

# Cyprus, waiting for reunification?

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# Summary

1. A divided island;
2. Five problems to be solved to reunify the island;
3. The gas disputes.

# Aphrodite's birth place





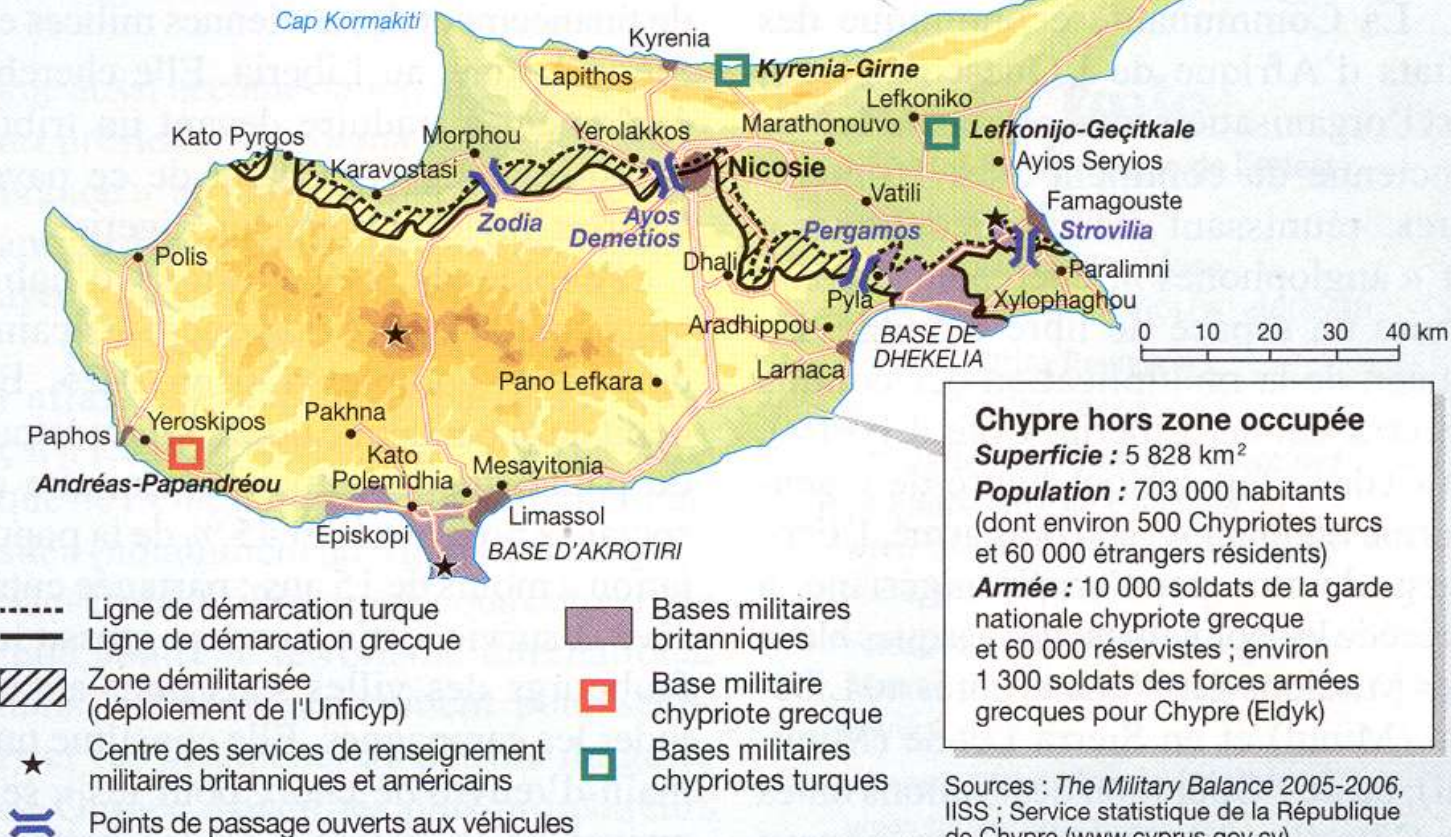
# 1. A divided island

**République turque de Chypre du Nord (RTCN, reconnue uniquement par la Turquie ; zone occupée)**

**Superficie :** 3 423 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population :** 200 000 habitants (dont environ 88 000 Chypriotes turcs, 110 000 immigrants turcs, 600 Chypriotes grecs)

**Armée :** 36 000 soldats de la III<sup>e</sup> armée turque, 5 000 soldats chypriotes turcs et 26 000 réservistes



Sources : The Military Balance 2005-2006, IISS ; Service statistique de la République de Chypre (www.cyprus.gov.cy).

14/03/2025



# South, North & the SBAs

- The governmental area: the South, where *acquis communautaire* is implemented since 2004;
- The territory occupied by the Turkish army: the North, since 1974;
- The British Sovereign Bases Areas, SBAs.

## As an EU member state:

- The GoC (Government of Cyprus) represents the whole island, but the implementation of the *acquis* is suspended in the territory not under its control ;
- This situation is similar to Germany before unification: all Cypriots (except Anatolian illegal immigrants) are EU citizens ;
- The demarcation line (Green line) is a *de facto* external EU border, bringing complex customs management problems;
- Endless intercommunal negotiations with UN support have unsuccessfully tried to build a reunification agreement.

Summer  
1974:  
« Turkish  
invasion » or  
so-called  
« Peace  
Operation »  
in  
Cyprus





## Under the treaty of guarantee art.4

« In the event of a breach of the provisions of the present Treaty, Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom undertake to consult together with respect to the representations or measures necessary to ensure observance of those provisions. In so far as common or concerted action may not prove possible, each of the three guaranteeing Powers reserves the right to take action with the sole aim of re-establishing the state of affairs created by the present Treaty.»

# 1974-2024: permitted invasion and planned sclerosis

- “Although our preferred policy is for a complete British military withdrawal from Cyprus, we recognize that we cannot do so at present, given the global importance of working closely with the Americans.
- “The US government are now firmly attached to the view that withdrawal from our bases in Cyprus would have a destabilizing effect upon the Eastern Mediterranean, with implications to the Middle East,”
- “The benefits that we derive from the SBAs are of major significance and virtually irreplaceable... They are an essential contribution to the Anglo-American relationship. On balance, the conclusion is that an early ‘solution’ might not help (since pressures against the SBAs might then build up), just as breakdown and return to strife would not, and that our interests are best served by continuing movement towards a solution – without the early prospect of arrival”.

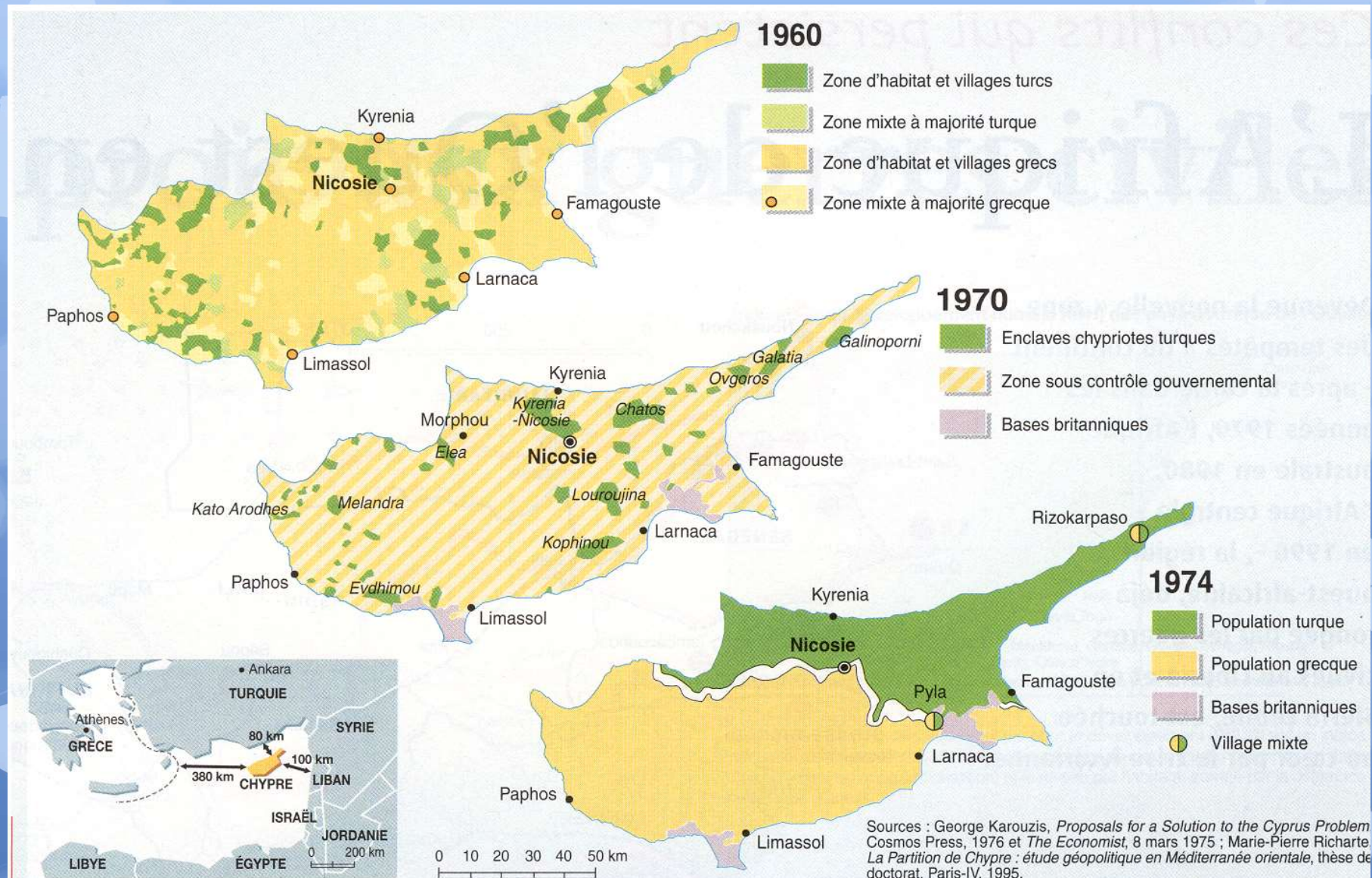
(FCA 1975, quotation W. Mallinson)

# Less than 60% of the area are under government control

	Area (sq km)	Area CYP = 100	Population Inhabitants (2021)	Population CYP = 100
Occupied zone (North)	3254	35,2	295000	26,0
Gouvernment zone (South)	5497	59,4	832000	73,3
Green line (buffer zone)	246	2,7	none	
Sovereign Base areas (SBA)	255	2,8	7500	0,7
Total	9252	100,0	1134500	100,0

