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**LES ÉLECTIONS LÉGISLATIVES EN TURQUIE MARQUÉE
PAR LA VICTOIRE DU PARTI AU POUVOIR, PAR UN NON CLAIR
À L'INGÉRENCE DE L'ARMÉE ET PAR L'ENTRÉE
DES DÉPUTÉS KURDES AU PARLEMENT TURC**

RES élections législatives du 22 juillet ont sensiblement modifié la donne politique en Turquie avec un parti au pouvoir, issu de la mouvance islamiste, sorti renforcé du scrutin face au camp de

l'armée, et le retour au Parlement des ultra-nationalistes turcs du MHP et des Kurdes du DTP. Au pouvoir depuis près de cinq ans, le parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) a obtenu 46,6% des voix. La performance n'est

pas mince. Comme l'a souligné M. Erdogan lui-même, c'est la deuxième fois en 50 ans qu'un parti au pouvoir améliore son score à l'occasion d'un nouveau scrutin. Avec un tel pourcentage, l'AKP aura 340 députés sur 550, soit nettement plus que la moitié des sièges. Aux législatives de 2002, il avait recueilli 34% des voix (351 députés). Paradoxalement, le nombre de parlementaires de l'AKP est cette fois moins

élevé car une troisième force - Le Parti de l'action nationaliste (MHP) avec 14,2% des voix et 71 députés - fait son retour au Parlement où reviennent aussi des députés kurdes (au nombre de 20), sous l'étiquette « *indépendant* ». Le principal parti d'opposition, le Parti républicain du peuple (CHP, nationaliste), recueille 20,8% des suffrages à peu près le même score qu'en 2002 (19 %) et aura 112 députés. De plus, cinquante femmes devraient y siéger, portant la part des femmes à près de 10%, du jamais vu, d'après le quotidien *Milliyet*. Le précédent Parlement comptait 24 femmes soit 4,3% du total. Ankara occupe le 123e rang pour la représentation des femmes au sein de l'Union interparlementaire, une organisation qui regroupe plus de 140 parlements nationaux

Treize ans après en avoir été exclus, les députés kurdes retournent au Parlement turc à l'occasion de ces élections et cela malgré les nombreux obstacles notamment administratifs et légaux. Le parti de la société démocratique (DTP, principal parti prokurde) qui jouit d'un fort soutien dans les provinces kurdes, a présenté soixante candidats aux élections sous l'étiquette « *indépendant* » afin de contourner la règle du seuil minimum de 10% des voix au plan national pour qu'un parti puisse entrer au Parlement. Dès l'annonce en mai de sa nouvelle stratégie électorale, le Parlement turc a, dans une rare manifestation

d'unanimité, voté un amendement destiné à y faire obstacle. Les noms des candidats indépendants devant désormais figurer sur le même bulletin que celui des partis avec pour résultat une liste interminable, souvent confuse pour l'électeur alors qu'auparavant, les indépendants étaient inscrits sur des bulletins séparés. De plus, les candidats ont l'interdiction de s'adresser en kurde à leur électeur, le turc demeurant la seule langue autorisée de la campagne. Le DTP a dû confectionner de curieux pochoirs et d'étranges bouts de ficelle pour inciter les électeurs, souvent illettrés, à faire le « *bon choix* ». En plaçant le pochoir sur le bulletin de vote qui contient une longue liste de noms c'est celui du candidat kurde qui apparaît au milieu du cercle découpé et il ne restait plus à l'électeur qu'à apposer le tampon sur le nom. Au Kurdistan de Turquie, 45 % des femmes et 19 % des hommes sont illettrés, bien plus que la moyenne nationale de 20 % et 4 % respectivement. La pauvreté demeure également un grave problème dans cette région, où le chômage peut atteindre des pointes de 70 % dans les zones les plus défavorisées, tandis que de nombreux villages n'ont toujours pas l'eau courante et l'électricité.

A l'annonce des résultats, des centaines de personnes ont fêté avec des tambours et des chants la victoire électorale de leurs candidats à travers le Kurdistan. « *Ankara, nous arrivons* », ont-ils scandé. « *Nous*

voulons ouvrir une page nouvelle », a souligné Aysel Tugluk, ravie de figurer parmi la vingtaine de députés kurdes élus. « *Nous voulons entamer un processus de dialogue et de réconciliation au Parlement afin de régler le problème (kurde)* », affirme cette nouvelle députée de Diyarbakir, capitale politico-culturelle du Kurdistan de Turquie. « *Nous ne serons pas une source de tension (...), nous agissons dans un esprit de tolérance et de compréhension* », a-t-elle ajouté. « *Nous allons avoir pour mission de contribuer à la paix et à la démocratie* », a déclaré pour sa part Ahmet Türk, qui retourne au Parlement turc après en avoir été exclu manu militari en 1994. « *Nous réclamons une nouvelle vision* » du problème kurde, a-t-il souligné sur la chaîne d'information *CNN-Türk*. Les élus kurdes, dont Sebahat Tuncel, élue députée dans la circonscription d'Istanbul alors même qu'elle était incarcérée depuis neuf mois pour délit d'opinion, vont pouvoir former un groupe dans le nouveau Parlement. Les candidats ont fait campagne sur le thème de la réconciliation entre Turcs et Kurdes et ont notamment appelé Ankara à abandonner l'option militaire contre le PKK et à accroître les droits des Kurdes. Le DTP veut obtenir une amnistie pour les membres du PKK, alors qu'Ankara exige une reddition. Les Kurdes, au nombre de 15 à 20 millions sur une population totale de 74 millions d'habitants de Turquie, veulent pouvoir étudier leur

langue dans les écoles publiques et réclament que les fonctionnaires travaillant dans leur région sachent parler kurde.

Les premiers pas des députés kurdes au Parlement ont pris fin sur un échec en 1994 quand leur immunité a été levée. Certains, dont la plus connue, Leyla Zana, lauréate du prix Sakharov de la paix du Parlement européen, ont purgé près de 10 ans de prison. D'autres ont choisi l'exil. D'ailleurs, un procureur turc a, le 21 juillet, ouvert une enquête contre Leyla Zana qui a prôné une structure d'Etat fédéral pour la Turquie permettant aux Kurdes de jouir d'une autonomie. L'ouverture de cette enquête fait suite à une plainte de la police après des déclarations de l'ancienne députée kurde lors d'un meeting de soutien la veille aux candidats kurdes. « *Il est temps de diviser la Turquie en Etats* », avait déclaré l'ex-députée, évoquant l'établissement d'un « *Etat du Kurdistan* ». L'enquête du parquet devra établir si Leyla Zana a violé des articles du code pénal sur l'unité de l'Etat turc.

Par ailleurs, les élections législatives marquées par un vent de nationalisme a permis au parti d'action nationaliste (MHP-ultranationaliste) de séduire l'électorat avec un discours mêlant tentations xénophobes, accents militaires et euroscepticisme aigu. Le MHP devient le troisième parti du Parlement turc. « *C'est une élection très propice*

au MHP. Pour la première fois, il bénéficie d'un soutien significatif au sein des classes moyennes. Cela reflète la frustration à l'égard du CHP et la colère contre l'AKP », commente Ayse Ayata, de l'Université technique du Proche-Orient, à Ankara. Devlet Bahçeli, le chef du MHP, a réclamé la restauration de la peine de mort pour les « *terroristes* », alors que lui-même et son parti appartenaient à un gouvernement de coalition qui a aboli la peine capitale en 2002 dans le cadre des réformes réclamées par l'UE. Ce même gouvernement avait commué en peine de prison à perpétuité la condamnation à mort prononcée par la justice contre Abdullah Ocalan. Le MHP n'avait pas atteint en 2002 le seuil des 10% de voix nécessaires à une représentation au parlement. Son passé est marqué par des violences. Ses partisans, notamment son organisation de jeunesse baptisée les Loups Gris, participaient dans les années 1970 à des batailles de rue contre les militants de gauche. Durant la prochaine législature, le MHP va probablement essayer de mobiliser l'opinion contre les réformes politiques et les concessions éventuelles sur Chypre, deux domaines essentiels dans les négociations d'adhésion à l'Union européenne.

Ce scrutin anticipé, marqué par plus de 84% de participation, devait dénouer la grave crise qui a opposé au printemps M. Erdogan aux partisans dits improprement « *de la laïcité* », dont l'armée, qui

refuse surtout d'abandonner ses prérogatives politiques. Les journaux soulignaient que la menace voilée d'une intervention de l'armée dans la crise avait eu un effet boomerang, avec un sursaut « *démocratique* » des électeurs qui a profité au parti au pouvoir. Les résultats montrent que l'armée « *doit totalement cesser d'intervenir dans la politique* », soulignait le quotidien *Aksam*. Dans une première réaction à sa victoire, M. Erdogan s'est engagé à respecter les « *principes fondateurs* » de la République, dont le premier est la laïcité. « *L'élan en vue de la transformation et du développement (du pays) se poursuivra avec détermination avec le 60ème gouvernement* », a-t-il assuré le lendemain. La victoire du Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan a été saluée par la Bourse d'Istanbul, son indice des valeurs vedettes clôturant sur un record historique à 55.625,44 points. Ces dernières années, l'inflation a chuté, les investissements étrangers ont progressé et la croissance économique a atteint une moyenne annuelle de 7%. Les pays membres de l'Union européenne, quoique divisés sur l'adhésion de la Turquie, ont exhorté Ankara à poursuivre sur la voie des réformes économiques et politiques afin de satisfaire aux critères exigés pour rejoindre les Vingt-Sept. Le chef de la diplomatie britannique David Miliband a jugé « *très important* » de tendre la « *main au nouveau gouvernement turc* ». Son homologue autrichienne Ursula Plassnik

a souligné l'intérêt d'avoir « une Turquie moderne, dynamique et prospère en tant que partenaire », espérant que le gouvernement continue « avec même plus d'ambition ». De son côté, le président de la Commission européenne José Manuel Barroso a observé que le succès du parti de M. Erdogan intervenait « à un moment important pour le peuple de Turquie alors que ce pays avance dans les réformes politiques et économiques ».

Mais le Premier ministre suscite également des inquié-

tudes à la suite de ses efforts pour faire de l'adultère un crime et nommer d'anciens islamistes à des fonctions clés. Sans compter le trouble provoqué par ses appels à lever les restrictions sur le port du foulard islamique. Pour ce qui est de la question kurde, la Turquie, membre de l'OTAN, menace régulièrement de lancer une offensive dans le Kurdistan irakien sous le prétexte de combattre le PKK, dont certaines unités sont sous basées aux frontières de la Turquie, de l'Irak et de l'Iran.

à l'Iran de revenir sur sa décision et de ne pas exécuter ces deux hommes ». Une condamnation à mort doit être impérativement approuvée par la Cour suprême pour être appliquée. Le chef du pouvoir judiciaire, l'ayatollah Mahmoud Hachemi Chahrودي, qui est désigné par le guide suprême de la République islamique, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei, peut également intervenir pour empêcher la pendaison. L'organisation de défense de la liberté de la presse Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) avait dénoncé le 25 juillet la condamnation à mort de ces deux journalistes et appelé la communauté internationale à intervenir auprès de l'Iran pour l'empêcher.

**IRAN : ABDOLVAHED BOTIMAR ET
ADNAN HASSANPOUR, DEUX JOURNALISTES KURDES
CONDAMNÉS À MORT**

L'IRAN a, le 31 juillet, confirmé pour la première fois que deux journalistes kurdes iraniens avaient été condamnés à la pendaison comme « ennemis de Dieu ». Abdolvahed Botimar et Adnan Hassanpour « ont été condamnés à la pendaison pour être mohareb », ce qui signifie en persan « ennemis de Dieu », le 16 juillet dernier, par le tribunal de Marivan (Kurdistan iranien), a déclaré le porte-parole du pouvoir judiciaire, Alireza Jamshidi sans préciser les charges retenues contre les deux hommes. Ces déclarations confirment une récente information de l'Institut kurde de Paris qui avait alerté les organisations des droits de l'homme et les pouvoirs publics occidentaux mi-juillet (<http://www.institutkurde.org/info/special/iran/>)

Adnan Hassanpour et Abdolvahed alias Hiva Botimar, étaient collaborateurs du magazine Aso (Horizons), interdit en août 2005. Adnan Hassanpour y traitait de la question très sensible du Kurdistan iranien. Lors de son procès à huis clos, il a été reconnu coupable « d'activités subversives contre la sécurité nationale » et « d'espionnage ». Ses entretiens avec des médias basés à l'étranger, tel que Voice of America, ont également été retenus à charge. Il a été transféré le 18 juillet à la prison de Sanandaj, capitale du Kurdistan iranien. Abdolvahed Botimar est également un membre actif de l'ONG environnementale Sabzchia. RSF a dénoncé ces condamnations comme « proprement scandaleuses et honteuses » et appelé « la communauté internationale à demander

Le ministère français des Affaires étrangères a, le 25 juillet, convoqué le chargé d'affaires de l'ambassade d'Iran à Paris, pour exprimer ses « extrêmes préoccupations » sur la peine de mort en Iran. A la demande de Mme Rama Yade, secrétaire d'Etat aux Affaires étrangères et aux Droits de l'Homme, le chargé d'affaires iranien à Paris a été convoqué au ministère. « Nous lui avons marqué notre extrême préoccupation et rappelé notre opposition à la peine de mort en toutes circonstances, notre engagement en faveur de son abolition universelle, notre attachement au respect, par les autorités iraniennes, de leur moratoire de 2002 sur les lapidations, notre appel à ce qu'aucune autre condamnation à lapidation ne soit exécutée », affirme un communiqué du ministère. La France condam-

ne l'exécution de douze citoyens iraniens survenue le 22 juillet. Elle relève avec une « *préoccupation particulière* » qu'un officiel iranien avait annoncé le 10 juillet que l'orientation sexuelle des condamnés figurait parmi les chefs d'inculpation, a déclaré le ministère français. Ces condamnations et ces exécutions viennent s'ajouter à la lapidation pour adultère d'un homme le 5 juillet, ajoute le communiqué.

L'Iran applique largement la peine de mort même si l'exécution (outrage extrajudiciaire) d'un journaliste y est rare. L'Iran compte une population kurde d'environ 10 millions d'habitants, sur une population totale de 71 millions de personnes. Les Kurdes sont concentrés dans les provinces du Kurdistan, de Kermanschah, de l'Azerbaïdjan occidental et de l'Illam.

dans l'avenir en soutenant aussi bien le fédéralisme que la démocratie. « *L'expérience amère du peuple irakien et les difficultés que nous avons surmontées sous le régime Saddam Hussein nous ont tous rendus plus déterminés pour atteindre cette conception de l'avenir. Les tentatives des terroristes échoueront et ne serviront qu'à rallier encore plus le peuple irakien à la Constitution* », a-t-il ajouté.

**ERBIL : LA CONFÉRENCE SUR
« LA PRATIQUE DU FÉDÉRALISME »
RÉUNIT POUR LA PREMIÈRE FOIS LES MEMBRES
DES PARLEMENTS DU KURDISTAN ET D'IRAK**

RES parlementaires du Parlement du Kurdistan et du Parlement irakien se sont pour la première fois retrouvés à Erbil le 10 juillet dans le cadre d'une conférence s'articulant sur cinq jours afin d'échanger les points de vue sur la question du fédéralisme en Irak. La conférence intitulée « *la pratique du fédéralisme* » a été organisée par deux organisations travaillant pour la protection des droits de l'homme, de la justice et de la démocratie, No Peace Without Justice et International Alliance for Justice et avec le soutien du ministère italien des Affaires étrangères et du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan. A l'ouverture de la conférence, Kosrat Rasul, vice-président du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan, a déclaré : « *Nous pouvons trouver une solution aux problèmes en Irak à travers le*

dialogue et la négociation... Je suis certain que le fédéralisme est la solution la plus viable pour l'Irak comme il a pu réussir dans de nombreux autres pays à travers le monde ». Cette première conférence réunissant les membres du Parlement fédéral et de l'Assemblée nationale du Kurdistan a donné l'opportunité aux parlementaires de voir les implications pratiques du fédéralisme comme la répartition des pouvoirs et les responsabilités au sein du gouvernement, mais aussi les questions relatives à la taxation, aux dépenses publiques, aux ressources naturelles, à la protection des droits et libertés individuels, à l'éducation et aux affaires culturelles et religieuses.

Sheikh Khaled al Attiyah, le président du Parlement irakien, a déclaré que le peuple irakien a décidé de se projeter

Adnan Mufti, le président du Parlement du Kurdistan, a, pour sa part, déclaré que « *le fédéralisme est la réponse du peuple à la dictature et pourra vaincre le racisme et le chauvinisme des terroristes* ». « *Ayant surmonté nos différences, nous avons opté pour le fédéralisme comme la seule option nous ayant été offerte pour instaurer la paix sur la base de la liberté et de la justice* », a-t-il ajouté.

Des membres éminents du gouvernement fédéral et du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan ont également pris part à cette conférence. De plus, l'Ambassadeur d'Italie en Irak, Maurizio Melani, l'Ambassadeur Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, représentant du secrétaire général de l'ONU en Irak et M. Kamel Abou Jaber, ancien ministre jordanien des Affaires étrangères au nom du Prince Hassan Bin Talal de Jordanie, ont apporté leur contribution à la conférence. Les parlementaires, d'horizons divers, membres de diverses communautés et de différents partis politiques ont également eu l'opportunité de discuter du rapport présenté récemment par la

commission de révision de la Constitution irakienne au Parlement irakien. La commission avait été établie par le

Parlement fédéral en septembre 2006 afin de déterminer une éventuelle révision.

kien proteste également contre ce projet de loi pour différentes raisons.

UN NOUVEL AMENDEMENT CONTROVERSÉ SUR LA LOI DU PÉTROLE IRAKIEN MENACE LES INTÉRÊTS DU KURDISTAN IRAKIEN

RE projet de loi controversé sur le pétrole irakien a subi de profonds changements et menace les intérêts du Kurdistan irakien. Le conseil des ministres irakien a, le 3 juillet, approuvé un amendement du projet qui doit être examiné ultérieurement par le Parlement irakien. Le texte a été amendé par un comité consultatif du gouvernement qui a apporté des modifications sur les mécanismes de redistribution des recettes pétrolières du pays. Toutefois, seulement 24 des 37 ministres étaient présents pour le vote en raison d'un boycott de certains ministres sunnites et chiites. Son éventuelle adoption par le Parlement pourrait être reportée à la rentrée de septembre, en dépit de la prolongation d'un mois de la session parlementaire, qui s'achèvera fin juillet. La loi sur le pétrole avait été approuvée une première fois en conseil des ministres en février, mais elle avait dû être réexaminée en raison de réserves des diverses communautés. Le ministre irakien du pétrole, Hussein Shahrastani, a, le 6 juillet, déclaré que les contrats pétroliers conclus par le gouvernement régional du Kurdistan devraient se conformer au nouveau projet de loi sur le

pétrole. Selon lui, une fois revus, les contrats devront être présentés à un conseil du pétrole et du gaz prévu par la loi. Le député kurde au Parlement irakien, Mahmoud Othman, a d'ores et déjà déclaré que le bloc kurde à cette assemblée voterait « *contre la loi si une telle clause y était incluse* ». Les Kurdes et les sunnites, ont, le 4 juillet, dénoncé leur mise à l'écart des dernières modifications apportées par le gouvernement à majorité chiite à la loi sur le pétrole. Les représentants des communautés kurdes et sunnites se plaignent de ne pas en avoir été informé. Le gouvernement régional du Kurdistan (KRG), « *un parti clé dans les négociations de la loi sur le pétrole, n'a pas vu ni approuvé le texte final de la loi* », a déploré dans un communiqué. Le KRG s'est dit « *satisfait des améliorations dans la formulation de la loi* », mais il a mis en garde contre tout changement touchant à la « *substance* » du texte. Le principal bloc sunnite au Parlement a regretté de ne pas avoir été consulté: « *Nous ne savons rien au sujet de la dernière version adoptée en conseil des ministres* », a affirmé un député du Front de la Concorde, Ala Maki. Le mouvement du leader radical chiite Moqtada Sadr au Parlement ira-

Lors d'une session du Parlement du Kurdistan à Erbil, le ministre des ressources naturelles du Kurdistan, Ashti Hawrami, a, le 11 juillet, déclaré, que « *le changement le plus significatif, c'est l'ajout d'une clause stipulant que les contrats d'exploration de pétrole seront du ressort du gouvernement central* ». « *Cela réduirait les prérogatives du Kurdistan* », a-t-il souligné. Considérée par Washington comme un point essentiel pour la réconciliation nationale en Irak, cette loi visant à partager équitablement les revenus du pétrole brut entre les 18 provinces est un sujet particulièrement sensible dans ce pays assis sur les troisièmes réserves mondiales d'or noir. Les réserves actuellement prouvées du Kurdistan représentent seulement 2,9% des 115 milliards de barils enfouis sous les pieds des Irakiens, mais contrairement au reste du pays, cette région, épargnée par les violences, attire les investisseurs étrangers. L'Irak possède les troisièmes réserves mondiales prouvées de pétrole, mais est toujours obligé d'importer des produits raffinés comme l'essence, sa production n'ayant pas retrouvé son niveau d'avant l'invasion américaine de 2003 en raison d'infrastructures défaillantes et de sabotages. Elle est actuellement d'environ deux millions de barils de brut par jour et pour l'essentiel sous contrôle de la compagnie nationale irakienne.

**SYRIE : BACHAR AL ASSAD ANNONCE SANS CONVAINCRE
DES MESURES CONCRÈTES POUR RÉINTEGRER
DANS LA NATIONALITÉ SYRIENNE PLUS DE 200 000
KURDES EXCLUS DEPUIS 1962**

RORS de son discours d'investiture pour un deuxième mandat devant le Parlement, le président syrien Bachar al-Assad a, le 17 juillet, annoncé que des mesures concrètes allaient être prises pour accorder la nationalité à des Kurdes syriens qui en sont privés. « *Il existe un consensus en Syrie sur la nécessité de régler la question du recensement de 1962* », a déclaré M. Assad, en référence aux Kurdes apatrides privés de la citoyenneté syrienne par décision arbitraire du régime baassiste. Le président syrien a promis de régler ce problème, évoquant « *un projet de loi en phase d'élaboration* ».

Le congrès du Baas, lors d'une réunion en juin 2005, avait « *affirmé la nécessité de régler le problème du recensement organisé en 1962 à Haskaké et d'œuvrer pour le développement de la région* », où sont installés la majorité des 1,5 million de Kurdes syriens. Selon des responsables de partis kurdes syriens, 225.000 Kurdes sont privés de la nationalité depuis ce recensement, qui ne les avait pas comptabilisés. Les responsables kurdes de Syrie se défendent de toutes visées sécessionnistes et assurent qu'ils veulent uniquement la reconnaissance de leur langue et de leur culture,

ainsi que de leurs droits politiques.

Fils de l'ancien président Hafez al-Assad, Bachar al-Assad, a été réélu président de la République syrienne pour un nouveau septennat le 29 mai avec 97,62% des voix, lors d'un référendum

où il était le seul candidat. Dans son discours de plus d'une heure, centré sur la politique intérieure, M. Assad a assuré la détermination de son gouvernement à poursuivre les réformes économiques qui constituent « *une priorité* ». « *Les réformes politiques se feront graduellement* », a-t-il ajouté, déclarant qu'il envisageait une loi sur le multipartisme. « *Nous envoyons une série de démarches dont une loi sur les partis pour consolider la démocratie* ».

**PROCÈS DES ASSASSINS DE HRANT DINK :
HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH DEMANDE LA RESPONSABILITÉ
PÉNALE DE TOUTE FORCE DE SÉCURITÉ RECONNUE
COUPABLE DE NÉGLIGENCE OU DE COLLISION
AVEC LES CRIMINELS**

PLUS de six mois après l'assassinat de Hrant Dink, journaliste arménien qui militait pour une réconciliation entre les Turcs et les Arméniens, le procès de 18 suspects s'est, le 2 juillet, ouvert en Turquie, dans une affaire qui apparaît comme un test pour la justice turque. La mort de ce journaliste, poursuivi en justice pour avoir « *dénigré l'identité turque* » et devenu la cible des nationalistes radicaux pour ses travaux sur les assassinats de masse, a provoqué des critiques internationales et relancé le débat sur la liberté d'expression en Turquie. Le procès s'est ouvert avec presque deux heures de retard, entouré de strictes mesures de sécurité par les forces de l'ordre qui

avaient bouclé la rue menant au tribunal de Besiktas, dans le centre d'Istanbul. Quelque 2.500 manifestants, la plupart vêtus en noir, se sont rassemblés sur une place avoisinante sous une banderole sur laquelle on pouvait lire: « *Nous sommes tous témoins. Nous voulons la justice* ». Les avocats de la partie civile avaient fait savoir lors d'une conférence de presse le 29 juin que la procédure risquait de laisser dans l'ombre des éléments cruciaux de l'affaire, d'autres protagonistes, notamment des forces de l'ordre, n'étant pas poursuivis. Au premier rang des accusés figure Ogün Samast, chômeur de 17 ans originaire de Trabzon (nord-est) et proche des milieux ultranationalistes de cette ville,

d'où sont originaires la plupart des 17 autres prévenus. C'est lui qui, de son propre aveu, a abattu de trois balles Hrant Dink le 19 janvier à Istanbul, devant les locaux de l'hebdomadaire bilingue turc-arménien Agos, que dirigeait le journaliste. Le ministère public a requis de 18 à 24 ans de prison à son encontre pour le meurtre, ainsi que de 8,5 ans à 18 ans de prison pour port d'arme illégal et appartenance à une organisation terroriste. Le huis-clos a été ordonné en raison de son âge.

Aux côtés de cet exécutant désœuvré, les deux dirigeants de l'organisation et commanditaires de l'assassinat -selon l'acte d'accusation-, Yasin Hayal et Erhan Tuncel, qui ont affirmé lors de leurs interrogatoires qu'ils travaillaient pour les forces de sécurité encourent des peines de prison à vie incompressibles. Yasin Hayal, qui a déjà passé plusieurs mois en prison pour un attentat à la bombe visant un restaurant McDonalds à Trabzon, qui avait fait six blessés en 2004, est également poursuivi pour avoir proféré des menaces à l'encontre du prix Nobel de littérature 2006 Orhan Pamuk, connu pour ses positions contestataires sur la question arménienne.

Mais pour la partie civile, d'autres protagonistes auraient dû être poursuivis. Les autorités n'ont pas réagi aux signes avant-coureurs d'un complot visant Hrant Dink qui a été abattu devant les locaux de son journal, Agos, à Istanbul. « *Les forces de*

sécurité en activité à Trabzon, où le meurtre a été planifié, à Istanbul, où il a été exécuté, et à Ankara, où les renseignements sont rassemblés, n'ont pas été incluses dans le dossier, alors que leurs liens avec les suspects, le non accomplissement de leur devoir, leur dissimulation de preuves et même leur apologie du crime et du criminel ont été établis », a déclaré Me Fethiye Cetin.

L'organisation non-gouvernementale de défense des droits de l'Homme Human Rights Watch a qualifié dans un communiqué le procès de « *test crucial de l'indépendance de la justice turque* ». Elle a enjoint les juges de « *considérer comme pénalement responsable toute force de sécurité qui sera reconnue coupable de négligence ou de collusion* » avec les criminels.

BILAN DE LA GUERRE EN IRAK : NOUVEAU RECORD D'ATTAQUES QUOTIDIENNES AU MOIS DE JUIN ET FORTE HAUSSE DE NOMBRE DE CIVILS TUÉS EN JUILLET

LE nombre moyen quotidien d'attaques en Irak a atteint un nouveau record en juin. Des statistiques du département américain de la Défense indiquent qu'en juin, en moyenne, 177 attaques ont été perpétrées chaque jour contre les soldats irakiens et de la coalition sous commandement américain, contre les civils et contre les infrastructures. Le record précédent remontait à octobre 2006, où l'on dénombrait une moyenne de 176 attaques par jour. Le total quotidien de juin est le plus élevé depuis que George Bush a déclaré la fin des opérations de combat majeures, en mai 2003.

Par ailleurs, au moins 1.652 civils ont été tués en juillet en Irak, un bilan en hausse de 33% comparé à juin, selon les ministères irakiens de la Défense et de la Santé. En revanche, le nombre de morts

dans la police a baissé de 24,6% en juillet (144) après une forte progression le mois précédent (191), selon la même source. L'armée irakienne, de son côté, a perdu 79 soldats contre 31 en juin, soit plus du double. Au moins 1.241 civils avaient été tués en juin, un mois qui avait connu une forte baisse (-36%). En juillet, le nombre de civils blessés est également en hausse: 1.691 contre 1.561 en juin (+8,3%).

Toujours selon les statistiques irakiennes, le nombre de « terroristes » tués s'est établi à 425 en juillet contre 417 un mois plus tôt (+1,9%). Le nombre d'arrestations est en revanche en baisse de 3,2% à 2.191 contre 2.265 le mois précédent. En juin, la tendance à la baisse du nombre de victimes dans les violences confessionnelles avait été interprétée comme un possible effet positif du déploie-

ment progressif de soldats américains et irakiens supplémentaires dans le cadre du nouveau plan de sécurisation de Bagdad lancé à la mi-février. Mais de nombreux terroristes semblent avoir fui ces zones d'opérations de sécurité et continuent de lancer de spectaculaires attentats dans d'autres régions plus isolées du pays. Ainsi le 7 juillet, au moins 150 personnes ont été tuées et 250 blessées dans l'explosion d'un camion piégé déclenchée par un kamikaze dans le petit village d'Emerli dans le nord de l'Irak. Le 16 juillet, l'Irak a connu un autre attentat suicide particulièrement sanglant dans la ville kurde de Kirkouk. Quatre-vingt quatre personnes ont été tuées et au moins 185 blessées dans l'explosion d'un camion piégé visant les locaux de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), le parti du président irakien Jalal Talabani, dans la ville pétrolière de Kirkouk. Le bâtiment visé abrite aussi des organisations locales non gouvernementales, dont le comité olympique local. La déflagration a provoqué un cratère de sept mètres.

Par ailleurs, la Chambre des représentants américaine a, le 12 juillet, voté une loi qui exige que les troupes de combat américaines soient retirées d'Irak au plus tard le 1er avril 2008. La Chambre, à majorité démocrate, a adopté ce texte par 223 voix contre 201. Le président Bush a déjà opposé son veto à un projet de loi similaire proposant un calen-

drier pour le retrait des quelque 160.000 soldats américains actuellement en Irak. Le président a en outre menacé jeudi de mettre à nouveau son veto à toute loi exigeant une date de retrait des troupes. Quatre républicains ont voté en faveur du texte tandis que dix démocrates ont voté contre. Ce vote est intervenu au moment où un rapport officiel américain estime que les progrès réalisés en Irak sont « *insatisfaisants* ». Ce rapport intérimaire de 25 pages montre que sur 18 objectifs au total, les progrès sont « *insatisfaisants* » pour 8 objectifs, « *satisfaisants* » pour 8 autres tandis que deux derniers objectifs ont eu des résultats mitigés. Le document se veut la première évaluation de la situation en Irak depuis l'annonce en janvier d'une nouvelle stratégie américaine pour ce pays prévoyant 30.000 hommes en renfort et qui est très impopulaire aux Etats-Unis. Un rapport complet est attendu le 15 septembre.

Rédigé par le Conseil national de sécurité auprès de la présidence américaine, le rapport reproche un manque d'efforts du « *gouvernement irakien pour développer un programme de désarmement efficace pour les milices* ». Il relève aussi que le Parlement irakien a échoué à adopter une loi décisive pour l'industrie pétrolière du pays qui pourrait atténuer les hostilités entre les chiites et la minorité sunnite du pays. Il est aussi critique à l'égard du gouvernement du Premier

ministre Nouri al-Maliki qui n'a pas réussi à obtenir une loi facilitant l'accès à des postes publics pour les anciens membres du parti Baas de Saddam Hussein. Sur le front diplomatique, le rapport accuse l'Iran et la Syrie de contribuer aux attaques menées contre les Irakiens et les forces américaines en Irak. Bagdad estime que Damas n'agit pas efficacement pour empêcher le passage d'hommes et d'armes en Irak. Les forces de sécurité irakiennes ont ainsi saisi le 11 juillet 2007 deux ceintures d'explosifs à la frontière avec la Syrie, selon le ministère irakien de l'Intérieur.

Les ceintures ont été découvertes lors de la fouille d'un camion passé de Syrie en Irak par le poste de contrôle de Walid. Le général Kevin Bergner, porte-parole de l'armée américaine, avait affirmé pour sa part que 60 à 80 combattants étrangers s'infiltraient en Irak chaque mois, et 70% d'entre eux en passant par la Syrie.

De plus, l'armée américaine a, le 11 juillet, affirmé que plus de 4.000 personnes avaient été tuées ou blessées dans des attentats suicide perpétrés au cours des six derniers mois en Irak par Al-Qaïda. La plupart de ces attaques ont été commises par un nombre de combattants étrangers « *relativement faible* », mais dont les effets sont « *très, très dévastateurs pour la population irakienne* », a souligné le général Bergner.

**AFFRONTEMENTS ENTRE L'ARMÉE TURQUE ET LE PKK :
225 PERSONNES TUÉES DEPUIS LE DÉBUT
DE L'ANNÉE SELON L'ASSOCIATION TURQUE
DES DROITS DE L'HOMME**

R'ASSOCIATION turque des droits de l'Homme (IHD) a, le 13 juillet, annoncé que 225 personnes ont été tuées dans des violences qui ont augmenté depuis le début de l'année au Kurdistan entre les forces de sécurité et les combattants du parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). « *Nous constatons une sérieuse augmentation du nombre des heurts quotidiens* », a indiqué lors d'une conférence de presse Mehdi Perinçek, responsable régional à Diyarbakir. « *Nous nous inquiétons du fait que les accrochages s'étalent sur une grande zone* », a-t-il souligné.

Selon un décompte de l'IHD, utilisant sources officielles et indépendantes, 111 membres des forces de l'ordre, 109 combattants du PKK et cinq civils ont été tués dans la région de début janvier à fin juin. Dans la même période de 2006, ce chiffre était de 190 morts, a affirmé l'IHD. Sur son site internet, l'état-major des armées turques a fait savoir que 100 combattants kurdes avaient été tués entre avril et juin, sans dire combien de militaires ont perdu la vie pendant cette période. Selon les milieux de la sécurité, Ankara a porté à plus de 200 000 hommes les effectifs militaires déployés dans le Kurdistan de Turquie dans le

cadre de ses opérations contre le PKK. Le 6 juillet, le ministre des Affaires étrangères, Abdullah Gül, a affirmé que des plans d'incursion détaillés au Kurdistan d'Irak étaient prêts alors qu'à l'approche des élections législatives, la surenchère nationaliste bat son plein et l'état-major de l'armée turque presse le gouvernement d'autoriser une opération dans le Kurdistan irakien. L'accroissement des attaques du PKK depuis le début de l'année a été l'un des thèmes de la campagne électorale, l'opposition accusant le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP), de ne pas avoir une politique assez dure contre le PKK.

Pour sa part, le général Perry Wiggins, directeur adjoint des opérations des forces américaines à l'état-major inter-armées, a, le 3 juillet, mis en garde Ankara contre des incursions dans le Kurdistan d'Irak. L'armée américaine « *a de bonnes relations avec les militaires turcs* » mais « *comme l'a dit le secrétaire à la Défense (Robert Gates), tout bouleversement dans le nord de l'Irak (Kurdistan) ne serait pas bienvenu en ce moment* » a-t-il déclaré. Quant au porte-parole de la Maison Blanche, Tony Snow, il a déclaré le 9 juillet que « *le PKK et les organisations terroristes sont bien sûr*

des sujets d'inquiétude pour nous (...) Mais il est également important de reconnaître la souveraineté territoriale de l'Irak ». Le chef d'état-major turc Yasar Büyükanit appelle depuis avril au lancement d'une opération contre le PKK dans le Kurdistan d'Irak alors que l'armée américaine a transféré le 30 mai la responsabilité de la sécurité des trois provinces kurdes d'Irak au gouvernement régional du Kurdistan.

Au cours de l'année les armées turque et iranienne ont à plusieurs reprises bombardé le territoire kurde faisant fuir la population. Ainsi, une centaine d'obus ont été tirés en direction de Zakhō, ville proche de la frontière turque selon Jabar Yawar, numéro deux de la sûreté kurde. Le gouvernement irakien a dénoncé le bombardement le 19 juillet par l'armée turque de secteurs de la région du Kurdistan et exhorté Ankara au dialogue pour régler la question de la présence du PKK dans le Kurdistan d'Irak. Des responsables kurdes ont cependant démenti des informations faisant état de raids de l'aviation turque. Sans évoquer spécifiquement les derniers bombardements, les autorités irakiennes « *regrettent les opérations militaires turques qui font appel à l'artillerie et à l'aviation pour bombarder les villages irakiens frontaliers et les villes de la province de Douhok ...Le gouvernement irakien invite la Turquie à mettre fin à ces opérations pour revenir au dialogue et à l'entente* », ajoute Bagdad

dans un communiqué. Par ailleurs, les forces iraniennes ont, le 12 juillet, bombardé la région de Pishder, à 160 km au nord de Soulemaniye. « *Il y a eu des combats entre PEJAK et les forces iraniennes, et celles-ci ont procédé à des bombardements dans le secteur de Sardoul, dans la région de Pishder* », a affirmé Bachir

Ahmed, un responsable du district de Pishder. Jabar Yawar a confirmé l'attaque de l'Iran dans la région de Pishder et a déclaré : « *Nous sommes opposés à l'utilisation du territoire kurde pour frapper n'importe quel pays et demandons aussi que nos régions ne soient elles non plus attaquées* ».

CONDAMNE LA TURQUIE POUR TORTURES SUR UN PRISONNIER POLITIQUE ET SUR DES VILLAGEOIS KURDES. La Turquie a, le 31 juillet, été condamnée à Strasbourg pour avoir infligé le supplice de la falaka (coups sur les pieds) à un prisonnier en 2000 à titre de punition et des tortures à des Kurdes pour leur arracher des aveux en 1999. Sabri Diri, détenu en 2000 dans une prison de haute sécurité d'Istanbul pour « *appartenance à une organisation illégale* », avait participé aux grèves de la faim organisées dans ces établissements pour protester contre la sévérité de leur régime et réprimées dans le sang par les autorités.

AINSI QUE...

• **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ACCUSE LES POLICIERS ET LES GENDARMES TURCS DE PRAATIQUER LA TORTURE ET DÉNONCE LEUR IMPUNITÉ.** L'organisation de défense des droits de l'Homme Amnesty International estime que les policiers et les gendarmes turcs continuent à bénéficier d'une impunité inacceptable et les accuse de pratiquer torture, mauvais traitements et homicides. À l'occasion de la publication d'un rapport sur la Turquie, l'organisation a, le 6 juillet, dénoncé que « *les enquêtes et poursuites judiciaires découlant de sérieuses violations de droits de l'Homme commises par des policiers et des gendarmes sont bâclées, ce qui est encore aggravé par les décisions aléatoires des juges et procureurs* ». L'organisation ajoute dans son communiqué que « *le résultat, c'est que les victimes de violations de droits de l'Homme n'obtiennent justice que tardivement ou pas du tout* ». « *Le système pénal turc doit être réformé. Il doit fermement placer la protection des droits de l'Homme des*

citoyens au-dessus de ce qui est perçu comme les intérêts des institutions ou des responsables de l'Etat », a souligné Nicola Duckworth, directeur d'Amnesty pour l'Europe et l'Asie centrale, dans le communiqué.

Le rapport intitulé « *Turquie: la culture enracinée de l'impunité doit cesser* » examine les facteurs contribuant à l'impunité des forces de l'ordre, notamment les délais administratifs, les défauts de procédures judiciaires et l'intimidation exercée à l'encontre de défenseurs des droits de l'Homme ou des journalistes. Le rapport répertorie tortures et mauvais traitement infligés lors de détentions arbitraires, pendant et après des manifestations, ou en prison. Il dénonce aussi des procès au cours desquels des déclarations obtenues sous la torture représentent le principal élément à charge de l'accusation et sont admis dans la procédure.

• **STRASBOURG : LA COUR EUROPÉENNE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME**

Des scintigraphies, pratiquées à la demande expresse de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme, avaient permis de prouver l'existence de traumatismes dus au supplice de la falaka que la Turquie niait, ou attribuait à d'autres causes. Dans son arrêt, la Cour européenne a estimé que M. Diri avait été torturé « *intentionnellement dans le but de le punir et de briser sa résistance physique et morale aux autorités de la prison* ». Elle a alloué au requérant, qui vit actuellement en Suisse, 15.000 euros pour dommage moral.

Dans un autre arrêt, la Cour a attribué des sommes de 5.500 à 12.700 euros à 12 requérants kurdes résidant à Sirnak, arrêtés par les gendarmes en septembre 1999 pour « *appartenance à l'organisation terroriste illégale parti des travailleurs*

du Kurdistan (PKK) ». Les requérants affirmaient avoir été privés d'alimentation, battus, pendus, avoir reçu des chocs électriques ou des jets à forte pression et subi des musiques ou des cris à fort volume sonore pour les

contraindre à avouer. Les juges européens ont donné raison à cinq d'entre eux pour les tortures, et reconnu aux sept autres notamment une durée excessive de leur garde à vue. « Les autorités n'ont pas carte blanche pour arrêter des

suspects et les placer en garde à vue, sans contrôle effectif des tribunaux, chaque fois qu'elles estiment qu'il y a eu une infraction terroriste », rappelle la Cour dans son arrêt.

A Genève, une organisation suisse tente de promouvoir la « réconciliation irakienne »

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GENÈVE

CORRESPONDANCE

Vendredi 29 juin, un certain nombre de responsables politiques irakiens se trouvaient à Genève autour du président Jalal Talabani. Etaient présents une dizaine de représentants de partis politiques ayant participé aux élections législatives, sous l'étiquette de la Liste irakienne unifiée de l'ancien premier ministre Iyad Allaoui.

Tous, officiellement, sont venus assister à une réunion de l'Internationale socialiste (IS) consacrée à « la paix et [à] la stabilité dans un monde de conflits sans frontières ». Mais, en marge de cette conférence, les Irakiens ont participé à des discussions informelles sur l'avenir de leur pays, organisées par une organisation moins imposante et dont les ambitions intriguent.

Voilà plus d'un an qu'Hasni Abidi, un

Algérien de Genève, directeur du Centre d'études et de recherche sur le monde arabe et méditerranéen (Cermam), travaille avec un Irakien, Qaïs Al-Azzawi, cadre du petit parti du Mouvement des socialistes arabes, pour organiser à Genève une conférence de réconciliation nationale irakienne. M. Abidi, qui se rend souvent en Irak, affirme avoir pu discuter avec de nombreuses forces, y compris des responsables islamistes influents comme l'« Association des oulémas musulmans » et des représentants de la « résistance irakienne non terroriste ». Malgré la guerre, tous ont accepté de discuter, pourvus que le cadre soit acceptable. La Suisse aurait ainsi constitué pour eux l'endroit idéal.

Naïveté ou vanité, là ou d'autres – comme la Ligue Arabe, en 2006, au Caire –

ont échoué ? Le fait est qu'en janvier, le ministre irakien des affaires étrangères, Hochiar Zébari, mentionnant le Cermam, s'est adressé à son homologue suisse, Micheline Calmy-Rey, pour qu'une réunion puisse se tenir à Genève. A Berne, le ministère des affaires étrangères reconnaît « suivre avec attention le projet du Cermam, qui demande encore à mûrir ».

Mais, pour MM. Habidi et Azzawi, que la Suisse accepte ou non de jouer son rôle de « diplomatie hôtelière », la dynamique enclenchée continue, l'idée étant de dégager « une plate-forme commune sur des questions aussi délicates que le statut de Kirkouk, le pétrole ou l'avenir des forces étrangères ».

AGATHE DUPARC

LE FIGARO lundì 2 juillet 2007

La violence nationaliste au cœur du pouvoir turc

TURQUIE

Le meurtrier du journaliste Hrant Dink et les assassins des missionnaires chrétiens participent à une offensive encouragée en haut lieu.

L'AVOCAT stanbouliote Kemal Kerincsiz est un adepte de la théorie du complot : il voit les services secrets occidentaux ou le Mossad derrière la série d'assassinats politiques et de meurtres de religieux chrétiens. Dans son bureau décoré de cartes de la grande Turquie, ses explications fumeuses lui servent de parade lorsqu'il est interrogé sur les responsabilités des nationalistes turcs dans l'élimination du journaliste d'origine arménienne Hrant Dink, en janvier à Istanbul, du père Santoro, l'an dernier à Trabzon, ou des

trois missionnaires sauvagement mis à mort en avril à Malatya.

Animateur de l'Union des juristes turcs, Kemal Kerincsiz est à l'origine de la plupart des procès intentés ces dernières années à des intellectuels turcs pour insulte à la nation. Ses ennemis : les élites libérales, les minorités non musulmanes et les Kurdes. Les missionnaires chrétiens ? « Des gens très dangereux dont il faut interdire les activités. » Orban Pamuk et Elif Safak, ces romanciers qui osent briser les tabous de l'histoire officielle ? « Ils cherchent à faire passer les Turcs pour des barbares au profit de mouvements

étrangers », commente-t-il d'un air inspiré, en levant le menton.

L'avocat ultranationaliste mène son combat par la voie légale dans les prétoires des tri-



Kemal Kerincsiz, ici lors d'une manifestation contre la venue du Pape en Turquie en novembre 2006, est à l'origine de la plupart des plaintes contre les intellectuels turcs pour insulte à la nation. Stringer/Reuters

bunaux. Il porte plainte en se référant à l'article 301 du Code pénal adopté en juin 2005, qui punit de peines de prison les auteurs d'atteinte à l'honneur de la Turquie.

D'autres ont des méthodes plus expéditives. Comme Ogün Samast, 17 ans, ce jeune désœuvré d'un village de la banlieue de Trabzon, un bastion des ultranationalistes, jugé à partir d'aujourd'hui

pour l'assassinat du journaliste Hrant Dink d'une balle de pistolet. Le jeune a été arrêté sur le chemin du retour vers la ville des bords de la mer Noire où fut assassiné en 2006 le prêtre italien. Lors de son interpellation, les policiers l'ont photographié à leurs côtés à l'instar d'une vedette de football.

« Un plan de déstabilisation »

« Qui a manipulé Oğün Samast ? », s'interroge Fethiye Çetin, amie et avocate de Hrant Dink. Dans chaque crime, des gangs nationalistes prônant le sectarisme religieux sont mis en cause. Mais jamais les enquêtes ne remontent aux commanditaires. Les complicités à l'intérieur de l'appareil d'État sont pourtant avérées. Samast avait ainsi pour complice Ebran Tuncel, un indic qui avait prévenu les policiers locaux. Ceux-ci avaient rédigé pas moins de 17 rapports sur les risques d'élimination du patron du journal *Agos*, mais ne l'avaient pas protégé. Après l'attentat, l'un d'eux avait demandé à son informateur au cours d'une conversation téléphonique « si les siens étaient mêlés à l'affaire ».

Rapidement occultée, la thèse de Malatya rappelle les méthodes du Hezbollah, un groupuscule des années 1980 manipulé par les services de renseignement dans la lutte contre les Kurdes. « On a l'impression qu'un plan de déstabilisation a commencé d'être exécuté. Ces initiateurs agissent en l'absence de tout contrôle pour créer de la tension dans le pays », assure l'avocat kurde Hesip Kaplan. Il évoque l'ombre d'Evit Devlet, l'État profond, une conjonction d'intérêt où se retrouvent des malfrats, la mafia politico-financière et des membres de l'appareil d'État. « Les nationalistes et les fondamentalistes veulent empêcher l'application des mesures libérales », assure un dignitaire religieux chrétien.

Les groupuscules d'extrême droite prospèrent sur fond de racisme, de xénophobie et d'intolérance. « Les discours effrayants de haine que l'on entend de plus en plus souvent relient chaque affaire. Après Hrant, puis Malatya, maintenant on se demande à qui le tour ? », s'inquiète Fethiye Çetin.

THIERRY OBERLÉ

Le procès des meurtriers de Hrant Dink met à l'épreuve la justice turque

Dix-huit prévenus sont jugés à Istanbul pour l'assassinat, en janvier, du journaliste d'origine arménienne. La famille de la victime attend que le tribunal éclaire les connexions entre milieux ultra-nationalistes, criminels et « État profond » turc

ISTANBUL
CORRESPONDANCE

Le plus jeune des 18 prévenus, Oğün Samast, est âgé de 17 ans. Il a reconnu être le dernier maillon de la chaîne, celui qui a tué le journaliste turc d'origine arménienne Hrant Dink, en janvier, de trois balles tirées à bout portant sur le perron de l'hebdomadaire turco-arménien *Agos*. En raison de son jeune âge, c'est à huis clos que s'est ouvert, lundi à Istanbul, le procès des auteurs présumés de l'assassinat.

Les 18 prévenus sont originaires de Trabzon, une ville austère de la mer Noire, réputée pour sa violence ultranationaliste. « C'est une bande criminelle à but politique, estime Bahri Belen, l'un des avocats de la famille de Hrant Dink : pour l'enquête, les dossiers du meurtre du prêtre Andrea Santoro [en 2006], de l'agression contre un autre prêtre et de l'attentat contre un McDonald's [en 2004], ont été réunis. On retrouve les mêmes acteurs dans ces attentats commis à Trabzon. L'assassinat de Hrant Dink faisait partie d'un même plan. »

Des peines lourdes ont été requises. Oğün Samast, l'exécutant, pourrait avoir plus du double de son âge en sortant de prison. Et les deux principaux commanditaires, Erhan Tuncel et Yasin Hayal, risquent la réclusion à perpétuité. Le deuxième est également poursuivi pour avoir menacé l'écrivain Orhan Pamuk, cible des ultranationalistes. Les quinze autres prévenus seront jugés pour complicité, comme Yasar Cihan, responsable local du Parti de la grande union (BBP) : un parti qui, avec ses foyers Alperen (un mouvement de jeunesse), « a servi de structure », selon Bahri Belen.

Mais le comité de soutien de la famille Dink ne se satisfait pas d'un procès où seule une partie des responsables se retrouve sur le banc des accusés. Les avocats espéraient assister au procès de « l'État profond ». Un concept qui, en Turquie, désigne une nébuleuse criminelle et nationaliste gravitant dans les rouages de l'État. « Les forces de sécurité de Trabzon, où le meurtre a été planifié, d'Istanbul, où il a été exécuté, et d'Ankara, où les renseignements sont rassemblés, n'ont pas été incluses dans l'enquête, a déploré Fethiye Çetin, une autre avocate, au cours d'une conférence de presse, alors que leurs liens avec les suspects, la dissimulation de preuves et même l'apologie du criminel ont été établis. »

L'enquête judiciaire a montré que des responsables de la police ou du renseignement étaient au courant des projets d'assassinats. Les requêtes des avocats pour suivre ces pistes ont pourtant été rejetées. De même, le cybercafé où se serait réfugié le meurtrier, tenu par un ancien militaire, à deux pas du siège d'*Agos*, n'a pas été inspecté.

Nouvelles révélations

La saisie, il y a deux semaines, d'un stock de grenades et d'explosifs dans un quartier d'Ankara et l'arrestation de plusieurs officiers à la retraite, font toutefois espérer à Bahri Belen de nouvelles révélations sur l'affaire Dink. « On pourrait trouver des liens », explique-t-il. Comme par exemple avec le général Veli Küçük, fondateur des Jitem (unités de gendarmerie antiterroriste), cité dans cette affaire ou dans le scandale mafieux de Susurluk, en 1996. A son procès, en 2006, pour « insulte à l'identité turque », Hrant Dink l'avait trouvé en travers de son chemin. Le général à la retraite lui avait lancé un briquet dans les pieds en guise de menace.

La semaine dernière, Fethiye Çetin a également engagé des poursuites contre le général Karaduman qui, au cours des funérailles d'un soldat tué par les rebelles kurdes du PKK, avait déclaré que « le Sénat américain, les Parlements français et européen, l'Arménie, n'ont pas condamné ceux qui vous tuent. Ils ne condamnent que les meurtres de traîtres ». ❊

GUILLAUME PERRIER

Massoud Barzani: une opération militaire turque au Kurdistan irakien déclencherait une guerre dévastatrice



4 Juillet 2007

Massoud Barzani, le leader du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan lance un avertissement: une attaque contre les Kurdes en Irak serait une catastrophe et déclencherait une "guerre dévastatrice dans la région". Cette déclaration fait suite à la menace d'Ankara de mener une opération militaire en Irak contre les rebelles kurdes. La Turquie comme les Etats-Unis considèrent en effet le PKK, le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, comme une organisation terroriste. Le conflit irakien, la présence des troupes américaines, le rôle mineur joué par l'Europe: Massoud Barzani répond aux questions d'EuroNews.

EuroNews : En ce qui concerne le Kurdistan, y-a-t-il des craintes d'une intervention turque dans les affaires irakiennes ?

M.Barzani : On entend de temps à autres des menaces turques mais nous voyons que la meilleure solution c'est le dialogue.

EuroNews : Une intervention peut-elle ajouter un troisième problème aux divisions actuelles en Irak ?

M. Barzani : Evidemment, une intervention turque dans les affaires irakiennes aboutirait à une catastrophe pour toute la région, pour la Turquie, pour l'Irak et pour tous les autres.

EuroNews : Quelle genre de catastrophe ?

M. Barzani : Ce serait le début d'une guerre dévastatrice dans la région.

EuroNews : Elle pourrait toucher d'autres pays ?

M.Barzani : Elle peut se déplacer et se propager à d'autres pays.

EuroNews : Dans les pays où se trouvent des Kurdes ou au delà de cette zone ?

M.Barzani : Il y aura une réaction irakienne forte de la part des Irakiens, surtout au Kurdistan.

EuroNews : Les Kurdes sont-ils plus concernés que les autres ou est-ce l'ensemble de l'Irak qui est concerné ?

M.Barzani : Non, tout l'Irak est concerné, car cela signifie une violation de la souveraineté du pays.

EuroNews : Avant la guerre, il y a quatre ans, il y avait des craintes de libanisation de l'Irak, maintenant on

craint une irakisation du Liban. Ces craintes sont-elles fondées ?

M.Barzani : Non, je ne crois pas qu'il est juste de prendre l'exemple libanais pour l'Irak ou vice versa. Le Liban a sa particularité, l'Irak aussi.

EuroNews : Il y a des pressions de la part du sénat américain sur l'administration Bush. Comment voyez-vous ces pressions qui visent à retirer les troupes étrangères d'Irak ?

M.Barzani : Il me semble qu'il y a des éléments qui manquent à la connaissance du Congrès américain. De telles pressions sur le président Bush ne servent pas les intérêts américains, ni ceux de leurs alliés ou encore la lutte contre le terrorisme.

EuroNews : Vous souhaitez donc que les forces américaines restent en Irak ?

M.Barzani : La présence des forces américaines est importante. Je ne parle pas du nombre mais le principe de leur présence, dans les conditions actuelles, est très important.

EuroNews : S'agit-il de forces de libération ou d'occupation ?

M.Barzani : La grande erreur a eu lieu après la libération.

EuroNews : Quelle erreur ?

M.Barzani : L'erreur c'est la résolution 1483 de l'ONU qui autorise l'occupation. Les forces de libération sont alors devenues des forces d'occupation. C'est là que les problèmes ont commencé.

EuroNews : Souhaitez-vous que les choses changent et que les Américains laissent l'Irak aux Irakiens ?

M.Barzani : Il est important qu'il y ait un accord clair entre le gouvernement irakien et les Etats-Unis. Chacun doit connaître ses devoirs. Les forces américaines ne doivent pas intervenir comme des policiers dans la vie quotidienne des Irakiens.

EuroNews : On dit qu'il y a des pays extrémistes qui cherchent les troubles et l'instabilité en Irak...

M. Barzani : Il y a beaucoup de pays qui ont des comptes à régler avec les Etats-Unis. Ces pays veulent régler ces comptes sur le sol irakien au détriment des intérêts de l'Irak.



EuroNews : Qui se cache derrière les divisions internes en Irak entre sunnites et chiites ?

M.Barzani : Malheureusement, il y a des forces extrémistes côté sunnite comme chiite. Chacune mène des opérations contre l'autre.

EuroNews : Y a-t-il un espoir que ces opérations se terminent ?

M.Barzani : Le conflit est profond et enraciné. Je ne vois pas de fin à ce conflit dans l'immédiat.

EuroNews : Pourquoi l'Europe est-elle absente ?

M.Barzani : C'est une question que je me pose. Pour quelle raison l'Europe est quasi absente notamment en ce qui concerne l'Irak ? Cette question me préoccupe.

EuroNews : Vous pensez que l'Amérique tente d'écartier l'Europe de la région ?

M.Barzani : Je ne pense pas. Au contraire, l'Amérique invite ses alliés européens à participer aussi bien militairement qu'économiquement.

EuroNews : Cela place donc l'Europe au seul niveau des aides financières ?

M.Barzani : Non, elle peut participer concrètement dans le processus de stabilisation, dans les investissements, la construction.

EuroNews : Comment voyez-vous l'adhésion de la Turquie à l'Union Européenne ?

M.Barzani : J'espère que la Turquie adhèrera à l'Union aux conditions des Européens.

EuroNews : Conditions européennes, pourquoi ?

M.Barzani : Car cela aidera à la propagation d'une démocratie réelle en Turquie

Loi sur le pétrole irakien: Kurdes et sunnites dénoncent leur mise à l'écart



BAGDAD, 4 juil 2007 (AFP) - Deux des trois principales communautés irakiennes, les Kurdes et les sunnites, ont dénoncé mercredi leur mise à l'écart des dernières modifications apportées par le gouvernement à majorité chiite à la loi sur le pétrole, un texte déterminant pour l'avenir de l'Irak.

Le conseil des ministres avait approuvé mardi à l'unanimité un amendement à ce projet de loi désormais prêt à être débattu au Parlement et considéré par Washington comme un point important dans le cadre de la réconciliation nationale en Irak. Mais les représentants des communautés kurdes et sunnites se plaignent de ne pas en avoir été informé.

Le gouvernement régional du Kurdistan (KRG), "un parti clé dans les négociations de la loi sur le pétrole, n'a pas vu ni approuvé le texte final de la loi", a-t-il déploré dans un communiqué. A son tour, le principal bloc sunnite au Parlement a regretté de ne pas avoir été consulté: "Nous ne savons rien au sujet de la dernière version adoptée en conseil des ministres", a affirmé un député du Front de la Concorde, Ala Maki.

"Mais nous sommes prêt à discuter le contenu de la loi, politiquement et techniquement", a-t-il toutefois ajouté. Pour sa part, le KRG s'est dit "satisfait des améliorations dans la formulation de la loi", mais il a mis en garde contre tout changement touchant à la "substance" du texte.

Un porte-parole du gouvernement irakien, Ali al-Dabbagh, avait fait savoir mardi que les changements par rapport au texte initial portaient uniquement sur des modifications dans la formulation du texte. "Nous espérons que le conseil des ministres n'a pas approuvé un texte avec lequel le KRG est en désaccord, car cela violerait les droit constitutionnels de la région du Kurdistan", a averti le gouvernement régional du Kurdistan.

Les réserves prouvées du Kurdistan représentent seulement 2,9% des 115 milliards de barils enfouis sous les pieds des Irakiens, mais contrairement au reste du pays, cette région du nord de l'Irak, épargnée par les violences, attire les investisseurs étrangers.

La répartition des revenus du pétrole entre les différentes communautés est un sujet particulièrement sensible en Irak. Les réserves d'or noir sont concentrées dans le sud chiite et le nord majoritairement kurde, peu disposés à partager cette manne, tandis que les sunnites, écartés du pouvoir après la chute du régime de Saddam Hussein, vivent dans des régions dénuées de pétrole.

Le texte n'a pas été examiné en première lecture mercredi par les députés irakiens, comme l'avait annoncé la veille le Premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki. "L'examen de la loi sur le pétrole n'est pas à l'ordre du jour de la session parlementaire", a déclaré le président de séance, Khalid Attiya, sans préciser quand le texte serait examiné. Cette loi vise à partager les revenus du pétrole brut équitablement entre les 18 provinces d'Irak et à autoriser l'exploitation des réserves par les compagnies étrangères.

Elle avait déjà été approuvée une première fois lors d'un conseil des ministres en février, mais des communautés avaient alors exprimé des réserves, provoquant un réexamen du texte.

L'Irak possède les troisièmes réserves mondiales prouvées de pétrole, mais est toujours obligé d'importer, sa production n'ayant pas retrouvé son niveau d'avant l'invasion américaine de 2003 en raison d'infrastructures défaillantes et de sabotages. Elle est actuellement d'environ deux millions de barils par jour et pour l'essentiel sous contrôle de la compagnie nationale irakienne.

Turquie: Deux rebelles kurdes, un milicien pro-Ankara tués dans des heurts



DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 5 juil 2007 (AFP) - Deux rebelles séparatistes kurdes et un milicien pro-Ankara ont été tués dans des heurts survenus tard mercredi dans l'est de la Turquie, ont indiqué jeudi des sources de sécurité locales.

Les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) ont été abattus à Tunceli par des soldats alors qu'ils voulaient poser une mine sur les abords d'une route pour viser les convois militaires, une méthode très utilisée par les séparatistes, a-t-on précisé de même source.

Dans un incident séparé survenu à peu près aux mêmes heures dans la province voisine de Bingöl, un "gardien de village", milicien kurde armé par l'Etat turc contre les séparatistes kurdes, a été tué dans des accrochages avec des membres du PKK. Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, a accru ses attaques depuis le début de cette année.

Irak: vent de fronde politique contre la loi sur le pétrole



BAGDAD, 5 juil 2007 (AFP) - Le mouvement du leader radical chiite Moqtada Sadr a rejoint jeudi les groupes sunnites et kurdes protestant contre un projet de loi du gouvernement irakien sur le pétrole, qui promet de vifs débats au Parlement de Bagdad, sur fond de pressions américaines.

Considérée par Washington comme un élément essentiel de la réconciliation nationale en Irak, cette loi visant à partager équitablement les revenus du pétrole brut entre les 18 provinces est un sujet particulièrement sensible dans ce pays assis sur les troisièmes réserves mondiales d'or noir.

Le vent de fronde contre ce projet, adopté à l'unanimité mardi par le gouvernement du Premier ministre chiite Nouri al-Maliki, pourrait reporter son éventuelle adoption à la rentrée de septembre, en dépit de la prolongation d'un mois de la session parlementaire, qui s'achèvera fin juillet.

Aux yeux de Joost Hiltermann, directeur pour le Moyen-Orient de l'association International Crisis Group, cette loi ne pourra être adoptée si les Kurdes et les sadristes s'y opposent.

Mais elle a des "chances de succès" et n'aura "peut-être pas besoin de l'aval des sadristes s'il y a un accord entre (les partis chiites) Conseil suprême et Dawa (le mouvement de M. Maliki) et les Kurdes. C'est la même coalition qui pour l'essentiel gouverne l'Irak depuis janvier 2005", prédit l'analyste.

"Les discussions sur la loi pourraient durer au moins un mois", a prévenu de son côté le député Hassan al-Sinad, un influent parlementaire membre de l'Alliance unifiée (chiite) et proche de M. Maliki, dans les colonnes du quotidien irakien Al-Sabah.

Le groupe Sadr, qui a permis l'élection de M. Maliki mais est devenu l'un de ses principaux opposants, a fait savoir jeudi qu'il s'opposerait catégoriquement à toute loi permettant à des sociétés dont "les pays occupent l'Irak" de conclure des accords pétroliers avec ce pays, en allusion aux Etats-Unis, à la Grande-Bretagne et à leurs alliés.

C'est justement ce que prévoit l'un des articles du texte. "C'est la chose à laquelle nous sommes le plus opposés", a averti le leader sadriste au Parlement, Nassar al-Roubaie.

Ce type d'accord reviendrait à "sous-estimer la souveraineté de l'Irak à court terme et à lui retirer sa souveraineté sur le long terme", a ajouté le député de ce groupe, qui occupe 32 des 275 sièges de l'Assemblée.

Les Kurdes, en revanche, ne sont pas opposés à cet aspect de la loi. Car les investisseurs étrangers sont attirés par le Kurdistan, région du nord de l'Irak épargnée par les violences.

Le gouvernement régional du Kurdistan proteste surtout contre le fait de ne pas avoir été consulté avant l'adoption d'un amendement au texte en conseil des ministres et mis en garde contre tout changement touchant à sa "substance".

Un porte-parole du gouvernement irakien, Ali al-Dabbagh, avait assuré que les changements portaient uniquement sur des modifications dans la formulation du texte.

De son côté, le Front irakien de la Concorde, principal groupe sunnite au Parlement, avait lui aussi déploré mercredi l'absence de consultation: "Nous ne savons rien au sujet de la dernière version adoptée en conseil des ministres".

La loi sur le pétrole avait été approuvée une première fois en conseil des ministres en février, mais elle avait dû être réexaminée en raison de réserves des diverses communautés.

En Irak, les réserves de pétrole sont concentrées dans le sud chiite et le nord majoritairement kurde, peu disposés à partager cette manne, tandis que les sunnites, écartés du pouvoir après la chute du régime de Saddam Hussein, vivent dans des régions dénuées de pétrole.

Thomas L. Friedman

Dog paddling in the Tigris

LONDON

It's too early to pronounce the U.S. military's surge in Iraq a failure. It's not too early to say, though, that there's no sign that it's succeeding — that it's making Iraqi politics or security better in any appreciable, self-sustaining way.

At best, the surge is keeping Iraq from descending into full-scale civil war. At best we are dog paddling in the Tigris. Which means at least we should start to think about what happens if we have to get out of the water.

We have to start by taking stock — honestly — about where we are.

President George W. Bush talks about Iraq as a country where the vast majority of the people are longing to live with each other in peace, harmony and freedom, and where only a tiny minority of terrorists and die-hard Baathists are standing in the way.

I wish. If that were really the case, how could it be that after four years, hundreds of billions of dollars, tens of thousands of U.S. troops and thousands of casualties, we and our Iraqi allies have not been able to defeat this tiny minority? It doesn't add up. No minority could be that powerful.

The truth is we have a majorities problem in Iraq, not just a minority problem. For too many Iraqi leaders and too many of their followers, America's vision of Iraq — a unified, pluralistic, democratizing, free-market — is actually their second choice, at best.

The first choice for many Shiites is a pro-Iranian, Shiite-dominated religious Iraq, where Sunnis have little say and little power. The first choice for many

Sunnis is a return to the good old days of Sunni minority rule over the Shiite majority. The first choice for many Kurds is an independent, democratic Kurdistan. In too many cases, the violence that is bedeviling Iraq today — while carried out by a minority of people — reflects the broad aspirations or fears of the respective majorities.

In short, our first-choice soldiers are dying for Iraqis' second choice. That is wrong, terribly wrong. It has to stop.

What to do? Most of the options being floated by Democrats and Republicans talk about abandoning the whole idea of trying to implant democracy in Iraq and focusing instead on America's core "national interests."

'You can't build a democratic example in all of Iraq, but you can build it in Kurdistan.'

Those are described as getting as many of our troops out of Iraq as possible, while preventing the inevitable Iraqi civil war — which would follow any U.S. withdrawal — from spreading around the region. Such proposals are only half right.

Some things are true even if George Bush believes them. And one thing that remains true (maybe the only thing) about Bush's strategy toward Iraq is that it is still in our national interest to try to create a model of decent, progressive, pluralistic politics in the heart of the Arab world.

