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The Exclusive Economic Zone Delimitation Agreement Between Cyprus &  
Lebanon, and its Impact to Energy and Regional Security

**By**

**Georgios Koukakis**

Research Associate of “HERMES” I.I.A.S.GE

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## Introduction

The delimitation of a state's maritime zones is a complex issue of International Law that is guided by the provisions of the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS) which was signed in Montego Bay (Jamaica) in 1982 and came into force in 1994. One of the most important maritime zones defined in UNCLOS is the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which among other things grants states several rights relating to energy security. To this end, the EEZ delimitation has been a matter of dispute between neighbouring states due to their attempt to promote their national interests, leading in some cases to periods of tension as far as their bilateral relations are concerned. One of these cases is the EEZ delimitation agreement between Cyprus and Lebanon, a matter that dates back in 2007 and was finally resolved in late 2025.

## How delimiting EEZ is connected to energy & regional security

The EEZ is a maritime zone defined in UNCLOS, the characteristics of which are described in Part V (articles 55-75) of the convention. It has a maximum breadth of 200 nautical miles (nm) – measured from a state's baselines – and its importance lies in the fact that the EEZ (when declared) provides inter alia the coastal state with specific energy-related sovereign rights. To be more precise, article 56 of UNCLOS defines that:

*“In the exclusive economic zone, the coastal State has sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing the natural resources, whether living or non-living, of the waters superjacent to the seabed and of the seabed and its subsoil, and with regard to other activities for the economic exploitation and exploration of the zone, such as the production of energy from the water, currents and winds.”*

Energy security of a state – a vital component of its national security – is affected by factors such as the availability (continuous access), the reliability (uninterrupted & outage-protection supply), the affordability (stable & affordable energy prices), and the sustainability (low social, environmental & economic cost) of energy. That said, by exploiting its EEZ, a state enhances its energy security by providing additional (re)sources

to its energy network, thus enhancing availability, increasing reliability, maximising affordability, and promoting sustainability.

As far as regional security is concerned - a level of security that besides countering common regional threats is affected by the quality of bilateral and/or multilateral interstate relations - it must be stressed that the inability of states with opposite or adjacent coasts to delimitate their EEZs can lead to the deterioration of their bilateral relations, as the unresolved dispute prevents them from exploiting their maritime energy resources, thus improving their economy. Moreover, in case a state proceeds to the exploitation of a disputed maritime area, the incident may even result in a regional military crisis due to the fact that this action is usually considered by other states as a violation of their sovereign rights.

### **The prior-to-2025 delimitation agreements of the Cypriot EEZ**

In regard to the delimitation of the Cypriot EEZ prior to 2025, it must be noted that Cyprus – a maritime state that neighbours with Greece, Türkiye, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Egypt – managed to reach a delimitation agreement with two of its neighboring states. The outcome of these diplomatic actions was a Cyprus - Egypt agreement on the delimitation of the southern part of the Cypriot EEZ which was signed on 17 February 2003 (Figure 1), and a Cyprus - Israel agreement on the delimitation of the south-southeastern part of the Cypriot EEZ that was signed on 17 December 2010 (Figure 2).

Concerning the rest of the neighboring states, a Cyprus - Lebanon agreement on the delimitation of the southeastern part of the Cypriot EEZ – excluding inter alia the southernmost point as it also needed to be negotiated with Israel – was signed on 17 January 2007, but did not come into force as the agreement was not ratified by Lebanon. As far as the northern part of the Cypriot EEZ is concerned – not having reached a delimitation agreement with Türkiye – Cyprus deposited a list of geographical coordinates of points accompanied by an illustrative map to the United Nations on 4 May 2019, depicting the northern and north-western (N-NW) limits of its EEZ (Figure 3).

