

# **Strategic Rivalries and Alliances: The Egypt–Greece–Turkey Triangle between Libya and the Muslim Brotherhood**

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**Publication date: 7 September 2025**

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Cairo and Athens enjoy strong and stable relations dating back decades of mutual cooperation and strategic understanding. These relations intersect with other complex and intertwined issues in the region, giving them greater importance and stability.

**Turkey and its movements are prominent in the region, particularly in the Libyan conflict. What does this mean for Cairo and Athens?**

## **Relations between Egypt and Greece**

Relations between Egypt and Greece have witnessed significant development in recent years, with an increase in official visits and summits between the two sides. In January 2025, Cairo hosted a trilateral summit with the presidents of Cyprus and Greece, during which the three countries affirmed their commitment to strengthening regional cooperation. In May 2025, Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdel Aty contacted his Greek and Cypriot counterparts following the announcement of military exercises between Türkiye and Egypt, to emphasize transparency and build trust<sup>1</sup>.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi made his fifth official visit to Athens in May 2025, where he met with Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis. In a joint statement, they affirmed that the two countries' relations are "rooted in history." The elevation of bilateral relations to the

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Ahram Online. "Egypt, Greece, Cyprus Joint Efforts Key to Achieving Regional Stability: FM." Ahram Online, May 2024. <https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/1234/545496/Egypt/Foreign-Affairs/Egypt,-Greece,-Cyprus-joint-efforts-key-to-achievi.aspx>

level of a "strategic partnership" was also officially announced. Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdel Aty is scheduled to visit Athens this week<sup>2</sup>.

This comes after a crisis erupted between Cairo and Athens in late May over the management of Saint Catherine's Monastery. Both sides are working to contain the dispute through official dialogue channels.

### **The Challenge of the Muslim Brotherhood**

Athens views Egypt's stability as a crucial factor in its national security, given Egypt's geographic location, which makes it Europe's "first gateway" to the southern Mediterranean. This is in addition to its role in combating illegal immigration and combating extremist organizations, most notably the Muslim Brotherhood, which is a common security threat to both countries.

Athens has expressed growing security concerns about the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, particularly during its rule in Egypt in 2013, which was officially welcomed by Greece upon its ouster. The Greek government has adopted a clear position that the group represents a threat to regional stability, given its links to international ideological networks and its adoption of a political agenda that could destabilize the balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Turkish support for the Brotherhood since 2011 has also made the group a focus of interest for Egypt and Greece, considering the potential for the Brotherhood's rise to be used as a tool of external influence to enhance Turkish influence in the region<sup>3</sup>. This explains Cairo and Athens' concerns about developments in Syria.

After the ouster of former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi in 2013, both Qatar and Turkey adopted positions hostile to Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, accusing him of supporting the Muslim Brotherhood and hosting its leaders. Ankara provided an active media platform through channels such as "Mekameleen and Al-Sharq", which broadcast leaks and news critical of the Egyptian government and incitement against state institutions. For its part, Qatar financially supported these channels and dedicated media platforms such as Al Jazeera Mubasher Misr to extensive coverage hostile to the Egyptian regime. In 2014, el-Sisi stated that Turkey and Qatar were spending millions of dollars to sow chaos in the Arab world through media and incitement<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ekathimerini.com/politics/foreign-policy/1276897/athens-on-edge-as-sinai-power-struggle-unfolds/>

<sup>3</sup> Zenonas Tziarras, The New Geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean: Trilateral Partnerships and Regional Security, march, 2019. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/zypern/15662.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/egypts-sisi-says-qatar-and-turkey-are-spending-millions-to-spread-chaos-in-arab-lands-372332>

## **Egyptian-Turkish Rapprochement: A Complex Path and Regional Balances**

Over the past year, Egyptian-Turkish relations have developed. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's visit to Ankara in September 2024 marked a turning point in the course of relations between Cairo and Ankara. This followed a similar visit by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Cairo in February 2024. These visits were described as the beginning of a major breakthrough in a diplomatic crisis that had lasted for more than 12 years<sup>5</sup>.

Since then, the two countries have taken a series of gradual steps toward rebuilding trust and normalizing relations. In February 2025, the foreign ministers of the two countries met in Ankara to mark the centenary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Egypt and Turkey<sup>6</sup>. In May 2025, Egyptian Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Ahmed Khalifa made an official visit to Ankara, during which he met with senior Turkish military officials to discuss ways to enhance military cooperation<sup>7</sup>.