You need to only look at Gaza and Lebanon, not to mention Baghdad, to see how badly this region needs a different model of governance.

But I just said earlier that we have a majorities problem in Iraq. So what to do? Build on the minority.

"Go for the Kurdish option," says Hazem Saghiyeh, the noted columnist for the London Arabic daily *Al Hayat*. "You can't build a democratic example in all of Iraq today, but you can build it in Kurdistan. That is where you should go."

He's right. If the surge fails to pave the way for a Sunni-Shiite power-sharing agreement in Iraq, then we have to remove our troops from their areas and relocate them to the border to contain their civil war.

But we should also talk to the Kurds about setting up a base in Kurdistan and buttressing its development. Kurdistan is not Switzerland (still too much corruption). But it does have the cultural and institutional foundations — including an active parliament, vibrant newspapers, open universities and free markets — for a decent democratizing example in the heart of the Arab-Muslim world.

Many Iraqis have already fled to Kurdistan to find safety or even vacation in its thriving hotels. A U.S. base in Kurdistan would protect it from invasion by Turkey, and assure Turkey that an autonomous Kurdistan will not be a problem for it.

Nothing could justify the staggering cost of the Iraq war anymore, but if we could get one decent example implanted in the neighborhood, even a small one, at least it wouldn't be a total loss. The example set by little, progressive, modernizing, globalizing Dubai has had a big impact on other countries in the Gulf.

A thriving, progressive Kurdistan could do the same. If such an example doesn't make Iraqi Sunnis and Shiites come to their senses, it will at least be a mirror that shows them every day how utterly wasteful, senseless and self-destructive their civil war is.

Kurds Offer To protect Damaged Shiite Holy Shrine In Central Iraq

AP Associated Press

The Associated Press July 1, 2007

BAGHDAD: Kurdish officials offered to provide troops to protect a Shiite shrine in the central Iraqi city of Samarra that was heavily damaged twice in bombings the past 16 months, destroying its dome and minarets, officials said Sunday. The offer would have to be approved by the Shiite-led government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki but could anger many Sunni Arabs in Samarra, who are suspicious of the Kurds.

The Askariya shrine in Samarra, 95 kilometers (60 miles) north of Baghdad, is one of the holiest places for Shiites, and a February 2006 bombing that destroyed its golden dome sparked retaliation by Shiites and a brutal cycle of sectarian killings. Despite heightened security, it was struck again last month, bringing down its two minarets. A delegation from the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq made the proposal to Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who recently called off a march to Samarra planned for July 5 after the government and Sunni leaders urged him to do so for fear of sectarian clashes.

"A Kurdish delegation visited (the holy city of) Najaf and came forward with the initiative to protect the holy shrine and guarantee security to the companies and

workers who will rebuild the shrine," said Saleh al-Aujali, a legislator from al-Sadr's bloc in parliament. He said the Sadrist movement welcomes the proposal. Brig. Gen. Jabbar Yawar, an undersecretary for the Kurdistan regional Ministry of Peshmerga (Kurdish militiaman), said a predominantly Kurdish battalion of the Iraqi army's 2nd Brigade is ready to go to Samarra to protect the shrine.

"The force will be mixed of Kurds, Arabs and Turkomen and does not belong to any (ethnic) group," Yawar said. He added that the force was waiting for a decision by the Baghdad government. Government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh was not in the country for comment and repeated calls to other government officials went unanswered.

Defense Ministry spokesman Mohammed al-Askari said there is no need for a force to deploy in the area since the Iraqi army's 4th Division, made up mainly of Shiite and Sunni Arabs, is deployed in Salahuddin province, where Samarra is located. He added that an Iraqi army force has deployed around the shrine since the June 13 bombing.

The Washington Times

July 2, 2007 By Nicholas Birch

Kurds rely on Turkey for workers, goods

IRBIL, Iraq — Growing tensions between Turkey and Kurds in control of northern Iraq belie a deepening cooperation, as Turkish companies, workers and goods flock to a market enriched by 17 percent of Iraq's oil revenues. Stocked almost entirely with Turkish brands, upmarket Iraqi Kurdish supermarkets only differ from their counterparts north of the border in their taste for gaudy decoration.

Once the preserve of two-story family houses, the suburbs of Iraqi Kurdish cities are increasingly home to the high-rise blocks characteristic of Turkey. "Turkey is by far and away our most important trading partner," says Aziz Ibrahim Abdo, general director at the Ministry of Trade in the Iraqi Kurdish capital Irbil. "You can see that by looking around you."

The statistics back him up, too. In Irbil, 380 out of 500 foreign companies are Turkish. In Dohuk, a city farther west, 65 percent of contracts worth about \$350 million so far this year have gone to Turkish companies. Worth another \$350 million and \$300 million, respectively, brand new airports in Irbil and Sulaimaniyah are Turkish products.

Another Turkish company won a \$260 million bid to build a new university campus in Sulaimaniyah. "The quality of Turkish work is good, and they're much more trustworthy than the Iranians," said Ibrahim Sofy, deputy head of Irbil's Chamber of Commerce.

The brisk trade and investment contrasts sharply with recent threats by Turkey to send its armed forces into northern Iraq to hunt down rebels seeking their own state in southeastern Turkey. The militant Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) has staged a violent campaign against Turkey since the late 1970s, in which more than 30,000 people have been killed. Turkey says PKK is conducting raids inside Turkey from hidden bases in northern Iraq.

Turkish trade with Iraq reached \$3 billion in 2006 and "could top \$5 billion this year," Turkey's trade minister, Kursad Tuzmen, told about 500 Turkish and Iraqi businessmen at an Iraqi trade fair last month. Much of that money is flowing to Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast, a region impoverished by two decades of war against separatist Kurds.

"This border is our lifeline," says Abdulkadir Sir, a taxi driver who used to make a living as a smuggler. A builder from the Turkish Kurdish town of Bitlis, now in Irbil, Faysal Ozdemir is another one whose bank account has benefited. "Back home, I'd be lucky to earn [\$460] a month," he said. Here, he earns \$2,000.

Qualified Turkish engineers working in northern Iraq can expect monthly salaries of at least \$5,000, more than twice what they would earn in Turkey. "It's hard being away from home, but the money makes it worthwhile," says Seyhmus Gurbuz, a waiter at one of the Turkish-run restaurants. He's one of an estimated 15,000 Turkish citizens — most of them Kurds — working in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Not everything about the new Turkish-Kurdish economic relationship is rosy. An Irbil resident for three years, Faysal Ozdemir estimates at least 10 percent of Turkish companies have left northern Iraq in the past month. "All this talk of invasions scared them away," he says.

NO DEAL ON OIL LAW, TOP IRAQ KURD SAYS



Ben Lando, UPI Energy Correspondent

WASHINGTON, July 3 2007 (UPI) -- The top Kurdish energy official says no deal has been reached on an Iraq oil law, despite news reports the Parliament is to take up the bill.

"We are not aware of anything being passed by the Cabinet," said Kurdistan Regional Government Natural Resources Minister Ashti Hawrami, speaking to United Press International via mobile phone.

Numerous media have reported Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and his top adviser, Ali al-Dabbagh, said the oil law governing the world's third largest oil reserves would be sent to Parliament as early as Wednesday.

The Kurdistan Regional Government and the federal government in Baghdad have been negotiating the law since last summer. At issue is whether which oil fields the federal and regional governments control, as well as the distribution of oil revenue.

A draft of the law approved by negotiators and the council of ministers in February and finalized in March, "is the only approved text," said Hawrami, the KRG's lead negotiator.

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"Even the text of the March draft is not complete," he said. A revenue sharing law was approved and sent to the council of ministers earlier this month, though there may still be some complaints from Sunni politicians. It must still be passed on to Parliament.

Hawrami said the issue of oil control still looms large, though progress is being made. After the draft law was approved earlier this month, the Iraq Oil Ministry unveiled four annexes -- a list of which oil fields would be under the federal government control, via the Iraq National Oil Co, and which would be under regional control (Kurdistan is the only official region currently). "We've not been consulted about anything being agreed upon apart from March," he said.

Reports of progress and disputes over the law have been convoluted in the past. The Kurds, a strong player in the oil talks, would need to agree on a deal to move forward. What is not known is the fate of other crucial sticking points, including the new roles of INOC and the Ministry of Oil, concerns over the oil law's language and extent of transparency, as well as revenue sharing and the annexes.

U.S. hit with Turkish demands on Kurds



By Desmond Butler, Associated Press Writer | July 4, 2007

WASHINGTON --U.S. and Turkish officials say that the United States needs to step up efforts to prevent Kurdish separatists from operating cross border attacks on Turkey from Iraq. The issue has taken on greater urgency as Kurdish guerrillas have escalated attacks in Turkey and provoked Turkish threats to launch a military incursion into Iraq, a move that could have serious implications for the U.S. efforts to stabilize Iraq.

U.S. officials say they consider the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party or PKK to be a terrorist organization and are working closely with Turkey to combat the threat. But officials have had few examples of success against the PKK to point to.

Responding to criticism of U.S. inaction from Turkey, U.S. Brig. Gen. Perry Wiggins, deputy director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff suggested that the United States was focused on its own mission in Iraq. "We continue to work with Turkey," Wiggins said. "Our military's focus is on Iraq and the situation in Iraq." He added: "As the secretary of defense has said, any disruption up in Northern Iraq would not be helpful at this time."

The comment came a week after Turkey's military chief, Gen. Yasar Buyukanit asked the government to set political guidelines for an incursion into northern Iraq. The Turkish military has said that an incursion may be necessary because the U.S. and the Iraqi governments have failed to stop attacks across the border.

The issue is highly sensitive in Turkey, which has been battling the PKK since 1984 in a conflict that has killed tens of thousands of people. Tension over whether the Turkish military will take action in Iraq has intensified as the country approaches an election later this month.

The PKK has escalated attacks this year, killing at least 67 soldiers so far. More than 110 rebels were killed in the same period. During the 1990s, Turkish troops penetrated Iraqi territory several times, sometimes with as many as 50,000 troops. The Turkish forces withdrew, leaving behind about 2,000 soldiers to monitor rebel activities.

Buyukanit complained to senior White House officials including Vice President Dick Cheney during a U.S. visit in February and Turkish officials have continued to press the case in Washington.

"Clearly our expectations are not being met," said a Turkish diplomat in Washington, who requested anonymity because he was not authorized to speak on the record. "We are using every channel to express our unhappiness about what is not happening."

Meanwhile, Turkey, a key NATO ally continues to provide vital support to U.S. operations in Afghanistan and Iraq through Incirlik Air Base in southern Turkey, one of the most important U.S. military assets in the region.

Privately, some U.S. officials are raising concern that the United States has not moved aggressively to allay Turkish concerns. They say that U.S. policy makers are underestimating the risk that Turkey's pursuit of the PKK in Iraq could lead to a wider conflict with the Kurdish forces which are a key part of the Iraqi army.

One senior U.S. diplomatic official says that the likelihood of Turkey invading Northern Iraq ahead of the July 22 Turkish elections is very high.

The official, who requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue, said that the U.S. government has not focused sufficient attention or resources to address Turkish concerns. "I think we ought to be doing everything we can to counter the PKK," the official said. "The biggest problem is getting the U.S. to do what it should do."

The official added that inaction by the U.S. risks alienating Turkey. "I think that 70 million Turks are important," the official said. Capturing PKK fighters in Iraq might mollify the forces in Turkey in favor of an invasion, the official said.

Some analysts believe that the United States is too distracted by its efforts to stabilize Iraq and fight insurgents to focus on the PKK. A move against the PKK would require shifting military resources to northern Iraq, a region that has been relatively calm from Washington's perspective.

"Arresting PKK members in northern Iraq is not so easy," said Mark Parris, a former U.S. ambassador to Turkey now a visiting fellow at The Brookings Institution. "A lot of crockery can be broken in that part of the world." Analysts say that the United States has also been reluctant to pressure Kurdish politicians in Iraq-- who Washington considers reliable allies in a chaotic political atmosphere -- to crack down on the PKK.

"A Turkish military operation is a disaster waiting to happen," said Bulent Aliriza, a Turkish scholar at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies. "But the United States has not been able to reconcile an important tactical relationship with the Kurds in Iraq with the long-standing strategic alliance with Turkey."

Kurdish oil riches draw many drillers

Billowing smoke signals new investment

By Kambiz Foroohar

TAWKE, Iraq: Just outside the village of Tawke in northeastern Iraq, black smoke billows over the green hills as a fire rages unchecked.

Najman Yousef, a former Kurdish guerrilla, inspects the scene. This blaze, unlike the attacks roiling the rest of Iraq, is a positive sign: It is burning the excess oil gushing from one of the first wells drilled since the fall of Saddam Hussein four years ago.

Yousef, who once fought off Saddam's Republican Guard in the mountains nearby, has given up his AK-47 assault rifle to work on an oil platform built by Det Norske Oljeselskap, a Norwegian producer and explorer of oil and natural gas known as DNO. Also exploring in the region are oil producers like Western Oil Sands and Heritage Oil, both of Canada; Addax Petroleum of Switzerland; Genel Enerji, a unit of Cukurova Holding in Turkey, and Sterling Energy of Britain.

The Kurds have controlled the area since 1991.

"Before, I was a fighter," said Yousef, who is now 30 and survived Saddam's attempts to annihilate the Kurds. "Now, I'm building Kurdistan, and the oil will help us."

Yousef and the rest of the area's five million Kurds are sitting atop what the Kurdish natural resources minister and

Iraqi government estimate to be 25 billion barrels of oil.

That compares to 12.9 billion barrels estimated as Mexico's reserves, according to the BP Statistical Review of World Energy, and the equivalent of more than 80 percent of U.S. reserves.

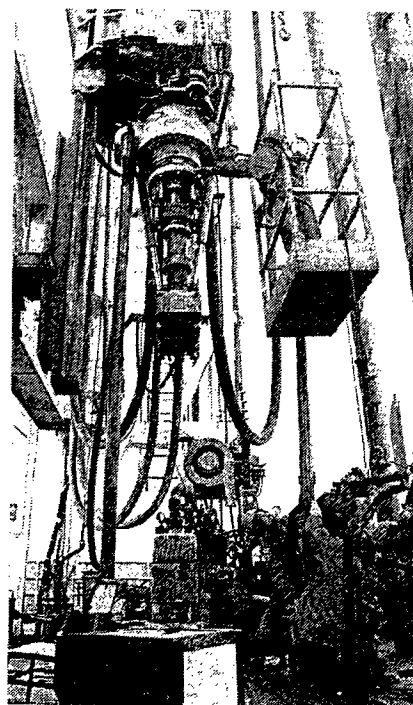
The Kurdish territory encompasses three provinces — Suleimani, Erbil and Dohuk — that are wedged between Turkey on the north, Syria on the west and Iran on the east.

Freed from Saddam's regime, the Kurds are opening the door to outside investment. They are also weighing the risks of extending their reach into neighboring areas that have large Kurdish populations.

The prime target is the multiethnic Iraqi oil city of Kirkuk, which is 100 kilometers, or 60 miles, from Erbil, the Kurdish capital.

The additional territories would give the Kurds potential reserves of 55 billion barrels, or almost half of Iraq's oil. That includes 10 billion barrels in Kirkuk and 20 billion barrels in other disputed areas. Expansion would set up a confrontation with Turkey, which has its own Kurdish minority and opposes Iraqi Kurds' taking over Kirkuk.

Franklin Lavin, a former U.S. undersecretary of commerce, said, "The Kurds want to make up for the lost time under Saddam." The United States, which invaded Iraq in 2003, is trying to



persuade construction and petrochemical companies to use the Kurdish area as a base.

"We want to encourage companies that are looking at Iraq to think about the Kurdish region as a possible gateway into the country," Lavin says.

Douglas Layton, director of the Kurdistan Development Corporation, which promotes the region, says the Kurds aim to create a trading and commercial hub that extends beyond oil.

"Our goal is to be in a position to challenge Dubai," Layton said.

Numerous roadblocks stand in the way of the Kurds' ambitions. In February, after more than a year of negotiations, Iraq's cabinet approved an initial version of a petroleum law that benefited the Kurds because it gave regional governments the right to manage undeveloped fields like the one at Tawke.

The Kurds are the only group so far to take advantage of a provision in Iraq's new Constitution that allows a province to designate itself a region.

In April, Iraq's oil minister, Hussain Shahrastani, a Shiite, introduced amendments to the draft that allocated management of 93 percent of the country's oil reserves to the Iraq National Oil Company. The Kurds say they ended up with fields that were commercially unattractive to develop.

The Kurds countered. Under their plan, 58 percent of Iraq's reserves would be run by the national oil company and the rest would fall to the Kurdistan Regional Government and other local bodies.

Kurdish members of the Iraqi Parliament, who make up about a quarter of that body, will reject the draft law as it stands, says a Kurdistan Regional Government spokesman, Khaled Salih.

As Iraq's factions jostle for influence in the new national government, Shahrastani has warned the Kurds not



Jamal Penjweny/Markets Magazine via Bloomberg News.

Magne Normann, the head of the Iraqi unit of Det Norske Oljeselskap, a Norwegian producer and explorer of oil and natural gas, oversees oil drilling in Tawke, Iraq. "We took all the political risk," he said. "There should be compensation for that."

to sign oil agreements with foreign companies. In March, he said that the agreement with DNO might not be valid because it has not been approved by the central government.

"All the contracts that have been signed either by the previous regime or by the northern region will have to satisfy the conditions of the new law," Shahrastani said in Vienna at a meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Rochdi Younsi, an analyst with Eurasia Group, a New York firm that advises on political risks, says big companies worry that if they enter the Kurdish region before a petroleum law is ratified, they will hurt their chances of working in the rest of Iraq.

"Major oil companies don't want to damage their relationship with Baghdad," Younsi said.

For now, that leaves Iraqi Kurdistan to wildcatters like DNO. The Norwegian company reached two production-sharing agreements with the Kurdistan Regional Government in 2004, gaining a 55 percent stake in the two licenses. DNO will take 10 to 30 percent of the profits; the rest will go to the regional government.

Magne Normann, head of DNO's Iraq unit, hired the Great Wall Drilling Company, a unit of China National Petroleum, to drill for the oil. DNO has 80 trucks standing by at the field to begin shipments to local markets and is waiting for the national government in Baghdad to issue an export license to use an Iraqi-owned pipeline to Turkey.

"We signed our agreements before the interim government was in place in 2004," Normann said. "We took all the political risk. There should be compensation for that."

DNO is taking physical risks, too, since getting to Tawke from Erbil is a logistical challenge. Normann and his team of Kurdish and French engineers left the capital in a convoy of three sport utility vehicles at 4:30 a.m. on a March morning, and before they left, they were briefed by a security adviser, who gave only his first name, Graham.

"If your team leader is killed, follow your driver," said Graham, referring to the person who is in charge in each vehicle. "If you're fired upon, just drive. Do not stop."

After five hours navigating bone-rattling dirt roads, the convoy reached Tawke. Apart from a satellite television dish, the mud houses appear not to

have changed in 100 years. There's one sign of incipient wealth: on a hilltop, streams of black, gooey crude oil cut through the green grass.

"The oil seepages were a hint that there could be commercial oil here," Normann said.

Later, at the site of the well fire, Normann almost skipped with joy. After drilling, companies typically open up the well to see how fast oil is coming out. In most cases, there are no storage facilities during such tests, so drillers simply burn the oil. The blaze's intensity can be an indication of the oil pressure in a well.

At first, DNO estimated that the Tawke field held 100 million barrels and would reach peak production of 50,000 barrels a day next year, he said. Now, it appears that it may contain much more. The well that is burning, DNO's fifth in Tawke, has a flow rate of 12,000 barrels a day, 40 percent greater than a previous well in the same area.

"A couple of more wells like this one and we'll meet our target for this year," Normann said.

Bloomberg News

Baghdad deaths fall, Iraq and U.S. report

But scale of change in June is uncertain

By Alissa J. Rubin

BAGHDAD: Civilian deaths appeared to have dropped in June, a measure indicating that the security plan is having some effect on the level of violence in Baghdad.

Reports of the scale of the drop varied, but overall Iraqi government sources reported a sharper decline than the American military did.

Iraqi officials estimated civilian deaths nationwide at about 1,200 in June, down 36 percent from May when they exceeded 1,900. The Web site icasualties.org, which tabulates news reports of civilian deaths, put the number of deaths in June at about 1,342, down from 1,980 in May.

In Baghdad, 765 civilians died either from assassinations, bombs or small arms fire in June, down from 1,070 in May, an Interior Ministry official told *The New York Times*.

But the number of dead bodies found in Baghdad, a measure of sectarian killings, while lower in June than in May, still was higher than in April, the Interior Ministry said.

In April, there were 411 dead bodies found in Baghdad. In May, there were 726 and in June, the number dropped to 540.

Overall, the U.S. military said it believed the nationwide drop was less dramatic than the Iraqi numbers indicated. Although the Americans do not make specific numbers public, Lieutenant

Colonel Christopher Garver said that there had been only "a slight decrease in the month of June." He added that it was "a potential downward trend" and that the military would be closely watching the trends in the coming weeks.

"We are just two weeks into Operation Phantom Thunder," Garver said. "We can't tell yet the effect we're having, but reducing deaths in the civilian population is why we're doing what we're doing."

The decline comes after a U.S. troop increase in Baghdad that began in February but only reached full strength of about 160,000 troops in June. The increase in American soldiers in the capital has been accompanied by more raids on extremist groups and a broader offensive in the belts around Baghdad to curb the car bomb and roadside bomb factories believed to supply many of the weapons used by insurgents.

American soldiers have found a number of bomb making facilities, some quite sophisticated, underscoring the diffi-

culties the military faces in trying to rid the country of lethal explosive devices.

Even as civilian deaths apparently dropped in Baghdad, violence in the surrounding areas, particularly Diyala Province, remained high, and there were reports of violence in Kirkuk and Salahiddin, an area that had been one of the quieter ones in Iraq for some time.

In Diyala, a roadside bomb exploded in Baladroz, east of Baquba, wounding 20 people. Elsewhere in the province two civilians were kidnapped and killed north of Baquba, and a truck driver was hijacked near Khalis, where two dead bodies were found.

On Sunday, a truck bomb in Ramadi killed five people and wounded seven. It targeted a police checkpoint. Two car bombs struck Sunni Arab neighborhoods of Baghdad, killing three in the Dora neighborhood and one in the Saydiya neighborhood.

Wissam Habeeb and reporters in Diyala, Ramadi and Hilla contributed to this report.

■ 2 GIs charged with murder

Two American soldiers have been charged with premeditated murder for allegedly killing three Iraqis and then planting weapons on their bodies to portray them as combatants, the U.S. military said. The Associated Press reported in Baghdad.

The three Iraqis were killed in separate incidents from April to June near Iskandariya, 50 kilometers south of Baghdad, the military said.

July 2, 2007

Herald Tribune

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THE WORLD'S DAILY NEWSPAPER

■ ANKARA

Kurd rebels said to flee camps inside Iraq

Four former members of the Kurdistan Workers Party, known as the PKK and outlawed by Turkey, said Sunday that Kurdish guerrillas were vacating camps in northern Iraq because they feared an attack by Turkish troops.

Turkey's armed forces have urged

the government to allow an incursion into mainly Kurdish northern Iraq to attack up to 4,000 PKK militants who use the region as a base from which to attack targets inside Turkey.

The rumors of a possible Turkish attack have rattled financial markets and have drawn warnings from the United States, Ankara's NATO ally, to stay out of Iraq. (Reuters)

Tehran foes rally in Paris to protest EU terror listing

The Associated Press

VILLEPINTE, France: Thousands of people rallied near Paris over the weekend to protest a recent European Union decision to keep an Iranian opposition group on a terror blacklist.

Supporters of the People's Mujahedeen of Iran came to the rally from around Europe on Saturday, many on buses. The group said that up to 50,000 people had taken part. Police figures were unavailable late Sunday.

The People's Mujahedeen, which is also on a U.S. State Department's list of terrorist groups, seeks the overthrow of Iran's Islamic government.

The Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein allowed the group, also known as the Mujahedeen Khalq, to operate camps there, from which it staged attacks in Iran.

The group, whose leader is based in Auvers-sur-Oise, north of Paris, asserts it is a peaceful movement of exiled opponents of the Iranian government. It also says that its militants in Iraq have surrendered to U.S.-led forces.

Maryam Rajavi, head of the National Council of Resistance, the political wing of the group, denounced the EU decision. She also said that recent unrest in Iran over a government fuel-rationing plan was "the true picture of a discontented society on the verge of exploding."

Iranians broke shop windows last week and set fire to more than a dozen gas stations in the capital, Tehran, and other cities amid protests of the rationing, which took effect midnight Tuesday.

Rajavi said the refusal Thursday by the 27-nation EU to take her group off



Reuters

Maryam Rajavi, head of the National Council of Resistance, the political wing of the People's Mujahedeen of Iran, with demonstrators in Villepinte, near Paris.

its terror list was aimed at appeasing the clerical leadership of Iran.

"EU, shame on you!" chanted the crowd, under a huge banner reading "A free Iran with Maryam Rajavi."

The People's Mujahedeen asserts that the EU has refused to apply an order last year by the European Court of Justice that annulled a 2002 decision to place the group on the terrorist blacklist and order its assets frozen. The group is seeking more than \$1.35 billion in damages from the European Union.

EU legal experts maintain that the Court of Justice ruling focused on procedural problems and did not imply that the group must be taken off the blacklist.

■ Chávez meets Iranian leader

President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela told his Iranian counterpart Sunday that the two oil-producing states, which have forged close ties in opposition to the United States, should cooperate to defeat imperialism, news agencies reported.

Chávez and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who both regularly condemn the U.S. government, met during an official visit by the Venezuelan lead-

er to the Islamic Republic. Chávez arrived in Iran on Saturday after visiting Russia and Belarus.

The Venezuelan president, who wants to forge an alliance of leftist states to counter U.S. policies, told Ahmadinejad, according to the official Iranian news agency IRNA: "Cooperation of independent countries such as Iran and Venezuela has an effective role in defeating the policies of imperialism and saving nations."

Chávez, who is using his country's oil wealth to promote social spending and nationalization of strategic industries in his country and elsewhere in Latin America, backs Iran's nuclear program, which is under United Nations sanctions.

Ahmadinejad, whose country is embroiled in a standoff with the West over that program, took a similar line.

"The pillars of the global arrogance have become shaky," he told Chávez, adding that "victory" could be achieved "with resistance and standing firm."

"Global arrogance" is a term Ahmadinejad and other Iranian officials use to refer to the United States and its allies, but like Chávez he did not name America in comments published by IRNA.

(Reuters, Bloomberg)

Herald INTERNATIONAL Tribune July 3, 2007

Iraqis make progress on crucial oil legislation

By Alissa J. Rubin

BAGHDAD: The Iraqi government took a step closer on Tuesday to completing work on an oil law that is one of several pieces of legislation on which the U.S. Congress has demanded pro-

gress before it authorizes additional expenditures for the war.

The cabinet approved one part of the legislative package, known officially as the hydrocarbon legislation, and sent it to Parliament. The law will be delivered officially to Parliament in the next two or three days. But a measure dealing with how the oil revenue will be shared has not yet been approved.

Although the cabinet's approval is significant, only 24 of 37 cabinet members were present because the Sunni Arab ministers are boycotting cabinet meetings as are the 6 ministers who represent the faction that supports the Shiite cleric Muktada al-Sadr.

Representatives of the Sunni bloc said they were not opposed to the law, but that there were a number of aspects they wanted to discuss.

"We are astonished at the government's rush to submit the law to Parliament," said Salim Abdulla, a member of the Sunni bloc, Tawaffuk. "We were waiting to finish with the constitutional amendments to make sure there is no contradiction between the oil law and the constitution."

Members of the Sunni bloc are boycotting Parliament to protest an arrest warrant against the culture minister and to insist on the reinstatement of the speaker, Mahmoud Mashadani, whom they had previously agreed to replace. If they are not present in the Parliament, full discussion of the law will probably be more protracted.

The oil law approved Tuesday by the cabinet lays out the role of a new powerful federal oil and gas council, which will review all contracts and determine oil and gas sector policy.

Much of the focus of the measure is on the relationship between the new council and Iraq's regions and provinces. For instance, the Kurdistan Regional Government, which consists of three provinces, has a system already in place for letting contracts and determining oil field exploration and development. The oil measure strikes a balance between allowing review by the new Federal Oil and Gas Council and setting limitations on the grounds on which the council can reject contracts.

Separately on Tuesday, the Iraqi police said a car bombing in a Shiite neighborhood of Baghdad killed at least 18 people, with at least 35 wounded, Reuters reported.

■ Death penalty for GI is sought

Federal prosecutors filed a notice Tuesday that they will seek the death penalty if former a soldier, Steven Green, is convicted of killing an Iraqi family and raping a 14-year-old girl, The Associated Press reported from Louisville, Kentucky.

The notice, filed in U.S. District Court, cites 12 alleged offenses related to the slayings, including that the deaths were premeditated, involved sexual abuse and were committed with a firearm.

Herald INTERNATIONAL Tribune July 4, 2007

Iran feels sanctions bite

The hard-line regime of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran has been frightening neighbors with its meddling in Iraq, Lebanon, and Gaza. The regime's apparent pursuit of nuclear weapons has also prompted unusual solidarity among the United States, Europe, and Russia; together they have been ratcheting up UN Security Council sanctions on Iran, demanding that it suspend uranium enrichment and comply with its obligations to the International Atomic Energy Agency. But the most telling signs of trouble for the regime in Tehran are currently on display in domestic turmoil.

The reaction to gas rationing casts light on public discontent with Ahmadinejad's failure to keep his promises to improve economic conditions. Iranians set fire to gas stations after the announcement of rationing. Amid long lines of cars waiting to fill up in Tehran, men threw stones at police and chanted "Ahmadinejad should be killed!"

The need to ration gas in OPEC's second largest exporter of crude oil reveals a major vulnerability of Iran's theocratic regime.

Government policy is clearly to

blame for the rationing. The problem begins with subsidies for consumers, which acts as a powerful stimulant for consumption. Yet Iran suffers from an acute shortage of refining capacity, forcing it to import 40 percent of the gasoline supplied to the public. And Iran's inability to rectify the refinery deficit can be attributed to Ahmadinejad's truculence on the nuclear issue and regional conflicts.

A salient conclusion for policy makers in Washington is that the current reliance on UN sanctions and Treasury warnings against international banking transactions with Tehran is having the desired effect. This is a policy that entails a much lower level of risk than threats to bomb Iran's nuclear installations. And it is much easier to exploit Iran's dependence on imported gasoline than to take out underground nuclear facilities.

Living conditions for most Iranians outside the corrupt clerical elites are deteriorating. Ahmadinejad has been arresting reformists and censoring the press, but his blatant domestic failures are becoming the best antidote to the threat from Tehran.

— The Boston Globe

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune
July 3, 2007

U.S. links Iran to raid that killed GIs in Iraq

General also accuses Hezbollah of acting as 'proxy' for Tehran

By Michael R. Gordon

BAGHDAD: Iranian operatives helped plan a January raid in Karbala in which five American soldiers were killed, an American military spokesman in Iraq said Monday.

The military spokesman, Brigadier General Kevin Bergner, also said that an Iranian unit, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, had used operatives from the Lebanese militia group Hezbollah as a "proxy" to train and arm an array of Shiite militant cells in Iraq.

American military officials have long asserted that the Quds Force, an elite unit of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, has trained and equipped Shiite militants in Iraq. The Americans have also cited extensive intelligence that Iran has supplied Shiite militants with the most lethal type of roadside bomb in Iraq, a device called the explosively formed penetrator, which is capable of piercing an armored Humvee.

But the assertions presented at a news briefing in Baghdad on Monday marked the first time that the United States has charged that Iranian officials have helped plan an operation against American troops in Iraq and have had advance knowledge of a specific attack

that led to the deaths of American soldiers.

In effect, the United States is charging that Iran has been engaged in a proxy war against American and Iraqi government forces for years in an apparent effort to shore up its Shiite allies in Iraq and raise the cost of the American military presence there. Despite the broader implications of his presentation, Bergner sought to confine his comments to the specific incidents covered in his briefing.

When the Karbala attack was carried out Jan. 20, American and Iraqi officials said that it appeared to have been meticulously planned. The attackers carried forged identity cards and wore American-style uniforms. One American died in the raid, which targeted a center where American soldiers were coordinating with provincial officials. The rest of the American soldiers were abducted and later killed.

Some officials speculated at the time that the aim of the raid might have been to capture a group of American soldiers who could have been exchanged for Iranian officials that American forces had detained in Iraq on suspicion of supporting Shiite militants there. But while Americans officials wondered about an indirect Iranian role in the Karbala raid, until Monday they stopped short of alleging that the Quds Force was directly involved in planning the attack.

Bergner declined to speculate on Iranian motivations. But he said that the evidence for the American allegations consisted of interrogations of Qais

Khazali, a Shiite militant who oversaw Iranian-supported cells in Iraq and who was captured several months ago along with another militant, Laith Khazali, his brother.

When the Khazali brothers were captured the Americans also seized a 22 page "planning and lessons learned" document the men had on the Karbala attack. That document, Bergner said, showed that the Iranian Quds Force had provided detailed information on the activities of American soldiers in Karbala, including shift changes and the defenses at the site.

Other information was obtained following the capture in March of a senior Hezbollah operative, Ali Musa Daqduq. The Americans also obtained Daqduq's

\$3 million a month in funding to the Iraqi militants, the American general said.

Some of the Shiite militants who were trained in Iran are former members of the Mahdi army, the militia that reports to Moktada al-Sadr. Bergner said there was no evidence to suggest that their activities had been backed by Sadr, though Qais Khazali once served as a spokesman for Sadr's movement.

Daqduq was captured in March in Basra. To avoid revealing his Lebanese accent, he initially pretended that he was a deaf mute, Bergner said. But he eventually began to speak under interrogation.

In Washington, Bush administration officials have generally held open the possibility that the Quds Force activities might have been carried out without the knowledge of senior Iranian leaders.

But military officials say that there is such a long and systematic pattern of Quds Force activity in Iraq, as well as a 2005 confidential American protest to Iranian leaders regarding the alleged Iranian supply of roadside bombs, that senior Iranian leaders must be aware of the Quds Force role in Iraq.

"Our intelligence reveals that the senior leadership in Iran is aware of this activity," Bergner said.

Asked if the supreme leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, could be unaware of the activity, Bergner said "that would be hard to imagine."

personal journal and detailed documents he possessed on tactics for attacking Iraqi, American and other coalition troops. The capture of Daqduq had remained secret until today.

"Both Ali Musa Daqduq and Qais Khazali state that senior leadership within the Quds Force knew of and supported planning for the eventual Karbala attack that killed five coalition soldiers," Bergner said. The Shiite militant who led the Karbala raid, Azhar Dulaymi, was killed by American-led forces in May.

More generally, Bergner said, the Quds Force has been using Lebanese Hezbollah as a "proxy" or "surrogate" in training and equipping Shiite militants in Iraq. The aim of the Quds Force was to prepare the militant groups so they would attack American and Iraqi gov-



The Associated Press

Iraqi youths at the site of an attack on a Bradley fighting vehicle Monday in the Obeidi district of southeast Baghdad. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

ernment force while trying to conceal an obvious Iranian role, he said.

There have long been reports that Hezbollah operatives have been working with the Quds Force to train Iraqi operatives in Iran and even Lebanon. But few details had emerged about specific Hezbollah officials. According to Bergner, Ali Musa Daqduq joined Hezbollah in 1983, commanded Hezbollah units in Lebanon and was involved in coordinating the protection of the

group's leader, Hassan Nasrallah. Hezbollah has been armed and funded by Iran.

In 2005, the Hezbollah leadership instructed Daqduq to go to Iran and help the Quds Force train Shiite Iraqi militants, Bergner said. Daqduq went to Tehran in 2006 with Yussef Hashim, another Hezbollah operative who serves as the head of the group's operations in Iraq. They met with the senior Quds Force commanders and were di-

rected to go to Iraq and report on efforts to train Shiite militants there, Bergner said.

Groups of up to 60 Iraqi militants were brought to Iran for military instruction at three camps near Tehran and trained in using roadside bombs, mortars, rockets, kidnapping operations and in how to operate as a sniper.

The Quds Force also provided up to

Herald INTERNATIONAL Tribune July 5, 2007

Roger Cohen

Time to call in the Iran chips

NEW YORK

If one country should have been happy with the post-9/11 upheaval the United States has engineered in Afghanistan and Iraq, it was Iran.

The Shiite mullahs in Tehran were delivered from their sworn enemy, the Taliban, against whom they had amassed 200,000 troops on the Afghan border in 1997, and from Saddam Hussein in Iraq, against whom they had fought an inconclusive war in the 1980s that took one million lives.

Afghanistan came under the authority of President Hamid Karzai, who has called Iran a "close friend." Iraq's social revolution brought Shiite brothers to power. All this came thanks to the "Great Satan," at no cost in Iranian treasure (growing by the day with oil at \$70 a barrel) or blood.

Globalist

I know history has its ironies, not least the fact that the United States funded the creation of Muslim holy warriors, Osama bin Laden among them, as agents in the Afghan undoing of the Soviet Union, only to face these warriors reinvented as death-to-America jihadists once the Cold War ended.

This was harsh payback for Washington. But Iran's payback for the favorable power shift gifted upon it has been as bitter.

In contrast to Iran, the countries that ought to have been most unhappy with the regime changes were America's regional allies — Pakistan, Jordan and Saudi Arabia — Sunni powers with scant sympathy for the governments installed in Kabul and Baghdad.

They are indeed displeased by the power shifts. Everyone is irked, Iran chief and most dangerous among them.

The failure to parlay two American military interventions that served Iran's objective strategic interest into substantive engagement between the two countries constitutes the Bush administration's most costly diplomatic failure. Such expenditure of U.S. treasure and blood merited more creative diplomacy.

This failure hurts U.S. interests in Iraq and Lebanon and in finding an Israeli-Palestinian peace. It has even begun to hurt U.S. interests in Afghanistan where, in a fantastic turnabout, Iran is arming its erstwhile mortal enemy, the Taliban.

If America is engaged in another Cold-War-like generational conflict, which is the way the administration has chosen to characterize the war on terror, then Tehran is the closest equivalent to Moscow.

Iran combines ideological fervor, military vigor, strategic agility, domestic repression, economic weakness (petrol shortages despite

having the world's second largest oil reserves) and serious social fissures in ways suggestive of the former Soviet Union. It is, in the assessment of one seasoned American diplomat, "a worthy adversary."

That adversarial role is now channeled into a proxy war in Iraq. U.S. accounts this week of Iranian involvement, through agents of its elite Quds Force, in the killing of five American soldiers in January were the most specific of a series of persuasive U.S. and British charges against Tehran.

What is Iran up to in Iraq and Afghanistan? It wants to keep America bleeding. Looking down the barrel of a gun over its nuclear program, Iran likes the idea of American forces stretched as thin as possible. It wants its Shiite proxies armed in the event of a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. And, angered by the notion that Pakistan can have nukes but not Persia

rising, it is looking for respect.

"Iran and the United States were closest on Afghanistan and Iraq, and farthest apart on the nuclear issue, Hamas and Hezbollah," said Vali Nasr, the author of "The Shia Revival." "The conciliatory logic of Iraq might have dominated, but the reverse has happened and Iranian moderates were never cultivated."

Iran is an ugly regime. Its president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, is a foul-mouthed buffoon. But it is also a sophisticated country and the only one in the Middle East with a government far more anti-Western than its generally America-loving population. Placing Iran in the "axis of evil" and isolating it has served no constructive purpose.

It is time to put the onus on the mullahs. The United States should propose broad, high-level talks with Iran across the range of issues confronting the two countries —

Iraq, Afghanistan, nuclear weapons, Lebanon, Israel-Palestine — while dropping its meaningless insistence that Iran suspend nuclear enrichment activities before talks begin.

That will test whether the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and Ahmadinejad feel they can survive without the "Great Satan" distraction from acute domestic woes.

If the answer to the invitation is no, and Iranian-orchestrated attacks in Iraq continue, America should play hardball. Iran, like Iraq, is a multiethnic country. Its Kurds, ethnic Baluchis and other minorities can find money and weapons flowing to them from a "worthy adversary" of the mullahs' regime.

Tehran wants to keep America bleeding.

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ANALYSIS: SOFT PARTITION OF IRAQ



By **CLAUDE SALHANI** UPI International Editor July 6 2007

WASHINGTON, July 6 (UPI) -- The partition of Iraq is far from an original idea. The notion has been floated around Washington and Baghdad numerous times since the start of the war in 2003. Pundits, journalists and politicians have in the past proposed the partition of Iraq in various forms despite strong opposition from Iraqi leaders, the Bush administration and the Iraqi Study Group headed by former Secretary of State James Baker and former Congressman Lee Hamilton.

But as the country seems to be drawn more and more into a fully fledged civil war that is killing hundreds of people on a monthly basis -- as well as increasing the numbers of U.S. casualties -- the notion of partition may just possibly offer the best solution, if only to keep the antagonists apart and to stop the slaughter.

This time the idea stems from two American scholars, Michael O'Hanlon, a Brookings Institution senior fellow, and Edward Joseph, a visiting scholar. They are the authors of a newly released report from the Saban Center for Middle East Policy entitled "The case for a soft partition in Iraq" as an alternative plan for stabilizing the war-torn country.

Unfortunately for Iraq, their plan calls for breaking up the country into three separate entities. "Soft partition has a number of advantages over other 'Plan B' proposals currently under discussion," argue the two Brookings scholars.

Most other plans focus on a U.S. troop withdrawal or on the containment of "civil war spillover (into) other countries, rather than the prevention of a substantial worsening of Iraq's civil war."

The difference with a soft partition, say the authors of the report, is that it "could allow the United States and its partners to preserve their core strategic goals: an Iraq that lives in peace with its neighbors, opposes terrorism, and gradually progress towards a more stable future."

O'Hanlon and Joseph believe it would "further allow for the possibility over time for the re-establishment of an Iraq increasingly integrated across sectarian lines rather than permanently segregated."

But this partitioning of Iraq comes with a caveat; it needs to be carefully implemented. If successful, it would help end the war and the enormous loss of life on all sides. But what about al-Qaida-sponsored terrorism? What guarantees that their actions would stop with partition and not continue so long as U.S. troops remain in Iraq?

O'Hanlon and Joseph argue that if the U.S. surge of additional American forces into the battle ordered by President George W. Bush several months ago and related efforts to broker a political accommodation with the existing government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki failed, soft partition may be the only means of avoiding an intensification of the civil war and the growing threats of a regional conflagration.

What the two scholars propose is to build two more autonomous regions, along the lines of the existing Kurdish autonomy region in the northern part

of the country; one for Sunni Muslims and one for the Shiites.

In other words, Iraq would become a federation, or a confederation, loosely governed from Baghdad where the central authority would oversee issues such as national defense and the fair sharing of oil resources among all three regions, leaving local government to run the rest.

O'Hanlon proposes a seven-step solution to help make the transition as peaceful as possible.

1. A soft partition of Iraq will not help speed up the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the country. It will not be a welcome message by most people, but it is a realistic message. In fact, O'Hanlon suggests keeping at least 150,000 U.S. troops for the foreseeable future and then gradually cutting down to about 50,000 to 75,000 troops to be kept in Iraq for several years to come. O'Hanlon compares the situation in Iraq to that of the Bosnia region.

2. You have to think about drawing regional boundaries and where you draw those boundaries.

3. You also have to think about how you go about protecting people as they relocate. About 5 million Iraqis are likely to be concerned by these measures.

4. You have to help people start over their new lives once they have relocated.

5. You have to have some kind of concept for sharing oil revenues; otherwise you risk feeding the rift between the Sunnis and Shiites.

6. You need some way to track people; you need identity cards. That will make it harder for terrorists from al-Qaida operating in western Baghdad to infiltrate Shiite neighborhoods.

7. And lastly you need to rebuild institutions.

The authors of the report are realistic in that they admit from the outset to sharing "some of these concerns (regarding partition) and, as a matter of principle and theory, disliked partition as a solution to ethno-sectarian conflict." However, O'Hanlon and Joseph see the option of partition in Iraq becoming at some point the "lesser of the range of possible evils."

Backing up their theory, O'Hanlon and Joseph refer to partition in history, citing the Treaty of Versailles at the end of World War I that "carved up much of the Middle East (including Iraq)."

In fact, it was the Treaty of Sevres that shared the spoils of the Ottoman Empire at the close of WWI, carving up much of the Middle East. And look where it got us today. The Treaty of Versailles demanded that Germany pay reparations for the war, and it eventually led to World War II. There has to be a lesson in there somewhere.

The Washington Times

A Fresh Look at Iraq

July 5, 2007 *Washington* Times.

Opinion Editorial* By /Kosrat Rasool Ali, Vice President of the Kurdistan Regional Government/

A fresh look at U.S. policy toward Iraq is vital, especially after the long time that elapsed since the liberation of Iraq and the lack of tangible progress and the critical state of affairs that Iraq has reached. Let us not forget the dangers posed to our nations by terrorism.

Such policy and decision can only be taken by a brave man like President Bush. Thanks to his courageous leadership, two terrorist regimes, the Taliban's Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein's Iraq, no longer exist.

Without these two essential wars, the danger of terrorism would have been much higher and many

more incidents like September 11 would have taken place.

To those who say that the liberation of Iraq was a mistake, I say: September 11 took place before the liberation of Iraq and Afghanistan.

As a fighter and a Peshmerga, I know how difficult it is to take a decision to go into war. I know too that that the war was the only way to stop the terrorists from taking the fight to the United States.

I strongly believe that history will judge Mr. Bush as someone who contributed to the protection of the free world from the threat of terror. He will be remembered as someone who did not allow the values of

democracy, freedom and peace to be undermined by terrorism. In taking the fight against the terrorists to their homes, it is true and unfortunate that there are casualties amongst the American troops. But let us not forget that the terrorists are also sustaining daily casualties as dozens of them are being killed or captured every day. Their hideouts are being exposed.

We should not forget that the vast majority of the people of Iraq were against the regime and welcomed liberation. It took only 24 days in 2003 for the liberating troops to topple the Saddam — nobody recalls any resistance to them.

Without going into the history, the current complicated political and security situation of Iraq is the result of mistakes committed after liberation.

The main challenge today for the U.S. and Mr. Bush is restoring the situation in Iraq. As the heated debate rages on the way forward, the following can be done:

1. An effective government formed from all leaders of the political parties. Such government can even include those who are in the insurgency and did not commit crimes against the people of Iraq. Thus, such government will be representative of all segments of Iraqi society through their political parties.

2. The political parties that are loyal to new Iraq and believe in a strategic alliance with the U.S. can secure large parts of Iraq. This will not stir any conflicts amongst the people of Iraq — the successful experience of the Kurdish forces in securing certain parts of Baghdad is a prime example of that.

3. The Multinational Forces can be kept in military bases outside the cities and towns and not on the streets. They can provide support for the Iraqi forces and be kept away from the threat of terrorist attacks.

4. Sufficient budget can be allocated for all the regions of Iraq. This will help in providing job opportunities for the local population and prevents the terrorists from exploiting them. Such step will need adequate planning in coordination with the Iraqi government. This setup can be tried for a period of time, if it proves unsuccessful, then the only other option would be to restructure Iraq into four federal regions: northern (Kurdistan), central (Sunni), southern (Shiite) and Baghdad.

The wealth of the country would be distributed to all four regions in accordance with the population and with taking into account an extra percentage for each region — based on the region's wealth and contribution to the federal budget.

The United States of America can support these regions through four established military bases in each one of them. The support can be political, military and economic. This can be organized through a long-term strategic agreement with the federal government.

In any of the scenarios above, the United States can rely on their Iraqi allies and friends. As a democratic

power in the new Iraq, the Kurds are today part of the solution and not the problem.

Here, I stress that the Kurds are proud to be friends and allies of America.

But in return, the United States bears a responsibility to strengthen and protect their allies. The implementation of Article 140 of the Iraqi

constitution, which outlines the solution for the city of Kirkuk, is essential to strengthening this alliance and making the Kurds more committed, and ready to sacrifice, for the new Iraq.

As committed democrats, we believe that America's success is ours. As

fighters of terrorism, dictatorship and tyranny, we see that neither America nor we can afford to fail. In short, we stand for the same values and strive for the same goals as America.



Iraqi political scene at crossroads

By Basil Adas, July 06, 2007

Baghdad: Amid intensified debates about the fate of Nouri Al Maliki's government and critical attitudes issued by the Sunni Accord Front toward Al Maliki's political and security policies, the internal Iraqi political scene seems to be approaching a crossroad, according to Iraqi politicians and analysts.

Mahmoud Othman, a prominent Kurdish leader close to Kurdistan leader Masoud Barazani and Jalal Talabani, the Iraqi President, has revealed that Kurds seek to strike a significant political deal with influential Islamic blocs like the Sunni Accord Front.

"There is a Kurdish initiative

to annex the Islamic Party to the new political front, which includes the Islamic Supreme Council headed by Abdul Aziz Al Hakim, the Dawa Party led by Nouri Al Maliki and the two major Kurdish parties," Othman told Gulf News. He added, "The annexation of the Islamic Front will hold back Al Maliki as Prime Minister to any future government, however this development will take down the Accord Front which includes, besides the Islamic Party, the Ahl Al Iraq [People of Iraq] convention led by Adnan Al Dulaimi and the National Dialogue Front led by Khalaf Al Alyan." Both Al Dulaimi and Al Alyan are Sunnis.

Fakhri Al Asadi, an Iraqi political analyst, told Gulf News, "I believe the Americans support this approach because it will demolish what is seen as extremist Sunnis and Shiites ... As for the Kurds, they are known for being the acceptable and moderate intercessor."

The timing of recent critical statements by Tarek Al Hashemi, the Iraqi vice-president and leader of the Islamic Party, which coincided with political efforts to annex the Islamic Party to the moderate Kurdish-Shiite Front, may indicate his longing to put pressure on Al Maliki to accept full partnership in

handling the Iraqi security file.

The exclusion of Sunnis particularly the Accord Front from the security file is attributed by the Shiite coalition to the penetration of the Baathist and Al Qaida members.

The dramatic and dangerous information revealed by Kurds indicated that Americans are cautious of Al Maliki's overthrow and the emergence of an ex-Baathist government in the frame of an emergency plan, because that would mean overthrowing the democracy established by Americans in Iraq

Turkey 'faces choice between democracy and dictatorship'

THE INDEPENDENT

By Nicholas Birch in Kortek, Iraqi Kurdistan 09 July 2007

Closing your eyes and listening to his thoughts on Turkey's elections at the end of next week, you could almost mistake Cemil Bayik for a political analyst. He is not. In fact, he is one of the two most powerful figures in the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, whose 25-year war against the Turkish state has cost nearly 40,000 lives.

Speaking from his mountain stronghold on Iraq's

border with Iran, he says: "Turkey is faced with a choice between democracy and authoritarianism. This debate about secularism and the Kurds is political manoeuvring - just a means for the powers that be to hold on to their influence."

This year, 67 soldiers have died fighting the PKK, in a wave of violence that at one stage looked as though it might even prevent elections

from taking place. Talk of delays has now subsided. But terror - rather than the economy or EU reforms - still makes up the bulk of politicians' campaign speeches.

With 30,000 soldiers massed on the Iraqi border since late April, rumours are rife in Ankara this week that the government might return from holiday to vote for military operations. Asked whether this is what he wants, Mr Bayik insists

it is not. The PKK declared a ceasefire in November 2006, he says, and his fighters are only using their "right of self-defence". It is a strange way to describe the conflict. Half of the soldiers killed this year were victims of Iraqi insurgent-style roadside bombs. But the strangest thing about the presence of 2,000 PKK militants in Turkey is that they are not even fighting for an independent Kurdish state any more. Since 1995, they have been fighting for democracy.

That is still some way off in south-eastern Turkey, admittedly. This April, a court ruled that four policemen who shot a 12-year-old boy nine times in the back at close range had acted in self-defence and acquitted them.

But the situation now is an improvement on the past. Before 1991, speaking Kurdish in public was illegal. Now, says Orhan Miroglu, a senior member of a pro-Kurdish party who many Turks see as a front for the PKK, "nobody questions our right to have political representation".

Mr Bayik also acknowledges there have been improvements. But he points to the refusal of Turkey's leaders to take the PKK's ceasefires seriously as evidence that Turkey's European Union-backed democratisation process is a sham.

"We're not fighting because we are in love with war. We're fighting because we have been given no alternative", he says.

An Ankara-based terrorism specialist Nihat Ali Ozcan, thinks the group is nervous about losing its grasp now, with elections approaching and Turkey's Kurdish vote split between nationalists and supporters of the religious-minded government.

Since 1995, when it realised it could not defeat the army head on, the PKK has seen conflict as a political tactic, he says. "This time, its aim is to strengthen ties with its civilian backers." But there is another, much more pragmatic way in which the PKK has benefited from conflict: fighting is good for discipline.

"When you're fighting, all you think about is survival," says Zuhel Serhat, who joined the PKK in 1995, aged 15. "It was when we stopped that we started asking questions."

She is referring to the five-year ceasefire that followed the capture of the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in 1999. His jailing split the organisation, with 1,500 fighters leaving the organisation between 2004 and 2005. Many went freely. Serhat fled by night through Saddam-era minefields and was led to safety by local shepherds. With the army barely 62 miles away, security in the PKK's mountain base is

tighter than in the past. Visitors used to be able to walk in. Now bags and clothes are checked closely.

Despite everything, though, the mood appears relaxed. "A Turkish invasion of Iraq would lead to the division of Turkey," says Mr Bayik. "They won't just have us in opposition. They'll have the world." Rubar, a Russian Kurd who joined the PKK in 1994, agrees. "We've never been stronger", he says.

The Kurds' campaign

* OCTOBER 1978 Proclamation of independence and formal establishment of the PKK.

* 1984 Beginning of a full-scale guerrilla war against Turkey from bases mainly in Syria.

* JUNE 1994 Bombs explode in two Turkish resorts, injuring 10 foreign tourists.

* NOVEMBER 1998 First of a series of suicide attacks, many carried out by female bombers

* FEBRUARY 1999 PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan captured in Kenya. Sentenced to death, but commuted to life imprisonment.

* SEPTEMBER 2006 Latest in series of ceasefires that rebels say not observed by troops.

The Washington Post

By Jim Hoagland - July 8, 2007

The relative stability and prosperity of Iraqi Kurdistan provide the only bright spots of redemption for President Bush in the bloody anarchy that Iraq has become under a mismanaged occupation. Permanently securing the Kurdish minority from Baghdad's genocidal impulses and acts would be a historic accomplishment.

But the growing likelihood of Turkish military strikes into Iraq's northern region threatens to erase that last positive legacy of the American invasion -- and to undermine prospects for a major U.S. redeployment out of Iraq's chaotic cities to bases in the north in the near future. Eagerly sought by the Kurds, such redeployment is strongly opposed by Ankara, which listens to an urgently ticking electoral clock.

Managing Turkey's legitimate grievances against its own Kurdish rebels who take sanctuary among their Iraqi kin requires both agility and firmness from Washington. Thus far, the administration has shown neither quality in dealing with a devastated Iraq and its grasping neighbors. There is no better time than a moment of political extremism to change habits.

American failure in transforming Iraq has many causes. None is more important than Bush's inability to set clear, achievable priorities and to stick to them when they collide with the

vested interests of Iraq's neighbors and of significant parts of the U.S. bureaucracy.

Bush has not followed his own counsel to the American people. Despite his rhetoric, he has not treated Iraq as the defining struggle of our time, one that requires sustained sacrifice and clarity of purpose. He has hopped from goal to goal and from faction to faction in the U.S. government, in Iraq and in the region, rather than pursue the steady, determined course that was -- and still is -- needed.

Consider his deferring to Sunni Arab governments rather than putting effective pressure on them to back U.S. efforts in Iraq. Vice President Cheney and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice have both gone to the region and urged Saudi Arabia's rulers to work with Nouri al-Maliki, the Shiite prime minister of the "national unity" Iraqi government that the administration helped bring to power last year.

"No," was the blunt answer from the Saudis, who let it be known they do not trust Maliki because they see him as an agent of Iran's Shiite ayatollahs. "Okay," perhaps accompanied by a shrug, seems to have been the considered bottom-line U.S. response.

Similarly, the administration has not conveyed a message that is clear and

consistent enough to deter Turkey's politicians from issuing increasingly strident threats to invade Iraqi Kurdistan -- or to keep Turkish generals from massing forces on the border, as they have in recent weeks.

This is partly about politics: Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party face a pitched battle for control of parliament in elections set for July 22. They must convincingly trounce the far-right Nationalist Movement Party to secure the commanding majority they need to enact far-reaching changes to the constitution. But NMP accusations that Erdogan is weak on Kurdish terrorism are boosting the right-wingers in the polls as time runs out.

But it is also about strategy: The generals, who compete with the politicians for influence in Turkish affairs, do not want a strong, U.S.-protected Kurdistan on their border. And they are upset over what they view as unkept promises from Washington to curb the small but murderous Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) guerrilla force that operates from Iraqi territory, thereby relieving pressure on Ankara to intervene.

Neither the Pentagon nor the CIA appears to have stepped up to the mission. This inaction feeds Turkish suspicions that hidden anti-Iranian

agendas and alliances among U.S., Saudi, Jordanian and other intelligence services have more influence over American priorities than do commitments from Bush or his senior aides.

A month ago, a consensus among trained observers and diplomats held that the Turks were unlikely to intervene despite their threats. That opinion is changing as disillusionment and electoral desperation take hold in Ankara. Moreover, predictions that any intervention would be limited to airstrikes and mopping-up operations by Turkish special forces at PKK sites are giving way to fears of a much larger operation that could be aimed at forestalling Kurdish control over the disputed Kirkuk region. Rice telephoned Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul on Friday to try to head off intervention but received no firm assurance.

A Turkish invasion that turns Kurdistan's relative calm into chaos and bloodshed would be the nail in the coffin for Bush's legacy in Iraq and for U.S. public support for the American presence there. Making sure this does not happen should be Priority One for Bush and for everyone working for him in the weeks ahead.

The Next Battle in Iraq?

U.S. finds hope in Iraqi province

Alliance with Sunnis has broken extremists' hold on Anbar

By John F. Burns

RAMADI, Iraq: Sunni merchants watched warily from behind neat stacks of fruit and vegetables as Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno walked with a platoon of bodyguards through the Qatana bazaar here one recent afternoon. At last, one leathery-faced trader glanced furtively up and down the narrow, refuse-strewn street to check who might be listening, then broke the silence.

"America good! Al Qaeda bad!" he said in halting English, flashing a thumbs-up in the direction of the second-ranking U.S. commander in Iraq.

Until only a few months ago, the Central Street bazaar was enemy territory, watched over by American machine-guns in sandbagged bunkers on the roof of the governor's building across the road.

Ramadi was the most dangerous city in Iraq, and the area around the building the deadliest place in Ramadi.

Now, a pact between local tribal sheiks and U.S. commanders has sent thousands of young Iraqis from Anbar Province into the fight against extremists linked to Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia. The deal has all but ended the fighting in Ramadi and recast the city as a symbol of hope that the tide of the war may yet be reversed to favor the Americans and their Iraqi allies.

In a speech on June 28 at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, President George W. Bush cited the turnaround here and elsewhere in Anbar Province, a vast desert hinterland that accounts for nearly a third of Iraq, as a reason to resist demands from Democrats in Congress for an early withdrawal of American troops.

But Bush's pitch masked some of the crucial questions that still confront U.S. commanders.

Two factors that have led to the astonishing success in Anbar — the Sunnis' dominance of the province and the nature of their foe here — could have the opposite effect elsewhere, especially in Baghdad. There the population is an explosive mix of sects, rather than largely Sunni.

And the Sunnis' fight — explicitly so, in the case of many of the new volunteers — is not just against Qaeda-linked extremists, but ultimately against the U.S. presence here and, beyond that, the new power of the majority Shiites.

The Anbar turnaround developed just as Bush was committing nearly 30,000 additional American troops to Iraq in a bid to regain control of Baghdad and the "belt" areas that surround it. The so-called troop surge reached full strength in mid-June, and the re-

sults so far have been mixed. In any case, the Pentagon has told U.S. commanders it can be maintained only until next March at the latest.

This has left commanders looking beyond the surge's end to a point when the trajectory of the war, increasingly, will be determined by decisions the Iraqis make for themselves.

So the question is whether the Anbar experience can be "exported" to other combat zones, as Bush suggested, by arming tribally based local security forces and recruiting thousands of young Sunnis, including former members of Baathist insurgent groups, into Iraq's army and police force.

Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, who leads the Shiite-dominated national government, has backed the tribal outreach in Anbar as a way to strengthen Sunni moderates against Sunni extremists there. But he has warned that replicating the pattern elsewhere could arm Sunni militias for a civil war with Shiites.

Anbar has been a war zone now for four years, and the Americans are as much a part of life as the blasting summer heat.

Ramadi, which lies on the edge of a desert that reaches west from the city to Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria, had a

The question is whether the turnaround can be 'exported.'

population of 400,000 in Saddam Hussein's time.

That was before the insurgents — a patchwork of Qaeda-linked militants, die-hard loyalists of Saddam's ruling Baath Party and other resistance groups fighting to oust U.S. forces from Iraq — coalesced in a terrorist campaign that turned much of the city into a ghost town, and much of Anbar into a cauldron for American troops.

Last year, a leaked U.S. Marine intelligence report conceded that the war in Anbar was effectively lost and that the province was on course to becoming the seat of the Islamic militants' plans to establish a new caliphate in Iraq.

The key to turning that around was the shift in allegiance by tribal sheiks. But the sheiks turned only after a prolonged offensive by American and Iraqi forces, starting in November, that put Qaeda groups on the run, in Ramadi and elsewhere across western Anbar.

Not for the first time, the Americans learned a basic lesson of warfare here: that Iraqis, bludgeoned for 24 years by

Saddam's terror, are wary of rising against any force, however brutal, until it is in retreat.

In Anbar, Sunni extremists were the dominant force, with near-total popular support or acquiescence, until the offensive broke their power.

U.S. infantry, backed by Marine units, have teamed with the Iraqi Army in clearing the extremists from one Ramadi district after another. In February, the extremists were averaging 30 to 35 attacks daily. By late June, the average was down to one a day, and the Americans had counted nearly 50 days with no attacks at all.

Across Anbar, according to figures compiled by the U.S. command, insurgent attacks fell from 1,300 last October to 225 in June. The command said the Ramadi offensive put more than 800 extremists out of action — more than 200 killed or wounded and nearly 600 captured.

U.S. losses in the same period were 19 soldiers and marines killed, though Iraqi security force casualties were higher. In the wake of their offensive, American and Iraqi units moved out of large bases on Ramadi's outskirts to establish more than 100 smaller posts across the city, most of them in what previously were no-go zones.

Meanwhile, the Americans have revived local government structures and launched a \$30 million program — part of a \$300 million effort across Anbar — to repair war damage, compensate property owners and finance start-up businesses. Thousands of families have returned to neighborhoods they had abandoned, and house prices have leapt upward, quadrupling in some areas.

"We couldn't go more than 200 meters from this base when I arrived," said Captain Ian Brooks, a Marine officer at one new neighborhood base. "Now, I can walk the streets without any problem."

The change that made all the others possible, American officers say, was the alliance with the sheiks. In Ramadi, 23 tribal leaders approached the Americans and offered to fight the extremists by forming provincial security battalions, or neighborhood police auxiliaries, and by sending volunteers to the Iraqi Army and the police.

Across Anbar, the 3,500 police officers in October jumped to 21,500 by June. In Ramadi, where there were fewer than 100 police officers last year, there are now 3,500.

Many recruits, American officers acknowledge, were previously insurgents.

Colonel John Charlton, commander of a U.S. combat team, said: "There's a lot of guys wearing blue shirts out there who were shooting at us last year."

Turkey sets plan for possible Iraq incursion

From news reports

ANKARA: The Turkish government and military have agreed on detailed plans for a cross-border operation against Kurdish rebels based in northern Iraq, the Turkish foreign minister, Abdullah Gul, said Friday.

Gul urged the United States and Iraq, which oppose a Turkish military incursion into Iraq, to crack down on rebels of the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK. But he said Turkey was ready to stage an offensive if necessary.

"We have decided how to act, everything is clear," Gul told NTV, a Turkish television network. "We know what to do and when to do it," he said, adding that the precise details and timing of

the military assault would remain secret.

Turkey has long complained of U.S. inaction against separatist rebels, who

have escalated attacks in Turkey in recent months. Last week, the chief of the Turkish military asked the government to set political guidelines for an incursion into northern Iraq.

Asked whether the government would discuss a possible cross-border offensive during a cabinet meeting next week, Gul said, "Everything can happen in one day."

Turkish political leaders have said Parliament would have to approve any

major incursion. Such a move could strain ties with Washington, which is trying to deal with violence elsewhere in Iraq and wants to preserve the north as one of the country's few relatively calm areas.

But the Turkish Army has criticized Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government for failing to take measures against the PKK in northern Iraq, blaming the Kurdish group for launching attacks into Turkey. (AP, Bloomberg)

Herald INTERNATIONAL Tribune July 10, 2007

Iraqis see a regional war should U.S. leave

By Stephen Farrell

BAGHDAD: Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari warned on Monday that an early American withdrawal from Iraq could bring on an all-out civil war and regional conflict, pointedly telling the United States that it had responsibilities to continue lending support to the Baghdad government.

Zebari also asserted that Turkey had massed 140,000 troops near his country's northern border and urged it to resolve differences with dialogue, not through force.

Zebari was speaking after a violent weekend in which more than 220 people were killed in Iraq, including about 150 by a truck bomb in one of the deadliest single attacks since the American invasion in March 2003.

Asked whether the Iraqi government was aware of the growing pressure on President George W. Bush from Congress to impose a timetable for withdrawing American forces from Iraq, Zebari said his government was holding a "dialogue" with some U.S. lawmakers.

"We explain to them the dangers of a speedy withdrawal and leaving a security vacuum, and the dangers vary from civil war to dividing the country or maybe to regional wars," he said. "Some people might disagree with this assessment, but in our estimation the danger is huge. Until the Iraqi forces and institutions complete their readiness, there is a responsibility on the U.S. and other countries to stand by the Iraqi government and the Iraqi people to help build up their capabilities."

Zebari's comments came after some Sunni and Shiite leaders called on Iraqi civilians to take up arms to defend themselves, amid frustration that Iraqi security forces had failed to halt the deadly suicide attacks.

On Saturday, about 150 people were killed by a truck bomb in the poor Shiite Turkmen village of Amerli, 160 kilometers, or 100 miles, north of Baghdad. This came 12 hours after 17 Shiites were killed by an explosion in Zarkush, north of Baquba.

Some Iraqis complain that suicide bombers have simply moved outside such cities as Baghdad and Baquba, where American and Iraqi troops are engaged in large-scale security operations to restore order.

Zebari conceded that when insurgents were removed from one area, "they will try to move their operation and their activities to another area, just to prove that they are still in business by killing more innocent people." But he asserted that this movement was evidence that the bombers are "on the run, and really the net is closing on them."

Zebari described Turkey's reported troop movement toward the Iraqi border as a "huge buildup in our view" and

said the Iraqi government was "trying to defuse the situation."

