

Cyprus Spent Fifty-Two Years Managing the Occupation: SALAMIS 2033 Must Reverse It

A Seven-Year National Programme to Transform Turkish Occupation from a Protected Fact into a Military Exposure, an Economic Liability, and a Reversible Condition

By Shay Gal

For fifty-two years, the Republic of Cyprus has demonstrated resilience, enduring the division of its territory while Turkey has exploited time to consolidate its position at minimal cost. Nicosia rebuilt the state, joined the European Union, and denied legitimacy to the secessionist entity in the north. Yet international law preserved Cyprus's title to the land, while Turkish force maintained possession of it. Endurance, however, is not restoration.[1][2]

A state cannot simultaneously declare an occupation temporary and treat its permanence as a planning assumption. Negotiations conducted under an unchanged balance of power do not reverse the outcome of the last military confrontation; they merely administer it.

Today, capital, technology, and alliances are converging, presenting Cyprus with an opportunity to implement a seven-year national programme: **Total Defence, strategic denial, industrial sovereignty, operational reconnection, and restored control across the island.** This programme is SALAMIS 2033.

Endurance Was Not Restoration

After 1974, the Republic's priorities were clear and rational: housing the displaced, replacing lost infrastructure, restoring employment, securing international recognition, and preventing the legalisation of partition. The entire island entered the European Union, yet European law remains suspended in areas where the lawful government cannot exercise effective control. The attempted secession in the north thus remains legally invalid.[1][2] These were important victories, but they preserved the Republic without restoring its sovereignty over the entire island.

The absence of further invasion was interpreted as proof of deterrence. Prosperity substituted for restoration. Each negotiating round deferred the power required for the next. Nicosia expected time to erode the occupation, but Ankara weaponised it.

Every road, crossing, camera, registry, and administrative adjustment shifted the baseline for future negotiations. Recognition was unnecessary; survival became administration, administration bred dependency, and dependency entrenched permanence.[3] Uniformed forces held the line, while pipelines, power grids, registries, and databases normalised the

division. Ankara converted occupation into administration. The Republic defended the legal frontier while Turkey wired the physical one.[4]

The occupation is not a file to be managed; it is a system to be dismantled—its military insulation, administrative dependency, demographic engineering, economic returns, and political utility.

Negotiated withdrawal remains the instrument; power, its condition.

The Salamis Decision

SALAMIS 2033 is a state programme, not merely an operations order or a procurement catalogue. It enables the Republic to withstand coercion, deny a *fait accompli*, absorb reinforcement, and restore sovereignty. Every ministry, acquisition, reserve formation, alliance, and infrastructure project must serve this objective.

In Cyprus, Salamis is an ancient city near Famagusta in the occupied north: territory, continuity, and sovereignty awaiting restoration.[5] In Greece, Salamis is the strait where, in 480 BC, a smaller allied fleet defeated an imperial armada by turning geography, cohesion, preparation, and timing into decisive force. The Greeks compressed Persian mass until size became a liability.[6]

One Salamis defines the object. The other defines the method.

The Republic does not seek to build a smaller Turkey. Instead, it must redesign the contest so that Turkey's advantages become burdens: forces requiring protection, supply lines requiring defence, deployments triggering European alignment, and an occupation consuming more influence than it generates.

The Republic as a Defence System

Singapore provides the operational model, not the order of battle. A small state without strategic depth cannot absorb surprise, retreat, and reorganise at leisure. It must anticipate threats, integrate civilian and military resilience, calculate lifetime costs, stockpile for disruption, diversify supply chains, and treat science and industry as instruments of defence.[7] Its Total Defence model unifies military, civil, economic, social, digital, and psychological resilience into a single national system.[8]

A **Presidential Salamis Directive** would establish the objective. A **seven-year Defence and Sovereign Resilience Act** would protect funding across electoral cycles. A **single capability authority**, reporting to the Council of Ministers, would sequence efforts across Defence, Interior, Energy, Transport, Health, Digital Policy, and Finance.

