveness in the Eastern Mediterranean cannot be understood solely through contemporary power politics. It is deeply rooted in historical experience and collective memory (Aydintasbas et al. 2020). On one level, there is a persistent belief within Türkiye that the Eastern Mediterranean functioned for centuries as a Turkish-controlled inland sea and should retain a privileged position in Ankara's strategic planning. On another, 'Sèvres Syndrome' continues to shape political thinking: this is the widespread suspicion that Western powers seek to weaken, encircle or dismantle the Turkish Republic, a scenario in which the country suffers the fate of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War[1] (Isachenko and Kaymak 2024).

The intellectual foundations of current Turkish foreign policy are often traced to Ahmet Davutoğlu's[2] *Strategic Depth*, published in the early 2000s (Davutoğlu 2010). Davutoğlu criticised Türkiye's historically limited maritime view as inconsistent with its geography and strategic potential (Eilat 2025). He framed the Eastern Mediterranean as a core civilisational and geopolitical space, closely linked to the Dardanelles, the Aegean Sea and the Persian Gulf. Together, these areas form a critical corridor for energy transit and strategic influence. Within this framework, Cyprus and Türkiye—with the advantage it acquired following its 1974 military invasion of the former—occupy a central role (Sülün 2025; Godwin 2025).

It is therefore wrong to interpret Türkiye's actions in the Eastern Mediterranean primarily through the lens of energy competition. These policies are part of a broader revisionist agenda, closely connected to Ankara's claims in the Aegean, its challenges to Greek sovereignty and its interventionist posture in the broader Middle East (Syrigos and Dokos 2025).

This mentality was indirectly acknowledged in December 2025, when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, speaking at a trilateral summit in Jerusalem with the leaders of Greece and Cyprus, warned that 'countries fantasising that they can re-establish their empires and their dominion over our lands should forget it' (*Turkish Minute* 2025). The reference was unmistakable. The emerging coalition intends to defend its interests without succumbing to Turkish pressure and ambitions.

Netanyahu's statement was directed not at an abstract idea but at a concrete geopolitical doctrine, Türkiye's Blue Homeland (*Mavi Vatan*), developed primarily by Turkish naval officers.[3] This doctrine rejects UNCLOS and advocates a dramatic expansion of Türkiye's maritime claims (covering approximately 462,000 km^2) while portraying Türkiye as a dominant naval power. Its implications directly challenge Greek and Cypriot maritime rights and, by extension, the legal and strategic interests of the EU (Denizeau 2021).

Israel, for its part, cannot remain indifferent to Turkey's growing regional aspirations. Since 2010[4] Ankara's hostile rhetoric, its political support for Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, and its interventionist policies in Gaza, Syria and Somalia have steadily damaged bilateral relations. In this context, Israel's alignment with Greece and Cyprus reflects not only energy interests, but a shared assessment of Türkiye as a destabilising regional actor rather than a predictable and reliable partner (Serveta 2023).

Different regions, similar narrative: Türkiye's *Mavi Vatan*, Russia's *Russkiy Mir* and China's Blue Dragon

Foreign policy doctrines such as Türkiye's *Mavi Vatan* are not unique in international politics. States that adopt such frameworks tend to portray themselves as central actors in the international system while challenging the sovereignty of their neighbours and defying the established norms of international law. The shared assumption that justifies these doctrines is that historical injustice has constrained national potential and that existing borders or legal regimes deserve revision in favour of these states.

Against this backdrop, parallels between the foreign policy trajectories of Türkiye, Russia and China are difficult to ignore. While their national interests might differ, their strategic narratives and methods display striking similarities, particularly in their confrontational posture towards neighbouring states.

China's Blue Dragon strategy relies on maritime coercion through a combination of naval forces, coastguard units and civilian vessels. This layered approach deliberately blurs the line between civilian and military activity, allowing Beijing to disregard UNCLOS while pressuring smaller states to give in to its maximalist claims. The objective is not merely influence, but the gradual transformation of contested waters into a de facto Chinese-controlled area, or at least into legally ambiguous 'grey zones'. The long-term goal remains undisputed dominance in the South China Sea, a region of critical

geo-economic importance and a central theatre in the wider Indo-Pacific balance of power (Bautista 2024).

