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INSTITUT KURDE, 106, rue La Fayette - 75010 PARIS
Tél. : 01- 48 24 64 64 - Fax : 01- 48 24 64 66

www.fikp.org
E-mail: bulletin@fikp.org

TURQUIE : POURSUITE DES AFFRONTEMENTS ENTRE LE PKK ET L'ARMÉE

SYRIE : ARRESTATIONS EN MASSE, MYSTÉRIEUSE ÉPIDÉMIE PARMIS LES CONSCRITS KURDES.

KURDISTAN D'IRAK : POLÉMIQUE SUR UNE EXPORTATION CLANDESTINE DE PÉTROLE

CULTURE : « SEWAKAY » KHOM OU LE RENOUVEAU DU THÉÂTRE KURDE

TURQUIE : POURSUITES DES AFFRONTEMENTS ENTRE LE PKK ET L'ARMÉE

Tout le mois de juillet les accrochages meurtriers se sont poursuivis entre le PKK et l'armée turque.

Le 1^{er} juillet, 11 ou 13 combattants du PKK auraient ainsi perdu la vie dans un affrontement avec une unité de militaire, selon l'agence de presse Anatolie. Du côté turc, 2 soldats ont perdu la vie ainsi que 3 membres des milices « gardiens de village ».

Les autorités turques pointent du doigt le commandement militaire du PKK réfugié dans le mont Qandil au Kurdistan irakienne, régulièrement pilonné par l'aviation turque. Elles critiquent aussi l'insuffisance de l'aide américaine dans leur lutte contre le PKK,

comme l'explique Sinan Ogan, directeur du centre de recherche Turksam.

Depuis l'affaire de la flottille humanitaire turque vers Gaza, qui a gravement compromis les relations turco-israéliennes et le refus d'Ankara de voter des sanctions contre l'Iran à l'Onu, les relations entre les Etats-Unis et la Turquie connaissent un certain refroidissement, selon les observateurs. Ainsi, le sous-secrétaire d'Etat américain adjoint Philip Gordon a directement interpellé la Turquie sur « sa loyauté envers Washington ».

Mais le Premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan a nié ces

crispations tout en reconnaissant des divergences de vue, « Cela ne veut pas dire qu'il y a un problème ». Cependant, le même jour, le vice-Premier ministre, Cemil Çiçek, déclarait que la Turquie attendait « davantage » des Américains, dans la lutte contre le PKK :

« Nous voulons une coopération plus déterminée, au-delà du mécanisme tripartite (Turquie-USA-Irak) mis en place en 2007 contre les rebelles. »

La Turquie exige aussi que les Etats-Unis « livrent » les dirigeants du PKK basés au Kurdistan irakien, et qu'ils fassent pression sur le gouvernement kurde d'Erbil

pour que ce dernier encercle totalement les bases du PKK, même si dans la réalité ces deux exigences relèvent du domaine de l'impossible.

En visite à Toronto pour le sommet du G20, M., Recep Tayyip Erdogan, rencontrant Barack Obama s'est plaint du retard dans les informations fournies à l'armée turque par les drones américains, informations qu'il réclame « en temps réel ».

S'exprimant sous couvert d'anonymat à l'AFP, un diplomate turc confirme cette doléance :

« C'est simple, nous demandons aux Américains de nous fournir plus d'informations sur le PKK en Irak et ils en ont tous les moyens. »

Une liste de 248 membres du PKK, dont les commandants militaires Murat Karayilan, Cemil Bayik et Duran Kalkan, a même été remise aux Américains, aux Irakiens et aux Kurdes, demandant qu'ils soient livrés "dans les plus brefs délais" aux autorités turques, selon le journal turc Radikal. La Turquie souhaite aussi une opération conjointe pour ces captures.

Plus spécifiquement, lors d'un passage à la télévision, le chef d'état-major turc, le général Ilker Basbug, a plus violemment accusé les Kurdes d'Irak « d'inaction contre le PKK », relançant le spectre d'une autre incursion militaire au Kurdistan d'Irak.

En attendant, l'aviation turque pilonne fréquemment des positions du PKK, dans la zone de Khakurk et de Qandil, située dans la région autonome kurde, sans que cela ait un grand effet sur la fin des attaques.

De sa prison d'Imrali, le leader du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, a une fois de plus appelé Ankara à négocier avec son mouvement armé, en réclamant

aussi une reconnaissance des droits des Kurdes de Turquie dans la Constitution, un statut d'autonomie, ainsi que la libération des membres du BDP ou suspectés d'être du PKK, arrêtés lors des dernières rafles policières. Autrement, Öcalan a indiqué que la lutte du PKK loin de cesser, ne ferait que s'intensifier.

De fait, d'autres attentats ou attaques ont eu lieu par la suite. Ainsi le 19 juillet, un engin explosif, placé sur le bord d'une route a fait sauter un véhicule militaire près de la ville de Cukurca, (province de Hakkari).

Une autre attaque, survenue le 20 juillet, a fait 15 morts parmi les soldats, alors que des renforts avaient été envoyés à Cukurca après l'attaque contre le véhicule militaire.

Autre signe de désenchantement après les espoirs suscités par « l'initiative kurde » initiée par Erdogan, un certain nombre de personnes composant le « groupe de paix » qui avaient traversé la frontière irako-turque est retourné en Irak.

Ces 34 "envoyés de la paix", 30 adultes —huit militants du PKK et 22 « sympathisants » avaient d'abord été laissés en liberté, mais ont été accusés ensuite de liens avec le PKK, risquant jusqu'à 20 ans de prison. Dix d'entre eux ont été mis en détention et leur procès s'est ouvert en juin dernier.

"Nous avons tendu la main, mais nous nous sommes heurtés au vide", a déclaré le porte-parole de ce groupe cité par l'agence Firat.

Le ministre turc de la Justice, Sadullah Ergin, questionné par la presse, a déclaré ne rien savoir de certain sur ce retour en Irak, tout en le regrettant :

"Nous avons reçu des informations dans ce sens, J'aurais souhaité qu'ils restent dans ce pays pour contribuer

aux efforts de paix du gouvernement ».

Pour sa part, le chef militaire des forces du PKK, Murat Karayilan, a confirmé, dans un entretien à la BBC, les propos d'Öcalan, en précisant, qu'il ordonnerait à ses hommes de déposer les armes « sous supervision de l'ONU » si la Turquie acceptait un cessez-le-feu, en brandissant pour la première fois depuis des années la menace de « l'indépendance » :

« Si le problème kurde est résolu de façon démocratique via le dialogue, alors oui, nous déposerons les armes. Mais "si le gouvernement turc refuse d'accepter cela, nous devons proclamer l'indépendance" du sud-est turc, où opère le PKK.

Seul signe de détente politique, le parlement turc a voté, le 22 juillet une loi limitant l'emprisonnement des enfants kurdes qui avaient été arrêtés pour avoir lancé des pierres sur les forces de l'ordre, lors de manifestations. Des centaines d'entre eux, certains âgés de 12 ans, avaient été condamnés à la prison de jeunes, malgré les protestations d'organisations de défense des droits de l'homme, dont Amnesty International.

La nouvelle loi prévoit une amnistie pour les mineurs emprisonnés : "Environ 190 mineurs actuellement en prison devraient sortir... Et des milliers d'autres actuellement jugés devraient bénéficier de cette loi", a déclaré à l'AFP le député kurde Bengi Yıldiz. Les mineurs coupables de participation à une manifestation interdite ou convaincus de délits énoncés dans la loi antiterroriste iront dans des maisons de redressement, et non plus en prison. Seuls les « récidivistes » et ceux pris avec des armes continueront de risquer des peines d'emprisonnement, mais ne pouvant plus dépasser six années. Enfin, ces enfants et adolescents ne seront plus jugés par des tribunaux pour adultes.

SYRIE : ARESTATIONS EN MASSE, MYSTÉRIEUSE ÉPIDÉMIE PARMİ LES CONSCRITS KURDES.

Les forces syriennes ont arrêté 400 personnes début juillet, toutes kurdes, dans un vaste coup de filet comprenant les villes d'Alep, de Qamishlo, d'Afrin, Hassaké et Raqqa.

C'est l'agence turque Anatolie qui s'est fait l'écho de cette nouvelle, alléguant qu'il s'agissait de membres appartenant au PKK, affirmation démentie par les organisations et associations kurdes syriennes.

Les charges pesant sur les détenus vont de la collecte illégale d'argent au séparatisme et à la volonté de « diviser la Syrie ». L'agence turque a même indiqué que 11 membres du PKK ont été tués dans des affrontements avec les forces syriennes.

Mais l'association « International Support Kurds » basée en Syrie a dès le lendemain, 2 juillet, démenti ces affirmations, indiquant que les 400 Kurdes arrêtés l'avaient été en raison des derniers événements du Newroz, notamment à Raqqa, où les Kurdes célèbrant le Nouvel An avaient été attaqués par les autorités syriennes, et non en un seul coup de filet, mais en plusieurs vagues d'arrestations. Certaines de ces personnes ont été relâchées depuis.

De plus, selon Newaf Khalil, journaliste et analyste de la politique kurde en Syrie, la plupart des Kurdes arrêtés sont soupçonnés non d'appartenance au PKK, mais à un autre parti, le PYD. Quant aux onze morts mentionnés par Anatolie, ils relèvent, selon le journaliste, de la pure invention, ou bien d'une manœuvre de la part de l'AKP, visant à persuader l'opinion publique turque qu'il agit au

niveau régional pour combattre le PKK en dehors de ses frontières.

Par ailleurs, si le motif des arrestations est contesté par les Kurdes syriens, la répression est elle, bien réelle. Amnesty International a une fois de plus interpellé le président syrien sur le sort de 52 prisonniers dont on est sans nouvelles, après une révolte en détention qui a coûté la vie à 22 personnes, dans la prison militaire de Saydnaya 2 ans auparavant.

Malcolm Smart, directeur d'Amnesty pour le Moyen-Orient a ainsi déclaré que les autorités syriennes devaient renseigner les familles des prisonniers sur leur état, leur lieu de détention, voire leur décès, et les circonstances de ces décès.

Selon un rapport de police, les violences avaient commencé du fait de neuf prisonniers islamistes attaquant les gardiens pour s'emparer de leurs armes et de leurs téléphones portables, afin d'alerter leurs familles et les organisations internationales sur leurs conditions de détention. Au moins 17 prisonniers et 5 militaires seraient morts.

Les persécutions contre les Kurdes de Syrie prennent aussi la forme d'expropriations. Ainsi des fermiers kurdes de Dêrik ont été obligés de signer des feuilles blanches qui ont servi à annuler toute possibilité de réclamer les terres qu'ils exploitaient, une fois que l'État les aurait confisquées et soustrait à toute activité agricole.

Le texte de la cessation des terres comporte aussi la mention que ces actes ont été signés sans contrainte et que les paysans étaient en pleine possession de leurs moyens physiques et mentaux.

En fait, les fermiers kurdes ont fait état de menaces s'ils refusaient de signer, notamment celle d'être accusés d'appartenance à une organisation illégale, comme le PKK, le PYD ou la Confédération du Kurdistan occidental, ou bien de se voir refuser, pour leurs enfants, l'accès à la scolarisation et aux universités.

Enfin, une suite de morts mystérieuses affecte les conscrits syriens d'origine kurde depuis des mois. Plusieurs appelés sont en effet morts dans le nord de la Syrie, alors qu'ils servaient sous les drapeaux, les circonstances de leurs décès demeurant inexplicables. Devant l'insistance des familles et des associations, les militaires syriens ont finalement invoqué la possibilité d'une « épidémie » et annulé plusieurs enrôlements de jeunes soldats.

Une association kurde affirme dans une déclaration que 10 recrues ont été ainsi hospitalisées le 12 juillet dans un hôpital de Qamishlo et que leur état serait critique.

Sans réellement apporter de précisions sanitaires, d'autres officiels syriens ont par ailleurs admis que la soi-disante épidémie serait plutôt due à un épuisement sévère, aggravé par la canicule qui frappe toute la région, et divers maux comme la dysenterie, pouvant être aussi causés par la déshydratation et la dénutrition.

« Il y a beaucoup de suppositions concernant les raisons de ces maladies, certains accusent les vaccins donnés aux nouveaux soldats, qui sont peut-être défectueux. D'autres attribuent la cause au climat qui aurait provoqué une vague d'insolations et de fièvres.

D'autres parlent aussi de contamination par l'eau et la nourriture, tout cela ne concernant que les militaires, et non des civils » a ainsi déclaré le porte-parole de

l'association Kurdistan occidental, ajoutant que le diagnostic des médecins est difficile à établir en raison de la pauvreté de leur équipement et des moyens des laboratoires.

Au moins 14 soldats, tous des nouvelles recrues, auraient ainsi perdu la vie, dans les hôpitaux militaires de Harasta et Teshrin.

KURDISTAN D'IRAK : POLÉMIQUE SUR UNE EXPORTATION CLANDESTINE DE PÉTROLE

Un hebdomadaire d'opposition, *Rozname*, a publié le 20 juillet un article accusant les deux partis au pouvoir de toucher des pots-de-vin dans une contrebande de pétrole destinée à l'Iran. Estimant cette accusation sans fondement, le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan, dirigé par le président kurde Massoud Barzani a porté plainte pour « diffamation » contre le journal *Rozname*, en réclamant un milliard de dollars de dommages et intérêts.

L'Observatoire de la liberté de la presse en Irak a fait part de sa « préoccupation » en soulignant que c'est « la somme la plus importante jamais exigée dans l'histoire de la presse en Irak ».

Rozname, fondé en 2007, appartient au chef du parti d'opposition Goran Nauchirwan Moustafa, affirme en effet que « ce trafic rapportait des millions de dollars aux deux partis traditionnels le PDK et l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan ».

Le secrétaire du PDK, Fazel Mirani, a également réclamé l'interdiction de sortie du territoire du journaliste à l'origine de l'article, Sirwan Rachid, ainsi qu'au rédacteur en chef d'une autre revue, *Azad Jalak*.

« Nous avons décidé d'ester en justice et de demander des compensations au journal car il nous accuse de corruption. Il doit apporter les preuves de ce qu'il

avance et s'il n'en a pas c'est notre droit de demander des indemnités », a déclaré un responsable du bureau politique de PDK.

À l'origine de l'affaire, c'est un article du *New York Times* qui a fait part, le 8 juillet d'une possible contrebande de pétrole avec l'Iran, information relayée par l'AFP dont un correspondant signalait sur la route de Bashmakh, 150 camions-citernes attendant de passer la frontière iranienne, en violation de l'embargo.

En réaction à l'article du *New York Times*, le gouvernement kurde a fait une déclaration publique, le 11 juillet, réfutant ces accusations et affirmant que la Région n'exportait pas de pétrole brut mais seulement des produits pétroliers lourds fournis par ses trois raffineries, inutilisables au Kurdistan et dont le stockage peut avoir des conséquences sur l'environnement. L'activité des raffineries kurdes est autorisée par la loi sur les hydrocarbures votée en 2007 par le parlement irakien et que le surplus de ces produits pétroliers.

Le GRK a cependant admis que du pétrole raffiné en dehors du Kurdistan, dans les autres régions irakiennes, pouvait être exporté clandestinement via ses propres frontières et a promis une série de mesures afin d'y mettre un terme.

Déjà mis en cause par la presse

d'opposition dans des affaires de corruption, le ministre des Ressources naturelles du Kurdistan, Ashti Hawrami, dans une interview accordée au journal *Rudaw*, s'explique longuement sur cette affaire. Ainsi, il nie avoir été en désaccord avec le Premier ministre Barham Salih sur cette question et avoir organisé clandestinement des ventes de pétrole à l'Iran. Selon le ministre, ces ventes se situent dans un cadre légal, celui de la Constitution, et ont été approuvées par le président Barzani. Les accusations du *New York Times* seraient à mettre en rapport avec le conflit qui oppose Bagdad et Erbil depuis le début, sur la gestion et l'exploitation des ressources pétrolières kurdes et que les affirmations du parti Gorran, notamment celles du député Mala Nuri, membre du parti Gorran, sont sans fondement.

« Le pétrole brut du Kurdistan n'est pas exporté. Parfois les gens confondent pétrole brut et produits pétroliers. Donc, si il [Mala Nuri] parle de pétrole brut, il se trompe. »

Quant aux revenus tirés de la vente des produits pétroliers, le ministre kurde affirme qu'ils sont reversés sur un compte du ministère des Finances, compte bloqué en attendant que le conflit avec Bagdad soit résolu. Il affirme également que les ventes vers l'Iran se sont faites légalement et que le gouvernement central en était informé, comme l'exige la loi sur le pétrole, ce que nie Hussein

Sharistani Jihad, le ministre irakien du Pétrole, connu pour ses relations très conflictuelles avec la Région kurde, via son porte-parole Assem Jihad.

Ce dernier a même menacé de soustraire du budget alloué à la Région du Kurdistan les revenus que le GRK tirerait de ces ventes.

Interrogé sur cette possible rétorsion, Ashti Hawrami a déclaré laconiquement : « Nous avons notre propre gouvernement et notre propre parlement et nous prenons nos propres décisions. »

Abdullah Mullah Nuri, député du parti Gorran ne se dit pas surpris

que cette affaire envenime davantage les relations entre le gouvernement fédéral et le Kurdistan, avant d'ajouter qu'il croyait que ces allégations de contrebande étaient largement véridiques :

« Il y a toujours eu des tensions entre le gouvernement central et le Kurdistan au sujet du pétrole. Dès lors que l'information d'un trafic est révélée, elle devient un élément du conflit. Les relations entre Erbil et Bagdad deviendront plus compliquées et tous les politiciens vont vouloir user de cet atout en leur faveur. Même les USA pourraient se servir de ce problème pour faire pression sur les Kurdes. »

Des experts politiques estiment que le prochain gouvernement – dont la formation est encore incertaine – pourrait profiter de cette affaire pour réformer l'actuelle loi sur le Pétrole et réguler la distribution des revenus tirés des ressources naturelles dans tout l'Irak, Kurdistan compris. Cependant, les résultats des dernières législatives ayant amené les deux principales coalitions sunnites et chiites arabes au coude à coude, un accord peine à être trouvé pour former un gouvernement de coalition viable, et les Kurdes toutes tendances comprises disposant de 63 sièges au Parlement ont un rôle clef à jouer dans les négociations pour la formation d'un futur gouvernement.

CULTURE :

SEWAKAY KHOM OU LE RENOUVEAU DU THÉÂTRE KURDE

Une représentation théâtrale de la pièce intitulée « Sewakay Khom » (Ma Pomme) a rencontré un grand succès à Erbil ce mois-ci. Écrite par l'artiste Karokh Ibrahim Hakim, elle traite des traumatismes de la guerre et a suscité, lors de la première, le 29 juillet, des réactions très élogieuses de la presse et du public kurdes.

Hema, une jeune femme kurde mariée à un riche vieillard, est amenée, en raison des malheurs de son union et des blessures de la guerre, à tuer son enfant.

La troupe théâtrale « Jeunesse » qui chaque année, au mois de juillet, produit un nouveau spectacle, prouve, selon Hakim, que le théâtre au Kurdistan est loin d'être sinistré et en crise, comme on l'entend très souvent, en le comparant à « l'âge d'or » du théâtre kurde, entre les années 1970 et 1980. Selon lui, le succès des représentations dépend surtout de leur qualité.

« Nos spectacles ont toujours attiré

beaucoup de monde. C'est le témoignage que notre réussite à faire passer nos messages » a expliqué le metteur en scène au journal Aknews.

De fait, les critiques ayant assisté aux représentations sont d'un avis assez unanime sur le fait que Sewakay Khom montre que les auteurs et metteurs en scène au Kurdistan ont la capacité de produire de très bons spectacles, même si ce n'est pas le cas le plus fréquent.

Ainsi, le critique de théâtre Haydar Abdurrahman, juge que cette pièce est « une des rares pièces « artistiques » de notre époque, parce qu'actuellement, nous sommes en plein dans la crise du théâtre et de telles représentations sont pour nous une bouffée d'air. Que ce soit la mise en scène, la distribution et l'écriture, tout cela contribue à une œuvre théâtrale fantastique. » Haydar Abdurrahman s'est dit particulièrement impressionné par le jeu des jeunes acteurs, qu'il juge « extraordinaire » et le talent du

metteur en scène à faire s'épanouir leur capacité d'initiative.

Autre avis de professionnel, celui du directeur de la troupe « Paix » du théâtre de Kirkouk, Sirwan Belana commente également la prestation :

« La pièce vaut vraiment la peine d'être vue, car peu d'œuvres théâtrales ont pu atteindre un si haut niveau en termes de mise en scène et de texte. »

Selon lui, le message principal de Sewakay Khom est que les femmes ne doivent compter que sur elles-mêmes pour s'émanciper.

Anwar Shekhani, un acteur kurde émérite, s'est dit aussi très impressionné par ce travail, en soulignant le parti pris original du metteur en scène :

« Traditionnellement, les intrigues ont un début, une apogée et un dénouement. Mais dans cette pièce, le metteur en scène a fait exactement l'inverse. »

AFP

TURQUIE: 17 TUÉS DANS DES COMBATS ENTRE L'ARMÉE ET LES REBELLES KURDES (ARMÉE)

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 1 juil 2010 (AFP)

DEUX SOLDATS TURCS, trois membres des forces paramilitaires, et 12 rebelles kurdes ont été tués tard mercredi lors de violents combats dans le sud-est de la Turquie, a annoncé jeudi l'état-major turc.

Un précédent bilan fourni par des sources locales et l'agence de presse Anatolie faisait état de 15 tués, dont 11 rebelles.

Un premier accrochage est survenu entre une unité de militaires appartenant à un avant-poste et un groupe de rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans une zone rurale de la province de Siirt, près de la localité de Pervani, au cours duquel deux soldats ont péri et deux autres blessés, précise un communiqué en ligne.

Dans un autre incident simultané survenu non-loin, trois "gardiens de village" --une milice kurde payée par Ankara pour soutenir l'armée dans la sécurisation du sud-est anatolien, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes-- ont été abattus par des rebelles, souligne le document .

L'armée a dépêché des hélicoptères de combat et des drones pour pourchasser les rebelles ayant commis ces attaques et 12 d'entre-eux ont été abattus, selon le texte qui ajoute que des opérations se poursuivent dans la région pour intercepter d'autres rebelles.

Le PKK multiplie ses attaques contre l'armée turque depuis plusieurs semaines. Des accrochages quasi-quotidiens sont signalés dans l'est et le sud-est anatolien, théâtre d'opérations du PKK.

Le PKK, qui est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara et de nombreux pays, lutte pour l'autonomie du sud-est anatolien. Le conflit, qui dure depuis 1984, a fait au moins 45.000 morts, dont la grande majorité des rebelles, selon l'armée.

AFP

TURQUIE: RECRUESCENCE DU CONFLIT KURDE, ANKARA INTERPELLE SON ALLIÉ AMÉRICAIN

ANKARA, 1 juillet 2010 (AFP)

LA RECRUESCENCE des affrontements entre l'armée turque et les rebelles kurdes rappelle que ce conflit reste le problème majeur de la Turquie, qui réclame davantage d'aide de son allié américain, à un moment où les relations bilatérales sont crispées.

Deux soldats turcs, trois membres des forces paramilitaires, et 12 rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ont été tués mercredi lors de combats dans le sud-est de la Turquie, a annoncé jeudi l'état-major turc.

Attentats à la bombe à Istanbul, attaques contre des avant-postes à la frontière irakienne suivies d'une riposte de l'armée contre les rebelles en Turquie et dans le nord de l'Irak: le pouvoir turc est de nouveau confronté aux menaces du PKK qui a annoncé qu'il porterait le conflit jusque dans les grandes villes.

L'"ouverture démocratique", initiative lancée l'an dernier par le gouvernement islamo-conservateur pour octroyer plus de droits aux Kurdes, avait pourtant semblé amorcer un processus de règlement d'un conflit qui a fait 45.000 morts, depuis 1984.

L'interdiction du principal parti pro-kurde et une offensive judiciaire contre les milieux kurdes ont toutefois sonné le glas du projet.

Depuis juin, 50 personnes ont été tuées dans les violences, selon un décompte de l'AFP.

Selon les autorités, la plupart des attaques du PKK sont organisées par son commandement militaire réfugié dans la montagne irakienne, régulièrement pilonnée par l'aviation turque.

Dans ce domaine, Ankara bénéficie des renseignements fournis par les Etats-Unis, son allié de l'Otan, sur les bases arrière et déplacements du PKK.

Mais "la Turquie ne dispose pas suffisamment d'aide de la part des Etats-Unis dans sa lutte contre le PKK", estime Sinan Ogan, directeur du centre de recherche Turksam.

Il note aussi que la diplomatie d'Ankara, tournée récemment vers ses

voisins de l'est - Syrie ou Iran - dérange Washington, sans aller jusqu'à établir un lien de cause à effet entre les deux phénomènes.

La crise de la flottille humanitaire vers Gaza, qui a amené les relations turco-israéliennes au bord de la rupture, et le refus turc de voter des sanctions contre l'Iran à l'Onu, ont crispé les rapports bilatéraux.

Le sous-secrétaire d'Etat américain adjoint Philip Gordon a récemment enjoint Ankara de faire la preuve de sa loyauté envers Washington.

Le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a nié mercredi toute tension avec Washington, affirmant que "parfois, les alliés ont des vues différentes sur certaines choses". Mais, a-t-il poursuivi: "Cela ne veut pas dire qu'il y a un problème".

Le même jour cependant, son vice-Premier ministre, Cemil Çiçek, rappelait que la Turquie attendait davantage des Américains, dans la lutte contre le PKK.

"Nous voulons une coopération plus déterminée, au-delà du mécanisme tripartite (Turquie-USA-Irak)" mis en place en 2007 contre les rebelles, a-t-il affirmé.

Il a aussi réclamé que les Etats-Unis livrent les dirigeants du PKK réfugiés dans le nord de l'Irak, et qu'ils incitent l'administration kurde de cette zone à couper tous les moyens logistiques du mouvement.

M. Erdogan s'est entretenu de cette question avec le président américain Barack Obama, le week-end dernier à Toronto (Canada).

Il s'est plaint du "timing" des informations fournies à l'armée turque par les drones américains, réclamant qu'elles viennent en "temps réel", pour que les jets turcs puissent frapper avec acuité leurs cibles, affirme le journal Radikal.

"C'est simple, nous demandons aux Américains de nous fournir plus d'informations sur le PKK en Irak et il en ont tous les moyens", fait remarquer un diplomate turc à l'AFP, sous couvert d'anonymat.

AFP

L'AVIATION TURQUE BOMBARDE LE PKK EN IRAK, ÖCALAN APPELLE À UNE TRÊVE

ANKARA, 2 juillet 2010 (AFP)

L'AVIATION TURQUE a de nouveau pilonné les repaires du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) en Irak, tandis que le chef du mouvement, Abdullah Öcalan, a, de sa prison, appelé les rebelles et Ankara à une trêve, après plusieurs semaines de combats quotidiens.

L'état-major turc a fait état vendredi d'un raid de ses chasseurs dans la nuit contre des caches du PKK situées "sur la zone de Khakurk et de Qandil", dans la région autonome kurde du nord de l'Irak.

Le PKK possède des bases dans cette région, d'où il lance des attaques en territoire turc.

Un porte-parole du PKK en Irak, Ahmed Denis, a confirmé le raid qui, selon lui, n'a pas fait de victime.

Depuis le début du mois de juin, il ne se passe pas un jour sans que des accrochages ne soient signalés entre les rebelles et l'armée. Le PKK a aussi mis à exécution la semaine dernière sa menace de s'en prendre aux grandes villes, tuant six personnes dans un attentat à la bombe à Istanbul.

Une cinquantaine de personnes ont été tuées depuis début juin dans les violences liées à la rébellion du PKK.

Cinq membres des forces de sécurité et 12 rebelles ont été tués mercredi lors de combats dans le sud-est kurde du pays.

De sa prison turque où il purge depuis 1999 une peine de prison à vie, le chef du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, a exhorté Ankara et son mouvement à réfléchir à une trêve, a rapporté vendredi l'agence pro-kurde Firat.

"Les deux parties peuvent avancer vers un processus de non-violence", a indiqué le leader kurde par le biais de ses avocats.

Si, dit-il, "une telle volonté se manifeste, (...) ils (les rebelles) pourraient y répondre".

Le leader kurde a aussi réclamé une nouvelle fois une reconnaissance explicite des droits des Kurdes dans la Constitution.

Depuis 2007, l'armée turque pilonne régulièrement les positions du PKK en Irak et y a mené une série d'incursions terrestres. Selon les estimations, environ 2.000 rebelles sont retranchés dans le nord de l'Irak.

La Turquie demande à Washington, son allié de l'Otan, qui lui fournit des renseignements sur les déplacements des rebelles en Irak, d'en faire davantage pour soutenir sa lutte contre le PKK.

Lors d'une récente rencontre au Canada, le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a demandé au président américain Barack Obama de faire pression sur les dirigeants kurdes d'Irak afin de mettre le PKK hors d'état de nuire.

La recrudescence des violences a été précédée d'une période d'accalmie pendant laquelle le gouvernement islamo-conservateur turc a proposé une initiative en faveur des droits des kurdes (près de 15 millions de personnes, sur 73 millions de Turcs).

Mais l'initiative a fait long feu avec la fermeture par la justice du principal parti pro-kurde et des arrestations massives.

Les combats ont repris de plus belle et des voix s'élèvent désormais en Turquie appelant l'armée à envahir le nord de l'Irak, faisant valoir que les Américains n'ont pas mis fin aux activités du PKK, qu'ils considèrent pourtant comme un mouvement terroriste.

"A l'instar des Américains en Afghanistan (...), la Turquie doit immédiatement envahir l'Irak", a souligné l'analyste Sedat Laçiner dans le journal Hürriyet Daily News.

Ce spécialiste en terrorisme a fait remarquer que depuis l'occupation américaine de l'Irak, en 2003, "pas un seul terroriste du PKK n'a été tué ou capturé par nos amis Américains".

Le PKK a pris les armes en 1984 pour obtenir l'indépendance du sud-est anatolien. Il revendique aujourd'hui l'autonomie de la région. Le conflit a fait 45.000 morts, selon des chiffres officiels.

AFP

TURQUIE / OLÉODUC: LES REBELLES KURDES SERAIENT À L'ORIGINE D'UNE EXPLOSION

ANKARA, 4 juillet 2010 (AFP)

LES AUTORITÉS turques soupçonnent les rebelles kurdes d'être à l'origine d'une explosion qui a endommagé dans le sud-est de la Turquie un oléoduc transportant du pétrole d'Irak vers le port turc de Ceyhan, a-t-on appris dimanche auprès des services de sécurité locaux.

L'explosion s'est produite samedi sur une section de l'oléoduc proche de la ville de Midyat, dans la province de Mardin, selon cette source. L'incendie a été maîtrisé tôt dimanche.

Les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) sont tenus pour responsables de cet attentat, et des opérations de ratissage sont en cours, a précisé cette source.

Le PKK n'avait pas revendiqué ce sabotage, dimanche dans la matinée.

Cet oléoduc a déjà été plusieurs fois la cible des insurgés kurdes actifs dans la région.

L'oléoduc, long de 970 km, relie Kirkouk, zone pétrolière du nord de l'Irak, au port de Ceyhan, sur la côte méditerranéenne de la Turquie, d'où le brut est embarqué sur des pétroliers en direction des marchés mondiaux.

Inauguré en 1976, l'oléoduc a transporté l'an dernier 167,6 millions de barils de brut, selon les chiffres turcs.

Les rebelles du PKK, qui mènent depuis 26 ans des actions armées pour obte-

nir l'autonomie du sud-est de la Turquie à majorité kurde, ont commis au cours des dernières années plusieurs attentats contre l'oléoduc Kirkouk-Ceyhan.

Selon la même source sécuritaire, des rebelles du PKK ont également attaqué un poste de l'armée à Beytussebap, une ville de la province voisine de Sirnak, samedi soir tard, et deux rebelles ont été tués dans les combats.

Deux civils et deux gardiens de village, des supplétifs de l'armée régulière recrutés localement dans la communauté kurde, ont été blessés, selon cette source.

Des opérations de sécurisation étaient en cours dimanche dans la région.

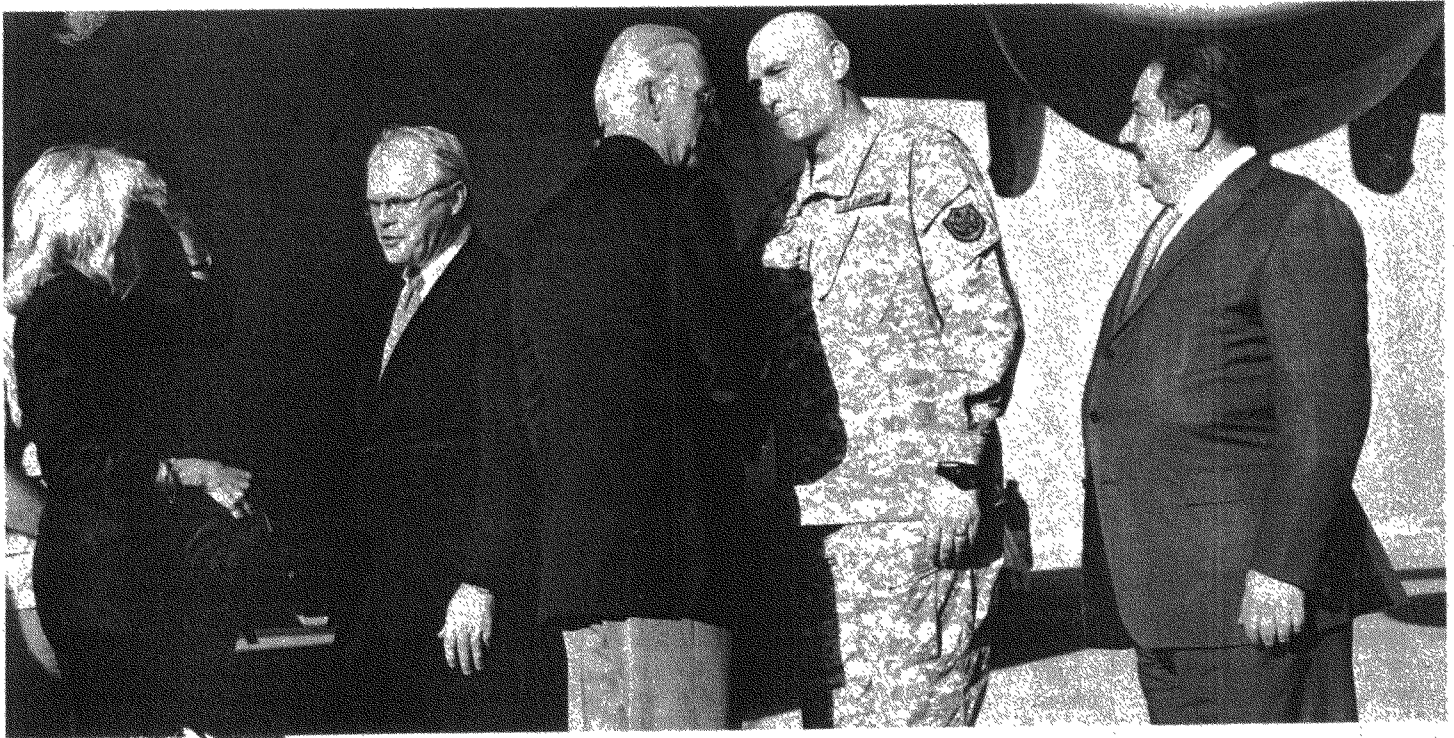
Les militants du PKK ont, ces dernières semaines, multiplié les attaques et attentats meurtriers en Turquie, après l'annonce en mai, par leur leader emprisonné Abdullah Öcalan, qu'il abandonnait ses efforts pour dialoguer avec le gouvernement.



Le Monde
Mardi 6 juillet 2010

A Bagdad, Joe Biden exhorte les Irakiens à former enfin un gouvernement

Quatre mois après les élections législatives, la rivalité entre Iyad Allaoui et Nouri Al-Maliki, au coude à coude lors du scrutin, bloque la désignation d'un premier ministre en Irak



Le vice-président américain Joe Biden (au centre), à Bagdad, samedi 3 juillet, entouré de Christopher Hill, ambassadeur américain en Irak, du général Ray Odierno, et de Hoshyar Zebari, ministre des affaires étrangères irakien. HADI MIZBAN/AP

Préoccupée par l'impasse politique dans laquelle s'enferme l'Irak depuis les élections de mars, l'administration Obama – qui s'apprête à retirer du pays des forces combattantes (25 000 hommes) d'ici au 31 août – a dépêché, samedi 3 juillet, à Bagdad, Joe Biden pour la cinquième fois depuis 2009. Le vice-président a exhorté les politiciens locaux à « reléguer leurs intérêts personnels au second plan » et à accélérer « ensemble » la formation d'un nouveau gouvernement.

M. Biden, qui a passé 48 heures dans une base près de la capitale irakienne pour célébrer la fête de l'indépendance américaine, a lancé, dimanche 4 juillet, un appel à l'œcuménisme politique, estimant qu'à son « humble avis » les quatre grands partis arrivés en tête aux élections du 7 mars « devraient tous jouer un rôle important dans le nouveau gouvernement afin que celui-ci fonctionne ».

Pour l'heure, le premier ministre sortant, Nouri Al-Maliki, et son rival Iyad Allaoui, qui ne se sont rencontrés que deux fois depuis le 7 mars sans parvenir à un accord, entendent, l'un et l'autre, être chef du prochain gouvernement. M. Allaoui et son Bloc irakien ont remporté les élections avec 91 sièges (aux trois quarts sunnites).

Mais M. Maliki et son mouvement Alliance pour un Etat de droit (aux trois quarts chiite) est parvenu ces derniers mois à unir ses 89 élus aux 70 de l'Alliance nationale (à 95% chiite), ce qui lui donne un avantage politique. Problème, les deux partis qui forment l'Alliance nationale, le Conseil suprême islamique, formé en Iran en 1982 (30 élus), et le Mouvement sadriste du prêcheur radical anti-américain Moqtada Al-Sadr (40 élus), rechignent à reconduire M. Maliki au poste de premier ministre.

Les tractations, avec partage des influences et des marabouts,

se poursuivent. Le nouveau Parlement, qui s'est assemblé le 14 juin, doit en théorie, selon la Constitution, se réunir à nouveau le 14 juillet et désigner un premier ministre et un président de la République. Le chef de l'Etat, le Kurde Jalal Talabani, souhaite être reconduit et l'Alliance kurde qui le soutient devrait au final se rallier au bloc qui assurera sa réélection.

« Pas de favori »

Joe Biden a rencontré les deux têtes de liste rivales, et a fait savoir que Washington n'avait « pas de favori », bien que M. Allaoui ait été nommé chef intérimaire du « Conseil de gouvernement » mis en place par les Américains peu après leur invasion d'avril 2003.

De son exil iranien, où il poursuit depuis près de trois ans des études religieuses supérieures, le jeune Al-Sadr (36 ans) a appelé ses partisans à manifester dimanche contre « l'ingérence de l'occupant ».

Beaucoup d'autres responsables, sunnites et chiites, estiment au contraire que l'intervention américaine est nécessaire pour débloquer la situation. Certains, membres de la minorité arabe sunnite surtout, s'inquiètent plus ou moins ouvertement de voir les Etats-Unis « obsédés par une seule chose, leur départ d'Irak ». Il y avait 165 000 soldats américains dans le pays à l'été 2007, 112 000 début 2010, 75 000 aujourd'hui. D'ici au 31 août, conformément aux accords conclus, il n'en restera plus que 50 000 jusqu'à la fin 2011, date de leur départ à tous.

Al-Qaïda, à qui est imputée la majorité des attentats encore perpétrés en Irak, a subi de très sérieux revers. Mais les attaques sporadiques et les assassinats ciblés se poursuivent. Trois attentats dans trois villes différentes se sont produits dimanche au moment où M. Biden s'adressait à ses soldats. ■

Patrice Claude

U.S. abandons or cuts back Iraqi projects

FALLUJA, IRAQ

Others being finished hastily as troop removal creates a security risk

BY TIMOTHY WILLIAMS

After two devastating battles between U.S. forces and Sunni insurgents in 2004, this city needed almost everything — new roads, clean water, electricity, health care.

The U.S. reconstruction authorities decided, however, that the first big rebuilding project to win hearts and minds would be a citywide sewage treatment system.

Now, after more than six years of work, \$104 million spent, and without having connected a single house, U.S. reconstruction officials have decided to leave the troubled system only partly finished, infuriating many city residents.

The plant is just one of many projects that the United States has decided to scale back on — or in some cases abandon — as U.S. troops who provide security for reconstruction sites prepare to leave in large numbers.

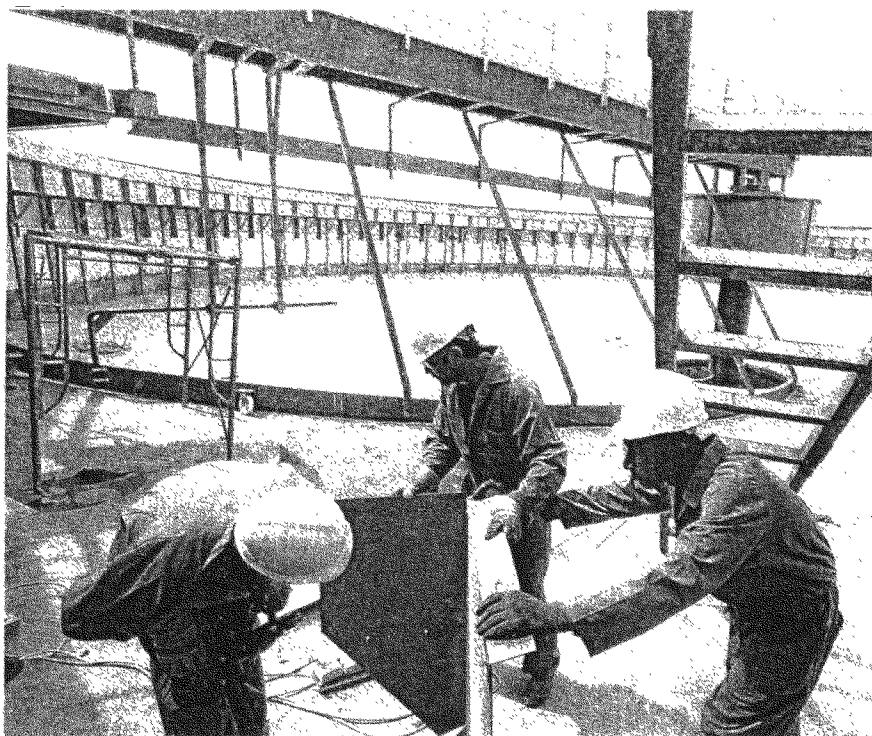
Even some of the projects that will be completed are being finished with such haste, Iraqi officials say, that engineering standards have deteriorated precipitously, putting workers in danger and leaving some of the work at risk of collapse.

U.S. officials give many reasons for their decisions to scale back or drop some projects before more troops leave, including that they have discovered in some cases that the facilities diverged from Iraq's most pressing needs, or that the initial work — overseen by U.S. contractors and performed by Iraqi workers — was so flawed that problems would take too long to fix.

Reconstruction officials point out that they have completed the vast majority of the \$53 billion in projects they planned throughout Iraq, from bridges to honeybee farms.

And the officials, along with the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, say they are aware of only isolated concerns about the quality of reconstruction work now under way in the country, or about projects being left undone.

"I am not aware of the Iraqis' having any sort of hard feelings that we will not finish current projects and award projects we said we would," Col. Dionysios



Construction workers on a water treatment plant, part of a sewer system for Falluja, Iraq. Originally planned for the whole city, the system will serve only one-sixth of the population.

Anninos, head of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers office in Iraq, wrote in an e-mail message. "We will finish strong!"

But some Iraqis have compared the current hurried reconstruction effort to the haphazard American withdrawal from Vietnam in 1975. In Diyala Province, northeast of Baghdad, Iraqi officials said they found that construction standards had slipped so drastically that they ordered an immediate halt to all U.S.-financed projects, even though U.S. inspectors said the work was adequate.

The Americans had told the local authorities that they were speeding up projects because a nearby U.S. Army base was scheduled to close this summer.

Shaymaa Mohammad Ameen, who works with reconstruction officials as a liaison for the Diyala Provincial Council, said U.S. officials had frequently threatened to leave when Iraqis questioned engineering standards and brought up other safety issues.

"They constantly tell us that if we do not approve, they can always move the allocated funds to projects in other provinces," she said.

In Baghdad and Salahuddin Provinces, local officials say Americans have simply walked away from partly completed police stations, schools, government build-

ings and water projects during the past several months without explanation.

Here in Falluja, in Anbar Province, the sewage treatment system has left some of the city's busiest streets lined with open trenches for more than three years and engendered widespread resentment. The news that it will be left unfinished has provoked anger.

"I told the Americans if they want to leave a good impression on Falluja and to erase the bad feelings about the United States from the war, that they should finish this project completely and properly," said Hamed Hashim, president of the Falluja City Council.

Reconstruction officials say that the project has been hindered by myriad problems, including the area's continuing violence.

The project was conceived to treat waste for all of Falluja's 200,000 residents and to build in additional capacity for the city to grow by 50 percent. But the new, diminished system will serve about one-sixth of Falluja's population, according to U.S. and Iraqi officials.

Duraid Adnan contributed reporting from Baghdad, and Iraqi employees of The New York Times from Anbar, Diyala and Babil provinces.

In Iraqi Kurdistan, oil pours into a sanctions gap

PENJWIN, IRAQ

Every day, over 1,000 tanker trucks enter Iran, undermining U.S. policy

BY SAM DAGHER

Even as the United States imposes new sanctions against Iran, one of the biggest gaps in the American strategy is on full display here in Iraq, where hundreds of millions of dollars in crude oil and refined products are smuggled over the scenic mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan every year.

Every day, without formal authorization from Baghdad, more than a thousand tanker trucks snake through this town on Iraq's border with Iran, not only undercutting recent U.S. sanctions but also worsening tensions with the Iraqi government over how to divide oil profit.

The scale and organization of the trade has raised concerns among American officials that proceeds could be flowing to corrupt Iraqi politicians and benefiting the Iranian regime. The United States recently approved new unilateral sanctions against Tehran imposing penalties on foreign entities that sell refined petroleum products to Iran, which sorely lacks refining capacity despite being a major oil producer.

A senior Kurdish government official said the benefits from a business he described as "elaborate" and "huge" went to the region's two governing parties and affiliated companies, and that officials and politicians in Baghdad were involved as well.

