

Throughout the past few years in Iraq, just as in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s, the U.S. government has acknowledged the need to win over the “hearts and minds” of the native people on behalf of whom it is intervening. It has recognized that diplomacy often involves not only negotiating with foreign governments but also reaching out to the peoples under the protection of those governments. Particularly in fellow democracies, the will of the people cannot and should not be ignored. If pursuit of our national interest requires the support of a foreign democratic nation, our diplomatic strategy must target the populace as well as the governing elite. However, a foreign populace is not as easily swayed by the brandishing of political or economic power as a foreign government might be. Therefore, it is necessary to engage in dialogue and negotiation with their representatives in order to understand the nature of their concerns and address them accordingly. In light of these guiding principles for effective diplomacy, the U.S. effort to secure approval to send U.S. troops through Turkey into Iraq in 2003 constituted an American diplomatic failure.

Early in 2003, as the U.S. government progressed toward the second U.S. war with Iraq in a decade and a half, the Department of Defense strategized with the Turkish military and government over the possibility of using Turkey as a staging ground for U.S. troops. While most of the U.S. military forces would invade Iraq from the south through Kuwait, U.S. military leaders planned to open up a second front in northern Iraq, relying on access to that area through Turkey. Having gained the initial support of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Pentagon exerted strong pressure on the Turkish Parliament to authorize the deployment of its forces – 62,000 U.S. combat troops, 255 warplanes and 65 helicopters – through Turkey. In return, the U.S. offered a financial

package of \$5 billion in aid and \$10 billion in loans to compensate for the impact of the war on the Turkish economy. However, unlike Erdogan, a significant majority of the Turkish people opposed the U.S. proposal. In light of public opinion and the concerns on which that opinion was based, their elected representatives denied the U.S. request on March 1, 2003. In response, the U.S. government expressed respect for Turkey and its democratic process, but its surprise and anger were thinly veiled. Although the Turkish government later made certain concessions – for example, allowing smaller envoys of U.S. troops to travel through Turkey and securing for the U.S. the right to fly over Turkish airspace – the Pentagon was forced to significantly alter its plan for invasion as a result of the parliamentary vote.

Evaluating the diplomatic strategy surrounding the decision of the Turkish Parliament, it is clear first of all that while the U.S. government did exert effort to convince the Turkish government of the need for plan approval, it neglected to similarly court the Turkish people. Secondly, in its haste to secure consent, the U.S. government overlooked several important principles of dialogue and negotiation.

In recent history, the U.S. has exalted Turkey as an example of a functioning democracy for its Muslim-majority neighbors in the Middle East to emulate. As the world's preeminent democracy, the U.S. should recognize that democracy confers a particular weight on the will of a nation's constituents. While elected democratic leaders are not bound to – and, in fact, should not – always make decisions in conformity with the generally fragmented, often erratic, and sometimes misinformed public opinion, they *are* obliged to consider the sentiments of their constituents with gravity. Thus, when a majority of the Turkish population (some polls estimated over 90 percent) opposed allowing U.S. troops to invade Iraq through their nation,

the Parliament had an obligation to evaluate the source of their concern and weigh their opposition to the U.S. proposal accordingly.

Nevertheless, the U.S. government made no perceptible overtures to win over the hearts and minds of the Turkish people in favor of supporting the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Anti-Americanism had already been rising in Turkey, in part because the U.S. promoted Turkey as an example of democracy flourishing within an Islamic culture, while the majority of Turks still prided themselves on the nation's secularism, as established by Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) in the 1920s. Opinion polls leading up to the parliamentary vote on March 1 revealed increasing opposition to the U.S., due substantially to the perception that the Pentagon was attempting to bully the Turks into action.

In light of Turkey's mounting anti-Americanism and its democratic system of government, the U.S. government should have strived to better manage relations with the Turkish populace, utilizing the tools of effective negotiation. Diplomatic negotiation should not be viewed as a zero - sum game, or as a power play, in which the stronger party can only win at the expense of the weaker party. Instead, the most effective diplomatic negotiations entail the following steps: evaluating each side's relative resources, taking into account the other party's concerns, and then seeking a mutually beneficial outcome. In this case, the U.S. fulfilled only the first criterion, observing the pertinent resources of Turkey (i.e. strategic geographic location) and assuming that an offering of its own resources (i.e. economic aid and loans) would serve as appropriate compensation. The U.S. offer, however, insufficiently recognized and addressed the concerns of the Turkish people.

The Turks' experience following the first Gulf War did cause them to fear economic repercussions of a U.S. invasion. However, the impact of that war was not limited to a

disruption in regional economic activity during the conflict itself. After the war's end, the Turks suffered long-term losses from the trade embargo with Iraq, the cessation of an oil pipeline from Iraq, the decline of tourism in the region, etc. U.S. aid and loans might band-aid the short-term economic effects of a second war with Iraq, but they would not alleviate the long-term effects in Turkey and the region.

Additionally, the Turkish people had political concerns. While the U.S. presumed that the Turkish people would embrace the Iraq War as bringing greater political stability to the region, the Turks feared the immediate consequences with respect to their own Kurdish population. For nearly fifteen years, they had been plagued by the terrorist acts of Kurdish separatists. The Turks worried that Iraq might devolve into sectarian violence as a result of the U.S. invasion and that subsequently the Kurds in southeastern Turkey would attempt to form an autonomous state with those in northern Iraq. The U.S. did not offer any strategy to prevent such an event, nor did it indicate a willingness to involve the Turkish government in its planning and operations with respect to the Kurdish population. The U.S. did not convey a desire to reach a mutually acceptable solution taking into account Turkish concerns, and therefore it failed to accomplish through diplomatic means the outcome that would have best supported its national interests.

The failure of diplomacy surrounding the Turkish Parliament's decision affected several significant national interests. The first interest, of course, was the Iraq War. In addition to forcing the U.S. military to alter its strategy and invade only on one front, the Parliament's decision also created problems in the post-war environment. According to former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, since there was no northern front of U.S. military forces, Saddam Hussein's Republican Guards were able to flee northward and blend in

with the civilian population, thereby hindering capture and prosecution. Secondly, the failure of diplomacy adversely affected the United States' strategic alliance with Turkey. Given Turkey's unique status as a secular democracy that also serves as a bridge to the Middle East and the Islamic world (e.g. being the only NATO member that is also belongs to the Organization of the Islamic Conference), it is in the interest of the U.S. to support its democratic processes and not alienate its government by pursuing a policy of intransigence or conveying an attitude of superiority. Yet by failing to engage the concerns of the Turkish people, the U.S. government created a situation in which voting in favor of the U.S. proposal would be a political liability for members of the Turkish Parliament. Contrary to the results of this diplomatic failure, the U.S. must endeavor to cultivate its relationship with Turkey to preserve that strategic alliance in a very critical and often hostile region.

The U.S. must recognize that pursuit of national interests through diplomacy involves not merely coercing a foreign government into action. Rather, through dialogue and negotiation, the U.S. government should attempt to view the situation through the lens of the foreign government and its populace. It should take their concerns into account, propose a tenable solution for both parties, and then seek to convince the populace, as well as the government, of the benefits of the U.S. proposal. If the U.S. seeks to spread democratic values throughout the world, it must demonstrate respect for democracy in action and practice diplomacy accordingly.

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