

# MERIA

## **STRATEGIC LOCATION, POLITICAL DISLOCATION: TURKEY, THE UNITED STATES, AND NORTHERN IRAQ**

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*The Turkish parliament's failure, after months of negotiations, to grant U.S. ground forces access to national territory to enable a direct land assault against northern Iraq demonstrated that Washington's strategic valuation of Turkey's geographic location may not necessarily be welcomed by the country's inhabitants. Ankara's preoccupation with the implications of the conflict for Kurdish aspirations demonstrated that the U.S.'s global strategic vision can be undermined by the more parochial, regional concerns of its allies. The future of Turkish democracy, U.S.-Turkish relations, the fortunes of the Kurdish people, as well as of Iraq itself, are all now at stake.*

Although for many observers the link remains obscure, within weeks of the terrorist attacks of September 11 2001 (9/11), the Bush administration began turning its attention to the unsettled score of Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program, and began to entertain the idea of 'regime change' in Baghdad. As both a neighbor of Iraq and strategic ally of Washington, Turkey was bound to find itself in the spotlight. As it emerged that Washington's preferences in any new military operation would be to use Turkish territory as a launch pad for a direct land attack against northern Iraq, Ankara's opposition to war intensified.(1) Such a scenario would more deeply implicate Turkey than did the previous Gulf War of 1990-1.

Bulent Ecevit's coalition government strenuously warned Washington of Turkey's opposition to war, and urged Baghdad to comply with United Nations inspections and resolutions, which were now being revived with the unanimous passage of Security Council Resolution 1441 in November 2002. In the same month, Turkish elections brought the

moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkinma--AKP) to power. It, too, hoped that war could be avoided. However, the United States had already delayed putting pressure on Ankara as a consequence both of the uncertainty generated by Turkey's impending elections and the machinations of international diplomacy, and so Turkey's new government immediately found itself a target of Washington's diplomatic attentions.

### **IRAQ'S NEIGHBOR**

Ankara's unease with Washington's approach derived in many respects from the same sources that fed the broader international opposition to U.S. policy. However, Turkey had additional reasons for fearing a renewal of armed conflict with Iraq. Turkey had enjoyed broadly cooperative economic and political relations with Iraq both before and since the 1990-1 Gulf War. However, as a result of this war, the consequent closure of the Kirkuk-Yumurtalik pipeline to Turkey's Mediterranean coast, and the subsequent sanctions and impoverishment of Iraq,

Turkey had lost its major trading partner in the region and a lucrative source of revenue. Downturns in tourism, foreign investment and general economic confidence in the wake of the 1990-1 Gulf War inflicted further (though largely indirect) blows to the already weak national economy. Furthermore, promises of compensation for Turkey's war losses had failed to fully materialize. With the national economy even more fragile than it was a decade before, Ankara feared that a renewal of conflict in the region would inflict a severe setback to the country's IMF-sponsored economic reform program.

Turkey's present domestic political context added an additional dimension to the country's antiwar sentiment. The AKP government achieved electoral victory on a platform of reform and rehabilitation of the crisis-hit and chronically sick Turkish economy. A related priority was the implementation of an ambitious program of political, legal, and administrative reforms to ready the country for serious EU accession negotiations. Furthermore, the AKP administration represents a constituency more sympathetic to Turkey's own Islamic character and to its Muslim neighbors, while few AKP deputies, former provincial mayors and the like, have much experience or interest in foreign policy issues. With the Cyprus and EU accession issues also demanding its attention, the diplomatic plate was more than full for this novice government.

It is also important to recall the unique role played by President Turgut Ozal in 1990-1. Ozal had stood against much of Turkey's policy elite, as well as public opinion, in supporting so wholeheartedly the coalition effort against Iraq. Moreover, he was willing to engage in the messy politics of the Middle East, something Ankara generally shied away from. Indeed, his daring approach to the crisis prompted the resignation of the Turkish Chief of the General Staff General Necip Torumtay,

and contributed to the resignations of the foreign and defense ministers too. This raises the question of how cooperative Turkey would have been in 1990 if it had not been for Ozal's readiness to go so far out on a limb.<sup>(2)</sup> Furthermore, few in Turkey are convinced that Ozal's expectation that his accommodating approach would increase Turkey's post-Cold War value to the west has brought tangible benefits.

