

No More Patrons:
Israel, Greece and Cyprus Must Build Power Beyond Washington

Why the Eastern Mediterranean needs a Lisbon 2.0 doctrine before Turkey, Russia and American uncertainty redraw Europe's security map

by Shay Gal

(Shay Gal works with governments and defence leadership on sovereign risk, alliance leverage, and cross-theatre security dynamics. He previously served as Vice President of External Relations at Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) and as a senior advisor to Israeli government ministers.)

Copyright: @ 2026 Research Institute for European and American Studies (www.rieas.gr) Publication date: 1 May 2026

Note: The article reflects the opinion of the author and not necessarily the views of the Re-search Institute for European and American Studies

There are moments when a region discovers that its most dangerous error was not about its enemies, but about its friends.

Israel, Greece and Cyprus have reached that moment. Greece has faced it in the Aegean, in islands framed by Ankara as negotiable geography, and in a standing threat of war over rights it is entitled to exercise. Cyprus has lived it through occupation, division, drilling and the normalisation of an illegal reality on European soil. Israel has come to it through Syria, Gaza, Ankara's rhetoric and the arrival of Turkey as a strategic actor near its operational perimeter. Disputes are used as pressure theatre.

Europe understands fragments. Washington understands it differently. That gap is now decisive. Europe sanctions Russia within hours, yet avoids naming Turkey for what it is. It punishes the external threat and absorbs the internal one.

A System, Not a Crisis

The Turkish challenge is not a crisis. It is a system. Turkey is not assessed by file. It is read as a structure. From the Aegean to Syria, from Cyprus to Libya, these are not separate arenas. They form a single strategic envelope. The Turkish occupied areas of the Republic of Cyprus, the Aegean, Syria, Libya, the Bosphorus, energy routes, seabed claims, migration pressure, drones, defence exports, Islamist leverage, Russian channels, NATO veto power. Each file is used to leverage the others. Russia pressures from the outside. Turkey operates from within. Iran coerces through force. Turkey conditions through control. Ankara does not test limits. It exploits vacuums. Escalation patterns are tested. Response thresholds are measured. Control renders closure unnecessary. **[1]** Coercion begins with control.

Any serious Eastern Mediterranean doctrine begins with one line: Israel, Greece and Cyprus cannot outsource their security to the United States. They should work with Washington. They cannot depend on it. Not now. Not under Donald Trump. Not when Washington treats a dangerous regional actor as useful because it serves another purpose.

India learned this long ago. Washington knew what Pakistan was. It knew the double game, the generals, the proxies, the manipulation. It returned anyway, because Pakistan offered access, channels and utility. India paid the price for a relationship that made sense in Washington and none in Delhi. The lesson is simple: the United States can recognise your threat and still sustain it. **[2]**

Turkey is not Pakistan. The structure is familiar. Make yourself useful enough and contradiction is absorbed. Ankara applies this inside NATO. It buys Russian systems and seeks Western ones. It mediates between Russia and Ukraine while avoiding alignment. It condemns Israel while remaining useful to Washington on Syria, Gaza, NATO, the Black Sea and migration. It pressures Greece and Cyprus while presenting itself as indispensable to Europe. It is leverage.

Under Trump, the risk sharpens. Power and transaction converge. Allies cannot separate state interest from personal instinct. His business history in Turkey, including Trump Towers Istanbul and his past acknowledgment of conflict, is not anecdotal. **[3]** It defines uncertainty. The risk is structural. Dependence becomes reckless.

Europe, despite hesitation, is the safer partner. Not because it is faster. It is not. Not because it is braver. It rarely is. It is safer because its interests are structural. Greece

and Cyprus are not clients of Europe. They are Europe. Their sovereignty sits inside the Union. Washington can pivot. Europe cannot. Pressure on Greece and Cyprus is pressure on the Union itself.

That is the argument Athens, Nicosia and Jerusalem must impose. Turkey is not peripheral. It is the southern test of European sovereignty. If Europe cannot defend Cyprus, secure Greek air and maritime space, protect infrastructure linking Israel, Cyprus and Greece, or respond to coercion by a NATO member, then Europe has no autonomy. It has vocabulary. If Europe cannot protect its own, its sovereignty is an illusion.

Macron's visit to Cyprus and Greece placed this issue where it belongs. [4] Article 42.7, mutual assistance between EU member states in case of armed aggression, creates obligation. The shift is from language to application.

NATO cannot solve this. It was not built to confront pressure from within its own alliance. Article 5 was never designed to settle disputes inside NATO. [5] NATO does not act against its own members. Article 5, collective defence against external attack, produces ambiguity. Article 4, consultation, produces delay. [6]

Cyprus exposes the flaw. EU member. Not in NATO. Turkey inside NATO. Outside the EU. Ankara operates across frameworks. Europe waits inside them. That is not strategy. It is paralysis.