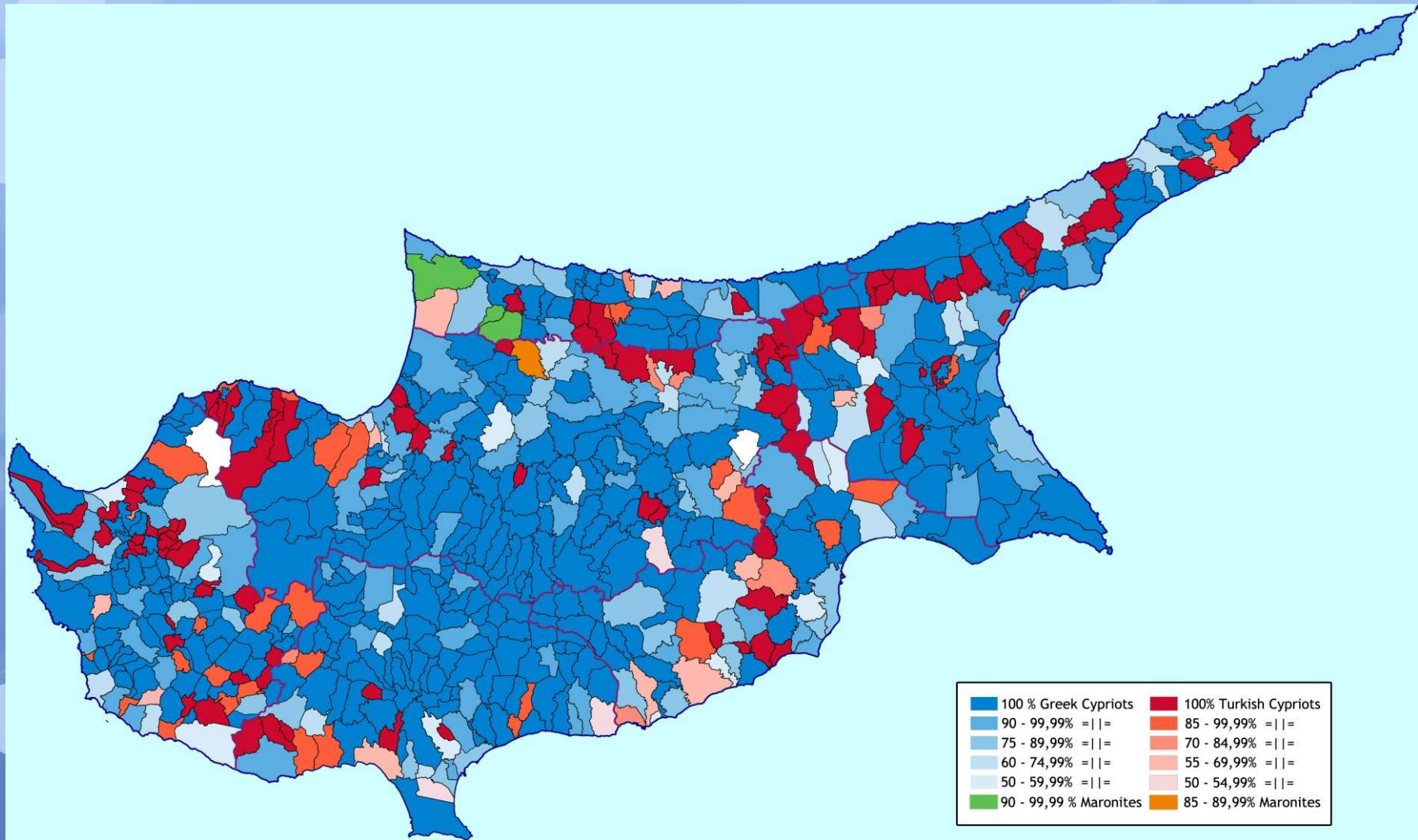


# The result of ethnic cleansing

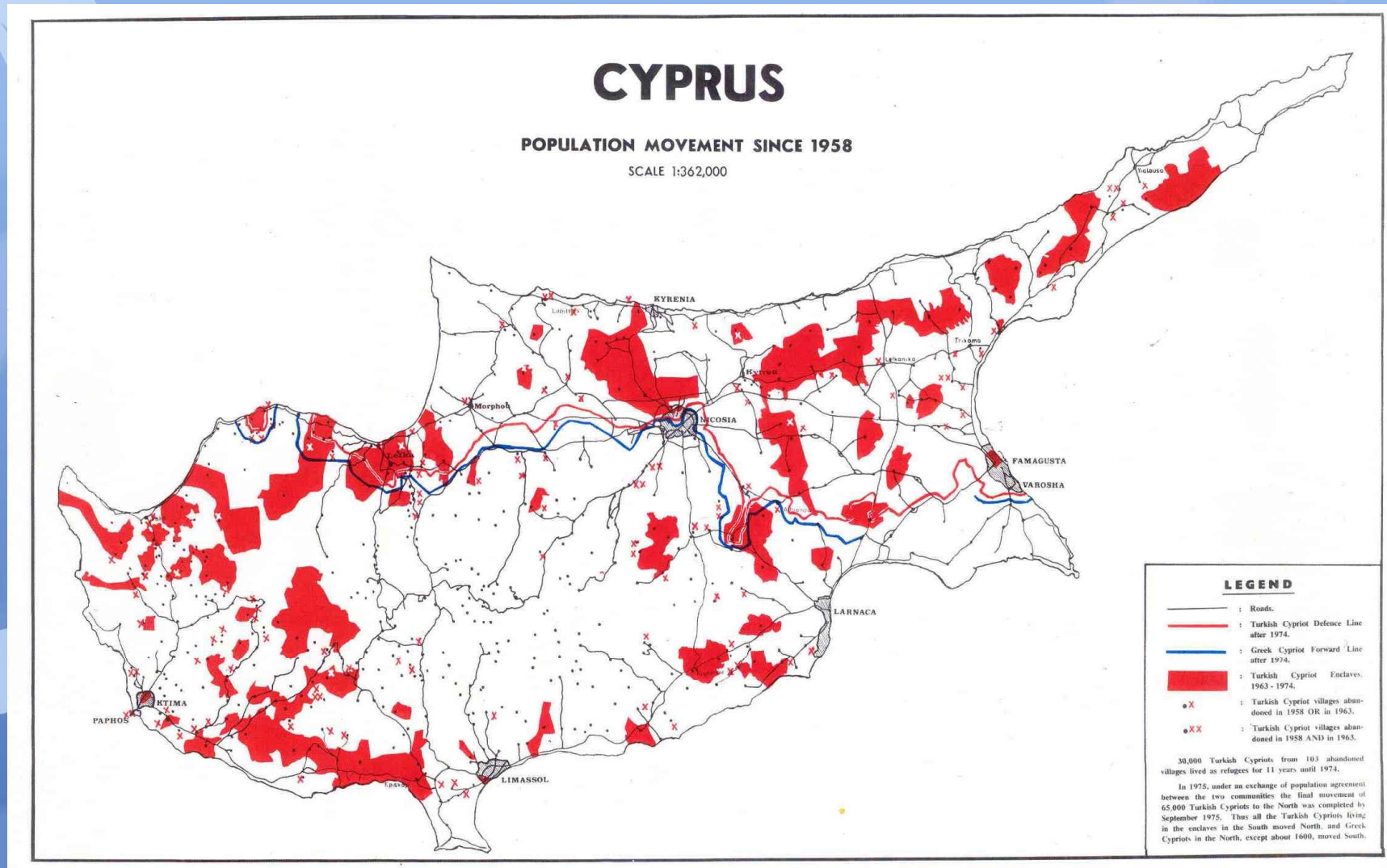




# Cyprus 1960



# 1964-1974 (propaganda map)







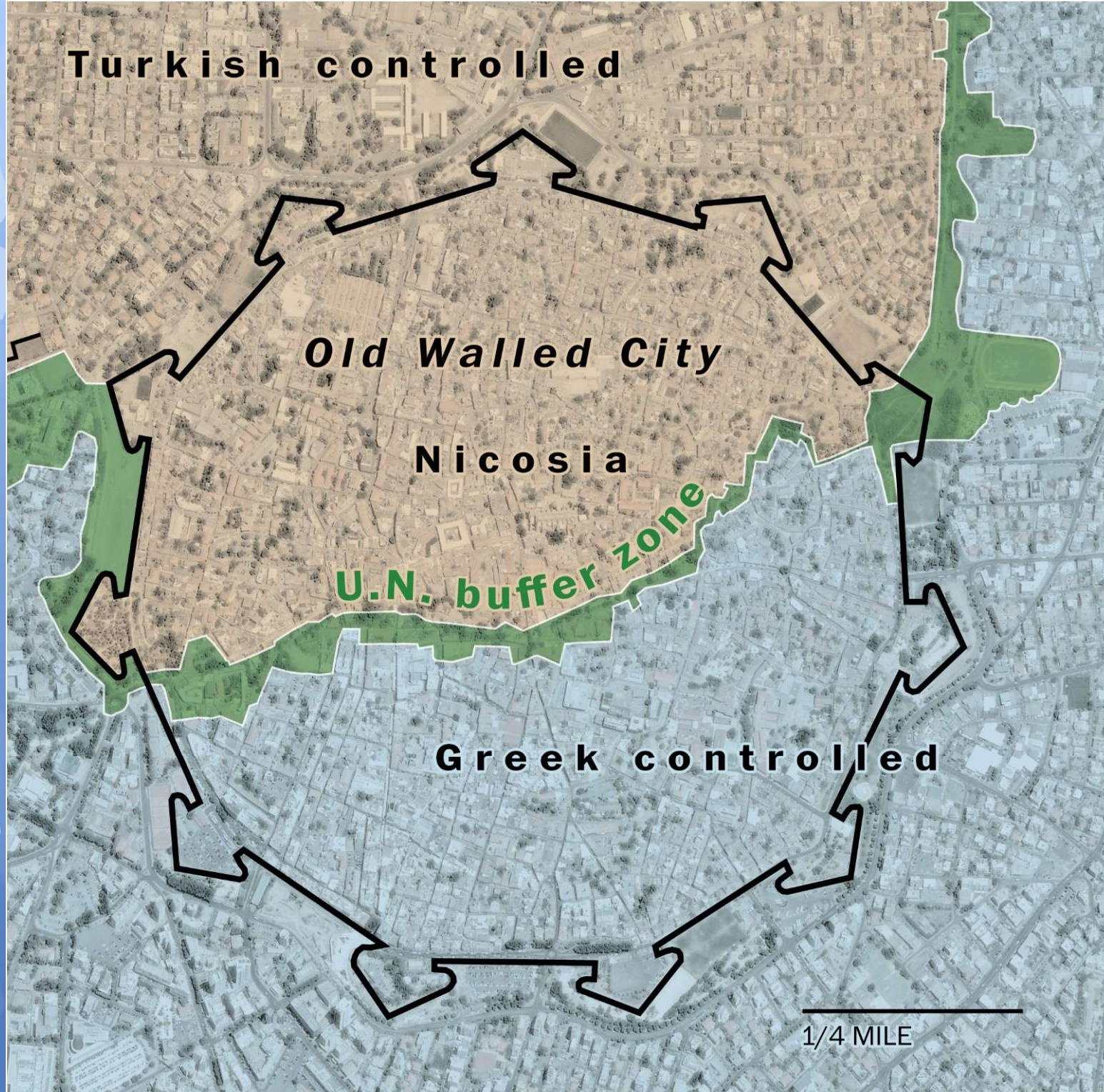
ΛΕΥΚΩΣΙΑ

THE LAST DIVIDED CAPITAL

LA DERNIERE CAPITALE DIVISEE

DIE LETZTE GETEILTE HAUPTSTADT





14/03/2025







Ermou (Hermes) street was the most active shopping place before 1964





Coffee (either Turkish or Greek) no longer available since 1964





# Varosha (Famagusta) ghost town 1974-2020



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Reuniting Cyprus



# UN supervision of the green line



# Nicosia airport departure hall (deserted since 1974)





# ex-hotel Ledra, (UN headquarters)





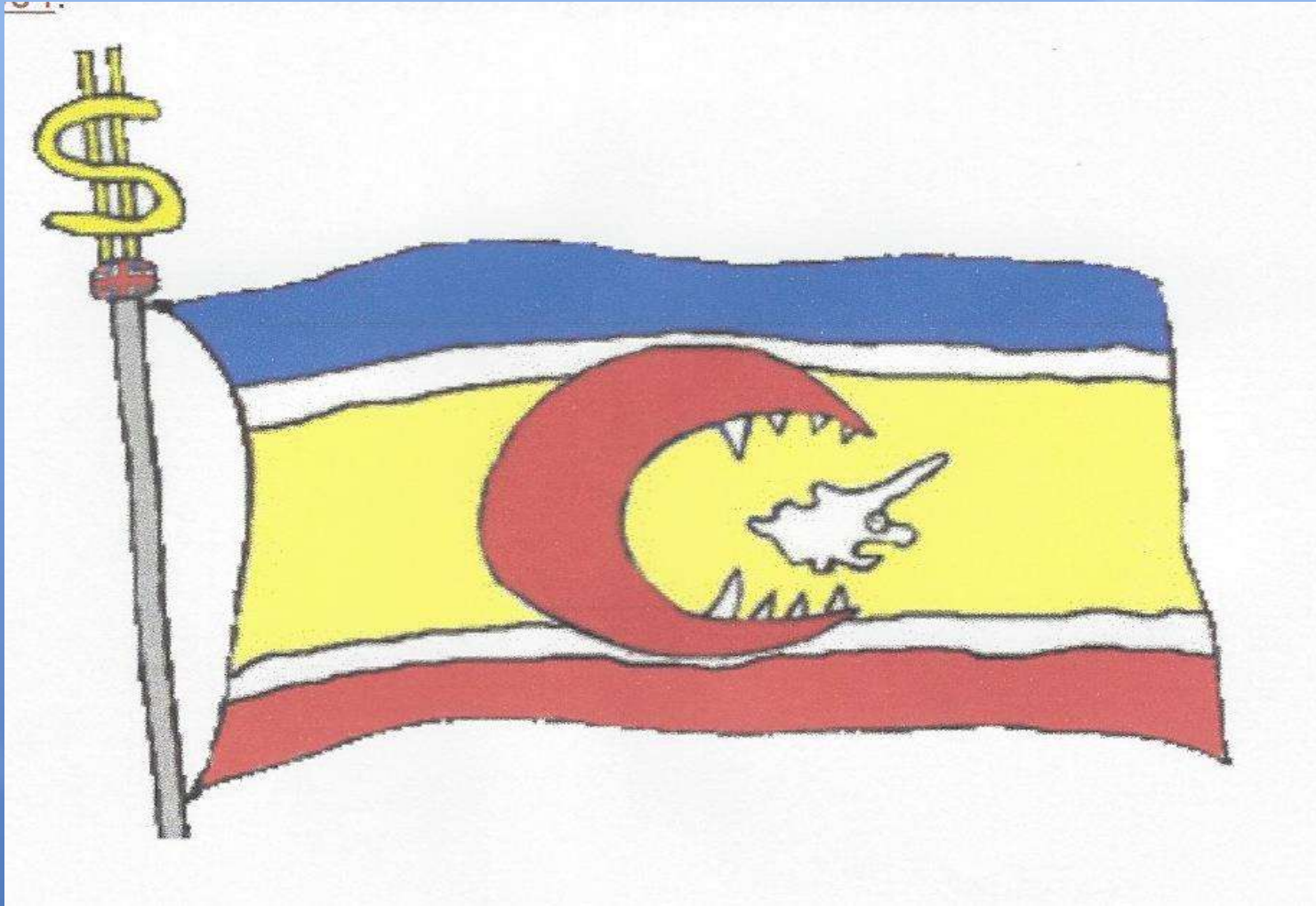
## 2. Reunification of Cyprus

- Ensuring independence and security;
- Establishing workable institutions;
- Clarifying bizonality;
- Solving the obstacle of property rights;
- Rebuilding a single economy.

# Strongly opposed views

<b>facts</b>	<b>Greek opinion</b>	<b>Turkish opinion</b>
<b>Around 20% of the Cypriot population is Moslem/Turkish</b>	<b>a minority deserving special rights in a bizonal Federation</b>	<b>From equal partnership to a Community deserving an independent state</b>
<b>The 1974 Turkish intervention in Cyprus</b>	<b>A Turkish invasion</b>	<b>A Peace operation</b>
<b>The separation of the two communities</b>	<b>Ethnic cleansing</b>	<b>voluntary exchange of population</b>
<b>The status of Northern Cyprus</b>	<b>illegally occupied territory</b>	<b>independent state (only recognised by Turkey)</b>
<b>The presence of the Turkish army (35000 men)</b>	<b>End of occupation, not more than 650 men, as stated in the 1960 Treaty</b>	<b>Heavy presence necessary for the security of the Turkish community</b>
<b>The economy of the North</b>	<b>Bad management</b>	<b>Effect of the Greek blockade</b>
<b>The Annan plan</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>yes</b>
