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# Iraq's Kurds and Turkey: Challenges for US Policy

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In November 2003, Paul Bremer, head of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq, persuaded Washington to speed up the transfer of power to representative Iraqi bodies, not least as a response to the worsening security situation in the country. Bremer's initial proposals were partly abandoned in the face of opposition on the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) and particularly from Iraq's Shiite leadership. The interim agreement eventually arrived at by the IGC's membership in early March 2004 determined that direct elections must take place by 31 January 2005. In early June 2004 the membership of Iraq's interim government to take over on 1 July was announced.

Given that eight of the 33-member interim government are ethnic Kurds, these arrangements suggest a secure place in the evolving post-Saddam Iraq for the Kurds of northern Iraq. Furthermore, the interim constitution, or Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), that emerged from the Iraqi Governing Council in March, in accordance with which Iraq is expected to be governed until a permanent constitution is drawn up by an elected National Assembly during 2005, is also generally regarded as favorable to the Kurds.<sup>1</sup> It recognizes the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) as the official government for the interim period of the three ethnically Kurdish northern Iraqi provinces over which it has presided since 1992, and the federal nature of Iraq's transitional administration. Kurdish is designated as one of Iraq's two official languages, along with Arabic. Even in light of the decree banning the various militias in Iraq announced by the new interim government in early June, the Kurdish *peshmerga*, the largest of Iraq's private forces, will be permitted to function as an internal security and police force in the KRG zone.<sup>2</sup> In any case, it is doubtful the decree will be enforceable for some time. The Transitional

Administrative Law gives the green light to some managed resettlement back to their place of origin both of Kurds displaced by Saddam's "Arabization" of the north and of Arabs (mostly Shiite) who moved there as a consequence of it, and affords considerable scope for the primacy of local law above federal law. It also states that a referendum on a permanent constitution would fail if two-thirds of the voters in three or more governorates—principally a reference to the KRG zone—were to reject it.

The fate of Kirkuk, on the other hand, is deferred until after a permanent constitution has been settled and a census held in the region, and the Transitional Administrative Law permits up to a maximum of three of the 18 provinces to join together to form a "region," thus prohibiting the formation of a larger KRG zone. Nevertheless, the Shiites balked at signing the interim constitution, largely as a consequence of their opposition to concessions made to the Kurds.<sup>3</sup> Ankara too reiterated to Washington its oft-stated concerns about Kurdish aspirations.<sup>4</sup> There also have been indications of increased Shiite and Turkmen armed militancy in Kirkuk,<sup>5</sup> not least by the followers of Sheik Muqtada al-Sadr.<sup>6</sup> Concessions the Kurds feel they have made appear to have been insufficient to assuage the doubts of others.

Prior to Ambassador Bremer's November 2003 plan, the Kurdish preference had been to first entrench federal arrangements guaranteeing Kurdish autonomy before the introduction of democracy into Iraq. Their reasoning was clear. Kurds make up at most one-fifth of the Iraqi population, and are greatly outnumbered by the Arab majority. Shiite Arabs alone constitute around 60 percent of the Iraqi population. This demography explained initial Shiite support for, and Kurdish opposition to, direct elections in the formation of the Transitional National Assembly.<sup>7</sup> Iraq's permanent constitution will now be determined only after nationwide elections have taken place, and it is unclear that these interim arrangements will be carried over in light of the continued unhappiness of the Shiite leadership in particular with their terms.

For this reason, Iraq's two Kurdish leaders, Masoud Barzani and Jalal Talibani, sent a wide-ranging letter to President Bush on 1 June 2004 expressing unhappiness with, among many other grievances, the draft US-UK resolution put to the UN Security Council in late May 2004, because it failed to refer

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to the contents of the Transitional Administrative Law. The letter threatened a Kurdish withdrawal from the central government—in effect, Kurdish independence from Iraq—if the TAL is not incorporated into a permanent constitution.<sup>8</sup> Shiite leader Ayatollah Ali Sistani, on the other hand, successfully warned against including references to the TAL in the United Nations resolution, which in early June and to Kurdish anger was unanimously passed in this form.<sup>9</sup> It is evident that a great deal remains to be settled in Iraq.

