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INSTITUT KURDE, 106, rue La Fayette - 75010 PARIS
Tel. : 01-48 24 64 64 - Fax : 01-48 24 64 66
www.fikp.org
E-mail: bulletin@fikp.org

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AS WELL AS ...

BAGHDAD: THE NEW GOVERNMENT TAKES AN OATH OF ALLEGIANCE TO A FEDERAL IRAQ

On 8 May, several months behind its initial timetable, the Iraqi Prime Minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, and the Iraqi Parliament, invested six Ministers of the new government to those positions hitherto vacant. A notable fact — four Sunni Arabs politicians are among the new Ministers. In a formal vote, 112 of the 155

members of Parliament present approved the nominations submitted to them by Mr. Jaafari, including those of Shiite Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum, as head of the Oil Ministry and of the Sunni Arab Saadun al-Duleimi to the Defence.

No sooner appointed, however, than Hashim Abdul-Rahman al-Shibli, a Sunni Arab, refused the portfolio of Human Rights

Minister. Mr. Shibli explained that he did not want to be chosen solely because of his religion. "Focusing solely on religious identity leads to divisions within society and the State. It is for this reason that I respectfully decline this portfolio", he declared. He was one of the four Sunni Arabs put forward by Mr. Jaafari, bringing the total number of Sunni Arab ministers to seven. Of the 37 Ministers, there remain now only the Human Rights portfolio and a fourth Deputy

Prime Minister to be appointed. Mr. Jaafari expressed the hope that the latter would be a woman.

Furthermore, the members of Ibrahim AL-Jaafari's government, in taking their oath of office on the occasion of the second meeting of the Council of Ministers, used a new modified oath that mentions a "federal Iraq". Mr. Jaafari was the first to take part in the ceremony, by swearing the oath with one hand on the Qoran, followed by the other members of his cabinet present. Mrs. Bassema Youssef Boutros, the only Christian Minister, who is responsible for Science and Technology, took the other on a copy of the Bible. "I swear by God, to preserve the independence of Iraq, its sovereignty, to defend the interests of its people, of its waters and natural resources and of its democratic and federal system, and to carry out the law with sincerity and impartiality", declared each of the members of the Cabinet.

The reference to the democratic and federal system had been dropped in the version used by the members of the still in complete government on 3 May. The Kurdish leader, Massud Barzani, had protested, on 6 May, at the dropping of the mention of the term "federal Iraq" in the oath sworn by the members of the government. "Suppressing mention of a federal Iraq is a violation of the law and a serious threat to our alliance", (with the list supported by the Shiite clergy) he had declared. "I hope it was not deliberate and I would like to see it restored as soon as possible", added the leader of

the Kurdistan Democratic Party, allied with President Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and with the Shiite Iraqi Unified Alliance list. He called on the Kurds in the National Assembly to "raise the question and find a solution to it".

During the 4 Mai Parliamentary sitting, Fuad Massum, former Kurdish Prime Minister and PUK Member of the Baghdad Parliament had protested at the dropping of this clause, while the Kurds running the autonomous Kurdish region had always insisted on the federal character of Iraq, which had been written into the interim Constitution.

You will find below that list of Ministers in the transitional Iraqi government, as announced and approved by Parliament on 8 May. It totals 36 Ministers: 18, Shiites, 9 Sunni Arabs, 8 Kurds and one Christian. Seven of these are women.

Shiites

Prime Minister: Ibrahim Jaafari

Deputy Prime Minister: Ahmed Shalabi

Minister for Oil: Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum

Minister of the Interior: Bayan Baqer Sulagh

Minister for Electric Supply: Mohsen Shlash

Minister of Justice: Abdel Hussein Shandal

Minister for the Economy and Finance: Ali Abdel Amir Allawi

Minister of Education: Abdel Falah Hassan

Minister of Higher Education: Sami al-Muzaffar

Minister of Health: Abdel

Muttaleb Mohamed Ali

Minister of Agriculture: Ali al-Bahadli

Minister of Construction and Housing: Jassem Mohammed Jaafar

Minister of Transport: Salam al-Maliki

Minister for Emigrés and Displaced Persons: Mrs. Suheila Abed Jaafar

Minister of Youth and Sports: Talib Aziz Zaini

Secretary of State for Internal Security: Abdel Karim al-Anzi

Secretary of State for Civil Affairs: Alaa Habib Kadhem

Secretary of State for Parliamentary Affairs: Safaeddin Mohammad Safi

Sunni Arabs

Deputy Prime Minister: Abed Motlaq al-Jubur

Minister of Defence: Saadun al-Dulaimi

Minister of Industry and Mines: Usama al Najafi

Minister of Trade: Abdel Basset Karim Muloud

Minister of Culture: Nuri Farhan Rawi

Secretary of State for Women's Rights: Mrs. Azhar al-Sheikhali

Secretary of State for Tourism and Archaeology: Hashem al-Hashemi

Secretary of State for Provincial Affairs: Saad Naif al-Hardan

Kurds

Deputy Prime Minister: Roj Shawees

Minister of Foreign Affairs: Hoshyar Zebari

Minister of Planning: Barham Saleh

Minister of Communications:
Mrs. Juan Fuad Massum

Minister of Labour and Social
Affairs: Idriss Hadi

Minister of Water Resources:

Latif Rashid

Minister of the Environment:
Mrs. Narmin Othman

Minister of Local Government
and Public Works: Mrs. Nisrin

Barwari

Christian

Minister for Science and
Technology: Mrs. Bassema
Yussef Boutros

DAMASCUS: THE KURDISH SHEIKH MAACHOUK KHAZNAWI IS KIDNAPPED, TORTURED AND THEN MURDERED BY THE SYRIAN SECURITY SERVICES

Sheikh Maachouk Khaznawi, a man noted for dialogue and progressive thinking, who defended the Kurdish cause, reported missing since 10 May, died in Damascus Army Hospital as a result of tortures he had suffered, according to the anonymous evidence of a doctor.

A moderate religious public figure, Sheikh Maachouk Khaznawi, whose teaching stressed the compatibility of Islam and democracy, enjoyed considerable popularity in Syria, and his influence extended well beyond the Kurdish community. Born into a renowned family of Kurdish theologians, grandson of Sheikh Ahmad Khaznawi, who was particularly famous as the author of a monumental critical edition of the works of the 15th Century Kurdish mystic poet Melayê Ciziri, Sheikh Maachouk Khaznawi had passed his secondary school years at Qamichlo, then studied theology in various universities in the Middle East. In 1992, he returned to Syria to take over the function of Imam at Edleb mosque, near Aleppo, then returned to his native region as Imam at Qamichlo. Sheikh Maachouk Khaznawi directed the Centre for Islamic Studies at Qamichlo and was assistant director of the same Centre in Damascus. He was also a member of the Jerusalem

Foundation in Beirut and of the Committee for dialogue between Moslems and Christians in Damascus. In this capacity he had recently been invited by the Norwegian Foreign Minister to attend a congress on Islam there.

A man for dialogue, Sheikh Maachouk Khaznawi was also a man for justice and civic commitment. He regularly expressed his support for the Kurdish cause and denounced the fate of the Kurds who had been deprived of their papers, insisting on the necessity for the Kurdish parties to unite so as to exert a greater influence on the Syrian government.

The news of his kidnapping had aroused a wave of indignation. Defying the ban, some 10,000 Kurds had demonstrated in Qamichlo on 21 May to demand the truth about his fate. The civil rights lawyer, Anouar Bounni, who has defended numerous opponents of the Baathist regime, had declared that he held the authorities "responsible for the life and freedom of Sheikh Khaznawi".

The death of Sheikh Maachouk Khaznawi is part of the policy of the Syrian government to eliminate independent Kurdish elites. His funeral, celebrated in Qamichlo, was attended by over 100,000 people. There were also demonstrations against the regime where slogans were shouted promising President Assad the

same fate as Saddam Hussein.

Furthermore, on 15 May, the State Security Court, a drum head tribunal, sentenced Abdel Rahman Mahmud Ali, a PKK activist, to two years jail on the standard charge of "being member of a secret organisation aiming to annex part of Syrian territory to a foreign country", according to Mr. Bounni. On the other hand, the court had postponed to 19 June the trial of a young Kurd, Shivan Abdo, arrested over a year ago following the bloody clashes of March 2004. Similarly, the next hearing of the trial of Mahmoud Ali Mohammad, a leader of the Kurdish Yekiti (Unity) Party, arrested over a year ago was also adjourned. "Despite all claims to the contrary, the Syrian authorities continue to repress society and political movements through the security services and the State Security Court, which is an illegal tribunal" Mr. Bounni pointed out. About 300 Syrians, mostly Kurds, gathered before the State Security Court shouting in Kurdish and Arabic "Long Live freedom", "Freedom, not emergency laws", "Freedom, we want democracy" and carrying banners demanding "the release of all political detainees". Several Human Rights activists carried photos of Sheikh Khaznawi.

Many members of Syrian Kurdish parties, that are not legally recognised, have recently been arrested by the police in Syrian Kurdistan, where bloody clashes occurred last year announced, on 12 May, Hassen Saleh, head of the Kurdish Yekiti party on the Arab TV

network Al Arabiyah. "This campaign of arrests (...) is taking place despite the Presidential pardon of 30 March, in favour of 312 Kurdish prisoners" arrested after the clashes of March 2004 added the leader of this Syrian

Kurdish party. This pardon has not been fully applied "because there remain over 100 Kurds in prison" affirmed Mr. Saleh.

The Kurds in Syria, some 1.5 million people, or about 9% of the

country's population, are essentially settled in the Northern regions, along the Iraqi and Turkish borders. Apart from the recognition of their language and culture, they demand political and administrative rights.

GERMAN CHANCELLOR GERHARD SCHRÖDER, DURING A VISIT TO TURKEY, URGED ANKARA TO "TRANSLATE THE REFORMS ADOPTED INTO ACTUAL PRACTICE"

On 4 May, Germany's Chancellor Gerhard Schröder left Turkey to return to Berlin after a two-day visit first to Ankara then to Istanbul. Germany, which is the European country in which lives the largest community of Turkish nationality, (2.5 million people, 600,000 of whom are Kurds) is also Turkey's first economic partner, with a volume of trade of nearly 15 billion euros. In Ankara, where he arrived on 3 May from Bosnia, Mr. Schröder had discussions with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President of the Republic Ahmet Necdet Sezer on the project of Turkish membership of the European Union.

The German Chancellor urged Turkey to "translate into practice" the reforms adopted to join the E.U., criticising certain deficiencies but saying he was convinced that the timetable for opening negotiations with Ankara would be observed. "The dynamic of reforms must be pursued (...) The amendments to the Constitution and the laws" adopted by the Turkish parliament "must be translated into practice" he declared in Ankara during a joint Press conference with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Mr. Schröder excluded any "change in decision" regarding the

date for opening discussions on membership with Ankara, set for 3 October 2005 at the last EU summit last December. He also called on Turkey, a country of 71 million inhabitants, 99% Moslem, to broaden the rights of non-Moslems. "I have always worked for the rights of religious minorities. Freedom of worship is a European principle", he pointed out.

The Chancellor further reminded Ankara of its commitment to signing a protocol extending its customs agreement with the EU to Cyprus, — of which Turkey does not recognise the internationally recognised Greek part — in the absence of which negotiations for membership cannot begin.

But Mr. Erdogan expressed the "deep anxiety and expectations" of his government regarding Germany, whose members of Parliament had, on 21 April, called on Turkey to face up to its past and to the massacres of Armenians in 1915 under the Ottoman Empire. The resolution, proposed by the conservative opposition, did not, however, use the word "genocide" that Turkey categorically rejects.

On this subject, Mr. Schröder welcomed a Turkish initiative of studying these events, which are poisoning relations between Turkey and Armenia, with

Armenian historians. He added that Berlin was ready to offer its help to the two countries and to open its own archives.

He then sent on to Istanbul for a meeting with the Patriarch of Constantinople, the highest religious authority of the Orthodox Church and was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor honoris causa of Marmara University. In a speech made on that occasion, Mr. Schröder declared, with reference to the issues on which Turkey must make greater progress, that "the ill-treatments inflicted by the police and security forces, the restrictions on freedom of expression and discriminations against women are not compatible with our common values".

Invited to a meeting with Turkish and German businessmen, he evoked the possibility of cooperation in the areas of tourism and agriculture with the Turkish part of Cyprus, militarily occupied by Turkey since 1974. "I am not saying this to play off one party against the other, but to lay the foundations of a new attempt by UNO to reunite the island", he stressed.

Mr. Schröder and his Social-Democrat/Green coalition, supports Turkey's joining the EU. But, according to opinion polls, three quarters of the German electors are, today, against full membership of Turkey in the European Union.

In an interview published on 2 May, by the Turkish daily paper Milliyet on the eve of his visit,

Gerhard Schröder had stressed that it is "primordial to pursue the path chosen" – "The reforms, in particular in the areas of fundamental freedoms and of human and minority rights, must be applied and it is necessary to ensure that there is no turning back. For this, as Prime Minister Erdogan has said, there must also be a change of attitude. And that will not take place in a single day". "Negotiations will begin on 3 October. The conditions that Turkey has to fulfil are well known. The negotiations will, undoubtedly be long and hard", insisted the Chancellor before adding: "the progress achieved by Turkey in the way of reforms will

determine, to a considerable extent, the progress it will accomplish in the negotiations".

Furthermore, the German Minister of the Interior, Otto Schilly, urgently pressed the Turkish authorities to cooperate with Germany on the issue of those holding German and Turkish passports, considering that Ankara should publish the data in its possession. "We demand to be informed" by the Turkish authorities on this subject, Mr. Schilly stressed in an interview with the foreign Press, considering that "a clear agreement with Turkey" had to be found to the question.

To obtain German naturalisation,

Turkish nationals must give up their original nationality. However, many of them, after securing German nationality, apply to regain their Turkish nationality. "If they obtain it again, they automatically lose German nationality, even if they are still in possession of a German passport" Mr. Schilly pointed out. "It is a bizarre conception of protecting data" when a country refuses to publish the list of its nationals, he added, "We have no problem about saying who is a German".

It is estimated that nearly 50,000 Turks, who have become naturalised Germans, have regained their Turkish nationality since the year 2000.

ANKARA: THE TURKISH MINISTER FOR THE ECONOMY APPOINTED CHIEF NEGOTIATOR FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE E.U

On 24 May, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced the appointment of the Turkish Minister for the Economy, Ali Babacan, as chief negotiator in the difficult discussions for Turkey's membership of the European Union, which are due to begin on 3 October next. "We have appointed Mr. Ali Babacan as chief negotiator for the discussions with the EU" he indicated in a speech to the parliamentary group of his Justice and Development Party (AKP). "We will follow the process with our minister (...) This increases his burden but, insh' Allah, with his youth and dynamism he'll come through all right" he added. Mr. Babacan, at 38 is the youngest member of the Turkish cabinet. The Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gul or his predecessor, Yasar Yakis, a former career diplomat, had been forecast for this position. EU leaders had

became increasingly puzzled at Turkey's leaving this post vacant for five whole months and were questioning Ankara's real will to conduct negotiations for membership.

Virtually unknown in political and economic circles, this "infant prodigy" had been appointed to take charge of Turkey's economy after the last general elections in November 2002, which had given a landslide victory to the Justice and Development party, an offshoot of the Islamist movement. Born at Ankara in 1967, Ali Babacan graduated from the prestigious Middle East Technical University (METU) in 1989 as an engineer, passing his exams with without any errors and coming first of all seconds that year. He then continued his studies in the United States, thanks to a Fulbright Scholarship. In 1992 he secured a Masters at North Western University and the worked from 1992 to 1994 as

consultant for a major private firm of financial consultants in the USA. On returning to Turkey, he went into business ran his family textile business. After the creation of the AKP he took on the post of its co-ordinator in economic affairs and so became part of the party's resolutely pro-Western and neo-liberal "shop window". He succeeded in managing the completion of the programme of stand-by credits (negotiated with the IMF in 2001 during the worst economic recession in modern Turkish history). This three-year programme, which has reached its conclusion last February, has recently been replaced by a new 10 billion dollar line of credit.

Mr. Babacan has always limited himself to expressing his views on economic subjects, avoiding "sensitive" issues such as the ban on the Islamic headscarf in Universities and the civil service, although his own wife is veiled.

The Turkish government has gambled its future on European Union membership, an issue that is very popular in the country, where the majority of people make no

distinction between future democratisation, economic success and the E.U. Moreover, it is expected that it will be at least a decade before these negotiations bear fruit. For all that, the French NO to the European Constitution is in danger of both bringing grist to the mill of the anti-European forces and providing a cold shower for its enthusiasts in Turkey, where the more nationalist trends are already hesitating about renouncing whole sections of their sovereignty. The Turkish Prime Minister estimated, on 31 May, that the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by France would not have any incidence on his country's European aspirations and hoped that the European Union would rapidly be able to overcome this crisis. "The result of the referendum in France is not any kind of hindrance to the process of Turkey's membership", he stressed before his party's members of parliament. "Turkey is determined to march forward towards its objective by accomplishing the work incumbent on it (...). It will begin discussions with the European Union on 3 October, let no one

think otherwise" he declared. Furthermore, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, indicated on 31 May that Turkey would "shortly" sign a protocol that extends to the Cyprus Republic the Customs Union agreements that link Ankara with the E.U. Turkey does not recognise the Republic of Cyprus (Greek Cypriot) and the Turkish leaders have affirmed that Ankara's signing the protocol does not mean any recognition of that republic. The EU considers that, failing official recognition, this Turkish signature amounts to de facto recognition of the Nicosia government. But Turkey refutes any interpretation of its extension of the protocol as being any sort of recognition, even implicit. The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, for his part, affirmed on 30 May that France's rejection of the European Constitution "of course" did not mean any calling into question of negotiations for membership with Turkey. On 27 May, US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, warned that failure of Turkish integration into the European Union would have serious consequences. Mrs. Rice

declared that it was important that Turkey be admitted once it had fulfilled the conditions required by the European Union "because we cannot allow a trench between Turkey and the rest of Europe". This "could appear like what has been described as a clash of civilisations between Moslem Turkey and Christian Europe. That would be a terrible thing", she continued.

Furthermore, on 30 May, during a visit to Manama by the Turkish Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gul, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Turkey signed a framework agreement for setting up a free trade zone. The document was signed by The Bahraini Foreign Minister, Sheikh Mohammad Ben Mubarrak Al-Khalifa, the General Secretary of the GCC, Abderrahman Al-Attiyah, and Mr. Gul. Bahrain holds the Presidency of the GCC at the moment. The agreement provides a context for "negotiations on setting up a free trade zone" between the six Gulf monarchies (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman) and Turkey, declared Mr. Attiyah.

BLOODY BOMB ATTACKS IN IRAQI KURDISTAN

Some 46 people were killed and 94 others wounded in a suicide bomb attack against a police recruitment centre in Irbil on 4 May, the day after the Iraqi government was sworn in. A kamikaze mingled with the police recruits in front of the recruiting centre before activating his belt of explosives, according to Governor Nawzad Hadi and Kurdistan Democratic Party sources. "This kind of cowardly action will not terrorise us. We commit ourselves to pursuing the struggle

against terrorism till it is uprooted" declared Mr. Hadi. Hundreds of local inhabitants rushed to the scene and some expressed their anger at such a barbarous action that had bloodied a city that usually enjoyed a clamed in comparison with the Arab zones. "The assassins and killers want to export their campaign of terror to peaceful Kurdistan", said a student, Karawan Ahmed, indignantly. The public Television station, Iraqia, interrupted its broadcasts to show the scene of the attack live. Pools of

blood were visible in the roadway. The attack was claimed by the Ansar al-Sunna group, linked to the al-Qaeda network, in an Internet communiqué. Prior to this communiqué the LDP security had already accused the Ansar al-Sunna of the attack, which, according to them, was very similar to that of 1 February 2004 that had killed 105 people at the KDP and d PUK offices in Irbil. The Committee of Moslem Ulemas, the principal Sunni religious organisation, condemned the attack and recalled its rejection of attacks on "innocent civilians". For its part, the Turkish Foreign

Ministry pointed out, in a communiqué, that 21 of those wounded in this attack had been transferred to Ankara on a plane chartered by the Turkish government. It added that the offer of help had been sent directly by Abdullah Gul, Turkish Foreign Minister to Massud Barzani, head of the KDP.

Furthermore, thirty-nine people were killed and 25 others wounded in an double suicide bomb attack on 23 May at Tall Afar (North), a mainly Turcoman town about 80 Km West of Mossul. The double attack occurred a few minutes after mortar bomb attacks on two houses in the Muallimin quarter, mainly inhabited by Shiite Kurds and Turcomen. On 1st May, twenty-five people were killed and over 30 wounded in a suicide bomb attack at Tall Afar. A

Kamikaze in a car bomb set off his vehicle just as a number of people were gathered to celebrate the funeral of Taleb Sayyed Wahba, a KDP leader.

Moreover, on 23 May, Muhammed Mahmud Jigareti, a senior official of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, escaped from a car bomb attack at Tuz Khurmatu, South of Kirkuk. He escaped safe and sound from the explosion, but five people were killed and 18 others were wounded. Still in Kirkuk, General Ahmad Saleh al-Barzanchi, a Kurdish general of the Iraqi police, seriously wounded on 29 May by unknown assailants who had kidnapped him, was later found dead on the roadside. Two Iraqis were killed and nine others wounded in another attack on the same day as an American convoy was passing

by, near the PUK premises at Tuz Khurmatu. On 11 May, at Hawija, 55 Km from Kirkuk, a man set off a belt of explosives hidden beneath his clothing, while he was in a queue waiting before a recruitment centre for security forces, causing 30 deaths and 35 injured, 15 of whom are in a critical state. The next day, two car bombs exploded in Kirkuk, one of which was aimed at a Shiite mosque, causing two deaths and four injured.

Kirkuk Province, which has a mainly Kurdish population but is outside the Kurdistan regional administration, has become one of the theatre of operations of Sunni terrorist groups, relying on the support of the Baath networks set up amongst the Arabs settled there by the old regime.

CANNES: THE SUCCESS OF KURDISH FILMS: HINER SALEEM'S FILM "KILOMETRE ZERO" ENTERED IN OFFICIAL COMPETITION AND ITS DIRECTOR AWARDED THE DISTINCTION OF "CHEVALIER DES ARTS ET DES LETTRES"

A Kurdish film, "Kilometre zero", was selected for the 2005 edition of the Cannes Film Festival. The film is a Franco-Kurdish production, directed by Hiner Saleem, so that, over twenty years after the great Kurdish film director Yilmaz Güney won the Gold Palm at Cannes in 1982, Kurdish filmmaking has made a notable return. Kilometre zero, a road movie set in the Iran-Iraq war, features a Kurdish soldier and an Arab driver who have to cross the whole country to take the body of a war martyr to his family.

This fourth film by a young Kurdish film director was shot in Iraqi Kurdistan, with the support of the regional government. A delegation from the Kurdish

government led by the Minister of Culture came to attend the Festival. Kilometre zero did not win a prize but, for the young Kurdish director, the mere fact of being in the official competition was a great success and a promising encouragement, especially as his film was the only one from the Moslem world to be selected for the official competition. Moreover, the media gave considerable space to the film and to the fate of the Kurdish people. Hiner Saleem thus went back to the oppression his people had suffered under the Saddam Hussein dictatorship. "I didn't want to show, in this film, how many people Saddam Hussein had killed" the film maker explained. "That would have been too easy, almost opportunist and

dishonest, I wanted to recreate an atmosphere, to breathe in the smell of the dictatorship". "The Cannes Film Festival is most important, because it gives one a sort of residential permit, a visa to the whole world for the Kurdish cinema, which for so long was banned in Iraq" he added.

On 16 May, the French Minister of Culture, Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres, insisted on awarding the insignia of "Chevalier" (Knight), of the Order of Arts and Letters to Hiner Saleem. The following is the speech made by the Minister on the occasion of a warm and friendly ceremony during the competition.

Dear Hiner Saleem,

I am very happy to honour in you, in the name of France, a filmmaker whose artistic commitment is, above all, a struggle for freedom.

You were born in 1964 in that Kurdistan that was so partitioned by the Lausanne Treaty, in 1923, between four states – Turkey, Iran,

Iraq and Syria – in the Iraqi part. It was in leafing through an illustrated book of poems, then in watching television, that you discovered, at an early age, your passion for pictures. You fled the dictatorship and your country at the age of 17 and found refuge in Europe. Today you live in Paris. Your first land of asylum was Italy. During the Kuwait war you returned home. And you shot, in 16 mm film, your first film “A bit of a frontier” in which you made your father and brother act. But your shooting was interrupted by air raids and your first experiment remained incomplete. It is exactly like the “uncompleted film”, presented at the Venice Mostra in 1992 by Gillo Pontecorvo. It was what enabled you to move onto your first full-length film “Long live the bride ... and the liberation of Kurdistan” in 1997, where you told the story of a Kurdish activist refugee in Paris. This won you, amongst other rewards, the Grand Prize of the best scenario at the Angers film Festival, and the prize of the Best European Film at the Viareggio Festival. Then in 1999, you made an autobiographical film “Dream Smugglers” with actors like Olivier Sitruk, Anémone, and Patrick Bouchitey. Then, in 2003 came “Lemon Vodka” that you shot in Armenia and sometimes, it seems, in Absudia, so humorously you depicted the surrealist and comical events, even while giving

a poignant testimony to the situation the Kurds live through in that country. That film won you several awards, including the Prize of the Best Film at the Venice Counter-current Festival and that of the Best Film at the Mons Festival as well as being selected outside competition at the Toronto Festival.

It was thus in Armenia, while filming there, that you heard of the collapse of Saddam Hussein. As soon as you were back in France you decided to go back to Iraq and film your next film in Kurdistan, without waiting to be able to gather the financing, nor knowing whether you would be there for two or for eight weeks. You remained there four months. The action of your road movie takes place in 1988, in the middle of the Iran-Iraq war and present the extreme South to the extreme North of the country, a Kurdish soldier “against his will” and his Arab trench mate and the corpse of a war martyr that they have been assigned to take home. This film is due to be shown in French cinemas next September, you have called it *Kilometre Zero*, as both the beginning and the end of the long Kurdish march to a destiny that it is trying to find. If you have inherited the sense of humour of your grandfather, who used to say “Our past is sad, our present is tragic but fortunately we have no future” it is clear that for you this

is just a beginning. The promising beginning of the journey of a filmmaker who has proved himself and who tells us about history even as it is being made. And I’m glad that you were backed by the Fonds Sud (Funds for the South), which was expressly created with the object of allowing films like yours to be made in the best possible conditions and be seen in cinemas and in Festivals. I want to pay tribute to your career and your talent. Hiner Saleem, in the name of the Republic we present you with the insignia of Knight of the Order of the Arts and letters”.

Furthermore, on 11 April, the Kurdish film director Bahman Ghobadi won the Audience’s Prize for his film “Turtles can fly”, which takes place in Iraq, at the end of the 16th International Film Festival (Natfilm) in Copenhagen. In this film the 36-year, old director originally from Baneh, a small town in Iranian Kurdistan, shows a groups of children left to their own devices, living in a camp for Kurdish refugees in Iraq, shortly before the American invasion of the country in 2003. “Turtles can fly” which also won the First prize at the San Sebastian Film Festival in 2004, is Bahman Ghobadi’s third film, after “A Time for the intoxication of horses” and “Marooned in Iraq”, both filmed in free Iraqi Kurdistan during the Saddam Hussein dictatorship.

THE TRIAL OF ABDULLAH OCALAN: THE EUROPEAN HUMAN RIGHTS COURT CONFIRMS ITS CONDEMNATION OF TURKEY, ESSENTIALLY FOR AN INEQUITABLE AND BIASED TRIAL



On 12 May, the European Human Rights Court in Strasbourg gave its definitive verdict in the case of Abdullah Ocalan, founder of the PKK (Kurdistan

Workers’ Party) by considering that he has not had an equitable trial. Ocalan’s death sentence had been commuted to life imprisonment on 3 October 2002, following the abolition of capital

punishment in Turkey – one of the democratic reforms adopted by the country in the context of its European aspirations.

The ruling of the Court’s Grand Chamber confirms an earlier decision of a seven-Judge Court on 12 March and finds Turkey guilty of violation of three articles of the European Convention of Human Rights. The Strasbourg Court, by

11 votes against six, challenged the trial's equity (Art. 6) because the State Security Court that had sentenced him lacked impartiality and independence because of the presence of an Army Judge on the bench. Considering the trial inequitable, the Court recommended that the Turkish authorities organise retrial of the PKK leader. Moreover, it unanimously considered that the rights of the defence had not been observed throughout the proceedings. "When, an individual, as in this case, has not been sentenced by a Court that fulfils the conditions of independence and impartiality required by the Convention, a new trial or a reopening of the proceedings, at the request of the person concerned represents, in principle, an appropriate means of correcting the breach observed" it affirmed.

The European Court for Human Rights also condemned the conditions surrounding the detention of the Kurdish leader (Art. 5), in particular its excessive duration. The Grand Chamber finally concluded that the death sentence passed on Abdullah Ocalan as the result of an inequitable trial, constituted torture and thus a violation of Article 3 (forbidding torture).

"I am very satisfied at this ruling. Our principal complaint was that he had not enjoyed an equitable trial. In these circumstances, the court opens the way to a fresh trial", considered Mr. Mark Muller, one of Abdullah Ocalan's lawyers. "Article 90 of the Turkish Constitution obliges the government to apply the rulings of this Court. The remedy is clear – it is a fresh trial", added Kerim Yildiz, another of the PKK President's defence lawyers. At Budapest on 12 May, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan assured his hearers that "the Turkish Courts will follow the

decision" of the European Court for Human Rights (ECHR) in the case of Ocalan. "The ruling of the European Court, as you know, must still be endorsed by the Ministerial Committee of the Council of Europe, which after evaluation, will take a decision. The Turkish Courts must observe that decision", he declared to journalists. The Ministerial Committee of the Council of Europe has the responsibility of executing the judgements of the ECHR. "Turkey is a State of Law and any new decision (that may be taken) by the Turkish Courts will be irrevocable", Mr. Edogan added.

The European Commission indicated that it expected the Turkish authorities to observe the ruling of the European Court for human Rights. "The EU expects that Turkey will observe the Court's ruling", declared a spokesman for the Commission when asked whether a failure to observe this decision could have an impact on the beginning of negotiations with Turkey, due in October, for membership. "Turkey is a member of the Council of Europe and thus is obliged to carry out all the decisions of the Court", added the spokesman, Amadeu Altafaj. The European Commission nevertheless welcomed the "prompt reaction" of the Turkish leaders, indicating that Ankara intended "to observe the principles of the State of law".

On the other hand, the Vice-President of the People's Republican Party, the principal social democratic opposition party in the parliament, accused the Government of having adopted a "very premature attitude by announcing that it was ready to organise a retrial before even the ruling (of the ECHR) had been announced". Mr. Onur Oymen saw there a "serious error by the

government" and "proof of its great inexperience".

Furthermore, Abdullah Ocalan has been cited to appear as a witness in the trial of fourteen activists accused of "criminal activities" in Holland, according to a report by the ANP news agency dated 30 May, quoting legal sources. According to the judge of the Court of Bois-le-Duc (centre), the fact that Mr. Ocalan was at the moment in prison did not justify his rejecting the petition of the defence to cite him to appear. The fourteen men are accused of having set up or taken part in a PKK training camp in a camping site in Southern Holland. They were arrested last November, The date for their trial has not yet, however, been set, and a fresh hearing of the proceedings is due to be held on 11 July.

Turkish Kurdistan has experienced a resurgence of tension in the last few months. Two soldiers and two village guards were killed on 25 May in a rural area of Batman Province when an Army vehicle carrying them was blown up by a mine set by PKK rebels, according to local security sources. In the neighbouring province of Diyarbakir, a Kurdish activist of Syrian nationality was killed in the course of a clash between Turkish soldiers and a group of PKK fighters, near the town of Dicle, according to an official source.

On 18 May, two Kurdish activists and a Turkish soldier were killed in separate incidents in Turkish Kurdistan. In the province of Erzincan (South) two men suspected of belonging to the PKK were gunned down by troops. According to the NTV television network, the two men had their bodies bedecked with explosives. The local officials refused to make any comments. In Diyarbakir province, a skirmish between PKK

activists and Turkish troops carrying out mopping up operations near the locality of Sivan caused the death of one of the latter, according to official sources. Already the day before, four soldiers had been killed by a mine on Mount Gaber while two

others and two Kurdish activists found their deaths in a shoot-out in Hakkari province.

On 14 May, the Turkish Army killed nine PKK activists, including two women, in a rural area in Dersim province. The day before, three Turkish soldiers were

killed and four wounded in an attack by a PKK group near a village in Bingol province, according to the Turkish authorities. Three PKK fighters were killed in clashes with the Turkish army on 10 May near a hamlet in Dersim province.

THE IRAQI PRIME MINISTER, IBRAHIM AL-JAAFARI, MAKES HIS FIRST VISIT ABROAD TO TURKEY

On 20, May, Iraqi Prime Minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, met his Turkish opposite number, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, for discussions on bi-lateral economic relations and security. The meeting took place in Ankara, to which he made his first official visit abroad since taking office the month before. The new Prime Minister arrived on 19 May in a private aeroplane belonging to Mr. Erdogan, which the latter had sent to Baghdad for him. This is Mr. Jaafari's second visit to Turkey since the beginning of the year — he had made a visit there in January when he was Deputy Prime Minister. Ibrahim al-Jaafari met Turkish businessmen during the day, before having dinner with Mr. Erdogan, then met the Speaker of the Turkish Parliament, Bulent Arinc the next day before returning home. "There is a common destiny, a partnership of interests, between Iraq and its friend Turkey regarding oil, power and water resources" declared Mr. Jaafari on his arrival at Ankara, accompanied by an important delegation including the Ministers of Oil, of Finance, of Trade, of Electricity, Industry and of Water Resources, Latif Rashid.

The Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, repeated in Ankara that his country attached great importance to the Territorial integrity and political unity of

Iraq. Mr. Erdogan made this remark during a joint Press Conference with his Iraqi compare, Ibrahim al-Jaafari. "The international community is obliged to support the government of Iraq and its people in its present transition period", declared Mr. Erdogan. "The success of Iraq in its present transition period is of great importance for peace in the region. Turkey is ready to provide political, economic and trade support to Iraq", he added.

Describing the 30 January General Elections in Iraq as a most important stage, Mr. Erdogan said he was convinced that the preparatory process for drawing up a new Iraqi constitution would also be accomplished with success. Questioned on the role of Turkey in Iraq and the Middle East, the Turkish Prime Minister declared "We aim at ensuring peace and security in the region and as a country that has greatly suffered from terrorism, we are concerned by terrorism in all its forms".

The Turkish daily, *Hurriyet*, reported on 18 May that Iraq's debt to Turkish firms, in connection with the oil sales since the occupation of the country by coalition forces in March 2003, which is estimated at 1.7 billion dollars, could be the subject of intense negotiations.

The Iraqi and Turkish authorities

also raised the question of the Kurdistan Workers' Party fighters, some 5,000 of whom are said to have found refuge in the mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan. The issue of the PKK was at the heart of a tripartite Turco-American-Iraqi meeting in January 2005, which evoked taking measures against these fighters but which had never been followed up. In particular, according to a high ranking diplomat, Osman Koruturk, responsible for relations with Iraq, Turkey asked Mr. Jaafari to hand over to it PKK leaders, a list of which was sent to Baghdad as well as to the US forces in Iraq. "We have waited till the new (Iraqi) government take office for same action to be taken regarding this list (...) We hope now that it shall establish details about these people, arrest them and extradite them", declared Mr. Koruturk on 18 May, on the NTV television network.

Ankara is also worried about the oil producing city of Kirkuk, claimed by the Kurds as well as by some of the Turkomenians, those of the Turcoman Front, whereas the majority of Turcomen consider themselves citizens of Kurdistan, which respects their identity and recognises their cultural rights.

On the economic front, the two parties are due to discuss the eventual sale of electricity to Iraq and the opening of a second border post between the two countries, which should, according to Ankara, encourage bi-lateral trade.

RELATIONS BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND DAMASCUS WORSEN WHILE RUSSIA CANCELS THREE QUARTERS OF SYRIA'S DEBT, ESTIMATED AT 13 BILLION DOLLARS

On 24 May, Syria announced the ending of its military and strategic collaboration with the United States because of "unjust" American accusations about its role in the passing into Iraq of foreign fighters. The Syrian Ambassador to Washington, Imad Mustapha, declared that Syria wished to cooperate with the United States at all levels, including military and strategic ones, but not if it was the target of accusations. This declaration reveals a fresh degradation in the difficult diplomatic relations between Damascus and Washington. The US State Department's spokesman, Richard Boucher, described Mr. Mustapha's remarks as being "certainly a step in the wrong direction". He also stressed that Syria's cooperation had,

hitherto been "minimal and sporadic". "I would not say that Syria is putting an end to real and continuous cooperation, because so far there has never been any real and continuous cooperation", he added.

On 5 May, US President G.W. Bush had renewed economic sanctions decided against Syria the year before, affirming that Damascus continued to support terrorism and was undermining efforts of stabilisation in Iraq. On 11 May 2004, the US Administration had decided on a battery of sanctions against President Bachar al-Assad's regime: banning of American exportations except for food and medicines, suspension of air connections, authorisation of the Treasury Department to freeze the assets in the United States of Syrian citizens and organisations involved in terrorist activities and

restrictions on banking activities between the two countries. Since that date, relations between Washington and Damascus have gone from bad to worse. The United States, in particular, recalled their Ambassador to Damascus in February as a protest against the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri.

