TÜRKİYE ENERGY STRATEGIES AND POLICIES RESEARCH CENTRE

STRATEGIC SCENARIO ANALYSIS REPORT



A POSSIBLE TÜRKİYE–GREECE ARMED CONFLICT IN THE AEGEAN AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Escalation Dynamics, the Israel Factor, a Four-Scenario Model and a "Table Power"-Centred Strategic Assessment

Prepared by

TESPAM Kızılelma Institute

October 2026

TESPAM

Türkiye Energy Strategies and Policies Research Centre

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This report is not a war plan; it is a scenario analysis for the purposes of deterrence and crisis management, based on open sources and the conceptual assessments of retired military experts.

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Prepared by: TESPAM Kızılelma Institute

Publisher: Türkiye Energy Strategies and Policies Research Centre (TESPAM)

Publication Type: Strategic Scenario Analysis Report

Publication Date: October 2026

Citation System: APA 7

Contact: info@tespam.org

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Suggested Citation (APA 7)

TESPAM Kızılelma Institute. (2026). *A possible Türkiye–Greece armed conflict in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean: Escalation dynamics, the Israel factor, a four-scenario model and a “table power”-centred strategic assessment* (Strategic Scenario Analysis Report). Türkiye Energy Strategies and Policies Research Centre.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CEF	Connecting Europe Facility
DEHUKAM	Ankara University Research Centre for the Law of the Sea
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EU	European Union
FSRU	Floating Storage and Regasification Unit
GCASC	Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSI	Great Sea Interconnector
HVDC	High-Voltage Direct Current
ICJ	International Court of Justice
LANDCOM	NATO Allied Land Command
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
MDCA	Mutual Defence Cooperation Agreement
MİLGEM	National Ship Project
MPA	Marine Protection Area
MUGEM	National Aircraft Carrier
NAMFI	NATO Missile Firing Installation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NAVTEX	Navigational Telex (Navigational Warning System for Mariners)
NOTAM	Notice to Air Missions
SSB	Presidency of Defence Industries
TANAP	Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline
TAP	Trans Adriatic Pipeline
TBMM	Grand National Assembly of Türkiye
TESPAM	Türkiye Energy Strategies and Policies Research Centre
TRNC	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle / Armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UMV	Unmanned Maritime Vehicle
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

Executive Summary

The disputes between Türkiye and Greece in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean —the continental shelf, territorial waters, the exclusive economic zone (EEZ), the militarisation of the islands, the political status of Cyprus, the Meriç (Evros) line and migration— have been managed "just below the threshold of open conflict" for more than half a century. This report sets out the picture that could emerge if that threshold were crossed. It does so within a four-scenario model, taking into account the technical assumptions of retired senior military experts with many years of service in the field, and testing the relevant approaches against open-source data.

The main findings of the report can be summarised as follows:

- **What would start a war is not ordinary friction but a "threshold event" that involves loss of life and has an identifiable perpetrator:** Exchanges of fire on the Meriç, migrant push-back incidents, dogfights and radar lock-ons are "grey zone" behaviours that both sides have internalised over decades. The sinking or shooting down of a warship, an aircraft or a seismic research vessel, by contrast, could set off an automatic retaliation dynamic through public opinion and the rules of engagement. Distinguishing realistically between these two is essential in any analysis.
- **At the operational level, Türkiye holds clear advantages in geography, mass, unmanned systems, electronic warfare and logistics:** Greece is trying to close the quality gap with Rafale/Meteor, F-16 Viper, FDI frigates, Type 214 submarines and the roughly €3 billion Achilles Shield integrated air-defence programme it signed with Israel in August 2026. Yet this is not enough for it to mount an effective defence against Türkiye.
- **The strategic outcome can take shape independently of the operational outcome:** The first use of force against an EU member state would bring into play costs such as Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union, the mutual-assistance clause of the 2021 France–Greece strategic partnership agreement, sanctions, capital flight and loss of tourism and transit revenues. Of course, it is not clear who would carry out the first attack. On the other hand, Türkiye keeps the equipment to deliver a very rapid and hard response to a Greek first strike on constant alert. The decisive question will therefore be less "who strikes faster" than "what order will be established when the war ends, and what legitimate gains will Türkiye bring to the table."
- **The most likely paths (S1–S2) are a managed crisis or a conflict limited to hours:** A short multi-front war (S3) is of low probability; a prolonged and internationalised war (S4) is the least probable but the most destructive scenario.

- **Energy infrastructure is both the most fragile and the most deterrent element of the conflict:** International nodes such as TANAP–TAP, TürkAkım (TurkStream), the Dedeağaç (Alexandroupolis) FSRU, Piraeus and the Great Sea Interconnector (GSI) serve the parties as "mutual hostages" as much as "untouchables."
- **The regional balance of power is shifting in Türkiye's favour:** The easing of the domestic security burden through the "Terror-Free Türkiye" process, the resolution of problems in the East and Southeast to a large extent, growing influence in Syria and Iraq, the Mecca Defence Agreement signed with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan (August 2026) and normalisation with Armenia have markedly raised Türkiye's capacity for external operations and alliance-building.
- **This rise has sharply heightened Israel's threat perception:** The report's central thesis is that Israel, unable to risk a direct confrontation with Türkiye, aims to pit Türkiye against Greece as the lowest-cost way —and, as time works against it, the "last resort"— of weakening Türkiye. That the Greek national command-and-control architecture will be built by Israel itself under Achilles Shield is the most concrete indicator of this thesis.
- **The "preemptive strike" scenarios circulated in the Greek press lack internal consistency:** These scenarios bear a striking doctrinal kinship with the operational design Israel applied against Lebanon (2024) and Iran (2025). It is quite possible that these texts derive from an Israeli planning culture. Yet they do not amount to a plan that Greece could carry out against Türkiye.
- **The "cleanest" trigger of a war lies on the legal-cartographic front:** If Türkiye enacts the Blue Homeland (Mavi Vatan) Law and Greece answers by declaring 12-mile territorial waters, a "double trigger" arises that would directly activate the 1995 casus belli resolution. At a time when tension among the great powers is rising globally, the risk of such a local war growing into an international one is far higher than in 1974 and 1996.
- **Türkiye's military-technological superiority is a clear asymmetry that deepens with each passing year:** Defence and aerospace exports surpassing USD 10 billion for the first time in 2025, a domestic-content ratio above 80 per cent, the Steel Dome (Çelik Kubbe) with deliveries under way, Tayfun and SİPER in serial production, Kızılelma —the first unmanned combat aircraft to fire an air-to-air missile beyond visual range— KAAN, whose prototypes will fly at the end of 2026, and the MUGEM aircraft carrier now under construction have carried Türkiye to a force structure that cannot be compared with Greece's. In a war that could be started under Israeli direction, it is highly likely that Greece's military capacity would be broken down within a very short time.
- **Türkiye has the capacity to deliver a rapid and comprehensive response to an attack against it:** If the Aegean Army, the First Army and the Turkish Peace Forces in Cyprus moved simultaneously with their land, naval and air elements, the complete recovery of

the Eastern Aegean islands, Cyprus and Western Thrace within a short time is a militarily realistic possibility. This capacity is examined in detail in the scenario model (S3).

- **The US will not be able to enter a hot conflict with Türkiye while its strategic competition with China continues:** The US National Defense Strategy of January 2026 left primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defence to the European allies. Engaging in conflict with a Türkiye that has NATO's second-largest army and holds the Straits, İncirlik and Kürecik would shake America's global position in favour of China and Russia. A possible US intervention, in turn, would push Türkiye towards alternative centres of power and could fundamentally change the balances in Eurasia. NATO, for its part, would remain inoperative in an intra-alliance war. This reality is the same for Republican and Democratic administrations alike.
- **De-escalation is in the interest of Greek society above all:** It is the Greek people who would pay the price of Israel's calculation to weaken Türkiye. For this reason, pressure from Greek public opinion on its government that reduces tension and puts dialogue first is the most realistic way to keep Greece from being used as an instrument of third parties' strategic calculations.

I. Introduction: Purpose, Scope and Method

I.I. Purpose and Scope

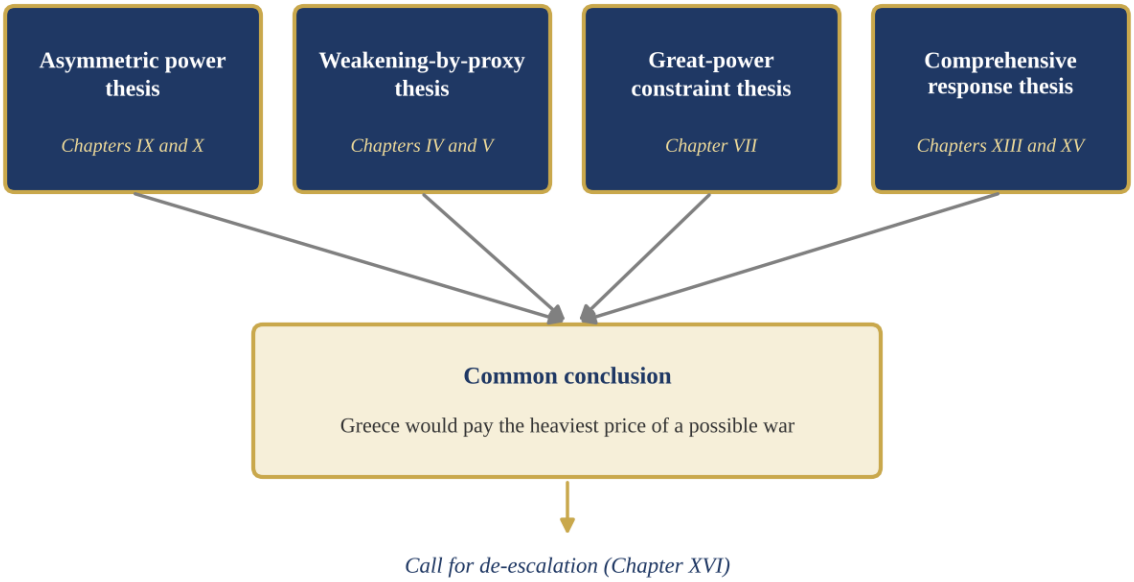
Without doubt, war is as much the continuation of politics by other means as it is the *bankruptcy* of politics. In this context, the aim of the report is less to depict a possible Türkiye–Greece armed conflict than to show through which thresholds such a conflict could arise, into which scenario branches it could divide, and what the political, economic and energy-security costs of each branch might be for Türkiye. The scope covers four geographical areas —the Aegean, the Eastern Mediterranean, Thrace (the Meriç line) and Cyprus— and the political-military situation as of autumn 2026.

I.II. Conceptual Framework and Core Theses

The report rests on an integrated reading that treats the technical assumptions of retired senior military experts with many years of service in the field together with open-source data. In this spirit, the study is built around four core theses that complement one another:

- **The asymmetric power thesis:** Türkiye's technical, military and potential power is clearly superior to Greece's; with the generational leap in the defence industry, this gap widens every year (Chapters IX and X).
- **The weakening-by-proxy thesis:** Israel, which is running out of tools in the face of Türkiye's regional rise, regards weakening Türkiye by setting it at war with Greece as a last resort (Chapters IV and V).
- **The great-power constraint thesis:** In a conjuncture in which strategic competition with China continues, the US will not be able to enter a hot conflict with Türkiye, and NATO will remain inoperative in an intra-alliance conflict (Chapter VII).
- **The comprehensive response thesis:** In the event of a Greek first strike —under Israeli direction— Türkiye has the capacity to retake the Eastern Aegean islands, Cyprus and Western Thrace through a simultaneous and rapid operation; the order established at the end of the war will determine how this capacity is translated to the table (Chapters XIII and XV). The common conclusion of these four theses is clear: the party that would pay the heaviest price for a possible war is Greece. It is precisely for this reason that one of the final chapters of the report is devoted to the steps that Greek society and politics should take towards de-escalation (Chapter XVI).

Figure 1. The report's four core theses and their common conclusion



Source: TESPAM model (Section I.II).

I.III. Method

The study combines the tradition of qualitative scenario planning (Schwartz, 1991) with the escalation-ladder approach (Kahn, 1965). Instead of a quantitative inventory comparison, the military balance is assessed in line with Biddle's (2004) "force employment" approach —that is, by looking not only at platform numbers but at integration, training, logistics and geography. Why a war might break out and how it might end are read through Fearon's (1995) rationalist explanations of war —information asymmetry, the commitment problem and indivisibility— and Schelling's (1966) concept of coercive diplomacy.

The model is built on two axes: (i) **the intensity and duration of the conflict** (crisis → hours → days → weeks) and (ii) **the degree of internationalisation** (remaining bilateral → diplomatic/military intervention by third parties). Four scenarios are derived from the intersection of these two axes; for each, the triggers, the logic of development, the probability assessment and the cost-benefit balance for Türkiye are given.

I.IV. Limitations

- The study rests entirely on open sources; it contains no classified information on inventories, munitions stocks or rules of engagement.
- The probability assessments are not the output of a quantitative model but structured expert judgement.

- The report deliberately avoids detail at the tactical and target level; the operational concept is discussed at the strategic-operational level.

II. Map of the Dispute Areas

The Turkish–Greek disputes are not independent problems but a **cluster of problems** that feed one another: the breadth of territorial waters affects the continental shelf, the continental shelf affects the EEZ, the EEZ affects energy exploration and cable/pipeline routes, and these in turn directly affect the military status of the islands. Table 1 classifies this cluster by escalation potential.