This confrontational maritime doctrine complements China's Belt and Road Initiative, which is frequently criticised as a vehicle for political leverage, dependency creation and debt entrapment (Rice and Robb 2021; Singh 2024). The countries most directly affected by the militarisation of these waters are Taiwan, Japan, several members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and India, with its impact extending across the Indian Ocean.

Türkiye's approach in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean follows a comparable logic. Ankara insists that the Greek islands should be demilitarised, repeatedly suggesting that if this is not done, Greek sovereignty over them could be questioned.[5] This position is difficult to reconcile with Türkiye's own posture, as it maintains one of its largest army formations (the 'Aegean Army') directly opposite Greek waters, has occupied the northern part of Cyprus since 1974 and has formally declared a *casus belli* (Grand National Assembly of Turkey 1995) should Greece exercise its lawful rights under international law in the Aegean. The asymmetry between claimed insecurity and actual force projection is evident.

Russia's *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World) doctrine rests on a similar ideological foundation. It frames Russians as a territorially fragmented people whose unification and protection constitute a core responsibility of the Russian state. The defence of Russian speakers abroad is elevated to a strategic imperative, providing both moral justification and political cover for interventionist policies.

Comparable patterns have emerged in Türkiye, particularly after the failed *coup d'état* in 2016. Ankara has sought to cultivate and mobilise a sense of Turkish identity among Muslim communities in former Ottoman territories, treating these populations as instruments of political leverage over sovereign states. Cultural affinity is used as strategic influence.

In all three cases, hybrid warfare and disinformation play a central role. The pattern is consistent. Russia interfered in the 2016 US presidential election, China conducted a 'war without harm' (Lin 2025) during Taiwan's 2024 elections, and Erdoğan has publicly urged voters of Turkish origin in Germany and the Netherlands to support specific political choices. Adding to these efforts is the weaponisation of migration, as seen at the Evros border (2020) and at the Belarus–Poland frontier (2021–2). The aim is the same: to distort reality, undermine cohesion, and destabilise neighbouring states and Western societies.

Such doctrines are rooted primarily in perceptions of strategic vulnerability, fear of resource constraints, insecurity and diplomatic limitations imposed by external actors. Within this worldview, the West is portrayed as pursuing encirclement through proxy states such as Ukraine, Taiwan, Greece and Cyprus.

A further driver lies in a country's outsized perceptions of its imperial past. Political leaders in Ankara, Moscow and Beijing increasingly present themselves as heirs to lost or diminished empires, measuring their status against a glorified past. Sovereign neighbouring states are consequently viewed not as equal actors, but as subordinate spaces within an assumed sphere of influence. The result is an attempt on the part of these states to exercise hegemonic authority that often exceeds their actual economic, military and geopolitical capacity.

Such strategies rarely go unanswered. Across regions, the response follows a familiar pattern: either direct containment by a stronger power or the formation of counterbalancing alliances among states whose interests converge in opposition to the aspiring hegemon. In this sense, the doctrines of *Mavi Vatan*, *Russkiy Mir* and Blue Dragon do not merely reshape regional orders but also accelerate the creation of opposing blocs.

A great Mediterranean game: the energy chessboard in the Levant

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the discovery of hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean basin generated expectations of positive geopolitical transformation. Many analysts assumed that economic incentives and shared energy interests would serve as catalysts for cooperation in a region long marked by instability. More than two decades later, those expectations have largely proven incorrect.

Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine made the EU's need to diversify energy supplies away from Moscow an urgent strategic priority. Given its geographic proximity and the presence of two EU member states (Greece and Cyprus) and one candidate state (Türkiye), the Eastern Mediterranean appeared to offer a viable alternative. A concrete step in this direction was the 2022 EU–Israel–Egypt agreement facilitating gas exports to Europe (European Commission, Directorate-General for Energy 2022).

Türkiye, however, has interpreted these developments, and particularly those benefiting Greece and Cyprus, as directly undermining Turkish national interests. Ankara presents itself as the region's natural hegemon and links its domestic political and economic stability to energy developments in its neighbourhood (Iseri and Çağrı Bartan 2019). This approach faces two structural obstacles. First, Türkiye rejects UNCLOS, which constitutes the legal foundation for maritime delimitation among other key Eastern Mediterranean states.[6] And second, Ankara views any regional energy cooperation that excludes it as an attempt to marginalise its ambition to become a central energy hub (Eilat 2025).

