

The Eastern Mediterranean's New Security Architecture

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Marianna Costa

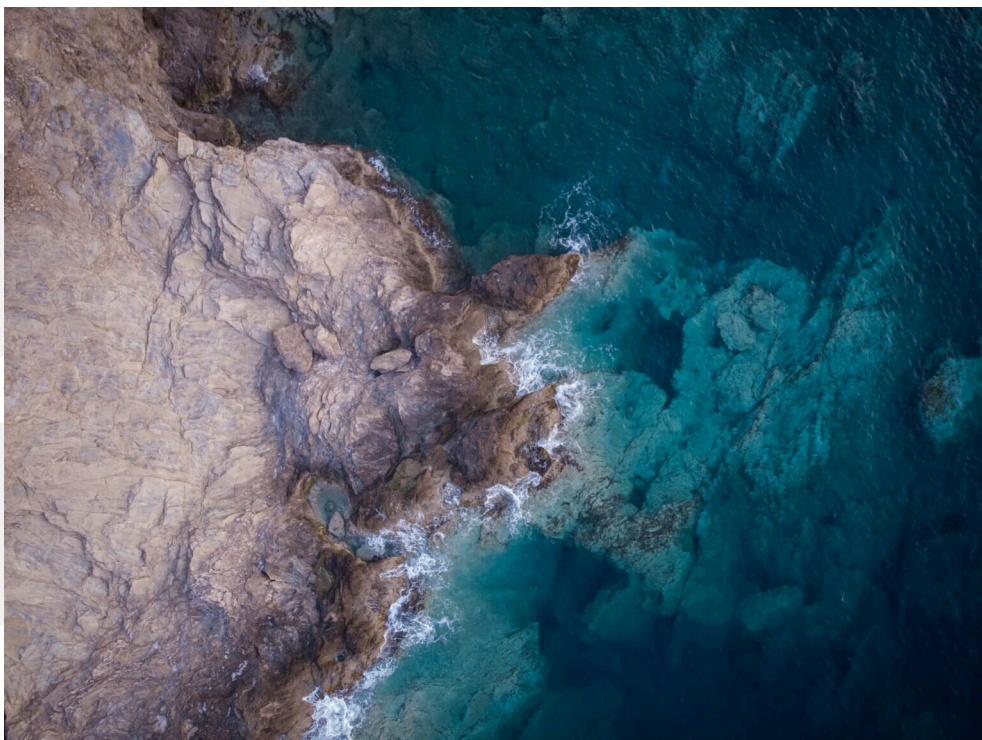


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The Eastern Mediterranean has long been marked by geopolitical rivalry, contested maritime zones, energy competition and unresolved political disputes. However, events in 2026 indicate that a new era is beginning in the region. Growing concerns over energy security and maritime infrastructure, along with the deepening of conflict in the wider Middle East, have increased uncertainty and prompted states to fortify current alliances or strengthen strategic partnerships.

A more general question for the European Union is raised by these developments: does the emergence of overlapping regional security alliances indicate a change toward a more fragmented and interest-driven security architecture, or does it enhance the current multilateral order?

A new web of regional partnerships

Recent events indicate that traditional alliances or well-defined opposing blocs are no longer sufficient to understand the Eastern Mediterranean. Rather, a network of military, political and economic alliances is becoming more flexible.

Greece is a particularly instructive example. The roughly €3 billion Achilles Shield pact, which established a multi-layered air, missile, and drone defence infrastructure, was signed by Greece and Israel in August 2026. As part of a larger connection that already encompasses military training, energy, and technology cooperation, the deal signifies a substantial deepening of Greek-Israeli defence cooperation.

However, Greece's ties to the region go beyond Israel. The collaboration between Greece, Cyprus and Egypt has strengthened the link between regional connectivity, energy and maritime security. The three nations underlined the significance of maritime security, freedom of passage, and energy projects linking the Eastern Mediterranean with Europe during their trilateral summit in September 2026. In a similar vein, trade routes, energy and supply-chain resilience have been connected to regional cooperation by Greece, Cyprus, and Jordan.

Simultaneously, a further significant security agreement has surfaced outside of the local Eastern Mediterranean. The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement, which was signed in August by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye, states that an armed attack on one state is considered an attack on all. This is more than just a single diplomatic statement, as evidenced by the subsequent creation of institutional channels for political and defence collaboration.

These changes, however, should not be seen as the emergence of two distinctly antagonistic blocs. For instance, Greece is strengthening its engagement with Israel while maintaining significant defence ties with Saudi Arabia. Therefore, it is easier to think of what is developing as an overlapping web of interest-driven partnerships, where governments cooperate in diverse ways based on their political, economic and security interests.

Security for one, insecurity for another?

Perceptions of vulnerability are another significant reason driving this expanding network.

Greece, Türkiye and Cyprus each operate in a region defined by competing strategic goals, historical disputes and varied security concerns. As a result, states may bolster their military prowess and alliances not because they necessarily want conflict but rather because they believe there is more unpredictability in the world.

This leads to a well-known security conundrum. A state may perceive actions meant to make it safer as proof of an increasing threat, which could lead to new alliances or additional military spending. The outcome can be

paradoxical: while the region as a whole becomes more militarised and possibly less predictable, each actor tries to strengthen its own security.

In the Eastern Mediterranean, where defence cooperation increasingly overlaps with energy infrastructure, maritime boundaries and unsolved political problems, the challenge is especially significant. Although regional alliances can offer resilience and deterrence, they are unable to eradicate the underlying feelings of fear that gave rise to them.

Overlapping networks of power

Michael Mann's theory of social power offers a helpful perspective for comprehending this changing environment. Mann characterises societies through overlapping networks of political, military, economic and ideological power rather than seeing power as contained inside a single organisation.

Such a relationship is becoming more and more evident in the Eastern Mediterranean. Energy corridors are linked to defence agreements; energy projects rely on marine security; new industry links are formed through technical procurement; and political partnerships influence surrounding governments' strategic calculations.

The expanding significance of Israel in European defence serves as an example of the scope of these networks. Greece's Achilles Shield uses Israeli military technology, and Germany's acquisition of the Israeli Arrow 3 missile defence system has grown into a multibillion-dollar project. As a result, Israel is becoming more and more of a security and technology partner for European nations in addition to becoming a regional player in the Eastern Mediterranean.

A broader European question is also raised by this. Does Europe's growing reliance on foreign defence technologies improve its immediate security while also fostering new types of strategic dependence as it pursues more strategic autonomy?

Europe needs coordination, not another bloc

These regional alliances shouldn't be replaced by the EU. Many of them give states useful tools for infrastructure protection, energy connectivity, cooperation and deterrence. Furthermore, not every new agreement should be seen as proof that multilateralism is eroding.

The greater risk is **fragmentation without coordination**.

Therefore, connecting rather than competing with new regional networks should be Europe's goal. This entails bolstering EU-NATO collaboration on vital infrastructure protection and maritime situational awareness, encouraging organised communication between regional parties and making sure that new security arrangements stay grounded in international law.

Security strategy ought to include energy policy as well. Gas resources, electrical connections, LNG infrastructure, undersea cables and shipping

routes in the Eastern Mediterranean show that economic and military security can no longer be handled independently.

In the short run, regional alliances could assist states in controlling insecurity. However, in the absence of organisations that can lessen perceptions of mutual threat, the same networks meant to offer security could exacerbate the uncertainty they were meant to dispel.

Therefore, the question is no longer whether the Eastern Mediterranean is important for European security, but rather if Europe can create a policy that takes into account the significant changes in the security architecture of the region.

