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# The Formulation of the Blue Homeland Doctrine<sup>\*</sup>



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## ABSTRACT

The Blue Homeland Doctrine expresses Turkey's legitimate maritime rights within the framework of international law. Efforts to protect these rights make an important contribution to global and regional peace in terms of both implementing international law and the possibility of regional countries benefiting from all resources equitably. Contrary to allegations made by the detractors of the Blue Homeland Doctrine, it seems that not only Turkey but also all countries in the region can reap immense gains from the full implementation of this doctrine. Moreover, this doctrine is far from promoting an "expansionist" policy, especially considering how the Blue Homeland Doctrine anticipates the creation of cooperation mechanisms with riparian states in the Eastern Mediterranean. The implementation of this doctrine will greatly contribute to the development of international trade and the more efficient use of energy resources. Regarding those countries whose attitude is still inspired by "maritime piracy," one should take into account the fact that Turkey possesses a superior naval fleet to protect its rights and up-to-date military-industrial infrastructure.

**Keywords:** Aegean Sea, Blue Homeland, Greece, EEZ, maritime

Although the West brands Turkey's re-landing in the open sea as 'Neo-Ottomanism', Turkey's Blue Homeland Doctrine is a 21st-century geopolitical reality which was expressed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as a survival necessity of a democratic, secular republic and whose borders are drawn according to the universal law of the sea.

The seas are an inexhaustible supply of wealth and power. Seamanship may not be in the nature of the Ottoman nation. However, considering its strategic, political, and economic situation, the empire resides in a territory that can only be held if sea domination is ensured. Ottoman Asia will not be able to overcome the reign of chaos until it acquires such a domination. People cannot survive if they do not obey the laws of nature. Ottoman Turks are doomed to be either sailors or shepherds in the hot deserts of their old homeland (Alpagut, 1913: 168).

This quote was written in 1913 by famous naval historian Ali Haydar Emin Alpagut right after the Balkan War. The Ottoman Empire had endured the pain of being without a navy for many years and had to face bloody consequences. Not a single ship was found to deliver aid to Tripoli, Thessaloniki, or the Balkans. The empire was collapsing. The Greek cruiser Georgios Averof could come and occupy the 500-year-old Ottoman islands alone. We would either sail or shepherd in hot deserts. History was forcing the Turks to sail once again.

Mustafa Kemal personally witnessed the strategic impact of naval power in Çanakkale. He had seen the great firepower of British and French battleships and was amazed by the game-breaking roles of German U-boats. He realized that Nusret's mines would not be enough for the ultimate victory and realized the vital importance of naval power. Following the Anafartalar Victory, he told a German journalist:

We have been trapped on land. Just like the Russians. By blocking the straits, we kept the Russians in the Black Sea and doomed Russia to collapse sooner or later. Because we have cut ties with its allies, yet, we, too, are destined to collapse for the same reason. Although we are on the foot of the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and the Indian Ocean, we cannot sail to any ocean. As a land force devoid of naval forces, we can never defend our peninsula against a naval force that can bring land forces (Kinross, 2018: 123).

Thereby, the historical origins of Turkey's Blue Homeland strategy can be traced as back as to a century ago. In Atatürk's view, a Turkey that cannot navigate the seas is doomed to collapse. With the creation of the Republic, the wounds had to be healed quickly and a "strong Turkish Navy" had to be created.

The total tonnage of active ships taken over from the Ottoman Empire in 1923 was 13 thousand tons. Their ages ranged from 11 to 30 years (Eker & Bahtiyar, 2019: 17). The 25,000-ton battleship Yavuz hit three mines and lay in port for years. The Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits did not allow it to be repaired. During this period, the Straits were demilitarized and the Golden Horn Shipyard was closed to the navy. Mustafa Kemal, on the other hand, was determined to bring the Turks back to sea despite all of these difficulties.

Nobody, especially Marshal Fevzi Cakmak, believed that Turkey needed a large fleet. There was Alfred Mahan next to President Roosevelt, who made the USA a sailor nation, and Wilhelm II had Admiral Von Tirpitz, who led Germany to sail. However, Mustafa Kemal was all alone.

Despite all the objections, Mustafa Kemal provided a significant budget to the navy from 1924 onwards. He raised the battleship Yavuz by having a 25-thousand-ton huge pool built in Gölcük. On December 30<sup>th</sup>, 1924, he gave full support to the Ministry of the Navy and ensured the creation of an independent Ministry of Maritime Affairs. He had non-active vessels maintained and repaired in a short time and increased naval strike capacity with the order of new submarines and corvettes. With the Law of Cabotage in 1926, he saved the country from the scourge of capitulation, and in 1936 he gained absolute control over the Turkish Straits with Montreux. Using the cannons of the Yavuz, he had the Greek and Bulgarian King sign peace treaties. With the Nyon Conference, he brought the Turkish Navy to the west of the Mediterranean. When he passed away, he left the immortal spirit of the Turkish navy with the 80-thousand-ton modern Republic Fleet. He laid the foundations of the Blue Homeland strategy, which is doctrine today, on November 1st, 1937, through the following speech at the Turkish Grand National Assembly:

Seamanship will be understood not only as a transportation business, but as an economic business, and shipyards, ships, ports, and piers will be built, sea sports clubs will be established, protected, and developed. This is because the boundaries of the power and talent of the people draw the borders of its nation, which extend to the sea. With its industry, trade, and sport, Turkey is located in the most suitable geographical location and is surrounded by sea on three sides. Therefore, it has the ability to raise a most advanced

maritime nation. We must know how to take advantage of this ability. We should think of seamanship as the great national ideal of the Turks and achieve it within a short time (Turkish Naval Forces, 2019).

