

## Politics

"He didn't reveal what was fully in the report. Again, those aren't opinions. That's not a political agenda. Those are the facts."

— Chris Wallace, weighing in on Attorney General William Barr and criticizing how some Fox News colleagues have covered the attorney general's handling of the Mueller report



# The Birth of the Eastern Mediterranean Partnership: Israel, Cyprus, Greece and America

By Philip Christopher and Andy Manatos

**T**he Eastern Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) of Israel, Cyprus, Greece and now also America has become a major guardian of US security interests at the intersection of three regions of international concern -- the Middle East, the Balkans, and North Africa. We know we can count on these three other EMP countries as they have tirelessly "had our back," a characteristic unique for that region. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently referred to the EMP as "one of the best regional associations in the world."

In late March in Jerusalem, at the sixth trilateral summit of Israel, Cyprus and Greece, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo participated, marking the first time the US has joined. Secretary Pompeo and the recently departed Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasia Wess Mitchell brilliantly realize that a close and active US relationship with Israel, Cyprus and Greece, through an Eastern Mediterranean Partnership, will greatly benefit America's security interests. Because these three stable countries are the only in the region who equally value freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, they form a critically important strategic line in this unstable and dangerous area.

However, unless we institutionalize the EMP deep within our own bureaucracy, this realization and benefit for America will not last. Today, as Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan turns against America, we bind closely with all three countries. But, if Turkey shifts in our direction even slightly, our foreign policy establishment will likely drop Cyprus and Greece, as their over 40 year pattern suggests. This profoundly flawed and tilted diplomatic mindset could again see Greece and Cyprus as the losers of an unnecessary zero

sum game that makes regional balance and America the ultimate loser.

While Cyprus and Greece have always been among our staunchest allies, Turkey, our NATO ally, has repeatedly and illegally violated Cyprus and Greece. Yet our Executive Branch has stayed virtually silent. In Cyprus Turkey has illegally occupied, using American arms, the northern third of the island for 44 years, and illegally flooded the occupied area with hundreds of thousands of settlers. This has set the stage for the first modern Islamic conquest of Western World territory. In Greece they have overflowed Greek territory, in US-supplied planes, and deployed troops, using US arms, across from Greek islands. Wise diplomats don't stay silent when valuable allies are treated this way.

Whether the cause of this mistreatment is the many millions of dollars Turkey spreads around Washington or some misguided diplomats, it must change. The considerable resources Russia and China are spending to lure away our Eastern Mediterranean partners give America no option.

The US Congress is wisely working on appropriations legislation that would institutionalize this valuable EMP of Israel, Cyprus, Greece and the US, regardless of our relationship with any other country. The new powerful Chairs of the House authorization and appropriations committees -- Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Eliot Engel (D-NY) and Appropriations Committee Chair Nita Lowey (D-NY) -- along with the new powerful Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), have championed these allies for many decades.

And, no one in the US Senate has championed these allies longer than Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member, Bob Menendez. On April 9 Menendez,

along with Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL), introduced S. 1102, the Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act of 2019. The House version of this legislation will be introduced soon. Other important advocates of these three countries in the House and Senate are also playing crucial roles.

The enactment of significant Congressional appropriations can enable an annual Washington EMP Summit. Each country could establish EMP liaisons within their State, Defense, Energy and other ministries to facilitate such important talks. Such a Summit will sharpen the message of this mutually beneficial partnership, provide a mechanism to strengthen such relations and allow this partnership to penetrate the thinking of these bureaucracies, as well as the White House and US Congress. Amid the turnover of US officials, it can make more permanent the knowledge of the many strategic assets and potential assets for America in Israel, Greece and Cyprus. It can also counter serious Russian and Chinese efforts to usurp important American relationships in the region.

Most importantly, such Congressional action can institutionalize the common sense realization that strengthening tried and true allies, like Israel, Cyprus and Greece, located in an area where the stakes are high, cannot hurt and can greatly benefit American interests. Winston Churchill understood this when he said, "There is only one thing worse than fighting with allies and that is fighting without them."

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