MERIA

THE FAILURE OF U.S. – TURKISH PRE-IRAQ WAR NEGOTIATIONS: AN OVERCONFIDENT UNITED STATES, POLITICAL MISMANAGEMENT, AND A CONFLICTED MILITARY

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Three years after the fateful March 1, 2003 vote in the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA), a vote that denied American troops from staging an invasion of Iraq from Turkish soil, it is in the interests of both Ankara and Washington to identify past mistakes to avoid repeating them in the future. Although a full account of the failed negotiation over the northern front cannot occur without the declassification of government documents in the U.S. and Turkey, the goal of this paper is to begin explaining what happened and why. This article argues that three main factors contributed to the failed vote in the Turkish Parliament: 1) An overconfident United States that asked for more than it should have from its Turkish ally; 2) A divided Justice and Development Party; and 3) A conflicted Turkish military establishment.

On March 1, 2003, the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) voted 264 – 251 on a measure that would have authorized as many as 62,000 American troops from the 4th Infantry Division to stage an invasion of Iraq from Turkish soil. Under Turkish parliamentary rules, however, a majority of Members of Parliament (MPs) present in the chamber needed to vote "yes" for the measure to pass, and there were 19 abstentions. Thus, the measure failed by three votes. The Parliament's decision was the culmination of nearly a year of official discussions and intense negotiations between U.S. and Turkish officials both in Washington, D.C. and in Ankara.

The result shocked and embarrassed Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the leader of Turkey's Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi* or AKP), who had assured the United States that he could deliver a positive vote in the Turkish Parliament. It also surprised and angered many in the Pentagon, including Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, who only a few months earlier during a December trip to Ankara seemed to think Turkish approval was locked up, declaring at a press conference that "Turkey has been with us always in the past and will be with us now."[2] Suddenly, the U.S. military, which had ships of supplies and materiel waiting for weeks off the Turkey's Mediterranean coast, would have to reconfigure its war plans only weeks before the planned American invasion of Iraq.

By nearly all accounts, the failed vote dealt a serious blow to U.S. – Turkish relations. Threes years later, it still hangs like a dark cloud over the U.S.-Turkey relationship. It is at least partially responsible for the surge in anti-American sentiment in Turkey as reflected by the wild popularity of the recently released Turkish film, "Valley of the Wolves – Iraq," a work of "historical" fiction that depicts American soldiers committing brutal acts against Iraqi

innocents. The film has broken all Turkish box office records. In the United States, the Bush Administration remains cool towards Turkey, and many of Ankara's traditional supporters within the Pentagon are still bristling from what they consider a great betrayal. While there are currently attempts in both Ankara and Washington to rebuild their strategic partnership, the road ahead remains steep.

As with most recent history involving complex interactions between governments, ripping truth from the jaws of political spin and popular conventional wisdom is no easy task. However, three years after the fateful vote in the Turkish Parliament, it is in the interests of both Ankara and Washington to identify past mistakes to avoid repeating them in the future. Although a full account of the failed negotiation over the northern front cannot occur without the declassification of government documents in the United States and Turkey, the goal of this paper is to begin explaining what happened and why.

Why did the Turks reject the U.S. request? Or, conversely, how did the United States fail to secure Turkish support? U.S. and Turkish officials, who were involved in the negotiations, as well as regional experts interviewed for this paper, agree that there are many explanations. The prevailing view at the Pentagon is that the Turkish military leadership did not push hard enough, if at all, for the authorization to pass. Some State Department officials also share this view, though many to a lesser extent. Turkish officials and regional experts blame the United States for asking too much of Turkey and not appreciating the pressure that they were putting on an inexperienced government. All agreed that the AKP had terribly mismanaged the parliamentary vote on March 1, 2003 and that its procedural errors were the most easily avoidable. Each of these explanations has merit and deserves the appropriate analysis.

This article argues that three main factors contributed to the failed vote in the Turkish Parliament: 1) An overconfident United States that asked for more than it should have from its Turkish ally; 2) A divided Justice and Development Party; and 3) A conflicted Turkish military establishment.

