



SPECIAL REPORT

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IRAQ AND ITS NEIGHBORS

ABOUT THE REPORT

Iraq's neighbors are playing a major role—both positive and negative—in the stabilization and reconstruction of “the new Iraq.” As part of the Institute’s “Iraq and Its Neighbors” project, a group of leading specialists on the geopolitics of the region and on the domestic politics of the individual countries is assessing the interests and influence of the countries surrounding Iraq. In addition, these specialists are examining how the situation in Iraq is impacting U.S. bilateral relations with these countries. Henri Barkey’s report on Turkey is the first in a series of USIP special reports on “Iraq and Its Neighbors” to be published over the next few months. Next in the series will be a study on Iran by Geoffrey Kemp of the Nixon Center. The “Iraq and Its Neighbors” project is directed by Scott Lasensky of the Institute’s Research and Studies Program. For an overview of the topic, see Phebe Marr and Scott Lasensky, “An Opening at Sharm el-Sheikh,” *Beirut Daily Star*, November 20, 2004.

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The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Institute of Peace, which does not advocate specific policy positions.

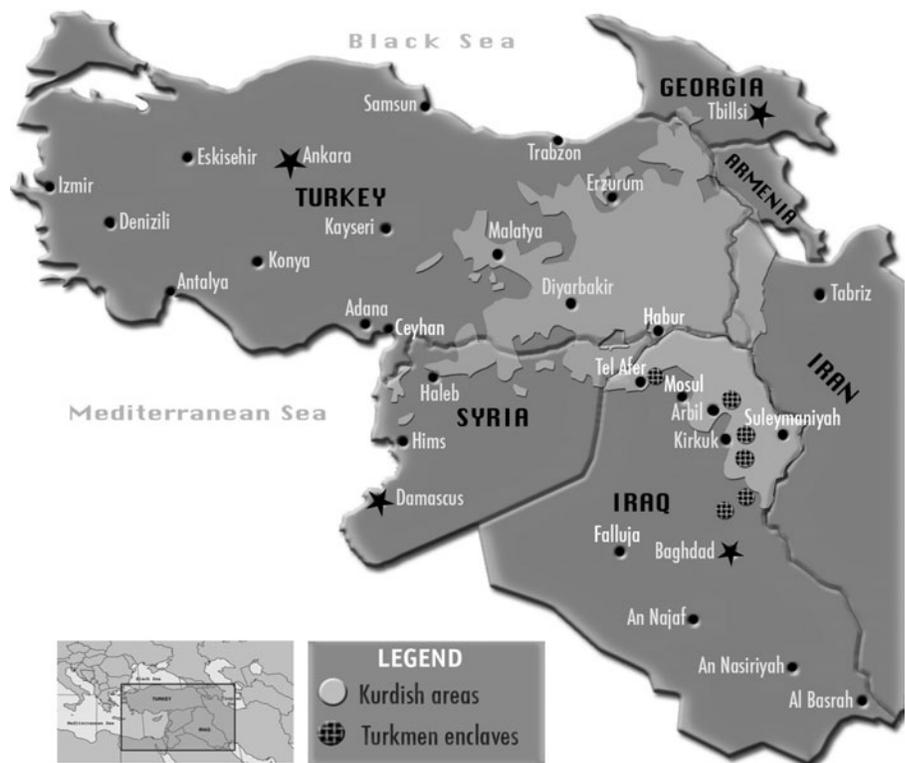
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Turkey and Iraq

The Perils (and Prospects) of Proximity



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Summary

- Throughout the 1990s, Turkey was the anchor in the containment of Saddam Hussein’s Iraq by the United States. The unpredictable set of events unleashed by Operation Iraqi Freedom has unnerved both Turkish decision makers and the public alike.
- The U.S.-led coalition’s operation in Iraq has also upended Turkey’s fundamental interests in Iraq, which are fourfold: (1) Prevent the division of Iraq along sectarian

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or ethnic lines that would give rise to an independent or confederal Kurdish state (with the oil-rich city of Kirkuk as its capital), thus supporting aspirations for a similar entity from Turkey's own extensive Kurdish population. (2) Protect the Turkish-speaking Turkmen minority, which resides primarily in northern Iraq. (3) Eliminate the Kurdistan Workers' Party, the Turkish Kurdish insurgent movement, which has sought refuge in the northeast of Iraq following its defeat in 1999. (4) Prevent the emergence of a potentially hostile nondemocratic fundamentalist Iraqi state.

- Turkish concerns reflect the deep anxiety it harbors regarding the demonstration effect Kurdish independence or robust autonomy in Iraq would have on its own domestic Kurdish population. Having turned down a U.S. request to open up a second front against Iraq, Turkey has found itself with limited influence in Iraq and is at a loss as to how to shape the future course of events. Turks perceive that Iraqi Kurds have achieved a position of privilege as a result of their unconditional support for the overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq and the occupation of the country by coalition forces.
- Turkish attitudes and foreign policy toward Iraq are complicated by the uneasy relationship between Ankara's ruling Justice and Development Party government and the traditional secularist elites, military and civilian. The latter's suspicions of the ruling party are driven mainly by the "concessions" made to obtain an invitation this past December from the European Union to open accession negotiations. One of the "concessions" was to adopt a tempered policy toward Iraq; hence, success in Iraq has become a litmus test of sorts for the government.
- With uncertainty in Iraq and Turkish anxieties mounting, U.S.-Turkish relations have suffered, despite their mutual desire for a unified, prosperous, and democratic Iraqi state that can become a counterweight to Iran in the future. What divides the United States and Turkey most of all is the lack of accord over future contingencies in Iraq, especially in the event of a U.S. failure in that country. Thus, it is crucial for the United States and Turkey to engage in extensive—preferably back-channel—negotiations and, later, to include the Iraqi government and representatives from Iraqi Kurdish factions in the negotiations in order to rebuild confidence in the U.S.-Turkish relationship.

Introduction

Turkey, like every other country surrounding Iraq, has seen its interests upended by the conflict in that country. For the past three decades, turmoil in Iraq has been a source of both instability and opportunities for Ankara. Ever since the end of the Gulf War in 1991, Turkey has found itself more deeply involved in Iraqi affairs. The establishment of the no-fly zone over northern Iraq, enabling British and U.S. aircraft operating out of the Turkish air base at Incirlik to routinely patrol the territory in defense of Iraqi Kurds, made Ankara a permanent pillar of the U.S. policy of containing Saddam Hussein. However, the unpredictable set of events unleashed by the current war in Iraq unnerves Turkish decision makers and publics alike. The current situation represents a conundrum for Ankara: because of its proximity, it is propelled to act in Iraq both in defense of its interests and, simultaneously, with a great deal of caution and restraint for fear of further entangling itself in what appears to be a quagmire.

Turkey and the United States share basic goals in Iraq. They both would very much prefer to see Iraq remain united and not break up into numerous enclaves or states along ethnic or sectarian lines. They both would like a strong central government that is not only capable of bringing back political and economic stability, but that will also be robust enough to become a future counterweight to Iran in the region. Neither would like to see the emergence of any form of a fundamentalist state in Iraq.

Where Turkey and the United States differ is the extent to which the Iraqi Kurds should be allowed to maintain their hard-won gains of autonomy and quasi-independence during the past decade. More broadly, however, the Turkish-American relationship has been marred by misunderstandings and mistrust stemming primarily from the lack of accord over future contingencies in Iraq.

What further complicates Turkish attitudes and foreign-policy making is the uneasy relationship between the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) government in Ankara and the traditional secularist elites, military and civilian, who eye the relationship with a great deal of suspicion. At stake in Iraq are not just immediate Turkish interests—such as the stability of a neighboring state with vast oil riches and the presence of a Turkish-speaking minority (the Turkmen) in northern Iraq—but also the very nature of Kemal Atatürk's conception of the modern Turkish state. Primarily because the Kurdish minority in Iraq may end up with at least a robust autonomous state or even perhaps an independent state of its own, Ankara is particularly affected by the uncertainty in Iraq, for it fears the contagion effect on its own Kurdish minority of a potential independent or federal Kurdish state in Iraq's north.

Still more sensitive is how the government and its powerful detractors within the state establishment each will approach the issue. Although adamantly opposed to Kurdish independence in Iraq, Turkish elites feel powerless at the moment to influence events on the ground. The Kemalist elite—the secular and nationalist hard-liners in the military and civilian bureaucracy and their supporters—has tied itself in knots by marrying itself to the Iraqi Turkmen community and using it as a wedge with which it can justify a Turkish intervention in northern Iraq.¹ Also, by making strong their opposition to the Iraqi Kurds' aspirations, the Kemalists have also limited their own room to maneuver. Hence, any attempt by the government to seek a compromise in northern Iraq—most likely to stave off a worse eventuality—is likely to engender a domestic political crisis. Such a crisis could have dire consequences for Turkey's prospective membership in the European Union (EU), which advanced significantly on December 17, 2004, with the decision of the EU's European Council summit in Brussels to open negotiations with Turkey this fall based on its progress on accession criteria agreed to at the 1993 European Council summit in Copenhagen (the so-called Copenhagen Criteria).

The aftereffects of the Iraq War in combination with the uncertainty over northern Iraq have the potential to seriously damage the U.S.-Turkish relationship; Turks, by and large, do not have much confidence in Washington's motives and intentions. The U.S. administration's inability or unwillingness to do away with the remnants of the Turkish Kurdish insurgent group, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), holed up in northeastern Iraq, has further strengthened these suspicions. Hence, the possible emergence as a worst-case scenario of an independent Kurdistan in northern Iraq or the creation of an autonomous Iraqi Kurdish federal republic that also incorporates the oil-rich city of Kirkuk is likely to deepen the alienation of mainstream Turks from the United States. Nevertheless, given the multiplicity of bilateral channels and a history marked by a strong alliance relationship—particularly within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)—the United States and Turkey can work together to ensure a stable outcome in northern Iraq if the rest of the country descends into chaos; a U.S.-Turkish deal in northern Iraq could entail guarantees for both the Kurds and the Turkmen. Such a positive scenario, however, will require an active diplomatic initiative on the part of Washington, Ankara, and Baghdad in collaboration with the Iraqi Kurdish leadership.

