

CYPRUS: THE EURO-MED REGION'S ULTIMATE 'COUNTRY OF COMMON INTEREST' IS ABOUT TO HAVE ITS MOMENT



By Roudi Baroudi

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January 1 marked a watershed moment for Cyprus, the first day of a six-month stint in the rotating presidency of the European Union that will give the tiny island nation massive influence, not just over the current agenda, but also the future direction of the entire EU and the destiny of the Eastern Mediterranean region.

The real significance of the moment lay not in the position itself, though, nor even in the considerable (but temporary) increase of Nicosia's raw political power. In fact, this is not even the first time that Cyprus has held the presidency; that came in the second half of 2012.

Instead, what makes this time different is that a) the Cypriot leadership has laid out a highly ambitious agenda, one designed to generate recurring benefits for both the EU and its Mediterranean neighbors; b) regional circumstances cry out for precisely the kind of engagement that Nicosia envisions; and c) Cyprus today is far better-equipped to advance its politico-diplomatic goals than it was in 2012, not just because its economy and finances are in better shape, but also because it is now on the verge of becoming an oil and gas producer and exporter. If well-managed, this latter point figures to drive growth for decades to come, enabling historic investments in education, healthcare, transport, and other drivers of greater economic competitiveness and better living standards, not to mention greater ability to influence – and stabilize – the surrounding region.

None of this has happened overnight. Geography and history have situated Cyprus – both literally and figuratively – athwart what is both our planet's most long-lived maritime trade route and its most famous crossroads of different languages, cultures, faiths, and ethnicities. The island's copper and other resources have always had their own attractiveness, rising or falling in value depending on the period, but it was location – specifically its proximity to each of Asia, Africa, and Europe – that made Cyprus a strategic prize for millennia, and that same location gives it enormous potential today.

None of this has happened overnight. Geography and history have situated Cyprus – both literally and figuratively – athwart what is both our planet's most long-lived maritime trade route and its most famous crossroads of different languages, cultures, faiths, and ethnicities. The island's copper and other resources have always had their own attractiveness, rising or falling in value depending on the period, but it was location – specifically its proximity to each of Asia, Africa, and Europe – that made Cyprus a

strategic prize for millennia, and that same location gives it enormous potential today.

For decades, the centerpiece of this toolkit has been a foreign policy which seeks friendly relations with as many countries – especially neighboring ones – as possible. And it has worked. Both during and since the Cold War, for example, Nicosia has been able to maintain working relationships with governments on both sides of the East/West divide, and its search for neutrality has been equally assiduous on the Arab-Israeli front. By habitually staking out the middle ground, Cyprus has not only insulated itself against most external problems, but also steadily burnished its bona fides as a helpful player on the international stage.

All of this helped, but it was not enough. Try as Cyprus might to parlay its neutrality into tangible benefits at home and abroad, its economy remained fragile and unbalanced, distracting and undermining the freedom of action of successive governments. After its banks had to be rescued with EU bailout funds in 2012-2013, support began to grow for reforms that would prevent future meltdowns, restore the stability of the financial services industry, and rebuild its ability to finance private and public activities alike.

By the time President Nikos Christodoulides took office in early 2023, Cypriots of all persuasions were fed up with “business as usual”. Because he had run as an independent and attracted support from a broad cross-section of society, he had a strong mandate to make sweeping changes, and these have included an increase in the minimum wage, income tax cuts for working people, more effective financial regulation, and a far-reaching program for digital transformation. His administration also has run a tight fiscal ship, dramatically reducing public debt (from 115% of GDP in 2020 to a forecast 65% for 2025) and thereby making more credit available to the private sector. As a result, Cyprus’ sovereign rating was upgraded by all three of the major credit rating agencies in

2024, and as of this writing, two of them regard its outlook as positive, while the third views it as stable.

At the same time, Christodoulides' background as a professional diplomat has empowered him to focus closely and effectively on foreign policy, recognizing its capacity to help shield the island against exogenous shocks, shore up the stability required to pursue its domestic social and economic development goals, and restore regional stability in the aftermath of the war in Gaza. It is no surprise, therefore, that his government has been at the center of international efforts to assist Palestinian refugees affected by the conflict, making Cyprus the staging ground for a vital flow of relief supplies.

Earlier this year, Christodoulides also teamed up with his Lebanese counterpart, President Joseph Aoun, to make sure their respective negotiating teams finally concluded a long-awaited maritime boundary agreement. The MBA clearly defines who owns what on the seabed, making both countries' offshore hydrocarbon sectors more attractive, especially to the major oil and gas companies whose capabilities will be required to explore, develop, and extract the resources in question. Nicosia and Beirut are considering several other agreements as well, including ones that would expand cooperation in electricity and other fields, but the MBA was crucial because of the doubts it removed and the doors it opened.

All of these factors are steering the entire Eastern Mediterranean region to what can only be described as its "Cyprus moment": the day when this minuscule country finally rises to its full stature as an exemplar of effective governance at home and a voice for peace and prosperity abroad. By some measures, this moment has already arrived, but the first exports of Cypriot natural gas to the European mainland will leave no doubt, and those are currently planned for late 2027.

Some say that timeline will be difficult to meet, but the positive effects are already being felt, and historians looking back will rightly regard the precise start state as a footnote. The economy has responded well to treatment, growth is expected to average 3% for the next couple of years, and diversification is already under way, including a variety of technology-related businesses that are helping to reduce the island's traditional reliance on tourism and construction.

Most importantly, the buzz generated by offshore hydrocarbons has attracted the attention of international investors, and they like what they see: in addition to its prime location and increasingly sophisticated workforce, Cyprus also offers some of the EU's most favorable tax conditions, strong investment protections, and a common law legal system modeled on the United Kingdom's, making it more familiar and easier to use for many outsiders. The result? Over the past few years, hundreds of companies have relocated to Cyprus, including some 270 in 2024 alone, adding at least 10,000 new jobs to the island's economy.

When gas production starts adding extra motive force to the economy, even more opportunities will open up. The advent of domestic energy production will not only spur employment both directly and indirectly, but also reduce the country's need for expensive energy imports, and put downward pressure on domestic energy prices across the board, imparting a key competitive advantage on the entire economy. If all goes according to plan, this would be just the beginning, because while the savings and security enabled by production will be significant, the really lucrative next step will be exports, and Western Europe – the world's hungriest energy market – is right next door.