### ***Kurdish Aspirations***

The Kurdish aspiration that Iraq should be organized as an ethnically-based federation dates back at least to the Kurdish Regional Government's establishment in 1992. A draft constitution adopted by Iraq's two Kurdish parties in 2002 envisaged that the oil-bearing Iraqi Kurdish provinces to the south of the KRG zone would be incorporated into any future Kurdish self-governing area within a loose Iraqi federal framework, that Kirkuk should be the Kurdish capital, that the Kurds would retain control over their own armed forces (the *peshmerga*), and that the proposed Kurdish state should have the constitutional right to secede.<sup>10</sup> In December 2003, the Kurdish leadership sent a proposal along these lines to the Iraqi Governing Council, where it was met with profound disapproval.<sup>11</sup> As Henry Kissinger has put it, "Kurds define self-government as only microscopically distinguishable from independence."<sup>12</sup>

The more than a decade of self-rule which Iraqi Kurds have exercised in Iraq's three northernmost provinces appears to have strengthened Kurdish determination to seize the historic opportunity presented by Iraq's current circumstances to cement their autonomy. Notwithstanding the violent conflict between the two governing factions during the mid-1990s, Iraq's self-governing Kurdish provinces have thrived relative both to the rest of Iraq and to the period preceding the establishment of the KRG. This has been due partly to the UN-administered share of the now terminated oil-for-food income that was allocated to the KRG, and partly through smuggling and other illegal and semi-legal activities, the scope of which has now dramatically reduced with the lifting of sanctions against Iraq. Although the KRG has by no means enjoyed a perfect democracy, there has been little of the repression, lawlessness, and anarchy that has been the sad fate of so much of the rest of Iraq since the first Gulf War up to the present time, and the autonomous period has seen commendable improvements in the region's infrastructure. More pointedly, the KRG also has represented Kurdish freedom from Arab, Turkish, or Iranian repression.<sup>13</sup>

In an effort to strengthen their bargaining position and to lay the foundation for the single Kurdish entity they envisage will eventually form a loose federation with Iraq's Arab provinces, the KRG's two governing par-

ties are speeding up the creation of a single Kurdish government in the north.<sup>14</sup> Since Saddam's overthrow, they also have enjoyed de facto control of those areas beyond the KRG zone and to which they lay claim as part of their expanded Kurdish zone, such as Kirkuk and much of Mosul province.<sup>15</sup> Demographic squabbles and ethnic tensions have simmered in the region, especially in Kirkuk, as the Kurds have endeavored to reverse Saddam's policy of Arabization and resettle displaced Kurds. These tensions have periodically spilled over into violence, notably in August 2003 and in the following December and January. During this latter outbreak, Arabs and Turkmen fought alongside each other against Kurds, and US forces were obliged to impose a curfew. As talks on the interim constitution heated up, the Kurdish leadership intensified its insistence on self rule,<sup>16</sup> and a petition demanding a referendum on Kurdish autonomy attracted almost two million signatures.<sup>17</sup>

There are indications that the Kurdish leaders may have gone out on a limb with their own constituency in the concessions they have made, notably concerning control over future oil revenues, incorporation of Kirkuk and other lands deemed traditionally Kurdish, and the extent of Kurdish independence generally.<sup>18</sup> The Kurdish leadership has fully participated in US initiatives in Iraq since the demise of Saddam's regime. They held five of the 25 seats on the Iraqi Governing Council and a number of ministerial posts too, including that of foreign minister under Hoshiyar Zebari. This is given additional significance by the fact that, unlike so many of the IGC's Arab members, and those of the new interim government, the Kurdish leaders are not returned exiles but elected representatives of their populations who head well-organized political parties and armed militias. Furthermore, in the war to remove Saddam, the Kurdish *peshmerga* cooperated closely with US forces in the north, securing the runways used by American airborne troops dropped into northern Iraq, engaging with Iraqi forces, liberating Mosul and Kirkuk, handing nominal control of these areas over to American forces, and, since then, ensuring that the areas under their control have been relatively trouble-free and secure. In return, the Kurds have sought, and expected, sympathy and support for their goals. The June letter to President Bush from Barzani and Talibani makes it clear they feel let down by Washington, as do many Iraqi Kurds.