Table 1. Dispute headings and escalation potential

Dispute	Türkiye's position	Greece's position	Escalation potential
Territorial waters (6/12 miles)	Extension to 12 miles in the Aegean is considered a casus belli (TBMM, 1995)	Reserves the right to 12 miles under UNCLOS Art. 3	**Very high** — a unilateral declaration is itself a threshold event
Continental shelf / EEZ	Limited or zero effect for islands; principle of equity	Islands have full effect (UNCLOS Art. 121)	High — seismic exploration and NAVTEX crises
Militarisation of the islands	Violation of the demilitarised-status obligations of Lausanne (1923) and Paris (1947)	Right of self-defence under Art. 51 of the UN Charter	Medium-high — the first set of targets in a conflict
Islands/islets of uncertain sovereignty	"Grey zones" not transferred by treaty	All under Greek sovereignty	High — the 1996 Kardak precedent
Cyprus	Two-state solution; security of the TRNC	Integrity of the Republic of Cyprus; EU membership	High — post-1974 property and hydrocarbons
GSI cable route (off Kaşot)	Permit and notification requirement within its own continental shelf/EEZ	Freedom to lay cables in international waters	Medium-high — the 2024 naval shadowing
Blue Homeland Law and marine protected areas	Registration of jurisdiction areas in domestic law through a framework law; 6 miles preserved in the Aegean	A unilateral "map law" contrary to UNCLOS	**High** — very high if it triggers the 12-mile counter-move
Meriç (Evros) line and migration	Riverbed changes, push-back violations	Border security and the EU's external border	Low-medium — historically manageable
US presence at Dedeağaç (Alexandroupolis)	Indirectly erodes the Montreux balance	NATO logistics and deterrence	Low — not a direct cause of conflict, but a calculation multiplier

Source: UNCLOS (1982); Treaty of Lausanne (1923); Paris Peace Treaty (1947); compiled by TESPAM.

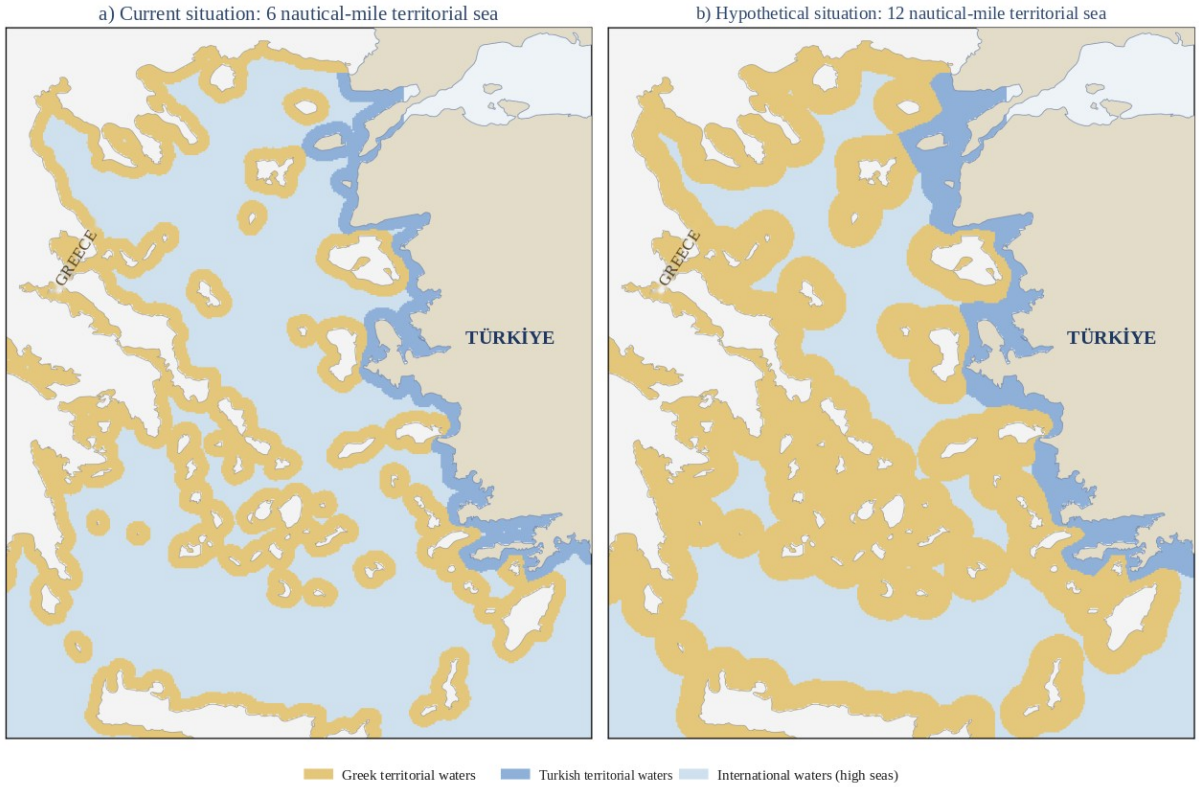
Map 1. Principal dispute areas in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean



Source: Treaty of Lausanne (1923); Paris Peace Treaty (1947); Milliyet (2025); Nexans (2026); Natural Earth boundary data. Locations and routes are approximate and schematic; the map does not constitute delimitation. Prepared by TESPAM.

It should be stressed in this regard that extending territorial waters to 12 miles is an indisputable red line for Türkiye and the “cleanest” trigger in the scenario model. For it is both a legal-political declaration and, in effect, turns the Aegean into a closed Greek internal sea. Moreover, Greece’s 2025 Marine Spatial Planning and its marine-park initiatives in the Aegean are read as an effort to reach the same result by “quiet” means; Türkiye’s response through its own spatial planning shows that the crisis continues on the legal-cartographic plane.

Map 2. Comparison of 6- and 12-nautical-mile territorial-water scenarios in the Aegean



Source: TESPAM calculation based on Natural Earth 1:10 million-scale coastline data. Territorial waters are drawn for illustration on the equidistance principle, with the median line used in overlapping areas; small islets and rocks are excluded because of scale, and the map is not an official depiction of boundaries.

II.I. The Legal-Cartographic Front: The Blue Homeland Law, 12 Miles and Civil Marine Protected Areas

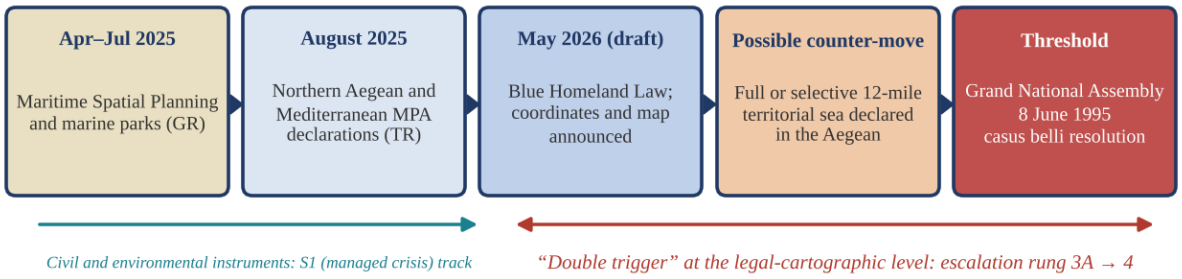
Over the last two years the centre of gravity of the rivalry in the Aegean has shifted from actual contact at sea to law and map-making. Greece published its Maritime Spatial Planning in April 2025 and, on 21 July 2025, declared two marine parks in the Aegean and Ionian seas. Türkiye's response came by the same means, that is, **through a sovereignty declaration of a civil and environmental character**. On 3 August 2025 the North Aegean Marine Protected Area off Gökçeada and the Mediterranean Marine Protected Area off Fethiye–Kaş–Finike were declared, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed that unilateral faits accomplis in semi-enclosed seas would not be accepted, that counter-steps would continue and that freedom of navigation would not be affected.

The second and far heavier link in this chain is **the Blue Homeland (Mavi Vatan) Law**. The draft framework law, shared with the public in May 2026 and based on the work of the Ankara University Maritime Law Research Centre (DEHUKAM), preserves the 6-mile territorial-sea limit in the Aegean; defines the regimes of internal waters, territorial sea, contiguous zone, continental shelf and EEZ in a single legal text; gives the President the authority to declare **special-status areas** beyond the EEZ for fisheries and conservation purposes; and,

for the first time, registers the Straits regime at statutory level in domestic law. Athens' reaction to this draft law was swift; the matter was taken to the EU agenda, and the Greek press read the law as "a new tension that could be carried onto the ground."

It is precisely at this point that the report's concept of the **"double trigger"** comes into play. The entry into force of the Blue Homeland Law —especially the official proclamation of coordinates and maps— could raise domestic political pressure in Athens to a level that confronts the Greek government with a need to "respond" ahead of the 2027 elections. The strongest response in the repertoire of Greek politics is a declaration of 12-mile territorial waters. Whether made across the whole Aegean or in a "selective" sector such as south of Crete, this step would directly trigger the Grand National Assembly's (TBMM) resolution of 8 June 1995, that is, the "casus belli" declared by Türkiye. In short, Türkiye's law and Greece's 12-mile scenario are two legal moves liable to trigger each other, and in the escalation model (Table 8) they appear as the most probable "planned" starting point of a war.

Figure 2. The "double trigger" chain on the legal-cartographic front



Source: Milliyet (2025, 2026); TBMM (1995) resolution; TESPAM escalation model (Table 8).

Yet the same front also offers a different instrument that leaves no need for war: **declarations of civil nature parks and marine protected areas.** This instrument is non-military and has high environmental legitimacy, the EU would struggle to criticise it given its own green agenda, and it is the very method Greece used in 2025; it allows Türkiye to make its claims in the Aegean concrete on the ground without firing a shot. In the model, this instrument is treated as the main tool of scenario S1 (managed crisis). It must not be forgotten, however, that each new declaration provokes a counter-declaration reflex in Athens, and that at the end of the chain the 12-mile threshold is still waiting.

III. Regional and Global Actors: Current Positioning and Strategic Steps

Far beyond being a bilateral equation, the Turkish–Greek dispute rests on the map of interests of regional and global actors. That map is examined below with data as of autumn 2026.

III.I. France: A Two-Track Actor

France's search to make up in the Mediterranean for the influence it has lost in North Africa (especially the Sahel) took concrete form in the strategic partnership agreement, containing a mutual-assistance clause, that it signed with Greece in 2021. Within this framework Greece procured Rafale aircraft and FDI (Belharra-class) frigates. The agreement is reported to have been renewed indefinitely. Nevertheless, in 2026 the Ankara–Paris axis has also seen a marked thaw. In this context, technical work continues on the possible supply of the SAMP/T air-defence system to Türkiye, while Baykar–Safran cooperation is causing open discomfort in Athens.

In short, France is a two-track actor that **builds an economic-industrial partnership with Türkiye in peacetime but is legally bound to stand with Greece in war.**

Yet for a France moving towards co-production with Türkiye in the defence industry, deploying militarily against Türkiye in a possible crisis would contradict Paris's own strategic interests. France's stance will therefore manifest itself as a form of diplomatic balancing rather than actual military intervention.

III.II. The GSI Project and the Nexans Factor

The Great Sea Interconnector (GSI), which has received a grant of around €657 million from the EU's Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), envisages an HVDC line of roughly 900 km between Crete and Cyprus.

Türkiye's shadowing in 2024, with its naval elements, of the seabed survey off Kaşot effectively halted the work. Nexans, the contractor, announced in January 2026 that the project's delivery schedule would slip as a result. The company's revised 2026 projections likewise foresee no fieldwork under the GSI during the year.

The reservations of South Cyprus over cost recovery and geopolitical risk also slow the project further. While this picture reflects the French contractor's effort not to jeopardise its relations with Türkiye, it also shows that another cause of the slowdown is a financing and risk-sharing dispute between Nicosia and Athens.

III.III. Israel and the Achilles Shield

The agreement of about €3 billion signed between Athens and Tel Aviv on 31 August 2026 provides for Israel to supply Greece with the David's Sling, SPYDER and Barak MX systems, MMR multi-mission radars and a new national command-and-control architecture developed by Rafael. According to Greek Defence Minister Dendias, the system will be delivered in stages and become fully operational within roughly 35 months. Athens' general modernisation plan of about €28 billion through 2036 also covers the purchase of up to 40 F-35s. **Yet this development, too, will not be enough to close the asymmetry between Türkiye and Greece.** By 2029, when the Achilles Shield is due to become fully operational, Türkiye will also have rolled out the Steel Dome more widely, increased serial production of Tayfun and SİPER, and made a generational leap in air power with the Eurofighter and KAAN (Chapter IX). On the other hand, while Türkiye produces its own munitions and equipment, Greece will be reinforcing its defence only with expensive imports that are hard to sustain, and the balance will again swing in Türkiye's favour.

III.IV. The US, the United Kingdom, China and Russia

- **The US:** Under the Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement (MDCA), the port of Dedeağaç (Alexandroupolis) has become a NATO logistics corridor (towards Romania, Bulgaria and Poland) that bypasses the Black Sea and the Straits. The port also hosts an FSRU (floating LNG storage and regasification) facility. Souda Bay on Crete is a US/NATO naval support facility for heavy-tonnage ships; NAMFI is a NATO missile firing range. The US's priority reflex in a conflict between two allies would be to separate the parties quickly and to prevent a rupture that pushes Türkiye towards Russia.
- **The United Kingdom:** The sovereign base areas in Cyprus (Akrotiri and Dhekelia) are the centre of air-power projection towards the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Any ground operation on the island touches a British area of interest directly. Therefore, even if the UK did not join a conflict on Cyprus as a party, it would try to step in for a rapid peace process.
- **China:** The Port of Piraeus, operated by COSCO, is the European gateway of the Belt and Road Initiative. A disruption of Aegean/Mediterranean maritime traffic would directly and swiftly move China to act in favour of a ceasefire.
- **Russia:** Commercial and "shadow fleet" traffic leaving the Black Sea ports (mainly Novorossiysk) depends on the Straits–Aegean line. Russia's attitude towards Türkiye will be directly tied to whether that line is kept open. On the other hand, the US position will also be an important factor shaping Russia's strategies.