### The NATO Wedge Forced Into the Blue Homeland

Mustafa Kemal's great maritime ideals were interrupted with Turkey's entry into NATO. The Turkish Navy was excluded from the high seas and deployed in line with NATO needs. Soner Polat, one of the great Turkish admirals, explained NATO's negative effects on the Turkish Navy with the following words:

They brought Turkey to the Black Sea saying that there is a Soviet threat. They even had a submarine base set up in Ereğli. What happened when we were locked in the Black Sea? They left all the initiative in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean to Greece. Greece then began to use these areas as a sovereign right against us in NATO missions. Then we noticed that we were stuck here, we realized that, maybe we would not be able to improve our conditions without Cyprus, so we immediately sailed to the Aegean and the Mediterranean ... We established the Aksaz Naval Base, established the Foça Naval Base, and expanded Mersin. We once fell into the trap of NATO and life has taught us to travel from the Black Sea to the Aegean and the Mediterranean (Kadan, 2019a: 14).

The Cyprus question pointed out by Admiral Polat was a turning point for Turkey. The bru-

ality that the Turkish Cypriots suffered in front of the whole world forced the Turkish Navy to land in the Mediterranean. It was foreseen that neither NATO nor the United Nations (UN) was going to help Turkey. So we had to take matters into our own hands.

Turkey, which was not able to protect the safety and future strategic interests of its kin during the crises in Cyprus Island in 1963, 1964, and 1967, rapidly improved its force projection ability in the period up to 1974.

With the island of Cyprus under threat and unable to protect the safety of its kin there, in 1974, Turkey showed its ability to increase its strength and persevere against external pressures. When the Nikos Sampson coup from the Greek side took place on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 1974, it was time for Turkey's military intervention in Cyprus. The Turkish Navy performed a difficult amphibious assault landing, holding the beachhead in Kyrenia within 120 hours and completing the operation with great success. Few armed forces in the world history have achieved this (İkiz, 2020).

Right after Operation Cyprus Peace, the international pressure on Turkey increased. Admiral Cem Gürdeniz described what happened during this period:

After this operation, global hegemons punished Turkey in various ways. First, Armenian terror was resurrected. ASALA, a bloody terrorist organization, was created to increase the violence and scope of terrorism. Then came the U.S. embargo. Between February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1975, and September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1978, the U.S. applied an arms embar-

go against the Turkish Armed Forces, completely stopping the flow of weapons and spare parts into Turkey. Along with the Air Forces jets, the infrastructure of the Naval Forces' destroyers and submarines hit the bottom. However, the lessons learned from this difficult period had a positive and profound effect on the Navy armament strategy. By 1974, all destroyers and submarines of the Turkish Naval Forces, with the exception of the TCG Berk escort destroyer, were US-made. The weapons used and the materials required for the planned maintenance and repair of the ships in Gölcük Shipyard were imported from the USA at high prices. The difficulties created by the arms embargo in the maintenance of equipment and systems made it necessary and inevitable to use national capabilities and to turn to other countries for modernization (Gürdeniz, 2019a: 142-143).

“Following the US arms embargo, Support Foundations for Land, Air Force, and Naval Forces were established. In 1987, all foundations were united under the name of the Turkish Armed Forces Foundation, and the procurement processes of major projects for the modernization of the Turkish Armed Forces were managed” (Kadan, 2019b: par.4).

### **The National Ship Project as A Stepping-Stone**

Turkey's national weapons and ammunition production capability can be traced back to the

first years of the Republic. With the encouragement of Atatürk, the foundations of the national defense industry were laid, and aircraft and submarine bombs were made in the factory built by Şakir Zümre. However, our national defense industry was collapsed with the Marshall Plan<sup>1</sup>, because it was designed suitable for the USA along with NATO. At the time, even our own Air Force generals believed that national aircraft production was too costly, hence Turkey's perceived need for buying from outside. Şakir Zümre's bomb factory was converted into a stove factory, which is the most painful indicator of the blow struck to Turkey.

**By the 1990s, the idea of building ships had begun to mature and the Turkish Naval Forces signaled that they were not going to fit into NATO's mold.**

But the Republic Navy never lost its spirit. In as early as 1978, computer technicians were recruited and R&D studies started. Scientific education was emphasized in the Naval High School and the Naval Academy, and those who came out as officers were sent abroad to continue their engineering education. By the 1990s, the idea of building ships had begun to mature and the Turkish Naval Forces signaled that they were not going to fit into NATO's mold. An interesting development took place during this period:

In the years following the Cold War, the Soviet Union collapsed and the United States remained unrivaled as the only global power.

