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APRES L'ATTAQUE D'AKTÜTÜN L'ARMEE TURQUE ACCUSEE DE « NEGLIGENCE »

Le 3 octobre, une attaque du PKK contre le post militaire turc d'Aktütün, dans la province de Hakkari, a fait 20 morts parmi les soldats turcs et 23 morts parmi les combattants kurdes selon le bilan officiel de l'armée, tandis que le PKK donnait pour bilan neuf victimes dans ses rangs contre 62 morts et plus de 30 blessés parmi les soldats turcs. L'armée a riposté en bombardant les bases du PKK, dans le Kurdistan irakien, sans pouvoir établir de chiffres précis

sur les victimes. Quelques jours plus tard, une autre attaque visant cette fois des policiers à Diyarbakir, faisait cinq victimes dont quatre membres des forces de l'ordre. Selon la version des autorités turques, des membres du PKK ont mitraillé un car de police. L'attentat n'a cependant pas été revendiqué par l'organisation kurde.

Comme à l'habitude, l'enterrement des soldats turcs a donné lieu à des manifestations nationalistes et vengeresses

rassemblant des dizaines de milliers de personnes. L'importance des effectifs de la guérilla impliqués dans l'attaque et le nombre des victimes a secoué l'opinion publique turque. Mais cette fois-ci, la presse et les partis d'opposition ont remis en cause ouvertement les compétences de l'armée.

Dès qu'ils ont appris l'attaque, Abdullah Gül, le président de Turquie a annulé un déplacement en France qui devait avoir lieu la semaine suivante, tandis que le Premier Ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan revenait précipitamment d'une visite au Turkménistan.

Une fois encore, le gouvernement turc a demandé à l'Irak d'« assumer ses responsabilités ». Mais le porte-parole du gouvernement irakien, Ali Al-Dabbagh, s'il a condamné l'attaque, a appelé Ankara à agir avec « sagesse et mesure ».

Dans une conférence de presse, le général Metin Gurak, qui dirige le bureau de la presse de l'état-major des armées, a affirmé que les pertes les plus lourdes étaient dues à des tirs à l'arme lourde qui venaient de l'autre côté de la frontière, en territoire irakien. Il a fait état de 23 combattants kurdes « neutralisés ». Mais le porte-parole du PKK, Ahmed Danis, a affirmé que les pertes turques étaient bien plus élevées que le bilan officiel de l'armée, sans pouvoir indiquer de chiffres précis.

L'attaque est survenue peu de jours avant l'expiration de l'autorisation d'un an accordée par le Parlement turc à l'armée d'opérer contre les bases du PKK à l'intérieur du Kurdistan irakien. Mais loin de tirer avantage de ces événements, cette fois l'armée a dû faire face à une salve de critiques, notamment dans la presse. L'importance de l'assaut, le fait qu'il soit survenu en plein jour, ait duré plusieurs heures, et le grand nombre de combattants kurdes, près de 350, ont fait s'interroger beaucoup d'observateurs sur une défaillance des services de renseignements, ou bien sur la capacité de certains officiers à tenir compte des avertissements concernant la sécurité du front.

Au moment de l'attaque, le commandant des unités de la région était à un mariage, aucune alerte n'a été donnée aux troupes alors même que des informations avaient déjà circulé sur une possible opération du PKK. Enfin,

le poste d'Aktütün, de part sa position géographique, a été fréquemment la cible d'attaques, sans que l'armée ait, semble-t-il, pris des mesures particulières pour le sécuriser. « Est-ce que les soldats assurent la sécurité aux frontières et dans le pays ? Et n'ont-ils pas besoin, en ce cas, d'assurer leur propre sécurité ? Comment se fait-il que le même poste-frontière soit attaqué depuis 16 ans et combien de soldats y sont tombés en martyrs ? » interroge Mehmet Altan du Daily Star, tandis qu'Oktay Ekşi, de Hürriyet se fait plus direct : « Est-ce que quelqu'un va demander s'il y a eu faute après de tels incidents ? Est-ce que quelqu'un va demander qui est responsable ? Est-ce qu'il va y avoir une enquête officielle ? »

Chose rare, l'armée s'est crue obligée de tenir une conférence de presse afin de répondre aux critiques de la presse. Le chef-adjoint de l'état-major, le général Hasan Iğsız, a ainsi nié toute faute de la part des officiers ou des services de renseignements militaires, en réaffirmant que la plupart des pertes étaient surtout dues à des tirs provenant de l'autre côté de la frontière, et non à une infiltration du territoire turc.

De l'avis de Gareth Jenkins, de la Fondation Jamestown, interviewé par Zaman, il faut plus y voir un « mélange d'incompétence et d'arrogance. Les militaires ont pu penser qu'il n'y avait pas de problème, qu'il [le poste-frontière] pouvait être défendu. Ils répugnent probablement à reconnaître qu'ils ne pouvaient pas le défendre. » De fait, les photos diffusées dans la presse turque montrent un poste-frontière délabré, avec des défenses pour le moins précaires, alors que sa position le rend particulièrement vulnérable aux attaques du PKK (38 depuis 1992).

En réponse aux attaques de la presse concernant l'insuffisance des informations fournies par les Etats-Unis, le général Iğsız nie qu'il y ait eu faille dans le système de renseignements. Il a par contre indiqué que les Kurdes d'Irak pouvaient, d'où ils étaient, suivre les moindres mouvements du PKK mais qu'il n'y avait pas, à ce jour, de partage d'informations instauré avec le Gouvernement régional du Kurdistan. Le général turc a également accusé le GRK d'abriter les blessés de la guérilla dans ses hôpitaux et de le laisser librement circuler, ce que les autorités d'Erbil ont toujours nié.

Alors que certaines voix au sein de l'armée protestent contre la limitation de leurs pouvoirs par les réformes constitutionnelles faites en vue de l'adhésion à l'Union européenne, et demandent l'adoption de nouvelles lois « anti-terreur » d'autres voix parmi les « faucons » pointent surtout le besoin d'un renouvellement de stratégie et l'amélioration des tactiques militaires jusqu'ici employés pour lutter contre la guérilla, en remettant en cause les compétences des dirigeants de l'armée. Ainsi Önder Aytaç, un instructeur de l'Académie de police d'Ankara, prône une plus grande initiative laissée aux corps de police et dénonce le manque de coordination entre les services de renseignements en Turquie. Prenant le contrepied du discours officiel de l'armée selon lequel la cause des pertes turques venaient de tirs lancés de l'autre côté de la frontière, il affirme que l'assaut d'Aktütün pourrait aussi bien avoir été mené par des unités du PKK opérant de l'intérieur : « Ils étaient équipés d'armes lourdes, ce qui signifie qu'ils ont eu besoin de véhicules ou de chevaux pour porter ces armes. Il est hautement probable que cette attaque ait été menée par des terroristes du PKK

basés en Turquie. Et si ces terroristes ont infiltré la Turquie à partir du nord de l'Irak, la situation est encore plus grave. » Et Önder Aytaç d'ajouter que plusieurs responsables, allant du commandant militaire du poste-frontière au directeur de la police du département, devraient être relevés de leurs fonctions si une telle attaque devait se reproduire.

Selon İhsan Bal, de l'Organisation internationale de recherches stratégiques (USAK), basée à Ankara, c'est également la coordination et une coopération entre la gendarmerie, les gardes-frontières et la police qui font défaut. Il réclame par conséquent qu'une plus grande autorité soit accordée au ministre de l'Intérieur. Mais pour Nihat Ali Özcan, un analyste de la Fondation de recherche en économie politique (TEPAV), spécialisé dans les questions sécuritaires, des mesures dans ce domaine ne peuvent résoudre que très partiellement le problème : « Ce n'est pas normal d'avoir 6000 hommes en armes dans les montagnes. Si vous persistez à traiter cette situation comme étant normale, alors vous ne parviendrez à aucun résultat. Vous devez mettre en place des objectifs politiques, développer des stratégies et y mettre les moyens nécessaires, en temps et en argent, pour appliquer ces stratégies. »

Mais de nombreux éditoriaux dans la presse turque soulignent, au contraire, que la question kurde en Turquie ne peut plus être considérée sous un aspect uniquement militaire ou sécuritaire, mais qu'il a une dimension « politique, culturelle, internationale, psychologique et sécuritaire » (Akşam, 5 octobre).

Enfin cette affaire, qui survient un an après la très controversée

attaque de Dağlıca, à propos de laquelle le journal Taraf avait déjà fait état de zones d'ombres, ravive les suspicions d'instrumentalisation de la violence par « l'Etat profond », alors que se poursuit le procès de l'Ergenekon. Le même journal a publié et diffusé sur son site des images infrarouges aériennes. Ces images, prises d'un drone, montrent clairement un groupe de combattants venant poser des mines dans le secteur près de trois-quarts d'heure avant le déclenchement de l'assaut. Puis, alors que les unités du PKK se font de plus en plus importantes, certains prennent position au sommet des collines, étant bien en vue des caméras du drone. Quant à l'assaut il a été entièrement filmé de la même façon. Taraf en conclut que les forces de sécurité turques ne pouvaient ignorer aucun des mouvements du PKK avant et pendant les combats, puisque ces images ont été transmises directement, durant plusieurs heures, à l'état-major. De plus, le journal publie des rapports de sécurité envoyés à ce même état-major l'avertissant de l'imminence d'une attaque, rapport où figurent même les noms, âges et date de naissances des combattants du PKK prévus pour l'opération.

Enfin le journal conteste ouvertement les propos du porte-parole de l'état-major, Hasan İğsız, qui, lors de sa conférence de presse avait affirmé qu'une troupe de soldats et des gardes s'étaient déployés avant l'attaque et que des avions de guerre F-16 étaient venus en renfort. Or les informations rapportées par Taraf montrent que les renforts en soldats ne sont venus que plus tard et que seuls deux hélicoptères Cobra étaient intervenus en forces aériennes. Hasan İğsız avait également affirmé que Bayraktepe, une colline proche du poste, n'avait jamais été prise par le PKK, tandis que les

renseignements publiés par Taraf indiquent que la guérilla a pris et tenu ce sommet 8 heures durant avant de se replier.

Faisant le parallèle avec l'attaque de Dağlıca survenue l'année dernière, Taraf fait la liste des mêmes manquements militaires ayant abouti aux mêmes pertes : dans les deux cas, l'armée avait été informée de l'imminence d'une attaque, 9 jours avant, dans le cas de Dağlıca, 10 jours pour celui d'Aktütün. Pour l'assaut d'octobre 2007, l'enquête avait plus tard établi que la guérilla avait, durant toute une semaine, infiltré la Turquie avec de petits groupes et des mules, mouvements qui avaient été observés par l'armée, comme en a fait état l'enregistrement des communications entre les officiers et les soldats. Dans les deux cas, se pose la question de la lenteur des forces militaires à réagir en fonction des renseignements fournis. Enfin, dans ce même journal, Avni Özgürel voit dans la guerre contre le PKK un intérêt vital pour l'armée, en plus de lui permettre de garder une grande emprise sur la vie politique du pays : « Les revenus de l'héroïne ont été utilisés pour financer la guerre contre le PKK. Du Sud-Est à Edirne, l'héroïne est transportée dans des convois de véhicules militaires blindés. Ceux qui participent à ce trafic se disent : « Pourquoi devrais-je mettre ma vie en danger dans les montagnes face au PKK? Voire infiltrer le PKK pour recueillir des renseignements pour le compte du JITEM? Je préfère partager les gains de l'héroïne, m'enrichir et former un gang. »

La poursuite de la guerre ne profite pas qu'aux trafiquants de drogue. Elle permet surtout à l'armée de justifier son budget et ses effectifs démesurés et de maintenir sa tutelle sur la vie

politique du pays, au nom de la « défense de la patrie en danger ». La guerre contre le PKK permet également de brandir constamment la menace d'une intervention militaire au Kurdistan irakien, prenant ainsi en otage la population kurde irakienne et ses institutions démocratiques.

A cet égard, il est très symptomatique que la tuerie d'Aktütün soit intervenue quelques jours avant la date d'expiration de l'autorisation donnée à l'armée d'intervenir au-delà des frontières. Nombre d'observateurs se demandent si l'armée n'a pas délibérément tendu un piège au PKK en lui offrant une proie facile afin, dans l'émotion de l'opinion publique suscitée par la mort des soldats turcs, de faire adopter par le Parlement la prolongation de son autorisation d'intervenir.

Comme en témoigne le procès d'Ergenekon, l'histoire turque récente fourmille de ce genre de coups tordus et de manipulations.

Dans ce climat de malaise et de suspicions, au cours d'une réunion de crise rassemblant des membres de l'état-major et du

gouvernement, les militaires ont présenté, dans un rapport préparé par le commandement du Second corps de l'armée, basé à Malatya, une version des faits qui lave l'armée de toute défaillance dans la défense et la sécurité. Le général Ilker Başbuğ a ainsi démenti les propos du journal Taraf, en affirmant par exemple, que les images infrarouges publiées ne provenaient pas d'Aktütün et qu'elles montraient un groupe localisé à 125 km du poste. Indiquant aussi qu'il s'agissait d'images venant d'appareils américains, le Premier Ministre Recep Tayyip Erdoğan a demandé au ministre des Affaires étrangères Ali Babacan de prendre contact avec les responsables américains pour en déterminer l'origine et expliquer comment elles avaient pu se trouver en possession du journal Taraf. Après l'exposé, les nombreuses questions posées par les ministres montrent que ces derniers se sont montrés insuffisamment convaincus par cet exposé des faits.

La réunion portait aussi sur les mesures proposées pour lutter contre le PKK, parmi lesquelles des pourparlers directs avec les autorités du Gouvernement régional du Kurdistan.

menace terroriste du PKK » sans en dire davantage et aussi de l'ouverture d'une « nouvelle page » dans les relations entre Erbil et Ankara. Tout aussi concis, Fuad Hussein, le directeur de cabinet de Massoud Barzani, a parlé d'entretien « positif et constructif ». Les Etats-Unis, qui poussaient depuis longtemps à une prise de contacts directs entre leurs deux principaux alliés au Moyen-Orient se sont naturellement félicités de cette rencontre.

De retour au Kurdistan, commentant la discussion, Massoud Barzani l'a lui aussi qualifiée de « page nouvelle » et de « chemin ouvert pour le dialogue » : « Avant, la Turquie refusait toute sorte de contacts avec nous. A présent, Ankara a fait un pas pour améliorer ses relations avec nous, ainsi qu'avec le gouvernement de Bagdad. Cette rencontre a été un début. Un début pour trouver des solutions positives aux problèmes qu'il y a entre nous. » Le président kurde a confirmé la tenue ultérieure d'autres rencontres, sans donner un agenda précis, en indiquant simplement que cela se ferait « ici et en Turquie ». Il a également nié que les conversations aient porté exclusivement sur le PKK, même si ce sujet sera de nouveau abordé entre les deux parties. Propos confirmés par le Premier ministre de la Région du Kurdistan, Nêçirvan Barzanî : « Nous ne voulons pas que nos relations se cantonnent uniquement au problème du PKK. Nous voulons nouer des liens étendus avec toutes les régions. » Le Premier Ministre a confirmé que d'autres rencontres sont prévues, mais non encore fixées dans le temps. Il a aussi révélé avoir eu des entretiens avec Murat Özçelik à Londres au mois de juillet dernier afin de planifier cette rencontre avec Massoud Barzani.

DEBUT DE DIALOGUE ENTRE ANKARA ET ERBIL

Le 14 octobre une rencontre « tripartite » a eu lieu à Bagdad, avec le président de la Région du Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani, le président de l'Irak Jalal Talabani et le Premier Ministre Nouri al-Maliki et une délégation turque qui avait à sa tête Murat Özçelik, le représentant spécial de la diplomatie turque pour l'Irak. C'est la première rencontre « officielle » entre la Turquie et le Gouvernement régional du Kurdistan. Jusqu'ici, le gouvernement d'Ankara s'était

toujours refusé au moindre geste politique pouvant induire une reconnaissance officielle de la Région kurde, et persistait à ne vouloir passer que par Bagdad, notamment pour résoudre la question des bases du PKK, installées dans les monts Qandil. La presse turque présente volontiers cette rencontre, qui a duré deux heures, comme un moyen d'amener les Kurdes d'Irak à agir contre le PKK sur leur sol, mais Murat Özçelik est resté bien plus évasif, en parlant « d'action décisive à prendre pour contrer la

Ce changement ouvert d'attitude survient alors que l'armée turque, affaiblie par l'attaque du poste d'Aktütün, doit répondre de sa stratégie à la fois devant l'opinion publique et auprès du gouvernement. Dans une conférence de presse, le général Ilker Basbug a ainsi appelé publiquement au dialogue : « Il faut dialoguer avec le président de la Région du Kurdistan pour mettre fin à la violence. Au vu de cette question, les efforts sont positifs. » Le général a aussi souhaité des « solutions démocratiques pour la question kurde », en expliquant que les réponses militaires ne résoudre rien et n'empêcheraient pas les jeunes de partir dans la guérilla. Il a également émis le souhait que des programmes en langue kurde soient émis le plus

tôt possible sur les télévisions turques.

Le journal turc Milliyet, reprenant un article du journal kurde Kurdistanî Nuwe, a même annoncé qu'après sa prochaine visite à Bagdad, le président turc Abdullah Gül se rendrait à Erbil, où il devrait inaugurer l'aéroport de la capitale régionale kurde. Cette annonce n'a pas été formellement confirmée par l'entourage du président turc, qui, s'il ne nie pas qu'un prochain déplacement dans la capitale irakienne est prévu, indiquent que la date et l'éventualité de se rendre à Erbil sont toujours en discussion : « Il n'y a pas de visite prévue à Erbil ou au nord de l'Irak » a répondu de même Burak Özügergin, le porte-parole du ministre des Affaires étrangères. « Il est trop tôt pour cela. Cela n'a pas été discuté »

Mais d'autres voix dissidentes se sont exprimées avec plus de sévérité envers la Turquie. Ainsi l'opposant turc Ali Ertem, qui vit en Allemagne, a interpellé les intellectuels de son pays afin qu'ils s'opposent aux persécutions dont sont victimes les citoyens non turcs de la Turquie, dont les Kurdes. « Aujourd'hui l'Etat turc nie les crimes commis contre l'humanité, dans son histoire proche, et maintenant il emploie toute sa force pour faire disparaître la culture kurde. Les défenseurs de la paix et de la démocratie, les écrivains, les journalistes, les défenseurs des droits de l'homme comme Musa Anter, Hrant Dink, Akin Birdal ont été victimes d'assassinat, ont été emprisonnés, ont été empêchés de s'exprimer librement. Le dernier exemple est l'interdiction, il y a quelques jours, du journal Taraf. Des dizaines d'intellectuels sont poursuivis au titre de l'article 301 du code pénal turc, en raison de leurs opinions. Tout comme l'interdiction de la langue kurde dans la vie administrative : L'enseignement en langue kurde est empêché, l'utilisation des sons comme 'X', 'Q' et 'W' est bizarrement interdit dans les textes. »

Un incident a d'ailleurs eu lieu durant le salon, des nationalistes turcs s'en prenant violemment à un stand kurde qui arborait le drapeau kurde et une carte du Kurdistan.

La dénonciation de la censure bloquant Youtube, Wordpress ou Dailymotion n'a pas empêché, le 20 octobre, la justice turque de fermer soudainement le site Blogger, soit le plus grand hébergeur de blogs au monde. La décision a été prise par la 1ère Chambre criminelle de Diyarbakir, sans que les raisons en soient, dans un premier temps, indiquées. Il s'agissait en fait d'un problème de droits de diffusion de

TURQUIE : LES ATTEINTES A LA LIBERTE D'EXPRESSION DENONCEES PAR LES INTELLECTUELS



lors que la Turquie était l'invitée cette année de la Foire du livre de Francfort, plusieurs intellectuels, écrivains et éditeurs en Turquie en ont profité pour dénoncer les atteintes à la liberté d'expression et de publication auxquelles ils doivent toujours faire face dans leur pays. L'écrivain Orhan Pamuk, prix Nobel de littérature 2006, a ainsi déclaré, lors de la cérémonie d'inauguration, à laquelle assistait aussi le président turc Abdullah Gül : « L'Etat turc continue malheureusement à punir des écrivains et à interdire des livres. Sur la base de l'article 301 du code pénal turc, avec lequel on essaie d'intimider des écrivains comme moi, des centaines d'auteurs et de journalistes sont traînés en justice et condamnés. »

Orhan Pamuk a aussi rappelé les interdictions multiples visant des sites Internet, comme Youtube, émanant de juges qui ont le

pouvoir de bloquer l'accès de tout un pays à des plates-formes du WEB parmi les plus utilisées mondialement.

Répondant à l'écrivain, Abdullah Gül a affirmé que « la Turquie remplissait désormais en grande partie les exigences européennes en matière de liberté d'expression et de respect des différences culturelles », avant d'ajouter que le « succès n'était pas complet » et qu'il restait « beaucoup à faire. » Le président turc a tenu à remercier Orhan Pamuk pour sa « contribution à la reconnaissance culturelle de la Turquie ».

Le ministre allemand des Affaires étrangères Frank-Walter Steinmeier a reconnu lors de cette même cérémonie que « la Turquie a encore du chemin à faire. Mais il faut la soutenir. Je ne peux pas imaginer de réussir la politique d'intégration en Allemagne sans intégration européenne de la Turquie.

rencontres de football, droits détenus par la chaîne de télévision Digitürk. Plusieurs bloggeurs ayant publié sur leur site les résultats des match et des images des rencontres, Digitürk a porté plainte. La cour de Diyarbakir a ainsi ordonné la fermeture de l'accès à l'ensemble des blogs. De nombreux bloggeurs turcs, excédés, ont manifesté leur mécontentement en créant un site commun, Sansuresansur.com, qui permet de contourner le blocage. Devant la publicité faite autour de cette interdiction, Blogger a pu rapidement être de nouveau accessible en Turquie. Mais Reporters sans frontières, qui réclame depuis plusieurs mois la levée de l'interdiction contre Youtube, s'est indigné contre cette mesure subite et disproportionnée : « Ni notifications aux utilisateurs, ni assignations à comparaître ! Les blogs hébergés sur cette plateforme ont été fermés par surprise. Il ne s'agit pas seulement d'une question de droits d'auteurs et de piratage. Cette décision est encore un exemple qu'en Turquie, des sites sont fermés entièrement

en raison de la publication d'un seul contenu problématique sur un blog isolé. »

L'ONG a réclamé l'abrogation de la loi 5651, adoptée le 4 mai 2007 qui prévoit le blocage des sites Internet contraires à la loi 5816 (datant, elle de 1951 et condamnant les « délits contre Atatürk », l'incitation au suicide à la pédophilie, aux abus sexuels et à l'usage de stupéfiants).

« Suite à ces blocages abusifs successifs, nous avons la preuve que cette loi est la source principale de la détérioration de la liberté d'expression sur Internet. De plus, les fournisseurs d'accès doivent eux-mêmes bloquer l'accès aux sites qui vont à l'encontre de la loi, les rendant complices de la censure. Nous demandons la révision de la loi 5651 dans les plus brefs délais. Plutôt que de bloquer un site dans son intégralité, seul le contenu jugé « sensible » doit faire l'objet d'un litige », a déclaré Reporters sans frontières, qui a classé la Turquie au 102e rang de la liberté de la presse en 2008.

la population, dans la loi sur les élections provinciales. » Le prince Tahsin Beg, chef des Yézidis, a indiqué qu'ils avaient souligné l'importance, auprès de l'ONU, des quotas de représentation, en estimant que la délégation de l'ONU leur avait fait part de sa « compréhension » concernant leur prise de position. Andrea Kilmer, l'adjoint de Staffan de Mistura a affirmé dans une conférence de presse que les Nations Unies « feront de leur mieux » pour garantir les droits des minorités en Irak et tout particulièrement ceux des Yézidis et des chrétiens.

Le Conseil spirituel des Yézidis a déjà émis une déclaration diffusée dans leurs centres culturels et religieux : « Au nom de tous les Yézidis, nous demandons et insistons pour la réinsertion de l'Article 50 dans la loi sur les élections provinciales ainsi que sa révision pour garantir une représentation équitable des Yézidis de Ninive. » Selon ce Conseil, la population yézidie s'élèverait dans cette province à 450,000 principalement à Sindjar, Shekhan, Telkif, et Bashiqa. Les Yézidis demandent aussi à l'ONU et au Conseil de présidence irakien le respect de leurs droits et d'être considérés comme une des composantes du peuple irakien.

Dans la Région du Kurdistan, ainsi que dans les zones protégées par les forces kurdes, les chrétiens, en plus de manifester contre l'abrogation ont également réclamé une autonomie dans leurs zones de résidence. « Nous manifesterons et protesterons jusqu'à ce que nous obtenions les droits à l'autonomie pour les chrétiens dans nos districts ainsi qu'une représentation religieuse équitable pour les minorités » a ainsi déclaré Djamil Zeito, qui dirige le Conseil public des Syriaques-Chaldéens. Des milliers

MOSSOUL : LES CHRETIENS FUIENT EN MASSE

Le débat sur l'adoption de la loi pour les futures élections provinciales n'a pas faibli ce mois-ci, au sujet de l'abrogation dans la loi électorale de l'article 50 qui garantissait des sièges aux minorités ethniques et religieuses. Les protestations sont toujours aussi vives de la part des groupes minoritaires concernés, comme les Yézidis et surtout les chrétiens, en butte à de récentes et meurtrières attaques dans la ville de Mossoul. Dès septembre, le représentant de l'ONU en Irak, Staffan de Mistura a appelé à la réintégration de cet article dans la constitution irakienne, et les minorités irakiennes ont aussi été relayées

par le Gouvernement régional du Kurdistan.

A Telkif et au temple yézidi de Lalesh, les représentants de l'ONU, dont Staffan de Mistura, ont donc rencontré des délégations chrétiennes et yézidies. « La délégation de l'ONU a rencontré les directions des unités administratives. Ils ont discuté des moyens d'accorder des droits équitables aux minorités religieuses au moyen de l'article 50 » a résumé Dirman Sleman, le chef du Conseil provincial de Telkif. « La rencontre a porté principalement sur la requête que tout le peuple irakien soit représenté proportionnellement à

de chrétiens ont ainsi pris part aux manifestations, dans les villes d'Al-Qosh, Tel-Saqif, Qarqush, et à Duhok.

Le Gouvernement régional du Kurdistan a réitéré son soutien aux minorités. Le président du Parlement d'Erbil, Adnan Mufti a qualifié la suppression de l'article 50 d'anticonstitutionnelle : « Le Parlement du Kurdistan soutient la demande des chrétiens et des autres composantes ethniques et religieuses concernant la loi sur les élections provinciales. La constitution régionale du Kurdistan reconnaît davantage les droits des minorités que la constitution fédérale de l'Irak. Au Kurdistan, les minorités participent au processus démocratique et jouissent de tous leurs droits civils, culturels et administratifs. » De son côté, Nêçirvan Barzanî, le Premier Ministre de la Région kurde, a déclaré « soutenir pleinement » la réintégration de l'Article 50 dans la constitution irakienne : « Nous devons garantir les droits des communautés minoritaires de sorte qu'elles aient une représentation dans notre gouvernement. Dans un nouvel Irak, fondé sur les principes du fédéralisme, de la démocratie et du pluralisme, nous ne devons pas permettre que de petits groupes de citoyens se sentent aliénés ou séparés. Nous devons toujours nous rappeler que notre gouvernement doit servir son peuple et n'existe que pour protéger ses droits et promouvoir leur bien-être. Dans la Région du Kurdistan, nous avons été vigilants afin de protéger les intérêts de toutes les minorités, et c'est une des raisons pour lesquelles les citoyens de toutes religions et ethnies y vivent en paix. »

Les protestations et les craintes des minorités religieuses de se

voir marginalisées de la vie politique irakienne s'inscrivent dans un contexte sombre pour les chrétiens de Mossoul qui, dans le même temps, ont dû faire face à une vague d'assassinats, de menaces, d'intimidations et de chantage, de la part de groupes obscurs, qui semblent s'être donnés pour mission d'éradiquer toute présence non arabe et non musulmane à Mossoul. C'est ainsi que près de 300 chrétiens ont dû fuir la ville en quelques jours. Dès le 10 octobre, l'archevêque de Kirkouk, monseigneur Louis Sako, dénonçait, au sujet de plusieurs attaques, une « campagne de liquidations » contre les chrétiens du pays : « Nous sommes la cible d'une campagne de liquidations, une campagne de violences aux objectifs politiques ». Ces attaques ne sont pas les premières, et ne seront malheureusement pas les dernières. Il a aussi dénoncé l'inertie du gouvernement de Bagdad devant ces exactions : "Nous avons entendu beaucoup de paroles du Premier ministre Maliki, mais cela ne s'est malheureusement pas traduit dans les faits. Nous voulons des solutions, pas des promesses. »

De fait, le Premier ministre chiite, Nouri Al-Maliki, s'il a condamné les meurtres et les actes d'intimidation contre les chrétiens, n'a pas fait état de mesures précises concernant la protection de la population. L'indifférence des autorités irakiennes est durement pointée par monseigneur Rabban Al-Qas, évêque d'Erbil et d'Amadiya, dans un appel lancé sur Asia News : « Ce qui se passe à Mossoul aujourd'hui est précisément le résultat de l'immobilisme de l'Etat ainsi que d'une mentalité tordue, fanatique et fondamentaliste. Cette tragédie - qui rappelle la situation des chrétiens aux premiers siècles - a débuté immédiatement après la chute de

Saddam Hussein en 2003. Des milliers de chrétiens et de musulmans kurdes ont été chassés, tués, enlevés, obligés de quitter Mossoul. A présent, il reste moins d'un quart de la population chrétienne de Mossoul. Les menaces, les repréailles, les discriminations, le chantage, la propagande islamiste dans les écoles, les slogans sur les murs ont amené même les musulmans modérés à cesser de défendre leurs frères chrétiens contre l'intolérance. Auparavant, leurs maisons étaient ouvertes aux chrétiens. Maintenant, par crainte du fanatisme et du terrorisme, ils n'osent même plus montrer qu'ils ont des amis ou des connaissances parmi les chrétiens. Ce qui se passe ces jours-ci est le résultat d'un long silence de la part du Premier Ministre et du gouvernement de Bagdad, qui se sont montrés incapables de stopper la vague de violence contre les chrétiens. Ce qui se passe ces jours-ci est de leur responsabilité, sans oublier la responsabilité des forces américaines et des représentants des Nations Unies. »

Devant l'urgence de la situation, douze évêques chaldéens se sont réunis à Erbil avec le nonce du Vatican, le 29 octobre. De leur côté, dès le milieu du mois, le parlement kurde a tenu une session extraordinaire pour débattre de la situation à Mossoul et du sort des chrétiens fuyant la ville. Il a été décidé aussi d'envoyer une délégation du GRK sur place, afin de rendre compte des besoins de cette population menacée. Le Parlement a alloué 100 millions de dinars irakiens pour venir en aide aux réfugiés et le Gouvernement régional du Kurdistan a fait une déclaration condamnant les agissements des terroristes et demandé « à tous les ministères, départements et organisations concernés de porter

assistance aux victimes autant qu'il leur est possible.

Dans un reportage du *Kurdish Globe*, daté du 16 octobre, Romeo Hakkari, le secrétaire général du Parti démocratique Bet-Nahrain, un parti chrétien, après une visite d'inspection auprès des familles réfugiées en hâte dans les alentours de Mossoul où la population est majoritairement chrétienne, faisait état de 14 chrétiens tués depuis le début du mois et de 1400 familles déplacées, trois maisons chrétiennes détruites, et d'un grand nombre de blessés. Pour Romeo Hakkari, il s'agit d'un plan visant à chasser tous les chrétiens de Mossoul, et le secrétaire général accuse ouvertement les groupes islamistes et les anciens membres du Baath. « Beaucoup de familles chrétiennes ont reçu des menaces directes afin qu'elles quittent Mossoul, ou bien indirectement, sur leur téléphones portables. » Romeo Hakkari ajoute que même après leur départ, ces chrétiens ont continué de recevoir des menaces par téléphone, afin de les dissuader à jamais de rentrer chez eux.

Interrogés par les journalistes du *Kurdish Globe*, les réfugiés confirment l'absence de réaction des autorités de Mossoul. « Nous avons quitté Mossoul sous les yeux de la police irakienne » accuse Samil Georges, un chrétien de la ville, qui a fui trois jours auparavant avec sa famille. Selon lui, il se peut même que certains policiers aient pris part, en sous-main, à ces actions visant à chasser les Assyro-Chaldéens. Réfutant les allégations d'un député arabe du Parlement de Bagdad, Osama Al-Nadjifi, de la Liste nationale irakienne, accusant les Kurdes d'être à l'origine de ces

exactions, le père Zaya Shaba, un prêtre de la ville de Shaqlawa, dans la province d'Erbil, qui abrite de nombreux réfugiés, arabes musulmans ou chrétiens rétorque : « Au Kurdistan, le gouvernement kurde nous construit des églises, alors qu'au centre de l'Irak et à Mossoul, des extrémistes font exploser les églises. » Le père Shaba rappelle par ailleurs que les attaques antichrétiennes ne sont pas une nouveauté et se perpétuent depuis longtemps à Bagdad ou à Basra.

S'exprimant officiellement sur le site du Gouvernement kurde, le Premier Ministre Nêçirvan Barzanî expose ainsi la situation et les forces en présence : « Les terroristes qui étaient derrière les attaques et le déplacement des chrétiens à travers l'Irak ont poursuivi et étendu leur campagne de terreur à Mossoul. Les chrétiens qui ont fui Mossoul ne viennent pas seulement d'un ou deux districts de la ville de Mossoul, ils viennent aussi de 52 districts distincts des régions alentour. Il y a eu beaucoup de victimes à Mossoul. Des milliers de Kurdes ont été tués en raison de leur ethnie, ce qui a eu pour conséquence de chasser des milliers de familles. La ville de Mossoul est devenue aujourd'hui un refuge pour beaucoup d'organisations terroristes et des membres de l'ancien régime du Baath. Le soi-disant « Etat islamique » par exemple est devenu une organisation parapluie sous laquelle tous ces terroristes opèrent. Il est vrai que la plupart de ses membres sont arabes, mais les groupes comprennent aussi des Turkmènes et des Kurdes. Ajoutons à cela qu'il y a même des chrétiens qui sont d'anciens membres du régime du Parti Baath, qui se

qualifient eux-mêmes de « résistance », qui luttent activement contre le gouvernement actuel et les Forces de la Coalition. Les terroristes ont recruté des soutiens parmi un mélange de groupes ethniques et religieux, afin de semer le doute, la crainte et les tensions parmi les gens de Mossoul. C'est une tactique terroriste classique. »

Réfutant ironiquement les accusations lancées par le député Osama Al-Nadjifi et relayées par une certaine presse hostile aux Kurdes, le Premier Ministre rétorque que les intérêts des Kurdes et des chrétiens, ainsi que des autres minorités de Mossoul, sont au contraire liés dans la région, et que les Kurdes ont tout à perdre de cette épuration ethnique et religieuse : « En ce qui concerne les intérêts nationaux kurdes, la présence de Kurdes yézidis et shabaks et de chrétiens dans la ville de Mossoul est importante pour les chiffres proportionnels de la population lors des prochaines élections provinciales. Dans ce cas, comment est-il logiquement possible que les Kurdes essaient de diminuer le nombre de chrétiens dans la ville et de donner aux Arabes la majorité parmi la population ? Ceux qui ont accusé les Kurdes de chasser les chrétiens et les autres hors de Mossoul sont les mêmes qui ont auparavant accusé les Kurdes de politique expansionniste à Mossoul et dans d'autres régions. Maintenant ces accusateurs ont complètement changé leurs assertions, en disant que les Kurdes chassent les chrétiens et les Kurdes yézidis et shabaks. Les Kurdes, politiquement, ont le plus à perdre de ces incidents, puisque la proportion des Arabes augmente. »

VAGUE D'ÉMEUTES EN TURQUIE

Une série d'émeutes a agité la Turquie ce mois-ci, déclenchées par divers incidents, en apparence insignifiants, mais tous au cœur de la question kurde dans le pays. Ainsi, en début de mois, des émeutes antikurdes ont éclaté dans la ville d'Altinova, près de la mer Egée, après une altercation qui avait fait deux victimes turques, tuées par un Kurde. Environ 48 personnes ont été interpellées, selon les autorités locales et 18 d'entre elles doivent comparaître devant un juge.

L'origine de ces affrontements ne tient qu'à un fait divers. Lors d'une querelle, un Kurde a renversé avec sa camionnette, deux Turcs tués sur le coup. Il a été immédiatement arrêté, mais après les obsèques, plus de 3000 personnes ont défilé en brandissant des drapeaux turcs au cri de « Altinova nous appartient ». Les émeutiers s'en sont pris alors à des boutiques tenues par des Kurdes, les attaquant à coups de pierre. Au-delà de ce fait divers, les raisons de ces tensions interethniques peuvent s'inscrire aussi dans la vague d'indignation nationaliste qui a suivi l'attaque du poste frontière d'Aktütün et les appels à la vengeance après la mort de 17 soldats turcs.

Deux semaines plus tard, c'est à l'est du pays qu'éclataient une série de violentes manifestations, après que les avocats d'Abdullah Öcalan, le leader du PKK, aient affirmé, le 18 octobre, que leur client avait été bousculé et « menacé de mort » par un de ses gardiens. Le 20 octobre, durant un meeting du DTP à Dogubeyazit, des manifestants se sont heurtés aux forces de l'ordre, faisant un mort et des douzaines d'arrestations. Le 25, des heurts

avec la police se sont produits à Van et 7 personnes ont été arrêtées. Le 26 octobre, à Gaziantep, la police a usé de gaz lacrymogènes et procédé à une dizaine d'arrestations. A Yuksekova, une petite ville près de la frontière irakienne, la police a également utilisé des gaz lacrymogènes pour disperser la foule.

A Diyarbakir, la capitale du Kurdistan de Turquie, 5000 personnes ont défilé et la police a chargé quand certains manifestants ont commencé à lancer des pierres, arrêtant plusieurs dizaines de personnes.

L'ouest du pays, qui comprend une nombreuse population kurde, déplacée durant la guerre, n'a pas été épargné. A Istanbul des affrontements ont eu lieu dans le district d'Umraniye, et à Kucukcekmece, un centre commercial a été dévasté avec des cocktails Molotov. Les protestations du PKK et de ses sympathisants se sont également multipliées en dehors de la Turquie. Le 21 octobre, des manifestants ont tenté d'incendier l'ambassade turque à Helsinki. 5 suspects arrêtés ont été depuis relâchés. A Beyrouth, des centaines de Kurdes ont manifesté devant les bureaux des Nations Unies le 26 octobre. Le 29 octobre, en Arménie, des défilés ont eu lieu avec les drapeaux arméniens et ceux du PKK.

Bien que le ministre de la Justice, Mehmet Ali Sahin, ait nié ces allégations, elles ont été appuyées et relayées par le parti DTP, en la personne de son leader, Ahmet Türk, qui a, dans une déclaration à la presse, protesté contre les « mauvais traitements » qu'aurait subi Abdullah Öcalan et a réclamé l'envoi d'une délégation, comprenant plusieurs membres de son parti, à Imrali, lieu de détention du leader kurde. Alors

que le DTP est menacé d'interdiction et que les prochaines élections vont opposer activement ce parti à l'AKP dans les régions du Kurdistan de Turquie, Ahmet Türk a une fois de plus appelé à la résolution du problème kurde par des moyens pacifiques : « La question kurde est un problème politique et elle ne peut être résolue que par des moyens politiques. La mentalité qui pousse à se dire « si je remporte les élections dans les régions kurdes, si je balaie le DTP de ces mêmes régions, alors j'éliminerai le problème » montre de quelle façon humiliante et irrespectueuse les Kurdes sont considérés. »

Au sujet de la répression policière, Amnesty International a par ailleurs dénoncé la mesure envisagée par le gouverneur d'Adana, de couper l'accès aux soins aux manifestants et à leurs familles. « La réponse des autorités doit être en accord avec les droits de l'homme et ne pas induire de punition collective » a déclaré Andrew Gardner, d'Amnesty International, responsable du département de la Turquie. En Turquie une « carte verte » permet aux familles les plus pauvres d'avoir accès aux soins, très chers, même pour les classes moyennes. Il a été également envisagé de leur couper le charbon, fourni gratuitement par la Fondation de l'assistance sociale et de la solidarité. « Ces mesures pour priver de soins et autres aides les enfants soupçonnés d'avoir participé aux manifestations, ainsi que leur famille sont une forme de punition collective et violent le droit de la personne aux soins et à un niveau de vie décent, sans aucune discrimination », ajoute Andrew Gardner. « Plutôt que de violer les droits de l'homme, les autorités turques doivent s'assurer que leurs réponses aux manifestations sont compatibles avec leurs

obligations de respecter et de protéger les droits de l'homme à l'intérieur de leurs territoires. »

Cette série d'incidents montre surtout le fossé grandissant entre les populations kurde et turque, la première étant stigmatisée comme « complice du terrorisme ». Quant aux Kurdes, selon Sezgin Tanrikulu, le président du barreau de Diyarbakir, leur confiance en des solutions pacifiques et démocratiques ne fait que

s'effriter. Dans les villes kurdes, les célébrations du 29 octobre, date anniversaire de la fondation de la république turque, ont été largement boycottées par les mairies DTP. Les maires de Diyarbakir, Şirnak, Tunceli, Cizre et Hakkari n'ont ainsi organisé aucune manifestation, afin de protester ouvertement, comme Kazim Kurt, le maire de Hakkari, contre la future interdiction de leur parti.

embarrassées et d'autres enfin qui ont peur de déclarer leur position. Nous avons participé dimanche soir à la réunion du Conseil politique de sécurité nationale où nous avons affiché clairement notre position. L'accord comporte beaucoup de points positifs en faveur de l'Irak. Il a été décidé d'en référer au gouvernement et au Parlement et chaque partie est libre de donner sa position. L'alternative en cas de rejet est inquiétante : cela signifie soit la continuation de la situation actuelle quand un officier américain a les prérogatives pour arrêter tous les ministres, soit les Etats-Unis quittent l'Irak et renoncent à leurs engagements envers notre pays. Nous avons toujours déclaré notre opposition à tout accord qui viole la souveraineté du pays mais la dernière version de l'accord proposée par les Américains prend en compte cette souveraineté. »

IRAK : LES DIFFICILES NEGOCIATIONS DU « SOFA »

Plusieurs rencontres entre les Kurdes d'Irak et des responsables américains, ainsi que la visite de Massoud Barzani à Washington, ont porté principalement sur le « SOFA » (Status of Forces Agreement). Un accord doit en effet permettre aux Etats-Unis de maintenir une présence militaire à long terme en Irak, après que le mandat de l'ONU ait expiré, soit le 31 décembre 2008. Mais les négociations autour des modalités de l'accord n'avancent guère, en raison des réticences irakiennes.

Dans son fief de Salahaddin, le président de la Région du Kurdistan Massoud Barzani a d'abord reçu le général Raymond Odierno, le commandant des forces multinationales, accompagné d'une délégation. Le Premier Ministre du gouvernement kurde, Nêçirvan Barzanî, était également présent, ainsi que plusieurs responsables du GRK. En plus des questions liées aux régions réclamées par les Kurdes comme Khanaqin, et de façon plus large, les problèmes de sécurité dans le pays, notamment à Mossoul, l'entretien a surtout porté sur le Pacte de sécurité actuellement débattu entre les Américains et l'Irak, les Kurdes s'y montrant, de toutes les

composantes politiques de l'Irak, les plus favorables. Autre visite éminente à Salahaddin, celle de John Negroponte, le Secrétaire d'Etat adjoint américain, venu lui aussi discuter du pacte et des accords bilatéraux Irak-USA. Auparavant, John Negroponte avait rencontré à Suleïmanieh Jalal Talabani, le président de l'Irak et visité Kirkouk. Dans une conférence de presse commune, Massoud Barzani a de nouveau réitéré son soutien à cet accord.

Le président kurde s'est ensuite rendu à Bagdad pour participer à la réunion du Conseil politique de sécurité nationale durant laquelle les principaux responsables politiques irakiens devaient discuter de nouvelles modalités apportées à l'accord final, alors que les Etats-Unis sont réticents à toute modification. Mais le Premier Ministre irakien, Nouri Al-Maliki a tout de même annoncé qu'il allait soumettre à la Maison Blanche une nouvelle version du SOFA.

De retour, il a déclaré à la presse, dès son arrivée à l'aéroport d'Erbil : « Nous sommes clairement en faveur de la signature du projet d'accord. Il y a des forces qui soutiennent ce traité, d'autres qui hésitent, d'autres encore qui sont

Une semaine plus tard, Massoud Barzani s'envolait pour Washington afin de discuter avec les responsables américains de ce même accord, alors que le camp irakien, et notamment les chiïtes, se montrent réticents. « La question de l'accord stratégique a été le thème principal de la rencontre », a déclaré le président à la presse, après son entretien avec Condoleeza Rice, avant d'ajouter que l'accord avait été discuté « en détail. »

Le président George Bush a indiqué avoir reçu du gouvernement irakien plusieurs demandes de modification et en avoir discuté avec Massoud Barzani, sans que leur teneur ait été révélée à la presse. Il a reconnu que le président kurde était un défenseur actif de cet accord. Condoleeza Rice, comme George Bush, se sont déclarés confiants sur le fait que l'accord puisse être

signé avant la fin de l'année 2008, mais ce n'est pas un sentiment unanime au sein de l'administration américaine. L'expiration du mandat, si le SOFA n'était pas signé, ôterait toute légalité à la présence militaire des USA en Irak, ce qui entraînerait la suspension de toute opération armée, et le cantonnement des soldats dans leurs casernes. « Les avancées en

matière de sécurité qui ont été accomplies commenceront de se défaire, car nous n'aurons plus de mandat légal pour opérer », estime ainsi le porte-parole du Pentagone, Geoff Morrell.

Une autre solution, qui serait d'obtenir de l'ONU qu'elle reconduise ce mandat, nécessiterait d'obtenir l'accord de la Russie et de la Chine, qui pourraient y apposer leur veto.

torture prises par la Turquie en vue de son adhésion à l'Union européenne, ces pratiques n'ont pas disparu et l'IHD (Association des droits de l'homme en Turquie), a recensé pour l'année 2007 678 plaintes « pour tortures et mauvais traitements infligés par la police et la gendarmerie », ce qui présente tout de même une légère amélioration au vue des années précédentes (708 pour 2006, 825 pour 2005 et 1040 pour 2004).

AINSI QUE...

MORT D'UN MILITANT TURC SOUS LA TORTURE

Un militant d'extrême-gauche, Engin Ceber, est mort à l'hôpital le 10 octobre des suites des tortures subies après son arrestation le 28 septembre dernier. Il était âgé de 29 ans. Dès l'annonce de sa mort, Amnesty International a demandé une enquête complète, relayé par de nombreuses ONG turques : « *La mort d'Engin Ceber est une nouvelle preuve que les actes de torture et les mauvais traitements sont monnaie courante dans les lieux de détention en Turquie.* »

Cette affaire relance la question de la torture en Turquie dans l'ensemble de son appareil policier, judiciaire et même pénitentiaire car Engin Ceber aurait en effet subi des sévices tant de la part des gendarmes et des policiers que lors de sa détention, ce qui renvoie aux plus mauvais jours des prisons turques, notamment après le coup d'Etat.

Engin Ceber avait été arrêté ainsi que d'autres militants lors d'une manifestation qui mettait en cause les autorités turques dans une autre affaire, celle de la mort de Ferhat Gercek militant abattu par la police un an auparavant. Selon son avocat, immédiatement après son arrestation, Engin Ceber aurait été déshabillé et passé à tabac, frappé avec des matraques en bois non seulement durant sa garde à

vue mais au cours de sa détention provisoire. Hospitalisé le 7 octobre pour des traumatismes crâniens, il a succombé trois jours plus tard.

.Le 14 octobre, le ministre de la justice, Mehmet Ali Şahin a officiellement présenté ses excuses à la famille du militant, au nom de son gouvernement et de l'État. Il a également annoncé la suspension de 19 fonctionnaires et promis une enquête complète.

Si certains journaux turcs, comme Hürriyet ont salué l'effort de transparence du gouvernement - « C'est la première fois qu'un ministre s'excuse de la sorte » indique le journaliste Ahmet Hakan - d'autres voix, comme celle du père de la victime ne se contentent pas de ce mea culpa et réclament des sanctions plus sérieuses pour les coupables qu'une simple suspension. Cela ne satisfait pas non plus Amnesty International qui a demandé à ce que « *les responsables présumés de la mort d'Engin Ceber* » soient traduits en justice. L'organisation demande également à ce que les deux autres militants arrêtés le même jour d'Engin Ceber, toujours en détention provisoire dans la même prison Metris à Istanbul ne soient pas soumis aux mêmes actes de torture et soient suivis médicalement.

Malgré les promesses de « tolérance zéro » en matière de

ERBIL : UNE LOI RESTREIGNANT LA POLYGAMIE ADOPTÉE

Le 31 octobre, le Parlement d'Erbil a voté la loi sur le statut de l'individu, qui comprend un certain nombre de différences par rapport aux lois irakiennes, notamment en ce qui concerne la polygamie et le divorce. En 2001, la loi n° 62 votée par le parlement kurde avait déjà interdit cette pratique, sauf dans certaines conditions. Dès le 28 octobre, 200 militantes appartenant à près de 40 mouvements féministes manifestaient devant le Parlement en réclamant l'abrogation totale de la polygamie et l'égalité absolue entre les sexes pour tout ce qui regarde les dispositions matrimoniales et familiales. Mais le 31, la loi adoptée par les députés n'est pas allée jusqu'à l'interdiction, se contentant de limiter fortement le recours à cette pratique. Alors que la religion musulmane admet qu'un homme puisse prendre jusqu'à quatre épouses, la loi du GRK ne tolère qu'un second mariage, uniquement dans les cas avérés de stérilité ou si la femme souffre de maladies sexuellement transmissibles. « Nous n'avons pas réussi à interdire la polygamie, mais nous avons réussi à la limiter strictement », a déclaré à AFP la députée Khaman Zirar. Pour sa part, Laila

Abdullah, de l'Union des femmes kurdes regrette ce résultat partiel, en indiquant que son groupe continuera de faire pression sur la classe politique pour parvenir à l'interdiction.

Autre disposition adoptée, une loi autorisant les femmes à divorcer, liberté qui sera stipulée au moment du mariage, comme une des conditions du contrat, signé en présence de deux témoins. Quant à l'âge légal du mariage, il a été fixé pour les deux sexes à 16 ans, après qu'un certificat médical ait établi qu'ils sont aptes physiquement et mentalement à contracter une union, sous réserve de l'accord parental de la future mariée, ou à tout le moins de sa mère si elle est veuve.

LA CONSTRUCTION DU BARRAGE DE HASANKEYF COMPROMISE

L'Allemagne, l'Autriche et la Suisse, principaux soutiens financiers pour la construction controversée du barrage d'Ilisu, qui doit noyer la ville et la vallée de Hasankeyf ont amorcé, après plusieurs avertissements, un processus de retrait du projet turc. Selon le sous-secrétaire du ministre de la Coopération économique et du développement, Erich Stather, les trois pays réunis le 7 octobre ont envoyé une requête ferme au sujet des problèmes d'environnement posés par le projet et auxquels la Turquie n'a apporté que peu de réponses et de garanties. Si Ankara ne satisfait pas dans les 60 jours aux demandes exprimées par les gouvernements européens, ils cesseront de se porter garants pour les sociétés impliquées dans le projet, ce qui aboutirait de fait à un gel du projet. Les ONG qui luttent pour la préservation de la ville de Hasankeyf estiment qu'il est absolument improbable que les conditions exigées pour préserver

l'environnement puissent être remplies en deux mois par la Turquie, soit jusqu'au 6 décembre 2008 dernier délai.

Selon Ulrich Eichelmann, de l'ECA Watch Austria, un tel geste est une première dans « l'histoire européenne de l'économie d'exportation ». Heike Drillisch, qui mène de l'Allemagne la campagne contre le barrage d'Ilisu, se félicite de cette décision longuement attendue et assure qu'ils resteront vigilants contre tout compromis de dernière minute avec le gouvernement turc.

Depuis plus d'un an, des experts indépendants n'avaient cessé de souligner le fait que la Turquie ne remplissait pas ses engagements ni les critères internationaux en matière d'environnement et de garanties envers les habitants qui devaient être expropriés. En mars 2007, l'Allemagne, l'Autriche et la Suisse s'étaient portés garants pour les sociétés Andritz AG, Zueblin AG et Alstom., lesquelles avaient pu alors emprunter à plusieurs banques, la banque autrichienne UniCredit, la banque allemande Deka et la Société générale. Le montant total des crédits était estimé à 450 millions d'euros. Le désistement des gouvernements incitera probablement les banques à se retirer à leur tour du projet, surtout dans le contexte de crise actuelle. Ainsi, les contrats avec les sociétés de construction seront eux aussi compromis.

Le maire de Hasankeyf, Abdulyahap Kusen, a exprimé sa satisfaction : « Le probable retrait des Européens est une bonne nouvelle pour les habitants de Hasankeyf et une motivation supplémentaire de poursuivre en Turquie notre lutte, étape par étape, contre le projet. Nous avons réellement une possibilité de sauver notre habitat, avec son

patrimoine culturel et naturel, vieux de milliers d'années. »

IRAN : UN MILITANT KURDE CONDAMNÉ EN APPEL A ONZE ANS DE PRISON

La politique de durcissement contre les militants féministes et des droits de l'homme se poursuit en Iran. Le 23 octobre, la cour d'appel de Téhéran a ainsi confirmé la peine de onze ans de prison infligée à un militant des droits de l'homme et journaliste kurde, Mohammad Sadigh Kaboudvand pour « atteinte à la sécurité nationale » a annoncé à l'AFP son avocate Nasrin Sotoudeh. Son seul tort est en fait d'avoir fondé une organisation de défense des droits de l'homme.

« L'accusation d'atteinte à la sécurité nationale est sans fondement » s'insurge Reporters sans Frontières. Il est absurde de considérer la défense des droits de l'homme comme une atteinte à la sécurité nationale. Ce n'est qu'un prétexte fallacieux pour faire taire un journaliste qui écrivait depuis longtemps sur les discriminations des minorités en Iran. » RSF a également dénoncé l'absence de traitement médical que nécessite l'état de santé du militant kurde. Détenu depuis juillet 2007 dans la prison d'Evin à Téhéran, centre de détention de sinistre réputation, Mohammad Sadigh Kaboudvand souffre de douleurs à la prostate et ne fait l'objet d'aucun soins. Son épouse, Parniz Hassani, a indiqué à RSF qu'elle n'avait pas obtenu l'autorisation de lui rendre visite depuis le 24 septembre dernier.

En juillet dernier, Amnesty International avait publié un rapport alarmant sur les discriminations religieuses et culturelles et les persécutions subies par les minorités, et principalement sur les 12 millions de Kurdes, en Iran.

Irak



3 OCTOBRE 2008

Brigades du Sahwa : de la bannière étoilée à l'armée nationale

Les 54 000 miliciens des brigades du Sahwa («réveil» en arabe) de la région de Bagdad combattent depuis mercredi sous le drapeau irakien. Forces supplétives de l'armée américaine, ces brigades, très majoritairement sunnites, ont joué un rôle considérable dans la lutte contre Al-Qaeda. Elles ont ainsi permis depuis environ un an une amélioration sensible de la sécurité dans les provinces sunnites de l'Irak et dans la capitale, Bagdad. Le niveau de violences y est à son plus bas niveau depuis quatre ans.

Dès le 31 octobre, les Sahwas toucheront un premier salaire du gouvernement de Bagdad. Jusqu'à présent, leurs rémunérations étaient assurées par l'armée américaine, à raison de 300 dollars (217 euros) par combattant, soit environ 16 millions de dollars (11,5 millions d'euros) par mois. Environ 50 000 autres membres des brigades du Sahwa, répartis dans les provinces du nord et du centre de l'Irak, seront transférés «progressivement» sous le contrôle du gouvernement de Nouri al-Maliki.

«**Réconciliation**». Cette passation des pouvoirs est un élément clé dans la stratégie américaine de désengagement de l'Irak. C'est en

septembre 2006 que les chefs de tribus sunnites de la province occidentale d'Al-Anbar, souvent achetés et «retournés» par les Américains, ont mis sur pied les brigades du Sahwa. La région est alors très largement acquise à la rébellion et les groupes liés à Al-Qaeda y pullulent. La violence extrême de ces derniers sera aussi une des raisons qui permettront la création de ces milices tribales. Depuis, la situation sécuritaire s'est nettement améliorée. Ensuite, les brigades du Sahwa ont été peu à peu généralisées aux autres provinces sunnites. Les miliciens ont contribué là encore à faire diminuer les attentats dans ces régions qui constituent aussi depuis 2003 des foyers de l'insurrection antiaméricaine.

L'amélioration est cependant fragile comme le montre l'embuscade commise mercredi près de la ville de Khan Bani Saad, dans la province de Diyala, qui a coûté la vie à 35 personnes, dont 27 policiers. Le conseiller à la Sécurité nationale du gouvernement irakien, Mowaffak al-Rubaï, a salué mercredi un «important succès pour la réconciliation nationale», en soulignant que Bagdad était «impatiente d'assumer [cette] responsabilité». Le gouvernement irakien s'est engagé à enrôler 20%

d'entre eux dans l'armée ou la police, et à garantir aux autres l'accès à des emplois civils, publics ou privés.

«**Ennemis**». Mais, selon des sources bien informées dans la capitale irakienne, leur transfert de l'autorité américaine à celle de Bagdad n'est pas sans poser de graves problèmes. Des dirigeants irakiens entendent en effet demander des comptes à certains chefs de brigades pour les violences qu'ils ont exercées à l'encontre des chiites irakiens. Dans la crainte d'arrestations, plusieurs d'entre eux auraient déjà fui en Jordanie et en Syrie. «Nous condamnons l'intégration des Sahwas dans les forces de sécurité et la possibilité qui leur est donnée de décider du sort des Irakiens», déclarait dernièrement cheikh Abdelhadi al-Mohammadaoui, un haut responsable de l'Armée du Mahdi, la puissante milice chiite. «Ils étaient, il y a encore peu, les ennemis des Irakiens», ajoutait-il.

Si ce nouveau conflit éclatait, il pourrait permettre une «renaissance» d'Al-Qaeda, ce que le général américain David Petraeus, qui a mis en œuvre cette politique de contre-insurrection, avouait dernièrement craindre.

→ JEAN-PIERRE PERRIN

LE FIGARO 6 octobre 2008

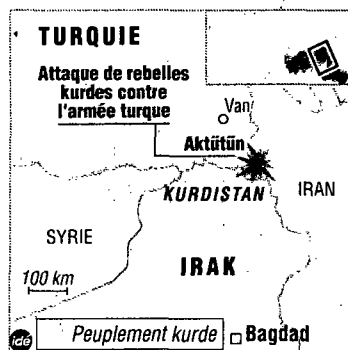
Ankara menace d'attaquer les bases du PKK en Irak

TURQUIE

Quinze soldats turcs et 23 rebelles kurdes sont morts, vendredi, au cours d'une attaque des séparatistes contre une caserne près de la frontière avec le Kurdistan irakien.

Istanbul

À TRAVERS toute la Turquie, dans plusieurs villes, la même scène s'est répétée dimanche. Des dizaines de milliers de personnes ont assisté aux funérailles des quinze soldats tués lors d'un assaut mené par le PKK près de la frontière irakienne, vendredi. Dans la foule, des appels pour venger les «martyrs» fusaient. À l'unisson, la classe politique a condamné cette nouvelle attaque, la



plus sanglante depuis le début de l'année. Dans un message télévisé, le président de la République, Abdullah Gül, a assuré que «quel que soit le prix, le combat continuera sans faiblir». Et le premier ministre, Erdogan, annulant un voyage en Mongolie, a regagné précipitam-

ment la Turquie samedi pour assister à une réunion avec des généraux.

Alors que la réponse à cette «attaque haineuse» doit être étudiée dans les prochains jours, les autorités civiles et militaires turques ont critiqué de concert la région autonome du Kurdistan d'Irak, accusée, au mieux, de passivité face à la présence de la rébellion sur son territoire. «Non seulement nous n'avons aucun soutien de l'administration du nord de l'Irak, mais elle fournit (au PKK) des infrastructures comme des routes et des hôpitaux», a fustigé le général Hasan Igsiz, le numéro deux de l'état-major, au cours d'une conférence de presse. Alors qu'il assistait à des obsèques, Recep Tayyip Erdogan a également demandé au gouvernement de M. Barzani de prendre «des mesures (...) contre les bases» cachées dans les montagnes irakiennes.

