A COMEDY OF ERRORS: AMERICAN-TURKISH DIPLOMACY AND THE IRAQ WAR

The Grand National Assembly's failure to allow American troops to use Turkish territory to conduct military operations on Iraq was a watershed event in Turkish-American relations. It did not occur in isolation, though, but rather was the result of diplomatic and political errors and miscalculations on both sides. Nor can the March 1 vote - or the July 4 incident - fully explain subsequent US-Turkish tension. Irritants in bilateral relations have included misguided US diplomacy in the run-up to the war and an American failure to properly address PKK terrorism, as well as counterproductive Turkish strategies regarding Iraqi Turkmen and Kurds. Both Washington and Ankara have failed to engage productively about the future of Kirkuk.

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Turkey and the United States have for more than half a century enjoyed a special relationship. Turkish troops fought alongside Americans in the Korean War. As one of only two North Atlantic Treaty Organization members to border the Soviet Union, Turkey truly was a frontline state throughout the Cold War. In the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the Turkish government reaffirmed its alliance. Within a month, the Turkish Grand National Assembly voted 319-101 to send troops to Afghanistan to assist the United States in its Global War on Terror.[1]

Three years later, U.S.-Turkish ties are in disarray. In December 2004, Mehmet Elkatmış, head of the Turkish Parliament Human Rights Commission, accused the United States of "conducting genocide in Iraq." Faruk Anbarcıoğlu, a Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) deputy, suggested the dissolution of the Grand National Assembly's Turkish-American Inter-Parliamentary Friendship Group.[2] American officials, long friends of Turkey, also sounded alarm bells. Despite frequent assurances from both Turkish and American diplomats that U.S.-Turkish relations were on the mend, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas J. Feith acknowledged the problems during a February 17, 2005 speech at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City. Responding to a question from a Turkish reporter, Feith said, "It's crucial that the appreciation of…relationships extend beyond government officials [and] down to the public in general, because otherwise the relationship is not really sustainable." He implied that the AKP was responsible for the rise of anti-Americanism, commenting, "We hope that the officials in our partner countries are going to be devoting the kind of effort to building popular support for the relationship that we build in our own country."[3]

An opinion article entitled "The Sick Man of Europe—Again" examining Turkish anti-Americanism sent shockwaves through Turkish intelligentsia, both because of its sharp tone and because of its publication in *The Wall Street Journal*, a conservative daily generally supportive of both the George W. Bush administration and U.S.-Turkish relations.[4]

While AKP has done little to improve relations—and indeed leading figures like Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül and Chairman of the Parliament Bülent Arınç have done much to exacerbate them—the erosion in Turkish-American relations revolves around the decision to use military force to overthrow Iraqi President Saddam Huseyin. While both the American and Turkish media both focus on the March 1, 2003 Turkish Grand National Assembly decision against the deployment of Turkish troops in Iraq, the events leading to the downturn in Turkish-American relations are more complicated.

A Rude Awakening

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[1] Leyla Boulton, "Turkey to let troops go abroad for war on terror," *Financial Times*, October 11, 2001, p.4.
[2] *Radikal* website, December 5, 2004; translation provided by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, December 5, 2004.
[3] Douglas J. Feith, "National Defense in the Second Term," Council on Foreign Relations, February 17, 2005. www.cfr.org/publication_print.php?id=7858&content=
[4] Robert L. Pollock, "The Sick Man of Europe—Again," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 16, 2005.

The March 1, 2003 Grand National Assembly vote shocked an American public who had long taken Turkish support for granted. "In Blow to U.S., Turks Deny Bases," headlined *The Boston Globe*.[5] "Turkey snubs U.S., rejects troops," declared the *Chicago Tribune*.[6] While the majority of parliamentarians present voted in favor of the motion, Arınç ruled that the motion failed because, considering the 19 abstentions, the majority did not vote in favor of the U.S. deployment.

Both Turkish and American commentators—especially those opposed to the war in Iraq—trumpeted the vote as an example of democracy. While true, the machinations leading to the motion's defeat were far more complex, a combination of AKP disorganization, internal political machinations, and misguided American diplomacy.