CAVEAT ON 20/20 HINDSIGHT

As with most failed negotiations, there is plenty of blame to go around. Many analysts and officials refer to a handful of mistakes that might have affected the three-vote margin. For example, officials in the State Department and in the Turkish Foreign Ministry argue that offensive cartoons from American newspapers that anti-authorization deputies circulated in the Turkish Parliament on the day of the vote might have affected the outcome. The cartoons portrayed the Turks as nefarious rug sellers and prostitutes trying to extort Uncle Sam. They were the result of a political miscalculation by Turkish Foreign Minister Yaşir Yakiş whose late night trip to Colin Powell's home in February 2003 to request a $92 billion aid package leaked in the American press.[3] Powell considered the amount ridiculous and expressed as much to Yakiş who was reprimanded in Ankara upon his return.

Similarly, there are officials and analysts who believe that the United States made a crucial mistake by setting deadlines and then reneging on them. According to Sedat Ergin's account of the negotiations in the Turkish daily newspaper *Hurriyet*, Vice President Dick Cheney phoned Prime Minister Abdullah Gul at one point and told him that, "the President must decide by February 12 [at] the latest whether these

ships should remain near the Turkish coast or head toward the Suez Canal."[4] However, this date came and went, while the ships remained parked off the Turkish coast. Thus, the Turks began to think that the Americans not only wanted a northern front, but that they needed it. If the idea that Turkey was indispensable to the U.S. war effort had not been planted and nurtured quite so methodically by American officials, maybe three deputies would have voted "yes" instead of "no."

While each of these incidents is certainly important, there are a dozen other alleged mistakes that one could argue affected the outcome. However, the purpose of this paper is not to micromanage every detail of the negotiation from the perspective of 20/20 hindsight. It is to contribute to our deeper understanding of the underlying reasons for why the negotiations did not result in an affirmative parliamentary vote.

AN OVERCONFIDENT UNITED STATES

When U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney made a trip to Ankara in March of 2002, he initiated discussions about how Turkey might assist the United States if it went to war with Iraq.[5] This process would formalize in July 2002 when Cheney's appointed right-hand man on Turkey, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, made his own trip to the Turkish capitol to articulate the American request for access to Turkey's military bases.[6] General Tommy Franks of the U.S. Central Command and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld told President Bush that the northern front was a necessary part of their war plan.[7] It was upon their urging that the President decided to ask Turkey for access to a northern front.[8]

On the surface, this demand may not have seemed unreasonable to officials without intimate knowledge of Turkey, its domestic politics, and its strategic concerns. Turkey and the United States have a rich history of cooperation and strategic partnership that has its roots in the Cold War. Turkish soldiers fought alongside American soldiers in the Korean War and boast the second largest military force in NATO. In 1991, Turkish President Turgut Özal gave then President George H.W. Bush access to Turkish airspace and airbases during Operation Desert Storm. Turkey would continue to allow Americans access to their airbase at Incirlik in the country's southeast to enforce the Iraqi no-fly zone as part of Operation Northern Watch throughout the 1990s. Americans remain the only foreign soldiers that Turkey has ever allowed to operate on its soil since the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923.

Beneath the surface, the first Persian Gulf War had put considerable strain on the U.S.- Turkish relationship. When Turkish President Özal had pushed for U.S. access to Turkish airbases, he had done so against the wishes of his military and several members of his cabinet. The Turkish military's Chief of Staff General Torumtay even resigned in protest at the time.[9] Throughout the 1990s, American use of the Turkish airbase at Incirlik to patrol the no-fly zone in Iraq as part of Operation Northern Watch was also very unpopular among many of Turkey's military and political leaders. The Turkish Parliament had to reauthorize the mission every six months, which always led to heated parliamentary debates. Moreover, Ankara refused to allow the United States to launch offensive air strikes against Baghdad from Incirlik airbase during the 1996 crisis over