The collapse of the Cyprus peace talks at Crans-Montana in 2017 further exacerbated regional tensions. In the aftermath, Turkish policy in the wider Levant grew more assertive. Repeated incidents aimed at disrupting Cypriot drilling activities in the island's EEZ were followed by the internationally contested 2019 maritime agreement between

Türkiye and Libya's Government of National Accord (Ciddi 2025). To these, one could add the most prolonged episode of Greek–Turkish naval brinkmanship in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean Seas in decades (in 2020).

From an energy perspective, Egypt holds the largest share of natural gas reserves in the region (nearly 65%), followed by Israel, Cyprus and Syria (Krane 2025). Despite being the second-largest gas producer, Israel's export potential remains constrained by ongoing regional conflicts and investor caution. As a result, access to European markets through Cyprus and Greece represents its most viable export route.

Cyprus's energy prospects are similarly constrained by geopolitical factors. The continued Turkish military occupation of the northern part of the island and Ankara's challenges to Cypriot maritime rights complicate development efforts. Nevertheless, the Republic of Cyprus has concluded agreements delimiting its EEZ with Egypt (2003), Lebanon (2005, ratified in 2025) and Israel (2010). All three agreements are grounded in UNCLOS, precisely the legal framework Türkiye opposes.

Geo-economic and geopolitical pressures have drawn Cyprus, Israel and Greece into closer alignment. In January 2020 the EastMed pipeline project was formally launched. Shortly thereafter, the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum was established, bringing together Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, France and Italy. The two initiatives shared a common feature, Türkiye's exclusion, which was intended to incentivise a change in the country's regional behaviour. At the same time, Washington has consistently cautioned against pushing Ankara into full strategic isolation.

Despite political backing from the EU and the US, both initiatives currently face stagnation. The EastMed pipeline has encountered financial and technical challenges, while the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum has been affected by the conflict in Gaza and Türkiye's gradual rapprochement with Egypt.

US interest in Eastern Mediterranean energy developments remains strong, consistent with Washington's emphasis on expanded hydrocarbon production and exports. Last November, at a meeting of the Partnership for Transatlantic Energy Cooperation in Athens, the energy ministers of the US, Greece, Israel and Cyprus reaffirmed their commitment to regional energy security. This '3+1' framework highlighted the need to reduce dependence on hostile suppliers and deepen cooperation among like-minded partners (*NE Global News Service* 2025).

Further signalling US engagement, the House Foreign Affairs Committee passed the Eastern Mediterranean Gateway Act, emphasising the strategic importance of the India—Middle East—Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC n.d.). The proposal identifies India, Egypt, Cyprus, Greece and Israel as key partners and highlights several critical projects, including the Great Sea Interconnector linking Greece, Cyprus and Israel; the proposed Greece–Egypt power connection; the Greece–Bulgaria natural gas interconnector

(IGB);[7] and the expansion of liquefied natural gas (LNG) facilities across the Eastern Mediterranean (*Ekathimerini* 2026; *Politis* 2025).

LNG exports remain high on the US agenda, and the EU has become a major consumer of American LNG. As diversification options narrow, the US has emerged as the Union's dominant LNG supplier. Given growing uncertainty in transatlantic relations, the EU must broaden its options related to energy sources. Beyond the strategically important 'vertical corridor', the Eastern Mediterranean should occupy a central place in the EU's long-term energy strategy (Dimakos 2026).

Egypt's LNG terminals, despite their age, could serve as an initial platform for the development of a regional energy hub supplying Europe. The EU should firmly support its member state Cyprus and protect the interests of European energy companies such as ENI (Italy) and TotalEnergies (France), which already operate within the Cypriot EEZ. This requires careful diplomacy, given Türkiye's confrontational stance. In this context, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis's proposal for a regional forum of Eastern Mediterranean coastal states represents a constructive step. It would aim to address maritime disputes and related issues in accordance with international law (Nedos 2025).

If the EU acts cohesively, it could secure geo-economic and energy gains while also contributing to conditions conducive to making progress on the Cyprus issue. Expectations, however, should remain measured. Natural gas may facilitate limited cooperation, but it cannot by itself resolve deeply rooted political conflicts.