On the other hand, on 29 May, Russia accepted to cancel nearly three quarters of Syria's debt, which amounts to some 13 billion dollars so as to encourage economic relations between the two countries. The agreement was signed in Damascus. The decision was taken during President Bachar al-Assad's visit to Moscow in January. The bulk of this debt goes back to the Soviet period, when bilateral trade had reached almost a billion dollars and when Damascus had been a crucial ally of the USSR in the Middle East. Syria should henceforth only owe about 3.6 billion dollars to Moscow. Other agreements should follow.

3,100 IRANIAN KURDISH REFUGEES ARE TRANSFERRED TO IRAQI KURDISTAN

The Iraqi government has decided to transfer 3,100 Iranian Kurdish refugees from the Al Tash camp, West of Baghdad, to a safer region in Iraqi Kurdistan, according to the UN High Commission for Refugees (HCR). "We have just been informed that the Iraqi Prime Minister's Services have approved a proposal to move the refugees living at Al Tash to a much safer site near Suleimaniah" in Iraqi Kurdistan, declared a spokesperson for the HCR, Jennifer Pagonis. Nearly 3,200 refugees have already fled from the Al Tash camp in recent months, many of them going to

Suleimaniah, where the local authorities have supplied help, the spokeswoman recalled. The Al Tash camp is located to the West of Baghdad, between the towns of Ramadi and Fallujah, in one of the most unstable regions of Iraq. Refugees had started to flee the camp last November, after an attack against a police post in the camp. Furthermore, several hundreds of refugees, including Iranian Kurds, who have been in a refugee camp near the Jordanian border since 2003, have been transferred to a camp in Jordanian territory pending their transfer to a host country. In all, 743 refugees were transferred to the Rueishad camp on 29 May "for

reasons of humanity and security", pointed out a spokesman for a Hashemite (semi-state) charitable organisation. For his part, Omar Abdel Aziz, a spokesman for the Iranian Kurds, indicated that the UN High Commission for Refugees was trying to find a host country for these refugees. In December 2004, 185 Iranian Kurds, blocked at the Iraqi-Jordanian border for over 18 months, were accepted by Sweden, where they received political refugee status.

Several Iranian refugees had started a hunger strike to protest against the "the world's silence" about their ordeal, Omar Abdel Aziz recalled on 18 May, criticising the HCR "which is ignoring the sufferings of refugees in this camp located in a dangerous desert area".

STRASBOURG: A FLOOD OF CONDEMNATIONS OF TURKEY BY THE EUROPEAN HUMAN RIGHTS COUR

On 31 May, the European Human Rights Court, petitioned by the families of six Kurds who "disappeared" or died in doubtful circumstances in 1994 and 1995, found, in these six separate cases, Turkey guilty of "violation of the right to life", amongst other charges. In five of the six cases before the European Judges, the families affirmed that their relatives had been killed by Turkish police or gendarmes after being arrested. The Turkish authorities, on the contrary, assured that they had played no role and denied that these people had been arrested.

The Court considered that in three of these cases the victims had, indeed, been killed while placed under the State's jurisdiction and responsibility. In the other two cases, the judges indicated that they had not been able to determine precisely what had happened but, nevertheless, found Ankara guilty of failing to conduct any enquiry into the cases and, in one case of having "failed to protect" the life of the victim. In the sixth case, it was not denied that the victim had been arrested and had died while in detention, but the government denied that its agents had tortured and deliberately killed the prisoner. The judges ruled that the government was responsible for this death and that the victim had suffered "inhuman or degrading" treatment. In all these cases, the judges found an "absence of effective enquiry" by the authorities into these disappearances or deaths. All six families of the victims will receive a total of between 13,500 and 83,500 euros for moral and/or

material damages, and 8,000 to 15,000 for costs.

On the same day, the European Court for Human Rights found Turkey guilty for having dissolved, in 1997, the Turkish Emek Partisi party (EP – Party of Labour) founded a year earlier and accused of "attacking the territorial integrity of the State". The Court considered that Turkey had violated Article 11 (Freedom of meeting and association) of the European Convention on Human Rights and awarded 15,000 euros for "moral damages" jointly to the petitioners, the EP party and Osman Nuri Senol, the President of this organisation at the time it was dissolved.

Founded in 1996, this party was dissolved on 14 February 1997 by the Turkish Constitutional Court "on the grounds that its programme was an attack on the territorial integrity and unity of the nation", the European judges recalled in their ruling. "According to the Constitutional Court, the party's constitution, under cover of promoting the development of the Kurdish language, aimed at creating minorities to the detriment of Turkish territorial integrity and national unity, thus encouraging separatism and the division of the Turkish nation" they pointed out. "The party was dissolved solely on the basis of its programme, before even having been able to start its activities" the European judges observed, stressing that "the litigious parts of its programme could be summed up as an analysis of the development of the working class in Turkey and the whole world and a criticism of the way the (Turkish) government was fighting separatist activity". Thus

dissolution "cannot reasonably be considered as answering any imperious social need or as being necessary in a democratic society" they added.

Furthermore, on 31 May, the European Court for Human Rights (ECHR) found Ankara guilty of "inhuman treatment" of three men and a woman taken into detention in 1996, then sentenced to various terms of imprisonment in 1998. Erol Giltekin, Sait Oral Uyan, Karim Gundogan and Mrs. Nezahat Tyrjhan "suspected of being members of the illegal KTP/ML-TIKKO organisation (Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist-Army of peasant and worker liberation in Turkey)", were arrested and taken into detention on 19 and 20 April 1996, the ECHR recalled in its ruling. "At the end of their detention, on 3 May, the petitioners appeared before the Public Prosecutor of the Istanbul State Security Court, to whom they affirmed they had been tortured. On the same day they were examined by a forensic doctor who noted that their bodies bore various lesions", the ECHR noted. A year later, three policemen were tried for ill-treating the petitioners, before finally being acquitted.

"A State is responsible for any person in detention since the latter, in the hands of police officials, is in a vulnerable situation and the authorities have the duty of protecting him" remarks the Court, considering that Turkey bore "the responsibility for the injuries observed on the bodies of the petitioners". The ECHR concluded that Ankara had, in particular, violated Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (forbidding torture and inhuman and degrading treatment). It awarded a total of 50,000 euros for moral damages to the four

petitioners, three of whom are still incarcerated for "membership of an illegal organisation and endangering the constitutional regime".

Again, the ECHR found Turkey guilty, on 24 May, for its responsibility in the death of the President of the Health Workers Union, Necati Aydin. The union official, of Kurdish origin, died in 1994. The Council of Europe's judiciary also condemned Turkey for "inhuman treatment" inflicted on the trade unionist during his detention and for having refused fully to cooperate with it, as the European Convention on human Rights required.

The body of Necati Aydin, killed by a bullet in the back of the head, was found in a ditch five days after he had been freed by the Diyarbakir State Security Court, two weeks after his arrest. No one saw him leave the courthouse, which, indeed, had not recorded his departure.

"The government has an obligation to explain how Mr. Aydin was killed, when he was in the hands of State agents. In the absence of any such explanation provided by the government, the Court must conclude that it is in default of providing an account of the murder of Mr. Aydin". The Court considered that the lesions observed on the body confirmed the declarations of the victim's wife, placed in detention at the same time as him, that she had heard her husband screaming under torture. Turkey will have to pay 55,000 euros to the dead man's family for material and moral damages.

In another case on the same day, the European Court found Turkey guilty of violation of the right to life, following the deaths of six people, shot down by "village guards" who also wounded ten

others. The events occurred on 22 April 1992, just outside the village of Calpinar, in Kurdistan, when a group of inhabitants who were travelling in a truck and a minibus in the region of Midyat were stopped by a group of armed men. The latter, a group of village guards according to the petitioners (parents of those killed and the survivors), made everyone get down, lined them up along the side of the road and opened fire on them, before taking flight, the Court summed up in its ruling. Following ballistic examinations, 27 village guards were charged with murder and attempted murder in July 1992, before being finally acquitted in 2000. The Turkish Court considered, indeed, that it was "highly probable that the bullets had been left on the spot after the attack provoked by persons unknown". Legal proceedings were, however, renewed in 2003 against ten of the village guards who were sentenced to life imprisonment. The European Court – a sentence quashed by the Court of Appeals. The European Court judged that the "Turkish authorities had to assume responsibility" for these deaths and injuries since the village guards, although civilians, were operating "under the authority of the gendarmerie command". The Court also found Turkey guilty of violating the right to effective recourse because of different "acts of negligence" in the investigations. It awarded 352,338 euros damages to the ten petitioners, who will receive from 4,000 to 54,000 euros depending on their case.

On 19 May, the European Court found Turkey guilty of violating freedom of expression in two distinct cases. The European Court found in favour of Teslim Töre, sentenced in November 1996 to

one year, one month and 10 days imprisonment for alleged separatist propaganda. Teslim Töre had written an article entitled "The socialists of Kurdistan must seize the moment", published in July 1994 in the revue *Medya Günesi* (The Medya Sun). The Court considered that the verdict had infringed Teslim Töre's freedom of expression by passing a sentence "disproportionate and unnecessary in a democratic society". It also ruled that the sentencing court could not be "considered and independent and impartial court". Turkey must pay Teslim Töre 310 euros material damages, 6,500 euros moral damages and 3,000 euros costs.

In another case the ECHR had found in favour of Talat Turhan against the Turkish State. The plaintiff, author of a book entitled "Extraordinary war, terrorism and counter-terrorism" had been sentenced by the Turkish Courts to pay damages to a Secretary of State for "defamatory remarks" contained in this book. The European Court considered that Teslim Töre's right to freedom of expression had not been respected, since the offending remarks constituted a value judgement. But "a value judgement does not lend itself to exact demonstrations of proof" according to the ECHR. The Court sentenced the Turkish State to pay the plaintiff 600 euros material damages, 1,000 euros moral damages and 1,500 euros costs.

Moreover, on 18 May, Turkey criticised the opening of legal proceedings by a Greek Cypriot to obtain damages for the occupation of his property in the North of the island, stating that this action would not help efforts being made in view of a resolution of the Cyprus problem. For the first time since the partition of the island in

1974, proceedings are being opening in a Greek Cypriot court by a Greek Cypriot accusing a Turkish Cypriot of illegally exploiting his property in North Cyprus. The plaintiff, Panos Ioannides, is asking for 250,000

Cyprus pounds (about 550,000 US dollars) damages.

Some 200,000 Greek Cypriots were obliged to flee their homes in the Northern third of the island after the 1974 invasion by Turkish troops, in alleged riposte against a

failed coup d'état by ultra-nationalist Greeks attempting to unite the island to Greece. Some tens of thousands of Turkish Cypriots were obliged, for their part, to fly to the Turkish occupied Northern part of the island.

THE IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S "HISTORIC" VISIT TO IRAQ

On 17 May, the Iranian Foreign Minister, Kamal Kharrazi, arrived in Baghdad for a visit described as a first ever since the fall of Saddam Hussein. The head of Iranian diplomacy, who, like all in authority in Iran is a Shiite, met the Iraqi Prime Minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, as well as his opposite number Hoshyar Zebari. "I have no doubt that this visit will open new horizons in the cooperation between the two countries", stated Mr. Zebari in a Press Conference with his Iranian opposite number in Baghdad. He stressed that Iran had been "one of the first countries to recognise the new government" after the Iraqi elections in January and emphasised that "post-Saddam Iraqis a peaceful and not a belligerent country". "We must turn the page on the past and build our relations in all areas on the basis of mutual respect and non-interference" he continued. According to Mr. Zebari, the political message of this visit is important. "It is the first visit by

the Foreign Minister of an Arab or Islamic country since the free and democratic elections" in January. "And, it is a sign of respect by the Iranian leaders to the Iraqi people" he insisted, stressing the regional importance of Iran.

Iraq and Iran, enemies yesterday and today both run by Shiite elites, undertook to open a new chapter in their relations despite foreign presence on Iraqi soil.

"Iraq is responsible for its own affairs. Any interference would be an insult to the Iraqi people", declared for his part Mr. Kharrazi, adding that his country had no intention of settling its differences with the United States on Iraqi territory. "Our cooperation with Iraq is not linked to our relations with the United States and we want to strengthen the historic relations between the two countries. The help we can give to the Iraqi people serves the regional interests of the Islamic Republic", he added.

After discussions with Mr. Zebari, the Iranian Foreign Minister had talks with Ibrahim al-Jaafari, who

leads the Shiite-led Iraqi government and who had spent many years in Iran, a country with a considerable Shiite majority.

The Iranian authorities had welcomed with unconcealed satisfaction the fall, in 2003, of Saddam Hussein, who had waged an eight-year war against Iran from 1980 to 1988. It had favourably viewed the 30 January victory of the Shiites, who are also the majority in Iraq, whereas the Sunni Arabs like King Abdullah of Jordan expressed their fear of seeing a Shiite axis emerge in the region.

However, the military and civil differences remain considerable. Iran and Iraq has still not signed the peace treaty and the Islamic Republic maintains a cult of the "martyrs" who died in the eight years of war. According to a generally accepted estimate, 500,000 Iraqi and Iranian fighters perished – but these figures ignore the civilian deaths. The total human losses is often estimated at over one and a half million. Iranians continue to this day, to succumb to the effects of the chemical weapons used by Saddam Hussein's army.

IRAQ: EXTENSION OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY IN IRAQ, EXCEPT FOR KURDISTAN, WHILE THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL EXTENDS THE US-LED MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE'S MANDATE

On 13 May, the new Iraqi government, confronted with a fresh upsurge of violence, announced a prolongation of the State

of Emergency throughout the country except for the three provinces of autonomous Kurdistan. "The Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, has decided to

prolong the State of Emergency throughout the country with the exception of Kurdistan, for 30 additional days as from today" indicated an official communiqué. The document explains that this extension was decided because of the "persistence of the conditions that justified the state of emergency".

The State of Emergency had been initially decreed, by former Prime Minister, Iyad Allawi, on 7 November 2004, on the eve of the American assault on the rebel town of Fallujah. It had been renewed since then. It gives the government very extensive powers, going from imposing curfews to issuing arrest warrants, passing by the power to dissolve associations, restricting displacement of people and telephone tapping.

In an interview in the Brazilian daily *Folha de Sao Paulo*, President Jallal Talabani considered that "this wave of violence is a sign of these terrorists' weakness. Note that the only means left to them is that of car bombs", stated Mr. Talabani, who took part, on 10 and 11 May, in the first Summit of Arab and South American countries — his first sortie into the international field since he took the oath of office on 7 April.

On 1 June the Iraqi authorities a particularly bloody month of May: an increase in attacks by the insurrection, mainly Sunni Arab, cost the lives of 672 Iraqis, 1,174 others being wounded, that is nearly 200 more deaths than the month before, or 19% more than in April, according to statistics provided by three Iraqi Ministries. For its part, the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior reported 150 of its personnel killed in May in 59 car bomb attacks and armed assault. The Ministry of Defence, for its part reported 88 soldiers killed and 79 others wounded. On the insurgent side, 287 rebels were killed in May as against 64 in April, still according to the Ministry. In April, already, the assessment of Iraqis killed by this violence was 50% up on March.

According to another assessment, made by Associated Press since 28 April and the announcement of the new government, the increasing violence caused at least 765 deaths, including the US forces. And, according to AFP, about a hundred

suicide-bomb attacks were made in May.

In its annual, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) reported that an American action of "increasing efficiency" has allowed a certain improvement in the situation in Iraq. This finds "positive signs" in the region as a whole and a more dispersed terrorist threat. The "despair" that the explosion of the Iraqi insurrection in the spring of 2004 had aroused, has given way to "prudent hope" for peace and stability in the country, according to the analyses of the IISS experts, whose works are published in London. "Even if the policy (of US President Bush) was rash, controversial and lead to divisions, his aggressive world programme of promoting peace, freedom and democracy has appeared of an increasing efficiency" the IISS affirms.

The Institute notes a "substantial diminution" in attacks against the coalition and suggests that "the Iraqi population is becoming more and more intolerant" of this violence. It also classes amongst the positive signs the rate of participation in the January elections. "The war in Iraq was nevertheless a risky means of promoting the changes wanted by Washington and it remains to be seen if a net gain will result", the Institute hedges. The IISS considers that the US commitment in Iraq has provoked, by ricochet, a positive development in the Lebanon. On the other hand, Washington was not effective in its fight against Islamist terrorism, for which "an improved relation between the Islamic world and the West is necessary", according to the IISS. The al-Qaeda network is nevertheless more dispersed than a year earlier, "dependent on local groups and subject to centrifugal influences".

Furthermore the UN Security Council has accepted to extend the mandate of the American-led

multinational force in Iraq, the Iraqi Foreign Minister having let it be known that his government was in favour. The mandate for this force of 160,000 men does not expire before the end of the year and the formation of a permanent government. But Baghdad has, nevertheless the possibility of calling for its departure before this date.

On 31 May, the Security Council, called upon to express an opinion on the subject, considered that the mandate of the multinational force — 28 countries are represented in it — should continue till "the conclusion of the political process", as stipulated in its Resolution 1546 of May 2003, declared the Danish Ambassador to the UN, Ellen Loj, who is currently the Council's Chairperson.

The Iraqi Foreign Minister, Hoshiyar Zebari, stated to the Council that Iraqi security needed this force because the "campaign of destruction and intimidation" being waged by the insurgents had intensified since the formation of the Iraqi government on 28 April and would continue, in his opinion, during the drafting of the new constitution over the next few months.

Russia delayed the Council's decision for several hours by demanding the inclusion of a reference to the May 2003 resolution that sets a limit to the presence of foreign forces in Iraq. Anne Patterson, present US representative to UNO, considered, however, that no "precise timetable" had been established for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Iraq. These would not remain longer than necessary, she assured her hearers, while judging that they could not be withdrawn "so long as the Iraqi government is not in a position to answer to the important challenges regarding security with which they are faced".

AS WELL AS ...

• **THE TURKISH PARLIAMENT PASSES A CONTROVERSIAL PENAL CODE THAT CRIMINALISES ANY PERSON WHO ACTS AGAINST "FUNDAMENTAL NATIONAL INTERESTS"**. On 27 May, the Turkish Parliament voted a package of amendments to the new controversial Penal Code, whose coming into force, originally planned for March, was postponed because of the many criticisms regarding the restrictions it imposed on freedom of the press as well as its technical imperfections. The adoption of this code, first passed last September, was one of the conditions imposed by the European Union on Turkey for it to secure a firm date for beginning negotiations for membership, finally set to begin on 3 October at last December's European summit.

The new code, that repeals 78 old laws originally borrowed from fascist Italy, was welcomed as establishing a more liberal penal system. In particular, it increases the penalties laid down for torturers and other guilty of breaches of human rights, and improves the protection of women and children.

The amendments touched up a number of articles on the rights of the press, which had already been criticised by the media that observed that journalists could still be jailed. In particular they suppress the increases in sentences for certain offences — like insulting the President or incitement to war — when committed by the press.

The members of parliament also reduced the field of application of an article providing up to ten years jail for people having

received from abroad for acting against "fundamental national interests". A provision that the penalty would increase from 10 to 15 years if the accused had committed his crime through the press was removed. This article had aroused considerable anxiety when it appeared, in the explanatory notes attached to the Bill, that the persons targeted were, amongst others, those who argued for the withdrawal of troops from North Cyprus or for the recognition of the genocidal character of the Armenian massacres of 1915.

Other articles that were denounced by the media as being too restrictive and imposing a threat to investigative journalism concerned the protection of privacy and the secrecy of pre-trial investigations.

The new penal code, with the amendments, is due to come into force on 1 June, after approval by the President of the Republic.

The Parliamentary debate was marked by the departure of the CHP members of parliament (the principal opposition party) in protest at a last-minute change introduced by the government.

The amendment approved, thanks to the block vote of the Justice and Development Party members (AKP) in office, allows the officials of illegal scholastic institutions, like the Quranic schools, to escape imprisonment. The secular elite is categorically opposed to any measure that eases the opening of private schools on the grounds that such schools would enable the Islamist movements to set up their own teaching centres.

Moreover, on 10 May, the Deputy Prime Minister, Mehmet Ali Sahin announced the preparation of a new Bill responding to the European Union's requirements and aiming at improving the

regulations covering the property of non-Moslem foundations. "From time to time there have been complaints from (non-Moslem) community foundations as well as from European Union leaders ... This law eliminates the need for such complaints" pointed out Mr. Sahin after a meeting of the Council of Ministers.

Turkey harbours some small Christian communities, particularly Greek Orthodox and Armenian, as well as a Jewish community, concentrated in Istanbul. In a report on the progress of democracy in Turkey, the EU stressed that the non-Moslem communities "have no legal status, suffer from restrictions to their property rights and that their foundations are exposed to interference in their management and cannot train their clergy" even if, in other respects, this does not affect their freedom of religious practice. "Their existing properties are constantly threatened with confiscation and attempts to recover them by legal channels encounter numerous difficulties" the report concluded.

• **ANKARA AUTHORISES THE USE OF THE INCIRLIK MILITARY BASE BY GREAT BRITAIN AND SOUTH KOREA AND RENEWS THE AUTHORISATION TO THE AMERICANS**. On 12 May, the Turkish Foreign Affairs Minister announced that Turkey had authorised Great Britain and South Korea to use the Turkish Air Force base at Incirlik to carry out activities linked to Iraq. The Turkish President, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, after months of discussions, endorsed the decree, dated 18 April, authorising the United States to use the Incirlik base (South Turkey) for logistic

purposes for their troops deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. The authorisation granted to Great Britain and South Korea is in the context of the same decree,

Great Britain had asked to be able to use the base's facilities for refuelling its planes. For its part, South Korea hoped to be able to evacuate wounded soldiers via Incirlik in case of emergency. The 3m500-odd South Korean soldiers are all based in Irbil, in Iraqi Kurdistan, and none of them has been killed or wounded to date.

The Turkish ministry also specified the authorisations to the Americans to use the Turkish base. American planes will not be authorised to carry arms, ammunition or troops. They may only have on board supplies, for example tents, food or spares parts. Washington will have to apply for authorisation one month before the flight.

The Americans intend to use the base for logistic purposes for their troops deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. They will use civil aircraft to go to Turkey and military planes to transport the supplies to Iraq or Afghanistan.

During the Cold War Incirlik was used as a base for the American U2 spy planes that flew over the Soviet Union. During the Gulf War it served as a base for British and American fighters and bombers and, after that war was used in the context of the "Provide Comfort" operation, then "Northern Watch" which ended in April 2003, just before the beginning of the Americano-British offensive against the Baghdad regime. Only a little contingent of US soldiers is still deployed on this base, used for the rotation of American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. A member of NATO, Turkey has, since February, been assuming its six-month period in command of the

General Staff of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

• **THE BEGINNING OF THE BAKU-TBILISSI-CEYHAN (BTC) OIL PIPELINE INTENDED TO CONVEY OIL FROM THE CASPIAN TO THE WEST.** On 25 May, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey celebrated the beginning of the Baku-Tbilissi-Ceyhan pipeline (BTC). This is a giant American inspired project intended to convey oil from the Caspian Sea to the West and to favour their economic and political cooperation. Meeting for the ceremony at the Sangachal oil terminal about fifty kilometres South of Baku, the three Presidents, Ilham Aliiev of Azerbaijan, Mikhail Saakashvili of Georgia and Ahmet Necdet Sezer of Turkey, symbolically opened the valves of a replica of the pipeline, placed in a tent a few metres away from the real BTC. They were imitated by the American Secretary for Fuel and Power, Samuel Bodman and the boss of the British oil group BP, Lord John Browne, whose group is the main contractor of this 4 billion dollar project. The pipeline will run 1,765 Kilometres across three countries.

As their leaders explained, the BTC will be the backbone of the "East-West power corridor" that the three countries intend opening up and in which Kazakhstan, also very rich in oil and gas, has confirmed its future participation. Additional infrastructures such as a new rail link connecting Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan are envisaged. "Some people did not believe that this project would become a reality", stressed Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliiev. "Some tried to disturb it but the support of the United States and the activity deployed by BP have

helped implement it" he added. "The pipeline plays a great role in terms of stability and security in the region. It is a good example of regional economic cooperation", he continued.

The British BP Group has a 30% share in the consortium running the pipeline. The other shareholders are the Azerbaijani national oil company Socar, Ameralda Hess, ConocoPhillips, Eni, Inpex, Itochu, Statoil, TPAO, Total and Unocal. The Kazakh President, Nursultan Nazarbaiev and the European Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs also took part in the ceremony.

The pipeline enjoyed a strong financial and logistic support from the Americans who are seeking both to reduce their fuel dependence on the Middle East and to affirm their influence in Azerbaijan and Georgia, where they are competing with Russia. The latter, hitherto, has been the only one able to transport Caspian crude oil, thanks to its network of pipelines. However Russian President Vladimir Putin's special representative, in charge of international fuel and power cooperation, Igor Iussutiev, was absent from the ceremony because of illness and had not been replaced.

The BTC will transport to the Mediterranean up to 1 million barrels of oil per day (mbd) of the 84 mbd the planet is expected to consume this year. A very modest figure compared with the 9.5 mbd that Saudi Arabia alone produces. It will enable Caspian oil to avoid being moved by tankers through the overcrowded Turkish straights. The oil producing countries hope, moreover, for a further inflow of investments to their countries.

The idea of the BTC was launched about eleven years ago, following Azerbaijan's opening up its oil

industry to the major foreign groups and has aroused great expectations in the countries it passes through. Up to 10 million barrels will be needed just to fill it, which will take six months: delivery of the first load at Ceyhan is thus envisaged for the fourth quarter of 2005.

• **MILLIONS OF DOLLARS INTENDED FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF IRAQ HAVE DISAPPEARED.** An American report published on 4 May reveals the disappearance some 100 million dollars of a fund intended for reconstruction in Iraq. The officials of the former Provisional Iraqi Authority are unable to justify this hole. The US Inspector General charged with overseeing Iraqi reconstruction has indicated that he had found "potential indications of fraud" and subtitled then for legal investigation. Three reports published on 4 May call into question the supervision, by the Provisional Authority led by America's Paul Bremer, of Iraqi reconstruction contracts between 2003 and June 2004. "These reports paint a picture of a disorganised and neglectful management of funds coming from the US taxpayers and the Iraqi people itself", denounced US Senator Russ Feingold. "Billions of dollars, the success of the stabilisation mission and American credibility are at stake", he added. "These reports inspire very little confidence in the competence and the transparency that the United States have shown so far" he pointed out. Already, on 31 January, the magazine *Time* had affirmed that the Provisional Authority had lost all trace of nearly nine billion dollars. Bremer's team had protested at this report and stressed the difficulty of producing receipt for

expenses in a disturbed post-war situation.

Moreover, on 5 May, the House of Representatives of the US Congress passed a budgetary supplement of some 83 billion dollars to finance military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, which also includes civilian assistance for the Palestinians and the victims of the Asian tsunami. This resolution envisages a supplementary 75.9 billion dollars envelope to finance operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, in top of the 2005 budget. These sums are in addition to the 200 billion or so dollars already spent by the Bush Administration for these operations.

• **THE IMF GRANTS A FRESH LINE OF CREDIT TO TURKEY, AMOUNTING TO 10 BILLION DOLLARS.** On 11 May, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) granted Turkey a fresh line of credit amounting to 10 billion dollars to support its economic programme. During an audio Press conference, the IMF official responsible for Turkey, Reza Moghadam, announced that the Fund's Board had agreed to "this new line of credit that aims to create the conditions for sustained growth and create jobs". This fresh credit of 10 billion dollars was granted over three years and Ankara will immediately be able to draw on the first instalment of 837.5 million dollars, the official added.

The IMF's last credit, of 16 billion dollars, was granted in 2002 after the serious economic crisis that had struck the country the year before. It expired in February. The granting of this stand-by credit goes hand in hand with a new programme of economic and financial reforms to which the Turkish government committed

itself by a letter of intent. It aims at a rate of growth of about 5% and a reduction in current account deficits to 4.4% of the GNP, while inflation should be reduced to 8% in 2005.

The IMF Director General, Roderigo Rato, who presided the Board meeting, rejoiced at "Turkey's economic performance, which was the best in a generation" according to an IMF communiqué, which quotes his remarks. He recalled that "growth reached 8% in the average over the last three years, while inflation has dropped to less than 10% on its lowest level for over 30 years". According to him, "the substantial application of the policy (of reforms) during the previous programme with the IMF has been translated into impressive performance". "With the European Union's decision to open negotiations for membership, this signals a total change in Turkey's economic perspectives".

The commitments given by the Turkish government for the next three years such as maintaining the objective of primary surplus (apart from servicing the debt) of 6.5% of the GNP "will considerably reduce the debt and help to contain the current account deficit" he added. Moreover, observing the independence of the Central Bank and the introduction, next year, of an inflation objective, "will help consolidate the reduction of inflation" according to Mr. Rato, who stresses that these "macroeconomic policies should facilitate fresh reductions in interest rates and generate sustained growth". In the same way, the application, planned for this year, of reforms in the banking system and social security should contribute to a better investment climate, according to the IMF.

TURQUIE Visite officielle du premier ministre turc en Israël dans un climat rendu difficile par les critiques dont il est la cible

Erdogan veut renouer un dialogue cordial avec Sharon

Istanbul :
Marie-Michèle Martinet

Pour sa première visite officielle en Israël, le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a reçu hier, dès son arrivée, un accueil chaleureux qui contraste avec l'évidente détérioration des relations entre les deux pays depuis deux ans : « Cette visite illustre le fait que les deux pays ont des relations stables, proches et quasiment intimes », a souligné le ministre israélien des Affaires étrangères, Sylvan Shalom, insistant sur la pérennité d'un lien que l'arrivée au pouvoir, en Turquie, il y a deux ans, d'un chef de gouvernement issu de la mouvance islamique, a sévèrement mis à l'épreuve. Qu'à cela ne tienne : « Cela prouve que l'islam modéré peut parfaitement dialoguer avec Israël », a précisé Sylvan Shalom. Juste avant de se rendre à Jérusalem pour y rencontrer le président israélien, Moshé Katsav, ainsi que son homologue, Ariel Sharon, le premier ministre turc, avait, pour sa part, confié aux journalistes qu'il espérait « donner un nouvel élan » aux relations entre les deux pays, en expliquant : « Nos bonnes rela-

tions avec Israël ne nous empêchent pas de faire de franches critiques ».

Le moins que l'on puisse dire est que les « franches critiques » ont été nombreuses depuis l'arrivée au pouvoir de Recep Tayyip Erdogan, en mars 2003. En dépit des liens historiques rapprochant les deux pays et de l'accord de coopération militaire conclu en 1996, au grand dam des pays arabes, le gouvernement turc en place n'a eu de cesse de prendre ses distances, affichant des positions plus que critiques à l'égard du vieil ami israélien. Au lendemain de l'assassinat du chef spirituel du Hamas, Cheikh Ahmed Yassine, tué dans un raid israélien, en mars 2004, Tayyip Erdogan n'hésitait pas à qualifier cette opération d'« acte terroriste ». Et, deux mois plus tard, il évoquait le « terrorisme d'Etat » pratiqué par Israël dans la bande de Gaza, avant de rappeler temporairement son ambassadeur à Tel-Aviv.

Pendant deux ans, la diplomatie turque a ainsi brouillé les cartes de ses traditionnelles alliances. Tandis que les relations avec Israël tournaient au vinaigre, celles avec Washington se dégradaient également, sur fond de guerre en Irak et de guérilla kurde persistante. Et, à

mesure qu'elle se démarquait de ses traditionnels alliés, la Turquie se rapprochait de ses voisins iraniens et syriens...

Avec le recul, il apparaît cependant que la priorité de la Turquie consiste avant tout à préserver son autonomie dans une région du monde particulièrement instable, où elle se verrait bien jouer un rôle de médiateur. Ce qui l'amène aujourd'hui à afficher une plus grande modération. Ainsi, après des mois de discussions tendues, Ankara vient d'autoriser les Etats-Unis à utiliser la base militaire turque d'Incirlik, dans le sud du pays, en précisant toutefois que cette base logistique ne pourrait servir au transit des armes ou des soldats vers l'Irak et l'Afghanistan.

De la même façon, Ankara ne cache pas sa volonté de figurer parmi les acteurs du processus de paix au Moyen-Orient. Ses interlocuteurs israéliens semblent être prêts à lui reconnaître une telle position : « La Turquie peut servir de pont entre Israël et les pays arabes », a déclaré Sylvan Shalom, en réitérant

l'appui d'Israël à une entrée de la Turquie dans l'Union européenne, qui « favoriserait la stabilité au Moyen-Orient ».

Dans la perspective d'une éventuelle médiation en faveur de la paix, Recep Tayyip Erdogan doit se rendre aujourd'hui dans les Territoires palestiniens où des entretiens sont prévus avec le président de l'Autorité palestinienne, Mahmoud Abbas, et le premier ministre, Ahmad Qoreï.

D'importants contrats d'armements figurent également au programme de sa visite portant, selon le quotidien *Haaretz*, sur la modernisation de 30 appareils F 4 « Fantoms » et la livraison de drones de combat.

LE FIGARO

2 MAI 2005

En Turquie, des centaines de milliers d'emplois sont menacés

Le secteur, qui emploie indirectement 4 millions de salariés, veut miser sur l'innovation

ISTANBUL
correspondance

Dans la grande banlieue industrielle d'Istanbul, la zone de Merter est quasi vouée au textile. Près de 1 500 ateliers de production y sont regroupés. « L'ambiance est morose depuis quelques mois. Chaque jour, j'entends que deux ou trois entreprises ferment leurs portes, constate, amer, Erhan Aktunali, un jeune patron du secteur. Il n'y a plus de commandes. Et beaucoup d'incertitude pour l'avenir. »

Le PDG de Tuna Örne fabrique des T-shirts et des joggings pour des marques allemandes, françaises ou britanniques et emploie 170 salariés. Son activité a chuté de 30 % depuis la suppression des quotas d'importation de textile venant de Chine, le 1^{er} janvier. « Beaucoup de

nos donneurs d'ordres sont partis en Chine. Nous devons continuer à abaisser nos coûts de production, mais nous ne pouvons pas lutter contre les prix chinois », soupire-t-il.

Pilier de l'économie turque, l'industrie textile représente un tiers des exportations nationales (15 milliards de dollars en 2003). En comptant les emplois indirects, ce sont près de 4 millions de Turcs qui vivent de cette manne. Grâce à sa proximité géographique et à des salaires relativement bas (350 euros par mois), la Turquie est l'atelier de l'Union européenne (UE) et son deuxième fournisseur de textile. Mais la concurrence chinoise pourrait plonger le secteur dans la crise.

« Cela fait plus d'un an que j'avertis l'UE et l'Organisation mondiale du commerce [OMC]. 100 000 personnes

vont perdre leur travail, clame Suleyman Orakcioglu, président de l'Association turque des exportateurs de textile et de confection. Et au moins 200 000 autres sont menacées. »

ALLER PLUS À L'EST

Dans l'atelier de confection de Tuna Örne, des couturiers s'affairent. « Je ne suis pas inquiet. Les Chinois ne pourront jamais atteindre cette qualité », se rassure un ouvrier. Son patron est moins optimiste. « Je vais peut-être devoir licencier tout ou partie de mes salariés. Et déménager ma production », regrette M. Aktunali. Aller à l'est du pays, où les salaires sont moins chers. Voir en Asie centrale. « L'Iran, l'Ouzbékistan ou le Turkménistan sont très prisés, rapporte-t-il. Certains partent aussi en Chine. »

À la tête du groupe Joy (350 salariés), un poids lourd du textile, Kenan Dogan, lui, s'était préparé. « Le problème ne se pose pas pour nous car nous sommes très flexibles et produisons des choses assez compliquées, sur lesquelles la Chine ne nous concurrence pas, avance-t-il. En plus, j'ai diminué de 30 % mon temps de production. » Son activité a même crû depuis le 1^{er} janvier.

Selon M. Dogan, la Turquie, pour faire face au géant chinois, doit recentrer sa stratégie sur ses avantages structurels : une proximité culturelle avec l'Europe et un savoir-faire ancien de sa main-d'œuvre. « Les Chinois sont imbattables sur les grandes quantités et les produits simples. Mais les Turcs sont plus réactifs et sensibles aux modes. Nous devons jouer sur la qualité.

D'ici cinq ans, la Turquie va devenir la nouvelle Italie de l'Europe », prophétise-t-il.

Le secteur textile turc devrait aussi exporter ses propres marques. Actuellement, une petite dizaine y parvient, à l'instar des jeans Mavi,

présents aux États-Unis, en Allemagne ou en Russie. Tuna Örne envisage cette issue. « Pour nous en sortir, nous devons investir dans le design et la création, analyse Asli Aktu-nali, qui s'occupe du marketing du groupe familial.

« Le "made in Turkey" doit devenir une référence », confirme Suleyman Orakcioglu, patron du groupe Orka et représentant des exportateurs de textile. L'association, en partenariat avec l'Union européenne, va créer à Istanbul un institut

de la mode, pour former à tous les métiers du secteur. Pour, selon M. Orakcioglu, « faire d'Istanbul une capitale de la mode ».

Guillaume Perrier

Iraq's slippery and unfilled dream

By Erik Eckholm

With vast reservoirs of oil and the potential to rival Saudi Arabia, Iraq has long tantalized the world's energy industry.

But the new Iraqi government's glaring failure last week to agree on an oil minister and the sectarian bargaining over this crucial appointment, as well as the unabated insurgency, have been new reminders of the political faults that keep the country's petroleum promise unrealized.