Government must continue functioning after the first strike. Electricity, water, banking, communications, hospitals, ports, and airfields must remain operational. Ministries would

receive wartime missions. Critical operators would meet continuity standards. Reservists would be assigned by skill as well as by unit. Civilian expertise in engineering, transport, cybersecurity, medicine, and logistics would be integrated into mobilisation plans before a crisis emerges.

The military layer would unify intelligence and command, incorporating layered air and counter-drone defence, maritime denial, uncrewed and precision systems, hardened bases, dispersed stocks, rapid repair, and domestic sustainment.

The architecture would map dependencies and secure alternatives.

Salamis begins not at the buffer zone, but in the command network, the power grid, the port, the hospital, the reserve unit, and the national budget.

The occupation rests on an administrative layer: water, electricity, communications, identity, property, and public records embedded in Ankara's systems.[4] Salamis would build Cypriot-European substitutes *before* transition: interoperable power and water networks, telecommunications, digital identity, land registration, payments, healthcare, education, municipalities, and archives.

Liberation without reconnection changes only the flag—it preserves the dependency.

Military and administrative restoration must form a single operation, executed at different speeds.

Cyprus will not import dependence under the guise of modernisation. Every strategic contract must include a sovereign production clause.

A sovereign capability cannot depend on external technicians, opaque diagnostics, political permission, or peacetime supply chains. Contracts must therefore require local maintenance, engineering training, diagnostic and integration access, mission-data support, island-based stockpiles, and selective domestic production.

Priority fields include command software, secure communications, sensors, drones, counter-drone systems, electronic warfare, uncrewed maritime platforms, additive manufacturing, selected munitions, spare parts, simulation, and depot repair.

Cyprus need not manufacture combat aircraft, submarines, or long-range interceptors. However, it *must* control integration, sustainment, and recovery.

Knowledge transfer is not an addendum to industrial policy; it is the difference between possessing a system and controlling a capability.

Greece has established the standard that Cyprus should follow, including source-code control, domestic participation, indigenous manufacture, and in-country maintenance.[9] European industry cannot claim that such transfers are commercially unfeasible after having transferred design, production, sustainment, and expertise into Turkish ships, aircraft, submarines, and weapons.[10]

Cyprus enters this effort with European financing, aggregated demand, common standards, long-term contracts, EU law, air and maritime infrastructure, proximity to the Levant, and access to Greek and Israeli ecosystems.

No supplier is compelled to bid, but every successful bidder is compelled to transfer.

Cyprus is already fielding the Barak MX air-defence system, replacing unsustainable Russian dependencies.[11] It has introduced the H145M fleet, replacing its previous Russian-made helicopters.[12] Greece, Cyprus, and Israel have expanded combined training, air and naval exercises, and operational knowledge-sharing.[13]

Salamis must turn these acquisitions into a cohesive system. Each must receive a defined mission, interface, sustainment chain, readiness date, and industrial return. Systems that cannot connect, disperse, survive, and replenish will not be integrated.

Prestige procurement must end. Sovereign effect must become the test.

Occupied Cyprus serves as Ankara's nearest military-intelligence platform to the Levant. Drone infrastructure, surveillance, air defence, and the capacity to host combat aircraft place Cyprus, Israeli territory, ports, sea lanes, and energy assets within a single Turkish operating space.[15]

Turkey's March 2026 deployment of six F-16s and air-defence systems to the occupied north demonstrated how quickly occupation can be leveraged for regional power projection.[16]

Salamis must remove the occupation's assumption of sanctuary.

Seven Years, Not Another Generation

By the end of 2027, the Republic would establish the legal framework, authority structure, joint Greek-Cypriot staff, architectural blueprint, stockpile contracts, infrastructure map, and reformed reserve system.

By the end of 2029, Cyprus must be capable of surviving the opening shock of any conflict and absorbing allied power without losing government continuity, command integrity, or access to critical assets.

By the end of 2031, maritime denial, electronic warfare, precision strike capabilities, uncrewed systems, engineering, repair, and production must operate jointly with Greece.

By 2033, Cyprus would achieve strategic sufficiency: state functions would remain operational, the military would survive initial contact, bases would absorb reinforcement, Turkish freedom of action would be constrained, and the coalition would be positioned before the outcome is decided.