<sup>1</sup> Marshall Aid, offered military and financial aids to 15 European countries and also Turkey under colour of “threat of communism” in 1947 by the US President Harry Truman. At the outset Turkey was not included in Marshall Plan by the reason of not going to war, not being destroyed, and having foreign currency. Thanks to the bureaucratic efforts, Turkey was accepted to Marshall Plan under the condition that Turkey would accept to be grain elevator of Europe and ignore its industrial development. The US donated war material at 95 million dollars to Turkey by “the Marshall Aid”, but received £ 400 million from the budget every year for the maintenance of these materials (Sezen, 2018).

According to Fukuyama, the “End of History” had arrived, and liberalism had gained the final victory. A new world order had to be built on the ruins of the old. For the USA, it was the time for bringing “democracy” and “freedom” to the world. The government in Turkey at that time shared the dreams of the Atlantic. President Turgut Özal wanted to enter Iraq alongside the United States. The Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) showed resistance, though. The resignation of General Necip Torumtay, who upset the apple cart, revealed the attitude of the army. The USA, from then on, faced a great challenge.

Meanwhile, the foundations of federated Kurdish state were laid in northern Iraq. Turkey’s resistance to the U.S. plan was punished by a German arms embargo once again (Serdar, 2018). During this period, Turkey was asked to give support to the coalition forces in the Persian Gulf. The matter was proposed as an item for the agenda in the Turkish Grand National Assembly, but considering the relations with Iraq, no ships were sent to the region. On top of that, when two US helicopters were dropped, this drove a wedge between them.

Turkey, who did not send ships to the Persian Gulf, attended a NATO exercise in the Gulf of Saros with a TCG Destroyer. The date was October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1992, around 11 pm. Two Sea Sparrow missiles were launched from the U.S. aircraft carrier USS Saratoga in the “Green Period” non-exercise section. The missiles hit the TCG Destroyer at its deckhouse. Consequently, five sailors were martyred and 22 were injured, along with the ship’s commander. US Deputy Secretary of State Eagleburger gave the news to Washington Ambassador Nüzhet Kandemir with the following words: “We sunk your ship, we apologize.” (Ertürk, 2019).

After the attack, the U.S. claim that this was an accident, because its personnel were

under-trained and some of them were even intoxicated. However, a Sea Sparrow cannot be fired by accident. 6 different safety phases would be overcome, permission would have to be obtained from the ship’s commander, and these operations must be completed from different rooms. What is worse, is that the Sea Sparrow is an air defense missile. It is not the “Fire and Forget” type. After the missile was fired, it needed information to hit its target. The target had to be illuminated to fire. Moreover, both missiles had hit with full accuracy (Ertürk, 2019). It was clear that this was a major operation.

The USA’s message was crystal clear: They wanted to get Turkey “in line” and wanted Turkey to adopt the new world order. But besides this, they had another purpose. The U.S. wanted to sell Turkey its Knox class frigates for some time. The Turkish Naval Forces stated that they did not want the ships. The idea of building our own ship was expressed concretely for the first time. Of course, after the USA had hit TCG Destroyer, compensation was discussed. The U.S. notified Turkey that they could give Knox frigates at a reduced price to Turkey. Afterward, 8 Knox were granted to Turkey (Öztürk, 2018). Thus, the national shipbuilding project would be shelved, and the Turkish Navy would once again become dependent on American weapons, until the project was reconsidered in 2003.

The Turkish Naval Forces did not give up. The Research Center Command (ARM-ERKOM), founded in 1998, became the center of critical studies for national capabilities. With Admiral Özden Örnek becoming the Commander of the Turkish Naval Forces in 2003, all projects were re-opened and the button for the national ship-building project was pressed. Turkey’s idea of making his own ships had also created discomfort inside, as well as in the West

(Örnek, 2017). But this time, there was an unyielding pressure against them.

2003-2005 were the golden years of the Turkish Naval Forces. Admiral Özden Örnek's close colleague Admiral Cem Gürdeniz describes the years as follows:

It was Özden Örnek who resurrected the National Ship (MİLGEM) project with a completely different spirit during the period of the Force Command between 2003-2005. The establishment of ARMERKOM has accelerated thanks to his forward vision. He is the one who was able to reduce the external dependence of the Republic Navy not only by the design and construction of warships but also by the production of national surface and underwater weapons, fire control systems, war management systems, especially the Ship Integrated Combat Management System (GENESIS). During the two-year period of force command, he had his signature under all of the projects for the participation of more than 50 ships and the main system in the inventory with national capabilities and opportunities. During his 17-year admiralty, he came to the fore not only with its initiatives and projects aimed at the equipment and force structure of our naval force. He provided great value in the fields of strategy, tactics, concept, doctrine, and above all, marine culture. He brought the analytical methodology known as the Naval

Forces Measurement System for Combat Readiness to the navy (Gürdeniz, 2019b: par.6)

### The Naval Force Peels Away From Its Shell

It was time for the Turkish Naval Force to peel away from its shell by MİLGEM. First, an exclusive cooperation mechanism with riparian countries against NATO was created in the Black Sea. With Operation Black Sea Congruence (KUH<sup>2</sup>), the ground was laid for landing in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean, while the north was secured. During these years, hydrocarbon assets were discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus (GCASC) unlawfully declared Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) in the region (MFA, 2007). In 2002, Greeks tried to enter the Turkish continent by chartering the Northern Access ship from Norway (Başeren, 2007). A great fight started when the Greeks joined the European Union in 2004 and announced the EZZ in the same year.