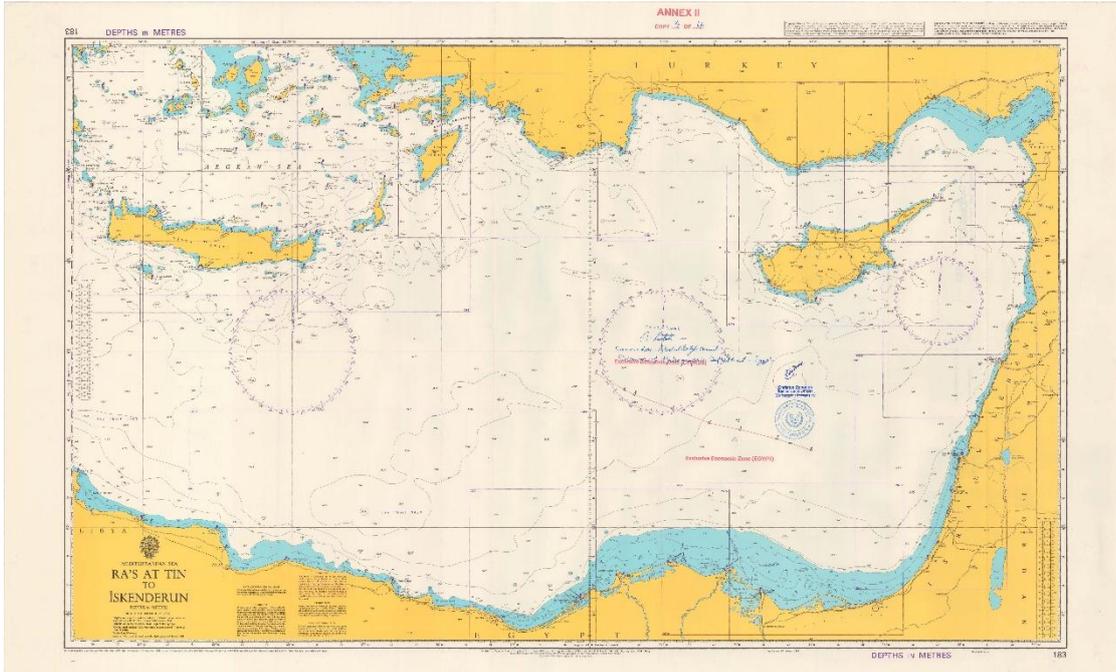


Figure 1: The EEZ delimitation line of the Cyprus - Egypt agreement (2003)  
 (Source: United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs & the Law of the Sea)

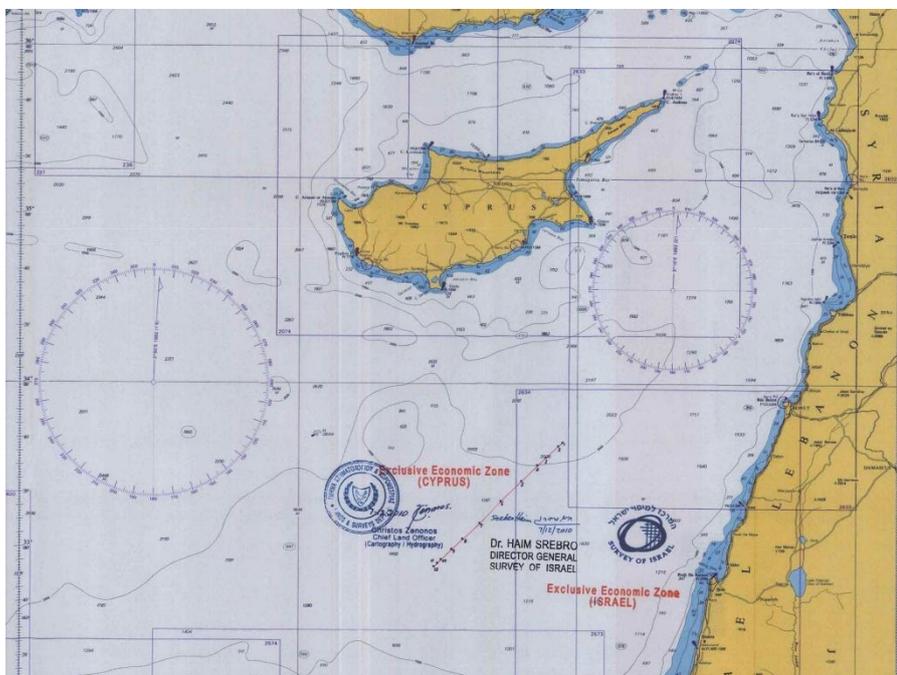


Figure 2: The EEZ delimitation line of the Cyprus-Israel agreement (2010)  
 (Source: United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs & the Law of the Sea)