Iraqi operations in the north and during Operation Desert Fox.[10]

In the lead-up to the second Gulf War, Bush Administration officials appear not to have fully appreciated the extent of Turkish apprehension about American policy objectives in Iraq throughout the 1990s. For Turkish policy-makers, especially those in the military, the first Persian Gulf War was anathema to Turkish security interests. They were concerned that the war would cause great regional instability with economic and possibly military consequences for Turkey. Immediately after the war, despite Turkey's official support of U.S. policy, a strong suspicion emerged in Ankara that the United States was sympathetic towards the Iraqi Kurds and that it would support the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq and southeastern Turkey. In the 1980s and 1990s, Turkish politics was consumed by Turkey's bloody war with Kurdish separatist guerillas, which claimed more than 30,000 lives.

In Turkey, there is no existential fear more palpable from the man on the street to the President of the Republic than that of a foreign power dividing up Turkey's territory. This fear, often referred to as the Sevre mentality, has its roots in the Treaty of Sevre imposed on the defeated Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, which divided Ottoman territory among the allied victors. The struggle to establish a modern Turkish nation-state by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the father of the Turkish republic, was a direct response to the Sevre humiliation. For many in the Turkish political establishment, there was a concern following the first Persian Gulf War that U.S. policy towards Iraq would eventually lead to a Sevre-like outcome for Turkey, namely the establishment of an independent Kurdish state. Turkish officials fear that an independent Kurdistan in northern Iraq would inevitably make claims on large parts of southeastern Turkey where much of the population is of Kurdish origin. They also worry that it would embolden Kurdish separatists in Turkey and lead to all-out civil war that could physically pull the country apart. Turkish fears appear to be at least somewhat warranted. A year after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), a terrorist organization whose end goal is the establishment of a Kurdish nation-state, ended its five year-old ceasefire and began launching attacks against Turkish soldiers and Turkish tourist sites. Since 2004, more than two-hundred Turkish soldiers and several civilians have died in PKK attacks.

Although the U.S.-Turkey relationship had endured these difficulties over Iraq in the 1990s, the threat of a second war with Iraq would present a new challenge. The United States had never asked the Turks to land troops on their territory. The Pentagon request would be raising the bar in the relationship and putting considerable pressure on the already suspicious Turks. Was the United States asking too much of its Turkish ally?

Secretary of State Colin Powell was skeptical of the Pentagon's request and expressed severe reservations. After working with the Turks during the Persian Gulf War and its aftermath, he knew the Turks would have a difficult time delivering.

"I think {the Turks} can handle the overflights," Powell told the National Security Council.

> I think they can handle the through-put. I think they can handle the air piece. It's when you talk about moving an armored division or

> mechanized division overland through the length of Anatolia with a long huge train behind it, huge numbers of vehicles, going to invade another Muslim country. I will go for that, but that may well be one too many bricks on the scale for the Turks. I don't think we can get it and we're taking a risk at losing it all by going for that.[11]

Powell ultimately lost the argument to Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and Franks who insisted that a northern front was necessary and that the Turks would ultimately permit it. The Pentagon's optimistic outlook was reinforced by unofficial backchannels of communications from some of Erdogan's political advisers signaling that Turkey would ultimately come through. One of these voices belonged to Cuneyd Zapsu, a businessman and close adviser to Erdogan without an official position in the Turkish government. Rather than listening to officials at the Turkish Embassy in Washington who, like Powell, were sending warning signals to U.S. officials about the chances for success, Wolfowitz and his advisors put more faith in the rosy communications coming from Zapsu and other unofficial interlocutors. In short, the Americans heard what they wanted to hear and blocked out the rest.

