

Are Syria and Iran Manipulating Turkey on Iraq?

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October 23, 2007: PKK is the Kurdish Worker's Party that adopted violence in its struggle against Turkey. As the Turkish Parliament recently voted to authorize a limited invasion into Northern Iraq to fight the PKK militias, one can see the rising shadows of two hostile regimes in the region, eager to see a NATO member, Turkey, eventually clashing with the United States through their local allies in Iraq. Indeed, the Iranian and Syrian regimes have been pushing the precarious mechanisms of a Turkish military intervention into Northern Iraq for a while now. Logically, a collapse of security in the most secure part of Iraq would lead to a crumbling of the military stabilization of the country, a chief objective of US plans in Iraq. But the Iran plans for Iraq, which I have analyzed in a previous article, consist of three types of destabilization: ^a An Iranian push in the south, ^a A Syrian opening for the Jihadists in the center, and ^a Dragging Turkey to a dogfight in the mountains of the north. In order to launch the third leg preemptively into Iraqi Kurdistan, Tehran and Damascus have been pushing all the right buttons for the confrontation. Iran's shelling of villages in the northern part of Iraqi Kurdistan over the past months aimed at encouraging Turkey to do the same. Opening salvos by the Ayatollahs are to test the Kurdish and US reactions. Moreover, Iran's Pasdaran - the Revolutionary Guard that provides training and support to terrorist groups throughout the region and abroad - is said to have infiltrated some circles within the PKK, since the latter was based in Syria a few years ago. The PKK suddenly has been waging inexplicable operations inside Eastern Turkey with a new energy, after years of calm. Sources believe the PKK was manipulated by both Iran and Syria into these terror acts on Turkish soil while the official bases of the group are on Iraqi soil. Hence the attacks triggering Turkish anger and responses may have been manipulated by the "axis." But the Syrian regime has another card it could have played. According to well informed sources in the region, and not to the surprise of experts, the Alawite regime in Syria (Alawites are important to the leadership of Syria, as President Bashar al-Assad and his father, Hafez are Alawite) has had good relations with Alawite officers inside the Turkish armed forces. The "Alawite connection" may have been activated to encourage a military response and incursion into northern Iraq. But nevertheless, the Assad regime and the Turkish Islamist Government - reinforced by the last Presidential election in Ankara - have a joint objective interest in weakening the US presence in Iraq. Assad thinks that he can help create a major Turkish-Iranian-Syrian alliance against the Kurds in Northern Iraq. And by the same logic, the Kurds, solid US allies, will be facing another formal ally of Washington on Iraqi soil: Turkey. The plan is to drag the Turkish Army (traditionally not inclined to find itself face to face with its major ally) to enter a territory where "terrorists are based," but where they could be indistinguishable from those Kurdish Peshmergas who are the backbone of the new post-Saddam Iraq. The rest can be guessed. As the "axis" is using all its cards to crumble Iraq's and Lebanon's democracies, the Kurds in Northern Iraq should have acted quickly and strategically. There shouldn't have been any PKK bases in their areas because these are a recipe for disaster. The situation in Iraq as a whole is still complex, precarious and explosive, despite the advances made by the new US military plans, including the surge. The north must remain stable and secure and, above all, at peace with the only "NATO" border it has. The other frontiers Iraqi Kurdistan has are with the Pasdarans and the Syrian Baath. Both want the new Iraq's head. Instead of playing charms with Tehran and Damascus, the Kurdistan city of Soleimaniye must reinforce its own deterring force and maintain stability and peace on its northern border with Turkey. Knowing all too well that the new Islamist Government in Ankara is shifting the grounds inside the modernist Kemalist Republic, Iraq's Kurdish leadership mustn't offer any reason for a Turkish adventure in their areas. Hence, it is recommended that the Kurdish leaders of Iraq be the ones to reign in the PKK to avoid having the Turkish Army crossing the borders. The US can - and should - broker arrangements between the Iraqi Kurds and the Turkish military to avoid the rise of an anti-Kurdish Triangle in the region.

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