

Cyprus: the fictitious Island of MILEX 05? The EU in a Self-restrictive Security Role?

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Abstract

A year ago, in the last week of November 2005, an important EU Military exercise took place in Brussels in the framework of the fast evolving European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). MILEX 05 was based on a fictitious crisis scenario depicting “a situation on a fictitious island (Atlantia) where friction between two ethnic groups over a contested area is leading to the growing danger of instability and spill-over into hostilities.” Departing from the hypothesis that Atlantia is the exercise’s name for Cyprus, this paper explores the positions taken so far and the future policy options for the EU, Greece, Turkey, the UK and the Republic of Cyprus in the search for viable security arrangements in the Eastern Mediterranean.

1. Moving the ESDP Ahead: From CMEs to MILEX 05 (2002-05)

Towards the end of last year (22 November – 1 December, 2005) the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) took another important step in the direction of assuming a truly international role. The European Union (EU) conducted in Brussels its first ever military exercise, code-named MILEX 05. The history of exercises within the ESDP framework is relatively short. Only three exercises preceded MILEX 05 in the space of three years. The first was a Crisis Management Exercise (CME 02) conducted in May 2002. The following year in November, the EU joined

forces with NATO to carry out a joint Crisis Management Exercise (CME/CMX 03). Lastly, a third Crisis Management Exercise (CME 04) was executed at the time of the latest expansion of the European Union in May 2004.

MILEX 05, as the first exercise of its type, albeit without deployment of troops, is considered to constitute a qualitative advance and a leap forward in the development of the second pillar of the European integration project. The relevant press release issued by the Council of the European Union stressed that MILEX 05 focused on key military aspects. Truly, it was the first time that an EU Operation Headquarters (OHQ) was fully activated as part of an EU exercise. MILEX 05 concentrated on the interaction between EU-dedicated facilities at Mont Valerien – a location sixteen kilometres west of Paris - in France in the role of OHQ and an EU Force Headquarters (FHQ) in Ulm, Wurttemberg, south Germany¹. Importantly, the entire enterprise was held *in the context of an autonomous EU-led military operation*.²

Presumably, the fictitious crisis scenario of MILEX 05 points to a running sore in the south-eastern flank of the European security structure. Depicting a situation on a fictitious island (Atlantia) *where friction between two ethnic groups over a contested area is leading to the growing danger of instability and spill-over into hostilities*, the exercise's scenario supports the need for an *autonomous* EU-led operation requiring the deployment of military forces.³ Under the decision of the European Council, operational authority for MILEX 05 was placed with the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) High Representative Javier Solana while responsibility for preparation and implementation rested with the Director General of the EU Military Staff (EUMS). Despite the non-deployment of troops, some four hundred and fifty 'players' and supporting personnel were involved in the simulation.

2. Portraying a Potential Conflict Situation in Cyprus?

It is not too hard to imagine that the MILEX 05 crisis scenario could be a thinly veiled reference to a not too improbable future twist of events in the Eastern Mediterranean long-troubled island of Cyprus. Ideally, the underpinning idea of this first ever EU military exercise may prove to be a catalyst sparking off a debate in the European - and the US for that matter - decision-making centres both as to the need to work out a viable comprehensive settlement of the island's problem as well as to the

¹ Response Forces Operations Command (formerly II Germany/US Korps).

² Council of the European Union, Press Release 14675/05 (Presse 304), Brussels, 18 November 2005.

³ Ibid.

potential uses of its soil, air space and territorial waters for ESDP operations inland - in case of a constitutional collapse - and further afield.

From this point of departure, the aim of this paper is to address the crucial questions with regard to the current status and the future of the ESDP in the sensitive area of the Eastern Mediterranean - and by extension the Middle East - with respect to the potential uses of Cyprus. The analysis focuses on the positions assumed by the principal actors in this strategic power game in the Eastern Mediterranean. Thus it provides a sketch of the Turkish and British security perception of the Eastern Mediterranean Island and continues with an analysis of their resulting Cyprus policies as articulated in recent times. It closes with the argument that the absence of a comprehensive and successful European Union Cyprus policy is part and parcel of the EU's broader weakness in the project of the transformation of Turkey into a truly democratic European state.