While Zapsu and others like him might have been honestly expressing the views of Erdogan, Pentagon officials should have understood that Erdogan's influence on Parliament was limited. After all, Erdogan was not prime minister yet and had no official influence over his party's MPs. Erdogan was nominally his party's leader, but Turkey's courts had banned him from holding political office after he was convicted in the early 1990s of publicly reciting a "seditious" Islamist poem. He would not become prime minister until after the new AK-dominated Parliament passed a law to expunge his record. He did not become prime minister until March 2003 after the vote for a northern front had already occurred. Complicating matters for the Americans, interim Prime Minister Abdullah Gul was uncomfortable with the U.S. request and argued against Turkish approval in several meetings with AKP officials. While Erdogan was traveling to Washington and European capitols reassuring foreign leaders of his Islamic-oriented government's benign intentions, Gul was back in Ankara arguing against Turkey's involvement in any war with Iraq.

INADEQUATE DIPLOMACY

The Pentagon's overconfidence in securing its preferred outcome was evident in the U.S. diplomatic strategy. Although Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Under Secretary of State Marc Grossman made several trips to Ankara to meet personally with Turkish officials, the negotiations never rose above the Deputy Secretary level. This was in stark contrast to the lead-up to the Persian Gulf War when Secretary of State James Baker reportedly visited Ankara three times.

Not everyone involved in the negotiations agreed with this approach. Other State Department sources indicated that U.S. Ambassador to Turkey Robert Pearson (who would not comment on the matter) felt uncertain enough about the Turkish ability to deliver that he advised Washington that President Bush should make a personal trip to Ankara from the NATO Summit in Prague at the end of November 2002. The White House denied his request. "Pearson argued that President Bush should go to Turkey personally to ask

for support," according to a State Department official. "Somewhere high up it was decided that the President would not go from the summit."

Instead, President Bush and his national security team decided to meet with Turkish diplomats and Turkish President Ahmet Sezer in Prague at the Hilton Hotel to discuss Iraq. However, the new AKP government had not yet received a vote of confidence, so they were not officially in power. Therefore, there was not a single representative from the AKP at this high-level meeting. With the exception of President Sezer, whose views differed markedly from the AKP in many areas, the Bush team was meeting with bureaucrats and political lame ducks.[12]

Diplomatically, the Bush Administration had made two critical mistakes. It had underestimated the apprehension across the Turkish political spectrum to a northern front and failed to make its case sufficiently to the Turkish leaders that mattered most.

A DIVIDED, INEXPERIENCED AKP MISMANAGES THE PARLIAMENTARY VOTE

In the November 2002 Turkish elections, the newly formed Justice and Development (AK) Party—which had populist and Islamist roots—swept into power with an overwhelming mandate from the Turkish electorate. AK, the Turkish acronym for the party, means white or pure in Turkish and had symbolic resonance during the campaign, as its candidates sought to replace the corrupt "old guard" political parties with a fresh vision and new leadership.[13] The newness of AK's leadership, however, had a downside. Most AKP deputies had never held public office before. They were new to the business of politics and it showed in the weeks and days leading up to the March 1, 2003 parliamentary vote. This even included Erdogan, who had been a popular mayor of Istanbul, but had little experience with Turkish Parliamentary procedure.

"I think Erdogan basically misassessed the position he was in and made a mistake in the management of the vote in the Parliament," according to former U.S. Cyprus Coordinator Tom Weston who was in Ankara meeting with Erdogan about the renewed UN peace effort on Cyprus just before the vote. "He actually thought he had enough party discipline to win."[14]

While the AKP might have secured the three votes necessary for passage if it had employed a different parliamentary strategy, there were also serious internal political cleavages within the party that threatened the vote from the outset. Two factions emerged within the AKP leadership. One, led by Erdogan and his closest supporters in the cabinet, argued that Turkey should support the U.S. request to protect its interests in northern Iraq. Although Erdogan's faction was not happy about the idea of a war in Iraq, they believed a U.S. invasion was inevitable. By helping the Americans secure a northern front, they would ensure that Turkey would have a seat at the table in the war's aftermath. The other faction, led by interim Prime Minister Abdullah Gul, was both morally and strategically against the war. Strategically, the Gul faction pointed to the negative repercussions of Ozal's support of the first Persian Gulf War and suggested that a "no" vote would bolster Turkey's reputation in the European Union (EU). Its members were also morally uncomfortable with helping to facilitate an attack against other Muslims.[15] The inability of Erdogan to overcome this internal division before the cabinet sent the authorization bill to the Parliament was a major tactical failure. The

government's lack of unanimity made Erdogan's goal of passage significantly more difficult.

