



Egyptian-Turkish Relations on a Roller Coaster: Implications for the Eastern Mediterranean

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Summary

- The Libyan civil war emerged as a proxy conflict between Egypt and Turkey; however, both states have since aligned their positions on the Gaza crisis, reflecting a major shift in their diplomatic approach.
- The significance of Libya's oil reserves for both states cannot be overstated, as they have prompted a renewed sense of cooperation after a decade of rivalry.
- Despite their significant ideological differences, Egypt and Turkey have ultimately recognized the necessity of strengthening their ties across nearly all areas, including trade and military cooperation.
- After a decade of intense conflict shaped by competing interests and military interventions in Libya, Egypt and Turkey are now contemplating a rapprochement with a view to addressing common security and economic interests.
- If it signals Turkey's wish to engage with all the countries in the region based on international norms, a rapprochement between Egypt and Turkey could prove to be a critical factor for the achievement of stability in the Eastern Mediterranean.
- An opportunity is emerging for Greece to promote regional cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean through a trilateral initiative bringing Egypt, Greece and Turkey together.

Introduction

Volatility is not a recent feature of Egyptian-Turkish relations. Following decades of rather lukewarm relations, in the early 2000s, Turkey and Egypt forged cooperative relations characterized by a boost in economic cooperation, trade, and investment. This era was underpinned by Turkey's AKP administration's policy of "zero problems with neighbours"¹ and Egypt's Mubarak-era emphasis on regional stability. The regional landscape underwent a dramatic transformation in 2011 with the onset of the Arab Spring, which led to the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and the fall of other long-standing regimes across the Arab Middle East.² The election of Mohamed Morsi, a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, to the Presidency of Egypt in 2012 heralded a new era in Egyptian-Turkish relations. Turkey's AKP administration, sharing strong ideological affinities with the Muslim Brotherhood, welcomed Morsi's presidency and sought a strategic relationship with Egypt. However, relations quickly soured following the military coup of 3 July 2013 which ousted Morsi and brought General Abdel Fattah El-Sisi to power. Turkey vehemently condemned the coup and refused to recognize El-Sisi's government; diplomatic relations were suspended.³ Turkey's increased support for the Muslim Brotherhood further ratcheted up the tension, which peaked during the Libyan Civil War, in which Turkey and Egypt found themselves supporting opposing factions: Turkey backed the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli, while Egypt supported the Tobruk-based House of Representatives and the Libyan National Army (LNA) led by General Khalifa Haftar.

The attempted coup in Turkey of 15 July 2016 marked a new low point in Egyptian-Turkish relations. Initial reactions in Cairo to news of the coup appeared rather positive, reflecting deep-seated animosities linked to the Erdoğan administration's support for the Muslim Brotherhood and its refusal to recognize the El-Sisi government.⁴ The failure of the coup not only embarrassed Egyptian media, but it also reignited bilateral tensions. The coup attempt ignited internal debates in Egypt about the role of the military in politics in which comparisons were drawn to Egypt's own experience. Key obstacles to reconciliation remained, notably Turkey's non-recognition of the El-Sisi regime and the status of the Muslim Brotherhood in Turkey. Despite Saudi mediation efforts and Turkey's normalization of relations with other regional powers including Israel and Russia, mutual distrust and differing political stances continued to obstruct the restoration of diplomatic ties.

¹ Gencer Özcan, *Policy of Zero Problems with the Neighbours*, European Institute of the Mediterranean 2012:

<https://www.iemed.org/publication/policy-of-zero-problems-with-the-neighbours/>

² Libya emerged as a major crisis hotspot. The first phase of the Libyan Civil War started in February 2011 and lasted eight months, while the second phase started in May 2014 and ended in October 2020. It resulted in the removal of Muammar Gaddafi and marked a shift in regional power dynamics. Pan-Islamism (Arabic: الوحدة الإسلامية) is a political movement that promotes the unification of Muslims within a single Islamic nation or state, often envisioned as a caliphate, or within an international organization governed by Islamic principles. The ensuing political upheavals saw differing ideological currents emerge, notably between Pan-Islamism, championed by Turkey, and Pan-Arabism, historically aligned with Egypt. Pan-Arabism (Arabic: القومية العربية) is a political movement and belief system which advocates for the nationalist notion of cultural and political unity among Arab countries. Its origins go back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when increased literacy sparked a cultural and literary renaissance known as the Nahda (al-nahḍah al-adabiyah) among Arabs in the Middle East.