Map 3. Strategic nodes of regional and global actors in the Eastern Mediterranean



Source: Compiled by TESPAM from the open-source information in Chapters III and VII. Locations are approximate; routes are schematic.

III.V. Regional Alignment

In the Eastern Mediterranean one can speak of two opposing legal-political blocs. On one side stands the Greek side, shaped by the Israel–GCASC (2010) and Egypt–Greece (2020) maritime-jurisdiction agreements and the EastMed pipeline vision; on the other, the Turkish side, with the Türkiye–Libya memorandum of understanding of 27 November 2019 —that is how the picture may be framed. Of course, recent developments have also increased the potential of other regional countries, Syria and Lebanon, to stand closer to Türkiye in general terms. Indeed, even Egypt is now closer to Türkiye than it has ever been.

On the other hand, the development that has changed this picture the most is the **Mecca Defence Agreement** signed between Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan on 7 August 2026. The agreement contains a collective-defence provision that treats an armed attack on one of the parties as an attack on all and refers to Article 51 of the UN Charter. In a scenario in par-

ticular where Greece starts the conflict with a preemptive strike, this provision places behind Türkiye the largest economy of the Gulf and a nuclear-armed country. Of course, in the most likely hot-conflict scenario even such support will not be needed, and the Mecca Defence Agreement will remain on the table as a deterrent.

IV. The Changing Balance of Power: Türkiye's Strategic Rise and Israel's Threat Perception

To read the Turkish–Greek dispute only as an equation between two countries would mean ignoring the profound power shift that has taken place in the region over the last two years. This chapter takes up the two faces of that shift together —Türkiye's strengthening both on the domestic front and in the region, and the threat perception this strengthening has created in Israel— and sets out one of the report's core theses, namely **the weakening-by-proxy thesis**.

IV.I. Consolidating the Domestic Front: "Terror-Free Türkiye" and the East–Southeast

For more than forty years, Türkiye has had to devote a significant share of its land forces, gendarmerie, intelligence capacity and defence budget to internal security, in particular to counter-terrorism in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia. The **"Terror-Free Türkiye"** process —which began in February 2025 and was institutionalised through the PKK's decision to dissolve itself in May 2025, the first disarmament ceremony in July 2025 and a commission set up within the TBMM— has the potential to ease this burden structurally. Although the process is not tied to a timetable —and President Erdoğan's statement of September 2026 points in the same direction— it continues and keeps reducing ethnic tension at the societal level. Indeed, positive reflections of the process can be observed in Syria and Iraq as well.

The strategic consequence of this development is threefold. First, the manpower and resources set aside for the internal threat can increasingly be transferred to external-operations and deterrence capacity. In other words, the Turkish Armed Forces are turning **from an army weighted towards internal security into an army weighted towards external operations**. Second, the fact that the problems in the East and Southeast have largely entered a path to resolution disables one of the most effective levers that external actors have used against Türkiye for decades. Third, the strengthening of social peace reduces the risk of a split on the domestic front in a possible external crisis and increases Türkiye's capacity to bear a long-running crisis. Without doubt, these three outcomes strengthen Türkiye to a degree that will change the calculations of its rivals in its own region.

IV.II. Regional Opening: Syria, Iraq, the Gulf and the Caucasus

- **Syria:** With the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, Türkiye became the closest regional partner of the new administration in Damascus; the March 2025 agreement envisaging the integration of the SDF into the Syrian state structure accelerated the process of transforming the threat on Türkiye's southern border. Türkiye's training-and-advisory role in the restructuring of the Syrian army has the potential to directly limit Israel's freedom of movement in Syrian airspace.
- **Iraq:** The Development Road project, energy and water cooperation and the weakening of the terrorist presence in Northern Iraq are turning Türkiye from a security actor in Iraq into an economic-logistics partner.
- **Saudi Arabia and Pakistan:** The Mecca Defence Agreement of 7 August 2026 has taken Türkiye's relations with the Gulf beyond mere normalisation to the level of collective defence. Türkiye has come under the same defence umbrella as the central country of the Arab world and a nuclear-armed Islamic country.
- **Armenia:** The e-visa arrangement expanded in December 2025, the Istanbul–Yerevan flights that began in March 2026, direct trade that began in May 2026 and the joint working group on reopening the Kars–Gyumri railway represent a historic breakthrough in a relationship that had been frozen for more than thirty years. This normalisation, which is advancing simultaneously with the Azerbaijan–Armenia peace process, closes Türkiye's chronic front in the Caucasus and strengthens the Middle Corridor. The common denominator of these four openings is that Türkiye's **number of active fronts is decreasing while its alliance capacity is increasing.** A state's capacity for external intervention is inversely proportional not only to the weapons it holds but also to the number of fronts it must manage at the same time; Türkiye is gaining on both sides of this equation simultaneously.

IV.III. Israel's Threat Perception

Türkiye's multi-dimensional rise has found a clear echo in Israeli security thinking. The Nagel Commission, set up by the Israeli government to review the defence budget and force structure, warned in its January 2025 report that Israel should be prepared for the possibility of a direct encounter with Türkiye in Syria and identified Türkiye as a new regional threat. An analysis published in the Greek press in September 2026 lists Israel's three red lines on Türkiye —Türkiye advancing in Syria beyond the north into the centre and south; Türkiye deploying radar, air-defence and missile systems in Syria; the emergence of infrastructure close to the Golan— and stresses that Israel's real fear is a chain of mutually triggering events slipping out of control.

Israel's strategic culture is based on preventing the emergence of any actor in its region that could reach an equal or superior military-technological capacity. In this context Türkiye

is a rival that differs from Iran and is far more formidable from Israel's point of view. This is because, first of all, it is a NATO member and has institutional ties with the US.

On the other hand, it has an economy integrated with the West, has built its own defence industry, is drawing closer to the Arab world and —unlike Iran— is a model that cannot be isolated in the international system. Above all, in a possible war, its military, economic, technological and soft-power capabilities give it the capacity to truly defeat Israel. In short, for Israel, Türkiye has become an actor that **grows stronger as time passes and cannot be balanced by conventional means**.

IV.IV. The Weakening-by-Proxy Thesis: Pitting Türkiye against Greece

The central thesis advanced by this report is as follows: **Israel cannot risk a direct military conflict with Türkiye; therefore, as the lowest-cost way of weakening Türkiye, it aims to set it at war with another actor, and with Greece as the most suitable candidate.** In pursuit of this aim, Israel also tried to trigger a war between Türkiye and Iran, but did not succeed. Today, Greece has taken Iran's place in this equation.

As can be foreseen, a direct Türkiye–Israel conflict would lead to a result that tests Israel's relationship with the US, unites the Arab world around Türkiye and multiplies Israel's already multi-front security burden. By contrast, a Türkiye–Greece war could produce results —casting Türkiye as the "aggressor" against an EU member, uniting the EU and Western public opinion against Türkiye, weakening the Turkish economy through sanctions, isolating Türkiye within NATO and drawing Türkiye's weight in Syria towards the Aegean— **without Israel risking a single soldier.**

The time dimension of the thesis lends it the character of a "last resort." As Türkiye consolidates its domestic front, widens its regional alliances and continues its generational leap in the defence industry, Israel's capacity to balance Türkiye will shrink a little more each year.

If this dynamic cannot be changed, Israel will in future fall into a far more helpless position against Türkiye in the Eastern Mediterranean and Syria. For Israel, therefore, weakening Türkiye by pitting it against another element appears, in a strategic equation in which time works against it, as **the last and most attractive option left**.

Table 2. Indicators of the weakening-by-proxy thesis

Indicator	Content	Meaning for the thesis
Achilles Shield (August 2026)	Israel building Greece's air defence and national command-and-control system	Israel embedding itself in the "nervous system" of a possible conflict and being able to initiate the conflict process
Fortifying Cyprus with Israeli systems	Israeli-origin systems in GCASC air defence	The Cyprus front also being tied into the same architecture
Nagel Commission (January 2025)	Türkiye defined at official level as a potential threat	Institutionalisation of the threat perception
Greek preemptive-strike scenarios (December 2025 – September 2026)	Doctrinal similarity to Israeli operational designs (Chapter V)	Preparing Greek public opinion for the idea of "striking first"
Israeli systems in the militarisation of the islands	Israeli-made air-defence elements on islands with demilitarised status	A third state's participation in unlawful militarisation
Trilateral (Israel–Greece–GCASC) military cooperation	Joint exercises, intelligence and defence-industry programmes	Construction of a permanent military axis

Two points should be underlined for the analytical robustness of the thesis:

- First, Greece is not a passive instrument in this equation but an actor with its own historical concerns and domestic political dynamics; Israel's role manifests itself not as *creating* the existing tension but as *feeding it, arming it and making it prone to being triggered*.
- Second, a Türkiye–Greece war that spirals out of control could also affect maritime trade in the Eastern Mediterranean and Israel's own energy-export routes. Israel's preference, therefore, would be less a large and long war than a wearing and limited conflict that would cast Türkiye as the "aggressor" in the international arena. These two points do not weaken the thesis; on the contrary, they clarify Türkiye's counter-strategy. That is: **what Israel wants is the war itself and for Türkiye to be seen in that war as the "first striker"; Türkiye's greatest strategic success will be not to fall into this trap.**

IV.V. Unlawful Militarisation of the Islands and Coordination with Israel

Articles 12 and 13 of the Treaty of Lausanne prohibited the establishment of naval bases and fortifications on the islands of Lesbos (Midilli), Chios (Sakız), Samos (Sisam) and Ikaria (Ahikerya) and limited the military presence there. Article 14 of the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty provided for the transfer of the Dodecanese (Onikiadalar) to Greece on condition that they remain demilitarised. Although Türkiye is not a party to the Paris Treaty, it maintains that the sovereignty over these islands was transferred subject to the condition of demilitarised status and that a breach of the condition makes the basis of the transfer of sovereignty disputable. Greece, for its part, cites the right of self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter and Türkiye's Aegean Army as justification.

Greece has deployed various air-defence, anti-tank and anti-drone elements on these islands, led by the Israeli-made SPYDER air-defence systems; the Achilles Shield, for its part, aims to tie these elements into an Israeli-built national command-and-control network. This adds a new dimension to the legal debate: the militarisation of islands with demilitarised status is no longer merely a bilateral dispute but takes the character of **a violation conducted through a third state's systems, training and network architecture**. In this context, the military facilities on the islands constitute, in a possible conflict, both the most legally defensible target set and the most visible field of Israel–Greece coordination.

V. Greek Preemptive-Strike Scenarios: Content, Source and Inconsistencies

V.I. The Content of the Scenario

Statements by Greek Chief of the General Staff General Dimitrios Choupis in December 2025 on a “long-range strategic preemptive strike” capability opened the way in the Greek press to a series of scenarios on Türkiye. The most comprehensive of these is the 24-hour crisis scenario published in the newspaper Ta Nea on 27 September 2026. The scenario consists of four phases: (i) Greek intelligence detecting preparatory activity in Turkish landing forces, UAV fleets and ballistic missiles, and the National Security Council convening; (ii) Greece applying electronic warfare to the Turkish radar and communications network, then striking Turkish air bases with Rafale and F-16 Viper aircraft and the landing forces in ports with Spike NLOS and Exocet systems; (iii) Türkiye responding with missiles and unmanned systems, and Greek Patriot systems and the new Kimon-class frigates meeting that response; (iv) the US, NATO and the EU pressing the parties for a ceasefire within 24 hours.

V.II. Doctrinal Kinship and the Question of Authorship

The design of the scenario bears a striking structural similarity to the operations Israel has carried out over the last two years: a first strike legitimised by an intelligence-based “early detection” narrative; blinding the opponent’s radar and communications network by electronic warfare in the opening phase; then simultaneously targeting air bases, launch elements and critical military infrastructure; and finally the assumption that the gain will be “frozen” by rapid intervention of international actors. This sequence overlaps almost one-to-one with the design of the opening operations Israel carried out against Hezbollah in Lebanon in September 2024 and against Iran in June 2025.

This similarity does not appear coincidental. For (i) Israel is itself building Greece’s national command-and-control architecture through the Achilles Shield, and the Israeli Ministry of Defence explicitly stresses that these systems are based on “operational experience gained in war”; (ii) a comprehensive defence-cooperation programme between Greece and Israel is in force for 2026; (iii) the most comprehensive scenario text was published only four weeks after the Achilles Shield agreement was signed. Assessed together, these indicators make it **highly probable that the Greek preemptive-strike scenarios are texts written by Israel or derived directly from Israel’s planning culture.** That authorship has not been proven by a publicly available document does not eliminate this possibility; on the contrary, it should be borne in mind that by their nature such texts are put into circulation through local media outlets and retired soldiers.

V.III. Inconsistencies of the Scenario

The Greek preemptive-strike scenario harbours deep inconsistencies in military and political logic. Table 3 sets out these inconsistencies systematically.

