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Issue Brief

Türkiye-Egypt Rapprochement: Regional Implications

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S*ummary*

After a decade of political estrangement, Türkiye and Egypt have moved towards structured rapprochement, consolidated by Türkiye's President Erdoğan's February 2026 visit to Cairo. Cooperation now spans defence co-production, expanding trade, and energy collaboration, reflecting deeper state-to-state coordination.

Background

Following the ouster of Egypt’s President Mohamed Morsi in 2013, relations between Ankara and Cairo entered a prolonged period of acute political estrangement. The rupture was driven primarily by Türkiye’s overt political support for the Muslim Brotherhood, which the post-2013 Egyptian leadership designated as a terrorist organisation. Consequently, bilateral diplomatic representation was downgraded, high-level political engagement was suspended, and official rhetoric became increasingly adversarial.

Ankara and Cairo have since gradually reassessed the costs of sustained confrontation in a rapidly shifting regional environment. The rapprochement that reversed this trajectory began with exploratory diplomatic contacts in 2023 and accelerated in February 2024, when the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC) was envisioned with its inaugural meeting held in Ankara on 4 September 2024. Subsequent ministerial consultations and memoranda of understanding in 2024–25 laid the groundwork for fuller normalisation.

Türkiye’s President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited Cairo and met Egypt’s President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi on 4 February 2026, further concretising the rapprochement between Türkiye and Egypt. Hosted around the second meeting of the HLSCC, the visit produced a joint declaration, a military cooperation framework agreement, and a suite of memoranda of understanding covering defence, trade, investment, agriculture, health, and other sectors, signalling a transition towards more structured inter-governmental interaction.

The significance of Erdoğan’s third visit to Egypt within two years (February 2024; October 2025; February 2026) derives largely from its strategic timing. West Asia is currently witnessing heightened tensions between the United States and Iran, with the risk of escalation into a broader military confrontation. Any such conflict would have profound regional repercussions, including renewed instability in the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, both critical arteries of global trade, and the possible involvement of allied non-state and state actors, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and Shiite militias in Iraq.¹

The February 2026 engagement assumes broader strategic relevance within this environment of heightened uncertainty. The visit also provided a forum to synchronise positions on pressing regional crises, especially in Gaza, Sudan and Libya, and to articulate a shared interest in managing instability through diplomatic coordination. These outcomes occurred against a backdrop of evolving

¹ Mahmoud Hassan, “[Egypt and Turkey: A Summit of Arrangements and Strategic Gains](#)”, *Middle East Monitor*, 10 February 2026.

West Asian geopolitical dynamics, where both Ankara and Cairo have pursued greater foreign policy flexibility and pragmatic cooperation with a range of regional actors.

Security and Defence Cooperation

In recent years, defence cooperation between Türkiye and Egypt has moved beyond conventional arms sales towards operational interaction and joint industrial production. In March 2025, Türkiye’s defence cooperation with Egypt assumed a further industrial and technological dimension with the signing of a strategic cooperation agreement between HAVELSAN and the Kader Advanced Industrial Factory, which operates under Egypt’s Arab Organisation for Industrialisation.² The agreement provides for the joint production of unmanned ground vehicles (UGVs) at Kader’s facilities in Egypt, with HAVELSAN supplying technical assistance, licensing and systems integration support.

The agreement builds on HAVELSAN’s established capabilities in autonomous and AI-enabled systems, including decision-support software, real-time data processing, mission management, swarm intelligence and advanced sensor integration for unmanned platforms.³ These competencies underpin the development of UGVs designed for reconnaissance, surveillance, security, border management and support operations across varied operational environments.

Turkish officials characterised the partnership as a transfer not only of technology but also of expertise and strategic outlook. In contrast, Egyptian counterparts viewed it as a foundation for longer-term defence-industrial collaboration.⁴ Within the broader trajectory of Egypt–Türkiye defence relations, the HAVELSAN–Kader agreement illustrates a shift towards embedded co-production and industrial integration, reinforcing Egypt’s ambitions to strengthen domestic manufacturing capacity and positioning the partnership as a potential platform for future regional exports.

