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ERBIL : LA FRANCE INAUGURE SON BUREAU D'AMBASSADE

RE ministre français des Affaires étrangères, Bernard Kouchner, a inauguré le 1^{er} juin à Erbil, capitale de la Région du Kurdistan d'Irak, le bureau d'ambassade (futur consulat) en présence du Premier ministre de la Région, Nêçirvan Barzani, de l'ambassadeur de France et du consul Frédéric Tissot. Une foule d'environ deux cents personnalités francophones, de ministres et de diplomates ont assisté à cette inauguration.

Dans son discours, Bernard Kouchner a exprimé son bonheur d'être au Kurdistan, en cette occasion particulière : « Je suis très heureux d'être à Erbil, capitale de la Région du Kurdistan d'Irak. Et je me souviens de bien des éléments de cette histoire, particulière, de cette histoire qui concerne bien des personnes ici, et qui concerne aussi l'histoire avec un grand H, qui concerne la famille Barzani, qui concerne la lutte des Kurdes. Tout à l'heure en voyant la photo de Mustafa Barzani, le grand-père du

Premier ministre, je me souvenais de ce soir, de cette nuit de 1974, en septembre je crois, de 1974, j'ai rencontré pour la première fois ce grand homme, Mustafa Barzani, et puis j'ai rencontré toute la famille et cela a duré des années : Idriss et Massoud et maintenant le Premier ministre. Et cela fait bientôt 40 ans que certains, dont Frédéric [Tissot], dont Alain Deloche [co-fondateur de Médecins du Monde], dont d'autres ici, nous attendons ce jour. Ce jour qui concerne bien sûr le peuple kurde, mais qui concerne aussi l'Irak, qui concerne tous les Irakiens. Car je pense, avec des raisons personnelles de

ne pas me tromper, que l'histoire des Kurdes préfigure l'histoire de l'Irak, sa lutte pour être libre, pour échapper à la dictature, pour construire un modèle au Moyen-Orient. »

Bernard Kouchner a ensuite évoqué sa visite en compagnie de Mme Mitterrand lors de l'ouverture du Parlement d'Erbil en 1992, les années difficiles qui s'ensuivirent. Il a tenu à rendre hommage à Abdulrahman Ghassemloo, le leader kurde du PDKI assassiné à Vienne en 1989 par les services iraniens, ainsi qu'à tous les combattants et militants des droits de l'Homme au Kurdistan.

Assurant que cette représentation diplomatique « sera transformée en consulat bien vite », le ministre français a fait part du « désir profond de la France d'apporter sa présence et son aide à la reconstruction du processus politique de stabilisation de l'Irak tout entier, de cette construction nécessaire de l'Irak entier, au Moyen-Orient, dans ses difficultés, et plus que ses difficultés, les déchirements actuels de l'histoire du Moyen-Orient.

Vous avez, vous les Kurdes, vous les Irakiens, un rôle essentiel à jouer dans l'Histoire qui s'inscrit aujourd'hui devant vous, devant nous. Nous avons besoin de vous. Nous avons besoin d'un Kurdistan solide dans un Irak libre et démocratique, dans un Irak qui prendra toute sa personnalité, toutes ses responsabilités, qui n'aura plus besoin de personne. Mais de vous, il aura toujours besoin. Vous êtes le modèle et l'avancée de l'Irak. »

Le ministre des Affaires étrangères a évoqué ensuite une amélioration de la situation irakienne, avant d'assurer le Kurdistan du soutien et de la présence de la France à Erbil, en envisageant aussi des échanges mutuels entre les deux pays, notamment par la présence des Français déjà sur place : « Il nous faut plus de Français ici, il nous faut plus de déploiement d'énergie. (...) il faut que se noue tout un tissu de relations économiques, d'investissements et, bien sûr, de relations culturelles. »

Pour Bernard Kouchner, les Kurdes et leur long combat démocratique sont un modèle, non seulement pour les Irakiens, mais pour tout le Moyen-Orient, « car je pense, avec quelque raisons personnelles de ne pas me tromper, que l'histoire des Kurdes préfigure l'histoire de l'Irak, sa lutte pour être libre, pour échapper à la dictature, pour construire un modèle au Moyen-Orient. »

Le ministre français a ajouté que le gouvernement kurde devait être un modèle de stabilité politique pour tout l'Irak, notamment pour les droits de l'homme et les libertés des femmes.

Prenant ensuite la parole, le Premier ministre kurde Nêçirvan Barzani a salué Bernard Kouchner comme un ami fidèle des Kurdes, rappelant le temps où il travaillait pour Médecins sans frontières et quand, « en 1974, quand nous n'avions pour amis que les montagnes, il a visité la région du Kurdistan pour la première fois, et a rencontré le général Barzani » ; et

puis dans les années 1980, avec Médecins du Monde, alors que « notre peuple vivait ses jours les plus sombres » pour y apporter une aide médicale et plus tard, en 1991, quand il a contribué à faire adopter la résolution 688 de l'ONU.

Le Premier ministre s'est dit alors heureux de ce que l'amitié franco-kurde fasse un pas en avant, avec cette ouverture d'une représentation diplomatique, et est revenu sur le chemin politique parcouru : « A partir de 1991, nous dépendions des dons de nourriture, de vêtements, d'abris, de la part de nos amis et des organisations humanitaires internationales. Cette noble décision nous a soutenus durant les jours noirs. Mais aujourd'hui la situation a changé. Nous, dans la Région, avons profité de l'occasion qui nous a été offerte et avons tourné le dos à ce passé amer. A cette époque, l'aide humanitaire était très importante et précieuse pour nous, mais avec la libération de l'Irak, le peuple de la Région du Kurdistan a relevé le défi et nous avons joué un rôle actif dans la reconstruction de l'Irak.

Aujourd'hui, nous vivons une phase nouvelle, mais nous avons toujours besoin du soutien de la communauté internationale dans le processus de reconstruction à l'intérieur du Kurdistan et pour tout le reste de l'Irak. »

Abordant plus précisément les relations de la Région kurde avec la France, Nêçirvan Barzani juge que les deux pays bénéficieront de ce nouveau stade de leurs relations, à la fois sur le plan économique et politique. « La

France occupe une position forte en tant que membre du Conseil de sécurité et à l'intérieur de l'Union européenne. Votre pays peut jouer un rôle important en nous aidant à développer notre processus politique, notre système démocratique et en encourageant les industries françaises et les investisseurs à participer aux efforts de reconstruction de l'Irak. Nous souhaitons aussi des échanges plus étroits avec la France pour la culture et l'éducation. Nos étudiants méritent comme le reste du monde, l'opportunité de poursuivre leurs études à un niveau avancé. Nous espérons que les universités françaises pourront offrir aux étudiants de la Région du Kurdistan d'être présents chaque année et d'assister aux dernières avancées scientifiques et technologiques.

Vous soutenez un peuple qui veut vivre en paix avec lui-même et ses voisins, un peuple qui respecte les droits de l'homme et le droit, et qui avance sur le chemin de la tolérance et de la coexistence pacifique.

Ces changements nous encouragent à travailler plus dur. Nous voulons compenser les années d'isolation dont nous avons souffert dans le passé. La Région du Kurdistan est très riche et peut offrir de nombreuses occasions à la communauté internationale,

tout spécialement dans le domaine des ressources naturelles, de l'agriculture, du tourisme, du bâtiment et des infrastructures.

Tous nos efforts et nos actions se font en accord avec les droits qui nous sont donnés par la constitution irakienne. Alors que le pétrole et le gaz ont été une source de souffrance dans le passé, aujourd'hui nous nous servons de la loi pour tâcher de les transformer en sources de prospérité et d'opportunité.

Nous sommes absolument résolus à traiter ce problème à la condition que nous puissions garantir les droits de notre peuple pour le futur. Les positions que nous prenons le sont uniquement pour le bien-être et le bonheur de la Région du Kurdistan et de tout l'Irak.

Nous ne voulons pas que le pétrole et le gaz soient les seules sources de revenus pour l'économie de notre Région. Nous voulons tirer profit de toutes les ressources naturelles de la Région du Kurdistan et travailler à développer tous les secteurs. »

En conclusion, le Premier ministre a remercié encore la France de l'ouverture de ce bureau diplomatique et pour le soutien politique et humanitaire qu'elle a offert au Kurdistan dans le passé, en considérant qu'une

étape nouvelle a été franchie dans les relations franco-kurdes.

Au terme de cette visite-éclair d'une journée, Bernard Kouchner a rencontré le président de la Région du Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani, en compagnie d'Adnan Mufti, le président du Parlement, de Nêçirvan Barzani et de son adjoint Omar Fatah, ainsi que du Secrétaire et des membres du Bureau politique du PDK.

Dans la conférence de presse qui a suivi la rencontre, Massoud Barzani a salué l'ouverture de ce bureau d'ambassade, qu'il voit lui aussi comme une avancée cruciale dans les relations entre la France et le Kurdistan. Sur la teneur de l'entretien qu'il a eue avec le ministre français, le président a indiqué avoir expliqué la position des Kurdes sur l'article 140, qu'il a qualifié de « flexible » notamment au regard de la contribution des Nations Unies sur la question.

Bernard Kouchner, qui avait commencé son périple irakien par une visite à Nassiriah, dans le Sud chiite, avant de rencontrer à Bagdad les principaux dirigeants irakiens, dont le président Talabani, le Premier ministre Al-Maliki, ainsi que son homologue Hosyar Zebari, a rejoint Paris dans la nuit du 1^{er} juin.

IRAK : MECONTENTEMENT QUASI-GENERAL APRES LE RAPPORT DE L'UNAMI

RE rapport de Staffan de Mistura, représentant de l'ONU en Irak, sur la question des territoires kurdes encore sous juridiction irakienne, après le report de six mois consenti par les Kurdes, du référendum prévu par l'article 140, a été rendu public le 5 juin.

Ce rapport se concentre sur quatre provinces, sélectionnées parmi un large éventail, pour une analyse de terrain et des propositions politiques et administratives : Akre (Ninive), Hamdaniya (Ninive), Makhmour (Ninive / Erbil) et Mandali (Diyala).

Pour Akre (province de Ninive), administrée par Duhok depuis 1991, et depuis ce temps comprise dans le GRK, le rapport considère qu'Akre est « typiquement considérée comme l'un des districts mentionnés comme administrés par le GRK dans l'article 53 de la Loi provisoire et l'article 143 de la constitution irakienne. » Il s'agit d'un district majoritairement peuplé de Kurdes et le transfert officiel de son administration dans le gouvernorat de Duhok n'apporterait aucun changement important en l'état actuel des choses. L'UNAMI (United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq) recommande que des mesures soient prises pour garantir notamment la liberté de mouvement entre les provinces de Duhok et Ninive et les droits de la langue arabe.

Hamdaniya (province de Ninive) est administrée par le gouvernorat de Ninive depuis 1932 et n'était donc pas compris dans les zones gérées par le GRK jusqu'au 19 mars 2003. La zone jouit de liens économiques et administratifs étroits avec Mossoul, et est historiquement constituée de grandes villes chrétiennes entrecoupées de villages shabaks et de communautés arabes, surtout dans le sous-district de Namroud. La montée de la violence dans cette région depuis 2007 visant particulièrement les minorités religieuses, un certain nombre de shabaks et des chrétiens de Mossoul se sont réfugiés dans cette zone. Les recommandations et propositions de l'UNAMI vont dans le sens d'un maintien de ce district dans la province de Ninive, d'une plus grande participation locale dans les forces de sécurité irakiennes, surtout de la part des Arabes et des chrétiens, et un déploiement de ces forces à Hamdaniya, en place des Peshmergas kurdes qui en assurent actuellement la défense.

Le rapport affirme que les communautés chrétiennes et shabaks préfèrent une forme de gouvernement local et l'UNAMI insiste sur les droits culturels et religieux de ces minorités, tels qu'ils sont exprimés dans la constitution. Les recommandations portent aussi sur les dispositifs que devraient adopter les forces irakiennes de sécurité pour contrôler la région, tels que des check-point, le recrutement local au

sein de ces mêmes forces, l'augmentation du nombre de bureaux de police, etc.

Makhmour (province de Ninive et Erbil) a constamment fait partie du gouvernorat d'Erbil depuis 1932, et le district n'est administré par Ninive que depuis 1991, date à laquelle la « ligne verte » séparant la zone d'autonomie kurde et le reste de l'Irak a été mise en place. Pour cette raison, Makhmour est considérée comme étant hors du GRK bien que, comme le souligne le rapport, « aucune législation, décret ou règlement n'ait officiellement transféré l'administration du district de Makhmour d'Erbil au gouvernorat de Ninive. » D'un autre côté, le rapport ajoute que « le sous-district de Qaraj est majoritairement peuplé de communautés arabes qui ont exprimé une forte opposition à être administrées par Erbil. » Le rapport propose de rattacher Makhmour à Erbil, excepté Qaraj qui serait rattaché à un district voisin compris dans un autre gouvernorat. Les recommandations vont dans le sens d'un traitement équitable en termes de budget, de répartition des ressources, d'accès à l'emploi et de représentation dans le gouvernement et les forces de sécurité entre les Arabes et les Kurdes, ainsi que la liberté de langue et de mouvement.

Mandali (province de Diyala) est un des plus anciens secteurs administratifs de l'Irak, mais a été rétrogradé en 1987, par l'ancien régime, du statut de district à sous-district et intégré dans la zone de Baladruz. Depuis 1932, il a toujours fait partie du gouvernorat de Diyala. « Dans les années 1970, une politique

d'expulsion massive des Kurdes fayli (chiïtes) et d'autres communautés, ont été suivies de nombreuses décisions dans les années 80, en raison de la guerre Iran-Irak, pour déplacer la population frontalière hors de Mandali, créant un autre déplacement massif et un déclin drastique du nombre de ses habitants. Le sous-développement chronique, des décennies d'opérations militaires et de répression, la négligence administrative systématique dans les services et un manque d'eau aigu ont empêché un retour massif des habitants d'origine. Le rapport préconise la prise en compte du passé tragique de Mandali (en particulier des Kurdes et des Turkmènes) et d'investir de façon importante dans le développement de cette zone sinistrée, avec un traitement équitable en termes de budget, de répartition des ressources, d'accès à l'emploi et de représentation dans le gouvernement et les forces de sécurité, mais en laissant la région dans le gouvernement de Diyala.

L'UNAMI a indiqué poursuivre son enquête de terrain dans d'autres régions disputées, telles que Tell Afar, Sheikhan, Sinjar pour la province de Ninive et Khanaqin pour celle de Diyala. Enfin, en troisième lieu, la question de Kirkouk sera abordée.

Comme on le voit, le Bureau de l'ONU en Irak, a donné presque à chaque fois la préférence au maintien administratif des districts dans leur région d'origine, sauf dans le cas d'Akre qui est déjà inclus dans la Région kurde. Le tracé des provinces datant de 1932 est ainsi pris comme référence historique majeure, et le rapport élude totalement la

question du référendum prévu par l'article 140.

De la part des Kurdes, les réactions de mécontentement ont été assez générales. Le président de la Région du Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani, le président du Conseil des ministres, le président du Parlement et le Conseil des partis politiques kurdes, ont d'abord organisé une réunion afin d'analyser la teneur de ces propositions. Puis, dans une déclaration officielle en quatre points, ils ont fait part de leur préoccupation, exprimant notamment le « désappointement causé par les recommandations » qu'ils ont jugées, dans leur forme actuelle, loin de ce qu'ils avaient espéré, en estimant qu'il ne pouvait constituer une base pour la résolution future des conflits. Le gouvernement kurde a aussi souligné que les solutions proposées étaient en désaccord avec celles qui avaient été acceptées auparavant, qu'elles ne tenaient pas compte de la constitution irakienne et de l'article 140. En conséquence, le GRK a décidé de préparer un mémorandum qu'il adressera aux Nations-Unies et souhaite que le bureau de l'ONU en Irak négocie avec une commission formée au sein de la Région kurde.

Réagissant plus en détail, Mohammed Ihsan, le ministre kurde des Affaires extra-régionales, spécialement en charge de cette question, a jugé le rapport « injuste », en critiquant notamment la proposition de détacher le sous-district de Qaraj du district de Makhmour, et en soulignant que les dirigeants kurdes n'ont jamais été informés par Staffan de Mistura que de tels aménagements allaient être

suggérés. « Le Conseil de Mandali a répété plusieurs fois qu'il souhaitait le rattachement du sous-district à la Région du Kurdistan, nous attendons de l'ONU une aide technique pour appliquer l'article 140, et non pour le modifier », explique le législateur Mushin Ali, s'exprimant lors d'une session spéciale du parlement kurde qui a examiné lui aussi le rapport. D'autres voix accusent la commission de l'ONU de n'avoir pas pris en compte la demande de la plupart des chrétiens de Hamdaniya d'être rattachés à la Région du Kurdistan.

Mais les Kurdes ne sont pas les seuls mécontents. Des Arabes de la province de Kirkouk, membres ou sympathisants du bloc « Unité arabe », ou bien des Turkmènes du Front turcoman, ont également fait part de leur opposition au rapport, notamment à la partie qui recommande un partage du pouvoir avec les Kurdes. Ils reprochent à l'UNAMI de s'appuyer sur les élections provinciales de 2005, qui ont été largement boycottées par les Arabes sunnites et ont donné la majorité des sièges de Kirkouk aux Kurdes. Hassan Weli, un leader du parti turcoman soutenu par Ankara, accuse ainsi l'ONU d'avoir été influencé par les « factions kurdes », en se disant opposé à ce que des acteurs externes s'immiscent dans la question de Kirkouk, ce qui est un peu curieux au regard de l'activisme virulent de la Turquie sur cette question, mais peut s'expliquer par le relatif désengagement du gouvernement AKP sur cette question, après un certain « réchauffement » des relations entre Ankara et Erbil : « les

Turkmènes essaient d'unir l'Irak et croient qu'il est dans l'intérêt de l'Irak et des Irakiens de résoudre leurs problèmes eux-mêmes plutôt que de faire appel à des intervenants extérieurs, même si cet intervenant est l'ONU. » Le site Internet de ce parti proposait même, le 15 juin, dans une déclaration adressée à la commission de l'ONU, de déclarer Erbil « zone disputée ».

En réponse à cette salve de critiques, l'UNAMI a indiqué qu'en dernier ressort, ce serait le gouvernement irakien qui déciderait. Andrew Gilmour, directeur politique à l'UNAMI, ne se déclare d'ailleurs pas surpris de ce mécontentement de la plupart des parties en conflit : « Nous n'attendions pas qu'une des parties saluent les propositions. Aucune n'a obtenu 100% de ce qu'elle demande. Les compromis ne sont jamais agréables pour les partisans de la ligne dure, quels qu'ils soient. »

Nonobstant les critiques sévères du Gouvernement kurde envers la commission de l'ONU, le Premier ministre Nêçirvan Barzani, a, lors d'un déplacement à Dubaï, envisagé lui aussi une forme de partage du pouvoir à Kirkuk : « Nous poussons pour qu'une solution soit trouvée, pas spécialement un référendum. »

Commentant cet assouplissement, Wayne White, qui a dirigé au département d'Etat des renseignements la section irakienne, de 2003 to 2005, voit cela comme une « bonne nouvelle » : « Les leaders kurdes, Massoud Barzani, le président du Kurdistan et le président irakien Jalal Talabani ont été soumis à une énorme pression de la part

de leurs bases pour qu'ils fassent le maximum dans beaucoup de domaines, dont les territoires de Kirkuk et d'ailleurs. » Selon Wayne White, bien que des concessions sur Kirkuk puissent éroder la popularité des deux grands partis kurdes, elles peuvent aussi leur apporter des

avantages, dans leurs relations avec la Turquie, leurs négociations avec Bagdad sur la question des ressources pétrolières et du budget, ainsi que des liens plus détendus avec leurs voisins irakiens, les Arabes sunnites, les Turkmènes et les Arabes chiites.

SANANDAJ : EXECUTION D'UN MINEUR, LOURDES CONDAMNATIONS CONTRE DES MILITANTS KURDES

UN adolescent de 17 ans, Mohammad Hassanzadeh a été exécuté par pendaison le 10 juin dernier, à Sanandaj (Sine), capitale de la province du Kurdistan en Iran, pour le meurtre d'un garçon de dix ans, commis alors qu'il n'était lui-même âgé que de 15 ans. Un autre prisonnier reconnu lui aussi coupable de meurtre et âgé de 60 ans a été pendu en même temps que l'adolescent.

Dans un communiqué, l'Union européenne condamne vivement cette exécution, ainsi qu'Amnesty International : « Il s'agit de la dernière exécution en date d'un mineur délinquant, et en y procédant, les autorités iraniennes ont commis une nouvelle violation flagrante de leurs obligations internationales au titre du Pacte international relatif aux droits civils et politiques et de la Convention relative aux droits de l'enfant, qui interdisent de condamner à mort les personnes qui étaient âgées de moins de dix-huit ans au moment des faits qui leur sont reprochés. Elle met à mal les espoirs suscités par la décision prise par le responsable du pou-

voir judiciaire iranien le 10 juin 2008 d'accorder à deux mineurs délinquants condamnés à mort un sursis d'un mois afin de laisser plus de temps pour parvenir à un accord avec les proches des victimes. »

En effet, Behnoud Shojaee et Mohammad Fedai ont été aussi reconnus coupables de meurtre avec préméditation (quoique ce dernier point soit nié par les deux adolescents). Mais l'usage de la torture allégué dans une lettre de Mohammed Fedai entache d'irrégularités graves toute la procédure. Le garçon affirme qu'il ignorait même les aveux qu'il a signés après avoir cédé sous les sévices : "J'ai vingt et un ans, je suis jeune, et je n'avais que seize ans lorsque j'ai été emprisonné. Comme tout autre adolescent, [j'avais] encore mes rêves d'enfant, écrit-il, ajoutant : « J'ai été frappé et fouetté à plusieurs reprises [...] Ils m'ont suspendu au plafond [...] Ils ne m'ont laissé aucun espoir de survie."

Amnesty se dit également préoccupée par la pendaison prochaine de Saïd Ghazee, âgé aujourd'hui

de 21 ans, qui doit être exécuté le 25 juin. En décembre dernier, c'est un autre jeune Kurde, Makwan Moloudzadeh, qui avait été pendu à l'âge de 21 ans. Il avait été emprisonné à l'âge de 17 ans pour avoir eu des relations homosexuelles.

A ce jour, Amnesty International indique que 85 mineurs attendent d'être exécutés en Iran : « Nous demandons aux dirigeants, aux responsables de la justice et aux nouveaux députés iraniens de faire en sorte que l'Iran suive la tendance mondiale contre le recours à la peine de mort, qui a été exprimée avec force le 18 décembre 2007 dans la résolution de l'Assemblée générale des Nations unies appelant à un moratoire mondial sur les exécutions », a indiqué l'organisation. D'autres organisations de défense des droits de l'homme font état de 124 détenus en attente d'être exécutés pour des faits commis alors qu'ils avaient moins de 18 ans. De façon générale, Amnesty International a recensé au moins 335 pendaisons pour l'année 2007, dont 7 concernaient des mineurs, ce qui fait de l'Iran le pays où la peine capitale est le plus souvent appliquée dans le monde.

L'Iran a pourtant signé plusieurs traités internationaux, dont la Convention des Nations Unies sur les droits de l'enfant, qui prohibe la peine capitale pour les mineurs. Mais selon la loi iranienne, la majorité est fixée à 14 ans pour les garçons et 8 ans et demi pour les filles, ce qui, aux yeux des juges, les exclut de la justice réservée aux mineurs.

De façon générale, la répression

et les condamnations se multiplient dans les régions kurdes. Deux jeunes militantes féministes, Rounak Saffahzadeh et Hana Abdi ont été arrêtées respectivement le 25 septembre et le 23 octobre 2007. Elles étaient toutes deux membres d'Azarmehr, ou Association des femmes du Kurdistan, qui organisait notamment des ateliers de formation et des activités sportives dans la ville de Sanandaj et dans d'autres lieux du Kurdistan iranien. Elles avaient aussi participé à une campagne intitulée « Un million de signatures pour l'égalité ».

Immédiatement après leur arrestation, Rounak Saffahzadeh et Hana Abdi ont été placées en cellule d'isolement pour une durée de 3 et 2 mois, dans le centre de détention du ministère de l'Information pour le Kurdistan, avant d'être transférées à la prison de Sanandaj.

Le 19 juin, Hana Abdi a été condamnée à 5 ans de prison pour « activités subversives » et « collaboration avec l'ennemi » par la Seconde chambre de la Cour révolutionnaire de Sanandaj. La cour a également ordonné que toute la durée de sa détention se passe loin de chez elle, dans la prison de Germe, dans la province azérie d'Ardabil. Rounak Saffahzadeh est toujours en attente de jugement. Mohammad Sharif, l'avocat des deux jeunes filles, a confié à Human Rights Watch qu'il craignait que les charges qui seront portées contre Rounak soient encore plus lourdes, et incluent notamment celle « d'ennemie de Dieu », ce qui lui ferait encourir la peine de mort.

« C'était une routine, pour le gouvernement iranien, d'utiliser de vagues accusations concernant la sûreté nationale pour emprisonner ou intimider des militants pacifiques », explique Sarah Leah Whitson, directrice de Human Rights pour le Moyen-Orient et l'Afrique du Nord. « Mais maintenant, ils vont plus loin en prononçant des sentences iniques. »

Ces deux procès s'inscrivent dans une campagne de répression et d'intimidation contre les militantes féministes, notamment celles qui ont initié ou participé à la pétition « Un million de signatures pour l'égalité », s'élevant contre les discriminations sexuelles. Ces deux dernières années, 35 activistes liées à cette campagne ont été arrêtées. On peut aussi les relier à une recrudescence des peines prononcées contre les Kurdes, régulièrement accusés d'activités portant atteinte à la « sécurité nationale » ou d'appartenir à une bande armée (le PJAK), même quand il s'agit uniquement de délits d'opinion. Ainsi, le 22 juin, un journaliste kurde, Mohammad Sadegh Kabovand, a été condamné à 11 ans de prison, ce qu'a vigoureusement dénoncé Reporter sans frontière : « Le régime de Téhéran n'a aucun scrupule à faire condamner des journalistes sur des prétextes fallacieux et au terme de procès iniques. L'état de santé de Mohammad Sadegh Kabovand n'a même pas été pris en compte. Cette sentence particulièrement sévère est un message adressé à tous ceux qui ne courbent pas l'échine devant le pouvoir, particulièrement dans la région du Kurdistan. »

Mohammad Sadegh Kabovand était rédacteur en chef du quoti-

dien Payam-e Mardom-e Kordestan (Le Message du peuple du Kurdistan), qui a été fermé en 2005. Mais les 11 ans de prison que lui a infligés la Cour révolutionnaire de Téhéran sont liés à sa création d'une association pour les droits de l'homme dans la région kurde. Arrêté en juillet 2007, il a passé 5 mois d'isolation dans la prison

Evin de Téhéran. Souffrant de problèmes de santé, ni lui ni sa famille n'ont été capables de s'acquitter de l'énorme caution réclamée contre sa remise en liberté provisoire : 150 millions de tomans (145,000 euros). Ses avocats, Nemat Ahmadi et Mohammad Sifzadeh ont protesté contre ce qu'ils jugent être une condamnation « politique ».

rence » : « Les Etats-Unis n'ont pas le droit d'interférer dans cette question car elle est purement irakienne. Nous ne disons pas que les élections ne doivent pas avoir lieu, mais nous demandons l'application de l'article 140, et nous n'acceptons aucune ingérence dans ce problème, qu'elle vienne des Américains ou d'Irakiens. »

KIRKOUK : UN CASSE-TÊTE POUR LES ELECTIONS PROVINCIALES

RA question de Kirkouk plombe aussi l'organisation des élections provinciales qui doivent se tenir le 1^{er} octobre 2008, dans toutes les régions de l'Irak sauf la Région du Kurdistan. Ces élections portent sur un projet de loi redéfinissant les compétences de Bagdad et des provinces. Mais leur annulation pure et simple est envisagée, tant elles exacerbent les rivalités et les conflits entre les Arabes, les Kurdes et les Turkmènes de la province.

Les Arabes et les Turkmènes demandent en effet à ce que Kirkouk soit divisé en quatre districts électoraux ce que la Coalition du Kurdistan (KC) refuse, en y voyant une tentative de partager la région et de désintégrer son unité. De plus, les Kurdes s'opposent à ce que de nouvelles élections aient lieu tant que l'article 140 et le référendum prévu ne seront pas appliqués. Au contraire, les représentants arabes et turkmènes insistent sur la nécessité de nouvelles élections, car ils rejettent les résultats du scrutin de 2005, qui avaient

été boycottés par les Arabes sunnites.

De son côté, un conseiller auprès de l'ambassade des Etats-Unis à Bagdad, Thomas Krajiski, a visité Kirkouk et parlé avec tous les représentants des Kurdes, des Arabes et des Turkmènes, au sein du gouvernorat : « Nous soutenons la tenue d'élections à Kirkouk et nous ne souhaitons pas leur ajournement, car la ville de Kirkouk est importante pour tous les Irakiens et les pays voisins, ainsi que pour les nations du monde. Les Etats-Unis d'Amérique et les Nations Unies cherchent à trouver une solution au problème de Kirkouk qui satisferait toutes les parties." Mais le conseiller s'est refusé à préciser quel type de solution pouvait être envisagé de son point de vue. D'autres officiels américains estiment que ces élections pourraient être reportées d'un mois.

Mohammed Ihsan, le ministre des Affaires Extra-régionales du Kurdistan, a jugé cette visite et ses propos comme une « ingé-

Du côté irakien, le porte-parole du parlement irakien, Mahmud al-Mashhadani, a, dans une déclaration, émis le souhait que le problème de Kirkouk ne compromette pas la tenue des élections, avant de demander à tous les blocs politiques de l'assemblée de se mettre enfin d'accord pour les tenir ou les reporter. Jalal al-Din Al-Sagheer, le chef du bloc de l'Alliance chiite, estime qu'il sera très difficile qu'elles se déroulent selon le calendrier prévu, notamment en raison de Kirkouk, même si la commission électorale a indiqué que le projet de loi devait être adopté au plus tard début juillet, afin de laisser trois mois nécessaires à la préparation du scrutin. Aussi, des juristes arabes et turkmènes ont proposé de différer les élections, mais uniquement à Kirkouk, en préparant pour cette province une loi et des élections à part, ce que rejettent les Kurdes, qui craignent de perdre les acquis des dernières élections de 2005, contestées par les deux autres groupes ethniques.

En ce qui concerne les provinces de Ninive et de Diyala, qui contiennent d'autres districts disputés, les partis politiques kurdes ont annoncé qu'ils participeraient aux élections en formant une liste unique, afin de remporter un nombre maximum

de sièges dans les conseils provinciaux de Mossoul. Selon Khasro Goran, l'adjoint du gouverneur de Mossoul et le chef du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan pour la province de Ninive, les Kurdes obtiendront la majorité des sièges, en s'unifiant sous une liste commune, la Fraternité de

Ninive. Cette liste inclura l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan, le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan, l'Union islamique du Kurdistan, le Parti communiste du Kurdistan, le Parti communiste irakien et des partis politiques chrétiens.

inconnue. Depuis, aucune nouvelle ne nous est parvenue de lui », a déclaré le président de l'ONDHS, Ammar Qorabi.

Il s'agit de la troisième arrestation pour Habib Saleh, auteur de plusieurs articles critiquant les agissements de la Syrie, notamment envers ses opposants politiques. Il avait déjà été emprisonné en 2001, avec neuf autres activistes du « Printemps de Damas » et libéré après trois ans de détention. En mai 2005, il a été arrêté une fois de plus et accusé d'« avoir publié des informations mensongères » sur Internet. Il n'a été libéré qu'en septembre 2007.

Le 11 mai, Tarek Biasi, âgé de 23 ans, a été condamné à 3 ans de prison. Arrêté en juillet 2007, il était accusé d'« insulter les services de sécurité » en ligne, et « d'affaiblir le sentiment national. » Le 12 mai, un autre procès s'est ouvert, celui de Muhammad Badi` Dek al-Bab, membre de l'Organisation nationale pour les droits humains, arrêté le 2 mars 2008. La cour militaire de Damas le juge pour un article intitulé « Damas, capitale de la culture arabe », qui ironise sur le statut de la ville syrienne, déclarée « Capitale arabe de la culture 2008 » alors que les arrestations des écrivains et des intellectuels se multiplient. Accusé de « propagation de fausses informations susceptibles de porter atteinte au prestige de l'Etat », il a été condamné à six mois de prison ferme. Là non plus, ce n'est pas sa première condamnation car en 2000, Muhammad Dek al-Bab avait été condamné à 15 ans de prison pour appartenance aux Frères musulmans et n'avait été remis

SYRIE : PRESSIONS ACCRUES DU POUVOIR CONTRE LES MILITANTS ET LES CYBERDISSIDENTS

R'INVITATION controversée du président syrien Bachar Al-Asad aux cérémonies du 14 juillet en France a fait réagir plusieurs organisations de défense des droits de l'homme, dont Human Rights Watch, qui rappelle les pratiques de l'Etat syrien visant à « arrêter, juger et harceler les intellectuels et militants politiques et des droits humains », en usant de diverses méthodes d'intimidation et de coercition. « Toute relation avec la Syrie doit comporter une discussion ouverte sur les problèmes relatifs aux droits humains, y compris le sort des prisonniers politiques et d'autres Syriens victimes d'exactions », a déclaré Sarah Leah Whitson, directrice à Human Rights Watch pour le Moyen Orient et l'Afrique du Nord. « Les autorités de Damas continuent à harceler toute personne qui ose les critiquer. »

Les blogueurs syriens, en particulier, embarrassent le pouvoir, qui, s'il contrôle la presse, a plus de mal à museler l'information sur le web. Tous les événements

du Newroz 2004, ou l'agitation qui a suivie l'assassinat du Sheikh Mashouk en 2005, ou bien les incidents du Newroz 2008, sont largement filmés, commentés, révélés au public via les blogs et les sites Internet de la diaspora, relayant les informations fournies par les acteurs directs.

Ainsi, en mars 2008, l'écrivain kurde Pîr Rostem, membre du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan, qui écrivait dans de nombreux sites kurdes internationaux, a été arrêté, sa maison fouillée et ses papiers et ordinateur portables confisqués. Le 7 mai dernier c'est au tour de l'écrivain et analyste politique Habib Saleh, âgé de 60 ans, d'être arrêté par les services syriens, qui l'ont emmené dans un lieu inconnu, où il est détenu au secret, comme le rapporte l'Organisation nationale des droits de l'homme en Syrie (ONDHS) : « Les services de sécurité chargés de surveiller Habib Saleh l'ont arrêté mercredi soir alors qu'il se promenait au marché de Tartous. Il a été conduit vers une destination

en liberté 5 ans plus tard qu'en vertu d'une grâce présidentielle. «Ce verdict montre que les autorités syriennes continuent de violer les droits élémentaires et les libertés publiques et de réprimer les militants des droits de l'homme», a déclaré Me Qorabi, son avocat : « Il s'agit d'une décision visant l'ONDHS pour punir ses efforts destinés à dénoncer les atteintes aux droits de l'homme ».

En plus de la liberté d'expression écrite, le droit de réunion, d'association est tout aussi bafoué. Depuis décembre 2007, 13 militants politiques syriens, dont l'ancien parlementaire Riad Seif, sont emprisonnés pour avoir participé à une réunion de groupes d'opposition. Ils sont là encore accusés d'« affaiblissement du sentiment national et d'incitation à la violence sectaire », de « diffusion de nouvelles fausses ou exagérées qui pourraient affecter le moral du pays » et d'« appartenance à une organisation formée dans le but de changer la structure de l'Etat. »

Toute forme de rassemblement et de plate-forme est ainsi découragée, ou tout bonnement interdite ou annulée au dernier moment. Le 25 mai, Mazen Darwish, président du Centre syrien pour les médias et la liberté d'expression, devait ainsi organiser une conférence sur la liberté de la presse au Centre culturel arabe de Damas. Malgré l'autorisation préalable du ministère de la Culture, la conférence a été annulée 15 minutes avant son ouverture, sur simple coup de fil de ce même ministère.

Les entraves à la circulation des personnes sont aussi nombreuses et les assignations à résidence

fréquentes. Human Rights Watch indique ainsi pour le mois de mai que sept militants politiques ou des droits de l'homme se sont vus refuser la sortie du pays. Le 21 mai, Muhannad al-Hasani, président de l'Organisation syrienne des droits de l'homme, n'a pu ainsi se rendre à Beyrouth, où il était attendu pour participer à une émission sur la chaîne al-'Alam TV qui portait sur la situation des détenus syriens en Arabie Saoudite. De même, Radif Mustafa, le président du Comité kurde pour les droits de l'homme, n'a pu venir à Paris, alors qu'il était invité à un atelier de formation organisé par le Réseau Euro-méditerranéen des droits de l'homme. Raja` al-Nasser et Muhammad Abdel Majid Manjounah, avocats et

membres du parti de l'Union socialiste n'ont pu se rendre le 8 mai au Yémen pour participer dans un atelier organisé par le Congrès national arabe. Zaradasht Muhammad et `Abdel Rahman Ahmad, deux militants politiques kurdes, se sont vus interdire de quitter la Syrie pour le Kurdistan d'Irak, où ils devaient rencontrer des partis politiques. Mais ces restrictions ne touchent pas que les déplacements à caractère militant ou professionnel. Ainsi, Abdel Sattar al-Qattan, n'a pu sortir de Syrie pour subir une transplantation rénale. Membre des Frères musulmans, il avait été emprisonné et libéré pour raison de santé le 12 juin 2007 et doit subir actuellement une dialyse trois fois par semaine.

AINSI QUE...

DIYARBAKIR : LES JEUNES CHORISTES RISQUENT 5 ANS DE PRISON. A Diyarbakir, le procès de trois adolescents kurdes de Turquie, dont deux sont âgés de 15 ans et l'un de 17 ans, a commencé le 9 juin. Ils sont accusés d'avoir violé l'article 7/2 de la loi Anti-terreur, pour « propagande en faveur d'une organisation terroriste » et risquent au maximum 5 ans de prison ferme.

En octobre 2007, un chœur de petits chanteurs de la municipalité de l'arrondissement Yenisehir, Diyarbakir, s'était produit dans un festival international de musique à San Francisco. Le chœur avait interprété 9 chansons, dont une marche patrio-

tique turque, Çanakkale Marsi, et l'hymne kurde « Ey Raqib », hymne de la république kurde de Mahabad, officiellement adopté de nos jours par la Région du Kurdistan d'Irak. De retour, apparemment peu au fait de l'histoire du mouvement national kurde, un procureur turc a porté plainte contre les enfants, en les accusant d'avoir entonné « l'hymne du PKK sous le drapeau du PKK ».

Les trois chanteurs les plus âgés comparaissent donc devant le tribunal de Diyarbakir pour propagande en faveur d'une organisation terroriste, et les autres choristes, plus jeunes, devant un tribunal pour enfants.

Michael Santoro, le directeur du festival, qui avait personnellement invité le chœur de Diyarbakir, a nié toute intention de propagande politique ou « séparatiste » dans ces manifestations, en indiquant que son festival avait pour but la possibilité de se produire d'offrir « à des musiciens, des compositeurs, des artistes qui historiquement ont été sous-représentés en raison de barrières culturelles, politiques ou économiques. »

Le chant incriminé n'a rien à voir avec le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, comme l'accuse le procureur. C'est en fait un poème écrit en 1938 par le poète kurde Dildar, et qui fut adopté comme hymne national par la république kurde de Mahabad en 1946. C'est actuellement l'hymne adopté par la Région du Kurdistan d'Irak. Quant au drapeau, Michael Santoro indique là encore qu'il s'agissait du drapeau national kurde mais qu'aucun emblème du PKK n'a figuré sur l'estrade.

Amnesty International a déclaré que chanter un hymne historique ne pouvait être considéré comme une menace pour la sécurité publique et que cela relevait de la liberté d'expression. L'organisation a déclaré que ces enfants, s'ils étaient condamnés et emprisonnés, seraient considérés par elle comme des prisonniers d'opinion.

FETE DE LA MUSIQUE AU KURDISTAN IRAKIEN. Cette année, Erbil, capitale de la Région du Kurdistan d'Irak, a rejoint la liste internationale des villes qui célèbrent la Fête de la

musique, le 21 juin, avec Duhok et Sulāimāniah. En partenariat avec le ministère français des Affaires étrangères et européennes, l'Ambassade de France en Irak et son Bureau d'Erbil qui venait tout juste d'ouvrir, le ministère de la Culture du Gouvernement régional du Kurdistan a organisé une série de manifestations musicales dans tout le pays, avec plus de 35 groupes de musiciens, extrêmement divers : kurdes, assyro-chaldéens, yézidis, et même un groupe de jazz français, Mystère Trio, venu avec le soutien de la convention Cultures France/Ville de Toulouse. Les manifestations musicales ont eu lieu dans les endroits extrêmement divers, allant, pour le groupe français, d'un concert en plein air dans le grand Minare Park d'Erbil, à des prestations dans des lieux insolites comme les prisons, les dispensaires et les hôpitaux, respectant ainsi l'esprit de cette fête, initialement lancée pour faire sortir la musique des salles de concerts et des scènes officielles. En tout, 24 concerts ont été donnés dans les trois provinces de la Région.

Les Kurdes appréciant particulièrement la musique et les fêtes de plein air, cette initiative a connu un grand succès. A Sulāimāniah, le parc Azadî (Liberté) ancienne base militaire de Saddam, a accueilli des chanteurs traditionnels ou modernes kurdes, pour la plus grande satisfaction des habitants, telle qu'ils l'ont exprimée au Los Angeles Times : « Mon corps et mon âme bougent avec la musique », s'enthousiasme ainsi Shireen Wihab, 29 ans. « Je n'avais

jamais ressenti cela auparavant. »

Heresh Abed Rahman, un joueur de zorna, à la tête de son groupe Sahnad, très populaire au Kurdistan, est lui aussi très positif sur cette expérience : « Nous essayons de redonner le goût de la musique à notre peuple, à nous rapprocher d'eux, et c'est une belle chose. C'est la première fois que nous jouons en plein air. Bien qu'il y ait du vent, ce qui affecte la sono, le bruit de ce vent dans les arbres donne justement des tonalités particulières qui se mêlent à notre musique. »

Dans la même ville, une maison de repos accueille, dans son jardin, un quatuor à cordes. Un des auditeurs, Rasheed Mourad, âgé de 69 ans, explique : « La vie a été dure, je n'ai jamais eu la chance de pouvoir écouter de la musique. J'ai travaillé dur pour élever mes enfants, mais à présent, je vis dans un monde différent ici, avec ceux qui n'ont pas de famille. Je voudrais que cet événement se répète, pour nous donner de l'espoir contre les difficultés de la vie. »

BAGDAD : ALI LE CHIMIQUE NIE AVOIR EXECUTE DES CIVILS CHIITES. Ali Hassan al-Majid, surnommé « Ali le Chimique » en raison de son rôle majeur dans l'Anfal des Kurdes et les bombardements chimiques contre la population du Kurdistan, est actuellement jugé à Bagdad pour son implication dans l'assassinat de dizaines de milliers de chiites, en 1991, quand le régime de Saddam a écrasé le soulèvement de l'Irak du sud, après sa défaite de la Première Guerre du Golfe. Ce

cousin de Saddam Hussein, un des premiers acteurs politiques de l'ancien régime, nie cependant le massacre de plusieurs milliers de civils dans le Sud chiite, en ne reconnaissant que l'exécution d'un « saboteur à la solde de l'Iran ». Des témoins rapportent au contraire que lui et ses soldats ont ouvert le feu délibérément sur des manifestants chiites désarmés, dans la ville de Basra, tuant, notamment une adolescente, ce que nie Ali Al-Madjid. : « Il n'y avait aucune manifestation pacifique à Basra. Les émeutiers ont commencé de dresser des barricades et d'attaquer les soldats. ... Je n'ai jamais tiré sur des civils, mon seul devoir était d'éliminer les hommes armés. » L'ancien ministre de Saddam, déjà condamné à mort en juin dernier pour génocide, ajoute qu'il ne cherchait qu'à défendre son pays contre une « invasion iranienne ».

L'attitude officielle des dirigeants baathistes envers les opposants chiites, pourtant majoritaires en Irak, était en effet de les considérer comme des agents de l'Iran, voire des ressortissants iraniens, une fois qu'ils avaient été déchus de leur nationalité irakienne, comme ce fut le cas des Kurdes fayli, dont le massacre et la déportation massive vont être jugés prochainement par la Haute Cour irakienne.

De confession chiite, ces Kurdes, qui vivent répartis, outre Bagdad, sur la frontière irako-iranienne, dans les régions de la province de Diyala, de Khanaqin à Amarah, ainsi qu'en Iran dans la province d'Ilam et de Kermanshah, étaient au nombre d'un million en Irak, avant que Saddam ne

lance contre eux, dans les années 1970 et puis 1980, une vaste campagne de nettoyage ethnique, et pour finir de génocide. Des dizaines de milliers de Fayli furent arrêtés, ou déportés en Iran ou exécutés secrètement. Beaucoup vivent encore dans des camps de réfugiés, dans les provinces d'Ilam et d'Ahwaz.

Outre leur confession chiite qui les rendait suspects au régime, surtout pendant la guerre Iran-Irak, leur appartenance ethnique les condamnait aussi aux yeux de Bagdad, et ce dès les premières années de la dictature, comme l'explique Muhammad Qaradaghi, un responsable du Gouvernement régional du Kurdistan : « Dans les années 1970, le mouvement politique kurde était très actif à Bagdad, et cela était dû en partie à son importante population fayli. Dès cette époque, les autorités avaient planifié leur déportation afin de contrecarrer leur influence, en s'assurant, en plus, un bénéfice financier avec la confiscation de leurs biens. »

Durant l'Anfal, les survivants ont indiqué avoir été victimes, en plus des déportations vers l'Iran et des exécutions, d'attaques chimiques au thallium, un agent neurotoxique. La haute Cour irakienne examine actuellement si le procès comportera l'accusation de crime de génocide.

GRANDE- BRETAGNE : PROJECTION DU PREMIER LONG DESSIN ANIME KURDE. Havi Shakur, âgé de 28 ans, réfugié kurde arrivé en Grande-Bretagne via l'Allemagne, a créé le premier

grand film d'animation kurde avec l'animateur anglais Stuart Palmer, qui a été projeté le 22 juin dans la ville de Hull, à l'occasion de la Semaine des réfugiés.

Créé à partir d'images numériques sur ordinateur, ce film de 55 minutes retrace la légende de Kawa le forgeron, héros mythique du peuple kurde, et sa lutte victorieuse contre le tyran symbolisant les forces du Mal, Zohak. « Comme c'est le premier film de ce genre, le premier long dessin animé kurde, il était très important que ce soit une histoire kurde », explique son créateur. « L'histoire est celle de Kawa le Forgeron, qui est probablement la plus célèbre légende kurde, qui raconte à la fois l'histoire du Nouvel An kurde, (Newroz) et la naissance d'une nation. Mais ce n'est pas seulement un film kurde destiné au peuple kurde. Je crois qu'il peut plaire aussi à beaucoup de Britanniques. »

La société Splash Productions en partenariat avec Goodwin Development Trust qui en assurait le financement, 11 acteurs kurdes et 11 acteurs britanniques ont prêté leur voix aux personnages.

D'après Havi Shakur, « le projet a rencontré un grand intérêt au Kurdistan, nous avons reçu beaucoup d'aide et d'encouragement de la part des gens là-bas. Pour son élaboration, nous avons fait des recherches méticuleuses, afin que chaque détail soit rendu de la manière la plus authentique possible ». Les deux créateurs se sont notamment attachés à la reconstitution fidèle des maisons kurdes, des vêtements et des paysages, et ont constamment sou-

mis leurs essais à leurs contacts au Kurdistan, pour s'assurer de la justesse des décors.

Stuart Palmer, qui travaille aussi pour Splash Productions, raconte comment l'idée de ce film leur est venue : « Tous les deux, nous voulions utiliser nos talents à créer quelque chose d'unique, et qui en vaille vraiment la peine.

Moi même, je ne connaissais pas grand chose à la culture kurde et cela a été une chance pour moi d'explorer quelque chose d'un peu différent. Nous avons alors contacté le Goodwin Development Trust pour qu'ils nous financent durant tout le processus de fabrication, qui devait prendre un an. Mais ils ont été tellement emballés par l'idée

qu'ils ont décidé de se joindre à nous pour développer le projet. »

Le film comporte deux versions, une en kurde et une anglaise (sous-titrée en kurde). Ses créateurs espèrent le voir diffuser sur les chaînes de télévision kurdes, ainsi qu'en DVD pour les pays d'Europe, les Etats-Unis, le Canada et le Kurdistan.

LE FIGARO lundi 2 juin 2008

En visite à Bagdad, le ministre des Affaires étrangères pense que le moment est venu pour les entreprises françaises de revenir en Irak

Il fait au bas mot une chaleur de 45 degrés sous cette immense tente, dressée le long de la rivière Gharrâf, entre Tigre et Euphrate, dans la région des marais naguère asséchés par Saddam Hussein, contre la volonté de la population. Politiciens et hauts fonctionnaires, universitaires et grands médecins, religieux enturbannés et chefs de tribu en keffieh, tous les notables de la province de Dhî Qâr, cœur de la Mésopotamie chiite, ont été conviés à ce grand banquet, donné en l'honneur du ministre des Affaires étrangères de la République française, par le vice-président de la République d'Irak. Adel Abdel-Mehdi, l'enfant du pays de loin le plus éminent, a tenu à recevoir Bernard Kouchner dans sa maison de famille, bâtie par son père, qui fut député au premier Parlement de 1932, puis ministre du roi. Parfaitement francophone, diplomate de formation, Adel aime la France, qui l'a recueilli en 1969, après que le gouvernement de Saddam Hussein l'eût condamné à mort. C'est un chiite modéré, vénérant l'ayatollah Sistani, qui prône la séparation entre l'État et la religion, au contraire du velayat-e-faqi (gouvernement des clercs) de l'actuel régime iranien.

À l'évidence, le courant passe parfaitement entre Abdel-Mehdi et Kouchner, qui ont tous les deux tombé la veste pour piocher allègrement dans le traditionnel



uzi, grand plat d'agneau rôti, de riz, de raisins secs et d'épices. Le dignitaire irakien a bien fait les choses. A son arrivée dans la villa familiale, Kouchner a été accueilli par un vieux poète, dont le compliment en arabe disait notamment : « Dans ma vie, j'ai

Le pari irakien de Bernard Kouchner



Bernard Kouchner, hier lors de sa rencontre à Bagdad avec le premier ministre irakien, Nouri al-Maliki. Le ministre français a estimé que la sécurité dans le pays était en voie d'amélioration. AFP

reçu beaucoup de blessures ; aucune n'est venue de France. »

Auparavant, après la visite du site archéologique d'Ur, « berceau de la civilisation » car lieu de naissance d'Abraham selon la Bible, la délégation française avait roulé pendant une cinquantaine de kilomètres à travers la province. Spectacle de désolation et de torpeur. Bosquets de palmiers rachitiques, ruines industrielles, infrastructures déglinguées, masures inachevées, cimetières de carcasses automobiles, ponctuaient un océan de sable et de poussière. Pas le moindre champ irrigué. La seule activité humaine visible se résumait aux forces de sécurité irakiennes déployées tout le long du parcours du convoi de 4 x 4 Chevrolet blindés du ministre français, ou gardant le pipe-line stratégique (serpentin de tuyaux à moitié rouillés posés sur de simples parpaings) courant du sud au nord du pays.

« En demande de France »

Le spectacle de cet immense délabrement n'avait pas entamé l'optimisme de Bernard Kouchner, qui pense que le moment est venu pour les entreprises françaises de s'intéresser à nouveau à l'Irak. « Les Suisses, les Allemands, les Chinois commencent à être là, pourquoi pas nous ? », s'est exclamé à plusieurs reprises le ministre français. Les caisses

de l'État irakien, qui avait établi son budget 2008 sur la base d'un baril de pétrole à 57 dollars, se remplissent en effet beaucoup plus vite que prévu. Le Parlement de Bagdad vient de voter une enveloppe spéciale de 5 milliards de dollars pour construire les nouvelles raffineries et centrales électriques dont le pays manque cruellement (il n'y a toujours que 3 heures d'électricité par jour dans la capitale).

Et les Irakiens de toutes tendances se souviennent que les entreprises françaises remportèrent une grande partie des contrats d'équipements lourds énergétiques dans la décennie 1970, âge d'or de la modernisation baasiste, interrompu par la guerre d'agression contre l'Iran de 1980.

Mais en commençant, samedi matin, sa visite en Irak par le cœur du pays chiite, Kouchner a une autre idée en tête, une vision stratégique. Alors que le chiisme iranien et le chiisme libanais sont aujourd'hui radicalisés dans leur posture antioccidentale, le chiisme modéré irakien apparaît au ministre des Affaires étrangères comme « en demande de France ». Kouchner pense que le moment n'est pas trop tôt pour y répondre car il constate que le gouvernement (dirigé par le chiite Nouri al-Maliki) a osé s'attaquer à l'armée du Mahdi, milice chiite du jeune dignitaire

« Les Suisses, les Allemands, les Chinois commencent à être là, pourquoi pas nous ? »

religieux charismatique Moqtada Sadr, inféodée au régime iranien.

Non sans une certaine distorsion des faits, le vice-président Abdel-Mehdi parle d'une « victoire de l'armée irakienne », ayant abouti à la reprise par le gouvernement du port stratégique de Bassorah et de Sadr City, populeuse banlieue est de Bagdad, presque exclusivement peuplée de chiites.

La réalité est que cette « victoire » n'a été obtenue que grâce à deux éléments : le secours de l'armée américaine et la décision de Moqtada d'appeler ses hommes à cesser le combat. Le jeune chef chiite extrémiste, qui dispose déjà de 33 sièges (sur 275) au Parlement fédéral, souhaite en effet élargir son assise, à la faveur des prochaines législatives, prévues pour le 1^{er} octobre. Une négociation secrète, menée par

le Président de la République Jalal Talabani (un Kurde) avec le général Souleymani, chef de la Force Al-Quds des Pasdaran iraniens, avait beaucoup contribué à mettre fin à la guerre interchittes des premiers mois de l'année 2008.

Commencée dans la soirée de samedi et poursuivie toute la matinée du dimanche, la visite de Kouchner à Bagdad confirme, aux yeux du ministre, cette impression d'un « printemps de Bagdad, sécuritaire, économique, politique », pour reprendre l'expression du président Talabani. Cette accalmie, ce « début de réconciliation nationale », la délégation française ne la constate pas visuellement elle-même. Si vous traversez aujourd'hui Bagdad en convoi officiel dans vos 4x4 blindés équipés d'antennes de « blockphone » (système brouillant les ondes électromagnétiques pour éviter le déclenchement à distance par téléphone portable des roadside bombs), vous ne voyez pas de cir-

culatation : toutes les avenues, y compris l'autoroute de l'aéroport, ont été préalablement fermées pour faciliter le passage du convoi. Quant à la ville, vous ne la voyez pas non plus, car, entre deux chicanes abritant des check-points, vous roulez presque en permanence entre des murailles de blocs de bétons. Vous n'avez pas l'impression de traverser une capitale habitée ; vous êtes comme dans un jeu vidéo.

«Un détail technique»

C'est seulement à l'intérieur de la zone verte, dans ce que vos gardes du corps appellent « la petite Venise », que vous trouvez un urbanisme normal. Les villas sont agréables et verdoyantes, séparées par de charmants canaux d'eau claire. Elles sont réservées aux ministres et autres dignitaires du pays. On croise un troupeau d'oies : référence à celles du Capitole antique ?

Parfois, vous entendez une explosion, comme ce fut le cas

dimanche matin. Une voiture piégée avait explosé non loin de l'ambassade d'Iran, au passage d'une patrouille de l'armée irakienne, nous explique l'un des vingt gendarmes du GIGN gardant en permanence l'ambassadeur de France. Deux morts et cinq blessés : une brouille pour Bagdad.

Certes, la guerre civile entre sunnites et chiïtes s'est arrêtée et le niveau des attentats terroristes a beaucoup baissé par rapport aux années noires 2005, 2006 et 2007. Il est vrai qu'aucun véhicule ne pénètre au centre-ville qui n'ait été préalablement contrôlé au moins deux fois par les forces de sécurité irakiennes ou américaines.

Dans ses entretiens avec tous les responsables irakiens (le président sunnite du Parlement, le président kurde de la République, le premier ministre chiïte), Kouchner accepte de bonne grâce cette présentation d'un printemps de Bagdad, nourri par un État enfin « déconfessionnalisé, neutre et professionnel ». On lui

dit que seul « un détail technique » empêche encore le retour des ministres sunnites au gouvernement, mais que les accords de principe ont été trouvés. On n'hésite plus à critiquer ouvertement l'ingérence de l'Iran dans les affaires irakiennes.

Lorsque le général Petraeus, commandant en chef américain, vient rendre visite à Kouchner dimanche matin, il se montre plein de prévenance pour la France et son ministre, lui confiant qu'il cherche à insuffler à ses troupes un « esprit Médecins sans frontières », c'est-à-dire en empathie avec la population.

A Bagdad, Kouchner a fait un pari pascalien. Si la guerre civile reprend, il n'aura rien perdu. Mais si le printemps se confirme, il aura gagné gros, en montrant, avant tous ses homologues européens, une solidarité de la France à des leaders irakiens qui cherchent désespérément à sortir leur pays de l'ornière.

TURQUIE LA FRANCE À LA TÊTE DE L'UE LE 1^{ER} JUILLET

Paris redoute des représailles de la part d'Ankara

RELÉGUÉE par Nicolas Sarkozy à l'« Asie mineure », la Turquie s'apprête à ne faire aucun cadeau à la France lors de sa présidence de l'Union européenne (UE), qui commence le 1^{er} juillet. Partenaire important de l'Europe, notamment pour les questions énergétiques et de défense, la Turquie est en mesure d'entraver certaines des priorités affichées par Paris.

La relation bilatérale est crispée. Le récent vote par les députés français d'un amendement au projet de réforme de la Constitution française, qui maintient un référendum pour l'adhésion de la Turquie à l'UE, et pour elle seule, a accru le problème. Ankara a qualifié ce texte, le 3 juin, d'« approche discriminatoire, préjudiciable » à la coopération avec la France.

Source d'inquiétude pour l'Elysée : la présence du président turc Abdullah Gül ou du premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan

au sommet de l'Union pour la Méditerranée prévu, à Paris, le 13 juillet, est loin d'être acquise.

Position intransigeante

La Turquie a aussi une capacité de blocage sur le développement de l'Europe de la défense, dont Paris a fait une priorité. Membre de l'Organisation du traité de l'Atlantique nord (OTAN), elle demande des garanties d'accès à tout projet de l'UE qui impliquerait des infrastructures ou une logistique de l'Alliance atlantique.

Pour tenter de lever l'hypothèque turque, et aussi pour calmer les craintes de pays comme le Royaume-Uni, la Suède, l'Italie, l'Espagne, qui redoutent un incident de parcours pendant la présidence française de l'UE, les responsables français se sont mis à assurer que leur approche serait « impartiale, objective, équilibrée ».

M. Sarkozy a dépêché à Anka-

ra, en début d'année, son conseiller diplomatique, Jean-David Levitte, et, plus récem-

ment, le secrétaire d'Etat aux affaires européennes, Jean-Pierre Jouyet. Mais les déclarations successives de M. Sarkozy sur la Turquie et du premier ministre, François Fillon, à propos de l'occupation du nord de Chypre, ont attisé l'amertume. Les militaires turcs, en particulier, tiennent une position intransigeante depuis le vote, en 2006, d'une loi française qui pénalise la négation du génocide arménien.

En dépit des demandes du ministre français des affaires étrangères, Bernard Kouchner, Ankara n'a pas levé les restrictions placées, début 2007, sur les droits de survol du territoire turc par les avions militaires français se rendant en Afghanistan ni sur les droits de mouillage des navires français dans les ports turcs.

M. Sarkozy a confié en mars une mission « sur la relation franco-turque » au député UMP Pier-

re Lellouche, partisan de l'intégration de la Turquie dans l'UE. L'affaire de l'amendement de la Constitution est « calamiteuse, terrifiante », commente-t-il, après une visite, le 13 mai, à Ankara, où il a été reçu à haut niveau. Gaz de France reste évincé du projet de gazoduc européen Nabucco traversant la Turquie. D'autres projets sont en souffrance. En tout « 5 milliards d'euros de contrats ont été perdus » par la France en Turquie depuis septembre 2007, estime M. Lellouche.

Cherchant le moyen de sortir de cette crise par le haut, les émissaires français ont répété à Ankara que seuls les chapitres de la négociation avec l'UE supposant une adhésion à terme de la Turquie seraient bloqués. Ils ont laissé entendre qu'un ou deux nouveaux chapitres pourraient être ouverts avant la fin de l'année. La méfiance persiste : « Aucune garantie ne nous a été donnée », dit une source diplomatique turque, à Ankara. ■

NATALIE NOUGAYRÈDE

Le Monde

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Kouchner: "Nous devons reprendre notre place en Irak"

Propos recueillis par Gilles DELAFON

Le ministre français des Affaires étrangères Bernard Kouchner est arrivé samedi en Irak pour une visite surprise de deux jours. Objectif: "Témoigner de l'engagement politique renouvelé de la France à l'égard du peuple irakien", précise le ministère dans un communiqué. Depuis Bagdad, le chef de la diplomatie française a répondu aux questions du Journal du Dimanche.

Réunie jeudi dernier à Stockholm, la communauté internationale a estimé que l'Irak était sur la voie du redressement. Est-ce aussi votre impression?

J'ai effectivement le sentiment que la situation s'améliore. Rien n'est encore acquis, mais les Irakiens semblent cette fois avancer vers la réconciliation nationale et c'est cela que nous voulons soutenir. J'étais à Nassiriyah dans le sud du pays, là-bas toute la région est tenue par des soldats irakiens. Il y a visiblement une prise en charge positive du secteur par l'armée nationale, il n'y a d'ailleurs pas eu d'attentats depuis trois mois. J'espère que cela continuera. Le but de cette visite, au cours de laquelle je verrai chiïtes, sunnites, kurdes et je saluerai, bien sûr les Américains,



Bernard Kouchner s'est rendu en Irak pour rencontrer le président Jalal Talabani. (Reuters)

c'est justement d'assurer la nécessité de la réconciliation. Puis il faut reconstruire. Il y a beaucoup de travail pour tout le monde mais les Français ne sont pas assez présents. Il faut qu'ils le soient plus.

Sous quelle forme pourraient-ils être présents?

Je pense d'abord à tous les travaux d'intérêts généraux. Tout le monde est là, les Italiens, les Japo-

nais, les Suisses, les Chinois, les Russes... Nous devons donc reprendre petit à petit notre place. Les gens qui nous ont accueillis dans le Sud n'avaient pas vu de Français depuis dix ans. Il y a un vrai appétit de France et une volonté de travailler avec nos entreprises qui est formidable. Il faut parier sur un Irak réconcilié dans les années qui viennent et les soutenir.

Politiquement, avez-vous le sentiment que cela a progressé depuis votre passage il y a un an?

C'est beaucoup mieux. Le président et le gouvernement ont le sentiment d'avoir pris l'avantage sur les éléments influencés par l'Iran. Le combat contre l'Armée du Mahdi (la milice pro-iranienne de Moqtada Sadr) a ainsi été gagné à 70%. C'est quasiment un tournant décisif. Ils pensent donc pouvoir s'engager dans une perspective nationale, pour bâtir un gouvernement d'union où les sunnites sont attendus. Cela semble en bonne voie et dans cette phase la France peut jouer un rôle.

Pour se chercher des alliés chiïtes contre l'Iran?

Nous ne cherchons pas d'alliance avec l'une des communautés irakiennes en particulier. Nous voulons être les amis de toutes les communautés, mais les chiïtes modérés ont notre total soutien. Mon impression est bonne, les Irakiens sont en train de prendre en charge leur destin national. Peu à peu, ils sortent des tourments les plus importants, avec des difficultés certes, mais ils en sortent.



01 juin 2008

France / Irak

Kouchner inaugure un bureau d'ambassade

Arrivé samedi matin en Irak pour une visite surprise de 48 heures, le chef de la diplomatie française, Bernard Kouchner, a rejoint Bagdad dimanche, après une journée passée au Sud dans la région chiïte de Nasiriyah. Dans la capitale irakienne, l'ancien responsable de Médecins sans frontières a visité un établissement hospitalier spécialisé en cardiologie en compagnie du professeur Deloche, le responsable français de la Chaîne de l'espoir, une association qui organise le séjour médical en France d'enfants cardiaques irakiens. A Bagdad, Bernard Kouchner a également eu des entretiens avec le premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki et avec le commandant américain, le général Petraeus.

Dimanche après-midi, c'est un autre ancien « french doctor » qui attendait Bernard Kouchner à Erbil, la capitale du Kurdistan autonome où Paris a ouvert début 2008 un « bureau d'ambassade » que le chef de la diplomatie française est venu inaugurer.

C'est à Frédéric Tissot, défenseur de la cause kurde, ancien « french doctor », que Paris a confié sa représentation diplomatique d'Erbil. Un perchoir éminemment stra-

tégique au cœur du Kurdistan autonome que préside Mas-soud Barzani. Un Kurdistan pétrolier dont il n'est plus question aujourd'hui de soutenir une quelconque revendication d'indépendance, pas plus à Paris qu'à Washington.

A la fin des années quatre-vingt, sous Saddam Hussein, Frédéric Tissot avait pour sa part organisé l'exfiltration en France de militants kurdes dont il parle la langue et connaît la culture. Mais aujourd'hui les Kurdes d'Irak participent au pouvoir central à Bagdad : à la présidence, avec Jalal Talabani, et au gouvernement central où ils occupent le terrain avec les partisans chiïtes du Premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki, au grand dam des autres factions chiïtes et sunnites.

Chiïtes et sunnites sont unanimes en revanche pour dénoncer les ambitions territoriales kurdes sur la cité pétrolière de Kirkouk. Une menace sur l'unité et la sta-



Le Ministre des Affaires étrangères, Bernard Kouchner, serre la main de son homologue irakien, Hoshiyar Zebari, à Bagdad le 1er juin 2008. (Photo: Reuters)

bilité de l'Irak selon eux. Dans ces conditions, le poste diplomatique d'Erbil n'a pas vocation de sinécure.

Le chef de la diplomatie française se réjouit de "l'amélioration" en Irak

Par Hervé BAR

Le ministre français des Affaires étrangères, Bernard Kouchner, s'est réjoui dimanche de "l'amélioration" de la situation en Irak, réaffirmant la volonté de la France de prendre part à la reconstruction de ce pays.

"Je pense sincèrement que la situation sécuritaire s'améliore en Irak. Il y a des endroits où elle est pratiquement semblable au reste des pays du monde", a estimé M. Kouchner, au terme de son passage à Bagdad.

Après avoir passé la journée de samedi à Nasiriyah, ville du sud chiite du pays, M. Kouchner a rencontré le président irakien Jalal Talabani, à sa résidence du centre de la capitale.

Il a passé la nuit sur place, en dehors de la "zone verte" ultrafortifiée où se trouve notamment l'ambassade américaine et où séjourne le plus souvent les responsables étrangers en visite en Irak.

Le ministre français a rencontré dimanche matin le général David Petraeus, commandant en chef des forces américaines et alliées en Irak, puis le plus haut dignitaire chrétien irakien, le cardinal Emmanuel III Delly.

Il a visité l'hôpital Al-Bitar, un établissement spécialisé en cardiologie dans le centre de la capitale, où intervient l'association humanitaire française "la chaîne de l'espoir".

Le ministre s'est ensuite entretenu avec le Premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki, qui a souligné "la volonté du gouvernement de renforcer ses relations avec la France", en particulier dans le domaine économique, selon un communiqué.

"L'entretien s'est bien passé", a commenté à l'AFP M. Kouchner, qui s'est félicité de "l'accueil chaleureux" des responsables irakiens et a reçu en cadeau un exemplaire du Coran.

Il s'agissait de la seconde visite en Irak de M. Kouchner en tant que chef de la diplomatie fran-

çaise. Il s'était rendu à Bagdad en août 2007, pour la première visite d'un membre du gouvernement français depuis l'invasion du pays en 2003, à laquelle la France s'était fermement opposée.

Peu après son déplacement, M. Kouchner avait cependant dû s'excuser auprès de M. Maliki après avoir réclamé sa démission dans un entretien avec l'hebdomadaire américain Newsweek.

"L'incident n'a pas été évoqué" dimanche lors de la rencontre entre les deux hommes, a confié à l'AFP un membre de la délégation.

Le Premier ministre a ainsi appelé "les entreprises françaises à investir en Irak", souhaitant "développer la coopération médicale" entre les deux pays ou encore que les forces armées irakiennes s'équipent de matériel français.

"Il y a un besoin urgent que la France et les sociétés françaises soient plus visibles, plus présentes ici en Irak", selon le ministre des Affaires étrangères, Hoshiyar Zebari.

De son côté, M. Kouchner a "réaffirmé la volonté de la France de prendre part à la reconstruction du pays".

"Il y a des projets qui ont été proposés à la France, a-t-il expliqué. Nous verrons bien si certains industriels peuvent y répondre".

Plus généralement, le ministre français s'est réjoui d'avoir constaté "une amélioration de la sécurité" et le processus d'«irakisation» en cours dans le pays.

Avec leur armée, leur administration, "les Irakiens prennent eux-mêmes leurs affaires en charge, et nous en sommes très heureux", s'est-il félicité,



ajoutant "qu'il faut donner le plus vite possible aux Irakiens toutes leurs responsabilités".

M. Kouchner a par ailleurs confirmé que les dossiers de 500 Irakiens, dont des chrétiens, étaient actuellement examinés par les autorités françaises pour être accueillis prochainement en France.

Il s'est ensuite rendu à Erbil, capitale du Kurdistan autonome dans le nord de l'Irak, où il a été accueilli par le président de la région, Massoud Barzani, selon un correspondant de l'AFP.

Le ministre, qui connaît très bien cette région pour y être intervenu à de nombreuses reprises comme humanitaire, a ouvert officiellement un "bureau d'ambassade" dans le centre-ville de la capitale kurde, sous la responsabilité de Frédéric Tissot, et destiné à devenir un consulat.

AFP

IRAN: TROIS REBELLES KURDES TUÉS DANS LE NORD-OUEST

TEHERAN, 1 juin 2008 (AFP) - Trois membres du groupe séparatiste kurde Pejak ont été tués vendredi dans des affrontements avec des militaires iraniens, dans le nord-ouest du pays, a rapporté dimanche le quotidien modéré Kargozaran.

Vendredi soir, trois membres du Pejak ont été tués par des militaires iraniens dans la région de Bazargan (Azerbaïdjan occidentale), a rapporté le quotidien.

Selon le journal, parmi les trois rebelles se trouvaient une ressortissante syrienne et un ressortissant turc.

Ces affrontements interviennent après que six membres de l'armée d'élite des Gardiens de la révolution eurent été tués dans des combats avec des rebelles kurdes et la mort de deux gardes-frontières dans l'explosion de mines dans le nord-ouest de l'Iran.

Mardi dernier, la presse iranienne avait également fait état de la mort de trois

Gardiens de la révolution dans des affrontements dimanche dans le nord-ouest du pays.

Le 24 mai, la presse avait rapporté la mort de neuf rebelles kurdes, dont cinq femmes, membres du Pejak, lors d'affrontements avec les forces de l'ordre dans le village de Gonbad, près de la ville d'Orumieh, située dans la province d'Azerbaïdjan occidental.

Les provinces du nord-ouest de l'Iran, habitées de Kurdes, sont souvent le théâtre d'accrochages entre les forces de sécurité et les militants du Pejak.

Ce groupe est lié au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), basé en Turquie et dans le nord de l'Irak.

L'Iran accuse régulièrement les Etats-Unis de chercher à fomenter des troubles ethniques en soutenant des groupes de rebelles dans les provinces iraniennes comportant des minorités.

AFP

IRAN: QUATRE POLICIERS TUÉS PAR DES REBELLES KURDES

TEHERAN, 2 juin 2008 (AFP) - Quatre policiers iraniens ont été tués en sautant sur des mines posées par des rebelles kurdes, membres du Pejak, lié au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), basé en Turquie et dans le nord de l'Irak, a rapporté lundi le quotidien Jomhour Eslami.

Selon le quotidien, qui cite le site internet d'information conservateur Tabnak, généralement bien informé, les quatre policiers ont été tués dimanche par des mines télécommandées dans la région de Haj Omran, non loin de la frontière irakienne dans le nord-ouest du pays.

Selon le quotidien, les mines ont été posées par les rebelles kurdes après la mort de plusieurs de leurs responsables dans des affrontements avec les militaires iraniens.

Les affrontements et les actions armées se multiplient dans cette région du nord-ouest de l'Iran.

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June 1, 2008

Iraq looks to buy French arms

BAGHDAD (AP) — The Iraqi government pressed for advanced French weapons Sunday, while France's top diplomat said French companies were private and free to make their own decisions about whether to do business in wartorn Iraq.

In a meeting with visiting Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki "expressed Iraq's desire to supply its armed forces with advanced French weapons," according to a statement from his Baghdad office.

Kouchner, on a two-day trip to Iraq, said afterward that he supported increased cooperation between the two countries but could not force French companies to invest in Iraq.

"Unfortunately, French companies are private ones," Kouchner told reporters in Baghdad.

"I think the situation in Iraq has improved and the security in some areas looks like the situation in some other countries and areas in the world," he said. "The French companies have to take seriously and consider all these projects and offers."

Al-Maliki also called on French companies to invest in reconstruction and building projects across Iraq, his office said.