Turkey took rapid measures in response. In 2006, Operation Mediterranean Shield was launched (Turkish Naval Forces, 2015). Within the scope of this operation, Turkish ships would raise a shield around our continent to proclaim that aggressive moves against our rights would not be tolerated. Over the course of 14 years from now, 14 foreign drillships were sent back, unable to enter the region (Yaycı, 2019a). The Aegean and Mediteranean islands problem, which arose with the Kardak crisis, had evolved into a new dimension with the discovery of hy-

2 "After observing the contribution of KUH to the security and stability in the Blak Sea, Turkey initiated the efforts to turn the Operation into a multinational structure invate the whole countires that are coastal states in the Black Sea to participate in the operation. Three coastal states consisting of Russian Federation, Romania and Ukraine have officially responded to Turkey's invitation" (Deniz Kuvvetleri Komutanlığı, 2016).



drocarbon deposits in the Mediterranean. Now the struggle of Turkey in the sea was crucial to creating a prosperous society. Seawater was to be defended as much as the land. In 2006 Admiral Cem Gürdeniz conceptualized this issue as the “Blue Homeland” based on Mustafa Kemal’s great maritime ideals.

The response of the USA was, again, without delay. This time, the Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETO) took action on behalf of the USA. It was unacceptable to the USA that Turkey derailed from the Atlantic alliance. The Turkish Army had to ‘get in line’. In 2007, the button was pressed with the Ergenekon plot. The target was anti-NATO officers of the Turkish Armed Forces, leaders of the Workers’ Party of Turkey (Vatan Party) challenging America, and Turkey’s patriotic intellectuals. The Navy, which they saw as the brain of the TSK, would also be subjected to massive attacks. “On September 21st, 2012, 36 Admirals, 115 officers, and 5 petty officers from the Navy were sentenced to severe sentences ranging from 13 to 18 years with false evidence from the Balyoz conspiracy. In many lawsuits opened with fabricated evidence other than the Balyoz case, the number of naval military personnel who were the subject of false accusations reached 300” (Gürdeniz, 2013: 289-290). The ‘derailed’ command line was eliminated overnight without a single bullet fired. Members of

the FETO terrorist organization infiltrated into the Army were quickly given the ranks of admiral/general, and the struggle for the Blue Homeland was shelved. Until July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016<sup>3</sup>.

**After the coup attempt, with the removal of FETO members from the army and bureaucracy one by one, the Blue Homeland struggle resumed.**

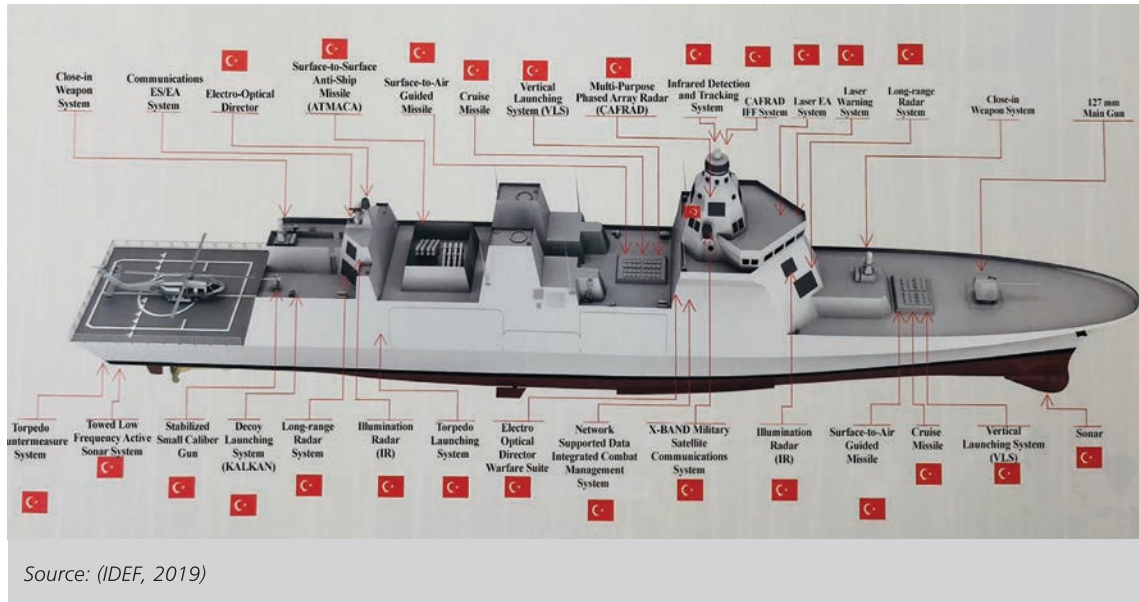
On the night of July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the American Gladio<sup>4</sup> took action to take over the administration. People were run over by tanks, some were shot, the National Assembly was bombed, assassination squads were sent. But they failed! Turkey fought back and won the struggle for independence with its army and nation once more. After the coup attempt, with the removal of FETO members from the army and bureaucracy one by one, the Blue Homeland struggle resumed<sup>5</sup>.