### ***Ankara's Fears***

US diplomacy in Iraq has been reflective of the wider US responsibility for the future of Iraq, and has taken into account both majority Iraqi and broader regional opposition to extensive Kurdish autonomy, most notably and vociferously from NATO ally Turkey, where about half of all ethnic Kurds live. Although the KRG's autonomous zone was afforded protection by the US and

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UK-enforced “no fly zone” based at Incirlik in Turkey, and although Turkish security forces had in effect enjoyed a free hand in their struggle with activists in the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) and the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK) based on the Iraqi side of the mountainous border with Turkey, Ankara never fully acclimatized itself to the existence of the KRG.<sup>19</sup> Turkey feared the KRG might serve as a pole of attraction for Turkey’s restive Kurds, or that it might become emboldened enough to lend them direct support. It could garner international sympathy for the idea of wider Kurdish national self-determination, possibly leading ultimately to a sovereign Kurdish state. Ankara has long feared that a fully independent and sovereign Kurdish state could emerge by design or by default, and this would threaten not only Turkish territorial integrity but an unravelling of the region as a whole.

Indeed, as US plans to take military action against Saddam Hussein took shape during 2002 and early 2003, Ankara intensified its warnings to Washington that war could raise the risk of an enlarged, oil-rich, and more autonomous if not fully independent Kurdish self-governing entity emerging in northern Iraqi territory—whether by design, default, or through opportunistic exploitation of chaos and uncertainty. For a time, Turkish military intervention in northern Iraq designed in part to forestall such an eventuality was a prospect sufficiently realistic enough for the Bush Administration to feel compelled to warn Ankara against it. Ankara’s unease with the possible consequences of US military action contributed to the 1 March 2003 vote by the Turkish National Assembly that denied US forces access to Turkish territory.<sup>20</sup>

Fearful both of its own diplomatic isolation and of the possible regional ramifications of Iraq’s fragmentation, Ankara also has conducted an uncharacteristically active diplomatic campaign in the Middle East region, giving rise to suspicions that a major shift in Turkish foreign policy could be under way.<sup>21</sup> Thus, in January 2003 Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul initiated and hosted a summit in Istanbul attended by Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, aimed both at finding alternatives to war and at explaining Ankara’s perspective on the Kurdish issue. Subsequent gatherings have been held in Riyadh, Tehran, Damascus, and, most recently, in Kuwait in

February 2004. This loose regional alliance broadly shares Ankara's unease concerning possible Kurdish aspirations for greater independence, and has been incorporated into a UN Advisory Group by the UN Secretary General.<sup>22</sup>

Ankara has made particularly diligent efforts to align its position with those of Iran and Syria, producing bilateral declarations in support of Iraq's territorial integrity and against the Kurdish preference for an ethnically-based Iraqi federation. Turkish, Syrian, and Iranian unease is also bound to intensify in light of the extensive rioting by Iranian Kurds that greeted the signing of the TAL in Iraq,<sup>23</sup> the recent disturbances in Syria's Kurdish-populated areas,<sup>24</sup> and the PKK's announcement of the end of its cease-fire and the associated increase in violence in Turkey's southeast.<sup>25</sup>

