



By: TA | AP Brief

Erdogan's support for a two-state deal on ethnically split Cyprus is absolute



Turkish Cypriots on Sunday celebrated Turkey's military invasion of Cyprus that cleaved the island nation along ethnic lines 51 years ago.

Turkey's president reaffirmed his full backing for a controversial peace deal that envisions the establishment of two separate states.

It's a proposal that the majority Greek Cypriots in the island's internationally recognized southern part **reject** out of hand. It would formalize Cyprus' partition and give Turkey a permanent foothold they see as a bid for control of the entire, strategically situated country and its offshore hydrocarbon wealth.

"Our support for (Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar's) vision for a two-state solution is absolute," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in remarks to a crowd during celebrations that culminated with a military parade.

It was scheduled this year for the evening to avoid the worst of the scorching mid-summer's heat.

"It is time for the international community to come to terms with the facts on the ground," Erdogan added, urging the international community to establish diplomatic and economic relations with the breakaway state in Cyprus' northern third that Turkish Cypriots declared in 1983.

Turkey's invasion came in the immediate aftermath of a coup staged by Athens junta-backed supporters of uniting Cyprus with Greece.

Currently, only Turkey recognizes the Turkish Cypriot declaration of independence and maintains 35,000 troops in the north.

Erdogan's renewed support for a two-state deal came just days after Tatar, the island's Greek Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides, the foreign ministers of 'guarantor' powers Greece and Turkey, and Britain's minister of state for Europe **gathered** at U.N. headquarters in New York for meetings

with U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to end an eight-year moratorium on formal peace negotiations.

Confidence-building measures

The meeting achieved little in the way of a return to fully fledged negotiations as Tatar insisted on recognition for the breakaway Turkish Cypriot state as a prerequisite.

The meeting did, however, achieve some progress on a number of confidence-building measures such the exchange of cultural artifacts and the setting up of an advisory committee on civil society.

Guterres said he'll meet again with Tatar and Christodoulides in September and hold another wider meeting after a Turkish Cypriot leadership election in October in which Tatar is running on a two-state platform.

Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots insist a two-state deal is the only way forward because decades of U.N.-mediated peace talks based on a U.N. Security Council endorsed framework of reunifying Cyprus as a federation no longer had any meaning.

That switch came after the last big push for a peace accord in the summer of 2017.

It fell through on what Greek Cypriots said was a Turkish and Turkish Cypriot insistence on keeping a permanent Turkish troop presence on the island and enshrining military intervention rights for Turkey as part of any deal.

Greek Cypriots also rejected a demand for blanket veto powers for the minority Turkish Cypriots on all government decisions.

In the south where Greek Cypriots commemorated the invasion with solemn memorials to the war dead, Christodoulides said the international community gives no support to a two-state deal.

He said Turkey's continuing "occupation of

European territory” subverts its ambitions for
closer European Union ties and undermines
the role it wishes to play in the region.