The broader international political context of Turkish policy during 2002 and early 2003 is also of note in understanding Turkey's stand on the eve of hostilities between Iraq and Coalition forces. It became increasingly evident that there would be no regional groundswell of support for U.S.-led action against Iraq comparable to that associated with the 1990-1 crisis. Conceivably, the international difficulties the United States was having in building international support, not least in Europe, bolstered Ankara's readiness to resist U.S. pressure. It may also have inflated Ankara's estimation of its indispensability to Washington. In any case, whatever the outcome of any war, Turkish thinking went, Turkey would continue to inhabit the region, and would need to rebuild any fractured relationships with its neighbors, Arab and Iranian. Ankara feared it might become a focus of regional hostility should it become too closely involved in U.S. war plans. Given, too, the Islamic fundamentalist inspired terrorist threat that so dramatically manifested itself on 9/11, the broader anti-Americanism now so prevalent in much of the Islamic--and especially Arab--world, and the seeming vulnerability of some of the region's regimes to such phenomena, Turkey also worried about the more general implications for regional stability of any new war with Iraq.

#### **KURDISH RAMIFICATIONS**

The potential ramifications for the Kurdish issue in any war with Iraq caused Ankara a still greater headache. Developments in Iraqi Kurdistan subsequent to the 1990-1 Gulf War constitute a major consideration for Ankara's policy makers. After the 1991 uprising against Saddam failed, there was a flood of approximately half a million Iraqi Kurds to a zone near the Turkish border. This crisis brought the involvement of the international community, which created safe havens for the refugees and a 'no-fly-zone' policed from Incirlik in Turkey. Following the withdrawal of Baghdad's forces from the area in October 1991, a self-governing Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) zone was established, nestled against the Turkish and Iranian borders. The zone did not extend to the Mosul and Kirkuk oilfields, which nevertheless form part of what has been traditionally regarded as Iraqi Kurdistan. Although relationships between the two main elements of the KRG--the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP)--are fragile, this Iraqi Kurdish experiment in self-government and democratization created a tangible sense of well-being and freedom for the inhabitants of the area, such that they would welcome neither a return of Saddam's rule, nor any kind of wholly centralized government controlling them from Baghdad.(3)

For Turkey, the future of the Kurds is seen as a vital national security issue. Up to half of all ethnic Kurds, who straddle the Turkish, Iraqi, Iranian and Syrian borders, live in Turkey. Turkish security forces fought an almost two-decade-long war in the southeast of the country against the separatist Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), at a cost of more than 30,000 lives. Over the years, Turkish troops have launched substantial raids across the border--at times with the agreement of Baghdad--in pursuit

of PKK fighters. Ankara has also maintained smaller forces in northern Iraq almost continuously since the 1980s, and conducted numerous air raids. It has even cooperated with Iraqi Kurdish forces in tracking down PKK operatives in Iraq.

In Ankara's view, the Iraqi Kurdish self-governing arrangements pose a serious challenge to Turkey's hold over its own, equally sensitive Kurdish provinces. The KRG could serve as a pole of attraction, or a model, for Turkey's restive Kurds, or the KRG might become emboldened enough to lend them direct support. It could garner international sympathy for the idea of wider Kurdish national self-determination leading ultimately to a sovereign Kurdish state. Ankara suspects that full independence and sovereignty is the ultimate goal of Kurds on both sides of the border. Moves towards the establishment of an independent Kurdish state could create tension between the states where Kurds reside (Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria), and could even threaten to unravel the entire region.

Turks find it implausible that Iraqi Kurds would willingly trade much of the self-government they enjoyed for reintegration into the uncertain enterprise of a post-Saddam Iraq. They are reinforced in that view by the draft KRG constitution drawn up in late 2002, which envisaged the oil-bearing Iraqi Kurdish provinces becoming incorporated into any future Kurdish self-governing zone within a loose Iraqi federal framework, with Kirkuk as its capitol, while retaining control over its own armed forces.(4) Whether by design, default or through opportunistic exploitation of chaos and uncertainty, in Turkey's view the risk of war to Iraq's, and perhaps ultimately Turkey's, territorial integrity was substantial.