³ Omar Sheira, *Turkey-Egypt Relations: Incentives to Normalize*, Global Political Trends Center (GPoT), September 2014

⁴ Ofir Winter and Gallia Lindenstrauss, *Egypt and Turkey following the Failed Coup: The Interrupted Thaw*, Institute for National Security Studies, No. 842, August 2016

The Dynamics of the Eastern Mediterranean

The instability of the Eastern Mediterranean has been fuelled by several key factors which primarily revolve around the discovery of significant natural gas reserves in the EEZs of Cyprus, Egypt, and Israel. The discovery of Israel's Leviathan field in 2010, followed by Cyprus's Aphrodite field and Egypt's Zohr field, sparked high expectations of regional energy exports. However, instead of fostering cooperation, these discoveries intensified maritime boundary disputes and attracted the attention of major powers and energy companies. Initial optimism about leveraging these resources for regional stability and economic benefit was overshadowed by the challenges of monetization, including the need for further discoveries and regional political consensus. Unilateral actions and non-inclusive approaches further impeded progress.⁵ Compounding these issues is the unresolved Cyprus problem, which has long strained Greek-Turkish relations and obstructed regional cooperation. Turkey's opposition to Cyprus's maritime boundaries and its interference with drilling operations have exacerbated tensions. The emergence of significant natural gas reserves has raised the stakes, leading Greece to strengthen its strategic alliances. Greece's EEZ delimitation agreements in 2020 with Italy and Egypt, which were aimed at clarifying maritime boundaries and countering Turkey's claims, marked a significant shift in its approach.

Turkey's recent foreign policy shift vis-à-vis the Middle East was made in response to both regional dynamics and domestic insecurities.

Turkey's recent foreign policy shift vis-à-vis the Middle East was made in response to both regional dynamics and domestic insecurities. As regional conflicts intensified, particularly in Syria and Libya, Turkey increasingly turned to military interventions and unilateral actions. This shift was driven by heightened threat perceptions, especially following the collapse of the Kurdish peace process and the failed coup attempt in 2016,⁶ which exacerbated concerns over regime security. Moreover, Turkey's rivalry with the Saudi Arabia-UAE axis has fuelled a zero-sum approach to regional power struggles and further embedded its military presence across the Middle East.⁷ This reorientation also underscores Turkey's efforts to balance its relationships with powers like the United States and Russia, despite the challenges of diverging interests. Overall, Turkey's evolving strategy highlighted a securitized and risk-prone approach, reflecting its broader ambitions, vulnerabilities and feeding into an increasingly volatile regional landscape.⁸

The deterioration in Turkey's relations with its immediate Arab neighbours, particularly Egypt, has complicated the strategic landscape of the Eastern Mediterranean significantly. Rooted in divergent strategic interests and historical rivalries, the strain between Turkey and Egypt was exacerbated by Turkey's alignment with pro-Western states, its NATO membership, and its contentious relationship with Israel. These factors placed Turkey at odds with Egypt, which had aligned itself with the Saudi Arabia-UAE axis against Turkish influence in the region. The aftermath of the Arab uprisings, particularly in Libya, saw the two countries supporting opposing factions, which deepened their rivalry. Moreover, Turkey's broader regional ambitions, shaped by its security imperatives and strategic alliances, fuelled Egypt's perception of Turkey as a regional adversary. This animosity was further complicated by Turkey's assertive

⁵ Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, *The Eastern Mediterranean as an Emerging Crisis Zone: Greece and Cyprus in a Volatile Regional Environment*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2021

⁶ The Solution Process (Turkish: Çözüm Süreci; Kurdish: Proseya Aştîyê), also known as the Peace Process or the Turkey-PKK Peace Process, aimed to resolve the Kurdish-Turkish conflict which had been ongoing since 1984, resulting in ca. 40,000 casualties and significant economic and social damage to Turkey. Since 1984, there have been more than six peace-making "attempts."