Vendredi, des membres du PKK, 350 selon les médias, ont pris d'assaut la caserne de Aktütün, soutenus par des tirs d'artillerie lourde, venus du nord de l'Irak. Isolé, le petit poste militaire se trouve à quelques kilomètres de la frontière. Au cours de cette opération, qui a coûté la vie à quinze soldats, deux autres ont éga-

lement disparu, vingt ont été blessés et 23 rebelles kurdes sont morts, selon le décompte de l'état-major. Dans les heures qui ont suivi, l'aviation turque a pilonné des positions du PKK dans les montagnes irakiennes. C'est la quatrième fois depuis juin 2007, que le poste de Aktütün est la cible des rebelles kurdes : en quinze mois, 22 soldats y ont péri.

Incursions aériennes

Cette dernière attaque a eu lieu quelques jours avant un vote crucial au Parlement turc. Mercredi 8 octobre, les députés devraient prolonger la motion autorisant l'armée à intervenir en Irak une année supplémentaire. Le résultat ne fait pas de doute. Ces derniers mois, de nombreuses incursions aériennes ont déjà été menées dans le nord irakien et une vaste intervention terrestre a eu lieu en février. Déjà, le premier feu vert parlementaire, qui avait été donné le 17 octobre 2007, était intervenu après une attaque du PKK, contre une patrouille : la mort de treize soldats avait suscité une forte émotion populaire, contraignant le gouvernement à se ranger du côté des partisans d'une intervention armée.

LAURE MARCHAND

AFP

TURQUIE: TENSION TURCO-KURDE DANS UNE VILLE APRÈS UN INCIDENT MEURTRIER

ANKARA, 2 oct 2008 (AFP)

QUARANTE-huit personnes ont été arrêtées mercredi dans une petite ville de l'ouest de la Turquie où des hostilités ont éclaté entre communautés turque et kurde à la suite d'un incident qui a coûté la vie à deux hommes, a indiqué le gouverneur local Selahattin Hatipoglu.

Un précédent bilan fourni par la presse faisait état de quarante interpellations.

Dix-huit des personnes placées en garde à vue doivent comparaître jeudi devant un cour d'Altinova, a souligné M. Hatipoglu.

Le responsable a appelé la population locale à garder le sang froid et ne pas faire escalader la tension qui restait toujours vive dans la ville, selon les médias.

"J'invite tout le monde à rester calme", a souligné le gouverneur, cité par l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Les gendarmes sont intervenus en force pour assurer la sécurité à Altinova,

petite station balnéaire sur la mer Egée, prisée notamment par les retraités, où des magasins et des maisons appartenant à des Kurdes ont été attaqués à coup de pierre par une foule en colère, précisent les journaux.

Les incidents ont éclaté mardi soir lorsqu'un Kurde a renversé intentionnellement avec sa camionnette deux hommes avec lesquels il s'était disputé peu avant, les tuant sur le coup. Il a été immédiatement arrêté.

Lors de leurs obsèques mercredi, une foule de plus de 3.000 personnes brandissant des drapeaux turcs et scandant "Altinova nous appartient", s'en est pris violemment aux échoppes appartenant à des Kurdes, les saccageant à coups de pierres malgré l'intervention des forces de l'ordre, selon le journal Vatan.

Les autorités ont interdit les entrées et les sorties de la ville et des renforts militaires y ont été dépêchés.

La Turquie est confrontée depuis 1984 à une rébellion séparatiste kurde meurtrière dans le sud-est du pays, peuplé majoritairement de kurdes, qui attise les sentiments nationalistes entraînant parfois des tensions entre Turcs et Kurdes.

AFP

Irak: le Conseil présidentiel approuve la nouvelle loi électorale

SOULEIMANIYEH 3 oct 2008 (AFP) —

LE CONSEIL présidentiel irakien a approuvé vendredi la nouvelle loi électorale adoptée par le parlement et qui prévoit la tenue d'importantes élections provinciales d'ici la fin janvier, a-t-on appris de source proche de ce Conseil.

Le Conseil présidentiel, qui regroupe le chef de l'Etat Jalal Talabani et ses deux vice-présidents, Tarek al-Hachémi et Adel Abdel Mahdi, s'est réuni le matin à Souleimaniyeh, à 365 km au nord-est de Bagdad, dans la région autonome du Kurdistan, a indiqué à l'AFP un membre de l'entourage de M. Talabani.

Il a formellement approuvé, lors de cette réunion, la nouvelle loi électorale adoptée le 24 septembre par les députés, a-t-il précisé sous le couvert de l'anonymat.

Le président Talabani et ses deux vice-nts ont cependant "suggéré que soit réinséré un article de la loi assurant la représentation des minorités au sein des Conseils provinciaux", toujours selon la même source.

La suppression de cet article, dit article 50, avait suscité de vives protestations au sein des minorités d'Irak, en particulier chez les Chrétiens, l'une des plus anciennes communautés du pays.

Le Premier ministre Nouri Al-Maliki, puis la mission de l'ONU, avaient également exprimé leur "inquiétude" sur cette question, demandant une réintroduction de l'article 50.

Bloquée depuis des mois par les profondes divisions entre factions irakiennes, la loi avait été adoptée par la majorité des parlementaires à l'issue d'intenses négociations et dans un rare consensus.

Elle prévoit que les élections provinciales se déroulent au plus tard le 31 janvier 2009 dans 14 des 18 provinces d'Irak. Elles seront en revanche organisées plus tard dans les provinces formant la région kurde (Dohouk, Erbil et Souleimaniyeh) et dans la très contestée province de Kirkouk (nord).

Initialement fixé le 1er octobre 2008, le scrutin est considéré comme crucial pour la stabilité du pays, notamment par Washington, qui y voit une étape incontournable du processus de réconciliation en Irak.



Un premier projet de loi avait été approuvé le 22 juillet par le parlement dans un contexte tendu et lors d'un vote boycotté notamment par les députés kurdes. Le Conseil présidentiel y avait opposé son veto, nécessitant la rédaction d'un nouveau texte.

L'adoption de la loi a longtemps buté sur la question de la répartition des pouvoirs entre les communautés au conseil provincial de Kirkouk (250 km au nord de Bagdad), une région riche en pétrole que se disputent Kurdes, Arabes et Turcomans.

S'estimant majoritaires, les Kurdes souhaitent que leur prépondérance y soit reconnue, ce que refusent Arabes et Turcomans.

Selon la nouvelle loi, les élections provinciales à Kirkouk n'auront pas lieu avant mars 2009, après l'examen de la situation par un nouveau comité.

Les élections provinciales au Kurdistan autonome, région de facto indépendante seront quant à elles fixées par le parlement local.

AFP

KURDISTAN: ENTRÉE EN ACTIVITÉ D'UN PROJET GAZIER DE DEUX FIRMES DES EMIRATS

DUBAI, 4 oct 2008 (AFP) -

LES FIRMES DANA Gas PJSC et Crescent Petroleum, basées à Charjah, aux Emirats arabes unis, ont annoncé samedi l'entrée en activité d'un projet gazier lancé en 2007 au Kurdistan irakien pour un coût total de 650 millions de dollars.

Avec la réalisation de la première phase du projet, du gaz doit être acheminé par un gazoduc de 180 km au rythme de 75 millions de pieds cubes par jour vers deux centrales électriques en construction à Erbil et Souleimaniyah, ont ajouté les deux firmes dans un communiqué cité par l'agence officielle Wam.

Le pompage du gaz devrait être porté à 300 millions de pieds cubes au premier semestre 2009, lorsque les deux centrales seront opérationnelles avec une capacité de production totale de 1.250 mégawatts, selon le document.

La région kurde semi-autonome du nord de l'Irak, riche en pétrole, est l'une des plus sûres du pays.

Le gouvernement régional a déjà signé des contrats d'exploration et d'exportation de brut avec des compagnies internationales après avoir adopté son propre arsenal législatif en août 2007, déclenchant la colère du gouvernement central de Bagdad, qui nie la validité de ces contrats.

Iraq remains 'locked in conflict'

The US defence department says the fundamental character of the conflict in Iraq remains unchanged, despite dramatic security improvements there.

In its quarterly report to Congress, it said Iraq remained locked in a communal struggle for power and resources.

The Pentagon also expressed concern at the pace at which members of Sunni militias were being integrated into the armed forces or other government jobs.

The report identified Iran's influence as the major long-term security threat.

"Despite continued Iranian promises to the contrary, it appears clear that Iran continues to fund, train, arm, and direct SG [special groups] intent on destabilising the situation in Iraq," the report said.

The US military has increased its reliance on Iraqi troops and its allies among Sunni fighters to take the lead in security operations, which is reflected in the death tolls from the last month.

The number of Iraqi security forces killed in September rose by nearly a third to 159 compared with the same period last year, while US troop deaths for the same period fell by nearly 40% to 25, according to the Associated Press news agency.

Awakening move

The report comes on the day that US is beginning to transfer control of about half of the 100,000 local Sunni Muslim militiamen belonging to the so-called Awakening Councils into the Shia-led government.

"The Multinational Force in Iraq is transferring the



About 100,000 Sunni Iraqi men has joined the Awakening Councils

responsibility of the [councils] to the Iraq government today," a US military spokesman in Baghdad told the AFP news agency.

The move was announced at the beginning of September. Last week a US commander said the Iraqi government would start paying their salaries in Baghdad from 10 November.

Members of Awakening Councils outside the capital would come under government control at later dates.

"The slow pace of transition is a concern," the Pentagon report said.

Correspondents say the US is worried the Sunni fighters, if they are not given legitimate employment in the government, will rejoin the anti-US insurgency.

The Awakening movement was born in 2005 in Anbar province, when Sunni tribal leaders turned against former allies in al-Qaeda and worked alongside US troops.

The US military subsequently put tens of thousands of them onto its payroll and provided them with equipment and training.

The salary bill is thought to be about \$360m a year.

Their successful campaign ousted al-Qaeda from Anbar within a year, transforming the huge western province into one of the most peaceful parts of Iraq.

Awakening Councils are also found among Sunni Arab tribes in Salaheddin, Diyala, Nineveh and Tamim provinces.

Bad tidings in Iraqi Kurdistan

By Mohammed A Salih

COLUMBIA, Missouri - Tensions between Iraqi Kurds and the government are on the rise, raising fears of ethnic clashes just as the country begins to recover from years of sectarian violence between Shi'ite and Sunni Arabs.

The Iraqi army last month deployed units to areas under Kurdish control in the volatile northern Diyala province, as part of its "Operation Good Tidings", which has been launched to expand government authority over the area.

The centerpiece of the controversial move was Khanaqin, 140 kilometers northeast of Baghdad, a small, largely Kurdish town that has oil reserves and is close to the Iranian border. Kurdish security forces, known as the Peshmarga, left their bases in the nearby districts of Jalawla, Saadiya and Qara Tapa in northern

Diyala after receiving warnings from the Iraqi army.

In a hasty face-saving move, Iraqi and Kurdish officials tentatively agreed that neither Peshmarga nor Iraqi troops would go to the town. But to the Kurds' advantage, the predominantly Kurdish police force was told it could remain in charge of security.

Kurds see the deployment as a test of their power and believe if they withdraw from Khanaqin, the Iraqi army will chase them out of other strategic, and contested, locations in and around the oil-rich Kirkuk and Mosul in northern Iraq.

"The current problem is over borders, because they [the Iraqi government] believe the borders of [autonomous] Kurdistan should be where the former ousted regime [of president Saddam Hussein] were," said Masoud Barzani, president of Iraq's northern Kurdistan region, in a meeting with Kurdish journalists on September 28.

"From now on, if Iraq sends its forces to somewhere in disputed areas, then we will dispatch our forces to the same spot as well. If they send one brigade, we will send two," Barzani said.

His remarks ratcheted the current tensions to a new level, signaling Kurds will not shy from fighting the army of the very government which is run by a Kurdish president, as well as containing some key Kurdish ministers.

Last month, Sheikh Homam al-Hamudi, a Shi'ite Arab who heads the Iraqi parliament's foreign relations committee, warned Kurds on behalf of

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki that "any [Kurdish] Peshmarga who violates the blue line will be chased out by the [Iraqi] security forces".

The blue line refers to the official border between areas under Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) jurisdiction and the rest of Iraq. KRG runs the three northern provinces of Arbil, Sulaimaniya and Dohuk and has no official jurisdiction over Khanaqin, Kirkuk and Nineveh province, home to the city of Mosul.

In the wake of the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, Kurds gained unprecedented power and recognition in the country's politics and their relations with Baghdad went through an exceptional period of apparent friendship.

Kurds consider Khanaqin, Kirkuk and towns around Mosul part of their historic homeland. Under Saddam, tens of thousands of Kurds were expelled from those areas and replaced by Arab settlers from the central and southern parts of the country. Now Arabs charge Kurds with a tit-for-tat "ethnic cleansing" campaign, as ownership disputes between Kurds, Arabs and Turkomans - people of Turkish origin - turn the areas into potentially explosive flashpoints.

The recent developments marked the advent of a new era in Iraq's post-war politics and a sign, as Kurdish media sometimes say, that the "honeymoon" between Kurds and the Iraqi government is over.

For the first time, the Shi'ite-led government of Maliki is militarily challenging Kurds who are partners in his coalition government. Since the overthrow of Saddam, Shi'ites and Kurds have given the appearance of a political alliance. When several Shi'ite, Sunni and secular groups withdrew from Maliki's government in 2006, it was Kurds who propped up his cabinet by staying and backing him.

But as the security situation has improved over the past year, Maliki's confidence appears to have grown in parallel. That has meant he now finds himself in a position to take on old friends, in maneuvers typical of Iraqi politics, which is notorious for short-lived and often self-serving political alliances.

The recent moves by the Iraqi army sent shockwaves among Kurds, reviving images of the bitter history of their relations with various central governments in Baghdad. Kurds have been at war with virtually all governments since the establishment of Iraq

in 1921 up to 2003.

The worst experience was with Saddam, who in the 1980s conducted large-scale massacres of Kurds, killing tens of thousands. In April, the Iraqi parliament unanimously recognized those massacres as "genocide".

"I think, unfortunately, this was an alarm bell as far as we are concerned ... Baghdad again followed the practice that when it is weak, it keeps silent toward us, but as soon as it gets powerful, starts to threaten us," Nechirvan Barzani, prime minister of the KRG and Massoud's nephew, told Voice of America last week. "We thought in the new Iraq, an Iraq that is rebuilt on a new basis, this issue is over."

In response to what many Iraqi Arabs see as Kurdish encroachment on the authority and powers of the central government, Maliki issued a clear warning, saying that Iraq needed a "strong central government".

"We do not want the central government, as some think, to become just a process of collecting and producing wealth," the London-based pan-Arab daily al-Hayat quoted Maliki as saying in mid-September.

Distrust between the two sides runs so deep that recently, as the news broke of Iraq's plans to buy advanced military equipment like F-16 jets from the United States, the speaker of the Kurdish parliament, Adnan Mufti, said the US should insist on guarantees from the Iraqi govern-

ment that it would not use those weapons against the civilian population, as in the past.

Saddam frequently used the army to crush his political opponents, notably Shi'ites and Kurds.

Arab parties charge that Kurds are getting a disproportionate share of the Iraqi budget - 17% - and that they are over-represented in federal government institutions in Baghdad.

Observers believe the Kurds' position in Iraqi politics is weakening as sectarian Shi'ite-Sunni violence has decreased and Arabs of both sects act more in unison on some key issues, especially those related to Kurds. Pressures from regional powers, especially Turkey, have also had an impact in undermining Kurdish influ-

ence in Iraq.

In February, when the Turkish army launched an incursion into the remote mountainous areas of Iraqi Kurdistan in search of Kurdish guerillas, the Iraqi government merely issued a few statements. And as the US seeks to stabilize Iraq, it is pressuring Kurds to make concessions to Shi'ite and Sunni Arabs.

All this means Kurdish leaders face tough times, especially as major disputes between Baghdad and the KRG over oil, territory and budgets remain unsettled.

Given the potential dangerous course that events in this regard may take, what has happened so far could be the calm before the real storm.



Voice of America®

02 October 2008

Turkey's Kurdish Party Looks to Religion to Boost Political Profile

By Dorian Jones Diyarbakir, Turkey



Turkish Kurds hold flags of a pro Kurdish party as they dance during the celebrations for Nowruz in Diyarbakir (File)

After suffering defeat in last year's general election to the Islamic rooted AK party, Turkey's main Kurdish party is turning to religion in its battle to re-establish itself as the region's main political power. But there are concerns about the direction the movement is going. For VOA, Dorian Jones has this report from Diyarbakir in southeast Turkey.

At a public meeting of the Democratic Society Party or DTP, in Diyarbakir, leaders address their supporters.

Standing at their sides are religious elders. The retired Imams, while religiously conservative, are staunch supporters of Kurdish nationalism. But in last year's general election they didn't give their traditional support to the DTP. That lack of

support coincided with a victory for the Islamic rooted AK party, which stood on a platform of Islamic solidarity. Head of Diyarbakir's religious elders, Zait Citiran, says the DTP had to be taught a lesson.

He said the DTP made a great mistake not understanding that 97 percent of Kurdish people are Muslim and have Islamic sensitivities and he says that is why they lost last year's general election. But he says the DTP mayors and members of parliament are now going to mosques to pray and they are inviting religious elders to their meetings. Citiran says he and the religious elders are now pleased to support the DTP.

But there are concerns about this embrace of Islam by political leaders.

Publisher and writer Kawa Nemir has devoted his life to the struggle for Kurdish rights both politically and culturally. He believes many of the gains of the last few decades of the Kurdish movement are at risk.

"We have a literary political movement of modernizing Kurdish society and modernizing Kurdish literature for the last 30 years," said Nemir.

"There has been a guerrilla war, also there has been a legal movement, legal struggles, and at the beginning it was leftist, it was Marxist. There were some liberals, some villagers, some progressive people. Intellectuals were supporting that movement.

Secularism was very important for the Kurdish movement. But now this movement is being more religious day by day. Fifty years ago it was conservative, but it had started to change but now there is a reverse."

The Friday sermon at the Olu Cami, Diyarbakir's main mosque, is a tirade of anti-Semitism particularly aimed at Israel. It says Jews are murderers of Palestinian children and are agents of the devil.

Kurdish nationalists are traditionally sympathetic to Israel because of its support for the semi autonomous Kurdish state in neighboring Northern Iraq.

The Friday sermon, according to head of the DTP in Diyarbakir, Nectar Atalay, is just another example of the Turkish state and the ruling Justice and Development Party, using religion to undermine his party's support.

He says they are always trying to use religion against the DTP, saying the DTP is an atheist party. He says they especially attack the DTP for the prominent role of woman in the DTP movement and that many of the women don't wear head scarves. Atalay says the DTP is now being more successful in showing the people that it is a party of faithful people that respects Islam.

Last March, tens of thousands of people attended a meeting to celebrate the birth of Mohammed. It was organized by supporters of the DTP in the neighboring city of Batman. The increasing embrace with Islam, is causing particular concern among woman.

The DTP has a strong secular tradition and commitment to woman's rights. It has a 45 percent quota for positions for women in the party.

Silan Eser, is a popular singer in Diyarbakir and a leading official in the DTP. She is the modern face of the party. Eser says while she understands the motives behind the party moving towards Islam, she thinks it is a dangerous game. Eser says the recent move toward Islam by the DTP does not bode well for women in the party. Up until now, she says, the DTP movement has been very positive for women and has always challenged conservatism in the region.

She says that's why women make up the majority of the party activists. Eser says these women will not allow Islamic ideals to become too powerful in the party and, she says, women will protect all the achievements they have won. Supporters of the party's stance towards religion are arguing it is a question of fighting fire with fire. But critics are warning that people who play with fire invariably end up with burnt fingers. For the Kurdish movement it could well be the women who suffer first.

Iraq clears way for provincial elections

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq's presidential council on Friday officially approved a law that paves the way for U.S.-backed provincial elections to be held by the end of January, officials said.

The move will allow preparations to go ahead for the first provincial elections in four years. But it came only after Iraqi lawmakers agreed to set aside the divisive issues of power-sharing in an oil-rich northern region and the representation of minorities.

Iraq's parliament approved the law unanimously on Sept. 24 following months of deadlock centering on a Kurdish-Arab dispute over the city of Kirkuk, which the Kurds seek to incorporate into their semiautonomous region in the north.

But Christians, Yazidis and other minorities objected to the exclusion of an article that would guarantee them a certain number of seats on the local councils.

Firyad Rawndouzi, a Kurdish lawmaker, told The Associated Press that the three-member panel led by President Jalal Talabani had signed the law Friday and asked the parliament "to solve the minorities problem."

Support has been growing among Iraqi lawmakers from all sides to find a way to restore a quota system for minorities. But critics said it was difficult due to a lack of census data.

"There is an effort to come up with an appendix

regarding the minorities later on," presidential council spokesman Nasser al-Ani said.

U.S. officials hope the election, which must be held by Jan. 31 according to the new legislation, will give greater representation to minority Sunni Arabs and disaffected members of the Shiite majority.

Many Sunnis and some Shiites boycotted the last provincial election in January 2005, enabling Shiite religious parties and the Kurds to win a disproportionate share of the seats.

Empowering Sunnis through a new election may reduce support for the waning insurgency — though not among extremist groups.

Followers of anti-U.S. Shiite 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.

The 275-member Iraqi parliament had been heavily criticized for its inability to pass the law needed to establish the rules and guidelines for the vote. The election had been due as early as Oct. 1, then the date was pushed to the end of December.

U.S. officials have complained privately that Iraqi politicians have failed to take advantage of the sharp drop in violence — down 80% since last year, according to the U.S. military — to forge lasting power-sharing agreements.

The approval from Talabani and his deputies, Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi and Shiite Vice President Adel Abdul-Mahdi was especially



significant because they had vetoed a previous version over the summer.

That measure had been approved by parliament despite a Kurdish walkout in anger over Kirkuk.

But Kurdish legislators agreed to the latest proposal after all sides accepted a U.N. compromise to put off the vote in Tamim province, which includes Kirkuk, and form a committee to recommend separate legislation for elections there by March 31.

The Washington Times October 3, 2008

ANALYSIS/OPINION:

U.S. troop withdrawal missing a political strategy

Henri J. Barkey SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The United States and Iraq are close to concluding a deal on the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from major population centers by the end of June and from the rest of Iraq by 2011.

By most accounts this pact is the result of the Maliki government's increasing confidence in Iraq's armed forces and U.S. domestic pressure for withdrawal.

There is, however, a gaping hole in this deal: It has no strategy to contend with Iraq's neighbors — some of whom are capable and willing to undermine Iraqi stability.

Without a political strategy that counteracts their influence or engages them in the process, a withdrawal agreement is not worth the paper on which it is printed.

Iraq's neighbors are not just bystanders: almost all have specific interests and, through surrogates, have been actively involved in Iraq. These activities have often been at odds with U.S. and Iraqi government wishes.

A withdrawal plan, which creates a political vacuum, invites intervention by Iraq's neighbors to shape the nation's internal evolution in accordance with their own security considerations.

This, of course, is not as easy as it seems. Two of Iraq's neighbors, Iran and Syria, have been at loggerheads with Washington. Lines of communication are all but closed and replaced by complete mistrust.

Tehran and Damascus firmly suspected that regime change in Baghdad would extend to them as well. Washington consistently has accused both countries of supporting Iraq's insurgency; and in the case of Iran, accusations include the transfer of arms and training for insurgents.

By contrast, the other four neighbors — Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Kuwait — are long-standing allies of the U.S.

Iran and the Saudis are eyeing each other nervously in Iraq. Riyadh, already unnerved by Iran's nuclear program, sees Iran attempting to use a Shia-dominated Baghdad as an ally in its quest for regional dominance. Tehran, in turn, fears Saudi-supported Sunni jihadist movements and the emergence of a pro-U.S. Iraq aligning itself against Iran.

Turks, Iranians and Syrians would like to see the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) subjugated to Baghdad's control, if not disappear altogether. In their minds, a Kurdish province in an Iraqi federal state could inspire secessionist impulses among their own much-maligned Kurdish populations.

Saudis and other Arabs are unsympathetic to federalism, believing that Kurdish aspirations will one day lead them to secede and carve out another non-Arab country in the region or the Shia will create a superfederal region of their own.

The U.S. and Iraq's neighbors, however, do share one common goal: Iraq's territorial integrity. Where they disagree is on the internal arrangements. This provides a foundation on which Washington can begin a diplomatic initiative to construct a regionwide understanding.

The most important first step is to work with the allies individually to unscramble conflicting U.S. and Iraqi concerns on one side and Turkish, Saudi, Jordanian and Kuwaiti ones on the other.

Once progress is made, Washington can bring Iraq and the four neighbors together to constitute an informal front. Such a strategy would strengthen United States' weak hand and make it easier to engage the Iranians and Syrians.

Washington should urge the Saudis to stop their nationals from joining the fight in Iraq and also halt the transfer of Saudi petrodollars to jihadist networks all over the world.

The Saudis, in exchange, may require new security understandings from the United States, confirmation of Iraq's place in the Arab fold and agreement between Iraq and the Persian Gulf countries on security arrangements against Iran.

Iraq will want the Saudis to use their considerable influence over Sunni tribes to get them to commit to working with the central government after a U.S. withdrawal.

Similarly, among Turkey, the Iraqi Kurds and Baghdad, there is a deal to be made.

AP Photo

Iraqi Kurds want assurances from Turkey that it will not intervene in Iraqi domestic matters against them and that Ankara will ensure their access to European markets for their oil and other products.

Turks want the Turkish Kurdish insurgent group, the PKK, to be forced out of northern Iraq and for the KRG not to take the oil-rich city of Kirkuk. These are hard but not impossible problems to resolve.

However, it would require a diplomatic game plan that puts together the elements of a win-win strategy for all involved. The United States should want the KRG to become an institutionalized part of Iraq and not an independent state.

For this to happen, the Turks must recognize the KRG, while Iraqi Kurds must work with the United States if the PKK is to be forced out of northern Iraq. Turkey must act as a reliable conduit for Iraqi Kurds to sell their products to international markets.

Finally, a peaceful and legitimate resolution of the multiple claims to the oil-rich city of Kirkuk has to emerge without the intervention of outside powers.

• Henri J. Barkey is a nonresident senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the Bernard L. and Bertha F. Cohen Professor and Chair of the International Relations Department at Lehigh University.

TODAYS ZAMAN

October 3, 2008

Ethnic tensions rise in Aegean town of Altınova

An ethnic clash between Turks and Kurds in the coastal town of Altınova, in Balıkesir province, during which two were killed on the first day of Eid al-Fitr, has raised the already high tension in the town.

AYŞE KARABAT

Balıkesir Governor Selahattin Hatipoğlu tried to downplay the situation by claiming that the clash erupted for economic reasons. The Democratic Society Party (DTP) and the Human Rights Association (İHD) sent delegations to the town on fact-finding missions.

According to witnesses, a group of youngsters were playing loud music on Tuesday in front of a building in which Kurds formed the majority of residents. The witnesses claimed that the youngsters in the car had in the past had hostile relations with the residents of the building, who warned them to stop playing the music. A quarrel between the two groups escalated when they called in their friends for assistance. M.A. then drove his car toward the group, playing the music and two were killed. Some houses and shops belonging to Kurds were attacked and set on fire, subsequently extinguished by the fire department. A group of people then formed and marched through the town, shouting slogans such as "We don't want Kurds here" and "Kurds out."

Funerals for the two victims were held on Wednesday and increased tension as new attacks on Kurds took place. The gendarmerie intervened, detaining 46 individuals. Entry into and exit from Altınova is now strictly controlled by the gendarmerie; some Kurds have already left.

Altınova, a holiday resort and district of Ayvalık, has for long been a scene of ethnic clashes. A story published by Sunday's Zaman on Nov. 11, 2007 described the situation

in the town with the headline "Town of the First Bullet' Ayvalık reveals bitter ethnic rift."

However, Governor Hatipoğlu, addressing the public yesterday, said the clashes erupted for economic reasons. "The incident erupted because of commercial competition. The youngsters then called their friends to get involved in the fight. All exits from the town will be controlled; everyone should return to their business," he said and added that the responsible persons were detained and that they will soon be arraigned.

"Altınova is a tourism center whose future is bright. Those kinds of events will harm this bright future. The state will ensure security," he said and urged families to keep an eye on the town's youngsters.

Meanwhile, the DTP issued a statement and declared that it had sent a fact-finding delegation including party co-chairperson Emina Ayna.

The İHD also sent a delegation to the town to meet with officials and the public. İHD Chairman Hüsnü Öndül noted that the region was the scene of ethnic rifts before.

"It is very dangerous. Even a small incident can suddenly turn into an ethnic clash. For years people have heard racist propaganda and the state has not taken measures to prevent it," he said.

Meanwhile, the Bolu High Penal Court ruled out that an article urging the public to kill DTP members does not contravene the law. The article, published in a local newspaper, claimed that as long as the DTP does not label the



outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) a terrorist organization. DTP members should be targeted.

"For every martyr one member of the DTP should share the same destiny and this is the wish of the society," the article claimed.

DTP deputy Selahattin Demirtaş petitioned public prosecutors in Bolu, demanding a lawsuit be filed against the newspaper, which had also published the names of DTP members. After the prosecution denied Demirtaş's request, the DTP filed a lawsuit with the court itself, after which the court ruled that inciting people to commit murders is not against the law. The DTP is expected to take the case to the European Court of Human Rights.

AP Associated Press

Turks, Kurdish rebels in worst clashes in 8 months

October 4, 2008 By Selcan Hacaoglu, Associated Press Writer

ANKARA, Turkey --The Turkish army clashed with Kurdish rebels in south-eastern Turkey and northern Iraq in their deadliest battle in eight months, and the government vowed Saturday to fight the rebels at full force.

Fifteen soldiers and at least 23 insurgents were killed, the military said Saturday. Twenty more soldiers were wounded, the government said.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan returned early to Ankara from an official visit to Turkmenistan to lead an emergency security meeting, and President Abdullah Gul canceled a planned visit to France on Sunday.

"Whatever the cost, the fight will go on full force," Gul told reporters before meeting with the chief of the military.

Outraged Turks demonstrated in the streets in several cities, politicians denounced the rebels, and images of grieving families of fallen soldiers covered the Web sites of almost all newspapers.

The Iraqi government, the European Union, NATO and the U.S. Embassy in Ankara all condemned the rebels and supported Turkey. Iraq also called on Ankara to show restraint in its response.

The fighting Friday was the deadliest since February, when Turkey staged a weeklong ground offensive against guerrillas based in northern Iraq and claimed to have killed hundreds of them.

The military did not say whether Turkish soldiers crossed the border into Iraq on Friday, but said rebels attacked soldiers near a military outpost in Aktutun, Turkey, about 6 miles (10 kilometers) north of the Iraqi border, and Turkish warplanes, helicopters and artillery units pounded insurgent positions in northern Iraq.

Turkey's Foreign Ministry called the attack with heavy weaponry from northern Iraq was "a grave situation," and called again on Iraq to capture the Kurdish rebels and work to prevent future attacks.

"We expect Iraq to fulfill its responsibilities," the ministry said.

Iraq's presidential council then said it would continue efforts with Turkey to prevent any more such aggression and end "the illegitimate presence of the gunmen on Iraqi territory."

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani had telephoned Gul earlier Saturday and suggested resuming security talks, Turkey's presidential palace said. Gul told Talabani that Turkey expected Iraq to "immediately take necessary measures to stop these international terrorist acts against Turkish soil," the palace said.

Rebels of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, have been fighting for autonomy since 1994 from bases in predominantly Kurdish southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq.

Brig. Gen. Metin Gurak, a military spokesman, said that Turkish forces on

Friday were reacting to Kurdish rebel movements they had detected in northern Iraq and to the rebel attack near the outpost.

Most of the 15 Turkish dead were killed near the outpost in heavy rebel fire from northern Iraq, Gurak's statement said. The Web site of the pro-Kurdish Firat news agency quoted Kurdish rebels as saying they used rocket launchers and assault rifles in the attack.

Two soldiers were missing, Gurak said. The insurgents have kidnapped Turkish soldiers in the past during similar attacks.

Gurak said Turkish forces killed at least 23 Kurdish rebels, but more may have died during the artillery and air force attacks in northern Iraq.

Ahmed Deniz, a PKK spokesman in northern Iraq, said Saturday afternoon that the rebels had attacked a small Turkish army camp from four directions and

that the fighting was continuing. He would not give any figures on rebel casualties and vowed to keep fighting.

An American Embassy statement said, "We mourn with the citizens of Turkey and extend our condolences to the families of the soldiers who lost their lives."

"President George W. Bush has labeled the PKK a common enemy of the United States, Turkey and Iraq, and we reiterate our long-standing call for the PKK to lay down its arms and cease its violence once and for all," it said.

Iraqi government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh urged Turkey "to deal with this criminal act wisely and to show restraint."

Next week, Turkey's Parliament is to vote whether to extend for another year a mandate authorizing the military to carry out cross-border operations against Kurdish rebel bases in northern Iraq. The current authority expires Oct. 17.



Kurdistan Region Presidency

October 5, 2008

President Barzani receives US Commander in Iraq Raymond Odierno

Salahaddin, Kurdistan Region- Iraq (krp.org) - Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani received General Raymond Odierno, the Commander of the Multi-National Forces in Iraq and an accompanying delegation in Salahaddin, Iraq yesterday. KRG Prime Minister Nerchivan Barzani was also in attendance.

Other attendees of the meeting included: Lieutenant General Omar Othman, the minister of Kurdistan Region Protection Guards; Masrour Barzani, Chief of Security of Kurdistan Region; Fuad Hussein, Chief of Staff of the Kurdistan Region Presidency and a number of members of the General Command of Kurdistan Region Protection Guards. President Barzani welcomed Raymond Odierno, the commander of the Multi-National Forces in Iraq and the accompanying delegation, congratulating him for assuming his new post and wished him success.

In response, the Commander of the Multi-National Forces in Iraq reviewed his relationship with the leadership of the Kurdistan Region at the various stages of the cooperation between the two sides in safeguarding the security situation in many areas in Iraq. Odierno also expressed his thanks to President Barzani and Kurdistan Region Protection Guards for the cooperation and the support offered to the Multi-National forces in Iraq.

The Iraqi-US security pact was reviewed in the meeting. The two sides expressed their belief that the security pact is beneficial for both sides, declaring their hope that the other Iraqi parties would eventually come to the same conclusion.

They also discussed the situation in Khanaqin, which has been a site of recent tensions between the Kurdistan Region and the federal government in Baghdad after Iraqi troops were sent to the previously peaceful area in Diyala province. Other topics of discussion



included the larger political and security process in Iraq, the general security situation in the country, and security in Mosul. The security situation in Mosul is unstable now, but both sides expressed hope that the security situation in Mosul would improve through cooperation and coordination between the federal government of Iraq and the government of the Kurdistan Region.

The two sides also touched upon developments in neighboring countries and their effects on Iraq.

Los Angeles Times

October 5, 2008

Calm broken as Kurds attack Turk army outpost

Laura King, Los Angeles Times

Fierce new fighting flared Saturday between Turkish troops and Kurdish rebels after months of relative calm. Fifteen soldiers and at least 23 separatists were killed.

Turkey's military called in helicopters, fighter planes and heavy artillery after the Kurdish separatists struck an army outpost in southeastern Turkey early Friday, apparently overwhelming the defenders. The fighting near the border with Iraq, which also wounded 20 soldiers, represented Turkey's largest loss of troops this year in a single incident.

In an indication of how seriously Turkey views the incident, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan cut short a visit to the former Soviet republic of Turkmenistan to return to the capital, Ankara.

The fighting was considered likely to spur Turkish military strikes at rebel hideouts across the border in northern Iraq. Within hours of the rebel attack, the Turkish military was aiming artillery strikes across the frontier.

"We have no doubt they (the Kurdish rebels) will receive the response they deserve, in the harshest way," Koksal Toptan, the Parliament speaker, told reporters in Ankara. Most of the deaths on the Turkish side were in or near the outpost that was attacked near Tktutun, about 5 miles from the Iraqi frontier.

Because Turkey's military is far better-equipped and stronger than the fighters from the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, the rebels' ability to inflict a large number of deaths in a fortified army position constitutes a significant propaganda victory for the separatists, and a demoralizing blow for Turkey.

News reports said two Turkish soldiers were missing in the wake of the outpost attack, suggesting they might have been kidnapped. Rebels try to seize prisoners whenever they can, knowing that such abductions fuel a sense of frustration and helplessness on the part of the Turkish public.

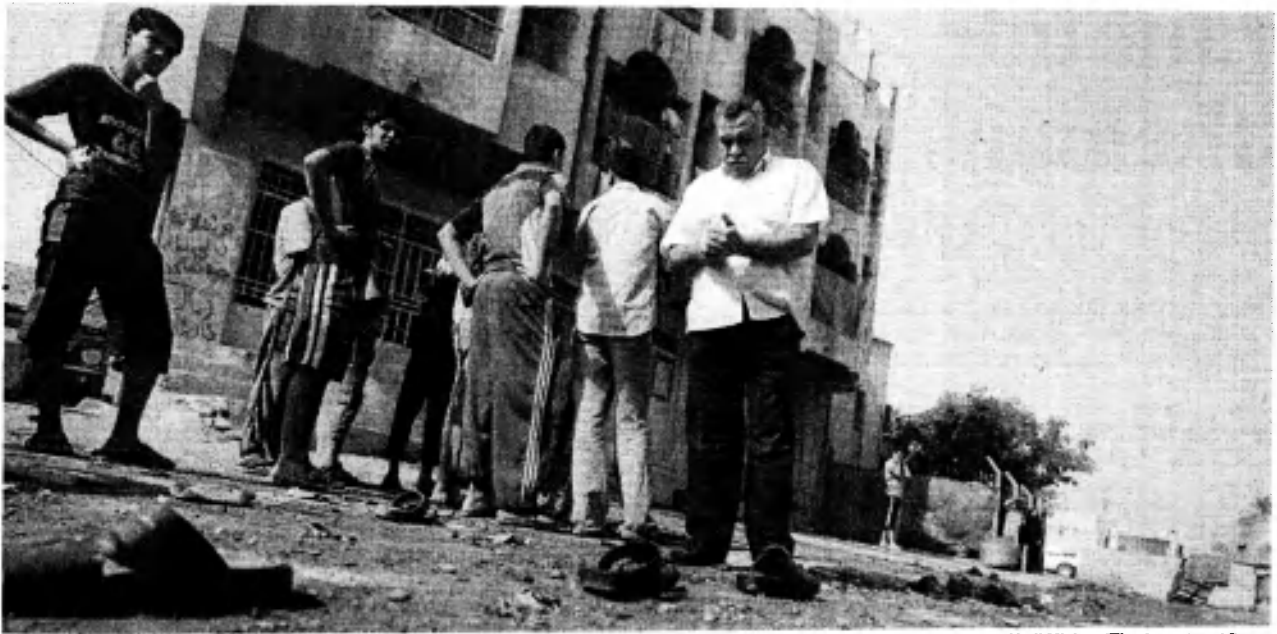
The fighting came days before Turkish lawmakers are to take up a measure that would give

the army continued authority in the coming year to stage strikes across the border in Iraq. Late last year and in the early months of 2008, Turkish troops waged an intense campaign of cross-border incursions in an effort to root out the rebels.

The PKK, which has been designated a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union, has been waging a sporadic battle for a separate Kurdish homeland for nearly 25 years.

Bush administration officials have expressed concern that the spillover of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict into northern Iraq could leave U.S. troops caught between two forces friendly to the United States - NATO member Turkey, and the semi-autonomous Kurdish administration in Iraq.

The renewed fighting comes only a month after Gen. Ilker Basburg took over as head of Turkey's powerful military. Observers have been watching closely to see how harsh a stance he will take toward the Kurdish separatists.



Hadi Mizban/The Associated Press

The site of a suicide bombing Thursday that targeted worshipers in a predominantly Shiite area of the capital, New Baghdad.

Attacks on Iraqi mosques kill 20

By Stephen Farrell and Alissa J. Rubin

BAGHDAD: As Muslims celebrated the close of the fasting month of Ramadan, suicide bombers killed at least 20 people in attacks on two Shiite mosques during early morning prayers in different areas of Baghdad early Thursday, the Interior Ministry said.

The attacks were the second wave this week during a lengthy public holiday covering observances of the Id al-Fitr feast, which is celebrated at different times by Sunnis and Shiites at the end of Ramadan.

In the middle-class Zafraniya District, an area of southeast Baghdad with a population of mixed faiths, a car bomber rammed a taxi into an armored vehicle guarding the entrance to a compound, killing eight people, including two Iraqi soldiers, the Interior Ministry said. The attack took place in a neighborhood with a mostly Shiite population.

In the second attack, a bomber wearing an explosive vest tried to enter a prayer hall in the predominantly Shiite New Baghdad area nearby, killing 12 people and wounding at least 25.

In Zafraniya, Iraqi troops had mounted a checkpoint just in front a small, blue-domed Shiite mosque, using a Humvee armored vehicle that was destroyed but which prevented the bomber's car from reaching the mosque itself, witnesses and others said.

Outside the mosque, on a dusty street, the blast shattered car windows and damaged the facades of buildings.

Jamal Tawfiq, 28, with a black plastic bag covering his right hand, collected body parts and placed them in a separate yellow bag. "They were targeting the prayers in the mosque," he said. "Nobody expects anything like this on Id al-Fitr."

Bombings coincide with Muslim feast

As American soldiers inspected the aftermath of the attack, using Humvees and other vehicles to set up a cordon, a predominantly Shiite crowd gathered around the area.

Some people in the crowd said they believed Sunni extremists were responsible for the attack, but others said they suspected American involvement. They offered no evidence to support the assertions, but their sentiments reflected deep antagonism toward American forces in an area where the anti-American cleric Moktada al-Sadr holds sway.

Major Jade Hinman, an American adviser to the Iraqi Army, said that, while it was regrettable that the army had sustained losses, the checkpoint outside the mosque had done its job.

"The Iraqi Army had instructions to provide security for Shiite mosques. They believed that the mosque itself was a target," he said, adding that the outcome had been "good for the people in the mosque, bad for the Iraqi Army."

There was no indication who was responsible, he said, but he pointed out that Sunni insurgents had attacked Shiite mosques on other religious holidays.

Last Sunday, five bomb attacks struck Baghdad, three of them aimed at civilians who were out holiday shopping and strolling. Security sources said at least 27 people had been killed and 84 wounded.

The bombings reinforced fears that the security situation in the city was deteriorating, even though it remained at the most stable level since the American-led invasion in 2003, according to

data measured by the U.S. military command.

The worst of the bombings Sunday, in a bustling market in the central Karada District, seemed intended to inflict casualties on people preparing to celebrate the holiday marking the end of Ramadan. Sunnis began celebrating earlier this week, while Shiites marked the occasion later.

Alan Cowell contributed reporting from Paris and Riyadh Mohammed contributed from Baghdad.

■ Soldier sentenced in killings

A U.S. soldier pleaded guilty Thursday to charges of accessory to murder and was sentenced to eight months in prison for his role in the killing of four Iraqi prisoners who were bound, blindfolded, shot and dumped in a canal, The Associated Press reported from Vilseck, Germany.

Specialist Steven Ribordy, 25, of Salina, Kansas, also will receive a bad conduct discharge from the Army as part of a plea deal. He also agreed to testify against other members of his unit.

The prosecutor, Captain John Merriam, had pressed for the maximum five years in prison. "The execution of prisoners is arguably the greatest crime," Merriam said at the court martial. "It betrays everything the soldiers stand for."

Ribordy testified he had helped stand guard as prisoners were killed by other members of his patrol in early 2007. Initially charged with conspiracy to commit murder, which carries a possible life sentence, the charges were reduced Thursday to the lesser accessory to murder as part of Ribordy's plea agreement.

Turkey hits Iraqi bases of Kurdish separatists

From news reports

ISTANBUL: Turkish warplanes have bombed Kurdish rebel bases in northern Iraq, the Turkish military said Sunday, two days after 15 Turkish soldiers were killed and at least 20 wounded in an attack by Kurdish separatist rebels in the mountainous border area of eastern Turkey.

The planes bombed Saturday in Iraq's Avasin Basyan region and returned safely to their bases, the Turkish military said.

The military's deputy chief, meanwhile, accused leaders in northern Iraq of tolerating the rebels.

"We don't receive any kind of support from the local administration in the northern part of Iraq," the officer, General Hasan Igsiz, said Sunday. "Our expectation from them is to accept that the terrorist organization is a terrorist organization and eliminate the support provided to it."

The soldiers were killed Friday night in an attack on the Aktutun border post in Semdinli, a district that borders Iran and Iraq, the military said. Twenty-three Kurdish fighters of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, also known as the PKK, were also killed.

The attack was the deadliest since last October, when Kurdish fighters

killed 13 Turkish soldiers in an ambush near the town of Daglica. That attack touched off a political confrontation between Turkey and Iraq, where some rebels hide. Turkey bombed targets there, over Iraqi objections, and later sent troops in, but withdrew them eight days later under American pressure.

Turkey, a NATO member, has been fighting Kurdish separatists in its southeast since the 1980s. Kurdish rebels want greater autonomy for Turkey's minority Kurdish population, a condition that the Turkey says would lead to secession. The conflict has died down substantially since the bloody days of the 1980s and '90s.

Even so, the attack was the most serious in a year, and the Turkish authorities will be under pressure to respond. Regional elections are scheduled for March, and Turkish officials will take pains to show the public that they are working hard to punish the rebels for their attacks.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan cut short a trip in Central Asia, and returned to Ankara, Turkey's capital, where he held a more than two-hour meeting with the country's top security officials on how to respond to the attack. Though nothing specific was made public from the meeting, the country's president, Abdullah Gul, said in a statement that the attack would "be investigated until the very end to find out how and with whose help" it was carried out.

The Turkish military says it needs Iraqi help to halt the rebel infiltration from bases across the long and mountainous border. It says that its surveillance capabilities in Iraq are limited, and that the rugged terrain makes it difficult to defend positions.

Iraq's national government has pledged to cooperate with Turkey.

President Jalal Talabani, who is a Kurd, told Gul during a telephone call Saturday that he condemned the Friday attack.

Brigadier General Metin Gurak of the

Turkish General Staff told reporters in Ankara that the rebels had used heavy artillery, leading to the high number of military casualties, Turkey's state-run Anatolian Agency reported. He said two soldiers were also reported missing after the attack.

Turkey often blames Iraq for harboring the fighters in its Kurdish enclave. But the PKK has hide-outs in Turkey as well, and Iraqi officials say that Turkey blames Iraq to avoid taking responsibility for rebels on its own soil.

The Turkish Parliament is expected to approve a government request to extend a deadline that would allow the Turkish military to take action in northern Iraq. The current mandate expires Oct. 17.

Necati Ozgen, a retired general who has been in charge of the Aktutun base, said that assailants must have entered through Iraq, since the military base faces the small village right by the border and has unattainable high mountains behind it.

"There seems to be a major intelligence failure," Ozgen said during an interview on Turkey's NTV television. "It is impossible for a large group to reach as far as the base, before the villagers or village guards notice them."

The border post, Aktutun Gendarmerie Station, has been attacked frequently in the past, most recently in May. NTV reported that 20 soldiers were killed in a major battle there in September 1992, when the war was deadlier.

Semdinli has also been the scene of violence in which the Turkish military has been incriminated. Several members of a paramilitary force are suspects in a bomb attack inside a bookstore in the largely Kurdish town in 2005. Turkey's former top military commander, Yasar Buyukanit, acknowledged knowing one of the suspects, who had served under his command, describing him as a "good fellow."

The men's trial is still continuing, with the next hearing scheduled for Dec. 19. (IHT, AP)

Christians demand Iraq quotas

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD: A senior Iraqi lawmaker called Monday for an urgent resolution to Christian demands for a minority quota system in provincial elections, while the electoral commission ruled out holding them this year.

Parliament approved a law last month paving the way for elections to provincial councils after months of deadlock but dropped a quota system in place in 6 of Iraq's 18 provinces, citing a lack of census data on how many Chris-

tians, Yazidis and members of other religions were still in those areas.

The deputy speaker of Parliament, Khalid al-Attiyah, a Shiite, said one option would be to use outdated prewar census data to come up with a different formula. "No political bloc in Parliament has the intention of denying small ethnic minorities their constitutional rights," he said at a news conference. "There is an urgent need to solve this matter."

Dozens of Christians protested over the issue at a rally near a church in Baghdad, saying that dropping the quota would marginalize their community, which accounts for an estimated 3 percent of Iraq's 26 million people.

"We do not want to immigrate to the U.S. or Britain — we want to stay in Iraq and have our representatives in both the provincial councils and the legislature," said the Reverend Louis al-Shabi, a preacher at a Chaldean church in Baghdad. "We want to be treated equally as Iraqis living with the Muslims and other nationals in a united brotherly spirit."

The issue has threatened to overshadow

preparations for the vote for provincial councils throughout Iraq.

Faraj al-Haidari, head of Iraq's independent electoral commission, said that it would not be possible to hold the vote this year as had been hoped but that the commission would do its best to meet a legal deadline of Jan. 31.

Haidari said that there was not enough time to finish preparations for the elections before year's end and that the dispute over the quota system was complicating matters.

"It is definitely impossible to hold the elections this year," Haidari said in a telephone interview from Beirut. He said the date for the vote would be announced within two weeks.

In preparation, the independent elections commission will start registering candidates and political blocs on Oct. 15, he said. Officials also need to update voter lists, design the ballot papers and attend to other technicalities, he added.

The vote, which U.S. officials hope will promote national unity and stem support for violence, had initially been scheduled to be held in October.

AFP

UNE ATTAQUE KURDE FAIT 38 MORTS DANS LE SUD-EST DE LA TURQUIE

ANKARA, 4 oct 2008 (AFP)

QUINZE SOLDATS turcs et vingt-trois rebelles kurdes ont été tués lors d'une attaque kurde vendredi contre un poste militaire proche de la frontière irakienne, dans le sud-est de la Turquie, a rapporté samedi l'agence Anatolie, citant un porte-parole de l'armée.

Deux soldats étaient portés disparus après cette attaque survenue dans la ville de Semdinli, dans la province d'Hakkari, a déclaré le général Metin Gurak, chef du département de presse de l'état-major.

Le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a annoncé samedi qu'à la suite de cette attaque il annulait une visite de deux jours prévue en Mongolie et regagnait incessamment Ankara, dans une déclaration transmise par la télévision turque depuis le Turkménistan où il se trouvait en visite officielle.

Les rebelles du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ont lancé un assaut sous la protection de tirs à l'arme lourde provenant de bases situées dans le nord de l'Irak.

"Nos pertes ont été causées principalement par des tirs à l'arme lourde du nord de l'Irak", a déclaré le général Gurak.

Les forces turques ont répliqué par des tirs d'artillerie et des hélicoptères

d'assaut ont bombardé des positions rebelles, pendant que des renforts étaient envoyés dans la zone, a-t-il déclaré.

Des avions de chasse et des unités d'artillerie turcs ont aussi pris pour cible un groupe de rebelles dans le nord de l'Irak, à une dizaine de kilomètres du poste militaire attaqué, a indiqué le général Gurak.

"Nous ne savons pas encore combien de terroristes ont été tués par les tirs d'artillerie et les frappes aériennes", a déclaré le général, précisant que deux soldats avaient été grièvement blessés dans les combats.

Le PKK avait annoncé lundi une trêve dans ses opérations armées pendant les fêtes célébrant la fin du ramadan, entre mardi et jeudi.

Considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis, le PKK se bat depuis 1984 pour l'autonomie du sud-est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes.

Selon un récent bilan fourni par l'armée turque, le conflit a fait 32.000 morts dans les rangs du PKK et près de 6.500 dans ceux des forces de sécurité (armée et police). Quelque 5.500 civils ont également perdu la vie dans le conflit.

AFP

LA TURQUIE PROMET DE RIPOSTER APRÈS UNE SANGLANTE ATTAQUE KURDE

ANKARA, 4 oct 2008 (AFP)

LE GOUVERNEMENT TURC a promis samedi de faire de la lutte contre la rébellion kurde la priorité absolue après l'attaque des séparatistes du PKK la veille dans le sud-est du pays, la plus sanglante depuis le début de l'année, au cours de laquelle 15 soldats sont morts.

"Nous poursuivrons notre lutte contre le terrorisme dans n'importe quelles conditions et au-dessus de toute autre préoccupation, par le biais d'une coopération efficace entre les organes de l'Etat, et toute mesure sera mise en œuvre avec détermination", a assuré le gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan dans un communiqué.

"Les attaques odieuses du (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, PKK) (...) ne seront pas suffisantes pour briser l'unité et l'intégrité de la nation", a ajouté le Premier ministre à l'issue d'une réunion de crise à Ankara entre les plus hauts responsables gouvernementaux et militaires du pays, convoquée au lendemain de cette attaque contre un poste militaire proche de la frontière irakienne.

Quinze soldats turcs ont été tués, et 23 rebelles ont péri dans les combats qui ont suivi, les plus intenses depuis le début de l'année.

Le président Abdullah Gül a assuré plus tôt qu'Ankara "poursuivrait la lutte" contre la rébellion, "quel qu'en soit le prix". "Nous enquêtons pour savoir comment a été menée cette lâche attaque, qui l'a rendue possible", a-t-il

ajouté.

L'armée turque procède régulièrement à des raids contre des bases de la rébellion kurde active dans le sud-est du pays et dans les montagnes du Kurdistan irakien, frontalières de la Turquie, où Ankara affirme que des milliers de combattants trouvent refuge.

Dans une conversation téléphonique avec M. Gül, le président irakien Jalal Talabani a condamné l'attaque et appelé à des discussions immédiates entre la Turquie, l'Irak et les Etats-Unis pour évoquer des mesures contre le PKK, selon un communiqué de la présidence turque.

M. Gül a déclaré à son homologue qu'il attendait des autorités irakiennes qu'elles prennent des actions immédiates contre cet "acte de terrorisme international", est-il écrit dans ce communiqué.

Auparavant, le gouvernement irakien a affirmé "soutenir toutes les mesures" qu'Ankara prendra "pour assurer la sécurité de son territoire", mais a demandé à la Turquie d'agir "avec sagesse et retenue".

L'attaque du PKK a été déclenchée vendredi dans la ville de Semdinli, dans la province d'Hakkari, par des rebelles appuyés par des tirs à l'arme lourde provenant de bases situées dans le nord de l'Irak, a fait savoir l'armée.

Les forces turques ont répliqué par des tirs d'artillerie et d'hélicoptères et envoyé des renforts sur place, a déclaré le porte-parole de l'armée, le général Metin Gurak.

Des avions de chasse et l'artillerie turque ont aussi pris pour cible un groupe de rebelles dans le nord de l'Irak, à une dizaine de kilomètres du poste attaqué, a ajouté le général Gurak, précisant que deux soldats étaient portés disparus. Vingt soldats ont également été blessés dans les combats.

Selon l'agence de presse Anatolie, les opérations de l'armée se poursuivaient autour de Semdinli samedi.

Le porte-parole du PKK, Ahmed Danis, a affirmé à l'AFP que les pertes turques étaient plus importantes que celles communiquées par l'armée.

Auparavant, un communiqué du PKK publié par l'agence Firat, considérée comme proche des rebelles, avait justifié son offensive en accusant l'armée d'avoir rompu une trêve annoncée par la rébellion entre mardi et jeudi, pour marquer la fin du mois de jeûne musulman du ramadan.

A Paris, la présidence française de l'UE a condamné l'attaque et réitéré son soutien à Ankara dans sa lutte contre le PKK, cependant que la Turquie aspire à rejoindre l'Union européenne. L'ambassade des Etats-Unis à Ankara et le Foreign Office, à Londres, ont également condamné l'attaque.

L'Organisation de la Conférence islamique (OCI) a quant à elle vivement dénoncé les actes du PKK, et assuré Ankara de sa solidarité.

Le Parlement turc doit se prononcer prochainement sur une prolongation d'un an de l'autorisation donnée à l'armée, le 17 octobre 2007, de faire des incursions dans le nord de l'Irak contre les bases du PKK.



Le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan (au centre), lors des funérailles de l'un des soldats tués par des rebelles du PKK, le 5 octobre 2008 à Armutlu, près de Kirikkale

AFP

L'ARMÉE TURQUE ACCUSE LES KURDES D'IRAK D'AIDER LA RÉBELLION

ANKARA, 5 oct 2008 (AFP) –

L'ARMÉE TURQUE a accusé dimanche les Kurdes d'Irak de soutenir les rebelles kurdes retranchés sur leur territoire, pendant que des dizaines de milliers de personnes, rassemblées pour les funérailles des 15 soldats tués vendredi, criaient leur colère contre le PKK.

"Non seulement nous n'avons aucun soutien de l'administration du nord de l'Irak, mais elle fournit (aux rebelles) des infrastructures telles que des hôpitaux et des routes", a déclaré à la presse le chef d'état-major adjoint, le général Hasanzade.

Ankara accuse depuis longtemps l'administration du Kurdistan irakien, frontalier des régions kurdes du sud-est de la Turquie, de ne pas agir contre les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

A Armutlu, un village proche d'Ankara où il assistait à des funérailles, le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan a d'ailleurs lancé un nouvel appel aux Kurdes d'Irak.

"Des mesures doivent être prises contre les bases (du PKK). Nous attendons des actes positifs sur le terrain", a-t-il dit.

Selon Ankara, des milliers de combattants du PKK sont retranchés dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak, où ils peuvent aisément se fournir en armes et explosifs pour déclencher des attaques sur le sol turc.

Le général Igsiz a accusé l'administration kurde d'Irak de "ne faire aucun effort" pour empêcher les rebelles de se mêler à la population locale, rendant plus difficile la mission de l'armée turque lorsqu'elle tente de cibler le PKK au cours de raids aériens.

Vendredi, 15 soldats turcs ont été tués dans une attaque du PKK dans le sud-est de la Turquie, la plus meurtrière depuis le début de l'année. Vingt-trois rebelles, selon l'armée, ont péri dans les combats qui ont suivi, neuf seulement, selon le PKK, qui a affirmé avoir fait 62 morts et plus de 30 blessés dans les rangs de l'armée.

Des cérémonies, accompagnées de démonstrations de colère contre le PKK, se sont déroulées dimanche dans neuf provinces du pays, pour les funérailles des soldats.

A Armutlu, la foule scandait des slogans contre le PKK et réclamait l'exécution de l'ancien chef kurde Abdullah Ocalan, qui purge une peine de prison à vie depuis 1999.

"Les martyrs sont immortels, la terre natale est indivisible", criait la foule au passage du cercueil, porté par des soldats, enveloppé dans un drapeau turc.

"Maudit soit le PKK, les martyrs sont immortels", "Les Turcs et les Kurdes sont frères", scandait la foule réunie pour une autre cérémonie dans la province de Siirt, dans le sud-est du pays.



Le chef de l'Etat Abdullah Gul a lui aussi assisté à des funérailles à Eskisehir, à 200 kilomètres à l'ouest d'Ankara.

Le gouvernement s'était engagé samedi à faire de la lutte contre la rébellion la priorité absolue, après l'attaque de la veille.

Selon l'agence Anatolie, l'armée a envoyé des renforts en hommes et en matériel dans les zones frontalières avec l'Irak. Un premier raid aérien turc contre une base arrière du PKK en Irak vendredi a été suivi par un second samedi contre des rebelles en fuite, a fait savoir l'armée dimanche.

Des hélicoptères ont également fait des vols de reconnaissance au-dessus de chemins utilisés par le PKK et des soldats ont établi des positions d'artillerie dans les montagnes, a précisé Anatolie.

Comme plusieurs pays occidentaux et l'Organisation de la conférence islamique, le secrétaire général des Nations unies Ban Ki-moon a condamné dimanche l'attaque du PKK, faisant part de sa "compassion" au peuple turc et appelant Ankara et Bagdad à collaborer pour "promouvoir la paix et la stabilité".

Le Parlement turc doit se prononcer prochainement sur une prolongation pour un an de l'autorisation donnée à l'armée, le 17 octobre 2007, de procéder à des incursions dans le nord de l'Irak contre les bases du PKK. Depuis cette date, l'armée turque fait régulièrement des raids aériens dans cette région et y a effectué une opération terrestre.

Classé organisation terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis, le PKK se bat depuis 1984 pour l'autonomie du Sud-Est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes.

Une offensive anti-PKK en Irak nuit à la diplomatie turque

REUTERS

5 octobre 2008 Reuters - Par Ibon Villelabeitia

ANKARA (Reuters) - Après l'attaque meurtrière menée par le PKK contre des soldats turcs vendredi, les appels se multiplient en Turquie en faveur d'une vaste offensive militaire contre les rebelles kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak, ce qui tendrait les relations entre Ankara et ses partenaires américains et européens.