Smuggling of oil and other goods and commodities along Iraq's porous borders thrived in the 1990s, when Iraq was under international sanctions. But the semi-official nature of the current trade underscores how business interests have trumped the messy politics of Iraq and the region. The stream of tankers into Iran was uninterrupted by an Iranian military campaign last month against Iranian Kurdish separatists operating at the border.

Hundreds of tankers with a capacity of at least 226 barrels each of crude oil and refined products enter Iran every day from Penjwin and two other border posts in Iraqi Kurdistan, Kurdish officials say. The crude oil is trucked all the way down to the Gulf ports of Bandar Bushehr, Bandar Imam Khomeini and Bandar Abbas, where it is emptied into reservoirs or loaded onto ships, accord-



A truck driver praying in Penjwin, in Iraqi Kurdistan, beside fuel tankers headed into Iran. Iran sorely lacks the ability to refine its own oil.

ing to drivers. Much of the refined product is used in Iran.

The trade is supported by an estimated 70 mini-refineries, known in the industry as topping plants. They are dotted around the Kurdistan region and Kurdish-controlled areas in nearby Kirkuk and Nineveh Province. Many of them are unlicensed.

Abdul-Karim al-Luaibi, one of Iraq's deputy oil ministers, said he was unaware of oil exports to Iran from the Kurdistan region and said that all the mini-refineries were illegal.

"They bear responsibility for this," said Mr. Luaibi, referring to Kurdish authorities.

In a rare interview, the Kurdistan region's oil minister, Ashti Hawrami, said only fuel oil and byproducts like naphtha were being sent to Iran after processing at two privately owned refineries. He said revenue from the Iran business was being used to help foreign oil contractors operating in the Kurdistan region recoup part of their costs stemming from a dispute with Baghdad that has halted exports of crude by pipeline to Turkey since October.

Mr. Hawrami added that any extra revenue that accrued to the region from this business was being kept out of the Kurdistan government's finances and deposited in a separate bank account to be reconciled with Baghdad in the fu-

The scale of the trade has raised concerns that proceeds could be flowing to corrupt Iraqi politicians.

ture, once the two sides resolved their differences.

But he also disclosed that it was not just refined products from the Kurdish region that were finding their way into Iran. Crude oil and refined products from Kirkuk and the enormous Baiji refinery to the south were also being smuggled into the region, and some were crossing the Iranian border. He said his ministry had no control over this.

"A truck is a truck," said Mr. Hawrami, adding that it was easy to manufacture a license and "say this is fuel oil and not crude oil and they find their way. Unfortunately the problem is much broader than little Kurdistan."

The disclosures about the oil trade with Iran come at a delicate time for the Kurdish region. In May, the central government approved a tentative deal to resume crude oil exports of about 100,000 barrels a day to Turkey through Iraq's pipeline network. Mr. Hawrami said exports would resume only after working out a mechanism to pay the oil companies' production costs.

He said the companies — DNO of Norway and a Chinese-Turkish venture called Ttopco — were owed about \$1 billion in back costs. The two fields they operate can produce up to 200,000 barrels a day, and the region's production will reach one million barrels a day in three to four years when at least six other fields come online, Mr. Hawrami said.

Analysts say that the Kurdish region's oil trade with Iran provides a revenue source that it does not have to share with Baghdad, at least for now, diminishing its reliance on exports to Turkey. It also grants them leverage in resolving oil and internal border disputes with Baghdad.

"They can negotiate from a position of strength," says Ruba Husari, an oil specialist and founder of Iraqoilforum.com. "They are running their own oil kingdom."

But questions about the legitimacy of

the region's oil activities are increasingly coming from within.

"Kurdistan is like an island with no rule of law when it comes to oil," says Abdulla Malla-Nuri, a member of the region's parliament from the Gorran opposition movement, which broke away from one of the governing parties last year and has accused them of rampant corruption.

Mr. Malla-Nuri wants revenue from the Iran trade to flow into the region's budget after deducting what is owed to the rest of Iraq — 83 percent, according to current arrangements.

The region's prime minister, Barham Salih, is also reportedly pushing for this but is being met with fierce resistance, even from his own party, which is headed by Iraq's president, Jalal Talabani.

Mr. Salih's task is further complicated by an acrimonious relationship with the regional oil minister, Mr. Hawrami, who

is backed by the region's president, Massoud Barzani, and his powerful nephew and former regional prime minister, Nechirvan Barzani. Mr. Talabani's party has had a so-called strategic agreement with Mr. Barzani's party since 2005, allowing them to divide the region's political, economic and military power. This applies to the oil trade with Iran as well, according to a top Kurdish official who requested anonymity because he belonged to one of the governing parties. The lion's share of the business is going to companies like Iraq Oil, Qaiwan and others affiliated to party insiders, according to the official.

"It is mafiosos in the true sense of the word," he said.

Herald INTERNATIONAL Tribune JULY 5, 2010

Biden calls for end of Iraqi political impasse

BAGHDAD

Vice president stresses U.S. support in meetings with Maliki and Allawi

FROM NEWS REPORTS

Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. on Sunday met Iraqi leaders who are locked in an impasse four months after an inconclusive vote, and expressed hope that they would not delay much longer in forming a government, Iraqi officials said.

In talks with Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki and the top vote winner in the March 7 election, a former prime minister, Iyad Allawi, Mr. Biden stressed U.S. support for democracy in Iraq, Mr. Allawi said.

Mr. Biden and other American officials said Washington had a long-term commitment to the country despite a plan to end combat operations in August and withdraw completely next year.

Mr. Allawi turned up slightly late for a meeting with Mr. Biden after being delayed by what his aides said were the vice president's security measures.

"The talks were along the lines of supporting democracy in Iraq and the results of the election," he said.

Discussions on a coalition and picking

a prime minister have made little headway since the election, raising concerns for stability as insurgents try to exploit the political vacuum through attacks to reignite all-out sectarian war.

The continuing violence has raised questions about the U.S. military's plans to cut its numbers to 50,000 by Sept. 1 from 80,000 now, and to end combat operations as it devotes its efforts to training and assisting Iraqi police and troops.

Militants attacked government offices and Iraqi officials across the country Sunday, killing four people and raising fears that extremists are exploiting the country's political deadlock to destabilize Iraq.

A female suicide bomber killed four people and wounded 23 in an attack on a government building in Ramadi, the capital of Anbar Province, once the heartland of the Sunni Islamist insurgency that broke out after the 2003 U.S. invasion. Councilman Aefan Sadoun said the attacker detonated explosives strapped to her body in the reception room of the provincial government headquarters.

In Mosul, Iraq's third-largest city and a northern stronghold of Al Qaeda, the police shot a suicide bomber near the provincial government's headquarters, though the bomber still managed to detonate his explosive belt, a U.S. military official with knowledge of the incident said. The Iraqi police said two officers were wounded in the blast.

The targeting of government offices is a hallmark of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, which may be looking to use Mr. Biden's visit and the U.S. Independence Day holiday as a reminder of Iraq's continuing instability.

Also Sunday, a prominent Sunni official was wounded in what the police said was an assassination attempt in Kirkuk.

The official, Mulla Mustafa Hussein, the head the Sunni Endowment in the city, was leaving his office when an explosives-loaded car exploded next to his convoy, Brig. Gen. Sarhad Qadir said.

Mr. Biden and other U.S. officials said they did not intend to unduly pressure Iraqi politicians to pick up the pace of coalition talks, and have played down any concerns they have.

"Not long ago Iraq was a country on the brink of civil war," the vice president told American troops earlier at the main U.S. military base near Baghdad's international airport. "This is my 15th, 16th, 17th trip here, and every time I come it gets better."

"The thing I love so much about the day is the irony," Mr. Biden told the soldiers during an Independence Day naturalization ceremony in one of Saddam Hussein's palaces. "Here we are in the hunting lodge of a dictator who subjugated a people, who in fact stood for everything that we don't stand for, and we are in the middle of this marble palace making a lie of everything that he stood for. I find it delicious."

A cross-sectarian bloc headed by Mr. Allawi took a two-seat lead in the March election on strong backing from Sunnis who view Mr. Allawi, despite his Shiite background, as a secular and strong leader who would counter Iranian influence.

A union between the Shiite blocs, however, including Mr. Maliki's State of Law, is expected to beat Mr. Allawi's Iraqiya in the struggle to gain a governing majority.

Sunnis may react angrily if Mr. Allawi fails to become prime minister, reinvigorating a wounded but still lethal insurgency. (REUTERS, AP)

Turquie: 3 soldats, 12 rebelles tués dans des combats entre l'armée et les rebelles kurdes

DIYARBAKIR , (AFP) - Trois soldats turcs et douze rebelles kurdes ont été tués dans la nuit de lundi à mardi lors de combats dans le sud-est de la Turquie, a annoncé l'armée.

Un précédent bilan faisait état de dix rebelles abattus.

Un groupe de rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) a attaqué un avant-poste militaire dans une zone rurale de Semdinli, non loin des frontières avec l'Irak et l'Iran, indique l'armée dans un communiqué diffusé sur son site internet.

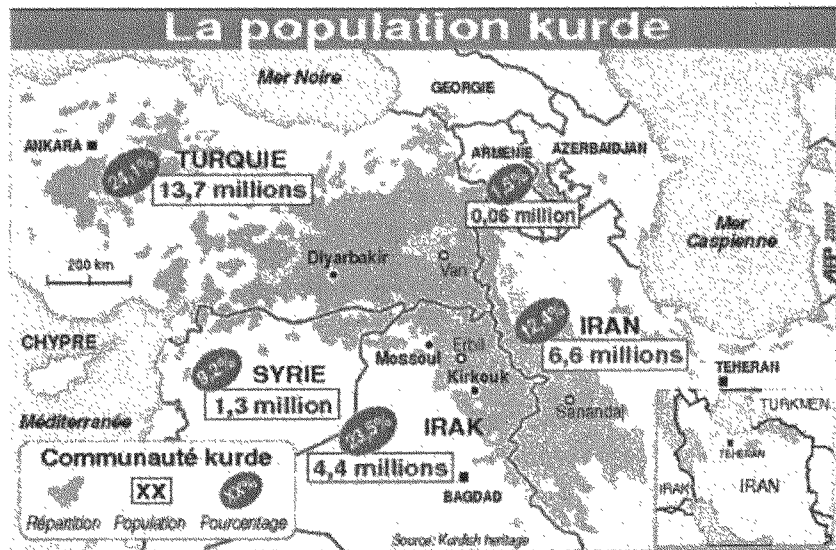
Les soldats ont riposté aux tirs des rebelles et les heurts ont fait 14 morts, trois soldats et 11 rebelles, précise le document.

Trois soldats ont été blessés.

Dans trois autres incidents survenus tard lundi dans l'est et le sud-est anatolien, théâtre d'opérations du PKK, neuf autres soldats ont été blessés et un rebelle abattu, a ajouté l'armée.

Le PKK multiplie ses attaques contre l'armée turque depuis fin mai. Des accrochages quasi-quotidiens sont signalés.

Le PKK, qui est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara et de nombreux pays, lutte pour l'autonomie du sud-est anatolien. Le conflit, qui dure depuis 1984, a fait au moins 45.000 morts, en grande majorité des



© AFP InfographielArchives Francis Nallier

rebelles, selon l'armée.

La Turquie estime à environ 2.000 le nombre de rebelles réfugiés dans le nord de l'Irak d'où ils lancent des attaques contre les forces turques.

L'aviation turque bombarde régulièrement leurs positions.

Dans ce domaine, Ankara bénéficie des renseignements fournis par les Etats-Unis, son allié de l'Otan, sur les bases arrière et déplacements du PKK.

Dans un entretien accordé lundi soir à une chaîne de télévision privée, le chef d'état-major turc, le général Ilker

Basbug, a accusé l'administration kurde autonome de ne pas agir contre le PKK sur son territoire.

"Le nord de l'Irak est un sanctuaire pour le PKK", a-t-il dit, cité par Anatolie, avertissant que la présence des rebelles dans la montagne irakienne pourrait détériorer les relations d'Ankara avec Bagdad mais aussi avec les Etats-Unis qui ont envahi ce pays en 2003.



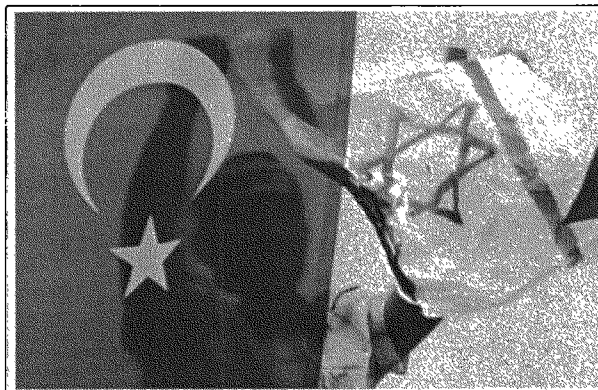
Turquie-Israël: «La diplomatie de dialogue a été carbonisée en quelques mois»

INTERVIEW

Par MARC SEMO

Les propos du ministre turc des affaires étrangères Ahmet Davutoglu menaçant à nouveau «d'une rupture des relations diplomatiques» avec Israël si l'Etat hébreu ne s'excuse pas pour le raid de ses forces contre une flottille humanitaire le 31 mai, ont relancé les interrogations sur la nouvelle politique étrangère d'Ankara.

Le gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan, le leader de l'AKP, parti issu du mouvement islamiste, a-t-il changé les priorités de la politique extérieure



Un manifestant turc brûle un drapeau israélien à Istanbul le 5 juin 2010. (AFP Bulentkilic)

de ce pays pilier du flanc sud-est de l'Otan, qui a commencé les négociations pour son intégration à l'Union Européenne en octobre 2005? La diplomatie d'Ahmet Davutoglu

inquiète Washington comme les capitales européennes mais suscite aussi toujours plus de polémiques au sein même du pays. Spécialiste des questions européennes, l'universitaire turc Cengiz

Aktar répond aux questions de Libération.

Les propos d'Ahmet Davutoglu vous ont-ils surpris?

Ils sont dans la logique de ce que cet ancien professeur de relations internationales et conseiller de Recep Tayyip Erdogan dit et fait depuis son entrée en fonction. Et surtout depuis l'intervention des commandos de marine israéliens sur le Mavi Marmara qui a fait huit morts turcs et un turco-américain. Mais je crois que ces excès de langage qui sont aussi ceux du Premier ministre relèvent plus de l'improvisation, de la maladresse, de l'«ubris» (l'ivresse) d'une popularité croissante dans le monde arabo-musulman que d'une poussée de fièvre idéologique.

Pourquoi cette politique suscite-t-elle des doutes en Turquie, notamment parmi les diplomates et même dans certaines franges du parti au pouvoir?

La grande idée de la politique étrangères lancée par Ahmet Davutoglu est celle du «zéro problème» avec les voisins et il est évident qu'il y a pour la Turquie un énorme rôle à jouer dans la région. Mais pour pouvoir le faire et pour être un médiateur crédible dans une région aussi explosive, il faut être équilibré entre toutes les parties en présence. Y compris, donc, Israël. Et la Turquie est aujourd'hui perçue souvent

comme alignée sur le Hamas et l'Iran. Elle ne peut pas être influente sur la scène internationale et régionale en antagonisant les liens euro-atlantiques qui ont été les piliers de son action diplomatique depuis 1945. La nouvelle politique orientale menée par Ankara ne peut remplacer sa politique traditionnelle tournée vers l'occident. Et d'ailleurs je ne crois pas que ce gouvernement le veuille. Mais ses maladresses aboutissent à ce résultat. La Turquie pouvait être porteuse de la force tranquille de l'Europe dans la région et y exporter la diplomatie de dialogue que l'Union n'arrive pas à mener faute de vision. Tout cela a été carbonisé en quelques mois.

Vous êtes très dur sur le bilan de la politique étrangère du gouvernement Erdogan. Pourquoi?

Il faut regarder les faits et pas s'en tenir seulement aux déclarations d'intention. Les deux seuls résultats concrets obtenus ces deux dernières années dans la zone ont été l'élection du nouveau Premier ministre libanais, où Ankara a agi de concert avec Damas et Paris, et le rôle joué par la Turquie en Irak vis-à-vis des tribus arabes sunnites pour les amener à rejeter Al-Qaeda. Pour le reste, il n'y a que des mots. Le processus de normalisation diplomatique avec l'Arménie lancé il y a bientôt un an, avec la signature des protocoles à Zurich, est aujourd'hui gelé. Le processus d'adhé-

sion à l'Union Européenne est enclavé à cause de l'attitude de nombreuses capitales européennes, mais la véhémence turque sur Gaza ou l'Iran ne fait qu'accroître la méfiance.

Les relations avec Washington ont rarement été aussi mauvaises surtout après le «non» turc au Conseil de sécurité sur les sanctions à l'Iran pour son programme nucléaire alors même que Barack Obama s'était entretenu directement avec Recep Tayyip Erdogan. On peut certes comprendre pourquoi la Turquie y était hostile, notamment en raison des liens économiques et commerciaux avec ce pays. Mais ils ont été très maladroits et leur contre-proposition de compromis avec Téhéran négociée en commun avec le Brésil n'en était pas une. Tout cela n'est pas très étonnant car en réalité la Turquie manque de mémoire et de connaissance sur le Moyen-Orient. Et aujourd'hui la relance du conflit kurde et les menaces des rebelles compliquent encore la donne pour Ankara. Un pays qui se trouve face à un problème domestique aussi sérieux peut-il vraiment faire la leçon à ses voisins et représenter un facteur de stabilité dans son étranger proche? Je crains que pour résoudre ce conflit la Turquie n'ait elle-même besoin d'une médiation internationale.

Un déploiement d'une force de l'ONU en Irak après 2011?

Associated Press

Dans un entretien à l'Associated Press, le général Odierno déclare que le déploiement de casques bleus de l'ONU pourrait être une option si les soldats kurdes n'intègrent pas l'an prochain l'armée irakienne dominée par les arabes.

Le général Ray Odierno, commandant en chef des forces américaines en Irak, a estimé mardi que le déploiement d'une force de maintien de la paix de l'ONU pourrait être nécessaire si les tensions entre Kurdes et arabes ne sont pas apaisées lorsque les troupes américaines auront quitté le pays en 2011.

Dans un entretien à l'Associated



Press, le général Odierno déclare que le déploiement de casques bleus de l'ONU pourrait être une option si les soldats kurdes n'intègrent pas l'an prochain l'armée irakienne dominée par les arabes. Les Kurdes revendiquent plusieurs territoires des provinces de Ninevah, Tamim et Diyala pour leur région semi-autonome, une demande à

laquelle le gouvernement central, dominé par les arabes, est opposé. Selon le général Odierno, une force de l'ONU pourrait être nécessaire pour protéger les territoires disputés.

Si les Kurdes n'intègrent pas l'armée, «nous aurons peut-être à réfléchir à un autre mécanisme», a déclaré le général américain. «Je ne sais pas encore ce que c'est. Est-ce une force sous le chapitre VI de (la charte de) l'ONU? Je ne sais pas.» Le chapitre VI de la charte des Nations unies porte sur les missions de maintien de la paix.

President Barzani and King Abdullah discussed opening Jordon Consulate



By AKNEWS

Leading a high Kurdish delegation, Barzani will head to Egypt after this visit.

After arriving in Amman, Iraqi Kurdistan region President, Massoud Barzani, met Saunday with King Abdullah of Jordon and discussed opening the Jordon Consulate in the Erbil.

In their meeting on Saturday Barzani and King Abdullah discussed the bilateral relations and the procedures

to consolidate the amicable ties in between, Kurdistan Presidency website reported on Sunday.

According to the website in the gathering the King reiterated his support for the stability and security in Iraq, and at the same time, the Kurdish and the Jordanian top figures exchanged the talks over opening the Jordon consulate in Erbil, the capital of Kurdistan region.

Barzani showed his gratitude for the friendly stance and support of Jordon in respect

with stepping forward for strengthening the bilateral trade, economic and cultural relations.

Leading a high Kurdish delegation, Barzani will head to Egypt after this visit.

Before the delegation leaves for Jordon in a statement, Fuad Hussein, the Head of

Kurdistan Presidency Office, had stated that Barzani will meet with Amru Musa, the Secretary General of the Arab League in this visit.

The visit comes only a week after Barzani's visit to a number of European countries.

UN on two significant Iraqi issues

By Namu Abdulla and Najiba Muhammad

ERBIL-Hewlêr, - Ad Melkert was appointed by the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to be his special envoy to Iraq in July 2009. Previously Associate Administrator of the UN Development Programme, Melkert, 53, will replace Staffan de Mistura. In this short interview, Melkert comments on two probably most significant Iraqi issues, that is, the formation of the government and the bombardment of the border regions of Iraqi Kurdistan by Iran and Turkey.

Q: Why has the United Nations done nothing regarding the shelling from Turkey and Iran?

Ad Melkert: Well, the UN is an organization of member states, so the member states decide what the agenda is and the resolution they adopt. I think there is reason for concern about what we see in the border areas of the Kurdistan region. I spoke about that today with the parliament's president [speaker] Kirkuki, who has also expressed other concerns that I will submit or transfer to the secretary general.

Q: But isn't what Turkey and Iran are doing a violation of one of the principles of the UN, that is, sovereignty of the nations?

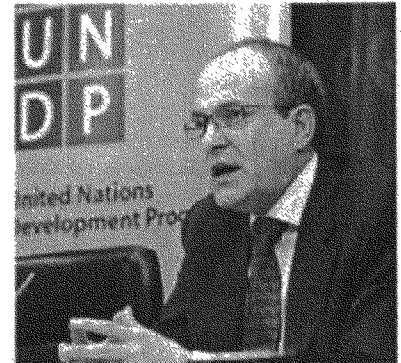
Ad Melkert: I think it is really important to emphasize the importance of the principle, sovereignty, and that should count everywhere including Iraq. They are also very much concerned about the humanitarian consequences and the suffering of the people in the border areas. That is what the UN supports.

Q: Have you provided any humanitarian aid to the people?

Ad Melkert: Yes, there are humanitarian agencies at this moment in the border areas, trying to support the people as much as they can.

Q: Two more questions about the Iraqi government. What do you think are the reasons behind this deadlock in the government formation? The government has yet to be formed after more than three months.

Ad Melkert: Well, it was not that long ago that the final election results were certified, so in that sense some patience is needed. But now I think in the month of July, it will be a very important to try



Ad Melkert was appointed by the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to be his special envoy to Iraq in July 2009

to come to a conclusion for everyone.

Q: My final question is that some people believe that if you put Mr. Allawi aside, which is expected after the Shiites have created a bigger coalition able to form the government, there will be more violence. What is your take on that?

Ad Melkert: I cannot comment on the position of parties or speculations of what could happen. I think it is important for the future of Iraq that the process of the government formation is inclusive, and that all major parties be part of the government.

Iraq: Key facts and figures

Seven years after the US-led invasion, Iraq has held an election which it is hoped will allow most of the remaining US troops to leave the country at the end of the year.

MILLIONS of dollars have been spent on rebuilding the country's infrastructure, but there is still a long way to go.

STANDARD OF LIVING

Overall, 23% of Iraq's population lives below the poverty line (\$2.2 per person per day), according to the United Nations.

The latest report from the World Food Programme, in November 2008, described an estimated 3.1% of Iraqi households - 930,000 people - as "food insecure", living with hunger and fearing starvation. That represented a considerable improvement on 15.4%, the figure when the survey was last carried out in 2005.

However, the WFP also found a further 6.4 million people would be vulnerable to food insecurity without the Public Distribution System, which provides monthly food rations to 90% of the population.

In January 2010, there were approximately 1.3 million landline telephone subscriptions and 19.5 million mobile phone subscriptions, according to the Brookings Institution. That compares with a pre-war level of 833,000 landline subscriptions and no cellular network.

There are also now 1.6 million internet subscribers, compared with 4,600 before the US-led invasion.

The UN reported in 2004 that car ownership had doubled since 2003, but between then and the Iraq household socio-economic survey in 2007, the figure remained relatively static, rising just above 25%.

ELECTRICITY

In the first three months of 2010, electricity supply was up 7% from the last quarter and 14% on same quarter of 2009, according to a report by the US Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (Sigir) in April. However, production remained below the record high reached between July and September 2009.

Based on data supplied by the Iraqi ministry of electricity, the quarterly supply met 71% of estimated demand, and provided only 18.4 hours of electricity per day on average. The lack of reliable electricity supply from the national grid has led to widespread use of backyard and neighbourhood generators.

SANITATION

World Bank figures released in February 2010 show that potable water service is available to less than 70% of the population outside of Baghdad and

can drop to as low as 48% in rural areas.

In Baghdad, most residents have in-home access to potable water, but varying sources estimate that between 10% and 25% of the population is disconnected from the water supply network and relies on expensive alternative sources for drinking water, such as delivery by tankers. In some areas, water is available only in the evening; and in many areas, village residents illegally tap into water pipelines.

Fewer homes are connected to wastewater sanitation systems than to potable water sources. According to the World Bank report, less than 8% of the homes outside Baghdad are connected to sewerage systems.

An outbreak of cholera in August 2008 affected nine provinces in the country and was due to the poor standard of sanitation. According to the World Health Organization "outbreaks will recur in Iraq until access to safe water and proper sanitation is ensured for all people". Diarrhoea, a symptom of other waterborne diseases, was also reported to be on the increase.

VIOLENCE

Most coalition troops have withdrawn from Iraq, but according to the Brookings Institute there were an estimated 95,000 US troops in the country as of April 2010.

The number of deaths, military and civilian, is continuing to fall. The Iraq Body Count says 4,645 civilians were reported killed in violence in Iraq in 2009, which was about half the level in 2008 and the lowest annual total since the invasion in 2003.

At the end of April 2010, IBC said 1,010 civilians had been reported killed so far this year. The IBC counts reported deaths and then cross references them with official figures from Iraqi hospitals and ministries.

REFUGEES

The US government and others estimate that 1.5 million Iraqis fled their homes to other parts of Iraq or other countries to escape the sectarian conflict sparked by the 2006 Samarra mosque bombing. It is believed that another 200,000 had already been displaced following the US-led invasion, while approximately 1 million people left Iraq during the rule of Saddam Hussein.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that 364,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and 62,000 refugees returned to their areas of origin during 2008 and 2009. However, there are still approximately 1 million Iraqi

refugees abroad and 1.55 million IDPs, a third of whom are living in settlements or camp-like situations in extremely poor conditions, it says.

The UNHCR registered nearly 35,000 refugees inside Iraq at end of 2009, mostly Palestinians, Syrians and Iranians. They are primarily located in the areas administered by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Baghdad. In addition there are 3,800 asylum-seekers from Iran, Syria and Turkey.

A refugee camp for Palestinians in the desert near the Syrian border was recently closed and the occupants moved over the border into Syria, but a further 10,000 remain - mostly in Baghdad.

OIL PRODUCTION

Iraq relies on oil for much of its wealth. It has the fourth largest proven oil reserves in the world, with about 10% of the world's oil reserves, according to the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC).

Oil production figures dipped at the start of the invasion but have since remained relatively buoyant. As of April, 2.41 million barrels of oil a day were being produced, still well below the 1979 peak of 3.5 million barrels a day.

EMPLOYMENT

The number of Iraqis employed in the public sector has doubled since 2005, with the public sector currently providing 43% of all jobs in Iraq and almost 60% of all full-time employment.

But constraints on the federal budget caused by the drop in global oil prices have curtailed new public sector recruitment, while the private sector remains too weak to meet the demand for jobs. Unemployment stands at 15% and a further 28% of the workforce is underemployed, which may increase in the coming years, particularly amongst youth, according to a UN analysis of 2008 figures from Iraq's Central Organisation for Statistics and Information Technology.

Young people were increasingly vulnerable to poverty and food insecurity as 450,000 entered the labour market facing limited job prospects, the UN report said. Only 17% of women are employed.

BBC IRAQ POLL FEBRUARY 2009

Violence and insecurity were no longer the main concern of most Iraqis, for the first time since the 2003 US-led invasion, an opinion poll for the BBC in February 2009 suggested.

It found that Iraqis were much more

AP Associated Press

U.S. General says Iraq may need U.N. peacekeepers

BAGHDAD, Iraq — July 7, 2010 — AP

THE TOP AMERICAN military commander in Iraq said Tuesday that U.N. peacekeeping forces may need to replace departing U.S. troops in the nation's oil-rich north if a simmering feud between Arabs and minority Kurds continues through 2011.

A U.N. force might offer both the Iraqi leadership and President Barack Obama a politically palatable alternative to an ongoing U.S. presence to prevent ethnic tensions from descending into war. Although occasional bombings by Sunni extremists on Shiite targets grab the headlines, many observers believe the Kurdish-Arab dispute is the most powerful fault line in Iraq today.

Gen. Ray Odierno brought up the possibility of a U.N. force during an interview with The AP. He observed that there is no immediate end in sight to the years long dispute between Arabs and Kurds, who have managed an uneasy political dance under American supervision since the fall of Saddam Hussein.

"That's something that has to be worked out," Odierno said, discussing potential options to defuse hostilities if a pilot program to bring Kurdish troops into the Arab-dominated Iraqi army fails.

"If we have not integrated, we might have to think of some other mechanism," he said. "I don't know what that is yet. Is it a Chapter 6 U.N. force? I don't know."

Chapter 6 of the United Nations charter refers to peacekeeping duties like investigating and mediating disputes.

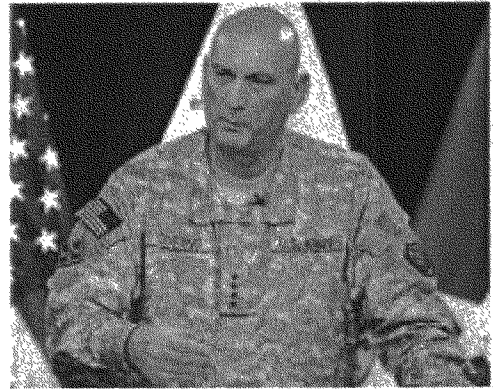
At issue is a swath of land through three northern Iraqi provinces that Kurdish leaders want included in their semiautonomous region, known as Kurdistan. The area sits on top of some of the world's largest oil reserves and has been a flashpoint since Saddam forced tens of thousands of Kurds from their homes and replaced them with Arabs.

But the United Nations has so far been unable to broker a compromise to the land fight, a dispute which has compounded years of distrust between Arabs and Kurds, a separate ethnic group making up about 20 percent of Iraq's population.

A U.N. spokeswoman in Baghdad, Radhia Achouri, directed questions about peacekeepers to the Iraqi government and the U.N. Security Council. In New York, U.N. headquarters officials and diplomats said there has been no discussion about the possibility of a U.N. peacekeeping force in northern Iraq. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

A security agreement between the U.S. and Iraqi governments requires all American forces to leave the country by the end of 2011. There are currently about 77,500 U.S. troops here. It's widely believed that Iraq's leaders may ask the United States to leave at least some troops behind to give the nation's uneven army and police forces more time to train.

Odierno maintained that decision would be up to the incoming Iraqi government, whose leadership is still contested after no clear winner emerged from the March parliamentary elections. But he left open the possibility that some U.S. troops might stay.



U.S. Army Gen. Raymond Odierno, speaks during a press conference in Baghdad, Iraq, Tuesday, July 6, 2010. The top American military commander in Iraq said that U.N. peacekeeping forces may need to protect disputed territories in the nation's north if tensions between Kurds and Arabs haven't eased by the time U.S. troops leave in 2011. AP Photo

"I don't see a large U.S. presence here. I really don't," he said. "They might want technical support, but again, that's their decision, not ours."

After a military clash between Kurds and Arabs in eastern Diyala province in 2008, Odierno this year ordered U.S. forces to set up security checkpoints in the disputed territories. He instructed that the checkpoints be guarded by Kurdish troops as well as soldiers from the Arab-led Iraqi army. The intent was to unite Kurds and Arabs against a common enemy — al-Qaida insurgents who exploit regional tensions — instead of fighting each other.

The Iraqi checkpoints mostly have been peaceful, but clashes continue to break out between Kurdish and Arab forces.

A fist-fight led to gunfire among soldiers Monday near a market in Qara Tappah, a Diyala town about 75 miles northeast of Baghdad. Two Iraqi soldiers, a Kurdish officer and one civilian were wounded in the clash. Authorities called it a misunderstanding between soldiers, and Odierno described it as a spat between individuals — and not a widespread Kurd-Arab problem.

Odierno said he hopes by 2011 that Kurdish soldiers will have successfully joined the Iraqi army, creating an ethnically diverse force and eliminating the need for independent oversight.

If that happens, "then we'll let them do it," Odierno said. "It's too early to tell. But that's an issue that we'll have to watch and work through."

In an AP interview last month, Gen. Babaker Shawkat Zebari, a Kurd who is top commander of the Iraqi military, said the checkpoints will no longer be necessary once Iraq's parliament settles the disputed areas. But parliament has long been deadlocked over how to resolve the morass peacefully.

Also in limbo are plans to hold a referendum on the future of the ethnically mixed city of Kirkuk, 180 miles (290 kilometers) north of Baghdad, and a census to determine the breakdown for the entire disputed region.

Kurdish lawmakers are threatening to withhold their key political backing for Iraqi leaders vying to become prime minister unless they promise to schedule a Kirkuk referendum among parliament's top priorities. Doing so, however, would be political suicide for Arab politicians as they try to round up broad support for the right to lead the new government.

Odierno said he could not predict when parliament might address the issue, or whether it could be solved before the last U.S. troops are scheduled to leave Iraq.

hopeful about the future and were increasingly pre-occupied with more conventional worries like the economy and jobs. But Iraqis remained unhappy about the role foreign powers play in their country, notably Iran, the US and UK.

On security, 85% of all respondents described the current situation as very good or quite good - up 23% on 2008. A total of 52% said security had improved, up 16% on March 2008, while only 8%

said it was worse. Nearly 60% felt safe in their neighbourhoods.

Those who said their lives were going very well or quite well were 65% of the total, up 9 percentage points. And there was a 14-percentage-point increase - to 60% - of those who thought things would be better in Iraq in the following year.

The survey showed that some aspects of everyday life were improving, too. The availability of power had been a major issue in the previous six annual

polls, with only about 10% of the population saying they have had reliable supplies. In the 2009 poll, it was 37%.

And the number of those who said that availability of fuel for cooking or driving was now very good or quite good also shot up to 67%, a 48 percentage point rise on the 19% of 2008.

Los Angeles Times July 8, 2010

Babylon & Beyond

SYRIA: Damascus teams up with Turkey to fight Kurdish aspirations

With economic and political ties cemented over the last 12 months, the Syria-Turkey alliance has now appeared to move on to the realm of security. Reports from Turkish state media say Syria has arrested around 400 Kurds with links to the Kurdistan Workers Party, known by the acronym PKK, a move by Damascus seen as ending a once troubled security relationship.

The operation to round up several hundred Syrian Kurds began two weeks ago involving raids in the northeastern cities of Afrin, Aleppo, Qamishli, and Raqqa, reported the Anatolian News Agency last week. The state-run outlet also reported 11 Kurdish "terrorists" were killed in clashes with Syrian security officials as part of the operation. Kurds in Syria have for decades been marginalized and formal teaching of the Kurdish language is banned.

According to *Kurdishaspect.com* more than 630 Kurds have been taken into custody and that "The [Syrian] government implicates the detainees with false link [sic] to other Kurdish political parties, providing material support and separatism charges. Most of the detainees constitute the underprivileged civilian families living in rural areas." Clashes regularly occur between Kurds and police during Nowruz, the Kurdish new year. Last March at least one Kurd was shot dead and dozens of others arrested in Qamishli during new year celebrations.



No details were available as to whether the operation was the combined work of Turkish and Syrian security forces against restive members of a regional Kurdish population that has caused security concerns to trouble Ankara and, to a lesser extent, Damascus.

The arrests are a first for two countries that flirted with all-out war in 1998 over Syria's refusal to hand over PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, who had been hiding out there. Damascus later forced Ocalan out of the country after having been chastised for three decades by Turkey for sheltering (or ignoring) him and other PKK members.

In recent times, much has changed. May 2009 saw Turkey's parliament pass a law to demine the Syrian-Turkish border while just last month, Syrian president Bashar al-Assad visited Istanbul twice in a two-week period to work on further developing economic ties. However, Kurds in Syria fear closer ties bet-

ween the two countries will see them further isolated.

Kurds in Syria occupy the lowest social rank among the country's minorities, with thousands working as waiters and cigarette peddlers in Damascus and Aleppo. In Aleppo, Syria's northern capital, they are largely confined to living in informal settlements in poor suburban areas, with whole families often renting rooms for as little as \$30 per month. In the city center neighborhood of Baramkeh in Damascus, after dark, Kurdish vendors set up illegal clothing stalls, away from the gaze of customs police. Clothes are sold for as little as \$2.

There has been a resurgence of attacks and violence in southwest Turkey in recent months. On Thursday, 12 PKK rebels were killed by government-supported local militia close to the border town of Siirt. Turkey's air force later carried out attacks on the PKK's main base in the Qandil mountains on the Iran-Iraq border.

-- Stephen Starr in Damascus
Photo: A Syrian Kurd youth purchases food in the town of Qameshli, in eastern Syria. Credit: Stephen Starr / For Babylon & Beyond

Q & A with Iraqi Kurdistan President Masud Barzani

By Huda Al Hussein

Cairo, Asharq Al-Awsat- Immediately following his return from his visits to Turkey, Austria, Germany, and France, Masud Barzani, president of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, began an Arab tour that took him first to Jordan at the invitation of Jordanian King Abdullah II and then to Egypt at the invitation of its President Hosni Mubarak. Developments on the Iraqi situation topped the agenda of Barzani's talks in these countries. However, the economic files also asserted their strong presence on the talks. In Egypt, these files also asserted a strong presence. In an exclusive interview with Asharq Al-Awsat in Cairo, the president of the Kurdistan Region emphasized the importance of the unity of Iraq's people and land. He said: "We have not proposed secession and we strengthened unity. Irbil is Iraq's second capital. At the same time, I defend the special character of the Kurdish people. I am ready to host the Arab summit if the security situation in Baghdad precludes convening it there". Jokingly, Barzani added: "We can also hold a big party for the Arab heads of state in Irbil if the summit convenes in Baghdad". The interview also covered developments on the Iraqi arena, Arab-Kurdish relations, and the results of his visit to Cairo where he met with President Mubarak. The text of the interview is as follows:

Q) What are the results of your meeting with President Hosni Mubarak, particularly after Egypt announced the opening of an Egyptian consulate in Irbil? Does this mark the beginning of a new Egyptian-Kurdish relationship?

A) First of all, the meeting with President Hosni Mubarak was very important; it was friendly and warm. It was an opportunity for me to explain to President Mubarak our viewpoint on the political process in Iraq and on the attempts to form the next Iraqi government. I sensed President Mubarak's keen interest in conditions in Iraq. We also talked about the prospects for economic, trade, and cultural cooperation between Egypt and Iraq in general and the Kurdistan Region in particular. I sensed a strong desire by President Mubarak and the Egyptian government in this regard; this desire is mutual.

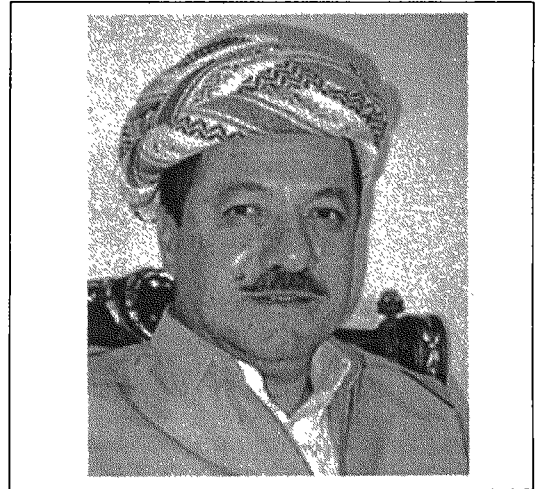
Q) What are the priorities of this Egyptian-Kurdish cooperation?

A) The cooperation will be in the field of investments. The Egyptian companies are invited to operate and invest in the fields of construction, agriculture, exchange visits by delegations, and holding cultural conferences. Many in Egypt and from outside Egypt are not aware that the first Kurdish newspaper was published in Egypt in 1898 and the first Kurdish radio station transmitted from Cairo in 1957.

Q) So will the Egyptian-Kurdish relationship renew the fields of active cooperation?

A) We will restore the warmth to this Egyptian-Kurdish relationship to be in the form and substance that we wish.

Q) Do you intend to visit other Arab capitals after your visits to Egypt and Jordan?



A) On this visit, I held important talks in Egypt and Jordan and I will return directly to Irbil. In the future, I will visit other Arab countries. I have already visited Saudi Arabia where I noted the strong interest of King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz, the custodian of the two holy shrines, in the situation in Iraq, the situation in the Kurdistan Region, and in building better relations. I was very pleased with the assurances of the custodian of the two holy shrines that Saudi Arabia supports what the Iraqi people decide and does not interfere in Iraq's affairs but that it is important to safeguard national unity, fraternity, and amity.

Q) Does this Arab-Kurdish warmth allow holding the Arab summit in Irbil if the security situation precludes holding it in Baghdad?

A) From the legal point of view, Irbil is Iraq's second capital. If security conditions in Baghdad preclude holding the Arab summit there, Irbil is definitely ready to host the Arab summit in lieu of Baghdad. If the summit convenes in Baghdad, we will host a big party for the Arab heads of state in Irbil.

Q) Do you consider your reply as a correction of the charges made against you that you seek to secede from Iraq?

A) On the contrary, I strongly care for Iraq's unity and we proved that in practice. However, I also strongly care for the special character and rights of the Kurdish people. When a situation arises that requires me to defend the rights of the Kurdish people I do so while safeguarding the national unity of Iraq's land and people. I believe in history and in a common destiny; but I cannot abandon a cause for which I have devoted all my life. At the same time, I care a lot about the issue of democracy in Iraq and about the historic relationship between the Arabs and Kurds. Therefore, the defense of the legitimate rights of the Kurdish people should not be interpreted as a call for secession. This is an erroneous understanding of the issue.

Q) You were among the most prominent figures that contributed to the emergence of the new Iraq. How do you view the new Iraq today?

A) The new Iraq means that the Iraqi people should decide their future in the ballot boxes. Power should be rotated and should have democratic, federal, and pluralistic components.

Q) Are the factors for achieving this vision available or are they lacking?

A) The first step was drafting the constitution that recognized this identity and the new Iraq. The rest is the implementation of the constitution.

Q) What about the formation of the government and the current differences among the Iraqi lists? Do you consider this to be an obstacle to building the future of Iraq? What is the way to emerge from this impasse?

A) Unfortunately, I feel embarrassed when I am asked this question. Four months have passed since the elections were held but the government has not been formed. So if we do not resolve this problem, the situation will be embarrassing for Iraq and the Iraqi people. We hope that the Iraqi government would be formed as soon as possible and we will exert major efforts to emerge from this crisis.

Q) Are there any external positive interventions urging the formation of the Iraqi government?

A) I believe that many friends and countries are urging, encouraging, and pushing for the expeditious formation of the Iraqi government. I believe that if any negative interference takes place, political forces in Iraq should block such interference.

Q) Will the delay in the formation of the government impede the programmed departure of the US forces in August?

A) According to the statements made by US Vice President Joe Biden, the issue of the formation of the government does not affect the schedule of withdrawal of the US forces from Iraq.

Q) Do you think that the United States is serious about ending Iraq's occupation allowing it to return to its normal state?

A) The strategic security agreement that the Iraqi government and the United States have signed ended the occupation. However, the withdrawal of the US forces from Iraq does not mean the end of the relationship between the United States and Iraq. We need this relationship to continue. A US presence does not mean a military presence. A US presence can be through diplomatic channels and bilateral agreements.

Q) Proceeding from your distinctive relations with Washington, how can the United States help Iraq in a way that ensures non-intervention in its affairs?

A) It is true that we have good relations with the United States and we have exploited these relations in favor of Iraq and not just in the service of the Kurdish issue. We were honest with the United States before and after the fall of the former regime. We gave them a true picture of conditions in Iraq and of our viewpoints. We never deceived them. We criticized them when they made mistakes. I have said that the biggest mistake made by the Americans in Iraq was the issuance of Resolution 1483 that confirmed the occupation. That was a big mistake.

Q) When will the international tutelage on Iraq end?

A) There are problems. The Iraqi foreign ministry and government are exerting major efforts to emerge from the repercussions of the mistakes that were committed in Iraq and to end the international tutelage on Iraq and Chapter VII.

Q) Is the Kurdish-Turkish problem closer to a solution, especially after you announced the importance of a peaceful solution?

A) I was in Turkey about one month ago; I think it was a very successful visit. It was an opportunity to exchange viewpoints with the Turkish president and the prime minister as well as with Kurdish officials. I am very happy that I sensed Turkey's understanding and openness. I also

sensed a new policy in Turkey pertaining to the relationship with the neighbors, the situation in Iraq, and the Kurdish issue inside Turkey. We support this Turkish openness. I believe that the resolution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey should be through dialogue and peaceful means. We oppose violence and we advised the Kurdish side not to resort to violence. The relationship between the Kurdistan Region and Turkey in the economic and trade fields is developing fast. The Kurdistan Region and Turkey can act as a springboard for the promotion of the economic and trade fields with other countries until the security situation settles down in the rest of Iraq.

Q) Regarding Iraq's regional relations, how can Iran contribute to the stability of Iraq instead of its current negative interference?

A) Iran can no doubt play an important role in Iraq and Turkey. It is also an important neighboring state. Iraq should establish balanced relations with Turkey and Iran as big and important neighboring countries. I proposed to the Al-Maliki government that when evidence is collected about the interference of any state, this evidence should be shown to the particular state. We should be frank with the state and tell it that this or that interference took place. We should ask: Is this government policy or is it the work of a specific organ or organs in the state? I say that when we find evidence of negative interference by Iran we should discuss this matter with it through diplomatic channels. We should avoid raising the tension in relations because such escalation does not serve the interests of any country.

Q) Do you think the proposal by the Arab Neighborhood League and dialogue with Iran serve Arab-Iranian relations?

A) I believe that the Arab League secretary general's initiative in this regard is good and I hope it will lead to positive results.

Q) Did you ask for specific aid to Iraq during your discussions with the Arab League secretary general?

A) The Arab League can play an important role in Iraq and the region in general and we welcome any role by the Arab League. As far as we are concerned we also support them in establishing a relationship between the Arab League and the Kurdistan Region because the Arab world concerns us and we wish to be understood without any doubt-casting on our stands in any issue and we want to safeguard our historic ties with the Arabs.

