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and Iran (under the Shah), aiming to destabilize the Iraqi government, backed a Kurdish revolt led by Mustafa Barzani. Barzani's son continues to battle Iraq, but now with support from Iran and Libya.

Since the Iran-Iraq war began in 1980, the Kurds have continued their violent campaigns in three nations.

Home to five Kurdish partisan armies, northern Iraq is "a cauldron of Kurdish separatism." Two groups of 10,000 guerrillas oppose the Iraqis, taking advantage of the army's preoccupation with the war to the south, and threatening the highway and oil pipeline to Turkey. Three armies of anti-Khomeini guerrillas based in Iraq routinely conduct raids into Iran.

Turkey does not recognize the existence of its eight million Kurds, calling them "eastern compatriots" or "mountain Turks." But Syrian-trained, Marxist *pesh mergas* have launched more than 400 attacks on Turkish border villages since 1984. To secure its southeastern provinces, Turkey is fencing the Syrian border and bombing the hideouts of *pesh mergas* in Iraq.

While some opportunistic Kurdish factions lean toward Marxist ideology, they have also welcomed support from the West. If Iran triumphs over Iraq, Kaplan contends, either superpower may use the Kurds for "an insurgency option" in Iran. "Draw up any scenario you please," he suggests, "the Kurds are available."

### *Deregulating Japan*

"Micro Economics" by Robert Chapman Wood, in *Policy Review* (Fall 1987), Heritage Foundation, 214 Massachusetts Ave. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.

Japan's trade barriers against foreign imports are well known. Yet Japan has an equally formidable network of *domestic* trade barriers—internal regulatory restrictions that discourage investment and growth and encourage trade surpluses. These restrictions, says Wood, an economic consultant, "prevent Japanese citizens from buying what they most want to buy."

Japanese curbs on development, Wood argues, derive from government policies designed to "preserve the country's traditions and culture." Having been taught in school that Japan is a small nation lacking in resources (without being told about comparable areas of the world, such as southern New England or the Netherlands), few Japanese believe that they can live as well as Europeans or Americans. There is little public pressure, therefore, for the removal of existing economic barriers.

Consider Japan's housing policies. Although the nation's population density is high (846 people per square mile), Japan is actually *less* congested than such states as New Jersey (986 people per square mile). But Japanese agricultural policies, with high subsidies for farm products and low taxes on farmland, discourage farmers from selling acreage to developers, reducing the space available for new housing. (Fifteen percent of the Tokyo metropolitan area, for example, is farmland.) Meanwhile, strict national rent controls "often make redevelopment practically impossible."

New businesses are hobbled by government policies designed to preserve family-run stores. Only one "large" store is allowed in a neighbor-

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hood, "large" being defined as about the size of "the pre-World War II A&P." Because chains do not compete against one another, Japanese consumers are offered fewer goods than their Western counterparts.

To reduce trade surpluses, Wood concludes, the Japanese government needs to slash farm subsidies and eliminate restrictions on business. Housing deregulation, for example, would allow export-oriented Japanese manufacturers to concentrate on domestic markets, as well as provide new customers for Western construction firms. "Reducing Japan's congestion," Wood asserts, "is as important as reducing America's budget deficit."

*Neocolonial Triumph*

"Gabon: A Neocolonial Enclave of Enduring French Interest" by Michael C. Reed, in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* (June 1987), 32 East 57th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

The overthrow of governments is common in much of Africa. Yet in the small West African country of Gabon, French neocolonialism has helped ensure that only two men have ruled this nation of perhaps one million since its independence in 1960. Gabon's very identity, notes Reed, a doctoral candidate at the University of Washington, Seattle, "is inseparable from France."

Gabon's first president was Léon M'Ba, leader of a Gabon political party backed by French forestry interests. M'Ba was ousted in February 1964, but was restored to power with the assistance of 600 French paratroopers. After M'Ba's death (in a Parisian hospital) in November 1967, he was succeeded by his vice president, Albert-Bernard (later Omar) Bongo, who has remained in charge ever since.

Bongo maintains strong ties with France. The *Service d'action civique* (SAC), a neo-Gaullist paramilitary organization, is quite influential in Gabon; SAC members (who are led by retired general "Loulou" Martin, a Dienbienphu veteran) control both the Presidential Guard and Gabon's secret service.

But Bongo has also ingratiated himself with African governments of widely varying political philosophies. During the 1970s, for example, Gabon helped break the sanctions imposed by the UN on Rhodesian exports. But Bongo has also made six state visits to China, and has offered to negotiate peace between Libya and Chad. Gabon's foreign policy, Bongo has said, is "neither to the right nor to the left, but straight ahead."

Oil revenues have brought prosperity to Gabon. In 1984, for example, sources of petroleum totaling \$691 million accounted for 83 percent of the country's exports. But oil production and revenues have been declining since 1976, and life *après pétrole* looks bleak. Budget revenues fell from \$2.28 billion in 1985 to \$1 billion in 1987. Big development projects, such as the trans-Gabon railway completed in December 1986 at a cost of \$4 billion, may not become profitable for years, if ever.

Bongo's hold on power appears secure. Opposition parties are weak and divided, and Bongo won the November 1986 presidential election with a 99.97 percent majority. "According to African tradition," Bongo declared after his victory, "the *chef* (leader) is chosen one time and forever."