#### **NATIONAL POLICY TAKES SHAPE**

The July 2002 visit of U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz left Ankara in little doubt that, in the event of war, U.S. plans would indeed involve launching ground attacks from Turkish territory. Ankara's response was to pursue the two tracks of continuing to lobby against war on the one hand (which incorporated regionally-based endeavors to find alternatives to it), and positioning Turkey to make the best of an unwanted situation on the other. Three issues emerged. First was the economic compensation Ankara should seek to extract in return for its cooperation. The second issue was the terms under which Ankara might permit its territory to be used by U.S. and allied forces. Third, Turkey's military drew up plans to insert substantial forces into northern Iraq so as to keep the lid on the situation there if necessary. Throughout the second half of 2002 and into 2003, Ankara's negotiating approach was to interconnect these issues, using Washington's needs as a lever to ensure Ankara's own needs were satisfied. This involved driving a hard bargain with Washington, to the increasing irritation of the latter, as Ankara sought to maximize the leverage it had as a consequence of its strategically vital location--or, perhaps to put it as many Turks would, minimize the damage to Turkey as a consequence of its location. Washington's preference for a two-front war, the relentlessness of its military build-up in the region, and the very imminence of conflict, offered Ankara considerable negotiating advantage, which, from Washington's perspective it appeared to mercilessly exploit.

### **WASHINGTON ENTERS THE BAZAAR**

During his December 2002 trip to Ankara, Wolfowitz impressed upon the new government Washington's quest for access to Turkish territory as a launch pad for ground attacks. Although Wolfowitz

appeared upbeat about the talks, declaring that 'Turkish support is assured,' Turkish comment was far more circumspect.<sup>(5)</sup> The request to base 80,000 or more U.S. troops in Turkey was greeted particularly coolly in Ankara,<sup>(6)</sup> and in fact the visit demonstrated just how far apart U.S. and Turkish perspectives were. Ankara refused to give Wolfowitz the green light to U.S. access to Turkish territory.<sup>(7)</sup>

Although Ankara had been privy to U.S. war planning since July, the Turks seemed barely to have moved at all towards accommodating them. Paradoxically, this strengthened Ankara's hand in the negotiations that ensued, just as the military timetable served to force Washington's hand. It appeared to become a negotiating objective of Ankara to insist on a reduction in the number of U.S. troops earmarked to enter Turkey, perhaps down to as low as 15,000.<sup>(8)</sup> In return for allowing U.S. troops to base in Turkey, Ankara wanted Washington's green light to a substantial Turkish move into northern Iraq.<sup>(9)</sup> It was reported that the United States did agree to a geographically limited entry of Turkish troops into northern Iraq, with the proviso that they steer clear of Kurdish towns and cities. Not surprisingly, such a possibility was deeply upsetting to Iraq's Kurds, who threatened to resist the entry of Turkish troops into the KRG area.<sup>(10)</sup>

In the face of increasing frustration in Washington, it was not until early January, after weeks of foot-dragging, that Ankara finally agreed to allow U.S. technicians to enter Turkey to assess the suitability and condition of bases and ports that might be used. It was not until 6 February--a date by which Washington had once hoped and expected that permission for U.S. troops to enter the country would already have been granted--that a parliamentary vote permitted around 4,000 U.S. personnel to enter the country to commence the upgrade of the facilities, at an estimated cost to the