Parallel to defence-industrial integration, military-to-military operational engagement also resumed. After nearly a decade of limited military contact, the two sides resumed joint naval and air exercises in September 2025 under the *Friendship Sea* operation.⁵ It was the first joint naval exercise in 13 years. These exercises

² [“HAVELSAN Takes a Strategic Step in Egypt: Cooperation Agreement Signed With Kader Factory for the Production of Unmanned Ground Vehicles”](#), HAVELSAN, 27 March 2025.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ [“Egyptian-Turkish Naval Exercise ‘Friendship Sea-2025’ Wraps Up”](#), State Information Service, Egypt, 30 September 2025.

involved Turkish frigates, patrol vessels, submarines and F-16 fighter aircraft operating alongside Egyptian naval and air assets, signalling a restoration of military-to-military confidence and interoperability.

In December 2025, the expanding industrial dimension of this cooperation was visible at the EDEX 2025 defence exhibition, where Turkish and Egyptian firms presented jointly developed platforms, including the Hamza-1 vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) drone and the AKREP Unmanned Ground Vehicle, a 6x6 platform capable of carrying a remote-controlled weapon system, offering a capability not previously available in Egypt.⁶

One of the most significant deliverables of the February 2026 Cairo meeting was the military cooperation framework agreement. This framework creates a basis for structured defence cooperation, an area that had been dormant or limited during much of the past decade. Türkiye and Egypt have concluded a US\$ 350 million defence cooperation package that significantly expands bilateral military supply ties and lays the groundwork for joint defence industrial production in North Africa. The agreement was finalised between Türkiye’s state-owned Mechanical and Chemical Industry Corporation (MKE) and Egypt’s Ministry of Defence.⁷ A core component of the deal involves the export of Türkiye’s Tolga short-range air defence system, valued at approximately US\$ 130 million, which is designed to counter drones and low-altitude aerial threats, reflecting Egypt’s growing emphasis on layered air defence capabilities.

Beyond arms transfers, the agreement places substantial emphasis on localised defence production and industrial capacity-building. Approximately US\$ 220 million of the package is allocated to establishing a 155mm long-range artillery ammunition factory in Egypt, alongside production lines for 7.62mm and 12.7mm ammunition.⁸ Both sides have also agreed to establish a joint venture to manage these facilities, with the stated objective of strengthening Egypt’s position as a regional hub for military manufacturing, capable of meeting not only domestic requirements but also export markets across Africa and West Asia. Taken together, the package signals a shift in Egypt–Türkiye defence relations from limited procurement towards deeper industrial collaboration and longer-term strategic interdependence.

The defence component of the visit carries regional implications because Egypt and Türkiye oversee two of the largest and most capable armed forces in West Asia and

⁶ [“Türkiye–Egypt Defense Partnership Unveils New Unmanned Systems AKREP AndHAMZA-1”](#), *Türkiye Today*, 7 December 2025.

⁷ Jodesz Gavilan, [“Turkey, Egypt Sign \\$350M Defense Pact to Boost Arms and Joint Production”](#), *The Defense Post*, 9 February 2026.

⁸ Ibid.

North Africa (WANA), and structured cooperation in this domain suggests a degree of mutual strategic trust not present in earlier phases. Yet both sides carefully contextualised the cooperation outside alliance-like structures, framing it as joint capacity-building and industrial partnership rather than as collective security obligations.

Trade, Tourism and Energy Cooperation

Beyond security convergence, the rapprochement is equally anchored in the expansion of economic interdependence. Economic cooperation featured prominently in the Cairo agenda. Egypt is Türkiye’s largest trading partner in Africa, with a trade volume of US\$ 9 billion. Leaders set a bilateral trade target of US\$ 15 billion by 2028.⁹ According to the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (CAPMAS), Egypt–Türkiye trade exchange reached US\$ 6.8 billion in 2025, up from US\$ 6.6 billion in 2024.¹⁰ Egyptian exports to Türkiye included ready-made garments, plastics, machinery and fertilisers, while mineral fuels, electrical machinery and vehicles led imports from Türkiye. Turkish investments in Egypt rose to US\$ 175.1 million in fiscal year 2024/2025, while Egyptian investments in Türkiye also increased, highlighting growing bilateral economic linkages.

To translate rising trade volumes into sustained structural integration, both sides have strengthened business-to-business and chamber-level institutional linkages. Egypt and Türkiye took another step towards institutionalising their expanding economic partnership with the signing of a three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 7 February 2026 between the Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce (FEDCOC) and two Turkish counterparts, namely the Mersin Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Tekirdağ Chamber of Commerce and Industry.¹¹ The MoU establishes a structured framework for comprehensive cooperation, with provisions for automatic renewal and joint implementation mechanisms to deliver integrated commercial and business services.