Profitant du regain d'indignation et de nationalisme provoqué par l'attaque, au cours de laquelle 15 soldats ont été tués et 20 autres blessés dans le sud-est de la Turquie, le journal Vatan estime en une, au-dessus de photos de soldats morts, que maintenant "Ça suffit!".

Des chaînes de télévision turques ont diffusé en direct dimanche la cérémonie des obsèques des soldats.

Au cours de l'attaque, la plus meurtrière depuis un an, les séparatistes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan ont pris pour cible un avant-poste de l'armée turque dans une zone proche de la frontière irakienne. Outre les morts et les blessés, deux autres militaires sont portés disparus.

Le Premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, et l'armée ont promis d'intensifier les opérations contre le PKK, qui a d'ores et déjà été affaibli par les bombardements aériens turcs contre leurs bases du nord de l'Irak.

Pour les analystes, cependant, l'attaque de vendredi place le gouvernement dans une situation difficile, car d'un côté les appels à la riposte se multiplient mais de l'autre Ankara doit veiller à ne pas s'aliéner ses alliés par une offensive à grande échelle.

Membre de l'Otan, la Turquie a attaqué les bases du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak à plusieurs reprises ces 12 derniers mois. Elle s'est bornée à le faire avec son armée de l'air depuis l'offensive terrestre qu'elle avait engagée en février mais qu'elle a dû écourter sous la pression des Américains.

Washington et l'Union européenne, à laquelle la Turquie espère adhérer un jour, craignent que des opérations militaires turques prolongées en territoire irakien ne déstabilisent un peu plus l'Irak et plus largement la région.

Le parlement turc doit renouveler le mandat de l'armée pour pouvoir mener des opérations militaires contre le PKK en Irak en cas de nécessité. Le mandat sur lequel s'appuie l'armée actuellement prend fin le 17 octobre.

L'AKP PRIS ENTRE L'OPINION ET LES ALLIÉS OCCIDENTAUX

Pour Hugh Pope, analyste auprès de l'International Crisis Group, un organisme de réflexion, l'attaque de vendredi semble avoir été menée à un moment particulier pour "prendre en otage la politique turque".

"Le PKK prospère sur un climat de polarisation", estime Pope, auteur de plusieurs ouvrages sur la Turquie. "Le PKK cherche à pousser l'armée à lancer une vaste incursion dans le nord de l'Irak, ce qui mettrait à rude épreuve les relations américano-turques et attirerait des critiques de l'UE."

"Les réformes préconisées par l'UE pour octroyer davantage de droits aux Kurdes marginalisent le PKK", dit-il. "Le gouvernement doit veiller à ne pas tomber dans cet automatisme et à verser dans la réaction nationaliste qu'ont les journaux".

Pour Gareth Jenkins, analyste des questions de sécurité basé à Istanbul, "le PKK cherche à faire un coup de propagande".

"Il veut montrer à l'Etat et à ses propres partisans qu'il n'a pas été anéanti", ajoute-t-il.

On estime à plusieurs milliers le nombre de combattants du PKK toujours basés dans le nord de l'Irak, d'où ils lancent des attaques contre des objectifs militaires dans le sud-est de la Turquie.

Si le PKK ne constitue plus une menace grave pour la sécurité de la Turquie, les analystes pensent que les opérations militaires ne permettront pas d'écraser la rébellion séparatiste,

à moins qu'elles ne soient combinées avec des mesures non militaires visant à surmonter les problèmes politiques et culturels qui attisent l'insurrection dans le Sud-Est turc.

Erdogan a annoncé son intention d'investir 12 milliards de dollars dans cette région et d'accorder des droits culturels aux Kurdes, mais d'autres promesses faites en ce sens par le passé n'ont pas été tenues.

Le parti islamiste modéré AKP au pouvoir en Turquie espère prendre le contrôle de villes importantes du sud-est du pays lors des élections municipales de mars prochain, en détournant les électeurs kurdes d'un parti politique pro-kurde. En même temps, aujourd'hui, l'AKP pourrait vouloir se montrer intransigeant aux yeux d'un électorat de plus en plus nationaliste et anti-américain.

Le Point

6 octobre 2008

Turquie riposte contre une attaque des rebelles kurdes, réunion à Ankara

Par Burak AKINCI

La Turquie a riposté par des raids aériens à une attaque sanglante des rebelles kurdes qui a coûté la vie à 17 de ses soldats, un bilan très lourd pour une attaque qui devait faire l'objet lundi d'une réunion du gouvernement à Ankara.

En riposte à l'assaut survenu vendredi, des chasseurs turcs ont bombardé samedi des repaires du parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le nord de l'Irak, a annoncé l'état-major turc, sans donner de bilan.

Le PKK a affirmé lundi avoir récupéré les corps de deux autres soldats portés disparus par l'armée, portant le bilan de l'assaut à 17. L'armée turque avait indiqué dimanche que ces deux conscrits étaient "probablement morts".

Le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan doit présider lundi à 11H00 GMT une réunion de certains ministres pour discuter des suites à donner à l'attaque d'un poste militaire situé à quelques km de la frontière irakienne, dans la localité montagnaise de Semdinli.

Dans cette attaque, la plus meurtrière de ces dernières années, 23 rebelles ont été abattus, selon l'armée.

Selon les journaux, des "bérêts bordeaux", les forces spéciales de l'armée de terre, ont été dépêchés dans la zone pour empêcher toute nouvelle infiltration depuis le Kurdistan irakien.

Le numéro deux de l'état-major, le général Hasan Igsiz, a accusé dimanche devant la presse l'administration kurde d'Irak de soutenir les rebelles réfugiés par milliers dans la zone en "infrastructures telles que des hôpitaux et des routes".

M. Erdogan a lui aussi lancé dimanche un nouvel appel aux Kurdes d'Irak. "Des mesures doivent être prises contre les bases (du PKK). Nous attendons des actes positifs sur le terrain", a-t-il réclamé.

Des dizaines de milliers de personnes ont assisté aux obsèques organisées à travers le pays pour les soldats "martyrs". Les funérailles ont été ponctuées de démonstrations de colère contre le PKK, ainsi que contre M. Erdogan et le chef de l'Etat Abdullah Gül, selon les médias.

Pour les observateurs, l'attaque de vendredi place le gouvernement dans une situation difficile. Car si les appels à la riposte se multiplient, Ankara doit aussi veiller à ne pas s'aliéner son allié américain par une offensive de grande ampleur.

Membre de l'Otan, la Turquie a attaqué les bases du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak à plusieurs reprises ces 12 derniers mois grâce à des renseignements fournis par les Américains. Elle s'est bornée à le faire avec ses jets depuis une courte incursion terrestre qu'elle avait engagée en février.

Washington craint que des opérations militaires turques prolongées en territoire irakien ne déstabilisent un peu plus l'Irak et la région.

Le parlement turc doit renouveler probablement cette semaine pour un an le mandat de l'armée pour pouvoir mener des opérations militaires contre le PKK en Irak en cas de nécessité. Le mandat actuel prend fin le 17 octobre.

Certains commentateurs de presse prenaient à partie lundi le gouvernement du parti de



Des militants nationalistes mettent le feu à un mannequin à l'effigie du leader kurde emprisonné Abdullah Öcalan, le 5 octobre 2008 à Istanbul

la justice et du développement (AKP).

"Les Etats-Unis et le gouvernement irakien sont responsables (de cette attaque). Je ne parle même pas de l'administration kurde car ils sont solidaires avec le PKK et non pas la Turquie", estimait Tufan Türenç dans le journal à gros tirage Hürriyet

Un autre commentateur, du quotidien Vatan, réclamait plus de fermeté contre les Kurdes d'Irak, rappelant les menaces de guerre proférées en 1998 par Ankara contre la Syrie pour qu'elle chasse le chef du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan.

Classé organisation terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis, le PKK se bat depuis 1984 pour l'autonomie du Sud-Est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes.

LeNouvelliste.ch

6 octobre 2008

EDITO : IMPUISSANCE TURQUE

ANTOINE GESSLER

La Turquie annonce, une nouvelle fois, de manière tonitruante, son intention d'en finir avec les combattants kurdes du PKK. Or, en l'occurrence, il y a loin de la coupe aux lèvres. Si Ankara possédait la moindre chance de détruire cette révolte armée, il y a belle lurette que M. Erdogan et ses amis auraient remporté la partie. Mais les peshmergas du PKK, rompus à la guérilla, capables de se fondre dans une nature foncièrement hostile et disposant du soutien de leur population s'avèrent des ennemis difficiles à résoudre.

Eclaté entre la Turquie, l'Irak et l'Iran, le Kurdistan n'a jamais existé en termes d'Etat indépendant. Pourtant depuis la Première Guerre du Golfe, contre le régime de Saddam Hussein, une zone d'exclusion a permis aux Kurdes d'Irak d'organiser une semi-autonomie. Puis les Etats-Unis en firent de fidèles affidés.

Du côté d'Ankara, il s'avère dé-sormais difficile d'oublier que Jalal Talabani, le leader de l'Union démocratique du Kurdistan (UDK), occupe la présidence à Bagdad.

Une guerre avec cet encombrant voisin, que Washington protège jalousement, ne figure pas à l'ordre du jour. Dans la région, la Turquie a bel et bien dû renoncer au rôle de passage obligé qu'elle convoitait. Sur le plan intérieur, les héritiers de la Sublime Porte doivent s'attendre à encore bien des deuils. Le conflit avec les Kurdes n'a rien d'une sinécure. Faute de leur accorder les droits les plus élémentaires, le pouvoir central a lui-même généré les frustrations et les haines qui aboutissent aux actions ensanglantant la Turquie. Les Kurdes n'ont pas oublié les tromperies dont ils souffrent toujours. Pour avoir trop souvent servi d'exécuteurs des basses oeuvres, ils durent se contenter de promesses jamais tenues. Comme jamais ils ne reçurent les

terres volées au million d'Arméniens massacrés en 1915. Pas plus qu'ils ne purent porter sur les fonts baptismaux un pays à part entière.

Citoyens de seconde zone, les Kurdes n'ont que l'énergie du désespoir pour se faire entendre. Sans les miliciens du PKK, prompts à monter à l'assaut, ils croupiraient dans l'indifférence d'une communauté internationale à l'égoïsme vérifié.

Les maquisards tiennent ainsi la dragée haute à une armée régulièrement ridicule par ses déploiements aussi spectaculaires qu'inefficaces.

Dans ce contexte, la ferme résolution affichée par la Turquie traduit surtout son impuissance à réduire les Kurdes à merci. Il suffirait pourtant de leur appliquer la Déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme pour couper une partie de la racine du mal.

Une offensive meurtrière du PKK ravive les tensions entre Turcs et Kurdes

ISTANBUL

CORRESPONDANCE

Dans plusieurs villes du pays, les drapeaux turcs et les slogans nationalistes ont accompagné, dimanche, les cercueils des quinze soldats, tombés la veille dans une attaque du PKK près de la frontière irakienne. Suivies par plusieurs milliers de personnes et retransmises en direct par les chaînes de télévision, les funérailles des « martyrs » ont de nouveau entraîné une vague d'émotion et d'appels à la vengeance.

Le cycle des violences entre l'armée turque et la guérilla kurde est relancé. L'offensive des rebelles du PKK, 350 hommes d'après la presse turque, a été rondement menée, samedi 6 octobre au matin, depuis les montagnes du Nord de l'Irak : des tirs d'artillerie lourde avaient préparé le terrain, selon l'état-major d'Ankara, surprenant la plupart des victimes.

Deux sous-officiers manquant à l'appel pourraient eux aussi avoir été tués dans l'attaque, ainsi que 23 « terroristes ». C'est la cin-

quième fois depuis 1992 que la caserne d'Aktütün, dans la province d'Hakkari, est prise pour cible.

L'aviation turque a riposté en bombardant des positions présumées du PKK, dans les montagnes du Kurdistan irakien où

seraient retranchés les chefs du groupuscule marxiste-léniniste, en lutte contre la Turquie depuis 1984. Et la hiérarchie militaire a stigmatisé l'inaction des autorités kurdes d'Irak : « Ils fournissent (aux rebelles) un accès aux infrastructures telles que les routes ou les hôpitaux », a dénoncé le général Hasan Igsiz.

L'éditorialiste du quotidien turc *Milliyet*, Fikret Bila, proche du haut commandement, met également en cause le renseignement américain, qui aurait fait défaut. Le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, qui assistait aux obsèques d'un soldat près d'Ankara, a réclamé, dimanche, une action immédiate contre les caches du PKK.

Expéditions punitives

Cette offensive survient à un moment crucial : le Parlement turc doit renouveler, cette semaine, l'autorisation donnée à l'armée de mener des opérations terrestres et aériennes au-delà de la frontière turco-irakienne. Le feu vert avait été donné pour un an, en octobre 2007, après une embuscade du PKK qui avait coûté la vie à 13 soldats, dans la même région. Ce nouvel épisode pourrait inciter les dirigeants turcs à faire preuve de la plus grande fermeté. « Nous

poursuivrons la lutte, quel qu'en soit le prix », a déclaré le président Abdullah Gül.

La montée des revendications nationalistes risque d'alourdir un climat déjà marqué par des tensions ethniques. Mercredi 1^{er} octobre, un juge de Bolu, dans le centre du pays, a relaxé un journaliste local qui avait écrit : « Pour chaque soldat martyr, il faudrait tuer cinq membres du DTP (le parti kurde légal) », estimant que cette

phrase relevait de la « liberté d'expression ». Et la semaine dernière, plusieurs milliers de Loups gris, des militants ultranationalistes, ont mené des expéditions punitives contre la population kurde d'Altinova, une petite ville de l'Ouest de la Turquie, saccageant commerces et maisons aux cris de « Altinova nous appartient ». ■

GUILLAUME PERRIER



9 OCTOBRE 2008

Ankara veut chasser le PKK d'Irak

TURQUIE



Les députés turcs ont voté hier à une très large majorité la prolongation pour un an du feu vert donné à l'armée pour mener des opérations militaires dans le nord de l'Irak contre les rebelles séparatistes kurdes du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan).

Pourquoi ces opérations transfrontalières ?

La mort de 17 militaires turcs tués vendredi dans l'assaut, par les rebelles kurdes, d'une caserne près de la frontière avec l'Irak est l'attaque la plus grave depuis celle d'octobre 2007, qui avait coûté la vie à 12 soldats. Le PKK, qui

lutte depuis 1984 pour la création d'une entité kurde dans les régions du sud-est anatolien peuplées en majorité de Kurdes, a, depuis 1999, regroupé l'essentiel de ses forces (de 2000 à 5000 combattants) dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak, notamment à Qandil. Cette nouvelle attaque montre que le potentiel militaire du PKK a été peu affecté par les nombreux raids aériens menés depuis un an, pas plus que par l'opération terrestre lancée en février pendant huit jours.

Les Kurdes d'Irak aident-ils le PKK ?

C'est une accusation récurrente à Ankara. « Non seulement nous n'avons aucun appui de l'administration du nord de l'Irak, mais elle fournit aux terroristes des infrastructures telles que des hôpitaux et des routes », martèle le général Hasan Igsiz, chef d'état-major adjoint de l'armée turque. Le Kurdistan irakien, qui échappe au contrôle de Bagdad depuis 1991, dispose d'une indépendance de fait avec ses propres forces armées. A plusieurs reprises, le président de la région kurde, Massoud Barzani, a appelé le PKK à renoncer à la violence.

Mais attaquer les rebelles dans les montagnes lui serait aussi difficile militairement que politiquement. L'an dernier, Ankara avait menacé d'un embargo économique cette région, qui dépend presque intégralement des produits venant de Turquie. Le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan exige « des actes concrets sur le terrain ». **Pourquoi Washington s'inquiète ?** Une incursion turque massive dans le nord de l'Irak risquerait de déstabiliser cette zone, jusqu'ici épargnée par la guerre, au moment même où la situation s'améliore dans le reste de l'Irak. Mais l'administration américaine, qui, tout comme l'Union européenne, considère le PKK comme une organisation terroriste, ne peut rester sans rien faire. L'an dernier, elle s'était engagée, pour calmer Ankara, à fournir en temps réel des renseignements, notamment les photos satellites, sur les mouvements du PKK. Washington s'inquiète à nouveau, alors que le gouvernement Erdogan est soumis à la pression de l'opinion.

← MARC SEMO

TURKISH MILITARY FEELS HEAT FROM POST-ATTACK CRITICISMS

TODAY'S ZAMAN

A brazen attack on a military outpost by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has devastated the families of the 15 soldiers killed there and left Turkey questioning the quality of military intelligence and border security, wondering how to deal with rising ethnic tensions that many fear will escalate following Friday's assault.

The attack on the military outpost in Ak-tütün, located in the Şemdinli district of Hakkari, was carried out in broad daylight on Friday, with clashes lasting for several hours, the military announced on Saturday. A group of PKK militants, reportedly made up of 350 terrorists, attacked the outpost. The military said most of the losses were caused by heavy weapons fire from northern Iraq. Two soldiers are missing after the clash, during which 23 PKK members were killed. The military said yesterday that the search was still under way for the missing soldiers but that they might be dead.

The raid, the deadliest in a year, was the fifth attack on the same outpost since 1992, when a similar assault by the PKK claimed the lives of 22 soldiers. Since June 2007, the outpost, located on a major route PKK terrorists use to infiltrate Turkey, has been the target of three PKK attacks, the latest one in May 2008.

"I keep asking questions because this unnerving situation seems odd to me," wrote Mehmet Altan in the Star daily. "Aren't the soldiers maintaining the security of the border and the country? Don't they need to guarantee their safety to do this? Then how come the same outpost has been attacked for 16 years and so many soldiers have been martyred?"

"Is anyone asking whether there was a mistake made after such incidents? Is anyone asking who is responsible? Is there any official investigation?" asked Hürriyet's Oktay Ekşi.

In a rare media briefing, the military responded to criticism yesterday, dismissing any failure in intelligence or deficiency in the number of security personnel guarding the area, but said there were difficulties stemming from the territory.

Deputy Chief of Staff Gen. Hasan İğsız defended the commanding officers, but added that the commander of the Second Army was looking into the matter. İğsız insisted that most of the casualties, 13 of the 15 soldiers killed, were due to heavy weapons fire from Iraq. He said however that the locations of five outposts along the border, including the one attacked on Friday, will be changed.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan declined to comment on whether there was a failure in securing border safety but said the border outposts will be fortified. He also called for unity. "If our morale receives a blow at a time when it needs to be at the highest level, how can security forces focus on success?" Erdoğan said to reporters yesterday.

Friday's attack comes almost a year after a nearly identical attack on a military outpost in Dağlica on the border took the lives of 12 soldiers. The media has reported that the commander in charge of the military unit was at a local wedding when the attack took place, that there was intelligence beforehand indicating that an attack could happen and that sufficient backup units had not been sent to the area of clashes. No one was prosecuted after the incident, but the military launched several cross-border operations, including a ground

offensive, in northern Iraq against the PKK after the attack.

Newspapers were also critical of security conditions at the outpost. Photographs of the outpost showed the thin roof made up of tinplate and the shoddy structure of the building. Newspapers complained that the outpost's location and poor security measures exposed it to PKK attacks from across the border.

NATO-member Turkey has attacked PKK bases in northern Iraq several times in the past 12 months, but has confined itself to shelling and air strikes since a land offensive in February. The United States shares intelligence with Turkey, and the former chief of staff, retired Gen. Yaşar Büyükanıt, once praised this intelligence sharing, saying that the intelligence on PKK movements and camps resembles the reality TV show "Big Brother."

"Weren't you saying it was like a BBG house?" asked daily Radikal on its front page, referring to the Turkish version of the popular TV show. İğsız responded saying it is technologically impossible to monitor every location in a vast mountainous territory, but insisted that there is no intelligence sharing problem with the United States. "Hundreds of terrorists can attack a military outpost in broad daylight. How could this happen? Where are our unmanned drones and thermal cameras? What are our intelligence authorities doing?" asked Hakkı Öznur, deputy chairman of the Grand Unity Party (BBP).

Tensions at home

The attack comes as Parliament prepares this week to discuss whether to extend a mandate to carry out cross-border operations in northern Iraq against the PKK and just days after local residents and ethnically Kurdish migrants clashed in the western town of Altınova. Demonstrators marched in the town, shouting slogans such as "We don't want Kurds here" and "Kurds out," after a Kurdish driver ran over two local residents in an allegedly deliberate move during a melee.

"The organized aggression in Altınova should be seen as a sign of danger," wrote Oral Çalışlar, a columnist for daily Radikal. Outraged Turks demonstrated in the streets of several cities, and images of grieving families of fallen soldiers covered the front pages of almost every newspaper on Sunday. "It seems the terrorists are trying to drag Turkey into a Turkish-Kurdish conflict," said Star's Altan.

The Democratic Society Party (DTP), the main pro-Kurdish party, is facing a closure case, and observers say the Constitutional Court is nearing a decision. The attack could increase calls for closure of the party as local elections loom. The DTP is in a tight race with the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party), which pledges to improve economic conditions in the region, for dominance in the predominantly Kurdish southeastern provinces. The government has announced plans to invest up to \$12 billion in southeastern Turkey to improve living standards and drain support for the PKK, but rising ethnic tensions are feared to polarize southeastern and western provinces with large Kurdish migrant communities ahead of the polls slated for late March.

The DTP expressed "sadness" over the clashes in a statement that fell short of denouncing the PKK for the attack. "We see that PKK members and soldiers alike are being killed as long as this environment of conflict persists," said DTP Chairman Ahmet Türk on Saturday. Its soft stance on the PKK is likely to increase pressure on DTP leadership to openly



condemn the terrorist organization.

"We need a strong political solidarity, and it should be supported by all parties," said main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Deniz Baykal. "There should be no disagreement on this. This is very important."

Pressure to widen offensive in Iraq

The attack is likely to put pressure on the government to strike back at the PKK. It also threatens to strain ties between Iraq and Turkey, which has accused Baghdad of not doing enough to crush the PKK. Public criticism and mistrust of the United States are also likely to increase in the aftermath of the attack.

President Abdullah Gül told his Iraqi counterpart, Jalal Talabani, that Turkey wants Iraq to take the necessary precautions to prevent attacks as soon as possible, according to a statement from the Presidential Press Office. "We are closely investigating how this last heinous attack was made, who were the collaborators and who facilitated this attack," Gül said in the statement.

The Foreign Ministry called the attack with heavy weaponry from northern Iraq "a grave situation" and called on Iraq to capture the PKK terrorists and work to prevent future attacks.

Parliament this month is likely to pass a government request to extend a mandate to launch military operations against the PKK in Iraq as needed. The current mandate expires on Oct. 17.

Erdoğan cut short an official visit to Turkmenistan on Saturday to chair an emergency security meeting in Ankara where military and civilian leaders pledged to act against the PKK and said they would consider all possible methods and precautions. "The struggle against terrorism will continue with increased determination," a statement issued after the meeting said.

New strategy?

Both Erdoğan and the new chief of staff, Gen. İlker Başbuğ, have said in the past that social and economic measures should be put into effect to cut off support for terrorism. This is the first major test for Başbuğ since he took over his post in late August.

Erdoğan said another high-level anti-terror meeting will take place on Thursday where the situation will be analyzed once again. "Terrorism does not have just one dimension. It has psychological, sociological, socio-economic and diplomatic dimensions that we will review," he said yesterday.

TODAYS ZAMAN

October 6, 2008

Gül urges Iraqi counterpart to prevent further PKK attacks

TODAY'S ZAMAN

President Abdullah Gül has described Friday's bloody attack in which 15 Turkish soldiers were killed as a heinous assault on Turkish territory and called on his Iraqi counterpart to take necessary measures to prevent such attacks being launched from Iraq again.

A press release issued by the Presidential Press Office said Iraqi President Jalal Talabani called Gül and condemned the attack committed by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) on Friday. "We harshly condemn the terrorist attack and deem it as a crime against all Turks, Kurds, the whole Iraqi nation and its religious values," the press release quoted Talabani as saying.

Fifteen Turkish soldiers were killed and 21 others were wounded in clashes with the separatist PKK at a military outpost, Aktütün, in the Şemdinli district of eastern Hakkari province. At least 23 terrorists were also killed after they infiltrated Turkey from northern Iraq and fired heavy weapons at a military outpost on the border with Iraq and Iran.

Gül told his Iraqi counterpart over the phone that the Iraqi government should take necessary measures to prevent such attacks being launched from Iraq as soon as possible. "This treacherous attack is an international terrorist act against Turkish territory," Gül said. He also noted that terrorists should not be allowed to destroy the positive atmosphere developing between the two countries, adding that Turkey had vowed to step up its fight against terrorism after the attack.

Talabani proposed a high-level security meeting between the two states. The attack came ahead of a critical vote in the Turkish Parliament on a new proposal to extend another year-long mandate giving

military authorization for cross-border operations against PKK bases in northern Iraq.

The PKK is listed as a terrorist group by much of the international community including the United States and the European Union.

Massoud Barzani, leader of the regional administration in northern Iraq, said they condemned the attack by the PKK in Turkey.

"We denounce such attacks and are against such acts. We absolutely do not approve of these kinds of attacks. We would like to offer condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in these attacks. We hope there will be no such attacks in the future," said Barzani, who spoke to reporters together with US Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte following a tête-à-tête meeting.

"This is an ugly attack; we condemn it," Negroponte said. A similar denouncement came from the Iraqi government and presidential council on Saturday. Government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh said the terrorist attack "posed a serious threat to the border areas and to the joint security of Iraq and Turkey." He also called on the Turkish government to "deal with this criminal act wisely and to show restraint."

Later, the presidential council also denounced the violence and pledged to help Turkey. "The presidential council has decided unanimously to condemn the vicious aggression against Turkish troops near the Iraqi border," a statement said on the presidential official Web site.

"The council has decided to continue efforts with



US Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte (L) and Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani (second from R) address a joint news conference in Arbil in northern Iraq on Saturday.

Turkey to prevent the repetition of such acts of aggression and to put an end to the illegitimate presence of gunmen in Iraqi territory," the statement added.

Britain also condemned the attack and said it stood with Ankara in its fight against the separatists. "The United Kingdom utterly condemns Friday's terrorist attack in Hakkari, Turkey. There can be no excuse for the use of violence to achieve one's aims," a spokesman for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office said. "The UK stands shoulder-to-shoulder with Turkey in its fight against terrorism and strongly supports ongoing efforts between the Turkish and Iraqi authorities to prevent the PKK from using northern Iraq as a base from which to mount attacks against Turkey," it added.

The Washington Post

October 6, 2008

Turkey strikes back at Kurds in northern Iraq

Ellen Knickmeyer, Washington Post

Turkey staged retaliatory air strikes against Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq on Sunday as thousands of Turks attended rain-lashed funerals for 15 soldiers killed by the rebels in a cross-border attack from Iraq.

Public anger mounted in Turkey at the inability of civilian leaders to stop attacks by the rebel Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK. The group has waged a 24-year guerrilla war for greater autonomy for Turkey's minority Kurds from bases in southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq.

Mourners booed President Abdullah Gül and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan at funerals Sunday for two of the soldiers killed near the border with Iraq on Friday.



BURHAN OZBILICI / AP

Demonstrators elsewhere waved the country's flag in front of parliament and beat and burned effigies of the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan.

Turkey's leaders increased demands Sunday for neighboring Iraq to do more against the Kurdish rebels based there.

"We have no support at all from the northern Iraqi administration," Gen. Hasan Igsiz told reporters in Turkey's capital, Ankara. "Our expectation is that rebels be acknowledged as a terrorist organization there and that support for the rebels be eliminated."

Erdogan helped bury one soldier, shoveling silt into the man's grave in the town of Armutlu. Mourners chanted slogans against the PKK.

"There are measures to be taken against the hideouts" of rebels in northern Iraq, Erdogan said afterward. "We are expecting positive action on the ground" from Iraq, he added.

Turkish warplanes bombed suspected rebel bases in northern Iraq late Sunday, the military said.

Turkey has staged several air strikes in northern Iraq this year. Ground troops also mounted a weeklong offensive in Iraq in February. The mountain terrain, and the rebels' familiarity with the landscape, hinders the military, although the United States this year increased the sharing of intelligence to help guide Turkey in the attacks.

The government has tried to show itself as determined as the military in combatting the rebels.

Although violence in Turkey's war with the Kurdish rebels has eased since the 1980s and 1990s, when fighting and bombs killed more than 40,000, Turkey has sustained more troop fatalities in PKK attacks this year than the U.S. military has in violence in neighboring Iraq.

Friday's attack was the deadliest single strike by rebels against Turkey's military this year. Turkey said that Friday's fighting killed at least 23 Kurdish rebels.

The Misrule of Massoud Barzani: Iraqi Kurdistan's Yasser Arafat

Sam Brannen | 01 Oct 2008
WORLD POLITICS REVIEW

Once an oasis of stability in Iraq, the Kurdish north is increasingly a source of unrest. Because of the misrule of Massoud Barzani, the president of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq (KRG) who may go down as the Yasser Arafat of the Kurdish people, the region is becoming a danger both to the country and to its own people.

The contrast between Barzani and Iraq's president, Jalal Talabani, is striking. Talabani, the scion of Kurdish Iraq's other political dynasty, has spent the years since liberation from Baathist rule in Baghdad, earning a reputation as one of the great unifiers of a fractious Iraq, often serving as mediator between the various sects, the Americans, and others in the region.

Massoud Barzani, on the other hand, has spent the past five years amassing power and influence in Erbil, the capital of the increasingly independent Iraqi Kurdistan. There he has focused on conducting oil deals beyond the reach of the central government, and has refused to cooperate with Turkey to combat the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) terrorists that operate from safe haven in territory ostensibly under his control.

Corruption in the Kurdish region is rampant, and many of the Turkish firms that rushed in after the liberation of Iraq, eager for contracts, have gone unpaid for work already completed. Luxury cars are appearing on the streets while many ordinary Iraqi Kurds are increasingly disillusioned with the continued lack of development. Opposition parties rooted

in Islamist politics -- perceived as immune from corruption -- are springing up across the political landscape, but no elections are scheduled (the Kurdish region will not hold elections with the rest of the country in January) and it's likely that even if elections were held, the outcome would be predetermined.

Most recently, Barzani has demanded that the central government pay for his Peshmerga forces, still likely the best trained and most disciplined in Iraq. He argues that these forces are for the greater good of all of Iraq, but has simultaneously taken to deploying them in contested areas outside the established borders of the Kurdish region. This has resulted in a heightening series of clashes with Sunni Arabs, mainly focused in Diyala province. Barzani claims that the Peshmerga are fighting al-Qaida, and that their role in the stabilization of Iraq continues to be underappreciated. While some Peshmerga were folded into the Iraqi Army and have fought bravely and died for the security gains in Iraq over the past year, for the most part Barzani has jealously guarded his forces in a region that doesn't especially need them. Barzani's true goal is clear: expand the borders of Iraqi Kurdistan into oil-rich areas before the state of Iraq and a more capable central government solidify.

Massoud Barzani's nephew and the prime minister of the KRG, Nechirvan, has shown himself to be a far more reasonable man, serving as a key link in talks with Turkey about the PKK issue. But he does little to temper his uncle's excesses. Cause for greater concern are the continued health problems of Jalal Talabani, whose exit from the scene would truly leave Massoud Barzani's ambitions unchecked.



Such a situation would be perilous not only for Iraq's immediate stability, but for the long-term prosperity of the Iraqi Kurdish people as well.

Author's note: The author has been informed by readers that Michael Rubin has previously compared Massoud Barzani to Yasser Arafat and to Hezbollah's Nasrallah. The author was not aware of this at the time he wrote this piece. This piece is based on original research into the topic.

Sam Brannen is a fellow with the Center for Strategic and International Studies' International Security Program.

Massoud Barzani: The KRG Representative to the U.S. Responds

Qubad Talabany | 06 Oct 2008
WORLD POLITICS REVIEW

Editor's note: The following is an unsolicited response to a World Politics Review commentary from Qubad Talabany, the Kurdistan Regional Government's representative to the United States.

WPR usually publishes reader mail on our blog, but we have chosen to publish this as a stand alone item out of respect for Mr. Talabany's diplomatic stature.

As both a news and analysis journal, WPR recognizes that some articles it publishes will provoke differences of opinion and disagreements of interpretation. Above all, our commitment is to airing all sides of a contested issue, so long as they are respectfully expressed.

Dear Sir:

The "Commentary" by Sam Brennan, "The Misrule of Massoud Barzani: Iraqi Kurdistan's Yasser Arafat," is erroneous and ill-informed.

Mr. Brannen begins with the statement that the "Kurdish north is increasingly a source of unrest" and "becoming a danger both to the country and to its own people." What "unrest" and "danger" is he referring to? There is no political violence or unrest in the Kurdistan region. The Kurdistan Region is the most stable and democratic part of Iraq, and regularly acknowledged as such by administration officials and members of Congress. Furthermore, it is hard to square how KRG cooperation in overthrowing Saddam Hussein, drafting the Iraqi constitution,

fighting terrorism and meeting political benchmarks such as passing the provincial election law last month are a "danger" to Iraq and the Kurds.

That the KRG, like many governments, is imperfect and has corruption is true. But unlike other governments in the region, the KRG can point to a level of progress in democratic reforms, tolerance, transparency and better governance. I would challenge Mr. Brannen to identify another region in Iraq or the Middle East where the secular trend, as well as tolerance for diversity, is as well-developed as it is in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Brannen also claims that Massoud Barzani, the president of the Kurdistan Region and a revered figure among the Kurds, "may go down as the Yasser Arafat of the Kurdish people." Yasser Arafat acquiesced to terrorism as a tactic to promote his and his party's goals, whereas President Barzani has been one of America's staunchest allies in fighting terrorism. We Kurds have been victims of terrorism, not its proponents. This comparison is at best sloppy and uninformed, and at worst slanderous, and Mr. Brannen should be held accountable for it.

As the son of President of Iraq Jalal Talabani, I take strong personal offense at Brannen's unflattering comparison of Massoud Barzani to Jalal Talabani. He fails to recognize the important role played by President Barzani on every major milestone in Iraq's development. His input and involvement, in Baghdad with President Talabani, has led to breaking of the impasse on many major issues, including the drafting and the ratification of Iraq's permanent constitution. While the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan have had their differences in the past, the Kurdish leadership is today united, and Jalal Talabani and Massoud Barzani are the closest of confidantes and partners in



building both the Kurdistan Region and a federal and democratic Iraq.

Mr. Brannen also mischaracterizes KRG-Turkish relations over the past year, including regarding the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), culminating in a historic meeting in Baghdad on May 1, 2008, between KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and senior Turkish officials. That this progress could have taken place if President Barzani had "refused to cooperate with Turkey," as Mr. Brannen asserts, shows a lack of understanding about decision-making in our government and the relationships among President Barzani, Prime Minis-

ter Barzani, President Talabani, and the rest of the Iraqi Kurdish leadership.

The author is misguided in his description of the status of the Peshmerga. The Peshmerga are not "his [Barzani's] Peshmerga", rather they are the security force of the Kurdistan Region, a force that is recognized in Iraq's permanent constitution. Where does Mr. Brannen get the idea that the Kurdistan region "doesn't especially need its security forces"? At other places in his article he acknowledges the threats from al-Qaida and other terrorist groups. Mr. Brannen might also be reminded of what our recent history has been, including the use of chemical weapons by Saddam Hussein against Kurdish villages in 1987-88.

Moreover, every time there is conflict in Iraq, be it with al-Qaida, or other extreme groups and militias, it is the Peshmerga that is called upon by the prime minister of Iraq to assist the Iraqi army. Kurdish Peshmerga forces have bravely and consistently fought against terrorists who kill Americans and Iraqis. In response to Mr. Brannen's assertions that Kurdish forces are deployed outside of Kurdistan's boundaries, it should be made clear to readers that throughout 2004 and 2005, the Iraqi Government and the U.S.-led Multi-National Forces have requested Kurdish security forces to assist in securing parts of Diyala, Kirkuk and Nineveh provinces. Kurdish forces did so with great success, rooting out terrorists from Tal-Afar, securing towns like Kha-

naqin and rooting out terrorist elements from Kirkuk. These areas remain disputed territories and thus not under the direct control of either Kurdistan or Baghdad. Moreover, it was Prime Minister Maliki's unnecessary deployment of Iraqi army units to Khanaqin this year that has heightened tensions in an otherwise peaceful and stable situation.

Finally, the author proves yet again to be incorrect in his assertions that no elections will take place in the Kurdistan Region. Elections are scheduled to be held in the Kurdistan region of Iraq in June 2009.

Qubad Talabany
Representative to the United States
Kurdistan Regional Government - USA

TURKISH DAILY NEWS

October 6, 2008

International community condemns the PKK attack

ANKARA - Turkish Daily News

The international community has over the weekend condemned an attack by Kurdish terrorists on a military post in southeastern Turkey near the Iraqi border that has killed at least 15 soldiers.

The Iraqi government, the European Union, NATO, the UN, Britain, the Swedish Foreign Minister, the United States and Italian embassies in Ankara all denounced the attack carried out by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, in separate statements.

The Iraqi government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh said the rebel attack "poses a serious threat to the border areas and to the joint security of Iraq and Turkey," also urging the Turkish government "to deal with this criminal act wisely and to show restraint."

Later, the Iraqi presidential council led by President Jalal Talabani also denounced the violence and pledged to help Turkey.

"The council has decided to continue efforts with Turkey to prevent the repetition of such aggression and to put an end to the illegitimate presence of the gunmen on Iraqi territory," said the official Web site of the presidency.

The European Union's French presidency said the EU expressed its complete solidarity with the Turkish authorities, adding that the EU stood resolutely beside Turkey in its battle against the PKK, an organization that is on Europe's lists of terrorist groups and entities.

The UN spokesperson Michelle Montas, meanwhile, said in a written statement the UN expressed its deepest sympathies with the Turkish people and government in the face of terrorist violence, urging cooperation between Turkey and Iraq to address the threat, while Britain said it stood "shoulder-to-shoulder" with Ankara in its fight against the separatists.

A spokesman for the British Foreign Office said there could be no excuse for the use of violence to achieve one's aims.

"The UK stands shoulder-to-shoulder with Turkey in its fight against terrorism and strongly supports ongoing efforts between the Turkish and Iraqi authorities to prevent the PKK from using northern Iraq as a base from which to mount attacks against Turkey."

The U.S. Embassy in Ankara said the United States severely condemned the attack, recalling that President George W. Bush called the terrorist organization PKK as the common enemy to Iraq, the United States and Turkey.

The Italian Embassy in Ankara also condemned the attack, expressing its solidarity with its friends the Turkish people, while Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt said in written statement that all had to display a firm stance against terror and that the PKK had continued its attack to halt the reforms launched by Turkey in many fields, reforms with positive effects on Kurds as well.



Voices of Iraq
October 7, 2008

KDP, PUK agree to unify ministries

ARBIL / Aswat al-Iraq: Member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party's (KDP) political office on Monday said that leaderships of the KDP and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) agreed to unify the three ministries of Interior, Peshmerga (local Kurdish armed forces), and Finance within the coming two weeks.

The two parties also agreed to send a high-profile delegation to Baghdad, headed by the region's president, to discuss pending issues with the federal government. "This occurred during a meeting in Arbil today," Imad Mohammed told Aswat al-Iraq. He did not mention when the delegation would travel to Baghdad. Arbil, also written Erbil or Irbil, is believed to be one of the oldest continuously inhabited in the world and is one of the largest cities in Iraq. The city lies eighty kilometers (fifty miles) east of Mosul. In 2005, its estimated

population was 990,000 inhabitants. The city is the capital of the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan region and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). It hosts the headquarters of the Kurdistan region ministers and parliament. Since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, only isolated, sporadic violence has hit Arbil, unlike many other areas of Iraq. Parallel bomb attacks against the Eid celebrations arranged by the Iraqi President Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and KRG President Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) killed 109 people on February 1, 2004. Responsibility was claimed by the Islamist group Ansar al-Sunnah, and stated to be in solidarity with the Kurdish Islamist faction Ansar al-Islam. Another bombing on May 4, 2005 killed 60 civilians. Despite these bombings the population generally feels safe.



Voices of Iraq
October 9, 2008

Strategic agreement between Kurdistan, U.N. next week – source

ARBIL / Aswat al-Iraq: nKurdistan region's coordinator for U.N. affairs said on Tuesday that a strategic agreement will be signed between the Kurdish government and the U.N. for cooperation in a number of services fields.

"A delegation from the U.N. headed by Deputy Secretary General David Sherrar will arrive in Arbil next week to sign a strategic agreement with the Kurdish government," Dindar Zebari told Aswat al-Iraq. "The agreement aims

to help the region in health, agriculture and education fields in three years between 2008 until 2010," he added. "The agreement is an important step to boost relations between Iraq's Kurdistan region and the U.N.," he also said, noting that Deputy Prime Minister of Kurdistan Omar Fatah will sign the agreement with the U.N. delegation. "The U.N. had signed a similar agreement with the Iraqi government last month," Zebari highlighted.

la Croix

7 OCTOBRE 2008

La Turquie accentue ses raids contre le PKK en Irak

L'aviation turque a effectué hier un nouveau raid contre des bases des séparatistes kurdes du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak, en riposte à une attaque des rebelles vendredi contre un poste militaire proche de la frontière irakienne, qui a fait quinze morts parmi les soldats turcs.

Que veut le PKK ?

Le parti -interdit- des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), créé en 1978, a décrété le 15 août 1984 la lutte armée contre le pouvoir central d'Ankara pour la création d'un État kurde indépendant dans le Sud-Est anatolien, peuplé majoritairement de Kurdes.

Le PKK a lancé ses premières attaques meurtrières en Turquie en 1984. Selon l'Institut international des études stratégiques (IISS) de Londres, son potentiel militaire est jugé assez limité: 3 000 à 5 000 combattants. Mais cette attaque, dans laquelle 15 soldats turcs ont été tués dans le sud-est de la Turquie, est la plus meurtrière depuis le début de l'année.

Des cérémonies, accompagnées de démonstrations de colère contre le PKK, se sont déroulées dimanche dans neuf provinces de la Turquie, alors que se déroulaient les funérailles des soldats.

L'administration kurde d'Irak donne-t-elle son appui au PKK ?

Le PKK agit depuis le Kurdistan d'Irak, donc forcément avec le soutien, plus ou moins affiché, des autorités kurdes d'Irak. Dimanche, l'armée turque a encore accusé ces dernières de soutenir les rebelles kurdes. « Non seulement nous n'avons aucun appui de l'administration du nord de l'Irak, mais elle fournit (aux rebelles) des infrastructures telles que des hôpitaux et des routes »,

Selon la Turquie, des milliers de combattants du PKK sont retranchés dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak.

a déclaré le chef d'état-major adjoint, le général Hasan Igsiz. Ankara accuse depuis longtemps l'administration du Kurdistan irakien, frontalier des régions kurdes du sud-est de la

Turquie, de ne pas agir contre les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Le premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan a d'ailleurs lancé un nouvel appel aux Kurdes d'Irak. « Des mesures doivent être prises contre les bases (du PKK). Nous attendons des actes positifs sur le terrain. »

Que peut faire la Turquie ?

Ankara a décidé de continuer ses incursions en territoire

kurde d'Irak et de poursuivre ses raids. Selon la Turquie, des milliers de combattants du PKK sont retranchés dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak, où ils peuvent aisément se fournir en armes et explosifs pour déclencher des attaques sur le sol turc.

Le général Igsiz a accusé l'administration kurde d'Irak de « ne faire aucun effort » pour empêcher les rebelles de se mêler à la population locale, rendant plus difficile la mission de l'armée turque lorsqu'elle tente de frapper le PKK au cours de raids aériens.

Prochainement, le Parlement turc doit se prononcer sur une prolongation pour un an de l'autorisation donnée à l'armée, le 17 octobre 2007, de procéder à des incursions dans le nord de l'Irak contre les bases du PKK, qui est classé « organisation terroriste » par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les États-Unis.

L'armée turque a envoyé des renforts en hommes et en matériel dans les zones frontalières avec l'Irak. Un premier raid aérien turc contre une base arrière du PKK en Irak, vendredi, a été suivi par un second, samedi, contre des rebelles en fuite. Des hélicoptères ont également fait des vols de reconnaissance au-dessus de chemins utilisés par le PKK et des soldats ont établi des positions d'artillerie dans les montagnes.

AGNÈS ROTIVEL

LE FIGARO

9 octobre 2008

L'Irak négocie avec la France l'achat d'hélicoptères

MOYEN-ORIENT

La signature d'un contrat sur la livraison d'une cinquantaine d'appareils relancerait la coopération militaire entre Paris et Bagdad.

UNE PAGE devrait bientôt se tourner. Écartée de la reconstruction de l'Irak pour s'être opposée à la

guerre de 2003, la France va reprendre sa coopération militaire avec Bagdad, qui fut l'un de ses principaux acheteurs d'armes, sous le régime déchu de Saddam Hussein. Une délégation du ministère de la Défense est attendue prochainement à Paris. « La négociation porte sur l'achat d'une cinquantaine d'hélicoptères neufs », déclare au Figaro un proche du

premier ministre, Nouri al-Maliki. Il s'agirait d'appareils de surveillance des frontières et des installations pétrolières vitales pour l'économie de l'Irak, qui cherche à équiper son armée, avant un retrait militaire américain.

Début juin, lors de la dernière visite de Bernard Kouchner en Irak, Maliki avait demandé que la France livre du « matériel militaire de pointe ». Quelques semaines plus tard, invité du Salon de l'armement d'Eurosatory, un groupe de militaires irakiens entamait les négociations. « Les pourparlers se poursuivent encore, souligne un diplomate français, les Irakiens souhaitent que l'affaire se fasse, mais elle n'est pas encore

finalisée, étant données les procédures à respecter en matière de fournitures militaires. » Le contrat, qui pourrait être signé d'ici à la fin de l'année, viserait également la formation de personnel, comme Kouchner l'avait proposé au premier ministre irakien, ainsi que la fourniture de pièces détachées pour du matériel ancien.

Sécuriser ses frontières

Jusqu'à l'invasion du Koweït par l'Irak en 1990, Bagdad achetait ses armes en priorité à la France et à la Russie. Aujourd'hui, les Irakiens cherchent à améliorer leurs capacités de défense, pour prendre en main le plus rapidement possible la sécurité de leur pays. Pour réduire sa dépendance à l'égard de l'armée de l'air américaine, Bagdad vient ainsi d'acquiescer 12 avions de reconnaissance aux États-Unis, et des négociations sont en cours avec Washington pour l'achat de chasseurs F-16. Ce qui n'est pas sans inquiéter cer-

tains voisins de l'Irak, comme le Koweït. L'Irak tient également à sécuriser ses frontières avec l'Iran, la Syrie et l'Arabie saoudite, d'où ont afflué, ces dernières années, les djihadistes de la mouvance al-Qaïda. Bref, après avoir été dominé par les Américains, le marché de la sécurité pourrait s'ouvrir à d'autres acteurs. La France de Nicolas Sarkozy, qui a repris pied en Irak, dispose d'atouts. Mais les autorités irakiennes espèrent que les pourparlers autour des hélicoptères relanceront une fois pour toutes les relations avec Paris. « On sent encore les Français réticents à s'engager en Irak, est-ce dû à un frein psychologique ? » se demande un diplomate irakien.

Sans minimiser l'importance de ces négociations, la partie française rappelle qu'il ne s'agit pas encore d'une véritable coopération impliquant l'échange de militaires. Dans ce domaine, « on en reste encore à la doctrine Chirac, constate un autre diplomate, c'est-

à-dire pas d'uniforme français en Irak ». Quatre ans après avoir rétabli les relations diplomatiques avec Bagdad, la France n'a toujours pas envoyé d'attaché militaire à Bagdad. Pas plus d'ailleurs que d'attaché commercial, et ce, alors que Bernard Kouchner incite les entreprises françaises à retourner en Irak.

GEORGES MALBRUNOT

Le Monde
10 octobre 2008

L'armée turque réclame des pouvoirs étendus pour lutter contre le PKK

L'état-major militaire a obtenu le feu vert des députés pour mener des opérations terrestres contre les rebelles kurdes à la frontière turco-irakienne

ISTANBUL
CORRESPONDANCE

Les députés débattaient au Parlement à Ankara, mercredi 8 octobre, et s'approprièrent à prolonger l'autorisation donnée aux forces armées pour mener des opérations terrestres par-delà la frontière avec l'Irak. L'annonce d'un nouvel attentat contre un car de police, à Diyarbakir (Sud-Est), avant même la fin du vote, lui a donné encore plus de poids. Cinq personnes, dont quatre policiers, ont été tuées dans le mitraillage du véhicule, attribué aux rebelles kurdes du PKK par les autorités turques. « Nous ne nous laisserons pas intimider par ces actes », a réagi le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, dans la soirée.

Cette attaque survient quelques jours après celle menée par le PKK contre un poste militaire, à Aktütün, à la frontière turco-irakienne, dans laquelle 17 soldats ont trouvé la mort. Depuis, pas une journée sans que les avions de chasse turcs ne frappent des installations présumées du PKK dans les montagnes du Kurdistan irakien.

Dans ce contexte, l'armée a donc obtenu le feu vert des députés. Le parti au pouvoir (AKP), mais aussi les deux principaux partis de l'opposition nationaliste soutenaient l'extension de l'accord. Seuls les députés kurdes du DTP (Parti pour une société démocratique) s'y opposaient. L'ampleur et les modalités de la riposte doivent être passées en revue jeudi, à Ankara, où doit se réunir le haut comité antiterroriste.

L'état-major militaire s'impatiente et réclame des pouvoirs élargis pour lutter contre « l'organisation terroriste », la périphrase offi-

cielle pour désigner le PKK. Plusieurs officiers se sont plaints de l'impact négatif sur la sécurité du pays des réformes menées dans le cadre des négociations d'adhésion à l'UE depuis 2002.

Le régime d'état d'urgence, qui était en vigueur de 1987 à 2002 dans l'est du pays, pourrait ainsi être remis au goût du jour. Ce qui suscite de nombreuses craintes pour les droits de l'homme dans les

provinces à majorité kurde. Des zones de sécurité sous contrôle militaire ont déjà été créées depuis un an.

Mais les forces de sécurité militent notamment pour l'extension de la durée de garde à vue, et pour un droit de perquisition et de contrôle élargi, sans le mandat préalable d'un procureur, ainsi que pour le brouillage des réseaux de communication. Le ministre de la justice, Mehmet Ali Sahin, a expliqué, mardi devant le Parlement, que le gouvernement avait accepté

une partie de ces demandes, tout en se voulant rassurant sur la question des libertés. « La Turquie n'est pas en position de devoir choisir entre ses libertés et sa sécurité. »

Certains généraux soutiennent l'idée d'établir une zone tampon, côté irakien, pour prévenir les infiltrations de combattants du PKK en Turquie. Le président du parti d'action nationaliste (MHP), Devlet Bahçeli, a relayé la proposition. Sans convaincre le premier ministre. « Je me demande si les messieurs qui ont fait cette proposition se sont déjà rendus dans cette zone, vu la longueur de la frontière avec l'Irak », a ironisé M. Erdogan.

Certains commentateurs accusent l'armée turque de jouer la surenchère pour masquer ses propres déficiences. Le journal *Taraf* a accusé, mercredi, l'état-major d'avoir ignoré plusieurs avertissements. La hiérarchie militaire avait été prévenue, selon lui, de l'imminence d'une attaque sur la caserne d'Aktütün. ■

GUILLAUME PERRIER

Le point Front fuyant

de Christian Merville Beyrouth

« **M**audit soit le PKK ! Les martyrs sont immortels », scandaient les foules aux obsèques des 15 soldats morts dans des affrontements avec les rebelles kurdes, vendredi dernier à la frontière avec l'Irak. Le problème, c'est que la patience du diable est notoirement infinie et longue est l'éternité. Cette guerre en pointillé qui ne veut pas dire son nom, il y a maintenant un quart de siècle qu'elle dure sans qu'il soit possible d'en voir l'issue. Au contraire, constate-t-on : elle se complique au fil des ans même si, militairement, le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) a vu ses effectifs ramenés à près de 4 000 hommes, autant en raison des ripostes musclées à son action que de la désaffection d'une population que n'attire plus le miroir d'une impossible indépendance. Le bilan des pertes, lui, est autrement plus impressionnant : 44 000 morts dans des actes de violence qui vont des incursions à partir du territoire voisin aux attentats particulièrement meurtriers, comme celui perpétré fin juillet dernier quand, en deux temps, 17 tués et plus de 150 blessés sont tombés dans une proche banlieue d'Istanbul.

À l'image de tous les combats pour l'indépendance, le duel entre le David

kurde et le Goliath turc a connu des périodes d'accalmie alternant avec des éruptions meurtrières. À chaque fois, la riposte ordonnée par l'état-major central s'accompagnait de mises en garde à l'adresse de l'autorité à Bagdad, accusée de fermer l'œil sur l'aide apportée par les anciens peshmergas de Moustapha Barzani à leurs frères, solidement retranchés dans des camps (on en compterait jusqu'à une douzaine dans les monts Kandil). Le week end dernier, le ton est encore monté quand le chef d'état-major adjoint, le général Hasan Igsiz, a dénoncé la passivité de l'administration irakienne de la zone nord, allant jusqu'à évoquer une aide indirecte assurée aux indépendantistes sous la forme d'hôpitaux et de réseaux routiers. C'est un fait que l'opération du 3 octobre à Aktulun, dans la zone de Hakkari, une province montagneuse d'un accès difficile, a réussi grâce à l'appui de l'artillerie basée en territoire irakien. Il est tout aussi vrai que la marge de manœuvre du gouvernement Maliki est bien faible, alors qu'aucun progrès n'a été enregistré au plan interne, que les Américains ne laissent à leurs protégés qu'un simple rôle de figurant et que le Premier ministre ne tient nullement, en ces heures de tous les

doutes, à se colleter avec un président de la République kurde et lui-même gêné aux entournures par le responsable de l'administration du Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani.

Coincés, les Turcs le sont eux aussi, qui se trouvent une fois de plus placés devant une alternative dont chacun des deux termes n'apporte qu'une fausse solution. Ils peuvent ainsi continuer à faire parler le canon sans pour autant espérer aboutir à une solution militaire, ou bien initier un gigantesque programme de développement censé aider une couche ethnique composée tout de même de 17 millions d'âmes et qui demeure douloureusement démunie. Passer de la cosmopolite Istanbul (classée la métropole ultramoderne de l'année par la revue Wallpaper) à Diyarbakir, capitale du Sud-Est, revient à basculer d'un Ouest hyper-industrialisé au pire des tiers-mondes, constate un journaliste anglo-saxon, frappé par la brutale transition entre, ici, les gratte-ciel et là les bidonvilles. Conscient de cette disparité énorme, Recep Tayyip Erdogan a annoncé cet été un vaste programme de développement doté d'un budget de 12 milliards de dollars, accueilli dans un climat de doute à peine poli tant sont nombreuses les aides

faites jadis et demeurées à l'état de promesses. Cette fois pourtant, l'État a tout intérêt à tenir ses engagements concernant l'équipement en infrastructures et à réduire ses objectifs militaires. Parce que l'Union européenne suit attentivement l'évolution de la situation économique-sociale dans le Sud-Est, entre autres, avant de se prononcer sur la demande d'adhésion de la Turquie. Et parce qu'une guerre en bonne et due forme serait de nature à déstabiliser cette zone du Moyen-Orient aujourd'hui hautement instable mais appelée – surtout dans sa composante turque – à jouer un rôle déterminant une fois réglé le problème irakien et résolue l'énigme iranienne. Que cette double échéance tarde à venir ne rend que plus impérieuse la nécessité de trouver une issue à ce qui est devenu une « question » – comme autrefois les Balkans, comme de nos jours la Palestine.

Déjà le PKK a réduit ses prétentions, les ramenant à une simple reconnaissance d'une certaine forme d'autonomie et à l'amnistie de ses dirigeants. À Ankara d'exorciser ses vieux démons nés au lendemain de la Première Guerre mondiale et de montrer au monde que l'ancien « homme malade » ne craint pas les rechutes.



6 octobre 2008

TURQUIE - Le PKK profite de la crise politique

Les rebelles kurdes, réfugiés dans le nord de l'Irak, ont encore une fois lancé une opération contre l'armée turque. Ces affrontements portent un coup dur au gouvernement en place, sans toutefois servir les intérêts de la population kurde, estime le quotidien libéral *Vatan*.

L'attaque menée par le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) contre le poste d'Aktütün à la frontière avec l'Irak, au cours de laquelle 15 soldats turcs ont été tués, 2 ont disparu et plus de 20 ont été blessés, est encore plus grave que celle qui avait coûté la vie à 12 soldats en octobre 2007. A l'époque, elle avait débouché sur une intervention de l'armée turque dans le nord de l'Irak. Elle s'était produite peu de temps après les élections législatives de juillet 2007 [remportées par le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP)] et l'élection de Gül à la présidence de la République. Celle du 5 octobre s'est déroulée à un moment plus critique. Outre le contexte international très sensible (crise financière mondiale, élection présidentielle aux États-Unis, incertitude liée à l'évolution de la situation en Irak et dans le Caucase), l'attaque meurtrière du 5 octobre s'est déroulée alors que la Turquie vit une situation de grave crise chronique.

En effet, le processus judiciaire visant à interdire l'AKP, qui n'a pas abouti, et le dialogue de sourds qui caractérise les rapports entre la majorité et l'opposition ont créé une dangereuse polarisation au sein de la société turque. Avec les révélations sur les scandales touchant l'AKP, c'est désormais la corruption qui a remplacé la laïcité en tant que vecteur de cette crise chronique. Or le PKK montre bien qu'il entend pleinement profiter de cette ambiance délétère. L'opération du PKK se produit également alors que la représentation politique légale du mouvement kurde en Turquie est dans l'impasse. Le Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP, qui compte 20 députés à l'Assemblée nationale) est en effet également menacé par une procédure d'interdiction. Pour autant, on ne peut pas dire que les élus kurdes aient beaucoup fait depuis plus d'un an pour contribuer positivement à la résolution de la question kurde en Turquie. Ils ont plutôt, volontairement ou inconsciemment, contribué à aggraver la situation. En cause, l'hypothèque du PKK qui pèse sur ce parti et dont les membres ne veulent pas, ne peuvent pas ou n'ont pas le courage de se débarrasser. D'autant plus que la Turquie est déjà en campagne électorale pour les élections municipales de mars 2009 dont l'enjeu principal sera précisément le Sud-Est [à majorité kurde] où l'AKP et le DTP dominent le paysage politique. Si

l'AKP réussissait à prendre les mairies DTP de Diyarbakir et de Batman [les deux plus grandes villes de la région], ce serait un coup très dur pour le mouvement kurde en Turquie. C'est pour essayer d'enrayer cette évolution que le PKK multiplie ses actions terroristes. Cette situation n'apportera évidemment rien de bon au DTP, mais ce ne sera pas la première fois que le PKK sacrifiera ses relais politiques légaux afin de pouvoir continuer à exister.

Par ailleurs, l'attaque du PKK a eu lieu alors que des heurts sérieux se produisaient dans certaines villes anatoliennes entre Turcs et Kurdes. Affirmer que le PKK a planifié cette attaque précisément au moment des affrontements entre Turcs et Kurdes à Balikesir [deux morts, début octobre, suivi du saccage de commerces appartenant à des Kurdes] serait exagéré. Mais ce n'est un secret pour personne que le PKK encourage les affrontements interethniques dans les villes de l'Ouest, au minimum pour l'utiliser comme moyen de chantage. Dans ce contexte, les funérailles des soldats tombés en martyrs lors de cette attaque devraient rendre la situation très sensible dans les prochains jours [dans la mesure où les obsèques débouchent souvent sur des manifestations anti-PKK qui peuvent dégénérer].

Rusen Cakir



A TURQUIE S'APPRÊTE À RECONDUIRE SES OPÉRATIONS EN IRAK CONTRE LE PKK

ANKARA, 8 oct 2008 (AFP) –

LES DEPUTES turcs devaient prolonger mercredi pour un an l'autorisation donnée à l'armée de mener des opérations militaires en Irak contre les rebelles séparatistes kurdes, cinq jours après une attaque qui a coûté la vie à 17 soldats turcs.

Le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan avait agité mardi la menace d'une nouvelle intervention terrestre contre les repaires du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le nord de l'Irak, frontalier de la Turquie.

Depuis la Finlande où il se trouve en visite, le chef de l'État Abdullah Gül a souligné que l'autorisation donnée à l'armée "concernera des attaques ciblées, visant uniquement les terroristes" du PKK, sans nuire à la population locale.

Une motion sera soumise au vote à l'issue des débats, qui se sont ouverts à 12H00 GMT. Sans surprise, elle doit être approuvée par une large majorité des 550 parlementaires.