### *A Still Uncertain Future for Iraqi Kurds*

The US preference for a strongly unified Iraq that is administratively rather than ethnically federal is partly rooted in the need to reassure Turkey. Ankara has repeatedly sought reassurance concerning Washington's commitment to Iraq's territorial integrity—for example, during the January 2004 visit to Washington of Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan and Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul. Concurrently with the Washington visit, US Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz argued in an interview with senior Turkish commentators that “some degree of . . . federalism or federation is probably going to be inevitable, but that should be based on administrative and geographic lines, not on ethnic lines. Our message to the Kurds is your future doesn't lie in separating yourselves from the Iraqis.”<sup>26</sup>

However, the interim agreement of early March leaves Iraq's future, and the position of the Kurds in it, largely unresolved. There could, of course, be benefits for the Kurds in reintegrating the KRG zone into a unified Iraq, and the Kurdish leadership does indeed continue to declare its commitment to Iraq's future unity. The termination of the sanctions and the oil-for-food program with the removal of Saddam's regime might render independence unsustainable in any case. Reintegration could afford Kurdish leaders the opportunity to weave themselves into the country's political fabric, following on from their participation in Iraq's interim arrangements.

Kurds might also benefit from any economic recovery enjoyed by a post-Saddam, stable, and sovereign Iraq. Softening their stance on autonomy would enable them to avoid the wrath of Iraq's neighbors, particularly Turkey, and even win their gratitude. In any case, Kurdish economic well-being remains largely at the mercy of Ankara and other neighboring states. Ethnically mixed areas such as Kirkuk and Mosul could develop power-sharing arrangements between the various factions making up the populations there, as will presumably happen in Baghdad and other multi-ethnic areas.



The drawbacks of such an arrangement would be that Kurdish autonomy would be less than the virtual independence enjoyed for the past decade or so. The Kurds would also once again be at the mercy of Iraq's Arab majority, a hitherto unhappy experience. A Shiite-dominated Iraq might bring problems of its own for the relatively secular Kurds, not least an Iraq based on Islamic *Sharia* law. The interim constitution, while declaring that any law contradicting the tenets of Islam will be impermissible, identifies Islam as *a*, but not *the*, source of legislation in the new Iraq. On the other hand, there are grounds for doubting that the Shiite leadership will be satisfied with these limitations, as the future role of Islam in Iraq contributed both to the heat generated by the preparation of the TAL and the Shiite delay in signing the agreement.<sup>27</sup>

In any case, there appears to have been little softening of the Kurdish insistence on autonomy. Kurdish nationalism is now a genie out of the bottle, and Iraqi Kurds generally seem indisposed to risk their autonomy on the altar of an Arab-dominated Iraq. In addition to the historically unprecedented opportunity offered by the present situation, the pressure of circumstances in Iraq and the intervening obstacles that must be overcome look formidably discouraging. Arab Iraq remains distinctly unstable, and it is not yet certain that a functioning political system will emerge into which the Kurds could integrate even if they were in principle prepared to do so. In a set of circumstances in which civil war or, possibly more likely, armed and violent chaos constantly threatens, the Kurds are unlikely to agree to disband their long-established militias in any foreseeable future. Nor will other Iraqi factions.<sup>28</sup> Washington's officially upbeat line is not mirrored everywhere, and there is a sense that events could spiral beyond US control.<sup>29</sup>

Arrangements in northern Iraq also will hinge on the fraught and contested demography of the area. Kurds were certainly the majority in Kirkuk in 1957, and are almost certainly the largest single group today,<sup>30</sup> although the Turkish-backed Iraqi Turkmen Front has claimed that this honor falls to the Turkmen.<sup>31</sup> Kurdish victims of Saddam's population transfers have been returning to the north in significant numbers, welcomed by the Kurdish authorities who control the area, though not necessarily by coalition forces.<sup>32</sup> If the Kurds succeed in "creating facts" in the north, then they might achieve their objectives through the ballot box, although there is bound to be resistance from the Arabs and Turkmen, who would be the losers. Intensified inter-communal tension in the north is thus foreseeable.