Kouchner, a physician, visited a hospital Sunday in

Baghdad, and told reporters France has opportunities to invest in and help improve Iraqi medicine, education, reconstruction and power stations.

"These projects were proposed to France and we will see if the French industrialists and companies participate in such projects," he said.

Kouchner added that France would also increase the number of Iraqi students eligible to study in France each year, but did not give details.

Later Sunday, Kouchner traveled to the northern Kurdish city of Irbil, to open a French consulate. He was greeted at the airport by Masoud Barzani, the leader of the semi-autonomous region, before attending the opening ceremony.

It was the French foreign minister's second visit to Iraq in less than a year, as Paris seeks to rebuild ties with the battered, fledgling nation.

On Saturday, he visited the southern city of Nasiriyah, meeting the provincial governor as well as Iraq's Shiite vice president, and toured nearby ancient ruins of the biblical city of Ur.

Kouchner is the co-founder of the Nobel Prize-



winning aid group Medecins Sans Frontieres, or Doctors Without Borders, and a former U.N. administrator for Kosovo.

On Aug. 19, Kouchner became the first senior French official to visit Iraq since the war started, saying Paris — which had been one of the fiercest critics of the U.S.-led invasion — wanted to "turn the page" and look to the future.



Voice of America®

01 June 2008

France Opens Diplomatic Mission in Northern Iraq

By Suzanne Presto

Irbil

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner inaugurated a new French diplomatic office in the northern Iraqi city of Irbil on Sunday evening, the second day of his two-day trip to Iraq. VOA's Suzanne Presto attended the opening ceremonies and reports from Irbil.

The French national anthem filled the air in Irbil, as France opened a new consulate office in the capital of northern Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region.

The bright colors of the French, Kurdish and Iraqi flags stood apart from the white building that is now France's second diplomatic location in Iraq.

French Foreign Minister Kouchner and Kurdistan's Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani took part in the inauguration ceremony. Kouchner praised the security situation and stability in Kurdistan, saying that Kurds represent the future.

The foreign minister said Kurdistan's government must be a model of political stability for all of Iraq. He added that Kurdistan must set an example in the fields of human rights and women's rights.

The French foreign minister visited the southern city of Nasariyah on Saturday and Baghdad on Sunday, where he met numerous officials, including Iraq's President Jalal Talabani and Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

Kouchner said the security situation in Nasariyah is improving, but Baghdad is facing murders, kidnappings and bombings. He said Kurdistan's security and stability should be a model to these cities.

Kouchner got a big applause from his audience when he said "long live" the Kurds and Iraqis.

Taking the podium after the French foreign minister, Prime Minister Barzani called Kouchner a faithful friend to the Kurds. Mr. Barzani then praised Kurdistan for its political and economic improvements.



French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner (L) and Kurdistan regional government Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani (R) hold the hands of French second counselor Frederic Tissot during a flag raising ceremony at a newly opened French consulate in Erbil, the Iraqi Kurdistan's capital on Sunday

He said that if Kurdistan thrives, Iraq thrives. He stressed that Kurdistan needs the support of the international community, and that the Kurdish government is willing to offer all necessary support to the new French diplomatic bureau.

Mr. Barzani added that the opening of the consular office in Irbil is just the beginning of Kurdistan's strengthening relationship with France.

France, a strident critic of the war in Iraq, was one of the first countries to re-establish its diplomatic mission in Baghdad in 2003, after U.S.-led forces toppled Saddam Hussein.



France's Kouchner, Kurdistan's Barzani Discuss Kirkuk Referendum

By Suzanne Presto Irbil

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner have spent two days in Iraq on a previously unannounced visit to meet with political leaders in Baghdad and the semi-autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq. VOA's Suzanne Presto reports from the northern city of Irbil.

French Foreign Minister Kouchner praised the political stability and security in northern Iraq's Kurdish region during his visit to the area on Sunday.

Speaking at a news conference late that night alongside Kurdistan's President Massoud Barzani, Kouchner hailed the cooperative efforts between the regional government and Iraq's central government in Baghdad.

The French foreign minister noted that he met jointly with Kurdistan's President Barzani and Iraq's President Jalal Talabani last year. Both men are Kurds, a minority in Iraq, and they head rival Kurdish political parties.

Now, Kouchner says, the president of the region and the president of the nation are friends who can work with each other - and all other groups - to rebuild Iraq.

But a main source of contention between the Kurdish government and the central government continues to thrive - the status of the disputed territory of oil-rich Kirkuk province in northern Iraq.

Article 140 of Iraq's constitution says a referendum will decide the status of the city and province of Kirkuk and other towns in the region. That referendum was due to be held by the end of 2007. But, last December, lawmakers in the Kurdish region approved a six-month delay to give the United Nations a greater role in preparations.

Those six months will be up at the end of the June.

Much of Iraq's oil wealth lies beneath Kirkuk province. The city of Kirkuk was "Arabized" under Saddam Hussein, with Arabs being moved in to the region and Kurds driven out. The Kurds reasserted their rights to the area after U.S.-led forces toppled Saddam in 2003.

Ethnic Kurds want it to be part of the semi-autonomous Kurdish region, arguing that, oil-resources aside, it is culturally and historically a Kurdish area. But, minority Arab and Turkmen residents fear marginalization and want Kirkuk to be under Baghdad's con-

trol.

Kurdistan's President Barzani told reporters that he discussed the issue of Kirkuk with his French guest.

France is a major political power, as well as a veto-wielding member of the United Nations Security Council. But when a reporter asked Kouchner for France's stance on the disputed territory, the foreign minister declined to directly answer the question.



French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner (L) speaks during a joint press conference with Kurdistan Regional Government President Massoud Barzani in the northern Kurdish resort of Salalahdin, 01 June 2008

He said the issue is related to Iraq's constitution and it is up to the people of Iraq to decide how to resolve the dispute.

Still, Mr. Barzani said the Kurdish government is working well with the central government and the United Nations on the issue of Kirkuk.

He stressed that the ultimate decision will be based on Iraqi law, and he said the Kurdish government will adhere to that final decision, whatever the outcome.

Guardian

June 2 2008

Turkish star faces jail for criticising army

Robert Tait in Istanbul

One of Turkey's most popular singers is facing up to three years in jail after being accused of trying to weaken public support for the powerful armed forces.

In a case highlighting the pivotal role of the army in Turkish life, prosecutors have indicted Bülent Ersoy on charges of "making the public detest military service" after saying on nationwide television that if she had a son, she would not let him fight against Kurdish separatists.

Her comments, made last February, came after the army launched a controversial ground offensive in northern Iraq against the militant Kurdistan Workers party (PKK) - regarded by Turkey and many western countries as a terrorist organisation.

The offensive was the latest stage in a bloody conflict with the PKK that has killed around 37,000 people, including 5,000 Turkish soldiers, since 1984.

Turkey's leaders regard the PKK as an ethnic secessionist group which threatens the integrity of the Turkish state. But Ersoy questioned the rationale of the offensive, saying: "Of course the homeland is indivisible, but why are we sending these youths to death? If I had a child, I would not send him to the grave for the war of other people."

The singer, famed for her rendition of classical Ottoman music and as a TV personality, has been a controversial figure since undergoing a sex change operation in 1981. She had previously carved out a successful singing and acting career as a man.

Ersoy now faces trial under article 318 of the Turkish penal code, which makes it a crime to undermine the institution of military service.

Turkish human rights groups recently launched a signature campaign calling for the law to be repealed.

The indictment against Ersoy refers to an oft-quoted maxim, "Every Turk is born a soldier" and says her comments turned people against the military while encouraging the PKK.

"Her remarks were aimed at discouraging people from sending their sons to military service.

"For this reason, Ersoy was praised by Roj TV, known as the media arm of the PKK," it reads.

Military conscription is compulsory in Turkey, with no exceptions made for pacifists or conscientious objectors.

The country has previously been condemned by international human rights organisations for imprisoning conscientious objectors.

In 2006, the European court of human rights fined Turkey €11,000 (£8,630) over its treatment of Osman Murat Ülke, an objector jailed for two-and-a-half years after publicly burning his army draft card.

Will Iraq's wounds heal with time?

Keith Humphreys

Over the front desk in my hotel in Irbil, in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, are four dusty clocks that display the times in different cities around the world. The country also runs on four time zones, but the spacing among them dwarfs anything a simple set of clocks could convey.

"Kurdistan time" is the most modern. Having ended their bitter civil war a decade ago, the Kurds are enjoying the fruits of peace, newfound freedom and high oil prices. People in Irbil, including Western visitors such as me, linger in markets and cafes without fear. The main roads are smooth, and an increasing number of homes have electricity and clean water. Yes, there are still blast walls and gun-toting soldiers, but mercifully, they are not being put to use.

Visitors to Irbil can hardly believe that this is Iraq. Late in the evening, in a new water park, parents stroll on the walkways while their children laugh and play. And throughout the city, anti-Americanism is rare. A friend asks a pet store keeper the price of a bird because he wants to compare it to the cost in the United States. The storekeeper replies "There is no price. You liberated us; what I have is yours." After a few days, I hesitate to look too long at bread or fruits or sweets because I know the shop owner is likely to offer some to me as a gift.

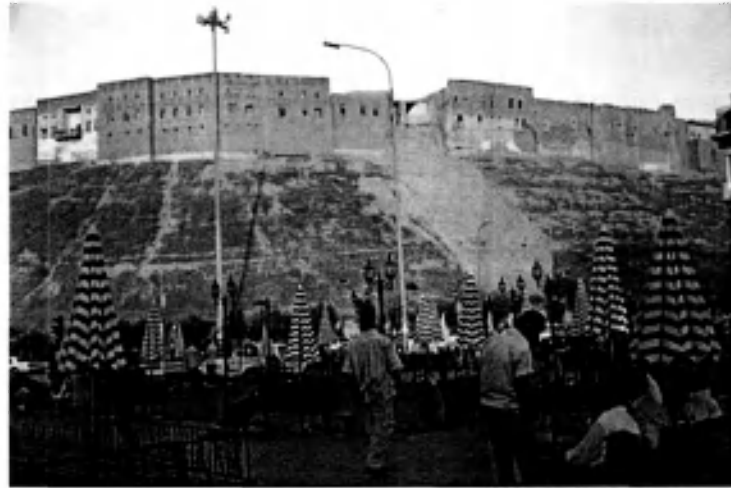
Less than an hour's drive from the center of Kurdistan, the predominately Arabic part of Iraq runs on the clock that held sway here during the mid-1990s. The "Arab Iraq time" zone is punctuated by unpredictable, brutal violence and constantly shifting strategies and alliances by various factions. Colleagues from Baghdad, who are here to attend a psychiatry course I am helping to teach, tell stories of kidnapped doctors, mothers seeing their children killed, and the unending fear that when spouses part in the morning, it will be for the last time.

The third clock of Iraq is "Saddam Hussein time," which can rear its head anywhere in the country. When Iraqis criticize the government, they still instinctively lean in closely and lower their voices, scanning with their eyes from side to side before speaking. And corruption is rampant, with every government ministry issuing a large number of paychecks to employees who never come in to work, if they exist at all. The most despairing Iraqis say they long for Saddam Hussein's return, but the fact is that, in many ways, he is still here.

"Medieval time" is the last and most frightening time zone in Iraq. Colleagues from Ramadi, Diyala, Mosul and Basra live in fear of theocratic militias who wish to roll back human rights a thousand years - especially for women - and terrorize anyone who stands for

modernity, education and rationality. To return to the medieval time zone is a prospect my well-educated Iraqi friends dread, particularly because they know that many less-privileged Iraqis are sorry they ever left it. Many people at the bottom of the society brood over the lost grandeurs of the Abbasid Caliphate, and believe that only the sermons

can't be ascribed simply to the passage of time. Not religiously, although most Americans would not know it because the Western media regularly uses the term Sunni as if it only applied to Arabs, when in fact the Kurds are predominantly Sunni Muslims as well. But other differences are pronounced. Kurds have their own language and identity. Even



ASSOCIATED PRESS / YAHYA AHMED

An ancient castle towers above a park in Irbil in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Ten years after the end of a bloody civil war, Kurdistan is a relative oasis of calm in country filled with violence and uncertainty.

of conservative imams give full voice to their desperate hope and seething anger.

When the disparate time zones of Iraq intersect, the result can be humorous. A cultural center named after the bisexual poet Rimbaud, of the French Decadent movement, displays paintings of transvestites to puzzled Kurds in the middle of the 8,000-year-old citadel of Irbil. An antiques store contains piles of Saddam Hussein-era suitcase phonographs and 13-channel televisions with rabbit ears a few blocks from a store with the latest Nokia cell phones and iPods.

But the clash of time zones can also be horrifying. A psychiatric resident diagnoses a young woman with schizophrenia and prescribes the latest, best medication and psychotherapy. At the next appointment, she arrives bruised from head to toe and has multiple broken bones. Upon learning the diagnosis, her parents took her to a traditional healer, who strapped her down and savagely beat her to drive out the *jinni* that causes her illness.

A main topic of conversation here is whether Iraq will ever converge in a single time zone, and if so, which one? Is Arab Iraq truly just a decade behind post-civil-war Kurdistan, or is it a fantasy to believe all that separates Kurdistan from the rest of the country is time?

The Kurds are clearly different in ways that

across clans, they feel a strong sense of kinship, not the least because they were so brutally persecuted by Hussein.

Most of the people I meet who are stuck in "Arab Iraq time" do not see a Kurdish future for themselves. A sad-eyed woman from Baghdad says simply, "Because we have oil, they will never allow us to be happy." A few are desperate enough to want to move backward to "Saddam Hussein time" or "medieval time," where there was some predictability in daily life, if little justice.

Others Iraqis are more optimistic, noting that the factional rivalries in Kurdistan were every bit as bloody as those in the rest of Iraq, but the population (with encouragement from the United States) figured out that there was much more to be gained by putting down their guns and sharing Iraq's riches for mutual benefit.

Who is correct, the optimists or the pessimists? Even after hundreds of conversations with Iraqis over the past few years, I still can't do better than fall back on a cliché: Only time will tell.

Keith Humphreys is a professor of psychiatry at Stanford University who has been a volunteer consultant to the Iraqi mental health care systems since 2004. E-mail comments to

LA ESCRITORA Y PERIODISTA VENEZOLANA CAROL PRUNHUBER PRESENTA NUEVO LIBRO

“Rahman el kurdo es modelo de un verdadero líder revolucionario”

La autora narra el drama de la lucha del Kurdistán por su identidad y autonomía a través del retrato del dirigente asesinado en 1989

LISSETH BOON

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Caracas. Fue en el Festival de Cannes de 1982 cuando comenzó el encantamiento de la escritora venezolana Carol Prunhuber por la historia del Kurdistán. Había dejado por momentos sus clases del doctorado en Estudios Hispano-americanos de la Universidad de París, para acercarse a la cita del cine en el sur de Francia, donde pudo conocer al cineasta kurdo y activista político Yilmaz Güney, quien se llevó ese año la Palma de Oro por su película *Yol* (El camino).

A partir de ese encuentro, Prunhuber comenzó a trabajar con políticos kurdos hasta dar en 1984 con Abdul Rahmán Ghasemlú, líder del Partido Democrático del Kurdistán iraní (prohibido en Irán). Le seguirían entrevistas y viajes a esa región sin Estado ni acceso al mar, dividida entre Turquía, Iraq, Irán y Siria, y que ha sido históricamente reclamada por el pueblo turco.

Producto de una larga investigación y de su cercanía con el pueblo kurdo, incluida la convivencia con

“Se trata de un homenaje a este político carismático, de posturas moderadas, que tenía una gran cultura política y general, que hablaba ocho idiomas y nunca avaló los actos terroristas. Pasó del comunismo estalinista a la socialdemocracia”, cuenta la autora. “Muchas veces me he preguntado qué hubiese logrado este hombre extraordinario, abierto al diálogo como no abundan en esa región, de

EL DATO

26 millones de kurdos

viven entre Kurdistán occidental (Turkía), Kurdistán oriental (Irán), Kurdistán meridional (Iraq) y Kurdistán suroccidental (Siria)

los peshmergas (guerrilleros) en la montaña, es el libro *Pasión y muerte de Rahmán el kurdo: el sueño del Kurdistán*, publicado por Alfa Editorial (Colección Hogueras), que presenta mañana martes a las 7:30 pm en el Ciec de la Universidad Metropolitana, en el marco del III Salón del Libro.

Prunhuber decide escribir el libro en 1989, año cuando fue asesinado el líder kurdo en Viena, justo en plenas negociaciones por la independencia kurda. Hasta ahora, los autores del crimen permanecen a oscuras, aunque las sospechas siguen recayendo sobre la república islámica de Irán.

no haber sido asesinado. Las negociaciones con Occidente podrían haber tomado otro curso y la historia del Kurdistán podría haber sido otra.

A partir de la reconstrucción de la vida y asesinato de Ghasemlú, la periodista venezolana también presenta la historia del pueblo kurdo y la revolución islámica. A pesar de la importancia de la lucha de este contingente por su autono-



Carol Prunhuber escribió reportajes sobre Kurdistán para diarios venezolanos entre los años 80 y 90



mía e identidad, el tema no pareció interesar mucho a las editoriales españolas donde Prunhuber presentó su investigación. Hasta que se topó en Venezuela con Alfa Editorial. “Ahora están dadas las circunstancias para publicarlo en Venezuela, por las relaciones del actual gobierno con la República de Irán y los avances del ensayo como región autónoma”.

Ella no duda en afirmar que Ghasemlú es un modelo de verdadero líder revolucionario. “Es importante que el venezolano conozca más de la república islámica de Irán, dadas las actuales vinculaciones. Que se formen opinión más profundas sobre la realidad del pueblo kurdo”.

■ TalCual ■

15 de abril de 2008

Ghasemlú según Carol Prunhuber

La periodista venezolana ofrece un testimonio histórico de los hechos que rodearon la muerte del líder kurdo iraní

Carmen Victoria Méndez

“ Si algún día muerdo, ¿por qué no escribes un libro sobre mí?”, le preguntó Abdul Rahmán Ghasemlú a la venezolana Carol Prunhuber, un día de 1984. La periodista se encontraba entonces en Kurdistán rodando un documental para la televisión francesa sobre el conflicto armado en esta región. La frase se fijó en su mente y la llevó a escribir el interesante testimonio que presentará esta noche en el marco del Salón del Libro.

Su obra se titula *Pasión y muerte de Rahmán El Kurdo: el sueño del Kurdistán*. Se trata de un extenso reportaje que recopila los hechos que rodearon el asesinato del líder kurdo iraní en Viena en 1989, un crimen que -a causa de una maraña de intereses políticos- nunca fue resuelto. Prunhuber hiló sus experiencias personales con Ghasemlú al contenido de 50 entrevistas que ella y sus colaboradores hicieron en distintos países.

—¿Cómo conoció a Ghasemlú?

—Nos presentaron en 1984, en el Instituto Kurdo de París. En ese momento el era el líder kurdo iraní que estaba peleando contra Jomeini. La lucha armada había comenzado en 1979, y me invitó al Kurdistán para que me documentara mejor de su realidad. Como buena venezolana le dije que aceptaba su invitación y al año siguiente monté un documental con la agencia de televisión francesa *Gamma*. Nos fuimos un equipo de tres personas.

—¿Qué impresión guarda de ese primer encuentro?

—Fue un shock. Ghasemlú hablaba un francés exquisito, además de otros seis idiomas. Me impresionó el refinamiento de la cultura de ese hombre. Ahí mismo me di cuenta del carisma que tenía. Mientras hablábamos estábamos rodeados de gente, porque todo el mundo quería escucharlo. Él mismo



Saúl Uzcátegui/TalCual

arregló las visas para nuestro viaje. Cuando llegué al Kurdistán me lo encontré vestido de kurdo. Me impactó mucho su investidura, así como la deferencia con que lo trataban. Lo vi en toda su estatura política.

—¿Qué encontró usted en Kurdistán?

—Entramos por Bagdad. Estuvimos una semana con los peshmerga, los guerrilleros kurdos, en las montañas donde combatían al régimen de Jomeini. Peshmerga significa aquel que va delante de la muerte. Visitamos la prisión y conocimos el Cuartel General una semana. Un día nos llevaron a la frontera, nos montaron en unas mulas cargadas de municiones con *katiuskas* y *kalashnikovs* y empezamos a subir montañas. Tardamos 14 horas en llegar a Irán. Fue un viaje bastante impresionante. En el Kurdistán iraní pasamos

una semana más. Cubrimos la guerrilla, y lo que pudimos ver en ese momento es que estaban muy compenetrados con la gente del pueblo. Presenciamos un combate y esas experiencias las recogí en un diario; en el libro forman parte del cuarto capítulo.

—¿Se centra más en el asesinato del líder?

—Sí. Ocurrió en Viena, en 1989, en un intento de negociación con los iraníes. Le habían dicho que no fuera a la asamblea porque las relaciones con Jomeini ya estaban muy tensas. Ya en 1988 a través de Talabani -que tenía relaciones con el Gobierno islámico- se habían establecido unas negociaciones de paz. Las reuniones en Viena fueron organizadas por Talabani, lo que significa que había seguridad. Tuvieron varios encuentros y los iraníes de repente cortaron las relaciones, dijeron que no

querían seguir conversando.

—¿Y qué pasó después?

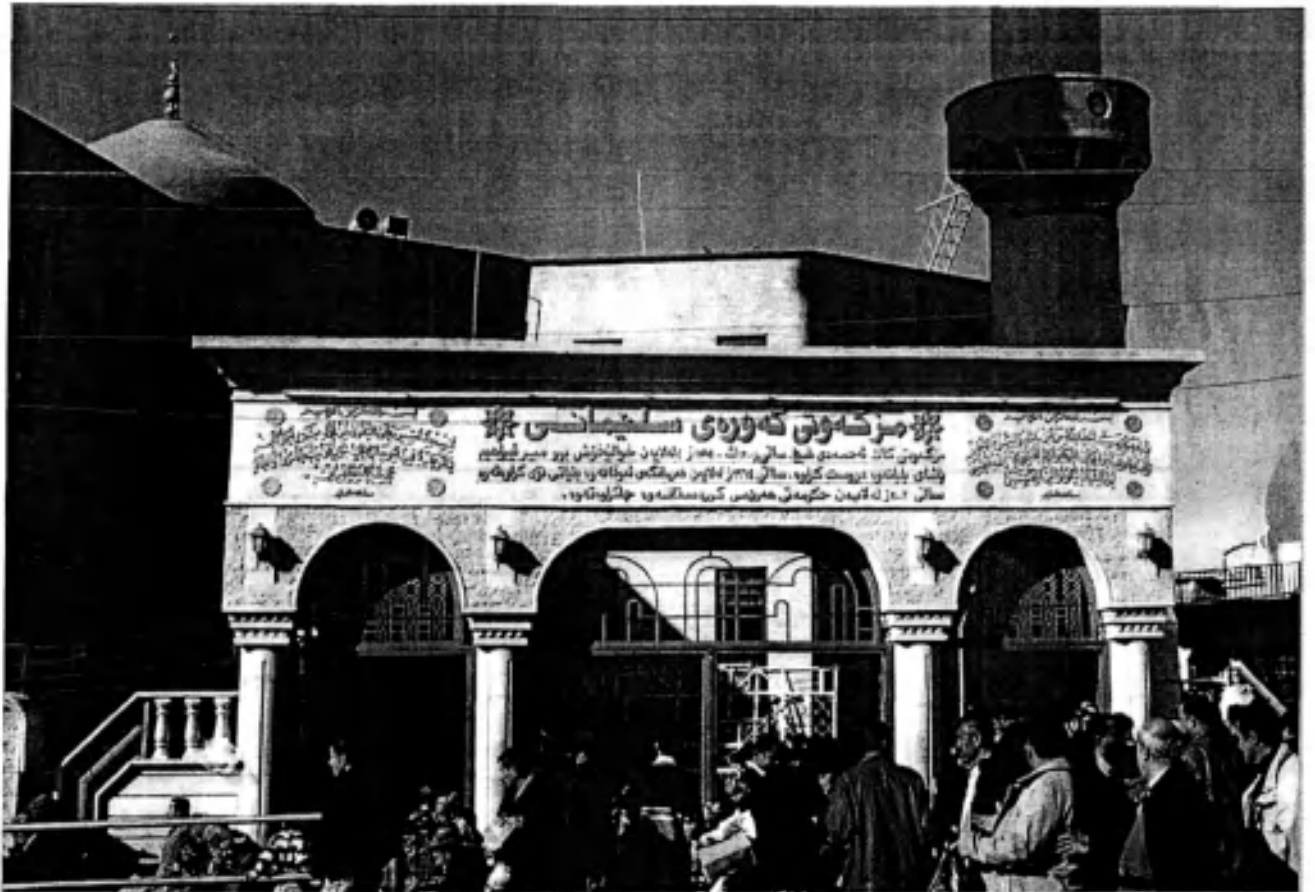
—Unos meses después, en 1989, el gobierno iraní contacta a un intelectual kurdo iraquí para que contacte a Ghasemlú. Querían empezar unas negociaciones de paz, pero nadie entiende por qué Ghasemlú acepta ir a esa cita sin informar a nadie. Muy pocas personas sabían de estos encuentros, su partido no lo sabía. Él se fue sin seguridad. La gente que lo recibió en Austria no sabía con quién se va a reunir. Todo es secreto. Durante la segunda reunión lo mataron.

—¿Quiénes lo mataron?

—En la cita estuvieron involucrados tres emisarios del Gobierno iraní con pasaporte diplomático y tres kurdos. De esa reunión salieron tres kurdos muertos y un iraní herido. El crimen quedó sin resolver por presiones políticas: los iraníes presionaron al Gobierno de Austria, encargado de llevar a cabo las investigaciones. Además, todo eso ocurrió poco antes de que estallara el escándalo de venta de armas a Iraq e Irán -lo cual estaba prohibido- que involucraba a personeros del estado austriaco.

—En su libro menciona al actual presidente de Irán como uno de los cómplices.

—Austria permitió que dos testigos se fugaran y el caso quedó ahí. La viuda de Ghasemlú empezó entonces una querrela contra el estado austriaco. El diputado del Partido Verde, Peter Pilz fue una de las personas que trató de mover el caso, pero no siguió adelante. En 2005, Pilz salió diciendo que tenía pruebas de la implicación de personeros del Gobierno y pide que se abra nuevamente la investigación. Él acusa a Mahmud Ahmadineyad de esta implicación en la planificación del asesinato, así como al entonces presidente de Irán Akbar Hashemi Rafsanyani, de haber dado la orden. Pero nada de eso se pudo probar.

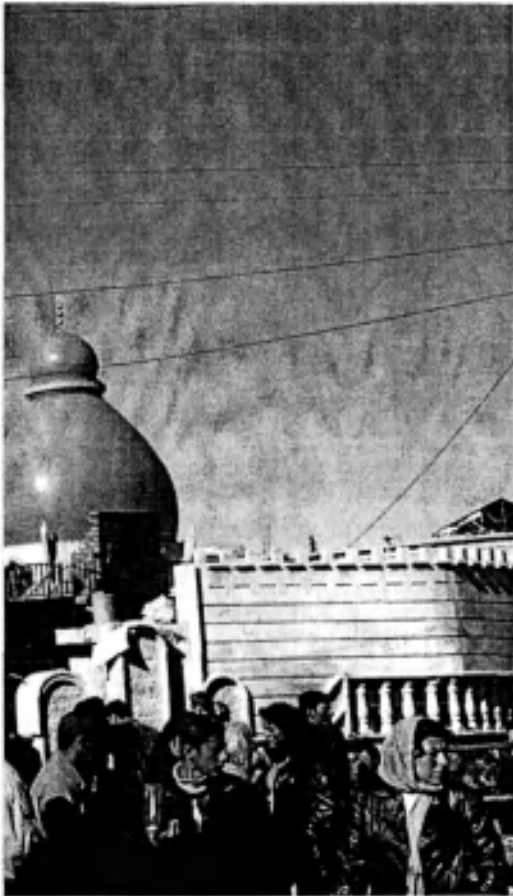


The voice of the opposition from within

In an exclusive interview with **CHRIS KUTSCHERA**, Nawshirwan Mustafa, the former deputy of Jalal Talabani turned publisher, speaks out about the need for reform in the Kurdish government.

KNOWN AS THE “terrible child” of the Iraqi Kurdish national movement, Nawshirwan Mustafa had risen to the highest reachable position in Suleimania. He was a member of the political bureau and deputy secretary general of the PUK – the secretary general being none other than Jalal Talabani, who is at the same time president of the Republic of Iraq and the lifelong head of PUK – when he decided in February 2007 to resign and become a ‘simple militant’. A simple militant who is publishing a newspaper, *Rozhnama*, coupled with a popular website, in which he says loudly what many people dare not even whisper, and who is now preparing to launch a satellite TV station, *KNNC (Kurdish News Network Channel)* to bring news but “no singing and dancing”, he asserts with conviction.

“The time has come to focus on internal issues,” Mustafa states at his house in Suleimania. “But I am saying what I have to say with a friendly voice. I am not in opposition. I have good relations with both Jalal Talabani and Masoud Barzani – head of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP). We all talk together. I am their friend, not their enemy. I want to make reforms in the government, the parliament, and in the bureaucracy. It is better,



NAWSHIRWAN MUSTAFA wants to instill a real desire for reform among the Kurdish leadership and public opinion

when there are problems, to discuss them." The first challenge, Mustafa says, is the lack of services: the Kurds have been their own rulers for 17 years, but they still have certain issues to address. Currently a severe shortage of electricity hampers Kurds from going about their daily business. The government provides only about one hour of electricity per day; those who can afford it, buy seven or eight hours of electricity from the owners of private generators, others must manage without power. Water is also an acute problem, as demonstrated by the recent cholera epidemic in Suleimania. There is also a severe shortage of housing. Rents are skyrocketing and young people cannot afford to marry unless they are prepared to live with their parents. Infrastructural development is lagging behind and there is a shortage of schools, even in big cities: "In Suleimania, we have schools running with four shifts. How is this possible when the budget for the Kurdish region is \$6bn?" questions Mustafa, echoing a widely popular feeling.

Another problem, adds Mustafa, is the lack of transparency in the running of government affairs. "There is no transparency on budgetary matters. Ordinary people do not know anything about the budget of KDP and PUK or the budget for educa-

tion. What do people know about the oil contracts? And there is no transparency on foreign affairs: nobody knows what is going on between the Kurdish leaders and Baghdad, or between the Kurdish leaders and the Americans."

"I know about the budget because I was part of the leadership, I was one of them," he notes, adding: "But I cannot tell you because I do not want to make trouble. Again, I stress, I am not the enemy of Jalal Talabani and Masoud Barzani but I do want them to make things public. It is in their favour to do so. I want to instill in public opinion a real desire for reform."

Mustafa goes on to identify the most serious problem facing Kurdish society as corruption. "I am not only speaking of bribery, but also of cronyism and nepotism," he says, adding: "Unless you are close to one of the parties (PUK and KDP), you have no chance of being a minister or a deputy minister. The parties are interfering in the media and the judiciary. The judges are appointed by the parties. The parties control everything in the society. We are in a totalitarian system, like in the former Soviet bloc or the Romania of old.

"Of course, I am proud of what we have accomplished; we have a government, a parliament. But now is the right time to speak out about our problems. The party is appointing everybody, from village heads to the governors of the provinces, even the heads of the universities," says Mustafa echoing a grievance felt by much of

the population, from disfranchised young students to sceptical journalists.

Mustafa claims that even the acceptance of students for PhD courses depends on the party. "Not only is it necessary to be a member of the party, but it is necessary to have somebody inside the leadership supporting you." In Suleimania, the office of democratic organisations controls all the jobs in the trade unions. "Even the prime minister did not choose his ministers," claims Mustafa, "the parties did - fractions and blocs inside the parties."

Claiming that there is a 100-fold difference between the highest salaries and the lowest salaries in the government, the former leader of Komala, a Maoist Kurdish organisation, observes: "Our society is divided into two different classes... We now have a very rich class and a very poor one in a society of freedom fighters turned statesmen."

Asked why the PUK did not nominate a candidate for the post of prime minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government last autumn, as agreed by KDP and PUK in their "strategic agreement", and why the PUK accepted that the KDP's Nechirwan Barzani remained prime minister, Mustafa surprisingly backs off and declines to comment: "I was one of the founders of PUK in 1976, so I do not want to speak out about certain problems... I have some moral commitments."

He only volunteers, "The people do not care who is prime minister. They want someone who can provide services and social justice. The people expected that after the unification of the Kurdish PUK and KDP administrations, there would be change. But there is no change."

"There is no opposition in Kurdistan," muses Mustafa. "All the political parties, big and small, participate in the government. It was necessary to speak with one voice in Baghdad until the Iraqi constitution was written. Now however the time to speak up has come.

"Born in 1944, I joined KDP in 1961, at the age of 17, when Jalal Talabani opened the KDP legal office in Suleimania, under Kassem. We are the lucky generation; we saw the victory and the freedom of our country. Sheikh Mahmoud was banned from his home town for 40 years. Sheikh Said and Qazi Mohammed were hanged. General Barzani died in exile. We are the lords of our country." ■

It was necessary to speak with one voice in Baghdad until the Iraqi constitution was written. Now however the time to speak up has come



A Kurdish oil emirate?

BY CHRIS KUTSCHERA

NECHIRVAN BARZANI, PRIME Minister of the Iraqi Kurdish government, did not try to hide his excitement. "I am leaving in a few hours to fly to Seoul and sign a big contract with the Koreans," he told *TME* after a ceremony at the Kurdish parliament in Erbil.

Shortly afterwards, it was announced that a memorandum of understanding had indeed been signed with Korean president-elect Lee Myung-Bak to include the exploration and the development of four oilfields in Kurdistan. The deal requires Korean construction companies to develop the local infrastructure with the construction of a \$2bn, 450km highway and \$10bn worth of "social infrastructure", including

hospitals, schools, water supply networks and power plants.

So far, the Kurds have signed about 20 Production Sharing Agreements (PSA) with foreign independent oil companies. Despite stern warnings by Baghdad, Genel Enerji and DNO were among the first to sign with the Kurdish authorities, followed by Heritage Oil, Sterling Energy, Woodside Petroleum, Petoil, Perenco, OMV, Dana Gas, Western Oil Sands, Gulf Keystone and Hunt.

The development of the Taq Taq oilfield, 60km northeast of Kirkuk, sums up the history of oil in Kurdistan. The first exploration well was drilled in Taq Taq back in 1960, after General Qassem's revolution overthrew the Iraqi monarchy, and was left

incomplete. Drilling resumed at Well 1 in 1978, under the Baath Party, when INOC, the Iraqi National Oil Company, started drilling two more wells - Wells 2 and 3. In 1981, due to technical problems, the Iran-Iraq war and the presence of Kurdish peshmergas (Kurdish freedom fighters), work stopped in the remote fields of Kurdistan and was concentrated in the easier to protect area of Kirkuk.

For 15 years, the oilfields of Kurdistan were left unexplored, while Kurds were expelled from the city and the governorate of Kirkuk within the framework of a systematic campaign of Arabisation. In 2003, when Saddam Hussein was removed from power, only 40 Kurds were working in the oil company in Kirkuk.

Six wells have since been successfully drilled, each with a production capacity of 16,000-37,000 b/d. More wells are expected to be drilled in the second half of 2008



KURDISTAN IS now exploring oilfields that were left dormant for years



KOREAN PRESIDENT-ELECT Lee Myung-Bak has signed an MoU with Kurdistan to develop several oilfields

Work resumed after the Kurds set up their own administration in 1992. Faced with an embargo on fuel enforced by Baghdad, the Kurds started the exploitation of two wells in Taq Taq. Starting in 1994, Well 2 produced heavy crude used by the Suleimania cement factory. Well 1 was finally opened by Kosrat Rasul, head of the PUK government, on 17 May 1996. It produces 3,000 barrels a day (b/d), sent to a small kit refinery built in Suleimania from the spare parts of a sugar factory.

It is not clear when Taq Taq entered the industrial age. Did Jalal Talabani, in his capacity of secretary general of PUK, negotiate a deal with Genel Enerji, a Turkish company, on 20 January 2004, a few weeks after the capture of Saddam Hussein, as it

is officially written? Or was it signed in July 2002, several months before the American operation in Iraq, as some sources claim, when the Kurdish region had still no official status? Either way, all sources agree that it was a political deal – a particularly generous one – with a clear aim: to mollify the Turks and bring them to accept the idea that the Kurds could produce oil and export it through Turkey.

Genel Enerji is a front for a Turkish conglomerate, Cukurova Holding – with no oil experience; in July 2005, it linked up with Addax international, a Swiss-Canadian oil company, and formed TTOPCO (Taq Taq Operating Company).

Six wells have since been successfully drilled, each with a production capacity of

16,000-37,000 b/d. More wells are expected to be drilled in the second half of 2008 when a new modern rig is brought in. Production should then reach 100,000 b/d which would enable the Kurds to export their oil. “We joined forces with a Turkish company,” says engineer Hoshyar Nuri Abbas, the Taq Taq field manager, “to find the key.”

At the other end of Kurdistan, near Zakho, in Badinan, a region traditionally controlled by the KDP, the second main Kurdish political party, DNO, a Norwegian oil company, is also about to produce oil. After signing a contract with the Kurdish government of Erbil in 2004, it struck oil with its first exploration well, Tawke 1, which has a production capacity of 5,000 b/d. DNO drilled five more positive wells, and is planning to produce 50,000 b/d as soon as it can export its oil. A pipeline with a capacity of 50,000 b/d has been built from Tawke to a point close to the Kirkuk-Ceyhan main pipeline. And according to some unconfirmed reports, a convoy of tanker trucks is already at work exporting oil to Turkey (each tanker carrying 200 barrels, 25 trucks carrying 5,000 barrels, with a single rotation per day).

Other companies are proceeding with seismic surveys and preparing to drill exploration wells, but, unlike Genel Enerji and DNO, they are moving slowly: “We will do the seismic survey and drill a few wells,” says an oil executive working for one of these medium size independents who wants to remain anonymous. “Our contract says that each phase will last two to three years. We will proceed slowly. Hopefully in five or six years, the problem between the Kurds and Baghdad will be resolved. Everybody needs this oil, Baghdad included.”

The conflict between Baghdad and the Kurds has stalled the adoption of an oil law by the Iraqi parliament, where the Kurds control a block of 55 MPs. Fundamentally, the Kurds want to have the right to sign contracts for the exploration and exploitation of the new oilfields (leaving the old ones to the central government) while Baghdad wants to control all developments and supervise all new contracts.

“It is obvious from past history, that Baghdad will not develop oil in Kurdistan,” says a European oil expert, adding, “If the Kurds want to develop the oil in-



GENEL ENERJI is a major player in the Kurdistan oil development currently taking place

dustry in their region, they have to take the initiative." "If the Kurds wait for Baghdad to develop the oilfields of Kurdistan, they could wait until my grandchildren run the business," adds another representative of an independent oil company.

The Kurds have a more immediate interest to sign the contracts with the oil companies: "There is a lot of 'bonus'," says an expert with an intimate knowledge of the industry. "Funds are allocated by the oil company for the training of employees and for the preservation of the environment... It brings jobs for local people". There are also other "pluses", on which he does not elaborate. The Kurds are quick to learn, as shown by the recent contract with the Koreans, which will bring billions of dollars of infrastructure projects to Kurdistan.

These conflicting views explain why Iraq is still without an oil law which has been discussed by experts and politicians for two years. "We started discussing the project of an oil law in May 2006," recalls Ashti Hawrami, the oil minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government and the "bête noire" of Hussein Al Sharistani, the Iraqi oil minister. A first draft was written which was, claims Hawrami, "consistent with the previous regime... We even suspect it was written before Saddam Hussein's fall".

It was reviewed by an 11-member federal oil and gas committee created by Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki, and on 15 January 2007, it was announced that a final text was agreed and sent to the Iraqi parliament. "I got a copy of the text. Although we were said to be 'on board', it was totally unacceptable," says Ashti Hawrami. It took six weeks to renegotiate a new draft, which was finalised on 26 February 2007 and approved by the government. But the Kurds did not agree on everything. They insisted that the law should define precisely the role of the

Iraqi National Oil Company (INOC) and identify the oilfields falling under its supervision. The Kurds also wanted a clearer revenue sharing law.

The INOC law was written by a committee made up of Oil Ministry officials who consider that foreign oil companies come to Iraq "to steal Iraqi oil" and do not want to hear of Production Sharing Agreements (PSA). They decided that most of the oilfields – in fact 93% of the reserves – would be allocated to INOC. "If 93% is allocated to INOC, what do you give me," says Ashti Hawrami, "then there is no need for an oil and gas law... This is totally unacceptable."

Ashti Hawrami spent two weeks discussing with Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki the issue of sharing revenues. At the end of June 2007, it was agreed that all revenues, including the revenues of the Kurdish region, would go to a single account, and that the central government would take its share for so called "sovereign expenses", including expenses for foreign affairs and defence, approved each year with the budget by parliament. The Kurdish region would get its share – 17% – the remainder being administered by the central authorities, and going to the other regions of Iraq if a federal republic is set up and if other regions are created.

Then came a new twist. The draft of the oil law was sent to a "shura council" made up of experts of the Ministry of Justice which decided that the law should be consistent with an eventually amended constitution and which altered the draft.

With 1m b/d for a population of 4m Kurds, Kurdistan will more likely be another Dubai, and not another Abu Dhabi... but the Kurds will need to emulate the sheikhs of Dubai with their brains and innovate

Several pages were taken out from the agreed draft. "Here we stand," says Ashti Hawrami, "the Kurdistan region's rights have been deleted, and the INOC law is still under discussion."

"We accepted a compromise," adds the Kurdistan oil minister, "with the creation of an oil and gas council entitled to review our contracts. But we want a law that respects the Iraqi constitution. Article 112 is very clear. We are partners with the federal authorities, we are not second-class citizens. Decisions are not to be taken in Baghdad. If an oilfield lies in Kurdistan – if it is a new one – we sign the contract. If it is an old one, which may be allocated to INOC, we are partners in its management."

Two years after the oil law was first discussed, there is still no agreement on a text to be approved by the Iraqi parliament. In February 2008, a new crisis erupted between Baghdad and the Kurdish regional government. First, Baghdad wanted to allocate only 13% of the budget to the Kurds. Then it agreed to allocate 17% as previously agreed, but it questioned the number of peshmergas whose salaries and pensions should be financed by the central government – the Kurds quoting a figure of 90,000 peshmergas, while Baghdad said their number should be no more than 30,000.

It looks as though both sides have given up the idea of agreeing an oil law, and the Kurdistan Regional Government is signing new contracts with independent small oil companies, while Baghdad is starting discussions with some majors for the development of its southern fields.

"We want to produce up to 1m b/d in a maximum of five years," states Ashti Hawrami. "We also want to be self sufficient in terms of refinery." Does it mean the Kurdistan Region will soon be like a Gulf Emirate? ■

L'EXPRESS

02 juin 2008

Kouchner chez les Kurdes Une histoire de "french doctor"

Le ministre des Affaires étrangères était ce week-end au Kurdistan. Une région du monde où l'ancien médecin sans frontière a retrouvé des souvenirs et un ami: le nouveau consul de France à Erbil.

Par notre envoyé spécial, Vincent Hugué

Au cœur de la capitale du Kurdistan d'Irak, le "French doctor" revit cette nuit de septembre 1974, lorsqu'il rencontra pour la première fois le défunt Mustapha Barzani, héros vénéré de la cause kurde et père de l'actuel président de la région autonome, Massoud. La séquence souvenirs à la Georges Perec ne s'arrête pas là. "Je me souviens, poursuit le Dr K, de la naissance en 1992 de votre parlement libre. J'étais au côté de Danielle Mitterrand et nous avions des larmes dans la voix."

Kurde d'honneur depuis des lustres, Kouchner n'a pas davantage oublié son premier échange avec Jalal Talahani, un autre fils de cette terre rude et meurtrie, propulsé en avril 2005 à la présidence de l'Irak: "Il y avait aussi là le grand Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou". Nul doute que cette référence au leader des Kurdes d'Irak, assassiné à Vienne (Autriche) en juillet 1989 par des agents de Téhéran, est allée droit au cœur de Frédéric Tissot, chef de la toute nouvelle représentation diplomatique tricolore à Erbil. Car ce généraliste converti à la diplomatie, autre prototype du franc-tireur de l'humanitaire, fut un intime du fin et lettré Ghassemlou. C'est d'ailleurs sous l'égide de celui-ci que les routes des deux médecins globe-trotteurs se croisèrent de façon insolite: Kouchner avait alors pris Tissot, vêtu à la kurde et qui parlait la langue, pour un autochtone. Ainsi commence, en 1984, un long compagnonnage.

Destinée insolite que celle du Dr Frédéric Tissot, né voilà 57 ans en Algérie. Il sera tour à tour médecin de campagne dans le Haut-Atlas marocain puis, dès 1981, l'un des pionniers des "raids" audacieux lancés au Kurdistan et en Afghanistan par Aide médicale internationale (AMI). Plus tard, on retrouve ce polyglotte - outre le kurde, il maîtrise l'arabe et le berbère - à la



tête de la cellule d'urgence du Quai. Cap sur Sarajevo, le Haut-Karabakh, enclave arménienne en Azerbaïdjan, puis retour au Kurdistan. Cette fois, il s'agit d'orchestrer l'accueil en France de centaines de réfugiés ainsi soustraits en 1989 aux expéditions punitives de Saddam Hussein, ou, deux ans plus tard, d'organiser les largages de vivres aux Kurdes lâchés par les Etats-Unis, errants sans but et par un froid de gueux dans la boue. "J'avais François Mitterrand en direct au téléphone, confie-t-il. Pas facile. Il fallait vaincre l'hostilité de Pierre Joxe, alors ministre de la Défense."

Après avoir exploré un temps les arcanes des politiques de santé publique, le fils de harki replonge. Ce sera le Kosovo, où il accompagne brièvement son copain Kouchner, nommé pro-

consul à Pristina par le secrétaire général de l'ONU Kofi Annan. Puis de nouveau l'Afghanistan, au lendemain de l'assassinat du stratège de l'Alliance du Nord Ahmad Shah Massoud. Quatre années durant, Frédéric Tissot oeuvre à Kaboul comme conseiller auprès du ministre de la Santé. Mission exercée ensuite en Haïti. Et c'est là, sur les hauteurs de Port-au-Prince, que le sort le frappe voilà deux ans. Au bout de son jardin, le vétéran des missions clandestines en zone de guerre marche par inadvertance sur un câble électrique dénudé. Il est foudroyé et se réveille paraplégique. Peut-être avait-on omis de le préciser: le futur consul de France à Erbil poursuit sa route en fauteuil roulant. Et lui aussi, fut-ce en fauteuil, vient de rajeunir d'une trentaine d'années.

AFP

DEUX RESPONSABLES KURDES ASSASSINÉS EN IRAK

KIRKOUK (Irak), 3 juin 2008 (AFP) - Deux responsables kurdes du parti du chef de l'Etat irakien Jalal Talabani ont été tués par balles mardi à Tuz Khurmatu, au nord de Bagdad, a-t-on appris de source policière.

Des hommes armés non identifiés ont ouvert le feu sur le convoi de deux responsables de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), Delshad Abdelkarim Sufar et Nasseh Moussa Rostom, a indiqué à l'AFP le commandant de la police Jawdat Mahmoud.

Les deux responsables ont été tués, et deux de leurs gardes du corps blessés dans l'attaque survenue vers 20H30 locales (17H30 GMT) près de l'hôpital général, dans le centre de Tuz Khurmatu, à 160 kilomètres au nord de Bagdad, a-t-il ajouté.

Les assaillants ont pu prendre la fuite, toujours selon le commandant Mahmoud.

L'attaque a suscité une vive tension dans la ville. L'une des deux victimes, Nasseh Moussa Rostom, était membre du Conseil provincial et particulièrement populaire au sein de la communauté kurde.

Tous deux étaient des responsables de l'UPK, parti de M. Talabani, et l'une des deux grandes formations kurdes du pays.

Tuz Khurmatu est habité par des Turcomans, des Kurdes et, en moindre proportion, par des Arabes.

Les Turcomans considèrent Tuz Khurmatu et sa région comme leur berceau historique et accusent les Kurdes, venus de la région voisine du Kurdistan autonome, plus au nord, de mener une politique de colonisation.

Tuz Khurmatu se trouve également à 75 kilomètres au sud de la ville de Kirkouk, théâtre de vives tensions communautaires entre Kurdes, Arabes et Turcomans, et que les Kurdes considèrent comme la leur.

AFP

BOMBARDEMENTS IRANIENS SUR DES VILLAGES KURDES D'IRAK: 2 BLESSÉS (SÉCURITÉ)

SOULEIMANIYEH (Irak), 4 juin 2008 (AFP) - Au moins deux villageois ont été blessés mercredi par des tirs d'artillerie iraniens sur cinq villages du Kurdistan irakien (nord), proche de la frontière d'Iran, a-t-on appris de source de sécurité locale.

Les bombardements ont visé pendant deux heures, de 04H00 à 6H00 (01H00 à

03H00 GMT), cinq villages proches de la ville de Sayyid Sadiq, située à 70 km au sud-est de Souleimaniyeh (nord-est), a annoncé à l'AFP le porte-parole des peshmergas (combattants kurdes), le général Jabari Yawar.

Deux civils ont été blessés, du bétail a été tué et des champs ont été endommagés, a-t-il précisé.

Des villages du Kurdistan irakien, frontaliers de l'Iran, sont régulièrement la cible de tirs d'artillerie de l'armée iranienne qui tente d'éradiquer la rébellion kurde.

Mais c'est la première fois que cette zone, relativement proche de la ville de Sayyid Sadiq, est bombardée par l'armée iranienne, selon le général Yawar.

En février, la Turquie voisine avait lancé dans le nord irakien une vaste offen-

sive contre les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatistes kurdes turcs) qui mènent depuis 1984 une lutte armée contre l'Etat turc qui a fait quelque 37.000 morts.

Le groupe séparatiste du Pêjak, lié au PKK, est accusé par Téhéran de mener des opérations armées dans l'ouest de l'Iran et d'être soutenu par Washington.

AFP

IRAN: 12 HOMMES ARMÉS TUÉS PAR LES FORCES DE SÉCURITÉ À LA FRONTIÈRE OUEST

TEHERAN, 5 juin 2008 (AFP) - Douze hommes armés ont été tués par les forces de sécurité iraniennes lors d'un accrochage dans une région de l'ouest de l'Iran, a déclaré jeudi un officier de police de la province d'Azerbaïdjan occidental, cité par l'agence Fars.

"Douze terroristes ont été tués et d'autres ont été blessés par nos tirs quand un groupe de 40 terroristes s'est infiltré dans la région de Haj Omran, près de Piranshahr", a déclaré l'officier, Shahnam Rezaei, ajoutant que des membres du groupe avaient réussi à prendre la fuite.

Quatre policiers ont été tués et un a été blessé par les tirs du groupe, a-t-il ajouté, sans préciser la date de l'accrochage, la nationalité des hommes armés ou leur provenance.

Le quotidien iranien Jomhour Eslami avait rapporté lundi que quatre policiers iraniens avaient été tués en sautant sur des mines posées par des rebelles kurdes, membres du Pejak, lié au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK),

basé en Turquie et dans le nord de l'Irak.

Selon le quotidien, les quatre policiers ont été tués dimanche par des mines télécommandées dans la région d'Haj Omran, non loin de la frontière irakienne, dans le nord-ouest du pays.

Les mines auraient été posées par les rebelles kurdes après la mort de plusieurs de leurs responsables dans des affrontements avec les militaires iraniens, selon le journal.

Les affrontements et actions armées se multiplient dans le nord-ouest de l'Iran. Les provinces de cette région, habitées de Kurdes, sont souvent le théâtre d'accrochages entre les forces de sécurité et les militants du Pejak.

L'Iran accuse régulièrement les Etats-Unis de chercher à fomenter des troubles ethniques en soutenant des groupes de rebelles dans les provinces iraniennes où vivent des minorités.

Attaques coordonnées de la Turquie et l'Iran Contre les rebelles kurdes en Irak

AP Associated Press

05 juin 2008 AP

La Turquie et l'Iran ont mené une série de frappes coordonnées contre les rebelles kurdes basés dans le nord de l'Irak, a annoncé jeudi un général turc, selon des informations télévisées.

Les deux pays avaient fait part de leur intention de coopérer contre les rebelles kurdes, mais ces déclarations confirment que Ankara et Téhéran agissent de concert contre le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui combat pour l'autonomie dans le sud-est de la Turquie, et le PEJAK, sa branche iranienne.

"Nous partageons des renseignements avec l'Iran, nous parlons, nous nous coordonnons", a déclaré le général Ilker Basbug, commandant des forces terrestres turques, cité par la télévision CNN-Turk.

Il a précisé qu'aucune opération coordonnée n'avait eu lieu au cours des deux derniers mois mais qu'une plus grande coopération était possible à l'avenir, si nécessaire.

Aucun détail n'a été donné sur les frappes ou les cibles visées. Le principal camp rebelle se trouve au Mt Qandil, à la frontière entre l'Irak et l'Iran.

Des dizaines de milliers de personnes ont été tuées dans la lutte pour l'autonomie du PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par les Etats-Unis.

L'armée turque a lancé des raids aériens contre des cibles rebelles kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak au cours des derniers mois. En février, elle a mené une opération terrestre de huit jours sans aller jusqu'à Qandil. AP

TURQUIE

Le général Ilker Basbug : nous travaillons en coordination avec l'Iran

Nouvelles d'Arménie

5 juin 2008, par Stéphane/ armenews

"Nos derniers offensives et raids ont infligé des pertes importantes à l'organisation terroriste (PKK)" a déclaré jeudi le commandant des Forces armées terrestres turques le général Ilker Basbug.

"L'organisation est en proie, depuis décembre, à un chaos intérieur" a ajouté le général lors d'un symposium international sur les "incertitudes au Proche-Orient (PO), son avenir et les problèmes de sécurité" organisé par le Centre d'étude et de recherches stratégiques (SAREM), au commandement des Académies militaires

turques à Istanbul.

"La Turquie, dans la mesure de ses moyens, contrôle sa frontière avec l'Irak, (à partir duquel s'infiltrèrent les terroristes PKK sur le territoire turc)" a précisé le général Basbug, en faisant part d'une coordination entre les autorités turques et iraniennes dans la lutte contre les séparatistes du PKK.

"Veiller à la sécurité le long de la frontière avec l'Irak est notre première priorité et la deuxième priorité est la frontière avec l'Iran" a-t-il ajouté.

"Dans les régions proches de l'Iran, nous

travaillons en coordination avec l'Iran, nous partageons des informations, nous parlons et planifions des opérations" a-t-il encore ajouté.

"Les Iraniens mènent des opérations du côté iranien de la frontière et nous faisons de même du côté turc" a-t-il précisé en ajoutant que de sérieux accrochages ont eu lieu entre les forces iraniennes et les rebelles du PKK.

"Malgré toutes les mesures prises, des petits groupes de terroristes continueront toujours de s'infiltrer sur le territoire turc" a-t-il également précisé.

AFP

TROIS PESHMERGAS TUÉS ET CINQ BLESSÉS DANS L'EST DE L'IRAK

SOULEIMANIYEH (Irak), 12 juin 2008 (AFP) - Trois membres des peshmergas, les forces militaires du Kurdistan irakien, ont été tués jeudi avant l'aube et cinq autres ont été grièvement blessés dans l'explosion d'une bombe dans la province de Diyala, à l'est de Bagdad, a-t-on appris de source kurde.

Les peshmergas ont été visés par une bombe artisanale qui a explosé au passage de leur véhicule, selon une source au sein des forces peshmergas.

L'incident s'est produit dans la nuit de mercredi à jeudi à Jalawla, dans la province de Diyala, où vivent des Kurdes chiites.

Les peshmergas participent à des opérations militaires dans la région.

TURKISH DAILY NEWS June 2, 2008

Tens of thousands in Istanbul rally for peace

ISTANBUL - Turkish Daily News

Tens of thousands of people gathered yesterday in Kadıköy district on Istanbul's Anatolian side demanding a "peaceful solution" to the Kurdish problem.

Many demonstrators at the gathering who spoke to the Turkish Daily News highlighted their demands for peace, while saying they do not believe that Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is sincere in his desire to solve the problem.

"He (Erdoğan) does not have any problems. We have. We would not be here if his words became reality," said Emine Üçgümbüz, voicing her opinion of the government's new action plan on the Southeastern Anatolia Project, or GAP. "We have seen all the pain. That is why we are in streets," she said.

The demonstration was held by the Peace Assembly, a civil society organization consisting of academics,

journalists, trade union representatives, intellectuals and political parties. "Edi Bese!" in Kurdish, meaning "Enough is enough!" was the slogan for the gathering. People also chanted other slogans, including, "Peace, not war." The crowd also chanted against Erdoğan.

"Lies, lies, lies," said a woman named Vahide, an elderly Kurdish participant who wore her traditional Kurdish garb and withheld her surname, when asked for her opinion of the GAP plan. "No one will vote for him," she said of Erdoğan.

"We want money to be spent for peace, not for war," said Aziz Elitoğ, a resident of Istanbul for the last 25 years who left his hometown of Bingöl because of the Kurdish conflict. Elitoğ said Kurdish people do not want to break away from Turkey but to live together. "Kurdish people are like partridges, and they are the hunters," he said of politicians.

The gathering is unlikely to be the last of its kind, as the Kurdish question will continue to exist, said another participant, a non-Kurd from the southern province of Adana, who declined to be named. "But we have hope, otherwise we would not be here," he continued, noting, "Opposition in Turkey is not well organized."

People at the gathering danced and sang to the music of well-known folk singers, despite the hot weather. Ayhan Bilgen, in his speech representing the Peace Assembly, called on the government to create a new constitution that would secure the institutional equality of Turks, Kurds and all citizens. Bilgen also said it would not be possible for Kurds and Turks to live together without allowing Kurdish language and literature to be freely presented in the public sphere.

United Press International

02 June 2008 UPI

Iran and Syria sign missile pact

Iran has created an independent missile command to be integrated with a Syrian.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps has created an independent missile command to be integrated with a Syrian missile program, military sources said.

The DEBKAF file news agency reported Sunday that the joint command was formalized in a treaty signed by the Syrian Defense Minister Hassan Turkmani in Tehran last week.

Under the agreement, Syria's missile units would come under the new Iranian missile section and their operations would be fully coordinated with Tehran.

Iranian officers are to be attached to Syrian units, while Syrian officers are posted to the Iranian command.

Military sources told DEBKAF file that Iran's control of four hostile missile fronts would virtually neutralize the American and Israeli anti-missile defense systems in the region.



Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (L) shakes hands with Syrian Defence Minister Hassan Turkmani prior to a meeting in Tehran on May 26. AFP

San Francisco Chronicle Jun 3, 2008

Kurdish official: Iraq should sharply boost oil output

By BARBARA SURK, Associated Press Writer

Iraq should boost crude oil export capacity to 6 million barrels a day, nearly three times the amount the country currently sends to international markets, a top Kurdish political leader urged Tuesday.

The goal set by Nechirvan Barzani, the prime minister of Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdish region, gave no proposed timetables and would far exceed even the nation's peak oil output shortly before the 1990 invasion of Kuwait. But the Kurds and the Iraqi government are locked in a dispute over the rights to sign oil contracts, and export levels remain a critical issue for both sides.

"We think Iraq needs to export more oil," Barzani told a news conference.

He added that talks over Iraq's long-awaited oil law will resume within two weeks in Baghdad, according to Dow Jones Newswires.

On Monday, Iraq's oil ministry said the country's oil production and exports have risen to their highest levels since the March 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

Iraq's exports reached 2.11 million barrels a day in May while the total output — which include exports and domestic consumption — stood at about 2.5 million barrels a day, spokesman Assem Jihad told The Associated Press.

The Energy Information Administration, part of the U.S. Energy Department, estimated Iraqi production at about 2.6 million barrels a day in early 2003. Production tapered off just before the U.S.-led invasion, according to the group.

Iraq sits on the world's third-largest proven oil reserves, totaling more than 115 billion barrels. But the industry is plagued by a lack of modern equipment and training after decades of U.N. sanctions, war and Saddam Hussein's ruinous rule. Saudi Arabia, OPEC's No. 1 producer, currently pumps between 10.5 million and 11 million barrels per day.

Iraq hopes to boost oil output to 3 million barrels a day by the end of 2008 and 4.5 million barrels a day by end of 2013. The country could earn about \$70 billion in oil revenues this year if crude oil prices remain high and the country maintains stability in major producing areas,

such as the southern city of Basra.

Iraqi lawmakers have been deadlocked over proposals for a new oil law that could include a framework to distribute revenues among Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish regions.

Kurds, however, fear losing control over their oil fields under the current proposals and have started signing their own deals directly with outside oil companies, including Austria's OMV AG and South Korea's SK Energy.

"It's important that we agree ... otherwise foreign companies won't come to invest," Barzani said.

But the Iraqi government considers the Kurds' contracts illegal and has threatened to prevent international oil companies doing business in Kurdistan from opportunities elsewhere in Iraq.

The Kurds maintain the deals — mostly production-sharing agreements — are in line with the Iraqi constitution.

"We don't think (the government) has the right to stop the deals," said Barzani.

Iraq Kurd PM says ready for power-sharing in Kirkuk

DUBAI (Reuters) - The prime minister of Iraq's Kurdish region said on Tuesday Kurds were willing to share power with Arabs in the city of Kirkuk -- a focus of rivalry between ethnic groups, largely because of its considerable oil wealth.

Kurds, a minority in Iraq as a whole, see Kirkuk as their ancient capital and had led the push for a referendum to establish control. Arabs encouraged to move to Kirkuk under Saddam Hussein want it to stay under Baghdad's control.

The dispute could threaten the relative stability in the largely Kurdish north, spared some of the ravages suffered by the rest of the country, but it also resonates beyond Iraqi borders. Turkey fears extension of Kurdish control to Kirkuk and surrounding oil fields would spawn a wealthy, and hostile, Kurdish state that could foment separatism in its south-east.

Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani said the Kurdish regional government that controls the north was

pushing for a solution over the status of Kirkuk but that this did not necessarily have to come in the form of referendums proposed so far.

The Kurdish parliament voted in December for a six-month delay in a proposed referendum, partly to give the United Nations time to come up with proposals for settling the issue.

"In Kirkuk, as Kurds, we are ready for power-sharing," Barzani told Reuters in Dubai.

"We are pushing for a solution, not especially a referendum. We have asked the UN to be technically involved because the situation is complicated," he said.

A referendum had been due by the end of 2007 to decide the settlement of multi-ethnic Kirkuk's fate. There were fears a referendum could stoke ethnic conflict by delivering power to one side or the other, or lead to disruptive movements of population as groups manoeuvre for influence.



The U.N. special representative to Iraq, Staffan de Mistura, said in April a peaceful settlement must be found through a political formula and not a hastily organised referendum that could trigger violence.

United Press International

\$4.5 billion development planned for Erbil

ERBIL, Iraq, June 3, 2008 (UPI) -- The Dubai-based Damac Properties Tuesday announced plans to develop a 170 million-square-foot development in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Damac issued a release announcing the launch of the Tarin Hills development in Erbil. It is the first Damac development in Iraq.

The development includes residential, retail, sports facilities and its own gas station, the statement said.

Damac officials announced the plan in a joint news conference with Kurdish Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani.

"The Tarin Hills development will not only help promote the global face of Erbil, it will also create jobs and support growth in related sectors, such as tourism and hospitality," Barzani said.

A 10-floor medical facility is planned to address the healthcare needs of future residents and the overall community.

"We are happy to contribute to the development of a new Kurdistan and believe that this investment will contribute towards the growth phase of the region and a landmark in Iraq development," Damac Chairman Hussain Sajwani said.

The initial phase is expected to be valued at \$4.5 billion.



KURDS TO OFFER NEW PROPOSALS ON OIL LAW

Gulf Daily News - DUBAI:

Iraq's Kurdish regional government will make fresh proposals to Baghdad in two weeks to iron out differences over the federal oil law, the region's Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani said yesterday.

Disputes between the largely autonomous northern region of Kurdistan and Baghdad have delayed the law for over a year. Iraq needs billions of dollars to modernise the oil industry and raise output after decades of sanctions and war, but uncertainty over the law has stalled international investment.

"Very soon, about two weeks from now, we will start negotiations to finalise the agreement," Barzani said.

The two sides will discuss a package of proposals covering the oil law, revenue sharing, the functions of the oil ministry and the national oil company, Barzani added.

"It is important for all of Iraq," he said. "Without that law oil companies cannot come into Iraq."

Earlier, the Kurdish region's top energy official Ashti Hawrami said he hoped Iraq's parliament would pass the law this year.

Barzani said he would also hold talks with the federal government over Baghdad's decision to halt oil exports to Austria's OMV and South Korea's SK Energy after the companies signed oil deals with the Kurdish region. Baghdad claims the deals were illegal.

"We don't think they have the right to stop these deals," Barzani said.

Baghdad controls Iraq's export pipelines, and until the Kurdish region reaches an agreement with the federal government it is unable to produce more oil.

The Kurdish region was ready to

pump 150,000 barrels per day (bpd) of oil, Barzani said.

Norwegian producer DNO is producing from wells in the Kurdish region and has built a pipeline to hook up to Iraq's main northern export route to Turkey, but has yet to receive an export licence from Baghdad.

Barzani said that the region was not exporting oil without Baghdad's consent. "We are not selling oil to anybody," he said.

9 KILLED IN ATTACK ON MOSUL POLICE

Suicide blast at provincial headquarters raises fear that Sunni militants are reorganizing

Sameer N. Yacoub, Associated Press

A suicide car bomber targeted the provincial police headquarters in Mosul on Monday, killing at least nine people and wounding dozens, police said. The attack underscored fear that Sunni insurgents are regrouping despite a U.S.-Iraqi offensive in the northern city.

Nobody claimed responsibility for the attack, but suicide operations are commonly associated with al Qaeda in Iraq - the main target of U.S.-Iraqi military operations to clear the city 225 miles northwest of Baghdad.

Salim Shakir said he was walking toward his house in the area when he was hit with shrapnel in the stomach and legs.

"We are shocked because we thought that the violent days had ended," the 47-year-old taxi driver said from his hospital bed. "This explosion shows that the insurgents are still active, and much is needed to stop them."

The U.S. military has said the terror network is on the run but retains the ability to conduct its trademark high-profile car bombings and suicide attacks. U.S. and Iraqi troops have faced relatively little resistance since launching the offensive on May 10, but commanders warn that many key insurgent leaders have fled to outlying areas and are planning future attacks.

On Monday, the attacker detonated his explosives-laden car about 8 p.m. as he approached a checkpoint allowing cars through concrete blast barriers surrounding the headquarters, located in a busy commercial district.

Those killed included five police officers and four civilians, while 46 other people were wounded, according to a police officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he

wasn't authorized to release the information.

The blast highlighted the fragility of recent security gains even as the Iraqi government struggles to take advantage of the relative calm in the country to make political progress.

Iraqi lawmakers said Monday they are stepping up negotiations on a draft law setting rules for provincial elections, due to begin in October. They warned that failure to reach agreement within the next two weeks may lead to a delay in the key vote to redistribute power among Iraq's fractured parties.

The elections to choose councils for Iraq's 18 provinces are seen as an important step in repairing the country's sectarian rifts, particularly by opening the door for greater Sunni Arab political representation.

Many Sunnis boycotted the last election for provincial officials, in January 2005, enabling Shiites and Kurds to win a disproportionate share of power at their expense - even in areas with substantial Sunni populations.

Followers of anti-U.S. cleric Muqtada al-Sadr also are hoping to make large gains in southern provinces, where many of the councils are dominated by rival Shiite parties in the ruling government coalition.

But disputes have arisen over organizational details in the draft law, such as the way candidates will be presented to voters.

Iraq's Independent Election Commission had said the law must be passed by June 1 for it to have time to organize the vote before the Oct. 1 deadline.

A delay means parliament will have to pass a separate law pushing back the election to No-



vember or December - which would be a setback for U.S. efforts to get Iraqi politicians to overcome differences.

"We are facing a big test. All blocs should work together in order to pass this law," said Abbas al-Bayati, a lawmaker from the largest Shiite bloc, the United Iraqi Alliance.

He and others expressed confidence a law could be passed by mid-June.

But **Kurdish** lawmaker Mahmoud Othman suggested that some groups currently in power were pushing for a delay to avoid losing their influence.

In a separate development, Iraqi officials said Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki will travel to Iran and Jordan next week. It will be the Shiite leader's second trip to Iran in nearly a year and comes as his government is cracking down on Shiite militias the United States says are supported by the Iranians. Tehran denies the allegations.

PEACEMAKER TURKEY FACES NEW THREAT

By Mohammed A Salih

WASHINGTON - An intensifying fight between Turkey and a reorganized Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) threatens to introduce a new element of instability to the Middle East. And this at a time when some of the most serious crises in the region are taken on by regional actors, ironically with Turkey itself playing a key role as a peace mediator.

That has left the United States in a dilemma over whether to continue with its traditional policy of giving a green-light for a militaristic approach by Turkey to deal with the long-standing Kurdish issue, or to pressure its longtime ally to try harder for a political solution.

Turkish and PKK sources have claimed since the start of this

year to have killed hundreds and dozens from the other side, respectively, signifying the resurgence of old hostilities in the region.

"We are at the threshold of a most critical era in terms of the PKK's influence," wrote Mehmet Ali Birand, a prominent Turkish colum-

nist, in the May 29 English-language Turkish Daily News, acknowledging the potentially destabilizing consequences of the current conflict.

While Turkey appeared triumphant after the capture of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in 1999, it has witnessed an escalation of attacks by Kurdish insurgents since 2007, raising fears that the country might be plunged into a new era of intra-Turk-Kurd fighting reminiscent of the 1980s and the 1990s.

The fight between the PKK and Turkey has claimed about 40,000 lives over two decades. The PKK is considered a terrorist group by Ankara and dozens of Western countries, including the US and European Union members.

Now, after years of relative inaction, all signs indicate the PKK has made a strong comeback and is gaining renewed momentum in Turkey and abroad.

"It's clear that PKK has reorganized itself. I was in Europe recently ... and I was amazed how much stronger the PKK is," said Aliza Mar-

cus, a journalist and author of *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence*.

"[PKK] has regained the support of many Kurds who are not necessarily outright PKK supporters but do not see another option," Marcus said.

As Turkey made international headlines last week for its role in bringing Syria and Israel, two long-standing foes, to the negotiating table, 1,000 Kurdish figures, ranging from parliamentarians to PKK affiliates, called on the EU and the US in a statement to appoint an international mediator to resolve the Kurdish question in Turkey.

With Turkey's strategic weight increasing in the eyes of policymakers in Washington - among other things, due to the need for a more solid partnership with Turkey over Iran's nuclear program and rising influence in the Middle East, and US pressure on Turkey to contribute more troops to fight a resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan - any prospects of instability within its North Atlantic Treaty Organization ally's borders

could significantly harm US designs for the region as a whole.

There is a strong likelihood that the fighting may spill over to neighboring Iraq, where the PKK's headquarters are based. The evidence for that is ongoing as Turkey continues on a regular basis to conduct air raids into Iraq's Kurdistan region in the north. That could drag Iraqi Kurds into the conflict as well.

Turkey launched a ground incursion in February into Iraqi Kurdistan amid initially consenting but increasingly apprehensive international reactions.

Fearing that the operation could destabilize the one relatively safe part of Iraq, Washington finally stepped in and US Defense Secretary Robert Gates anxiously warned Turkey that if it did not blend military operations with "economic and political measures", then "at a certain point the military efforts become less and less effective".

"That represented a frustration on the part of the US government that Turkey had for long promised re-

forms, and the idea was that after Ocalan was captured this would be the time for Turkey to make real changes when it came to the Kurdish issue and instead, Turkey did nothing," said Marcus.

Meantime, the PKK can take on an even wider dimension by getting Iran involved in the process, as a PKK-affiliated organization, known as the Party For Free Life in Kurdistan (PEJAK), is fighting Iran. PEJAK, which claims to have received aid

from Washington, said it had killed at least eight Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps in clashes inside Iran this week.

While that could be happy news to the US, it has the potential to speed up Iranian-Turkish cooperation on the matter. That comes as the US tries to distance Turkey from Iran as part of its policy to isolate Tehran at the regional and international levels.

As the prospects of a bigger conflict inside Turkey and its spillover to

regional countries get graver, some are suggesting that Turkey has to take its Kurdish issue more seriously. An early sign of that realization is beginning to take shape in Turkey as Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced the allocation of US\$12 billion to develop the economy of the Kurdish-dominated region of south-east Turkey.

Saying that Erdogan's economic development plan was not enough, Najmaddin Karim - whose Washing-

ton Kurdish Institute was a signatory to the statement by the 1,000 Kurdish figures - noted, "The issue of Kurds in Turkey is a political issue and an issue of identity and has to be addressed as such. The thing is that the Kurdish question is like the genie that is out of bottle now and can't be put back into the bottle anymore," said Karim.

StarTribune June 5, 2008

Turkish general says Turkey, Iran share intelligence, coordinate attacks on Kurdish rebels

By SUZAN FRASER, Associated Press Writer

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) -- Turkey and Iran have been carrying out coordinated strikes on Kurdish rebels based in northern Iraq, a top Turkish general said Thursday in the first military confirmation of Iranian-Turkish cooperation in the fight against separatists there.

Gen. Ilker Basbug, Turkey's land forces commander, said the two countries have been sharing intelligence and planned more coordinated attacks in the future against the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, and PEJAK, the group's Iranian wing.

"We are sharing intelligence with Iran, we are talking, we are coordinating," CNN-Turk television quoted Basbug as telling reporters on the sidelines of a security conference in Istanbul.