News Analysis

"Unfortunately, oil in Iraq is being politicized more and more," Issam al-Chalabi, who was Iraq's oil minister in the late 1980s, told a conference of scholars and oil-company executives in Washington in late April. "This is dangerous."

Chalabi, now a consultant based in Jordan and Baghdad, is not related to Ahmad Chalabi, the former exile who, in the latest of his political ups and downs, has been appointed interim oil minister.

As recently as April, a senior Iraqi leader evoked the eternal dream that Iraq could produce 10 million barrels a day — close to the Saudi levels — within 10 years to 15 years.

Far less progress than that could alter the global oil market and aid consumers everywhere.

But two years after Saddam Hussein was toppled, production is limping along at about two million barrels a day, less than before the war, and even at that rate it may be causing long-term damage to poorly maintained fields.

U.S. officials had hoped that output at this stage would be at three million barrels a day, generating funds for reconstruction. That level of production could also reduce oil prices, which are now around \$50 a barrel and a global source of inflationary pressure.

But close to \$2 billion worth of American aid to the oil sector has brought only limited gains.

Sabotage of a pipeline to Turkey has choked off exports from Iraq's northern fields, around Kirkuk, and violence has slowed efforts to renovate the larger southern fields.

But even if the insurgency is tamed, oil experts say, Iraq will never receive the foreign investment and advanced technologies it needs until the country has a strategy and laws, ideally enshrined in a constitution, for developing hydrocarbons. Can foreign firms be partners in exploring and drilling new fields and in reaping the product, or

Politics and violence limit oil's benefits

will they simply be hired to do the work?

Whatever pattern Iraq chooses, it must be clearly delineated, industry executives say, with protections for foreign investors.

The volatile question of regional autonomy, especially for the Kurds who want more control over Kirkuk and its oil, must also be resolved before outsiders will be likely to put large amounts of capital at risk.

These issues and more are at play as the newly elected Iraqi leaders seek to write a constitution this year and, more immediately, try to agree on who should become oil minister. The stakes are high, for Iraq and for the world's consumers. Even if achieving Saudi-level output seems little more than a dream, every incremental gain can make a global difference in the price of oil, energy experts say.

"If the northern pipeline could be secured and those fields were brought to their existing capacity, enough oil could flow to change the world oil market," said Lawrence Kumins, an oil expert at the congressional Research Service.

The Kirkuk fields could be producing 800,000 barrels a day within six months to a year, Kumins said, and "the world oil market swings on a million barrels a day."

Herman Franssen, an oil specialist at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, cautioned against too much optimism. Even if Iraq's political situation stabilizes, he

noted, it takes years to sign contracts and get oil wells working. Any major decisions on oil development must also await the results of a study, being conducted by British Petroleum and Royal Dutch Shell, that will chart the state of the country's oil fields and assess the most promising next steps.

"Doubling output to four million barrels a day by the end of the decade would be a major achievement," Franssen said. "And that would make a big difference in the global market, absolutely."

There is a near consensus in the oil industry, he said, that prices will remain high in the coming years, though not necessarily at recent levels of \$50 a barrel and more. Barring a widespread recession, he said, prices may bottom out at \$30 rather than the previous low of \$18.

No one doubts Iraq's potential for enormous production. Only 17 of its 80 known oil fields have been developed, and the costs of new production are among the world's lowest, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

Huge geologically promising areas of Iraq have never been explored with advanced seismic techniques.

But the focus now is simply on resuming maintenance at existing fields to safeguard their output.

Since the international sanctions that followed Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the country has done virtually none of the customary nurturing of oil wells normally carried out every one to three years. Also halted was the drilling of new wells, which is necessary to replace old ones, to reach shifting reservoir pockets or to apply strategic injections of pressure.

The New York Times



An American soldier patrolling oil pipelines in northern Iraq. Petroleum lines are a favorite target of sabotage attacks.

THE GLOBE AND MAIL
THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2005

Kurds: the key to Iraq



ANTHONY JENKINS/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

The U.S. thinks Iraq's new Kurdish president is a sign of increasing harmony and democracy. Yesterday's bombing tells a different story, says analyst **ANDRÉ GEROLYMATOS**

The suicide bombing yesterday in the northern Iraqi city of Erbil at the offices of a Kurdish party is a cruel reminder that the war in Iraq is far from over — and could degenerate into a full-scale civil conflict. For the Kurds, it underscores the fact that their safety cannot be secured by the new Iraqi state.

Amid the ever-rising death toll in Iraq, a new political establishment seeks to give the country its first coalition government. The appointment of a veteran Kurdish leader, Jalal Talabani, as President of Iraq is part political compromise and part wishful thinking. Ultimately, it reinforces the myth that, with enough time and rigorous application of democracy, the United States can transform Iraq into a united federation.

There is no doubt that some Iraqis of different political, religious and ethnic backgrounds are now prepared to work together — if only to get the Americans out of their country. Distaste for the United States does not include the Kurds, however. Unlike the rest of Iraq's disparate communities, the Kurds are decidedly pro-American

and willing participants in the fight against militant Islam. They're prepared to keep the Americans in the region as long as possible, believing that a U.S. military presence in

Iraq is the primary guarantee for their hard-fought autonomy and future independence. This, in and of itself, sets the Kurds apart from the rest of the Iraqis.

But the election of a Kurd as president or the recasting of Iraq as a federation cannot substitute for the ultimate desire among Iraq's Kurdish people for independence. The Kurds have been a sovereign people-in-waiting far too long to accept anything less than eventual complete independence. Most Kurds hope that the reconfiguration of Iraq into a federation is merely the first step toward the establishment of an independent Kurdistan.

The establishment of such a state would place the U.S. in a quandary. Realistically, the alliance with the Kurds offers the only practical option for the United States to implement a forward policy in the region and provide a stable area to maintain substantial American forces in the Middle East. It is no accident that the U.S. is constructing several large military and intelligence facilities in Kurdish Iraq, and also undertaking to arm and train Kurdish militias and special forces.

A united pro-American Iraq still remains a forlorn hope for U.S. policy-makers. Many in the Bush administration wish to believe that the swearing in of Mr. Talabani will serve to persuade the Kurds, Shiites and even Sunnis to take part in the creation of a federal Iraq. Mr. Talabani's presidency, however, has only papered over historic divisions among Iraq's embittered minorities and may ultimately even widen the religious and ethnic schisms.

The disposition of oil-rich Kirkuk, for example, remains an intractable issue. The Kurds claim it as their own historic territory and

demand that it remain part of the autonomous Kurdish region. They also insist that they have the right to maintain armed militias. Most Iraqis, especially the predominant Shiites, assume the contrary and expect that the country's president (even though the post is ceremonial) will support the territorial integrity of Iraq. How Mr. Talabani will reconcile Kurdish ambitions and Iraqi centrist tendencies remains a crucial open question.

There is even less agreement among Iraqis on the role of Islam in the proposed new federation. For many, Islam remains the source of all political, social and cultural organizations. This belief will have an impact on how Iraqi democracy can be reconciled with religious ideology. In this context, the appointment of a leading Shia politician, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, as Prime Minister underscores Washington's anxieties over the role of Islam in Iraq. Iraqi politicians of various stripes may have engaged in horse-trading to establish a government, but it remains to be seen whether all Iraqis can ever vote outside their religious and ethnic blocs.

These uncertainties over the future of Iraq further highlight the significance of the Kurds to the Americans. In the short term, the autonomous Kurdish territory has enabled the U.S. to concentrate its forces in central and southern Iraq, safe in the knowledge that the Kurds control the northern part of the country. It has also been a reminder to Turkey not to take American friendship for granted, and a not-so-subtle warning to Iran and Syria (both countries have substantial Kurdish minorities) that the U.S. has the means of using these minorities to instigate serious unrest.

Twice in the last century (in 1946 and 1979), Iranian Kurds tried to

break away from Iran; it would not take much to instigate another uprising. Fundamentally, the Americans see the Kurds as a means to counter the pro-Iranian Shiites and keep Iraq away from the clutches of the mullahs in Tehran. The appointment of Mr. Talabani, albeit a

singular accolade for the Kurds, is more an exercise in the machinations of the democratic process and less an indicator of the political direction of the Iraqi state. The Erbil bombing simply underscores the difficulties in forging a federation of Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis.

André Gerolymatos is chair of Hellenic Studies at Simon Fraser University and the author of *Red Acropolis, Black Terror: The Greek Civil War and the Origins of Soviet-American Rivalry*.

IRAK

La terreur ensanglante le Kurdistan irakien

Quarante-six personnes sont mortes dans un attentat suicide, hier, à Erbil dans le Kurdistan.

C'est l'un des attentats les plus sanglants en Irak depuis les élections du 30 janvier. Il a frappé Erbil, une ville kurde située à 350 km au nord de Bagdad, « capitale » du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK). L'attentat a été commis au lendemain de la prestation de serment du gouvernement. Le bilan définitif de l'attentat s'établit à 46 morts et 95 blessés, selon les autorités locales qui précisent qu'un kamikaze avait visé des recrues de la police.

Dans une ville calme

« Ce genre d'actes lâches ne nous fera pas peur et ne va pas nous terroriser », a déclaré Nawzad Hadi, le gouverneur, après s'être rendu au chevet des blessés. « Nous nous enga-



Jusqu'à présent, la zone kurde était plutôt épargnée par les attentats

geons à poursuivre la lutte contre le terrorisme jusqu'à le déraciner », a-t-il insisté.

Un médecin de l'hôpital Rouz Gari, le plus grand de la ville, a lu devant la foule des parents venus demander des nouvelles une liste de 39 tués, tous des recrues de la police, et indiqué

qu'il y avait six cadavres non identifiés.

Après l'explosion, des centaines d'habitants ont accouru sur les lieux. Certains ont exprimé leur colère contre cet acte de violence ayant ensanglanté la ville, qui connaît un calme relatif en comparaison avec les zones rebelles.

Flaques de sang

« Les assassins et les tueurs veulent exporter leur campagne de terreur au Kurdistan pacifique », s'est indigné un étudiant. « Rien ne peut expliquer un tel acte sinon une volonté délibérée de faire de tout le pays un champ de bataille et de destruction », a-t-il ajouté. La télévision publique iraquia, qui transmettait les travaux d'une session du Parlement à Bagdad, a interrompu ses émissions pour montrer en direct le lieu de l'attaque. Sur les images, des flaques de sang maculaient la chaussée...

Attentat dans un quartier commerçant de Bagdad

LUNDI 2 MAI, deux voitures piégées ont explosé à Bagdad. La première visait un haut fonctionnaire du ministère de l'intérieur ; la seconde a fait au moins quatre morts dans un quartier commerçant de la ville. Pour cette seule journée, le pays a été secoué par au moins huit attentats, faisant plus de 20 victimes irakiennes et de nombreux blessés.

Selon l'armée américaine, douze « rebelles » qui seraient liés au réseau du Jordanien Abou Moussab Al-Zarkaoui ont été tués lors d'une opération de la Force multinationale près de la ville irakienne d'Al-

Qaim, sur la frontière avec la Syrie. Par ailleurs, deux avions de chasse américains F/A-18 Hornet qui survolaient l'Irak se sont écrasés lundi soir. Le corps d'un des deux pilotes a été retrouvé « tôt mardi matin », a annoncé l'armée américaine.

Marquée par la poursuite des violences sur le terrain, la journée de lundi a permis une avancée sur le plan politique avec la conclusion d'un accord sur l'attribution de six ministères et d'un poste de premier ministre aux Arabes sunnites dans le nouveau gouvernement irakien.



The New York Times MAY 5, 2005

60 Kurds Killed by Suicide Attack on Police Recruits in Northern Iraq



Erbil is a provincial capital in the normally calm Kurdish territory.

RECRUITS ARE THE TARGET

Terror Group Says Attack Was in Retribution for Kurdish Aid to U.S.

By **WARZER JAFF**
and **RICHARD A. OPPEL Jr.**

ERBIL, Iraq, May 4 — A suicide bomber pretending to be a job seeker blew himself up Wednesday morning outside a police recruiting center in this Kurdish provincial capital, killing at least 60 Kurds, most of them prospective policemen, and wounding 150 others as insurgents pressed an effort to destabilize Iraq's infant democratic government.

A well-known terrorist group, Ansar al Sunna, which has been active in northern Iraq, took responsibility for the blast and said it was intended as retribution for the involvement of Kurdish troops fighting insurgents alongside American forces in flash points like Falluja and Mosul.

Near the recruiting center, blood was splattered over buildings, and pieces of flesh were strewn on the pavement, in trees and on top of damaged cars. Iraqi and American soldiers used plastic bags to collect the remains.

Arab television showed emergen-

cy workers frantically loading haphazardly bandaged victims into ambulances and taking them to nearby hospitals, where hallways were crowded with frenzied relatives.

Blood mixed with water from fire hoses collected in large pools in the street near the blast site and close to an office of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, which controls the western and northern Kurdish region and is led by Massoud Barzani.

The bombing was the biggest single act of terrorism in Iraq since early March, and only the second post-invasion strike of its magnitude in the normally calm Kurdish territo-

ries, where the highly disciplined militia, the pesh merga, enforce a strict system of checkpoints and ethnic profiling intended to keep out insurgents.

Close to 200 people, mostly Iraqi police officers and soldiers, have been killed in car bomb attacks and other insurgent ambushes since the government was announced last Thursday. The campaign by insurgents is apparently aimed at intimidating Iraq's first democratically elected government.

The leaders of the new administration sworn in Tuesday evening are largely Shiites and Kurds who repre-



Safin Hamed/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Shoes and a pool of blood where a suicide bomber struck yesterday near a police recruiting center, Iraq's biggest terrorist act since March.

sent populations heavily persecuted during the rule of Saddam Hussein, whose Sunni Arab supporters now make up a large part of the insurgency. Sunnis say they are being short-changed in the new government and fear vengeful Shiite leaders will

purge government ranks of former members of Mr. Hussein's Baath Party.

In an interview on Wednesday, Abdul-Satar Sadq, a senior Interior Ministry official in Erbil, described the attack: "At the front gate there was a policeman organizing the movement of the recruits into the building. At that time, the bomber was queued with them, and because he was unable to enter the building, he detonated himself by the gate where the young men gathered, killing 46, including the policeman who was searching. We expect the number of the dead to mount."

American military officials said later Wednesday that the death toll was 60.

An American soldier who went to the scene said, "The bomber was facing the front door, aiming at entering the office, but he couldn't, so he blew himself up in the midst of the crowd."

Abdul-Razaq Sarmab, a 17-year-old who was hit by shrapnel as he waited in line to register to join the police force, told Reuters from his hospital bed, "All I can remember is a huge explosion from behind which lifted me off my feet."

"The scene was like a slaughterhouse with body parts everywhere, heads, hands, eyes," Mr. Sarmab said. "It was terrible. Those who are doing this are animals because it is all against Islam."

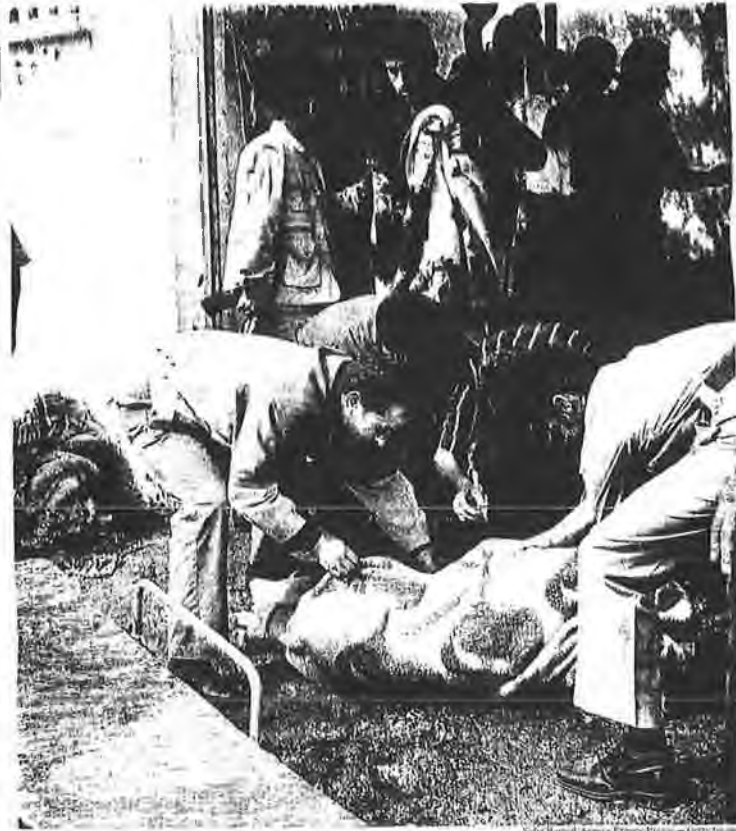
Baghdad was also struck by more violence on Wednesday. Nine Iraqi soldiers were killed by a suicide car bomb that hit an Iraqi convoy in the hostile Dawra district of southern Baghdad, according to an official at the Interior Ministry.

The American military also said it had located the body of the second pilot missing in action over south-central Iraq after the presumed collision of two F/A-18 jets from the aircraft carrier Carl Vinson on Monday night.

Hours after the attack in Erbil, 220 miles north of Baghdad, Ansar al Sunna posted an Internet statement claiming responsibility for the blast, but said it was not the work of a killer on foot but a suicide car bomber. That account, however, was disputed by Kurdish officials.

For such a devastating blast, a killer on foot would probably have had to wear a payload of high explosives hidden in a vest or elsewhere on his body.

In December, what military officials believe was probably a suicide bomber wearing an Iraqi military uniform infiltrated the mess tent of a United States base in Mosul — a res-



Iraqi Kurds removed a body from the site of a suicide bombing yesterday morning in Erbil, in northern Iraq

tive and largely Arab city 60 miles west of Erbil — and detonated an explosive vest laced with ball bearings. The blast killed 22 people, including 14 American troops and four American contractors. Ansar al Sunna also took responsibility for that attack.

In the statement on the Erbil blast, Ansar al Sunna criticized Mr. Barzani for lending Kurdish troops to support American forces and warned that more attacks were coming. The group is believed to be an offshoot of Ansar al Islam, a jihadist organization driven out of its base in northern Iraq by American and Kurdish troops two years ago.

"This operation that shakes your throne is a response for the torture our brothers undergo day and night in your prisons and is a response against the pesh merga forces that lent themselves to the crusaders and raised its weapon against the Muslims," the statement said. "Be acknowledged that we are preparing more for you, so get ready for that sooner or later."

Only one other insurgent strike of this size has hit the Kurdish territories since American forces invaded Iraq two years ago: an attack on Feb. 1, 2004, by two bombers at political gatherings in Erbil that killed at least 105. Mr. Sadeq, the Kurdish Interior Ministry official, said Wednesday's attack in Erbil had been car-

ried out in much the same fashion. The 2004 attack is also believed to have been the work of insurgents affiliated with Ansar al Sunna.

Despite a wave of terrorism since the new government was selected, Iraq has not had one distinct attack this deadly since a bomber killed 53 people in Kirkuk on March 10. Ten days earlier, a suicide car bomber in the Shiite city of Hilla killed at least 136 people, mostly Iraqi police and army recruits. And while large attacks have grown common across much of Iraq, such strikes are highly unusual in the Kurdish north, where patrols of Pesh Merga maintain checkpoints on the roads leading into the region and also in large Kurdish cities.

The Kurds, generally, are friendly toward Americans and mistrustful of Iraqi Arabs. There is support among Kurds to secede from Iraq and create an independent Kurdistan, though Kurdish leaders say they do not plan to pursue secession.

The attack in Erbil came on the first full day of Iraq's first democratic government, whose president, Jalal Talabani, is a Kurd who fought Mr. Hussein. The new prime minister, Dr. Ibrahim al-Jaafari, and most of his cabinet were sworn in Tuesday evening.



5 MAI 2005



A Erbil, au Kurdistan, hier, une mare de sang, après l'attentat-suicide qui a fait 46 morts et 94 blessés devant les bureaux du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan.

Les violences ont redoublé depuis la formation du gouvernement, le 28 avril.

Pendant la crise politique, le carnage continue en Irak

Carnage dans la communauté kurde

Avec un nouvel et sanglant attentat au Kurdistan, la guérilla a, hier encore, plongé l'Irak dans le carnage tandis que le jeune gouvernement irakien se montrait toujours impuissant à résoudre sa première crise politique. Il ne parvient en effet pas à attribuer certains ministères, comme le Pétrole et la Défense. A Erbil, où siège le gouvernement de la région autonome kurde, c'est un kamikaze qui a fait sauter sa charge explosive en fin d'après-midi devant les bureaux du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK), qui servent également de centre de recrutement de la police. Le bilan s'élève à 46 morts et 94 blessés, selon le gouverneur de la ville, et les hôpitaux se disent débordés. Plus tard dans la soirée, 9 soldats irakiens ont été tués et 17 personnes blessées à Bag-

dad dans un attentat à la voiture piégée. Ces deux explosions interviennent au lendemain de l'investiture officielle du gouvernement et trois mois après des élections dont les Irakiens attendaient un renforcement de la sécurité. **Marchandages.** Les attentats d'hier font suite à une des pires semaines que l'Irak ait connues. En six jours, depuis l'annonce de la formation du gouvernement, le 28 avril, plus de 150 personnes, pour la plupart des civils, ont trouvé la mort dans des attaques et des attentats. Cette multiplication des violences rend dérisoires les interminables marchandages ministériels au sein de la coalition qui se partage le pouvoir. D'autant que ce gouvernement n'est que transitoire et ne durera que quelques mois, l'une de ses tâches étant de préparer la future Constitution. Certes, le Premier ministre (chiite), Ibrahim al-Jaa-

fari, a prêté serment mardi, la main droite sur le Coran, dans une salle de conférences de la Zone verte, secteur sous haute surveillance de l'armée américaine et interdit à la population dans le centre de Bagdad. Mais le gouvernement incomplet qu'il préside dissimule mal la profonde polarisation du pays, chiites et Kurdes d'un côté, sunnites de l'autre, qui va toujours s'amplifiant. Ainsi, la liste du cabinet annoncée à cette occasion ne comporte plus que 30 ministères, y compris les postes du Premier ministre et de ses deux vice-Premiers ministres, alors que celle, provisoire, annoncée le 28 avril, en désignait 37. Manquent cinq postes ministériels, dont ceux stratégiques de la Défense (promise à un sunnite) et du Pétrole (garanti à un chiite), et deux postes de vice-Premier ministre. **Ligne rouge.** Même pendant la cérémonie d'investiture, la division entre communautés est apparue cinglante.

Ainsi, l'un des vice-présidents, le sunnite Ghazi al-Yaouar, qui fut le premier président de l'Irak post-Saddam, et plusieurs députés de sa communauté ont boycotté la prestation de serment. Ils accusent les nouveaux hommes forts de n'avoir pas tenu leur promesse d'un gouvernement «d'union nationale». Tous les regards sont fixés sur le poste de la Défense, dont les sunnites ont fait une ligne rouge. «Nous avons constamment proposé des noms mais ils ont tous été rejetés», indiquait hier Ahmed Najadi, porte-parole de Ghazi al-Yaouar. Selon lui, ils ont été repoussés par les chiites, qui les soupçonnent d'avoir des liens avec la rébellion. Habile négociateur, Al-Jaafari est sensible aux revendications sunnites mais doit compter avec les autres formations de la liste chiite très hétéroclite voulue par l'ayatollah Ali Sistani pour remporter les élections du 30 avril. Ces partis veulent une «débaasification» en profondeur des institutions politiques, militaires et administratives, tandis que les sunnites ne jurent que par des hommes compétents et de confiance. «Le problème de Jaafari, c'est que toutes les personnes qui ont assez d'expérience pour devenir ministre de la Défense ont un jour ou l'autre été loyales au Baas et à Saddam», analyse le diplomate américain Richard Murphy, cité par l'AFP. Le blocage pourrait donc durer. **Retour.** Ce cabinet n'est pas sans surprise. Aucun membre du courant (laïque) de Iyad Al-laoui, l'ex-Premier ministre, n'y figure. En revanche, le chiite laïque Ahmed Chalabi fait son retour comme vice-Premier ministre et ministre intérimaire du Pétrole. Ancien chef du gouvernement intérimaire mis en place par Washington en juin 2003, ce proche du Pentagone et de l'Iran était tombé en disgrâce sous l'action conjuguée de la CIA - qui l'accusait de trahir au profit de Téhéran - et d'Al-laoui. ◀

JEAN-PIERRE PERRIN

The Guardian

May 5 2005

They queued to join Iraq's police. But one man had a job – the bomber

Scores killed and injured as insurgents hit Kurdish capital

Rory Carroll in Baghdad
and Michael Howard in Irbil

To be a police officer in Iraq is a perilous job, but for \$180 (£95) a month it seemed worth the risk, and they flocked to the recruitment centre in droves, young men in shabby clothes hoping for a blue uniform.

The queue snaked down the street in morning sunshine. But one man in the line already had a job. He was a suicide bomber.

No one noticed him until it was too late. The explosion thundered across Irbil and in an instant dozens lay dead and dying. It was 9.30am local time.

"The scene was like a slaughterhouse, with body parts everywhere, heads, hands, eyes. It was terrible," one survivor, Abdul-Razaq Sarmab, 17, said from his hospital bed.

At least 46 people died and more than 60 were wounded in one of the bloodiest attacks this year, bringing to nearly 200 the number killed since the new government was formed last week.

The bomb incinerated seven cars and damaged nearby buildings.

Elsewhere in Iraq, a car bomb in Baghdad killed nine Iraqi national guardsmen and wounded 20 people, while roadside bombs in the capital killed two US soldiers. In the southern town of Hilla, a bomb damaged the office of Dawa, one of the main Shia ruling parties.

The onslaught came amid growing despondency in the US about events in Iraq. A CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll said 57% of those interviewed thought it had not been worth going to war, up from 50% in February. Some 42% said things were going "well", down from 52% in March.

The gloom was deepened by a classified congressional report in which General Richard Myers, the chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff, said the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq had drained the Pentagon's ability to deal with other potential conflicts, though he said the military could still meet all of Washington's policy objectives.

Irbil's objective last night was to bury the dead and treat the wounded. The US military put the death toll at 60. One health ministry official said 46 had died. A hospital doctor put it as high as 90.

Even the lowest estimate made it the single deadliest attack since February, when a car bomber killed more than 120 people in Hilla. The target then was also a crowd of would-be police recruits.

With unemployment of almost 70% there is no shortage of young men seeking to enlist.

Yesterday's bomb struck a two-storey



A young boy lies in a hospital in Irbil after yesterday's suicide bombing in the city. The US military put the death toll at 60, but a hospital doctor claimed as many as 90 had died Photograph: Reuters

building that served as a police recruitment centre.

"I was standing outside. All I remember is seeing a huge explosion and seeing many people that were injured and killed," said Fareed Makhdid, a dazed 28-year-old policeman who was covered in blood.

The blast hurled "tennis-ball sized lumps of flesh" on to the lawn of a hotel 300 metres away, according to Arraf Ziad, who had been having breakfast in what locals call the Sheraton, though it is not part of the chain.

Gwynne Roberts, a British documentary film-maker, was also in the hotel. He ran out and saw pandemonium. "There was a pile of bodies in grotesque shapes,

all of them appeared to be young men," he said. "We were all terrified there was going to be another explosion."

Hawra Muhammad, 37, found his brother, Ahmed, 32, slumped, but alive: "I lifted my brother on to my shoulders and took him to a nearby hospital. The blood on my shirt is my brother's."

One survivor thought the blast had come from a car, but the vast majority sourced it to a man on foot who was assumed to have worn a bomb-laden vest.

The militant group Army of Ansar al-Sunna claimed responsibility, according to an internet statement posted on its website. It promised more attacks on Kurds who, along with the majority Shia, dominate the new government.

"This attack which shook your throne is in response to our brothers who are being tortured in your prisons, and to the infidel peshmerga [Kurdish militia] who surrendered themselves to the crusaders," it said.

Ambulances and taxis ferried people with burns and shrapnel to hospitals, where staff used loudspeakers to direct the influx. Dr Mahmoud Othman, a senior Kurdish politician who treated the

wounded, said the casualties appeared to be all men under 20. Many had fractures from nail wounds.

It was an unnerving reminder of a twin suicide bomb attack in February 2004

Politicians in Baghdad united in condemnation. 'This is an inhuman operation, killing the sons of the land who were coming to protect Iraq', said a Sunni member of the national assembly

that killed more than 100 people in Irbil. "We must never let our guard down in the face of this terrorism," Dr Othman said.

Irbil, 217 miles north of Baghdad, is home to the Kurdish regional government, which presides over the safest part of Iraq. But its proximity to the insurgency stronghold of Mosul makes it difficult to secure, according to a Kurdish security source. He said the original target may have been a scheduled meeting between the two main Kurdish parties which was postponed yesterday.

Politicians in Baghdad united in condemnation. "This is an inhuman operation, killing the sons of the land who were coming to protect Iraq," said Mohsin al-Jarwa, a Sunni Arab member of the national assembly.

Most recent attacks have concentrated on Baghdad, underlining the tenuous authority of a government cobbled together after months of bickering between Shia and Kurds in the wake of the January election.

The cabinet was sworn in on Tuesday, but the defence ministry and other key posts earmarked for Arab Sunnis were filled with temporary appointees because of continued wrangling which some frustrated Iraqis compared to Nero fiddling while Rome burned.

In a glimmer of good news for the government, it said security forces had captured Ayman Sabawi, a son of Saddam Hussein's half-brother Sabawi Ibrahim al-Hassan, in a raid.

IRAN Elles se préparent à lancer des opérations suicides contre les troupes américaines stationnées en Irak

Ces jeunes Iraniennes candidates au martyre

LE FIGARO JEUDI 5 MAI 2005

Téhéran : Delphine Minoui

À l'heure où les Iraniennes de son âge surfent sur Internet et collectionnent les foulards colorés, Somayeh a d'autres préoccupations en tête. Tchador noir et baskets aux pieds, elle récite par cœur les principaux versets du Coran et manie parfaitement les armes. Son rêve : « *Se battre, quitter à mourir, pour défendre la cause des musulmans.* »

Il y a quelques jours, la jeune Iranienne de 25 ans est allée inscrire son nom sur la liste des « *candidates au martyre* ». L'appel aux volontaires a été lancé par le Comité pour la commémoration des martyrs du mouvement islamique international, une association non gouvernementale. Objectif : se préparer à lancer des opérations suicides contre les troupes américaines stationnées en Irak, ou contre des cibles israéliennes en territoire occupé.

En une soirée, plus de 400 noms ont été enregistrés. L'année dernière, la même association avait déjà obtenu quelque 2 000 signatures. « *La majorité des candidats au martyre sont des femmes* », souligne fièrement Zeinab Gol Mohammadi, une des organisatrices.

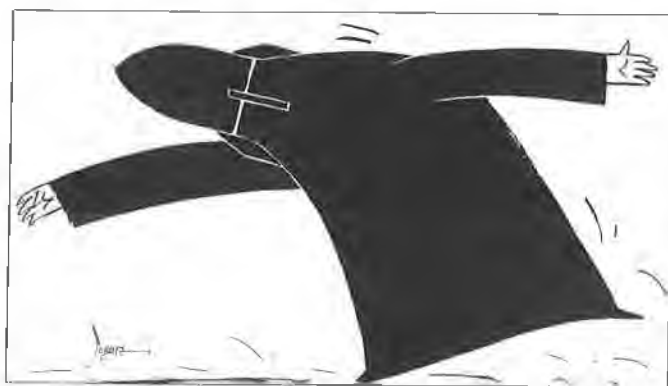
Officiellement, les autorités de Téhéran ont pris leurs distances avec ce genre d'organisations, présentées comme des initiatives privées. Mais la République islamique d'Iran, qui ne reconnaît pas Israël, n'a jamais caché son soutien au Hezbollah. Chaque semaine, la prière collective raisonne aux cris de « *Mort à Israël, mort à l'Amérique* ». En 1997, l'arrivée du président réformateur Khatami donna pourtant une image plus souriante de l'Iran, longtemps étiquetée comme pays terroriste par la communauté internationale. Dans un de ses premiers discours, Khatami appela la nouvelle génération à « *garder la vie, non la mort* ». Mais les conservateurs, de retour en force dans les municipalités et

au Parlement – et vainqueurs potentiels des présidentielles de juin prochain –, entretiennent un goût prononcé pour la notion de « *martyre* ».

Mehdi Koutchakzadeh, député de la droite islamique, vient ainsi de suggérer à la mairie de Téhéran de « *dresser à travers la ville des statues de martyres palestiniennes* ». Des fresques à leur effigie seront bientôt inaugurées sur certaines grandes artères de la capitale iranienne. Le grand ayatollah Hossein Nouri Hamedani vient également de prononcer une fatwa autorisant les attentats suicides menés par des Iraniens. « *De telles actions, précise-t-il, sont jugées acceptables dans la guerre sacrée au nom de Dieu, surtout quand la différence entre les forces militaires ennemies et l'armée de l'islam est trop importante pour pouvoir recourir à des moyens guerriers classiques.* »

« *La candidature au martyre est plus symbolique qu'autre chose*, reconnaît néanmoins Zeinab Gol Mohammadi. *Sans décision officielle du guide religieux, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei, nous n'agissons pas.* » Depuis le lancement des inscriptions, il y a un an, aucun des volontaires n'a ainsi mis sa parole en action. Sur plus de 60 millions d'Iraniens, le faible nombre de candidats relativise d'office l'importance que certains cherchent à donner à l'événement.

Mais dans de nombreuses familles de vétérans de la guerre Iran-Irak, le « *martyr* » est resté une valeur qu'on honore au quotidien. Somayeh venait juste de naître quand son père partit au front pour défendre l'Iran face aux troupes de Saddam, un an après le renversement du chah et l'arrivée des religieux au pouvoir. « *Mon regret : avoir été trop petite pour pouvoir participer à la guerre Iran-Irak. Pour tout bon musulman, mourir en martyre est le plus sacré des vœux. C'est la rencontre ultime avec Dieu. En me portant candidate, j'espère que mon vœu se réali-*



sera », souffle-t-elle. Célibataire, employée de bureau dans une entreprise locale, elle n'envisage le mariage qu'avec un « *futur martyr, comme moi* ».

Ses modèles de référence s'appellent Ayat al Akhbar, ou encore Rim Saleh al-Riashi, de jeunes Palestiniennes kamikazes, auteurs d'attentats suicides en Israël. Ce sont, dit-elle, « *les Israéliens et les Américains qui sont les vrais terroristes. S'ils se contentaient de rester sur leur propre territoire et s'ils respectaient les valeurs*

des musulmans, on n'irait pas les attaquer ».

Somayeh a déjà envisagé tous les scénarios. « *En cas d'invasion américaine ou d'attaque des sites nucléaires iraniens, je traverserai la frontière iranienne pour mourir en martyr contre les troupes d'occupation stationnées en Irak. Ceux qui s'attaquent aux Américains en Irak, ce ne sont pas des « terroristes », ce sont des « résistants ».* Quand tu donnes un coup, dit-elle, il faut t'attendre à recevoir le même coup. »



À New York, le ministre iranien des Affaires étrangères, Kamal Kharrazi (à gauche), a réaffirmé le droit de son pays à la technologie de l'atome. (Photo F. Franklin/AP.)

Maureen Dowd

The new Iraq comes ethics-free

The Iraqis have thrown the United States another curveball. Ahmad Chalabi — convicted embezzler in Jordan, suspected Iranian spy, double-crosser of America, purveyor of phony war-intigating intelligence — is the new acting Iraqi oil minister.

Is that why we Americans went to war, to put the oily in charge of the oil, to set the swindler who would be Spartacus atop the ultimate gusher?

Does anybody still think the path to war wasn't greased by oil?

The neocons' con man had been paid millions by the United States to tell the Bushies what they wanted to hear on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. A year ago, the State Department and factions in the Pentagon turned on him after he began bashing America and using Saddam's secret files to discredit his enemies.

Right after the invasion, the charlatan was escorted into Iraq by U.S. troops and cultivated an axis of Americans, Iraqis and Iranians. He got a fancy house with layers of armed guards and began helping himself to Iraqi assets. The U.S. occupation sicced the Iraqi police on his residence only after an Iraqi judge had thugs in the Chalabi posse arrested on suspicion of kidnapping, torture and theft.

Newsweek revealed that the United States suspected Chalabi of leaking secret information about American war plans for Iraq to the Iranians before the invasion, and of perhaps leaking "highly classified" information to Iran that could "get people killed" if abused by the Iranians. Chalabi claimed the Iranians set him up.

In August of last year, while he was at a cabin in the Iranian mountains, the Iraqis ordered him arrested on counter-

feiting charges, which were later dropped for lack of evidence.

Now, showing survival skills that make Tom DeLay look like a piker, the resourceful Thief of Baghdad has popped back up as one of the four deputy prime ministers and the interim cabinet minister controlling the one valuable commodity in that wasteland: the second-largest oil reserves after Saudi Arabia. He even has a DeLay-like talent for getting relatives on the payroll: A nephew is the new finance minister.

Anthony Cordesman, a Middle East expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington,

This is not an Iraqi government that will practice Athenian democracy or end the insurgency.

told Reuters that many Iraqis would consider the plum job for Chalabi "putting a fox in charge of the henhouse." The choice, he added, "is going to make it extremely easy for people to make charges about corruption."

Oil isn't on the front burner only in Iraq. President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney know that time is running out to pay back the Texas buddies who sent them to Washington with an energy bill. So the oilmen are frantically pushing one loaded with giveaways to the oil industry at a time when it's already raking in huge profits because of high gasoline prices.