The March 1 vote was not the first time the Turkish parliament voted to authorize American military action. On January 17, 1991, the Grand National Assembly voted to authorize American forces to attack Iraq from Turkish bases.[7] Even with 52 absent or abstaining parliamentarians, President Turgut Özal, whose Motherland Party held a parliamentary majority, had little trouble rallying the necessary votes. American officials assumed that AKP leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and then-Prime Minister Abdullah Gül could muster the same party discipline. "It's a huge setback for our purposes. It stunned me," Senator Jay Rockefeller, ranking Democrat on the Intelligence Committee, told CNN the day after the vote.[8]

Both Turkish and American journalists covering the politicking prior to the vote confided privately to American officials that, while Erdoğan was sincere in his desire for the motion's success, AKP deputies and party managers each denied their own responsibility for canvassing party members; the party leadership, because of AKP's disorganization, may have been unaware that it did not have the votes to win. Other factors may have also contributed to the bill's failure. According to a number of Iraqi Kurdish businessmen and politicians, Kurdistan Democratic Party leader Masud Barzani encouraged—sometimes financially—AKP deputies from southeastern Turkey to vote against the war so as to undercut the possibility of Turkish forces entering his territory. Regardless of the reason for the failure to win permission for the use of Turkish territory, in their shock at the motion's failure, many American officials fairly or unfairly began to question Erdoğan and Gül's sincerity.

American diplomacy was not without fault and, indeed, bears much of the blame. While the use of Turkish bases and territory were not indispensable from an American military standpoint, Turkey's participation in the 2003 Iraq War was nevertheless highly desirable to the United States, from both a military and diplomatic perspective. This makes the failure of the State Department to engage in high-level diplomacy all the more curious: Between the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the commencement of Operation Desert Storm,

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[5] March 2, 2003.
[6] March 2, 2003.
[7] Jonathan Randal, "Turkish Assembly Approves Use of Air Bases for U.S. Attacks," *The Washington Post*, January 18, 1991, A27.
[8] CNN Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer, March 2, 2003, Transcript # 030200CN.V47.

Secretary of State James Baker visited Turkey four times. Aside from a brief 2001 visit, Secretary of State Colin Powell did not travel to Turkey until a month after the National Assembly's vote.[9] Powell's failure to visit Turkey in late 2002 and early 2003—while he found time to fly to Angola, Cape Verde, and Columbia—was indicative of the failure in American public diplomacy under Powell.

Both the State Department and the U.S. Embassy in Ankara fumbled American approach to Turkey in other ways. In February 2003, Powell dispatched Ambassador Marisa Lino to lead negotiations. Lino was the wrong woman for the wrong job. While she had experience in Syria and Iraq, and has been ambassador to Albania, she had little experience in Turkey.[10] As the head of the U.S. delegation negotiating military memoranda of understanding regarding Turkish-American cooperation in Iraq, Lino was antagonistic and, according to even pro-American Turkish diplomats, dishonest.[11] Simultaneously, though, Ankara's choice of Ambassador Deniz Bölükbaşı as head of the Turkish team was unfortunate. While Ankara and Washington eventually reached agreement, the excessive nationalism for which Bölükbaşı is well-known in Ankara coupled with both his and Lino's lack of negotiation experience, soured the atmosphere.

The bulk of responsibility on the American side for the erosion of bilateral relations in the run-up to the war rests on the U.S. Embassy in Ankara. During pre-war negotiations, Ambassador W. Robert Pearson leaked derogatory comments about Turkey to the American and Turkish press.[12] He had a tin-ear for Turkish politics. Despite private entreaties by Turkish officials, he ignored warnings that the presence of American diplomats in the Grand National Assembly on the day of the vote would spur a nationalist backlash against the American deployment. He also shirked his own responsibilities. He shocked American policymakers when, shortly before his departure, he remarked at a diplomatic reception that he had spent the day before the vote playing golf with Turkish businessman Mustafa Koç.

Both Pearson and his staff failed to make the case for American policy to the Turkish press. Journalists who published falsehoods would often be invited to embassy functions with little mention of their incitement, while the embassy excluded many pro-American reporters and officials. Perhaps unintentional, such slights nevertheless demoralized if not embittered Turkish proponents of American policy and signaled to the larger Turkish audience that Washington did not care for its friends.