Table 3. Inconsistencies in the Greek preemptive-strike scenario

Assumption of the scenario	Inconsistency
Neutralising Turkish air bases in the first hours	Turkish air power is dispersed through the strategic depth of Anatolia; Greece's stock of long-range air-to-ground munitions is not large enough to neutralise this depth in the first wave. The air superiority and US support Israel had in its Iran operation are not available to Greece.
Blinding the Turkish radar and communications network by electronic warfare	Greek electronic-warfare capacity is largely dependent on foreign sources; Turkish systems, by contrast, are domestic, multi-layered and combat-tested.
Striking landing forces in port	Türkiye's deterrence in the Aegean rests not on landing ships but on UAVs/armed UAVs, unmanned maritime vehicles, coastal missile batteries and artillery.
International intervention within 24 hours	If this assumption holds, the military gain Greece achieves is frozen, but the political and legal cost of the "first striker" status remains permanently on Greece.
Legal ground	The assistance obligation under Art. 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union arises for a member "that is the victim of armed aggression"; a preemptive strike places Greece in the position of aggressor and weakens its own solidarity umbrella. By contrast, the Mecca Defence Agreement may activate Saudi Arabia's and Pakistan's collective-defence obligation towards an attacked Türkiye.
Timing	The Achilles Shield will not be fully operational until around 2029. Carrying out a preemptive strike today means leaving a country whose air defence is not yet integrated open to Turkish ballistic-missile and armed-UAV retaliation. That is strategic suicide.
Public opinion and domestic politics	Most of Greek public opinion does not want war. A war started before elections and ending in losses would be a political disaster for the government.

These inconsistencies make the following question unavoidable: why is a scenario whose military logic is this weak being put before the public? The report's assessment is that the scenario's real function is not military but **political-psychological**. What is aimed at in this regard can be thought of as accustoming Greek public opinion to the idea of "striking first," keeping the "Turkish threat" narrative alive in Western capitals, and lending legitimacy to large expenditures on Israeli systems. Yet, as Jervis (1976) showed, such scenarios can turn into **self-fulfilling prophecies** based on misreading the other side's intentions. The settling of an "Athens will strike first" perception in Ankara could push Türkiye as well towards preemptive thinking. And this is precisely the outcome that the weakening-by-proxy thesis explained in Chapter IV desires. Moreover, another consequence of these scenarios is that they mislead Greek public opinion about Türkiye's real capacity: as set out in Chapters IX and X, the price a first strike against Türkiye would bring to Greece is far beyond what scenarios of this kind depict.

VI. The Global Climate of Tension and the Risk of International War

The Turkish–Greek dispute is escalating in a conjuncture in which the international system is going through its most tense period in decades. The 2026 risk assessments of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), Chatham House and the International Crisis Group (ICG) stress that rivalry among the great powers has entered an "arm-wrestling" phase and that the system's capacity to bear this tension is being strained. The principal risk areas are a possible Chinese naval blockade around Taiwan, Russia–NATO tension along the Baltic and Polish line, the conflict dynamics on the Israel–Iran and US–Iran axes, and rivalry in the cyber and space domains.

This global environment exposes a possible Türkiye–Greece war, in three respects, to a far more dangerous ground than the crises of 1974 and 1996. Namely, at the point reached:

- **Mediation capacity has diminished.** In the 1996 Kardak crisis the US was able to separate the parties within a few hours. That crisis coincided with a period in which Washington's attention and prestige were concentrated on the region. Today, the attention of the US and the EU is divided among Ukraine, the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific. This could prepare the ground for a delayed ceasefire and for the conflict to evolve from S3 into S4.
- **The Eastern Mediterranean is the intersection point of several theatres of war.** Souda Bay, Akrotiri, Dedeağaç and Piraeus are logistics nodes of Russia–NATO rivalry, of conflicts in the Middle East and of China's trade with Europe. A Turkish–Greek conflict affecting any of these nodes could by itself fuel these larger conflicts.
- **Opportunistic actors have multiplied.** Russia will want to gain strategically from a rift on NATO's southern flank; Israel will try to exploit in Syria the shift of Türkiye's attention towards the Aegean; and regional and global actors' disinformation and proxy instruments will deepen the crisis. In this respect the report's model accepts that global tension may affect the Turkish–Greek conflict in two directions:
- On the one hand, the great powers' dispersed attention may give some actors a perception of a "window of opportunity";
- on the other, the same dispersion may make a local war, once begun, harder to bring under control and expose it to **the risk of evolving into a regional, even international war**. In short, the period 2026–2028 also brings with it a need for every step taken in the Aegean to be calculated not only bilaterally but on a global scale.

VII. NATO, the US and the Great-Power Balance: Why Can Washington Not Enter a Hot Conflict with Türkiye?

VII.I. NATO: An Umbrella That Becomes Inoperative in an Intra-Alliance War

NATO's collective-defence mechanism (Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty) is designed against an armed attack coming from outside the Alliance; it cannot be invoked in a conflict between two allies. Article 1 of the Treaty requires members to settle their disputes by peaceful means, while Article 4 regulates consultation only. In a Türkiye–Greece war, therefore, NATO would not be a military bloc defending one of the parties; at most it could be a consultation platform trying to separate the parties. Indeed, the 1974 Cyprus Peace Operation and the 1996 Kardak crisis clearly demonstrated this reality.

Türkiye's weight within the Alliance makes this picture even sharper: Türkiye, which has NATO's second-largest army after the US, controls access to the Black Sea through the Straits under the Montreux regime, hosts İncirlik Air Base and the Kürecik radar, which forms the early-warning leg of the Alliance's ballistic-missile-defence architecture, and houses the Allied Land Command (LANDCOM) in İzmir. The NATO Summit held in Ankara on 7–8 July 2026 also confirmed Türkiye's central position on the Alliance's southern flank. In short, a southern flank without Türkiye would lose its function along the line stretching from the Black Sea to the Middle East. For the Alliance to develop a stance that sets it against Türkiye would mean calling its own reason for existence into question. On such a plane, almost no NATO member could risk losing Türkiye for Greece's sake.

VII.II. The US's Strategic Priority: Competition with China and Gradual Withdrawal from Europe

The US National Security Strategy of December 2025 and the National Defense Strategy published in January 2026 defined Washington's priorities as the defence of the homeland and the Western Hemisphere, strengthening the defence-industrial base, and deterring China along the First Island Chain. According to the document, NATO allies are "in a strong position to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defence"; US support for Europe will be more limited. In other words, Washington has moved to reduce its military burden in Europe and to shift its resources to its own hemisphere and the Indo-Pacific.

In this strategic framework, the US entering a hot conflict with a NATO ally in the Eastern Mediterranean —moreover one with the strongest army in the region— would contradict its own strategic documents directly. Without doubt, Washington would try to use levers on Türkiye in a possible crisis, such as arms-export licences, the spare-parts chain and financial instruments; yet turning these levers into a military intervention would create a cost the US

cannot bear in its global competition with China. In addition, the domestic-content ratio above 80 per cent in the Turkish defence industry has markedly reduced the effect of these levers compared with the past.

VII.III. Consequences of a US Intervention for China and Russia

A hypothetical US intervention would at once make the Turkish–Greek conflict part of global power rivalry and could shift the balances most in favour of the US's rivals:

- **Russia:** The balance in the Straits and the Black Sea would be disrupted in Russia's favour; the weakening of Türkiye's balancing role within NATO would open a broad room for manoeuvre for Moscow in the Black Sea and the Caucasus. A rift on NATO's southern flank would be the greatest strategic gain Russia could obtain since the war in Ukraine.
- **China:** The shift of US attention and resources to the Eastern Mediterranean would offer Beijing a strategic window of opportunity in the Indo-Pacific and especially in the Taiwan Strait. In addition, the US using force against an ally would shake confidence in Washington's alliance system globally and strengthen China's "unreliable America" narrative.
- **Türkiye's orientation:** A Türkiye that feels excluded from the Western alliance will inevitably deepen its relations with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, BRICS and the Gulf–Pakistan axis; this would permanently change the geopolitical map of Eurasia.

Table 4. Possible US intervention options and their strategic costs

Option	Cost to the US	Effect on China and Russia	Probability
Direct military intervention (in favour of Greece)	Directly: collapse of NATO's southern flank; effective loss of the Straits, İncirlik and Kürecik. Indirectly: the US being excluded from Türkiye's civilisational geography and facing major problems	The greatest strategic gain for Russia and China	**Very low**
Arms-export and spare-parts restrictions	Accelerates localisation of the Turkish defence industry; pushes Türkiye towards alternative suppliers	A new market and sphere of influence for rivals	Medium
Economic and financial pressure	Instability in global markets; can be offset by Gulf financing	Limited	Medium
Rapid mediation and cease-fire diplomacy	Low; preserves alliance cohesion	Narrows rivals' field of opportunity	**High**

Source: US National Security Strategy (December 2025); US National Defense Strategy (January 2026); TESPAM assessment.

In short, the US's most rational stance in a possible Turkish–Greek war would be to turn quickly to mediation without militarily supporting either side. This reality invalidates one of

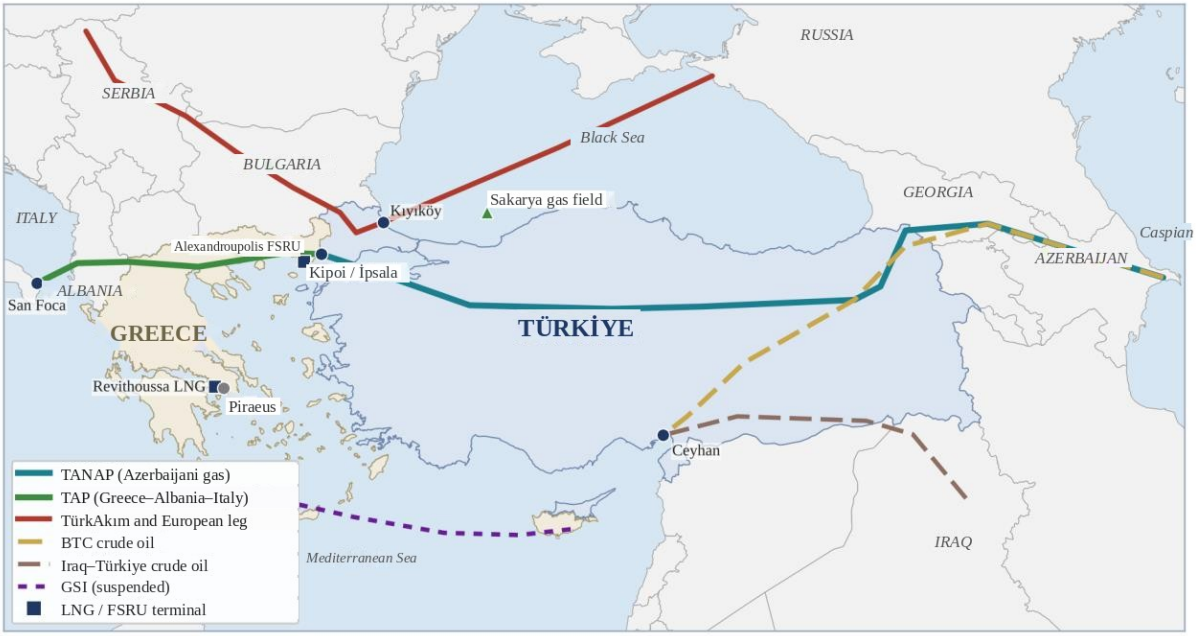
Athens' most basic strategic assumptions, namely the expectation that in a crisis Washington would stand militarily at Greece's side. It is precisely at this point that Greece's strategic loneliness becomes even more pronounced. So much so that the US will not be able to enter a hot conflict, the EU will not be able to intervene militarily with a joint army it does not have and will in general be able to continue only a policy of sanctions and condemnation. On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that France is a two-track actor. Israel, for its part, will provoke the war but will not pay its price.

VIII. Energy Infrastructure: Untouchable or Mutual Hostage?

In a possible conflict, the parties are expected not to target international critical nodes —Crete, Piraeus, Dedeağaç, the NATO Land Command (LANDCOM) in İzmir, TANAP, TürkAkım, LNG/storage facilities and international airports— since these nodes are the direct areas of interest of third parties (the US, the EU, Azerbaijan, Russia, China) and damage to them would at once internationalise the conflict. Yet in later phases of the war, Türkiye halting the TANAP flow on security grounds, suspending international flights and restricting Aegean–Mediterranean maritime traffic are also discussed as options. **There is a clear tension between these two approaches, and the report's model resolves this tension in favour of protecting the critical nodes.** The reasons are as follows:

- **The TANAP–TAP line carries Azerbaijani gas.** Cutting the flow would cause contract and revenue losses for Azerbaijan, one of Türkiye's closest allies. Yet the real problem would appear as price crises resulting from supply losses in many European markets, from Italy to Baumgarten. That is something Europe would not want.
- **The European leg of TürkAkım** carries gas to Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary. A possible interruption would again push the energy-supply equation within the EU into a difficult predicament.
- **The Montreux Convention** (1936, Art. 5) grants freedom of passage through the Straits to merchant ships of neutral countries that do not assist the enemy, even when Türkiye is a belligerent. Most of the Aegean consists of international waters and Greek territorial waters; Türkiye has no legal authority to "close" this area. An actual closure would drive Russia and China to apply anti-Türkiye ceasefire pressure.
- **Halting international flights,** once it goes beyond limited NOTAM restrictions on the conflict zone, would directly and adversely affect Türkiye's tourism and air-cargo revenues —which are many times larger than Greece's. It is precisely at this point that the dual nature of energy infrastructure becomes more pronounced. The nodes described can be seen both as **deterrent hostages** that constrain the parties and as Türkiye's strongest bargaining chip to carry to the table in the post-crisis order. The value of this chip is at its highest as long as it is not used.