Q) Is the Arab presence in Iraq adequate? What does Iraq need at present?

A) The Arabs came to Iraq late. Egypt's presence was important had it not been for the painful incident involving Egyptian Ambassador Ihab al-Sharif who was martyred. However, the fact is that the Arab role in Iraq was not up to the required standard.

Q) How do you see it at present?

A) There is a push and desire and a better understanding of the situation in Iraq.

Q) What is the current situation in Irbil? What are your plans for the future?

A) The security situation in Irbil is stable and we are constantly consolidating our constitutional institutions, promoting development and construction, working to provide full services to our citizens in the Kurdistan Region, and also playing a positive role in solving Iraq's problems.

Turkey's Forgotten War



By Amir Taheri

While news of the war in Afghanistan swims in the main media channels little attention is paid to a forgotten war that has claimed more victims during the past three weeks. This forgotten war is Turkey's 20-year long campaign to subdue its Kurdish rebels who have found a safe haven in neighboring Iraq.

Over the past three weeks Turkish air force has carried out a series of bombing raids against alleged Kurdish rebel positions while gunfights have continued between the ground forces of the two sides. According to news agencies at least 100 fighters, including 30 Turkish soldiers, have been killed, many more than the casualties reported from the Afghan war for the same period.

This forgotten war needs to be remembered for a number of reasons.

First, there is that little ignored fact which is Iraq's national sovereignty. The Turks formed the habit of treating Iraq as a war zone in 1991 when Saddam Hussein gave them the green light to enter northern Iraq to kill the Kurds. In exchange, Ankara allowed smuggling rings linked to Saddam's family to operate through Turkish territory. Such behavior, illegal then, is now unacceptable as well. Today, Iraq has a government that represents its people and thus as a state enjoys the legitimacy that the Takriti set up lacked. Bombing a member of the United Nations even in the name of fighting rebels is a step too far by any standards.

Next, there is the fact that the present Turkish government, formed by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) built part of its initial good reputation on its condemnation of Ankara's raids against Kurds in Iraq. When in opposition, AKP leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan, now prime minister said repeatedly that there was no military solution to Turkey's long standing 'Kurdish problem.'

In a conversation we had with Erdogan in Davos in 2001 he went out of his way to advertise his party's 'creative solution' for the problem even if that included 'thinking the unthinkable.'

To its credit, the AKP government did initiate measures that helped modify Turkish attitudes towards the Kurds. Some Kurdish political prisoners were released and the strict ban on Kurdish language and culture was eased. These measures were in part a result of pressure from the European Union. However, AKP had its own reason for trying to mollify the Kurds. In its second general election victory, AKP collected almost 43 per cent of the votes. A quarter of those votes came from Kurds who thought they were saying thank you to the measures taken by AKP. Some Turkish analysts claim that without Kurdish votes the AKP would not have won a straight majority.

Ever since Kemalism emerged as the core ideology of the Turkish republic, the Kurdish minority, believed to be between 17 and 20 per cent of the total population, were either ignored or marginalized in the name of pan-Turkism a creed that belonged to the same family as Italian fascism, German Nazism and Argentine peronism. Erdogan and many other AKP leaders spent years fighting that creed.

It was, therefore, not unexpected that they should reject the pan-Turkist myth that here was no such thing as a Kurdish identity and that the Kurds were simply 'mountain Turks'. While pan-Turkists emphasized the supposed 'blood' link as the cornerstone of nationhood in modern Turkey, the AKP put the emphasis on Islam, the common religious faith of 99 per cent of the population.

In the past few years, however, the AKP has gradually moved away from some of its original positions by falling for what is now known as neo-Ottomanism, the ideological mirror-image of pan-Turkism.

Neo-Ottomanism is designed to unite pan-Turkists and Islamists in a common quest to revive the supposedly glorious days of the Ottoman Empire in which Turkish nationalism and Islam were the ingredients of the ideological cocktail.

Neo-Ottomanism is based on a number of myths. Chief among these is the claim that the Ottoman Empire was a modern construct, some say even the first experiment in globalization, if only because of its diversity.

What is not said is that the Ottoman Empire treated its diverse peoples as subjects not as equal partners in a common enterprise. This is why neo-Ottomanism cannot accept the Kurdish minority as a distinct entity within a democratic pluralist system.

The neo-Ottoman approach to the Kurdish problem is further complicated by the identification of the Kurdish minority with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a Marxist outfit with a discourse that belongs to another age.

Like it or not, there is no doubt that the PKK represents a chunk of Kurdish opinion in Turkey and must be brought into the broader picture of Turkish democracy. Most Turkish citizens, including perhaps a majority of ethnic Kurds, do not like the PKK's ideology or political methods. However, the Turkish political landscape consists of a handful of minority parties that represent a rich spectrum. In that spectrum even the PKK could find a place, provided it abandoned its goal of overthrowing the Turkish republic through armed struggle.

Almost 10 years ago, Erdogan, the most imaginative of Turkish leaders in a generation, spoke of a 'creative solution' to the Kurdish problem. That 'creative solution' should include efforts to wean the PKK away from violence and terror. The first step in that direction is the establishment of a dialogue, perhaps with the help of the Kurdistan government in Iraq which has already informed Ankara of its readiness to mediate.

Within the past two years Turkey has started reshaping its foreign policy in the hope of finding a greater role in its natural geopolitical habitat which includes the Middle East.

However, Ankara would not be able to play a leadership in the region while it continues bombing Iraqi territory. Nor would Ankara's profession of anger at the way Israel treats the Gaza population sound sincere when Turkey's ethnic Kurds continue to be treated with less consideration than a modern democracy should offer its citizens. It is, perhaps, time for Erdogan Pasha to start thinking the unthinkable.

Il faut compter avec Ankara Une Turquie nouvelle dispute à Téhéran la « rue arabe »

Du Caire à Bagdad, les Arabes sont soumis à une double « offensive de charme » régionale, due à la dévaluation de leur rôle stratégique : ils ont le choix entre un alignement sur Téhéran ou sur la « nouvelle Turquie » – le Maghreb étant davantage tourné vers l'Europe, tout en restant très sensible au sort des Palestiniens. En effet, la Turquie islamiste de l'AKP a progressivement reformulé son concept stratégique, grâce à son ministre des affaires étrangères, Ahmed Davutoglu. Ayant perdu de son importance dès la fin de la guerre froide, et vexée par les freins mis à son intégration dans l'Union européenne, la Turquie est engagée par cette nouvelle « doctrine Davutoglu » à s'investir dans son environnement naturel, arabe et islamique. L'objectif est à la fois de collectionner les cartes géopolitiques, de valoriser son rôle auprès de l'OTAN et surtout de frapper aux portes de l'Union européenne avec plus de vigueur et de poids.

Ainsi, Ankara a inauguré une nouvelle diplomatie d'ouverture, d'apaisement et de développement à l'égard de son voisinage arabe, kurde et iranien, tout en tournant progressivement le dos à son ex-partenaire israélien. Désormais, les visas sont supprimés entre la Turquie et plusieurs pays arabes, dont la Syrie. Une tentative de réconciliation avec les Kurdes a été entamée, conduisant même le ministre turc des affaires étrangères à passer une nuit à Erbil, la capitale du Kurdistan irakien. Enfin, la Turquie parraine (avec le Brésil) l'échange sur son territoire de l'uranium faiblement enrichi par l'Iran avec de l'uranium enrichi à 20 % et fourni par les grandes puissances – prêtant ainsi à Téhéran une bonne foi qui lui manque à l'évidence.

Ce positionnement se décline sur la question centrale qui mobilise Arabes et musulmans : celle de la Palestine, qui les touche au plus haut point parce qu'elle atteste de leur humiliante impuissance à s'affirmer face à Israël depuis soixante-deux ans. Le jeu d'Ankara est très subtil : tout en soutenant le programme nucléaire civil de l'Iran, il cherche à lui disputer la « rue arabe » qui ne sait plus à quel saint se vouer. Cette « rue » se trouve tiraillée entre deux puissances régionales : Téhéran-la-chiïte et Ankara-la-sunnite. Et, dans la mesure où l'Iran a réussi à couper l'herbe sous le pied des régimes arabes en faisant

Antoine Basbous

Directeur de l'Observatoire
des pays arabes

de la surenchère et en réussissant sa greffe idéologique auprès du Hezbollah et son implantation militaire au Liban, la Turquie semble bien décidée à conquérir la rue en usant d'un verbe moins brutal et plus politique.

Ainsi le premier ministre turc Erdogan a-t-il réagi de façon spectaculaire, au forum de Davos de janvier 2009, aux bombardements israéliens infligés à Gaza, en surprenant par sa vigueur le président israélien, Shimon Pérès, assis à ses côtés. Les relations n'ont pas cessé de se détériorer entre les deux pays, sur tous les plans.

Les généraux turcs, qui perdent jour après jour de leur influence, n'y pourront rien. Ils sont invités à quitter la scène politique et à regagner leurs casernes. Grâce à la légitimité du suffrage universel, les islamistes de l'AKP déclinent progressivement leurs valeurs, tant en matière de politique intérieure qu'internationale. Et ce en dépit des dégâts qu'ils infligent aux relations très denses entre les armées israéliennes et turques.

Duel à peine feutré

Pour les Arabes, notamment pour leur

majorité sunnite, la Turquie apparaît comme un moindre mal. Reconnaisant leur incapacité à faire face à Israël, ils préfèrent aux Perses le voisin sunnite de Turquie, héritier d'un empire qui a régné près de quatre siècles sur leurs terres, et qui déploie une politique compatible avec leurs aspirations. L'Iran, elle, tient à leur égard un discours aussi arrogant et menaçant qu'envers Israël.

La question est de savoir si la Turquie veut jouer ses cartes seulement pour détacher les Arabes conquis par le discours iranien ou si elle cherche aussi à s'inscrire dans une surenchère qui plaît tant à la base politique de l'AKP, à l'approche des élections en Turquie.

Dans ce duel à peine feutré, un pays se trouve particulièrement au premier rang des perdants : l'Egypte de Moubarak. Usé par un règne qui n'en finit plus, défié à sa frontière de Gaza, et défié une deuxième fois par la Turquie, qui a envoyé des ONG à bord de bateaux pour briser le blocus israélien de Gaza, Le Caire n'a eu le choix que de lâcher du lest, en trouvant le poste frontière de Rafah !

Aujourd'hui, les peuples ont le choix entre l'offre belliqueuse iranienne et son substitut, plus politique, de la Turquie. Ces deux pays promettent de prendre la relève des Etats arabes qui ont, de facto, abandonné la partie sans le crier sur tous les toits, estimant qu'ils ont suffisamment payé pour les Palestiniens, sans parvenir à des résultats probants. La question est de savoir quelle suite la Turquie de l'AKP compte donner à la dynamique enclenchée depuis janvier 2009 et lequel d'Ankara ou de Téhéran signera un « Yalta » avec Washington sur la région, au détriment des Arabes.

Quelle que soit l'évolution de cette compétition irano-turque, il est un constat qui s'impose : jamais auparavant Israël n'a été aussi isolé sur la scène internationale et jamais le Hamas de Gaza ne s'est senti aussi proche de la fin d'un blocus qui a étranglé ses administrés. La Turquie y aura été pour beaucoup. ■

Turquie

Les juges annulent en partie une révision de la Constitution

ANKARA. La Cour constitutionnelle de Turquie a en partie annulé, mercredi 7 juillet, une révision controversée de la Constitution réduisant le pouvoir de la hiérarchie judiciaire et de l'armée, deux instances hostiles au gouvernement islamo-conservateur du premier ministre Erdogan. Les juges ont annulé une partie des amendements concernant les nominations des membres de la Cour constitutionnelle et à propos du Conseil supérieur de la magistrature (HSYK), instance qui nomme les juges et les procureurs, a annoncé le président de la Cour, Hasim Kilic. Cette décision constitue un revers pour le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) au pouvoir. Les amendements qui n'ont pas été bloqués par la Cour pourront être soumis à référendum comme prévu le 12 septembre. Ils limitent la juridiction des tribunaux militaires et autorisent les tribunaux civils à juger des militaires en temps de paix, pour tentative de coup d'Etat et crimes liés à la sécurité nationale. – (AFP) ■

AFP

TURQUIE: 3 SOLDATS, 10 REBELLES TUÉS DANS DES COMBATS DANS LE SUD-EST

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 6 juillet 2010 (AFP)

TROIS SOLDATS turcs et dix rebelles kurdes ont été tués dans la nuit de lundi à mardi lors de combats dans le sud-est de la Turquie, a-t-on annoncé de source officielle.

Un précédent bilan faisait état de neuf rebelles abattus.

Un groupe de rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) a attaqué un avant-poste militaire dans une zone rurale de Semdinli, non loin des frontières avec l'Irak et l'Iran, selon un communiqué du gouvernorat de Hakkari, la province où se sont produits les combats.

Les soldats ont riposté aux tirs des rebelles et les heurts ont fait 13 morts.

Trois soldats ont été blessés.

Dans trois autres incidents survenus tard lundi dans l'est et le sud-est anatolien, théâtre d'opérations du PKK, neuf autres soldats ont été blessés, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Le PKK multiplie ses attaques contre l'armée turque depuis fin mai. Des accrochages quasi-quotidiens sont signalés.

Le PKK, qui est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara et de nombreux pays, lutte pour l'autonomie du sud-est anatolien. Le conflit, qui dure depuis 1984, a fait au moins 45.000 morts, en grande majorité des rebelles, selon l'armée.

La Turquie estime à environ 2.000 le nombre de rebelles réfugiés dans le nord de l'Irak d'où ils lancent des attaques contre les forces turques.

L'aviation turque bombarde régulièrement leurs positions.

Dans ce domaine, Ankara bénéficie des renseignements fournis par les Etats-Unis, son allié de l'Otan, sur les bases arrière et déplacements du PKK.

Dans un entretien accordé lundi soir à une chaîne de télévision privée, le chef d'état-major turc, le général Ilker Basbug, a accusé l'administration kurde autonome de ne pas agir contre le PKK sur son territoire.

"Le nord de l'Irak est un sanctuaire pour le PKK", a-t-il dit, cité par Anatolie, avertissant que la présence des rebelles dans la montagne irakienne pourrait détériorer les relations d'Ankara avec Bagdad mais aussi avec les Etats-Unis qui ont envahi ce pays en 2003.

AFP

QUATRE POLICIERS TURCS BLESSÉS LORS D'UNE ATTAQUE DE REBELLES KURDES

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 9 juil 2010 (AFP)

QUATRE POLICIERS turcs ont été blessés lorsque des rebelles kurdes ont ouvert le feu avec des fusils d'assaut sur un poste de police, dans l'est de la Turquie, a indiqué vendredi une source militaire.

L'attaque, menée par des militants du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK),

a eu lieu jeudi soir dans la localité de Varto, de la province de Mus, selon cette source.

Les assaillants ont pris la fuite lorsque les policiers ont répliqué aux tirs.

Le PKK a multiplié ces attaques meurtrières contre les forces de sécurité depuis que leur leader emprisonné, Abdullah Öcalan, a annoncé en mai qu'il abandonnait ses efforts pour dialoguer avec le gouvernement. Le PKK a par ailleurs annoncé la fin d'un cessez-le-feu unilatéral, le mois dernier.

Trois soldats et 12 militants du PKK avaient été tués lors d'affrontements mardi.

Le PKK lutte depuis 1984 pour la défense des droits des 15 millions de Kurdes de Turquie, sur une population de 73 millions. Le conflit a fait au moins 45.000 morts, selon les données officielles.

AFP

LA SANTÉ D'ABDULLAH ÖCALAN S'EST AMÉLIORÉE SELON LE COMITÉ ANTI-TORTURE

STRASBOURG (Conseil Europe), 9 juillet 2010 (AFP)

LA SANTÉ d'Abdullah Öcalan, le dirigeant emprisonné du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), s'est améliorée, rapporte vendredi le Comité Anti-Torture du Conseil de l'Europe (CPT).

Dans un rapport sur l'état des prisons en Turquie, le CPT souligne qu'au cours de la visite de sa délégation dans ce pays les 26 et 27 janvier 2010, celle-ci "a passé en revue l'état de santé d'Abdullah Öcalan".

"De manière générale, la santé du prisonnier s'est améliorée depuis la dernière visite (du CPT) en 2007. Il a encore des symptômes nasaux et allergiques récurrents mais ceux-ci sont intermittents et ne semblent pas causer de problèmes de santé majeurs", souligne le CPT.

"Son état mental a lui aussi connu une amélioration et peut être désormais décrit comme satisfaisant, sans désordre psychiatrique, bien qu'une vulnérabilité demeure", ajoute le rapport.

Le CPT souligne que les conditions de détention du prisonnier se sont aussi améliorées dans la nouvelle unité de la prison où il a été transféré en novembre dans l'île d'Imrali, dans le nord-ouest de la Turquie

"Comparé au régime qui été infligé auparavant à Abdullah Öcalan, les nouvelles

conditions constituent une amélioration certaine", affirme-t-il.

"La période d'exercices à l'extérieur a été augmentée de une à deux heures par jour. De plus, le prisonnier est autorisé à prendre part à des activités en-dehors de sa cellule autre que les activités à l'extérieur et est autorisé à avoir des contacts avec d'autres prisonniers pendant une heure par semaine", explique le Comité anti-torture.

"Cependant, ces nouvelles dispositions ne peuvent être décrites que comme une étape très modeste dans la bonne direction", conclut le rapport.

Öcalan, fondateur du PKK, a été condamné à mort pour trahison et séparatisme en 1999. Cette sentence a été commuée en prison à vie en 2001 à la suite de l'abolition de la peine capitale par la Turquie dans le cadre de réformes visant à respecter les normes de l'Union européenne.

La visite du Comité torture s'est déroulée à l'invitation du gouvernement turc. Par le passé, le CPT avait été très critique sur les conditions d'isolement infligées à Abdullah Öcalan.

Le Monde
9 juillet 2010

En Iran, l'économie paie le prix des choix politiques

Les options du gouvernement iranien ont un effet plus dévastateur que les sanctions internationales

Le Bazar de Téhéran, centre économique de la capitale iranienne, s'est mis en grève mardi 6 juillet pour protester contre un projet de hausse de 70 % des taxes sur les commerces. Le responsable d'un syndicat de vendeurs a affirmé à cette occasion que l'Iran était « *entré en récession* », selon l'agence de presse Insa.

Ce tableau contraste avec le satisfecit adressé en février à Téhéran par le Fonds monétaire international (FMI) et qui avait surpris. Celui-ci visait en fait la politique de « *désubventionnement* » que le président Ahmadinejad tentait de faire adopter par le Parlement. Et pas du tout l'état de santé d'une économie chaotique, dont l'opacité ne peut qu'être aggravée par les nouvelles sanctions internationales adoptées à l'ONU ainsi que celles, unilatérales, des Etats-Unis et de l'Union européenne.

Il en coûte environ 100 milliards de dollars (79 milliards d'euros) par an au budget de l'Etat iranien pour subventionner le pain, l'eau, le lait, le sucre, les transports publics, l'électricité, le gaz et l'essence, afin d'éviter l'explosion sociale que pourraient provoquer un chômage réel de plus de 20 % chez les jeunes et une inflation qui dépasse allègrement le taux officiel de 9,9 %.

Par exemple, chaque automobiliste reçoit un quota mensuel de 60 litres subventionnés d'essence au prix de 1 000 rials le litre (0,80 euro environ), soit le quart du prix normal. Cette aberration conduit l'Iran à importer 33 % de sa consommation de carburant.

Mais les réserves du pays (80 milliards de dollars) ne sont pas inépuisables et, dès 2008, le président avait manifesté la volonté de réduire ces subventions d'environ 25 milliards de dollars et de les réserver aux 70 % des Iraniens les moins bien lotis. L'intention était équitable, mais des voix se sont élevées au Parlement et dans la presse pour dénoncer le risque



Dans le bazar de Tabriz, dans le nord-ouest de l'Iran. L'économie souterraine représente un tiers de l'économie nationale. A. TAHERKENAREH/EPA

d'une hyper-inflation de 30 %, voire 80 % selon les plus pessimistes.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad est parvenu à surmonter les réticences de ses amis, mais la loi dite « *de réforme économique* » votée en février demeure inappliquée à ce jour, car elle suscite une autre critique. « *Le projet était louable*, explique Clément Therme, spécialiste de l'Iran à l'Institut des hautes études internationales et du développement de Genève, *mais demeure la question de savoir comment un pays aussi corrompu distribuera cet argent.* » Le clientélisme pourrait s'en trouver encore renforcé, si la manne était réservée aux amis du pouvoir. L'Iran ? Une véri-

Quand la Banque centrale d'Iran annonce une croissance de 8 %, le FMI parle, lui, de 2 %...

table « *économie d'aumônes* », selon Clément Therme.

Car l'opacité de l'économie du pays ne cesse de se renforcer. Les sta-

tistiques sont manipulées : quand la Banque centrale d'Iran annonce une croissance de 8 % pour l'exercice en cours, le FMI parle de 2 %. L'économie souterraine gagne du terrain : elle représenterait un tiers de l'économie nationale. Les importa-

tions de contrebande auraient triplé depuis 2005 et dépasseraient les 19 milliards de dollars, selon les chiffres avancés en mai par le ministère du commerce.

Surtout, on assiste au sein du régime à une lutte impitoyable dans l'ombre. « *Il s'agit d'une oligarchie concurrentielle*, affirme Clément Therme, *c'est-à-dire que ses membres se battent pour l'accaparement de la rente, tout en lançant en permanence des appels à l'unité.* » Ce sont les fondations religieuses et les pasdarans, les gardiens de la révolution, qui récupèrent les entreprises privatisées ou les secteurs que désertent les entreprises étrangères pour cause de sanctions

Désormais, les pasdarans (125 000 membres) contrôlent – en sous-main pour ne pas devenir la cible des sanctions – des entreprises majeures des travaux publics,

Téhéran reconnaît l'impact des sanctions

Ali Akbar Salehi, le chef de l'Organisation iranienne de l'énergie atomique, a estimé mercredi 7 juillet, à propos des sanctions internationales adoptées contre l'Iran, qu'« on ne peut pas dire que les sanctions sont sans effet ». Elles « visent à empêcher les activités nucléaires de l'Iran, mais nous disons que ces sanctions pourraient freiner le travail mais pas l'arrêter », a-t-il ajouté, selon l'agence ISNA. L'Iran a affirmé mardi être prêt à reprendre en septembre les négociations sur son programme nucléaire à condition que les objectifs de ce dialogue soient clairement définis au préalable. Les Etats-Unis se sont dits ouverts au dialogue si l'offre iranienne est « sérieuse ». – (AFP.)

de l'énergie et des transports. Ils ont récupéré l'exploitation du terminal de l'aéroport de Téhéran confiée d'abord à une société turque. Ils pourraient bien rénover le

port de Bandar Abbas à la place de l'allemand Siemens, qui a jeté l'éponge. En septembre 2009, ils se sont emparés de 51% de l'opérateur national de télécommunications.

Ce « mili-business » est comparé par l'opposant Mohsen Sazegara, cité dans un rapport de Rand Corporation, au résultat « d'uncroisement entre le Parti communiste, le KGB, une multinationale et la mafia », et qui n'est pas sans rappeler la Russie d'aujourd'hui.

De plus, ce régime très populis-

te cultive les incohérences. Par exemple, les salariés ne sont plus vraiment défendus, parce que seuls les syndicats officiels ont voix au chapitre et que la législation sociale a été réformée pour supprimer toute entrave au licenciement. « Dès 2006, M. Ahmadinejad a pris le parti des patrons », constate Fariba Adelhah, spécialiste de l'Iran au CERI-Sciences Po.

L'industrie est à bout de souffle et la moitié des grandes entreprises serait en situation de dépôt de bilan, parce que le pouvoir pratique

une politique aberrante d'échanges internationaux. « L'appel massif aux importations empêche la pénurie et l'on trouve de tout en Iran, explique un banquier de Téhéran, mais la contrepartie est que l'industrie souffre de la concurrence de produits venus d'Asie et de Dubaï, par exemple l'électroménager. »

Mêmes incohérences du côté des exportations, dont certaines sont lourdement subventionnées au gré des intérêts de quelques oligarques. La voiture Samand, modèle dérivé de la Peugeot 405, coûte

ainsi 7000 dollars aux Irakiens, mais 12000 dollars aux Iraniens.

« L'économie iranienne est bien plus victime de l'impéritie de ses dirigeants que des sanctions de la communauté internationale, conclut Denis Bauchard, chercheur associé à l'Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI). Mais elle peut résister si les prix des hydrocarbures restent élevés », et les achats pétroliers de la Chine, toujours aussi massifs. ■

Alain Faujas

LE FIGARO 6 juillet 2010

Les relations s'enveniment entre Israël et la Turquie

Ankara demande des « excuses » aux Israéliens et menace de rompre les relations diplomatiques.

MARC HENRY
JÉRUSALEM

PROCHE-ORIENT Entre Israël et la Turquie, deux pays longtemps alliés, la descente aux enfers continue. De deux côtés, l'heure est à l'escalade verbale. Ahmet Davutoglu, le chef de la diplomatie turque, a agité hier la menace d'une rupture des relations diplomatiques si Israël ne présentait des « excuses » en bonne et due forme pour le raid contre un bateau d'une flottille de militants pro-palestiniens. Cette opération, menée le 31 mai par un commando israélien au large de la bande de Gaza, a coûté la vie à neuf passagers turcs.

La réponse ne s'est pas fait attendre. « Il est hors de question de présenter la moindre excuse pour nos soldats qui n'ont fait que se défendre contre une bande de voyous qui voulait les lyncher », a répliqué Avigdor Lieberman,

le ministre israélien des Affaires étrangères.

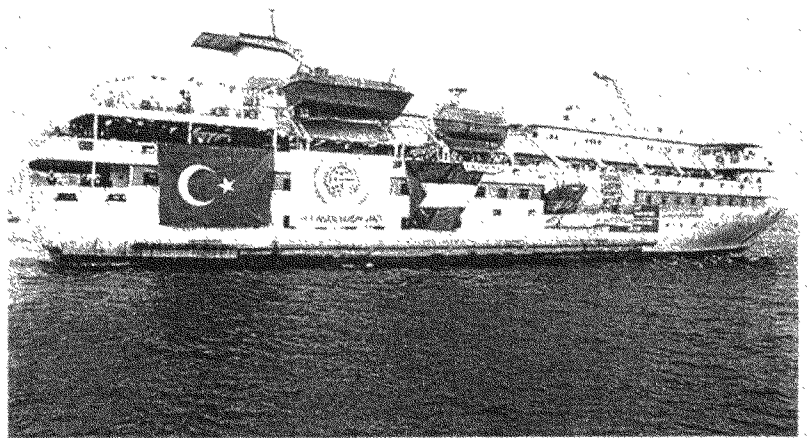
Les responsables israéliens, qui avaient jusque-là adopté un profil bas, malgré le rappel de l'ambassadeur turc à Tel-Aviv, pourraient durcir le ton. L'objectif était de laisser passer la tempête pour préserver les relations avec le seul pays du Moyen-Orient avec lequel l'État hébreu a conclu des accords militaires stratégiques. Ils se sont traduits ces dernières années par des manœuvres aériennes et navales communes avec les États-Unis ainsi que par de fructueuses relations commerciales.

Menace de fermeture de l'espace aérien

Cette « modération » semble désormais ne plus être de mise. Le ministre des Transports, Yaakov Katz, un proche de Benyamin Nétanyahou, a ainsi

Le raid des commandos israéliens, le 31 mai, contre le convoi maritime humanitaire turc à destination de Gaza avait fait neuf morts à bord du Mavi Marmara.

AFP



averti que si la Turquie fermait son espace aérien aux avions civils israéliens, comme Ankara l'a fait pour l'armée de l'air israélienne, l'État hébreu prendrait la même sanction contre les appareils turcs. « Ankara, en décidant une telle mesure, s'exclurait de l'espace aérien européen », a ajouté le ministre des Transports. Autre signe de très mauvaise humeur : le bateau turc pris d'assaut par les militaires israéliens reste bloqué jusqu'à nouvel ordre dans le port de Haïfa.

Pour les commentateurs, cette crise aiguë est le résultat direct d'un « changement de cap de la Turquie », qui s'est rapprochée de « l'axe du mal » mené par l'Iran et la Syrie. « Les Européens ont claqué la porte aux Turcs et c'est Israël qui en paye le prix », constate, amer, un diplomate israélien.

Tout espoir d'apaisement ne s'est toutefois pas évanoui. Ahmet Davutoglu a laissé une porte entre-ouverte en affirmant, pour la première fois, que

son pays pourrait se contenter de la commission établie par Israël pour enquêter sur l'affaire de la flottille de Gaza, sans exiger la création d'une commission internationale. « Si cette commission (israélienne) conclut que le raid était injuste et s'ils s'excusent, cela serait considéré comme suffisant », a fait valoir le chef de la diplomatie turque.

Avant la visite de Benyamin Nétanyahou à Washington, les responsables israéliens misent également sur des pressions des États-Unis pour calmer les ardeurs d'Ankara et le jeu entre deux des principaux alliés des États-Unis dans la région. ■



KRG statement on recent New York Times article

Response by the official spokesman of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to an inaccurate New York Times article of 8 July 2010 on the refining of crude oil in the Kurdistan Region.

11 July 2010

Kurdistan refined products

The Region's refineries provide essential fuels to Iraqi domestic and international markets. The KRG is proud of its growing oil and gas sector, and the KRG's free trade policies.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has licensed three refineries in the Kurdistan Region. These licenses are issued in accordance with the Iraq Constitution and the Kurdistan Region's Oil and Gas Law of 2007.

The refineries provide much-needed petroleum products to the people and businesses of the Kurdistan Region. The Kurdistan Region is the economic success story of Iraq."

Surplus from some refined products from Kurdistan's refineries is available for export. The KRG conducts open and competitive tendering for the export sale of petroleum products.

Products refined outside Kurdistan

The major sources of refined products are the large refineries in other parts of Iraq including Beiji, near Baghdad, and Dora, in Salahiddeen governorate. Some of that product may well be exported through the Kurdistan Region.

In other parts of Iraq, fuel oil is sold to the local private sector by Federal agencies at a significant discount to the international price. This discount is intended to stimulate the local economy. Unfortunately, this creates incentives for the buyers to engage in cross-border trade.

The KRG is aware of the fact that profiteers in fuel oil refined outside Kurdistan have exploited Kurdistan's international borders. The KRG, with the active support of President Barzani, is instituting a series of measures to ensure full compliance with the Iraqi Constitution and international law, and in this regard the KRG is committed to working with the Federal Government to eliminate permanently all such profiteering in fuel oil, not only in the KRG but also along the entirety of Iraq's international borders.

Joint KRG-Federal measures include mandatory licensing of all fuel oil tankers entering the Kurdistan Region.

Crude oil

In 2009, the KRG commenced the export of crude oil by international pipeline through Turkey to the Turkish port of Ceyhan.

With that exception, no crude oil travels across the internal or external boundaries of the Kurdistan Region.

KRG oil policy a success

The KRG's oil policy, under the guidance of the KRG's Ministry of Natural Resources, is endorsed by the whole Government and is a resounding success. It will continue to be the engine of the Kurdistan Region's economic development.

AP Associated Press

Turkey to form professional army to fight rebels

Jul 14, 2010 - By SUZAN FRASER (AP)

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey is working on plans for a specially trained military unit to man troublesome outposts along the Turkish-Iraqi border and fight autonomy-seeking Kurdish rebels, the defense minister said Wednesday.

Turkey has long been considering a professional army to fight the guerrillas of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which has been fighting since 1984 for autonomy for Turkey's Kurds.

Turkey's largely conscript army, made up of young recruits serving an obligatory 15 months, is seen as insufficiently trained to fight the battle-hardened guerrillas.

Many PKK guerrillas shelter in the mountains of neighboring Iraq, crossing the border for hit-and-run assaults. The group is considered a terrorist organization by both the European Union and United States.

The special army would consist of professional soldiers recruited to serve up to 10 years guarding the border with Iraq. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan told an opposition party leader Tuesday, according to Turkish media reports.

Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul confirmed the reports, saying his ministry was working on the legal aspects of the plan while the military was finalizing other details.

There was no information on the size of the planned military unit.

Turkey already has tens of thousands of troops deployed along the Iraqi border in addition to a large pro-government militia unit made up of local Kurds.

The government last year initiated more cultural and political rights to Kurds in a bid to reduce support for the rebels in the country's impoverished southeast.

But the PKK recently escalated attacks against troops, killing more than 20 soldiers since June. The rebels accuse Turkey of not establishing dialogue with them or with imprisoned Kurdish rebel chief Abdullah Ocalan and of refusing to declare an unconditional amnesty or allow Kurdish language education in schools.

Troubles in Turkey's Backyard

Forget Gaza or Iran, Prime Minister Erdogan needs to focus on the reignited war with Kurdish separatists -- before a full-fledged war breaks out in Turkey's restive southeast.

— Foreign Policy—

BY ALIZA MARCUS

TURKEY'S rugged Kurdish region in the country's southeast has exploded in violence once again, posing a new challenge for Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. More than 80 soldiers have been killed this year in attacks orchestrated by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a Kurdish separatist group, already exceeding the total for all of 2009. Turkey responded last week by bombing PKK strongholds in northern Iraq.

This renewal of violence should serve as a reminder to Erdogan that peace begins at home -- not in Gaza or Iran. The prime minister won regional prestige for undercutting U.S. diplomacy by striking a nuclear fuel swap deal with Iran in May and for lambasting Israel in June over its botched raid on a Gaza-bound flotilla, which resulted in the deaths of nine Turks. Translating this newly aggressive foreign policy into domestic support, however, has proved trickier.

Although lashing out at Israel won him accolades from Islamist and Turkish nationalist voters, it did not help his deteriorating relations with Turkey's ethnic Kurds, who make up nearly 20 percent of the country's population. For them, the real issue is how long it will take Erdogan to make good on his promise of reforms to end their status as second-class citizens. So far, he has disappointed.

Erdogan only has himself to blame. He raised expectations last year by announcing a "Democratic Initiative," meant to turn Turkey into a true Western democracy and end the country's stubborn Kurdish insurgency. But political missteps have complicated the process. Erdogan granted an unofficial amnesty last year to 34 PKK members and supporters in Iraq, allowing them to return to Turkey. His bid at rapprochement backfired, however, when the returnees were greeted as heroes by thousands of jubilant Kurds, many chanting pro-PKK slogans, waiting on the Turkish side of the border. It was an unwanted reminder to Erdogan, and Turks in general, that the PKK is a popular force to be reckoned with.

Since then, Erdogan has hesitated to



move ahead with his stated plan to reform his country's relationship with its Kurdish minority. Draft legislation submitted by his party in March to revise Turkey's Constitution, which aims to curtail the military's significant political influence, did not include any changes to the articles limiting Kurdish freedoms and identity. The Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party, the primary legal Kurdish party that holds 20 seats in parliament, boycotted the vote, sparking accusations from Turkish nationalists that Kurds were trying to torpedo the democratic process.

The political and military situation has only deteriorated since. On June 22, Kurdish rebels took their fight to western Turkey, detonating a roadside bomb alongside a military bus in Istanbul. Four soldiers and a teenage girl were killed. Erdogan's rhetoric in response to the renewed violence has been forceful: He insisted that he will not be deterred from pursuing his peace agenda even as he promised that the rebels will "drown in their own blood." But he also seems to think he can make peace on his own, without talking to the Kurds.

But solving Turkey's persistent Kurdish problem will take more than simply opening a 24-hour Kurdish language station -- Erdogan's one concrete achievement to date. To encourage Ankara to negotiate, the PKK announced a cease-fire on April 13, 2009. Erdogan did not respond -- but the security forces did. A day after the PKK's announcement, police rounded up 53 executives and members of the legal pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party on suspicion of aiding the rebel group. To Kurds, the timing looked suspicious. The PKK had said it wanted to give Kurds and Turks a chance to solve the conflict peacefully, but in response the state arrested leading Kurdish politicians. Kurds also assumed the arrests were the prime minister's way of getting back at

the Kurdish party, which had thoroughly trounced Erdogan's Islamist-oriented AKP in March 29 local elections.

Legal assaults against Kurds' elected representatives only continued. In December 2009, the party was shut down by the Constitutional Court for its alleged links to the PKK. It reopened under a new name, but 37 senior officials were barred from politics for five years, including two parliamentarians, who also lost their seats. Last month, on June 18, prosecutors in the city of Diyarbakir charged 151 Kurdish politicians and activists -- including 8 elected mayors (most of whom are in jail pending trial) from the southeast -- with aiding the PKK. Given the growing tensions, it should have come as no surprise that on June 1, the PKK ended its one-sided ceasefire, sparking the current outbreak of violence.

In the Kurdish region, the narrowing of the democratic field has revitalized support for the guerrilla war. The few Kurdish voices calling for the PKK to disarm are now marginal. Unsurprisingly, the PKK has no shortage of new recruits.

"I am afraid my son will join the PKK because he sees what is happening to me, and says that there's no point trying to do anything through legal channels," Abdullah Demirbas, the Kurdish mayor of the Sur district of Diyarbakir, told me in June 2009. Demirbas had been suspended from his post in June 2007 by the Interior Ministry for printing informational pamphlets in Kurdish. In the March 2009 local elections, he regained his seat. But his reelection was not enough to prevent fears from becoming reality: A few weeks after Demirbas and I met, his 17-year-old son did join the rebels. The elder Demirbas was arrested at the end of 2009 in a security service roundup of Kurdish politicians.

If You Want Peace, Prepare for War

While Erdogan spent the past year talking about his plan for reform, the PKK prepared for the "what if" scenario: What if Erdogan did not stick to his promise of democratic reforms? What if the military, under attack by the judiciary for alleged coup plots against the government, actually retaliated with a coup? Turkey's military simply ignored the cease-fire, insisting the "terrorists" needed to disarm unconditionally and trust in the justice of the state. It was little surprise that inter-

mittent clashes continued. Now, with the formal end of the cease-fire, the position of both sides appears to have hardened: The military has stepped up its cross-border bombing raids while Erdogan continues to avoid pushing for political changes to better integrate the Kurds. The PKK has made clear it plans to ratchet up its political and military assaults.

Senior PKK leadership in the Kandil mountains -- a harsh stretch of terrain close to the triangle where the borders of Iraq, Iran, and Turkey meet -- are threatening to declare autonomy in the southeast. They have also resumed urban attacks, allying with the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK), a proxy force, to bomb the military bus in Istanbul. TAK was ordered shut down by imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan four years ago -- in part, due to concerns that its tactics hurt attempts to build support among Turkish liberals and could precipitate mob violence against Kurdish civilians in western cities. But hardliners inside the PKK, mainly younger militants with no memory of anything but the insurgency, have been pushing to take the fight out of the Kurdish region and hit western Turkey. The bombing in Istanbul shows that they have won the argument.

Erdogan, increasingly embattled at home and abroad, likely does not have the political capital to push forward with negotiations with the PKK or even with legally elected Kurdish politicians. He is already fighting off accusations by political opponents and secular Kemalists who distrust the prime minister's Islamist credentials that the detention of senior military officers for allegedly plotting a coup is a crude attempt to destroy the political power of the Turkish Armed Forces, a secular institution. He faces accusations from Washington -- sparked by his incendiary comments following the Israeli

attack on the Gaza-bound flotilla and his warming relations with Syria, Iran, and Hamas -- that he is an unreliable and irrational ally. At the same time, he is already starting to plan for the 2011 national elections. Sitting down with the PKK, especially after the recent spate of attacks, will not play well with his conservative Islamist base or with the nationalist Turks he is trying to woo.

Erdogan could still surprise, however -- and so could the Kurds. Although Kurdish activists publicly insist that the state must negotiate directly with Ocalan and be ready to free him as part of a settlement, they are more accommodating in private. Ocalan himself has said that Turkey does not have to talk directly to him, but can instead negotiate through the elected Kurdish representatives. Still, making peace will require both sides to adopt some useful fictions. The legal Kurdish party may not be part of the PKK, but it is under the rebel group's sway. For talks to get off the ground, Turkish officials will have to pretend they are not talking to the PKK, and the PKK will have to act as if it is not involved in negotiations.

No one should doubt that the PKK is a military organization with scant regard for democratic principles. The group does not tolerate dissent -- neither among its militants, who can be killed for stepping out of line, nor within Kurdish society, where people critical of the organization are isolated and threatened. But it is also a pragmatic organization which, in many ways, is as sensitive to the demands of its supporters as Erdogan is to his voting base. If Erdogan truly wants a partner for peace, he is likely to find one in the PKK. But if he wants to first destroy the PKK, as his public comments indicate, and then look for Kurds with whom to negotiate, peace will elude him.

Erdogan's goal should be to transform the PKK through negotiations -- giving PKK rebels a reason and the political space (including amnesty and a lifting of restrictions on pro-Kurdish political activity) to put down their weapons and join the democratic process. Ending the PKK's war requires recognizing that the organization, despite its brutality and anti-democratic methods, has won legitimacy among Kurds by dint of refusal to give up fighting for their rights, whatever the means. The prime minister needs to accept this.

Back in the 1990s, it seemed Kurds might be satisfied if they simply received equal rights to education in their own language and other cultural freedoms. No longer is this the case. Their vision is now one of autonomy, if not a federal structure similar to what Iraqi Kurds enjoy across the border, coupled with full amnesty for PKK rebels. Kurds will have to compromise: Ocalan is unlikely to ever leave prison, senior PKK commanders may be barred from returning to Turkey, and the contours of autonomy will have to be jointly decided. But since 1999, when a legal Kurdish party first stood in local elections and won dozens of municipalities, Kurds have developed a taste for governing themselves and are unlikely to back down.

Turkey must accept that the Kurdish problem is not primarily the result of inadequate economic development, or meddling foreign powers using the Kurds to weaken Turkey, as is often claimed in Ankara. Erdogan, so pleased with the foreign accolades he has received for standing up for the Palestinians in Gaza, would do well to show the same courage when it comes to Turkey's Kurdish citizens.



Syria detains 400 Kurdish rebels in raids

ISTANBUL - July 1, 2010 - (Reuters) -

SYRIAN security forces detained 400 people in five cities in Syria in an operation against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) separatist guerrilla group, Turkey's state news agency Anatolian said on Thursday.

Turkey has sought the support of its neighbours in the region and the United States in its fight against the outlawed group, which has killed more than 50 Turkish soldiers in the last two months in escalating violence.

Turkey's Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan, facing public anger at the government's inability to stem the rising violence ahead of next year's elections, has called on allies to cut off funds for the rebels and extradite suspected militants to Turkey.

The PKK is active in Turkey's impoverished southeast as well as Syria and in Iran through an offshoot called the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK).

Syria and Turkey came to the brink of war in 1998 over Syrian support for the PKK, but political and trade ties between Ankara and Damascus have warmed since then.

The PKK also has bases in northern Iraq, where Turkey and the United States have agreed to share intelligence on the group's activities. Washington and the European Union, like Ankara, consider the PKK a terrorist organisation.

The PKK has stepped up attacks on the military after calling off its one-year truce on June 1, accusing the government of failing to find a political resolution to the 26-year conflict. Four Turkish soldiers were wounded on Wednesday in a PKK attack in Van in the southeast.

The AK Party's efforts to expand cultural and political rights for Turkey's Kurdish citizens, which make up around 15-20 percent of the population, was met with hostility in parliament and lost Erdogan political capital in nationalist circles.

Oil Refinery To Be Established in Kirkuk

By HEMIN BABAN

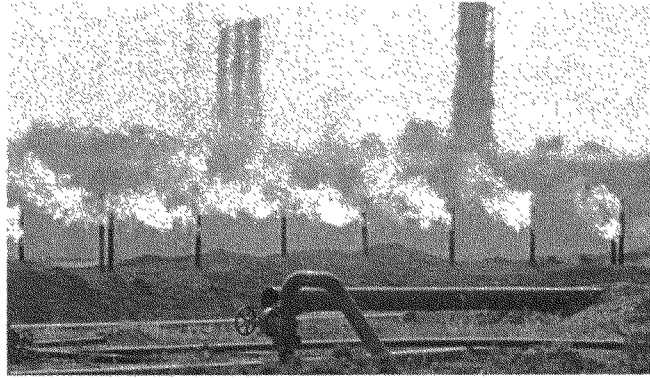
Royal Dutch Shell Company has announced that it is going to build an oil refinery in the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, a step not only making Iraq less reliant on foreign countries' refineries, but also employing thousands of Iraqis.

The refinery will cost an estimated US\$ 4 billion and have the capacity to refine 150,000 bpd. Deputy Chairman of the Oil and Industry Committee in Kirkuk, Turhan Muzafar, said that the refinery will lessen exporting oil from the giant oil field of Babagurgur in Kirkuk, which is now as many as 600-700 thousand bpd.

"It provides the people of Kirkuk with around 4,000 job opportunities" said Muzafar.

Muzafar says that Kirkuk is in a dire need of a refinery because it has had no new refinery built since the establishment of the Iraqi state in the early 1920s.

Kirkuk, largely populated by the Kurds, has historically been ignored by the Arab regimes, and is now a victim of a constitutional deadlock which defines it



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image Flames are seen at Babagurgur oil field in Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad in August 2009. Photo by Reuters

as a "disputed region" between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Erbil and the Central Government in Baghdad.

The Arabs and Turcomans, backed by Baghdad and Turkey, are against the constitutional solution of the city fearing that it will ultimately put the city under Kurdish control.

According to the Article 140 of the constitution, the people of Kirkuk are to decide through a referendum whether they want to be part of KRG or Baghdad.

The refinery is expected to play a role in the reconstruction of Kirkuk since a dollar per refined barrel of oil will be reserved for construction projects in the city, according to Muzafar.

According to a press release from Kirkuk's Provincial Council, an initial agreement has been signed with Shell, a multinational company, to build the refinery near Qush Qaya, 20 Km north of

Kirkuk.

"Shell Company won the contract for building the refinery near Kirkuk" said Jamal Mawlood Bapir, member of the Oil and Industry Committee in Kirkuk.

"The construction of the refinery will require 4,000 labors. According to the contract 300 labors must be Kirkuk residents" he said.

Royal Dutch Shell, a British-Dutch Company, is the second biggest energy company in the world. It was founded in 1907 and its headquarters are in Hague in the Netherlands. The United States own only 4% of the company.

"The oil to be purified by the refinery will not only be for Kirkuk people but for other parts of Iraq as well," said Muzafar.

