

# Erdogan claims he will invade Qandil, this is why he will fail

by Kardo Bokani - 12/06/2018 10:37



Unable to accept the enhancing status of the Kurds in the Middle East, the Turkish state has over the course of past few months ratcheted up its belligerent approach towards the Kurdistan Freedom Movement. Parallel with its illegal invasion and occupation of the Efrîn Canton in Syria, the Turkish army has been deploying forces inside a sovereign territory, internationally recognised as northern Iraq. Its avowed intention is to “eradicate” the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) whose spreading influence and growing popular support around the world is clearly evident for any independent observer.

This is not the first time that the Turkish army is embarking on such an over-ambitious and admittedly impossible task. It was in 1983, a year before the declaration by the PKK of an armed struggle against Turkey, that the Turkish army entered northern Iraq in a bid to contain the PKK challenge. This marked the first in a long pattern of cross-border incursion, repeated in 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1991,

1995, 1997, 2007, and 2008.

In 1995, it should be noted, the Turkish army launched two operations, which involved 35,000 and 3,000 troops respectively, whose cost stood at \$65 million. This was Turkey's largest military operation in over 70 years, bigger than the invasion of Cyprus in 1974. Amongst Turkey's major purposes was not only the "eradication of the PKK" but also to prevent the formation of what it now is the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), with whom Turkey has now entered into a cordial relationship. In fact, during the operation Turkish jet fighters attacked targets over 100 miles inside the "safe haven" created by the US to protect the civilian Kurds from Iraqi forces.

Not only have these attacks failed to change anything on the ground, but they have also cast further doubt on the much-vaunted capability of the Turkish army, challenging its once dominant position in the whole political system and preventing it from moving in the direction of democratisation.

The reason for these repeated failures should not only be found in the topographical factor present around Qendîl (Qandil), even though, without a doubt, its significance cannot be underestimated. Qendîl is a sprawling mountain range of dramatic nature, which is crisscrossed by hundreds of gorges and ravines, which significantly restrict the movement of a regular army.

The major factor for Turkey's recurring failures is the highly adaptable and formidable military capabilities, defences and the organisational sophistication of the PKK which draws on a tradition stretching back not only to 1984 but also to 1806 when the first armed Kurdish rebellion broke out against the Ottoman occupation of Kurdistan. The combination of these two factors are set to yield yet another disastrous outcome for the invading Turkish army.

Erdogan, however, expects support from the Iranian state and the Democratic Party of Kurdistan-Iraq (KDP). Although the latter has always sided with the Turkish state rather than with the PKK, given the political and economic ties it has over the last two decades fostered with Turkey, the incurring social, political and military cost is highly likely to keep the KDP away from the putative invasion.

Iran is neither interested in participating, given the larger geopolitical issues the whole region is grappling with, not to speak of the internal political crisis the Iranian government has yet to overcome. It is already overextended both financially and militarily in its monolithic attempt to maintain the land bridge of Shi'a majority territories across Iraq and Syria, aimed at allowing the flow of military support from Iran to Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon. Additionally, after the defeat of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, jihadist fighters have shifted their destination to Afghanistan. There they join the local branch of ISIS—Walayat Khorasan—and are set to continue their jihad

against those who do not subscribe to their version of Islam, including the Shi'a population of Iran.

Historically, even with Iranian cooperation, previous operations have failed to yield PKK's capitulation. For example, in 1994 Turkey and Iran forged a military alliance against the PKK, as a result of which the Iranian government permitted Turkish jet fighters to target PKK positions along its borders, while handing over to Turkey a dozen of PKK fighters they had previously captured on the border zones. Moreover, from 2007 onwards, the Turkish and the Iranian armies launched a number of joint operations against the PKK and the PJAK (Kurdistan Free Life Party). None of this, however, brought Turkey any closer to its avowed aim.

Even some of Turkey's senior authorities have admitted the virtually impossible nature of a successful operation against Qendîl. Over the years, various Turkish military officials have repeatedly pointed out that attempting to overrun Qendîl would only end in failure. Erdogan is also aware of this. However, with uncertainty clouding the possibility of total victory in the upcoming snap elections, desperation and fear have led him to embark on such a perilous course. Without a doubt, such an irrational move cost the lives of hundreds of Turkish soldiers and put even more strain on an already destabilised national economy for which Erdogan should be solely held responsible. Yet again we see the careless and dictatorial means Erdogan is willing to implement in order to cling to power and yet again we see that it is the people who will suffer the cost.