Turkish Interests in Iraq

Turkish interests in Iraq have remained fairly stable over the years and are primarily motivated by the fear of a possible politicization of Turkey's own Kurds. These interests can be reduced to two specific and primary factors: The first is to deny any Turkish Kurdish insurgent group, such as the PKK, a safe haven in northern Iraq. Second, and more

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Turkey has been wary of the rebellious Iraqi Kurds' influence because of its experience with its own Kurdish population, which has rebelled on a number of occasions since the inception of the Turkish Republic in 1923.

Turkey has maintained a contingent of well-armed forces estimated between 1,200-1,500 soldiers within northern Iraq to keep an eye on both the PKK and the Iraq Kurdish parties and their militias. Even after the U.S. occupation of Iraq, Turkish troops have remained there with Washington's acquiescence.

important, is to minimize the contagion effect on Turkey's Kurds that may emanate from the political activities of Iraqi Kurds; this factor requires the containment of Iraqi Kurds' political ambitions, be they the creation of an autonomous entity in northern Iraq, with the oil-rich city of Kirkuk at its heart, or straightforward independence.

With an estimated 12 million citizens of Kurdish origin living in its borders, Turkey accounts for the largest single group of Kurds residing in the region. Turkey has been wary of the rebellious Iraqi Kurds' influence because of its experience with its own Kurdish population, which has rebelled on a number of occasions since the inception of the Turkish Republic in 1923. Periods of quiet were marked by extensive political activity and grassroots mobilization designed to challenge the state.² The last such insurgency collapsed in 1999 when PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan was captured and imprisoned. Instability in Iraq, first during the Iraq-Iran war and later following the Gulf War and the UN-imposed sanctions period, enabled the PKK to use northern Iraqi territory as both a staging ground for raids into Turkey and a sanctuary where it could enjoy a respite from Turkish counterattacks. As a result, Ankara, especially during the height of the Kurdish insurgency in the late 1980s and 1990s, was keen on collaborating with Baghdad to mount crossborder raids designed to eliminate the PKK's rear bases.

Although it retreated to northern Iraq following its 1999 defeat and announcement of a unilateral ceasefire, the PKK nevertheless remains a fighting force capable of creating problems for Turkish security forces. In fact, it abandoned its ceasefire in summer 2004 and resumed fighting, leading to numerous clashes since. Still, the organization, which has suffered many defections and internal dissension, no longer represents the kind of existential threat to the Turkish Republic that it did in its earlier days. This diminished threat stems primarily from reforms engendered by the EU accession process that have provided Turkish Kurds with alternative means of achieving some minimum of cultural expression. Also, the fifteen-year insurrection took a tremendous toll on the region's Kurdish civilian population, which does not want to see it resume. The diminished Kurdish threat does not mean that political activity among the Kurds has ebbed; indeed, it remains a constant source of worry for the Turkish political elite—Kemalist and non-Kemalist alike. For instance, the 2005 traditional Newroz celebrations by Kurds in Turkey were marked by many instances of defiance and veneration for the imprisoned Ocalan.³

Despite these developments, the fear of the Iraqi contagion effect is still one that dominates Ankara's thinking. The most explicit and recent public articulation of this anxiety came from former Turkish prime minister Bulent Ecevit, who argued for a Turkish military intervention into northern Iraq not just to support the Turkmen there but also to prevent what Turkey sees as more serious and dangerous developments from occurring. Pointing out the fact that Kurds in Iraq are organizing themselves politically, he argued that they

want to create a powerful political party that will incorporate them all. They will succeed in this. They are also thinking of creating a parallel Kurdish party in Turkey. They may succeed in this. After succeeding in this, they will query why should we live in two distinct territories. After a political evolution they will be asking Turkey to give up territory.⁴

Iraqi Kurds have a history of rebelling against the central government in Baghdad. There are strong tribal, familial, and historical bonds that unite the two Kurdish communities across the Turkish-Iraqi international border. Following the 1991 Gulf War, when half a million Kurdish refugees fleeing Saddam Hussein's retribution ended up on Turkey's border (another one million ended up on Iran's border), Ankara agreed to a limited U.S.-UK military mission (which would eventually be called Operation Provide Comfort) to enforce a no-fly zone over northern Iraq. Although the mission allowed the Iraqi Kurds to return home, it also provided the space for an embryonic Kurdish state in northern Iraq. However, intra-Kurdish rivalries between the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan not only hampered this development but also allowed Ankara to play one faction against the other. Turkey has maintained a contingent of well-armed forces estimated between 1,200–1,500 soldiers within northern Iraq to keep an eye on both

the PKK and the Iraq Kurdish parties and their militias. Even after the U.S. occupation of Iraq, Turkish troops have remained there with Washington's acquiescence.

Ankara's preferences in Iraq

Turkey's professed first preference in Iraq is to see a return of central government authority and control over the entire Iraqi territory. As in the past, it wants the new government in Baghdad to be able to overcome the ethnic, regional, and sectarian divisions that have plagued the country to varying degrees over the course of its history. It also wants Iraq to become a stable and prosperous nation with which it can resume its lucrative trade relationship; this includes the security of the two pipelines that carry oil from northern Iraqi fields to Turkish terminals at the Mediterranean port city of Ceyhan. At different times, Ankara has articulated what it deems its "red lines" in Iraq, which have had a great deal more to do with the disposition of northern Iraq than anything else. At first, these "red lines" were declared in opposition to any Kurdish federal arrangement in Iraq. Subsequently, they were refined to include three unacceptable outcomes: the creation of an independent Kurdish state in Iraq; the incorporation of the city of Kirkuk—deemed to be a Turkmen city by Ankara—into a Kurdish federal (or independent) state; and increased vulnerability of the Turkmen living in Kirkuk (whom the deputy chief of the Turkish General Staff, General Ilker Basbug, and many other Turkish elites have consistently referred to as being of the same "race or ethnic origin" as Turks⁵). The latter two outcomes were expressed by General Basbug in a press briefing on the eve of the January 30 Iraqi elections as "vital."⁶

For Ankara, an additional and important consideration is whether a new government in Baghdad can successfully control its northern borders and put an end to the infiltration by the PKK and other Kurdish insurgent groups. In the past, Ankara tried to cooperate with Saddam Hussein on the Kurds, especially on Turkish counterinsurgency raids. After the 1991 Gulf War and the containment of the Baathist regime, Turkish governments continued to deal with Hussein, although they professed to be indifferent as to whether he would make a comeback. He did represent in Turkey's view someone capable of holding the country together; understandably, Ankara is not confident that a Kurdish federal entity would be as capable or as willing as a strong central government in securing Iraq's border with Turkey.

Still, Ankara is realistic enough to understand that the emergence of a federal entity along some combination of ethnic and sectarian lines is a distinct possibility under a new Iraqi government. The idea of a federated Iraqi state is not new: In October 1998, then-U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright threw American support behind the idea of federalism when she negotiated a truce between the leaders of the two Kurdish factions, Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani—the latter of whom was recently elected as Iraq's president. More significant, though, is the fact that the interim Iraqi constitution (the Transitional Administrative Law, signed in March 2004) explicitly provides Iraqi Kurdistan with a special status. In the event that Iraqis decide to create such a federal arrangement, Ankara would very much prefer that the central government be capable of minimizing the autonomy of the federal regions, even beyond the obvious centralization of powers regarding foreign, defense, and monetary policy. Ankara would like the putative Kurdish federal region to possess the most limited ability to interact on its own with the world outside and certainly with Turkey.

Ankara also wants to see Iraq's oil resources brought under the firm control of the central government in Baghdad; oil, it fears, can provide the resources for a future drive to Kurdish independence. And although it understands that it will not be able to influence Baghdad to minimize cultural autonomy, Ankara would still like to see restrictions on domestic education policy. The acceptance of Kurdish as a language on par with Arabic could, in Ankara's view, fuel demands for the same in Turkey. Ironically, Turkey's own negotiation process for accession to the European Union (scheduled to commence in October 2005) is likely to increase Turkish Kurds' demands for cultural rights.⁷

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Should Iraq fall into the hands of a fundamentalist Iranian type Shi'a regime, it is quite possible that both the United States and the European Union will want to see Ankara become the bulwark against both Iran and Iraq.

As part of its campaign to contain the contagion effects of the Iraqi Kurds, Ankara increasingly came to rely on Iraq's Turkmen minority. The Turkmen issue is relatively new to Turkey; it was not until the 1990s that Ankara began to articulate demands for Turkmen minority rights in Iraq. Arguing that the Turkmen represent the third largest ethnic group in Iraq, Ankara has taken up the banner for their defense, especially their claims to control the city of Kirkuk.⁸ As part of this effort, Turkey has been instrumental in the creation of the Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF), an organization it wants the Turkmen to rally around. Yet the Turkmen are divided: Not only are there those who oppose Ankara's interference and the ITF's heavy hand, but there are also sectarian Sunni-Shiite differences that divide the community.⁹ Perhaps as many as half of the Iraqi Turkmen are Shiite.

The Turkmen question not only has enabled Ankara to slow down Kurdish ambitions and table alternative claims to the city of Kirkuk but, most important, also provides Ankara with a "legitimate" reason to remain engaged in northern Iraq. If the U.S. were to remove the last vestiges of the PKK from Iraq as it has promised, the Turkmen would effectively become the only card Ankara can brandish in northern Iraq. Ankara wants the Turkmen minority to have as much say as possible in determining the future of Iraq and control the oil-rich city of Kirkuk. Both the Kurds and the Turkmen claim Kirkuk as their heritage, and the conflicting claims have been characterized by an International Crisis Group report as "dueling narratives."¹⁰ Both groups suffered from Saddam Hussein's policy of ethnic cleansing and "Arabization" of the northern provinces; thus they are wary of each other's attempt at resettling refugees in order to create a demographic landscape more favorable to it.