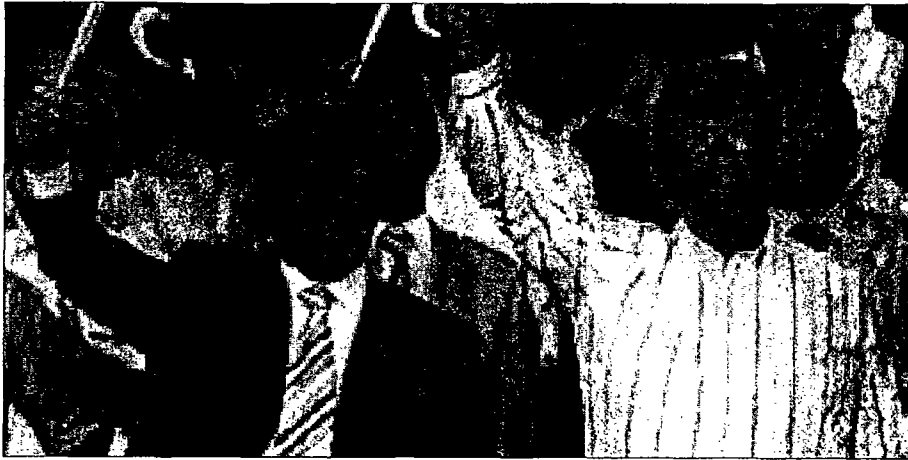
The Turkish government has long complained that the Kurdish regional government in northern Iraq has failed to stop separatist fighters belonging to the Kurdistan Workers Party from crossing the border and carrying out attacks in Turkey. The Kurdish party, known as the PKK, is a separatist group that has been designated a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union.

A spokesman for the Turkish military said Monday it had no comment on the reported troop movement. The Turkish army has increased activity along its border with Iraq since the spring, and commanders have pressed the Turkish Parliament to allow a large-scale operation in northern Iraq, where they say Kurdish militants who want a separate Kurdish state in southern Turkey hide.

Turkish commanders contend 2,800 to 3,100 militants are in northern Iraq.

Zebari, who is a Kurd, said Iraq was ready "to address all Turkish legitimate security concerns over the PKK or any terrorist activities."

Sabrina Tavernise contributed reporting from Ankara.



REUTERS/Gaman Osaal (TURKEY)

Turkish Sport Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin and Deniz Baykal, leader of the Republican People's Party, wave national flags as a sign of protest against Kurdish guerrilla attacks, during the annual oil wrestling tournament at Sarayici in Edirne, western Turkey, July 1, 2007.

Turkey's election and nationalist hysteria

Globe Editorial

A fact particularly ominous to Kurdistan Region is that "unscrupulous politicians" in the upcoming Turkish general election is depicting Kurds as the enemy, both within and outside of that country.

Turkey is preparing for the general election this month. The main parties in this election are the ruling pro-Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP), headed by Prime Minister Recep T. Erdogan; the Social Democrat Party (CHP), headed by the populist, ultranationalist Deniz Baykal; the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), famous for its racist political discourse against the Kurds; the newly founded Democratic Society Party (DTP); and a few minor parties. The pro-Kurdish parties, mainly the DTP, are going to participate based on personalities, since they cannot surpass the 10% election limit in Turkey.

The strange issue—which is, of course, quite ordinary in Turkey—is that many traditional Turkish parties are campaigning against Tur-

key's chronic 'problem'; the Kurds. Be it own Kurds or Kurds wherever they live!

Deniz Baykal, head of the MHP, has focused on two issues. Baykal is advocating a tough policy against Kurds in the north, and is accusing the AKP of selling out concerning their policy toward southern Kurdistan. The MHP demands the execution of PKK-leader Abdullah Öcalan, although he was captured during the reign of a coalition in which also the MHP was a part of. Nationalist rallies are being held against Kurds where nationalist parties are asking the powerful military to take the charge of the matters. All this is accompanied by the schism between the military and the AKP-led government concerning military operations in southern Kurdistan.

The nationalist hysteria expressed in the election campaign indicates the national malady of Turkey—chronic Kurdophobia. Perhaps only because of the elections have these parties intensified their abhorrence against the Kurds, which is limited to certain parts of society. Unfortunately, 80 years of de-

nying the Kurds cannot pass without mental detriment in the spirit of the Turkish society. Kurds didn't exist, suddenly, against the official ideology and the Turkish masses' will. Kurds did exist, and their existence was not willingly accepted. Amazingly enough, the Turkish identity had defined itself against an "other" that it denied existed. When the pressure from outside forced the Turks to admit that Kurds did exist, the otherness intensified, and hatred reached its peak.

This hatred is not only expressed within the political discourse of Turkish parties, but also in the attitudes of the Turkish masses. Kurds are lynched in Turkish cities every day. The large Kurdish population in Turkey (in Turkish cities and towns outside Kurdistan) is running the risk of being victims of arbitrary treatment not only from officials and the system, but also from the Turkish people. Turkey's society is heavily polarized. Interestingly enough, Turkish society has never been as much mobilized against Kurds as it presently is. Even during the intense PKK guerilla

warfare against the Turkish government in the '90s, the Turkish mass mobilization against Kurds didn't reach this level. The rage against Kurds originates from the fact that the Turks have lost room to maneuver; they cannot enter the south as or when they wish, and Kurdish achievements in the south are not only firmly protected but also consolidating every day. Seeing all of this, Turkish paranoia against Kurds turns into sheer hysteria, particularly during elections, since many unscrupulous politicians in Turkey use the paranoia for their own interests, depicting Kurds as both internal and external enemies. It is not a good omen, since we wish for healthy neighbors.

Militarily entering southern Kurdistan is counterproductive for Turkey. They will lose less if they avoid adventurism in Kurdistan. Entering means the revival of Sèvres by a larger scale during a shorter time, and will only mean bigger losses for the Turkish state and its population.

*Behrooz Shojai
Globe Political Desk*

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

By Scott Peterson, Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor July 9, 2007

Turkey's Kurds still prepared to fight

DIYARBAKIR, TURKEY - Sultan Koyun says she cries as much for fallen Turkish soldiers as for killed militants of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). For the first half of this story, published June 6, click here.

But as a Kurdish member of the "Mothers for Peace" group in southeast Turkey, she holds the PKK and its three-decade separatist struggle in higher regard. She is proud to count her son as a guerrilla, fighting Turks "in the mountains" for minority Kurdish rights that until recent years have been all but denied by the Turkish state.

"The State says the PKK is a terrorist organization, but the PKK is founded by our sons and daughters," says the sturdy matron with wire-rimmed glasses and head scarf. "They are not terrorists. They are just Kurds, humans like others, created by God." "There are 40 million Kurds," says Mrs. Koyun, overcounting regional numbers by 10 million or so. "My question is to the state: "Does this mean there are 40 million terrorists?"

Offering tea in the Spartan "Mothers offices," Koyun and another mother describe how lives for many ethnic Kurds are defined by harassment at the hands of Turkish authorities, which for decades referred to Kurds as "mountain Turks" and refused to permit a separate cultural identity, including banning the Kurdish language from government institutions.

There is no talk of the PKK's many civilian casualties, except denial that PKK has caused any. But they both say that government pressure caused their sons - like thousands of others - to join the fight with the

PKK in a 15-year war that stopped in 1999 after an estimated 37,000 deaths, but has now begun to reignite. "The PKK is an organic part of society here, and largely through dead bodies," says a Western-educated Kurdish analyst in Diyarbakir who spoke on condition of anonymity.

TICKING OFF numbers, he says that 20,000 PKK militants have been killed, 10,000 more are in prison, and that there are 20,000 PKK activists in Europe, all with extended families. That means that hundreds of thousands of Kurds "are organically tied to the PKK," he says. This analyst himself lost three siblings who fought for the PKK.

"The naive strategy would be to claim they are only a terrorist organization, with no support," says the analyst. One hurdle is the "dehumanization" of Kurds by constant use in the media of the "terrorist" label.

Koyun's son was arrested in 1994 at the institute where he was a student, during the peak of a sweeping Turkish military state of emergency marred by mass clearances of Kurdish villages, disappearances, and torture. The son was "tortured badly," the mother says, so "had to run away to the mountains" - the euphemism here for joining the rebels.

Abuse continues in Turkey, though the state of emergency was lifted years ago. "Torture, ill-treatment, and killings continue to be met with persistent impunity for the security forces in Turkey," Amnesty International reported last week.

There were "widespread allegations of torture" after mass arrests during lethal

demonstrations in Diyarbakir in March 2006, Amnesty said, in which 10 protestors were shot dead. Koyun has been questioned many times by police, and once when her husband was arrested, he was told that 800 guerrillas had been killed.

"All of these 800 are like sons to me," the father says. The belief that their son was killed was dispelled only after eight years. They were able to visit him at a PKK base in northern Iraq a couple years ago. He had been badly wounded, and no longer fights on the front line, but decided to stay.

"We are all here as slaves without those rights, so he chose to stay and fight," says Koyun. "I was proud of him. Emine Ozberk is another activist, a mother who has been jailed twice, with two nephews and a niece who died fighting for the PKK. Because of their role, Mrs. Ozberk's son was pressured by police, fled, and was arrested in Europe, before joining the PKK.

"Our children are defending themselves, because the Army and government does not give any human rights," asserts Ozberk. "They have nothing else but a simple weapon, [but] there is an Army that engages them with tanks and planes and guns."

In a first for a Turkish leader, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in 2005 admitted that Turkey had a Kurdish "problem" and that "mistakes have been made" in its heavy-handed dealings with the Kurds. They should be given "more democracy," not more oppression, he said. Mr. Erdogan made the comments after several years of relative calm, when Turkey had made some EU-inspired legal

changes that eased pressure on Kurds.

"What is going to change Kurd-Turkish relations in Turkey is not the EU, but what happens in [Kurdish] northern Iraq," adds the analyst. "While northern Iraq has 10 TV stations, here there is only 45 minutes [of Kurdish broadcasting allowed] each day. Here, you can't work in Kurdish. There, universities teach in Kurdish. This may radicalize [Turkey's] Kurds." That is now happening, say Kurdish activists.

"[Turkish Kurds] don't expect so many things - [just] their own culture, language, and richness, but it's not allowed in Turkey," says Hasan Gungor, head of the Diyarbakir branch of the Teacher's Association. "A child is born, but can't be taught in [his or her] own language. It's a big infringement of human rights." Some restrictions have eased, but Mr. Gungor's predecessor has been sentenced to 14 months in prison for affixing his name to a statement marking international peace day, and legal cases continue against teachers caught addressing pupils in Kurdish. "From childhood, I learned the struggle from my father and older brothers," says a Kurdish woman and PKK supporter who asked not to be identified. "I will struggle forever for my rights, until my death." The PKK guerrillas "want to put the weapons down, but the Turkish state keeps on attacking them, so I accept PKK attacks as defending themselves," she says. Even with attacks against civilians? "Never, never, says the woman, "The PKK never attacked any civilian."

Will Turkey Invade Northern Iraq?

By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA July 9, 2007

ISTANBUL, Turkey (AP) -- Reports that Turkey has massed a huge military force on its border with Iraq bolstered fears that an invasion targeting hideouts of Kurdish rebels could be imminent. But how deeply into Iraq is the Turkish army willing to go, how long would it stay and what kind of fallout could come from allies in Washington and other NATO partners?

All these questions weigh on Turkey's leaders, who have enough on their hands without embarking on a foreign military adventure. Turkey is caught up in an internal rift between the Islamic-rooted government and the military-backed, secular establishment, less than two weeks ahead of July 22 elections that were called early as a way to ease tensions in a

polarized society.

A military operation could disrupt Turkey's fragile democratic process by diverting attention from campaign topics such as the economy, and raise suspicion about whether the government and its opponents are manipulating the Iraq issue to win nationalist support at the polls.

On Monday, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Turkish television that Turkey would take whatever steps were necessary if the United States fails to fulfill its pledge to help in the fight against Kurdish rebels, but he appeared reluctant to order an invasion before the elections.

"We are seeing with great grief that America remains quiet as Turkey struggles against terrorism. Because there were promises given to us,

AP Associated Press

and they need to be kept. If not, we can take care of our own business," Erdogan said. "We hope there won't be an extraordinary situation before the election. But there'll be a new evaluation after the elections."

The aim of any military push into Iraq would be to hunt separatist rebels of the Kurdish Workers' Party, or PKK, who rest, train and resupply in remote bases in the predominantly Kurdish region of northern Iraq before crossing mountain passes into Turkey to attack targets there. In recent months, rebels have stepped up assaults, adding to a sense of urgency in Turkey that something must be done.

A claim Monday by Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari, a Kurd from northern Iraq, that Turkey had massed 140,000 soldiers on its border with Iraq rattled nerves on both sides of the border. Turkey's military had no comment, and the Bush administration said there has been no such mass buildup.

Although Turkish military commanders have said an invasion is necessary, it is difficult to know how prepared they are because many areas along the Iraqi border have been declared "security zones" and are essentially off-limits to civilians. There have been reports of Turkish shelling of rebel positions inside Iraq from time to time, and commandos are believed to periodically conduct so-called "hot pursuits" of guerrillas across the border.

Turkey also feels a special kinship for the ethnic Turkmen minority in northern Iraq, and Turkish military air ambulances on Sunday evacuated 21 people wounded in a devastating suicide attack in Armili, a town north of Baghdad, for treatment in Turkish hospitals. Turkey condemned the attack, but there was no indication that it gave impetus to calls for military intervention in the north to protect its ethnic brethren.

Turkey staged a series of major cross-border operations in the 1990s, involving tens of thousands of troops and jet fighters that attacked suspected rebels hideouts in the mountains. Results were mixed, with rebels regrouping after the bulk of the Turkish forces had left, even though some military units stayed behind to monitor guerrilla activities.

This time, Turkish forces could face the possibility of a confrontation with Iraqi Kurds who are emboldened by newfound autonomy since the

downfall of Saddam Hussein in the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. Some U.S. forces are also in the area, with American warplanes known to fly close to the Iraqi-Turkish border.

Soner Cagaptay, director of the Turkish Research Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, acknowledged that part of Turkey's goal was likely to draw increased U.S. attention to the issue, but said the Turks were likely to act if attacks continued.

Cagaptay said there are already Turkish forces in Iraq, operating about 10 to 15 miles beyond the border, where the steep mountains turn into hills that are more easily navigable. He said monitoring this area was "the only way (Turkey) could control the border."

Cagaptay said Zebari's announcement that there are Turkish troops on the border was likely a sign that the Iraqi foreign minister takes the threat of further incursion seriously and is trying to draw international attention to the border games to eliminate the possibility that Turkey could execute raids under the radar.

Besides possible tension with the United States, another concern for Turkey is the impact that a military intervention might have on its troubled efforts to join the European Union. Accusations of human rights abuses by Kurds could slow the process even further; the Turkish military has already expressed frustration with what it perceives as European leniency toward PKK sympathizers.

Sinan Ogan, head of the Turkish Center for International Relations and Strategic Analysis, said one option was a limited air force operation, which would help the government deal with domestic demand for action. If ground forces do go in, he said, the military would want them to stay for at least six months to assess the impact of the mission.

"An operation before the elections will bring the ruling government more votes so they might be willing to allow such an operation," he said. "A clash with several soldiers getting killed or a bombing at an important spot might be the spark for a military operation."



9 July 2007

Iraq fears Turkey troop build-up

Iraq says Turkey has 140,000 soldiers along its border, prompting fears of an incursion against Kurdish guerrillas

Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari, an ethnic Kurd himself, said his government was against any breach of Iraqi sovereignty. He called for talks with Ankara to solve the issue.

Turkey accuses Kurdish separatists of staging attacks from inside Iraq. It has often warned Baghdad that it is prepared to take military action.

Turkey has not commented on the figure of 140,000 quoted by Mr Zebari. If the figure is accurate, Turkey would have nearly as many soldiers along its border with Iraq as the 155,000 troops which the US has in the country.

In Washington, White House spokesman Tony Snow said the US shared Turkey's concerns but that it was "important, we think, to recognise the territorial sovereignty of Iraq".

Mr Zebari said he understood Turkey's "legitimate security concerns", but said the best way to address them was by reviving the tripartite military and

security commission, which involves Iraq,

Turkey and the US.

"We are fighting terrorism here in the streets and neighbourhoods of Baghdad. If the expectation (is) to release all these troops to go and fight in the north and in the Kurdish mountains, the thing is that the timing is not right for that," Mr Zebari said. Turkey has been fighting the left-wing PKK Kurdish guerrillas since 1984, in a war which has claimed up to 30,000 lives.

There has been an upsurge in fighting in recent months, with the Turkish army claiming it has killed 110 rebels since the start of the year and losing in turn 67

soldiers in clashes with the PKK. The government of the Islamist-rooted AK Party has been under pressure from the military to take action against Kurdish guerrillas in Iraq.

There have been a series of reports of a build-up of Turkish troops along the border in recent weeks. Last week, Turkey's Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul said the government and the military had agreed detailed plans on how a cross-border offensive might be carried out.

BBC regional analyst Stephanie Irvine says the current build-up of troops at the border may herald action or may be designed merely to show Washington and Baghdad that Ankara is running out of patience with their failure to deal with the Turkish separatist rebels in northern Iraq.

Turkey is in the middle of an election campaign, with parliamentary polls due to take place on 22 July. Nationalist parties are expected to perform well on the back of the wave of popular clamour for action against Kurdish separatists.



GETTY IMAGES



9 JUILLET 2007

Al-Qaeda fait 150 morts dans un village turkmène irakien

Un camion piégé a dévasté le centre d'Ermeli, dans la région de Kirkouk.

L'explosion d'un camion piégé sur un marché, dans la matinée de samedi, a fait 150 morts et 250 blessés dans le village d'Ermeli, dans le nord de l'Irak. Cet attentat, l'un des plus meurtriers depuis 2003, porte la marque d'Al-Qaeda. Le camion, un dix-tonnes bourré d'explosifs, a soufflé une cinquantaine de maisons. Nouri al-Maliki, le Premier ministre irakien, a dénoncé un «crime

haineux». Le général David Petraeus, qui commande les opérations américaines en Irak, a déclaré s'attendre à une série d'attaques similaires, dans les semaines qui viennent, menées par des extrémistes sunnites. Ermeli, un village turkmène entouré de localités arabes, est peuplé de musulmans chiïtes et sunnites qui cohabitent paisiblement. Il semble avoir été visé pour sa stabilité, selon le mai-

re d'une localité voisine. Ermeli est situé près de Kirkouk, ville revendiquée par les Kurdes, dans une province qui abrite les deux tiers des réserves pétrolières du pays, et dont le statut doit faire l'objet d'un référendum avant la fin de l'année. Selon la police locale, Al-Qaeda a menacé le village une semaine avant l'attentat. Les autorités locales se sont vues reprocher leur soutien au gouvernement irakien, al-

lié des Etats-Unis dans la lutte contre le terrorisme. Hier, 23 soldats irakiens ont péri dans un autre attentat au camion piégé à Falloujah. Deux bombes ont explosé à Bagdad, faisant 6 morts et 11 blessés. Une nouvelle vague d'attentats secoue l'Irak, où sont déployés 155 000 soldats américains, chargés d'un plan de sécurisation centré sur la capitale. ◆

AFP, AP

LE FIGARO 13 juillet 2007

Le régime iranien étouffe toute contestation

GOLFE

Arrestation d'étudiants, de syndicalistes et de binationaux, poursuites contre les militantes féministes, intimidation d'opposants et de journalistes : le régime de Téhéran, sous pression internationale à cause de son programme nucléaire, durcit le ton en interne.

DANS la salle de rédaction de ce journal local, on entend voler les mouches. Sous le poids des nouvelles restrictions imposées ces derniers mois, les plumes n'ont plus grand-chose à gratter. « À l'exception de la retranscription des discours du guide suprême et des déclarations du président Ahmadinejad, écrire est devenu une prise de risque incontrôlable », se lamente un jeune reporter, qui préfère taire son nom.

Interdiction d'évoquer les sanctions onusiennes, interdiction de parler des arrestations menées par la police des mœurs, interdiction d'écrire sur les pressions subies par la minorité sunnite... Une circulaire de trois pages, envoyée par le Conseil

suprême de la sécurité nationale il y a un mois aux rédactions des quotidiens iraniens, dresse une liste exhaustive des sujets à éviter. Ceux qui dérogent à la règle sont régulièrement intimidés, parfois arrêtés, voire forcés de mettre la clef sous la porte.

Derniers exemples en date : la fermeture forcée, à une semaine d'intervalle, du quotidien réformateur *Hamihan* et de l'agence de presse semi-officielle *Ilna*, proche des modérés... Des signes, parmi tant d'autres, de la vague de répression qui secoue la société iranienne, à l'heure où les

autorités de Téhéran font l'objet d'une pression internationale renforcée à cause de leur refus d'abandonner leur programme nucléaire.

Lapidation publique

Chaque jour, le triste tableau des atteintes aux droits de l'homme en Iran ne cesse de se noircir. « *Le pouvoir se sent menacé de l'extérieur. Du coup, il réprime en interne* », se désole le journaliste. Depuis le mois de mars, date qui coïncide avec le deuxième volet de sanctions votées à l'ONU, des dizaines de féministes ont été

arrêtées, puis relâchées sous caution. Certaines font l'objet d'un procès. L'une d'elles, Delaram Ali, vient d'être condamnée à 34 mois de prison, peine assortie de coups de fouet. Son « crime » : avoir mené campagne en faveur de la parité entre les sexes dans un pays où, au regard de la loi islamique en vigueur, la femme ne compte souvent que pour la moitié d'un homme.

Ces dernières semaines, près de 150 000 Iraniennes ont été interpellées à cause de leurs foulards jugés insuffisamment stricts. En outre, la lapidation publique, annoncée cette semaine, d'un homme accusé d'adultère, a révélé la poursuite de pratiques archaïques, en dépit d'un engagement pris en 2002 par les autorités iraniennes de suspendre ce genre de sentence.

Les syndicats ne sont pas épargnés par la chape de plomb. Mardi soir, Mansour Osanlou, le dirigeant du Syndicat des chauffeurs de bus, s'est fait enlever et tabasser en pleine rue par des hommes habillés en civil. Dans un communiqué, ses collègues disent y reconnaître la marque des services de renseignement

Téhéran lance sa « CNN »

■ Habillage moderne, présentatrices souriantes sous leurs foulards colorés, musique entraînante... En lançant Press TV, sa chaîne d'information en anglais, Téhéran soigne son look et se lance de plain-pied dans la guerre des ondes avec Washington. Objectif annoncé : « *Briser l'emprise des entreprises occidentales sur les*

médias globaux. » Son équipe comprend des Américains et des Britanniques. « *Cette chaîne est un antidote à Fox News* », a déclaré Yvonne Ridley, une de ses journalistes, au *Guardian*. Ancienne reporter au *Sunday Express*, elle s'est convertie à l'islam après sa capture par les talibans en 2001.

D. M.

iraniens. Ils ont appelé à la libération immédiate de leur confrère.

« Le gouvernement d'Ahmadinejad est en train de montrer son vrai visage », confie Arash, un étudiant de 25 ans. Après son élection, en juin 2005, ce président islamo-populiste a, dans un premier temps, concentré ses

efforts sur la politique internationale : défis lancés à l'Amérique, appels à rayer Israël de la carte du monde. À l'étonnement général, il a donné quelques gages d'ouverture en interne, en prônant par exemple le droit des femmes à assister aux matchs de football. En février 2007, il s'est même engagé à ne pas punir des étudiants de l'université Amir Kabir qui avaient brûlé sa photo lors d'un rassemblement.

Mais, au fil des mois, son gouvernement, composé en partie d'anciens membres des services secrets et d'ex-gardiens de la

révolution, a commencé à s'attaquer, sans détour, à ces mêmes étudiants – dont une dizaine se trouvent aujourd'hui en prison – ainsi qu'aux organisations non gouvernementales, défenseurs des droits de l'homme, journalistes et syndicalistes.

La récente détention de Hossein Moussavian, l'un des anciens négociateurs réformistes, chargé du dossier nucléaire, est perçue, à Téhéran, comme le témoignage d'une guerre déclarée aux partisans de la négociation et du dialogue avec l'Occident. Depuis peu, de nombreux

professeurs et intellectuels sont, eux aussi, convoqués par les services secrets iraniens et appelés à suspendre leurs relations avec les ambassades occidentales.

Binationaux accusés

Raison invoquée par Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, le ministre des Renseignements, à l'occasion d'un récent discours : « la nécessité de punir toute tentative de renverser le régime ». « Malheureusement, certaines factions au sein du gouvernement voient dans les opposants iraniens des agents d'un projet américain, en faveur d'une révolution de velours », regrette le dissident iranien Ahmad Zeidabadi, dans un article posté sur Roozonline, un site Internet contestataire. Par les temps qui courent, les appels de Washington en faveur d'un « changement de régime en Iran »



Signe de la vague de répression qui secoue le pays, près de 150 000 Iraniennes ont été interpellées ces dernières semaines, à cause de leurs foulards jugés insuffisamment stricts. Alexandra Boulat/VII

servent, dit-il, de prétexte aux autorités iraniennes pour étouffer les efforts de démocratisation.

C'est dans cet esprit que trois binationaux ont récemment échoué derrière les barreaux de la prison d'Evine. L'universitaire Haleh Esfandiari, le sociologue

Kian Tadjbakhsh et l'homme d'affaires Ali Shakeri, qui possèdent tous trois la double nationalité irano-américaine, sont accusés d'avoir « agi contre la sécurité nationale ».

Une documentariste franco-iranienne, Mehrnoucha Solouki, est également retenue contre son gré en Iran depuis février. Elle s'était rendue en Iran en décembre pour réaliser un documentaire sur la répression politique qui suivit la fin de la guerre Iran-Irak en 1988. Incarcérée, puis relâchée sous caution en mars, elle fait l'objet d'une enquête.

Saper l'ouverture envers l'Occident

Parnaz Azima, journaliste irano-américaine pour les services en langue persane de Radio Farda, basée à Prague, est également assignée à résidence. Son passeport lui a été confisqué lors de son arrivée à l'aéroport de Téhé-

ran, en janvier 2007, alors qu'elle venait rendre visite à sa mère malade. Elle est accusée de propagande contre le régime et son dossier se trouve entre les mains du tribunal révolutionnaire, qui lui demande une caution d'environ 500 000 dollars. « Le plus dur, c'est d'être condamnée à attendre, sans savoir ce qui peut m'arriver », confie-t-elle au Figaro.

Pour les observateurs du puzzle politique iranien, cette répression symbolise, à sa façon, la volonté de l'establishment révolutionnaire, incarné par Ahmadinejad et ses proches, de sauvegarder coûte que coûte le régime en sapant toute tentative d'ouverture à l'Occident. « C'est aussi révélateur d'un régime qui s'efforce d'étouffer toute forme de contestation croissante, notamment sur la question économique, à l'heure où Téhéran risque de faire face à un troisième volet de sanctions », confie un diplomate occidental.

D'autres y voient une crise de paranoïa des autorités iraniennes, à un moment où les Américains, militairement présents en Irak et en Afghanistan, viennent de déployer deux porte-avions dans le golfe Persique. La crise des marins britanniques, détenus pendant 13 jours en début d'année pour avoir,

selon Téhéran, franchi les eaux territoriales iraniennes, en est un exemple. À l'époque des réformateurs, la question aurait été réglée discrètement, par voie diplomatique. « Mais la nouvelle administration iranienne a une attitude beaucoup plus militaire et belliqueuse », analyse Ebrahim Yazdi, le leader du Mouvement pour la liberté, un groupe d'opposition iranien.

DELPHINE MINOUI

L'armée turque procède à des concentrations de troupes massives à la frontière.

Le Kurdistan irakien menacé

12 JUILLET 2007



Le Kurdistan irakien est un havre de paix et de stabilité dans un Irak déchiré par des affrontements confessionnels et le terrorisme massif d'Al-Qaeda bénéficiant du soutien multiforme de la Syrie et de l'Irak. Après des décennies de guerres et de dictature, avec leur cortège de destructions, de déportations et de malheurs de toutes sortes, les Kurdes ont réussi à faire leur unité, à reconstruire une grande partie de leurs quelque 4500 villages et vingtaine de villes rasés, et à mettre en place une démocratie parlementaire vibrante.

Les libertés fondamentales sont assurées; des islamistes non violents aux communistes, tous les courants politiques s'expriment et s'organisent librement. Les minorités assyro-chaldéennes et turcomanes possèdent leurs propres institutions, leurs écoles, leurs médias, leurs partis politiques sont représentés au Parlement et dans le gouvernement. Près du tiers des membres de l'Assemblée nationale du Kurdistan sont des femmes qui, par ailleurs, sont très actives dans les nombreuses organisations de la société civile et dans les universités. Elles luttent pour l'égalité des sexes, pour les valeurs laïques et contre les archaïsmes sociaux barbares comme les crimes d'honneur. Les Kurdes assurent eux-mêmes la sécu-

tribus arriérées et sauvages que la Grande Nation turque doit civiliser ou des terroristes à abattre. Le prétexte invoqué est précisément «la lutte contre le terrorisme du PKK». Cette organisation – qui espérait, sinon une solution politique comprenant la reconnaissance de l'identité kurde et des droits culturels qui permettent sa libre expression, du moins une amnistie générale autorisant le retour dans la dignité de ses milliers de maquisards et leur intégration dans la vie civile – a relancé ces derniers temps ses actions armées.

Les dirigeants kurdes irakiens, soutenus discrètement par Washington, ont offert à Ankara leurs bons offices pour la recherche d'un règlement politique honorable au problème du PKK qui, pour eux, n'a pas de solution militaire. Les généraux turcs ont rejeté avec dédain ces offres. Or, malgré une politique de terre brûlée pratiquée dans les années 90 par l'armée turque qui a abouti à la destruction de 3400 villages kurdes et au déplacement de plus de 3 millions de civils kurdes, l'éradication promise n'a pas eu lieu. Une vingtaine d'incursions militaires turques en territoire kurde irakien «pour détruire les bases arrière du PKK» n'ont produit aucun résultat tangible. D'ailleurs, comme l'a récemment rappelé le Premier ministre turc, les trois

quarts des maquisards du PKK agissent à l'intérieur de la Turquie, mènent des actions dans les provinces comme Dersim,

si tués à plus de 500 km de la frontière irakienne, et l'armée est incapable de les éliminer.

Outre «le droit de poursuite contre le PKK», les généraux turcs invoquent aussi leur droit de «protéger la minorité turcomane» qui serait menacée par l'intégration éventuelle de la province de Kirkouk dans le Kurdistan autonome – intégration qui, selon l'article 140 de la Constitution irakienne, doit se décider d'ici fin 2007 par référendum par la population de cette province. Or là encore, aucun traité international ne reconnaît à Ankara un droit quelconque de protection de cette minorité. Celle-ci, dans sa grande majorité, rejette les prétentions turques et rappelle que lorsqu'elle était persécutée et déportée sous le régime de Saddam Hussein, Ankara n'a jamais élevé la moindre protestation. Maintenant qu'elle jouit de larges droits linguistiques et culturels et qu'elle est représentée dans les instances du Kurdistan, la Turquie prétend vouloir empêcher leur «domination par les Kurdes». Malgré tout le soutien financier d'Ankara, le Front turkmène proturc n'a pas réussi à obtenir une

Par KENDAL NEZAN

président de l'Institut kurde de Paris.

part significative des suffrages de cette communauté qui refuse d'être instrumentalisée.

En fait, les arguments d'Ankara sont spécieux et peu convaincants, même aux yeux d'une partie de l'opinion turque. Tout se passe comme si l'armée turque – qui, plus qu'un Etat dans l'Etat, se considère comme la propriétaire légitime de l'Etat turc – avait besoin de crises, de conflits et d'«ennemis de la patrie» pour justifier sa suprématie dans la vie politique turque. Les ennemis les plus commodes de l'ultranationalisme turc restent les Kurdes. Ceux de Turquie, bien sûr, qui persistent à refuser «le bonheur de se dire turc» – un article obligatoire du nationalisme d'Ataturk, idéologie officielle de la Turquie. Mais aussi ceux d'Irak qui, à en croire les médias turcs, seraient en train de créer un Etat kurde indépendant avec l'appui des Améri-

cains, des Européens et des sionistes. Ce délire, alimenté constamment par les médias et les partis politiques turcs ultranationalistes, développe un climat dangereux d'antioccidentalisme et d'antisémitisme en Turquie.

La croisade engagée par l'armée, sous couvert de la défense des valeurs laïques et de la lutte contre le terrorisme, dissimule mal les dérives ultranationalistes et autoritaires. Au lieu de se perdre dans des négociations laborieuses sur des chapitres techniques, l'Europe doit signifier clairement à la Turquie que toute aventure militaire en Irak ou toute intervention de l'armée dans la vie politique mettra définitivement un terme au processus d'adhésion à l'Union européenne. Elle pourrait proposer aussi de rechercher une solution équitable à la question kurde en Turquie et au contentieux entre Ankara et le Kurdistan irakien. ◀

Le Kurdistan d'Irak, démocratie prometteuse qui sert de référence au reste du pays, est devenu une source de fierté, d'espoir et d'inspiration pour les Kurdes des pays voisins.

rité de leur région où il y a moins d'une centaine de conseillers américains et environ un millier de Sud-Coréens participant à la reconstruction du pays.

Depuis mai 2003, le Kurdistan autonome a connu une demi-douzaine d'attentats terroristes, mais aucun étranger n'y a été blessé ou tué. Cette démocratie paisible et prometteuse – qui sert de référence au reste de l'Irak et qui est devenue une source de fierté, d'espoir et d'inspiration pour les Kurdes des pays voisins –, est, aujourd'hui, sérieusement menacée par la Turquie.

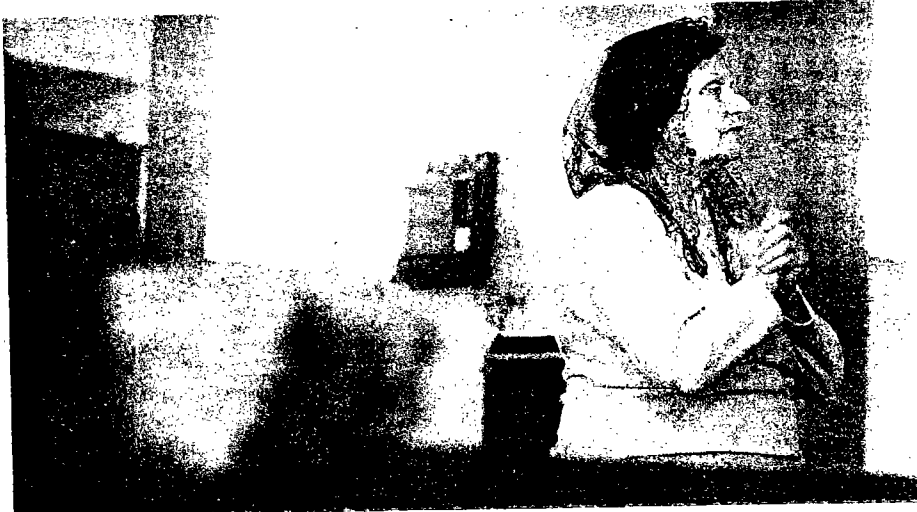
L'armée turque procède à des concentrations de troupes massives aux frontières et son chef, le général Büyükanit, ne cesse de revendiquer le droit d'envahir militairement «le nord de l'Irak» et de «punir ses chefs de tribu». L'un de ces «chefs» est le président élu du Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani, l'autre, le président élu de l'Irak, Jalal Talabani. Pour les Turcs, qui, dans leurs écoles et les casernes, apprennent que leurs ancêtres ont inventé les grandes civilisations universelles et qu'«un Turc vaut tout l'univers» (maxime d'Ataturk), les Kurdes ne peuvent être que des

Chrétiens d'Irak, l'exode

Confrontées à la violence généralisée et aux persécutions qui les visent, beaucoup de familles chrétiennes fuient vers le nord du pays ou à l'étranger

JEUDI 12 JUILLET 2007

la Croix



Dans l'église Saint-Joseph de Bagdad.

**Les chrétiens d'Irak
sont chassés
par la violence
qui ensanglante
leur pays.**

**« La Croix » retrace
deux itinéraires**

MOSSOUL
Correspondance spéciale

Mossoul, un matin de juin. La «petite Bagdad», triste surnom donné désormais à cette ville du centre-nord de l'Irak à cause de la violence qui y sévit, se réveille péniblement. La veille, un prêtre et trois diacres catholiques ont été assassinés à l'issue d'une messe. Tous quatre appartenaient à l'Église chaldéenne. Ils venaient de monter en voiture après la célébration dominicale quand leur véhicule a été balayé par une pluie de balles.

« Ici ? Je ne me sens pas chez moi », lance Youssef. Les yeux rivés vers le sol, son frère ne bronche pas et acquiesce d'un signe de la tête. Il poursuit : « Depuis que nous avons quitté Bagdad, je ne dors plus. Et quand j'y parviens, je me réveille tous les matins avec le même poids sur le cœur. » Youssef et son frère sont eux aussi de rite chaldéen.

Nés en plein centre de Bagdad, dans le quartier Karrada, jamais ils n'auraient pensé devoir quitter leur maison, même un seul jour. À présent, ils se retrouvent à fouler les rues d'une ville qu'ils ne connaissent pas.

Pourquoi ? Parce qu'à Bagdad, les raptés sont le quotidien des habitants. Que le sang de civils innocents coule encore et toujours à cause des voitures piégées. Que, pour combler la coquille vide qu'est l'État irakien, le gouvernement donne carte blanche aux milices armées, souvent extrémistes, confessionnelles et incontrôlables. Alors Bagdad se vide.

L'exode est continu. Chaque habitant se voit contraint malgré lui de se retrancher dans son propre camp. Les sunnites à l'ouest, les chiites au sud, les Kurdes au nord. Et les chrétiens ? « Un peu partout, raconte Youssef. Certains à Mossoul et ses environs, d'autres à Einkawa, dans le Kurdistan irakien. Ceux qui ont les moyens vont en Jordanie ou en Syrie. »

Youssef se présente comme un vrai Bagdadi, issu d'une de ces familles chrétiennes qui habitent la capitale irakienne depuis des siècles et y étaient respectées.

Mais la violence et l'extrémisme dorénavant touchent tout le monde. À chacun son heure. Comme tant d'autres, il a reçu une lettre accompagnée d'une balle de Magnum calibre 22 long rifle.

« Vous avez trois jours pour quitter le quartier », une phrase manuscrite noir sur blanc. Le message était clair, mais lui, l'enfant du quartier, ne voulait pas y croire. C'est seulement lorsqu'il reçut un jour un appel anonyme le sommant de quitter les lieux que Youssef comprit. « Il était temps de voir la réalité en face », lance-t-il.

Un de ses derniers souvenirs date de la célébration de Noël en décembre dernier. Pour la première fois, les chrétiens de Bagdad avaient fêté Noël sans sapin : les agriculteurs de la périphérie de la ville n'osaient plus braver les barrages des miliciens, et les commerçants craignaient d'être la cible des attaques d'extrémistes. « Les vendeurs musulmans avaient >>>>

>>>> la gentille habitude de nous souhaiter un joyeux Noël avant de nous vendre un arbre, se souvient-il. Des gestes de solidarité comme ceux-là, voilà ce qui me manque le plus. »

Selon l'ONU, la violence en Irak a provoqué le déplacement à l'intérieur du pays de près de deux millions d'habitants, tandis que deux autres millions ont trouvé refuge dans les États voisins. Parmi eux, Farid et Pascale, un couple mixte. Lui, musulman sunnite, originaire de Tikrit, le fief de l'ancien président Saddam Hussein. Elle, chrétienne de Mossoul, mais née à Bagdad. Un mariage réussi entre deux passionnés de l'art. Avant la guerre, Farid était directeur des cinémas et théâtres de Bagdad, et musicien à ses heures. Pascale faisait de la danse contemporaine. Leurs deux enfants, un garçon et une fille, jouaient du piano. La vie d'une famille aisée et favorisée, où Noël se fêtait en famille, entre musulmans et chrétiens, sans problème.

Le couple vivait à Khadra, un quartier ouest de la capitale, aujourd'hui l'un des plus dangereux. Après la chute de Bagdad, le 9 avril 2003, Farid s'est vu reprocher son origine tikriti, alors que Pascale, en tant que chrétienne, était plutôt épargnée. « J'avais pensé quitter l'Irak dès cette année-là, mais mon épouse ne m'a pas laissé faire. Elle avait peur de quitter son pays », raconte-t-il. « C'est ici que nous sommes nés, c'est donc ici que nous devons mourir, dans notre pays », lui disait-elle.

**« Il n'y a pas d'avenir
en Jordanie et en Syrie.
La seule solution,
c'est l'Europe. »**

Mais au fil des mois, Pascale déchantée. Elle est désormais menacée par des extrémistes. Fin 2006, le couple décide de quitter l'Irak. Mais où aller, et comment? «*Il n'y a pas d'avenir en Jordanie et en Syrie*, expliquait-elle alors. *La seule solution c'est l'Europe.*» La Suède est le pays qui accueille le plus grand nombre de réfugiés irakiens, plus de 80000 (*lire ci-contre*). Des milliers de Bagdadis, jeunes ou moins jeunes, rêvent à cet eldorado.

C'est là que Farid décide de se rendre. Des amis de longue date les y attendent, lui et sa famille. Le couple

doit vendre quelques tableaux afin d'acheter un «vrai-faux» visa au marché noir. «*J'ai déboursé près de 13000 dollars, j'ai même vendu ma voiture. Mais je m'estime chanceux, car aujourd'hui le prix a largement augmenté*», explique Farid, joint par téléphone.

En janvier, par un matin glacial, la famille de Farid quitte Bagdad, quelques jours après la pendaison de Saddam Hussein. Sa femme et leurs deux enfants s'installent en Jordanie tandis qu'il rejoint la France par avion, puis l'Allemagne en train. Là, des intermédiaires le

placent dans un autocar, direction Stockholm.

Aujourd'hui, Farid est sain et sauf dans la capitale suédoise, où son statut de réfugié serait «*en bonne voie*» d'être accordé. Reste à faire venir sa femme et ses enfants. «*Pas facile*», estime-t-il, car la Suède a décidé de mettre un frein à l'immigration massive des Irakiens – devenus en quelques années la deuxième communauté étrangère –, en refoulant certains ressortissants déjà installés dans le royaume.

FEURAT ALANI

Le président Bush refuse de plier sur la guerre d'Irak

Les appels au retrait de l'Irak se multiplient au Congrès où désormais la rébellion gagne les élus républicains

Face à la pression de l'opinion publique et du Congrès pour un retrait des soldats américains d'Irak, George W. Bush refuse de plier et réclame une nouvelle fois la patience. Un rapport intérimaire sur la situation en Irak doit être présenté d'ici à la fin de la semaine au Congrès pour faire un premier point après l'augmentation des troupes sur le terrain.

Selon des extraits cités par les journaux américains, il établit que l'augmentation du nombre de soldats américains en Irak depuis le début de l'année n'a pas changé fondamentalement la donne sur le terrain et que les Irakiens se montrent encore incapables d'assurer seuls la sécurité de leur pays face aux insurgés.

Au moment où le Sénat doit débattre d'un projet de budget de défense de 649 milliards de dollars (476 milliards d'euros), la rébellion s'amplifie dans les rangs des élus républicains. Une série de propositions, certaines fixant un délai pour le retrait des troupes, doivent être examinées par le Sénat d'ici à la fin de la semaine prochaine, la question étant de savoir si elles recueilleront les 60 votes requis pour toute législation portant sur la guerre, soit la majorité des deux tiers nécessaires pour bloquer un veto présidentiel.

George W. Bush, lui, espère repousser la question du retrait graduel jusqu'après la remise au Congrès, en septembre, d'un rapport du général Petraeus, commandant des forces américaines en Irak. «*J'appelle le Congrès des États-Unis à donner au général David Petraeus une chance de revenir nous voir et de nous dire si sa stratégie fonctionne et si nous pouvons travailler ensemble pour aller de l'avant*», a-t-il affirmé avant-hier. Le président américain se trouve confronté à la défection d'éminents élus républicains, jusque-là partisans de la guerre en Irak, et que les démocrates espèrent rallier pour contraindre la Maison-Blanche à changer de politique. Les démocrates ont déposé un amendement au projet de loi sur la défense limitant clairement la mission américaine en Irak.

Leur texte exige que le retrait débute moins de 120 jours après l'entrée en vigueur de la loi et soit achevé avant le 30 avril 2008. Il laisse au président la possibilité de maintenir une partie des troupes pour des missions précises comme la lutte contre le terrorisme ou l'entraînement des forces irakiennes.

George W. Bush a déjà opposé son veto à une tentative des démocrates qui voulaient l'obliger à fixer une date de retrait. Un nombre grandissant d'élus républicains veut le forcer à réexaminer dès maintenant la situation en Irak sans attendre septembre.

Susan Collins, sénatrice républicaine du Maine, tente, elle, de promouvoir avec Ben Nelson, sénateur démocrate du Nebraska, une proposition bipartisanne visant à réduire

la mission des troupes américaines en Irak à la lutte antiterroriste, au maintien de la sécurité des frontières et à l'entraînement des forces irakiennes. Cet amendement ne réclamerait pas un retrait des troupes mais aboutirait à une réduction substantielle des effectifs.

De leur côté, les sénateurs républicains John Warner et Richard Lugar travaillent à un amendement en faveur d'une initiative diplomatique, couplées avec des changements dans la mission des troupes américaines. Qu'elles incluent ou non une date spécifique pour un début de retrait des troupes américaines, les propositions démocrates et républicains aboutiraient cependant au maintien en Irak de plusieurs milliers de soldats.

Dans une interview publiée lundi par le quotidien, *The New York Times*, Ryan Crocker, ambassadeur des États-Unis à Bagdad, estimait qu'un retrait des troupes américaines pourrait s'accompagner d'une augmentation significative de la violence en Irak. Au nombre des scénarios possibles, le diplomate citait une résurgence du groupe Al-Qaida en Mésopotamie, le risque d'un effondrement total des forces de sécurité irakiennes et leur désintégration en milices, et le spectre de l'interférence de l'Iran, des États arabes sunnites voisins et de la Turquie.

Dans le même temps, l'opposition à la guerre en Irak a atteint aux États-Unis le chiffre record de 62 % dans la population, tandis que la popularité du président Bush est tombée à 29 %. Selon un sondage *USA Today/Gallup*, sept Américains sur 10 sont favorables au retrait de la quasi-totalité des troupes américaines d'Irak d'ici à avril, et 62 % estiment que l'envoi de troupes en Irak a été une erreur.

FRANÇOIS D'ALANÇON

REPORTAGE

Capitale de la région autonome kurde, au nord de l'Irak, Erbil croule sous les investissements mais ceux-ci ne favorisent pas vraiment le développement économique

Les rêves de grandeur du Kurdistan d'Irak

ERBIL
De notre envoyée spéciale

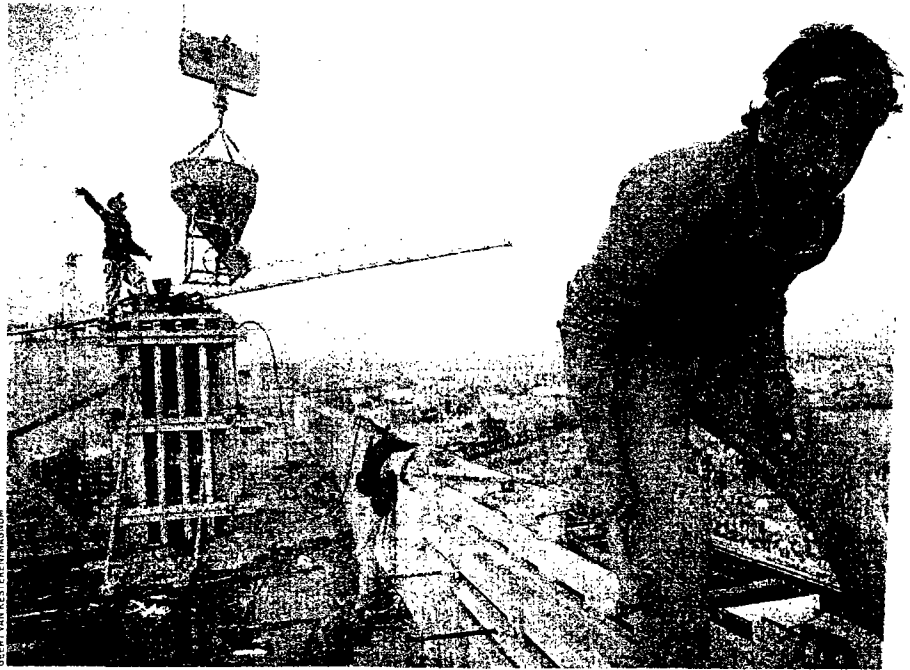
L'aéroport international d'Erbil est perdu en plein champ de luzerne. Les passagers descendus de l'appareil marchent sur le tarmac pour rejoindre les locaux neufs qui tiennent encore du hangar. Mais l'aéroport, construit à l'origine par Saddam Hussein pour y accueillir seulement des hélicoptères, est promis à un agrandissement futur. Il serait même doté à terme d'une grande piste d'atterrissage capable d'accueillir les Airbus A380. La compagnie Austrian Airlines assure trois vols par semaine à partir de Vienne. Outre celui-ci, le Kurdistan d'Irak, peuplé de quatre millions d'habitants, dispose d'un autre aéroport international, à Souleymanieh.

Au sortir de la zone ultra-sécurisée, où sacs de sable et militaires armés jusqu'aux dents rappellent que l'on est en Irak, des dizaines de grues s'étirent dans un paysage encore champêtre. La société Empire World affirme qu'elle «construit le futur», c'est-à-dire un vaste complexe d'appartements de luxe, centres commerciaux et hôtels.

Dans l'esprit de nombreux responsables locaux, le doute n'est pas permis: le Kurdistan sera un second Dubaï! Dans le souk de Howler, le nom kurde d'Erbil, que surplombe l'ancienne citadelle, un immense centre commercial est en construction. Qassam s'avoue surpris par l'architecture du bâtiment, en verre bleu, mais il assure que ses compatriotes ont bien plus d'argent que ne laisse penser l'achalandage du marché traditionnel, avec sa multitude d'échoppes de téléphones portables, ses étals de fruits et légumes et de vêtements bon marché.

«La libre entreprise règne au Kurdistan depuis 1991», l'année de l'opération Tempête du désert qui a bouté les troupes irakiennes hors du Koweït, assure Aziz Ibrahim Abdo, directeur général au ministère du commerce. Un an plus tard, la France, la Grande-Bretagne et les États-Unis instauraient une interdiction de survol pour l'aviation irakienne au-dessus de la plus grande partie du Kurdistan d'Irak. «Depuis cette date et surtout depuis 2003, nous sommes la porte par laquelle passe la reconstruction de l'Irak, poursuit Aziz Ibrahim Abdo. Plus de 500 entreprises étrangères ont établi un bureau dans notre région.»

Avec l'insécurité qui règne dans le reste de l'Irak, de nombreuses sociétés appartenant à des entrepreneurs de Bagdad se sont délocalisées à Erbil. Par ailleurs, alors que les relations politiques entre Ankara et les Kurdes d'Irak sont exécrables,



À Erbil, où de nombreuses entreprises s'installent, les responsables locaux veulent faire de leur région un second Dubaï.

les liens commerciaux sont importants: 75 % des entreprises étrangères au Kurdistan d'Irak sont turques ou kurdes de Turquie. Pour favoriser la venue de sociétés étrangères, les autorités ont concocté une loi sur mesure: exonération d'impôt pendant dix ans et possibilité d'être propriétaires du terrain, etc.

Pour l'heure, la région quasi autonome produit peu et n'exporte pas grand-chose. Les produits sont importés d'Iran, de Turquie ou de Syrie au prix fort. Le Kurdistan n'est qu'une zone de transit. L'économie locale est encore très archaïque et l'activité n'est pas bien répartie entre les Kurdes. «L'ensemble de la population active est payé par l'État qui compte plus d'1,164 million de fonctionnaires», constate l'universitaire Denise Natali. L'agriculture est en friche, la main-d'œuvre est insuffisante et doit être importée de Turquie. Les effectifs dans la police et les forces de sécurité sont pléthoriques.

Les griefs pleuvent à l'encontre du gouvernement et de sa gestion. L'afflux d'argent a donné lieu à une corruption dans tous les secteurs de l'économie, sans parler du népotisme. Le premier ministre de la région kurde, Nechirvan Barzani,

REPÈRES

Sous la pression turque

► **La Turquie a massé 140 000 soldats le long de la frontière nord de l'Irak, mais il n'y a eu pour l'instant aucune violation territoriale**, a affirmé lundi le ministre irakien des affaires étrangères Hochar Zebari, un Kurde. L'armée turque n'a pas confirmé mais elle a convenu avec le gouvernement turc des détails d'une éventuelle opération transfrontalière contre les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) basés dans le nord de l'Irak, avait annoncé vendredi dernier le ministre des affaires étrangères Abdullah Gül.

► **La Turquie fait pression sur les États-Unis et l'Irak pour éliminer les bases du PKK** dans les régions sous contrôle kurde dans le nord de l'Irak, et s'est dite prête à lancer une offensive de l'autre côté de la frontière si nécessaire.

neveu du président de cette même région, Massoud Barzani, est aussi propriétaire de tous les centres commerciaux en construction et il a la haute main sur le commerce d'alcool et les concessions de marques automobiles.

Des manifestations contre la vie chère ont éclaté à Erbil et Souleymanieh. Elles ont été lourdement réprimées. Et pourtant, le gouvernement régional perçoit 350 millions de dollars (257 millions d'euros) de revenus tirés des droits de douane. Il est supposé en reverser une partie au pouvoir central à Bagdad, ce qu'il ne fait pas. «*Le gouvernement a en tête le modèle de développement de Dubaï, ce qui signifie des investissements en dépit du bon sens*», observe un économiste kurde qui préfère ne pas être nommé.

Paradoxalement, cette région, assise sur de fantastiques réserves d'or noir, a connu l'hiver dernier une pénurie de pétrole! L'essence raffinée en Irak est acheminée vers la Turquie. Attaqués ou rançonnés par les terroristes ou les tribus arabes, les camions citernes ne traversent plus le Kurdistan qui, de fait, doit recourir à la contrebande avec l'Iran. Même problème pour l'électricité. Bagdad, qui a déjà du mal à subvenir aux besoins de ses propres habitants, n'envoyait cet hiver qu'une à deux heures d'électricité par jour. D'où une floraison de «*générateurs de quartier*» qui, pour une quinzaine d'euros par jour, fournissent six heures d'électricité quotidienne à 200 maisons. Et il y a les multiples «*générateurs individuels*» pour les petits commerces, qui, à même les trottoirs, sonorisent les soirées kurdes.

Ces problèmes pourraient être en partie réglés dans un ou deux ans, le temps pour le Kurdistan d'achever la construction par des fonds privés



d'une centrale électrique de 250 mégawatts. Celle-ci sera toutefois insuffisante pour les besoins combinés des particuliers et des entreprises. «*C'est la faute des États-Unis qui n'ont rien fait pour nous aider; ose un Kurde proche du pouvoir. Sur les 18,6 milliards de dollars d'aide versés par l'administration américaine à l'Irak, le Kurdistan n'a eu que de quoi construire une station de purification!*»

Sur le plan politique, les relations du Kurdistan avec le gouvernement du premier ministre Nouri Al Maliki à Bagdad ne sont pas au beau fixe. Les Kurdes, opprimés par Saddam Hussein, ont toujours rêvé de s'affranchir de l'autorité centrale. Pendant douze ans, de 1991 à 2003, grâce à l'interdiction de survol, la région a goûté à une quasi-indépendance. Avec la chute du régime de Saddam Hussein et l'adoption d'une nouvelle Constitution, tous les espoirs d'une autonomie, voire presque d'une indépendance étaient permis. Les Kurdes se voyaient déjà récupérer la ville pétrolière de Kirkouk, arabisée par Saddam Hussein, mais historiquement kurde. Quatre ans plus tard, cette question reste en suspens et Washington n'est plus aussi pressé de remplir ses promesses. Certes, le Kurdistan est juridiquement séparé de Bagdad, mais il fait toujours partie de l'Irak.

Au sein même de la région kurde, l'harmonie ne règne toujours pas entre les deux anciennes entités, le Nord et le Sud, autrefois antagonistes. L'une est sous la coupe du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan de Massoud Barzani, l'autre sous celle de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan, de Jalal Talabani, président de l'Irak. Le gouvernement régional siège à Erbil ainsi que le Parlement, mais reste encore à réaliser l'unité politique.

AGNÈS ROTIVEL

LE FIGARO 13 juillet 2007

Culture

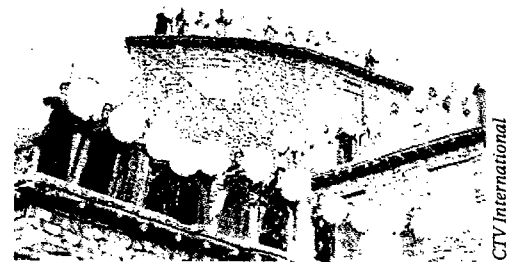
Charme kurde

Half Moon de Bahman Ghobadi

CINÉMA. Pour voyager dans le monde kurde, entre Iran, Irak et Turquie, le film de Bahman Ghobadi est un guide original, qui suit un itinéraire peu commun. On part du Kurdistan iranien, dont le cinéaste est originaire. Un petit village perdu dans des solitudes immenses, mais plein de l'animation d'un combat de coqs. Là vit Mamo (Ismail Ghaffai), vieux musicien kurde célèbre, à la fois proche de la mort et d'une étonnante verdure. Depuis la chute de Saddam Hussein, Mamo s'est donné une dernière mission : partir avec ses dix fils, tous musiciens, pour donner un concert dans le Kurdistan irakien, où il lui était jusqu'alors interdit d'aller. Ils ont répété sept mois avant de partir à bord d'un vieil autocar conduit par le truculent Kako

(Allahmorad Rashtiyani), l'organisateur des combats de coqs, grand admirateur de Mamo.

À travers les étapes de cette expédition, *Half Moon* développe ses multiples saveurs, graves et rudes comme la splendeur désolée des paysages montagneux, ardentes et épicées comme un combat, suavement lyriques ou rondement cocasses. À la recherche d'une chanteuse, la petite troupe arrive dans un village imaginaire d'Iran où vivent toutes les chanteuses interdites par le régime des mollahs (pour cette étrange et belle séquence, *Half Moon* a été censuré en Iran), puis, poursuivant son périple, se heurte à des barrages à la frontière irakienne, cherche son passage par la Turquie, grâce à la complicité d'un policier kurde irakien, d'une jeune chanteuse kurde turque, gracieuse fée des abords de la mort.



Bahman Ghobadi passe sans solution de continuité d'un pittoresque très concret à une fable politique et à une vision omirique plus mystérieuse, qui parle de l'âme kurde avec des accents sourds de maquisard et des inflexions de légende. Le beau visage de Mamo, roc spirituel, la musique qui défie les frontières et les interdits, la mort elle-même «*qui n'est pas un malheur*», ennoblissent ce vagabondage entre terre et ciel, au charme erratique.

MARIE-NOËLLE TRANCHANT

Les forces iraniennes ont bombardé un refuge de rebelles kurdes en Irak

SOULEMANIYEH (Irak), 12 juil 2007 (AFP) - Les forces iraniennes ont bombardé jeudi la région de Bashdar (nord de l'Irak), ciblant la guérilla kurde, a indiqué à l'AFP un dirigeant kurde

"Il y a eu des combats entre Pejak et les forces iraniennes, et celles-ci ont procédé à des bombardements dans le secteur de Sardoul, dans la région de Bashdar", a affirmé Bachir Ahmed, un responsable du district de Bashdar, à 160 km au nord de Soulemaniye.

Le Pejak est un parti séparatiste kurde iranien proche du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, rebelles kurdes de

AFP

Turquie).

Un porte-parole des peshmerga (combattants kurdes) dans l'administration du Kurdistan, Jabar Yawar, a confirmé l'attaque de l'Irak dans la région de Bashdar.

"C'est vrai. Mais nous ne soutenons pas le PKK ou Pejak. Nous sommes opposés à l'utilisation des terres kurdes pour frapper n'importe quel pays et demandons aussi que nos régions ne soient elles non plus attaquées", a déclaré M. Yawar.

Le PKK mène depuis des décennies une lutte pour l'autonomie du peuple kurde, alors que la Turquie a averti qu'elle pourrait entreprendre une action militaire contre les rebelles, si le gouvernement régional kurde ne mettait pas fin à leurs activités.

Un cadre présumé du PKK, inculpé en France, a pris la fuite en Irak

PARIS, 13 juil 2007 (AFP) - Riza Altun, considéré comme l'un des fondateurs du parti séparatiste kurde PKK, inculpé en février par un juge parisien pour des activités terroristes présumées et placé sous contrôle judiciaire, a pris la fuite et a gagné l'Irak, a-t-on appris de sources proches du dossier.

Selon ces mêmes sources, M. Altun a été interpellé en Autriche le 4 juillet. Les autorités autrichiennes l'ont libéré jeudi et M. Altun a aussitôt pris la direction de l'Irak où il est arrivé vendredi.

Selon l'une de ces sources, M. Altun a rejoint la guérilla kurde dans le nord du pays, d'où les militants du PKK s'infiltrèrent en territoire turc pour des attaques

sporadiques.

Il devrait faire l'objet d'un mandat d'arrêt international, selon ces sources.

M. Altun avait été interpellé en février lors d'un vaste coup de filet en France qui avait donné lieu à une quinzaine d'arrestations de Kurdes, présentés comme des membres actifs du PKK.

Ils avaient alors été mis en examen (incolpes) pour plusieurs infractions, dont l'extorsion de fonds et le blanchiment d'argent qui aurait servi au financement d'attentats commis en Turquie ainsi qu'à des combats au Kurdistan irakien.

Ils avaient été placés dans un premier temps en détention par un juge des libertés et de la détention, avant que la chambre de l'instruction de la cour d'appel de Paris ne décide le 23 février de les remettre en liberté mais avec un contrôle judiciaire comprenant une interdiction de quitter la région parisienne.

Les rebelles kurdes du PKK ont pris les armes en 1984 contre le pouvoir central d'Ankara pour la création d'un Etat kurde indépendant dans le sud-est anatolien. Le PKK est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne.

AFP

Turquie: 225 personnes tuées dans les violences depuis le début de l'année

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 13 juil 2007 (AFP) - 225 personnes ont été tuées dans des violences qui ont augmenté depuis le début de l'année dans l'est et le sud-est anatoliens entre forces de sécurité et rebelles kurdes, a annoncé vendredi la principale organisation turque de défense des droits de l'Homme.

Deux soldats et deux membres du parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) ont par ailleurs été tués dans des incidents survenus tard jeudi et vendredi dans trois provinces de l'est et du sud-est, théâtres de la lutte armée du PKK depuis 1984, ont indiqué les autorités locales.

Un soldat a été blessé, a-t-on précisé de même source.

"Nous constatons une sérieuse augmentation du nombre des heurts quotidiens", a indiqué lors d'une conférence de presse Mihdi Perinçek, responsable régional à Diyarbakir, principale ville du sud-est peuplé majoritairement de kurdes, de l'Association des droits de l'Homme (IHD).

"Nous nous inquiétons du fait que les accrochages s'étalent sur une grande zone", a-t-il souligné.

Selon un décompte de l'IHD, utilisant sources officielles et indépendantes, 111 membres des forces de l'ordre, 109 rebelles du PKK et cinq civils ont été tués dans la région de début janvier à fin juin.

Dans la même période de 2006, ce chiffre était de 190 morts, a affirmé l'IHD.

Sur son site internet, l'état-major des armées turques a fait savoir que 100 rebelles avaient été tués entre avril et juin, sans dire combien de militaires ont perdu la vie pendant cette période.

Le PKK, considéré comme organisation terroriste par Ankara, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, a accru ses attaques depuis le début de l'année.

Plus de 37.000 personnes ont trouvé la mort depuis que le PKK a pris les armes avec pour objectif l'autonomie de l'est et du sud-est de la Turquie, à la population majoritairement kurde.

AFP

Turquie: Deux soldats tués, un autre blessé dans des violences dans l'est

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 13 juil 2007 (AFP) - Deux soldats turcs ont été tués et un troisième blessé dans des violences survenues dans la nuit de jeudi à vendredi dans l'est de la Turquie, ont indiqué des sources de sécurité locales.

Un premier incident est survenu dans la province d'Erzincan, où l'explosion d'une mine posée par des rebelles séparatistes du parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) a tué un

soldats et blessé un autre.

Dans la province voisine de Bingöl, un deuxième militaire a été tué dans des accrochages avec des éléments du PKK.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, a accru ses attaques depuis le début de l'année.

AFP

LE TEMPS Alain Campiotti, de retour d'Erbil 14 juillet 2007

Les Kurdes ont peur d'un retrait américain

IRAK. George Bush refuse toujours un calendrier de rapatriement des troupes. Mais ça viendra. Et ceux qui avaient souhaité l'invasion espèrent désormais des bases américaines chez eux, dans le nord

La guerre fatigue. George Bush a fait cet aveu désarmant - si l'on peut dire - jeudi à la Maison-Blanche, devant les journalistes convoqués pour entendre que le président s'oppose toujours au rappel des troupes d'Irak. C'est pourtant ce que la Chambre des représentants lui a demandé par un vote dans la nuit. Il y en aura d'autres. Mais la majorité démocrate au Congrès est trop mince pour lever le veto que promet chaque fois la Maison-Blanche.

L'envahisseur, pourtant, prépare son évacuation, plus compliquée que la conquête. La décision du début du retrait, désormais, est une question de mois. Et en Irak du nord, cette perspective suscite l'incrédulité. «Je ne crois pas qu'ils partiront de sitôt. Les conséquences seraient incalculables. Les pertes américaines ne sont d'ailleurs pas si lourdes, alors que les intérêts des Etats-Unis ici sont énormes.» L'homme qui parle ainsi s'appelle Mohsen Ahmad Omer. Il est professeur de littérature comparée, traducteur du Désert des Tartares de Dino Buzzati. Il est assis dans une pièce sombre de la Citadelle d'Erbil. Vertige: dans cette forteresse maintenant inhabitée (mais l'une des plus vieilles villes du monde), Omer ne parle plus de l'armée qui n'arrive jamais, mais de celle dont le départ

fait peur.

Les Kurdes, bien sûr, ne sont pas l'Irak. Juste un bon tiers de la population. Et ils étaient, en 2003 et même avant, les envahis les plus consentants. L'élimination du régime de Saddam Hussein leur a permis de consolider une autonomie et de conquérir, pour le moment, du pouvoir à Bagdad. La présidence avec Jalal Talabani, le Ministère des affaires étrangères avec Hoshyar Zebari, qui parlait il y a une semaine comme le professeur Omer: les Américains ne peuvent pas partir maintenant. Dans le nord, la guerre est tenue en respect, mais ses flammes lèchent aussi le pays kurde: en mai, un attentat devant le Ministère régional de l'intérieur, à Erbil, a fait un carnage. Et Ermeli, où un camion piégé a tué samedi dernier plus de 150 personnes, est à moins de deux heures de route de là.

Hoshyar Zebari vient aussi de s'en prendre à la manière dont le débat irakien est conduit à Washington. Les discussions autour d'un calendrier de retrait, les conditions posées à la poursuite du soutien américain au gouvernement dont il fait partie, sont pour lui un encouragement à ceux qui cherchent à l'abattre.