As luck would have it, one of the island's first commercially operational undersea gas fields figures to be Cronos, which lies within easy distance of existing Egyptian infrastructure, meaning its production can be easily piped to the Egyptian

processing facility at Damietta and then delivered to European customers by LNG carrier. Nicosia's plan is for this flow to begin in 2027, but again, that is just the beginning: Cyprus also expects the nearby Aphrodite field to be a major money spinner, and the plan there is to install a Floating Production Storage and Offloading Unit directly above the deposit. This would enable both dry gas shipments for use in Egypt and further production of LNG for export further afield.

In the longer term, other streams are under consideration as well, including undersea pipelines to Greece, Italy, and/or (one day) even Turkey, and possibly a fully fledged liquefaction plant onshore that would be far and away the largest infrastructure project in Cypriot history. The investments being made and planned now are expected to fundamentally alter the path of Cyprus' economic and social development. What is more, if and when the time comes, the same infrastructure could also be used to help neighbors like Lebanon and Syria, both of whose coasts are less than 100 nautical miles away, to get their own gas to market. That could be crucial in enabling both of those countries to start recovering and rebuilding after decades of stagnation, and like Cyprus itself, the EU at large has a vested interest in seeing peace and prosperity spread across the Levant.

These and other factors give Cyprus' strategy a level of importance that goes beyond the purely national. Gas exports to Europe also will help increase the EU's energy independence, for example, further reducing continuing dependence on Russian energy supplies, and strengthening Europe's position in any negotiations over the situation in Ukraine. An LNG plant also would make affordable primary energy supplies available to several African countries, enabling them to pursue the electrification strategies they need to modernize their own economies. Again, Europe has countless reasons to want a stabler, happier Africa on its doorstep, beginning with the fact that this would

automatically reduce the flow of undocumented migrants making their way across the Med.

The Cypriot approach is nothing less than inspiring, especially since it springs from the very same wells of good will, good governance, and good sense that inspired the Barcelona Declaration more than 30 years ago. The EU envisioned by Barcelona, a strong and cohesive bloc closely integrated with vibrant neighborhoods in the MENA region, has been long-delayed by the collapse of what was then a promising Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and some countries have largely given up on that dream.

Clearly, Cyprus is not one of those countries. Instead, it has wagered on cooperation, weaving good governance and sensible diplomacy into a bold and hopeful venture.

No longer is Cyprus just a sunny little island filled with charming holiday homes and ringed with the Mediterranean's cleanest beaches; now it is also going to be a regional energy hub, a magnet for international investment, a docking mechanism to help its non-EU neighbors access European markets, and a catalyst for EU dialogue and engagement with Africa and Asia. In short, the country has refashioned itself into the ultimate "project of common interest" – a venture that serves so many useful purposes, both inside and outside the bloc, that it verily demands support from Brussels.

The before and after contrast is increasingly striking. Once a fragile neophyte dependent on handouts from Brussels, today's Cyprus has transformed itself into the very model of a Euro-Mediterranean country envisioned by the Barcelona process: a hopeful, peaceful, and universally useful land whose success promises only more opportunities for its friends and neighbors.

Cyprus: The Euro-Med region's ultimate 'country of common interest' is about to have its moment

LEBTALKS INTERVIEW: INTERNATIONAL ENERGY EXPERT ROUDI BAROUDI APPLAUDS 'HISTORIC' LEBANON-CYPRUS DEAL, DISMISSES 'BASELESS' CRITICISMS FROM NEIGHBORS



Following criticism of the Lebanon-Cyprus Maritime Boundary Agreement (MBA) by the governments of Israel and Turkiye, LebTalks spoke with energy and policy expert Roudi Baroudi,

who has authored several books and studies on sea borders in the Eastern Mediterranean. Baroudi praised the pact as “full of positives” for the interests of both parties and stressed the words of Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, who pledged after signing the MBA that “this agreement targets no one and excludes no one.”

LebTalks: How significant is the signing of the maritime boundary agreement between Lebanon and Cyprus?

RB: The official signing of the Lebanon-Cyprus deal is a major achievement, one that confers important advantages on both parties. This process was delayed for a very long time for no good reason, so President Joseph Aoun and the government deserve congratulations for having seized the initiative, and for having seen the job through to completion. So do Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides and his team, because they did the same thing. What made this historic agreement possible – after an impasse lasting almost two decades – was that Lebanon finally had a president who both understood the need for an MBA and made achieving it a top priority.

LebTalks: What does Lebanon gain by signing this deal?

RB: The agreement, which was reached by the negotiating teams in September, provides several benefits for both countries in the short, medium, and long terms.

The new equidistance line between the two states, defined according to the rules and guidelines of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), provides a fair and largely uniform boundary between the two brotherly countries’ maritime zones. Most of the new turning points used to draw the line have moved in Lebanon’s favor compared to the earlier negotiation in 2011, giving it an extra 10,200 meters on its western front while Cyprus received 2,760 meters.

Crucially, the MBA wipes away all overlapping claims caused by previous uncertainty over the precise location of the border.

Accordingly, this eliminates 108 km² of (map attached) Lebanese offshore blocks that were actually in Cypriot waters, as well as 14 km² of Cypriot blocks which were also on the wrong side of the line.

Apart from removing a key risk for would-be investors, the agreement also contributes to stability and security by providing clarity and thereby enabling easier cooperation, not just bilateral, but also, potentially, involving other states as well. It really is full of positives for both Lebanon and Cyprus, and therefore for the region as a whole.

LebTalks: What should Lebanon do to follow up on this agreement?

RB: To make the most of this clearer playing field, the logical next step is for Lebanon and Cyprus to immediately start drafting a joint development agreement, which would allow them to have a smooth partnership in place for any hydrocarbon reserves which are found to straddle their maritime boundary.

Perhaps the most important feature of the Lebanon-Cyprus MBA is that it provides a clear and stable starting point, putting Lebanon in ideal position to finish defining its maritime zones. The new line means that Lebanon's existing maritime boundary arrangements with Israel, signed in 2022, should be tweaked a little, but it also makes it easier to do that – and to negotiate a similar agreement in the north with Syria when that country's new leadership is ready to do so.