The unabated violence that has followed the overthrow of Saddam Hussein has also heightened Turkish concerns over the ultimate stability of Iraq. Beyond the immediate concern over the Kurds, there are also lingering fears about the potential breakup of Iraq and the emergence of unstable, radical, and possibly fundamentalist Shi'a or Sunni entities, as well as the likelihood of a two- or three-way civil war. Such an eventuality can affect Turkey in two distinct ways.

The first is the danger that the violence and instability will be exported to Turkey and other neighbors. The emergence of an authority in Baghdad bent on revenge and punishing the Kurds for being the primary allies of the United States in the war against Iraq will ultimately lead to interethnic violence close to Turkey's own borders. In turn, if the incipient Kurdish state is threatened, the U.S. may want to help its Kurdish allies in northern Iraq and thus make demands on Ankara that will be difficult to accept, much like the initial demand for opening a second front against Saddam Hussein on the eve of the war. Complicating matters further would be the Turkmen role and fate in any such conflict between Arabs and Kurds.¹¹ There is a delicate understanding between the two primary Kurdish groups, which fought bitterly with each other in the 1990s, that can be endangered by the potential chaos and uncertainty of Iraq. In the event of civil war in Iraq, Ankara will be hard pressed to resist domestic calls for direct intervention. At this stage, one cannot assume that the Kurds will remain united in the long run either. All these factors have drastic implications for the domestic peace that has been achieved in Turkey itself following the defeat of the PKK in 1999.

The second way a fragmented Iraq could affect Turkey is that instability and violence in its immediate neighborhood—especially the kind of violence that is likely to pull Turkey into Iraq, either to protect the Turkmen or to support other interests—may make the European Union suspend or even reconsider the accession process. Moreover, should events in Iraq lead to greater unrest within Turkey's own Kurdish population, either as a result of Turkish Kurds' need to come to the support of their brethren across the border or because of increased repressive measures employed by Ankara to quell Kurdish turmoil, the Europeans are quite likely to freeze the accession process. Hence Iraqi instability can potentially derail what ultimately has been regarded as the greatest achievement of Turkish diplomacy to date—the beginning of European Union accession talks.

Should Iraq fall into the hands of a fundamentalist Iranian type Shi'a regime, it is quite possible that both the United States and the European Union will want to see Ankara

Who Are the Turkmen?

The past and present of the Iraqi Turkmen (or Turkoman) is a subject still largely open to debate. Estimates of their numbers, as well as historical narratives of their origin, vary widely.

The earliest Iraqi Turkmen are thought to have settled in northern Iraq in the seventh or eighth centuries, arriving from Central Asia. These non-Muslim Turkic peoples posed a threat to the expanding Islamic empire and many converted. Their numbers were bolstered with the arrival of the Seljuk Turks in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; these migrations are likely the source of the current Iraqi Turkmen populations.

The Turkmen in the region flourished under the Ottoman Empire as Istanbul sought to place Turkic peoples in important bureaucratic positions in the regions, as well as to ensure a favorable Turkic demographic along its trade and transport routes south to Baghdad. Thus the Turkmen have held a disproportionate number of prominent professional, official, and trading positions throughout the north of Iraq—particularly in Kirkuk—from Ottoman times until the British mandate.

In the twentieth century, Kurdish urbanization fueled by the region's oil boom led to tense relations with the Turkmen throughout the cities of northern Iraq. Relations were further strained by latent class resentment: For centuries, Turkmen were the ruling elite, while Kurds were mostly lower class. In 1926, British authorities tipped power in the other direction by changing the language of education from Turkish to Kurdish—to “the language of the servants,” in the words of Ihsan Dogramaci, a Turkmen native of Irbil and founder of Bilkent University in Ankara.*

Under Saddam Hussein's policy of Arabization in Kirkuk and the nearby areas, the Turkmen, along with the Kurds, suffered forced deportations as a result of the effort to consolidate Arab Baathist control of the oil-rich region.

Today, as Kurds return to Kirkuk, the remaining Turkmen feel increasingly threatened. They allege that the voter rolls in Kirkuk for the January 30 elections for Iraq's new National Assembly were stacked with Kurds from other regions who have no claim to land or heritage in Kirkuk. Kurdish leaders argue that these are the same Kurds who were expelled alongside the Turkmen from Kirkuk by Saddam Hussein. Estimates of Turkmen populations vary accordingly. The Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF)—a political party backed by Ankara—estimates their numbers at some 2 to 3 million, or 8–11 percent of the Iraqi population; independent scholars put the population share at no more than 2–3 percent.

Regardless of the numbers, the Turkmen fared poorly in the recent Iraqi elections. The ITF list won only three seats in the National Assembly. There are also several other Turkmen scattered on some of the larger party lists.

Sources: International Crisis Group, *Allaying Turkey's Fears over Kurdish Ambitions*; ICG Middle East Report, no. 35 (Ankara/Amman/Brussels: International Crisis Group, January 26, 2005); online; available: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3241&l=1> (accessed June 1, 2005). *The World Factbook 2005*; online; available: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook> (accessed June 1, 2005). “Iraqi Kurdish Leader Holds ‘Positive’ Talks in Turkey,” Agence France-Presse, October 11, 2004. Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 2d ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 2005). Middle East Institute, *Rethinking Iraq: Sectarian Identities—The Turkmen* (policy brief on a presentation by the ITF's Orhan Ketene, April 15, 2004); online; available: <http://www.mideasti.org/articles/doc194.html> (accessed June 6, 2004). Nir Rosen, “Are They Iraqis, Ultimately, or Are They Kurds?” *The New York Times Magazine*, February 20, 2005.

*Quoted in International Crisis Group, *Iraq: Allaying Turkey's Fears over Kurdish Ambitions*. ICG Middle East Report, no. 35 (Ankara/Amman/Brussels: International Crisis Group, January 26, 2005), 8.

become the bulwark against both Iran and Iraq. Although such a role would transform Turkey into a frontline state, it would necessarily pit Ankara against its neighbors, a position it has not relished in the past and is unlikely to do so in the future. The current AKP-led government has aggressively sought to improve ties with Turkey's Muslim neighbors and the Muslim world in general, and it even aspires to have Turkey assume a leadership role among Muslim countries. In the event of a Sh'ia takeover of Iraq's government, U.S. and EU resistance to the division of the country may diminish as they consider the benefits of a Kurdish buffer state. It remains to be seen whether the Turkish establishment, including the government, would countenance an independent Kurdish buffer state by overcoming its deeper fears stemming from such an entity.

The dilemma for Turkey is one of ascertaining a risk-minimizing policy vis-à-vis Iraq at a time when the future of the country is indeterminate. Turkish leaders not only have to balance their own domestic preferences but also must prepare for the worst as they currently define it. Ankara's conundrum extends beyond the probable emergence of a Kurdish entity in northern Iraq and includes the disposition of the other parts of the country, including the future of the Turkmen minority. Clearly, as it defines its immediate interests, Ankara would perceive an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq, with Kirkuk as its capital and the Turkmen under its tutelage neighboring a rump "fundamentalist" Iraqi state or two, to be its worst scenario. Unlike any other difference it may have had with its principal strategic ally, the United States, over a variety of issues, the direct involvement of the United States in Iraq complicates matters for Turkey. Turkey will be careful not to alienate Washington, irrespective of its relations with the EU, especially considering the importance the U.S. attaches to an eventual resolution of the Iraq crisis in a manner that does not compromise its image, credibility, and influence in the region.

Turkish Domestic Politics and Iraq

Vulnerabilities at home

The ruling Justice and Development Party of Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan emerged from the 2002 elections with one of the largest parliamentary majorities ever seen in Turkish politics: With 34.7 percent of the popular vote, the AKP commands almost two-thirds of the parliamentary seats. The electoral rule requiring political parties to garner at least 10 percent of the national vote for parliamentary representation has meant that the government, unlike its recent predecessors, has only one opposition party to contend with in the Turkish parliament. Moreover, the AKP government appears to have increased its popularity since its election, primarily because of its single-minded determination to improve its chances of getting a date for accession negotiations from the EU by reforming the institutions of the state.

Yet despite its increased popularity and enviable parliamentary majority, the government remains vulnerable on its Iraq policy; ironically, that vulnerability results perhaps in part from its success on the European front. Given the AKP's origins in Turkey's Islamic movement, the party's 2002 electoral victory was received with a great deal of trepidation and unease by the country's traditional secular elites and institutions. The reforms and policy changes required to get the EU accession negotiations on track have not only chipped away at the prerogatives enjoyed by these groups and institutions but have also opened the way for greater democratization in Turkey. Specifically, the reforms have constrained the military's role as a bulwark against Islamic reaction and Kurdish nationalism in Turkey. For those wedded to the hard-line interpretation of the Kemalist principles that underscore the foundation of the modern Turkish state, these concessions are nothing short of a betrayal. The reforms required by the European Union would make it easier for Kurds in Turkey to express their ethnic heritage and roots openly; hence, the

AKP government is accused of having sacrificed and conceded far too much in its pursuit of EU accession. To further emphasize this point, the hard-liners point to the AKP's successful policy of marginalizing Turkish Cypriot leader and fellow hard-liner Rauf Denktaş in order to get the Turkish Cypriots to vote in favor of a political solution to reunify the divided island, and the broad support among Turks for the European path has made it very difficult for opponents of the AKP to offer serious resistance to all these moves. The efforts of the AKP government eventually bore fruit in the December 2004 EU summit, which concluded that Ankara had sufficiently fulfilled enough of the Copenhagen Criteria to begin accession negotiations in October 2005.