La conférence de presse de George Bush, jeudi, accompagnait la publication

d'un rapport intermédiaire sur la situation en Irak, imposé par le Congrès. La majorité démocrate, à défaut d'un calendrier de désengagement, avait obtenu ce moyen terme: les crédits de guerre seraient votés conditionnellement; il fallait que le gouvernement Al-Maliki, à Bagdad, atteigne une série de 18 objectifs, pour que les milliards de dollars et les armes continuent de venir.

Le rapport que l'administration vient de livrer au Congrès est très sombre, forcément. Pour de petites améliorations de sécurité, obtenues dans la province d'al-Anbar et dans la capitale par le renfort de 30000 soldats américains, le reste du bilan est un fiasco. Les réformes que le gouvernement et le parlement irakiens devaient réaliser sont demeurées lettre morte, en raison des déchirements communautaires du pouvoir post-husseïni. La capacité d'action de l'armée irakienne, depuis le déploiement des renforts américains, a encore diminué.

Bob Woodward, l'homme du Watergate et du Washington Post, vient de révéler dans son journal le contenu d'une évaluation établie il y a quelques mois par Michael Hayden, le directeur de la CIA: le gouvernement irakien, dit le maître espion, ne «peut pas fonctionner», et cette paralysie est «irréversible».

La Maison-Blanche n'est pourtant pas prête à tirer les leçons de cette débâcle. George Bush demande aux élus d'attendre encore l'évaluation globale que doit présenter en septembre le général David Petraeus, commandant des forces en Irak. Et le président a de nouveau brandi, jeudi, l'épouvantail d'Al-Qaida, «qui transposera son combat d'Irak aux Etats-Unis en cas de retraite précipitée». Le renforcement du mouvement djihadiste est un fait. Il a reçu comme un cadeau l'intervention américaine en Mésopotamie, répétition espérée et amplifiée de l'invasion de l'Afghanistan par l'Armée rouge en 1979. L'Irak est maintenant son terrain: les cellules y viennent, s'y forment, s'en vont vers d'autres batailles, en Afghanistan de nouveau, en Algérie, en Somalie, au Liban maintenant...

Dans la déroute qui vient, les Kurdes d'Irak se raccrochent à un espoir: que l'armée américaine, se retirant de Bagdad et des provinces centrales, établisse des bases chez eux, dans le nord du pays. C'est ce que le New York Times, opposant à la guerre dès le début, conseille aujourd'hui à la Maison-Blanche.

Armes US aux rebelles kurdes: Ankara demande des explications aux Etats-Unis

AFP

ANKARA, 14 juil 2007 (AFP) - La Turquie exige des explications des Etats-Unis au sujet de la livraison d'armes américaines aux rebelles kurdes basés dans le nord de l'Irak, a déclaré le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères Abdullah Gul, cité samedi par la presse.

Ankara a commencé à enquêter sur cette affaire après qu'un militant du Parti des travailleurs kurdes (PKK) qui s'est rendu ce mois-ci aux autorités turques, eut déclaré avoir vu deux véhicules blindés américains livrer des armes dans un camp du PKK en Irak, à la frontière avec l'Iran.

L'armée turque "a également des soupçons (et) a en sa possession certains documents", a dit le ministre, cité par le journal Radikal.

"Nous avons convoqué l'ambassadeur américain au ministère et nous lui avons montré les documents (...) Il a répondu que ce n'était pas possible, mais a déclaré qu'il allait demander à Washington d'enquêter", a poursuivi M. Gul.

Le ministre a ajouté qu'il avait également soulevé cette question lors d'une

conversation téléphonique avec le secrétaire d'Etat américain, Condoleezza Rice, la semaine dernière.

Le gouvernement turc ne supporte plus que les rebelles du PKK puissent continuer à bénéficier d'un sanctuaire dans les zones kurdes du nord de l'Irak, malgré le fait que les Etats-Unis aient également placé le PKK sur leur liste d'organisations terroristes.

La Turquie accuse les Kurdes d'Irak d'aider les rebelles, en armes et en explosifs.

"Nous savons que les Etats-Unis fournissent des armes à l'administration qui gère le nord de l'Irak, et il est tout à fait possible qu'elles finissent dans les mains d'organisations terroristes", a déclaré mercredi l'ambassadeur turc à Washington, Nabi Sensoy.

Le PKK a pris les armes contre le régime d'Ankara en 1984 pour réclamer un territoire autonome dans le sud-est de la Turquie.

M. Bush estime qu'un retrait américain serait « dangereux pour l'Irak »

La Chambre des représentants vote une loi exigeant un retrait au plus tard le 1^{er} avril 2008. George Bush maintient le cap, mais reconnaît que les Américains sont « fatigués » de la guerre

WASHINGTON
CORRESPONDANTE

Conformément à la requête du Congrès, la Maison Blanche a publié, jeudi 12 juillet, un rapport évaluant la situation en Irak, six mois après le début de l'envoi de 30 000 soldats supplémentaires. Le président Bush a vu des signes encourageants dans le document, tout en reconnaissant que « ceux qui pensent que la guerre est perdue » en feraient probablement une lecture opposée. « Je sais que certains, à Washington, aimeraient que nous quittions l'Irak dès maintenant, a-t-il dit. Commencer à se retirer avant que nos commandants nous disent que nous sommes prêts serait dangereux pour l'Irak, pour la région et pour les Etats-Unis. »

Long de 23 pages, le rapport fait la liste des 18 critères sur lesquels le Congrès a réclamé, en mai, des progrès de la part du gouvernement irakien. Sur huit d'entre eux, l'administration fait état d'améliorations. Sur huit autres, elle n'en voit aucune. Les derniers points restent indéterminés.

M. Bush a relevé avec « optimisme » que le tableau n'était pas entièrement négatif. L'opposition a fait remarquer que des progrès « satisfaisants » ont été accomplis, mais dans des secteurs subalternes, alors que plusieurs des tâches essentielles à la réconciliation politique n'ont pas progressé.

Le gouvernement irakien n'a « pas effectué de progrès significatifs » sur la question

de la réforme de la « débaasification », et tout compromis sera « extrêmement difficile », note le rapport. Les Irakiens n'ont pas non plus fait de progrès vers l'adoption d'une loi d'amnistie, encore moins dans le désarmement des milices. La loi sur la répartition des ressources du pétrole n'a pas été ratifiée. Enfin, le gouvernement n'a pas réussi à faire en sorte que les forces de sécurité irakiennes soient vues comme une instance impartiale.

Selon le texte, la Syrie et l'Iran ont continué à « créer l'instabilité en Irak ». L'Iran « recherche la défaite » des Etats-Unis et « apporte un soutien financier et matériel » aux groupes qui les combattent directement. La Syrie continue de laisser passer les terroristes en puissance. Cette filière syrienne fournit de 50 à 80 commandos-suicides par mois, indique le rapport. Depuis janvier, il y a eu 280 attentats-suicides en Irak, qui ont fait près de 5 500 victimes.

Le président Bush a néanmoins réaffirmé sa détermination à poursuivre la stratégie annoncée en janvier, au moins jusqu'à l'évaluation que doit faire le général David Petraeus avant le 15 septembre. « Nous devons nous assurer que, quand nous partirons, ce ne sont pas les terroristes qui prendront la relève », a-t-il justifié. Il a reconnu que les Américains étaient « fatigués » de la guerre et qu'il les comprenait. « Bien sûr, je m'inquiète de savoir si les Américains sont dans ce combat. » Il a écarté les critiques du groupe de républicains modérés qui ont réclamé, cette semaine, un changement de politique sans même attendre que la nouvelle stratégie puisse être pleinement appliquée (les derniers renforts sont arrivés sur place en juin).

Pour les apaiser, M. Bush a annoncé une initiative diplomatique sous la for-

me, début août, d'un voyage conjoint dans la région, de la secrétaire d'Etat, Condoleezza Rice, et du ministre de la défense, Robert Gates. Selon M. Bush, ce voyage servira à « rassurer » les alliés des Etats-Unis sur le fait que « le Moyen-Orient reste une priorité stratégique » pour Washington. La porte pourrait aussi être entrouverte sur l'après-15 septembre. Une nouvelle réunion ministérielle du groupe des voisins de l'Irak devrait avoir lieu à Istanbul à l'automne.

M. Bush a fait état d'une convergence de vues entre les différents protagonistes. « Les Irakiens ne veulent pas voir de troupes américaines patrouiller indéfiniment dans leurs rues, pas plus que les Américains. Mais nous devons être certains que, quand les forces américaines se retirent, les terroristes et les extrémistes ne prennent pas le contrôle. »

Une nouvelle fois, M. Bush semble avoir repris ses troupes en main. Le chef de file démocrate au Sénat, Harry Reid, n'a cessé d'appeler les républicains qui ont pris des positions très critiques à se joindre aux démocrates, mais sans succès. L'amendement du sénateur Jim Webb imposant un temps de repos au retour équivalent à la durée du déploiement n'a pas été adopté.

La Chambre des représentants a en revanche voté en faveur d'un calendrier de retrait exigeant que les effectifs soient retirés d'Irak au plus tard le 1^{er} avril 2008, imposant un début de redéploiement des troupes de combat dans les 120 jours. Quatre républicains seulement ont voté avec les démocrates. Un projet de loi identique est en attente au Sénat, mais ne semble pas pouvoir réunir les 60 voix nécessaires pour interrompre les manœuvres d'obstruction parlementaire. ■

CORINE LESNES

« Nous devons nous assurer que quand nous partirons, ce ne sont pas les terroristes et les extrémistes qui prendront la relève »

George Bush

L'instabilité en Irak « irréversible », selon le chef de la CIA

Dans un article paru jeudi 12 juillet, le *Washington Post*, sous la plume du journaliste Bob Woodward, relate une réunion qui a eu lieu à la Maison Blanche, le 13 novembre 2006, en présence de Michael Hayden, directeur de la CIA (Agence centrale de renseignement). Selon le quotidien, qui précise avoir eu accès aux transcriptions des débats, M. Hayden a affirmé que « l'incapacité du gouvernement [irakien] à gouverner semble irréversible », ajoutant qu'il ne voyait

« aucun élément qui permettrait de sortir de cette situation ». « Nous avons mis beaucoup d'énergie pour créer un gouvernement qui soit équilibré, et cela ne fonctionne pas », a-t-il précisé. M. Hayden a poursuivi en reconnaissant qu'« un gouvernement capable de gouverner, de se défendre et d'être pérenne n'est pas envisageable à court terme ».

Cette réunion, note le quotidien, est intervenue une semaine après la victoire des démocrates aux élections de mi-mandat

et l'éviction du secrétaire à la défense Donald Rumsfeld. Elle aurait poussé les parlementaires membres de la commission Baker-Hamilton – groupe de réflexion bipartite sur l'Irak – à infléchir les conclusions de leur rapport final, publié le 6 décembre, en soulignant que la situation « était grave et se détériorait ».

Turkey: Kurdish Guerrillas Using US Arms

WASHINGTON - Turkey's ambassador to Washington said Wednesday that U.S. weapons have been turning up in the hands of Kurdish

He did not suggest that the U.S. has been supplying the PKK directly. But he accused Kurdish members of the Iraqi government of allowing the group to operate in northern Iraq and to stage cross-border attacks into Turkey.

The comments come as the Turkish officials have indicated that they are considering military operations against the PKK in Iraq, a move that the United States fears would cause further instability. While tensions between Ankara and Washington have increased, Turkey remains a key U.S. ally, providing vital support to U.S. operations in Afghanistan and Iraq through Incirlik Air Base in southern Turkey, one of the most important U.S. military assets in the region.

U.S. officials have said they are working closely with Turkey to combat the PKK but that their focus in Iraq is in combatting insurgents opposing U.S. forces. The United States considers the PKK a terrorist group and has taken steps to cut off its international financing. But U.S. officials can point to few examples of success against the PKK in Iraq.

Told of Sensoy's comments, Defense Department spokesman Bryan Whitman acknowledged that the U.S. military is not taking military action to try to stop the rebel activities.

"The United States government certainly recognizes the PKK threat that exists for the Turkish government and the Turkish people," Whitman told reporters at the Pentagon.

He repeated U.S. objections to possible Turkish incursions into Iraq. "We've also made it clear that any sort of military action into Iraq would be very unhelpful," he said.

Sensoy said that Turkey understands that because of the challenges already facing the U.S. military in Iraq, Washington may not be able to divert forces to Northern Iraq. But Ankara believes that the United States has the power to force action by Kurdish officials in Iraq.

"To suggest that the United States does not have the leverage over the Kurds in the North to cut off support to a terrorist organization it is fighting all over the world is difficult to understand," the ambassador said.

The perception in Turkey that the United States has ignored Turkish concerns about the PKK's operations in Iraq has increased pressure on the Turkish government to order military operations against the PKK in Iraq. The PKK has escalated attacks this year, killing at least 67 soldiers so far. More than 110 rebels were killed in the same period.

The PKK has been smuggling sophisticated explosive devices over the border from Iraq for attacks in Turkey, the ambassador said.

"I think the Turkish people have shown enough patience," Sensoy told reporters at a press breakfast. "We have to show the public some concrete results."

Sensoy would not comment on a recent assertion by Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari that Turkey had massed 140,000 soldiers along the border. He said that troop levels in the region were often increased during the spring and summer in response to increased activity by the PKK.

Turkey has been battling the PKK since 1984 in a conflict that has killed tens of thousands of people.



A Turkish girl wearing a military commando uniform marches with a national flag during a rally against terror in Ankara, Turkey, Saturday, July 7, 2007. Hundreds of people gathered in the Turkish capital to protest attacks by separatist Kurdish rebels in Turkey's southeast. (AP Photo)

guerrillas staging attacks in Turkey.

Nabi Sensoy said that the United States is not doing enough to influence Kurdish politicians in key positions in the Iraqi government to crack down on the Kurdistan Workers Party or PKK, which has been fighting for an independent Kurdistan within Turkey for decades. He said that Turkey has been pressing the United States to ensure that U.S. weapons supplied to Kurdish forces within the Iraqi army are not funneled to the PKK.

Ethnic Cleansing In Syria: The Unseen Terror

The Bulletin

July 13, 2007

By: Joseph Puder

While the world's attention is focused on the war in Iraq, the internal Palestinian strife, the Israeli-Hamas confrontation in Gaza and the clashes between the Lebanese army and Syrian supported Fatah al-Islam, scant attention has been paid to developments inside Syria.

The regime of Bashar Assad has used this opportunity to re-launch the campaign of ethnic cleansing in the Kurdish region of Hasakah. The Syrian press, controlled by the regime, prevents access to the foreign press, and the abuses of the Kurds have gone practically unreported. News of the ethnic cleansing is arriving almost exclusively through letters and faxes from persecuted Kurds.

The champion of pan-Arabism, Egypt's former president Gamal Abdel Nasser, was the first to consider the Arabization of Hasakah when he led the United Arab Republic (UAR), a merger between Syria and Egypt that lasted from 1958 to 1961. In 1959, the UAR began to settle Arabs in the Derrick area, located on the west bank of the Tigris River. Nasser had hopes of transferring 1.5 million landless Egyptians to Hasakah and managed to establish at least two villages populated by Egyptians.

According to Sherko Abbas,

president of the Kurdistan National Assembly-Syria, "The UAR was determined to inflict maximum damage on the Kurds because they were viewed as agents of Israel. In 1960, the Syrian government issued a decree that denied the Kurds the right of grazing livestock on their own land. As a result, millions of livestock perished of starvation, causing the Kurds severe economic hardship."

In 1961, agents of the UAR deliberately torched a movie theater in the Kurdish city of Amude. Three hundred Kurdish students were forced into the theater to watch a film on the Algerian Revolution. The doors were then locked and they set the theater on fire. All 300 youngsters were burned alive.

When the UAR broke up, Syria was in a chaotic state for 18 months. By March 1963 the National Council of the Revolutionary Command (NCRC), led by a group of leftist Syrian military officers, and civilian officials of the Baath party were installed, taking over the executive and legislative functions of government.

As soon as the Baathists came to power, they announced a program of agrarian reform, which ostensibly meant the confiscation of Kurdish land. The land would be used to build the "Arab Belt" (a euphemism for

ethnic cleansing) and serve as a buffer zone between Syrian Kurds and their brethren in Turkey and Iraq. "The Baathists seized Kurdish lands in 1966 and continued to do so well into the 1970s and '80s," Sherko Abbas asserted, "In 1974, the regime of Hafez Al-Assad created a buffer zone, ethnically cleansing the Kurds along the Turkish border at a depth of 35 km. Now, his son Bashar Assad is doing the same by creating a buffer zone along the Iraqi border to separate Syrian Kurds from Iraqi Kurds."

The Syrian security agencies in the Kurdish area have extraordinary powers. They can confiscate, detain, torture and kill with impunity. The Syrian government does not officially recognize the Kurds as being Kurds. Kurds are seen (and they see themselves) as "second class Arabs." Harsh conditions in the Kurdish areas of northeast Syria, in addition to the lack of infrastructure or employment opportunities, has forced many Kurds to flee Syria and settle in Germany and Scandinavia.

In March 2004, Kurds staged an uprising against the Assad regime. Syrian forces killed 85 Kurds, and thousands were imprisoned. Determined to oppose further ethnic cleansing, the Kurds, who have now become desperate, are ready to do

battle with the regime.

The discovery of oil in the Hasakah region served as further motivation for the Syrian regime to engage in their ethnic cleansing of Kurdish areas. According to intelligence estimates, Syrian oil reserves will be depleted in the near future, and the Kurdish region may be the target of future oil exploration. Strategically, this may also increase Damascus' dependence on Iran for energy supplies.

Asked to sum up the current situation in Syria, Abbas said, "In my view, the Bashar Assad regime is trying to complete the ethnic cleansing process by isolating Syrian Kurds from Iraqi Kurds. It is intended to prevent future support from Kurds in Iraq. Damascus seeks to revive its deterrence amongst the Kurds by re-imposing the fear factor that evaporated during the March 2004 uprising. The Assad regime is employing pan-Arab nationalism in northern Syria to shore up support among the Arab population by portraying the Kurds as agents of America and Israel. Kurds, who comprise 20 percent of the Syrian population, are tired of being victimized and are demanding their legitimate civil and human rights."(

www.thebulletin.us)

THE  TIMES

The Kurds: new key to long-term victory

July 15, 2007 | Andrew Sullivan

The phrase on everyone's lips now is "postsurge". The logistics of military tour cycles, the logic of congressional politics and the sheer impossibility of putting Iraq back together again in anything like the foreseeable future have caused something of a Rubicon in Washington.

It has been approaching for a while but last week you could feel the collective decision being made. Some time in the next six months there will be a withdrawal of US troops from Iraq. Quite when it happens, how it happens and who will take credit or blame have yet to be determined. But it will happen. The question then becomes: what is salvageable? What is the opportunity in this transition?

An honest assessment would have to acknowledge that in many parts of Iraq even worse horrors will probably unfold. In areas of sectarian conflict the violence could be dreadful even by Iraqi standards. This is one reason not to feel uncomplicated relief at some realism entering into US policy so late.

I think intelligent, careful withdrawal is the least worst option. But I'm not going to pretend it's morally clean. It isn't. Many innocents will die. The problem is: staying isn't morally clean either. And many innocents are already dying in a civil war we cannot get a handle on.

But it's also a stretch to see all of Iraq necessarily going up in smoke. There are smaller regional success stories. Anbar is one, where Sunni tribes in a homogeneous Sunni region have aligned effectively with US forces to fight Al-Qaeda. But the real success story – and the great unsung achievement of the West for the past 15 years – is the emergence of a relatively peaceful, increasingly prosperous, largely democratic Kurdish region in the north. It's a success story we have no reason to turn into a failure.

The Kurds, of course, were in effect liberated from Saddam's butchery after the first Gulf war by the US-UK no-fly zone. They had their civil war in the 1990s and a stable polity emerged. The Kurdish peshmerga have been the only seriously competent force in Iraq since the fall of the Ba'athists and the disbanding of the army.

More important: they are Sunni Muslims. They have a fledgling democracy. And they love the US. If the US can salvage a democratic,

peaceful Kurdistan from the wreckage of the Iraq occupation, the war will not have been entirely in vain. I don't mean independence. I mean an effective soft-partition that keeps the Kurdish dream alive.

Yes, there are many issues remaining: the status of Kirkuk and Mosul, potential ethnic clashes and rogue Kurdish terrorists. But they are certainly more manageable than keeping the lid on the entire country of Iraq in the absence of a central government.

One obvious postsurge option for US troops is therefore to redeploy to Iraq's territorial borders to deter an influx of foreign agents, but primarily to defend and police the territorial integrity of Kurdistan. In this, Washington needs to hold Turkey's hand tightly and patiently. It too is a critical ally, a Muslim democracy and essential to restraining the centrifugal forces of Iraq.

But the Turks are deeply and understandably suspicious of Kurdish aspirations. The Turkish-Kurdish border therefore badly needs Nato troops to keep it stable and prevent incursions from either side.

The benefits of rescuing Kurdistan include a positive and constructive narrative for the next stage of the war. Americans do not like losing and they need to be reminded that the sacrifice of thousands of young soldiers has not been for nothing. But protecting Kurdistan has profound strategic advantages as well.

It would create a democratic buffer against Arab extremism from Israel through Turkey to Kurdistan. That arc points directly at Iran, a country in the grip of spiralling inflation, public unrest and a brutal crackdown on dissent. Iran too has a Kurdish population, and a free Kurdistan under US protection could act as a focus for Kurdish unrest in Iran's north. Persians are not Arabs. Many of them love the West and are potentially a great ally against Wahhabist insanity. If the next few years are about rattling Tehran's cage, a free, stable Kurdistan would help.

It's also worth remembering that some things are true even if George W Bush believes them. One of those truths is that the Middle East should not be consigned to Islamist fundamentalism or secular dictatorship for eternity. If we are going to win the long war against Islamo-fascism, some models of democracy in the region are essential.

There are encouraging global precedents. In Asia, for example, Taiwan followed Japan's capitalist, democratic path, and the domino effect eventually brought China and Vietnam into the global economy. Even in the Gulf, Dubai is showing that freedom and capitalism are not impossible for Arab states. But they cannot be imposed by force. They can rather be defended by force, protected, nurtured and then held up as role models. If part of Iraq succeeds in this way, what better example for the other parts? Or for the region as a whole?

It's also, it seems to me, far too soon to give up on Afghanistan. It is not a hopelessly divided sectarian mess like Mesopotamia. It is rather a hard-to-govern wasteland that has nonetheless come a long way since liberation from the Taliban.

The problem in Iraq is that there is no real government, no central entity that can unite the country's sects and control its warring militias. Afghanistan is nowhere near as hopeless.

Am I being naively optimistic? I hope not. I still believe that removing Saddam was a morally and strategically defensible act. For the Kurds it ended a hideous chapter in a long history of oppression and violence. They remain grateful. They want to be a solid ally in the region and an oasis from Islamist terror.

Like the Jews, they have endured centuries of persecution in other people's lands with no home of their own. They have one now and the West helped give it to them. We should do all we can to ensure nobody takes it away.

There are many things left to fight for in Iraq. Kurdistan is one of them

Turkey election stirs optimism, change for Kurds

REUTERS

By Paul de Bendern - July 15, 2007

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey (Reuters) - Pro-Kurdish politicians are poised to enter Turkey's parliament for the first time in more than a decade, bringing hope to many Kurds that their cultural and political rights will be addressed.

Turkey's poor, restive southeast has not been represented in parliament by pro-Kurdish parties since the early 1990s when several MPs were kicked out of the chamber and later jailed for speaking the Kurdish language while taking their oath of office. Turkey's parliamentary elections are set for July 22.

"We don't care that they won't get into government. All we want is to be

Kurdish candidates can help change that image."

Turkey's largest pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) has fielded dozens of unaffiliated or "independent" candidates because the DTP fears it would not pass Turkey's high 10 percent national threshold of votes required to win seats in parliament. Opinion polls predict these candidates will win 20 to 30 of the 550 seats in parliament. That would be sufficient for the members to reorganise under the DTP banner once elected.

Turkey's ruling centre-right AK Party, with Islamist roots, is expected to remain the biggest party in the new parliament. The centre-left CHP and the far-right Turkish nationalist MHP are also tipped to clear the 10 percent barrier and win seats. The DTP, then known as DEHAP, won six percent of the vote in the last general election in 2002. It picked up no seats despite winning most votes in the mainly Kurdish southeast.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

"My worry is that expectations are too high, Kurds think all their problems will disappear once the DTP enters parliament. That would be true if Turkey were a democracy, but it's not," said Sezgin Tanrikulu, a leading human rights lawyer.

Turkish nationalists fear Kurds want to divide the country and say the DTP is a mouthpiece for the banned Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which still musters considerable regional support. The DTP denies any links although people in the southeast say the party has loose ties with the rebel movement.

Ankara blames the PKK -- considered a terrorist organisation by the United States and the European Union as well as by Turkey -- for more than 30,000 deaths since the group launched its armed campaign for an independent homeland in 1984.

Violence is again on the rise, with over 200 soldiers and PKK rebels killed since January, a human rights group says. Many locals believe the DTP can help end the conflict. But if opinion polls are correct, the DTP could find itself embroiled in confrontations and possibly legal challenges from Turkish nationalists once in parliament.

Aysel Tugluk, a DTP member running as an independent, is likely to get heat from fellow MPs if elected because of her ties as a defence lawyer for jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan. DTP leader Ahmet Turk, a veteran politician who was among those jailed over the 1991 incident in parliament, downplayed concerns that his party would spoil this historic opportunity.

"We know there will be provocations, but we are not going to parliament to create clashes, but to find solutions," said Turk during a campaign trip to Kiziltepe, near the Syrian border. The DTP already runs a few municipalities in the southeast.

Pressured by the EU, Turkey's AK Party government has taken small steps to meet Kurdish demands in recent years, such as allowing limited Kurdish language television broadcasts and private Kurdish language classes.

"The situation has improved since we came to power, but it takes time and there is a lot of history to overcome," said Agriculture Minister Mehdi Eker, himself a Kurd, during a campaign trip to the province of Igdır in eastern Turkey. Some local people seem impressed by the AK Party's record.

"I'm voting for the AK Party because they are making investments and giving us school books. I don't know what the DTP has done," said student Aydin Baykara, 21, from Kiziltepe.



Aysel Tugluk (2nd R), a Democratic Society Party member running as an independent, visits Kurdish musician Nusret Icli (L) in his music store as she campaigns for the upcoming early parliamentary elections in the southeastern Turkish city of Diyarbakir July 12, 2007. Pro-Kurdish politicians are poised to enter Turkey's parliament for the first time in more than a decade, bringing hope to many Kurds that their cultural and political rights will be addressed. (REUTERS/Umit Bektas)

represented in parliament and that they speak on our behalf," said Mehmet Serif Kurtay, 47, a vegetable vendor in a dusty bazaar in Diyarbakir, the largest city of the southeast.

Turkey's Kurds, numbering between 12 million and 15 million in a total population of 74 million, have long complained of political, economic and cultural discrimination, partly because they are not officially recognised as an ethnic minority.

Kurds hope these elections will be a turning point for the poorest region in Turkey, a country otherwise experiencing an economic boom, and ultimately lead to the end to an armed conflict between separatist Kurdish rebels and the armed forces.

"No one dares to address the Kurdish issues because many Turks think all Kurds are terrorists and that the only language and identity in Turkey is Turkish," said Nusret Icli, a Kurdish musician who abandoned his professional music career after serving time in jail. He is now planning a new record. The

Iraq Kurd PM: Swift oil law approval

upi

IRBIL, Iraq, July 16, 2007 (UPI) -- The premier of Iraq's Kurdish region is urging the federal government to make headway on a stalled oil law, claiming "unauthorized" changes were made to it.

Nechirvan Barzani, prime minister of the Kurdistan Regional government, issued a statement Sunday calling for fast moves to usher the oil law, as well as a revenue-sharing law, before the Parliament.

"The sooner the agreed drafts are enacted into law, the better for all Iraqi peoples," Barzani said. "While this law is vital for Iraqis, it is also important that we demonstrate to the

international community that we are capable of bringing this law into action."

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government is facing increased pressure from the administration of U.S. President George W. Bush to approve the oil law, calling it a "benchmark for reconciliation."

But the law faces numerous opponents. Among them, Sunni politicians fear it will lead to a breakdown in central control, leaving regions strong in a weak federal government. Sunnis worry that, with little oil-rich land, they'll be excluded from money and investment. The oil unions also oppose the law,

claiming it will lead to too much access by foreign oil companies.

A text of the oil law was agreed upon in February by negotiators from the Kurdish government and Shiite-led central government. Although the Council of Ministers approved the law two weeks ago, it was altered too much by a judicial council, and the Kurds now oppose the new version.

The Shoura Council "made unauthorized material changes to the agreed drafts, apparently in consultation with unnamed

Oil Ministry officials in Baghdad," Barzani said. "It is a delaying tactic that must be swept aside." He called for the February language to be submitted to Parliament.

The revenue-sharing law was agreed upon in June but has not been taken up by the ministerial council yet.

Iraq holds the world's third-largest oil reserves. It produces around 2 million barrels per day now, less than the 2.6 million bpd before the war and far less than its reserves could handle.

Kurds' high hopes over Turkey elections

16 July 2007

BBC NEWS

Ahead of Sunday's general election, the BBC's Sarah Rainsford travels to south-eastern Turkey for the first of three reports about the state of the nation.

A convoy of cars snakes its way through a wheat field. Crammed inside are hundreds of mourners heading for the wake of the latest person to die in more than 20 years of conflict.

At the end of the dusty track, a group of wailing women greet the cars.



Pro Kurdish politicians are launching a new peaceful offensive

Some wave photographs of the dead girl. She is dressed in military fatigues.

Rojda died fighting for the Kurdish separatist group PKK. To the Turkish state she was a terrorist. But the Turkish Kurds at her wake hailed her as a martyr. "She went to fight against the enemy and against oppression," Rojda's sister says. "She couldn't take it any more."

Turkey has been fighting the separatist PKK in the south-east since 1984. The fighting subsided when its founder Abdullah Ocalan was captured 15 years later but has flared-up again recently with renewed force.

Revenge

More than 60 soldiers have died so far this year and Turkey insists it will carry on fighting until the last separatist is killed. There seems little sign of that happening soon. The military says there are still around 2,000 PKK fighters in Turkey alone,

and as many as 3,000 more based across the border in northern Iraq.

"After so many years of conflict, every Kurd here knows someone who has died or is up fighting in the mountains," one local man told me, observing the wake from the sidelines.

"Every time one PKK fighter is killed, another takes up a gun and goes to fight. The families of Turkish soldiers want revenge too. It can't go on like this." So pro-Kurdish politicians are launching a peaceful offensive. They are out coaxing people to look to them for answers, not to the gun.

In the next town of Idil, a group of men crowd around Hasip Kaplan on a cobble-stoned side-street. He is one of several dozen pro-Kurdish candidates campaigning for seat in the next parliament. They are demanding recognition and rights as ethnic Kurds, but want to prove that this does not make them separatists.

For many years even the term "Kurd" was banned here. There have been unprecedented reforms and improvement in recent years - but that mentality still lingers.

Regular clashes

At the last election Hasip Kaplan's party won almost 50% of the vote in the south-east where ethnic Kurds are in the majority. But the party could never attract enough support nationally to pass the high threshold to enter parliament. So this time Kaplan and his colleagues will stand as independents - a strategic move they hope could win them as many as 30 seats.

"The Kurdish problem has always been treated as a security issue and handed to the military," Hasip Kaplan says, fiddling with a string of worry-beads.

"The Kurds are still discriminated against here because of their

language and their race. The problem is social, political and psychological. It has to be addressed in parliament." But that view finds little support outside the region. Since spring there have been regular clashes between the PKK and Turkish troops in the mountains close to Idil.

Earlier this year 10 people were killed in Ankara in a suicide bomb attack blamed on the PKK. Frustrated, the military is now calling for a major operation into Northern Iraq to target the Kurdish fighters it says are based there.

Unitary state

It is hardly an atmosphere conducive to dialogue. Instead, it is handing votes to Turkish nationalists, who have made security a major campaign issue.

More than 1,000km (621 miles) from Idil, a local Istanbul office of the nationalist MHP is draped in red and white national flags. Supporters of the party are deeply suspicious of anyone who insists upon an individual Kurdish identity, and talks of Kurdish rights.

"Turkey was founded as a unitary state and you cannot change that. We have invested in this state materially and emotionally," says Gunduz Aktan, former ambassador turned MHP candidate for parliament.

"The Kurdish candidates are just a front organisation. The PKK murdered many innocent civilians. I don't want to sit under the roof of parliament with those who support terror." But that is what he may soon have to get used to.

Pro-Kurdish politicians will not condemn the PKK, and with support from the south-east, they are likely to make it into parliament. It may be an opportunity to talk peace. But it will not be easy.

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune
July 17, 2007

75 killed in suicide bombing in Kirkuk

By Richard A. Oppel Jr. and Ali Adeeb

BAGHDAD: A suicide bomber crashed his truck into the perimeter of a major Kurdish political party compound in Kirkuk on Monday, killing at least 75 people.

The attack appeared to be the single deadliest post-invasion blast in Kirkuk, a city rich in both oil and ethnicity, where ambitious and organized Kurds are pushing to absorb the city into neighboring Iraqi Kurdistan while Turkmen and Arabs fight to prevent a full-scale Kurdish takeover.

Many women and children were engulfed by a large fireball as they were shopping in the busy street market next to the political offices.

More than 4,000 kilograms, or 9,000 pounds, of explosives were used in the truck bomb, a senior Kirkuk police official said, destroying a building belonging to the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan,

as well as scores of shops and cars nearby. The explosion flung bodies throughout the outdoor market and left some of the 185 people who were wounded shouting wildly for help as they ran through the streets with their clothes and hair on fire, witnesses said.

Sherzad Abdullah was a few hundred meters away when he said he saw a truck "storm into the PUK" and blow up. Stunned and wounded in one hand, Abdullah said he watched the fireball "devour the cars passing on the road."

One passenger bus burst into flames, Abdullah said. "The whole bus was on fire and the passengers were jumping up and down inside."

Rescue workers frantically dug through the concrete and rubble and rushed those they found still breathing to hospitals. But many were turned away, told there was no more room because the wards remained full of wounded from another massive bombing in a small village south of Kirkuk nine days earlier that left at least 150 dead and several hundred wounded.

Many of those wounded Monday were diverted to hospitals in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, the two largest cities in Kurdistan.

The bomber rammed his truck into the blast walls surrounding the PUK offices just after noon, as the adjoining street market was flooded with people heading for lunch or midday shopping. It was not clear how many victims were affiliated with the PUK, which controls southeastern Kurdistan and is a major power in Kirkuk. The leader of the PUK, Jalal Talabani, is president of Iraq.

The enormous payload was very similar to the July 7 attack in Amerli, a poor Shiite Turkmen village about 50 kilometers, or 30 miles, south of Kirkuk. That bomb obliterated dozens of families, crushed as their fragile clay-walled homes collapsed on top of them.

Like that attack, the Kirkuk explosion underscored how Sunni extremists seem to have been able to elude newly fortified American units closer to Baghdad and to turn their lethal focus to places excluded from the American military's five-brigade troop buildup.

Two other bomb blasts struck Kirkuk later in the day, but it was not clear how closely they were linked to the one outside the PUK building. Two people were killed in those blasts.

The attacks came amid increasing ethnic tensions in Kirkuk, which is 240 kilometers north of Baghdad and 95 kilometers west of Sulaymaniyah, the largest city in the PUK-controlled region of Kurdistan. Kurds have aggressively moved into Kirkuk since the 2003 invasion, angering Turkmen and Arab residents who feel they are being driven out.

Under Saddam Hussein, the government resettled many Arabs in the city. But the Kurds contend that Kirkuk belongs in Kurdistan, the autonomous northern region that has its own security forces and is in many ways a separate country from the rest of Iraq.

The Kurds have made officially annexing Kirkuk a top political priority, and a referendum is scheduled for later this year on whether Kirkuk should join the Kurdistan Regional Government.



Siahalden Rasheed/Reuters

A suicide truck bomb Monday in Kirkuk, Iraq, left a huge crater and killed dozens. The blast was followed by two smaller car bombs.

The New York Times JULY 14, 2007

EDITORIALS OF THE TIMES

The Road Home From Iraq

It is time for the United States to leave Iraq, without any more delay than the Pentagon needs to organize an orderly exit.

Like many Americans, we have put off that conclusion, waiting for a sign that President Bush was seriously trying to dig the United States out of the disaster he created by invading Iraq without sufficient cause, in the face of global opposition, and without a plan to stabilize the country afterward.

At first, we believed that after destroying Iraq's government, army, police and economic structures, the United States was obliged to try to accomplish some of the goals Mr. Bush claimed to be pursuing, chiefly building a stable, unified Iraq. When it became clear that the president had neither the vision nor the means to do that, we argued against setting a withdrawal date while there was still some chance to mitigate the chaos that would most likely follow.

While Mr. Bush scorns deadlines, he kept promising breakthroughs — after elections, after a constitution, after sending in thousands more troops. But those milestones came and went without any progress toward a stable, democratic Iraq or a path for withdrawal. It is frighteningly clear that Mr. Bush's plan is to stay the course as long as he is president and dump the mess on his successor. Whatever his cause was, it is lost.

The political leaders Washington has backed are incapable of putting national interests ahead of sectarian revenge. The security forces Washington has trained behave more like partisan militias. Additional military forces poured into the Baghdad region have failed to change anything.

Continuing to sacrifice the lives and limbs of American soldiers is wrong. The war is sapping the strength of the nation's alliances and its military forces. It is a dangerous diversion from the life-and-death struggle against terrorists. It is an increasing burden on American taxpayers, and it is a betrayal of a world that needs the wise application of American power and principles.

A majority of Americans reached these conclusions months ago. Even in politically polarized Washington, positions on the war no longer divide entirely on party lines. Extricating American troops from the war should be at the top of Congress's agenda.

That conversation must be candid and focused. Americans must be clear that Iraq, and the region around it, could be even bloodier and more chaotic after Americans leave. There could be reprisals against those who worked with American forces, further ethnic cleansing, even genocide. Potentially destabilizing refugee flows could hit Jordan and Syria. Iran and Tur-

key could be tempted to make power grabs. Perhaps most important, the invasion has created a new stronghold from which terrorist activity could proliferate.

The administration, the Democratic-controlled Congress, the United Nations and America's allies must try to mitigate those outcomes — and they may fail. But Americans must be equally honest about the fact that keeping troops in Iraq will only make things worse. The nation needs a serious discussion, now, about how to accomplish a withdrawal and meet some of the big challenges that will arise.

The Mechanics of Withdrawal

The United States has about 160,000 troops and millions of metric tons of military gear inside Iraq. Getting that force out

safely will be a formidable challenge. The main road south to Kuwait is vulnerable to roadside bomb attacks. Soldiers, weapons and vehicles will need to be deployed to secure bases while airlift and sealift operations are organized. Withdrawal routes will have to be guarded. The exit must be everything the invasion was not: based on reality and backed by adequate resources.

The United States should explore using Kurdish territory in the north of Iraq as a secure staging area. Being able to use bases and ports in Turkey would also make withdrawal faster and safer.

Accomplishing all of this in less than six months is probably unrealistic. The political decision should be made, and the target date set, now.

The Fight Against Terrorists

Despite President Bush's repeated claims, Al Qaeda had no significant foothold in Iraq before the invasion, which gave it new base camps, new recruits and new prestige.

This war diverted Pentagon resources from Afghanistan, where the military had a real chance to hunt down Al Qaeda's leaders. It alienated essential allies in the war against terrorism. It drained the strength and readiness of American troops.

And it created a new front where the United States will have to continue to battle terrorist forces and enlist local allies who reject the idea of an Iraq hijacked by international terrorists. The military will need resources and bases to stanch this self-inflicted wound for the foreseeable future.

The Question of Bases

The United States could strike an agreement with the Kurds to create those bases in northeastern Iraq. Or, the Pentagon could use its bases in countries like Kuwait and Qatar, and its large naval presence in

the Persian Gulf, as staging points.

There are arguments for, and against, both options. Leaving troops in Iraq might make it too easy — and too tempting — to get drawn back into the civil war and confirm suspicions that Washington's real goal was to secure permanent bases in Iraq. Mounting attacks from other countries could endanger those nations' governments.

The White House should make this choice after consultation with Congress and the other countries in the region, whose opinions the Bush administration has essentially ignored. The bottom line: the Pentagon needs enough force to stage effective raids and airstrikes against terrorist forces in Iraq, but not enough to resume large-scale combat.

The Civil War

One of Mr. Bush's arguments against withdrawal is that it would lead to civil war. That war is raging, right now, and it may take years to burn out. Iraq may fragment into separate Kurdish, Sunni and Shiite republics, and American troops are not going to stop that from happening.

It is possible, we suppose, that announcing a firm withdrawal date might finally focus Iraq's political leaders and neighboring governments on reality. Ideally, it could spur Iraqi politicians to take the steps toward national reconciliation that they have endlessly discussed but refused to act on.

But it is foolish to count on that, as some Democratic proponents of withdrawal have done. The administration should use whatever leverage it gains from withdraw-

ing to press its allies and Iraq's neighbors to help achieve a negotiated solution.

Iraq's leaders — knowing that they can no longer rely on the Americans to guarantee their survival — might be more open to compromise, perhaps to a Bosnian-style partition, with economic resources fairly shared but with millions of Iraqis forced to relocate. That would be better than the slow-motion ethnic and religious cleansing that has contributed to driving one in seven Iraqis from their homes.

The American military cannot solve the problem. Congress and the White House must lead an international effort at a negotiated outcome. To start, Washington must turn to the United Nations, which Mr. Bush spurned and ridiculed as a preface to war.

The Human Crisis

There are already nearly two million Iraqi refugees, mostly in Syria and Jordan, and nearly two million more Iraqis who have been displaced within their country. Without the active cooperation of all six countries bordering Iraq — Turkey, Iran,

Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria — and the help of other nations, this disaster could get worse. Beyond the suffering, massive flows of refugees — some with ethnic and political resentments — could spread Iraq's conflict far beyond Iraq's borders.

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia must share the burden of hosting refugees. Jordan and Syria, now nearly overwhelmed with refugees, need more international help. That means money. The nations of Europe and Asia have a stake and should contribute.

Washington also has to mend fences with allies. There are new governments in Britain, France and Germany that did not participate in the fight over starting this war and are eager to get beyond it. But that will still require a measure of humility and a commitment to multilateral action that this administration has never shown.

The Neighbors

One of the trickiest tasks will be avoiding excessive meddling in Iraq by its neighbors — America's friends as well as its adversaries.

Just as Iran should come under international pressure to allow Shiites in southern Iraq to develop their own independent future, Washington must help persuade Sunni powers like Syria not to intervene on behalf of Sunni Iraqis. Turkey must be kept from sending troops into Kurdish territories.

For this effort to have any remote chance, Mr. Bush must drop his resistance to talking with both Iran and Syria. Britain, France, Russia, China and other nations with influence have a responsibility to help. Civil war in Iraq is a threat to everyone, especially if it spills across Iraq's borders.

President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney have used demagoguery and fear to quell Americans' demands for an end to this war. They say withdrawing will create bloodshed and chaos and encourage terrorists. Actually, all of that has already happened — the result of this unnecessary invasion and the incompetent management of this war.

This country faces a choice. We can go on allowing Mr. Bush to drag out this war without end or purpose. Or we can insist that American troops are withdrawn as quickly and safely as we can manage — with as much effort as possible to stop the chaos from spreading.

Thomas L. Friedman

In Iraq, it's all in, or all out

When it comes to Iraq, September will be coming early this year — like now.

Democrats, and a growing number of Republicans, are determined not to wait until September for President George W. Bush to report on whether the surge is working. Americans have had enough. They want out.

As we move into the endgame, though, the public needs to understand that neither Republicans nor Democrats are presenting them with a realistic strategy.

Obviously, the president's stay-the-course approach is bankrupt. It shows no signs of producing any self-sustaining — and that is the metric — unified, stable Iraq.

But the various gradual, partial withdrawal proposals by many Democrats and dissident Republicans are not realistic either. The passions that have been unleashed in Iraq are not going to accommodate some partial withdrawal plan, where we just draw down troops, do less patrolling, more training and fight Qaeda types. It's a fantasy.

The minute we start to withdraw, all hell will break loose in the areas we leave, and there will be a no-holds-barred contest for power among Iraqi factions. Our staying there with, say, half as many troops,

will not be sustainable.

Look at the British in Basra. The British forces there have slowly receded into a single base at Basra airport. And what has happened? The void has been filled by a vicious contest for power among Shiite warlords, gangs and clans, and British troops are still being killed whenever they venture out.

As the International Crisis Group recently reported from Basra: "Basra's political arena is in the hands of actors engaged in bloody competition for resources, undermining what is left of governorate institutions and coercively enforcing their rule. Far from being a model to replicate, Basra is an example of what to avoid. With renewed violence and instability, Basra illustrates the pitfalls of a transitional process that has led to the collapse of the state apparatus."

We must not kid ourselves: Our real choices in Iraq are either all in or all out — with the exception of Kurdistan. If those are our only real choices, then we need to look clearly at each.

Staying in means simply containing the Iraqi civil war, but at the price

Staying in Iraq means simply containing the civil war.

of Americans and Iraqis continuing to die, and at the price of the United States having no real leverage on the parties inside or outside of Iraq to negotiate a settlement, because everyone knows we're staying so they can dither.

Today, U.S. soldiers are making the maximum sacrifice so Iraqi politicians can hold to their maximum positions.

Getting out, on the other hand, means more ethnic, religious and tribal killings all across Iraq. It will be one of the most morally ugly scenes you can imagine — no less than Dar-

fur. You will see U.S. troops withdrawing and Iraqi civilians and soldiers who have supported us clinging to our tanks for protection as we rumble out the door. We need to take with us everyone who helped us and wants out, and give green cards to as many Iraqis as possible.

But getting out has at least four advantages. First, no more Americans will be dying while refereeing a civil war. Second, the fear of an all-out civil war, as we do prepare to leave, may be the last best hope for getting the Iraqis to reach an 11th-hour political agreement. Third, as the civil war in Iraq plays out, it could, painfully, force the realignment of communities on the ground that may create a more stable foundation upon which to build a federal settlement.

Fourth, we will restore our deterrence with Iran. Tehran will no longer be able to bleed us through its proxies in Iraq, and we will be much freer to hit Iran — should we ever need to — once we're out.

Moreover, Iran will by default inherit management of the mess in southern Iraq, which, in time, will be an enormous problem for Tehran.

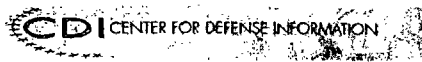
For all these reasons, I prefer setting a withdrawal date, but accompanying it with a last-ditch UN-led — not U.S. — diplomatic effort to get the Iraqi parties to resolve their political differences. If they can, then any withdrawal can be postponed. If they can't agree — even with a gun to their heads about to go off — then staying is truly pointless and leaving by a set date is the only option.

"It is one thing to try to break up a fight between two people who disagree; it is another thing to try to break up a riot," said Michael Mandelbaum, a foreign policy expert at Johns Hopkins. "You just get sucked into the middle."

We need to determine — now, today — whether this is a fight that can be resolved or a riot that we need to build a wall around and wait until it exhausts itself.

July 12, 2007

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune
THE WORLD'S DAILY NEWSPAPER



Center for Defense Information *July 16, 2007*

The Kurdish Tug of War

As the Turkish military moves soldiers to the Iraqi border, the region moves precipitously closer to another challenge in its path to stability. The impact of a Turkish military invasion of northern Iraq will reverberate throughout the Middle East.

Turkey Vs. Iraq?

By Richard May

While Capitol Hill battles the White House over Iraq, another battle is brewing in the Middle East. In the last week the Turkish military has moved 140,000 troops from across its country to the southern border with Iraq. These troops represent an invasion force meant to prevent the continued terrorist activities of the Kurdish minority that use northern Iraq as a safe haven. Turkey has previously voiced its intent to attack elements of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) after repeated bombings and recent attacks on civilians in the south of Turkey. If Ankara chooses to use military force in the north of Iraq now, the results would be dire for the future security and stability of Iraq.

The effects of Turkey conducting military operations in northern Iraq would undermine the fragile security environment that currently exists in two major ways. First, the Kurdish soldiers that are operating in Baghdad as part of the U.S. military "surge" would be tempted to abandon their posts in order to protect their homeland in the north. Second, because Turkish troops would not likely remain for long in the north of Iraq, the remaining PKK fighters could regroup and continue to use northern Iraq as a base of operations for its recent offensive attacks in Turkey. Iraq would have difficulty meeting either of these challenges. To face both simultaneously would only exasperate and quicken the destabilization of Iraq and the region.

Northern Iraq is more than just another piece of territory for Kurds. It is a homeland: it is Kurdistan. For decades Kurds have fought to secure northern Iraq in order to build a Kurdish nation, a nation that finally seems within reach. However, Kurds are also an essential part of the future of Iraq. Most recently, the Kurds have sent three brigades of the Iraqi Army from the north, comprised of a vast majority of Kurdish soldiers, into Baghdad to assist

in security operations as part of the surge of U.S. forces. These three brigades represent about 10,000 soldiers and are an essential part of the strategy for securing Baghdad. This number does not even account for the other Kurdish soldiers that are serving in other units in Baghdad. Were Turkey to attack Kurdistan, these soldiers would undoubtedly leave Baghdad to defend their homeland, choosing Kurdistan over Iraq. The loss of these 10,000 indigenous, well-trained soldiers would threaten the already tenuous security situation even more.

If Turkey did invade northern Iraq, the incursion would not lack precedent. In 1995 and 1997, Turkey used 35,000 soldiers to conduct raids against the PKK. In both cases they remained in Iraq for fewer than 60 days and did not completely eradicate the Kurdish elements that they claimed were responsible for conducting attacks. A future invasion would be similar: a short incursion with limited success. Indeed, an incursion by Turkish forces against PKK elements would violate the new perception of territorial sovereignty that has grown in Kurdistan since the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

While most Kurds in northern Iraq are not members of the PKK, a perceived violation of territorial sovereignty of Kurdistan would unify the Kurdish population to either support the PKK to a greater extent or develop an increased Kurdish independence movement. Without the support of the Kurdish population, especially their military, the unity and stabilization of Iraq will be severely inhibited, requiring either more U.S. military forces to fill in the gaps left by the Kurdish troops or instigating a civil war that could spread throughout the region. The Kurdish population is one of the only stable influences in Iraq and the loss of their support would reverberate throughout Iraq, Iran and Syria.

Turkey's invasion of Iraq would have limited benefits for Turkey and disastrous implications for Iraq. The violation of state sovereignty that a Turkish incursion represents would present the Iraqi government as ineffectual and unable to protect its own borders. Jalal Talabani, the president of Iraq, would be forced into a difficult position, having to choose between his ethnic group and his country. Turkey would gain little more than a minor disruption of PKK activity and would ultimately foster increased hostility from the Kurdish community, including the possibility of establishing an open policy of support for Kurdish separatists in other countries.

The only foreseeable solution is for a joint U.S.-Turkish-Kurdish agreement that focuses on addressing the PKK elements and not Kurdistan as a whole. Turkey will not likely be pacified by a political agreement alone and will demand evidence of action against the PKK locations. If the United States does expect to stop an invasion, an agreement with Turkey must be negotiated soon. While cooperating with Turkey will be distasteful to many Kurds, it will not be nearly as insulting as an outright invasion. A Turkish invasion will force the Kurds to choose between Kurdistan and Iraq. And in this choice, Iraq will lose out.

Richard May served as an officer in the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division in Afghanistan and Iraq. He is currently the Herbert Scoville Jr. Peace Fellow at the World Security Institute's Center for Defense Information and a contributor to Foreign Policy In Focus (www.spif.org).

Turkish opposition rides nationalist wave in elections

AFP

(AFP) by Sibel Utku Bila Jul 17, 2007

ANKARA - A politician brandishes a noose and calls for a jailed Kurdish leader to be hanged; another accuses the prime minister of being a coward for not invading Iraq, a third says the premier is the biggest obstacle to Turkey's anti-terror effort.

With the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) leading the opinion polls for legislative elections Sunday, opposition parties are lashing out at Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's failure to quell renewed bloodshed by separatist Kurdish rebels in the southeast.

The secularist army, often at odds with the AKP's Islamist roots, has upped pressure on Erdogan with public appeals for an incursion into neighbouring Iraq, where the rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), listed as a terrorist group by Ankara and much of the international community, takes refuge.

Funerals of soldiers killed by the PKK have turned from usually solemn ceremonies into anti-AKP protests during which ministers are booed and the government tagged "murderers." "The terrorism problem is right at the heart of the elections," political scientist Fuat Keyman said.

Public anger boiled over in May when a suspected PKK militant blew himself up in Ankara, killing nine people. "The opposition is exploiting the people's security fears. The problem of terror, the slain soldiers have become political material, which is not healthy at all," commented Mehmet Ozcan of the Ankara-based think tank USAK.

The opposition finds fertile ground in a society where nationalism is already on the rise, analysts say, pointing at Turkish exasperation with US inaction

against PKK bases in Iraq and strong opposition in Europe to mainly Muslim Turkey's bid for EU membership.

The main beneficiary of rising nationalist sentiment will be the far-right Nationalist Action Party (MHP), which is expected to go over the 10-percent national threshold and return to parliament after a five-year absence, polling expert Hakan Bayrakci told the Internet newspaper Forum. "The MHP will pass the threshold thanks to the rise of terrorism," he said. "Otherwise, it would have had a very hard time" getting into parliament.

While the MHP's nationalist campaign is no surprise, the main opposition Republican People Party's (CHP) endorsement of a similar agenda has stunned many and left a big void in the centre-left of Turkish politics.

The CHP, expected to be the second force in parliament after the AKP, "drifted away from its social-democrat identity. It is hard now to even call it a democratic party," Keyman said. The traditional voice of pro-Western, secular Turks, the CHP is now opposed to EU reforms to expand free speech and minority rights and leads calls for an incursion into northern Iraq.

The opposition's reliance on "exaggerated and populist" nationalism reflects its failure to offer efficient economic policies to rival the AKP, whose four and a half years in power have resulted in economic stability and strong growth, Keyman said.

The prospect of no centre-left voice in the new parliament gave rise to an unprecedented grassroots movement that nominated an outspoken human rights defender, Baskin Oran, as an independent candidate from Istanbul.

Oran, a respected international relations professor and a close associate of

slain ethnic Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, says he is campaigning for the rights of "all the oppressed and alienated" -- from Kurds and non-Muslim minorities to the unemployed and homosexuals.

He focuses on expanding Kurdish rights as a means of ending the insurgency in the southeast."Nationalism harms the nation most, because it triggers counter-nationalism," one of his campaign slogans says

FINANCIAL TIMES Kurdish vote stirs ethnic tensions

By Steve Negus, Iraq Correspondent July 18 2007

The town of Makhmour lies amid the dust devils, wheat-fields and oil pipelines of the northern Iraqi plains, just east of the Green Line which divides the autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government from the rest of Iraq.

For decades, this predominantly Kurdish town surrounded by what are now mostly Arab villages has been on the front line of ethnic tensions.

These tensions have left their mark in the form of sandbagged emplacements on the turn-off from the town's main highway and shrapnel scars on buildings caused by a car bomb in May, which killed 50 people.

By the end of this year, the town is scheduled to vote in a referendum on whether to join the Kurdistan region - a referendum some Iraqis say may lead to a new era of security and prosperity for the north, but others say could cause simmering tensions to boil over.

The first stage of the "Article 140" process - named after a section of Iraq's constitution - is only weeks away, when on July 31 the committee in charge of implementing it finalises the lists of eligible voters.

Officials overseeing the process say that after the July 31 "census", they will organise a referendum in which the "disputed territories" of northern Iraq vote, district by district, on whether to join the Kurdistan Regional Government.

The referendum is better known outside Iraq for its association with Kirkuk, an oil-rich city that is home to Kurds, Sunni Arabs, Turcomans, Assyrian Christians and Shia Muslims. The city is part of a disputed region that forms an arc running 450km from Sinjar in the north-west corner of the country to the province of Diyala in the east.

The region is rich in oil - the fields around Kirkuk alone represent almost 10 per cent of Iraq's reserves - and Saddam Hussein tried to cement his control over it by making sure its Arab population was in the majority. In towns such as Kirkuk, the regime altered the demographic balance by expelling Kurds and Turcomans and bringing in Shia settlers from the south.

In Makhmour, it took an administrative approach. According to Kurdish officials, the town was detached from the majority-Kurdish Irbil governorate in 1996 and reassigned to predominantly Arab

Ninewah. "This region [Makhmour] is Kurdistan," says Mohammed Amin Roj, head of the Kurdistan Democratic party, one of two main political movements that dominate politics in the north. Even the Arab villages, he says, have Kurdish names such as Kherabaddan, (Round Stone) or Karamerdi (Dead Donkey).

He says joining the KRG would mean security as well as prosperity for the inhabitants of Makhmour, which he claims has been neglected by the province of Ninewah.

Some non-Kurds may welcome a chance to join the relative security of the north. A mixed group of Arab, Kurdish and Turcoman shopkeepers in the town of Purdieh agree the sooner the KRG's rule extends to their city, the better. But the most vocal Arab and Turcoman parties oppose it, and some outside observers believe many of the region's inhabitants will strongly resist integration into Kurdistan.

Ethnic tensions are running high, not least because of the recent car and truck bombs, the latest of which this week killed 85 people in Kirkuk. Makhmour officials say the bomb in May turned out to have been assembled in a nearby Arab village.

In Makhmour's marketplace, one young Sunni Arab, asked if he wanted to be part of Kurdistan, replies: "How would I know? I've never been to Kurdistan. If I tried to drive to Irbil [the Kurdistan region's capital, they'd see 'Arab' on my identification and never let me in." His friend claims that after the May bomb, Arab civil servants were attacked. "They beat and insulted government employees in the street."

Some outsiders have urged the Kurdistan and Iraqi governments to hold off on implementing Article 140. The Brussels-based International Crisis Group suggests the process lacks legitimacy among Arabs, Turcomans and others. But Kurdish officials say they have had little luck trying to negotiate any practical compromises with their main Sunni or Turcoman opponents.

"We are talking about a constitution. It is not a menu for a restaurant," says Mohammed Ihsan, the Kurdish member of the multi-ethnic commission overseeing Article 140. "The constitution is something fixed and you have to implement it."

Turkey Bombards Northern Iraq, Iraq Says

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA - The Associated Press - July 18, 2007

AP Associated Press

BAGHDAD -- The Iraqi government said Turkish

artillery and warplanes bombarded areas of northern Iraq on Wednesday and called on Turkey to stop military operations and resolve the conflict diplomatically.

The claim occurred amid rising tension and Turkish threats to strike bases of the Kurdistan Workers Party or PKK, which has been launching attacks



against targets in Turkey from sanctuaries in Iraq.

Government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh told The Associated Press that the morning bombardment struck areas of the northern province of Dahuk, some 260 miles northwest of Baghdad. Col. Hussein Kamal said about 250 shells were fired into Iraq from Turkey. He added that there were no casualties on the Iraqi side of the border.

"We have received reports that the Turkish government and the Turkish army have bombed border villages. The Iraqi government regrets the Turkish military operations of artillery and warplanes bombing against border cities and towns," al-Dabbagh said. "The Iraqi government calls for ceasing these operations and resorting to dialogue," he said, insisting that Iraq wants "good relations with

Turkey."

Earlier Wednesday, Kurdish guerrillas staged a bomb attack against a military vehicle, killing two soldiers and wounding six others near the Iraqi border, the state-run Anatolia news agency said.

The attack occurred close to the Iraqi border, near the town of Cukurca in Hakkari province, Anatolia said. Military helicopters flew the injured to hospitals as military units in the region launched an operation to hunt down the attackers, it said.

Last week, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari said Turkey had massed 140,000 soldiers along the border - a figure the U.S. disputed. Zebari said troop levels in the region were often increased during the spring and summer in response to increased activity by PKK. U.S. officials cast doubt on the figure.

Turkish officials have repeatedly said they are considering military operations against the PKK in Iraq, a move that the United States fears would cause further instability. Al-Dabbagh said the Iraqi government is ready either for bilateral talks or three-way talks that will include the United States. He added that the PKK matter is not new but years-old.

"We have said before that we will not allow Iraq to become a launching pad for operations against Turkey or any other country," al-Dabbagh said. Washington says it is working with Turkey to combat the PKK but that it is focused on combatting insurgents opposing U.S. forces.

The PKK has escalated attacks this year, killing about 70 soldiers so far. More than 110 rebels were killed in the same period. Turkey has been battling the PKK since 1984 in a conflict that has killed tens of thousands of people.

Kurds rule out referendum delay fordisputed Kirkuk

REUTERS

(Reuters) Jul 18, 2007 By Bernd Debusmann, Special Correspondent

ARBIL, Iraq - Kurdish leaders are determined to press ahead with a referendum on the future of the oil city of Kirkuk, despite rising tensions over the issue and violence that included car bomb attacks killing more than 80 people this week.

"We must hold the referendum by the end of the year," said Mohammed Ihsan, the Kurdish regional government's point man on Kirkuk. "Postponing it would mean surrender to the terrorists. We are not willing to do that."

Ihsan, whose title is Minister of Extra Regional Affairs in the Kurdish Regional Government, was speaking in an interview a day after a huge truck bomb

northern cities and replace them with Arabs.

The constitutional timetable also provided for a census to be completed by the end of July, but neither this nor "normalization" has been implemented.

"We are working on preparations for a voting list based on the 1957 census," Ihsan said. At that time, he added, Kurds made up 48.3 percent of the Kirkuk area's population and Arabs accounted for 28.2 percent.

The Kurds say the 1957 census was the last reliable count of Kirkuk's population before the Iraqi monarchy was toppled and a succession of governments began manipulating the demographics of the region in favor of Iraqi Arabs. By 1965, according to Ihsan, Kurds accounted for just 36.1 percent of the population.

Now, Kurds make up the largest community in the multiethnic city and would likely win the referendum on its final status, which requires a simple majority.

VOLATILE BREW

An added ingredient in the volatile Kirkuk brew is oil -- the area has 584 wells -- and who will control it. Ihsan shrugged off the importance of that issue. "The oil will be for all Iraqis," he said. "That can be worked out."

The cabinet of Shi'ite Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki has approved a draft hydrocarbon law to divide Iraq's oil revenue but this has not yet been debated by parliament.

Iraq is estimated to have the world's third-largest oil reserves, in fields in the Shi'ite south and in northern Iraq, mainly around Kirkuk.

Ihsan, who was educated in Britain and served as the Kurdish Regional Government's Human Rights Minister before taking up his present post in May last year, had blunt criticism for the central government in Baghdad, whom he described as incompetent foot-draggers.

"There are no leaders in Baghdad. There is incompetence. And there is a new Arab chauvinism, people who just don't accept Kurds," he said.

U.S. officials have quietly suggested to the Kurds that they postpone the referendum but Ihsan said it would be wrong "for the Americans to listen to terrorist bombs more than the words of their only friends (the Kurds) in the region."



exploded outside the local headquarters of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the political party of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani. "There can be no question of a delay or negotiations on this," Ihsan said. "You don't negotiate the constitution."

Foreign analysts have warned Kirkuk could become the next flashpoint in the strife that has been tearing most of Iraq apart since the 2003 U.S. invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein.

"If the referendum is held later this year over the objections of the other (non-Kurdish) communities, the civil war is very likely to spread to Kirkuk and the Kurdish region, until now Iraq's only area of quiet and progress," said an analysis of the issue by the Brussels-based International Crisis Group.

The Kurds see Kirkuk as their historical capital and want it included in their autonomous Kurdistan region. But the referendum plan has run into bitter opposition from Kirkuk's other ethnic groups, including Turkmen and Chaldo-Assyrians, who fear they would be forced out of the city or become second-class citizens.

The Iraqi constitution's article 140 stipulates a December 31, 2007 deadline for the Kirkuk referendum -- at the end of a process that includes "normalization," shorthand for reversing the effects of Saddam's policy to drive Kurds out of a string of

THE JERUSALEM POST
75 YEARS OF JOURNALISM

Jul. 18, 2007 - james martin

Analysis: Turkish army on Iraqi border is jnst 'saber-rattling'

Recent statements by Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari concerning a buildup of Turkish troops along the country's border have heightened international fears that a Turkish military incursion into Iraq's northern Kurdish region is imminent.

Zebari, in a press conference in Baghdad on July 9, said Turkey had 140,000 soldiers along the border and that his government stood "against any interference or breach of Iraqi sovereignty from neighboring states."

Over the weekend, Zebari reiterated these concerns in a phone conversation with Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, while indicating that Iraq was willing to hold multiparty talks on the presence of roughly 3,000 Kurdistan Worker Party, or PKK, guerrillas in northern Iraq.

Turkey has threatened to move into Iraqi territory to conduct military operations against the PKK, a paramilitary organization responsible for numerous attacks against civilian

and military targets in Turkey since 1984 that now operates with relative impunity out of the remote Kandil mountain region of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Responding to an upsurge in PKK activity - this year has already seen the deaths of 67 Turkish soldiers and 110 rebels in sporadic fighting - Gul recently said on television, in reference to a possible Turkish military strike, "We have decided how to act, everything is clear. We know what to do and when to do it."

To date, the Turkish military has restricted its activity in the region to periodic shelling of PKK positions and limited cross-border raids. But concern that such activity is a prelude to a larger invasion that could contribute to further instability across Iraq has led both US Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to issue stern warnings to Gul not to act precipitously.

But according to officials in Iraqi Kurdistan, the likelihood of a full-scale Turkish invasion is too remote to warrant such fears. Many see the troop buildup instead as a move by the military to influence domestic Turkish politics and to force a favorable outcome in Sunday's national election.

"Turkish concerns are there and are genuine. The PKK is a menace," said Safeen Dizayee, a senior official in the Kurdistan Democratic Party, one of the two major parties comprising the Kurdistan Regional Government. "But much has been used for internal politics. It's saber-rattling rhetoric."

Dizayee's skepticism of Turkish motives is widely shared among Iraqi Kurds. According to many, threatening to attack the PKK in northern Iraq has proven a powerful propaganda tool for the Turkish military, which is struggling to maintain influence in a government dominated by the Islamic-leaning Justice and Development Party.

With parliamentary elections set for Sunday, they argue, the military has pushed security concerns to the forefront in order to reinforce an image of the Justice and Development Party as indecisive and soft on terrorism and to benefit the

nationalist and secular parties with which they have close ties.

"Turkey is at a crossroads," said Bilal Wahab, an activist and writer in Erbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan. "The military is losing and the military wants something to regain influence. All they have is the PKK."

Gareth Jenkins, a journalist in Istanbul and an expert on Turkish military affairs, agreed that the army was actively encouraging an image of itself as tough on terrorism as a means to retain influence in domestic politics. "The military has to position itself to maintain public prestige, which is its main source of political leverage, in case it needs it against the [Justice and Development Party] government. It cannot afford to lose this prestige," he said.

Jenkins also said that by threatening to invade Iraq, the military hoped to pressure the Kurdistan Regional Government and the American military into taking an active role in dismantling PKK camps and offices there. "Turkey is rightly very frustrated that the US hasn't done anything against the PKK at all," he said. "There is a feeling in the military that if they take [the threat of invasion] seriously, then maybe they'll crack

down a little on the PKK and put pressure on the Kurds."

It remains unlikely, however, that the US - bogged down with a major insurgency to the south - would commit significant forces to battling the PKK. Tactically, a large-scale incursion into Iraqi Kurdistan would be a complicated and risky operation for the Turkish military. The mountainous region of northern Iraq where the PKK camps are located is notoriously difficult to control and could prove a nightmare for major counterinsurgency operations.