Seuls une vingtaine de députés du parti pro-kurde DTP (Parti pour une société démocratique), a prévu de voter contre.

L'actuel mandat donné à l'armée pour intervenir en Irak prend fin le 17 octobre. Celui-ci a permis à l'armée turque d'effectuer depuis un an des raids aériens dans cette région où sont retranchés, selon Ankara, 2.000 combattants du PKK, ainsi qu'une intervention terrestre de huit jours en février.

Vendredi dernier, des rebelles kurdes ont attaqué une caserne toute proche de la frontière irakienne, tuant 17 soldats. 25 rebelles ont été abattus dans les combats qui ont suivi, selon l'armée.

L'aviation a frappé à quatre reprises depuis des cibles du PKK dans le Kurdistan irakien, une région autonome dont les dirigeants sont accusés par Ankara de soutenir la rébellion.

L'état-major a annoncé mercredi que quatre rebelles tués mardi soir lors de combats à Sirkak (sud-est). Un sergent a en outre été tué dans des heurts à Dicle (sud-est), selon l'agence Anatolie.

Le gouvernement turc est tiraillé entre le mécontentement de la population et de l'opposition parlementaire, qui réclament davantage de fermeté contre le PKK, et le poids de la diplomatie.

Mercredi, M. Erdogan, tout en émettant des doutes sur son efficacité, a affirmé que son gouvernement pourrait envisager la création d'une zone tampon en Irak, suggérée par l'opposition parlementaire, pour rendre la frontière entre les



deux pays, longue de 384 km, plus hermétique aux infiltrations de rebelles.

Washington, allié de la Turquie dans l'Otan, est opposé à une intervention turque prolongée en Irak, qui pourrait déstabiliser la seule région du pays épargnée par les violences.

Selon un décompte publié sur le site internet de l'état-major turc, 640 rebelles ont été tués depuis janvier, dont 408 en Irak.

Jeudi, le Haut conseil de lutte anti-terroriste (TMYK), qui réunit les principaux dirigeants civils et militaires, doit se réunir pour éventuellement donner un feu vert à une demande des autorités militaires de renforcer leurs prérogatives contre le PKK.

Les forces de l'ordre réclament notamment une prolongation des gardes à vue et le droit de procéder à des perquisitions spontanées.

Ces mesures pourraient cependant déplaire à l'Union européenne, à laquelle souhaite adhérer la Turquie. Ankara a adopté ces dernières années une vaste panoplie de réformes en matière des droits de l'Homme.

Considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis, le PKK mène depuis 1984 une lutte armée pour l'autonomie du Sud-Est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes. Le conflit a fait environ 44.000 morts, selon les chiffres officiels.



ATTAQUE CONTRE UN CAR DE POLICE EN TURQUIE: QUATRE TUÉS, 15 BLESSÉS

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 8 oct 2008 (AFP) –

AU MOINS trois policiers et un civil ont été tués, et 15 policiers blessés mercredi dans l'attaque par des rebelles kurdes présumés d'un car transportant des policiers d'une école de police à Diyarbakir (sud-est de la Turquie), selon des sources de sécurité.

Un précédent bilan faisait état d'un policier tué et de 14 blessés.

Les assaillants ont mitraillé le véhicule avec des armes à longue portée alors que celui-ci traversait une zone d'habitations de la principale ville du Sud-Est anatolien, à la population en majorité kurde, tuant le chauffeur et trois policiers, ont affirmé les services du gouverneur de Diyarbakir.

Une grenade non explosée a également été retrouvée sur les lieux de l'attaque, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolie, ajoutant que plusieurs blessés étaient dans un état grave.

Les forces de sécurité ont lancé une vaste opération pour arrêter les auteurs de l'attentat, procédant à des fouilles de suspects et de véhicules, avec le soutien aérien de deux hélicoptères de la police, selon Anatolie.

La police a établi les portraits robots de deux suspects, qui auraient pris la fuite à bord d'une voiture rouge, a affirmé l'agence.

Les rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), soupçonnés par la police, ont dans le passé commis plusieurs attentats à Diyarbakir.

L'attaque survient alors que le Parlement turc s'apprêtait à voter la reconduction d'une autorisation pour l'armée de pénétrer en territoire irakien pour y pourchasser les rebelles du PKK, qui y ont établi des camps.

Considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis, le PKK se bat depuis 1984 pour l'autonomie du Sud-



Est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes.

Selon un récent bilan fourni par l'armée turque, le conflit a fait 32.000 morts dans les rangs du PKK et près de 6.500 dans ceux des forces de sécurité (armée et police). Quelque 5.500 civils ont également perdu la vie dans le conflit.

**EDITORIALS
& COMMENTARY**

Going into the end game in Iraq

No matter who wins the presidential election, the United States is on its way out of Iraq. Barack Obama offers the most specific and speediest withdrawal plan, but even John McCain will not be able to keep a large number of combat troops there for long. Without a major pullback from Iraq, the Pentagon will not have enough troops to fight in Afghanistan — where the U.S. is in danger of losing the real war on terrorism against Al Qaeda and the Taliban.

If that is not reason enough to begin serious preparations for a withdrawal, the Iraqis have decided

that it's time to scale back the U.S. military presence. That's the crux of a new security agreement that American and Iraqi officials say is nearly finished. It would require American combat troops to leave Iraq by the end of 2011 unless Baghdad asks them to stay.

That's longer than Obama's mid-2010 target but still the kind of finite framework that President Bush and McCain long opposed but are now being forced to accept.

We still do not know what McCain means with talk about some kind of magical "victory" in Iraq. What we do know is that only by setting a clear deadline and a sound withdrawal plan can America hope to keep encouraging Iraqis to make and implement the political reforms needed to stabilize the country. There is a lot to be done, and done quickly, to ensure that the withdrawal is safe, orderly and limits further damage to Iraq and its neighbors.

One of the most urgent tasks is to ensure that Iraq's Shiite-led government fulfills its commitment to integrate about 54,000 members of the Awakening Councils — Sunnis paid by the United States to provide

security in local neighborhoods — into security and other government jobs. The Sunnis' 2006 decision to work with the Americans instead of attacking them has dealt a crippling, perhaps fatal blow to Al Qaeda in Iraq and is a major reason for the decline in violence.

Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki and his allies have never trusted the councils and fear the Sunnis are just biding their time for a fight against the Shiites. Instead of trying to co-opt them, they

are still looking for ways to defeat them — a very dangerous course. For Iraq to function peacefully, all ethnic groups have to be part of the system.

The Iraqi Parliament, meanwhile, should be commended for finally approving a long-overdue law that paves the way for provincial elections by the end of January.

The elections will give a chance for participation in politics to tribal Sunnis and impoverished Shiites who previously opted out or were frozen out. But the elections also mean that some groups now in power may lose clout and may be tempted to return to violence.

Emboldened by unconditional American support, al-Maliki has not shown enough interest in accommodating political rivals. Bush must insist that he work with other Iraqi leaders to ensure the election results are respected.

Lamentably, there is still no solution to a fierce dispute over the ethnically mixed, oil-rich city of Kirkuk, where provincial elections have been postponed until next year, or to the demand by Iraq's Christians and other minorities for representation in government.

There is still no law apportioning Iraq's oil resources. Time is quickly running out for Washington and Baghdad to find answers.

There's a lot to be done, and quickly, to ensure a safe U.S. withdrawal.

Sadr ally is killed in bombing

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD: An Iraqi lawmaker loyal to the Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr was killed Thursday when a bomb struck his convoy in Baghdad, officials said.

The explosion hit the convoy carrying Saleh al-Auqaeili and other Shiite lawmakers from Sadr's parliamentary bloc as it passed within 200 meters of an Iraqi Army checkpoint near the main Shiite district of Sadr City, said one of his colleagues. At least one bystander was killed in the bombing. Auqaeili was taken to a hospital but died of his wounds, said Ahmed al-Massoudi, a spokesman for the Sadrist bloc, and a fellow lawmaker, Hassan al-Rubaie.

The U.S. military asserted that Shiite extremists were responsible for the attack, which occurred shortly before 10 a.m. The bombing raised concerns that internal rivalries within political groupings, whether Shiite or Sunni, could emerge before provincial elections are held. Internal battles could pose a major threat to Iraq's stability, even as sectarian violence ebbs.

A U.S. commander warned Thursday that he saw a risk of "nefarious" Iranian meddling in Iraq's approaching elections — including assassinations.

Major General Michael Oates, who commands an area south of Baghdad, said he expected an "uptick" in bombings and other attacks, including "assassinating prominent candidates" as the elections approach. His comments were not linked to the Auqaeili killing.

Auqaeili was a senior member of Sadr's political bloc, which opposes the U.S. presence in Iraq, and has 30 seats in the 275-member Parliament. The 37-year-old former professor was known for his moderate stance in the Sadr movement, where some factions are pushing for a return to violence, said another Sadrist lawmaker, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive internal issues.

Followers of Sadr have been targeted in past attacks, but the bombing Thursday was notable because it occurred within a section of Sadr City that is considered secured by the U.S. military.

Some Sadrists accused the Americans and their Iraqi allies of targeting Auqaeili because of the Sadr movement's opposition to a U.S.-Iraqi security agreement that has been under negotiation for months.

Falah Hassan Shanshal, riding in a different car in the same convoy, said the group became suspicious when discovering there were no traffic jams in the usually crowded area.



6 octobre 2008

Kurdistan: la Turquie frappe fort

L'armée a bombardé les bases rebelles du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak. Le conflit meurtrier avec les séparatistes kurdes dure depuis plus d'un an.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, le premier ministre turc, dimanche, à l'enterrement d'un des soldats tombés lors de l'offensive du PKK. (REUTERS)

Le Kurdistan s'enflamme de nouveau. La Turquie a une fois de plus bombardé des repaires du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le nord de l'Irak, ce lundi. Cette zone avait déjà été la cible de frappes aériennes samedi, en réponse à l'assaut d'un poste militaire turc, qui avait entraîné la veille la mort de 17 soldats.

Le PKK, qui affirme détenir le corps de deux soldats turcs, milite pour l'autonomie du sud-est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes. Selon l'armée turque, 23 rebelles ont été abattus, faisant de ces raids les plus meurtriers de ces dernières années.

Prudence diplomatique

Le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a réuni lundi ses ministres pour débattre de la suite des évé-

nements. Le gouvernement est tiraillé entre le mécontentement grandissant de la population, qui réclame une solution définitive aux problèmes du PKK, et le poids de la diplomatie. En effet les bases arrière du PKK se situent en territoire irakien. Washington voit d'un mauvais œil les incursions de l'armée turque, qui déstabilisent la seule région tranquille du pays.

L'année dernière, Ankara avait déjà massé des forces à la frontière, menaçant d'intervenir directement sur le sol irakien. L'état-major turc met en cause l'administration kurde d'Irak, accusant les responsables de soutenir les milliers de rebelles réfugiés dans la zone, avec des «infrastructures telles que des hôpitaux et des routes». Des forces spéciales de l'armée auraient été dépêchées à la frontière pour empêcher toute nouvelle infiltration.

Les lacunes de la stratégie turque

Ces violences interviennent alors que le parlement turc doit voter, cette semaine, le renouvellement du mandat de l'armée pour les opérations contre le PKK. Pour les spécialistes du dossier, les opérations militaires ne permettront pas d'écraser la rébellion. La pauvreté de la région et la marginalisation des Kurdes attisent la haine envers le pouvoir central. Sans un programme de développement économique de la zone et un intérêt réel pour les problèmes politiques et culturels des habitants, le conflit risque de perdurer, puisant sa force dans la misère et l'isolement de la population.

Erdogan a annoncé cet été des investissements de 12 milliards de dollars dans la région. De quoi tenter de pallier les promesses non tenues du passé.

AFP

PKK: ERDOGAN N'ÉCARTE PAS L'ÉTABLISSEMENT D'UNE ZONE TAMPON EN IRAK

ANKARA, 8 oct 2008 (AFP) -

LE PREMIER ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan a affirmé mercredi que son pays pourrait envisager la création d'une zone tampon en Irak pour empêcher l'infiltration en Turquie de rebelles kurdes, tout en émettant des doutes sur son efficacité.

"Nous discuterons de cette proposition. Nous en parlerons avec nos forces armées. Et s'il s'avère qu'une telle mesure est indispensable, nous ferons le nécessaire", a-t-il dit lors d'une conférence de presse avec son homologue tchèque Mirek Topolánek, en visite en Turquie.

La veille, un parti d'opposition nationaliste avait proposé que la Turquie constitue une zone tampon à l'intérieur de l'Irak pour empêcher toute infiltration depuis ce pays.

La proposition intervient après que des rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatistes kurdes de Turquie) ont tué 17 soldats vendredi dans une caserne du sud-est de la Turquie, région frontalière avec l'Irak.

Mais M. Erdogan n'a pas semblé convaincu par l'idée qu'une zone tampon puisse rendre la région frontalière, très montagneuse, plus hermétique.

"Je me demande si les messieurs qui ont fait cette proposition se sont déjà rendus dans cette zone, vu la longueur de la frontière avec l'Irak" qui est de 384 km, a-t-il souligné.

"L'établissement d'une zone tampon n'est pas aussi facile que l'on serait tenté de le croire", relevait d'ailleurs dimanche le numéro deux de l'état-major turc, le général Hasan Işsiz, à un groupe de journalistes, ajoutant qu'un nombre substantiel de troupes devraient y être engagées.

Les députés turcs doivent voter mercredi après-midi une motion prolongeant pour un an l'autorisation donnée à l'armée de mener des opérations militaires en Irak contre le PKK.

L'actuel mandat a permis à l'armée turque d'effectuer des bombardements aériens dans cette région où sont retranchés, selon Ankara, 2.000 combattants du PKK, ainsi qu'une intervention terrestre de huit jours en février.

TRIBUNE DE GENÈVE

8 octobre 2008

La Turquie renouvelle l'autorisation de frappes contre le PKK en Irak

ANKARA, (AFP) -Le Parlement turc a renouvelé mercredi une autorisation donnée à l'armée de procéder à des frappes contre les bases des rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le nord de l'Irak, alors qu'une attaque attribuée au PKK a fait quatre morts en Turquie.

Sur 529 députés présents dans l'hémicycle au cours du vote, 511 ont soutenu la motion donnant au gouvernement le droit d'engager l'armée dans des opérations transfrontalières contre le PKK, 18 élus se sont opposés à ce texte.

Le vote du Parlement est intervenu quelques dizaines de minutes après une attaque menée par des membres présumés du PKK contre un car de police à Diyarbakir, la principale ville du Sud-Est anatolien, à la population en majorité kurde.

Le chauffeur et trois policiers ont péri dans le mitraillage du car, dans une zone d'habitations de la ville, et 15 policiers ont été blessés, selon

les services du gouverneur de Diyarbakir.

Cinq jours plus tôt, une autre attaque du PKK, contre une caserne toute proche de la frontière irakienne, avait fait 17 morts dans les rangs de l'armée, suscitant l'indignation de la population turque.

Vingt-cinq rebelles avaient été abattus dans les combats qui ont suivi, selon l'armée.

Le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan avait agité mardi la menace d'une nouvelle intervention terrestre contre les repaires du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak, frontalier de la Turquie.

Depuis la Finlande où il se trouve en visite, le chef de l'Etat Abdullah Gül a souligné que l'autorisation donnée à l'armée "concernerait des attaques ciblées, visant uniquement les terroristes" du PKK, sans nuire à la population locale.

L'actuel mandat donné à l'armée pour intervenir en Irak prend fin le 17 octobre. Celui-ci a permis à l'armée turque de mener depuis un an des raids aériens dans cette région où sont retranchés, selon Ankara, 2.000 combattants du PKK, ainsi qu'une intervention terrestre de huit



jours en février.

Les opérations se sont multipliées en Turquie depuis l'attaque de vendredi et l'état-major a annoncé mercredi que quatre rebelles avaient été tués mardi soir dans des combats à Sirkak (sud-est). Un sergent a en outre été tué dans des heurts à Dicle (sud-est), selon l'agence Anatolie.

Mercredi, M. Erdogan, tout en émettant des doutes sur son efficacité, a affirmé que son

gouvernement pourrait envisager la création d'une zone tampon en Irak, suggérée par l'opposition parlementaire, pour rendre la frontière entre les deux pays, longue de 384 km, plus hermétique aux infiltrations de rebelles.

Washington, allié de la Turquie dans l'Otan, est opposé à une intervention turque prolongée en Irak, qui pourrait déstabiliser la seule région du pays épargnée par les violences.

Selon un décompte publié sur le site Internet de l'état-major turc, 640 rebelles ont été tués

depuis janvier, dont 408 en Irak.

Jeudi, le Haut conseil de lutte anti-terroriste (TMYK), qui réunit les principaux dirigeants civils et militaires, doit se réunir pour éventuellement donner un feu vert à une demande des autorités militaires de renforcer leurs prérogatives contre le PKK.

Les forces de l'ordre réclament notamment une prolongation des gardes à vue et le droit de procéder à des perquisitions spontanées.

Ces mesures pourraient cependant déplaire

à l'Union européenne, à laquelle souhaite adhérer la Turquie. Ankara a adopté ces dernières années une vaste panoplie de réformes dans le domaine des droits de l'homme.

Considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis, le PKK mène depuis 1984 une lutte armée pour l'autonomie du Sud-Est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes. Le conflit a fait environ 44.000 morts, selon les chiffres officiels.

AFP

QUATRE REBELLES KURDES TUÉS EN IRAN (AGENCE)

TEHERAN, 11 oct 2008 (AFP) -

QUATRE REBELLES kurdes ont été tués dans des affrontements avec des membres du bassidj (milice islamiste) dans un village de la province de Kordestan, dans l'ouest de l'Iran, a rapporté samedi l'agence de presse officielle Irna.

Les affrontements ont eu lieu mardi soir dernier entre les rebelles du groupe indépendantiste kurde Pejak et les bassidji dans le village de Tijtj, près de la ville de Marivan, selon Irna.

Le bassidj (milice islamiste) est la milice islamique qui dépend des Gardiens de la révolution, l'armée d'élite du régime.

Ces dernières années, les affrontements meurtriers ont été fréquents entre les forces iraniennes et les militants du Pejak, qui opèrent depuis des bases

arrières du nord-est de l'Irak.

Le Pejak, acronyme du "Parti de la vie libre au Kurdistan", a des liens étroits avec les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), mouvement séparatiste basé en Turquie et dans le nord de l'Irak et qui mène une lutte armée contre Ankara depuis 1984.

L'Iran a été le théâtre ces dernières années d'une montée des violences dans plusieurs régions où vivent d'importantes minorités ethniques, comme le Sistan-Balouchistan (sud-est) ou le Khouzestan (sud-ouest), ainsi que dans les zones kurdes.

L'Iran accuse la Grande-Bretagne et les Etats-Unis d'être derrière ces violences.

rfi

11 octobre 2008

Ankara va discuter avec les Kurdes irakiens des rebelles du PKK

Avec notre correspondant à Istanbul, Jérôme Bastion

Au moment où l'état-major annonce de nouveaux bombardements sur des cibles de la rébellion kurde en Irak du nord, et où un attentat a été déjoué en plein centre d'Istanbul avec l'arrestation d'une femme transportant une dizaine de kilos d'explosifs, l'Etat turc se dit prêt à discuter directement avec l'administration kurde du nord de l'Irak pour coordonner la lutte contre la rébellion du PKK, qui a lancé ces dernières semaines des attaques sanglantes sur le territoire turc. Une première.

C'est un changement assez radical de stratégie, qui prouve que le gouvernement est prêt à jouer de la realpolitik, même sur des sujets extrêmement sensibles et toujours tabous. Il y a quelques jours à peine, l'opposition appelait d'ailleurs à déclarer l'administration locale kurde ennemie officielle de la Turquie, comme s'il ne restait plus qu'à lui déclarer la guerre...

Il y a 5 ans encore, Ankara promettait une réponse ferme y compris militaire à toute velléité de déclaration d'indépendance des Kurdes d'Irak. Et l'an dernier, les Turcs menaçaient d'intervenir physiquement contre le PKK sans le feu vert d'Erbil. Mais les temps ont changé, et il y a urgence.

Et surtout, comme le dit le Premier ministre

kurde Nerçivan Barzani, « sans nous parler, qu'est-ce que les Turcs peuvent attendre de nous? ». Réponse de ce diplomate turc : « Jusqu'à là, nous demandions aux Kurdes d'Irak de faire le nécessaire, mais maintenant, nous allons dialoguer et le faire ensemble ».

Confirmant cette nouvelle orientation, le président Gül a rappelé que la Turquie avait déjà, par le passé, pris langue avec les Kurdes irakiens, certes dans un autre contexte, les deux factions kurdes se battant entre elles à l'époque, mais aussi pour fermer le sanctuaire du PKK. Aujourd'hui, la stabilité de l'Irak passe par l'amitié et la coopération avec la Turquie, dit encore M. Gül. Le cadre de cette coopération devrait être bientôt connu.

Le Point

11 octobre 2008

La Turquie admet dialoguer avec les Kurdes irakiens

La Turquie a reconnu publiquement pour la première fois samedi qu'elle dialoguait avec le gouvernement kurde irakien afin de trouver des moyens de lutter contre les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Le président Abdullah Gül a confirmé les informations fournies par la télévision selon lesquelles Ankara cherchait à obtenir la coopération des autorités kurdes d'Irak dans son combat contre le PKK.

"Il n'y a rien de nouveau (...) Je pense que cela est juste et il n'y a rien de plus normal", a commenté Gül lors d'une conférence de presse.

Le chef de l'Etat turc a estimé que les actions menées par les rebelles du PKK constituaient

également un sujet de préoccupation pour les dirigeants kurdes irakiens.

La chaîne de télévision NTV avait rapporté qu'Ankara était disposé à engager des discussions avec les Kurdes irakiens, ajoutant que le président du gouvernement régional kurde, Nechirvan Barzani, pourrait être invité en Turquie pour participer à ces discussions.

Jusqu'à présent, la Turquie refusait de négocier avec les Kurdes irakiens leur reprochant de ne pas prendre les mesures nécessaires pour lutter contre le PKK.

Les pouvoirs publics et l'armée turcs font l'objet d'une pression grandissante en faveur d'une riposte aux attentats imputés au PKK qui

ont visé récemment les forces de l'ordre.

Cette déclaration de Gül intervient après une nouvelle attaque de l'aviation turque sur des positions des rebelles du Kurdistan dans la nuit de vendredi à samedi.

Trente-et-une cibles ont été touchées lors de ce raid aérien, a précisé l'état-major turc. L'attaque qui a duré environ une heure n'a pas fait de victime, selon un porte-parole du PKK.

A la demande du gouvernement, le Parlement a prorogé mercredi pour un an le mandat autorisant les forces gouvernementales à s'attaquer aux séparatistes kurdes retranchés en territoire irakien. (Reuters)

Herald Tribune
October 11-12, 2008

Christians flee Mosul over targeted killings

By Erica Goode and Suadad Al-Salhy

BAGHDAD: Hundreds of Christians are fleeing Mosul after a string of killings that appear to be singling out the minority group in the northern city, where many had sought refuge from persecution in other parts of Iraq.

Since late September, at least 11 and perhaps as many as 14 Christians have been killed in Mosul, according to government officials and humanitarian groups. The victims include a doctor, an engineer, two builders, two businessmen and a 15-year-old boy, who was gunned down in front of his home. In some cases, there have been two or three killings on the same day.

A pharmacist was killed Friday by a man who pretended to be an undercover police officer and asked for the pharmacist's identification card, said Khisroo Koran, deputy governor of Nineveh Province, of which Mosul is the capital.

The attacks coincide with an angry dispute over the Iraqi Parliament's decision to drop a provision of the provincial elections law that ensured political representation for Christians and other minorities, before passing the legislation on Sept. 24. To protest Parliament's action, Christians held demonstrations in Nineveh Province — where about 250,000 Christians live, about 50,000 of them in Mosul — and in Baghdad.

At one demonstration in Nineveh, protestors held up signs demanding the creation of a 19th province governed by Christians that would be linked to the semi-autonomous Kurdish region in the north, according to William Warda, an Iraqi journalist and chairman of the Hammurabi Human Rights Organization, based in Baghdad.

Although the motivation for the sudden increase in violence in Mosul is not known, several Iraqi Christian leaders said Friday that it could be tied to the protests and to the demands for an autonomous province.

Christians from all over Iraq have been emigrating in huge numbers, but of those who have remained in the country, many have fled to the Ninewa plain, which is dotted by ancient Assyrian-Chaldean villages that contain saints' graves and monasteries that were built during the time of Mohammed.

LE FIGARO 13 octobre 2008

Les chrétiens irakiens fuient les violences à Mossoul

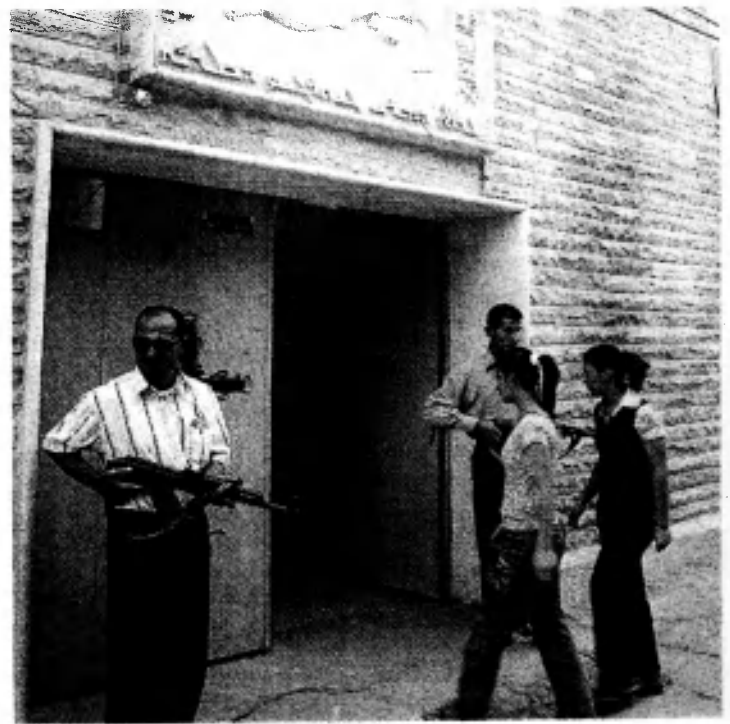
MOYEN ORIENT
Al-Qaida a lancé une nouvelle vague d'épuration religieuse dans le nord de l'Irak.



LES CHRÉTIENS d'Irak fuient à nouveau les tueries. Près d'un millier de familles, soit environ 5 000 personnes, viennent de quitter Mossoul pour se réfugier dans des villages de la région autonome du Kurdistan. Les déplacés quittent leur domicile pour échapper à la terreur orchestrée par la branche irakienne d'al-

Qaida. Au moins onze chrétiens ont été assassinés à Mossoul depuis le 28 septembre, alors que des maisons étaient détruites à l'explosif. Des groupes extrémistes sunnites sillonnent les quartiers chrétiens en partie désertés par des vagues successives de départ pour chasser les derniers d'entre eux. Les insurgés islamistes les accusent de soutenir les « envahisseurs croisés ». Ils ne se contentent plus de les racketter, mais multiplient les enlèvements et les attentats. « Nous sommes la cible d'une campagne de liquidations et de violences aux objectifs politiques », accuse M^r Louis Sako, l'un des responsables de l'Église chaldéenne en Irak, la principale Église de rite oriental d'Irak. Selon M^r Sako, le nombre de chrétiens se situait autour de 800 000 individus avant l'invasion américaine de mars 2003. La communauté a subi une hémorragie avec l'exil de 2 500 000 de fidèles partis en Syrie, en Turquie et, pour les plus chanceux, en Occident.

Ultime fief urbain d'al-Qaida, Mossoul est l'une des villes les plus



Les membres d'une milice chrétienne montent la garde à l'entrée de l'église Saint-Georges de Tel Askouf, dans la périphérie de Mossoul. Emad Matti/AP

dangereuses du pays. Considérée longtemps comme une ville multiculturelle composée d'une mosaïque ethnique et religieuse, elle est aujourd'hui une cité en proie à l'épuration religieuse. En février, son évêque chaldéen, M^r Faraj Rahou, a été kidnappé et retrouvé mort quelques semaines plus tard.

Le pape Benoît XVI a condamné hier ces violences. Les forces de sécurité irakiennes ont déployé des renforts dans les quartiers sensibles et placé les églises sous surveillance. Mais les chrétiens préfèrent se met-

tre à l'abri dans des localités protégées par les peshmergas, les soldats kurdes qui forment un premier rideau de protection. Dans les villages proches de Mossoul, les premières milices chrétiennes ont fait leur apparition. Elles ont notamment pris le contrôle de Tel Askouf, une bourgade du nord irakien où quelque 200 combattants chrétiens équipés et financés par les peshmergas assurent la sécurité d'une population en perpétuelle croissance avec l'arrivée des déplacés de Mossoul.

T.O. (avec AFP)

The New York Times October 8, 2008

Five Killed In Attack on Police Bus In Turkey

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey (Reuters) - Four police trainees and a civilian were killed and many other people were wounded in an attack on a police bus in southeast Turkey on Wednesday, the interior minister said.



Unidentified assailants armed with guns and explosives attacked the vehicle on a busy street on the outskirts of the city of Diyarbakir.

A spokesman of the illegal Kurdistan Workers' Party claimed responsibility for the attack.

"This incident happened in Diyarbakir inside the Turkish border this morning, where a Turkish patrol opened fire on PKK positions, so our fighters fired back and killed four of them and wounded more than 30," said PKK spokesman Ahmed Danees.

He said there were no casualties among PKK fighters. Kurdish separatist guerrillas frequently target Turkey's armed forces and police in the mainly Kurdish southeast.

Interior Minister Besir Atalay told reporters that up to 19 people were injured in the attack and some of them were in critical condition.

The attack came shortly before parliament in Ankara approved a government request to extend a mandate to launch military operations against PKK rebels based in

northern Iraq.

Television images showed bullet holes in the windows of the bus that was carrying the students. Attacks are rare in Diyarbakir, the largest city in the Kurdish southeast, where Turkish troops have a strong presence.

Anatolian state news agency said an unexploded grenade was found near the site.

Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan and the military have pledged to step up a campaign to crush the separatist PKK, including those based across the border in Iraq.

The authorities have come under increased pressure after a cross-border attack killed 17 soldiers on Friday, the deadliest against the Turkish military in a year. The outcome of the vote had been widely expected.

Turkey blames the PKK, considered a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union, for the deaths of more than 40,000 people since it launched its armed campaign for an ethnic Kurdish homeland in southeast Turkey in 1984.

The New York Times October 9, 2008

Turkey Authorizes Extension of Military Strikes in Iraq

By **SABRINA TAVERNISE**

ISTANBUL — Turkey's parliament voted overwhelmingly on Wednesday to extend by one year its authorization of military operations against Kurdish separatists in northern Iraq, keeping the door open to future strikes in the region.

The approval, by a vote of 497 to 18, had been largely expected, and occurred amid a flurry of attacks in Turkey's largely Kurdish southeast. Seventeen Turkish soldiers were killed in an attack on a border post late last week, and Turkey responded with several days of air strikes in Iraqi territory. A fresh attack on Wednesday killed five police officers and wounded 19 others on the outskirts of Diyarbakir in the southeast.

Turkey, a NATO member, has been fighting Kurdish separatists in its southeast since the 1980s, though the conflict has died down substantially in recent years. An attack on a border post last year set off a political confrontation between Turkey and Iraq, with Turkey conducting air strikes and a brief ground operation into Iraq.

A government mandate permitting the military to conduct operations outside Turkey was

due to expire Oct. 17.

Deputy Prime Minister Cemil Cicek said Turkey had conducted 29 air operations, several artillery strikes as well as land operations under the previous mandate.

Turkey contends that Iraq does not do enough to curb the rebels, known as the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or P.K.K., who hide in the mountains along its northern border. Iraq says far more reside in Turkey.

The tension is a delicate matter for the United States, which counts Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds among its closest allies in a troubled region. When Turkey made a brief ground incursion early this year, the Bush administration pressed for a withdrawal. The Turkish strikes, however, have not ruined relations with Iraq, and even opened fresh lines of diplomacy between the countries.

The Turkish president, Abdullah Gul, in a visit to Finland on Wednesday, said the extension of the mandate would be "used solely against the pinpointed targets of the terror organization," the state-run Anatolian News Agency reported.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said

after the vote that operations against the separatists would continue, but added that solving the problem was "also about diplomacy, politics, sociology and psychology."

Local elections are planned for March and Mr. Erdogan's party is working to win votes in the southeast, a region that has chosen Kurdish parties in the past.

The attack in Diyarbakir occurred on a bus carrying police officers in training on a highway into the city. The assailants used long-range rifles, Anatolian reported, and a grenade was thrown, but did not explode.

Turkey's interior minister, Besir Atalay, said in a live television broadcast that the authorities had not yet identified the assailants. "Our pain is grave," he said.

The Reuters news agency, quoting a P.K.K. spokesman, said the group took responsibility for the attack, but contended that it had been fired on first.

The attack is likely to increase the public pressure on Mr. Erdogan to act against the rebels.

TODAYS ZAMAN October 9, 2008

Counterterrorism board convenes following deadly attack

ERCAN YAVUZ, TODAY'S ZAMAN

The Higher Counterterrorism Board (TMYK) will convene today for the second time following an attack by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) on a military outpost last Friday, in which 17 Turkish soldiers died, to discuss a new strategy to fight terrorism in a meeting where the military is expected to demand amendments that might undo some of the democratization steps taken during the European Union process.



In today's meeting the military is expected to voice demands for a move reminiscent of the Emergency Rule Regions (OHAL), areas under martial law, implemented in the past, but the government is very cold to the idea, since studies and expert views indicate that the OHAL system actually had adverse consequences for the fight against terrorism, in addition to curbing rights and freedoms in the region. The government is not against listening to the complaints and concerns of the military, but it is determined

not to compromise on democratic rights and freedoms.

Meanwhile, opposition parties have also been offering their opinions on a new strategy. Main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Deniz Baykal, in his party's parliamentary group meeting on Tuesday, called for the establishment of a buffer zone along the northern Iraqi border to fend off terrorist infiltration and end attacks against military targets on Turkey's borders launched from northern Iraq.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, State Minister Cemil Çiçek, Foreign Minister Ali Babacan, Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül and Justice Minister Mehmet Ali Şahin will attend the meeting representing the government and Chief of General Staff Gen. İlker Başbuğ, Land Forces Commander Gen. Işık Koşaner, Gendarmerie Commander Gen. Atilla Işık, Deputy Chief of General Staff Gen. Hasan İğsız, National Police Chief Oğuz Kağan Köksal, National Intelligence Organization (MİT) Undersecretary Emre Taner and Prime Ministry Undersecretary Etkan Ala, as well as other relevant bureaucrats, will attend the meeting, which will convene at 2 p.m. today.

'Clean up first, set up buffer next'

Baykal noted once again that northern Iraq is the PKK's primary launch pad for its attacks

against Turkey, adding that this base had to be stopped at all costs. Baykal said Turkey has no way of becoming safe from terrorism unless it first crushes all PKK hideouts and camps in northern Iraq. He also said the US only fought al-Qaeda and did not even consider other armed groups in the area, including the PKK, terrorist organizations. Stressing that the US has to ensure full security in the region under the Geneva Convention, Baykal accused the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) government of failing to make sufficient demands of the US administration.

He said Turkey had to establish a buffer zone between Turkey and Iraq after cleaning up terrorist hideouts in the Hakurk, Zap and Kandil mountains of northern Iraq in a new military ground campaign. He also warned the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) to review its policies on terrorism.

MHP supports security zones and OHAL

The Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which has the third-largest number of seats in Parliament, has argued that Turkey needs to set up what it calls a "security zone" that would include both sides of Turkey's border with Iraq.

The MHP has also said the government should develop a new strategy to fight ethnic

separatism, including a nationwide campaign that includes every citizen in the country. It has asserted that Turkey should conduct a second ground operation in northern Iraq, where it should stay until terrorist elements in the area are entirely cleared out.

DTP calls for amnesty, end to operations

The DTP, perceived by both the CHP and MHP as an extension of the PKK, has argued that the only way for Turkey to solve the issue of terrorism lies in silencing all guns. The DTP often stresses that Turkey has failed to solve the problem by hunting for terrorists for the past 25 years and that democracy and stronger local governments in the region are ultimately the only way to solve the problem.

The Democratic Left Party (DSP), which has 13 seats in Parliament, has made the radical proposal of placing a wall along the Iraqi border to stop attacks from inside that country, similar to the security walls put up by Israel against Palestine and Iran against northern Iraq. The party has actually presented a draft of this idea to Parliament.



October 7, 2008

Bushra Juhi, Associated Press

A TOP SHIITE lawmaker urged parliament Monday to restore quotas for Christians and other small religious communities on ruling provincial councils that voters will select in balloting by Jan. 31.

Parliament had dropped the quota system, in place in six of Iraq's 18 provinces, citing a lack of census data on how many Christians, Yazidis and other religions were still in those areas.

But Christians, believed to comprise less than 3 percent of Iraq's 26 million people, complained that the change would effectively exclude them from representation in a political system where most people vote along religious lines.

"We do not want to immigrate to the U.S. or Britain - we want to stay in



Hadi Mizban / AP

Iraq and have our representatives in both the provincial councils and the legislature," the Rev. Louis al-Shabi said at a rally of dozens of Christians at a Chaldean church in Baghdad.

Deputy parliamentary speaker Khalid al-Attiyah, a Shiite, said that none of the political parties intends to deny Christians and others their rights and that the matter should be solved urgently.

Iraq lawmakers urged to restore quota system

"We hope that this issue is solved as soon as possible and an article is added in the law, giving a number of seats to the minorities," al-Attiyah said. "It should be for psychological reasons."

Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Christians have fled the country since the 2003 fall of Saddam Hussein, fearing attacks by both Sunni and Shiite religious extremists. Christian leaders say that assuring them of limited representation would help preserve the community and give it a stake in Iraq's future.

"We want to live in peace and want this representation because it refers to our existence," said a 37-year-old mother, who gave only her nickname, Um Noor. She was at the rally with her 5-year-old daughter.

U.S. officials have been anxious for provincial elections to help redress a political imbalance in many local governments since the last local balloting in January 2005. Many Sunnis boycotted the election, enabling Kurdish and Shiite religious parties to gain a disproportionate share of power.

Faraj al-Haidari, the head of Iraq's independent electoral commission, said it would be impossible to hold the vote this year as originally planned but that his commission will do its best to meet the Jan. 31 legal deadline. The date for the vote will be announced within two weeks, he said.

In preparation, the independent elections commission will start registering candidates and political blocs on Oct. 15, he said. Officials also need to update voter lists, design the ballot papers and other technicalities.

In a sign of improvements, authorities have torn down a concrete wall in the flash point neighborhood of Fadhil erected to separate Sunnis and Shiites. Volunteer guards manned a checkpoint Monday where the wall once stood.

Although a network of walls and checkpoints throughout Baghdad have helped cut down on sectarian killing, the barriers have drawn widespread complaints from Iraqis, who find them disruptive and an obstacle to moving conveniently through the city.

Also Monday, a plane carrying Iraq's Sunni parliamentary speaker, Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, was turned away by Iran. The Iranian news agency later said the problem was the type of plane and not with the speaker.

An aide to al-Mashhadani said Iran later offered an apology and said a private plane would be sent.

Christians, Yazidis continue to protest removal of Article 50

Call for minorities to be given representation grows stronger.

By The Kurdish Globe

Religious minorities steadfastly oppose the provincial council elections law, which they say ignores their rights.

For the second week, religious minorities, especially Yazidis and Christians, continue to oppose the article in the provincial council elections law that they say ignores their rights, and are calling for it to be reviewed.

Protesting Christians are demanding autonomy in their areas of residence. "We will demonstrate and protest until we achieve autonomous rights for Christians in our districts as well as fair representation for religious minorities, including Christians, in the provincial elections," said Jamil Zeito, head of the Seriaques-Chaldeans Public Council. He spoke about the demonstrations arranged by the council on October 1: "The protests and demonstrations will not stop till we accomplish our fair rights; ignoring the rights of minorities indicates incomplete democracy in Iraq."

Thousands of Christians took part in the demonstrations arranged in the districts of Ninewa Flaf that includes the towns of Al-Qush, Tel-Saqif, Qarqush, and Duhok city. The demonstrators waved flags and banners demanding "democracy for Iraq, autonomy for Christians, and the return of the article giving minorities representation within the provincial councils elections.

The Iraqi Council of Representatives (Parliament) passed the law of the provin-



cial council elections on September 24; but Article 50 guaranteeing seats for religious minorities was removed. Meanwhile, Yazidis, a Kurdish religious minority, also declared their protest to Iraqi Parliament's passing of the provincial council elections law and consider it against their rights. Statements have been released by cultural and religious organizations.

"On behalf of all Yazidis, we ask and insist on reinsert Article 50 of the provincial council elections law and reviewing it to ensure the equitable representation of Yazidis within the population of Ninewa (Mosul) province," read a statement by the Yazidis' Spiritual Council.

The statement indicated that the population of Yazidis in this province is 450,000 and they reside in Sinjar town, Shekhan, Telkif, and Ba'shiqa district.

The statement also requested that the UN and the Iraqi Republic Presidential Council stand with them to achieve their rights and consider Yazidis one of the components of the Iraqi people who deserve a role in reconstructing Iraq. Meanwhile, the protests forced the UN Mission in Iraq to send a delegation to meet with the Yazidis and Christians in Telkif town and to the Lalish Temple of Yazidis.

"The UN delegation met with the heads of administrative units. They discussed the

mechanisms of achieving the rights of religious minorities fairly after canceling Article 50," said Diman Sleman, head of the Telkif Provincial Council.

"Their meeting focused on calling for the representation of all the Iraqi people according to the population ratio in the provincial council elections law; the UN delegation confirmed this point as well." The UN's special envoy to Iraq, Staffan De Mistura, visited the Lalish Temple on October 6 and met with the Yazidis' Spiritual Council about this issue.

"We showed the importance of Yazidis' rights to the UN delegation according to the population ratio, because violating this issue means ignoring Yazidis and we will never accept that," said Tahsin Sa'ed Ali, the Ameer (leader) of Yazidis in Iraq and the world.

"The UN delegation showed their understanding and readiness to our position."

The deputy UN special envoy to Iraq, Andrea Kilmer, stated to journalists and reporters in Lalish that "the UN will do its best in order to accomplish these rights, and the issue has been discussed with a number of political parties in Baghdad; there is no objection."

Kilmer added that the UN is serious in guaranteeing the rights of religious minorities, especially Yazidis and Christians.

TheNational

: October 09, 2008
UAE

Tensions mount in Kurdish region

Nizar Latif, Foreign Correspondent

KHANAGIN, IRAQ // The streets are quieter now, the boiling tensions of a month ago have faded. But they have not disappeared entirely and remain, simmering away, not far beneath the surface.

In the late summer it looked as if the struggle for power between Kurds and Arabs in Khanaqin could break out into open warfare.

Kurdish soldiers, the Peshmerga, were controlling this city 150km north-east of Baghdad and the Iraqi government decided to send in its own troops to take charge. There was a standoff and fevered talk of Arab Iraqi troops going to war with Kurdish Iraqi troops – a nightmare scenario.

That was averted – or at least postponed – when Arab and Kurdish leaders reached a compromise that meant neither force stayed in the city, leaving security up to locally recruited police.

Having stepped back from the brink, however, many fundamental issues remain unresolved. The Kurdish

authorities insist Khanaqin is a Kurdish town and should be part of their autonomously run northern zone. Arab Iraqis in Baghdad insist it must remain part of the centrally administered area, and accuse the Kurds of discriminating against its Arab minorities.

In the centre of this nondescript town of some 150,000 people, a Kurdish resident who asked to be named only as Barshad said it would never submit to Baghdad's control.

"There are equal rights here between the Arabs and Kurds," Barshad, 32, said. "The Kurds are not trying to claim the whole of the city and push Arabs out."

"But we are the majority and do not want to be under the control of the Iraqi government. We are Kurdish, we have a different language and culture and we will stand against attempts by the government to control us here." A majority of city residents apparently share those sentiments. Kurds staged a large public demonstration against the Iraqi government's plans to send in



A Kurdish Peshmerga fighter guards his position in the north eastern town of Khanaqin 150km from Baghdad. Ali Yussef / AFP

troops. However, members of the city's Arab and Turkoman minorities said they felt under threat from the Kurds and were treated as second-class citizens. Few were prepared to talk openly about it, but in the Kahmez neighbourhood, Abu Ahmad Turkmani

said problems have been on the rise.

"There are only eight Turkomen households here now," he said.

"We've been pushed into a corner. Not openly but in quiet ways. I'm a trader and have a much harder time of things than Kurds in the same

business." The 45-year-old merchant claimed that while Kurds faced few obstructions from the local authorities, he was constantly facing hold-ups and inspections by the Asaiysh, the Kurdish secret police.

"I'm always getting them coming round to inspect my merchandise and they'll say it doesn't have the right permits, or is not valid, even though I source it from the same suppliers as the Kurds." In terms of business, he said, the situation was easier under

Saddam Hussein, who carried out a forcible migration policy in such towns as Khanaqin, pushing in Arabs and pushing out Kurds. Mr Turkmani said Kurds and Arabs were living in an unstable peace, pointing to a spate of bombings and murders.

"There are problems here between Arabs and Kurds," he said. "There are killings, there is a competition for power here.

"Years ago there were more Arabs but many of them have left. These are not problems between the ordinary citizens. It's something that comes from the political parties. All any of us want is to live quietly and peacefully and to have work."

He was adamant that Khanaqin, a city with valuable oil resources, should fall under the auspices of Baghdad, not the Kurd's administrative capital, Erbil.

"The minorities here want to be part of Iraq, not part of Kurdistan. Only with the central government will our rights get protected." Similar con-

tests are being played out in other towns along the frontiers between the Kurdish and Arab zones. There is no clear border and ethnically mixed towns, such as Khanaqin and Jalawla in Diyala province, are often volatile. Kirkuk is the most obvious, high-stakes example. It is the richest, biggest city under dispute. The United Nations has been drafted to come up with power-sharing recommendations and, although the issue of Kirkuk is still under consideration, the UN has said some smaller contested areas claimed by the Kurds should, in fact, stay outside of Kurdish Regional Government hands. In Khanaqin, the situation remains uneasy. And it is not without its unexpected complexities. One Kurdish resident, 25-year-old

Ahmed Abbas, said he was tired of Kurdish political parties trying to claim the area. "Arabs and Kurds have lived here without too many problems for years," he said.

"The Arabs haven't tried to take over the town but the Kurds have. I've lived in Khanaqin all my life and now that the Kurds out of Erbil want to take over they treat the local Kurds as second class. The Kurds have been forcing Arabs from their homes and that's not right. They just want a Kurdish monopoly."

Politicians were more interested in personal prestige than the real interests of locals, he said, insisting Khanaqin should be under the authority of Baghdad. "This is an Iraqi city, and our government is in the capital."

REUTERS

Iraq Kurdish leader warns Turkey over buffer zone

October 09, 2008 ANKARA, (Reuters) By Ibon Villedelaitia

- A senior Iraqi Kurdish official warned Turkey on Thursday against stationing troops inside Iraq and said such a move would not stop cross-border raids by Kurdish guerrillas.

New attacks on Turkish security forces by Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) rebels based in Iraq have strained ties between Baghdad and Ankara, which accuses its neighbour of not doing enough to combat the separatists.

Anger over PKK attacks is mounting in Turkey, and opposition parties are calling on the government to set up a buffer zone inside northern Iraq to prevent rebels from crossing the border.

"I think this (buffer zone) would not change the situation. This is also practically not easy because it's a mountainous region. Other alternatives should be found for the solution of the problem," Nechirvan Barzani, who heads the Iraqi Kurdish regional government, told Turkish state news agency Anatolian.

Turkey's parliament on Wednesday overwhelmingly approved a government request to give the military the green light to carry out operations against PKK bases in northern Iraq for another year, days after a cross-border attack killed 17 soldiers.

Another attack by the PKK that killed four police trainees and a civilian on the outskirts of the main city of Diyarbakir in Turkey's southeast has further put pressure on authorities.

Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan said on Wednesday it was up to the military to decide on the buffer zone, although both government and army have downplayed such a move, which would anger its allies, the United States and the European Union.

Turkish civilian and military leaders will meet on Thursday to discuss measures to take against the PKK, and Turkish newspapers said the option of a buffer zone would be included.

Opposition nationalist parties, and retired generals have been floating the idea

of setting up a buffer zone for at least two years, but have stepped up calls in recent days.

General Hasan Igsiz, deputy chief of Turkey's military staff, appeared to pour cold water on the issue.

"This is not as easy as some people think, and to implement it would not be as easy as some people think. We would have to hold the territory and we would lose mobility capability in the southeast," Igsiz told reporters on Sunday.

NATO member Turkey has staged almost daily airstrikes against suspected PKK bases in Iraq since the ambush on Friday, the worst single attack on the military in more than a year.

A similar attack on a border post last year led Turkey to launch a brief large scale land operation in Iraq.

Washington and Brussels are worried prolonged Turkish operations in northern Iraq would hurt the region.

Turkish President Abdullah Gul, in a visit to Finland on Wednesday, said the mandate would be used solely against "pinpointed targets" of the PKK.

Turkey blames the PKK, considered a terrorist organisation by the United States and the EU, for the deaths of more than 40,000 people since it launched its armed campaign for an ethnic Kurdish homeland in southeast Turkey in 1984.



KURDISHGL BE

09 October 2008

As its national pride is wounded, Turkey invariably points the finger at the Iraqi Kurds

By Bashdar Pusho Ismaeel
Globe Editorial

Turkish military and political leaders squarely accused the Iraqi Kurds of having an indirect hand in the latest deadly showdown between PKK rebels, reportedly resulting in the death of 15 Turkish soldiers and 23 Kurdish rebels, and countless wounded.

Perhaps it was the daring nature of the daytime attack near the border that shocked the Turkish hierarchy, pressing them into a customary strong-worded rhetoric. Since the inception of Kemalist ideology, the strong and respected Turkish army, as the protectorate of the republic and the symbol of Turkish nationalism, has posed an almost mystical identity. The idea of

such a flagrant attack by the much-loathed rebels was bound to rattle sentiments across Turkey.

However, as much as Turkey would hate to believe, let alone acknowledge, even the mystical might of the Turkish army has simply not been enough to counter an equally vibrant nationalist movement. The analogy is of a ferocious lion being bitten in broad

daylight by a much smaller-cat, who in the knowledge of being unable to ever directly counter such a beast, will nevertheless aim to strike psychological "bites" to the proud animal rather than ever serve it any great physical damage.

This attack, along with those of the past, has done just that. They have hurt Turkish pride and stoked national sentiments, forcing Turkey

to take decisive action as in the mass-invasion of this year, designed to send unwavering intent that the lion will fight back to uphold its honour and eminence, than belief they can kill the nemesis cat in the midst of a torrential landscape.

As mass funerals and patriotic outcries highlight the death of every

means of gaining goals, least of all terrorist acts, belong in the bygone era and are ultimately counter-productive and a prelude to tarnishing what may essentially be a justifiable cause. However, let's not forget that there is a mourning mother on each side.

While it is simply untrue to allege such direct Iraqi Kurdish sup-

port, it is slowly submerging Iraqi Kurdish sentiments into the conflict. The Iraqi Kurds rely heavily on Turkey, and in the modern era maintaining strong relationships with a monumental European neighbor has been much more important than aiding and abetting their ethnic brethren in a violent battle that the Iraqi Kurds would do well to avoid.

It is true the Iraqi Kurds could do more. But in the eyes of Turkey, this "more" is a deadly inconclusive inter-ethnic confrontation with the PKK, resulting in mass suffering for the local population and destabilization of the region. And for what? In order that Turkey will continue to treat the Kurdistan Regional Government with disrespect and utter discontent, let alone the simple virtue of acknowledgment and direct dialogue?

The time for realism has never been greater in the back of this latest shockwave across the region. On the eve of Turkish parliamentary vote to extend the one-year authorization for cross-border attacks, this attack was clearly designed to ensure that Turkey will not only authorize another extension but take graver disproportionate measures against their foes.

And this is exactly the focus and attention that not only the PKK

craves, but that it decisively needs to survive as a movement. As Turkey will feel forced to take more abrasive measures, this will eventually evoke a broader regional conflict that will serve no sides, but the sides of violence and bloodshed.

Turkey must act at the root of problems. Rather than addressing how to shoot down rebels in mountains, Turkey could seek ways of seeing them come down at their own will. Promises of greater southeastern development and more encompassing reforms may have been more than encouraging compared to past records, but in the context of today have been beset without any significant action.

Now is the time to stop further bloodshed and promote a feeling of brotherhood in Turkey. Let's not forget there are millions of disgruntled Kurds in Turkey, and only a minority in arms. Not all Kurds believe in confrontation or rejoice at Turkish deaths. The people want jobs, peace, and prosperity—they have long chosen Turkey and the prospects of the EU over unrealistic daydreams.

Bashdar Pusho Ismaeel Senior UK Editor



Military officers pray during a funeral ceremony in Istanbul for two Turkish soldiers killed in clashes with Kurdish separatist PKK rebels in southeast Turkey last week. AFP/File/Bulent Kilic

Turkish soldier, thousands of Kurdish deaths, the "debris" of the greater nationalist project, are ignored. Insurgent and violent

port such as to provide weapons, roads and hospitals, undeniably as the crisis grows in Northern Iraq and Turkey takes more abrasive

TODAYS ZAMAN

10 October 2008



Kurdish crisis was invited by the state

ETYEN MAHCUPYAN Columnists

The most common management strategy in times of transformation is inaction. We actually expect the reverse. We imagine that in such times the people who rule the country would predict the change, take the necessary measures and develop alternate plans for the future.

However, governments and managers are usually reluctant to deviate from the behavioral patterns that have kept their administration alive, made them successful and guaranteed a "risk-free" future. The approaching crisis is realized, but no new strategies are implemented because prior management practices have already coagulated into a stable culture; moves which threaten this stability are considered dangerous. If the culture of an institution was based on a sacred ideological framework, it becomes especially difficult to deal with change, and the system gradually marches towards an inevitable crisis.

You may read the above paragraph with reference to the investment banking crisis that broke out in the US. But if you live in Turkey, the very same paragraph also applies to the core of the Kurdish question. Recent provocations in border towns and the presence of Turkish nationalism against which Kurds are ready to take action should come as no surprise. In the end, this is a country where a journalist can say "We have to kill one Democratic Society Party (DTP) member for each soldier killed by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)" without any legal consequences. It is not possible to attribute the approaching crisis to the mentality of the judiciary

because the real problem lies elsewhere.

The recent history of the Kurdish question tells us precisely what is going on. It is an unbelievable story of a Kurdish identity which was recognized during Ottoman times, but abolished after the foundation of the republic. The indifference to Kurdish demands made during the first two decades of the new regime provoked Kurds to riot. After the government repressed these uprisings, all reflections of the Kurdish identity were banned. Movements opposing this ban were persecuted, and the PKK was reinforced through state actions.

The low intensity of the war that subsequently took place implies the ambivalence of Kurds toward the state and the PKK. The conflict has provided substantial gains for both sides whereas Kurds, particularly in southeastern Anatolia, have been subjected to a deliberate policy of discrimination. Since 1993 there has been a state policy of the evacuation of villages, the destruction of forests and livestock and the forced migration of about 1 million people.

However, throughout the last three decades, Turkey has been strongly impacted by global dynamics: it has become more integrated into the world and has made substantial progress in the EU accession process. You do not have to be a genius to see that, during this period of progress, the state policy toward Kurds would backfire. However, the official ideology in Turkey, which designates Turkishness as the only identity, has paralyzed advancement on the Kurdish issue. Because politicians expect action from the military to resolve this issue and because the military

has defined this sphere as part of its jurisdiction, the Kurdish question is considered a mere security issue.

However, social change is more complicated than this. The state's failure to find a political solution to the demand for a Kurdish identity results in the further politicization of this identity. In the meantime, Kurds have migrated to Western cities in the aftermath of forced displacement, and they now populate the ghettos of these cities. These new settlements mostly harbor young and unemployed people. Because of this, the issue, which used to be restricted to Kurds, has become a major crisis ready to explode and affect the entire country. Today, some Turks are ready to resort to racist actions against the Kurdish identity. In response, the state is desperate to take the psychological steps necessary to isolate this hatred.

The row that erupted on the Aegean shore will be repeated elsewhere in the country. Every day that goes by without resolution will make it more likely that Turkey will resort to a fascist policy of violence and coercion. The crisis has already arrived. However, we all know that ineptness and inaction are intrinsic to the state and will not go away. The state relies on its own inaction to elevate the crisis so that it can be used as a trump card to defeat its opponents.

The only way out is through the Justice and Development Party (AK Party). Kurds seeking peace should facilitate this rapprochement. The AK Party should not fear the responsibility of being the ruling party. The West must promote and encourage this rapprochement.

10 October 2008

TODAYS ZAMAN

Barzani says PKK attacks aim at hurting ties, calls for dialogue

TODAY'S ZAMAN

A senior official of the Iraqi Kurdish administration said yesterday that attacks by the outlawed Islamic militant group (PKK) on Kurdish Turkish forces were aimed at undermining recent steps to improve relations with Kurds, asserting that his administration was determined to prevent PKK activities in the region.

Turkey blames Kurds who control the administration of northern Iraq for tolerating and even supporting PKK activities in northern Iraq, where the terrorist group has bases. At a press conference yesterday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Burak Özügergin repeated Turkish concerns about the stance of the Iraqi Kurds towards the PKK and said Ankara expected the Kurdish administration to "do a lot more" to help Turkey's efforts against the PKK.

"It is a serious situation that the PKK launched an attack with heavy weaponry from the border with northern Iraq," Özügergin told reporters, referring to a PKK attack last week on a military outpost on the border that killed 17 soldiers. "The fact that this attack was carried out with weaponry found in northern Iraq shows that the PKK is able to continue its activities there."

Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani condemned the attack on the Aktütün outpost, and Kurdish officials dismissed accusations that the weaponry used in the attack was supplied by the Kurdish administration.

"Our stance towards the PKK is very clear and firm," said Nechirvan Barzani, Massoud Barzani's nephew and the prime minister of the autonomous Kurdish administration, to the Anatolia news agency on Thursday. "We are doing what we can to prevent the PKK from using areas in northern Iraq to attack neighboring countries."

Asked to comment on Turkey's expectations for concrete steps against the PKK, Barzani complained that Ankara had refused dialogue with the Kurdish administration. "How can we help when Turkey



refuses to talk to us? How can you ask someone for help when you have no dialogue with them?" he said. "They don't sit at the same table with us. How are we supposed to understand how we are supposed to help?"

Turkey refused to have formal talks with the Iraqi Kurdish administration reportedly in protest against their stance towards the PKK. In May however, two senior Turkish officials met with Nechirvan Barzani in Baghdad, the first formal contact with the Kurdish administration. Asked whether there has been contact with the Iraqi Kurds since the Aktütün attack, Özügergin said there had been no such contact lately.

Barzani said the PKK attacks on Turkey had no positive consequences and would instead complicate existing problems. He also said the Kurdish administration could not be held responsible for PKK attacks in Turkish territory.

The PKK is also believed to be behind an attack on a police bus that killed five in the southeastern province of Diyarbakir on Wednesday. The attacks have strained ties between Baghdad and Ankara, which accuses its neighbor of not doing enough to combat the terrorist group, and increased calls for

creation of a buffer zone inside northern Iraq to prevent PKK members from crossing the border.

Turkey's Parliament also overwhelmingly approved a government request to give the military a green light to carry out operations against PKK bases in northern Iraq for another year on Wednesday.

Barzani said cross-border operations or proposals for a buffer zone would not help towards a solution. "I think this [buffer zone] would not change the situation. This is also not easy on a practical level because it's a mountainous region. Other alternatives should be found to solve the problem," he said. He also warned this was a matter that would concern the territorial integrity of Iraq.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said on Wednesday it was up to the military to decide on a buffer zone, although both government and army have downplayed such a move, which would anger its allies, the US and the EU.

Opposition nationalist parties and retired generals have been floating the idea of setting up a buffer zone for at least two years but have stepped up calls in recent days.

Gen Hasan İğsız, deputy chief of Turkey's general staff, appeared to pour cold water on the issue. "This is not as easy as some people think, and to implement it would not be as easy as some people think. We would have to hold the territory and we would lose mobility capability in the Southeast," İğsız told reporters on Sunday.

NATO member Turkey has staged almost daily air strikes against suspected PKK bases in Iraq since the ambush on Friday, the worst single attack on the military in more than a year. A similar attack on a border post last year led Turkey to launch a brief, large-scale land operation in Iraq.

