



Sabotage in Wartime

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With all the problems facing this country, both in Iraq and at home, why is Congress spending time trying to pass a resolution condemning the massacre of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire nearly a century ago?

Make no mistake about it, that massacre of hundreds of thousands – perhaps a million or more – Armenians was one of the worst atrocities in all of history.

As with the later Holocaust against the Jews, it was not considered sufficient to kill innocent victims. They were first put through soul-scarring dehumanization in whatever sadistic ways occurred to those who carried out these atrocities.

Historians need to make us aware of such things. But why are politicians suddenly trying to pass Congressional resolutions about these events, long after all those involved

are dead and after the Ottoman Empire in which all these things happened no longer exists?

The short answer is irresponsible politics.

People of Armenian ancestry in the United States and around the world are justifiably outraged at what happened in the Ottoman Empire – and at subsequent governments in Turkey which have refused to acknowledge or accept historical responsibility for the mass atrocities that took place on their soil.

But the sudden interest of Congressional Democrats in this issue goes beyond trying to pick up some votes.

They want a resolution to condemn what happened as "genocide" – a word that provokes instant anger among today's Turks, since genocide means a deliberate government

policy aimed at exterminating a whole people, as distinguished from horrors growing out of a widespread breakdown of law and order in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War.

These are issues of historical facts and semantics best left to scholars rather than politicians.

If Congress has gone nearly a century without passing a resolution accusing the Turks of genocide, why now, in the midst of the Iraq war?

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that this resolution is just the latest in a series of Congressional efforts to sabotage the conduct of that war.

Large numbers of American troops and vast amounts of military equipment go to Iraq through Turkey, one of the few nations in the Islamic Middle East that has long been an American ally.

Turkey has also thus far refrained from retaliating against guerrilla attacks from the Kurdish regions of Iraq onto Turkish soil.

But the Turks could retaliate big time if they chose.

There are more Turkish troops on the border of Iraq than there are American troops within Iraq.

Turkey has already recalled its ambassador from Washington to show its displeasure over Congress' raising this issue. The Turks may or may not stop at that.

In this touchy situation, why stir up a hornet's nest over something in the past that neither we nor anybody else can do anything about today?

Japan has yet to acknowledge its atrocities from the Second World War. Yet the Congress of the United States does not try to make worldwide pariahs of today's Japanese, most of whom were not even born when those atrocities occurred.

Even fewer, if any, Turks who took part in attacks on Armenians during the First World War are likely to still be alive.

Too many Democrats in Congress have gotten into the habit of treating the Iraq war as President Bush's war — and therefore fair game for political tactics making it harder for him to conduct that war.

In a rare but revealing slip, Democratic Congressman James Clyburn said that an American victory in Iraq "would be a real big problem for us" in the 2008 elections.

Unwilling to take responsibility for ending the war by cutting off the money to fight it, as many of their supporters want them to, Congressional Democrats have instead tried to sabotage the prospects of victory by seeking to micro-manage the deployment of troops, delaying the passing of appropriations — and now this genocide resolution that is the latest, and perhaps lowest, of these tactics.