In the last few months, Iraq had bided out four oil refineries to be created in Kirkuk, Karbala, Dhyqar and Missan. Around 100 international and local companies have participated in the bid

GULF NEWS

July 17, 2010

Turkey unveils its own drone aircraft

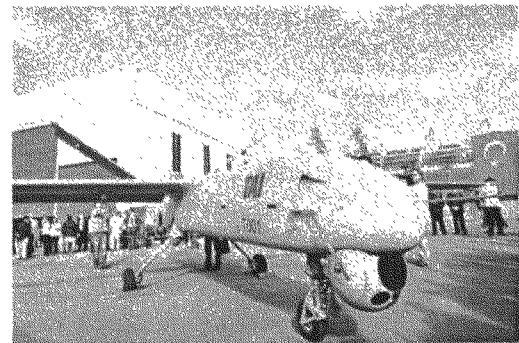
Turkey's eagerness to produce its own military technology mirrors its increasingly robust and independent diplomacy in the region.

Ankara: Turkey yesterday unveiled its first drone aircraft, a surveillance craft able to fly for 24-hour stretches over the rugged mountains where Kurdish rebels are waging a deadly insurgency.

Turkey's eagerness to produce its own military technology mirrors its increasingly robust and independent diplomacy in the region. And producing its own drone fleet would allow Turkey to sever an important link with Israel, which has provided Turkey with drones even amid rising tensions over Israeli policy toward the Gaza Strip.

While the success of the Turkish-made drone is far from assured, Turkish engineers said they were confident it would become part of the country's arsenal. Ozcan Ertem, head of the project, said an armed version of the Anka, or Phoenix, was possible but not in the works for now.

Some 43 countries have now developed unmanned aerial vehicles, which have proved to be extremely effective in gathering intelligence and, in US hands, staging attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq.



Turkey's first drone airplane called Anka or Phoenix is seen during a roll out ceremony at the TAI - Turkish Aerospace Space Industries Inc., near Ankara, yesterday. AP

Ertem said four or five countries are expected to place orders for the Anka once the Turkish Air Force issues an order probably later this year. The first system was expected to be delivered to

the Turkish Air Force in 2013.

The drone, with a 56-foot wingspan and an ability to fly for 24 hours at a speed of 75 knots per hour and height of 9,144 metres is expected to spy mostly on Kurdish rebels. Turkey has purchased 10 massive Heron drones from Israel and their delivery was expected to be completed in August.

The defence cooperation goes beyond drones — Israel has upgraded some of Turkey's combat jets and tanks with modern

radar equipment, according to defence officials and analysts, but the relationship is threatened by the dispute over Israel's May 31 raid on an aid ship that attempted to break its blockade of Gaza.

The Turkish defence industry is "not yet world-class, but certainly growing. However, it is still dependent on foreign builders and likely will stay that way for a while," said Peter Singer, director of the 21st Century Defence Initiative at the Brookings Institution.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH.....JULY 16, 2010



Syria: Al-Asad's Decade in Power Marked by Repression

Rights Suppressed, Activists Detained, Media Censored, Kurds Sidelined

(New York) - President Bashar al-Asad has not delivered on his promises to increase public freedoms and improve his government's human rights record during a decade in power, Human Rights Watch said in a report released today on the eve of the anniversary of his accession to power.

The 35-page report, "A Wasted Decade: Human Rights in Syria during Bashar al-Asad's First Ten Years in Power," reviews al-Asad's human rights record in five key areas: repression of political and human rights activism; restrictions on freedom of expression; torture; treatment of the Kurds; and Syria's legacy of enforced disappearances. The verdict is bleak.

"Whether President al-Asad wanted to be a reformer but was hampered by an entrenched old guard or has been just another Arab ruler unwilling to listen to criticism, the outcome for Syria's people is the same: no freedom, no rights," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "Al-Asad's record after 10 years is that he has done virtually nothing to improve his country's human rights record."

In his inaugural speech on July 17, 2000, al-Asad spoke of the need for "creative thinking," "transparency," and "democracy." However, the period of tolerance that followed al-Asad's ascent to power was short-lived, and Syria's prisons quickly filled again with political prisoners, journalists, and human rights activists. In the most recent examples, Syrian criminal courts in the last three weeks separately sentenced two of Syria's leading human rights lawyers, Haytham al-Maleh, 78, and Muhanad al-Hasani, 42, to three years in jail each for their criticisms of Syria's human rights record.

Syria's security agencies, the feared mukhabarat, detain people without arrest warrants and torture with complete impunity. Two years after prison authorities and military police used firearms to quell a riot that began on July 5, 2008, at Sednaya prison, Syrian authorities have not revealed the fate of at least 42 detainees, at least nine of whom are believed to have been killed. Censorship is prevalent and extends to popular websites such as Facebook, YouTube, and Blogger.

Promises by al-Asad for new laws that would broaden political and civil society participation have not materialized. In March 2005 he told journalists that "the coming period will be one of freedom for political parties" in Syria. However, Syria is still a de facto single party state with only the Ba`ath Party able to



operate freely.

"Whatever hopes Syrians might have had for a new era of political openness under al-Asad's rule have been dashed," Whitson said.

The Kurdish minority, estimated to be 10 percent of the population, is denied basic group rights, including the right to learn Kurdish in schools or celebrate Kurdish festivals, such as Nowruz (Kurdish New Year). Official repression of Kurds increased further after Syrian Kurds held large-scale demonstrations, some of which turned violent, throughout northern Syria in March 2004 to voice long-simmering grievances. Despite repeated promises by al-Asad, an estimated 300,000 stateless Kurds are still waiting for the Syrian government to solve their predicament by granting them citizenship.

In public interviews and speeches, al-Asad has justified the lack of political reforms either by arguing that his priority is economic reform or by contending that regional circumstances have interfered with his reform agenda. However, a review of Syria's record shows a consistent policy of repressing dissent regardless of international or regional pressures on Syria.

Syria has emerged from its Western-imposed isolation since 2007, with officials from the US and European countries reaching out to Damascus and regularly meeting with al-Asad.

"President al-Asad has no excuse to continue to stall on needed reforms to his country's human rights record," Whitson said. "Now that he has emerged from his internationally imposed isolation, he should open up his country."

Americans cash in on Kurdish gratitude in Iraq



AYMAN OGHANNA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Thousands of foreigners live and work in the Kurdish region in places like English Village, a complex for Western workers in Erbil.

ERBIL, IRAQ

Many Bush-era officials now chase business deals or serve as paid advisers

BY SAM DAGHER

Shortly after leaving his job last year as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Zalmay Khalilzad started negotiations with Iraqi Kurdish leaders to become a paid adviser.

His stint as adviser to the board of investment of the semiautonomous Kurdish region lasted about seven months. In May, Mr. Khalilzad, who once also served as ambassador to Iraq, became a board member of RAK Petroleum, an oil and gas investment company based in Ras al-Khaimah, one of the United Arab Emirates.

RAK is a significant shareholder in DNO, a major Norwegian oil producer in the Kurdish region that has been mired in controversy for its involvement in a deal that granted an interest in its oil field to a former U.S. diplomat, Peter W. Galbraith, for help in negotiating the contract with the Kurds. Last month DNO nominated Mr. Khalilzad to its board.

As the United States winds down its war effort in Iraq, Mr. Khalilzad is among a growing list of former U.S. diplomats and military officials now chasing business opportunities in the oil-rich Kurdish region or acting as advisers to

its government. Some visit regularly, while others call the region and its booming capital, Erbil, home. Kurds treat them like dignitaries.

The region, Iraqi Kurdistan, may be the only place in the country where Americans are still embraced as liberators. The authorities boast that no Americans have ever been attacked here.

Critics say these former officials are cashing in on a costly and contentious war they played a role in. The way they see it, though, they have every right after leaving their government posts.

Business and politics are inseparable in a region dominated by two governing parties and families, both of which have been accused of autocratic rule and corruption.

Many of the former U.S. officials turned entrepreneurs are also staunch advocates of the Kurdish cause, including statehood, which clashes with the U.S. policy of preserving Iraq's unity and being at equal distance from all groups.

The Kurds, in turn, have leveraged their U.S. connections, which in some cases go back decades, into an impressive lobbying and public relations machine in Washington.

Iraqi Kurdistan ranks among the top 10 buyers of lobbying services in the United States, according to the Foreign Lobbyist Influence Tracker, a joint project of ProPublica and the Sunlight Foundation. "They love these consultants here," said Denise Natali, an American academic and author based in Sulaimaniya, Iraqi Kurdistan's other main

city. "It brings them attention, recognition and credibility."

Ms. Natali herself has advised corporations like Hunt Oil, which was among dozens of foreign oil companies awarded concessions in Iraqi Kurdistan in defiance of the central government in Baghdad.

Mr. Khalilzad's firm, Khalilzad Associates, describes itself as serving "clients at the nexus of commerce and public policies" and is advising businesses seeking opportunities in Afghanistan and Iraq.

He said he ended his advisory contract with the Kurdish government after his company started advising "multinational corporations" investing in the Kurdish region and Iraq. "We felt it created a possible conflict of interest to represent both sides," he said.

He said he was trying to find a way to pay rent on an apartment in Erbil provided to him free by the Kurdish authorities as part of his contract. The region's Oil Ministry owns the apartment.

Mr. Khalilzad made several high-profile appearances last year while on contract for the Kurds. They included an election rally for the regional president, Massoud Barzani. Mr. Khalilzad, along with most of the region's top leaders, sits on the board of regents of the American University of Iraq in Sulaimaniya.

John Agresto, who served as a senior adviser for higher education under the Coalition Provisional Authority, which ran the country under occupation, helped found the university with the strong

backing of Barham Salih, the current prime minister of Iraqi Kurdistan. Mr. Agresto said he had accomplished in the Kurdish region what he had failed to do in the rest of Iraq, namely introduce U.S.-style liberal arts education. "The American brand is much more welcome here," Mr. Agresto said. "This is probably the last place in the whole world where George Bush could still win an election."

The majority of Kurds are grateful for the U.S. support of the no-flight zone in the 1990s that helped them establish autonomy and the subsequent toppling of Saddam Hussein. Thousands of foreigners, including many Americans, now live and work in Iraqi Kurdistan, enjoying comforts that are rare in the rest of the country.

"We love them," Haro Ahmed gushes about Americans. His family owns a real estate conglomerate, whose assets include a sprawling mall in Erbil that would not be out of place anywhere in suburbia in the United States. Mr. Ahmed has reserved space in the mall for several American fast-food chains and says he is in talks with Marriott to build a hotel and golf course nearby.

"This is probably the last place in the whole world where George Bush could still win an election."

Jay Garner, the retired lieutenant general who briefly headed the reconstruction effort in Iraq after the U.S.-led invasion, says that it is precisely this attitude, coupled with the region's oil wealth and strategic location next to Iran, Syria and Turkey, that makes Kurds the perfect partner in Iraq.

"Why we do not wrap our arms around them, I do not understand," General Garner said.

He said he did free consulting for the Kurds. But he also sits on the advisory board of Vast Exploration, a company based in Calgary, Alberta, that is prospecting for oil in Qara Dagh, an area of Iraqi Kurdistan where drilling started in May.

Kurdish leaders have grown impatient with the administration of President Barack Obama, particularly its mounting pressure on Kurds to make

concessions in a continuing dispute with Baghdad over internal borders and the sharing of oil and gas resources. This contrasts with their close relationship with their American friends, most of them Bush-era officials.

"Kurdish officials are frustrated with us," one senior U.S. diplomat said on the condition of anonymity under diplomatic ground rules. "They say, 'The minute you turn your back, Baghdad will stab you.'"

Harry J. Schute Jr., a former U.S. Army colonel who commanded a civil affairs battalion in northern Iraq after the invasion and later became the Coalition Provisional Authority's chief of staff in the north, says Iraqi Kurdistan is the "poster child" for what the United States has been trying to accomplish in the rest of Iraq.

"There are not a lot of places in the Middle East where they are saying, 'Pick us, we want to be your friends,'" Mr. Schute said. He now runs a security consulting practice in Erbil and sits on the board of Vigilance, a joint venture between U.S. and British security contractors and the Kurdish government itself.

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune
JULY 17-18, 2010

Car bomb targets police in former Saddam stronghold

BAGHDAD

BY TIMOTHY WILLIAMS
AND OMAR AL-JAWOSHY

A car bomb that exploded near an ice cream shop in northern Iraq killed nine people, including five police officers, in a wealthy area of Tikrit, the hometown of the former dictator Saddam Hussein, according to the authorities.

Tikrit, while relatively peaceful, remains a center of support for the Sunni Arab insurgency in Iraq and is where many former military officers and government officials who worked under Mr. Hussein continue to live.

The bomb appeared to be aimed at a large group of Iraqi police officers who had gathered in the area on Thursday morning, the authorities said.

Among the 15 people wounded were nine police officers — a frequent target of Sunni insurgents.

More than four months after national elections, Iraq remains deadlocked over the selection of a new prime minister — a stalemate that many Iraqi military and political leaders have blamed for the country's continuing political violence.

Former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's political alliance won two more seats in Parliament than the party of the current

prime minister, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, but not enough to form a government without a coalition. Negotiations between various factions have continued this week.

After the bombing in Tikrit on Thursday, Ahmed Jassim, who owns the ice cream shop in the mixed commercial and residential district near where the explosion occurred, said there had been rumors that the area might be the target of an attack.

"We heard that there were gunmen who intended to blow up a car on the street, and someone did that today," Mr. Jassim said as he stood outside his badly damaged ice cream parlor. "This is my shop. It's totally destroyed."

"These cowards want to exact revenge on Iraq — and especially on Tikrit, because it is a safe city," Mr. Jassim added.

Khalid D. Ali contributed reporting from Baghdad, and employees of The New York Times from Salahuddin and Anbar Provinces.

Hotel fire kills dozens

A hotel in the northern Iraqi city of Sulaimaniya burned to the ground overnight, killing at least 29 people, in-

cluding four Americans, Tim Arango reported from Baghdad, citing a government official in Erbil, the provincial capital.

Twenty people were injured, and the death toll could climb higher. The five-story hotel, the Soma, caught fire because of a short circuit, the government official said.

Terraseis, a company headquartered in Dubai that works with oil companies to conduct geographical surveys and compile seismic data, said a number of its workers were staying at the hotel. The owner of the hotel, Newroz Abdulla, said that Americans, Canadians, Australians and Britons were staying in the hotel.

Sulaimaniya is 260 kilometers, or 160 miles, north of Baghdad, in the semi-autonomous Kurdish region of Iraq, and some of the victims may have worked for foreign oil companies, The Associated Press reported. At least four children were among the dead, according to The A.P.

Ahmadinejad renews drive to crush traditional conservatives

TEHRAN

Ahmadinejad and allies are striving to neutralize traditional conservatives

BY WILLIAM YONG
AND ROBERT F. WORTH

Having suppressed the opposition uprising that followed last summer's disputed presidential election, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his backers in the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps are renewing their efforts to crush another rival group — Iran's traditional conservatives.

Conservative rivals of Mr. Ahmadinejad have voiced their concerns publicly, accusing him of sidelining clerics and the Parliament, pursuing an "extremist" ideology and scheming to consolidate control over all branches of Iran's political system.

"Now that they think they have ejected the reformists, maybe they think it is time to remove their principalist opponents," Morteza Nabavi, the editor of a mainstream conservative newspaper, said in an unusually blunt interview published Friday in the weekly *Panjereh*. (Iranian conservatives, including Mr. Ahmadinejad's group, prefer the term "principalism" to "fundamentalism.")

Mr. Ahmadinejad has often fed the traditional conservatives' fears; he has himself referred to the divide among conservatives, warning that "the regime has only one party" in a speech published Monday on his official Web site that provoked outrage among his conservative rivals.

An Iranian political analyst, who refused to be identified for fear of retribution, said, "I think we are seeing a kind of Iranian McCarthyism, with Ahmadinejad disposing of all the people who are not with him by accusing them of being anti-revolutionary or un-Islamic."

In a sense, the power struggle among conservatives is a return to the status quo prior to last year's presidential election, which unleashed the worst internal dissent Iran has seen in decades. The street protests were widely viewed in the West as a fundamental challenge to Iran's theocracy. But after a year during which outpourings of public anger failed to effect tangible change, the dust has settled to once again reveal a more basic split within Iran's political elite, albeit with renewed force and hostility.

The rift is partly a generational one,

with Mr. Ahmadinejad leading a combative cohort of conservatives supported by the Revolutionary Guards. On the other side is an older generation of leaders who derive their authority from their links to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the founder of Iran's Islamic revolution in 1979. Reformist lawmakers now represent a largely impotent minority in the Parliament.

"Ahmadinejad wants a new definition of conservatism," the political analyst said. "He wants to say that we are the true conservatives and not you anymore."

The older conservatives, including clerics, lawmakers and leaders of the bazaar, Iran's ancient system of trade and commerce, have long questioned Mr. Ahmadinejad's competence and even accused his ministers of corruption. But recently they have gone further, accusing Mr. Ahmadinejad's faction of distorting the principles of the

Islamic revolution and following a messianic cult that rejects the intermediary role of the clergy.

To some, those criticisms amount to a veiled plea by the old-line conservatives to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, to rein in the president or even to remove him.

The divisions erupted last month when conservative members of Parliament voted to block Mr. Ahmadinejad's efforts to seize financial control of Iran's largest academic institution, Azad University. The university was founded by Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, the former president and a central figure among traditional conservatives. After the vote, a spokesman for Mr. Ahmadinejad declared that the lawmakers had "aided the conspiracy," a phrase often used against street protesters and terrorist groups.

The next day, a government-backed demonstration formed outside the Parliament building, with protesters denouncing Ali Larijani, the speaker of Parliament and a conservative rival to Mr. Ahmadinejad.

"We will reveal the treacherous M.P.'s," read a poster held up by a chador-clad female protester in pictures published by the Iranian Labor News Agency, a semiofficial media outlet. In the holy city of Qum, pro-government students distributed leaflets titled "Mr. Larijani, give us back our vote; you no longer represent us."

Mr. Larijani struck back, declaring the his critics as "impudent, without logic and controversy mongers."



Mr. Ahmadinejad leads the conservatives.

Ayatollah Khamenei has tried to appear neutral in the university dispute, issuing orders to Mr. Ahmadinejad and Mr. Rafsanjani that both sides should suspend efforts to make changes to its charter.

Since then, another front has opened up against the administration. Iran's centuries-old merchant class, the bazaaris, have risen up to challenge Mr. Ahmadinejad's plans to squeeze them for more tax revenue. The Grand Bazaar, a vast, labyrinthine complex of arched tunnels and courtyards selling an amazing variety of goods in Tehran, has been closed in protest for more than a week, and the strike has spread to other major cities.

Though the political dimension of this dispute has yet to fully take shape, Iran's bazaar class has strong links with the traditional conservative party, the Motalefeh, whose members also have key positions in the Azad University hierarchy. Mr. Rafsanjani, the cleric and former president, was once a Motalefeh member and continues to maintain strong links.

Traditional conservatives have clashed with Mr. Ahmadinejad's administration over a number of issues in the past year, including controversial cabinet appointments and a major effort to overhaul Iran's decades-old system of

state subsidies. In April, tensions rose further when conservative lawmakers called for the arrest of First Vice President Mohammad Reza Rahimi on corruption charges, saying he had masterminded a scheme to steal millions of dollars worth of public funds.

But lately, the language has sharpened on both sides.

On Monday, one prominent conservative lawmaker, Omidvar Rezai, warned

that Mr. Ahmadinejad's government had violated the Iranian Constitution and that the Parliament "may have to make use of its legal powers," including impeachment and removal of the president, according to Khabar Online, a news Web site.

Last month, many conservatives were shocked when Hassan Khomeini, the grandson of Ayatollah Khomeini, was prevented from making a speech by

pro-Ahmadinejad hecklers at an event to commemorate his grandfather's death.

"The behavior of extremists who are not open to debate or logic has opened a divide within the principalists," said Mohammad Ashfrafi-Esfahani, a senior cleric and member of the body that oversees Iran's political parties, in comments published by the Iranian Labor News Agency. "This group spares no one, not even the house of the Imam." (Ayatollah Khomeini is referred to in Iran as the Imam.)

A June 21 editorial on Khabar Online, which is believed to be linked to Mr. Larjani, warned of "an extreme movement, wearing the clothes of Islam and the revolution" that has been the cause of "great costs" for Iran's principalists.

Mr. Nabavi, the newspaper editor, also suggested that Mr. Ahmadinejad's faction belongs to a cult — banned decades ago by Ayatollah Khomeini — that puts great emphasis on the prophesied return of Shiite Islam's 12th imam, who is said to have disappeared in the ninth century. The accusation is familiar, but conservatives have until now refrained from making it so clearly and openly.

"These people say they have direct contact with the 12th imam so they can lead us," Mr. Nabavi said in the interview. "This is not just a matter of opposition to government by the clergy but something much deeper."

Sunni group behind dual bombings in Iran, it says

TEHRAN

Dozens die and hundreds are wounded in attack on Revolutionary Guards

BY WILLIAM YONG
AND ROBERT F. WORTH

The Sunni militant group Jundallah claimed responsibility Friday for a suicide bombing attack outside a mosque in southeast Iran that killed 26 people and wounded 300, in one of the deadliest terrorist attacks Iran has seen in years.

The dual bombings Thursday night underscored the continuing threat of religious and ethnic violence in Iran that is unrelated to the political upheavals of the past year. The victims included members of the powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, officials said, which Jundallah has targeted repeatedly in the past.

Jundallah, which claims to be fighting on behalf of Sunni Muslim members of the Baluch ethnic group in Iran and Pakistan, has been a thorn in the side of Iranian security services for years, carrying out repeated bombings in Zahedan and other southeastern cities. It claimed responsibility for an attack in October 2009 that killed 40 people, including 15 members of the Revolutionary Guards.

In its Internet statement, Jundallah said Friday that two of its "faithful and brave sons" had detonated their bombs at a gathering of the Revolutionary Guards at a religious meeting hall in Zahedan to commemorate their organization.

Iran said it had struck a major blow against the group earlier this year after it captured Jundallah's former leader, Abdolmalek Rigi, and executed him in June. The Internet statement identified the

bombers in the mosque bombing as Abdolbaset and Muhammad Rigi, relatives of Abdolmalek Rigi, the former leader.

Iranian officials have repeatedly accused the United States, Britain and Israel of supporting Jundallah, whose name means "soldiers of God" in Arabic. Those accusations surfaced again on Friday when Yadollah Javani, a high-ranking official in the Revolutionary Guards, was quoted as saying that the attack "points to the involvement of terrorist groups under the auspices of the United States, Israel and some Western countries" seeking to foment sectarian strife.

State media, quoting an official from the Interior Ministry, said the first bomb went off when a person wearing women's clothes approached the entrance to Zahedan's main mosque during Thursday evening prayers, killing three or four people.

Minutes later, after a crowd of helpers and onlookers had gathered, a second bomber struck, killing and wounding many more. The death toll, initially estimated at 20, rose to 26, local officials said Friday, and some of the wounded had life-threatening injuries.

Zahedan lies in the province of Sistan-Baluchistan, where Jundallah says it is fighting official discrimination against the Baluch Sunni minority. The province is predominantly Sunni Muslim while Iran is predominantly Shiite.

In a statement in Washington, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton condemned the attacks.

"This attack, along with the recent attacks in Uganda, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Algeria," she said, "underscores the global community's need to work together to combat terrorist organizations that threaten the lives of innocent civilians all around the world."

The authorities in Tehran have said that the insurgents, operating in an area close to the borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan, are linked to Al Qaeda, Israel, Britain and the United States. The three counties deny supporting Jundallah, and the claimed link to Al Qaeda has not been independently corroborated.

Robert F. Worth reported from Washington. Alan Cowell contributed reporting from Paris.



Turkey's dual cause in northern Iraq

* Business New Europe
By Justin Vela

Nothing encapsulates the foreign policy of Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) better than the presence of more than 1,000 Turkish companies in Kurdish northern Iraq, which are reconstructing the region at a breakneck pace and planning to stay on to reap further rewards as the region develops.

Yet there is a dual cause to the approximately \$7bn in trade that has grown up between Turkey and northern Iraq. On one side there is business and investment; on the other there is the desire to be able to put pressure on Baghdad and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) to help fight Kurdish rebels, largely directed from a leadership based in northern Iraq's Qandil Mountains, who in June ended their latest ceasefire in the 26-year conflict and resumed attacks inside Turkey.

Today, Turkish firms provide about 80% of northern Iraq's food and materials. Trade continues to rise and the region views itself as a gateway to the rest of Iraq and, also, Iran. In the city of Sulaymaniyah, Turkish businesses are easy to spot. Names such as Dogan and the Ozboy furniture shop and Istikbal are easily picked out on the main street. Two new overpasses were recently completed by Turkish firms, as well as the

airport and repairs to Sulaymaniyah University. "The KRG government gives [Turkish business] a secure place," says one Kurdish Iraqi businessman. "We need them like they need us. They are near to us in culture, it is easy to cooperate. In politics there is a big problem, but in one way we want to explain by letting them come here that we are not enemies."

Though tensions in Iraq are far from settled, Iraqi Kurds essentially control their own territory in the north of the country through their own parliament and administration. Though they have a large degree of sympathy for Turkish Kurds, they do not currently suffer the same kind of repression and welcome the Turkish companies whose presence outranks all other foreign companies. "They are not a small country, they have a lot of experience," the Kurdish businessman notes.

If there is any hesitance from Kurds about the Turkish companies, it is that they by and large bring in their own workers from Turkey instead of hiring locals. The difference in the cost of labour is not much, while the difference in experience, with Iraq sequestered under an embargo for years, is great. Wanting Kurdish businesses and workers to gain experience, local businessmen are pressuring the KRG to make the Turkish companies form more joint ventures similar to those mandated in the Gulf states.

No conflict of interests

The Turkish government has no qualms about the connection between fostering business in northern Iraq - an AKP official recently led a delegation of 200 Turkish businessmen to the region - and trying to gain influence so they can eradicate the Kurdish Worker's Party (PKK), who without their bases in the Qandil Mountains would find survival far more difficult. "Trade is the key of politics... Improving business ties will eradicate the problems between us," Zafer Caglayan, Turkey's minister for foreign trade, recently told a local newspaper.

Though the PKK insists that all Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran must form what it calls a "national democratic union," the group also insists that internal divisions between Kurds must be left to Kurds to fix on their own. Interviewed in the Qandil Mountains, top PKK commander Murat Karayilan said: "I cannot evaluate the KRG in the sense of good or bad. We know the aim of the Turkish state is not only to weaken us, but also to weaken Kurds everywhere. It is a strategic approach."

In June, Kurdish President Massoud Barzani visited Ankara at the invitation of Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu. Barzani's trip was widely viewed as a success for both sides and only a month after Barzani's visit to

Ankara, the Turkish government demanded the KRG arrest 248 PKK commanders who are known to operate in the Qandil Mountains, even apparently offering the option of a joint operation. Turkey's frequent bombing and cross-border incursions into northern Iraq, which have killed and injured Iraqi Kurdish citizens, are all but ignored by the KRG.

Though he has condemned the PKK carrying out attacks from northern Iraq, Barzani doesn't appear ready to give in to Turkey and push the PKK further into the mountains. A long-time advocate of a Kurdish state, Barzani demands that the oil rich city of Kirkuk be included in Iraqi Kurdistan and has disagreements with both Turkey and the central government in Baghdad on how to solve the ethnic tension between Turkmen, Kurds and Arabs there, as well as disagreement over future control of oil resources. When Turkish officials raised the issue over Kirkuk, Barzani replied that if Turkey interfered, "we'll interfere in [the Kurdish Turkish city] Diyarbakir."

Yet as Iraq forms a new government and oil and gas begins flowing, much of it up through Turkey, the KRG may find the Kurdish guerrillas are getting in the way. Blood may be thicker than water, but perhaps not oil.

☆☆☆



Iraqi Kurds to clamp down on oil smuggling

ARBIL, Iraq (Reuters) - July 19 2010
By Ahmed Rasheed and Jim Loney

IRAQI KURDISTAN'S cabinet approved stricter measures including stepped-up border surveillance on Monday to stop any illegal trade in crude oil across the borders of the semi-autonomous northern region, regional prime minister Barham Salih said.

Salih also said in an interview with Reuters that he hoped legal exports of crude from Kurdistan, which were halted last year amid a dispute with Baghdad, could be restarted quickly.

But he said his government was still awaiting a decision from the central government on how exactly foreign oil firms would be paid for investment costs.

In an interview at his office in Arbil, Salih said his government was not aware of any illegal crude traffic across Iraqi Kurdistan's bor-

ders despite reports of long lines of tankers crossing into neighboring Iran every day.

The reports said the trucks carried both crude and refined oil products, and challenged U.S. efforts to impose sanctions on Iran over its nuclear research program.

Under Iraqi law any export of crude has to be done through the State Oil Marketing Organization, the federal government marketing company.

"We have no interest in being a violator of either the Iraqi constitution or international law," he said. "I can tell you we have no knowledge of any crude oil passing through the borders of Kurdistan and if they do, these are illegal and illicit."

Among the measures passed by his cabinet on Monday were enhanced monitoring of border crossings to prevent unauthorized products from leaving, and increased surveillance of tankers to ensure

they comply with Kurdish and federal law, Salih said.

He also said his government would make sure refineries and plants supplying the tankers were regulated and that fuel from other areas of Iraq was properly monitored and accounted for.

Salih said fuel trade across the border was hardly unique to Kurdistan. "It is taking place across all the borders of Iraq."

BILLIONS LOST

Salih said Iraq and its Kurdish region were both losing billions of dollars because of the halt of exports from Iraqi Kurdistan and placed the ball for resumption back in Baghdad's court.

Arbil and Baghdad have been at loggerheads over oil contracts the KRG signed with foreign oil firms like Norway's DNO and Turkey's Genel Enerji.

Oil exports flowed briefly last year from two fields, Taq Taq and Tawke, before the central government's refusal to pay the companies turned off the tap.

The Iraqi cabinet has since approved a proposal that would compensate the firms for their exploration and production costs but would not cover their profits.

"We have asked Baghdad to give us a specific proposal about how these companies will be paid for their costs," Salih said.

"We are waiting for the results of this matter and I very much hope that we and our colleagues in Baghdad will be able to settle this quickly because every barrel of oil lost is a barrel lost for all the Iraqi people."

Iraqi Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani said recently that he was "surprised" the Kurds had not resumed exports and said they should be started immediately.

The KRG says it has the right to regulate its own oil industry while Baghdad says the contracts were illegal because they were signed without its approval and consent.

"I am hopeful ... that things are on the right track but I hope we can expedite it and get it done," Salih said. "Get it done."

TODAYS ZAMAN

21 July 2010



DOGU ERGIL

COLUMNISTS

Russia, Syria and the Kurds

Turkey has recently been preoccupied with Israel's ties with the Kurds of Iraq as well as the notorious Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). But what about Russia, with a long history of relations with Kurds since Tsarist times through the USSR and now federal Russia?

Kurds are making endless entreaties to Russia to pay more attention to their pleas for a state of their own. But Russia, observing the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of states where Kurds live, has by and large stayed clear of such advances.

In the recent past close to 1 million Kurds lived in the territory of the former USSR, which comprised Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. Some of these Kurdish enclaves are not happy that where they have been living has moved to the Russian Federation. It is estimated that today about 400,000 Kurds live in the Russian Federation. They are mainly settled in the cities of St. Petersburg and Moscow as well as the Republic of Adygea, Krasnodar Krai and Stavropol and in the regions of Tambov, Yaroslavl, Saratov and Nizhny Novgorod.

Russia's Kurds have created their civic organizations that interact with

the country's governmental and legislative structures. More than 20 Kurdish social organizations in Russia and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries have created the International Union of Kurdish Social Organizations. They are active in the socio-political life of Nizhny Novgorod, urging the Russian authorities to be more active in Kurdish affairs outside the country.

These organizations call on Russia to support peaceful solutions to the Kurdish issue that has become a source of political unrest in many countries in the Middle East. They urge the Russian government to call for an international conference based on the model of the ones convened previously for Bosnia and Afghanistan. Does this mean we will see Russia more involved in the Kurdish issue, which is already a very complex one?

Here is an example of how complex the issue is: Presently Syrian troops and Kurdish rebels under the umbrella of the PKK are locked in fierce battle in northeast Syria. Hundreds of Kurds are reported dead. This may be a routine reflex by the Syrian armed forces. What is new is that the Syrian campaign is backed by Heron spy drones Israel sold Turkey, reportedly made accessible on the personal orders of Prime Minister Tayyip Recep Erdogan.

This move offers a golden opportunity for the opponents of Turkey and pro-Israeli parties to accuse Turkey of becoming the first NATO member to make advanced Western military technology available for

adversaries of the West and Israel. Their argument is that Syria is a strong ally of radical Iran and an active sponsor of terrorist organizations like Hezbollah. Following intense exchanges between Jerusalem and Washington, the NATO command has urged Turkey to stop its support. Ankara has reportedly not yet responded.

The drones are being used to track Kurds in their movements across Syria's borders. The unmanned aerial vehicles assistance to Damascus is said to be in breach of the Israel-Turkish sales contract, which barred their use in the service of hostile states or entities. Again, commentators state that both Syria and Hezbollah, Iran's external arm in Lebanon (both enemies of Israel) now have a unique opportunity to study the Herons sophisticated attributes in real combat conditions at close hand and adjust their own tactics accordingly.

It is ironic that the states in the Middle East with Kurdish enclaves can only come up with military methods to deal with their Kurdish problem. How much more manpower (lives), material sources and time this method will consume is unknown given the quarter-century left behind.

AFP **LA TURQUIE RÉCLAME LES DIRIGEANTS DU PKK EN IRAK (PRESSE)**

ANKARA, 10 juillet 2010 (AFP)

LA TURQUIE a demandé aux Etats-Unis, à l'Irak et à l'administration kurde irakienne de lui livrer les dirigeants du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, rebelles kurdes de Turquie) réfugiés dans la montagne irakienne, rapporte samedi le journal turc Hürriyet.

Une liste de 248 rebelles, dont des commandants militaires comme Murat Karayilan, Cemil Bayik et Duran Kalkan, a été remise aux autorités américaines, irakiennes et kurdes pour qu'ils soient livrés "dans les plus brefs délais" aux autorités turques, souligne le journal, citant des hauts responsables turcs qui ont requis l'anonymat.

La Turquie propose aussi "si nécessaire" une opération conjointe pour capturer ces hommes, précise le quotidien.

"L'état ne s'était jamais autant resserré" autour des chefs du mouvement rebelle qui dispose de bases arrière dans le nord de l'Irak, sous administration kurde, indique l'une de ces sources.

Interrogé par l'AFP, Jabbar Yawar, le porte-parole des peshmergas (combattants kurdes), n'a pas confirmé qu'une liste ait été remise aux autorités kurdes.

"Les noms cités ne sont pas ceux de personnes vivant officiellement dans la région (autonome du Kurdistan). Ils vivent en Turquie où ils se livrent à leurs activités criminelles", a-t-il souligné

"Le gouvernement du Kurdistan ne peut pas les arrêter car ils ne sont pas

dans la région (...) "Nous (le Kurdistan) ne sommes pas une partie du problème. Nous voulons que le problème soit réglé de façon pacifique", a ajouté le porte-parole.

Murat Karayilan et Cemil Bayik, deux commandants militaires du PKK, s'entre-tennent régulièrement avec des journalistes turcs et étrangers dans leur bases du Kurdistan irakien.

En 2008, la Turquie, l'Irak et les Etats-Unis ont créé un comité tripartite pour coordonner la lutte contre le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, Washington et de nombreux pays.

Depuis la fin mai, le PKK multiplie ses attaques contre l'armée turque dans l'est et le sud-est anatolien.

L'aviation turque bombarde régulièrement les positions rebelles dans le nord de l'Irak et a mené une série d'incursions terrestres dans cette région où, selon Ankara, sont retranchés environ 2.000 rebelles.

Ankara bénéficie des renseignements fournis par les Etats-Unis, son allié de l'Otan, sur les repaires et déplacements du PKK.

Dans un entretien télévisé la semaine dernière, le chef d'état-major turc, le général Ilker Basbug, s'en est vivement pris à l'administration kurde irakienne, l'accusant d'inaction contre le PKK. Ces déclarations ont nourri les spéculations dans la presse sur une éventuelle incursion terrestre d'envergure de l'armée dans cette zone.



SOULEIMANIYEH: 30 MORTS DONT 14 ÉTRANGERS DANS L'INCENDIE D'UN HÔTEL

SOULEIMANIYEH (Irak), 16 juil 2010 (AFP)

TRENTE PERSONNES ont été tuées, parmi lesquelles 14 étrangers, et des dizaines d'autres blessées, dans l'incendie qui a ravagé un hôtel de Souleimaniyeh, dans le nord de l'Irak, selon un nouveau bilan donné vendredi par le chef de l'hôpital de la ville.

"Nous avons reçu 30 corps dont ceux de 14 étrangers, et 22 personnes sont encore hospitalisées. Le gouvernement régional du Kurdistan va contacter les ambassades et consulats pour identifier officiellement les victimes étrangères, car beaucoup de passeports ont été calcinés dans l'incendie", a expliqué le directeur Ricot Hamma Rachid.

"Des femmes et des enfants figurent parmi les victimes", a-t-il ajouté.

Le chef de la défense civile de la ville, le colonel Azar Bakr, avait auparavant indiqué que "la majorité ont péri par asphyxie". Il avait fait état de 42 blessés, dont sept pompiers.

Parmi les étrangers figurent des ressortissants de Grande-Bretagne, d'Australie, du Canada, des Philippines, du Bangladesh, du Cambodge, du Sri-Lanka, d'Equateur, d'Afrique du Sud, du Venezuela et du Liban, selon un rapport préliminaire établi par l'hôpital. Deux des victimes étrangères sont des femmes.

Le rapport ne fait pas mention de victimes américaines, contrairement à un responsable hospitalier qui avait indiqué dans un premier temps que quatre Américains avaient été tués.

Un porte-parole de l'ambassade des Etats-Unis a déclaré qu'il enquêtait sur cet incident et vérifiait si des ressortissants américains en avaient été victimes.

Une première identification des corps des étrangers a été effectuée par des responsables des sociétés qui les employaient, a-t-on appris de source médicale.

Le président de la compagnie de téléphonie mobile AsiaCell, Farouk Mullah Mustafa, a indiqué que parmi les morts figuraient quatre de ses ingénieurs: une Philippine, un Cambodgien, un Sri-Lankais et un Irakien.

L'incendie a débuté jeudi vers 22H30 (19H30 GMT) dans l'hôtel Soma, un éta-

blissement de standing de six étages dans le centre de Souleimaniyeh, la deuxième ville du Kurdistan irakien.

Selon des témoins, trois personnes ont trouvé la mort en se jetant par la fenêtre pour échapper aux flammes. Trois autres bâtiments ont été endommagés, a constaté le journaliste de l'AFP.

"Nous étions dans la chambre quand les flammes sont apparues", a déclaré sur son lit d'hôpital Marwan Saïd, 30 ans.

"Je me suis enfui sur le toit et j'ai sauté sur un bâtiment à proximité mais je me suis cassé les jambes", a-t-il ajouté.

L'incendie, qui s'est déclaré au deuxième étage, serait dû à un problème électrique et il a fallu plus de sept heures pour que les pompiers maîtrisent le feu, a précisé Risgar Ahmad, un édile de la ville.

Le Premier ministre du Kurdistan, Barhem Saleh, a annoncé la création d'une commission d'enquête.

"Les pompiers ne disposaient pas de matériel suffisant pour venir à bout du sinistre, c'est ce qui explique la catastrophe", a affirmé un commerçant qui se trouve à côté de l'hôtel mais qui a refusé d'être identifié.

"Les policiers ont dû casser les vitres pour pénétrer dans l'hôtel. Je les ai vus sortir dix corps, dont ceux d'une femme et de deux enfants", a dit un autre témoin, Ziñan Mohammad.

Souleimaniyeh est le fief du président irakien Jalal Talabani. Contrairement au reste de l'Irak, le Kurdistan est une région relativement calme, qui accueille des touristes étrangers et des hommes d'affaires participant à la reconstruction de cette région.

Pendant l'été, de nombreux Irakiens fuyant la chaleur passent leurs vacances dans cette région montagneuse.

AFP

PKK: LA TURQUIE VEUT DÉPLOYER DES UNITÉS SPÉCIALES À LA FRONTIÈRE IRAKIENNE

ANKARA, 16 juillet 2010 (AFP)

LA TURQUIE envisage de déployer des unités entièrement composées de professionnels à sa frontière avec l'Irak pour enrayer l'infiltration sur son sol des rebelles kurdes à partir du nord de l'Irak, a annoncé vendredi le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

"Nous souhaitons que dans les zones frontalières et à risques, des unités professionnelles assurent la sécurité", a-t-il dit lors d'une réunion à Ankara de son Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP, issu de la mouvance islamiste).

La frontière turco-irakienne, longue de quelque 350 km et particulièrement montagneuse, est propice aux infiltrations des militants du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Le PKK compte environ 2.000 hommes dans ses repaires de la montagne irakienne, selon Ankara. L'aviation turque les bombarde régulièrement depuis 2007 mais cela n'a pas empêché les attaques rebelles.

"Il s'agira de troupes frontalières spéciales qui serviront dans le système actuel", a-t-il souligné, indiquant que ses membres seront recrutés pour une durée d'au moins cinq ans.

M. Erdogan n'a pas précisé la taille de ces unités, ni quand elle seraient déployées. Il n'a pas donné des précisions sur la composition de ces unités, notamment si elles seront constituées au sein de l'armée ou de la police, ou bien s'il s'agit d'unités mixtes.

Mais, a-t-il tenu à préciser, "ce ne sera pas une armée spéciale, à part".

Malgré de timides démarches en faveur d'une armée de métier, l'armée turque, la deuxième en nombre au sein de l'Otan (515.000 hommes environ) après les Etats-Unis, est largement composée de conscrits.

Le PKK a multiplié ses attaques contre les forces de sécurité, depuis la fin mai.

Le conflit kurde en Turquie a fait 45.000 morts depuis le début, en 1984, de l'insurrection armée du PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne.

AFP

UNE REQUÊTE D'OCALAN SUR UN NOUVEAU PROCÈS DÉCLARÉE IRRECEVABLE PAR LA CEDH

STRASBOURG (Conseil Europe), 16 juil 2010 (AFP)

LA COUR EUROPÉENNE des droits de l'homme a déclaré vendredi irrecevable la demande d'Abdullah Öcalan, chef emprisonné du mouvement séparatiste kurde du PKK, d'être rejugué en Turquie.

Le chef du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), mouvement armé illégal, se plaignait du refus d'Ankara de rouvrir la procédure pénale ayant abouti à sa condamnation à mort en 1999, peine commuée en prison à vie en 2001.

Il invoquait le droit à un procès équitable en s'appuyant justement sur un arrêt pris en 2005 par la CEDH qui avait conclu à des violations dans la procédure. L'arrêt mentionnait des restrictions de contacts avec ses avocats et la présence d'un juge militaire, concluant qu'un "nouveau procès était en principe un

moyen de redresser la violation constatée".

Mais, rappelle vendredi la Cour, "il est de la seule compétence du Comité des ministres du Conseil de l'Europe d'examiner si les États se conforment aux arrêts rendus" par la CEDH.

"Or dans cette affaire, l'exécutif du Conseil de l'Europe a conclu que le réexamen effectué par la cour d'assises d'Istanbul était conforme aux obligations".

La CEDH a donc rejeté vendredi le grief invoqué par Abdullah Öcalan, "ne pouvant l'examiner sans empiéter sur les compétences du Comité des ministres", composé des 47 chefs de la diplomatie des Etats du Conseil de l'Europe.

Öcalan, fondateur du PKK, a été condamné à mort pour trahison et séparatisme en 1999 par la cour de sûreté, après son arrestation en février au Kenya. Cette sentence a été commuée en prison à vie en 2001 à la suite de l'abolition de la peine capitale par la Turquie dans le cadre de réformes constitutionnelles visant à respecter les normes de l'Union européenne.

Il a été longtemps le seul détenu de la prison de l'île d'Imrali (nord-ouest) avant que ses conditions de détention, dénoncées par la Comité anti-torture (CPT) du Conseil de l'Europe, ne conduise Ankara à rompre cet isolement et à assouplir ses conditions de détention.

AFP

UN SOLDAT TURC TUÉ, UN AUTRE BLESSÉ, PAR DES REBELLES KURDES

ANKARA, 15 juillet 2010 (AFP)

UN SOLDAT turc a été tué et un autre blessé par l'explosion d'une bombe jeudi dans l'est de la Turquie, au cours d'une opération attribuée aux rebelles kurdes par l'agence de presse turque Anatolie.

Les soldats étaient en patrouille près de la ville de Gulpinar, dans la province de Van, quand des engins dissimulés par les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ont explosé, a précisé l'agence.

Le PKK a multiplié ses attaques contre des cibles turques depuis que le dirigeant kurde emprisonné, Abdullah Öcalan, a annoncé en mai qu'il renonçait à toute tentative d'ouvrir des négociations de paix avec le gouvernement. Le PKK a par ailleurs annoncé la fin d'un cessez-le-feu unilatéral le mois dernier.

Le conflit kurde en Turquie a fait 45.000 morts depuis le début en 1984 de l'insurrection du PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne.

AFP

CINQ POLICIERS ET TROIS SOLDATS TURCS BLESSÉS PAR DES REBELLES KURDES

ANKARA, 17 juil 2010 (AFP)

CINQ POLICIERS et trois soldats turcs ont été blessés vendredi soir lors de l'attaque à la roquette par des rebelles kurdes d'un poste de police dans le sud-est du pays, a-t-on appris samedi de source officielle.

L'attaque a eu lieu à Pervari, dans la province de Siirt, après une coupure de courant dans la ville, a déclaré le bureau du gouverneur local, cité par l'agence

de presse Anatolie.

Les militants du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ont attaqué les bâtiments à la roquette et au fusil d'assaut, provoquant une fusillade qui a duré environ une heure, selon la même source.

Un des soldats est grièvement blessé.

Le PKK mène des attaques quasi-quotidiennes contre les forces de sécurité depuis l'annonce en mai par son leader emprisonné Abdullah Öcalan qu'il a abandonné ses efforts pour dialoguer avec le gouvernement.

Le PKK, qui est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par de nombreux pays, lutte pour la défense des 15 millions de Kurdes de Turquie, sur une population totale d'environ 73 millions.

Kurdistan, la seconde Palestine du Moyen-Orient ?

En pleine crise de la flottille, après l'assaut sanglant mené par les troupes israéliennes contre un navire turc qui tentait de briser le blocus imposé aux Palestiniens de Gaza, la question kurde a refait surface, comme réveillée par l'onde de choc régionale. L'armée turque, frappée par une attaque du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) qui a tué 11 soldats, le 19 juin, a riposté en déclenchant des opérations aériennes et terrestres dans le sud-est de la Turquie et dans le nord de l'Irak, où sont retranchés environ 2 000 membres de la guérilla kurde, fondée par Abdullah Öcalan.