President Abdullah Gül, in a visit to Finland on Wednesday, said the mandate would be used solely against PKK targets pinpointed by the military.

Guardian

October 11 2008

Ankara's exercise in futility

Turkey has attacked Kurdish PKK bases in northern Iraq again, but the policy isn't working



Rani Alaaldin

The conflict between Turkey and the PKK shows no sign of being resolved and looks set to continue indefinitely. Clashes last weekend between Turkish forces and the Kurdish rebels – who have been fighting since 1970, initially for Kurdish independence and, now, greater Kurdish civil rights – resulted in casualties on both sides. Turkey responded by way of airstrikes on suspected PKK bases in northern Iraq. This tit-for-tat process continued on Wednesday with a PKK ambush on a police shuttle in south-east Turkey.

The question that should be asked, however, is whether the PKK justifies a Turkish "war on terror" policy. The European courts have already removed the PKK from the EU's terror list, therefore damaging Turkey's historic rhetoric that the PKK requires the same cross-border action used by her allies around the globe.

Nevertheless, it is imperative to recognise the thin veil that divides "old terrorism" and "new terrorism": the former is characterised by its local, nationalist goals that are sought with only

a limited level of violence. The latter form, however, was markedly on display by the atrocities of 9/11; it is amorphous in aim, devastatingly sophisticated, and transnational in capability.

The notorious past of the PKK cannot be overlooked and to suggest that the organisation no longer provides cause for concern would be recklessly complacent. That force is the only conceivable response to the PKK is not indisputable, however. Its aims are local and nationalistic. It does not operate, for example, around an ideology or agenda that seeks the destruction of Turks and the Turkish state, and it lacks the state patronage that would be needed in order to pose a sophisticated military threat. In stark contrast to its macabre operations in the 1990s, which effectively put Turkey's tourist industry under siege, the PKK, as statistics corroborate, now only targets the Turkish army and security forces.

The solution to long, sensitive, and complicated conflicts between states and non-state entities is by no means simple or easily determined. But closure of the UK-IRA conflict sug-

gests that it is most certainly achievable. The PKK has indicated a readiness to sit at the table, but Turkey remains uncompromising.

The conflict in its entirety also provides Turkey with a cross-border PKK problem. The PKK may indeed be operating from – or sheltering within – Iraqi Kurdistan with cautious acquiescence from the KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government). Turkey, however, refuses to negotiate with the regional governments. For example, it once dismissed an Iraqi-submitted diplomatic package on ending the PKK presence inside Iraq for its failure to provide any "immediate" redress (Turkey has failed to defeat the PKK presence both within, and across, its borders since the organisation's inception in 1970).

In the interim, Turkey is able to continue its cross-border strikes with passive support from the US. A nuclear-seeking Iran, the so-far-undeterrred Syrian and Iranian proxy war in Iraq and elsewhere, and increasing instability within Israel and around are all factors that make Turkey a pivotal pawn in the US administration's plans for the Middle East and thus turn the PKK

into a "common enemy". History, however, warns that the US-Turkish relationship is not entirely impervious, as in 2003 when Turkey refused territorial access to US forces and as was the case when the US imposed an arms embargo on Turkey in 1974.

Prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, by his own admission, dismisses the logic of incursions on the grounds that the PKK is an indigenous Turkish organisation and remains active within Turkey's own borders. However, Turkey has previously carried out 26 unsuccessful cross-

border deployments – a record which speaks for itself. Regardless, on Wednesday the Turkish parliament extended its mandate to launch attacks into Iraqi Kurdistan; Turkey expects further PKK attacks to follow and so futility is most likely to continue.

Kirkuk: Iraqi Kurdish journalist killed in drive-by shooting

REUTERS 

October 12, 2008 Reuters

Kirkuk, Iraq's border with Kurdistan region, — An Iraqi Kurdish journalist was killed on Friday in a drive-by shooting in the northern city of Kirkuk, police said.

Diyar Abbas, a stringer for independent news agency Aien, was shot by armed men in a car as he left the office of a Kirkuk artists' association on Friday evening.

Abbas, a Kurd, was 28.

Iraq is the world's most dangerous country for journalists. According to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, www.ekurd.net at least 135 journalists have been killed in the line of duty in Iraq since the U.S.-led liberation in 2003.

Soran Mama Hama, 23-year-old journalist, www.ekurd.net a reporter for the Kurdish-language magazine Leven, was shot in July 2008 in the Rasheed Awa village, where many Kurds were forced to relocate when Saddam Hussein sent thousands of Arabs into the oil-rich Kirkuk area to dilute the presence of Kurds and others.

The Committee to Protect Journalists is deeply concerned about the wave of threats against journalists in northern Iraq in the last few weeks. CPJ has documented an alarming number of cases recently, ranging from the murder of a journalist to an attack on another by a mob to at least three death threats

directed at journalists in less than a month.

The Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate, which has begun issuing periodic reports on threats against the press, noted that in the first six months of 2008 there were around 60 cases of killings, attacks, threats, and lawsuits against journalists in the region. In addition, at least one journalist has disappeared since March 2008, they said.

Kirkuk city is historically a Kurdish city and it lies just south border of the Kurdistan autonomous region, the population is a mix of majority Kurds and minority of Arabs, Christians and Turkmen. It lies 250 km northeast of Baghdad. Kurds have a strong cultural and emotional attachment to Kirkuk, which they call "the Kurdish Jerusalem".

Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution is related to the normalization of the situation in Kirkuk city and other disputed areas.

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.

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.

The Philadelphia Inquirer

12 October 2008

Dirndls, oom-pah, sausages? Oktoberfest in Iraq

By Bradley S. Klapper The Associated Press

Dirndl-clad waitresses deliver frothy beers, the brass band has the oom-pah music in full drive and there are sausages on the grill.

Welcome to Iraq? It may still be a far cry from the Oktoberfest party in Munich, Germany, that draws in 6 million people each year.

But Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq is looking to cash in on the relative peace it is enjoying with new investment and - despite the challenge of attracting foreigners to one of the world's most dangerous countries - perhaps the beginnings of a tourism industry. In Irbil, a city 350 kilometers (217 miles) north of Baghdad, German beer house owner Gunter Voelker wants to dispel the notion that Iraq isn't a holiday destination. In the north, at least, beer is bringing people together.

"It is good to have an area here in Iraq where we can make this festival in peace with friends," said Voelker, whose restaurant, the Deutscher Hof Irbil, ended its three-night celebration of the famed German beer festival early Sunday.

"We can make this festival with Iraqi people, Turkish people, Kurdish people, American people, German people, with (people from) all over the world in peace and in a real good mood."

He also had a special message for his compatriots, who as Europe's biggest travelers can contribute greatly to any nascent tourism industry.

"For my people from Germany," he said in German to AP Television News, "Iraq is not dangerous everywhere. There are good areas here. There is Kurdistan and the Kurdish region, where you can get around well, where you can get work done, where you are welcome, where the war stays away."

Iraq's Kurdistan region is already a travel destination for thousands of Iraqis, eager to leave behind the heat, dust and daily killings in their country's heartland for the green, tranquil mountains of the north.

Organized bus tours are possible as a result of the improved security that has taken hold in much of the country over the last year. A week in a modest hotel, with bus fare, costs about US\$160 per person, or just one-third of an average monthly Iraqi salary.

Arab visitors are still carefully screened in the semiautonomous region about the size of Switzerland and home to nearly 3.8 million people.

The relative calm, however, is even bringing in tourist operators from farther afield. France's Terre Entiere recently added Kurdistan to its catalog, billing the trip as a

Christian pilgrimage and timing it for the Christmas holidays. In June, the Long Beach, California-based agency Distant Horizons conducted a 12-day visit to the region.



"The north of Iraq is ready for (doing) business," said Raik Mingramm, a German who sells electrical machinery and one of a few dozen guests at the beer hall. "Maybe we can bring some money into the country."

Behind him, members of the brass band "Edelweiss" in their Lederhosen gear up for yet another rendition of "Ein Prosit der Gemuetlichkeit," a Munich standard that roughly translates to "Cheers to our well-being."

It's a strange song perhaps for a gathering of people in Iraq, where tens of thousands have died since the 2003 U.S. invasion. It is one, however, that those in the north are learning the words to.

Official: 3,000 Christians flee Iraq's Mosul

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Hundreds of terrified Christian families have fled Mosul to escape extremist attacks that have increased despite months of U.S. and Iraqi military operations to secure the northern Iraqi city, political and religious officials said Saturday. Some 3,000 Christians have fled the city over the past week alone in a "major displacement," said Duraid Mohammed Kashmoula, the governor of northern Iraq's Ninevah province. He said most have left for churches, monasteries and the homes of relatives in nearby Christian villages and towns.

"The Christians were subjected to abduction attempts and paid ransom, but now they are subjected to a killing campaign," Kashmoula said, adding he believed "al-Qaida" elements were to blame and called for a renewed drive to root them out.

Political and religious leaders interviewed said the change in tactics may reflect a desire on the part of extremists to forcibly evict all Christians from Iraq's third-largest city.

Earlier this week, Chaldean Archbishop Louis Sako said he was worried about what he termed a "campaign of killings and deportations against the Christian citizens in Mosul."

Mosul police have reported finding the bullet-riddled bodies of seven Christians in separate attacks this



month, the latest a day laborer found Wednesday.

Homes blown up

On Saturday, militants blew up three abandoned Christian homes in eastern Mosul, police said.

The Rev. Bolis Jacob, of Mosul's Mar Afram Church, said he was at a loss to understand the violence.

"We respect the Islamic religion and the Muslim clerics," he said. "We don't know under what religion's pretexts these terrorists work."

The violence occurs despite U.S.-Iraqi operations launched over the summer aimed at routing al-Qaida in Iraq and other insurgents from strongholds north of the capital.

The killings come as Christian

leaders are lobbying parliament to pass a law setting aside a number of seats for minorities, such as Christians, in upcoming provincial elections, fearing they could be further marginalized in the predominantly Muslim country.

In Mosul, where Christians have lived for some 1,800 years, a number of centuries-old churches still stand.

Joseph Jacob, a professor at Mosul University, said nearly 20,000 Christians lived in the city before the 2003 U.S. invasion. But more than half have left for neighboring towns, or new countries, he said.

Frequent targets

Islamic extremists have frequently targeted Christians since the inva-

sion, forcing tens of thousands to flee Iraq.

Attacks had tapered off amid a drastic decline in overall violence nationwide, but that appears to be changing with the deaths this month.

On Saturday, Bashir Azoz, 45, said he was forced to flee his home in the city's eastern Noor area after gunmen warned a neighbor the day before to leave or face death.

"Where is the government and its security forces as these crimes take place every day?" asked Azoz, who is now staying with his wife and three children in a monastery in the Christian-majority town of Qarqoush, east of Mosul.

Also

U.S. soldier killed: A U.S. soldier died Saturday when a bomb exploded near his vehicle outside Amarah, southeast of Baghdad. The U.S. military said it was withholding the soldier's name until it notified next of kin.

Journalist killed: A Kurdish journalist was gunned down in the northern city of Kirkuk, Iraqi police said. A New York-based journalists group said Saturday it was the 136th killing of a reporter since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq five years ago. Col. Taha al-Din of Kirkuk police said Diyar Abbas Ahmed, a journalist with Iraq Eye media, was assassinated Friday in the city center.



Kurdistan Regional Government

13 Oct. 2008

Kurdistan Region hosts Iraq's first US military band concert

Erbil, Kurdistan - Iraq (KRG.org) - The United States Army

First Armoured Division Band played their first ever military concert in Iraq in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Region. Last week the band spent three days performing their show called History of American Music throughout the Region, as part of efforts to strengthen and exchange cultural ties between the US and different parts of Iraq.

In discussing the ideas behind the performances, the US Army First Division said, "With better security in all of the northern provinces of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, we wanted to let some of our soldiers meet more of the Iraqi and share in their experiences."

US Major General Mark Hertling, Commander of Multi-National Division Iraq North and of the 1st Armoured Division, opened the groundbreaking event by thanking all those in the audience and the Kurdistan Region for developing the security and infrastructure that makes such events possible. He said, "Understanding the music of a culture helps you understand the people of that culture all the better, so hopefully this concert will be the start of many artistic exchanges between the people of this great country and the people of the United States."

Mr Falakaddin Kakeyi, the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) Minister of Culture, welcomed the performance by the soldier musicians. He said, "We strongly encourage such events and hope to continue building positive cultural relations between America and the Kurdistan Region. This concert was a great opportunity for the Kurdish people to be



introduced to different types of American music, and hopefully inspired many of our own musicians by presenting new instruments and styles."

The 28-piece band, consisting of wind, brass, guitar and percussion, played for the 700 strong audience at the KRG's Ministry of Culture building. The performance included a wide variety of music from Yankee Doodle to the Jungle Book, Dixie Jazz and West Side Story. After their ceremonial show in Erbil, the band continued on to play in Suleimaniyah and finished their tour in Dohuk.



[MONDAY TALK]

Jenkins: Turkish ultranationalists a major gift to the PKK

Gareth Jenkins, an analyst with the US-based Jamestown Foundation, has said that Turkey faces the danger of civil war even though most Turks and Kurds in the country do not desire it. He says this danger exists because some people from both groups want to provoke it.

Violent Turkish ultranationalists are a major gift to the [outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party] PKK. The security forces should remain on alert for any danger. This is a psychological war of propaganda," he said.

Parliament overwhelmingly voted last Wednesday to extend by one year its authorization of military operations against the PKK in northern Iraq, keeping the door open to future strikes in the region.

The approval came amid a flurry of attacks in the country's predominantly Kurdish Southeast. The deadliest attack in a year on the Aktütün Armed Forces (TSK), the attack on the Aktütün outpost near the border with Iraq on Oct. 3 claimed the lives of 17 soldiers, and Turkey responded with several days of air strikes in Iraqi territory.

A fresh attack on Wednesday killed five police officers and wounded 19 others in southeastern Diyarbakır province. For Monday Talk, Jenkins speaks about his impressions of the Southeast upon his return from Diyarbakır to Istanbul.

Have you heard anything different this time during your visit to Diyarbakır?

Yes. One of the problems is the people's attitude toward terrorism. There is a culture of denial on the part of a lot of PKK supporters when the PKK causes civilian casualties. They tend to say it is [the job of] Ergenekon [an alleged deep state-related ultranationalist group] and they try to shift responsibility. Before the Aktütün attack -- which was a huge propaganda victory for the PKK, unfortunately -- they argued that violence does not work and something else, like dialogue, must be tried. Compared to when I was there at the end of August, Diyarbakır residents think that Aktütün proves this policy of confrontation is not going anywhere. The PKK cannot be destroyed, so the government should open up to negotiations. This argument was a lot stronger now compared to at the end of August.

Is the PKK giving the message that they would continue with such attacks if the government does not enter into negotiations with them?

That is the impression I was getting. You also have to look at the timing of the attack. It came within a week of this motion going through Parliament. One of the arguments Turkey used was that they can destroy the PKK if they hit their bases in northern Iraq. The PKK is trying to show after one year of this mandate that Turkey has not succeeded and that this is what they are capable of doing.

Did the PKK expect Parliament not to pass the motion to hit PKK bases in northern Iraq?

I don't think so. It is a difficult situation for Turkey. There is public pressure to not engage in negotiations. If you talk to Turks on the street, they seek revenge. That's what you see when there are a lot of people being killed. That's the big difference compared to 1984, when the first PKK insurgency started. The coverage then was small, buried inside pages of newspapers. Now we have these traumatizing pictures of families and little children holding onto coffins of soldiers killed by the PKK. It would take an incredibly brave government to negotiate with the PKK.

What does this say about the PKK's real goal?

In theory, they have a number of demands: general amnesty, negotiations and political rights. A lot of them genuinely believe that [imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah] Öcalan can be released. If he were released, of course, he would be dead in two days



because someone would assassinate him. It is not a realistic demand but it does not mean that they do not believe in it. And for cultural and political rights, considering the political culture in Turkey, it is difficult for the government because that's what the PKK is demanding. Opponents would say the government is making concessions to terrorism. Another problem in Turkey is that the whole political spectrum has been moved to a more nationalist one. I am not a fan of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), but it is very difficult for the AK Party because a lot of its voters are nationalistic, too.

Was the attack in Diyarbakır another show of force by the PKK?

Diyarbakır is one of the most heavily policed cities in Turkey. The attack took place in the center of the city, in broad daylight. One of the problems with governments in the world -- of course, the worst one is the Bush administration -- is that they do not understand that a fight against terrorism is as much a war of propaganda and psychology as military. By doing this in Diyarbakır, the PKK demonstrates that the state is not succeeding.

Have the cross-border operations not weakened the PKK?

There is no question that those operations weakened the PKK. Their fighters are younger and not as well trained as before. But they still recruit people easily. If you look at what happened at Aktütün, they must have been preparing for a long time. Normally, they operate in small units of eight to 10 people. This time they had several hundred working together. They also have heavy weaponry and move it to the top of the mountains. It was deliberately chosen to make a statement.

Were they based in Turkey?

Some were based in Turkey, but most came from northern Iraq. The cross-border raids weakened them and reduced their abilities. They honestly thought America would never let the Turks come across, but the Americans did let Turkey go on cross-border raids. Psychologically, that was a big blow.

The General Staff has said around 700 PKK members were killed in the cross-border raids. What would you say about this figure?

It is impossible to be precise. You're dropping a bomb from an F-16. If there is a building there, you can see whether it was destroyed or not. How do you tell how many people are hiding in a cave? The military has the ability to pick up on PKK communication but it is impossible to be precise. The number is an exaggeration. The military also knows that they are engaged in psychological warfare and are therefore trying to say something to both the PKK and the Turkish public.

The Turkish public has increasingly been questioning the military's abilities and intentions -- especially after revelations

of neglect prior to the PKK ambush in Dağlica last year. What do you think of all this?

One of the problems in Turkey is that it is very

difficult to ask questions and criticize. When there is a problem in the military, it becomes hard to distinguish if it was a mistake or not. I don't ever remember the military accepting a mistake even though they make mistakes. There is a lot of intelligence coming in about planned PKK attacks, but a lot of them do not happen. When one of those reports comes in, they do not act on it. Then when it takes place, of course, everybody jumps in and complains. I do not believe conspiracies theories that suggest the military deliberately allows its members to be killed.

How do you interpret the vulnerability of the Aktütün military post to attacks?

It is a combination of incompetence and arrogance. The military might have thought that there is no problem, that it can defend it. There probably is reluctance to admit that they could not defend it.

Do you think the military has realized this is not a problem that can be solved only by military means?

There has always been an awareness of this. One of the problems is that if you talk to most Turks in western Turkey, you will find that most of them have never been east of Ankara. It includes people in the government and some deputies. The military has had an institutional presence in the area for about 20 years. They know the problems in the area better than any other institution in the country. In the 1990s, the military would say that something else has to be done but it is the government's responsibility. So they would pass the ball between the two. But even with this government, we haven't seen any comprehensive approach to the problem.

What do you think of the government's recent announcement to complete the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) to bring socio-economic relief to the area?

There have been positive changes in the GAP region compared to 15 or 20 years ago. But many of the poorest areas in the region are outside the GAP region, including Iğdır, Ağrı and Hakkari. One of the problems is implementation. You are going to get results in 20 years. There is often reluctance to invest in anything that does not bring results before the next election. It is not just the current government; this is true of all the parties in the last 20 years.

The current government received more support in the Southeast during last year's elections than the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP). How do you put this into context?

The DTP is very close to the PKK. When you look at the DTP's leadership, they are quite secular and this is because the PKK was originally a Marxist organization. Most of the people in the Southeast are religious. A combination of Kurdishness and a feeling of piety motivate most of the people there. A lot of the religious people won't vote for the DTP anyway because they don't see them as proper Muslims. At the grassroots level, a lot of the DTP supporters are religious. But the AK Party has the advantage of having a religious identity that appeals to voters in the Southeast. When it comes to the DTP, it is seen as having ties to the Marxist -- and therefore atheist -- PKK, although the PKK has been trying to reposition itself. Many also voted for the AK Party for economic reasons. Macroeconomic performance improved under its rule.

What has the PKK been doing to reposition itself from its Marxist past?

For example, they called for a cease-fire during Eid al-Fitr [the first three days following Ramadan, a month of fasting].

They are trying to show that they are good Muslims. Some of the people in the PKK ranks are quite observant Muslims even though the leadership is not.

What do you expect will happen in the Southeast during the local elections to be held in March of next year?

When you go to the Southeast, it is difficult to find

someone without an immediate or distant relative who has been up in the mountains and joined the PKK. At the same time, they don't necessarily support the PKK. The PKK has done some appalling things to the civilians in the southeast. People want some kind of negotiated solution. What the PKK has done over the years is allow the Kurdish public to now be able to ask why they cannot speak their own language. The AK Party is now in power and there are incentives to support it, but they are going to be judged in the elections on how things are going in the economy. Today's Southeast is different than the one of 20 years ago. There are some rich people there and there are upscale shopping centers, but many southeasterners are poor. Some of the people there were evacuated from their villages either by the PKK or by the state and they are very poor. When it comes to the election, the DTP is quite strong -- especially in Diyarbakir.

What would be the government's best move against the PKK?

When the Ergenekon investigation started, there was a wonderful opportunity for the state to show that if someone does something wrong, we go after them and punish them. The state could look into at least some of the unsolved murders in the Southeast that took place in the 1990s. And the message to the people by the state would be that we are looking after you. That would have been a huge blow to the PKK. But it was a lost opportunity.

Why?

The Ergenekon investigation has become too politi-

cized. Ergenekon members should be punished for what they did and what they planned to do. No less and no more. Ergenekon is a byproduct of the deep state, not the deep state itself. The people in the Southeast ask why the government cares so much about one gang which targeted the AK Party and so little about the many gangs that killed Kurds in the 1990s. One Turkish nationalist slogan about Turkey says "Love it or leave it." The people of the Southeast feel that they were abandoned years ago. But they are also part of this country.

What gestures by the government would be helpful?

If [Prime Minister Recep Tayyip] Erdoğan goes to the Southeast and delivers a speech -- which he has successfully done in the past in Diyarbakir -- and repeats again that Kurds and Turks should live in brotherhood, that would be a move the PKK would not desire. One of the achievements of the Turkish society is that there haven't been many ethnic clashes. Also, to be fair to the government, we had some attacks on Kurds in some Turkish towns following the Dağlica attack last year and the government reacted very quickly. But recent events in Altınova showed there is potential for a serious conflict with young men, particularly poor young men, who are angry at Kurds. But as long as people understand the danger, there is hope.

What is the danger, exactly?

The danger is one of civil war. Most people in Turkey desire no such thing, but those that do indirectly aid the PKK. The security forces should be

aware of the danger. This is a war of propaganda. Erdoğan says that "the blood will not stay on the ground." OK, but if he combines that with a visit to the Southeast and convinces the Kurds that they are equal citizens, this could make a difference. Turks also need to start traveling to the east, go there on vacation, learn about the situation and help the economy there. It is not solely a military struggle.

Gareth Jenkins

Gareth Jenkins is a journalist, analyst, writer and editor based in Istanbul, specializing in the military, political Islam and terrorism. Currently an analyst with the US-based Jamestown Foundation, he regularly writes for the Eurasia Daily Monitor and prepares an annual report on the Turkish financial sector for the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). He is also a correspondent for The Sunday Times of the UK and the Al Ahram weekly, writing news articles, features and commentaries on Turkish and regional politics.

His latest book, "Political Islam in Turkey: Running West, Heading East?" was published in the US in May and came out in Europe last month. He also wrote books including "Context and Circumstance: The Turkish Military and Politics" (2001), "Turkish Stocks and Bonds" (1995).

STARS AND STRIPES

October 14, 2008

Kirkuk reconstruction team sees progress, but fears cutbacks

Expected reduction of military contingent next month leaves future unsettled

By Heath Druzin, Stars and Stripes

KIRKUK, Iraq — Howard Keegan sweeps into a dusty street market in the late afternoon heat and is immediately mobbed by shoppers, storeowners and local press eager to talk about their daily struggles in this oil-rich, ethnically diverse northern city.

It's a security nightmare for his detail of soldiers, but Keegan, walking without body armor to make locals more comfortable, stays and listens as the crowd swells.

"I'm 40 years old and myself, I feel a stranger in this country. This used to be a close-knit country," said Yousif Nashi, a Kurdish fabric shop owner bemoaning friction between different ethnic groups.

A gruff former Marine with wild eyebrows and a steely stare, Keegan leads the Kirkuk Provincial Reconstruction Team that is working to quell tensions between Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen and other groups and bring disparate political parties to a long-sought agreement on local elections.

Many think a solution to Kirkuk's political problems is a key to greater stability in Iraq, but the future of Keegan's mission is as unsettled as that of the divided province. The team has been told that next month,



Heath Druzin / S&S

Howard Keegan, leader of the Kirkuk Provincial Reconstruction Team, talks to Kirkuk residents while paying a visit to a Kurdish market in the city.

as part of a larger troop reduction in Iraq, its military contingent will be drastically reduced, scheduled to go from roughly 30 soldiers to fewer than 10. It's a cut many team members fear will hamper the mission and threaten fragile social and political gains at a critical time in the province.

The team is made up of 34 civilians, many from the State Department, and around 30 reserve soldiers from the Missouri-based

418th Civil Affairs Battalion who provide security and expertise. The team's near-daily visit to its headquarters in the provincial government building downtown requires more than a dozen soldiers for security. Going downtown, walking the streets and talking to people is key to reconciliation, Keegan said.

"If we don't continually get out (in town) it's hard for us to know what the people are after," he said.

"[The cuts] couldn't come at a worse time."

Many other team members echo that view, worrying that the cuts could lead to a reversal after months of progress.

In the past eight months, commerce has picked up, and Kirkuk residents have made strides in standing up civil society and local government, said Lt. Col. David Menegen, the PRT's deputy team leader and ranking military officer. Menegen, a New York City reservist with the 353rd Civil Affairs Battalion, said the job of the PRT should eventually be put entirely in Iraqi hands, but that now is too soon for such a big cut.

"I'm supportive of downsizing the PRT at some point, but it's the time frame," he said. "It's a process, not an event."

Aside from governance, team members also work to improve local infrastructure, healthcare, media, agriculture, local police and courts — all projects that will need to be trimmed with the cutbacks, said Jeffrey Ashley, the team's U.S. Agency for International Development representative.

"We are working in close cooperation with [Multi National Corps-Iraq and Multi-National Force-Iraq]

to ensure that all PRTs have the support they need to operate," a statement from U.S. Embassy officials with the Office of Provincial Affairs read. "We are reconfiguring our resources to be in a position to continue to provide the type of support we are committed to giving the Iraqi government during this transition period."

A key place

Because of its unsettled ethnic tensions, Kirkuk was left out of a sweeping election law passed late last month by the Iraqi Parliament that paved the way for local elections in the rest of the country. The province, however, will form a multi-ethnic committee tasked with coming up with election recommendations by March 31. Also put on the backburner is a proposed referendum to decide whether Kirkuk becomes part of semi-autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan or remains under the control of the central government.

The Kirkuk PRT is deeply enmeshed in the negotiations to form the advisory committee, working with all the ethnic groups to come to political agreement.

With its vast oil reserves, Kirkuk has outsized importance in the country. In a recent New York Times interview, Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama mentioned the province's unsettled

political situation in assessing progress in Iraq. As Kirkuk goes, many think, so goes Iraq.

Most days, Keegan and his governance ride in a heavily defended military convoy to the dilapidated, heavily guarded provincial government building in downtown Kirkuk. They meet with members of the provincial government, who hold the key to the region's future. "We have faced difficulties in Kirkuk," said Tahseen Kahea, a Turkmen Provincial Council member. "We as Turkmen need justice, we need rights for our people, we need democracy for our people, we need freedom for our people."

The ethnic groups have long memories. Some invoke abuses dating back to the Ottoman Empire in laying out their claims to power.

"It's like getting the most complicated stereo system on Earth and the instructions are in Japanese," Keegan said.

'Before, it was easy'

Both Iraqis and team members say efforts by the PRT have helped the province make strides in easing ethnic tensions and coming to a political agreement but stark challenges still remain.

Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen remain distrustful of each other. Even the dominant Kurds squabble between two political parties — the

Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and Kurdistan Democratic Party — and some Kurdish residents are fed up with both factions.

The American presence is the only thing keeping the fragile peace between Kirkuk's ethnic groups, said Araz Ahmed, a Kirkuk resident working as a translator for the reconstruction team.

"Disaster, civil war," he said when asked what the consequences would be if the Americans pulled out.

In a bare-walled office in the government building, Sheik Hussein Aly Saleh, an Arab provincial council member, tells PRT governance representative Kris Graf that he is working for all the people of Kirkuk but that Arabs have been shut out by the majority Kurds.

"American officials and military leaders are cooperating with the Kurds," he said.

The fact that Saleh was talking at all is an improvement. Since Keegan arrived 18 months ago, Arab and Turkmen political parties ended long boycotts of the provincial government.

Keegan said there was much more animosity between ethnic groups and toward U.S. forces when he arrived in Kirkuk.

"There's a growing feeling in the community for everyone to work ... together," he said.

Away from the halls of power, lies a sprawling, crumbling city, where sewage seeps into the streets and many are impoverished. The people here seem most interested in basics, like education and security. One 14-year-old boy riding his bike through the market Keegan visited said he recently dropped out of school and went to work full time because his father was killed.

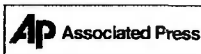
A teacher who wished to remain anonymous because of security concerns, said Kirkuk is plagued by substandard schools.

"The education in this city is insufficient," she said. "The politicians should sit with the people and educate them."

Shop owner Ako Hassan, who is Kurdish, is pessimistic about reconciliation in the province.

"The Kurds are willing to live with other ethnicities but the Turks and Arabs are against us," he said.

In a way, getting along was easier under Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, said Tahseen Kahea, the Turkmen provincial representative. "Before, it was easy; there was a regime and we were the opposition. Now it is very different for us."



Iraqi Kurdish leader holds first direct talks in 4 years with Turkish delegation in Baghdad

By Sinan Salaheddin, Associated Press | October 15, 2008

BAGHDAD - Turkish officials yesterday pressed the president of Iraq's Kurdish enclave to crack down on the Kurdish separatists launching cross-border attacks from their Iraqi mountain sanctuaries.

It was the first direct talks in four years between Turkey and Massoud Barzani, president of the three-province semiautonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq.

The meeting was held as Turkish media reported that five Turkish soldiers were wounded yesterday in a Kurdish guerrilla attack on a military convoy in southeastern Turkey.

Turkey has been pressing the Iraqi Kurdish administration to cut supply lines in its territory used by the guerrillas of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which has fought for autonomy in Turkey, and to arrest and hand over its leaders who live across the border in Iraq.

Turkish pressure has increased since PKK rebels killed 17 Turkish soldiers on the Turkey-Iraq border earlier this month. Iraqi Kurdish authorities condemned the Oct. 3 attack, but the Turks are demanding more.

Iraqi Kurds, which have their own police and armed force, are largely responsible for security in the northern areas of the country where the PKK operates, rather than US or Iraqi troops.

Yesterday's meeting took place in the US-protected Green Zone and lasted about two hours, Turkey's state-run Anatolia news agency reported.

Turkey's special envoy for Iraq, Murat Ozelik, was quoted as saying the talks were held in a "positive atmosphere" and that Turkey had communicated to the other side its suggestions concerning security. A spokesman for the self-ruled Kurdish region in northern Iraq, Fouad Hussein, said earlier that the meeting was being held to discuss bilateral relations. He did not elaborate.

The PKK, branded a terrorist group by the United States and the European Union, has fought for autonomy in southeastern Turkey since 1984. Tens of thousands of people have been killed.

Iraqi Kurdish forces known as peshmergas had fought against the PKK along-

side Turkish troops during incursions in 1990s. Turkey is again trying to win support of Iraqi Kurds against the rebels.

Barzani and other Iraqi Kurdish officials met regularly with Turkish officials during former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's regime. Relations cooled after the 2003 US-led invasion as Kurdish national aspirations skyrocketed.



Iraqi Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani meets Murad Ozelik, chief of Iraqi affairs at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Baghdad.



TURQUIE: 5 SUSPECTS INCULPÉS POUR UNE ATTAQUE CONTRE UN CAR DE POLICE

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 13 oct 2008 (AFP) –

CINQ PERSONNES ont été inculpées lundi par une Cour d'assises de Diyarbakir (sud-est de la Turquie) pour leur participation présumée à une attaque contre un autocar de police dans cette ville qui a coûté la vie à cinq personnes la semaine dernière.

Trois suspects ont été accusés d'"appartenance à une organisation terroriste et de participation à une action armée à son nom" et les deux autres pour "soutien à une organisation terroriste", a constaté un correspondant de l'AFP.

Deux autres suspects ont été libérés par la Cour.

Les cinq hommes ont été écroués dans une prison de cette ville peuplée majoritairement de Kurdes.

Un autre personne interpellée par la police était toujours interrogée et devait être déferée devant un tribunal tandis que le "cerveau" de l'attaque est en fuite, a-t-on précisé de source judiciaire.

Les rebelles séparatistes kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) ont revendiqué dimanche la responsabilité de cette attaque survenue le 8 octobre.

Les assaillants avaient mitraillé le véhicule avec des armes à longue portée alors que celui-ci traversait une zone d'habitations, tuant le chauffeur et quatre policiers.



LE CHEF DU PKK : ANKARA VEUT ENTRAINER LE KURDISTAN IRAKIEN DANS UNE GUERRE

MONTS QANDIL (Irak), 14 oct 2008 (AFP) –

LE COMMANDANT militaire des séparatistes kurdes du PKK, Murat Karayilan, a accusé mardi la Turquie, lors d'une interview à l'AFP depuis sa cachette dans les Monts Qandil, de chercher à entraîner le Kurdistan irakien dans une guerre.

"La Turquie veut entraîner le Kurdistan irakien dans une guerre en accusant (les Kurdes, ndr) d'accueillir sur leur territoire des membres du PKK", le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, a déclaré Murat Karayilan à l'AFP.

L'interview s'est déroulée dans les Monts Qandil, le long de la frontière avec la Turquie, où les rebelles du PKK possèdent des bases arrière.

"Mais l'objectif principal de cette accusation est d'affaiblir les positions des Kurdes dans leur différend avec Bagdad", a ajouté le responsable kurde.

"C'est la poursuite des bombardements sur nos positions dans les montagnes et la politique visant à semer la zizanie entre le Kurdistan irakien et Bagdad (...) qui nous ont poussés à réagir, ce qui constitue de la légitime défense", a défendu M. Karayilan.

Le leader rebelle a accusé la Turquie de "conspirer" contre les Kurdes sur l'épineuse question de Kirkouk, une ville du nord de l'Irak à majorité kurde, source de désaccord entre le Kurdistan irakien et Bagdad depuis la chute de Saddam Hussein en 2003.

Ces déclarations du chef militaire du PKK interviennent alors que le président de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien, Massoud Barzani, se trouve à Bagdad pour rencontrer des hauts responsables turcs pour la première fois depuis le début de la récente crise entre la Turquie et le PKK.

"Il y aura une rencontre entre Massoud Barzani et une délégation dirigée par un représentant du Premier ministre turc", Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a déclaré à l'AFP Fouad Hussein, directeur de cabinet du président kurde.

Les rebelles du PKK ont attaqué le 3 octobre une caserne turque près de la frontière irakienne, tuant 17 soldats, et 25 rebelles ont été tués dans les combats qui ont suivi, selon l'armée turque.

En représailles, l'aviation turque a plusieurs fois bombardé les bases du PKK en territoire irakien.

Ce regain de tension entre le PKK et la Turquie intervient alors que le Parlement turc a renouvelé la semaine dernière l'autorisation donnée à l'armée de procéder à des frappes contre les bases des rebelles kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak.

Ce mandat a permis à l'armée turque d'effectuer depuis un an des raids aériens dans cette région où sont retranchés, selon Ankara, 2.000 combattants du PKK, ainsi qu'une intervention terrestre de huit jours en février.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, l'Irak, l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis, mène depuis 1984 une lutte armée pour l'autonomie du Sud-Est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes, qui a fait plusieurs dizaines de milliers de morts. Les rebelles kurdes sont notamment basés en Irak d'où ils procèdent à des incursions en territoire turc.

Selon M. Karayilan, l'attaque du 3 octobre contre une caserne turque constituait "une réponse aux pressions répétées de la Turquie sur le nord du Kurdistan", la partie du territoire à majorité kurde située en Turquie.

"Notre présence en profondeur sur le territoire turc (...) est un message clair lancé à la Turquie et à quiconque que nous sommes dans le Kurdistan de Turquie, et non le Kurdistan irakien, et nous sommes liés aux habitants en Turquie", a affirmé le responsable kurde.

"Nous préférierions résoudre ces problèmes par le dialogue, mais la Turquie ne nous écoute pas et nous avons le droit de les attaquer pour nous défendre", a-t-il ajouté.

Il nié par ailleurs que le PKK soit fourni en armes par la Russie, la Syrie, l'Irak ou le Kurdistan irakien.



MALIKI ET BARZANI RENCONTRENT UNE DÉLÉGATION TURQUE POUR DISCUTER DU PKK

BAGDAD, 14 oct 2008 (AFP) –

LE PRESIDENT de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien, Massoud Barzani, a rencontré mardi à Bagdad un émissaire d'Ankara, après les récents raids aériens de l'aviation turque sur le nord de l'Irak, où sont retranchés les rebelles kurdes du PKK.

M. Barzani et le Premier ministre irakien Nouri al-Maliki ont eu deux heures d'entretiens avec la délégation turque menée par Murat Ozçelik, représentant spécial de la diplomatie turque pour l'Irak, consacrés aux rebelles séparatistes kurdes du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Il s'agit de la première rencontre entre des responsables kurdes irakiens et turcs depuis le début de la nouvelle crise entre Ankara et le PKK.

Le PKK a attaqué le 3 octobre une caserne turque près de la frontière irakienne, tuant 17 soldats. Vingt-cinq rebelles ont été tués dans les combats qui ont suivi, selon l'armée, et l'aviation turque a bombardé à plusieurs reprises les positions du PKK en territoire irakien.

"L'Irak ressent de la colère et du ressentiment contre le PKK pour ses activités terroristes depuis le territoire irakien contre la Turquie voisine", a assuré le Premier ministre irakien dans un communiqué après la rencontre.

Le directeur de cabinet de Massoud Barzani, Fouad Hussein, a lui qualifié l'entretien de "positif et constructif".

Pour sa part, le haut responsable turc a estimé que la Turquie et l'Irak devaient prendre "des mesures pour répondre à la menace posée par l'organisation terroriste du PKK".

Considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, l'UE et les Etats-Unis, le PKK mène depuis 1984 une lutte armée pour l'autonomie du sud-est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes.

Le PKK effectue des incursions depuis le nord de l'Irak et procède à des attaques en Turquie.

Le commandant militaire du PKK, Murat Karayilan, a de son côté accusé Ankara de chercher à entraîner le Kurdistan irakien dans une "guerre".

"La Turquie veut entraîner le Kurdistan irakien dans une guerre en accusant (les Kurdes) d'accueillir sur leur territoire des membres du PKK", a déclaré Murat Karayilan à l'AFP lors d'une interview réalisée lundi dans les Monts Qandil, le long de la frontière avec la Turquie, où les rebelles du PKK possèdent des bases arrière.

"Mais l'objectif principal de cette accusation est d'affaiblir les positions des Kurdes dans leur différend avec Bagdad", a ajouté le responsable kurde.

"C'est la poursuite des bombardements sur nos positions dans les montagnes et la politique visant à semer la zizanie entre le Kurdistan irakien et Bagdad (...) qui nous ont poussés à réagir, ce qui constitue de la légitime défense", a avancé M. Karayilan.

Le leader rebelle a notamment accusé la Turquie de "conspirer" contre les Kurdes sur l'épineuse question de Kirkouk, une ville du nord de l'Irak à majorité kurde, source de désaccord entre le Kurdistan irakien et Bagdad depuis la

chute de Saddam Hussein en 2003.

"Nous préférierions résoudre ces problèmes par le dialogue, mais la Turquie ne nous écoute pas et nous avons le droit de les attaquer pour nous défendre", a-t-il ajouté.

Ce regain de tension entre le PKK et la Turquie intervient alors que le Parle-

ment turc a renouvelé la semaine dernière l'autorisation de procéder à des frappes contre les bases des rebelles kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak.

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AFP

TURQUIE: 5 SOLDATS BLESSÉS DANS UNE EMBUSCADE DES REBELLES KURDES

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 14 oct 2008 (AFP)

CINQ SOLDATS turcs ont été blessés, dont un grièvement, mardi dans une embuscade des rebelles kurdes visant un convoi militaire dans l'est de la Turquie, a-t-on indiqué de source de sécurité locale.

L'incident s'est produit près du petit village d'Aktülük de la province de Tunceli, l'un des théâtres de la lutte armée du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit), a-t-on précisé de même source.

La Turquie est confrontée ses dernières semaines à un regain des violences après que les rebelles kurdes eurent attaqué le 3 octobre une caserne à la frontière irakienne, dans le sud-est turc, tuant 17 soldats.

Le 8 octobre, des hommes armés ont attaqué un car de police à Diyarbakir, principale ville du sud-est à majorité kurde, tuant quatre policiers et leur chauffeur. Le PKK a revendiqué cette attaque.

Depuis, l'aviation turque a attaqué à plusieurs reprises les bases arrières des rebelles dans le nord de l'Irak.

Considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, l'UE et les Etats-Unis, le PKK mène depuis 1984 une lutte armée pour l'autonomie du Sud-Est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes. Le conflit a fait environ 44.000 morts, selon les chiffres officiels.

Le Monde 15 octobre 2008

L'ARMÉE TURQUE LANCE UNE ACTION JUDICIAIRE APRÈS DES FUITES DANS LA PRESSE

ANKARA. (AFP)

Le chef d'état-major de l'armée turque a affirmé mercredi avoir lancé des poursuites contre les auteurs d'articles indiquant que l'armée a négligé des renseignements qui auraient pu lui permettre d'éviter une attaque meurtrière des rebelles kurdes et contre leurs sources.

"Nous avons lancé une action légale contre ceux qui ont divulgué des informations secrètes et contre ceux qui les ont utilisées", a déclaré le général Ilker Basbug à Balikesir (nord-ouest) lors d'une allocution retransmise par les télévisions.

"Ceux qui prétendent encore que les actions de l'organisation terroriste sont des succès ont la responsabilité de chaque goutte de sang versé, maintenant et dans l'avenir", a poursuivi l'officier, visiblement en colère.

Ses déclarations interviennent au lendemain de la publication par le quotidien libéral Taraf d'un article affirmant que l'état-major avait reçu des renseignements sur un projet d'attaque des rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK)



contre une caserne proche de la frontière irakienne, avant que celle-ci n'aie lieu.

L'assaut, mené le 3 octobre avec le soutien d'armes lourdes depuis l'Irak, a coûté la vie à 17 soldats.

Taraf affirme que l'armée avait connaissance

des déplacements d'un groupe de 80 rebelles à travers les montagnes du nord de l'Irak en direction de la frontière turque un mois avant l'assaut.

Cinq jours avant l'attaque, un rapport a prévenu que les rebelles transportaient des pièces d'artillerie anti-aérienne et des renseignements fournis par les Etats-Unis quelques heures avant l'opération montraient les rebelles installant leurs armes et minant les alentours, selon Taraf.

Le général Basbug a indiqué que l'armée menait une enquête interne sur l'attaque et annoncerait ses résultats une fois achevée.

Considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, l'UE et les Etats-Unis, le PKK mène depuis 1984 une lutte armée pour l'autonomie du sud-est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes. Il dispose de plusieurs camps dans le nord de l'Irak. Le conflit a fait quelque 44.000 morts.

AFP

TURQUIE: 5 SOLDATS, 5 REBELLES KURDES TUÉS DANS DES COMBATS

ANKARA, 16 oct 2008 (AFP) -

CINQ SOLDATS turcs et cinq rebelles séparatistes kurdes ont été tués dans des combats survenus mercredi dans différents secteurs du sud-est de la Turquie, a annoncé jeudi l'état-major des armées turques sur son site internet.

Quatre soldats, membres d'une force de commandos, ont été tués dans des heurts avec des membres du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) dans la localité de Kavakli, dans la province de Hakkari, frontalière de l'Irak et de l'Iran, souligne un communiqué en ligne.

Une autre soldat a été tué et 15 autres légèrement blessés, dont un général de brigade, lors du crash accidentel d'un hélicoptère qui se rendait en renfort dans la zone de combats, précise-t-il.

Cinq rebelles ont été abattus par ailleurs par les forces de sécurité dans des accrochages à Semdinli et Sirnak, zones proches de la frontière irakienne, ajoute l'armée turque.

La Turquie est confrontée ses dernières semaines à un regain de violences après que les rebelles kurdes ont attaqué le 3 octobre une caserne à la frontière irakienne, tuant 17 soldats.

Le 8 octobre, des hommes armés ont attaqué un car de police à Diyarbakir, principale ville du sud-est à majorité kurde, tuant quatre policiers et leur chauffeur. Le PKK a revendiqué cette attaque.

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Ankara veut impliquer les Kurdes irakiens dans la lutte contre le PKK

ISTANBUL

CORRESPONDANCE

C'est un changement de stratégie. Deux émissaires turcs de haut rang ont rencontré, mardi 14 octobre, à Bagdad, le président de l'entité autonome kurde d'Irak, Massoud Barzani, pour évoquer avec lui la présence des rebelles du Parti des travailleurs kurdes (PKK) dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak. Jusqu'ici, Ankara ne s'adressait, officiellement, qu'au pouvoir central, par souci de « l'intégrité de l'Irak ». En coulisse, les contacts sont pris depuis plusieurs mois. L'envoyé du gouvernement turc, Murat Özcelik, a qualifié de « positif » son entretien avec le chef kurde, laissant entrevoir une possible coopération.

Cette rencontre, saluée par la diplomatie américaine, pourrait en annoncer d'autres. Le président de la République turque, Abdullah Gül, devrait, selon la presse, se rendre prochainement en Irak. Au moins à Bagdad et peut-être à Erbil, le fief des Kurdes. Mais les récentes attaques de



commandos du PKK, à Diyarbakir contre un car de police et à Aktütin contre une caserne militaire, ont poussé le gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan à réagir pour tenter d'arrêter l'hémorragie.

Cinq soldats turcs ont encore été tués, jeudi, lors d'une embuscade tendue par des séparatistes kurdes dans la province d'Hak-

kari, près de la frontière. Les partis nationalistes pressent M. Erdogan de répondre par la fermeté. Le leader du Parti d'action nationaliste (MHP) a accusé M. Erdogan d'être « manipulé » par M. Barzani, « le cerveau de la terreur », selon lui. « La Turquie a la responsabilité de montrer aux autorités d'Irak du Nord que leur soutien au PKK peut

avoir des conséquences fâcheuses, a déclaré pour sa part le député du Parti républicain du peuple (CHP, kémaliste), Sukru Elekdag. Il faut forcer Barzani à choisir entre la Turquie et le PKK. »

Le Parlement turc a voté, début octobre, une résolution permettant à l'armée de mener des opérations transfrontalières contre « l'organisation terroriste ». Mais le gouvernement se passerait bien d'une nouvelle crise avec ses voisins kurdes. Avec l'Irak et la Syrie, la coopération anti-PKK est devenue plus efficace. Reste à convaincre Massoud Barzani d'en faire de même. Dans les années 1990, ses peshmergas luttèrent déjà aux côtés des Turcs contre le PKK retranché dans les montagnes. Aujourd'hui, il lui est reproché de fermer les yeux sur la présence de quelque 2 000 combattants dans cette région et de leur permettre d'utiliser les hôpitaux ou les routes. Et puis les intérêts économiques turcs au Kurdistan irakien incitent Ankara à la prudence. ■

GUILLAUME PERRIER



ANALYSE Le PKK reste un facteur de déstabilisation

DU 16 AU 22 OCTOBRE 2008

Les rebelles kurdes de Turquie, retranchés dans le nord de l'Irak, entravent le processus de normalisation de la région.

Compte tenu de sa position géostratégique au Moyen-Orient et de sa relative proximité du Caucase via le Kurdistan turc, le Kurdistan est sans nul doute une région hautement stratégique pour les grandes puissances internationales. En cette période où celles-ci s'efforcent de restructurer la politique et l'économie mondiales, le mouvement nationaliste kurde est désorienté. Sous l'impulsion des chefs politiques du Kurdistan irakien et grâce à l'adoption d'une position commune, le statut politique des Kurdes d'Irak s'est amélioré. Mais la division et la confusion qui règnent au sein des mouvements politiques kurdes des pays limitrophes [Turquie, Syrie et Iran] ont pour effet non seulement de réduire les chances d'obtenir des droits nationaux kurdes, mais aussi de menacer les futurs gains politiques du Kurdistan irakien, en particulier sur la question de Kirkouk. [Cette ville riche

en pétrole est située à la limite séparant le Kurdistan du reste de l'Irak ; pour les dirigeants kurdes, c'est la capitale du Kurdistan fédéral de demain.] Le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan [PKK, mouvement séparatiste kurde de Tur-

quie] constitue le principal facteur de confusion. Il est impératif de s'en occuper.

Le procès Ergenekon [réseau turc ultranationaliste et proche de l'armée, accusé d'avoir fomenté des projets putschistes], qui se déroule en Turquie, n'a pas révélé seulement les illégalités commises par l'Etat turc, mais aussi les liens du PKK avec ce réseau. La mise en accusation d'Ergenekon par le procureur d'Istanbul jette de sérieux doutes sur les véritables intentions du PKK et sur ses relations avec Ergenekon. Ce dernier n'est pas un

gang financé par des militaires de haut rang, comme le proclament la plupart des observateurs. C'est une survivance de Teskilati Mahsusa, une organisation clandestine créée par le Comité union et progrès [CUP, nom officiel du parti des Jeunes-Turcs, à la tête de l'Empire ottoman entre

1908 et 1918], qui a joué un rôle majeur dans le génocide arménien en 1915 et dans la formation et le développement du mouvement kémaliste au lendemain de la Première Guerre mondiale.

Le PKK est un cheval de Troie. La Turquie s'en est servi pour diviser le mouvement national kurde durant les années 1980 – puis, des années 1990 à aujourd'hui, pour déstabiliser le Kurdistan irakien. L'incorporation de Kirkouk à la région kurde serait un tournant historique pour le mouvement national kurde, mais Istanbul et beaucoup d'autres multiplient pressions et menaces pour l'empêcher. Le seul atout sérieux dont la Turquie dispose pour déstabiliser le Kurdistan irakien est le PKK, et elle s'en sert. La déstabilisation militaire et politique du Kurdistan irakien et la menace constante d'une invasion turque gênent les Kurdes d'Irak dans leur bataille pour récupérer Kirkouk. Il faut bien comprendre que, sans un règlement du problème du PKK, l'incorporation de Kirkouk dans la région kurde aura du mal à se faire. L'importance que les chefs politiques du Kurdistan irakien accordent à la question de Kirkouk doit se refléter dans leur attitude vis-à-vis du PKK. Il est urgent qu'ils privent la Turquie de cet atout.

Kurdish Globe (extraits), Erbil

TURQUIE

Ankara fait fausse route avec les Kurdes irakiens

Après les attaques menées par le PKK à partir du territoire irakien, les Turcs s'en prennent au gouvernement autonome kurde. Une erreur qu'il faut corriger rapidement, estime le journal *Radikal*.

RADIKAL (extraits)

Istanbul

La récente attaque du PKK qui a fait, le 3 octobre, 17 morts dans les rangs de l'armée turque, à l'instar de celle qui a lieu en octobre 2007 [12 soldats tués], n'a pas été lancée depuis un territoire situé sous contrôle de l'administration kurde du nord de l'Irak mais bien à partir du "PKKland". Certes, cette zone se situe effectivement à l'intérieur des frontières de l'Irak, c'est-à-dire dans une région qui, selon la Constitution irakienne, relève en principe de la responsabilité de l'"administration régionale du Kurdistan"; mais tout cela est très théorique. En effet, cette zone est en réalité sous la coupe du PKK, de même que certains autres secteurs situés du côté turc de la frontière, où se trouvait précisément le poste militaire turc d'Aktütün visé par l'attaque du 3 octobre. D'autres zones rurales montagneuses à l'intérieur du pays sont également concernées. Les attaques du PKK dans la région turque du Dersim [située à 200 km de la frontière irakienne] pourraient-elles ainsi être le fait de "terroristes" venus d'Irak ? Le PKK [fondé en 1978] a-t-il été créé dans le nord de l'Irak par le gouvernement autonome kurde [établi en 2006] ?

La vérité, c'est que ni le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK), de Massoud Barzani, ni l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), de l'actuel président de la République irakienne, Jalal Talabani, ne contrôlent cette région des monts Qandil. Cela s'explique par les particularités géographiques de cette zone très escarpée aux confins de la Turquie, de l'Irak et de l'Iran. Cette situation n'est d'ailleurs pas sans rappeler le cas de la frontière afghano-pakistanaise, que les forces de l'OTAN ont depuis plusieurs années tant de mal à contrôler. Certes, cela ne diminue en rien la nécessité pour la Turquie de prendre des mesures militaires pour assurer sa sécurité. Pour autant, il faut en finir avec cette habitude de ne pas vouloir regarder la réalité en face. Ne succombons pas à la facilité consistant à accuser l'administration kurde du nord de l'Irak de tous les maux liés au PKK et à la question kurde.

Deniz Baykal, le leader de l'opposition kémaliste, pour qui faire de

■ Raids

"Depuis le 3 octobre, l'armée turque a effectué sept raids aériens contre des membres du PKK retranchés dans le nord de l'Irak. Selon l'armée, la dernière opération a été menée contre une base du PKK située dans la région montagneuse de Zap, où se trouvent des dirigeants de haut niveau", rapporte le Turkish Daily News. "Le 8 octobre, le Parlement a renouvelé l'autorisation accordée au gouvernement d'engager l'armée dans des opérations transfrontalières contre le PKK."



la politique consiste à répéter à l'envi des généralités en les caricaturant, estime que le gouvernement kurde autonome du nord de l'Irak est responsable des attaques du PKK et qu'il faut "en finir avec cette situation". Il reproche également au gouvernement turc d'entretenir des contacts avec Talabani et avec Barzani, et accuse au passage les Américains d'être coresponsables des attaques du PKK. Mais que faut-il donc faire, alors ? Selon certaines voix, la Turquie devrait entrer en Irak et s'installer durablement dans cette région contrôlée par le PKK. Voilà une formule qui aurait toutes les chances de se transformer en borborygme pour la Turquie. En effet, dans un tel scénario, celle-ci serait contrainte d'empêcher les attaques venant de ce no man's land tout en entrant dans une relation de plus en plus conflictuelle avec le gouvernement kurde autonome, avec les Irakiens en général, mais surtout avec Washington. Une politique aussi irrationnelle permettrait-elle vraiment d'en finir avec le terrorisme ?

Dans ces conditions, on ne peut analyser en dehors du contexte géopolitique régional le moment choisi par le PKK pour attaquer aussi violemment la Turquie. Le but de la dernière attaque du PKK était d'empêcher un rapprochement entre Ankara

et Erbil [siège de l'administration kurde d'Irak]. Il faut donc prendre des mesures allant précisément en sens inverse de ce que recherche le PKK. Pour cela, il faut tout d'abord intensifier les contacts avec le gouvernement kurde du nord de l'Irak. En effet, parmi les responsables politiques qui entretiennent des relations suivies avec l'Irak, il n'y a plus guère que les dirigeants turcs qui n'aient pas encore mis les pieds à Erbil. Il faut en finir avec ce manège inutile des rendez-vous à Bagdad ou à Londres avec les dirigeants kurdes irakiens et renforcer l'axe direct entre Ankara et Erbil. Corollaire de cela, il convient de soigner nos relations avec les Etats-Unis, en particulier maintenant que la tendance semble indiquer une victoire de Barack Obama à l'élection présidentielle de novembre prochain. Ces initiatives et d'autres seront indispensables pour rompre avec les pratiques du passé.

Cengiz Candar

LE FIGARO 20 octobre 2008

La justice turque à l'épreuve d'Ergenekon

TURQUIE

Le procès de ce réseau armé clandestin, accusé d'avoir tenté de renverser le gouvernement, s'ouvre aujourd'hui près d'Istanbul.

Istanbul

À 50 KM d'Istanbul, au bord de la mer de Marmara, les restaurateurs et les hôteliers de Silivri sont sur le pont pour accueillir une clientèle d'arrière-saison inhabituelle. Surtout ceux qui bénéficient d'un bon emplacement, à côté de la prison. À partir d'aujourd'hui, le procès du réseau dit « Ergenekon », accusé d'avoir préparé le terrain au renversement du gouvernement islam-conservateur, s'ouvrira dans la station balnéaire, entre les murs de l'établissement pénitentiaire. Un acte d'accusation de 2 455 pages, 86 accusés, une enquête ponctuée de rebondissements et d'emballements médiatiques.

Le démantèlement de cette cellule clandestine tient la Turquie en haleine. À présent, la justice va devoir se livrer à un exercice d'équilibriste pour éviter que ce procès ne tourne au règlement de compte politique ou ne s'enlise.

L'affaire Ergenekon, du nom du berceau mythique du peuple turc, a démarré avec la découverte d'une cache d'armes dans un faubourg stambouliote en juin 2007. Puis les vagues d'arrestations se sont succédées. Sur le banc des prévenus, on retrouve

des figures du milieu ultranationaliste : d'anciens militaires, des journalistes, Dogu Perinçek, le leader du Parti des travailleurs,

Veli Küçük, un général à la retraite impliqué dans le scandale de Susurluk qui, en 1996, a révélé les liens entre la mafia et l'armée, Kemal Kerinçsiz, l'avocat d'extrême droite à l'origine des poursuites judiciaires contre les intellectuels évoquant le génocide arménien.

Jugés pour « incitation à l'insurrection armée », appartenant à une organisation terroriste ou « encouragement à organiser un coup d'État », ils encourent des peines allant de cinq ans de prison à la perpétuité. Selon l'acte d'accusation, Ergenekon serait également responsable de l'assassinat d'un juge du Conseil d'État en 2006 et projetait d'assassiner de nombreuses personnalités, comme Orhan Pamuk, Prix Nobel de littérature.

Tractations entre le gouvernement et l'armée

Si le procès suscite une telle attente dans l'opinion publique, c'est qu'Ergenekon constitue sans aucun doute une ramification de l'« État profond ». Cette nébuleuse criminelle, active au sein de l'armée et de la classe politique avec des ramifications mafieuses, est accusée d'avoir commis, au nom de la défense de l'État, des dizaines de meurtres et

d'exactions. « Soit la justice met au jour un large complot et abat le fonctionnement de l'« État profond », souligne l'éditorialiste Mehmet Ali Birand. Soit le procès dure des années, sans résultat concret, et provoque une grande frustration. »

Avant l'ouverture du procès, l'enquête a suscité des réserves. L'AKP au pouvoir n'en profite-t-il pas pour intimider ses ennemis ou pour détourner l'attention du

public ? En septembre, une actrice et un célèbre manager transsexuel ont ainsi été interpellés puis relâchés sans qu'aucune charge ne soit retenue. Ce dernier coup de filet s'est produit en pleine affaire Deniz Feneri, du nom d'une association caritative turque qui vient d'être condamnée en Allemagne pour détournement de fonds. L'opposition accuse le parti de M. Erdogan d'avoir des liens avec cette orga-

nisation musulmane. Le 1^{er} juillet, des arrestations spectaculaires dans plusieurs villes avaient précédé de quelques heures le réquisitoire du procureur général qui réclamait la fermeture de l'AKP pour « activités antilais ». »

De plus, de nombreux signaux laissent à penser que l'affaire Ergenekon fait l'objet de tractations entre le gouvernement et l'état-major. En août, le

nouveau chef des armées a dépêché en prison un émissaire auprès des généraux Eruygur et Tolon, soupçonnés d'être les têtes pensantes du réseau. Une « visite humanitaire » fortement critiquée en Turquie. Leur acte d'accusation n'a toujours pas été rendu public.

Pour l'avocat Ümit Kardas, ancien juge militaire, ceux qui espèrent de ce procès un renforcement de la démocratie risquent fort d'être déçus : « Il ne s'agit que d'un pas car l'AKP utilise ce procès pour assurer sa continuité politique. » Et les 86 accusés ne sont que la partie émergée de l'organisation terroriste. « La structure se trouve dans l'armée, mais jusqu'où pourra-t-on remonter dans la hiérarchie ? » En Turquie, on ne compte plus les procès qui se sont perdus dans les méandres de la justice.