<b>Future status of the island</b>	<b>A strong federation between two constituent states</b>	<b>A loose federation between two independent states</b>

# Annan's plan failure (2004)





# Joint declaration agreed (11/02/2014) to resume intercommunal talks (2014-2017)

The settlement will be based on the following principles:

- Bicommunal, bizonal federation with political equality;
- Single international personality, single sovereignty and single citizenship;
- The federal Constitution will be the supreme law and will be binding on the federation's authorities and on the constituent states;
- Principles upon which the EU is funded will be safeguarded and respected throughout the island.

Since the adoption of the joint declaration, designing a solution in the framework of the *acquis communautaire* is now a requirement

Main EU parameters for a solution:

- Making TCs aware of the advantages of Community legislation;
- Improving EU experience in working out a political solution (the EU lacks the UN experience);
- Cooperating with the UN, the guaranteeing powers (Greece, Turkey, UK) and the US;
- Securing complete implementation of the *acquis* in the North by reunification date.



# Five problems to be solved

- Securing unfettered independence and ensuring security for the whole island;
- Building an efficient federal state;
- Achieving bizonality through territory restitutions and adequate residence rights;
- Solving property issues in compromising between *de jure* and *de facto* realities;
- Creating a new economy in integrating the North.

# Independence and security

## Adverse heritage:

- unequal treaties imposed on Cyprus (1960) contain important limitations
- the SBAs (British bases) are held in full sovereignty;
- Turkish occupation (since 1974);

## Possible evolution:

- The illusions of neutrality and demilitarisation;
- Is « Natoification » a feasible option ?
- Establishing maritime borders.