### ***Towards Iraq's End?***

Events could easily slip from Washington's grasp. This possibility has encouraged some US analysts to ask difficult questions. Among the most eminent is Leslie Gelb, who has argued that the Iraqi state, created as it was



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from three distinct Ottoman provinces by the British, possesses no natural unity. Only the oil-less Sunni Arab minority, who have dominated Iraq since its inception, have a stake in its survival. Gelb has proposed that the US encourage a three-state solution to Iraqi disorder, and he takes events in post-Tito Yugoslavia as his guide.<sup>33</sup> Henry Kissinger shares some of Gelb’s pessimism about the chances of Iraqi unity, and has argued, “It may be that like Yugoslavia, Iraq, created for geostrategic reasons, cannot be held together by representative institutions, that it will tend towards autocracy or break up into its constituent parts.”<sup>34</sup> He too concludes that “a breakup into three states is preferable to refereeing an open-ended civil war.” Former US Ambassador Peter Galbraith is another who has openly contemplated the prospect of Iraq’s ethnic breakup as a least-bad option.<sup>35</sup>

A fragmentation of Iraq would pose profound policy problems. As Kissinger asks, would the United States be prepared to support an autocracy in Iraq, the historically tried and tested way of holding the country together? What would the domestic American reaction be to any violent suppression of Kurdish aspirations for self-determination by such a regime, particularly in the light of Kurdish support and welcome for the United States in Saddam’s overthrow? Can the denial of Kurdish self-determination be squared with the Bush Administration’s declared commitment to the democratization of the Middle East region as a whole? Would the United States feel that the emergence of a Shiite-dominated, theocratic, and probably unfriendly Iraqi regime—which given Shiite demographic preponderance is an outcome that could emerge even via the ballot box—be worth the blood, treasure, and American political capital that has been expended on it, and be worth denying the Kurds their right to self-rule?

### ***Problems for US-Turkish Relations***

In the face of the dilemmas that could be thrown up, US reaction might hinge on the Turkish response, for whom a breakup of Iraq might be seen as a first-order strategic threat. As already noted, Turkey was initially

opposed to US military action against Iraq because of fears over the ramifications for the Kurdish issue. As it became clear that the United States was determined to oust Saddam militarily, a substantial Turkish military force was built up on Iraq's borders, refusing US command, and ready to intervene unilaterally should the Kurds transgress Ankara's so-called "red lines" by moving toward the Kirkuk and Mosul oilfields or toward political independence. Turks also asserted their guardianship toward the Turkmen ethnic minority in northern Iraq, and more recently Ankara objected to the TAL partly because of the insufficient attention it pays to the rights of Turkmen.<sup>36</sup>

In the wake of the US invasion, and with a tightening Kurdish grip on northern Iraq, the Turks have been largely on the outside looking in, seemingly without a clearly defined policy. This frustrating and unstable situation has sometimes put the relationship between the two NATO allies at further risk. This was amply demonstrated by the furor surrounding the 4 July 2003 arrest by US forces of 11 Turkish special forces commandos and a number of Turkish and Turkmen civilians during a raid on a building in Sulaymaniyah, northern Iraq, on the basis of intelligence reports that the Turks were engaged in "disturbing activities." The establishment of a US-Turkish commission to investigate the incident did not prevent General Hilmi Ozkok, Chief of Turkey's General Staff, from characterizing the incident as heralding "the biggest crisis of confidence" between the two sides.<sup>37</sup>

Turkey's enforced reliance on US troops and Kurdish *peshmerga* to confront the estimated 5,000 or so PKK separatists holding out in the mountains of northern Iraq has further augmented Ankara's displeasure. In autumn 2003 Washington agreed to take on the PKK presence in Iraq on Ankara's behalf. Although this gesture enjoyed the declared support of the Iraqi Kurdish leadership, little will or capacity to invest in this mission has been evident. In January 2004, Turkish General Ilker Basburg, who had helped negotiate the agreement, declared that "the US's fight against the PKK is not meeting our expectation."<sup>38</sup> Abdullah Gul repeated the complaint in May.<sup>39</sup> Ankara's discontent could mount were this issue to remain unaddressed, particularly in light of the recent revival of PKK violence.