Map 4. Critical energy infrastructure in the region: mutual-hostage nodes



Source: Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources; Nexans (2026); Daily Sabah (2026). Routes are schematic. Prepared by TESPAM.

Table 5. Energy-dependence comparison (approximate, 2025–2026)

Indicator	Türkiye	Greece	Meaning for the scenario
Natural gas	Consumption ~50–55 bcm; domestic production is rising with Sakarya but covers only about 5–8% of consumption in 2026	Almost entirely imported (pipeline, LNG, Revithoussa, Dedeağaç FSRU)	Both sides depend on imports; Türkiye's supply diversity (7 import sources, storage) is higher
Crude oil	About 20% of consumption is domestic (trending up with Gabar)	Almost entirely imported	Fuel logistics are critical in a long war
Electricity	Almost all production is domestic; but a significant share of the fuel (gas, imported coal) is imported	Largely domestic production; periodic net imports/exports	"Independence in electricity" is true for generation, partly true for primary fuel
Critical transit role	TANAP, TürkAkım, BTC, Iraq–Türkiye	TAP, Dedeağaç, Piraeus, GSI (suspended)	The transit role is both a strength and a vulnerability for Türkiye

Source: Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources statements (2025–2026); EPDK (Energy Market Regulatory Authority) reports; TESPAM assessment. Figures are rounded indicators.

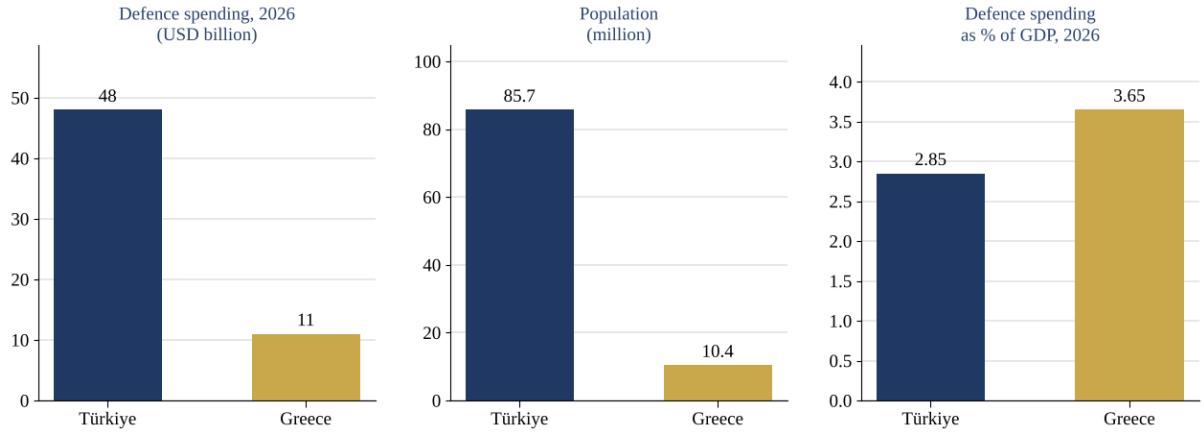
IX. The Turkish Defence Industry: The Material Foundation of Deterrence

The fundamental element that turns Türkiye's superiority over Greece from a temporary conjunctural advantage into a structural asymmetry is its growing population, continuing economic growth and the defence-industry ecosystem built over the last twenty years. Without doubt, a country's capacity to sustain a war depends not only on the number of platforms it owns but also on its ability to produce and repair those platforms during war and to replenish their munitions. It is precisely at this point that the difference between Türkiye and Greece ceases to be a mere inventory difference and turns into a difference between two distinct strategic categories.

IX.I. Scale, Domestic Content and Sustainability

Türkiye's defence and aerospace exports rose by about 49 per cent in 2025 and exceeded USD 10 billion for the first time; more than 3,500 firms and over 1,400 projects are now active in the sector. The domestic-content ratio has risen above 80 per cent, and a level above USD 11 billion has been targeted for 2026 exports. According to NATO data, Türkiye's 2026 defence spending is around USD 48 billion. Greece's 2026 defence budget, by contrast, is about USD 11 billion. More importantly, whereas Greece is at the limit of its economic capacity by devoting 3.65 per cent of its gross domestic product to defence, Türkiye reaches a budget more than four times larger while staying below that share. In short, the difference between the two countries stems not from the will to spend but from economic and industrial scale.

Figure 3. Türkiye and Greece: key asymmetry indicators (2026)



Source: NATO defence-expenditure data (2026); Politikam (2026); values in Box 1. Prepared by TESPAM.

This difference of scale also shows itself in **munitions sustainability**, one of the most decisive variables of a possible conflict. Greece, which imports nearly all of its platforms, would be able to replenish every interceptor missile and precision-guided munition it con-

sumes in war only depending on the political will and production schedules of foreign suppliers. Türkiye, with its own production lines led by ASELSAN, ROKETSAN, TUSAŞ, MKE and Baykar, is one of the few countries able to increase munitions production during a war.

IX.II. Critical Programmes and 2025–2026 Milestones

Table 6. Selected programmes in the Turkish defence industry and their current status (2025–2026)

Area	Programme	Current status	Effect against Greece
Layered air defence	Steel Dome (HİSAR, SİPER, KORKUT, ALP radars, electronic-warfare elements)	First delivery in August 2025 (47 vehicles); expansion contracts worth USD 6.5 billion in November 2025; target of more than 100 component deliveries a year from 2026	A nationwide integrated shield against Greek air and missile attacks
Long-range air defence	SİPER Block-I	Battery acceptance completed in November 2025 with an autonomous firing test at Sinop	Range that keeps Greek combat aircraft from approaching Turkish airspace
Ballistic missile	Tayfun (Block-4 development under way), Bora	Precision-hit test firing in December 2025; serial production and deliveries continue	Air bases, command centres and air-defence positions on the Greek mainland are within range
Cruise missile	SOM, ATMACA (including canister launch from submarines)	ATMACA submarine launch successfully tested in March and October 2025	A multi-directional threat to the Greek surface fleet and coastal facilities
Unmanned combat aircraft	Kızılelma, Akıncı, TB3, Anka-3	Beyond-visual-range air-to-air firing with Gökdoğan from Kızılelma (November 2025) — a world first; target of first Kızılelma and ship-launchable TB3 deliveries in 2026	Capacity to saturate Greek air defence and to establish air superiority with unmanned systems
Combat aircraft	KAAN; Eurofighter Typhoon	KAAN prototypes expected to fly at the end of 2026, with deliveries starting from 2028; contract for 20 new Eurofighters (including Meteor) signed in October 2025	Closing the Rafale/Meteor niche; transition to the fifth generation
Naval forces	MİLGEM, Reis-class submarines, TCG Anadolu, MUGEM	The sixth MİLGEM ship TCG İzmir and TCG Muratreis to enter service in 2026; construction of the 60,000-tonne MUGEM aircraft carrier has begun (entry into service 2032)	Numerical and qualitative naval superiority in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean
Land forces	Altay main battle tank; domestic armoured-vehicle families	Target of delivering 10 Altay tanks to the Land Forces in 2026	The armoured backbone of rapid ground operations in Thrace and Cyprus

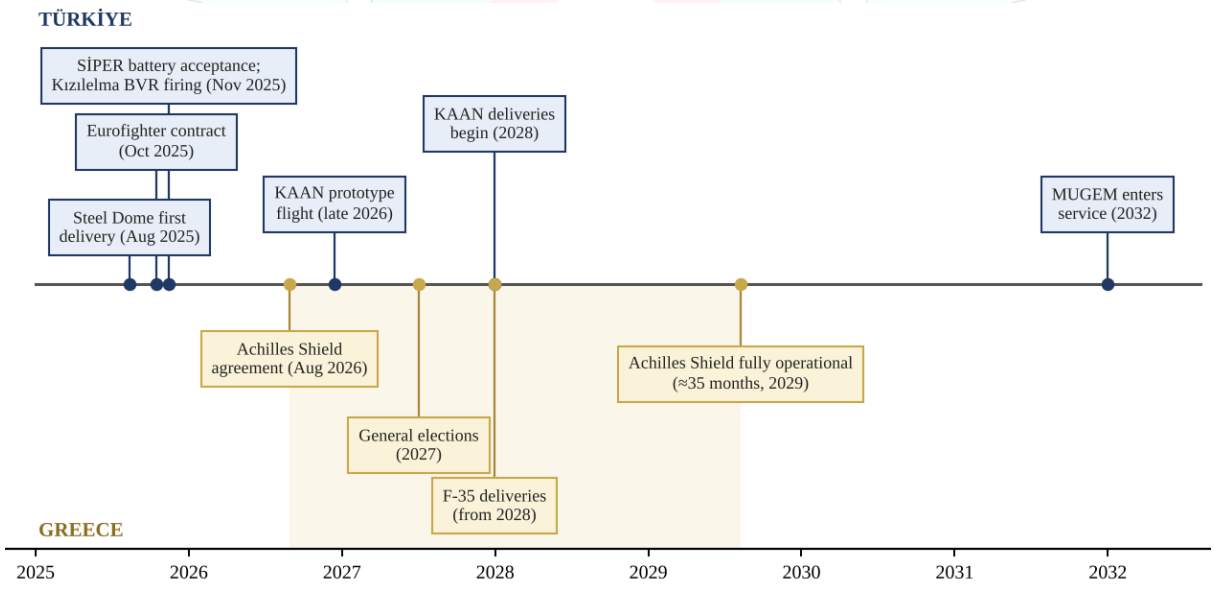
Source: SSB (Presidency of Defence Industries) 2025 assessment and 2026 targets (Defence Turkey, 2026); Quwa (2026); Protothema (2026); Milliyet (2025); TESPAM compilation.

IX.III. A Qualitative Break: Unmanned Systems, Deep Strike and Network-Centric Warfare

The real break that the Turkish defence industry creates against Greece lies on the qualitative plane. Türkiye is one of the few countries in the world that has tested unmanned air and naval systems in combat —in Syria, Libya, Karabakh and Iraq (and even in the Russia–Ukraine war)— and embedded this experience in its doctrine. Kızılelma's hit on an aerial target at beyond-visual-range marks a threshold showing that unmanned combat aircraft can take part directly in the struggle for air superiority. When deep strike with Tayfun and SOM, submarine-launched anti-ship warfare with ATMACA and network-centric layered defence with the Steel Dome are added to this, it becomes clear that Türkiye holds against Greece not merely more platforms but **a higher category of warfare**.

This picture also explains why Israel's arming effort for Greece cannot close the asymmetry: by 2029, when the Achilles Shield is to be completed, Türkiye will have spread the Steel Dome across the country, renewed its air power with KAAN and the Eurofighter and advanced the construction of MUGEM. The gain Greece obtains by buying a defence system is condemned to fall behind, every time, the gains Türkiye produces over the same period with its own industrial base.

Figure 4. Timeline of the Achilles Shield and milestones of Turkish defence programmes (2025–2032)



Source: Defence Turkey (2026); Quwa (2026); Prototherma (2026); Reuters (2026); Cyprus Mail (2026). Prepared by TESPAM.

X. The Military Balance: A Net Assessment

The military balance between Türkiye and Greece should be assessed not only by platform numbers but, as Biddle (2004) proposes, through the whole set of capabilities that will be decisive in war. The table below is prepared with this approach and shows that the difference between the two armies is not accidental or conjunctural but **structural and clear**.

Table 7. Capability-based net assessment

Area	Türkiye	Greece	Net assessment
Geography and logistics	2–20 km from the Eastern Aegean islands; short interior lines; ~70 km to Cyprus	Long sea/air resupply lines to the islands; ~800 km to Cyprus	**Clearly in Türkiye's favour**
Unmanned systems (UAVs/armed UAVs, unmanned maritime vehicles)	Mass, cost advantage and real combat experience (Syria, Libya, Karabakh, Iraq)	Limited; developing through cooperation with Israel	**Clearly in Türkiye's favour**
Electronic warfare	Domestic, field-tested systems (REDET, PUHU, KORAL, etc.)	Largely dependent on foreign sources	**Clearly in Türkiye's favour**
Combat aircraft	Modernised F-16 fleet; 20 new Eurofighters (including Meteor) and the KAAN programme; unmanned combat air power with Kızılelma	Rafale F3R (Meteor), F-16 Viper; F-35 deliveries from 2028	A limited Greek niche at platform level; **in Türkiye's favour** at system level (numbers, unmanned combat aircraft, deep strike)
Integrated air defence	Multi-layered Steel Dome architecture; deliveries began in 2025	Fragmented structure of Patriot, S-300, SPYDER, etc.; the Achilles Shield fully operational only around 2029	**Clearly in Türkiye's favour**
Deep strike (ballistic and cruise missiles)	Tayfun, Bora, SOM, ATMACA; domestic production and sustainable stocks	SCALP, Exocet; imported and limited stocks	**Clearly in Türkiye's favour**
Submarines	Numerically superior fleet; Reis-class (AIP) and submarine-launched ATMACA	Type 214 (AIP) and modernised Type 209	In Türkiye's favour
Surface fleet	Numerically superior; MİLGEM, TCG Anadolu; MUGEM under construction	FDI frigates (the first in service in January 2026), modernised MEKOs	In Türkiye's favour
Land forces and amphibious capacity	NATO's second-largest army; Aegean Army, First Army, Turkish Peace Forces in Cyprus; landing and marine elements	Numerically limited; dispersed deployment across the islands and the Meriç (Evros) line	**Clearly in Türkiye's favour**
Industrial base and external dependence	Domestic content above 80%; more than 3,500 firms; capacity to increase munitions production during war	Nearly all platforms and munitions imported; spare parts and stock replenishment depend on external suppliers	**Clearly in Türkiye's favour**; the gap widens as the war lengthens
Joint-operations experience	Real multi-front operational experience over the last 10 years	No recent combat experience	**Clearly in Türkiye's favour**
Defence budget (2026)	About USD 48 billion (2.85% of GDP)	About USD 11 billion (3.65% of GDP)	**In Türkiye's favour (more than fourfold)**

Source: NATO defence-expenditure data (2026); SSB (2025–2026); open-source defence press (2025–2026); TESPAM assessment.