LebTalks: What about the objections voiced by Israel and Turkiye?

RB: With all due respect, these claims and complaints are completely baseless. As President Aoun has stressed from the very day it was signed, this accord targets no one, excludes no one, challenges no one else's borders, and undermines no one else's interests. I know there has been some negative commentary from both Israel and Turkiye, but there really is nothing here for anyone to be upset about. The line agreed to by Lebanon and Cyprus, which Turkiye has claimed is 'unfair' to residents of the self-styled 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus', is literally several kilometers away from any waters claimed by the TRNC. Beirut and Nicosia were very careful to make sure of this.

As for the Israelis, the only material change relating to the Lebanon-Cyprus line is that it pushes the Israel-Cyprus line in Cyprus' favor. But that's not Lebanon's fault. Or Cyprus' or anyone else's. It's just a fact of new mapping technologies, which today are far more precise and more accurate than those used when the Israel-Cyprus line was drawn

in their 2011 treaty.

On that subject, I would also note for all stakeholders in the East Med that while Lebanon and Cyprus are the region's only full-fledged members of UNCLOS, all states are subject to its rules and precedents, which have become part of Customary International Law. Since the Lebanon-Cyprus deal adheres strictly to those rules and the science behind them, the criticisms haven't got a legal leg to stand on. This is especially true with regard to Israel, whose own treaty with Cyprus was negotiated on the basis of the very same laws, rules, and science.

I have to assume that a lot of this is posturing, that both Israel and Turkiye will settle down once they've had more time to analyze the deal and see that, far from damaging them in any way, it could help all concerned by contributing to regional stability and economic growth. And again, I would go back to Aoun's words on signing day, when he declared that "this agreement should be a foundation for wider regional cooperation, replacing the language of violence, war, and ambitions of domination with stability and prosperity."

**Baroudi congratulates
Lebanese government on
boundary deal with Cyprus**



The decision of the Council of Ministers to approve Lebanon's maritime boundary agreement (MBA) with Cyprus is a genuine tour de force, a feather in the cap for President Joseph Aoun and his government.

This step caps a process that was unnecessarily delayed for almost two decades, but that only makes this achievement more gratifying.

Having settled maritime boundaries is crucial right now because of the opportunities it opens up. The agreement makes Lebanon much more attractive to the major international partners it needs to develop its nascent offshore oil and gas sector. If and when that sector reaches even a small fraction of its potential, the benefits should flow to virtually every corner of the Lebanese economy, so everyone in the country should really celebrate this.

As if to punctuate the moment, the Council of Ministers also awarded the rights to a key offshore area, Block 8, to a reputable international consortium consisting of France's TotalEnergies, Italy's ENI, and Qatar's QatarEnergy.

Together, these moves help to pave the road toward a future in

which Lebanon becomes an energy producer and exporter, adding unprecedented momentum to an economy that desperately needs it.

These are both major milestones, and the government – along with President Joseph Aoun, whose own leadership on the border deal was crucial to initiating the negotiations – deserves plenty of credit.

The important part now is the follow-up. The government still needs to implement a long list of reforms, invest in capacity building, and retain competent personnel and managers to steward and safeguard the country's offshore resources. It also will need to do its homework on how best to nurture that offshore business.

There is so much to be done – but so much to be claimed by doing it! Getting the MBL with Cyprus finalized was at the top of the list, and resolving Block 8 was not far down, so the government deserves congratulations for both.

And since I mentioned nurturing, I also take this opportunity to propose that the Lebanese government immediately invite its Cypriot counterpart to negotiate another crucial deal: a joint development agreement, or JDA, which would govern the sharing of any oil and/or gas resources which straddle their border at sea. Setting up a JDA now would not only prevent possible delays in the future – it also would make both countries' offshore energy sectors even more attractive to investors.

Σε συνομιλίες η Κύπρος για

την ΑΟΖ με τον Λίβανο. Οι επαφές που κάνει ο πρόεδρος της Κύπρου



Οι τεταμένες σχέσεις Ισραήλ-Λιβάνου και οι ραγδαίες εξελίξεις στη Μέση Ανατολή έχουν κινητοποιήσει τη Λευκωσία για επαφές υψηλού επιπέδου για την επικύρωση της ΑΟΖ με το Λίβανο. Ετοι ο πρόεδρος της Κύπρου Νίκος Χριστοδουλίδης συναντήθηκε με τον εμπειρογνώμονα περιφερειακής πολιτικής Ρούντι Μπραούντι, μακροχρόνιος υποστηρικτής του διαλόγου, της διπλωματίας και της ειρηνικής ανάπτυξης, ως προς τις ασφαλέστερες διαδρομές προς μεγαλύτερη σταθερότητα για ολόκληρη την Ευρω-Μεσογειακή περιοχή και άτυπο διαμεσολαβητή των δύο χωρών. Μάλιστα έχει γράψει και σχετικά βιβλία, όπως την «οριστικοποίηση Θαλάσσιων Συνόρων στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο: Ποιος θα είναι ο Επόμενος;» και «Ένα Κλειδί, Πολλαπλά Έπαθλα: Οριστικοποίηση Θαλάσσιων

Συνόρων ανάμεσα στην Κύπρο, το Λίβανο και τη Συρία».

Ο κ. Χριστοδουλίδης και ο ομόλογός του από το Λίβανο, ο πρώην Γενικός Τζόζεφ Αουν, συμφώνησαν τον Ιούλιο να διαπραγματευτούν και να οριστικοποιήσουν μια γραμμή θαλάσσιων συνόρων. Και οι δύο χώρες αναμένουν ότι θα αποκομίσουν πολλά οφέλη από μια τέτοια συμφωνία, και η κατοχύρωση εδαφικών συνόρων στη θάλασσα θα καταστήσει ευκολότερη την προσέλκυση ξένων επενδυτών για την ανάπτυξη των ενεργειακών πηγών τους.