"When they start an operation, we do, too," the general said. "They carry out an operation from the Iranian side of the border, we from the Turkish side."

The report did not give any details on the strikes or the targets. The general said no coordi-

nated action had taken place in the past few months.

"We haven't done it in the past one or two months, but we can do it again," he said.

The PKK, which has bases in northern Iraq, has been fighting for self-rule in southeastern Turkey since 1984. Tens of thousands of people have died in the conflict. The main rebel camp is on Mount Qandil, which sits on the Iraqi-Iranian border.

In recent months, the Turkish military has launched several airstrikes on Kurdish rebel targets in northern Iraq. In February, it staged an eight-day, ground offensive.

Iran also has shelled northern Iraq. Tehran says rebels from PEJAK, the Party for Free Life in Kurdistan, a group fighting for Kurdish rights in Iran, also have bases on Mount Qandil.

In northern Iraq, PKK spokesman Ahmad Danas told The Associated Press that the group knew about the contacts between Turkey and Iran. But he said the strikes failed to dislodge the rebels.

"The sites bombed in the Mount Qandil area and other sites inside Iraqi territory have no impact on us because we had already left those sites," he said. "Militants have movable sites in rocky mountains that cannot be targeted."

The United States has labeled the PKK a terrorist organization and supports Turkey's fight against the group by providing intelligence on the rebels. But it also has urged restraint on Turkey, fearing the fight could undermine efforts to calm Iraq.

In Washington, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said after meeting with the Turkish foreign minister Thursday that the U.S., Turkey and Iraq are "on the same page about the desire to see the PKK not capable of carrying out attacks against Turkey."

"The PKK is an enemy of Iraq; it's an enemy of the United States; it's an enemy of Turkey; it's an enemy of the region," Rice said.

The Boston Globe June 5, 2008

Iran says kills 12 in clash near Iraq: report

TEHRAN (Reuters) - Iran said 12 members of an armed group and four border guards were killed in a clash near the Iraqi border, a news agency reported on Thursday.

Fars news agency said the armed group had planned to carry out "terrorist activities" in the Islamic state. It did not make clear when the clash happened and did not give details about the identity of those killed.

Iranian media said last month nine Kurdish rebels and three Iranian Revolutionary Guards were killed in fighting in northwestern Iran near the Turkish border.

Iranian forces have often clashed in Iraqi border areas with rebels from the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK), an offshoot of the Kurdis-

tan Workers Party (PKK) which took up arms in 1984 to fight for a Kurdish homeland in southeast Turkey.

"Some of the terrorists were killed in a clash with security forces and the others escaped to the other side of the border," Fars quoted Shahnam Rezaei, a police official in the province of West Azarbaijan, as saying.

"Four border guards from the town of Piranshar were martyred in the clash and one was wounded," Rezaei added.

Iran shares its western borders with Turkey and Iraq and a Turkish general said on Thursday his country was cooperating with Iran through the sharing of information and coordinated strikes against PKK guerrillas in northern Iraq.

General Ilker Basbug, the second most powerful man in the Turkish military, said the two countries had not carried out any coordinated strikes in the last "one or two months" but would do so if necessary.

The Turkish military has regularly attacked PKK rebel positions this year in the mountains of northern Iraq, where several thousands are believed to be holed up.

Analysts say PJAK has bases in northern Iraq from where they operate against Iran.



Voices of Iraq
Jun 4, 2008

Turcoman MP Welcomes Kurdish PM Statements On Kirkuk Power Sharing

Baghdad, Jun 4, (VOI)- Turcoman Lawmaker Fawzi Akram Tarzi on Wednesday welcomes statements of Iraq's Kurdistan Prime Minister Negervan Barazani, during which he expressed Kurdish readiness to share all ethnic groups in ruling Kirkuk. "The Turcomans received Barzani's statements with great optimism and the

Turcoman leaderships realized that the Kirkuk cause will not be solved without understanding as well as to take into consideration the privacy of the city," Tarzi, a Sadrist, told Aswat al-Iraq - Voices of Iraq (VOI). Barzani had expressed in statements from Dubai yesterday the Kurds' readiness to share power with Arabs in the

city of Kirkuk, highlighting the importance role of the U.N. to solve this cause. The Turkoman MP voiced belief that in case these statements implemented would contribute in realizing peace and security throughout Kirkuk.

Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution is related to the normalization of the situation in Kirkuk an important and mixed city of Kurds, Turkmen, Christians and Arabs. Kurds seek to include the city in the autonomous Iraq's Kurdistan region, while Sunni Arabs,

Turkmen and Shiite Arabs oppose the incorporation. The article currently stipulates that all Arabs in Kirkuk be returned to their original locations in southern and central Iraqi areas, and formerly displaced residents returned to Kirkuk, 250 km northeast of Baghdad. A referendum, provided for in the Iraqi constitution, was scheduled to be held by the end of 2007 on including the city into the Kurdistan region, but was postponed for six months.

United Press International

Kirkuk delaying provincial laws, MP says

BAGHDAD, June 4, 2008 (UPI) -- A lawmaker with the Islamic Virtue Party said Wednesday the exploitation of religious symbols by parties in Kirkuk is holding back provincial council laws.

Basem Sherif said that the use of "religious symbols and mosques' platforms to promote the elections are one of the main reasons of the delay in approving the provincial council laws by the Iraqi Parliament," Voices of Iraq reported.

Terms of the provincial council laws include Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution, which reverses the "Arabization" policy of former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

Article 140 specifies that Arabs in Kirkuk should return to southern and central Iraq while displaced residents of Kirkuk return north. Kurdish officials want

Kirkuk to incorporate into Iraqi Kurdistan while Sunni and Shiite Arabs, as well as members of the Turkomen ethnic group, oppose the measure.

Meanwhile, Turkic lawmaker Fawzi Akram Tarzi of the Sadrist Movement, the party loyal to Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr, praised statements by Kurdish Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani welcoming all ethnic groups into the political process in Kirkuk.

"The Turkomen received Barzani's statements with great optimism, and the Turkomen leadership realized that the Kirkuk cause will not be solved without understanding as well as to take into consideration the privacy of the city," he said.

United Press International

UNAMI reports on Iraqi border disputes

BAGHDAD, June 5, 2008 (UPI) - - The U.N. mission in Iraq Thursday presented an analysis to the Iraqi government concerning possible resolutions to internal border disputes.

The U.N. Assistance Mission in Iraq examined four districts in Iraq to develop benchmarks for the Iraqi government to reach broader national reconciliation as part of the Iraqi Constitution. Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution seeks to reverse ethnic policies implemented by Saddam Hussein.

UNAMI examined the city of Akre in Ninewa province. It is administered by the provincial government of Dohuk because it lies between Kurdish and Baghdad authority. UNAMI recommended freedom of movement between both provinces and fair hiring practices for government and civil service positions.

In Hamdaniya, also in Ninewa, UNAMI suggested incorporating Arabic and Christian members into official duties as a confidence-building measure to

settle displacement issues among those groups.

The city of Makhmour is administered by the provincial government of Ninewa despite its location within the province of Erbil. UNAMI recommended restoring Makhmour to Erbil.

The city of Mandali in Diyala province experienced widespread displacement of Kurds and Turkomen during the Iran-Iraq war. UNAMI recommends implementing local processes to address reconstruction issues involving all members of that city.

UNAMI said it started analysis on scenarios to settle the status of the province of Kirkuk and intends to present those findings in the next few weeks.

"I want to stress that the government of Iraq alone has the sovereign responsibility to decide on the process and methodology used to address disputed internal boundaries," said the U.N. envoy to Iraq, Staffan de Mistura

United Press International

Sons of Iraq not effective in Mosul

MOSUL, Iraq, June 5, 2008 (UPI) -- The military strategy to destroy al-Qaida in Mosul does not include tactics for the use of the Sunni paramilitary force Sons of Iraq, U.S. officials say.

The Sons of Iraq are a U.S.-financed paramilitary force typically charged with policing roles in Iraq. It grew out of the Sunni Awakening movement in 2005 as a means to drive al-Qaida out of western Anbar province.

The Sons of Iraq operate best in communities where the sectarian conflict is clearly defined between two opposing elements. Mosul, however, is a diverse community of Arab, Kurdish, Christian and Turkomen and therefore not a theater for the Sunni force, the official newspaper of the U.S. military, Stars

and Stripes, said Thursday.

Lt. Col. Robert Molinari with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment said the official training of Iraqi national security forces makes it the more effective fighting force for operations in Mosul.

Third Armored Cavalry platoon commander 1st Lt. Peter Cacossa also noted that the Iraqi armed forces are independent and highly trained units capable of largely defining their own operations.

"The Iraqi army has demonstrated an agility and freedom of movement," Molinari said, backing his counterpart's sentiments. "(Sons of Iraq) is an armed, paid neighborhood watch. You can't move them around."

United Press International

Iraqi Kurd oil ready with no place to go

BAGHDAD, June 6, 2008 (UPI) -- Iraqi Kurds said they are ready to ship \$18 million worth of oil a day, but political disputes have hampered shipments.

The Kurds have signed deals with numerous foreign companies, but the bordering countries of Turkey, Iran and Syria have refused to extend transit rights for Kurdish oil, Assaman News Service reported Friday.

Iraq's Oil Ministry has also retaliated against companies that sign deals with

the Kurds, who control Iraq's Arbil, Sulaimaniya and Dahouk provinces and are trying to gain control of the oil-rich city Kirkuk, Assaman reported.

The Kurds have said 150,000 barrels a day could be shipped. Recently, they have sent signals to the central government in Baghdad that they would like to resolve their differences.

But, Baghdad has insisted the oil profits from Kurdish provinces should go the country's central bank, the report said.

As Iraq ramps up oil production, it turns to foreign firms

By Simon Webb and Ahmed Rasheed
Reuters

DUBAI: Iraq is exporting more oil than it has for years and is on the verge of signing deals with oil majors that could quickly take output higher, oil officials said.

Baghdad expects this month to conclude negotiations for six oil-field service contracts with international companies that could further increase output this year.

The deals could provide the extra 200,000 barrels a day in exports that Iraq wants from the southern Basra terminal by the end of 2008. Basra accounts for most of Iraqi exports, shipping more than 1.5 million barrels a day.

"Provided they are signed promptly, these deals could give quick progress," said an executive at a Western oil company negotiating for one of the contracts. "They are the first step towards real improvement in a sector that has been under stress for 30 years."

Baghdad expects exports in June to reach 2.2 million barrels a day, the highest for monthly shipments since the U.S.-led invasion of March 2003. Baghdad sees exports rising further, to 2.3 million barrels a day, by the end of 2008.

The oil sector has increased output as security has improved, but oil

companies remain nervous.

Iraq will contract international oil companies to help manage operations at its largest-producing fields like Rumaila in the south, supplying equipment to refurbish dilapidated infrastructure.

The two-year deals call for a total output increase of 600,000 barrels a day. Once the contracts are signed, Iraq plans to offer the same fields in a bidding round for longer-term development.

The industry needs billions of dollars for its renewal and expansion. The service deals are part of stop-gap measures to attract part of that investment in the absence of a much-needed oil law.

Political disputes have stalled the passage of an oil law through Parliament for over a year. The legislation aims to set the terms and extent of foreign investment in developing the world's third-largest oil reserves, after Saudi Arabia and Canada.

"Considerable progress can be made without the law," said Muhammad-Ali Zainy, senior energy analyst at the London-based Center for Global Energy Studies. "These contracts are a big step forward and will help bring new methods and technology to these important fields."

Improved security has yielded gains of nearly 500,000 barrels a day in

northern exports since last summer. Sabotage had kept that production mostly idle since the invasion.

Baghdad hopes to see Kirkuk oil exports up by another 100,000 barrels a day by the end of the year.

The oil minister, Hussain al-Shahristani, said this week that he was optimistic that Iraqi forces would keep security tight at oil facilities, helping to bolster the confidence of foreign investors discouraged by sectarian violence.

Rising output and exports are allowing Iraq to cash in on record oil prices, and they have raised the prospect of an accelerated recovery for its shattered economy.

Iraq has a 10-year plan to lift output from 2.5 million barrels a day this year to 6 million barrels per day, Shahristani said this week. It aims to hit 4.5 million barrels a day in five years.

But for those larger long-term gains, Iraq needs the oil law in place so that international oil companies can play a bigger role in developing untapped fields.

"We remain very cautious in terms of further capacity expansion," said Alex Munton, analyst at the global consulting company Wood Mackenzie. "Iraq has almost reached the point, simply by repairing the damage of the

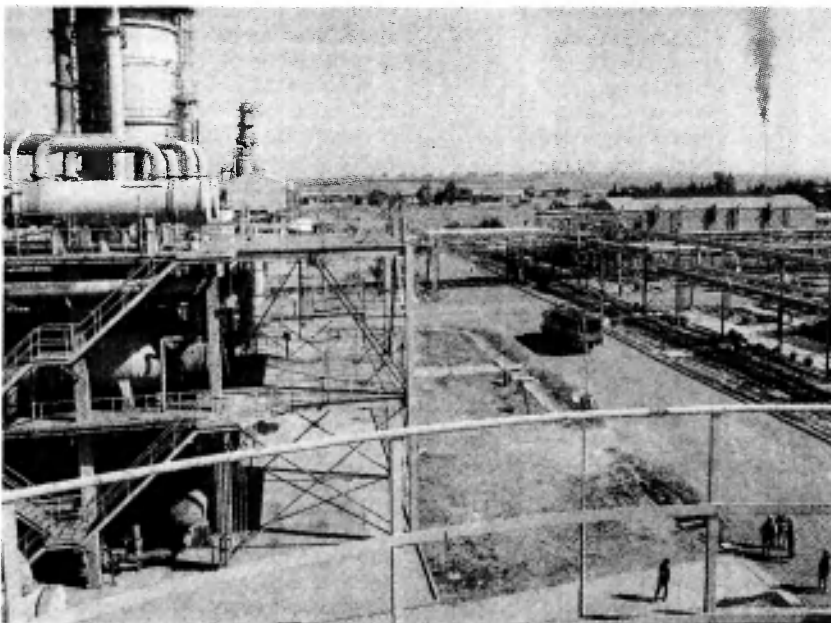
last few years and adding security around main pipelines, of maximum capacity with the infrastructure in place. But there is little likelihood of being able to add to that without much larger-scale investment and the assistance of international oil companies."

Even with the law, major international oil companies have said it would be years before security improved enough for them to be able to send ground staff to Iraq.

They intend to manage the new technical service contracts from outside the country, and will rely on Iraq's state oil companies to execute their plans.

The law is meant to help bridge divides between Iraqi Shiites, Sunni Arabs and Kurds. Control of oil reserves is one of the principal disputes.

The prime minister of the Iraqi Kurdish region said Tuesday that he would take fresh proposals to Baghdad on the oil law in the next two weeks. The Kurds' top energy official said he hoped the law would pass this year.



Staton R. Winter/Bloomberg News

Oil refining in Kirkuk, northern Iraq. Improved security has yielded gains of nearly 500,000 barrels a day in northern exports for the year. But for longer-term gains, Iraq needs an oil law to allow international oil companies a bigger role in developing fields.

Les juges d'Ankara mettent la vie politique turque sous tutelle

TURQUIE

La décision de la Cour constitutionnelle sur le foulard illustre l'ambiguïté du rôle des magistrats.

Istanbul

L'ANNULATION par la Cour constitutionnelle, jeudi, de la loi qui autorisait le foulard dans les universités constitue le dernier exemple de l'intervention de la justice dans l'arène politique. « La Cour montre que la souveraineté appartient au pouvoir judiciaire », titrait le quotidien *Taraf*. Pour les partisans de l'adhésion à l'Union européenne, c'est l'institution judiciaire dans son ensemble qui a besoin d'être réformée. « C'est la même mentalité qui conduit à poursuivre les intellectuels au nom de l'article 301 du Code pénal ou le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) », estime Orhan Kemal Cengiz, avocat à la tête d'une association des droits de l'homme. Car en Turquie, les magistrats assument un rôle politique et le droit

est utilisé comme un instrument pour accomplir leur mission.

« La majorité des juges et des procureurs est formatée par l'idéologie républicaine, la perception démocratique est absente, constate Ümit Kardas, ancien juge militaire. Depuis sa création, la République a deux peurs : la charia et le séparatisme. Qui permettent de justifier le maintien d'un pouvoir militaire. Les magistrats sont un rouage de ce système et sont donc autorisés à dépasser les limites du droit. »

« Obsessions »

En 2007, ces mêmes juges avaient fait obstacle à l'élection d'Abdullah Gül en annulant le premier tour de la présidentielle. Ce sont eux également qui se prononceront sur l'interdiction du parti au pouvoir, l'AKP, en cours d'examen. « L'oreille de la Cour constitutionnelle est très sensible à la voix de l'armée », souligne Ümit Kardas. Commentant la décision des juges qui ont estimé que la loi sur le foulard violait la laïcité, le chef de l'état-major a d'ailleurs déclaré

qu'elle était « l'expression de ce qui est une évidence ».

L'autre obsession de ces magistrats concerne les revendications identitaires kurdes. Les maires du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP), accusé d'être la vitrine politique du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), sont soumis à un harcèlement judiciaire. La chasse au « séparatisme » se niche dans des recoins insoupçonnés. Ainsi, les lettres « Q », « W » et « X », parce qu'elles n'existent pas dans l'alphabet turc, mettraient en danger l'intégrité du territoire : Osman Baydemir, édile de Diyarbakir, contre qui 24 procès ont été ouverts, comparait pour l'utilisation de ces lettres hors la loi.

La fondation Tesev a dressé le portrait-robot d'une corporation conservatrice, antilibérale et qui se méfie de l'UE. « Nous avons interrogé 51 juges et procureurs pour comprendre comment l'idéologie influençait leurs pratiques, explique Volkan Aytar. Leurs réflexes sont axés sur la sécurité. » Ainsi, un juge sur deux considère que les droits de

l'homme peuvent mettre en danger l'État, et la majorité pense que la défense de l'État doit passer avant celle du citoyen. La confiscation de milliers de biens immobiliers aux minorités chrétiennes s'inscrit dans cette logique. Pour les gardiens du dogme, égratigner la mémoire du fondateur de la République constitue un sacrilège. En mars, un professeur a été condamné à quinze mois de prison avec sursis pour insulte à l'héritage d'Atatürk : il avait critiqué le kéralisme, « davantage régressif que progressiste ».

Cet idéal républicain doit aussi être protégé des « impérialismes » de Washington et de Bruxelles. Dans son acte d'accusation contre l'AKP, le procureur de la Cour de cassation accuse les États-Unis de soutenir un régime islamique en Turquie. Et « l'UE implique une redistribution complète des rôles, c'est-à-dire la fin de la suprématie de ceux qui sont désignés sur ceux qui sont élus, décrypte Orhan Kemal Cengiz. Les bureaucrates sont engagés dans une lutte à mort pour leur survie. »

LAURE MARCHAND

Le Monde

Mercredi 4 juin 2008

John McCain s'en prend à l'Iran d'Ahmadinejad et au candidat Obama



John McCain, futur candidat républicain à l'élection présidentielle de novembre aux États-Unis, a porté une nouvelle attaque contre celui qui pourrait être son rival démocrate, Barack Obama, critiquant vivement sa volonté affichée de dialoguer avec des chefs d'États hostiles aux États-Unis.

M. McCain qui s'adressait, à Washington, à la conférence annuelle de l'Aipac

(American Israel Public Affairs Committee), principale organisation de lobbying pro-israélien non confessionnelle, lundi 2 juin, à la veille de la fin du marathon des primaires, mardi, avec le vote du Montana et du Dakota du Sud, a été très applaudi lorsqu'il a déclaré : « Il est difficile de voir ce que rapporterait un sommet avec le président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, sinon une tirade antisémite et une audience mondiale pour un homme qui nie l'Holocauste. » Agitant le spectre d'un Iran nucléaire, un « risque inacceptable », M. McCain a expliqué que « l'idée que [les Iraniens] recherchent l'arme nucléaire parce que nous refusons d'ouvrir des pourparlers au niveau présidentiel est un contre-sens historique grave ».

Sur l'Irak, le candidat républicain a accusé M. Obama de vouloir à tout prix retirer les troupes américaines, « quelles que soient les conditions et les recommandations » des responsables militaires sur le terrain. « Si nos soldats sont soumis à un retrait forcé, nous risquons une guerre civile généralisée, un génocide et l'échec d'un État au cœur du Moyen-Orient : les terroristes d'Al-Qaïda se réjouiraient de la défaite des États-Unis », a-t-il prévenu.

Hari Sevugan, porte-parole de M. Obama, a immédiatement dénoncé, sur un

ton tout aussi cinglant, le discours de M. McCain, présenté comme une façon de « doubler la mise sur la politique ratée » du président George Bush. « John McCain promet quatre ans supplémentaires d'une politique qui a renforcé l'Iran, au détriment de la sécurité des États-Unis et d'Israël », a accusé M. Sevugan, en soulignant que M. Obama avait toujours affirmé son intention de consulter l'état-major en Irak avant de retirer les troupes.

Un sondage publié lundi par l'institut Gallup révèle que les deux tiers des Américains (67 %) sont favorables à ce que leur président rencontre les dirigeants de pays considérés comme des ennemis des États-Unis, comme le propose M. Obama. Quelque 70 % des électeurs indépendants, 79 % des démocrates, et même 48 % des républicains approuveraient l'approche du sénateur de l'Illinois. Mercredi, Hillary Clinton et Barack Obama devaient s'adresser à leur tour aux membres de l'Aipac. ■

NICOLAS BOURCIER (AVEC AFP)

AFP

DEUX REBELLES KURDES ET UN SOLDAT TUÉS EN TURQUIE

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 9 juin 2008 (AFP) - Deux rebelles séparatistes kurdes ont été tués lundi au cours d'affrontements avec les forces de sécurité dans l'est de la Turquie, ont indiqué des sources de sécurité locales.

Par ailleurs, un soldat a été tué lundi et quatre autres militaires blessés dans l'explosion d'une mine dans le sud-est de la Turquie, selon ces sources.

Dans une région montagneuse près de la localité d'Ovacik, dans la province de Tunceli, des combats entre un groupe de militants du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) et les forces de sécurité ont fait deux morts dans les rangs du PKK, a-t-on précisé de mêmes sources.

De violents combats étaient encore en cours dans cette zone, a-t-on précisé.

Dans un incident séparé dans la province de Hakkari (sud-est), dans une zone proche de la frontière avec l'Irak, des rebelles du PKK ont fait exploser par télécommande une mine lors du passage d'un véhicule militaire, tuant l'un des occupants et blessant quatre autres, selon les autorités locales.

L'armée turque a renforcé son action contre le PKK depuis décembre, procédant à plusieurs raids aériens contre des bases rebelles situés dans le nord de l'Irak. Elle a aussi effectué une incursion terrestre d'une semaine dans le Kurdistan irakien où Ankara affirme que plus de 2.000 rebelles kurdes ont trouvé refuge.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, a entamé en 1984 une lutte pour obtenir l'indépendance du sud-est anatolien qui a fait plus de 37.000 morts.

AFP

TURQUIE : L'ARMÉE ÉTABLIT DES ZONES DE SÉCURITÉ POUR COMBATTRE LE PKK

ANKARA, 9 juin 2008 (AFP) - L'armée turque a annoncé lundi avoir établi six zones de sécurité temporaires du 12 juin au 12 septembre dans le sud-est du pays dans le cadre de la lutte contre les rebelles séparatistes kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit).

Les coordonnées communiquées sur le site internet de l'état-major des armées correspondent à six zones non-urbaines et montagneuses des provinces de Siirt, Sirnak et Hakkari, proches de la frontière avec l'Irak, ainsi que de celle de Van, riveraine de l'Irak.

Depuis 2007, l'armée turque place régulièrement sous régime de sécurité temporaire des zones proches de l'Irak. Des points de contrôle sont établis aux abords de ces zones et seuls les civils y résidant ou y travaillant peuvent y accéder après une fouille minutieuse de leurs véhicules.

L'armée turque a mené plusieurs raids aériens depuis la mi-décembre et une opération terrestre d'une semaine fin février contre les rebelles du PKK retranchés dans le nord de l'Irak. Ceux-ci se servent de cette région comme d'une base arrière pour leurs actions en Turquie.

AFP

LE PARLEMENT TURC APPROUVE LE PRINCIPE D'UNE CHAÎNE TV EN KURDE

ANKARA, 11 juin 2008 (AFP) - Le parlement turc a approuvé jeudi une loi autorisant une chaîne de télévision publique en langue kurde, une promesse que le gouvernement avait faite à la communauté kurde de Turquie.

Le texte de loi, qui permet de lever les restrictions sur des émissions en langues étrangères devra, pour entrer en vigueur, être entériné par le président de la République.

Le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan avait affirmé au mois de mars que la télévision nationale TRT ouvrirait une chaîne spéciale pour des émissions en kurde, en persan et en arabe dans le sud-est de la Turquie, frontalier avec l'Irak et l'Irak.

TRT avait lancé en 2004 un programme hebdomadaire de 30 minutes en langue kurde brisant ainsi un tabou dans un pays où il y a encore 15 ans l'usage du kurde en public était interdit.

Le programme avait cependant été critiqué pour son manque de contenu et sa qualité médiocre.

Les télévisions et radios privées ont également été autorisées à diffuser des programmes en langue kurde.

Le gouvernement de M. Erdogan, qui cherche à priver les rebelles kurdes de tout soutien populaire, se voit contraint de faire des gestes politiques et économiques en direction de l'importante communauté kurde.

Le gouvernement a promis d'investir 15 milliards de dollars dans les infrastructures dans le sud-est du pays, la région la plus pauvre de Turquie.

Cette région est le théâtre de violences depuis 1984 lorsque le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) y a pris les armes contre le gouvernement d'Ankara.

Le conflit a fait quelque 37.000 morts.

AFP

UN SOLDAT TURC TUÉ DANS L'EXPLOSION D'UNE MINE

ANKARA, 12 juin 2008 (AFP) - Un soldat turc a été tué jeudi dans l'explosion d'une mine posée par des rebelles séparatistes kurdes dans le sud-est anatolien, dans une zone toute proche de la frontière irakienne, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Le militaire tué faisait partie d'une unité qui menait une opération de ratissage dans une zone montagneuse de la province de Hakkari, où sont particulièrement actifs les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Le PKK a régulièrement recours à des mines commandées à distance dans ses opérations contre les forces de sécurité.

Le PKK est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne. Il mène depuis 1984 une insurrection pour l'indépendance du sud-est anatolien, dont la population est majoritairement kurde. Le conflit a fait plus de 37.000 morts selon les chiffres officiels.

AFP

TURQUIE: UN REBELLE KURDE TUÉ DANS DES COMBATS AVEC L'ARMÉE

ANKARA, 14 juin 2008 (AFP) -- Un rebelle kurde du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) a été tué samedi dans le sud-est de la Turquie lors de combats avec les forces de sécurité, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolie.

L'accrochage a eu lieu dans une zone rurale de la province de Bingöl alors que l'armée effectuait une opération de ratissage, a affirmé l'agence, indiquant que le rebelle abattu était un responsable local du PKK.

Des opérations se poursuivaient pour intercepter quatre autres rebelles bles-

sés, mais qui sont parvenus à prendre la fuite, selon Anatolie, qui ajoute que les forces de sécurité ont découvert à proximité du lieu de l'affrontement une cache du PKK contenant de nombreuses armes, munitions et provisions.

Le PKK est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne. Il mène depuis 1984 une insurrection pour l'indépendance du sud-est anatolien, dont la population est majoritairement kurde. Le conflit a fait plus de 37.000 morts selon les chiffres officiels.

Baykal hooks to ethnicity in the Southeast

ANKARA – Turkish Daily News

The main opposition leader reiterated yesterday his position on the need to tolerate different ethnic identities, but did not offer any well-defined solutions to the Southeast's Kurdish issue.

The state must be proud of the ethnic identities it harbors. It cannot pursue a politics of assimilation, Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Deniz Baykal said at his party's central executive committee meeting during his tour in the southeastern city of Diyarbakır. Baykal is currently on a tour of the region.

Everyone should be able to learn their mother tongue and publication in maternal language must be allowed, he underlined in a speech that dwelt heavily on the issue of ethnicity. The state sees only human beings, it does not see the ethnic identity behind them.

Turkey gathers different ethnic groups together, and it is not a headhunter state, Baykal said, highlighting a position on ethnicity he articulated on the first day of his tour. People involved in terrorism must be convinced to do otherwise. Psychology, tensions and state of enmity that feeds terror must be replaced by dialogue, Baykal urged.

During our work in Urfa (on Wednesday), we realized that our party receives more attention and concluded we need to visit the region more frequently, Baykal suggested. We all know that the CHP rejects ethnic enmity. We are everybody's friend and we love Kurds. Describing

relations between CHP and Kurds is simple. It involves love and respect, Baykal said.

The CHP was shut out of the southeast region in the most recent general elections, scoring merely 2 percent in the region's major city of Diyarbakır. The CHP leadership was criticized for neglecting the region and the Kurdish issue in general.

Baykal booed

Baykal was protested by two groups voicing disparate views upon his arrival in Diyarbakır. A group of 15 people, allegedly including some pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) members, booed the convoy carrying CHP members.

The second group appeared as Baykal's bus arrived in front of the hotel where the Central Executive Board meeting would take place, yelling that Baykal should, Go to Denmark! a country where caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed were published. The crowd started shouting slogans, including Mohammed's army CHP's bane! and Down with the CHP! Former CHP Diyarbakır Deputy Mesut Değer spoke with the protesters, guiding them away from the hotel's entrance.

Baykal was calm toward protesters, saying they were exercising their democratic rights. No one can insult our Prophet, or our book or our beliefs under the disguise of freedom of thought. Freedom of thought does not allow blasphemy, said Baykal. We respect everybody's prophet just



DIYARBAKIR: The CHP was shut out of the southeast region in the most recent general elections, scoring merely 2 percent in the region's major city of Diyarbakır. Hurriyet photo

as we demand respect for Mohammed, he maintained.

The CHP was in political trouble earlier when its General Secretary Önder Sav's words belittling an elderly man about to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca were leaked to the press.

Baykal's words were of no avail soothing protesters waiting outside, who through bottles and tomatoes at the bus carrying CHP elite.

THE DAILY STAR

REGIONAL

June 06, 2008

Kurds' readiness to end Kirkuk impasse raises hopes for stability

Barzani signals willingness to forgo referendum on oil-rich area

Mohammed A. Salih - Inter Press Service

WASHINGTON: A possible breakthrough over the fate of the contentious Iraqi province of Kirkuk appears to be under way, and could be a significant source of relief for the US in its attempts to stabilize the country. On Tuesday, a top Kurdish official explicitly said for the first time that Kurds were ready to break a stalemate that has been ongoing for years, if not decades, raising hopes the potential time bomb of Iraq could be defused.

"In Kirkuk, as Kurds, we are ready for power-sharing," Nechirvan Barzani, prime minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, was quoted as saying by the Reuters news agency in Dubai. "We are pushing for a solution, not especially a referendum. We have asked the UN to be technically involved because the situation is complicated," he added.

Barzani's remarks signal the Kurds' new willingness to compromise over the oil-rich city after longtime resistance to any settlement other than a popular referendum. Because Kurds' numbers in Kirkuk have grown since 2003, Kurdish insistence on a referendum was interpreted by others as a desire to take over the city.

"It seems to be good news because [Kurdish leaders Masoud] Barzani and [Iraqi President Jalal] Talabani have been under tremendous pressure from their base to pursue the maximum in various areas, including pieces of territory in Kirkuk and beyond," said Wayne White, who worked as head of the State Department's intelligence team in Iraq from 2003 to 2005.

Under the Iraqi Constitution, a referendum was to have been held in Kirkuk late last year in which people would have voted on whether the province would join Iraqi Kurdistan, remain under Baghdad's jurisdiction or be given special status as an independent region. The referendum was not held, and the deadline was extended for another six months. It expires at the end of June, but it is highly unlikely to take place this month due to tremendous opposition from various Iraqi groups, neighboring countries and the US. Instead, the United Nations' special envoy to Iraq, Staffan de Mistura, has been tasked with seeking other possible solutions. While the US military and its Iraqi allies conduct operations to pacify the war-torn country, Kirkuk has long been flash-

ing in the background as a likely point for the eruption of a civil war.

"The US has been counseling restraint [on Kirkuk] because of the danger of upsetting the apple cart of increased security successes," White said.

Kurdish leaders have been in a dilemma for a long time, finding it extremely hard to make any major concessions on Kirkuk, an issue with a deeply emotional dimension in contemporary Kurdish history.

In 1975, the Kurds' autonomy arrangements with Baghdad broke up after Kurdish leader Mulla Mustafa Barzani, grandfather of Nechirvan Barzani, refused to back down on Kurdish claims to Kirkuk. That legacy has been very hard up to now for any Kurdish leader to move away from. Although a concession on Kirkuk could erode the popularity of the two major Kurdish parties - the Kurdistan Democratic Party and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan - among Iraq's Kurds and beyond, it could bring them some major gains as well.

Any such deal can improve Kurds' ties with Turkey, which has been indirectly threatening Kurds with military action if they take over Kirkuk. It could

also convince the Iraqi government to make serious concessions toward Kurds, for instance, recognizing their controversial oil deals with foreign firms which Baghdad and Washington do not look upon favorably. And it could improve the prospects of security for Kurdistan and establish trust with the neighboring communities of Sunni Arabs, Turkomans and Shiites in Iraq.

The softened stance by Kurdish leaders was welcomed by the city's Turkomans, who have boycotted the Kirkuk provincial council for months. Like Kurds, Turkomans claim ownership of Kirkuk and some of their major political parties have been fiercely resisting an attachment of Kirkuk to the neighboring Kurdish region.

"The Turkomans received Barzani's statements with great optimism," Akram Tarzi, a Turkoman member of the Iraqi Parliament from the bloc of Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, told Voices of Iraq news agency. "The Turkoman leadership realized that the Kirkuk cause will not be solved without understanding."

United Press International

Baghdadis frustrated, Kurdish MP says

BAGHDAD, June 6, 2008 (UPI)

Baghdad residents are increasingly frustrated with insurgent activity and are cooperating with military forces, a Kurdish lawmaker said Friday.

"People in Baghdad are exhausted by militias and insurgents, and they are tired of violence," Farzand Bawani of the Kurdistan Alliance said Friday.

The strength of Sunni militant groups operating in Iraq is in decline as their foreign supporters are bowing to U.S. pressure to stop financing the insurgency, he said, adding local residents are also pressuring the militias.

"I can say that 80 percent of Baghdad citizens are now cooperating with and supporting government security forces so that security can be sustained in the

capital," he told The Kurdish Globe Friday.

The U.S. military and various media outlets reported recently that violence in the Iraqi capital is at its lowest level in four years.

Bawani also noted relations between Baghdad and Iraqi Kurdistan are on the mend due to talks between the Kurdistan Regional Government and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

"Resuming talks between the KRG and Baghdad to discuss KRG oil contracts and Peshmerga (armed Kurdish fighter) issues was the result of Kurdish leaders' decisions to support Nouri al-Maliki in fighting the Mehdi Army (Shiite paramilitary force)," he said.



Voices of Iraq
Jun 6, 2008

UN recommendations on disputed areas "disappointing" – Kudish MP

Baghdad, Jun 6, (VOI) – An Iraqi lawmaker said on Friday that the recommendations of the UN on disputed areas were "disappointing and would not solve the existing problem."

"The recommendations suggest that the UN workers do not realize the dimensions of the Iraqi differences over the disputed areas," Mahmoud Othman, a member of the Iraqi Parliament from the Kurdistan Coalition (KC), told *Aswat al-Iraq – Voices of Iraq – (VOI)*. Othman, whose KC is the second largest bloc in the Iraqi parliament with 55 out of 275 seats, expressed concerns that these UN recommendations "might create problems among the political rivals," hoping, however, the world body would forge another proposal that would guarantee the rights of everyone. The UN mission in Iraq had recommended on Thursday to include four of the disputed areas within the administrations of both the central Iraqi government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The UN recommended that placing the districts of al-Hamdaniya and Mandili under the central government's administration while the Kurds are to run the districts of Makhmour and Aqra. Othman said these solutions are not welcomed by the Iraqi political powers, which he blamed for "allowing foreign

interference in Iraq's internal affairs". "If the Iraqis had reached an agreement among themselves, the UN and other agencies would never have intervened," said Othman. Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution is related to normalization in Kirkuk, an important and mixed city of Kurds, Turcomans, Christians, Arabs and Assyrians. Kurds seek to include the city into the autonomous Iraq's Kurdistan region, while Sunni Muslims, Turcomans and Shiites oppose the incorporation. The article stipulates that all Arabs in Kirkuk be returned to their original locations in southern and central Iraqi areas, and formerly displaced residents returned to Kirkuk, 250 km northeast of Baghdad. The article also calls for conducting a census to be followed by a referendum to let the inhabitants decide whether they would like Kirkuk to be annexed to the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan region or having it as an independent province. These stages were supposed to end on December 31, 2007, a deadline that was later extended to six months. The former regime of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had forced over 250,000 Kurdish residents to give up their homes to Arabs in the 1970s, to "Arabize" the city and the region's oil industry.

Guardian

June 9 2008

Iraqi Kurdish Families seek redress for Turkish incursions

- Raids on Kurds blamed for deaths and damage in Iraq
- British lawyers take cases to human rights court

Owen Bowcott *The Guardian*,

British lawyers are taking Turkey to the European court of human rights in pursuit of compensation for deaths and damage allegedly inflicted by repeated bombardments of northern Iraq.

The test cases, lodged in Strasbourg, will force one of Nato's largest military powers to justify incursions aimed at destroying Kurdish rebel bases in mountains beyond its borders.

Details of the legal challenge emerged as Turkish jets launched a fresh wave of attacks over the weekend on positions occupied by the Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK) fighters in the Zap region of northern Iraq.

Ahmad Danas, a PKK spokesman, confirmed "there was a Turkish air strike last night ... but it caused no casualties. They hit empty bases. The fighters do not have fixed bases."

A senior Turkish commander said last week that Turkey and Iran are cooperating, sharing intelligence and carrying out coordinated strikes against the PKK and Pejak, the group's Iranian wing.

In February, thousands of Turkish soldiers moved into northern Iraq in an attempt to annihilate strongholds occupied by the PKK. Turkey denies civilians were killed.

That incursion - the largest in a decade - provoked international criticism that it would destabilise the one region of Iraq that was relatively calm. US officials confirmed they were also sharing intelligence with the Turkish military in order to pinpoint rebel bases and minimise civilian casualties. Kurdish rebels have been fighting for a homeland in eastern Turkey since 1984. More than 30,000 people have died during the conflict.

Turkey, an eager applicant for membership of the EU, was one of the founding states of the Council of Europe, the body that established the European court of human rights. The legal claims have been brought by the London-based Kurdish Human Rights Project (KHRP) on behalf of Muslim and Chaldean Christian villagers who say they lost their homes during Turkish air raids last October and December.

The cases will test the limits of the court's jurisdiction but have a precedent. A 1995 case, also brought by the KHRP, resulted in the Strasbourg court establishing the

principle that Council of Europe states could be held accountable for human rights abuses committed beyond their borders - even outside Europe. The KHRP failed on that occasion, however, to prove that Turkish soldiers had killed seven shepherds found dead in northern Iraq.

The latest cases have been prepared following a fact-finding mission to the area this spring. Kerim Yildiz, the organisation's director, said of his investigations: "We have been told that Turkish shelling and bombing caused civilian deaths and injuries, and damage to livelihood, farmland and property."

"In Iraq I witnessed some of these atrocities and also saw that civilians have been traumatised [and] ... displaced. The military operations have compromised the human rights of Iraqi civilians." One of the British lawyers involved is Mark Muller QC, who chairs both the Bar Human Rights Committee and the KHRP.

A Turkish embassy spokesman in London said: "To my knowledge there were no civilian casualties [in northern Iraq]. But there were some civilians who complained that they had lost livestock."



Voices of Iraq
june 8, 2008

U.S. soldier killed, 17 wounded in suicide bombing in Kirkuk

Kirkuk, Jun 8, (VOI)- U.S. army and Iraqi police said a U.S. service member was killed and 17 more wounded as well as seven Iraqis on Sunday afternoon, when a suicide bomber detonated a car crammed with explosives inside a residential compound near Kirkuk, northern Iraq.

"A U.S. soldier was killed and 17 more were wounded when a suicide bomber detonated a car rigged with explosives near their patrol in al-Rashad district, southwest of Kirkuk," U.S. media adviser Abdellatif Rayan told Aswat al-Iraq-Voices of Iraq- (VOI). Rayan added "Two Iraqi contractors were also wounded

in the attack." Meanwhile, Brigadier Sarhad Qader of Kirkuk police said that a suicide bomber detonated a car rigged with explosives, this afternoon, targeting two Iraqi-U.S. bases inside al-Noor residential compound at al-Rashad district, 30 km southwest Kirkuk. "The explosion wounded five Iraqi civilians and left unidentified number of casualties among the U.S. troops," Brigadier Qader said. Kirkuk is 250 km northeast of Baghdad. SK



- Voices of Iraq
june 8, 2008

De Mistura's proposal on internal borders is unfair – Kurdish official

Arbil, Jun 8, (VOI) – The preliminary analysis that was submitted by Stefan De Mistura, the head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), concerning the disputed internal borders is "unfair," Kurdish official said.

said on Sunday, during a session of the Kurdistan parliament that was held today at Arbil, Kurdistan region's capital.

"De Mistura's suggestion is unfair, and was amended without informing us," Mohammed Ihsan, the Iraqi Kurdistan Region's minister for disputed areas' affairs, said.

"The proposal annexing Qaraj district (14 km north of Makhmour suburb) to Mosul instead of Arbil is unjust," he added.

Makhmour, a disputed area between the two provinces of Arbil and Ninewa, lies 68 km to the southwest of Arbil city, 349 km northeast of the Iraqi capital Baghdad.

On June 7, 2008, Kurdistan Region's Presidency received De Mistura's project regarding the disputed areas.

According to the Kurdistan Region Presidency's website, the Kurdish political leadership will announce its official stance in this respect after studying the

project.

For his part, Nuri al-Talabani, member of the Kurdistan regional parliament, said, "De Mistura's proposal is not in line with the Iraqi constitution's article 140, related to Kirkuk issue and the disputed areas."

"The UN can not solve any problem, and if it could, it would take a long time," he added.

Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution was supposed to be implemented within a deadline that ended on December 31, 2007, later extended for six months, to end on June 30, 2008.

On June 5, UNAMI recommended putting two disputed areas under the central government's authority and giving the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan region's government the right of administering two other districts.

MH/AE



The Boston Globe

June 7, 2008

Iraqis protest pact with U. S.

By Sameer N. Yacoub - ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD — Two Shiite militia leaders surrendered Friday to American soldiers, while tens of thousands of supporters of hard-line Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr streamed out of mosques to protest a proposed agreement that could keep U. S. troops here for years.

The arrests and demonstrations occurred on the eve of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's trip to Shiite-dominated Iran, his second visit there in a year.

U. S. officials allege that Iran is arming and training Shiite militiamen and encouraging a public campaign in Iraq against the proposed U. S.-Iraq security agreement, which the Iranians oppose.

One of those who surrendered early Friday is believed to have ordered attacks on U. S. troops, directed the kidnapping of Iraqis and helped smuggle Iranian weapons into Iraq, the U. S. military said.

The other tried to escape by wading through an irrigation canal before turning himself in to U. S. soldiers.

The men's names were not released, but the U. S. command said both were members of Iranian-backed "special groups," a term used to describe Shiite fighters who have defied al-Sadr's cease-fire order that ended seven weeks of fighting in Baghdad last month.

Iran denies arming the extremists.

Through a series of raids in mostly Shiite areas south of Baghdad, U. S. and Iraqi troops have been trying to block the movement of Iranian weapons into Iraq.



Shiites shout anti American slogans and burn an American flag in Baghdad during Friday's protest against a security agreement with the United States.

Allegations of Iranian links to Shiite militants and the proposed

U. S.-Iraqi security agreement are expected to figure prominently in al-Maliki's talks, which begin today.

The security agreement, which the Iraqis and Americans hope to finish by midsummer, would establish a long-term relationship between Iraq and the United States. The two sides also are negotiating a parallel agreement to provide a legal basis for keeping U. S. troops in Iraq after the U. N. mandate expires at the end of the year.

Supporters believe the deal would guarantee U. S. support as Iraq seeks to cement the security gains of the past year. It also would help assure Iraq's Arab neighbors, notably Saudi Arabia, that Iraq's Shiite-led government would not become an Iranian satellite.

U. S. officials have released no details about the negotiations, which began last March.

But leaks by Iraqi authorities have triggered a storm of protest, with critics complaining that the terms would solidify American military, economic and political domination of the country for decades.

Al-Maliki's Dawa party has described the talks as stalled, and prominent parliamentarians from Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish parties have written to the U. S. Congress to express their opposition to the proposed agreement.

The most outspoken opponents have been from al-Sadr's political movement.

Iraqi PM: US-Iraq security pact will not harm Iran

NASSER KARIMI The Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran - Iraq's prime minister pushed Iran's leaders to back off their fierce opposition to a proposed security pact with the U.S. on Sunday, promising that his country will not be a launching pad for any attack on them.

The agreement has become a center of contention as Baghdad tries to balance its close ties to both Washington and Tehran. Iran fears the deal will lead to permanent U.S. bases on its doorstep amid fears of an eventual American attack.

Iran has led a vocal campaign against the deal, with powerful former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani vowing last week that people in Iraq and the region won't allow it. That has led to U.S. accusations that Tehran is actively trying to scuttle the agreement, putting Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government in a tight spot between two rival allies.

Al-Maliki's visit to Tehran, his second this year, appeared aimed at getting Iran to tone down its opposition and ease criticism within Iraq, where followers of anti-U.S. Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who has close ties to Tehran, have held weekly protests against the deal.

But the security pact also faces strong criticism from members of al-Maliki's own Shiite-dominated coalition. Two Iraqi officials familiar with the negotiations warned on Sunday that a deal is unlikely to be reached before the end of President Bush's term in January unless Washington backs off some demands seen as giving American forces too much freedom to operate in Iraq and infringing on Iraqi sovereignty.

Iraq's parliament must approve the deal, and the two officials said opposition in the legislature was so widespread that it stood no chance of winning approval without significant changes in the U.S. position. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because of the secrecy surrounding the negotiations.

In his talks with Iranian officials, al-Maliki offered assurances that his country is no threat to Iran, according to a statement released by his Baghdad office.

"Iraq, today, does not represent a threat as it was during the former regime because it has become a constitutional country based on the rule of law," the statement

quoted him as saying. "Iraq is working on developing its relations with the countries of the region on the basis of mutual understanding and cooperation."

Iraqi Defense Minister Abdul-Qader al-Obeidi echoed that promise. He told his Iranian counterpart Gen. Mostafa Mohammad Najjar that the "agreement would not threaten" any neighboring country, and that no Iraqi government would allow the country "to be used for attack on Iran or any other country," the semi-official Iranian news agency Fars reported.

But an aide to the prime minister said al-Maliki would complain about Iran's public campaign against the agreement, as interference in Iraq's internal affairs. The aide spoke on condition of anonymity in return for giving information on the private talks.

In remarks to state television later Sunday, government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh said Iraq was sovereign and free "to enter in any pact helping it achieve its national interests."

"Moreover the others should not be acting as attorneys for the Iraqis or urge the Iraqis to reject the pact as what happened last week, when the Iraqis urged the Iraqis to reject the pact," he said.

Al-Maliki also appeared to signal that Tehran would not be squeezed out by any agreement, saying Iraq's "development and stability will be provided through more bilateral cooperation" with Iran.

Ahmadinejad, in turn, insisted Iran had a key role in Iraq's security. "The responsibility of (Iraq's) neighbors is doubled in this regard," he said, according to the Web site.

Further complicating al-Maliki's balancing act between Washington and Tehran are American allegations that Iran is arming and financing Shiite militiamen in Iraq, a claim Tehran denies. The Iraqi prime minister was expected to raise the concerns in his talks.

On Sunday, the U.S. military in Iraq said it had captured a Shiite militant who ran an "assassination squad" in the southern city of Basra and was responsible for trafficking Shiite extremists in and out of Iran for training.



Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, center left, shakes hands with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki as he welcomes him for their meeting in Tehran, Iran, Sunday, June 8, 2008. Others unidentified. (AP Photo/SNA, Amir Kholusi)

Al-Maliki's party and other Shiite and Kurdish members of his ruling coalition have long-standing close ties to Iran's leadership. Iran played a key role in mediating a truce between al-Sadr's Mahdi Army and the Iraqi government earlier this year.

U.S. officials increasingly see the criticism against the security deal as driven by Iran, particularly through al-Sadr.

"The U.S.-Iraqi negotiations (on the pact) concern the American and the Iraqi sides. As we have noticed, the Iranian contribution again is not positive regarding this," U.S. Embassy spokeswoman Mirembé Nantongo told journalists Sunday in Baghdad.

But opposition to the deal has come from a number of sides in Iraq. The two Iraqi officials familiar with the negotiations said the Iraqi National Security Council had rejected an initial American draft that they said provided for virtual U.S. control of Iraqi airspace and gave American troops greater freedom of movement and of detaining suspects than the Iraqis can accept.

U.S. officials would not comment on the details of the negotiations.

United Press International

Arabs reject U.N. Kirkuk proposal

KIRKUK, Iraq, June 9, 2008 (UPI) -- Arabs in the Iraqi province of Kirkuk said they don't like a set of U.N. recommendations for a power-sharing agreement with Kurds in the region.

The proposals drawn up by U.N. Special Envoy Steffan de Mistura have been rejected by committees representing Kirkuk's Arab population, which reportedly objected to an initial phase of the proposal allowing the autonomous Kurdistan region to run cities in parts of the Mosul region, al-Sumaria Iraqi Satellite TV reported.

Arab participants in the meeting instead affirmed their support for the Arab unity bloc in Kirkuk, saying its policies best reflect the hopes and ambitions of Arab in the region.

De Mistura's second-stage resolutions cover disputed areas including Tal Afar, Sinjar, Shikhan and Khanqin while the third stage would be centered on the city of Kirkuk, al-Sumaria reported.

Arabs, Turkmen and Kurds have been disputing political control of Kirkuk, Iraq's fourth-largest city, since Kurdish forces briefly occupied it after the U.S. invasion of 2003 toppled former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

United Press International

Iraqi Kurd oil sales, signing bonus waiting for Baghdad

June 10, 2008 By BEN LANDO, UPI Energy Editor

ERBIL, Iraq - Iraq's Kurdish region has been collecting millions of dollars in signing bonuses for 19 oil deals inked with international oil companies but is waiting for a federal revenue-sharing law before turning it over to Baghdad.

The signing bonuses vary from between \$1 million and \$5 million "to sometimes more than that," said Kurdistan Regional Government Minister of Natural Resources Ashti Hawrami, though he wouldn't give details "until we publish the information."

"It will be published probably within a month or two. We're currently working on compiling all of our agreements, and then we will just put all the information on the KRG Web site," he told United Press International at his office in the KRG capital. He said the funds are being held in an account "in Erbil."

"The signing bonuses are part of the oil revenue, and they should be accounted for as such. That money hasn't been touched by the regional government. It's basically accounted for to be deposited when we have an agreed revenue sharing law."

Also to be published are details of what is required of the contractors, aside from searching for and producing oil and gas.

"We have placed quite a lot of burden on the contractors on the local content, i.e., through employment, training, capacity building, expats (foreigners) coming in to help us, technology transfers, just to make sure that we can benefit from the contract in a variety of ways, also this includes environmental fund and so on," he said. "We want the contract area to benefit from the contractor's good will and corporate responsibilities. You're going there and you're disturbing everybody's life in terms of seismic activities, drilling, housing, expats coming and going.

"We're basically putting the burden on the contractor to really make an impact locally at the contract area, the villages, the area affected, to contribute to them. Maybe building a couple schools, a hospital, or maybe contributing to a government program. We call that local capacity support.

"We're also doing some sales of crude oil internally now," he said. "A few million dollars of revenue is accumulated, again this revenue is accounted for in the same way."

The 19 oil and gas deals with foreign companies are part of a dispute with Baghdad over control of the hydrocarbons development. The federal Oil Ministry has called most of them illegal. This contention has stalled talks on a package of oil-related legislation including a new oil law, a revenue-sharing law and laws reconstituting the national oil company and reforming the Oil Ministry.

And although only two of the 19 oil deals have resulted in oil production, none is being exported, he said.

"The government share of the revenue belongs to all Iraqi people. We will deal with that and account for it, but in practice we haven't reached there yet."

Small local refineries are taking what is produced by Norwegian firm DNO and the Taq Taq Operating Co., the joint venture of Turkey's Genel Enerji and Canada's Addax Petroleum. But as these and the other contracts start increasing flow, the KRG plans to have the capacity to keep some crude at home.

"Cumulatively probably we're going to build about 100,000 barrels per day refinery capacity, which basically should solve most of our domestic problems," Hawrami said. One is to be built by Heritage Oil of Canada and the other by Genel, both at the site of their respective exploration blocks.

"It is difficult to forecast these things because they are not entirely under our control," he said. "Typically I think two years from the date of the award is about right for these refineries, which under the current environment is considered to be a fast track, because the refinery builders have full orders, much bigger orders, and so on."



Asharq Al-Awsat

June 10, 2008

INVESTMENT BOOM IN KURDISTAN

By Maad Fayad

Asharq Al-Awsat, London - Newroz Amin, a representative from the Kurdistan Investment Authority revealed that "Over 105 investment projects worth over US \$16 billion in the regions of Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Duhok have been recorded."

Amin, the director general of legal, financial and administrative affairs at the Kurdistan Investment Authority spoke to Asharq Al-Awsat from her office in Erbil; she said, "All of these projects are independent of the regional government; we do not hold any shares in them. These are private company investment projects."

"The projects encompass various fields including tourism, production, agriculture, finance, education (private universities), health (private hospitals), commerce (the construction of shopping centers) and housing," she added.

"16 percent of the investment projects are funded by foreign investors, 25 percent of investment projects are funded by foreign and local investors, and 59 percent of investors are Iraqi," explained Newroz Amin.

Amin also discussed recently authorized projects; "One newly approved investment project was the Damac company project, the capital of which will reach over US \$6 billion. The project will be implemented over two stages; each stage will cost US \$3 billion dollars and will take five years to complete."

"Erbil, or Hewler as it is known in Kurdish, has been transformed into a large construction site with

the building of two large hotels, the Grand Rotana Hotel and Le Royale Hotel. In addition, American Village, a large residential project, as well as the English Village and the Italian Village are being built. Residential,

Investment Law 2006, which states that any investment project in the region is exempt of all non-custom taxes and duties for 10 years from the date that it provides services or the date of actual production. Amin

vestors: "Foreign investors and capital are treated the same as national investors and capital. Foreign investors have the absolute right to own the capital of any project that they have set up in the region in accordance with this law."

"The regional Supreme Council for Investment, based on a proposal made by the Investment Authority, has the right to transfer ownership of the land that is allocated to strategic projects at a promotional price proposed by the Authority or free of charge provided that the nature and importance of the project and public interest are safeguarded," she said.

Amin stressed, "Investors must obtain reliable foreign or national insurance to cover their projects. The investor has the right to employ the necessary foreign or domestic workforce for the project, while giving priority to employing domestic workers in accordance with the implemented laws in the region."

"Foreign investors are permitted to transfer their profits abroad in accordance with the provisions of this law. Similarly, non-Iraqi workers and those with whom they deal outside of the region have the right to transfer their dues and wages abroad," she said.

Amin added, "The law stipulates that the foreign investor can return his capital abroad upon completing or liquidating the project as long as the operation does not violate the regional law and the tax and customs measures that govern the project."



tourism and production investment projects are being established in Sulaymaniyah and Duhok and a German Village in Sulaymaniyah is under construction next to three cement factories," she added.

Amin pointed out that "There are many factors for success in the region, the most prominent of which are perhaps the stability of security and the standards of procedure according to fixed laws. Moreover, the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Nechirvan Barzani, encourages the youth to implement administrative projects in the region, including investment projects, which is critical for the Kurdish economy."

Newroz Amin indicated that the facilities or privileges offered to investors are open to all in accordance with the Kurdistan Region

described this law as an "incentive for investment by providing facilities that are not offered elsewhere in the region."

"This law applies to projects that are approved by the Investment Authority in the sectors of manufacturing, electricity and related services, in addition to agriculture, forestry, hotels and tourism projects, theme parks, health, the environment, scientific and technological research, information technology, transport and modern communications, banks, insurance companies and other financial institutions, infrastructure projects; including construction, reconstruction, housing projects, roads and bridges and the relevant advisory services," explained Amin.

Newroz Amin continued to discuss the laws related to foreign in-

Maliki, on Iran visit, seeks to lower tensions

By Andrew E. Kramer

BAGHDAD: Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki of Iraq, seeking to soothe Iranian opposition to a long-term American military presence in his country, assured officials during a meeting in Tehran on Sunday that American bases in Iraq would never be used to attack Iran.

Maliki met Sunday with the Iranian vice president, Parviz Davoudi, to offer the assurances, Iranian news agencies reported, according to Reuters.

Davoudi, in turn, said Iran was working to support stability in Iraq.

"Helping the establishment of security in Iraq has always been one of Iran's main policies," he said, according to IRNA, the main Iranian news agency.

Maliki met later Sunday with President Mahmoud Amadinejad for talks on the proposed long-term security pact with the United States, called a Status of Forces Agreement.

Even as Maliki met with officials in Tehran, the U.S. military issued a statement saying that soldiers had captured

a senior Iranian-backed Shiite militia leader who had smuggled fighters in and out of Iran for training.

Maliki, the leader of a Shiite political party that took refuge in Iran during the rule of Saddam Hussein, has taken a less adversarial position than the United States on Iranian support for Shiite militias in Baghdad and southern Iraq.

Still, Maliki was expected to present evidence of Iranian influence in Iraq, the state newspaper, Al Sabah, reported before he departed. It was unclear whether Maliki, armed with this evidence, would argue that diminished Iranian support for the insurgency could be rewarded with a diminished long-term American military presence in Iraq.

American soldiers raiding a house in eastern Baghdad on Sunday captured a man they characterized as weapons dealer and leader of an "assassination squad" of Iranian-backed militants. In a statement, the U.S. military said the man, who was not identified, was an arms dealer and trafficked militiamen in and out of neighboring Iran for training.

The U.S. military regularly announces the detention of militia fighters it says are operating with Iranian support. The Iranian authorities deny that they have a hand in the fighting.

In violence in Iraq on Sunday, a vehicle driven by a suicide bomber blew up near a patrol base in Kirkuk Province, killing one U.S. soldier and wounding 18, according to a Reuters report that quoted U.S. forces.

The attack came a day after a roadside bomb killed a U.S. soldier in eastern Baghdad, the U.S. military said. An additional 13 American soldiers were wounded in the attack.

A mortar shell struck near the American-controlled Green Zone in Baghdad on Sunday, killing three people and wounding another seven.

Three roadside bombs targeting Iraqi police patrols and a police recruiting center in Baghdad killed 4 policemen and recruits and wounded 33 policemen and bystanders, officials said.

In northern Iraq, gunmen opened fire on a police patrol in Mosul, killing three policemen. Southeast of Baghdad, gunmen killed five shepherds in a field.

Iran's supreme leader says U.S. is obstacle to Iraqi stability

By Nazila Fathi

TEHRAN: Iran's supreme leader told the visiting prime minister of Iraq on Monday that U.S. forces were the biggest obstacle to the nation's stability.

The statement by the Iranian leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was the most authoritative public word so far on Tehran's objections to long-term security agreements under negotiation between the Bush administration and the government of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki.

The U.S. military has been operating in Iraq under a United Nations mandate that has been renewed annually. The pact expires on Dec. 31, 2008.

"The most fundamental problem of

Iraq is the presence of the foreign forces," Khamenei told Maliki, according to excerpts of their meeting reported by the Iranian Students News Agency. "The Iraqi government, Parliament and all the authorities who have been elected with public vote should take charge."

Iran strongly opposes the U.S. military presence in Iraq, which they consider a major threat on their border.

Yet it was the U.S.-led effort that overthrew their hated enemy, Saddam Hussein, and brought about a coalition government in Baghdad dominated by Shiite political leaders, including Maliki, with strong ties to Iran.

"When a foreign force gradually increases its interference and domination in all the affairs of Iraq, it becomes the

most important obstacle in development and prosperity of the Iraqi people," the ayatollah said, without directly referring to the security agreements under discussion in Baghdad.

The Iranian accounts of the meeting between Khamenei and Maliki did not give Maliki's response. But he assured the Iranians on Sunday that his country would not become "a platform for harming the security of Iran and its neighbors."

Tensions between Tehran and Washington have escalated under the Bush administration, which has accused the Iranians of working on a nuclear weapons program and of supplying weapons to anti-American militants in Iraq. Iran has denied the accusations.

LE FIGARO

11 juin 2008

Washington et Bagdad butent sur un accord stratégique

MOYEN-ORIENT

Dans le cadre des négociations sur une présence à long terme des États-Unis, l'Irak refuse de laisser les militaires américains libres de leurs mouvements.

LES UNS veulent rester maîtres chez eux. Les autres tiennent à garder les coudées franches dans leur lutte antiterroriste. Irakiens et Américains affichent des objectifs largement contradictoires dans les négociations qu'ils mènent pour finaliser un accord de partenariat stratégique, si possible avant le 31 juillet, sinon d'ici à la fin de l'année. Mais cinq ans après la guerre déclenchée par les États-Unis pour installer un pouvoir pro-occidental à Bagdad, celui-ci compte désormais profiter de ces pourparlers pour affirmer enfin sa souveraineté.

À travers d'après discussions entamées en début d'année, Bagdad et Washington cherchent à définir les contours d'une présence militaire américaine à moyen terme en Irak. La plupart des responsables irakiens étant favorables à un tel maintien, « ce n'est pas tellement la durée de cette présence qui suscite un débat, ni même l'importance de son déploiement, qui ne sera pas fixée par un accord, note un diplomate occidental à Bagdad, ce sont surtout ses implications en termes de souveraineté qui posent problème aux Irakiens ».

La principale pierre d'achoppement porte sur les conditions d'opérations des troupes américaines qui resteront dans leurs bases. Officiellement, les deux camps sont hostiles à l'établissement de bases permanentes. Ils préfèrent parler « d'installations transitoires ». Mais que recouvre ce terme ? Pas plus d'une dizaine d'années, préviennent certains responsables irakiens. D'autre part, combien de bases américaines seront conservées à travers le territoire ? Quatre disent certains, dix ajoutent d'autres.

Droit de regard irakien

Une certitude, les dirigeants irakiens se plaignent du brouillard maintenu par Washington sur ce point. Certaines de ces bases sont déjà construites, comme celles

proches de Bagdad, d'Erbil, au nord chez les Kurdes, ou de Nassyriah, en pays chiite. « Mais nous n'y avons pas accès, regrette Ali Dabbagh, le porte-parole du premier ministre, Nouri al-Maliki ». « Nous ne savons pas non plus quels types d'armes les Américains entreposent dans ces bases, c'est une préoccupation pour le gouvernement irakien », nous déclarait-il lors d'un récent passage à Paris.

Autre litige : la liberté de mouvement des troupes américaines. Elle est exigée par Washington, aussi bien à l'intérieur du territoire irakien qu'aux entrées et aux sorties du pays. « Pas question », répond l'un des vice-présidents, le Kurde Barham Saleh. Bagdad tient à disposer d'un droit de regard sur les opérations militaires que les troupes américaines lanceront. Mais il paraît peu probable que les Américains cèdent.

Ces derniers exigent également de conserver le contrôle de plusieurs prisons et une certaine maîtrise de l'espace aérien.

« Les États-Unis doivent réaliser qu'après cinq ans d'occupation, il y a un très large sentiment anti-américain en Irak », soutient Ali Dabbagh. Le ressentiment est alimenté par l'impunité dont bénéficient les sociétés privées de sécurité, régulièrement accusées d'exactions contre des civils. Mais ces supplétifs jouent un rôle important pour Washington, qui aimerait leur faire bénéficier du même statut que celui accordé aux troupes régulières.

Selon Dabbagh, « le fossé entre les deux camps est encore grand et les négociations n'en sont qu'à un stade préliminaire ». Dans ces conditions, un accord fin juillet paraît hors de portée. En cas d'impasse avec les États-Unis, Bagdad s'est dit prêt à rechercher « d'autres options ».

En fait, le gouvernement irakien menace de retourner devant le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU pour demander une prolongation du mandat de la force multinationale, qui expire au 31 décembre prochain. « Le gouvernement Maliki a déjà tenté de mettre les Nations unies dans le coup », reconnaît un autre diplomate. Face à une Administration américaine finissante, Bagdad peut



donc être tenté de jouer la montre, préférant attendre le successeur de George Bush.

« Les Irakiens ont vraiment la volonté de lâcher le moins possible, mais y parviendront-ils ? », s'interroge ce diplomate. Même si la situation sécuritaire s'est améliorée, l'Irak reste dépendant de l'appui américain pour continuer la stabilisation du pays face aux insurgés. C'est sans doute pourquoi Robert Gates, le patron du Pentagone, minimise les rumeurs selon lesquelles Washington pourrait tout simplement renoncer à négocier avec l'Irak. « Je pense qu'il existe de multiples façons d'aboutir. Pour le moment, nous sommes toujours focalisés sur le Sofa (l'accord sur le statut des forces, NDLR), du moins du point de vue du département de la Défense. »

L'Iran inquiet

En début de semaine, un haut responsable américain avait reconnu pour la première fois que

la conclusion de cet accord pourrait incomber au prochain locataire de la Maison-Blanche.

Le bras de fer va continuer. Chez lui, le gouvernement irakien est sous pression. Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, leader d'un parti chiite au pouvoir à Bagdad, a déjà critiqué cet accord, tout comme les sadrites, la plus importante composante chiite du pays. « Le vieux fond de nationalisme irakien ressurgit autour de ces discussions », souligne un chercheur. Maliki a déjà prévenu qu'il soumettrait le texte au Parlement. Il n'ignore pas, non plus, que ses voisins iraniens sont inquiets. En visite à Téhéran le week-end dernier, il a assuré que son pays ne servirait pas de « base » pour porter atteinte à la sécurité de l'Iran.

GEORGES MALBRUNOT

Le Monde
Mercredi 11 juin 2008

Téhéran invite le premier ministre M. Maliki à « libérer » l'Irak de la présence militaire américaine

Bagdad tente de concilier alliance avec les Etats-Unis et lien avec l'Iran



Le premier ministre irakien, Nouri Al-Maliki, et le Guide suprême iranien, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei, le 9 juin à Téhéran. H. GHAEDI/AFP

ces », inspiré de ceux conclus au lendemain de la seconde guerre mondiale avec l'Allemagne ou le Japon, pour légaliser la présence de l'armée américaine au-delà du 31 décembre. Aucun chiffre quant à l'ampleur du corps expéditionnaire qui serait maintenu par la suite n'est cité, mais il serait question de plusieurs dizaines de milliers de soldats et de plusieurs dizaines de bases militaires.

Dans la quatrième version, théoriquement « confidentielle » du projet, présen-

tée dimanche à des élus irakiens qui l'ont fait aussitôt « fuiter » à la presse, les Américains veulent garder la possibilité de mener des offensives militaires intérieures sans avoir à en référer au gouvernement irakien. Ils demandent à conserver la maîtrise de l'espace aérien irakien « jusqu'à 29 000 pieds ». Ils veulent, pour leurs soldats comme pour leurs « contractuels », mercenaires armés et civils divers (entrepreneurs, pétroliers, conseillers, etc.), qui sont aujourd'hui autour de 50 000, une immunité totale vis-à-vis des lois du pays.

Ils demandent aussi l'autorisation de poursuivre leurs opérations de police contre les Irakiens qui leur semblent suspects, mais, dans la dernière version du texte, ils accepteraient de transférer tous leurs détenus dans des geôles irakiennes. L'armée américaine détient présentement quelque

Pour beaucoup d'élus irakiens, les exigences de Washington sont estimées « inacceptables »

20 000 citoyens irakiens.

Pour beaucoup d'élus, jusque et y compris dans la majorité parlementaire qui soutient le premier ministre Maliki, cette situation est « intolérable » et les exigences de Washington « inacceptables ».

Le second texte en discussion, plus flou, plus secret et de nature éminemment stratégique, est un « accord cadre de coopération bilatérale » dans les domaines « politique, économique, culturel et sécuritaire » d'une durée initiale de dix ans, étant entendu, a précisé l'ambassadeur américain à Bagdad, que celui-ci « pourrait être révoqué » avant son terme par l'une ou l'autre partie.

Selon la « déclaration de principes » signée en décembre 2007 par M. Maliki et M. Bush, cet accord inclurait « des garanties de sécurité pour la République d'Irak en cas d'agression étrangère, d'atteinte ou de menace contre la souveraineté et l'intégrité de ses territoires, ses eaux, son espace aérien ».

Pour beaucoup d'élus américains au Congrès, à commencer par Hillary Clinton ou Edward Kennedy, qui accusent

Engagé depuis quatre mois dans une difficile négociation avec l'administration Bush, qui souhaite maintenir ses soldats et ses prérogatives en Irak au-delà du 31 décembre 2008, date à laquelle prend fin la résolution de l'ONU qui légalise la présence militaire américaine dans ce pays, le premier ministre irakien, le chiite Nouri Al-Maliki, ne semble pas avoir réussi à dissiper, lors de sa visite à Téhéran du 7 au 9 juin, la forte opposition de la République islamique d'Iran à ses projets.

« Les forces d'occupation étrangères qui interfèrent dans les affaires irakiennes avec leur puissance militaire, particulièrement celle de l'Amérique, constituent le principal obstacle au progrès, à la prospérité et à l'unité de l'Irak », a souligné Ali Khamenei, Guide suprême de l'Iran, avant même que M. Maliki ne regagne Bagdad lundi soir. Pour l'ayatollah iranien, « le rêve de l'Amérique en Irak ne se réalisera pas ».

M. Maliki, qui a rencontré non seulement le Guide mais aussi tous les dirigeants iraniens d'importance durant les

trois jours de sa visite, a eu beau répéter qu'« en aucun cas l'Irak ne servira de tremplin à une offensive contre l'Iran » – assurance réitérée lundi de Washington par un porte-parole du Pentagone –, il s'est vu fermement invité par le Guide à « réfléchir à une solution » visant à « libérer » son pays « de la présence américaine » plutôt que d'essayer de s'en accommoder.

M. Maliki a deux problèmes principaux : même si l'armée irakienne devient chaque jour plus efficace dans sa lutte contre les rebelles, chiites et sunnites, elle est encore loin, de l'avis général, d'être en mesure de se passer des 151 000 soldats américains présents sur le terrain avec des forces aériennes et des équipements sophistiqués dont elle est elle-même démunie ; et l'administration Bush, qui, à l'instar de Téhéran, soutient l'actuel chef du gouvernement, dispose de sérieux moyens de pression, politiques et financiers, pour obtenir ce qu'elle désire.

Deux accords, que le président George Bush souhaite voir signés avant la fin du mois de juillet, ce qui paraît impossible à beaucoup d'élus irakiens, sont en discussion. Le premier est un « Statut des for-

M. Bush de vouloir « *lier les mains de son successeur* » avant la fin de son mandat en janvier 2009, cet accord constituerait « *un traité de défense* » en bonne et due forme qui devrait être soumis à un vote des élus.

« *Pas du tout* », réplique l'administration, pour qui il s'agirait d'un simple « *document politique, sans obligations spécifiques* » pour l'Amérique. Donc sans vote à la Chambre des représentants et au Sénat.

A Bagdad, où l'on a, semble-t-il, pas la même interprétation, les deux accords, a promis M. Maliki, seront soumis au Parlement. « *Insuffisant* » pour beaucoup d'élus nationalistes, sunnites et chiïtes, qui, à l'instar de Moqtada Al-Sadr, le prêcheur radical chiïte qui a mené avec sa milice deux offensives armées contre les soldats américains, réclament un référendum populaire.