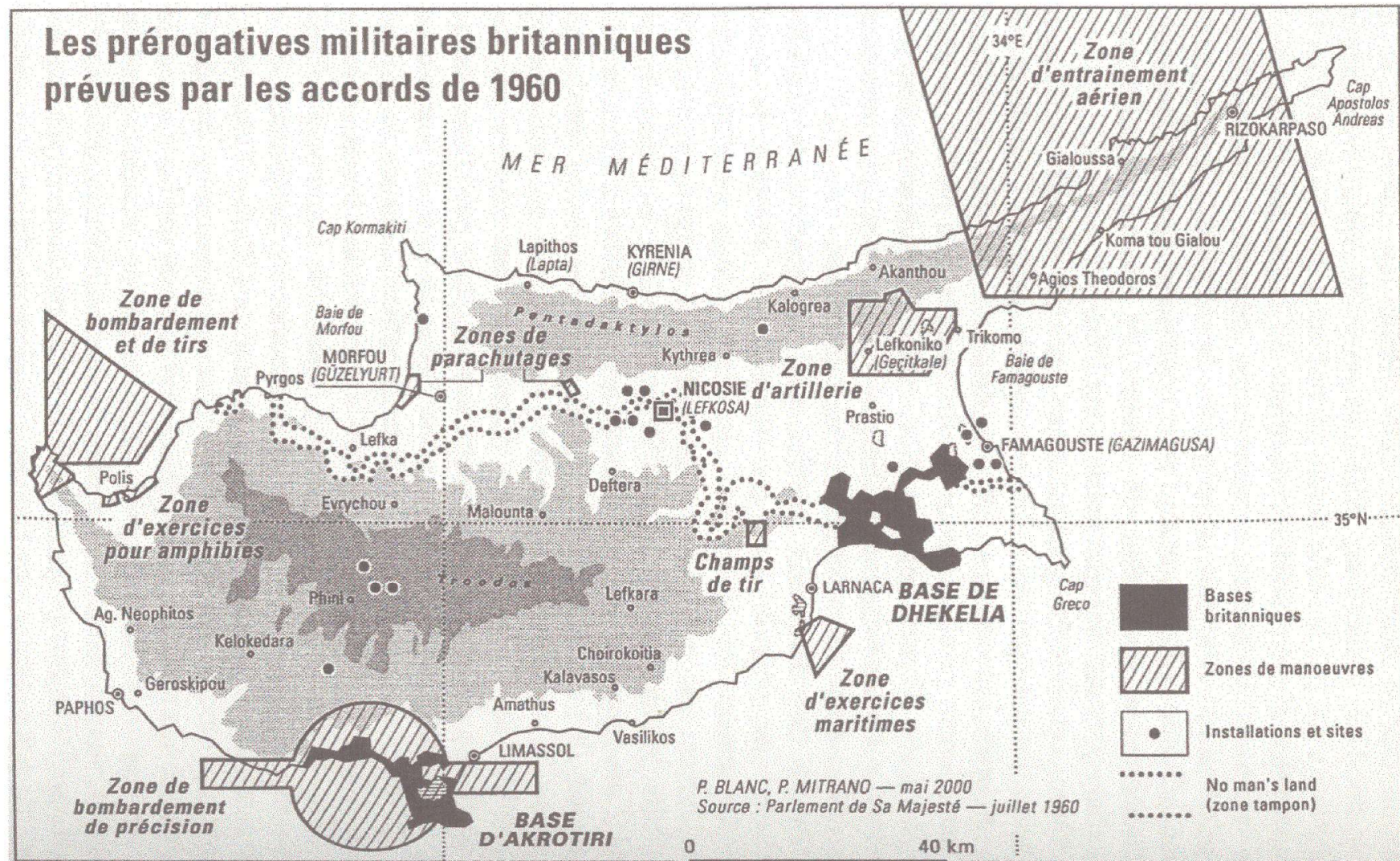


# Unequal treaties (1960)



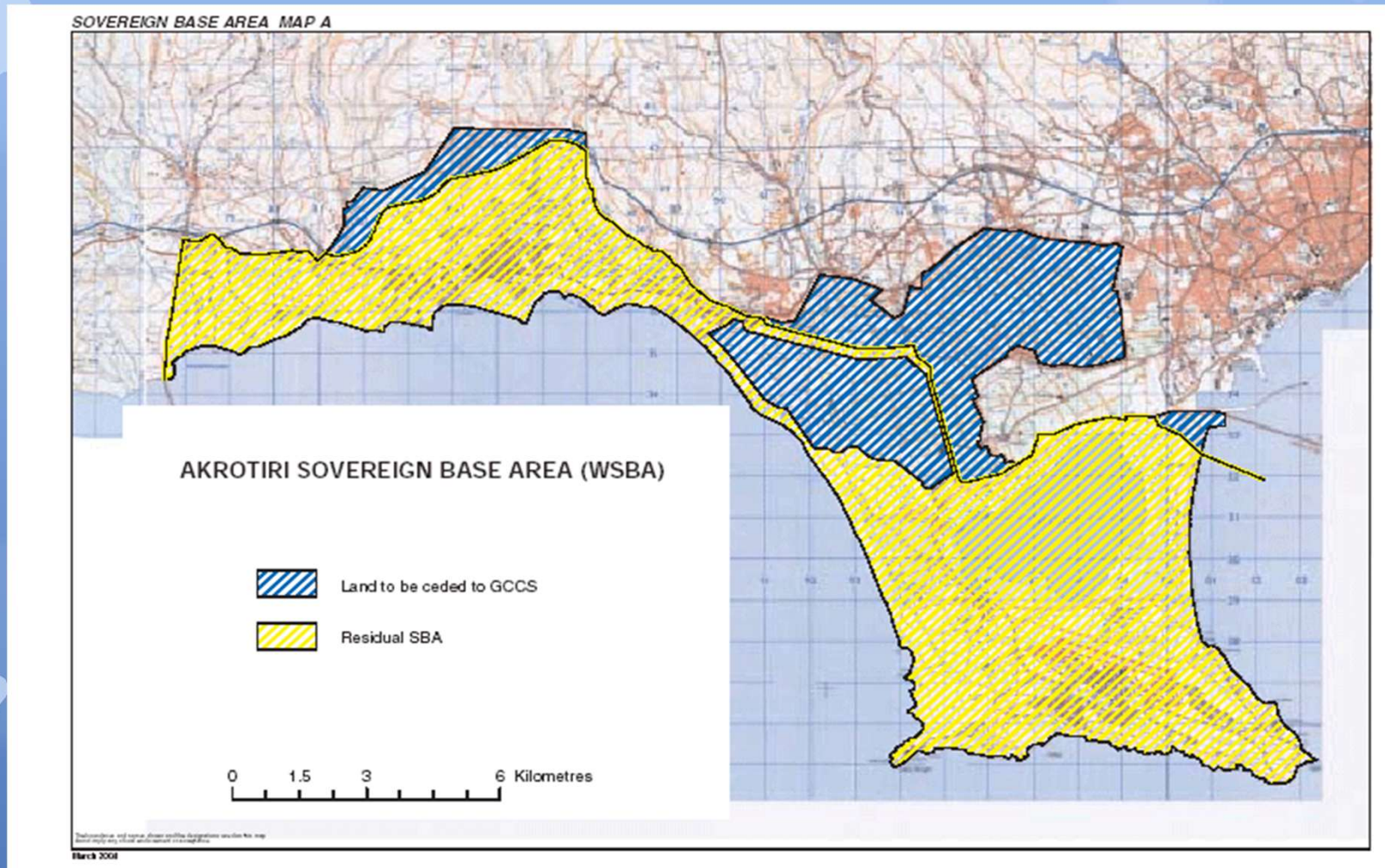


# British military privileges in Cyprus





# Akrotiri SBA



# 75% of Greek Cypriots are against the SBAs

Cypriots do not have many reasons to celebrate their island strategic value;

- The SBAs did not protect them against the Turkish invasion;
- They may represent a risk when used against a Mideast country;
- SBAs occasionally disturb the life of the neighbouring population;
- Contrary to Malta, the SBAs do not bring significant economic benefits.



# Turkish occupation

- Heavy military presence since 1974: around 35000 service men garrison the North;
- Close control upon Northern authorities, « *a subordinate administration of Turkey* », according to the Council of Europe);
- Illegal immigration of Turkish nationals outnumbering TCs, turning them into « *a minority within the minority* »
- Ankara's long term objective: transforming Northern Cyprus into a Turkish province;
- Two justifications: protecting Turkish Cypriots and securing Southern Anatolia

# Establishing workable institutions

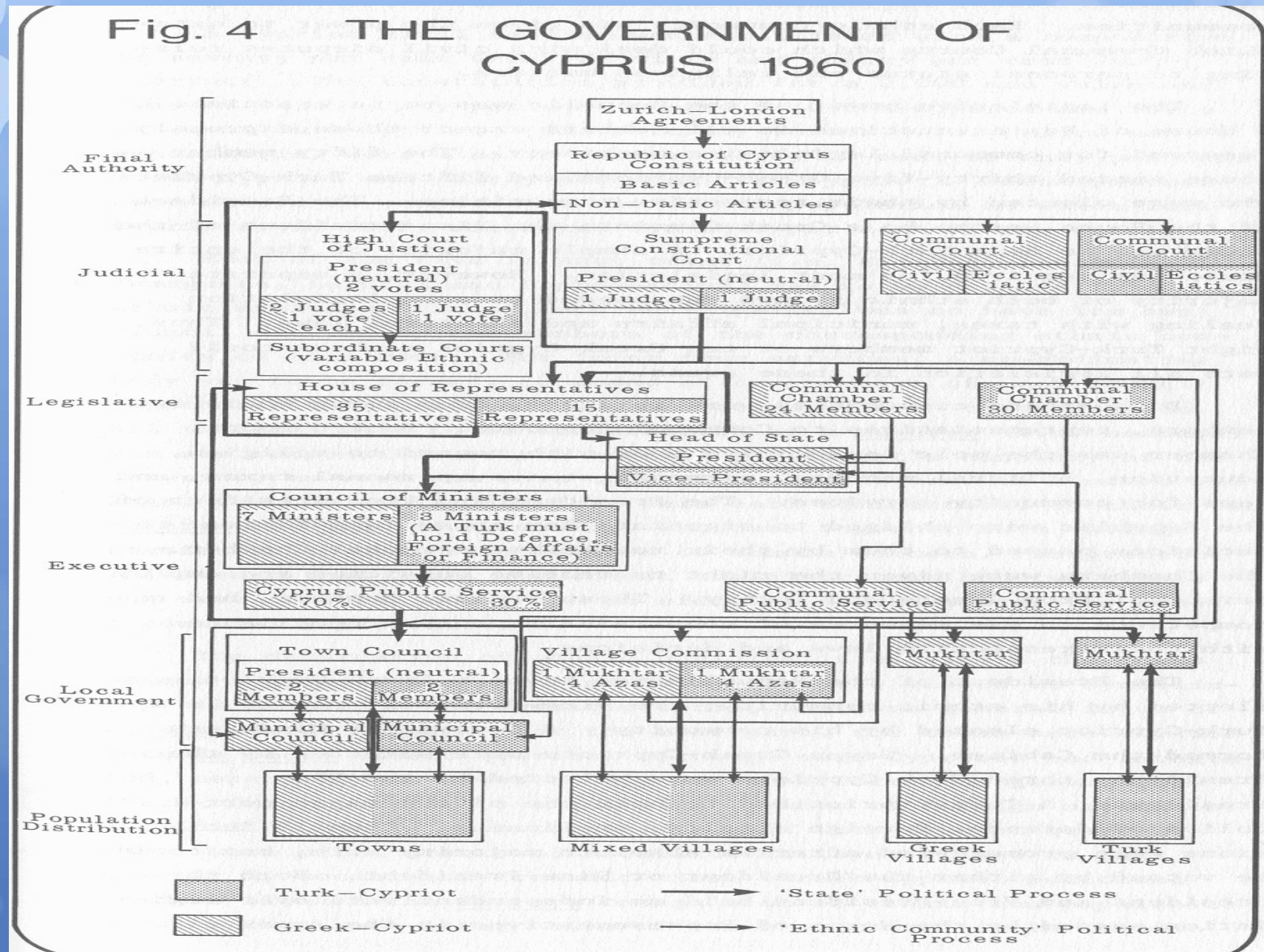
- Avoiding the 1960 complicated Constitutional framework;
- Taking into account Cyprus specificities (remains of the old « *millet* » system);
- Solving the Federation dilemma: GCs in favour of a strong federation, TCs wanting a loose one;
- Overcoming TCs contradictions;
- Establishing an independent civil service.



# How to design a new federal State ?

- In 2004, to reintegrate Northern Cyprus into international law, the Annan plan has juxtaposed the two administrations in a very loose federation, likely to turn unworkable ;
- The new institutions must be designed in a way avoiding the 1963 breakdown;
- They will have to perform their EU duties, in the same efficient way as GoC is doing today, without exporting any internal dispute to Brussels;
- In a small island, the creation of a dual federation is not self-evident.

# To be avoided: the unworkable 1960 Constitution





# Requirements for an efficient federal level

- a workable institutional framework not rewarding obstruction tactics or minority blackmailing;
- Institutional and financial incentives to promote cooperation;
- Efficient arbitration mechanisms (Supreme Court);
- Predominance of Federal law over regional and local legislations;
- Independent federal civil service appointed through fair selection rules.

# How to achieve a fair balance of power with strong incentives to cooperate

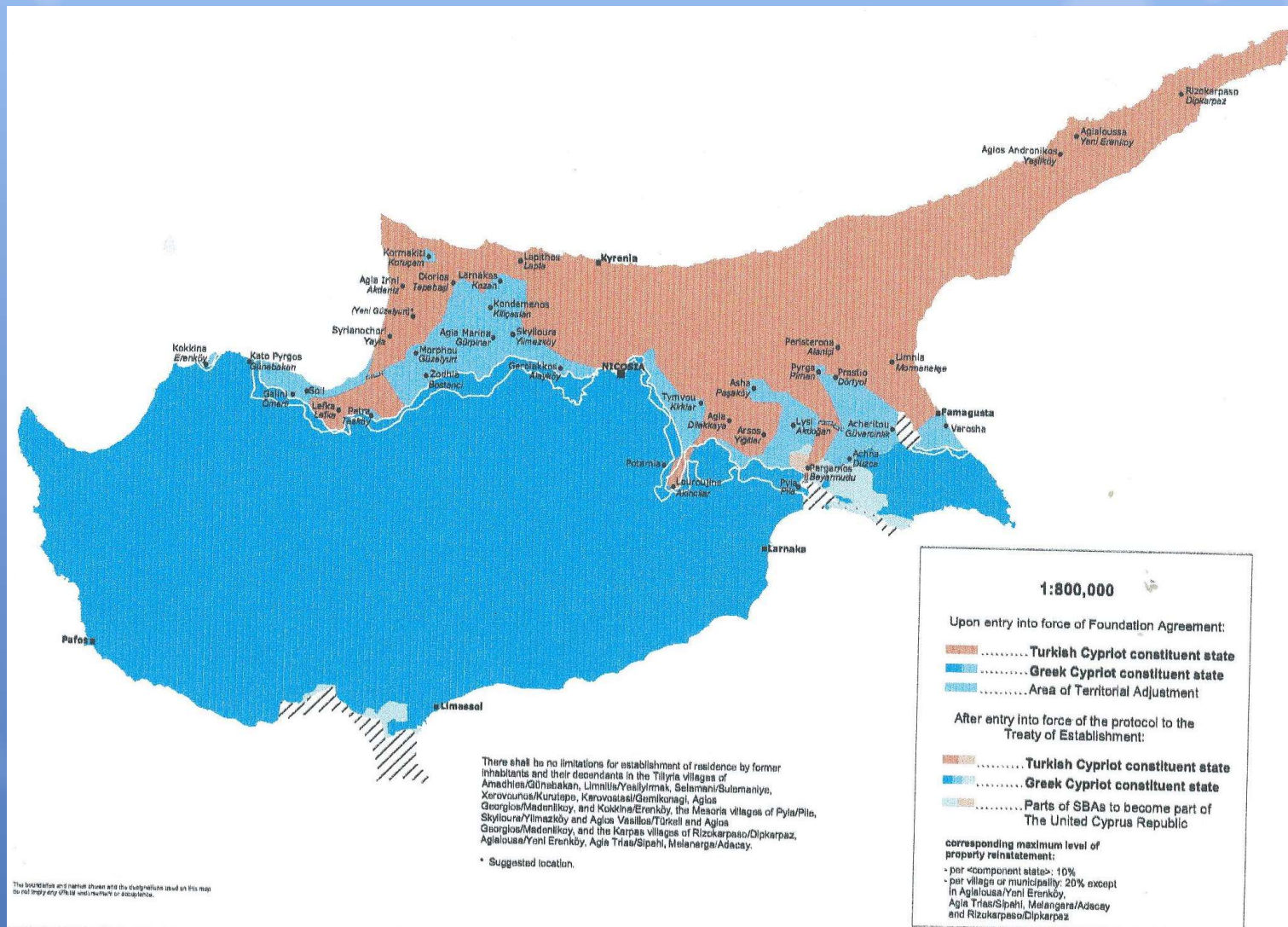
- A standard federal system ensure an over-representation of one population category to compensate its disadvantaged situation or an ethnic, religious or linguistic particularism (TC likely to get 30% of power for 20% of population, although they demand 50%);
- This institutional imbalance should not jeopardise overall effectiveness;
- A federation made up of many units is easier to manage than a bilateral system, especially if one of them has the majority of population and wealth, which is today the case in Belgium and would happen tomorrow in Cyprus.



