

Secretary of State Pelosi

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House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, famous for donning a head scarf earlier this year to commune for peace with the Syrians, has now concluded that this is the perfect moment to pass a Congressional resolution condemning Turkey for the Armenian genocide of 1915. Problem is, Turkey in 2007 has it within its power to damage the growing success of the U.S. effort in Iraq. We would like to assume this is not Speaker Pelosi's goal.

To be clear: We write that we would like to assume, rather than that we do assume, because we are no longer able to discern whether the Speaker's foreign-policy intrusions are merely misguided or are consciously intended to cause a U.S. policy failure in Iraq.

Where is the upside in October 2007 to this Armenian resolution?

The bill is opposed by eight former U.S. Secretaries of State, including Madeleine Albright. After Tom Lantos's House Foreign Affairs Committee voted out the resolution last week, Turkey recalled its ambassador from Washington. Turkey serves as a primary transit hub for U.S. equipment going into both Iraq and Afghanistan. After the Kurdish terrorist group PKK killed 13 Turkish conscripts last week near the border with Iraq, Turkey's prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, asked the parliament to approve a huge deployment of the army along the border, threatening an incursion into Kurdish-controlled Iraq. This of course is the one manifestly successful region of post-Saddam Iraq. In a situation teetering on a knife-edge, President Bush has been asking Mr. Erdogan to show restraint on the Iraq border.

Somehow, none of this is allowed to penetrate Speaker Pelosi's world. She is offering various explanations for bringing the genocide resolution to the House floor. "This isn't about the Erdogan government," she says. "This is about the Ottoman Empire," last seen more than 85 years ago. "Genocide still exists," insists Ms. Pelosi. "We saw it in Rwanda; we see it now in Darfur."

Yes, but why now, with Turkey crucial to an Iraq policy that now has the prospect of a positive outcome? The answer may be found in the compulsive parochialism of the House's current edition of politicians, mostly Democrats. California is home to the country's largest number of politically active Armenians. Speaker Pelosi has many in her own district. Mr. Lantos represents the San Francisco suburbs. The bill's leading sponsors include Representatives Adam Schiff, George Radanovich and Anna Eshoo, all from California.

Pointedly, Jane Harman, the Southern California Democrat who Speaker Pelosi passed over for chair of the intelligence committee, wrote an op-ed for the Los Angeles Times Friday, questioning the "timing" of the resolution and asking why it is necessary to embarrass a "moderate Islamic government in perhaps the most volatile region in the world."

Why indeed? Perhaps some intrepid reporter could put that question to the three leading Democratic Presidential candidates, who are seeking to inherit hands-on responsibility for U.S. policy in this cauldron. Hillary Clinton has been a co-sponsor of the anti-Turk genocide resolution, but would she choose to vote for it this week?

Back when Bill Clinton was President, Mr. Lantos took a different view. "This legislation at this moment in U.S.-Turkish relations is singularly counterproductive to our national interest," he said in September 2000, when there was much less at stake in the Middle East. According to Reuters, he added that the resolution would "humiliate and insult" Turkey and that the "unintended results would be devastating."

If Nancy Pelosi and Tom Lantos want to take down U.S. policy in Iraq to tag George Bush with the failure, they should have the courage to walk through the front door to do it. Bringing the genocide resolution to

the House floor this week would put a terrible event of Armenia's past in the service of America's bitter partisanship today. It is mischievous at best, catastrophic at worst, and should be tabled.