On a broader level, the U.S. Embassy failed in its public diplomacy outreach. Embassy officials did not effectively make the case for the Iraq intervention, nor did they counter faulty Turkish arguments. For example, many Turkish officials argued that the Iraqi

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[9] "Secretaries Travel Abroad," Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State. www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/trvl/st/13122.htm

[10] "Alumni Profile: Ambassador Marisa Lino," *Briefing*, The Elliot School of International Affairs, George Washington University, Spring 2003. http://www.gwu.edu/~elliott/news/briefing/spring2003/p26.cfm

[11] "From the Newspaper Columns: Behind the Scenes of the Washington Talks," *Turkish Daily News*, February 25, 2003.

[12] "The Foggy Bottom mindset," *The Washington Times*, June 16, 2003. www.washingtontimes.com/functions/print.php?StoryID=20030615-112308-4250r

campaign would devastate the Turkish economy and tourism industry. Deniz Baykal, leader of the parliamentary opposition Republican People's Party, for example, argued that Turkey would lose $10 billion in tourism revenue if it cooperated with the American intervention in Iraq.[13] The facts soon proved otherwise. Despite insurgency and insecurity in Iraq, Turkey's tourism revenue rose 32.5 percent, to $15.9 billion in 2004.[14] While Turkish officials may have exaggerated the potential for loss, their American counterparts—many new to Turkey—were not cognizant of the disappointment much of the Turkish establishment and public felt when the George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton administrations failed to compensate or reward Turkey for its substantial sacrifices during the 1991 Operation Desert Storm and subsequent Operation Northern Watch operations.

Fumbling the Vote's Aftermath

The Grand National Assembly's refusal to allow American forces might have been a footnote in U.S.-Turkish relations had it not been for subsequent missteps. It set a sour tone that Turkish authorities refused to waive visa fees for many in the American delegation arriving for negotiations at Esenboğa airport in March 2003. At the Sheraton in Ankara, hotel authorities forced early morning room changes upon American delegates "because of plumbing problems." Later that day—in full view of American officials and shortly before the arrival of the Iraqi Kurdish delegations—Turkish security officials moved into those very same rooms. Turkish intelligence operations may have been understandable, but the lack of subtlety was counterproductive.

The choice of Ankara for Iraqi opposition talks the week before the war was also unwise. The most contentious discussion centered upon the role of the Iraqi Turkmen Front in the Iraqi opposition leadership. While the U.S. delegation was in favor of allowing the Iraqi Turkmen Front to join the Iraqi opposition, it was more difficult for the Iraqi Kurdish politicians to make concessions on Turkish soil than on American soil. The choice of venue was also partly the fault of Zalmay Khalilzad, special presidential envoy and ambassador at large for Free Iraqis. He dismissed Washington's concerns over the meeting location. In Ankara, Khalilzad could be the center of press and diplomatic attention, while in Washington he would not be. Khalilzad was very ambitious; many in his entourage felt that he viewed himself as a Richard Holbrooke-type figure.[15] Unfortunately, with the talks in Ankara and the start of war less than a week away, it was impossible for the Bush administration to bring in the most senior figures—Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, or even the President—to cement a deal when delegates stalemated on key issues.

The Turkmen Problem

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[13] "Baykal asks AKP, 'Are you Hitmen?", *Turkish Daily News*, March 5, 2003.
[14] "Tourism earns Turkey 15.9 bln dollars in 2004," *Agence France Presse*, January 26, 2005.
[15] Richard Holbooke negotiated the 1995 Dayton Accords ending the Bosnia War and has been considered a leading contender for Secretary of State in any future Democratic administration.

Successive Turkish governments have taken interest in the Iraqi Turkmen community. They have long claimed the presence of more than three million Turkmen in Iraq.[16] These Turkish-speaking Iraqis were traditionally, alongside the Iraqi Jewish community, the country's business, professional elite, and during Ottoman times, political elite.

Following the 1991 uprising and the establishment of the northern Iraqi safe-haven, several Turkmen groups coalesced into the Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF). While the ITF was initially independent of the Turkish government, by 1996, former officials like founder Muzaffar Arslan left the group, complaining of increasingly heavy-handed Turkish military and intelligence interference. U.S. authorities also associated the ITF with the Turkish General Staff and the *Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı*, Turkish intelligence. Iraqi Turkmen officials reinforced this impression because of the frequency of their consultations with Turkish military and intelligence officials during the course of negotiations.