U.S. of \$300 million. Fifty AKP deputies, along with the entire opposition, voted against the measure.<sup>(11)</sup> Furthermore, the Turkish government accompanied the vote with the rider that it should not be interpreted as implying that approval for the entry of U.S. troops, which would also require parliamentary approval, would necessarily be forthcoming.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to see that these political difficulties were an indication of what was yet in store, but one does wonder whether Washington might have been able to recognize the warning light at the time. The AKP government's repeated protestations that it could not guarantee to win over its own deputies unless Washington met Turkish demands was not simply a crude negotiating ploy--which is how many in the United States saw it. Some government figures--not least, then Prime Minister Abdullah Gul, but also the Speaker of the National Assembly and President Sezer--remained unenthusiastic about granting the United States military access to Turkish territory in order to open a northern front against Iraq. The AKP leadership's uncertain control over its factionalized and inexperienced deputies rendered doubtful its capacity to deliver a parliamentary majority on the issue. Given that opinion polls suggested that over 90% of the population were against a war with Iraq, and that many AKP deputies shared this view, parliamentary approval for the entry of U.S. troops was far from a foregone conclusion.<sup>(12)</sup> Regardless, Washington continued to base its military planning and build-up on the availability of Turkish bases.

### **THE KURDISH CONUNDRUM**

From the outset, Ankara did not disguise its increasing suspicions about the discussions that had begun taking place as early as May 2002 between the PUK/KPD

leadership and U.S. officials, and expressed resentment at their exclusion from them.<sup>(13)</sup> For their part, the Iraqi Kurdish leaderships were also initially nervous about the prospect of U.S. action against Saddam's regime. They feared that the considerable gains in autonomy that they had made over the previous decade would be put at risk by war in the region, and they suspected that, once again, Washington might abandon them to their fate--in the form of Turkish troops, or a new autocrat in Baghdad, or both--once Saddam had been removed.<sup>(14)</sup> As was also the case in Ankara, however, the Kurds recognized that they had to accommodate themselves to the likelihood of U.S. military action in northern Iraq.

However, it was as clear to the Iraqi Kurds as it was in Ankara that, although the United States needed the support of both parties, Kurdish and Turkish interests were almost diametrically opposed.<sup>(15)</sup> The Iraqi Kurdish leadership, whilst fearing Turkish involvement in their region and repeatedly issuing dramatic warnings that they would resist any Turkish invasion of northern Iraq,<sup>(16)</sup> nevertheless appreciated that it was vital to reassure Ankara that they were committed to a unified Iraq.<sup>(17)</sup> These reassurances failed to reassure Ankara. A July meeting of the Turkish National Security Council reportedly discussed contingencies for the entry of Turkish troops into Iraq as far south as the 36th parallel, in the event of a U.S.-led military move against Saddam Hussein. In addition to Turkey's national objectives, a Turkish military presence in northern Iraq might also be required to deal with any ensuing refugee crisis, and supervise Iraqi prisoners of war, tasks for which, in any case, the United States had sought a Turkish contribution.<sup>(18)</sup>

In addition to the estimated 5,000 Turkish troops said to already be inside Iraq and chiefly engaged in countering

PKK activity, in October, Turkish forces on the Iraqi border were put on an increased state of readiness.(19) By December, the Turkish troop presence on the Turkish-Iraqi border was already perhaps as high as 50,000. Continued Turkish resistance to American suggestions that Turkish troops in northern Iraq be placed under U.S. command, and attempts to negotiate downwards the number of U.S. troops earmarked for the northern front, made both Americans and Kurds apprehensive that Turkey might be prepared to act quite independently of the United States.(20)

### **MUDDYING THE WATERS?**

Alongside attempts to establish some common understandings with the Iraqi Kurdish leadership, Ankara also sought to muddy the waters for any Kurdish enclave in a future federal Iraq by championing the cause of its Turkic kinsmen in the region. Senan Ahmet Aga, head of the Iraqi Turkoman Front (ITC), was a regular presence in the corridors of power in Ankara--hardly a surprise to those KDP officials who believed the ITC to be a creation of the Turkish security forces. Aga argued that his people--numbering anywhere between 500,000 and 3 million--were discriminated against in the KDP-administered zone where they lived, and that in any future federal arrangement they too should enjoy the benefits of self-government on the basis of their distinctive ethnicity, rather than incorporation into a Kurdish zone. This argument has particular significance because of the concentration--according to Aga, a 60 percent preponderance--of Turkomen in the Kirkuk oil-bearing region of northern Iraq.(21) Therefore, any Turkoman element in a federal Iraq would of course be sponsored by Ankara and centered on oil-rich Kirkuk,(22) an outcome that would be detrimental to the KDP in particular.