Meanwhile in Baghdad, we could wind up with a one-man Enron — never underestimate the snaky charmer. And

the draconian efforts of Chalabi and other Shiites in power to purge Baathists from the government will breathe fire into the insurgency.

Bush wanted Iraq to have a democracy like America's. It's on its way, nearing an ethics-free zone where a corrupt official can hold sway and a theocracy can curb women's rights.

Another big winner in the new Iraqi cabinet is Moktada al-Sadr, the Shiite cleric who scurried away like a rat across the desert after he led two armed uprisings and caused a lot of American and Iraqi troops to die. His political movement got three ministries — health, transportation and civil society — and Sadr allies will try to give the scofflaw cleric legal protections so he can slink back into a leadership role.

Ayad Allawi, the Shiite who was supposed to keep the government secular and bring in Sunnis to blunt the insurgency, has been marginalized. That leaves the government to be ruled by men rooted in the sort of conservative Shiite religious politics that will not produce a new dawn of equality for Iraqi women.

The new prime minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, is a devout Shiite from the Dawa Party. As John Burns wrote in The New York Times on Friday (IHT, April 30), the Dawa Party was "fiercely anti-American during their exile years under Saddam, and Dawa was implicated by American intelligence in terrorist acts across the Middle East, including a 1983 bombing of the American Embassy in Kuwait."

The bad news: This is not an Iraqi government that will practice Athenian democracy or end the insurgency. The other bad news: If Jaafari falls, Chalabi will be there to pick up the pieces.

E-mail: liberties@nytimes.com

L'ancien grand argentier turc Kemal Dervis dirigera le PNUD

Il succède à Mark Malloch Brown à la tête du Programme de l'ONU pour le développement

L'ASSEMBLÉE générale des Nations unies, représentant 191 pays, a confirmé, vendredi 6 mai, Kemal Dervis, ancien ministre des finances de Turquie et ex-haut responsable de la Banque mondiale, en tant que prochain administrateur du Programme des Nations unies pour le développement (PNUD). M. Dervis, qui est membre du Parlement turc, devrait entamer son mandat de quatre ans le 15 août.

« Je me réjouis de l'occasion de travailler pour une organisation qui a toujours été en première ligne de la bataille contre la pauvreté et qui est le chef de file dans la lutte pour les droits de chacun à vivre dans la liber-

té et dans la dignité, a déclaré M. Dervis. D'autant que nous devons satisfaire le besoin le plus pressant dans le monde : la réalisation des Objectifs du Millénaire pour le développement (OMD). La paix, la sécurité, le développement économique et la liberté sont indissolublement liés. »

M. Dervis est le premier ressortissant d'un pays bénéficiant d'une aide au développement — plutôt que d'un pays donateur — à avoir été sélectionné pour diriger le PNUD. Il succédera à Mark Malloch Brown, qui, en janvier 2005, a été désigné chef de cabinet du secrétaire général de l'ONU.

En se mettant en quête d'un can-

didat, il y a trois mois, Kofi Annan avait déclaré qu'il cherchait un dirigeant qui aurait à son actif une expérience du développement de première main, soit dans une grande institution de développement, soit au sein du gouvernement d'un pays en développement. Il avait stipulé aussi que le nouvel administrateur devrait posséder de grandes aptitudes en matière de diplomatie, de politique et de gestion et être capable de diriger une organisation internationale et de mobiliser l'appui mondial en faveur des OMD.

Sur un total de plus de 100 nominations soumises, six candidats avaient été retenus — Kemal Dervis

(Turquie), Fawzi Al-Sultan (Koweït), la baronne Valerie Amos (Royaume-Uni), Kaoru Ishikawa (Japon), Hilde Frafjord Johnson (Norvège) et Ad Melkert (Pays-Bas). Ils ont tous été interrogés par un jury spécial qui a retenu trois noms.

Ces personnes ont eu alors des entrevues avec le secrétaire général et la vice-secrétaire générale, Louise Fréchette. La confirmation par l'Assemblée générale de M. Dervis est intervenue après que le conseil d'administration du PNUD eut rapporté au secrétaire général que ses 36 membres appuyaient ce choix.

22 ANS À LA BANQUE MONDIALE

En tant que ministre des finances, M. Dervis, 56 ans, a mis en œuvre un programme de relance qui a permis à la Turquie de sortir d'une crise financière dévastatrice en 2001. On le crédite d'avoir mis un terme à une récession prolongée et à une inflation supérieure à 100 %, remettant la Turquie sur la voie d'une croissance soutenue et donnant au pays des fondations économiques requises pour son admission au sein de l'Union européenne.

Avant d'être pressenti au poste de ministre des finances en Turquie, M. Dervis avait été fonctionnaire à la Banque mondiale pendant vingt-deux ans. En tant que directeur du département de l'Europe centrale, il a supervisé les programmes de la Banque mondiale et de l'UE pour la reconstruction de la Bosnie au milieu des années 1990.

Doté d'un budget annuel de plus de 3 milliards de dollars, le PNUD dispose de personnel dans 166

pays. Il y aide les populations et les instances gouvernementales à réaliser les objectifs de développement mondiaux et nationaux.

L'arrivée de M. Dervis au PNUD coïncidera avec celle de plusieurs autres responsables d'organisations directement concernées par la réalisation des OMD. Deux mois avant, Paul Wolfowitz aura pris les rênes de la Banque mondiale. Le Français Pascal Lamy ou l'Uruguayen Carlos Perez del Cas-

tillo s'assoira dans le fauteuil de Supachai Panitchpadki, à l'Organisation mondiale du commerce. Ce dernier aura remplacé le Brésilien Rubens Ricupero à la tête de la Cnuced. Le Sénégalais Abdou Diouf devrait, en novembre, se succéder à lui-même comme directeur général de la FAO. A la clôture des nominations, le 8 avril, aucun autre pays n'avait présenté de candidat.

Babette Stern

Nuclear tension ■ By Ray Takeyh

Europe is talking Iran around

As the UN nuclear nonproliferation conference proceeds in New York, Iran has once more emerged as an important source of concern. In a defiant speech to the assembled delegates, Iran's foreign minister, Kamal Kharrazi, insisted that "Iran, for its part, is determined to pursue all legal areas of nuclear technology, including enrichment."

The hardening of Iran's position has led many American policy makers to think that the negotiations between Iran and the European trio of Britain, France and Germany will soon collapse and that time has come for the UN Security Council to contemplate punitive sanctions. But there is a real possibility that Europe's diplomacy will actually produce an accord.

Beyond the ebbs and flows of the negotiations and sporadic posturing of Iranian politicians, over the past few months the perspectives of Iran and its European negotiators have gradually converged. The longer the negotiations go on, the more likely it is that the United States, and not Iran, will once more stand isolated.

Although the Islamic Republic is often viewed as an irrational rogue, indifferent to the norms of the international community, it has managed its nuclear negotiations rather effectively. Despite frequent bouts of incendiary rhetoric, the Iranian leadership quickly came to terms with the International Atomic Energy Agency, accepting the intrusive inspection regime of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty's additional protocol and limiting its claims to uranium enrichment, a right that it possesses under the treaty.

Although the nuclear agency has not reached a final verdict on Iran's proliferation tendencies, Iran's evident co-operation has led the agency's director, Mohamed El-Baradei, to stress repeatedly that there is no evidence that Iran has diverted its nuclear technology for military purposes. The defection of the nuclear agency from America's hard-line posture has deprived Washington of a critical ally in any effort to secure multilateral sanctions against Iran.

The next step in Iran's diplomacy was to assuage European concerns. The fact remains that Britain, France and Germany have always recognized Iran's right to enrich uranium, but hoped that as a confidence-building measure it would relinquish that right for corresponding trade concessions.

For its part, Iran has finally moved beyond its often-repeated claim that it has the right to enrich vast quantities of uranium and build industrial-size nuclear plants. The new Iranian position is that as a goodwill gesture, it will confine its ambitions to a small-scale pilot program with limited number of centrifuges operating under a rigorous inspection regime. Increasingly, the Iranian offer is prov-

ing reasonable to many within Europe, and indeed, the wider international community.

In recent weeks, it appears that France has edged closer to accepting Iran's concessions. "Jacques Chirac is the one who's taking the Iranian proposal under consideration," one European diplomat declared.

Even the more recent Iranian defiance has invited further European diplomacy in terms of pressuring the United States to offer more concessions. A European diplomat visiting Washington stressed that "we would enhance these chances" for negotiating success "if we could add U.S. carrots."

ElBaradei has followed suit, saying, "I think in diplomacy if you offer more, you get more." In a clever move, Iranians have used their obduracy to provoke the Europeans to put more pressure on Washington than on Tehran.

It is likely that the positions of Europe and Iran will further converge, as both parties have an interest in defusing tensions and avoiding a crisis at the United Nations. Iran's diplomacy has already diminished the prospect of multilateral economic sanctions being enacted by the Security Council. So long as Iran accepts demands by the nuclear agency for further inspections and negotiates with the Europeans, it is unlikely that a consensus against Iran will evolve in the United Nations.

As with Iraq, the United States is now facing the prospect of making claims regarding a nation's proliferation tendencies that the UN inspection arm is unwilling to validate. It is hard to see how the European states, much less China and Russia — two of Iran's most reliable commercial partners — will be willing to coerce and sanction Iran over the issue of a limited enrichment program.

One reason Iran's diplomacy has succeeded is the inflexibility and lack of imagination of American policy. As the Europe-Iran negotiations progressed, America stayed on the sidelines, periodically criticizing the European negotiators and threatening Iran with military reprisals.

Belatedly, as a gesture of alliance management, the Bush administration offered largely symbolic concessions of acceding to Iran's petition to the World Trade Organization and agreeing to consider the sale of spare parts for Iran's aging airline industry. But both of these gestures proved to be too little, too late.

If the United States had been an active participant in the negotiations and engaged Iran in a far-reaching dialogue, it could have pressed its claims and demands more effectively. In the end, America's bad-cop diplomacy is increasingly ensuring its own isolation.

Ray Takeyh is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

**America's bad-cop
diplomacy is
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its own isolation.**

Special report Iraq

The Economist May 7th 2005



New team, old terrors

BAGHDAD

As its temporary government at last takes office, Iraq looks as fragile as ever

THREE months after Iraqis braved the bombers and turned out to vote, there is little joy left in the memory. The weeks after the election saw a relative lull in violence, punctuated by moments of exceptional viciousness. In February and March, according to American figures, attacks on coalition troops dipped to 35 a day, from a pre-election figure of 140. Attacks on the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) were also down, though less markedly. But the past fortnight has been among the bloodiest since the war's official end two years ago.

On May 4th, more than 60 people were killed and 150 wounded in Arbil, the capital of Iraq's Kurdish region, after a suicide bomber detonated himself outside a police recruitment centre. The next day a similar attack on a recruitment centre in Baghdad claimed at least 13 lives. The killings marked a murderous week following the naming of the new government. On April 29th at least 17 car bombs, most in Baghdad, killed over 50 people. Around 600 Iraqis were killed by insurgents in March, ac-

cording to the government, including around 150 members of the ISF.

On April 20th, 57 bodies were fished from the Tigris river downstream of Madaen, south of Baghdad; locals were reported as saying that hundreds remained in the water. Days before, the government had reported the kidnapping of 150 Shia men and women by insurgents in Madaen; a massacre appeared to have taken place. And it had, but one more shocking than a single slaughter. The killing in Madaen seems to have occurred over several months, unknown to the American troops stationed nearby or to their Iraqi allies.

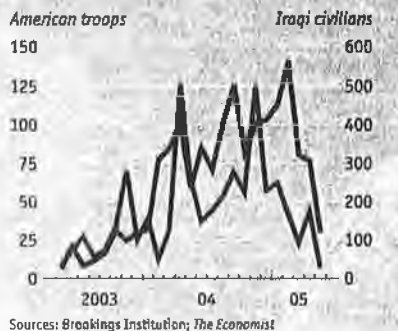
Some analysts are predicting a civil war, either after the coalition's troops leave the country, or to hasten their going. Wiser heads urge caution. Throughout the war, they say, journalists and, less forgivably, the American officials who brief them, have jumped to conclusions based on the flimsiest of evidence—often the Americans' own casualty rate. The truth is more complicated.

Military history suggests that, failing the capture of an important leader or an equivalent setback, insurgencies need to be measured in cycles of not less than a year. Such an exercise requires much data, including some unavailable in Iraq. The government only recently began releasing numbers for Iraqi civilian deaths. American officials have made little effort to distinguish successful from failed attacks, major from minor attacks, or politically motivated from criminal attacks; though they estimate that criminals perpetrate 80% of the total violence. As a result, says Anthony Cordesman of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC, sound forecasts are night-impossible: "Everyone's looking at the tsunami, no one's looking at the tide."

About the insurgents, only the following is certain. They include a mix of Iraqi nationalists—many of them former supporters of Saddam Hussein's Baath party—and jihadis, some of them foreign fanatics. Both groups employ part-time assassins and other hirelings with a grudge against the occupation forces, known to coalition officials as FOIs, or "pissed-off Iraqis". Currently, both these groups are predominantly Sunni Muslim (though, last year, Muqtada al-Sadr led a Shia insurgency). As in Madaen, most insurgents are localised. American officials say about 70 such groups exist, but they are probably guessing. Some central organisation exists; Abu ►►

Less deadly streets

Fatalities as a result of acts of war



► Musab al-Zarqawi, a well-organised Jordanian jihadi, may be chiefly responsible.

The nationalists and the jihadis have no common aim beyond the expulsion of the coalition and the collapse of the government it has helped establish. As the nationalists settle on longer-term aims—either to re-establish the secular Baathist state, or to negotiate terms with the government—differences between the two will emerge. Most analyses of the insurgency vary according to the extent to which this tension is thought evident.

Analysing the insurgency

Official America's analysis begins with the successful conduct of the election. It was not peaceful, with 210 recorded insurgent attacks that day, including nine suicide bombs in Baghdad. Yet turnout was over 60%, and only eight polling stations came under direct attack. This, American officials say, represented a triumph for the ISF, who policed the poll, and the country's peace-hungry majority; and it was a shock to violent nationalists.

As a result, those officials claim, the next few weeks saw a lull in the insurgency and an increase in talks between coalition and government officials and men who claimed to represent the insurgents. Some nationalists swung behind the government; for example, a statement was issued at the nationalist-leaning Um al-Qura mosque in Baghdad urging Sunni Arabs to join the police. Subsequent attacks, this analysis concludes, are mostly the work of criminals, off-message nationalists or jihadis. Mr Zarqawi, in particular, has been credited with a series of atrocities.

Others scoff at this. Sure, the Iraqi security forces and their foreign sponsors managed to limit the violence on polling day, they say, but only by sealing borders and closing roads—in short, by shutting down the country. And why should the insurgents risk a major setback at such an overpoliced time? Unlike the coalition troops, whose political leaders want them home, the insurgents have the luxury of time. And moreover, after a massive increase in violence in the months before the election,

the insurgents needed to rest and re-arm. Thus they passed January and March—in Damascus, perhaps, or even Amman—before resuming the onslaught in April.

Either way, the insurgency has lost none of its potency in the short term. Nor is there any dispute about the insurgents' improved professionalism. Recent attacks in Baghdad and Mosul—the first and second cities in Iraq and the most violent—have featured several staggered blasts, aimed to kill and maim both the initial targets and their rescuers.

The progress of the ISF—the main focus of the coalition's efforts in Iraq—is less certain. In the conflagration of November-to-January, it emerged that few were ready to stand and fight. Across the country, police shed their uniforms as insurgents seized their stations. With greater American effort, some half-decent troops have since emerged. Iraqi soldiers have begun patrolling Haifa Street, one of the most violent in Baghdad. Six months ago, when American marines launched an attack on Fallujah, the ISF had around three battalions fit to take a backward role in the operation. They could probably now call on two, or perhaps three, times that number. But, with few heavy arms or armoured vehicles, and still heavily dependent on their American advisers, these troops could not be depended on to fight the insurgents unaided.

In the best of circumstances, says Toby Dodge of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, the task of training enough Iraqi troops to withstand the current insurgency would take at least five years, probably longer. "And we're not in the best possible circumstances," he adds. "We're in the middle of lawlessness and anarchy, trying to build a dam while water crashes in on us from all sides."

Dr Jaafari's cabinet

A chief strut in this dam, as optimists see it, is Iraq's brand-new and just-formed government. On May 3rd Iraq's first-ever elected prime minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, and 29 of his ministers walked one by one to a podium in Baghdad's convention centre and took their oaths of office. Not only violence marred the occasion, however. Several prominent Sunni Arab politicians, including one of two vice-presidents, Ghazi al-Yawar, stayed away, angry that their choices for office had been overruled by the Shia majority. And seven cabinet appointments—including two deputy premierships and the vital defence and oil ministries—remained unfilled, meaning that the squabbling will go on.

As he took office, Dr Jaafari set out to lower expectations. "You all know the heavy legacy inherited by this government," he said. "We are afflicted by corruption, lack of services, unemployment and mass graves." To restore services and create jobs, stability is needed, which

Still sluggish

Oil



means that each of Iraq's half-dozen big Shia factions and two Kurdish parties, plus a disorganised Sunni Arab community with few strong leaders, must feel they have a share in government. Handing out ministries as rewards to parties for their good behaviour, however, is a sure-fire way to stoke corruption. Add the historical bitterness between Iraq's ethnic groups, stoked by Mr Hussein's mass killings and by the 1980-88 war with Iran, and finding a solution may well be impossible.

Even the largest factions on Iraq's political scene can claim no more than around one-eighth of the seats in parliament. The two main blocks—the Shia-led United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), which won 140 seats in the 275-strong parliament, and a Kurdish-dominated coalition which won 75—achieved a rough agreement long ago on how to divide the bulk of cabinet posts between them. However, so many horses appear to have been traded in the Kurdish-Shia negotiations, and in disputes within the coalitions, that there may not be enough jobs left over to mollify the Sunnis, who make up the bulk of the insurgency.

Despite their differences, the Kurds (secular and federalist) and the Shia block (dominated by clerics, and centralising) were able to reach agreement to divide the posts roughly in proportion to their strength in parliament. In the final count, the Shias have so far taken 16 cabinet posts, including the premiership, with the Kurds taking nine. In exchange for a commitment to resettle Kurdish refugees in the disputed city of Kirkuk and to accept, at least temporarily, a limited role for Islamic sharia in legislation, the Kurds agreed to accept the moderately Islamist Dr Jaafari as prime minister. His two deputies are Rowsch Shaways of the Kurdish Democratic Party and the maverick (but secularist) Shia politician, Ahmed Chalabi.

That, however, was the easy part. The final division of spoils also had to reflect rivalries within the two blocks. Negotiators had to shuffle ministers at the last minute to make sure that neither of the two main Kurdish parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdish Democratic Party ►►

► (KDP), felt upstaged by the other. Striking a balance between the different factions in the Alliance, who range from secularist independents to followers of the messianic preacher Muqtada al-Sadr, was even more difficult, and was probably the reason why the electricity and oil ministries remain unfilled. For now, the KDP's Mr Shaways will hold electricity and Mr Chalabi oil.

The two blocks also have to find a role for outsiders, in particular the Sunni Arabs. They agreed to set aside six ministries for Iraq's former ruling minority, but five of those—culture, tourism and archaeology, provincial affairs, human rights, and women's affairs—do not provide the kind of control over jobs, revenue sources and military units that are the main currency in Iraqi political bartering. The Sunnis' sixth ministry, defence, does—but filling that post has proved the biggest hurdle in the forming of the government.

The Shias, especially their most powerful faction, the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), are insisting that any candidate for the defence job should have no ties to the Baathists. The Sunnis say this is impossible, since almost anyone in public life in Mr Hussein's Iraq, particularly in the army and other Sunni-dominated institutions, had to join the Baath party as a matter of course. They also think a purge foolish, arguing that the new government needs Sunni military veterans in key security posts in order to reach out to insurgents. SCIRI, however, is convinced that members of the security forces with Baathist sympathies are in league with the troublemakers, and it certainly wants them nowhere near government. Its vetting committee has already vetoed several Sunni nominees for the defence job and, for the time being, the post will be held by Dr Jaafari.

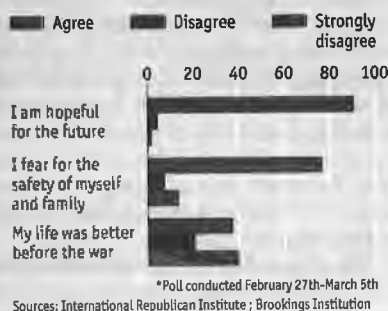
Such inflexibility is ominous. Iraq's political factions generally agree—or so the Americans have supposed—that the solution to the insurgency is political. Sunni politicians and Sunni groups, such as the influential Muslim Scholars' Board, would have to be involved in any effort to convince the insurgents to give up their arms. Some Kurds, such as President Jalal Talabani, have made similar noises, calling for an amnesty for guerrillas who are not guilty of acts of terrorism. However, Shia attitudes appear to have been hardened by a series of sectarian massacres, and they now talk of a war to the finish.

The job to be done

Can Dr Jaafari reverse the trend, and bring stability? The signals are mixed. The doctor is regarded as a sincere Islamist who fought for decades against Mr Hussein, but he has a pragmatic streak. He is likely to avoid antagonising the Kurds with overzealous Islamicisation, or riling the Sunnis by settling pre-invasion scores. But he may

Generally optimistic

Thinking about your life today, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? *, %



not be able to keep other members of his coalition in line. Post-war Iraqi politicians have shown an alarming tendency to turn ministries into their personal preserves, packing them with their own supporters and diverting contracts to their allies. If this continues, it could have disastrous effects both on the rebuilding of the Iraqi security forces and on reconstruction.

Dr Jaafari and his new team are keen to get public services up to scratch again and rebuild the country's broken infrastructure. There is much to do. Petrol queues stretching for kilometres may almost be a thing of the past, but electricity generation has not improved noticeably since the summer of 2003. Output still falls short of pre-war levels and is just a little over half of demand. Crude-oil production has dipped a bit, to around 2.2m barrels a day (see chart 2): enough to provide an estimated \$17 billion in revenues last year, but short of the 2.5m bpd target.

Meanwhile, the economy remains stagnant. Estimates of unemployment, which usually range from 25% to 50%, are almost meaningless, but the overall picture is of

only slight improvement since the sanctions-ravaged days before the war. Thanks to reforms brought in during the occupation, civil servants who made a token \$2 to \$3 a month just before the war now make living wages averaging around \$120 a month, and tens of thousands of formerly unemployed Baghdad slum-dwellers are now at work on American-funded infrastructure projects. However, other sectors of society, such as officers in the dissolved pre-war Iraqi army, have seen their living standards decline sharply. No surprise, therefore, that a pool of candidates stands ready and willing to ambush passing marine patrols for a few hundred dollars.

This government's main task, however, is not to sort out the country, but to set up a permanent version of itself. The parliamentary committee charged with drafting the constitution should begin meeting soon, although only optimists expect to see a draft completed by the initial deadline in August. Parliament will probably seek a six-month extension. The Kurds are insisting that the starting point for negotiations should be the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), the interim constitution adopted last year by Iraqi politicians under heavy American pressure, which spells out a relatively limited role for Islam in the state and provides for the entrenchment of their northern autonomous zone. Many Shia leaders, however, have already signalled their dissatisfaction with the TAL, claiming that it gives too much power to regional minorities such as the Kurds.

So far, it has taken Iraqi politicians three months to set up even a temporary government. The heart sinks to think how long they may take to reach agreement on a permanent constitution. Meanwhile, at least in the short term, the insurgency seems not dispirited but emboldened by each faltering step towards democracy. ■



How much can they do without the Americans?

The Economist May 7th 2005

Turkey and the Middle East

Erdogan's travels

ANKARA

The Turkish prime minister's visit to Israel was aimed partly at America

"A NEW friendship" is how Israel's *Haaretz* daily headlined its musings on the Turkish prime minister's visit this week. In fact Turkey's friendship with Israel, underpinned by trade and military co-operation, is among the oldest and strongest in the region. Yet since becoming prime minister two years ago, Recep Tayyip Erdogan has spurned invitations to Israel, saying he was too busy—even though the bilateral relationship seemed in danger of unravelling last year, when Mr Erdogan accused Israel of perpetrating "state terrorism" against the Palestinians.

The conventional wisdom is that Mr Erdogan was appeasing pious constituents embittered by his failure to meet promises to ease restrictions on the Islamic headscarf and religious education. He may also have fallen prey to advisers with visions of Turkey again leading the Muslim world. Yet this week, flanked by his scarved wife, Emine, and an army of Turkish businessmen, politicians and military officials, Mr

Erdogan assured Israel's prime minister, Ariel Sharon, that his Justice and Development (AK) party saw anti-Semitism as "a crime against humanity". He added that Iran's nuclear ambitions were a threat not just to Israel but to "the entire world".

What prompted the visit now? Mr Erdogan said it was to propose his services as a mediator between Israel and the Palestinians. But most pundits scoff at this (as did the Israeli foreign minister, Silvan Shalom). Instead, they see the visit as part of a

campaign to repair Turkey's relations with America. That thought must have crossed the mind of the Palestinian prime minister, Ahmed Qurei, when Mr Erdogan showed up two hours late for a meeting after an unscheduled encounter in his Jerusalem hotel with America's Senate majority leader, Bill Frist. Mr Qurei cancelled, apparently complaining that Turkey had more time for Israel and the Americans.

Turkey's recent tensions with Israel mirror its deteriorating ties with America. Some in the AK party have accused both countries of harbouring secret plans to establish an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq, which could become a magnet for Turkey's own rebellious Kurds. Rich Israeli Jews with Kurdish roots have allegedly been buying land in northern Iraq and in Turkey's mainly Kurdish south-east. For similar reasons, say conspiracy theorists, the Americans are refusing to dislodge separatist Kurdish PKK rebels from their mountain bases in northern Iraq. Mr Erdogan's description of Iraq's Sunni insurgents as "martyrs" and his dismissal of the election in Iraq as anti-democratic have not helped relations.

Some speculate that Mr Erdogan has allowed his ties with Washington to sour because of his new confidence in the European Union. Yet by his own admission, this has waned since last December, when EU leaders agreed to start accession talks with Turkey next October, but attached a slew of new conditions to putative Turkish



Turks on Temple Mount

membership. "Something broke in me that day," Mr Erdogan told the newspaper *Milliyet*, amid news that his government had agreed to a ten-month-old American request for expanded use of the Incirlik air base in southern Turkey.

Mr Erdogan's fresh embrace of Israel and America has been spurred also by fears of falling behind changes in the Middle East. Turkish officials admit to being embarrassed by their president's visit to Syria last month, just as the Syrians were being pushed to get out of Lebanon. Democratic or not, Iraq's elections have now produced a government whose president, Jalal Talabani, and foreign minister, Hoshyar Zebari, are Kurds. In another sign that Turkey is changing tack, Abdullah Gul, the foreign minister, signed a declaration with Iraqi and Arab colleagues in Istanbul on May 1st, pledging to support a federal structure "if that is what the Iraqi people decide". The days when Turkey's leaders would utter warnings against federalism in Iraq, as a red line that could provoke Turkish intervention, seem to be over. ■

The Economist May 7th 2005

Iran's economy

Could do better

TEHRAN

The conservatives' xenophobia deters investors

AN AIR of farce clings to Muhammad Khatami's efforts to bequeath to Iranians a world-class airport before his eight-year stint as Iran's first reformist president ends this summer. Almost exactly a year

ago, his conservative opponents in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) seized the Imam Khomeini International Airport after just one plane had landed. Last week, the airport's (re-)inauguration

was spoiled by warnings from the British and Canadian governments that its runway might be unsafe. Amid calls in parliament for his expulsion, Britain's chargé d'affaires was forced to deny that the warning was politically motivated.

Politics has dogged the project from the start. Ahmad Khorram, the then transport minister, irked Iranian nationalists when he invited Tepe-Akfen-Vie, a Turkish-dominated consortium, to build and run the airport's first phase; the guardsmen are said to have been piqued that conservative Iranian companies were denied the contract. Later, domestic rivalries led Iran's IRGC-friendly parliament to impeach Mr Khorram and to force changes to another big contract, under which Turk Telecom was to set up and operate a mobile-phone network. It looks as though the conserva-

tives, who dislike Mr Khatami and distrust secular Turkey, have had their way: both Turkish firms look likely to retreat.

At what cost? Many outsiders, not all of them Turks, doubt whether Iranian companies have the wherewithal to build the airport's second phase. Until that is finished, most international flights will continue to use Tehran's old airport, an inconvenient half-hour drive away. And a shadow has fallen over Mr Khatami's reputation as a cautious promoter of foreign investment. In that, as well as his still-born democratic reforms, the president is likely to be remembered more for his intentions than his achievements.

Again, politics is partly to blame. In 2002, hot on the heels of well-received legislation to woo foreign investors, Iran's American critics began arguing that its nuclear programme should be referred to the UN Security Council; sanctions could follow. That threat has not receded; negotiations between Iran and three European countries have made little progress. Then,

last year, conservatives took control of parliament and quickly drew fire for their chauvinism and fiscal profligacy.

Foreigners observe warily. Iran's large, youthful population and oil wealth mean that Tehran's trade fairs are still well attended, but investment is thin on the ground. According to Saeed Leylaz, an economist, inward foreign investment outside the oil and gas sectors in the year to March 2005 totalled a paltry \$1 billion.

Some Iranians sigh that they are the victims of their own mineral riches. Since the price jump of 1999, bumper oil receipts have excused politicians from undertaking the painful task of tackling the structural deficiencies and isolationist thinking that have contributed to Iran's economic woes. Even the oil and gas industries, which have been open to foreigners since 1995, are not the exceptions they should be. Tendering procedures are slow and politicised. Some foreign contractors are threatening to pull out of Iran; they complain of wasting large sums chasing con-

tracts whose winner, they suspect, has often been predetermined.

Some big deals trickle through the system, but the oil minister's recent call for \$150 billion of new investment to double production is unrealistic. American sanctions and internal politicking mean that Iran has trouble maintaining current levels. And, despite having the world's second biggest reserves of natural gas, Iran has made a bad job of attracting investment, and remains a net importer.

Eyes are fixed on June's election. Most foreign investors would prefer Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, a former president and likely candidate, to defeat his putative conservative opponents; reformist candidates are expected to be barred from standing. For reasons of expediency, Mr Rafsanjani is a liberaliser, and he is good at clearing logjams. If he is elected, things might get better. In the meantime, if you have a connecting flight in Tehran, give yourself plenty of time. ■

Suicide bombers kill 26 Iraqis and hurt 48

Amid violence, political progress is made

By Richard A. Oppel Jr.

BAGHDAD: Insurgents killed at least 26 Iraqis and wounded 48 more Friday when a suicide bomber struck a public market in Suwayrah, a town torn by sectarian violence near Baghdad, and another bomber attacked a bus carrying Iraqi policemen in Saddam Hussein's hometown, Tikrit.

More than 200 Iraqis, most of them police or soldiers, have been killed in the past two weeks amid one of the most lethal stretches since the invasion two years ago.

In northeast Baghdad, a worker digging with a shovel discovered the corpses of 12 men in their 20s and 30s who had been tortured, shot in the head and buried at least a week earlier, the Iraqi police said. One Iraqi police captain investigating the crime said the bodies had broken legs, arms and rope burns on their necks.

Amid the continued bloodshed, there were suggestions of a possibly significant political breakthrough late Friday: Aides to the nation's top Shiite and Sunni lawmakers said they had reached a tentative agreement to appoint a new defense minister.

If the deal between the two groups were to hold up and be approved by the Iraqi Parliament, it would ease a logjam that hurt relations between the Sunnis

and Shiites and, in the view of American officials, contributed to increased insurgent violence. But Iraqi leaders have time and time again announced deals for top government posts, only to see their predictions fall apart.

The Shiite and Sunni aides would not provide a name for the defense minister, saying it would be revealed over the weekend. While they said Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish leaders had given their approval to the candidate, he still must be accepted by Iraq's five-member presidency council and by the National Assembly.

"It's done. We have a conclusion,"

Ahmad Najati, a spokesman for the highest-ranking Sunni Arab in the new government, vice president Sheik Ghazi al-Yawar, said Friday evening. A senior aide to Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Laith Kubba, also said there was a tentative deal.

But Kurdish officials, who could effectively veto the nomination, could not be reached for comment. And a senior Shiite aide cautioned that on high profile matters such as this one, nothing is ever final and certain until the name is formally announced and approved.

If the agreement were to fall through, it would deal another setback to efforts by the Shiite and Kurdish leaders who dominate the new administration to

form a "unity" government that gives important jobs to all of Iraq's major religious and ethnic groups, including the Sunni Arabs, who largely boycotted the Jan. 30 elections and are believed to comprise most of the insurgency. The defense post is the most important job allotted to the Sunnis, but Sunni leaders have complained that the Shiite leaders have rejected qualified candidates they have put forward.

Indeed, by Friday night some Sunni Arab leaders were grumbling about the defense minister selection. One Sunni, Saleh Mutlak, a member of the Sunni political group the National Dialogue Council, identified the defense candidate as Sadoon al-Dulaimi, a member of a tribe that is very powerful in Anbar, the sprawling province in western Iraq that includes Falluja and Ramadi and is home to many insurgents.

While he personally did not object to the selection, Mutlak said he was "not optimistic" about it, saying that some Sunni Arab leaders feel that Jaafari is relying too heavily on Yawar in completing his cabinet. "The choosing has mostly been between Ghazi and Jaafari, so it is not the Sunni's decision anymore," Mutlak said. "I think tomorrow they will not be happy."

The New York Times

Herald Tribune
THE WORLD'S DAILY NEWSPAPER

May 7-8, 2005

Le FMI met en garde la Turquie contre sa gestion de la dette et le chômage



ANKARA, 6 mai 2005 (AFP) - 18h32 - La Turquie doit, selon le Fonds monétaire international (FMI), s'efforcer de réduire sa dette publique, faire reculer le chômage et le secteur informel pour consolider les bénéfices de la croissance spectaculaire survenue depuis la crise, a expliqué vendredi Anne Krueger, directrice générale adjointe de l'organisation internationale.

En trois ans, la Turquie est parvenue à abaisser de 90% à 63% le niveau de son endettement rapporté au PIB après avoir signé, en 2002, un prêt de 16 milliards de dollars (12,3 milliards d'euros) avec le Fonds, a rappelé Madame Krueger lors d'une conférence de presse.

Le conseil exécutif du FMI doit se réunir la semaine prochaine pour examiner l'octroi d'un nouveau prêt de 10 milliards de dollars (7,7 milliards d'euros) pour prendre le relais de cet accord qui a expiré en février.

"Je pense que la plupart des analystes considéreraient tout niveau d'endettement supérieur à 40% ou même nettement au-delà de 30%, un peu trop élevé", a-t-elle dit.

"Si les taux d'intérêt augmentent dans le monde, un risque de vulnérabilité demeure", a-t-elle justifié. "La Turquie devrait pouvoir y faire face mais cela pourrait être douloureux", a averti Mme Krueger qui s'est entretenue avec des représentants officiels turcs et a participé à plusieurs colloques au cours des deux derniers jours.

La dirigeante du FMI a salué la reprise "impressionnante" de l'économie turque, mais pressé Ankara de continuer à mettre en oeuvre des réformes structurelles pour soutenir la forte croissance. Elle a cité comme domaines prioritaires: le secteur financier, les finances publiques et le marché du travail.

Mme Krueger a déclaré que les autorités devaient prendre des mesures pour développer l'emploi et faire reculer le vaste secteur informel, tous deux susceptibles de ralentir la forte croissance potentielle.

Abaisser le salaire minimum, aujourd'hui de l'ordre de 350 YTL (environ 260 USD ou 200 EUR), assouplir la législation, qui complique les licenciements, figurent parmi les mesures dont dispose le gouvernement, selon elle.

"Partout dans le monde, l'expérience prouve que lorsque vous imposez des salaires minimum assez élevés, vous découragez l'emploi", a-t-elle dit.

Selon les statistiques officielles, le taux de chômage s'est élevé à 10,3% en Turquie en 2004, soit un nombre estimé de 2,5 millions de demandeurs d'emploi.

Le gouvernement Jaafari prête de nouveau serment sur un Irak fédéral



BAGDAD, 9 mai (AFP) - 11h48 - Les membres du gouvernement d'Ibrahim al-Jaafari ont prêté lundi à nouveau serment, à l'occasion de la deuxième réunion du Conseil des ministres, sur un texte modifié ajoutant la mention "Irak fédéral".

M. Jaafari a été le premier à se prêter à ce rituel en prononçant le serment la main posée sur le Coran, suivi par les autres membres de son cabinet présents, selon un photographe de l'AFP.

Bassema Youssef Boutros, la seule ministre chrétienne, chargée des Sciences et de la Technologie, a prêté serment sur un exemplaire de la Bible.

"Je jure par Dieu de préserver l'indépendance de l'Irak, sa souveraineté, de défendre les intérêts de son peuple, de ses eaux et de ses ressources naturelles et de son système démocratique et fédéral, et d'appliquer la loi avec sincérité et impartialité", a déclaré chacun des membres du cabinet.

La référence au système démocratique et fédéral avait été supprimée dans la version sur laquelle les membres du gouvernement, encore incomplet alors, avait prêté serment mardi dernier.

Le puissant chef kurde irakien Massoud Barzani s'était insurgé vendredi avec force contre la suppression de la mention d'"Irak fédéral" dans le serment prêté par les membres du gouvernement.