«Η επίτευξη συμφωνίας θα ανοίξει όλες τις πόρτες για την Κύπρο και το Λίβανο», δήλωσε ο κ. Μπαρούντι μετά από τη συνάντηση. «Οι τάσεις πηγαίνουν στη σωστή κατεύθυνση, και όχι μόνο σε σχέση με το Λίβανο. Ο πρόεδρος της Κύπρου έχει φιλόδοξα σχέδια εξωτερικής πολιτικής, ιδιαίτερα σχετικά με τις δραστηριότητες της Κύπρου τους πρώτους έξι μήνες του 2026, όταν θα έχει την προεδρία του συμβουλίου της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης».

«Εκμεταλλεύτηκα επίσης την ευκαιρία να ευχηθώ στο πρόεδρο της Κύπρου καλή επιτυχία σε αυτή την αποστολή», πρόσθεσε, «ειδικά καθώς αναμένεται να εστιάσει όχι μόνο στην ενίσχυση της συνοχής της Ευρώπης, αλλά και στην ενίσχυση του ρόλου της Κύπρου ως γέφυρα μεταξύ Ευρώπης και γειτονικών χωρών.»

Πράγματι, η Λευκωσία έχει ένα φιλόδοξο πρόγραμμα για την προεδρία της και συνεργάζεται στενά με τη Δανία, που ασκεί την προεδρία αυτό το εξάμηνο, και την Πολωνία, που θα διαδεχθεί την Κύπρο. Η λεγόμενη «τριπλή προεδρία» βοηθά στη διασφάλιση συνέχειας από τη μία προεδρία στην επόμενη.

Ο κ. Μπαρούντι έχει γράψει αρκετά βιβλία και μελέτες σχετικά με το πώς τα υπάρχοντα εργαλεία του ΟΗΕ μπορούν να βοηθήσουν τις παράκτιες χώρες να συμφωνήσουν δίκαια και ισότιμα θαλάσσια σύνορα, να μειώσουν τις εντάσεις και να αποκομίσουν σημαντικά οικονομικά και κοινωνικά οφέλη. Έχει επίσης γράψει και μιλήσει δημόσια για διάφορες ευκαιρίες περιφερειακής συνεργασίας, από διασυνδεδεμένα ενεργειακά δίκτυα και υπεράκτια αιολικά πάρκα μέχρι κοινή διαχείριση θαλάσσιων προστατευόμενων περιοχών.

Το 2023, απονεμήθηκε στον κ. Μπαρούντι το Βραβείο Ηγεσίας από το Transatlantic Leadership Network, ένα think-tank της Ουάσινγκτον, για τη «πολύτιμη συμβολή του στην οικοδόμηση μιας ειρηνικής και ευημερούσας Ανατολικής Μεσογείου».

Σε δεκάδες άρθρα, μελέτες, εμφανίσεις στα μέσα ενημέρωσης και ομιλίες, για παράδειγμα, ο βετεράνος της κλάδου έχει τεκμηριώσει την επιχειρηματική βάση για το νησιωτικό κράτος να γίνει κέντρο επεξεργασίας και διανομής φυσικού αερίου για τους γείτονές του. Αυτό θα περιελάμβανε την Κύπρο να δημιουργήσει έναν υπόθαλασσιο αγωγό φυσικού αερίου προς την ευρωπαϊκή ενδοχώρα, ένα εργοστάσιο υγροποιημένου φυσικού αερίου (LNG) που θα ήταν το μεγαλύτερο έργο που έχει ποτέ η χώρα, ή και υπεράκτια πλωτά συστήματα αποθήκευσης και υγροποίησης για την εξυπηρέτηση απομακρυσμένων χωρών δια θαλάσσης.

«Όλες αυτές οι μελέτες και οι παράγοντες που ανέδειξαν παραμένουν επίκαιροι σήμερα», δήλωσε ο κ. Μπαρούντι. «Η Κύπρος διαθέτει την εγγύτητα, τις τιμές γης και τις σχέσεις με τους γείτονές της για να γίνει ο συνεταιριστής όλων στις εξαγωγές ενέργειας, αλλά και να λειτουργήσει ως θεμέλιος λίθος για μια πιο σταθερή και ευημερούσα περιοχή.»

Amid Maritime Boundary Talks in the Region, Cypriot President Receives International Energy Expert,

Roudi Baroudi, on UN Demarcation Tools



NICOSIA – 29, September 2025: Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides met today with the international energy policy expert, Roudi Baroudi, who presented copies of his two latest books, “Settling Maritime Boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean: Who Will Be Next?” and “One Key, Multiple Prizes: Settling Maritime Boundaries Among Cyprus, Lebanon, and Syria”.

Baroudi, a long-time advocate of dialogue, diplomacy, and peaceful development as the surest routes to greater stability for the entire Euro-Med region, said he felt “honored to have been received by the President.”

Christodoulides and his Lebanese counterpart, former General Joseph Aoun, agreed in July to have their respective teams

negotiate and finalize a maritime boundary line (MBL). Both countries expect to derive numerous benefits from such a pact, and having treated borders at sea will make it easier to attract the foreign investors required to develop their respective offshore oil and gas resources.

Reaching a deal “will open up all sorts of doors for Cyprus and Lebanon,” Baroudi said after the meeting. “The trends are going in the right direction, and not just vis-à-vis Lebanon. The President has ambitious foreign-policy plans, particularly with regard to Cyprus’ activities for the first six months of 2026, when it will hold the rotating presidency of the European Union.”

“I also took the opportunity to wish His Excellency every good fortune on that mission,” he added, “especially since it is expected to focus not only on shoring up Europe’s cohesion, but also on beefing up Cyprus’ role as a bridge between Europe and its neighbors.”

Indeed, Nicosia does have an ambitious agenda for its time in the presidency, and is working closely with Denmark, the current holder, and Poland, which will follow Cyprus’ term. The so-called “trio presidency” helps to ensure continuity from one presidency to the next.

Baroudi has published several books and studies on how existing United Nations tools can help coastal states to agree fair and equitable maritime boundaries, reduce tensions, and reap significant economic and social rewards in the bargain. He also has written and spoken publicly about a variety of opportunities for regional cooperation, from interconnected power grids and offshore wind farms to joint management of marine protected areas. In 2023, he was awarded the Transatlantic Leadership Award by the Transatlantic Leadership Network, a Washington think-tank, for what it described as “his valuable contribution in building a peaceful and prosperous Eastern Mediterranean.”