The conflict in Iran, which is ongoing at the time of writing, has provided an opportunity for several European states to demonstrate, on the ground, their willingness to advance the EU's strategic autonomy and defence ambitions. Although this development did not stem from a coordinated initiative at the EU level, it was largely prompted by Greece's decision to deploy naval and air assets to safeguard Cyprus and, by extension, the Union's strategic interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. The European response was noteworthy. Within a week, military assistance from France, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and the UK had been deployed to the island in support of Cyprus (Karagiorgas 2026), demonstrating a rapid—albeit ad hoc—form of European security cooperation.

European capitals must quickly realise that in the absence of coordinated action, particularly in the Union's immediate neighbourhood, external actors will fill the void. If this comes to pass, the cost will be borne by the EU's own strategic interests, such as energy security, strategic autonomy and, ultimately, the Union's standing in the contemporary international order.

Conclusion

The Eastern Mediterranean has acquired growing strategic importance for the EU. It is not only the Union's easternmost external border, but also a gateway to the Middle East, the Gulf, the Maghreb, the Balkans and, beyond them, Eastern Europe, the Black Sea and the

Caucasus. In this sense, it marks the boundary between the zone of peace and the zone of conflict. Its relevance extends beyond geopolitics to core geo-economic interests.

Located at the intersection of major trade routes linking Europe with Africa and Asia through the Suez Canal, the region also holds significant potential for strengthening the EU's energy security. Greece and Cyprus, as front-line EU member states, could play a pivotal role in this effort. Together with regional partners such as Israel, Egypt and Lebanon, they could form a durable framework for cooperation that safeguards common interests and provides the political and security conditions necessary for the development of energy resources.

Türkiye, by contrast, continues to project itself as a regional hegemon, shaped by its own perceptions of its size, history and imperial legacy. By asserting itself diplomatically and militarily, Ankara is seeking to impose its strategic preferences and signal that regional developments require its consent. This approach assigns predetermined roles to neighbouring states, challenging both their sovereignty and established legal frameworks.

In recent years, Turkish foreign policy has appeared more conciliatory, particularly towards neighbouring countries and major international capitals. Whether this represents a genuine strategic recalibration or a tactical move, aimed at gaining time to modernise military capabilities and engage with European defence initiatives such as the Security Action for Europe, remains to be seen.

What is clear is that Türkiye's revisionist policy in the Eastern Mediterranean has not delivered the outcomes Ankara initially anticipated. The decisive stance adopted by Athens, Nicosia, Tel Aviv and Washington has limited its room for manoeuvre. At the same time, several EU member states maintain strong economic and diplomatic ties with Türkiye, reinforcing the perception that Ankara is indispensable to Europe's security architecture. This view is often justified by the size and operational readiness of the Turkish armed forces, particularly when compared with the limited military capabilities of some of the EU's largest member states.

Nevertheless, in an emerging and more competitive international order, the EU must act with unity and strongly defend its vital interests. It demonstrated its ability to do just that when it stood unequivocally by Denmark during the Greenland dispute with the US. A comparable level of coherence is required in its approach to Türkiye. Ankara cannot be meaningfully integrated into the EU's defence planning while it continues to threaten an EU member state with war, disregard international legal norms, defy UN resolutions, occupy part of an EU member state and repeatedly violate the sovereignty of its neighbours.

The era of strategic complacency has passed. If the EU seeks to be taken seriously as a global power rather than merely as an economic bloc, it must prioritise the protection of its member states across land, sea and air. Cohesion, credible deterrence and integrated policy instruments are indispensable for safeguarding the EU's geo-economic and security interests in the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. The Treaty of Sèvres was signed in August 1920 between some of the Allies of the First World War and the Ottoman Empire, but it was never ratified. The treaty aimed to divide the Ottoman Empire by ceding, among others, large parts of its territory to France, the UK, Greece and Italy.
2. He has served as a Turkish prime minister and minister of foreign affairs under Erdoğan.
3. The naval officers involved were Admiral Cem Gürdeniz and Admiral Cihat Yaycı.
4. In 2010 the largest ship of a flotilla attempting to break the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip, the *Mavi Marmara*, confronted commandos of the Israel Defense Forces, resulting in the deaths of nine Turkish citizens. The incident had a very negative impact on Turkish–Israeli relations.
5. According to the Treaties (Lausanne 1923, Paris 1947), there is no connection between the two issues (Tasiopoulos 2022).
6. Egypt, Israel, Greece, Cyprus and Lebanon.
7. This interconnector is the beginning of a 'vertical corridor', a network of gas interconnectors linking Greece with Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine (Athanasopoulos 2026).

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