

The Fourth Power Doctrine: France Completes the Eastern Mediterranean Centre. Poseidon's Wrath Enters Ankara's War Calculus

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The Eastern Mediterranean needs a centre, not a patron. Israel, Greece and Cyprus are it.[1] They read Turkey as a system that converts geography into leverage, NATO membership into insulation, occupation into depth, migration into pressure and defence exports into reach. Without European power, Ankara reduces their alignment to a local coalition, recasts a systemic threat as bilateral disputes and negotiates each crisis back to its latest gain.

That is the Fourth Power Doctrine: France completes the centre with European authority, escalation control and strategic permanence without command.

The Completion Power

The United States remains indispensable in a wider war but cannot found the Eastern Mediterranean order. Washington recognises the Turkish threat while preserving Ankara's utility in NATO, the Black Sea, Syria, migration and regional diplomacy. Intervention still depends on presidential chemistry and competing theatres. Paris cannot make that trade at Greek and Cypriot expense without surrendering its Mediterranean position.

The Fourth Power Doctrine is the Eastern Mediterranean application of Lisbon 2.0. Lisbon's second life begins when Article 42(7) ceases to be treaty language and becomes force, industry, stockpiles, mobility, command and reflex. NATO remains indispensable against external war. It cannot answer coercion by an insider with a veto over the Alliance itself.

Turkey can veto NATO. It cannot veto Lisbon. France therefore does not enter a local coalition. It operationalises Europe's own defence architecture at its most exposed frontier.[2]

Turkey contests French power in European defence and across the arc from the Aegean and Cyprus through Libya, Syria, the Levant and Suez to the Red Sea, the Gulf, Africa and the Indian Ocean. Across Africa, Ankara has converted French retreat into Turkish infrastructure, finance, standards, education, security and influence, then carried that architecture into French society.[3] Greek or Cypriot vulnerability subordinates French access along that arc to Ankara.

Within the Union, only the Fifth Republic combines presidential command, an independent nuclear deterrent, sovereign intelligence, carrier aviation, expeditionary reach, an autonomous defence industry and a permanent Security Council seat. The deterrent raises the stakes in Ankara's calculus; the Security Council seat shields military outcomes from lawfare, diplomatic erosion and reversal. France's decisive capability is not a platform. It is sovereign decision: the power to lead European coalitions, act with NATO allies without NATO consensus and carry the campaign beyond the opening deployment.

Israel is already dismantling Turkey's gate system. The Constantinople Protocol codifies it. Coercion begins not with closure but administration: a port order, an overflight restriction, a delayed service, an insurance condition or regulatory ambiguity. Administration becomes discretion; discretion becomes veto. French sovereignty begins with redundancy: ports, airspace, energy corridors, cables and logistics independent of Turkish consent. Under the Protocol, no Turkish gate remains singular.[4]

From Alignment to Armed Commitment

France moved while the Union hesitated. In 2020, as Ankara used armed escorts, maritime revisionism and its intervention in Libya to manufacture facts, Paris backed Greek and Cypriot sovereignty, linked their defence to European sovereignty and deployed air and naval power.

Alignment became treaty in 2021. Article 2 of the Franco-Greek strategic partnership requires assistance by all appropriate means, including armed force, when both governments determine that either state has suffered armed aggression.[5] The agreement institutionalised consultation, staff coordination, intelligence and operations. Its 2026 renewal, 24 Rafale aircraft and the FDI frigate programme embedded French systems in Greek doctrine, training, maintenance and force development.[6] Retreat now carries a French price: abandoning Greece after an unambiguous attack would damage French industry, treaty credibility, European leadership and the authority of the Fifth Republic.

With Cyprus, France built presence rather than a bilateral guarantee. The 2017 defence agreement entered into force in 2020, opening Cypriot ports and infrastructure to French access and recurring exercises. Macron had already defined Cyprus as a strategic port of call for the French Navy and the Charles de Gaulle carrier group. In December 2025, France became the first European Union member to establish a strategic partnership with Cyprus across defence, security, industry, innovation and European coordination.[7]

QUAD and EUNOMIA turned access into interoperability. When Cyprus was struck in March 2026, France coordinated with Greece and deployed Mistral air defence, Rafale aircraft and the frigate Languedoc to reinforce the island.[8] Macron then converted deployment into doctrine. In Nicosia, he declared that an attack on Cyprus was an attack on Europe and that signed commitments carried armed force. In Athens the following month, he defined Article 42(7) as an obligation reinforced by the Franco-Greek clause and by common aircraft, frigates, weapons and exercises.

Ankara protested the Franco-Cypriot relationship, rejected foreign military access to the island and treated French presence as a change in the balance.[9]

Paris Reads the Same Map

Only Athens and Nicosia stand closer to Jerusalem on the Turkish file. French and Israeli defence and foreign ministries, security services and intelligence establishments read Turkish power in Cyprus, Syria, Libya and access routes as one system.