"I don't believe Turkish troops would cross the border," said Nawzad Hadi Mawlood, governor of Erbil. "They will get lost. Kurdistan will turn into a graveyard for Turkish troops. Neither us [the Kurdistan Regional Government] nor they can evict the PKK because of where they are in the mountains."

Wolfgang Piccoli, a Turkey expert at the Eurasia Group, a political-risk consulting firm based in New York, agreed. The ease with which PKK forces could flee into the mountains when they see Turkish troops cross the border and regroup when these troops leave, he said, make an effective military incursion into Iraq nearly impossible.

"From a logistical point of view, if Turkey decides to invade, it will only take a few days to cross the border. But militarily, they know an operation like that would make no sense."

Piccoli said that a major PKK terrorist attack in western Turkey that caused significant casualties could force Turkey to invade, despite the difficulties of doing so. Barring such an attack, however, it is unlikely that Turkey will act before Sunday's elections. In order for the military to invade, the Turkish parliament would have to convene and pass a resolution granting their support. But with parliament in recess, it is unlikely any action will be taken. A change in power could see added pressure to pass such a resolution, Piccoli said, but the tactical realities will remain the same and

will continue to discourage a Turkish invasion. "If the MHP [National Action Party, a nationalist, pro-military party] obtains seats in parliament, more pressure will be placed on passing the resolution allowing the Turkish military to carry out a cross-border incursion targeting the PKK's bases in northern Iraq. But there will probably only be lots of rhetoric from all the actors concerned and not much change on the ground," he said.

FINANCIAL TIMES

July 19 2007

A contest to decide Turkey's future

This Sunday's general election in Turkey is historic. It was called to resolve a stand-off between the neo-Islamist government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the army-led secular establishment over the election of the next president. It is far from clear how this contest will settle that constitutional crisis, which, furthermore, has found little resonance in the daily battle for votes. That is perhaps because the real importance of this election is that it is about the future and the nature of the Turkish republic.

The ruling Justice and Development party (AKP), built out of the debris of failed Islamist movements, has established itself as the chosen path to modernity of the socially conservative, religiously observant Turkish heartland of Anatolia, which is at the same time dynamic, entrepreneurial and determined to secure its rightful share in power hitherto monopolised by the country's westernised urban elites.

Ranged against the AKP is the entrenched secularist establishment headed by the

military that regards itself as guardian of the legacy of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, who forged modern Turkey out of the ruins of the Ottoman empire.

When the AKP came to power in 2002 the generals were dismayed. Yet both sides shared the common national project of getting Turkey into the European Union: the army and the Kemalists because this fulfilled the western vocation of Ataturk; the government because Brussels provided a shield against the generals. The army has ousted four elected governments since 1960 - the last time in a "soft" coup against an Islamist administration 10 years ago. But it seemed willing until recently to allow the enlargement of democratic, human and Kurdish minority rights, and curtailment of its political influence, as the entry price to Europe.

That tactical consensus now lies in tatters. EU hostility to Turkish membership has stoked a ferocious nationalist backlash. The rhetoric of Turkey as a beacon of Islam and democracy, of the AKP

as Muslim Democrats akin to Europe's Christian Democrats, of the Turks as bridge-builders between east and west - all that is gone. Turkey's long alliance with the US through Nato has been corroded by the bungled invasion of Iraq and its empowerment of Iraqi Kurdistan, whose de facto independence Ankara feels will stoke secession and terrorism among the 15m Kurds of south-east Turkey. No one is talking about the EU or Nato in this election; they have become toxic institutions. But this election is above all about the credibility of Turkey's own institutions. The AKP has been a successful government under the charismatic Mr Erdogan, not only reforming the state but overcoming deep financial crisis and changing entrenched attitudes such as Turkish intransigence over Cyprus.

Yet it has still to persuade the secular middle class it is not intent on ending its liberal lifestyle and installing theocracy by stealth. But it is the secularists who are

politically stuck in the past, hating how the rural influx into the cities has changed the balance of power. Unable to put together electable parties, they are trying to win back in the streets what they lost in the ballot box, and relying on over-reaching generals to help them.

But the signs are that Turks do not like their leaders playing politics with issues such as secularism or institutions like the presidency. They will probably, and deservedly, give the AKP a majority, but hopefully boost republican and nationalist numbers in parliament.

In 2002, the AKP got two thirds of the seats on one third of the votes. A more proportional result would be healthier: for a compromise candidate as president; for democratic balance in which all sides openly articulate their fears and hopes; and for Turks to remind themselves what they have shown the world - that Islam and democracy are perfectly compatible

Daniel Williams

Letter from the Middle East

Sunnis and Shiites form 'little Baghdad' in Syria

DAMASCUS

In Iraq, Shiite and Sunni Muslims live uneasily close to each other as bitter foes in a bloody conflict. In Sayeda Zeinab, a working-class district on the outskirts of Damascus, they live uneasily close as refugees.

More than a million Shiites and Sunnis have crossed the border into Syria, where the ruling Baath Party pursues a pan-Arab ideology. Even though they now live under a government that plays down religious differences, the two groups have created a little replica of Baghdad in the Syrian capital — one so reminiscent of the city they left that mainly Sunni and Shiite areas are segregated by a thoroughfare called Iraq Street.

So far, there have been no reports of sectarian violence. Exile, though, has not meant forgiving and forgetting.

"You know, the Shiites are the problem in Iraq," says Adel Khalef, a Sunni taxi driver who says nine cousins were slaughtered by Shiites. "They would come after us here if the government didn't keep an eye on them."

About 2.2 million of Iraq's 27 million people have moved abroad, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said June 5. Ninety-five percent have gone to Syria and Jordan, the two most welcoming of the neighboring Arab countries.

Syria, with a population of 19 million, has accepted more than any other country: 1.4 million by UN estimate. The government of President Bashar al-Assad has been reluctant to shut the door.

The chances for settling beyond Syria are slim. The United States has agreed to grant asylum to 7,000 Iraqi refugees this year. About 20,000 Iraqis made their way, many smuggled, into Europe last year. About 9,000 arrived in Sweden, according to UNHCR statistics.

Originally, the influx into Syria was Sunni, the 20 percent of Iraq's population that dominated the country under Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi leader ousted in the U.S.-led invasion of 2003 and executed in December last year. In recent months, Shiites, the 60 percent-majority population empowered by his downfall, have joined the flow.



Khaled al-Hariri/Reuters

An Iraqi refugee displaying documents for registering at a UN office in Syria.

Between January 2007 and mid-May, 41,000 Sunnis, 18,500 Shiites, 19,700 Christians and 5,000 members of smaller minorities registered with the UNHCR, says Sybella Wilkes, UNHCR information officer in Damascus.

The Shiites have surprised refugee officials, who initially thought they would flee into Shiite areas of Iraq. Shiite refugees say they are hunted down at home and their mosques are car-bombed. Syria, despite its 75 percent Sunni population, is the easiest and most accommodating place to go, they say.

"At this point, every group is coming," said Laurens Jolles, the UNHCR's Damascus representative. "Iraq is reproducing itself in Syria."

Jolles fears there might be a backlash from native Syrians about the Iraqi influx. "Things are only going to get more difficult," he says. "There's rising resentment at so many foreigners."

Duraid Laham, a prominent Syrian actor, expresses the mood among many of his compatriots: "There are parts of Syria that are becoming alien to us," he says.

In the Sayeda Zeinab neighborhood, pictures of the Shiite militia leader Moktada al-Sadr, accused by U.S.

officials of unleashing death squads on Sunnis, hang from doors and windows in the Shiite areas. An occasional portrait of Saddam appears in Sunni dwellings.

The refugees have brought with them their clipped Arabic dialect, their bittersweet lemon tea, their penchant for Saddam-size moustaches and, for the Shiites, black head-to-toe women's wear. They've also brought their suspicions.

"I don't mingle much with the Sunnis here," says Iman Jawad, a 28-year-old widow who says her Shiite husband was gunned down by Sunnis on a highway last September on his way to Jordan looking for work. "I can't get over the fact that they killed my husband for nothing."

Her parents informed her there was no place at home for the new widow. "I have nine sisters," Jawad said. "Girls don't provide. They're supposed to have a husband. That's what the Sunnis did to me."

In Iraq, men began to come around her apartment making unwanted sexual advances. Now living in Damascus, Jawad, who has no children, is looking for a male protector. One suitor is 56-year-old Abdel Amin Salem.

In January 2006, he returned to visit his Iraqi hometown of Samarra after 15 years working in Germany. The killings of Shiites by Sunni marauders quickly drove him and his wife out. She became ill in Syria and died of a kidney disease.

"All this because Sunnis kill Shiites," he says. "Iraq is finished for us." He says he will try to resettle in a European country.

Khalef, the Sunni taxi driver who ferries Iraqis to and from the border, lives in Sayeda Zeinab and condemns his Shiite compatriots across Iraq Street. "In Baghdad, if your name is Omar, an Ali kills you," he says. Omar is a common Sunni first name; Ali, a Shiite. Khalef, 47, left Iraq in February after his nine relatives at a car-rental company in Baghdad were fatally shot in their office.

"Shiite terrorists killed my wife, right in our house," says Khaled Nouri, 37, a fellow driver from the mixed Amr district of Baghdad.

Asked how they feel about their Shiite neighbors, both Nouri and Khalef answer: They want to escape them.

"I don't care where it is, so long as there are no Shiites," Nouri says.

Bloomberg News

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Turquie: deux soldats tués, six blessés par une mine posée par le PKK



DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 18 juil 2007 (AFP) - Deux soldats turcs ont été tués et six autres blessés lorsqu'une mine posée par des rebelles kurdes a explosé au passage de leur véhicule mercredi dans le sud-est de la Turquie, ont indiqué les autorités locales.

L'incident s'est produit dans la localité de Cukurca, tout près de la frontière avec l'Irak, où l'armée dispose d'importantes troupes pour empêcher les infiltrations de rebelles depuis leurs bases du nord de l'Irak, a-t-on précisé de même source.

Les rebelles du parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) pratiquent fréquemment ce type d'attaques pour s'en prendre aux forces de sécurité turques.

Deux soldats et un rebelle ont été tués mardi dans des heurts dans cette région.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, a accru ses attaques depuis le début de l'année.

Turquie: retour annoncé des Kurdes au Parlement à la faveur des élections



DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 19 juil 2007 (AFP) - Treize ans après avoir été exclus du Parlement, des députés kurdes devraient y retourner à la faveur des législatives de dimanche avec des promesses de réconciliation alors que la recrudescence des violences séparatistes suscite la colère dans le pays.

Soixante membres du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP) vont se présenter comme indépendants, une stratégie destinée à contourner la règle sur les 10 % minimum de voix au niveau national permettant à un parti d'entrer au Parlement. Vingt à trente d'entre-eux pourraient être élus, selon les sondages, en raison du fort soutien dont ils bénéficient dans le sud-est du pays à majorité kurde.

A quelques jours du scrutin, l'excitation est palpable à Diyarbakir, la principale ville kurde du sud-est: les affiches des candidats sont omniprésentes et des milliers de volontaires font campagne en leur faveur.

"Nous allons voter pour les nôtres afin de montrer que nous existons dans ce pays et que nous aussi, nous avons une voix", explique Ferhat, un vendeur de légumes de 22 ans.

Les candidats font campagne sur le thème de la réconciliation entre Turcs et Kurdes. Ils appellent Ankara à abandonner l'option militaire contre les séparatistes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) et à accroître les droits de cette minorité pour permettre un règlement pacifique du conflit vieux de 23 ans. Ils sont cependant sans illusion sur l'accueil d'Ankara en cas d'élection.

"Nous savons que ce sera difficile mais nous agissons avec mesure. Les gens vont apprendre à mieux nous connaître au Parlement et vont bien voir que nous ne sommes pas des monstres", souligne l'une des candidates, Aysel Tugluk.

Le PKK a augmenté ses opérations cette année, alimentant les réactions nationalistes et les appels à une intervention dans le nord de l'Irak voisin où les rebelles disposent de bases arrières. Le DTP a suscité la colère d'Ankara en refusant de condamner le PKK comme une organisation terroriste, alors que les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne le considèrent comme telle.

"Le PKK n'est pas seulement une bande d'hommes armés. Il jouit d'un fort soutien parmi le peuple kurde", souligne un autre candidat, Selahattin Demirtas. "Le condamner reviendrait à condamner le peuple", ajoute-t-il. Le DTP réfute tout lien avec le PKK, mais certains de ses membres reconnaissent que les rebelles ont une influence sur le parti.

"Le succès de nos députés dépendra de la façon dont l'establishment va les traiter et si le PKK soutient la démocratie ou fait pression sur eux pour qu'ils adoptent des positions radicales", confie un militant sous couvert de l'anonymat. Le DTP veut obtenir une amnistie pour les membres du PKK, alors qu'Ankara exige une reddition.

Les premiers pas de la vingtaine de députés kurdes au Parlement ont pris fin sur un échec dramatique en 1994 quand leur immunité a été levée après avoir été accusés d'aider le PKK. Certains se sont retrouvés en prison, d'autres ont choisi l'exil et un a rejoint le PKK.

Depuis, sous la pression de l'Union européenne, la Turquie a accordé à la minorité kurde davantage de liberté dans le domaine culturel et levé l'état d'urgence dans le sud-est. Les Kurdes continuent toutefois de se plaindre de discriminations. Ils réclament l'enseignement de leur langue à l'école et la reconnaissance de celle-ci dans la vie publique.

La pauvreté demeure également un grave problème dans cette région, où le chômage peut atteindre des pointes de 70 % dans les zones les plus défavorisées, tandis que de nombreux villages n'ont toujours pas l'eau courante et l'électricité.

Ankara agite la menace d'une incursion en Irak après les élections



ANKARA, 21 juil 2007 (AFP) - Ankara a averti samedi qu'il pourrait envoyer des troupes dans le nord de l'Irak si les discussions avec les Irakiens et les Américains prévues après les élections turques de dimanche ne règlent pas le problème des rebelles kurdes basés dans le nord de l'Irak.

Le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a indiqué avoir invité son homologue irakien Nouri al-Maliki à venir à Ankara après les législatives pour discuter de cette question. La Turquie ne supporte plus que les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan continuent à bénéficier d'un sanctuaire dans les zones kurdes du nord de l'Irak, bien que les Etats-Unis aient placé le PKK sur leur liste d'organisations terroristes.

Elle accuse les Kurdes d'Irak d'aider les rebelles, en armes et en explosifs et veut des discussions trilatérales pour régler cette question. "Nous allons leur demander de prendre toutes les mesures nécessaires ou nous ferons ce qui est nécessaire", a averti Erdogan sur la télévision Kanal-7. Le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères Abdullah Gul a lui aussi souligné qu'Ankara voulait neutraliser les rebelles.

"Notre objectif n'est pas d'entrer en Irak mais de neutraliser l'organisation

terroriste. Nous utiliserons notre droit (à l'autodéfense) tant que cette organisation continuera à frapper la Turquie", a-t-il déclaré à la télévision TGRT.

L'accroissement des attaques du PKK depuis le début de l'année a été l'un des thèmes de la campagne électorale, l'opposition accusant le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) d'Erdogan, en tête des sondages, de ne pas avoir une politique assez dure contre les rebelles.

Deux rebelles kurdes du PKK ont été abattus vendredi par les forces de sécurité dans le sud-est de la Turquie, lors de combats dans la province de Sirnak, riveraine de l'Irak et de la Syrie.

L'attaque par le PKK d'un poste de police vendredi soir dans la localité de Semdinli (sud-est), près de la frontière avec l'Irak et l'Iran a également fait deux blessés légers parmi les policiers, selon l'agence Anatolie.

Selon un décompte réalisé par une association de défense des droits de l'Homme, utilisant sources officielles et indépendantes, 111 membres des forces de l'ordre, 109 rebelles du PKK et cinq civils ont été tués dans le sud-est anatolien, à la population majoritairement kurde, de début janvier à fin juin.

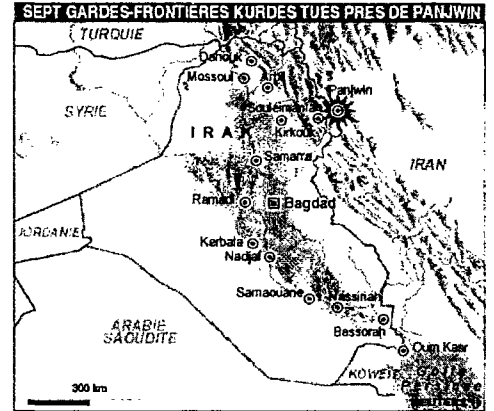
Sept gardes-frontières kurdes tués dans une embuscade d'Al Qaïda

REUTERS

BAGDAD (Reuters) 15 juillet 2007 - Sept gardes kurdes affectés à la surveillance de la frontière habituellement calme du nord du Kurdistan avec l'Iran ont été tués dans une embuscade attribuée à un groupe lié à Al Qaïda, a-t-on appris auprès des autorités locales.

L'affrontement, qui a duré plus d'une heure dans cette région montagneuse, est le plus violent depuis l'invasion américaine de 2003, a déclaré le maire de la ville proche de Panjwin, Ghareb Ali, qui met en cause un groupe djihadiste baptisé Brigade du Kurdistan.

La police a précisé que les peshmergas kurdes, qui assurent la sécurité dans la région, ont bouclé la zone de l'incident à la recherche des assaillants.



L'Humanité

16 juillet 2007 Istanbul, envoyé spécial.

La mouvance islamiste turque sûre de sa force

Turquie . Confiant dans les résultats des élections législatives anticipées, l'AKP, le parti au pouvoir, pense déjà à faire élire l'un des siens comme chef de l'État.

Plus de 31 millions de Turcs sont appelés à élire le nouveau Parlement le 22 juillet, et ce, à l'issue d'élections législatives anticipées. Ce scrutin législatif anticipé a été décidé à la suite de l'invalidation du second tour de l'élection du président de la République par le Parlement turc par la Cour constitutionnelle saisie par le Parti républicain du peuple (CHP, kémaliste), crédité de 15 % d'intentions de vote. En effet, le mandat de l'actuel président de la République, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, devant se terminer le 16 mai dernier, l'AKP, qui détient la majorité des sièges au Parlement, a désigné, le 24 avril, Abdullah Gül, actuel ministre des Affaires étrangères, pour lui succéder, déclenchant une crise ouverte au sommet de l'État. Opposée à l'arrivée à la tête de l'État d'un homme issu de la mouvance islamiste, - à l'instigation de l'armée, gardienne du dogme kémaliste, par le biais de ses réseaux informels, tel le Tesud, une organisation composée de militaires à la retraite-, des manifestations, rassemblant plusieurs centaines de milliers de personnes, ont lieu à Ankara et Istanbul, pour empêcher cette élection sous prétexte de défense de la laïcité.

Reste que, pour être élu, Abdullah Gül devait obtenir les voix des deux tiers des députés. Le 27 avril, il lui en manquait dix. Toutefois, il pouvait être élu à la majorité simple

à l'issue d'un troisième tour. Mais, entre-temps, la Cour constitutionnelle a invalidé le processus de désignation du chef de l'État provoquant alors des élections législatives anticipées. Qu'à cela ne tienne, après cet échec, le parti au pouvoir, qui a introduit une réforme constitutionnelle pour l'élection du chef de l'État au suffrage universel, a, cette fois-ci, reçu le feu vert de la Cour constitutionnelle, et ce, malgré l'opposition politique soutenue en sous-main par l'armée. Cette réforme sera soumise à un référendum, en octobre prochain, que le parti issu de la mouvance islamiste est convaincu de remporter.

En effet, un récent sondage indique qu'ils sont plus de 75 % de Turcs à approuver l'élection au suffrage universel du président de la République, élection qui n'interviendra toutefois qu'en 2012, soit à la fin du mandat du président qui sera désigné par le Parlement issu des résultats du scrutin législatif du 22 juillet. De ce fait, la campagne législative se polarise presque exclusivement sur la question de l'élection présidentielle. L'AKP en fait sa priorité. « La première chose que fera le nouveau Parlement après le scrutin législatif sera d'élire le nouveau président de la République », tonne un de ses leaders dans Today's Zaman de vendredi. Mais, pour ce faire, il devra faire mieux qu'en 2002 (360 sièges sur 550) et obtenir 367

sièges, soit une majorité de deux tiers, nécessaire pour faire élire l'un de ses députés comme chef de l'État. la surenchère nationaliste

Pour l'en empêcher, ses concurrents directs, le CHP et le MHP (Parti d'action nationaliste), font dans la surenchère nationaliste, axant une partie de leur campagne sur la situation dans le nord de l'Irak qui servirait de base arrière au PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, interdit). Les obsèques de chaque soldat turc tué sont l'occasion d'une surenchère nationaliste, le MHP allant jusqu'à proposer le rétablissement de la peine de mort. Suspecté de connivence avec les « rebelles » kurdes, sans doute parce qu'il est donné largement favori dans le Kurdistan, l'AKP multiplie les gages de nationalisme, stigmatisant les « terroristes » du PKK, tout en réaffirmant son attachement au caractère laïc de l'État turc : ses adversaires l'accusant ouvertement de vouloir y mettre fin par petite dose !

Quant à l'armée, gardienne du dogme kémaliste - pas touche à la laïcité !-, opposée sans l'assumer publiquement à l'adhésion de la Turquie à l'UE, elle a, en effet, tout à craindre de cette adhésion. Parmi les conditions que doit satisfaire Ankara pour l'ouverture des négociations d'adhésion figurent, entre autres, la fin de l'ingérence des militaires dans la vie publique turque et la perte de tout pouvoir de contrôle sur la société et l'État turc.

Car des pouvoirs, elle n'en manquait pas. Par le biais du Conseil national de sécurité (le MGK), dont les prérogatives ne sont plus aujourd'hui ce qu'elles étaient par un passé récent, la grande muette avait droit de regard et de veto sur la marche du pays, notamment concernant la reconnaissance des droits culturels et politiques de la minorité kurde (13 millions). Mais depuis que le MGK n'est plus composé majoritairement de militaires, il a perdu une partie importante de ses prérogatives. la partie se joue à trois

Dans cette campagne où la gauche marxiste est éparpillée en une multitude de formations, elle a du mal à faire entendre sa voix, faute de s'entendre sur un minimum. De ce fait, la partie se joue à trois - l'AKP, le CHP et le MHP -, peut-être à quatre si on ajoute le Parti démocrate (DP), parti où, hormis la question présidentielle, ils sont tous à des degrés divers adeptes du néolibéralisme.

Reste cependant que le premier ministre sortant, Tayyip Erdogan, dispose d'un avantage sur ses adversaires. Il met en avant son bilan : une croissance de 6,1 %, une relative baisse du chômage et de la pauvreté et un revenu annuel par habitant (5 800 dollars) qui a doublé sous sa législature.

Hassane Zerrouky

Irak: 6.000 guérilleros kurdes pour garder les infrastructures dans le nord

AFP

SOULEMANIYAH (Irak), 17 juil 2007 (AFP) - Le gouvernement irakien va prochainement envoyer quelque 6.000 anciens guérilleros kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak pour protéger les infrastructures électriques et pétrolières contre les attaques d'insurgés, a annoncé mardi un responsable des services de sécurité.

"Une brigade de 6.000 peshmerga (combattants kurdes) va être dépêchée dans une région au sud-ouest de Kirkouk pour protéger les groupes électrogènes entre Kirkouk et Baiji", a déclaré un porte-parole des services de sécurité de la région autonome du Kurdistan, le général Jabar Yawal.

Au moins 55 des 179 pylônes électriques entre la région pétrolière de Kirkouk et la raffinerie de Baiji, dans le centre du pays, ont été détruits au cours des dernières années, contribuant aux fréquentes coupures de courant frappant l'Irak.

Une délégation du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan a donné son accord pour dépêcher ces forces, après des pourparlers en début de mois avec le ministre irakien de la Défense, a indiqué M. Yawal, soulignant que l'approbation finale en revenait au Premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki.

Des projets semblables de déploiement de soldats kurdes sont envisagés dans la région de Mossoul (nord), où des oléoducs reliant cette ville au port turc de Ceyhan sont fréquemment l'objet de sabotages.

Les peshmerga sont d'anciens guérilleros kurdes qui ont participé à l'invasion américaine de l'Irak en 2003, avant de rejoindre les forces de sécurité irakiennes.

Les réserves pétrolières de Kirkouk permettraient à l'Irak d'exporter 1,2 million de barils de pétrole par jour, mais les oléoducs sont hors service depuis des mois en raison du sabotage des infrastructures par l'insurrection.

Turquie: deux soldats tués, six blessés par une mine posée par le PKK

AFP

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même source.

Les rebelles du parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) pratiquent fréquemment ce type d'attaques pour s'en prendre aux forces de sécurité turques. Deux soldats et un rebelle ont été tués mardi dans des heurts dans cette région. Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, a accru ses attaques depuis le début de l'année.

LE DEVOIR

La partition de l'Irak

SERGE TRUFFAUT 17 juillet 2007

Les attentats commis hier en Irak confirment ce que le gouvernement Bush se refuse d'admettre: le pays est en proie à une guerre civile. Ils confirment même son extension géographique. C'est à Kirkouk, dans le Kurdistan irakien, que les kamikazes ont fait sauter leurs bombes. L'évolution du conflit est à la fois si ample et si sanglante qu'elle laisse présager une partition du pays.

Parmi les cibles détruites par les auteurs des attentats, une mérite une attention plus soutenue, soit le siège de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK). Celui-ci est dirigé par Jalal Talabani, qui est également président de l'Irak. Depuis qu'il occupe ce poste, il s'est employé, avec le soutien de divers leaders kurdes, à convaincre ses compatriotes de s'installer à Kirkouk, ville située dans le sud de la province kurde. Ils cherchent ainsi à contrebalancer une politique imposée par Saddam Hussein.

Lorsqu'il dirigeait le pays, ce dictateur avait décidé d'installer des milliers d'Arabes sunnites à Kirkouk, alors habitée par une majorité de Kurdes. En agissant de la sorte, Hussein voulait s'assurer un contrôle plus ferme des immenses richesses pétrolières qui distinguent cette région. Peut-être faut-il rappeler que l'essentiel des réserves en hydrocarbures est concentré dans les environs de Kirkouk et au sud du pays. CQFD: elles se trouvent soit en territoire kurde, soit en territoire chiite. Les sunnites? Ils disposent de trois fois rien.

Toujours est-il que les responsables kurdes, Talabani en tête, ont fait du statut de Kirkouk leur priorité politique de l'année. À l'automne,

ils entendent organiser un référendum sur le sujet. Le résultat est aisé à deviner: les Kurdes étant plus nombreux, ils vont voter en faveur du rattachement administratif de Kirkouk au gouvernement de la seule province... autonome de l'Irak.

On s'en doute, les visées de Talabani font grincer les dents. Plus exactement, elles aiguissent l'opposition des sunnites qui, n'ayant toujours pas digéré le modèle fédéral inscrit dans la Constitution, n'entendent pas lâcher Kirkouk. En fait, ils redoutent que, après la réalisation de l'arrimage de la ville au gouvernement kurde, celui-ci ne fasse sécession. À ce propos, il faut rappeler que les responsables kurdes avaient profité des élections générales pour mener un référendum sur l'indépendance. Et alors? Au-delà de 90 % des électeurs avaient exprimé leur désir de séparation.

Si les Kurdes décident effectivement de divorcer et de ne pas partager de fait la rente pétrolière, alors plus rien ne pourra empêcher la balkanisation de l'Irak. Selon des chercheurs du Brookings Institute de Washington, l'indépendance du Kurdistan se traduirait naturellement par l'autonomisation des provinces du sud chiite et l'autonomisation, forcée, elle, de l'ouest sunnite. Avant que les premières ne soient éventuellement greffées à l'Irak et les secondes à l'Arabie saoudite.

Dans la foulée de cette extension géographique, la Turquie a décidé de réagir, d'envoyer des signaux indiquant clairement qu'elle ne resterait pas les bras croisés. En effet, il y a une dizaine

de jours, Ankara a ordonné la concentration de 150 000 soldats le long de la frontière irakienne. Jusqu'à présent, le gouvernement turc a toujours laissé entendre que l'indépendance du Kurdistan ne passerait pas comme une lettre à la poste. D'autant moins qu'il craint comme la peste qu'une telle indépendance ait pour conséquence immédiate un renforcement du mouvement nationaliste kurde en Turquie.

Cela étant, il faut se demander si la partition de fait de l'Irak n'est pas en train de se produire. Car, même en faisant abstraction des épisodes sanglants et de leurs origines, que constate-t-on? Que deux millions de personnes se sont exilées, que presque autant se sont déplacées à l'intérieur du pays et que, chaque mois, 50 000 individus plient bagage. On s'en doute, les sunnites rejoignent les sunnites, les chiites rejoignent les chiites, etc.

La dégradation aussi rapide que généralisée de l'Irak est telle qu'il y a de quoi être étonné, c'est le moins que l'on puisse dire, par l'aveuglement du gouvernement Bush. Refuser de reconnaître et de prendre en considération le FAIT qu'une guerre civile a cours en Mésopotamie est irresponsable. On comprend qu'une telle admission consisterait à confesser s'être trompé. C'est pourtant bel et bien le cas. On a beau avoir composé une Constitution, organisé des élections et ajouté des milliers de soldats, rien, absolument rien n'y fait. Si le président Bush observait le principe de réalité, il constaterait la guerre civile.

Attentat suicide très meurtrier à Kirkouk

AFP

Un double attentat a fait au moins 80 morts et 130 blessés à Kirkouk, dans le nord de l'Irak. Un bilan provisoire.

KIRKOUK (Irak), 16 juil 2007 (AFP) - Au moins 71 personnes ont été tuées et de nombreuses autres blessées lundi dans un attentat suicide à la voiture piégée à Kirkouk, dans le nord de l'Irak, a annoncé le chef de la police de la ville.

"La plupart des blessés, dont des femmes et des enfants, sont dans un état critique en raison de brûlures", a ajouté le chef de la police de Kirkouk, Bourh an Habib Tayyeb. Après l'explosion, des véhicules de police ont parcouru les rues désertées de la ville en appelant dans des micros la population à donner du sang.

Des témoins ont raconté que la plupart des bâtiments proches du lieu de l'explosion se sont effondrés, tandis que les secours continuaient de retirer des corps des décombres. Des habitants se sont précipités dans les hôpitaux pour obtenir des nouvelles de leurs proches.

Un peu plus d'une heure après cette forte déflagration, une voiture piégée a explosé près d'un marché de la ville, tuant une personne. La police avait évoqué dans un premier temps un attentat au camion piégé, avant de préciser qu'il s'agissait finalement d'un double attentat, dont l'un a été particulièrement meurtrier.

Le bâtiment visé dans la première attaque abrite des organisations locales non gouvernementales, dont le comité olympique local, qui représentent un symbole du pouvoir kurde dans cette ville multiethnique.

Depuis l'invasion américaine de l'Irak en 2003, Kirkouk, la troisième ville du pays où cohabitent des Arabes, des Kurdes et des Turcomans, a été bien plus épargnée par les violences que Bagdad.

Avant les attentats de lundi, des officiers américains avaient évoqué "un niveau de violence acceptable" dans la région de Kirkouk, marqué occasionnellement par l'explosion d'engins piégés, d'enlèvements et d'échanges de coups de feu, mais jamais par une attaque de l'ampleur de celle du lundi.

Les attentats de Kirkouk portent la marque des insurgés d'Al-Qaïda, qui se sont enracinés dans les villages sunnites de la région, où nombre d'entre eux ont un ressentiment vis-à-vis de ce qu'ils considèrent comme une domination kurde.

"La ville est une énorme ville pétrolière, mais les Kurdes contrôlent tout -- les forces de sécurité, le gouvernement, le pétrole, tout", avait déclaré la semaine dernière à l'AFP un paysan sunnite arabe vivant au sud de Kirkouk.



Les tensions se sont accrues au cours des derniers mois en raison d'un article de la Constitution irakienne prévoyant un référendum avant de la fin de l'année sur l'adhésion ou non de la ville au gouvernement régional autonome du Kurdistan irakien.

Après la chute du régime de Saddam Hussein en 2003, nombre de Kurdes qui avaient fui les persécutions de l'ex-dictateur sont revenus à Kirkouk et contrôlent maintenant le gouvernement local et la plupart des forces de sécurité.

Syrie: Assad promet de régler le contentieux kurde

AFP

DAMAS, 17 juil 2007 (AFP) - Le président syrien Bachar al-Assad a annoncé mardi que des mesures concrètes allaient être prises pour accorder la nationalité à des Kurdes syriens qui en sont privés, lors de son discours d'investiture pour un deuxième mandat devant le Parlement.

"Il existe un consensus en Syrie sur la nécessité de régler la question du recensement de 1962", a déclaré M. Assad, en référence aux Kurdes apatrides privés de la citoyenneté syrienne à l'issue de ce recensement officiel.

Le président syrien, qui a prêté serment mardi devant le Parlement pour un deuxième mandat, a promis de régler ce problème, évoquant "un projet de loi

en phase d'élaboration".

Le congrès du Baas, lors d'une réunion en juin 2005, avait "affirmé la nécessité de régler le problème du recensement organisé en 1962 à Hassaké (nord) et d'oeuvrer pour le développement de la région" nord-est, où sont installés la majorité des 1,5 million de Kurdes syriens.

Selon des responsables de partis kurdes syriens, 225.000 Kurdes sont privés de la nationalité depuis ce recensement, qui ne les avait pas comptabilisés.

Les responsables kurdes de Syrie se défendent de toutes visées sécessionnistes et assurent qu'ils veulent uniquement la reconnaissance de leur langue et de leur culture, ainsi que de leurs droits politiques.

Turquie: deux soldats et un rebelle kurde tués lors de heurts

AFP

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 17 juil 2007 (AFP) - Deux soldats turcs et un rebelle kurde ont été tués lors de combats avec des rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le sud-est anatolien, a annoncé mardi l'armée.

L'accrochage s'est produit lundi entre des soldats en patrouille et des rebelles du PKK dans la région montagneuse de Bestler, dans la province de Sirmak, riveraine de l'Irak et de la Syrie.

Un premier bilan donné par les autorités locales faisait état de deux morts

dans les rangs de l'armée. L'état-major a ensuite précisé dans un communiqué qu'un rebelle avait aussi été abattu.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, a accru ses attaques depuis le début de l'année.

Selon un décompte réalisé par une association de défense des droits de l'Homme, utilisant sources officielles et indépendantes, 111 membres des forces de l'ordre, 109 rebelles du PKK et cinq civils ont été tués dans le sud-est anatolien, à la population majoritairement kurde, de début janvier à fin juin.

Un attentat sanglant vise la ville multiethnique de Kirkouk

Le Monde
Mercredi 18 juillet 2007

LA VILLE multiethnique de Kirkouk a été le théâtre d'un attentat-suicide à la voiture piégée qui a causé la mort d'au moins 76 personnes, lundi 16 juillet. Plus de 180 personnes ont été blessées par la déflagration qui s'est produite devant des locaux de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) du président Jalal Talabani.

Un peu plus d'une heure après cet attentat, une autre voiture piégée a explosé près d'un marché de la ville, blessant une personne. Un officier a également été tué dans une attaque contre une patrouille de police au sud de la ville.

Depuis l'invasion américaine de l'Irak en 2003, Kirkouk, où cohabitent des Arabes, des Kurdes et des Turcomans, a été relativement épargnée par la violence.

Avant les attentats de lundi, des officiers américains avaient évoqué « un niveau de violence acceptable » dans cette zone. Kirkouk et sa région furent certes la cible d'attentats dans le passé, mais moins meurtrier que celui de lundi.

Ces attentats portent la marque des insurgés d'Al-Qaida, présents dans les villages sunnites de la région, où se dévelop-

pe un ressentiment vis-à-vis de ce qui est considéré comme une domination kurde. Après la chute de Saddam Hussein en 2003, nombre de Kurdes qui avaient fui les persécutions imposées par l'ancien régime irakien sont revenus à Kirkouk et contrôlent maintenant le gouvernement local et la plupart des forces de sécurité.

Les tensions se sont accrues au cours des derniers mois en raison d'un article de la Constitution irakienne prévoyant

un référendum avant la fin de l'année sur l'adhésion ou non de la ville, la troisième du pays, riche en ressources pétrolières,

au gouvernement régional autonome du Kurdistan.

Par ailleurs, l'agence de presse britannique Reuters a demandé, lundi, à l'armée américaine, une enquête « objective » sur la mort, la semaine précédente, à Bagdad, de l'un de ses photographes et de son chauffeur irakiens.

Cette demande est motivée par des doutes sur les explications fournies par les militaires américains sur les circonstances du décès des deux hommes, qui auraient été pris dans des combats, selon l'armée américaine. - (AFP, Reuters.) ■

TURQUIE ÉLECTIONS LÉGISLATIVES ANTICIPÉES

L'AKP veut gouverner seule la Turquie, sans s'allier aux « indépendants »

ISTANBUL

CORRESPONDANCE

L'assassinat, lundi soir 16 juillet à Istanbul, quelques jours avant les élections législatives du 22 juillet, de l'un des quelque 7 000 candidats qui s'y présentent n'a guère bouleversé la campagne électorale. Mais il en a éclairé l'un des coins sombres : selon la police, le candidat Tuncay Seyranlioglu, un homme d'affaires poursuivi pour fraude, devait de l'argent à ses assassins, arrêtés mardi.

M. Seyranlioglu était l'un des 700 candidats « indépendants », les autres relevant des quatorze partis en lice. Ces « indépendants » se répartissent en « indépendants kurdes », en « vrais indépendants » et en... « indépendants commerciaux ». Le défunt faisait apparemment partie de cette dernière catégorie, la plus nombreuse : ses candidats recouvrent parfois leur mise en vendant, avant le scrutin, « leurs » centaines ou milliers de voix (clans, tribus, groupes mafieux ou autres) à de « vrais » candidats.

Mais le fait marquant de ce scrutin est la présence des deux autres sortes d'« indépendants » - les Kurdes nationalistes qui devraient revenir au Parlement après une absence de seize ans, et les démocrates, comme l'intellectuel Baskin Oran, qui veulent pallier la dérive nationaliste des diverses « gauches » turques. Elus, ils pourraient avoir un rôle pivot décisif dans la prochaine Assemblée, ou du moins y générer de nouvelles idées... ou de nouvelles crises.

Pour l'instant, celle qui a secoué la Turquie en avril-mai est assoupie : la convocation du scrutin anticipé a calmé les passions. En Turquie, on respecte les urnes. Mais selon les résultats, le pays peut, ou non, renouer avec la crise.

L'enjeu n'a jamais été de savoir si le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP), le parti « post-islamiste » du premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, va gagner. Les sondages indiquent qu'il devance toujours largement ses adversaires - du jamais vu pour un parti turc après quatre ans et demi au pouvoir. L'incertitude est de savoir s'il aura assez de sièges pour continuer à gouverner seul, et surtout pour élire un président de la République de son choix, ou s'il lui faudra pour cela s'allier à d'autres. C'est-à-dire aux « indépendants ».

Promesse de M. Erdogan

Car nul n'imagine ces anciens islamistes, devenus globalistes et pro-occidentaux, s'allier à l'un des deux autres partis qui devraient entrer au Parlement : le Parti républicain du peuple (CHP) des vieilles élites kémalistes, principal parti d'opposition, et le Parti d'action nationaliste (MHP) des « Loups gris » d'extrême-droite, qui pourraient faire leur retour à l'Assemblée, peut-être même en force. Car tous deux accusent l'AKP, à lon-

gueur de campagne, non plus tant de vouloir introduire la charia (loi islamique)

que d'avoir « vendu le pays aux étrangers », de « soutenir les terroristes kurdes qui veulent diviser le pays », voire d'être « infiltrés par les Arméniens et les juifs ».

Le discours est certes plus outrancier chez les Loups gris que chez les kémalistes. Beaucoup de ces derniers professent toujours les principes sociaux-démocrates du fondateur de la République. Mais leur chef, Deniz Baykal, ayant résolulement pris le tournant nationaliste, une alliance CHP-MHP pour gouverner est un scénario envisagé par certains sondages, au grand effroi des libéraux et des milieux d'affaires. Mais apparemment pas par M. Erdogan qui a promis, mardi, de se retirer de la vie politique si son parti ne gagnait pas avec une marge suffisante pour gouverner seul. ■

SOPHIE SHIHAB

Le Monde
Jeudi 19 juillet 2007

En Turquie, les « indépendants » pro-kurdes espèrent faire leur entrée au Parlement

Dans les provinces à majorité kurde du Sud-Est, contrôlées par l'armée, la campagne pour les élections législatives du 22 juillet reste fortement marquée par les solidarités claniques

SIRNAK
ENVOYÉ SPÉCIAL

Aux points de contrôle qui quadrillent la plaine de Sirnak, les candidats doivent montrer patte blanche pour aller à la rencontre de leurs électeurs. La campagne pour le scrutin du 22 juillet se tient dans une ambiance pesante : les trois provinces du sud-est de la Turquie, à majorité kurde, ont été placées sous « mesures exceptionnelles de sécurité » par l'armée jusqu'au 9 septembre. Certaines zones sont interdites d'accès pour cause d'opérations militaires. « En dehors des centres-villes, tout est plus ou moins interdit », constate Ahmet Ertak, maire de Sirnak et membre du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP), parti pro-kurde considéré par Ankara comme la vitrine légale du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatiste). « Par exemple, les villages autour de Beytüşsebab sont très difficiles d'accès », montre-t-il sur une carte. Son parti dénonce ces « élections sous état d'urgence ».

Candidate du DTP à Sirnak, Savahir Bayindir craint des fraudes massives dans les villages contrôlés par l'armée. « C'est déjà arrivé par le passé. C'est un moyen pour les militaires d'empêcher les Kurdes de s'organiser. Ce n'est pas un hasard si ces opérations interviennent en pleine campagne électorale », estime-t-elle. Dans la zone de Güclükonak, théâtre d'opérations de l'armée contre les rebelles kurdes, le candidat Hasip Kaplan dénonce « des pressions des militaires dans les bidonvilles pour empêcher les gens de voter pour les candidats indépendants ». Car pour ces élections législatives, les candidats du DTP se présentent en « indépendants ». Une tactique destinée à contourner le barrage de 10 % des voix, nécessaire à une formation pour entrer au Parlement. Il y a cinq ans, malgré des scores élevés localement, le parti n'avait obtenu que 6,2 % au niveau national. Les candidats pro-kurdes espèrent cette fois former un groupe d'une trentaine de députés et peser dans la future Assemblée. Leur leader, Nurettin Deniztaş, a même revendiqué, dimanche, quatre postes ministériels si son parti formait une coalition avec l'AKP de Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Une éventualité que l'actuel premier ministre rejette catégoriquement.



Des militants kurdes brandissent des portraits du chef emprisonné du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, le 15 juillet, à Istanbul. MUSTAFA OZER/AFP

Nouvelles règles

Pour mobiliser leurs électeurs habitués à l'étiquette partisane, les « indépendants » pro-kurdes ont envoyé leurs militants battre le rappel. Cette année, les noms de tous les candidats « indépendants » seront regroupés sur un même bulletin. Un procédé que le DTP estime destiné à semer la confusion parmi ses sympathisants. Dans les faubourgs d'Istanbul, peuplés de nombreux immigrants kurdes, le taux d'illettrisme élevé est un obstacle de plus. Des dizaines d'étudiants ont donc été envoyés pour faire du porte-à-porte et expliquer ces nouvelles règles.

Dans le Sud-Est, la campagne législative reste cantonnée aux centres-villes, sillonnés par les caravanes publicitaires. Mais dans ces régions où subsiste un système tribal ancestral, les *asiret*, le plus important est de rallier les chefs de clans. Abdurhaman Keskin est l'un de ces notables tri-

baux. A Hakkari, il aura la haute main sur plusieurs milliers de votes. Écarté de la candidature par le Parti démocrate (DP, centre droit), il va appeler à voter pour le Parti républicain du peuple (CHP, gauche nationaliste), malgré le soutien de ce parti à une intervention de l'armée contre les rebelles kurdes réfugiés en Irak.

« Si notre chef estime qu'il faut donner nos voix au CHP, nous le ferons », approuve Lezgin, un instituteur. « Moi je voterai quand même pour le DTP », maugrée son voisin. Le clan des Dotski, lui, restera fidèle à Esat Canan, qui a quitté le CHP pour se présenter en « indépendant ». Le vote dans ces zones kurdes obéit souvent plus à des solidarités claniques ou familiales qu'à des convictions personnelles. Chez un marchand de miel de Hakkari, Mehmet, fonctionnaire, assure qu'il votera pour l'AKP (Parti de la justice et du développement), parce que son oncle est candidat, mais qu'il soutient quand même le DTP. ■

GUILLAUME PERRIER

Le défi du PKK est devenu l'enjeu majeur des élections turques

TURQUIE. Derrière les escarmouches à la frontière entre les fidèles d'Abdullah Öcalan et l'armée d'Ankara, l'autonomie du nord de l'Irak et son pétrole. Reportage.

Abdullah Öcalan ne vieillit pas: c'est un homme de pierre. Son portrait en cailloux peints apparaît à flanc de montagne, au détour de la route, loin de Raniyah, le dernier village dans la vallée. Des gardes arrêtent la voiture, interdisent les photos. C'est l'entrée d'une des enclaves contrôlées par le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), au nord de l'Irak. Celle-ci, Kortek, est à quelques kilomètres de la frontière iranienne. La plus grande, Qandil, au nord, touche la frontière turque.

Cette semaine, le canon a tonné des deux côtés. Les Gardiens de la révolution ont bombardé une base du Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan (PJAK), la petite branche iranienne du PKK, pour punir une incursion. Au nord, l'artillerie turque a tiré des salves du côté de Zakho, après deux incidents qui ont coûté la vie à quatre soldats, près de Sirnak, au sud de la Turquie.

Routine d'une guerre de basse intensité. Mais dans la campagne électorale turque qui s'achève, elle a tenu une place centrale. L'opposition républicaine et nationaliste au gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan s'est emparée des 74 soldats tombés depuis le début de l'année pour dénoncer la mollesse de l'AKP (islamiste modéré) sur les questions de sécurité et dans la lutte «contre les terroristes». L'autre jour,

dans un meeting, l'ultra-nationaliste Devlet Bahçeli brandissait une corde pour pendre Öcalan. Mais la peine de mort n'existe plus en Turquie. Depuis qu'il a été pris en 1999, le chef du PKK est en prison à vie sur la mer de Marmara.

L'armée, qui n'aime pas l'AKP, accompagne en sourdine l'opposition. Elle a déployé des renforts dans le sud-est (100000? 200000 hommes?), sur la frontière irakienne, prêts à intervenir de l'autre côté contre les bases du PKK. Elle attendait des ordres, montrait de l'impatience à ne pas les voir venir. Le gouvernement a dû montrer les dents, pas trop: quelques volées d'obus. Abdullah Gul, le ministre des Affaires étrangères, a protesté à Vienne parce que les Autrichiens ont laissé Riza Altun, le trésorier du PKK, prendre l'avion pour Erbil. Il a dit qu'il demanderait des comptes à Washington s'il s'avérait que la guérilla kurde a bien reçu des armes américaines. Drôle d'histoire. L'armée a sorti quatre transfuges du PKK qui affirment avoir assisté à une livraison. Le problème, c'est que les Américains équipent les combattants du PJAK, pour chatouiller les Iraniens. Or le PJAK et le PKK, dans les enclaves d'Irak, c'est la même chose.

La preuve. A Kortek, l'homme de garde, qui a posé sur une chaise le Journal de Bolivie de Che Guevara pour aller

chercher un officier, est un Iranien. Son supérieur monte à pas lents d'un abri invisible de la route. Il n'est pas rasé, n'a pas dû dormir depuis des jours. Hamza - il donne ce nom - explique qu'on ne peut pas parler à un cadre du PKK sans avoir pris rendez-vous. Et comme la guérilla n'utilise plus de téléphone... Mais il s'assied, se met à répondre.

Il est dans la montagne depuis douze ans, après une formation militante en Allemagne. «Apo (Öcalan, ndlr.) m'a révélé à moi-même, dit-il. Avant, je ne savais même pas que j'étais kurde. J'ignorais l'histoire et la langue.» Après? «Je me battrais 40 ans s'il le faut. L'armée turque ne nous fait pas peur. Ni les Américains s'ils nous attaquent.»

Que veut maintenant le PKK? Hamza a une théorie amusante: «Il faut conquérir nos libertés avec l'aide de l'Europe, pour arracher l'indépendance.» Öcalan, depuis qu'il est prisonnier, a mis en fait de l'eau dans son vin: il expose dans ses écrits un vague projet de confédération où les Kurdes auraient leur place.

La guerre, qui a repris en 2004 après une trêve liée à la chute du chef, n'est plus aussi atroce que dans les années 1990, quand les villages kurdes étaient rasés par centaines. Le gouvernement d'Ankara, pressé par l'Europe, a ébauché des réformes: le

kurde dans les écoles - pas publiques; trois quarts d'heure de programme à la TV. Mais la vraie télévision kurde s'appelle Roj, elle émet du Danemark. Osman Baydemir, le maire de Diyarbakir, «capitale» kurde de Turquie, y a parlé du PKK comme d'une «résistance armée»; il est aujourd'hui poursuivi. Encore un effort...

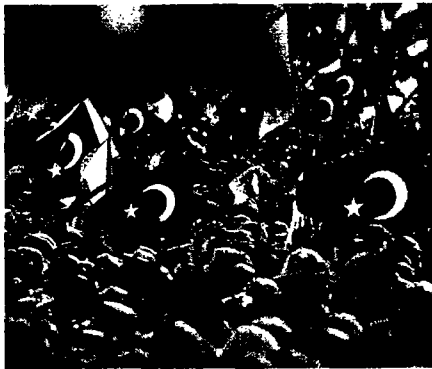
Avant 2003, l'armée turque n'hésitait pas à lancer des raids dans le nord de l'Irak pour détruire les bases du PKK. Aujourd'hui, avec les Américains dans les parages, qui ne veulent pas d'une déstabilisation de la région autonome, ce n'est plus possible.

L'armée, pourtant, est sur la frontière. Elle n'aime pas cette demi-paix qui la ligote. Et elle a, avec le «pouvoir profond» d'Ankara, un autre objectif: Kirkouk. C'est l'obsession turque: empêcher les Kurdes d'Irak de mettre la main, avec l'aval américain, sur cette ville imbibée de pétrole. Les arguments turcs ne sont pas que militaires: la région autonome dépend économiquement de la Turquie, y compris pour les exportations de pétrole. Kirkouk, cependant, est déjà presque un fief de l'UPK, l'un des deux partis kurdes d'Irak. Et sur la montagne de Kortek, le PKK est installé dans une caserne des peshmergas del'UPK

TURQUIE
L'ARMÉE MASSÉE
PRÈS DU KURDISTAN

À LA VEILLE DES ÉLECTIONS législatives en Turquie, 200 000 soldats sont déployés dans le sud-est du pays, massés le long de la frontière irakienne. Selon Ankara, les rebelles séparatistes kurdes du PKK (classé terroriste) sont toujours retranchés dans les montagnes du Kurdistan autonome irakien, avec la bénédiction du président Barzani, Kurde ennemi juré des Turcs. Les velléités de la région kurde d'annexer Kirkouk, riche en pétrole et qui compte une minorité turkmène, attisent leur courroux.

Sur son territoire, la Turquie fait face à un regain de violence : 220 militaires et combattants du PKK ont trouvé la mort au cours des six premiers mois de 2007. Dans ce contexte qui rappelle les heures sanglantes de la guerre civile, l'état-major de



La Turquie à la veille des élections.

l'armée met la pression sur le gouvernement pour obtenir le feu vert des députés à une opération transfrontalière. Les militaires, qui sont intervenus dans l'élection présidentielle en avril pour la torpiller, ont le soutien des nationalistes, adversaires des islamo-conservateurs de l'AKP au pouvoir.

La « terreur » kurde monopolise les meetings électoraux, l'extrême droite propose de pendre Abdullah Öcalan, le chef du PKK emprisonné à vie, les Américains sont accusés de fournir des armes aux séparatistes... Et pour servir cette sur-enchère va-t-en-guerre, les funérailles des « martyrs » – le terme officiel pour les soldats et les miliciens tués dans des combats contre le PKK – sont retransmises sur les chaînes de télé avec des gros plans sur les mères effondrées de douleur et sur la foule qui appelle à la vengeance, le poing levé.

Les enjeux sur la scène politique inté-

rieure sont primordiaux. Les opposants à l'AKP ont tout d'abord joué la carte de la menace islamiste pour faire échouer l'élection à la présidence d'Abdullah Gül. Ils sortent désormais le joker du terrorisme kurde pour déstabiliser le gouvernement.

En refusant de déclencher l'opération militaire, le Premier ministre est accusé de ne pas protéger la nation. Mais si Erdogan s'embourbe en Irak, il en portera la responsabilité. ■

LAURE MARCHAND



SAMEDI 21 ET DIMANCHE 22 JUILLET 2007

Les Kurdes espèrent des députés
Malgré un regain de tensions, près de 40 candidats sont éligibles.

Diyarbakir (Turquie) envoyé spécial

C'est une euphorie tranquille qui depuis trois semaines a gagné toute la ville de Diyarbakir, la capitale d'un Sud-Est anatolien peuplé en majorité de Kurdes. « Cette fois, il est certain que nous serons enfin représentés au Parlement », estime Seyhmus Diken, historien et écrivain soulignant que « la vraie question est de savoir si le parlement turc sera assez tolérant pour permettre une solution pacifique du problème kurde. »

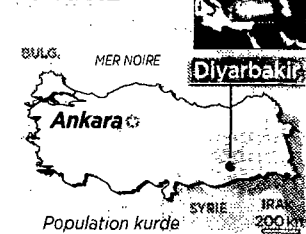
13 millions de Kurdes vivent en Turquie. Sous la pression de l'Union européenne, des réformes, par exemple libéralisant l'emploi de la langue kurde, ont été adoptées mais elles restent le plus souvent sur le papier. Les rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ont repris leurs attaques et quelque 60 militaires ont été tués depuis le mois de mai. Les affrontements des années 90 avaient fait plus de 35 000 morts.

Barrage. Partout dans le pays kurde le DTP (Parti de la société démocratique accusé d'être la vitrine politique du PKK) a décidé de présenter des candidats indépendants. Il évite ainsi le barrage imposant aux partis un minimum de 10% des voix à l'échelle nationale pour avoir des re-

présentants au Parlement. Des partis kurdes avaient essayé par deux fois en 1999 et en 2002 d'envoyer des élus à Ankara mais bien que recueillant plus de 40% des votes dans le Sud-Est et l'Est anatoliens, ils n'en avaient eu que 6% à l'échelle nationale. Entre 30 et 40 indépendants devraient cette fois entrer au Parlement qui compte 550 membres.

Figure emblématique de la cause kurde l'ancienne députée Leyla Zana, emprisonnée pendant plus de dix ans, n'a pu présenter sa candidature car les procédures judiciaires à son

TURQUIE



encontre ne sont pas achevées. Le DTP, qui présente ses candidats indépendants sous la bannière des « Candidats des mille espoirs », soutient également certains candidats turcs de gauche, mais pas Baskin Oran, candidat d'une Turquie plurielle (Libération de jeudi), qui n'a jamais hésité à critiquer publiquement le

PKK. Dans sa circonscription se présente Dogan Erbas, avocat d'Abdullah Öcalan, le leader du PKK condamné à perpétuité et détenu depuis 1999. « Le problème de ce parti kurde est qu'il reste coincé entre l'Etat turc et le PKK et je ne sais même pas s'il pourra agir au Parlement sans l'accord du PKK » estime l'intellectuel kurde Ümit Firat.

Etat de siège. L'enjeu est important si le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan, issu du mouvement islamiste, n'obtient pas la majorité aux élections de dimanche. L'ex-président du DTP, Ahmet Türk, candidat indépendant à Mardi (Sud-Est), a déclaré lundi dernier que « les Kurdes pouvaient coopérer voire soutenir l'AKP. » Le DTP demande notamment l'amnistie pour les combattants du PKK.

L'armée turque a décrété depuis trois semaines une sorte d'Etat de siège dans certaines régions frontalières turco-irakiennes et quelque 140 000 soldats y sont massés. L'opposition nationale, (CHP, social-démocrate, et MHP, extrême droite) soutient

une éventuelle opération en Irak du nord contre « les terroristes séparatistes soutenus par les Kurdes d'Irak et Washington ». Le gouvernement du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) y est hostile. « Il y a une entente objective entre l'armée turque et le PKK pour que la violence continue » accuse Ahmet Insel de l'université de Galatasaray soulignant que le problème kurde hypothèque l'ensemble du processus de démocratisation. ◆

Ahmet Insel, universitaire

RAGIP DURAN

ÉLECTIONS LES DEUX TURQUIE

Le 22 juillet, les Turcs se rendent aux urnes pour élire leurs députés. Les islamistes modérés au pouvoir semblent favoris. L'opposition laïque doit envisager une alliance avec l'extrême droite pour offrir une alternative.

Une fracture culturelle

GAZETEM (extraits)

Istanbul

La Turquie va tout droit vers un sérieux règlement de comptes. Le pays ne s'est pas divisé, comme on pouvait le craindre, sur des questions ethniques ou religieuses. Non, en réalité, le clivage que l'on peut observer en Turquie aujourd'hui est plus profond et bien plus terrifiant. La "fracture culturelle", à l'œuvre depuis l'avènement de la République, est maintenant de plus en plus marquée entre deux groupes. Le premier groupe représente une part importante de la population dont les épouses se couvrent la tête, dont les hommes peuvent sortir dans la rue en pyjama et dont les garçons vont au café alors que les filles subissent de plein fouet la pression liée au contrôle social. Ce sont les mêmes qui se déchaussent avant d'entrer dans une maison, qui apprécient un style musical à mi-chemin entre la musique folklorique et l'"arabesque" [variété musicale s'inspirant de la musique arabe], qui parfois n'ont jamais lu un livre, qui ne sont jamais allés non plus en couple au restaurant, qui aiment le kitsch, qui ont peu étudié et qui, bien sûr, sont très croyants.

PAS DE SOCLE CULTUREL COMMUN POUVANT LES RÉUNIR

En face, il y a un second groupe de gens, évoluant selon des standards de vie à l'occidentale, dont les enfants étudient par exemple au Robert College d'Istanbul. Les membres de ce second groupe vont au cinéma et ont déjà lu au moins quelques livres. Leurs goûts musicaux se situent entre la pop et la musique classique, et leurs maisons sont décorées avec un certain goût. Même s'ils ne les autorisent pas en principe, ils ferment les yeux sur les flirts de leurs filles et croient en Dieu sans être pratiquants. Leurs femmes ne portent pas le foulard et, même s'ils ne comprennent pas grand-chose à la qualité du vin, il leur arrive de consommer des boissons alcoolisées. Lecteurs de journaux, ils se considèrent comme plus évolués que le premier groupe. Les styles de ces deux groupes sont à l'opposé l'un de l'autre. Il n'existe pas de socle culturel commun pouvant les réunir, comme c'est le cas en Occident, où par exemple la musique d'église, l'iconographie religieuse et les récits bibliques, parfois adaptés au cinéma, ont créé une sensibilité partagée par différentes classes

sociales. En Turquie, tout les sépare : modes de vie, sensibilités, croyances. Il y a même de plus en plus d'inimitié entre eux. Le premier groupe a été rejeté et dévalorisé pendant toutes les décennies précédentes. Mais, aujourd'hui, il s'est structuré politiquement, au point qu'il incarne désormais une force politique capable de gagner n'importe quelle élection. Le second groupe, inférieur en nombre, ne semble plus en mesure de pouvoir remporter la moindre élection.

C'est dans ce contexte que nous nous trouvons face à une situation tout à fait paradoxale. En effet, le second groupe, bien qu'adhérant aux valeurs politiques occidentales, adopte néanmoins une position de défiance vis-à-vis de l'Occident et de ses principes démocratiques dès lors qu'il sait qu'il ne pourra plus jamais arriver au pouvoir par les urnes. Par contre, la frange de la population dont le style de vie est à l'opposé des standards occidentaux, parce qu'elle a compris qu'elle n'accéderait au pouvoir qu'en

adoptant précisément ces critères occidentaux, souhaite développer des liens avec l'Occident et faire en sorte que la démocratie devienne la norme. Face à ce scénario de fracture culturelle, l'armée se voit attribuer un rôle très important.

En effet, si elle décidait d'apporter son soutien au premier groupe, acceptant ainsi les principes de la démocratie à l'occidentale, l'armée perdrait le pouvoir politique dont elle jouit actuellement. Bien qu'elle compte dans ses rangs une majorité de soldats issus du groupe aujourd'hui

Plutôt brun que vert !

Le directeur du quotidien kémaliste Cumhuriyet appelle à une alliance entre les sociaux-démocrates et l'extrême droite.

La semaine dernière, j'ai publié un article sur le MHP [Parti d'action nationaliste, extrême droite] et ce fut l'apocalypse médiatique. Les Machiavel turcs ont réagi en écrivant tout et n'importe quoi sur les péchés passés du MHP, ses attaques contre la gauche, les actes de torture commis par certains de ses membres – y compris à mon encontre. Bref, tout un chacun, fouillant dans le passé, a voué le MHP aux pires gémonies. Pourquoi ? Parce que la formation probable d'une coalition CHP-MHP [sociaux-démocrates et extrême droite] après les élections rend folle cette bande de religieux et de gauchistes.

Pas de quoi en faire un plat. Allons au cœur du sujet : pour obtenir le soutien de l'administration américaine, l'AKP [islamistes modérés, au pouvoir] a décidé d'adopter une stratégie de résignation face à la terreur exercée par le PKK [Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, séparatiste], de fermer les yeux devant les actes séparatistes, de vivre une histoire d'amour avec Talabani et Barzani [leaders kurdes irakiens] et, finalement, de céder ouvertement le pays aux étrangers, morceau par morceau. Une politique prônée par des leaders vendus, à laquelle s'oppose justement le MHP. Le MHP est-il le seul parti à s'y opposer ? Non, tous les autres partis s'élèvent également contre la politique de bradage du pays par l'AKP. Résultat : l'AKP se retrouve seul et isolé. Alors, pourquoi faire tant de bruit à ce sujet

[une coalition CHP-MHP] ? De 1999 à 2002, le DSP [nationaliste de gauche] de Bülent Ecevit et le MHP de Devlet Bahçeli n'ont-ils pas formé une coalition ? La panique des gauchistes et des opportunistes ne sert pas à grand-chose, car la Turquie se rend compte du danger. De droite comme de gauche, progressistes ou conservateurs, tous vont se retrouver pour sauver la Turquie républicaine. Le passé, c'est le passé, et la haine héritée du passé a tellement vieilli qu'elle ne figure même plus dans le carnet de contentieux de l'épicier du coin. La vengeance ou le crime d'honneur ne sont pas dignes d'un intellectuel contemporain. Et, pour défendre la république laïque d'Atatürk, je trouve naturel, au nom de la nécessité patriotique, de tendre la main à ceux qui m'ont torturé hier.

Ihlan Selçuk, Cumhuriyet, Istanbul

majoritaire dans la société, elle collabore néanmoins avec le second, qui du point de vue sociologique ne lui ressemble pourtant pas, afin de préserver son pouvoir. D'une certaine façon, l'armée trahit ainsi ses origines sociologiques. Dans ce contexte, ces deux groupes semblent prêts pour un affrontement dont l'objectif est la prise du pouvoir politique. Par le développement d'un secteur économique dynamique en Anatolie, le premier groupe a désormais acquis une certaine puissance. En plus, grâce à l'accumulation de capital, il finance dorénavant ses relais politiques. Ce premier groupe est soutenu par le grand patronat, par une frange d'intellectuels persuadés que la démocratie est la seule voie vers la stabilité du pays, ainsi que par des fonctionnaires estimant qu'il faut réformer la structure de l'Etat.

UNE FRACTURE AUX CONSÉQUENCES DRAMATIQUES À L'ÉCHELON MONDIAL

Le second groupe, paradoxalement, n'est pas très puissant sur le plan économique. Mais il jouit du soutien du pouvoir judiciaire, de l'armée et d'une majorité des membres de la haute administration. Pour ce groupe, le pouvoir ne peut plus se gagner par l'intermédiaire du jeu politique et démocratique : il cherche donc un autre moyen pour maintenir sa tutelle sur le régime. L'élection présidentielle a précisément illustré le caractère décisif de cette lutte et a permis aux deux parties d'afficher clairement leurs intentions. Ainsi, le second groupe, soutenu par l'armée, ne veut pas d'élection [au suffrage universel pour élire le président]. Dans ce contexte, les rumeurs de coup d'Etat vont bon train. Mais qu'arriverait-il donc en cas de putsch militaire ? Un groupe de Turcs dont le mode de vie est proche de celui des Occidentaux accaparerait le pouvoir, mais perdrait le soutien de l'Occident. En effet, l'Europe s'opposera avec fermeté à toute forme de coup d'Etat. Les Américains, avec le pragmatisme qui les caractérise, pourraient éventuellement accepter cette situation moyennant un soutien à leur politique au Proche-Orient. Mais, dès lors qu'ils occupent l'Irak avec la promesse d'y instaurer la démocratie, on imagine mal les Etats-Unis défendre un coup d'Etat devant l'opinion internationale.

Si jamais l'armée turque renversait le gouvernement, le monde se trouverait dans une situation inédite. La Turquie essaierait de conclure des partenariats avec la Russie et l'Iran, pays qui pourraient lui fournir armes, fonds et sources d'énergie. Mais ce nouveau bloc chamboulerait tous les équilibres géostratégiques actuels. On le voit, la fracture à l'œuvre en Turquie pourrait avoir des conséquences dramatiques au niveau mondial. Cette hypothèse, me dira-t-on, est "totalement improbable". J'aimerais néanmoins que chacun réfléchisse sur ce scénario qui, selon moi, est réaliste. N'oublions pas que la Première Guerre mondiale n'a éclaté, après tout, qu'à la suite d'un coup de pistolet.

Ahmet Altan

■ **Dettes**

"Quand l'AKP est arrivé au pouvoir, la Turquie avait une dette totale de 222 milliards de dollars. Aujourd'hui, elle atteint 400 milliards. Soit 5 458 dollars [4 000 euros] par habitant", s'inquiète Rahmi Turan, l'éditorialiste de Hürriyet, qui appelle l'électeur à sanctionner le gouvernement.

Le dilemme des milieux d'affaires

Entre la stabilité que promet l'AKP et les valeurs occidentales des laïcs, les hommes d'affaires ont du mal à choisir.

A Istanbul, les milieux d'affaires espèrent que l'AKP restera au pouvoir même s'ils comptent voter pour le CHP [sociaux-démocrates] : cette information a fait le tour de la presse avant de faire l'objet de débats au sein des deux partis. L'AKP s'est demandé pourquoi les milieux d'affaires veulent qu'ils restent au pouvoir mais refusent de voter pour eux alors que le CHP s'est questionné sur la raison qui pousse ces milieux à ne pas le voir au gouvernement. Deux raisons à cela : d'abord, aucun signe fort n'indique que le CHP obtienne une majorité absolue pour former un gouvernement à lui seul. Ensuite, au cas où l'AKP n'arrive pas à former un gouvernement, les déclarations prévoyant une coalition entre le CHP de Deniz Baykal et le MHP [extrême droite] de Devlet Bahçeli se multiplient. Certes, le CHP, en cas de victoire, procédera à des changements en profondeur. Mais les positions du parti nationaliste (MHP) sur l'Union européenne, les Etats-Unis et sa volonté de rétablir la peine de mort ne vont pas

de pair avec l'intégration de la Turquie en Occident. C'est cette analyse que font les milieux d'affaires. A l'AKP, c'est l'actuel ministre des Affaires étrangères, Abdullah Gül, qui a fait des commentaires sur ce sujet : *"Pourquoi les milieux d'affaires pensent-ils ainsi [et ne votent pas pour nous] ? Certains s'imaginent que nous avons un agenda caché et d'autres s'offusquent de nos choix personnels."* Les "choix personnels" de Gül font référence en réalité à la question du voile. Les milieux d'affaires soutiennent donc la politique économique de l'AKP tournée vers l'Occident, mais ils s'arrêtent là.

