

# **GREECE AS A STRATEGIC PARTNER IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN**

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Honorable Minister,

Your Excellency the Ambassador of the United States of America,

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening.

Energy is not only difficult to find but it is the driving force behind political developments and re-alignments. All wars were fought due to competing interests, and this holds even truer for larger conflagrations. The most important of these were primarily triggered by the struggle over energy resources.

The Trojan War (1228-1218 BC), the largest amphibian operation in Asian Minor, involving 1,200 ships from across the Greek city-states, was precipitated by the ever increasing berthing fees that the Trojans were charging the Greek merchant ships. Greek ships would dock at the port of Troy, waiting for favorable winds to safely transit either to the Hellespont and on to the Black Sea or alternatively to the Aegean Sea.



This was followed by wars over lumber resources, namely the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453) between England and France. Its primary cause was the rapid deforestation of the European mainland to satisfy their energy needs. Subsequently, conflicts driven by the need to find coal deposits to feed Europe's nascent factories and industry took center stage, such as the Seven Years' War (1755-1764) and the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1814). Then, the two World Wars came (1914-1918 and 1939- 1945 respectively) which were fought over oil instead of coal...

The cause of the Great War was the alliance between Germany and Turkey and the signing of an agreement to construct a railroad between Berlin, Mosul and Kirkuk which would provide Germany access to the oil reserves of the Ottoman

Empire. This was sufficient reason for the Allies to destroy the Ottoman Empire and to humiliate the Germans.

The determination and heroic sacrifices of the Allies during the Second World War was the main driver of the German defeat. That being said, the Soviet victory at the Battle of Kursk (the largest tank battle in history) in 1944 resulted from their use of superior quality diesel in contrast to the gasoline-fueled German tanks, whose fuel froze in the low temperatures on the field of battle. Subsequently the Japanese, instead of attacking the Russians and forcing them to open another front, preferred to focus their attention on Indonesia and its oil reserves given that they had literally run out of fuel. If Hitler had sufficient fuel in 1944 during the final German counter offensive in Ardennes, he likely would have broken through the Allied front. Allied forces were well supplied on the other hand and this ultimately won them the war.

The conclusion of the Second World War found Europe decimated, prompting the US, in addition to launching the Marshall Plan to seek to secure sufficient access to energy resources for the continent, and in doing so resolving Europe's energy problem and reducing its dependence on the energy reserves of the USSR. At the same time, NATO and the visible deterrent of the Treaty of Warsaw were aimed at bolstering Europe's security.

Russia's vast energy resources (7th globally) and its crucial role as supplier to Europe present a real "headache" for both the EU and NATO as they try to avoid a situation whereby Russia gains a monopolistic position and a resulting strangle hold over the continent. Such an outcome would significantly influence geostrategic balances with the potential marginalization of the US and the EU and the equivalent upgrade in Russia's geopolitical standing. In light of the ever-increasing energy dependence of China and India on Russia, Moscow is creating the potential for a unification of Eurasia and its emergence as global hegemon.

The geostrategic position of Greece and Cyprus in combination with the presence of oil and gas reserves is creating a dynamic and explosive landscape of competing interests.

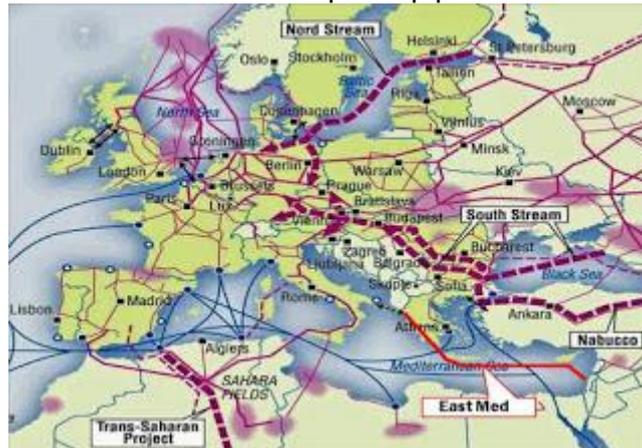
As one can see on these maps, it is self-evident that instability will plague the Middle East and North Africa for decades to come. It is a high-risk region, with a fluid and volatile political backdrop and considerable potential flash points.



By contrast, Greece, in cooperation with Egypt, Israel, Lebanon and Cyprus, can control the strategic "choke points" in the region such as the Dardanelles, the

Aegean, and the Suez Canal. Due to its numerous islands scattered across the Aegean in combination with the larger islands of Crete and Cyprus, one can support operations throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. The strategic importance of the aforementioned “choke points” has a multiplier effect in today’s era of geopolitical-energy competition.

One needs to look no further than the battles being waged with oil pipelines, with new gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the Ionian-Western Greece. These all require strategic planning at a national level, political cooperation and a stable backdrop to facilitate the orderly extraction of the resources and the construction of the required pipelines.



All the major sea routes allowing transport of materials, supplies, reinforcements, and energy to and from the energy-rich Caucasus, Caspian, North Africa and Middle East and both the EU and Northeast Asia pass through the Eastern Mediterranean.

However, it is worth highlighting that this monopolistic position of the region is being eroded by the EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zones) of countries such as Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Egypt and Lebanon. These countries can provide long-term energy independence in combination with the requisite stability.



Those that have strategic interests in the region will have no choice but to view my country in a different light as their own clashes can be perfectly captured by an old Greek saying: “when the bulls fight, the frogs pay the price.”