The Turkish Navy recovered rapidly and set sail again. In February 2019, a joint exercise in three seas was planned for the first time. The name of the exercise in which 103 ships participated was “Blue Homeland” (Anadolu Ajansı, 2019a). Just three months later, this time with the participation of 131 ships, ‘Denizkurdu’, the biggest exercise in the history of the Republic,

3 "15 July coup attempt or military coup attempt in 2016, Operation Lightning or Operation Peace at home named by the coup plotters, is the military coup attempt by a group of soldiers that identifies themselves as Peace At Home Council within the Turkish Armed Forces on July 15<sup>th</sup> through 16<sup>th</sup> 2016. As a result of the trials, it was revealed that these soldiers were members of FETO, led by Fetullah Gülen, who resided in the USA" (15 Temmuz darbe girişimi, n.d.).

4 Doğu Perinçek: “An underground organization is being created within the states participating in NATO. An armed force called Gladio is being created. When the situation does not go the way it wants, the US stages a coup by mobilizing its forces within the army. This was the case on March 12<sup>th</sup> and September 12<sup>th</sup>. There was another American-centered coup attempt on July 15-16, but this time it was failed. For the first time in a NATO country, the Gladio organization was suppressed by the armed forces of that country.” Doğu Perinçek wrote on *Aydınlık Gazette*, July 15<sup>th</sup> 2020 (Aydınlık, 2020a).

5 More than 125 thousand people have been expelled from the public institutions since the 15 July coup attempt. The Minister of Internal Affairs Süleyman Soylu said in a statement in March 2019 that 511 thousand people were detained and 30 thousand 821 people were arrested in the period after July 15<sup>th</sup> 2016. A total of 19,583 personnel were expelled from the Turkish Armed Forces, which includes the Army, Navy and Air Forces, from July 15 to June 2020. 87 generals from the Land Forces Command, 33 admirals from the Naval Forces Command, 32 from the Air Forces Command were expelled. After July 15, 44 percent of 198 army generals, 59 percent of 56 admirals, and 45 percent of 72 aviation generals were expelled (Aydınlık, 2020b).



Source: (IDEF, 2019)

was held (Anadolu Ajansı, 2019b). Meanwhile, Turkey had accelerated the national ship project, Reis-class submarines and Istanbul-class frigates were laid on the stocks. Turkey’s first Multi-Purpose Amphibious Landing Ship TCG Anatolia was begun to be constructed. While a new era was opened in the Navy with the Atmaca missile, national strike capability was increased with the Orka and Akya torpedoes. With GENESIS ADVENT, the entire command control system was taken under the management of Turkish officers. Today, Turkey is not just a country that can only design and produce ships. It can also sustain its naval forces with national facilities from arms and ammunition to command and control systems.

### The Blue Homeland Has Become An Implemented State Doctrine

The Blue Homeland Strategy, whose original framework was drawn by Mustafa Kemal, has become a state doctrine after the suppression of the attempted July 15<sup>th</sup> coup. In this context, legal, military, and diplomatic steps were taken

simultaneously. While the Turkish Navy was waving the flag in our sovereign areas with giant exercises, the Memorandum of Understanding on the Delimitation of Maritime Jurisdictions was signed with Libya and our western border in the Eastern Mediterranean was drawn (Yaycı, 2020a). A national energy fleet consisting of 3 drilling and 3 seismic research vessels was formed. The search and rescue responsibility area has been expanded to include the Blue Homeland map (Vatan, 2020). A change in perception of the federation demands that would lead to a two-state solution in Cyprus had taken shape. The national defense industry had been structured to meet 21st century geopolitical needs. Navy Diplomacy launched against moves threatening peace in the Mediterranean.

### How Were the Blue Homeland’s Limits Determined?

Although Turkey was not a party to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982, it identified its maritime jurisdiction according to this convention’s criteria. Today, according to the principles of UNCLOS

and the decisions of the Court of Arbitration and the International Court of Justice (ICJ), Turkey's maritime jurisdiction areas are determined by the following principles, as stated by Admiral Cihat Yaycı (2020b: 160):

(1) Equity (States with opposite coasts share the seas fairly.)

(2) Superiority of Geography (Based on the mainland as the delimitation means that the islands that are on the opposite side of the bisector line have sea authority as much as their territorial waters.)

(3) Proportionality (In the delimitation, it means that the maritime jurisdiction states will have is proportional to their coastal lengths.)

(4) The State of 'Not closing' (means that the islands close to the coasts of another state should not prevent this coast from sailing.)

Turkey has opposite coasts with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), Libya, Egypt, Israel, Palestine, and Lebanon, and a side maritime boundary with Syria in those drawn nautical maps. The gnomonic and geodetic maps used in these calculations were used in the maritime delimitation of other countries before. Thus, Turkey is not a country in the east-west axis extending straight over the world. It is a country with a first-degree slope, and it has been scientifically proved that this situation created an 18-degree perspective (Yaycı, 2019b). The Blue Homeland map drawn by Admiral Cihat Yaycı in light of these principles includes an area of 462 thousand square kilometers. Turkey's struggle to rightfully claim its exclusive rights over all living and non-living resources in this area, is called the Blue Homeland Struggle.