The AKP's Iraq policy, however, is a different matter altogether. Because of its potential impact on the domestic Kurdish question, it remains the one area where the traditional elites, with their suspicions of the AKP's nationalist credentials, can try to weaken, if not undermine, the party's hold on power. With the Turkish government's declaration of victory after the EU summit, it is not surprising that former prime minister Ecevit's call for a military intervention in northern Iraq was accompanied by criticisms of the EU decision's shortcomings.¹² The future of Turkish interests in Iraq will loom larger in the domestic political discourse; after the EU decision, Iraq remains a primary point of vulnerability for the strengthened AKP government. The AKP has tried to avoid being dragged into the Iraqi quicksand, especially after having dodged a bullet at the onset of the war when the Turkish parliament on March 1, 2003 turned down a U.S. request to permit the transit of U.S. troops in advance of the Iraq invasion. That the question of Iraq remains a contentious one is evident from the public criticisms that the commander of the ground forces, General Yasar Buyukanit, leveled at the government when he accused it of not having an Iraq policy.¹³

In this context, one cannot underestimate the importance of the Turkmen factor. Previous governments in Ankara were the primary instigators behind the creation of the Iraqi Turkmen Front, but it is unclear how much influence the government now has over the ITF. Two developments have contributed to the current uncertainty.

First, the ITF and its leaders have succeeded in capturing the imagination of many Turks; they are increasingly perceived in Turkey as an Iraqi Turkish minority deserving of official help, and by making claims similar to those of the Turkish Cypriots, ITF leaders are insinuating themselves into the Turkish mainstream. For the ITF leaders, the current chaos in Iraq is the best possible opportunity to stake their claims and try to improve their status as a separate and important ethnic minority; the ITF is no different than any other ethnopolitical entrepreneur. Hence, when the U.S. assault on the mostly Turkmen city of Tel Afer occurred in September 2004, the ITF launched an information campaign in Turkey that accused the U.S. of committing "massacres and ethnic cleansing" against the Turkmen in the city. Accounts of massive civilian casualties were widely reported in Turkish media outlets and forced the Turkish government to adopt a hard stance against Washington.¹⁴ Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Gul even cautioned that, should the U.S. military operation continue, Turkey's relations with Washington would have to be reviewed.¹⁵

Turks increasingly perceive the conflict in northern Iraq as a zero-sum relationship between Kurds and Turkmen. Although the Turkmen question is a relatively new issue, it has assumed an important dimension in Ankara's foreign policy rhetoric and even domestic politics. It mirrors many of Turkey's domestic sensibilities and allows the Turks to project a sense of illegitimacy onto Iraqi Kurds and their demands. Hence, were the Turkmen to be humiliated by being forced out of the ancestral lands or from Kirkuk in particular, the Turkish government would come under severe pressure from hard-line elements to act—and act decisively.¹⁶ The government has so far tried to walk a tight-rope: On the one hand, it has regularly met with Iraqi Kurdish leaders Barzani and Talabani in an attempt to keep the lines of communication open, while on the other hand it refers to the high-level Kurds not by name but as "clan leaders" to satisfy domestic

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constituencies.¹⁷ Both Erdogan and Gul were critical of Iraq's January 30 elections; they complained about Kurds who were sent at the last minute to vote in Kirkuk, as well as the abstention and inability of Sunnis to vote.

Whereas the government was on solid ground with the country's political mainstream when it pursued the EU accession negotiations, the war in Iraq and the Turkmen question have revealed the deep nationalistic bent of the party. The Erdogan government has been forced to cater to hard-line elements by increasing the level of the rhetoric over Kirkuk, the Turkmen' demands, and Iraq's January 30 elections.¹⁸ The ITF fared poorly in the elections, however, thereby diminishing both its influence and Turkey's room to maneuver in Iraq. The ITF garnered 0.87 percent of the 8.5 million votes cast, managing to get only three of its members elected into the 275-person National Assembly. The ITF's poor showing sparked severe criticism in Turkey, and both Erdogan and Gul criticized the ITF leadership for failing to bring its voters to the polls.¹⁹

The second reason for the uncertainty surrounding the Turkish government's influence over Iraq's Turkmen is the relationship between the Turkish military and the ITF, which is ambiguous. As a result, the extent to which the Turkish government can exercise operational control over the ITF is unclear. The ITF operates in tandem with Turkish Special Forces in Iraq, which are there with U.S. cognizance.²⁰ The Turkish Special Forces have been operating under a 1996 National Security Council Special Political Document that gives the chief of the Turkish General Staff (TGS) the authority to coordinate all of Turkey's activities relating to Iraq and northern Iraq, including the Special Forces. Accordingly, the Turkish Foreign Ministry also has its representatives assigned to the TGS headquarters in Silopi, southeastern Turkey.

In a series of events that have yet to be completely explained, on July 4, 2003, U.S. soldiers detained a number of Turkish Special Forces troops and ITF personnel at an ITF site in Suleymaniyah, Iraq on suspicion of planning to engage in violent activities. The Turks were transported to Baghdad and subjected to the same kind of treatment reserved for al Qaeda members. Although the Turks were released a few days later, the incident created a furor in Turkey as it capped a long list of what Turks viewed as U.S. misdeeds against their country. Still, after some delay, the Turkish military high command cashiered one of the generals in charge of the Special Forces in Iraq and retired another; the commander with overall operational control of the Special Forces in the Turkish General Staff also retired. Turkish General Staff efforts at establishing control over its own forces notwithstanding, the incident suggests the strong possibility of an ITF-led or influenced rogue operation in northern Iraq leading to a confrontation with Kurds or coalition troops. U.S. overreaction to the incident was partially determined by bureaucratic factors: as the head of U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), General John Abizaid, would admit later, unlike their U.S. European Command counterparts, who routinely work with the Turks, U.S. forces in Iraq under USCENTCOM had little if any experience with Turkey.²¹

Despite American promises to remove it, the continued presence of a sizable PKK force in northern Iraq exacerbates the Turkish government's vulnerability as the PKK presence opens it to charges of continued subservience to U.S. interests. The deployment of the PKK in the mountain regions and the general chaos in Iraq have prevented U.S. military authorities from initiating an operation against the PKK.

The re-emergence of the PKK is a serious political problem for both the government and the Turkish military. Though still minimal, casualties nonetheless conjure up images of the previous PKK insurrection. Unlike the late 1980s and early 1990s, the current state of violence does not constitute a strategic challenge to Turkey, although it opens the government to charges that it is inattentive to Kurdish terrorism. Perhaps more important, though, it undermines the Turkish populace's confidence in U.S.-Turkish relations, something that both the Turkish government and military do not want to see damaged even if they are leading the criticism of Washington. Every event in Iraq's Kurdish region is scrutinized. For instance, the brother of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, Osman, who broke with his brother and quit the PKK, ended up in U.S.-controlled Iraqi territory.

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Understandably, Turks were angered when an enterprising journalist easily discovered and interviewed someone they consider a terrorist in Mosul.²² Accounts of U.S. unwillingness and inability to deal effectively with the PKK in Iraq are used by opponents of the government's policy as proof of the relative weakness of the Turkish political position in Iraq today.

How do events in Iraq play in Turkey's domestic politics?

Although the AKP has an unassailable majority in the Turkish National Assembly, the party and the government are susceptible to charges of abandoning Turkey's "red lines" in Iraq from not only the opposition but also from hard-liners in practically every institution in Turkish society, particularly the bureaucracy and the media. Complicating matters further for the Turkish government is the poor image of the United States among Turkey's media elites and, correspondingly, with the general public following the Iraq war. Also there is the fact that the AKP's supporters have been among the least pro-American groups in Turkey. While opposition to the war was extremely strong, U.S. actions in Iraq—particularly the Abu Ghraib prison scandal—have reduced the AKP's room to maneuver in Iraq for fear of being accused of condoning questionable actions by U.S. military forces. One such example was the accusation by the AKP chairman of the Turkish parliament, Mehmet Elkatmis, that the U.S. was committing genocide during its November 2004 pacification campaign in Falluja. Faced with Washington's anger, the Turkish government dissociated itself and engaged in damage control.²³ Similarly, when five Turkish security guards traveling to Baghdad were ambushed and killed near Mosul in December 2004, many in Turkey pointed an accusatory finger at the United States. Adding his voice to the fray, the commander of Turkey's 1st Army, General Hursit Tolon, also indirectly implicated the U.S. and Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani in the killings.²⁴ A parliamentary delegation investigating the incident reminded the Turkish public of the humiliating July 4, 2003 episode, when members of the Turkish Special Forces in Iraq were arrested by the U.S. military, and questioned the official version of the facts.²⁵

The Turkish political system in recent years has been unduly influenced by the political weight of the country's military brass and by the weakness of the Turkish media as an institution. During the debate in early 2003 on whether to allow the transit of U.S. troops over Turkish soil for the opening of a second front in the Iraq war, the interplay between Turkish politicians and military officers was particularly rancorous. Rumors of dissent within military ranks—and of possible coup plots—have made headlines, adding to the political uncertainty.²⁶ Civilian politicians have been accustomed to letting the military take the lead in matters of national security; in this case particularly, the AKP wished the military would have made the decision, given the unpopularity of the issue at home. Likewise, the officers (although not completely of one mind) were anxious to have civilian officials shoulder the blame—as they are supposed to in a country with "normal" civil-military relations. The interaction between the government and the military was one of the factors that led to the March 1, 2003 parliamentary vote denying the United States a Turkish staging area to open a second front in its impending military phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Turkey's civil-military relations have since improved somewhat as the current chief of the Turkish General Staff, Hilmi Ozkok, has consolidated his hold on the military's high command. Despite its progress toward EU accession, Turkey is still a country where the role of the military in politics is a divisive issue.²⁷

Still other contentious issues between the strictly secular military and the Islam-influenced AKP—ranging from secular education to headscarves—can potentially affect the making of Iraq policy. For those (especially hard-line Kemalists) who think that the consolidation of the AKP with a two-thirds majority in parliament is anathema, the government's behavior in Iraq is seen as a litmus test of its intentions to protect the Turkish Republic. The inability of the government, for instance, to quell Kurdish Democratic

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Party leader Massoud Barzani's public pronouncements about Kurdish intentions regarding Kirkuk and to get the Iraqi government open a second border crossing between the two countries (at Ovakoy, about 10–15 miles southwest of the border crossing at Habur) over Barzani's objections is often interpreted as proof that the AKP cannot influence events in Iraq.