Turkey's relations with Iraq's Kurds are often fraught. Again, a demonstration of this was offered as a consequence of last autumn's US encouragement of, and inclination to accept, Ankara's offer of up to 10,000 troops to assist in the post-Saddam peacekeeping mission in Iraq. By November 2003 it had become manifestly evident that a Turkish troop presence would do more harm than good, as the Kurds threatened to resist militarily the introduction or even transit farther south of Turkish peacekeepers.<sup>40</sup> This echoed a similar Kurdish threat to resist a Turkish troop presence in northern Iraq which, it was rumored, the United States had agreed to on the eve of the invasion of Iraq.

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Nor has Ankara’s stridency with respect to the aspirations of Iraq’s Kurds abated, notwithstanding the latter’s repeated reassurances that they intend to remain an integral part of Iraq. The issue was at the top of Turkey’s agenda during the January trip to Washington, on the eve of which Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned the Kurds not to play with fire, and threatened that Syria, Iran, and Turkey were in agreement that neighboring states might intervene should a breakup of Iraq look imminent.<sup>41</sup> General Basbug warned that an ethnically-based Iraqi federation would be “difficult and bloody.”<sup>42</sup> Henry Kissinger has plausibly speculated, “If Kurdish autonomy goes beyond a certain point, there is a not negligible threat of a Turkish military intervention, perhaps backed by Iran.”<sup>43</sup>

***A Turkish Intervention?***

Turkish military action against the Kurds of Iraq could conceivably be prompted by a crossing of Ankara’s “red lines”—excessive Kurdish autonomy, particularly of an expanded Kurdish zone incorporating Kirkuk. A future drawdown of US troops in Iraq, or an Arab Iraq either in chaos or itself seeking to rein in Kurdish ambitions, might be seen as contexts permissive to Turkish military intervention. Ankara would surely seek, and possibly receive, a degree of regional sympathy, so long as Ankara was not itself suspected of expansionism.

Turkey is not invariably trusted by its neighbors, however, and an occasional whiff of irredentism can hint at a more sinister twist to Turkey’s approach to Iraqi Kurdistan. Turks have occasionally resurrected an earlier resentment at the loss of Mosul and Kirkuk as a result of the 1923 Lausanne Treaty. In 1986 Ankara apparently warned the United States and Iran that it would demand the return of Mosul and Kirkuk in the event of disorder in Iraq as a consequence of the Iran-Iraq War.<sup>44</sup> During the Gulf War, President Turgut Ozal had similarly mused about historic Turkish claims to the region in the event of an Iraqi collapse.<sup>45</sup> In August 2002, Defense Minister Sabahattin Cakmakoglu, admittedly a member of the far right National Action Party (MHP), chose to remark that Iraqi Kurdistan had been “forcibly separated”

from Turkey (by the British) at the time of the republic's founding in 1923, and that Ankara retained a protective interest in the fate of the region.<sup>46</sup> As military action against Iraq approached, the then-Foreign Minister of the new Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, Yasar Yakis, apparently sought legal clarification of the status of Mosul and Kirkuk,<sup>47</sup> and a leading Turkish commentator pointed out that Mosul and Kirkuk were ceded to Iraq, not to any Kurdish state that might subsequently emerge.<sup>48</sup> More recently, former Turkish President Suleyman Demirel expressed regret that Turkey was denied Mosul by the 1923 Lausanne agreement.<sup>49</sup> It would be fanciful to build a prediction upon so disjointed a set of utterances, although some Kurds might. But it does serve as a reminder of the potentially explosive situation that now exists in northern Iraq.

