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Defence Industry: What's New in Cyprus-Greece-Israel Cooperation

The partnership among Cyprus, Greece and Israel is a clear example of what “spill-over” means in international politics: it basically started with fire-fighting, then it consolidated on shared security issues and now it is ready to explore another, sensitive area of security-economic cooperation: military industry.

On 22 June 2018, Nicosia, Athens and Tel Aviv held the second Trilateral Meeting of Defence Ministers in the Cypriot capital: it was the venue to underline the growing and multi-level cooperation among the three countries, that announced the willingness to pursue strengthened partnership in cyber-security, joint military drills and search and rescue operations in the Eastern Mediterranean [*Associated Press*, “Cyprus, Israel, Greece Pledge Deeper Military Ties”, 22 June 2018].

At the side-line of the meeting, the first conference of Cypriot, Greek and Israeli military industry companies has taken place in Nicosia, involving representatives of the three countries. Stressing the engagement of Cyprus, Greece and Israel in developing defence industry projects, the Cypriot Minister of Foreign Affairs, Savvas Angelides, emphasized the geopolitical framework of this cooperation.

As a matter of fact, these defence industry-centred initiatives are fostered by shared visions of current and future threats, both at a systemic and sub-regional level: according to Angelides, they could be translated into the acquisition of common defence systems, enhancing the effectiveness of joint actions to cope with menaces and challenges [*Stock Watch*, “Cooperation in Defense Industry with Israel and Greece”, 22 June 2018].

Defence industry intertwines security and economic interests: this announcement adds another piece to the recalibration of Eastern Mediterranean’s alignments and alliances, where new patterns of cooperation become long-term projects, thus emphasizing the consolidation of the Cyprus-Greece-Israel partnership.

With regard to Cyprus and Greece, two dynamics have to be also taken into account. First of all, both countries are entering a better financial season with respect to the last decade: Nicosia’s economy is recovering from the crisis started in 2011 and Athens’s bailout plan will successfully expire on August

2018, as stated by creditors and European institutions. This means that Cyprus and Greece will have more chances to invest in military procurement and defence-related activities to meet their armed forces' needs. Secondly, Cyprus and Greece signed the EU Permanent Structured Cooperation on Security and Defence (PESCO): this framework allows and fosters EU members to cooperate on joint development in the defence field, also providing tools and assistance for joint defence equipment acquisition.

Therefore, new occasions for partnership are looming in the Eastern Mediterranean, also in the military industry sector.

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