⁷ Military operations in Syria and Iraq against the Kurds; military involvement in Libya supporting the Government of National Accord (GNA) against the forces of Khalifa Haftar; general military preparedness for developments in the region.

⁸ Meliha Benli Altunışık, *The New Turn in Turkey's Foreign Policy in the Middle East: Regional and Domestic Insecurities*, FFPS - Istituto Affari Internazionali, July 2020, ISBN 978-88-9368-137-7

military actions in Libya and its support for movements like the Muslim Brotherhood, which Egypt viewed as a direct threat to its own stability and regional influence. As a result, the relationship between Turkey and Egypt remained tense, with little room for reconciliation as both states pursued competing visions of regional leadership.⁹

The Libyan civil war: From proxy conflict to détente

Libya was the country where Egyptian-Turkish confrontation reached the brink of a proxy war. Following the fall of the Muammar Qaddafi regime in 2011, Libya experienced state failure and prolonged instability due to the rise of various militias. By 2014, Libya was divided between two rival administrations, one in Tripoli and one in Tobruk. Egypt's involvement in the Libyan conflict was driven by strategic interests and ideological opposition. The geographical proximity of Egypt and Libya, coupled with a history of strained relations with Qaddafi, shaped Egypt's position in the post-Qaddafi era. Under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Egypt remained resolutely opposed to Islamist movements, including the Muslim Brotherhood, which had ties to the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli. Instead, Egypt supported the Tobruk-based House of Representatives and the Libyan National Army (LNA) led by Khalifa Haftar with a view to counteracting Islamist influence and securing economic benefits, such as discounted Libyan oil, while also addressing security concerns related to border stability.

Turkey's involvement in Libya also reflected its broader strategy, which sought to expand its influence across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

However, Turkey's intervention on behalf of the GNA in early 2020, when the LNA attempted to occupy Tripoli, complicated Egypt's objectives. Egypt eventually proposed the Cairo Declaration in June 2020, seeking to address the presence of foreign forces—Turkey, in particular—and to avoid direct military confrontation. Egypt's role in the Libyan conflict was also shaped by its alliance with the UAE and Saudi Arabia, both of which provided Egypt with financial and military aid, aligning Cairo's policies with their broader regional goals of countering political Islam and containing Turkish influence. Egypt's strategy involved bolstering Haftar's military capabilities while simultaneously engaging in diplomatic efforts to limit Turkey's influence. Despite its assertive stance, Egypt was aware of the potential domestic repercussions and the strain on its economy and was cautious about overextending itself militarily in Libya. This balancing act underscored Egypt's complex position, as it navigated between immediate security concerns and the broader regional power dynamics involving its Gulf allies.¹⁰

The Libyan conflict emerged as a significant arena for rivalry between Turkey and Egypt, reflecting their divergent ideologies and strategic interests.

Turkey's involvement in Libya also reflected its broader strategy, which sought to expand its influence across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Turkey deepened its engagement in Libya beyond military support for the GNA by leveraging soft power through cultural and economic ties, which included reconstruction efforts and infrastructure projects. This economic involvement not only strengthened Turkey's political leverage, but it also sought to establish long-term Turkish influence in a post-conflict Libya. Turkey's actions served to counterbalance those of regional rivals, particularly the UAE and Saudi Arabia, which acted across the Arab world to oppose Turkish influence. Turkey's strategic involvement in Libya, including its efforts to assert its presence in the Eastern Mediterranean, underscored the complex interplay between regional powers in the conflict, making Libya a crucial battleground for influence in the MENA region.¹¹