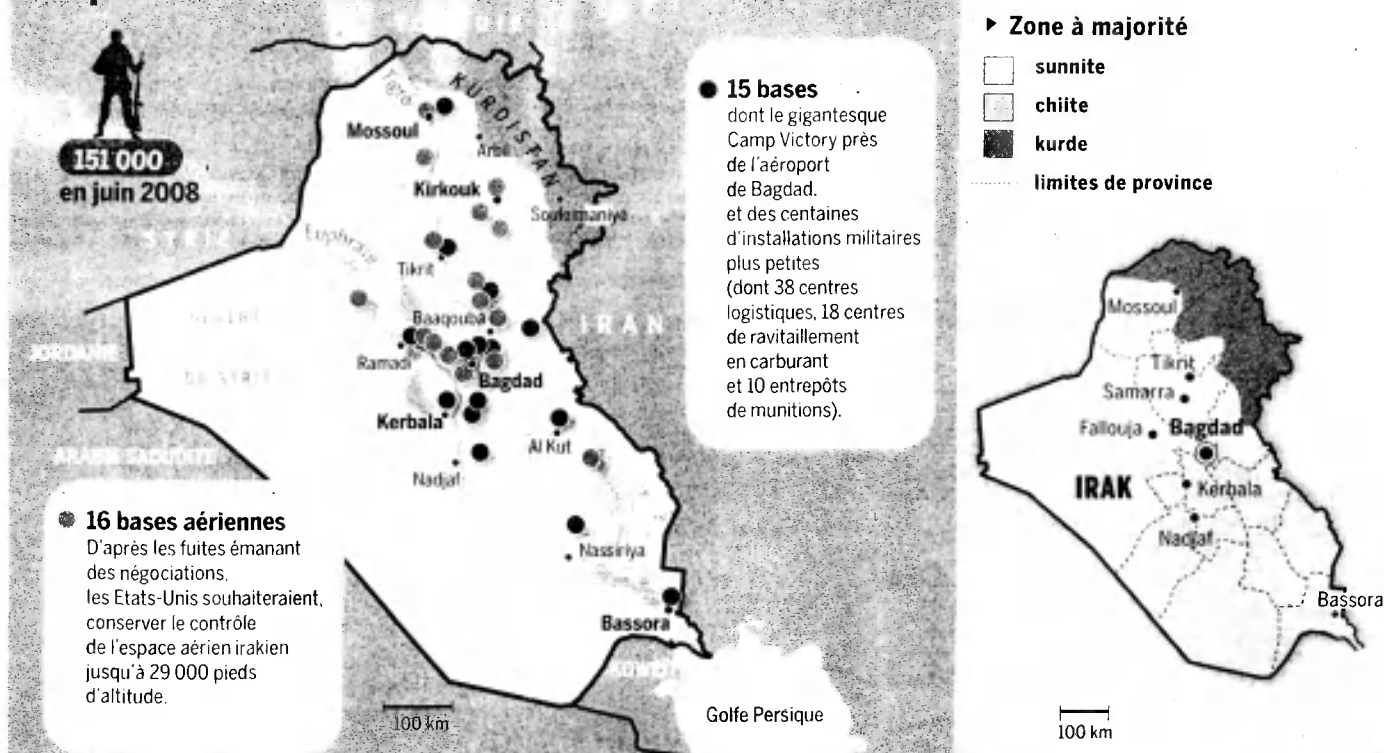
Pour appuyer sa revendication, le chef politico-religieux, qui a 30 élus (sur 275)

au Parlement, a appelé ses fidèles à manifester chaque vendredi jusqu'à obtenir satisfaction. La semaine passée, plusieurs milliers de chiïtes ont obéi et sont descendus dans les rues de Bagdad et d'ailleurs pour protester.

Incidentement, Moqtada Al-Sadr vit depuis plus d'un an dans la ville sainte chiïte de Qom, près de Téhéran. ■

PATRICE CLAUDE

La présence militaire américaine en Irak



LE FIGARO 13 juin 2008

L'adhésion de la Turquie à l'Union européenne en question à Bruxelles

UE
Dans la perspective d'une invalidation de l'AKP, le parti au pouvoir, la Commission envisage une suspension des négociations.

De notre correspondant à Bruxelles

LA PERSPECTIVE de voir le principal parti islamiste turc, l'AKP, purement et simplement rayé de la vie politique nationale affole plusieurs dirigeants européens. À tel point que la Commission européenne envisage, en guise de me-

sure de rétorsion, de suspendre les négociations d'adhésion avec Ankara. Selon un scénario imaginé à Bruxelles, cette riposte pourrait intervenir après que la Cour constitutionnelle turque juge illégale, le cas échéant en octobre prochain, la formation du premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Interdire un parti politique, qui plus est proeuropéen et ultra-influent, équivaldrait pour les responsables communautaires à une sorte de coup d'État en douceur. Inacceptable aux yeux de Bruxelles.

Une suspension des négociations d'adhésion est envisageable

sur le plan strictement juridique, au regard de la législation communautaire. Il suffit pour cela d'obtenir l'aval d'une majorité qualifiée des deux tiers des 27 États membres. Sur le plan politique, en revanche, une telle décision équivaldrait à l'arme atomique. « *Nous risquerions de donner des munitions au camp antieuropéen en Turquie* », redoute une source communautaire, et par là même, de désespérer ceux qui, à Ankara, poussent au contraire leur pays sur la voie des réformes. C'est pourquoi certains eurocrates plaident plutôt pour une suspension « *molle* » de courte durée, qui ne s'appuierait pas sur résolution juridique formelle. Ce serait un moyen pour Bruxelles de marquer son mécontentement face aux dérives judiciaires d'Ankara sans s'aliéner pour autant le camp proeuropéen.

Le recours à cette formule diplomatique, aussi byzantine soit-elle, devrait être utilisé, le cas échéant, sous présidence française. Problème, Paris n'y est pas favorable. « *Tel qu'il a été élaboré, le pro-*

cessus de négociation en cours permet déjà de bloquer l'ouverture de certains chapitres, ce qui équivaut de facto à une suspension. Ce n'est pas la peine de rajouter là-dessus une suspension formelle », estime un diplomate français.

Chapitres sensibles

Ainsi, la France s'oppose depuis un an à l'ouverture de chapitres jugés sensibles (euro, budget), au motif que cette opération préjugerait de l'adhésion d'Ankara. Par ailleurs, huit autres chapitres sont gelés du fait du quasi-blocus imposé par les autorités turques chypriotes à l'encontre de la partie sud de l'île. « *Nous ne voulons pas être ceux qui rendent encore plus difficiles les négociations avec Ankara* », ajoute un second diplomate. Durant sa présidence, qu'il souhaite harmonieuse, Paris devrait se contenter d'ouvrir deux ou trois chapitres considérés comme anecdotiques, comme la libre circulation des capitaux. Assurer, autrement dit, le service minimum.

PIERRE AVRIL



13 juin 2008

TURQUIE - L'impasse et comment en sortir

Le gouvernement islamo-conservateur est de plus en plus la cible de la Cour constitutionnelle, qui l'accuse de vouloir mener une islamisation rampante du pays. Pour maintenir le système démocratique, le Premier ministre doit convoquer de nouvelles élections, estime Referans.

Voilà où nous en sommes : le Parlement turc a été renouvelé en juillet 2007 et le Parti pour la justice et le développement (AKP, au pouvoir depuis 2002) a été reconduit à la tête du pays grâce au soutien de 47 % des électeurs. Il a donc eu les coudees franches pour former un gouvernement. Le nouveau Parlement est composé de quatre partis [sur un total de 550 sièges, l'AKP islamo-conservateur en compte 341, le Parti républicain du peuple (CHP, kémaliste) 112, le Parti d'action nationaliste (MHP) 71 et le Parti de la Turquie démocratique (DTP, prokurde) 26]. Après seulement un an, deux de ces partis [AKP et DTP] sont sous le coup d'une procédure judiciaire et risquent d'être interdits sur décision de la Cour constitutionnelle. Même le Premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, risque d'être privé de toute activité politique pendant cinq ans.

Par la suite, une modification de la Constitution votée [en février 2008] par trois de ces quatre partis [AKP, MHP et DTP (levée de l'interdiction du port du voile à l'université)], a été invalidée par une Cour constitutionnelle dont bon nombre d'observateurs estiment qu'elle a outrepassé son rôle qui consiste, en principe, à vérifier que les lois sont conformes à la Constitution. Dans ces conditions, la volonté politique de 80 % des députés ne signifie plus rien sur le plan législatif. L'Assemblée nationale n'est plus désormais qu'une simple structure gendarmée par une Cour constitutionnelle qui l'empêche de voter des lois. Quant au gouvernement, il est dans la position du canard boiteux. Car un exécutif dont l'avenir à court terme est très incertain et dont

le chef pourrait bientôt être interdit d'activité politique est-il en mesure de diriger le pays et d'être pris au sérieux par la communauté internationale ?

Et la justice turque ? Le troisième pouvoir, constitué par la Cour constitutionnelle, la Cour de cassation et le Conseil d'Etat, s'est complètement fourvoyé dans une politisation excessive et a perdu toute velléité d'indépendance. L'institution judiciaire connaît ainsi une grave crise de confiance au sein de l'opinion publique turque qui ne croit plus que la haute magistrature puisse encore représenter le droit. Cette institution ne peut en effet espérer incarner le troisième pouvoir en ne s'appuyant que sur les 112 députés de l'opposition [kémaliste], qui ne représentent que 20 % de l'électorat. La Cour constitutionnelle s'est en quelque sorte fait hara-kiri dès lors qu'elle fait planer le doute sur la légitimité d'une éventuelle décision d'interdire l'AKP et de bannir politiquement Erdogan. Le sujet dépasse de loin la question du voile. En réalité, le système est bloqué et la Turquie vit une crise politique très grave, avec un Parlement moribond, un exécutif paralysé et un pouvoir judiciaire qui a perdu la confiance d'une majorité de la population.

La sortie de cette crise ne peut être que politique. Erdogan doit réagir en convoquant des élections législatives anticipées lui permettant de conforter sa position s'il veut procéder à un changement de la Constitution. C'est ce qu'il avait fait en réaction à l'ultimatum [du 27 avril 2007] de l'armée et aux interprétations juridiques douteuses de la Cour constitutionnelle, qui exigeait un quorum de



Des femmes ont défilé vendredi 6 juin 2008 pour protester contre le jugement de la Cour constitutionnelle

AFP

367 députés pour l'élection du président de la République. Les mises en garde de l'armée et l'attitude de la Haute Cour s'inscrivaient alors dans un processus putschiste qui a été stoppé par une action politique démocratique permettant de débloquer la situation. Il revient au Premier ministre de prendre ses distances avec les manœuvres politiciennes qui ne donnent aucun résultat et de se conformer à la voie démocratique pour sortir le pays de cette crise.

Cengiz Candar
Referans

AFP

16 juin 2008 (AFP)

Une explosion d'origine encore non déterminée par les autorités mais imputée par un témoin à une bombe a fait huit blessés hier soir dans un café d'Istanbul, selon l'agence de presse Anatolie. La déflagration, survenue dans le quartier périphérique de Büyükkçekmece, sur la rive européenne de la métropole turque, a provoqué des bris de verre et endommagé une voiture garée près du café. Six personnes légèrement blessées, dont une femme, ont pu regagner leur domicile, tandis que deux hommes, souffrant respectivement de blessures cutanées et à la tête, ont été hospita-

lisés, sans que leur vie soit en danger, ont indiqué des sources hospitalières citées par l'agence. Les responsables d'une unité de gendarmes dépêchée sur les lieux ont déclaré ne pas être immédiatement en mesure de déterminer la cause de l'explosion, affirme Anatolie qui rapporte les propos d'un des blessés légers, convaincu d'avoir été victime d'une bombe. Plusieurs attentats à la bombe survenus à Istanbul ont été imputés au cours des dernières années à des organisations de rebelles kurdes, d'extrême-gauche et islamistes.

AFP

TROIS REBELLES KURDES TUÉS DANS L'EST DE LA TURQUIE (AGENCE)

ANKARA, 18 juin 2008 (AFP) - Trois rebelles séparatistes kurdes ont été tués mercredi au cours d'affrontements avec les forces de sécurité dans l'est de la Turquie, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Les combats sont survenus dans une région montagneuse près d'une zone rurale de la localité de Pülümür, dans la province de Tunceli, après que les autorités militaires eurent repéré un groupe de militants du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), a souligné l'agence.

L'armée turque a renforcé son action contre le PKK depuis décembre, procé-

dant à plusieurs raids aériens contre des bases rebelles situés dans le nord de l'Irak. Elle a aussi effectué une incursion terrestre d'une semaine dans le Kurdistan irakien où Ankara affirme que plus de 2.000 rebelles kurdes ont trouvé refuge.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, a entamé en 1984 une lutte pour obtenir l'indépendance du sud-est anatolien qui a fait plus de 37.000 morts.

TURQUIE

Les médias plus forts que les putschistes

La diversification du paysage médiatique rend plus difficile la manipulation de l'opinion publique à des fins politiciennes, se réjouit la chroniqueuse libérale Gülay Göktürk.

BUGÜN
Istanbul

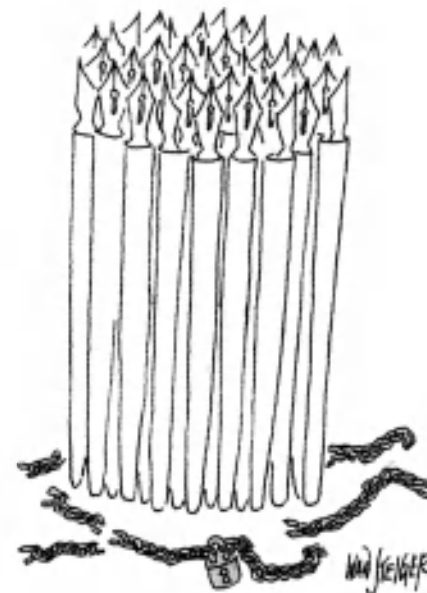
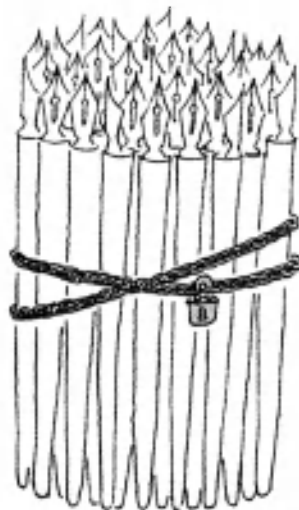
Le fait qu'un parti politique ait signé un contrat avec une chaîne de télévision pour qu'elle diffuse des interviews d'élus de ce parti et des informations appuyant ses thèses est un scandale. C'est inacceptable sur le plan de l'éthique politique, de la part d'un parti comme le CHP [Parti républicain du peuple, kémaliste, opposition parlementaire], mais aussi du point de vue de la déontologie, de la part d'une chaîne qui se prétend indépendante comme Kanal Türk [nationaliste et très anti-AKP - Parti de la justice et du développement, au pouvoir].

Il y a dans ce scandale une dimension politique qui démontre que la Turquie a beaucoup évolué depuis l'époque où les coups d'Etat rythmaient la vie politique et sociale du pays. En ce temps-là, la plus grande partie de la presse avait accepté de se soumettre aux putschistes. Que ce soit en 1960, en 1971 ou en 1980, ceux-ci avaient bénéficié d'un soutien de la presse. On peut donc dire que les responsables de ces coups d'Etat n'auraient sans doute jamais osé aller aussi loin s'ils n'avaient pas réussi à capter, ou à tout le moins à neutraliser, une bonne partie de la presse. Les médias ont joué un rôle déterminant dans le processus de préparation des coups d'Etat. En effet, ils ont contribué à créer les conditions favorables à un putsch, notamment en faisant croire à la population qu'un danger imminent menaçait le pays. On comprend bien que la situation actuelle [le parti islamo-conservateur au pouvoir est accusé d'atteinte à la laïcité] suscite chez les partisans de la manière forte une nostalgie pour ces jours anciens.

Mais la Turquie n'est plus le pays où l'information était le fait d'une poignée de médias isolés. Aujourd'hui, tant pour ce qui est la presse écrite que de l'audiovisuel, le pays possède un large éventail de médias qui disposent d'une audience de plus en plus importante. C'est grâce à cette diversification que toutes les tentatives de provocation orchestrées ces dix dernières années par une certaine presse

► *Dessin d'Ivan Steiger paru dans la Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Francfort.*

■ **La question kurde**
"On assiste actuellement à un rapprochement entre le gouvernement turc et les autorités kurdes du nord de l'Irak, avec lesquelles il était en froid. Le problème est que ce réchauffement avec les Kurdes d'Irak se fait sans les militaires turcs, qui sont absents de tous les contacts bilatéraux", relève Taraf. "Sans oublier que les relations entre un gouvernement AKP affaibli par une procédure d'interdiction et les Kurdes de Turquie ne sont pas au mieux pour le moment."



ont été désamorçées. Chaque information faisant l'objet d'une manipulation est maintenant systématiquement et rapidement dénoncée, ce qui empêche d'abuser la population.

Rappelez-vous : au lendemain de l'assassinat d'un juge du Conseil d'Etat [le 17 mai 2006], une partie de la presse avait essayé d'attribuer la responsabilité de ce meurtre au gouvernement AKP. Cet assassinat fut alors présenté comme une action menée par des islamistes s'en prenant à la laïcité. Quelques jours à peine suffirent pour que d'autres organes de presse démontrent qu'il s'agissait en fait de tout autre chose [l'assassin appartenait à un réseau ultranationaliste]. La vérité sur les événements de Semdinli [attentat commis en 2005 qui a mis en lumière l'implication de militaires turcs dans des "escadrons de la mort" sur fond de question kurde] de même que les zones d'ombre qui planent sur l'attaque par le PKK du poste-frontière de Daglica en octobre 2007 [où douze soldats turcs ont été tués et huit autres enlevés par le PKK, ce qui déclencha une riposte militaire turque] ont aussi été dévoilées par la presse. Les plans de coups d'Etat qui s'appuyaient précisément sur ces manipulations ont ainsi été déjoués. C'est encore cette presse turque libre qui a révélé l'ampleur des activités du gang de l'Ergekonek [groupe ultranationaliste aux

vellités putschistes disposant de relais dans une partie de l'appareil d'Etat].

Si une information affirmant qu'"une femme médecin aurait refusé de soigner un homme malade" est publiée dans un quotidien, on apprend le lendemain dans un autre journal que cette information est mensongère. Les dépêches sans fondement faisant état de l'interdiction de la consommation de boissons alcoolisées dans certains endroits sont rapidement démenties.

Une présence de plus en plus accrue des médias dans l'espace public turc constitue dès lors l'une des meilleures assurances de la pérennité d'un système démocratique dans notre pays. Dans ce contexte, la tentative du CHP [considéré par l'auteur comme incarnant une tendance antidémocratique] d'acheter le soutien d'une chaîne de télévision s'avère précisément une preuve de faiblesse. On ne peut que se réjouir que ce scandale ait été révélé. Les rangs des partisans des forces antidémocratiques sont si clairsemés aujourd'hui qu'ils en sont réduits à devoir monnayer pitoyablement leur existence médiatique. **Gülay Göktürk**

Trial sheds light on shades of Turkey

A report commissioned eight years ago by the highest advisory body in the land investigates how many Turks, Kurds and people of other extractions are living in Turkey. The report comes to light as part of the trial for the murder of three Christian missionaries.

ISTANBUL - Milliyet

The trial of the suspects of the murder of three Christian missionaries in the eastern province of Malatya last year unveiled a study undertaken by a group of Turkish universities to shed light on the size of the country's different ethnic groups, including Kurds, Arabs and Georgians

The National Security Council (MGK) asked a committee of academics from Erciyes University in Kayseri province, Firat University in Elazığ province and İnönü University in Malatya to prepare a report on the ethnic composition of Turkey eight years ago. Currently attached to the Malatya massacre case, the report cites quite interesting figures.

About 9 million Alevi:

Although some sources say the population of Alevi in Turkey ranges between 5 and 25 million, it is approximately 8.75 million, according to the MGK report.

When the 1 million Alevi living in Europe as well as those living in eight provinces where the study was not carried out, the number of Alevi citizens is estimated to reach about 10 million.

Taking into account the fact the research on the Alevi population was carried out eight years ago, the number is predicted to be about 11 million today. This indicates that 85 percent of Turkey's population is of the Sunni denomination of Islam.

The was supervised by Professor Şaban Kuzgun and was carried out in 68 provinces. It drew a profile of the ethnic and religious backgrounds of the people who live in these provinces. The report also includes figures about who belongs to which denomination of Islam.

Below is the ethnic composition of Turkey as shown in the MGK report:

- Turks: Ethnic Turkish groups such as Turkmen, Yürüks, Tatars, Tahtacıs, Terekemes, Karaçays, and Azerbaijanis make up Turks in the country. The size of this group, which has currently no ties with its ethnic roots, is about 50 million but reaches 55 million when those currently undergoing a Turkification process are included.

- Kurds: This is the second largest ethnic group in Turkey, according to the MGK report. When Zazas, who are about 3 million, are included, the Kurdish population in Turkey exceeds 12.6 million. A further 2.5 million are undergoing a Turkification process and in some regions there is a number of people who deny their Kurdish origins.

- Georgians: This group lives mainly in the Black Sea provinces of Ordu, Artvin, Samsun, and in the Marmara region. Their population is about 1 million. Excluding those who live in a few villages in the Black Sea region, many Georgians have already forgotten their mother tongue.

- Bosnians: Located mainly in Adapazarı, İzmir and Manisa, the population of Bosnians living in Turkey is about 2 million.

- Circassians: Dispersed around different provinces of Turkey, the Circassian population is about 2.5 million. Some 80 percent of those cannot speak the Circassian language.

- Arabs: This group lives mainly in the cities of Siirt, Şırnak, Mardin, Diyarbakır, Şanlıurfa, Hatay, Adana and İstanbul. The Arab population in Turkey is 870,000.

- Albanians: There are more than 1.3 million Albanians in Turkey. Half of the community has currently no ties with Albania as a result of the Turkification process they have undergone in the past decades. For about 500,000 Albanians, however, being and Albanian is highly important.

- Laz: In Turkey, there is a widespread

false belief that all people from the eastern parts of the Black Sea region are Laz. But in fact, the Laz people, who migrated from the Caucasus and speak a language called the Lazuri, live in some villages of Rize and Artvin provinces of the Black Sea region and some parts of the Marmara region. Their population is about 80,000.

- Hemşins: Just as the Laz, the Hemşins also live in some villages or districts of Rize and Artvin, and their population is about 13,000.

- Pomaks: Some sources say Pomaks are of Turkish descent but some say they have Slavic origins. The population of Pomaks in Turkey is about 600,000 and they have already been Turkified.

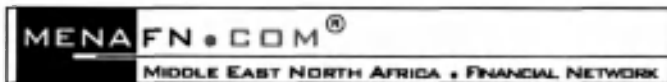
- Other ethnic groups: The total population of all other ethnic groups living in Turkey is just over 1 million. Roma people constitute the majority with a population of 700,000. In addition, there are about 60,000 Armenians, 20,000 Jews, 15,000 Rums (Greeks with Turkish citizenship). Very few Assyrians [Christians] live in Turkey.

Population of Turks slowly increases

The MGK report says population growth in Turkey has been low within the last 15 years. Population of the Kurds, on the other hand, increases 2.5 percent each year. [Turkey's national growth rate is 1%.]

The report also reveals that the population of Bosnians declines 0.12 percent each year, while the number of Turks declines by 0.8 percent and that of Albanians declines by 0.5 percent each year.

The highest level of Turkification is recorded among Kurds. They are followed by Bosnians, Circassians, and Albanians. Arabs migrating from the southeastern parts of Turkey have been undergoing a rapid Turkification process, according to the report.



June 11, 2008

Dana Gas charts world's largest aircraft to Kurdistan

Dana Gas, the Middle East's first and largest regional private-sector natural gas company, along with its project partner Crescent Petroleum, has chartered the world's largest aircraft, the Antonov 124 (An-124), to transport a large load of equipment and components from Houston, Texas (USA) to Erbil, the Iraqi Kurdistan's capital for use in Dana Gas and Crescent Petroleum's projects under implementation in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, at a cost of US\$ 1.25 million.

The companies' project is being implemented on a fast-track basis and involves a total investment of \$650 million - the largest single private sector investment in Iraq since 2003.

The project implementation includes upstream development and production, processing with state-of-the-art LPG plants, and transportation of natural gas through a new 180km pipeline, in order to pro-

vide urgently-needed gas supplies to cost-effectively fuel new power stations under construction, providing savings to the Government budget of over \$2 billion annually in fuel costs.

Antonov-124

The project implementation will also provide work opportunities for over 2,000 Iraqi nationals of all ethnic groups, and provide comprehensive training in oil and gas operations for Iraq's citizens.

The An-124 shipment consisted of essential project components weighing 58 tons that are to be utilized in the construction of two LPG plants which will be used to transport natural gas to new power stations being built in the Iraqi Kurdistan region.

The equipment was loaded and secured carefully on the An-124 using the aircraft's 10-ton gantry



crane and a team of specialized personnel over a period of five hours.

Part of a requirement identified in the later stages of the project to add flexibility to the plant, the components were identified, acquired, airlifted to Adana airport in Turkey, and transported on flatbed trucks to the project site in a record delivery time of just three weeks.

Thomas Watts, Project Director for the project in Iraqi Kurdistan, explained the rationale behind chartering the Antonov 124 for this task, and said, "Chartering the largest plane in the world at a cost of US\$1.25 million to move urgently needed equip-

ment from Houston to Iraq shows that Dana Gas and Crescent Petroleum are going the extra mile to get the job done.

"We have a mandate to expedite the implementation of this project in order to meet the needs of the Iraqi economy and to deliver much-needed gas supplies that will fuel power generation and industry, resulting in major savings for the Iraqi economy and a catalyst for industry and resultant job-creation," Mr. Watts added.

The An-124 has been the largest plane ever

mass produced in the world since 1982, with a capacity of up to 150 tons of cargo. It can also carry up to 88 passengers in its upper deck, and is able to kneel in order to facilitate front loading through its nose.

The An-124 has been used to transport some of the largest and most delicate cargo in the world, including large industrial equipment, train locomotives, small aircraft, archaeological treasures, and animals like elephants and even whales.



Voice of America®

11 June 2008

Iraq's Kurds Condemn Turkish Shelling

By Suzanne Presto - Irbil

Turkey has stepped up military operations this year against Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq's Kurdistan region. These operations include frequent cross-border shelling campaigns. VOA's Suzanne Presto in Irbil reports that the Kurdistan government is again condemning Turkish military action in Iraq.

Kurdistan officials say Turkey's military frequently shells unpopulated mountain areas not far from the Turkish border. Turkey says it is targeting rebels of the Kurdistan Worker's Party, the PKK, which has been fighting for independence in southeastern Turkey for nearly 25 years.

Kurdistan President Massoud Barzani's chief of staff, Fouad Hussein, says the government condemns Turkish military action in Iraq's largely autonomous Kurdistan region.

"We are condemning any shelling of the Kurdistan territory, and that is part of Iraqi territory," he said. "And that is not acceptable. That is not acceptable, and we hope they will stop. This will not help the interests of neither Turkey nor Iraqi Kurdistan."

Iraqi and Kurdistan officials said Turkey shelled an unpopulated area in the northern province of Dohuk as recently as Monday.

Last week, the deputy head of Turkey's armed forces, General Ilker Basbug, said Turkey has shared military intelligence with Iran, and that the two nations have carried out coordinated attacks against Kurdish rebels.

Iran is battling Kurdish rebels belonging to the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan, which are based along the Iranian border with Kurdistan.

Hussein says Kurdistan's neighbors, Turkey and Iran, are sovereign nations with a right to collaborate. But he says this fact does not give them license to discuss strategies that target Kurdish people living inside Iraqi borders.

"They are two independent countries," said Hussein. "It is their business, but if it is about Kurds in Iraq and about Kurdish people in Iraq then it is not acceptable. But if they are sharing information with each other about other issues, then that is different."

Hussein says Kurdistan has been in contact with the Turkish government about the rebel conflict and Turkey's military campaign. Last month, Kurdish Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani met with a

Turkish delegation in Baghdad to discuss political and security issues.

A Kurdish government statement issued after the talks said the prime minister recognized Turkey's legitimate concerns, and he stressed the importance of solving common problems through negotiation and dialogue.

Hussein also emphasizes that Kurdistan and Turkey should engage in further diplomatic measures.

"There is an open door between both sides, and we hope that during the future sitting and discussion and negotiation that we will solve this problem, because this cannot continue all the time," he said.

He stresses that the Kurdish regional government has no control

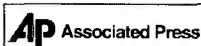


Deputy head of Turkey's Armed Forces Gen. Ilker Basbug (l) and Chief of Staff Gen. Yasar Buyukanit (r), Jun 2007

over the PKK rebels.

"We are not responsible for the PKK actions," Hussein said. "PKK does not listen to us, does not get orders from us. PKK is an organization which belongs to the Kurds of Turkey and we are not responsible for any actions that PKK takes."

Nearly 30,000 people have been killed in the conflict since the PKK began battling for autonomy in 1984. The United States, Turkey and other countries classify the PKK as a terrorist group.



Bomb kills head of Saddam Hussein's tribe in Iraq

June 10, 2008 By BUSHRA JUHI, The Associated Press BAGHDAD -

The head of Saddam Hussein's tribal clan was killed Tuesday by a bomb that had been planted on his car, Iraqi police said.

Sheik Ali al-Nida was the 65-year-old chief of Iraq's al-Bu Nasir tribe, a large Sunni Arab clan of about 20,000 members, including Saddam's family.

Al-Nida and one of his guards died when a bomb that had been glued to the undercarriage of his car exploded as they drove through the Wadi Shishain area of Tikrit, a mostly Sunni Arab city about 80 miles north of Baghdad, an officer said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to media.

Three other guards were seriously wounded, the officer said.

As the head of the clan, al-Nida received Saddam's body after his 2006 execution and arranged the former dictator's funeral. In 2007, he founded a so-called Awakening Council in Saddam's home village of Ouja, partnering with U.S. forces to fight Sunni militants in the area.

Members of Saddam's tribe have been targeted before, but it was unclear whether it was because of their ties to the former Iraqi dictator or because of long-standing tribal rivalries.

Al-Nida's brother, Mahmoud al-Nida, was shot dead by unknown gunmen in summer 2006.

Meanwhile, Iraqi soldiers cordoned off an area of eastern Baghdad on Tuesday to search houses, acting on a tip about militants hiding there, an officer said.

An Associated Press reporter at the scene said a suspected car bomber rammed into the fence of a house before gunmen burst out of the vehicle running. A gunbattle erupted, with Iraqi soldiers killing at least one of the men. Two others escaped, and a fourth wounded man was arrested.

Afterward, the dead man's body lay in the street, covered with a newspaper. Blood pooled nearby.

A construction crane arrived to remove the car, which an officer said was believed to be rigged with explosives than had not detonated. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to media.

Also Tuesday, the U.S. military said it captured two alleged al-Qaida in Iraq leaders along with three other men in Baghdad.

The men belong to an al-Qaida-linked group with roots in Iraq's western Anbar province, but which currently operates in the northern belts around Baghdad, a military statement said.

During the arrests Monday, American soldiers fatally shot another man who approached a security perimeter and ignored warning shots, the statement said.



Iraq plans to conduct general census next year

June 10, 2008 By SAMEER N. YACOUB, The Associ-

ated Press BAGHDAD -

Iraq's government announced on Tuesday that it will conduct a census next year in an effort to determine the real numbers of the country's religious and ethnic groups.

The population count would be the first since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime five years ago and will take place in October 2009, according to a statement by the government's media office.

The statement called upon all ministries to work together to organize the census.

The last census was conducted in 1997 during Saddam's rule. But the three northern Kurdish provinces were excluded because they were beyond the control of the central government. The 1997 census put the country's population at more than 26 million.

The country's first census 80 years ago put the population at less than 3 million.

A new census would settle the controversies over the size of the country's religious communities. Shiites claim to be the majority population at about 60 percent, a figure disputed by Sunni Arabs.

The results of the 2009 census will also determine the Kurds' fair share in the \$48 billion national budget.

Since Saddam's fall, the government has allocated about 17 percent of its budget for the Kurds, based on the assumption that the figure reflects their percentage of Iraq's population.

But some Shiite and Sunni politicians claimed Kurds should be cut back to about 14 percent. After much haggling, the Kurds held onto their 17 percent of the 2008 budget.



12 June 2008

DE MISTURA RELEASES ARTICLE 140 RECOMMENDATIONS

Kurdish lawmakers criticize UN recommendations over disputed districts.

By The Globe- Erbil

The UN releases its recommendations based on "the administrative history of the areas and the changes that have taken place after March 2003 along with the population structure and 2005 elections."

Top authorities in Kurdistan Region united to express their unhappiness with the June 5 recommendations proposed by UN envoy to Iraq Staffan De Mistura to solve the Article 140 issue.

Negative reactions came during a June 9 meeting of most if not all high-ranking Kurdish government authorities. The meeting was chaired by Kurdistan President Massoud Barzani, and the united presidencies let their discontent be known.

The contents of the report were not expected and thus "cannot be a suitable essence for solving the problems," read the declaration of the Kurdistan presidencies.

In the first phase, the recommendations give possible solutions to four of the disputable towns. They state that the KRG can govern Akre and Makhmur in Ninewa Province while two other towns, Hamdaniya and Mandali will remain under the administration of Baghdad.

The second stage of suggestions, to be announced in the coming weeks, will cover other disputed areas, while the third stage of suggestions will concentrate on Kirkuk.

The UN described the suggestions as part of their mission in Iraq legislated by resolution number 1770 in 2007 by the Security Council. Iraqi authorities gave the

UN permission last December to provide technical support toward the implementation of Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution.

Kurdish leaders described De Mistura's report as "contrary to the constitutional demands of applying Article 140." In another part of the Kurdistan leaders' declaration, it reads, "Most of the steps used in the mechanism of carrying out this report do not match with points already agreed on for resolving the problems." Kurdish leaders decided to send a letter to De Mistura explaining Kurdistan Region demands and pointing out the report's mistakes. In its Sunday session, Kurdistan Parliament called on De Mistura, the Iraqi government, the KRG, and the High Committee responsible for implementing Article 140 to "count the worries of Kurdistan people, execute Article 140, respect the historical and geographical facts, and remove the unjusts committed by the former regime against Kurds, Turkmen, and all Kurdistan people through ethnic cleansing." Arez Abdullah, a Kurdistan Parliament member, said that De Mistura's report deepens the problem because "it does not respect the will of Kurds concerning disputed areas."

Abdullah, speaking to PUKmedia a day after the report was released, said that "there are no disputes about Akre," which is mentioned as a disputed area in the report. Akre has been under the control of the



Iraqi President Jalal Talabani greets UN envoy to Iraq Staffan De Mistura in Baghdad on June 5. PRESS PHOTO

KRG since 1991. He added: "How could De Mistura give himself the right without holding a referendum to link Mandali to Diyala and ignore the right of the people of that place."

He also said there is no issue with Makhmur, which was attached to Mosul in 1996; neither Mosul nor Erbil authorities disagree on returning

it to Erbil. Makhmur's mayor, Barzan Sayd Kaka, objected to the suggestion in that term it asked for separating Qaraj-a district belonging to Makhmur-when the town is returned to Erbil. Sayd Kaka ex-

plained that even Arabs in Qaraj will not accept being cut off from the KRG. This district has 76 villages: 40 villages of Kurds, 34 villages of Arabs, and two villages of both ethnicities.

Mahmoud Othman, an Iraqi Parliament member from the Kurdistan List, said on Friday that De Mistura's recommendations were "disappointing" and would "not solve the existing problem." Othman added that these recommendations would only serve to increase the differences among the political parties.



United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq

Thursday, 5 June 2008:

UNAMI presents first analysis to GOI to help resolve on disputed internal boundaries

Press Releases

Today the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for Iraq Staffan de Mistura presented UNAMI's first analysis to the Government of Iraq regarding possible processes to resolve disputed internal boundaries. This effort is part of the UNAMI effort to implement its mandate under UN Security Council Resolution 1770 (2007).

Following the general agreement reached last December, prior to the deadline contained in Article 140 of the Constitution, among the Presidency Council, with the concurrence of the Prime Minister of Iraq and the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, UNAMI has been working on technical assistance for resolving these issues. Today, it presented separate analytical reports on four disputed districts to the same five senior officials together with a paper outlining UNAMI's methodology.

"I want to stress that the Government of Iraq alone has the sovereign responsibility to decide on the process and methodology used to address disputed internal boundaries," SRSG de Mistura stated. "UNAMI's aim in preparing and presenting this analysis is merely to contribute to the development of processes to resolve these complicated and sensitive issues."

UNAMI's analysis has pointed to a series of specific confidence building measures (CBMs) designed to assist with the handling of the administrative jurisdiction of the districts in dispute, provide security to all Iraqis living in the disputed territories, and create momentum towards a wider political agreement that includes each disputed district. We fully understand that this process must be deliberated properly.

SRSG de Mistura said, "Everyone recognizes that progress on the resolution of disputed internal boundaries (which we are aware are not limited to northern Iraq, with some in central and southern parts of the country) and clarification of administrative alignment must take place alongside wider political compromises that reassure the people of Iraq and solidify the unity of the Iraqi state. In this connection, UNAMI also continues to provide advice to the Government and democratic institutions of Iraq on the preparations for the upcoming elections and the Constitutional review process."

Four Initial Districts

In view of the complexity of the issues UNAMI has selected four districts on which to focus its initial analysis. Through these sample districts UNAMI aimed to develop a methodology which could be applied to these and other disputed areas for the consideration of the Government of Iraq. These districts were selected after a broad consultative process and analysis of the particular circumstances in each one.

Akre, Ninewa: Akre has been administered by the Dohuk governorate since 1991 and lies above the "green line" that divided the de facto Kurdish region from the administration of the Government of Iraq. As a result, Akre is typically considered to be one of the districts referred to as administered by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Article 53 of the TAL, which was incorporated into the Iraqi Constitution under Article 143. The district is home to a large Kurdish majority and officially transferring administration to the Dohuk governorate would not require substantial changes to the current arrangement.

UNAMI has recommended numerous CBMs including measures that work to guarantee the freedom of movement between Dohuk and Ninewa governorates, Arabic language rights, and fair hiring practices in Akre police units and government positions.

Hamdaniya, Ninewa: Hamdaniya has been continuously administered by the governorate of Ninewa since 1932. It falls outside those districts administered by the KRG as of 19 March 2003. The district enjoys strong administrative and economic ties with Mosul, and historically consisted of large Christian towns interspersed with Shebek villages and Arab communities, particularly in the sub-district of Namroud. The sharp rise in violence experienced in Hamdaniya after March 2007 is anecdotally cited as affecting the administrative preferences of vulnerable communities in Hamdaniya. The difficult security situation in Iraq has also directly impacted the demographics of Hamdaniya. In particular, it has led to members of the Christian and Shebek communities, increasingly displaced in other parts of Iraq, to settle in significant numbers in Hamdaniya. Based on analysis received, the Gov-

ernment of Iraq may wish to continue administration of the Hamdaniya District by the Ninewa Governorate.

UNAMI has recommended several CBMs aimed at increasing local participation in the Iraq Security Forces (ISF) in Hamdaniya, particularly from the Arab and Christian communities, and the urgent deployment of the ISF in Hamdaniya in place of local security arrangements (which are currently largely composed of Peshmerga). Additional CBMs focus on addressing hiring practices, the provision of basic services, and other measures. Members of the Christian and Shebek communities have expressed a preference for some form of local government arrangements and UNAMI has worked to emphasize the basic constitutional protections of all Iraqis in these districts, including administrative, political, cultural and education rights.

Particular attention has been paid to ensuring the safety of vulnerable communities in Hamdaniya. UNAMI has worked to identify security arrangements aimed at enhancing the safety of the Christian and Shebek communities and urges the Government of Iraq, with MNFI support, to continue to guarantee the safety of minority communities in Hamdaniya. These include establishing extra checkpoints, recruiting local residents from the concerned communities into the ISF, increasing the number of police stations, and deploying ISF units from a neighbouring district.

Makhmour, Ninewa/Erbil: Makhmour has been continuously a part of Erbil governorate since 1932, with numerous government decisions, orders and laws confirming this. However, the district has been administered by the Ninewa governorate since 1991 when the "green line" was established dividing the Kurdish region from the administration of the Government of Iraq. As a result, Makhmour is generally considered outside those districts administered by the KRG as of 19 March 2003. However no legislation, decree or regulation officially ever transferred the administration of Makhmour district from Erbil to Ninewa governorate. Makhmour's uncertain status has contributed to a complex development path and the district remains among the least developed districts in Iraq. On the other hand, the sub-district of Qaraj is largely populated by Arab communities who have expressed strong opposition to being formally administered by Erbil. Based on analysis received, the Government of Iraq may wish to take steps to officially restore the administration of Makhmour district through the Erbil governorate, with the exception of Qaraj sub-district which may be better administered through another neighbouring district and governorate.

UNAMI has recommended numerous CBMs focused on ensuring that Arab communities and residents receive equitable budget resources, access to employment, and representation in government and security forces. Additional measures include ensuring identification properly accounts for all residents of Makhmour, language guarantees, freedom of movement, and a focus on the injection of development projects.

Mandali, Diyala: Mandali, one of the first administrative districts of Iraq, was downgraded by Republican Decree to the status of sub-district in 1987 (within the district of Baladruz), but has continuously remained part of the Diyala governorate since 1932. State policies of the 1970s to expel Fayli Kurds and other communities were followed by numerous decisions in the 1980s, relating to the Iran-Iraq war, to relocate the border population out of Mandali, triggering another major displacement and a sharp decline in the number of inhabitants. Chronic under-development, decades of military activity and brutalization, systemic administrative neglect in service delivery, and an acute water shortage hindered a massive return of the original inhabitants. Administration of Mandali sub-district by the Diyala Governorate would be a continuation of the historical administrative arrangement.

UNAMI has proposed a series of CBMs which aim to secure recognition of Mandali's tragic history (in particularly that of the Kurds and Turkomen) and to address its systemic neglect. This would be done by invoking constitutional provisions for special attention to crisis areas and obtaining capital investment in all sectors. Local consultative processes to involve all communities in the reconstruction plans and development needs are strongly encouraged. Additional CBMs focused on ensuring equitable budget resources, and provision of basic services, access to employment, and representation in security forces and government offices. They further included

language guarantees, freedom of movement, and a focus on the injection of development projects, in particular irrigation.

Lines of Inquiry

In developing its analysis UNAMI explored a number of lines of inquiry to better understand the particular circumstances in each district. No single criteria has been given significantly greater importance over others.

Administrative history: When considering future administrative changes it was important to consider past practices and changes under previous governments. An examination of the relevant Revolutionary Command Council Decisions and Republican Decrees was part of this process.

Changes since March 2003: Iraq has undergone profound changes since March 2003 when administrative arrangements were overturned, almost overnight. It is important to understand the nature of these changes, how they affect the different communities and the degree to which they are permanent or not.

Government service delivery: In all districts, issues were raised concerning government service delivery and budget execution, which is a problem in many parts of Iraq. In the disputed areas, funding and resource distribution is often taking place on an unpredictable basis along dual lines, from the Government of Iraq and via the KRG. This has had the effect of creating confusion for some sub-national authorities who would otherwise prefer to operate fairly on behalf of all of their constituents.

Demographics and the December 2005 elections: Efforts were made to closely study the characteristics of the population in each district. One way this was done was through the use of central and local statistical databases in Iraq. Additionally, an examination of the December 2005 parliamentary election results sought to distinguish local political preferences and degrees of political influence in the districts at that time. The election results should not be construed as indicating a preference by the population for changing administrative jurisdictions and it is recognized that many complaints have been made regarding the conduct of those elections in these areas, including allegations of fraud, intimidation, and irregularities. Also considered under this category was the situation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Socio-economic conditions: The socio-economic situation in the disputed areas helped to reveal the particular history of administrative control.

Claims and compensation: The status and levels of property claims and compensation in each district were inspected as another indicator of previous manipulation.

Security conditions: The security situation in each area was examined to understand the trends of the last two years and its impact on local administration. A related and more sensitive question concerned the issue of who is providing security protection on behalf of whom.

UNAMI consultations: An essential part of the research involved UNAMI field visits to the areas in question for meetings with district and sub-district councils, as well as tribal and community leaders. The security environment limited deeper survey of some areas. Nonetheless, it was felt that the visits enabled UNAMI to capture a broadly representative view of the concerns of each district. This process was augmented by meetings with political parties and parliamentarians in Baghdad including Iraqi citizens who came forward of their own volition.

Confidence-building measures: A final but vital part of the analysis was the identification of confidence building measures tailored to the unique circumstances of each area. Across all districts these involved a combination of reconstruction and development interventions and measures to assist the protection of minorities.

Phase Two: UNAMI research continues

UNAMI continues analysis in a similar manner for another set of disputed districts in northern Iraq. These include Tal Afar, Tilkaif, Shekhan, and Sinjar districts in the Ninewa governorate and the Khanaqin district in Diyala. UNAMI aims to complete these analyses in the coming weeks. A third phase will focus on the governorate of Kirkuk and some districts adjoining it that are currently administered from other neighbouring governorates.

Kirkuk confidence-building measures

Kirkuk is central to any effort to address disputed internal boundaries in northern Iraq. UNAMI has recently established a presence in Kirkuk and will continue to engage with all communities there. UNAMI is exploring options on a range of possible confidence building measures with the parties and stands ready to assist with the finalization of such steps in the areas of power-sharing, security arrangements, including community-based policing, the delivery of public goods and services, the handling of detainees, language rights, and the distribution of government posts.

UNAMI has also started working on a series of possible scenarios and options for resolving the administrative jurisdiction and status of Kirkuk governorate, within a political and constitutional process that would be acceptable to the major stakeholders. It intends to discuss these scenarios and options with all relevant players in the coming weeks.



Kurdistan Region Presidency

KRP.org

9 June 2008 -

Statement by the Kurdistan Region Political Leadership on Mr de Mistura's report on disputed areas

With the participation of Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani, a broad-based meeting was held in Salahaddin yesterday, 9 June 2008, to discuss Steffan de Mistura's first phase of the report for resolving the issue of the disputed areas. The meeting was attended by the three presidencies of the Kurdistan Region (Presidency of the Kurdistan Region, Presidency of the Kurdistan National Assembly and the Presidency of the Kurdistan Regional Government Council of Ministers) as well as the Council of Kurdistan Political Parties.

The report was fully discussed and analysed during the meeting. The following points were identified

as sources of concern that should be addressed:

1- The participants expressed their disappointment with the recommendations of the report and stated that the report, in its current form, was far from what had been anticipated. For this reason, this report cannot be a basis to rely on for resolving the issues.

2- Most of the implementation mechanisms mentioned in the report are not close to those agreed to previously for resolving the issues.

3- The report has ignored the crux of the Iraqi Constitution and its call to implement Article 140.



4- de Mistura's committee has been more preoccupied with irrelevant activities, instead of working on resolving the basic problems. It has allocated a large part of the report to some issues which are not the concern of the Committee.

The participants unanimously expressed their dissatisfaction with de Mistura's report and described it as negative. They decided to prepare a formal memorandum to de Mistura, which will identify the re-

port's shortcomings and will convey the Kurdistan Region's demands. It will also insist that a committee from the Kurdistan Region hold negotiations with the UN Representative in Iraq.

At the end of the meeting, the participants called for these concerns to be taken into consideration to address the mistakes and shortcomings in the report. This first report should not be used as a basis for any future steps.

Globe Editorial

Did the UN really stop the clock?

By Bashdar Pusho Ismaeel
The Kurdish Globe - Erbil

In December 2007, as the deadline for the implementation of Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution unsurprisingly passed, UN special envoy to Iraq Staffan de Mistura claimed: "the question of Kirkuk was a ticking time bomb. The United Nations has stopped the clock." In reality, however, the UN never stopped the clock; they only added more time to the "ticker."

After Iraqi political figures agreed to "technical" assistance from the UN, it was hoped that a breakthrough could be finally reached on the hotly contested territories including oil-rich Kirkuk. That aside, Article 140 is officially-despite Turkoman and Arab rhetoric-still the only legally binding paradigm for solving land disputes. The decision in December was to extend the deadline by another six months. However, only the deepest optimist would have thought that a referendum would be held by June 31, 2008.

The fact that Iraq is unwilling to follow democratic principles adopted by a clear majority speaks volumes about the level of mistrust and animosity gripping the national horizon and lack of genuine appetite for egalitarianism. Iraqis should never have allowed the interference of outside parties in internal affairs, let alone that of the UN. Simply stated, the UN lacks an adequate understanding on the level of differences rooted amidst the socio-political landscape.

The Kurds have never had representation in the UN and have been commonly persecuted while the UN Security

Council has taken no action. While 250,000 Kurds were kicked and beaten without remorse from their historical homes, "compromise" was not a word uttered by Baathist forces. Now those same Kurds, wishing to return home, are being told their legally enshrined demands constitute overreaching and they must compromise.

In tandem with political progress on Article 140, even the UN missed their own deadline by weeks to table suggestions to Iraqi leaders. Finally, those widely anticipated suggestions arrived in Baghdad last week. Even the first phase of a methodology designed as a stepping stone for dealing with Kirkuk by resolving less-contested areas was met with much apprehension. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) "first analysis" recommended putting Akra and Makhmour districts under Kurdistan Region control, with the districts of al-Hamadaniya and Mandali to be administered by the central government.

The recommendations were based on "the administrative history of the areas and the changes that have taken place after March 2003, along with the population structure and 2005 elections." No matter what historical trajectory is analyzed, UNAMI suggestions will always be based on approximations until people of every town are consulted in true democratic terms. This simply takes the argument full circle: No technical agreement can formulate an all-encompassing basis for each region without an unambiguous consultation.

The suggestions were almost immediately criticized by Iraqi lawmakers



on both sides of the Arab-Kurdish divide. There was general Arab consensus that the recommendations were "unconstitutional," complicated the issue, and had no legal basis. The Kurds themselves are unlikely to be happy without the prize asset of Kirkuk returning. For the Kurds, this is a historical juncture.

This is a chance to correct the wrongs of the past in a democratic and legal manner. If Kurds were unwilling to compromise in 1975 over Kirkuk, then any deal in the "new" Iraq of 2008 not involving its rightful return would represent a huge setback. The UN is an international yet generic taskforce when it comes to fiercely contested regional matters. They will adopt a formula to try and please all parties, regardless of the weight of historical argument. If the UN is truly a taskforce capable of ensuring equal rights and safeguarding stability, then Kurdistan would have been independent long ago.

The UN formula seemingly side-

steps the fact that Article 140 is synonymous with Kirkuk. A solution to deal with other, less- emotive areas under dispute does not alter the picture a great deal.

Recently, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani stated his administration's willingness for power sharing. If realized, such concessions are likely to be weighted with many caveats-possibly for greater compromise by Baghdad on the hydrocarbon law or the return of all other disputed lands without question. Concessions would give Kurds productive short-term gains as well as a major boost of ties with the Turkish administration, yet the sense of regional defeat may be unavoidable.

Kirkuk has been a historical red line and remains a future icon of Kurdish prosperity and survival. The will of the majority must not be sacrificed as a political token or gesture. Regardless, the ticking time bomb continues its countdown

KRG suggests De Mistura rethink his recommendations

Steffan De Mistura, the UN Secretary-General's top envoy to Iraq, finally submitted his views and suggestions to Iraq's President Jalal Talabani on four disputed districts, Akre, Hamdaniah (Bartla), Makhmour, and Mandali, as the first phase of UN suggestions for the implementation of Article 140 of the Iraqi Permanent Constitution.

By By Aso Karim
The Kurdish Globe - Erbil

The report was discussed and scrutinized in Kurdish Parliament. Kurdistan Region's Presidency Office also announced its official stand regarding De Mistura's suggestions on June 9, and asked him to revise his advice. Various opinions were introduced in the region regarding the issue. Generally, opinions should move around one of these two points: 1) not hesitating in announcing the final stand until De Mistura submits the second part of his report about Khanaqeen, Talaafar, Sinjar, Sheikhan, and Tilkef; and 2) rejecting the suggestions and creating public pressure



on those necessary to "take into consideration the historical and geographical factors and the demographic changes in those areas during Saddam's era (1968-2003), and establish a committee to negotiate with the UN Iraq envoy."

I personally think we can work in both directions. People can create pressure in a civilized and democratic way, and the committee, which is set to be established, can start negotiations with De Mistura; or, we can wait until De Mistura submits all his other suggestions and advice, and study all of it as a package. Then, the measures used by De Mistura to reach a decision about the

solutions to the issues can be scrutinized and each recommendation can be given its respective comment. Some suggestions can be accepted; others rejected. For example, regarding Makhmour District, De Mistura suggests that it should be linked to Erbil Province, and Qaraj sub-district be attached to another Arab province since the majority of its residents are Arabs. He uses an ethnic basis for this suggestion. However, in regard to Mandali, despite the fact that the majority of its residents are Kurds, De Mistura doesn't depend on an ethnic basis and

doesn't attach it to Kurdistan Region; instead, he uses administrative history that was decided at the dawn of the Iraqi state in the 1930s when the British divided the area with no regard to an ethnic basis or the historical and geographical facts. This administrative partitioning was further distorted by the subsequent Iraqi regimes.

Nevertheless, according to UN Security Council Resolution number 1770 of 2007, De Mistura's plan is not obligatory but merely suggestive, and the final decision is to be made by the Iraqi govern-

ment (the Presidency Office and the Ministerial Council), Kurdistan's Presidency, and the residents of the disputed areas. Besides, it in no way can trespass upon the rules of Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution and the stages of its implementation, including asking the opinion of the residents of those areas. Besides, we should not expect much from the UN since it is actually an organization of united countries, not nations, and it has many political interests and considerations of its member countries; when we remember the resolution of December

26, 1925, to attach Mosul Province to the newly established Iraqi state, we can realize this fact more easily. Therefore, in this careful process, probably in today's situations, we are not able to easily gain all of our rights and the historical suffering of the Kurds cannot be healed all at once. There will probably come into existence other compromised solutions for Kirkuk, and thus it is important to think of various alternatives.



WASHINGTON KURDISH INSTITUTE June 12, 2008

UNAMI Fails to Address the Constitutional Commitments of Article 140, says WKI President

WKI Press Release June 12, 2008

Washington, D.C. – The President of Washington Kurdish Institute, Dr. Najmaldin Karim, criticized the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) for its arbitrary recommendations regarding the issue of disputed territories. Dr. Karim underscored that UNAMI was brought into the process to provide UN resources to assist in the mechanism for implementation of article 140 of the Iraq Constitution. So far, UNAMI has elected not to release the complete text of its report and has merely released a brief press release, available on its website.

Dr. Karim said: "From what we can surmise, UNAMI has offered nothing more than its unbalanced preference for arbitrary criteria to allocate certain areas of the disputed territories. Seemingly, it has ignored the fundamental injustices of ethnic cleansing and state-sponsored Arabization, perpetrated by successive Iraqi regimes, with the specific purpose of changing the demographic structure of the region. UNAMI has failed to address the core elements of Article 140 of the Iraq Constitution that commit the Iraqi government to reversing past racist policies through the process of normalization and referendum, which was negotiated and decided as a fair way to resolve the territorial issues.

"If UNAMI aims to bypass the Iraq Constitution and announce bureaucratic acronyms, as they had indicated thus far, then the KRG leadership should pursue the resolution of Article 140 without their assistance. Their recommendations are non-binding and should be received as such. The issue is too important to the future of Kurdistan and Iraq as a whole to accept further equivocation and procrastination. We urge the leadership of Kurdistan Alliance and the KRG to stand firm against the deliberate encroachment upon historical and legitimate Kurdish rights."

Dr. Karim added: "The Kurdish people have not forgotten the dismal record of the UN bureaucracy, in its past silence against genocide and gross human rights abuses committed against the people of Kurdistan during the 1980's. Its role in the scandal of Oil for Food and its complicity with Saddam's regime in abusing Iraqi oil resources, to the detriment of the Iraqi people, has yet to be fully accounted. UNAMI can play a relevant and positive role by facilitating the mechanism for the practical implementation of Article 140."

Background on the issue of Article 140 and the disputed territories

On May 9, 2008, the Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI), the Penn Program in Ethnic Conflict at the University of Pennsylvania, and the Kurdish National Congress of North America (KNC) hosted an all-day conference in the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill. The focus of the conference was Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution, which mandates a process of normalization and referendum for disputed territories.



Iraq federal, Kurd region oil chiefs informally agree on exports

United Press International

: June 12, 2008 By BEN LANDO UPI Energy Editor

The pipeline that could pump northern Iraqi oil for export is nearly complete but empty, ending for now in the soil near the borders with Syria and Turkey, on the side of a dirt road.

Across the dirt road are the buried pipelines that carry oil from Iraq's second-largest oil hub, Kirkuk, to the Iraqi government's oil export metering station guarded by Iraqi Kurdish forces less than a half mile up the dirt road, and on to the Turkish port of Ceyhan.

Norwegian company DNO's oil and the idled pipeline await the outcome of ongoing negotiations between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the federal Iraqi government to give it permission to export.

Both sides' oil officials say they are ready to sign an export deal, but there has been no agreement yet. If one is reached, it could add 1 million barrels per day to the market within five years -- half of Iraq's total exports now -- according to KRG estimates.

"We have told the KRG that we are willing to receive all the oil that's being produced by DNO and others," said Iraqi Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani, adding the "others" include only the four contracts signed

before February 2007 when a draft oil law was agreed to by both sides. Oil produced by the more than a dozen other contracts signed since then would be confiscated outright, he said, claiming Baghdad's sole rights to sign deals.

"We told them OK, we'll send a technical team to hook up their pipeline to our export pipeline, and nothing has happened," he said. "We never had an issue with the fact that any oil produced in any part of the country is the property of Iraq."

He said all Iraqi oil exports must take place by Iraq's State Oil Marketing Organization and all the revenue deposited into the Development Fund for Iraq, the U.N. mandated and audited account of Iraqi oil sales.

"That has always been our position. We not only encouraged that but insist that there is no other way to export oil but through our export pipelines and SOMO contracts."

Ashti Hawrami, the natural resources minister of the KRG, said there are still a few issues on the technical side to be resolved before the KRG will be able to actually export.

"When we are ready, we will call our colleagues, and I don't envisage any problem in that," he said. "The metering station is in the KRG territory. We can just link up the pipeline, open the metering and tell SOMO that so many barrels are going through, please account for it.

"All we are doing is expanding Iraq's production capacity," Hawrami said. "So what's wrong with that?"

The export issue has been included in disputes between the central and regional governments over revenue sharing, the legitimacy of the KRG deals and the oil law.

Both sides say the constitution backs them, and both insist they are doing what's best for Iraq as a whole. But the structure of control and decision-making over the oil sector spread throughout the country hasn't been finalized. And there is still widespread opposition to such industry-friendly deals, such as production-sharing contracts the KRG has signed ("The government takes about 90 percent or so," Hawrami said), let alone the role international oil companies should play in Iraq's oil future.

Talks are expected to resume next week, over this and more fiery impasses, such as a new federal oil law and the more than a dozen other contracts the KRG signed with international oil companies.

DNO's project to find and produce oil is by far the most advanced of them all. A 45-minute drive from the end of the empty pipeline is the village of Tawke, where a pool of seepage oil bubbles. Nearby is DNO's main KRG site, where a handful of wells produce oil and either fill up tankers there or at the central processing facility.

Tawke has produced a 6,000 to 7,000 barrel per day average since June 2007, said Magne Normann, DNO managing director of the Iraqi Kurdistan work.

"We are not in a position to give any guidance to this, but we hope that we are commencing export by the end of this year," he said. "The design capacity of our facilities is 50,000 bpd, which can be delivered once export is in place. In the meantime we are delivering oil to the domestic market by tanker trucking."

About 10,000 bpd of KRG-produced oil is sold currently, all to the domestic market, Hawrami said. He denies reports that oil exports via tanker have headed into Iran.

He said most of the new production from within the KRG boundaries will be sent to foreign markets.

"Maybe some of it will be used to feed a few local refineries to satisfy the local consumption," he said. There are plans for about 100,000 bpd worth of refineries in the region.



DNO's oil pipeline ends here at Faysh Khabur, near the Iraq border with Turkey and Syria. It's less than a half mile from the Iraqi government's oil metering station, seen in the background, but a deal hasn't been reached between Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government to allow exports from KRG inked deals. (Ben Lando/UPI)

But within five years, Hawrami said, the KRG oil sector will be more robust.

"From the contracts we've signed, and those under negotiations, and the contracts that may be signed in a year, 18 months down the line," Hawrami said, "cumulatively out of these activities we believe we'll get a stable million barrels a day for many years."



June 12, 2008

KRG Official on Oil Production, Kirkuk, Turkey

By Ma'ad Fayad

London, Asharq Al-Awsat- Falah Mustafa, head of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq foreign relations department (equivalent to foreign minister), said that KRG Prime Minister Nechervan Barzani will visit Baghdad in mid-June to discuss with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki and other officials concerns between Kurdistan and the federal government, in particular, the oil and gas bill and the fate of Kirkuk.

He said: "Oil exploration operations in the region are continuing and there are oil contracts waiting to be signed, in addition to the ones signed two years ago. We are now in the production stage." He highlighted Prime Minister Barzani's assertion that the "region is ready to pump oil through Iraqi pipelines at the rate of 1 million barrels per day to start with."

He added that the "regional government's compliance with the oil resources issue is in accordance with the Iraqi constitution. That is, 17 percent of the revenues go to the region's government and 38 percent to the federal government in Baghdad. This means we [KRG] are not taking all the revenue, as some wrongly believe." Mustafa stressed: "Under the Iraqi

constitution, oil and gas belong to the people and we can offer much to our Iraqi people, particularly now at the stage of building and reconstruction."

He indicated that the Iraqi oil and gas bill "was delayed because of differences in the views of the region's government and some in the federal government who want to keep the oil industry policy as it was before; that is, subject to total central policy. We in the regional government and some officials in the federal government believe this important industry should be subject to the free market and open to investors to rebuild the oil industry's technology and expand exploration and investments. This is more of an economic issue than a political one; otherwise, Iraq will have to be content exporting two million barrels a day at a time when it has the potential to export six million barrels."

Speaking to Asharq Al-Awsat in London, Mustafa said: "We are here to meet British officials and discuss the situations in the region of Kurdistan and Iraq and the ongoing political process in the country and also to strengthen our relations, particularly the political, economic, and cultural ones."

"We are acting in accordance

with what is set out for us in the Iraqi constitution and what is in accordance with Iraq's foreign policy and in coordination with the foreign ministry to serve Iraq as a whole and the region of Kurdistan because we are part of Iraq and the Iraqi people," he added.

On the nature of relations today between the KRG and the federal Iraqi government and whether the negative situation in Baghdad affects KRG policies, Mustafa said: "It is known that the Kurdish political leadership decided, in accordance with the voluntary union principle, that we should be part of Iraq, live in peace, act for the country's progress, and do everything we can in the interest of the Iraqi people. As long as the region is part of Iraq, we will do everything in our power to positively influence the political, economic, and cultural situations all over Iraq. We always call on our brothers in Baghdad to take our experiences in these fields to Iraq's other areas and are trying our best not to let some of the negative situations in some Iraqi areas to affect the region [Kurdistan]."

Regarding the proposals by the UN secretary general's representative for solving the question of Kirkuk and other disputed areas, the Kurdish

official said: "the solution for this problem needs real will and political determination by all the Iraqi parties. The best solution is compliance with Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution. The Kurdish leadership's acceptance of it signified a large concession." He highlighted: "If Kirkuk comes under the region administratively, it will not mean it will be separated from Iraq. It will remain Iraqi, similar to Arbil, Sulaymaniyah, and Duhok, which are Iraqi governorates."

He added: "The first stage proposals presented by the UN secretary general's representative are not practical and ignore many facts. They are non-binding proposals and were a deep disappointment for the Iraqi parties." Mustafa appeared optimistic about Kurdish-Turkish relations, and said: "We are seeking to develop our economic, cultural, and political relations with our neighbor Turkey because it knows that we can play a positive role in the relations between it and Iraq. It is a historic neighbor and helped us a lot in the past. It has big investments in the region and can expand them in Iraq's other regions."

AFP

Iran kills two Kurdish PJAK separatists in clash near Iraqi Kurdistan border

June 13, 2008 (AFP)

Piranshar, Iranian Kurdistan, — Iranian border police killed two Kurdish PJAK militants in fighting this week in the city of Piranshar near the border with northern Iraqi Kurdistan region, the Mehr news agency reported on Friday. "Two armed bandits from a group of six were killed in clashes in highland areas of Piranshar two days ago," provincial police spokesman Shahnam Rezaei was quoted as saying, adding that another three were wounded. He said the militants were planning "sabotage" in Iran, without giving details on their identity. "Our border patrols have confronted these bandits and terrorists and forced them to flee to the other side of the border many times during this year," he added.

Last week, Rezaei said another 12 Iranian Kurdish PJAK rebels and four Iranian police were killed in clashes near Piranshar, which is located in Iran's West Azerbaijan province.

The Jomhuri Islami newspaper reported two weeks ago that four members of the Iranian security forces were killed by mines laid in the area by Kurdish rebels from the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK).

There has been an apparent increase in fighting with Kurdish rebels on Iran's northwestern border areas with Iraqi Kurdistan region and Turkey over the past few weeks.

Since 2004 the PJAK took up arms for self-rule in the country's mainly Kurdistan province northwestern of Iran (Iranian Kurdistan, Eastern Kurdistan). Half the members of PJAK are women.

June 13, 2008

TODAYS ZAMAN

Kurds welcome Kurdish broadcast bill

E. BARIŞ ALTINTAŞ İSTANBUL

The adoption of a bill that allows full-time state broadcasts in Kurdish has been mostly welcomed by Kurdish activists and intellectuals, but they say it is hardly enough on its own.

In a session on Wednesday night Parliament adopted new legislation amending a law on the state-owned Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) network allowing broadcasts in non-Turkish languages. The bill was passed in a vote of 225 to 75. The bill has been awaiting parliamentary approval for the past three weeks. The new legislation allows TRT to allocate one of its channels for full-time broadcasting in Kurdish. Turkey's laws on radio and television broadcasting do not allow foreign language broadcasts by private stations except for accepted languages taught in state schools as a second language, such as English. Many say the move has symbolic importance in that the state itself will be broadcasting full-time in Kurdish. The European Union, which Turkey aspires to join, has been expecting the reform for a long time.

"It is a very positive step," said Ümit Firat, a Kurdish intellectual who shared his opinions with Today's Zaman. "Kurds until today have made certain demands, including television in Kurdish," he noted.

Firat said the move was indicative of the state's interest in meeting the demands of its people, who have felt neglected for some time.

"This is one of the most pleasant pieces of news I've heard in recent times," noted law professor Nebahat Akkoç, president of the Diyarbakır-based Women's Consultation and Solidarity Center (KAMER), which has carried out numerous projects in the Southeast among Kurdish women.

"It was a demand KAMER has voiced so many times," she told Today's Zaman. "It will be a great tool to inform women about their legal rights. The channel most certainly has to have programs concentrating on women's issues." She also stated that KAMER's list of opinions and suggestions for programs on women's issues would be communicated to TRT. "It will be very, very useful," she said.

Sezgin Tanrıku, head of the Diyar-

bakır Bar Association, agreed that it is most certainly welcome to see the state struggling to do something to meet its people's ethnic and cultural demands; however, he said, he strongly believes that without allowing private television owners to broadcast in Kurdish, those demands cannot really be met. Tanrıku also noted that he was deeply skeptical that this first step could also be interpreted as a first step to allowing private networks to broadcast in Kurdish in the near future.

The TRT plans to start its full Kurdish broadcasts by October of this year.

TRT to face competition from satellite channels

The TRT earlier had broadcasts limited to a few hours a day in Kurdish, which were largely ignored by the Kurdish population of Turkey. These programs were usually uninteresting and old documentaries about nature or history that lasted about an hour, immediately followed by a broadcast in another language such as Bosnian or Azerbaijani. TRT's one-hour Kurdish TV broadcasts did not stand a chance next to the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) station Med TV and stations based in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq.

In Tanrıku's opinion, the TRT law did not need to be changed. "I don't understand why they had to change the law. The hour limitations of TRT's Kurdish broadcasts were not set by law but by the bylaws of the institution itself. I think they couldn't make TRT to do full-time broadcasts, and so the government passed the law to break the resistance the TRT has shown," Tanrıku reasoned.

The new TRT administration has planned a full-day television station with entertainment programs and serials like those on Turkish stations, and officials of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) say if the new TRT station can effectively meet regional viewers' demands, then it might actually have a chance to be actually watched instead of dismissed outright as an instrument of state propaganda.

Firat noted that drawing viewers is about competition. "Whoever does better broadcasting, they will get more viewers." He said some of the channels were too ideological, which he admitted appealed to some, but not to everyone. "Well, most

to everyone. "Well, most people want to learn from their televisions what's going on in the world, to watch shows about women's issues or the environment," he stated.

Tanrıku, however, stated that the alternatives are too strong. "I do not think TRT will be appealing to large audiences in the region," he said.

Yet Firat noted that as long as TRT is prudent in its broadcasting policies, it won't have to face the perception of being a channel of state propaganda. "It should not be a Kurdish version of the regular TRT," Firat said. "It should be a Kurdish station directed at Kurdish culture, not a translation."

Challenges along the way

Firat said those planning the programming appear to be targeting that. "They have talked to me about working with them, too. From what I've gathered, I can say that their intentions are good. They are in search of good ideas. But only time will tell if their good intentions will be enough to make it worthwhile," he stated.

He also said personnel challenges awaited TRT. "It will be hard to find qualified employees because although Kurdish is not banned in Turkey, there is no education in Kurdish," he said, adding that it was impossible for a language to develop just by being spoken in daily life and that its use in intellectual discourse and writing is crucial to developing quality human resources well-versed in that language.

Akkoç said programs that target women and that inform them of their constitutional rights would help tremendously in improving their situation.

The Republican People's Party (CHP), which has challenged tens of government sponsored amendments passed in Parliament, also announced that it is backing the broadcast, leaving an angry Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) on its own.

MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli earlier on Tuesday said of Kurdish broadcasts, "This is a gesture made to the terrorists of the PKK." He said the compromises made by the state would not be limited to Kurdish-language broadcasts and that soon Kurdish language education and finally a new Kurdish state in the Southeast would be established.



Iraqi lawmakers reject US security draft pact

Iraqi lawmakers say accepting US proposals would cement American control of Iraq.

June 13, 2008 BY QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

BAGHDAD - New US proposals have failed to overcome Iraqi opposition to a proposed security pact, two lawmakers said Thursday, and a senior government official expressed doubt an agreement could be reached before the US presidential election in November.

The security agreement would provide a legal basis for the presence of US forces in Iraq after the UN mandate expires at the end of this year. Failure to strike a deal would leave the future of the American military presence here to the next administration.

US negotiators offered new proposals this week after Iraqi lawmakers expressed outrage over the direction of the negotiations, claiming that accepting the US position would cement American military, political and economic domination of this country.

Iman al-Asadi, a Shiite member of the parliamentary committee on legal affairs, said the latest American version "wasn't satisfactory to say the least."

She said the American proposals contained "some good points but they were not up to what we had expected." Al-Asadi said the committee had recommended to the negotiators that they reject the latest draft, the fourth since the talks began last March.

Kurdish lawmaker Mahmoud Othman confirmed al-Asadi's comments, adding that "we will not sign" the agreement as proposed by Washington.

US officials have refused to release details of the talks while they are still under way but have expressed their respect for Iraqi sovereignty.

The top State Department adviser on Iraq, David Satterfield, told reporters this week that the two sides would meet a July target date to finish the agreement, which must be ratified by the Iraqi parliament.

President Bush told reporters this week in Germany that he was also confident that a deal would be reached.

But a senior Iraqi official said that the chance of finalizing an agreement before the US presidential election was "slim," although he added that Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government was interested in a deal if it served Iraqi interests.

The official is familiar with the negotiations but spoke on condition of anonymity to protect his position.

He said Iraqis were disappointed that the Americans were not offering a firm commitment to defend the country from foreign invasion — a move that would require US Senate ratification.



The Bush administration has said it does not need congressional approval for the agreement despite demands from Democrats that Congress have a role if the pact commits US forces to remain in Iraq long-term.

Several Iraqi lawmakers said a major obstacle was the US demand for immunity from prosecution in Iraqi courts for all American personnel, including both troops and civilian contractors.

Al-Asadi said the latest US proposals limited immunity to American military personnel but that was not enough.

"What happens to our dignity? What happens to our sovereignty? We want immunity to be lifted," she said.

She also said the Americans had softened their demand for control of a considerable part of Iraq's airspace but that the Iraqis insisted on full control.

"If the US controls the air, the ground and the sea, this means no sovereignty," she said.

Al-Asadi refused to release further details or talk about how many bases the United States wanted access to under the agreement. She said the Americans were now avoiding talk of numbers of bases but were asking for an "American presence" until Iraqi security forces were deemed ready to take over from US-led forces.

She said the agreement included no timetable for drawing down American forces and "this is a scandal."

TIME

June, 14, 2008

Iraqi Suicide Bomber Hits Soccer Fans

By AP/KIM GAMEL

(BAGHDAD) — A female suicide bomber targeted a crowd of soccer fans celebrating Iraq's win in a World Cup qualifier on Saturday, wounding at least 34 people near a cafe north of Baghdad, police said.

The young woman, who was covered in a traditional black Islamic robe, was dropped off by a car shortly before the attack as dozens of cheering young men poured out onto the streets after watching Iraq beat China 2-1 on television in the cafe in the town of Qara Tappah.

The woman told suspicious police that she was waiting for her husband but blew herself up after an officer spotted the detonator and began screaming at the crowd to disperse, according to the town's top administrator, Serwan Shukir.

Seven police and 27 civilians were among the wounded, Shukir said, but the officer's warning had averted a higher casualty toll by preventing the woman from reaching the bulk of the fans.

Police Capt. Najib Khourshid said she was about 20 yards away from the crowd when the blast occurred.

"About 100 people were in the cafe and we went out to celebrate the victory after the match. Minutes later, a big explosion took place near us," said Salman Hameed, who was wounded in

his chest and right hand. "The female bomber has spoiled our joy and celebration."

Hameed, a Sunni Arab, said five of his Kurdish and Turkomen friends also were wounded in the attack.

Qara Tappah is a mainly Kurdish and Shiite Turkomen city, about 75 miles northeast of Baghdad in the volatile Diyala province. The attack followed warnings by U.S. officials that al-Qaeda in Iraq is increasing efforts to recruit women as suicide attackers in a bid to subvert stepped up security measures, particularly in Diyala.

In Baghdad, a bomb hidden on a bus exploded in a Shiite neighborhood, killing two people and wounding eight, police said. Three other civilians were injured Saturday when a roadside bomb exploded near a police patrol in the capital's Karradah district, police said.

President Bush, meanwhile, brushed off comments that negotiations on a long-term security agreement between the United States and Iraq were faltering ahead of a July target date for completion. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki told reporters Friday that the talks were deadlocked but would continue.

The Iraqi national security council met Saturday and expressed support for al-Maliki's

management of the talks, according to a government statement.

The expression of support by the council, which includes representatives from all major political blocs, appeared to be aimed at showing the U.S. and the Iraqi public that the political establishment was united in its opposition to U.S. demands.

