

# Greece–Cyprus–Israel and United States Security Collaboration in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean

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## Introduction

The Eastern Mediterranean has become increasingly important in geopolitics due to its positioning between Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. As there is a competition for energy and economical gains, the US has emerged as a key focus for foreign policy. To reduce dependency on rival state powers, initiatives such as the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and the 3+1 Mediterranean Alliance have been constructed and are on the road to formal implementation. Israel, Greece, Cyprus, Syria, and Turkey all hold vital and pivotal positions in determining the fate of the global economy and energy policies. These states also are involved in conflicts in the region of the Middle East, notably the Israel-Hamas War and the 2026 US-Iran War. This paper examines how energy security, development of infrastructure, and geopolitical competition are affecting and changing the Eastern Mediterranean.

## A History of Tension

The nuclear dimension is a key component of emerging proposals and deals for global energy security. In terms of US foreign policy, negotiations for a nuclear deal between the US and Iran were formalized in 2015 during the presidency of Barack Obama<sup>1</sup>. However, these negotiations have faced complications over the years with drastic changes in US leadership and foreign-policy outlook. Following years of rising tensions between the two states, the current US administration resorted to military intervention to address what is viewed as growing security concerns related to Iran’s alleged nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs.

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<sup>1</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. “2026 Iran War.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

In close coordination with Israel, the White House administration justified the initial military strikes on Iran, launched on 28 February 2026, as part of a broader strategy to dismantle the state of Iran in a kinetic form of action after years of unsuccessful diplomatic efforts.<sup>2</sup> However, the escalation of tensions around the Strait of Hormuz generated uncertainty in global energy markets, contributing to volatility in European and US markets.

Regional instability may complicate the implementation of IMEC in the short term, as heightened tensions in the Strait of Hormuz could delay certain phases of the project and increase uncertainty surrounding its timeline. At the same time, these developments reinforce the strategic importance of IMEC and the 3+1 Alliance as mechanisms for strengthening regional connectivity, energy security, and supply-chain resilience.

A number of political disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean are rooted in tensions over maritime domains.<sup>3</sup> In October 2018, Turkey unveiled its “Mavi Vatan” (Blue Homeland) doctrine asserting expansive maritime claims in the Black Sea and Aegean Sea territories, that challenge the maritime rights and jurisdiction claimed by Greece and Cyprus<sup>4</sup> under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Both the EU and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have criticized the doctrine for violating the rights of sovereign states of Greece and Cyprus. The Turkish legislation of the Mavi Vatan bill is now expected to be delayed until after October 2026, when Turkey will host the upcoming NATO Summit.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the Turkey-Libya Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which was implemented in 2019, violates Greece’s maritime jurisdiction.

Syria acts as a large hub for Eastern Mediterranean trade routes, which marks the state as highly significant to distributing energy and other goods to the Levant and beyond. Syria is also linked to the Israel-Iran conflict, serving as an important platform for Iran’s regional proxy network. Iranian state actors, such as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), support Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, as well as Hamas and its allies (including the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) in the Gaza Strip. The IRGC has also provided support for Shi’a militants in Iraq, Bahrain, and Syria.<sup>6</sup> After the fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria, the new government under Ahmed al-Sharaa distanced itself from Iran and pushed Syria closer to Turkey. Although this may seem like a concern for the 3+1 Alliance, foreign policy relations between Syria and the US remain positive.

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece. “Map.” *Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs*.

<sup>3</sup> Australian Army Research Centre. “Middle Eastern Advisory Competition: Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps–Quds Force.” *Australian Army Journal* 14, no. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Kathimerini. “Ankara Expected to Delay the Blue Homeland Bill.” *Kathimerini*. Accessed June 18, 2026.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations. “Memorandum of Understanding Between Turkey and Libya on the Delimitation of Maritime Jurisdictions in the Mediterranean.” 2019.

<sup>6</sup> The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. “Between Israel and Turkey: Implications of a New Syria (Part 2).” Accessed June 18, 2026.