Erdogan found himself in a delicate political negotiation with his rank and file that eventually slipped out of his control. As we know now from several accounts, Erdogan took a secret straw poll of his party's deputies before the vote to estimate his party's defection rate.[16] The results of the straw poll appeared to bolster Erdogan's position since only about 50 deputies, about the same number who had voted against a measure in February authorizing the modernization of Turkey's military bases for possible American use, signaled that they would oppose the measure. Erdogan knew he didn't need all 361 AKP deputies to vote with him for the authorization to pass, but he was confident that the authorization would still pass by a clear margin of close to 50 votes.

Erdogan's tolerance of defectors within AK's ranks was an unorthodox political move. As in most parliamentary systems, the majority party's deputies in Turkey typically vote in lockstep with their government. It is not like the American system where Senators and Representatives routinely break from their party. Although Erdogan supported granting the authorization, he was sensitive to the different views of some of his own deputies, especially those who represented areas close to Turkey's border with Iraq where the prospect of war was very unpopular. He sent a clear signal to those deputies that they would be able to vote "no" (just as they had against the earlier measure in February) without repercussions.

Bolstered by his straw poll, Erdogan made a rare and unusual parliamentary move by calling for a closed rather than an open parliamentary vote. While there has been little said about the significance of this procedure in press accounts, officials and analysts familiar with the vote point to this closed procedure as a major a mistake on Erdogan's part. A closed vote means that the parliament casts its votes confidentially. Deputies vote electronically in the chamber, but only the vote totals are made public. Therefore, deputies are not individually accountable for their votes since their constituents do not know how they voted. The actual votes are not made public for ten years from the date of the vote.

One former State Department official, who is a regional expert on Turkey, compared the vote on March 1, 2003 to a similar vote taken prior to Operation Desert Storm in 1991 when the Turkish Parliament voted in favor of an authorization to allow the United States access to Turkish airspace and airbases. "In both cases, you had a ruling party holding a majority in Parliament containing a significant sentiment against Turkish participation. The difference is Ozal [the Turkish Prime Minister in 1991] had an open vote and Erdogan had a closed vote. If Erdogan had had the guts to have an open vote, it would have passed."

So why did Erdogan call for a closed vote?

First, it is possible that Erdogan didn't want to have to punish his own deputies publicly only months after taking office, especially over an issue as sensitive as a war authorization. Public opinion was 90 percent against the war, according to polls. Furthermore, on the day of the vote, thousands of Turkish citizens were protesting outside of the Parliament building. Any political party concerned about its electoral future would try to mitigate the potential fall-out associated with defying such overwhelming public

sentiment. This is particularly the case for the deputies representing areas in southeastern Turkey where the public would be most adversely affected by a war.

Second, as already mentioned, we know that Erdogan was facing deep divisions within his own cabinet. Several members, including the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of State for Religious Affairs, and the Minister of Culture, would not initially sign the authorization bill, which was necessary procedurally to send it to the TGNA.[17] A closed vote would enable these members of his cabinet to vote "no" without the public knowing that they had opposed the policy of the party leader.

There is widespread speculation that Prime Minister Gul, whose reservations about the authorization have already been mentioned, ultimately voted against the authorization and used the closed vote as cover to persuade other AKP deputies to vote "no" as well. We know from press accounts that his speech in Parliament on behalf of the authorization was tepid at best. "I will vote for this bill because my signature is on it," he is reported to have said.[18] Typically, such high-profile public defections in a parliamentary system would send a signal that the party leader is weak and would force the leader to take corrective action or risk the collapse of his government. It is reasonable to assume that Erdogan wanted to avoid this result.