The MoU focuses on facilitating trade and investment expansion, joint access to bilateral and multilateral development financing, technology transfer, training and innovation, as well as cooperation in organising exhibitions, conferences and promotional activities within each side’s national business networks. It also

⁹ [“Joint Declaration of 2nd Meeting of High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council Between Egypt, Türkiye”](#), The Arab Republic of Egypt Presidency, 4 February 2026.

¹⁰ [“Egypt–Türkiye Trade Exchange Reaches \\$6.8bn In 2025: CAPMAS”](#), *Daily News Egypt*, 4 February 2026.

¹¹ [“Egypt, Turkey Sign Landmark MoU to Boost Economic Cooperation”](#), State Information Service, Egypt, 7 February 2026.

envisages collaboration on joint exports to free trade zones and the formation of consortia for construction and infrastructure projects in neighbouring regions, signalling an outward-looking economic agenda. The signing ceremony was attended by senior business leaders, including FEDCOC President Ahmed El-Wakil and TOBB President Rifat Hisarcıklođlu, reflecting the growing role of chamber-to-chamber diplomacy in underpinning the broader political rapprochement between Egypt and Türkiye.

Egypt’s Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Sherif Fathy, speaking on the sidelines of EMITT (Istanbul’s international tourism exhibition) in Istanbul on 8 February 2026, underscored the growing strength of Egyptian–Turkish relations.¹² He noted that Egypt received around 19 million tourists in 2025, marking a 20 per cent increase over 2024, and is targeting an additional 10 per cent growth in 2026. Fathy highlighted the Turkish market as a key driver of this expansion, with tourist arrivals from Türkiye rising by 43 per cent in 2025 and flight bookings from the Turkish market projected to increase by 20–25 per cent in 2026, making Egypt the leading destination for Turkish travellers last year.

In parallel with the expansion of trade and services, energy cooperation has emerged as a strategically consequential pillar of the bilateral agenda. In February 2024, Türkiye’s state pipeline company BOTAŞ and Egypt’s EGAS agreed to cooperate on natural gas and LNG trade, joint infrastructure (such as storage and pipelines), and shared technical training.¹³ Egyptian gas firms are exploring the sale of LNG to Türkiye to meet Türkiye’s growing ambitions for a gas hub. Both sides also committed to expanding cooperation in renewable and conventional energy. An MoU in the field of energy was signed in September 2024.¹⁴ According to the February 2026 Joint Statement, Türkiye and Egypt agreed to strengthen cooperation in the energy sector based on mutual benefit, energy security and sustainable development.

The two sides reaffirmed cooperation across electricity, renewables, energy efficiency and green hydrogen, while emphasising the importance of cleaner production and low-carbon industrial transformation. They also agreed to implement the existing MoU on hydrocarbons and mining, including joint exploration activities, technology

¹² [“Tourism Minister Highlights Growth in Egyptian-Turkish Ties”](#), State Information Service, Egypt, 9 February 2026.

¹³ [“Türkiye, Egypt Plan to Deepen Energy Cooperation As Ties Grow”](#), *Daily Sabah*, 15 February 2024.

¹⁴ [“Turkey Set to Boost Energy Cooperation With Egypt”](#), Egypt Energy Show (EGYPES), 12 September 2024.

exchange and capacity building, and to expand cooperation in nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in accordance with international obligations.

Key Outcomes of Erdoğan’s February 2026 Visit

A central outcome of the visit was the joint declaration issued by Türkiye and Egypt following the HLSCC meeting.¹⁵ The declaration reaffirmed principles of mutual respect, sovereignty, non-interference and regular diplomatic consultation, and committed both states to deepen cooperation across multiple policy areas, including defence, trade, investment, health, agriculture, youth and sports. The declaration emphasised forward-looking engagement over historical disputes, reflecting a conscious effort by both governments to anchor the relationship in shared interests rather than ideological alignment.

Table 1 summarises the principal outcomes agreed during the February 2026 HLSCC meeting. The table highlights the domains in which convergence has been formalised and serves as a reference point for evaluating implementation and future policy coordination. The suite of agreements signed during the visit extended to sectors beyond defence and trade. Memoranda of understanding across various domains indicate deeper bureaucratic linkages and technical exchanges.