Straddling three continents - Europe, Asia and Africa - Cyprus stands at the crossroads of multiple strategic interests. Such conflicting interests vying for dominance carry the potential for instability. Threats to regional stability cannot be underestimated. The undecided political future of the *de facto* dismembered island is linked with the comprehensive solution - or endless protraction? - of the complex Greco-Turkish disputes over sovereign rights in the Aegean. The connection of these two major problems (Cyprus-Aegean) warrants a thorough study.

Within the confines of this short paper, the ensuing analysis hopefully proves that it is Ankara which ultimately commands the last word over security arrangements in the Eastern Mediterranean geo-strategic space. The maintenance of this precarious uneasy-peace-without-settlement in the Eastern Mediterranean holds as long as Athens refrains from exercising full sovereign rights in the Aegean Sea while appearing complacent with Ankara's military grip on northern Cyprus. The extent to which Turkey will continue to be exercising *de facto* control over part of the Aegean space and of the island south of its 'soft underbelly' is, partly at least, related to the level of resources Ankara will have to commit in its engagement with the PKK Kurdish insurgents in the southeast of the country. Developments in neighbouring Iraq, three years after the US-led intervention, are far from advantageous for Ankara. The Kurds in northern Iraq, adjacent to Turkey, have advanced themselves to enjoying a large degree of autonomy. Most importantly, they exercise control over the region's rich oil resources. The federal government in Baghdad, backed by the Americans, has been vying against formidable centrifugal forces. The prospect of an independent Kurdistan appears to be visible more than ever before.

Ankara, deeply suspicious of the political emancipation of the Iraqi Kurds, is pressing hard for the US to intervene resolutely in order to dismantle the 5,000 strong PKK irregulars based in the northern Kurdish enclave. The US is reluctant to open a second front as their forces are stretched in the rest of the country. However, Washington will not allow Ankara to intervene because a Turkish incursion would destabilise the only peaceful part of Iraq. A recent resurgence in the number of casualties at the PKK's hands both in the backward southeast and the developed tourist packed areas in the western and southern part of the country has heightened pressure on Erdogan's government to pursue the rebels into Iraq. The crucial open-ended question for the future seems to be how far is Ankara prepared to go in interfering with Iraq in the face of American opposition.⁴

3. The Reluctant Republic of Cyprus (RoC): From Full Participant to an Emasculated Observer of the ESDP Structures?

In certain European quarters, it has been argued that the failure to produce a political solution to the de facto division of the island before the internationally recognised Republic of Cyprus acceded to the Union was a blunder. And given that, the argument goes on, the largest, most successful and prosperous regional club of countries in the world need not have incorporated such a liability – an ever unsettled island republic.⁵ Nevertheless, irrespective of whether the decision to take in the divided RoC were a blunder or not – a matter of value judgement – the European Union's declared policy of promoting peace, security and stability in Southeast Europe, part of which is the Eastern Mediterranean basin, is now more than ever before being put to the test. Larnaka and Lemesos, the two major ports on the southern shores of the Republic of Cyprus – under the effective control of the government in Lefkosia - have proved to be invaluable assets in evacuating European civilians of Beirut but equally in launching and providing a firm base of continuous logistical support for the EU peace-keeping operation in the ever unsettled nearby Lebanon. How could the European Union launch operations from Cyprus to pacify the turbulent Middle East if the island itself is prone to conflict? The design of the fictitious scenario for MILEX 05 seems to acknowledge this peril.

⁴ *The Economist*, 30 September 2006, p. 36.

⁵ See for example: Peel Quentin: "New members must wait for the new EU rules", *Financial Times*, 24 May 2006. Peel argued in his column "Between the Lines": *Most of the existing member states are painfully aware of the danger of importing unresolved disputes into the union, because of the lessons being learned from Cyprus. A single member state with a profound national grievance can cause havoc with decision-making.* A similar opinion was expressed by Alessandro Silj, Secretary General of the Italian Social Science Council (CSS) in a conversation with the author in Andalo, Trento, Italy in January 2006. Silj called the accession of the RoC without political settlement to the division a 'blunder'.