How are Turkey's claims challenged? The next section will explore this question.

### Greece's Preposterous Thesis

First of all, it is necessary to understand the basis of Greece's maximalist claims. At the root of the

Greek claims lies the thesis that there are "Archipelagic States". Article 46 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea stipulates that "archipelagic State" means a State constituted wholly by one or more archipelagos and may include other islands". In other words, for a country to become "Archipelagic States", it must be completely or largely composed of islands (UNCLOS, Article 46).

Basing on these statements, Greece argues that the most extreme points of its borders are Crete, Kerpe, Kasot, Rhodes, and Meis and that it can make a deal with other countries on a midline basis by drawing a border over this line. Furthermore, it adopts all water between the islands as its internal water. Not to mention the claim that each island has its own Exclusive Economic Zone.

But Greece is not an "Archipelagic State", contrary to its claim. Only 17 percent of the country's surface area consists of islands, islets, and cliffs (Çubukcuoğlu, 2020). In UNCLOS, in the decisions of the International Court of Justice and the Arbitral Tribunal, there are no principle or decision that can make Greece an "Archipelagic State".

### The Blue Homeland's Aegean Front

Many problems have arisen from this mind-blowing thesis by Greece. Here, it is necessary to categorize these problems into the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean, since their legal status is different.

It is seen that disputes are starting with the territorial water in the Aegean, continuing with the continentality, the EEZ, search and rescue responsibility area, FIR Line (Flight Information Zone) and islands, islets, and rocks whose sovereignty has not been legally transferred to Greece (known by the acronym in Turkish, EGAYDAAK).

Looking at the historical background of these problems, the theses of Greece and Turkey differ mainly due to the different interpretations of Article 16 of the Lausanne Peace Treaty. "Greece alleged that Article 16 is a general waiver provision for the islands three-miles out of the Anatolian coast. Therefore the islands given to Italy and Turkey are counted as 'limiters'. Additionally, Greece also asserted that the boundary between Italy and Turkey was drawn by the treaty on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1932, and the document on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1932 was put forward as an extension of the treaty. It was also alleged that this boundary was valid between Turkey and Greece, since Greece was the successor to Italy. Thus, all islands supposedly belong to Greece, except the ones left within 3 miles in the Lausanne Peace Treaty" (Başeren, 2006: 138).

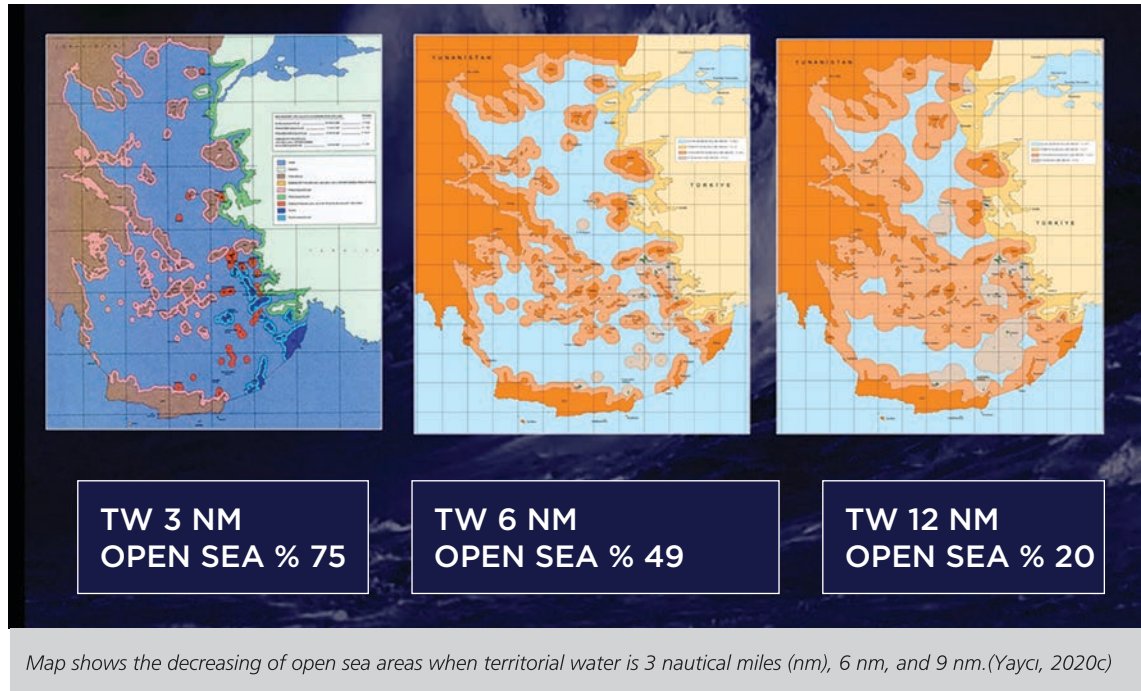
In addition to this, Greece asserts that the maximum width of the territorial waters is determined as 12 miles by Article 3 of the UNCLOS, and the sea areas of the islands are also regulated in Article 121. Thus, Greece can supposedly make arrangements on the islands as in the mainland, and can also determine the airspace in parallel. In other words, Greece states that every island ought to have 12 miles of territorial waters and airspace (Akkutay, 2018).