Au moment où Ankara mobilisait ses forces contre « l'organisation terroriste », selon la périphrase officielle, le premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan qualifiait le Hamas de « mouvement de résistance populaire » à l'opresseur. Un parti pris que ses adversaires ne manquent pas de relever. Déjà en 2006, lorsque la Turquie avait accueilli une délégation du Hamas à Ankara, Israël s'était offusqué : « Que diriez-vous si nous recevions Öcalan à Tel-Aviv ? » PKK et Hamas figurent sur la liste noire des groupes terroristes et constituent des enjeux sécuritaires nationaux primordiaux pour les deux pays.

La comparaison entre Kurdes et Palestiniens, deux peuples sans Etat, n'est pas nouvelle. Les keffieh, les enfants lanceurs de pierres affrontant des véhicules militaires blindés, la guerre de propagande, la peur du renversement démographique – Kurdes et Palestiniens ayant des taux de natalité beaucoup plus élevés... Les points communs sont nombreux.

Si les deux situations diffèrent, elles soulèvent aussi la question du droit à l'autodétermination des peuples, consacré par l'article 1^{er} de la charte des Nations unies – qui affirme « le respect du principe de l'égalité de droits des peuples et de leur droit à disposer d'eux-mêmes » –, et impliquent les deux principales puissances régionales, alliées des Etats-Unis : la Turquie et Israël.

Installée dans le paysage géopolitique, la question kurde est « l'autre front du Moyen-Orient », selon le politologue Hamit Bozarslan, directeur d'études à l'Ecole des hautes études en

Analyse

Guillaume Perrier

Istanbul, correspondance

sciences sociales (EHESS). Comme celui des Palestiniens, le sort des 32 millions de Kurdes – écartelés entre quatre pays, Turquie, Iran, Irak et Syrie – menace la stabilité de la région et rejaillit en cascade sur les voisins.

Après avoir été chassés du Liban et de Syrie dans les années 1990, les chefs militaires du PKK s'abritent dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak, avec ceux du PJAK, la branche iranienne de la guérilla. La Turquie et l'Iran mènent des actions concertées, par-delà leur frontière, contre les rebelles : bombardements et incursions au Kurdistan irakien.

Les Etats-Unis et Israël assistent l'armée turque dans ces opérations. Mais le gouvernement turc rejette toute comparaison entre les questions kurde et palestinienne. « La Turquie a une approche plus large de la lutte contre le terrorisme et prend en compte les aspects économiques, culturels et sociaux », estime Ihsan Bal, analyste à l'organisation de recherche stratégique internationale (USAK), proche du pouvoir. M. Erdogan compare volontiers le PKK au « terrorisme d'Etat » d'Israël. La Turquie laisse planer l'idée que l'Etat hébreu se livre à des activités secrètes dans la partie kurde de l'Irak et arme le PKK en sous-main.

La presse d'Istanbul a rendu Israël coupable d'avoir poussé les récentes attaques, en représailles à l'envoi de la flottille propalestinienne. Une « campagne de désinformation », selon le commandement du PKK, pour qui « la Turquie tente ainsi de se rallier les opinions des pays arabes ». Les puissances occidentales sont également accusées par la rue de soutenir la guérilla pour affaiblir l'Iran.

L'appui au PJAK, et donc au PKK, pour mieux lutter contre le régime des mollahs ? L'idée fait son chemin dans certains cercles de réflexion

anglo-saxons, des voix s'élevant même pour que le groupe iranien soit rayé de la liste des mouvements terroristes.

Comme la question palestinienne, la question kurde s'est installée dans le temps. En Turquie, où ils pèsent 20 % de la population, l'assimilation des Kurdes a rencontré de fortes résistances. Aucune solution, autre que militaire, n'a jamais été réellement mise en œuvre pour sortir de l'impasse : la guérilla du PKK sévit depuis 1984 et la lutte antiterroriste a déjà coûté 250 milliards d'euros et 42 000 vies humaines, 4 000 villages brûlés, des millions de déplacés et une obsession sécuritaire qui maintient la société turque dans un état de « terreur ». Et le PKK n'est que le vingt-neuvième mouvement d'insurrection lancé contre la Turquie en moins d'un siècle...

De même en Syrie et en Iran, des émeutes kurdes éclatent régulièrement, suivies de vagues

Le sort des 32 millions de Kurdes écartelés entre Turquie, Iran, Irak et Syrie menace la stabilité de la région et rejaillit sur les voisins

d'arrestations de militants et d'intellectuels. Les nationalismes kurdes et ceux des populations majoritaires se renforcent mutuellement. En Irak, la révolution lancée par la famille Barzani, puissante tribu du nord, dès les années 1930, a joué un rôle essentiel dans le processus d'émancipation des Kurdes.

Mustafa Barzani fonda même, en 1946, une éphémère République autonome, à Mahabad, dans l'ouest de l'Iran. Après plusieurs décennies de répression du régime baasiste, les Kurdes jouissent aujourd'hui d'une large autonomie et constituent, grâce à l'appui des Etats-Unis, un embryon d'Etat avec son drapeau, son parlement et son président. Un début de solution ? ■

Courriel : perrier@lemonde.fr

Think-Tank Suggests Kurdistan Will Enhance Possible Israeli Attack on Iran

By WLADIMIR VAN WILGENBURG

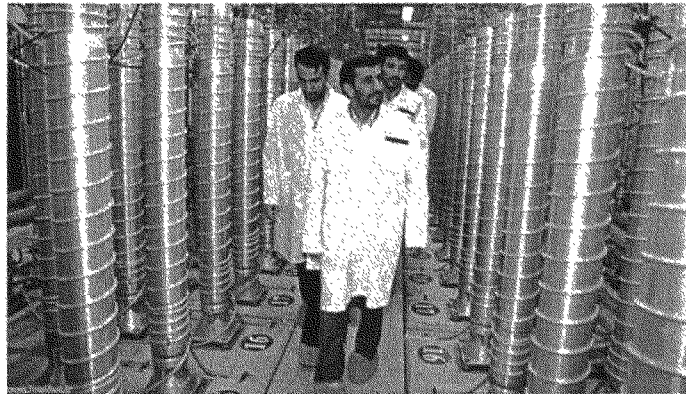
A British think-tank suggests that the Kurdistan Region of Iraq could be useful for Israel to launch any prospect attacks on the nuclear facilities of Iran.

In a report titled "Military Action against Iran: Impact and Effects," by the London-based Oxford Research Group, says if Israel decides in the coming months to take military action in order to pre-empt Iran developing nuclear weapons, it is like to have to inform the United States government in advance.

"Support facilities in the Kurdish region of north-east Iraq would greatly aid effective action. Given tacit US approval, and bearing in mind the relatively small number of long-range strike aircraft available, Israel might also use conventionally-armed land-based ballistic missiles...and quite possibly armed UAVs staging from north-east Iraq or Azerbaijan," said the report.

However, the report rules out using military operations as a means of responding to its possible nuclear weapons ambitions since it is probably unfruitful in preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, and could lead to a prolonged war.

"The consequences of such an attack would lead to a sustained conflict and regional instability that would be unlikely to prevent the eventual acquisition of nuclear weapons by Iran and might



Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, accompanied by some nuclear scientists in a nuclear field to produce energy.

even encourage it," said the report.

The report also suggests that Israeli military units have also been involved in a range of operations in Iraq, especially in Iraqi Kurdistan where, among other activities, they have been training commando units. It also mentions close military connections with Azerbaijan in the north of Iran.

"In the event of a conflict with Iran, it is possible that Israel would be able to deploy military facilities in both countries, especially Azerbaijan. These might include ISTAR capabilities, Special Forces and search and rescue aircraft."

On July 4, the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Amr Moussa, denied reports of the media about the possibility of using Kurdistan by Israel or the United States to strike Iran in a press conference

with the Kurdish president Massoud Barzani in the Egyptian capital of Cairo.

"Iraq is committed to the Arab position and the Arab League against Israel," said Moussa adding that "the claim of the possibility of using Kurdistan to launch an attack on Iran by Tel Aviv or Washington was not correct."

For his part Kurdistan President Barzani denied having any political ties with Israel in answering a question already asked so many times by Arab journalists whether the Kurds had relations with Israel.

In 2006 BBC said that Israeli forces were Kurdish Peshmarga forces, a report rejected outright by the Kurdish authorities.

REUTERS

Kurdish rebels kill seven Turkish soldiers

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey (Reuters) - July 20, 2010

KURDISH rebels killed six Turkish soldiers in a night attack close to the border with Iraq, military officials said Tuesday.

Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants opened fire on an army unit, triggering a firefight which lasted until morning in the Cukurca area of Hakkari province.

Helicopters flew in reinforcements from a commando barracks in Hakkari. A day earlier, in the same area, 11 soldiers were wounded when their minibus struck a roadside bomb.

A PKK spokesman based in northern Iraq said rebels had killed more than 30 soldiers in the ambush and wounded several more. They also seized several weapons caches, he said.

In a separate attack Tuesday, one soldier died after his unit opened fire on a group of militants in Van province, security sources said.

Fighting has intensified since the PKK ended a 14-month ceasefire at the start of June, accusing the government of not being serious in its bid to boost Kurdish minority rights and bring to an end an insurgency that began in 1984.

More than 40,000 people have died in the 26-year conflict. Around 100 military personnel have been killed so far this year, already exceeding last year's death toll.

Most of the PKK's estimated 4,000 fighters are based in the mountains of neighboring northern Iraq.

Turkey's government is under pressure to clamp down on violence ahead of parliamentary elections due in July 2011.

Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan announced last week plans to create special units to combat guerrillas along the border with Iraq. The plans envisage building 150 new military outposts along the frontier.

Barzani Says Kurds Should Declare Independence One Day

RUDAW

MASSOUD BARZANI, the president of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, has said that "this generation or next generation" will probably see the creation of an independent Kurdish state in the north of Iraq.

"I would like to express my opinion frankly. I view the issue the way that we, as Kurds, are a nation of the Middle East, just like the Arabs, Persians and Turks," said Mr. Barzani, in an interview published on Monday in Gulan magazine, a journal of Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party.

"I completely believe in the right of self-determination of the Kurds and consider it a fair right that the Kurdish nation deserves," he added.



"This is our right on which we should always insist and give it time as well. Our generation or next generation will probably see this wish coming true."

While Mr. Barzani said he could understand the current reality which suggests Kurds remaining as part of Iraq, he

added that Kurdish dream for independence will remain survived.

"God willing, this right should be achieved one day....But this will not happen by force, violence, gun or war. This should happen through mutual understanding and peace."

The Kurds are the largest ethnic group of the world without a state of their own. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, they were divided among Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

The first time that Kurds were promised a state was in 1920 by the Treaty of Sèvres, signed between the Ottoman Empire and Allies at the end of the First World War, a pledge which has never been kept.

Guardian
28 July 2010

Do Iraq's politicians believe in Iraq? Five months on from the elections, Iraq's factions seem unable to unite under a common banner of statehood



Ranj Alaaldin

Nearly five months after parliamentary elections were held, Iraq is still without a government. Unfortunate as this may be, it is not entirely surprising because Iraq, seven years on from the 2003 war, is still a country in transition. Post-2003 Iraq is somewhat akin to post-1958 Iraq when Abdul Karim Qassim and other military conspirators overthrew a discredited (and British-backed) monarchic regime. As with Qassim's overthrow, the removal of the equally discredited but more brutal Saddam Hussein paved the way for various competing forces to move into the political vacuum.

In post-1958 Iraq, these groups were principally the Arab nationalists and socialists, the Kurds and the communists. Qassim himself cunningly played them off against each other as he sought to maintain his grip on power. In post-2003 Iraq, the principal actors – the Kurds, Sunni Arabs and Shia Arabs – are looking, as ever, to expand or protect their interests.

Today's Iraq is much more democratic and accountable to its people than at any other point in its history, but, despite all that, no one quite knows what today's Iraq actually stands for.

For all of Saddam's atrocities and the failures of previous governments, Iraq has historically had some kind of identity based, at the very least, on Sunni-Arabist characteristics, even if this was forcibly imposed on the population by governments in Baghdad and their western backers. Today, however, there is no longer any meaningful construct to the term "Iraq".

The Iraq of today is federalist, centralist, Shia, Sunni and Kurd, though with other minority ethnicities and religions too. It is also influenced from outside by Saudi, Iranian, Turkish, Syrian, US, UK and Jordanian interests. While all these might be components in some future vision for a pluralistic Iraqi state, the reality, at present, is that they are symptoms of dysfunctionality. The failure to form a government and the failure to form any serious cross-sectarian coalition for the elections are just two among many examples of the inability to amalga-

mate under a common banner of statehood, much to the detriment of the Iraqi people.

Despite the less-than-convincing and age-old rhetoric used by the main players – in particular the often-used line about "working in Iraq's interest" – it is doubtful whether any political force sincerely believes in the construct of an Iraqi state. So far as the Kurds are concerned, for example, post-2003 Iraq has been a country of convenience rather than substance, historically forced upon them without much choice.

Across the political spectrum, "working in Iraq's interest" seems to mean engaging with and appeasing almost anybody and everybody that could provide the keys to power. For example, Ayad Allawi and Moqtada al-Sadr, who have previously gone head-to-head in violent clashes and by all accounts were once deemed fierce enemies, recently met to discuss the possibility of forming a coalition.

Whether a coalition does materialise will, of course, come down to what was offered and conceded; individual ministries are offered and conceded on a whim and have essentially become fiefdoms of the various groupings. All this, of course, is irrespective of whether Allawi – who also met with Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law coalition – or Sadr's supporters actually want the two to form a coalition.

While it is important to ensure the rights of Iraq's various ethnic and sectarian groupings are protected, this does not mean that every political player has an unconditional right to be part of the government.

There is no legal requirement for the Iraqi cabinet and other positions like the premiership and presidency to be proportionally allocated to each ethnic and sectarian group. But a "national unity" government is the more convenient option because the sad reality is that no group will step aside quietly – and the result is political paralysis.

If Iraqi decision makers and their regional partners fail to get their act together in the coming years, Iraq's existence as a single country will be increasingly questioned as its people continue paying with their lives for a state that was created, essentially, to protect British interests in the region.

Don't blame Europe for Turkey's moves away from the West

Continued rejection by the European Union does not alone account for Turkey's embrace of Muslim nations. The U.S. must push the Turks to reform internally.

By Henri Barkey

In an interview this month with the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, President Obama suggested that the European Union's continued reluctance to accept Turkey into its ranks has pushed Turkish leadership to "look for other alliances" and move toward closer relations with other Muslim nations in the Middle East. These comments echoed Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, who last month blamed Europe for Ankara's movement away from the West.

Both men are wrong. They are wrong in their analyses of Turkish behavior and wrong on the policy prescriptions implied by their statements. Fully engaging with and understanding Turkey is of critical importance for this administration, and blaming Europe oversimplifies the situation and could lead to unintended consequences.

It is true that French President Nicolas Sarkozy and to a lesser extent German Chancellor Angela Merkel have poured cold water on Turkish ambitions for membership in the EU, in part because of Turkey's failure to resolve issues relating to the divided island of Cyprus. But in any circumstance, Turkey's entry into the EU is at least 20 years away, and continued rejection by the EU does not alone account for Turkey's growing ambivalence toward Europe and the West. The current Turkish government led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) would have acted the same way even if membership to the EU were imminent.

The Turkish government's increasing overtures toward non-Western governments is driven in part by an over-inflated sense of its importance on the world stage. Turkish leaders believe their country should be among the premier world powers, and that its strategic location, economic prowess, historical ties and cultural affinities with the

Muslim world are assets that can be marshaled behind an activist foreign policy designed to further enhance Ankara's importance. This ambition weighed down by an unhealthy dose of hubris is one of two drivers of the new foreign policy.

The second is Turkey's commercial interest. A forceful export drive and an appetite for foreign investment have fueled growth and made Turkey the 16th largest economy in the world. As President Obama acknowledged, trade benefits were one of the factors that drove the Turks to side with Tehran and against the U.S. in the U.N. Security Council vote on sanctions. Turkey is in a constant search for new markets for its wares and its Middle East policy has helped open new opportunities and consolidate existing ones.

When it comes to the EU, Turkey has two fundamental and difficult problems that are unlikely to disappear anytime soon and will remain the main impediments to progress for EU membership.

The first is the Kurdish question. Turkey is deeply divided over its Kurdish minority, and a 26-year insurgency by the Kurdistan Workers' Party is nowhere near being subdued. The ruling AKP, to its credit, made modest proposals for engagement with the Kurds last year, but it quickly pulled back from them. As a result, the possibility for a greater explosion of violence threatening to also engulf many of the cities has never been higher. There is no military solution to the Kurdish problem; it will require a political approach that allows for much greater cultural freedom.

The second problem is that although Turkey is a country of laws, it does not embrace the rule of law. Its 1982 constitution, drafted by a military junta, is designed to protect the state from its citizens and not vice versa. Application of the law is arbitrary and

allows the state to persecute whomever it wants whenever it wants. This has not changed one iota under the AKP.

Both of these impediments will take years, if not decades, to deal with. Therefore, to blame Europe for Turkey's difficulties is unfair and unnecessarily alienates the Europeans. It made sense for the U.S. to push the Europeans on Turkey in the 1990s when Europe was pushing Turkey away. Now, however, a process has been put in place for Turkey to pursue EU membership. The current U.S. rhetoric and silence on domestic issues relieve Turkish leaders from the burden of reform and from being honest with their public about the travails ahead for EU membership. It does not do Turkey any favors; on the contrary, it solidifies the distance between Turkey and the EU.

A smarter American policy would focus on pushing the Turks to reform. The faster Ankara institutes reforms, the closer it will get to EU membership. And if membership for Turkey is in the U.S. interest, then Washington needs to develop a more comprehensive approach to the country that also pays attention to its domestic concerns. The U.S. must align itself with Turkish and European advocates of change and help transform Turkey into a more tolerant and democratic society. Only then is EU membership likely.

Henri Barkey is a visiting fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a professor of international relations at Lehigh University.

Seeking out the PKK gunmen in Iraq's remote mountains

In Iraq's northern mountains, Kurdish rebels the PKK plan and launch their attacks on Turkey. The BBC's Gabriel Gatehouse sought them out.

After a number of abortive approaches, we finally made contact with the PKK.

With the help of a guide, for hours we travelled by car along miles of bumpy, unpaved winding roads up into the Qandil Mountains of northern Iraq.

When we got to the camp, hidden in a dip in the mountains, our reception was friendly but guarded.

Few of the fighters wanted to talk to us. About a third of them are women. All were dressed in the same heavy green uniform. Most carried Kalashnikov rifles.

Under the shade of a tree, I sat down with their leader, Murat Karayilan. His cordial smiles and air of reasonableness soon turned to anger as he accused Turkish government forces of mutilating the dead bodies of his fighters.

"When one of our comrades is killed, Turkish soldiers cut his body to pieces and cut out his eyes," he said.

"We will go on. We will make whatever sacrifice is needed and we will not surrender, no matter what."

I challenged him to justify killing in the name of a political cause. He said he was willing to order the PKK to lay down its arms, under UN supervision, if the Turkish government agreed to a ceasefire.

Fighting for independence

The group's demands, he said, were an end to attacks on civilians and more rights for the millions of Kurds living in eastern Turkey, or northern Kurdistan as he called it.

But his offer was immediately tempered



PKK fighters use the mountains of northern Iraq as an attack base

by a threat.

"We want the problem in the northern part of Kurdistan to be resolved through democracy.

"If the Turkish state does not accept this solution, then we will declare democratic confederalism independently."

Asked for a response to Mr Karayilan, a Turkish government official said it was "not in the habit of commenting on statements made by terrorists".

For more than a decade now, the PKK has used the inaccessible mountains of northern Iraq as a base from which to plan and execute attacks inside Turkey.

They see this as a war of self defence, a fight for the survival of Kurdish identity.

The Turkish government regards the PKK as a terrorist organisation. Most governments, including EU states and the US, agree.

Only last month, there was a stark reminder of why. On 22 June a roadside bomb exploded next to a bus in Istanbul. The attack, which was claimed by a PKK splinter group, killed five people, four of them soldiers, one a 17-year-old girl.

The PKK launched its armed struggle against the Turkish government in 1984. Since then, the conflict has claimed the lives of more than 40,000 people on both sides.

A drive last year by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to solve the conflict with the Kurds through dialogue has stalled. Hundreds of Kurdish officials in eastern Turkey have since been arrested.

Earlier this spring, the PKK announced the end of its unilateral ceasefire. Since then more than 50 Turkish soldiers have been killed.

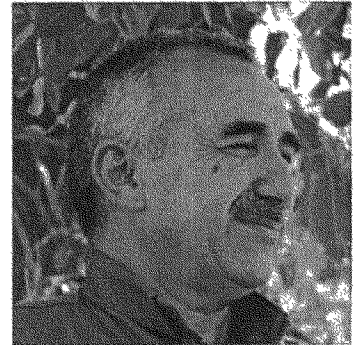
And this war is now being fought on two fronts: with Turkey to the north, and with Iran to the east.

Both countries have been hitting back, with artillery bombardment and air-strikes on Iraqi territory.

Scattering the villagers

At a village near the secret PKK camp, we saw some of the effects of this bombardment.

Two vast craters, filled with rubble and shrapnel, bore witness to a recent air-strike. Several houses had been badly damaged, their walls collapsed, glass shattered, the belongings of their inhabitants charred and scattered about.



PKK leader Murat Karayilan says he is fighting for independence

Outside one of the houses, the twisted nose-cone of a shell lay in the dust.

The village was deserted, and there was no-one to ask about the circumstances of the attack.

But Kamal Chomani, a local journalist, said that villagers had told him that the destruction was the result of a Turkish air-strike which took place at the end of June.

The inhabitants of the village, he said, had moved into temporary accommodation in a school building nearby.

After years of massacres and oppression under Saddam Hussein, the Kurds of northern Iraq finally have their own

" We will make whatever sacrifice is needed and we will not surrender, no matter what."

Murat Karayilan PKK leader

autonomous homeland.

But, he said, the people here in these mountains have little choice but to show support for their fellow Kurds from other parts of the region who are still fighting.

"[The people of] this area, during Saddam Hussein's time, they were very revolutionary," he said.

"When any armed [PKK] forces come here, they have to listen to them, they are obliged to support them. Because, if they do not support them, they may have to leave their villages."

In other words, they are afraid.

And at the moment, many are paying dearly for that support.

In a deep valley at Doli Shahidan, not far from the Iranian border, there are hundreds of tents pitched in a dry riverbed.

Forgotten families

The setting is spectacular, with soaring craggy mountains on either side and small winding paths receding into the distance.

But for more than 500 families who have been forced to flee here over the past

six weeks, the realities of life are less poetic.

Gabriel Gatehouse witnesses the effects of the attacks taking place inside Iraq

Mahmoud came here with his family in June, when Iranian shells fell on his village.

He is a farmer, dressed in a traditional baggy Kurdish tunic, held in at the waist with a length of cloth.

"Yes," he said, "there are PKK fighters in our area. But what can we do? They are armed. We just want to be left in peace

to tend to our land."

It is the PKK and not Iraqi forces who control much of this mountainous region.

The government in Baghdad has protested to Tehran and Ankara over the shelling and incursions into its territory. But, say local people, not loudly enough.

Mahmoud and his fellow refugees are victims of a forgotten war, who have no idea when they'll be able to go back home again.



Despite pledges, Iraqi Kurd oil still flows to Iran

Haj UMRAN Iraq (Reuters) - July 22, 2010

By Ahmed Rasheed and Shamal Aqrawi

DESPITE A PLEDGE by Iraqi Kurdistan to crack down on the flow of fuel being smuggled to Iran, the only real impediment truck drivers say they face are long lines that force them to wait for days to cross.

Perhaps around 100 tanker trucks corralled into groups of 10 or a dozen by Kurdish police idled on the road to the border point of Haj Umrان on Tuesday, waiting for their chance to pass over to unload fuel at Iranian ports or fuel depots.

"I've been waiting for two days to be able to pass over to Iran and take my 24 tonnes of fuel safely to Bandar Abbas port," said Barzan Hussain, a driver who works for a Kurdish shipping company based in Arbil.

The cross-border trade in fuel is a challenge to U.S. efforts to impose sanctions on Iran over its nuclear research programme, and an embarrassment for Washington's Kurdish allies, eager to remain in the good books of the United States as U.S. troops prepare to withdraw from Iraq by the end of 2011.

It is also another thorn in the side of often tense relations between Iraq's Arab majority and ethnic Kurds who have enjoyed virtual autonomy in their northern enclave since the end of the first Gulf War.

The Shi'ite-led federal government in Baghdad says any trade in crude oil would be illegal, because Iraqi law only allows the State Oil Marketing Organisation to export it.

It is also critical of any trade in refined products, because seven years after the U.S.-led invasion, Iraq still does not produce as much refined fuels as it needs and has to import.

On Monday, the cabinet of the Kurdish Regional Government approved stricter measures including stepped up border surveillance to stop any illegal trade in crude across its borders. There was little sign the next day at Haj Umrان that border guards had been told to be more vigilant.

DANGEROUS, WINDING ROADS

The trucks heading to Iran brave dangerous, winding roads in some of the most mountainous parts of Iraq to reach Haj Umrان, which lies in the shadow of Halgurd mountain, the highest peak in the country.

Drivers waiting at the border said companies they work for are only transporting fuel oil, like diesel and other refined products, to Iran and they make \$80 (52 pound) per tonne, plus a bonus of \$100 for each driver.

The mayor of Haj Umrان town said all the fuel trucks going to Iran were working legally and for the regional government.

"Why would we stop them? These companies have legal

contracts with the government of Kurdistan to transport fuel oil and oil waste to Iran," mayor Karwan Aref told Reuters.

Aref said local officials had not received any instructions from the regional authorities to check the trade.

Shipping agents working with a company in Arbil said they signed contracts with the Kurdish region's Minerals and Natural Resources Ministry about a year ago to transport all kinds of fuel to Iran in trucks. They declined to say whether crude oil was included.

The head of the Haj Umrان border post, Hamad Jafaar, said only refined products were allowed to cross the border.

"All refined products transported to Iran are legal and carried out with the legal approval of the Minerals and Natural Resources Ministry and this is why we let them cross," Jafaar told Reuters in his office.

Jafaar said he had not received any instructions to stop fuel shipments to Iran and had only heard of such measures on television.

Drivers waiting for their turn to cross to Iran said they usually unload the fuel at Bandar Imam or Bandar Abbas ports in Iran, where it is often re-exported, and sometimes travel to Afghanistan to deliver fuel.

"I transported two shipments to Afghanistan. We go through Iran and deliver our shipments to Afghan drivers, but I decided to stop because security is not good," said truck driver Abul Razzaq Fatah.

Drivers said they load the fuel at refineries in the Kurdish region and are given documents in which quantities, fuel type and destination of cargos are established by Kurdish government officials in the refineries.

"They load my truck and hand me the documents. They say it is fuel oil and that's all I know about my cargo and I don't care," said Majid Sultan, a truck driver from Anbar province.

Some are angry about criticism of the trade.

"Why all this fuss about Kurdish oil? Saddam's regime was smuggling oil and buying weapons to use against the Iraqi people and nobody said a word. At least Kurds are selling their oil to Iran to rebuild our cities," Fatah said. Regional lawmaker Nasir Tawfiq, secretary of the energy committee of the Kurdish parliament, said the panel felt uncomfortable about the exports because the government had not explained where the revenues were going.

"All these sales to Iran should stop. The fuel sales are not transparent and are shrouded in secrecy. Unless all the information about the revenues is made public, it reeks of corruption," Tawfiq told Reuters.



14 Juillet 2010

Le Kurdistan irakien cible d'attaques de l'armée iranienne

Par RFI

Human Right Watch appelle l'Iran à la retenue dans ses attaques contre le Kurdistan irakien. Dans un rapport publié à New York, l'organisation de défense des droits de l'homme fait état d'opérations militaires iraniennes menées contre des dizaines de villages kurdes en territoire irakien. Human Right Watch dénonce des attaques délibérées contre des populations civiles.

Plus de 500 familles déplacées et une jeune fille de 14 ans qui a trouvé la mort : c'est le bilan des attaques menées par l'armée iranienne depuis la fin du mois de mai. Les civils ont fui vers les provinces d'Erbil et de Souleymayne. A ce jour 4 720 personnes vivent dans des camps de réfugiés. L'armée iranienne justifie ses bombardements par la présence dans la région d'un groupe rebelle kurde iranien, le PJAK, le Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan.

Une thèse que contredit l'enquête menée par Human Right Watch dans le secteur. Les explications de Fadi Al-Qadi, conseiller d'Human Right Watch pour le Moyen-Orient : «De tels bombardements alors qu'il n'y a pas de cibles militaires semblent plutôt être destinés à nettoyer la zone de sa population civile. L'objectif pourrait être de créer une zone tampon. Pour nous, c'est la vraie question parce que, à notre connaissance, rien ne permet d'établir que des combattants du Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan opèrent dans la région.



Des tentes de fortune dressées près du village irakien de Haji Omaran, non loin de la frontière iranienne. Photo: Daniel W. Forgeron/Human Rights Watch

Il n'y a ni preuve ni témoignage pour affirmer qu'elle leur sert de base arrière contre l'armée iranienne. D'après nous, il n'y a pas non plus de différend frontalier entre l'Iran et l'Irak dans cette région.»

Bien que ces attaques constituent un véritable casus belli, Bagdad s'est contenté pour l'heure d'une simple protestation officielle auprès de l'ambassadeur iranien.

LEFIGARO

16 Juillet 2010

L'Irak s'enfonce dans l'impasse politique

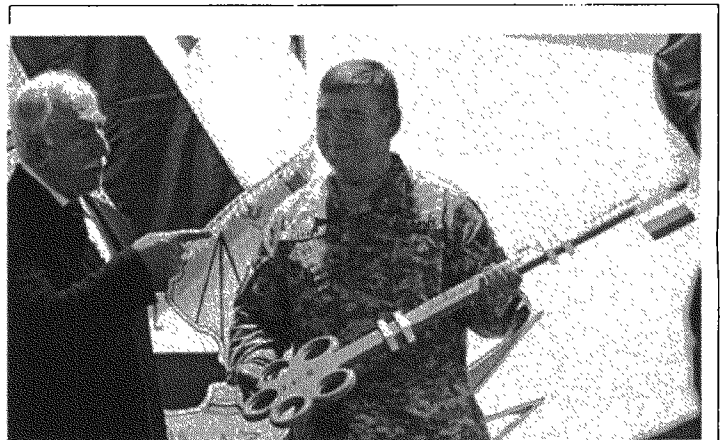
L'échec des tractations pour former un nouveau gouvernement favorise l'insécurité.

Par Fatma KIZILBOGA

SOUS une chaleur étouffante excédant les 50 degrés, Sanaa est à bout de nerfs. Dans sa maison située dans le quartier de Hayl Kindi à Bagdad, cette femme au foyer âgée de 42 ans ne veut plus entendre parler de politique. «Personne ne se préoccupe vraiment des citoyens, les dirigeants ne pensent qu'à leurs intérêts personnels.» Près de sept ans après le début de l'invasion américaine en Irak, le constat concernant le niveau de vie des Irakiens est toujours loin d'être brillant. Dans la capitale, les foyers ne reçoivent en moyenne que sept heures d'électricité par jour. Insuffisant pour espérer une qualité de vie satisfaisante. «Réfrigérer les aliments est

quasi impossible. Même faire tourner le ventilateur devient un luxe», explique-t-elle, résignée. Un problème auquel s'ajoutent les régulières coupures d'eau. «Certains jours les robinets ne sont alimentés que pendant une heure. Se doucher relève parfois du parcours du combattant», résume cette Irakienne.

Plus de quatre mois après les élections législatives et alors que l'Irak s'enfonce dans le marasme, le pays peine toujours à former son nouveau gouvernement. Inauguré le 14 juin, le nouveau Parlement disposait selon le délai légal accordé par la Constitution de quatre semaines pour désigner son président. Mais faute d'entente entre les différentes formations, les responsables politiques ont décidé lundi 13 juillet de s'accorder un sursis



Le général Jerry Canon (à droite) a remis, ce jeudi, la clef symbolique de Camp Cropper à Dara Noureddin, ministre irakien de la Justice. (crédits photo Maya Alleruzzo pour AP)

de quinze jours avant la reprise de la session parlementaire.

En coulisses, les négociations menées entre les différentes formations politiques n'ont toujours pas abouti.

Encouragé par Téhéran, le rapprochement entre les listes chiites de l'Alliance pour l'État de droit de Nouri al-Maliki dotée de 89 sièges et celle de l'Alliance nationale irakienne (ANI), proche de

l'imam radical Moqtada al-Sadr, avec 70 sièges, est en passe d'échouer. Vivement opposé à la réélection du premier ministre sortant, le camp sadriste refuse désormais de poursuivre les discussions avec la liste de l'Alliance pour l'État de droit. «Notre rejet de Maliki est définitif», assure Jawad al-Hassnaoui, dirigeant de l'ANI.

Faute d'une majorité de 163 élus nécessaire à la formation du nouveau gouvernement, Nouri al-Maliki tente dorénavant de contourner les obstacles par tous les moyens. Quitte à multiplier les rencontres avec son principal opposant, le laïc Iyad Allaoui, tête de file de la liste du Bloc irakien, vainqueur du scrutin législatif du 7 mars avec 91 sièges et soutenu par

la minorité sunnite. Là encore, le projet d'alliance ne parvient pas à être scellé en dépit du soutien de Washington qui encourage une composition mixte du pouvoir exécutif, principalement en raison de désaccords concernant la distribution des postes du futur cabinet.

Risque d'embrasement

Pour l'analyste politique irakien Ibrahim Subeydl, le jeu est dangereux. «Ni les Kurdes, ni le courant sadriste soutenu par l'armée du Mahdi, ni le Conseil supérieur islamique d'Irak (C'SII) et sa milice Badr n'accepteront d'être mis de côté. Sans oublier al-Qaida qui ne manquerait pas de multiplier les attaques dans la mesure où les

sunnites seraient mis hors jeu. Quelle que soit la composition du prochain gouvernement, une recrudescence des violences interconfessionnelles semble donc inévitable dans les mois à venir.»

À quelques semaines à peine de la fin du retrait total des troupes de combat américaines, prévu le 1er septembre, l'instabilité politique qui persiste en Irak attise des interrogations sur l'avenir sécuritaire du pays. Cela alors que la passation de pouvoir entre les militaires américains et irakiens se poursuit.

Mercredi 14 juillet, le contrôle de Camp Cropper, le dernier centre de détention géré par l'armée US, situé près de l'aéroport de Bagdad, a été officiellement remis aux autorités irakiennes. Une

étape importante, qui marque la fin d'un chapitre douloureux dans la guerre en Irak, avec les images choquantes de détenus irakiens torturés par des soldats américains dans la prison d'Abou Ghraïb, présentes encore dans tous les esprits.

La question est désormais de savoir si les militaires irakiens, bientôt livrés à eux-mêmes, parviendront à faire face à la menace d'affrontements interconfessionnels qui plane sur l'Irak.



27 juillet 2010

«En Syrie, la répression demeure constante»

Questions à Nadim Houry Spécialiste du Liban et de la Syrie Pour Human Rights Watch

Par JEAN-PIERRE PERRIN

Dix ans après l'accession de Bachar al-Assad, fils de l'ancien président Hafez al-Assad, au pouvoir à Damas, l'organisation Human Rights Watch (HRW) analyse dans un rapport de 35 pages la situation des droits de l'homme en Syrie. Chercheur à Beyrouth, Nadim Houry a enquêté pour ce rapport.

Bachar al-Assad a-t-il amélioré la situation ?

Que le président syrien soit un dirigeant qui aurait souhaité entamer des réformes mais en a été empêché par une vieille garde bien établie, ou qu'il ne soit qu'un dirigeant arabe de plus

qui reste sourd aux critiques, le résultat est le même : aucune liberté, aucun droit. Il n'a pratiquement rien fait. Dans son discours d'investiture, le 17 juillet 2000, il avait évoqué la nécessité d'une «réflexion créative», d'une «transparence» et de «démocratie». La période de tolérance qui a suivi son accession au pouvoir a été de courte durée, et les geôles syriennes se sont vite à nouveau remplies de prisonniers politiques. Exemples récents : Haytham al-Maleh, 78 ans, et Mohanad al-Hasani, 42 ans, deux avocats syriens condamnés dernièrement à trois ans de prison pour leurs critiques de la situation des droits de l'homme.

Pourquoi réprime-t-il autant ?

Il a justifié l'absence de réformes politiques en arguant que les réformes économiques sont prioritaires ou en prenant prétexte des circonstances régionales. Or la répression demeure constante, quelles que soient les pressions régionales. Les services de sécu-

rité arrêtent toujours des personnes sans mandat et les torturent en totale impunité. La censure, très répandue, s'étend aux sites internet les plus populaires.

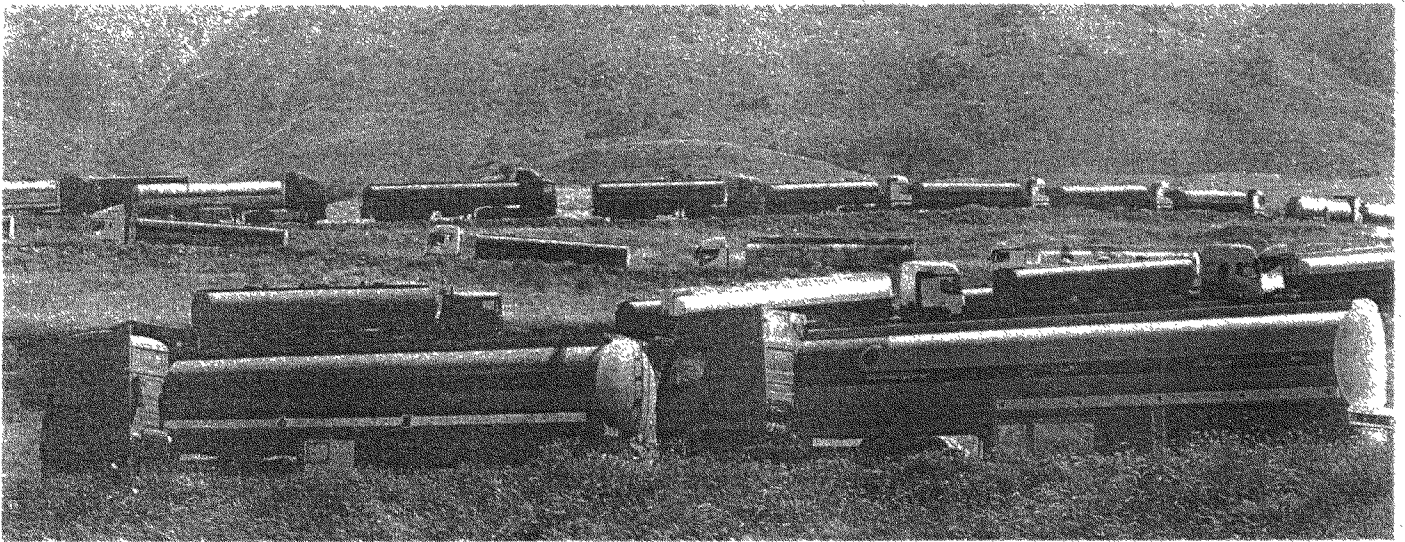
Quelle est la situation des Kurdes ?

Les droits élémentaires de cette minorité (10% de la population) lui sont refusés, y compris le droit d'enseigner le kurde ou de célébrer ses fêtes. La répression s'est encore accrue après que les Kurdes de Syrie ont organisé de grandes manifestations, dont certaines ont tourné à la violence, dans tout le nord du pays, en mars. Malgré les promesses répétées d'Al-Assad, on estime à 300 000 le nombre de Kurdes apatrides qui attendent toujours du gouvernement une réponse à leurs difficultés en leur accordant la citoyenneté.

Le Monde
21 juillet 2010

Les Américains préparent leur retrait d'un Irak incertain

Les attentats se poursuivent, alors que les partis irakiens demeurent incapables de composer un gouvernement



Au Kurdistan irakien, des camions-citernes transportant des produits pétroliers en route vers l'Iran, le 7 juin. Un trafic dénoncé par Bagdad. YAHYA AHMED/AP

Qu'il y ait ou non un gouvernement à Bagdad d'ici là, le vice-président américain, Joseph Biden, n'a « *aucun doute* » : dans les six semaines, le corps expéditionnaire stationné en Irak depuis l'invasion d'avril 2003, et qui compte jusqu'à 165 000 soldats en 2007, ne comprendra plus que 50 000 hommes. M. Biden, qui répondait, dimanche 18 juillet, aux questions de la chaîne ABC, s'est dit convaincu que ce nouveau retrait de troupes – elles sont encore 70 000 aujourd'hui –, conforme aux accords conclus fin 2008 avec le gouvernement de Nouri Al-Maliki, « *n'affectera nullement la stabilité physique de l'Irak* ».

Les intéressés, à commencer par les miliciens arabes sunnites qui avaient accepté, à partir de fin 2006, d'abandonner leurs alliances avec les groupes de guérilla anti-américains pour lutter, avec les GI, contre les djihadistes d'Al-Qaïda et affiliés, ne sont sûrement pas tous d'accord avec cette vision relativement optimiste des choses. Au moins 48 de leurs hommes, enrôlés dans des « *comités du réveil* », ont été tués dimanche, et

47 autres blessés, alors qu'ils patientaient devant des casernes pour toucher leur paye. Deux kamikazes envoyés par la filiale locale d'Al-Qaïda, qui s'est toujours jurée de « punir les traîtres » qui l'avaient lâchée, se sont faits exploser au milieu des files d'attente.

Plusieurs centaines de ces miliciens ont été assassinés depuis début 2009 quand les Américains ont « transféré » la responsabilité, et les soldes, de leurs supplétifs sunnites au gouvernement local, dominé par la majorité chiite, de M. Maliki. Ils étaient alors autour de 100 000. Ils seraient encore près de 70 000 à assurer cahincaha, dans les villes et les campa-

Les lucratives reconversions de responsables américains

Peter Galbraith, diplomate itinérant, a reçu des participations pétrolières pour avoir bien conseillé les Kurdes lors des négociations constitutionnelles avec les autres communautés irakiennes. Zalmai Khalilzad, ancien ambassadeur à Bagdad, vient d'entrer au conseil d'administration de la compagnie norvégienne DNO,

gnes du pays, une certaine présence sécuritaire et des barrages sur les routes. Beaucoup, selon le gouvernement, ne « *travailleraient* » plus qu'épisodiquement, essentiellement dans leurs propres régions et quartiers urbains.

Selon leurs chefs, souvent d'origine tribale, le gouvernement n'aurait pas tenu sa promesse, faite aux Américains, d'embaucher 20 000 de ces miliciens dans les forces régulières de sécurité. Dans les zones sunnites comme la province d'Al-Anbar où se situent les villes de Fallouja et Ramadi, et où des attentats aveugles et des assassinats ciblés se multiplient à nouveau, la colère gronde d'autant plus qu'au niveau national, les Ara-

qui exploite du pétrole kurde. Le général Jay Garner, premier administrateur américain d'Irak en 2003, est consultant dans une autre compagnie en activité au Kurdistan. John Agresto, haut fonctionnaire qui s'occupait en 2003 des universités d'Irak, joue désormais, pour son propre compte, le même rôle au Kurdistan.

bes sunnites (20% de la population) qui ont très largement voté pour la liste laïque d'Iyad Allaoui, se sentent politiquement floués.

La liste Iraqiyah (« irakienne ») de M. Allaoui est arrivée en tête des élections du 7 mars mais semble n'avoir aucune chance de pouvoir former le prochain gouvernement depuis que les deux grandes listes chiites, dont celle de M. Maliki, se sont alliées au début de l'été pour continuer de gouverner le pays.

L'Irak est cependant entré lundi dans son cinquième mois sans gouvernement puisque les deux listes alliées ne parviennent toujours pas à se mettre d'accord sur le partage des maroquins, à commencer par le poste de premier ministre que M. Maliki veut conserver et que d'autres personnalités chiites convoitent. Le Parlement a repoussé, dimanche 18 juillet, la date à laquelle un gouvernement devra lui être présenté. Beaucoup d'observateurs irakiens estiment que l'impasse pourrait se prolonger au-delà de la date du retrait partiel américain le 31 août.

« Des experts d'Iran »

Mais au moment où Washington allège un peu plus son dispositif militaire en Irak, d'autres pou-

blèmes, liés à l'Iran, se profilent à l'horizon. Chaque jour, plus de 150 camions-citernes remplis à ras bord de brut, mais aussi de produits raffinés, font la navette entre le Kurdistan irakien et l'Iran.

Nul ne sait très bien d'où viennent ces produits, les autorités autonomes kurdes affirmant qu'il s'agit de surplus produits par leurs propres raffineries – « Mais alors

pourquoi ne pas les vendre en Irak même où ils manquent ? », s'interrogent les fonctionnaires du pétrole à Bagdad. Le pouvoir fédéral de M. Maliki soupçonne au contraire que les Kurdes, qui ont droit à 17% de la production nationale à bas prix, en revendent une partie avec profit aux voisins iraniens.

Dans un cas comme dans l'autre, l'affaire est extrêmement

embarrassante, et pour les Américains – dont les Kurdes sont les plus proches alliés en Irak – et pour Bagdad qui est contraint d'importer de Turquie et du Koweït, notamment, les produits raffinés qui lui manquent. Elle est d'autant plus gênante pour Washington que son commandant en chef local, le général Ray Odierno, s'alarmait le 10 juillet des « menaces de plus en

plus précises » que feraient peser des groupes chiites irakiens « entraînés par Téhéran » sur la sécurité de ses bases et de ses retraits à venir. « Au cours du mois dernier, a affirmé le général, des experts ont été envoyés d'Irak pour les aider à nous attaquer. » ■

Patrice Claude

Observatoire de la Vie Politique Turque (OVIPOT).....22 Juillet 2010

Adoption d'une législation limitant les possibilités d'emprisonner les enfants kurdes qui jettent des pierres.