The uncertainty regarding Iraq's future has become the greatest challenge for the Turkish government as it has united many elements of both the center-left and extreme nationalist right along an anti-American and nationalist axis. This "nationalist moment" of sorts has come to dominate media outlets and Turkish civil society in general and has worked to constrain Ankara's freedom to shape a coherent policy toward Iraq. The combination of a diverse set of pressures emanating from the AKP's Islamist base, the anti-AKP establishment, and hardcore nationalists, amplified by a media that has conducted its share of inaccurate and inflammatory reporting, has continuously pulled the government into a variety of mini-crises with U.S. and Iraqi leaders. Abdullah Gul's response to reports of "massacres" in Tel Afer is a case in point. Underlying the government's difficulties in Iraq is the general public antipathy and distrust for U.S. policy in that country.

Should Turkey's interests in Iraq suffer if conditions there radically change in the postelection period or if the insurrection were to include cities such as Kirkuk and Mosul, pressure on Turkey's government likely would increase.

Until late 2004, the impending EU vote on accession negotiations and the incessant speculation regarding the conditions the EU was expected to attach to an initiation of talks diverted the attention away from Iraq. That diversion has proven to be the government's saving grace: until December 17, neither Iraq as a whole nor the Turkmen question has been the primary preoccupation of the public or media. Should Turkey's interests in Iraq suffer if conditions there radically change in the postelection period or if the insurrection were to include cities such as Kirkuk and Mosul, pressure on Turkey's government likely would increase.

How do events in Iraq constrain Turkey's foreign policy objectives?

The new Turkish government's first and foremost objective since assuming power has been to devise and implement reforms that would prove sufficient for the European Union to issue an invitation to start accession negotiations. Turkey's domestic and foreign policies have thus been subjected to an EU test of sorts. If anything, it is the EU process that constrains Turkish foreign policy options in Iraq. Ankara knows that the EU would take a dim view of any Turkish military intervention in Iraq to stop the Kurds from achieving either independence or even robust autonomy. It is unclear how the Europeans would react to a Turkish military intervention on the sides of the Turkmen following violent interethnic clashes or a Turkish attack on PKK camps without U.S. authorization. Given the opposition in many EU countries to Turkey's accession, a military move undoubtedly would give more ammunition to Ankara's detractors.

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On the other hand, instability in Iraq—especially the prospect of a fundamentalist Sunni or Sh'ia regime in Baghdad—is a cause of concern not only for the secular Turkish establishment but also for the Europeans. If anything, a fundamentalist and unstable Iraq on the Turkish border could further add reservations to an already long list of doubts about eventual Turkish membership in the European Union because this, in effect, would extend the EU's borders to Iraq.

Events in Iraq have also significantly reduced the amount of control Turkey could exert on the Kurdish factions in northern Iraq. Prior to the invasion of Iraq, the Kurds in the north were very dependent—though not solely—on Turkish goodwill. With the presence of U.S. troops and new conditions, Turkey has seen its influence diminish as far as containing Kurdish ambitions. Ankara makes its presence felt because everyone involved is conscious of Turkish preferences. In general, the transitional Iraqi governments and bodies, such as the Interim Governing Council (IGC), in existence until June 30, 2004, and the subsequent Alawi interim government, had made it clear that they prefer that the neighboring countries, including Turkey, minimize their role and presence in Iraq. In the summer of 2003, the Kurds, together with the IGC, successfully prevented the deployment of Turkish peacekeeping troops in Iraq following an agreement between Ankara and Washington.

Despite its focus on the EU accession process, the AKP government was quite intent on involving itself in a Middle East-wide initiative. Prime Minister Erdogan and Foreign Minister Gul's vision for Turkey has been an expansive one. During the 1996–1997 coalition government of the Islamist Necmettin Erbakan's Welfare Party and the center-right True Path Party led by Tansu Çiller, Erbakan launched a number of foreign policy initiatives—including the Developing Eight (Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey), which he envisioned as a way to promote much closer cooperation among the predominantly Muslim countries. Gul was then one of Erbakan's most trusted confidants and eager supporter of the new and more assertive foreign policy, and that vision continues with the current AKP government as both Erdogan and Gul perceive Turkey as a country with a much greater potential to influence events on the world stage and particularly in the neighboring region. In their pursuit for more visibility and renown, Erdogan and Gul have already shown their abilities by outmaneuvering Bangladesh for the general-secretary position at the Organization of the Islamic Conference.²⁸ In January 2005, Gul re-embarked on a Middle East mission designed to highlight Turkey's potential role as an interlocutor between Israelis and Syrians and between Israelis and Palestinians. Before the launching of the Iraq war, Gul initiated a regional effort at preventing it. Ironically, much of the Erdogan-Gul team's ambitions for a more influential Turkish foreign policy is helped by Turkey's EU accession path; mishaps in Iraq that alienate the Europeans will, by contrast, undermine Turkey's stature.

Turkish Influence in Iraq

Compared to Iran, which has had a long relationship with Iraq's largest community, the Sh'ia, Turkey cannot claim any influence over any of the groups in Iraq except for a segment of the Turkmen, specifically the ITF. Its current relations with the Kurdish groups are characterized by limited cooperation under a veil of mutual suspicion. During the Saddam Hussein years, Syria was one of the preferred locations for Iraqi exiles and thus could establish strong linkages to a variety of Iraqi opposition groups. Turkey, by contrast, had emphasized bilateral relations with the Baathist government. The Iraqi insurgents clearly do not discriminate between Turks and other foreigners as they have attacked Turkish truck drivers with equal frequency; more than seventy of them have fallen victim to date.

Despite the lack of strong linkages with Iraqi society—some of the Turkmen, although an obvious exception, do not measure up to other sectarian and ethnic groups in importance—Turkey is still a critical player in the future of Iraq. To be sure, given the volatility of the Iraqi scene, no neighboring country can completely determine the course of future developments in Iraq. Turkey, not unlike Iran, has the capability to both impede and facilitate progress for the U.S. and its allies in Iraq.

First and foremost, Turkey represents Iraq's most direct gateway to European markets; a great deal of truck traffic crosses through the border post at Habur. In addition, two oil pipelines traverse Turkish territory en route to Mediterranean oil terminals at Ceyhan.²⁹ Currently, Turkey serves as an important base for support operations for the U.S. military. The air base at Incirlik has historically played a critical role not just for maintaining the sanctions policy against the Saddam Hussein regime but also for facilitating U.S. troop rotations and other combat support activities. Such links to the United States obviously differentiate Turkey from both Iran and Syria. While Ankara has had some limited influence on U.S. policy options in Iraq, the general distrust harbored by the current Iraqi leadership toward all neighboring countries has limited overall Turkish influence.

Ankara has the capability—although not necessarily the will and certainly not the intention—to disrupt U.S. supply lines, prevent the U.S. military from making use of

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the Incirlik air base, and use the ITF to further exacerbate interethnic relations. Some Sh'ia Turkmen (although not associated with the ITF) in Tel Afer and even Kirkuk have sided with the insurgency against the United States and the Alawi government. The ITF, independent of Turkey, has some ability to influence and even disrupt the conditions on ground in Kirkuk and beyond, although its poor performance in the January elections has cast some serious doubts on its long-term viability. In fact, reports indicate that the ITF has suffered severe defections and split into several factions.³⁰ These developments perhaps explain the dubious claims articulated by the ITF leadership in Mosul of American soldiers attacking them and then using their uniforms to fire indiscriminately on Mosul's residents.³¹

Following its criticisms of the ITF performance in the January 30 elections, the Turkish government has been looking for alternative approaches to the Turkmen question. In this vein, Ankara's point person in Iraq, Ambassador Osman Koruturk, enunciated a new set of policy guidelines that he claimed were drawn from Ankara's experience with the Bulgarian Turks in the 1980s. Accordingly, the Turkmen would be encouraged to rely on themselves, increase their political involvement, and broaden their coalition to include all Turkmen, just as the Bulgarian Turks had done earlier.³² Koruturk emphasized that the new policy did not represent just the Turkish foreign ministry's preferences but, rather, those of all relevant Turkish institutions (read the military).³³

Despite the recent difficulties in Turkish-American relations, Ankara understands that it cannot afford to alienate Washington and, therefore, is unlikely to risk such a course of action unless its fundamental interests are threatened in any meaningful manner. Clearly, the Turkish government's attempt to adjust its policies in Iraq in the wake of the elections augurs well for Turkish-American relations. The EU decision to open accession talks does not make it easier for Ankara to move away from the U.S. on the matter of Iraq precisely because, as far as Turkey's involvement in Iraq is concerned, the EU's views do not differ significantly from those of the United States. Still, given the rising tensions in relations, the U.S.-Turkish relationship is hostage to any potential unfortunate accident or event such as the incident with Turkish Special Forces troops on July 4, 2003.

Turkey's influence in Iraq will materialize in the medium term and only after efforts at writing a new constitution commence. Convinced that a federation based on ethnic lines is a recipe for future division—à la Yugoslavia—Turkish elites have no doubt that Turkey's diplomacy will then focus on limiting the nature of the emerging federal structure in Iraq, particularly in northern Iraq. To the extent that a new Baghdad government will be looking for help not only to consolidate its position but also to improve economic conditions quickly, Ankara's cooperation will be necessary. Any sort of impediment at the Habur border post can threaten the recovery effort and also put the Kurdish enclave in the north under pressure.