On a working level, the Iraqi Turkmen impacted Turkish-American relations a number of ways, all negative. While the State Department and Defense Department welcomed the opening of an ITF office in Washington, its office director Orhan Ketene gratuitously antagonized American authorities, leading to a poisoned attitude when dealing with Turkish officials. For example, Ketene would sometimes demand same-day meetings with the Secretary of Defense, impossible on short-notice not only for ambassadors but also American congressmen, and all the more so when the appointment-seeker refuses to disclose the subject of conversation. He developed a reputation for failing to keep those appointments he did make (as did also Farhad Barzani, the representative of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Washington). While some American officials were clearly sympathetic toward the Iraqi Kurds, Ketene attacked even the most pro-Turkish American government officials as being pro-Kurdish. Just as Pearson would speak ill of his Turkish interlocutors in Ankara, Ketene would do likewise in Washington, often badmouthing government officials; in both instances, such behavior was unprofessional and impacted relations negatively, especially among officials at the working level.

The Turkmen issue clouded negotiations in other ways. American authorities delayed meeting with ITF leader Sanan Aga after learning of his alleged involvement in a bombing plot directed at Iraqi Kurds, but in a location where Americans would have also been present. While the U.S. government was prepared to work with the ITF, both Turkish and American authorities wasted a great deal of diplomatic capital on a single person. Any remaining goodwill evaporated when Sanan Aga, after demanding entry into the six-party Iraqi opposition leadership, a concession Washington had wrung out of the Iraqi Kurdish leadership, indicated his continuing unwillingness to work in a coalition with any other Iraqi groups.

The Turkmen issue plagued U.S.-Turkish relations following the overthrow of Saddam's regime. Simply put, most Iraqi Turkmen—and especially those who were Shi'ite—refused the ITF's representation, which they considered biased toward the Sunni community and more concerned with the Turkish constituency than the Iraqi

[16] "Who wants a Kurdish state?", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, October 10, 1996.

constituency. When the [Iraqi] 'Kurdistan Regional Government' distributed Kurdish flags to residents of multi-ethnic towns like Tuuz and Daquq, many Turkmen responded not by flying the pale blue and white ITF flag, but rather the black, green, and red banners of the various Shi'ite groups.

Coalition Provisional Authority governance director Ryan Crocker exacerbated relations further when he selected Songul Chapuk to the Interim Governing Council. Crocker, who had spent much of his career in the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, was more sensitive to Arab rather than Turkish concerns. He appointed Chapuk primarily because he felt the Governing Council needed a woman, and was willing to overlook her lack of constituency not only in Kirkuk, but also in Iraq's wider Turkmen community. Had the ITF developed better working relationships with American officials or joined the process earlier, they would have had far greater influence over the process. Chapuk's appointment and failure to rise to the challenge of leadership effectively left the Turkmen community disenfranchised.

The disproportionate attention of the Turkish Foreign Ministry and General Staff upon the Turkmen undercut significantly Turkish influence in Iraq. Turkish officials gave their American counterparts the impression that Ankara was interested only in northern Iraq, and not in events in Baghdad or southern Iraq where, as a chief American ally, Turkish advice would have initially been more than welcome. On Turkmen policy and broader Iraqi issues, Turkish officials could likely have exerted greater influence with involvement in the incubation of policy rather than by seeking to wring concessions by threatening impediments once Washington had drafted policy.

The Kurdish Issue

The March 1 vote was a blow to U.S. war planning but while American officials considered Turkey's participation desirable, subsequent events showed it not crucial. The Grand National Assembly's vote was not without consequence, though. If Turkey could not be a military partner to the American military in northern Iraq, then U.S. forces had little choice but to increase their partnership with the Iraqi Kurdish militias. The Iraqi Kurds embraced the U.S. soldiers. The Kurdistan Democratic Party in particular showered American soldiers with lavish feasts, and bestowed gifts like carpets and gold jewelry upon some commanding officers and political officials who, unfortunately, accepted such favors. In one case, because the commanding officer of the 404th Civil Affairs Unit in Erbil accepted Kurdish largesse, U.S. authorities relieved him of his command and initiated a corruption investigation. Exacerbating the situation was the fact that many senior U.S. officials in Iraq held romantic notions of the Kurds from their 1991 experience with Operation Provide Comfort; they had neither seen the Iraqi Kurdish political leadership's corruption nor the abuse of power, both of which had become rife over the subsequent 12 years.