These dates represent capability milestones, not procurement anniversaries.

Salamis would raise defence and sovereign resilience spending toward 3% of GDP during the build period, producing a seven-year capital envelope of €4–6 billion through national expenditure, the European SAFE programme, common procurement initiatives, and partner infrastructure investments.

Cyprus can finance this acceleration without becoming a war economy. The IMF projects nominal GDP of €38.9 billion, a 2.3% fiscal surplus, and public debt of 50.5% of GDP in 2026.[17]

The alternative is another decade of compounded occupation.

Athens Before the Crisis

The strategic unit is not the National Guard alone, but Cyprus and Greece connected as a single operating space under sovereign national commands.

Salamis excludes symbolic fighter fleets and ceremonial blue-water navies. Instead, Cyprus would build protected bases, sensors, communications, fuel storage, ammunition depots, repair capacity, and command arrangements through which Greek power can enter immediately.

A Greek aircraft arriving after the balance has been decided represents solidarity; a Greek aircraft integrated before the crisis represents deterrence.

A permanent joint staff would align intelligence, attribution, missions, deployment thresholds, host-nation support, communications, maintenance, evacuation, and political control.

This arrangement would not transfer the decision for war to Athens. It would prevent military timelines from pre-empting political decisions.

Greece's Agenda 2030 integrates sensors, command systems, targeting, layered air defence, counter-drone systems, satellites, uncrewed platforms, transport, and national industry. Salamis would become its interoperable south-eastern node.[9]

The March 2026 deployment of four Greek F-16s and two frigates proved both physical access and political will.[18]

Europe Without Turkey's Veto

The eastern Mediterranean requires a centre, not another patron. Israel, Greece, and Cyprus form its core; France completes it. The centre must understand occupation, maritime coercion, airspace violations, energy security, migration flows, exports, and veto power as components of a single Turkish system, not as bilateral disputes.[19][20]

Lisbon 2.0 takes its name from the Treaty of Lisbon, signed in 2007 and in force since 2009. The treaty introduced the Union's mutual-defence clause, Article 42(7) TEU: when a member

state suffers armed aggression on its territory, all other members owe it aid and assistance by all means in their power. The obligation exists; no standing mechanism currently operationalises it. Lisbon 2.0 would supply that machinery: force, industry, stocks, mobility, command, and reflex.[22]

The 1960 guarantee system has been exhausted. Turkey used a restorative clause to partition the state. Britain preserved its bases, not the constitutional order. Since Cyprus entered the Union, its operative collective guarantee lies in European law.[21]

Salamis would write the Cypriot implementation before it is required: requests for assistance, intelligence release protocols, cyber support, air and sea access, port and airfield defence, infrastructure protection, logistics, medical reception, and command liaison.

Turkey can veto NATO decisions, but it cannot veto Lisbon 2.0.

France supplies European authority, military reach, and industrial depth. Its strategic partnership with Cyprus provides the state framework.[23] Israel contributes early warning, networked air defence, electronic warfare, cyber capabilities, uncrewed systems, precision strike, and integration expertise.

National command would remain in Nicosia, with Athens providing depth. Paris would anchor European force, and Jerusalem would accelerate the system.

Washington remains useful but is no longer foundational.

Cyprus would concentrate its €1.2 billion SAFE allocation on air and counter-drone defence, command and electronic warfare, maritime infrastructure, hardening, stockpiles, repair, and mobility.[14]

Turkey is not a SAFE beneficiary. Its industry seeks entry into Europe's expanding defence market. That access must become conditional.

SAFE cannot finance the defence industry of the state whose occupation forces Europe to finance Cypriot defence.

Ankara also seeks Customs Union modernisation, European finance, investment, mobility agreements, political upgrading, and security-industrial access. Each must enter a conditional structure.[24]

Every Turkish gain in Europe would carry a Cypriot condition; every breach on the island would close a European file.

A deployment freeze would open discussion. Removing new offensive systems would permit limited steps. Sustained force reductions would widen access. A binding withdrawal timetable would unlock the wider package. Full reversal would complete it.