However, this is not a general and uniform rule that can be applied to any case, according to both customary law and Arbitration Decisions. "In other words, Article 3 states that the territorial waters are not 12 miles, but can be increased to 12 miles, if geographically and legally possible. Indeed, Turkey does not have a conventional obligation caused by Article 3, since it is not a party in the UNCLOS" (Akkutay, 2018: 202). Considering the special situation of the Aegean Sea, it is seen that the sea restrictions here must be made by mutual agreement. "Article 15 of the

Convention and customary law also show that it is possible to give less or no effect to the islands than other territorial countries given the presence of special circumstances in the delimitation of territorial waters" (Akkutay, 2018: 203).

Again, "in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Maritime Law Conference, as was understood from the explanations regarding draft article 121, it is seen that the condition of evaluating the territorial waters of the islands according to the other provisions regarding the land countries is determined for the areas where there are no restriction problems and aims to set a general rule. Therefore, when it comes to delimitating the territorial waters, it is possible to give limited or no effect to the islands according to the mainlands in case of special circumstances, according to Article 15 of the Convention" (Akkutay, 2018: 198). It is seen that Article 16 of the Treaty of Lausanne is not a waiver provision, that the three-mile principle does not terminate their rights over the islands outside this distance. Therefore, the islands transferred to Italy and Greece are counted as 'limiters' in Articles 12 and 15. The document of December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1932 has never turned into a valid international treaty, and the Greek practices cannot change the borders determined by international treaties, as was indicated in the international court decisions (Başeren, 2006).

Ultimately, since the sea is subject to the land, it does not seem possible to determine any maritime boundaries without registering ownership of the islands in the Aegean. So, the top priority question to be solved in the Aegean is the question of islands, islets, and rocks. The primary issue of the property problem is its territorial waters. By breaking the balance of Lausanne, Greece has increased its territorial waters to 6 miles in 1936 and reduced the open sea area in the region to less than 50 percent.



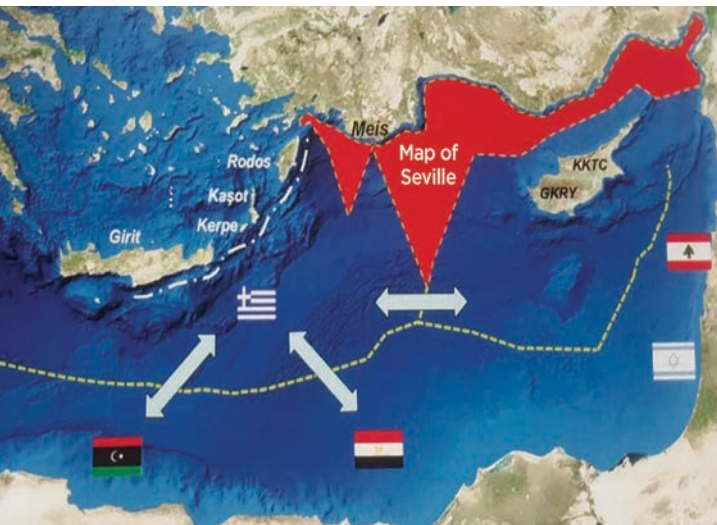
According to the 6-mil-regime, there is only one open waterway going down to the Mediterranean. This regime cannot pose a problem for other countries, but the size of the continental shelf offshore areas sharing is critical to Turkey. So Turkey should make legal preparations for the return of point 3-mile-regime, and begin an official call (Yaycı, 2020c).

Since all problems in the Aegean are related to each other, discussing these problems as a package would be beneficial for Turkey. Greece has blocked the way to the International Court of Justice, claiming they do not have any problems with Turkey in the Aegean, except the continental shelf. Thereby, Turkey's government needs to start applications for the approximately 152 island group in the Aegean when the time comes. But the problems in the Aegean frozen by the Agreement of Bern in 1976, allows Turkey to intensify the priority of rights and interests in the eastern Mediterranean. Today, while the to-

tal maritime jurisdiction area of the 152 Aegean island group is 15 thousand square kilometers, the size of the sea area of Turkey attempted to be usurped by Greece in the eastern Mediterranean is 150 thousand square kilometers.

### The Seville Imposition in the Eastern Mediterranean

The problem in the Eastern Mediterranean is more concerning than that of the Aegean. In 2003, a map of maritime jurisdiction prepared by the University of Seville calculated the territory of Turkey in the eastern Mediterranean as 41 thousand square kilometers, and GCASC announced its EZZ according to the map in question. According to the map, Greece and Southern Cyprus are seen as neighbors from the sea. Greece's islands overlooking the Eastern Mediterranean were given full effect, and Turkey's sailing to the open seas was blocked (Yaycı, 2019b: 43-53).



Source: (Yaycı, 2019b)

Greece's coast length in the Eastern Mediterranean is 167 kilometers. On the other hand, Turkey's coastline is 1870 kilometers. Consequently, according to the principle of equity, Turkey must obtain maritime jurisdiction 13 times more than that of Greece (Yaycı, 2020d).