Iraqi Kurds would fiercely resist any Turkish invasion, a prospect that might itself serve as a deterrent. This would certainly deny to Turkey the possibility of turning Iraqi Kurdistan into a kind of northern Cyprus, compliantly semi-annexed. In the event of a long stay, global diplomatic opposition and mischief-making by neighboring states would grow. The United States in particular would be compromised, and could hardly be expected to stay uninvolved. Were US troops still present in the region, both Washington and Ankara would wish desperately to avoid a clash. In such a scenario, it could not be ruled out.

The best hope is that Iraq proves able to arrive at an arrangement that satisfies both the broader requirement for Iraq's territorial integrity and stability on the one hand, and Kurdish demands for a degree of self-determination on the other. This could still happen. As yet incomplete and uncertain changes may be under way in Turkey too, as the military appears to be adopting a lower profile and the country readies itself for European Union accession. The security-driven, militarized approach to the Kurds, both domestically and in Iraq, could give way to a more nuanced and sophisticated policy on Ankara's part. Poor Turkish-Kurdish relations need not be a given, and there has indeed been cooperation and consultation between Ankara and Iraq's Kurds for some time, in particular on economic issues and on the PKK presence in northern Iraq. In any case, a land-locked Iraqi Kurdistan can acquire enormous benefit from good relations with Turkey, and suffer enormous harm in their absence. There have even been reports of a future Turkish protectorate over an autonomous Iraqi Kurdish entity.<sup>50</sup>

### ***Some Broader Considerations***

Much of the analysis offered here is predicated on the basis of a continued failure to achieve stability in Iraq. There are indeed reasons to be pessimistic. As for the implications for US-Turkish relations, the primary post-Cold

War value of Turkey to Washington has been its proximity to Iraq. The lesson that access to Turkey's real estate can be denied by a parliamentary vote is a profound one. Furthermore, Turkey's democratization might combine with divergent regional interests to render less likely the adoption by Ankara of positions complementary to those of Washington. Indeed, this is a lesson that might apply to the Middle East generally, should the Bush Administration's aspirations to transform it bear fruit.

In the wake of Saddam's overthrow, and the consequent removal of the need to contain Iraq, it was likely that US-Turkish relations would change in character regardless of US-Turkish differences and become, in Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz's words, less focused on military cooperation, and instead derived from "the common values, the common beliefs in secular democracy."<sup>51</sup> Washington has long held Turkey up as a model for other Islamic states to emulate, and this inclination will surely strengthen in the context of the Bush Administration's aspiration to democratize the region as a means of stabilizing it. However, it is less than self-evident that the Turkish experience is, or is perceived as, at all relevant or attractive to the rest of the region. In any case, democracy, stability, and pro-US sympathies are not necessarily bedfellows in the Middle East.

In short, the pieces of the jigsaw thrown up by the US-led regime change in Baghdad are yet to hit the ground, and Washington might yet have to reap what it has sown—in Kurdistan in particular.

#### NOTES

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5. "Some 2000 Sadr Militiamen March through Kirkuk," *Kurdistan Observer*, 8 March 2004.
6. See, for example, "Insurgents Stir Up Strife in Kirkuk," *The Washington Post*, 17 May 2004.
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16. Negus, pp. 4-7.
17. "Kurds Lay Ground for Independence Poll," *Daily Telegraph*, 9 January 2004.
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20. For a fuller account of these developments, see my "Strategic Location, Political Dislocation: Turkey, the United States, and Northern Iraq," *Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA)*, 7 (June 2003), 11-23.
21. "Turkey Denies Shift in Foreign Policy," *Financial Times*, 8 April 2003.
22. See the 14 February 2004 Kuwait address by Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul at <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ai/RegionalCountriesMeetingOnIraq.htm>.
23. "Kurds Riot in Eastern (Iranian) Kurdistan," *Kurdistan Observer*, 11 March 2004.
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