But in Paris, Bush said he was still optimistic that a deal would be finalized.

"If I were a betting man, we'll reach an agreement with the Iraqis," Bush said. "Of course, we're there at their invitation. It's a sovereign nation ... We're going to work hard to accommodate their desires. It's their country."

Failure to strike a deal would be a major setback for Bush ahead of the November presidential election and would leave the future of the U.S. mission here to the next president. The agreement would provide a legal basis for American troops to remain here after the U.N. mandate expires at the end of the year, raising Iraqi concerns about sovereignty issues.

Al-Maliki, himself a Shiite, has sought to assert more control with a series of U.S.-supported operations against Shiite and Sunni extremists in a bid to maintain recent security gains that have led to dramatic falls in violence nationwide.

Helicopters blanketed Amarah with pamphlets Saturday urging residents to cooperate with Iraqi security forces as they prepare for a new operation against Shiite militia fighters in the oil-producing southern city.

The pamphlets urged residents to provide information about "the hideouts of outlaws" and warned them to stay indoors when the new operation dubbed "Imposing Law" starts, two local police officers said on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to release information to the media.

No kickoff date for the operation was pro-

vided in the pamphlets.

Iraqi soldiers accompanied by American military advisers have begun moving into Amarah, capital of Maysan province and the purported hub of weapons smuggling from nearby Iran.

U.S. and Iraqi commanders also say many militia chiefs have fled to Amarah — a longtime safe haven for anti-U.S. Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army militia — and Iran after security operations against them in Basra and Baghdad's Sadr City district.

A senior official in al-Sadr's office in the holy

city of Najaf said a Sadrist delegation led by lawmaker Hazim al-Araji was sent Friday to Amarah to try to defuse the tensions and to encourage fighters to adhere to a cease-fire.

Local authorities asked him to spread the word among the Mahdi Army that they were issuing a three-day deadline starting Sunday for gunmen to hand over heavy and medium weapons or face arrest, a security official said. The ultimatum also was announced on local TV.

Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to release the information.



Voice of America®

16 June 2008

Tourists Embrace an Unexpected Destination: Iraqi Kurdistan

By Suzanne Presto Irbil



A group of American tourists just wrapped up a two-week trip to Iraqi Kurdistan. Local tourism officials say they are the first American tour group, and only the second tour group ever, to travel through northern Iraq's Kurdish region. Suzanne Presto joined the tourists in the region's capital, Irbil, on the last evening of the trip and has this report.

Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan are not the first places that comes to mind as vacation destinations. Although much of Iraq is mired in war and violence, the largely autonomous Kurdish region in the north has enjoyed relative safety and prosperity. In 1991, allied forces that battled Iraq when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait instituted a safety zone in the north, providing some security for the Kurds, who were brutally oppressed by Saddam. But the U.S. State Department, as well as other nations' foreign ministries, still advise citizens to avoid traveling to the region. So U.S.-resident Marge Busch's friends were surprised when she told them that she and her husband Len were headed to Iraqi Kurdistan on vacation. "Everyone of them - 'Oh, why would you go there?'" said Marge Busch. The Buschs and 17 other well-traveled Americans became the first U.S. tour group to ever travel through Kurdistan.

Among the trailblazing tourists was retired U.S. Army officer Bill Beauchamp. Two years ago, the 87-year-old published a book on world history that included chapters on Mesopotamia and the Silk Road. So Beauchamp was thrilled when he learned that a California-based touring company, Distant Horizons, was organizing a trip to Iraqi Kurdistan for the first two weeks of June. "Distant Horizons came out with a lit

le squib in one of their newsletters that they tell what is going to happen in the future," said Bill Beauchamp "and as soon as I got it, I ran to the telephone and called them up and I said 'Give me a seat,' you know?" Gouhar Shemdin is the advisor of heritage to Kurdistan's tourism minister. She met with the 19 tourists in the regional capital, Irbil, and told them that their visit is a historic event. "It has been really an honor and a pleasure to have the first touristic group here, who is here not for anything else but tourism," said Gouhar Shemdin. "We have had many, many, many people coming for trade or politics. But you were the first ones, pioneers, and we very much appreciate that and we hope to have many other groups like you here."

A local travel operator says a significantly smaller tour group, comprised of several Brits, toured through Kurdistan last year. But they did not garner the same attention as the large group of mostly retired Americans. During their two-week adventure, the 19 tourists visited the Citadel, a walled-in city that rises above central Irbil's shops and homes, where people have continuously lived for at least the past six-thousand years. The tour group traveled long stretches by bus through the Kurdish countryside, picnicking in the mountains, exploring caves and listening to lectures about Alexander the Great's historic battles. Minnesota-resident Busch says she particularly enjoyed visiting a shepherds' encampment. "They had like 800 sheep and I forget how many people, but we drove into it and they of course welcomed us totally fully," she said. "And they were so friendly. I would not want to live that life, but it was very, very wonderful to see that, you know, that that still goes on in this world." Beauchamp was excited to visit Amedi, an ancient walled-in city that sits upon a mountain a few hours' drive from Irbil. While Beauchamp says he enjoyed the trip, his time in Amedi did not exactly live up to his expectations. "Not terrific, but I was interested in this so-called marble gate there," he said. "That was attractive. There was no other trace of the Silk Road." The sweeping natural landscape of jagged mountains, deep ravines, and rolling hills made an impression on Busch. The woman who says she has traveled most of the globe said she was fascinated by the juxtaposition of old and new in Kurdistan. "I love seeing everything from the shepherds in the field to the highly developed buildings and things that are going on here," said Busch. "It is such a combination of two worlds." That said, Kurdistan feels a world away from the violence that flares only 80 kilometers outside Irbil in Mosul, and 300 kilometers away in Baghdad. Members of this tour group said they felt very safe in Kurdistan - a sentiment that will likely surprise friends back in the United States. Beauchamp can relate to that. When asked what is the first thing he will tell people when he gets back to Hawaii, he responded. "I am going to tell them where I was," said Beauchamp. "I did not tell them where I was going because I did not want it to leak back to my wife. I told her I was going to western Turkey." The California-based company that organized the trip, Distant Horizons, says it is currently planning at least two other trips to Kurdistan.



Turkey

Beyond the veil

ANKARA

The secular and the pious march towards a new collision, with unforeseeable consequences for democracy and Turkey's chances in Europe

WHEN Adnan Menderes, a right-wing politician who spoke up for pious Anatolians, swept to power as prime minister after Turkey's first free parliamentary election 58 years ago, a group of officers began plotting a military coup within weeks. Ten years later, with the support of the secular intelligentsia and politicians, they overthrew the government, by then in its third term. A year later, in September 1961, Menderes was hanged.

Yildiray Ogur, a young activist, sees worrying parallels between the 1960 coup and today's campaign, spearheaded by Turkey's generals and judges, to overthrow Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the prime minister, and his Justice and Development Party (AKP). Turkey has been in upheaval ever since the constitutional court began considering a case brought by the chief prosecutor to ban the AKP and to bar 71 named individuals, including Mr Erdogan and President Abdullah Gul, from politics, on thinly documented charges that they are seeking to impose *sharia* law.

The stakes were raised on June 5th, when the court overturned a law passed by a big majority in parliament to let young women wear the Islamic-style headscarf at universities. By voting 9-2 to quash the law the court sent a clear signal that it would vote to shut down the AKP. A verdict is expected by the autumn.

To many the case is like a judicial coup: a last-ditch attempt to cling to power by an

elite that refuses to share wealth and social space with a rising class of pious Turks, symbolised by the AKP. It may also further discredit the constitutional court. Above all, says Mr Ogur, the case reveals "an army that believes it should have the final say, not elected politicians."

A defiant Mr Erdogan vows to fight back. In a fiery speech in parliament this week, he declared that the court had exceeded its jurisdiction and would "need to explain itself to the people." There is talk of changing the rules for appointing judges and limiting their ability to ban political parties. Some AKP officials dream of unleashing millions of supporters on to the streets. But they know that doing so would risk provoking a real military coup. "We are like lambs being taken to slaughter, we are resigned to our fate," sighs one AKP deputy.

A few hardy souls pin their hopes on Western support. The European Union has hinted that it would suspend membership talks if the AKP were banned. But thanks to the growing opposition to Turkish accession in countries such as France and Austria, few Turks believe they will ever get in anyway. "With no carrots left to offer, the EU has no stick to wield," opines Cengiz Aktar, who follows EU affairs.

The biggest deterrent to overthrowing the AKP may be Turkey's wobbly economy. After six years of steady growth the economy is slowing down, inflation has

crept back to double digits and this year's current-account deficit is expected to rise to 7% of GDP. Faik Oztrak, a former treasury under-secretary and opposition parliamentarian, reckons that Turkey will need at least \$135 billion in foreign inflows to plug the gap. As he asks pointedly, "where will it come from?"

Investor confidence has been rattled by the government's indecision over extending an IMF deal that expired in May. "With financial markets remaining jittery, Turkey is walking on a tightrope, making policy errors potentially costly. In particular, new initiatives that jeopardise the achievement of the announced fiscal targets, such as the planned reform of municipal finances, could tilt the balance of policies and should be avoided," Lorenzo Giorgianni, the IMF's mission chief for Turkey, says. He is referring to the government's plans to boost local spending.

Yet in Istanbul many financiers seem unfazed. They see no reason for alarm, even if the AKP is banned. A chastened, wiser AKP would simply regroup under a different name and it will be business as usual, the argument goes. Certainly, when a party is banned (they tend to be either pro-Kurdish or pro-Islamic) its members usually come together under a new banner. But Islamic parties often come back even stronger. The AKP itself is an offshoot of Virtue, a party that was banned in 2001. It romped to power in 2002 and won a second term last year with a bigger share of the vote.

Even if it were disbanded, the AKP's surviving parliamentarians would remain as independents in sufficient numbers to be able to force another snap election. Indeed, the million-dollar question, as one European diplomat puts it, is "whether those who are perpetrating this strategy against the AKP will let them come back

even stronger. They are stuck between a coup and a hard place."

Not everyone thinks that the AKP will emerge unscathed. Even his allies agree that Mr Erdogan made a strategic blunder by passing the headscarf law instead of blending it into a package of broader reforms embodied in a new constitution. Instead of appeasing secular fears, some AKP members crowed that the headscarf would soon be allowed in government offices as well. Many say the void left by Mr Gul, who moved up from foreign minister to become president last August, is partly to blame for Mr Erdogan's mistakes. As number two in the AKP, Mr Gul had often curbed Mr Erdogan's rasher instincts.

Meanwhile, support in the Kurdish south-east, where the AKP made big gains last year, has been waning ever since Mr Erdogan yielded to army pressure and authorised cross-border attacks on PKK terrorists in northern Iraq. He also snubbed

members of the pro-Kurdish DTP in parliament. Police brutality and mass arrests during a May 1st demonstration in Istanbul have not helped his image.

Yet, for all his and the party's failings, recent opinion polls suggest that the AKP retains a big lead over its rivals. "You may criticise us for going slow on reforms, but

the truth is that we made more changes than Turkey was able to absorb," says Abdurrahman Kurt, an AKP member from Diyarbakir. By giving pious Turks a political voice, the AKP has also bolstered their faith in democracy.

By overturning the headscarf law, says Mazhar Bagli, a sociologist at Diyarbakir's

Dicle university, the court is running the risk that "radical groups will now seek their rights through illegal means." In other words, the threat of radical Islam in Turkey may have increased thanks to the secularists' attack on the AKP. ■

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune June 18, 2008

U.S.-Iraqi 'strategic alliance' ■ Karl E. Meyer

Another bad deal for Baghdad

With only perfunctory debate, the Bush administration is pressuring a divided Iraqi government to approve a security agreement that could haunt Washington's relations with Baghdad for years to come.

The "strategic alliance" that President Bush is proposing eerily resembles, in spirit and in letter, a failed 1930 treaty between Britain and Iraq that prompted a nationalist eruption in Baghdad, a pro-Nazi military coup and a pogrom that foreshadowed the elimination of Baghdad's ancient Jewish community.

The outline of the deal, which has not been made public, has been described by a high-level Iraqi insider, Ali A. Allawi, a moderate Shiite who was a post-invasion finance minister.

Writing this month in *The Independent* of London, Allawi noted a disturbing parallel between the proposed alliance between the United States and Iraq and the earlier treaty that formally ended Iraq's post-World War I status as a British mandate.

"The treaty gave Britain military and economic privileges in exchange for Britain's promise to end the mandate over the country," Allawi wrote.

"The treaty was ratified by a docile Iraqi Parliament but was bitterly resented by nationalists. Iraq's dependency on Britain poisoned Iraqi politics for the next quarter-century. Riots, civil disturbances, uprisings and coups were all features of Iraq's political landscape, prompted in no small measure by the bitter disputations over the treaty with Britain."

Under the 1930 pact, Iraq had to consult Britain on security issues and allow it the use of Iraqi airports, ports, railways and rivers. Two major military bases were leased to the British, who were em-

powered to station their forces throughout Iraq. British personnel were granted immunity from local prosecution.

Almost 80 years later, the Bush administration seeks a startlingly similar arrangement. While not formally a treaty (having been carefully crafted to avoid the requirement of Senate ratification), the wide-ranging pact that the United States proposes nearly replicates the 1930 accord.

According to press reports based on leaks from the Iraqi Parliament, the pact envisions giving the Americans rights to as many as 58 military bases and control of Iraqi airspace. It would grant immunity from Iraqi laws to American military personnel. And it would empower American officials to detain suspected terrorists without the approval of Iraqi authorities.

The agreement, which Washington is pushing Baghdad to sign by July 31, would replace the UN mandate that now authorizes the American occupation.

Iraq would be freed from Security Council sanctions and would benefit from continued American military and economic aid. Iraq could also receive as much as \$50 billion in blocked assets, dating back to the first gulf war, that are now held by the United States.

The 1930 treaty was followed by Iraqi independence and then more than a score of coups, counter-coups, massacres and rebellions. Many Iraqis objected to British collusion with the ruling Sunni elite, and protested the use of British warplanes to suppress tribal uprisings.

The legal immunity given to British forces generated even more resentment, a history detailed by Elie Kedourie, a British scholar born in Baghdad.

The nationalist uprising culminated in an Axis-backed putsch in April 1941, when Iraqi colonels exploited these grievances to seize power bloodlessly. Following the only pro-German coup in the wartime Middle East, British forces rushed to Baghdad to oust the leaders, who fled as Allied troops approached.

To preserve the fiction that Iraq's liberation was indigenous, however, the British held back from crossing the Tigris and entering downtown Baghdad. That May, absent any occupying authority, two days of looting and rioting broke out as the capital's Jews were celebrating the festival of Shavuot, while the British troops looked on. This pogrom, called the farhud, claimed hundreds of lives and presaged the wholesale destruction after 1948 of the

largest and oldest Jewish community in the Arab Middle East.

After its 1930 treaty with Iraq, Britain proved unable to ensure order during the decade of nationalist tumult that followed. Rarely has the proverb about repeating history been more vividly signaled.

Karl E. Meyer, a former member of The New York Times editorial board and the editor-at-large of World Policy Journal, is the co-author, with Shareen Blair Brysac, of "Kingmakers: The Invention of the Modern Middle East."

The deal Bush proposes eerily resembles the 1930 treaty with Britain that led to a pro-Nazi coup.

Analysis: Future of Kirkuk field unknown

United Press International

June 18, 2008 By BEN LANDO, UPI Energy Editor

Kirkuk, Iraq's border with Kurdistan region, — The Kirkuk oil field in northern Iraq could be producing 70,000 barrels more per day, but a dispute between Iraq's central and Kurdistan regional governments has kept the needed equipment gathering dust.

Two weeks ago the security forces of the two governments, which don't always work in league, had a 24-hour standoff over the northernmost section of the oil field, called Khurmala Dome.

"Some people came and stopped our production," said Iraqi Oil Minister Hus-sain al-Shahristani.

According to various media outlets and sources who spoke to United Press International on condition of anonymity, the Peshmerga Kurdish military force forced an Iraq Drilling Co. team off the site, claiming Kurdistan Regional Government sovereignty over it.

"The federal government gave an ultimatum: Within 24 hours if that obstacle is not removed, we'll take drastic action, and within 24 hours it was removed and production was resumed," Shahristani said. "That is one of the three domes of the Kirkuk field, which is a producing field, and nobody has the right to stop the Ministry of Oil from producing." He vowed to use security forces if it happens again.

"We are now producing about 30,000 barrels per day from the Khurmala Dome, and we are drilling there, there's a couple of rigs there," he said. "And we'll be developing that field."

It's not clear, however, how the field will be developed.

The State Company for Oil Projects, part of the Oil Ministry, awarded a \$136 million contract in December 2004 to Iraq-based KAR Group to provide engineering and equipment for developing Khurmala Dome to a 100,000-bpd producer.

All the work under that contract is completed, but SCOP has not started using the equipment.

Meanwhile, the Oil Ministry is in the final stages of negotiations with Shell, reportedly to pay \$500 million for the oil giant to provide technology, equipment and training to boost oil production from the entire Kirkuk field by 100,000 bpd within two years.

Similar deals with five other fields are being negotiated with other global oil companies, but details are not being released by the Oil Ministry.

The development at Khurmala Dome may be stalled by Baghdad as talks

evolve over the Shell deal -- which raises questions of redundancy in work, performance and payment.

But ongoing disputes over the direction Iraq's oil sector should take are likely a large factor.

Negotiations between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the central government are to start again this week over a series of items including a draft federal oil law and related oil revenue and administrative legislation; the dozens of deals the KRG has signed to explore for and produce oil in their territory; and disputed territories just outside the official KRG boundaries, which include most of the Kirkuk field.

Khurmala Dome, however, is officially in Erbil province, part of the KRG. But drafts of the oil law puts discovered and producing fields under the control of the central government, sparking a dispute over what role the federal government plays within the semi-autonomous Kurdish region.

"Khurmala Dome is not in a disputed area. It's in Kurdistan, period," KRG Minister of Natural Resources Ashti Hawrami said, adding he considered it a non-producing field. "People say KRG are not allowing them to work in Khurmala. What that really says is it's under KRG control and we'd like to go get it back from them."

Baghdad also accuses the KRG of signing oil deals for exploration blocks that fall outside the official KRG territory. Hawrami says the KRG is the administrator of the territory and thus is allowed to sign deals.

"You show me the green line in the constitution," he said. "You show me a green line that officially anybody signed on it. There are many green lines. But what counts really is what is currently under the KRG authority."

Last November the KRG awarded a service contract to develop Khurmala to the new Kurdistan National Oil Co., a KRG-owned company that is still being organized.

The field will be developed to 250,000 bpd, according to a KRG statement announcing the contract, as well as a 50,000-bpd refinery. Associated natural gas from the field development and fuel oil from the refinery will be supplied to the KRG Electricity Ministry.

Some time in the second half of 2007 KRG security forces were accused of preventing the central government from doing work at Khurmala Dome.

SCOP Director General Falah al-Khawaja told UPI last November, "They prevented us from continuing our work, which is actually against the law," though he refused to say who "they" were.

BBC NEWS

19 June 2008

Kurdish child singers face prison

By Sarah Rainsford BBC News, Istanbul

Members of a Kurdish children's choir face up to five years in prison as they go on trial in south eastern Turkey.

The choir - whose members are aged from 12 to 17 - is accused of spreading propaganda for the outlawed Kurdish separatist rebel group, the PKK.

The charges were brought after the group took part in a world music festival in San Francisco, and sang a march in Kurdish.

The prosecutor's indictment claims the song is the anthem of the PKK.

Turkey has been fighting the PKK since the 1980s, in a conflict that has cost almost 40,000 lives.

In a statement on the case, Amnesty International argues that singing an historic anthem cannot be judged a threat to public order - and is therefore a matter of free expression. It warns that the children will be considered prisoners of conscience if they are found guilty.

Old Kurdish

The children's choir performed in America in several languages, but it is a march in Kurdish that has caused the controversy.

The prosecutor claims the song "Ey Raqip", or "Hey, Enemy", is the anthem of the PKK: the separatist militant group Turkish troops have been fighting for two decades.

The indictment also says PKK flags were displayed at the music festival - and accuses the children of making propaganda for terrorists.



One of the singers told the BBC the lyrics to the march were in an old form of Kurdish, and he and his friends did not even understand them. He said the choir wanted to showcase Kurdish culture, not engage in politics - and they only sang the march in response to a request from the audience.

Three teenagers - aged 15 to 17 - will be tried in an adult, serious crimes court in Diyarbakir - in the mainly Kurdish south east of the country.

They face up to five years in prison if they are convicted.

Six younger choir-members, aged 12-15, will be tried in a children's court on the same charge in July.

Suspicion

Michael Santoro, who is in charge of the San Francisco World Music Festival and, who personally invited the choir from Diyarbakir to take part, said: "These events were not political propaganda, nor were they designed with a separatist agenda in mind."

He said the events were "designed to mentor, empower and showcase musicians, composers and artists that historically have been under-represented due to cultural, political and economic barriers".

As for the prosecutor's claim that the children performed beneath PKK flags, Mr Santoro recalls that one audience member draped the flag of Kurdish northern Iraq on part of the stage, but says there were no PKK flags or insignia at the venue.

There is far more freedom in Turkey today to speak or sing in Kurdish than when the PKK took up arms, in the days when even the existence of the Kurds was officially denied here.

Private courses in the Kurdish language are now permitted and there is some Kurdish language broadcasting on Turkish state TV.

But there are still strict limits. Those who insist on a distinct Kurdish identity are widely viewed with suspicion and state prosecutors regularly file criminal charges for spreading PKK propaganda or for supporting separatism.

The main pro-Kurdish political party, the DTP, has 20 seats in the current parliament but is now on trial and facing closure. It is accused of having links to the PKK and being the "focus of activities against the integrity of the state".

Kurdish human rights groups also say many children who were involved in street protests that became riots in the south-east two years ago are still on trial there.

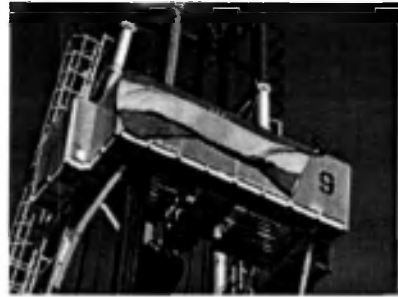
They have been charged with supporting the PKK - or even belonging to it.

REUTERS

18 June 2008

DNO said its output in Iraqi Kurdistan, jumped to 11,685 barrel per day in May from 5,961 barrels in April.

Norwegian oil company DNO (DNO.OL: Quote, Profile, Research, Stock Buzz) said on Wednesday its output in Iraqi Kurdistan, on a working interest basis, jumped to 11,685 barrel per day in May from 5,961 barrels in April. DNO produces oil at the Tawke field in autonomous Kurdistan region in "northern Iraq" under a production sharing agreement with the Kurdistan regional authorities.



worker hangs the flag of the Kurdistan regional government atop the drill of Norwegian public oil company DNO.

"Gross production from the Tawke field in May was 12,983 bopd, up more than 100 percent compared to previous month. The increase is due to higher sales volumes in the domestic market," DNO said in a statement. DNO's total working interest production amounted to 21,889 bpd in May, www.ekurd.net including output from its Yemen fields, up from 15,962 bpd in April, the company said. Total net entitlement production was at 13,874 bpd, and the achieved oil price was \$69.49 per barrel, DNO said. DNO sells its Iraqi oil on the local market, where prices are lower, because it does not have an export licence.



British parliamentary group calls for UK to support Kurdistan Region as model for Iraq

London, 18 Jun. 2008 UK (KRG.org) -

A group of British parliamentarians

yesterday published a report that calls for Britain to support the Kurdistan Region as a model for Iraq, whose success is in the interests of all those who want a peaceful and stable Middle East.

Members of the Kurdistan Region All Party Parliamentary Group announced the report, "The Kurdistan Region: Future Prospects", at a meeting yesterday in the House of Commons attended by Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir, the KRG's Head of Foreign Relations, and Ms Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, the KRG's High Representative to the UK.

The report says, "The Kurdistan Region, as part of the wider federal Iraq, deserves a far higher degree of international attention and support to enable its people to finally fashion a peaceful, democratic and secular future. Its success is in the interests of all those who want a peaceful and stable Middle East."



The report, written following a fact-finding visit to the Kurdistan Region in Iraq by the MPs in February, makes eight recommendations for the British parliament, government and people to consider:

- Support the federal, decentralised system in Iraq
- Advocate the implementation of Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution on the disputed territories
- Press Turkey to engage in talks with Erbil, Washington and Baghdad to find a lasting political solution to the PKK issue
- Raise awareness of the genocide against the Kurds
- Encourage British investment in various sectors of the economy and in English-language education
- Support efforts to protect and empower women
- Support the development of a free and professional media
- Support and encourage links between the Kurdistan Region and UK academic institutions

Minister Bakir, speaking in the British parliament, thanked the MPs for their report, and said, "We were honoured that this UK parliamentary delegation took the time to visit the Kurdistan Region. This reports shows how important it is for delegations to visit the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to see for themselves the progress we are making and the model of success that we provide for the rest of Iraq.

He added, "The MPs' recommendations are realistic and vital if we want to succeed in building a new democratic, federal and pluralistic Iraq that lives in peace with itself and with its neighbours. They are in line with the forward-looking vision of Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani in building a prosperous future for all. The Kurdistan Region and all of Iraq need political support, and we in the KRG hope that the British government and the international community seriously consider the report's recommendations."

Ms Abdul Rahman added, "The parliamentary delegation met people from all walks of life during their visit. Their report is a good snapshot of the situation in Kurdistan as well as the aspirations of its people, its parliament and government. They make important and incisive recommendations and we hope the British government will follow through on the parliamentary group's advice."

Mr. Zebari's Message

Iraq's foreign minister has a chat with Barack Obama.

SEN. BARACK OBAMA told Iraq's foreign minister this week that he plans to visit the country between now and the presidential election. We think that's a good thing, not because Sen. John McCain has been prodding the candidate to do it but because it will give Mr. Obama an opportunity to refresh his badly outdated plan for Iraq. To do that, the Democrat needs to listen more to dedicated Iraqi leaders like Hoshiyar Zebari, the foreign minister -- who, it seems, didn't hold back during their telephone conversation.

Mr. Obama laid out his current strategy for Iraq in November 2006, shortly before announcing his candidacy for president. At the time, Iraq appeared to be on the verge of a sectarian civilian war, and Mr. Obama was trying to distinguish himself in the Democratic primary race by offering a timetable for withdrawal. Nineteen months later, the situation in Iraq has changed dramatically, with violence down 75 percent from its peak and the Iraqi government and army in control of most of the country. But Mr. Obama has not altered his position: He still proposes withdrawing most U.S.

troops according to a fixed timetable, set to the most rapid pace at which commanders have said American forces could be pulled out.

Mr. Zebari, who has served as foreign minister in every Iraqi government since 2003, finds Mr. Obama's proposal worrying. In a meeting with Post editors and reporters Tuesday, he said that after all the pain and sacrifices of the past five years, "we are just turning the corner in Iraq." A precipitous withdrawal, he said, "would create a huge vacuum and undo all the gains and achievements. And the others" -- enemies of the United States -- "would celebrate."

Mr. Zebari said he told Mr. Obama that "Iraq is not an island." In other words, an American withdrawal that destabilized the country would also roil the region around it and embolden U.S. adversaries such as al-Qaeda and Iran. "We have a deadly enemy," Mr. Zebari said. "When he sees that you commit yourself to a certain timetable, he will use this to increase pressure and attacks, to make it look as though he is forcing you out. We have many actors who would love to take advantage of that opportunity." Mr. Ze-

bari says he believes U.S. forces can and should be drawn down. His point is that reductions should be made gradually, as the Iraqi army becomes stronger.

The foreign minister said "my message" to Mr. Obama "was very clear. . . . Really, we are making progress. I hope any actions you will take will not endanger this progress." He said he was reassured by the candidate's response, which caused him to think that Mr. Obama might not differ all that much from Mr. McCain. Mr. Zebari said that in addition to promising a visit, Mr. Obama said that "if there would be a Democratic administration, it will not take any irresponsible, reckless, sudden decisions or action to endanger your gains, your achievements, your stability or security. Whatever decision he will reach will be made through close consultation with the Iraqi government and U.S. military commanders in the field." Certainly, it makes sense to consult with those who, like Mr. Zebari, have put their lives on the line for an Iraq that would be a democratic U.S. ally. Mr. Obama ought to listen carefully to what they are saying.



19 June 2008

Globe Editorial

Middle East and Kurdistan

By Azad Aslan

While Israel and Syria engaged in indirect talks in Turkey, U.S. President George W. Bush, in a joint press conference on Monday with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, made fresh his warn-

ing to Iran on its nuclear activities.

In talks with Brown, Bush said pressure was necessary to "solve this problem diplomatically," but warned that "Iran must understand, however, that all options are on the

table." Israel-Syria talks and Israel's truce with Hamas in Gaza seem to gear toward isolating Iran in the region, as speculation over a possible military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities intensified recently.

While the current state of affairs in the Middle East is a mess and the prospect of stability and peace seems ever so slim, Kurdistan Region is blooming as an oasis of peace, stability, and democracy. Despite this striking contrast, it should not be forgotten that Kurdistan is part of this chaotic region and is not immune from it. The prospect of a plural, democratic, and federal Iraq is very slim. Iraqi non-Kurdish political actors' negative positions toward the issue of Kirkuk and other constitutional issues, their failure to resolve the ethnic and sectarian conflict through dialogue and understanding, and corrupt and messy administration of the central government are some of the indicators that portray a rather dark picture of Iraq. At the bottom of all this lies the struggle for power and dominancy, and the only experience that Iraqi political actors have in

their tools is Iraq's bloody history of dictatorship, oppression, and violence. The relative freedom, peace, and stability in Kurdistan in the midst of a chaotic Iraq and Middle East is not only a contrast but at the same time indicates the dangers that surround this positive experience. Lack of democratic experience in Iraq and the international character of the Kurdish national question at the heart of the Middle East present serious challenges for Kurdish political actors. There are some positive economic and social signs that indicate the regional and international recognition of the unique experience of Kurdistan Region. United Arab Emirates- (UAE) based private Estate Investment company's (DAMAC) decision to invest in Kurdistan Region a large sum of capital, approximately \$6 billion, on estate investment is one

of these signs. This explains that stability and security in Kurdistan is strong enough to attract foreign capital at such a large amount. For the first time, Kurdistan Region welcomed a group of American tourists who just wrapped up a two-



This file photo shows a number of workers gathering for a massive project in downtown Erbil near the Nishtiman Market. GLOBE PHOTO

week trip to Iraqi Kurdistan. Local tourism officials say they are the first American tour group, and only the second tour group ever, to travel through northern Iraq's Kurdish region. For the consolidation of positive economic, political, and social developments of Kurdistan, the Kurdish political institutions must endeavor further and harder to push for the development of a vibrant civil society, improve life standards, and provide growing space for democratic criticism. The balance of state-individual relations must be geared toward indi-

vidual democratic rights. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Kurdish political actors must radically reduce to a minimum their appropriation of surplus labor in economy, and further regulations for a liberal market economy must be introduced. In an award ceremony organized by the KRG's Minister for the Region for Civil Society Affairs in Hewler George Yousif Mansour, KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani's remarks were encouraging: "The KRG is firmly committed to a vibrant partnership with non-governmental organiza-

tions and individuals, to raise the quality of life in the Kurdistan Region and aid our social development. The public, private and third sectors must work hand in hand to create a new democratic and federal country. As we progress with our economic development, we must not neglect our cultural development. Some of the old customs must change; and the rights of all human beings, be they women, men, or children, must be fully respected." For the survival of the KRG in particular and the Kurdish national movement in general, de-

velopment of civil society and democratization of political institutions is not only necessary but imperative. Surrounded by unfriendly neighbors, being part of a country with no democratic background, and in a region where chaos and war rule, the only safety belt of the KRG to survive and develop is the healthy relations between nation and government and between nation and political parties. These bonds can only be secured and strengthened by democratic practice and trust.

The Economist

Jun 19th 2008

Iraqi Kurdistan Music and mountains

ERBIL. Can the Kurds offer a tourist haven?

FOR the Kurds of Iraq, Zakaria Abdulla is the nearest thing to the Beatles, rolled into one man. He claims that one of his more recent albums, "Telinaz", meaning "lovely", has sold more than 3m copies across the region and in Europe. But mere musical success is no longer enough. These days he has a political vision—and a business nose to match.

As a budding property magnate, he is the driving force behind Naz City, a burgeoning housing development on the edge of Erbil, the Iraqi Kurds' capital, with some 700 Western-style flats designed to "bring something beautiful to Kurdistan". Such projects, he hopes, may lure back some of the thousands of professionals who fled from Saddam Hussein and are now used to European and American living standards; Mr Abdulla spent some years in Sweden. So far, he says, seven ministers in the Kurdish regional government, more than 100 assembly members and at least 50 academics have taken flats in Naz City.

Mr Abdulla's cosy relations with the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), one of the two main ones in the region, have

helped him along. The prime minister, Nechirvan Barzani, a KDP man, has arranged for several of his leading officials to take flats there. Mr Abdulla says he is also planning to build a "medical city".

Other housing developments include an "English village", an "Italian village" and "Dream City", all meant to lure back investors and professional Kurds. Last week the Kurdish prime minister signed a deal with the United Arab Emirates said to be worth \$4.5 billion to build a hotel, shops and resort complex in Erbil.

With its peaceful gardens, tennis courts and swimming pools, Naz City is a far cry from battered Baghdad and other cities in the non-Kurdish parts of Iraq. The only hint of nearby strife is the heavy presence of watchful security guards. The Kurdish government loves to stress the difference between the quiet Kurdish north and the rest of Iraq; this week the most lethal bomb in months killed at least 63 Baghdadis.

The regional government has also launched a campaign to tout Iraqi Kurdistan as a tourist destination, describing it as



Zakaria Abdulla, for the Kurds of Iraq, Zakaria is the nearest thing to the Beatles, rolled into one man

"the Other Iraq". The Pank Resort near Sulaymaniyah, the region's second city, is popular with locals—as is its mountainside roller coaster. Farther north, a spring day at the waterfalls near Rawanduz, another resort, draws hundreds of visitors to picnic at the water's edge. Most of them are Kurds. But the government thinks that Kurdistan's lush mountains, peaceful cities and easy-going attitude to alcohol should attract Westerners and Gulf Arabs too.

United Press International

Ankara says U.S. intel on PKK not shared

ANKARA, Turkey, June 21, 2008 (UPI) -

Ankara gave assurances to Washington it was not sharing U.S. intelligence with Iran regarding military operations targeting Kurdish separatist groups.

Turkish officials acknowledged they are cooperating with Iran in intelligence matters concerning the activities of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, PKK, and the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan, PJAK, in northern Iraq.

The admission by Ankara has some officials in Washington worried, however, in part due to the ongoing dispute with Tehran regarding activity in Iraqi affairs and the contentious Iranian nuclear program.

Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, however, recently told U.S. officials Ankara was not sharing U.S. intelligence with Iranian agents, the Turkish Today's Zaman reported Friday.

U.S. officials preconditioned sharing intelligence with Turkey with promises from Ankara not to share the information with foreign countries.

"The U.S. intelligence supply to Turkey is also restricted to northern Iraq. The U.S. supplies Turkey with intelligence information on the PKK not for Iran, but for northern Iraq," U.S. officials told the Turkish newspaper.

Western oil firms head back to Iraq

Companies hone in on no-bid deals years after ouster

By Andrew E. Kramer

BAGHDAD: Thirty-six years after losing their oil concession to nationalization as Saddam Hussein rose to power, four major Western oil companies are in the final stages of negotiations this month on contracts that will return them to Iraq.

The Iraqi Ministry of Oil is in talks with Exxon Mobil, Shell, Total and BP — the original partners in the Iraq Petroleum Company — along with Chevron and a number of smaller oil companies.

The deals, expected to be announced on June 30, mark the first commercial contracts by the major oil companies since the U.S. invasion and open a new and potentially highly lucrative country for their operations.

Because the Iraqi Parliament has not yet passed an oil law laying out conditions and terms for competitive tenders, the ministry is offering the two-year contracts on a no-bid basis. The ministry described the contracts as a stop-gap measure to bring modern know-how into the fields while the legislation was pending.

While small by industry standards, the deals hold great promise for the companies. They come at a time when once-powerful, publicly owned Western energy companies are finding it increasingly difficult to gain access to other oil producing nations.

"The bigger prize everybody is waiting for is development of the giant new fields," Leila Benali, an authority at Cambridge Energy Research Associates on Middle East oil, said in a telephone interview from the firm's Paris office.

The contracts would be a "foothold" in Iraq for companies striving for longer-term deals, she said.

Senior officials from major companies, who spoke on a not-for-attribution basis, said in two interviews that the companies were sensitive to the criticism that they will appear to be benefiting from the war.

But the officials said the contracts were a continuation of charitable work the companies had been conducting here to assist the Oil Ministry. They

are, the officials said, extensions of two-year-old memorandums of understanding under which the companies provided pro bono advice and training to the Iraqis.

That relationship with the ministry, company officials and U.S. diplomats said, was a reason the contracts were not opened to competitive bidding.

In addition, as the deals are structured as service contracts — the companies will be paid for their work, rather than offered a license to the oil deposits — they do not require the passage of the oil law, which is stalled in Parliament.

Still, that law, when it is passed, would lay out procedures and conditions for competitive bidding for Iraqi oil contracts, including the so-called technical support agreements now being awarded on a no-bid basis.

Also, industry analysts said, the deals are wider in scope than typical oilfield service agreements of the type that Halliburton and Schlumberger perform routinely.

"These are not actually service contracts," Benali said. "They were designed to circumvent the legislative stalemate" and bring Western companies with experience managing large projects into Iraq before the passage of the oil law.

While the contracts will be opened for competitive bidding in two years, they provide formal competitive advantages to the companies that will hold them first on the no-bid basis. A clause in the draft contracts would allow the companies to match bids from competing companies and retain the work, according to the Iraq country manager for a major oil company who did not want to be identified discussing the terms.

In another unusual aspect, the ministry has offered to pay in oil, rather than money, an unusual practice for service contracts but typical of the production sharing agreements for undeveloped projects envisioned in the oil law.

The companies' role otherwise will resemble advisory work. It will include consultation with Iraqi engineers outside of Iraq, possible limited visits by Western experts to the fields and assisting the Iraqis in procuring oilfield equipment in an exceptionally tight market.

Assem Jihad, the spokesman for the Oil Ministry, said it chose companies it was comfortable working with based

on its experience under the charitable memorandum of understanding agreements. "The companies will use all the new equipment and techniques the oil fields need," he said. "Because of that, they got the priority."

In all cases but one, the same company that had provided free advice and training to the ministry for work on a specific field was offered the technical support contract for that field.

The exception is the West Qurna field. There, the Russian company Lukoil, which claims it holds a Saddam Hussein-era contract to the field, had been providing free training to Iraqi engineers under a memorandum of understanding. But a consortium of Chevron and Total were offered the contract. A spokesman for Lukoil, in a telephone interview, declined to comment.

The intent of the new agreements is to increase Iraqi oil exports by half a million barrels a day by the end of the year, about equivalent to the increase in production Saudi Arabia is expected to announce at an oil summit this month.

David Fyfe, a Middle East analyst at the International Energy Agency, the organization in Paris that monitors oil production for developed countries, said the Western expertise may indeed enable Iraq to raise production by that amount, though over a slightly longer time frame.

The International Energy Agency has estimated repair work on existing fields could bring Iraq's output from the current 2.5 million barrels a day to roughly 4 million barrels a day over several years.

After new fields are tapped, Iraq is expected to plateau at about 6 million barrels a day, Fyfe said.

In a twist of corporate history for some of the world's largest corporations, though the Oil Ministry and the companies said the current contracts were unrelated to the companies' previous work in Iraq, all four companies that had lost their concessions are now back in the country.

The forerunners of Exxon Mobil, Shell, Total and BP were equal partners in the Iraq Petroleum Company consortium that operated here from 1929 until it was expropriated by the government in 1972.

Turkish governing party fights 'anti-secular' charge

The Associated Press

ANKARA: The governing party of Turkey, facing closure after the country's highest court charged it with engaging in anti-secular activity, on Monday rejected accusations that it had steered Turkey toward Islamic rule.

Abdurrahman Yalcinkaya, the top prosecutor in Turkey, accused the governing AK Party of violating secularism, which is protected by the Turkish Constitution, and has asked that the party be closed down.

Yalcinkaya also asked that President Abdullah Gul, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and about 70 other party officials be barred from politics

for five years.

It could take several months for the court to reach a verdict. Analysts fear that a decision to disband the party, which holds a majority in Parliament, could throw the country into political and economic turmoil and could harm the country's relations with the European Union.

José Manuel Barroso, president of the European Commission, has warned that banning the AK Party would have a "major impact" on Turkey's ties with the EU.

In its defense, the party submitted more than 400 pages to the Constitutional Court on Monday, saying that closing down the party would amount to overturning the results of a demo-

cratic election.

"It is not true that the party has become the focal point of activities against secularism," the party said in its defense arguments. The case "is a violation of the right to free speech," it said, and "a violation of the right to free elections."

The AK Party, which came to power in 2002, won a new mandate in elections last year. "There is no evidence to support the claim that the party poses a risk to democracy in the short or long term," it said.

The chief prosecutor referred to a recent attempt by Parliament to abolish a ban on head scarves in universities as evidence that the party had become a "focal point of anti-secular activity."

The Constitutional Court struck down the amendment, saying that it violated secularism, and upheld the ban.

The decision was a major defeat for Erdogan, whose government is locked in a power struggle with secular groups supported by the military and other state institutions.

H. D. S. Greenway

Turkey's crumbling dream

He was born just before the last great crumbling of the Ottoman Empire in an Ottoman province that is now Greece. He came to fame as an inspired military leader who out-manuevered and out-fought the French, the British, and their dominion armies from Australia and New Zealand, who were clinging to the beaches of the Dardanelles in their ill-fated attempt to knock Turkey out of the first World War.

And when the empire was gone, and the allies tried to carve up Turkey itself with the 1920 treaty of Sevres, Mustafa Kemal rallied his demoralized countrymen, pushed out the invading Greeks, and faced down the British and French to secure the boundaries of Turkey as they stand today.

Having prevailed over the West, Kemal then set about on one of the most absolute social transformations of a country in history in order to be like the West. The ancient, flowing script was abandoned in favor of a Latinized alphabet — cutting Turks off from centuries of eastern literature. He lifted what he considered the dead hand of Islam from the body politic. Turkey would become a European-style, secular state with laws and regulations drawn from various European legal systems and constitutions. He would

henceforth be known as Ataturk, the father of all Turks.

This was not done by referendum. Traditionalists resisted. But it was done almost overnight, leaping the centuries that Europe had spent settling the balance between what was to be relegated to Caesar and what was God's.

Kemalism, as it came to be known, became the official doctrine, and over the years if anyone tried to stray, the army was there to protect Ataturk's ideals. Religion was to be allowed, but it was to be personal, as in Europe, and not interfere with the state.

Over the years, Ataturk's heirs have become rigid and unwilling to compromise. Even though Turkey has a working democracy, the Kamalist establishment has not entirely trusted democracy, and the army always stood ready as the guardian of the state to turf out any government it feels is straying too far from the path that Ataturk blazed.

Stephen Kinzer, in his book "Crescent and Star, Turkey Between Two Worlds," wrote that if "isiklal" (freedom) was his favorite Turkish word, "devlet" was his least favorite. Devlet means state in the dictionary, but it goes far beyond that. It is an "omnipotent entity that stands above every citizen and every institution," Kinzer wrote.

"It is a self-perpetuating elite — the generals, police chiefs, prosecutors, judges, political bosses, and press barons who decide what devlet demands. . . . This elite has

written many laws to help it do what it perceives as its duty, and when necessary it acts outside the law."

Today, democracy in Turkey is imperiled by devlet. Recently, the constitutional court struck down the Turkish Parliament's decision to allow girls to wear head scarves in state universities. Parliament is controlled

by an Islamic-leaning government, under Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is committed to maintaining a secular state. Ironically, his government is more democratic than the devlet will allow. Partly because of head scarves, there is another case before the courts that would shut

down his political party, and ban its leaders from politics for endangering Kemalist principles.

No issue alarms the traditionalist Kemalists as does the head scarf. As in France, it seems to hit at the very heart of what the secular state is all about. If devlet decides it cannot bear head scarves, so be it. The U.S. Supreme Court is not adverse to overturning the will of Congress when it deems necessary.

But that being said, if a moderate religious party that has been democratically elected is forcibly disbanded, if there is no recourse to the ballot box, then what hope is there for moderate Islam? To ban Erdogan and his party would be to force dissent away from political discourse and into the mosque, as is the case in less democratic Muslim countries.

Erdogan has presided over a reformist government bent on joining the European Union, which would have been Ataturk's desire. If Erdogan and his party are banned it would be devlet at its very worst, and, ironically, the end of Ataturk's European dream.

Révélation sur la filière nucléaire secrète nord-coréenne en Syrie

Enquête L'AIEA inspectera du 22 au 24 juin le site syrien d'Al-Kibar, détruit par Israël en 2007

VIENNE

ENVOYÉE SPÉCIALE

Que se tramait-il à Al-Kibar ? Détruit le 6 septembre 2007 par un raid de l'aviation israélienne, ce site au milieu du désert, dans l'est de la Syrie, doit être pour la première fois visité, du 22 au 24 juin, par des inspecteurs de l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA). Ayant la forme d'un bâtiment cubique de 21 mètres de haut, il abritait, selon une présentation faite le 24 avril par les agences de renseignement américaines, un réacteur nucléaire clandestin construit selon le modèle du réacteur nord-coréen de Yongbyon.

D'après nos informations, l'AIEA détient des données, provenant de plusieurs sources non américaines, qui appuient cette analyse.

Certaines de ces informations sont des photographies satellite fournies par différents pays. D'autres sont tirées des investigations que l'AIEA a effectuées par le passé sur les activités nucléaires de la Corée du Nord. D'autres encore viennent des recherches menées par l'AIEA sur les réseaux clandestins d'acquisition d'équipements nucléaires dans le monde.

Après la Libye et l'Iran, la Syrie, dont le président Bachar Al-Assad est invité à Paris en juillet, est le troisième cas de prolifération au Proche et au Moyen-Orient.

Le dossier Al-Kibar – qui s'annonce comme l'une des grandes énigmes nucléaires de ces dernières années – survient à un moment particulièrement délicat dans les enjeux diplomatiques au Proche-

Orient. La Syrie est engagée dans des pourparlers indirects avec Israël. Son président, Bachar Al-Assad, a récemment envoyé des signaux aux Occidentaux suggérant qu'il cherche à rompre son isolement international.

Le cas syrien a une particularité : alors que la Libye et l'Iran s'étaient adressés, pour leurs fournitures secrètes en technologie nucléaire, au réseau clandestin du Pakistanais Abdul Qadeer (A. Q.) Khan (le « père » de la bombe atomique pakistanaise), c'est à la Corée du Nord que la Syrie a fait appel pour se doter clandestinement de ses équipements. L'enquête de l'AIEA sur la Syrie pose ainsi la question de l'existence d'un « marché noir » nord-coréen du nucléaire. Le périmètre exact de la coopération nord-coréenne avec la Syrie et la possibilité que d'autres pays aient pu bénéficier de ce genre d'assistance fournie par Pyongyang sont au centre des inquiétudes.

Deux questions centrales vont occuper les inspecteurs de l'AIEA : d'où le combustible pour le réacteur d'Al-Kibar était-il censé venir ? Et y a-t-il en Syrie une installation secrète de retraitement du combustible usé ? Le retraitement est une technologie qui permet de produire du plutonium utilisable dans la fabrication d'une arme nucléaire. C'est par cette méthode que les Nord-Coréens se sont dotés de l'arme atomique qu'ils ont testée en 2006.

L'enquête sera d'autant plus compliquée que les puissantes bombes israéliennes qui se sont abattues sur le site d'Al-Kibar ont laissé un montage de débris que les Syriens ont, par la suite, partiellement évacués. Un nouveau bâtiment a été construit à cet endroit, rendant difficile tout travail d'excavation. L'AIEA pourrait, dans un premier temps, prélever des échantillons dans le sol, à la recherche de traces de graphite semblable à celui utilisé dans le réacteur de Yongbyon.

Les liens entre la Syrie et la Corée du Nord sont intenses depuis des années. Le régime nord-coréen a joué un rôle central dans l'acquisition par la Syrie de missi-

les balistiques. Or les méandres du trafic du nucléaire suivent souvent ceux de la prolifération en matière balistique, observent des experts.

Une photographie diffusée par la CIA en avril montre le chef de l'Agence syrienne de l'énergie atomique, Ibrahim Othman, aux côtés d'un des responsables du programme nucléaire nord-coréen, Chon Chibu. Le cliché aurait été pris en Syrie. Selon nos informations, Chon Chibu – avec lequel l'AIEA a été en contact dans les années 1990 – a subitement disparu de Corée du Nord à cette époque. L'une des hypothèses retenues aujourd'hui est qu'il a pu travailler en Syrie, aux côtés d'autres ingénieurs nucléaires et techniciens nord-coréens.

La construction d'Al-Kibar, sur les rives de l'Euphrate, a commencé vers 2001. Elle semble avoir été décidée par Hafez Al-Assad, le père et prédécesseur de l'actuel président syrien. Pour tenter de se doter d'une filière nucléaire, la Syrie s'était adressée, dans les années 1990, à des groupes en Russie, et aussi en Chine. Ces tentatives n'ont pas abouti. De l'aveu même de Damas, le Pakistanais A. Q. Khan s'est rendu en Syrie à la même époque, mais l'offre qu'il formula fut rejetée.

C'est par la suite seulement que la Syrie s'est tournée vers la Corée du Nord. Les motivations de cette dernière auraient été de deux ordres : d'une part l'attrait du gain financier lié à la vente d'un réacteur nucléaire ; d'autre part, la perspective d'accroître sa marge de manœuvre au moment où l'accord de 1994 passé avec les Etats-Unis – dans lequel Pyongyang renonçait à son programme nucléaire militaire en échange d'aides – semblait vaciller.

Alors qu'Israël a observé un grand silence sur les circonstances et les raisons de la frappe aérienne de septembre 2007, la Syrie a varié dans ses déclarations au fil du temps. Elle a d'abord affirmé que des avions israéliens avaient lâché,

Les révélations sur Al-Kibar placent la Syrie en violation de ses obligations au regard du traité de non-prolifération qu'elle a ratifié en 1969

CHRONOLOGIE

6 septembre 2007. L'aviation israélienne bombarde le site d'Al-Kibar dans l'est de la Syrie.

Début octobre. Les Syriens rasent au bulldozer ce qui reste du site, après en avoir retiré des éléments.

24 avril 2008. Les agences de renseignement américaines affirment, photographies et diagrammes à l'appui, que la Corée du Nord a aidé la Syrie à se doter d'un réacteur nucléaire « à des fins non pacifiques ».

2 juin. L'AIEA annonce l'envoi d'inspecteurs en Syrie, du 22 au 24 juin.

au-dessus du désert, des munitions qui avaient explosé. Puis reconnu qu'Al-Kibar avait bel et bien été bombardé, mais qu'il ne s'agissait que d'une simple installation militaire. Fin avril, elle qualifiait de « ridicules » les données présentées par le renseignement américain.

Mais lors de la réunion du Conseil des gouverneurs de l'AIEA à Vienne, début juin, le représentant syrien, Ibrahim Othman, s'est gardé de dire qu'Al-Kibar n'était pas un site nucléaire. Cette omission a beaucoup attiré l'attention des diplomates occidentaux et des experts de l'Agence, qui pensent que Damas se ménage une position de repli au cas où de nouveaux indices de travaux nucléaires seraient découverts.

M. Othman a dit espérer que l'AIEA travaillerait « sans préjugés », assurant qu'il n'y aurait pas d'entraves à sa mission. Toutefois, selon des diplomates, l'AIEA n'a pas été autorisée à se rendre sur trois autres sites, en Syrie, qui éveillent des soupçons. Al-Kibar a été soigneusement dissimulé par la Syrie pendant des années. Une partie importante de l'installation était souterraine. Un toit et des murs de camouflage avaient été dressés, lui conférant un aspect cubique qui le banalisait. Les révélations sur Al-Kibar placent la Syrie en violation de ses obligations au regard du traité de non-prolifération nucléaire (TNP) qu'elle a ratifié en 1969, et des textes qui s'y rattachent : tout début de construction d'un site nucléaire civil doit en effet être déclaré à l'AIEA.

L'AIEA est elle-même placée dans une position délicate car l'affaire Al-Kibar peut être perçue comme une nouvelle illustration – après les cas libyen et iranien – d'une incapacité de l'Agence à détecter à temps des programmes nucléaires clandestins dans le monde. Signe des tensions que ce dossier suscite, le directeur de l'AIEA, Mohamed ElBaradei, a vivement protesté contre le bombardement israélien et contre la lenteur de la transmission de certains renseignements à l'Agence. Il a aussi déclaré, mardi 17 juin, que la Syrie n'avait pas « les ressources humaines qui lui permettraient de mener un programme nucléaire d'envergure ». ■

NATALIE NOUGAYRÈDE

Nicolas Sarkozy devra répondre aux impatiences de sa majorité tout en ménageant Ankara

La Turquie, casse-tête de la présidence française

La candidature de la Turquie à l'Union européenne (UE) menace d'empoisonner l'été de Nicolas Sarkozy, qui doit concilier les pressions anti-turques de sa majorité avec la nécessité de ménager Ankara dans une période très sensible.

La tenue obligatoire d'un référendum en cas d'adhésion de ce pays à l'UE devient une pierre d'achoppement de la révision constitutionnelle française, censée être bouclée en juillet. En présidant l'UE, le chef de l'Etat devra gérer les conséquences d'une éventuelle interdiction de l'AKP au pouvoir par la Cour constitutionnelle turque, en raison de sa volonté supposée d'islamiser le pays.

Mardi 17 juin, les sénateurs français ont unanimement critiqué la disposition adoptée à l'Assemblée nationale rendant obligatoire un référendum sur l'adhésion à l'UE des pays dont la population représenterait plus de 5 % de celle de l'Union. Cette formulation, a souligné le président (UMP) de la commission des affaires étrangères, Josselin de Rohan, « réserve un traitement particulier à la Turquie sans toutefois la nommer ». L'objectif des députés était de réserver à la seule Turquie la réforme adoptée en 2005 sous Jacques Chirac, qui rendait obligatoire un référendum pour toute nouvelle adhésion. « Inscrire dans la Constitution une disposition allant directement à l'encontre d'un pays ami et allié, c'est à l'évidence porter un grave préjudice aux relations avec ce pays », a défendu le sénateur du Morbihan, la jugeant « discriminatoire ». En commission, un amendement laissant au président de la République la liberté de choisir le référendum ou la ratification parlementaire, a été accepté à l'unanimité des groupes du Sénat.

M. de Rohan a jugé la disposition de l'Assemblée « inutile » : le projet constitutionnel permet d'exiger un référendum à l'initiative d'un cinquième des parlementaires soutenue par une pétition citoyenne (un dixième du corps électoral). L'Elysée et Matignon misent sur cet argument pour convaincre les députés de la majorité qui conditionnent leur vote sur la réforme institutionnelle à l'adoption d'un dispositif particulier sur la Turquie.

M. Sarkozy doit faire reculer les députés, alors qu'il avait lui-même encouragé leur initiative. Il ne veut pas, quoi qu'il arrive, que la réforme capote sur la question turque. Devant les sénateurs, le premier ministre François Fillon a glissé un caillou dans la chaussure de M. Sarkozy. Relevant que la disposition adoptée

à l'Assemblée « rejoint l'orientation profonde » du président de la République, il s'en est démarqué : « Faut-il pour autant inscrire cet engagement dans notre texte constitutionnel ? », s'est-il interrogé. « Beaucoup d'entre vous ne partagent pas cet avis, a poursuivi M. Fillon, s'adressant aux sénateurs. Mon sentiment se rapproche du vôtre. »

Le débat français affecte les relations avec Ankara, alors que le premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan n'a pas confirmé sa présence à Paris le 13 juillet pour le lancement de l'Union pour la Méditerranée, longtenups perçue en Turquie comme

une tentative de saboter son adhésion à l'UE. M. Sarkozy a promis d'être le « porte-parole loyal et impartial » des 27 lors de sa présidence de l'UE.

En Europe, tout se poursuit comme si de rien n'était. Les Vingt-Sept ont ouvert, mardi, deux nouveaux chapitres de négociation avec Ankara

En Europe, tout se poursuit comme si de rien n'était. Les Vingt-sept ont ouvert, mardi 17 juin, deux nouveaux chapitres de négociation avec Ankara (droit des sociétés et propriété intellectuelle), ce qui porte à huit sur 35 les chapitres en discussion. Paris s'est engagé à en ouvrir deux à trois supplémentaire au second semestre.

Mais chacun scrute la Cour constitutionnelle turque, susceptible d'interdire l'AKP, après des plaidoiries en juillet. Cette décision jugée probable pourrait interdire d'exercer un gouvernement démocratiquement élu et s'apparenterait à un « putsch judiciaire », incompatible avec les critères démocratiques européens. Le commissaire à l'élargissement Olli Rehn préconise un « gel » informel et temporaire des pourparlers, pour marquer le coup, mais pas une suspension des négociations. Une telle initiative « risquerait de donner des munitions aux adversaires du rapprochement avec l'Europe » au sein du camp laïc turc, indique la Commission.

La France ne veut même pas de coup de semonce : le Quai d'Orsay considère qu'une interdiction de l'AKP « ne devra pas interférer » avec les négociations. Pour l'Elysée, il s'agit d'une « affaire intérieure ». « Si Erdogan nous demandait de faire un petit geste, on l'étudierait. On est là pour aider la démocratie turque à passer ce cap redoutable », indique-t-on. ■

ARNAUD LEPARMENTIER, PHILIPPE RICARD (À BRUXELLES) ET PATRICK ROGER

Turquie La fin du dogme kémaliste ?

La lutte d'influence entre l'Etat et l'islam ne date pas d'hier, comme le rappelle l'éclairage d'un éminent intellectuel. Mais le modèle imposé par Atatürk est usé.

De notre correspondante

La Turquie va-t-elle poursuivre son ancrage dans le camp des démocraties libérales ? La réponse sera donnée dans les prochaines semaines par la Cour constitutionnelle, appelée par le procureur de la Cour de cassation à interdire le parti au pouvoir (AKP, conservateur musulman), accusé de menées visant à détruire le régime laïque de la république turque. Déjà, les mêmes juges ont donné un avant-goût de leur verdict en déclarant contraire à la Constitution, au début du mois de juin, la levée par le gouvernement de l'interdiction du foulard islamique sur les campus.

Cette offensive du camp laïcard kémaliste n'est que le dernier épisode d'une lutte d'influence pluricentenaire entre les mondes séculier et religieux. Le Pr Serif Mardin en sait quelque chose. A 82 ans, ce diplômé des universités Stanford et Johns Hopkins (Etats-Unis) a voué sa vie à l'étude des mouvements islamistes. Au risque de provoquer l'ire de ses supérieurs, quand il rejoint, en 1954, la faculté de sciences politiques d'Ankara. « Ils me disaient à la fois que l'islam nous conduirait à notre perte et que l'on ne pouvait pas toucher à la religion ! » s'étonne encore Mardin en plissant malicieusement ses yeux



Le Pr Serif Mardin, titulaire d'une chaire à Washington, a consacré sa vie à l'étude des mouvements islamistes.

bleus. « Si l'islam devait nous détruire, je voulais comprendre comment », dit-il. Têtu, il commence à analyser le métissage de l'islam avec les traditions locales en Anatolie. Puis il mène des recherches sur la secte des Naksibendi, qui influe de nombreux hommes politiques, comme feu le président Turgut Özal ou le leader islamiste Necmettin Erbakan. On l'accuse alors d'en être membre...

Pour Rusen Çakir, journaliste et fin connaisseur de l'islamisme en Turquie, si le Pr Mardin a été traité de la sorte, c'est parce qu'il a brisé un tabou en considérant l'islam comme un objet d'étude. Le kémalisme s'était toujours évertué à nier le rôle joué par l'islam dans la construction de l'identité individuelle.

Comme Tocqueville expliquait l'absence de tension entre l'Etat et la religion dans le Nouveau Monde par le fait que la société américaine n'avait pas eu à passer par une phase médiévale, Mardin soutient que l'Etat turc a développé au cours des siècles

une relation originale à la religion, prenant soin de la tenir toujours à distance, ne fût-ce que « d'un millimètre », afin d'assurer la prééminence de la bureaucratie. C'est certainement en partie là que réside le secret de l'exception turque. Ce « millimètre d'avance » s'est manifesté parfois violemment, par l'exécution de religieux, lors de révoltes en Anatolie. Cette prédominance de l'Etat est trop souvent ignorée en Occident, se plaint Mardin.

*L'Etat turc
a toujours pris
soin de tenir
la religion
à distance*

La défiance envers tout ce qui touche au religieux explique aussi peut-être pourquoi ce professeur de l'université Sabanci, à Istanbul, invité régulier de l'université Columbia ou de celle d'Oxford, et titulaire d'une chaire à l'Université américaine, à Washington, n'a jamais été

admis à l'Académie des sciences turque. Cela ne l'empêche pas de peser fortement sur les débats d'idées dans son pays. A l'occasion d'une récente réunion organisée par l'Association de recherches et de solutions sociales (Sorar), Mardin a de nouveau fait sensation en renvoyant dos à dos kémalistes et islamistes. Selon lui, les très fortes tensions agitant la société turque actuelle viennent de l'incapacité du kémalisme à dépasser son statut de simple projet politique de libération nationale. A son sens, la faiblesse du kémalisme, idéologie sans profondeur, renvoie à son incapacité à définir une réelle philosophie sur le bon, le beau, le vrai... Appauvri, il serait en voie d'extinction au profit des valeurs traditionnelles, musulmanes et conservatrices, de la communauté locale, primitives mais élaborées des siècles durant. Un islam qui subit, lui aussi, des simplifications : les bigots ont pris la place des docteurs en religion, laquelle se trouve vide de ses subtilités. ● **Nükte V. Ortaç**



Un Belge d'origine turque tire sur un Kurde à Bastogne

19 juin 2008 - LUXEMBOURG

L'homme qui a blessé d'un coup de feu lundi soir un individu de nationalité kurde à Bastogne a été privé de liberté jeudi, a-t-on appris auprès du parquet de Neufchâteau. Le Belge d'origine turque et domicilié à Bastogne s'est présenté spontanément jeudi matin à la police de la commune. Il a été inculpé de tentative de meurtre par le juge Connerotte et placé sous mandat d'arrêt. Des incidents avaient éclaté dimanche soir déjà dans le centre de Bastogne entre des Turcs et des Kurdes à l'issue du match de l'Euro 2008 remporté par

l'équipe turque contre la Tchèque. Des bagarres avaient éclaté près d'un snack où un drapeau kurde avait été affiché. Lundi soir, au lendemain de la bagarre, trois Kurdes se sont présentés chez un Turc pour s'expliquer. L'ambiance avait dégénéré et l'un des Kurdes a été blessé par balle au bras. Plusieurs personnes avaient été entendues dans le cadre de cette affaire par le juge Connerotte. Elles avaient été remises en liberté, tandis que l'auteur du coup de feu était formellement identifié et recherché. Il comparaitra devant la chambre du conseil de Neufchâteau le 24 juin.

AFP

DEUX REBELLES KURDES TUÉS LORS DE COMBATS AVEC L'ARMÉE DANS L'EST

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 20 juin 2008 (AFP) - Deux rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ont été tués vendredi lors de combats avec l'armée dans l'est de la Turquie, a affirmé une source locale de sécurité.

L'accrochage est survenu dans une zone montagneuse près de Catak, dans la province de Van, au cours d'une opération de l'armée, a indiqué cette source.

L'armée turque a renforcé son action contre le PKK depuis décembre, menant

plusieurs raids aériens contre des bases rebelles situées dans le nord de l'Irak. Elle a aussi effectué une incursion terrestre d'une semaine dans le Kurdistan irakien où Ankara affirme que plus de 2.000 rebelles kurdes ont trouvé refuge.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, a entamé en 1984 une lutte pour obtenir l'indépendance du sud-est et de l'est anatoliens, à la population en majorité kurde, un combat qui a fait plus de 37.000 morts.

cyberpresse.ca

21 juin 2008

ON NE TOUCHE PAS AU SERVICE MILITAIRE EN TURQUIE

Marc Thibodeau - La Presse

Une diva ayant critiqué le service militaire en Turquie lors d'une populaire émission de télévision s'expose à quatre ans de prison dans le cadre d'un procès qui relance les critiques sur le manque de liberté d'expression dans le pays.

Bulent Ersoy, une flamboyante chanteuse qui s'était déjà attiré les foudres des autorités au début des années 80 après avoir subi une opération de changement de sexe, ne s'est pas présentée comme prévu devant le tribunal cette semaine. Une nouvelle audience a été fixée au 24 septembre. Mme Ersoy, 56 ans, avait déploré en ondes en février le coût humain de la lutte menée par l'armée turque contre les séparatistes kurdes du PKK, soulignant qu'elle n'aurait jamais laissé son enfant partir au front si elle avait été en mesure d'en avoir un. Sa déclaration est survenue alors que des soldats turcs poursuivaient une délicate offensive dans le nord de l'Irak, où le PKK dispose de plusieurs bases. Le conflit avec le groupe séparatiste a fait près de 40 000 morts en 30 ans. L'article 318 du Code criminel turc interdit aux citoyens du pays de critiquer «l'institution du service militaire».

Bêtise monumentale

L'acte d'accusation présenté contre Mme Ersoy rappelle qu'il est permis dans un régime démocratique «d'informer les gens, de commencer un débat». Mais pas de contester le «devoir sacré» des jeunes Turcs. L'universitaire turc Cengiz Aktar, joint à Istanbul, estime que le procès intenté contre l'artiste est une «bêtise monumentale» qui risque d'être très mal accueillie par la population. Il montre, selon lui, que les élus du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP), formation d'inspiration islamiste au pou-

voir, ne sont «pas du tout» hostiles à l'armée, qui a réalisé plusieurs coups d'État par le passé. «Ils veulent être gentils avec les militaires pour pouvoir continuer à gouverner», souligne M. Aktar. L'article 318 n'est qu'un des multiples articles de loi utilisés en Turquie pour réprimer la liberté d'expression, souligne les organisations de défense des droits humains comme Human Rights Watch. La loi antiterrorisme a notamment été évoquée récemment pour tenter un procès contre des adolescents kurdes qui avaient chanté un hymne traditionnel lors d'un festival de musique du monde à San Francisco. Un tribunal vient de rejeter la plainte.

Intolérance et assassinat

L'article 301 du Code criminel, qui empêche toute attaque publique contre la «nation turque» et ses institutions, est plus fréquemment utilisé. Des milliers d'intellectuels, de journalistes et de citoyens ont été poursuivis au fil des ans par la justice turque sur la base de déclarations ou d'écrits jugés répréhensibles. Bien que personne n'ait été incarcéré, plusieurs peines de prison avec sursis ont été prononcées. Human Rights Watch estime que «l'intolérance» de l'État aux opinions dissidentes génère un climat propice aux violences contre les groupes minoritaires. Selon l'organisation, il ne serait pas étranger à l'assassinat en 2007 de Hrant Dink par un militant ultranationaliste. L'année dernière, le fils de ce journaliste turco-arménien a été condamné à un an de prison avec sursis pour avoir reproduit une entrevue où son père évoquait le génocide arménien, un tabou en Turquie. Sous pression des autorités européennes, le régime du premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan a modifié l'article 301 en avril, réduisant la peine maximale de trois à deux ans de prison et rendant obligatoire



La chanteuse Bulent Ersoy a déploré le coût humain de la lutte menée par l'armée contre le PKK, soulignant qu'elle n'aurait jamais laissé son enfant partir au front. Photo AFP

l'autorisation des plaintes par le ministère de la Justice.

Contenter l'Europe

M. Aktar parle pour sa part d'un «amendement esthétique» visant à contenter l'Europe qui n'a rien changé à la portée de la loi. Il évoque, à l'appui de ses dires, la récente condamnation d'un éditeur turc, Ragip Zarakolu, qui était poursuivi pour la publication d'un livre traitant des exactions subies par la population arménienne sous l'empire ottoman. «Il croyait que la procédure serait abandonnée à la suite de la modification de l'article 301... Sa condamnation est la preuve par A plus B que (la révision) était de la merde», tranche M. Aktar.



UN Proposal Provokes Iraqi Anger

Kurds, Turkomans and Arabs criticise recommendations on how to resolve territorial disputes in north.

By Zaineb Naji in Baghdad

RIVAL political factions have slammed a United Nations proposal to settle disputes over control of a number of areas in the north of the country, arguing the recommendations are more likely to deepen their disagreements than resolve them.

Sunni and Shia Arab, Turkoman and Kurdish representatives have cited a variety of reasons for their opposition to the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, UNAMI, plan, which was presented to the Iraqi government by the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq, Staffan de Mistura on June 5.

Kurds say the proposal goes against article 140 of the constitution, under which the status of disputed areas in Iraq should be decided by referendum; Turkomans complain it is biased towards the Kurds; and Turkomans and Arabs warn it could mark the beginning of the partition of Iraq.

The UNAMI proposal suggests that the Kurdistan Regional Government, KRG, and central government split control of four contested northern areas – across the governorates of Nineweh, Diyala and Erbil.

It is the first of three proposals on how to resolve the status of Iraq's disputed regions which the mission expects to issue in the coming weeks.

The initial proposal suggests that the KRG be given two areas it essentially controls already – Akre in Ninewa, and Makhmour, which lies between Nineweh and Erbil provinces. It also advises that central government continue to administer Mandali district in Diyala, and Hamdaniya in Ninewa province.

UNAMI has been tasked by the Security Council to advise and support the government on resolving control of disputed territories. But the suggestions only appear to have exacerbated tensions.

Politicians are concerned that the UN agency will issue similarly unacceptable recommendations in relation to settling the status of oil-rich Kirkuk – Iraq's most hotly contested province, where Kurds, Turkomans and Arabs vie for power – which will be addressed in the third proposal.

Many of Iraq's disputed areas are in the north, where, under Saddam's so-called Arabisation policy, thousands of Kurds, Turkomans and Assyrians were uprooted and replaced with Arabs.

Many observers believe that resolving control of these contested regions – particularly Kirkuk – is key to the country's long-term stability. The province of Kirkuk is referred to as "Little Iraq" because it is home to nearly all of the country's ethnic and religious groups. The region is now sometimes referred to as a "powder keg" because many fear the battle for control over it could become explosive.

The most fervent opposition to the first UNAMI proposal came from Kurdish leaders, who have criticised the mission for skirting Iraq's constitution that provides for a referendum to settle the status of disputed territories – a process the Kurds are keen on.

A plebiscite was set to take place in Kirkuk at the end of 2007, but was delayed for six months and is expected to be delayed again.

Arab and Turkoman leaders instead advocate a power-sharing agreement in Kirkuk – a position also backed by many international analysts, who see it as the most realistic solution to the dispute.

According to the KRG website, a senior official, Mohammed Ihsan, met UNAMI's team in Iraq on June 16, telling them their proposal was unacceptable.

"The [UNAMI] proposal is superficial," said Abdul-Khaliq Zangana, a member of the Iraqi parliament on the Kurdish list. "It has the potential to deepen conflicts in many of the disputed areas, especially Kirkuk."

He also criticised it for failing to acknowledge the history of ethnic cleansing and demographic changes which have caused the territories to be disputed now.

Turkomans and Arabs in the north, meanwhile, are angry that UNAMI took into account the results of 2005 provincial polls, which were held throughout the country and boycotted by Sunni Arabs, when drafting its proposal.

Kurds won the elections throughout the north and now dominate Kirkuk's provincial council. At the time of the elections, the Turkoman minority accused Kurdish leaders of increasing their support by drafting in Kurdish voters from outside the province.

Turkomans and Arabs in the north resent the KRG's growing influence in Kirkuk and Nineweh since Saddam was ousted in 2003.

"Turkomans are rejecting the UN proposal because it has been influenced by the Kurdish factions," said Hassan Weli, a leader of the Turkoman Front.

He said they are also opposed to external actors resolving internal crises, "Turkomans are trying to unite Iraq and believe that it is in the interests of Iraq and Iraqis to solve their problems by themselves rather than resorting to outside parties, even if that party is the United Nations."

According to a June 15 article on the Turkoman Times website, the Turkoman Nationalist League's response to the UNAMI report was to recommend that the mission consider the Kurdistan capital of Erbil a disputed area because Saddam's regime declared it part of the Kurdish region in 1970.

UNAMI has stressed that the Iraqi government will ultimately decide how to resolve the disputed areas issue.

Andrew Gilmour, political director for UNAMI, acknowledged that most of Iraq's political factions were unhappy with the mission's proposal – although he said this wasn't surprising.

"We were not expecting any party to welcome the proposals. No party was getting 100 per cent of their [demands]," he added, noting that "compromises are never agreeable to hard-liners in any party".

He said the mission will make "minor adjustments" in future proposals based on the responses from politicians, but gave no further details on what these might be. Gilmour did say, though, that senior officials from a number of parties said they support UNAMI's efforts as a whole and want to resolve the disputes.

Qassim Daud, chairman of the Al-Tadhmun bloc in Shia-led United Iraqi Alliance, said UNAMI remains a credible agency, despite the widespread rejection of its proposal.

"Just because Iraqi parties have different views about UNAMI, this won't undermine the agency's role in Iraq," he said.

Zaineb Naji is an IWPR-trained journalist in Baghdad. Middle East editor Tiare Rath contributed to this report.