The test extends to export licences, sustainment, software, design authority, and industrial partnerships. Europe's arms-export rules require scrutiny of aggression, instability, and risk to member states.[25]

A guarantee begins before aggression, when Europe decides whether to arm the power built to test it.

Europe cannot finance Cypriot resilience while transferring Turkish coercion.

Nicosia need not answer every condemnation, but it must record the threat, place it before Europe, and continue the programme.

A Turkish threat against a defensive European acquisition is not an argument for restraining Cyprus. It is evidence against privileged Turkish access to Europe's defence base.

From Turkish Asset to Turkish Liability

Turkey holds the north because occupation yields strategic return at manageable cost. Every Cypriot improvement forces Ankara to spend more protecting what it once considered secure: air defence, dispersal, logistics, maritime presence, stockpiles, and political capital.

Military expenditure alone will not alter Turkish policy. **The occupation becomes unsustainable when its annual bill is joined by blocked European access, lost industrial opportunity, greater military exposure, and diminishing strategic return.**

The relevant constituency extends from households to the treasury, defence industry, diplomatic service, security establishment, and governing coalition. Turkey's regime still prices legitimacy through elections, performance, and predictability. Occupied Cyprus is therefore not only an external liability but also a pressure conduit through which Ankara exports dependency and ideological control to the north. This could trigger resistance returning through the same networks. When indigenous Turkish Cypriots reject imposed social engineering or Ankara-aligned leadership, the occupation ceases to display cohesion and begins to expose regime weakness.[26]

The governing question changes from *whether Turkey can afford the north* to *whether the north still strengthens Turkey*.

The Turkish argument advances in stages: the garrison is excessive; guarantees can replace troops; occupation blocks contracts and influence; withdrawal restores strategic freedom.

The language changes before the policy.

Salamis does not ask Ankara to reconsider the occupation. It reorganises the incentives until reconsideration becomes Turkish strategy.

Verified withdrawal would release European benefits, stabilise transition, and frame departure within Turkey as recovered strategic freedom, not abandonment of Turkish Cypriots. Economic openings would follow compliance and would not purchase declarations.

One Republic, no Imported Sovereignty.

One sovereign Republic across the island. One international personality. One defence authority. One European legal space. No foreign army.

Salamis ends where the Republic remains visibly incomplete: in Nicosia, Europe's last divided capital, under one sovereign administration.[27]

Constitutional design follows de-occupation and belongs exclusively to the sovereign Republic. Ankara receives no occupation-derived veto, electorate, or permanent tutelage.

Citizenship does not divide sovereignty.

Turkish Cypriots whose Cypriot continuity predates 1974, and their descendants, belong to the Republic. Their citizenship, property, participation, and rights derive from Cypriot and European law, not Turkish troops.

Persons transferred from Turkey after the invasion acquire no collective constitutional title through time. The Council of Europe has described their systematic arrival and naturalisation as colonisation and demographic alteration.[28]

Their status would be adjudicated individually. Those lacking a lawful Cypriot or European basis would be repatriated to Turkey. Individual examination protects rights but under no circumstances constitutionalises colonisation.[29]

Occupation-issued papers cannot manufacture a constituent people.

Demographic engineering does not mature into sovereignty.

Non-recognition becomes enforcement. No European funding, protocol, transport arrangement, institutional seat, or market access may simulate statehood for the occupation regime. Recognition does not begin only with an embassy. It begins when ceremony, title, access, and repetition perform sovereignty that the entity does not possess.[30]

One Republic is the end state and the operating rule before restoration.

Salamis and Poseidon's Wrath

Salamis does not replace Poseidon's Wrath. It gives it a sovereign Cypriot foundation.

Poseidon's Wrath defines the regional consequence when occupied Cyprus becomes an operational threat to Cyprus, Greece, Israel, or their connecting infrastructure. Salamis builds the Republic before that threshold is crossed.

Salamis is the state Cyprus builds. Poseidon's Wrath is the consequence Ankara must calculate.

Salamis changes the balance before the next negotiation begins.

2033 could be the date Turkey loses certainty.

The occupation ends when Ankara understands that remaining is more dangerous than leaving.

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the institute.

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