⁹ Ibrahim G. Aoudé, *Turkey and its Immediate Arab Neighbors in the Twenty-first Century*, Pluto Journals, Arab Studies Quarterly, Vol. 42, No. 1-2 (Winter/Spring 2020), pp. 91-108

¹⁰ Yahia H. Zoubir, *The Protracted Civil War in Libya: The Role of Outside Powers*, Insight Turkey, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Fall 2020), pp. 11-28

¹¹ Tarek Megerisi, *Libya's Global Civil War*, European Council on Foreign Relations (2019)

Egyptian-Turkish Relations on a Roller Coaster: Implications for the Eastern Mediterranean

The Libyan conflict emerged as a significant arena for rivalry between Turkey and Egypt, reflecting their divergent ideologies and strategic interests. The rivalry between Turkey and Egypt in Libya also had broader regional implications. The strategic discord contributed to the formation of alliances and treaties aimed at countering each other's influence. For instance, the Greece-Egypt maritime boundary agreement of 2019, which aimed to secure maritime rights and limit Turkish expansion, was partially a response to Turkey's assertive actions in the Eastern Mediterranean and Libya. In addition, the United States began increasingly to align with Egypt in recognition of Cairo's role as a stabilizing force and a counterweight to Turkish influence. Libya's conflict thus served as a focal point for the broader strategic struggle between Turkey and Egypt.¹² However, while the Libyan conflict has not yet been fully resolved, notable progress has been made toward stabilization. This is thanks to the UN-brokered ceasefire in October 2020 between Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) and the Government of National Accord (GNA), which has significantly reduced the violence.

Most of the deposits, as well as the mining and processing facilities, are under the control of the Haftar government, which strengthens his position and may have pushed Turkey to seek a compromise with Egypt.

While military violence has declined, political tensions remain high, however. The Central Bank of Libya, which manages the country's vast oil revenues, is at the heart of the latest political turmoil. On 26 August 2024, Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, the GNA Prime Minister based in Tripoli, fired the governor of the Central Bank, Sadiq al-Kabir. In response to this decision, oil extraction and processing in the eastern part of Libya was frozen.¹³ Most of the deposits, as well as the mining and processing facilities, are under the control of the Haftar government, which strengthens his position and may have pushed Turkey to seek a compromise with Egypt. A compromise agreement was brokered by the United Nations, and on 30 September 2024 the Tobruk-based House of Representatives [approved](#) the appointment of Naji Mohamed Issa Belqasem as the new head of the Central Bank.

From Conflict to Rapprochement: Current political dynamics

More than a decade after his previous visit, President Erdoğan travelled to Cairo to meet President El-Sisi in February 2024. They discussed enhancing economic cooperation, trade, and investment, while also addressing regional stability, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean and Libya. Energy cooperation, especially with regard to the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), was a key topic, along with counterterrorism efforts. The meeting aimed to finalize steps toward fully normalizing relations, including restoring ambassadorial exchanges and resuming high-level diplomatic engagements, marking a significant step forward in Egyptian-Turkish relations.

El-Sisi reciprocated with a visit to Ankara in September 2024. Eighteen memoranda of understanding (MoU) were signed covering cooperation in areas including energy, defence, tourism, and finance. During a joint press conference, Erdogan reiterated plans to increase bilateral trade from \$5 billion to \$15 billion over the next five years. It is worth noting that even after the fall of Morsi and during the Libyan War, trade between Egypt and Turkey was not interrupted; indeed, the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries has been crucial for Egypt's economy, as it has enabled the increased exports critical for generating foreign currency and addressing Egypt's financing challenges.¹⁴ Despite diplomatic tensions, Egypt has maintained the FTA to preserve access to Turkish markets, support its manufacturing sector, and foster economic recovery. The trade partnership has been more significant than Turkish

¹² Sarah Feuer, Yoel Guzansky and Gallia Lindenstrauss, *A Violent Theater of Regional Rivals*, Institute for National Security Studies, July 2019

¹³ Libya is the ninth largest oil producing country in the world and controls 2.9 percent of the world's oil reserves.