"La suppression de la mention d'un Irak fédéral est une violation de la loi et une menace sérieuse pour notre alliance" avec la liste soutenue par le clergé chiite du Premier ministre Jaafari, avait-il déclaré.

"J'espère que ce n'était pas intentionnel et je souhaite que ce soit rétabli dans les meilleurs délais", avait ajouté le chef du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) allié, avec l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) du président Jalal Talabani, avec la liste chiite de l'Alliance unifiée irakienne.

Il a appelé les membres kurdes de l'Assemblée nationale à "soulever la question et à lui trouver une solution".

Les Kurdes peuvent compter sur 77 élus au Parlement de 275 membres où ils se sont alliés avec la liste chiite (143 députés) pour former le gouvernement.

Lors de la session du Parlement mercredi, un autre député kurde Fouad Massoum de l'UPK avait protesté contre cette suppression, alors que les Kurdes qui gèrent de facto une zone autonome dans le nord ont toujours insisté sur le caractère fédéral de l'Irak, inscrit dans la Constitution provisoire.

Arrestation de membres de partis kurdes dans le nord de la Syrie



DUBAI, 12 mai (AFP) - 21h32 - De nombreux membres de parti kurdes syriens ont été arrêtés récemment par la police dans le nord de la Syrie, où des troubles sanglants ont eu lieu l'an dernier, a annoncé jeudi le chef du parti Yakiti, Hassen Saleh, sur la chaîne de télévision arabe Al-Arabiya.

"De nombreux membres de partis kurdes ont été arrêtés" ces derniers jours, a déclaré M. Saleh, qui affirmait parler depuis Qamichli, une ville du nord de la Syrie, sans préciser leur nombre ou les raisons de leur interpellation.

"Cette campagne d'arrestations (...) intervient malgré la grâce présidentielle du 30 mars en faveur de 312 prisonniers kurdes", arrêtés après les affrontements de mars 2004, a ajouté le chef du parti kurde syrien.

Cette grâce n'a pas été totalement appliquée "car il reste plus de 100 Kurdes en prison", a affirmé M. Saleh.

Le chef de Yakiti s'est par ailleurs inquiété du sort d'un dignitaire musulman kurde, cheikh Mohammad Maachouq Al-Jaznaoui, qui n'a plus donné de signe "depuis sa sortie, il y a deux jours, du Centre d'études islamique" à Damas.

"Même si les instances de sécurité nient être au courant de ce qu'il lui est arrivé, nous redoutons leur implication" dans la disparition du religieux, a poursuivi M. Saleh.

Le 30 mars dernier, le président syrien Bachar al-Assad a gracié la totalité des 312 prisonniers kurdes arrêtés après les affrontements de l'an dernier, selon l'agence officielle.

Du 12 au 17 mars 2004, des affrontements ont opposé des Kurdes aux forces de l'ordre ou à des tribus arabes à Qamichli et Alep faisant 40 morts, selon des sources kurdes, 25 selon les autorités syriennes. Ces heurts avaient été suivis par de nombreuses arrestations.

Les Kurdes de Syrie, quelque 1,5 million de personnes, représentent environ 9% de la population du pays et sont installés essentiellement dans le nord du pays. Outre la reconnaissance de leur langue et de leur culture, ils revendiquent des droits politiques et administratifs.

Trois rebelles kurdes tués dans l'est de la Turquie



ANKARA, 11 mai 2005 (AFP) - 13h58 - Trois rebelles kurdes ont été tués tard mardi lors d'accrochages avec l'armée turque dans la province de Tunceli (est), a-t-on indiqué mercredi de source de sécurité à Diyarbakir, principale ville du sud-est anatolien dont la population est majoritairement kurde.

Lors d'une patrouille en zone rurale près de la ville de Hozat, des soldats ont rencontré un groupe de cinq rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatiste).

Trois d'entre eux ont été abattus lors de l'accrochage qui a suivi et une opération est en cours pour capturer les deux autres qui ont réussi à prendre la fuite.

Le PKK a mené entre 1984 et 1999 une lutte armée indépendantiste contre les forces de sécurité turques qui a fait quelque 37.000 morts. Les combats, interrompus par une trêve unilatérale du PKK décrétée en 1999, ont repris en juin 2004, mais ont perdu de leur intensité.

L'armée turque estime cependant à quelque 5.000 le nombre de rebelles réfugiés dans le Kurdistan irakien. Ceux-ci s'infiltrèrent avec la fin de l'hiver en territoire turc et sont interceptés par les forces turques.

Un général turc met en garde contre des attentats kurdes



DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 11 mai 2005 (AFP) - 16h13 - Un haut responsable militaire turc a mis en garde mercredi contre des attentats à l'explosif qui pourraient être perpétrés par les séparatistes kurdes en Turquie, alors que trois rebelles ont été tués par les forces de l'ordre dans l'est du pays.

Le général Yasar Buyukanit, commandant en chef de l'armée de terre, a indiqué à Diyarbakir, principale ville du sud-est anatolien dont la population est majoritairement kurde, que les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatiste) qui s'infiltrèrent en territoire turc depuis le nord de l'Irak ramènent avec eux des quantités "importantes" d'explosif plastic C-4.

"Ce n'est pas un explosif qui peut s'acheter sur le marché avec de l'argent. C'est un explosif très spécial et très puissant", a-t-il dit à la presse lors d'une tournée d'inspection.

"Il (l'explosif) peut être dangereux dans les zones rurales et les métropoles", a-t-il mis en garde.

Trois rebelles du PKK ont été tués tard mardi lors d'accrochages avec l'armée turque près d'un hameau de la province de Tunceli (est).

Un groupe kurde proche du PKK, les Faucons de la liberté du Kurdistan, a revendiqué un attentat à l'explosif qui a coûté la vie à un policier et en a blessé quatre autres au début du mois dans une station balnéaire de la côte égéenne turque.

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L'armée turque estime cependant à quelque 5.000 le nombre de rebelles réfugiés dans le Kurdistan irakien. Ceux-ci s'infiltrèrent avec la fin de l'hiver en territoire turc et sont souvent interceptés par les forces turques.

Ankara accuse de longue date les Etats-Unis de ne pas lutter contre le PKK en Irak voisin qu'ils ont occupé.

Le PKK est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara et Washington.

IRAK

Bagdad a enfin un gouvernement complet

La minorité sunnite s'est vu attribuer hier quatre postes, ce qui porte à neuf le nombre des ministres sunnites dans le gouvernement d'al-Jaafari

Le Parlement irakien a approuvé hier la nomination des cinq derniers ministres et d'un vice-premier ministre, plus de trois mois après les premières élections législatives de l'ère post-Saddam. Depuis des semaines, au grand dam d'une population impatiente, les ultimes tractations portaient autour de la représentation de la minorité sunnite qui alimente la guérilla contre la Force multinationale et ses alliés irakiens. Marginalisée depuis la chute du régime de Saddam Hussein, elle s'est vu attribuer hier quatre postes, ce qui porte à neuf le nombre des ministres sunnites dans le gouvernement d'Ibrahim al-Jaafari, contre 18 aux chiites et 8 aux Kurdes, les vainqueurs du scrutin du 30 janvier.

Outre Abed Motlaq al-Joubouri, nommé vice-premier ministre, Saadoun al-Doulaymi, 51 ans, est le nouveau ministre de la Défense, un maroquin particulièrement exposé. Pendant des semaines, les chiites ont récusé tout sunnite ayant entretenu des liens avec la dictature baassiste.

Al-Doulaymi, un ancien militaire opposant depuis la fin des années 80, est originaire d'une puissante tribu, dont le fief Ramadi, à 100 kilomètres à l'ouest de Bagdad, est aussi un des bastions de l'insurrection. Sa désignation vise à apaiser les tensions ethniques. Une tâche bien difficile pour un homme qui devra composer avec des Américains, soucieux de garder le dernier mot en matière de sécurité, et une rébellion qui a accentué ses attaques ces dernières semaines. Samedi, un attentat perpétré avec deux voitures piégées a fait 22 tués à Bagdad, dont deux Américains. Hier, c'est un haut fonctionnaire du

ministère des Transports et son chauffeur qui ont été abattus. De son côté, l'armée américaine a annoncé la mort de 7 GI pendant le week-end aux alentours de Bagdad.

Les deux autres nouveaux ministres sunnites sont Ouassama Najafi, à l'Industrie, et Hachem al-Chibli, aux Droits de l'homme. Mais sitôt nommé, ce dernier a refusé le poste en affir-

mant qu'il n'avait pas été consulté et qu'il ne voulait pas cautionner un gouvernement basé sur un système de quotas confessionnels.

Même si certains responsables sunnites se demandent s'ils ne devraient pas finalement s'engager dans le processus politique en cours, ce dernier couac, ajouté aux atermoiements précédents, illustre la difficulté à bâtir « un gouvernement d'union nationale », comme le souhaite le premier ministre al-Jaafari.

L'autre nomination attendue visait le tout-puissant ministère du Pétrole, finalement imputé à un chiite, Ibrahim Bar al-Ouloum, que les Kurdes convoitaient également. Entre septembre 2003 et juin 2004, Bar al-Ouloum occupait déjà ce portefeuille : « Il n'avait pas laissé un très bon souvenir », se rappelle un expert

pétrolier, qui lui reproche d'avoir « confessionnalisé » ce ministère clé. Son père, un dignitaire religieux modéré, avait fait partie du Conseil intérimaire de gouvernement, la première instance gouvernementale mise en place par les Américains après le renversement de la dictature. « Nous allons travailler à augmenter la production avec pour objectif d'égaliser les niveaux d'avant-guerre », a déclaré hier Bar al-Ouloum.

La prochaine étape du processus politique est la rédaction de la Constitution permanente par l'Assemblée nationale, d'ici au 15 août prochain.

(AFP et Reuter.)



Le premier ministre irakien a indiqué que son gouvernement « aura recours à tous les moyens légaux, y compris les lois d'urgence » pour faire face à la violence.

Le traité ne remet pas en cause les quatre candidatures déjà déposées, dont celle d'Ankara. En revanche, il impose aux prochains entrants des critères plus stricts sur les droits de l'homme et les droits sociaux.

La Constitution ouvre-t-elle la porte à la Turquie?

OUI

«En réalité, la Constitution est formatée pour préparer l'accueil de la Turquie et lui reconnaître une place prédominante dans l'Europe de demain.»

Philippe de Villiers, président du Mouvement pour la France, dans *Les Turqueries du Grand Mamamouchi* (Albin Michel, janvier 2005)

L'adoption de la nouvelle Constitution ne favorisera pas une future intégration européenne de la Turquie. Et le rejet de ce traité ne freinera en rien le processus lancé en décembre 2004 lors du sommet européen qui a donné le feu vert à l'ouverture, en octobre 2005, des négociations d'adhésion avec Ankara. Cette question pèse pourtant lourdement dans le débat sur la Constitution, notamment en France. Nombre des adversaires du texte, à gauche comme à droite, n'hésitent pas à brandir l'épouvantail turc, présenté par les premiers comme un cheval de Troie de Washington et comme le spectre d'une déferlante migratoire islamiste par les seconds.

«Lier la question du référendum sur la Constitution à celle de l'adhésion de la Turquie est aussi artificiel que démagogique», martèle Robert Badinter, avocat et sénateur socialiste, partisan convaincu du oui, mais adversaire d'un élargissement qui repousserait les frontières de l'UE jusqu'à l'Iran et l'Irak. «La Constitution ne rend ni plus facile ni plus difficile l'adhésion de la Turquie», assure le juriste Jean-Luc Sauron (1).

Barre relevée. Certes, les dis-

positions et modalités du texte prévues pour le dépôt des candidatures (article I-58, lire ci-dessous) ne s'appliquent pas aux candidatures déjà reconnues, à savoir celles de la Roumanie, de la Bulgarie, de la Croatie et de la Turquie. Pour ces dernières, l'examen d'entrée ne change pas. Mais la barre s'en trouve relevée...

Pour être membre, il faut accepter de «promouvoir ensemble» les valeurs de l'Union, déclinées à l'article I-2 (lire ci-dessous). Or, celles-ci sont plus exigeantes que les critères fixés en 1993 à Copenhague et que tout pays candidat doit impérativement respecter (démocratie, Etat de droit, droits de l'homme, économie de marché), puisque s'y ajoutent désormais l'égalité hommes-femmes et le respect des droits des minorités. Deux pierres de plus dans le jardin d'Ankara...

Au terme des négociations, le traité d'adhésion reste soumis à la ratification par chaque Etat membre, selon ses propres règles constitutionnelles (référendum ou vote parlementaire). L'ouverture des négociations avec Ankara ne préjuge ni de leur aboutissement rapide, ni même d'une issue positive, s'évertue à répéter Jacques Chirac, qui, pour mieux rassu-

rer les Français, a fait inscrire dans la Constitution nationale que tout futur élargissement – au-delà de la Roumanie, de la Bulgarie et de la Croatie – fera obligatoirement l'objet d'un référendum.

Comme l'admet Etienne de Poncins (2), diplomate et membre du secrétariat de la convention, le nouveau système de vote prévu au sein de l'UE par la Constitution, avec une double majorité de 55% des Etats et 65% des populations, «rend sans conteste plus problématique une adhésion de la Turquie»: en raison de son poids démographique, «ce pays se verrait attribuer dès son adhésion la première place dans les institutions», avec la capacité de bloquer trois décisions sur quatre. En outre, par ce qu'il implique d'intégration politique accrue entre les Etats membres comme par ses critères plus rigoureux en matière de droits de l'homme ou de droits sociaux, le nouveau traité peut s'avérer nettement plus contraignant pour la Turquie, qui, au contraire, trouverait plus facilement sa place dans une Europe à minima réduite à un grand marché et sans véritable ambition politique commune. La problématique se pose à peu de

NON

«Plus nous serons dans une Europe intégrée, moins la Turquie pourra y participer. [Mais] si vous refusez la Constitution, ce sera alors le grand marché, et la question de l'intégration de la Turquie sera posée avec d'autant plus de facilité.»

Nicolas Sarkozy, président de l'UMP, le 24 février à Tarbes

choses près dans les mêmes termes pour l'Ukraine...

«Effet déstabilisateur». En fait, la vraie question, la plus difficile et la plus cruciale, celle des frontières de l'Europe, n'apparaît qu'en filigrane dans la Constitution. «Paradoxalement, c'est l'une des questions qui a fait l'objet du moins de réflexion approfondie», reconnaît Etienne de Poncins, qui souligne que «cette absence de définition précise des frontières a un effet déstabilisateur pour les opinions publiques en proie au sentiment d'un élargissement continu». Il y aura à terme les pays des Balkans, s'ils poursuivent leur route vers la démocratie, ainsi qu'une partie de ceux issus de l'URSS. Les frontières de l'UE ont-elles vocation à devenir à terme celles des 46 pays du Conseil de l'Europe, y compris la Russie, le jour où celle-ci le souhaiterait et respecterait les valeurs de l'Union?

La principale novation de la Constitution est d'instaurer explicitement un statut de «relations privilégiées» entre l'Union et certains de ses voisins (article I-57, lire ci-dessous). Un ajout dû au président de la convention, Giscard d'Estaing, qui ne s'est jamais privé de dire son hostilité à l'adhésion turque. «Il s'agit d'une voie nouvelle, et ces accords pourraient être proposés à des pays qui ne souhaitent pas rejoindre l'Union ou dont la candidature n'aurait pas été jugée recevable pour des raisons géographiques», souligne Etienne de Poncins. Pour la première fois, un traité européen institutionnalise ainsi ce que pourra être le deuxième ou le troisième cercle de l'UE. ◀

MARC SEMO

Vendredi sanglant en Irak

BAGDAD. Au moins 40 personnes ont été tuées et plus de 50 autres blessées dans deux attentats en Irak, vendredi 6 mai. Le plus meurtrier a eu lieu l'après-midi sur un marché bondé de Soueïra, au sud de Bagdad, où une voiture-piégée a tué 26 personnes et blessé 45 autres. Le matin, près de Tikrit (nord), 12 personnes dont huit policiers et 4 civils ont été tuées dans l'attaque perpétrée par un kamikaze à bord d'une voiture piégée contre un autobus. Par ailleurs, les corps de 14 civils assassinés ont été retrouvés dans une

zone de Bagdad appelée Kisra wa Atach. Selon la police, il pourrait s'agir de paysans. Ils avaient les mains liées et « un impact de balle à la tête ».

D'autre part, l'Australie a refusé, samedi, de céder à un nouvel ultimatum des ravisseurs de l'otage australien Douglas Wood qui demandent le départ d'Irak des troupes de Canberra. Dans une brève vidéo montrant l'otage, les ravisseurs ont donné soixante-douze heures à l'Australie pour annoncer son retrait d'Irak. — (AFP).

Offensive américaine contre Zarkaoui en Irak

Selon le Pentagone, 75 rebelles ont été tués. Un Japonais a été enlevé par un groupe islamiste.

A lors qu'un agent de sécurité japonais a été pris en otage par le groupe Ansar al-Sunna, lié au réseau Al-Qaeda du Jordanien Abou Moussab al-Zarkaoui, l'armée américaine mène une offensive d'envergure contre les insurgés islamistes censés se cacher dans l'ouest de l'Irak, près de Haditha et d'Al-Qaïm. Le Pentagone a affirmé hier avoir tué 75 rebelles, dont des Non-Irakiens,

au cours des dernières vingt-quatre heures dans une opération de grande envergure faisant notamment appel à des moyens aériens, près de la frontière avec la Syrie. Le groupe de Zarkaoui a démenti la mort de 75 combattants dans un communiqué sur un site Internet islamiste.

Ailleurs dans le pays, neuf Irakiens ont été tués, dont six dans des attentats à la voiture piégée à Bagdad. Le

gouvernement du Premier ministre Ibrahim al-Jaafari au complet a une nouvelle fois prêté serment en s'engageant à préserver le caractère fédéral de l'Irak, une mention qui avait été omise lors de la première prestation de serment, la semaine dernière, provoquant la colère des Kurdes. Le nouveau ministre sunnite de la Défense, Saadoun al-Doulaimi, a affirmé que l'Irak était devenu « une plaque tournante du terrorisme

international » et a fait de la sécurité « sa première priorité ».

L'otage japonais détenu par Ansar al-Sunna a été identifié comme étant Akihiko Saito. Ce directeur de la sécurité sur une base américaine aurait été grièvement blessé lors de sa capture. Cinq Japonais ont été assassinés en Irak depuis le début de la guerre, dont un jeune routard pris en otage et décapité par des islamistes. —

D'après AFP, Reuters

U.S. doubts Iraq rebels can keep it up

By Eric Schmitt

WASHINGTON: Insurgents in Iraq are drawing on dozens of stockpiled, bomb-rigged cars and groups of foreign fighters smuggled into the country in recent weeks to carry out most of the suicide attacks that have killed about 300 people in the past 10 days, senior American officers and intelligence officials say.

The insurgents exploded 135 car bombs in April, up from 69 in March, and more than in any other month in the two-year American occupation. For the first time last month, more than 50 percent of the car-bombings were suicide attacks, some remotely detonated, suggesting that Iraqis, who typically do not use that tactic, are being forced or duped into driving those missions, one top American general said.

Senior American officers predict that the insurgents, including Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the Jordanian militant whose network has claimed responsibility for the deadliest suicide bombings, will not be able to sustain the level of attacks much longer. And the attacks have not yet dented recruit-



Pool photo by Sabah Arar

ALL IN FAVOR — The Iraqi Parliament approved six cabinet ministers Sunday, but one of them, a Sunni, rejected the post.

ing for the American-trained Iraqi security forces.

But these officers acknowledged that the heightened suicide bombings over the last two weeks, while probably a last-ditch effort, have won the militants important propaganda victories by gaining worldwide news coverage, increasing insurgent morale that flagged after the Jan. 30 elections, and depicting the new Iraqi government as incapable of protecting its citizenry.

"When he cranks up the propaganda campaign, it means we've probably hurt him," Brigadier General John De-

Freitas 3rd, the senior military intelligence officer in Iraq, said of Zarqawi. "It's a tool in his arsenal and he has used it effectively."

In interviews with a dozen senior military officers in Iraq or with experience there, as well as with other American officials, varying assessments emerged, underscoring the military's opaque understanding of exactly how the disparate strands of the insurgency operate and coordinate with each other.

One senior officer said the recent violence was a predictable "attempt by the enemy to show that they are still a factor, still relevant and still capable."

The bombings, this officer said, "grabbed the headlines, drowned out the good news of a newly formed government, attacked the credibility and legitimacy of the new government."

Another top officer with extensive experience in Iraq said it would not matter if the suicide car-bombings subsided if the insurgents "feel that they achieved their information-operation objectives."

A third officer, a general with extensive command experience in Iraq, said

that he was not sure yet what the rash of suicide car-bombings meant: "More foreign fighters? More religious extremists? An indicator of insurgent desperation? Iraqis as suicide attackers?"

Attacks against allied forces had dropped to about 40 a day in March and early April; and now they stand at 55 a day, well below the 130 a day in the days before the Jan. 30 elections, but roughly the same as last fall.

Attacks against power stations, pipelines and other infrastructure have declined sharply in the past three weeks as insurgents shifted their attacks to Iraqi security forces, U.S. officers said.

An assault last month against the Abu Ghraib prison, which wounded 44 Americans and 13 Iraqi prisoners, as well as smaller strikes almost daily since then against the prison that became the center of the prisoner-abuse scandal, have been ineffective militarily but successful as a means of propaganda, DeFreitas said.

"Abu Ghraib is a huge symbol for the

insurgents," he said.

Military intelligence officials say that insurgents are pumping out CDs and other information on extremist Web sites that use Abu Ghraib as a recruiting tool and call to arms against the American-led military campaign.

U.S. officials say the insurgency is still a mix of former Baath Party loyalists, Iraqi military and security service officers, Sunni Arab militants and terrorists like Zarqawi. They claim progress against the insurgents, killing Zarqawi's top lieutenants, driving militants into rural areas less patrolled by the Americans, and getting more tips from Iraqis in the location of guerrillas.

Foreign fighters, only a small part of the insurgency, still commit most of the suicide bombings, military officials say. Fighters from Syria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and Iran continue to infiltrate Iraq's porous borders despite reconstituted Iraqi border patrol units and teams of specialists sent from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security

to assist them.

"Fighters, arms and other supplies continue to enter Iraq from virtually all of its neighbors despite increased border security," Earl Scheck, a senior analyst with the Defense Intelligence Agency, said at a congressional hearing last week.

But some intelligence analysts believe that Iraqi Sunni extremists are now joining the ranks of suicide bombers in what would be a troubling new trend.

Top commanders said they expected spikes and lulls in the violence through at least early next year.

"It takes everything they've got to muster attacks," Major General Stephen Johnson, the Marine commander in Iraq, said. "Unless the insurgents get involved in the political process, I think we'll continue to see this."

The New York Times

Thom Shanker contributed reporting to this article.

Sunni Arab declines Iraqi cabinet post

Lone rejection is blow to prime minister

By Richard A. Oppel Jr.

BAGHDAD: One of the four Sunni Arabs picked over the weekend to join the new Shiite-controlled cabinet in Iraq rejected the job on Sunday, dealing an embarrassment to Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari and other Shiite leaders trying to appease Sunnis angered by their limited role in government.

Hashim al-Shibli, a Sunni who had been named minister of human rights, said he rejected the post because he first learned of his appointment from watching satellite television on Saturday night and because he felt his selection would merely help to fill a Sunni quota, a system that he said would make sectarian problems worse.

The Iraqi National Assembly approved six ministers, Shibli included, in a vote on Sunday.

Jaafari had hoped their confirmation would complete his 35-member cabinet and put to rest the contentious political battles between the dominant Shiite political alliance and the Sunni Arabs, who largely boycotted the Jan. 30 election but demanded substantive roles in the new government.

Instead, it marked a fresh embarrassment just as Jaafari's government was trying to tackle an aggressive insurgency largely fought by Sunni Arabs who remain loyal to Saddam Hussein,

who favored the Sunnis and brutally oppressed the Shiites and Kurds who now dominate the new government.

Shibli said he did not formally learn that he had been picked until just before the confirmation vote on Sunday, leading him to believe his selection was more symbolism than substance.

"I heard about it watching TV. No one talked to me or asked me about it before," Shibli said. "This morning they called me and tried to congratulate me in my new job, but I said no."

"I refused this because this is sectarianism, and I don't believe in sectarianism," he added. "I believe in democracy, and there was a conflict between this and what I believe."

Insurgents have slain more than 300 people in the nine days since Jaafari announced his government, including more than 200 Iraqi police officers and troops. U.S. and Iraqi officials say the insurgents have coordinated their attacks to destabilize and undermine public confidence in Jaafari's administration.

While there was sporadic violence on Sunday, for Iraqis it was one of the least lethal days in recent weeks. One of the few assassinations or ambushes reported was the killing of a senior Transportation Ministry official, Yasser Khudair Almaaini, who was shot to death with his driver by gunmen in Baghdad at about 7 a.m., an Interior Ministry official said.

But it was a deadly weekend for U.S. soldiers. At least eight were killed in attacks using car bombs and homemade explosive devices.

The deadliest attack came Saturday in Haditha, a city in restive Anbar Province that U.S. officials believe has been a principal hideout for the terrorist leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

A battle at a local hospital killed three marines and one sailor as well as an unspecified number of insurgents, the military said.

The insurgents used the hospital to attack the servicemen with a car bomb, small-arms fire and rocket-propelled grenades. Another marine was killed by a homemade bomb in Karma, north of Falluja, on Saturday, the military said.

The New York Times

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La valse de Damas

Chassée du Liban, sous pression internationale, la Syrie louvoie. Le régime de Bachar el-Assad alterne répression et relâchement, multiplie les contradictions et perpétue finalement l'arbitraire.

Damas (Syrie) envoyé spécial

ls sortent de nulle part des pancartes qu'ils agitent sous le regard ébahi des passagers d'un bus. «Liberté pour Aktham!» «Liberté pour Shiran Abdo!» disent leurs écri-teaux. Extraits d'une poche, des tracts pliés en quatre pas-sent d'une main à l'autre. Ef-frayés, des passants changent de trottoir, tandis que des po-liciers armés de gourdins sur-gissent d'une camionnette. Les manifestants sont main-tenant près de deux cents massés devant le petit im-meuble gris où deux des leurs doivent comparaître. «Cour

de sûreté de l'Etat», lit-on sur la grille d'entrée. Ce n'est pas un palais lourd et sé-vère comme la justice, mais une officine discrète, fondue dans le paysage, sem-blable à celles qui, un peu partout dans la ville, abritent les services de sécurité. Un lieu évoqué avec effroi, jusque-là inac-cessible au public comme aux avocats.

Ce jour-là, on y juge un jeune internaute kurde, Shiran Abdo, et un dissident cé-lèbre, Aktham Naissé. Le premier, étu-diant, croupit depuis un an dans une cel-lule pour avoir mis en ligne des photos des affrontements violents entre Kurdes et forces de l'ordre en mars 2004. Le second préside le comité pour la défense des li-bertés démocratiques et les droits de l'homme en Syrie. Il risque une peine de quinze ans pour propagation à l'étranger «de fausses nouvelles» et atteinte à l'ima-ge de l'Etat.

Aktham Naissé arrive à pied accompagné de plusieurs avocats, syrien, égyptien, jor-danien. Il y a même un membre du bar-reau de Paris, venu en observateur, Em-manuel Altit, le représentant suisse d'une ONG contre la torture, des journalistes, des diplomates. Le dernier régime baa-siste se trouve dorénavant sous haute sur-veillance. «Grâce aux fortes pressions de l'extérieur, notre mouvement est devenu

très important», se réjouit Kamal al-La-bouani, un opposant qui vient de passer trois ans en prison.

«Une dictature sans dictateur»

Chacun s'étonne de son audace, de l'atti-tude des policiers, qui ne chargent pas. Des Kurdes apatrides en profitent pour réclamer leur naturalisation. Un jeune dénonce «un système de terreur». Le chef

d'un parti interdit accorde une interview. «Ce genre de rassemblement est très rare», souligne Matthew Lehrfeld, vice-consul américain, présent à tous ces défis lancés au pouvoir. Un an auparavant, il avait été interpellé avec des dizaines de manifestants. En

mars, lors du dernier sit-in, la foule avait été bastonnée par des nervis. Pas cette fois. Autre surprise, l'accusé peut pénétrer dans la cour avec sa suite. En gravissant les marches, un avocat fait part de son émotion: «A chaque fois, on repousse un peu plus loin les limites.» Au deuxième étage, le tribunal le plus redou-té du pays se réduit à un couloir éclairé aux néons. Pas de public, donc pas de sal-le. Deux des juges sont en civil, le troisiè-me en uniforme olive. Faute de place, les défenseurs se pressent sous leur nez com-me devant un guichet.

Etrange procès sans débat, sans procès-verbal. Le réquisitoire a été prononcé à huis clos en décembre. Le greffier ne prend aucune note. Au bout de trois quarts d'heure de plaidoiries désordon-nées, le président met fin à la séance en laissant entendre que la décision a déjà été prise. Sa leçon d'histoire de la région, délivrée à ses hôtes avant l'audience, a du-ré plus longtemps. «Du théâtre destiné aux étrangers», résume M^e Altit. La dé-fense, épatée d'avoir pu présenter ses ar-guments, n'en crie pas moins victoire.

Une formule revient dans toutes les bouches. La Syrie est devenue «une dic-tature sans dictateur», comme une hor-loge qui indiquerait plusieurs heures ou un broyeur à la mâchoire irrégulière. Jusqu'à son décès en juin 2000, Hafez el-Assad tenait son pays d'une poigne de fer. Son absence d'état d'âme, son art de la ruse forçaient même l'admiration d'un Kissinger. Son fils, Bachar, qui lui a



Affiche de l'Union socialiste arabe, parti satellite du Baas, à l'effigie de Nasser, d'Hafez el-Assad et de son fils Bachar.

succédé, ne possède ni sa férocité, ni son machiavélisme.

Ce jeune ophtalmologue, formé à Londres, est l'héritier improbable d'un trône destiné initialement à son frère aîné, Basel, un guerrier adulé par ses hommes, mort au volant de son bolide en 1994. Le cadet règne avec un «directoire, un système sicilien basé sur l'omerta, l'absence de lisibilité, formé par la famille et les chefs des services de sécurité», explique un diplomate. «*Il y a*

sont plusieurs mafias qui se disputent le pouvoir», affirme Haitham Maleh, un avocat défenseur des droits de l'homme. Bachar suscitait pourtant, à ses débuts, de grands espoirs. A peine couronné, il avait libéré la parole, promis des réformes, relâché 600 prison-

niers politiques, et laissé éclore des dizaines de forums de discussion, des salons où l'on refaisait le monde. C'était l'été. On s'en souvient comme du «printemps de Damas».

L'hiver est revenu brutalement, huit mois plus tard. Les principales figures de cette ouverture se sont retrouvées derrière les barreaux. Les forums ont tous été fermés, sauf un, «conservé comme un baromètre», selon l'un de ses organisateurs. Et puis, le Président, qui l'avait un jour cité en exemple de démocratie, n'a sans doute pas voulu se dédire. Dans un discours, il a fixé, lui-même, les «lignes rouges» à ne pas franchir, des limites qui épousent les contours de son pouvoir absolu.

«Comme un chat acculé»

Aujourd'hui, il n'y a plus de saison. «Un jour, il y a du soleil; un autre, il pleut», dit Ibrahim Hamidi, le correspondant d'*Al-Hayat*, le grand quotidien arabe. Répression coexiste avec relâchement. L'arbitraire devient synonyme d'incohérence. Pressé par la communauté internationale, les Etats-Unis et la France en tête, chassé du Liban, encerclé de toutes parts, le régime louvoie, titube, multiplie les erreurs et les contradictions.

«*La nature demeure tyrannique. Mais, il est comme un chat acculé qui rentre ses griffes. Il ne peut plus user de la violence comme par le passé*», déclare Yassine Haj-Saleh, un intellectuel communiste détenu pendant seize ans. A l'instar des autres dissidents, il parle à voix haute et à visage découvert.

«*En ce moment, ça bouge de tous les côtés. Le tissu est en train de craquer. Le mécontentement, auparavant étouffé, s'exprime*», note un diplomate. Hier encore, 100 intellectuels syriens ont réclamé dans une pétition des réformes politiques. Ces petites libertés, arrachées et non plus concédées, comme il y a cinq ans, apparaissent autant de signes de faiblesse.

Sur l'Internet, des dizaines de tribunes se créent sans autorisation et répercutent des attaques parfois d'une

rare violence. Dans le même temps, le site d'un baasiste réformateur, Ayman Abdel Nour (1), qui pointait les carences du système, est fermé. Toujours les mêmes zigzags. «*Lorsque les gens lisent sur le Web qu'il faut "tuer la famille Assad", ils se disent qu'ils ont affaire à des excités. Moi, ma critique est plus dangereuse car elle provient de l'intérieur*», analyse Ayman Abdel Nour. Il envoie maintenant ses flèches acérées par e-mails.

«*On a toujours peur*», s'écrie le chercheur Hassan Abbas, assis dans un bistrot élégant du centre-ville. Il porte encore sur sa joue la cicatrice du coup reçu une nuit dans un bâtiment qu'il hésite à montrer, situé de l'autre côté de la place. «*C'était alors le siège de la Sûreté étrangère. L'officier m'a giflé. Il avait une chevalière*.» Les services continuent de le convoquer de temps à autre. «*Sauf que, la dernière fois, le général m'a offert un café!*»

La surveillance ne se relâche pas, elle se fait plus douce. L'appareil répressif reste intact. La loi 49 qui punit de mort l'appartenance aux Frères musulmans est toujours en vigueur. Tout comme l'état d'urgence, décrété lors du putsch baasiste de

1963, et «*qui permet tout*», s'écrie un juriste. D'après Haitham Maleh, le pays compte encore près de 2000 prisonniers politiques, dont quelque 800 dans les divers cul-de-basse-fosse des organes de sécurité. Sous la contrainte, le régime jure de faire peau neuve lors du congrès du Baas en juin. «*Ce sera l'occasion de nouvelles avancées*», affirme Mehdi Dakhlallah, le ministre de l'Information. Le parti serait prêt à se «*syrianiser*», en renonçant à sa structure panarabe, support idéologique à ses ambitions régionales aujourd'hui défuntes. Il envisagerait même de se baptiser social-démocrate. «*Comme en Allemagne*», ajoute le ministre. Le Baas pourrait aussi proposer la suppression de l'article 8 de la Constitution qui entérine sa suprématie sur la vie politique. «*Tout est possible. Il n'y a pas de texte sacré*.» Un autre interlocuteur prédit la libération imminente du député Riyad Seif, un homme d'affaires très populaire, embastillé pour avoir dénoncé l'accaparement de l'économie nationale par un cousin de Bachar, Rami Makhlouf.

Trop souvent déçus par le passé, les Syriens, comme les chancelleries, accueillent ces effets d'annonce avec méfiance. «*Une perestroïka? Cette prétention du pouvoir n'a jamais débouché sur quoi que ce soit*», lance un juriste. Lorsqu'il voyait encore en Bachar un modernisateur, Jacques Chirac avait dépêché à sa demande des experts chargés d'établir un projet de réforme adminis-

trative. Peine perdue. «*Leurs rapports, jamais traduits, ont fini à la poubelle*», assure un proche du raïs.

«Plus de mille ans de prison»

«*Ce régime ne se reformera pas de lui-même. Il faut maintenir la pression*», insiste l'intellectuel Mohammed Ali Atassi. Une étreinte surtout externe. Très divisée, l'opposition ne constitue pas encore une menace. Malgré les rancœurs causées par la corruption et un chômage de 30%, «*elle ne rassemble pas plus de 10 000 personnes*», estime Ibrahim Hamidi. Si ses leaders n'hésitent pas à braver l'interdit, les simples citoyens restent encore tétanisés par le souvenir de la répression anti-islamiste qui avait fait au moins 20 000 morts

à Hama en 1982. Malgré un horizon incertain, l'heure est à la fête au sein de la dissidence. Atablés dans un restaurant de la vieille ville de Damas, ils sont une centaine à célébrer le retour de l'artiste communiste Youssef Abdelké après vingt-quatre ans d'exil. Accompagnés au luth, ils reprennent en chœur une vieille chanson de cheikh Imam, chantre de la gauche égyptienne. Leurs cheveux ont le plus souvent blanchi à l'ombre des cachots. «*A nous tous, on doit totaliser plus de mille ans de prison*», déclare un convive.

Officiellement, les 30 000 exilés peuvent obtenir un passeport et regagner la Syrie. A leur descente d'avion, ils ne risquent en principe qu'un interrogatoire de quelques heures, voire deux-trois mois de détention. Youssef Abdelké n'est que le second grand opposant à oser sauter le pas. «*J'ai franchi la douane sans même être convoqué. C'est bon signe*.»

Après le chaud, le froid. Alors que ses œuvres étaient montrées à Damas depuis deux décennies, il vient d'apprendre que le ministre de la Culture lui refuse l'autorisation d'exposer dans la plus grande salle de la ville s'il n'accepte pas son patronage. «*J'ai toujours refusé. Je ne vais pas céder maintenant!*» A une semaine du vernissage, il doit tout annuler. La force de l'arbitraire, c'est d'être impénétrable. ◆

CHRISTOPHE BOLTANSKI

(1) All4Syria.org

«*En ce moment, ça bouge de tous les côtés. Le tissu est en train de craquer. Le mécontentement, auparavant étouffé, s'exprime*»

Un diplomate



Iraq ■ By James Dobbins

Democracy vs. power sharing

WASHINGTON

Three recent and well-studied American initiatives all had the potential to alter the equation in Iraq when they were introduced, but in unpredictable ways: the Iraqi elections, President George W. Bush's commitment to spreading democracy and the administration's handing over of more responsibility to Iraqis. In fact, these are all related, and with the fog lifting from their aftermath, it is increasingly possible to begin to predict their cumulative effects.