Third, it is possible that Erdogan wanted the vote to be close in order to signal to a disapproving public that the entire AKP was not responsible for supporting the American-led war. Thus, having 50 or more deputies vote against the bill could have some domestic political benefits. Of course, even with an open vote, we can assume based on the February vote and Erdogan's straw poll that 50 AKP deputies would still have voted "no," so this explanation does seem not seem to hold up.

Fourth, Erdogan might have made the naïve assumption that a closed vote would compel some fence-sitting deputies to vote "yes" since they would not be held personally accountable for defying their constituents. However, this is the least compelling reason since it would have reflected a gross misunderstanding on the part of Erdogan of his own deputies. Since the deputies not only represented the public, but were members of it (especially in the case of AKP deputies most of whom had never held public office prior to November), their objections to the war were as much based on personal misgivings as they were on electoral concerns.

Ultimately, Erdogan made a miscalculation. Falsely assured by his straw poll that the authorization would pass by nearly 50 votes, he called for a closed vote and it backfired. While the Turkish public celebrated the Parliament's decision and praised the AKP deputies for defecting, Erdogan had let down his strategic ally.

A CONFLICTED TURKISH MILITARY SENDS MIXED SIGNALS

The news that the Turkish Parliament had failed to authorize the deployment of American forces in Turkey hit the Pentagon the hardest. "I can't overemphasize the degree of animosity between the U.S. military and the Turkish military after this," remembers Ret. Army Colonel Steve Norton who has worked extensively with the Turkish military over the years. "They lost all credibility and all trust. They're our long-time ally and then they say no? I think initially there was a feeling that the Turkish military lied to us."[19]

Many at the Pentagon had assumed that the Turkish military would ensure their

preferred outcome. In fact, the Turkish General Staff, specifically Chief of Staff General Hilmi Özkök, had signaled to their Pentagon counterparts that, though they opposed the war, they favored Turkish cooperation with the American military effort. After the vote, Pentagon leaders argued that if the Turkish military had spoken up and intervened more directly with the political leaders, then the Parliament would have passed the authorization. In short, they believed that the Turkish military establishment had betrayed them.

In order to assess this interpretation of events, it is necessary to ask whether it is reasonable to assume that the Turkish military would have somehow guaranteed a "yes" vote in Parliament if it truly believed that it was in Turkey's national security interests to cooperate with the United States war effort. We also need to take a look at the strategic environment in which the military was operating and the preferences that affected its behavior.

First, there is general agreement among American officials and outside analysts who deal with the Turkish military on a regular basis that the Turkish General Staff believed that a war with Iraq was a threat to Turkish national security. Specifically, the Turkish commanders were concerned that a war with Iraq would lead to great instability in southeastern Turkey and possibly lead to a renewed war against Kurdish separatists crossing the border from northern Iraq. Indeed, this is exactly what happened after the first Gulf War, and the memory was still fresh in the minds of the Turkish military. Nearly 500,000 Iraqi Kurds fled into southeastern Turkey after the U.S.-led invasion, causing a refugee crisis. Many of the Iraqi Kurds also joined the PKK. Members of the Turkish military have referred to the bloody war with the PKK as their "Vietnam."[20]

On the other hand, the Turkish military placed great value on its strategic partnership with the United States and had little desire to let down its American ally in a time of need. For fifty years, Turkey had generally benefited from its strong ties to Washington and saw the relationship as a pillar of its national strategic interest. "While the Turkish military thought it was in their best interest to go along with the American plan it was the lesser of two evils," according to Ret. Col. Steve Norton. "They didn't like that the U.S. was going in."

There was a third factor that likely colored the thinking of Turkish military commanders.

As one Turkish official explains, the Turkish military was not particularly happy with its relations with the United States over the last ten years. According to this official, "There were many distasteful events between Turks and Americans in Northern Iraq, involving the Kurds and CIA. The U.S. wanted to fly more aircraft. They wanted a freer hand to enforce the no fly zone."