The Kurds have the most pressing need for access to the West in general and also to Turkey for trade and political support. For them, such support is a balancer of sorts vis-à-vis Iraq's other constituent groups. Should a federated Iraq emerge in the near future that is not to its liking, Ankara will intensify its past efforts at containing the Iraqi Kurds in collaboration with Iran and Syria. In the past, such collaboration has not produced many concrete results, in part because of the mutual suspicions each country has about the other's intentions. Yet the AKP government has gone out of its way to improve relations with Syria and, to a lesser extent, with Iran. Kurdish nationalist feelings are running high in northern Iraq, and in the event that Baghdad implodes in sectarian violence or emerges as the center of a fundamentalist state, the likelihood that the Kurds would seek independence is almost certain.³⁴ This prospect could propel Ankara to join in any anti-Kurdish movement that would emerge within the Arab world, especially because the latter will perceive Kurdish independence as an attempt by the United States to create another non-Arab state in the Middle East. Even some commentators close to the Turkish military who were at the forefront in criticizing Syria and Iran for their support of the PKK

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are currently arguing that these two countries no longer pose as grave a threat, if any, to Turkey, compared to the developments in Iraq.³⁵

Finally, Turkey's ability to influence events in Iraq is hampered by the presence of the United States in that country. Were the U.S. to leave before Iraq is stabilized, Ankara will find its options in Iraq increased, especially its ability to block developments. In this eventuality, the EU and the collateral damage on the accession process would remain the only impediments to its policies.

Of course, these are outcomes Turkey would like to avoid. As a result, Ankara has a stake in the new political process in Iraq that began with the January elections if a modicum of plurality and stability is to be attained in the medium term. The relative success of the January 30 elections, in which Kurds and Shiites defied the threat of violence and participated in great numbers, is a positive outcome for Ankara, because it gives pause to the Kurdish push for independence. Furthermore, Talabani's selection as Iraq's president can also be seen as an attempt by the Kurds to become more integrated with Baghdad and, hence, with Iraq as a whole. By their own admission, the Turks have tried to play a constructive role and encourage the Sunnis to participate in the January 30 elections.³⁶ They have also been instrumental in regional efforts aimed at supporting the Iraqi transition. Yet Turkey's influence is severely limited; the political class now in power in Baghdad does not trust Ankara.

Ironically, Turkish influence in Iraq would be greatly augmented if it aligned itself with the Kurdish groups in northern Iraq. Despite its misgivings regarding Iraqi Kurds, Ankara's support for genuine and robust Kurdish autonomy in Iraq may go a long way to tip the balance in favor of those among the Kurds who are willing to give a federal arrangement a try and remain within a unified Iraq. Currently, two factors are propelling the move for Kurdish independence. The first is a growing sentiment for independence that is forcing leaders such as Talabani and Barzani to play the nationalist card, especially with regard to the final disposition of Kirkuk. After almost fourteen years of quasi-independence, it is hard for the younger generations to accept a return to Iraqi rule. The second is that the push for independence stems from the alarm over an uncertain future and the fear that a fundamentalist or even revengeful regime will come to occupy Baghdad. Adding to Kurdish woes is the increasing debate in Washington about the future course of Iraqi policy and calls for early disengagement.

Turkey cannot do much to prevent the first, but, given the Iraqi Kurds' preference for access to Europe and Turkey's privileged relationship with the EU, Turkish assurances would go a long way to assuage Kurdish anxieties. In fact, in the event of an early American pullout, Turkey may end up with much greater say in Iraq—as both a counterbalance against Iran and, if it chooses to be, as a protector of the Kurds against future instability and, especially, any attempt by a future central government in Baghdad to reduce Kurdish prerogatives.

Turkey can reap other benefits from positive inducements. First and foremost, a change in discourse and an offer of political assistance to the Kurds would also help diffuse some of the interethnic tensions between Kurds and Turkmen, making a dialogue over Kirkuk possible. Kurds are more likely to heed Turkish concerns and engage with both the Turks and Turkmen if they perceive that Ankara is not adamantly opposed to Kurdish aspirations. Similarly, the Kurds are far more likely to cooperate fruitfully with the Turks in anti-PKK operations.³⁷ More important, though, it is in the interest of the Turkmen in Iraq to make a deal with the Kurds and perhaps join a Kurdish-administered territory rather than remain under the tutelage of a Sh'ia-dominated and more "pious" Baghdad.

Second, Turkey would benefit from having a secular Kurdish autonomous entity—or even an independent state—should matters deteriorate further; such an entity could serve as a buffer zone in the event fundamentalist forces—Sunni or Sh'ia—were to emerge dominant in Baghdad. The existing Kurdish political infrastructure has had some success in keeping Iraqi insurgents at bay and away from northern Iraq.

Third, a change in the Turkish discourse vis-à-vis the Kurds would also help alleviate domestic tensions in Turkey. Already, changes in cultural rights for Kurds influenced by the

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EU process have led to improvements on the ground. Politically, however, Turkish Kurds remain quite attached to their Iraqi brethren. Any attempts by Ankara in support of Iraqi Kurds would be received with great enthusiasm in Turkey's southeastern provinces. Such a course of action was attempted once by former Turkish president Turgut Ozal in the early 1990s, when he actively courted Iraq's Kurdish leaders as a means of appealing to Turkish Kurds and weaning them away from the PKK. The policy had a successful start but collapsed with Ozal's death in office.

A rapprochement with Iraq's Kurds would benefit Turkey economically, especially its southeastern provinces, which have suffered much from the PKK-led insurgency throughout the 1990s. The Iraqi Kurdish leadership has already tried to make inroads with the Turkish business community by awarding it a passel of contracts—ranging from oil exploration to the construction of school dormitories, including a \$40 million airport construction project in Suleymaniyah.³⁸

Turkish engagement with Iraqi Kurds would also help ease future U.S. disengagement. The Bush administration is likely to come under pressure at home not to abandon the Kurds, especially because of their support for the U.S. effort in Iraq and Washington's past record of failing to stand by them after encouraging them to lead insurrections against the Saddam Hussein regime.

Turkey and U.S. Policy

Ankara's misgivings regarding U.S. policy in Iraq precede the current conflict and date back to the aftermath of the first Gulf War, when the zone of protection over northern Iraq, including the no-fly zone, gave rise to the creation of a Kurdish autonomous entity. For most of the 1990s, Turkey's acquiescence to the basing of American and British aircraft at the Incirlik air base to enforce the northern no-fly zone over Iraq proved to be one (if not the most important) of the U.S. policy anchors designed to contain Saddam Hussein. It would be safe to say that without Ankara, the U.S. position in Iraq would have suffered severe reverses. On the eve of the war in 2003, the United States, with Turkish permission, transferred undercover teams into Iraq from Turkish territory to lay out the groundwork for the invasion.³⁹

Yet the war in Iraq has deepened anti-American sentiment in Turkey, which had begun to change with the post-September 11, 2001 U.S. efforts at declaring a global War on Terror. A recent BBC survey found that, with 82 percent responding negatively, the Turks topped the list of people worldwide who believed that President George Bush's re-election would have negative consequences for the world.⁴⁰ Turkish-American relations have had their ups and downs during the 1990s, and the divergence often can be attributable to the role Iraq has played in the relationship.⁴¹

Compatibility with U.S. interests

At first glance, long-term Turkish and American interests in the Middle East do not differ very much. They both would prefer a democratic, stable, and unified Iraq; both perceive Iraq as a critical country in the region and are committed to its territorial integrity, regarding it as a valuable ally in containing Iran's ambitions. Washington and Ankara, including the Islam-friendly AKP government (not to mention the secular military), would consider the emergence of a full-blown fundamentalist regime in Iraq a failure of the Iraq war. Continued instability in Iraq not only undermines U.S. objectives but, from Ankara's standpoint, also has the potential of spilling over into Turkish territory through infiltration by PKK-like groups, the influence of fundamentalist activists, and consequent refugee flows. Both countries have shared the same viewpoint on the PKK presence for more than a decade: It must be removed.

Despite the compatibility of long-term interests, there is a great deal of variance on the means to accomplish these goals, and the divergence revolves around the future of

Continued instability in Iraq not only undermines U.S. objectives but, from Ankara's standpoint, also has the potential of spilling over into Turkish territory through infiltration by PKK-like groups, the influence of fundamentalist activists, and consequent refugee flows.

Iraq; contingencies there divide the two countries the most. Ankara wants to see Kurdish ambitions circumscribed and also to see the Turkmen play a greater role in a reconstituted Iraq and assume control of the city of Kirkuk as a bulwark against Kurdish separatist ambitions. The U.S. is more ambivalent about Kurdish aspirations: having promised them support for a federal arrangement in 1998, when Secretary of State Madeleine Albright negotiated a truce between the two Kurdish factions in northern Iraq, Washington is unlikely to back away from that promise. Realistically, the U.S. also understands that after more than a decade of quasi-independence, a federal structure is the absolute minimum condition that could convince the Kurds to remain within a unified Iraq. Turkey, too, reluctantly understands the necessity of a federal arrangement; but whereas the U.S. would leave the details of this arrangement to be determined by the Iraqis, Ankara wants not only to have a say but also to minimize the geographic and institutional reach of this kind of federation. What is more worrisome to the Turks is whether the U.S. would support the creation of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq should conditions in Iraq deteriorate beyond a certain point.