The accession of the RoC into the EU anchored the island firmly into the orbit of the European Defence and Security Policy at the expense of the toothless 116-member Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) of which the RoC was a founding member (Belgrade, 1961). Upon EU admission in May 2004, Cyprus - and Malta - renounced their NAM membership. Indeed, in the two and a half years that elapsed, the Cypriot representatives arguably sought to assert the status of the island's internationally recognised government as a full participant of the European integration processes including the ESDP dimension.

In the Common Foreign and Security Policy field, the government in Lefkosia sought full participation in both the political and the military level. The RoC has already committed personnel and resources in the 2004 and 2005 military capabilities commitment conferences. On the other hand, both the RoC and Greece have long been - since the Turkish invasion of 1974 - favouring the complete demilitarization of the island. Their proposal, however, has almost totally been neglected; surely overshadowed for over thirty years by the strong presence of Turkish troops in the northern⁶ and the British RAF air base, surveillance and other vital military installations in the southern part of the island.⁷

NATO-members Greece and the U.K. have been participating in the ESDP since its inception in 1999. In October 2005, long awaiting NATO ally Turkey has officially started its EU accession negotiations. Ankara has so far successfully pursued a policy of consolidating and legitimizing its military foothold on Cyprus. In the framework of this concrete long term Cyprus policy, Ankara has been steadfastly demanding to be consulted on ESDP operations in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Indeed, the European Council of Copenhagen (December, 2002) effectively granted Turkey a veto over ESDP operations which require the use of NATO assets in Cyprus and in the Aegean. With Athens yielding to Anglo-American pressure, the Copenhagen decision stipulated that EU members who are not participants in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme, that is Cyprus and Malta, would not be allowed to participate in future ESDP operations using NATO assets.

At a press conference after the summit, Yiorghos Papandreou, then Greek Foreign Minister, sought on the one hand to downplay the exclusion of Cyprus from ESDP

⁶ Ankara maintains 36,000 troops, the largest garrison stationed outside its borders.

⁷ Most important UK installations are the two Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs) - RAF Akrotiri and Dhekelia Garrison administered directly from London as overseas dependencies. The UK enjoys use of 99 retained sites scattered throughout the island. It also has a major listening post on the top of Mount Olympus and a Signals Unit at Ayios Nikolaos, both reporting directly to General Communications Headquarters GCHQ in the UK.

military operations while on the other hand placing emphasis on the Cypriot participation in the ESDP decision-making mechanism. Papandreou declared:

*There is a safeguarding of the presence of Cyprus and Malta who are neither NATO nor PjP members nor do they have a 'security agreement' with NATO and thus they do not have the right to receive secret intelligence. In case there is an agreement for EU-NATO cooperation they are not excluded from all the ESDP political decisions in the EU.*⁸

Ironically, Costas Simitis, then Prime Minister, responding to the critical question of whether Cyprus would be excluded from ESDP military operations, he replied in an unguarded if not ignorant manner: '*Does Cyprus have an army?*'⁹

In reality, the RoC does have an army of about ten thousand conscripts and around sixty thousand reservists¹⁰ with a defence budget of about \$384m.¹¹ However, both the man and the fire power of the Greek Cypriot National Guard (GCNG) are dwarfed by the strongest military presence which Turkey maintains out of its borders on the northern third of the island. However, the GCNG has progressively become, in recent years, a professional army. The cancellation of major military maneuvers on the island in the years 2002-4, as part of a broader pan-hellenic effort to produce a climate conducive to reconciliation with Turkey was not sustained, as Ankara failed to pull out some of its troops, a move that would have been perceived by the Greek side as a measure of goodwill. Hence the GCNG 'came back into active existence' repeating its annual week-long autumn maneuvers code-named *Nikiforos* (Victorious) in 2005 and 2006.¹²

The resounding rejection - 76 per cent - of the UN plan by the Greek Cypriots at the 24 April 2004 referendum resulted in disappointment and resignation both in Europe and the US. Yet again in both the European capitals and in Washington there seems to be little opposition to the massive presence of Turkish troops on the island. Their presence seems to be taken for granted. However, for what the European Parliament (EP) is worth as a sensor of European public opinion on foreign and security policy, one may argue that EP's September 13, resolution on Turkey's accession progress

⁸ <http://www.papandreou.gr/papandreou/content/articlepage.aspx?articleid=934&language=1>, p. 5.