First, by embracing the strategy of "Iraqicization," the Bush administration has finally matched its military objectives to the level of its forces on the ground. One reinforced corps of largely American troops was never going to be enough to stabilize a country as large, conflicted and heavily armed as Iraq. But that same force acting in support of the largest communal faction in Iraq, the Shiites, and the best armed, the Kurds, has every prospect of suppressing resistance based from within the third and weakest faction, the Sunnis.

The new military strategy, however, is dependent for success on a political gamble. As democratization has become the centerpiece of U.S. policy, other specific desirable goals —

Democratic change is the sole remaining justification for the war.

power sharing, regional stability, Iraqi territorial integrity — receive scant mention, presumably in the hope that these will flow from the unimpeded by-

play of popular sovereignty. Likewise, the United States is betting that popular sovereignty will produce a stable Shiite/Kurdish regime, ideally one with meaningful Sunni participation, capable of raising, motivating and sustaining effective counterinsurgency forces.

The impact of the Iraqi elections has been to accelerate the transformation of a broadly based nationalist resistance to U.S. occupation into a more narrowly based Sunni resistance to Shiite domination. Violence in Iraq is increasingly breaking down along sectarian lines.

This mutation of a nationalist resistance movement into a Sunni insurgency has an obvious upside for U.S. policy.

There is no doubt that a Sunni-based insurgency will ultimately be defeated by the combined weight of Shiite and Kurdish opposition, particularly when those two communities can count on the support of both the United States and Iran. What remains a bit less certain is whether Shiite and Kurdish weight will indeed be combined.

It is fair to say that Iraq is already in the midst of a kind of civil war, though — crucially — still an unconventional one. Just as there is no danger of the Sunni minority prevailing against the Shiite and Kurdish majority, so there is no danger of a Sunni insurgency escalating into conventional war. The only danger of a full-scale conventional civil war would arise from a falling out between the Kurdish and Shiite leadership over control of the oil fields and population centers of northern Iraq, or from violent divisions within the Shiite community itself.

Like most policy choices, Bush's shift of public focus to democratic reform was prompted by some combination of conviction and calculation. One need not doubt the sincerity of the president's commitment to democratic change to note that this theme represents the sole remaining justification for an increasingly expensive and unpopular war. Democratization also provides a rationale for U.S. policy toward the Middle East as a whole that his critics at home and abroad find relatively difficult to fault.

But Bush's apparently uncritical embrace of popular sovereignty could, nevertheless, complicate the administration's ability to promote the kind of power-sharing arrangements that will be necessary to hold Iraq together. This stance also limits America's ability to promote a regional consensus in favor of an emergent Iraqi regime. Power sharing is something that Tehran, Ankara, Amman and Riyadh understand and could conceivably agree upon. Democracy, particularly Iraqi democracy, is not.

At this point, one can see three possible futures for Iraq. The first, and most hopeful, is a gradual withering away of the insurgency as government police and military forces become more effective, the population more willing to collaborate with them and increasing numbers of Sunnis ready join the democratic process.

The second is a more violent but ultimately still successful suppression of the Sunni insurgency by Shiite and Kurdish forces, with U.S. and Iranian support. The third, least desirable, future is a civil war with Kurds in one corner, Sunnis in another and the Shiites fighting among themselves.

It is the recent progress toward formation of a broadly based, democratic Iraqi government that makes the first and best option a distinct possibility.

James Dobbins, a former assistant secretary of state and special envoy for Afghanistan, directs the International Security and Defense Policy Center at RAND Corp.

IRAN *A un mois du scrutin, les électeurs considèrent l'élection de Rafsandjani comme acquise*

Les Iraniens s'apprêtent à boudier la présidentielle

A un mois de l'élection présidentielle du 17 juin en Iran, la course entre les prétendants à la succession de Mohammad Khatami a commencé. Mais la ferveur électorale de 1997 n'est plus de mise. Déçus des réformes, les Iraniens s'apprêtent à boudier les urnes. Dans tous les esprits, c'est Hachemi Rafsandjani, l'ancien président, qui a officiellement enregistré hier sa candidature, qui, par défaut, finira par l'emporter.

Delphine Minoui

Mustafah Moïn, candidat réformateur à l'élection présidentielle du 17 juin, soigne son image. Depuis un mois déjà, cet ancien ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur, visage fin et cos-

tume bleu marine, fait la tournée des universités de province. Il possède même son blog personnel sur Internet. Il y répond quotidiennement aux questions des internautes.

Ses adversaires conservateurs, habituellement plus avertis de techniques de promotion à l'occidentale, lui ont emboîté le pas. Depuis l'annonce de sa candidature, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, ancien chef de la

police, multiplie les conférences et les interventions télévisées. Lunettes fumées, blouson en daim, ce candidat qui se dit indépendant, mais réputé proche du guide religieux, va jusqu'à évoquer la « *libéralisation des antennes paraboliques* » pour recevoir les chaînes étrangères, un discours habituellement réservé aux réformistes.

Jour après jour, les candidats sortent de l'ombre. A gauche, Mustafah Moïn et Mehdi Karoubi, ancien chef du Parlement iranien, ont annoncé leur candidature depuis belle lurette. A droite, une multitude de personnalités pointent leur nez, à côté de Qalibaf. Ali Larijani, ancien directeur de la télévision d'Etat, Mohsen Rezaï, ancien chef des gardiens de la révolution, constituent les principales figures de la course aux élections. Plusieurs femmes, dont Azam Taleghani, secrétaire de la Société des femmes de la révolution islamique, et l'ancienne députée Rafat Bayat ont fait savoir qu'elles comptaient se présenter. Mais, par le passé, les candidatures féminines n'ont jamais passé le filtre du puissant Conseil des gardiens. Ali Akbar Hachemi Rafsandjani, un conservateur pragmatique, chef du puissant Conseil de discernement et officieusement numéro deux du ré-

gime, est finalement sorti de l'ombre, mardi soir, après avoir joué la carte du suspense.

Les prétendants à la succession de Mohammad Khatami, toutes tendances politiques confondues, surfent sur la vague du marketing politique. A droite comme à gauche, ils reprennent à leur compte les formules magiques du chef de l'Etat sortant : société civile, droits des individus, progrès scientifique... Mais, du côté de la population, l'apathie règne. La plupart des Ira-

cottage des élections. Un sondage réalisé dans l'université Amir Kabir montre que seulement 30 à 35 % des étudiants envisagent d'aller voter. Selon plusieurs études, réalisées à une échelle plus large, le taux de participation des Iraniens s'établira entre 42 et 51 %.

Mehdi Habibi et ses compères rejettent le système de la République islamique d'Iran dans son intégralité. « *Aller aux urnes, c'est soutenir un système qui viole les droits de l'homme*, dit-il.

Toute élection doit pouvoir se faire sous deux conditions : libre choix de se présenter pour tous les candidats, et pouvoirs suffisants accordés au président. Or aucune de ces conditions n'est respectée. C'est pourquoi nous refusons de voter. »

L'étudiant fait ici référence au Conseil des gardiens, cette instance conservatrice qui présélectionne les candidats. Selon le calendrier électoral, les candidats ont jusqu'à vendredi soir pour y déposer leur nom. Le Conseil dispose ensuite d'une dizaine de jours pour les accepter ou les rejeter. Lors des législatives de février 2004, plus de 2 000 prétendants au Parlement avaient été invalidés. De même, en 2001,

900 candidats s'étaient inscrits pour briguer la tête de l'exécutif. Seule une petite dizaine avait été retenue pour la campagne.

Pour beaucoup d'étudiants iraniens, la réforme ne peut pas avoir lieu dans le cadre de la Constitution actuelle. Ils appellent à un référendum sur le statut même de la République islamique. Ils sont conscients que, dans l'état actuel des choses, les pouvoirs du président sont presque nuls et que le décideur numéro un reste le guide religieux, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

« *Au fond, ces élections ne vont pas changer grand-chose, concède un diplomate occidental. Khatami était plus un chef de l'opposition qu'un chef de gouvernement. En général, le président iranien est une sorte de premier ministre, dont les initiatives sont bloquées en permanence.* » Pour ce diplomate, « *parmi les grands dossiers qui préoccupent la communauté internationale – le nucléaire, les droits de l'homme et le rôle régional de l'Iran –, nous savons bien que ce n'est pas le président qui est aux commandes. Les décisions sont prises à un niveau plus élevé.* » Mais, reconnaît-il, « *le seul à être en mesure d'initier un changement, c'est bien Rafsandjani, de par son pouvoir, son expérience et ses connexions.* »

Selon plusieurs études, le taux de participation s'établira entre 42 et 51 %

niens sont arrivés à la même conclusion : le président, dont les pouvoirs sont très limités, ne pourra pas changer le pays. Et puis, dans tous les esprits, c'est la même idée qui trotte : quel que soit le taux de participation, Rafsandjani, le retardataire, est déjà donné gagnant.

« *A quoi bon voter ?* », s'interroge Mehdi Habibi, ancien défenseur des réformes et étudiant activiste au sein du Bureau de consolidation de l'unité. Les jeunes, qui furent en 1997 les principaux électeurs de Khatami, songent à appeler au boy-

European Court Urges Turkey to Grant Kurdish Leader a New Trial

By CRAIG S. SMITH
and SEBNEM ARSU

PARIS, May 12 — Turkey may be forced to order a new trial for a Kurdish separatist leader, Abdullah Ocalan, after the European Human Rights Court on Thursday upheld an earlier decision that his 1999 trial was unfair and called on Turkey to reopen the case.

Turkey is seeking to join the European Union and could jeopardize its application if it refuses to revisit the case.

"This file can be reopened, but it has been long closed in the people's conscience," said Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is in Hungary on an official visit. He said the Turkish judicial system would decide whether to order a retrial after evaluating the European court's

decision.

The court, which is based in Strasbourg, France, is not a European Union body, but defying its wishes could put Turkey in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights, to which all European Union members must belong.

The European Union will begin formal negotiations over Turkey's application to join in October.

Many people in Turkey worry that reopening Mr. Ocalan's case could reignite the fires of Kurdish nationalism, the suppression of which in the 1990's cost more than 30,000 lives. It could also rekindle a sense of Turkish nationalism, which could further complicate Turkey's efforts to join the European Union.

"A retrial could reactivate nationalist feelings that can be manipulated by the anti-E.U. front," said Umit Cizre, a political science professor at Bilkent University. He called the ruling by the European court "scary"



and urged the government to explain the reasons behind it to the public.

Mr. Ocalan, who headed the Kurdish Workers' Party, was captured in Kenya in 1999 and extradited to Turkey for trial. After his conviction, he

Craig S. Smith reported from Paris for this article, and Sebnem Arsu from Istanbul.

received a death sentence for treason, but that sentence was later commuted to life in prison when Turkey abolished capital punishment to comply with European Union membership requirements.

The European court first ruled in 2003 that Mr. Ocalan had not received a fair trial and the court's highest authority, the Grand Chamber, upheld that decision on Thursday.

The reasons for the latest ruling focused on the extended period of time that Mr. Ocalan was held before

standing trial and the limited time allowed for him to prepare a defense.

Mr. Ocalan is currently the sole inmate of a fortresslike prison on the western Turkish island of Imrali. He is still regarded by Kurdish rebels operating in eastern Turkey as their leader.

Gen. Yasar Buyukanit, the head of Turkey's land forces, called the court ruling "a totally political decision." He added, "Something's wrong when you give a political decision about a legal matter."

But Turgut Okyay, the judge who presided over Mr. Ocalan's 1999

trial, told Turkish state television that he was confident a retrial would result in another guilty verdict with another life sentence.

President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, arriving back in Turkey from an official visit to Portugal, suggested that a retrial would not happen soon because reopening Mr. Ocalan's case would require changes to the country's recently adopted penal code.

"It is impossible to accept this request given the present legal structuring," Mr. Sezer said, adding that it was up to Turkey's Parliament to make the required changes.

*Seul point commun entre les europhiles et les eurosceptiques,
l'opposition à une adhésion de la Turquie*

Simone Veil dit non à l'entrée d'Ankara dans l'Union européenne

Olivier Pognon

Comme Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, comme François Bayrou, Simone Veil n'est pas favorable à l'adhésion de la Turquie à l'Union européenne. L'ancienne présidente du Parlement européen l'a dit hier sur LCI : la Turquie n'a qu'« une très petite partie de son territoire géographique en Europe ». Aussi, a-t-elle ajouté, « je n'ai jamais été favorable » à cette adhésion. En revanche, la Turquie « peut très

bien avoir un traité d'association avec l'Union européenne et participer à un certain nombre d'actions de l'Europe ».

Simone Veil est sur la même ligne que Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, dont elle fut autrefois le ministre. L'ancien président de la République s'est expliqué à plusieurs reprises. « 95 % du territoire de la Turquie et 92 % de sa population sont situés en Asie, sur le plateau d'Anatolie, où le fondateur de la Turquie moderne, Kemal Atatürk, a choisi de déplacer la capitale du pays », faisait-il valoir récemment. VGE observe aussi que la

langue turque n'est pas indo-européenne et que la Turquie n'a été associée à aucun des mouvements qui fondent la culture européenne : « *apport de la Grèce et de la Rome antiques, héritage religieux, élan créateur de la Renaissance, philosophie du siècle des Lumières, apport de la pensée rationnelle et scientifique* ».

Cette position est encore partagée par François Bayrou. Le président de l'UDF avait demandé au gouvernement, en octobre dernier, de soumettre au Parlement la recommandation de la Commission européenne sur l'ouverture des négociations avec la Turquie. Sans être suivi.

Ils ne sont pas les seuls à refuser l'entrée de la Turquie. L'UMP de Nicolas Sarkozy a pris position contre, s'opposant à Jacques Chirac. Comme les centristes, les souverainistes – Philippe de Villiers, Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, Jean-Marie Le Pen – ont eux aussi l'opposition à l'adhésion turque pour cheval de bataille. Mais eux s'opposent aussi à la construction européenne, au traité constitutionnel et font campagne pour le non. Ceux-ci mis à part, les adversaires les plus farouches de cette adhésion

sont donc, en même temps, les plus ardents défenseurs, depuis toujours, de la construction européenne et les plus chauds partisans du traité constitutionnel. Il n'y a aucune contradiction et la position de ces UDF, ou anciens UDF, est cohérente. Ils militent, depuis le début, pour une Europe à vocation politique, appelée à devenir une fédération. Ils la veulent donc compacte, homogène par la culture, par l'histoire et par les aspirations, de sorte que puisse naître une identité européenne. « *L'adhésion de la Turquie changerait la nature du projet européen* », estime Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, selon qui « *les élargissements successifs* » ont déjà « *accru le trouble des esprits* ». Critiquant la position de Jacques Chirac, favorable à l'entrée d'Ankara, il regrette « *cette fuite en avant d'une Europe non organisée* ». Et François Bayrou déclarait à l'Assemblée, lors du débat organisé le 14 octobre : « *Nous croyons que l'Union européenne est une unité politique en construction. Or l'adhésion de la Turquie est un pas non vers l'unité de l'Europe, mais vers sa dispersion, à tous les points de vue.* »



Simone Veil a déclaré hier que la Turquie n'a qu'« une très petite partie de son territoire géographique en Europe ». (Photo François Bouchon/Le Figaro.)

TURQUIE Le « procès inéquitable » du chef séparatiste kurde a été dénoncé hier à Strasbourg

L'Europe contraint Ankara à rejurer Öcalan

Bruxelles :
de notre correspondante
Alexandrine Bouilhet

L'Europe a infligé, hier, un nouveau coup dur au gouvernement turc de Recep Tayyip Erdogan, en le contraignant à rejurer Abdullah Öcalan, le chef séparatiste kurde, emprisonné à vie pour ses activités terroristes au sein du PKK. La Cour européenne des droits de l'homme a condamné la Turquie pour « procès inéquitable ». Les juges de Strasbourg ont estimé que la Cour de sûreté de l'Etat, qui a condamné Öcalan à mort en juin 1999 n'était pas indépendante.

Parmi les magistrats turcs de l'époque siégeait un juge militaire, une pratique interdite par la Convention européenne des droits de l'homme, ratifiée par la Turquie depuis. La Cour de Strasbourg a également jugé que les droits de la défense d'Öcalan n'avaient pas été respectés au

cours de la procédure, recommandant à Ankara d'ouvrir un nouveau procès.

« Lorsqu'un particulier a été condamné par un tribunal qui ne remplissait pas les conditions d'impartialité et d'indépendance exigées par la Convention », indique l'arrêt de la Cour, « un nouveau procès ou une réouverture de la procédure, à la demande de l'intéressé, représente en principe un moyen approprié de redresser la violation constatée ».

Accusé de « séparatisme » et de « haute trahison », le prisonnier le plus célèbre de Turquie pourrait donc réapparaître devant un tribunal, liant une fois de plus son destin judiciaire à celui de la Turquie et de l'Europe. Condamné à mort en 1999, Öcalan aurait été pendu haut et court, si Ankara n'avait dû se mettre aussitôt en conformité avec les us et coutumes de l'Union européenne. Grâce à l'abolition de la peine de mort en Turquie, condition sine qua non

pour entrer dans l'Union, le chef du PKK a vu sa condamnation commuée en peine de prison à vie, en octobre 2002. Haï par une grande partie de la population, arrêté au Kenya à la suite d'une cavale rocambolesque à travers l'Europe, où il a tenté de demander l'asile politique, Öcalan purge aujourd'hui sa peine sur l'île prison d'Imrali, seul détenu au milieu la mer de Marmara.

Un nouveau procès ne changera en rien sa peine ni sa culpabilité, car le fond du dossier n'est

pas en cause, mais l'arrêt de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme tombe au plus mal pour les autorités turques, en proie à un regain de nationalisme du fait des réformes impopulaires exigées par l'Europe. Hier, le gouvernement turc a annoncé qu'il respecterait bien sûr l'arrêt de Strasbourg, mais les élus de la majorité n'ont pas

caché leur agacement. « Ce n'est évidemment pas la décision que

nous souhaitons », a déclaré un député influent de l'AKP, le parti islamiste de Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Placée sous haute surveillance à Bruxelles, comme dans toutes les capitales européennes, alors qu'elle marque le pas dans les réformes, et qu'elle tarde à reconnaître Chypre, la Turquie doit surtout calmer le jeu au plan national. « Il faut conserver son sang-froid. Ce n'est pas la fin du monde », a déclaré hier le ministre turc de la Justice. Avant de rejurer Öcalan, une hypothèse évoquée dès hier par Ankara, mais sans aucun plaisir, des aménagements législatifs seront nécessaires, ce qui ne manquera pas de provoquer des débats houleux au Parlement. « La Turquie fera ce qu'elle a à faire », a tranché hier la parole du gouvernement d'Erdogan. D'ici au 3 octobre, date prévue pour l'ouverture des négociations d'adhésion à l'Union, Ankara ne peut se permettre aucun écart, aucune liberté avec les exigences européennes. Echaudée par les images de femmes battues par les policiers turcs lors d'une manifestation, l'opinion publique européenne est sans indulgence. Le contexte tendu dans lequel se déroule le référendum français, où Constitution et Turquie sont toujours mêlés, oblige le gouvernement turc à faire profil bas, y compris sur le dossier Öcalan.

LE FIGARO

13 MAI 2005



Abdullah Öcalan durant son premier procès, en juin 1999. Le gouvernement turc a annoncé qu'il respecterait l'arrêt de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme. (Photo A. Antakyali/AP.)

13 MAI 2005

libération

La Cour européenne estime que le leader kurde n'a pas eu un procès équitable.

Öcalan, un obstacle sur la route européenne de la Turquie

Istanbul de notre correspondant

Aussitôt connu l'arrêt de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme (CEDH) demandant un nouveau procès pour Abdullah Öcalan (lire encadré), le leader des rebelles kurdes du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan), les autorités d'Ankara ont annoncé qu'elles respecteraient «les principes de l'Etat de droit». Le Premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, sait qu'il joue l'avenir européen de son pays sur le cas de ce leader kurde condamné à la prison à vie pour avoir dirigé, entre 1984 et 1999, une rébellion armée indépendantiste qui fit au moins 36 000 morts. La tâche s'annonce délicate pour le gouvernement, issu du mouvement islamiste. D'un côté, il lui faut calmer l'opinion publique turque, surtout les courants officiels et populaires, profondément nationalistes et antikurdes, mais, de l'autre, il lui faut respecter les normes européennes, à la veille de l'ouverture des négociations d'adhésion, prévues pour le 3 octobre.

«Pressions étrangères». Depuis quelques jours déjà, pour préparer les esprits à la prévisible décision de la CEDH, le ministre des Affaires étrangères, Abdullah Gül, répétait que «le leader d'un mouvement terroriste recevra toujours la même peine, même s'il est jugé cent fois». Le ministre de la Justice, Cemil Çiçek, qui estimait il y a un mois qu'un éventuel nouveau procès constituerait «une bombe à retardement», a, depuis, changé de position. Il ne s'agit plus, selon lui, que de «procédure à corriger». Mais l'opposition laïque se lance déjà dans une surenchère nationaliste et

Deniz Baykal, leader du Parti républicain du peuple, a demandé au gouvernement de l'AKP (Parti de la justice et du développement) de «ne pas courber l'échine devant les pressions étrangères», estimant que «la Turquie n'était pas obligée d'appliquer automatiquement les décisions de la cour de Strasbourg». Affirmation réfutée par le ministère de la Justice, qui précise que «le refus de l'application de cette déci-



A Istanbul, le 20 mars, des portraits d'Öcalan brandis lors du nouvel an kurde.

sion pouvait même provoquer la suspension de l'appartenance de la Turquie au Conseil de l'Europe».

Le nouveau procès d'Abdullah Öcalan, détenu depuis son enlèvement au Kenya, en 1999, dans la prison de haute sécurité de l'île d'Imrali (mer de Marmara), s'annonce pourtant comme un sérieux casse-tête. Il avait été jugé par une Cour de sûreté de l'Etat, organe aujourd'hui supprimé grâce aux réformes imposées par l'Europe, qui a aussi obtenu d'Ankara l'abolition de la peine de mort. La condamnation fut donc une perpétuité incompressible. Estimant que le procès n'avait été ni «équitable» ni en ligne avec les normes de la Convention européenne des droits de l'homme, les avocats d'Öcalan avaient demandé à la CEDH de revoir le cas. Selon l'avis de nombreux experts, un rejugement implique l'amendement d'une loi datant de 2003, qui permet un nouveau procès pour les détenus dont le jugement a été condamné par la CEDH, mais qui exclut Öcalan.

Déclarations contradictoires. Conscient de risquer sa tête, Abdullah Öcalan avait, lors de son procès, lancé un appel à déposer les armes. Condamné à l'isolement et ne recevant qu'une fois par semaine la visite de ses avocats, il multiplie, par leur intermédiaire, les déclarations les plus contradictoires, tissant à l'occasion les louanges de Mustapha Kemal Atatürk, le fondateur de

la République turque, ou justifiant les politiques d'Ankara au Moyen-Orient. Depuis un an, il a pourtant à nouveau radicalisé ses positions, craignant d'être définitivement marginalisé. L'été dernier, le

Kongra-Gel, l'organisation créée sur la ligne du PKK, annonçait la reprise des combats.

Cellules «terroristes». Un nouveau procès d'Abdullah Öcalan risque de faire encore monter des tensions turco-kurdes déjà fortes. L'incendie d'un drapeau turc par trois adolescents, le 21 mars à Mersin (sud) lors des célébrations du nouvel an kurde, avait déclenché de violentes réactions des milieux nationalistes et une menaçante mise au point de l'armée. Les accrochages entre les militants armés kurdes et les soldats turcs s'intensifient dans la région frontalière turco-irano-irakienne. Les forces de l'ordre ont, en outre, annoncé ces derniers jours avoir démantelé plusieurs cellules «terroristes» du PKK qui préparaient des attentats à l'explosif.

Les opposants turcs à l'Union européenne, dont une bonne partie de l'armée et de la haute bureaucratie, peuvent être tentés d'attiser à nouveau ce conflit pour bloquer un processus d'intégration qui menace leur pouvoir. Conscient du danger, le parti kurde Dehap espère, pour sa part, que «le rejugement d'Abdullah Öcalan, selon des normes légales universelles, offrira une nouvelle occasion pour discuter et résoudre le problème kurde».

RAGIP DURAN

Dans les régions kurdes, la violence armée a fait sa réapparition

Après cinq ans de calme relatif, les incidents ont repris entre l'armée et les militants séparatistes

QUELS seraient les effets d'un nouveau jugement d'Abdullah Ocalan ? Une nouvelle spirale du conflit turco-kurde ou, au contraire, un « début de processus en vue d'une paix durable », espoir exprimé, jeudi 12 mai, par Tancer Bakirhan, président du Parti démocratique du peuple (Dehap), principal parti prokurde de Turquie ? La réponse ne dépend pas uniquement de la façon dont M. Ocalan serait jugé. Car la « question kurde », talon d'Achille des réformes en Turquie, est aussi un enjeu stratégique en raison du chaos en Irak.

Dans le sud-est de la Turquie, la population kurde a connu cinq ans de calme relatif, après quinze ans de guerre et quelque 35 000 morts, civils avant tout, pris entre les guérilleros du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) et les soldats turcs, épaulés par des paramilitaires.

Après la capture de son chef en 1999, le PKK, paralysé, a lancé un appel au cessez-le-feu et s'est retiré dans le nord de l'Irak, contrôlé par les Kurdes, sous la protection de l'aviation américaine. L'armée a

desserré alors un peu son étai sur la région. Certains droits culturels ont été reconnus aux Kurdes : éducation privée et quelques heures d'émission dans leur langue. Des lois servant à emprisonner les militants kurdes, démocrates en particulier, ont été abolies. Leyla Zana et trois autres députés kurdes, accusés de liens avec une organisation séparatiste, ont été libérés, il y a un an, à la faveur de nouveaux procès réclamés par l'Union européenne (UE).

PLAINTES POUR TORTURE

Mais les appels à poursuivre les réformes et à donner de la substance à celles déjà en cours n'ont guère été entendus. Les agents de l'Etat sur place, les militaires, les juges, n'ont pas abandonné leurs vieilles habitudes. Des associations locales dénoncent la recrudescence des plaintes pour tortures et autres abus qui leur parviennent « depuis que la Turquie a obtenu une date » pour le début des négociations d'adhésion à l'UE.

Entre-temps, la violence armée

kurde a fait sa réapparition dans la région. En juin 2004, le PKK, divisé, a cherché une issue en annonçant qu'il mettait fin à sa trêve unilatérale. En raison de la lenteur des changements en Turquie et de l'« accès limité » des avocats d'Abdullah Ocalan à leur client. Peu à peu, les médias turcs ont recommencé à faire état d'escarmouches dans le Sud-Est, d'arrestations de « terroristes kurdes », dont deux, il y a une semaine, à Istanbul. Un groupe lié au PKK aurait revendiqué, en avril, une attaque qui a tué un militaire turc à Kusadasi.

Des experts américains estiment que, si quelque 6 000 combattants du PKK se trouvent toujours dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak, près de 2 000 seraient aujourd'hui revenus en Turquie, cachés dans des grottes et autres repaires. A la mi-avril, les militaires turcs ont annoncé avoir détruit un camp censé abriter 350 combattants. Trois soldats et 24 rebelles auraient été tués. Un correspondant du *Washington Post* a cité, le 11 mai, des habitants du village de Pervari, témoin

d'une attaque similaire menée dans les montagnes par « 86 véhicules militaires, des hélicoptères Cobra et des F-16 ». De quoi plonger la population kurde dans la crainte, si ce n'est d'une reprise de la guerre à grande échelle, au moins d'une perte des gains fragiles enregistrés ces dernières années.

Le pouvoir turc, qui multipliait, durant les années de guerre, les incursions anti-PKK en Irak, demande, depuis lors, aux Américains de liquider les sanctuaires de cette organisation, reconnue par Washington comme « terroriste ». Mais les Américains, embourbés en Irak, souhaitent moins que jamais s'aliéner les Kurdes. C'est le grief principal d'Ankara envers ses alliés, et l'une des raisons de la montée de l'antiaméricanisme en Turquie. Le Dehap, lui, veut un nouveau jugement d'Abdullah Ocalan, et une « vraie » amnistie pour les combattants, susceptible, assure-t-il, de les faire descendre, désarmés, de leurs montagnes.

Sophie Shihab

Turkey vows to back European ruling on rebel

From news reports

ANKARA: Turkey on Thursday pledged to respect a European court ruling condemning the 1999 trial of the imprisoned Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan.

The promise may fan anger at home but could help the government keep its EU membership efforts on track.

"The Turkish Republic is a state based on the rule of law and will undertake the procedures that the law requires," Dengir Mir Mehmet Firat, the deputy chairman of the governing Justice and Development Party, said after the court ruling was announced in Strasbourg.

"If the rest of the world wants to review the case of a terrorist, the Turkish judiciary is independent and Turkey is a transparent state of law," he added.

In a widely expected ruling, the European Court of Human Rights said the trial, in which Ocalan was sentenced to death for treason, was unfair and called for a retrial of the rebel leader, who is serving a life sentence on a prison island after Turkey abandoned capital punishment three years ago.

The judges, reaching their verdict by 11 to 6, said in a statement that Ocalan



had not had proper access to legal counsel or the facilities needed for his defense. "The applicant was not tried by an independent and impartial tribunal," they said.

Ocalan was tried by a State Security Court, a body set up to deal with crimes against the state that has now been dis-

The promise could help Ankara keep its EU membership bid on track.

banded.

Ocalan, who was arrested in Kenya in an undercover operation six years ago, was the head of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. The group, which Turkey and the United States consider a terrorist organization, led a 15-year battle for Kurdish autonomy in a conflict that has left 37,000 people dead in Turkey's largely Kurdish southeast.

A lawyer for Ocalan, Marc Muller, said that he was satisfied with the ruling and that he would consult with his client on whether to ask for a retrial. "He

will probably agree. There should be a new trial," Muller said in Strasbourg.

"If Turkey wants to join the European family it has to respect the minimum rules that apply to all human beings."

The ruling is not binding for Ankara, but has implications for the popularity of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government at home and its ambitions to join the European Union.

The EU on Thursday reminded Turkey that it had to abide by European institutions and values if it wanted to succeed in EU membership talks set to begin on Oct. 3. Olli Rehn, the EU's enlargement commissioner, said "it was evident" that Turkey would "have to comply with the decision of the European Court of Human Rights."

A retrial would be seen as a test of Ankara's argument that it had over-

hauled its judicial system to European standards. But it could still unleash fierce public anger in Turkey.

Ocalan, 56, is a figure of hatred for many Turks for his role as the leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party.

Faced with the risk of a backlash, Erdogan vowed that he would not let the ruling stir tensions at home or deviate Turkey from its EU ambitions. "I want

to particularly emphasize that temporal problems cannot influence neither our national unity nor our EU objective," Erdogan said during a visit to Budapest, the Anatolia news agency reported.

A retrial of Ocalan would also leave the government facing opposition attacks at a time when nationalist feelings are on the rise, partly because of EU-minded reforms. Ultranationalist and leftist circles say such reforms are un-

dermining Turkey.

"Demanding a retrial for a murderer who has committed a crime against humanity equals to playing with Turkey's honor and dignity," the Nationalist Action Party said in a statement.

The party, a strong opponent of the EU, called on the Turkish government not to agree to a retrial.

There are also concerns that a new trial could become an opportunity for the Kurdistan Workers' Party leader to rally his rebels at a time when they are making a comeback after calling off a five-year unilateral truce last year.

But the country's main Kurdish party argued that a retrial might encourage Kurdish insurgents to announce a new cease-fire with the government.

(AFP, Reuters, AP)

Comment Saddam Hussein a piégé l'ONU

Le programme «pétrole contre nourriture» a été détourné en système de pots-de-vin.

L'enfer est pavé de bonnes intentions. C'est en voulant atténuer l'impact de sanctions internationales, catastrophiques pour la population irakienne, que le programme «pétrole contre nourriture» de l'ONU a débouché sur le plus grand scandale d'aide humanitaire dans l'histoire de l'organisation internationale. En 1996, après cinq années de sanctions, l'Irak est exsangue. L'embargo onusien, maintenu après la libération du Koweït en 1991, vise à empêcher Saddam Hussein de réarmer et à le contraindre à respecter enfin la légalité internationale. En fait, il va enrichir les dignitaires de son régime, pendant que les villes et campagnes irakiennes s'effondrent dans la misère. Le 14 avril 1995, l'ONU réagit par la résolution 986 du Conseil de sécurité qui établit «pétrole contre nourriture», qu'elle définit comme une «mesure temporaire destinée à couvrir les besoins humanitaires du peuple irakien» en attendant que le régime assume ses engagements envers l'ONU, et que les sanctions puissent être levées.

Entré en vigueur en décembre 1996, le programme autorise Bagdad à vendre une quantité limitée de pétrole pour acheter en échange des vivres et médicaments avec le produit de ces ventes. Les Nations unies contrôleront les revenus du pétrole, dont une partie est mise de côté pour dédommager le Koweït, financer le fonctionnement (coûteux) du programme ainsi que le dispositif de contrôle des Nations unies (Unscorn).

Arme. Le programme s'élargit

en décembre 1999 à d'autres importations et ne prendra fin qu'en novembre 2003. D'une valeur totale de 64 milliards de dollars, il a vite été perverti par le régime de Saddam Hussein. Non content de s'en servir pour accroître son contrôle sur la population, il permet au dictateur de s'enrichir, en organisant un système de corruption qui lui permet de détourner plusieurs milliards de dollars. Saddam Hussein avait toujours vu dans le pétrole une arme politique. Cette fois, elle lui sert à «récompenser» par des contrats les compagnies pétrolières des pays amis. Mais aussi à rémunérer des hommes politiques et des «amis de l'Irak» qui plaideront dans les capitales occidentales la levée des sanctions. Ou aussi à financer l'importation de biens en violation des sanctions onusiennes. Trois dirigeants sont au cœur de ce «système de pots-de-vin de Saddam»: le vice-Premier ministre Tarek Aziz, l'ex-vice-président Taha Yassine Ramadan et le ministre du Pétrole. Ils font remettre à ceux qu'ils veulent favoriser des «bons de pétrole». Concrètement, explique Ruba Hussari, une spécialiste de l'Energy Intelligence Group à Londres, c'est «un morceau de papier sur lequel on alloue un certain

nombre de barils au porteur. Lequel va ensuite le mettre en vente sur le marché pétrolier à des compagnies ou à des traders». La commission empochée au passage va de 15 à 85 cents par baril, selon un rapport de la CIA cité par le *New York Times*. Ce qui peut se traduire par un gain rapide pour le bénéficiaire: entre 50 000 et 300 000 dollars pour un million de barils, souvent versés en liquide. L'acheteur va ensuite échanger le bon qu'il a acquis contre une livraison de pétrole dans le port irakien de Mina al-Bakr. D'après le Sénat américain, les bons d'achat dont ont profité Charles Pasqua et le député britannique George Galloway s'inscrivaient dans le cadre de «pétrole contre nourriture». Mais ils échappaient au contrôle de l'ONU: celle-ci n'avait pas les moyens de vérifier quelles tran-

sactions s'effectuaient directement entre les leaders irakiens et les acheteurs ou vendeurs.

Secret. Tarek Aziz et Taha Yassine Ramadan ont parlé, et sont à l'origine des révélations du Sénat américain. Celui-ci rappelle le rôle joué par Pasqua, alors ministre de l'Intérieur, dans la visite très politique de Tarek Aziz en France en octobre 1993. Cette venue, officiellement pour «raisons médicales», avait suscité une polémique dans l'Hexagone. Selon les sénateurs, les deux hommes se seraient revus secrètement un an après à New York, ce que dément Pasqua. Mais quelques mois plus tard, le 5 janvier 1995, Tarek Aziz arrivait en visite officielle à Paris qui plaçait alors pour... un assouplissement des sanctions. ♦

JEAN-PIERRE PERRIN



13 MAI 2005



13 MAI 2005

PASQUA S'ENGLUE EN IRAK

Retour sur les accusations portées à l'encontre de l'ex-ministre, qui dément avoir perçu des pots-de-vin de l'ancien régime irakien.



Charles Pasqua a démenti hier les accusations de la commission d'enquête du Sénat américain (lire *Libération* d'hier) selon laquelle il aurait touché des pots-de-vin du régime de Saddam Hussein dans le cadre du programme onusien «pétrole contre nourriture». «*Je démens une fois de plus*», a lancé Pasqua avant d'ajouter, menaçant, que «*n'ayant plus exercé de responsabilités gouvernementales en France depuis 1995, j'entends que ceux qui ont conduit les affaires du pays depuis cette date assument les leurs*». Le Quai d'Orsay a fait savoir hier qu'il souhaitait que «*toute la lumière soit faite sur les malversations éventuelles*», mais a regretté que les personnes mises en cause n'aient pas «*été en mesure de se défendre*».