Jean Marcou

Le Parlement turc a voté, la nuit dernière, une loi qui permettra de limiter l'emprisonnement des enfants kurdes qui jettent des pierres sur les forces de l'ordre dans les manifestations. Ce texte était attendu, depuis un certain temps déjà, car la législation antérieure permettait d'emprisonner des mineurs (parfois âgés d'à peine 12 ans), et suscitait la réprobation des organisations humanitaires internationales. Entre 2006 et 2008, 2.500 mineurs âgés de 12 à 18 ans ont, en effet, été jugés par des tribunaux pour enfants ou pour adultes, en vertu de la fameuse loi antiterroriste. Le nouveau texte limite les possibilités d'emprisonnement des mineurs arrêtés dans des manifestations, et va permettre une amnistie pour ceux qui ont été condamnés au terme de l'ancienne législation. Près de 200 d'entre eux devraient ainsi pouvoir sortir de prison et des milliers d'autres, qui étaient sous la menace de peines d'emprisonnement dans le cadre de procédures engagées, devraient bénéficier de cette initiative. En vertu de la nouvelle loi, les mineurs ayant participé à des manifestations interdites ou reconnus coupables de faits relevant de la loi antiterroriste, n'iront plus en prison et feront l'objet de protocoles spéciaux de traitement adaptés à leur âge. Toutefois les récidivistes, et ceux qui seront arrêtés les armes à la main, resteront passibles de peines de prison.

Ce texte constitue certes une amélioration, mais il intervient dans un contexte où la question kurde s'est particulièrement dégradée en Turquie. Après les espoirs suscités, l'an dernier, par le lancement de « l'ouverture démocratique » par le gouvernement de l'AKP, l'enlisement de ce processus, à la suite de la dissolution du DTP par la Cour constitutionnelle, en décembre 2009, a débouché sur une reprise des tensions, se traduisant par l'arrestation massive de responsables politiques kurdes suspects de sympathie pour le PKK, et surtout par une accentuation spectaculaire de la violence dans les provinces du sud-est. Depuis le printemps dernier, notamment, près d'une cinquantaine de soldats turcs et plus de 150 rebelles ont été tués dans des affrontements armés, des accrochages ou des attentats. Ce bilan s'accroît de jour en jour montrant que la guerre civile larvée, qui a commencé au cours des années 1980 et qui a fait plus de 40 000 morts et près de 2 millions de personnes déplacées, est loin d'être entrée dans une phase d'achèvement.



Le gouvernement déclare ne pas avoir renoncé à son projet d'ouverture politique, et le numéro 2 du PKK, Murat Karayilan, vient de se dire prêt à déposer les armes, si un véritable dialogue est engagé par Ankara. Toutefois, la récente révision constitutionnelle votée par le parlement, qui doit faire l'objet d'un référendum le 12 septembre prochain, n'a pas concerné la question kurde. Le BDP (la formation parlementaire kurde) ne soutiendra pas d'ailleurs cette réforme du gouvernement. Les dispositions qui devaient rendre plus difficile la dissolution des partis politiques et qui aurait sécurisé l'existence des formations politiques kurdes qui ont souvent fait les frais d'une telle sanction, n'ont pas été adoptées par les parlementaires du parti majoritaire. Quant au « groupe de la paix », qui avait symboliquement déposé les armes, en octobre dernier, sur la frontière turco-irakienne, il est finalement retourné en Irak, en estimant que les conditions n'étaient plus réunies pour poursuivre le processus engagé dans le contexte de « l'ouverture démocratique ».

Plus que jamais, la question kurde reste le problème politique clef qui conditionne l'accroissement de la démocratie et l'approfondissement de l'état de droit en Turquie. Le paradoxe est que de nombreux protagonistes semblent en avoir pris conscience, mais qu'ils peinent à trouver la voie d'un règlement véritable et durable.

Attentat contre des sunnites en Irak, une quarantaine de morts

par Muhanad Mohammad

BAGDAD (Reuters) - Un attentat suicide visant un groupe armé sunnite soutenu par le gouvernement a fait au moins 39 morts et 41 blessés dimanche dans le sud-ouest de Bagdad, a-t-on appris auprès des services de sécurité. Dans l'ouest du pays, près de la frontière syrienne, un second kamikaze s'est fait exploser lors d'une réunion de chefs locaux de milices sunnites, tuant au moins quatre personnes, a dit la police de la province de l'Anbar. Six personnes ont été blessées.

A Bagdad, un kamikaze a déclenché sa charge explosive au milieu d'un groupe de membres d'une milice Sahwa ("Eveil"), des ex-insurgés sunnites d'abord alliés à Al Qaïda et qui ont rallié les forces américaines et irakiennes en 2006-2007, participant d'un tournant majeur dans la lutte contre les islamistes.

Malgré le recul des violences interconfessionnelles, des insurgés sunnites demeurent actifs et tentent de tirer parti de l'impasse dans laquelle se trouve le pays depuis les élections législatives du 7 mars, qui n'ont pas désigné de majorité

claire.

L'attentat suicide de Bagdad a visé des miliciens Sahwa qui formaient une file d'attente dans le quartier à majorité sunnite de Radwaniya pour recevoir leur salaire.

Depuis octobre 2008, il revient au gouvernement de Bagdad de payer ces anciens rebelles qui ont changé de camp et ont été intégrés.

"PAS D'INCONNUS PARMIS NOUS"

"Il y avait plus de 85 personnes qui formaient trois queues devant la porte principale de la base militaire pour recevoir leur salaire: quand une personne nous a approchés. Lorsqu'un soldat a essayé de l'arrêter, il s'est fait exploser", a dit un rescapé de 20 ans. Tayseer Mehsen, hospitalisé à Mahmoudiya.

"J'ai perdu conscience et je me suis réveillé à l'hôpital", a-t-il ajouté.

Selon la police, l'attaque a fait 39 morts. Mais une source au ministère de l'Intérieur a parlé de 43 décès.

Tous les morts sont des miliciens Sahwa et deux soldats figurent parmi les blessés, a-t-on dit de même source.

Selon le chef de milice local Mohammed Al Anbari, il est possible que

le kamikaze soit issu des rangs même des Sahwa. "Il n'y avait pas d'inconnus parmi nous", a-t-il dit.

Les dirigeants des Sahwa ont été la cible d'une série d'attaques ces derniers mois dans les secteurs sunnites proches de Bagdad. La plupart de ces incidents ont été qualifiés d'actes de vengeance de la part d'insurgés ou d'Al Qaïda.

Certains ont été attribués à d'anciennes rivalités familiales ou claniques.

Une guerre interconfessionnelle a opposé les chiites, majoritaires en Irak, et les sunnites, jadis dominants dans le pays, après l'intervention américaine de mars 2003 et la chute de Saddam Hussein, avant de faiblir lors de "l'éveil".

Les attaques et attentats se sont intensifiés récemment à la faveur d'une vacance du pouvoir consécutive aux élections législatives.

L'Irak n'est toujours pas doté d'un nouveau gouvernement, la faute notamment aux difficultés à s'entendre éprouvées par les alliances ou groupes sunnites, chiites et kurdes.



TURQUIE: DOUZE SOLDATS BLESSÉS DANS UNE ATTAQUE DES REBELLES KURDES

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 19 juillet 2010 (AFP)

DOUZE soldats turcs ont été blessés dans l'explosion d'une bombe posée par les rebelles kurdes, lundi dans le sud-est de la Turquie, a annoncé l'armée.

L'engin explosif, placé sur le bord d'une route par les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) a fait sauter un véhicule militaire près de la ville de Cukurca, dans la province de Hakkari, près de la frontière irakienne, selon la même source.

Le PKK mène des attaques quotidiennes contre les forces de sécurité depuis l'annonce en mai par leur chef emprisonné Abdullah Öcalan qu'il renonce à toute tentative de dialogue avec le gouvernement.

Le conflit au fait au moins 45.000 morts, depuis 1984.



EXPLOSION SUR UN OLÉODUC TURCO-IRANIEN DANS L'EST DE LA TURQUIE

ANKARA, 21 juillet 2010 (AFP)

UN OLÉODUC transportant du gaz naturel iranien vers la Turquie a été endommagé dans la nuit de mardi à mercredi par une explosion, provoquée, selon le gouverneur de la province, par la rébellion séparatiste kurde du PKK.

Le transit a été interrompu, a indiqué au téléphone à l'AFP un responsable local sous couvert de l'anonymat.

L'explosion a eu lieu dans la nuit de mardi à mercredi sur une portion de l'oléoduc située près de la localité turque de Dogubayazit (est), à plusieurs kilomètres de la frontière iranienne, a-t-il déclaré.

"L'explosion a sans doute été provoquée par des membres d'une organisation terroriste séparatiste", a déclaré dans un communiqué Ali Yertikaya, gouverneur de la province d'Agri, où se sont déroulés les faits. Les termes d'organisa-

sation terroriste séparatiste désignent le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Dans le courant du mois, des rebelles du PKK, rébellion séparatiste kurde qui lance des attaques contre la Turquie, avaient été accusés d'avoir fait exploser un oléoduc transportant du pétrole irakien vers la Turquie.

Les autorités ont coupé le transit de gaz et les pompiers ont maîtrisé l'incendie, a rapporté de son côté l'agence Anatolie.

L'explosion de mercredi a interrompu le passage du gaz iranien mais une responsable de la compagnie étatique turque de pétrole et de gaz BOTAS a écarté le risque de pénurie car le gaz provenant de Russie et d'Azerbaïdjan suffit à répondre aux besoins.

"Il n'y a pas de problème pour le moment", a-t-elle déclaré.

Les réparations de la section endommagée de l'oléoduc devraient prendre une semaine, a-t-elle ajouté.

AFP

IRAK: LES SANCTIONS CONTRE L'IRAN DOPENT LA CONTREBANDE PÉTROLIÈRE

BASHMAKH (Irak), 18 juillet 2010 (AFP)

SUR LA ROUTE menant à Bashmakh, dans le nord de l'Irak, 150 camions-citernes attendent de passer en contrebande leur cargaison de produits pétroliers en Iran, un spectacle quotidien au coeur d'une violente dispute entre Bagdad et les Kurdes, et qui préoccupe Washington.

Au milieu des champs luxuriants et des collines verdoyantes qui entourent le village frontalier, les sanctions unilatérales imposées à l'Iran par les Etats-Unis sont loin d'inquiéter les chauffeurs de poids-lourds, accusés de transporter de l'essence, du gazole ou du naphte.

Assis à l'ombre de son camion pour éviter un soleil impitoyable, Omar Hassan, un sunnite de la ville septentrionale de Mossoul, dit patienter depuis trois jours.

"Chaque camion transporte 25 tonnes qui sont acheminées vers Bandar Abbas", assure-t-il, en référence à un port du sud de l'Iran où les produits raffinés seront transférés sur des navires pour l'exportation.

Si le gouvernement autonome kurde à Erbil admet du bout des lèvres qu'il y a un problème de contrebande, il affirme que la majorité des exportations sont légales car ces dérivés du pétrole dépassent la demande locale.

L'envoi de ces cargaisons, que l'Iran vendra ensuite sur le marché international, a de fortes répercussions en Irak et à l'étranger.

Ce sont les autorités régionales qui distribuent les laissez-passer aux chauffeurs turcs et kurdes, dans ce qui apparaît comme un défi au gouvernement central.

A Bagdad, le ministère du Pétrole est furieux de voir les Kurdes exporter des produits pétroliers importés par le gouvernement irakien principalement de Turquie et du Koweït pour répondre à la consommation intérieure.

"S'il y a un surplus, c'est pour le moins étrange de l'exporter, car l'Irak importe pour les besoins de ses citoyens", a affirmé mardi le ministre du Pétrole Hussein Chahristani, soulignant en outre que les revenus empochés par les autorités kurdes doivent revenir au gouvernement central.

Cette polémique dépasse les chauffeurs, qui souhaitent seulement la poursuite d'un trafic qui leur assure leurs revenus.

"Nous transportons ce pétrole (en Iran) où il est transvasé dans d'énormes citernes mais nous ne savons pas où il va ensuite", jure Kader Ghafour, un



chauffeur de Kirkouk, au nord de Bagdad.

Son collègue Hiwa Raouf craint que "ce trafic vers l'Iran cesse, maintenant que les médias en ont parlé".

"Si la contrebande s'arrête, les revenus de centaines de familles vont se tarir", ajoute-t-il en précisant que les cargaisons vont aussi jusqu'à Bandar Bushehr et Bandar Imam Khomeini, deux autres ports méridionaux iraniens.

Outre les tensions qu'elles suscitent avec Bagdad, ces exportations exaspèrent Washington, principal protecteur des Kurdes depuis la guerre du Golfe en 1991.

Les Etats-Unis, qui ont imposé unilatéralement des sanctions contre l'Iran, ont fait savoir qu'ils pénaliseraient toute compagnie étrangère qui vendrait des produits raffinés à Téhéran.

Un porte-parole de l'ambassade américaine à Bagdad a indiqué à l'AFP que la contrebande était déjà préoccupante avant les nouvelles sanctions, et que son pays enquêtait sur la situation dans le nord de l'Irak.

"Comme les majors ont indiqué ne plus vendre de produits raffinés en Iran, des petits opérateurs ont fait leur apparition pour profiter du vide. Nous en sommes inquiets et nous suivons de près cette affaire", a-t-il dit.

Certains dissidents kurdes estiment, eux, que le trafic accroît la corruption.

Kowestan Mohammed, de la liste Goran (changement), constituée contre les deux grands partis qui dominent la scène politique kurde depuis des décennies, déplore ainsi que "les revenus de la contrebande pétrolière n'entrent pas dans les caisses de la région".

DES "ENVOYÉS DE LA PAIX" KURDES QUITTENT LA TURQUIE POUR L'IRAK

ANKARA, 19 juillet 2010 (AFP)

UN "GROUPE DE PAIX", composé de rebelles kurdes qui avaient été envoyés en Turquie par le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), est retourné lundi en Irak, déclarant que ses gestes en faveur d'un dialogue avec le gouvernement d'Ankara étaient restés sans réponse, ont annoncé des médias.

Ceux qui sont rentrés font partie des 34 personnes, dont quatre enfants, qui avaient traversé la frontière en octobre dans un geste de soutien aux efforts de paix du gouvernement turc en vue de mettre un terme à la lutte armée du PKK en faveur des droits des Kurdes qui dure depuis 26 ans.

Quoique les "envoyés de la paix", les 30 adultes –huit militants du PKK et 22 sympathisants– aient été dans un premier temps laissés en liberté, ils ont été accusés en avril dernier de liens avec le PKK, encourant des peines de 20 ans de prison.

Dix d'entre eux ont été détenus dans l'attente de l'ouverture de leur procès en juin.

On ignorait dans un premier temps combien de personnes du groupe avaient passé la frontière irakienne. La chaîne de télévision NTV a estimé ce nombre à 19 tandis que la chaîne CNN-Turk a fait état de 14 personnes.

L'agence Firat proche du PKK, qui cite un porte-parole du groupe, a indiqué

que les poursuites judiciaires avaient rendu impossible la continuation des efforts de paix.

"Nous avons tendu la main, mais nous nous sommes heurtés au vide", a déclaré le porte-parole cité par l'agence sur son site internet.

Interrogé par la presse sur le retour en Irak des rebelles kurdes, le ministre turc de la Justice, Sadullah Ergin, a déclaré qu'il ne disposait pas d'informations concrètes confirmant leur retour dans ce pays.

"Nous avons reçu des informations dans ce sens, J'aurais souhaité qu'ils restent dans ce pays pour contribuer aux efforts de paix du gouvernement", a-t-il ajouté.

L'année dernière, le gouvernement avait engagé une double stratégie, améliorant les droits des Kurdes tout en gardant sous pression militaire le PKK afin de mettre un terme à sa lutte meurtrière.

L'initiative a toutefois subi un grave revers, le PKK ayant renoué avec la violence depuis qu'en mai son chef historique Abdullah Ocalan a déclaré qu'il renonçait aux efforts de paix avec Ankara.

Environ 45.000 personnes ont été tuées depuis le début du conflit en 1984 lorsque le PKK, qui figure sur la liste noire des groupes terroristes de la Turquie et de nombreux pays dans le monde, a pris les armes pour obtenir la création d'un Etat indépendant dans le Sud-Est de la Turquie à majorité kurde. Il revendique aujourd'hui l'autonomie de la région.

Iraq: The Impasse

by Joost Hiltermann

It is easy to underestimate how much fear can obstruct a society's recovery from horrific violence or repression, or both; and fear now dominates Iraq as its leaders try to make a new start after decades of a ruthless tyranny, its violent removal, and the chaotic aftermath. One principal fear among Iraqis is that there could be a resurgence of the Baath Party and a return to dictatorship. Another is that Iran will dominate Iraq through its influence on Shiites.

Although I found these fears common among politicians when I was in Baghdad in late May, I was caught off-guard when my driver, with disarming earnestness and in the expectation of a simple response, asked me: "Are you sure Saddam is dead? They say they buried wax copies of him and his sons, and that they are living in southern France."

In Iraq today, conspiracy theories based on what "they say" are so prevalent as to defy straightforward refutation, pointing to a deeper pathology that perhaps only time and genuine reconciliation can cure. For now, such fearful fantasies shape and distort both politics and policies, as the leading Iraqi political parties seek to fashion a coalition government out of the contested results of last March's parliamentary elections. Every bomb attack, every visit by a political leader to a neighboring capital, every killing of a politician provokes a profound dread that the horrors of the pre-2003 past survive in a diminished but still potent form—whether they derive from the mayhem of the murderous Baathist regime or from Iranian attacks during a senseless war fought more than twenty years ago. Will these ghosts return to leave their bloody mark on the country's future?

Exhibit A for those terrified by the specter of the Baath's return was the meeting, set up in April by the Damascus-based branch of the Iraqi Baath Party, of groups opposed to the current order in Iraq. It was the first such gathering that the Syrian regime permitted to take place in public, and the Iraqi prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, and his Shiite supporters saw it as an undisguised signal that Syria and the remaining Iraqi Baathists were supporting Maliki's main rival, the former prime minister Iyad Allawi, in his quest to lead the next Iraqi government. Similarly, Allawi, a secular Shiite whose followers are mostly Sunni, cites the post-election spectacle of leading Shiite and Kurdish politicians flocking to Tehran, ostensibly to celebrate Nowruz, the Persian New Year, in late March as convincing proof that the Iranian regime is steering the course of Iraqi politics at their expense.

More than four months since the elections, a new government has yet to take shape. The leaders of the four lists that emerged with the most seats all appear to recognize that the only workable way forward is through a broad-based coalition government. Fearing each other, they all seem to realize that it would be better to be in close proximity, around the table, talking, than in separate corners, out of sight, plotting revenge. In this, they are encouraged by Iraq's neighbors, as well as the United States, all of whom worry about what might happen if, at this sensitive stage in the country's development, one party is left out and turns again to insurgency, setting off a new round of civil war with unpredictable consequences for the region.

What is holding things up, however, is the fear among many Iraqis that whatever party wins the right to form the government and appoint the prime minister will proceed to concentrate power around itself, using gaps and ambiguities in Iraq's new constitution to its advantage.



Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki meeting with Iyad Allawi, the head of the al-Iraqiya alliance, Baghdad, June 29, 2010

Maliki's detractors point to his record during the past four years—he has done little by way of concrete governance, but instead has spent much effort to carve out a power base, including setting up security agencies that have no basis in the constitution. In addition to Iyad Allawi and his mainly Sunni constituency, Maliki's critics and competitors include the Kurds and his Shiite rivals in the Iraqi National Alliance (INA). This last is a loose grouping that includes the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, the Sadrist movement, and a variety of smaller parties and independents, among them the US's erstwhile friend and current nemesis, Ahmed Chalabi. Moreover, Allawi asserts that since his list won the most seats—ninety-one, compared to Maliki's eighty-nine—he has the right to take the first stab at forming a government.

Maliki has questioned the election results, hinting in not so unambiguous terms that a "foreign power"—understood to be the United States—has defrauded him by manipulating the vote, the count, and the recount in Baghdad. Even now, while resigning himself to the decision by the federal Supreme Court to certify the original results in early June, he continues to challenge Allawi's bid to form the government. His main tactic has been to pursue an alliance with his Shiite rivals in the INA, in order to become the largest bloc in parliament, gain the right to form a government, and thus deprive Allawi of his presumptive right to become prime minister.

Whatever their opinion of Maliki and his autocratic tendencies, Shiite politicians fear most of all losing the position of prime minister, and they are convinced that although Allawi would have a hard time collecting by himself the necessary number of seats (a simple majority of 163 in Iraq's 325-member legislature), a hidden hand—again, the United States—will somehow assist him and through trickery and deceit cheat the Shiites out of the dominant position they have acquired since 2003, after what they see as the long years of Sunni oppression.

What is striking about the Obama administration's current approach to Iraqi politics, however, is not its presumed preference for one party, Allawi's, but its unexplained lack of will to push for a solution, something much noted by politicians of all parties. The US tries to exercise strong influence only sporadically, invariably in the form of a visit by Vice President Joe Biden, the administration's de facto special envoy for Iraq. He arrived in Baghdad on the eve of Independence Day on July 3 and met with both Maliki and Allawi, as well as other leading figures. The US appears to want the two leaders to establish a broadly inclusive government based on power-sharing, and to do so quickly—well before the Obama administration fulfills its promises to reduce the number of US troops by 50,000 by the end of August.

In public comments, Biden also cautioned his audience against allowing outside forces to set Iraq's agenda. "You should not, and I'm sure you will not, let any state, from the United States to any state in the region, dictate what will become of you all," he declared. US commentators pointed at Iran as the intended target, but they could just as easily have mentioned Syria or Turkey, both of which have actively sought to affect the outcome of the current political battle, while Arab states have also tried to exert influence, for example, by warning of the possibility of civil war should Allawi not become prime minister. This should come as no surprise: all of Iraq's neighbors have a vital interest in the shape it will take. They agree on the need to preserve Iraq's territorial unity, but disagree on just about every other issue.

This matters all the more since the United States is a fading power in Iraq whose forces are departing and whose diplomacy appears rudderless because its attention is directed elsewhere. In its waning days, the Bush administration signed a Strategic Framework Agreement (the SFA, along with a Status of Forces Agreement, or SOFA) with the Maliki government that was intended to cement Iraq within the pro-US regional orbit. One of the most frequent and most exasperated complaints one hears from Baghdad politicians is that the Obama administration has taken few steps to implement the SFA.

The SFA's success will depend on two factors: the smooth transfer of some of the Pentagon's noncombat functions in Iraq to the State Department (such as funding for police training and other civilian reconstruction projects the administration envisions) and the conclusion of a follow-on agreement to the SOFA that will allow the US to maintain control over Iraqi airspace after 2011 while continuing to build up Iraq's security forces. The US hopes to do this through continued training and other forms of aid, as well as the sale of equipment such as F-16 fighter planes, which are used by other Arab countries cooperating with the US.

Uncertain of what will happen next and what the future US role in Iraq will be, its neighbors are each intent on contriving an outcome favorable to their own interests, and predictably they are working at cross-purposes. Most Iraqis deeply resent the influence these states exert. Depending on where they stand politically, Iraqis tend to cast one of the external forces as the villain while playing down the influence of others. Their perception of interference is magnified by their fear that such foreign meddling will decisively put the party they support out of the game. In Iraq, those who find themselves on the losing side realize that they stand to lose more than their formal positions and their perks and privileges. In the absence of strong institutions, such as an independent judiciary, that would encourage and sustain a peaceful transfer of power, their lives may be at risk as well.

While Iran stands accused of crude interference in Iraq—sending weapons across the border, training Shiite insurgents, funding political activities—its official diplomatic position on forming a government is not only benign but fully in line with that of the other neighbors and, in fact, the United States. Iran's ambassador, Hassan Kazemi Qomi, declared in April that in his view no single list could form a government on its own and that a coalition agreement among the main four winning lists would be needed. When I met him at the Baghdad embassy, he said that Iran wants Iraq to be unified and stable, free of foreign influence, and flourishing. Without a hint of irony (in view of Iran's domestic situation), he praised the March elections as a "fair competition with good participation," and derided the notion that Iran was meddling in Iraqi affairs. Ignoring such Iran-backed Shiite factions as the Kataeb Hezbollah and Asaeb Ahl al-Haq, he claimed that terrorism in Iraq originated entirely with groups, such as al-Qaeda and the former Baath Party, that operate with the support of "Arab states that are friends of the United States."

Iraqi politicians commonly assert that Iran is pushing for Shiite unity more than for any specific Shiite candidate for prime minister, and Qomi implicitly endorsed this reading when he noted as proof of Tehran's limited influence in Iraq that it had been unable to achieve the unification of the two Shiite lists, Maliki's State of Law and the INA. This was an interesting remark, because Iran has been pushing

the two groups to join forces for months, starting well before the elections. It has made no progress whatever in the face of Maliki's insistence that he would have to be the new alliance's leader, and thus its candidate for prime minister, an outcome that the other Shiite group refused to endorse. For all the talk of Iranian meddling, and despite its strenuous efforts, Tehran has failed so far to accomplish a principal policy goal in Iraq—securing a unified political coalition that could ensure Shiite dominance in Iraqi politics.

Both Iran and other outsiders, including the United States, have had similar failures in the past. In 2008, Iran tried to prevent the US-Iraq security agreements from being signed, and failed, despite its many summonses of Iraqi leaders to Tehran. Worse for Iranian leaders, some of their actions in Iraq have provoked a nationalist backlash from both Sunnis and Shiites. In November 2009, Iran's speaker of parliament, Ali Larijani, came to Iraq on a visit that many Iraqis perceived as pre-election meddling. Among various topics, Larijani raised the issue of dust storms that plague Iran, which he contended originate in Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Instead of expressing sympathy, Iraqi politicians pointedly reminded him of the harmful impact of Iran's management of rivers that flow into Iraq. Like Turkey, Iran has built dams that sharply curb the amount of water Iraq receives, a pressing concern in the southern marshes, which are drying up as a result. The combination of drought and desertification has given rise to dust storms that make life miserable throughout the region, not only in Iraq. The Iraqis spoke out after months of escalating anger in Basra against Iran's water policies. These may have wasted much of the goodwill Iran has built up by encouraging cross-border trade and supplying power to cities such as Basra.

If water matters to Iraqis as the source of their civilization and well-being, so does oil, their primary source of revenue. In December 2009, Iranian soldiers occupied a well in the Fakkeh oil field, which is located on the Iranian border in the southern Iraqi province of Meysan; they raised the Iranian flag and claimed the well was on Iranian territory. Outraged, Iraqi politicians asserted that the well had been Iraqi since it was dug in the 1970s. While acknowledging that there is a problem with border demarcation, leaders of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, which is often accused of being an Iranian proxy, were particularly angry at the hoisting of the flag, in their view an unacceptable violation of Iraqi sovereignty.

In another example of Iran's growing influence raising nationalist hackles, inhabitants of the Shiite holy city of Karbala demonstrated in April 2009 against the awarding of a contract to an Iranian company to renovate the historic city center. Karbala is home to two of the most important shrines in Shiite Islam, and the notion that Iran would be in charge of renovation projects was objectionable to many Iraqi Shiites, who view the matter within the context of an age-old competition over supremacy in Shiite affairs between Qom in Iran and Karbala and Najaf in Iraq. The divide between Arabs and Persians continues to interfere with the cross-border solidarity of Shiites.

Turkey doesn't seem to be faring much better. Turkish leaders are apprehensive of Iran's growing power in the region, whether by means of its nuclear program or its assertiveness in Iraq. In response, Turkish policymakers have sought to position Turkey as a mediator in the dispute over Iran's nuclear program, while trying to roll back Iranian influence in Iraq. They make no public declarations to this effect, because they want to protect their otherwise friendly relationship with leaders in Tehran. But they have opened consulates in Mosul, Erbil, and most notably Basra; established a high-level strategic cooperation council jointly with the Iraqi government; and signed a military cooperation accord with Baghdad as well as deals on energy cooperation and water sharing. They are thus giving clear signals that they intend to protect Iraq's territorial unity by keeping Iraqi Kurds tied to Baghdad, curb Iran's influence, and gain access to oil and gas, which Turkey needs desperately.

On the political front, Turkish officials privately say that they helped form Allawi's al-Iraqiya alliance. Whether this is true or not, Turkey clearly believes that al-Iraqiya represents its best hope in Iraq. It is a mostly Sunni list led by Allawi, a secular Shiite whose political views

are close to those of the Turkish government and most of the Arab states, all of which are predominantly Sunni and deeply suspicious about the loyalties of Iraq's Shiite parties, including Maliki's.

On at least two occasions this spring, Iraq's Foreign Ministry summoned Turkey's energetic ambassador in Baghdad, Murat Ozelik, to tell the Turkish government to stop meddling in Iraqi affairs. Despite Turkey's active diplomacy and its barely disguised preference for Allawi, however, it seems highly unlikely that he will be able to fulfill his ambition to become Iraq's first elected, truly secular prime minister. (He served as a US-appointed prime minister in 2004–2005.) And while Turkey has grandiose plans for obtaining energy supplies from Iraq, it frets that Baghdad has failed to move on issues indispensable for Ankara's prospects, such as a federal oil law.

If neighboring countries have traction in Iraq, it is because the weakness and divisiveness of the frail Iraqi state invite intervention. Yet nearby countries that try to interfere routinely encounter serious obstacles within Iraq, partly caused by what remains of Iraq's pre-2003 identity, elites, and institutions. Moreover, the same fearful attitude that sees a hidden foreign hand behind every political move also serves to convince a good many politicians that consensus-based politics will help them survive.

Somewhat paradoxically perhaps, the most senior proponent of inclusiveness and national independence is an Iranian-born cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who has lived in Najaf for most of his adult life. A political quietist by inclination, Sistani has limited himself to laying down basic principles (open elections: good; sectarian revenge: bad), but in doing so has played an important part since the 2003 US invasion in an Iraq ridden with sectarian violence, poor governance, and dysfunctional politics, although his influence now appears to be declining. Revered by the Shiite public, Sistani has also earned the respect of many Sunnis, and politicians have made the trek to his modest dwelling in Najaf to extract a piece of advice, delivered as by Delphic oracle, and often just as ambiguous.

A Sunni politician who visited Sistani along with Allawi and other leading al-Iraqiya figures in May told me that he had come away highly impressed. Sistani had addressed Allawi's principal fear by indicating that he had no preference for prime minister, as long as the new government would serve the people by improving security, delivering basic services such as electricity, and creating jobs.

Among Iraqis I have talked to, a certain vision survives of Iraq as a cultural middle ground, not a battleground, between Shiite Persia and the Sunni Arab world, a region with lively and diverse ethnic and religious communities tied together historically by the confluence of two major river systems, the Tigris and the Euphrates. You can find many Iraqis who express this sentiment, but somehow I was surprised that one of its most vociferous advocates is a politician of the Sadrist movement, Qusay al-Suheil, a forty-five-year-old parliamentarian from Basra who holds a Ph.D. in geology.

As the followers of Moqtada al-Sadr—a young populist Shiite cleric who comes from a prominent Najaf family that has produced some of the most senior Shiite clerics—the Sadrists are much reviled in the United States for having opposed and fought the American presence in Iraq by one means or another. In anticipation of the US troop departure, they have opportunistically kept one foot in insurgency, the other in politics. Despite the reputation of their militia, the Mahdi Army, as brutish thugs during the bloody street war with Sunnis between 2005 and 2007, the Sadrists emerged in the March elections with forty seats, helped by their clever electioneering and large constituency among Iraq's urban slum population. Their electoral success has given them a tangible presence in the wheeling and dealing that has defined the past four months. Most importantly, they have been able to keep Maliki off-balance by consistently opposing his bid to remain prime minister. (On July 19, for example, Moqtada al-Sadr met with Allawi in Damascus and remarked on the "readiness" of Allawi's party "to make concessions.") If the Sadrists have a political ideology, it is Iraqi nationalism, tinged with the strong conviction that a history of suffering at Sunni hands entitles the

Shiites to rule.

Moqtada al-Sadr himself has been pursuing religious studies in Qom, and, in any case, does not seek a formal position of power. In his place, al-Suhail has been mentioned as a possible Sadrist candidate for prime minister (he came in third in an informal Sadrist straw poll a few months ago, ahead of Maliki), although he strikes me as a person better suited to the rough and tumble of parliamentary politics than to managing a country. He has proved thoughtful, though, especially in his insistence that Iraq ought to carve out a space between its two main neighboring powers, Iran and Saudi Arabia. "We seek to provide an equilibrium between them," he said.

Saudi Arabia and Jordan view Shiites as a homogeneous bloc and as a threat. This is an exaggeration. Iraq has many different ethnic and religious groups, as well as an array of political currents. We have good relations with Iran based on our shared religion—and only based on this. Our Arab bond is stronger than our religious one. We need to go to Arab countries to pierce through these misperceptions.

Others have called for greater economic integration with Iran as a way of keeping the Khamenei regime at bay through entwined interests. Iran is among Iraq's largest trading partners, and its exports to Iraq already amount to \$7 billion per year and are expected to top \$10 billion soon. Some two million tourists from both countries—overwhelmingly Shiite—visit each other's holy sites annually. Compared to Turkey's three consulates in Iraq, Iran has opened five, most recently in Najaf. Iran also supplies Iraq with electricity, claiming to cover 40 percent of its needs. In return, Iraq provides Iran with some refined petroleum products such as diesel fuel and (smuggled from Kurdistan) fuel oil, as well as crude iron. If Iran's economic weight surpasses Iraq's for now, however, this may eventually change in Iraq's favor; Iraq's recent signing of a series of contracts with international oil companies to develop the country's huge oil wealth was the first significant step in that direction.

What is often underappreciated is that, as US forces head for the exit, Iran's position with respect to Iraq could undergo an important shift. The Iranian preoccupation with convincing the US to withdraw by driving up the cost of an extended stay could be replaced by an effort to fill whatever vacuum the US will leave behind when it does. This will require a constructive—one hesitates to say a "nation-building"—approach on Iran's part. The question is: Will Washington recognize this and work out a diplomatic and economic modus vivendi with Iran? Apart from Tehran's intense desire to see the American soldiers leave, Iran and the United States have had a certain commonality of interest in Iraq, from the removal of Saddam's regime to fair elections that brought Shiite parties to power. But Washington seems as traumatized by past attacks on its troops in Iraq as it is spooked by the Iranian nuclear program and dismayed by Iran's implacable repression of political dissent.

When I asked Iraqi politicians about Iran's current approach toward the US, all a parliamentarian from Allawi's al-Iraqiya alliance could come up with was:

What Iran wants is that no government be formed before August 31, so that it can show to the world that the United States cannot fix Iraq. It is interfering in the political process because it does not want to give the US any opportunity to claim success as it completes the drawdown.

What we now have is a battle of one-upmanship, in which Tehran is trying to give Washington one final poke in the eye as US troops go home, causing, among other things, further delays in forming a new government. Some Iraqis dream of the day they will be in a position to do the poking—in the eye of whichever foreign power has become too meddlesome.

—July 21, 2010

Kurdish autonomy campaign puts Obama between Iraq and a hard place

Pressure for expanded territorial rights for Iraqi Kurds from Kurdish lobby groups and US supporters in Washington and Northern Iraq is creating problems for President Obama and his policy of preserving Iraq's unity.

By Nick Amies

IT is said that Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan region of the same name in Northern Iraq, is the one place on earth in which George W. Bush could still win an election. While the Kurds continue to lose faith and become frustrated with US President Barack Obama's stance over their internal borders and sharing of natural resources, the legacy of the Bush administration's involvement in the region is supported and celebrated.

The Kurdish region – and Erbil in particular – is enjoying somewhat of an economic boom and the state of security, as much as is possible in Iraq, is relatively stable mainly thanks to the US support shown to the Kurdish military forces, known as peshmerga, who have managed to keep out Sunni Arab insurgents. Even Turkish incursions across the border have failed to unsettle the sense of renewal.

The resource-rich north of the country has probably profited the most from the 2003 US-led invasion which toppled Saddam Hussein's government and many Kurds are still very grateful for that intervention. They also remember that US support for the no-flight zone helped protect the region's slow recovery and allowed the Kurds to pursue autonomy from the rest of Saddam's Iraq in the 1990s. As well as being a region where the former President Bush would be welcomed, it is perhaps the only part of Iraq where US troops are still embraced as liberators.

Oil and gas reserves maintain US interest in the region



New modern shopping centres are a sign of Erbil's rise

The result of American investment in the region's stability and economy is an almost Western capital where shopping malls buttress plots of land put aside for hotel complexes and golf courses. Erbil is a city of opportunity and one full of foreigners, mostly Americans, who work and consult with the many oil and gas companies at the heart of the Kurdish region's wealth.

Among them are a number of former US diplomats and military officials from the George W. Bush-era who are now reaping their own rewards from the pro-US atmosphere in the Kurdish region. People like former US ambassador to the United Nations Zalmay Khalilzad, Jay Garner, the former administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority of Iraq, and former US government advisor to the Kurds Peter Galbraith, have all held paid advisory or board positions at Kurdish oil and gas companies at one time or another since retiring from office.

Given the Obama administration's support for the government in Baghdad in its dispute with the Kurds over the sharing of oil and gas reserves, the involvement of former US officials in expanding and strengthening the Kurds' grip on their region's resources has created clashes with Washington over the White House's stated policy of preserving Iraq's unity. While some work with Kurdish companies, others represent the dozens of foreign oil companies who were awarded concessions in oil field auctions against the wishes of the central government in Baghdad.

Kurdish lobby groups in Washington build pressure on Obama

Obama is not only feeling the pressure from Iraq. The Kurds have developed an impressive lobbying system in Washington based on their contacts with former politicians from the Bush administration, many of which remain advocates of the Kurdish cause and supporters of the right of statehood for the strategically important region between Iran, Syria and Turkey.

According to the US lobby watchdog the Foreign Lobbyist Influence Tracker, the Kurdish region ranks among the top 10



Obama's Iraq policy is under threat from Kurdish demands

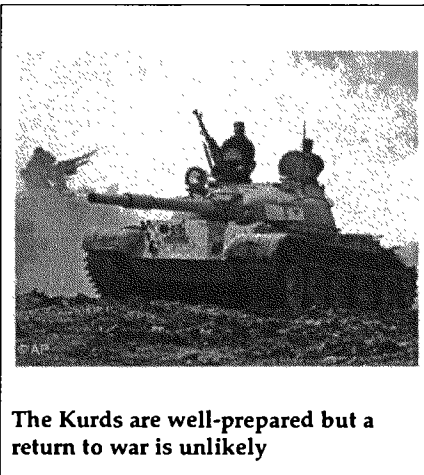
buyers of lobbying services in the United States. The Kurds are using their lobbying and public relations machine to apply pressure on the Obama administration to cement a "strategic and institutional relationship" with the US akin to that enjoyed by Israel and Taiwan and push the US to influence Baghdad over their territorial rights in the north of Iraq.

"The Kurds certainly seek a 'special relationship' with the US within Iraq and probably also support on contentious issues like the so-called Article 140 matters concerning disputed territories where Kurdistan meets Arab – and Turkomen – Iraq," Michael O'Hanlon, a senior fellow in foreign, national security and defence policy at the Brookings Institution in Washington, told Deutsche Welle. "In earlier eras, the Kurds probably hoped that a relationship with the US could be preserved even if the rest of Iraq fell apart. That has probably changed. But as a back-up plan, the Kurds do like thinking of the US as their ultimate security guarantor, although this is not stated explicitly"

According to O'Hanlon, "the Kurds are pushing for a more favorable resolution of disputed territorial matters than autonomy. There is a kernel of truth to the concept of more autonomy though as they apparently want flexibility to sign oil contracts with foreign firms without the need for a blessing from Baghdad – and that would be problematic if it makes the Sunnis in particular feel left out."

Kurdish message to Washington: We are major players

While the Kurds haven't been involved in the business of lobbying in the US capital for very long, they developed a knack for it quickly. "The Kurds are doing a lot of lobbying in Washington, and they are learning the game rather well, sending people not only to congressional hearings but to all meetings in Washington that touch on the politics of the region not only Iraq – and of course the lobbying firms do their job behind the scenes," Marina Ottaway, the Director of the Middle East Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace



The Kurds are well-prepared but a return to war is unlikely

told Deutsche Welle.

"From the point of view of Washington, the Kurds were useful to the US in the days of Saddam Hussein, but now they make things more complicated with the issue of the contentious region of Kirkuk and indeed tensions along the entire order between Kurdistan and Iraq," she added. "The Kurds are not exactly demanding more autonomy; they want to keep what they have. The changes they want are territorial adjustments. Nobody is going to try and reduce their autonomy."

Instability due to Kurdish autonomy a threat but a remote one

While the Kurds have influential friends both in Washington and back in Erbil, many power-brokers in the current US government are wary of supporting the Kurdish campaign for increased autonomy as it goes against the policy of a unified Iraq espoused by the White House and the Iraqi government. Some senior US officials still believe that giving in to Kurdish demands could break up Iraq and destabilize Turkey.

"The danger of instability and even disintegration in Iraq is there, but it is



Kurds want more territorial rights in Northern Iraq

not the result of Kurdish autonomy, rather of the incapacity of the factions and above all of top personalities to compromise," said Ottaway. "There could be strife over territory and that could be extremely destabilizing. If something goes wrong, the next step may be a push for independence, but it would only happen if the Iraqi government tries to limit Kurdish autonomy, and I do not think they will try."

Author: Nick Amies
Editor: Michael Knige



July 21, 2010

Kurdish rebel group claims responsibility for Iran-Turkey gas pipeline blast

By Ivan Watson and Yesim Comert, CNN

Istanbul, Turkey (CNN) -- Rebels from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) blew up a natural gas pipeline between Iran and Turkey Wednesday, a spokesman for the group said in an e-mail to CNN.

"Today, the Guerrilla Forces took the responsibility of the sabotage action," wrote PKK spokesman Roj Welat from Iraq. Thousands of PKK members operate out of camps in the mountains of northern Iraq, in remote border regions that are beyond the control of the Iraqi government.

The blast follows two deadly clashes between Kurdish rebels and Turkish security forces on Tuesday, which left at least seven Turkish soldiers dead.

In a written statement, the governor of Turkey's eastern Agri province blamed Wednesday's early morning explosion on what he called a "separatist terrorist organization's members."

Turkish television showed images of a fire burning white hot in the night, illuminating the surrounding countryside.

An official from BOTAS, Turkey's state oil and gas company, speaking on condition of anonymity, told CNN that the fire had been extinguished. However, the official said, it will take at least six days to resume pumping fuel through the pipeline. In the meantime, BOTAS has increased the flow of gas from Azerbaijan to compensate for the gas cut.

Turkey is reeling from another bloody summer of clashes with the PKK, the latest in a conflict that has simmered for more than 25 years. More than 30,000 people, mostly ethnic Kurds, have been killed in the conflict.

Initially, the PKK fought to carve out a separate homeland for

Turkey's ethnic Kurdish minority, which makes up roughly 20 percent of the Turkish population. But in recent years, the rebels have said they are giving up their demands for an independent Kurdish state, and are instead fighting for more linguistic and cultural freedoms. Though the Kurds represent Turkey's largest ethnic minority, their language has historically been suppressed by the Turkish state, which long referred to Kurds as "mountain Turks."

"If the military operations and the political operations do not stop against the guerrillas and the Kurdish people, the actions of the PKK will spread to the cities as well," Welat told CNN in a telephone call last month.

In his e-mail Wednesday, Welat announced a new proposal to disarm thousands of PKK fighters and send them back to their homes in Turkey, under the auspices of the United Nations.

"To do this, first of all there has to be a bilateral ceasefire," Welat wrote. The PKK also wants other conditions, including the release of Kurdish prisoners -- including PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan -- and the formation of an independent truth and reconciliation commission modeled on post-apartheid South Africa.

A senior Turkish government official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said it was unlikely Turkey would respond to the proposal. Ankara has long refused to negotiate or communicate with what it officially considers to be a terrorist organization.

On Tuesday, the Turkish military announced that six soldiers were killed and nine more wounded after rebels launched a pre-dawn attack on troops operating in the eastern province of Hakkari. In a separate incident, the military said a soldier was killed after coming under fire in Van, another eastern Turkish province.



AU MOINS SEPT SOLDATS TURCS TUÉS DANS DES ATTAQUES DE REBELLES KURDES

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 20 juillet 2010 (AFP)

SIX SOLDATS TURCS ont été tués dans l'attaque d'un poste militaire par des rebelles kurdes, près de la frontière irakienne, une des plus meurtrières depuis le début de l'année, a-t-on appris mardi de sources officielles.

Le poste militaire, installé près de la ville frontalière de Cukurca dans le cadre des renforts envoyés dans la région après une recrudescence des attaques rebelles, a été attaqué durant la nuit par les militants du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), selon des sources militaires.

Le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a confirmé ce bilan et ajouté que 15 soldats avaient été blessés, et un rebelle tué.

"Nous poursuivrons notre lutte contre le terrorisme avec détermination. Nous continuerons sans crainte et sans relâche. Nous ne reculerons pas d'un pas", a-t-il déclaré.

Des opérations de poursuites contre les rebelles étaient en cours mardi, avec l'aide d'hélicoptères, selon les mêmes sources.

Le PKK lance presque quotidiennement des attaques souvent meurtrières contre les forces de sécurité depuis l'annonce en mai par leur leader emprisonné à vie Abdullah Öcalan, qu'il renonçait à ses efforts pour dialoguer avec le gouvernement.

Le gouvernement rejette tout dialogue avec le PKK, qui est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par de nombreux pays.

Des échanges de tirs durant plusieurs heures sont courants ces dernières semaines entre forces de sécurité et rebelles, qui s'infiltrèrent en Turquie à partir de leurs bases du nord de l'Irak, dans la région autonome kurde irakienne.

Le PKK a également menacé de porter la violence dans les grandes villes.

Le mois dernier, des rebelles turques ont revendiqué un attentat à la bombe qui a tué cinq soldats et une jeune fille, à Istanbul.

L'armée de l'air turque bombarde régulièrement les positions rebelles dans les montagnes irakiennes, avec l'aide du renseignement américain.

Dans une déclaration commune, un rassemblement de 649 organisations non-gouvernementales a appelé à la fin de la violence, des deux côtés, et à l'ouverture d'un dialogue avec les rebelles.

"Un processus de dialogue doit être lancé pour permettre une solution durable et aucune des parties prenantes à ce conflit ne doit être exclue du processus", indique ces organisations.

La récente recrudescence des affrontements survient alors qu'une initiative politique, annoncée l'an dernier par le gouvernement pour octroyer plus de droits à la communauté kurde de Turquie, est en panne.

Elle a été condamnée à la fois par les militants kurdes, qui l'ont jugée dérisoire, et par l'opposition nationaliste, qui a accusé le pouvoir de brader l'unité nationale.

Sous la pression de l'opposition pour mettre un terme à la rébellion, le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan a annoncé la semaine dernière qu'il envisageait de déployer des soldats de métier spécialement entraînés dans le sud-est du pays, là où opère le PKK.

