

Summary of George S. Koumoutsakos' speech at the AHI – Athens Presentation “Greece As A Strategic Partner In The Eastern Mediterranean”

Greece is a European, Mediterranean and Balkan country. Culturally, it is an integral part of the tradition of the Western Enlightenment, while maintaining the ability to talk, on a basis of mutual respect, with the Islamic World and, at the same time, developing its ties with Israel. On the crossroads of three continents, Greece is a pivotal state with great strategic potential. It is a democratic and stable country in a troubled region and one of the oldest members of the EU and NATO. But its European and euro-atlantic alignment is not based solely on a perception of shared strategic interests, but, more importantly, on a bedrock of shared values. This has allowed Greece to act as a catalyst for the integration of the Balkans into the western camp, but also makes Greece the most stable and reliable factor in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Now that both Greece and the EU are slowly exiting from the economic and political crisis that began in 2010, New Democracy is determined to apply a new and forward-looking foreign policy. The main focus will be to strengthen Greece's partnerships and to establish the country as the effective gateway to Europe for energy resources from the Caucasus and the Eastern Mediterranean - and for solar energy from Egypt and North Africa - thus making a significant contribution to ensuring Europe's energy security. At the same time, New Democracy will give new momentum to Greece's Balkan policy in order to ensure the rapid integration of the Western Balkans into the EU and NATO.

More particularly, priority will be given to developing Greece's four-way strategic partnership with Cyprus, Egypt and Israel. This will allow the creation of a larger area of stability in the Eastern Mediterranean, which will anchor Egypt and Israel more firmly to the EU and serve as a security buffer for Europe. This will further strengthen the basis for developing Greece's security and defense cooperation with the US, the first step of which will be to finalize a long-term defense cooperation agreement for the use of Souda Bay and other Greek facilities. At the same time, Greece will enhance its participation in NATO and the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy, given that, in any case, it will continue spending upwards of 2% of its GDP on defense for the foreseeable future,.

In this way Greece will make a crucial contribution to building stability in its Balkan hinterland as well as in the Eastern Mediterranean, thus ensuring a more favorable environment for investments and economic growth.