Le nom de Charles Pasqua était apparu dans le scandale dès janvier 2004, quand le journal irakien *Al-Mada* avait publié une liste de 270 personnalités et compagnies internationales soupçonnées d'avoir

bénéficié de coupons d'achat de pétrole irakien de la part de Saddam Hussein. Plusieurs Français étaient nommés, dont l'ancien ministre de l'Intérieur, ainsi que des politiciens russes, britanniques et des entreprises américaines. Il est apparu peu à peu que le leader irakien aurait détourné des «*dizaines de milliards*» de dollars de pétrole. Alors qu'il était supposé vendre son brut à des fins humanitaires, Saddam Hussein aurait versé des pots-de-vin ou attribué des coupons pour bénéficier de soutiens politiques et vendre son pétrole illégalement (lire ci-contre). Sous pression, le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU vote en avril 2004, à l'unanimité, la

création d'une commission d'enquête indépendante, dirigée par l'ancien président de la Réserve fédérale américaine, Paul Volcker. Parallèlement à l'initiative onusienne, cinq commissions de la Chambre des représentants et une du

Sénat décident de mener leur propre enquête (lire page 6). Elles vont s'intéresser notamment au rôle de la banque française BNP-Paribas, qui gérait les transactions du programme «pétrole contre nourriture» pour l'ONU.

Ventiler. En octobre 2004, dans son rapport sur les armes de destruction massive en Irak, le chef des inspecteurs américains, Charles Duelfer, met de nouveau en cause Pasqua et

son conseiller Bernard Guillet. Pour sa part, la commission Volcker n'a jamais évoqué le politicien français. «*Il est vrai que nous n'avons pas évoqué M. Pasqua jusque-là*», expliquait hier une de ses porte-parole. «*Mais il est possible que nous publiions un autre rapport intermédiaire avant notre rapport définitif à l'été.*»

En France, l'affaire rebondit à la fin du mois dernier, avec la mise en examen du conseiller diplomatique de Pasqua, Bernard Guillet, dans un dossier de blanchiment visant Total. L'enquête avait été ouverte à Paris à l'été 2002 après que Tracfin, l'organisme antiblanchiment de Bercy, eut détecté des commissions suspectes de plusieurs millions d'euros versées par Total à une société écran suisse, Telliac. Celle-ci ventilait ces sommes

sur plusieurs comptes offshore détenus par des intermédiaires ayant aidé Total à décrocher des marchés à l'étranger, notamment en Irak. L'enquête a montré qu'une

grande partie des fonds versés par Total était destinée à Elias Firzli, un avocat libanais de 70 ans, réputé proche du ministre irakien des Affaires étrangères, Tarek Aziz, et lui-même généreux donateur à l'association France-Afrique-Orient (FAO), proche de Pasqua.

Brut. Parmi les quatre cadres de Total mis en examen, Jean-Michel Tournier, directeur du pétrole brut chez Total entre 1993 et 2000, a confirmé: «*Concernant l'Irak, Elias Firzli représentait les officiels irakiens. Je pense qu'il leur rétrocédait la plus grande partie de la commission. Si nous n'avions pas payé, nous n'aurions pas eu de pétrole brut de la Somo*» (société d'Etat irakienne). ●●●

●●● Ces cadres ont aussi indiqué que Total, pour acheter du pétrole à Bagdad, passait par la société suisse Genmar, dont le Sénat américain affirme qu'elle avait été choisie par Pasqua et Guillet pour vendre les coupons qu'ils obtenaient de Tarek Aziz à un prix avantageux. Cette société suisse était habilitée à travailler avec Bagdad, sous le contrôle de l'ONU, ce qui donnait une apparence légale à ces transactions.

«Amis de l'Irak». Le régime irakien obligeait les compagnies pétrolières désireuses d'acquiescer son brut à passer par des intermédiaires. L'écart entre la valeur des coupons attribués à ces «amis de l'Irak» et le prix de vente aux compagnies générant d'énormes commissions, réparties entre officiels irakiens et intermédiaires. Ce qui constituait un détournement massif du programme «pétrole contre nourriture», très loin des besoins humanitaires de la population irakienne. ◆

FABRICE ROUSSELOT (à New York)
et FABRICE TASSEL

«*J'entends que ceux qui ont conduit les affaires du pays depuis 1995 assument leurs [responsabilités].*»

Charles Pasqua, hier

NUCLÉAIRE Malgré de nouvelles mises en garde européennes, les dirigeants iraniens veulent reprendre bientôt l'enrichissement de l'uranium

L'Iran agite la menace atomique

L'Iran, en pleine campagne électorale pour la présidentielle du 17 juin, a confirmé hier qu'il entendait reprendre bientôt ses activités nucléaires sensibles, malgré les mises en garde des Européens contre les « conséquences » d'une telle démarche. Dans une lettre aux dirigeants iraniens, les trois pays qui négocient avec Téhéran au nom de l'Union européenne (France, Grande-Bretagne et Allemagne) ont proposé une nouvelle réunion à

quatre « dans un avenir proche ». Ils ont rappelé à l'Iran « les conséquences qu'il y aurait à reprendre des activités de conversion » de l'uranium. La conversion est une étape vers l'enrichissement, et l'uranium hautement enrichi peut servir à l'énergie civile mais aussi à fabriquer la bombe atomique. Les États-Unis ont affirmé de leur côté qu'ils continuaient de soutenir les efforts diplomatiques européens vis-à-vis de l'Iran.

L'UE offrait à l'Iran des mesures d'incitations économiques et politiques.

Mais dès le début, les dés étaient pipés et le désaccord, fondamental. Pour les Occidentaux, qui affrontent avec l'Iran un pays dissimulateur dans lequel ils n'ont guère confiance, seul le renoncement permanent à l'enrichissement peut garantir le caractère pacifique du programme nucléaire iranien. Téhéran a toujours refusé cette exigence. L'Iran a un « droit légitime » à acquérir la technologie nucléaire, a encore répété hier le ministre iranien des Af-

faires étrangères. Le problème, c'est que l'enrichissement destiné à fabriquer du combustible pour les centrales nucléaires civiles peut également servir à la construction des bombes atomiques. C'est une simple question d'intensité d'enrichissement.

Reconnu par le TNP, à condition qu'il s'effectue sous strict contrôle de l'AIEA, le droit d'enrichir de l'uranium pour un programme nucléaire pacifique, destiné à fournir de l'électricité, est en pratique peu utilisé. La plupart des pays ont en effet recours à des importations d'uranium auprès des pays producteurs.

La crise iranienne est en tout cas un nouveau revers pour la diplomatie européenne. Pour l'AIEA, qui espère toujours un accord de dernière minute, comme pour la troïka européenne, qui mène depuis plusieurs mois les difficiles pourparlers avec Téhéran, la reprise des activités nucléaires iraniennes entraînerait une rupture immédiate des négociations.

Après avoir longtemps traîné des pieds, le président américain George W. Bush a fini par

soutenir les efforts de la troïka depuis février. Mais sur le fond, Washington a toujours cru que les prétentions iraniennes de produire de l'électricité grâce au nucléaire civil ne sont qu'un paravent qui cache une intention de fabriquer des bombes atomiques. Laquelle intention risque fort de résister aux pressions diplomatiques. L'Administration américaine, si elle

Isabelle Lasserre

Réunis depuis le début du mois à New York, les 188 pays qui participent à la conférence d'examen du Traité de non-prolifération nucléaire (TNP) se seraient bien passés de ça. Déjà confrontés à une crise majeure avec la Corée du Nord, qui a annoncé avoir franchi une nouvelle étape dans la fabrication de la bombe atomique et menace d'effectuer un essai nucléaire (voir ci-dessous), ils ont assisté hier à la dégradation de l'autre point chaud de la conférence, le dossier iranien.

La crise, qui couvait depuis des semaines, s'est aggravée lorsque Téhéran a fait part de sa décision de reprendre de manière imminente ses activités de conversion nucléaire. L'Iran, qui examine encore « les conditions et le moment » de cette reprise, a affirmé qu'elle aurait d'abord lieu dans la centrale d'Ispahan, au centre du pays.

Après avoir dissimulé pendant dix-huit ans les aspects potentiellement militaires de son programme nucléaire, l'Iran a signé en décembre 2003 le protocole additionnel du TNP, se pliant ainsi à un contrôle renforcé de ses activités et à des ins-



pections surprises menées par les experts de l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA). Menacé de voir son dossier transmis au Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies, en vue d'éventuelles sanctions internationales, Téhéran a accepté en novembre 2004 de suspendre ses activités de conversion. Il a

obtenu en échange l'ouverture de négociations avec trois pays de l'Union européenne (UE), la France, la Grande-Bretagne et l'Allemagne. Pour la troïka européenne, il s'agissait d'obtenir, par la voie diplomatique, des « garanties objectives » sur le caractère civil du programme nucléaire iranien. En retour,



avait agi seule, aurait sans doute déjà transmis le dossier iranien au Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU.

Si Téhéran met sa menace à exécution, la troïka européenne

sera sans doute obligée de s'aligner sur la position américaine et d'en appeler au Conseil de sécurité, qui pourrait décider de sanctions, si toutefois la Chine et la Russie, qui toutes deux ont des intérêts en Iran, n'y mettaient pas leur veto. C'est en tout

cas la menace qu'a laissé planer le premier ministre britannique, Tony Blair, au cas où l'Iran « violerait ses obligations » dans le domaine nucléaire. Dans une lettre remise aux dirigeants iraniens, les trois grands pays européens ont mis en garde l'Iran contre « les conséquences » d'une reprise des activités de conversion nucléaires.

Reste à savoir si les menaces proférées par Téhéran sont ou non un bluff. Selon les analystes

politiques, l'ancien dirigeant Akbar Hashemi Rafsandjani, candidat à l'élection présidentielle du mois prochain, dont les alliés mènent les négociations avec l'UE, profiterait, dans les sondages, de la recrudescence des tensions entre l'Iran et la troïka européenne.

S'exprimant en marge de la conférence d'examen du TNP à New York, le directeur général de l'AIEA, Mohamed ElBaradei, a tiré la sonnette d'alarme. Quelle que soit l'issue de la

crise iranienne, le monde, a-t-il dit en substance, court à la catastrophe si on ne restreint pas rapidement l'accès à la technologie nucléaire militaire. Il estime que d'ici 10 ou 20 ans de nombreux pays risquent de devenir des puissances nucléaires virtuelles. « C'est le meilleur moyen, prévient-il, d'aboutir à notre autodestruction. »

Le Monde
12 MAI 2005

Irak : Washington lance l'opération « Matador » contre la guérilla

NEW YORK

de notre correspondant

Les troupes américaines ont lancé à la frontière syrienne leur plus importante offensive depuis la prise de Fallouja en novembre 2004. Cette ville de 250 000 habitants était alors l'épicentre de l'insurrection, que la puissance de feu des marines avait noyée sous les obus et les bombes.

Les moyens employés aujourd'hui dans l'ouest du pays semblent tout aussi considérables, mais le rapprochement entre les deux opérations serait trompeur. Le Pentagone évite aujourd'hui de combattre dans les zones urbaines. « En dépit de l'augmentation des attaques au cours des dernières semaines, l'armée américaine est parvenue à repousser la guérilla en dehors des grandes villes », souligne James Robbins, expert du conseil américain de politique étrangère.

A Fallouja, les forces américaines avaient tenté d'isoler les insurgés de la population qui les soutenait et d'amener certains sunnites à participer à la transition politique. Les lourdes pertes civiles les en avaient dissuadés. Il a fallu le succès des élections du 30 janvier pour amener une partie des sunnites à envisager de participer au gouvernement. Cela a conduit à une réduction des opérations menées par les insurgés. C'est peut-être temporaire, mais le commandement américain ne veut rien faire qui puisse réveiller la rébellion. Il a compris qu'il n'y avait pas de solution purement militaire pour en venir à bout. « Tant que les insurgés ne seront pas impliqués dans un processus politique, je pense que nous ne verrons pas vraiment de progrès », expliquait le major général Stephen Johnson, le plus haut gradé des marines en Irak, dans le *New York Times* du 9 mai.

Les officiels américains soulignent que l'insurrection a changé de nature. Elle n'est plus menée

essentiellement par d'anciens membres du parti Baas et des services de sécurité de Saddam Hussein, mais de plus en plus par des islamistes, notamment des étrangers entrés récemment dans le pays. Cela expliquerait pourquoi, depuis la formation du gouvernement le 28 avril, les attaques sont plus nombreuses et meurtrières.

Elles sont passées à 70 par jour en avril contre 30 à 40 en février et mars (130 à 140 en janvier, dans les semaines précédant les élections). Lors des dix derniers jours, les attentats-suicides ont tué plus de 350 personnes. Le nombre d'attaques à la voiture piégée est de 64 en février, 69 en mars et 135 en avril. La proportion de ces attaques impliquant un kamikaze est passée de 25 % à 50 %. Pour les autorités irakiennes et américaines, ces attentats-suicides sont

le seul fait des étrangers, mais il est impossible de s'en assurer.

Le Pentagone reconnaît avoir été incapable d'empêcher de jeunes djihadistes venus de Syrie, d'Arabie saoudite, d'Egypte, de Jordanie, d'Iran et même d'Europe de pénétrer en Irak, en dépit du renforcement des patrouilles aux frontières.

Les attaques deviennent aussi plus sophistiquées et ambitieuses. Les attentats avec deux bombes, la seconde déclenchée avec un léger décalage dans le temps, quand les secours se précipitent sur les lieux, deviennent fréquents. Le 2 avril, l'assaut mené de jour contre la prison d'Abou Ghraïb par les hommes

d'Abou Moussab Al-Zarkaoui, le chef d'Al-Qaïda en Irak, comprenait entre 40 et 60 combattants. Le 11 avril, une quarantaine d'insurgés lançaient un assaut contre une base américaine non loin de la frontière syrienne. « La guérilla est entrée dans une nouvelle phase. Elle n'hésite plus à accroître l'importance des forces engagées dans une opération pour tester la réaction américaine », explique Walter Lang, ancien responsa-

ble pour le Moyen-Orient du service de renseignement de l'armée.

COMMANDOS SPÉCIAUX

Le commandement américain a redéployé une partie de ses troupes et de ses moyens de renseignement dans le nord-ouest de l'Irak, considéré comme la principale zone d'infiltration. Il fait porter ses efforts contre les réseaux organisant les attentats-suicides, et notamment celui de Zarkaoui, dont plusieurs lieutenants ont été capturés.

Cette stratégie se double de la création d'unités irakiennes spécialisées dans la lutte contre l'insurrection, comme le 36^e bataillon de commandos, la 40^e brigade de l'armée et les commandos spéciaux de la police, forts de 5 000 hommes. Ces derniers ont combattu à Bagdad, Mossoul, Ramadi et Samara. Les officiers américains jouent à leur côté le rôle de conseillers, bien que ces forces n'hésitent parfois pas à employer les mêmes méthodes de terreur que leurs ennemis. Des observateurs comparent cette stratégie à celle menée au Salvador dans les années 1980.

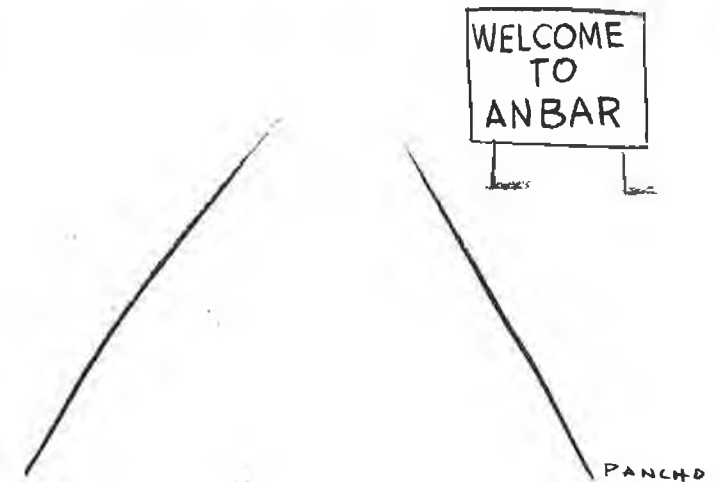
A Washington, où le Pentagone a dû céder les commandes au département d'Etat, un retrait d'Irak,

même si un document secret, révélé par la presse, évoque le mois de décembre 2005, n'est pas à l'ordre du jour. Le Congrès vient d'ailleurs de confirmer, mardi 10 mai, la rallonge de 82 milliards de dollars réclamés par l'administration pour la conduite des guerres en Afghanistan et en Irak. Et la condition *sine qua non* d'un retrait reste le renforcement des forces de sécurité irakiennes. Or il est loin d'être acquis.

Le commandement de la coalition affirme que plus de 150 000 Irakiens ont intégré les forces de sécurité. Mais des sénateurs, dont le démocrate Carl Levin, contestent la validité de ce chiffre. Selon lui, seul un quart de ces hommes « sont bien entraînés et sont capables ou ont la volonté de combattre ».

Comme l'écrit Thomas Hammes, un colonel des marines, il faut en moyenne dix ans pour vaincre une guérilla : « Les guerres contre une insurrection sont très longues. Il est difficile de mesurer leurs succès ou leurs échecs, même sur des périodes de plusieurs mois. »

Eric Leser



CANNES FESTIVAL

THE SHOWS

Making a movie in and on Iraq



By Joan Dupont

CANNES

There are moments at this festival, between frivolity and high art, when a timely political film enters the arena. It happened with the Bosnian director Danis Tanovic's "No Man's Land" and the Palestinian director Elia Suleiman's "Divine Intervention." These films, far from documentaries, are artfully conceived fiction, riddled with dark humor, built on explosive terrain.

Hiner Saleem's French-Iraqi-produced "Kilometer Zero," set in 1988 and filmed in Kurdish, Arabic and French, is a road movie that takes place in Kurdish Iraq, about a soldier recruited by force into Saddam Hussein's army to fight Iran. His anti-Kurd Iraqi driver taunts him every inch of dusty road, and he responds with nudges that gradually take the pair back to the Kurdistan border, where his family lives.

Along the way, we see the daily humiliation that Kurds were subjected to in a war they did not chose to fight — the hassles at checkpoints, the gratuitous insults. Even the driver's daily prayers to Allah seem to be driven into the flesh of the Kurd, who is not a Muslim and whose religion, if any, is not identified.

This is the first time a film from Iraq, showing the sheer beauty of the land and the suffering of the people, has come to Cannes.

"Kilometer Zero" was not an easy film to make, especially since we have no film structure in our country," Saleem said in an interview. "We needed French technicians and producers. Part of our country is free, with a Kurdish government and Parliament, and without their help I couldn't have made the movie. People don't have their minds on cinema, and we made fewer movies in our history than India makes

The Kurdish director Hiner Saleem, whose film "Kilometer Zero" is in competition for the Palme d'Or. The film is a road movie set in 1988, when poison gas attacks killed thousands of Iraqi Kurds.

in a few hours or France in one day."

In exile since the age of 17, the director, like his hero, is an angry man, with the kind of suppressed rage that comes out in spurts. His previous film, "Vodka Lemon," on the plight of Kurds in Armenia, won the San Marco award at Venice in 2003. "Of course I'm the same person with the same sensitivity and aesthetics," he said, "but 'Kilometer Zero' is inspired by one of my brothers, who was nabbed off the street and sent to fight for Saddam Hussein."

The movie is haunted by Saddam's pervasive image — his statues, his self-infatuated voice on the radio.

Born in Iraq, the director had no formal education and says he's not even sure of his age. (In previous interviews, he has said that his identity papers list 1964 as his year of birth, but that he believes it could be anywhere between 1960 and 1964.) "I was born an adult, because we Kurds didn't have a childhood." He has written a memoir, translated into English as "My Father's Rifle, A Childhood in Kurdistan," about his early years in Aqrah.

"When I was about 5, my father brought home books, printed clandestinely, beautifully illustrated — mountains, beautiful women and colors — and I thought that the words that went with them must be poetry. I wanted to be a painter and a poet. Then, a few years later, I saw television for the first time, an Egyptian series. It was painting and poetry in motion, and I thought, some day I would like to do something like that for my people, in my language.

"I have several languages, we all do. In our town, we used to have mosques, synagogues and churches before Sad-

dam tried to wipe us off the map and made chemical war against us. I would like to meet Saddam's cousin Chemical Ali," as Ali Hassan al-Majid is known for his role in poison gas attacks against the Kurds. "I would like to look this war criminal in the eye."

In the film, the unwilling soldier is mad at the whole world, and at his wife who doesn't want to leave her old father and follow him into exile. The family is sitting on a time bomb, but so is the rest of the country. "The international community knew Saddam was dangerous, the Kurds told them," Saleem said. "Saddam made war against Iran, invaded Kuwait, and since he came to power, he made nothing but war."

Saleem called the movie "Kilometer Zero" because, he said, the country hasn't made an inch of progress. Saddam, he said, "left a legion of others like him. Not just those who believe in him, but who have nationalist and intolerant ideology. It reigns in the whole region, from Turkey to Syria."

At the end of the film, the men close in on each other and come to blows, but they also come to a kind of understanding: Without blind hatred, Arabs and Kurds could behave like human beings, they could get along. "We are not saying Kurds are better. We are all human, but we take different directions in life."

It was a big day when Iraq was invaded and Saddam defeated. "I was finishing 'Vodka Lemon.' When I got home to my country, I saw friends, and I missed friends. So many had been killed. The emotion was intense, we went from euphoria to tears. People are beautifully naïve. They don't want to think about war, the past. I said, 'What if the Americans drop us? But they didn't want to hear it.'"

In Paris, where the war was sharply opposed, Saleem feels that he lives in his own world. "War is unpopular, I understand that, but Saddam destroyed a country, provoked the death of millions — he brought in the Americans. He wanted us wiped off the map."

He describes President George W. Bush as a romantic and a poet, adding sardonically, "He's not my favorite poet."

Saleem's first exile was in Florence, where he made money drawing caricatures outside the Uffizi and saw the works of Michelangelo, Leonardo and David — "real paintings for the first time." In Venice at 18, he caught up with high school studies. In Paris, "the city of exiles" where his Kurdish hero ends up, he feels he would now like to live in a bigger world.

"To be a filmmaker we can't just look at films, we have to look at people," Saleem said. "If I believe in anything, I believe that we are just passing through life; my religion is emotion."

He is happy to have made it to the festival. "Cannes is a passport for a cinema that is barely born, that was hidden underground. Our prize would be to go out and visit the world."

International Herald Tribune

May 13, 2005

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune
THE WORLD'S DAILY NEWSPAPER

VARIETY

DAY 3 FRIDAY, MAY 13, 2005

'Kilometer': A tragic Kurdish soldier's story

IN COMPETITION

KILOMETER ZERO

(KILOMETRE ZERO)

(FRANCE-KURDISTAN)

A Memento Films Distribution release (in France) of a Memento Films Production (France)/Hiner Saleem Production (Kurdistan)/La Cinefacture (France) co-production with the support of the regional government of Kurdish Iraq. (International sales: Memento Films Intl., Paris.) Produced by Alexandre Mallet-Guy, Hiner Saleem, Emilie Georges.

Directed, written by Hiner Saleem. Camera (color) Robert Alazraki; editor, Anna Ruiz; music, Nikos Kipourgos, Yan Axin; production designer, Fakher Sherwani; sound (Dolby Digital), Fredi Loth; associate producer, Fabrice Guez. **Reviewed at Cannes Film Festival (competing),** May 10, 2005. Running time: 88 MIN.

Ako Nazmi Kirik
Driver Eyam Ekrem
Selma Belcim Bilgin
Sami Ehmed Qeladizehi
Adnan Nezar Selami
(Kurdish, Arabic, French dialogue)

By DEBORAH YOUNG

Saddam Hussein's genocide of Iraq's Kurdish population hangs over the

spare narrative of "Kilometer Zero" like an ax about to fall on the neck of little Kurdish soldier Ako. Looking a little under-

whelming in this year's Cannes competition despite its obvious topicality, film displays the same simple, effective but stretched-out storytelling as writer-director Hiner Saleem used in his much-praised "Vodka Lemon." Much milder, though no less tragic, than the work of Iran's Kurdish director Bahman Ghobadi, Saleem's picture tells another part of the same horrible story without being depressing or shocking. Pic should have a built-in audience among those interested in Mideast politics.

Saleem cleverly narrows the audience's information gap by bracketing the story with the offscreen liberation of Baghdad in April of 2003. A French radio broadcast notes Saddam's armies killed 182,000 Kurds with chemical weapons and in village massacres. Thus, even if George W. Bush is suspected of having imperialist intentions, to the grateful Kurds the Americans and the coalition are liberators who finally got rid of Saddam.

Most of the action, however, takes place in 1988. Ako (Nazmi Kirik) lives in the mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan with his beautiful wife Selma (Belcim Bilgin), their son and his dying father-in-law. The condition of the cantankerous old man, who is typically depicted in a comic key, makes it impossible

for the family to flee before Ako is thrown into the Iraqi army.

Kurdish recruits who are rounded up are systematically insulted, mistreated and shipped off to the front as bomb- and missile-fodder in the war with neighboring Iran.

Ako is more determined than his persecuted, roly-poly friend Sami (Ehmed Qeladizehi) and buddy Adnan (Nezar Selami) to hightail it out of there ASAP. His chance comes when he is sent on a three-day mission to Kurdistan to deliver the body of a fallen soldier to the soldier's family.

The long drive in a broken-down station wagon with a flag-draped coffin tied to the roof turns into a surrealistic journey. At each checkpoint, military guards force them to hide the coffin from the local population. The film's finest moments involve a parade of identical cars bearing their identical burdens, while a statue of Saddam carried on a truck bed mockingly salutes them.

These moments of surreal humor, along with striking frame compositions, go a long way toward animating the film's narrative and stylistic minimalism. The natural beauty of Kurdistan is contrasted with the dusty, empty desert around Basra, swirling with falling bombs.

Despite the many inspired visuals, however, the pace begins to drag midway through the war due to the lack of a strong storyline. Ending lacks the twist needed to close the tale with a bang.

Kirik, who plays the funny-faced Ako with little distinction at first, gradually comes into focus as he exchanges jabs with his racist driver (Eyam Ekrem), a dyed-in-the-wool Kurd-hater. One hears echoes of Palestinian director and wit Elia Suleiman in their absurd monosyllabic tangles. Other thespians remain weak, without close-ups or emotional outbursts to sustain their parts.

Dialogue wisely sticks to the essential, letting physical business like fistfights and firing squads tell the story sans comment. Robert Alazraki's cinematography, which effectively separates the characters from the landscape, gives the film a stylishly bare look that holds things together despite some abrupt color jumps in the Cannes print.

Adding to the impression of an idealized Kurdistan is the stirring score and vocals by Nikos Kipourgos and Yan Axin.



Nazmi Kirik stars as a soldier trying to get home in "Kilometer Zero."

FESTIVAL DE CANNES

« Kilomètre zéro », première présence en compétition d'un cinéaste kurde irakien au festival

« L'ironie positive » de Hiner Saleem

Dominique Borde

Il y a deux ans, *Vodka Lemon*, récompensé au Festival de Venise, révélait le cinéaste kurde Hiner Saleem. Aujourd'hui, consécration, son dernier film, *Kilomètre zéro*, est dans la sélection officielle de Cannes. En 1988, en pleine guerre entre l'Irak et l'Irak, un jeune Kurde est enrôlé de force dans l'armée de Saddam Hussein. Obligé de ramener la dépouille d'un martyr de guerre dans un taxi conduit par un Arabe, il traverse le pays du sud au nord et voit là l'occasion de s'enfuir.

On imagine aussitôt une parabole sur le Kurdistan occupé par l'Irak et sur toutes les guerres. Hiner Saleem, qui a quitté sa terre natale depuis vingt ans, n'a pourtant pas tout inventé : « Cette histoire est d'abord celle, authentique, de mon frère, qui fut enrôlé de force dans l'armée irakienne. A partir de là, j'ai imaginé le reste. Mais au départ, comme toujours, c'est l'homme qui m'intéresse. Je suis un cinéaste, pas un militant ! Pour moi, il y a d'abord l'art, la force de la fiction et, autour, une histoire solide. »

Parti d'un scénario approximatif, le réalisateur a construit son histoire au fur et à mesure du tournage. « C'était la première fois que je travaillais comme cela. Ce qui donne beaucoup de liberté et peut poser d'énormes problèmes. D'autant que je ne savais jamais comment la situation politique évoluerait. Le tournage aurait bien sûr été impossible sans l'aide du gouvernement du Kurdistan irakien. J'ai pu tourner dans tout le pays. » Mais dans des conditions surréalistes, le Kurdistan n'ayant aucune industrie cinématographique. « Dans toute son histoire, l'Irak a produit ce que la France produit en une journée, ce que l'Inde produit en huit heures ! », souligne avec un brin d'ironie Hiner Saleem.

Il n'y avait donc aucune caméra, aucun matériel, et toute l'équipe a dû faire entrer caméra et pellicule et, ensuite, faire sortir le négatif. Une aventure difficile à chaque fois.



« Depuis que l'Irak existe, elle a fait zéro kilomètre de progrès », explique Hiner Saleem (à droite).

Autre petit exploit : le film montre à un moment une statue de Saddam Hussein. Or il n'en existait plus aucune. « J'ai été obligé de la faire sculpter. Mais aucun artiste kurde n'a accepté. Nous avons finalement trouvé un sculpteur arabe et nous avons dû déplacer son atelier car il était impensable de traverser le pays avec la statue. Dressée sur une place au centre d'une ville, elle a provoqué une émeute. Les passants ne comprenaient pas et ont prévenu la police... J'ai tourné une scène où cette fameuse statue était détruite mais on ne l'a pas gardée... »

Quant au vrai Saddam, Hiner Saleem en garde encore un souvenir hallucinant : « La vé-

rité dépasse tout ce que l'on a raconté et ce que l'on peut imaginer. Il y a une véritable délivrance depuis sa chute, mais il ne faut pas s'illusionner, Saddam n'était que le résultat d'une culture. Il y a encore des milliers de Saddam en Irak. » Et pour ce qui est des relations

entre Kurdes et Arabes, telles qu'elles sont montrées dans le film, le cinéaste y voit aussi une parabole en deçà de la réalité : « C'est bien pire. Chez nous, les Irakiens ne connaissent pas les Kurdes. Alors que nous sommes obligés de les connaître. A l'école, nous avons appris leur histoire, leur culture. »

On peut imaginer de la haine et de la rage chez ce Kurde qui a vu la fin d'un tyran et d'une injustice élevée en principe de gouvernement, mais Hiner Saleem raisonne plus sagement : « Je suis contre la peine de mort. Saddam est un criminel de guerre qui a voulu exterminer notre peuple. Il lui faut donc un vrai procès, une authentique justice qui mette ses crimes en lumière. Le fusiller serait lui faire un cadeau ! Il faut surtout en tirer une leçon : que personne ne reprenne jamais le même chemin que lui. »

C'est le grand message de ce film tourné avec des acteurs kurdes, Nazmi Kirik et la débu-

tante Belcim Bilgin. Un message tout entier contenu aussi dans son titre, *Kilomètre zéro*. « Depuis que l'Irak existe, elle a fait zéro kilomètre de progrès. C'est aussi évoquer une année zéro qui permette de repartir sur de bonnes bases. Comme l'Allemagne après la chute de Hitler. » Et la phrase qui referme le film est significative : « Notre passé est triste, notre présent est tragique. Heureusement, nous n'avons pas d'avenir ! »

Une « ironie positive » selon Hiner Saleem, qui voit dans sa sélection à Cannes un événement et une promesse : « C'est la première fois que notre pays est représenté. C'est un passeport pour un cinéma interdit, clandestin. Une magnifique récompense et un encouragement ! »

Kilomètre zéro, de Hiner Saleem (France) : sortie en salles en septembre.

LE FIGARO JEUDI 12 MAI 2005

COMPÉTITION OFFICIELLE

le film français
12 MAI 2005

Dans la fournaise



Kilomètre zéro

Pour la première fois en compétition à Cannes, cette "vitrine sur le meilleur du cinéma mondial, curieuse de découvertes et courageuse", Hiner Saleem, réalisateur de *Vodka Lemon* a souhaité prendre le pouls de sa patrie. Une aventure humaine intense qu'il évoque ici en affirmant : "La vie est un projet qui m'est cher, mais mon plus grand rêve est de voir le peuple kurde enfin libre... Le cauchemar a d'abord été d'acheminer au Kurdistan irakien une caméra et de la pellicule et comment les en faire sortir ensuite. Pour des raisons politiques, il n'a jamais existé de structures pour produire des films au Kurdistan. Nous avons donc dû faire venir de France une partie de l'équipe technique. Pour les scènes de guerre, il était impossible de trouver sur place des équipes capables de réaliser les effets spéciaux et nous avons dû utiliser du vrai TNT pour créer les explosions. Par ailleurs, nous n'avons fait appel à aucun acteur professionnel et l'interprète principal est originaire du Kurdistan turc.

Le film a été tourné intégralement au Kurdistan irakien, dans un pays menacé de toutes parts et à chaque instant. Heureusement nous avons pu bénéficier du soutien plein et entier du gouvernement régional, tant en termes financiers qu'en matière de sécurité et de logistique. On a même mis à notre disposition des casernes et du matériel militaires pour

nos scènes de guerre, ainsi qu'un service de sécurité. Au point qu'un jour, un officier de la sécurité a dé-

masqué un groupe de terroristes au volant d'un taxi comme ceux que nous avons utilisés. Ceux-ci es-

sayaient de perpétrer un attentat à l'aide d'un cercueil bourré de TNT fixé sur le toit du véhicule.

La préparation comme le tournage de *Kilomètre zéro* ont été très rapides, car nous ignorions comment allaient évoluer les événements. Nous ne pouvions pas prendre le risque que la situation politique ne devienne encore plus tendue qu'elle ne l'était déjà. Le tournage s'est achevé fin janvier 2005 et il a ensuite fallu aller très vite afin de terminer le film et être prêts pour Cannes. Nous avons commencé le montage à Paris parallèlement au tournage, ce qui nous a contraints à travailler jour et nuit afin de rester dans les délais. Cannes est un passeport pour un cinéma qui n'a pas de carte de séjour."

PROPOS RECUEILLIS PAR
JEAN-PHILIPPE GUERAND

EN COMPÉTITION « KILOMÈTRE ZÉRO »
de Hiner Saleem

Ennemis intimes

La critique
de Marie-Noëlle Tranchant

EN 1988, les Kurdes irakiens, qui ont pris parti pour l'Iran contre le régime de Saddam Hussein dans la guerre Iran-Irak, sont victimes d'une dure répression, menée notamment par un cousin du raïs, dit « Ali le chimique » parce qu'il emploie des gaz contre la population kurde.

C'est dans ce contexte politique très noir que la caméra de Hiner Saleem atterrit dans

un petit village du Kurdistan où l'armée irakienne enrôle de force les habitants. Ako (Nazmi Kirik), jeune électricien, est embarqué violemment avec quelques autres. Les uns subissent des brimades humiliantes, d'autres sont carrément tués sans autre forme de procès. D'autres enfin doivent partir au combat. En quelques fortes scènes, *Kilomètre zéro* décrit cette loterie sanglante et le despotisme méprisant exercé par des gradés qui sont à l'image de leur chef suprême et se prennent tous pour des

petits Saddam.

Ako voudrait désertir, fuir en France avec sa jeune femme, Selma (Beleim Bilgin), et leur fils. Mais Selma refuse de laisser son vieux père, inconscient, cloué sur son lit. Ako part donc et, dans un campement de fortune, reçoit son baptême du feu. Après le bombardement, il est affecté à une nouvelle mission : ramener en voiture dans sa famille le cercueil d'un « martyr » tombé au combat. Le film se transforme alors en un road-movie qui concentre le conflit sur Ako le Kurde et son chauffeur arabe : deux ennemis irréconciliables, acculés à une intimité hostile, en plein désert. L'aride beauté du paysage montagneux fait un écran immense et somptueux à la violence portative des

hommes, qui révèle tout ce qu'elle a de tragique et de dérisoire. La dérision ne manque pas à Hiner Saleem, ironiste acerbe qui ponctue la trajectoire dramatique d'Ako de moments burlesques, comme lorsqu'il agite ses jambes hors de la tranchée, sous le bombardement, en espérant devenir un amputé démobilisé, comme un de ses copains resté au village. Mais le film reste grave, porté par une colère sourde à laquelle on ne peut qu'être sensible, même si *Kilomètre zéro* est moins original que le précédent film d'Hiner Saleem, *Vodka Lemon*, et s'il vaut, davantage que par son accomplissement stylistique, par son propos et par le défi que représente le tournage.

Kurdish women make a stand against a return to the old ways

By John Lloyd

Dr Ariana Alazajani, an obstetrician and professor of medicine at Arbil University in Iraqi Kurdistan, has a number of reasons to be cautious about her future in post-war Iraq. One reason is because she is a Kurd, another is because she is a woman.

"When I studied in Baghdad, it was the same for all of us women," she said, "none wanted a religion that held them down. But we Kurds had developed a different culture which is free of fundamentalism; men and

The city's leading politician yawned throughout the women's speeches'

women treat each other with respect."

After 14 years of de facto independence, the status of women in Kurdistan is noticeably better than in the rest of Iraq, they say. They fear reintegration with the Arab-dominated south, and a government dominated by

Shia fundamentalists.

The Kurds have constructed the outline of a democratic and secular society which they now see as threatened.

Dr Alazajani says all Iraqi women, not only Kurds, fear a shift to fundamentalism of the kind that happened in neighbouring Iran 25 years ago.

Though still largely absent from the senior ranks of power, whether political or economic, Kurdish women say that both their influence

and liberties have flourished after Kurdistan was declared a safe haven by the US and the UK following the Gulf war.

Professor Vian Suleiman, one of 25 women in the 111-seat Kurdish parliament, still sees her identity as a Kurd rather than a woman. "There are lots of problems for the parliament, and some concern women. But I don't see myself being there as a woman, but as a Kurd. Iraqis regarded us as second class citizens not because we were women, but because we were Kurds."