From the beginning, therefore, there existed an inherent conflict among the Turkish General Staff (TKS) about what course of action they should support. Like many of Turkey's politicians, they opposed an Iraq war and preferred a policy that could somehow prevent that outcome. However, by February 2003, the United States had made it very clear that a war with Iraq was inevitable.

Given that the Turkish military could not reasonably find a way to stop America's war plans, their conclusion was that Turkey's interests would be better served if the Turkish government cooperated with the Americans. On January 31, 2002, Turkish

commanders, including Chief of Staff Hilmi Özkök, reportedly expressed strong views at a National Security Council meeting the AKP leadership that Turkey should cooperate militarily with the United States.[21]

The logic was that if war was inevitable Turkey would be better off having a seat at the post-war table than sitting it out. Thus, the strategy of the Turkish military and at least part of the Turkish political establishment was to guarantee a certain degree of control over American post-war policy in northern Iraq in exchange for giving the Americans access to their prized northern front. While we know that Turkish commanders were uneasy about the war in general, their deep concern about protecting their interests in northern Iraq strengthened their support for cooperating with the Americans. Once they decided that working with the Americans was better than being left out, they negotiated hard with Washington for a memo of understanding (MOU) that would have given them several freedoms of action in northern Iraq. For example, it would have given the Turks the right to establish a buffer zone in northern Iraq to limit the passage of Kurdish refugees into southern Turkey and to send their forces to the Iraqi cities of Kirkuk and Mosul if the Iraqi Kurds made any attempt to change the demographic status quo.[22] When the Turkish parliament voted against the authorization, the Turkish military lost the MOU.

So was the Turkish General Staff silent about their support for the authorization? Did they purposefully keep their mouths shut in order to make it appear that the AKP, rather than the military, had pushed for the American authorization request? Would they have intervened publicly if they felt there was a large risk that the Parliament would vote down the authorization?

First, we have to address the question of whether or not the Turkish General Staff were silent. Some American officials feel that if they cared enough about the authorization, they would have spoken out publicly. However, there are reasonable explanations for why the Turkish General Staff did not speak out publicly that do not preclude the likelihood that they spoke up privately.

There has long been a perception in the United States and in Europe that the Turkish military dictates Turkish foreign policy and, more broadly, that when the Turkish military wants something from Turkey's elected political leaders, it gets it. Much of this perception is the product of modern Turkish history during which the Turkish military has three times overthrown elected democratic governments in the name of protecting the secular, democratic nature of the state. Most recently, in 1997, the Turkish military is generally believed to have orchestrated the resignation of Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, because its leaders thought he was undermining Turkey's secularism.

Turkey's military has fundamentally changed since then. The military's support of Turkish accession to the European Union (EU) has made it more sensitive to the EU's criticisms of its interventionist tendencies.[23] More and more, the military is speaking publicly less and less.[24] Its changing attitude is perhaps most reflected in the military's current Chief of Staff, General Özkök. According to Turkish press accounts and former Pentagon officials, Özkök is much less inclined to talk to the media about politics than his predecessor, General Huseyin Kivrikoglu, who would frequently make headlines at press conferences. At his first meeting with

reporters in August of 2002, Özkök was asked whether he had made up his mind about which party he was going to vote for in the upcoming November election. "Is this a question that should be directed at a military officer?" and added, "Do not ask me this. I do not comment on politics in any way."[25] He gave a similar response when asked a nearly identical question after votes were cast in early November, "As you know, I'm not commenting on that subject."[26]

Retired Army Captain Jay Wilkins, who was part of the American negotiating team and previously the Turkey Desk Officer for two and a half years at the Office of the Secretary of Defense, believes that the Turkish military was genuinely self-conscious about publicly intervening in the political debate over the authorization bill: "I think the military didn't want to be seen as publicly beating on the AKP. The military has decreasingly been involved in things since Erbakan. The military thought it would pass anyway. And they felt the world was watching to see how they would react to this new AKP."[27]

There is yet another, more political explanation for the Turkish military's low profile in the authorization debate. It was an open secret that the military was suspicious of the AKP because of its strong Islamist roots. After all, since the inception of the Turkish Republic, the military has been the protector of the secular nature of the state. "The truth is that the Turkish military had a deep animosity towards the new government," according to one State Department official close to the negotiations. "They thought that they were a wedge, Islamist party. They were extremely suspicious of their political goals."