A more sinister twist to Turkey's approach to Iraqi Kurdistan was the occasional whiff of irredentism. For example, then-Defense Minister Sabahattin Cakmakoglu, admittedly a member of the far right National Action Party (MHP), chose in August 2002 to remark that Iraqi Kurdistan had been 'forcibly separated' from Turkey (by the British) at the time of the Republic's foundation in 1923, and that Ankara retained a protective interest in the fate of the region.(23) During the previous Gulf War, Ozal had similarly mused about Turkish claims to the region in the event of an Iraqi collapse.(24) In 1986, it also seems that Ankara warned the United States and Iran that it would demand the return of Mosul and Kirkuk in the event of disorder in Iraq as a consequence of the Iran-Iraq war.(25) Moreover, it has been reported that the then-Foreign Minister in the AKP government, Yasar Yakis, sought legal clarification of the status of Mosul and Kirkuk.(26) Some Turks have pointedly noted that Mosul and Kirkuk were ceded to Iraq, not to any Kurdish state that might subsequently emerge.(27)

Turkish nationalists had often expressed resentment at the loss of Mosul and Kirkuk as a result of the 1923 Lausanne Treaty and its confirmation by the League of Nations in 1926. This resentment is just one manifestation of the so-called 'Sevres mentality,' based on a never-implemented 1920 treaty that would have left no more than a rump Turkish state in the wake of the Ottoman collapse. This takes the form of a heightened sensitivity--some might say paranoia--concerning threats to the country's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Misplaced as such a mind-set might appear to be, Washington has arguably been guilty of underestimating it as an underlying reality of Turkish national security culture. It cannot be said to amount to irredentism, but it could in certain circumstances provide an

underpinning for what might otherwise appear as pure opportunism.

### **KURDS, TURKS AND AMERICANS**

Washington now found itself involved in intractable, unenviable three-way talks with Ankara and the Iraqi Kurds about arrangements for the northern front. Tension between Ankara and the Iraqi Kurds was particularly high concerning the fate of the northern Iraqi oilfields,(28) but Ankara was also worried about any suggestion that Kurdish forces might play a major part in the overthrow of the Iraqi regime.(29) Ankara became increasingly nervous about the possibility of the United States arming Kurdish fighters, particularly were it to involve heavy equipment, and insisted that any arms distributed to them be collected at the earliest possible opportunity. Washington's negotiators found themselves obliged to offer reassurances to both sides: to Ankara, Washington pledged its commitment to Iraq's territorial integrity; and to the Kurds, that their aspirations for autonomy within a federal structure would be met. Washington agreed that it would fall to U.S. troops to take the Mosul and Kirkuk oil fields, thus denying both Turkish and Kurdish forces the opportunity to determine the fate of the oil-bearing region.(30) During his December visit to Ankara, Wolfowitz was careful to insist that post-Saddam Iraqi oil resources would belong to the Iraqi state as a whole.(31) In an attempt to coordinate operations, a three-way U.S.-Turkish-Iraqi Kurd committee was established at the very end of 2002, with Zalmay Khalilzad acting as the U.S. interlocutor.(32) However, open expressions of mistrust of the U.S.-Kurdish relationship continued to be voiced in Ankara, and the Turkish press even reported an allegation that U.S. officials had entered into talks with the PKK behind Turkey's back.

As KDP-PUK cooperation intensified in anticipation of a U.S.-led attack on the Iraqi regime during the autumn of 2002, manifested by discussions over a draft constitution for the Kurdish zone and the reopening of the KRG parliament,(33) Washington also found itself maneuvered into recognizing the cause of the Iraqi Turkomen Front (ITF) in the face of KDP opposition. Thus, in Autumn 2002, the ITF was belatedly incorporated into the U.S.'s 1998 Iraqi Liberation Act, and was for the first time allowed representation at a September meeting of the Iraqi opposition in New York. The KDP clearly did not welcome this step, and continued to resist ITC involvement, its claims to Kirkuk and to a federal zone of their own. Indeed, the ITC's suggestion that the Kurdish parliament should be a temporary measure and might in time be superseded by the establishment of a central Baghdad parliament in post-Saddam Iraq dovetailed nicely with Ankara's preferences.(34)