The conclusion that the table shows is clear: Türkiye's superiority arises from **the combination of geography, mass, cost-effective unmanned systems, deep strike, electronic warfare, combat experience and industrial sustainability**, and this combination is not a difference that Greece can offset with any platform purchase. Indeed, in the Russia–Ukraine and Israel–Iran conflicts it has been seen that layered air defence can intercept part of saturation attacks; but in those examples the defender had either deep strategic geography or the direct intelligence, munitions and interception support of the US. Greece has neither strategic depth —the islands are a few kilometres from the Turkish coast— nor an integrated air-defence network, nor any assurance of US military support in a crisis (Chapter VII). In short, in a war that could be started under Israeli direction, it is highly likely that the Greek army would be unable to protect its command-and-control integrity in the first hours, and in the first days its island defences, sea lines of resupply or the land line within Western Thrace.

Box 1. The asymmetry in figures: Türkiye / Greece

— **Population:** ~85.7 million / ~10.4 million

— **Defence spending (2026):** ~USD 48 billion / ~USD 11 billion

— **Domestic-content ratio in the defence industry:** above 80% / nearly all platforms imported

— **Defence and aerospace exports (2025):** more than USD 10 billion / limited

— **Distance to the Eastern Aegean islands:** 2–20 km / sea supply lines of hundreds of kilometres from the mainland

— **Distance to Cyprus:** ~70 km / ~800 km

XI. Domestic Dynamics and the Political Logic of War

XI.I. Greece

With a population of about 10.4 million, high public debt and general elections expected in 2027, Greece is a country that cannot economically bear a long war. For Greece, which imports nearly all of its oil and natural gas and whose economy depends on tourism and external financing, sustaining a war beyond a week is extremely difficult. The everyday intertwining of the Eastern Aegean islands with Türkiye —dependence for health services, shopping, drinking water and tourism— clearly shows the scale of what island communities would lose in a war. A large part of Greek public opinion does not want a war and is also dissatisfied with the current government's record. In any case, the rate of domestic support for a declaration of social mobilisation could hardly be high.

Yet the phenomenon known in political science as "rally around the flag" shows that societies that think they are under attack close ranks around the government in the short term. Read together, these two realities yield a critical conclusion: **the tension-reducing influence of Greek society on its government is at its highest before the first shot is fired.** With the first shot the social reflex will turn to closing ranks around the government; but as the military picture quickly becomes clear —which the asymmetry set out in Chapter X makes inevitable— this closing of ranks will give way to deep disillusionment and political reckoning. In short, for a Greek government that cannot derive political gain from a war, every step that escalates tension means risking its own domestic political future.

XI.II. Türkiye

With a young and dynamic population of more than 85 million, a breakthrough in the defence industry and strong national sensitivity in public opinion, Türkiye is in a position incomparable with Greece in terms of capacity to sustain a long-running conflict. Without doubt, the economy's dependence on external financing, tourism and exports based on the Customs Union with the EU shows that a possible war would carry an economic price for Türkiye as well; yet this price could be substantially offset by deepening financial cooperation with the Gulf, diversity in energy supply based on many import sources, and domestic defence production. It is also clear that Turkish public opinion would give strong support to the government in the face of an attack on Türkiye.

XI.III. The Rationalist Reading of War

From the perspective of Fearon (1995), two rational actors would be expected to prefer a settlement to war, because war is costly for both sides. War breaks out either when one of the parties miscalculates the other's strength or resolve (**information asymmetry**), or when a rapid change in the balance of power pushes one side to "now or never" thinking (**the commitment problem**), or when the subject of dispute is perceived as indivisible (**indivisibility**). In the Turkish–Greek relationship all three mechanisms are present: the risk of Greece underestimating Turkish resolve, the balance changing with the Achilles Shield and the F-35, and the framing of the island/territorial-water issues as indivisible through "sovereignty."

It is precisely at this point that the truly dangerous pattern of thinking is the perception of a closing "window of opportunity"; yet this perception is forming not in Ankara but in Athens and Tel Aviv. Since Türkiye's relative power grows every year, the parties that think time is working against them are Israel and a Greece open to its steering. The logic of preventive war has historically most often ended in the strategic disaster of the side that started it. The right policy for Türkiye, for its part, is to crown the time already working in its favour with a lasting deterrence architecture.

XII. The Escalation Model: Thresholds and Triggers

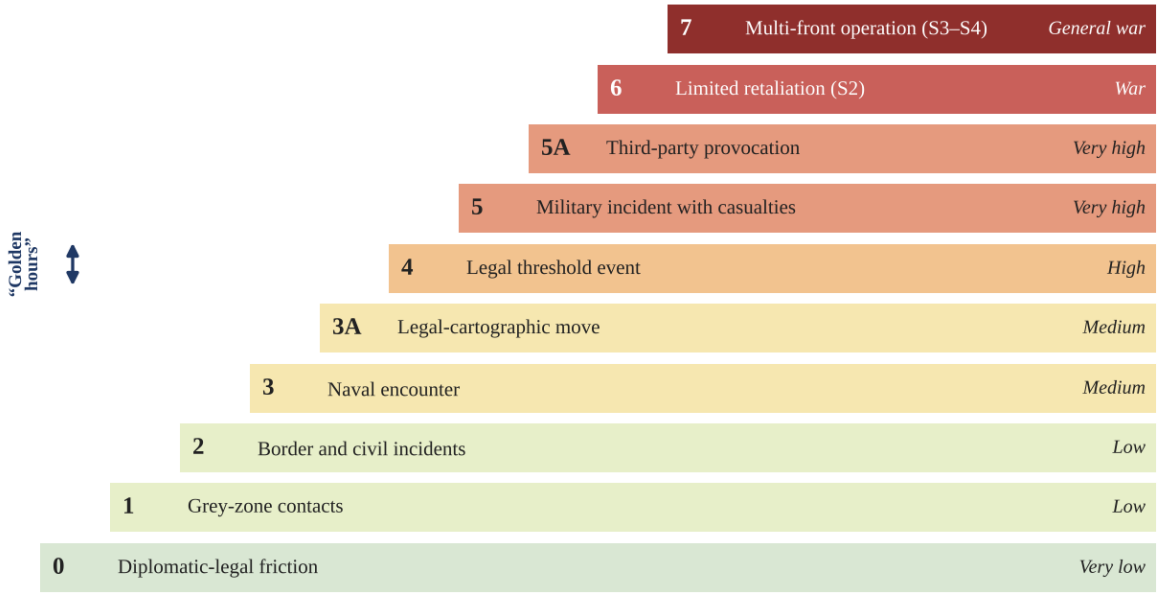
In escalation analysis, the most critical distinction is between **frictions that do not start a war** and **threshold events that can start a war**. This distinction has been turned into the model below along the lines of Kahn's (1965) escalation-ladder logic.

Table 8. The Turkish–Greek escalation ladder

Rung	Event type	Example	Propensity to turn into war
0	Diplomatic-legal friction	NAVTEX/counter-NAVTEX, diplomatic notes, map declarations	Very low
1	Grey-zone contacts	Airspace/FIR violations, dogfights, radar lock-on (Of course, an Israeli-controlled air-defence system being activated within this event type and interfering with a Turkish military element could upset the balances.)	Low
2	Border and civil incidents	Exchanges of fire on the Meriç (Evros), migrant push-backs, flag incidents in Nicosia (Lefkoşa)	Low
3	Naval encounter	Shadowing of a seismic/cable-laying ship, collision (the 2020 Kemal Reis–Limnos precedent)	Medium
3A	Legal-cartographic move	Entry into force of the Blue Homeland Law and proclamation of coordinates; declarations of marine parks/protected areas	Medium — rises rapidly depending on the counter-move
4	Legal threshold event	Greece's declaration of 12-mile territorial waters in the Aegean (in whole or in selective sectors) in response to the Blue Homeland Law; landing troops on a disputed islet	**High** — the 1995 casus belli comes into play
5	Military incident with casualties	An aircraft shot down, a warship hit, a seismic research vessel sunk by sabotage	**Very high**
5A	Third-party provocation	Sabotage of unclear origin, a false-flag act, an incident amplified by disinformation (the weakening-by-proxy thesis)	**Very high** — depends on the speed of attribution
6	Limited retaliation	A proportionate response to the platform/base from which the incident originated	The war has begun (S2)
7	Multi-front operation	Aegean + Western Thrace + Cyprus simultaneously	General war (S3–S4)

Source: Adapted from Kahn (1965); TESPAM model.

Figure 5. Visual model of the Turkish–Greek escalation ladder



Source: Adapted from Kahn (1965); prepared by TESPAM on the basis of Table 8.

The key finding of the model is this: a war can begin not with a central decision but with the instant decision of a pilot or a commander in the field. Rules of engagement and domestic public pressure then rapidly narrow the political leadership's room for manoeuvre. **The time between rungs 4 and 5 constitutes the "golden hours" that determine whether the crisis evolves into war or diplomacy.** Keeping military and diplomatic crisis-communication lines (including the confidence-building measures in place since 2008) working during these hours may therefore be more decisive than any weapon system.

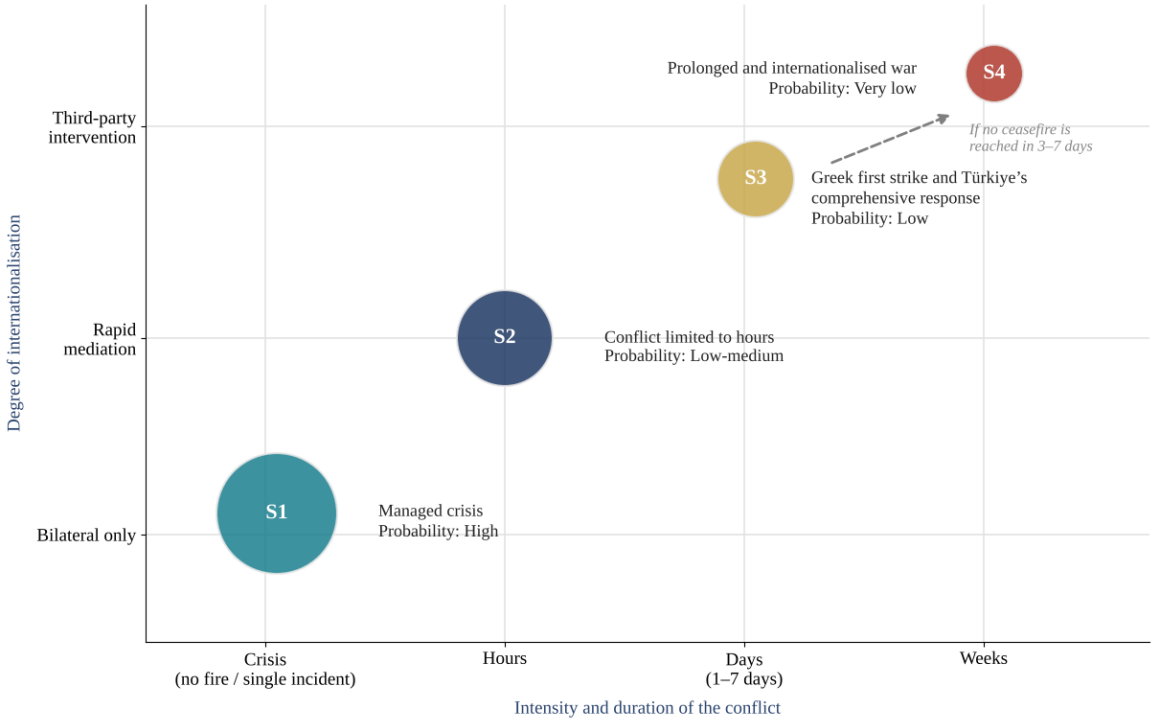
XIII. The Scenario Model

In light of the variables set out above, four scenarios have been derived. The probabilities are qualitative estimates based on structured expert judgement for the 2026–2028 period.

Table 9. Scenario matrix

Scenario	Duration / intensity	Internationalisation	Probability (2026–2028)	Net outcome for Türkiye
S1 — Managed crisis	Days–weeks; no fire or a single incident	Low	**High**	Status quo; diplomatic position preserved
S2 — Conflict limited to hours	Hours; single domain (sea/air)	Medium (rapid mediation)	Low-medium	Limited military superiority; high diplomatic cost
S3 — Greek first strike under Israeli direction and Türkiye's comprehensive response	1–7 days; multi-front	High	Low	**Collapse of Greece's military capacity; de facto control over the islands, Cyprus and Western Thrace; sitting down at the table from the strongest position**
S4 — Prolonged and internationalised war	Weeks; third-party pressure	Very high	Very low	Military superiority is preserved; economic and diplomatic cost depends on the degree of internationalisation

Figure 6. Scenario space: the intensity–duration and internationalisation axes



Source: TESPAM scenario model (Table 9). Circle sizes represent the qualitative probability level.