# Ensuring a functional combination of basic federalist principles

- Cooperation is of utmost importance for TCs, a community demographically and economically lagging behind, Then, had hardships of self isolation experienced since 1963 convinced TC to prefer reunification?
- The balance between the parties (equal partnership in Cyprus) has to be designed in a realistic manner: for instance, in Canada one of the two « *founding peoples* », the French, (23% of the population), do not demand institutional equality, but better consideration as a « *société distincte* »;

# Territory restitutions (Annan plan 2004)





# Bizonality: different interpretations

- GCs have accepted the main result of the ethnic cleansing: a region where TCs will remain the majority;
- In addition, TCs demand derogations to EU freedom of settlement to prevent GCs to come back to the North;
- EU rules could not be distorted so far to allow everyone to settle in the North, except GCs who remain the legal owners of 80% of private properties;
- Many GCs, refugees from rural areas and now urbanised are not so keen to resettle to villages with a completely Turkish environment;
- Both want the end of Anatolian immigration.

# Property rights: a huge gap

- In order to resettle 50000 TCs, Turkey has expelled over 150000 GCs. This has created a considerable gap between fact and law;
- Properties in dispute count for 200000 ha in the North, 55000 ha in the South (1 to 4),
- According to their estimated value, the gap is between 28,5 billion € to compensate GCs expelled from the North, versus 2,7 billion for the displaced TCs in the South (1 to 10);
- Due to this gap, no exchange scheme, as advocated by Turkey, could be implemented without very important additional resources.



# International requirements

- Since the end of WWII, international law guarantees property. This was confirmed by the ECHR (European Court of Human rights) (Loizidou case) and the ECJ (Apostolides);
- GCs ask for restitution to the legal owners, who should be given the right to decide what to do with their properties;
- Turkey and TCs aim at legalising the *fait accompli*, without paying any other compensation than the properties left by TCs in the South;
- Transitional arrangements should be established to reconcile fact and law.

# An impact of the ECJ ruling

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# Possible solutions

- On both sides, the intention is to limit population moves;
- Legality of ownership, enshrined in ECHR and ECJ's jurisprudence cannot be disputed;
- Empty properties can be restored to their legitimate owners;
- Occupied properties could be rented or subject to long term leases. Compensation may be offered to owners deprived of their property (but Cyprus can't afford);
- Physical planning regulations limiting building permits may be decided to avoid real estate speculation.

# The economic challenge

- Huge income gap: TCs were approaching 86% of GDP/cap in 1960, were around 50% in 1974, then less than 33% in 2000. Due to inflation imported from Turkey, they are probably below 40% today);
- Catching up requires an efficient development process;
- for Cyprus alone, the operation is of similar size as German unification (a quarter of its population with 10% of its GDP)
- In a Community of 27 member states, re-integrating the North is not an insuperable task;



# Developing the North

- As living far beyond its means, the North is extremely dependent on Turkish subventions; inefficiency and political cronyism have placed it in the doldrums;
- Measures detrimental to their economy should not be put forward by the TCs
- If properly and rapidly implemented, the *acquis communautaire* provides for a number of solutions (as experienced in central European candidates in the 1990s);
- The small size of the island excludes permanent derogations or even long transition periods;
- The World Bank report has clearly shown what is needed to transform a backward economy into a reliable economy;;
- Obvious complementarities should work: the South needs labour, the North needs employment.

# Reunification *a minima* ?

- Despite its experience of self isolation, the North leadership is still in favour of limited federal competences;
- Therefore, the reunification procedure might be carried out at rather low level;
- If the North prefers to do it alone, reunification may be less costly for Southern taxpayers;
- Anyway, the development of Single market mechanisms will favour the more competitive Southern private sector which has increased its competitiveness through the recent hardship.



# Winning cards

- EU membership: security, influence through unanimity rule, advantages of EU legislation;
- Geopolitics: is a handicap to become an asset? The GoC has made its assessment of past experience and is drawing lessons for the future;
- The gas issue remains a project, waiting for new discoveries and a EEZ agreement.

# EU membership provides for:

- Institutional advantages: voting rights in the Council (sometimes a veto right, such as in accession negotiations);
- Improving the island security through solidarity between member states;
- Benefitting from EU legislation;
- Membership of the € zone.



# Geopolitics

- More than often, the great powers have placed their geopolitical imperatives before respect for international law and democratic values;
- More than once, Cyprus has been the victim of such behaviour, as other Mideast countries;
- The purpose of European integration is precisely to ensure prevalence of the rule of law. Therefore an EU member state cannot be indefinitely placed under a subservient situation.

# Facing a turning point?

At the center of the Eastern Mediterranean basin, Cyprus has a very specific geopolitical situation, far away from the center of Europe and close to the Mideast chaos:

- In the past, it has been a disadvantage;
- It may be an opportunity for the future.

# Future opportunities

Living in a dangerous environment requires strong links with strong countries:

- Turning Mideast chaos into opportunity: Turkey becoming a dubious ally for NATO gives value to Cyprus' geopolitical situation;
- Concluding an agreement with the UK = consolidation of the SBAs, reunifying Cyprus is no longer a threat for the SBAs;
- Joining NATO: is it the best way to end Turkish occupation ?
- Building a new relationship through the triangle Greece-Israel-Cyprus: MEDGAS Forum?;
- Participating in EU new security policy?



# Repealing the unequal treaties ?

- There is no example of independence so strongly guaranteed on paper and so badly respected on the ground (successive violations by the 3 guaranteeing powers: Greece, Turkey and UK);
- Indeed, Cyprus is subjected to a kind of Neo-Brezhnevian doctrine of limited sovereignty;
- Repealing these treaties is not necessary (see the Austrian example). A declaration of the guaranteeing powers indicating that they will only use their prerogatives under the UN Charter could establish unfettered independence.

### 3. The gas disputes

Billions cubic meters	estimates	Proven reserves
Lebanon	1400/2100	none
Palestine-Gaza	28	
Israel	1400	784
Cyprus	283	140
US geological survey		3500

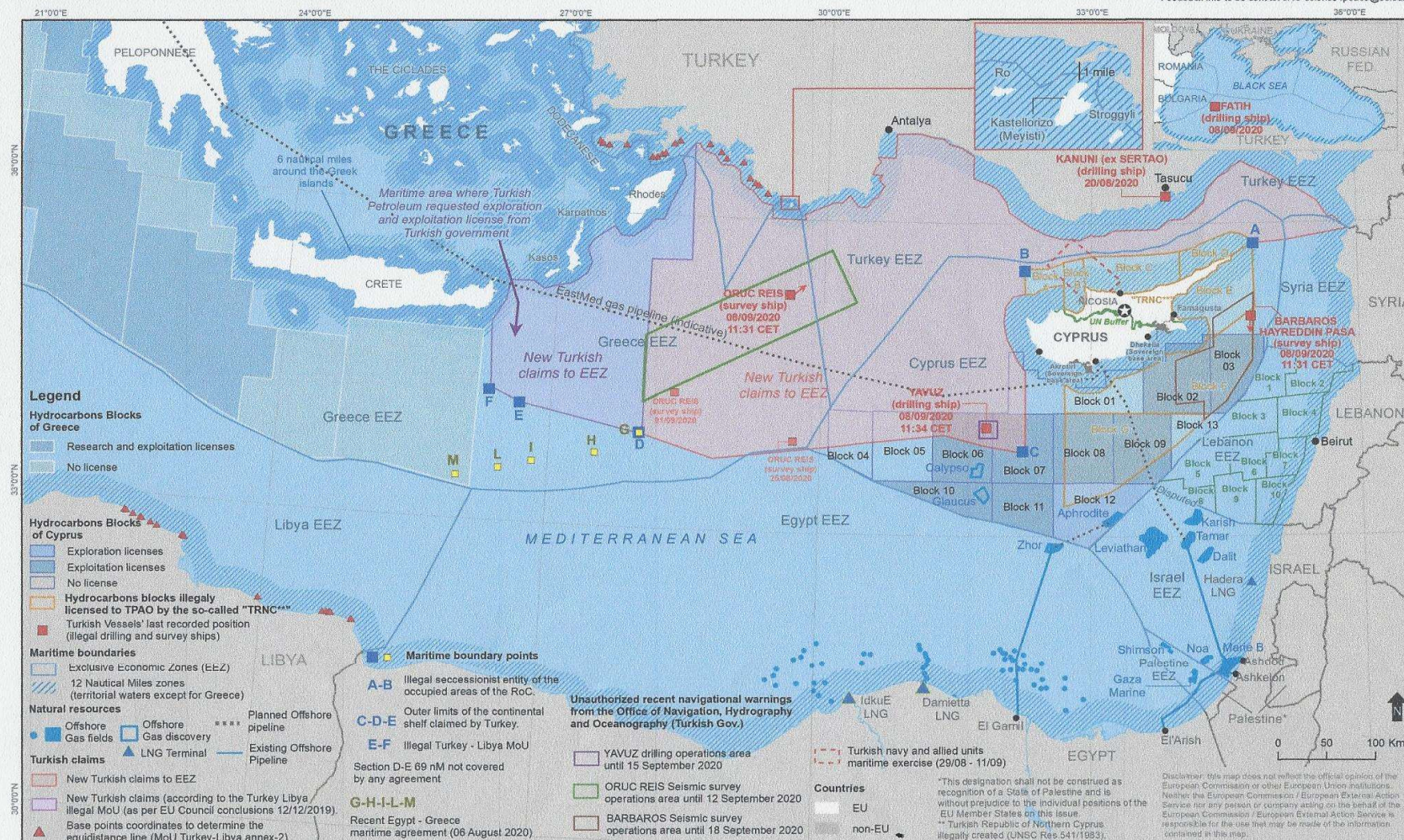


# Drilling disputes 2020

## Situation in Eastern Mediterranean as at 08 September 2020



Feedback info to be sent to: JRC-science4peace@ec.europa.eu



Map ID: S4P1320  
Production Date: 08 September 2020  
Map Catalogue: <http://science4peace.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>

Data source: EEZ v11; JRC; [www.marinetraffic.com](http://www.marinetraffic.com); HHRM (Hellenic hydrocarbon resources management) Cyprus Ministry of Energy, S&P Global Platts, <http://www.shodb.gov.tr/>; Flanders Marine Institute (2019), "Maritime Boundaries Geodatabase: Contiguous Zones (24NM), version 3", available at <http://www.marineregions.org>.