### **MONEY**

As U.S.-Turkish talks on access to bases and territory became increasingly earnest in late 2002, the two sides became increasingly tangled up in parallel negotiations over the amount of economic compensation Turkey should receive for its cooperation. Although the figures under consideration were not officially made public, it quickly became evident that the two sides were very far apart. From Ankara's perspective, and particularly that of an AKP government flying in the face of Turkish public opinion, the opinion of its own parliamentary deputies, as well as that of most of the region, the broader political as well as economic price Turkey would have to pay helped both to justify its tactics and strengthen its will to hold out. The twists and turns of these negotiations, and in particular Ankara's determination to obtain watertight assurances before any

firm commitments were entered into, were in themselves a contributory factor to the developing ill-feeling between Washington and Ankara. It appeared to many in Washington that money was Ankara's paramount concern, as if the Turkish approach was purely a mercenary one. However, although there is little doubt that Ankara has sometimes exaggerated the economic costs to Turkey both of the 1990-1 Gulf War and of any new conflict over Iraq, the belief that Turkey was a net loser from its cooperation in the earlier coalition effort runs deep, and fed much of the popular--and governmental--opposition to involvement in any new adventures. For their part, Turks resented the American implication that Turkey was prostituting itself.

#### **COMING TO A HEAD**

In the wake of a National Security Council meeting on January 31, the Turkish government finally agreed that on February 18 it would seek parliamentary approval for the entry of U.S. troops into Turkey. The vote would be linked to approval for the dispatch of Turkish troops to Iraq. However, the financial package, the number of U.S. troops to be allowed in, and the terms of Turkish entry into Iraq, had not yet been settled to Ankara's complete satisfaction.(35) Against the dramatic backdrop of raging diplomatic fallout in NATO over the dispatch of Patriot air defense systems, AWACS aircraft, and chemical and biological defense units to Turkey, an increasingly impatient United States was obliged to engage in frustrating and sometimes bizarre last-minute negotiations with Ankara over these outstanding issues. Even the terms governing the U.S. personnel involved in upgrading bases was still a source of a great deal of technical, legal and financial haggling before they were actually able to begin work.(36)

As February 18 approached, Ankara was still haggling over the U.S. offer of financial compensation, despite an increased offer from \$4 to \$6 billion in aid and up to \$20 billion in grants and loans. Ankara was also resisting Washington's attempts to ensure that the terms of the deal should fall within the IMF rescue package for Turkey, and was introducing to the agenda items such as duties on Turkish textile exports to the United States and the requirement that the aid package have a written guarantee attached in the hope that any future Congressional opposition might be overcome.(37) In any case, with four or five U.S. ships carrying tanks and other heavy equipment for the 4th infantry division sitting helpless off the Turkish coastline, and another 30 or so ships on their way, the Turkish government declined to put the issue to a vote, arguing both that it was not yet content with the progress of the talks, and that the Turkish parliament would in any case not be prepared to accept what was being offered.(38)

Reaching agreement on the related issues of U.S. and Turkish troop involvement appeared no less problematic. Amid reports that the two sides were nearing agreement that 47,000 U.S. troops might enter Turkey, there was still tension over the number of Turkish troops that might enter into Iraq, what their mission might be, and how much freedom of action they might enjoy.(39) Not surprisingly, as rumors circulated that Washington was making concessions in order to reach agreement with Ankara, Iraqi Kurdish objections became ever more strident.(40) Turkey was still insisting that any Kurdish fighters armed by the United States should be disarmed as soon as possible,(41) and that Turkey would retain command of its own forces in Iraq.

With a transparent lack of enthusiasm, with U.S.-Turkish differences concerning the role of Turkish troops and the terms of the aid package still in the open, against a



backdrop of intense U.S. frustration, and with concerns now being voiced by the Turkish President, the Parliamentary Speaker and others over the legality of the procedure, on February 26 the government introduced a measure to parliament that would permit the entry of 62,000 U.S. troops--a higher figure than had been expected--255 jet aircraft and 65 helicopters, for a period of 6 months. On March 1, after more delays and in the immediate wake of a National Security Council meeting at which the powerful Turkish military had remained emphatically mute, parliament rejected the measure, which would also have allowed an unspecified number of Turkish troops into northern Iraq, by a margin of just three votes.