Table 1. Core Outcomes of the Türkiye–Egypt HLSCC (February 2026)

Domain	Core Agreed Outcomes
Institutionalisation of Ties	Reaffirmed the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council as the apex bilateral mechanism; agreed to strengthen coordination & regular follow-up through established channels.
Political Relations	Reaffirmed commitment to advancing relations based on mutual respect, sovereignty, non-interference, and mutual benefit , to strengthen strategic cooperation.
Defence & Security	Signed MoU on defence cooperation ; reaffirmed commitment to counter-terrorism, addressing foreign terrorist fighters, and preventing regional spillover.

¹⁵ [“Joint Declaration of 2nd Meeting of High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council Between Egypt, Türkiye”](#), no. 9.

Domain	Core Agreed Outcomes
Economic & Trade Cooperation	Took note of growing bilateral trade, approaching US\$ 9 billion ; agreed to work towards increasing trade to US\$ 15 billion and facilitating trade & investment.
Industrial & Technological Cooperation	Agreed to enhance joint manufacturing, industrial partnerships, and technology transfer , including defence & civilian industries, with regional outreach.
Energy & Sustainability	Reaffirmed cooperation in energy and green transition , including renewables, electricity, green hydrogen, & low-carbon development.
Finance & Connectivity	Agreed to launch a high-level financial dialogue and recognised the role of civil aviation & connectivity in supporting economic ties.
Culture, Education & People-to-People Ties	Agreed to expand cooperation in culture, tourism, heritage, higher education, & academic exchange .
Africa & Third-Country Cooperation	Encouraged joint engagement in Africa & third countries , particularly in infrastructure, construction and development projects.
Regional Conflicts	Reaffirmed shared positions on Libya, Palestine/Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, Sudan, the Sahel, & Somalia , emphasising sovereignty, ceasefires, humanitarian access & UN-led political processes.
Maritime & Regional Security	Emphasised securing maritime routes , including the Red Sea & supporting regional stability & de-escalation.
Multilateral Coordination	Reaffirmed commitment to close coordination within regional & international organisations on issues of mutual interest.

Source: Adapted from [“Joint Declaration of 2nd Meeting of High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council Between Egypt, Türkiye”](#), The Arab Republic of Egypt Presidency, 4 February 2026.

Regional Security Implications

The consolidation of structured cooperation between Ankara and Cairo inevitably carries consequences beyond the bilateral domain. The gradual normalisation and

institutionalisation of ties between Ankara and Cairo influence the diplomatic geometry of the Eastern Mediterranean and West Asian theatres, where both countries exert significant political and military influence.

For the Gulf states, particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, Türkiye–Egypt rapprochement fits into a broader pattern of regional de-escalation and diplomatic recalibration observed since 2022. Gulf capitals have largely welcomed the reduction in tensions between Ankara and Cairo, viewing it as conducive to regional stability and economic integration.¹⁶ Saudi-brokered dialogue platforms and Emirati investments in both Türkiye and Egypt have already created overlapping economic interests. The Cairo visit reinforces the notion that Ankara is recalibrating its Middle East policy away from ideological contestation towards pragmatic engagement. This shift aligns with Gulf preferences for predictability and an economic-first approach to regional politics.

The normalisation between Türkiye and Egypt might weaken the previously antagonistic dynamic that had pushed Cairo into closer alignment with Greece, Cyprus, Israel, and other states in coalitions such as the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), which excluded Ankara. It may create space for new negotiations on maritime boundaries and energy cooperation that could mitigate longstanding disputes over hydrocarbon rights and maritime claims. Egypt’s role as an Eastern Mediterranean energy hub and Türkiye’s strategic position as a transit and consumer market mean that cooperation can reconfigure regional energy flows, including potential LNG trade and shared infrastructure, thereby influencing how gas politics and economic partnerships evolve across the basin.

Convergence and Divergence

One of the most prominent areas of alignment between Ankara and Cairo is the Gaza crisis and the broader Palestinian question. Both leaders have underscored that, notwithstanding the ceasefire, the humanitarian situation in Gaza remains acute, while criticising Israeli military actions and measures perceived to undermine the truce. Egypt’s operational role in facilitating access through border crossings and humanitarian corridors, alongside Türkiye’s readiness for humanitarian assistance and reconstruction, underscores its status as a complementary stakeholder.¹⁷ Collectively, this convergence indicates that the Palestinian issue is also becoming a

¹⁶ “[Erdogan: Gulf Countries Welcome Normalization of Relations Between Egypt, Türkiye](#)”, *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 22 July 2023.