Le PKK lutte depuis 1984 pour la défense des droits des 12 à 15 millions de Kurdes de Turquie, sur une population de 73 millions. Le conflit a fait au moins 45.000 morts, selon les données officielles.



TURQUIE: LE CHEF DU PKK PROPOSE UN CESSEZ-LE-FEU SOUS CONDITIONS À ANKARA

LONDRES, 21 juillet 2010 (AFP)

LE CHEF du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), rébellion séparatiste kurde en guerre contre la Turquie, a affirmé que ses combattants pourraient déposer les armes sous certaines conditions, notamment si Ankara acceptait un cessez-le-feu et un dialogue.

Depuis un camp du PKK dans les montagnes du Kurdistan irakien, Murat Karayilan a indiqué, dans un entretien à la BBC diffusé mercredi, qu'il ordonnerait à ses hommes de déposer les armes sous supervision de l'ONU si la Turquie acceptait un cessez-le-feu et certaines de ses revendications.

Un tel accord serait une percée dans le conflit qui oppose depuis 1984 la Turquie au PKK et a déjà fait 45.000 morts.

"Si le problème kurde est résolu de façon démocratique via le dialogue, alors oui, nous déposerons les armes", a assuré M. Karayilan à la BBC. Mais "si le gouvernement turc refuse d'accepter cela, nous devrions proclamer l'indépendance" du sud-est turc, où opère le PKK.

Un responsable du gouvernement turc, qui rejette tout dialogue avec le PKK,

considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara et de nombreux pays, a indiqué à la BBC qu'il n'était "pas dans les habitudes de commenter des déclarations faites par des terroristes".

Parmi les revendications du PKK, figurent la fin des attaques de l'armée turque contre les civils kurdes et des arrestations d'hommes politiques kurdes dans l'est de la Turquie.

Le PKK affirme se battre également pour la défense des droits linguistiques et culturels des 12 à 15 millions de Kurdes de Turquie, sur une population de 73 millions d'habitants.

Les rebelles du PKK lancent presque quotidiennement des attaques contre les forces de sécurité depuis que leur chef historique, emprisonné à vie, Abdullah Öcalan a annoncé en mai qu'il renonçait à ses efforts pour dialoguer avec le gouvernement.

Ses attaques se sont intensifiées ces dernières semaines et le PKK a également menacé de porter la violence dans les grandes villes.

L'armée de l'air turque bombarde régulièrement les positions rebelles dans les montagnes irakiennes, avec l'aide des services de renseignement américain.



NEUF REBELLES KURDES TUÉS LORS D'UN AFFRONTEMENT AVEC L'ARMÉE TURQUE (ARMÉE)

ANKARA, 23 juillet 2010 (AFP)

L'armée turque a annoncé vendredi avoir tué neuf rebelles kurdes, lors d'une attaque en début de semaine par la rébellion d'un poste militaire à la frontière irakienne, au cours de laquelle six soldats ont par ailleurs été tués.

Les corps de quatre rebelles ont été retrouvés après ces affrontements, mais des informations collectées par la suite ont permis d'établir qu'au total, au

moins neuf rebelles ont été tués, selon le site internet de l'armée turque.

Dans la nuit de lundi à mardi, un poste militaire près de la ville de Cukurca, non loin de la frontière irakienne, avait été attaqué par un important groupe de militants du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Six soldats avaient été tués et au moins neuf autres blessés dans cette attaque, l'une des plus meurtrières effectuées cette année par le PKK.

L'armée turque n'avait sur le moment pas fait état de rebelles tués.

Selon le journal Today's Zaman, le poste militaire a été attaqué par une quarantaine de rebelles.

Le PKK a pour sa part affirmé que 13 soldats ont été tués au cours de ces combats, qui ont duré deux heures.

AFP

LE KURDISTAN ENVAHI PAR DES TOURISTES IRAKIENS EN MAL DE FRAÎCHEUR

CHAQLAWA (Irak), 23 juil 2010 (AFP)

INFERNALE pour ses habitants, la canicule qui sévit dans le centre et le sud de l'Irak fait au moins le bonheur des restaurants et hôtels du Kurdistan (nord), pris d'assaut par des touristes irakiens en mal de fraîcheur.

A Chaqlawa, une petite ville à 370 kilomètres au nord de Bagdad, dénicher une chambre est une gageure.

"Il nous a fallu plusieurs heures pour trouver un hôtel", explique Ali Hussein, 24 ans, venu de Bagdad avec des amis pour visiter la région autonome qui, en plus d'un climat clément, jouit de conditions de sécurité nettement meilleures que le reste de l'Irak.

"Il y a beaucoup plus de touristes cette année", confirme Saroud Qader, 64 ans, propriétaire de l'hôtel Qasr Dhia, à Chaqlawa, dans la province d'Erbil.

"Nous sommes complets jusqu'au ramadan", explique-t-il, en référence au mois de jeûne musulman, qui débutera cette année à la mi-août.

Depuis la mi-juin, le mercure dépasse régulièrement les 50 degrés celsius dans le centre et le sud de l'Irak. Une vague de chaleur insupportable du fait de la pénurie d'électricité. La majorité des Irakiens reçoivent entre deux et quatre heures de courant par jour, ce qui empêche l'utilisation des climatiseurs et des réfrigérateurs.

Confronté à des manifestations qui ont parfois dégénéré en juin, le gouvernement a affirmé qu'aucune solution miracle n'était à espérer avant l'entrée en service de nouvelles centrales dans deux ans.

Pour ceux qui en ont les moyens, le salut est désormais au Kurdistan. Durant les années de guerre confessionnelle (2005-2008) un Irakien arabe devait être parainné par un Kurde pour pénétrer dans la région. Aujourd'hui, cette procédure est finie mais aux "postes frontière" de la zone autonome, il doit remplir un questionnaire et se faire prendre en photo.

Maoulawi Jabbar, responsable de l'Office de tourisme du Kurdistan, table sur nette hausse de la fréquentation touristique cette année.

"Il y a eu en 2009, 191.000 visiteurs et selon nos premières estimations, il y a 20% de touristes en plus par rapport à l'an dernier", a-t-il dit à l'AFP.

Depuis plusieurs semaines, Chaqlawa a plongé dans une forme d'insouciance estivale qui tranche avec le reste du pays. Les terrasses de café sont bondées, les parcs sont envahis par les touristes, ça et là, résonne l'air entraînant de musiques arabes ou kurdes.



La famille d'Ebtihaj Abdel Khoder, qui vit à Bassora, la grande ville du sud, n'a pas hésité à faire plus de 800 kilomètres pour se réfugier dans le paysage grandiose de cette ville coincée entre les montagnes Sorouk et Safine, laquelle culmine à 2.000 mètres.

"Au début, nous pensions venir pour quelques jours seulement, mais nous resterons autant de temps que nous le pourrons", explique-t-elle.

"La température à Bassora et au Kurdistan est incomparable et ici, en plus du climat agréable, il y a la verdure et les chutes d'eau", poursuit-elle.

Chaqlawa est une des meilleures bases pour des excursions à la journée vers les chutes de Gali Ali Beg (70 km), celles de Bekhal (80 km), ou vers les sources de Jundyan (90 km), près desquelles de nombreuses familles aiment venir pique-niquer.

Avec leurs lacs, montagnes et innombrables sites archéologiques, les trois provinces du Kurdistan (Erbil, Souleimaniyeh et Dohouk) constituent de longue date une destination privilégiée pour les Irakiens.

C'est également dans la région autonome que les Occidentaux ont recommencé ces dernières années à visiter l'Irak, la sécurité demeurant encore précaire autour des sites antiques majeurs d'Ur ou Babylone, au sud de Bagdad.

A l'heure actuelle, "le Kurdistan est la seule destination irakienne pour les touristes", estime Eyas Ahmed, 27 ans, qui vit à Bagdad. "Mais j'espère que d'autres hôtels et complexes touristiques ouvriront pour permettre à davantage d'Irakiens de venir."

AFP

TURQUIE : ENQUÊTE SUR DES LIENS ÉVENTUELS ENTRE SOLDATS ET REBELLES KURDES

ANKARA, 23 juillet 2010 (AFP)

L'ARMÉE TURQUE a annoncé vendredi qu'elle enquêtait sur la possibilité que des militaires aient entretenu des liens avec les rebelles kurdes, et les aient aidés.

"Le procureur de l'état-major poursuit son travail (...) pour réunir d'éventuelles preuves sur cette question", a déclaré le porte-parole de l'armée, le général Metin Gurak, dans des déclarations reproduites sur le site internet de l'armée.

Un article publié la semaine dernière par le journal Bugün a plongé dans une situation embarrassante l'armée turque, qui est déjà sur la sellette, après l'ouverture de procès ou l'annonce de l'inculpation de nombreux militaires, accusés de complot contre le gouvernement islamo-conservateur.

Le journal a reproduit des extraits d'enregistrements de conversations télépho-

niques entre deux officiers, en 2007, dans lesquelles les rebelles kurdes sont mentionnés par le terme "nos gars".

L'interlocuteur se plaint du fait que les pertes sont nombreuses dans les rangs des rebelles du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan), du fait de l'utilisation d'un drone par l'armée.

L'officier demande que l'itinéraire du drone soit modifié, et l'autre officier répond : "Nous allons voir ce que nous pouvons faire".

Le Général Gurak a annoncé que les autorités militaires avaient ouvert une enquête immédiatement après avoir reçu les bandes des écoutes téléphoniques envoyées par les services de renseignement, en octobre 2007.

Il a nié que l'armée ait traîné les pieds dans cette enquête, invoquant des difficultés à déterminer l'identité des militaires impliqués.

Le seul drone utilisé par l'armée turque à l'époque avait été loué à Israël et était basé à Batman (sud-est), a précisé le général Gurak.

L'armée turque combat le PKK depuis qu'il a pris les armes en 1984 pour obtenir l'autonomie du sud-est de la Turquie, dont la population est en majorité kurde. Le conflit a fait plus de 45 000 morts.

AFP TURQUIE: LIBÉRATIONS D'ENFANTS KURDES JETEURS DE PIERRE, APRÈS UNE RÉFORME

ANKARA, 26 juil 2010 (AFP)

LES AUTORITÉS TURQUES ont commencé à libérer des enfants kurdes emprisonnés, pour certains depuis plusieurs années, après avoir jeté des pierres sur les forces de l'ordre, avec l'entrée en vigueur d'une nouvelle législation, a annoncé lundi l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Cinq mineurs, âgés de 15 à 18 ans, ont été libérés dans la province de Mardin (sud-est), deux à Mersin (sud) et au moins huit à Adana (sud), après l'entrée en vigueur dimanche de la nouvelle loi, selon Anatolie.

Le Parlement turc a voté jeudi une loi limitant l'emprisonnement des enfants qui jettent des pierres sur les forces de l'ordre dans les manifestations, un texte qui concerne au premier chef la communauté kurde de Turquie.

Le parti au pouvoir AKP avait présenté ce texte pour remédier à la législation actuelle, qui a entraîné des centaines de condamnations à la prison de jeunes, certains âgés de 12 ans, provoquant les protestations d'organisations de défense des droits de l'homme, dont Amnesty International.

La nouvelle loi prévoit une amnistie pour les mineurs emprisonnés et rend plus

difficiles les condamnations à la prison de mineurs arrêtés dans les manifestations, selon le député d'origine kurde Bengi Yildiz.

"Environ 190 mineurs actuellement en prison devraient sortir... Et des milliers d'autres actuellement jugés devraient bénéficier de cette loi", a-t-il déclaré la semaine dernière à l'AFP.

Les jeunes lançant des pierres sont des scènes fréquentes dans les manifestations kurdes, souvent organisées dans le sud-est du pays pour soutenir le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), mouvement armé considéré comme terroriste par la Turquie et de nombreux autres pays.

Entre 2006 et 2008, environ 2.500 mineurs âgés de 12 à 18 ans ont été présentés à des tribunaux pour enfants ou pour adultes, en vertu de la loi antiterroriste, selon le ministère de la justice.

La nouvelle loi précise que les mineurs reconnus coupables de participation à une manifestation interdite ou de faits relevant de la loi antiterroriste seront pris en charge dans des programmes de redressement.

Enfin, la nouvelle loi abolit les articles de la précédente loi autorisant les tribunaux pour adultes à juger des mineurs.

AFP LES AUTORITÉS TURQUES IMPUTENT L'ATTAQUE CONTRE UNE VOITURE DE POLICE AU PKK

ANKARA, 27 juillet 2010 (AFP)

LES AUTORITÉS TURQUES ont désigné mardi les rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) comme les auteurs d'une attaque contre une voiture de police lundi soir dans le sud du pays, qui a fait quatre morts et provoqué des émeutes, a rapporté l'agence Anatolie.

Dans un communiqué cité par Anatolie, les services du gouverneur de Hatay, la province riveraine de la Syrie où s'est produit l'assaut, ont imputé l'attaque à "des membres de l'organisation terroriste", vocable utilisé par les autorités pour désigner le PKK.

Le ministre de l'Intérieur Besir Atalay a pour sa part appelé, lors d'une cérémonie en hommage aux quatre policiers, les forces de sécurité à "nettoyer" la région de Hatay de la menace des rebelles, selon l'agence.

"Je dis: nettoyez ces (monts) Amanos. Faites tout ce qui est nécessaire", a-t-il affirmé, faisant référence à une chaîne de montagne utilisée depuis des années par le PKK pour abriter ses unités.

Une voiture de police a été prise pour cible lundi soir par des assaillants qui ont ouvert le feu depuis une camionnette dans la ville de Dörtöyl, selon des sources policières citées par Anatolie. La camionnette a été retrouvée une dizaine de kilomètres plus loin, avec une grenade à l'intérieur, ont indiqué ces sources mardi.

Trois policiers ont péri sur les lieux de l'attaque tandis qu'un quatrième agent, gravement blessé, a succombé mardi à l'hôpital, a indiqué le gouverneur de Hatay, Mehmet Celalettin Lekesiz.

L'attaque a provoqué des émeutes à Dörtöyl, où plusieurs dizaines de manifestants conspuant le PKK se sont rassemblés lundi soir devant le commissariat pour réclamer que leurs soient livrés trois suspects supposés, selon la chaîne de télévision NTV.

Des émeutiers ont jeté des pierres et tenté d'incendier les locaux du principal parti kurde en Turquie, le Parti de la paix et de la démocratie (BDP), et ont attaqué des commerces tenus par des Kurdes, a rapporté Anatolie.

De nouvelles échauffourées entre groupes de manifestants kurdes et turcs se sont produites mardi, obligeant la police à intervenir avec des grenades lacrymogènes pour disperser la foule, tandis que les autorités appelaient la population au calme, selon l'agence.

L'explosion d'une mine actionnée à distance au passage d'un véhicule militaire a par ailleurs blessé quatre soldats à Hasanbeyli, dans la province d'Osmaniye, voisine de celle de Hatay, a annoncé Anatolie. Le PKK a souvent recours à ce type d'engins.

Le nombre d'attaques du PKK a largement augmenté depuis que son leader emprisonné à vie, Abdullah Öcalan, a annoncé avoir abandonné tout effort de dialogue avec le gouvernement et que les rebelles ont mis fin à une trêve unilatérale le mois dernier.

AFP DES DÉPUTÉS KURDES EMPÊCHÉS DE SE RENDRE SUR LES LIEUX DE TENSIONS ETHNIQUES

ANKARA, 29 juil 2010 (AFP)

LA POLICE a empêché jeudi un groupe de députés du principal parti kurde de Turquie de se rendre dans une ville du sud du pays en proie à des violences entre Turcs et Kurdes après un attentat imputé aux rebelles kurdes du PKK, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Un convoi transportant des parlementaires du Parti pour la paix et la démocratie (BDP) vers la ville de Dörtöyl, dans la province de Hatay, a été bloqué par la police avant d'atteindre sa destination sur ordre du gouverneur de la province, invoquant un risque pour l'ordre public, selon l'agence.

Quatre policiers ont été tués dans une attaque à l'arme à feu contre leur véhicule lundi soir à Dörtöyl, un attentat imputé par les autorités aux rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

L'attaque a provoqué des émeutes dans la ville, où plusieurs dizaines de mani-

festants ont, le même soir, jeté des pierres contre les locaux du BDP et tenté de les incendier, puis ont attaqué des commerces tenus par des Kurdes.

Des échauffourées entre groupes de manifestants kurdes et turcs se sont également produites mardi, obligeant la police à intervenir avec des grenades lacrymogènes pour disperser la foule.

La situation restait tendue jeudi, avec un millier de manifestants kurdes protestant contre l'interdiction de la visite du BDP, a affirmé la chaîne télévisée NTV.

La délégation du BDP avait prévu de se rendre à Dörtöyl pour témoigner de sa solidarité avec ses habitants kurdes, pas assez bien protégés par la police selon le parti, et appeler à la paix.

Le nombre d'attaques du PKK a largement augmenté depuis que son leader emprisonné à vie, Abdullah Öcalan, a annoncé en mai avoir abandonné tout effort de dialogue avec le gouvernement.



Oil Smuggling Allegations Widen Baghdad-Erbil Rift

KRG tightens checks but dismisses Baghdad's demand for probe into claims of oil smuggling to

By Khalid Waleed, Shorsh Khalid - Iraq

The Kurdistan Regional Government, KRG, decision to clamp down on alleged crude oil smuggling has done little to ease tensions between Baghdad and Erbil, with the federal government continuing to demand an investigation into the region's oil exports.

The KRG cabinet this week approved new measures to prevent oil trafficking, including the intensified monitoring of border areas and checks on the distribution of fuel sent from Baghdad to the KRG.

Their actions follow western media reports that tens of thousands of gallons of crude oil and refined fuel were being illegally transported to Iran through Iraqi Kurdistan, in violation of Iraqi regulations and undermining new United States sanctions prohibiting fuel sales to Iran.

A New York Times report on July 8 estimated that hundreds of millions of dollars were generated each year by the reported smuggling operation.

KRG officials have denied the allegations, dismissing suggestions that the alleged practice has been an open secret for years, made possible by government complicity.

In a statement last week, KRG natural resources minister Ashti Hawrami condemned the oil smuggling claims as baseless.

He said that oil derivatives were legally sold to Iran and that the central government was aware of the trade. Under Iraqi law, all oil exports must be reported to the Baghdad authorities.

But the KRG's denials and new measures have not diminished criticism from Baghdad, which is responsible for authorising crude exports and fuel distribution nationwide. The conflict has led to a further deterioration in relations between federal and Kurdish officials, who have frequently sparred over the management of natural resources in the semi-autonomous Kurdish region.

Federal oil ministry spokesman Assem Jihad said Baghdad did not know about the KRG selling oil derivatives to Iran.

The federal government's oil minister, Hussein al-Shahristani, has summoned KRG officials to Baghdad for questioning and told IWPR he is demanding documents showing the amounts, revenue and dates of oil exports, regardless of the type — ie crude oil or oil derivatives.

Whatever [the product] is, it will be considered oil smuggling.

Jihad called the KRG's new anti-smuggling measures insufficient and threatened that Baghdad will cut from the KRG's budget any profits that the KRG has made from these oil exports.

Some 17 per cent of the Iraqi government's budget is allocated to the KRG.

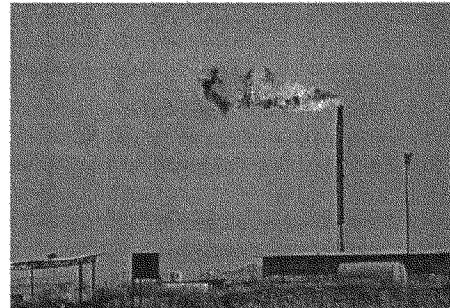
Hawrami said in response that the KRG does not intend to meet Baghdad officials but left the door open for possible cooperation between us.

I have nothing to say about Shahristani's demand except that we have our own government and parliament and we make our own decisions, he said.

Iraqi Kurdistan's relative stability has attracted foreign investors seeking to tap into the region's vast oil reserves. However, disagreement between the KRG and Baghdad over which government has the authority to sign contracts and pay foreign firms has limited the development of the oil sector in the region.

Iraqi Kurdistan has between 20 and 25 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, according to the KRG's ministry of natural resources. Much of the region remains unexplored, and more optimistic assessments put the total number at 40 billion barrels. The ministry said Iraqi Kurdistan currently produces roughly 100,000 barrels per day.

There has always been tension between the central government and Kurdistan over oil, said Abdullah Mullah Nuri, a Kurdish member of parliament for the opposition Change movement. Now that the information



A drilling station at the Taq Taq oil field in Iraqi Kurdistan. The region produces roughly 100,000 barrels of oil per day, a figure that could more than double within a year. (Photo: Tracey Shelton)

about the [alleged] smuggling has come out, this will be part of the dispute. Relations between Erbil and Baghdad will become more complicated, and all politicians will use this card to their favour. Even the US might use this issue to pressure the Kurds.

Nuri added that he believed that most of the information about the [alleged] oil smuggling is true.

Part of the reason why the oil ministry in Baghdad is so concerned is that it believes some of the petroleum products now being sold to Iran come from consignments that it imported from other countries to relieve shortages of petrol and other fuels. Like Iran, Iraq is a major producer of crude oil but lacks the capacity to refine enough of it to meet domestic demand.

In Iraqi Kurdistan, speculation about oil smuggling has long been driven by the presence of Iranian and Iraqi tankers near border areas. An IWPR-trained reporter in the border town of Penjwen said that on July 12 he observed a line of tankers nearly ten kilometres long waiting at a border checkpoint.

While the KRG cabinet has called for cooperation with Baghdad to prevent smuggling, the new measures will be entirely implemented and overseen by the KRG.

In addition to heightened border surveillance, the cabinet ordered the regional finance ministry to share oil industry-related records from 2010 onwards with the ministry of natural resources. Oil exporters trading from Iraqi Kurdistan, who are licensed by the Baghdad government, will also need to receive permission from the ministry of natural resources.

Hawrami said the increased monitoring of fuel distribution and border crossings will begin in the next few days.

We want to know and be able to scrutinise the kind of business that is being conducted on our borders so that there will not be any problems, said Hawrami.

The increased tension between Baghdad and Erbil comes as political deadlock over the formation of a new central government drags into its fifth month since an inconclusive national vote.

Oil sector development will be a critical issue facing Iraq's new government. Without the long-delayed hydrocarbons law — an unpopular measure which would guarantee a share of Iraq's oil profits for foreign companies — experts say the next administration must soon pass legislation to regulate the management and distribution of all of Iraq's oil wealth.

Hawrami said the claims of illegal fuel profiteering will not affect government negotiations in Baghdad. As it stands, no political bloc has enough parliamentary seats to form a government alone. The Kurds, with some 40 seats, could play a key role in a potential government coalition.

But analyst Abdullah Jafar, a retired political science professor from Baghdad University, disagreed.

The issue of [alleged] oil smuggling will give Baghdad the pretext to exert more restrictions on the Kurds' oil. As the issue was revealed, the Kurds have looked weaker in Iraqi politics and to the world for selling to Iran. This has given Baghdad more power to deal with their long-term argument with the Kurds over oil issues, Jafar told IWPR.

Turkey means business in Kurdistan

Asia Times / Hong Kong

By Justin Vela

ISTANBUL -Take a drive through the Kurdish city of Sulaimaniyah in Kurdistan region in Iraq's north and it's easily to pick out buildings and shops with Turkish names like Istikbal, Istanbul Bazaar, Dogan and the Ozboy furniture shop. On the main street, two new overpasses were built by Turkish companies, as were the city's international airport and also dormitories at the local university.

This is but a glimpse of the more than 1,000 Turkish companies, including oils firms, that are forging a presence in Kurdish northern Iraq at a breakneck pace. Whatever the project, Turks are building an international reputation for being able to get the job done with their skilled knowledge base and ability to negotiate the often heavy red tape in the developing or autocratic world.

"For oil exploration, Kurdistan is virtually unexplored," said Erdal Ahiska of Turkish energy company Petoil, which will invest approximately US\$50 million in northern Iraq in 2010. "Before there was no big ability for oil business in the Kurdish region. Only two fields were used. Now it is interesting for oil companies to explore and invest in oil and natural gas."

Since 2000, Turkish overseas projects climbed from \$750 million to \$23.6 billion in 2008. By 2015, the Turkish government hopes to increase international contracts to about \$50 billion and Turkish businesses are currently active in more than 80 countries across the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa.

At first glance, their presence raises no questions. However, the business drive is part of Turkish foreign policy stepped up in recent years by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and is a clear signal that, though the country does not plan on negating its European Union ascension bid, it will not wait for permission to become a globally powerful trading body.

According to Paul Barry of London-based Navigant Consulting, Turkish firms are beco-

ming "very serious" rivals abroad "because they can relate to Muslim cultures and are very competitive".

Yet given the Turkish government's 26-year war with Kurdish separatists in the country's southeast, which has left 40,000 people dead, the heavy presence of Turkish business in Iraqi Kurdistan has a special twist - a dual cause that goes beyond Turkey expanding its ever-growing markets.

The Turkey Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has long used northern Iraq's Qandil Mountains as a base to plan and carry out attacks inside Turkey. The Turkish military frequently bombs inside Iraqi Kurdistan and carries out occasional cross-border raids in pursuit of the PKK, which often result in the deaths of Kurdish Iraqi civilians. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has also clashed with Turkey in the past.

Turkey opposes the oil-rich areas around the cities of Kirkuk and Mosul being added to Iraqi Kurdistan and is concerned about the future of Turkmen as ethnic tensions in these cities continue to rise. "Turkey is not allowed to intervene in the Kirkuk issue and if it does, we will interfere in Diyarbakir's issues and other cities in Turkey," said Massoud Barzani, the president of the de facto Kurdish autonomous region in April 2007. Diyarbakir is the largest city in Turkey's Kurdish-dominated southeast.

Given the stakes involved, the AKP wants to turn the more than \$7 billion in trade between Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkey into political leverage to put pressure both on Baghdad and the KRG. Turkey also provides 80% of the food and clothes in Iraqi Kurdistan region. "Trade is the key of politics ... Improving business ties will eradicate the problems between us," said Zafer Caglayan, Turkey's state minister for foreign trade.

The pressure is aimed both at limiting the power and independence of the KRG - which is viewed as the precursor to a future Kurdish state - and at the same time meant to elicit their help in Turkey's long-time fight against the PKK.

In a rare interview in the Qandil Mountains, PKK top commander Murat Karayilan this month told this correspondent, "I cannot eva-

luate the KRG in the sense of good or bad. We know that the aim of the Turkish state is not only to weaken us, but also to weaken Kurds everywhere. It is a strategic approach. After us the KRG will weaken."

Seemingly having embraced a close relationship with Turkey, the KRG's support for the PKK can be seen as suspect. Barzani even accepted an invitation to Ankara in June this year and met with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President Abdullah Gul and other top officials to discuss ties.

"The KRG government gives [Turkish business] a secure place," said one Kurdish Iraqi businessman in Sulaimaniyah. "We need them like they need us. They are near to us in culture. It is easy to cooperate. In politics there is a big problem, but in one way we want to explain by letting them come here that we are not enemies."

There are more Turkish businesses in Iraqi Kurdistan than from any other country, including neighboring Iran. Turks had been doing business in northern Iraq since before the 2003 US invasion and already had the contacts and presence to become the dominant investors in a region that desperately needs infrastructure.

"They don't produce anything except oil and gas so we have to provide everything," said Galip Ensarioglu of Diyarbakir Trade and Industry Chamber (DTSO). "Water, marble ... everything we produce here we can sell to them." Ensarioglu claimed that 50,000 Turks had gone to northern Iraq to work.

The relationship is based on a strong necessity. Not only is it in the best interests of the United States that Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan cooperate in order to ensure the smoothest possible exit of their forces from Iraq, there is also oil involved. The 960-kilometer Kirkuk-Ceyhane pipeline, also known as the Iraq-Turkey Pipeline (ITP), exports 500,000 barrels of crude oil a day, one-fourth of Iraq's total crude exports.

The pipeline began functioning during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, allowing Iraq an export route without risking tankers in the Gulf being attacked. It was closed during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait

and Gulf War I (1990-1991), reopening for use during the United Nations-sponsored Oil for Food Program. Today, the pipeline is used to export crude from oil fields north of Kirkuk, but needs frequent maintenance because of its age and frequent insurgent attacks.

Most of the attacks are carried out inside Iraq. However on July 4, PKK insurgents bombed the pipeline near the town of Midyat in the southern Mardin province. The attack came after the ending of a year-long non-action period and could be interpreted as a signal to both Turkey and the KRG.

The hope of AKP had been that by exerting economic influence over Iraqi Kurdistan, they could convince the KRG to pressure the PKK to disarm, block supplies or otherwise uproot them from their Qandil Mountain stronghold

Even as Turkish business continues to flourish, this does not seem a likely scenario. Perhaps Turkey and the KRG are in fact engaged in a zero-sum game as Turkey wants to be a transit route for energy just as much as Iraqi Kurdistan region wants to export oil and its 6-8 trillion cubic meters in natural gas reserves.

On July 11, the Turkish government sent a list of 248 PKK commanders to the KRG, demanding their immediate arrest and even mooted a joint military action inside Iraq. "The net is tightening," one official said. The KRG response was to claim, "These names are not those of people living officially in the [Kurdistan autonomous] region. They live in Turkey where they undertake their criminal activities."

Having interviewed PKK top commander Murat Karayilan in the Qandil Mountains only the day before the list of names were issued, this reporter was witness to the double game being played by the KRG.

Though he had come down for the interview from a position higher in the mountains and PKK members are not allowed to travel freely through the rest of Iraqi Kurdistan, Karayilan was relaxed meeting in a field off a paved road approximately 10 kilometers from a KRG checkpoint

The PKK, also, maintain a checkpoint on the same road, operating as if Qandil was their legiti-

mate territory.

Neither the Turkish government or the PKK is in a position where they can agree on terms of peace. "It is not very clear, what will happen after this," said Karayilan. "Because AKP is pushing towards the hills. They don't want to stop the military campaign."

Yet the KRG still does have the ability to act as a bridge between the two. The idea is perhaps more welcome than the actors in the conflict would like to see. Though

they feel that the continued repression has brought the conflict to a new breaking point, Kurds are eager for peace. As on Kurdish man living in southeast Turkey said, "We can see the first Kurdistan flag in northern Iraq and we are very happy. But it is also important that they have dialogue all the time. I am pleased Barzani comes to Turkey."

The KRG appears more than willing to both foster trade with Turkey and allow the PKK to ope-

rate from their territory. Doing so allows them the maximum power as their territory continues to be an investment hotspot. The PKK are only interested in attacking Turkey and investments inside of Iraqi Kurdistan are not threatened by them.

By standing as that bridge, Barzani and the KRG are at the same time furthering the status of Iraqi Kurdistan as an investor hotspot and, also, the cause of Kurdish nationalism which has its uncertain

path set in the future of a wealthy yet conflict-ridden Iraq.

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Justin Vela is a freelance journalist based in Istanbul, Turkey.



U.S. general sees Iraq pullout without Arab-Kurd deal

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Jul 21 2010 - By Adam Entous

THE TOP commander in Iraq said on Wednesday that U.S. forces in the volatile north would probably be the last to leave the country at the end of 2011, acknowledging Arab-Kurdish disputes were unlikely to be settled before that time despite signs of progress last year.

General Ray Odierno has singled out ethnic tensions between Arabs and Kurds in northern Iraq as the biggest single threat to the country's stability.

He said the United States remained on track to draw down its forces in Iraq to 50,000 by September 1, when Washington will formally end combat operations, but U.S. forces in the northern city of Kirkuk will remain in place and "probably be one of the last units to leave Iraq ... by the end of 2011."

Odierno's warnings about the north reflect growing U.S. doubts about prospects for a breakthrough between Arabs and Kurds any time soon. Washington fears an outbreak of violence between them in the area could tip Iraq back into war.

During a visit to Kirkuk in December, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates had voiced confidence Arab and Kurdish leaders were moving toward settling their differences.

But Odierno, speaking to reporters in Washington, said: "We have not solved the problems of the disputed areas. That's a problem that has to be dealt with in the future."

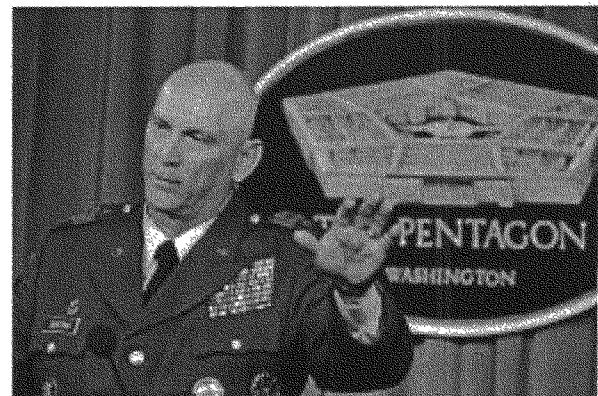
"Do I think it's going to be done by the end of 2011?" he said, referring to the date when U.S. forces are scheduled to leave the country. "No, I don't."

"We have to transition this so when we leave in 2011 there is a force there that continues to build the confidence and reduce tensions," he added.

To that end, the U.S. military is training Kurdish peshmerga fighters and Iraqi army troops, and wants to "merge them to become a force that's trusted by the population, that's representative of the population, that will sustain security once we leave," Odierno said.

The Iraqi government in Baghdad would command and control the joint force.

Kurds see Kirkuk, and the surrounding province which produces a fifth of Iraq's oil, as their ancestral home and want it wrapped into their semi-autonomous northern enclave. The city's Arab and



Turkmen populations oppose those aims.

50,000 TO REMAIN FOR YEAR

As the United States surges forces into the war with the Taliban in Afghanistan, its troop presence in Iraq has dropped sharply from 145,000 in January 2009 to about 70,000 today.

Odierno brushed aside concerns that drawing down to 50,000 by September will put the country's security at risk, voicing confidence that Iraq's own security forces "can handle the level of violence, can handle al Qaeda, with our help."

Odierno said 50,000 was "a significant number," adding: "If we need to do something, we have the capability to do that."

To ensure stability after September, he said the United States would maintain the 50,000-troop level through the summer of 2011, when an assessment will be made about getting them out by the end of 2011.

Odierno said Iraq's problems were now "largely economic."

Reducing the level of violence further will require "economic growth, job development -- good solid jobs -- and political movement toward ... reconciliation," he said.

Cash-strapped Iraq has signed contracts with global oil firms to develop its giant oilfields but Odierno said those deals will not fully "kick in for 3 to 5 years."

"They'll gain a little bit each year but nothing significant," Odierno said. "But by '13 or '14, if things go well, they then should be producing enough oil where they will be able to be what I consider to be solvent."

U.S. officials say solvency will enable Iraq to build up its military, and Odierno voiced confidence the projected increase in oil revenues starting in 2013 would enable Iraq to afford an initial purchase of 18 F-16 fighter aircraft, made by Lockheed Martin Corp.

Odierno made clear he supports the sale: "If they're going to buy multiple aircraft, I'd rather have them buy F-16s."

Iraq's Air Force is on record as hoping to buy up to 96 F-16s through 2020, the centerpiece of billions of dollars that Baghdad may spend on foreign arms in coming years.

Turkey and its rebel Kurds: An endless war

Turkey's long-running battle with Kurdish separatists is intensifying, again



SHOULD the Turks and Kurds live together? The answer from many of Turkey's restive Kurds has long been no. A vicious separatist campaign launched by rebels of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) has been raging since 1984. In recent months the PKK has stepped up its attacks, killing dozens of Turkish soldiers in and beyond the predominantly Kurdish south-east. Most recently, on July 20th, a Kurdish raid near the town of Cukurca killed six Turkish troops and injured at least 15.

But now a growing number of Turks are questioning the merits of cohabiting with the country's estimated 14m Kurds. Never mind that Istanbul is the world's largest Kurdish city, or that few of the provinces claimed by the Kurds are ethnically homogenous. In television debates and across the blogosphere support for the idea that the Kurds should go their own way is growing. Onur Sahin, who heads the Chamber of Agriculture in the Black Sea province of Ordu, says his fellow producers no longer want seasonal migrant Kurds to harvest their hazelnut crops.

Meanwhile, the military campaign

against the PKK is intensifying. The mildly Islamist Justice and Development (AK) party, which has governed Turkey since 2002, plans to deploy a new professional army along the border with Iraq, where the PKK has havens. Some fear a return to the excesses of the 1990s, when over 3,000 Kurdish villages were forcibly evacuated and thousands of Kurds were imprisoned, murdered or disappeared.

Over the border, Turkish air raids on the PKK's mountain bases in northern Iraq are increasing. America is helping by providing intelligence and broadening the air corridor used by Turkish fighter jets. Yet the Americans are worried by Turkey's increasingly strident calls for the Iraqi Kurds to hand over some 200 rebels, including their own leaders. The last thing the Americans want to see, as they pull out of Iraq, is a war between Turkey and Iraqi Kurds.

All of this is a far cry from last year when AK heralded its so-called Kurdish "opening". It made peace with the Iraqi Kurds and opened a consulate in Erbil, their capital. At home, a set of political and cultural reforms was meant to coax the PKK into laying down its arms, in the

wake of a unilateral PKK ceasefire that was declared in April but that never took full effect. But the opening ground to a halt following the return last October of 34 PKK fighters to Turkey from Iraq. More were meant to follow. But the group prompted a public outcry by touring the south-east in guerrilla outfits, declaring victory. In response the government stepped up its arrests of members of the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), accusing them of PKK membership. Half of the returnees have been put on trial for refusing to repent; ten are in prison. Last month the PKK hit back by calling off its truce.

Some voices plead for a return to peace. A group of Turkish intellectuals has petitioned the government to change a controversial article of the constitution that deems all Turkish citizens to be Turks. One AK mayor has suggested that Turkish men take Kurdish women as second wives. Others say that AK must talk to the PKK's imprisoned leader, Abdullah Ocalan. Despite 11 years of solitary confinement in an island prison off Istanbul, Mr Ocalan retains the loyalty of his fighters and the affection of millions of Kurds.

In fact, secret talks with Mr Ocalan, supposedly conducted by security and intelligence operatives, have reportedly been going on for some time. Murat Karayilan, the PKK's commander in northern Iraq, says his group wants to talk to politicians, not spooks, and this week proposed a bilateral ceasefire. But as next July's parliamentary elections draw nearer, Turkey's prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is unlikely to risk nationalist ire by openly talking to a group deemed by Turkey and its Western allies to be terrorists. On the other hand, as Mr Erdogan knows, abandoning reform in favour of war will only strengthen the hand of his opponents within the army. He is, as an old Turkish saying goes, holding a stick with shit at both ends.

Energy sector to comply with Iran sanctions

BRUSSELS

European companies offer promises as the E.U. gets tougher with Tehran

BY STEPHEN CASTLE

As the European Union stepped up its economic isolation of Iran in response to Tehran's uncontrolled nuclear program, European energy companies and insurers on Monday promised to comply with the bloc's toughest sanctions to date against the Iranian government.

Although European companies will still be allowed to import oil and natural gas from Iran, the sanctions go beyond those outlined by the United Nations, targeting key sectors of the Iranian economy.

Imposed in protest at Iran's refusal to halt its enrichment of uranium, the measures appeared to prompt a flurry of diplomatic activity Monday, with Iran saying it was ready to return to talks on a nuclear fuel swap. But it was unclear whether the offer was anything more than yet another ploy by Tehran to buy more time to continue its nuclear efforts.

While investment in Iran from the United States has dwindled over recent years, the European Union, with 27 member nations, is Iran's largest trading partner, taking in a third of its exports and selling it billions of dollars in goods and services.

That means that the measures could have a significant impact, though it was too early to determine the financial effect on European companies and the Iranian economy. The E.U.'s foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton, said figures on the amount of trade that would be involved in the sanctions was still being assessed.

Mrs. Ashton said that she would hold talks with Turkey, which has said it will not impose the new E.U. sanctions. Mrs. Ashton said she would work to insure that Turkey does not undercut Europe's efforts.

The 27 European ministers, in a statement, said they had agreed on "a comprehensive and robust package of measures in the areas of trade, financial services, energy, transport as well as additional designations for visa ban and asset freeze, in particular for Iranian banks, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (I.R.G.C.) and the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (Irisl)."

Pressure has been building on Iran over the past few months. In early June, the Security Council imposed a fourth round of restrictions.

On July 1, President Barack Obama expanded the sanctions imposed by the United States, adding bans on selling gasoline to Iran and imposing new restrictions on banking.

The government in Tehran says that its nuclear program is designed to produce electricity, not nuclear weapons, and that sanctions will not persuade it to change course.

Details of the companies and individuals covered by European measures will not be released until Tuesday at the earliest. But a draft text, discussed by foreign ministers at their meeting here in Brussels, identified dozens of individuals and companies, officials said. It is said to focus particular attention on those with ties to the Revolutionary Guards and the Iranian state-owned shipping company.

"We've sent quite a powerful message to Iran," Ms. Ashton said. "That message is that their nuclear program is a cause of serious and growing concern to us."

The E.U. has been keeping the door open to talks with Iran, hoping to use economic isolation as a lever to force Tehran to talk.

On Monday Iran said it was prepared to return to negotiations on a nuclear fuel swap "without conditions," according to Islamic Republic News Agency.

Talking of a letter that Iran handed to the International Atomic Energy Agency, Iran's envoy to the agency, Ali

"We've sent quite a powerful message to Iran."

Asghar Soltanieh, said that "the clear message of this letter was Iran's complete readiness to hold negotiations over the fuel for the Tehran reactor without any conditions," Reuters reported.

While many European companies have already reduced their business in Iran, analysts said that the new measures could have a significant effect over time in Iran.

"Over the long term Iran's output of oil and gas will continue to decline without European technology," said Mark Fitzpatrick, director of the nonproliferation and disarmament program at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. He added that Iran would also find it increasingly difficult to arrange insurance and re-insurance to do business abroad since European and North American companies dominate the sector.

David Williams, a spokesman for Shell, said that it would apply the sanctions and that it had already been reducing its investment in Iran.

"We have not been supplying gasoline to Iran since October last year and we are not renewing a small number of contracts to refuel Iranair," he said.

Mr. Williams would not comment on whether Shell would be able to proceed with its involvement in Persian LNG Company's proposed natural gas project in Iran.

Total, the French oil company, refused to comment on the impact of the sanctions. It said recently that it had financed four Iranian fields — Sirri, South Pars 2 & 3, Balal and Dorood — under contracts for which it is still owed payments. It also has a technical services agreement for the Dorood field.

A subsidiary holds a 50 percent stake in Beh Total, which produces and markets small quantities of lubricants.

In 2009, revenue generated from Beh Total's activities was €27.4 million, or \$35.6 million and cash flow was €5.6 million.

In 2009 Total bought around 58 million barrels of hydrocarbons from state-controlled entities for about €2.6 billion, and paid to a state-owned entity approximately €24 million for shipping contracts.

Despite the sanctions, Iran will continue to do business with some European energy companies. Richard Rogers, spokesman for EGL, a Swiss-based energy company, said that the sanctions by the United States and the European Union would "have no impact" on the existing natural gas procurement between EGL and the National Iranian Gas Export Company) under which the Iranian company delivers natural gas to the Iranian-Turkish border. Switzerland is not a member of the European Union.

On the insurance front, Bart Nash, external communications manager at Lloyd's of London, said it would always comply with applicable sanctions.

"The U.S. is an important market for Lloyd's and, in recognition of this, the market will not insure or reinsure refined petroleum going into Iran," he said in an e-mailed statement. "The Lloyd's market has been cutting back its exposures to Iran over the last two years, so any residual business is very small indeed."

European companies would not be able to provide technical or financial help "to enterprises in Iran that are engaged in the key sectors of Iranian oil and gas industry."

The draft requires E.U. governments to monitor Iranian banks in their jurisdiction closely. Financial transfers of more than about \$50,000 would require prior authorization.

Global Adviser

A Facelift for an Ancient Kurdish Citadel

By Charles McDermid

Its origins are an archaeological riddle worthy of Indiana Jones, but it's also a beacon of an oil-rich future. Welcome to the at least 7,000-year-old Arbil citadel in Iraq's northern Kurdistan region, a stunning walled fortress on a roughly 10-hectare site that some experts say is the oldest continuously inhabited settlement on earth (it's still occupied today, by a single family of 12). After years of stop-start negotiations, the citadel is finally set for a face-lift and likely World Heritage status.

Nobody knows who first built the towering castle-city, but it was already famous when Alexander the Great added it to his empire in 331 B.C. Some 1,500 years later, it took an invading Mongol army two tries and a six-month siege to storm it. (See the top 10 precarious buildings.)

The list of successive ruling cultures is a history lesson in itself — Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Sassanian and Ottoman, among many others — and each left its history behind, adding to an archaeological layer cake now 32 m high.

Despite pleas from scientists going back to the 1930s, the citadel has never been fully excavated. This is all about to change. The renovation of the ancient hill-top city has become the keystone in an ongoing campaign to turn vast archaeological treasures into tourist dollars for Kurdistan, a stable and prospering region that bills itself as "the other Iraq."

Arbil, the capital of the semiautonomous Kurdistan region, is just 340 km north of war-torn Baghdad but may as well lie in a parallel universe. Foreigners can go about freely, crimes and violence against visitors are unheard of, and the most daunting tasks are finding one's way through labyrinthine local bazaars and keeping pace with the legendary Kurdish hospitality.

In Kurdistan, against the backdrop of the snow-capped Qandil Mountains, a frenetic frontier economy is being driven by the promise of petrodollars from the region's estimated 25 billion barrels of proven oil reserves. Development is intense. New hotels, shopping malls and housing tracts are springing up to meet Arbil's surging population of more than 1 million. The bars in Ankawa, the city's laid-back Christian quarter, are a heady



Monumental change
Arbil's overhaul is part of a huge tourism drive
Sebastian Meyer

admixture of oilmen, contractors, journalists, security teams, aid workers and, increasingly, tourists.

"I really get the sense that they are coming to see for themselves what Kurdistan is about, in contrast to what we all know and see constantly on the news about Iraq," says Shannon Skerritt, who with his brother and a Kurdish partner operates the Sulaymaniyah-based tour company Kurdistan Adventures. "I guess they want to be some of the first to see this area."

The Kurdistan regional government recorded more than 132,000 foreign tourist arrivals in 2009, an almost 150% increase from 2007's figure. The government is bracing for more, opening a \$400 million state-of-the-art airport in Arbil and slashing fuel costs to attract airlines. Most regional carriers are making daily flights; Lufthansa and Austrian Airlines fly four and three times a week respectively. Rotana Hotels and Millennium and Cophorne Hotels are developing sites in the city, and a free 10-day tourist visa is available for most countries' citizens.