In the law of the sea, there is the principle of mainland supremacy. In other words, the restriction should be made between the Asian continent and the African continent. According to the decisions of the ICJ, the islands on the opposite side of the middle line have only territorial waters. At this point, decisions on the islands of Filfla, Serpents, Qit'at Jaradah, Alcatraz, Djerba, Saint Pierre & Miquelon can be examined. Also, islands within 200 miles of the mainland do not have a maritime jurisdiction. The islands of Greece remain within their continental shelf (Yaycı, 2019b: 43-53).

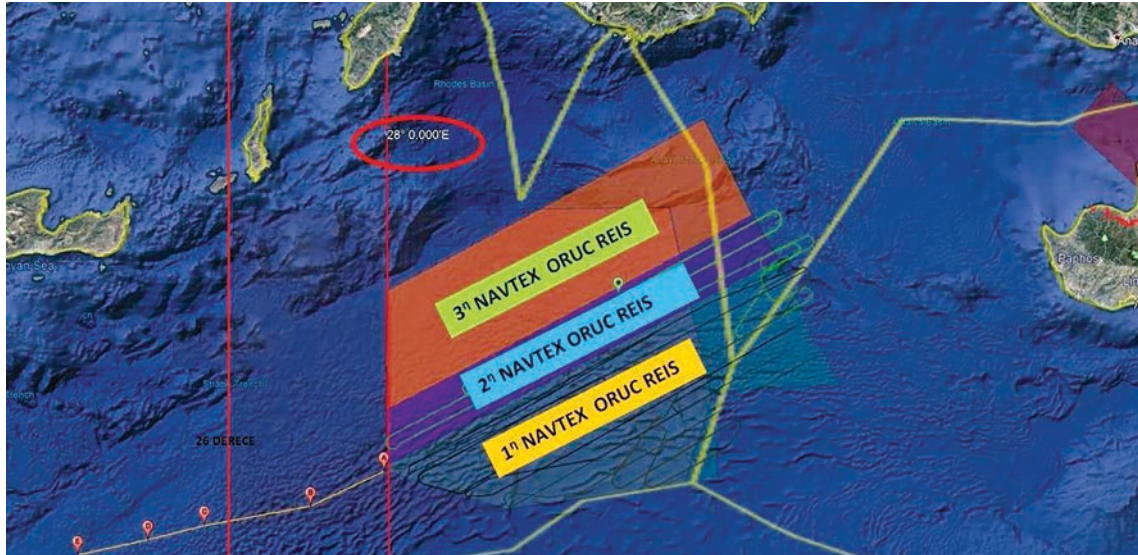
What is worse, Meis Island, which is two miles off Turkey's shores, was given 40 thousand square kilometers of maritime jurisdiction. However, Meis, Karaada, and Fener

Island are not even an island but more accurately a rock. It was stated in the South China Sea Arbitration Case that islands that cannot produce their own economy and do not have a settled population cannot possess maritime borders. What matters in maritime law is the situation before modification. In other words, the settlement policies initiated by Greece towards the islands cannot change the maritime jurisdiction of these islands (Bayıllıoğlu, 2019). Besides, Karaada and Fener Island have never been transferred to Greece: ownership of the islands still belongs to Turkey.

In summary, it will be seen from any perspective that Greece does not have a say in the Eastern Mediterranean. The EEZ agreements signed by Greece with Italy and Egypt did not give full effect to the islands, and Athens has thus given up its theses.

### The Duplicity of Europe and the USA

Today, the European Union and the US are making statements that the Seville Map has no legal validity. However, both use this map and shape their policies around it. Today, the Seville map is displayed in all units of the European Union, from the Progress Reports to Agriculture, Fisheries, and Energy Agencies. Every objection against Turkey's seismic survey in the eastern Mediterranean is based on the acceptance of this map. Although the Oruc Reis seismic research ship has never passed the west of 28° longitude, almost the whole of Europe has begun to discuss sanctions, alleging that Turkey violated the maritime jurisdiction. The territory covered by the Oruc Reis seismic research ship within the continental shelf Turkey has repeatedly been declared to the United Nations (MFA, 2004, 2013).



The operation areas of Turkish Oruç Reis vessel in the Eastern Mediterranean. (Bankingnews, 2020)

## Conclusion

Turkey has re-discovered the importance of the seas. It has drawn its maritime borders following all norms of international law. It is on its way to becoming a regional energy player with its national fleet of seismic and drilling ships. It transports goods all over the world with the Turkish mercantile fleet. The Republic Navy is in the most powerful period of its history. Turkey is one of the leading countries in the world in terms of national opportunities and capabilities. It provides aid to friendly and brotherly states beyond the borders of the Blue Homeland and contributes to global peace.

If the world wants to preserve peace at sea, it should cooperate with Turkey. Otherwise, Turkey does not have a drop of water from the Blue Homeland to give away. The Blue Homeland struggle is Turkey's struggle for existence. Tearing down imposed maps is a Turkish tradition. If anyone still bears hope for the Seville map, they should remember the fate of the Sevres and the maps of the Greater Middle East Project. 🌐

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