Underlying the Turkish viewpoint is a deep mistrust of U.S. actions and intentions in Iraq. The mistrust was accentuated by the failure of the prewar diplomacy. On the eve of the war, and despite intense domestic opposition, the Turkish government promised the U.S. that it would allow the creation of a second front, yet it failed to deliver on its promise when its inept handling of the parliamentary vote on the issue resulted in a negative vote. The agreement, which had been meticulously negotiated, would have allowed for a sizable Turkish military contingent to enter northern Iraq on the heels of U.S. troops. With the deal off the table, the U.S. has been adamant in limiting the Turkish military presence in Iraq to a minimum and has heeded Iraqi (both Kurdish and non-Kurdish) demands not to let Turks bring in troops. Still, despite the opposition to the war, Ankara did quietly lend a hand to U.S. forces by opening limited use of the border with Iraq and airspace, and later by becoming a conduit for supplies.⁴²

The parliamentary rejection precipitated a crisis in Turkish-American relations, and, after the vote, the U.S. was careful not to criticize the government, which had at least tried to pass the resolution through parliament. However, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz's interview with CNN-Turk criticizing the military establishment in Ankara for failing to provide leadership on the issue and trying to indirectly stall the measure shocked many.⁴³ Many Turks are convinced that the United States seeks to punish Ankara for having rejected the deployment of U.S. forces in Turkey in the March 1, 2003 parliamentary vote. In their view, the rejection privileged the Iraqi Kurdish factions by providing them an opportunity to demonstrate their support for the Bush administration's Iraq policy. Therefore, the increased reliance on the Kurds by the United States came at the expense of Turkey, which prohibited the entry of U.S. troops into northern Iraq from Turkish soil. In effect, the reliance of the U.S. forces in Iraq on Kurdish units to help them maintain order and even engage insurgents further inflames Turkish perceptions that the Kurds are now more important than them. Furthermore, U.S. inaction on the PKK front is also interpreted in the media as another way in which Washington is punishing Ankara for its rejection. All these perceptions culminate in the fear of a hidden U.S. agenda to create a state for its loyal Kurdish allies.

To some extent, the U.S. has also been exasperated with Turkish opposition to any future Iraqi agreement that offers the Kurds more than symbolic autonomy. As one commentator has recently argued, since the March 1, 2003 parliamentary vote, the real change in U.S.-Turkish relations has been one of diminished importance for the United States.⁴⁴ Both the July 4, 2003 incident involving Turkish Special Forces and the decision of Coalition Provisional Authority head L. Paul Bremer III to side with the Iraqis that same summer against the deployment of Turkish troops in Iraq reflected the growing unease within the U.S. Department of Defense about Turkey's intentions. Yet TGS chief

Turkey, too, reluctantly understands the necessity of a federal arrangement; but whereas the U.S. would leave the detail of this arrangement to be determined by the Iraqis, Ankara wants not only to have a say but also to minimize the geographic and institutional reach of this kind of federation.

Ozkok and his deputy Basbug have tried hard, despite rank-and-file uneasiness, to reinvigorate the Turkish-American relationship and put a stop to the spiraling anti-American rhetoric emanating from Ankara.⁴⁵

Another cause of disagreement is that neither Turkey nor the United States has succeeded in formulating a coherent Iraq policy. Because of all the unanticipated difficulties it has faced almost since the end of major combat operations, the U.S. has had to continually improvise its policies on the ground. The Turks, because of the fundamental nature of the threat they perceive to their own vision of national identity from Kurdish independence in Iraq and the domestic fallout such an event may cause, have opted out for a policy that cannot accommodate the changing conditions and realities in Iraq. But here, too, there are signs that some change is in the offing.

Can the differences be reconciled?

In the medium run, the differences between the United States and Turkey will increasingly be reconcilable as Turkey makes progress along the European accession path, which will boost Turkey's confidence and reduce its worries regarding Kurdish irredentism. Of course, this will require that the Turkish government continue to institute and implement reforms and policies that the EU deems necessary. Currently, the perception in Turkey is that the government has stalled on this front, at least temporarily. More important, the Europeans will also be able to weigh in on this matter, because it is in their interest to see the Iraqi situation resolved as soon as possible with a minimum amount of disruption.

The more important problem is in the near term, in which another incident such as the July 4, 2003, mishap with the Turkish Special Forces troops can throw the U.S.-Turkish relationship into a tailspin. Of late, Turkey and the United States have increased their dialogue on certain critical issues, such as the PKK. In early January 2005, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage was dispatched to Ankara, and a tripartite meeting on January 11, 2005, that brought together U.S., Turkish, and Iraqi officials to discuss measures against the PKK followed Armitage's visit. Media reports suggest that there was agreement on a number of issues, including repatriating PKK fighters by Iraq, dismantling a refugee camp said to be under PKK control, and preventing the participation of a PKK-affiliated political party in the January 30 Iraqi elections. On the heels of this meeting, USCENTCOM's General John Abizaid met with Turkish military officials to discuss a wide variety of issues, including Iraq and Afghanistan. Condoleezza Rice, in her first trip abroad as U.S. secretary of state, put Ankara on her itinerary as a clear signal that Turkey is an important ally. Clearly as a policy of damage control, Washington has decided to step up the frequency of contacts with Ankara.

Nevertheless, it is also vital that the United States and Turkey engage in a backstage diplomatic dialogue that helps clarify the potential scenarios and plans for different contingencies. Critical to bridging the differences is how to approach the Kurdish and Turkmen problems. Were Iraq to splinter, the Turkmen, at least the more secular ones and those close to Turkey, are likely to face a dilemma: They can either try to form a common front with an anti-Kurdish government in Baghdad that may end up implementing a fundamentalist agenda, or they can elect to side with the Kurds, who have made it clear they are opposed to fundamentalist rule and have so far shown to be far more liberal in their approach to governance.

It is also important for Turks and Americans to learn to compartmentalize issues, especially Iraq. Washington must understand that Turkey has to live with its neighbors—as unsavory as they may be, as is the case with Iran and Syria. And Turkey must understand that the U.S. role as a global power requires that these agreements on Iraq not be allowed to mar cooperation in other areas—particularly in NATO. The political future of Iraq, its economic development, and the role of both Turkey and the United States in the country's future are of paramount concern at this stage. The dialogue must be not only extensive but also multilayered and encompass different groups and political entities, including officials, politicians, academics, and journalists. Engaging in a such dialogue as soon as

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possible will not only help the two sides narrow their differences but also help moderate Turkish demands.

The greatest impediment to such a dialogue is that both sides have to confront some unpleasant facts. In the case of the United States, the occupation has suffered some rather severe setbacks and, despite the elections, Iraq is far from where many in the U.S. expected it to be in the post-Saddam Hussein period. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's ruminations regarding Turkey's lack of cooperation on the second front as the cause for the current situation in Iraq are not only unfair but also unhelpful.⁴⁶ For Turkey, the fact is that it must confront the Kurdish issue—at home and in Iraq—head on and explore ways in which the United States can help; this is something that Ankara has avoided, despite the EU reform process. Ultimately, the dialogue has to include both Iraqi officials as well as Iraqi Kurds.

What the U.S. should be looking for from the Turks is help in the event conditions in Iraq deteriorate further. It is possible that Iraqis may end up fighting a civil war, which should not be viewed as naturally resulting in a partition. If such an event were to materialize, where the U.S. will need Turkey the most is in maintaining open borders and also helping to limit Iranian and Syrian assistance for their proxies. Despite the mutual suspicions, Turkey's improved relations with both Syria and Iran and enhanced standing because of the European process will come in handy.

If the postelection outlook in Iraq improves, Turkey should conduct active yet careful engagement in Iraq, ranging from reconstruction activities to trade and political dialogue with Iraqi Kurds and the Iraqi government on issues such as Kirkuk. Bolstering the confidence of the Kurds in Iraq is vital to their chances of remaining part of the Iraqi state. Hence, containing the ITF's radical inclinations and even restructuring it from a quasi-paramilitary group into a genuine political movement will be necessary.

What can the United States offer in return? Its ability to influence what the Turks view as vital interests is directly correlated with an improving security situation in Iraq. Should conditions improve significantly, the U.S. will be able to make a more concrete gesture toward the Turks first and foremost, perhaps by issuing an ultimatum to the PKK forces in Iraq to give themselves up to the new Iraqi authorities. Turkish, Iraqi, and U.S. authorities must also come up with a realistic plan on how to handle demobilized PKK fighters; the U.S. was disappointed by the limited and restrictive nature of an amnesty offered by Ankara in 2003. As a result, and despite the organization's internal divisions, very few PKK fighters opted for returning to Turkey. Because it is unlikely that all PKK members will want to return to Turkey, a plan is certainly required for demobilization and relocation. Although such a plan would be only an interim step, it will go a long way toward assuaging Turkish fears about the future of the organization.

More important, perhaps, given Turkish domestic sensitivities, is working out an equitable solution to the status of Kirkuk, where competing Kurdish, Turkmen, and Arab claims to property and governance rights have yet to be negotiated. If conditions in Iraq improve, the U.S. will have to play the role of honest broker among the three. Considering that many of the Arab settlers in Kirkuk are Sh'ia relocated there by Saddam Hussein and that there is always the likelihood of a Sh'ia-influenced government in Baghdad, it is imperative that some kind of internationally supported adjudication system is put in place as soon as possible.

Turkish-American differences over the future of Iraq are not insurmountable. However, events in northern Iraq have the potential of creating a backlash—for reasons that are peculiar to Turkish domestic politics—that will undermine not just the Turkish-American relationship but also endanger the EU reform and accession processes. The current AKP government, despite all the post-EU summit political support it enjoys, remains vulnerable to developments in Iraq. Ironically, because Turkey has succeeded in convincing the EU of its commitment to required reforms, the actual path of negotiations is likely to

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chip away at this same political support as different constituencies discover that the EU's requirements overwhelm their particular interests.

Because the Kurdish question goes to the heart of Turkish identity and deep concerns over its own territorial integrity, an independent Kurdish entity in Iraq before most of the EU political reforms are introduced and institutionalized can deal a severe blow to Turkey's government. It is in the interest of both the U.S. and Turkish governments to work on modalities in anticipation of any unforeseen developments.

NOTES

1. Although there is not one Kemalist worldview, it has come to represent a combination of rigid secularism, centralized government, an inward-looking foreign policy, and the reliance on the military as the institution of last resort. For the Kemalist vision of foreign policy, see Philip Robins, *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 136–39.