⁹ Ibid. Simitis was replying to the Greek journalist Y. Delastik at the press conference referred to above.

¹⁰ IISS: "Military Balance 2004-5." p.85.

¹¹ Latest figure of 2002 provided by CIA Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cy.html>, accessed on 26 May 2006.

¹² *Nikiforos* was conducted for six days in October 2006. The exercise, involving several thousands of reservists, was rated a success both operationally and in the number of reservists showing up for service (participation recorded 85 per cent). *O Phileleftheros*, Lefkosia, 23 October 2006, p. 40.

represents increasing discomfort regarding Ankara's strategic grip on northern Cyprus.¹³

However, as recognized by Brussels themselves, the EU suffers from an enduring institutional crisis; central to it is the democratic deficit. In such a context, the EP resolutions can be little more than an empty letter. The Turkish forces withdrawal from the island is highly unlikely in the medium, if not the long term. The European security and defence structure in the Eastern Mediterranean will continue to be untenable: an immensely important nation for Europe's bridge into the Caucasus and the Middle East, negotiating accession violates the territorial integrity of a tiny, yet veto-wielding member-state.

To be sure, Ankara, far from contemplating withdrawal of its troops, refuses to recognize the RoC. Importantly, Turkey's customs union with the EU remains incomplete as long as its ban on Cypriot aircraft and ships entering Turkish airspace and ports stays in place. Ankara's hardline Cyprus policy has highly charged the atmosphere in certain European capitals.¹⁴

The Cypriot government under Tassos Papadopoulos declared that it could prevent the EU from starting entry talks with Turkey.¹⁵ In a last-minute change of heart, Papadopoulos toed the line mapped out by the big nations. He conceded the start of the talks. He did, however, pledge that the RoC reserves its right to bring Turkish entry negotiations to a halt on thirty-nine grounds; a reference to the fact that Ankara should satisfy all member states that all the chapters of the European law will duly be adopted and Ankara will honour her undertakings.

At the time of writing, there is little doubt that a growing sense of concern over Turkey's EU's course is increasingly engulfing both Ankara and major European capitals. At the end of October, Hansjoerg Kretschmer, outgoing European top envoy to the Republic of Turkey, ended his four-year stint in Ankara by firing parting shots. He put the blame squarely on the Turkish military for stalling democratic reforms. Kretschmer criticized the unchanging mindset of the military, saying the top brass

¹³ Resolution 2006/2118(INI) approved with a comfortable majority (13 September 2006) 'points out that the withdrawal of Turkish soldiers could facilitate the resumption of substantive negotiations and, pursuant to the relevant UN resolutions, calls on the Turkish government to effect an early withdrawal of Turkish forces in accordance with a specific timetable' (para. 57)

¹⁴ For example, Paris had declared earlier that Turkey can not enter accession talks unless it grants full recognition to the RoC before the start date. However the talks did start while the acknowledgement request remains unresolved.

¹⁵ International Herald Tribune: 'Cyprus threatening to block Turkey talks' 14 Sep. 2005.

disposition of intermingling in Turkish political life, has not remained intact despite legal reforms aimed at circumscribing its influence.¹⁶

4. Contributing to Military Capabilities: a Thorny Issue

As an acceding country, the RoC had been invited to contribute to the European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF) Military Capabilities. In the first Capabilities Commitment Conference (Brussels, November 2000), to which both member-states and membership candidate countries were invited, Cyprus offered certain contributions to the Headline Goal of the EU, within the framework of the evolving ESDP. In seeking to keep in line with its declared policy of complete demilitarization of the island, Lefkosia refrained from committing combat troops or artillery. Instead, the pledge was for logistics support and auxiliary services to be placed at the disposal of the EU's military force for its crisis management and peacekeeping operations in the region. Lefkosia has offered *inter alia* to make available to the ERRF a transport company, the air base in Pafos, situated in the south-west, its civilian airports (Larnaka and Pafos) and ports (Larnaka and Lemesos), telecommunications, reconnaissance and monitoring facilities, radar equipment, medical and rescue services.