In addition to these works, ever since 2011, when the full potential of the East Med's offshore hydrocarbon deposits began to emerge, Baroudi's advocacy role has seen him provide thought leadership for a variety of projects and proposals that would transform Cyprus into a regional energy hub. In dozens of articles, studies, media appearances, and speaking engagements, for example, the industry veteran has made the business case for the island nation to become a gas processing and distribution center for its neighbors. This would include Cyprus hosting one end of an undersea gas pipeline to the European mainland, a liquified natural gas (LNG) plant that would be the country's largest-ever project, and/or offshore floating storage and gasification units(s) to serve more distant customers by ship.

"All of these studies and the factors they highlighted are still relevant today," Baroudi said. "Cyprus has the proximity, the land prices, and the relationships with its neighbors to make it everyone's partner for energy exports, but also to serve as the bedrock for a stabler and more prosperous region."

**بارودي: استعداد الكهرباء
والغاز من قبرص ينبع مصادر
الطاقة ويحميها من أي تداعيات
جيوسياسية**

ARTISTIC MAP ILLUSTRATION OF CYPRUS BLOCK 6 GAS & ELECTRICITY PLAY



تبعد العلاقات اللبنانية القبرصية في حال تطور سريع وقد فتح هذا الباب رئيس الجمهورية العماد جوزاف عون فلائق استجابة ورغبة عارمة لدى نظيره القبرصي كريستو دوليديس تجاه تطوير العلاقة بين البلدين الجارين وما لفت أن الرئيس القبرصي هو الذي باشر وطرح على الرئيس عون استئجار الكهرباء من قبرص إلى لبنان وقد تلقي رئيس الجمهورية اللبنانية هذه المبادرة وطلب من وزير الطاقة جو صدي متابعة الموضوع.

وفي هذا السياق أثني خبير الطاقة الدولي رودي بارودي على مبادرة الرئيس القبرصي واللبناني، مؤكّدًا وجوب الترحيب بأي خطوة من هذا النوع باعتبارها نقطة انطلاق مهمة لتأمين الكهرباء للبنانيين وحل أزمة القطاع المستفلحة جزئياً منذ عقود وأن هذه الخطوة تأتي بعد الإعلان عن استئناف مفاوضات ترسيم الحدود البحرية بين البلدين. كما أثني بارودي على الدور الذي يلعبه الرئيس عون في ملف الطاقة

كل واعتباره أولوية لما فيه من فائدة على الاقتصاد وتعزيز القدرات الاجتماعية للمواطنين اللبنانيين.

ولفت بارودي إلى أن هذه الخطوة ستتيح تزويد لبنان ما بين 150 و300 ميغاواط وفق مراحل متعددة ولا سيما بعد عام أو عامين على الأكثر عندما تبدأ قبرص بإنتاج الكهرباء من الغاز المستخرج من & ENI حقولها البحريّة خاصة حقل كرونوس الذي يديره كل من شركتي ما يعزز تنويع مصادر الطاقة وبأسعار مقبولة لا TOTAL ENERGIES سيما وأن الحقل المعنى في قبرص لا يبعد عن حقل زهر المصري سوى ٦ كلم ما يعني أن كلفة الإستخراج ستكون مماثلة لتلك المعتمدة في الحقل المصري وهي كلفة رخيصة نوعاً ما.

ولفت بارودي إلى وجود محطتين رئيسيتين لإنتاج الكهرباء في قبرص، بين ليماسول Vassiliko وإداهما بين لارنكا وليماسول، والأخرى في وبافوس، بقدرة إجمالية تقارب 1600 ميغاواط من دون الكهرباء المنتجة من الطاقة الشمسية وبالتالي يمكن للبنان الاستفادة من هذه الطاقة بكلفة يتم التوافق عليها موضحاً أن الكلفة ستكون أقل بكثير من كلفة الكهرباء المنتجة في لبنان عندما تبدأ قبرص العام المقبل باستخدام الغاز المستخرج من حقولها البحريّة لإنتاج الكهرباء ولاسيما البلوك رقم 6.

بارودي طالب الحكومة اللبنانية بالإسراع بوضع الأطر الإصلاحية والتنظيمية للقطاع بشأن استجرار الكهرباء من قبرص وبإعداد دراسة جدوى اقتصادية تأخذ في الاعتبار كلفة الاستجرار ولفت أن محطة هي المحطة التي تصدر الغاز في 2026، على أن يواصل Vassiliko لبنان مساعيه لربط شبكته بالشبكة السورية للحصول على دعم إضافي كهربائي عن طريق محطة دير نبوح، بما في ذلك محطة الكسارة في منطقة البقاع.

Qatar deserves global thanks

– and a whole lot more



Most of the world is watching and waiting, hoping and/or praying that a hastily arranged ceasefire between Israel and Iran will hold. If it does, there will be sighs of relief virtually everywhere; if it does not, the State of Qatar should still be considered for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Yes, you read that correctly: even if the ceasefire that it helped to secure falls apart, Qatar should be considered for what many regard as the most prestigious prize on Earth.



I believe this because peace is more important than any other cause on Earth, and pound-for-pound, no country does more than Qatar to promote peace. Peace is more than a photo opportunity, more than a process that often allows belligerents to let their guns fall silent, more even than the gratitude of those whose lives and livelihoods are spared. It also serves other useful purposes, too, including as a commodity that promotes stronger growth and better socioeconomic development, and frees up resources for investment in education, healthcare, and transport infrastructure. Accordingly, achieving peace means more than simply not being at war: it means having the chance to better one's own situation by leaps and bounds. By extension, anyone who provides such a chance to anyone else deserves deep admiration.

By this measurement alone, Qatar's case for a Nobel is rock-solid – and has been for years, long before the world's most powerful country asked it to obtain Iranian consent to a ceasefire. A quick glance at Qatar's track record reveals a foreign policy focused almost entirely on the peaceful

resolution of differences. Over the past quarter-century, Qatari diplomacy has helped to resolve or mitigate multiple crises, disputes, and conflicts in too many places to count, including Afghanistan, Darfur, Gaza, Eritrea, Iraq, Lebanon, Russia and Ukraine, Sudan and South Sudan, and Yemen. These feats have included the winding down of one all-out civil war and the prevention of another, the brokering of several exchanges involving thousands of prisoners/hostages, the securing of temporary cease-fires, the resolution of dangerous constitutional deadlocks, and – most importantly – the kindling of hope in the hearts of millions.