LAURE MARCHAND



Le procès du réseau Ergenekon, avec ses 86 accusés, va se dérouler dans un bâtiment spécial de la prison de Silivri, près d'Istanbul. Ozer/AFP

REUTERS

Turkey's military rejects criticism over PKK attacks

October 15, 2008 By Zerin Elici (Reuters)

BALIKESIR, Turkey - Turkey's powerful generals rejected on Wednesday any blame for the deaths of 17 soldiers in a raid by Kurdish rebels, as rare public criticism of the army mounted following a series of attacks.

The armed forces, one of the country's most respected institutions and which sees itself as the main guardian of modern Turkey, have been virtually beyond criticism for years.

But its competence has been questioned in some media since attacks this month by the separatist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which also piled pressure on the government to adopt more heavy-handed tactics.

Turkish media has reported the army had intelligence warnings before a PKK ambush on an outpost in Aktutun near the Iraqi border this month that killed 17 soldiers, the deadliest single attack on the military for more than a year.

General Ilker Basbug, chief of Turkey's armed forces, denied the army had received any information beforehand and said it was conducting an investigation into the attack.

"Turkish Armed Forces have full self-confidence," a visibly angry Basbug told a news conference, accompanied by the commanders of the land, air, sea and gendarmerie forces.

"An investigation has started and like any institution which has self-confidence we will make the results of that probe public," said Basbug, who took command in August.

"GOLFING GENERAL"

The military has also been criticised since Turkish media published photos of General Aydogan Babaoglu, the air force commander, playing golf at a Medi-



terranean resort while reports of the Aktutun attack emerged and funerals were held.

Some Turkish newspapers have dubbed Babaoglu the "golfing general", and even *Hurriyet*, Turkey's leading newspaper, has called his behaviour unacceptable.

Basbug, who was in the western city of Balikesir during a military ceremony, said: "(Media) attacks of recent days do nothing but increase the determination of the Turkish Armed Forces."

Turkey's military has unseated four elected governments in the last 50 years and exerts vast influence behind the scenes.

But in recent years it has seen its influence diminish somewhat, due to reforms imposed by the European Union, which Turkey aspires to join.

The Aktutun attack again raised questions whether military might was enough to end the violence in impoverished, predominantly Kurdish southeast Turkey, which has long complained of discrimination and lack of investment.

Turkish officials on Tuesday met with senior Iraqi Kurdish leaders in Baghdad, including Masoud Barzani, president of Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, to discuss ways of curbing attacks by Iraq-based PKK rebels on Turkish security forces.

The Turkish government has in the past shunned direct contacts with Iraqi Kurdish leaders. The military and hard-line nationalists in Turkey dub Barzani a "supporter of terror".

The PKK, which has a large presence in the mountains of northern Iraq from where they are accused of staging attacks inside Turkey, is considered a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.



Kurdistan Regional Government

15 Oct. 2008

PM Barzani and British Minister Rammell discuss progress in Iraq, dialogue with Turkey

Erbil, Kurdistan - Iraq (KRG.org) - Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and senior Kurdistan Regional Government officials welcomed Mr Bill Rammell, the British Minister of State for the Middle East, to Erbil this week in his first overseas trip since his appointment as minister in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office earlier this month.

Prime Minister Barzani and Deputy Prime Minister Omer Fattah welcomed Mr Rammell, who was accompanied by Ambassador Christopher Prentice. They discussed a wide range of issues, including bilateral relations, the federal process in Iraq, the strategic agreement between Iraq the US and the UK, Article 140 of the Constitution, the provincial election and hydrocarbon laws, relations between the KRG and the federal government, the issue of the PKK and Turkey and the diplomatic talks beginning in Baghdad, and the recent tragedies of Christians being targeted in Mosul.



In a joint press conference following the meeting, Prime Minister Barzani and Mr Rammell emphasised the importance of a strategic agreement between Iraq and the US. Mr Rammell said, "Reaching an agreement, which would include the UK, is vital and would be a better solution than trying to extend the UN mandate in place."

The minister congratulated the KRG on the talks that Mr Masoud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Region, commenced with Turkey and the federal government in Baghdad concerning the PKK, adding that the UK "is very pleased that such dialogue is taking place." Prime Minister Barzani said, "We want to have strong and positive relations with our neighbours. There is no military solution to this problem, and we are glad talks have started."

At the press conference, Prime Minister Barzani strongly condemned the targeting of Assyrian Christians in and around Mosul by extremists. He said, "These attacks must cease and Iraq must follow the principles of religious freedom that have been established within the Kurdistan Region." In answer to a question from the press, Mr Rammell commented that the UK is not persuaded by the idea of creating a Christian safe-haven because "it is of crucial importance for all Iraq to support the worshiping of all faiths." Mr Rammell visited the region to further build relations with the Kurdistan Region and Iraq as well as to emphasise Britain's commitment to a successful and self-sustaining Iraq. He told reporters, "We in the United Kingdom are long standing friends with this part of the world. Prime Minister Barzani and I have had a productive discussion and I look forward to continuing the friendship between Britain and the Kurdistan Region."

Prime Minister Barzani warmly welcomed the minister and said, "Such visits clearly show the importance of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region to the United Kingdom." KRG officials attending the meeting with Mr Rammell and the ambassador were Minister of State for the Interior Mr Karim Sinjari; Dr Ashti Hawrami, Minister for Natural Resources; Dr Mohammad Ihsan, Minister for Extra-Regional Affairs; Mr Falah Mustafa Bakir, Minister and Head of Department of Foreign Relations; and Ms Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, High Representative to the UK.

October 15, 2008



Turkish-Kurdish overture may establish federal Kirkuk region-MP

BAGHDAD / Aswat al-Iraq: A lawmaker from the main Shiite bloc on Wednesday said the overture in Turkish-Kurdish relations might help find a compromise over the controversial issue of Kirkuk.

"The Turkish-Kurdish overture might lead to finding a just and balanced solution for the Kirkuk issue by establishing it as a federal region," MP Abbas al-Bayati from the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) told Aswat al-Iraq. "The Kirkuk problem has overreaching consequences affecting the domestic and regional arenas," the lawmaker highlighted. The MP expected the meetings between Turkish and Kurdish officials in Iraq would lead to "forge agreements of security coordination to control borders and to stem the infiltration of Kurdistan's Workers Party (PKK) into Turkey."

Turkish officials visited Baghdad on Tuesday and held talks with federal government officials and Kurdistan's regional president, Massoud Barazani. It was the first direct talks in four years between Turkey and Barazani, president of the three-province semiautonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq. Turkey has been pressing the Iraqi Kurdish administration to cut supply lines in its

territory used by the PKK, which has been fighting for autonomy in Turkey, and to arrest and hand over its leaders who live across the border in Iraq.

Iraqi Kurds, which have their own police and armed force, are largely responsible for security in the northern areas of the country where the PKK operates rather than U.S. or Iraqi government troops. The Tuesday meeting took place in the U.S.-protected Green Zone and lasted about two hours, an Iraqi government announcement said.

Turkey's special envoy to Iraq Murat Ozelik was quoted as saying the talks were held in a "positive atmosphere" and that Turkey had communicated to the other side its suggestions concerning security. The PKK, branded a terrorist group by the U.S. and the European Union, has been fighting for autonomy in southeastern Turkey since 1984. Tens of thousands of people have been killed. Barzani and other Iraqi Kurdish officials met regularly with Turkish officials during former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's regime. But relations cooled following the 2003 U.S.-led invasion as Kurdish national aspirations skyrocketed, and the last such meetings were held in 2004.

October 16, 2008



Sulaimaniya, Diyarbakir ink MoU on economic cooperation

ARBIL / Aswat al-Iraq: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the chambers of commerce and industry in Iraq's Sulaimaniya and the Turkish province of Diyarbakir to boost mutual cooperation.

"The signing ceremony was attended by the chairmen of booth chambers and was held at the headquarters of Arbil's Chamber of Commerce," the chairman of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Sulaimaniya, Hassan Baqi Horami, told Aswat al-Iraq.

The MoU aims at establishing strong economic and trade relations between the two chambers. Companies from both cities will be invited to attend trade exhibitions and to exchange economic and trade information, Horami noted.

A delegation from the Sulaimaniya chamber will arrive in Diyarbakir to participate in a workshop on adopted schemes of work in the city, according to Horami.

Meanwhile, a delegation from Diyarbakir will pay a similar visit to Sulaimaniya, he added.

Diyarbakir is the largest city in Turkish Kurdistan. Situated on the banks of the River Tigris, it is the seat of Diyarbakir Province, and has a population of 2.5 million.

The modern city of Sulaimaniya, 364 kilometers north of the Iraqi capital Baghdad, was founded in 1748 by a Kurdish prince known as Ibrahim Pasha Baban who named it for his father Sulaiman Pasha. Since being founded as the capital of a powerful Kurdish principality it has grown to about 1,800,000 people.

Sulaimaniya, known as Zamwa prior to its founding, is the cultural center of the Sorani-speaking Kurds and an important economic centre for Iraqi Kurdistan.



5 rebels, 4 Turkish soldiers killed in clashes near Iraq border; copter crash kills 1

October 16, 2008 Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey - The Turkish military clashed with Kurdish rebels near the Iraqi border in battles it said killed four soldiers and five rebels, while rebels claimed Thursday to have shot down a Turkish helicopter.

Another soldier was killed and 15 security personnel were slightly injured in the helicopter crash, the military said Thursday in a Web site statement.

The four soldiers were killed late Wednesday when rebels from the Kurdistan Workers Party opened fire on the soldiers in the province of Hakkari following an explosion, the statement reported. Hakkari is where the borders of Turkey, Iraq and Iran meet.

The military also said five PKK rebels were killed in two separate clashes in Hakkari and in the neighboring province of Sirnak, which also borders Iraq.

The military said the helicopter crashed due to a technical fault while trying to block the rebels' escape in the Hakkari clash. In Iraq however, the PKK said its fighters had shot down the helicopter.

"The helicopter was brought down by an ambush planned by PKK fighters," PKK spokesman Ahmed Deniz said.

The PKK, considered a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union, has been fighting for autonomy in southeast Turkey since 1984. Tens of thousands of people have died in the conflict since then.



Turkey has launched several cross-border airstrikes against the PKK in northern Iraq since a rebel attack Oct 3 killed 17 soldiers.

Kurdish rebels have stepped up attacks since then, killing four policemen and a civilian in an ambush in the Kurdish-dominated southeastern city of Diyarbakir last week. Turkish police also captured a potential Kurdish female suicide bomber who was posing as a pregnant woman in downtown Istanbul.

TURKEY AND THE KURDS

Terror in the mountains

Renewed violence raises new questions about Turkey's treatment of its Kurds

ANKARA, DIYARBAKIR AND KARS

HER boots caked in cow dung, her hands in soil, 80-year-old Xaje Artuget has but one regret. "I wish all eight of my sons had gone to fight in the mountains," she sighs. In fact, "only one" joined the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and is now "somewhere in northern Iraq". Similar feelings abound in many hard-scrabble townships in eastern Turkey, where decades of repression and poverty have provided a steady stream of recruits since the PKK launched its violent campaign for independence in 1984.

At least 44,000 people, mostly Kurds, have died in the conflict. The Turkish government says it has spent some \$300 billion battling the terrorists. The results have been mixed. The PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan, was captured in 1999, and several cease-fires followed. Yet the violence continues today—17 Turkish soldiers were killed in early October when some 400 PKK rebels raided a military outpost in Hakkari province, near the Iraqi border, and days later rebels killed four policemen in Diyarbakir. Sympathy for the PKK remains strong among Turkey's 14m Kurds.

The Turkish parliament has now extended the army's mandate to bomb PKK targets in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq, and Turkish aircraft have been doing just that. Yet the latest wave of PKK attacks has embarrassed the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and raised new questions about the army's competence. The cries of incompetence grew louder when Taraf, a newspaper, published a leaked internal report showing that the army knew about the planned attack in Hakkari but did little to stop it. It did not help when the air-force chief was photographed playing golf a day later.

In an alarming twist, ethnic tensions are erupting in western parts of Turkey as well. Two people died in the town of Altinova recently when a Kurdish youth rammed a truck into a group of Turks who were taunting Kurds by playing loud nationalist tunes. The army was called in when Kurdish homes and businesses came under siege.

The Kurds remain a huge problem for Turkey's government. The prime



minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, raised hopes in 2005 when he said the state had "made mistakes" in handling them. Steps to ease bans on Kurdish broadcasting and education followed, and vast sums were poured into Kurdish regions. The handouts included education subsidies for the poor, especially for girls. These helped the AKP to clobber the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) in much of the south-east in the July 2007 election. Yet to many the measures smell of vote-buying. "I haven't received a penny for my girls' schooling since April," complains Sabiha Celik in Sason. "I will never vote for the AKP again."

Indeed, Kurdish support for the AKP has been fading ever since the government yielded to army pressure to resume cross-border operations against the PKK in northern Iraq. The generals are baying for a freer hand, prompting worries of a return to the human-rights abuses of the 1990s. Ominously, the Turkish Human Rights Foundation says that, this year alone, over 30 people have been killed in alleged police violence, mostly in the Kurdish region. The government had to apologise when Engin Ceber, a left-wing activist, was tortured and beaten to death by security forces recently in an Istanbul prison.

AKP leaders, who narrowly escaped a constitutional court ban in July, have yet to utter a word about a

similar closure case that is pending against the DTP on the ground that it is propagating separatism. DTP deputies spend lots of time lobbying for better prison conditions for Mr Ocalan. Many of them were handpicked by the PKK to run for parliament. Yet just as in the AKP case, much of the prosecution's argument rests on words rather than deeds. Moreover, any ban might just boost the DTP's popularity.

Turkey blames some of its Kurdish woes on the West. "We are still seeing co-operation with the PKK, they are doing fund-raising in EU countries and there are many PKK terrorists living in Europe. This really bothers us," Ali Babacan, the foreign minister, claimed in an interview with *The Economist*. Similar harangues at the Americans have subsided since they agreed to let the Turks pursue the PKK in Iraq.

There are some hopeful signs that Turkey is trying to make friends with the Iraqi Kurds. This week Turkish diplomats met Masoud Barzani, who heads the Kurdish regional government in Iraq. This has prompted speculation that Turkey could be thinking of reviving an amnesty for PKK fighters untainted by violence. As the winter cold sets in, many might be tempted. And, as Mr Babacan acknowledges, "a military solution is not a solution."

TARAF DAILY STANDS FIRM IN FACE OF MOUNTING PRESSURE

YONCA POYRAZ DOĞAN

Taraf journalists have said pressure is mounting on the newspaper but that they are proud of publishing leaked documents related to a deadly attack on a military outpost early this month, revealing the military's alleged negligence in preventing the incident.

The pressure is immense on the newspaper since the country's traditionally powerful military had a show of force on Wednesday and then a ban on media coverage of the investigation related to the leaked confidential information imposed by the military court of the General Staff. A Taraf editor also confirmed to Today's Zaman that the General Staff gave the paper three days on Wednesday night to submit the evidence it has.

Liberal newspaper Taraf on Oct. 14 started to publish classified aerial images showing outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) terrorists preparing for the attack hours before they hit the outpost with heavy weaponry. At a press conference on Wednesday Chief of General Staff Gen. İlker Başbuğ lashed out at the media for publishing confidential information, in a rare appearance with commanders of the land and air forces, the gendarmerie and the education and doctrine unit. Gen. Başbuğ said the military was taking legal action over the leak of reports on the attack of Oct. 3, which killed 17 soldiers.

"Those who present the actions of the separatist terrorist organization as successful acts are responsible for the blood that has been shed and that will be shed," the angry general, sparking an outcry about media freedoms being under attack.

"The message said 'shut up.' This is why the general spoke. There is also a ban now on the media related to the subject. So the situation has come to the point of pressure on the paper," said Alper Görmüş, a Taraf writer and former editor-in-chief of the Nokta newsweekly, which ran a story exposing a confidential campaign of the military blacklisting some journalists and press organs and then another story with excerpts from a diary allegedly belonging to a former navy commander who gave details of coup plans to overthrow the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) government in 2004.

Drawing parallels between the developments leading to pressure being put on both Nokta and Taraf, Görmüş told Today's Zaman that it may eventually come to the point that the newspaper can no longer survive under the circumstances created.

Instead of looking into the alleged coup's plotters, a prosecutor chose to investigate Nokta on charges of provoking the people against "military service." The investigation turned into outright harassment in April of last year when some 50 police officers, acting on a search warrant, raided the magazine's building, taking three consecutive days to complete their investigation, which consisted of copying and duplicating every document on every computer there. Eventually, Nokta's owner shut the magazine down.

Görmüş also said these are critical days for Taraf. "Nokta did not submit any of its evidence, and a police raid followed. Taraf might share the evidence without disclosing its sources -- as it had in the Dağlica incident," he said, referring to a PKK ambush in late 2007 in southeast Dağlica that left 13 soldiers dead. Taraf published an intelligence report in June of this year claiming that the General Staff had prior knowledge of the ambush and that it had sent the intelligence report to the military prosecutor's office upon a request by the office.

Markar Esayan, one of the deputy editors and a columnist at Taraf, said the General Staff has given the daily until Saturday to submit the evidence and that Taraf editors will decide soon whether or not to submit the evidence.



Esayan said in the process of publishing news related to the events in Dağlica, Taraf itself offered to share the evidence they had but that this time the situation is different. "The general was too harsh in his style. We might well exercise our right to not disclose our sources."

'Taraf journalists happy and proud'

"Everyone is happy about our publication related to the classified information, and it's business as usual at Taraf," said Erkan D. Zing, an assistant editor with Taraf daily.

He said they expect a surge in Taraf's sales. The paper's circulation is around 40,000, he said, adding that they are also receiving faxes, calls and mail voicing support from the public.

"Eighty percent of the messages are positive," he said. When asked about threats, he said there are "a few" and that they expected those as well.

Esayan said they let the security forces know when threats seem serious. He also said that they have a security presence at the paper's entrance but that they do not have any special protection and that they cannot hire private security as they are experiencing financial difficulties.

'Media show mediocre support while some writers are blunt'

Esayan said most of the stories about Gen. Başbuğ's comments in other Turkish dailies concentrated on his style rather than substance.

"The papers were usually shamefaced, but some columnists were blunt, although some focused only on the general's style. There are a few who can say 'How come the media can be a target for the military?' because we have a culture of homage to the military," Esayan added.

Görmüş said Taraf's allegations are not of light substance, so a general can respond only by "shouting."

"There are concrete and serious allegations," he said.

The general was short of explaining whether or not the reports, reprinted widely by other newspapers on Wednesday and showing that the army had known about the attack, are true and whether or not it is true that the images transmitted from unmanned aerial vehicles were almost watched live at General Staff headquarters, but the media in general criticized him for being too harsh in his style.

When it comes to the public, which lags behind when it comes to a show of support in such cases, Görmüş said: "This is a problem in our democracy. When I ask if we have the public and even the intellectuals who could feel the existence of democracy in their hearts and minds, I cannot say 'yes!'"

However, he said that despite the odds Taraf

editors do not make decisions by looking behind to see how much support they may have if they publish a story before publishing some controversial material.

"Taraf journalists risk a lot by publishing what they think is right," Görmüş said, adding that Turkish politicians do not support Taraf, either.

Milliyet daily Editor-in-Chief Sedat Ergin said yesterday on live television that if he had received reliable information as Taraf had been given, he would have published it without a second thought.

Young Civilians: Pasha don't wag your finger!

Gathering in front of Taraf's head office in Istanbul, a group of activists from a nongovernmental organization called Young Civilians protested Gen. Başbuğ's remarks. Some of their placards read "Taraf should not be Nokta" and "You cannot shut Taraf up."

Canan Akbay, who spoke for the group, said: "We are speaking to the chief of general staff: Pasha! Pasha! You are facing this country's citizens, not your officers. You cannot speak to them while wagging your finger."

Akbay also criticized President Abdullah Gül, Parliament Speaker Köksal Toptan and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for supporting the general's remarks. *Istanbul Today's Zaman*

Journalists' associations criticize Başbuğ

A number of media professionals' associations expressed unease with Gen. Başbuğ's remarks as having a "threatening style" and not benefiting the country.

The Contemporary Journalists Association (ÇGD), the Parliament Correspondents Association, the Diplomacy Correspondents Association, the Photo Correspondents' Association (FMD), the Turkey branch of the Association of European Journalists, the Professional News Cameramen's Association, the Tourism and Environment Journalists Association, the Press and Information and Communication Workers Union (Haber-Sen) and the National Committee of the International Press Institute (IPI) issued a press release, stating:

"We can understand that the General Staff might have started an investigation related to the news/documents published in Taraf and then used in other papers on the grounds that 'confidential information has been leaked.' However, it is not possible to understand the statement 'Those who present the actions of the separatist terrorist organization as successful acts are responsible for the blood that has been shed and that will be shed.' Who will decide what expressions are going to be considered 'successful'? What is the measure of what is criticism and what is 'criticism beyond limits'? What is 'the

response that each military would give' when faced with such a situation? The General Staff's statement, which 'invites everybody to be careful and take a stand on the right side' projects an unacceptable threatening style. ... We would like to [bring to

mind] that in democracies nobody is exempt from criticism. As media professionals' associations, we believe that we can overcome our problems in these difficult times only with more freedom and transparency, and stress that efforts to bring the media into

line would not benefit the country." *Istanbul Today's Zaman*



Kurdistan Region Presidency
October 17, 2008

Presidents Talabani and Barzani offer support to Christians

Baghdad, Iraq (KRP.org)- Following a recent spike in violence and terrorist acts against Christians in Mosul, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani met today a number of Christian church leaders and clergymen in Baghdad.

The Deputy Patriarch of Chaldeans made a few remarks in which he condemned the recent killings and forced displacement of Christians and called for help to protect Christians in Iraq.

Some two thousand Christian families have fled Mosul in recent days to neighbouring areas and to the Kurdistan Region.

President Talabani addressed the meeting and strongly condemned the crimes against the Christians in Mosul and vowed to exert all efforts to reintroduce article 50 into the Provincial Elections Law. This article which called safeguarding minority rights was scrapped from the final draft of the provincial elections law.

For his part, President Barzani also voiced his deep concern over the killing and displacement of Christians in the town of Mosul and described it as crimes of genocide. "The Kurdistan Region is always open to receive Christians and to offer them all the material and moral support they need", the President added.

President Barzani also expressed his disappointment over the scrapping of article 50 in the provincial elections law and asserted that such an article is essential to safeguard and protect the rights of all religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq.



TheNational

October 21, 2008

UAE presence grows in Kurdistan

Bradley Hope - UAE

ERBIL, IRAQ // In a single fell swoop earlier this summer, the UAE became the biggest source of foreign investment for the northern region of Iraq known as Kurdistan. The announcement by Damac Properties of a US\$4.5bn (Dh16.52bn) property development outside the capital city of Erbil has proven to be the beginning of a wave of investment by UAE companies looking to join in the economic revival of Iraq. In recent weeks, the Abu Dhabi-based property developer, Al Maabar International, announced a \$10bn project in Baghdad and Etisalat's chairman has said the company would take a major stake in Korek, the Kurdish telecom company. And Bunyan Real Estate, based in Dubai, has signed a memorandum of understanding for a project in Sulimaniya worth \$2bn, according to Kurdish government officials.

"The UAE is the number one country for Iraq right now," said Mohammed Amin Baban, a senior economic adviser for strategic investment issues to Nechirvan Barzani, the Kurdistan regional government's (KRG) prime minister. "Erbil and Kurdistan are the

crossroads into the rest of Iraq. Security is very good and the investment laws are here." The Kurdish region has a semi-autonomous government and its own army, the peshmerga, giving it more stability than the rest of the country. But after decades of strife with Saddam Hussein and what Kurds like to describe as a double embargo - from Saddam Hussein's Baghdad and the rest of the world - the region has a badly damaged infrastructure network. Power is available only for about eight hours a day and the sewerage system is ancient and dysfunctional.

"For investors this is a virgin land," said Herish Muhamad, the chairman of the KRG's Board of Investment. "We need everything." Attempts to draw in foreign investors thus far have been only relatively successful. Half-built structures haunt the city and residents complain of a lack of jobs and poverty. But the emergence of the UAE as a major investor has drawn attention from government officials, particularly in the agriculture sector.

"We want to renew Kurdistan to its former production capacity," said Othman Shwani, the minister



A security guard looks over the countryside at the construction site of the American Village, a property development in Erbil. Philip Cheung / The National

of planning. "This will provide food security for all of Iraq, but we can also begin exporting to places like the Gulf countries." The government's five-year plan is to get the farms of the Kurdish region up to the point where they can provide enough food for the population and then begin exporting. Already, the

government is in talks to tie up with agriculture companies from Europe to improve the yields of the farms and is working on a way to export directly to Dubai. One UAE company, the Bin

Khalid Trading Company, made a \$3.5 million investment into agriculture in Dohuk.

Mohammed Rauf, the minister of trade, said the government was shipping its first test samples of the agricultural projects to Dubai next month. "We want to establish an economic integration with the UAE," he said. "We have the potential to produce a lot of agricultural produce and they need food because they have trouble growing things there." The KRG was opening an Erbil Business Centre in Dubai this year and the government had bought two spaces at Global Village in Dubai and to

promote trade, he said.

The UAE is taking a leading role in developing the energy sector in Kurdistan, too. The Sharjah-based energy affiliates, Crescent Petroleum and Dana Gas, are spending \$650 million to develop two Kurdistan gas fields, a pipeline and a gas-processing plant in an integrated gas and electricity development project. Late last month, the companies started producing gas from the Khor Mor field, located midway between Erbil and Suleimaniyah, at an initial rate of 75

million cubic feet per day. They expect to quadruple production from the field in the first half of next year. The gas will supply two new power stations that are in the final stages of construction and will provide the region's first new electrical generating capacity to be built in 50 years.

Crescent and Dana also plan soon to inaugurate a "Gas City" project in Kurdistan to attract investment in gas-intensive industries such as petrochemicals and ceramics to the region. The govern-

ment is planning greater investments in tourism and industry with the selling point to international companies that they can set up their businesses in Erbil and work in the whole of Iraq. "When we talk to people, we tell them that maybe there are four million or five million people in Kurdistan, but this is the gateway to the 30 million people of Iraq," said Mr Muhamad.

As violence slows down, more businesses are looking at doing work in the country and making investments, according to analysts.



October 21, 2008

Kurdish MP demands compensations from Turkey over bombardment

BAGHDAD. — A lawmaker from the Kurdistan Alliance parliamentary bloc on Monday demanded the Turkish government compensate the Iraqi Kurdish families that were affected by the Turkish bombardment that targeted Turkey's Kurdistan Workers Party's (PKK) locations within the Iraqi Kurdistan region border.

"Turkey should be committed to the Kurdish families that were damaged by the Turkish bombardment," Mohammed Senjari told VOI.

"The Turkish bombardment caused huge damage to Kurdish villages, and residents there were forced to flee, and currently live under very difficult circumstances," he said.

Displaced Kurdish families in the Iraqi province of Duhok on Monday will begin registering with local authorities to receive financial compensation, a local official said.

"A total of 4.5 million Iraqi dinars (1 U.S. dollar= 1,118 Iraqi dinars) will be paid in compensation to each family that was forced to leave Duhok as a result

of acts of violence," Mohammed Abdullah Hammo from the displacement and migration department said.

Turkish warplanes have been regularly bombing Turkey's Kurdish PKK rebel hideouts across the border in Iraqi Kurdistan region.

The Kurdistan Alliance occupies 53 out of the Iraqi council of representative's 275 seats

Since 1984 the Turkey's Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) took up arms for self-rule in the country's mainly Kurdish southeast of Turkey (Turkey-Kurdistan). 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.

Kurdistan Regional Government October 21, 2008



German business delegation find opportunities in Kurdistan Region

Erbil, Kurdistan Region – Iraq (krg.org) – Representatives of 50 German companies and Germany's Ambassador to Iraq yesterday concluded a trade mission to the Kurdistan Region.

The largest business delegation to visit the Region so far met with Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and other Kurdistan Regional Government officials, and attended the annual Erbil International Fair.

Mr Christof Weil, Germany's Ambassador to Iraq, joined the business delegation in Erbil and hosted a reception for his countrymen to meet Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) ministers and leading members of Kurdistan's business community.

In his speech at the reception, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani said, "The Kurdistan Region has developed a secure and politically stable environment which is ready for foreign investment. It is important for business delegations to visit our region to see for themselves the opportunities we have to offer." He added, "The German people have always been friends to Kurdistan's people and we look forward to building relations and interactions between Germany and the Kurdistan Region as well as all Iraq."

The Ambassador thanked the German business delegation for coming to Iraq and complimented the KRG on the Region's progress. He said, "It is wonderful to witness great development throughout the Kurdistan Region. The stability has made such development possible, and it is this stability which has signalled to our Embassy in Baghdad and leaders in Berlin that it is time to open a full consulate in Erbil."

Last summer Germany decided to establish a consulate in the Kurdistan Region and is hoping to have one open and operating by early 2009. Germany first came to the Kurdistan Region with an Honorary Consul, and now operates an Embassy Office headed by First Secretary Mr Cornelius Huppertz.

Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir, the KRG's Head of Foreign Relations, said of Germany's decision to increase its diplomatic presence, "We see this as a very positive sign as we forge ahead to build better relations with our friends and neighbours. In line with the Prime Minister's efforts, the Kurdistan Region has become the gateway to the rest of Iraq and offers many opportunities for businesses and countries to establish themselves."



Germany follows many other countries in sending business delegations to witness the economic boom in the Kurdistan Region. The 50 businessmen and women were brought together by Germany's Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology and the German Near and Middle East Association.

AFP

IRAN: DES REBELLES KURDES TUENT TROIS GARDIENS DE LA RÉVOLUTION (AGENCE)

TEHERAN, 17 oct 2008 (AFP) –

DES REBELLES KURDES ont tué trois membres d'une unité des Gardiens de la Révolution, le corps d'élite du régime islamique, déployée dans la province de Zanzan, dans le nord-ouest de l'Iran, a rapporté vendredi l'agence Isna.

"Mohsen Moslemi a été tué lors d'affrontements avec ce groupe contre-révolutionnaire dans la zone de Chaldoran", a déclaré un officier de la brigade Ansar al-Mahdi, Ahmad Fathi, cité par l'agence.

Selon Isna, il faisait référence au parti indépendantiste Pejak, acronyme du "Parti de la vie libre au Kurdistan", qui a des liens étroits avec les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Le PKK est un mouvement séparatiste basé en Turquie et dans le nord de

l'Irak, qui mène une lutte armée contre Ankara depuis 1984.

Deux autres membres de cette unité des Gardiens de la Révolution, Rahmatollah Rahmani et Mohammad Taghi Ahamdrou, avaient été tués auparavant par les rebelles et leurs funérailles ont été célébrées jeudi, a poursuivi Isna.

Ces dernières années, les affrontements meurtriers ont été fréquents entre les forces iraniennes et les militants du Pejak, qui opèrent depuis des bases-arrière du nord-est de l'Irak.

L'Iran est le théâtre d'une montée des violences dans plusieurs régions où vivent d'importantes minorités ethniques, comme le Sistan-Balouchistan (sud-est) ou le Khouzeistan (sud-ouest), ainsi que dans les zones kurdes.

L'Iran accuse la Grande-Bretagne et les Etats-Unis d'être derrière ces violences.

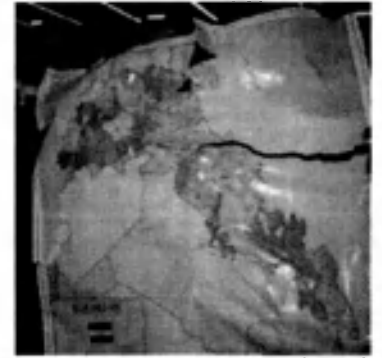
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INTERNATIONAL.COM

18 octobre 2008

ALLEMAGNE • Le conflit turco-kurde s'invite à la Foire du livre de Francfort

Les couloirs du Salon du livre à Francfort ont été, jeudi 16 octobre, le théâtre d'une confrontation entre militants turcs et kurdes. Des jeunes du stand de la Turquie, l'invité d'honneur de la manifestation, ont attaqué le stand dédié au Kurdistan et ils ont déchiré le drapeau kurde et la carte du grand Kurdistan qui s'y trouvaient", rapporte le site arabe d'information Elaph. Les militants kurdes ont riposté et les deux groupes en sont venus

aux mains. "La police allemande est intervenue pour les séparer. Toutefois, les deux parties ont poursuivi verbalement leur dispute en profitant de la présence de plusieurs médias sur place pour exposer, en hurlant, leurs griefs et leurs revendications. Seulement leurs propos échangés essentiellement en turc n'étaient pas compréhensibles pour la grande majorité de l'assistance."



La carte du Kurdistan déchirée par des Turcs DR

AFP

MANIFESTATIONS PRO-ÖCALAN EN TURQUIE: UN BLESSÉ, NOMBREUSES INTERPELLATIONS

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 18 oct 2008 (AFP) –

UN PERSONNE a été blessée et de nombreuses autres interpellées samedi lors d'incidents et de manifestations organisées dans le sud-est majoritairement kurde de la Turquie après des informations indiquant que le chef rebelle kurde emprisonné, Abdullah Öcalan, avait été maltraité.

A Diyarbakir, la principale ville du sud-est anatolien, plus de 5.000 personnes se sont rassemblées dans le centre scandant des slogans en faveur d'Öcalan, a constaté un correspondant de l'AFP.

La police qui n'a pas réagi dans un premier temps, a chargé la foule lorsque des manifestants lui ont lancé des pierres.

Plusieurs dizaines de personnes ont été placées en garde à vue.

Dans un incident séparé à Yüksekova, petite ville reculée du sud-est proche des frontières irakienne et iranienne, la police a fait usage de gaz lacrymogène et de canons à eau pour disperser une foule de plusieurs milliers de personnes qui ont érigé des barricades sur la principale artère et incendié des pneus, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolie.

La police a procédé à une vingtaine d'interpellations, selon l'agence.

L'explosion d'un engin sur le bord de la route au moment des manifestations a blessé un homme de 28 ans, a indiqué l'agence, ajoutant qu'une enquête avait été ouverte pour déterminer le type de l'explosif utilisé.

Les magasins n'ont pas ouvert samedi dans la ville, ajoute l'agence.

Déjà vendredi soir des heurts avaient éclaté à Istanbul et dans d'autres villes turques entre manifestants kurdes et police.

A Ümraniye, quartier populaire de la rive asiatique de la métropole, un groupe s'est heurté aux forces de l'ordre qui ont finalement dispersé les manifestants à l'aide de canons à eau, selon Anatolie.

Des inconnus ont aussi lancé des cocktails molotovs contre un centre commercial du quartier de Küçükçekmece, également dans le secteur asiatique de la ville, causant des dégâts matériels.

Les avocats du chef du parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, rebelles kurdes de Turquie) affirment que leur client a été récemment maltraité par ses gardiens à l'île-prison d'Imrali (nord-ouest) où il est le seul détenu depuis 1999. Öcalan a été "poussé assez brutalement" par un gardien et "menacé de mort", selon eux.

A chaque fois que des informations sur l'incarcération d'Öcalan, condamné à



vie pour la rébellion séparatiste du PKK, sont rapportées par ses défenseurs qui lui rendent régulièrement visite, des manifestations sporadiques qui dégénèrent souvent en heurts avec la police sont organisées dans les villes turques où vivent des communautés Kurdes.

Ainsi, à Mersin (sud), Sanliurfa (sud-est), Van (est) et Varto (est), des manifestations avec pour la plupart la participation de jeunes, ont été réprimées par la police, a indiqué l'agence pro-kurde Firat. Plusieurs voitures ont été incendiées dans la nuit à Sanliurfa.

Öcalan a été arrêté le 15 février 1999 au Kenya. Condamné à mort, sa peine a été commuée en prison à vie en 2002 après l'abolition de la peine capitale en Turquie.

Quelque 44.000 personnes ont été tuées dans les affrontements entre les rebelles kurdes et les forces de sécurité depuis 1984, date à laquelle le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, a déclenché son insurrection.

La Turquie traverse un nouveau cycle de violences depuis que des rebelles ont tué 17 soldats turcs au début du mois dans une caserne proche de la frontière irakienne. Une cinquantaine de rebelles ont été abattus depuis, selon l'armée.



IRAK: UN MEMBRE DES FORCES KURDES DE SÉCURITÉ TUÉ, 3 POLICIERS BLESSÉS

KIRKOUK (Irak), 18 oct 2008 (AFP) -

UN MEMBRE des forces de sécurité de la région autonome du Kurdistan a été tué et trois policiers irakiens ont été blessés samedi dans des violences dans la province de Kirkouk (nord), ont indiqué des sources des services de sécurité.

Un "assaïch", soit un membre des services de renseignements kurdes, a été tué samedi après-midi par l'explosion d'une bombe au passage de sa voiture à Dakouk, à 40 km au sud de Kirkouk.

Un peu plus tard, trois policiers "ont été blessés par l'explosion d'une bombe visant leur patrouille, près d'un poste de police dans le sud de Kirkouk", (255 km au nord de Bagdad), a déclaré à l'AFP le général Adel Zein al-Abidine.

Par ailleurs, les forces de sécurité ont retrouvé à Kirkouk le corps d'un fonctionnaire de la compagnie d'électricité qui avait été enlevé depuis plus de deux semaines. Son corps était criblé de balles.

Des violences, notamment des attentats, ont régulièrement lieu à Kirkouk, où un conflit oppose les communautés kurde, arabe et turcomane.



IRAK: MASSOUD BARZANI APPUIE L'ACCORD DE SÉCURITÉ AVEC LES ETATS-UNIS

ERBIL (Irak), 20 oct 2008 (AFP) -

LE PRÉSIDENT de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien, Massoud Barzani, s'est prononcé lundi en faveur du projet d'accord bilatéral donnant un cadre légal à la présence militaire américaine en Irak après le 31 décembre 2008.

"Nous sommes clairement en faveur de la signature du projet d'accord. Il y a des forces qui soutiennent ce traité, d'autres qui hésitent, d'autres encore qui sont embarrassées et d'autres enfin qui ont peur de déclarer leur position", a-t-il dit aux journalistes à son arrivée à l'aéroport d'Erbil, dans le nord de l'Irak.

"Nous avons participé dimanche soir à la réunion du Conseil politique de sécurité nationale où nous avons affiché clairement notre position. L'accord comporte beaucoup de points positifs en faveur de l'Irak. Il a été décidé d'en référer au gouvernement et au Parlement et chaque partie est libre de donner sa position", a-t-il précisé.

Le Conseil politique pour la sécurité nationale, qui regroupe les principaux

responsables irakiens, a examiné en soirée le projet final d'accord sur la présence américaine, lors d'une réunion au domicile du président irakien Jalal Talabani à Bagdad.

"L'alternative en cas de rejet est inquiétante: cela signifie soit la continuation de la situation actuelle quand un officier américain a les prérogatives pour arrêter tous les ministres, soit les Etats-Unis quittent l'Irak et renoncent à leurs engagements envers notre pays", a-t-il ajouté.

"Nous avons toujours déclaré notre opposition à tout accord qui viole la souveraineté du pays mais la dernière version de l'accord proposée par les Américains prend en compte cette souveraineté", a-t-il souligné.

L'Alliance kurde représente 53 députés sur les 275 que compte le Parlement. C'est le Parlement qui doit entériner ou rejeter le projet d'accord négocié depuis février entre Bagdad et Washington.



TURQUIE: UN MANIFESTANT TUÉ AU COURS D'UN RASSEMBLEMENT KURDE

ANKARA, 20 oct 2008 (AFP) -

UN MANIFESTANT a été tué lundi dans l'est de la Turquie au cours d'affrontements entre la police et des manifestants kurdes qui protestaient contre l'emprisonnement de leur dirigeant historique Abdullah Öcalan, ont rapporté des responsables et des médias turcs.

Des protestataires kurdes ont également accueilli le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan à Diyarbakir, à son arrivée dans la plus grande ville du sud-est du pays à majorité kurde, plus tard dans la journée pour une visite de vingt quatre heures.

"Une personne est décédée", a déclaré à l'AFP un responsable policier joint par téléphone. Il n'a donné aucune autre précision sur ces affrontements qui se sont déroulés à Dogubayazit, dans l'est de la Turquie.

Selon l'agence turque Anatolie, les affrontements ont éclaté lorsque les manifestants, scandant des slogans en faveur d'Öcalan et de son parti (le PKK, interdit), ont tenté d'avancer, refusant d'obéir aux ordres de dispersion de la police.

Les manifestants ont jeté des pierres aux policiers qui ont riposté en tirant en l'air et en faisant usage de gaz lacrymogènes et de canons à eau, selon l'agence.

Les circonstances dans lesquelles le manifestant a été tué n'étaient pas clairement établies, des informations non confirmées indiquant qu'il avait été tué par balles.

Des heurts s'étaient déjà produits entre manifestants et police ce week-end dans le sud-est, faisant deux blessés.

Les avocats du chef du PKK ont affirmé vendredi que leur client avait été récemment maltraité par ses gardiens de l'île-prison d'Imrali (nord-ouest) où il est le seul détenu depuis 1999. Le ministre de la Justice, Mehmet Ali Sahin, a nié dimanche ces allégations.

Lundi, les violences ont gagné Diyarbakir, où M. Erdogan est arrivé pour assister à l'ouverture de l'année académique à l'université locale et pour inaugurer un centre médical.

Au moins 20 personnes ont été interpellées alors que des centaines de manifestants kurdes se sont rassemblées dans les rues, scandant des slogans pro-Kurdes, lançant des pierres sur la police et des cocktails Molotov sur les écoles.

La police, avec l'appui des unités anti-émeutes des provinces voisines, a eu recours à des canons à eau et des gaz lacrymogènes pour disperser les protestataires alors que des véhicules blindés patrouillaient dans les rues, survolées par des hélicoptères.



Le Premier ministre a accusé les rebelles du PKK de chercher "à saboter" les efforts du gouvernement pour promouvoir les droits et le bien-être de la communauté kurde.

"En dépit de toutes les provocations de l'organisation terroriste, la Turquie ne fera de concessions ni sur la sécurité, ni sur les libertés ni sur les droits de l'homme", a-t-il déclaré dans un discours prononcé à l'université Dicle.

"Le processus en vue de l'entrée de la Turquie dans l'Union européenne se poursuit", a-t-il ajouté. Processus qui s'est traduit par une plus grande liberté dans le domaine culturel pour les Kurdes.

M. Erdogan a assuré que la télévision publique TRT lancerait bientôt une chaîne spéciale en langue kurde, une promesse que le gouvernement avait faite en mars à la communauté kurde.

Öcalan a été arrêté le 15 février 1999 au Kenya. Condamné à mort, sa peine a été commuée en prison à vie en 2002 après l'abolition de la peine capitale en Turquie.

Quelque 44.000 personnes ont été tuées dans les affrontements entre les rebelles kurdes et les forces de sécurité depuis 1984, date à laquelle le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, a déclenché son insurrection.

U.S. report details Iranian role in Iraq

Training of Shiite fighters is described

By Mark Mazzetti

WASHINGTON: They wake before dawn, with time to exercise, eat and pray before the first class of the day in firing Kalashnikov rifles.

Over the next eight hours, they practice using bazookas or laying roadside bombs, with a break for lunch and mandatory religious instruction.

There is free time in the evening to watch television or play Ping-Pong.

Lights out at 11 p.m.

Such is a typical day at a dusty military base outside Tehran, where for the past several years members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Quds Force and Lebanese Hezbollah operatives have trained Iraqi Shiites to launch attacks against American forces in Iraq, according to accounts given to American interrogators by captured Iraqi fighters.

U.S. officials have long cited Iranian training and weapons as reasons for the lethality of attacks by Shiite fighters in Iraq. Iranian officials deny that such training takes place.

Now, more than 80 pages of newly declassified intelligence documents for the first time describe in detail an elaborate network used by Iraqis to gain entry into Iran and train under Iranian supervision. They offer the most comprehensive account to date to support American claims about Iranian efforts to build a proxy force in Iraq. Those claims have become highly politicized, with Bush administration critics charging that accounts of Iranian involvement have been exaggerated.

The prisoners' accounts cannot be independently verified. Yet the detainees gave strikingly similar details about training compounds in Iran, a clandestine network of safe houses in Iran and Iraq that they used to reach the camps, and intra-Shiite tensions at the camps between the Arab Iraqis and their Iranian trainers.

Although attacks on Americans by Shiite militias have greatly decreased this year, military and intelligence officials said there was evidence that the militias, sometimes referred to as "special groups," were now returning to Iraq to disrupt coming elections and intimidate residents.

Major General Jeffery Hammond, the commander of U.S. forces in Baghdad, said recently that he believed that some militia fighters had returned to the capital in recent weeks.

The documents, compiled by the Combating Terrorism Center at West

Point, New York, are a collection of interrogation reports based on accounts of more than two dozen Shiite fighters captured in Iraq in 2007 and 2008. The center, a research organization that compiles and analyzes intelligence documents related to Al Qaeda, Iraq, Iran and other topics, has made the documents available online.

They portray an Iranian strategy to use Iraqi Shiites as surrogates, in part to avoid the risk of Iranians being captured in Iraq. In one of the intelligence reports, a prisoner tells his captors that "Iran does not want to fight a direct war" with U.S. forces in Iraq because Tehran worries that the United States would destroy Iran.

U.S. intelligence officials said they believe that since a handful of Iranian Revolutionary Guard operatives were captured in Baghdad in 2006, Iran shifted its strategy to bringing small groups of Iraqis into Iran. The Iraqis are then sent home to train larger cadres of Shiite militants.

One senior U.S. intelligence official said there were indications that the training programs in Iran might have significantly expanded this year to accommodate the scores of Iraqi militia fighters who fled their country during the Iraqi military's campaigns in Basra and Baghdad.

Brian Fishman, director of research at the Combating Terrorism Center and a co-author of a new study about Iran's

political and military influence in Iraq, said that even though Iran was not in direct command of militia groups in Iraq, the training was one of the means at Iran's disposal to increase or decrease its influence in Iraq at will.

"Having the militia allies is a hedge," he said. "If things turn against Iran politically, it gives them a lever to pull."

U.S. officials say it was still murky just how much of a direct role senior Iranian officials take in the training, though they say they believe that it takes place with at least the tacit approval of elements of Iran's government. The documents do not provide any direct evidence of senior Iranian government officials overseeing the training.

The study, written by Fishman and Colonel Joseph Felter, concludes that Iran aims to attack U.S. troops in Iraq in part to show off its own abilities and in part to "demonstrate a credible deterrent against a U.S. strike on Iran's nuclear facilities."

The captives gave detailed descrip-

tions of daily routines in the Iranian camps, from the intensity of weapons training to the more mundane complaints of military life. One of the captured Iraqis described a mini-revolt among the trainees because they had not been issued socks to wear with their military boots.

The documents also reveal deep ethnic fissures between Iranian and Iraqi Shiites. The Iraqis complained that their Iranian trainers did not show

One prisoner said that 'Iran does not want to fight a direct war' with U.S. forces in Iraq.

them the proper respect and that they made disparaging remarks about Moktada al-Sadr, the Iraqi Shiite cleric who has led an anti-American resistance movement in Iraq.

"Iraqi Shia are superior to Iranians because Iraqi Shia are moral, good, compassionate and emotionally sensitive," one detainee said. "Iranians are not moral, are not sensitive and believe they are superior to everyone."

By contrast, the Iraqis said that they tended to forge closer bonds to the Lebanese Hezbollah fighters, Arabs who share a language with the Iraqis.

After they had been selected for training in Iran, some of the trainees told their families that they were going to Najaf, Iraq, to help guard the holy Shiite shrines there. Actually, the trainees usually made their way to Amara, a town in eastern Iraq not far from the border with Iran. They met their contact person at a garage there, where they were given small sums of money and stowed in safe houses around the city.

After a day or two, those with passports were driven by bus or taxi over the border to such cities in western Iran as Ahvaz or Kermanshah. One prisoner reported that the Iranian training was usually scheduled around major Shiite holidays, when large numbers of pilgrims cross the border and there is a better chance that the movement of the fighters will go unnoticed.

Those without passports were usually driven at night to marshlands, where they boarded rowboats to be ferried over the border and picked up by a waiting vehicle.

After spending a night in Ahvaz or Kermanshah, the trainees were brought to a local airport and flown to Tehran, where they were picked up and driven to a military base hours outside the city. Several of the prisoners identified it as the Sayid al-Shahada base.

Once at the base, trainees were issued a "track suit, tennis shoes, towel and military food," one prisoner reported.

"The refrigerator was filled with a lot of food and fruit," he said.

They spent the next month training

to fire small-caliber firearms, mortars and anti-aircraft weapons, and learning how to carry out ambushes. They took classes in camouflage and daily religious instruction.

Some participated in a special "engineer course" that trained them how to lay roadside bombs. But only "smart" trainees were allowed to take part in the engineer training, said one captive,

who added that he was deemed not intelligent enough for this specialized training.

"If you are not smart, no one will waste the time and expenses to send you to Iran to train to be an engineer, because you will fail," says one of the interrogation reports. "Detainee did not care about engineer training and did not want to come back to Iran, because their

training was a waste of time and detainee had to leave his family for nothing."

Other prisoners shared this dim view of the training, telling American interrogators that a separate training course run by Hezbollah operatives in Lebanon was far superior to the training in Iran.

Herald ^{INTERNATIONAL} Tribune October 20, 2008

Deal to let U.S. forces stay in Iraq hits snag

From news reports

BAGHDAD: A landmark pact to allow U.S. troops to stay in Iraq until 2011 hit its first major political snag Sunday, with the governing Shiite alliance calling for changes just days after a final draft was unveiled.

The draft of the pact was agreed on last week after months of difficult negotiations between Baghdad and Washington, and Iraqi officials had previously described it as a final text unlikely to be renegotiated.

But the Shiite alliance, which includes Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki's Dawa Party, said its leaders had reviewed the pact at a meeting Saturday and were not happy with all of it.

"Beside the positive points that were included in this pact, there are other points that need more time, more discussion, more dialogue and amendments to some articles," the alliance said in a statement. It did not say what parts of the text gave rise to objections.

The reservations voiced by Maliki's alliance are a blow to the prospects of the pact, which needs to be approved in Parliament by the end of this year, when a UN Security Council resolution authorizing the U.S. mission expires.

Iraqi leaders say they could seek an emergency extension of the UN mandate if a bilateral deal is not ready in time.

The call by the Shiite parties for changes to the draft appears to contradict Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari, a Kurd, who said Saturday that Washington and Baghdad consider the draft final and would be unlikely to reopen it.

Zebari said that Parliament would be sent the draft to approve or reject but would not be permitted to make changes.

Enacting the pact would mean that, for the first time, U.S. troops in Iraq



Ahmad al-Rubaye/Agence France-Presse

Supporters of the anti-American cleric Moktada al-Sadr marching through Baghdad to protest the U.S. military presence in Iraq.

would have a mandate from the elected Iraqi government, seen as a major step on the road to full sovereignty for Iraq.

But giving formal blessing to the U.S. mission is a politically difficult step for the Iraqi government when many citizens consider the U.S. presence an occupation and fear that Washington wants a permanent foothold in the country.

The draft requires U.S. troops to leave Iraq at the end of 2011, unless Baghdad asks them to stay. It also provides certain conditions under which U.S. troops might be tried in Iraqi courts for serious crimes committed while off-duty, which Iraqi officials have described as a major concession from Washington.

The objections to the pact were the latest, and most damaging, sign that unease in Iraq with the security negotiations stretches beyond the faction headed by the anti-American cleric Moktada al-Sadr. On Saturday, his followers took to the streets in a demonstration against the proposed security agreement.

In a message to the marchers assembled Saturday, one of Sadr's senior clerics read a statement from him warning that "whoever tells you that this pact gives us sovereignty is lying," according to news services.

A leading Sadrist cleric at the rally, Hazim al-Arraji, said: "This is the voice

of the Iraqi people from all over Iraq: We need the invaders to leave our country; no one wants them to stay. 'No invasion! Get out invaders!' That will be our slogan."

Sadr, a Shiite cleric whose Mahdi army militia conducted two major uprisings against the U.S. occupation, has consistently called for an immediate U.S. withdrawal and has opposed negotiations that cede any authority at all to the United States. (Reuters, IHT)

■ 2 killed by roadside bomb

A roadside bomb targeting an Iraqi police patrol killed two people and wounded 10 in southeastern Baghdad on Sunday, The Associated Press reported.

The police and medical officials said the blast happened in the Shiite-dominated Zafaraniya neighborhood. The two people killed were civilians, while three policemen were among the wounded. A second roadside bomb in the same neighborhood blew up shortly after the first, wounding three policemen in a car and four civilians in an automobile.

October 21, 2008

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

US referees Iraq's troubled Kurdish-Arab fault line

At a flash point for violence, an Army general plays diplomat.

By Scott Peterson | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Khanaqin, Iraq - Their body language spoke volumes. The Kurdish mayor took another call on his mobile phone, the Shiite provincial governor leafed absent-mindedly through a newspaper. They would rather not be seeing each other at all.

But Khanaqin was the center of a recent face-off between Kurdish and Iraqi Army forces that threatened a much wider conflict, along a 300-mile fault line that divides the Kurdish lands of northern Iraq from the rest of the country.

And US Army Maj. Gen. Mark Hertling brought these officials together last week, to make peace, deepen ties between this Kurdish enclave and the state, and to temper chances of any future clash with diplomacy.

General Hertling broke the ice between the two with a joke about his last visit, and the thankless task of peacemaking between Kurds and Arabs.

"Everyone said I did bad things when I was here," says the commander of US-led forces in northern Iraq, provoking laughter. "All of the reporters in Baghdad were calling me a lover of the Kurds, and all the newspapers in the Kurdish region were calling me an Arab chauvinist. So for a while I didn't know which way I should go."

Few issues will affect Iraq's future more than the final relationship between the Kurds - whose autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq has its own president, ministers, militia, and flag - and the Shiite-run central government in Baghdad.

But this town in Iraq's troubled eastern Diyala Province is 15 miles south of the KRG line, and but one flash point along a swath of "disputed areas" where Kurdish troops and authorities have expanded control beyond their borders.

Iraqi Arabs charge that Kurds are forcing them out of these areas, in the same way that Saddam Hussein's "Arabization" efforts in the 1970s and '80s brutally removed tens of thousands of Kurds.

In August, an Iraqi Army offensive aimed to reclaim some of this territory, while also pushing against Sunni insurgents in Diyala Province. The Iraqi units faced down Kurdish forces, known as *peshmerga*, in nearby Jalawla. Then they moved up to Khanaqin, where tension surged as they set up checkpoints, sometimes directly opposite the *peshmerga*.

Chances of an immediate shootout eased when US Army Staff Sgt. Dave Schlicher kept decisionmakers on both sides in the mayor's office for nearly five hours, insisting, he says, that they "talk through a solution and not fire on each other at first sight." [Editor's note: The original version misidentified US Army Staff Sgt.



Dave Schlicher.]

That earned him the nickname "General Schlicher" among the Iraqis. Then the top brass and senior politicians weighed in.

Today only Kurdish flags fly from the rooftops. A token Iraqi flag does exist in the office of the mayor, who receives funds from both the KRG and the central government through this governor.

But the writ of Baghdad was sufficiently tenuous that General Hertling flew the governor to Khanaqin for this meeting to bolster ties.

"When it comes to ethnicity and to our country, we are proud of both," Kurdish mayor Mohammad Mulla Hassan finally tells the group, letting his calculated disinterest fall away as glasses of sweet tea are poured and stirred. "Khanaqin is a small Iraq ... we are part of everybody, all parts of our society."

Governor Raad al-Tamimi, sitting at the mayor's expansive desk, also starts with platitudes to mollify those who charge that Khanaqin is neglected by the government.

"Khanaqin is the bride of Diyala [Province]" says Mr. Tamimi. "The bride is the best selection." He says that Khanaqin is earmarked even more money than the provincial capital. But Khanaqin must be subject to national laws and security forces under orders from Baghdad.

This town's ambiguous status - mirrored across the "disputed areas," where by one count Kurds have added 7 percent more of Iraq's territory to their own - complicates every issue.

Kurdish forces were sometimes invited in years past to help secure these areas before the new Iraqi Army could deploy. But now as Iraqi security forces are expanding and taking a more proactive role, towns like Khanaqin are torn.

"Terrorism in Diyala will be pursued in Diyala or anywhere as part of the central government's duty," Tamimi tells the

group. "Terrorists must be followed wherever they are so that we can be rid of them."

And there are no shortage of Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) in the province. "The surge in Baghdad has pushed all the enemy to the north, and the Anbar Awakening pushed everybody to the east," says Hertling. "So we have a significant amount of Al Qaeda in Iraq [in Diyala Province]."

As the mayor and governor promise renewed cooperation, they also trade barbs. The mayor accuses the central government of neglect; the governor blasts the mayor - who has received death threats and two attempts on his life - for never coming to see him in the provincial capital.

"How many times did I come to see you this year? Three? More? But you never come to see me," says Governor Tamimi. "All I want is for my relationship with you guys to stay strong. There are certain issues that we need to leave to the politicians in Baghdad to solve."

Indeed, though the Kurdish territory has been the quietest since 2003, the standoff in Khanaqin is a reminder of another tinderbox. Most often that concern centers on oil-rich Kirkuk, which both Kurds and Arabs call their own.

"If [Kurds] don't back down on their claims, Iraq will really fall into ethnic conflict," says Hunain al-Qaddo, a parliamentarian from the northern Ninevah Province where Kurds have established themselves well beyond their territorial borders.

"Until our Kurdish brothers realize the dangers of their thrust, I can't be optimistic," says Mr. Qaddo. "If the Kurdish politicians are not pragmatic in their objectives, then they will compromise the security and stability across Iraq."

Preventing that has been one task of the special representative of the UN secretary-general in Iraq, Staffan de Mistura. The only way to overcome the pitfalls of a "hostile referendum and facts on the ground," he says, is to forge a political "grand bargain" that resolves all the issues at once.

Top of the list is clarifying the blend of federal and local government authority. Resolving the 12 "disputed areas" is so sensitive that the UN makes no map of them public. "There is mistrust of everyone's intentions," says Mr. de Mistura.

A key problem is the still-pervasive mind-set instilled by Saddam Hussein. "With him, you agreed or you were dead. So there were no negotiations with give and take."

Oct. 21, 2008

TIME

On Trial: The Shadowy Network at the Heart of Turkey

By Pelin Turgut / Istanbul

Turkish Nobel literature laureate Orhan Pamuk was told, two years ago, that he was on the hit list of a powerful underground group of ultra-nationalists. Pamuk was shown phone transcripts and other documents to underscore the seriousness of the threat, and was placed under around-the-clock security. Pamuk was hardly alone, though. On Monday, a Turkish court began hearing allegations resulting from a mammoth police investigation, which exposed what prosecutors say is a sinister clique of ex-generals, police officers, lawyers and journalists behind a series of high-profile murders and bomb blasts. The campaign of violence, prosecutors allege, was intended to breed chaos and public despair, paving the way for a military coup and derailing Turkey's European Union-mandated democratic reforms.

Judges in a specially outfitted courtroom began hearing the indictment against 86 alleged conspirators in a trial being billed as an historic opportunity for Turkey to rein in renegade security elements that see themselves operating beyond the reach of law — many Turks have long suspected the existence of such a network, popularly referred to as the "deep state".

The conspirators are alleged to have called themselves Ergenekon, after a mythic valley in Central Asia where Turks are said to have originated. Their vision of the world was no less fantastic: mistrustful of the West, they harbored a deeply isolationist view of Turkey's future. In recent years, TIME encountered such views in interviews with Kemal Kerincsiz, a zealous lawyer and one of the better-known figures among the accused. A wiry, sharp-featured man, Kerincsiz made a career out of prosecuting leading writers (including Pamuk) and civil rights activists under controversial legislation that outlaws "insulting Turkishness".

"Europe," he told TIME, "wants to see Turkey weak and divided. They tried to do that at the end of the First World War. Now they're trying again." He believed in a greater Turkish union with the Turkic peoples of Central Asia, and dreamt of a day when Turkey's pull would match that of the Ottoman Empire. There was a surreal quality to the office he ran. He travelled with an entourage of muscled, aggres-



Protesters carry a banner with the portraits of the leading defendants involved in the trial of ultra-nationalist group Ergenekon, as they demonstrate outside the heavily guarded Silivri prison, October 20, 2008. Fatih Saribas / Reuters

sive young men in suits, who operated like off-duty soldiers on a strict code: no smoking, starched shirts, shiny shoes, deference and piety.

The charges against Kerincsiz and his co-accused include the murders of a judge, a priest, a journalist, three workers of a Christian publishing house, and the bombing of a newspaper office. Some of those attacks, the indictment alleges, were disguised to appear as the work of Islamist extremists.