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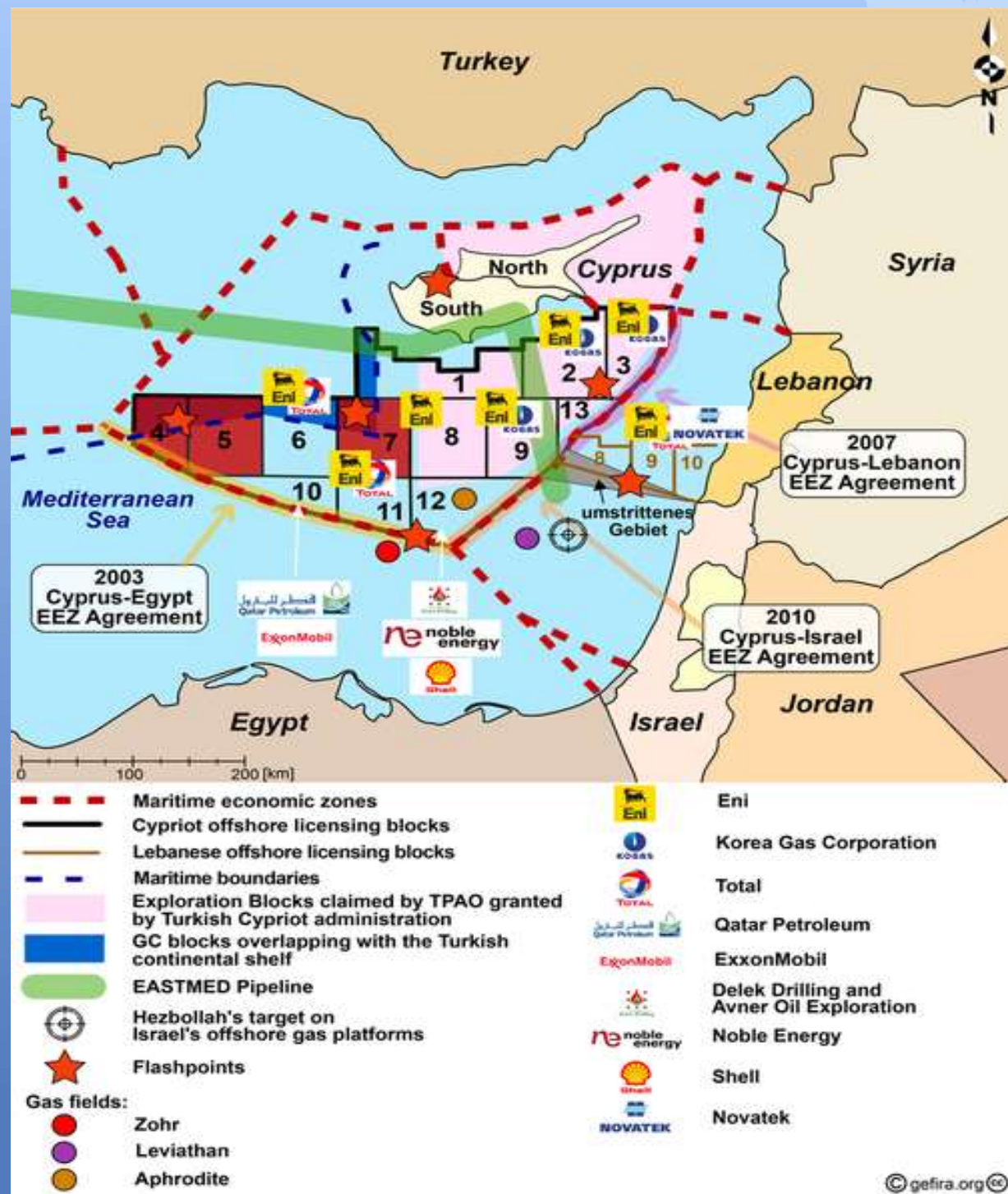




# Defining maritime borders

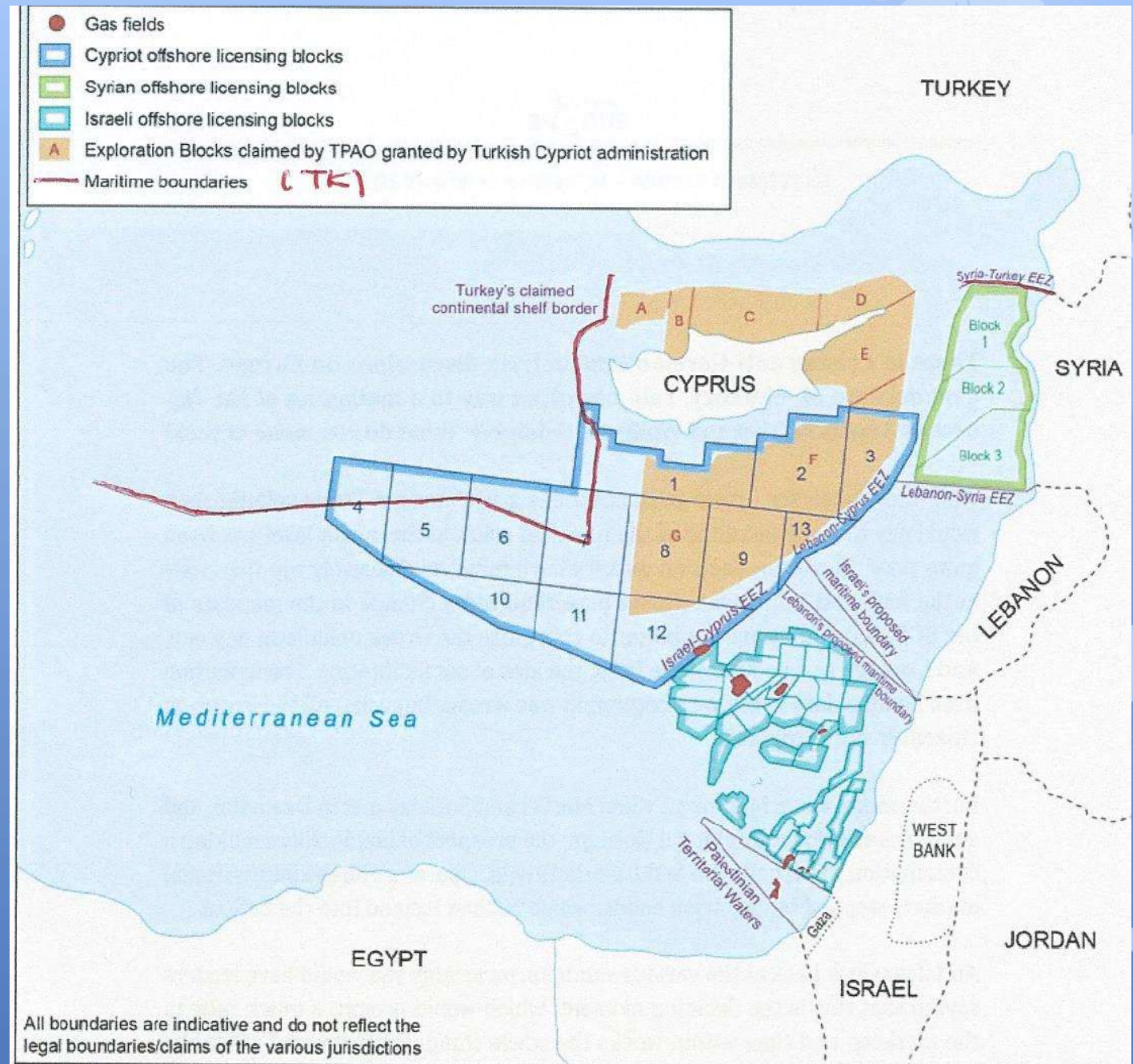
Cyprus has a rather wide EEZ. To secure its rights, various agreements were signed:

- Legal basis: the Law of the sea (UNCLOS 1982 convention of Montego Bay);
- EEZ delimitation agreements with Egypt, Israel, Lebanon;
- No EEZ delimitation with Turkey, as it refuses UNCLOS compliance and prevents oil & gas companies to drill in Cyprus EEZ.