The military has also traditionally been the most popular and respected institution in Turkey. Thus, given popular opposition to a Turkish northern front, Turkey's military commanders may not have wanted to make Erdogan's life any easier by making strong public pronouncements in favor of the authorization. To do so would have left the door open for AKP leaders to blame the military for pressuring AKP to support an unpopular war. In a final attempt to strengthen the "yes" camp within his party, Erdogan reportedly asked military leaders at a National Security Council meeting the night before the parliamentary vote to issue a public statement supporting the authorization. They declined and the next day the vote went down in flames.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the United States got what it needed from Turkey, even though it did not get what it wanted. The Turkish Parliament agreed later in March to give the United States access to their airspace, and the United States provided Turkey with a $1 billion aid package in exchange (which the Turks eventually turned down). The United States didn't have a northern front, but they were able to parachute in approximately 5,000 airborne troops into northern Iraq to fight alongside the Kurds. The invasion of Iraq was successful militarily, at least initially, making General Tommy Franks's insistence on having a northern front seem either disingenuous or wrong.

If President Bush had listened to Secretary of State Colin Powell, the United States might have avoided the wasted energy, manpower, resources, and the diplomatic humiliation that the failed negotiations cost. The Parliamentary vote was also an unnecessary and avoidable blow to the U.S.-Turkey relationship. While its full effect is the subject for a more

exhaustive analysis,[28] it is clear that things will never again be the same.

"Both sides know it is an important relationship," says former Turkish Ambassador to the United States Osman Faruk Loğoğlu. Yet he adds, with resignation in his voice, "The bitter taste still lingers. It's felt more times than others. But now it is part of the U.S.-Turkish historical space."[29]

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NOTES

[1] Since the subject of this paper is one of recent history, the academic literature is limited. Therefore, this paper is primarily based on interviews the author conducted with U.S. and Turkish officials involved in or intimately familiar with the negotiations, as well as with former officials and regional experts. Since many of the author's subjects are still currently in official positions, some were only willing to talk on background and are not referred to by name in this paper. The author has also closely consulted newspaper accounts both in the United States and in Turkey (translated) during and after the negotiations, as well as academic research when applicable.

[2] Stephen F. Hayes, "Wolfowitz Talks Turkey, The Serious War Planning is under Way," *Weekly Standard*, December 16, 2002.

[3] Glenn Kessler and Philip P. Pan, "Missteps with Turkey Prove Costly; Diplomatic Debacle Denied a Strong Northern Thrust in Iraq," *Washington Post*, March 28, 2003, A01.

[4] Sedat Ergin, "Report Says Turkey Pledged 'Split between Turkish Army, Government Reported Over Iraq Policy in Early 2003," *Istanbul Hurriyet* in Turkish (translated). September 22, 2003

[5] Fikret Bila, "Cheney's Visit, Turkey's Opposition to Operation against Iraq Viewed," *Milliyet* in Turkish (translated), March 22, 2002.

[6] Sedat Ergin, "Report Says Turkey Pledged 'Strategic Partnership' With U.S. in Iraq in 2002," *Istanbul Hurriyet* in Turkish (translated), September 17, 2003.

[7] Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 2004), p. 325.

[8] *Ibid*.

[9] Stephen F. Larrabee and Ian O. Lesser, *Turkish Foreign Policy in an Age of Uncertainty* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003), p. 135-36

[10] *Ibid*.

[11] *Ibid*.

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