The rise of Greece’s geostrategic value has been rapid, despite the socio-economic and national crisis that has been plaguing us for the past eight years that should not be a consideration in this geopolitical struggle. We deserve respect and mutual understanding and not assistance provided on the basis of

ulterior motives and in exchange for something because we always fought besides our allies and never as so-called “neutrals-allied” states.

A collapse of the Greek nation would create a geopolitical vacuum, a black hole in the region which could easily lead the international system down an unpredictable path, and one that could potentially involve large-scale conflict.

With clarity of thought and speech, we call upon all our friends and allies to recognize the geostrategic importance of the region and the new geopolitical game being played there, so we can jointly defend and promote those values and principles that are becoming of free, democratic societies without the forces of occupation that have been present for over forty years in Cyprus.

The US Pentagon refers to the significance of its air and naval base in Souda, which has a field of operations spanning from Afghanistan to the Mediterranean, as follows: “Souda Bay is a key enabler of US strategic objective in the region”.

Facilitating US interests in the region through the base in Crete and through access to other parts of the country, including its islands, should not be compared in terms of importance with similar bases in other so-called “neutral-allied” states. These other so-called allies in the past, and more specifically during the First and Second World Wars, demanded something in return in the form of Cyprus and islands in the Aegean in order to provide similar services, exhibiting the hallmarks of an unreliable and unpredictable partner and not that of a true ally.

As such, it is not necessary for Greece to prove to the EU, NATO, or to the US administration that they share the same interests in ensuring stability and in enhancing their own national defense and security capabilities as their most important strategic partner in the region.

President Trump himself recently highlighted: for the US, Greece is a crucial country and a pillar of stability in a particularly volatile region that has been for many years a source of uncertainty with constantly shifting parameters.

A notable point and an open-ended question, which should not be misinterpreted as a complaint as Greeks above all are characterized by their dignity, is why has Greece’s undeniably significant geostrategic value never been recognized by its partners in the EU, and especially by Germany, despite their acute awareness of the fact that their reliance on Russia, and to a lesser extent the Middle East and North Africa, for their energy needs is onerous and potentially hints at over dependence.

In the short presentation that follows, you will see irrefutable evidence of the instability in the broader Middle East and North African region and by contrast how Greece, in cooperation with Egypt, Israel, Lebanon and Cyprus, can not only ensure the security and stability but can also cover Europe’s natural gas needs into the future through the East Med pipeline.



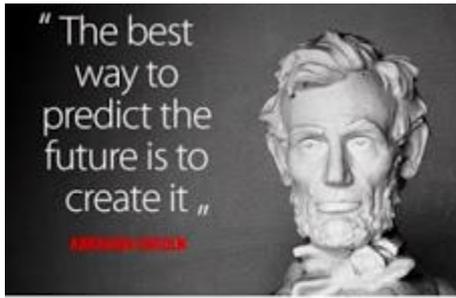
Europe's natural gas needs for the next thirty years amount to 220 billion cubic meters, all of which can be covered by reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean region, which are not impacted by the "stable instability" that plagues the surrounding energy-rich regions of the Middle East and North Africa.

Expected (Possible) Conventional Natural Gas Resources in Eastern Mediterranean in Trillion Cubic Meters (Tcm)				
EEZ OF COUNTRIES	Reserves 95% Probability	Reserves 50% Probability	Reserves 5% Probability	Accuracy ±
EGYPT	3,4 Tcm	5,8 Tcm	12,1 Tcm	20%
ISRAEL	0,9 Tcm	1,5 Tcm	3,5 Tcm	30%
CYPRUS	1,2 Tcm	2,0 Tcm	4,5 Tcm	30%
LEBANON+ SYRIA	0,9 Tcm	2,0 Tcm	5,0 Tcm	40%
GREECE	1,9 Tcm	4,5 Tcm	8,8 Tcm	50%
<b>TOTAL EAST MED</b>	<b>8,3 Tcm</b>	<b>16,3 Tcm</b>	<b>33,9 Tcm</b>	<b>50%</b>

Russia has at best the ability to export 180 billion cubic meters to Europe and its reserves and infrastructure are viewed by many as ageing.

This would translate into the EU being able to extricate itself from the position of a "satellite" region when it comes to energy matters and not be dependent on pipelines from Russia to Germany (Nord Stream) or hostage to a Turkey that is becoming an increasingly Islamic state, with all that this engenders, especially if pressure to allocate oil and gas pipelines unilaterally continues to increase. One should forget that Europe froze when Moscow turned off the taps on pipelines going through the Ukraine...

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Greek-American relations based on reciprocity should be strengthened and Washington should continue to intensify its efforts to resolve the difficult issues in Cyprus, where 45,000 Turkish troops are stationed in an EU member state while violations of Greek airspace and territorial waters represent a threat not only towards Greece but also towards the US and NATO, challenging their prestige and their strategic interests in the region...



For the sake of brevity and to be absolutely clear, the geostrategic value of Greece, in addition to its position as a bridge, and use as a launchpad with its countless islands serving as metaphoric “aircraft carrier”, the most important of which are Crete and more broadly Cyprus, confers significant advantages to its allies as they look to the east, to the south, and to the north, for all that this engenders in a region that has been characterized by “stable instability” across the ages.



Thank you for your time and attention.

**H.H.A.G.S.**

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