Although U.S. military and civilian officials sought to put a brave face on the outcome, U.S. war planners were now left in something of a quandary, compounded by the apparent absence of any plans to resubmit the bill to the Turkish parliament. Such was the progression towards war that time alone precluded the implementation of the original plan for a substantial and heavy infantry assault from Turkish soil. Amid hints that the aid package would now be withdrawn, and emphatic warnings to Turkey not to intervene in Iraq unilaterally, U.S. thinking now shifted towards the possibility of mounting a lighter and smaller attack against northern Iraq with forces that might be flown directly to air bases there. This, plus air attacks against Iraq, would also require Turkish parliamentary approval that the U.S. be granted overflight rights. Even now it took substantial pressure from Washington, including from President Bush, as well as the belated intervention of the Turkish Chief of General Staff, before the issue was put before the Turkish parliament. On March 20, on the very day that the war commenced, overflight rights were granted

by a comfortable margin in the Turkish parliament, the deal also incorporated permission to the Turkish army to enter northern Iraq. U.S. assault troops were not to be allowed onto Turkish territory, however. Turkey was the last NATO ally to grant overflight rights to the United States.

## CONCLUSION

Time will tell whether the issues raised by Washington's attempt to secure Turkish cooperation in the war with Iraq will be more substantial than the issues over which the war itself was launched. The future of U.S.-Turkish relations, of Turkey's relations with Iraq, of the Kurdish aspiration for self-determination, of the future of Iraq, of regional stability, and of Turkish democracy, are all now likely to be different, perhaps substantially so, than what they would have been otherwise.

The incorporation of a \$1 billion supplement into the war budget sent to Congress by the Bush administration, coupled with Secretary of State Colin Powell's 'kiss and make up' visit to Ankara in early April, are early indications that all is not lost in U.S.-Turkish relations. Powell's visit sealed Ankara's agreement that the Special Forces and airborne troops deployed to northern Iraq were supplied from Turkish territory. As the United States finds itself drawn ever more towards the political and resource issues of the broader Middle East region, Turkey remains a strategically located NATO ally. Regime change in Iraq will intensify Turkey's own development as a major oil and gas transit route. The United States will remain Ankara's most important strategic, economic and political sponsor. In the wake of the failure to settle the division of Cyprus in accordance with the most recent UN plan, a failure generally laid at the door of the Turkish Cypriot leadership and its supporters and allies within Ankara's

military and bureaucratic elites, the EU has rarely looked less likely as an alternative to Turkey's close relationship with the United States.

On the other hand, the Pentagon, hitherto Ankara's most ardent advocate in Washington, is arguably the most frustrated with Ankara's behavior. Its war plans were in effect sabotaged by Turkey's behavior. Bases and ports were upgraded at U.S. expense but to no avail. The equipment for the U.S. Fourth Infantry, earmarked to enter northern Iraq across the Turkish border and left floating off the Turkish coast for weeks waiting for what turned out to be a failed parliamentary vote in Ankara, spent most of the war transiting by sea to southern Iraq and was thus unavailable to the theatre command. Logistic supplies that had entered Turkey had to be withdrawn. Instead, airborne forces were parachuted into northern Iraq as much to signal to Ankara not to intervene unilaterally as to fight against Saddam. As a consequence of the absence of a real second front in Iraq's north, Mosul and Kirkuk--and Tikrit--remained unconquered even as coalition forces were entering the downtowns of Baghdad and Basra.

While things could have been worse, there will be many in the Pentagon who will remain conscious of the consequences of Turkish non-cooperation. For America's military planners, what good is Turkey's strategic location if it is unavailable to U.S. troops? Furthermore, should a stable and pro-western regime emerge in Baghdad, Iraq could offer Washington an oil-rich, grateful and still more strategically located regional alternative to Turkey. In the foreseeable future, it is less likely that the Pentagon will be quite so willing to lobby on Turkey's behalf. It is also less likely that Washington will speak up for Turkey quite so strongly with the EU or the IMF, or that the White House will be quite so prepared to dampen preoccupations on Capitol Hill with Turkey's human rights records or with

the claims of genocide put forward by the Armenian lobby.