In April 2025, the Turkish Ministry of Defense announced the implementation of a joint military training exercise between Turkish and Egyptian special forces in Ankara. The exercise included a series of advanced combat and tactical exercises. Media sources indicated that Ankara is also seeking to market its drones to Egypt as part of its efforts to explore opportunities for defense and technical cooperation<sup>8</sup>.

The impact of regional variables that have contributed to the rapprochement between Egypt and Turkey cannot be overlooked. Most notable among these is the outbreak of the Gaza war, which prompted both sides to further coordinate their diplomatic and humanitarian stances toward the Strip. However, some contentious issues remain unresolved and pose challenges to full normalization, most notably the Libyan issue and the Turkish presence in northern Syria. This reflects the continued complexity of relations between the two countries, despite apparent official signs of rapprochement.

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<sup>5</sup> Middle East Eye. "Egypt's Sisi Visits Turkey for First Time in Over a Decade as Rift with Erdogan Heals." Middle East Eye, 25 September 2024. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/egypt-sisi-visits-turkey-rift-erdogan>

<sup>6</sup> Daily News Egypt. "Egypt, Turkey Prepare for Presidential Summit, Discuss Gaza Aid, Regional Issues." Daily News Egypt, 4 February 2025. <https://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2025/02/04/egypt-turkey-prepare-for-presidential-summit-discuss-gaza-aid-regional-issues/>

<sup>7</sup> Ahram Online. "Egyptian Armed Forces Chief of Staff Discusses Military Cooperation during Official Visit to Turkey." Ahram Online, 10 May 2025. <https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/546053.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> Middle East Eye. "Egypt's Sisi Visits Turkey for First Time in Over a Decade as Rift with Erdogan Heals." Middle East Eye, 25 September 2024. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/egypt-sisi-visits-turkey-rift-erdogan>

## **Intersecting Geopolitical Interests: Libya and the Eastern Mediterranean**

Geo-politically, the relationship between Egypt and Turkey is closely intertwined with the relationship between Egypt and Greece, as the geopolitical interests of the three parties—Egypt, Turkey, and Greece—intersect in the Eastern Mediterranean and on the Libyan scene.

Egypt plays a pivotal role in supporting Libyan state institutions, particularly the Libyan National Army led by Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar and the House of Representatives headed by Aguila Saleh, based on Egyptian national security considerations. President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's recent meetings with prominent Libyan leaders confirmed Cairo's commitment to a comprehensive political settlement leading to unified general elections<sup>9</sup>.

In contrast, Turkey seeks to expand its influence in Libya through maritime and military agreements. Ankara signed a memorandum of understanding to expand oil and gas exploration within Libyan waters, which sparked objections from Greece and the European Union, who consider these agreements invalid due to their violation of Greek maritime rights<sup>10</sup>.

Ankara also strengthened its presence through military training agreements with various Libyan forces, as part of a pragmatic policy seeking to impose influence on both sides of the Libyan divide<sup>11</sup>.

## **The Maritime Border Demarcation Agreement between Libya and Turkey**

After the maritime border demarcation agreement signed between Libya and Turkey remained pending for nearly six years, this issue was reopened in July 2025, amid strong Greek objections and growing European efforts to curb any Libyan steps towards legalizing this agreement. Greece considers this agreement an infringement on its maritime boundaries, while Turkey and the Libyan government affirmed their intention to define areas of maritime sovereignty.

Turkish actions in Libya go beyond their declared economic or security nature and carry broader strategic objectives at their core. Ankara is pursuing a pragmatic approach based on expanding its political, military, and economic influence. This could earn Ankara the image of a "neutral mediator" in the eyes of the international community, particularly Washington, compared to the role of other countries.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://shorturl.at/7gMla>

<sup>10</sup> <https://shorturl.at/rSpPF>

<sup>11</sup> <https://rb.gy/w37u2u>

## **Cairo and Athens Face Off Turkey**

Cairo and Athens are keen to undermine the Turkish-Libyan maritime agreements, given the threat they pose to their strategic interests in the Mediterranean. Greece views the Turkish border demarcation agreement with Tripoli as an infringement on its exclusive economic zone. In light of this, security dimensions overlap with geopolitics, making Libya an arena of intense competition between two regional axes: one that relies on supporting the nation-state, and the other that seeks to strengthen its military and economic presence through local proxies.

It appears that Cairo will continue to attempt to balance its growing relations with Turkey, despite the simmering tensions surrounding developments in Libya, while maintaining stable relations with Greece and Cyprus. These relations are historically stable and based on trust and respect, in contrast to the volatile relationship between Egypt and Turkey, marked by competition, conflict, and differing ideologies, even when interests converge.