By accepting Kurdish hospitality in excess, Coalition Provisional Authority administrator L. Paul Bremer and other senior diplomats symbolically albeit unintentionally endorsed Iraqi Kurdish political intransigence. For several months following the July 13, 2003

inauguration of the Interim Governing Council, for example, Kurdistan Democratic Party leader Masud Barzani refused to travel to Baghdad, preferring instead to remain in Sar-i Resh, the former resort on the Salahuddin Massif which he appropriated for his personal use. Casting aside warnings that his travel to Sar-i Resh was undercutting the American position, Bremer would repeatedly take his helicopters and entourage to Barzani's headquarters. While American diplomats enjoyed the wining and dining at Barzani's personal resort, ordinary Kurds interpreted the unidirectional visits as a symbol of American acquiescence to Barzani, and a sign that Washington would not insist upon the same democratic reforms in northern Iraq that it did elsewhere in the country. Rather than reinforce the American position, Bremer's naïveté projected an image of American weakness.

Contributing to the U.S. military's clientitis toward the Iraqi Kurds was lingering anger neither recognized nor understood by many diplomats, both American and Turkish, who did not normally deal with military affairs. Many military officials privately blamed the March 1 Turkish National Assembly vote for the deaths of American soldiers: Had Coalition forces been able to enter Iraq from two sides in a pincer movement, then the Republican Guard and Fedayin Saddam could not have concentrated its forces in defense against the American advance.

That U.S. forces did not patch their relationship with the Turkish military was unfortunate, but more the result of bureaucracy than politics. While Turkish diplomats trumpet Turkey as a pivotal state spanning West and East,[17] its geographical position complicates U.S. military planning. Technically, U.S. military relations with Turkey fall under the European Command (EUCOM), while Central Command (CENTCOM) is paramount in Iraq and the Arab world. While EUCOM leaders understood Turkish politics and democracy, many CENTCOM officers addressed Turkish officials as if they, like the Arab elites in the Persian Gulf, had no democratic constituency. The poor personal relationship between the Turkish General Staff and CENTCOM undermined the balance between the United States, Turkey, and the Iraqi Kurds when, on July 4, 2003, with Bremer's acquiescence, U.S. forces in Sulaymaniyah detained a Turkish commando force. American authorities took the presence of the Turkish unit seriously, because any tolerance of Turkish infiltration into Iraq would give political and diplomatic ammunition for Iranian units to do likewise. While the 173rd Airborne should not have cuffed and hooded the detained Turkish troops, Turkish political officials' decision to leak the incident to the press and the subsequent shrill and often exaggerated commentary undercut attempts to rectify the matter. While Bremer accused the Turkish commando unit of planning to assassinate a Kirkuk political figure, Turkish authorities deny this; only historians will sort out the truth.

On a working level, the distrust and antagonism resulting from the incident has been far more damaging to the U.S.-Turkish relations than the March 1, 2003 vote. After July 4, 2003, Bremer became increasingly anti-Turkish. On October 6, 2003, the Grand National

[17] See, for example, Uğur Ziyal, "Perspectives in Turkish Foreign Policy: Looking Forward after Iraq," Speech before the American Enterprise Institute, June 17, 2003.
www.aei.org/news/newsID.17731/news_detail.asp

Assembly agreed to deploy Turkish peace-keepers in Iraq. The U.S. State Department, Pentagon, and National Security Council welcomed the vote with rare unanimity. Bremer, however, was furious. He instructed his governance team to provide reasons why Turkish troops should not enter Iraq, and Washington withdrew its offer of partnership, having embarrassed Erdoğan, who had expended significant political capital to ensure that he had the votes for the Turkish peace keepers' deployment.

Both a casualty of the strained military relationship, and a cause, has been American inaction against Kurdistan Workers Party [PKK] terrorists. The American public does not understand the terrorist threat Turkey faces. The American press often ignores Turkey. While a single terrorist incident in Israel becomes headline news in the United States, the PKK's murder of dozens in recent months receives little mention.

By tolerating the PKK's presence in northern Iraq, the U.S. military undercut both the spirit and the substance of President Bush's Global War on Terrorism. While Turkish officials have repeatedly sought concrete American action against the PKK—Erdoğan spoke to Bush about the problem at the June 2004 NATO summit in Istanbul and to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in February 2005—the breadth of issues upon which Turkish authorities demarche their American counterparts has ironically diluted attention on every bilateral issue of concern.