The second Military Capability Commitment Conference was convened in Brussels in November 2004. This was the first time the Republic of Cyprus took part as an EU member-state aspiring to contribute to the formation of the Union's armed forces. Lefkosia committed a medical group as part of the 'niche capabilities in support of the EU Battlegroups.'¹⁷ According to press reports, Kyriakos Mavronikolas, the Cypriot Defence Minister offered more than that, in particular: the Pafos Air Base, a transport unit and the Lemesos port. Britain, reportedly, undercut the RoC by offering its own sovereign military and air bases located on the southern coast of the island - surrounded in their northern boundary by the area under the effective control of Lefkosia. The British facilities have admittedly been operating for more than fifty years and therefore ready to be used at any time in the near future. With respect to the

¹⁶ *Turkish Daily News*, 31 Oct., 2006. Kretschmer stated characteristically that his requests for a formal meeting with the former Chief of General Staff, Gen. Hilmi Ozkok were ignored. The EU top envoy said that he met the General only once by chance.

¹⁷ Declaration on European Military Capabilities: EU Battlegroup Commitments: Niche Capabilities, p. 9; Brussels, 22 November 2004.

civilian leg of the ESDP, Lefkosia reportedly committed 62 civilian personnel: 30 policemen, 7 judges and attorneys and 25 men of the civilian protection force.¹⁸

The declaration of the 2004 Military Capability Commitment Conference stressed that ‘all member-states will be involved in the ECAP [European Capability Action Plan] process.’¹⁹ Lefkosia’s commitments are a clear indication that the RoC seeks to take full advantage of this universal approach to building the EU military capabilities by making its presence felt as an equal sovereign partner in the club.

On the other hand, Turkey has been consistently putting forward the argument that the treaty obligations of the RoC preclude it from offering or making such contributions. In particular, Ankara has been referring to the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) and the three treaties which established the island republic in 1960. Ankara’s position seems rather awkward. On the one hand it refuses to recognize the RoC, on grounds that it does not represent the Turkish Cypriots.²⁰ On the other hand, Ankara does refer to the provisions of the Treaties of Establishment, Alliance and Guarantee treating them as an equivalent to an ‘a la carte menu’. Pursuant of its policy of emasculating the sovereignty of the RoC, Ankara insisted on and eventually achieved the exception of Cyprus from joint EU-NATO military operations.²¹

More precisely, Ankara argues that the *Treaty of Guarantee* prohibits the RoC from joining any international military or political organization in which both Greece and Turkey do not happen to be members. In fact the Treaty of Guarantee stipulates in its first article that the RoC *undertakes not to participate, in whole or in part, in any political or economic union with any other State whatsoever. It accordingly declares prohibited any activity likely to promote, directly or indirectly, either union with any other State or partition of the Island.* However, one can hardly fail to observe that Turkey is in constant violation of this provision: its 1974 invasion has effectively imposed de facto partition; moreover, de jure recognition of the division is actively pursued by promoting the secessionist Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) while at the same time blocking membership of the RoC in the international organizations in which she is already a member.

¹⁸ *Politis*, Myria Antoniadou’s report from Brussels: “‘Half’ Participation in Euro-Defence”; “British Reaction behind the Scenes”, 23 November, 2004.

¹⁹ “Declaration on European Military Capabilities”, op. cit., Brussels, Nov. 2004, p. 15.

²⁰ Since Cyprus’s accession to the E.U. the government in Lefkosia has taken measures in order to ensure that Turkish Cypriots either residing in the free areas of the Republic, i.e. the South or the Turkish-occupied North take full benefits of EU citizenship rights.

²¹ Copenhagen European Council, December 2002.

5. The UK Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs): Continuity or Change?

One crucial factor in the use of Cyprus for furtherance of the ESDP goals in the Eastern Mediterranean is the future status of the two UK-controlled powerful military bases located on its southern shores. What are the SBAs origins? What is their current position under international law? Will the status of the bases be affected under a prospective comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem? In attempting to address these crucial questions a proper understanding of the decolonization process and of the trajectory of London's Cyprus policy in the ensuing forty-five years is needed. However, in the context of this short paper, we shall confine ourselves to delineating the historical outline of British policy.