Lisbon, Not Illusion

Lisbon is different because Turkey cannot veto it. Article 42.7, mutual assistance, creates obligation. Article 222, solidarity in crises, creates mobilisation. Article 46 enables coalition of the willing. The structure exists. The failure is political. Lisbon creates a legal obligation. Article 5 creates a political option. [7]

Lisbon 2.0 must turn treaty language into operational policy. It must act before escalation, not after. It must define coercion below the threshold as actionable: hostile drilling, armed escorts, airspace violations, threats of war, pressure on cables, intimidation of vessels, cyber attacks on infrastructure, weaponised migration, maritime erasure. These are not incidents. They are method.

The Turkish occupation of Cyprus returns to the centre. The occupied north no longer functions as a frozen conflict. It operates as a forward node. This is no longer only a Cypriot or Hellenic issue. It is part of Israel's security environment. The threat is not abstract. It is embedded and operational.

Energy follows the same pattern. Drilling, pressure, delay. The corridor linking Israel, Cyprus and Greece is not economic. It is sovereign infrastructure. If Europe cannot secure it, connectivity is fiction.

Libya is part of the system. The maritime memorandum is not technical. It redraws the map through a fragile state.

The Aegean is not bilateral. It is structural. A permanent grey zone around an EU member state is a strategic failure.

Syria brings Turkey into Israel's operational calculus. Turkish proximity affects freedom of action. That alone links Israel directly to the Eastern Mediterranean balance.

The Bosphorus extends the system into the Black Sea. Turkey controls passage under the Montreux Convention and conditions flow without breaching it. **[8]** Control replaces closure. Control of strategic infrastructure defines sovereignty in practice. **[9]**

Akkuyu reflects the same logic. A nuclear project built by Russia and embedded in a NATO state. War, sanctions, pressure, none dislodge it. It is positioning.

Turkey is harder to deter because it is harder to dismiss. Industry, exports, reach. It does not need victory. It needs to raise the cost of resistance.

Israel, Greece and Cyprus must build capability before messaging. Maritime awareness, air and missile defence, counter drone integration, undersea protection, cyber integration, legal preemption, coordinated planning, hardened infrastructure, aligned procurement. Structure matters.

In serious planning, maritime escalation scenarios are structured. Under a defined contingency framework named Poseidon's Wrath, **[10]** a coordinated response would neutralise forward infrastructure, degrade operational reach and restore the effective sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus if thresholds are crossed. Not aggression. Enforcement.

Deterrence means prepared cost. Every move answered in another domain. Pressure Cyprus triggers Europe. Pressure Greece triggers Israel. Target infrastructure triggers sanctions. Use NATO triggers Lisbon. Use migration triggers response. Control defines deterrence.

Europe must be driven into this role. Driven by reality. Today the pressure is southern. Tomorrow it shifts. Greenland already showed that sovereignty can be

pressured by an ally. If Europe cannot define response because the actor is inconvenient, it has no doctrine.

Lisbon 2.0 becomes continental logic. Against Russia, against Turkey, and in a future where the United States itself becomes a source of pressure. No external actor decides what in Europe is negotiable.

The United States remains necessary, but it is no longer a foundation. Europe hesitates, yet its interests will compel alignment. Turkey exploits both, shaping outcomes while others debate them. Israel, Greece and Cyprus cannot wait for clarity from outside. They must build structure where others offer process, power where others offer language. The Eastern Mediterranean does not need a patron. It needs a centre. They can be that centre, and once it exists, Europe will align with it and Turkey will have to face it.

Endnotes

[1] Shay Gal, [“Hormuz Closes. Bosphorus Conditions”](#), *To Vima International Edition*, March 30, 2026.

[2] Shay Gal, [“The Pakistan Trap: Israeli Analyst Explains Why Washington Keeps Picking Pakistan Over India”](#), *The EurAsian Times*, April 24, 2026.

[3] Zeke J. Miller, [“President Trump Said in 2015 That He Has a ‘Little Conflict of Interest’ in Turkey”](#), *Time*, April 19, 2017.

[4] Reuters, [“France’s Macron Says EU Mutual Assistance Clause Is Unambiguous”](#), April 25, 2026,

[5] Shay Gal, [“For Turkey, Article 5 Is Dead”](#), *Kathimerini*, September 29, 2025.

[6] North Atlantic Treaty Organization, [“The North Atlantic Treaty”](#), Washington, DC, April 4, 1949, arts. 4 and 5.

[7] European Union, [“Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union”](#), arts. 42(7) and 46.

[8] [“Convention Regarding the Régime of the Straits”](#), Montreux, July 20, 1936, arts. 1, 2, 20, and 21, UK Treaty Series no. 30, 1937.

[9] Shay Gal, [“From Akrotiri to Pituffik: Why Europe Must Control the Bases That Shape Its Security”](#), *High North News*, March 23, 2026.

[10] Shay Gal, [“Northern Cyprus Is Also an Israeli Problem”](#), *Israel Hayom*, July 29, 2025