The investigation started last year after police raided an apartment in a working-class neighborhood of Istanbul and found a stockpile of hand grenades. The serial numbers on the grenades suggested they had come from the same stocks as those used in the attack on the offices of the secularist newspaper Cumhuriyet. Police later arrested several suspects, including Veli Kucuk, a retired army general, and Dogu Perincek, leader of the far-left Workers Party. Dozens more suspects were later arrested in several waves of dawn raids.

Momentous as it may be, the case is clouded by criticism of political involvement. Critics accuse the Islamist-rooted government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of turning the trial into a witchhunt targeting secularist opponents. "The good news is that the trial does en-

compass coup seekers who I am convinced were involved in shady, illegal activity," says Cunevt Ulsever, a columnist for the mainstream Hurriyet. "On the other hand, there are also unlikely people in that group who, although I might disagree with their political views, it seems impossible to believe are guilty of crime. Their common denominator is that they don't get along with the government. That's what makes it confusing — these two groups are side by side."

More importantly, the indictment also fails to cover the murky Kurdish conflict in southeast Turkey. During the late 1980s and '90s, at the height of fighting between the Turkish military and Kurdish separatist PKK organization, hundreds of prominent Kurds were killed in "mystery murders" that remain unsolved. Kurds have long blamed the deaths on shadowy, state-affiliated militants. "We all know that the main hub of activity for Ergenekon was the southeast," alleges

Ulsever. "We are all aware of the extrajudicial killings, the torture and the rights abuses that went on, but none of that is in the indictment." Lawyers for the families of Kurds killed during that time have asked that the Ergenekon investigation be broadened, but prosecutors have been reticent. Critics say their unwillingness suggests that some aspects of recent Turkish history are still off-limits. "This case gives Turkey a chance to make clear that it will hold security forces accountable for abuse," says Benjamin Ward, associate Europe and Central Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "But that can only happen if the investigation follows the evidence wherever — and to whomever — it leads."

Given its scope, the trial could take months, even years. Key to its success is the degree to which prosecutors can prove an operational conspiracy — whose existence the defendants strenuously deny. Pamuk is inclined to believe the allegations, and sees the trial as crucial to the prospects for Turkish democracy. "Some of the press are belittling this investigation," the reticent writer said in a rare recent TV appearance. "But these men killed people. They plotted to kill others. I don't like to discuss politics but this is a fact. This organisation is very real."

Aswat al-Iraq

October 25, 2008

Kurds prefer decentralization in running their region

IRAQ / Aswat al-Iraq: Kurdish lawmakers agree that the decentralization system is the best model to run Iraq's Kurdistan region, underling that centralization encourages financial corruption, bureaucracy, and hampers implementing projects.

Head of the Green List Koustan Mohamed said her list has rejected the draft law presented by the Kurdish government to the Parliament last month. "

The provincial councils law envisages a lot of centralization," she told Aswat al-Iraq. "The draft law presented by the government envisages a lot of centralization, while the one presented by the provincial councils has much more decentralization. We, a legal committee in the Kurdish Parliament, support the decentralization administration not for the provincial councils only but also for the regions and districts too," Mohamed noted.

President of Iraq's Kurdistan region Massoud Barzani visited the Kurdish Parliament last week in an attempt to render the law a success.

According to information received by Aswat al-Iraq, the president discussed the bill and the parliament's chairmanship and the legal committee clarified their opinion.

She asserted the importance of not concentrating all powers in the federal government, explaining that the Sulaimaniya provincial council knows the city's needs more than the Council of Ministers.

"The administrative corruption increases when the power became more centralized," she underlined. For his part, Nouri al-Talabani, an independent lawmaker, expressed his happiness for the most of the Kurdish lawmakers' support to the decentralization system.

"The provinces should have the right to map out their own plans in education, health and social fields," al-Talabani said.

Salar Baseera, law professor at the Law and Political Science Faculty at the Sulaimaniya University, said the provincial council in the democratic system needs decentralization because it works not to turn the federal government into a dictator and a bureaucratic authority.

Erbil to Tehran: Containment or mutual relations

Kurdistan President Massoud Barzani traveled to Tehran, the capital city of Iran, upon an official invitation of President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad. Unlike Turkey, Iran officially recognizes the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and has a consulate in Erbil, the capital city of Kurdistan Region.

There are a number of crucial issues that are on the agenda between the two presidents, including the strategic agreement that is negotiated between Iraq and the U.S.; the activities of * PJAK (the Free Life Party in Kurdistan) in Iran and their military camps in Iraqi Kurdistan, and the status of the arrested Iranian officials in Erbil by the U.S. last year.

Iran is aware of the strategic importance of any strategic agreement between Iraq and the U.S. with its possible implications on Iran. Despite the fact that the agreement has yet to be finalized and signed between the two sides, Iran fears that its influence in Iraq would be diminished and the soil of Iraq may be used as a launch pad by the U.S. in a possible military confrontation with Iran.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, (L), welcomes President of the semiautonomous Kurdistan region in northern Iraq, Massoud Barzani, for their meeting in Tehran, Iran, Thursday, Oct. 23, 2008

Kurdistan Region has a lengthy border with Iranian Kurdistan and the position of the KRG in the eventuality of a U.S.-Iran military conflict would be decisive not only due to Kurdis-



Iraq's Kurdistan region president Massoud Barzani traveled to Tehran, the capital city of Iran, upon an official invitation of President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad.

tan's border with Iranian Kurdistan but also due to the fact that the KRG and political Kurdish parties have considerable leverage over the Kurds in Iran. Iran has long relations with Iraqi Kurds, but perhaps the bitterest memory of Iraqi Kurds with Iran is the infamous Algeria agreement between Iran and Iraq in 1975, which brought disaster to the Kurdish national movement in Iraqi Kurdistan led by legendary Kurdish national leader Mustafa Barzani, the father of Masoud Barzani.

Iran, unlike other neighboring countries of the KRG, has a kind of mild but cunning policy toward Iraqi Kurdistan and its own Kurdish community. Iran has never denied the existence of the Kurdish identity and a small region within Iranian Kurdistan officially called Kurdistan, whereas use of "Kurdistan" still is taboo in Turkey. Iran, however, has not been too happy to see full-fledged Kurdish nationalism either in Iraqi, Turkish, or Iranian Kurdistan. The difference between Iran and Turkey with respect

to their approach to the Kurdish national movement is that Iran mostly resorts to containment policy whereas Turkey aims to destroy it from its root.

Iran's interests in Iraqi Kurdistan at this particular period is mainly oriented to its own national security as it perceives the KRG as a strong partner of the U.S. in Iraq and thus it is exerting pressure on Kurds at least to make them remain indifferent in the eventuality of any military conflict with the U.S. However, prior to the meeting with Ahmedinejad Thursday, Barzani in a press conference on Wednesday with Iranian Foreign Ministry, Manuchehr Mottaki, in Tehran, stated that the strategic agreement between Iraq and US is the best agreement that Iraq is going to sign. With this statement Barzani sent his message to top Iranian officials his stance on the issue of US-Iraq strategic agreement.

Iran has also been anxious about the activities of PJAK and the rumors that the U.S. provides logistical and military support to it despite the fact that there is no concrete evidence to support the claim.

Recent tension between the KRG and the Iraqi central government led by al-Maliki on the issue of troop deployment in Khanaqin and other disputed areas is attributed by some commentators to Iran to corner and pressure the KRG through Iran's Shiite supporters in Iraq. It is not a big secret that Iran has great influence on Shiites in Iraq.



Kurdistan Region Presidency

24 October, 2008

President Barzani in Iran: we support the latest draft agreement between Iraq and the US

KRP.org, 24 Oct. 2008

KURDISTAN REGION President Masoud Barzani returns home on 23 October 2008, after an official 3-day visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The President, who was accompanied by a delegation of Kurdistan Region political party leaders, was received at Tehran airport by Manuchehr Mottaki, Iran's foreign minister.

The two later held a joint press conference.

Full transcript of the joint press conference of President Barzani and Iran's Foreign Minister Mottaki in Tehran, 23 October 2008

Mottaki: I thank Mr. Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Region, for accepting our invitation and I welcome him to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Barzani and Talabani are two famous individuals from Iraqi Kurdistan who, along with their Iraqi brothers, fought against the dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein. During that same time, their Iranian brothers were fighting against the corrupt regime of the Shah. Our relations with our Iraqi Kurdish brothers started a long time ago. In the last 30 years, since the Islamic revolution, the Islamic Republic of Iran has always supported the legitimate rights of the people of Iraq and our dear sisters and brothers in Iraqi Kurdistan.



After the collapse of the dictatorial regime of Saddam, because of the desire of the leaders of the two sides, the relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq took on a new dimension. The Islamic Republic of Iran supported the will of the Iraqi people and supported the first elected Iraqi government after the foreign forces

[Coalition Provisional Authority]. The government of Maliki, which is made up of people that support the territorial integrity of Iraq and that tries to protect Iraq, deserves respect; and at this critical time, the Iraqi leaders are holding on to this position.

In our meeting with Mr. Barzani, we discussed ways of cooperation between the two countries, and the special economic relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Kurdistan, and the projects under implementation in the Region. We reaffirmed the importance of our continued relations. We also discussed the tragic event that took place in Erbil, Iraq, in which the American forces arrested the staff of the consulate of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Mr. Barzani, as he has stated before, expressed his concern about this event and he described the event in a telling way "this action showed disrespect to us firstly before it showed disrespect to Iran". He has worked to free those businessmen and diplomats of the Islamic Republic.

This was a brief summary of our meeting and I apologize for taking too much time. We will hear Mr. Barzani's remarks and then will take your questions.

President Barzani: Thank you your Excellency. I would like to once again thank all the leadership and our friends in the Islamic Republic of Iran for their invitation and their warm hospitality and generosity. The Islamic Republic of Iran has always welcomed us and our people and it has supported the people of Iraqi Kurdistan when it faced genocide.

This was a good opportunity to exchange our views with the Minister and to discuss a number of important issues of common interest. I would like to reiterate that the Kurdistan Region is committed to the unity [territorial integrity] of Iraq. Obviously we have problems but we always have a constitution to consult. The Kurdistan Region is an active part of Iraq and it has a legal and constitutional status. The Kurdistan Region is working for a new Iraq, one that is democratic, federal and pluralistic with a constitution. We believe that the Islamic Republic of Iran can play a positive role in supporting Iraq in many ways. We expect nothing less from our brothers in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Thank you.

Question: A question for President Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Region. While the Iraqi government has some reservations on some points in the security agreement [draft] between Iraq and the US, Iraqi Kurdistan is wholeheartedly supporting this agreement. But when it comes to a point in the draft about Iraq being able to enter into agreements with regional countries, you have objections too? Second question for Mr. Mottaki, how far is Tehran prepared to go to accept the draft agreement between your neighbor Iraq and the US?

President Barzani: With regards to the security agreement between Iraq and the US, the position of the Kurdistan Region is clear. In our last meeting of the Political Council for National Security [Iraq] in Baghdad three days ago, we discussed the agreement [draft]; the ministers of interior, defense and finance were present. They looked at the agreement from a technical [practical] point of view. The question we need to pose is: what are the alternatives? Currently, the American forces or the Multi-National Forces have almost total powers and they can do whatever they want. The alternatives include extending the status quo, which means the Multi-National Forces will continue to have their current authority, which we can almost say it is total. Or they [Multi-National Forces] do a sudden and complete withdrawal. But the Iraqi security forces are still not capable of taking full security responsibilities on their own.

The other danger is that Iraq has many debts, amounting to one trillion dollars, according to the finance minister. If these debts are to be repaid, Iraq would find itself in a quagmire of problems. It is based on these observations, and not on any political outbidding or personal or special prejudices that we believe the latest draft agreement does not impair Iraq's sovereignty. Although no agreement between two countries is perfect, any agreement must respect the interest of both countries. The draft also specifies a withdrawal date of 2011.

As for legal jurisdiction, a good compromise solution is identified, which gives the Iraqi courts certain powers. This is why we believe the latest draft agreement is reasonable and does not affect the sovereignty of Iraq and we support it. Once again, I would like to say that the agreement is better than the alternatives. As for other agreements [between Iraq and other countries], I would like to say that the Kurdistan Region is an important and active part of the new Iraq; the Kurdistan Region must be consulted and must be privy to any agreements. There must be no regional agreement that concerns the Kurds or that threatens the Kurds.

Mottaki: There are two points worth mentioning here; the placing of Iraq under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter for which there is no longer any reason to extend. In both meetings of Istanbul and Kuwait, Mr. Maliki reiterated that Iraq must get out of Chapter 7. The Americans cannot [????]. As for the security agreement, as you know, this must be discussed in Iraq's national assembly [parliament], the government, and Iraq's national security council. We hope that any decision will take into account public opinion as well as the opinion of religious leaders and will be based on the interests of the Iraqi people. Iraq is facing a historic decision and we hope it will make the best decision.

Question: First question for President Barzani. What was discussed in this meeting and how do you think the points raised in this meeting could have an effect on the future of the Kurdistan Region? Second question is for Mr. Mottaki. How do you see the role of the Kurdistan Region in the area? For strong relations between the Kurdistan Region and the Islamic Republic of Iran, what demands does the Islamic Republic have on the Kurdistan Region?

President Barzani: Mr. Minister just talked about the points raised in our meeting. Obviously we will have more meetings. We believe that there are many common issues on which we can cooperate, whether as the Kurdistan Region and the Islamic Republic of Iran or as our country, Iraq, and the Islamic Republic of Iran. We hope that this visit will pave the way for more and better cooperation.

Mottaki: Iraqi Kurdistan, together with all the other regions in the south, in the east and in the west, constitutes the great Iraqi people. Protecting the territorial integrity of Iraq is a strong foundation for securing the independence and development of this country, Iraq, which is a neighbor and is important in the region. We were pleased to hear Mr. Barzani's views during our discussions. We would like to increase our cooperation and relations with the whole of Iraq. The [Iraqi] border areas, some of which fall within Kurdistan, some in the central Iraq and some in the southern Iraq, provide a good opportunity for this cooperation. As you know, we have agreed on new borders with the new Iraq and the new border points will pave the way for trade, travel, and economic activity between the two countries. There are many opportunities for economic cooperation, investment, and trade in Kurdistan. We will try our best to improve our relations with Iraq. Our trade with Iraq totals 3 billion dollars and with more planning and cooperation we could increase this to 5 billion dollars.

Question: I have two questions for you Mr. Barzani. You and Mr. Zebari have said several times that the agreement would be signed. But it hasn't been signed yet. If it is not signed, do you not believe that there is no coordination between you and the government of Maliki? The second question, if the agreement is signed, what guarantees do you have that Iraq will no longer remain under Chapter 7 [UN Charter]?

President Barzani: Firstly, I would like to correct a factual error. I have never said the agreement would be signed. On the contrary, I have always said that it would be difficult for the agreement to be approved. But the latest draft agreement is better than all the alternatives. No one wants his country's sovereignty to be compromised but this is the de facto situation. This draft agreement has set a date of June 2009 for the withdrawal of American forces from all Iraqi cities. They will need Iraqi permission for any military operations. All foreign forces will leave Iraq by the end of 2011. As for legal jurisdiction, Iraq will have an important role to play. I once again repeat that the latest draft is better than all the other alternatives on the table.

I don't want to go into details but in any case, the agreement would go before the parliament and it is the parliament that will have the final say. The parliament will also decide on Chapter 7 [UN Charter].

Question: I would like you to give a frank answer to my question. What is your position regarding the fighting between Turkey and the PKK and between Iran and PJAK? Would you be in favor of joint action by Iran, Iraq and Turkey? Would you work to stop the activities of the PKK?

President Barzani: Firstly, we absolutely never support violence. We believe violence should never be used and we grieve when there are casualties whichever side they may be from. We believe this issue needs a peaceful and political resolution. We will do all we can for peace, security and stability in the region. We will cooperate with Turkey and Iran to find a suitable resolution for this problem. But we believe that resorting to military means is not the right solution.

Irak Les violences antichrétiennes se sont multipliées

en octobre à Mossoul, la capitale du nord

Les chrétiens irakiens créent des comités de défense

BAGDAD
ENVOYÉ SPÉCIAL

Au moins quinze tués en autant de jours d'octobre. « *Priez pour nous* », supplie Mgr Shimoun Wardouni, évêque de Bagdad. Dans l'enfer sanglant qu'est devenu l'Irak, et en dépit de l'amélioration de la sécurité, la mort de quinze personnes, comparée aux 853 musulmans tués en septembre à travers le pays (trois fois moins qu'en septembre 2007), constituerait presque un bilan anodin. Sauf qu'elle eut pour théâtre une seule ville, Mossoul, et une seule communauté, celle des chrétiens. La campagne apparemment lancée contre eux a provoqué la fuite, dans les villages alentour, de plus de la moitié de la communauté restante dans la « *ville des églises* » : 2 400 familles selon Bagdad, soit environ 12 000 personnes.

« *Au rythme d'émigration actuel, s'alarme « Abou Ceasar », un ingénieur rencontré sur le parvis de Notre-Dame-de-la-Grâce, une église syriaque (catholique) au cœur de Bagdad, il n'y aura bientôt plus d'Assyriens dans le berceau même du christianisme moyen-oriental !* » Nouri Al-Maliki, le premier ministre chiite qui recevait une nouvelle fois, mercredi 22 octobre, une délégation de prélats très inquiets, a répété sa promesse de « *tout faire pour protéger la communauté* ». Problème : la troisième cité d'Irak (plus d'un million d'habitants), qui est aussi la plus ethniquement et confessionnellement « *mélangée* » du pays est, depuis six mois, la plus dangereuse de la région, théâtre d'une sanglante offensive irako-américaine contre les « *dernières concentrations de militants d'Al-Qaïda* » qui ne semble pas donner les résultats escomptés. Un nouvel attentat y a tué quatre personnes – musulmanes – mercredi.

Originaire de Mossoul, « *Abou Ceasar* » est terrorisé pour sa famille restée sur place. Comme presque tous les descendants des convertis de saint Thomas, qui y aurait vécu brièvement, en route pour les Indes, il y a 2 000 ans, sur le site biblique de Ninive à côté duquel fut élevée Mossoul, notre quadragénaire bien mis n'en finit pas d'égrener les attentats et assassinats dont ses coreligionnaires ont été victimes depuis cinq ans.

Numériquement faibles et politiquement inexistantes dans l'Irak moderne, les chrétiens se flattent de former « *la plus ancienne communauté religieuse d'Irak* ». Certains de ses membres parlent encore

Des minorités menacées

Chiïtes (58%)

Arabes
Kurdes
Turcs

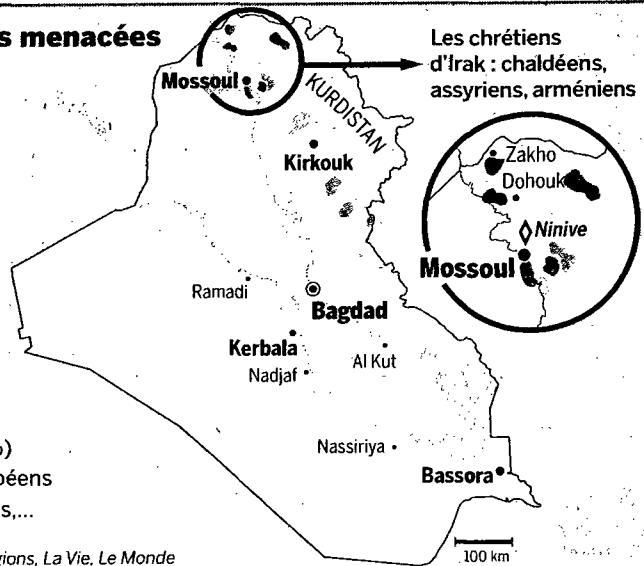
Sunnites (39%)

Arabes
Kurdes
Turcs

Minorités religieuses (3%)

Chrétiens (2%)
Mandéens, sabéens
Yazidis, yarsans,...

Source : L'Atlas des religions, La Vie, Le Monde



une langue voisine de l'araméen biblique.

Jusqu'en 2003, Saddam Hussein, qui les protégeait, notamment parce qu'ils étaient trop faibles pour présenter une menace à son pouvoir, les évaluait à près d'un million. Combien en reste-t-il ? « *On ne sait pas vraiment* », reconnaît l'évêque chaldéen de Bagdad, Mgr Shimoun Wardouni. « *Peut-être un demi-million, peut-être moins* », c'est-à-dire moins de 2 % de la population nationale, avance Yonadam Kanna, l'un des deux élus du petit Parti assyrien (chrétien) qui siègent parmi les 275 députés du Parlement.

Pour lui, pas de doute, Al-Qaïda est le coupable tout désigné des meurtres de Mossoul. Tout le monde n'est pas de cet avis. Certains accusent les chiïtes, qui se sont beaucoup implantés dans des villages chrétiens ces dernières années, et qui chercheraient à s'étendre.

Mercredi à Bagdad, Mgr Wardouni a demandé au chef du gouvernement d'envoyer « *plutôt des renforts militaires* », et non la police – largement dominée par les chiïtes – « *parce que nos gens ont plus confiance dans l'armée* ». Et puis il y a le facteur kurde. Interrogées par un envoyé spécial du *Times* de Londres, certaines victimes survivantes des violences à Mossoul pointent plutôt du doigt « *des éléments kurdes* » qui agiraient ainsi pour pousser les chrétiens, largement implantés dans et autour du Kurdistan autonome, à se solidariser politiquement avec

cette autre communauté minoritaire (20 % de la population) qui cherche à étendre la superficie qu'elle contrôle.

« Prudents comme le serpent »

Dans plusieurs villages autour de Mossoul – qui jouxte le Kurdistan mais ne lui appartient pas – des « *comités de défense chrétiens* », financés et organisés « *à titre personnel* », par un membre du gouvernement kurde autonome, Sarkis Aghajan Mamandou, se multiplient. Des armes sont fournies et des salaires mensuels de 250 à 300 dollars sont versés par M. Sarkis. Dans quel but ? C'est la question que se pose Mgr Wardouni. « *Tout cela est très bien, nous dit-il, cela protège les gens et fournit des salaires* » dans une région où le chômage touche les deux tiers des populations. « *Mais il ne faut pas qu'il y ait des conditions politiques à cette aide.* »

L'idée d'intégrer les chrétiens au Kurdistan lui paraît « *très dangereuse* » pour eux. « *Notre histoire est nationale, nous ne pouvons pas vivre dans un ghetto*, dit Mgr Wardouni. *Nous voulons dépendre, comme tous les Irakiens, du gouvernement central de Bagdad. Nous devons être humbles comme la colombe et prudents comme le serpent...* » ■

PATRICE CLAUDE

22 octobre 2008

L'Humanité

Ergenekon, le procès qui passionne les Turcs

Turquie . Des militaires, journalistes, universitaires, ultranationalistes et mafieux membres d'un réseau clandestin sont accusés d'assassinats et de tentatives de coup d'État.

C'est un étrange procès que celui qui s'est ouvert lundi à Silivri, près d'Istanbul. Un de ces « procès de masse » dont la Turquie des généraux eut longtemps la triste pratique, dans les années noires des coups d'État militaires. Sauf qu'au lieu des syndicalistes et militants des partis de gauche alors jugés par centaines, ce sont d'anciens généraux et autres capitaines qui se trouvent sur les bancs des accusés comme instigateurs du complot organisé par Ergenekon. Le principal inculpé est un ex-général de gendarmerie Veli Küçük.

Il y a aussi, parmi les 86 inculpés de ce procès fleuve, des civils de tous milieux : deux ex-rédacteurs en chef de Cumuriyet, le président de la chambre de commerce d'Ankara, un ancien recteur d'université et un politique : Dogu Perincek, chef du Parti des travailleurs, un groupe gauchiste devenu ultranationaliste, accusé d'avoir préparé une « insurrection armée ».

Que peuvent avoir en commun des gens aussi dissemblables ? L'acte d'accusation affirme qu'ils sont liés par un pacte secret - Ergenekon - dont le dessein est de créer le chaos

en Turquie afin de justifier un coup d'État militaire contre le gouvernement du parti islamique AKP. L'organisation aurait été créée en 2002, après la victoire électorale de l'AKP, par le général en chef de la 1re armée et celui de la gendarmerie, avec la complicité de l'amiral Ornek, chef des forces navales, qui a tout noté dans son journal.

Les chefs d'inculpation ? Préparation de deux coups d'État en 2004 et 2007, assassinat de personnalités comme le journaliste arménien Hrant Dink, trois protestants massacrés à Malatya en 2007, un juge du Conseil d'État. Projets d'attentats contre l'écrivain Orhan Pamuk et plusieurs personnalités kurdes. Trafic d'armes, vols de documents, provocation à la haine...

Certains journalistes laïcs accusent le pouvoir d'avoir voulu se débarrasser d'opposants gênants. C'est le cas de Mine Kirikkanat (1) : « Nous connaissons depuis longtemps en Turquie l'existence de ce qu'on appelle "l'État profond", une bande d'assassins, de racketteurs et de mafieux qui, avec l'aide occulte de l'État, ont organisé des dizaines de meurtres et d'attentats, prétendument

pour lutter contre le terrorisme. Cette bande de malfaiteurs a plusieurs fois défrayé la chronique : en 1996 avec l'affaire de Süsurluk, en 2005 avec celle de Semdinli (2). À chaque fois, le scandale a été étouffé, et la justice n'est pas passée. C'est le général Evren (3) le principal responsable de cet état de choses. Lui et ses amis ont mis tout en place dès les années 1970. Depuis lors, il y a eu en Turquie plus de 500 meurtres non élucidés : journalistes, hommes d'affaires, militants des droits de l'homme, Kurdes... La mère d'un des inculpés a raconté à la presse que son fils se vantait d'avoir tué lui-même 93 personnes ! Ergenekon entre dans ce cadre. Ce serait une bonne chose que la lumière soit faite sur cette sombre histoire et cette pourriture qui empoisonne le climat politique depuis des années. Le problème, c'est que l'AKP en profite pour faire un méli-mélo incroyable et mettre dans la marmite tout ce qui la gêne et combat sa politique. »

L'avenir dira si ce doute est fondé. Et si ce procès ira jusqu'au bout pour mettre fin à des pratiques dont les principales victimes sont la gauche, les militants des droits de

l'homme et les Kurdes. Au cours de la première journée, plusieurs députés kurdes et le maire de Diyarbakir ont d'ailleurs rejoint le camp des plaignants, de même que l'Association des droits de l'homme de Turquie. La salle d'audience s'étant révélée trop exigüe pour accueillir tous les avocats, le procès a été scindé en deux : les 46 inculpés déjà arrêtés sont jugés en premier. Prochaine audience, le 23 octobre.

(1) Mine G. Kirikkanat est l'auteur de la Malédiction de Constantin, paru en 2006 chez Métailié, un roman politico-policier qui dénonce l'emprise américaine sur la Turquie.

(2) À Süsurluk, en 1996, un accident a mis en lumière les relations entre un ministre du gouvernement de Tansu Ciller, l'armée, le crime organisé et l'extrême droite.

À Semdinli, en 2005, un attentat à la bombe attribué au PKK s'est révélé être l'oeuvre de gendarmes.

(3) Auteur du coup d'État militaire de 1980, il a dirigé la Turquie jusqu'en 1989. Françoise Germain-Robin

AFP

25 REBELLES KURDES TUÉS DANS UNE FRAPPE AÉRIENNE TURQUE (ARMÉE)

ANKARA, 24 oct 2008 (AFP) -

VINGT-CINQ rebelles kurdes ont été tués la semaine dernière dans une frappe aérienne de l'armée turque visant des refuges des séparatistes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le nord de l'Irak, a affirmé vendredi un porte-parole de l'armée à Ankara.

L'armée a reçu "des informations concordantes de plusieurs sources de renseignements indiquant que 25 terroristes ont été neutralisés lors de la frappe (aérienne) du 17 octobre", a déclaré au cours d'une conférence de presse le général Metin Gurak.

Ces frappes aériennes avaient visé la région des monts Qandil, frontaliers de la Turquie, dans l'extrême nord de l'Irak, qui abritent des bases-arrières des rebelles séparatistes du PKK, en lutte depuis 24 ans contre le pouvoir central turc.

De nombreux rebelles ont été blessés dans l'attaque, a ajouté le général Gurak, dont les déclarations n'ont pas été confirmées de source indépendante.

Selon le bilan de l'agence de presse Firat, proche du PKK, quatre rebelles avaient été tués, tous membres du "Parti de la vie libre au Kurdistan" (Pejak,

une organisation indépendantiste kurde iranienne liée au PKK.

La Turquie est confrontée ces dernières semaines à un regain de violences après une opération des rebelles kurdes qui ont attaqué le 3 octobre une caserne à la frontière irakienne, tuant 17 soldats.

L'aviation turque a depuis attaqué à plusieurs reprises les bases arrières des rebelles dans le nord de l'Irak.

Ankara dénonce régulièrement l'utilisation par les rebelles du PKK de bases situées dans ces montagnes du nord de l'Irak, frontalières de la Turquie et de l'Iran.

Au début du mois, le Parlement turc a prolongé d'un an son mandat au gouvernement l'autorisant à mener des opérations militaires transfrontalières contre les bases irakiennes du PKK.

Considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, l'UE et les Etats-Unis, le PKK mène depuis 1984 une lutte armée pour l'autonomie du Sud-Est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes. Le conflit a fait environ 44.000 morts, selon les chiffres officiels.

AFP

INCENDIE À L'AMBASSADE DE TURQUIE EN FINLANDE: 5 HOMMES PLACÉS EN DÉTENTION

HELSINKI, 24 oct 2008 (AFP) -

UN TRIBUNAL finlandais a placé en détention provisoire pour deux semaines cinq hommes soupçonnés de tentative d'incendie criminelle à l'ambassade de Turquie, a-t-on appris vendredi de source policière.

Agés de 16 à 20 ans, les cinq hommes, de nationalité turque dont certains sont d'origine kurde, avaient été arrêtés lundi peu après les faits.

Un tribunal d'Helsinki "les a placés en détention et tous les documents concernant cette affaire ont été classés", a déclaré à l'AFP Markku Stenberg, inspecteur de la police d'Helsinki.

Un procureur devra décider avant le 30 décembre si les cinq hommes doivent être inculpés.

Dans la nuit de lundi à mardi, une porte du bâtiment a été incendiée avant que le feu ne soit rapidement détecté puis éteint par une patrouille de police.

Un employé de l'ambassade, légèrement blessé, a cependant dû être hospitalisé.

L'ambassade de Turquie avait alors imputé cet acte à l'organisation PKK (rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan).

Quelques heures avant l'incendie, 200 Kurdes avaient manifesté devant la

mission diplomatique en soutien au chef rebelle kurde Abdullah Öcalan, emprisonné en Turquie depuis 1999.

Considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, l'UE et Washington,

le PKK mène depuis 1984 une lutte armée pour l'autonomie du Sud-Est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes.



UN CHEF MILITAIRE AMÉRICAIN EN IRAK PROMET DE COMBATTRE LES REBELLES KURDES

BAGDAD, 25 oct 2008 (AFP) –

LE GENERAL Raymond Odierno, chef des forces américaines en Irak, a discuté en Turquie avec l'armée turque des moyens de combattre ensemble les rebelles kurdes du PKK, a rapporté samedi un communiqué militaire américain.

Le général Odierno a rencontré vendredi le général turc Hasan Igsiz, chef d'état major adjoint de l'armée turque, pour s'entretenir de l'aide des forces américaines à la Turquie dans sa lutte contre le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), ajoute le texte.

"Le PKK est une organisation terroriste et a commis des crimes abominables contre le peuple turque", a souligné le général Odierno.

"Je suis engagé à travailler avec le gouvernement turc et le gouvernement irakien pour empêcher ce genre d'atrocités", a-t-il encore dit selon le commu-

niqué.

Le texte cite une série d'attaques du PKK le mois dernier qui a causé la mort de dizaine de soldats et civils turcs, provoquant un tollé des dirigeants turcs qui ont appelé à combattre ce groupe.

Le communiqué affirme que le général Odierno s'est engagé à apporter un soutien technique et à partager des informations pour prévenir de nouvelles attaques du PKK qui dispose de bases arrière dans le nord de l'Irak.

"Il y a des choses que nous pouvons faire rapidement pour protéger les vies innocentes et nous sommes engagés à soutenir nos partenaires turcs et irakiens dans leur efforts", a-t-il dit.

Vendredi, l'armée turque a annoncé avoir tué 25 rebelles dans un raid aérien la semaine dernière dans le nord de l'Irak.



ACCORD USA/IRAK: BARZANI RENCONTRE RICE À WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON, 28 oct 2008 (AFP) –

LE PRESIDENT de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien, Massoud Barzani, a discuté mardi à Washington de l'accord avec le gouvernement de Bagdad sur la présence militaire américaine en Irak, sur lequel les négociations piétinent.

"La question de l'accord stratégique a été le thème principal de la rencontre", a déclaré M. Barzani à la presse, à sa sortie du département d'Etat où il venait de rencontrer la chef de la diplomatie américaine.

L'accord "a été discuté en détail", a-t-il ajouté.

Le dirigeant kurde n'a toutefois pas précisé quels étaient les amendements proposés par l'Irak au projet d'accord Sofa (Status of forces agreement) régissant la présence militaire américaine en Irak après le 31 décembre, date à laquelle expire le mandat de l'ONU sous lequel agit la force dirigée par les Etats-Unis.

La Maison Blanche a exprimé mardi de fortes réticences à renégocier cet accord, après que le gouvernement irakien eut annoncé que le Premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki allait soumettre aux Américains une nouvelle version amendée de l'accord discuté par les deux gouvernements.

"Nous pensons qu'il s'agit d'un bon accord, la barre sera donc placée haut" pour d'éventuelles renégociations, a dit un porte-parole de la Maison Blanche, Gordon Johndroe.

M. Barzani a précisé avoir également évoqué avec Mme Rice l'opération menée mardi par l'aviation turque dans le nord de l'Irak visant des positions des rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

"Nous avons discuté des développements positifs auxquels nous assistons dans l'intérêt des deux parties", a-t-il déclaré sans plus de précision.

Un porte-parole du département d'Etat, Robert Wood, a confirmé que les deux responsables avaient évoqué ces deux dossiers, soulignant la contribution positive que M. Barzani y a apporté.

"Ils ont discuté du soutien du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan à l'accord stratégique et au Sofa, ainsi que des efforts de coopération du gouvernement régional avec la Turquie au sujet du PKK", a indiqué le porte-parole à l'AFP.

Ankara dénonce régulièrement l'utilisation par les rebelles du PKK de bases situées dans ces montagnes du nord de l'Irak, frontalières de la Turquie et de l'Iran.

Considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, l'UE et les Etats-Unis, le PKK mène depuis 1984 une lutte armée pour l'autonomie du Sud-Est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes. Le conflit a fait environ 44.000 morts, selon les chiffres officiels.

Selon M. Wood, Mme Rice a également pressé M. Barzani de faciliter l'adoption par le parlement irakien d'une loi sur le partage des revenus du pétrole irakien, bloquée depuis plus d'un an en raison d'importantes divisions entre les députés des régions productrices, comme le Kurdistan, et ceux du reste du pays.

"Ils ont aussi discuté des récents événements politiques en Irak, notamment le soutien du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan à une représentation des minorités aux prochaines élections provinciales et la nécessité pour le gouvernement régional de coopérer avec le gouvernement fédéral irakien dans le cadre constitutionnel pour mettre un terme à l'impasse au parlement sur le projet de loi sur les hydrocarbures", a-t-il indiqué.

Le Monde

29 octobre 2008

Ankara doit ravalier sa fierté et faire appel au FMI

A TURQUIE court droit à la catastrophe. Ce sera la deuxième fois en moins de dix ans, mais le gouvernement turc tient à gérer la crise tout seul. L'AKP, le parti au pouvoir, est las des interventions étrangères et se montre réticent à solliciter l'aide du Fonds monétaire international (FMI). Voilà qui ne va guère rassurer des investisseurs déjà nerveux.

En 2001, la devise s'était écroulée, les banques avaient été massacrées, les vannes du crédit s'étaient fermées et l'économie était tombée

en panne. La Turquie ne peut pas se permettre de revivre ce scénario.

L'investissement direct étranger, l'expansion boursière et les prêts accordés au secteur privé depuis d'autres pays ont nourri la croissance pendant vingt-six trimestres. On estime à 70 milliards de dollars (55 milliards d'euros) la dette des entreprises libellée en devises étrangères. Toute nouvelle faiblesse de la livre turque, qui a déjà perdu le quart de sa valeur face au dollar cette année, conduirait nombre d'entreprises à la faillite.

Le cours élevé du pétrole a creusé le déficit courant, qui culmine à 5,7 % du produit intérieur brut cette année. L'inflation a atteint 10 %. Des analystes pronostiquent pour 2009 une croissance de 2,5 %, soit la moitié de celle observée en 2007.

Mais le gouvernement se refuse à faire appel de nouveau au FMI : le Fonds le contraindrait à la rigueur, ce qui limiterait ses possibilités d'investissement dans les régions kurdes ; les municipales de mars approchant, Ankara veut aussi garder une marge de manoeuvre

financière ; enfin, l'AKP s'est appuyé sur une croissance miraculeuse pour se vanter d'avoir affranchi le pays de la tutelle du FMI.

L'AKP devrait ravalier sa fierté. Les programmes du FMI mis en place par le passé n'ont pas brillé par leur efficacité, mais les autorités turques n'y sont pas pour rien : elles n'ont pas tenu tous leurs engagements. Une intervention massive et pertinente du FMI devrait suffire à éviter un décrochage de la monnaie et écarter toute nouvelle crise.

Kurdish Prime Minister predicts US troops will remain in Iraq until 2020

Deborah Haynes, Irbil

Baghdad is unlikely to sign an agreement with Washington on the future of US forces in Iraq by a critical year-end deadline, according to the Prime Minister of the country's largely autonomous Kurdish north.

Nechirvan Barzani also told The Times that a conditions-based target contained in a draft version of the status of forces agreement for all US soldiers to exit the country within three years was "unrealistic" given the limited capabilities of the fledgling Iraqi Army. Instead, the Prime Minister, who is No 2 in the Kurdish region after Masoud Barzani, the President, predicted a US military presence of some form until 2020.

Iraq's Cabinet this week decided to ask the United States for changes to the text to the frustration of the Bush administration. US officials have warned of dire consequences to security in the country if an accord is not reached in time.

Mr Barzani said he thought that the Iraqi announcement was mere posturing by politicians wanting to demonstrate their independence from US influence.

"These people probably think that with slogans they can run a country and I believe this is wrong," the Prime Minister said. "They want to be given the credit as heroes or considered as heroes."

He also blamed "external interference", without naming specific countries. Neighbouring Iran, which is close to the Shia Arab parties that hold the majority in Iraq's Government, has been a vociferous opponent of the pact.

Asked whether he thought that the accord would be signed by the end of 2008, when a United Nations Security Council mandate authorising the presence of foreign troops in Iraq is due to expire, Mr Barzani said: "I don't think so. Now



they try to make it more complicated so it is not signed."

Abandoning the year-end deadline would force Iraq to return to the United Nations to ask for an emergency extension of the UN mandate, something that has been rolled over every year since the 2003 invasion and serves as a constant reminder that Iraq has not fully regained its sovereignty.

There are no guarantees, however, that the UN Security Council, which includes countries such as Russia that opposed the war, will approve the extension without requesting some new conditions.

"You have to think about what are the other options available," said the Prime Minister of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), which controls Iraq's three northern-most provinces. "What are the alternatives?"

Mr Barzani said that the United States had made more concessions with the Iraq agreement than with many of the other countries with which

it has such a military accord, including Japan, Germany and South Korea.

"We at the KRG believe that this is very much in the interests of Iraq. Probably it does not meet all the aspirations and expectations of Iraq, but this is very honourable to Iraq," he said.

In another twist, there has been speculation that some Iraqi leaders would prefer to wait to sign an accord with the next US administration, rather than seal a deal with the incumbent George Bush, who is hugely unpopular in Iraq.

The Kurdish Prime Minister, however, warned that this was also unwise.

"I don't believe we Iraqis will be able to have a better deal with the new administration," he said, speaking from his office in a palatial mansion inside a compound on the outskirts of Irbil, the capital of Iraq's Kurdish north.

Most crucially, a timely agreement with the United States was required to ensure that security gains in Iraq are maintained into next year, said Mr Barzani.

"Is Iraq really in a position that it can run its own affairs without the support [of the US]?" he said. "Militarily this is absolutely not true."

It would take until 2020 before Iraqi forces are up to speed, he predicted. "They said all the coalition will leave Iraq by the end of 2011, I believe that this is a mistake. It is unrealistic. Iraq needs more support."

The Prime Minister said that responsibility should be given to the Iraqi police and army, but US-led forces should retain some sort of presence for support.

There is no US military presence in the Kurdish north of Iraq, which has enjoyed relative autonomy from Baghdad for almost two decades. It also escaped the sectarian conflict that consumed the rest of the country after the invasion.

Kurdistan villagers see flame of hope

Robin Pagnamenta in Erbil

Standing on his front porch, Karim Amin gazes out across a barren brown landscape until his eyes rest on a bulb of brilliant red flame punctuating the horizon.

"It makes me happy to see this," he says, smiling at the flare atop a gleaming new gas plant stretched out beneath him. "We hope it will finally bring us prosperity."

Mr Karim, an elderly farmer in a small Kurdish village, has been waiting a long time. Iraq's largest private sector investment opened this month, but more than 20 years ago, long before two companies from the United Arab Emirates decided to plough \$650 million into its construction, he and his neighbours were forced to flee — a victim of Saddam's genocide against the Kurds.

"In 1987, the Baathists came and killed many people, destroyed our village. I came



back three years ago but have had a bad life here. We hope things can now become better."

The new gas plant, already producing 75 million cu ft of gas a day, is one of the first

concrete signs that the economic fortunes of this troubled region are improving.

Continued wrangling over export licences between the central government in Baghdad and the Kurdish Regional Government means the gas being produced here will not be for export. Instead it will be used to feed two new power stations in Kurdistan, which together will generate 1,250MW of electricity — a step that the 4 million locals hope will finally end frequent power cuts.

Majid Jafar, the executive director of Crescent Petroleum — one of the project's two UAE backers — claims that the project "will provide important economic and social benefits for the Kurdistan region and all of Iraq".

As discussions continue in Baghdad about the development of Iraq's oil and gas wealth, this new project could be a sign of things to come.

NEXT STOP

On War's Outer Edge in Kurdish Iraq

By LIONEL BEEHNER

THE roses were in full bloom as throngs of women in flowery head scarves swooped in to claim their spots in Sami Rahman Park, a triangular slice of greenery on the outskirts of Erbil in northern Iraq. Older men clutched Muslim prayer beads. Children scurried about the playground. And couples lazily strolled along a pond. Except for the noise from a luxury hotel under construction, the park was an oasis of calm. But these grounds were not always so peaceful. The well-manicured park sits on a former detention center run by Saddam Hussein's regime where hundreds of Kurds were rounded up, detained and executed in the 1980s. So it might seem strange that the park is now being promoted as a tourist attraction.

While much of Iraq remains mired in war, the semi-autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq has enjoyed relative safety and prosperity, thanks to a no-fly-zone imposed by the United States in 1991 after the first gulf war. So instead of repairing oil fields and burying their dead, Iraqi Kurds have been erecting shiny hotels, opening amusement parks and trying to figure out how to lure tourists.

There is even a Ministry of Tourism, with a staff of more than 400 and a bare-bones Web site (www.tourismkurdistan.com) with color pictures and links to the region's thin infrastructure. And to show that it means business, it has broadcast a series of television commercials in the United States called "The Other Iraq" that depicts high-tech factories and happy children greeting American soldiers as liberators.

But nothing promotes Iraqi Kurdistan better as a tourist destination than its remarkable history and rugged landscape. Even though most of Iraq's cultural treasures lie to the south, where it's too dangerous to visit, the Kurdish region does not disappoint.

History buffs will appreciate a landscape roughly the size of Maryland, dotted with the ruins of Christian monasteries and Ottoman mosques. In the center of Erbil, the bustling capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, are the mud-caked walls of a citadel thought to be 6,000 years old and one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world.

Adventure seekers will also find plenty to do: The roaring waterfall at Gali Ali Bag, immortalized on the 5,000 dinar note, is a sight to behold. Amadiya, an ancient hilltop fortress, offers glimpses of a millennium-old Christian and Jewish settlement. And the snow-capped peaks of the majestic Zagros Mountains offer hikers amazing views of Turkey, Iran and Iraq.

Not without reason do guidebooks charitably call Iraqi Kurdistan the "Switzerland of the Middle East."

But Iraqi Kurds have another model in mind: Dubai. Fueled by petrodollars, a forest of construction cranes has sprouted in Erbil, seeking to transform this Middle Eastern city of 2.8 million into a premier shopping and entertainment hub.

On a clear blue day last fall, the dusty and chaotic streets of Erbil were filled with chain-smoking men picking over rickshaws stuffed with secondhand clothes and knockoff Birkenstocks at an outdoor market. At times, the pace of development bordered on the surreal. At the foot of the ancient citadel stood the \$1 billion Nishtiman Shopping Mall, a gleaming white complex with 6,000 planned shops that could not look more out of place next to the ramshackle souks and mud-brick houses.

To accommodate the region's newly wealthy, New Urbanist-style gated communities have been built with aspirational names like Dream City, English Village and American Village. Add to that 18-hole golf resorts, mountainside roller coasters and a \$300 million airport terminal, set to open in 2009 to allow more international



flights, and the Kurds' ambition to create a "mini Dubai" may not seem so far-fetched.

There's only one problem. This is still Iraq.

According to tourism officials, only a trickle of Westerners has vacationed in Iraqi Kurdistan — perhaps as few as several hundred since 2003. But that hasn't stopped several travel agencies from sensing an opportunity.

Terre Entière, a Paris-based agency, began organizing trips to the region this year. The response surpassed expectations. Almost all of its 25 slots to its coming Christmas tour, which cost about 2,150 euros (\$2,946 at \$1.37 to the euro), were sold out in a week, and there is a lot of interest in trips in 2009.

Interestingly, many in the tour group are not stubble-faced backpackers but graying retirees. Janet Moore, who runs Distant Horizons, a California-based travel agency that organizes tours of northern Iraq, said that she turned away a 96-year-old American woman last June. "You don't have to be in incredible shape, but there are a lot of steps to walk up at most of the sites," she said.

The larger issue, of course, is the continuing violence. As recently as last March, a bomb went off in Sulaimaniya, the second-biggest city in Iraqi Kurdistan, killing a security guard. A truck bomb in May 2007 outside a government office in Erbil left over a dozen dead and several more wounded. And earlier this month, the long-simmering tensions between Turkey and Kurdish separatist rebels erupted again when Turkish warplanes entered northern Iraq and bombed remote rebel bases, killing at least 15 Kurds.

Not surprisingly, the State Department still advises Americans against visiting the country, saying that terrorists and kidnappers "remain active throughout Iraq." Many European countries, including Britain and France, however, have relaxed their travel warnings and differentiate the Kurdish region from the rest of Iraq (Washington does not).

While Erbil is a far cry from Baghdad, signs of the war are impossible to avoid. Hotels are fenced off by concertina wire, vehicles are inspected by Kalashnikov-toting guards, and checkpoints are abundant. On a lesser note, tourists accustomed to high-end comforts may also find Kurdistan frustrating. Electricity is spotty, few locals speak English and latrines, even in some

hotels, consist of a hole in the floor.

But the friendliness, and pro-American sentiment, of many Kurds might make up for the poor infrastructure. Mention in a restaurant that you are from the United States and your meal may be gratis. And it is not uncommon for Kurds to invite Westerners to share home-cooked meals, even in inhospitable places.

On a cool Monday night last fall, at a traffic-clogged border crossing into Turkey, a dozen Kurdish men stepped out of their cars and began passing around pita and tulip-shaped cups of tea to a pair of young, bleach-blond Swedes who were road-tripping across the Middle East in a beat-up sedan.

"Kurds really take pride in their way of life," Michael Flower, a carpenter from Stockholm, said between bites of pita as he showed off an oversize satellite phone to his appreciative hosts. "Where else can you find people who picnic by the side of a highway?"

HOW TO GET THERE

Getting to Erbil is surprisingly easy. Austrian Airlines (www.aua.com) flies into Erbil International Airport from Vienna, with round-trip flights originating from Kennedy Airport for as low as \$2,000 for travel next month. Tourist visas, required for American citizens, are issued at the airport.

Two tour companies that offer guided trips to Kurdistan:

Distant Horizons, based in Long Beach, Calif. (800-333-1240; www.distant-horizons.com), offers 12-day cultural tours to Erbil, Sulaimaniya and Dohuk starting at around \$5,860 a person. The next departure dates are March 22 and Oct. 4, 2009.

Paris-based Terre Entière (33-1-44-39-03-03; www.terreentiere.com) offers eight-day "spiritual" and "cultural" tours of Kurdistan. A Christmas trip starts at 2,150 euros. Tours for 2009, start at 2,250 euros, about \$2,945 at \$1.37 to the euro.

WHERE TO STAY

Erbil International Hotel (30 Meter Street; 964-66-2234460; www.erbilinhotel.com), a former Sheraton, has 167 luxurious rooms starting at 240,000 Iraqi dinars (about \$197 at 1,220 dinar to the dollar).

Just north of the capital, the Oz-like Khanzad Hotel & Resort (964-66-224-5273; www.khanzadresort.com) has 80 rooms and suites that offer sweeping views of the countryside. Rooms start at 208,000 Iraqi dinars.

A bitter war has Kurds divided among themselves

The PKK risks losing popular support as its increasingly bloody conflict with Turkey threatens the stability of Iraqi Kurdistan

MARK MACKINNON - Globe and Mail

ZAKHO, IRAQ — The streets of this bustling frontier town are crowded with trucks sporting blue and white Turkish licence plates, and billboards advertising Turkish products that are popular in Iraq. Watching the hectic flow of commerce, you'd never think that hostilities are exchanged across this border almost as rapidly as goods are traded back and forth across the same line.

The Turkey-Iraq frontier is the arena of a growing, although undeclared, conflict that threatens to destabilize the Kurdish majority regions of both countries. Attacks by the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, a Turkish Kurd rebel group that crosses back and forth into northern Iraq, have killed 17 soldiers this month. The Turkish military says that a series of retaliatory air strikes it carried out against PKK bases inside Iraq killed 25 fighters last week alone.

It adds up to one of the bloodiest stretches of fighting between the two sides in recent years. And while Turkey and the PKK have been exchanging blows for more than two decades, the stakes are higher than ever now, with some Iraqi Kurds worrying that the stability of their semi-autonomous region here may eventually be added to the list of casualties.

Turkey's parliament this month extended for another 12 months the military's year-old mandate to launch cross-border strikes against the PKK in northern Iraq. The United States, which has 144,000 troops stationed in Iraq, promised to do more to help Turkey fight the PKK, which it considers a terrorist organization.

Immediately after the Oct. 3 attack in which the 17 Turkish soldiers were killed, the Kurdistan Regional Government, the body that administers northern Iraq, issued a statement condemning its fellow Kurds in the PKK. "We believe that such actions greatly hamper the efforts by all sides to build essential stability in the region, so that all parties can live together in peace," the statement read. A few days later, Massoud Barzani, the head of the Kurdish government, went so far as to say he hoped the PKK would stop its attacks.

It was a response that both infuriated PKK supporters — who remember a time when Iraqi Kurds sought shelter in Turkey from Saddam Hussein — and highlighted Mr. Barzani's apparent inability to do anything to curb the PKK, which freely roams the Qandil Mountain area in the north of Iraqi Kurdistan.

But the official condemnation reflected what is becoming an increasingly popular

sentiment here in northern Iraq. After Turkey's ferocious response, even political allies of the PKK are saying that they wish the militia would do more to contain its conflict to the Turkish side of the border. Many worry that the group, while fighting for the independence of Turkish Kurds, will jeopardize the hard-won autonomy Iraqi Kurds have only recently gained.

"If I were in the leadership of the PKK, I would keep the conflict inside Turkey, not here in Iraqi Kurdistan. That would make them more popular in all Kurdistan," said Rahman Gharib, a journalist affiliated with

outside world.

But with Iraqi Kurds unwilling or unable to expel the PKK from their soil, Turkey has pointedly refused to open direct relations with the KRG headquartered in Irbil. Instead, Ankara insists on speaking only to Baghdad.

According to PKK members who witnessed the Turkish bombing of Qandil Mountain last week, many of those who were killed were, in fact, members of the Party for Free Life in Kurdistan, an Iranian-Kurdish group affiliated with the PKK. "We took heavy losses. Most of the martyrs



the local Communist Party. The PKK is Marxist-Leninist in ideology.

Turkey, a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, claims that some 3,000 PKK fighters use northern Iraq as a rear base from which they launch attacks on Turkish soil. Mr. Gharib said the PKK had only field hospitals and their communications headquarters on the Iraqi side of the border, but said that perhaps even those should be moved to avoid giving Turkey the pretext to strike.

Many Kurds believe that Turkey's real motivation in striking northern Iraq is precisely to sow instability, thereby undermining the Kurds' dream of eventually establishing a fully independent state here. Ankara fears that as Iraq's five million Kurds drive toward sovereignty, their own already restive Kurdish population of 12 million will raise their own demands for recognition and sovereignty.

Turkey doesn't recognize the Kurds as a separate people, and forbids education or broadcasting in the Kurdish language. The conflict with the PKK has taken more than 40,000 lives since it began in 1984.

The commercial relationship between Ankara and the Kurdish Regional Government, or KRG, complicates things even further. Turkey is Iraqi Kurdistan's most important trading partner and the Ibrahim Khalil crossing point outside Zakho is the landlocked region's main lifeline to the

were Iranian Kurds, not Iraqi or Turkish," a 54-year-old ex-PKK fighter told The Globe and Mail last week in an interview in the city of Sulaymaniyah shortly after the raids occurred. He wouldn't allow his real name to be used.

The PKK member said that eight Turkish planes targeted a meeting of the PKK and its Iranian and Iraqi affiliates last week, perhaps suggesting that the Turks had foreknowledge of the gathering. The PKK claims that only four of its fighters were killed in the attack, rather than 25. It also says that Turkish casualties from the recent clashes have been higher than Turkey is publicly admitting.

Faiq Golpy, a former parliamentarian in Iraqi Kurdistan with ties to the PKK, said there's evidence to suggest that Mr. Barzani's government has recently begun helping Turkey target PKK bases in the north of Iraq. If proven true, he said, it would be a betrayal of the wider Kurdish cause.

"There is the possibility of military actions by Turkey with the co-operation of the Iraqi Defence Ministry and maybe the KRG, which we don't like at all," Mr. Golpy said.

"The [KRG] has asked the PKK many times to leave Iraq. But this is Kurdistan. And every Kurd has a right to live in any part of Kurdistan."

Warzone where oil prospects outweigh risks

Robin Pagnamenta in Erbil

Half way up a barren mountain in northern Iraq the earth begins to shake. Starting slowly, a deep rumble is heard, stopping suddenly with a thin hydraulic hiss. But this is no earthquake. It is part of a seismic test to search for oil in a region where crude is so prolific that it oozes from the rocks.

Andy Grosse, exploration director of Sterling Energy, the British company funding the programme, says: "There is nowhere else left like this on earth — where there is so much potential but so little exploration has been done. For an oil company, it's like being a kid in a sweet shop."

In Baghdad, officials continue to hammer out details of a new oil law while Western oil giants bang on the door for access to vast, established fields further south. But here in Kurdistan, the scramble for Iraq's immense reserves is well under way.

Since the regional government, acting independently, awarded exploration licences to 24 smaller foreign companies last year, the remote Zagros mountains have swarmed with an international army of seismic crews, drillers, their support staff and security teams.

On Sterling's concession near the village of Sangaw, four huge vibrating trucks with 6ft wheels, each weighing 27 tons, are shooting shockwaves deep into the earth. Behind them, strung in a line for miles along the surface, thousands of small microphones pick up the response, identifying reservoirs of oil that could lie 3 or 4km underground.

Garmyan Arif, a Kurdish employee of Sterling, is one of 250 workers on the seismic programme, of which 150 are armed guards. He says with a smile: "It's amazing - we have never seen this kind of thing in Kurdistan before."



Nobody knows how much oil is here but the potential for big discoveries is obvious, judging by an arid riverbed a few kilometres away where viscous black crude trickles from a gash in the earth.

"This is fairly high quality crude," says Mr Grosse, a geophysicist, sniffing at it. "It's very encouraging. We know there is oil here, it's just a question of finding the trap in the subsurface where the oil is seeping out."

Iraq has 115 billion barrels of proven reserves, behind only Saudi Arabia and Iran. Far more might lie undiscovered, much of it in Kurdistan.

"In the early days, they found so much oil further south around Basra where it could easily be exported by tanker that they didn't really bother looking up here," said Mr Grosse. "It was remote, mountainous. There was no way to export it. Then politics came into play in the 1970s and this became a no-go zone."

Kurdistan, a region half the size of Ireland, could easily contain 30 billion barrels — putting it

on a par with the United States with 29 billion.

Back in Erbil, the capital, where hotel lobbies buzz with oil executives from Paris, London, Houston and Seoul, the sense of excitement is palpable.

There have already been big discoveries. Last year, DNO of Norway found 1.3 billion barrels near the Turkish border. Another find has been made by a Turkish company with Addax of Canada. With so much exploration going on in such a prospective area, more discoveries seem certain. In some blocks "it's a bit like shooting fish in a barrel", Mr Grosse quips.

As with everything in Iraq, prospecting for oil is not without complications. It is not just the need for new pipelines and infrastructure, the risk that seismic testing using dynamite can detonate unexploded mines, or the need to take tortuous detours along mountain roads to avoid trouble spots.

More importantly, political questions continue to hang over the legality of Erbil's decision to allocate oil blocks independently of Baghdad. Oil export licences can be granted only by the central Government, which is still horse-trading with the Kurds over a framework for distributing oil revenues. As no such licences have been granted, it would be illegal for any company to start exporting. It is the political risks that have put off bigger oil companies such as BP and Shell, which are chasing contracts with Baghdad for access to the vast fields of southern Iraq. The small fry believe this leaves them free to find and develop new fields on their own. "This is virgin land," said Awat al-Barzenji, project director of Kar Group, an engineering company involved in several oil projects. "Some people may be hesitant to jump in but for those that do, the rewards will be great."

Political tug-of-war for Iraqi minority groups

Deborah Haynes in Nineveh Plains, Iraq

The Christian man crammed his family and their belongings into the car before casting a final glance around the church hall in northern Iraq that had been their refuge for the past fortnight. Satisfied that everything was inside, he climbed behind the wheel and set off in the direction of home: the notorious city of Mosul.

Abu Masarra, his wife, their two children and his father were among scores of Christian families who were daring to venture back to Mosul only weeks after they and thousands of others fled after a spate of killings.

"My heart was racing as we made the journey," Abu Masarra, a builder, said. "There is a heavy security presence in the street and we've had no problems, but I'm still too scared to



An Iraqi Christian widow cries as she recalls the murder of her husband in Mosul

venture far outside."

The mass exodus from Mosul, which was condemned yesterday by the Pope, has eased but many families remain too traumatised to

follow the lead of Abu Masarra, 39, preferring to squat in monasteries and the spare rooms of houses in towns and villages to the north and east of the city.

Questions also remained about who carried out the attacks, which left more than a dozen Christian men dead and three houses destroyed. Allegations ranged from al-Qaeda fighters, who have killed Christians in the past, to power-hungry elements linked to the northern-most Kurdish region of Iraq.

The Kurdish authorities denied any connection.

Whatever the truth, the plight of the Christians highlighted the suffering of all the minority Iraqi communities, which include the Shabaks, who practise a form of Shia Islam, and the Yazidis, another ancient sect, as they struggle to find a voice before the

nationwide provincial elections to be held by January 31.

Qusay Abbas Mohammed is a top Shabak official in Bartella, a majority Christian town in the Nineveh Plains, north of Mosul, where more than 200 Christian families sought refuge. "Big whales swallow small fish," Mr Mohammed said, adding: "We are currently in danger of being swallowed."

Some minority leaders said that they were under pressure to run in the elections with larger Kurdish groupings rather than separately. Others argued that they would prefer to align themselves with the Kurds to be part of a more powerful force.

Basim Bello, the mayor of the Christian village of Telkif, also in the Nineveh Plains, said: "If the big blocks want to engulf us then the minorities will not be represented. You have to ask why we removed Saddam Hussein. Then we had a dictatorship, now we have multiple dictatorships."

Adding to the dilemma, parliament abolished a guaranteed quota of seats for minorities last month. The decision, which looks set to be amended, sparked protests by Christians at about the same time as the Mosul killings occurred.

This prompted speculation that the violence was motivated politically, with some alleging that the Kurdish authorities were using fear of persecution to make minorities feel as though the

Kurdish region was their only haven.