¹⁴ The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Turkey and Egypt was signed on 27 December 2005 and came into effect on 1 March 2007.

Egyptian-Turkish Relations on a Roller Coaster: Implications for the Eastern Mediterranean

investment in Egypt, which remains modest compared both to other foreign investments in Egypt and to Turkey's investment in other countries in the region.¹⁵

The two leaders also highlighted their shared stance on the Palestinian cause, calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and an end to violence in the West Bank. Turkey has condemned Israel's actions against Hamas in Gaza, sent aid to Egypt for Palestinians, and praised Cairo's role in ceasefire negotiations. El-Sisi noted that they also discussed the situation in Libya, where Turkey and Egypt have supported opposing sides, emphasizing that the ongoing conflict cannot be resolved until elections are held, foreign forces and mercenaries withdraw, and the militias disband.¹⁶

Improved relations between Egypt and Turkey could bring notable benefits to the region, including enhanced stability and opportunities to cooperate in energy development and security.

Improved relations between Egypt and Turkey could bring notable benefits to the region, including enhanced stability and opportunities to cooperate in energy development and security. A thaw could enable both states to more effectively address critical issues like maritime disputes and energy monetization, while leveraging their economic and strategic clout to foster regional cohesion. For Turkey, strengthening ties with Egypt might help counterbalance rival influences, particularly from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, while Egypt could gain from increased trade and investment opportunities. However, significant ideological differences and historical grievances—exemplified by Turkey's strained relationship with Israel and divergent views on regional issues—could pose challenges to the sustainability of this rapprochement. Persistent disagreements on key matters, coupled with underlying strategic rivalries, could undermine the potential for a stable and lasting partnership.

The War in Gaza

The Gaza war has posed significant challenges for Egypt, including the risk of a large influx of Palestinians into the Sinai peninsula and severe strains on its fragile economy. The conflict has disrupted Egypt's revenue streams from natural gas, tourism, and the Suez Canal, exacerbating existing economic issues, despite aid from Gulf states and international creditors. Egypt has actively mediated between Israel and Hamas, seeking a ceasefire and increased humanitarian aid, while preparing for potential refugee inflows and opposing Israeli encroachments. Domestically, Egypt faces the dual threats of rising public discontent over economic hardships and potential instability from a Palestinian influx, underscoring the need for economic and political reforms to ensure long-term stability.¹⁷

The conflict has also galvanized Egyptian public sentiment, leading to grassroots protests and a boycott of Israeli-linked products, which the government has tightly controlled to prevent broader anti-regime unrest. Despite securing substantial international aid, Egypt's long-term stability remains uncertain and hinges on essential economic reforms and improved governance. It would be beneficial if the international community supported Egypt's mediation efforts, opposed forced displacement, and pushed for reforms that could enhance Egypt's resilience and address internal discontent. The fact that the war in Gaza has cost Egypt financially and that its people are pro-Palestinian, puts it in an extremely difficult position. It seems to be trying to

¹⁵ Amr Adly, *How Egypt and Turkey Trade Amid Tensions*, Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, Oct. 2021:

<https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2021/11/how-egypt-and-turkey-trade-amid-tensions?lang=en¢er=middle-east>

¹⁶ Tuvan Gumrukcu, *Egypt's Sisi makes first presidential visit to Turkey in 12 years*, Reuters, Sep. 2024: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/egypts-sisi-heads-turkey-first-presidential-visit-12-years-2024-09-04/>

¹⁷ International Crisis Group, *Egypt's Gaza Dilemmas*, Crisis Group Middle East and North Africa Briefing N°91, May 2024

Egyptian-Turkish Relations on a Roller Coaster: Implications for the Eastern Mediterranean

straddle the line between the West and the Islamic world by maintaining a more formal and less bellicose attitude towards the war taking place just over its borders.