London finally decided to decolonize Cyprus in a manner that at best displeased, at worst irritated and angered the Greeks, who, forming the eighty per cent majority of the island's indigenous population, were long campaigning for enosis. Strictly speaking the three treaties which established the Republic of Cyprus, i.e. the Treaty of Establishment, the Treaty of Guarantee and the Treaty of Alliance were already in violation of Chapter XI of the United Nations Charter.²² Moreover, the U.K. carved out two sizeable chunks of Cypriot territory (256 square kilometres) - plus a reserve list of another hundred installations scattered around the island - which she retained baptizing them Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs). London ensured that the sovereign status of the Western and Eastern Base Areas was duly enshrined in the Treaty of Establishment.

This twelve-article Treaty was loaded with six cumbersome annexes. The first three A, B and C detail the delimitation of the Sovereign Base Areas and the retained sites and define the status of the foreign forces on the island. Thus the Treaty of Establishment resembles more a charter of British rights on Cypriot soil rather than a bill of rights of the Cypriot citizens on their own land. The treaty's articles carry specific terms designed to safeguard the permanent status of the British forces on the island. Article 1 specifies which of the island's areas remain under British sovereignty. Article 2 stipulates that the RoC shall accord to the United Kingdom those rights and goes on to bind the nascent Cypriot state to full co-operation with the colonial-turned-neo-colonial power *to ensure the security and effective operation of the military bases ... and the full enjoyment by the United Kingdom of the rights conferred by this Treaty*. Article 3 ties the RoC once again to consultation and co-operation in the 'common defence of Cyprus' with the UK (and Greece and Turkey). Article 4 relates once more to 'the status of [foreign] forces in the Island of Cyprus' while article 10 sets forth the dispute resolution mechanism should *any question or*

²² Chapter XI: Declaration regarding Non-Self-Governing Territories. Article 73b calls member-states "to develop self-government, to take due account of the political aspirations of the peoples [of the non-self-governing territories] ..." The time-honoured aspiration for *enosis* was never granted. For a fuller analysis see the author's book: *Cyprus: The Struggle for Self-Determination in the 1940s*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt, 2002.

difficulty ... may arise over the operation of the military requirements of the United Kingdom, or concerning the provisions of this Treaty in so far as they affect the status, rights and obligations of the United Kingdom forces.

For any significance quantitative text analysis may have, the word 'U.K' appears 448 times in the text of the Treaty and its Annexes!

No party to the Treaty of Establishment has to this day denounced it. Consequently, the status of the two British SBAs has not changed since 1960. The partition, resulting from the two-phased Turkish invasion of 1974, seems to have served Britain's policy of keeping the Cypriots' attention away from the quite operation of their military bases on the island. London turned a blind eye to the Turkish intervention and has since tolerated the continuing occupation of the northern part. This continuity in the British Cyprus policy leaves little room to doubt that London will continue to be complacent with letting Greeks and Turks fight over contested territory as long as their vital interests are served through the uninhibited operation of their bases on the island.

Recently released UK government's classified documents show that a form of veiled partition has always been London's favoured settlement. The following text is an extract of a Foreign Office note written on the day of the final ceasefire agreement between the invading Turkish forces and the Greek Cypriot National Guard:

It is important that we should avoid any suggestion that in favouring the geographical separation of the two communities as the most viable solution of the Cyprus problem, we are working for the partition of the Island. Partition has a bad name internationally. It would be contrary to our obligations, both under the 1960 Settlement and as a fellow-member with Cyprus of the Commonwealth and the United Nations. I recommend that we use the term 'biregional federation'.²³

London reaffirmed the status of the bases in the aftermath of the failure of the UK and US sponsored UN Cyprus peace plan. In the course of negotiations early in 2004, the U.K. weighed in to facilitate a territorial deal by making an offer to cede to Greek Cypriot control half of the territory of its Eastern Base (Dhekelia). It is assumed that the offer lapsed as the Greek Cypriots decisively outvoted the comprehensive settlement plan. Consequently, the U.K. reaffirmed the sovereign status of its bases on the island.²⁴

²³ Confidential note signed by A. C. Goodison under the title *Cyprus: A Geographical Solution*, UK National Archives: FCO 9/1911, 16 August 1974.