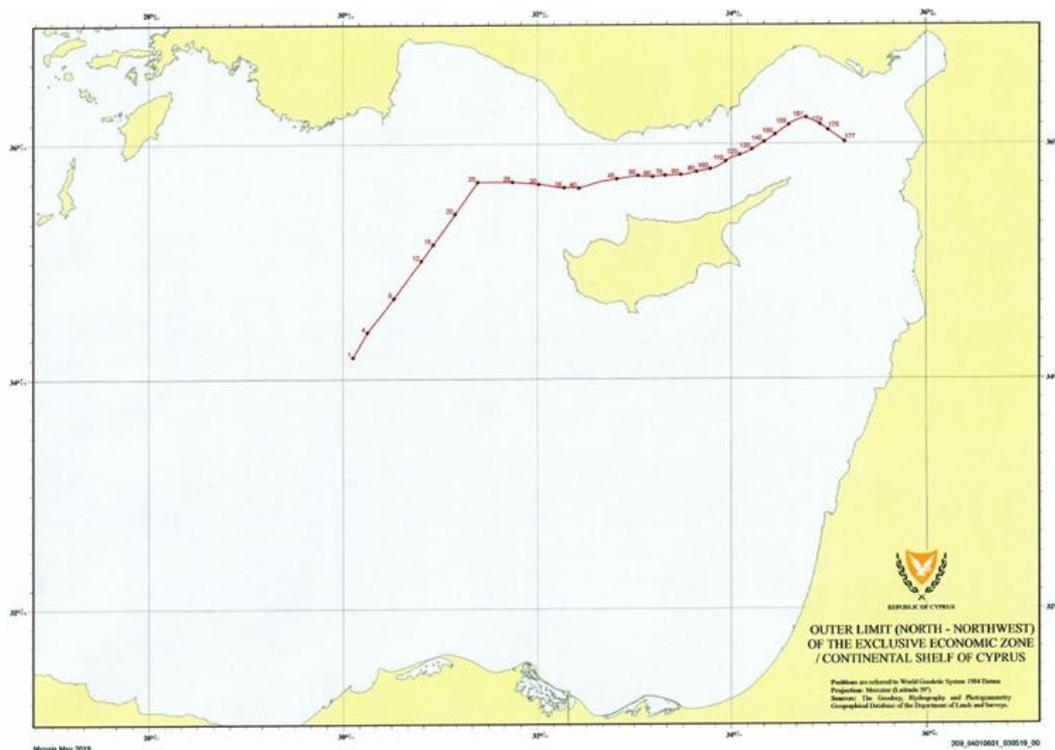


Figure 3: The deposited geographical points of the N-NW part of the Cypriot EEZ (2019)  
 (Source: United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs & the Law of the Sea)

As far as Greece and Syria are concerned, Cyprus – despite the excellent bilateral relations it has always maintained with Greece – did not sign any agreement with it because of the latter’s concerns that Türkiye would most probably react aggressively causing a crisis, due to their own maritime zone delimitation dispute in the Aegean Sea. Moreover, Syria’s unstable political situation due to the civil war prevented Cyprus from reaching a delimitation agreement with Syria.

### **The 2025 Cyprus - Lebanon rapprochement and the era of economic peace**

Cyprus and Lebanon finally managed to reach a delimitation agreement on 26 November 2025, an action that was characterized by the Cypriot President as a “*historic agreement*” due to the fact that it enhances the prospects of cooperation in critical sectors such as energy and infrastructure, also stating that:

*“Beyond its energy and economic impact, I must also emphasize the indisputable fact that such agreements are a strategic foundation for regional stability and security in a difficult region facing many*

*challenges. And today, with determination, vision, deep faith in the potential of our countries, and always through a positive approach, Cyprus and Lebanon are taking a significant step towards a more secure future for our countries and the wider region.”*

At this point, it needs to be stressed that the aforementioned Cyprus - Lebanon EEZ delimitation agreement needs to be seen in the broader context of the pursuit of common national (energy and economic) interests for both states. In fact, Lebanon proceeded to a similar action approximately three years ago, when under the mediation of the United States – the Senior Advisor to the U.S. President for Energy Security, Amos J. Hochstein – signed an EEZ delimitation agreement with Israel on 11 October 2022 to resolve their long-lasting maritime dispute, an initiative that was characterized as an “economic peace” model due to the fact that the two states proceeded to the respective agreement amidst their conflictual relations.