United Press International

Kurdish minority prepares genocide case

BAGHDAD, June 21, 2008 (UPI) -

The Iraqi High Tribunal is prepared to hear a case concerning atrocities committed against Fayli Kurds under Saddam Hussein, officials said.

Fayli Kurds settled the border regions between modern-day Iran and Iraq during the Mesopotamian era in what are today the Ilam and Kermanshah provinces of Iran and the Diyala province in Iraq.

Thousands of Faylis settled in Baghdad, and their numbers reached about 1 million before Saddam Hussein launched ethnic cleansing campaigns against the ethnic minority in the 1970s and 1980s.

European officials and representatives from the Kurdistan Regional Government brought several Faylis to Iraq to serve as witnesses as their cases are prepared for delivery before the Iraqi High Tribunal, the Kurdish Globe reported.

Many of the witnesses said they were the victims of the chemical thallium, a

nerve agent, forced displacements and disappearances.

Approximately 10,000 Faylis were detained under Saddam and hundreds of families were deported to Iran.

"The Faylis were living in Iraq for hundreds of years," said Mihabad Qaradaghi, a Kurdish official. "In the 1970s, the Kurdish (political) movement was active inside Baghdad due to the large Fayli population there. Authorities at that time planned to cleanse them to remove their influence and to benefit financially by confiscating their property."

Qaradaghi said several of the Fayli witnesses face obstacles to regain their Iraqi citizenship. The Kurdistan Regional Government offered to provide Faylis with identity cards, but the issue largely rests with Baghdad, she said.

The Iraqi High Tribunal is to consider whether the crimes committed against the Faylis amount to genocide.

An Israeli dry run for raid against Iran?

Maneuvers seen as reflecting worry about nuclear plant

By Michael R. Gordon and Eric Schmitt

WASHINGTON: Israel carried out a major military exercise earlier this month that American officials say appeared to be a rehearsal for a potential bombing attack on Iran's nuclear facilities.

Several U.S. officials said the Israeli exercise appeared to be an effort to develop the military's capacity to carry out long-range strikes and to demonstrate the seriousness with which Israel views Iran's nuclear program.

More than 100 Israeli F-16 and F-15 fighters participated in the maneuvers, carried out over the eastern Mediterranean and over Greece during the first week of June, U.S. officials said.

The exercise also included Israeli helicopters that could be used to rescue downed pilots. The helicopters and refueling tankers flew more than 1,400 kilometers, or 900 miles, about the same distance as between Israel and the uranium enrichment plant at Natanz in Iran, U.S. officials said.

Israeli officials declined to discuss the details of the exercise. A spokesman for the Israeli military would say only that the country's air force "regularly trains for various missions in order to confront and meet the challenges posed by the threats facing Israel."

But the scope of the Israeli exercise virtually guaranteed that it would be noticed by U.S. and other foreign intelligence agencies. A senior Pentagon official who had been briefed on the exercise and who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the political delicacy of the matter, said the exercise appeared to serve multiple purposes.

One Israeli goal, the Pentagon official said, was to practice flight tactics, aerial refueling and all other details of a possible strike against Iran's nuclear installations and its long-range conventional missiles.

A second, the official said, was to send a clear message to the United States and other countries that Israel was prepared to act militarily if diplomatic efforts to stop Iran from producing bomb-grade uranium continued to falter.

"They wanted us to know, they

wanted the Europeans to know, and they wanted the Iranians to know," the Pentagon official said. "There's a lot of signaling going on at different levels."

Several U.S. officials said they did not believe that the Israeli government had concluded that it must attack Iran and did not think that such a strike was imminent.

Shaul Mofaz, a former Israeli defense minister who is now a deputy prime minister, warned in a recent interview with the Israeli newspaper Yediot Aharonot that Israel might have no choice but to attack.

"If Iran continues with its program for developing nuclear weapons, we will attack," Mofaz said in the interview published June 6, the day after the unpublicized exercise ended. "Attacking Iran, in order to stop its nuclear plans, will be unavoidable."

But Mofaz was criticized by other Israeli politicians as seeking to enhance his own standing while questions intensified about whether the embattled Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, could hang on to power.

Israeli officials have told their U.S. counterparts that Mofaz's statement does not represent official policy. But U.S. officials were also told that Israel had prepared plans for striking nuclear targets in Iran and could carry them out if needed.

Iran has shown signs that it is taking the Israeli warnings seriously, by strengthening its air defenses in recent weeks, including increased air patrols. In one instance, Iran scrambled F-4 jets to double-check on an Iraqi civilian flight from Baghdad to Tehran.

"They are clearly nervous about this and have their air defense on guard," an official in the administration of President George W. Bush said of the Iranians.

Any Israeli attack against Iran's nuclear facilities would confront a number of challenges. Many American experts say they believe that such an attack could delay but not eliminate Iran's nuclear program.

Much of the program's infrastructure is buried under earth and concrete and installed in long tunnels or hallways, making precise targeting difficult. There is also concern that not all of the facilities have been detected. To inflict maximum damage, multiple attacks might be necessary, which many analysts say is beyond Israel's ability.

But waiting also entails risks for the Israelis. Israeli officials have repeatedly expressed fears that Iran will soon master the technology it needs to produce substantial quantities of highly en-

riched uranium for nuclear weapons.

Iran is also taking steps to defend its nuclear facilities better. Two sets of advanced Russian-made radar systems were recently delivered to Iran. The radar will enhance Iran's ability to detect planes flying at low altitudes.

Mike McConnell, the U.S. director of national intelligence, said in February that Iran was close to acquiring Russian-produced SA-20 surface-to-air missiles. U.S. military officials said the deployment of such systems would hamper Israel's attack planning, putting pressure on Israel to act before the missiles were ready.

For both the United States and Israel, Iran's nuclear program has been a persistent worry. A National Intelligence Estimate issued in December by U.S. intelligence agencies asserted that Iran had suspended work on nuclear weapons design in late 2003. The report stated that it was unclear whether that work had resumed.

It also noted that Iran's work on uranium enrichment and on missiles, two steps that Iran would need to take to field a nuclear weapon, had continued.

In late May, the International Atomic Energy Agency reported that Iran's suspected work on nuclear matters was a "matter of serious concern" and that the Iranians owed the agency "substantial explanations."

Over the past three decades, Israel has carried out two unilateral attacks against suspected nuclear sites in the Middle East. In 1981, Israeli jets struck Iraq's nuclear plant at Osirak after concluding that it was part of Saddam Hussein's program to develop nuclear weapons.

Last September, Israeli aircraft bombed a structure in Syria that U.S. officials said housed a nuclear reactor built with the aid of North Korea.

The United States protested the Israeli strike against Iraq in 1981, but its comments in recent months have amounted to an implicit endorsement of the Israeli strike in Syria.

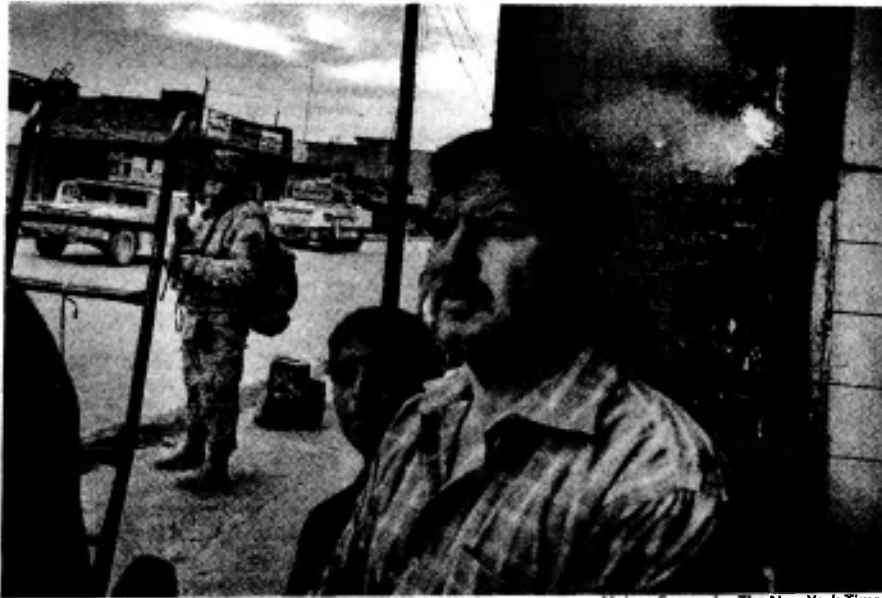
Pentagon officials said that Israel's air force usually conducted a major early summer training exercise, often flying over the Mediterranean or training ranges in Turkey, where they practice bombing runs and aerial refueling.

But the exercise this month involved a larger number of aircraft than previously observed and included a lengthy combat rescue mission.

Much of the planning appears to reflect a commitment by Israel's military leaders to ensure that its armed forces are adequately equipped and trained, an imperative driven home by the difficulties the Israeli military encountered in its Lebanon conflict with Hezbollah.

"They rehearse it, rehearse it and rehearse it, so if they actually have to do it, they're ready," the Pentagon official said. "They're not taking any options off the table."

New sense of stability is taking hold in Iraq



Moises Saman for The New York Times

As Iraqis watched, American soldiers conducted a foot patrol on a street in Mosul during security operations there.

Maliki is strengthened by military successes

By Stephen Farrell and Richard A. Oppel Jr.

BAGHDAD: What's going right? And can it last?

Violence in all of Iraq is the lowest since March 2004. Its two largest cities, Baghdad and Basra, are calmer than they have been for years. The third largest, Mosul, is in the midst of a major security operation. On Thursday, Iraqi forces swept unopposed through the southern city of Amara, which has been controlled by Shiite militias.

There is a sense that Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki's government has more political traction than any of its predecessors.

Consider the latest caricatures of Maliki put up on posters by the followers of Moktada al-Sadr, the fiery cleric who commands deep loyalty among poor Shiites.

They show the prime minister's face split in two: half his own, half Saddam Hussein's. The comparison is, of course, intended as a searing criticism. But only three months ago the same Sadr City pamphleteers were lampooning Maliki as half-man, half-parrot, merely echoing the words of his more powerful Shiite and American backers.

It is a notable swing from mocking an opponent perceived to be weak to denouncing one feared to be strong.

For Hatem al-Bachary, a Basra businessman, the turnabout has been "a miracle," the first tentative signs of normal life returning.

"I don't think the militias have disappeared and maybe there are sleeper cells which will try to revive themselves again," he said. "But the first time they try to come back they will have to show themselves, and the government, army and police are doing very well."

While the increase in American troops and their continuing support behind the scenes in the recent operations have helped tamp down violence, there are signs that both the Iraqi security forces and the government are making strides.

There are simply more Iraqi troops for the government to deploy, partly because fewer are needed to fight the Sunni insurgents who have defected to the Sunni Awakening movement. They are now paid to keep the peace.

Maliki's moves against Shiite militias have built some trust with wary Sunnis, offering the potential for political reconciliation. High oil prices are filling

government coffers.

But even these successes contain the seeds of vulnerability.

The government victories in Basra, Sadr City and Amara were essentially negotiated, so the militias are lying low but undefeated and seething with resentment.

Maliki may be raising expectations among Sunnis that he cannot fulfill, and the Sunni Awakening forces in many cases are loyal to their American paymasters, not to the Shiite government.

Restive Iraqis want to see the government spend money to improve services. Attacks like the bombing that killed 63 people in Baghdad's Huriya neighborhood on Tuesday show that opponents can continue to inflict carnage.

Perhaps most worrisome, more than five years after the American invasion that knocked Saddam from power but also set off great chaos, Iraq still lacks the formal rules to divide the power and spoils of an oil-rich nation among ethnic, religious and tribal groups and unite them under one stable idea of Iraq.

The changes are already affecting Iraq's complicated relationship with America. In the U.S. presidential campaign, voices are rising about whether the quiet means that American soldiers can leave early or whether it would be foolish to risk what is arguably the first real progress in five years.

Senior U.S. military commanders are seeing a new confidence among Iraqi leaders. They said they believe the success of the recent military operations have played a role in the Iraqi government's firm rebuff of American negotiators over a new long-term security pact to govern the U.S. military presence after the end of this year.

"They are feeling very strong right now, after Basra, Mosul and Sadr City," a senior American official said.

The most obvious but often overlooked reason for the recent military success has been an increase in the number of trained Iraqi troops.

The quality of the recruits and leadership has often been poor, even in recent months. In Baghdad's Sadr City enclave, an Iraqi company abandoned its position in April, forcing American and Iraqi commanders to fill the gap with hastily summoned reinforcements.

In Basra, more than 1,000 recently qualified soldiers deserted rather than obey orders to fight against Sadr's Mahdi army militia. A senior Iraqi government official conceded that the deserters simply "felt that the other side was too strong."

But sheer numbers have helped to overcome the shortcomings. After the embarrassing setback in Basra, Maliki was able to pull units from elsewhere to provide reinforcements and saturate the city with checkpoints and patrols, restoring a measure of order after years of domination by Islamist militias and oil-smuggling mafias.

U.S. officials said 50,000 Iraqi security forces took part in the Basra campaign, 45,000 in Mosul, and 10,000 in Sadr City — troops that would not have

been available to Maliki's predecessors.

The Iraqis had by far the largest numbers of troops, although American and other coalition troops provided crucial air power, reconnaissance, logistics, medical support and even expertise in psychological operations.

A key source of that manpower has been training: Over the past year the Iraqi Army has added 52,000 soldiers, the police have added 59,000 and Iraq Special Operations forces have added 1,400 troops, Lieutenant General James Dubik, chief of the U.S. security training and equipping mission, said last month.

Yet another reason for recent successes was that many troops were not tied down fighting Sunni insurgents in places like Anbar Province. That is thanks to the Sunni Awakening and a related program in which the American military has paid thousands of former insurgents and militia fighters and turned them into neighborhood guards.

"Our successes reduced the pressure on the Iraqi security forces by more than 50 percent," said Sheik Hussain Abaid, the head of one such pro-American group south of Baghdad.

Even Shiite government officials, long suspicious of the Awakening because it employs insurgents responsible for the deaths of Shiites, agreed. "Before, there was a security void in their areas, but they were able to fill it," said Ali Adeeb, a senior official in the Dawa party and a close ally of Maliki.

But the government's successes in Basra and Sadr City were not so much victories as heavy fighting followed by truces that allowed the militias to melt away with their weapons. "We may have wasted an opportunity in Basra to kill those that needed to be killed," said an American defense official who would speak candidly about the issue only if he was granted anonymity.

And in Mosul, the celebrations over the performance of the Iraqis who fought there has ignored the tremendous — but hidden — role played by American Special Operations forces to clear out the toughest enemy fighters before the Iraqi soldiers arrived in full. "It is underreported how much the secret guys did to set the conditions for the Iraqi Army to go in and do what they did," the official said.

What remains to be seen is whether the Iraqi government can capitalize on the operational successes with concrete steps that improve the lives of people in the three areas, like basic municipal services and economic opportunities. "The fear is unrealistic expectations," the American defense official said. "Services do take time."

Failure to follow through could wipe out much of the gains in places like Hayaniya, one of Basra's most deprived areas and a Sadrist stronghold, where residents already grumble that they have seen little evidence of improvement.

"They said they will repair schools and roads — but when and where?" said



A U.S. Army Humvee rolling out from Combat Outpost Rabiya in western Mosul during a major and ongoing security operation against insurgents.

Ali Alwan, 45. "It is only talk. We suffered during the military operation,

Many Sunnis are convinced that Maliki is trying to serve other masters.

but what is the reward?"

Maliki's operations against fellow Shiites in Basra and Sadr City have bought at least temporary political goodwill from Sunnis who long saw his Shiite-dominated government as the enemy.

Interviews with three dozen Sunni merchants, academics, teachers, laborers, government officials and office workers in former insurgent strongholds like Falluja, Tikrit and Baghdad's Adhamiya, Amiriya and Fadhill neighborhoods suggested that the prime minister has gained some ground with a group whose loyalty is essential to build a unified and stable state.

But old suspicions linger, and Sunnis remember the slaughter inflicted by Shiite militias from 2004 to 2007 and how Shiite death squads were protected by Iraqi security forces.

In addition to the Mahdi army, many Sunnis fear the Badr organization, the armed wing of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, a close ally of Maliki's Dawa Party. Badr forces dominate some security force units.

"Maliki's war was a selective one," says Falah Muhammed Abdullah, a 46-year-old engineer from Falluja. "Why does Maliki's government hunt down the Mahdi militia while it neglects Badr?"

Many Sunnis are convinced that Maliki is trying to serve other masters: Iran, the Americans or his own Dawa Party and the Islamic Supreme Council. Both face a serious challenge from the Sadrists in provincial elections this year.

Mowafaq Abu Omar, a 52-year-old street merchant in Adhamiya, voiced a common suspicion: that the true aims of the Basra operation were to seize control of Iraq's only significant port and to advance the creation of a large, autonomous and oil-rich Shiite super-province in the south.

There is also less enthusiasm for the recent operation in western Mosul, which is largely Sunni.

Eman al-Hayali, a teacher in Amiriya,

praised Maliki for weakening Sadr's Mahdi army but said she feared the Mosul operation was intended to satisfy the Maliki government's patrons in Iran and telegraph a message to Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad: "Do not worry, your excellency, we are also killing Sunnis."

With such suspicions just below the surface, the current stability would be jeopardized if former insurgents now serving in the Awakening forces come to believe that they are being used by the Shiite-led government while getting little in return.

"We are pleased with the government only regarding the war against the Shiite militias," said Khalid al-Summaraiya, a Sunni militia leader in Baghdad's Fadhill neighborhood. He added pointedly, "They haven't done anything for us that will give us a better standard of living."

Another important factor buoying Maliki has been the sharp rise in oil prices, which, among other things, has allowed the central bank to buy back its currency at a feverish pace, forcing the value of the Iraqi dinar higher and limiting increases in consumer prices. Driven by higher food costs, inflation stood last month at 16 percent, up from 11 percent in January.

The government is also trying to funnel money to placate Iraqis who endured the military operations in Sadr City, Mosul and Basra and cement their loyalty.

Tahseen al-Sheikhly, a spokesman for the Baghdad security plan, said \$100 million will go to Sadr City to upgrade economic and social conditions there in the wake of the two-month military operation, which left buildings shattered and markets destroyed. Another \$100 million will reportedly be spent on areas like health and education.

The anti-government and anti-occupation forces have also stumbled. The Sunni insurgents alienated many Iraqis with a trail of blood and bans on alcohol and smoking. And as attacks on Shiite communities by Sunni insurgents dropped, Shiites who had looked to the Mahdi army for self-defense were less willing to put up with abuses.

The improvements in Iraq face an array of destabilizing provincial, national and regional forces.

The Sunni insurgency — now in many places operating as pro-American Awakening groups — continues to wait to see whether the government makes good on promises of jobs and a less sectarian administration of security and public services and infrastructure.

TODAYS ZAMAN

June 21, 2008

TARAF EXPOSES ARMY'S COVERT OPERATIONS PLAN

TODAY'S ZAMAN - News

The Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) has devised a comprehensive plan of action to intervene in politics and civilian life, a leaked army document printed in the Taraf daily yesterday showed.

The army's plan went into force in September 2007, according to the Information Support Activity Action Plan, which is composed of a series of "measures" against the government, which the military deems the source of a "religious reactionary movement."

Taraf's story comes at a time when the Constitutional Court is at loggerheads with the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) government. Last month the court annulled a bill sponsored by the AK Party that would have allowed the Muslim headscarf to be worn on university campuses. The upper ranks of the Turkish judiciary, and the Constitutional Court in particular, has opposed government-sponsored bills since the ruling party first came to power in 2002. The court is currently hearing a closure case filed in March by the top prosecutor of the Supreme Court of against the AK Party over alleged "Islamist" activities. In addition to shutting down the AK Party, the prosecutor seeks to ban 71 of its former and current members from party politics for the next five years. Meanwhile, the General Staff released a statement on Friday afternoon denying Taraf's report. "There is no such official document approved by the commanding ranks in General Staff records," it said.

The document defines its goal as: "Bringing public opinion into line with the TSK on



The plan also emphasizes it is necessary to "bring universities, presidents of the higher judiciary, press members and artists into line with the TSK because they have the power to foment public opinion, and to ensure that these individuals act in the same way as the TSK."

Of note is a secret meeting between Constitutional Court Justice Osman Paksüt and Land Forces Commander Gen. İlker Başbuğ, also recently exposed by Taraf. The plan claims the AK Party government and its municipalities are organizing activities to spread an Islamic lifestyle in society. The document also defines a new constitution drafted by the AK Party as against the idea of "nation-state." According to the action plan: "The government is continuing to effectively use all the legitimate means of democracy, such as schools, dormitories, companies, associations and the media, in organizing and shaping the society. It is also known that Islamist centers have gone a significant distance in hiring their own in state institutions." The document also said the public had to be shown that the TSK was not against religion and that for the TSK, "religion is a necessary institution."

The document is in the form of a Microsoft Excel worksheet. Every individual and unit in the General Staff Department is assigned a code, making it difficult for the uninformed to discern which department or person

the document is referring to. An official document proves that the Excel document was in fact created at the General Staff's Office, Taraf claims.

The plan also includes a schedule. The names of individuals and organizations the army decided to work together with have been withheld in the plan, but they are frequently referred to by the usage of expressions such as, "trustworthy names," "civil society organizations," "the proper media organs," or "those who have similar opinions to the TSK."

The plan also seeks to protect the nation's unity against the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) and help the military maintain its role as a "leader of the society." Since independent deputies from the DTP entered Parliament in July last year, the General Staff has refused to invite DTP deputies to their events and does not attend events DTP representatives participate in.

The action plan includes hard-line suggestions for handling the Kurdish issue including, "Showing the people of the region that supporting the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party [PKK] does not come without a price." Another suggestion is to carry out "heavy artillery fire" on northern Iraqi residents.

Some of the most shocking highlights of the document include: "Supporting some individuals in groups against the TSK; support separation in political and ethnic groups and destroy unity in such organizations. Exhausting in the public's eye those artists and authors known for their anti-TSK opinions. Having proper composers and artists, overtly or covertly, create music and songs in line with the opinions the TSK defends."

Other plans of the TSK include using national security classes, taught in high school in Turkish schools, as an opportunity for "promotion of the TSK and explaining national values." Handing out books, CDs and DVDs about the TSK during these classes was also suggested in the plan.

The document also said, under the heading "Developing Cooperation with Proper NGOs," that "trustworthy individuals" would be used "indirectly" and "covertly" to avoid risk to the military. "Those NGOs which have open institutional communication with the military shall not be used for these activities," it said, adding financial support should be lent to those NGOs whose lines of communication with the military are not so direct.

In the meantime, in a statement released



issues the TSK is sensitive about, preventing the development of incorrect opinions about the TSK, ensuring the unity and solidarity of opinions and actions within the TSK." The same introductory chapter issues a caveat, stressing the need to avoid, "conflict with other state agencies" and relaying "the image of intervening in daily politics."

yesterday, the Free Thought and Education Rights Association (Özgür Der) condemned the action plan, terming it evidence of how Turkey is under a stifling military siege. "The military's Information Support Activity Action Plan reflects a fascist mentality that aims to control all of social life, from the judiciary to politics and the arts," the statement said.

Özgür Der noted that the Turkish military persisted in attempts to meddle in politics despite the heavy blow the institution was dealt with the results of the July 22 elections. The ruling AK Party garnered 46.6 percent of the vote, despite the military's having tried to intervene in politics by releasing a memorandum strongly criticizing the government earlier that year.

The president of the Advocates of Justice Association (ASDER) retired Brig. Gen. Adnan Tanrıverdi, said the military's attempt to shape internal politics and deeming the government, Parliament and the majority of the public a threat, may drag the country into chaos.

"The General Staff denied the existence of the said document, but I don't believe such a detailed document can be faked. It (the General Staff) previously denied the existence of

similar documents related to failed coup attempts called Ayıışığı and Sarıkız, but their existence was later proven. The government and Parliament should examine the allegations regarding the military's plan of action to intervene in politics and civilian life and should do what is necessary to prevent such interventions," he said.

MAZLUM-DER to go to European court

The Association of Human Rights and Solidarity for Oppressed Peoples (MAZLUM-DER) announced yesterday in a press statement that it will go to the European Court of Human Rights to file a complaint seeking an investigation into claims published by the Taraf daily. "The two heads, one civilian and one military, present in the judicial system prevent the meting out of justice in society. As MAZLUM-DER, we believe that until there is effective judicial reform in Turkey, there is no judicial system to investigate claims independently and objectively. In light of the present situation and considering our previous cases [which yielded no results], we will not submit a petition to the court again. We wish to inform the public that we will file a petition with the European Court of Human Rights, which Turkey and the Turkish Consti-

tution recognize."

Meanwhile, the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) invited Parliament, the public and political parties that support democracy to fight against undemocratic forces.

"The General Staff, with its statement, acknowledges the existence of such a plan. In its explanation, it says, 'There is no such official document approved by the commanding ranks in the records of the General Staff.' With this they do not deny that there is no such plan but express that there was no such official document. Indeed, such illegal documents have never been approved by the 'commanding ranks'."

Speaking to Today's Zaman, retired military judge and prosecutor and acting lawyer Ümit Kardaş said in a "normal, democratic country" the government would question the General Staff upon such reports and have it investigated.

"But the ruling party faces a closure case; the prime minister and the president face a ban from politics. Therefore, the political and judicial systems have been taken over. We have a deep military guardianship," Kardaş said.

United Press International

ERBIL, Iraq, June 23, 2008 (UPI) -

The Kurdistan Workers' Party in northern Iraq should be considered a terrorist organization only if it refuses political dialogue, the Kurdish president said.

Massoud Barzani told the Italian news agency Il Tempo the Kurdistan Regional Government would only classify the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, a terrorist entity if it refused to meet with Turkish officials in a political setting.

An international moderator is needed to broker a deal between Turkey and Iraq regarding the PKK because "terrorism and radicalism knows no bounds," he said, adding Kurds would favor a political resolution over a military solution.

PKK not terrorists, Barzani says



The president said the status of Kirkuk should be determined by demographics and through a national referendum on the matter.

He warned Turkey, however, against entering Kurdish territory in pursuit of PKK rebels because "that would be a gamble which could lead to a region-wide crisis," the Turkish daily Hurriyet reported Monday.

The U.S. military in Iraq has backed a Turkish offensive targeting PKK rebels in the region since December.

In other related developments, Barzani said the city of Kirkuk should be considered part of Kurdish territory. He issued a statement earlier this month saying a U.N. report on regional autonomy was a violation of the Iraqi constitution.

June 22, 2008

StarTribune

Talks on new Iraq oil law to resume this week in Baghdad, Kurdish official says

By SINAN SALAHEDDIN, Associated Press

BAGHDAD - Officials from the Iraqi central government and the self-ruled Kurdish region in the north will resume talks this week in Baghdad to try to settle their differences over a proposed new oil law, a Kurdish spokesman said Sunday.

Jamal Abdullah, spokesman of the Kurdistan Regional Government, said that the region's prime minister, Nechervan Barzani, arrived in Baghdad on Saturday with "new proposals that could solve the pending issues on the oil law with the central government."

Abdullah refused to discuss the proposals but said that they are "flexible enough to settle all the pending issues."

Iraqi political factions have been at loggerheads since February 2007 over the law that would set the rules for foreign investment in Iraq's oil industry and determine how oil revenues will be shared among Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds. Other obstacles include a dispute over the rights of regional administrations to negotiate contracts with foreign firms.

In the absence of a national law, the Kurds have signed nearly 20

production-sharing contracts with handful of international oil companies since August 2007.

Those contracts are considered illegal by the Iraqi Oil Ministry, which has threatened to exclude and blacklist companies that sign deals with the Kurds. The Kurds maintain they are legal.

Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's office confirmed this week's talks without elaborating.

Both sides are expected to discuss an export deal that could add 1 million barrels per day to the market within five years — nearly half of Iraq's current total exports, he added.

Baghdad already has opened the door to foreign oil firms by negotiating service contracts with several Western oil companies to boost its current 2.5 million barrels per day by 600,000 barrels.

It also plans to announce its first round of tenders to develop several vast oil fields in northern, central and southern Iraq at end of this month.

The New York Times June 22, 2008

In Turkey, Bitter Feud Has Roots in History

By **SABRINA TAVERNISE**

ISTANBUL — As Turkey's governing party braces for a high court ruling that could close it down and bar many of its members from politics, party officials like to talk about what they did that caused so much trouble.

"Watch out, you're talking to a sinner," said Sadullah Ergin, an official in the party, Justice and Development, whose founders, some of them former Islamists, now want Turkey to be a more open society for practicing Muslims.

Mr. Ergin's offense, detailed in a more than 160-page indictment of the party and its officials that has paralyzed Turkish politics since it was filed in March, was saying that a ban on women wearing head scarves in universities violated human rights, adding his signature to a draft law that helped cancel it and talking about it on a television talk show.

Most of all, his crime lay in his association with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the leader of the party, known as A. K., the initials of its Turkish name. With its control of the presidency, the Parliament and the government, the faction has come further than any other in modern Turkey in breaking the grip of the secular establishment on power.

The indictment accuses the party of trying to turn Turkey, a secular democracy, into an Islamic state, a charge that Mr. Ergin contends is "political, not legal."

Even Turkey's liberals, who would be among the first to speak out against Islamic activism in government, agree with that assessment. Many see the case as the last stand by Turkey's secular old guard — a powerful class that includes the military and judiciary — that is against the ropes and trying desperately to hang on to power. The military's attempt to stare down Mr. Erdogan last year led to a pro-A. K. retaliation at the ballot boxes, and now it has turned to its judicial allies to try to stop Mr. Erdogan. A ruling by the constitutional court is expected in the next few months.

"They are playing their last game," said Baskin Oran, a professor of international relations at Ankara University. "The military is no longer able to make coups. The last line to hold onto is the constitutional court."

On Saturday evening, a diverse crowd of several thousand people marched in central Istanbul, blowing whistles, banging drums and carrying round, pink signs that read, "Make Noise Against Coups."

"This is the first time that people are speaking out against coups," said Hilal Kaplan, a graduate student shaking a soda can filled with corn. "People were really angry. It filled up in us over all those years and now it's coming out."

The party that is supported by the old guard, the Republican People's Party, known as C.H.P., the initials of its Turkish name, says Mr. Erdogan is packing ministries with his own people and must be stopped to preserve the secular nature of Turkey.

"Secularism is like the lungs of a Muslim society that opens it up to freedoms," said Bihlun Tamayligil, a C.H.P. member. "It is the greatest insurance for women."

Mr. Erdogan says he also wants a secular state, just with more freedoms for its citizens.

Turkey's current struggle is the latest chapter in a remarkable history that began in the



A protester carried a sign Saturday in Istanbul that read "In the 80s, We Were Small, but Now You Are Small," referring to the role of the military in several coups.

1920s, when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, looking toward Europe, destroyed all connections to the East, changing the alphabet into Latin letters, placing mosques under state control and crushing the religious hierarchy.

"Turkish society has been traumatized," said Dengir Firat, vice chairman of A. K. "Overnight they were told to change their dress, their language. Their religious ways were dismantled."

"Societies without that trauma could not care less how people dress," said Mr. Firat, whose offense in the indictment was to have told a journalist that people who were nervous about head scarves should see psychiatrists.

Turkey's painful experiment, unique in the Muslim world, has resulted in a vibrant society that remains extremely self-conscious about issues of religion, ethnicity and class.

Turkey's political system had another peculiarity: A powerful coterie of generals and judges steered the country from behind the scenes for years, deposing elected governments four times since 1960. They exerted influence through a series of unelected institutions that imposed vetoes in education, the judiciary and security matters. Those institutions have been weakened through the retooling the government has undertaken as part of its bid to join the European Union, heightening the secular establishment's anxiety.

A headline from a mainstream Turkish daily from the 1940s helps illustrate just how sharp the class divisions were. "It got hot and the people rushed to the beaches," it read, adding that "the citizens could not bathe." Translation: Ordinary Turks crowded the privileged elite out of swimming areas.

The old guard "despises the people," Mr. Oran said "For them, the masses are shapeless and ignorant."

That class divide has persisted into the current day — A. K. represents the masses — and adds to the deep fears of secular women that their way of life will be curtailed in a more openly religious society.

Another worry about Mr. Erdogan, liberals say, is that he is simply replacing Turkey's cur-

rent elite with his own. The fear is that without a sincere effort to strengthen institutions, for which there is less incentive now that A. K. controls so many of the important political posts, Turkey will remain just as troubled.

If A.K. wins, "it will not necessarily mean that democracy wins in this country," said Mithat Sancar, a law professor in Ankara. "But if it loses, democracy will lose."

In a troubling sign, a company with strong links to Mr. Erdogan — its top manager is his son-in-law — bought the newspaper Sabah in February in an auction with no other bidders with financing from state banks, a purchase that even party members were hard pressed to explain.

"They think that their high percentage of votes gives them the right to do whatever they want," said Birgen Keles, a C.H.P. deputy, referring to the 47 percent Mr. Erdogan won in last year's election. "This is not democracy."

But the secular party is no longer the vanguard of liberalism. It voted against a law that would have expanded free speech and one returning property to religious minorities, both central to Turkey's European Union bid, and its members berate Mr. Erdogan for accommodating Europeans.

"The present government tries to get legality within the country by pleasing foreigners," Ms. Keles said. She contends Europeans are using the party "to realize their ambitions in Turkey."

Joost Lagendijk, a member of the European Parliament who works on Turkey issues, said, "You can't claim to be pro-European and vote against all the laws that are necessary to take you in."

Real change hurts, and many liberals argue that Mr. Erdogan pushed it too far too fast.

A constitutional amendment that would allow women wearing head scarves to attend universities was rushed through Parliament without adequate explanation of its limits, Mr. Oran said.

"We warned them 1,000 times to make this clear, but they didn't," Mr. Oran said. "Now not only do they have to pay for it, but we have to pay for it, too."

June 23, 2008

Talisman invests in two KRG blocks

Eric Watkins Senior Correspondent

LOS ANGELES, June 23 -- Talisman Energy Inc. Calgary, eyeing a possible settlement of differences between the Iraqi central government and the northern Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), said two of its subsidiaries have entered into agreements with KRG for "interests" in Blocks K44 and K39.

Talisman said it will acquire a 40% interest in Block K44, with Western-Zagros Ltd., holding 40% as operator and KRG retaining 20%. Talisman said it plans to spend \$80 million on the block, including past costs and a three-well commitment.

Talisman also has entered into a seismic services agreement with KRG on Block K39 for a period of 2 years, following which Talisman will have the option to enter into a production-sharing contract (PSC) as operator of the block with a 60% working interest and a one well commitment in the first year. Talisman estimates exploration costs associated with the initial work program on this block to be \$10-15 million. Talisman Pres. and CEO John A. Manzoni said Block K44 is an established PSC area, "entered into by the KRG prior to the effective date of the new Iraqi constitution." He said the block is in the early stages of exploration with a well currently drilling. Both blocks are within the territory widely recognized as being on the KRG side of the 'Green Line' boundary that demarcates the region of Kurdistan within Iraq.

As part of the transactions with KRG, Talisman said it will pay \$220 million plus further conditional contributions to KRG for financial support to infrastructure and capacity-building projects for the benefit of the people in the region, particularly local communities in the agreement areas. Talisman also said KRG is bound to adhere to the principles of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) pursuant to the Kurdistan Regional Oil and Gas Law. Talisman and KRG have confirmed their mutual commitment to revenue transparency in the spirit of the EITI, as well as to promoting respect for and

compliance with human rights principles, including those set forth in the voluntary principles on security and human rights.

Agreement nears The Talisman announcement coincided with reports that talks between KRG and the Iraqi central government will take place this week to try to settle their differences over a proposed new oil law for the country. A spokesman for the Iraqi government said major obstacles include a dispute over the rights of regional administrations to negotiate contracts with foreign oil firms and who has the final say in managing oil and gas fields. KRG argues that Article 110 of the Iraqi constitution enshrines KRG's legal right to oil self-determination and limits the federal government's powers to such activities as providing national security and mail service and printing currency (OGJ, Apr. 14, 2008, p. 22). As a result, the Kurds signed nearly 20 PSCs with a handful of international oil companies after drafting their own oil and gas law in August 2007—all of them considered illegal by the Iraqi Oil Ministry, which has threatened to blacklist companies that sign deals with the Kurds. Earlier this month, analyst Global Insight said an agreement seems within reach between the Iraqi central government and KRG to "grandfather in" those companies that invested in Iraqi Kurdistan before February 2007—before the oil law dispute began. Such an agreement would allow them to develop their acreage fully, adding perhaps more than 100,000 b/d to Iraqi exports within 1 year and as much as 300,000 b/d within 2 years. The analyst quoted officials from the Iraqi Oil Ministry and KRG's Energy Ministry as saying, "An agreement is virtually reached, with only technicalities precluding the final hook-up of the oil pipeline from DNO's Tawke field to the relatively near export metering station on the Kirkuk-Ceyhan crude pipeline running between the northern Iraqi oil-producing hub and the Turkish Mediterranean port."

REUTERS

S.Korea firms to participate in Iraq oil projects

SEOUL, June 25, 2008 - Reuters- - A South Korean consortium will participate in oil projects with Iraq's Kurdish regional government to secure an estimated 1.9 billion barrels of oil, group leader Korea National Oil Corp said on Wednesday.

The consortium signed a memorandum of understanding on Saturday with the regional government to participate in eight oil reserve projects estimated to house 7.2 billion barrels of oil.

The group, which includes builders such as Hyundai Engineering & Construction <000720.KS>, Kolon Construction <003070.KS> and Doosan Construction <011160.KS>, also agreed to participate in the construction of infrastructure worth \$2.1 billion.

Iraq needs billions of dollars to modernise its oil industry and raise output after decades of sanctions and war, while South Korea, the world's 10th largest energy consumer, wants to secure stable energy supplies as it imports 96 percent of its reserves from overseas.

But disputes over the federal oil law between the largely autonomous northern region of Kurdistan and Baghdad have stalled international investment in Iraq.

Baghdad controls Iraq's export pipelines, and until the Kurdish region reaches an agreement with the federal government it will remain unable to produce more oil.

Human Rights Watch

June 23, 2008

Iran: Guarantee Fair Court Hearings for Two Kurdish Women Harsh Sentences May Await Two Rights Activists

(Washington DC, June 23, 2008) – Iranian judicial authorities should guarantee two Kurdish women's rights activists transparent court proceedings when their cases come up for a hearing, Human Rights Watch said today.

Activist Hana Abdi is appealing a five-year prison sentence, while Ronak Safarzadeh is on trial on charges that could lead to a death sentence. Human Rights Watch urges Iranian authorities to ensure fair and open court proceedings for both women. The government's previously documented patterns of restricting freedom of association and expression using broad security laws raise concern that the officials are prosecuting both women only on the basis of their involvement in Kurdish rights and women's rights activism.

"It's become routine for the Iranian government to use vague security charges to detain and intimidate peaceful activists," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch. "Now, they're going further by handing down outrageous sentences."

On June 19, Branch Two of the Revolutionary Court in Sanadaj convicted Abdi on charges of "gathering and colluding to commit a crime against national security." The court ordered that she serve five years in a prison in the city of Germi, in the largely Azeri province of Ardbil.

Branch One of the Revolutionary Court in Sanandaj, which is trying Safarzadeh, has not yet made a decision on her case. The lawyer for both women, Mohammad Sharif, told Human Rights Watch that prosecutors have accused Safarzadeh of the more serious charge of "enmity with God." According to Iranian law, this charge may be punishable with death.

Safarzadeh and Abdi, both 21, have been in detention in the largely Kurdish city of Sanandaj since their arrest on September 25 and October 23, 2007, respectively. Prior to

their arrest, they were active members of the Azarmehr Association of the Women of Kurdistan, a group that organizes capacity-building workshops and sports activities for women in the city of Sanandaj and elsewhere in the Iranian province of Kurdistan. Abdi and Safarzadeh also volunteered with the One Million Signatures Campaign for Equality.

Initially, Safarzadeh spent three months and Abdi spent two months in solitary confinement in a detention center run by the Kurdistan Office of the Ministry of Information before authorities transferred them to the women's unit of the general prison in the city of Sanandaj.

The prosecution of these women follows on the heels of the government's crackdown of women activists, particularly those involved in the One Million Signatures Campaign for Equality. This grassroots campaign aims to raise awareness of Iran's laws that sanction discrimination against women by collecting 1 million signatures throughout the country in an effort to repeal these biased laws. In the last two years, the Iranian authorities have arrested more than 35 activists involved with the campaign and other women's rights projects.

Detentions and prison sentences against Kurdish rights activists have also been on the rise, with the government often accusing activists of having links with armed opposition groups. In February 2008, the government charged and sentenced to death a Kurdish teacher and civil society activist on charges of "endangering national security" through membership with Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

The government typically relies on vaguely defined "security" offenses to prosecute Iranians who attempt to associate or demonstrate. Human Rights Watch documented the government's reliance on these overbroad laws, which violate the internationally guaranteed rights to freedom of speech and association in its most recent report "You Can Detain Anyone for Anything": Iran's Broadening Clampdown on Independent Activism."

Postcard: Istanbul. Persecution drove them underground for centuries, but the ultraliberal Alevis are finally having their say. **Worshipping with Turkey's unconventional Muslim minority**

BY PELIN TURGUT AND NATHAN THORNBURGH

THE LIGHTS NEVER WENT OUT, AND the rumored orgy failed to materialize. Still, from the point of view of Turkey's Sunni Muslim authorities, a hundred other heresies were committed on a recent evening at the Alevi Muslim prayer service in Istanbul's working-class Okmeydani neighborhood. Most noticeable were the girls without head scarves flirting with boys in the entrance hall. Then there was the laxity: with no call to prayer ringing from loudspeakers, worshippers straggled in late, while one of the religious leaders joked about having to compete with TV sitcoms. When the service did start, it was far from the austere, silent genuflection associated with Sunni prayer. There were sermons, call-and-response sessions, a boy-girl hand-washing ritual and traditional music and singing.

And if their style of worship appears out of synch with that of Turkey's conservative Sunni ruling party, consider the Alevis' politics. They are Muslim, but their doctrine is unflinchingly progressive, favoring gay rights, access to abortion, equal opportunity for women, and pacifism. Many of their rituals stem from pre-Islamic times. They don't believe in heaven or hell, don't perform the hajj pilgrimage and don't face Mecca when they pray. God, they like to say, resides in people, not in mountains or stones.

In the current turmoil over Turkey's identity that pits political Islam against staunch secularism in the courts and on the streets, the Alevis, a Turkish offshoot of Shi'ite Islam, offer a third way: a faith-based humanism big enough to incorporate both piety and modernity. That the Alevis are such a large group—anywhere from 15% to 30% of Turkey's population, depending on who's counting—makes it all the more confounding that the ruling AK Party doesn't recognize them as a sep-



Revival The Alevis think their ancient faith can point Turkey in the right direction

arate faith. The Alevis are also up against secular Turkey's greatest irony, the religious-affairs directorate—a massive state-run bureaucracy whose billion-dollar budget pays 88,500 employees and funds mosques, churches and synagogues—which refuses to certify Alevi meeting halls as places of worship. To do so, argues directorate head Ali Bardakoglu, would be heresy. Last year AK Party lawmaker Mustafa Ozbayrak scoffed at Alevi requests for state funds: "If you give the Alevis funding... will you give groups like the Satanists the same tomorrow?"

The disdain of Turkey's Sunni authorities may explain why many Alevis venerate the country's secularist founder, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. In his separation of mosque and state, the Alevis finally found freedom from discrimination. But that eroded under subsequent governments, often in violence. As recently as 1993, 37 people, including prominent Alevi poets, writers and musicians, were killed in a fire set by a fundamentalist Sunni mob in a hotel in eastern Turkey.

For centuries, the Alevi response to

persecution has been to worship in secret while trying to pass as Sunni. Amid the political liberalization that has accompanied Turkey's efforts to join the European Union, however, many Alevis have begun emerging from the shadows. At the Karacaahmet Sultan shrine on the Asian side of the Bosphorus, volunteers teach traditional Alevi music and dance, while pro bono lawyers fight for Alevi rights in court. Last year, an Alevi parent won a landmark education case against the Turkish government at the European Court of Human Rights. The court ruled that the predominantly Sunni curriculum "cannot be considered to meet the criteria of objectivity and pluralism." It criticized the lack of information on Alevi beliefs, rituals and prayer forms, and urged a remedy. The government has so far refused to change the curriculum.

Upstairs at the Karacaahmet Sultan shrine, an Alevi leader named Muharrem Ercan sits behind the desk in his smoke-filled office. He's confident, he says, that the Alevis are on the winning side. "We solved the issue of whether Islam could be tolerant 750 years ago," he says. "It's the rest of Turkey that has to catch up." ■

GLOBAL DISPATCH
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Un nouveau diktat américain pour Bagdad

Washington veut obtenir un droit sur 58 bases, le contrôle de l'espace aérien et l'immunité pour ses militaires. Un accord léonin qui ressemble à celui signé par les Irakiens et les Britanniques en 1930...

DU 26 JUIN AU 2 JUILLET 2008

COURRIER INTERNATIONAL

THE NEW YORK TIMES
New York

Après un débat superficiel, le gouvernement Bush fait actuellement pression sur un gouvernement irakien divisé pour qu'il approuve un accord de sécurité qui risque de grever les relations de Washington avec Bagdad pour les années à venir. L'"alliance stratégique" proposée par le président Bush ressemble étrangement dans l'esprit et dans la lettre au traité que la Grande-Bretagne et l'Irak avaient conclu en 1930 et qui avait provoqué à Bagdad un soulèvement nationaliste, un coup d'Etat pronazi et un pogrom qui annonçait l'élimination de l'antique communauté juive de Bagdad.

Les grandes lignes de l'accord ont été exposées par Ali Allawi, un chiite modéré qui a été ministre des Finances après l'invasion américaine. Dans un article publié par *The Independent*, M. Allawi relève un parallèle troublant entre le projet d'alliance actuel et le traité qui a mis fin au mandat sur l'Irak confié aux Britanniques après la Première Guerre mondiale.

"Le traité accordait à la Grande-Bretagne des privilèges économiques et militaires en échange de sa promesse de mettre fin à son mandat sur le pays, rappelle M. Allawi. Il fut ratifié docilement par le Parlement irakien, mais provoqua un vif mécontentement chez les natio-



▲ Accord de sécurité Irak-Etats-Unis ! Le Premier ministre irakien, Nouri Al-Maliki, s'adressant à un ayatollah : "Un stylo, s'il vous plaît ?" Dessin d'Amjad Rasim paru dans Ashraq Al-Awsat, Londres.

nalistes. La dépendance de l'Irak vis-à-vis de la Grande-Bretagne empoisonna la vie politique irakienne pendant les vingt-cinq années qui suivirent. Les émeutes, troubles, soulèvements et coups d'Etat qui caractérisèrent le paysage politique irakien furent en partie provoqués par des polémiques acharnées sur le traité avec la Grande-Bretagne."

Selon le pacte de 1930, l'Irak devait consulter la Grande-Bretagne pour toute question de sécurité et permettre à celle-ci d'utiliser ses aéroports, ports, chemins de fer et cours d'eau. Deux grandes bases militaires étaient louées aux Britanniques, qui avaient en outre

le droit de stationner des troupes dans tout le pays. Les personnels britanniques ne pouvaient être déférés devant les tribunaux locaux. Près de quarante ans après, l'administration Bush cherche à obtenir un accord étrangement similaire. Même s'il n'a pas le statut de traité (le texte a été habilement rédigé de façon à ne pas être soumis à la ratification du Sénat), le pacte proposé par les Etats-Unis reprend presque à l'identique l'accord de 1930. Selon des articles de presse reposant sur des fuites en provenance du Parlement irakien, il prévoit d'accorder aux Américains un droit sur cinquante-

CONTREPOINT Mieux vaut ressembler à l'Allemagne qu'à l'Iran

Signer un traité avec les Etats-Unis, comme l'Allemagne et le Japon l'ont fait à la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, limite certes la souveraineté de l'Irak. Mais cela lui permettra sans doute d'échapper à la mainmise de Téhéran.

Voici comment se présente aujourd'hui l'agenda du pouvoir à Bagdad : tandis que les sunnites se chargent de débarrasser le pays d'Al-Qaida, les chiites font le nécessaire pour limiter les ingérences iraniennes. S'ils y parviennent, cela fera naître un nouvel Irak dans lequel les groupes confessionnels, au lieu de s'entre-tuer, feront le ménage en leur propre sein. L'amélioration notable de la situation sécuritaire s'explique par le fait que les sunnites ont déjà progressé sur cette voie et que les chiites semblent vouloir aller dans le même sens. Il est clair que le coup qui a été porté au courant sadriste [du religieux radical Moqtada Al-Sadr] a été rude, bien que non fatal, et il a créé un contexte sans précédent

depuis 2003, non seulement sur la scène politique mais également dans la rue : à Basorah mais aussi à Bagdad, où la contrainte du voile a faibli, du moins partiellement, et où les femmes qui osent s'en affranchir sont nombreuses.

Dans ce contexte, il existe un consensus entre tous les officiels et leaders d'opinion chiites, avec quelques nuances à propos de l'alliance militaire [du projet de traité] avec les Etats-Unis. Ils voudraient à peu près tous refuser des paragraphes qu'ils considèrent comme des atteintes à la souveraineté nationale, mais ils sont tous convaincus qu'il faut continuer à négocier pour parvenir à une solution acceptable.

Les-Etats-Unis avaient conclu de semblables traités avec l'Allemagne et le Japon après leur libération respective [leur défaite en 1945]. Ainsi, la question qui se pose aux Irakiens est la suivante : serait-il bien raisonnable de ne pas vouloir ressembler à l'Allemagne ou au Japon et de préférer faire allégeance à l'Iran ?

Les dirigeants chiites irakiens sont beaucoup trop raisonnables pour se laisser conduire à faire des choix irrationnels ou contraires à leurs intérêts pour des raisons idéologiques, confessionnelles ou simplement par haine aveugle de l'Amérique. Et comment en serait-il autrement ? L'adoption du modèle iranien aurait pour seule conséquence une guerre sans pitié et sans perspective en Irak entre sunnites et chiites, entre Arabes et Kurdes.

Les chiites d'Irak sont tous d'accord sur la nécessité de préserver de bonnes relations avec l'Iran, mais à condition que l'Iran reste en Iran. Ils sont partagés entre ceux qui veulent demeurer amis des Iraniens et ceux qui s'en méfient. Les uns voient dans tout rapprochement entre Téhéran et Washington une chance pour la stabilité irakienne, les autres estiment que cela se ferait au détriment de l'Irak. Mais tous sont d'accord pour dire que sortir l'Irak des griffes de l'Iran serait bénéfique pour ce pays grand, fort et riche.

Al-Hayat (extraits), Londres

huit bases militaires et le contrôle de l'espace aérien irakien. Il octroie l'immunité au personnel militaire américain et permet aux responsables américains de détenir des personnes soupçonnées de terrorisme sans l'approbation des autorités irakiennes.

LA COLLUSION DES BRITANNIQUES AVEC L'ÉLITE SUNNITE

L'accord, que Washington pousse Bagdad à signer avant le 31 juillet, remplacerait le mandat des Nations unies qui autorise actuellement l'occupation américaine. L'Irak serait délivré des sanctions du Conseil de sécurité et bénéficierait d'une aide militaire et économique américaine. Il pourrait ainsi recevoir jusqu'à 50 milliards de dollars en placements bloqués qui remontent à la première guerre du Golfe et sont détenus par les Etats-Unis.

Le traité de 1930 a été suivi par l'indépendance de l'Irak [en 1932], puis par une longue série de coups et contre-coups d'Etat, de massacres et de rébellions. Nombre d'Irakiens voyaient d'un mauvais œil la collusion des Britanniques avec l'élite sunnite au pouvoir et le recours aux avions militaires britanniques pour réprimer les soulèvements tribaux. L'immunité juridique dont jouissaient les forces britanniques suscitait un ressentiment encore plus vif.

Le soulèvement nationaliste culmina par un putsch en avril 1941 : des colonels irakiens soutenus par l'Axe profitèrent du mécontentement pour prendre le pouvoir sans effusion de sang. Ce fut le seul coup d'Etat pro-allemand que le Moyen-Orient connut pendant la guerre. Les forces britanniques se ruèrent sur Bagdad pour en

chasser les meneurs, qui s'enfuirent à l'approche des troupes alliées. Pour préserver l'illusion que l'Irak avait été libéré par sa population, les Britanniques se gardèrent de franchir le Tigre et de pénétrer dans le centre de Bagdad. Mais [les 1^{er} et 2 juin 1941], en l'absence de toute autorité d'occupation, des pillages et des émeutes éclatèrent pendant que les juifs de la capitale célébraient la fête de Chavouot. Les troubles durèrent deux jours sans que les soldats britanniques interviennent. Ce pogrom, baptisé Farhoud, fit des centaines de victimes. Il annonçait la destruction totale de la plus grande et plus ancienne communauté juive du Moyen-Orient arabe. La Grande-Bretagne fut donc incapable de maintenir l'ordre pendant la décennie qui a suivi le traité de 1930. L'Histoire se répète, dit le proverbe. On en a aujourd'hui un exemple frappant. **Karl E. Meyer**

Le Monde
Mardi 24 juin 2008

Turquie Nouveau carrefour des stratégies énergétiques

Ce pays méditerranéen accueille l'oléoduc BTP, qui court-circuite la Russie, et le gazoduc Blue Stream, qui irrite Washington. Le projet européen Nabucco doit le traverser, tandis que le projet russe South Stream l'évite. Mais Ankara ne peut se passer du gaz russe

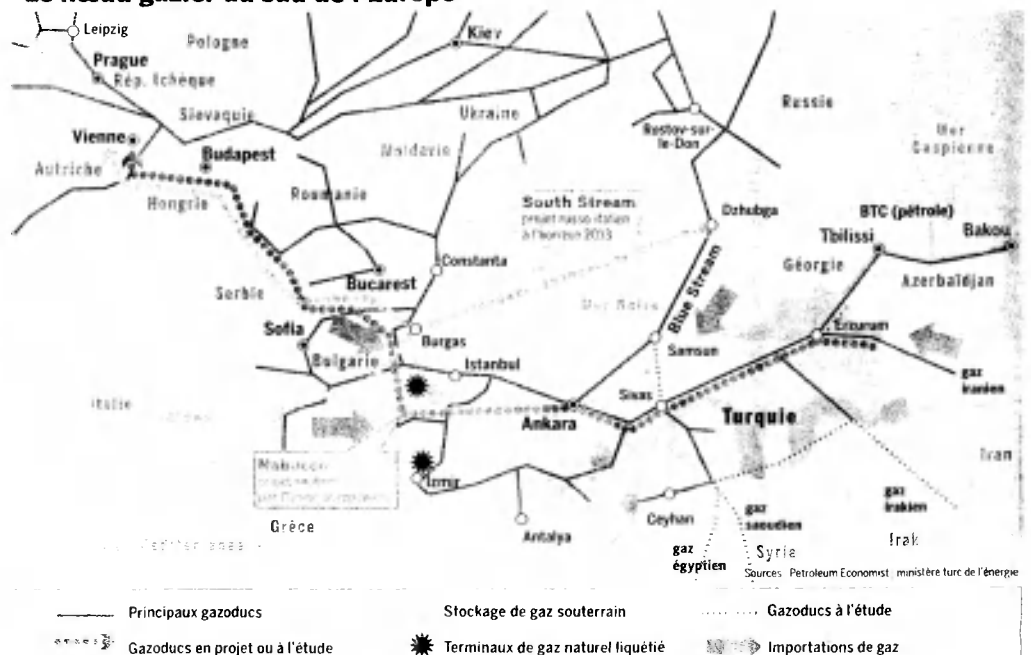
Au carrefour de l'Asie centrale, de la Russie et de l'Europe, la Turquie veut profiter de sa position pour s'imposer comme un pont énergétique entre les producteurs d'hydrocarbures de la région (Russie, Iran, Irak, Azerbaïdjan, Kazakhstan...) et les pays consommateurs d'Europe de l'Ouest. Voisine du Moyen-Orient et des riverains de la mer Caspienne, la Turquie a la moitié des réserves mondiales de gaz à ses portes. Mais les intérêts croisés dans la région obligent Ankara à faire « un grand écart stratégique », résume un officiel français en Turquie.

Les enjeux de l'oléoduc BTC...

L'entrée en service, en 2006, de l'oléoduc Bakou-Tbilissi-Ceyhan (BTC), capable de transporter 1 million de barils par jour, a transformé la Turquie en pays de transit majeur. Le gigantesque terminal de Ceyhan, sur la côte sud, où débouche aussi l'oléoduc en provenance de la région irakienne de Kirkouk, a vocation à devenir une plate-forme. Pour ses détracteurs, le BTC est un « joujou américain ». Financé par un consortium mené par la compagnie britannique BP, il a été largement soutenu par les Etats-Unis, en quête de nouvelles sources sûres.

L'objectif du BTC est aussi de court-circuiter la Russie et de « briser son monopole en faisant sortir le pétrole par d'autres routes », analyse Temel Iskit, ex-ambassa-

Le nœud gazier du sud de l'Europe



leur turc et conseiller pour le BTC dans les années 1990. La Turquie, alliée traditionnelle de Washington, offre un débouché idéal pour l'or noir de la Caspienne. En scellant cette alliance énergétique, l'Azerbaïdjan et la Géorgie se sont affranchis de Moscou, tandis que la Turquie renforçait son importance stratégique. Si les Russes ne s'y opposaient pas, un oléoduc Samsun-Ceyhan pourrait aussi acheminer du pétrole depuis le Kazakhstan.

... du gazoduc Blue Stream...

Ankara n'en garde pas moins un lien serré avec Moscou, d'autant que la Turquie est largement dépendante de la Russie pour son gaz. Fin 2006, Vladimir Poutine, alors président russe, et le premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan ont inauguré en grande pompe le gazoduc Blue Stream passant sous la mer Noire. Un partenariat qualifié de « stratégique » par les deux pays, mais qui irrite Washing-

ton. Une extension de Samsun (Nord) à Ceyhan (Sud) est en projet. Moscou voit dans Blue Stream une arme supplémentaire face aux tentatives de l'Union européen-

La moitié des réserves mondiales de gaz aux portes de la Turquie
Milliers de milliards de mètres cubes



Source : CEDIGAZ (Centre international d'information sur le gaz naturel)

ne (UE) de réduire sa dépendance au gaz russe – notamment en faisant du gazoduc Nabucco un projet « prioritaire ».

... et du projet Nabucco

Car s'il finit par voir le jour, Nabucco, le concurrent du projet russo-italien South Stream, passera aussi par la Turquie en provenance de la Caspienne pour alimenter les pays européens. La compagnie turque Botas participe au consortium européen qui doit financer le projet. « L'idée de ce gazoduc est de ne pas transporter de gaz russe, explique Gareth Winrow, un expert en stratégie de l'université Bilgi d'Istanbul. Mais comment le remplir sans Gazprom ? »

Irak, Égypte : projets incertains

La Turquie a promis de fournir 31 milliards de mètres cubes par an à Nabucco. Un chiffre que les experts jugent irréaliste : le gaz azerbaïdjanais ne représenterait au mieux que 10 milliards de mètres cubes, tout comme le gaz turkmène qui pourrait s'y ajouter à partir de 2009, a annoncé l'UE. A condition de trouver un moyen pour l'acheminer. L'Irak, de son côté, n'envoie que 5 milliards de mètres cubes, et les nouveaux investissements tardent à se concrétiser en raison de l'instabilité qui règne dans le pays. Enfin, un projet existe avec l'Égypte (Arab Gaz Pipe), mais les réserves égyptiennes sont incertaines.

L'Iran incontournable

Cette situation fait de l'Iran, qui détient les deuxième réserves mondiales de gaz, un partenaire incontournable, de la Turquie et de l'Europe. « Ankara se plaint du prix et de la qualité du gaz iranien, mais il n'y a pas vraiment d'alternative », souligne M. Winrow. La Turquie, dont plusieurs compagnies prospectent en Iran, devra composer avec des intérêts géostratégiques souvent contradictoires, Washington faisant pression pour maintenir Téhéran isolé. ■

GUILLAUME PERRIER
(ISTANBUL, CORRESPONDANCE)

Un pays toujours plus gourmand en énergie

ISTANBUL

CORRESPONDANCE

Tirée par une croissance élevée depuis 2002 (5 % par an en moyenne), l'économie de la Turquie (72 millions d'habitants) est devenue très gourmande en énergie, ce qui implique de nouvelles stratégies. De 78,1 millions de tonnes équivalent pétrole (Mtoe) en 2001, la consommation primaire devrait bondir à 153,9 Mtoe en 2010, selon le ministère de l'énergie : un doublement, en moins de dix ans. L'industrie, les transports, mais aussi les foyers turcs ont largement participé à cette hausse.

La production maison de pétrole et de gaz naturel reste symbolique. Quelques modestes gisements d'hydrocarbures fournissent à peine 3 % des besoins. Le charbon, encore très utilisé, représentera un bon quart de la consommation d'énergie en 2010, selon les prévisions. Les grands barrages et les énergies renouvelables se développent, mais ne devraient satisfaire que 9 % des besoins d'ici deux ans. Ankara a aussi lancé un programme de centrales nucléaires censées produire 5 000 MW à partir de 2012. Pétrole et gaz continueront cependant de représenter les deux tiers de la consommation énergétique dans deux ans.

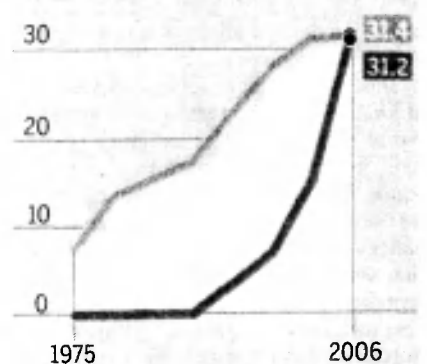
Dépendance à l'égard de la Russie

Le pétrole acheté par la Turquie arrive d'Azerbaïdjan, via l'oléoduc Bakou-Tbilissi-Ceyhan, mais aussi de Libye, d'Arabie saoudite et d'Irak. Le gaz naturel connaît la croissance la plus spectaculaire. En hausse de 74 % depuis 2001, sa consommation devrait dépasser celle du

Une croissance exponentielle

CONSUMMATION TURQUE

■ Pétrole (en milliards de tonnes)
■ Gaz (en milliards de m³)



Source : ministère turc de l'énergie

pétrole en 2013. Inquiet d'une éventuelle pénurie, Ankara a multiplié les contrats d'approvisionnement ces dernières années. Résultat : la Turquie devrait se retrouver avec un trop-plein de gaz naturel d'environ 25 % aux alentours de 2012.

La Russie avec Gazprom est de très loin le premier fournisseur, avec 65 %, et reste donc un partenaire-clé pour Ankara. Gazprom est seul capable de subvenir à des besoins urgents, comme l'hiver dernier, lorsque les coupures de gaz iranien ont obligé la Turquie à appeler Moscou à la rescousse. Le gazoduc Blue Stream, inauguré en 2005, renforce ce lien. Seul importateur de gaz en Turquie, la compagnie Botas fait également venir de l'or bleu d'Iran depuis 2001 et veut diversifier ses sources.

Outre la dépendance russe, le point faible de la Turquie reste sa capacité limitée de stockage, qui obère sa sécurité énergétique. ■

GU. P.

Un argument pour son adhésion à l'Union européenne

La diplomatie turque met en avant son rôle de porte d'entrée des hydrocarbures pour l'Europe parmi ses arguments en vue de son adhésion à l'Union européenne (UE). « Etre un simple importateur d'énergie ne va pas faire entrer la Turquie dans l'UE, estime toutefois l'analyste Gareth Winrow. Mais cela ne va pas non plus affaiblir sa candidature. »

A l'heure où Bruxelles songe à diversifier ses sources d'approvisionnement, notamment en gaz, pour être moins lié à Gazprom, la Turquie se place en alternative. Et la « plaque tournante » souhaite tirer profit de sa position en « revendant au prix fort du gaz à l'Ouest », selon un spécialiste européen à Ankara.

Le gouvernement turc devra, en tout état de cause, clarifier sa position sur le gaz en transit sur son territoire. Que la Turquie crée un hub pour valoriser une partie du gaz sur un marché à court terme n'inquiète pas les Européens. En revanche, « une telle activité d'achat-revente ne saurait en aucun cas concerner les contrats à long terme » souscrits entre un fournisseur d'Azerbaïdjan ou du Kazakhstan et Gaz de France, a prévenu Claude Mandil, ex-directeur exécutif de l'Agence internationale de l'énergie, dans un rapport remis récemment au premier ministre français, François Fillon. Le rôle de la Turquie est important, « mais non incontournable », souligne ce même rapport.



Une explosion blesse 13 soldats dans le sud-est de la Turquie

ANKARA, 23 juin 2008 (Xinhua) -- Une explosion a eu lieu dans une unité militaire dans la province de Gaziantep située au sud-est de la Turquie lundi, blessant 13 soldats des forces turques de sécurité, a rapporté l'agence de presse semi-officielle Anatolie.

Le gouverneur par intérim de Gaziantep, Mehmet Okur, a déclaré que quatre soldats ont été gravement blessés dans cette explosion qui s'est produite dans la ville d'Islihiye, dans la province de Gaziantep.

Les soldats ont été transportés à l'hôpital et l'enquête sur cet incident se poursuit, a-t-il déclaré.

Par ailleurs, les officiels turcs ont indiqué que l'explosion a eu lieu sur un véhicule militaire en patrouille, mais la raison de l'explosion ne peut être encore déterminée.

L'armée turque bombarde périodiquement les positions du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) à la frontière turco-irakienne depuis quelques mois. En février, elle a lancé une incursion de huit jours en Irak.

Le PKK, classé par les Etats-Unis et la Turquie comme groupe terroriste, a pris les armes en 1984 pour créer un Etat dans le sud-est de la Turquie. Plus de 30 000 personnes ont trouvé la mort dans ce conflit long de deux décennies.

AFP

Coup de filet en Europe contre une filière irako-kurde d'immigration

PARIS, 23 juin 2008 (AFP) - Une importante filière irako-kurde d'immigration clandestine vers le Nord de l'Europe a été démantelée lundi lors d'un coup de filet baptisé "Opération Bagdad" mené dans dix pays européens par plus d'un millier de policiers et qui a permis d'interpeller 75 personnes.

Ce réseau est responsable de l'acheminement de centaines de clandestins vers l'Angleterre et les pays scandinaves, par train ou bateau, pour un tarif démarrant à 10.000 euros, selon la justice française.

L'"Opération Bagdad" a été lancée tôt lundi matin, mobilisant 1.300 policiers, simultanément en France, en Allemagne, en Belgique, au Danemark, en Irlande, en Grèce, en Norvège, aux Pays-Bas, en Suède et au Royaume-uni, coordonnée par Europol sur le plan policier et par Eurojust dans le domaine judiciaire.

Une "grosse tête du réseau" figure parmi les 24 personnes interpellées en France, ont précisé des sources proches de la police à Paris. La plupart des interpellations ont été réalisées, pour une dizaine, à Paris et sa banlieue, et dans les régions de Calais, de Cherbourg et du Havre (ouest).

"Ces personnes, âgées de 21 ans à 48 ans, d'origine irakienne, iranienne, marocaine, tunisienne, algérienne, mauricienne, turque et française ont été placées en garde à vue", a indiqué le parquet de Paris dans un communiqué.

En matière de criminalité organisée, les gardes à vue "peuvent être prolongées jusqu'à une durée maximale de 96H00", a-t-on précisé de même source.

Cette opération couronne plus de deux années d'enquête, lancée après que les services français aient été alertés par des renseignements d'Europol et des autorités britanniques.

Deux juges parisiens, Corinne Goetzmann et Patrick Gachon, enquêtent depuis mai 2007 sur ce dossier dans le cadre d'une information judiciaire visant les faits "d'aide à l'entrée et au séjour irrégulier commis en bande organisée" et "d'association de malfaiteurs".

Ces chefs sont passibles de 10 ans d'emprisonnement et de 750.000 euros d'amende en France.

"Les investigations ont mis en évidence l'existence d'une filière transnationale bien structurée d'immigration clandestine de ressortissants irako-kurdes entre l'Irak et un certain nombre de pays du Nord de l'Europe", a expliqué le parquet de Paris.

"Les migrants, en provenance essentiellement du nord de l'Irak, mais également de nationalités iranienne, afghane, pakistanaise, chinoise et bangladaise, gagnaient la France, pays de transit, par la Turquie, la Grèce, et l'Italie", a-t-on précisé de même source

"Selon leur destination finale, le Royaume Uni ou l'Irlande pour une des branches de la filière, les pays scandinaves pour l'autre, ils étaient acheminés par la route, le train et le bateau vers les pays de leur choix, via la Belgique, les Pays-Bas, l'Allemagne et le Danemark", a-t-on ajouté.

"Plusieurs centaines d'immigrants ont ainsi gagné clandestinement divers pays de l'Union Européenne, chacun d'entre eux payant aux organisateurs de ce trafic de 10 à 12.000 euros pour prix de leur voyage, des prix qui pouvaient être sensiblement augmentés pour certains candidats en fonction de leur origine géographique ou ethnique", a conclu le parquet de Paris.

PÉTROLE: LE KURDISTAN IRAKIEN SIGNE DEUX CONTRATS AVEC LE CANADIEN TALISMAN

BAGDAD, 24 juin 2008 (AFP) - Le Kurdistan irakien a annoncé mardi la signature de deux contrats pétroliers avec la compagnie canadienne Talisman Energy malgré les vives protestations de Bagdad, où est examiné un projet de loi fédérale sur le pétrole.

Les contrats ont été signés jeudi dernier entre les responsables de Talisman Energy et le Premier ministre du gouvernement autonome kurde, Nechirvan Barzani, selon un communiqué publié tôt mardi matin.

Une filiale du groupe canadien va acquérir 40% du gisement pétrolier Kalar-Bawanoor. La société canadienne WesternZagros possédait déjà 40% de ce gisement. Les 20% restants appartiendront au gouvernement kurde.

Une seconde filiale de Talisman Energy va mener un programme d'exploration pétrolière de deux ans sur un autre gisement kurde.

"L'accord donne à Talisman une option pour un contrat à long-terme de production d'ici deux ans, dans lequel ils (les Canadiens, ndlr) entreront à hauteur de 60%", selon le communiqué. Les 40% restants demeureront aux autorités kurdes.

Le gouvernement n'a pas précisé le montant de l'investissement de Talisman

Energy. Le groupe canadien va par ailleurs verser 220 millions de dollars pour des projets "sociaux" dans les zones d'exploitation. Les gisements concernés sont proches d'Halabja.

Le gouvernement kurde a déjà signé 15 contrats d'exploration et d'exportation de brut avec 20 compagnies internationales après avoir adopté son propre arsenal législatif en août, déclenchant la colère de Bagdad, qui nie la validité de ces contrats.

Les députés irakiens tardent à approuver une loi sur le pétrole qui vise notamment à cadrer la redistribution des revenus pétroliers entre les 18 provinces irakiennes, un texte que les Etats-Unis considèrent comme crucial pour la stabilisation de l'Irak.

Le ministre du Pétrole, Hussein al-Chahristani, avait dit en février qu'il espérait que la loi serait approuvée avant la fin de l'année, mais les personnes impliquées dans le dossier ont reconnu qu'aucun progrès n'avait été fait. Les observateurs se demandent notamment si la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien, dans le nord du pays, consentira à partager ses revenus pétroliers.

AFP

Berlin met à l'index une télévision kurde émettant depuis le Danemark

24 juin 2008 (AFP) Le ministre allemand de l'Intérieur Wolfgang Schäuble a interdit mardi à une chaîne de télévision kurde émettant depuis le Danemark de diffuser ses programmes en Allemagne, affirmant qu'elle servait la propagande des extrémistes kurdes.

La chaîne Roj TV, dont les programmes sont diffusés par satellite, fait l'apologie du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), organisation de

lutte armée de Kurdes de Turquie, considérée comme terroriste par l'Union européenne (UE), a expliqué le ministre.

"La chaîne contribue de manière durable par son activité au maintien du PKK interdit", a-t-il estimé, affirmant qu'elle cherchait à recruter des

combattants pour le PKK.

Le ministre a également ordonné la fermeture d'une société de production télévisée, VIKO Fernseh Produktion GmbH, dont le siège est à Wuppertal, dans l'ouest de l'Allemagne, qui produisait des émissions pour Roj TV.



Turquie : un soldat tué dans un accrochage avec le PKK

ANKARA, 24 juin 2008 (Xinhua) -- Un soldat turc a été tué mardi dans un accrochage avec des rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatiste) dans le sud-est de la Turquie, a rapporté l'agence de presse semi-officielle, Anatolie.

Le conflit a eu lieu entre les forces de sécurité turques et un groupe de militants du PKK à Dicle dans la province de Diyarbakir (sud-est), selon Anatolie.

Un soldat identifié comme étant Erhan Caliskan a été tué lorsque des re-

belles ont ouvert le feu sur les forces de sécurité.

Ces derniers mois, l'armée turque a périodiquement bombardé et canonné les positions du PKK situées à la frontière turco-irakienne.

Le PKK, considéré par les Etats-Unis et la Turquie comme un groupe terroriste, a entamé en 1984 sa lutte pour la création d'un Etat ethnique dans le sud-est de la Turquie. Plus de 30.000 personnes ont trouvé la mort dans ce conflit de plus de deux décennies.

AFP

TURQUIE: TROIS REBELLES KURDES TUÉS DANS DES COMBATS AVEC L'ARMÉE DANS L'EST

ANKARA, 25 juin 2008 (AFP) - Trois rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ont été tués et un militaire turc blessé mercredi dans des combats dans l'est de la Turquie, a déclaré un responsable local.