Not surprisingly, Qatar's diplomatic corps is almost constantly and relentlessly engaged in one form or another of peacemaking. It does not always succeed, but its investments – both political and financial – in this mission pay dividends in other ways, too. Repeated successes are their own reward, but even “failure” both raises Qatar's profile and reaffirms its commitment to dialogue and peace. In addition, both the leadership and the professional diplomats learn important lessons from each and every engagement, making Qatari intervention increasingly effective over time. Just as importantly, this increasing effectiveness contributes to Qatar's growing reputation as an honest and capable broker, and that perception gives it still more influence, leverage, and flexibility going forward.

There are critics, of course. Many American officials, for instance, have criticised Doha for maintaining friendly relations with entities such as Hamas, the Taliban, and, indeed, the Islamic Republic of Iran. But when Washington and Paris wanted to end the presidential vacuum in Beirut, they turned to Qatar and other brotherly nations, which then helped to gain the acquiescence of Iran and Hezbollah. When Washington wanted to negotiate the release of Israeli soldiers and civilians held in Gaza, it was Qatar that made it happen. When the first Trump administration wanted a negotiated exit

from Afghanistan, it was Doha that made the contacts and hosted the talks. And when the current Trump administration decided it was time for Israel and Iran to end hostilities, it was the Qataris who delivered the Iranians – and this despite the fact that Iran had just retaliated against US air strikes by lobbing missiles at a US air base inside Qatar!

In effect, the peninsula is now a platform for peace promotion, and not by accident. As impressive as they are, even Qatar's obvious enthusiasm and evident aptitude for dialogue and diplomacy cannot account for the unprecedentedly large role it has come to play on the world stage.

Instead, today's Qatar is the product of a bold strategy rooted in both purpose and principle. Led by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, the country's entire leadership views respect for international law and the maintenance of international peace and stability as existential objectives for Qatar and its population.

The Amir inherited some of this strategy from his father, but he has expansively built on it, adding both breadth of vision and depth of commitment. Even – and perhaps especially – when this approach has carried dire risks, His Highness the Amir has refused to waver, and his steadfast pursuit of fraternal relations among nation-states has continued. That resolve has been noted by state and non-state actors alike, and some former antagonists have even come to embrace and even emulate much of the Qatari approach.

That's why Qatar deserves the Nobel Peace Prize. Not because it helped end a war between Iran and Israel, but because no other country is so singularly dedicated to peace. It's the ideas behind its actions that make them special: that a country should not only refrain from seeking out conflict, should not only keenly avoid conflict unless necessary, but should also actively seek to prevent, shorten, and/or mitigate conflict among other countries as well.

What could be more noble – and therefore more Nobel-worthy – than that?

- *Roudi Baroudi is an energy and policy expert with more than four decades of experience in both the private and public sectors. The author of several books, he currently serves as CEO of Energy and Environment Holding, an independent consultancy based in Doha.*

‘THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS’: ENERGY EXPERT LAUNCHES NEW BOOK ON RESOLVING MARITIME BOUNDARIES



ZOUK MOSBEH, 23-04-2025: Energy expert Roudi Baroudi signed copies of his latest book during a launch event at Notre Dame University – Louaize on Wednesday.

The book, “Settling Maritime Boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean: Who Will Be Next?”, is part of Baroudi’s years-long effort to promote regional energy cooperation. In it, the author makes the case that if East Med countries are serious about exploiting their offshore hydrocarbons, they need to settle their maritime borders in order to attract the major energy companies whose technical and financial muscle are virtual prerequisites for undersea oil and gas activities.



Co-hosted by the Office of NDU Publications (which published the book) and the university’s Office of Research and Graduate Studies, the signing event took place at NDU’s Pierre Abou Khater Auditorium. All proceeds from sales of the book will go toward Student Financial Aid at NDU.

Inspired by the landmark US-brokered October 2022 agreement that saw Lebanon settle most of its maritime boundary with old foe Israel, the new tome stresses the need to define other East Med borders as well, including those between Lebanon and Cyprus, Lebanon and Syria, Syria and Cyprus, Cyprus and Turkey, and Turkey and Greece.

Publication was delayed by the outbreak of the Gaza war in October 2023, but the author says that conflict – which also led to massive destruction and loss of life in Lebanon – only

underlines the need for regional players to find a new modus vivendi.



"We can't keep doing the same things over and over again, and then expecting a different outcome," Baroudi said during the NDU event. "For the first time in many years, all of Lebanon's branches of government – Parliament, Cabinet, and Presidency – are fully functional. We have to start thinking of ways to reduce the scope for friction, to open the way for foreign investment, and hopefully start producing offshore gas."

"Almost all of Lebanon's energy needs are met by imported hydrocarbons; imagine if we discover enough gas to provide 24/7 electricity to all Lebanese," he added. "And what if we had enough to start exporting it, too? Lebanon's coast is less than 100 kilometers from Cypriot waters: this means that once the island and its partners have built a pipeline and/or a liquified natural gas plant, Lebanese gas could flow straight into the entire European Union, one of the world's largest energy markets. The possibilities are endless. And now imagine all of the countries of the region having similar prospects – just because they finally got around to figuring out where their national waters begin and end."