While all of these developments are sure to attract travelers, local officials feel that archaeology is the ace in the hole for Kurdistan's fledgling tourism sector. "We have amazing archaeological sites that are equal to anything in the world," says Arbil Mayor Nihad Qoja. "If we can vitalize these sites, believe me, each year millions of people will visit Kurdistan."

This is where the citadel comes in. In late June, Kurdish officials and UNESCO representatives inaugurated the first renovations in a multimillion-dollar effort to bring the slumbering city back to life. In a shortlist of possible new World Heritage sites, UNESCO described the citadel as

"one of the most dramatic and visually exciting cultural sites not only in the Middle East but also in the world."

The first steps will be small, says Dara Yacoubi, an architect and head of the Kurdish reconstruction team. Initially, a few dozen of the citadel's most valuable houses will be restored. Later, similar work will begin on its three mosques, plus gates, gravesites and a central hammam that dates back to 1775. In three years, Yacoubi expects the citadel to be a significant tourist attraction. Within 10 years, he envisages museums and boutique hotels. Along with the renovations, the first major excavations on the citadel grounds will be conducted. Regular rumors of treasure chambers, temples and royal tombs are still just that, so experts are panting to dig in.

"The Arbil citadel has played a very great role in the history of the city. In fact, for many centuries it was the city," says Kanan Mufti, general director of Kurdistan's Ministry of Culture, who was born in the citadel and traces his family's roots there back 500 years. "It is only fitting that the citadel will have a role in the future of Arbil." Says Mayor Qoja: "The city's future is bright. We have mountains and rivers; we have oil reserves that haven't even been tapped." For him, tourism will be another great boost to the local economy. So while Arbil's walls may have withstood some of history's greatest armies, the hope now is that they will be swarmed by a new generation of invader — the free-spending tourist.

Turkey Sees Hidden Hand in Kurd Riots

By MARC CHAMPION And
ERKAN OZAT

ISTANBUL - Turkey's escalating battle with Kurdish insurgents has become caught up in the country's fiercely partisan domestic politics, as the government charged Tuesday that opponents of democratic change had triggered ethnic riots at both ends of the country.

Justice Minister Sadullah Ergin said Tuesday that intelligence services were investigating whether two episodes of unrest Monday had been engineered. In eastern Turkey, suspected guerrillas from the Kurdish Workers Party, or PKK, killed four policemen, triggering riots. In Turkey's west, riots that followed a knife fight involving ethnic Kurds left dozens injured and detained.

"In both cases we have to take into account the probability of provocations, and the intelligence services are investigating these probabilities," Mr. Ergin told a group of reporters in Istanbul, through simultaneous translation.

Turkey is in the midst of a power struggle between its Islamic-leaning government and the military-backed, secularist establishment that effectively ruled the country for decades. Conspiracy theories abound on both sides about the machinations of the other, and are impossible to prove.

However, the accusation that members of Turkey's so-called deep state are fueling conflict with the PKK in an effort to undermine trust in the government is explosive. Turkey's war with the PKK has cost 30,000 to 40,000 lives since it began in 1984.

Mr. Ergin declined when asked to name who he suspected of provoking Monday's riots, but he said they were groups "who favor the status quo" in Turkey. Those groups, he said, were trying to block the government's efforts at democratization, including a referendum on constitutional amendments to be held Sept. 12.

The proposed changes to the basic law, which would remake the country's top courts and subject the military to civilian law, could significantly alter the balance of power in the government's favor.

The PKK stepped up attacks in the spring after their jailed leader, Abdullah



Turkish police in Dortyol, near Syria, at the Tuesday funeral of four officers slain by suspected PKK gunmen.

Ocalan, said he was calling off talks with Turkey's government, explaining that Ankara's stated goal of improving conditions for Turkey's large Kurdish minority was going nowhere.

From the outset, columnists in Turkey's pro-government media speculated that the PKK's move was being orchestrated with deep state members in an effort to discredit the government and unseat the AKP. Hundreds of Turkish bureaucrats, journalists and military officers are currently awaiting trial as alleged deep-state conspirators in proceeding that opponents see as a witch hunt.

On Monday, the pro-government daily Bug, n published the transcript of a wiretapped phone conversation from 2007, in which two men the newspaper identified as Turkish air force officers discussed whether to eliminate or relocate an unmanned aerial vehicle that was flying over eastern Turkey to spot PKK terrorists, because "There were casualties in the last event, I received serious pressure because of this."

The two men don't mention the PKK, but the context of the conversation suggests they are talking about enabling Kurdish attacks.

The General Staff issued a statement confirming that an investigation into the wiretapped phone call was started in 2007. The statement didn't deny the authenticity of the transcript, but denied the probe had been delayed on purpose. The statement said voice analysis that would match the recording with the suspected officers had yet to be done.

Another pro-government newspaper, Vakit, last week published a picture of Murat Basbug, the son of Turkey's Chief of the General Staff Ilker Basbug, posing with a convicted PKK member. The

newspaper said the picture was one of many of the two young men together.

In a separate statement, the General Staff acknowledged the authenticity of the photograph of Murat Basbug, which Vakit said was found at the apartment of convicted PKK member Hasan Lala when he was arrested on April 9, 2009. The statement said the picture was taken at a casual meeting of friends and that facts cited in the Vakit story were "lies." The statement didn't specify which facts were inaccurate.

On Monday, riots left dozens detained and police cars burned just outside Bursa, a city of two million south of Istanbul with a Kurdish population of about 300,000. The riots followed a knife attack by a group of ethnic Kurds on non-Kurds, after which a crowd surrounded the police station where the attackers were being held.

The riots were the result of disappointment over the government's failed Kurdish initiative, said Ayla Yildirim, chairwoman of the Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party, or BDP, in Bursa.

Also Monday, rioters set fire to the BDP office in Hatay province, on Turkey's border with Syria, after suspected PKK fighters killed four policemen, according to Anadolu Ajansi, the state news agency. There, too, a crowd surrounded the police station, this time on incorrect rumors that three suspects were being held inside.

"It's like somebody pushed the button, we see those kind of events all over the country," said Ms. Yildirim.

Former PKK leader: Ocalan controls PKK, deep state controls Ocalan

TODAY S ZAMAN

Huseyin Yildirim, the former right-hand man of Abdullah Ocalan -- the jailed leader of the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) -- has said that the Ergenekon terrorist organization, an instrument of the deep state, is behind the conflict between Turks and Kurds in Turkey and that Ocalan is also under the control of the deep state.

Yildirim, who parted ways with the jailed terrorist head years ago, said in an interview with Taraf's Nese Duzel yesterday that the decades-long conflict in Turkey's Southeast is the work of Ergenekon, a clandestine organization nested within the state and bureaucracy aiming to foment chaos in society and lead to a military takeover.

Yildirim thinks that the environment of chaos in Turkey cannot end as long as Ergenekon maintains its grip over the country. The environment of chaos cannot end unless Turkey does away with Ergenekon. It is Ergenekon that wants a clash between Turks and Kurds. The deep state wants weapons shot. Ocalan controls the PKK and the deep state controls Ocalan, Yildirim said.

Ocalan, captured in 1999 in Nairobi, Kenya, was initially sentenced to death but his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment when the death penalty was abolished in Turkey in August 2002. He has been serving a life sentence on Omral1 Island in the Marmara Sea since his capture.

Ocalan made an agreement with the deep state at Imral1 to save his life. A program was given to him [by the deep state] and he is following it. He had made this public previously. He said that he was told to leave some 500 PKK members in Turkey when transferring others to northern Iraq [after his capture] and he had left them. The 500 PKK members were left in Turkey to be used in clashes because an environment of clashes is needed for the deep state, Yildirim said.

Noting that he cannot say for certain whether Ocalan's links with the deep state date back to the period before his capture, Yildirim says he



Former PKK leader Hüseyin Yıldırım

is sure that Ocalan has been cooperating with the deep state since his capture. He surrendered to the deep state after his capture. He said okay to whatever it said. This is crystal clear. You have to be blind if you cannot see that, Yildirim noted.

Turkey has fought the terrorist PKK since 1984, when it was set up with the goal of establishing an autonomous Kurdish state in the eastern and southeastern parts of Turkey. More than 40,000 soldiers and civilians have been killed in clashes thus far.

The PKK has been declared a terrorist organization by the international community, including the US and the EU.

When reminded of Ocalan's earlier remarks that Ergenekon had infiltrated the PKK, Yildirim said: He implies [PKK leaders] Semdin Sakik and Selim Curukkaya. This is in fact putting his own crimes on the shoulders of others. This is an effort to protect himself. In a book written by Mahir Sayan, he says the National Intelligence Organization [MIT] gave him money and weapon for two years.

Although he is jailed, Ocalan is known to have continued to direct the terrorist organization. Ocalan recently announced the end of the PKK's unilateral cease-fire with Turkey, which it declared in April of last year, paving the way for the recent escalation of violence in Turkey.

As for the question on what the PKK aims to achieve now, Yildirim

said the terrorist organization does not currently have a policy. They want two things before laying down arms. One of these is the freedom of Apo [the nickname of Ocalan]. The second is equal citizenship for Kurds. If the state does not accept these, the weapons cannot be silenced.

Stating that many people who opposed Ocalan were killed by the members of the organization on Ocalan's order, Yildirim said it is coincidental that he survived. Ocalan said of every person he ordered to be killed, He was going to eliminate me, he said.

BDP decision to boycott referendum boycott wrong

Yildirim is also critical of the recent policies of the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP). The policies it has followed so far are not consistent. They have some justifiable demands. But the state's failure to meet demands does not justify the BDP's policies, he says.

Yildirim also criticized the BDP decision to boycott the upcoming referendum on a constitutional reform package. It is totally wrong for the BDP to boycott the referendum. The constitutional reform package proposes changes in favor of both Kurds and Turks. How can you boycott that? Furthermore, if these changes are approved, it will pave the way for a brand new constitution. The [ruling Justice and Development Party] AK Party has launched a process of change. Why are they waging a war against the AK Party? The BDP will lose a lot if it does not change its policies, he says.

Sept. 12 will be a critical day, just as it was exactly 30 years previously. On Sept. 12, 2010 critical amendments to the Constitution prepared after the Sept. 12, 1980 coup are to be voted on in a referendum. Political parties have already determined their stance on the referendum to be held on that day. The BDP has announced that it plans to boycott the referendum.

L'Union européenne durcit ses sanctions et frappe au cœur de l'économie iranienne

Le secteur de l'énergie est visé par les mesures européennes, qui s'ajoutent à celles des Etats-Unis pour contraindre Téhéran à négocier sur le nucléaire

C'est un sérieux tour de vis. L'Union européenne (UE), principal partenaire commercial de l'Iran, mis en cause pour son programme nucléaire, s'apprête à adopter, lundi 26 juillet, un train de sanctions qui vont bien au-delà de celles prises le 9 juin par l'ONU.

Le secteur énergétique de l'Iran, quatrième producteur mondial de brut, est particulièrement ciblé. L'UE va interdire tout nouvel investissement dans les domaines pétrolier et gazier de ce pays, ainsi que toute fourniture d'équipements, assistance technique ou services financiers destinés à ce secteur.

Les Européens frappent le nerf de l'économie du pays. La résolution 1929 de l'ONU leur a procuré une couverture diplomatique pour franchir ce pas, en soulignant dans son préambule « le lien potentiel entre les recettes que l'Iran tire de son secteur de l'énergie et le financement de ses activités nucléaires posant un risque de prolifération ».

Les nouvelles mesures ont pour particularité d'élargir nettement le champ des sanctions au-delà des seules activités de prolifération de l'Iran. L'état se resserre ainsi sur le secteur bancaire. L'UE va geler les avoirs de huit banques iraniennes, parmi lesquelles les principales institutions du pays comme Mellat, Saderat, et des filiales de la banque Melli (elle-même déjà frappée par des sanctions européennes depuis 2008). L'UE va aussi interdire presque toutes les activités d'assurance en direction de l'Iran.

L'Allemagne a toutefois introduit un bémol, en refusant le gel des avoirs de la banque Europaisch-Iranische Handelsbank (EIH) basée à Hambourg, qui concentre une grande partie des activités financières de l'Iran en Europe. Les responsables français espéraient qu'un récent appel téléphonique du président des Etats-

Unis, Barack Obama, à la chancellerie allemande, Angela Merkel, lèverait cette réticence. En vain. Lors de la visite à Paris, le 21 juillet, du ministre des finances allemand, Wolfgang Schäuble, le sujet a été pudiquement évité. Selon des diplomates, l'administration américaine n'en restera pas là, et pourrait prochainement inscrire EIH sur sa liste noire.

Autre domaine visé par l'UE : les transports. Les avoirs de la principale compagnie maritime iranienne, Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL), impliquée dans de nombreuses opérations de contournement de sanctions, seront gelés. L'UE frappe aussi de sanctions une trentaine de nouvelles entités iraniennes, dont de nombreuses structures liées aux Gardiens de la révolution, l'armée idéologique du régime.

L'accumulation, strate par strate, de sanctions internationales est censée amener le pouvoir iranien, aux prises avec des difficultés intérieures et économiques, à la table des négociations. Il est essentiel, soulignent des diplomates, qu'après l'UE des pays de « même état d'esprit » prennent des mesures similaires, pour empêcher l'Iran de se tourner vers des marchés financiers ou des fournisseurs de substitution. Les Etats du

Golfe, le Japon, la Corée du Sud, l'Australie, la Suisse, par exemple, vont être sollicités.

Frustrée du peu de réponse iranienne à sa politique de la « main tendue », l'administration Obama a accéléré, en mai, le processus des sanctions à l'ONU, puis attendu que les Européens s'engagent, le 17 juin, à élaborer leurs propres mesures. Le 1^{er} juillet, M. Obama est passé à la vitesse supérieure en promulguant une législation préparée par le Congrès, exposant à des pénalités toute compagnie étrangère aidant l'Iran dans le domaine énergétique, notamment en lui livrant des produits pétroliers raffinés (l'Iran importe environ 40% de son essence).

Si le président américain s'est gardé la possibilité d'accorder une exemption à telle ou telle compagnie étrangère, les Etats-Unis détiennent un levier considérable sur les pays européens qui auraient

« Il ne s'agit pas de punir l'Iran, mais de le forcer à dialoguer, car la porte reste ouverte »

Un diplomate européen

Le Brésil et la Turquie invitent l'Iran à la « souplesse »

Le chef de la diplomatie turque, Ahmet Davutoglu, a fait savoir, dimanche 25 juillet, à Istanbul, lors d'une réunion avec le Brésil et l'Iran, qu'Ankara et Brasilia sont prêts à participer à des discussions sur le nucléaire entre Téhéran et le groupe des Six (Etats-Unis, Russie, Chine, Royaume-Uni, France et Allemagne), s'ils y sont invités. Ces deux pays, à l'origine d'une

médiation en mai, ont invité Téhéran à négocier avec « souplesse » et « transparence ». Le chef de la diplomatie iranienne, Manouchehr Mottaki, a annoncé que l'Iran transmettrait lundi à l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique ses réponses aux questions du groupe de Vienne (Etats-Unis, Russie et France) concernant une proposition d'échange d'uranium.

refusé de se joindre à l'effort de sanctions, ou qui auraient cherché à en limiter l'étendue. La Suède et les Pays-Bas, notamment, étaient hésitants. Des pays comme la Grèce et Malte rechignaient à viser le fret maritime. L'unité européenne s'est finalement construite sous la pression américaine, tandis que la France et le Royaume-Uni, rejoints par l'Italie, plaidaient pour des mesures fortes. Auparavant, de nombreuses compagnies, dont Total, avaient restreint leurs activités avec l'Iran, par précaution.

Le plan européen est sévère mais assorti d'une assurance : les Européens veulent continuer à négocier. Ils le répètent dans des conclusions politiques qui accompagnent le texte des sanctions. « Il ne s'agit pas de punir l'Iran mais de le forcer à dialoguer, la porte reste ouverte », assure une source diplomatique bruxelloise.

Catherine Ashton, haute représentante de l'Union européenne pour les affaires étrangères, propose une reprise du dialogue entre l'Iran et les Six chargés du dossier nucléaire (Etats-Unis, Russie, Chine, France, Royaume-Uni, Allemagne). Il pourrait avoir lieu en septembre. Le 20 juillet, M^{me} Ashton a rencontré, en Afghanistan, le ministre iranien des affaires étrangères, Manouchehr Mottaki.

Téhéran souhaite que le Brésil et la Turquie – qui ont tenté une médiation en mai, puis voté contre les sanctions à l'ONU en juin – soient associés aux discussions sur le nucléaire. Une idée qui n'enthousiasme guère, côté occidental. ■

Natalie Nougayrède et Jean-Pierre Stroobants (à Bruxelles)

Heurts entre Turcs et Kurdes après la mort de quatre policiers

Par Reuters, Daren Butler

Des policiers ont fait usage de gaz lacrymogènes mardi pour mettre fin à des heurts entre manifestants turcs et kurdes dans le sud de la Turquie.

Ces heurts faisaient suite à des affrontements ethniques analogues, survenus la veille dans le nord-ouest du pays.

Le ministre de l'Intérieur Besir Atalay a accusé des provocateurs d'être à l'origine des violences, alors que le pays se prépare à un référendum national sur une réforme constitutionnelle, en septembre, et à des élections législatives l'année prochaine.

Lundi soir, des individus armés ont ouvert le feu sur un véhicule de la police, à Dortyol dans la province de Hatay dans le sud de la Turquie. Quatre agents qui se trouvaient à bord ont été tués. C'est cet incident qui est à l'origine des heurts de mardi entre Turcs et Kurdes.

L'agence de presse officielle turque Anatolie rapporte que certains manifestants ont scandé des slogans en langue kurde, en soutien au chef emprisonné du PKK Abdullah Öcalan.



Des manifestants turcs ont ensuite mis le feu aux bureaux de la section locale du Parti Paix et démocratie, pro-kurde, ainsi qu'à des intérêts kurdes à Dortyol, a rapporté la chaîne NTV.

Dans la foulée de l'attaque meurtrière de lundi contre des policiers, le ministre de l'Intérieur Besir Atalay s'est engagé, lors d'une cérémonie à la mémoire des victimes, à éradiquer la présence des militants du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan) dans les monts Amanos, non loin de la frontière syrienne.

Six soldats avaient été tués par un tir de roquette du PKK dans le district d'Iskenderun, dans la province de Hatay,

à la fin du mois de mai.

Les affrontements dans les monts Hatay, lundi, ont eu lieu au lendemain de heurts ethniques à l'autre bout du pays, à Inegol dans la province de Bursa, à la suite d'une querelle dans un café-restaurant. Cinq personnes ont été blessées à l'arme blanche dans cette rixe.

A la suite des heurts à Inegol, des centaines de personnes se sont rassemblées et ont caillassé la mairie en exigeant de la police qu'elle livre les agresseurs. Les manifestants ont mis le feu à des véhicules et érigé des barricades, et les heurts se sont poursuivis pendant la nuit.

"Répétition de guerre civile", titrait mardi le journal Taraf à propos des heurts d'Inegol, où, selon l'agence Anatolie, 51 personnes ont été interpellées.

Le PKK, qui a pris les armes en 1984, a annoncé le 1er juin qu'il mettait fin au cessez-le-feu unilatéral proclamé voici près d'un an, cela en raison des opérations militaires déclenchées contre ses activistes.



27 Juillet 2010

Toujours pas d'accord politique en Irak pour former un gouvernement

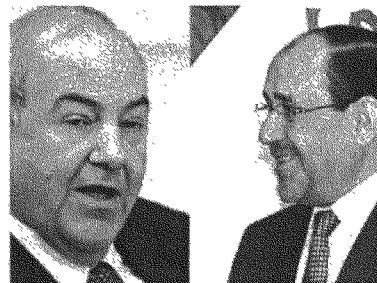
Par RFI

En Irak, le Parlement a une fois de plus renvoyé mardi 27 juillet sine die la session qui devait être consacrée à l'élection d'un nouveau Premier ministre en raison de blocages politiques. Près de 5 mois après les législatives, le pays reste donc sans gouvernement.

A défaut d'une entente politique entre les poids lourds sortis des urnes, le Parlement est paralysé. Le 7 mars dernier, les législatives ont en effet changé la donne en plaçant en tête le chef du Bloc irakien, le très laïc Iyad Allaoui. Avec lui, c'est la sensibilité sunnite qui est revenue au centre de l'échiquier politique irakien.

Mais les électeurs n'ont pas donné à Iyad Allaoui de majorité suffisante pour gouverner. Et dans le camp adverse, le Premier ministre sortant, le chiite Nouri al-Maliki, se refuse à passer la main. Dans la victoire législative d'Allaoui, il dénonce d'ailleurs une restauration des anciens du parti Baas de Saddam Hussein.

Pour sa part, Nouri al-Maliki avait voulu se démarquer de sa



Le Parlement n'a toujours pas tranché entre l'ancien Premier ministre irakien Iyad Allaoui (g) et l'actuel Premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki (d).

majorité chiite de l'Alliance nationale irakienne. Pour ratisser plus large aux deuxièmes législatives de l'Irak sous occupation américaine, il avait pris la tête d'une nouvelle formation aux ambitions transcommunautaires baptisée Alliance pour l'Etat de droit. Sans grand succès. Il vient donc de s'allier avec la deuxième grande formation chiite, inscrite, elle, dans la mouvance de son frère ennemi, Moqtada Sadr. Mais le compte de députés n'y est toujours pas. Reste la coalition kurde pour arbitrer entre Maliki et Allaoui.

L'EXPRESS

27 Juillet 2010

Report sine die en Irak d'une séance parlementaire

Par Reuters

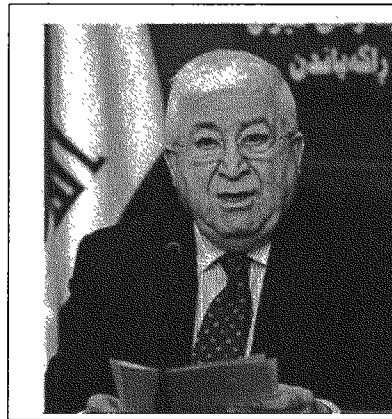
Les députés irakiens ont annulé une séance plénière, au motif qu'ils avaient besoin de plus de temps pour choisir le prochain président du parlement.

La réunion de ce mardi, qui aurait été la seconde depuis les élections législatives du 7 mars qui n'ont pas désigné de majorité claire, a été reportée sine die avant même de commencer.

Elle devait permettre de désigner un président de l'assemblée et deux vice-présidents, étape nécessaire dans le processus de formation d'un nouveau gouvernement.

"La session reste ouverte. Les partis ont demandé une nouvelle fois davantage de temps pour se mettre d'accord sur les trois", a déclaré Abbas al Bayati, un député du bloc Etat de droit du Premier ministre sortant, Nouri al Maliki.

Près de cinq mois après le scrutin, les partis chiïtes, sunnites et kurdes d'Irak ne sont pas parvenus à s'entendre sur le



Le président du parlement irakien par intérim, Fouad Massoum. Les députés irakiens ont reporté sine die une séance plénière avant même qu'elle ne débute, au motif qu'ils avaient besoin de plus de temps pour choisir le prochain président du parlement. (Reuters/Thaier al-Sudani)

nom du Premier ministre.

Courrier
INTERNATIONAL.COM

30 Juillet 2010

TURQUE : La paix civile menacée

De graves heurts se sont produits ces derniers jours dans plusieurs villes entre les populations turque et kurde. Les éditorialistes de la presse turque craignent que ces troubles ne dégèrent, alors que le pays est sous tension avant un référendum crucial qui se tiendra en septembre.

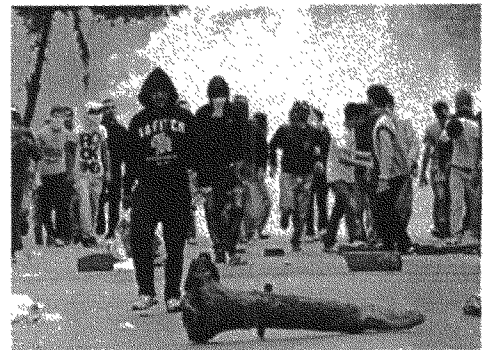
Pierre Vanrie | Courrier international

"CE N'EST QUE basse polémique politique que d'accuser le gouvernement AKP [Parti de la justice et du développement, islamiste, au pouvoir] d'être responsable des incidents qui se déroulent actuellement, uniquement parce qu'il a lancé une politique d'ouverture vis-à-vis des Kurdes", affirme Taha Akyol dans Milliyet. L'éditorialiste du quotidien turc réagit aux nombreux affrontements ethniques qui ont opposé ces derniers jours les populations kurde et turque dans la province de Hatay (sud du pays) et à Inegöl, dans le nord du pays, dans la région de Bursa. Quatre policiers avaient été tués lundi 26 juillet dans la ville de Dörtiyol, lors d'un attentat perpétré par l'organisation séparatiste kurde PKK.

"Les critiques de l'opposition ne sont pas plus crédibles que le discours du gouvernement. Selon ce dernier, ces graves incidents n'ont d'autre but que de saboter le processus menant au référendum [sur la révision constitutionnelle, prévu pour le 12 septembre prochain. Il vise notamment à limiter le rôle politique de l'armée.] En effet, de graves affrontements de masse s'étaient déjà produits avant

que le gouvernement ne lance son 'ouverture kurde' et ne décide d'organiser un référendum", continue Taha Akyol dans Milliyet. "Au cours des années 1980 et 1990, la question kurde restait cantonnée à un problème de terrorisme. Il n'y avait pas d'affrontements impliquant les populations civiles. Plus récemment, la question kurde s'est fortement politisée et a acquis une nouvelle dimension en pénétrant toutes les couches de la société. La tension inhérente à ce problème s'est étendue aux masses. Le problème des 'enfants jetant des pierres sur les forces de l'ordre', inimaginable il y a dix ans, est l'une des manifestations de ce processus. Ce sont des signaux d'alarme annonciateurs d'une effroyable catastrophe."

Dans le journal Taraf, Rasim O. Kütahyalı privilégie quant à lui la piste du complot visant à déstabiliser le gouvernement et à maintenir un statu quo favorable à un establishment menacé par les diverses procédures judiciaires en cours dans le cadre du procès Ergenekon [nom de l'organisation clandestine composée de civils et de militaires de l'Etat ayant pour but de renverser l'AKP]. "Ils essaient tout pour que le 'non' l'emporte lors du référendum du 12 septembre", écrit-il à ce propos. "La population n'a pas cru au danger du fondamentalisme musulman qui serait incarné par l'AKP. Le seul atout qui reste alors dans les mains du réseau Ergenekon, c'est de mener des opérations créant les conditions favorables à une guerre civile, en particulier dans les petites et les grandes villes de l'ouest de la Turquie. Le nationalisme turc, à l'œuvre dans les régions côtières occidentales, a une dimension laïciste et souverainiste selon laquelle tout lien spirituel avec les Kurdes est impossible. Le discours : 'Les Kurdes sont un fardeau', 'Pourquoi



Des militants kurdes affrontent la police anti-émeute turque, Istanbul, 10 juillet 2010.

vivrons-nous encore avec eux ?', s'entend surtout dans ces régions. Les affrontements d'Inegöl illustrent à nouveau le fait que le terreau de cette région est favorable à une guerre civile à caractère ethnique. Les événements qui ont eu lieu dans cette petite ville, s'ils ont l'air spontanés, sont donc le résultat de provocations orchestrées."

Dans Vatan, Rusen Çakir veut, quant à lui, dépasser la controverse : "Plutôt que de polémiquer sur le lien éventuel de ces événements avec le processus d'ouverture et de référendum du gouvernement, constatons qu'il s'agit là d'une nouvelle manifestation de la question kurde, la 'mère de tous les problèmes de la Turquie'. Toujours non résolue, cette question pose en réalité à ce stade celle de notre capacité à vivre ensemble en paix. Si nous ne voulons pas être tous perdants, nous avons alors intérêt à mettre tous la main à la pâte pour tenter de la résoudre. Dans ces conditions, toute personne qui en a la possibilité doit apporter sa contribution pour que le PKK dépose les armes sans aucune condition."

Expansion of Turkey-PKK War

By FIRAT KELEHKI and
NAJIBA MUHAMMAD

A Turkish newspaper recently reported that Turkey and Iran had been preparing to launch joint attacks on the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and their hideouts located in the mountainous terrains of the federal region of Kurdistan in the north of Iraq.

Throughout the past few months, the PKK and its Iranian offshoot, Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK), have been in almost continuous deadly conflicts with Turkey and Iran, resulting in the deaths of dozens of Turkish soldiers and guerrillas.

On Monday, the PKK-Turkey fighting escalated into ethnic riots on the streets of Turkey. The rioters chanted pro-PKK slogans and were charged as opponents of democratic change by the Turkish government, led by Prime Minister Erdogan and his Islamic party, the Justice and Development (AK).

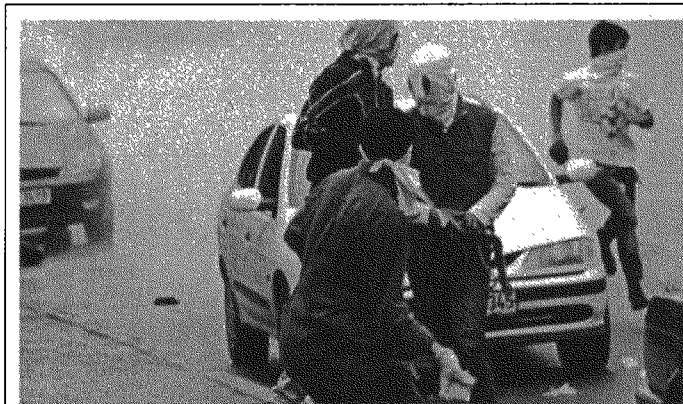
The Turkish-language newspaper, SABAH, reported that there had been a strategy discussed by the leaders of [Turkish] National Security Council that there will be some joint Iran-Turkey assaults, with the help of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), on PKK.

The Kurdish officials deny the authenticity of the news saying that such an assault will not be tolerated by the Iraqi government which is already in a political stalemate over the formation of a new government.

"There is no information about a joint attack of Turkey and Iran," said Jabar Yawar, spokesman of the Kurdistan's Ministry of Peshmarga (forces).

"I don't believe that these two countries will be able to launch such a joint assault. Iraqi government will not allow it to happen" said Yawar.

According to the newspaper, KRG has



Turkey's Kurds clashed with Turkish riot police at Gazi district in Istanbul on July 10, 2010, marching supports to the PKK.-----
Photo by Getty Images

been offering full cooperation to Turkey in many aspects in order to enable it to be more effective in its fight aimed to end the PKK's violence.

It also reported that a number of issues have been discussed between KRG and Turkey regarding the PKK. They include" diplomatic pressure, border protection, logistic siege, joint intelligence work, preventing PKK members from getting Iraqi citizenship, closing PKK camps and offices and ending any relation they may have with local Kurdish and Arab tribes"

Muhammad Nazir Karabash, Member of Turkey's Parliament with pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), ruled out the possibility of any joint Turkish-Iranian attack but was convinced that Turkey will keep and advance its unilateral attacks on PKK.

"Turkish army is preparing. There might be a heavier attack launched by Turkey" Karabash said.

Meanwhile, Firat News Agency, a close source to PKK, reported that Abdulla Ocelan, imprisoned PKK leader, mentioned an agreement to have been reached between the Turkish government and the army to stage "a big military operation" in the Kurdistan region.

Furthermore, Karabash, the BDP parliamentarian, believes that Turkey wants

to involve the Iraqi Kurds in a Kurd-Kurd war, a possibility which he doubts about.

The newspaper also wrote that Turkish officials had asked KRG to establish 400 check points near the border aimed at preventing PKK's moves, an issue considered an "internal Iraqi matter" by Yawar, the spokesman of Peshmarga.

"We are not aware of that. This depends on KRG and Iraqi government and has nothing to do with any other country," added Yawar.

Major General Ahmad Fazladin, commander of the border guards of the division 1, said that some KRG's military outposts are to be established nearby the borders of Turkey-Kurdistan region.

"These military bases have no relation with Turkey but US helps us to establish them" said major general Fazladin, mentioning that the border soldiers are expected to be trained by Turkey and Spain.

Turkey had always been accusing KRG of tolerating and even aiding the PKK. But since Kurdistan President Barzani's visit to Turkey almost 2 months ago, such accusations have not been heard.

Barzani promised Turks that he will be utilizing "all peaceful efforts" to stop PKK's in a peaceful way.



Turkish unrest not political, Ankara says

ANKARA, July 29, 2010 -(United Press International)

There are no underlying conspiracies linking two separate clashes in Turkey this week, the country's interior minister said.

Militant with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, are accused of killing four Turkish policemen this week in eastern Turkey, sparking riots in the region. Similar unrest erupted in the western parts of Turkey, leaving dozens injured.

Turkish Interior Ministry Besir Atalay said the incidents in western Turkey weren't related to the PKK events. He said a crowd

angered by "false reports" stormed police buildings in the area after a conflict between two bus drivers spiraled out of control.

"I want to underline that there are no political or ideological motives behind this incident," he said. "It took place totally spontaneously."

Ankara last year pushed for reconciliation measures with the Kurdish minority in an attempt to end the conflict with Kurdish rebels.

Turkish Justice Minister Sadullah Ergin told The Wall Street Journal this week that Turkish officials who favored "the status quo" were stoking sectarian conflict to thwart democratic reform.

"In both cases we have to take into account the probability of provocations and the intelligence services are investigating these probabilities," he was quoted as saying.



30 JULY 2010

PKK Attacks Threaten Turkey's Ties with Iraqi Kurds

James M. Dorsey
World Politics Review

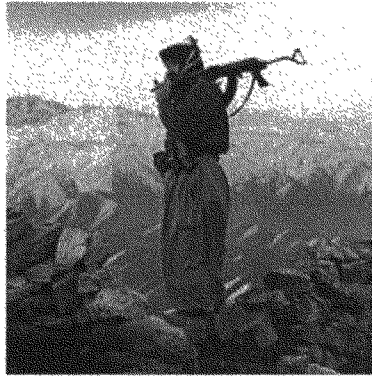
Stepped-up hostilities between Turkish forces and Kurdish guerrillas in southeastern Turkey and predominantly Kurdish northern Iraq coupled with a high-powered Iraqi Kurdish campaign to achieve greater autonomy are complicating U.S. efforts to ensure that Iraq remains united once American troops leave the country. The increased hostilities couldn't come at a worse time for the Obama administration, which is preparing for next year's withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq.

The U.S. had hoped that closer Turkish-Iraqi Kurdish cooperation and Ankara's conciliatory moves toward Turkey's estimated 15 million Kurds -- who account for approximately 20 percent of Turkey's population -- would end a decades-old Kurdish insurgency in Turkey.

Instead, Turkish warplanes are targeting PKK bases in northern Iraq with increased regularity, and the Turkish military is re-establishing checkpoints in predominantly Kurdish southeastern Turkey. The U.S., which has designated the PKK a terrorist organization, is assisting Turkey by providing intelligence to its military and granting Turkish fighter jets greater access to northern Iraqi air space.

The hostilities threaten to jeopardize Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's efforts to persuade the outlawed PKK to lay down its arms and end fighting that has cost some 45,000 lives, by granting Turkish Kurds greater political and cultural freedom. Despite the fighting and increasingly tough language towards the PKK, Erdogan continues to pay lip service to the notion that the conflict with the Kurds cannot be resolved with military means alone. Yet, with a controversial constitutional referendum scheduled for September, elections due next year and nationalist calls for a harder line towards the PKK, Erdogan will be hard-pressed to respond positively to recent PKK overtures for a ceasefire and a negotiated solution.

U.S. officials fear that the increased Kurdish violence could threaten an economic boom on both sides of the Turkish-Iraqi border and complicate the administration's efforts to ensure that Iraq remains united following the U.S. withdrawal. Washington is currently pressuring the Iraqi Kurds to moderate their demands for greater autonomy, for expansion of their terri-



tory to include the disputed oil-rich city of Kirkuk, and for independence from Baghdad in negotiating contracts with foreign oil firms.

The Iraqi Kurds are pushing back by investing heavily in a lobbying and public relations campaign in Washington. Iraqi Kurdistan now ranks among the top 10 foreign clients of several high-profile Washington-based lobbying and public relations firms. Gen. Ray Odierno, commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, last week warned that Kurdish-Arab tension over Kirkuk and the powers of the Kurdish Regional Government constitutes the single largest threat to Iraqi stability. He said that despite U.S. efforts to ensure stability, the differences were unlikely to be resolved before U.S. troops leave the country.

Iraqi Kurdish resolve to further insulate their autonomous region from volatility elsewhere in Iraq has been strengthened by the Obama administration's refusal to coax Iraqi political leaders to finally form a government months after inconclusive parliamentary elections were held. U.S. officials say Vice President Joe Biden, during his July 4 visit to Baghdad, emphasized the need to form a government quickly, but refrained from discussing how it should be formed or who should be part of it. U.S. officials have reiterated that position since.

Iraqi Kurdish leaders say the U.S. reluctance to intervene more forcefully is allowing Iran to fill the vacuum. Iran is trying to persuade pro-Iranian cleric Moqtada al-Sadr to drop his opposition to a government led by Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki's State of Law coalition. Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshayr Zebari, whose Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) is part of the outgoing Iraqi coalition government, appealed to the Obama administration during a visit to Washington this month to help Iraqi politicians form a government. Speaking to reporters he warned that the longer Iraq "goes without a government, you will have more and more vacuum.

That's why . . . time is of paramount importance."

Meanwhile, though Turkish military operations in northern Iraq are limited to remote mountainous areas of Iraqi Kurdistan, they put the regional government in an increasingly delicate position. Turkey has been pressuring the regional government to do more than simply tacitly agreeing to the anti-PKK strikes. The renewed fighting has dampened Iraqi Kurds' hopes that with greater political and cultural freedom for Turkish Kurds, the conflict on the other side of the border would be resolved.

The regional government, in an effort to navigate a way out of the impasse, has revived plans, in cooperation with Turkey's pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), to organize a conference with participation of Kurds from Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Syria and various European countries to discuss the future of the PKK and pressure it to lay down its arms. The organizers believe that having already moderated its goals, the PKK may be amenable to a Kurdish initiative to effectively mediate with Turkey. The rebels have dropped their demand for an independent Kurdish state in favor of greater political and cultural rights in Turkey and an amnesty for PKK fighters. The conference has the backing of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, a former Kurdish guerrilla leader.

But Turkey is wary that the conference, which is likely to propose a series of steps to be taken by both Turkey and the PKK, would mean internationalization of a conflict Ankara has long insisted is a domestic problem. Instead it has urged the Iraqi Kurdish and Iraqi governments as well as the U.S. to take military action against the PKK. Speaking on Turkish television, Turkey's top commander Gen. Ilker Basbug warned that "the presence of PKK bases in northern Iraq will certainly affect Turkey and Iraq's relationship and will negatively influence relations between the U.S. and Turkey." Privately, the Turks have gone so far as to warn Iraqi Kurdish leaders that continued escalation of hostilities inside Turkey may force them to invade Iraqi Kurdistan -- a move that could dash U.S. intentions to leave behind a stable Iraq capable of defending itself.

James M. Dorsey, a former Wall Street Journal foreign correspondent, writes about ethnic and religious conflict.

Turkey aims to ease tension with Kurds

BATMAN, TURKEY

Efforts to calm minority are met with distrust after long, vicious conflict

BY DAN BILEFSKY

Berivan Sayaca, a dark-eyed and vivacious 15-year-old Kurdish girl, dreamed of escaping her life as a seamstress and studying law. Instead, she was convicted as a terrorist for attending a protest rally and sentenced to nearly eight years behind bars.

This week, however, Ms. Sayaca was released from prison almost 10 months into her sentence. The move came after the Turkish Parliament, in an attempt to alleviate rising tensions with the nation's Kurdish minority, passed a bill reducing the sentences of hundreds of youths, age 18 and younger, who had been put on trial here and nicknamed the "stone-throwing kids."

An estimated 40,000 people have died during a vicious conflict stretching over more than a quarter century concerning national identity and land between Turkey and the separatist guerrilla group known as the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or P.K.K. In recent years, many young Kurds have been accused of being "terrorists," yet in some cases, their only crime was to have attended a demonstration, chanted a slogan or thrown a stone.

After Ms. Sayaca returned home to celebrate with her parents and six brothers and sisters in this poor, predominantly Kurdish city in Turkey's southeast — her emotional reunion captured by television stations across Turkey — she said her imprisonment had emboldened her resolve.

"It was very hard to be in jail at my age," she said. "But now I have my life back, and I still want to be a lawyer. What they did to me was wrong."

The Turkish government is particularly concerned about the Kurdish issue now. In June, the P.K.K. ended a 14-month cease-fire, prompting a surge of attacks on the Turkish armed forces and undermining a recent attempt at outreach to the Kurds.

More than 80 Turkish soldiers have been killed so far this year by the P.K.K., which in the past has committed hundreds of attacks against civilians, including Kurds. Turkey, the United States and the European Union classify



A rally this month for the Kurdistan Workers' Party, a separatist guerrilla group, in Diyarbakir, Turkey. The group ended a cease-fire in June, setting off attacks on the Turkish military.



the P.K.K. as a terrorist organization. Some fear a return to the 1990s when thousands of Kurdish villagers were forcibly driven from their homes.

The intensification of the violence in the southeast coincided with the deadly clash between Israel and a flotilla to Gaza, led by a Turkish organization, in May; the confrontation was greeted with deep resentment among many of Turkey's estimated 12 million ethnic Kurds.

They view their own quest for self-determination through the prism of the Arab-Israeli conflict and complain bitterly that the Turkish government is championing the Palestinians and defending Hamas, even as it turns its back on its own minorities.

"How dare Turkey send boats to Gaza and make friends with Hamas when its own house is on fire, when they are sending our kids to jail, and we have no hope?" Miriam Sayaca, Berivan's mother, said in an interview before Berivan's release. "We empathize with the Palestinians, but are we not Muslims, too?"

While many Kurds remain distrustful of the government's recent concessions, the efforts have also come under attack from opponents who fear that the moves may encourage terrorism.

Several members of the parliamentary opposition questioned the legal changes that led to Berivan's release and warned that the bill's supporters risked ending up with blood on their hands.

They observed that many youths filled the ranks of the P.K.K., including many young female guerrillas, whom they noted were also capable of throwing bombs, maiming and killing. They blamed Kurdish parents and the P.K.K.

for exploiting their own children for political ends.

"From now on, you are responsible for exploited minors and the people who are harmed by these minors," said Ridvan Yalcin of the Nationalist Movement Party, or M.H.P., whose members stormed out of the meeting when the bill was being debated.

Hundreds of Kurdish children have been put behind bars under a tough anti-terrorism law, introduced in 2006, that equated protest activities like attending an illegal rally with being a member of a terrorist group, according to Berivan's lawyer, Reyhan Yalcindag, a leading human rights activist.

She said thousands of children aged 15 to 18 had also been tried as adults in serious crimes courts, in breach of the United Nations conventions on children's rights.

Berivan was jailed soon after her family moved last October from Istanbul to Batman, one of dozens of bleak, dusty cities in Turkey's impoverished southeast where high unemployment and illiteracy rates have made it a fertile recruitment ground for the P.K.K.

Like many Kurdish girls, Berivan had been forced to leave school for manual labor. On Oct. 9, Berivan went to visit her aunt, but she never returned home. Soon after, Berivan's mother said, the family heard that she had been arrested after being seen at a pro-P.K.K. demonstration.

During her 30-minute trial, four months later, the main evidence from the prosecution was a photo of Berivan at the protest, a scarf pulled over her face.

Berivan told her parents that she had accidentally stumbled on the demonstration. But police officials in Batman said they had filmed her taking part in the protest. That was sufficient evidence to convict her, and send her to a high-security prison for adults.

Selim Sayaca, Berivan's father, insisted that the family had no links to politics, let alone to the P.K.K. "Berivan was upset when I was fired from my job for speaking Kurdish," he said. "But she is just a girl, she is not a terrorist."

Turkish officials and state prosecutors in Diyarbakir, the southeastern city where Berivan was imprisoned, declined to comment on her case. But Egemem Bagis, Turkey's minister for European affairs, noted in an interview that the governing Justice and Development Party had been seeking to improve the lives and rights of Kurds, including licensing a Kurdish-language television station, advocating Kurdish-language university faculties and promoting their membership in Parliament.

In October, 34 Kurds, including 8 P.K.K. fighters, were allowed to return to Turkey from northern Iraq in what was viewed as a critical peace gesture on both sides. But their return prompted an angry public backlash when they



Miriam Sayaca with a picture of her daughter, Berivan, who was convicted as a terrorist after being seen at a Kurdish rally. A new law in Turkey led to her release from prison this week.

traveled triumphantly across the southeast dressed as guerillas and refused to renounce violence. The arrest of hundreds of Kurdish activists followed.

Nijat Yaruk, chairman of the Diyarbakir branch of the B.D.P., the main Kurdish political party, said the government refused to allow Kurdish to be taught in state schools or approve any moves toward Kurdish autonomy.

Some historians say the modern Turkish republic, founded in the early 1920s, has long viewed the assertion of ethnic identity, Kurdish or otherwise, as a threat to its territorial unity.

The resumption of hostilities here has sent the stone-throwing kids back into the streets, and on a recent day, hundreds of Kurdish children, some of them as young as 7, gathered in front of a mosque in Diyarbakir to await the return of the bodies of two P.K.K. guerrillas killed by the Turkish Army.

Wearing white sheets on their heads to avoid being identified by the police, they waived illegal P.K.K. flags and marched ecstatically through the crowd, chanting, "Revenge! Revenge!"

While such actions were sufficient in the past to convict a minor as a member of a terrorist organization, under the new bill, minors caught at pro-P.K.K. demonstrations throwing stones or chanting slogans will be tried in juvenile

courts instead of serious crimes courts and will receive reduced sentences, provided they are first-time offenders.

Deprived of an education in prison, many young Kurds are entering back into society with no skills, said Mrs. Yalcindag, the human rights lawyer.

Ali Oncel, a 17-year-old vegetable seller, who was arrested after attending a P.K.K.-sponsored demonstration in February and spent about five months in a prison before being released this month, said the ordeal had left him feeling despondent, isolated and angry.

"My only contact with the outside world was one room in the jail without a roof where you could see the sky," said Mr. Oncel, the only breadwinner in his family of nine.

Asked whether he would now join the P.K.K., Mr. Oncel paused and sighed.

"My friends in prison said they would get their revenge by going directly from prison to the mountains to fight," he said. "I have to take care of my family. But if I didn't, I know what I would have to do."

Yilmaz Akinci contributed reporting.