Dans un pays qui a beaucoup souffert de l'instabilité monétaire et politique, on peut facilement comprendre les craintes de la population. Mais attention à ne pas lier la stabilité aux cours de la Bourse ou au nombre de touristes, sans évaluer d'autres critères sociaux. Sinon, il faudrait conclure que ce sont des pays comme l'Arabie Saoudite ou la Corée du Nord ou toute autre forme de dictature qui jouissent de la plus grande stabilité. Si la démocratie n'est pas effective, la stabilité peut devenir une hypothèse dangereuse.

Murat Yetkin, Radikal (extraits), Istanbul

MINORITÉS Kurdes et Arméniens votent pour l'AKP

En Turquie, les voix de la communauté arménienne [environ 50 000] se sont généralement dirigées vers les partis du centre droit. Ces derniers ont gagné la sympathie des électeurs arméniens jusqu'au début des années 1990", rappelle, dans les pages du quotidien Zaman, le journaliste arménien Etyen Mahçupyan, qui a succédé à Hrant Dink [assassiné à Istanbul le 19 janvier] à la direction de l'hebdomadaire Agos, publié en arménien et en turc. "A côté de cela, le traditionnel CHP [Parti républicain du peuple, principal parti d'opposition laïque] a également bénéficié de temps en temps des voix de cette communauté, mais à aucun moment les partis de sensibilité islamique n'ont pu compter sur un

tel soutien. C'est probablement dû à la hiérarchie communautaire mise en place par les Ottomans et au regard qu'avaient les musulmans sunnites sur les chrétiens. Par ailleurs, on peut supposer qu'un parti de sensibilité islamique sera considéré comme 'contraire' aux préférences d'une minorité d'une autre sensibilité religieuse... Mais pour ces élections [législatives du 22 juillet 2007], nous sommes face à un tableau totalement différent : outre la candidature indépendante de Baskin Oran [intellectuel turc de gauche], qui attire l'électorat arménien, il apparaît, de manière surprenante et pour la première fois, que la communauté arménienne se prépare à voter pour l'AKP. La raison concrète de ce changement découle essentiellement de la stratégie proeuropéenne de l'AKP. Les Arméniens pensent aussi que ce parti islamique poursuit une politique proche des positions des partis de centre droit. Donc, ils vont en réalité à nouveau voter pour le centre droit." Paradoxalement, on retrouve un scénario simi-

laire du côté de l'électorat kurde (la population kurde de Turquie est estimée à environ 14 millions de personnes). "La province de Diyarbakir, située dans le sud-est de la Turquie et qui compte environ 1,5 million de Kurdes, réserve une surprise pour les prochaines législatives, estiment de nombreux analystes. En effet, la plupart s'attendent à une percée significative de l'AKP dans cette région traditionnellement dominée par les partis prokurdes",

souligne Serdar Alyamaç dans le quotidien *Turkish Daily News*. Le 22 juillet, "l'AKP briguera les voix de cette province grâce aux candidats indépendants soutenus par le Parti pour une société démocratique [DTP, vitrine politique légale du PKK]. Ce parti soutient soixante candidats indépendants à travers le pays, dont quatre dans la ville de Diyarbakir. Ces derniers sont quasi certains de remporter le scrutin. Mais l'AKP dispose d'une carte maîtresse avec

une liste qui présente des figures politiques respectées dans cette province." Et si le Parti démocratique (DP), également en lice dans cette province, s'avère incapable de franchir le seuil des 10 % requis pour être représenté au Parlement "l'AKP sera bien placé pour être le premier parti d'envergure nationale capable de gagner le cœur et les voix de la population du Diyarbakir."

Le camp laïque agite l'épouvantail de la charia

L'opposition kémaliste se présente en défenseur des femmes et des valeurs républicaines pour tenter de contrer l'AKP.

De notre envoyé spécial à Ankara

DES FEMMES en tenue légère, les lunettes de soleil dans les cheveux, flânent devant les vitrines des boutiques de mode du centre-ville. Les rues sont couvertes de guirlandes de fanions multicolores portant les sigles des partis en course pour les législatives de dimanche. Le soir, lorsque la chaleur s'estompe, des couples prennent un verre de vin rouge local sur les terrasses. Sièges des institutions, Ankara, dont la municipalité est contrôlée par le parti d'Erdogan, ne donne pas le moindre signe d'islamisation à l'issue de cinq ans de gouvernance du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP).

La capitale fut pourtant, en avril, l'épicentre du mouvement de défense de la vie « moderne », orchestré par les partis kémalistes avec le soutien du noyau dur de l'appareil d'État laïque. Plusieurs millions de manifestants défilèrent pour dire « non à la charia » et refuser l'arrivée à la présidence d'Abdullah Gül, une figure de l'AKP dont la femme porte le turban, le voile turc.

« L'influence est insidieuse »

Au-delà de son exploitation politique, la crise avait cristallisé les inquiétudes de larges pans d'une population attachée aux codes laïques. Et surtout de femmes soucieuses de défendre une égalité acquise bien avant les Européennes, puisqu'elles obtinrent le droit de vote dès 1934. « Je sais qu'il n'y avait pas que des démocrates dans ces rassemblements mais il fallait montrer que l'on existe. J'étais là en tant que mère de famille et enseignante, »

commente Cansel Güven, un professeur de géographie. La jeune femme n'a pas oublié que durant son mandat le premier ministre a tenté, sans succès, d'imposer lors de la révision du Code pénal une loi criminalisant l'adultère. Elle reste sur ses gardes.

« Nous devons absolument préserver les acquis des femmes. Nous sommes dans un pays musulman mais nous nous habillons comme des personnes émancipées » explique Senal Sarchan, la présidente de l'Union des femmes républicaines. Cette avocate énergique vêtue d'une robe à fleurs un peu désuète a décoré son bureau de bibelots kitsch. Admiratrice de Mustafa Kemal, elle a relégué les inévitables portraits du grand homme dans une pièce adjacente. « L'influence islamiste est insidieuse, insiste-t-elle. Elle passe par des petits détails lourds de sens. Les ministres ne se déplacent jamais avec leurs femmes ou alors ils les éloignent. Dans les hôpitaux, de plus en plus de femmes exigent à la demande de leurs maris d'être soignées par du personnel féminin. »

Senal Sarchan dénonce aussi une instrumentalisation religieuse des manuels scolaires. « On fait la part belle au créationnisme au détriment des théories de l'évolution. La religion est présentée comme une solution à des problèmes quotidiens. Même les illustrations sont empreintes de morale musulmane. Avant la famille était représentée par un couple lisant les journaux dans le salon pendant que les enfants jouaient. Maintenant l'homme regarde la télé, la femme fait le ménage et les enfants lisent le Coran ! »

Loin d'être la règle, les quelques entorses aux principes laïques sont vécues comme des affronts par les gardiens du temple kémaliste. Ces derniers sont convaincus que si des lézards apparaissent dans le barrage laïque, la République sera emportée

LE FIGARO

samedi 21 - dimanche 22 juillet 2007



Dans les rues d'Ankara, voile et jupe courte se côtoient sans problème. La capitale a pourtant vu en avril les manifestants défiler, à l'initiative des kémalistes, pour dire « non à la charia ». Gali Tibbon/AFP

par une déferlante verte. La nuance n'a pas sa place dans cette approche binaire.

« Incompétents et méchants »

De permanence au siège de l'association pour la pensée d'Atatürk, Nemrim, ancienne haut fonctionnaire d'une cinquantaine d'années, est convaincue que les « islamistes cachent leur jeu ». « Ils veulent installer un régime théocratique à l'iraniennne, » dit-elle. Il y a quatre ans, elle a claqué la porte du ministère des Finances, peu après l'arrivée de la nouvelle équipe AKP. Elle ne supportait pas d'avoir pour supérieur un directeur issu d'un imam hatip, un lycée de formation des imams. « L'AKP place des fonctionnaires incompétents et méchants qui se méfient des femmes surtout lorsqu'elles ne sont pas de leur bord, » assène-t-elle.

Dans les hautes administrations d'Ankara, le fossé se creuse entre les nouveaux cadres imposés par le gouvernement et les élites républicaines qui dirigent le pays depuis parfois plusieurs générations. Les kémalistes sont décidés

à conserver, avec le soutien plus ou moins discret de l'appareil militaire, leurs bastions dans l'enseignement supérieur, la justice et les relations internationales. Les grandes manifestations ont illustré leur détermination. Dimanche, les kémalistes devraient porter leur vote sur le Parti républicain du peuple (CHP-social démocrate), crédité par les sondages de 20 à 25 % d'intentions de vote.

Tout au long de la campagne, le CHP a cherché à dramatiser un scrutin présenté comme un « choix de société ». Mais sa stratégie peut conduire à des déceptions car la fracture entre la Turquie de l'AKP et celle des kémalistes est peu apparente. « Les femmes votant AKP sont nos voisines et parfois nos proches. Je n'ai pas de conflit avec elles, bien que les discussions tournent court », reconnaît Cansel, la prof de géographie. Elle ajoute : « J'ai de la chance de vivre à Ankara où il n'y a pas de pression sociale mais je plains les femmes qui, ailleurs, subissent des milieux islamisés. »

T. O.

Briefing Turkey's election



A battle for the future

ANKARA, DIYARBAKIR AND ISTANBUL

The importance of this weekend's election goes well beyond Turkey itself

ON JULY 22nd Turkey, still an adolescent democracy, goes to the polls. The event is being followed carefully far from its own borders. For one thing, the country is of huge strategic importance. It borders the European Union to the west and the Caucasus, Iran, Iraq and Syria to the east and south. Iraq is especially crucial, as Turkey's army is threatening to invade its northern region to root out Kurdish terrorists there. Outsiders are also monitoring Turkey as one of the Muslim world's rare examples of a working democracy.

The election contest has been joyless if feverish, marked by huge rallies and demonstrations that suggest there will be a big voter turnout. Only this week an independent candidate was shot dead as he was being driven away from a tv studio in Istanbul. But underlying the tensions is a battle over which way Turkey's democracy will go.

The first fusillade in this battle was fired on April 27th when the army, claiming to detect a dangerous slide towards Islamic

radicalism, threatened to intervene against the government. In a late-night statement posted on the general staff's website, it spoke ominously of risks to Ataturk's secular republic. In a country with a history of military coups, the so-called "e-coup" promptly sparked a political crisis that led to the early election. Since then, it has cast a pall over the entire campaign.

The proximate trigger for the army's threat was the decision by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the prime minister and leader of the ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party, to nominate his foreign minister, Abdullah Gul, to replace President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, a former judge who was due to step down on May 16th. Like Mr Erdogan, Mr Gul once dabbled in political Islam. More to the point, both men's wives wear the Muslim headscarf, which in accordance with Ataturk's secular tradition is banned in all public buildings.

The army, always suspicious of the AK Party because of its Islamist roots, deemed the prospect of such a president a threat to

the secular republic. Despite the government's big parliamentary majority, Deniz Baykal, the leader of the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), managed to stop Mr Gul's election by dubiously claiming in the constitutional court that parliament lacked a quorum of 367 deputies in its first round of balloting. Egged on by the generals, the court came down on Mr Baykal's side. Meanwhile, millions of secular Turks took to the streets to protest against the government. Many were urban middle-class women, plainly fearing that their carefree lifestyles were at stake.

The combined pressure proved too strong: Mr Erdogan withdrew Mr Gul's candidacy and called a general election before the scheduled date of November 4th. But in a burst of defiance, he also rammed through a constitutional change to let the people elect the next president themselves. Mr Sezer, who has continued in office as a caretaker, vetoed this. Mr Baykal, who has built a career on trashing rivals without producing ideas of his own, lodged a fresh complaint with the constitutional court. Unexpectedly, however—or perhaps because it wished to salvage its reputation—the court this time backed the government.

The new parliament must now decide whether to go for a direct election of the president or to stick with the present rules. Under these, if parliament fails to agree on a president within 45 days, it will have to ▶▶

▶ dissolve itself and call yet another election. Thanks to Mr Baykal, a quorum is now needed, a complication that may allow opposition parties to paralyse the whole process. Mr Gul has hinted that he will re-present himself as a presidential candidate, but Mr Erdogan has also talked of putting together a possible list of nominees in consultation with the opposition.

Checking the record

To most Turkish voters, however, the election is about much more than the presidency and secularism. It is, in effect, a referendum on the AK Party's record in office, which is strikingly good (see chart 1). Never previously in power at national level, Mr Erdogan and his fellow Islamists have done more to transform and modernise Turkey than any of their secular predecessors except Ataturk and perhaps Turgut Ozal, a visionary prime minister in the 1980s. From the hardscrabble Kurdish provinces to the shiny new suburbs of Istanbul, the effects of AK's "silent revolution" are evident everywhere.

In the Kurds' unofficial capital, Diyarbakir, Kurdish women were recently ululating appreciatively as Mehdi Eker, the farm minister, reeled off the government's achievements and goals: average annual growth of 7.3% (nearly four times the EU figure), a record \$20 billion in foreign direct investment, \$40 billion in tourism earnings by 2013. "We gave your children free textbooks, brought the internet to their schools, and water to all your villages," said Mr Eker. He was speaking the most common Kurdish dialect, Kurmanji. Until the AK Party passed a raft of constitutional and judicial changes, he might have been jailed on separatism charges for doing so.

It was largely thanks to these constitutional changes, as well as to an improving economy, that the EU agreed to open membership talks with Turkey in 2005, a goal that most previous Turkish governments aspired to but none came close to achieving. Many European and American diplomats agree that Mr Erdogan is the man most fit to lead Turkey. Their views are plainly shared by millions of Turkish

voters, who recall the protracted squabbles, economic mismanagement and massive corruption of the string of secular coalitions that crippled Turkey before AK.

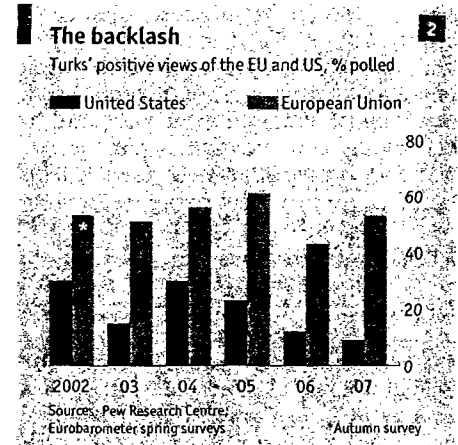
Indeed, opinion polls suggest that the voters may give AK quite a bit more than the 34% that catapulted it to single-party rule in the November 2002 election (when only one other party, the CHP, got above the 10% threshold for parliamentary representation). The polls suggest that at least one other party, the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), will enter parliament this time, along with some 30 candidates from the Kurdish Democratic Turkey Party (DTP), who are running as independents to get round the 10% threshold.

Thus, even if AK gets a bigger share of the vote than in 2002, it will probably have a smaller majority and it might even be unable to rule alone. On the other hand, if it were to win a sufficiently big majority (two-thirds of the 550 parliamentary seats) to change the constitution and force through its own choice of president, the army might well step in. "This [election] is a stick with shit at both ends," says one AK bigwig. "The choice is between a weak government or a military coup."

That may be an exaggeration. Yet, looking back, some AK officials concede that they could have handled the row over the presidency better. As commander-in-chief of the armed forces, the president has considerable power. He can approve the expulsion of overtly pious officers, and he appoints judges and university rectors. He can also veto legislation deemed to violate the secular constitution. To the generals, as to the millions of secular demonstrators, no AK man can be trusted in this role. They argue that Mr Erdogan (who originally wanted the job for himself) should have reached out to the opposition and agreed on a candidate outside his own party.

Secular suspicions of the AK government had already been fanned, not least by the controversial education minister, Huseyin Celik. Mr Celik, who is said to have close links to the powerful Islamic Nur fraternity, has been accused of injecting Islam by stealth. He has overseen a revision of textbooks to promote creationism and the recruitment, as teachers, of hundreds of graduates of imam hatip, Islamic clerical-training schools. There has also been "an explosion in enrolment at Koran lessons, especially among girls," says Alattin Dincer, president of Turkey's largest teachers' union. No wonder Mr Celik had to explain himself in a meeting with the chief of the general staff, Yasar Buyukanit, shortly after the army's e-coup.

Attempts by a few AK mayors to create booze-free zones, as well as Mr Erdogan's own failed effort in 2005 to outlaw adultery, have not helped the party's image with secularists. Yet none of this amounts to a tilt towards sharia law. Indeed, even



the AK's fiercest critics are hard-pressed to point to a single act that violates secularism. If anything, most pundits reckon that the army's salvos may have boosted Mr Erdogan's support. Banking on continued stability under a second term of AK government, foreign investors have been propelling the Istanbul stock exchange to record highs.

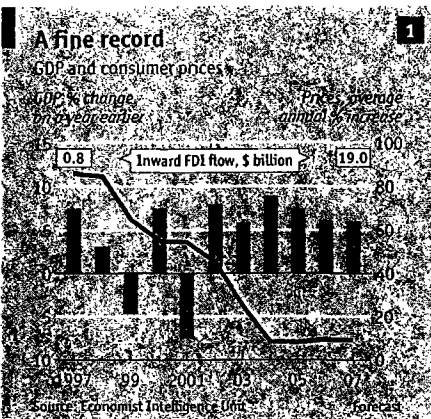
In truth, many AK reforms have upset the party's own conservative constituents—especially the scrapping of a law that put husbands in charge of their households. Plenty are disgruntled by the government's failure to loosen restrictions on the headscarf. All 62 female candidates fielded by AK are bareheaded. "We can't put our democracy at risk just for the headscarf, so we've frozen the issue for now," explains Ayse Bohurler, an Erdogan party chief who sports a tightly wound scarf.

What is more, Mr Erdogan has dropped some 150 deputies, many of them Islamist firebrands who in March 2003 voted against letting American troops invade Iraq through Turkey. He has replaced them with an array of new faces, among them a high-flying Kurdish investment banker, a writer from the liberal Muslim Alevi faith and a famous cartoonist's wife. Ever the pragmatist, "Erdogan drew the right lesson from those [pro-secular] rallies," asserts a senior Bush administration official.

Unimpressed in Istanbul

Behind the walled privacy of Istanbul's oldest social club, the scions of Turkey's moneyed class are unimpressed. They cling to the spectre of a battle between Islamic radicals and Ataturk's disciples. "This election is about the survival of the republic. I will vote for Ataturk's party [the CHP]," squawks a septuagenarian socialite. Like fellow members of the Cercle d'Orient, her aversion to the Islamists is profoundly snobbish. The real worry is the shift of wealth from an old industrial elite towards a new bourgeoisie made up of pious Anatolian entrepreneurs, who have thrived since AK came to power.

The generals have different concerns. ▶▶



► Among the reforms that earned Turkey its prized date to open membership talks with the EU were provisions to trim the influence of the army. The National Security Council, where the generals used to bark orders to the politicians, has been reduced to an advisory role. Civilians can no longer be tried in military courts. The generals' powers would be shorn further if Turkey ever joined the EU.

Yet that prospect seems to be receding. The election of Nicolas Sarkozy as France's president is a blow, because he is strongly against Turkey's EU membership. The French recently blocked the opening of a chapter in Turkey's negotiations with the EU on the ground that it was relevant only to full membership, not some form of looser association. French doubts are widely shared in Europe: only Britain and Sweden are now forthright in pressing the case for admitting Turkey. The impasse in Cyprus, to which Turkey refuses to extend its customs union with the EU so long as Turkish northern Cyprus is ostracised by the rest of the world, has become an excuse for all who want to slow down or stop Turkey's membership talks.

Not surprisingly, popular support in Turkey for the EU has fallen back from the highs of two years ago. Yet although the EU is one of Turkey's two big foreign-policy problems, it has hardly been mentioned during the election campaign. "The EU doesn't sell in Anatolia," comments Murat Mercan, an AK deputy.

The EU's focus on issues such as free speech and minority rights has also helped to feed a dangerous nationalism. This was most chillingly demonstrated in January when a Turkish-Armenian newspaper editor, Hrant Dink, was shot dead by a 17-year-old because he had "insulted the Turks". Three months later a group of youths in the eastern city of Malatya slit the throats of three Protestant missionaries after torturing them. This week the Istanbul-based Armenian patriarch, Mesrob Mutafyan II, said he had received threats to blow up his headquarters.

"Testosterone-driven nationalism is the biggest problem in Turkey," says one foreign banker in Istanbul. Ali Babacan, the economy minister, agrees. "Our biggest failure has been to create jobs for around 700,000 Turks who enter the labour market every year," he adds. Mr Babacan is also Turkey's top EU negotiator, and he still aims to be ready for membership by 2013. "Sarkozy will change," he says. "The EU cannot violate its obligations."

The Iraq conundrum

Renewed nationalism is also affecting Turkey's other big foreign-policy issue: northern Iraq. Sitting in his offices in Washington, DC, Qubad Talabani, the youthful representative of the Kurds' quasi-independent state in northern Iraq, says that he

and his kin are "bracing for a storm". Mr Talabani, who happens to be the son of the Iraqi president, Jalal Talabani, is talking about what may follow Turkey's election. For the new political landscape is likely to determine whether the army makes good on its repeated threats to attack separatist guerrillas of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) who are based in northern Iraq.

An invasion by NATO's second-biggest army would not only destabilise the only fairly calm bit of Iraq. It would also wreck Turkey's relations with America and the EU. Worse, it might not succeed: the Turks, too, could easily end up bogged down and unable to defeat an insurgency.

An upsurge in PKK attacks has killed over 200 Turkish soldiers since the start of the year. Each new Turkish casualty is bringing votes to the MHP, which is led by an enigmatic former economics professor, Devlet Bahçeli. Even his most avid supporters were unnerved when Mr Bahçeli flung a hangman's noose at his audience during a rally in the eastern city of Erzurum. The MHP leader has vowed, if he becomes prime minister, to reintroduce the death penalty and execute the imprisoned PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan.

Like the generals, Mr Bahçeli is also keen to clobber some 3,500 PKK militants who are sheltering in northern Iraq. America's failure to do the job is the biggest cause of rampant anti-American feelings in Turkey. Support for America is now down to 9%, lower even than in the occupied Palestinian territories, according to a Pew Global Attitudes Survey (see chart 2).

Many Turks reckon that America is reluctant to attack the PKK because it secretly wants to establish an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq, which would encompass the oil-rich province of Kirkuk and, possibly, chunks of south-eastern

Turkey. Mr Gul has complained that PKK fighters are carrying American-made weapons. America has denied responsibility. Meanwhile, Turkish troops continue to mass along the Iraqi border. Iraqi Kurdish leaders say their fledgling entity, not the PKK, is Turkey's real target.

Turkish sensitivities are perhaps best explained by their imperial past. Between 1878 and 1918 the Ottoman empire lost 85% of its territory and 75% of its population. "The fear of obliteration was a constant presence throughout the empire's long demise," notes an Ottoman historian, Taner Akcam. The belief that Western powers are bent on dismembering Turkey remains strong. Gunduz Aktan, a former ambassador who is running on the MHP ticket in Istanbul, argues that Turkey's very survival as a nation-state hinges on preventing a Kurdish one emerging. "If the Americans don't stop this, we will have to go in [to northern Iraq] ourselves," he says.

Mr Erdogan, who has resisted the army's calls for a cross-border incursion, has a different view. Over the past two years he has been quietly testing the ground for what Henri Barkey, a Turkey follower at America's Lehigh University, calls a "grand bargain". Turkey would recognise the Iraqi Kurds' semi-independent status; the Iraqi Kurds would coax PKK fighters to give up their guns and pledge to respect Turkey's borders. Relieved of the pressure of having to choose between its Turkish and Iraqi Kurdish allies, America would be delighted, as would Turkey's own Kurds.

But the generals refuse to play along. They still hope that, after the election, they will get the nod to stomp into northern Iraq. It is not only the future of Turkish democracy that is at stake this weekend; it may be the future of the whole region. ■



Another bouquet for Erdogan?

The Kurdish mountain army awaiting the next invasion of Iraq

THE
INDEPENDENT

By Patrick Cockburn in the Qandil mountains

19 July 2007

Hiding in the high mountains and deep gorges of one of the world's great natural fortresses are bands of guerrillas whose presence could provoke a Turkish invasion of northern Iraq and the next war in the Middle East.

In the weeks before the Turkish election on Sunday, Turkey has threatened to cross the border into Iraq in pursuit of the guerrillas of the Turkish Kurdish movement, the PKK, and its Iranian Kurdish offshoot, Pejak. The Iraqi Foreign Minister, Hoshiyar Zebari, warns that there are 140,000 Turkish troops massed just north of the frontier.

"Until recently, we didn't take the Turkish threat that seriously but thought it was part of the election campaign," says Safeen Sezayee. A leading Iraqi Kurdish expert on Turkey and spokesman for the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Massoud Barzani, the president of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Mr Dezayee now sees an invasion as quite possible.

The Iraqi Kurds are becoming nervous. The drumbeat of threats from Turkish politicians and generals has become more persistent. "The government and opposition parties are competing to show nationalist fervour," says Mr Dezayee. Anti-PKK feeling is greater than ever in Turkey. Most menacingly, Turkey is appalled that the Kurds are key players in Iraqi politics and are developing a semi-independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq.

After the election, Ankara may find it impossible to retreat from the bellicose rhetoric of recent weeks and will send its troops across the border, even if the incursion is only on a limited scale.

If the Turkish army does invade, it will not find it easy to locate the PKK guerrillas. Their main headquarters is in the Qandil mountains which are on the Iranian border but conveniently close to Turkey. It is an area extraordinarily well-adapted for guerrilla warfare where even Saddam Hussein's armies found it impossible to penetrate.

To reach Qandil, we drove east from the Kurdish capital Arbil to the well-watered plain north of Dokan lake. In the town of Qala Diza, destroyed by Saddam Hussein but now being rebuilt, the local administrator Maj Bakir Abdul Rahman Hussein was quick to say that Qandil was ruled by the PKK: "We don't have any authority there." He said there was regular shelling from Iran that led to some border villages being evacuated but he did not seem to consider this out of the ordinary. "The Iranians do it whenever they are feeling international

pressure," he said.

We hired a four-wheel drive vehicle and a driver in black Kurdish uniform who was from Qandil. Just below the mountains, we were stopped by the paramilitary Iraqi Frontier Guards. A red-white-and-black Iraqi flag, a rare sight in Kurdistan, flew over their headquarters which is built like a miniature medieval castle.

Kurdish officials close to Qandil are strangely eager to disclaim any authority over their own sovereign territory. In a stern lecture, after consulting with his superiors by phone, Lt. Col Ahmad Sabir of the Frontier Guards said we could go on but "we have no control beyond this point and no responsibility for what happens to you. You may meet PKK, Iranians on the border or shepherds with guns."

The road to the mountain climbs up the sides of steep hills dotted with small oak trees, past hamlets with flat roofs made from mud and brushwood. The road is at first pot-holed asphalt, then broken rock and finally, after crossing a bridge over a mountain torrent, it gives up being a road at all and becomes a track, parts of which had been swept away by avalanches.

The first sign of the PKK was a sentry box confidently in the open with two armed men in khaki uniform who confiscated our passports and mobile phones. Driving on, we came to a strange and exotic mausoleum to the PKK dead. Its walls are painted white and red and inside the gates are ornamental ponds and flowerbeds overlooked by a white column 30ft high, on top of which is miniature yellow star in metal or concrete, the symbol of the PKK.

The cemetery, built in 2002, holds 67 graves and stands in the middle of the deserted Marado valley inhabited only by grazing cattle. "Just three of those buried here died from natural causes," says Farhad Amat, a PKK soldier from Dyarbakir in Turkey who is in charge of the mausoleum.

Founded in the 1970s, the PKK fought a lengthy but ultimately unsuccessful guerrilla war in south-east Turkey in which at least 35,000 people died. A Marxist-Leninist separatist Kurdish organisation, its leader Abdullah Ocalan was captured in 1999 and its 4,000 well-trained fighters sought refuge in northern Iraq.

The inscriptions on the grave-stones tell the tragic history of the PKK. Almost all of those who died were Turkish Kurds, many of them very young. For

instance, a girl fighter whose nom de guerre was "Nergis" and real name Khazar Kaba was just 16 when she was killed on 30 July 2001.

At a PKK guest house by a brook shaded by ancient trees, we met several women guerrillas, who, contrary to patriarchal Kurdish traditions, play an important role in the PKK. They were wearing uniform and with them was an Iranian Kurdish family consisting of a mother, father and son. Their presence was unexplained until we were leaving when the father, Agai Mohammedi from Sina in Iran, suddenly blurted out that they were trying to find and bring home his 25-year-old son who had run off to join the PKK.

They were going from camp to camp looking for him but were always told he was not there. "Please, can you help us," asked Mr Mohammedi but there was nothing we could do.

The scale of the fighting is small. Pejak launches sporadic raids into Iranian Kurdistan. The PKK stages ambushes and bombings in Turkey and has escalated its attacks this year, killing at least 67 soldiers and losing 110 of its own fighters according to the Turkish authorities. But this limited skirmishing could have an explosive impact. The attacks provide an excuse for Turkish action against an increasingly independent Iraqi Kurdish state. "They [the Turks] want an excuse to overturn what has been achieved in Iraqi Kurdistan," says Mr Dezayee. A referendum is to be held in northern Iraq by the end of 2007 under which the oil city of Kirkuk may vote to join the KRG. The incentive for a Turkish invasion is growing by the day.

"Everything depends on the result of the Turkish election," says Dr Mahmoud Othman, a veteran Iraqi Kurdish politician. If the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, wins a two-thirds majority then the pressure for an invasion may be off. But if he believes he lost votes because his anti-PKK and Turkish nationalist credentials were not strong enough then he might want to burnish them by ordering a cross border incursion.

The lightly armed PKK, knowing every inch of the mountainous terrain at Qandil, will be able to evade Turkish troops. But the Iraqi Kurds worry that they and not the PKK are the real target of the Turkish army. After making so many threats before the election, Turkey may find it difficult to back off without looking weak.

The Washington Post July 20, 2007 By Ellen Knickmeyer Washington Post Foreign Service Friday.:

TURKEY TAKING HARDER LINE ON RESTIVE KURDS

Radical Separatists Are Major Concern On Eve of Election

SILOPI, Turkey, July 19 -- Soldiers guarding the heights of Turkey's Kurdish southeast have long used their vantage point to deliver messages to the restive population below, plopping whitewashed stones onto the hillsides to form terse admonitions, such as: "Motherland above all."

Lately the Turkish troops' messages for the Kurds have grown sterner and longer. Outside Silopi, an outpost on the ancient Silk Road from China and now a border town along the Turkey-Iraq frontier, one spills down the yellow grass of the steppe, in rows of letters each the size of a man:

We are resolute and motivated against struggles threatening the unity that is the ancient heritage of our motherland."

The reason for the Turkish military's tougher tone toward the country's Kurdish minority lies just a few more mountains south, across the border in northern Iraq. There, Iraqi Kurds under the protection of occupying U.S. troops are flourishing under their own increasingly assertive Kurdish government, strengthening their Kurdish militias, flying their Kurdish flags.

Turkey's government charges that Iraqi Kurdish leaders are tolerating the presence of a Kurdish separatist movement that has killed about 70 Turkish soldiers this year.

Many Turks say the growing security threat posed by the guerrillas of the Kurdistan

Workers' Party, known by the initials PKK, is the top issue in Turkish parliamentary elections set for Sunday.

"America broke the Iraqi state. There is no way to rebuild it. As a result, there is a Kurdish state that protects the PKK," Nejat Eslen, a retired Turkish brigadier general, said in an interview at his home in Istanbul this week.

Nationalist political parties, riding a wave of public unease over intensifying attacks by the PKK and the rise of Kurdish nationalism in northern Iraq, are expected to gain seats Sunday. Such gains would mean more support in parliament for a cross-border offensive against the PKK in northern Iraq.

Turkey's military last month created what it called a security zone in the wedge of Turkish territory jutting between Iran and Iraq, an area that has experienced decades of clashes between the PKK and Turkish troops.

All sides agree that Turkey is deploying additional troops in the zone, but none agree on how many. Iraqi Kurdish leaders, fearing invasion, alleged this month that Turkey had assembled 140,000 troops in the security zone.

Bush administration officials called the figure exaggerated. Turkish journalists in the southeastern city of Diyarbakir with experience in the border area estimated that the Turkish deployment in the main stretch of border had roughly doubled, to perhaps 50,000.



Graphic: Gene Thorp — The Washington Post

On Iraqi mountain fortress, anti-Turkish fighters rule

The Boston Globe

July 22 2007 By Bernd Debusmann, Special Correspondent

QANDIL MOUNTAIN, Iraq, (Reuters) - On the way to the Qandil mountains, a potential flashpoint for yet another Middle East war, Kurdish officials give blunt assessments of the limits of their sovereignty and power to curb anti-Turkish guerrillas.

"The problem with the border region is that we have no authority over it," said police major Abu Bakr Abdul Rahman Hussein in the town of Qalat Dizah in northern Iraq's semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan. "We can't go there. The mountains are full of PKK," he added, referring to guerrillas of the Kurdistan Workers Party.

A few miles east, at a base of the Iraqi Frontier Guard, Colonel Ahmed Sabr sternly warned of the dangers lurking ahead. "From here on, you are on your own. We can't help if anything happens to you. The area is full of people with guns -- PKK, Iranians, armed shepherds."



Farhat Amat, a fighter from the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), guards a cemetery in the remote Qandil mountains near the Iraq-Iran border in Sulaimaniya, 330 km (205 miles) northeast of Baghdad, July 15, 2007. Amat takes care of the site, which holds 67 graves of PKK fighters killed in the movement's guerrilla war for a Kurdish state. Picture taken July 15, 2007. (REUTERS/Shamal Agrawi)

The Qandil mountain is on the border with Iran, part of a range that stretches north to the border with Turkey, whose army has launched several major anti-guerrilla operations into Iraq since the PKK began fighting the Turkish state in 1984 in a struggle for autonomy that has killed more than 30,000 people.

During a bitterly contested campaign for July 22 parliamentary elections in Turkey, the Turkish armed forces urged the government to allow it to strike across the border to crush the estimated 4,000 PKK guerrillas who use the mountains as their base of operations. The PKK is outlawed in Turkey and considered a terrorist organisation by the United States and the European Union.

Turkish officials have accused the United States of failing to pressure the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq to crack down on the PKK to defuse tension along

the border of the Kurdistan region, which has been an oasis of relative peace in war-torn Iraq. Iraqi Kurds, in general, sympathise with the PKK owing to their ethnic kinship. The fragility of that peace was highlighted on July 18 when the Turkish army fired around 100 shells into the vicinity of the northern border town of Zakho, according to the KRG's deputy minister for security forces, Jabar Yawer. No-one was hurt but scores of residents fled the area.

"YOUR CELLPHONES PLEASE"

Driving into PKK territory -- the "border" is a cement bridge not far from Colonel Sabr's frontier fort -- explains why the Kurdish government considers the Qandil mountain a no-go zone and why the Marxist-Leninist guerrillas appear supremely confident they could withstand a Turkish invasion or a crackdown by the KRG's forces.

This is ideal guerrilla country, where fighters intimately familiar with the soaring peaks and deep valleys of the region have a natural advantage over any attacker. Even Saddam Hussein's army, waging ruthless and repeated campaigns, failed to dislodge them. Neither did large-scale Turkish incursions in 1995 and 1997 involving an estimated 35,000 and 50,000 troops, respectively.

Climbing up towards a guerrilla encampment at the hamlet of Marado, on the flank of the mountain, the track is so rutted that a jeep negotiates it at crawling pace, wheels inches e.

from the edge and a drop of hundreds of feet.

The first sign of PKK presence -- and a degree of nervousness about possible attacks -- comes at a guard post manned by two fighters carrying Kalashnikov rifles and serious expressions. Before allowing the visitors to travel on, they have to surrender their passports. "And your cellphones please," said one. "Satellite phones, too. All means of communications."

This is a new regulation, according to people familiar with the area, part of ever-more elaborate security precautions and fears that visitors could communicate the coordinates of guerrilla outposts, including the PKK "guesthouse" even higher up the flank of the mountain and so well camouflaged it is difficult to see.

The area around the camp is lined with steep hillsides and dotted with trees. There is no sign of life except for the odd flock of sheep and a shepherd.

The guesthouse is in the shade of an ancient oak tree, next to a large satellite dish. At the guesthouse, three woman PKK fighters in uniform in their early 30s served tea. They did not carry weapons.

None of the PKK leaders who occasionally receive visitors here are available but in a telephone interview, Abdul Rahman Chaderchi, the official in charge of the PKK's foreign relations, said a Turkish cross-border attack now would have no better chance of success

than previous incursions.

"We are well prepared, all along the mountains," he said, adding that a Turkish attack would be a "strategic mistake" that would unite Kurds on both sides of the borders and elsewhere in the Middle East.

REGIONAL STABILITY

There are Kurdish minorities in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria who make up the world's largest ethnic group without an independent state -- more than 30 million people in all. A fully independent Iraqi Kurdistan would be a threat to the stability of each of the countries where they live.

Turkey has the largest Kurdish population and the election campaign prompted a surge of nationalist feeling that has made some Kurdish politicians fear election rhetoric might be transformed into military action after Sunday's vote. In Washington, conservatives place the onus for defusing the potentially explosive border tension on Masoud Barzani, the president of the KRG.

A few days before the Turkish vote, Michael Rubin, a Middle East scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, told a session of the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee that Barzani "should expel PKK terrorists" from their strongholds. Judging from a day in their natural fortress of the Qandil range, this seems much easier said than don

THE
INDEPENDENT

24 July 2007 By Nicholas Birch in Istanbul

Turkey steps back from Iraq invasion after poll

As Turkey's government savoured an overwhelming electoral victory yesterday, regional analysts agreed that the immediate impetus for an invasion of northern Iraq had receded.

Sunday's clear mandate for the Islamic-rooted AKP of the Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has been received as a snub to his secularist and nationalist opponents, who put the fight against Kurdish separatist guerrillas across the border at the centre of their failed campaign.

Orhan Miroglu, one of the Kurdish politicians elected to parliament, said the veiled threat of military intervention and a massive military build-up in Turkey's south-east had failed to attract votes.

"Sunday's results are a victory for common sense and civilian democracy over a politics of nationalism and foreign intervention," he said in a telephone interview from the southern port city of Mersin.

With more than 100,000 troops on the border, Turkey's military has been talking about the strategic value of Iraqi operations for months. But it needs parliamentary permission to cross

into Iraq. Mr Miroglu, one of 24 deputies to be elected from Turkey's Kurdish nationalist party, says he will oppose an invasion. "We've had enough war," he says.

On the Iraqi side of the border, Murat Karayilan, the military commander of the Kurdish separatist group the PKK, which has been at war with the Turkish state since 1984, is still expecting a fight. "The date of the Turkish offensive has drawn near," he told the Associated Press. "We are ready to defend ourselves." Despite repeated assurances that it will do what is necessary to combat the PKK, the signs are that the victorious Justice and Development Party (AKP) has little enthusiasm for starting a new war.

One of the most striking aspects of it winning 47 per cent of Turkish votes this weekend was the increased support it gained from the south-eastern heartlands of Kurdish nationalism. At least 100 AKP deputies are of Kurdish origin. With unemployment in some Turkish Kurdish towns higher than 50 per cent, they know that war in Iraq is the last thing their constituents want. For a start, much of Turkey's \$2.7bn (£1.3bn) trade with Iraqi Kurdistan is in the hands of Turkish Kurds.

A security expert at the Ankara-based

International Strategic Research Organisation, Ihsan Bal, was unwilling to rule out the likelihood of small cross-border raids by highly-trained anti-terrorist groups.

Anything bigger would be a sign of government weakness, and the AKP has just been given an overwhelming public mandate. "Soft power is in the ascendant," he said.

How Turkish analysts interpret "soft power" depends on their political allegiances. Umit Ozdag, the author of an unsuccessful attempt last year to take over the leadership of Turkey's newly elected right-wing nationalist party, believes that Turkey should simply impose sanctions on Iraqi Kurds.

Under pressure from the secular establishment, AKP has until now avoided talking directly to the Iraqi Kurdish leader Massud Barzani and the Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd. Faruk Logoglu, whose term as Turkey's ambassador to Washington ended last year, said: "These are the first people we should be talking to about the PKK. I hope the government, now it has its massive new mandate, will have the courage to enter into dialogue with them

Islamic-rooted party keeps reins in Turkey

Voters rebuff secular state establishment

By Sabrina Tavernise

ISTANBUL: The governing party of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a former Islamist, won a broad victory in national parliamentary elections on Sunday, taking nearly half of the total vote in what has become a referendum on the future of Turkish democracy.

Erdogan's Justice and Development party took 47 percent of the vote, according to preliminary results, far more than the 34 percent the party garnered in the last election in 2002. The result was a rebuff to the secular state establishment, which had predicted that voters would punish the party for trying to push an Islamic agenda.

But only a fifth of Turks seemed to share that concern, with the Republican People's Party, the main party of Turkey's secular establishment, receiving 20 percent of the vote, up by 1 percent from the last election. The Nationalist Action Party, a party that played on fears of ethnic Kurdish separatism, won 14 percent of the vote, election officials said.

Turkey is a NATO member and a strong American ally in a troubled region, and its stability is crucial. Its current political soul-searching attempts to find answers to the very questions that Americans have been asking since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001: Can an Islamic-oriented government that is popularly elected be democratic and westward-looking?

It was unclear on Sunday night how Turkey's powerful military would react, if at all. It issued a sharp warning to Erdogan's party in April, saying it had strayed too far from secularism. It has deposed elected governments four times since the Turkish state was founded by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1923, and seemed to be threatening a fifth.

After the victory, Erdogan addressed supporters at the rally in Ankara, vowing to work for national unity.

"Democracy has passed a very important test," Erdogan said, The Associated Press reported. "Whoever you have voted for," he continued, "we respect your choices. We regard your differences as part of our pluralist democracy. It is our responsibility to safeguard this richness."

Erdogan also said he would continue the reforms that his government has promoted as part of its efforts to join

the European Union and overhaul an economy that now enjoys average annual growth of 7 percent.

"We will press ahead with reforms and the economic development that we have been following so far," Erdogan said, according to The AP.

He said Turkey would do whatever was necessary to fight separatist rebels in the country's predominantly Kurdish southeast. Turkey is considering a cross-border offensive into Iraq to ward off rebels who have safe havens there.

"In our struggle against separatist terrorists, we are determined to take every step at the right time," Erdogan said. "We will continue our determined struggle against every threat against the security of our people."

The struggle in Turkey is essentially one of power. Erdogan's party, known in Turkish by its initials, AK, comes from a religious, merchant class in rural Turkey. It has pushed hard for Turkey's membership in the European Union, rewriting laws to meet European standards and meeting requirements in an International Monetary Fund economic program. It has strengthened economic ties with Israel, and has broached the topic of Turkey's long-festered problems with its Kurdish

minority.

Still, secular, urban Turks are suspicious. The worldview of much of the senior leadership of the party differs substantially from their own. They recall Erdogan's beginnings as an Islamist,

and say it is impossible to trust his party no matter what their current record is.

"The community that made Tayyip Erdogan who he is is the Islamic community," said Nu Guvenmez, a gas industry employee who had just cast his vote for the secular party in an upscale neighborhood in Istanbul. "He hasn't broken ties. He can't leave it."

But some of that concern stems from a deep-rooted class divide. In an affluent neighborhood in Istanbul, the AK party leadership, many of whose wives wear head scarves, were compared unfavorably to administrations in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan — countries with much less vibrant democracies than Turkey — because those wives were uncovered.

The election caps three months of political uncertainty, after a showdown over the presidency precipitated Sunday's elections ahead of schedule.

Turkey's secular state elite, backed by its military, used a legal maneuver

in May to block Erdogan's candidate from becoming president. Their objection was that the wife of the candidate, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, wears a Muslim head scarf.

The episode brought out strong emotions in Turks and deeply divided the nation.

Fourteen parties and 700 independent candidates competed for a total of 42.5 million eligible voters. Voting is

compulsory in Turkey, though fines for failing to vote are rarely imposed, and 2002 election turnout was 79 percent.

Sunday's turnout was more than 80 percent, and the voting was largely peaceful, election officials said.

Parties must win at least 10 percent of the votes in order to be represented in Parliament, a high threshold that has drawn some criticism as being undemocratic.



Fatih Saribas/Reuters

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan greeted his supporters in Ankara on Sunday.

Turks fault Austria on letting Kurd fly to Iraq

The Associated Press

ANKARA: Accusing European allies of undermining the fight against terrorism, the Turkish foreign minister criticized Austria on Thursday for allowing Kurdish rebel sought by Turkey to fly to northern Iraq instead of returning him to Turkey.

Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul said Wednesday that his office had summoned the Austrian ambassador and handed her a note that formally protested Austria's decision to send the Kurd, Ali Riza Altun, to northern Iraq. Turkey contends that Altun is in charge

of finances in Europe for the Kurdistan Workers Party. The party is listed as a terrorist organization by the European Union and the United States.

Gul said Altun was on an Interpol wanted list and had been held by the Austrian authorities for traveling on a false identity card.

"But still, he was placed on a plane and sent to Iraq," Gul said at a news conference. "This is a grave error and unacceptable. We strongly protested this and asked for an explanation. This corrodes the foundations of international cooperation against terrorism."

The Austrian Justice Ministry confirmed that Altun was taken into custody at Vienna's international airport on July 4 on suspicion of trying to leave the country with a fake travel document.

The Justice Ministry said that Altun was released on July 13, after an investigation showed that the French authorities had granted him a type of asylum based on a belief that he would be persecuted if extradited to Turkey.

Altun, who had lived in France since 2000, left Austria for Iraq shortly after

he was released, the statement said.

Turkey has long complained of a lack of international cooperation in combating the Kurdistan Workers Party.

It is pressing Iraq and the United States to prevent rebel attacks on Turkey from bases in northern Iraq. The guerrillas have recently stepped up attacks in Turkey.

The military has massed troops on its border with Iraq, and Turkish leaders are considering a military operation in northern Iraq to root out the rebel bases.

On Thursday, Turkish officials asked Iraq's ambassador to have Iraq arrest Altun extradite him to Turkey, a Foreign Ministry official said.

Gul said the United States had opened an investigation after Turkish complaints that U.S. weapons were ending up in the hands of the rebels. The weapons appeared to be part of an arsenal that the United States had given to the Iraqi Army, Gul said.

"We have been told that there are incidents of corruption in which U.S. soldiers were involved and that action is being taken against them," Gul said. He did not elaborate.

Turks back Islamic party

World keeps watch on test case for political Islam

Michael Binyon Analysis

The general election in Turkey is arguably the most important since the death of Kemal Atatürk, the founder of today's secular republic. At stake is far more than the row over whether an Islamist can be elected president. The election will determine the nature of Turkish democracy, the identity of the Turkish state and whether a restless younger generation is prepared to defy the threats of a conservative military Establishment to launch the fifth coup since 1960.

The implications go far beyond the plains of Anatolia or the teeming bazaars of Istanbul. This election is being perceived across the Muslim world as a test case for political Islam. If, as expected, the

ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party wins a landslide, will the powerful Turkish army accept the result? Or will fears that the vote will give AKP a mandate to move beyond its cautious Islamism

prompt military intervention to reassert the army's role as the guardian of the Atatürk legacy and the final arbiter of a democracy for which most generals believe Turks are not yet ready?

If the army accepts the return of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Prime Minister, this marks a milestone in the fractious relations between the generals and civilian politicians; it also vindicates the caution and concessions he has made to allay suspicions that he is trying to undermine secularism by stealth. This will help him to resist the clamour to abolish the ban on headscarves in public and to build more Islamic schools. Such an outcome would reassure other wary

Middle Eastern governments that Islamists can be trusted to take part in democratic elections.

If the army refuses to accept the result, as in Algeria, Islamists across the Muslim world will conclude that they will never be accepted in a Western-style democracy. That would encourage radicals to reject any participation in parliamentary politics, on the ground that the cards are stacked

against them, fuelling extremism and leading to confrontations between secular politicians and Islamists around the world. Little wonder, then, that the Arab world is watching what happens in Turkey with unusual interest.

Iraqis are also watching closely. Mr Erdogan has been resisting army pressure to intervene in Kurdistan on the pretext that PKK fighters are using northern Iraq as a haven. The army, where nationalism has as strong a grip

as secularism, fears that de facto independence for Iraq's Kurds will encourage Turkey's restless Kurds and threaten the unity and stability of Turkey itself.

Turkish intervention would be catastrophic for hopes in America and Europe of stabilising Iraq. It would aggravate the poor relations of both with Ankara, caused by Turkish refusal to back the US invasion of Iraq and by the determination of some European Union leaders not to allow Turkey full membership of the EU.

The election will strongly influence the accession talks. Despite broad European sympathy

for the army's secular stance, many EU leaders are worried by its nationalist, interventionist tone. This is especially true on Cyprus. Mr Erdogan has shown some flexibility over the island, but the army is strongly opposed to any concessions. If the Prime

Minister is defeated or weakened, he will be unable to go farther on Cyprus. That would throw up an immediate roadblock to the accession talks.

Many outsiders have seen the election as a contest between Islamists and secularists. It is not so clear cut. AKP has demonstrated economic competence and clear commitments to reform and has won support from non-Islamists and pro-Europeans. The army, Turkey's most respected institution, would stand to lose from AKP's wish to cut back farther its political influence. It has attracted support from many angered by Nato and EU

pressures. This election will show whether Turkey can go forward with both reforming Islam or with nationalist secularism, or whether compromise between forces shaping a country strategically placed between the West and the Muslim world is impossible.

Turkey raises hopes of peace with Kurds

Poll victory gives Erdogan power to resist military

Kurdish party wins 23 seats in new parliament

Ian Traynor Istanbul

Turkey's prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is likely to use his sweeping election victory to open a dialogue with his country's Kurdish insurgents, according to Turkish and Kurdish experts.

He is also expected to oppose an invasion of Kurdish northern Iraq and has invited the Iraqi prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, to Ankara for talks that would include US officials.

Mr Erdogan is in a strong position to dismiss military pressure for a cross-border crackdown on PKK Kurdish guerrillas based in northern Iraq and to extract concessions on the Kurdish conflict from the Americans and Kurdish leaders.

Turkey has massed tens of thousands of troops on the Iraqi border in recent weeks, with hawks in the high command pressing for an invasion. Mr Erdogan has resisted. Thrust into an unassailable position by a landslide election victory on Sunday, he now looks better placed to push a new political initiative on the Kurdish issue rather than opt for military action.

"Invasion is off the agenda now, there's a new momentum," said Cengiz Candar, a Turkish analyst.

As well as securing a national victory on Sunday, Mr Erdogan scored a remarkable triumph in the Kurdish south-east, doubling the vote of his AKP or Justice and Development party in mainly Kurdish areas to win an absolute majority of the vote with 52%.

"The AKP beat us. The government now has complete power and legitimacy," said a Kurdish official in the regional capital of Diyarbakir.

Having received such a vote of confidence from the Kurds, Mr Erdogan is unlikely to alienate them by invading. The Americans are fiercely opposed to a Turkish incursion into Kurdistan, the only bit of Iraq that is relatively stable and successful.

At the weekend, the British ambassador in Ankara said he could not see what Turkey had to gain from invading northern Iraq. Government officials and diplomats agree.

One former Turkish ambassador said Turkish forces would get bogged down "in a quagmire" in the guerrilla territory of mountainous northern Iraq.

An aide to Mr Erdogan said: "There's been 26 cross-border operations in 30 years. If Turkey had the feeling that a 27th would put an end to the PKK, it would not blink."

In addition to the AKP's electoral success in the Kurdish areas, the main Kurdish party in Turkey, the DTP, took 23 seats, putting it in the new parliament for the first time since 1994. The DTP is seen as the political wing of the PKK. The Turkish election system is stacked against it by setting a 10% national threshold for representation in parliament. The DTP beat the system by running candidates as independents.

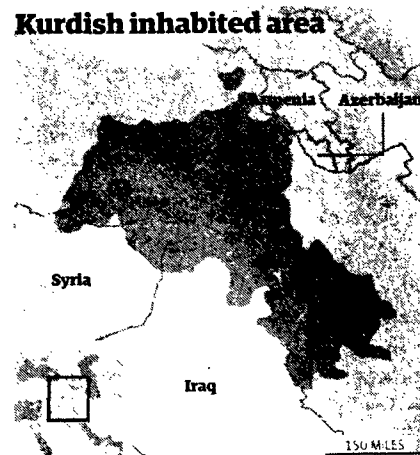
"That will make a difference," said Hizzar Ozsoy, a Kurdish analyst in Diyarbakir. "There's definitely a chance for a political opening."

The Erdogan camp has been trying to open political channels to the Kurdish leadership in Iraq for months, but has been

stymied by the military top brass and the outgoing hostile president of Turkey.

When Mr Erdogan wanted to invite the Iraqi president and Kurdish leader, Jalal Talabani, to Ankara, Turkey's president, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, vetoed the move.

In Istanbul and Ankara, the military pressure for an invasion was also seen as a warning to the Erdogan government against dialogue with the Kurdish leadership.



Turkey has been at war with the PKK for 30 years in a conflict that has taken almost 40,000 lives. At least 70 Turkish security forces have been killed this year. Turkey is home to around 15 million Kurds, by far the biggest of the Kurdish populations also native to Iraq, Iran and Syria.

Officially, Turkey does not recognise the regional government of Kurdistan led by Massoud Barzani. But, sources say, there were attempts several months ago to set up a secret meeting between the Turkish foreign minister, Abdullah Gul, and Mr Barzani, who, when leading the Kurdish insurgency against Saddam Hussein, travelled on a Turkish diplomatic passport.

"If there's an improvement in contacts with Kurdistan and with Barzani, that will be good for the Turkish Kurds," said the Kurdish official.

The key to any breakthrough, said the Erdogan aide, was a clear signal on "terrorism" from Mr Barzani.

guardian.co.uk/turkey »

FINANCIAL TIMES

Investors' joy at Erdogan landslide

By Vincent Boland in Ankara July 23 2007

Turkey's prime minister promised an agenda of political compromise and continued economic reform on Monday as he prepared for another term following a landslide general election victory.

The Turkish stock market jumped 5 per cent and the lira closed at a two-year high against the US dollar following Sunday's election. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, leader of the Justice and Development party (AKP), said he would try to avoid future tensions with the secular opposition and the military.

"The new government will bring peace and stability," he said after handing his old government's resignation to Ahmet Necdet Sezer, Turkey's president. Mr Erdogan is expected to be asked to form a new

government in early August, after parliament has reconvened.

The AKP, which has its roots in political Islam, won a thumping re-election victory, increasing its share of the popular vote by around 12 percentage points. Nearly one in two voters opted for its socially conservative, pro-business platform in a turnout of around 84 per cent, and it won 340 seats in the 550-seat parliament.

The secular opposition Republican People's party and the National Action party, which pursues a nationalist agenda and opposes Turkey's bid to join the European Union, also won seats. So did 27 independent candidates, most of them representing the ethnic Kurdish vote.

Mr Erdogan's win was the favoured outcome of investors, who have invested heavily in the AKP's economic and political reform agenda. But concern lingers that the government and the secular institutions might clash again over the election of a new president.

Ozgur Altug, chief economist at Raymond James Securities in Istanbul, said the election outcome was "one notch below best-case scenario". If the AKP had a slightly smaller majority the likelihood of a clash over the presidency would be diminished. Mr Erdogan said, however, that he would seek a candidate for the post who would not stir such a dispute. The AKP's attempt in April to get parliament to elect Abdullah Gul, Turkey's foreign

minister, to the post stirred intervention from the military and a constitutional crisis that initiated the weekend's election.

"We will resolve this matter without causing tensions," Mr Erdogan said after his meeting with Mr Sezer, whose term of office expired in May and who remains in a caretaker capacity.

Investors gave the election outcome an enthusiastic welcome, however, having already pushed stocks up nearly 10 per cent in the weeks before Sunday's vote. The Istanbul market's main index closed 5.1 per cent higher, the lira rose nearly three cents against the dollar and bond yields fell

BBC NEWS 23 July 2007

EU welcomes Erdogan election win

The EU has welcomed Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan's election victory, and urged him to relaunch reforms which could lead to membership of the bloc.

EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn said a new Turkish government would need to make "concrete progress" on freedom of expression and religion. Mr Erdogan has pledged to "work with determination" towards EU membership. He won a second five-year term in office after his AK Party increased its share of the vote to 46% on Sunday.

The election was called after opposition parties in parliament blocked the AKP's nominee for the post of president, causing political deadlock. But despite his electoral victory, Mr Erdogan will lack the two-thirds majority in parliament needed to be able force through his candidate.

'Major challenges ahead'

On Monday, the EU officials congratulated Mr Erdogan on his party's victory, describing it as a mandate for the reforms it wants Turkey to complete during its membership talks. However, the bloc's enlargement commissioner said the new Turkish government faced "major challenges ahead".

"It is essential that the new government will relaunch the legal and economic reforms with full determination and concrete results," Mr Rehn said. "We need to see concrete progress on such fundamental

freedoms as the freedom of expression, the freedom of religion."

The president of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, also welcomed the victory, saying the vote came "at an important moment for the people of Turkey". The UK Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, said it was very important for Europe to "reach out" to the new government.

"A stable and secure political situation in Turkey is massively in our interest and we will certainly want to be taking forward our links with this very important country," he added.

Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik said everyone was interested in having a "modern, dynamic, successful Turkey as a partner". "We expect this government that has a good track record over the past years to continue with even more ambition," she said.

Majority reduced

Correspondents have warned, however, that Mr Erdogan's mandate for reform may be limited by the workings of the Turkish electoral system.

Although the AKP has been returned to power with a larger share of the vote - 12 percentage points more than in 2002 - its share of the seats has dropped to 340 out of the 550 in parliament.



Erdogan has suggested he will compromise on his choice for president (file photo) (AFP)

The main secularist opposition group, the Republican People's Party, also increased its share of the vote, but its number of seats fell by more than 60 to 112.

The two main parties have fewer seats because the right-wing Nationalist Action Party (MHP) passed the 10% threshold to enter parliament, unlike in 2002. This time, the MHP won 71 seats with 14% of the vote.

No other parties passed the threshold, although 28 independent candidates, including more than 20 members of the Kurdish Democratic Society Party, won seats. It is the first time in more than a decade that a Kurdish party is represented in parliament.

TODAY'S ZAMAN

July 23, 2007 Today's Zaman with wires İstanbul

Zana faces probe for urging state of 'Kurdistan'

Former Kurdish deputy Leyla Zana faces an investigation after she called for division of Turkey into administrative states, including a "state of Kurdistan."

A prosecutor in the eastern city of Iğdır, where Zana spoke at a rally on Friday in support of pro-Kurdish independent candidates for Parliament, launched the investigation on Saturday following a complaint by the police.

"It is time for division of Turkey into states. Ankara, divide Turkey into states and establish the Kurdistan state," Zana was quoted as telling a crowd by the Anatolia news agency on Friday. She said this would be tantamount to taking a step that Turkey failed to take during the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923 and added that such a shift in the administrative system would not mean "division of the country," claiming that on the contrary that it would strengthen unity and coexistence.

Mustafa Küçük, chief prosecutor of Iğdır, said in a written statement carried by Anatolia that the investigation would determine whether Zana violated laws on

incitement and state unity.

Zana, who has already served a 10-year sentence for collaborating with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), insisted on her proposal on Saturday. "This is where I believe Turkey's interests lie," she was quoted as saying by the private Cihan News Agency in a speech in the eastern province of Van. "I believe that those who are angry with me now will implement what I call for after five or 10 years."

In a television interview Saturday, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan harshly criticized Zana's remarks and called for an investigation. "These are very unfortunate remarks," he told the Kanal 7 television station. "No one can ... make such a provocation on the eve of the elections."

Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül also lashed

out at Zana for her remarks, saying they are "very irresponsible and provocative"



on the eve of elections. Turkey's unitary status is a highly charged issue amid mounting violence by the PKK. Many oppose moves to clip the powers of the central government out of fear that it could lead to a break-up of the country.



July 24, 2007

Turkey: After Election Euphoria, AK Party Faces Political Challenges

July 24, 2007 (RFE/RL) -- With the initial excitement dying down after Turkey's ruling Justice and Development (AK) party won early parliamentary elections on July 22, the Islamic-oriented AK must now tackle a number of pressing challenges.

The most immediate challenge facing Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is to settle the choice of a new state president.

Parliament's rejection of Erdoğan's candidate, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül, is what precipitated the early elections. The secularist opposition distrusts Gül, a devout Muslim whose wife wears an Islamic head scarf in public -- which is seen by some Turks as a symbol of Islamic militancy.

To simply resubmit Gül's name could lead to a new deadlock, as the AK still lacks the two-thirds majority needed to push the nomination through.

Erdoğan hinted at compromise when he told journalists in Ankara that he believes the question of the president will be resolved "without causing tensions." At the same time, he suggested that Gül himself must make the decision on whether or not to stand.

Amberin Zaman, the Turkey correspondent for "The Economist" magazine, said Erdoğan will have problems, particularly with Turkey's secular establishment, if Gül insists on standing again.

"One of [Erdoğan's] first messages after declaring victory was to say to people who did not vote for them: 'We acknowledge your concerns and we don't want to raise tensions, we want to address your concerns as well,'" Zaman said. "So what sort of message would he send if he renominates Mr. Gül? He would be basically saying he was not sincere."

Momentum Toward Europe

The second challenge facing the prime minister is to continue with legal and administrative reforms needed to equip Turkey for European Union membership, and also to keep the economy rolling forward.

Brussels has already signalled that it wants Ankara to regain lost momentum in its membership bid. In remarks to journalists on July 23, EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn said the bloc expects a new Turkish government to be formed quickly. "It is essential that the new government will relaunch the legal and economic reforms with full determination and concrete results," Rehn said.

As for the economy, correspondent Zaman suggests that the healthy growth rate -- currently 7 percent per annum -- is a major reason for the AK party's near-landslide win in the weekend elections.

"One of the biggest reasons the AK party was

returned to power was simply the fact that it delivered so well on the economy," she said. "The average Turk has seen his life improve, particularly the poorer Turks. The AK party has done a lot to help these people. If you go to rural areas, many people will tell you that."

The Kurdish Conflict

A third major challenge facing Erdoğan in the longer perspective is the question of the Kurdish insurgency in southeast Turkey.

For the first time in some years, the new parliament includes Kurdish deputies, 27 in all. Zaman sees a heavy responsibility resting on these legislators. She says their job is to persuade the nation that the Kurdish conflict can be settled by negotiation.

The situation is complicated by the emergence of the autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq, which many Turks see as a spur to Turkish Kurd demands for eventual independence.

Turkish troops are massed along the Iraqi border, ready for a possible incursion in pursuit of guerrillas based there. But Erdoğan appears not to favor military action, considering that the Turkish military has already made 29 incursions onto Iraqi territory since the 1990s, without dislodging the guerrillas.

TODAYS ZAMAN

July 24, 2007 Andrew Finkel TODAY'S ZAMAN

[NEWS ANALYSIS]

Kurdish presence in Parliament may prompt reform or sore tempers

It's a modern myth that the Chinese written word for crisis consists of a combination of the characters for "danger" and "opportunity," so while it may not be a Chinese-style crisis, it is certainly the new conventional wisdom in Turkish politics that a new bloc of independent Kurdish MPs represents both a chance to resolve one of the country's long-standing problems but also the risk of igniting dangerous nationalist passions.

Sunday's election saw victory for some 23 candidates loyal to a Kurdish nationalist platform, well over the 10-member requirement to win the privileges of a parliamentary group. They stood as independent to overcome the 10 percent threshold a party needs to win nationally in order to qualify for seats in Parliament. The new MPs will now be able to represent the Democratic Society Party (DTP), which holds many key municipalities in the Kurdish Southeast of the country.

Sunday also saw the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) win 71 seats in the assembly. During the campaign the party was bellicose in demanding military action to punish radical Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) separatists based in northern Iraq. The party refuses to recognize a "Kurdish problem" in Turkey, defined in terms of cultural and human rights.

Instead it sees the issue as a problem of combating terror and eliminating the environment in which Kurdish nationalist demands are bred.

One of the key demands of the new DTP deputies will be an amnesty for

those imprisoned for having links to the PKK and for a way of returning those living outside the law to return to a normal life. One of the newly elected pro-Kurdish MPs is herself awaiting trial for being a member of the banned organization. Sebahat Tuncel will now be released from jail under the immunity from prosecution enjoyed by MPs to represent the third electoral district of İstanbul.

The MHP rejects the notion of any such pardon. One of its campaign posters mocked what it called the "flat plainers," those who think you can deal with terrorism by luring young people off the mountains. However, given the party's generally mediocre performance in the election, winning just over 14 percent of the national vote, they may feel reluctant to turn the floor of the National Assembly itself into a battleground.

The DTP-affiliated MPs will also be scrutinized for their willingness to compromise. Memories are still fresh of Kurdish deputy Leyla Zana attempting to swear her parliamentary oath in Kurdish wearing a Kurdish tricolor headband. She along with fellow MPs was imprisoned for 10 years. Ms. Zana, while not a candidate because of her penal record, has campaigned for fellow independents and raised eyebrows in a pre-election speech with calls not just for an amnesty but some form of political autonomy for the Kurdish region.

One force for moderation will be the knowledge that although they did well at the election, their total vote was nearly half the 6.2 percent which a

predecessor Kurdish party scored in 2002. This part is explained by the technical difficulties that independents face in getting the electorate to stamp their ballots correctly but also the headway that the governing Justice and Development Party (AK Party) has made in the Kurdish region.

Whereas independents gained as much as 60 percent of the vote in the small but Alevi province of Tunceli, the AK Party won six seats with 41 percent of the vote in the larger constituency of Diyarbakir, compared to independents, who gained four seats with an albeit larger (47 percent) poll.

The AK Party has proved itself acceptable partly for its ability to provide services, particularly in those municipalities it controls, but also for having the clout to stand up to demands to launch a major cross-border operation into northern Iraq. Many believe that such an operation would be ineffectual in containing the PKK but would also ignite violence within Turkey itself and poison relations with the people of the Kurdish Southeast.

The combined votes of new Kurdish MPs and the 340 seats that the AK Party enjoys are still short of the magic 367 votes needed to change the Constitution, but it is still probable that the new DTP bloc will pledge their support to the government's efforts for new reforms in exchange for progress on issues like Kurdish cultural rights. They may find the greatest obstacles are not within Parliament but inside a still powerful nationalist establishment well represented in the courts, the army and the bureaucracy.

TODAYS ZAMAN

July 25, 2007 Today's Zaman Ankara

Talabani, Barzani welcome new government

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani sent a congratulatory message to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on the occasion of his victory in the parliamentary elections held on Sunday, while Massoud Barzani, head of the de-facto autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq, expressed his wish that the rule of the new government of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) would

serve as a means for improving relations between the Turkey and Iraq.