Ofer Bronchtein, President Macron's adviser on the Middle East and the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, and a close friend of mine, translated Israeli threat perception for Paris and French intent for Jerusalem. Beneath politics, he kept open a channel that already carried the Turkish file. France and Israel must now institutionalise it.[10]

Gaza and Lebanon divide Paris and Jerusalem over force, sequencing and trust in institutions, not over Israel's security or the disarmament of Hamas and Hezbollah. Palestine is the deeper dispute, but rhetoric outruns policy. Israeli politicians denounce Oslo; the state has never annulled it and still invokes it as the framework governing relations on the ground.[11]

A demilitarised Palestinian state that recognises Israel, secured by enforceable guarantees, remains the only political settlement capable of preserving a Jewish and democratic Israel. It is also the core of the French position: Hamas excluded, Israeli security guaranteed and Palestinian statehood within a two-state settlement.[12]

That position places Paris and Ankara on opposite sides of the Palestinian outcome. France requires institutions, demilitarisation, a functioning Palestinian Authority and a negotiated settlement. Turkey legitimises Hamas, weakens the Authority, interferes in Jerusalem and

converts Palestinian suffering into regional leverage. Ankara supports Palestine in language and destroys its statehood in practice.[13]

Macron used the initiative to project authority abroad. Jerusalem treated it as hostile theatre, strengthened the initiative it opposed and widened the breach without altering the alignment on Turkey.[14]

France opposes specific Israeli policies, not Israel or its security. Jerusalem mistakes disputes with Macron for French enmity. Paris lets the Palestinian dispute block coordination with the region's leading power in intelligence, air defence, cyber and rapid response. The two capitals need no intimacy. They need a protected Turkey channel across defence, diplomacy, security and intelligence.

The SAMP/T Test

In July 2026, Macron confirmed the resumption of French, Italian and Turkish technical work on a possible SAMP/T transfer.[15] SAMP/T is not a procurement file. It is the French test of whether Article 42(7) begins after aggression or at the licensing table. A guarantee that activates only after attack is law without strategy.

Export law is the first layer of collective defence. Common Position 2008/944/CFSP bars licences where there is a clear risk of aggressive use, territorial claims backed by force, regional destabilisation or danger to Member States and allies.[16] Turkey occupies northern Cyprus, retains a casus belli against Greece, militarises the occupation and contests the sovereignty of two European Union members. It is not a legitimate recipient of French strategic air defence.

SAMP/T must remain closed to Turkey. The prohibition must cover export, transfer, sustainment, certification, integration and joint production. A transfer would arm the power France may be required to deter, invert the logic of Article 42(7) and turn French industry into the supplier of the threat French forces may be called to defeat.[17]

France was the exception. SAMP/T will decide whether it remains one.

A French shield cannot protect the state threatening the allies France is bound to defend. In this theatre, defence exports are strategy.

Poseidon's Wrath Means War

Turkey triggers Poseidon's Wrath when it uses occupied Cyprus operationally: forces, aircraft, drones, missiles, naval assets, intelligence installations or command structures employed against Cyprus, Greece, Israel or critical infrastructure, or reinforcements intended

to impose an irreversible military fact.[18] Once the occupation becomes the mechanism of war, it becomes the theatre of war. The war aim precedes the first shot: defeat the attacking force, block Turkish reinforcement, dismantle the occupation's military infrastructure, remove Turkish control and restore the Republic of Cyprus across the island.

Not contain it. Not refreeze it. End it.

The occupation survived because diplomacy lowered the temperature, preserved the coercive engine and converted each Turkish gain into the baseline for the next negotiation. The Republic of Cyprus is the island's internationally recognised sovereign state; the Security Council declared the attempted secession invalid and required states neither to recognise nor assist it.[19] Armed aggression entitles Nicosia to exercise self-defence, invoke allied assistance and activate Article 42(7) without a NATO decision or Turkish consent. A strike on Greek territory engages the Franco-Greek defence treaty. If occupied Cypriot territory is used against Israel, Nicosia can lawfully call Israeli power into the theatre. Diplomacy governs the unresolved conflict until Turkey opens war. It cannot preserve the occupation afterwards.

The end state is one sovereign Republic restored across the island. Turkish Cypriots remain equal citizens. Settlers brought after 1974 without lawful status are repatriated to Turkey. Nicosia restores government, security, property and civil order.

Poseidon's Wrath assigns four sovereign functions. Nicosia sets the trigger, invokes allied assistance and defines the war aim. Athens provides bases, continuity and the nearest Hellenic force to the Turkish theatre. Jerusalem delivers intelligence, early warning, air and missile defence, cyber, precision and the tempo that breaks the opening phase. Paris begins where the strike ends: France holds the maritime theatre, seals reinforcement routes, protects the seabed and critical corridors, sustains the air and naval posture, manages escalation and consolidates victory.[20]

Scenarios matching Poseidon's Wrath already sit on French defence planning tables: the defence of Cyprus, rapid deployment, combined action with Greece, Eastern Mediterranean manoeuvres, allied reinforcement, multinational operations and sustained access from the Levant through Suez to the Red Sea.[21] Prevention ceased to be the question in Paris long ago. Containment is no longer the plan. France is planning how to enter Poseidon's Wrath, make it overwhelming, sustain the campaign and turn victory into durable order.

Turkey makes the war French by attacking European territory, a French ally or the Mediterranean order on which French power rests. Paris and Nicosia must codify Article 42(7) and their strategic partnership in a mutual assistance protocol covering consultation, host nation support, French access, secure communications and the protection of ports, airfields, energy sites and undersea infrastructure.

National commands remain sovereign. A permanent classified architecture among the four states, separate from EUNOMIA, must align threat assessment, triggers, attribution, missions, communications and the political end state. It must synchronise state power, direct the combat plan across air, sea, seabed, intelligence and cyber, and secure wartime continuity across ports, aviation, energy, shipping, insurance, legal defence, fuel, maintenance, medical support, evacuation and logistics.

At the hour of decision, France must be there.

Endnotes

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[20] Shay Gal, [“Israel Is No Longer Only an Air Power”](#), Israel Hayom, 10 June 2026.

[21] Presidency of the French Republic, [“Déplacement à Chypre”](#), 9 March 2026.