Defense and Geopolitics: Why Turkey is Betting Again on the Italian-French SAMP/T

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After years of diplomatic freeze and strategic stalemate following the purchase of Russian **S-400** systems, Ankara officially reopens dialogue with Rome and Paris. At the center of the table is the **SAMP/T** air defense missile system, developed by the European consortium **Eurosam** (MBDA Italy, MBDA France, and Thales).

What began as an industrial project at the end of the 2010s has now turned into a national security urgency for Erdogan's government.

The Iran Factor and the Vulnerability of the Southern Flank

According to recent reports from *Bloomberg*, Turkey's push towards European technology is not just a political move but an operational necessity. The deteriorating context in the Middle East

has highlighted concrete threats:

- **NATO Interceptions:** Iranian missiles directed towards Turkish territory have already been intercepted by Alliance systems since the beginning of the regional conflict.
- **The Failure of the S-400:** Despite its advanced capabilities, the Russian system purchased in 2019 is not interoperable with NATO's radar network, leaving Turkey "blind" within the collective defense architecture.

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From Stalemate to "Steel Dome"

Turkey aims to build its own **"Steel Dome"**, a layered defense system inspired by the Israeli Iron Dome. To complete it, Ankara needs components that can communicate with Western partners.

The Timeline of a Complex Relationship

1. **2018:** Preliminary agreement between Turkey, Italy, and France for joint development.
2. **2019:** Purchase of Russian S-400s, US sanctions (CAATSA), and Turkey's exclusion from the F-35 program.
3. **2020-2021:** French freeze due to divergences over Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean.
4. **2022-Present:** Resumption of contacts, with Italy as a privileged mediator.

Italy's Role as an "Industrial Bridge"

Italy has maintained a pragmatic approach, managing to keep communication channels open when relations between Paris and Ankara were at an all-time low. Rome sees the agreement not only as an industrial victory but as an opportunity to stabilize NATO's southeastern flank.

> *"The SAMP/T represents the missing link to bring Ankara fully back into the technological perimeter of the Atlantic Alliance."*

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The Three Possible Routes for the Agreement

The future of the dossier now depends on the green light from the Élysée. Three scenarios are emerging:

Scenario	Description	Difficulty
Complete Trilateral	Italy, France, and Turkey collaborate on total co-production.	**High**: requires a total overcoming of political divergences.
"Plus" Bilateral Agreement	Rome-Ankara agreement with conditional assent from Paris.	**Medium**: the most likely solution to unlock the impasse.
New Stalemate	France vetoes for political reasons.	**Risk**: Ankara might turn again to non-EU suppliers.

Conclusion: A Test for NATO

The game on the SAMP/T goes beyond mere military supply. It is a **reliability test** for European defense and NATO cohesion. For Turkey, it is about balancing the ambition of industrial autonomy with the reality of a missile threat that cannot be faced in isolation. If Europe can respond, the Italian-French system will become the pillar of a new regional stability.