XIII.I. S1 — Managed Crisis

- The trigger is an event at rung 3 or 4: for example, a research vessel on the GSI route being stopped by Turkish naval elements, or a flag being planted on a disputed rock.
- The parties bring naval and air elements to the scene but avoid firing the first shot.
- The US, Germany and the NATO Secretariat step in; as in the 1996 Kardak crisis, the crisis closes with a "withdrawal and return to the status quo" formula.
- For Türkiye this scenario means testing and confirming red lines; as in the GSI case, a "de facto halt" can be achieved without paying the cost of war.
- **The model assesses that this is the most likely outcome and that Türkiye has also achieved its greatest gains to date on this track.**

XIII.II. S2 — Conflict Limited to Hours

- An incident occurs at rung 5. For example, an aircraft is shot down during a dogfight, or a ship is hit after a collision.
- The injured party, under domestic public pressure, carries out a proportionate retaliation against the platform or base from which the incident originated.
- The conflict remains confined to the sea and air domain. The islands and land borders do not come into play.

- In this scenario Türkiye's advantage in geographical proximity, mass and systems becomes decisive within a few hours; although the short duration of the conflict allows no lasting political gain, the asymmetry between the two armies becomes indisputably visible both in Athens and in international public opinion.
- A de facto ceasefire is secured within 12–48 hours under intense pressure from Washington and Brussels.
- **The critical question is who fired the first shot;** for in terms of international public opinion and law, the distinction between self-defence (UN Charter Art. 51) and aggression determines the entire subsequent diplomatic process.

XIII.III. S3 — A First Strike Under Israeli Direction and Türkiye's Comprehensive Response

- This scenario is the model's most intense branch and the one that most clearly reveals Türkiye's military superiority.
- The starting point of the scenario is Greece's putting into practice the preemptive-strike design discussed in Chapter V —with Israeli intelligence, command-and-control and electronic-warfare support.
- The trigger could be a naval incident following a 12-mile decision declared in response to the Blue Homeland Law, a sabotage of unclear origin, or an exaggerated "early warning" assessment by Greek intelligence of Turkish preparations.
- The logic of the scenario rests on the assumption that, if the first attack comes from Greece, Türkiye could simultaneously bring into play all of its previously prepared capabilities on the ground of self-defence (UN Charter Art. 51).
- The operation is designed in three phases:
  - **First phase (first hours) — blinding and saturation:**
    - Suppression of the Greek command-and-control, radar and communications network by electronic warfare;
    - Exhausting the expensive and limited interceptor munitions of Greek air defence with saturation attacks conducted by low-cost unmanned systems;
    - Neutralising the military facilities on the Eastern Aegean islands, including prepositioned elements, in a pinpoint and precise manner;
    - Targeting with deep-strike systems the bases from which Greek air and naval elements sortie.
  - **Second phase (first 24–96 hours) — simultaneous ground operation:**
    - Amphibious and airborne operations against the Eastern Aegean islands;

- An armoured operation by the Turkish Peace Forces in Cyprus, reinforced from the mainland, to secure control of the whole island;
- Elements of the First Army crossing the Meriç (Evros) line and advancing in Western Thrace.
- During this phase, through naval and air superiority, the Greek mainland's supply link with the islands and the elements in the field is severed.

– **Third phase (until the ceasefire) — consolidation and preparation for the table:**

- Guaranteeing the continuity of civilian life in the areas brought under control, conducting a transparent narrative aimed at international public opinion, and sitting down at the table in line with the previously designed post-war order. The table below addresses each line of the operation in terms of feasibility and strategic assessment.

Table 10. Feasibility assessment of the S3 operational lines

Operational line	Intended effect	Feasibility	Strategic assessment
1. Suppression of electronic warfare and command and control	Blinding the Greek command-and-control, radar and communications network in the first hours	**High**	The Greek command-and-control architecture is fragmented and not integrated; until the Achilles Shield is completed, this line gives Türkiye decisive superiority in the first hours
2. Saturation and neutralisation of island military facilities	Exhausting expensive interceptor munitions with cheap unmanned systems; pinpoint destruction of military facilities on the islands	**High**	Greece's limited and imported munitions stock is exhausted in the first days; with precision-guided munitions and strict target discipline, civilian settlements are not harmed
2A. Explosives pre-placed on the islands	Destruction of island military facilities from within in the first minutes of the operation	Medium-high (military); the preparation phase is high-risk	Reduces the reaction time of island defences to zero and reduces the need for heavy fire and civilian risk; if exposed in peacetime it becomes a casus belli — defensible only after the other side's first attack
3. Rapid ground operation in Western Thrace	Crossing the Meriç (Evros) line and de facto control over the whole of Western Thrace	**High** (military)	Against the First Army's mass and firepower, the Meriç fortifications can be overcome. The port of Dedeağaç (Alexandroupolis) and US/NATO facilities are kept outside the operational area and declared a neutral zone open to US logistics. The protection of the rights of the Turkish minority in the region deriving from Lausanne strengthens the political legitimacy of the operation
4. Comprehensive operation in Cyprus	De facto control over the whole island by the Turkish Peace Forces in Cyprus, reinforced from the mainland	**High** (military)	The resupply asymmetry of ~70 km versus ~800 km is decisive; GCASC defence, with its sea and air resupply cut off, cannot be sustained. The British sovereign base areas are kept outside the operation and London is given prior assurances to that effect
5. Sea/air superiority and cutting supply lines	Isolating the islands from the mainland	High (for the Eastern Aegean)	Militarily the most decisive and most defensible line; the blockade must be limited so as not to affect neutral trade
6. Control of the Eastern Aegean islands	Liquidation of the military presence on islands whose demilitarised status has been violated, and de facto control; including islets of uncertain sovereignty	**High**	The islands' distance of 2–20 km from the Turkish coast and the cutting of supply lines make the collapse of their defence within days inevitable; the legal thesis based on the Lausanne and Paris treaties forms the ground of legitimacy for the operation

Source: TESPAM assessment.

One of the distinguishing elements of the operational concept is the activation, in the first minutes of the operation, of **explosives pre-placed in the military facilities of the is-**

lands. Although this element may appear unconventional at first glance, the wars of the last two years show that covert pre-positioning has become an integral part of the opening phase of modern war. Israel's use in September 2024 of communication devices with explosive charges slipped into the supply chain against Hezbollah, Ukraine's June 2025 strike on strategic bombers with unmanned aerial vehicles moved beforehand deep into Russia (Operation Spiderweb), and Israel's targeting that same month of air-defence batteries with elements pre-positioned inside Iran are the most striking examples of this approach.

For the scenario model, this element has three functions. First, by bringing the reaction time of island defences close to zero, it ensures that air-defence systems are disabled in the first wave and multiplies the effectiveness of the saturation attack. Second, given that a significant share of the military facilities on the islands is thought to be close to residential areas, destruction from within and at specific points has the potential to **reduce the risk of civilian casualties** by reducing the need for heavy artillery and missile fire. This is also a tool that makes the report's principle that "the island population is never harmed" militarily workable. Third, by creating a perception of having been "infiltrated from within" in the Greek command structure, it accelerates psychological disintegration. On the other hand, the decisive risk of the element lies in the preparation phase. Namely, because in peacetime it requires a covert activity on another state's territory, its exposure would in itself be a casus belli for Greece and would seriously damage Türkiye's self-defence narrative. For this reason the model assesses that it is politically and legally defensible to activate the capability only after the other side's first attack, and that this is fully consistent with the principle of "not being the first to strike" proposed in Chapter XVII.

This assessment points to a clear conclusion for the internal consistency of S3: **all lines of the operation are militarily feasible, and in a war started by Greece, Türkiye has the capacity to retake the Eastern Aegean islands, Cyprus and Western Thrace simultaneously and completely within a short time.** The risk of the ground operation turning into a Türkiye–EU conflict must, without doubt, not be overlooked. Yet this risk diminishes markedly in the S3 design, in which two conditions occur together. First, the first attack coming from Greece places Türkiye's operation on the ground of self-defence and weakens the political force of Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union. Second, as set out in Chapter VII, the US's inability to enter a hot conflict and the absence of a joint EU army prevent the military support Greece expects from materialising in the field. How the areas brought under control will be converted into a return at the table is addressed in Chapter XV.

Greek air elements can be expected, in the first hours, to come up to the continental-shelf line and target near-coastal bases such as Gölcük, Aksaz and Foça with long-range air-to-ground munitions (SCALP, etc.). Of course, it is also assessed that these elements could not approach the Turkish coast by more than 250 km. While this capacity shows that S3 would not be entirely cost-free for Türkiye, the layered structure of the Steel Dome, the range

of SİPER and the numerical superiority of Turkish air power would keep this cost limited. Greece, since it could not replenish the long-range munitions it used in the first wave, would be largely without the capacity to carry out a second wave.

XIII.IV. S4 — Prolonged and Internationalised War

If a ceasefire cannot be achieved within 3–7 days in S3, the conflict could evolve into S4. In this scenario Greece would invoke Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union. Accordingly, France would make diplomatic and limited military gestures under the bilateral agreement, and an EU sanctions package and the suspension of the Customs Union would come onto the agenda.

The US, for the reasons set out in Chapter VII, would not become militarily involved and would try to apply pressure through arms-export licences and financial instruments. Türkiye could sustain the war militarily far longer than Greece, while Greece could not possibly carry a war beyond weeks in terms of munitions, fuel and financing. Yet economic cost and diplomatic pressure would be risks that Türkiye as well would have to manage in a prolonged war.

In the global climate of tension (Chapter VI), this scenario would also carry the risk of **evolving into a regional or international war** by being linked, through the logistics nodes in the Eastern Mediterranean, to Russia–NATO and Middle East conflicts. In short, what is decisive in S4 is carrying superiority in the field to the table in a timely and correct manner. Not losing at the table what has been won in the field depends on designing the post-war order in advance.

XIV. International Reaction and the Dynamics of a Ceasefire

There are three core variables that will determine the direction and severity of international reaction in a possible conflict. These are: who fired the first shot, which geography the conflict spreads to, and the great powers' own strategic priorities. In light of these variables, the expected reactions are listed below:

- **NATO's Article 5 does not operate in an intra-alliance conflict:** NATO cannot institutionally defend either party; at most it serves as a consultation platform trying to separate the parties (Chapter VII).
- **Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union** imposes on member states an obligation to assist a member that is the victim of armed aggression "by all the means in their power." Yet the same article also expressly provides that this obligation shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain member states or their NATO commitments. The absence of a joint EU army means that in practice the article turns into political and economic solidarity rather than military. Moreover, in a scenario in which Greece carries out the first attack, the political force of this article would also weaken markedly.
- **Who fired the first shot** is the main variable determining the stance of Western capitals. Between a scenario in which Türkiye responds to a Greek attack steered by Israel and one in which Türkiye carries out the first attack, there is a deep chasm in terms of international perception and legal legitimacy.
- **The US**, as a result of its strategic competition with China and its strategy of reducing its burden in Europe, will not enter a hot conflict with Türkiye and will turn to mediation from the first hours (Chapter VII).
- **The UN Security Council** will call for a ceasefire. The stance of Russia and China will be shaped by whether the Straits and Aegean trade stay open.
- **Regional support:** Diplomatic support can be expected from Azerbaijan, the Organisation of Turkic States, Libya (Tripoli) and Qatar. The stance of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan depends, because of the Mecca Defence Agreement, on who started the conflict: in a scenario in which Türkiye is subjected to armed attack, the collective-defence clause will open the door to political and even military support. Israel is likely to support Greece "in every sense" —with intelligence, electronic warfare, air-defence munitions and command-and-control reinforcement— while Egypt is likely to make an urgent call for peace to both sides.
- **The Israel factor and the attribution war:** In line with the thesis set out in Chapter IV, the war of narratives over how the conflict began will be at least as decisive as the fighting

in the field. Establishing swiftly and convincingly who carried out a sabotage or false-flag act of unclear origin could change the stance of Western capitals within hours. In this framework the most likely ceasefire architecture is negotiations that begin under the leadership of the US and the EU (especially Germany), with NATO's institutional support, on a neutral ground such as Switzerland (Geneva).

What is decisive in these negotiations is the balance that Türkiye will strike between the superiority it has obtained in the field and the legitimacy of its legal theses.

In addition to all these scenarios, Israel's active involvement in the process could prepare the ground for carrying the war to Israel via Syria, and for Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and perhaps even Iraq, Qatar and Egypt becoming direct parties to the war. Because this possibility is low, it is not elaborated in this report.