The Nineveh Plains, which border the Kurdish north, have been home for centuries to Christians, Shabaks and Yazidis. The rural land is dotted with churches, mosques and cone-shaped shrines that distinguish the Yazidi faith.

Targeted in Baghdad, Basra and Mosul after the invasion in 2003, thousands of people from minority sects have returned to their roots, where life remains a struggle with limited electricity, water and prospects.

The Nineveh Plains was officially under the control of the Iraqi Government but there was a strong Kurdish influence in several main towns. Caught in the middle, the minorities hoped to turn the land into their own autonomous region, although there was disagreement over whether to align any new province with Baghdad or Arbil, the capital of the Kurdish region.

Sulaiman Suvu, the spiritual leader of the Yazidis, believed that the future for all minorities was with the Kurds. "People have fled from Baghdad, Mosul and elsewhere to the Kurdish region," he said, speaking at his home in the majority Yazidi town of Bashiqa. "We would like an autonomous region under the Kurdistan regional government."

In contrast Mr Mohamed, the Shabak official, believed that Kurdish parties were using intimidation and the promise of reward to extend their authority. "Their goal is to build a Kurdish state, which is a legitimate ambition, but it should not

be at the expense of the minorities," he said.

Nechirvan Barzani, the prime minister of the Kurdish north, denied the suggestion that Kurds would try to pressure minorities politically. He also rejected the idea that the Kurdish authorities had anything to do with the Christian deaths.

"It is unreasonable for people like the Kurds, who have suffered a lot of oppression in the past, to practise the same kind of oppression against another nationality," the prime minister told The Times.

The Kurdish minority in Iraq was persecuted horrifically under Saddam.

In Mosul the Iraqi Government has started an operation to restore calm to its third-largest city, which has been plagued by violence since the invasion. It is also promising the families that left one million Iraqi dinars (£530) to return, an offer that few relish without the guarantee of safety.

With winter on the horizon, however, some are taking the chance. Umm Mariam and her family fled their home on October 10 after two Christians were shot near by. They took refuge in a church hall in Bartella but planned to travel home this week.

"There is an improvement in Mosul," the 50-year-old said, sitting in a small room in the hall where 42 other families were also squatting. "My daughter has gone back today to enrol at university. We must return. Our lives are there."

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

October 27, 2008

The Middle East Electoral College: Iraq results

Most Iraqi Kurds preferred McCain

By Mark MacKinnon

So colour Iraq neither red nor blue. Or rather, colour it either, depending on what part of the country you're talking about

During the course the week I spent in Kurdistan-Northern Iraq, I asked more than two dozen Iraqis whether they'd prefer to see John McCain or Barack Obama win the White House on Nov. 4.

The results were split almost perfectly down the middle. Most Kurds preferred McCain, seeing him as more likely to support their dream of independence and less likely to withdraw American troops from the country. Kurds, who actually speak with affection of George W. Bush, fear that a U.S. withdrawal would plunge the country into a new civil war that they could not stay out of.

The Arabs I met, however, were more likely to support Obama, believing that he is more likely to adopt different policies than Bush, the man they blame for destroying this country.

map from: Globe and Mail

Here's a taste of what some of the Iraqis I spoke to had to say on this question:

"We cannot ask the U.S. troops to leave because that will lead to civil war... Obama's policy is a rapid

withdrawal of American troops. This will not benefit the Iraqi people in general!" – Rahman Gharib, 42, a journalist affiliated with the Communist Party of Kurdistan.

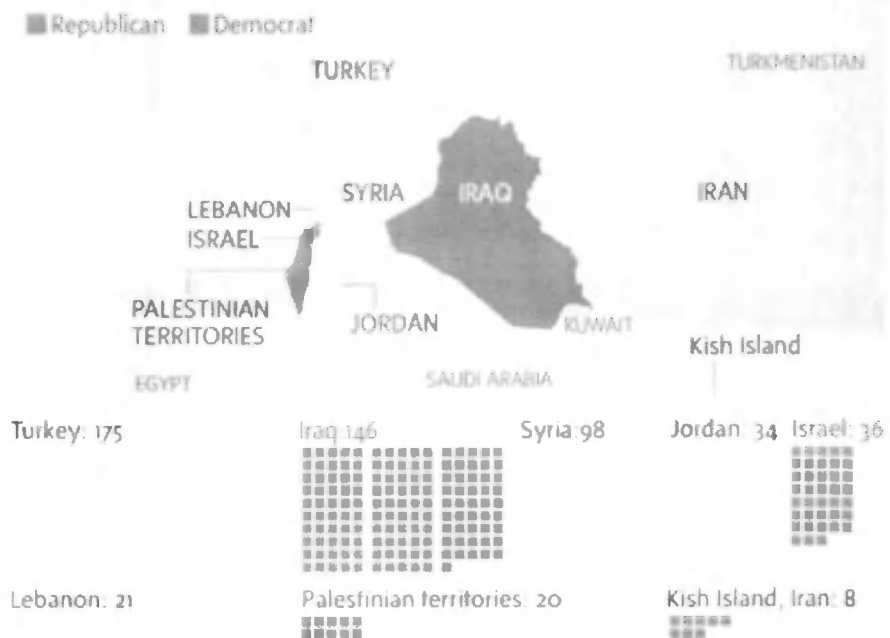
"I prefer the black one. He will pay

more attention to the situation in Iraq." – Walid Chiad, 42, an Arab refugee from Baghdad currently living in Kirkuk.

"I think America needs some change. People get sick and tired of a

style, a face or a colour." – Father Sabri al-Maqdassy, priest at St. Joseph's Church in Ainkawa.

A third opinion which was shared by Arabs and Kurds alike is that it won't make much difference who



wins and that Iraq will suffer under either man's leadership.

"Bush destroyed Iraq. He took our oil and gave us nothing in return," Ayyad Manfi, the mukhtar, or leader, of a refugee camp near Sulaimaniyah for former Baghdad residents. "We don't believe in this election. Whatever they say, they will change their promises later."

So, how to award Iraq's 146 electors? My poll was obviously skewed by the fact I was in the Kurdish north of the country. The Arab refugees I spoke to were also uniformly Sunni, meaning this already unscientific poll

takes almost no account of the feelings of the country's largest community, the Shiites.

The good news is that not every U.S. state is winner-take-all – and you could argue that Iraq is hardly one country anymore – so I'm doling out the electors based on the most obvious line: McCain has won Iraqi Kurdistan, Obama takes Sunni and Shia Iraq (the latter judgment based on the fact Shia leaders have been nearly unanimous in calling for a speedy U.S. withdrawal from the country, which is closest to Obama's policy). Kurds make up roughly 20 per cent of

Iraq's population, so McCain gets 20 per cent of the votes, or 29 electors. Obama gets the remaining 117.

Arbitrary? Perhaps. But I'm the one battling to hold my insides in after eating at an Iraqi roadside diner and spending sleepless nights at the Simpan Hotel, so I get to make the call. You're at home surfing the Internet during a commercial break in Hockey Night in Canada, so you just get to complain about it in the comments section below.

Our running total now shows Obama surging from behind to take the lead:

Barack Obama (Dem.) – 147 votes

John McCain (Rep.) – 65 votes
Next up, Turkey, which has a dominant 175 votes in the 538-seat electoral college. If Obama wins it, he'll shoot past the 270 mark needed to secure victory, meaning my little polling project could effectively be over long before election day. If McCain wins it, we've got a race to the wire, with Syria, Lebanon and Jordan deciding who takes the prize.

The New York Times

October 28, 2008

Rejection of Oil Law and Move to Create Tribal Councils Add to Tensions With Kurds

By ALISSA J. RUBIN

BAGHDAD — Tensions between Kurdistan and the central government of Iraq continued to bubble Monday. A parliamentary committee rejected a new draft of an oil law, and Kurdish politicians denounced the government's effort to create semi-tribal councils as a counterweight to Kurdish political power in Kirkuk.

At least two international organizations are working on reports on the troubles between Iraq's Kurds and Arabs. The United Nations is expected to release its report in the next month or two.

The International Crisis Group, a non-governmental organization based in Brussels that seeks to prevent and resolve deadly conflicts, will issue its report on Tuesday. Both try to set out a strategy to resolve a web of interlinked disputes that threaten to set Kurds and Arabs against each other along the border of Iraq's Kurdistan region.

At issue are fundamental questions of territorial rights: redrawing the borders of the Kurdish region, the rights of that region versus those of the central government and, not least, the region's right to develop its own oil resources.

"Kurds are very frustrated and are taking revenge by holding up other legislation in Baghdad," said Joost Hiltermann, a senior analyst of the Middle East for the International Crisis Group.

In the past year relations between the Kurds and the central government have deteriorated. A December 2007 deadline passed without the enactment of an article of the Iraqi Constitution meant to redress the Kurds' sense of betrayal by the government of Saddam Hussein. In addition to persecuting the Kurds, Mr. Hussein's government forced them to flee Kirkuk,

the center of an oil-rich area, and moved in Arabs to take their place.

The measure, Article 140, proposes a three-part remedy: enabling Kurds to return to Kirkuk, conducting a census, and then holding a referendum in which people who live in Kirkuk will vote on whether the city should become part of Iraqi Kurdistan. Many Kurds have returned, but there has been no census or referendum.

A delay of the referendum was brokered by the United Nations, but Kurds have been frustrated by the lack of any effort to set a new deadline.

It has become an article of faith for Kurdish political leaders that the Kurds have a right to fold Kirkuk into Kurdistan. The Kurds are also seeking to maintain influence over a number of other disputed areas along their border with the rest of Iraq.

The central government has long opposed Kurdistan's claims to Kirkuk because it wants access to the region's oil wealth, and also because historically many other peoples have lived there: Turkmens, Arabs and Christians, many of them Assyrians.

The Kurds' most recent tactic to push the central government to work with them has been to block needed legislation, slowing down passage of a provincial powers law, the election law and the oil law, according to the International Crisis Group report.

The group recommends that the Iraqi central government allow the Kurds to develop and sell their oil through a pipeline to Turkey, giving them some economic independence from Baghdad. In exchange, the Kurds would defer their claim to Kirkuk and accept a power-sharing agreement in which the top pro-

vincial slots and the provincial council seats would be equally divided among Kurds, Arabs and Turkmens and a small number of seats would go to Christians. Such an arrangement is acceptable to Arabs, Turkmens and Christians.

"This proposal is a grand bargain," said Mr. Hiltermann, the crisis group analyst. "This is what the Iraqi government has to give, and they would be giving relatively little, and this is what the Kurds have to give." It would also ask that Turkey allow the Kurds to export their oil through its territory.

On Monday, the Kurds announced that they had rejected efforts by the government to form tribal support councils in places that include Kirkuk and Khanaqin, a predominantly Kurdish city, and neighboring Jalawla. The councils are similar to the Awakening groups formed by the American military to fight Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, the homegrown Sunni insurgent group that American intelligence says is led by foreigners. The armed Awakening groups, whose stated goal is protection of their local areas, have also become a political force in some places.

One reason the Kurds reject them is that they fear that the councils may restrict Kurdish influence. "The areas where Mr. Maliki is forming these support councils are disputed areas," said Jabbar Yawer, the leader of the ministry governing the Kurdish pesh merga, a regional force partly absorbed into the Iraqi Army. The term "disputed area" describes areas that Kurdistan claims, but that the central government says are part of the rest of Iraq.

"There is no security vacuum in these areas," Mr. Yawer said. "The police and army are there and they can preserve security."

INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP - NEW REPORT

Oil for Soil: Toward a Grand Bargain on Iraq and the Kurds



Middle East Report N°80 28 October 2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A long-festering conflict over Kirkuk and other disputed territories is threatening to disrupt the current fragile relative peace in Iraq by blocking legislative progress and political accommodation. Two events in particular stand out: a two-month stalemate in July-September in negotiations over a provincial elections law in which Kirkuk's unresolved status was the principal obstacle and, during this period, a campaign by the Iraqi army in and around the Kurdish-controlled disputed district of Khanaqin. To avoid a breakdown over the issue of Kirkuk, the current piecemeal approach should be discarded in favour of a grand bargain involving all core issues: Kirkuk and other disputed territories, revenue sharing and the hydrocarbons law, as well as federalism and constitutional revisions.

Despite some progress, Iraq's legislative agenda, promoted by the U.S. in order to capitalise on recent security gains, is bogged down. The main culprit is a dispute over territories claimed by the Kurds as historically belonging to Kurdistan – territories that contain as much as 13 per cent of Iraq's proven oil reserves. This conflict reflects a deep schism between Arabs and Kurds that began with the creation of modern Iraq after World War I; has simmered for decades, marked by intermittent conflict and accommodation; and was revitalised due to the vacuum and resulting opportunities generated by the Baath regime's demise in 2003. In its ethnically-driven intensity, ability to drag in regional players such as Turkey and Iran and potentially devastating impact on efforts to rebuild a fragmented state, it matches and arguably exceeds the Sunni-Shiite divide that spawned the 2005-2007 sectarian war.

Stymied in their quest to incorporate disputed territories into the Kurdistan region by constitutional means, Kurdish leaders have signalled their intent to hold politics in Baghdad hostage to their demands. At the same time, the Iraqi government's growing military assertiveness is challenging the Kurds' de facto control over these territories. Rising acrimony and frustration are jeopardising the current relative peace, undermining prospects for national unity and, in the longer term, threatening Iraq's territorial integrity.

Rather than items that can be individually and sequentially addressed, Iraq's principal conflicts – concerning oil, disputed territories, federalism and constitutional revisions – have become thoroughly interwoven. Federalism cannot be implemented without agreement on how the oil industry will be managed and revenues will be distributed. Progress on a federal hydrocarbons law and a companion revenue-sharing law is inconceivable without agreement on the disposition of disputed territories that boast major oil fields, such as Kirkuk. And the constitution review has faltered over failure to settle all those questions, the solutions to which will need to be reflected in amendments reached by consensus.

How to move forward? If there is a way out, it lies in a comprehensive approach that takes into account the principal stakeholders' core requirements. A sober assessment of these requirements suggests a possible package deal revolving around a fundamental "oil-for-soil" trade-off: in exchange for at least deferring their exclusive claim on Kirkuk for ten years, the Kurds would obtain demarcation and security guarantees for their internal boundary with the rest of Iraq, as well as the right to manage and profit from their own mineral wealth. Such a deal would codify the significant gains the Kurds have made since they achieved limited autonomy in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War and especially after April 2003, while simultaneously respecting an Arab-Iraqi – as well as neighbouring states' – red line regarding Kirkuk.

This package entails painful concessions from all sides, which they are unlikely to make without strong international involvement. The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has been providing technical support on a range of issues and, since late 2007, has devoted the bulk of its efforts to the question of disputed internal boundaries. It will need stronger backing from the U.S. and its allies, which have an abiding interest in Iraq's stabilisation yet have played a passive bystander role that has confused Iraqi stakeholders and encouraged them to press maximalist demands. The U.S. should make it a priority to steer Iraq's political actors toward a grand bargain they are unlikely to reach on their own and to secure its outcome through political, financial and diplomatic support.

There is little time to waste. As U.S. forces are set to draw down in the next couple of years, Washington's leverage will diminish and, along with it, chances for a workable deal. This serves no one's interest. The most likely alternative to an agreement is a new outbreak of violent strife over unsettled claims in a fragmented polity governed by chaos and fear.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI):

1. Provide assistance to the principal stakeholders in negotiations aimed at achieving a grand bargain.

2. Delineate an internal boundary between the Kurdistan region and the rest of Iraq by making specific administrative status recommendations for disputed districts or sub-districts, using the criteria employed in its phase one proposal of 5 June 2008.

3. Assist the committee to be established under Article 23 of the September 2008 provincial elections law in recommending rules governing Kirkuk's elections, with seats divided among Arabs, Turkomans, Kurds and Christians according to either a 24-24-48-4 or a 23-23-46-8 per cent formula prior to elections held as caucuses within each community.

To the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG):

4. Formally request the UN Security Council to empower UNAMI to guide negotiations on a grand bargain.

5. Until such a bargain is reached:

a) accelerate negotiations over a federal hydrocarbons and associated laws and avoid unilateral moves – including signing oil and gas contracts and, in the case of the KRG, developing oil and gas fields in disputed territories;

b) reach agreement, with UNAMI's technical assistance, on a definition of "disputed territories"; and

c) establish an interim agreement, with UNAMI's assistance, for joint administration and security in disputed territories claimed by the Kurds.

To the Government of Iraq:

6. As part of a grand bargain:

a) adopt and implement UNAMI's recommendation for an internal boundary between the Kurdistan region and the rest of Iraq;

b) establish Kirkuk governorate as a stand-alone governorate or a uni-governorate federal region for an interim period of ten years;

c) establish a power-sharing arrangement in Kirkuk, consistent with Article 23 of the provincial elections law, by which senior executive (governor, deputy governor), administrative (directors general and their deputies) and quasi-legislative (district, sub-district and city council) positions are distributed among Arabs, Turkomans, Kurds and Christians according to a 32-32-32-4 per cent formula;

d) adopt and implement the recommendations on Kirkuk to be issued by the committee established under Article 23 of the provincial elections law; and

e) enact a federal hydrocarbons and companion revenue-sharing law mandating equitable development of oil and gas throughout Iraq, including the Kurdistan region; accepting the KRG oil and gas law; and granting the KRG the right to both manage its own fields and export oil and gas.

7. Ensure provincial elections are held no later than 31 January 2009 as per the new law and in a free, fair, inclusive and transparent manner.

8. Acknowledge publicly as human rights crimes the former regime's Arabisation policy, the 1988 Anfal campaign and gas attacks against Kurdish civilians, most notably at Halabja; recognise the victims' suffering; and offer financial compensation to survivors.

To the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG):

9. Address Turkey's concerns about the PKK's (Kurdistan Workers Party) ability to use the Kurdistan region as a staging area for attacks in Turkey by limiting its movement, preventing it from using the region to launch attacks, denying it access to media and disarming its fighters in areas under effective KRG control;

To the Government of Turkey:

10. In the context of an Iraqi grand bargain:

a) establish formal ties with the Kurdistan regional government;

b) work with the Iraqi government and the KRG to allow oil and gas transport from the Kurdistan region to/through Turkey;

c) pursue an economic open-border policy with Iraq, including its Kurdistan region; and

d) encourage investments by Turkish entrepreneurs in the Kurdistan region and cease all military activity inside Iraq so long as the KRG takes the above steps.

To the U.S. Government:

11. Promote the notion of a grand bargain and support efforts by UNAMI, the Iraqi government, the KRG and all other stakeholders to reach it.

12. Send an unambiguous signal to the Kurdish leadership that it opposes a quest to incorporate Kirkuk but is prepared to establish appropriate security arrangements for the Kurdistan region and, in particular, to offer guarantees to protect any agreed-upon internal boundary.

To the UN Security Council:

13. Upon request from the Iraqi government, empower UNAMI to guide negotiations toward a grand bargain.

Kirkuk/Brussels, 28 October 2008

Guardian

October 28 2008

Kirkuk dispute threatens to plunge Iraq into Kurdish-Arab war

Study warns dispute over territories and revenues in oil region could lead to violence greater than Sunni-Shia conflict

Julian Borger, diplomatic editor

Iraq's relative calm is threatened by a festering Kurdish-Arab conflict over the oil-rich city of Kirkuk and other disputed territories, that could explode into the worst sectarian war the country has suffered since the 2003 invasion, a new report says today.

The report by the International Crisis Group (ICG) says the territorial dispute is blocking political progress in Iraq, contributing to the delay in passing a law on sharing oil revenue, and threatening to put off critical provincial elections.

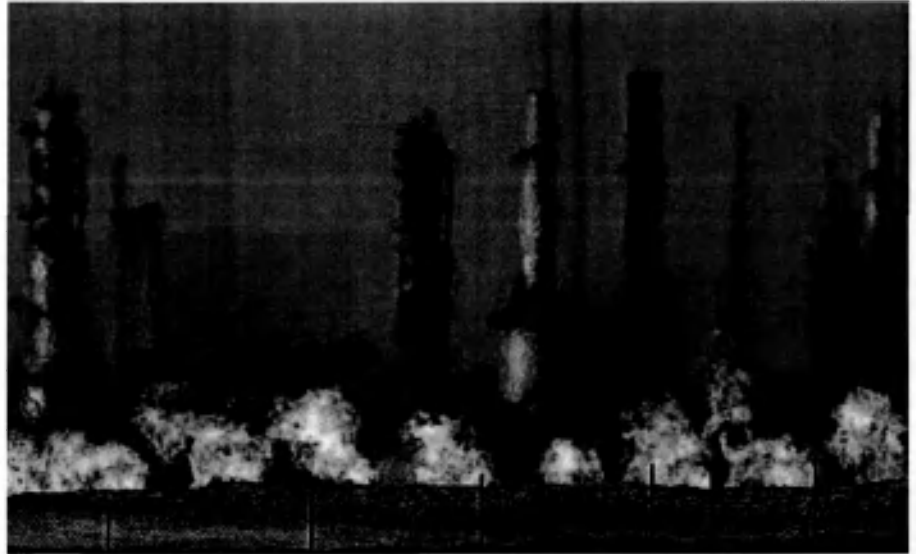
Pointing out that the Arab-Kurdish dispute dates back to Britain's creation of modern Iraq after the first world war, the ICG report warns: "In its ethnically-driven intensity, ability to drag in regional players such as Turkey and Iran, and potentially devastating impact on efforts to rebuild a fragmented state, it matches and arguably exceeds the Sunni-Shia divide that spawned the 2005 - 2007 sectarian war."

At the heart of the dispute is the city of Kirkuk, home to 900,000 Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen, which sits on one of the country's biggest oil fields. It lies outside the northern zone run by the Kurdistan Regional Government, but is in practice run by Kurdish peshmerga fighters and

a Kurdish intelligence service, the Asaish, which works closely with US intelligence.

Arabs and Turkmen residents, who represent 40% of Kirkuk's population, claim they live in fear, particularly of the Asaish.

The tensions in the city ignited in late July, when a suicide bomber blew himself up in the midst of a Kurdish demonstration. That triggered an attack by a Kurdish mob on the headquarters of a Turkmen party, where guards fired into the crowd. Over 25 people were killed in total and more than



Fires flare off the gas from crude oil at Iraq's oldest oil processing plant in the northern Iraqi town of Baba Gurgur, outside Kirkuk. Photograph: Khalid Mohammed/AP

200 injured.

Soon afterwards, Nuri al-Maliki's government in Baghdad sent troops into three areas that had been under informal Kurdish control, further escalating tensions and threatening a direct stand-off between Iraqi regular army and peshmerga forces.

The dispute over Kirkuk has derailed legislation in the national parliament to pave the way for provincial elections. Arab and Turkmen politicians demanded a guaranteed quota of seats in the Kirkuk assembly, but Kurdish parties refused.

Kurdish leaders argue Iraq's constitution gives them the right to absorb Kirkuk and other historically Kurdish-majority areas, in the name of "normalising" demographics

skewed under Saddam Hussein by forced removals and a policy of Arabisation.

Today's ICG report recommends that the only solution to the seemingly intractable problem is an "oil-for-soil" trade-off, in which the Kurds are given the right to manage revenues from their own mineral wealth and receive security guarantees for the existing internal boundary between Kurdistan and the rest of Iraq, in exchange for deferring their claims on Kirkuk for 10 years.

The report warns: "The most likely alternative to an agreement is a new outbreak of violent strife over unsettled claims in a fragmented polity governed by chaos and fear."

TURKISH DAILY NEWS

October 30, 2008

Pro-Kurdish party suggests federation

NAMIK DURUKAN ANKARA – Milliyet

The controversial suggestion by the jailed leader of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, to divide Turkey into regions and give broad powers to locally elected governors was presented to deputies by the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party, or DTP, this week.

The 64-page brochure, titled Democratic Autonomy Project and printed in Turkish, English and Kurdish, proposes Turkey be divided into 20 to 25 regions with each region given the power to designate its own symbols and colors.

The brochure was printed in Diyarbakir in the Southeast and was mailed to deputies, ministers and embassies so that it arrived at its destination on the eve of the Oct. 29 Republic Day celebrations.

The project was included by the DTP in its party program last year and was criticized by many politicians.

It includes a comprehensive administrative reform of the state structure with wide-ranging powers given to local governors.

The Kurdish identity and language must be protected by the Constitution, the brochure says, calling for a new and freer constitution.

The Republican People's Party, or CHP, deputy from Istanbul, Mustafa Özyürek, noted that it was the first time a Kurdish brochure was distributed in Parliament.

They also ask for a federation by hiding behind democratic autonomy, he said.

He said the escalation of terrorism by the PKK was aimed at creating another state.

Özyürek said the recent street violence in the Southeast showed the DTP was not content in merely preparing such documents but also wanted to implement their suggestions through violent means.



THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESIDENT
GEORGE W. BUSH

For Immediate Release Office of the Press Secretary
October 29, 2008

President Bush Meets with President Barzani of the Kurdistan Regional Government

Oval Office

PRESIDENT BUSH: President Barzani, welcome back to the Oval Office. It's been a while since we have seen each other, but we have talked on the phone quite frequently -- and the reason why is because you've played a very instrumental part in the development of a free Iraq. And I thank you for your leadership and I thank you for your personal friendship.

We had a discussion today on several major topics. We talked about the progress on the election law and on the hydrocarbon law, but we also talked about the status of forces agreement, called the SOFA. President Barzani has been a very strong advocate of the Iraqi government passing the SOFA, and I appreciate that.

I informed the President we received amendments today from the government. We're analyzing those amendments. We obviously want to be helpful and constructive without undermining basic principles. And I remain very hopeful and confident that the SOFA will get passed. And Mr. President, you get a lot of credit for your leadership on that issue.

So I'm proud to welcome you back here. Again, I thank you very much for your courage and your leadership.

PRESIDENT BARZANI: (As translated.) Thank you very much, Mr. President. It's good that there has been another opportunity for us to visit with you again. I am here to convey the gratitude of the Iraqi people in general and the people of Kurdistan, in particular, for the brave decision that you've made to rid us of this dictatorship.

We are very grateful for all the brave souls, women and men in uniform, who gave their dear lives in the process. And we are very grateful to the American people and to you, Mr. President, for this sacrifice.



And despite the fact that there remain some major problems, we have also to look at all the big achievements that have been made thus far. Let's look at the elections and the constitution that has been ratified. So these are major achievements that we are proud of. And we are determined to solve all the problems that still exist, according to the constitution.

And in terms of SOFA, we do believe that it is in the interest of the Iraqi government, it's in the interest of this country, and we have been and we will continue to support it and support its ratification.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Thank you, sir.

The Washington Times October 30, 2008

Turkey keeps wary eye on U.S.-Iraq peace talks

Ben Lando

ANKARA, Turkey | As the U.S. and Iraqi governments struggle to finalize an agreement on continuing the U.S. troop presence in Iraq, there are few more interested bystanders than Turkey.

Ankara is worried that a hasty U.S. pullout will create a power vacuum that would provoke new fighting between Iraqi Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims, embolden the Kurdish population that spans Iraq across Turkey's southeastern border and create a turf war between Iran and Saudi Arabia for influence in Baghdad.

"Turkey is critical for a stable Iraq," said Morton Abramowitz, U.S. ambassador to Turkey from 1989 to 1991 and a senior fellow at the Century Foundation. "Turkey is very focused on keeping Iraq together, is with us on everything we do on that score, and would hate to see U.S. forces leave."

In a recent session for U.S. reporters, bloggers and think-tank analysts, Turkish President Abdullah Gul said Turkey agrees with the United States on most aspects of foreign policy.

"I don't believe there are similar nations where such parallels could be drawn," Mr. Gul said. Washington benefits from Turkish-brokered talks between Israel and Syria, Turkish efforts to reduce tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan and its ties with both Russia and Iran, Mr. Gul said.

Relations have improved markedly since 2003, when the Turkish Parliament rejected U.S. requests to use bases here as a staging ground for the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Until last year, Turkey also thought Washington wasn't doing enough to combat the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), an Iraq-based group responsible for numerous attacks within Turkey.

"The PKK has once again become a very big issue in Turkey because of the incidents and sizable number of casualties," Mr.

Abramowitz said.

The group is labeled a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and Europe, but has been able to maintain camps in northern Iraq's mountains and launch attacks into Turkey.

U.S.-Turkish relations on this issue have improved since President Bush authorized intelligence sharing with Turkey's military.

"When I talked to President Bush in our meetings, I asked him, 'How would you feel if there were terrorist camps that were allowed to exist on the Mexican side of your border with Mexico? How would you feel if these camps were allowed to exist there and then the terrorists in those camps were allowed to stage attacks inside United States territory?'" Mr. Gul said.

He mentioned an Oct. 3 ambush that killed 17 Turkish soldiers.

"Something that I should stress is our people are angry," Mr. Gul said, "and they are angry because PKK terrorists, just because they're ethnically Kurdish, are given camps and the opportunity to be harbored in northern Iraq."

Turkey sent special envoy Murat Ozcelik to Baghdad recently to discuss the PKK issue with Iraqi leaders. He also met with Massoud Barzani, president of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq - a major overture for a country that fears taking actions that could legitimize a semi-autonomous region.

Turkey is "ready to cooperate with the government of Iraq, the U.S. and, depending on circumstances, the local government," a senior Foreign Ministry official said. The "local government" is the KRG.

By sending an envoy to Baghdad, Mr. Abramowitz said, Turkey is being practical, building relations for a time when the United States isn't there.

Senior Iraqi Leader Says Pact With U.S. Is Unlikely to Pass

Politicians' Fears of Voter Backlash Cited

By Dan Eggen and Karen DeYoung Washington Post

A senior Iraqi political leader said yesterday he is "doubtful" that a bilateral agreement authorizing U.S. forces to remain in Iraq after the end of the year would be approved by the Iraqi cabinet and parliament.

Massoud Barzani, president of the Kurdistan Regional Government, said most political factions in Iraq want the accord to go through. But he said the country is "in a situation of intellectual terrorism, where people are not able to state their real positions" for fear of appearing too close to the United States and of undercutting their standing in provincial elections scheduled for January.

"Personally, I'm doubtful it will pass," Barzani said, speaking through a translator, during a meeting with Washington Post reporters and editors.

The assessment came amid growing signs of trouble in negotiations over a status-of-forces agreement, or SOFA, that would govern the U.S. military presence in Iraq after a United Nations mandate expires Dec. 31. The process stalled again this week when the Iraqi cabinet decided to reopen negotiations and propose a series of amendments to the pact.

President Bush, who met with Barzani yesterday in the Oval Office, said he was "analyzing" the proposals and is optimistic that an agreement can be reached. "We obviously want to be helpful and constructive without undermining basic principles," Bush said. "And I remain very hopeful and confident that the SOFA will get passed."

But the mild encouragement from Bush came as other administration officials strongly suggested that a compromise is unlikely, increasing the possibility that the issue will become one of the first major challenges facing the next U.S. president.

The Iraqis have made several key demands, including granting Iraq more legal authority over U.S. troops accused of crimes;

hardening a tentative 2011 departure date for American troops; and allowing Iraqi inspection of U.S. military shipments. After a controversial raid by U.S. forces into Syrian territory last weekend, the Iraqis also want an explicit ban on the United States staging attacks from Iraq into neighboring countries.

The Bush administration has repeatedly said that the current draft of the agreement is the furthest that the United States is willing to go. "The bar to any revisions is very high," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said.

Geoff Morrell, the Pentagon press secretary, said the administration would listen to the Iraqi concerns but is reluctant to reopen negotiations. Instead, he said, the goal is to finalize the agreement before the end of the year.

"Otherwise, our guys are sitting there illegally," Morrell said. "The risk you run then is that the gains that have been made at great costs . . . will start to unravel."

Morrell said Iraqi political dynamics and Iranian interference are creating obstacles to the accord. "We have ample evidence that the Iranians are doing everything within their power to try to derail the agreement," he said.

In Iraq, Kurdish politicians have long been the most supportive of the U.S. presence, and the two main Kurdish parties are the only ones in the government to have publicly backed the agreement. "We believe it is in the interest of all Iraqis, especially Kurdistan," Barzani said yesterday.

Shiite parties contesting for control of provincial councils have not committed themselves, and Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has not taken a public stand on the agreement.

Iraq could seek a one-year extension of the U.N. mandate as a short-term solution, but Iraqi officials have long resisted that alternative as a violation of their national sovereignty.



30 October 2008T

Kurds unite for Iraq's provincial elections

Participating Kurdish parties prepare their lists in this "developing situation"

By The Globe- Erbil

"Participation in the coming provincial council elections is a mission and an opportunity..."-Adnan Mufti

Iraqi Kurdistan Region Parliament Speaker Adnan Mufti announced that the Kurdish parties agreed to participate in the coming provincial elections with one list in the provinces of Baghdad, Diala, Ninewa, Salahaddin, and then in Kirkuk. The parties are preparing the list and distributing the quotas.

"The provincial council elections, the law of which was passed by Iraqi Parliament this year, will not be carried out in Kurdistan Region's three provinces of Erbil, Suleimaniya, and Duhok, because elections in these provinces will be organized by the region while the

elections will be ongoing in the other Iraqi provinces, not within a region," said Mufti in an interview with Newsmatic news agency on Tuesday.

Mufti said the region has a provincial council elections bill and it will be discussed by Parliament at a later time to appoint the election date in the three provinces.

The upcoming provincial elections are supposed to be held by the end of next January in Iraq's 14 provinces after the exclusion of Kurdistan Region's three provinces and Kirkuk, in which the elections are postponed for another time.

"The two main Kurdish parties, Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), during this week agreed to take part with one list in the elec-

tions in Baghdad, Diala, Ninewa, Salahaddin, and Kirkuk," said Mufti, who is a prominent leader of the PUK, which is led by Iraq's President Jalal Talabani. He added that other Kurdish parties will also join the list, but their formation will happen later and in accordance to dialogues between the parties.

In the December 2005 provincial elections, the KDP and PUK formed the Brotherhood list, which also involved a number of Arabs, Turkmen, and other sides; this list could win the majority in Ninewa and Kirkuk. Meanwhile, the Kurdistan Islamic Union participated in a separate list and some other Kurdish parties entered those elections with one list.

Politburo members of the two main parties met on Sunday on

procedural issues before entering the Iraqi provincial elections in the provinces, which have Kurdish populations. During the meeting, the PUK and KDP decided to form a committee on the level of provinces, towns, and districts as well as a high committee on the level of the politburos to supervise the committee's works. They also dedicated a budget to implement pre-election procedures such as transporting voters to polling stations and solving problems of families whose names haven't yet been registered on electoral lists.

"Participation in the coming provincial council elections is a mission and an opportunity to take part in the developing situation in all provinces through the new councils," indicated Mufti.

October 31, 2008

TODAYS ZAMAN

DTP to consider pulling out of Parliament if party is closed

AYŞE KARABAT

As the Constitutional Court considers whether to close down the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP), party officials say the DTP is mulling its own course of action: whether to withdraw from Parliament.

"Such a move would be turning point for us and for Turkish politics," said Bengi Yıldız, DTP Batman deputy. He said that if the court decides to close the party or ban its members from political activity, DTP leaders would consider pulling out of Parliament completely.

The DTP's possible departure from Parliament might not lead to general or interim elections for the party's seats, which would be vacant, but it could create other problems -- for example, the legitimacy of Parliament regarding representation.

Chief Prosecutor of the Supreme Court of Appeals Abdurrahman Yalçınkaya applied to the Constitutional Court in November 2007 and requested the closure of the DTP. He claimed that DTP members' actions and statements run counter to the independence of the state and the indivisible integrity of its territory and nation.

The indictment also asked for 221 members of the DTP, including eight deputies, to be banned for five years from membership in a political party.

Yıldız, who is responsible for coordinating the party's response to the closure case, said it is not clear when the Constitutional Court will announce its verdict, which creates uncertainty.

"We think that there is no reason to close the party. But its closure will lead to pessimism. The Kurds will think that they're not wanted in Parliament. Those who are trying to close the DTP are aiming to end Kurdish hopes for democracy," Yıldız said.

He added that others in the party will consider resigning from Parliament if the eight DTP deputies are banned from politics.

"Of course, the party's executives will evaluate it, if and when the day comes," he said. "We know very well that in the case of closure and banning of our colleagues from politics, the Kurdish electorate will ask us to leave Parliament."

But Ümit Firat, a Kurdish intellectual, argues that the Kurdish population would not want to lose its representation in Parliament. Firat recalled that the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) actually did not want the DTP to be in Parliament but could not resist the Kurds' demands.

"I am not sure if the PKK will be able to control the population that depends on it if it forces the other DTP deputies to resign. Despite the fact it does not want a strong presentation in Parliament, when the time comes, it will think about totally pulling out of Parliament," he said.

Yıldız said that if the DTP is closed, it would be the last straw for pro-Kurdish politics, and they will be convinced that it is not possible to be in Parliament.

"Even those who have been in politics from the beginning have difficulty remembering the names and the order of the other parties that were closed down, and it will be no use for go down the same road and

establish new parties," Yıldız said.

The DTP is the sixth pro-Kurdish political party to have been founded in the past 16 years; all of its predecessors were outlawed by the Constitutional Court except the last one, the Democratic People's Party (DEHAP), which disbanded itself to merge with the DTP, but the court case against it continues.

Yıldız said that, as in the past, if they form a new party after the DTP, the result will be the same: The new one will be closed, too.

"Right now, we are only demanding and saying the minimum of what we would like. It is impossible for us to say or act less than this. ... If we are not allowed to say what we want, what is the use of being in Parliament?" Yıldız asked. He added that they already have difficulties representing themselves in Parliament.

He argued that the verdict on the DTP will be an indicator for them on the limits of

If the General Assembly gives its approval, 21 more seats in Parliament would be vacant in addition to the three that are already vacant. The minimum number of vacancies needed to hold an interim election is 28.

Yıldız pointed out that if they pull out from Parliament and that if interim elections appear on the agenda, they will boycott the elections, too.

"There is no reason to play the game by the same rules," he said.

Although the possibility of interim elections would be low if the DTP withdraws, Parliament's legitimacy in terms of representation would be questionable.

After the general elections in 2007, one of the praises for the new Parliament was its representative power. Participation in the elections was high, and different political views are reflected in Parliament.

DTP says criticism distorts content of book



the court's tolerance:

Akın Birdal, deputy from Diyarbakır for the DTP and the former chairman of the Human Rights Association (İHD), did not deny that they are discussing withdrawing from Parliament, but he said they will make a decision when the time comes.

The Constitutional Court is widely expected to shut down the DTP and ban eight of its deputies from political activity. In addition, the decision might send four DTP deputies, Deputy Chairwoman Emine Ayna, İstanbul deputy Sabahat Tuncel -- who was released from jail on charges of membership in the terrorist PKK when she was elected to Parliament -- Van deputy Özdal Üçel and Yıldız, to prison.

All of these deputies are protected by parliamentary immunity from various charges of terrorism and separatism. DTP Mardin deputy Ahmet Türk, Diyarbakır deputy Aysel Tuğluk, Bingöl deputy İbrahim Binici and Batman deputy Ayla Akad Ata also face political bans in the Constitutional Court case.

According to the law, if the eight deputies are banned and if the other DTP deputies resign from Parliament, the General Assembly must approve their resignations.

Leaders of the Democratic Society Party (DTP) issued a statement yesterday regarding criticism of a book titled "The Democratic Solution Project Regarding the Kurdish Question," which has sparked an adverse reaction in Parliament. The DTP figures said that criticism skewed the content of the book, which was sent to deputies.

"The DTP has been accused of a prejudiced approach of 'requesting [the creation of] a federation' [within Turkey]. But there is no approach envisioning a federation in the DTP's program or its discourse or any project it has set forth." DTP Muş deputy Sırrı Sakık said the book had been criticized without being read. "There is no damage to the state's [integrity] in the book, nor to its oneness, nor to its flag," he said. He explained the goal of dividing Turkey into 20 to 25 regions and electing governors by the people by saying: "This is not a recommendation for the Kurdish geography alone. This is a recommendation that concerns all quarters of Turkey. It's designed to ensure the administration's [ability] to make [proper] decisions there."

Ankara Today's Zaman

Herald Tribune
October 28, 2008

Iran and Syria denounce U.S. over border area raid

American officials confirm a mission

By Katherine Zoepf

BAGHDAD: Iran joined Syria on Monday in condemning what they described as an attack by four U.S. helicopters on the Syrian side of the border with Iraq that they said killed eight people.

The United States confirmed that a Special Operations mission took place in the area on Sunday, but a senior military official gave no more details for now.

The United States is trying to negotiate a strategic agreement with Iraq that would allow American troops to remain in the country and carry out military operations. The pact faces strenuous opposition from neighboring countries, especially Syria and Iran, because of concerns that the United States might use Iraqi territory to carry out attacks on them.

Syria's state-run news channel reported that U.S. helicopters on Sunday had attacked an area within Syria near the town of Abu Kamal. The official press agency, SANA, cited an anonymous official as saying that four American helicopters had "launched aggression on a civilian building under construction," killing eight people, giving the details of those it said were killed, and that the Syrian deputy foreign minister had summoned the chargé d'affaires from the American and Iraqi embassies in protest.

Speaking to reporters in the United States on Monday, the White House spokeswoman, Dana Perino, declined to comment on the reported attack.

Syria also said that U.S. soldiers on the ground had stormed a building in the area, Reuters reported.

In Tehran, an Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hassan Qashqavi, condemned the attack, saying a violation of the territorial integrity of any sovereign state was unacceptable.

"Iran condemns in strongest terms any form of aggression or violation of the states' territorial integrity which leads to the death of innocent civilians," he told reporters, according to the official press agency IRNA.

Syria's state-run media also intensified its criticism of the United States on Monday, with the government newspaper Tishrin accusing American forces of committing "a war crime," news agencies reported.

Walid al-Moualem, the Syrian foreign minister, accused the United States of "terrorist aggression."

"The Americans do it in the daylight, this means it is not a mistake, it is by blunt determination," he said at a news conference in London. "For that we consider this criminal and terrorist aggression."



Hussein Malla/The Associated Press

A funeral Monday for villagers from Sukkariyeh, Syria, reportedly killed in the attack.



The Iraqi government found itself in an awkward position, at once needing to remain on friendly terms with Syria — which is a neighbor and now home to more than a million Iraqi refugees — but also wanting to bolster the United States, which has said that the border area is used by people believed to be fomenting anti-government unrest in Iraq.

In a statement, Ali al-Dabbagh, the Iraqi government's spokesman, tried to give something to each country. In support of the United States' position he said, "This area was a staging ground for activities by terrorist organizations hostile to Iraq."

In the most recent action, militants killed 13 Interior Ministry employees in a border village, he said, adding, "At the time, Iraq requested that the Syrian authorities hand over the personnel from this group which uses Syria as a base for its terrorist activities."

At the same time, Dabbagh emphasized that Iraq wanted good relations

with Syria. But he said that "the presence in Syria of groups that are hostile to Iraq and who contribute to terrorist activity against Iraqis hinders the progress of our relationship."

On Sunday, the police in Anbar Province in Iraq said an explosion on the border of Iraq and Syria had killed 9 construction workers and wounded 19.

Local witnesses said they believed that the blast was caused by American shelling, but Major General Tariq al-Youssef, provincial police chief in Ramadi, the capital of Anbar, which borders Syria, said that could not be immediately confirmed at the time.

The police statement did not indicate on which side of the border the blast had taken place. The United States has no diplomatic relations with Iran and has withdrawn its ambassador to Syria.

■ Villagers bury the victims

Anguished villagers on the outskirts of farming town near Iraq buried loved ones they say were killed by an American helicopter raid inside Syria. The Associated Press reported from Sukkariyeh, Syria.

Amateur video taken by a villager on a mobile phone at the scene showed four helicopters flying toward the site as villagers point to the skies in alarm.

A journalist at the attack site in far eastern Syria saw the grainy video Monday. It did not show the helicopters landing.

Another villager said he saw at least two men at the scene taken into custody by U.S. forces and whisked away by helicopter.

During the funeral processions for seven men Monday, angry family members shouted anti-American slogans and carried banners reading: "Down with Bush and the American enemy."

Offensive highlights fragility of Mosul

Tension with Kurds tests Iraqi loyalties at a sensitive stage

By Sam Dagher

MOSUL, Iraq: In the midst of a new Iraqi military offensive against anti-government insurgents in this northern Iraqi city, U.S. commanders and others are increasingly concerned that Mosul could degenerate into a larger battleground that would see elements of the fragile Iraqi state confronting one another.

Old problems risk spilling out violently, here and now. As the central government in Baghdad sends troops to quell the insurgency in Mosul, it also seems to be taking aim at what it sees as a central obstacle to its own power: the semi-autonomous Kurdish region to the north of Mosul and the Kurds' larger ambition of expanding areas under their control.

The Shiite-led government of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki is sending national police and army forces to Mosul from Baghdad, and seeking to deploy Kurdish units of the Iraqi Army away from Mosul. At the same time, it is trying to forge alliances with Sunni Arab hard-liners in the province who have deep-seated feuds with the Kurdistan regional government led by Massoud Barzani.

The Kurds are resisting, underscoring yet again the depth of ethnic and sectarian divisions here and the difficulty of creating a united state even when violence is down over all. Tension has risen to the point that United States commanders held a series of emergency meetings with the two sides last week, seeking to head off violence between what amounts to two factions of the Iraqi government.

"It's the perfect storm against the old festering background," warned Brigadier General Tony Thomas of the U.S. Army, who oversees Nineveh Province, Kirkuk and the Kurdish region.

Worry is so strong that the U.S. military has already decided that as the troops slowly withdraw, they will allow Iraqis to settle their own problems, a policy that may set a preced-



Joao Silva for The NYT

An Iraqi police officer in Mosul. Baghdad has deployed national police officers there to replace Kurdish units.

ent. If the Kurds and government forces fight, the U.S. military will "step aside," Thomas said, rather than "have United States servicemen get killed trying to play peacemaker."

The competing agendas of the Kurds and the central government have nearly provoked violence before, but each side eventually fully grasped the risks.

At the moment, the United States is hoping to refocus each side on fighting the insurgency rather than each other. But current tensions underline the fact that achieving basic security is

only the first step toward deeper progress in Iraq, and how much remains, bitterly, unresolved.

Mosul technically falls outside the borders of the Kurdish region, but Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party came to control the provincial government after Sunni Arabs boycotted provincial elections in 2005. The Kurds say, however, that they will not abandon the city until they reclaim five areas in Nineveh Province, putting them on a political collision course with the central government.

Already tense personal relations between Maliki and Barzani worsened, officials on all sides said, after a standoff in September between the Iraqi Army and Kurdish Peshmerga forces in eastern Diyala Province.

More broadly, the two men do not see eye to eye on issues as fundamental as the sharing of oil resources, the resolution of disputed internal borders and the shape of the Iraqi state. The Kurds want a loose federation for the country, while Maliki, playing on nationalist sentiments, is increasingly pushing for a strong central government.

Relations have deteriorated to the point that the Kurdish leadership has described Maliki as a new Saddam Hussein, recalling how the former leader ruth-

lessly crushed the Kurds in the 1980s.

In the latest offensive against insurgents, Maliki is pushing to lessen Kurdish military influence here, and that is testing loyalties at a sensitive time. Maliki sent nearly 3,000 national police officers to Mosul to prop up the local force. The officers, who are almost all Shiites and Sunni Arabs, will be in charge of the overwhelmingly Sunni Arab west side of the city. The predominantly Kurdish Army units stationed in Nineveh are slowly being shuffled into the mainly Sunni Arab and Shiite contingents.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Defense has appointed Major General Abdullah Abdul-Karim, Maliki's brother-in-law, as the new head of the 2nd Division on Mosul's east side. That came after plans to move the whole division to western Anbar Province were blocked by U.S. commanders, who said the plan would be too disruptive ahead of a major military operation.

Sensing a plot to purge the Iraqi Army in the north of its Kurdish leadership, Barzani intervened to freeze a ministerial order to transfer 34 Kurdish officers, said Colonel Hajji Abdullah, a battalion commander in the 2nd Division.

"If the Arabs do not change now, things will get worse and I see confrontation," Abdullah said.

Amid the turmoil, Abdullah and another officer in the division, Brigadier General Nadheer Issam, said their loyalties were first and foremost to Kurdistan. "If I were made to choose, I would not even think for a second — I would leave the army," Issam said. "We have sacrificed too much fighting the Baathists," he said, referring to the political party of Saddam Hussein.

The United States has relied on the Kurds in Mosul from the very beginning. Ignoring historic enmities between the city and Barzani's party, U.S.

special forces accompanied Kurdish Peshmerga fighters beholden to the party when they took Mosul in April 2003. The United States drafted more Peshmerga units into the city in 2004 and 2005 when the whole provincial government and police force collapsed at the hands of insurgents.

In the elections of January 2005, which many Sunnis boycotted, Kurds and Kurdish-backed Arabs took 31 of the 39 seats on the provincial council.

Although many of the Peshmerga units in Nineveh Province were merged into the national army, there are still an estimated 5,000 men from Kurdistan's elite Ziravani corps in the north of the province.

All those actions have stoked anger in Mosul toward the United States and Kurds, who are often accused of being heavy-handed with the Arab population.

Karam Qusay, who works in the Zuhoor neighborhood of Mosul, wants the city to be free of Kurdish military presence both in the army and outside it. "We wish they would leave," he said. "We despise them."

Mosul's allegiance to Saddam was so

staunch that it was known as the "regime's pillow." Now, Maliki appears to want to win over the city by playing on grievances against the Kurds.

"The government wants to extend its authority, and this clashes with the will and ambitions of the Kurds," said Major Ali Naji, a Sunni Arab officer in one of the army units sent recently from Baghdad. "I predict fighting between Iraqi forces and the Peshmerga."

Sami al-Askari, a senior adviser to Maliki, said he hoped that talks between Maliki and Barzani would head off any such confrontation.

But he made clear the government's position: that the presence of Kurdish forces outside the national army and beyond the borders of Kurdistan was "unlawful." He also said the refusal of Kurdish officers in the Iraqi Army to obey their transfer orders from Nineveh is a "mutiny that must be severely punished."

The repercussions of a confrontation between Baghdad and Kurdistan in Mosul, the second-largest city in Iraq, would be far more serious than recent events in eastern Diyala.

Nineveh, which is wedged between Kurdistan and Syria and close to Turkey, remains a focal point for a number

of Sunni insurgent groups linked to Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia and the Baath Party. Both are fighting the Americans, Maliki's government and the Kurds.

Despite numerous offensives by U.S. and Iraqi forces since the start of the year, security remains tenuous at best. This month, 2,270 Christian families, according to the Ministry of Human Rights, fled Mosul after a campaign of intimidation and killings.

The overall level of violence has dropped in Mosul to an average of 9 or 10 attacks a day from an average of 40 attacks a year ago.

Yet murders continue. Judges are so intimidated or corrupt that the Iraqi government has flown in judges from Baghdad, based inside a U.S. base in Mosul, whose main job is to issue arrest warrants for suspects.

Mosul's allegiance to Saddam was so staunch that it was known as the 'regime's pillow.'

Although the murder of several Christians in the city was in the media spotlight, other groups also are being targeted. A senior provincial official was killed as he left a mosque last month.

In the neighborhood of Karama, a notorious insurgent stronghold on the east side, pro-government graffiti scrawled by Iraqi forces during the security operation last summer has been replaced by slogans glorifying jihad.



Joao Silva for The New York Times

Iraqi police officers who were sent to Mosul. Baghdad sent nearly 3,000 national police officers to the city to prop up the local force.

In his push to subdue Mosul and marginalize the Kurds, Maliki is trying to curry favor with disaffected Sunnis. Last week he sent his deputy, Rafie al-Issawi, a Sunni, here with promises of a new reconstruction effort and investment initiative that would be coordinated this time by respected Sunnis from Mosul.

Perhaps more significant, Maliki is courting former army officers and tribal leaders like Sheik Abdullah al-Humaidi, who leads the powerful Shammar tribe in western Nineveh. All are nationalists who believe that Kurds should be confined to the borders of Kurdistan drawn after the Gulf War.

Thomas, the U.S. general who oversees the area, said Maliki was promot-

ing Riad al-Chakerji, a Sunni Arab former army general, as the next governor of Nineveh. Chakerji is now an adviser to a committee that was set up to implement the central government's new economic initiatives for Mosul.

"The central government must be very strong especially now," Chakerji said in an interview that was interrupted by telephone calls about local government jobs for his protégés.

Chakerji, Humaidi and people like Hassan al-Luhaibi, a former Iraqi Army commander who led the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, have all joined a new political coalition known as Al Hadba, which will run in the next provincial elections.

Al Hadba is headed by Atheel al-Nujaifi, a prominent businessman who owns a ranch in Mosul that once supplied purebred Arabian horses to Saddam's sons, Uday and Qusay Hussein.

Nujaifi said the U.S. military ignored the province's historic enmity toward Barzani and turned itself into a party to

the conflict when it relied on Peshmerga forces from the first day it set foot in Mosul.

He said that for Maliki to assert his authority in Mosul, he should first make good on his promise to drive out Kurdish forces. "Many insurgent groups will become law-abiding after that."

Both Nujaifi and his brother Osama, a member of Parliament in Baghdad, blame the Kurds for instigating the campaign against the Christians in Mosul to deflect pressure from the central government.

One Kurdish leader called the accusations "ludicrous," and the United States military says it was most likely the work of militants linked to Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia.

But a group of Christian leaders who met with Thomas last week in the town of Al Qosh outside Mosul blamed the struggle between the central government and Kurdistan for the plight of their people. Sweeping out both sides, they said, may be the only way to restore calm and trust.

"You have done a great job removing Saddam's regime," Father Bashar Warda told the general. "Continue with removing this regime and start over again."

Alissa J. Rubin contributed reporting from Baghdad.

AFP

IRAK: LE PARLEMENT KURDE VOTE UNE LOI LIMITANT LA POLYGAMIE

ERBIL (Irak), 30 oct 2008 (AFP) –

LE PARLEMENT régional du Kurdistan a adopté jeudi une loi limitant la polygamie, sous la pression des organisations féminines qui n'ont toutefois pas réussi à interdire totalement cette pratique.

"Nous n'avons pas pu interdire totalement la polygamie mais nous avons réussi à la limiter fortement", a déclaré à l'AFP la députée Khamane Zrar.

La nouvelle loi prévoit que la polygamie ne sera autorisée que dans les cas où "la femme souffre de maladies sexuellement transmissibles ou de stérilité". L'homme aura alors le droit de prendre une seconde femme pour épouse, alors que l'islam permet aux hommes d'avoir jusqu'à quatre épouses.

Laila Abdallah, une militante de l'Union des femmes kurdes, a regretté pour sa part de "n'avoir pas pu interdire totalement la polygamie".

"Nous n'allons pas nous arrêter là. Nous continuerons à faire pression sur le

Parlement et le gouvernement pour interdire complètement cette pratique", a-t-elle ajouté.

Le Parlement régional du Kurdistan compte 111 députés, dont 28 femmes.

Dans le gouvernement local, il y a trois femmes sur 42 ministres.

La loi irakienne autorise la polygamie.

Par ailleurs, le Parlement régional a fixé à 16 ans l'âge du mariage et a amélioré les droits des femmes concernant le mariage.

Dans la société extrêmement conservatrice du Kurdistan, 12.500 femmes ont été tuées ou se sont suicidées entre 1991 et 2007.

Un rapport publié en 2007 par le "gouvernement régional" fait état de coups, d'agressions sexuelles, de menaces physiques, de mariages forcés, de rapt et de harcèlement contre les femmes.

AFP

IRAK: LES KURDES PRÉFÈRENT MCCAIN MAIS N'ONT PAS PEUR D'OBAMA

SOULEMANIYAH (Irak), 31 oct 2008 (AFP)

LE COEUR des dirigeants kurdes irakiens penche plutôt en faveur du candidat républicain John McCain, mais personne ne croit vraiment à un changement de la politique américaine si le démocrate Barack Obama devient président.

"La majorité des Kurdes préfère les républicains qui ont suivi une politique très claire en faveur de l'Irak, même s'il n'y a pas de différences notables entre McCain et Obama", affirme le président de la commission des relations extérieures au sein du Parlement régional kurde, Aref Abdallah.

"Leurs divergences sur l'Irak sont plus sur la forme que sur le fond", assure ce membre du l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK, du président irakien Jalal Talabani).

Assis dans son bureau à Soulemaniyah, l'une des deux grandes villes du Kurdistan, il rappelle qu'en 2000, les Kurdes préféraient le vice-président démocrate Al Gore à son challenger républicain George Bush.

"Ils estimaient que les démocrates étaient contre le régime baassiste mais il s'est avéré que ce sont les républicains qui ont changé l'Irak", ajoute-t-il.

Jouissant d'une autonomie de fait depuis 1991 à la suite de la première guerre du Golfe et l'interdiction faite à l'aviation irakienne de survoler leur territoire, les Kurdes ont accueilli avec une joie sans réserve l'invasion conduite par les Etats-Unis en mars 2003 qui a abouti à la chute de Saddam Hussein.

La nouvelle donne a permis à cette communauté d'acquérir une très large autonomie en 2005 dans la constitution initiée par les Américains, et un pouvoir qu'ils n'avaient jamais obtenu auparavant.

"Les Kurdes ont peur de perdre leurs acquis. En 1991, Bush père a créé une zone d'exclusion (aérienne) et Bush fils a changé de régime", a souligné M. Abdallah.

Pour Yassine Taha, un enseignant, "l'ambiguïté de la position d'Obama envers les Kurdes a suscité l'inquiétude au sein de leurs élites".

"Les républicains ont soutenu les Kurdes en Irak mais il n'y a aucune garantie qu'Obama continue sur la même voie car il a déclaré (...) qu'il préférerait se concentrer sur l'Afghanistan".

En juillet, lors d'une visite à Kaboul, M. Obama avait estimé que "ne pas avoir terminé (le) travail" en Afghanistan avait été "l'une des plus grosses erreurs commises après le 11 septembre 2001".

"Nous avons été distraits par l'Irak", avait-il déploré.

Mohammad Hakim, membre du bureau politique du Groupe islamique kurde représenté au Parlement régional, qui est plutôt en faveur d'Obama, reconnaît toutefois que "l'actuelle direction kurde préfère Bush et considère que si McCain est élu, il appliquera la même politique".

A Erbil, la capitale du Kurdistan, le président UPK du Parlement autonome dit, lui, ne pas voir de "grande différence" entre les candidats.

"Selon nous, l'intérêt américain est de poursuivre la politique menée par l'administration actuelle", assure Adnane el-Moufti.

"On ne change pas la politique étrangère en changeant de président américain. Le grand changement se produira surtout en politique intérieure."

Le vice-président du Parlement, qui appartient au Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK de Massoud Barzani), partage ce point de vue. "Il y aura peut-être un changement de tactique des Etats-Unis, mais pas de stratégie", assure Kamal Kirkouli.

Barack Obama a quand même des partisans à Souleimaniyah. "Obama est jeune et dynamique. Nous en avons assez de la politique de Bush et des républicains et McCain c'est la même chose que Bush", souligne Askoul Rassoul, 53 ans, employée au "ministère" local des Affaires sociales.

A ce propos, elle estime que cela pourrait servir de leçon au Kurdistan. "J'ai l'espoir de voir un jeune à la tête du Kurdistan irakien et d'en finir avec les dirigeants traditionnels et vieux". Jalal Talabani aura 75 ans dans deux semaines et Massoud Barzani est âgé de 62 ans.

TURKISH DAILY NEWS

October 30, 2008

Pro-Kurdish party suggests federation

NAMIK DURUKAN ANKARA – Milliyet

The controversial suggestion by the jailed leader of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, to divide Turkey into regions and give broad powers to locally elected governors was presented to deputies by the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party, or DTP, this week.

The 64-page brochure, titled Democratic Autonomy Project and printed in Turkish, English and Kurdish, proposes Turkey be divided into 20 to 25 regions with each region given the power to designate its own symbols and colors.

The brochure was printed in Diyarbakir in the Southeast and was mailed to deputies, ministers and embassies so that it arrived at its destination on the eve of the Oct. 29 Republic Day celebrations.

The project was included by the DTP in its party program last year and was criticized by many politicians.

It includes a comprehensive administrative reform of the state structure with wide-ranging powers given to local governors.

The Kurdish identity and language must be protected by the Constitution, the brochure says, calling for a new and freer constitution.

The Republican People's Party, or CHP, deputy from Istanbul, Mustafa Özyürek, noted that it was the first time a Kurdish brochure was distributed in Parliament.

They also ask for a federation by hiding behind democratic autonomy, he said.

He said the escalation of terrorism by the PKK was aimed at creating another state.

Özyürek said the recent street violence in the Southeast showed the DTP was not content in merely preparing such documents but also wanted to implement their suggestions through violent means.