In this context, Cyprus plays a vital role concerning regional security issues, as it has been included in several major regional energy projects that are being backed up by the European Union (E.U.) such as the Great Sea Interconnector (former Euro-Asia Interconnector) aiming to transfer electrical power from Israel to Europe, the Euro-Africa Interconnector aiming to transfer electricity from Egypt to Europe, and the Eastern Mediterranean Interconnector (East Med) aiming to transfer natural gas from Israel to Europe. In addition, Cyprus might take part in the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) infrastructure initiative that aims to connect India with Europe, while it is already a member of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) which inter alia focuses on regional cooperation in order to enhance energy security.

### **Concluding remarks**

The aforementioned delimitation agreements between Cyprus and its three neighboring states, the support provided to regional cooperative schemes by the U.S. and the E.U., and what seems to be a restoration of stability in Syria, indicate that the new dynamics between Eastern Mediterranean states are gradually shaping a less hostile regional security environment where Cyprus plays a vital due to its strategic location, its energy facilities in Vasilikos and the alternative energy routs that are being planned.

Moreover, it will be of no surprise if Cyprus signs an EEZ delimitation agreement with Syria and Greece in the near future.

Nevertheless, the final outcome of all these initiatives will eventually depend on the Turkish foreign policy. This is because Türkiye – a state that does not endorse the provisions of UNCLOS and refuses to sign the respective convention – not only objected to the EEZ delimitation agreement between Cyprus and Lebanon, but has repeatedly exhibited in the past an aggressive foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean towards third states – illegally possessing the Northern part of Cyprus since 1974, proposing the delimitation of maritime zones to Eastern Mediterranean states contrarily to the provisions of UNCLOS, harassing the drilling activities of oil companies in the Cypriot EEZ, etc. – stating that any project that does not include Türkiye will not succeed.

To sum up, the EEZ delimitation agreement between Cyprus and Lebanon not only affects in a positive way the energy and economic security of the contracting parts by promoting their national interests in the Eastern Mediterranean, but also enhances regional security. Thus, the rest of the Eastern Mediterranean states – taking advantage of the collaborative momentum and the U.S. favorable conditions that have been created – need to put aside any bilateral differences and assume similar initiatives in order to promote their common national interests in the region.



### **Georgios Koukakis, “HERMES” I.I.A.S.GE Research Associate**



Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Georgios KOUKAKIS has graduated from the Hellenic Military Academy (2002), the Hellenic Army War College (2020) and the Hellenic Supreme Joint War College (2023). He retired in 2024 on his own initiative, after serving for 22 years as a Leader and Staff officer in several Special Forces and Infantry Units, and as an Instructor in the Hellenic Airborne School and the Hellenic Infantry School.

He is currently a PhD Candidate in International Relations (focusing on Defence Diplomacy & National Security) at the Department of Mediterranean Studies

(Archaeology, Linguistics and International Relations) of the University of the Aegean (Rhodes, Greece), holds a Master of Arts in ‘Governance, Development and Security in the Mediterranean’ from the same Department/University, and since 2024 serves as the Academic Head of the ‘Security Studies in the Mediterranean’ educational program series (in Greek) of the Continuing Education & Lifelong Learning (CE-LL) Center of the University of the Aegean.

He is also a Senior Analyst in the Center for International Strategic Analyses (KEDISA), a Research Associate of HERMES Institute of International Affairs, Security & Geoeconomy (I.I.A.S.GE.) and a member of the Hellenic Institute of Strategic Studies (HEL.I.S.S.), ALLILONnet the Global Network of Greeks and Friends of Greece for Solidarity in the Professional Field and the Mercury Negotiation Academy (MNA). He has participated as a speaker in several seminars and conferences, is a columnist in a number of IR websites, while many of his articles and research papers have been published in a variety of scientific journals.

He is the co-author of the book (In Greek) ‘National Security: Myths and Reality’ that was published in April 2023, and the author of the book ‘Armed Conflict & National Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’ that was published in January 2025.

**Email:** [g\\_k\\_koukakis@yahoo.gr](mailto:g_k_koukakis@yahoo.gr)

**LinkedIn:** [Georgios Koukakis](#)

**Research Gate:** [Georgios Koukakis](#)