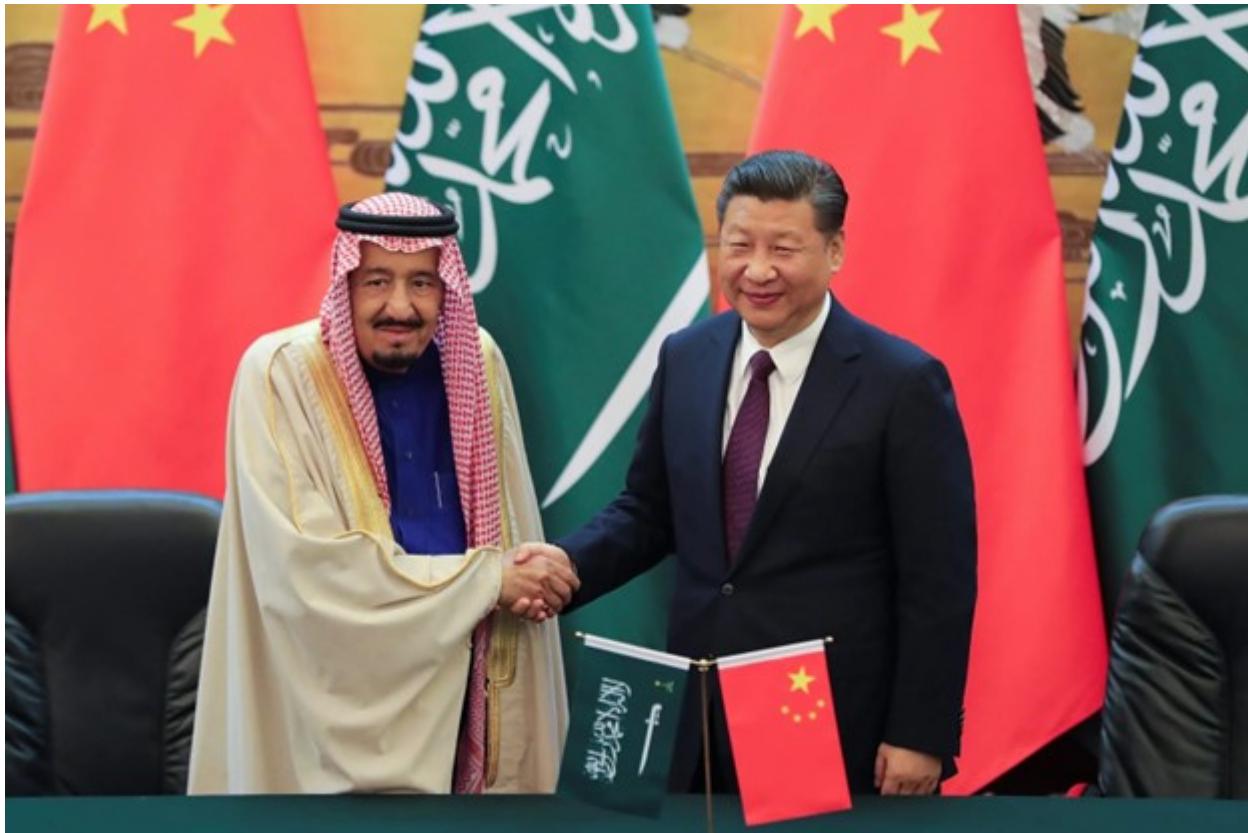
In addition to the manifold benefits of energy security and

lucrative export revenues to fund domestic investment in things like education, healthcare, fighting poverty, and transport, Baroudi said the exercise of negotiating sea borders could help build trust and good will.

“There isn’t enough of those commodities in the East Med region, and often for good reason,” he explained. “But we have to start somewhere, and maritime boundaries are a great place to do that because they open the way for investment and various forms of cooperation, direct or indirect, including fisheries monitoring and regulation, marine protected areas, tourism, weather forecasting, search and rescue, etc.”

With more than 47 years of experience, Baroudi has worked in multiple fields, from electricity, oil and gas, and petrochemicals to pipelines, renewables, and carbon pricing mechanisms. He also has led policy and program development with, among others, the World Bank, the US Agency for International Development, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Commission. The author of several books – including “Climate and Energy in the Mediterranean: What the Blue Economy Means for a Greener Future” (2022) – as well as numerous studies and countless articles, his expertise has made him a highly sought-after speaker at regional energy and economic conferences. Currently serving as CEO of Energy and Environment Holding, an independent consultancy based in Doha, he is also a Senior Fellow of the Transatlantic Leadership Network, a Washington think-tank. In 2023, he received the TLN’s Leadership Award in recognition of his efforts to promote peace.

AS AMERICA “PIVOTS TO ASIA”, SAUDI ARABIA IS ALREADY THERE – BY ROUDI BAROUDI



The biggest news in the energy industry last week was that a state-owned Chinese company had completed a massive offshore oil and gas platform for Saudi Aramco. Breathless media reports shared impressive details about the facility's record-setting size, weight, and output capacity, with some describing it as a massive bet on continuing strong demand for fossil fuels despite the meteoric rise of renewables.

The real significance of this news, though, is not to be found at the Qingdao shipyard where it was made, at the headquarters of the China Offshore Oil Engineering Company that built it, or at the Marjan field off Saudi Arabia's east coast where it will be installed and operated.

In fact, in order to truly appreciate the implications

involved, one needs to travel back in time a little more than 50 years. For on 8 June 1974, the United States and Saudi Arabia reached a historic agreement that has bound the two countries ever since.

Signed by then-US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and then-Minister of Interior Prince Fahd bin Abdulaziz, the pact established two joint commissions tasked, respectively, with increasing bilateral economic cooperation and with determining the kingdom's military needs. It also created several joint working groups responsible for specific elements to support growth and development, including efforts to: a) expand and diversify Saudi Arabia's industrial base, beginning with the manufacture of fertilizers and other aspects of the petrochemical sector; b) increase the number of qualified scientists and technicians available to make the most of technology transfers; c) explore partnerships in areas like solar energy and desalination; and d) find ways to cooperate in agriculture, especially in the desert.



Henry Kissinger with Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia, 1974

Contrary to widespread misperceptions, the agreement did not say anything about Saudi crude being priced and/or transacted exclusively in US dollars. In a side-deal that remained secret until 2016, however, the United States pledged full military support in virtually all circumstances and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia committed to investing a massive share of its oil revenues in US Treasury bills. While there was no public quid pro quo, therefore, this was to some extent a distinction without a difference: the world's biggest oil exporter ended up spending hundreds of billions of dollars on American debt and American-made weapons, making it only sensible that the vast majority of its crude sales would be in greenbacks. By extension, the sheer weight of Saudi oil in world markets – and especially within the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries – virtually guaranteed that the dollar would become

the de facto default currency of those markets, Petrodollars.

These arrangements suited both sides at the time, which featured a very particular set of circumstances. The previous year, as Egypt and Syria attempted to regain territories occupied by Israeli forces since the 1967 war, US President Richard Nixon authorized an unprecedented airlift of weaponry – everything from tanks, artillery, and ammunition to helicopters, radars, and air-to-air missiles – to Israel. Arab oil producers responded by playing their strongest card, announcing an oil embargo against states that supported the Israeli war effort. That led directly to supply shortages, soaring prices, and long lines at filling stations across the United States and many other countries, too, and indirectly to several years of higher inflation. Although the embargo had been lifted in March 1974, Washington was keen to prevent similar shocks in the future.