At the same time, Turkey's role in the Gaza war has had a significant influence on its evolving relations with Egypt. As a staunch supporter of the Palestinian cause and a vocal critic of Israeli military actions, Turkey has positioned itself as a key advocate for Gaza on the international stage¹⁸. This stance aligns with Turkey's broader foreign policy, which emphasizes support for Muslim-majority states and opposition to perceived Western and Israeli aggression in the region. Despite their state-level ideological differences, Turkey's humanitarian aid to Gaza and vocal criticism of Israeli actions have resonated with Egyptian public sentiment, which is deeply sympathetic to the Palestinians' plight. While this alignment could have been a point of convergence, it has also highlighted the differing approaches, with Turkey's more confrontational stance contrasting sharply with Egypt's more diplomatic and mediating role in the conflict.

Turkey and Egypt have found common ground on the Palestinian issue, which offers a significant opportunity for collaboration.

Despite their divergent political trajectories and regional rivalries, Turkey and Egypt have found common ground on the Palestinian issue, which offers a significant opportunity for collaboration. Under President Erdoğan, Turkey is seeking to position itself as a leading advocate for Muslim-majority states, using its vocal support for Palestine and critique of Israeli policies to enhance its regional influence. Meanwhile, recalling its historic role as the preeminent Arab power during the Nasser era, Egypt continues to claim a pivotal role in mediating the conflict and addressing humanitarian concerns. This shared commitment to the Palestinian cause highlights a potential avenue for cooperation, as both states navigate their historical legacies and contemporary ambitions. By aligning on this issue, they have an opportunity to bridge their differences and explore collaborative paths.

How could the Egypt-Turkey relationship evolve from here?

Given their shared historical grievances and ideological differences, both states will need to strike a delicate balance between cooperation and competition.

The future of relations between Egypt and Turkey appears to hinge on their ability to navigate overlapping regional interests and domestic challenges. Given their shared historical grievances and ideological differences, both states will need to strike a delicate balance between cooperation and competition. Relations with Israel could significantly impact this dynamic, with Turkey's vocal criticism of Israeli policies, particularly with regard to Palestine, contrasting with Egypt's more cautious and pragmatic approach. This divergence could either deepen their rivalry or foster a strategic alignment based on their mutual interest in regional stability. Additionally, both countries will need to address the pressing issue of refugee flows, especially given the potential influx of Palestinians into Egypt's Sinai peninsula. Effective management of this humanitarian challenge could serve as a critical test for their diplomatic efforts, potentially influencing their willingness to collaborate. If they can align their strategies to address these regional and domestic pressures, there is potential for a thaw in relations, leading to greater regional cohesion and a strategic partnership.

On the trade front, both countries have demonstrated a commitment to strengthening economic ties despite past diplomatic tensions. The recent agreements to increase bilateral trade from \$5 billion to \$15 billion over the next five years underscore the mutual economic interests driving their relationship. Trade could act as a stabilizing

¹⁸ Gallia Lindenstrauss & Rémi Daniel, *Turkish-Israeli Relations at a Dangerous Turning Point*, Institute for National Security Studies, No. 1835, May 2024

Egyptian-Turkish Relations on a Roller Coaster: Implications for the Eastern Mediterranean

A coordinated approach to resolving the Libyan crisis could significantly impact the overall relationship between Egypt and Turkey, potentially leading to a more collaborative and strategically-aligned partnership in the region.

factor, fostering deeper economic interdependence and creating incentives for continued cooperation.

In the energy sector, the discovery of significant natural gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean presents both opportunities and challenges. Alongside its strategic partnership with Egypt, Turkey's increasing involvement in regional energy dynamics could facilitate joint ventures and collaborative projects in this field. However, maritime boundary disputes and competing interests may pose obstacles. The alignment of their energy policies and shared interests in regional energy markets could play a vital role in shaping their bilateral relations.