²⁴ Interestingly, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has only recently decided to treat them as 'new entities' making separate entries for Akrotiri and Dhekelia in its 'World Factbook 2004' publication. Its introductory webpage reads: "Recent confirmation that the United Kingdom Government administers the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia on Cyprus as

6. Managing Inter-Ethnic Conflict or Containing Ankara's Projection of Militarism?

Questions arising from the complex security concerns of Greece, Turkey and the U.K. and their relation with Cyprus require a more in depth analysis. In the confines of this short paper, we sought to identify certain key issues. For a fuller analysis as to the future place of the island in the European security structure a critical examination of the nature of the EU's foreign and security policy is needed.

Lack of consensus on a consistent and comprehensive approach to the Cyprus question is not a new development in the CSFP field. The 'commonality' feature in the EU policy towards Cyprus seems to be a chimera in 2006 as much as it has ever been.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that the absence of a comprehensive strategy to solve the Cyprus question leads to the notion of the EU acting in a 'fire-brigade' role. The EU seems to be prepared, so far at least, to act solely with the aim of easing down tensions in the case of *growing danger of instability and spill-over into hostilities*.²⁵ The European Council's common line is apparently limited to gearing up for a rapid response in the eventuality of escalating tensions *between [the] two ethnic groups over a contested area*.²⁶ It does not go any further. It fails to address the crucial issue of disengaging the island republic from the neo-colonial suzerainty of Great Britain in the south and the subordinate administration of Turkey in the north. The former seeking to perpetuate the sovereign status of its bases - together with all the vital military and industrial surveillance and espionage installations entailed - and the latter seeking to legitimize, via a *de jure* recognition, its control of the north under the guise of a 'Turkish Cypriot constituent state' – in effect a legitimization of the UN condemned UDI (1983).

Both London and Ankara seem unmoving in repeating themselves on the Cyprus front. The two powers seek to reproduce a moribund 'reunification' settlement which will sink before the ink of their signatures on the new-old treaty terms dries. For that is the reason of their firm posture in favour of the 2004 UN plan. In fact, Britain as a permanent Security Council member pushed for its formal approval by the world's body, only to be rebuffed by a rival Russian veto.

The philosophy of the convoluted and cumbersome UK-design UN-executed comprehensive settlement plan was little more than a full cry for a neo-colonial regime. The vision was clearly not the creation of a "United Cyprus Republic" as its

dependencies (and not as lease areas like Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba) has required a changing of their status and their addition to the *Factbook* as new entities."

²⁵ Council of the European Union, Press Release 14675/05 (Presse 304), Brussels, 18 Nov. 2005.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

misleading title purported, but of a vassal state hostage to Turkey's uncertain European integration course.

Perceiving of the Cyprus imbroglio as primarily an inter-ethnic conflict *over a contested area* is a self-fulfilling hypothesis. Such a perception obfuscates the real issue: the projection of Turkish military power to the island lying off the southern coast of the Anatolian peninsula, conceived of by Ankara's top brass as the soft underbelly of the Turkish mainland. Such a definition of the problem indicates a fundamental weakness of the European Union to inject its democratic values into the Turkish military dominated geo-strategic space.

It is mostly for this reason that a consensual comprehensive approach to the Cyprus security question is missing from the ESDP Eastern Mediterranean architecture. The EU proves unable to project its declared principles of democratic governance and rule of law in Turkey's domestic sphere and of good neighbourly relations towards neighbours – that incidentally include in addition to Cyprus, Greece, Armenia and Iraq. A sharp-eyed observer would not fail to discern the continuing Turkish military's re-emerging influential role both in terms of the internal and the external affairs of this pivotal predominantly Muslim, yet secular country. Acknowledging this fundamental weakness revealed by its failure to accomplish, so far at least, democratic reforms in the vampire 'sick man of Europe' - to use the brilliant end of 19th century analogy - the European Union relegates itself to the role of a prospective damage control 'fire-fighter' as the MILEX 05 scenario betrays ...