An effort to gain Syria's support for the Alliance could expand potential transit routes and minimize Turkey's ability to disrupt the alliance's energy-security aspirations.<sup>7</sup>

### **3+1 Eastern Mediterranean Alliance**

Ongoing geopolitical, economic, and energy concerns have ignited recent talks between Greece, Cyprus, Israel, and the US to cooperate and combat tensions with Iran and Turkey. On 12 June 2026 the US, Greece, Cyprus, and Israel formally established the Eastern Mediterranean Energy Center (EMEC).<sup>8</sup> The quartet of nations, collectively referred to as the 3+1 Alliance, established a structured mechanism for cooperation in a variety of disciplines, such as energy, technology and security. This alliance is a trilateral partnership backed by the United States, established to address emerging geopolitical and energy security challenges through enhanced regional cooperation, strategic coordination and economic integration the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkey and Azerbaijan hold a close energy transit partnership in the Caspian Sea to supply energy to Europe. In some estimates, the 3+1 Alliance aims to secure the transit of energy to the European market through the waters of the Eastern Mediterranean in order to prevent potential destabilization caused by Turkey, as it seeks to play a larger role in the current conflicts in the Middle East. Alongside the establishment of EMEC, actors of the alliance have agreed to not only pursue an energy and economic agenda through intelligence sharing, but also cyber-security policies for infrastructure protection.<sup>9</sup>

On 29 April 2026, a bill titled the "Eastern Mediterranean Gate Act" (S.4443) was submitted to the US Senate.<sup>10</sup> It outlines a singular purpose: to offer US support to a number of Eastern Mediterranean countries as a way of promoting them as entryways to the IMEC. The goal of IMEC is to transform trade and inter-connectivity between involved actors.<sup>11</sup> Critical infrastructure, such as the construction of new ports, highways, pipelines, and railways, is key to the practical progress of the project. In addition, the development of critical infrastructure reinforces the objectives of the 3+1 Alliance by promoting regional integration, enhancing energy security, and diversifying European trade and supply routes, thereby reducing strategic dependence on Russian energy resources and Chinese influence over infrastructure. Signatories to the IMEC Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) include the US, the European Union (EU), India, Saudi Arabia, UAE, France, Italy, and Germany. On June 19, S.4443 was approved by the

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<sup>7</sup> The Hindu. "What Is Abraham Accords? Countries, Trump, Israel, West Asia, Iran Peace Deal." *The Hindu*. May 26, 2026.

<sup>8</sup> Israel-Greece Chamber of Commerce. "Strengthening the Cooperation Through the New Eastern Mediterranean Energy Center." *Israel-Greece Chamber of Commerce*. Accessed June 18, 2026. Israel-Greece Chamber of Commerce article

<sup>9</sup> Stevenson, Peter. Middle East Economic Survey (MEES). "Eastern Med 3+1 Initiative: Progress at Last?" *Middle East Economic Survey*.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Congress. "S.4443 — [Bill Title]." *GovTrack.us*. 119th Congress.

<sup>11</sup> International Maritime Economic Corridor (IMEC). "About IMEC."

Senate Foreign Relations Committee, meaning that it is a step closer to being sent to Congress for deliberation and eventually to US President Donald Trump for approval. The evolution and efforts of the 3+1 Alliance attempts to enable geopolitical and security strategies in order to establish cooperation and connectivity for Europe in the Eastern Mediterranean.

## **Geopolitical Economic Initiatives**

The Abraham Accords, brokered by the United States, seek to normalize relations between Israel and the participating Arab states, with the aim of strengthening diplomatic, economic, and strategic cooperation across the region. The UAE and Bahrain were the first Gulf States to normalize relations with Israel through the Abraham Accords, followed by Morocco later that year. While these agreements marked a significant step toward Israel's regional integration, several major Arab States have not yet become parties to the accords.<sup>12</sup> Saudi Arabia refrained from signing the accords and the normalization process has become increasingly complex following October 7, 2023 attacks in Israel, and the subsequent regional conflict. While Riyadh has consistently linked normalization with Israel to progress on the Palestinian issue, its policy is also shaped by broader strategic, regional, and security considerations. As a result, prospects of further expansion of the Abraham Accords by Arab states remain uncertain in the near future<sup>13</sup>. Although these developments may affect the pace of broader regional integration, they do not alter the strategic objectives of the 3+1 framework or the continued cooperation among its members.