"Let's hope for the consolidation and the expansion of the historical friendly and firm relations between Iraq and Turkey's peoples for the welfare of the two friendly countries and the welfare of our eastern peoples for achieving security, stability and peace for both nations and our east through destroying terrorism and violence and

achieving prosperity, progress and democratic development," said Talabani in a message reported on pukmedia.com, the official Web site of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). It was also reported that Barzani separately expressed his hopes for the new government's contribution to bilateral relations.

Qaeda closely tied to Iraq, Bush says

Military pullout would be disastrous for U.S., he argues

By Brian Knowlton

WASHINGTON: President George W. Bush argued forcefully Tuesday that the Al Qaeda affiliate in Iraq is strongly linked to the central Al Qaeda leadership, and that to leave Iraq without defeating the terror group would be "dangerous for the world and disastrous for America."

He made the remarks during a visit to Charleston Air Force Base in South Carolina, at a time of fierce political debate in Washington over calls for an Iraq pullout and a week after a major intelligence report concluded that the Qaeda organization of Osama bin Laden had successfully regrouped, probably in northwest Pakistan.

The president, in a half-hour speech clearly aimed at his Democratic critics, said that those who argued that Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, which he referred to as Al Qaeda in Iraq, was a local group with local objectives, and not a serious threat to Americans, were seriously misinformed.

"It's hard to argue that Al Qaeda in Iraq is separate from bin Laden's Al Qaeda when the leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq took an oath of allegiance to Osama bin Laden," Bush said, referring to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the Iraq group's leader, who was killed last year.

Bush called the two groups "an alliance of killers," and said, "No enemy is more ruthless in Iraq than Al Qaeda."

Democrats were critical and dismissive of Bush's comments.

Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, the majority leader, said that "the presi-

dent's claim that the war in Iraq is protecting us from Al Qaeda is as misguided and dangerous as the conclusions that drove us to Iraq in the first place."

"Despite what the president would like us to believe," he added, "it has been established that Al Qaeda had no active cells in Iraq when we invaded, and we have long known that we were not attacked from Iraq on 9/11. Saying otherwise does not make it so."

The president's remarks focused almost entirely on the Qaeda linkages and threats; his tone was particularly tough. But Bush's message did not vary from what he has long said about the group.

Some Democratic politicians and liberal commentators have suggested that the administration's portrayal of the link between Qaeda groups is overblown and that sectarian violence is a far greater concern in Iraq than are foreign terrorists. The more important threat to the United States, some have said, comes from bin Laden.

Meanwhile, the president has had some recent success, judging by polls, in making his case for staying in Iraq, both by insisting that success is possible and by warning that failure would be catastrophic — in part because Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia might turn its attentions elsewhere.

Earlier Tuesday, the White House press secretary, Tony Snow, was asked why Bush felt the need to insist on the Qaeda connections. "I think when somebody tries to argue that Al Qaeda in Iraq is not a key part of the problem, it creates a basis of saying, well, you

need to go someplace else," Snow said.

Snow appeared to be alluding to new calls for a U.S. military attack against Qaeda targets inside Pakistan — something administration officials themselves have said in recent days they cannot rule out.

Bush made no mention of the Pakistan question. He outlined the foreign involvement with Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, whose top leaders have included people from Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Turkey. He told how U.S. forces recently unmasked an effort by the group to pass off an Iraqi actor, using the surname al-Baghdadi, as its leader to create a more "Iraqi" image.

Amid the chaos after the U.S.-led invasion of 2003, Zarqawi "was able to expand dramatically the size, scope and lethality of his operation," Bush said. The following year, Zarqawi swore formal allegiance to bin Laden.

The White House released a grim new intelligence assessment last week that concluded that the United States was losing ground against the bin Laden organization and described it as significantly stronger than it was two years ago. That brought into question the idea that attacking jihadists abroad — in Iraq and Afghanistan — was better protection for the U.S. homeland.

American officials have squarely attributed the Qaeda resurgence to the decision last September by the president of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, to take a hands-off approach toward the tribal areas in the northwest where Al Qaeda and Taliban militants are thought to be.

Opening talks with Iran on Iraq discourage U.S.

By Stephen Farrell and Jon Elsen

BAGHDAD: Talks between the United States and Iran aimed at helping stabilize Iraq made little progress in their opening day Tuesday, as envoys from the two countries squared off over U.S. allegations that Iran has increased the flow of aid to Shiite militias.

A downbeat U.S. ambassador, Ryan Crocker, said after the meeting that despite Iran's stated desire for a secure and stable Iraq, evidence suggested no progress on that. He added that since Iranian and U.S. representatives last met to discuss the matter two months ago, Iranian-supported militia attacks on U.S. and Iraqi forces had seen "an escalation, not a de-escalation."

"I was as clear as I could be with the Iranians that this effort, this discussion, has to be measured in results, not in principles or promises, and that thus far

the results on the ground are not encouraging," Crocker said.

Crocker led a team that met with an Iranian group led by the Iranian ambassador to Iraq, Hassan Kazemi Qomi. The meeting was held in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone with the Iraqi foreign minister, Hoshyar Zebari.

Crocker characterized the talks as "full and frank" and said both sides expressed their views, with the Iranians maintaining their position that they had "absolutely nothing to do with" the attacks.

Crocker said his team had "laid out what is clear to us is evidence of Iranian support for some of these militia activities," adding: "We have individuals in custody who have spoken of Iranian involvement."

He said there was talk at the meeting of forming a security subcommittee to

address issues relating to militias, Al Qaeda and border security in Iraq. He added that the United States would continue the dialogue "as long as we think it has some prospect of leading to better results on the ground."

In Hilla on Tuesday, at least 26 people were killed when a suicide bomber struck a market. The explosion in the mainly Shiite city 100 kilometers, or 60 miles, south of Baghdad destroyed shops and cars and badly damaged a maternity hospital.

The bomber, driving a tow truck, detonated his explosives in the middle of the Bab al-Mashhad district, which was packed with shoppers and people on their way to work, The Associated Press reported. About 70 people were wounded, Reuters reported.

At least one person was killed at the nearby maternity hospital.

On Monday, car bombs ripped through what is normally one of Baghdad's least dangerous neighborhoods, killing at least 12 people and wounding 38. The authorities said most of the dead and wounded had been shopping at busy street-side markets.

William Pfaff

An ambivalent message from Turkey

ATHENS

The crushing victory of the Justice and Development (AK) party in Turkey's parliamentary elections July 22, with a turnout of more than 80 percent, expressed a popular will by the Turkish electorate to achieve two seemingly contradictory objectives.

They endorsed the government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who intends to go on pressing for Turkish membership in the European Union. They also conclusively expressed support for the popular and middle-class religious movement that provides the AK's electoral base. In that respect, the vote implicitly rejected the secular republican values established in the 1923 republic by Kemal Ataturk.

Turkey's problem with Europe is that while Europeans are generally prepared to see a secular Turkish state as member of the EU, they do not want a Turkey governed by what is effectively an Islamic religious party, as a full member of the European Union.

There are many reasons for this, some obviously connected with the war of the United States and its allies against Muslim extremist movements (and inevitably, to a significant if unavowed sense, against contemporary Islamic society).

Others are cultural and practical. European civilization was decisively shaped by Christianity and its values today reflect this in one way or another.

Turkey also is just too big, with too high a birthrate. Its population of 78 million is greater than that of any EU member except Germany (83 million).

Finally, the present French government says it would veto Turkey's admittance. Even if membership were put to referendum votes in all the member countries, Turkey would have virtually no chance of being admitted.

There is no excuse for the Europeans not to have been honest about this issue long ago and anticipated the problem by creating forms of EU association and cooperation that would have accommodated the Turkish problem (and that of other non-European

states that want to join).

They didn't do so for several reasons: Turkish membership seemed remote; many thought it might bridge Muslim-Western tensions; it was wanted by the United States; exclusion would be discriminatory; and, finally, there was lethargy, in that the EU bureaucracy was uncritically allowed to make EU expansion its criterion of success.

This should be a lesson to national political authorities about allowing a bureaucracy to take by default strategic political decisions.

Turkey has an industrial sector more or less the size of EU members Poland and Hungary, but the vast majority of Turks still live in a backward agricultural society.

EU members Spain, Portugal, Greece — and even the EU founding states, Italy and France — had (or have) very large, if modernized, agricultural sectors today. The Turks' problem again is the size and

backwardness of much of their population. It has too many peasants.

Ataturk was undoubtedly the most ambitious and successful revolutionary of modern times. He took power in what universally was regarded as an Oriental society, which since the 15th century had been the most powerful and culturally dynamic Muslim state in the world, possessing a European empire in the Balkans — in Greece, Serbia, Bosnia and Albania — at one point threatening Vienna, as well as incorporating what originally had been the great Arabian caliphate, its nominal power extending along most of the North African coast to Gibraltar.

By 1914, the empire had been coming apart for a century, mainly because it was fundamentally feudal in character, violent when necessary but with a method of decentralized rule ordinarily tolerant and indirect, acting through traditional elites and aristocracies and local communal, tribal and religious leaders and officials.

It was incapable of dealing with the pressures of the modernizing Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires, or with the new dynamism of popular nationalism that was set loose in the early 19th century.

Ataturk set out to make Turkey, shorn of its empire by defeat as Germany's ally in World War I, into a modern state.

He disestablished Islam and forced religious reform. He established a secularized school system. He replaced the Arabic script in which Turkish was written with a modified European alphabet. He established democratic elections and modernized the state administration and the army, which he charged

with the responsibility to maintain his reforms, if necessary by overturning elected governments that rejected them (as it has four times). He suppressed, or accommodated, the separatist claims of national minorities. He insisted on "Turkishness."

Ataturk, who died in 1938, wanted to make Turkey a modern European state and believed that Turkey's destiny

was as a European power. He would undoubtedly have seen membership in the European Union as consistent with his vision of a European Turkey.

The Turkish elite since the republic was founded has been educated with this European orientation and ambition. Those elite are now themselves Europeanized, internationalized, holding major international posts, full participants in the modern, Westernized international political order.

Certainly Turkey has a future in association with Europe, but not as an agent of cultural struggle with political Islam, as many would have it today. Ataturk conceived the country's vocation as sovereign and independent, distinct and individual, and that may be the course for it to follow today. It could make itself the EU's partner, rather than another member.

Tribune Media Services International

EU membership would have been consistent with Ataturk's vision of Turkey.

Kemalism's defeat, the Turkish election, and the Kurds

Globe Editorial

Election shows clear breaking points in modern Turkish history and politics.

Last Sunday's general election in Turkey was undoubtedly one of the most crucial elections in the Turkish Republic's history. On the one hand, the unofficial results of the election highlight continuity and change in Turkish political history. The predominance of right-wing tendency in the Turkish electorate not only remained intact, but at the same time increased its vote. On the other hand, the last election clearly indicated breaking points in modern Turkish history and politics. The election also signified the disoriented, incoherent, and confused state of mind of Kurdish politics.

The landslide victory of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) is highly significant should we consider the period from the crisis of the presidential election and Turkish military involvement, through a memorandum seeking to prevent the AKP from selecting a new Turkish president. The period also witnessed anti-government demonstrations in Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara under the banner of laicism and republicanism, organized and run by mainly Ke-

malist and pro-military civil associations in cooperation with the main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP). CHP was established by the Kemalists following the declaration of the Turkish Republic in the early 1920s, thus it represents Kemalism more stubbornly in Turkey than any other political party today.

The collaboration between the Turkish military, CHP, and ultra Turkish nationalists, such as the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), against the AKP in the pre-election period was analyzed by various political observers as Laicism versus Islam. Such categorization was not only profoundly misleading but at the same time misrepresenting the real Turkish politics and developments.

The real conflict in Turkey is between Kemalist bureaucratic/military cliques and growing small and middle traders and millions of dissatisfied, unemployed, lower-income groups. The Turkish military and bureaucratic casts since the establishment of the Republic have been enjoying untouchable privileges and status in Turkish political, economic, and social realms. Kemalism as a state ideology purports statism, republicanism, and laicism, and has always served the interests of this clique.

Turkey's endeavor to join

the EU and as a result to carry out some fundamental reforms within the Turkish state establishment was taken to the highest level during the AKP government. For Turkey to join the EU, this means that it has to give up statism, its state-led economy, and the role of Turkish military in politics. These measures certainly erode the privileges of the Turkish army and bureaucratic casts. Their reactions against the AKP government, thus, can be sought within this EU forces changing political circumstances in Turkey.

Despite all the explicit intervention of the military and the Kemalist intrigue up to the election, the victory of the AKP signifies the defeat of Kemalism in Turkey. This is indeed a very significant political development, which highlights a breaking point in Turkish politics. The post-election period in Turkey is more prone to speculation and chaotic developments as the conflict and struggle between the military and civil politics will no doubt intensify. The presidential election, the Kurdish national question, and EU reforms are some of the most challenging issues to be faced by the AKP against the military and other layers of Kemalism in the Turkish political system.

The Kurdish issue played a determining role during

the election. The pro-Kurdish Democratic and Society Party (DTP), due to the fear of threshold, entered the election as independent candidates and secured at least 23 MPs. After 16 years, the Kurds again will take their seats at the Turkish Assembly, following the dramatic arrest of Leyla Zana and other Kurdish MPs in 1991.

Analysis of discourses and practices of elected Kurdish MPs, however, highlights an irony. One of the most popular candidates of the DTP in Diyarbakir, Aysel Tugluk, published an article in a daily Turkish newspaper, *Radikal*, in which suggested that the Kurds along with their Turkish brothers should embrace Kemalism and follow the Kemalist guide. The irony is that while the majority of the Turkish population is distancing themselves from the Kemalist ideology, the Kurds are approaching and embracing it. The Kurdish dance with Kemalism is nothing but a clear picture of confusion, disorientation, and incoherence of Kurdish political movement. The impact of the new Kemalist Kurds would not only be seen in northern Kurdistan (Kurdistan of Turkey), but also be sensed in southern Kurdistan (Iraqi Kurdistan).

*Azad Aslan
Globe political Editor*

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The Kurdish Globe

Globe Chronicle

Assad and a new era for the disfranchised Kurds in Syria?

With regional spotlight and ensuing violence in Lebanon, Israel, Syria and Iraq and not forgetting the international scrutiny over the controversial Tehran regime, Syria has manoeuvred quietly in the background to deflect attention.

The last thing Syria craves in its quest to become an influential and respected regional power, is further spotlight and pressure over its lack of democratic principles and tainted human rights record.

Clearly, Bashar al-Assad has identified the long disgruntled and disenchanted Syrian Kurds numbering 1.5 million or 10% of the population, as one of

the greatest dangers facing the regime and a potential powderkeg for instability.

Across the border Iraqi Kurds have grown in prominence, prosperity and strategic standing whilst at least the Kurdish issue in Turkey is finally reaching the international attention it deserves, serving to fuel Syrian Kurdish expectations.

Of the crux of the Syrian Kurdish problem is the 200,000 Kurds who are in essence classified as 'ajanib' or foreigners as a result of the politically motivated census of 1962, with thousands more classified as 'maktoumeen' or concealed and simply unregistered, a

kin for Kurds of been 'buried alive'.

Stateless Kurds are the subject of many state restrictions, including education, employment and travel and are legally prohibited from marrying Syrian citizens.

Syrian Kurds sensing their historic opportunity have grown in confidence highlighted by well-publicised riots in 2004, growing political opposition movements and coverage by human rights organisations, not to mention the ubiquitous tough line from the Bush administration of which the Syrian regime accuses of wanting to topple the regime.

Some liberal reforms were witnessed upon his initial presidency, creating strong optimism for greater change and loosening of the social noose

but this was later thwarted under pressure from an alarmed Baathist establishment, the army and Alawite minority.

Under growing pressure, al-Assad has taken a softening stance towards the Kurds in recent years and in 2005 publicly restated his intention to resolve the issue and even hinted at visiting the area and meeting representatives of tribes in the north of Syria. In essence, nothing of substance was actually implemented and as Kurds feared may have been political showcasing.

Syrian officials have been quick however to emphasize that there is no Kurdish problem and that the current problem emanates as a result of a technical problem from the 1962 census. On the current debate, al-Assad commented "Kurds are a basic

part of our social body in our region, this part is not artificial, but we should separate terrorist acts and extremist parties from the Kurdish issue."

However, clearly acknowledging the destabilising affect of the Kurds, al-Assad has decided that it is better to keep your friends close, your enemies closer.

To underline al-Assad's strategic thinking, this week in a speech marking the onset of his second presidential mandate, al-Assad reiterated his commitment to resolving the status of

stateless Kurds and confirmed that new legislation was been drafted.

Somewhat ironically, there are concurrently reports emanating from Syria of an ongoing campaign of ethnic cleansing particularly in the region of Hasakah. Mindful of the cross-border influence of Kurds in neighbouring countries, Syria has historically confiscated land and deported Kurds in the border areas creating essentially an Arab belt in the oil-rich lands and simultaneously creating a buffer against Iraqi and

Turkish Kurds.

However, although the recent concessions set a positive undertone, on the other hand they only highlight rising Kurdish influence in Syria. It is very doubtful that resolving the status of 200,000 Kurds will resolve the greater issue and thus lower Kurdish expectations, when thousands more are been systemically repressed with cultural restrictions, political bans and long treated with suspicion, second class status and as agents of Syria's arch-enemy Israel.

The biggest danger is the onset of a popular national armed opposition movement in Syria with the Kurds forming a spearhead of other minorities and disgruntled Syrians, taking inspiration from the PKK model across the Turkish border. It would be unsurprising to see a strong US support for such a movement in a country it deems on its infamous axis-of-evil and a candidate for regime change.

*Bashdar Pusho Ismaeel
Globe Political Desk*

Kurdistan's 2007 budget approved

Budget finally meets the approval by a majority of Parliament



Aliyeh Mawloodi

Kurdistan's 2007 budget, estimated to be 5,982,356 million Iraqi dinars (approximately \$4,710,516,535), was finally approved by a majority of Parliament members in their last meeting before they begin summer recess until the end of August. The 2007 budget year began January 1, 2007, and ends December 31, 2007.

In attendance at the meeting were Shekh Bayiz Talabani, Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) State Minister of Economy and Finance; Sa'd Khalid, the KRG State Minister for Parliament Issues; Dilshad Osman and Rashid Tahir, Deputy Ministers of Economy and Finance and experts on such issues.

Though late in arriving, it was regarded as a great achievement for Kurdistan since, as speaker Adnan Mufti said in the meeting, "After the unification of the Kurdish administrations, it is the first budget of the region that is discussed, put to vote, and approved publicly."

The delay in preparing and submitting the budget to Parliament was believed to be mainly the fault of the Iraqi central government.

"The central government

is not frank with the KRG and the Kurdish people," said Dr. Dier Shawes, head of Parliament's Economic and Financial Committee in an interview with The Globe.

However, there were some

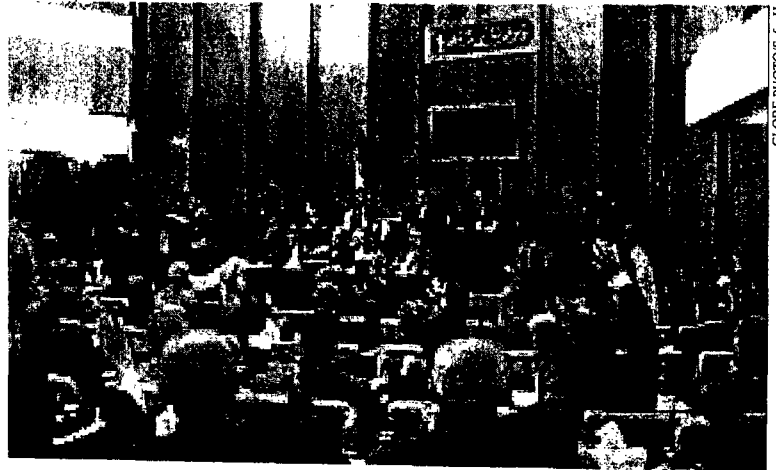
objections to the budget, both from the Economics and Financial committees and individual MPs. Among the major objections was the lateness of its submission; also, some objected to the fact that the operating budget constitutes the greatest part of the KRG budget, most of which goes to pay public employees (80-85%, according to Dr. Shawes).

The government and Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani have taken action to reduce the number of public employees to reserve more of the region's budget for investment.

At present, Kurdistan is in need of an investment budget for the reconstruction of the region, especially now, as it suffers from a weak infrastructure.

The government has recently established a High Commission for Economic Development, which aims to set strategic plans for the economic and social development of Kurdistan.

Another serious point of weakness about the economy of the region is that there are very few sources of revenue. Nearly all of the revenue, which is mostly from oil sales, comes from the central government. This in



GI. ORF PHOTOS/Sahin H.

turn threatens a considerable amount of the region's economic stability.

To solve this problem, Shawes suggests that the government find various other sources of revenue and not depend solely on oil and the central government.

The Parliament speaker made some recommendations on how to improve the 2008 budget policy. They included the Ministry of Finance submitting the region's budget before the end of the current year; it was also recommended that the government pay more attention to destroyed parts

of Kurdistan that deserve more consideration, such as Halabja. Another recommendation was that some of the KRG ministries, such as those of the Interior, Finance, and Peshmarga, unify before the end of 2007.

Dr. Shawes believes that, aside from those three ministries, there are others

with similar tasks and activities that should merge. "This would facilitate dealing with the budget for the KRG," he said.

Parliament asked the Ministry of Finance to submit a report on how the past seven months' budget was spent, as well as regular

seasonal reports on revenues and expenditures of the ministry from now on.

In a press conference after the meeting, Deputy Minister Osman described the approval of the budget as very important since it is the first of its kind in Kurdistan Region.

"We consider the recommendations of Parliament and will try to achieve better results in the future," Osman told reporters.

Deputy Minister Tahir said they would distribute the budget to the KRG's ministries and institutions over the next two weeks.

Aza Hasib Qaradaghi



Innumerable reasons for Turkey's hostility

All possibilities are considered as to why Turkey creates cross-border tension.

Why has Turkey put itself at the top of the list of countries hostile to Iraq and Kurdistan Region?

Once again, the American administration has warned Turkey against launching a cross-border operation into Kurdistan Region. White House spokesperson Tony Snow said that the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and other terrorist organizations are sources of concern for the United States and its allies, but it was just as important to acknowledge and respect Iraq's sovereignty.

Gordon Jundro, the U.S. National Security Council spokesperson, said the U.S. "wants to see the problem resolved in a way that Turks would not face PKK terrorism and Turkey, Iraq, and the U.S. would work together to eliminate terrorism."

It is noteworthy that the U.S. has emphasized the term "terrorism" while referring to the PKK. This is a new development in American discourse that takes the emotional aspect of Turkish politics and public opinion into consideration.

No tangible change was noticed in the Kurdish position toward Turkey when Kurdistan Parliament Speaker Adnan Mufti warned against any Turkish violation of its border with Iraq, adding that it would further complicate Iraq's situation. Mufti called upon Turkey to resolve its problem through dialogue with the Iraqi government.

"Iraq faces regional interventions in its internal affairs, including dangerous developments from Turkey and deployment of a large number of troops on Iraqi Kurdistan borders poised for intervention, which is no excuse," Mufti told a gathering of Iraqi and Kurdish parliamentarians during the General Conference on Federalism held in Erbil last week. "Turkey's intervention in Iraq and trespassing on Kurdistan's territory will set it on a confrontation with the Iraqi people, highly complicate the Iraqi issue, and pose new difficulties for the Iraqi government."

Turkey on top of the list

In this complicated and interwoven atmosphere where several regional and international elements are involved, why does Turkey put itself on the top of the list of countries hostile to Iraq and the federal region of Kurdistan?

Politicians and generals in Turkey madly want to create tension through a cross-border military operation into Kurdistan Region, but they have not received permission yet. That is because all the regional and international players, especially the U.S. and Europe, reject any Turkish military operation into Iraq through Kurdistan Region because it will harm Turkey before anyone else and add to regional tensions. A military intervention will not resolve Turkey's problem, which is that of the PKK. In fact, the problem is principally the problem of Kurdish people in Turkey who are waiting for a peaceful and fair solution through democratic principles to realize national rights, prosperity, and stability in southeast Turkey. Such a solution can open new horizons for development in Turkey and set the tone for more fruitful relations with neighboring countries and the EU, who would then open its doors to Turkey.

So, why does Turkey spearhead those who oppose the democratic experience in Iraq and Kurdistan? Is the reason because Turkey worries that the existence of a federal state on its borders will encourage Turkish people and others who live in Turkey to follow suit and demand more political freedoms the realization of the rights of nationalities and minorities who are oppressed by the extremist majority in Turkey?

Is it because Turkey lives in a new stage that puts the old system in Turkey to a test that it may not pass successfully? A stage that may pave the way for a new set of politics that would harm the interests of the traditional political elites, army generals, and intelligence peo-

ple who have been dominating power openly or from behind curtains?

Is it because of having to decide either to return to the era of Barbarism and military governing, or to step forward on the way to democracy, freedom, and achieving the demanded social and justice boundaries as well as enhancing steps toward inclusive development, raising Turkey in the fields of economy, welfare, and the positive advanced relations with the regional and international countries?

Is the reason because of the elections in Turkey (held last Sunday) by all so all parties have opened shops to sell nationalist sentiments and fiery slogans that are principally intended to transfer internal problems to the outside?

Is it worried about its situation, position, and role in the region, only able to express this worry by postponing the situation and through military intention?

Or because all these reasons have gathered together simultaneously and are floating in the minds of political and military officials?

The coming days and events will answer our questions, and until we get a certain answer, the current circumstances oblige everyone, whether in Iraq or Kurdistan Region, not to ignore the possibility of a military incursion even if on a low scale.

Turkey and its crises: Where is the key?

Amidst the political, military, and media intentions, the Turkish prime minister called his Iraqi counterpart to visit Ankara and hold dialogues on the PKK issue. This is a noticeable development and could calm the situation. It arranges the meeting table to exchange diplomatic, political, and economical solutions between these two countries where trust has not been reliable since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of the new Turkey and Iraq states.

Though Turkey was founded as part of the Ottoman Em-

pire and built its essences after breaking up all the Ottoman political, religious, and cultural structure, Iraq still remained an inheritor of the Ottoman state in regard to land and political highness.

The invitation comes as an attempt to exit the blazing deadlock glowing inside Turkey before the elections. Still, it must be welcomed and encouraged. Meanwhile, the main issue concerning the PKK problem and its existence in the Kurdistan Region mountains is not discoursed. Thus, Premier Tayyip Erdogan's attempts lack the participation of the main players in the game, including PKK representatives, representatives from the Kurdistan Regional Government, and other leaders in Kurdistan.

As far as this problem is within the Kurdish issue in Turkey, it is credible that the solution is also inside the Kurdish issue, not out of it.

As far as the problem embodied in existence of PKK fighters inside Iraqi Kurdistan regional lands, reasonably the solution also could be achieved along with the leaders from Kurdistan Region and with the Iraqi government, not only with one of them.

The problem is also related to the nature of the political system in Turkey, which intends to enter the EU; it is reasonable for the solution to be within the frame of the EU and through the obedience of the Turkish government to the EU demands of developing and enhancing democracy through improving political freedoms, determining the rights of the Kurdish people, and sketching real plans for developing the economy in Turkey. As much as Turkey states the problem with "terror," it is still reasonable for Turkey to become a participant in confronting terror by not supporting it in Iraq and not funding the revolutionary fronts against the Iraqi

political process in general and against the federal democratic experience in Kurdistan Region.

Turkey knows which one is

the key for solving the problems, but it considers itself the only legal inheritor of the Ottoman Empire, and uses this for its political and ethnical

highness. Thus, it always loses the key and tries to break the door to come out of its crises. This breaks its nose, but it does not break the door.



The Kurdish Globe

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PHOTO ISNA / Amir Kholoosi



A number of Iranian students are seen in a picture taken during a ceremony attended by 500 students immediately after a local court in Hamedan sentenced the academic Hashem Aghajari to death in October 2003.

Human rights violations in Iranian Kurdistan

Globe Editorial

As the Iranian regime escalates its egregious human rights abuses, many of those charged are sent to prison to face torture or deplorable solitary confinement conditions.

The human rights situation in Iranian Kurdistan has drastically deteriorated over the course of the last three months as pressure on Kurdish intellectuals, journalists, students, and human rights activists has intensified. Various reports of human rights organizations show that not only in Kurdistan, but also in all of Iran, activists within the civil society have faced increasing restrictions on fundamental freedoms of expression and association.

For instance, the 2007 Amnesty International report on Iran indicates that scores of political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, continue to serve prison sentences imposed following unfair trials in 2006.

Correspondingly, thousands were arbitrarily arrested, mostly during or following demonstrations held in various places in Iran. The number of arrested was considerably high among Azeri people at the same time that the Islamic regime followed its repressive politics on the Arab,

Lori-Bakhtiyari, and Baluchi minorities in the country. In the majority of cases, the detained individuals had been denied not only contact with their families but also access to legal representation. It is noteworthy to say that torture, especially during periods of pre-trial detention, remains an ordinary tool that Iranian authorities wield.

In the course of last year, at least 177 people were executed, four of whom were under 18 at the time of their alleged offenses. Moreover, two people were reportedly stoned to death after they were accused of maintaining an extramarital relationship. The report gives accounts of a number of cases where sentences of flogging, amputation, or eye gouging were implemented on the alleged offenders. The exact numbers of those executed or subjected to corporal punishment is probably considerably higher than what has been reported.

Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand, Chair of the Kurdish Human Rights Organization (RMMK) based in Tehran, has been detained in the awful Evin prison since July 1 of this year. This prominent human defender and journalist was among those singular voices who were fervently revealing the human rights abuses

in Iranian Kurdistan. The number of human rights abuses on Kurds that were unmasked by the RMMK during the three years of its existence was reported to be more than 40,000 cases. It is noteworthy to say that Kabudvand, the former editor of the banned weekly newspaper Payam-e Mardom, had been given an 18-month suspended prison sentence for "publishing lies and articles aimed at creating racial and tribal tension and discord." Human rights organizations have showed their concern about the destiny of Kabudvand, saying that he may be at risk of torture and ill-treatment; they believe he is very likely to be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association.

On July 17, Adnan Hassanpour and his cousin Abdolwahed (Hiwa) Butimar were sentenced to death by an Islamic court in Sanadaj, the capital of the Kurdish province Kurdistan. Charges were "espionage and Moharebeh (being at enmity with God)." The sentences will be further confirmed by the Islamic Supreme Court. Hassanpour, a Kurdish journalist and advocate of cultural rights for Iranian Kurds, was detained on January 25 and environmentalist Butimar on or around

December 23, 2006, both in Marivan, Kordestan province. According to Amnesty International, they were reportedly held incommunicado in a Ministry of Intelligence facility in Marivan, and transferred to Marivan prison on March 26.

The case of Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand, Adnan Hassanpour, Abdolwahed (Hiwa) Butimar, and many other Kurdish prisoners of conscience shows that the situation in Kurdistan relating to human rights issues over the last 10 years has never been as deplorable as it is today. In order to illustrate a minimum of the suffering that the Kurdish people experience due to the repressive politics of the Islamic regime, I refer to the statement of a young Kurdish male with whom I had an online conversation recently. He said simply, "We have the dagger on our throats." He deplored the recent waves of arrests of Kurdish activists and proclaimed that the Islamic Regime of Iran has never been as eager as it is currently to suffocate the fundamental freedoms of expression. He urged the international community to intervene in favor of freedom and democracy.

By Khalid Khayati
Political Commentator

Turquie Le Parti de la justice et du développement obtient la majorité des sièges au Parlement

La victoire électorale de l'AKP renforce M. Erdogan

ISTANBUL
CORRESPONDANCE

Un groupe de jeunes filles voilées survoltées se déhanchent sur des harangues de Recep Tayyip Erdogan rythmées par une musique techno. Le drapeau turc dans une main, celui de l'AKP (Parti de la justice et du développement) frappé de l'ampoule, son symbole, dans l'autre, Ahmet Bulus se laisse emporter par l'euphorie ambiante. « Je suis très heureux. Malgré les manifestations de l'opposition, qui voulait faire croire que le régime était en danger, la Turquie a montré qu'elle souhaitait la continuité », exulte cet étudiant en gestion.

Comme quelques centaines d'autres supporters, il est venu célébrer dans la liesse, dimanche soir 22 juillet, devant le siège stambouliote du parti, l'écrasante victoire aux élections législatives des ex-islamistes de l'AKP. Ceux-ci recueillent, selon des résultats encore non officiels, 46,6 % des voix, et obtiennent une confortable majorité des sièges au Parlement : 341 sur 550. Un chiffre renfor-

cé par la forte mobilisation des électeurs, la participation dépassant les 80 %.

Le score de l'AKP sonne comme un plébiscite pour Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Le premier ministre avait mis dans la balance, mardi, son retrait de la vie politique en cas de défaite.

Mais dimanche soir, à Ankara, devant quelques milliers de fidèles scandant « La Turquie est fière de toi ! », M. Erdogan pouvait savourer son triomphe. « C'est votre démocratie qui est sortie renforcée, a-t-il lancé. Ces résultats font porter encore plus de responsabilités sur nos épaules. Nous allons continuer à travailler pour atteindre notre objectif : une Turquie puissante et prospère. Et l'adhésion à l'Union européenne. »

Jamais un parti sortant n'avait été réélu avec une telle marge sur ses adversaires. Le score de l'AKP, en hausse de 13 points par rapport à 2002, progresse dans toutes les régions, de la très laïque Izmir aux confins du Sud-Est. Sa base électorale, populaire et conser-

vatrice, s'est considérablement élargie. Les milieux d'affaires ou encore les communautés chrétiennes ont soutenu à mots couverts le parti sortant.

« C'est la première fois que des chrétiens votent pour des soi-disant islamistes », note Raffi Hermonn, vice-président de l'association des droits de l'homme et d'origine arménienne, qui veut désormais croire à une normalisation des rapports entre les minorités non-musulmanes et l'Etat.

« C'est une grande victoire pour l'AKP, analyse Ahmet Insel, professeur à l'université Galatasaray. Elle est pour moitié de leur fait : ils ont réussi à attirer des sociaux-démocrates et des gens du centre-droit. Et pour moitié du fait de l'échec de la stratégie de déstabilisation menée par les militaires et la bureaucratie pour créer un sentiment de peur et coaguler les votes autour du CHP. Ces résultats montrent qu'il y a en Turquie un réflexe démocratique, car c'est le parti le plus proche des positions civiles qui a gagné. »

De son côté, le camp kémaliste, qui nourrissait de grands espoirs, est déconfit. Le CHP (Parti républicain du peuple), parti de l'appareil étatique fondé par Mustafa Kemal, n'est pas parvenu à rassembler au-delà de son électorat traditionnel, avec 20,85 % des voix. Et les manifestations antigouvernementales qui ont germé au printemps dans les grandes villes turques ne semblent pas avoir eu d'effet dans les urnes, signe que les électeurs n'ont pas jugé sérieuses les craintes d'une islamisation du pays et d'une remise en cause de la laïcité par le parti au pouvoir.

« Il faut avouer que c'est presque la Berzina, admet Bedri Baykam, écrivain et militant pugnace du CHP. Nous n'avons pas réussi à surmonter le "facteur Deniz Baykal" [le leader du CHP]. Ce parti est géré comme un parti fasciste : comment peut-il convaincre qu'il est pour la démocratie s'il ne l'applique pas dans ses propres rangs ? » Chez ses partisans démobilisés, Deniz Baykal affrontait, dès dimanche soir, des appels à la démission.

La troisième force du prochain Parlement sera l'extrême droite ultranationaliste du MHP, les « Loups gris », qui a mené campagne pour le rétablissement



Le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, et sa femme, Emine, lors d'un meeting électoral à Trabzon, dans le nord-est du pays, le 20 juillet. LOUISA GOULIAMAKI/AFP

« L'armée n'osera plus intervenir. L'armée, c'est le peuple. Et aujourd'hui, le peuple, c'est nous ! »

Un supporter de l'AKP

Editorial

La victoire d'Erdogan

de la peine de mort et l'arrêt des négociations d'adhésion à l'Union européenne. Avec 14,3 % des voix, ils doublent quasiment leur score de 2002 et envoient 70 députés au Parlement. Ils y côtoieront leurs ennemis jurés, les pro-Kurdes du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP), qu'ils jugent liés aux rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatiste).

Dans son fief du sud-est de la Turquie, à majorité kurde, le DTP a presque rivalisé avec l'AKP et a pu faire élire au total 24 députés, qui se présentaient comme

« indépendants ». Aux élections précédentes, le mouvement kurde n'avait pas réussi à franchir le seuil de 10 % des voix permettant d'être représenté au Parlement. Et les quatre représentants élus en 1991, parmi lesquels l'avocate Leyla Zana, avaient terminé leur mandat en prison.

« Pour nous, c'est une revanche », a commenté Ahmet Türk, l'un des chefs du parti, lui-même élu. La forte polarisation des suffrages – les trois premiers partis totalisent 82 % des suffrages – a exclu du jeu plusieurs petites formations. Mehmet Agar, président du Parti démocrate (centre droit) crédité de 5,4 %, a démissionné dès l'annonce des résultats.

Assis sur une majorité parlementaire forte, Recep Tayyip Erdogan n'a toutefois pas atteint le cap des deux tiers (367) des sièges au Parlement qui lui aurait permis de pouvoir réformer la Constitution et surtout de faire élire seul son candidat à la présidence de la République. Le nouveau Parlement devra se prononcer sur cette question dans les prochaines semaines. Dimanche soir, devant le siège de l'AKP, on entonnait : « *Cankaya est à Gül et le restera !* » Le palais présidentiel, bastion kémaliste, est la dernière conquête en vue pour les islamo-conservateurs qui souhaitent y envoyer Abdullah Gül.

L'élection du « frère » et bras droit de M. Erdogan avait été torpillée, en avril, par l'opposition et par les militaires. Faute d'une majorité suffisante, l'AKP devra donc faire des compromis sur le nom du candidat, sous peine de replonger dans une crise à l'issue incertaine. A moins d'une alliance de circonstances avec les « indépendants ». « *En tout cas, l'armée n'osera plus intervenir, se persuade Ertugrul, un jeune supporteur de l'AKP, en écrasant son klaxon. L'armée c'est le peuple. Et aujourd'hui, le peuple, c'est nous !* » ■

GUILLAUME PERRIER

La Turquie progresse et se normalise. Un signe ne trompe pas : pour la première fois dans ce pays, les sondages publiés avant les élections législatives du 22 juillet avaient vu juste, avec la victoire annoncée du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) du premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan. La vie politique turque est devenue prévisible.

Contrairement aux peurs des élites laïques du pays, la nette victoire de l'AKP « ex-islamiste » ne signifie pas qu'il aura les mains libres pour appliquer un quelconque « agenda islamiste caché ». D'abord parce que l'AKP s'est encore recentré durant la campagne électorale. Ensuite parce qu'il n'atteint pas seul le seuil des deux tiers des sièges nécessaires pour élire le président de la République. M. Erdogan aura une raison pour résister à sa base, qui veut voir à ce poste un « homme pieux », le ministre des affaires étrangères, Abdullah Gül, et non un président de compromis agréé par l'armée, gardienne du kémalisme et de la laïcité.

Bien sûr, le chef de l'AKP a mené campagne sur le thème de la revanche à prendre après « l'humiliation infligée au peuple » par l'armée. Cette armée qui a bloqué l'élection de M. Gül en raison du foulard porté par son épouse – à l'instar de plus de 60 % des femmes du pays. Mais, dès les résultats connus, M. Erdogan a tenu un discours conciliant, promettant stabilité, sécurité et respect des « différences ». Il s'est bien gardé de répondre à la foule qui scandait le nom de M. Gül, gardant le silence sur la question de la présidence.

La nette victoire de l'AKP permet aussi de tenir en lisière au Parlement les « Loups gris », ultranationalistes du Parti du mouvement national (MHP). Et si les nationalistes kurdes du Parti de la société démocratique (DTP), proches du PKK, séparatiste, font leur entrée dans l'enceinte parlementaire, ils n'ont guère prétexte à pavoiser : les 42 % de voix de l'AKP dans la « capitale » kurde, Diyarbakir, montrent que la population, lasse du conflit, veut la stabilité. Ces résultats devraient renforcer M. Erdogan dans son opposition à toute aventure militaire dans le nord de l'Irak, un scénario prôné par des généraux et la plupart des médias turcs au point d'apparaître inévitable.

M. Erdogan a par ailleurs clairement annoncé « la poursuite du chemin européen » de la Turquie. Au sein de l'Union européenne, les opposants aux négociations avec la Turquie, à défaut d'un soutien à l'adhésion, devraient au moins mettre en sourdine leurs déclarations de rejet. Les Turcs, de plus en plus sceptiques envers l'Europe, ont voté pour le parti le plus pro-européen du pays. Que l'AKP soit un mouvement « ex-islamiste » ou « islamo-conservateur » peut déplaire au sein de l'UE, mais la volonté de réformes et d'avancées démocratiques des Turcs doit être respectée. ■

Les Kurdes retournent au Parlement

Treize ans après en avoir été exclus, les députés kurdes retournent au Parlement turc, mais leur tâche sera rude.

LaTribune.be

23 Juillet 2007 Treize ans après en avoir été exclus, les députés kurdes retournent au Parlement turc à l'occasion des élections mais leur engagement en faveur d'une réconciliation sera mis à rude épreuve par une recrudescence des activités des séparatistes kurdes. "Nous voulons ouvrir une page nouvelle", a souligné Aysel Tugluk, ravie de figurer parmi les 24 députés kurdes élus aux législatives de dimanche, selon les résultats officiels. "Nous voulons entamer un processus de dialogue et de réconciliation au Parlement afin de régler le problème (kurde)", affirme cette nouvelle députée de Diyarbakir, chef-lieu du sud-est anatolien à majorité kurde.

Elle veut aussi rassurer l'opinion publique :

Des centaines de personnes ont fêté avec des tambours et des chants la victoire électorale de leurs candidats à travers le sud-est. "Ankara, nous arrivons", ont-ils scandé. Le parti pour

une société démocratique (DTP, principal parti pro-kurde) qui jouit d'un fort soutien dans cette région, avait présenté soixante candidats aux élections sous l'étiquette "indépendant" afin de contourner la règle du seuil minimum de 10% des voix au plan national pour qu'un parti puisse entrer au Parlement. Ces députés doivent pouvoir former un groupe dans le nouveau Parlement.

Les candidats ont fait campagne sur le thème de la réconciliation entre Turcs et Kurdes. Ils ont notamment appelé Ankara à abandonner l'option militaire contre les séparatistes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) et à accroître les droits de cette communauté.

Les premiers pas des députés kurdes au Parlement ont pris fin sur un échec en 1994 quand leur immunité a été levée après avoir été accusés de collusion avec le PKK. Certains, dont la plus connue, Mme Leyla Zana, lauréate du prix Sakharov de la paix

du Conseil de l'Europe, se sont retrouvés en prison. D'autres ont choisi l'exil. Depuis, sous la pression de l'UE, Ankara a accordé à la minorité kurde davantage de liberté dans le domaine culturel et levé l'état d'urgence dans le sud-est.

Les Kurdes continuent toutefois de se plaindre de discriminations. Ils réclament l'enseignement de leur langue à l'école et la reconnaissance de celle-ci dans la vie publique.

Il est cependant certain que les nouveaux parlementaires kurdes ne seront pas accueillis à bras ouverts à Ankara où le DTP est soupçonné d'être la vitrine politique du PKK et refuse de le condamner comme une organisation terroriste. Le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a d'ores et déjà averti que "le DTP continuera à alimenter les soupçons tant qu'il ne condamnera pas le PKK comme une organisation terroriste", comme l'ont fait l'Union européenne et Washington.

Le PKK a augmenté ses opérations cette année, suscitant des réactions nationalistes et des appels à une intervention dans le nord de l'Irak voisin où les rebelles disposent de bases arrières.

La résurgence des violences du PKK est considérée comme l'un des principaux facteurs qui ont favorisé le retour du parti nationaliste MHP au Parlement après une absence de cinq ans. Parmi les candidats kurdes élus figurent deux avocats du chef rebelle emprisonné Abdullah Pcalan, dont Mme Tugluk, accusée par les autorités turques de servir d'intermédiaire entre le chef du PKK et ses rebelles.

Autre situation plus insolite: une activiste incarcérée à Istanbul et qui devait bientôt être jugé pour liens présumés avec la rébellion kurde a gagné un siège de député. Plus de 37.000 personnes ont été tuées depuis que le PKK a pris les armes en 1984 avec pour objectif l'indépendance de l'est et du sud-est de la Turquie.

LaTribune

The Associated Press - 23/JUILLET/2007

Turquie: Erdogan promet d'oeuvrer pour l'unité nationale après la victoire de l'AKP aux législatives

Le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan s'est engagé lundi à oeuvrer en faveur de l'unité nationale et de la lutte contre le terrorisme au lendemain de la large victoire aux législatives de sa formation issue de la mouvance islamiste, le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP, au pouvoir).

L'AKP, qui a recueilli 46,6% des suffrages d'après les résultats publiés lundi, obtiendrait 340 des 550 sièges au Parlement, selon les projections faites par l'agence de presse turque Anatolie.

Deux formations d'opposition, le Parti républicain du peuple (CHP, laïc) et le Parti d'action nationaliste (MHP, nationaliste) remporteraient respectivement 112 et 71 sièges. Par ailleurs, des personnalités politiques soutenues par le Parti de la société démocratique (DTP), formation kurde, feraient leur retour au Parlement pour la première fois depuis plus d'une décennie. Selon la chaîne CNN-Turk, le DTP occuperait 23 sièges.

Après ce scrutin marqué par plus de 84% de participation, les pays membres de l'Union européenne, quoique divisés sur l'adhésion de la Turquie, ont exhorté Ankara à poursuivre sur la voie des réformes économiques et politiques afin de satisfaire aux critères exigés pour rejoindre les Vingt-Sept.

Le chef de la diplomatie britannique David Miliband a jugé "très important" de tendre la "main au nouveau gouvernement turc". "Nous avons certainement le désir d'aller plus loin dans nos relations avec ce très très important pays", a-t-il dit à Bruxelles.

Son homologue autrichienne Ursula Plassnik a souligné l'intérêt d'avoir "une Turquie moderne, dynamique et prospère en tant que partenaire", espérant que le gouvernement continue "avec même plus d'ambition".

De son côté, le président de la Commission européenne José Manuel Barroso a observé que le succès du parti de M. Erdogan intervenait "à un moment important pour le peuple de Turquie alors que ce pays avance dans les réformes politiques et économiques".

Bien que la victoire de l'AKP soit présentée comme la preuve d'une possible coexistence entre démocratie et islam, le nouveau gouvernement devrait être confronté à des tensions persistantes sur le rôle de l'islam dans la société.

M. Erdogan, musulman, s'est engagé lundi à sauvegarder les traditions laïques du pays et à mener toutes les actions jugées nécessaires pour lutter contre les séparatistes kurdes. "Nous ne ferons jamais de concessions sur les valeurs du peuple, les principes fondamentaux de notre République. C'est notre promesse", a-t-il lancé à Ankara.

Il a affirmé que le gouvernement continuerait sur le chemin des réformes et du développement économique. Sous Erdogan, l'inflation a chuté, les investissements étrangers ont progressé et la croissance économique a atteint une moyenne annuelle de 7%.

Mais le Premier ministre a aussi suscité des inquiétudes à la suite de ses efforts pour faire de l'adultère un crime et

nommer d'anciens islamistes à des fonctions clés. Sans compter le trouble provoqué par ses appels à lever les restrictions sur le port du foulard islamique.

Pour ce qui est des séparatistes kurdes, la Turquie, membre de l'OTAN, étudie actuellement l'idée de lancer une offensive dans le nord de l'Irak contre les rebelles, ayant des bases dans cette région. "Dans notre lutte contre les terroristes séparatistes, nous sommes déterminés à prendre chaque mesure au bon moment", a affirmé M. Erdogan.

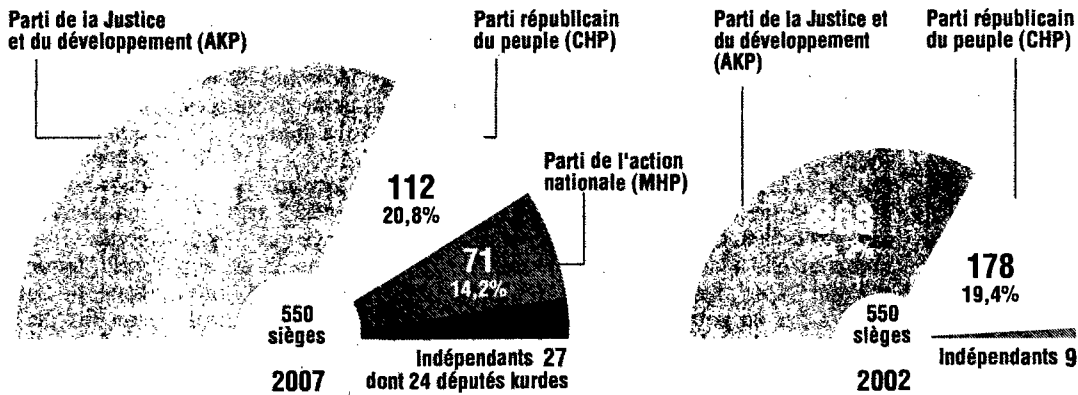
Les législatives de dimanche, saluées dans l'euphorie par les partisans de l'AKP, se sont tenues avec quatre mois d'avance après une crise politique marquée par des manifestations massives en faveur de la laïcité. A l'origine de cette crise, la candidature avortée du chef de la diplomatie Abdullah Gül au poste de président -élu par le Parlement. M. Gül était contesté par l'opposition et les élites laïques, appuyées par l'armée, qui craignaient une remise en cause de la séparation entre Etat et religion.

L'une des premières tâches du Parlement sera d'élire un président. Si le poste est largement honorifique, le chef d'Etat peut opposer son veto aux nominations gouvernementales et aux textes législatifs.

Cinquante femmes devraient y siéger, portant la part des femmes à près de 10%, du jamais vu, d'après le quotidien "Milliyet". Les responsables électoraux n'ont fait état d'aucun incident majeur pendant les opérations de vote. AP

Erdogan obligé de maîtriser son triomphe

► Le nouveau Parlement turc en nombre de députés et % des suffrages exprimés



LE FIGARO
24 juillet 2007

TURQUIE

Les islamistes doivent rapidement trouver une solution pour l'élection du président de la République. Ils leur faut aussi endiguer la violence des séparatistes kurdes.

De notre envoyé spécial à Ankara

IL Y A comme un air de revanche contre les militaires, mêlé à un parfum d'ivresse. « Ce résultat est le mémorandum du peuple », commente Bülent Arınç, le président islamiste de l'assemblée nationale. « Notre victoire va au-delà de nos espoirs », lâche Abdullah Gül, ministre des Affaires étrangères et candidat malheureux du Parti de justice et du développement (AKP) à l'élection présidentielle avortée d'avril. Les éditorialistes de la presse turque leur emboîtent le pas. « S'il n'y avait pas eu l'ultimatum de l'armée, l'AKP n'aurait pas obtenu 47 % », écrit le quotidien libéral *Radikal*, tandis que le journal à grand tirage *Aksam* estime que « le peuple a dit non à l'intervention de l'armée dans la politique ». Au lendemain de la large victoire de l'AKP, il est aussi souvent question d'Adnan Menderes, le seul premier ministre avant Recep Tayyip Erdogan à avoir été réélu en améliorant le score de son mouvement, le Parti démocratique. Son souvenir douche les enthousiasmes. Grisé par son succès acquis en 1954, Menderes tenta de desserrer l'étau kémaliste en brimant ses opposants. Il fut renversé par un coup d'État en 1960 et finit l'année suivante au bout d'une corde sur l'île d'Imrali dans la mer de Marmara. Son

successeur garde la tête froide. « C'est la première fois depuis 1954 qu'un parti augmente ses suffrages pour remporter un second mandat... mais notre porte est ouverte à tous », a déclaré dimanche soir le premier ministre devant ses supporters avec à ses côtés sa femme Ermine, voilée d'un turban blanc. Plus que jamais pondéré dans ses propos, Erdogan va devoir gérer sa victoire avec prudence. Il est attendu sur quatre dossiers clés.

La présidence de la République. Le nouveau Parlement dispose d'un mois à partir de sa première réunion le 3 août pour élire un successeur au président Ahmed Necdet Sezer. S'il n'y parvient pas, la chambre sera dissoute et de nouvelles élections convoquées. Elles seront sans doute couplées avec le référendum du 21 octobre sur l'élection par le peuple du président de la République. Ce scénario du pire ne peut être totalement exclu. L'AKP dispose d'une confortable majorité mais les électeurs ne lui ont pas donné la majorité des deux tiers qui aurait permis au parti au pouvoir d'imposer la personnalité de son choix. Fort de son succès aux allures de plébiscite, il peut estimer qu'un électeur sur deux a soutenu sa démarche.

En cas de tentative de passage en force, le pays risque de s'enfoncer dans une longue crise de régime, à l'issue incertaine, dans laquelle l'AKP pourrait perdre les dividendes du 22 juillet. L'hypothèse la plus probable est la recherche d'un consensus sur une candidature avec les partis représentés au Parlement et en filigrane avec les généraux de l'État major. « Le principal défi d'Erdogan va être de maî-



Abdullah Gül et Recep Tayyip Erdogan (au centre), entourés de leurs épouses. Le nouveau Parlement a jusqu'au 3 septembre pour élire un successeur au président de la République, Ahmed Necdet Sezer. Saribas/Reuters

triser sa victoire pour en tirer un profit maximal. Un art dans lequel il excelle», note un diplomate turc. Voici quelques jours, le premier ministre a indiqué que son parti va à nouveau se prononcer sur les candidatures. Abdullah Gül, le compagnon de route de toujours, marqué au fer rouge par les militaires car sa femme porte le voile, serait alors sacrifié par réalisme. Il pourrait être remplacé par une personnalité de l'AKP au profil moins polémique. L'armée serait obligée d'accepter sauf à aggraver son image d'institution antidémocratique. Un sage sans appartenance pourrait également être désigné en cas de litige.

La laïcité. L'attitude de l'AKP vis-à-vis de la laïcité va être en grande partie dictée par le dénouement de la crise présidentielle. Car le président de la République est le gardien des règles et de l'esprit laïques. Il a un droit de veto sur les nominations aux hauts postes administratifs en particulier dans le domaine de l'enseignement supérieur et de la justice, deux secteurs dominés par les élites kémalistes. Si un président de consensus est élu, le statu quo sur la laïcité

devrait se prolonger. Erdogan a affirmé durant la campagne qu'il abandonnait l'idée d'imposer par une loi l'entrée libre des universités aux jeunes filles portant le voile. Il renonce ainsi à une réforme phare. Père de famille, Erdogan a deux filles qui mènent des études supérieures aux États-Unis pour pouvoir aller à la faculté en portant le foulard.

La question kurde. Des représentants kurdes sont de retour au Parlement pour la première fois depuis 1991. « On a supprimé notre immunité voici quatorze ans pour nous exclure du Parlement et nous jeter en prison. Nous avons notre revanche », s'est félicité Ahmed Türk, le président du parti pour une société démocratique (DTP) élu avec 23 de ses camarades en présentant des candidatures indépendantes. La future présence du DTP à Ankara est saluée par les partisans d'un dialogue entre l'Etat et la minorité kurde. Il vaut mieux, selon eux, voir les Kurdes « faire de la politique dans la plaine » plutôt que de les savoir « dans la montagne ». Erdogan demande, sans succès, au DTP de condamner le PKK en tant que groupe terroriste. Le premier ministre a engagé de timides réformes qu'il a mis en veilleuse lorsque les accrochages ont repris en 2004 entre l'armée et les groupes insurgés. Il va devoir juguler la violence des séparatistes. Les militaires souhaitent intervenir contre les bases du PKK en Irak du Nord alors que l'AKP y est réticent. Des négociations vont se dérouler prochainement avec Bagdad. Si elles échouent, l'armée soutenue par les nationalistes sera en embuscade.

Les réformes. Elles sont quasiment interrompues depuis deux ans. Les programmes de protection du statut des minorités religieuses dont les droits sont précaires et des biens souvent spoliés sont au point mort. Erdogan promet de relancer les chantiers mais l'Europe a été absente de sa campagne électorale.

THIERRY OBERLÉ

La victoire tranquille d'Erdogan en Turquie

Plébiscité, le Premier ministre pourrait trouver un compromis pour la présidentielle.

Ankara (envoyés spéciaux)

Au soir de son triomphe, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, le Premier ministre issu du mouvement islamiste a tout de suite tenu à rassurer. « Nous n'allons faire aucune concession sur les principes fondateurs de la République » a martelé le vainqueur du haut du balcon du siège du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) aux côtés de sa femme Emine portant un strict foulard islamique. En obtenant plus de 47% des voix aux législatives dimanche, l'AKP augmente son score de plus de 12 points par rapport à 2002. « C'est la première fois depuis plus de cinquante ans qu'un parti au pouvoir est reconduit avec un score encore supérieur à celui qu'il a obtenu aux élections précédentes » a insisté le leader conforté par ce vote quasi plébiscitaire: « Nous sommes respectueux des différences de notre société et que nous considérons comme nos richesses. »

Mise en garde. Cette garantie de continuité a réjoui les milieux financiers turcs, provo-

quant une envolée de la Bourse. Les capitales européennes exultent et le président de la Commission José Manuel Barroso a félicité le vainqueur soulignant « qu'il s'est engagé personnellement à se rapprocher de manière durable de l'Union européenne ». « C'est la société civile qui a gagné mais ce mandat clair du suffrage universel ne sera viable que si l'AKP continue les réformes démocratiques et économiques en s'affirmant réellement comme le grand parti du centre », explique l'universitaire Cengiz Aktar, spécialiste des questions européennes.

La crise politique ouverte en avril dernier n'est pourtant pas encore finie. Sur le balcon de l'AKP dimanche soir, il y avait aux côtés d'Erdogan, celui qu'il appelle « son frère », Abdullah Gül, ministre des Affaires étrangères, lui aussi avec sa femme voilée. La foule en liesse scandait longuement « Gül président ». L'impossibilité pour l'AKP de faire élire par les



REUTERS

députés Abdullah Gül à la présidence de la République avait entraîné les élections anticipées de dimanche. Un quorum de deux tiers des députés était en effet indispensable et l'opposition laïque du Parti républicain du peuple (CHP) avait boycotté le scrutin estimant que l'arrivée de Gül au palais de Cankaya, l'Elysée turc, aurait donné tous les leviers du pouvoir aux islamistes. Les militaires, dans un « mémorandum », avaient lancé une mise en garde claire et des millions de personnes avaient manifesté dans les rues pour défendre la laïcité.

Réislamisation. Renforcé par sa victoire Erdogan pourrait être enclin au compromis. L'AKP, avec 341 sièges sur 550, n'a pas les moyens d'imposer seul son candidat dans un Parlement plus morcelé que le précédent. Pour la première fois depuis quinze ans, y siègent 24 députés indépendants

kurdes, des élus du Mouvement pour une société démocratique (DTP), considéré par Ankara comme la « vitrine politique » des rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Seuls 4 vrais indépendants rentrent au Parlement mais pas l'intellectuel Baskin Oran pénalisé par la concurrence d'un autre indépendant, Dogan Erbas avocat du leader du PKK emprisonné, Abdullah Öcalan.

A gauche, le CHP, qui n'a obtenu que 20% des voix, devrait connaître des règlements de compte contre son leader, l'indéboulonnable Deniz Baykal, 69 ans, qui mène le parti de défaite en défaite. Le camp laïc commence à s'inquiéter d'une réislamisation accélérée qui, à en croire certains commentateurs, a déjà commencé depuis des années. Tufan Türenç, chroniqueur du quotidien *Hürriyet* rappelle « qu'en Turquie, il y a un imam pour 780 personnes mais un médecin pour 900, et 81 000 mosquées contre seulement 67 000 établissements scolaires. »

RAGIP DURAN et MARC SEMO



25 JUILLET 2007

Une femme kurde au Parlement turc



Aysel Tugluk
AFP

Aysel Tugluk était l'un des 500 avocats d'Abdullah Öcalan, le leader indépendantiste kurde emprisonné depuis 1999. Lors des élections législatives de dimanche dernier, cette quadragénaire a obtenu un siège de député au Parlement turc, sous une étiquette «indépendante».

Un candidat porteur d'un programme ouvertement favorable aux droits des Kurdes n'avait pas franchi la porte du Parlement depuis 1994. Sur les 550 députés

siégeant au gouvernement, l'équipe sortante ne comptait qu'une vingtaine de femmes. Les résultats officiels des dernières élections n'ont certes pas encore été publiés mais elles ne devraient pas être plus de cinquante dans la prochaine Assemblée. Afin de franchir le seuil des 10 % des voix à l'échelle du pays, exigé pour entrer au Parlement, les candidats du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP) ont choisi de se présenter sous une étiquette «indépendante». Originaire d'Elazig, Aysel Tugluk se présentait à Diyarbakir, une ville du sud-est anatolien qui compte de nombreux militants de la cause kurde. Auparavant, elle avait dû

démisionner du DTP qu'elle co-dirigeait avec Ahmet Türk, en raison de la loi qui interdit à un parti d'avoir deux présidents.

Avec 499 autres avocats, Aysel Tugluk a formé l'Association pour la défense d'Abdullah Öcalan à la fin des années 1990. Lors du procès de son client, elle fut l'une des personnes les plus en vue, les plus médiatisées. Elle a rapidement été accusée d'*avoir des liens* avec le parti d'Öcalan, le PKK, Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan. Plusieurs plaintes ont été déposées contre Aysel Tugluk mais

elle n'a jamais été condamnée définitivement.

Si elle a fait partie des proches d'Abdullah Öcalan, Aysel Tugluk a aujourd'hui un discours modéré sur la question kurde. Comme les autres candidats pro-kurdes, elle a fait campagne sur la réconciliation et sur l'abandon de la force pour régler leurs conflits avec Ankara. L'un de ses articles paru la semaine dernière dans le journal *Radikal*, une publication turque, portait pour titre: «*Oui à la différence mais non au séparatisme.*» Aysel Tugluk ne parle qu'en turc lors de ses interventions télévisées. Même si la principale revendication des hommes et femmes politiques pro-kurdes est de faire reconnaître le kurde comme langue officielle.

ANNE-LUCIE ACAR

Les femmes ne devraient pas être plus de cinquante dans la prochaine Assemblée.

TURQUIE

Echec à l'armée

La victoire de l'AKP, le parti au pouvoir, est un avertissement lancé aux généraux d'Ankara

C'est une démocratie turque confortée qui sort du scrutin législatif du 22 juillet. Le fort taux de participation (plus de 80 %) témoigne, en pleines vacances estivales, de la vitalité du sentiment civique. Et le résultat est sans appel. En plébiscitant la formation au pouvoir, l'AKP (Parti de la justice et du développement), les Turcs ont à la fois délivré un satisfecit au gouvernement pour sa bonne gestion, ses réformes démocratiques, sa volonté de se rapprocher du modèle européen et confirmé leur souhait de stabilité. C'est la seconde fois depuis cinquante

ans qu'une majorité sortante est renouvelée avec un soutien populaire accru. «La nation a confirmé que l'AKP était ancré au centre de la société», a déclaré le Premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Pour le chef de ce mouvement issu de l'islam politique et converti à un mélange de libéralisme réformiste et de pragmatisme démocratique, c'est un succès personnel. Son insistance à écarter des élus sortants afin d'ouvrir ses listes à des candidats venus de la droite et de la gauche laïques, comme du monde des affaires, a payé.

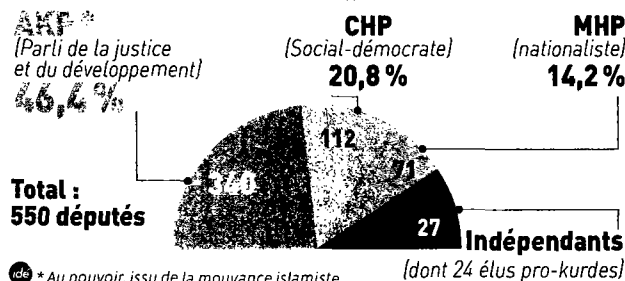
La défaite ne frappe pas la seule opposition, engoncée dans un nationalisme laïc d'un autre âge. Le camouflet affecte aussi l'armée, responsable de la crise



SEMAINE DU 26 JUILLET AU 1^{er} AOÛT 2007

La nouvelle assemblée

En % des voix et un nombre de sièges



du printemps autour de l'élection du chef de l'Etat. Certes, l'opinion sait encore gré aux militaires d'Ankara de leur rôle d'ultimes gardiens de la République et de protecteurs des frontières dans un Moyen-Orient instable. Mais elle n'accepte plus d'immixtion grossière dans le fonctionnement normal des institutions. L'avertissement des citoyens

pourrait peser dans les prochaines semaines : à l'intérieur, quand le nouveau Parlement devra élire le président de la République ; à l'extérieur, si l'allié américain ne parvient pas à contrôler la guérilla séparatiste kurde (PKK), qui frappe la Turquie à partir de ses bases d'Irak. ●

Jean-Michel Demetz

En Iran, un haut dignitaire, Ali Larijani, dénonce l'incapacité américaine à « gérer la crise en Irak »

Tandis qu'à Bagdad se tenait une rencontre tendue entre Iraniens et Américains sur l'Irak, le négociateur sur le nucléaire de la République islamique a nié tout soutien de l'Iran aux insurgés

TÉHÉRAN
ENVOYÉE SPÉCIALE

Les Etats-Unis « n'ont pas été en mesure de gérer la crise en Irak » : c'est le constat que fait le secrétaire du Conseil suprême iranien de sécurité nationale, Ali Larijani, haut dignitaire de la République islamique et représentant du Guide, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei au Conseil. Il est assis à Téhéran dans une vaste salle de réunion ornée comme il se doit du portrait du Guide et de son prédécesseur, l'ayatollah Khomeiny. M. Larijani est un conservateur de tendance dure.

Dans les années 1980, il a été chef des Gardiens de la révolution, les pasdarans, l'armée idéologique du régime dont est issu l'actuel président iranien, le radical Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Lorsqu'Ali Larijani a été nommé par ce dernier, en août 2005, négociateur en chef pour les questions nucléaires, les discussions avec les Occidentaux sur les activités de l'Iran dans le domaine atomique ont aussitôt pris une tournure plus difficile. La position de Téhéran n'a cessé de se durcir.

A écouter M. Larijani, ce mardi 24 juillet, alors qu'il accorde un long entretien à un groupe de journalistes européens et américains, la nette impression qui se dégage est que c'est bien l'enlèvement américain en Irak qui, pour ce haut responsable iranien, fait que son pays serait à l'abri de frappes militaires contre

ses installations nucléaires. Le même jour, à Bagdad, des discussions – les deuxièmes en deux mois – ont lieu entre représentants américains et iraniens sur les problèmes de sécurité en Irak. Des discussions qualifiées « d'échanges houleux » par l'ambassadeur américain à Bagdad, Ryan Crocker. M. Larijani ne semble pas, lui non plus, en attendre de grandes avancées. Il se livre à une description sans appel des actions américaines en Irak. Il laisse aussi filtrer une inquiétude sur le sort du gouvernement irakien de Nouri Al-Maliki, que l'Iran soutient depuis le début, dans une stratégie d'appui à la communauté chiite et d'influence régionale.