# Overlapping EEZ in the East Med.

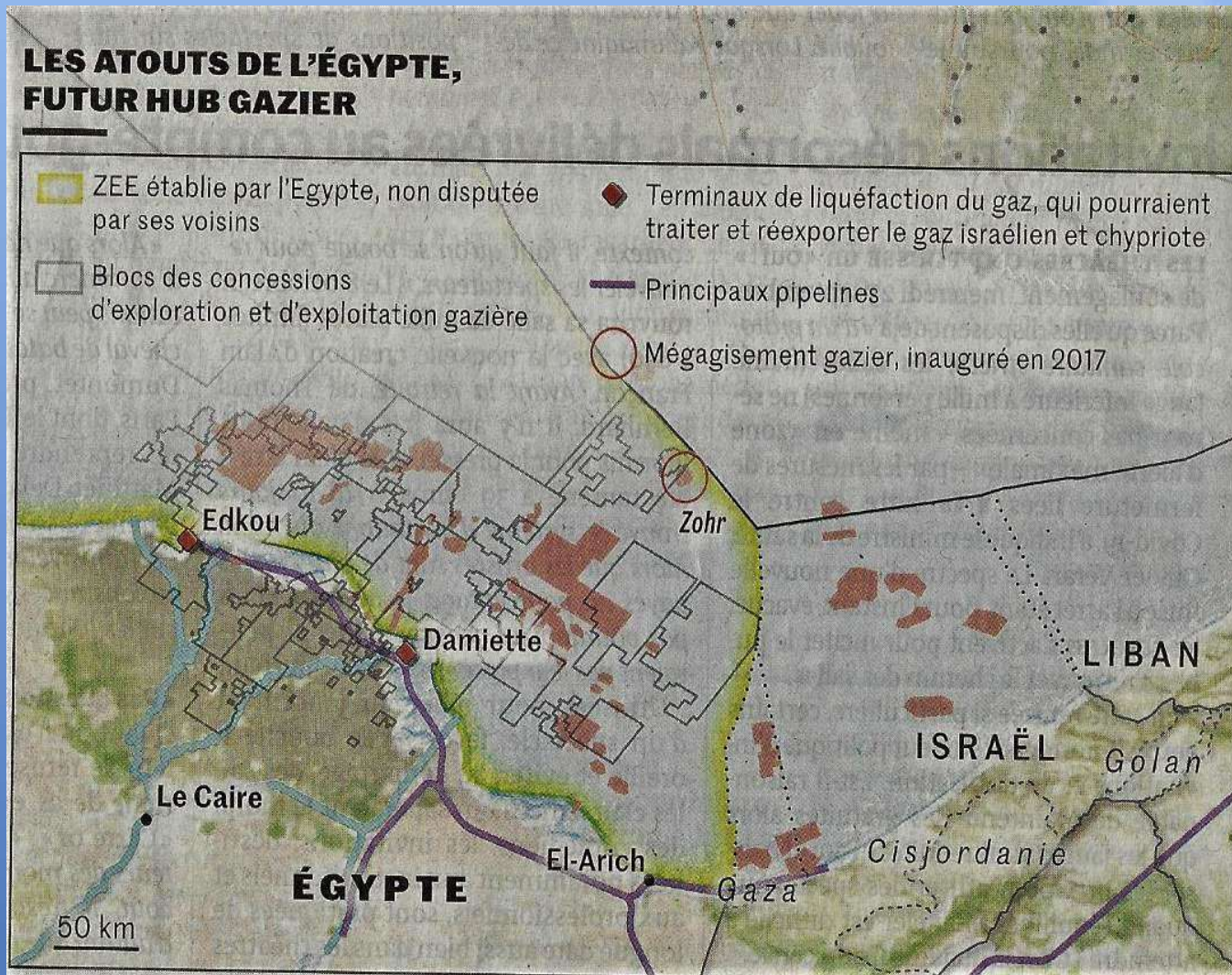




# The Israel-Lebanon 2022 agreement is impacting Cyprus



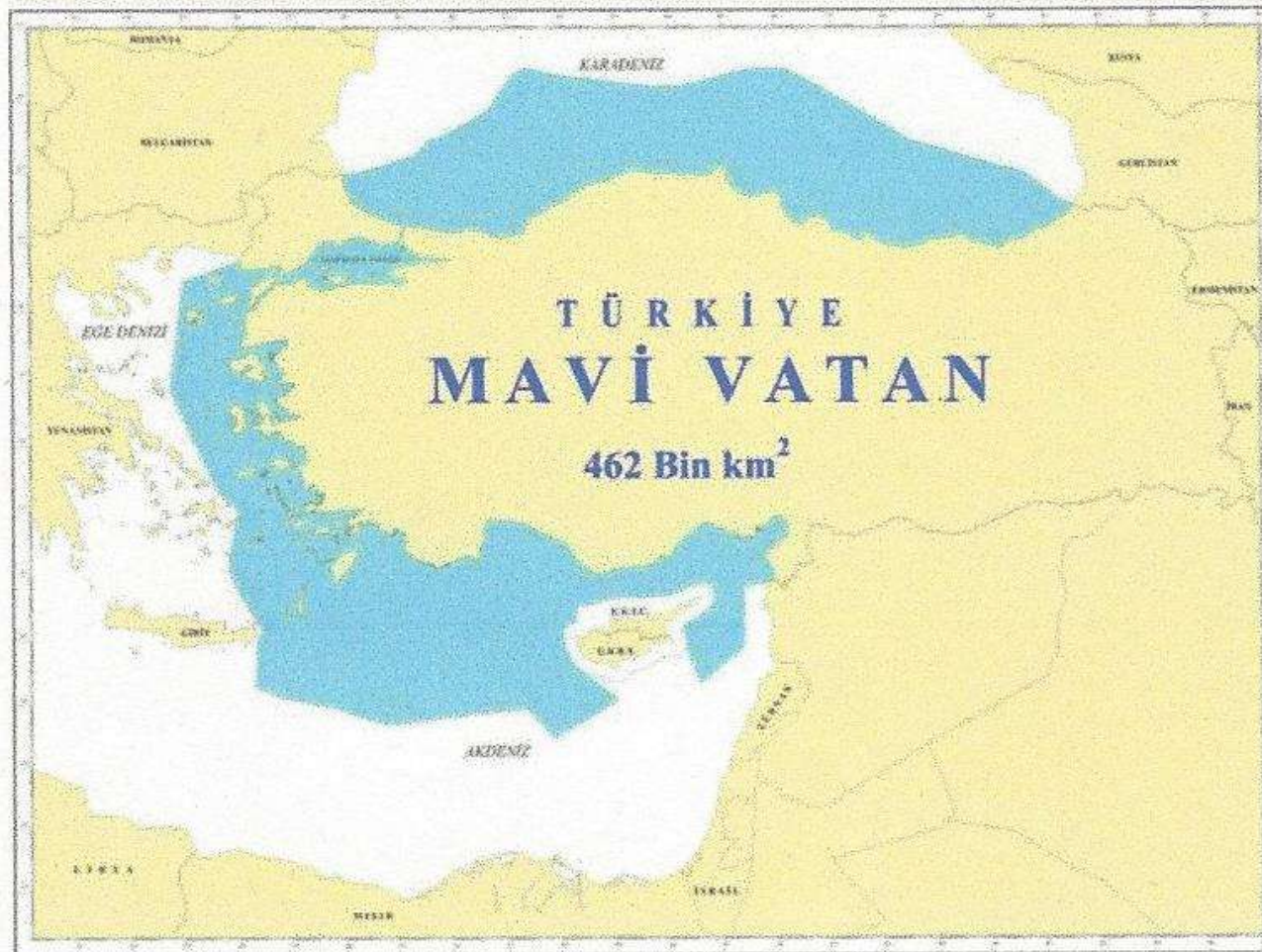
# Egypt EEZ





# Turkey's ambitions

**Figure 5:** Turkey's Projected Maritime Boundaries, According to the Architects of the Blue Homeland Doctrine

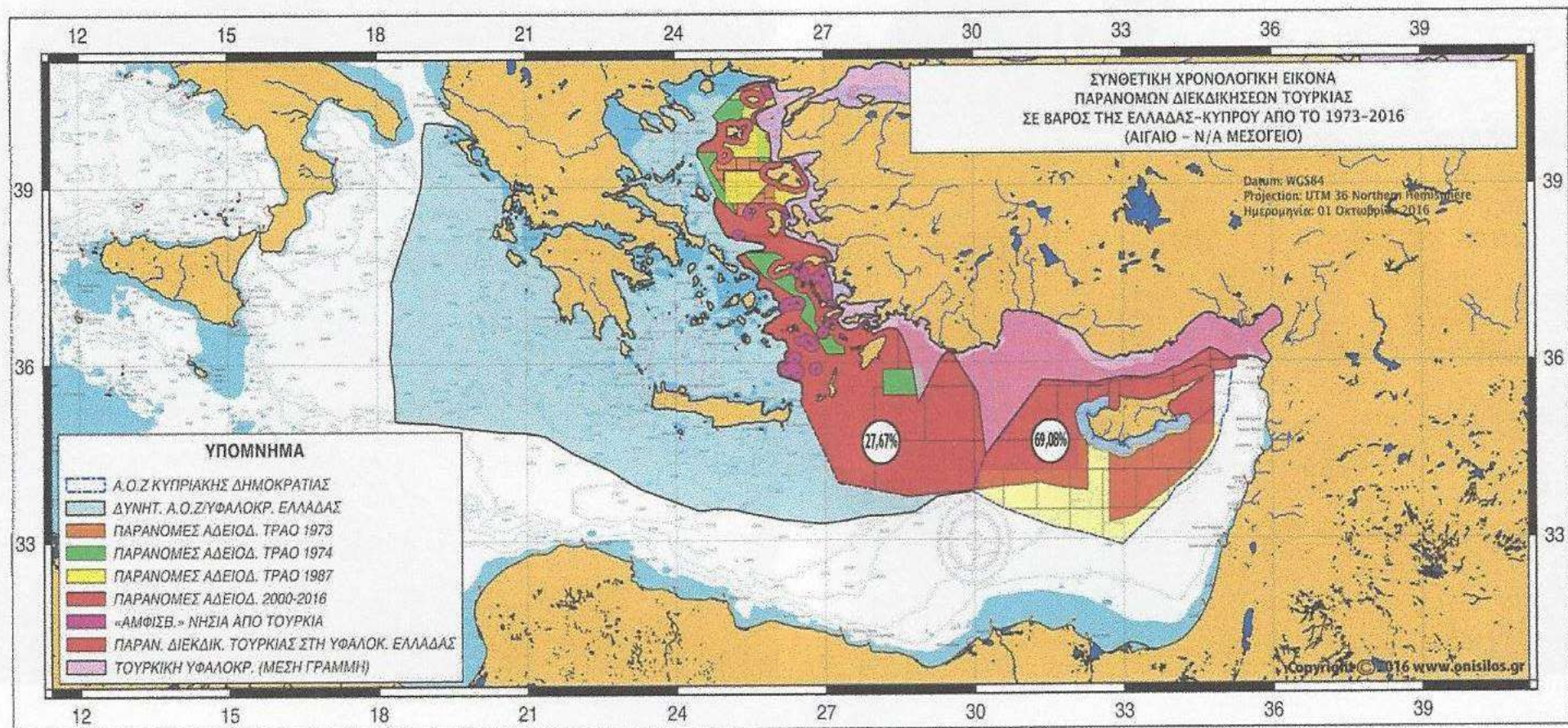


Source: "Mavi Vatan Kavramı ve Önemi" [The Blue Homeland Concept and Its Importance], Mavi-Vatan.net, accessed January 20, 2021, <https://mavivatan.net/mavi-vatan-kavrami-ve-onemi/>.

Note: The turquoise color represents Turkey's projected maritime boundaries (462,000 square meters) according to the proponents of the Blue Homeland doctrine. This map was drawn by Cihat Yaycı.