Turkey's failure to permit U.S. troops to enter Iraq from the north resulted in the ultimate irony. America's thinly spread and relatively lightly armed forces were left with no option but to rely on Iraqi Kurds more than either Ankara or Washington would ever have desired. American promises to take Mosul and Kirkuk and to keep the Kurds away from these cities, as a sweetener to encourage Ankara to cooperate with Washington, amounted to nothing as the United States was left with no choice but to regard its Kurdish allies as indispensable force generators in the north. Ankara's more overbearing threats to act unilaterally also became more muted once the fighting started, as Ankara was forced to appreciate that it had lost whatever room for maneuver it had formerly enjoyed, in light of the clear U.S. warnings not to intervene in Iraq. The United States is now more indebted to the Iraqi Kurds, and Ankara is less well placed to have a say in post-Saddam arrangements in Iraq, as a consequence of Turkey's failure to cooperate.

Yet, although their numbers have been reduced since Saddam's fall, Turkish troops remain poised on the Iraqi border, and the situation in Iraqi Kurdistan is surely shaping up to confirm some of Ankara's very worst fears. A possibly serious clash between Ankara and Washington over the future of Iraqi Kurdistan looks likely before long. In such an eventuality, Iranian and Syrian involvement cannot be ruled out. Washington's best way to avoid such a clash, as well as to satisfy the likely wishes of any future Iraqi government too, might be to rein in its Kurdish allies. This would pose an awful dilemma. Ankara did warn Washington of the possible implications of war for Iraq's territorial unity, and of its likely regional ramifications. In issuing such warnings, Turkey was acting as an integral part of the region, not as a

bystander. The Turkish government's recent overtures to Syria and Iran, which have aroused Washington's suspicions, offer an additional reminder of Turkey's regional preoccupations. Washington might still have to reap what it has sown in Kurdistan.

It is reasonable to surmise that Turkey's domestic political ground has shifted too. In the negotiations that preceded March 1st, Washington sometimes behaved as if the Turkish General Staff was the main conduit to Turkish decision-making. In the past, this has been a fairly well founded presumption. However, the AKP government, and its parliamentary deputies even more so, proved to be less predictable and less malleable than expected. Of course, Turkish governments have rarely been as compliant as is sometimes supposed. Ankara's concerns were real and, from the outset, forcibly expressed. Nevertheless, Washington elected to downplay their significance.

For its part, the military in Turkey was remarkably quiescent. The explanation for this remains obscure, but the early indications are that the General Staff was happy to stand back and allow a government it despised to demonstrate its incompetence. The AKP government duly obliged, but the eventual outcome was not one that the military either expected or desired. The Turkish General Staff is now extremely constrained in its freedom of action with respect to northern Iraq, and can only watch while the Iraqi Kurds seek to call in their debts with Washington. The Turkish military's stock in the Pentagon has fallen considerably, that of the Iraqi Kurds has risen, whilst the AKP government has behaved in accordance with the wishes both of the Turkish people and a majority of Turkey's Muslim neighbors.

There was an element of miscalculation on Ankara's part during the negotiations with the United States. Both the

government and the military believed that the United States had no choice but to offer whatever Ankara asked for, and to wait until Ankara was ready. In failing to recognize that Washington would resort to a 'Plan B,' both the military and civilian elements of the government overplayed their hand. At the same time, there was an element of defiance in the behavior of the AKP deputies, and perhaps of the government too. Ankara's resistance to U.S. pressure played well to the domestic and regional audiences. This expression of Turkish democracy has not been to the liking of the military, and also caused problems for the United States. It may continue to do so. Should Turkey's Islamist democrats persist in their efforts to cement relations with neighboring states and exploit populism at home, this whole saga might come to be considered as part of a broader set back for Turkey's secularist approach to both domestic and foreign policy issues.

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## NOTES

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