

**Turkey's Military Presence in Cyprus:
Is It Needed for Regional Stability or Is It a Cause of Tension?**

**Andrew Michael
Intercollege, Cyprus**

Abstract

Since 1974 Turkey has maintained troops in the northern part of Cyprus. Today it has about 40000 troops stationed in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, a self-declared state that has yet to be formally recognized by any country. Turkish politicians and the Turkish General Staff have always argued that the presence of Turkish troops in Cyprus is needed to maintain stability and order on the island, to protect the Turkish Cypriot minority from any hostile offences from Greek Cypriots, and to protect Turkey's interests and national security. Turkey's National Security Council (NSC) that is comprised of the Turkish General Staff has refused to accept any potential solution to the Cyprus problem that would require the removal of all foreign troops (both Greek and Turkish) from the island. In the latest initiative undertaken by the United Nations, its General-Secretary Kofi Annan, had submitted a plan to reunite the island. The Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots voted upon this plan for acceptance or rejection in separate referenda on April 24, 2004. The Turkish Cypriots voted in favor of the plan but the Greek Cypriots rejected it. One of the main reasons that the Greek Cypriots voted against the plan is that although it leads to a gradual and partial demilitarization of the island it does not guarantee total demilitarization of the island. Although Greek Cypriots have requested a fast and complete demilitarization of the island, Turkey's NSC has been unwilling to accept a plan that would remove all Turkish troops from the island. Furthermore, the latest UN plan allows Turkey to unilaterally act militarily as one of the Guarantor Power's of Peace. Both of these issues have raised concerns for the Greek Cypriots' security. They have also strengthened their suspicions regarding Turkey's intentions on the island.

This working paper discusses whether Turkey's presence on the island indeed fosters stability and peace or rather contributes to tension and instability.

Part I will briefly outline the historical events leading to Turkey's military intervention on the island in 1974. Part II will provide data on the size of defense spending by the Cyprus government. It will also briefly discuss the potential costs of reunification based on the latest UN plan. Part III will consider whether the socio-political climate that has evolved over the years upholds the reasons cited by Turkish officials and General Staff for the presence of Turkish troops in Cyprus given Cyprus's accession to the EU from May 1, 2004. Part IV will examine the possible reasons for Turkey's insistence to keep its troops on the island. The paper concludes with suggestions for a long lasting solution and peace in Cyprus.