The American economy was particularly vulnerable to longer-term repercussions because of several factors, including a general slowdown caused by its long, expensive, and ultimately unsuccessful war in Vietnam. The real problem, though, stemmed from another issue: in 1971, as the dollar continued to lose ground against major European currencies, Nixon had taken the United States off the gold standard, gutting the Bretton Woods arrangements put in place after World War II and throwing foreign exchange markets into disarray. With the Cold War as backdrop, America appeared to be losing ground in its strategic competition with the Soviet Union.

The so-called “side-deal”, then, was actually far more important than the public agreement because it would restore the dollar’s primacy in international markets, making it once again the world’s favorite reserve currency, while simultaneously reducing the likelihood of future Arab oil embargos. The new system worked very well for a very long time: the US economy regained its stability, and Saudi Arabia embarked on a long program of socioeconomic development that

continues to this day. Even as the Americans have sought further protection by reducing their reliance on Saudi and other OPEC crude, their bilateral partnership and the dollar's general prevalence in the oil business have likewise persisted despite all manner of diplomatic spats, crises, and other obstacles.

Back in the present-day, the Soviet Union is no more, and although the United States has an even more formidable strategic rival in China, this competition carries neither the day-to-day intensity nor the seeming inevitability of nuclear Armageddon that the Cold War engendered. In addition, the United States is now producing more crude oil than any country ever has, further insulating its economy against exogenous shocks, while China's rapid expansion has made it the world's most prolific energy importer. In fact, Washington is years into a "pivot to Asia" that will see it focus less attention on the Middle East.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia is now led by Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), a young and highly ambitious ruler who has shown himself more than willing to act independently of American desires or even demands. Accordingly, it should not surprise anyone that the behemoth facility now being transported to Marjan is just the most visible tip of the Sino-Saudi iceberg. Theirs is a burgeoning relationship driven by complementary needs, with both parties investing in one another's economies and cooperating on large-scale energy and industrial projects.

Given all of the foregoing, it is much too early to declare the end of an era. Even if rumors that the Saudis will soon start selling oil futures contracts in yuan or other currencies turn out to be true and the results include an erosion of the dollar's value, the US-Saudi economic relationship remains very much in place, as do defense ties ranging from procurement and maintenance to joint exercises and training. This is not to mention the approximately 60,000

Saudi students who study at American universities every year, or the countless other business and/or personal ties nurtured over decades.



Then, US President, Jimmy Carter receiving the Crown Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia at the White House in Washington, 1977. Seeing the continuation of the Petrodollar Agreement.

All the same, a new era has definitely begun: just as the Americans have opened up other avenues to secure their energy needs, the Saudis are now moving decisively to diversify their foreign partnerships and have been doing so for many years. Inevitably, the global oil and gas economy's center of gravity will shift eastward, but how could it be otherwise when China and several other Asian economies have become such powerhouses? The diversification path will almost certainly include occasional stretches where Riyadh will have to make difficult decisions, but this, too, reflects the confidence

that MBS has in his country's ability to determine its own destiny.

Roudi Baroudi has worked in the energy sector for more than four decades, with extensive experience in both the public and private sectors. Having advised dozens of companies, governments, and multilateral institutions on program and policy development. He has been a loyal advocate for energy stability and peace. He is also the author or co-author of numerous books and articles, and currently serves as CEO of Energy and Environment Holding, an independent consultancy based in Doha, Qatar.

Regional Energy Expert Roudi Baroudi Earns Award from Washington Think Tank



Transatlantic Leadership Network Recognizes Author for Contributions to Peaceful Development in Eastern Mediterranean

WASHINGTON, DC November 9, 2023: Doha-based Lebanese author Roudi Baroudi was one of two people presented with the 2023 Transatlantic Leadership Award at a ceremony in Washington this week.

Although circumstances relating to the conflict in the Gaza Strip prevented Baroudi from attending the event, both he and Joshua Volz – the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Europe, Eurasia, Africa, and the Middle East and the Office of International Affairs at the US Department of Energy – were recognized by the Transatlantic Leadership Network (TLN). Each was cited at a gala dinner on Monday for his “valuable contribution in building a peaceful and prosperous Eastern Mediterranean” as part of the TLN’s 2nd Annual Conference on Freedom of the Media.

"I was deeply honored to be named a recipient of this prestigious award, and I will always be grateful for the many ways in which the TLN has supported my work for several years now," Baroudi said. "I also look forward to working together in the future so that one day, our descendants can know the benefits of peace and coexistence. It is precisely in difficult and trying times that cooler heads must be able and willing to look at the reasons for current bloodshed and recrimination, then envision pathways to a better future."

Baroudi, who serves as CEO of independent consultancy Energy and Environment Holding in Doha, is a long-time champion of dialogue, cooperation, and practical solutions to both the global climate crisis and recurrent tensions in the East Med. A regular speaker at regional energy and policy conferences, Baroudi's insights are also avidly sought by local and international media, as well as governments, major energy companies, and investors.

Having advised both public and private sector actors on a wide variety of energy issues, Baroudi is widely credited with bringing unique perspective to all manner of policy discussions. He is the author of several books, including "Maritime Disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Way Forward" (2021), and "Climate and Energy in the Mediterranean: What the Blue Economy Means for a Greener Future" (2022). Together with Notre-Dame University – Louaize, Baroudi has also published a study of the US-brokered October 2022 Maritime Boundary Agreement between Lebanon and Israel, and is currently preparing another volume on Lebanon's prospects for similar deals with Cyprus and Syria.

The TLN describes itself as "a nonpartisan, independent, international network of practitioners, private sector leaders and policy analysts dedicated to strengthening and reorienting transatlantic relations to the rapidly changing dynamics of a globalizing world."

Monday's ceremony was attended by a broad cross-section of high-profile figures, including senior officials from the Departments of Energy and State, numerous members of Washington's extensive diplomatic corps, and representatives of both international organizations and various media outlets.