2. For more detailed histories of the Kurdish question in Turkey, see Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish Question* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), and Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, *The Kurdish Question in Turkey: An Example of a Trans-State Conflict* (London: Frank Cass, 1997).

3. *Radikal* (Istanbul), March 21, 2005, and *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), March 21, 2005. All Turkish news sources cited here are their internet editions unless otherwise specified.

4. *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), December 22, 2004.

5. The word used was “soydas,” which brought a sharp response from a liberal columnist who argued that, given the large numbers of Kurdish-origin citizens in Turkey, the use of the word “soydas” was at best discriminatory and divisive; see Gulay Gokturk, “Kirmizi Çizgilerimiz II,” *Dunden Bugune Tercuman* (Istanbul), February 4, 2005.

6. http://www.tsk.mil.tr/bashalk/toplantı/basbıltoplantı/ocak2005_sorucevap.htm, January 26, 2005.

7. The issue of nonreligious minorities in Turkey, such as the Kurds, has figured prominently in the run up to the December 17, 2004, EU summit vote on opening accession negotiations; see Murat Yetkin, “Ankara'nın Kurt Sikintisi,” *Radikal* (Istanbul), November 7, 2004. Most Kurds view the reforms instituted—but yet to be fully implemented—by the Turkish government to be too timid and insufficient. Although the reforms satisfied the European Union enough to initiate accession negotiations with Ankara, Kurds are likely to take advantage of the EU process to push for more comprehensive reforms.

8. After decades of “Arabization” policies, natural population movements, and conflict, it is hard to come up with accurate figures on Kirkuk's population; see International Crisis Group, *Iraq: Allaying Turkey's Fears over Kurdish Ambitions*. ICG Middle East Report, no. 35 (Ankara/Amman/Brussels: International Crisis Group, January 26, 2005). Phebe Marr estimates that the total Turkmen population is no more than 2–3 percent of the total Iraqi population; see *The Modern History of Iraq*, 2d ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 2004), 16. Marr argues that the Turkmen were until recently well integrated into Iraqi society.

9. Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 9–11.

10. International Crisis Group, *Iraq's Kurds: Toward a Historic Compromise?* ICG Middle East Report, no. 26 (Amman/Brussels: International Crisis Group, April 8, 2004), 9.

11. The primarily Shiite Turkmen city of Tel Afer became a battleground in early fall 2004 when U.S. troops intervened to cleanse the city of insurgents.

12. Ecevit is not the only one to call for intervention; see, for example, Umit Ozdag's interview with Nese Duzel, “Gerekirse Amerika'yla Çatisiriz,” *Radikal* (Istanbul), February 7, 2005.

13. In an unusual fashion, Foreign Minister Gul quickly responded to the general's criticisms; *Radikal* (Istanbul), March 17, 2005. A number of columnists also took the general to task; see Hasan Cemal, “Komutan Iki!” *Milliyet* (Istanbul), March 19, 2005.

14. “Kerkuk Provasi,” *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), September 28, 2004. An ITF representative argued that the Tel Afer operation was a joint U.S.-Kurdish initiative designed to rid the city of its Turkmen population and replace it with Kurds; *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), September 12, 2004.

15. Cengiz Çandar, “Gul'un Turkiyesi Irak'ta Kime Karsi?” *Dunden Bugune Tercuman* (Istanbul), September 15, 2004, and Fikret Bila, “Gul Kayitsiz Kalamayiz,” *Milliyet* (Istanbul), September 15, 2004.

16. In a November 1, 2004 front-page story, the daily *Milliyet* claimed that some forty thousand Turkish soldiers were poised to intervene if the U.S. turned over Kirkuk and its oil fields to the Kurds. Deputy Chief of the General Staff Ilker Basbug denied the story at a news conference the following day; see http://www.tsk.mil.tr/bashalk/toplantı/bsbıltoplantı/kasim2004/kasim2004_sorucevap.htm. Still, Basbug did stress that the Turkish military prepares plans for all sorts of contingencies. The paper was also widely criticized—even by its own ombudsman—for not sufficiently sourcing the story; see *Milliyet* (Istanbul), November 8, 2004. Nevertheless, the story was interpreted as part of a disinformation campaign designed to weaken the government; see Ismet Berkan, “Savasa mi Giriyoruz?” *Radikal* (Istanbul), November 3, 2004.

17. See Foreign Minister Gul's speech in the Turkish parliament, *Sabah* (Istanbul), September 14, 2004.

18. Semih Idiz argues that Erdogan was “trying to court a hard-core Sunni nationalist element that is prevalent in Turkey, and which also has a not so negligible presence within the AKP”; “Kirkuk a Potential

Debaçle for the Government,” *Turkish Daily News* (Ankara), February 3, 2005. In a sharp attack on the United States, Erdogan commented to his party members: “Forces that came to the region in the name of democracy have elected to remain passive in the face of nondemocratic aims. Everyone should know that Turkey, which has historical and kinship ties to the region, will not allow it to be engulfed by years-long turmoil”; Murat Yetkin, “Ankara ve Washington’da soru aynı: Bu nasıl bir ilişki?” *Radikal* (Istanbul), February 5, 2005.

19. Sedat Ergin, “Irak’li Turkmenler buharlastılar mı?” *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), February 18, 2005. In fact, Ergin points out that there were twelve Turkmen elected for the assembly; the Sh’ia coalition had five and the Kurds another four.

20. Fiket Bila, “Ozel Siyaset Belgesi ve Rumsfeld,” *Milliyet* (Istanbul), July 20, 2003. These forces being in place prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, they remained with the acknowledgement of the U.S. authorities.

21. See Abizaid’s interview with Murat Yetkin, “Abizaid: Irak’in Gelecegi İçin Türkiye’nin Destegi Kilit Onemde,” *Radikal* (Istanbul), January 13, 2005.

22. See the interview with Osman Ocalan, *Milliyet* (Istanbul), September 16, 2004.

23. Yasemin Çongar, “Irak Cephesinden Yansıyanlar,” *Milliyet* (Istanbul), December 27, 2004.

24. Cengiz Çandar, “Musul Bilmecesi mi?” *Dünden Bugüne Tercuman* (Istanbul), December 22, 2004.

25. *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), December 23, 2004.

26. “Turkish people disturbed due to military coup rumors,” *Turkish Daily News* (Ankara), June 11, 2003.

27. In a recent poll, 45 percent of university professors said they trusted the military most compared with 17 percent who stated the parliament, 15 percent the judiciary, and 6 percent the European Union; Taha Akyol, “İste Üniversite,” *Milliyet* (Istanbul), January 3, 2005.

28. Prime Minister Erdogan claimed that after two years of AKP rule, Turkey was on “its way to become a global power,” *Yeni Safak* (Istanbul), December 29, 2004.

29. The pipelines were built in the 1980s and have a combined capacity of 1.5–1.6 million barrels a day. They were closed during the sanctions period and were reopened for limited use after the UN’s Oil-for-Food regime was instituted. Since the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime, oil exports through the north have suffered from insurgent attacks and have not, as a result, reached full capacity.

30. Cengiz Çandar, “Turkmenlerin Geldigi Nokta,” *Dünden Bugüne Tercuman* (Istanbul), April 26, 2005.

31. *Milliyet* (Istanbul), February 27, 2005.

32. For details, see Fikret Bila, “Yeni Turkmen Politikası Olustu,” *Milliyet* (Istanbul), March 21, 2005. The Bulgarian reference is to the late 1980s, when the Sofia government tried to forcibly change the names of Bulgarian citizens of ethnic Turkish origin. Many Bulgarian Turks migrated to Turkey but the policy was abandoned soon thereafter, allowing for the return of many.

33. *Ibid.*

34. A group of leading Kurdish representatives delivered to the United Nations a petition for the independence of the Iraqi Kurdish areas signed by 1.7 million people; Reuters, December 23, 2004.

35. Mehmet Ali Kislali, “Türkiye-Suriye-Iran,” *Radikal* (Istanbul), March 25, 2005.

36. See the interview with Foreign Minister Gul, “Gul: Türkiye’yi Kürtlerle Korkutmak Yanlıs,” *Milliyet* (Istanbul), November 5, 2004.

37. Throughout the 1990s, the two Kurdish parties in northern Iraq collaborated and fought with Turkish troops against the PKK.

38. William Safire, “The Resolution’s Weakness,” *New York Times*, June 9, 2004.

39. See Sedat Ergin, “We Can Open a Northern Front but a UN Resolution Is Needed,” *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), September 21, 2003.

40. BBC World Service, January 19, 2005.

41. For a detailed analysis of the period, see Henri J. Barkey, “The Endless Pursuit: Improving U.S.-Turkish Relations,” in *Friends in Need: Turkey and the United States after September 11*, ed. Morton Abramowitz (New York: The Century Foundation, 2003).

42. See Sedat Ergin, “Kararin Sonuçları,” *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), March 2, 2003, and Erdal Guven, “?” *Radikal* (Istanbul), March 2, 2003.

43. For a transcript, see <http://dod.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030506-depsecdef0156.html>.

44. Omer Taspinar, “Gerginlik Abartılıyor,” *Radikal* (Istanbul), March 21, 2005.

45. See, for example, http://www.tsk.mil.tr/bashalk/konusma_mesaj/2005/yillikdegerlendirme_200405.htm.

46. Tom Shanker, "Rumsfeld Faults Turkey for Barring Use of Its Land in '03 to Open Northern Front in Iraq," *New York Times*, March 21, 2005. Technically, Rumsfeld may be correct: Had the 4th Infantry Division been allowed to transit through Turkey, there would have been many more troops on the ground and the insurgency might not have gained the momentum it did following Baghdad's fall. Moreover, with more troops, the looting would have been reduced and the occupation could have started on a better footing. That said, however, it is also clear that the U.S. failed to anticipate the insurgency and did not prepare for it. In fact, the Americans were planning to reduce their troops soon after Baghdad's fall.

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