XV. The Post-War Order and “Table Power”

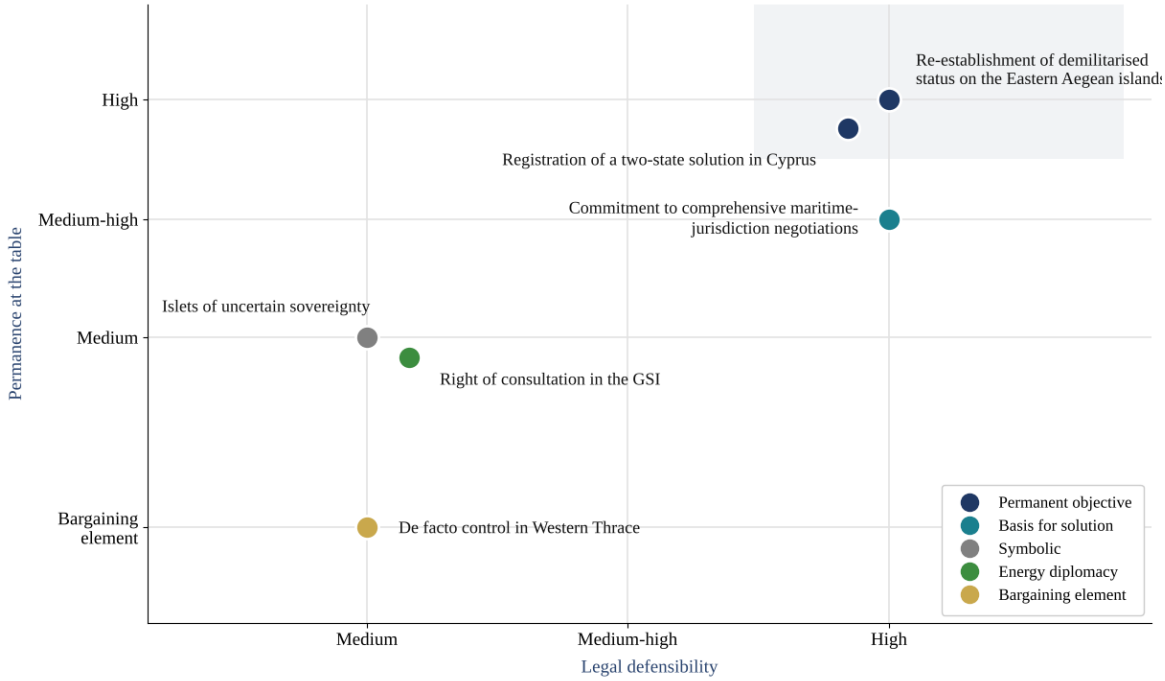
That the order to be established at the end of a war must be designed before the war, and that a government that gives back at the table, for nothing, the places captured in war cannot gain politically, are among the basic propositions of strategic thought since Clausewitz. Read together with the report’s comprehensive-response thesis, this proposition raises a critical question: into what kind of return at the table will Türkiye’s capacity to retake the Eastern Aegean islands, Cyprus and Western Thrace be converted?

The report’s answer to this question is clear: **capacity and legitimacy must complement each other.** The return at the table for each area brought under control must be defined in advance; which gains are permanent objectives and which are bargaining elements must be determined before the war begins. In this way, every arrangement made at the table would manifest itself not as a “return” but as part of a previously designed order. Table 11 sets out this distinction.

Table 11. Types of gain in terms of table power

Type of gain	Legal defensibility	Permanence at the table	Assessment
Liquidation of the military presence on the Eastern Aegean islands and re-establishment of demilitarised status under Turkish guarantee (Lausanne/Paris)	High	High	**Permanent objective** — de facto and legal confirmation of Türkiye’s legal thesis
A commitment to a comprehensive maritime-jurisdiction negotiation (a package to be taken to the ICJ)	High	Medium-high	A ground for a long-term solution
Islets of uncertain sovereignty remaining with Türkiye	Medium	Medium	Limited but of high symbolic value
Recognition of Türkiye’s right to be consulted in the GSI and similar projects	Medium	Medium	Critical for energy diplomacy
De facto and legal registration of a two-state solution in Cyprus	High (in the event of a Greek first strike)	High	**Permanent objective** — ending in Türkiye’s favour the uncertainty that has persisted since 1974
De facto control in Western Thrace	Medium (depends on the source of the first attack)	Bargaining element	The strongest card that can be brought to the table in return for international guarantees of the rights of the Western Thrace Turkish minority deriving from Lausanne and for a comprehensive package of jurisdiction areas in the Aegean

Figure 7. Positioning of gain types in terms of table power



Source: Prepared by TESPAM on the basis of Table 11.

In this regard **table power arises from the union of two elements: a capacity to take everything in the field, and a state mind that uses this capacity for a legitimate, predictable and previously designed order!**

A Türkiye that does not start the war, but if it is started rapidly establishes decisive superiority at sea, in the air and on land, leaves civilians and international infrastructure untouched and declares its legal theses openly at every stage, will sit down at the table not merely as a strong party but also as one in the right.

On the other hand, within the relevant negotiations:

- Some former Turkish settlements remaining on the Greek Cypriot side of the island of Cyprus not being returned,
- No island retaken on the pretext of armament being returned,
- Establishing lasting control in the region on the pretext of human-rights violations in Western Thrace may also be possible.

XVI. A Strategic Reading for Greek Public Opinion: The Rationality of Reducing Tension

The picture that this report sets out concerns Greek society most of all. For neither Israel, nor the US, nor France will pay the price of a possible war. That price will be paid by the families living on the islands, the communities in Western Thrace and Cyprus, the Greek economy under its debt burden and Greek youth whose future will become uncertain. This chapter of the report therefore takes the form of a strategic reading addressed directly to Greek public opinion.

Greek society faces a clear and rational choice:

- **Reading military reality correctly:** The military, industrial and economic asymmetry between Türkiye and Greece is of a scale that cannot be closed by any system that could be bought (Chapters IX and X). Narratives that try to persuade Greek public opinion with "preemptive strike" scenarios against this reality do not protect the Greek people; on the contrary, they drag it into a risk that cannot be remedied.
- **Asking whose war it is:** Israel's calculation to weaken Türkiye, which has embedded itself in the Greek command-and-control architecture through the Achilles Shield, does not coincide with Greece's national interests. The Greek people have the right and the responsibility to oppose their land and their youth being used for the strategic calculations of a third state.
- **Assessing allies' expectations realistically:** It is not possible for the US to enter a hot conflict with Türkiye while its competition with China continues. The EU has no joint army. France, for its part, is building a defence-industry partnership with Türkiye (Chapters III and VII). There is no power that would stand militarily at Greece's side in a moment of crisis.
- **Grasping the timing:** The effect of social pressure on the government is at its highest before the first shot is fired (Chapter XI). It is essential that the demand to reduce tension be voiced before the crisis, that is, today. In this framework, for Greek public opinion —through civil-society organisations, the business community, academia, the media and especially island communities whose daily lives are intertwined with Türkiye— to exert the following kind of pressure on its government is the most realistic way for Greece to secure its own future:
- A return to the demilitarised status of the islands;
- Giving up unilateral steps with the character of a casus belli, such as 12 miles;
- Limiting the military axis built with Israel and directed at Türkiye;

- Negotiating the disputes in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean as a comprehensive package, in good faith and through direct dialogue. Without doubt, there is no enmity between the Turkish nation and the Greek people, who lived for nearly 600 years in peace under Ottoman rule.

Both shores of the Aegean have for centuries, under the Ottoman roof, shared the same sea, the same trade, the same table and the same fate.

The strongest shield against the calculations of those who wish to turn this shared heritage into the wreckage of a war will be the good sense of Greek society.

XVII. Assessment and Policy Recommendations

XVII.I. Deterrence and Preparedness

- **The asymmetry must be preserved and deepened.** Türkiye's relative power is increasing over time; there is therefore no need for a preventive war. The spread of the Steel Dome across the whole country, the acceleration of serial production of Tayfun and SİPER, adherence to the schedules of the KAAN, Kızılelma and MUGEM programmes, and the prioritisation of indigenous engine programmes will widen the gap further by 2029, the year in which the Achilles Shield is to be completed.
- **Deterrent capacity must be made visible.** The joint operational capability, unmanned systems and deep-strike capacity of the Turkish Armed Forces must be shared with the public on a regular basis through exercises, test firings and defence exhibitions. Deterrence will function only when it is a capacity that the other side can read correctly.
- **Red lines must be declared clearly and consistently.** The position on 12 miles, the arming of the islands and Türkiye's activities on the continental shelf must be restated in language that leaves no ambiguity but does not fuel escalation; for, as Fearon (1995) showed, a significant share of wars arise from the misreading of the other side's resolve.
- **Attribution capacity must be strengthened.** An intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance and forensic investigation capacity able to establish within hours the perpetrators of subsea and surface incidents in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean is the most effective defence against third-party provocations; a weakening-by-proxy strategy can feed only on uncertainty.
- **The principle of not being the first to strike must be adopted as a strategic doctrine.** This principle will not limit Türkiye's operational capabilities; on the contrary, it will ensure that all capabilities prepared in advance —including pre-positioned elements— are put into play with full legitimacy after the other side's first attack, and it will defeat the "aggressor Türkiye" narrative that Israel desires.
- **The protection of critical infrastructure** is important. Strategic assets such as TANAP, TürkStream, LNG/FSRU, storage facilities and subsea cables must be made a priority in land and sea air-defence planning. These facilities are both high-value targets and the basic source of Türkiye's peacetime power.

XVII.II. Crisis Management

Within crisis management, it is important to attend to the following points and to plan the related preparations:

- **An institutional coordination mechanism must be established for the "golden hours".** In this context, hotlines operating 24/7 with Greek counterparts and with NATO should be established at the level of the General Staff and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and a political decision protocol to be applied in the first 6–12 hours after an incident at rung 5 should be devised.
- **The rules of engagement must be internalised by all units.** That is, balanced rules that would prevent a strategic war from being started by the instant decision of a commander in the field, yet would not restrict the right of self-defence, must be understood by all military personnel.
- **Narrative preparation and communication design must be strengthened.** Intensive work must be carried out so that Türkiye's legal theses (Lausanne, Paris, the principle of equity) are conveyed to international public opinion in an intelligible manner before the crisis rather than at the moment of crisis.

XVII.III. Diplomacy and Energy

In terms of diplomacy and energy, the following steps should be attended to. In this context:

- **Strategic dialogue with Washington** must be strengthened. What an Israeli-directed Turkish–Greek war would hand Beijing and Moscow in the US's competition with China must be conveyed to US decision-makers clearly and systematically.
- **Rapprochement with France** must be sustained. However, it must also be realistically taken into account that this does not remove France's legal obligations towards Greece.
- **In projects such as the GSI**, a formula of "consultation and partnership" should be considered in place of "de facto obstruction". It should not be forgotten that Türkiye's participation in regional electricity trade in return for recognition of its rights on the route could turn zero-sum rivalry into positive-sum energy diplomacy.
- **The timing and language of the Blue Homeland Law** must be managed carefully. The law's entry into force must not be made to coincide with Greece's 2027 election calendar; the message that 6 miles is preserved in the Aegean and that the law is a ground for negotiation must be conveyed to Western capitals in advance and in clear terms. In this way, the international legitimacy of Athens' 12-mile counter-move can be narrowed.
- **Civil marine protection areas and nature parks** should be used systematically as instruments that give concrete form to Türkiye's claims in the Aegean without firing a shot; the authority over special-status areas provided for by the Blue Homeland Law should be exercised for this purpose.

- **The role of the Israel–Greece–GCASC axis** in the arming of the islands must be documented and kept on the agenda in international legal platforms —the UN, the OSCE and NATO.
- **Direct communication channels with Greek society** must be increased. Contacts to be established with island communities, the business world, academia and civil society will make the shared interest between the two peoples visible and will help the demand to reduce tension gain strength within Greece.
- **Türkiye's reputation as a transit country (and, in the long term, as an energy hub)** must be protected under all circumstances. This reputation is a strategic asset more lasting than any military gain.

XVIII. Conclusion

The Turkish–Greek dispute in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean is a rivalry that has been managed on the brink of war for half a century but has never turned into war. The model set out in this report shows that this balance has become fragile in the 2026–2030 period owing to three factors: (i) Israel's embedding in the Greek defence architecture through the Achilles Shield, (ii) the proliferation of "silent sovereignty" moves such as the GSI, marine parks and spatial planning, and (iii) the way the two countries' election calendars increase domestic public pressure.

The first basic proposition of the report is that the military, technological and industrial asymmetry between Türkiye and Greece is obvious and lasting. With its geography, mass, unmanned systems, deep strike, electronic warfare, combat experience and a defence industry that grows stronger every year with a localisation rate exceeding 80%, Türkiye has moved into a position that cannot be balanced by any system Greece might buy. In a war that could be launched under Israeli direction, Türkiye has the capacity to collapse the military capacity of the Greek army in a short time and to retake the Eastern Aegean islands, Cyprus and Western Thrace completely in a simultaneous operation. That the US cannot enter a hot conflict with Türkiye while its strategic competition with China continues, and that NATO would be rendered inoperative in an intra-alliance war, invalidate Greece's most basic strategic assumptions.

The second basic proposition of the report is that this balance is no longer established solely between Athens and Ankara. A Türkiye that is consolidating its home front with the "Terror-Free Türkiye" process, has largely set its problems in the East and Southeast on the path to resolution, is increasing its influence in Syria and Iraq, is forming a collective-defence bond with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan and is normalising with Armenia is, for Israel, an actor that becomes harder to balance as time passes. For this reason, from Israel's standpoint, weakening Türkiye by making it fight another element —and, as the most suitable candidate, Greece— is becoming the last and most attractive option left. Israel, embedded in the Greek command-and-control architecture through the Achilles Shield, the coordination in the unlawful arming of the islands, and Greek preemptive-strike scenarios that lack internal consistency and reflect Israeli operational design are indicators of this thesis. At a time when tension between great powers is escalating on a global scale, the double trigger formed by the Blue Homeland Law and Greece's 12-mile scenario has the character of a spark that could carry a local crisis into an international war.

Ultimately, the basic proposition of this report is this: **Türkiye's strongest position in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean is to be a state that is known by all to have the capacity to win a war, yet achieves its objectives without having to use that capacity.**

Since what those who wish to weaken Türkiye desire most is war itself, not falling into this trap —and, if it is nonetheless sought to be made to fall into it, responding with all its capacity, without being the first to strike and while preserving its legitimacy— will be Türkiye's greatest strategic success in this period. In sum, the key to peace in the Aegean is in Athens; and the one who will turn that key is the good sense of Greek society, which will not hand over its own future to the calculations of third parties.

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