Ali Larijani accuse sans les nommer les pays arabes sunnites de se livrer à un travail de sape du gouvernement Maliki en livrant des armes et des soutiens aux groupes extrémistes sunnites d'Irak. L'accusation est formulée comme une réponse à celles que les Etats-Unis ne cessent d'adresser à l'Iran. Washington exige que la République islamique cesse d'équiper et d'entraîner des groupes d'insurgés qui s'en prennent aux troupes américaines, ce que Téhéran dément formellement.

« L'Iran est le seul pays de la région à avoir soutenu la démocratisation de l'Irak, après la fin de la dictature sanglante de Saddam Hussein, dit M. Larijani. Alors que, je le rappelle, les pays amis des Etats-Unis dans la région n'ont pas appuyé ce processus. »

L'Iran réclame le retrait des troupes américaines. Interrogé sur le risque d'intensification de la guerre civile que se livrent chiites et sunnites en Irak, au cas où un tel retrait se produirait, le responsable iranien cherche à minimiser le danger, et évoque une méconnaissance du contexte par les Occidentaux.

Facteurs extérieurs

« La guerre civile à laquelle vous faites allusion comporte des éléments étrangers à l'Irak. Nous, Iraniens, connaissons bien ce pays, vous savez. Je suis moi-même né à Najaf [ville sainte chiite en Irak]. Le problème qui se pose est dû à des facteurs extérieurs. Une réunion des chefs des services de renseignement de plusieurs pays de la région s'est tenue il y a quelque temps dans un pays proche de l'Irak, durant laquelle de mauvaises décisions ont été prises. Celles-ci ont mené à une détérioration en Irak provoquée, donc, de l'extérieur », affirme M. Larijani.

Il évoque ainsi, sans l'expliciter, un soutien des pays sunnites de la région à des

groupes armés opposés au gouvernement Maliki. Quant aux Etats-Unis, dit-il, à part le fait que Saddam Hussein ait été renversé, le bilan en Irak est un échec total. « Seuls 3 % des Irakiens pensent aujourd'hui que les troupes américaines et britanniques sont venues les libérer », affirme-t-il. « Les troupes d'occupation ont atteint le stade où elles sont obligées de coopérer avec les factions baasistes ! L'ambassadeur américain à Bagdad a eu des réunions avec des groupes terroristes, et il s'est même engagé à leur fournir des armes. Et des pays amis des Etats-Unis dans la région coopèrent avec cela », poursuit le dignitaire iramien.

« Les Américains ont transformé l'Irak en vaste garnison, avec des baraquements le long des routes, et des soldats qui font irruption dans les maisons, qui défoncent des portes... Je me suis rendu en avril en Irak et j'ai voulu me déplacer en voiture. Je me disais que j'allais ainsi mettre en valeur le succès du gouvernement Maliki pour assurer la sécurité. J'ai dit à Maliki : "Je viens en voiture." Mais il m'a répondu : "C'est trop dangereux. Je vais vous fournir des hélicoptères." » ■

NATALIE NOUGAYRÈDE

Le Pentagone étudie un nouveau plan de campagne

WASHINGTON
CORRESPONDANTE

Alors que 55 % des Américains réclament un retrait d'Irak avant le printemps 2008, les deux responsables à Bagdad de la stratégie américaine, le général David Petraeus et l'ambassadeur Ryan Crocker, ont développé un plan de sécurisation qui nécessiterait le maintien des troupes jusqu'en 2009.

Selon le porte-parole du général Petraeus, le colonel Steven Boylan, ce « plan de campagne conjointe » contiendrait une série d'objectifs pour les deux prochaines années. L'existence de ce plan a été révélée, mardi 24 juillet, par le *New York Times*. 30 000 soldats supplémentai-

res ont été envoyés depuis janvier en Irak, où sont maintenant stationnés près de 160 000 soldats. Selon ce plan, au lieu d'attendre une hypothétique réconciliation politique, au niveau du gouvernement de Bagdad, les forces américaines s'efforceraient d'établir une « sécurité localisée » avant juin 2008, en passant si nécessaire des compromis avec les factions sunnites, réunies sous la bannière anti Al-Qaïda. Une sécurité « durable » devrait être établie avant l'été 2009.

Le porte-parole du Pentagone, Bryan Whitman, a indiqué qu'aucune décision n'avait encore été prise. La stratégie de l'administration doit faire l'objet d'une révision à la mi-septembre. Les démocrates,

qui ont échoué à deux reprises à imposer le calendrier de retrait, ont prévu de repartir à l'attaque. Ils disposent d'une arme importante : le vote du budget de la défense. Les révélations sur le plan coïncident avec une nouvelle offensive du président George Bush pour convaincre les Américains de « donner au général Petraeus le temps et les ressources dont il a besoin ».

La raison de poursuivre la guerre est de combattre Al-Qaïda en Irak, un mouvement que M. Bush a lié avec insistance, mardi, aux « auteurs des attentats du 11-Septembre ». Or, contre un tel ennemi, a-t-il dit, « les Américains ne peuvent accepter moins qu'une victoire totale ». ■

CORINE LESNES

26 juillet 2007

L'extrême droite turque accentue son opposition MHP, le nouveau cauchemar

d'Erdogan

Absent de l'ancienne assemblée de 2002, le MHP, parti de l'extrême droite, étiqueté « fasciste », revient en force à la faveur des dernières élections législatives anticipées du 22 juillet.

Ankara (Turquie) : De notre envoyé spécial

Avec ses 71 députés, bien qu'il soit loin de pouvoir peser sur l'orientation de la GANT (Parlement), le MHP, qui a connu auparavant des temps de gloire, ne compte pas néanmoins croiser les bras et abdiquer devant l'éclatante victoire de son pire adversaire, AKP. « La République est en danger », dit son vice-président, Faruk Bal, qui nous reçoit dans son opulent bureau dans l'imposant bâtiment du MHP au quartier résidentiel Baglat. M. Bal fut également chargé aussi de la dernière campagne électorale. Le MHP, selon lui, ne se décourage pas. Il continuera toujours à protester contre les différentes politiques d'AKP. « Nous les critiquerons et nous défendrons la voix du peuple »,

insiste Faruk Bal.

Au lendemain de l'annonce des résultats, le MHP met en place toute une nouvelle stratégie pour mieux organiser l'opposition. Il envisage de faire une sorte de « front national » pour stopper ce que les dirigeants de cette formation appellent « le massacre du pays ». Fort d'être revenu au Parlement, le MHP entend être à la tête des « défenseurs des intérêts suprêmes de la nation ». « Tout ce qui s'est passé depuis les dernières élections va continuer. Que ce soit au plan politique ou sur le plan international, la Turquie ne sera plus vue comme une force indépendante. Le pays perdra sa souveraineté en faveur des étrangers », regrette Faruk

Bal pour lequel il est bien longtemps – c'est-à-dire depuis l'arrivée d'AKP au pouvoir – que les intérêts du pays « ne sont plus défendus ». Le MHP s'oppose à tout ce qui se fait actuellement.

Il refuse le rapprochement voulu par AKP avec l'UE, dénonce la dépendance de la Turquie de l'impérialisme américain et condamne la vente des entreprises – parfois stratégiques comme les télécommunications de l'armée et sa banque – aux firmes étrangères, notamment américaines et israéliennes. « Depuis qu'il est au pouvoir, la Turquie n'appartient plus aux Turcs », ironise M. Bal. Si les chiffres avancés jusque-là font état

d'une croissance économique jamais égalée depuis les vingt dernières années, le MHP, quant à lui, voit tous les signes virer au rouge. « L'économie en recul, le peuple s'appauvrit, la privatisation prend un élan inquiétant et le terrorisme grandit. La sécurité et la paix ne sont pas garanties pour le pays », relève M. Bal. Le MHP ne compte, d'ailleurs, pas soutenir le candidat d'AKP à la présidentielle. M. Bal n'hésite pas, à l'occasion, de critiquer l'AKP également par rapport à ses fréquents changements de position quant au mode d'élection du président de la République.

M. A. O.



NOUVELOBS.COM 31 juillet .2007

IRAN: Deux journalistes kurdes iraniens condamnés à mort

Condamnés à la pendaison comme "ennemis de Dieu", Abdolvahed Bohimar et Adnan Hassanpour font partie de la minorité kurde comptant 6 millions d'habitants parmi les 71 millions Iraniens.

L'Iran a confirmé pour la première fois mardi 31 juillet que deux journalistes kurdes iraniens avaient été condamnés à la pendaison comme "ennemis de Dieu". Cette sentence est dénoncée par des organisations de défense des droits de l'homme.

Le porte-parole du pouvoir judiciaire, Alireza Jamshidi, a déclaré qu'Abdolvahed Bohimar et Adnan Hassanpour "ont été condamnés à la pendaison pour être mohareb", ce qui signifie en persan "ennemis de Dieu", le 16 juillet dernier, par le tribunal de Marivan dans le Kurdistan iranien.

Ces déclarations confirment une récente information de l'Institut kurde de Paris.

Pendaison

Le porte-parole n'a pas dit quelles charges précises avaient été retenues contre les deux hommes. Il a ajouté ignorer si la Cour suprême avait entériné cette peine.

Toute condamnation à mort doit être impérativement approuvée par la Cour suprême pour être appliquée.

Le chef du pouvoir judiciaire, l'ayatollah Mahmoud Hachemi Chahroudi, peut également intervenir pour empêcher la pendaison. Il est

désigné par le guide suprême de la République islamique, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Condamnation dénoncée par RSF

Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF), l'organisation de défense de la liberté de la presse, avait dénoncé mercredi dernier la condamnation à mort des deux journalistes kurdes. Elle avait appelé la communauté internationale à intervenir auprès de l'Iran pour l'empêcher.

Selon RSF, Adnan Hassanpour et Abdolvahed Botimar, étaient collaborateurs du magazine Aso (Horizons), interdit en août 2005. Adnan Hassanpour y traitait de la question très sensible du Kurdistan iranien, avait précisé RSF.

Toujours selon RSF, lors de son procès à huis clos, il a été reconnu coupable "d'activités subversives contre la sécurité nationale" et "d'espionnage". Ses entretiens avec des médias basés à l'étranger, tel que Voice of America, ont également été retenus à charge, ajoute RSF.

Appel à la communauté internationale

L'organisation, qui cite sa famille et l'un de ses avocats, affirme qu'il aurait été transféré le 18 juillet à la prison de Sanandaj, une ville du Kurdistan iranien.

RSF précise qu'Abdolvahed "Hiva" Botimar est également un membre actif de l'ONG environnementale Sabzchia.

L'organisation a dénoncé ces condamnations

comme "proprement scandaleuses et honteuses". Elle a appelé "la communauté internationale à demander à l'Iran de revenir sur sa décision et de ne pas exécuter ces deux hommes".

L'Iran applique largement la peine de mort mais l'exécution d'un journaliste y est extrêmement rare.

Kurdistan, zone de troubles

L'Iran compte une minorité kurde d'environ 6 millions d'habitants, sur une population totale de 71 millions de personnes.

Les Kurdes sont concentrés dans les provinces du Kurdistan mais aussi de l'Azerbaïdjan occidental, situées le long de la frontière avec l'Irak et la Turquie.

Ces régions ont connu des troubles et des affrontements entre l'armée iranienne et des rebelles du Pejak, un parti séparatiste kurde iranien proche du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), rebelles kurdes de Turquie, qui s'infiltrèrent en Iran depuis la Turquie ou l'Irak.

L'Iran accuse régulièrement les Etats-Unis d'aider les groupes armés kurdes qui combattent le pouvoir central.

Les militants du Pejak affrontent souvent les forces de sécurité iraniennes en particulier dans les provinces du Kurdistan iranien et d'Azerbaïdjan occidental

Iraq ■ Michael E. O'Hanlon and Kenneth M. Pollack

A war America just might win

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune
THE WORLD'S DAILY NEWSPAPER
July 30, 2007

Viewed from Iraq, where we just spent eight days meeting with American and Iraqi military and civilian personnel, the political debate in Washington is surreal. The Bush administration has over four years lost almost all credibility. Yet now the administration's critics, in part as a result, seem unaware of the significant changes taking place.

Here is the most important thing Americans need to understand: The United States is finally winning in Iraq, at least in military terms. As two analysts who have harshly criticized the Bush administration's miserable handling of Iraq, we were surprised by the gains we saw and the potential to produce not necessarily "victory" but a sustainable stability that both Americans and the Iraqis could live with.

After the furnace-like heat, the first thing you notice when you land in Baghdad is the morale of U.S. troops. In previous trips to Iraq we often found American troops angry and frustrated — many sensed they had the wrong strategy, were using the wrong tactics and were risking their lives in pursuit of an approach that could not work.

Today, morale is high. The soldiers and marines told us they feel that they now have a superb commander in General David Petraeus; they are confident in his strategy, they see real results, and they feel now they have the numbers needed to make a real difference.

Everywhere, Army and Marine units were focused on securing the Iraqi population, working with Iraqi security units, creating new political and economic arrangements at the local level and providing basic services — electricity, fuel, clean water and sanitation — to the people. Yet in each place, operations had been appropriately tailored to the specific needs of the community. As a result, civilian fatality rates are down roughly a third since the surge began.

In Ramadi, for example, we talked with an outstanding Marine captain whose company was living in harmony in a complex with a (largely Sunni) Iraqi police company and a (largely Shiite) Iraqi Army unit. He and his men had built an Arab-style living room, where he met with the local Sunni sheiks — all formerly allies of Al Qaeda and other jihadist groups — who were now competing to secure his friendship.

In Baghdad's Ghazaliya neighborhood, which has seen some of the worst sectarian combat, we walked a street slowly coming back to life with stores and shoppers. The Sunni residents had been unhappy with the nearby police checkpoint, where Shiite officers are reported to have abused them, but they told us they were very happy with the U.S. soldiers and a mostly Kurdish Iraqi Army company patrolling the street. The local Sunni militia even had agreed to confine itself to its compound once the Americans and Iraqi units arrived.

We traveled to the northern cities of Tal Afar and Mosul. This is an ethnically rich area, with large numbers of Sunni Arabs, Kurds and Turkmens. U.S. troop levels in both cities now number only in the hundreds because the Iraqis have stepped up to the plate. Reliable police officers man the checkpoints in the cities, while Iraqi Army troops cover the countryside. A local mayor told us his greatest fear was an overly rapid American departure from Iraq. All across the country, the dependability of Iraqi security forces

over the long term remains a major question mark.

But for now, things look much better than before. American advisers told us that many of the corrupt and sectarian Iraqi commanders who once infested the force have been removed. The American high command assesses that more than three-quarters of the Iraqi Army battalion commanders in Baghdad are now reliable partners.

In addition, far more Iraqi units are well integrated in terms of ethnicity and religion. The Iraqi Army's highly effective Third Infantry Division started out as overwhelmingly Kurdish in 2005. Today, it is 45 percent Shiite, 28 percent Kurdish, and 27 percent Sunni Arab.

In the past, few Iraqi units could do more than provide a few "jundis" (soldiers) to put a thin Iraqi face on largely American operations. Today, in only a few sectors did we find American commanders complaining that their Iraqi formations were useless — something that was the rule, not the exception, on a previous trip to Iraq in late 2005.

The additional American military formations brought in as part of the surge, General Petraeus's determination to hold areas until they are truly secure before redeploying units, and the increasing competence of the Iraqis has had another critical effect: no more whack-a-mole, with insurgents popping back up after the Americans leave.

In war, sometimes it's important to pick the right adversary, and in Iraq we Americans seem to have done so. A major factor in the sudden change in American fortunes has been the outpouring of popu-

lar animus against Al Qaeda and other Salafist groups, as well as (to a lesser extent) against Moktada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army.

These groups have tried to impose Shariah law, brutalized average Iraqis, killed important local leaders and seized young women to marry off to their loyalists. The result has been that in the last six months Iraqis have begun to turn on the extremists and turn to the Americans for help. The most important and best-known example of this is in Anbar Province, which in less than six months has gone from the worst part of Iraq to the best (outside the Kurdish areas). Today the Sunni sheiks there are close to crippling Al Qaeda and its Salafist allies. Just a few months ago, American marines were fighting for every yard of Ramadi; last week we strangled down its streets without body armor.

Another surprise was how well the coalition's new Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams are working. Wherever we found a fully staffed team, we also found local Iraqi leaders and businessmen cooperating with it to revive the local economy and build new political structures. Although much more needs to be done to create jobs, a new emphasis on microloans and small-scale projects was having some success.

In some places where we have failed to provide the civilian manpower to fill out the reconstruction teams, the surge has still allowed the military to fashion its own advisory groups from battalion, brigade and division staffs. We talked to dozens of military officers who before the war had known little about governance or business but were now ably immersing themselves in projects to provide the average Iraqi with a decent life.

Outside Baghdad, one of the biggest factors in the progress so far has been the efforts to decen-

tralize power to the provinces and local governments. But more must be done. For example, the Iraqi National Police, which are controlled by the Interior Ministry, remain mostly a disaster. In response, many towns and neighborhoods are standing up local police forces, which generally prove more effective, less corrupt and less sectarian. The coalition has to force the warlords in Baghdad to allow the creation of neutral security forces beyond their control.

At bottom, the situation in Iraq remains grave. In particular, we still face huge hurdles on the political front. Iraqi politicians of all stripes continue to dawdle and maneuver for position against one another when major steps toward reconciliation — or at least accommodation — are needed. This cannot continue indefinitely. Otherwise, once America begins to

downsize its forces, important communities may not feel committed to the status quo, and Iraqi security forces may splinter along ethnic and religious lines.

How much longer should American troops keep fighting and dying to build a new Iraq while Iraqi leaders fail to do their part? And how much longer can the U.S. wear down its forces in Iraq? These haunting questions underscore the reality that the surge cannot go on forever. But there is enough good happening on the battlefields of Iraq today that Congress should plan on sustaining the effort at least into 2008.

Michael E. O'Hanlon is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. Kenneth M. Pollack is the director of research at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings.

Saudis going south on Iraq

The Bush administration and Saudi Arabia's ruling family have a lot in common, including oil, shared rivals like Iran and a penchant for denial that has allowed both to overlook the Saudis' enabling role in the Sept. 11 attacks. But their recent wrangling over Iraq cannot be denied or papered over with proposals for a big new arms sale. And if these differences are not tackled, there is an increased likelihood that the war's chaos will spread far beyond Iraq's borders.

While Washington hasn't protested publicly, Riyadh is pouring money into Sunni opposition groups and letting Saudis cross the border to join Sunni insurgents fighting the U.S.-backed, Shiite-led government. Washington estimates that nearly half of the 60 to 80 foreign fighters entering Iraq each month come from Saudi Arabia.

So far, neither Washington nor Riyadh is spending any time thinking about containing the chaos that will follow the inevitable U.S. withdrawal. The only good news is

that President Bush is sending Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Defense Secretary Robert Gates to Saudi Arabia for what we hope will be a frank discussion.

A failed Iraqi state with Saudi Islamists holed up in Qaeda sanctuaries in its western deserts is clearly not in the interests of the Saudi monarchy. But for Rice and Gates to have any chance of changing Saudi policies, they will have to go beyond the administration's usual mix of bullying and denial and address legitimate Saudi concerns.

One such concern is Iran, which is bankrolling and training Shiite militias, building a power base in Shiite areas of Iraq and drawing the prime minister, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, into its orbit. Iran's expanding influence poses a major threat to Saudi Arabia.

After years of mistaken U.S. policy in Iraq, that threat cannot simply be conjured away. Washington needs to face up to these issues, sit down with Tehran and work out mutually acceptable solutions to

these issues that the Saudis can live with as well.

Another concern is the plight of Iraq's Sunni minority under a sectarian Shiite government in league with vindictive Shiite militias. Saudi Arabia and Iraqi Sunnis have to get used to the idea of Shiite majority power. But the Saudis cannot be expected to sit still while the Iraqi Sunnis are driven from their homes, denied decent jobs and treated as second-class citizens by the Iraqi government.

If Washington wants Saudi backing for the Maliki government, Maliki must earn it by ending sectarianism in the security forces, reforming discriminatory anti-Baathist restrictions and pushing through an equitable oil revenue law.

It is past time for Bush to acknowledge that the U.S. has no realistic chance of winning a military victory in Iraq, and that it needs to be urgently preparing to manage the consequences of U.S. withdrawal. That will require working cooperatively with all of Iraq's neighbors, including Iran and Syria. Compared with those, Saudi Arabia should be easy.

With work pending, Iraq deputies take vacation

From news reports

BAGHDAD: The Iraqi Parliament on Monday went into summer recess for a month without agreeing on a series of laws that Washington sees as crucial to stabilizing the country.

The parliamentary speaker, Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, closed a three-hour session Monday without a quorum present and declared that the body would not resume work until Sept. 4.

Legislators blamed the government of the Shiite prime minister, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, for failing to present compromise versions of key legislation

like a law intended to ensure a fair distribution of Iraq's oil wealth.

"We were supposed to discuss important issues in the month of July, but we did not," said Mahmoud Othman, a Kurdish lawmaker. "Sitting in August is unconstitutional and even if we sit next

month, that's no guarantee that the important business will be done.

"There are Iraqi-Iraqi and Iraqi-American differences that have not been resolved," he continued. "The government throws the ball in our court, but we say that it is in the government's court and that of the politicians. They sent us nothing."

The return of Parliament on Sept. 4 will be just two weeks before the top U.S. commander in Iraq, General David Petraeus, and the U.S. ambassador to Baghdad, Ryan Crocker, are due to report to Congress on the success of the U.S. strategy that sent more troops to Iraq and to make recommendations. The recess left Bush with little to show after dispatching nearly 30,000 soldiers to give Iraqi leaders breathing space to reach a political accommodation.

"Bush cannot realistically go to Congress and say he has to keep U.S. troops there because the Iraqi government is doing a good job — because the govern-

ment is largely absent," said Gareth Stansfield, an analyst at the British research institute Chatham House. "It places him in a very difficult predicament."

Petraeus has said that U.S. commanders believed they would need a substantial force in Iraq at least until mid-2009.

Washington has pressed the Iraqi government to speed up passage of laws that include measures to distribute Iraq's oil reserves and ease restrictions on former members of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party serving in the

civil service.

It views such laws as key to reconciling disaffected members of Iraq's Sunni Arab community, once politically dominant under Saddam and now in a vicious conflict with the majority Shiites that has killed tens of thousands. A U.S. Embassy spokesman said that during the parliamentary recess it was important that Iraq's leaders "remained actively engaged on key legislation and trying to reach agreement on the sticking points."

Ministers loyal to the Shiite cleric Muktada al-Sadr have pulled out of Ma-

liki's government, while the biggest Sunni bloc in Parliament, the Accordance Front, is threatening to do the same this week if certain demands are not met.

On Monday, a car bomb killed six people in a mainly Shiite area of Baghdad, ending a brief lull in violence while Iraqis reveled in their soccer team's Asian Cup triumph.

The U.S. military, meanwhile, said three soldiers had been killed Thursday in fighting in Anbar Province, west of Baghdad. (AP, Reuters)

Iraqis savor a rare joy with soccer triumph

Team drawn from across sectarian lines

By Stephen Farrell

BAGHDAD: Iraqis defied sporting odds, vehicle bans, government warnings and the threat of death from suicide bombers and celebratory bullets when its soccer team won the Asian Cup on Sunday, prompting the entire country to erupt with joy.

Thousands took to the streets waving national flags, shooting in the air, setting off fireworks and shouting "Go, go Iraq" and "Iraq is a crown on our heads."

The Iraqi team beat their regional rivals Saudi Arabia, 1-0, in the finals of the tournament held in Jakarta, with the Iraqi captain and national hero Younes Mahmoud scoring the only goal.

Nicknamed "The Lions of the Two Rivers" — in reference to the Tigris and Euphrates — the team has become a unifying force across the country since its unexpected progress through the tournament it had never won before.

"This is the happiest moment," said Ali Hassan, 52, as he danced in Paradise Square, where the famous statue of Saddam Hussein was toppled in April 2003.

"The Iraqi people are thirsty to have moments of enjoyment. This is the second best day I can remember, the first was the fall of the regime."

The team is drawn from across Iraq's sectarian divide. The captain and goal-scoring star Mahmood is a Sunni from Kirkuk, the goalkeeper Noor Sabri — who pulled off a superb save — is a Shiite, and the star midfielder player Hawar Muhammed is a Kurd from Mosul.

For the match the Iraqi team wore black ribbons on their sleeves, to commemorate the victims of car bombings which killed at least 50 people in Baghdad during celebrations of their semi-final victory over South Korea last week.

Ignoring the threat of repeat attacks, Iraqis streamed onto the streets of the capital within minutes of the victory, waving banners, wrapping themselves in flags and dancing on the hoods of the

police cars that were supposed to be enforcing the vehicle curfew.

Sadly, the gunshot celebrations killed at least four people, despite repeated warnings to the populace not to indulge the traditional Iraqi means of celebratory self-expression.

In Baghdad, an Iraqi military official said the police had foiled a suicide car bomber by shooting him as he headed for a crowd in the southwest of the city.

Victory was all the sweeter because it was Iraq's first appearance in the finals, where they defeated the wealthier, more-experienced and better-prepared Saudi team, which has won the tournament three times.

Hours ahead of the 4:30 p.m. kickoff on Sunday, the Iraqi government announced a vehicle ban in Baghdad between 4 p.m. and 6 a.m. Monday, and told civil servants to go home early.

Other provinces followed suit. In Hillah, a Shiite town south of Baghdad, the Babel provincial authorities imposed a curfew from 2 p.m. until further notice.

The sectarian slaughter has touched even the team. Sabri, the goalkeeper and hero of the victory against South Korea, lost his brother-in-law to a bombing four days before the team arrived in Thailand.

"This football team has given Iraqis happiness and everything which has been missing for them," said Ayad Aziz Nader, a bare-chested Baghdadi sweating from the efforts of his celebrations. "What governments could not do, they did. We want to show the world there is no Sunni, no Shia. They are political blocs, they are fighting among each other. Now you see Sunni, Shia, Kurd, Christian, Yazidi, everyone. We are like brothers watching the television together."

Batool Fawzi, 47, a homemaker, said, "Eleven young men in their best physical shape unified Iraq. Don't the Parliament and our politicians feel ashamed of that?"

Herald INTERNATIONAL Tribune

July 30, 2007

Yet little in Iraq is truly neutral, and the celebrations were inevitably tinged with regional and sectarian loyalties.

Some Shiites were particularly gleeful at beating Saudi Arabia, whom they accuse of helping to dispatch suicide bombers into Iraq. Before the match, one Shiite newspaper published this blaring headline: "Iraq defeats South Korea and prepares to defeat Saudi at football and terrorism."

Abdul Razzaq al-Saiedi, Karim Hilmi, Qais Mizher, Ali Adeb, Mudhafer al-Husaini, Sahar Najeeb, Wisam A. Habeeb and Ahmad Fadam contributed reporting from Baghdad, with employees in Basra and Mosul.

■ Rebuilding effort is faulted

An Iraqi power plant rebuilt with tens of millions of U.S. dollars fell into disrepair once it was transferred to the Baghdad government, according to the independent U.S. agency that tracks reconstruction spending, The Associated Press reported from Washington.

The agency, the Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq, is set to report to Congress that Iraqis' failure to maintain the Doura plant, a 320-megawatt complex considered an important source of power for an electricity-starved Baghdad, is just one of the issues hindering attempts to rebuild the country.

Also crippling the efforts are anemic capital spending by Iraq's central government ministries and its provinces; continued challenges faced by contractors in fulfilling the terms of their contracts; and endemic corruption.

Helene Cooper

Letter from Washington

A plan to heal Iraq by splitting it apart

WASHINGTON

Is Joe Biden auditioning to be the next secretary of state? For the record, he says no. Actually, he said, "Hell, no," during an interview last week. But the thought isn't as far-fetched as it might seem, even though his poll numbers remain in the cellar among the Democratic presidential hopefuls.

What he does have, and the other Democratic candidates don't, is a coherent proposal for dealing with the debacle in Iraq that is increasingly picking up steam. Foreign policy analysts, Capitol Hill politicians and even officials in the Bush administration have started sounding positive notes.

"The truth is, we could end up close to the Biden-Gelb proposal," a senior administration official said, referring to the partition plan that the Delaware senator, along with Leslie Gelb, the former president of the Council on Foreign Relations and a longtime correspondent and editor for The New York Times, presented more than a year ago in an Op-Ed article in The Times.

"Are we there yet?" the official added. "No."

But not "Hell, no."

Biden's so-called soft-partition plan — a variation of the blueprint dividing up Bosnia in 1995 — calls for dividing Iraq into three semi-autonomous regions, held together by a central government.

There would be a loose Kurdistan, a loose Shiastan and a loose Sunnistan, all under a big, if weak, Iraq umbrella.

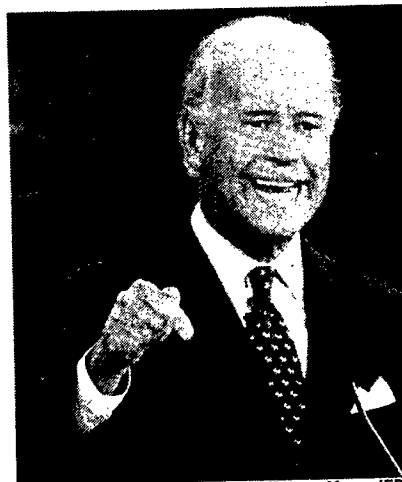
"The idea, as in Bosnia, is to maintain a united Iraq by decentralizing it, giving each ethno-religious group — Kurd, Sunni Arab and Shiite Arab — room to run its own affairs, while leaving the central government in charge of common interests," Biden and Gelb wrote in their opinion piece on May 1, 2006. "We could drive this in place with irresistible sweeteners for the Sunnis to join in, a plan designed by the military for withdrawing and redeploying American forces, and a regional nonaggression pact."

The proposal acknowledges forthrightly what a growing number of Middle East experts say is plain as

day: Iraqi Shiites and Sunnis are not moving toward reconciliation; they still haven't managed to get an oil law passed, and de facto ethnic cleansing is under way as Sunnis flee largely Shiite neighborhoods and towns, and vice versa.

The plan was dumped on when it was announced last year.

"Partitioning Iraq: No Starter" was the headline on a column by George Hishmeh in Gulf News, a daily newspaper that specializes in the



Tannen Maury/EPA

A proposal by Senator Joe Biden to divide Iraq is slowly gaining traction.

Middle East. Hishmeh, a former writer for the U.S. Information Agency, pointed out a common complaint about the partition idea, that the very word "partition" has a bad ring to Arab ears given that a UN partition plan paved the way for the creation of Israel.

Foreign policy analysts also pointed out that breaking up Iraq could cause bloodletting (as if that isn't happening now) in Iraq's urban areas. While Sunnis predominate in the western part of the country, Kurds in the north, and Shiites in the south, Iraq's cities are not as homogeneous. Baghdad, Kirkuk and Mosul don't have clear geographical lines separating the main groups.

Or at least they didn't. The reality is, Iraq's cities have become far more homogeneous recently as terrified residents have fled areas where their ethnic group doesn't predominate.

The neighborhoods around the edges of Baghdad have already experienced a lot of ethnic cleansing.

Officially, Bush administration officials maintain that they share President George W. Bush's hopes that increased U.S. troop strength in Baghdad will tamp down the violence and create political space for Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds to reach a political solution. But testimony and interviews this month about conditions in Iraq indicated that the administration is already making de facto moves toward partition.

The State Department, in particular, has stressed a proposal to build up provincial reconstruction teams out in the Iraqi provinces, with the goal of strengthening local tribal leaders. That, in itself, points toward greater decentralization in Iraq.

By way of caution, experts say a

The administration is already making de facto moves toward partition.

successful partition of Iraq would hardly be easy, involving careful consultation with Iraq's neighbors, including the feuding regional behemoths Iran and Saudi Arabia, not to mention tiptoeing around Turkey's nationalist sensibilities on the Kurdish question.

Biden, who said he believed that one way or the other, the United States would find itself in the role of trying to mediate a soft partition, recently went up to the United Nations in New York to chat about his idea with officials from the permanent members of the Security Council, and to try to enlist the help of the United Nations.

He said he got a good response.

"One said to me, 'What took you guys so long?'" Biden said.

"We're going to get there either by our action or by our inaction; what we need to do is to manage this transition."

Hmmm. Coming up with a proposal on U.S. foreign policy? Going up to the United Nations to try to sell it? Trying to get America's allies on board? If this president thing doesn't work out, that wouldn't be bad experience for someone who did want to become secretary of state.

U.S. seeks to arm Sunni allies to counter Iranian influence

By Helene Cooper and Mark Mazzetti

WASHINGTON: The Bush administration said Monday that it would ask Congress to approve an arms sales package for Saudi Arabia and its neighbors that could eventually total \$20 billion, at a time when the United States is leaning heavily on its Sunni Arab allies to play a more constructive role in Iraq.

The package, announced by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice before she and Defense Secretary Robert Gates headed to the Middle East to meet with officials from Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf states, includes aid to Egypt, as well as a sweetener meant to head off potential Israeli objections to the deal.

"We will move soon to conclude a new 10-year military assistance agreement with Israel," Rice said. "This agreement will provide a total of \$30 billion to ensure Israel's ability to defend itself."

The proposed package of weaponry for Saudi Arabia, which includes im-

proved satellite-guided bombs, upgrades for fighter jets and new naval vessels, had made Israel and some of its supporters in Congress nervous. Even before the administration had announced the package, two congressmen, Anthony Weiner and Jerrold Nadler, both Democrats of New York, held a news conference outside the Saudi Consulate in Manhattan to announce a legislative proposal to block the plan.

Bush administration officials said the arms sales were meant in part to act as a bulwark against Iran's growing influence in the Middle East.

Nicholas Burns, under secretary of state for political affairs, told reporters Monday that Iran's nuclear ambitions and financial support for terrorist groups "has worried everybody in the region," and that the arms sales would help balance aggressive attempts by Iran to dominate the Middle East.

Discussing some details of the arms package, Burns said that U.S. military aid for Israel would be increased to \$3

billion annually over 10 years, from \$2.4 billion now.

Burns said that Egypt, another crucial Sunni Arab country under pressure from Washington to embrace Iraq's Shiite-led government, would receive a total of \$13 billion under the plan.

He declined to provide specifics about the packages intended for Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations, saying those details were being hammered out.

The final package will be formally presented for congressional approval in September.

Administration officials have recently accused Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations of helping to destabilize Iraq by giving financial support to Sunni Arab groups in the country who are opposed to the American-backed Iraqi government.

Burns said that the arms package was not an attempt to trade weapons for a more cooperative Saudi policy toward the government in Baghdad. "There are no formal quid pro quos in this, but it figures that we would want our friends to be supportive of Iraq," he said.

Oxfam seeks more aid in bleak report on Iraq Humanitarian crisis growing, study says

By Damien Cave

AMMAN: Poverty, hunger and public health continue to worsen in Iraq, according to a report issued Monday by Oxfam International, which demands more humanitarian aid from abroad and calls on the Iraqi government to immediately decentralize the distribution of food and medical supplies.

The report, a compendium of research from the United Nations, the Iraqi government and nonprofit organizations that Oxfam works with or funds, offers little original data but provides one of the most comprehensive pictures to date of the humanitarian crisis within Iraq, and what it describes as a slow-motion response from the Iraqi government, the United States, United Nations and the European Union.

The report states that as many as four million Iraqis are in dire need of assistance with food, many of them children; that 70 percent of the country now lacks access to adequate water supplies, up from 50 percent in 2003, and that 90 percent of the country's hospitals lack basic medical and surgical supplies.

One survey cited in the report, com-

pleted in May by the Iraqi Ministry of Planning, found that 43 percent of Iraqis live in "absolute poverty," on less than \$1 a day.

Unemployment and hunger are particularly acute among the estimated

two million people displaced internally from their homes by violence — those who "have no incomes and are running out of coping mechanisms," the report says.

The solutions proposed by Oxfam, an international aid organization that opposed the 2003 American invasion and supports groups in Iraq from an office in Amman, focus on both Iraqi policy and international funding.

Specifically, the report calls on Iraq to expand and decentralize its distribution of food rations and emergency cash payments to widows. Medical and other aid supplies, currently kept in seven Baghdad warehouses, should be pushed out to the provinces and managed by the local authorities rather than the inefficient central government, the report says.

Citing policies of nongovernmental organizations that restrict the acceptance of money from countries involved in Iraq's conflict, Oxfam also called on

countries without troops in Iraq to send more money for aid.

According to the report, funding cuts and the challenges of providing assistance in an insecure environment have limited what the United Nations and its partners can do for Iraqis. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, for example, used to work with 20 partners in Iraq; it now has only 11, the report says.

"The government of Iraq, international donors, and the United Nations system have been focused on reconstruction, development, and building political institutions and have overlooked the harsh daily struggle for survival now faced by many," the report says.

The Oxfam analysis offers no suggestions on how to root out the corruption that has hobbled the Iraqi government and international aid efforts in the past, nor does it address the links between criminal militias and Iraqi government agencies, like the Ministry of Health, which is run by the political party loyal to Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr. It focuses almost exclusively on the need for more money and better-distributed aid.

Joost Hiltermann, deputy program director for the Middle East and North Africa at the International Crisis Group, an organization of experts on conflicts, said that at this point in Iraq, the focus is justified. Corruption, he said, is beyond the purview of groups like Oxfam and the lack of organized aid needs to be immediately addressed. "The priority," he said, "is to get aid going regardless of such problems."

July 31, 2007

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THE WORLD'S DAILY NEWSPAPER

PESHMERGA TO PROTECT IRAQ POWER AND OIL



SULAIMANIYA, Iraq, July 30, 2007 (UPI) -- Iraqi Kurdistan security forces will be sent to neighboring provinces to protect key power towers once Iraq's prime minister gives the green light.

Jabbar Yawir, undersecretary of ministry in charge of the forces, called Peshmerga, told the Voices of Iraq news agency 12,000 peshmerga fighters are ready to be deployed.

"We're waiting for the approval of the government of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki," Yawir said. "We are in agreement with the central government in Baghdad to send 6,000 troops to protect power facilities on the Taza-Baiji highway."

He also said the Iraqi Ministry of Defense asked the Kurdistan Regional Government to deploy Peshmerga fighters to protect an oil pipeline that leads from south of Mosul to the port in Ceyhan, Turkey.

The Peshmerga forces were formed when Kurds fought the

forces of Saddam Hussein and were the de facto regional army since 1992 when Iraqi Kurdistan gained semi-autonomy.

Both oil and electricity facilities are regular targets of insurgents in the north. The oil pipeline has been bombed so much it is virtually useless, stifling potential oil production from the north. Currently, Iraq produces just less than 2 million barrels per day, most from oil fields in the south.

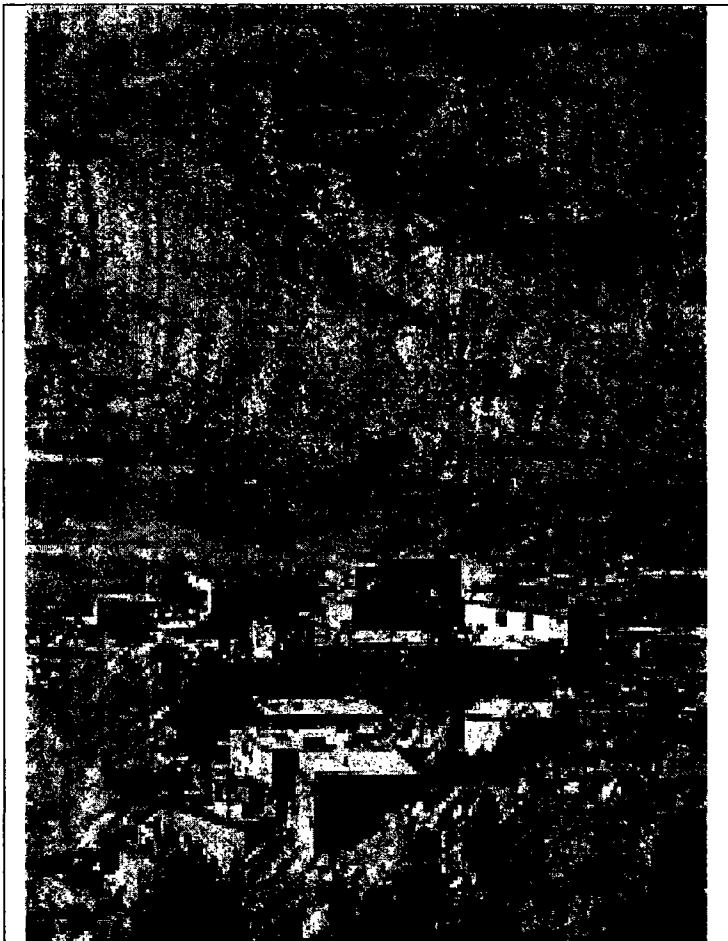
Peshmerga will also be deployed in the oil-rich and restive Kirkuk province. It's become more of a hotbed for violence as a planned vote draws near. The controversial referendum will allow voters in the heavily Kurdish but ethnically and religiously mixed territory to decide whether to become part of the Kurdistan Regional Government.

Attacks on electricity are one of many factors leading to regular blackouts and reliable electricity shortages throughout the entire country.

U.S. says working with Turkey to solve PKK "problem"

REUTERS

WASHINGTON (Reuters) Jul 30, 2007 By David Morgan



Reuters Photo: A Turkish military helicopter flies over the town of Sirnak in the mainly Kurdish southeast

- The Pentagon said on Monday it is working with Turkey to resolve a "serious problem" posed by the separatist Kurdistan Workers Party, but declined comment on a media report of secret plans to stop rebel violence.

The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which the U.S. State Department lists as a terrorist organization, has escalated attacks on soldiers and civilians in Turkey in recent months, prompting Turkish calls for a cross-border operation against rebels based in northern Iraq.

"We recognize that the PKK is a serious problem and we're working closely with both the government of Iraq and the government of Turkey to resolve this," Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman told reporters.

But he declined to comment on a U.S. report on Monday that said the Pentagon briefed Congress last week on secret plans for a joint U.S.-Turkish military operation to suppress the rebel movement and capture its leaders.

The PKK, which consists mainly of Turkish Kurds, launched a separatist campaign in 1984. The Turkish government blames PKK violence for more than 30,000 deaths.

The group's goal is to establish an independent, democratic Kurdish state in southeast Turkey, northern Iraq, and parts of Iran and Syria, according to the State Department.

But syndicated columnist Robert Novak said on Monday that U.S. officials plan a U.S.-Turkish operation that if successful would avert a Turkish invasion of Iraq.

Up to now, the Bush administration has focused on diplomacy to ease tensions along the border between Turkey and Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdistan region. The U.S. Treasury Department has also targeted PKK funds flowing through Europe.

But U.S. efforts to stop Kurdish militants in Iraq from attacking Turkey have been meager and unsuccessful, increasing the chances of a retaliatory strike by Ankara, U.S. officials and analysts have warned

A FRAGILE STABILITY ON IRAQ'S NORTHERN BORDER

Kurdish rebels threaten to draw regional players into Iraq

MT. QANDIL, Iraq - The paved road runs out about 10 miles from the Iranian border, and so does the authority of the Iraqi government. High in the jagged peaks above lies territory controlled by a radical band of Kurdish leftists that has emerged as the latest threat to the region's imperiled stability.

At the last Iraqi border checkpoint, a squat gray castle flanked by fields of sunflowers and melons, Col. Ahmed Hamid warns travelers that he can't guarantee their safety. "If anything happens to you, the Iraqi government is not responsible," he cautions. "There could be bombing, and there are terrorists everywhere."

He was referring to fighters of the PKK, or Kurdistan Workers' Party, who have been launching guerrilla attacks against Turkey from the borderlands of the northern Iraqi region of Kurdistan for the last 16 years, in pursuit of their dream of an independent Marxist-Leninist state encompassing the Kurdish areas of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria.

Now this forgotten frontier and the leftist revolutionaries living off its land risk becoming the flash point for a future conflict that could draw in players from across the region. In response to a recent surge of PKK attacks, Turkey has massed up to 140,000 troops along the Iraq border. They have fired periodic bursts of artillery toward remote villages on the Iraqi side and threatened to launch military action unless the PKK halts its attacks.

Iran also has been reinforcing its side of the border to deter attacks by a PKK-affiliated Iranian Kurdish group. The Iranians also have been shelling the area, most recently on July 22, local villagers say. Since a U.S. warplane flew over it a little over a week ago, the Iranians have bolstered their positions in the area with 2,000 more men, according to Hamid, though he said he thinks the Iranian move is defensive. "They don't want Kurds escaping into Iran if Turkey attacks the area," he said. Iraq's Kurds are hoping it won't come to that. They point out that Kurdistan is the one relative success story that the U.S. can point to in Iraq, and they believe the U.S., as one of Turkey's NATO allies, will be able to restrain Ankara.

"The only safe area in Iraq is Kurdistan, and if Turkey destroys this area, it will blacken the face of the Americans," said Gen. Jaber Manda, the deputy commander of the Kurdish pesh merga, the former guerrilla army now responsible for security within Kurdistan. Iraq's

Kurds attribute much of the Turkish saber-rattling to the Turkish election campaign and are hoping that Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's victory in the July 22 election will diminish the threat of imminent military action.

Erdogan has invited Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki for talks to discuss the PKK. If the talks fail, he warned in an election eve pledge, Turkey will launch military action against northern Iraq. Kirkuk referendum feared The Kurds suspect that the real goal of Turkey's military buildup goes far beyond the PKK bases. A referendum is to be held in December in Kirkuk on whether to absorb the oil-rich Iraqi city into the region of Kurdistan, something that Turkey fears would further encourage Kurdish aspirations to independence.

Turkey has made it clear that it does not want the referendum to go ahead, citing the potential for civil strife in Iraq, and Kurds speculate that the troops' presence along the border is intended to pressure Iraq into delaying the poll. If that is the case, then Turkey's military presence along the border threatens to cast a long shadow over Kurdistan's future, deterring investment and undermining stability in the one region in Iraq that is viewed as safe. "Turkey has a disease, a sensitivity that Kurds should not have anything. They don't want Kurdistan to succeed," said Maj. Gen. Aziz Wesiya, commander of the pesh merga's border guards.

"If Kurds are a success anywhere in the world, even in Siberia, Turkey will interfere. This is the problem." In Turkey's view, the PKK is a terrorist organization that has killed more than 15,000 Turks in the past three decades, and Turkey has as much right to wage war against it as the U.S. has to fight terrorism elsewhere. If the U.S. and the Iraqi government do not do more to crack down on the PKK, Erdogan warned in a pre-election TV interview, "We will have to do whatever it takes. And that 'whatever' is obvious."

Iraqi Kurds in no mood to fight Struggling to recover from decades of conflict, Kurdish officials say they are in no mood for another fight. At most, Turkey will launch limited strikes against the PKK's bases, and Kurdistan will have little choice but to look the other way, predicted Sadi Ahmed Pire, a top official in the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, or PUK, one of the two main Kurdish parties governing the Kurdish region. "It takes two sides to make a war," said Pire, an adviser to

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, who is a Kurd. "We have to ignore it. We have not one penny to spend on another war."

But the Kurdish regional government is equally disinclined to bow to Turkish pressure to rein in the activities of the PKK, leaving uncertain the prospects for dialogue. Iraqi Kurds have fought three times against the PKK over the last 15 years, twice alongside Turkish troops, and on each occasion they were unable to dislodge the PKK from its bases. That was back when Turkey and Kurdistan enjoyed relatively warm relations, before the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003 formalized Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq. Turkey now accuses the Iraqi Kurds of helping the PKK, but Kurdish officials say they have had no contact with the rebel group since a 2000 cease-fire. "We have nothing to do with them. They do not have our permission to be there," said Ahmed Hussein, the mayor of Qaladiza, the last town before the Iraqi border post. "They don't come here, and we don't go there."

Turkey's past failed incursions demonstrate that military action won't work in the forbidding terrain, said Manda, the Kurdish security official. "These are very harsh, very high mountains, and they cannot be controlled by the Kurdish government, nor could they be controlled by Saddam, and they couldn't be controlled by Turkey," he said. "They are uncontrollable. Even America couldn't control them." An oasis in the harsh terrain A visit to Mt. Qandil, where the PKK's main base in northern Iraq is located, illustrates the challenges inherent in taking on the rebels in their mountain fortress, where soaring cliffs offer natural defenses for a guerrilla army. The first PKK checkpoint, marked by two flagpoles flying the group's sunshine-logo flag, lies a grueling 20-minute drive from the Iraqi post, up a perilously twisting dirt track that winds high above a steep gorge. Two youthful guards, dressed in olive fatigues bound at the waist with thick Kurdish-style sashes, peer suspiciously at visitors, then wave them on.

At the second checkpoint, an older fighter takes journalists' passports and assigns them an escort wielding an AK-47 to visit the Martyrs' Shrine, an unexpected oasis in the harsh terrain. The shrine is planted with geraniums, peach trees and roses and contains the graves of 67 fallen fighters, all killed in battles with Iraqi Kurds. A lily pond features a running fountain and jumping fish. This is as

far as visitors are permitted to go because of the sensitivity of the situation, according to Farhat, 30, a PKK fighter guarding the shrine who would only give his first name. "This is a very hot area so we are expecting an attack at any time," he said. "That is why we're here."

The main camp, which includes guest houses, a restaurant and classrooms, lies farther up the mountain; it is sustained by crops grown by the PKK fighters and the proceeds of cross-border smuggling, local Kurds say. They say it is not a military command center so much as a training facility that draws young Kurds from across the region to be schooled in Marxist-Leninist thought, Kurdish nationalism and how to survive in the forbidding terrain. Though it is safely out of reach of gunners on the Turkish side of the border, nearly 50 miles away, Iranian artillery is just over the mountain ridge. The area is well within the reach of Turkish warplanes, which launched air strikes against the camp in 1992. Disdain mixed with kinship

Local villagers, living among the PKK in rough-hewn stone houses with satellite dishes perched on their roofs, are nervous. Two days earlier, they cowered in fear at the sound of artillery exploding in the distance. "They hit the mountains and killed some goats. We were very afraid," said Fatma Hajji. "We expect the attacks to increase." Officials in the pro-American, pro-foreign investment Kurdish government do not attempt to hide their disdain for the leftist revolutionaries who are jeopardizing their stability. The U.S., as well as Turkey, has designated the PKK a terrorist organization, and Kurdistan would be "more than happy" if the PKK went away, said Pire, the PUK official. Yet a bond of Kurdish kinship inevitably ties the Kurds governing their own territory to those still fighting for an independent Kurdistan.

"The PKK represents a nation without rights just as we used to be in the past," said Hussein, the Qaladiza mayor and himself a former pesh merga fighter. "Once it was us who was fighting in those mountains, and Mam [uncle] Jalal was our leader," he said, using a term of endearment to refer to President Talabani. "We suffered thousands of martyrs until we reached the point where we are today, and now Mam Jalal is our president. "It's a dream come true

FINANCIAL TIMES

Iraq misses deadline for electoral roll

July 31 2007 By Steve Negus, Iraq Correspondent

Iraq's government has missed its deadline to compile a list of people eligible to vote in a December referendum that will determine the fate of a large, oil-rich and bitterly disputed swathe of the country, officials of northern Iraq's Kurdistan autonomous region said yesterday.

Politicians from the Shia-led bloc that dominates the government and the Kurdish parties that are its main allies had agreed before the formation of the national unity government in June 2006 that today would be the deadline for a "census" of the inhabitants of Kirkuk and other "disputed territories" of northern Iraq.

However, the deadline appears to have passed without a census being completed, raising doubts as to whether the government is willing to follow through on its commitments.

The failure to meet the deadline "shows a lack of seriousness from all parties to implement... articles that were in the constitution that people had agreed and voted upon," said Falah Mustafa Bakir, head of the Kurdistan regional government's department of foreign relations.

For many Kurds, the referendum is a chance to reclaim Kirkuk, which Jalal Talabani, Iraq's Kurdish president, has called the "Jerusalem of Kurdistan" - a historic capital purged of much of its non-Arab population by the regime of Saddam Hussein, the deposed leader.

But although Iraq's constitution calls for the referendum - which would ask people whether they wished to be part of the Kurdistan autonomous region - to be held no later than December 31, many Sunni and Shia Arabs strongly oppose Kirkuk ever becoming part of Kurdistan.

The Article 140 process - designed to undo the "Arabisation" policies pursued by Saddam aimed at solidifying Arab control of northern oilfields - has also drawn criticism from others who fear it will feed instability.

The former regime pushed Kurds and other non-Arabs out. Arab settlers were brought in from other parts of the country, particularly the Shia south.

In addition, it shuffled the borders of the region's provinces, handing away slices of Kirkuk to its neighbours in what Kurdish officials claim was an attempt at gerrymandering, ensuring the north's main oilfields were in an Arab-majority province.

To reverse this demographic engineering, Arab settlers are to be offered nearly \$16,000 in compensation and land in their home

provinces to leave. Kurdish officials claim 16,000 families have voluntarily signed up.

Iraq's presidency council was supposed to have addressed the border issue by restoring the north's pre-Arabisation administrative boundaries. But the approval of parliament has yet to be granted.

Background

About 8m Iraqis need immediate aid because of the crisis caused by the war, relief agencies said yesterday. A report by Oxfam and the NGO Coordination Committee network in Iraq said 15 per cent of Iraqis could not regularly afford to eat; 70 per cent were without adequate water (up from 50 per cent in 2003); and 28 per cent of children were malnourished.



Ewen MacAskill in Washington - July 30, 2007

US joins Turkey's war against rebel Kurds

The Pentagon confirmed today that it is working closely with the Turkish government to crush Kurdish guerrillas operating from bases in northern Iraq.

But it refused to comment on a report that the US is planning a covert operation to send special forces into action to try to neutralise the leadership of the Kurdistan Workers party (PKK), which has been mounting attacks inside Turkey.

The US is trying to persuade the Turkish army against taking matters into its own hands by invading northern Iraq, where the Kurds have established an autonomous region.

Washington, faced with a myriad of problems in Iraq, does not need a new front opening up in the country.

Bryan Whitman, a Pentagon spokesman,

today would neither confirm nor deny that a covert operation is being planned. But he said: "We recognise that the PKK is a serious problem and we're working closely with both the government of Iraq and the government of Turkey to resolve this."

The veteran American columnist, Robert Novak, in the Washington Post, disclosed that Eric Edelman, an undersecretary of defence and former ambassador to Turkey, told selected Congressmen in private last week about the planned covert operation. The administration is required by law to inform Congress of any such operations.

Mr Novak wrote that the US forces would "behead the guerrilla organisation by helping Turkey get rid of PKK leaders that they have targeted for years."

The PKK has been fighting for the breakaway from Turkey of the large Kurdish population in the east of the country.

Some of the members of Congress informed were alarmed by the development at a time when they are working to find ways of stabilising Iraq and withdrawing US forces.

The Turkish prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, threatened two weeks ago a military incursion inside the Iraqi Kurdish area. This followed a build-up of Turkish forces along the Iraqi border. The 250,000-strong Turkish force on the border is confronting an estimated 4,000 PKK fighters. The Turkish army lobbed shells over the border last month. The Turkish government is running out of patience in the face of continuing PKK action.

The US administration until now has restricted its involvement to trying to reduce tensions through diplomacy and economic measures. The US Treasury has targeted PKK funds in Europe.

Although the Kurdish region of Iraq has been autonomous since shortly after the first Gulf war, it remains part of Iraq, and US special forces would be able to move freely there.



Guerillas of the separatist Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK) near the Turkish border in the remote village of Lewzhe, in northern Iraq. Photo: Yahya Ahmed/AP

TURKISH DAILY NEWS

Turkey, Iraq preparing terror draft

DUYGU GÜVENC , ANKARA , July 31, 2007

Iraqi PM Maliki's visit can mark a historic step for the two countries if joint steps against the PKK are approved, diplomats say

Turkey and Iraq have drafted a document specifying joint measures to stop attacks by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) sheltered in northern Iraq. The Turkish and Iraqi prime ministers, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Nouri Al Maliki plan to announce the measures in a joint declaration next week.

The Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki will come to Ankara after Erdoğan invited him for a visit last June. The Turkish Daily News learned that diplomats from both countries are working on a document that will be made public if the Maliki government does not reject it. A Turkish diplomat, on the condition of anonymity, said that if the Iraqi government does not respond positively to Turkey's calls, then Ankara will remind them of its international rights to self defense.

"If Turkey is obliged to conduct an incursion into northern Iraq, it will be sure to protect the territorial integrity of Iraq," a diplomat said. "We would make this issue clear to Maliki during talks."

Here are Turkey's expectations from Iraq to block the PKK in Iraq.

. Taking necessary steps to control the activities of the PKK terrorists in Iraq. It does not necessarily mean arresting them and extradition to Turkey. Iraq has already rejected Turkey's demand on extradition.

. Stopping the PKK members from using Iraqi television and other means of propaganda. Murat Karayılan, a senior member of the PKK, often appears on Massoud Barzani's TV channel.

. Thwarting the illegal traffic of guns, drugs and other products from the borders. Increasing cooperation on the border.



. Stopping Barzani's provocative statements against Turkey.

. Taking measures to stop Iraqi nationals supporting the PKK by transporting food.

. Not treating the PKK terrorists in Iraqi hospitals.

No agreement to be signed

Turkey does not expect extradition of the PKK chieftains anymore, although Erdoğan will repeat this request once again during official talks. The proposal by Turkey to sign an agreement on the fight against terrorism is also not on the agenda of Maliki's visit.

"If Maliki gives a positive reply, than we will announce the declaration and Turkey will continue to make favorable deals for all Iraqis in economic terms to prove our real intention," said a Turkish diplomat.

Maliki is expected to arrive in Turkey during the second week of August. It is not certain yet whether President Ahmet Necdet Sezer will receive Maliki.

Military intervention for a short period

Ankara is also prepared for disappointment. If Maliki's proposals do not satisfy Ankara,

Erdoğan will repeat Turkey's right to self defense, said diplomatic sources.

"We have two priorities, one is the PKK and the other is Kirkuk. If the Turkish military makes an operation into Iraq, this will be for a short time period just to maintain the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq," said a high level Turkish diplomat. Drawing attention to the difficulty faced by Maliki to postpone the referendum in Kirkuk, Ankara expects a sign from Maliki to be conveyed to the Kurds on the Kirkuk issue.

Economic package for Iraq

Turkey is ready to boost its economic ties with Iraq if Maliki's visit will prove Baghdad's willingness to cooperate with Turkey, diplomats said. Supporting the construction projects of Iraqi infrastructure, marketing Iraqi petroleum to Europe, construction of a new pipeline for Iraqi natural gas, which will be linked with the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline are among the projects that Turkey can support.

DTP deputies complete MP registration

Nineteen independent candidates supported by the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) completed procedures to register as parliamentary representatives

in Parliament on Sunday.

Ahmet Türk, the DTP leader who temporarily stepped down to run as an independent candidate, spoke to the press following completion of the registration procedure. Türk said this year's election was very important to the DTP and that his party's group would work to make democracy permanent and develop a peace process. Expressing that his party's major aim was to bring civilian and democratic methods to the foreground and solve problems, including the Kurdish question, in the peaceful framework of dialogue.

"As a group we will try to be the people's voice in Parliament. We understand dialogue and consensus to be fundamental. Our aim is to consider the sensitivities of 72 million people and conduct politics that will express their problems," he claimed.

He said as a group they would be acting with full awareness of their responsibility to realize the brotherhood of people that have lived together for a thousand years.

Türk said the DTP would also strive to transform Turkey into a civilian and democratic republic and avoid creating tension in Parliament. After stressing that they expected support from all segments of society, he added: "Because one-sided goodwill and dialogue cannot solve anything, it would prove inconsequential. We want to see an approach from the government that will contribute to peaceful efforts."

When asked about the DTP's position on AK Party deputy and constitutional law professor Zafer Üskül's statement that a new civilian constitution would leave out references to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Türk said they were ready to support efforts to form a civilian constitution. He then expressed the view that it was a



responsibility of Parliament to "erase the traces of military takeovers."

"In the end we want a democratic and contemporary constitution. Nowadays everybody interprets the principles and revolutions of Atatürk according to his or her own ideas. In reality we want a modern understanding in their interpretations. Instead of ideological discussions, we should have a civilian constitution that responds to the demands of our age," he explained.

Meanwhile former head of the Human Rights' Association (İHD) Akın Birdal, also elected to Parliament as an independent, announced that he had accepted Türk's offer to join the DTP's parliamentary group.

DTP Deputy Chairwoman Aysel Tuğluk, also temporarily resigned from her party, made a statement to the press on Sunday in which she asserted, "We are here to serve our country."

She said that sitting next to the Nationalist Movement Party's (MHP) deputies, as determined by the parliamentary seating plan, would "not create any problems."

Sırrı Sakık, another DTP member elected as an independent candidate from the province of Muş, expressed great excitement about being a Parliament member. Recalling that members of a DTP predecessor elected in 1991 left Parliament after one took the oath of allegiance in Kurdish, Sakık said, "I wish that incident had never happened."

Chatting with reporters Sunday after completing his registration, Sakık claimed that a change made to the ballots which listed the names of independent candidates had caused confusion for DTP voters. "We would have come in with 30 or 35 deputies if names of the independent candidates had been written on a separate ballot," he said.

Also in the conversation Sakık claimed the 10 percent election threshold that forced members of the DTP to run as independents was unfair. Additionally he expressed his opinion that the larger number of female representatives in Parliament should be seen and used as a good opportunity for Turkey.

Les Etats-Unis veulent armer leurs alliés du Moyen-Orient contre l'Iran

Le projet de l'administration Bush de vendre, sur dix ans, pour 20 milliards de dollars d'équipements militaires à l'Arabie saoudite et à cinq pays du Golfe est contesté au Congrès

WASHINGTON
CORRESPONDANTE

Est-ce bien le moment de livrer des armes supplémentaires aux pays du Moyen-Orient ? A peine annoncé, le projet de l'administration Bush de vendre en dix ans pour 20 milliards de dollars (14,6 milliards d'euros) d'équipements militaires à l'Arabie saoudite et à cinq autres pays du Golfe se heurte aux réticences d'une partie du Congrès.

Le plan a été présenté à certains parlementaires la semaine dernière, en prélude à la réunion que doivent tenir, mardi 31 juillet à Charm El-Cheikh (Egypte), le ministre de la défense Robert Gates et la secrétaire d'Etat Condoleezza Rice avec leurs homologues d'Egypte, d'Arabie saoudite, et des cinq autres pays arabes dits modérés. Pays avec lesquels Washington a entrepris de consolider un bloc susceptible de faire contrepoids à l'influence de l'Iran

« Une augmentation de 25 % » de l'aide militaire à Israël

Le premier ministre israélien, Ehoud Olmert, a salué la décision de la Maison Blanche qui lui offre une victoire politique précieuse à quelques semaines de la publication du rapport final de la commission d'enquête Winograd sur la guerre du Liban de l'été 2006. « Cela représente une augmentation de 25 %. Je crois qu'il s'agit d'une amélioration importante et significative de l'aide militaire à Israël. » Cet accord, négocié lors de la venue de M. Olmert à Washington en juin, obéit à un scénario non écrit, rappelle Amir Oren, chroniqueur du quotidien *Ha'aretz* : « C'est comme ça depuis 40 ans. Chaque fois qu'un président américain cherche à renforcer un régime arabe ami du Moyen-Orient pour le proté-

(Qatar, Bahrein, Koweït, Oman, Emirats arabes unis). Un deuxième volet prévoit une augmentation spectaculaire de l'aide militaire à Israël (+ 25 % selon le premier ministre Ehoud Olmert). L'aide à l'Egypte atteindrait 13 milliards de dollars en dix ans. Compte tenu de l'importance des contrats en jeu, la loi impose au gouvernement d'avoir l'aval du Congrès. Parmi les armes destinées à l'Arabie saoudite figurent des missiles air-air, des navires de guerre et des JDAM (Joint Direct Attack Munitions) qui transforment les bombes classiques en armes guidées de précision.

Obtenir des concessions

L'administration Bush espère ainsi augmenter les capacités de défense de ses alliés sunnites du Golfe. Ceux-ci sont inquiets de voir l'Iran dominer la région en cas de retrait américain d'Irak, surtout dans l'hypothèse où il parviendrait à se doter d'une capacité nucléaire. A court terme, les Etats-Unis espèrent aussi encourager Riyad à soutenir le gouvernement irakien de Nouri Al-Maliki, bien qu'il soit dominé par les chiïtes.

A la veille du déplacement de M. Gates et M^{me} Rice, qui doivent se rendre à Djeddah après Charm El-Cheikh, les responsables américains ont fait publiquement

ger d'un coup d'Etat, Israël fait part de ses objections. Malgré cela, les Etats-Unis vont au bout du projet, mais n'oublent pas en chemin une compensation pour Israël. » Eilat, sur le golfe d'Akaba, et le réacteur nucléaire de Dimona, dans le Néguev, sont à quelques minutes en avion des frontières saoudiennes. Plus qu'une grande offensive, l'état-major israélien est préoccupé par l'idée d'une attaque isolée par un pilote rebelle ou par celle d'un renversement du royaume par des radicaux qui s'empareraient de son arsenal. L'aide américaine doit permettre à Tsahal de reconstituer ses stocks et de maintenir son avance technologique vis-à-vis de la Syrie et l'Iran, alimentés en armes par Moscou. — (Corresp.)

part de leurs critiques. « L'Arabie saoudite et un certain nombre d'autres pays ne font pas tout ce qu'ils peuvent pour nous aider en Irak, a déclaré, dimanche 29 juillet, l'ambassadeur américain à l'ONU Zalmay Khalilzad sur CNN. Parfois, non seulement ils ne nous aident pas mais ils sapent nos efforts pour faire des progrès. »

Le président démocrate de la commission des affaires étrangères de la Chambre des représentants, Tom Lantos, s'est déclaré opposé à livrer des armes sans obtenir de concessions de l'allié saoudien, comme par exemple une contribution à la prise en charge des réfugiés irakiens qui se massent en Jordanie, ou l'engagement de ne plus tenter de réconcilier le Mouvement de la résistance islamique (Hamas) et le Fatah palestiniens comme le roi Abdullah l'a fait en mars. Du Qatar, il souhaiterait obtenir une modération du rôle de la télévision Al-Jazira dans la région.

Deux autres représentants démocrates, Anthony Weiner et Jerrold Nadler, ont également fait part de leur intention de bloquer la vente des armements, en rappelant que 15 des 19 auteurs des attentats du 11-Septembre avaient la nationalité saoudienne. « L'Arabie saoudite ne devrait pas bénéficier d'une once de soutien militaire américain tant qu'elle ne dénoncera pas sans équivoque le terrorisme et ne prendra pas des mesures concrètes pour l'empêcher », ont-ils déclaré. Le fait d'annoncer de telles ventes d'armes – le montant le plus important de la présidence de George Bush – dans une région considérée comme une poudrière a fait sursauter plus d'un expert à Washington, où l'on craint qu'une telle démarche aboutisse, de fait, à renforcer la position du président iranien Mahmoud Ahmadinejad dans son pays.

Les experts relèvent qu'en Irak aussi les Américains arment les chefs tribaux sunnites, pour peu qu'ils acceptent de se retourner contre Al-Qaïda. Selon l'Associated Press (AP) à Bagdad, M. Maliki a eu de vifs échanges avec le général David Petraeus à ce sujet. Il aurait agité la menace d'armer les milices chiïtes pour faire contrepoids. ■

CORINE LESNES