Libya remains a critical point of contention but also of potential cooperation. The evolving situation in Libya, with its complex web of alliances and ongoing conflict, has highlighted the strategic importance of this North African country. Turkey and Egypt's support for different rival factions in Libya has been a source of friction. However, their mutual interest in stabilizing Libya and addressing the broader implications of the conflict, including the management of resources and security, could open avenues for dialogue and joint action. A coordinated approach to resolving the Libyan crisis could significantly impact the overall relationship between Egypt and Turkey, potentially leading to a more collaborative and strategically-aligned partnership in the region.

Conclusions

The evolving relationship between Egypt and Turkey marks a significant shift away from their previous antagonism in a direction which is promising for both cooperation and mutual benefit. Recent diplomatic engagements, including high-level meetings and the signing of major agreements, indicate a thaw in relations that could reshape regional dynamics and influence broader strategic landscapes.

The ongoing Libyan conflict remains a critical area of contention, but also an opportunity for collaboration.

One notable implication of this rapprochement is the role Egypt could potentially serve as a conduit for Turkey's enhanced involvement in the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF). Conversely, Turkey's improved relations with Egypt could help Egypt achieve its broader strategic goals, including its aspirations for closer cooperation with NATO.

Migration is another critical dimension of their evolving relationship. Both Egypt¹⁹ and Turkey²⁰ face significant pressures from migration flows and the associated humanitarian and economic challenges. The European Union (EU), which has been grappling with migration and refugee management, would benefit from enhanced coordination between Egypt and Turkey, which could help alleviate pressure on EU borders and contribute to regional stability.

Furthermore, a potential convergence of Egyptian and Turkish maritime policies could have important regional implications. Joint efforts in this area, particularly in terms of maritime boundary delimitation and access to resources in the Eastern Mediterranean, would likely also include Cyprus, Libya and Greece.

The ongoing Libyan conflict remains a critical area of contention, but also an opportunity for collaboration. The two states have a shared interest in stabilizing Libya, and their

¹⁹ Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, Nauja Kleist and Hans Lucht, *Europe and the refugee situation*, Challenges for European Geopolitical Security, Danish Institute for International Studies, 2017, p. 45

²⁰ Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, Nauja Kleist and Hans Lucht, *Europe and the refugee situation*, Challenges for European Geopolitical Security, Danish Institute for International Studies, 2017, pp. 42-43

Egyptian-Turkish Relations on a Roller Coaster: Implications for the Eastern Mediterranean

joint efforts could further solidify their partnership while influencing regional power dynamics. Similarly, their shared commitment to addressing the Gaza conflict, despite differing approaches, highlights further potential areas for cooperative action.

...a significant opportunity for Greece to promote a trilateral initiative aimed at fostering dialogue and cooperation among Greece, Egypt and Turkey.

However, several questions and doubts remain with regard to the future of this collaboration. How will Egypt and Turkey reconcile their differing approaches to the Gaza conflict and their respective relationships with Iran and Russia? Turkey's closer ties with Iran and Russia, driven by strategic interests and energy partnerships, contrast with Egypt's cautious engagement with these powers, reflecting a broader strategic divergence. Moreover, how might this rapprochement affect their relations with Western powers and Israel? Both countries must navigate complex relationships with these actors, whose interests and policies could be influenced by the shifting dynamics between Cairo and Ankara. Similarly, Israel's reaction to this rapprochement, given its own strategic interests and security concerns, could further impact the trajectory of Egyptian-Turkish relations.

Last but not least, the détente represents a significant opportunity for Greece to promote a trilateral initiative aimed at fostering dialogue and cooperation among Greece, Egypt and Turkey. By advocating for a collaborative approach to regional issues, Greece could create a platform that encourages Egypt and Turkey to engage more constructively with one another. Such an initiative could start by focusing on shared goals, such as achieving a ceasefire in the Middle East and addressing migration challenges. Through such an initiative, Greece could not only improve its relations with both countries, it could also assert its role as a key player in the Eastern Mediterranean. This could help lay the groundwork for a more cohesive and collaborative regional framework and for enhanced regional stability, shifting the strategic landscape towards peace and mutual understanding while simultaneously giving Greece leverage in its own bilateral relations with Turkey and Egypt.

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