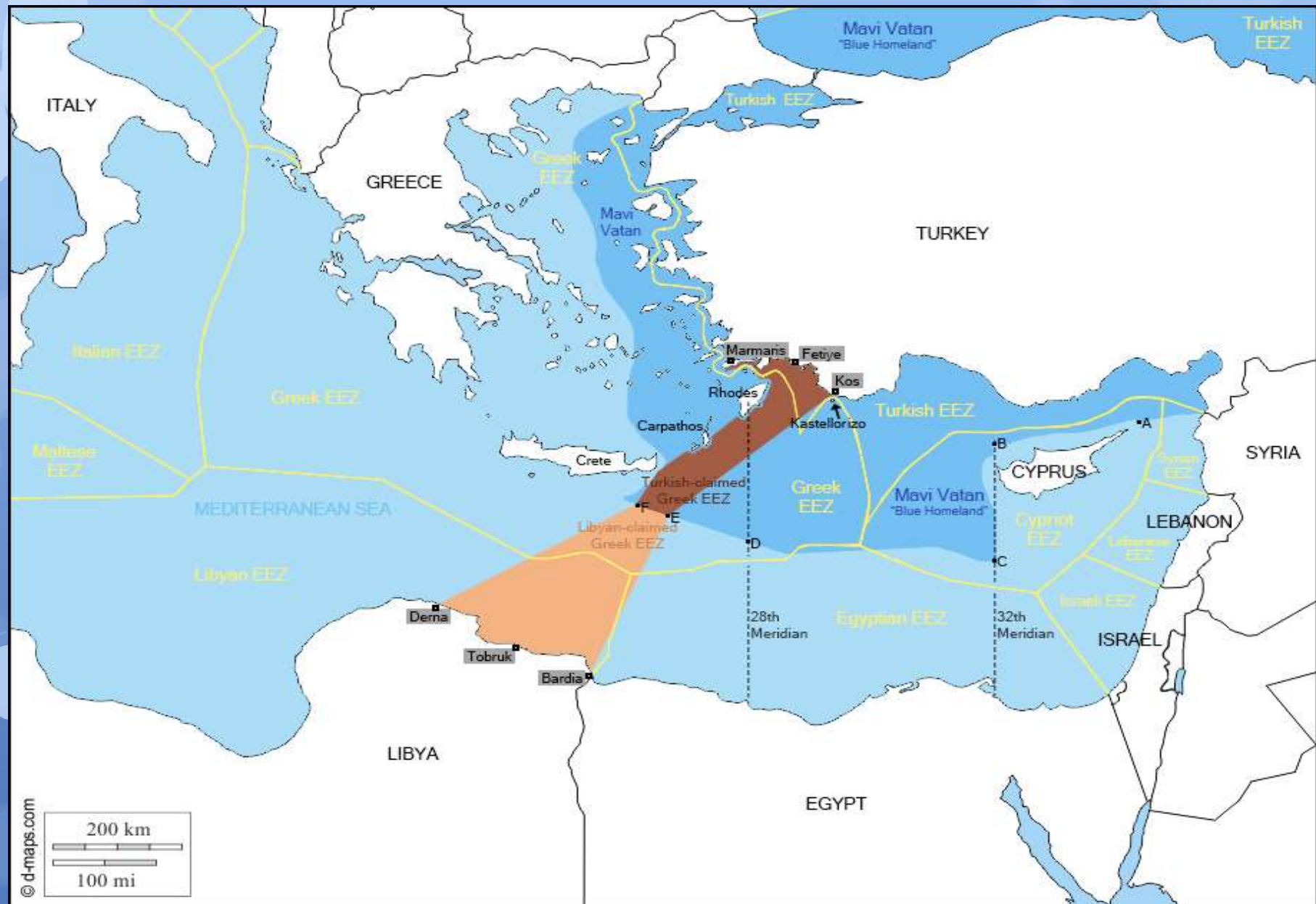


# The EEZ dispute: Turkish views





# Turkey-Libya EEZ agreement



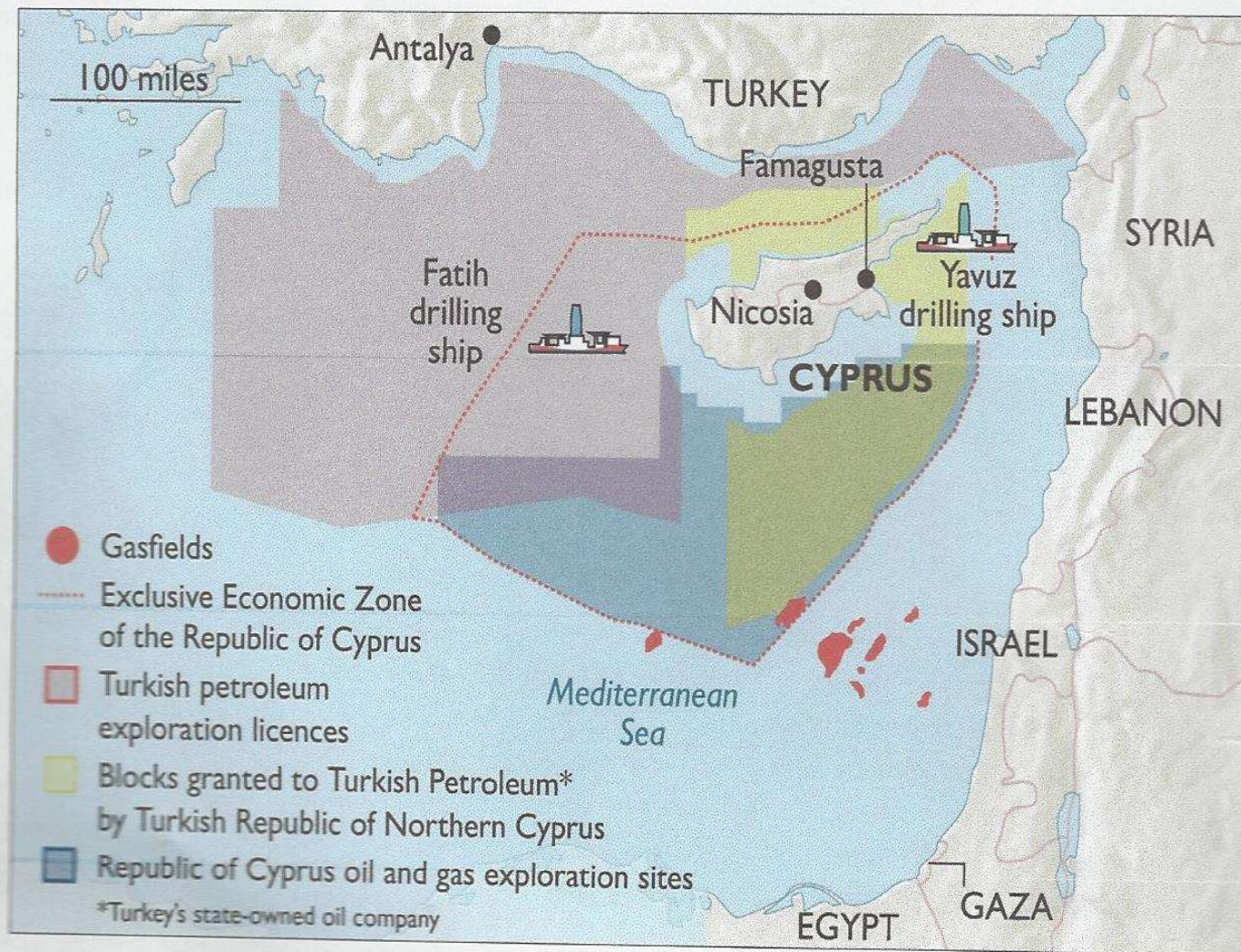


# Erdoğan's threats



# Turkey's gunboat diplomacy

**Figure 5** | Drilling spots of TP drill ships *Fatih* and *Yavuz*



Source: Hannah Lucinda Smith, "Turkey Defies EU Sanctions by Sending Fourth Ship to Hunt for Gas Off Cyprus", in *The Times*, 17 July 2019, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/turkey-defies-eu-sanctions-by-sending-fourth-ship-to-hunt-for-gas-off-cyprus-d6hf88wsp>.



# The gas issue for Cyprus

- A major natural gas field, Aphrodite, has been discovered in Cyprus EEZ, with some 283 billion cubic meters of recoverable reserves;
- At the end of 2012, the US firm Noble Energy made a successful drilling on the Cypriot block 12 and expects other discoveries;
- Turkey is trying to oppose other to oppose other drillings in Cyprus' EEZ. As the fields are located far in the South, Turkey cannot claim them for itself and pretends to secure TCs interests;
- GoC has stated that the gas benefits will be shared between the two communities.

# Is the promising gas potential of the East Med about to be unlocked?





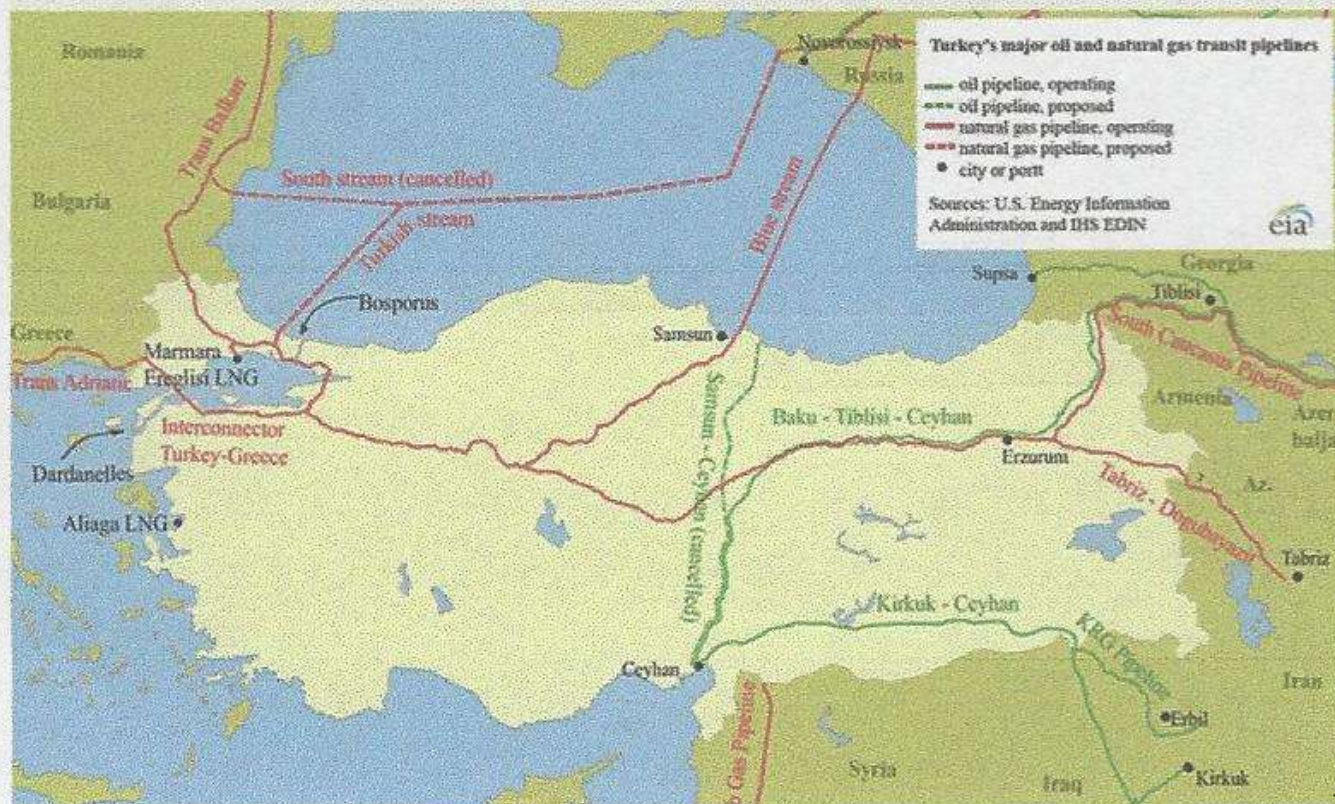
# Pipe dreams ?





# Turkey's transit opportunities

**Figure 2:** Turkey's Major Oil and Natural Gas Transit Pipelines



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, "Turkey: Overview," accessed October 2020, <https://www.eia.gov/international/analysis/country/TUR>.



# An element of strong political value

- Cyprus is likely to satisfy its energy needs (both North and South);
- A significant surplus may be available for exports through liquefaction;
- Due to its geographical situation, Cyprus could also be a hub for Israeli and Egyptian gas exports;
- Financial gas resources will be a decisive contribution to the federal budget;
- It could also be a major tool for financing reunification and solving property issues.

# The exportation dilemma

- Up to now, no major discoveries : more than enough for internal consumption, not enough to finance huge exportations infrastructures;
- Although having far more gas, Israel in a similar situation;
- Having to export gas at low prices requires cooperation between Israel, Cyprus and possible new producers (Gaza, Lebanon)
- The case for selling gas to Turkey or sending it to Europe via Greece.



# Costly export infrastructures

Possible options	Investment cost (€ millions)
LNG in Vassilikos (Cyprus)	10328
Pipeline to Turkey	3918
Pipeline to Greece	15992
Electricity line to Greece	1500

# A pipeline to Europe ?





# Conclusion:

## Turkish views: « no solution is a solution »

- According to Turkey, the Cyprus problem has been solved in 1974, but the Greeks didn't realise;
- « Faits accomplis » only need international recognition;
- Turkey pretends to safeguard Turkish Cypriots' security : no need for that since accession.
- Turkey's military believe that their country cannot be safe without occupying Cyprus, although France never needed the Channel islands and Italy Corsica.

# Does France want to garrison the Channel islands or Italy Corsica ?





# According to European standards:

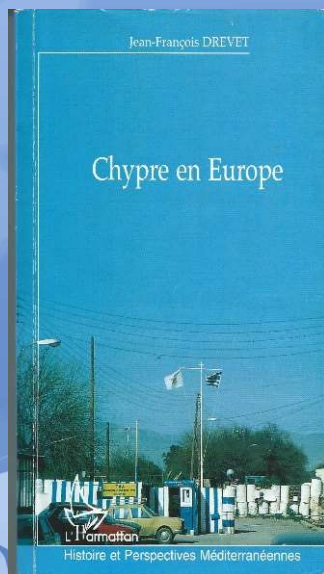
- The Turkish argument, concerning both the protection of the Turkish Cypriots and the vital nature of its strategic interests, does not hold water;
- Turkey has to understand this and adjust its views according to international law;
- A political settlement in Cyprus should include a Turkish commitment to remove its troops.

# The three scenarios

- 1. Status quo: all losers
- 2. the Belgian one = loose federation: risk of instability and possible divorce;
- 3, the Swiss one = strong federation, likely to function efficiently.



# Further reading



Reunifying Cyprus