Recent advancements of US foreign policy with the Eastern Mediterranean; EMEC and the Eastern Mediterranean Gate Act, illustrates the growing importance of the Eastern Mediterranean region to Washington. The US appears to be integrating its goals concerning the region with long-term efforts to stimulate growth and increase interconnections between the Eastern Mediterranean, Middle East, and India. India in particular acts as a strategic counterweight to China. The US has traditionally viewed India as a contender against China, due to its geographic size, dynamic population growth, and steady emergence as an economic power.<sup>14</sup>

While IMEC's primary objective is to enhance regional connectivity, Washington additionally views the initiative as a potential stabilizing factor for the Eastern Mediterranean and the broader Middle East. In this context, the US particularly recognizes IMEC participants such as Greece, together with committed partners Cyprus and Israel, as democratic and strategically reliable actors in the region.

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<sup>12</sup> Anadolu Agency. "Saudi Arabia Says No Normalization with Israel Without Establishing Palestinian State." *Anadolu Agency*.

<sup>13</sup> Anadolu Agency. "Saudi Arabia Says No Normalization with Israel Without Establishing Palestinian State." *Anadolu Agency*. July 28, 2025.

<sup>14</sup> Bajpaee, Chietigj, and Jie. "How China-India Relations Will Shape Asia's Global Order." *Chatham House*. April 23, 2025.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), also referred to as the ‘New Silk Road’ was launched in 2013 by Chinese President Xi Jinping.<sup>15</sup> Similar to IMEC, BRI strives to connect the world regions via economic cooperation.<sup>16</sup> However, unlike IMEC, the BRI reaches beyond the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean areas and into Latin America and Africa. From the US perspective, China lending money to BRI nations is seen as a partial goal of the BRI. The funds are utilized by the borrowers to build critical infrastructure.

Greece’s Port of Piraeus is considered to be the largest in the coastal nation. The Port has ties to BRI through COSCO, a Chinese state-owned company which is a stakeholder of the port. COSCO operates Pier II and financed the erection of Pier III.<sup>17</sup> As China is the EU’s second largest trading partner, this offers a more direct line of trade and influence from China.

As of 2025, as many as 150 nations had either joined or expressed interest in joining the New Silk Road. The US views the BRI as yet another avenue through which China is attempting to expand its spheres of influence, and therefore sees it as a strategic threat. To a certain degree, the US conceived IMEC as a response to the BRI.

## **Conclusion**

The Eastern Mediterranean has emerged as a crucial region in modern United States foreign policy, where energy security, economic connectivity, and geopolitical competitors intersect. Through recent initiatives—IMEC and the 3+1 East Mediterranean Alliance—Washington seeks to strengthen regional partnerships while simultaneously implementing alternative energy routes to Europe. These efforts not only aim to reduce European reliance on Russian energy resources but also serve as a strategic alternative to China’s expanding influence through BRI.

Simultaneously, the triumph of these initiatives depends on the ability of regional actors to navigate long-standing challenges. Tensions between Israel and Iran, disputes concerning Turkey’s maritime claims, instability in Syria, and evolving dynamics surrounding the Abraham Accords continue to pose significant challenges to regional cooperation and integration. Additionally, Syria remains strategically important due to its geographic position and possible influence over future trade and energy corridors.

Ultimately, US policy in the Eastern Mediterranean reflects a broader strategy of connecting geopolitical stability with energy security. The region’s future will depend on its ability to overcome historical rivalries and create networks that connect Europe, the Middle East, and Asia in a manner that promotes both regional prosperity and US strategic interests.

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<sup>15</sup>Port Economics, Management and Policy. “Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).”

<sup>16</sup>Institute of Policy Research and International Relations (IPRI). “Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).” 2024.

<sup>17</sup>Jackson, Karen, Jiandan Li, and Serena Masino. “COSCO and the Privatisation of Piraeus Port: A Tale of Three Piers.” *European Journal of Industrial Relations* 31, no. 2 (2025): 233–252.