L'accrochage est survenu dans une zone montagneuse de Tendürek, dans la province d'Agri, au cours d'une opération de l'armée, a indiqué le gouverneur local Mehmet Cetin, cité par l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Deux des trois rebelles abattus sont des femmes, a-t-il dit, indiquant que ce bilan pourrait s'alourdir.

Un officier de l'armée a été blessé dans les heurts, a ajouté le gouverneur.

L'armée turque a renforcé son action contre le PKK depuis décembre, menant plusieurs raids aériens contre des bases rebelles situées dans le nord de l'Irak. Elle a aussi effectué une incursion terrestre d'une semaine dans le Kurdistan irakien où Ankara affirme que plus de 2.000 rebelles kurdes ont trouvé refuge.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, a entamé en 1984 une lutte séparatiste armée dans le sud-est et l'est anatoliens, à la population en majorité kurde, un conflit qui a fait plus de 37.000 morts.

Le Point

27 juin 2008

Profil - L'homme de fer de la Turquie

Guillaume Perrier (à Istanbul)

Le 30 août, il sera le nouveau chef d'état-major de l'armée turque. La nomination à ce poste d'Ilker Basbug, un général à la réputation de « faucon kémaliste », signifie pour beaucoup que l'aile radicale du pouvoir militaire veut reprendre les choses en main. Agé de 65 ans et passé par plusieurs postes auprès de l'Otan, Basbug commande depuis 2006 l'armée de terre. Adeptes de la manière forte dans la lutte contre les rebelles kurdes du PKK, il est aussi mis en cause pour

ses manœuvres sur la scène politique. Récemment, il a reconnu avoir rencontré secrètement le vice-président de la Cour constitutionnelle, qui veut interdire le parti au pouvoir (AKP). Il a même été soupçonné de préparer le terrain à un coup d'Etat... Pur produit de la bureaucratie laïque turque, le général Basbug est également accusé par la presse islamiste d'être franc-maçon et d'avoir effectué une visite privée au mur des Lamentations à Jérusalem



AFP

IRAK: COMMISSION MIXTE DES AUTORITÉS FÉDÉRALES ET KURDES SUR LE PÉTROLE

ERBIL (Irak), 28 juin 2008 (AFP) - Le gouvernement autonome du Kurdistan irakien et les autorités fédérales ont créé une commission pour trouver un accord facilitant l'adoption par le Parlement irakien d'une loi sur le pétrole, a annoncé samedi le Premier ministre du Kurdistan, Nechirvan Barzani.

La commission, qui comprend le Premier ministre irakien, Nouri al-Maliki, M. Barzani et d'autres responsables fédéraux irakiens et kurdes, doit trouver une "solution commune" à l'épineuse question du partage des revenus tirés de l'exploitation du pétrole dans le pays.

"Cette commission se réunira la semaine prochaine à Bagdad et si nous avons le sentiment qu'il y a également besoin d'une commission technique, elle sera créée", a déclaré le Premier ministre kurde à des journalistes à Erbil, où siège le gouvernement autonome kurde irakien.

MM. Barzani et Maliki se sont rencontrés cette semaine à Bagdad pour évoquer la question pétrolière.

Le gouvernement kurde a déjà signé 17 contrats d'exploration et d'exportation

de brut avec une vingtaine de compagnies internationales après avoir adopté son propre arsenal législatif en août, déclenchant la colère de Bagdad, qui nie la validité de ces contrats.

Les députés irakiens tardent à approuver une loi sur le pétrole qui vise notamment à fixer le cadre de la redistribution des revenus pétroliers entre les 18 provinces irakiennes, un texte que les Etats-Unis considèrent comme crucial pour la stabilisation de l'Irak.

Les observateurs se demandent notamment si la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien, dans le nord du pays, consentira à partager ses revenus pétroliers. M. Barzani a estimé samedi que personne à Bagdad n'avait le droit d'annuler les contrats.

"Certains pensent probablement à Bagdad que nous n'avons pas le droit constitutionnellement de signer ces contrats, a-t-il déclaré.

"Je veux confirmer que ce que nous faisons au Kurdistan est constitutionnellement légal", a ajouté le responsable kurde.



Kurdistan Regional Government

KRG.org - 24 Jun. 2008

KURDISTAN REGION WELCOMES US BUSINESS DELEGATIONS

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) - The Kurdistan Regional Government welcomed two large American business delegations for three days of meetings with local government and business leaders. The delegations from the US Department of Commerce, led by Deputy Secretary John J. Sullivan, and the US Chamber of Commerce include 28 representatives from US companies – the largest American business delegation ever to visit the Kurdistan Region.

The delegations were warmly welcomed in Erbil by Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) officials: Mr Herish Muharram, Chairman of the Investment Board of Kurdistan; and Mr Falah Mustafa Bakir, Head of the Department of Foreign Relations; and Mr Karim Sinjari, Minister of State for the Interior.

To assess the Kurdistan Region's current environment and its needs, the delegations met Deputy Prime Minister Omer Fattah and several ministers, including the ministers for agriculture, electricity and planning.

Ms Nawroz Mawlud Mohamad Amin, the Kurdistan Investment Board's Director-General, said,

"The Kurdistan Region is ripe for investment in many sectors, and we are here to help make the process easier for foreigners as well as locals." She added, "The delegation will also be able to explore business opportunities with local companies, such as members of the Erbil, Suleimaniah and Dohuk Chambers of Commerce."

Prime Minister's Nechirvan Barzani's government has taken steps to make investing in the region easier for foreign businesses. In July 2006 the Kurdistan National Assembly (parliament) passed the Kurdistan Region Investment Law, one of the most liberal investment laws in the Middle East.

Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir, the KRG's Head of Foreign Relations, said, "The KRG has created a safe and secure environment for foreign investors to enter the Iraqi market. The presence of the US delegations make clear that the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is open for business. We welcome and encourage US investment in our region and are eager to explore how we can deepen and expand our economic ties with the United States."

The two groups will meet local and international business

representatives and tour sites in or near Erbil, the capital city. The KRG has previously hosted business delegations from Italy, Austria, Sweden, Japan, the UK, Poland and other countries.



Kurdistan Regional Government

KRG.org - 25 Jun. 2008

KRG and Korea National Oil Corporation sign new petroleum contracts

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) - Dr Ashti Hawrami, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Minister for Natural Resources, today announced that the KRG has awarded two production sharing contracts (PSCs) and approved the assignment of Third Party Interests in a number of existing contracts to Korea National Oil Corporation (KNOC), the oil and gas company owned by the Government of the Republic of Korea.

The announcement comes a day after the KRG announced two other petroleum contracts, with Talisman Energy Inc.

Dr Hawrami said, "We are very pleased to strengthen our relationship with KNOC and with the Korean people who as part of the coalition forces have contributed to the stability of our region since 2004. The growing presence of KNOC followed by significant Korean private sector infrastructure investment will secure our mutual prosperity."

The contracts were signed by KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and Dr Hawrami, together with KNOC representatives, headed by Dr Seong-Hoon Kim, Executive Vice President of New Ventures & Exploration, in Erbil on Saturday 21 June. The contractual terms had been approved after the Memorandum of Agreement reached between the parties during an official visit by the KRG delegation, headed by Prime Minister Barzani, to Seoul in February of this year.

"We are delighted to expand on our existing operations in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and to underpin our access to significant sources of potential oil reserves to secure the energy needs of our country," said Dr. Kim. "The region is in need of economic development and the implementation of basic infrastructure projects, which the Korean involvement will aim to support."

Brief description of the project

Sangaw South and Qush Tappa

KNOC will take a 60% interest in the Sangaw South Block, with the remaining 40% participation interest held by the KRG. KNOC will also take an 80% participation interest in the Qush Tappa Block (published in some KRG block maps as "Block K26"), with the remaining 20% participation interest held by the KRG.

Third Party Interest assignments

KNOC will receive Third Party Interest allocations of 15% in an existing PSC comprising four blocks containing two discoveries (Hawler Block), 20% interest in another PSC (Sangaw North Block) and a further 20% in the Bazian Block, which was previously awarded to a consortium of Korean oil companies led by KNOC.

Capacity-building and infrastructure support

KNOC has agreed to allocate some of its income from the share of its profits from the oil finds to support a large programme of infrastructure and capacity-building in the Kurdistan Region. This programme was agreed between the KRG and a consortium of Korean infrastructure companies in Seoul, also in February this year. The programme is designed to solve some of Kurdistan's pressing problems related to power generation and distribution, water purification, and the building of a major highway linking the three main provinces of Kurdistan. The initial investment related to this programme will be in the region of 2 billion US dollars.

Revenue from the contracts

The contracts agreed with KNOC are based on the KRG's published model production sharing contract and commercial terms and conditions. As with all Kurdistan Region petroleum operations, the contracts are governed by the Kurdistan Region Oil and Gas Law, which entered into force in August 2007.

KNOC will be entitled to petroleum cost recovery from the contracts and to receive a share of the profit oil, based on a formula defined in the KRG Oil and Gas Law and the KRG's published commercial terms.

With respect to the Government share of profit oil, the KRG has volunteered a commitment to forward petroleum revenues from the Kurdistan Region for Iraq-wide revenue sharing when a federal revenue sharing law is in place. The KRG is bound by law to the principles of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

Case to outlaw pro-Kurdish party

By Sarah Rainsford
BBC News, Istanbul

Turkey's chief prosecutor has given evidence to the constitutional court, in a case aimed at closing down the country's pro-Kurdish political party.

The Democratic Society Party (DTP) - which has 20 seats in the parliament - is accused of ties to the outlawed Kurdish separatist group, the PKK.

The case was opened last November when clashes between the PKK and Turkish troops had intensified.

The DTP asked for extra time and has until September to prepare its case.

The same prosecutor is also seeking the closure of Turkey's governing AK Party, claiming it is undermining the secular state.

'Backwards step'

The chief prosecutor presented his case in just 30 minutes.

He claims that the DTP is acting on direct orders from the armed PKK, or Kurdistan Workers' Party, which it refuses to denounce as a terrorist organisation.

The prosecutor describes the party as a focus for separatist activities. He has asked the court to close it down - and ban dozens of its members from politics.

The DTP insists its only aim is to work for a peaceful solution to the Kurdish conflict, which is now more than two decades old, and has already claimed almost 40,000 lives.

The DTP has 20 seats in the current parliament - the first time a pro-Kurdish party has been represented in national politics in over a decade.

Almost all its predecessors were closed by the courts. DTP officials describe Turkey as a "graveyard for political parties" and call the closure case a step backwards for democracy.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has called on the party to label the PKK a terrorist group.

But he also warned that closing down the DTP risks forcing more people up into the mountains - and into the ranks of the PKK.

United Press International

Kirkuk status looms over Iraqi elections

ERBIL, Iraq, June 26, 2008 (UPI) -- Iraqi parliamentary speaker Mahmoud al-Mashhadani said Thursday the status of Kirkuk needed to be settled to avoid delaying the fall provincial elections.

Iraq is scheduled to hold provincial elections Oct. 1, but disputes among ethnic Arabs, Kurds and Turkomen over the northern city of Kirkuk threaten that date.

Kurdish officials oppose a measure calling for the division of Kirkuk into four electoral districts along sectarian lines, saying the move threatens regional solidarity, The Kurdish Globe reports.

The Kurds also say any move to hold elections cannot be considered until all elements of constitutional Article 140, a measure reversing the Saddam-era policy of "Arabization" of the region, are upheld.

Mashhadani in a statement "demanded all parliamentary blocks either all agree to hold the election or postpone it."

British diplomat and adviser to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad Thomas Krajicki said U.S. officials and the United Nations are working toward a resolution on the Kirkuk issue in order for the elections to take place.

"We support holding elections in Kirkuk on schedule, and we do not want them postponed, because the city of Kirkuk is important to all Iraqis and neighboring countries and nations of the world," he said.

The Kurdistan Regional Government, however, described such a move as interference, calling it largely a matter for the Iraqi people to settle.

United Press International

Iraqi military unable to hold Mosul

MOSUL, Iraq, June 26, 2008 (UPI) -- Iraqi security forces are unable to maintain order following operations targeting al-Qaida fighters in the northern city of Mosul, officials said Thursday.

U.S. and Iraqi authorities view Mosul, the provincial capital of Ninawa, as one of the last remaining al-Qaida strongholds in Iraq. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki ordered a military crackdown in the northern city in May.

The gains from these operations, however, have disintegrated as militant groups re-entered the city and gunmen reportedly are roaming the streets in force, the Iraqi daily Azzaman reported.

Ninawa officials said there was an insufficient number of Iraqi troops to

maintain security following operations in May.

"Residents are hopeless once again after shortly enjoying the faint light at the end of the tunnel," officials said on condition of anonymity.

Officials said they are also concerned about the presence of the Kurdish Peshmerga force, which guards their political districts in the largely Arab city.

At least 18 people died and nearly 80 were wounded in a car bomb attack in Mosul Thursday that targeted the offices of Ninawa Provincial Governor Duraid Kashmula.

Jun. 26, 2008

The Chosun Ilbo

Korea Secures 1.9 Billion Barrels of Kurdistan Oil

AKorean consortium led by the Korea National Oil Corporation will develop a super-size oil field with an estimated deposit of 1.9 billion barrels of oil and build social infrastructure in the Kurdish Autonomous Region in northern Iraq. It looks as though Korean businesses will after all take a brisk part in Iraq's postwar reconstruction in the area.

According to the Ministry of Knowledge Economy on Wednesday, Kurdish Regional Government Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and a senior executive of the KNOC

officially signed a contract on the development of eight oil blocks and the sharing of oil production in Irbil in the northern Iraqi region of Kurdistan.

As a result, the KNOC obtained the right to develop two undeveloped blocks presumed to have oil deposits and to take smaller stakes in six other blocks in Kurdistan. The total estimated deposit in these eight blocks is approximately 7.2 billion barrels, of which the KNOC has secured about 1.9 billion, the equivalent of two years' consumption for all of South Korea.

The KNOC said the Kurdish oil blocks are the largest oil fields Korea has ever developed overseas. Test production is to begin in three to four years.

The two sides also signed an agreement for a package deal that includes crude oil development and social infrastructure construction in the Kurdish region. The SOC consortium will consist of seven Korean construction companies, including Hyundai Engineering and Construction, Ssangyong Engineering and Construction, and Kolon Engineering and Construc-



tion. They will build infrastructure worth US\$2.1 billion, including electrical works (\$700 million) and water supply and sewers (\$1.4 billion).

Euro 2008: The Kurds taunted the Turks with chants of "Deutschland! Deutschland"

REUTERS

BERLIN, Germany June 26, 2008

— , Berlin police reported no serious trouble immediately after Germany's thrilling 3-2 Euro 2008 semi-final win over Turkey on Wednesday in a match watched by hundreds of thousands of Germans and Turks around the city.

A police spokeswoman said there had been 11 arrests for minor offences at the 'fan mile' in the centre of the city, where an estimated 500,000 people had gathered to watch the eagerly-anticipated game on three giant screens.

Minor scuffles broke out after Turkey took the lead in the first half of the match being played in Basel, Switzerland, but police quickly calmed the situation, Reuters Television pictures showed.

Jubilant Germans took to the streets on foot and in cars after the final whistle, waving black, red and gold flags and celebrating Germany's place in Sunday's final in Vienna against Spain or Russia, who play on Thursday.

Berlin: The Kurds taunted the Turks with chants of "Deutschland! Deutschland" and "Turks terrorists!" while the Turkish side responded with "One Turkey!"

In the heavily Turkish Kreuzberg district of Berlin, Germans and Turks partied past midnight, chanting the names of their nations, beating drums, whistling and singing.

About 2.7 million people of Turkish origin live in Germany. www.ekurd.net more than in any other country in western Europe, and the flags of both countries have been fluttering side-by-side from buildings and cars since the start of the three-week tournament.

There was some tension between Turks and Germany-supporting Kurds in Kreuzberg after the match, but riot police moved to separate the two groups and they quickly dispersed.

The Kurds taunted the Turks with chants of "Deutschland! Deutschland" and "Turks terrorists!" while the Turkish side responded with "One Turkey!"

"This has nothing to do with soccer, this is just politics," said one young Turkish woman at the scene, adding that the Kurds were supporters of the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK.

The PKK is considered a 'terrorist' organization by Ankara, U.S., the PKK continues to be on the blacklist list in EU despite court ruling which overturned a decision to place the Kurdish rebel group PKK and its political wing on the European Union's terror list.

The PKK demanded Turkey's recognition of the Kurds' identity in its constitution and of their language as a native language along with Turkish in the country's Kurdish areas, the party also demanded an end to ethnic discrimination in Turkish laws and constitution against Kurds, ranting them full political freedoms.

Turkey refuses to recognize its Kurdish population as a distinct minority. It has allowed some cultural rights such as limited broadcasts in the Kurdish language and private Kurdish language courses with the prodding of the European Union, but Kurdish politicians say the measures fall short of their expectations.

Television viewers of the match across Germany lost the picture for about five minutes midway through the second half, www.ekurd.net which broadcaster ZDF said was due to a power outage in Vienna.

The Austrian capital, which was hit by an electrical storm, is the hub of TV operations for Euro 2008.

The picture went blank briefly several more times but then ZDF solved the problem by tapping into a Swiss TV signal.



Berlin: The Kurds taunted the Turks with chants of "Deutschland! Deutschland" and "Turks terrorists!" while the Turkish side responded with "One Turkey!"

KURDISHGLOBE

26 June 2008

Kurdish stance on provincial elections in Iraq Kurdish participants draw a hard line on provincial-elections issue.

By The Glohe- Erbil

Iraqi Parliament speaker Mahmud al-Mashhadani calls for Kirkuk problem to be solved to avoid postponement of provincial elections. The provincial elections, which are supposed to be held by October 1, have created a fierce debate among Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen regarding Kirkuk province. In a meeting with the heads of all parliamentary blocks, Iraqi Parliament speaker Mahmud al-Mashhadani demanded that the settlement of differences on the issue of Kirkuk be expedited in order to avoid the possibility of postponement of the upcoming local elections. Later in a statement, al-Mashhadani "demanded all parliamentary blocks either all agree to hold the election or postpone it."

Arab and Turkmen demanded Kirkuk be divided into four electoral parts according to the number of components therein as part of provincial elections. The Kurdistan Coalition (KC), however, firmly rejected dividing the province into

electoral districts, saying such a proposal sought only to partition the country and disintegrate political unity. The KC also refused to hold new elections unless constitutional Article 140 concerning Kirkuk is fully implemented. Nevertheless, Arab and Turkmen representatives stressed the necessity of holding new elections in October, and rejected the results of the 2005

elections, which they say are not precise.

U.S. embassy supports election in Kirkuk A senior advisor to the United States embassy to Baghdad, Thomas Krajiski, visited Kirkuk this week and spoke with the representatives of Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen. "We support holding elections in Kirkuk on schedule, and we do not want them



postponed because the city of Kirkuk is important to all Iraqis and neighboring countries and nations of the world," said Krajiski. "The United States of America and the United Nations are seeking to find a solution to the problem of Kirkuk that satisfies all parties." He refused to comment on what kind of solution he had in mind. Krajiski met with representatives of the governorate of Kirkuk, the Kurdish Brotherhood list, and then with the Iraqi Turkmen Front list as well as the Arab list to understand their points of view about Kirkuk and the elections. But Krajiski's statement displeased Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Minister of Extra-Regional Affairs Muhaminad Ihsan, who described it as "interference."

"The United States has no right to interfere in this issue because it is relevant to Iraqis," Ihsan stated. "We aren't saying the elections shouldn't be held, but we demand the implementation of Article 140 [first]. We do not accept interference into this issue either by Ameri-

cans or Iraqis."

Kurdistan list seeks seats in Diyala and Mosul provinces Kurdistan political parties said they will participate in the October 1 provincial elections in Ninewa and Diyala provinces as one united list in order to win many

seats on Diyala and Mosul provincial councils. Khasro Goran, Mosul deputy governor and head of Kurdistan Democratic Party's office in Ninewa province, said he believes the Kurdistan list will win the majority of seats in the Ninewa province council. Goran stated that all

the Kurdistan political parties will join the one list, known as the Ninewa Brotherhood List. The political parties include Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) headed by Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, Kurdistan Democratic Party headed by Kurdistan Region President

Massoud Barzani, Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), Kurdistan Communist Party, Iraqi Communist Party, and Christian political parties.

Telegraph

June 26, 2008

Germany's Kurds and Turks bring their fight to football

By Harry de quetteville BERLIN, Germany

Well, the German team has moved one step closer to its inevitable victory in Euro 2008, but my heart really went out to the Turkish fans in Berlin last night.

I was watching the game in Kottbusser Tor in Kreuzberg, the beating heart of Turkish support in the German capital. Amidst the beer and banter and jollity, there was no sign of trouble with any of the German fans. Well, not quite.

But there was one bunch of Germany supporters who were determined to wind up their rivals. They were kind of uber fans, over-dressed from head to toe in German colours, screaming in a sinisterly patriotic way every time Germany broke for goal and generally baiting the Turks. Neo-Nazis? Nah. They weren't German at all. They were Kurdish.

Yes, on a somewhat grimy esplanade outside the fast food joints of Kreuzberg, football had become the latest battleground of Kurdish separatism.

A chum of mine, inquiring at the nearest kebab joint, discovered that some Turks considered this a disgraceful "provocation". And frankly, given the level of baiting, I was fairly sure that a fight would break out. In England, among fans fuelled by many pre-match pints, I'm sure it would have.

But under the watchful eye of quite a few burly police, who managed to combine looking terrifying with extreme good manners ("Oh, I'm terribly sorry," said one as I attempted to move through a little police cordon to retrieve my bike, "of course. Right this way.") there was no violence.

But there has been. Last year, as Turkey prepared to send in its army into northern Iraq on a campaign against the PKK Kurdish separatists, Turkish and Kurdish expats in Berlin staged a series of ambushes and pitched battles of their own.

At the time Spiegel produced a great article explaining

the in and outs of the various factions in Germany, and about the millions that Kurds in Germany raise for their cause back home.

This week, German interior minister Wolfgang Schaueble banned a Kurdish TV station here that he described as a mouthpiece for the PKK, which tried to "recruit guerilla fighters for armed conflict with Turkey".

Ahead of last night's game, much was written (including by me) about football's capacity to help bridge divides between communities. It is the sporting equivalent of earthquake diplomacy, which has done much to bring Greece and Turkey closer, and even China and Japan.

But it's foolish to pretend that the game can't also focus the enduring, bitter enmity between peoples. Watching those several dozen Kurds last night, dreaming of one homeland but dressed top-to-tail in the colours of another, was reminder enough of that.

REUTERS

Four Turkish soldiers wounded as Kurdish PKK guerrillas attack convoy of vehicles

DIYARBAKIR, June 27, 2008 - Kurdish Southeastern region of Turkey, — A Turkish driver was killed and four Turkish soldiers injured when Kurdish PKK guerrillas opened fire on a convoy of vehicles in mainly Kurdish southeast Turkey on Thursday, a security source said.

The source, www.ekurd.net who declined to be named, said the Turkey's Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) rebels opened fire on the convoy of civilian minibuses bringing soldiers back from an operation in the restive southeast.

The army responded with a fresh operation against the guerrillas in the provinces of Diyarbakir and neighbouring Bingol.

Over 39,000 Turkish soldiers and Kurdish PKK guerrillas have been killed since 1984 when the Turkey's Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) took up arms for self-rule in the country's mainly Kurdish southeast of Turkey. A large Turkey's Kurdish community openly sympathise with the Kurdish PKK rebels.

The PKK demanded Turkey's recognition of the Kurds' identity in its constitution and of their language as a native language along with Turkish in the country's Kurdish areas, the party also demanded an end to ethnic discrimination in Turkish laws and constitution against Kurds, ranting them full political freedoms.

The PKK is considered a 'terrorist' organization by Ankara, U.S., the PKK continues to be on the blacklist list in EU despite court ruling which overturned a decision to place the Kurdish rebel group PKK and its political wing on the European Union's terror list.

Turkey refuses to recognize its Kurdish population as a distinct minority. It has allowed some cultural rights such as limited broadcasts in the Kurdish language and private Kurdish language courses with the prodding of the European Union, but Kurdish politicians say the measures fall short of their expectations.

AP Associated Press

Kurdish regional leader stands by oil deals

Jun. 28, 2008 By SAMEER N. YACOUB - Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD --The prime minister of Iraq's self-ruled Kurdish region said Saturday that oil deals unilaterally signed by the Kurds with foreign companies will stand despite opposition from the Iraqi central government.

The Shiite-led government in Baghdad considers any deals the Kurds have signed illegal since the country has not yet completed a new national oil law. Kurdish officials claim these contracts are in line with the Iraqi constitution.

Prime Minister Nechervan Barzani said the more than 20 production-sharing contracts the Kurds have signed with international oil companies since they drafted their own oil and gas law in August 2007 are "irreversible."

"Anyone who wants to put off these deals is a dreamer," he said in the Kurdish regional capital of Irbil.

Kurdish and Iraqi government officials ended talks this past week in Baghdad to try to settle their differences over a proposed new oil law but made little progress.

Barzani said the two groups have agreed to set up a committee headed by Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki that will try to reach a final solution on the oil deals signed by the Kurds.

Barzani's comments are expected to deepen further the rift with the central government over the issue.

Iraqi political factions have been at loggerheads since February 2007 over the law that would set rules for foreign investment in Iraq's oil industry and determine how oil revenues will be shared among Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds.

Major obstacles include a dispute over the rights of regional administrations to negotiate contracts with foreign oil firms and who has the final say in managing oil and gas fields.

The Iraqi Oil Ministry has threatened to blacklist companies that sign deals with the Kurds, but that has not prevented firms from working with the Kurdish government.

On Wednesday, the Kurds announced a new package of oil deals with South Korea's state oil company.

Iraq has an estimated 115 billion barrels of oil and some 112 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves, the government says.

The Kurds, who control three northern provinces, sell the roughly 10,000 barrels of oil per day they produce to the domestic market since their region has no coastline to transport the resources.

Iraqi Christians' secret: Protection money to insurgents

By Andrew E. Kramer

MOSUL, Iraq: Like priests all over the world, Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho, the leader of the Chaldean Christians in this ancient city, gathered alms at Sunday Mass. But for years, the crumpled pile of multicolored Iraqi dinars went into an envelope that was put into the hands of a man who had threatened to kill him and his entire congregation.

"What else could he do?" asked the archbishop's cousin, Ghazi Rahho. "He tried to protect the Christian people."

U.S. military officials now say that, as security began to improve around Iraq last year, the 65-year-old archbishop stopped paying the protection money, just one sliver of the larger shadow of violence and persecution that has forced hundreds of thousands of Christians to flee from Iraq.

That decision, the officials say, may be why the archbishop was kidnapped in February. Two weeks later, his body

was found in a shallow grave outside Mosul, the biblical city of Nineveh.

Rahho was among the highest-profile Iraqi Christians to die in the war so far. He was mourned by President George W. Bush and Pope Benedict XVI, though his role as a conduit for protection money paid by the Chaldean Christians to insurgents had not been disclosed.

Those payments, U.S. military officials and Iraqi Christians said, reached their peak from 2005 to 2007 and grew into a source of financing for the insurgency. They thus became a secret, shameful and extraordinary complication in the lives of Iraq's Christians and their leaders.

"People deny it, people say it's too complex, and nobody in the international community does anything about it," said Andrew White, the Anglican vicar of Baghdad. Complicating the issue, he said, is that some of the protec-

tion money came from funds donated by Christians abroad to help their co-religionists in Iraq.

Yonadam Kanna, a Christian lawmaker in the Iraqi Parliament, said, "All Iraqi Christians paid." For more than 1,000 years, northern Iraq has been shared by people who for the most part believe and worship differently: Turkmen, Kurds, Yazidis, Sunni and Shiite Arabs and Assyrian Christians, of whom the Chaldeans are the largest denomination.

Since the time of the Prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam, Muslims in the Middle East permitted that diversity in part through a special



Safin Hamed/Agence France-Presse

Iraqi Christians carrying the coffin of Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho in Kremtis in March. Rahho, who had denounced protection payments, was kidnapped and found dead.

tax on Jews and Christians. The tax was called a *jizya*, which is the name the insurgents chose to cloak extortion from Christians.

Officials say the demands ranged from a few hundred dollars to a few thousand dollars per male member of the household, per month. In many cases, Christian families drained their savings and went into debt to pay.

Insurgents also raised money by kidnapping priests. The ransoms, often paid by the congregations, typically ran as high as \$150,000, according to several priests and lay Christians.

One paradox is that Mosul, long the seat of Iraqi Christianity, also became what was called the last urban stronghold of Sunni insurgents. Another, more painful one, is that many of the remaining 700,000 Christians in Iraq paid to save their lives, knowing full well the money would be used for bombs and weapons to take the lives of others.

Rahho preached peace in his sermons. How he became a financier of the insurgency is a complex question. Part of the answer lies in the unraveling local politics of northern Iraq under the occupation.

The north, in all its ethnic and religious diversity, was initially calm. But it crumbled into mayhem after the U.S. Marine Corps assault on Fallujah, west of Baghdad, in 2004 forced northward leaders of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, the Sunni insurgent group that U.S. intelligence describes as foreign-led.

Christians, seen as allied with the American invaders, became a target of

attacks. "Leave or die" notes began appearing on their doorsteps.

"Anytime the Western countries go to war in the Middle East, it becomes a religious war," said Rosie Malek-Yonan, the author of "The Crimson Field," a history of the 1914-1918 massacre of Assyrians during World War I.

Malek-Yonan, who testified on the issue of Christians' safety in Iraq at a U.S. congressional hearing in 2006, accused the U.S. Army of failing to protect the Christians out of concern that special attention to this minority would play into the hands of insurgent propagandists.

Instead, the task of protecting Christian neighborhoods in Mosul and villages on the surrounding Nineveh Plain fell to the Kurdish *pesh merga* militia and later to Kurdish-dominated units of the Iraqi Army.

The Kurds, however, have their own agenda: expanding the borders of their region. Kurds are claiming five disputed districts in Nineveh Province, including two that were historically Christian.

Malek-Yonan and other experts accuse Kurdish commanders of depriving the Christians of security in an effort to tilt the demographics in favor of Kurds. The expected result, she said, was an exodus of hundreds of thousands of Christians from Iraq. At least hundreds have been killed.

Kurdish officials deny that they failed to protect Christians. "The Kurdish Iraqi forces in Mosul do their job without differentiation between sects, religion or nationality," said Mohammed Ehssan, a minister for external affairs in



Iraqis attending a Mass at the Sacred Heart Chaldean Church in Baghdad.

Chaldeans are the largest denomination among the country's Assyrian Christians.

the Kurdish Regional Government.

Still, the Christian population of Iraq has fallen to roughly 700,000 today from a prewar estimate of 1.3 million.

The jizya was collected and paid by Jewish and Christian leaders to insurgents operating on the west bank of the Tigris River. Rahho, according to Kanna, the Christian lawmaker, made the payments on behalf of the Christians living in eastern neighborhoods of Mosul. He would have been an obvious choice: He had spent nearly his entire life in Mosul and was well known.

"He was the link," Kanna said.

The archbishop's cousin, Ghazi Rahho, characterized the role as less central and emphasized the life-and-death nature of the choice to pay to save the lives of the parishioners. And the archbishop was certainly not the only person paying.

"We all paid," said one Assyrian Orthodox priest here who did not want his name published for fear of retribution from insurgents. "We were afraid."

By several accounts, the money changed hands quietly, according to a simple mechanism.

A man who introduced himself as Abu Huraita, and who sometimes said he represented Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, made menacing telephone calls, the Assyrian priest said.

"He said, 'I need money, I need money, if you do not give us money, I will kill you,'" the priest said.

He said he paid 10 million Iraqi dinars, or about \$8,000, over three years, until last winter, when the U.S. Army reinforced its garrison in Mosul with the Third Armored Cavalry Regiment. Military operations increased in the city.

The American units built neighborhood forts and traffic control points that disrupted the insurgents' movements. The racket started to unravel.

During the fighting last winter, the Assyrian priest said, word trickled out that U.S. forces had killed Abu Huraita.

Many church leaders used the death of this contact to halt payments. Among them, perhaps most prominently, was Rahho. He gave a speech on television in January denouncing the payments and saying that he would no longer make them.

A month later, on Feb. 29, he was kidnapped by gunmen after praying at the Holy Spirit Cathedral. They shot and killed his driver and two guards and bundled him into the trunk of a car. He managed to reach his cellphone and call his church. He implored them not to pay a ransom that would finance violence, church officials said.

Lieutenant Colonel Eric Price, an adviser to the Iraqi Army units in eastern Mosul, said Rahho, a diabetic, probably died from a lack of medication before his release could be negotiated.

In fact, the church had opened ransom talks. The price, never paid, was quoted at \$1 million and then \$2 million.

Ahmed Ali Ahmed, identified as a member of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, was captured, tried and sentenced to death for the kidnapping.

Bomb kills 3 U.S. soldiers

By Richard A. Opiel Jr.

BAGHDAD: Three U.S. soldiers and an interpreter were killed by a roadside bomb in Nineveh Province, in the second large explosion to strike the Mosul region of Iraq in a day, providing further evidence that Sunni Arab militants remained very active in the northern city despite recent Iraqi military operations.

Few details of the attack were released by the U.S. military, which said that an improvised explosive device had killed the soldiers and interpreter at about 10:45 p.m. Tuesday. At least 25 U.S. service members have been killed in Iraq this month, compared with 19 in May, according to Icasualties.org, a Web site that tracks deaths.

Violence has dropped in Mosul in recent months, but according to officials knowledgeable about the fighting, many of the city's most fearsome militants have been pursued by U.S. special operations forces operating in secret rather than Iraqi troops.

The attack on the soldiers Tuesday night followed a bombing at a Mosul police station earlier in the day that killed one police officer and a boy. On Wednesday morning, the U.S. military command released a statement increasing the casualty list from the police station bombing, saying that 90 people had been wounded in the blast, instead of the 70 initially reported by Iraqi security officials.

The statement said the blast had been caused by a car bomb and carried out by Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, the largely homegrown Sunni insurgent group. The statement offered no explanation of why the military believed Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia had been responsible for the attack and not any of the other Sunni extremist and pro-Saddam groups that still operate in the city.

diers to secure postwar Iraq, about twice as many as were deployed.

But that was not what Franks and the Bush administration had in mind. In an April 16 visit to Baghdad, Franks instructed his officers to be prepared to reduce forces rapidly during an "abbreviated period of stability operations," the study notes.

Asked about the decision to establish a new headquarters, Franks told the army historians that he had told the Pentagon what was needed and that it

was the Defense Department's responsibility to ensure that the headquarters was rapidly installed.

He said he told the Pentagon leadership that a new headquarters was needed and that it was up to them to "figure it out."

Sanchez, who has retired from the army and has published a book about his time in Iraq, told historians that his new command was hampered by staff shortages and by the failure to coordinate the transfer of responsibilities to

his new headquarters. "There was not a single session that was held at the command level to hand off or transition anything," he said.

Wallace told historians that the shift to a new headquarters involved a complicated transfer of responsibilities at a critical time. "You can't take a tactical headquarters and change it into an operational headquarters at the snap of your fingers," he said. "It just doesn't happen."

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune June 30, 2008

Support for Iran resistance group

Thousand at rally near Paris call for end to terror listings

The Associated Press

PARIS: Thousands of supporters of an Iranian opposition group called on the European Union and the United States to remove the organization from terror blacklists at a large weekend rally outside Paris.

The National Council of Resistance of Iran — an umbrella group based in Paris that includes the blacklisted People's Mujahedeen, or PMOI — held the rally at an exhibition center in the northern suburb of Villepinte just days after Britain removed the group from its list of banned terrorist organizations.

A leader of the National Council, Maryam Rajavi, said the status of the member group in the United States and the EU was hindering its ability to fight for regime change in Iran.

In a speech at the rally Saturday, she called the terrorist labels "unjust."

"Do not deprive the world of the most effective means to combat the religious fascism and terrorism," Rajavi said. "Instead, side with those who can bring the Iranian people freedom."

Although the People's Mujahedeen participated in the Islamic Revolution in Iran, it later became opposed to the clerical government. Members of the group moved to Iraq in the early 1980s and opposed the Iranian government from there until the United States invaded Iraq in 2003.

American troops have since disarmed thousands of members of the group, which says that it renounced violence several years ago.

The National Council that said more than 70,000 people had attended the rally, including many bused in from neighboring countries in Europe. Some participants arrived from the United States, Canada and countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa, it said. There was no independent confirmation of the organization's crowd estimate.

British lawmakers removed the People's Mujahedeen from the country's terror list last Monday, giving it more freedom to organize and raise money in Britain.



Mehdi Fedouach/AFP

A woman at the rally wearing a picture of the National Council of Resistance of Iran leader, Maryam Rajavi.

Fifteen British lawmakers came to France for the rally, including former Home Secretary David Waddington, organizers said.

Waddington said in a speech at the rally that the British decision was "an important step" and that he had attended to "celebrate." "Now the PMOI can get on with its work," he said later in an interview by telephone.

■ Iran doubts an Israeli attack

The Iranian foreign minister said Sunday that he did not believe Israel was in a position to attack Iran over its nuclear program, Reuters reported from Tehran. "They know full well what the consequences of such an act would be," Foreign Minister Manoucher Mottaki said.

He was speaking a day after the head of the Revolutionary Guards was quoted as saying Iran that would im-

pose controls on shipping in the Gulf oil route if Iran was attacked and warned regional states of reprisals if they took part.

Speculation about a possible attack on Iran has risen since The New York Times reported this month that Israel had practiced such a strike.

Mottaki said Israel was dealing with the consequences of its 2006 war with Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon and suffering a "crisis of deepening illegitimacy" in the Middle East.

"That's why we do not see the Zionist regime in a situation in which they would want to engage in such an adventurism," he said when asked about the possibility of an Israeli attack.

Analysts say Iran could use unconventional tactics, such as deploying small craft to attack ships, or have allies in the area strike at U.S. or Israeli interests.

The Iranian defense minister, Mostafa Mohammad Najjar, said reports of a possible strike were part of the "psychological warfare" waged by the West against Iran, aimed at diverting attention from "domestic failures" in the United States and Israel.

Iran says its nuclear program is peaceful and aimed at generating electricity. But the West and Israel fear that Iran is seeking nuclear weapons. Israel is believed to be the only Middle Eastern state with nuclear arms.

Washington has said it favors diplomacy to resolve the standoff but has not ruled out military action.

The European Union foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, delivered an offer to Iran on June 14 of trade and other benefits proposed by the United States, Russia, China, Britain, Germany and France in an effort to end the standoff.

Iran has ruled out suspending sensitive nuclear work in exchange for economic incentives, but it said it would examine the proposals and respond.

"Right now we are in the final stage of reviewing the package," Deputy Foreign Minister Alireza Sheikh-Attar was quoted as saying on the Web site of Iranian state television. He did not elaborate.

The Kurds, Israel, and the Future of Syria

By Joseph Puder - FrontPageMagazine.

Israel has a longstanding relationship with the Kurdish people. In the early 1960's, Mustafa Barzani and his Peshmerga fighters received training and support in the Jewish State. David Ben Gurion, then Israel's Prime Minister, possessed an acute vision and understanding of the regional geopolitics – so lacking in today's realities. He reasoned that Arab hostility encircling Israel necessitated alliances with the leadership and people of non-Arab states like Iran, Turkey and the Kurds (understanding that the Kurdish connection needed to be somewhat secretive, as it continues to be today for fear of upsetting the Turks.)

Israel's military and diplomatic establishment is heavily invested in Turkey and trade relations are of growing significance. Turkey represents, as far as Israel and the U.S. are concerned, a model for a "secular" Islamic democracy. It is the Turkish model that is competing with the radical Islamist model of the Islamic Republic of Iran throughout Central Asia's Islamic states, and for that matter, in the larger Muslim world. But the government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan (since 2003), leader of the Justice and Development Party has been accused by the secular military establishment of attempting to appoint Islamist judges. He has also gravitated closer towards the Muslim world as negotiations regarding membership in the European Union have dragged on since 1987. It is precisely for this reason that Israel must not place all its chips on a continued strong relationship with Ankara.

Masoud Barzani, the current president of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Northern Iraq, has expressed his government's positive feelings towards Israel and relations with the Jewish State. Similarly, Kurds elsewhere have attempted to establish channels of communications with Israel. Israel, mindful of the reactions from the Turks, has refrained from open expressions of support for Kurdish rights.

Elsewhere around the region, democratic opposition parties in Syria have indicated their interest in ties with Israel and hopes that Israel would be less protective of the Baathist regime. Israel, fearful that the removal of Bashar Assad's Alawite minority/Baathist regime would unleash radical Islamism (Muslim Brotherhood) forces from the majority Sunni-Muslim community, has preferred to see the status quo in Damascus remain in tact. It appears

as if Washington shares the Israeli fears. Are such fears real and justified? Sherko Abbas, President of the Kurdistan National Assembly of Syria has a different view.

Joseph Puder (JP): Should Israel fear a Muslim Brotherhood takeover if the Assad regime were to fall?

Sherko Abbas (SA): It depends, if the status quo remains or if there is sudden change, the Islamists might take over with the backing of Sunni-Arab countries. Alternatively, if the U.S. and the states in the region including Israel support the Syrian democratic opposition and the idea of a federated Syria, where all stakeholders share power, it might prevent the Islamists from taking over. I mean to say that a decentralized federal Syria would boost the power of ethnic and religious minorities. After all, almost 50% of the Syrian population is comprised of Kurds, Druze, Alawite, and Christians.

JP: Could Syria transform into a democracy with a federal system that would provide increased powers to various regions within the country, as well as cultural, and political autonomy to the Kurds, Alawite, and Druze?

SA: A federal democratic Syria is a realistic option. Syria under our envisioned system would have five regions or states, with increased power for each state over legislative, political, and economic affairs. The central government in Damascus would be limited to foreign affairs, monetary and national defense policies.

JP: You mentioned five regions, could you name them?

SA: In the South, bordering Israel would be the Druze State or region. In the North and Northeast, the Kurdish region East of the Euphrates River, and the Turkish border in the North. Aleppo, Arab region would be the third. Damascus would be a separate Arab region as well. The fifth region would be Alawite along Syria's Mediterranean Coast.

JP: Why do you think Syria requires a federal system, what was wrong with the Baathist system?

SA: Syria is comprised of Sunni Arabs, Kurds, Druze, Alawite, and Christians. We must have a system that provides protection for minorities and satisfies all the stakeholders in the nation instead of just a select group at the expense of all the others.

The Baathists are not much different from the Muslim Brotherhood. The Baathists conceal their pan-Arab nationalistic ideology in a secular form, while the Muslim Brotherhood conceals its pan-

Arab nationalistic ideology in an Islamic form.

Both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Baathists are a threat to the region and to the world. Consider what the Baathist parties did in both Iraq and Syria over the last three decades, and you will notice that the Baathist regimes supported radical terrorist groups, caused wars, denied people freedom, human rights, and democracy, and used WMD on their own ethnic populations.

JP: Do you believe that Assad's Syria can detach itself from Iran?

SA: Absolutely not. Iran has positioned itself in Syria and Lebanon to such a degree that even if the Assad regime wanted to separate itself from Tehran it could not. Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the spread of Shiaism in Syria as well as the over 100,000 Iranians who gained citizenship in Syria, would not allow such a separation. Also, the Iranians have developed alliances with the Syrian elites that guarantees their continued presence in Syria and influence over Syrian policies.

JP: In the context of an Israeli-Syrian peace deal, how do you see the future of the Golan Heights?

SA: We know that the current governments in Damascus and Jerusalem are not serious about peace. They simply need each other to stay in power. In the context of a real peace the Druze would have the right to settle with Israel over the Golan. Of course a federal Syria will be involved, but the Druze must approve such an agreement.

JP: How do you see the relationship between Israel and the Kurds?

SA: The Kurds are Israel's natural allies. They are moderate Muslims and tolerant towards other minorities. For Kurds, religion is not as important or emphasized as ethnicity. The Kurds geographic location and acculturation makes them a barrier to the spread of radical Islam-whether Shia or Sunni. The Kurds also aspire to become a democratic society modeled after Israel.

A democratic Syria would be less of a threat to both Israel and Turkey, and a Kurdish region in a federal Syria would be no more of a risk to Turkey than the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq is today. Israel's fear of a regime change in Syria should be mitigated by the realization that the current regime in Damascus allied with Iran and Hezbollah, and harboring radical Palestinian terrorist groups while promoting terror against the U.S. forces in Iraq and Israel, is as bad as it gets.

Kurdistan PM says no power in Baghdad can annul oil deals

REUTERS

29 June 2008, Reuters

Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani rejected calls from Iraq's central government to scrap disputed oil contracts with foreign firms.

The prime minister of Iraqi Kurdistan on Saturday rejected calls from Iraq's central government to scrap disputed oil contracts with foreign firms, calling those who proposed such annulments "dreamers".

Nechirvan Barzani arrived back in the largely Kurdistan autonomous region on Thursday after several days of talks with



Baghdad that were partly aimed at resolving a dispute over a draft oil law. Those talks appeared to have yielded nothing but mutual promises to keep talking about the stalled bill.

Iraq's cabinet agreed a draft oil law in February last year, but it has failed to get through parliament partly because of rows between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Baghdad over who will control oil reserves and contracts.

Among the disputes are deals the KRG signed with foreign energy firms on its own initiative. Baghdad has called them illegal and will not recognise them.

"They are legal and constitutional contracts and they meet international standards," Barzani told journalists in the Kurdish city of Erbil, the Iraqi Kurdistan's capital, "No power in Baghdad can annul these contracts. Those who call for them to be annulled are dreamers."

Barzani brought to Baghdad what Kurdish officials had called new proposals to resolve disputes over the deadlocked national oil law, but no breakthroughs were made.

Barzani said both sides promised to continue talking through a new political committee. "This committee will be headed by (Prime Minister) Nuri al-Maliki," he said.

Iraq has the world's third largest oil reserves at around 115 billion barrels, although Deputy Prime Minister Dr Barham Salih said in April reserves could be as much as 350 billion barrels. In the absence of the oil law, Baghdad has been negotiating six short-term technical service contracts with foreign oil majors with the aim of lifting output at its largest producing fields by a combined 500,000 barrels a day.

Iraq's oil ministry has finished negotiations with the oil majors and hopes to sign the deals during the next month, the Oil Ministry said this week.

On Monday, Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani is expected to announce which large producing fields will be open for long-term development contracts, the officials added.



- Voices of Iraq
june 29 , 2008

Barzani highlights results of his discussions in Baghdad

A committee has set up in Baghdad to settle the issue of oil and gas law.

Baghdad - 29 June 2008 - VOI

Iraqi Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani revealed that a committee was set up with the Baghdad central government during his recent visit to the Iraqi capital to settle the issue of oil contracts as well as the oil & gas law.

"The committee formed during my visit to Baghdad is composed of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, myself, Vice Presidents Tareq al-Hashimi and Adel Abdul-Mahdi, Deputy Premier Dr Barham Saleh and Roz Nouri Shawais, a member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)'s politburo," Barzani said during a press conference in Erbil on Saturday.

"The committee, which will start its work next week, aims to reach a solution for the issue of oil contracts and the law on oil & gas," he added.

He underlined that the oil contracts "signed by the government of Iraqi Kurdistan was a right granted by the constitution."

The Iraqi government had refused to recognize the oil contracts signed by the autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government with foreign corporations to explore and invest oilfields in the KRG's territories.

On the issues of Kurdistan Region Forces, or the peshmerga in Kurdish, www.ekurd.net and the means to merge them into the Iraqi army in line with the Iraqi armed forces' criteria, Barzani replied that a joint committee was formed 18 months ago to settle the issue of the peshmerga.

"The committee was composed of the U.S. and British sides, the Iraqi defense ministry and a representative of the KRG, but failed to reach a final solution," the Kurdish premier explained.

The Baghdad government had declined to pay the salaries of more than 190,000 peshmerga personnel from the central defense ministry budget.

Asked on the issue of article 140 of the constitution pertaining to normalization in Kirkuk, Barzani said there was no "political orientation to marginalize the article's application."

Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution is related to normalization in Kirkuk. Kurds seek to include the Kurdish city into the autonomous Iraq's Kurdistan region, while Sunni Muslims, Turcomans and Shiites oppose the incorporation. The article stipulates that all Arabs in Kirkuk be returned to their original locations in southern and central Iraqi areas, and formerly displaced residents returned to Kirkuk.

Kirkuk city is historically a Kurdish city and it lies just south border of the Kurdistan autonomous region, the population is a mix of major-

ity Kurds and minority of Arabs, Christians and Turkmen. lies 250 km northeast of Baghdad. Kurds have a strong cultural and emotional attachment to Kirkuk, which they call "the Kurdish Jerusalem."



The article also calls for conducting a census to be followed by a referendum to let the inhabitants decide whether they would like Kirkuk to be annexed to the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan region or having it as an independent province. These stages were supposed to end on December 31, 2007, a deadline that was later extended to six months.

The former regime of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had forced over 250,000 Kurdish residents to give up their homes to Arabs in the 1970s, to "Arabize" the city and the region's oil industry.

Answering a question by VOI correspondent on his position regarding the recent report by UN envoy Staffan De Mistura, Barzani replied that the Iraqi government "was discontented with part of the first report just like our government refused it and would even refuse future reports if they came similar to that one."

De Mistura had submitted a report in the form of recommendations for the Iraqi government in early June providing that four of the disputed areas would be under the administration of both the central and Iraqi Kurdistan governments.

The report suggested that the districts of al-Hamdaniya and Mandili come under the central government's administration while the Kurds would be entitled to run the districts of Makhmour and Aqra.

U.S. Army issues blunt analysis of Iraq flaws

By Michael R. Gordon

WASHINGTON: Soon after U.S. forces toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003, General Tommy Franks surprised senior U.S. Army officers by revamping the military command in Baghdad.

The decision reflected the assumption by Franks, the top U.S. commander for the Iraq invasion, that the major fighting was over. But according to an army history that is to be made public on Monday, the move put the military effort in the hands of a short-staffed headquarters led by a newly promoted three-star general and was made over the objections of the army's vice chief of staff.

"The move was sudden and caught most of the senior commanders in Iraq unaware," states the history, which adds that the staff for the new headquarters was not initially "configured for the types of responsibilities it received."

An aide to Franks said that the former commander had covered Iraq decisions in his book, that he had not seen the report and that he had told army historians that it was the Pentagon's responsibility to make sure the new headquarters was properly established.

The story of the U.S. occupation of Iraq has been the subject of numerous books, studies and memoirs. But now the army has waded into the highly charged debate with its own 696-page account: "On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign."

The unclassified study, the second volume in a continuing history of the Iraq conflict, is as noteworthy for who prepared it as for what it says. In essence, the study is an attempt by the army to tell the story of one of the most

contentious periods in its history to military experts — and to itself.

The study adds to a growing body of literature about the problems that the United States encountered in Iraq, not all of which has been embraced by army leaders. Lieutenant Colonel Paul Yingling of the army started a debate when he wrote a magazine article that criticized U.S. generals for failing to prepare a coherent plan to stabilize Iraq.

In 2005, the RAND Corp. submitted a report to the army, called "Rebuilding Iraq," that identified problems with virtually every government agency that played a role in planning the postwar phase. That report, after a long delay, is scheduled to be made public Monday.

But the "On Point" report carries the imprimatur of the army's Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas. The study is based on 200 interviews conducted by military historians and includes long quotations from active or recently retired officers. Publication was delayed six months so that General George Casey Jr., now the army chief of staff and a former top com-



General Tommy Franks, left, the U.S. commander for the Iraq invasion, and aides inspecting the ruins of a former palace of Saddam Hussein's near Baghdad in 2003.

mander in Iraq, could be interviewed for the study and senior army leaders could review a draft.

The authors were instructed not to shy away from controversy while withholding a final verdict on whether senior officials had made mistakes that decisively altered the course of the war, said Colonel Timothy Reese, director of the Combat Studies Institute at Fort Leavenworth, who along with Donald Wright, a civilian historian at the institute, oversaw the preparation of the volume.

Even so, the study documents a number of problems that hampered the army's ability to stabilize the country during Phase IV, as the postwar stage was called.

"The army, as the service primarily responsible for ground operations, should have insisted on better Phase IV planning and preparations through its voice on the Joint Chiefs of Staff," the study notes. "The military means employed were sufficient to destroy the Saddam regime; they were not sufficient to replace it with the type of nation-state the United States wished to see in its place."

The study focuses on the 18 months that followed President George W. Bush's May 2003 announcement that major combat operations in Iraq were over.

It was a period when the army took on unanticipated occupation duties and was forced to develop new intelligence-gathering techniques, armor its Humvees, revise its tactics and, after the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, review its detention practices.

A significant problem, the study says, was the lack of detailed plans before the war for the postwar phase of the conflict, a deficiency that reflected the general optimism in the White House and in the Pentagon, led by then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, about Iraq's future, and an assumption that civilian agencies would assume much of the burden.

Colonel Thomas Torrance, commander of the 3rd Infantry Division's artillery, told the army historians: "I can remem-

ber asking the question during our war gaming and the development of our plan, 'O.K., we are in Baghdad, what next?' No real good answers came forth."

The allied land war command, which was led by Lieutenant General David McKiernan and which reported to Franks, did additional work on the postwar phase, but its plan was not formally distributed to the troops until April 2003, when the ground invasion was under way.

Inadequate training was also a factor. Lieutenant Colonel Troy Perry, operations officer of the 1st Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, told the historians that his unit trained extensively, but not for the sort of problems that it would encounter in conducting "stability operations" once Baghdad fell.

A fundamental assumption that hobbled the military's planning was that Iraq's ministries and institutions would continue to function even after Saddam Hussein's government was toppled.

"We had the wrong assumptions, and therefore we had the wrong plan to put into play," said General William Wallace, who led the V Corps during the invasion and currently leads the army's Training and Doctrine Command.

Faced with a brewing insurgency and occupation duties that they had not anticipated, the army had to adapt. But organizational decisions made in May and June 2003 complicated that task.

L. Paul Bremer 3rd, the civilian administrator in Iraq, issued decrees to disband the Iraqi Army and ban thousands of former Baath Party members from working for the government, orders that the study asserts caught U.S. field commanders "off guard" and "created a pool of disaffected and unemployed Sunni Arabs" that the insurgency could draw on.

Some of Franks's moves also appeared divorced from the growing problems in Iraq. Before the fall of Baghdad, Colonel Kevin Benson, a planner at the land war command, developed a plan that called for using about 300,000 sol-



Middle East Report

MER 247 — Summer 2008

The Kurds and the Future

Editorial

Like the Palestinians, the Kurds are routinely described as a “question.” The label refers, in one sense, to their status as a people who sought self-determination in the wake of World War I but whose claim is still unsettled. From the standpoint of the states that divided the population of Kurdistan among themselves, the Kurds are a “question” as the Palestinians are to Israel today, or as the Jews of Europe were in the past, a troublesome, bumptious minority and a running challenge to the states’ preferred notions of national identity. In each of Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey, the Middle Eastern countries where Kurds live in large numbers, governments have resorted to violent repression, of varying degrees, in vain attempts to make the “Kurdish question” go away.

On the world stage, the Kurds are infamously classified as “good” or “bad” depending on the attitude of the great powers toward the Middle Eastern state in the spotlight at any given moment. Since the 1991 Gulf war, the Kurds of Iraq have generally been viewed as “good,” for their stubborn insurrections against Saddam Hussein and then their acquiescence in the US-led invasion of 2003. Their *peshmerga* militias now comprise the crack units of the new, US-trained Iraqi army. The Kurds of Turkey, when they are noticed at all, are frowned upon for undermining the territorial integrity of a key US ally. The group that launched armed struggle on their behalf, the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), is on the State Department’s list of foreign terrorist organizations. Oddly enough, the “good Kurds, bad Kurds” formula is frequently applied among the international left as well, though with protagonist and antagonist reversed. This narrative frame has led to no small amount of moral hypocrisy—among governments and progressives alike—and left various groups of Kurds without outside support when they most needed it. The durability of “good Kurds, bad Kurds” thinking attests to the excessive weight given to Washington and the unspoken loyalty to the prerogatives of the nation-state in the collective imagination.

At one level, and barring a dramatic reversal of fortune, the collapse of the Iraqi state in 2003 has outmoded the old ways of seeing the Kurdish issue. Already in the 1990s, with a US-British no-fly zone over much of northern Iraq, the dual Kurdish parties had achieved the substantial self-governance for which they had long fought in the majority-Kurdish provinces. Since 2003, the two parties have deftly inserted themselves into the councils of quasi-state in Baghdad even as they have inscribed their *de facto* autonomy in law. These hard-won gains have a power to inspire the Kurds of Iran, Syria and Turkey that cannot be dismissed.

It is important to note, however, that the landlocked Kurds of Iraq remain deeply interconnected with their neighbors, in particular, Arab Iraq and Turkey. In Iraq, there is extensive commerce between the Kurdish zone and points south, and a burgeoning licit trade with Turkey to augment the smuggling networks that have survived the end of sanctions. Turkish policy toward northern Iraq is primarily aimed at destroying the PKK’s mountain bases, but it appears that Ankara is also promoting business ties to establish Turkey as Iraqi Kurdistan’s economic lifeline and to stabilize the Turkish southeast. Kurdish businessmen from Turkey, for instance, are now encouraged to invest across the Iraqi border.

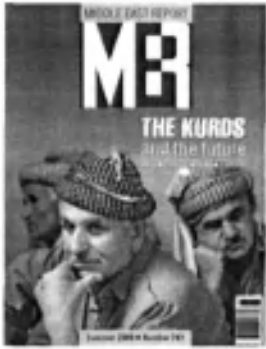
With the denouement of the Iraqi Kurds’ liberation struggle also comes the nettlesome intramural contestation of a “normal” polity. The Kurds of Iraq, like their brethren elsewhere, are

divided along lines of party affiliation, language and tribe, and highly stratified by income and education. Class divides will only widen amid the frontier capitalism of the post-sanctions era. Socio-economic grievances once blamed upon Saddam or sanctions are now directed at the twin Kurdish parties and the Kurdistan Regional Government they jointly operate. The most sensitive issue of all, of course, is the fact that the Kurdish-controlled areas contain numerous Arabs, Assyrians, Turkmen and other non-Kurds; the “disputed territories” the Kurdish parties seek to annex, chiefly oil-rich Kirkuk, contain even more. The “reverse Arabization” of Kirkuk, while it has not proceeded as rapidly and mercilessly as once feared, has these smaller communities worried about the prospect of consolidated Kurdish rule.

Finally, the Kurdish parties of Iraq remain enmeshed in perhaps the most consequential great-power intervention in the vicinity of Kurdistan since the aftermath of World War I. They have hardly been mirrors of US policy preferences—witness, for example, Iraqi President and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan leader Jalal Talabani’s regular visits to Tehran or the Kurdish parties’ near silence at Iranian attacks upon the *peshmerga* from Iran (allegedly backed by the US) based in Iraq. While they embrace an expansive version of federalism, the Kurdish parties have not worked to impose the “soft partition” of Iraq along ethno-sectarian lines, as Sen. Joe Biden (D-DE) and a few Washington think tankers have irresponsibly advocated. But they are part of a rump Iraqi government that is negotiating with the Bush administration over the parameters of a long-term US military presence in Iraq, against the express wishes of important Arab Iraqi factions and, if polls are to be believed, a majority of the Iraqi people. They are clearly counting on Washington, as well, to help them thread the needle of Kirkuk, where they hope to press their territorial claim while maintaining warmer relations with Turkey. US intentions in this regard, as in others, are unpredictable at best.

All these factors militate against thinking that the present successes of the Kurds of Iraq are necessarily a first step toward a greater Kurdistan or even the replication of the Iraqi experience in Iran, Syria or Turkey. In these countries, the states persist in denying the Kurds the right to identify as Kurds, mandating that Kurds assimilate to the dominant national formation or consign themselves to frustrated, and often dangerous, political opposition. Turkey’s advances in this area are inadequate, as are Iran’s; Syria’s are non-existent. Any future moves to code the Kurds of these countries as “good” or “bad” for great-power priorities will likely redound to the detriment of their just demand to be acknowledged as equal citizens with a distinct culture.

The Kurds symbolize the incompleteness of the project of nation-state building in the Middle East, being a nation without a state and having borne some of the most terrible costs of the efforts of states at forging nations. Today, their activism inside and outside the corridors of power is shaking the old ethno-nationalist faiths, but also displaying the limitations of ethno-nationalism itself. A peaceful conclusion to the Kurds’ long quest for communal rights will require imagining self-determination that does not force the displacement or disenfranchisement of others and citizenship that does not dictate the erasure of difference.



Middle East Report

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The Kurds and the Future

To Protect or to Project ? Iraqi Kurds and Their Future

Joost R. Hiltermann

Joost R. Hiltermann is deputy program director for the Middle East and North Africa at the International Crisis Group. He is author, most recently, of *A Poisonous Affair: America, Iraq and the Gassing of Halabja* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Erstwhile kings of the mountains, Iraq's Kurdish parties have become kingmakers in Baghdad. No federal government can be established without them—and they know it.

This new role suits the Kurdish parties just fine, as it allows them to advance their agenda: to use a once wide but now narrowing window of opportunity to expand the territory and natural resources (oil, gas and water) under their control, as well as the powers they exercise within that territory. They hope thereby to build the foundations of an independent Kurdish state, an ambition that once and for all would allow them to trade in their barren mountain hideouts for a stable home in the fertile plains. How did the Kurds accomplish this remarkable makeover from hardened *maquisards* to polished politicians and administrators? What are its implications today for Iraq as well as the Kurdistan region? And what challenges lie ahead?

Perhaps no one was more surprised than the Kurds themselves by the speed with which former *peshmerga* (guerrilla) leaders, whom many Iraqis had branded "saboteurs" for their decades-long insurgency against central rule and "traitors" for their alliance with Iran during the eight-year Iran-Iraq war, were propelled into the seat of power in Baghdad. Here they gained the most senior positions: president of the republic, deputy prime minister, foreign minister and deputy army chief of staff, as well as a myriad of pivotal, if less visible, positions throughout institutions, agencies and committees of the new Iraq, the security and intelligence services not least among them. They consider the accession to the presidency by Jalal Talabani, this one-time "collaborator" with the "Persian" enemy, as a vindication of their, and his, life-long struggle.

And yet for all their newfound power, both gratifying and remunerative, the Kurds do not aspire to run non-Kurdish Iraq, the area south of the Hamrin mountain chain, a low ridge they consider the border of their hoped-for state. Their struggle has been one of national liberation, not capture of the Iraqi state. But now, sitting in Baghdad, they find themselves presented with an unprecedented opportunity to press forward with their bid for statehood. Their objective is to use the levers of state for a twofold purpose: to prevent a powerful central state from deploying its security forces against the Kurdish population, as happened so often during the past century, and to maximize Kurdistan's chances to secede. These twin goals are closely intertwined: jointly, they define the Kurdish past, present and future.

Thanks to this strategy, the Kurds have made serious headway in strengthening their regional autonomy and deepening a de facto separation between them and the rest of Iraq. Moreover, they have found an important ally in the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), a Shi'i Islamist party created in Iran in 1982, in their effort to hollow out the central state.^[1] But this gambit is dangerous: Weakening the state is feeding centrifugal forces that could destroy the country and thus create new threats to the security of all the region's people,

Kurds as well as Arabs. The Kurds face other self-inflicted threats as well. In their bid to gain control over Kirkuk and other areas they claim as Kurdish from time immemorial, they have started to overreach, exasperating even their friends and allies.

Conspiracies of History

The tension between the Kurds' short- and long-term goals—between enhanced autonomy and independence—has been a leitmotif of their history. Uncertain how to solve this strategic dilemma, the Kurdish leaders—Masoud Barzani of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Jalal Talabani of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)—to this very day retain their party headquarters not in Erbil and Suleimaniya, de facto capitals of the two mini-regions they control, but in Sari Rash and Qulat Chwalan, fortified places high on the mountains or deep inside them.

Time and again the Kurds have faced the same set of questions: To accommodate or to rebel? To fight for minority rights or for secession? To participate in Baghdad politics or to retreat to mountain strongholds? To protect or to project? Tempted by the arrival of a new and apparently less hostile regime in Baghdad, they would probe and absorb, dispatch emissaries and receive the government's in turn, exchange ideas and negotiate outright. Invariably, they would find their quest for self-determination tempered by the bitter fact that, once again, historical and geographical circumstances



Arabs in Kirkuk check lists of families allowed to claim \$16,000 and land in exchange for leaving town in November 2007. (Michael Kamber/New York Times/Redux)

conspired to thwart their aspirations.

After the monarchy's demise in the 1958 revolution, Mullah Mustafa, Masoud's father and founder of the modern Kurdish national movement, returned to Iraq from Soviet exile to reach out to the country's new military leaders. He found a receptive ear at first, but before long competing agendas emerged, hitched to dueling narratives that reflected rival nationalisms. Soon the Kurds found themselves the targets of an air campaign, their villages subject to destruction. To listen to uprooted villagers in their desolate resettlement camps, as I did for Human Rights Watch in 1992–1993, was to encounter a common trope of suffering, an unending litany of



Former peshmerga train for the Iraqi National Guard near Erbil. (Ed Kashi)

bombardments, rocketing, ruination, torture and violent death, the counter-insurgency's organizing principle being to eradicate Kurdish nationalism by crushing the Kurds.

Another shakeup in Baghdad brought another opportunity for the Kurds. When the Baath Party put itself in the saddle in a 1968 coup, its rule was initially shaky. Sensing weakness, Mullah Mustafa hastened down to the capital. He successfully negotiated an autonomy agreement of considerable breadth, but alas for the Kurds, the 1973 oil crisis erupted before it could be fully implemented. Oil revenues filled Iraqi coffers and strengthened the regime, which realized it no longer needed the Kurds to survive. It reneged on its commitments and abrogated the agreement; in turn, the Kurds went back to the mountains and resumed their insurgency. When the Shah of Iran, who had lent the rebels a hand, suddenly signed a treaty with Baghdad settling the Shatt al-Arab border dispute and withdrew his support, the revolt collapsed. Mullah Mustafa was forced back into exile, this time in Iran.

The Iran-Iraq war, which broke out when Saddam Hussein sent his forces into the ethnically Arab, oil-rich Iranian province of Khuzestan in September 1980, gave the Kurdish rebellion a dangerous twist. In a fateful decision, first Barzani's KDP and then Talabani's PUK (which had split from the KDP in 1976) allied themselves with Iran, although Talabani flirted with the regime for a couple of years in search of advantage against his KDP rivals. In the eyes of the regime, this decision turned the two men into betrayers of the Iraqi cause and their movement into a fifth column. The response was ferocious. In an escalating counter-insurgency campaign, the regime began destroying Kurdish villages on a massive scale in 1987, using chemical weapons to kill insurgents and scare the population. The next year saw the culmination of this strategy with the gas attack on the town of Halabja that killed thousands, followed by the Anfal campaign in which the regime used gas to flush villagers out of the countryside.^[2] This tactic enabled the Iraqi army to gather up tens of thousands of civilians and systematically murder them.^[3] Demoralized,

the rebels fled to Iran. This time,

the Kurdish movement appeared to have been vanquished.

If it returned from the dead, it was by *deus ex machina*, with the United States playing the role of the deity. Saddam's foolish decision to invade Kuwait triggered a broad international military campaign to drive his forces out; this, in turn, created space for the Iraqi population to rise up, Shi'a in the south, Kurds in the north. The Kurdish rebel parties returned triumphantly from exile and established themselves in the cities in the plains: Erbil, Suleimaniya, Dohuk and even Kirkuk. The administration of Bush the Elder did not help them, however; soon the regime recovered and lashed back, crushing the twin rebellions and sending hundreds of thousands of Kurds into Iran and the mountains lining the border with Turkey. In response, and to help its Turkish ally keep Kurdish refugees from entering its territory, the US established a "safe haven" and a no-fly zone in northern Iraq. For a while the Kurdish parties and the regime negotiated, and even organized joint army-*pehmerga* patrols in the Kurdish cities, but in October 1991 Iraqi forces unilaterally withdrew to a line, the so-called Green Line, that marked off a territory roughly equivalent to what the regime had granted the Kurds in the 1970 autonomy agreement.^[4] Within six months, the Kurdish parties held elections and created a regional government. This was the beginning of effective self-government, a period of growing self-confidence and relative prosperity and peace that was, however, bloodily punctured by several years of internecine KDP-PUK conflict in the mid-1990s.

Throughout the post-1991 period, a second great tension emerged. While the Kurds began to enjoy unprecedented freedoms within their newfound autonomy, protected from the regime by the US and even Turkey (as part of "Operation Provide Comfort"), they were constrained by an economic straitjacket that derived from being landlocked and utterly dependent on those very same states for their access to the outside world. Turkey and the US allowed a certain degree of reconstruction but not true economic development, which could have set the Kurdish region on a path toward independence. To the Kurds it was vital to escape from this vise. Their frustration fueled an irredentism that had always been there and that centered on the city and governorate of Kirkuk.

In each of the above historical episodes—in the early 1960s, in 1974, in 1984 and again in 1991—negotiations between the Kurds and the regime broke down over the Kurds' quest to incorporate Kirkuk into their autonomous region. The stakes were high. The Kirkuk oilfield, the bulk of which lies on the city's northwestern outskirts, contains 13 percent of Iraq's proven oil reserves and while abused and requiring rehabilitation is guaranteed to yield significant revenues for several decades. The Kurds claim a continuous Kurdish presence in Kirkuk and assert that the city once served as the capital of Shahrazour, a predominantly Kurdish region that existed during a period of the Ottoman Empire. They refer to Kirkuk as their Jerusalem (a somewhat unhelpful metaphor that appears to equate God with oil). With the other communities in Kirkuk—Arabs and Turkmen, as well as a small group of Chaldo-Assyrian Christians—this argument never sat well, it threatened to reduce them to minorities in a Kurdish region that aspired to independence. But the Kurds see Kirkuk as vital in providing, at a minimum, enhanced economic leverage vis-à-vis the central government and, more ambitiously, an economic base supporting their bid for statehood.

"Kurdifying" Iraq

The regime's removal by the US in April 2003 unchained the Kurdish parties' potential. Their alliance with the US, aided by Turkey's refusal to grant the US transit rights during the war, proved greatly rewarding. They lost no time in establishing themselves in three areas: They

solidified their control over the Kurdistan region and, under US pressure, started to merge their two parallel administrations in Erbil (KDP) and Suleimaniya (PUK), a legacy of their mid-1990s civil war; they pushed forward into what became known as the "disputed territories," a broad swath of land with a historically mixed population that stretches from the Syrian to the Iranian border, in the middle of which lies the supreme trophy, Kirkuk; and they permeated the government and institutions of the new federal Iraq.

In effect, the Kurds succeeded in "Kurdifying" Iraqi politics to the extent that no decision can be taken without Kurdish input or, more, without the threat of a Kurdish veto. This power was most visibly evident in the country's interim constitution, the 2004 Transitional Administrative Law, which

vague and open to interpretation, appeared to point the way toward the Kurds' acquisition (they would say retrieval) of Kirkuk within two years. Article 140 set out an itinerary ("normalization," census, then referendum) and a deadline (December 31, 2007) that favored the Kurds by mandating a mechanism—a plebiscite—that could only yield victory, given the Kurds' expected demographic majority in Kirkuk following completion of the process known as normalization. The term refers to removal of Arabs settled in Kirkuk and return of Kurds expelled from the region by former regimes as part of their Arabization policy.

But while Article 140 evinces the Kurds' strength in the new Iraq, it has also proved their fundamental and enduring weakness as a minority, a third leitmotif. While the Kurds are able to veto



The solid lines mark the boundaries of Iraqi provinces. The dotted lines show the current path of the "Green Line," the boundary of the territory administered by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Shaded areas are the "disputed territories" that the Kurdish parties aim to annex to the KRG areas. The Iraqi constitution does not stipulate the exact boundaries of these territories. (Go! Creative/Free Hand Press)

held that the country's permanent constitution needed an absolute majority to succeed in a popular referendum and could be voted down by a two-thirds majority in a minimum of three governorates—code for the three Kurdish governorates.^[5] In other words, no constitution could be passed without the Kurds' approval. The result was a constitution that reflected the interests of the parties that had won the January 2005 elections: the Kurds and ISCI (which headed the United Iraqi Alliance, a loose coalition of mostly Shi'i parties and individuals). Because so much of Iraq's parliamentary politics since 2005 has concerned constitutionally mandated legislation, the Kurds have left their imprint repeatedly and decisively. They have been helped by their internal discipline and meticulous preparation (especially compared to everybody else), as well as the unity of their strategic vision.

Their crowning achievement was Article 140 of the constitution, a clause that, though dangerously

legislation that runs counter to their interests, they cannot force implementation of laws that serve them and that they drafted, such as Article 140. The December 2007 deadline passed without a referendum, or a census, or indeed without meaningful progress toward "normalization." A number of Arab "newcomers" (*wafidin*) left Kirkuk already in 2003, ahead of the Kurds' arrival, but no significant numbers have followed them since, despite the Kurds' unremitting pressure and inducements in the form of promises of state-provided compensation for those who agree to pull up stakes. Worse, from a public relations point of view, is the painful reality that few Kirkuki Kurds have come back. While expressing a desire to return one day, they decry the absence of security, jobs and essential services; many have steady jobs in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, where their children can go to school safely and the situation is stable.^[6] Instead, the parties have played up the sorry predicament of a collection of impover-

ished, displaced and homeless Kurds living in slum-like conditions in the Kirkuk football stadium and on the grounds of the Iraqi army's first corps—props used to underline the injustice of Arabization and the snail's pace at which it is being reversed.