¹⁷ Kaan Devecioğlu, “[Is Türkiye-Egypt Rapprochement Forging a New Eastern Mediterranean-Red Sea Diplomatic Axis?](#)”, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 6 February 2026.

normative basis for legitimising bilateral cooperation, reflecting the consolidation of a humanitarian-centric discourse in their regional engagement.

Since the onset of normalisation with Egypt, Türkiye has adopted what may be characterised as a policy of calibrated containment towards the Muslim Brotherhood, which is marked by a tangible contraction of the movement’s operational and discursive space within Turkish territory. Ankara has restricted overt political mobilisation by Brotherhood-affiliated figures, curtailed or closely monitored media platforms previously broadcasting anti-Cairo content, and, in select cases, cooperated with Egyptian security concerns through arrests or deportations of individuals deemed legally or politically problematic.¹⁸ Simultaneously, the Turkish leadership has refrained from issuing symbolic or rhetorical endorsements of Brotherhood figures, a notable departure from the post-2013 period when public political backing formed a central axis of Ankara–Cairo antagonism.

However, Türkiye’s continued exclusion from EMGF membership highlights a structural divergence in regional energy architecture. The EMGF’s institutional framework, with Egypt as the central convening state and energy hub, has reinforced Cairo’s position as a crucial actor in regional gas processing, liquefaction and export coordination, thereby enhancing its strategic influence in Eastern Mediterranean energy governance. EMGF’s infrastructure initiatives, regulatory mechanisms and cooperative alignments, particularly those involving Greece and Cyprus,¹⁹ have repercussions for Türkiye. This asymmetry underscores competing geopolitical and maritime priorities in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Moreover, Libya remains a potential point of friction, maritime jurisdiction disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean remain legally unsettled, and regional escalation scenarios, particularly in Gaza, Sudan, or the Red Sea, could test alignment. While institutionalising dialogue reduces volatility, they do not eliminate structural asymmetries or differing threat perceptions.

Strategic Implications and Future Trajectory

Erdoğan’s February 2026 visit to Cairo consolidates the structured strategic engagement between Türkiye and Egypt. Unlike earlier phases shaped by immediate regional contingencies, the present trajectory rests on institutional mechanisms, particularly the operationalisation of the HLSCC, which provides predictability and

¹⁸ Ragip Soylu, “[Turkey Eyes Closer Egypt Ties With Crackdown On Muslim Brotherhood](#)”, *Middle East Eye*, 25 July 2025.

¹⁹ “[Egypt, Cyprus, Greece Leaders Agree to Develop Joint Energy Projects at Cairo Trilateral Summit](#)”, *Egypt Today*, 8 January 2025.

bureaucratic continuity. By embedding cooperation within formalised state-to-state interfaces, both sides have increased the relationship’s resilience.

Politically, the reaffirmation of sovereignty, non-interference and mutual benefit signals a deliberate move away from the ideological frictions that defined the post-2013 rupture. Ankara and Cairo appear to have recalibrated their relationship around state interests and strategic autonomy rather than bloc-based alignments. This shift reflects broader regional trends towards de-escalation and pragmatic balancing.

The defence-industrial component signifies the most structurally consequential dimension of rapprochement. The move from procurement to co-production and joint ventures introduces longer-term interdependence. For Egypt, cooperation supports domestic manufacturing ambitions and regional export positioning; for Türkiye, it expands strategic access in North Africa and along the Red Sea corridor. If implemented effectively, this industrial integration could anchor sustained strategic trust.

Economic linkages further reinforce stabilisation. Expanding trade targets, institutionalised business cooperation, and willingness to collaborate on energy, including LNG, renewables and emerging green hydrogen initiatives, create cross-sectoral stakeholder interests. Although current trade volumes remain below declared targets, the institutional framework for expansion is now in place.

Looking ahead, three indicators will likely shape the trajectory of Türkiye–Egypt relations: sustained bureaucratic execution of defence-industrial agreements, continued military-to-military confidence-building, and coordinated diplomacy in regional and multilateral forums. The February 2026 engagement should therefore be seen not as the culmination of reconciliation but as the beginning of structured co-existence, characterised by calibrated cooperation, selective convergence and managed competition. If institutional momentum is maintained, Türkiye and Egypt could emerge as complementary, though not fully aligned, stabilising actors within the evolving West Asian and Eastern Mediterranean order.

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