The failure to respond—even in the limited way urged unofficially by pragmatists within the Turkish General Staff—is not because of Bush administration insincerity, but rather because of that of CENTCOM inertia. U.S. military authorities in Iraq fear provoking terrorism against American forces, and do not appreciate the damage PKK terrorists have wrought since their June 1, 2004 ceasefire abandonment. The Kurdistan Democratic Party, which once fought the PKK but has in recent years lent passive support to the group, has also discouraged action.

CENTCOM has therefore responded with a filibuster: It has accepted the demand to plan operations against the PKK, but short of constant pressure, its leadership shows no inclination to complete planning and take action. Hopefully, Rice, unlike Powell, will ensure that her promises regarding American action against the PKK are fulfilled.[18]

Kirkuk and the Future

Turkish-American relations are again nearing a crisis point. With irritants large and small unresolved, problems whose solution is in partnership are magnified into crises. Kirkuk is the latest example. While much of official Washington celebrated the January 30, 2005 elections in Iraq, Erdoğan warned, "Powers claiming that they came to bring democracy to the region preferred to remain insensitive to these antidemocratic ambitions…Everyone must know that Turkey…won't allow this geography to be delivered to chaos that will last for many years."[19]

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[18] "Turkish ambassador mentions Rice's PKK promise," *Turkish Daily News*, March 4, 2005.
[19] "Turkish premier says Iraqi elections may be skewed," *Associated Press Worldstream*, February 1, 2005.

That Kirkuk is now becoming an international flashpoint is a reflection not only of the state of U.S.-Turkish relations, but also of two years of Turkish policies which have undercut Ankara's influence in Iraq. Demands to stop Kurdish movement from Sulaymaniyah and Chamchamal into Kirkuk rally nationalist support in Turkey. While it is true that the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan has pressured Iraqi Kurds to move to the city, sometimes threatening to fire them from government positions and benefits unless they do so, it is equally true that many Turkmen who fled the city during Saddam Hussein's rule have shown little inclination to leave Baghdad, where many settled into a comfortable, middle class existence. Staunchly Turkmen neighborhoods exist in Kirkuk—especially around the citadel and the airfield—but show no evidence of growth.

While American officials understand Turkish concerns, there is little Washington can do with regard to migration to Kirkuk: It is politically impossible for American officials to prohibit Iraqis from living in certain cities simply because of their ethnicity, so long as they legally own their property. Turkish authorities could more effectively counter the Kurdish migration by pinpointing complaints of American aid, Kurdish corruption, and precise and accurate complaints of Kurdish abuse of power.

Both the United States and Turkey share many of the same interests in Iraq and could achieve more should they cooperate rather than treat each other as diplomatic adversaries. For example, the Turkish government is playing diplomatic hardball, threatening to tie the future American use of the Incirlik air base to American positions on Iraq.[20] Ironically, however, such Turkish demands make it harder for Washington to extract concessions from Iraqi Kurds. Both Kurdistan Democratic Party leader Masud Barzani and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan leader Jalal Talabani want the U.S. military to establish a permanent base in their territory. If Ankara signals that the U.S. military may not be welcome in Turkey, American bargaining position on issues like Kurdish federalism and the status of Kirkuk and its oil fields in the federal unit is undercut. But if the United States and Turkey establish a common front, they can better ensure both the stability of Iraq and the security of Turkey.

For more than two years, U.S.-Turkish diplomacy has been a comedy of errors. Mistakes cannot be undone and the relationship will take years to rebuild. Neither side is indispensable to the other, but both Washington and Ankara would lose much should their relationship deteriorate further. Influence is best exerted in partnership. Continued Turkish anti-Americanism might be popular and even politically expedient as Turkish politicians again approach elections, but with issues like the status of Kirkuk unresolved and key Iraqi constitutional debates yet to come, the U.S.-Turkish partnership is simply too important to lose. If Turkish and American politicians and diplomats do not acknowledge and put aside their past mistakes, bilateral relations will continue to sour, impacting not only the once special relationship, but also Turkey's security and the future shape of Iraq.

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[20] "Future use of Incirlik base depends heavily on Iraq," *Turkish Daily News*, February 22, 2005.