Control over governance in Kirkuk, where the Kurds won a majority of provincial council seats in 2005 and have arrogated most senior administrative positions (governor, heads of directorates and security chiefs) since 2003, has allowed them to advance their dominance in all areas, but not to change Kirkuk's status. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) pays—extra-territorially—the salaries of Kurdish civil servants in Kirkuk (many of whom arrived from Erbil and Suleimaniya in April 2003), but provides no reconstruction aid, which it sees, with some justification, as the federal government's responsibility. The Baghdad government, however, has excelled in dithering; its record of governance is so poor that ministry officials often only meet their counterparts in the governorates thanks to US "helicopter diplomacy" ferrying them to and from the Green Zone. Funds remain stuck in the federal treasury; reconstruction occurs mostly by the grace of US military commanders, who are empowered to spend emergency funds directly or via provincial reconstruction teams attached to military units. In Kirkuk, the US has encouraged the equitable allocation of reconstruction funds by the provincial council, but a boycott by its Arab and Turkmen members has given rise to discrimination, or at least the perception thereof.^[7] Rather than convincing Arabs and Turkmen of their good will and potential as fair rulers if and when Kirkuk joins the Kurdistan region, the Kurdish parties have succeeded instead in persuading them of the opposite and in hardening their opposition to any change in Kirkuk's status. Economically backward despite its great oil wealth, the place is profoundly unhappy and divided, its disposition in limbo with the referendum deadline's lapse. Meanwhile, Kurdish leaders have precious little to show for their immersion in Baghdad politics, as their critics in Kurdistan are quick to point out. Ironically, after having whipped up elite support for Kirkuk's incorporation into the Kurdistan region, the KRG faces intense criticism now that it has failed to accomplish its goal by the deadline. It is also coming under growing scrutiny for oil deals it signed in secret with international companies, and for corrupt practices more generally. Kurds do not understand why they have less electricity today than in the years of hardship in the early 1990s, and tend to blame political party nepotism and kickbacks rather than other factors.

First Through the Gate

Nevertheless, the Kurds have left an indelible mark on the architecture of post-2003 Iraqi politics. The regime's removal led not to its replacement by a more democratic administration but to a fundamental overhaul of the state system: from a highly centralized state that a ruthless leader was able to turn into a vicious dictatorship to a state that threatens to be so completely decentralized as to become utterly ungovernable. While this transformation is not solely the Kurds' doing, they have played a leading role in bringing it about. It was they who introduced the notion of ethnically based federalism, inspired by their unique experience of oppression, to an Iraq so weakened by the wholesale uprooting of the state by the US that it could not resist the application of its underlying ethno-sectarian logic not only to Kurdistan but also to the entire country. (It is interesting to note that the Kurdish parties have made no corresponding push to take decentralization a step further and apply it within the Kurdistan region; their support of federalism strictly concerns the status of their region vis-à-vis the rest of Iraq.)

Federalism to the Kurds originally meant confederation—a mutual choice by Kurdish Iraq and Arab Iraq to continue to live together but in a very loose arrangement that would afford the Kurds maximum autonomy over their own affairs. This

idea they sold to Iraq's fragmented Arab opposition parties in the years of exile, especially after 1991. These parties were too divided, however, to agree on anything but the lowest common denominator—the principle of federalism, yes, but not its definition, the bare outline with no details filled in. When these exile parties were hoisted to power on the shoulders of the US rampage into Iraq, they embraced identity politics to gain the support of a population that suspected their motives and resented their skills obtained in years of freedom that Iraqis themselves had never been given the chance to enjoy. What better way to comfort (and mobilize) people in a situation of chaos and uncertainty than to offer them the protection of their nominal communities—Arabs and Kurds, Sunnis and Shi'a, and sundry ethnic and confessional minorities—and their affiliated militias?

Neither knowing its roots nor grasping its inherent dangers, L. Paul Bremer's Coalition Provincial Authority enshrined this new brand of politics in the country's new governing institutions, from the 2003 Iraqi Governing Council to the 2004 interim government and on to the successive governments produced by the grace of parliamentary elections in 2005. This politics created the fertile ground on which could be sown the seeds of federalism defined by ethnic or sectarian identity. These seeds in turn were watered by the proposal, peddled as a panacea by some in the US, proactively to partition the country, which gave every sign of falling apart, among Kurds, Sunnis and



Wires from private generators over Erbil's back streets. (Karl Badohal)

Shi'a. The rationale was that "these people," the Iraqis, could not live with each other, and did not want to, and that the better solution would be for them to live "together apart" in a loose federal arrangement with strong regional governments and a weak center—the latter to prevent another megalomaniacal leader from turning the state into his personal fiefdom and repressing his subjects.

The Iraqi people, apart from the Kurds, do not appear to have bought this notion of their country's tripartite division. The parties that have pressed for it, especially the Kurdistan Alliance (the coalition of Kurdish parties in the Iraqi Council of Representatives) and ISCI, have made little headway, except in Kurdistan. The 2005 constitution prescribes a federal system with two exceptional characteristics: It guts the powers of the federal state through extreme devolution to federal regions, and it provides scope to governorates to form regions, either standing alone or in conjunction with other governorates, that would replicate the Kurdistan region in their powers. Being the first through the gate, as it were, the Kurdistan region has been the principal and so far sole beneficiary of this arrangement.

Whether others will follow will depend on the ability of a party such as ISCI, which has advocated a nine-governorate Shi'i "super-region" south of Baghdad, to mobilize sufficient support in each concerned governorate to win a local referendum, which is a key building block of forming a region. ISCI's overt sectarianism and lack of popularity

mitigate against its success, but it has deep pockets and considerable institutional power, accumulated since its strong showing in the 2005 provincial council elections, when its main rivals, the followers of Muqtada al-Sadr, mostly stayed away from the polls. The Sadrist, as well as other Shi'i parties and,



Erbil schoolgirls singing a Kurdish anthem during flag raising. (Alfredo Caliz/Panos Pictures)

of course, Sunni Arab parties (who would be left without their own oil resources in a region of their own^[8]), have adamantly opposed Iraq's federalization along these lines, and much parliamentary wrangling in the past few months has centered on precisely the question of how much power the regions really have. The issue has come up, for example, in debates over the right to manage oil fields and over provincial powers, including the federal government's right to dismiss governors.^[9]

The question now is whether the Kurdish parties have an inherent interest in the formation of additional regions in the rest of Iraq or whether they could live with an Arab-Kurdish confederation that would be asymmetrical: Kurdistan living side by side with an Arab Iraq decentralized along governorate boundaries. Historically, the Kurds never envisioned anything but such an arrangement. Post-2003 developments, however, may have pushed them to embrace the new formula. In the January 2005 elections, in particular, the United Iraqi Alliance and the Kurdish parties gained disproportionate power, owing to a massive boycott by Sunni Arabs, as well as, formally, the Sadrist movement; this, in turn, gave them control over the constituent assembly. Matching opportunity with a dawning realization of necessity—the fear of a resurgent powerful central state controlled by groups inherently inimical to Kurdish aspirations—the Kurds may have thought that the safest way forward would be to eviscerate the state by encouraging additional regions to emerge and devolving as much power as possible to them. Moreover, Kurdistan's existence and powers would find helpful justification in a quest by other Iraqi actors, such as ISCI, to attain regional status as well. The upshot has been an increasingly polarized debate about the degree of decentralization necessary to keep together a country that is coming apart at the seams.

It may be difficult to undo the damage, although a new, but very loose, coalition of Iraqi parties is trying. Spanning the ethno-sectarian divide, these parties have a nationalist undercurrent in common. They include the Sadrists, who have no interest in playing second fiddle to ISCI in a Shi'i super-region in the oil-rich south when their main strength lies in Baghdad, an area with little oil; the Fadhila Party, a Shi'i Islamist group strong in Basra; Iyad Allawi's secular National Iraqi List; and the two main Sunni Arab lists, the religious Iraqi Consensus Front^[10] and secular Iraqi National Dialogue Front. Although these groups do not all wholeheartedly embrace

federalism as a concept, they all have indicated they can live with some form of decentralization, disagreeing mostly about the degree. They share an intense distaste for the extreme decentralization advocated by ISCI and the Kurds, however, and they have started to push back against the latter's drive to implement their vision of a decentralized Iraq via constitution-based legislation, including a law that sets out a mechanism for creating regions. This law squeaked through a vote in the Council of Representatives in October 2006 following a last-minute compromise that delayed its entry into force for 18 months.

That period has just passed but, tellingly, Baghdad has remained silent: There is no apparent movement to launch local initiatives in southern governorates, as ISCI has advocated. Instead, Iraqis appear preoccupied with provincial council elections that are supposed to take place by October 1 and whose outcome could transform politics. Nor have ISCI and the Kurds found any support among neighboring states, or in the world, for their particular brand of federalism. To the contrary, Iraq's neighbors may prefer a relatively weak state but not one so incapacitated that it would fall to pieces, threatening the region. In sum, Iraq's federalism remains in an unsteady holding pattern based on local and regional power balances in which neither domestic side can impose its own preferred scheme.

Searching for Security

Saddam's Kuwait gambit opened a window of opportunity for the Kurds. President George W. Bush widened it with his madcap adventure to transform the Middle East by using the US military as a vehicle for installing democracy in Iraq. Today it has started to close again. This is a result of the surge, Bush's "hail Mary" bid to salvage both his undertaking and his legacy. To diffuse the centrifugal forces that are tearing the country apart, his administration has sought to recalibrate power in Iraq, curbing the ruling parties' latitude and luring disaffected Sunni Arabs into the new order, all the while fighting "irreconcilable" extremists, such as fighters associated with al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), as well as "Special Groups" loosely affiliated with the Sadr movement that are allegedly sponsored by Iran. In Baghdad and Anbar, this effort has taken the form of a struggle to absorb as many insurgents-turned-"concerned citizens" as possible into the state's institutions and security forces, and find employment for the rest. In the so-called disputed territories, however, the move by Sunni tribal elements to establish anti-AQI Awakening councils (*sahwa*) is being resisted by the Kurdish parties, who see the councils as a direct challenge to their influence in these areas, which they seek to annex to Kurdistan.

In a telling development, after members of the Jabour tribe set up a *sahwa* in Hawija, a predominantly Arab district in Kirkuk governorate, in November 2007, local US officials of the provincial reconstruction team promptly mediated a power-sharing agreement between Arab and Kurdish political leaders in Kirkuk, an apparent *quid pro quo* for the Jabours' readiness to restore calm in Kirkuk. While there is no ground for optimism that this agreement will be implemented any time soon, or at all, the fact that it could come to be is significant, given the unremitting animosity between the camps. It certainly was recognized as pivotal by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who alighted in Kirkuk on December 18 during a whirlwind tour of the region. She used her visit to congratulate the signatories on having achieved a local accord when the politicians in Baghdad had yet to make meaningful progress on reconciliation.^[1]

If the US role in negotiating the Kirkuk agreement was a message to the Kurds that the extended honeymoon they have enjoyed with the US was drawing to a close, a second, somewhat earlier event was even more alarming to them. On December 16, the Turkish air force carried out its first of a series of attacks on suspected holdouts of the Kurd-

istan Workers' Party (PKK) in northern Iraq (joined by a brief ground incursion in February 2008). Iraqi Kurds saw the Turkish pilots, and the politicians behind them, as having not only the PKK but also the KRG in their sights, and they responded with great anger, including over the realization that the US had publicly signed off on the attacks and apparently had supported them with actionable intelligence. To the Kurds, all this pointed toward a US reaffirmation of Iraq's territorial integrity and a reminder that US support of the Kurds was contingent on their willingness to subscribe to the US agenda in Iraq.^[2]

Of course, the Kurds do not claim to be preparing for secession, even as they assert at every turn that independence is in their hearts. They remain caught in their principal dilemmas: Should they push to incorporate Kirkuk by hook or by crook and thus risk alienating, angering and incurring reprisals from neighboring states such as Turkey, on whom they are economically dependent, and allies such as the US, who have protected them, because of the perception that what they really are doing is making a veiled bid for statchood? Or should they press for greater rights, powers and access to resources within current boundaries and political constraints and thereby risk facing another powerful central Iraqi state sometime in the future that could undo all that they have accomplished over the past two decades, and worse?

How can they escape geography? Some Kurdish maps may show a Kurdistan that reaches the Mediterranean, but no Iraqi Kurdish politician I know has fooled himself into believing that this is a realistic ambition. Even if the Kurdistan region wins the Kirkuk oilfields and/or develops the ones located inside its own territory, it will still need to pump the stuff out and sell it, and for the moment the only viable route leads through Turkey. If it wishes to diversify, it would have to make a deal with Syria as well, which takes just as low a view of Kurdish designs on Kirkuk as does Turkey (or, for that matter, Iran, which has made its opinion abundantly clear through statements uttered by its officials in public fora). The Kurds' freedom of maneuver will depend on their good relations with their neighbors for a long time to come.

This is perhaps why, when a friend of mine asked Masoud Barzani two or three years ago whether he was seeking "federalism," the KRG president replied that security was what he was after. "Federalism," he said, is just a word. It is indeed security that the Kurds need and covet. How could they not after the traumatic culmination of their alliance with Iran in the 1980s, when they were gassed in their homes, rounded up, hauled away like cattle, dragged to execution sites and summarily done away with?

The real question is how the Kurds will be able to reach a state of relative security. The KRG has set its sights on Kirkuk, seeing safety in territory and economic power. But important lessons are to be learned from the Halabja/Anfal experience. After all, while Saddam Hussein unequivocally was guilty of a crime against humanity by sending his bombers to drop their poisonous load on a Kurdish city, the Kurdish parties played a role that cannot be ignored—one that is actively being questioned by people in Halabja and beyond. It was the Kurdish parties who chose to ally themselves with Iran during a war that was existential for both countries, and it was they who guided the Iranian Revolutionary Guards into Iraqi territory to throw out Iraqi forces and liberate Halabja. However justified the wartime alliance may have been given the Iraqi regime's extreme brutality, the *peshmerga* made a gamble, knowing full well that the regime was capable of doing, and would do, in reprisal against the defenseless townspeople. If there was anything surprising about the Halabja chemical attack, it was its extraordinary scale and ferocity, not that it took place or even that it involved gas, which the regime had been using against the Kurds for almost a year at that point.

The result was not only a civilian catastrophe but also the utter collapse of the Kurdish national movement, which gave up the fight and fled. The parties had clearly overreached and they suffered the consequences. The national movement's resuscitation and return to Kurdistan in 1991 was a serendipitous event unprovoked by anything the parties themselves did. In Kirkuk today, they face a similar challenge. Aside from any claims, legitimate or not, to Kirkuk based on history and geography, they are confronted with significant obstacles—resistance from the Iraqi government and neighboring states, US unwillingness to see their Kurdish allies rock the Iraqi boat—as well as the challenge that if and when they take Kirkuk, they will have to defend it. The Kurdish parties have been notoriously ill equipped to protect their towns from invaders—their 1991 rout from Kirkuk, where they had been for less than a week, was particularly swift and devastating—and there is every reason to believe that without some accommodation over Kirkuk the Kurds' enemies will simply be biding their time: Once US forces leave, they are bound to strike back if they can. At the least, neighboring states will use local proxies to make life hell for the Kurds in Kirkuk.

The better way forward for the Kurds in their legitimate quest for security may therefore lie in a push for the maximum that is realistically and consensually attainable at this historical juncture. Backed by the US they have an uncommon opportunity to strike deals that will be both beneficial and durable. These deals are unlikely to yield exclusive Kurdish control over Kirkuk. But they may allow the KRG to develop its own oil and gas fields under



Outside a Suleimaniya restaurant. (Alfredo Caliz/Panos Pictures)

federal legislation that will draw the international investments the Kurds require to explore and develop their natural wealth. Such deals could also produce a boundary to the Kurdistan region that would be accepted by Iraq and neighboring states and as such could be recognized officially by the UN and major states, and thus could attract guarantees of inviolability.

In the end, the Kurds will have to choose between endemic strife and a compromise accord that could buy them peace for a generation or more. As long as US forces remain in Iraq, the window of opportunity for the second option is unlikely to close. And enhanced autonomy (Kurdish federalism) will not extinguish the dream for Kurdish independence; to the contrary, through a combination of good governance (fighting corruption, in particular), strong regional economic relations and good neighborliness, it may bring closer the day that this dream can be realized.

Endnotes

[1] This alliance dates back to the Iran-Iraq war, when ISCI was known as the Supreme Council for the Islamic

Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). SCIRI and Kurdish fighters fought side by side in several battles in the north, including Halabja in March 1988.

[2] See Joost R. Hiltermann, *A Poisonous Affair: America, Iraq and the Gassing of Halabja* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[3] See Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide: The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

[4] The term "safe haven" was always a misnomer. It concerned only a small area that fell under the allied forces' direct control in April 1991, incorporating the towns of Zakho and Dohuk close to the Turkish border. The unilateral Iraqi withdrawal six months later expanded the effective "safe haven" area dramatically. It was patrolled by the Gulf war allies via a no-fly zone, which ill reflected political realities on the ground. It included Mosul, for example, although this mixed but predominantly Arab city lies outside the Kurdistan region, and it excluded the main Kurdish city of Suleimaniya.

[5] It is an irony that the constitution ended up facing a challenge not from the Kurds but from Sunni Arab parties that saw the document as reflecting the fundamental interests of its key drafters, the Kurdish parties and ISCI. While the original clause in the Transitional Administrative Law reflected Kurdish fear of repression by constitution, the January 2005 parliamentary elections—and its exclusions—radically transformed the political landscape. It put the Kurds and ISCI in power and relegated Sunni Arabs to

being those who had to fear for their future, as represented by the constitution or otherwise. In the end, they fell only 85,000 votes short of the required two-thirds majority in one governorate, Ninawa (Mosul), having already breached the threshold in two others, Anbar and Salah al-Din.

[6] In one of the strange post-2003 ironies, the people of Kirkuk enjoy more hours of state-provided electricity than those of Erbil and Suleimaniya, who are almost totally dependent on privately owned generators, for which they must purchase expensive fuel. Apart from endemic corruption, inability to provide electricity and affordable fuel has been one of the Kurdistan Regional Government's great failures.

[7] The Arab council members ended their boycott in late 2007 and the Turkmen members in May 2008.

[8] Although there is oil in Anbar, it is not clear that it is possible to extract it profitably. And as long as Anbar is unstable, no international oil company will want to invest there. Distrusting the Iraqi government, which they see as an Iranian proxy, Sunni Arab politicians fear they will be left out in the cold. They place little trust in constitutional guarantees concerning oil revenue sharing and therefore want to return to state institutions and security forces to make these guarantees ironclad.

[9] See International Crisis Group, *Iraq After the Surge II: The Need for a New Political Strategy* (Baghdad/Istanbul/Damascus/Brussels, April 2008).

[10] The party's name is often mistranslated in the media as the Iraqi Accord or Accordance Front. According

to party officials, the name was designed to convey their claim that the coalition represents the consensus of the Sunni Arab community.

[11] See the text of Rice's December 21, 2007 press conference in Washington at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2007/12/97945.htm>.

[12] An unpleasant byproduct of the Kurds' alliance with the US is that they are asked at times to perform tasks they see as hurting their immediate interests. This was the case, for example, when the US, in launching the surge in 2007, demanded that its Kurdish friends send a couple of Kurd-dominated Iraqi army units to Baghdad to help US forces in clearing out al-Qaeda in Iraq. These units were brought in from Kirkuk, where they had been deployed to protect the city from AQL attacks originating in Arab districts such as Hawija. The Kurds grumbled but complied, valuing their alliance with the US, and the long-term benefits they expect to flow from it, above any temporary setbacks in Kirkuk or elsewhere.



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The Kurds and the Future

The Politics of Poverty in Turkey's Southeast

Will Day

Will Day is a doctoral candidate in Middle Eastern studies and social anthropology at Harvard University. He is currently carrying out a two-year ethnographic project based in Diyarbakır.

There's not a kid in this neighborhood who hasn't shined shoes or sold tissues," says Mehmet, 19, laughing deeply. His is the black humor born of misfortune: Like so many Kurdish youths in Diyarbakır, seat of Turkey's troubled southeast, Mehmet slowly made his way to the city with his family after watching his village burn during the war between Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) guerrillas and the Turkish army in the 1990s. Temporary, off-the-hooks jobs are all that stave off hunger for countless families of Kurds settled in and around Diyarbakır since their forcible displacement from the subsistence economies of the countryside. Stark socioeconomic inequalities are nothing new for this region, of course. But the uprooting of hundreds of thousands of rural Kurds has created a massive new class of urban poor, searching for a way to rebuild their lives in cities unable to provide for their basic needs, let alone offer employment.

There is no systematic study of the 1990s displacement and hence no agreement upon the precise number of displaced. A 1998 Turkish parliamentary investigation, relying on census totals from southeastern villages before their depopulation, estimated the number at 378,355.

The human rights organization Göç-Der, on the other hand, suggests the number may be as high as three million, when the definition of the displaced is broadened to encompass those forced to leave their homes by armed clashes, the destruction of fields and pastures, army-imposed food embargoes and threats by state security forces, state-employed "village guards" and the PKK. In Diyarbakır, the highly symbolic city that many Kurds consider the capital of an imagined greater Kurdistan, the population has increased nearly threefold since the peak of displacement in the early 1990s. Estimates of joblessness range from 30 percent

(the 2000 census) to 70 percent (a Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry study from 2002). Add underemployment and temporary or seasonal employment, and the figure jumps to almost 74 percent, according to a door-to-door survey carried out in four of Diyarbakır's main squatter settlements by the local NGO Sarmaşık. The same report found that 83 percent of the nearly 6,000 households surveyed live below the official "hunger line" of \$490 per month. The



Teenagers in Diyarbakır. (Burhan Ozbilic/AP Photo)

sheer scale of deprivation has moved poverty and economic inequality to the center of the long-standing debates over what the Turkish media persist in calling "the Kurdish problem."

The politics of that "problem," as indicated by the discrepant displacement and unemployment figures, largely define what can and cannot be said in the poverty debates. For the Turkish state, in fact, poverty in the southeast is a condition prior to politics, strictly separated from

questions of history, identity and culture. “The problem of citizens [here] is a humanitarian problem,” as Hüseyin Avni Mutlu, governor of Diyarbakır, told the mainstream newspaper *Referans* in January. Ankara appoints governors to oversee the southeastern provinces. “Cultural identity is not the basic problem. The agenda of the people is economic; the agenda is sustenance. Any other claims are political.” So long as the desires of the people of the southeast are rendered as a universal, biological need—sustenance—the state will recognize them. The governor dismisses questions about the historical and political origins of poverty as “the worst form of exploitation, human exploitation.”

It is a viewpoint that clashes somewhat with those of poor Kurdish youth, even those, like Mehmet, who have seen some benefit from the state’s solicitude since their own stint shining shoes and selling tissues. Mehmet’s elder brother received an interest-free loan from the governorate, one of a number of state-sponsored programs to encourage entrepreneurship, and set up a small kebab stand. He divides the profits between supporting his ailing parents and saving up for his imminent marriage. Mehmet works for free, but when he needs pocket money, his brother obliges.

Mehmet wakes up every morning at 5:30, buys fresh liver and meat for the stand, and heads to high school (having dropped out years before to work, he is now five years senior to his first-year classmates). After school, he runs the stand until midnight. Three days a week, he attends a training program, provided free of charge by the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, that will certify him to lay natural gas lines.

Mehmet’s understanding of Diyarbakır’s economy, nevertheless, is colored by a broader feeling of exclusion. “When we go west to find work, people hear our accent, or the police take one look at our ID cards [where one’s place of birth is listed] and they say, ‘He’s from the east, he’s a terrorist.’ When we stay here, there are no factories, no jobs, and we can’t get a decent education or score well on the national university exams because the state only sends the worst teachers here, and any talented teachers here escape to the west if they find the chance.”

That the present shape of poverty has a political history, and that the presence of poverty does not erase other claims—that one can be hungry and desire education in Kurdish, that one can hope for both a more equal distribution of wealth and a more equal distribution of dignity and life chances—captures, in condensed form, the kind of recognition advocated by the NGOs and municipal governments working in the southeast. These NGOs and municipalities are the new legal, public face of Kurdish politics, emerging from a series of political reforms in motion since the early 2000s. From their per-

spective, the separation of poverty from politics is equal to a denial of historical and social reality. “The problem,” stresses the mayor of Diyarbakır, Osman Baydemir, “is economic, social, cultural, political, legal and administrative. An integrative approach is essential to bringing improvement.” The politics of poverty extends even to word choice. The Turkish state favors the term *yoksulluk* (an abstract noun indicating an existing state or condition of “poor-ness”), while domestic NGOs and regional governments prefer *yoksullaştırma* (a verbal noun emphasizing action behind the state or condition described, and translatable as “causing to be poor,” or impoverishment).

For other local actors, recognizing more than basic human need in the southeast is not only essential to designing more effective poverty relief. Many NGOs and research groups working in the region hope that discussion of forced migration and its role in the production of the new urban poverty may also urge the state toward a deeper commitment to assisting in the rehabilitation of the regional economy. If the claims of the southeast can be associated with principles of the European Union and the UN—such as cultural rights and participatory local governance—they may acquire a stamp of legitimacy that pushes the state to reevaluate its reflexive equation of southeastern grievances with PKK demands.

For Ahmet, 21, the ongoing debate on poverty and economic improvement is filtered through firsthand experiences of forced displacement, urban underemployment, and deep familiarity and sympathy with the PKK. Ahmet’s story begins in the early 1990s, when state security forces first evacuated, and, upon the return of residents, burned his family’s village. The village was known to be providing nearby militant camps with bread. “The guerrillas weren’t strangers to us. They were our brothers and fathers, sisters and cousins, so we couldn’t turn them away.” At seven, he left the village empty-handed and came with his family of nine to Diyarbakır.

He began working soon after arrival, shining shoes, selling tissues and gum on the streets, running errands for neighborhood restaurants and teahouses. Halfway through middle school, he landed a job as an assistant in a bakery and left school to work nights. He receives \$300–350 per month.

Ahmet also sees a great deal of politics in the local economy. “In the southeast, there are no opportunities for work. Or if there are, they’re very, very few. Look, there are people working for almost nothing on this street. Why? To try to contribute a little at home. And you won’t find less than seven to ten people in any home here. They say in the west, ‘Don’t give away jobs to Kurds’—they always exclude us. But if we didn’t do their work, Turks would die

of hunger. Look at pistachios, hazelnuts, cotton—they’re all harvested by Kurds. Everyone benefits from our poverty, they [in the west], the world, even people here in the southeast.... Why are we always excluded?”

He is unimpressed by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s recent announcement of a \$12 billion investment package targeted at economic development in the southeast. “Well, the state always tries to distract us Kurds with enticing stories, to have us forget our struggle. They say, ‘We’re going to give you opportunities for work.’ They’re all lies, nothing but deception.” “Peace and rights are what we want,” Ahmet says, and believes that Kurds have a duty to respond to violence in kind in the struggle for equal rights against a state perceived to be intentionally retarding development in the region.

Mehmet reads the new talk of poverty relief and development through a somewhat different lens. Toiling at his brother’s kebab stand launched with help from the state, he dreams of a less exhausting, more just future. He speaks repeatedly of the need for young people to “know themselves,” and to see the economic future of the southeast as bound up with personal responsibility. “I used to spend all night just walking the streets. Now I think that to secure your future, you’ve got to work. If a few factories are established, if a few more workplaces are opened, then a regular citizen can go home at night with a bag of groceries and keep his kids in school.” Distrustful of police, angered by his memories of military violence and proud of his association, through the gas worker training program, with the pro-Kurdish municipal government, he also echoes a main thesis of the state: If everyone had a job, then political contestation in the southeast might just disappear. In this, Mehmet is like many people, taking in the range of available ideas about the rapidly changing present, and often joining seemingly contradictory positions in the same person.

The state’s poverty relief strategies have contradictions of their own. The encouragement of small entrepreneurs, for instance, has given businessmen and NGOs in the southeast a new role as brokers, capturing and redistributing development rent and cultivating new skills such as grant writing. One thing is clear: In the unresolved debate over poverty, a debate impinging upon everyday life for hundreds of thousands in urban squatter settlements across the southeast, the presence of so many actors (NGOs, development brokers, local, national and international government bodies, ex-peasants) makes old dichotomies pitting the Turkish state against Kurdish rebels no longer helpful. Addressing the problems of the new urban poor will require thinking outside them.

L'Orient
LE JOUR 27 juin 2008

DEUX ATTENTATS, L'UN À FALLOUJAH ET L'AUTRE À MOSSOUL, FONT PRÈS DE 40 MORTS ET UNE CENTAINE DE BLESSÉS

Une vingtaine de chefs de milice sunnites anti-Qaëda figurent parmi les tués

À moins 38 personnes ont été tuées et une centaine blessées hier en Irak dans deux attentats, dont l'un a provoqué la mort de 20 chefs de milice en lutte contre la branche locale d'el-Qaëda, près de Falloujah (Ouest), l'ancienne place forte de l'insurrection sunnite. Le second attentat, à la voiture piégée, a fait 18 morts dont un policier à Mossoul, un bastion d'el-Qaëda situé à 370 km au nord de Bagdad.

À al-Karma, petite ville proche de Falloujah, le kamikaze s'est introduit à l'intérieur de la mairie au moment où se déroulait une réunion de chefs de « Sahwa » (« Réveil »), ces groupes de combattants sunnites passés de l'insurrection anti-américaine à la lutte contre le réseau d'Oussama Ben Laden. L'attentat suicide s'est produit vers 12h00, heure locale (09h00 GMT) et a entraîné la mort de 20 d'entre eux, dont le maire d'al-Karma, a-t-on indiqué de sources officielles. Vingt autres personnes, dont trois policiers, ont été blessées par la puissante déflagration, selon le ministère de la Défense.

L'armée américaine a par ailleurs indiqué qu'il y avait des soldats américains parmi les « victimes », sans préciser le nombre ni s'ils étaient morts ou blessés.

« L'attentat porte la marque d'el-Qaëda en Irak », a accusé une porte-parole militaire, le sergent Brooke Murphy.

Al-Karma est rattachée administrativement à Falloujah, une ville de la province d'al-Anbar située à 50 km à l'ouest de Bagdad. Les comités du « Sahwa » sont mobilisés depuis début 2007 et financés par l'armée américaine pour lutter contre el-Qaëda. Ces milices sont constituées en majorité d'anciens insurgés sunnites et de combattants tribaux payés 300 dollars par mois comme supplétifs des forces de sécurité irakiennes et américaines.

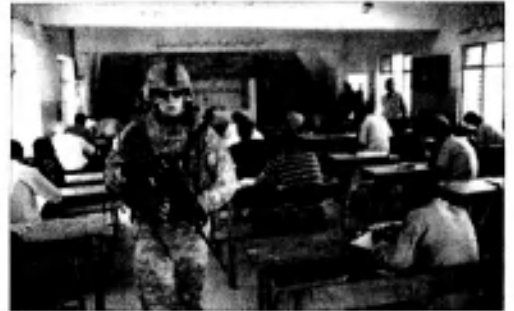
Le gouvernement de Bagdad avait accueilli avec méfiance la formation de ces groupes, craignant qu'ils ne se retournent finalement contre les autorités. Les Réveils, qui sont également appelés « Fils de l'Irak » ou « citoyens mobilisés », rassemblent plus de 80 000 anciens insurgés. Ils ont largement contribué à la baisse des violences à Falloujah. Dans un document récent, le commandant en chef des forces armées américaines et irakiennes, le général David Petraeus, préconisait de généraliser en Irak l'utilisation de l'argent comme « arme », en référence à l'expérience fructueuse avec les « Sahwa ».

Cet attentat intervient alors que le contrôle de la province sunnite d'al-Anbar

doit passer dans les prochains jours de l'armée américaine aux forces irakiennes. Ce passage de témoin est très symbolique dans la mesure où Falloujah, l'une des grandes villes de la province, avait été l'épicentre des violences entre l'armée américaine et les insurgés sunnites après la chute du régime de Saddam Hussein en avril 2003.

La ville de Mossoul, également théâtre d'un attentat hier, est elle considérée comme le « dernier bastion urbain d'el-Qaïda » par l'armée américaine. L'explosion, en début d'après-midi, d'une voiture piégée en plein centre a tué 18 personnes, dont un policier, et fait 80 blessés, dont neuf policiers, a indiqué l'armée américaine dans un communiqué. Le commandement américain n'a pas été en mesure de donner plus de détails, mais selon un policier interrogé par l'AFP, l'attaque ne s'est pas réduite à une voiture piégée.

Vers 13h00 (10h00 GMT), une pluie de roquettes s'est abattue sur un marché de Mossoul. Selon le policier, le gouverneur



de la province de Ninive (dont Mossoul est la capitale), Duraïd Mohammad Kashmoula, s'était rendu sur le marché après ces tirs et s'y trouvait encore quand la voiture piégée a explosé. Mais, de même source, il n'a pas été touché. L'attentat de Mossoul intervient alors que l'armée irakienne, soutenue par des unités américaines, a lancé depuis le 14 mai une vaste offensive contre la branche irakienne d'el-Qaëda, très active dans cette région. Mossoul et ses plus de 1,5 million d'habitants sunnites, chiites, chrétiens et kurdes, est toujours considérée par le commandement américain comme l'épicentre de l'action des partisans d'Oussama Ben Laden, repoussés en 2007 de Bagdad et de l'ouest du pays.

AFP

KARAYILAN: ANKARA S'EST LIGUÉE AVEC TÉHÉRAN ET DAMAS CONTRE LES KURDES

MONTS QANDIL (Irak), 28 juin 2008 (AFP) -

- Le principal commandant militaire du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), Murat Karayilan, a appelé samedi la Turquie à négocier avec les séparatistes plutôt que de chercher à former un front anti-kurde avec l'Iran et la Syrie.

"Nous espérons que la Turquie va arrêter sa politique agressive et mener des négociations démocratiques pour résoudre les problèmes", a déclaré à un journaliste de l'AFP le leader séparatiste, qui se cache dans les Monts Qandil, dans le nord de l'Irak.

La Turquie ne pourra être un pays "stable et démocratique tant qu'elle n'aura pas réglé le problème kurde", a estimé M. Karayilan.

L'armée turque a lancé plusieurs offensives sur les positions du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak depuis décembre. Le gouvernement turc affirme que 2.000 rebelles kurdes du PKK sont cachés de l'autre côté de sa frontière avec l'Irak.

Considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, le PKK a entamé en 1984 une lutte séparatiste armée dans le sud-est et l'est de la Turquie, à la population en majorité kurde, un conflit qui a fait plus de 37.000 morts.

M. Karayilan, qui dirige le PKK selon Ankara depuis la capture en 1999 d'Abdullah Öcalan, accusent la Syrie, la Turquie et l'Iran, trois pays où vivent des communautés kurdes, de s'être ligüés contre le PKK et un groupe affilié basé dans le nord de l'Irak, le Pejak.

"Une alliance des ennemis des Kurdes s'est formée entre l'Iran, la Turquie et la Syrie", a déploré le responsable, reprochant aux trois pays d'empêcher l'émergence d'un "Kurdistan en Turquie, en Syrie et en Iran".

Selon lui, Téhéran et Ankara s'apprentent à lancer de nouvelles attaques contre les rebelles kurdes.

"Nous ne sommes pas contre l'Iran. Nous ne lui avons pas déclaré la guerre. Il y a un parti kurde iranien, le Pejak, et ce parti est la cible de l'Iran. Il est donc bien obligé de se défendre", a estimé le leader séparatiste.

Le Pejak fait des incursions en Iran où ses combattants affrontent réguliè-



ment les forces armées iraniennes.

Murat Karayilan a estimé en outre que les responsables politiques kurdes irakiens, comme le président Jalal Talabani et le président de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien Massoud Barzani, pourraient apporter leur aide compte tenu de leurs relations privilégiées avec Washington.

"Nous souhaitons régler le problème kurde d'une manière pacifique (...) par des discussions dans une atmosphère démocratique. Barzani et Talabani peuvent jouer un rôle dans ce dossier et offrir un programme pour résoudre le problème", a-t-il affirmé.

"Je pense que leurs relations avec les Etats-Unis sont meilleures maintenant et s'ils veulent jouer un rôle, ils peuvent le faire et obtenir de bons résultats. Mais nous ne voyons aucune tentative (de leur part), et la politique contre le Kurdistan se poursuit", a-t-il ajouté.



- Voices of Iraq
june 30 , 2008

Kurdistan's president, Libyan leader discuss Iraq's developments

Erbil-Hewler, Kurdistan region "Iraq", june 30 , 2008 (VOI)

— President of Iraq's Kurdistan Region, Massoud Barzani, and his accompanying delegation, arrived in Libya and met with Muammar Gaddafi, the Libyan leader, according to a release posted on the Kurdistan's regional government's official Web site on Sunday.

"On Saturday evening, Barzani arrived in Libya upon an official invitation addressed to him by the Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi," said the release that was received by VOI.

"Barzani thanked Gaddafi for his continuous position and support to Kurdistan's people and case," it added.

At the airport, President Barzani was received by al-Baghdadi Ali al-Mahmudi, General Secretary of the General People's Committee, the prime minister of Libya. Later, the President was received by President Gaddafi.

President of Iraq's Kurdistan Region, Massoud Barzani (L), Muammar Gaddafi, Libyan President.

President Barzani thanked President Gaddafi for his position and continuous support for the people of Kurdistan. For his part, the Libyan President expressed his pleasure for this visit by President Barzani.



"The two sides conferred on the political and security circumstances in Iraq," it noted.

President Barzani visited Italy earlier and attended the Alliance of Democrats conference in Rome.



Voices of Iraq
Jun 30,2008

Article 140...between reality and constitution

Baghdad, Jun 30,2008 (VOI) — While still under debate among political forces, an extension of the deadline for the implementation of Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution will expire in July 2008, with many raising questions about the constitutional and legal aspects of its implementation.

The deputy chairman of the Constitutional Amendments Committee in the Iraqi parliament, Fouad Masoum, says that the parliament is not authorized to extend the implementation of constitutional articles.

Speaking to Aswat al-Iraq- *Voices of Iraq*- (VOI), Masoum, who is also a member of the Kurdistan Coalition (KC), (55 seats), said that the controversy over disputed areas is still going strong on the political scene. "Only the Constitutional Amendments Committee is authorized to extend the deadline for the implementation of the article," Masoum added.

"The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for Iraq Staffan de Mistura can intervene to find solutions that are acceptable to all parties in the dispute," he explained.

In early June, de Mistura presented a number of recommendations on four disputed districts to the Iraqi government. The UN official recommended that Akra and Makhmour districts be administered by the Kurds, and al-Hamdaniya and Mandali districts by the central government.

Most Iraqi political forces expressed their categorical rejection of de Mistura's recommendations.

The UN official is expected to submit his recommendations of the second stage of disputed areas, including Tal Afar, Sinjar, Shikhan and Khaneqeen. The third stage will be devoted to the oil-rich city of Kirkuk.

Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution is related to the normalization of the situation in Kirkuk city and other disputed areas.

Kurds seek to include the city in the autonomous Iraq's Kurdistan region, while Sunni Muslims, Turkmen and Shiites oppose the incorporation. The article currently stipulates that all Arabs in Kirkuk be returned to their original locations in southern and central Iraqi areas, and formerly displaced residents returned to Kirkuk, 250 km northeast of Baghdad. The article also calls for conducting a census to be followed by a referendum to let the inhabitants decide whether they would like Kirkuk to be annexed to the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan region or having it as an independent province.

These stages were supposed to end on December 31, 2007, a deadline that was later extended to six months to end in July 2008.

Last month, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) warned in statements by its official spokesman, Jamal Abdullah, of the repercussions of not implementing Article 140. The spokesman indicated that any decision on the controversial article should first be referred to the regional government and political blocs, noting that the passing of time is not a great healer in this regard.

Raed Fahmi, an official from the committee, told VOI that the legal status will be determined by the Iraqi cabinet. "Our committee is affiliated with the cabinet and the decision is in the hands of the prime minister," Fahmi noted.

When asked about the developments in the committee's work, Fahmi said: "We are currently working on the normalization process and we have made much progress in this regard. We also pay compensation to the displaced and returnees...."

THE TIMES June 30, 2008

Turks Court Disaster

Turkey's judges are being asked to ban the country's ruling party and its leading politicians. If they want to save democracy they will refuse

Turkey's constitutional court opens a case today that will have momentous, and possibly disastrous, consequences not only for Turkey but also for much of the Muslim world (see page 34). It is a case that could end Turkish hopes of joining the European Union for ever and transform one of the West's most vibrant strategic allies into a feuding and embittered society, torn between military re-

pression and Islamic fervour.

For what the court is attempting to decide is whether Islam is compatible with secular democracy. If it rules that the present Islamist Government has undermined Atatürk's constitution, it will declare the entire ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party illegal and order the dissolution of one of Turkey's most popular and successful governments. If that should happen, Islamist parties

throughout the Muslim world may turn their backs on democracy, arguing that, since secularists will never accept them, they should ignore the democratic process and seize power.

Few court cases have been more political or less justified. When the chief prosecutor opens proceedings today with the accusation that Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Prime Minister, is seeking to transform Turkey into an Islamic state, most Turks

will hear the voice of the powerful and resentful armed forces. The Army, which sees itself as the guardian of secularism, has never accepted either Mr Erdogan or his party. Four times in the past 50 years it has staged a coup, coming close last year to doing so again over the the Prime Minister's proposal to name a prominent Islamist as the next president. The wily Mr Erdogan, however, called a snap election, came back with an increased majority, installed Abdullah Gül as President and implicitly challenged the military to defy popular opinion and overthrow him.

Having failed in their public warnings to stop AK returning to power, the generals have thrown their weight behind this latest coup by stealth. Counting on the secularist constitutional court to accept the legal challenge by the opposition, they now hope to prove their contention that recent gov-

ernment decisions, especially the attempt to lift the ban on headscarves at universities, were indicative of an Islamic agenda.

The prosecution - and the generals - are seeking a five-year ban on politics on 71 party members, including Mr Erdogan and President Gül. The uncertainty is already damaging markets and inhibiting foreign investment. The European Union has taken a strong stand against the trial, saying that accusations against the Government should be debated in parliament and that it is up to voters, not to a tribunal, to decide whether the AK Party, which now proclaims itself a "conservative democratic" rather than Islamist party, is fit to hold office.

If the Government is dissolved forcibly by a court decision, the EU would almost certainly break off accession talks. This would please the military Establishment, which has become increasingly

nationalist and views the EU with suspicion, especially in light of EU condemnation of its campaign against Kurdish rights and the suppression of writers considered unpatriotic. This is just one issue where the secular Establishment has forfeited the former warm support of the West, while the AK Party has impressed outsiders by a swath of reforms and progress on human rights.

Muslim governments are watching Turkey intently. Most are fearful that attempts to draw Islamist parties, hovering on the edge of legality, into the political framework will founder if AK is banned. That would radicalise Islamists, revive conflict with the West, thwart political reconciliation across the Muslim world and lead to lasting bitterness. A lot rides on this week's court case.

REUTERS

June 30, 2008 Reuters BAGHDAD

Iraq's Oil Ministry unveiled on Monday six oilfield areas open to foreign firms for long-term development contracts, clearing the way for major international involvement in the country's petroleum wealth.

The fields are Rumaila, Kirkuk, Zubair, West Qurna Phase 1, Bai Hassan and the Maysan fields. Maysan comprises three fields, Bazargan, Abu Gharab and Fakka.

Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani announced the list at a news conference in Baghdad. The government has already pre-qualified 41 foreign firms to bid for the contracts.

Two gas fields, Akkas and Mansuriyah, were also opened.

The Oil Ministry said last week it had finished negotiations with oil majors on six separate short-term oil service contracts and hoped to sign those deals during the next month.

The short-term deals, each worth about \$500 million (250 million pounds), are aimed at quickly lifting output at Iraq's largest producing fields by a combined 500,000 barrels a day. Iraq's current oil production is around 2.5 million bpd.

Taken together, the short-term and long-term contracts will open the door to major international involvement in the OPEC member's oil sector for the first time in decades.

LARGE OIL RESERVES

The majors have been positioning themselves for years in the hope of eventually gaining access to Iraq's proven reserves, which at 115 billion barrels are

the world's largest after Saudi Arabia and Iran. Deputy Prime Minister Dr Barham Salih said in April that reserves could be as much as 350 billion barrels.

Five of the short-term deals that have been under discussion are with Royal Dutch Shell, Shell in partnership with BHP Billiton, BP, Exxon Mobil and Chevron in partnership with Total.

Iraq has also been in talks with a consortium of Anadarko, Vitol and Dome for a sixth short-term contract.

Those talks on the short-term deals have given the majors a head start in efforts to bid for future oil contracts. The U.S. companies were involved in Iraq long before Saddam Hussein took over the country and nationalised the oil industry.

After bids are submitted for the long-term contracts, negotiations may take months. At the end of 2008 or in early 2009, the oil ministry has said it would announce the winners.

Oil is Iraq's main source of income, and boosting output is key to earning the cash the country needs for reconstruction.

Iraq's cabinet agreed a draft oil law in February last year, but it has failed to get through parliament partly because of rows between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Baghdad over who will control oil reserves and contracts.

In the absence of the law, Baghdad has moved ahead with the short and long-term contracts, saying this is in line with an old oil law in existence before the U.S.-led invasion in 2003.

Iraq unveils oilfields open for long-term contracts

United Press International

Iraqi Kurdistan Government oil minister explains oil deal breakdown

June 30, 2008 (UPI) Erbil-Hewler, Kurdistan region "Iraq",

The contracts have not been published, but Ashti Hawrami, Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) natural resources minister, insists everything needed to know about what's in the dozens of contracts signed between the KRG and international oil companies is in the public domain.

In a recent interview with United Press International from his office in Erbil, the capital of Iraq's Kurdistan region, Hawrami explained the breakdown of contract ownership by the companies and how much control the government has in the contract.

He says the Kurdish government not only takes the majority of the profit after the companies recoup their costs, has rights to enter into the deal via the state companies or a private company of the government's choosing.

Hawrami said the companies also are required to pay a signing bonus to the government and commit millions of dollars in local development projects.

Dr Ashti Hawrami, Kurdistan Regional Government minister of natural resources, in his office in Erbil, the capital of Iraq's Kurdistan region



He said the details of all this will be published in the coming months, including an account held in an Erbil bank of all the funds collected in the oil deals, to be turned over to Baghdad once a revenue-sharing law is signed.

Since 2004 the KRG has signed more than 20 contracts to explore for and develop oil in the region, with two contracts commercially producing oil already. While the Iraqi Oil Ministry in Baghdad claims the deals are illegal, it apparently can't stop the KRG, which signed a handful again last week.

The KRG deals range from small international firms to some of the largest state-owned and independents, like Dallas-based Hunt Oil, India's Reliance, MOL from Hungary, OMV of Austria and the Korea National Oil Corp.

The production-sharing contracts were negotiated outright, not up for bid, and the KRG has been criticized for not being transparent.

While Hawrami refused to make the contracts public, he told UPI "the government takes about 90 percent or so through the public company and royalty and profit oil, and

the contractor's take is generally about 10 percent."

Hawrami said much of the details are on the KRG Web site, published when the deals were announced.

"The government takes 10 percent from the top, as a royalty, that is 10 percent of the total oil produced before the contractors get anything towards their cost recovery. The contractor is then allowed, typically, a maximum of 40 percent of the remaining oil to offset its costs. And that is effectively net 36 percent, because it's 40 percent of the remaining 90 percent after royalty. And then what is left (54 percent) is profit oil. If the contractor doesn't have any costs remaining, then 36 percent cost oil will also be added to the profit oil, which makes the whole 90 percent after royalty profit oil," he said.

"While the contractor is in the cost recovery stage, he starts with a slightly higher cut of the profit, but ultimately that's only for a short window of time, so it comes down to around 15 to 16 percent, and the government gets the rest, effectively 85 percent. But then before that, the government has taken 10 percent of the gross revenue as royalty. So, that means that the government gets 85 percent of the 90 percent (i.e., 76.5 percent) plus 10 percent as royalty, thus

86.5 percent overall cut," he said.

"Also in the contract, on the contractor's side, one of the partners is the Kurdistan National Oil Co. or the Kurdistan Exploration and Production Co., either as an option to be exercised or it is named upfront. There's the option for a government to exercise an interest option through a government company.

"And typically that is 20 percent. In some contracts this is 25 percent," he said. "When you subtract that 20 percent to 25 percent from the contractor's share, the foreign contractor's net share becomes really about 11 percent, this is because KEPCO will be taking 20 percent or so from the contractor's share of its profit. Also, we still typically have about 15 to 20 percent more in these contracts reserved for the government to exercise that option in favor of a new contractor (a third party). We are doing that to allow us to broaden the consortium to include an additional party, either bringing a friendly company from another friendly country or to increase the government stake via KNOC or KEPCO, or to bring in a domestic private sector company, if it can demonstrate adequate resources."

Le journal
Observateur

29 juin 2008

Révélations sur la guerre secrète de l'Amérique contre l'Iran

Ce matin, l'hebdomadaire le "New Yorker" vient de mettre en ligne un article très important sur la guerre secrète que l'Amérique mène sur le sol iranien depuis plusieurs mois.

Le journaliste Seymour Hersh, en général extrêmement bien informé, révèle qu'à la fin de l'année dernière la Maison Blanche a obtenu du Congrès une enveloppe de **400 millions de dollars pour financer des opérations spéciales en Iran** d'une envergure beaucoup vaste que celles menées jusqu'à présent.

Leurs buts?

Déstabiliser le leadership de la République islamique et obtenir des informations sur ses travaux nucléaires.

Comment?

En fournissant **argent et armes** à des groupes d'opposition arabes (dont l'un serait proche d'Al Qaida), balouches, kurdes et iraniens (y compris le Conseil National de la Résistance, pourtant classé parmi les organisations terroristes).

Le tout serait organisé à partir d'une base secrète située dans l'Ouest de l'Afghanistan.

Résultats?

D'après les informations recueillies par Hersh, il semble - mais cela n'est pas certain - que ces groupes auraient accompli **plusieurs "exécutions" de hauts responsables des Gardiens de la Révolution** (organisation clé du pouvoir iranien dont est issu le président Ahmadinejad).



Selon le journaliste du "New Yorker", au moins quatre leaders du parti Démocrate (majoritaire au Congrès) ont donné leur accord à cette intensification des opérations spéciales en Iran.

Mais, d'après lui, les législateurs n'auraient pas été mis au courant des détails et en particu-

lier des "exécutions" ciblées - et cela, **en contradiction avec la loi**.

Hersh insiste en outre sur le fait que, selon lui, la Maison Blanche envisage très sérieusement des frappes militaires contre l'Iran mais qu'elle se heurte à **l'opposition du Pentagone** et de son chef, le secrétaire d'État à la Défense, Robert Gates.

Ce dernier aurait dit lors d'un déjeuner, fin 2007, avec des parlementaires démocrates: si nous attaquons l'Iran, **"nous créerons des générations de jihadistes et nos petits-enfants devront combattre nos ennemis ici en Amérique"**.

Mais il a précisé que c'était là son point de vue, pas celui de la Maison Blanche.

Hersh, qui a intitulé son article **"Préparations du champ de bataille"**, semble convaincu que l'intensification des opérations spéciales est une étape supplémentaire vers la guerre.

S'il a raison, il est fort possible que le prochain président des États-Unis découvre en janvier 2009 que des frappes sont d'ores et déjà programmées - exactement **comme Kennedy** a découvert l'opération militaire visant à renverser le régime de Castro en janvier 1961.

A l'époque, le jeune président n'avait pas osé, pas su ou pas voulu s'opposer au tout puissant patron de la CIA, Allen Dulles, et avait donné son feu vert à ce qui allait devenir le **désastre de la Baie des Cochons**.

Que ferait Obama dans un cas similaire?

Le Monde

Mercredi 25 juin 2008

INSTITUTIONS

Le Sénat supprime la clause du référendum anti-Turquie

CINQ AMENDEMENTS identiques étaient examinés au Sénat, dans la soirée du lundi 23 juin, pour supprimer du projet de révision constitutionnelle sur les institutions l'obligation de référendum

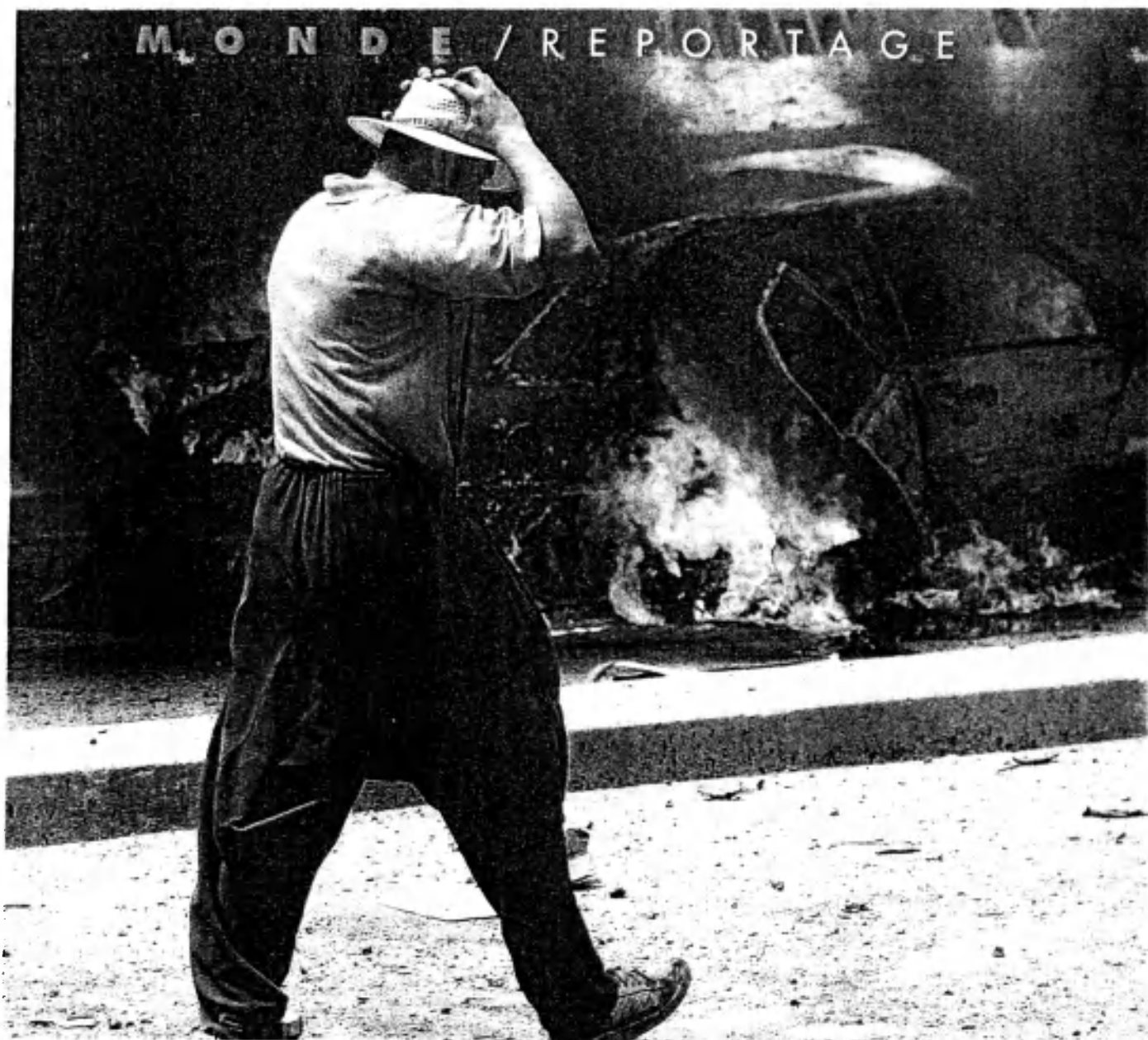
pour la ratification de l'adhésion à l'Union européenne d'un Etat dont la population représenterait plus de 5 % de celle de l'Union. Cette clause restrictive, visant sans le dire la Turquie, avait été introduite en première lecture à l'Assemblée nationale, sous la pression des opposants à l'adhésion de la Turquie et avec l'aval du chef de l'Etat.

Tous partis confondus, les sénateurs se sont élevés contre une disposition jugée « **inacceptable** » (Jacques Blanc, UMP, Lozère), « **indigne, injurieuse pour la Turquie** » (Alima Boumediene-Thiery, Verts, Paris), « **insupportable** » (Bernard Frimat, PS, Nord), « **discriminatoire et scandaleuse** » (Bernard Vera, PCF, Essonne), « **fâcheuse** » (Pierre Fauchon, UC-UDF, Loir-et-Cher). La garde des

sceaux, Rachida Dati, convenant que « **cet amendement a suscité des controverses** », a indiqué que le gouvernement s'en remettrait à la « **sagesse** » du Sénat. Les amendements ont été adoptés par 297 voix contre 7.

La réaction n'a pas tardé. « **Ayant reçu le soutien du gouvernement, les élus de la nation que nous sommes ne peuvent qu'être surpris par cette attitude qui vise à aller à l'encontre de la volonté des représentants du peuple français** », s'indignent dans un texte commun 54 députés de l'UMP, dont Richard Mallié, Patrick Devedjian et Frédéric Lefebvre, qui ajoutent : « **Nous restons ouverts à la discussion, à la seule et unique condition que l'objectif de notre amendement soit conservé.** » ■

P. RR



Irak Si Kirkouk

Dans le nord du pays, cette ville millénaire, riche en pétrole, est revendiquée par la région autonome du Kurdistan. Multiethnique, elle résume à la fois les tensions et les – fragiles – espoirs d'un Etat qui reste à reconstruire.

● VINCENT HUGELUX/REPORTAGE PHOTO : ABDULLAH IBRAHIM POUR L'EXPRESS

De notre envoyé spécial

Sarkot a 22 ans, le teint mat, le cheveu ras, la barbe drue et les nerfs à vif. Lui, sa femme, Samia, et leurs deux fils vivent dans une bicoque de parpaings, de torchis et de rondins, bricolée aux abords du stade de Shorja, refuge de 600 familles kurdes chassées de Kirkouk sous Saddam Hussein. « A mon retour, fin 2003, notre maison avait



Le 16 juillet 2007, un attentat au camion piégé provoque une hécatombe au cœur de Kirkouk (85 tués). Depuis, l'intensité des violences terroristes a nettement décliné.



En vertu de la Constitution de 2005, l'Irak est un Etat « multiethnique et multiconfessionnel », fédéral et démocratique, composé de 18 gouvernorats provinciaux. La loi de régionalisation, adoptée en février dernier, élargit les prérogatives des gouvernorats, mais ne s'applique pas aux trois provinces du Nord qui composent la région autonome du Kurdistan, déjà dotée de son Parlement et de son gouvernement. L'enjeu, crucial, est la survie d'un Irak unitaire. Le pays reste en effet tiraillé par la volonté souverainiste des Kurdes au nord et des chiites au sud, régions qui recèlent l'essentiel des ressources pétrolières. L'Assemblée nationale élue en décembre 2005 est dominée par les chiites (128 sièges sur 275), les Kurdes (53) et l'Alliance sunnite (44).

R. SAHREDEV/PHOTERS

explose...

disparu, soupire cet ancien peshmerga (combattant). Depuis, rien, sinon des promesses et deux couvertures, don d'une ONG étrangère. J'attends. » Pour nourrir les siens, Sarkot empile sur une charrette à bras des tapis d'occasion qu'il vend au porte-à-porte. Sous les gradins, entre un four à pain de fortune et des flaques fétides, d'autres squatters désœuvrés accourent. Très vite, le ton monte et les griets pleuvent. « Voyez

mes gosses, éructe un quadra moustachu. Ils croupissent dans une misère sans fond au-dessus d'une mer de pétrole ! » Allusion aux réserves d'or noir que recèlent Kirkouk et ses environs, îlot du Nord irakien revendiqué par la région autonome du Kurdistan. Dire qu'à deux pas d'ici les 400 logements neufs et innocupés du quartier de Panja Ali, pourvu d'une mosquée, d'une école et d'un château d'eau, narguent les

naufragés de Shorja... « Ras-le-bol des menteurs et des voleurs ! tonne l'un d'eux. S'il le faut, on descendra dans la rue avec des flingues. » A qui la faute ? Tout le monde y passe : les partis kurdes, coupables de « trahison », les Etats-Unis, « qui nous ont débarassés de Saddam puis abandonnés », les autorités locales et Bagdad, 255 kilomètres plus au sud, où siège un embryon de régime fédéral. Seul épargné, parfois, le président irakien, Jalal Talabani, kurde de souche. « Sans lui, tranche Sarkot, les Arabes nous tueraient. »

« Mosaïque » ou « bombe à retardement » ?

De Kirkouk, les grossistes en clichés ont tout dit. Car cette cité antique de plus de 1 million d'âmes, peuplée de Kurdes, d'Arabes, de Turkmènes et de chrétiens, passe au mieux pour une « mosaïque », au pis pour une « poudrière », un « chaudron » ou une « bombe à retardement ». « Pour elle, jurait le légendaire Mustafa Barzani, je verserais jusqu'à la dernière goutte de mon sang. » De fait, tous les conflits armés entre rudes montagnards du Nord et pouvoir central ont eu pour enjeu la citadelle millénaire où reposent, selon la légende, les prophètes Daniel et Ezra. Une certitude : la capitale de la province de Tamim ressemble à s'y méprendre à un Irak en modèle réduit ; à la vitrine des cancers qui le rongent, comme de ses atouts et de ses espoirs. Mais nul ne sait si c'est un sage ou un Docteur Folamour oriental qui détiendra demain les clefs du laboratoire. « Si l'on réussit ici, parie un ingénieur, la paix peut revenir partout. En cas d'échec, le pays est foutu. »

Faut-il, pour solder le litige, s'en remettre à l'Histoire ? Non, bien sûr : chaque communauté raconte la sienne en lâchant un feu nourri de chiffres et de dates. Les Turkmènes invoquent l'âge d'or de l'Empire ottoman et dégagent le recensement de 1957 ; les Arabes se prévalent des statistiques de 1977 et de 1997. Quant aux Kurdes, libérateurs de la ville en 2003, au côté des forces spéciales américaines, ils arguent de leur soif de justice en brandissant des liasses d'archives. « Tout le monde sait que ●●●

De retour à Kirkouk, d'où son père fut chassé par Saddam Hussein, le Kurde Sarkot vit dans un taudis et vend des tapis usagés au porte-à-porte.



Près du gouvernorat, un Arabe déchiffre la liste des résidents censés percevoir une indemnité avant de quitter la ville.

●●● Kirkouk est kurde, assène un élu. Des milliers de documents turcs, britanniques, français ou russes l'attestent. » Sauf à jouer les faussaires, nul ne peut contester cette évidence : des décennies durant, le régime baasiste a mené une campagne d'arabisation forcenée, expulsant des dizaines, voire des centaines de milliers de Kurdes, souvent parqués dans des « villages collectifs », et aussitôt remplacés par des cohortes de chiïtes du Sud, souvent gratifiés d'une maison et d'un emploi dans l'industrie pétrolière. Cette guérilla démographique a laissé des traces. Pour preuve, le ballet incessant des plaideurs aux abords du gouvernorat. Les Arabes « importés » prêts à quitter Kirkouk, parfois sous la menace, y croisent les Kurdes exilés avides d'exercer leur droit au retour. Aux uns, on promet une indemnité de 20 millions de dinars, soit environ 12 000 euros ; aux autres, un pécule deux fois moindre.

Sous un soleil aveuglant, à deux pas des guérites de tôle brûlantes des écri-

vains publics, Ahmad le sunnite scrute les listes affichées sur les panneaux de béton armé qui enserrant le bâtiment dans un corset anti-attentats. « Mon dossier, confie ce chômeur venu de Mossoul, père de 10 enfants, je l'ai déposé il y a un an. Me voilà à la septième des neuf étapes du processus. On me promet mon chèque pour octobre. »

Kirkouk, disent les Kurdes, est notre Jérusalem

Son voisin chiïte n'en est pas là. Lui réclame le renouvellement de la carte de rationnement requise pour l'achat de vivres à prix réduit. Peine perdue : « Ils me disent que je vais partir et que j'en aurai une autre dans le Sud. » « La bonne nouvelle, souligne le Suédois Staffan de Mistura, représentant spécial de

l'ONU en Irak, c'est que le système de compensation existe ; la mauvaise, c'est qu'il tourne au ralenti. » Au mieux, on a traité à ce jour 10 % des dossiers. Seules 6 000 familles arabes ont décampé ; tandis que 5 000 foyers kurdes retrouvaient la terre natale, quitte à bâtir à la hâte un logis sur une parcelle inconstructible.

Taher Karim, lui, a renoncé à finir ses jours à Neiba Sara, village évacué manu militari puis rasé en 1986 par la Garde républicaine et ses supplétifs locaux, au temps de l'Anfal, terrible tentative d'anéantissement des Kurdes d'Irak. « Trop vieux, trop fatigué, murmure cet ancien berger coiffé d'un keffieh et vêtu d'un pantalon bouffant, hébergé depuis lors dans la "réserve" urbaine de Beni Slawa, à l'est d'Erbil. Je suis retourné deux fois là-bas, et l'un de mes fils a tenté en vain de s'y établir.



Invités à rentrer dans leur Sud natal, les Arabes installés à Kirkouk sous Saddam attendent des années la compensation promise.

Impossible : ni eau, ni électricité, ni école, ni commerces. Dommage. J'aurais tant voulu mourir là où je suis né. »

A défaut de retour aux sources, et pourvu qu'Allah lui prête vie assez longtemps, le pieux Taher aimerait au moins prendre part au référendum sur le devenir de Kirkouk et autres « territoires disputés ». Et voter des deux mains pour leur rattachement à une entité kurde quasi souveraine. Selon l'article 140 de la Constitution irakienne, adoptée en octobre 2005, la consultation aurait dû avoir lieu avant le 31 décembre 2007. Date limite différée de six mois sur les instances de l'émissaire onusien, dûment mandaté par le Conseil de sécurité. A l'évidence, l'échéance du 30 juin 2008 ne sera pas davantage honorée.

Et cela vaut mieux : l'établissement des listes électorales, exercice ô combien délicat, n'est pas même amorcé ; pis, une telle empoignade tracerait à coup sûr le chemin le plus court vers l'affrontement communautaire. « Nous avons stoppé à temps le compte à rebours du colis piégé, mais le dossier reste explosif, admet Staffan de Mistura. Pour autant, le climat a changé, dans le sens du dialogue politique. Mieux vaut un référendum ultérieur, appelé à valider un accord négocié, qu'un vote conflictuel, rançon de la logique du fait accompli. » Arabes ou Turkmènes récusent la voie des urnes. Et seuls les Kurdes, sûrs de leur primauté, tiennent – officiellement du moins – au verdict référen-



Membre du Haut Comité pour l'application de l'article 140, Kaaka Rash Sadik reçoit un vieux Kurde désireux de revenir à Kirkouk.

taire. Kirkouk, se plaignent-ils à répéter, est notre Jérusalem. Voilà qui promet : si le statut futur de la ville suscite autant de déchirements que celui de la cité trois fois sainte... Pour l'heure, de Mistura le démineur planche sur une « formule créative » aux contours mystérieux, qui sera soumise aux protagonistes « dans les prochaines semaines » ; tout comme il s'évertue à « restaurer la confiance ».

« Une ville symbole de l'oppression de l'ère Saddam »

Déjà, les élus turkmènes et arabes, minoritaires, envisagent de siéger de nouveau au sein d'un conseil municipal boycotté depuis des mois. « Le drame, avance un enseignant, c'est que notre destin se joue moins ici qu'à Bagdad, Erbil ou Ankara. » Pas faux. Le retour au sein du giron kurde de Kirkouk et de son pactole pétrolier pourrait doper l'appétit des nationalistes kurdes dispersés, au gré d'une épopée cruelle, dans les pays frontaliers. Un vrai cauchemar pour la Turquie, par ailleurs protectrice des cousins turkmènes, pour

l'Iran, attentif au sort des chiïtes, ou pour la Syrie, trio enclin à l'ingérence. « Pas si simple, nuance un émissaire des Nations unies. Les Turcs et le gouvernement d'Erbil discutent. Tous les acteurs doivent bien l'admettre : l'ONU ou les Américains resteront dans les parages un moment, mais leurs voisins sont là pour toujours. » Le leadership de la région autonome a compris autre chose : la nécessité de désamorcer le piège des hydrocarbures. « Pour nous, soutient Kiwan Siwaily, expert pétrolier formé en Allemagne, Kirkouk est avant tout le symbole de l'oppression de l'ère Saddam. Le brut et le gaz ? Ils doivent servir l'essor de l'Irak tout entier. A ce stade, nous nous contenterons comme prévu de 17 % des recettes. Pas question d'attendre le bon vouloir de Bagdad pour exploiter un potentiel que le régime baasiste nous interdisait de faire fructifier. Déjà, nous avons perdu un siècle. Ça suffit. » Voilà pourquoi, tandis que s'enlise à Bagdad le débat sur la loi pétrolière fédérale, Erbil signe maints contrats avec les « majors » ●●●

●●● occidentales ou leurs filiales. Faut-il voir dans l'or noir tant convoité un don du ciel ou une malédiction ? « Parfois, je me le demande, confesse le cheikh Ismaïl al-Hadidi, chef d'une tribu sunnite à l'humeur aussi sombre que les panaches de fumée que crachent les torchères. Sans ce trésor, on n'en serait sans doute pas là. »

La cité de Daniel et d'Ezra ne vaut pas une guerre

En cette matinée de juin, une tension palpable étreint Kirkouk. Lancées à tombeau ouvert, deux ambulances se fraient un chemin jusqu'à l'hôpital à grands coups de rafales tirées en l'air : une charge téléguidée vient de faucher deux passants, grièvement blessés, et six policiers, plus légèrement touchés.

Une heure plus tard, un autre engin de mort explosera au passage d'une patrouille. Pas de quoi altérer pour autant l'optimisme du général Torhan Yusuf, chef adjoint de la police provinciale. « Sur le front de la sécurité, inartèle ce Turkmène, il y a un mieux très net. Je peux maintenant compter sur la collaboration des Kirkouki : ils en ont plus que marre des terroristes. » Et d'étaler sur son bureau les photos du meneur local d'Al-Qaeda, agenouillé et menotté. De fait, on est loin des carnages au camion



Le 1^{er} juin, l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), le parti du président irakien, Jalal Talabani, fête à Kirkouk comme ailleurs le 33^e anniversaire de sa création.

piégé des années 2006 et 2007. Plus erratique, la menace persiste. Le 15 juin, deux soldats et un civil irakien ont ainsi péri sur la route de Bagdad. Douze jours plus tôt, un commando avait assassiné deux dignitaires de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), le parti de Jalal Talabani, à Tuz, ville cosmopolite située 75 kilomètres plus au sud. Crapuleux ou politiques, les enlèvements et le

racket ne sont pas rares. Ici, on kidnappe le fils d'un riche négociant arabe ; là, l'employé d'un homme d'affaires chrétien, libéré contre rançon. Le général Yusuf a un autre souci : le respect du ratio légal dans ses rangs : 32 % de Kurdes, autant d'Arabes et de Turkmènes. Le reliquat ? Des Chaldéens et des Assyriens. « Pas facile, concède-t-il. Moi, je déteste ces quotas. En vingt-sept ans, j'ai servi partout, de Zakho [Kurdistan] à Bassora, fief chiite du Sud. Nous sommes tous irakiens, avec les mêmes droits. »

Au rayon des devoirs, il en est un sacré aux yeux de tout patriote kurde : proclamer urbi et orbi la « kurdité » de Kirkouk. Reste que, si Paris valait bien une messe, la cité de Daniel et d'Ezra ne vaut pas une guerre. « A quoi bon imposer par la force un rattachement formel, au risque de mettre en péril tous les acquis d'une indépendance de facto ? glisse un ingénieur. D'autant que je crains aussi dans ce cas une bagarre ouverte pour le contrôle de la ville et le réveil des vieilles rivalités entre l'UPK et le PDK. » Référence au Parti démocratique du Kurdistan de Massoud Barzani, président de la région autonome.

« Le vieil Irak est mort », tonne un universitaire fraîchement rentré d'Europe. Soit. Mais, vu de Kirkouk, son cadavre bouge encore. ● V. H.

D'Alexandre à Saddam

Les remparts de sa citadelle seraient plus de six fois millénaires. Et, à en croire les chroniqueurs de l'époque, Alexandre le Grand y séjourna brièvement. Kirkouk, l'un des sites habités les plus anciens du Moyen-Orient, a toujours attisé les convoitises. Longtemps aux mains de l'Empire ottoman, la cité passe sous mandat britannique en 1920, à la faveur du naufrage de la Sublime Porte. Plus tard, les soudards de Saddam Hussein dévastent la vieille ville et ses joyaux, telles les mosaïques ornant ses antiques maisons. Dès 1974, Mustafa Barzani, héros de la nation kurde, déclenche une insurrection armée après que Saddam a refusé de lui concéder la moindre autorité administrative sur la « Jérusalem des Kurdes ». Soulèvement écrasé

dans le sang. Cette brutalité affleure dix ans plus tard dans le défi ironique lancé par Tarek Aziz, bras droit du tyran, à Jalal Talabani, alors chef d'une faction kurde : « Vous n'aurez jamais Kirkouk. Et il ne vous restera que vos yeux pour pleurer. » Vidée de ses occupants avant l'invasion calamiteuse du Koweït par l'Irak (1990), la citadelle meurtrie, reléguée au rang de casernement, abrite ensuite une unité de la Garde républicaine. En 1991, tandis que vacille le régime baasiste, contraint sous les bourrasques de l'opération « Tempête du désert » d'évacuer l'émirat pétrolier, les peshmerga kurdes tiennent la ville pendant vingt-quatre jours. Conquête aussi éphémère que le rêve d'indépendance du Kurdistan, alors lâché par son parrain américain. ● V. H.