In truth, most meetings

and public occasions are still run and attended largely by men. A gathering of political figures in Duhok, at which Professor Suleiman and other female MPs were speaking, had a slightly forced air, with the leading politician in the city yawning elaborately throughout the women's presentations.

But if the progress is relative, it is felt as real and valuable, and to be quite distinct from the surrounding Arab societies.

In a meeting in Sulaimaniya of officials of the fledgling trade unions, a group of female officials, elected in the main from mixed-sex workforces, claimed that pay and conditions are equal, no jobs are barred to them and that women can organise successfully – a claim echoed loudly by their male colleagues.

Baher Osman, a beautician, said she had organised hundreds of men and women in the city's beauty parlours and hairdressing salons. "Men and women can work together there," she says, "It's unheard of anywhere else".

Saddam, former exponent of allegory, turns to writing his memoirs from jail

By Roula Khalaf in London

Saddam Hussein has decided to write his memoirs while he languishes in an Iraqi jail awaiting trial after more than two decades of being responsible for brutal abuses.

According to Giovanni di Stefano, who is a member of Mr Hussein's legal team, the former writer of allegorical novels – better known as Iraq's dictator – resolved in recent weeks to start writing his biography.

Mr di Stefano promised: "There will be quite considerable detail. The Americans [holding him] are relaxed about it and we've seen some of the translation."

Do not expect a confession. In his first appearance before an Iraqi judge in July last year, Mr Hussein, looking old and tired, was as defiant as ever, rejecting the court's jurisdiction and defending his 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Mr Hussein is writing about his



Poetic justice: Saddam Hussein

childhood in Iraq, his early exile to Egypt and his misguided military adventures. He will try to embarrass the great powers that once saw him as a useful buffer against the expansionist ambitions of Iran after the 1979 Islamic revolution.

In particular, says Mr di Stefano, he will tell how France and Britain double-crossed him by also helping Iran's Islamic republic during its eight-year war with Iraq in the 1980s.

There have been reports that Mr Hussein has been writing poetry in his jail cell. According to Mr di Stefano, since his capture in December 2003, he has also been watching more television. One programme his American guards were most insistent that he should see was the recent inauguration of Jalal Talabani, Iraq's new president, one of the main leaders of the Kurdish minority oppressed under the Ba'athist regime.

Iraq's deposed president

already likes to think of himself as an accomplished novelist. Before the 2003 Iraq war, those books most widely praised by Iraq's state propaganda – and, hence, most closely read by western intelligence agencies – were assumed to have been the leader's work. Signed "a book by its writer", the novels are now believed to have been inspired by Mr Hussein but in fact written by a committee working for him.

In *Zabibah and the King*, released to Baghdad's book shops in 2001, a king is portrayed as misunderstood by his people. His love for a young woman was seen by reviewers as a metaphor for his attachment to his country.

Plans to publish Mr Hussein's fourth and final novel, the story of an Arab who defeats his American and Jewish enemies, were shattered when the Americans invaded Iraq in 2003 and deposed him. The book was found in the ruins of the information ministry after the war.

The
Economist

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Turkey and the European Union

Mountains still to climb

ANKARA, DIYARBAKIR AND ISTANBUL

There remain formidable obstacles to Turkish membership of the European Union, not least in Turkey itself

THE Turkish prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is cross with critics who attack his government for doing too little to prepare for accession talks with the European Union, due to start on October 3rd. These critics claim that, whereas big reforms were introduced in the months leading up to December 17th, when Mr Erdogan secured the precious October date at an EU summit, nothing has been done since. Some even point to an upsurge in Turkish nationalism as a sign of a backlash against the idea of joining the EU.

In a recent interview with *The Economist*, Mr Erdogan dismissed such criticism as unfair. He talked darkly of a "campaign against us". He said his government would do "whatever is required of us, take whatever steps are necessary", insisting that "we are fully committed to the EU process." He conceded that a big test would be implementing the reforms, as this requires "a change of mentality". As for critics' gripes that he has failed to appoint a top EU point man, he claimed that there was no rush, as he himself would be in overall charge of the negotiations.

So all is set fair for October 3rd? Not quite. Formally, Turkey must fulfil two more conditions. The first is to bring into force its new penal code, which should happen in June. The second is to sign the protocol extending the EU-Turkey customs union to the ten new EU members that joined last year—including Cyprus. This

Turkey is now ready to do, despite fretting that it may imply some recognition of the Greek-Cypriot government.

Yet other problems are sure to appear. The December summit almost foundered over the precise wording on Cyprus. Everybody is aware that Croatia lost its promised date of March 17th for the start of membership talks, because the EU decided it was not complying with The Hague war-crimes tribunal. They also know that Cyprus will haunt negotiations with Turkey far beyond October. As the Greek-Cypriot president, Tassos Papadopoulos, gleefully noted in December, he will have many opportunities to veto Turkish entry: the negotiations could last for ten years or more.

Two more immediate problems are the French and Dutch votes on the EU constitution in two weeks' time. Mr Erdogan protests that Turkey should not have been dragged into the debate on the constitution, since the two issues are quite unconnected. But the fact is that, in both countries, Turkey's putative membership has been a significant weapon for the no campaigns. The leaders of France and the Netherlands favour opening talks with Turkey. But if either country votes no, their governments will come under pressure at least to postpone, and possibly to call off, the negotiations with Turkey.

The odds still favour the opening of talks, if only for fear of the fallout from not opening them. No country that has begun

negotiations with the EU has not been offered membership. Yet the obstacles to Turkey will remain huge even after talks begin—and they go well beyond Cyprus.

Public opinion within the EU is mostly hostile, for a start. France's president, Jacques Chirac, has promised to consult French voters in a referendum before admitting Turkey, and other countries may follow suit. In Germany, the opposition Christian Democrats are against full membership for Turkey, although they will not block talks once they have begun. The new (German) pope is on record against Turkish entry—though, as Mr Erdogan sardonically observes, the Vatican is not an EU member. That his AK party is in the Christian Democrats' umbrella group, the European People's Party, seemingly counts for little.

Yet, as one EU diplomat in Ankara says, the biggest obstacle to Turkish membership is not the EU: it is Turkey. In part, this is a question of understanding. The Turks see EU accession as a matter of genuine negotiation: if they make concessions, they expect concessions in return (eg, on northern Cyprus, see next article). In reality, the talks are just about assuming the obligations of the EU's *acquis communautaire*. These include not just boring single-market measures but such broader concerns as human rights, the treatment of minorities and religious and democratic freedoms.

Mr Erdogan insists that none of these is any longer a problem for Turkey. His reforms over the past year included scrapping state security courts, cementing civilian control of the army, allowing Kurdish-language teaching and broadcasting, and shaking up the police and judiciary. Yet negative incidents happen too often: Christian churches are harassed, the Greek Orthodox seminary near Istanbul remains closed, a new military crackdown has begun against Kurdish PKK terrorists (and civilians) in the south-east. The prime minister talks of "provocations", a word he uses to describe a women's protest in early March that was broken up violently by police in front of the television cameras.

As for rulings against Turkey by the European Court of Human Rights, he says the government disputes most of them. This week the ECtHR ruled that the 1999 trial of the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan, was "unfair". Mr Erdogan says that he cannot interfere in Turkey's independent courts. In response to broader concerns of human-rights groups for Kurds, he wonders where they were when he was jailed in 1999 for reading an Islamist nationalist poem in public, before they rushed to Diyarbakir to back local mayors.

Turkey has clearly improved in its observance of human rights and its treatment of Kurds and other minorities, but it still has a lot more to do to match European standards. This makes a recent speech by General Hilmi Ozkok, the army's chief of staff, interesting and, in some respects, troubling. The general observed that Turkey had a security interest in northern Cyprus, that allegations of genocide against

Armenians in 1915 had no basis and that the Americans were not doing enough to stamp out PKK terrorists in northern Iraq. He also stressed that secularism was the driving force of Turkey's democracy, and that the Turkish state must remain an indivisible whole.

It might seem odd that a general should say any of these things publicly now, but in Turkey the army still plays a key role in

upholding Atatürk's secular legacy. In effect, the generals have embraced the country's EU aspirations, but only on the basis that EU membership will support and not undermine that legacy. Yet a strand of Turkish opinion clearly frets that support for religious and minority freedoms may conflict with Atatürkism; and that acceptance of more autonomy for Kurds may threaten Turkey's territorial integrity.

General Ozkok's conclusion was that saying yes or no must be a right not only for the EU, but also for Turkey. It would be an irony if, after working so hard to overcome European hostility to their joining the club, the Turks themselves came to decide that the rules were too onerous—but it is not impossible to imagine. ■

Condi Rice en visite surprise au Kurdistan et à Bagdad

Enlevés le 5 janvier, le journaliste de *Libération* Florence Aubenas et son guide Hussein Hannoun entament ce matin leur 132^e jour de captivité en Irak. Le directeur du quotidien, Serge July, et le secrétaire général de Reporters sans frontières, Robert Ménard, étaient ce week-end à Amman, en Jordanie, pour rencontrer les médias arabes.

La secrétaire d'Etat américaine, Condoleezza Rice, a effectué hier une visite surprise en Irak où elle a plaidé pour une alternative à la violence impliquant une participation des sunnites au processus politique, notamment la rédaction de la Constitution.

Premier haut responsable américain à venir en Irak depuis la formation du nouveau cabinet début mai, elle est arrivée à Arbil, à 350 kilomètres au nord de Bagdad, à bord d'un avion militaire en provenance du Qatar. Son voyage a été gardé secret et seuls quelques collaborateurs en ont été informés.

M^{me} Rice, 50 ans, s'est rendue à bord d'un hélicoptère à Salaheddine, où elle a rencontré dans son fief le chef kurde Massoud Barzani qui a vu dans cette visite « *un soutien des Etats-Unis aux deux peuples kurde et arabe dans leur démarche pour construire la démocratie* ».

Elle a indiqué vouloir s'informer de la situation sécuritaire du pays, du processus politique et des efforts économiques des Irakiens, afin de voir « *comment nous pouvons mettre en adéquation nos priorités avec les leurs* ». Mais M^{me} Rice s'est dite préoccupée par la faible partici-

pation de la minorité sunnite à la commission parlementaire chargée de rédiger la Constitution, où ne siègent que deux sunnites sur 55 membres, en majorité des chiïtes. « *J'aimerais discuter de la composition de la commission et comment ils (les dirigeants irakiens) peuvent faire participer tous les Irakiens à ce processus, dont les sunnites* », a-t-elle dit, soulignant qu'« *il est vraiment important que tous les Irakiens aient le sentiment d'y être représentés* ».

M^{me} Rice a estimé que la vague de violence, qui a causé la mort de 400 civils en deux semaines, selon le gouvernement irakien, était une tentative des insurgés de faire échouer le processus politique et de riposter à la traque lancée contre eux par les forces de sécurité irakiennes. Mais, a-t-elle insisté, plus que

des moyens militaires, ce sont les réformes démocratiques qui vaincraient les insurgés. « *Pour les défaire, il faut avoir une alternative politique* », a-t-elle dit. Elle a

confirmé que les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne appuyaient la tenue d'une conférence internationale en juin pour voir le type d'assistance, notamment en matière d'expertise matérielle et technique, qui peut être apporté à l'Irak. L'idée de cette conférence a été lancée pour la première fois lors du sommet Europe - Etats-Unis en février au Luxembourg.

La secrétaire d'Etat s'est ensuite rendue à Bagdad pour rencontrer le premier ministre, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, et le président, Jalal Talabani, ainsi que des soldats américains.

Les violences ont fait de nou-



La secrétaire d'Etat américaine, ici avec le dirigeant kurde Massoud Barzani, a indiqué vouloir s'informer de la situation sécuritaire du pays.

velles victimes hier. Cinq Irakiens ont été tués, dont quatre policiers, et 39 blessés dans un double attentat suicide à Baqubah, au nord-est de Bagdad, contre un tribunal et le convoi d'un responsable local. Dans la capitale, un responsable

de la sécurité au ministère de l'Industrie et son chauffeur ont été tués par des hommes armés. Enfin, 34 corps d'hommes tués par balles, décapités ou égorgés, ont été découverts samedi et dimanche en Irak, dont treize à Bagdad. (AFP.)

Rice urges patience as Iraq strife continues

In surprise visit, she says 'political path' must represent all

By Christine Hauser

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice flew into Iraq under heavy security and held talks Sunday with the country's new leaders and other officials, urging the government that took office this month to forge a democracy that represents all ethnic and religious groups.

The government is confronting a violent insurgency that has taken hundreds of lives in recent weeks, and the authorities said Sunday that they had found the bodies of 34 men shot by guerrillas. Drive-by shootings and suicide bombings killed at least eight other Iraqis, and Rice urged patience for Iraqis weary of repeated bombings and insecurity.

"We are fighting a very tough set of terrorists who are, it seems, determined to stop the progress of the Iraqi people," Rice said at a news conference.

Rice held talks in Baghdad with the new Iraqi prime minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, whose Shiite majority government has taken shape within the past two weeks after being delayed by political bickering since the Jan. 30 national elections. The vote, was largely boycotted by the country's Sunni Arab population that was the governing minority under Saddam Hussein.

As part of her trip, Rice also flew in a military helicopter to the mountain stronghold of the Kurdish Democratic Party leader, Massoud Barzani, according to news agency reports from reporters traveling with her. She appealed during her visit for patience for the fragile government and said Iraqis had made remarkable political progress that could overcome a recent surge of violence, the reports said.

Her visit to the country was conducted under great secrecy and tight security measures, according to the reporters traveling with her.

It was the first visit to Iraq by Rice as secretary of state, although when she was national security adviser she accompanied President George W. Bush on his surprise visit to Iraq on Thanksgiving Day in 2003.

The government had a faltering start, leaving several cabinet posts earmarked for Sunni Arabs vacant, then filling

them with officials — including a defense minister — who were rejected by some hard-line Sunni representatives. It must now face the major challenges of writing the constitution and tackling an insurgency, generated mostly by Sunni Arabs, that is intent on derailing the new political order that puts power into the hands of Kurds and Shiites, groups that were oppressed under Saddam. "The next step and the next challenge is to have a constitution that is written by people that are broadly representative," Rice told Fox News in an interview from Baghdad.

"And so we've been talking about the constitutional drafting process that's about to take place here. It is true that Sunnis did not participate in large numbers in the elections and therefore are underrepresented in the National Assembly," she said.

"But I found an openness to the idea — which is really an Iraqi idea — that Sunnis must be represented in this constitutional process because this has to be an Iraq that works for all Iraqis. That's the only way that everyone is going to see the political path as a way to a better future."

Rice said she would tell Bush that Iraqis were "dedicated to a democratic future."

"They are doing everything that they can to work together, to put aside sectarian differences that were, frankly, exacerbated by Saddam Hussein," she said in the interview with Fox News. "These people are committed to democracy, and that's the message I'll take back."

She said that foreign forces in Iraq were training the Iraqis to take over the security of their own country, and when they were ready, the United States would be "pleased and proud to turn over security to them." She gave no time



Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice with unidentified aides upon their arrival Sunday in the northern Iraq city of Salahuddin.

frame, but said that the security interests of the United States called for a "different kind" of Middle East, emphasizing that meant an Iraq that is democratic, prosperous and multiethnic.

"We need to finish this job, but of course finishing the job means getting Iraqis to the point that they can do this job themselves," she said.

Administration officials said last week that the Bush administration, struggling to cope with a recent intensification of insurgent violence in Iraq, has received signals from some radical Sunni Arab leaders that they would abandon fighting if the new Shiite majority government gave Sunnis a significant voice in the country's political evolution.

The officials said U.S. contacts with what they called "rejectionist" elements among Sunni Arabs showed that many wanted to join in the political system, including the writing of a constitution.

Iraq has been in turmoil with daily assassinations, bombings and ambushes that have killed hundreds.

On Sunday, in the west Baghdad neighborhood of Ghazaliyah, gunmen shot and killed an Iraqi security forces chief in the Industry Ministry, Colonel Jassam Muhammad Jumrah, and his driver, an official at the Interior Ministry said. The official said that in east Baghdad seven bodies were found in a dump.

A spokesman for the Iraqi police in the Hilla area south of Baghdad said that four "terrorists" were killed after clashes with the police at a checkpoint, and at least nine were arrested elsewhere in that region.

In Baquba, north of Baghdad, 5 people, including 3 police officers, were killed and 24 people were wounded after two bomb attacks, an Interior Ministry official said.

The New York Times

L'Iran relance les craintes de prolifération nucléaire

- L'Iran a annoncé hier une reprise de ses activités dans le cycle de fabrication d'uranium enrichi
- Pour la communauté internationale, cette décision signifie que l'Iran veut se doter de la bombe atomique
- Cette décision survient en pleine renégociation du traité de non-prolifération nucléaire

Que veut faire l'Iran ?

■ L'Iran a décidé de reprendre une «partie notable» de ses activités de conversion d'uranium, qu'il avait suspendues en novembre 2004 à la demande des Européens, a déclaré hier matin un haut responsable nucléaire iranien. «Sur la base [...] des décisions que nous avons prises, nous allons reprendre une petite partie des activités suspendues», a déclaré Gholam Reza Aghazadeh, chef de l'Organisation iranienne de l'énergie atomique (OIEA), à la télévision d'État. Il a ajouté que «probablement une partie notable» des activités de conversion d'uranium à l'usine d'Ispahan, sera reprise.

L'Iran réaffirme ainsi son souci de maîtriser le cycle complet de l'enrichissement de l'uranium. Schématiquement, celui-ci se décompose en trois opérations: le minerai d'uranium est cuit pour donner un matériau appelé «yellow cake». Celui-ci est ensuite converti en gaz UF₆ et UF₄. Enfin, ce gaz est transformé en uranium enrichi.

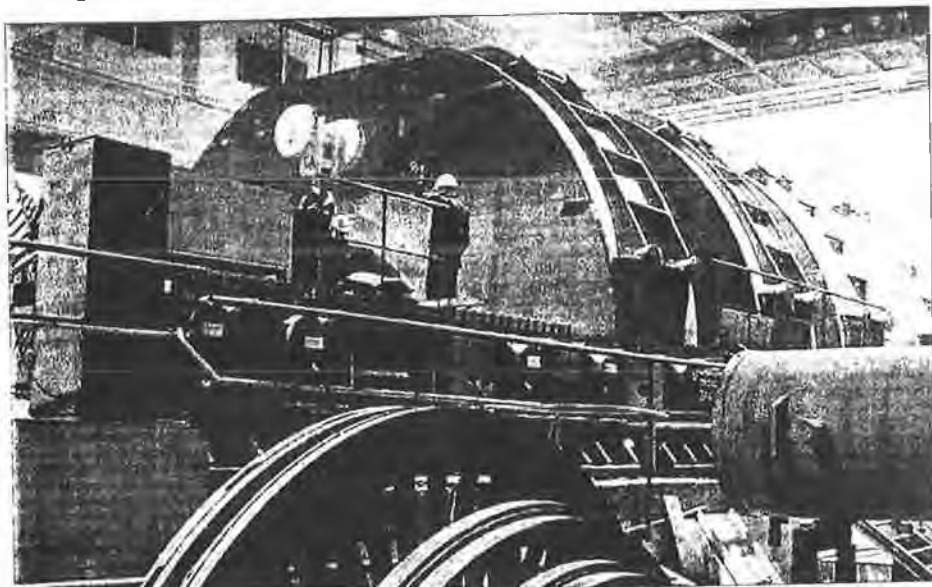
Les propos de Gholam Reza Aghazadeh confirment les craintes qu'éprouvaient depuis plusieurs jours les diplomates occidentaux: l'Iran, qui a déjà produit du yellow cake, a décidé de reprendre les activités de conversion de ce matériau en gaz. C'est en effet à cette transformation qu'est dédiée l'usine d'Ispahan. Ce faisant, l'Iran déchire l'accord signé en novembre à Paris avec la France, la Grande-Bretagne et l'Allemagne par lequel il s'engageait à suspendre cette activité, en échange de l'ouverture de négociations plus globales sur les questions de sécurité et de commerce.

Comment fabrique-t-on une bombe nucléaire ?

■ La bombe atomique à fission nucléaire (ou bombe A) nécessite de disposer d'un combustible, du plutonium 239 ou de l'uranium 235. Parmi la famille uranium, ce dernier est le seul qui soit fissile, c'est-à-dire dont les noyaux puissent se scinder sous l'effet d'un bombardement de neutrons en produisant de nouveaux neutrons qui iront à leur tour provoquer la fission d'autres noyaux. C'est ce phénomène, la réaction en chaîne, qui entraîne un gigantesque dégagement d'énergie, la réaction en chaîne se poursuivant de façon exponentielle en quelques fractions de seconde.

Selon des experts internationaux, Téhéran pourrait produire rapidement 10 à 12 kg d'uranium militaire et 500 kg/an à partir de 2006.

Dans la nature, les minerais uranifères (que recèle le sous-sol iranien) ne contiennent que 0,5 % d'uranium. Pour augmenter la teneur en uranium, on concasse et broie le minerai jusqu'à obtenir une pâte jaune appelée «yellow cake» qui contient alors 75 % d'oxyde d'ura-



Installation nucléaire iranienne, au port de Bouchehr.

ni-um. Pour pouvoir être utilisée dans des réacteurs nucléaires, cette pâte est purifiée puis convertie en gaz, en tétrafluorure d'uranium (UF₄) d'abord puis en hexafluorure d'uranium (UF₆). On est alors en présence de 99 % d'uranium 238 et seulement 1 % d'uranium 235. Or, pour alimenter un réacteur à uranium et eau légère ou fabriquer une bombe, il faut disposer de 3 à 5 % d'uranium 235. L'opération qui consiste à accéder à cette proportion d'uranium 235 s'appelle l'enrichissement.

Pourquoi peut-on suspecter l'Iran de vouloir fabriquer la bombe ?

■ Bien qu'ils soient l'un des plus importants producteurs d'hydrocarbures au monde, les Iraniens affirment qu'ils ont besoin du nucléaire civil pour être en mesure de faire face à l'avenir à leurs besoins énergétiques. Ils ont fait affaire avec la Russie, qui achève la construction d'une centrale à Bouchehr. Les Russes ont récemment annoncé qu'ils comptaient effectuer une pre-

mière livraison de combustible nucléaire à la centrale de Bouchehr fin 2005-début 2006. Mais ce contrat, qui se veut en parfaite conformité avec les normes de l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA), une agence de l'ONU, prévoit que la Russie fournira le combustible et rapatriera celui-ci sur son territoire lorsqu'il sera usagé.

Or, les Iraniens ne se contentent pas de cette filière. En 2003, la communauté internationale a découvert qu'ils poursuivaient un programme secret d'enrichissement de l'uranium à partir

de minerai local. Téhéran a par ailleurs acheté des centrifugeuses, des appareils destinés à la dernière phase de production d'uranium enrichi. Selon les experts, elles ne sont pas en conformité avec le type de combustible qui sera utilisé à Bouchehr. Les experts du nucléaire en concluent que l'Iran veut produire de l'uranium enrichi pour se doter de l'arme atomique.

L'ultracentrifugation se suffit de petites installations, pouvant passer inaperçues aux yeux des satellites d'observation ou militaires. En 2004, si l'Iran a bien arrêté son usine d'enrichissement d'uranium de Natanz (sud de Téhéran), elle n'en a pas moins continué à assembler des centrifugeuses. Selon des experts internationaux, Téhéran pourrait produire rapidement 10 à 12 kg d'uranium militaire (de quoi fabriquer une bombe) et 500 kg/an à partir de 2006.

Les Iraniens violent-ils le traité de non-prolifération ?

■ À ce jour, les Iraniens sont toujours adhérents au TNP. Et nul ne peut affirmer qu'ils le violent tant qu'il n'est pas prouvé qu'ils cherchent à se doter de la bombe. Hier après-midi, le dirigeant iranien en charge du dossier nucléaire, Hassan Rohani, a déclaré que l'Iran n'aura plus de «respect» pour le traité de non-prolifération.

*** nucléaire (TNP) s'il est empêché d'utiliser la technologie nucléaire à des fins pacifiques. Mais le retrait du TNP aurait un coût politique très fort et isolerait l'Iran, la Russie pouvant être contrainte de stopper le programme de

Bouchehr.

Comment vont réagir les Européens ?

■ Dans une lettre remise aux dirigeants iraniens mercredi, la France, la Grande-Bretagne et l'Allemagne ont mis en garde l'Iran contre « les conséquences » d'une reprise des activités nucléaires suspendues. Les Européens ont proposé une nouvelle « réunion à quatre dans un avenir proche » et rappelé à l'Iran « les conséquences qu'il y aurait à reprendre des activités de conversion » de l'uranium, disant espérer « que l'Iran reconsidérerait sa décision ». Hier après-midi, le ministre des affaires étrangères français, Michel Barnier, a publiquement exhorté l'Iran à ne pas faire un « geste dont il connaît les conséquences ». De son côté, le premier ministre britanni-

que, Tony Blair, a menacé jeudi de faire appel à l'ONU si l'Iran « viole ses obligations ». « Comment nous allons exactement agir, cela sera décidé en accord avec nos partenaires et alliés, mais les règles internationales n'existent pas pour rien et doivent être respectées. Attendons de voir ce qui se passe réellement », a-t-il affirmé.

La France, la Grande-Bretagne et l'Allemagne ont engagé une démarche diplomatique à trois auprès de l'Iran depuis 2003 pour amener ce pays à renoncer totalement et en toute transparence à l'arme nucléaire. Ils étaient arrivés en novembre dernier à un accord par lequel l'Iran s'engageait à suspendre ses activités d'enrichissement. Le but des Européens était que cette suspension soit définitive et que l'Iran, de lui-même, renonce à maîtriser le cycle complet de

l'enrichissement. La décision d'hier est a priori un échec pour les Européens, qui avaient agi en tenant toujours étroitement informés les États-Unis, la Russie et l'Agence internationale à l'énergie atomique (AIEA). Dès mardi, le représentant de l'Union européenne pour la politique étrangère, Javier Solana, avait évoqué un retour du dossier iranien devant le conseil des gouverneurs de l'AIEA.

Que vont faire les États-Unis et Israël ?

■ Depuis deux ans, les Européens tentent de convaincre Washington et Tel-Aviv de leur laisser une chance d'amener, par la diplomatie, l'Iran à renoncer à la bombe atomique. Ils semblaient avoir convaincu George W. Bush lors de la visite de ce dernier à Bruxelles en

février dernier. À l'inverse, Israël estime que les Iraniens veulent absolument posséder l'arme nucléaire et que leurs négociations avec les Européens ne sont que de la poudre aux yeux. Il y a un mois, le premier ministre israélien Ariel Sharon avait évoqué ce dossier avec George W. Bush. Face aux journalistes, le président américain s'était montré beaucoup plus prudent que son visiteur.

La décision iranienne ne peut que renforcer, aux États-Unis et en Israël, le camp de ceux qui prônent des frappes contre les installations iraniennes. « Je pense qu'il y aura bombardement, précisément parce que l'Iran n'a pas encore de dissuasion nucléaire », pronostiquait un diplomate français très proche du dossier, il y a déjà un mois.

JEAN-CHRISTOPHE PLOQUIN
ET DENIS SERGENT

L'Iran aspire à devenir une puissance nucléaire pour le prestige et pour assurer sa sécurité dans une région où il se sent isolé

L'Iran veut se doter d'un bouclier

Les spécialistes en sont convaincus: le régime de Téhéran sera en mesure de se doter de l'arme nucléaire au plus tard en 2007 ou 2008 si on ne met pas un terme à ses activités d'ici là. Celui-ci dément mollement, même s'il assure ne pas avoir de dessein militaire en la matière et fait valoir que l'énergie nucléaire serait utile à l'Iran dont le potentiel hydroélectrique est limité et dont les réserves en hydrocarbures, bien qu'encore très importantes, ne sont pas renouvelables.

Son ambition de se doter de l'arme nucléaire ne date pas de l'avènement de la République islamique. Elle s'inscrit dans le cadre et dans la continuité d'une politique de puissance qui remonte à Mohammad Reza Shah. « Ce dernier entendait assurer la prééminence régionale de l'Iran grâce à l'augmentation de ses recettes pétrolières au début des années 1970, à son alliance stratégique avec les États-Unis, à la modernisation de son armée et à la supériorité civilisationnelle supposée de la Perse. À n'en pas douter, l'acquisition de l'arme nucléaire faisait partie de ce projet. L'Iran avait d'ailleurs pris une participation à Eurodif, le consortium nucléaire européen », rappelle l'Iranienne Fariba Adelkhah, directrice de recherches au Centre d'études et de relations internationales (Ceri) (1).

Depuis la révolution islamique

de 1979, l'Iran a basculé du statut d'allié privilégié des États-Unis à celui d'ennemi. Déjà qualifié de « rogue state » (État voyou) par l'administration Clinton, il a été placé en janvier 2002 par George W. Bush sur « l'axe du mal », aux

côtés de la Corée du Nord et de l'Irak. Après le renversement de Saddam Hussein en avril 2003, le président américain est bien décidé à remodeler et à « démocratiser » le Moyen-Orient, quitte à se débarrasser de certains régimes récalcitrants.

Géographiquement, l'Iran se retrouve de plus en plus isolé. Nombre de ses voisins, des républiques d'Asie centrale issues de l'ancien empire soviétique, à la Turquie, l'Afghanistan et les pays du Golfe, sont des alliés de Washington. L'Irak et l'Afghanistan, deux de ses voisins

immédiats, ont des groupes armés nombreux sur leur sol. De plus, au cœur d'une zone qui compte déjà trois puissances nucléaires (Israël, l'Inde et le Pakistan), la République islamique a de quoi se sentir fragilisée.

Face aux périls qui montent à ses frontières, l'Iran semble vouloir l'arme nucléaire comme bouclier tout autant que comme outil de

prestige. « Un éventuel programme nucléaire iranien ne s'insérerait pas dans une démarche révolutionnaire messianique, ni même dans une approche ultra-nationaliste, explique Fariba Adelkhah, mais dans une préoccupation exacerbée de sécurité et d'indépendance nationale. Il s'agirait d'une politique d'État dont les partenaires, ou complices, diront certains, sont d'autres États: la Russie, qui refuse de céder aux pressions américaines en suspendant sa coopération nucléaire civile; la Chine, qui fait de l'Iran l'un de ses princé-

aux fournisseurs de pétrole et qui développe ses relations avec celui-ci dans tous les domaines; le Pakistan, en dépit d'intérêts divergents en Afghanistan; et la Corée du Nord qui semble avoir consenti des transferts de technologie balistique. »

Ephraïm Kam, de l'université de Tel Aviv, analyse pour sa part: « L'ambition nucléaire de la République islamique comme fondamentalement dissuasive. Elle s'est affirmée en réaction à l'utilisation massive des armes chimiques par l'Irak lors de la guerre. »

Quoi qu'il en soit, notent les spécialistes, même si la jeunesse iranienne dans son ensemble rêve d'ouverture sur l'Occident, le « patriotisme nucléaire » recueille auprès d'elle un réel écho. « Force est de reconnaître, précise Fariba Adelkhah, que l'opinion iranienne est encline à soutenir ses dirigeants

sur ce dossier et à s'irriter des pressions étrangères en s'indignant de cette politique de deux poids, deux mesures. » Où l'on inflige un embargo sur les ventes d'armes conventionnelles à l'Iran et non au Pakistan et à l'Inde, elles aussi puissances nucléaires.

Faut-il alors résumer la crise actuelle entre l'Occident et l'Iran à cette réflexion ironique de Pierre Hassner, spécialiste des relations internationales, cité par Fariba Adelkhah: « La bombe iranienne eût été acceptable, mais sans le clergé, et le clergé serait fréquentable, mais sans la bombe. La bombe avec le clergé, c'est exclu! »

AGNÈS ROTIVEL

(1) Auteur d'un excellent petit livre *L'Iran*, collection « Idées reçues », Éditions Le Cavalier bleu. 128 p., 9 €.

la Croix
13 mai 2005

A new and fair trial for Abdullah Ocalan

The Turks often complain that because they are Middle Eastern Muslims, Europe is making them jump through many more hoops than any other candidate for membership in the European Union. There is some merit to that complaint, but there is no denying the fairness of the latest hoop that went up — that Turkey at last provide a fair trial to the Kurdish nationalist leader Abdullah Ocalan.

The question now is whether Turkish leaders will comply with last week's confirmation by the European Court of Human Rights of its

ruling two years ago that Ocalan's 1999 trial was not fairly conducted. Ocalan, who led a separatist rebellion in which at least 30,000 people died, is serving a life sentence for treason.

It is not unfair to watch closely how Turkey responds. Turkey had offered many excuses for not taking care of this obvious problem. It argued that the ruling by the Strasbourg court was largely procedural and that its rulings are not binding. It noted that the tyrannical system of state security courts in which Ocalan was originally tried for

"treason through separatism" have since been scrapped, and his original death sentence was commuted when Turkey abolished the death penalty in 2002 in line with EU requirements.

But Turkey's handling of the long-standing yearnings for autonomy of its Kurdish minority is one of the central issues on which its progress on human rights will be judged.

A new and fair trial for a man so reviled by most Turks would be a notable achievement. Under Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the country has been trying, even if fitfully, to improve its levels of democracy and human rights. We hope that Erdogan will show his government can properly handle a case that arouses such intense emotions.

SYRIE L'opposition en exil envisage un retour au pays

Les prudents espoirs des Frères musulmans

Londres :
de notre envoyé spécial
Pierre Prier

Au bout de la *Northern Line* du métro londonien, dans une maisonnette plantée au bord d'un parc, le chef des Frères musulmans syriens attend de rentrer à Damas. Avec les énormes pressions internationales exercées sur la Syrie, la fin de l'exil paraît moins improbable à Ali Sadreddine Bayanouni, leader de la branche syrienne de la confrérie. « *N'exagérons rien, je n'ai pas encore bouclé ma valise. Mais j'envisage le jour de mon retour, où nous participerons à une coalition nationale. Après quarante ans de dictature, il faudra la coopération de tout le monde pour relancer le pays* », assure Bayanouni, affable avocat de 67 ans aux lunettes cerclées d'or et à la barbe taillée court, à la mode des « Frères ».

Le 4 avril dernier, Ali Bayanouni a fait monter la pression d'un cran en lançant un appel à l'armée syrienne, pour qu'elle « *accompagne un processus de changement pacifique* ». Le texte a été bien accueilli par les divers groupes d'opposition,

comme avait pu le constater *Le Figaro* à Damas. Rien ne dit pourtant que le grand retour est pour demain. Le président Bachar el-Assad, bien qu'affaibli, garde les mains sur les commandes. Son père Hafez était encore au pouvoir quand Ali Bayanouni s'est enfui de Syrie, en 1979. Réfugié en Jordanie, le militant a dû de nouveau s'exiler en 2000 : « *J'étais à l'étranger. Les services secrets jordaniens*

m'ont fait comprendre que je ne devais pas rentrer, leur pays s'étant rapproché de Damas. » D'abord chef adjoint, il est élu en 1996, puis réélu en 2002 à la tête de la section syrienne de la confrérie des Frères musulmans. A l'image des autres branches du mouvement, les Syriens ont leur propre histoire et se sont émancipés de la tutelle égyptienne. « *Les Frères musulmans syriens ont toujours été modérés et politiques* », explique Ali Bayanouni.

Leur histoire en Syrie s'est terminée dans le sang. En 1982, après plus d'un an de manifestations, Hafez-el-Assad applique la manière forte : le centre-ville de Hama, cœur de la contestation, est rasé. On compte environ 20 000 morts. Pourtant, dans la première partie de l'histoire syrienne, entre l'indépendance et

l'avènement des régimes militaires, les Frères avaient participé à la vie politique, avec des députés au Parlement et des ministres au gouvernement. Ali Bayanouni voudrait renouer avec cette époque bénie. Fidèle au pragmatisme des Frères, il a affirmé avoir tenté une négociation avec Bachar el-Assad, pendant les premiers mois de son règne, 2000-2001, où avait fleuri un éphémère « *printemps de Damas* ». Des « *médiateurs* » ont été envoyés, « *mais ils ont échoué* ».

Bayanouni compte maintenant sur le peuple : « *Il y a un courant islamique de masse en Syrie. Plus de 70 % de la population est sunnite.* » La confrérie, assure-t-il, ne dispose d'aucun réseau clandestin. Mais elle lorgne sur cette majorité silencieuse qui s'est repliée sur une pratique religieuse à forts relents

identitaires. « *La véritable crise a lieu entre la minorité alaouite au pouvoir, et les sunnites* », assure l'avocat. Le « *projet politique pour la Syrie future* », publié en décembre 2004, promet pourtant un « *État de droit* » avec séparation des pouvoirs, égalité de tous les citoyens, y compris les femmes, liberté de culte, et Parlement élu. Le texte

des Frères affirme sur ce point l'équivalence entre les principes européens et musulmans : « *Le système de gouvernement est la Choura, c'est-à-dire la consultation (républicaine, démocratique).* »

Un principe que les Frères devront réconcilier avec la notion de l'« *identité arabe et islamique de la Syrie* » et le statut de « *religion d'État de l'islam, considéré comme la source principale de toute législation* », qui pourrait inquiéter les 12 % de chrétiens syriens. Bayanouni n'y voit pas de contradiction, et chante le « *modèle turc* », une « *expérience fantastique* » selon lui. Quant à son application sur le terrain, ou à un débordement de la situation libanaise sur la Syrie, le leader islamiste reste prudent : « *Les Libanais se sont soulevés quand ils ont compris qu'ils étaient protégés de l'extérieur.* » Mais le « *protecteur* » s'appelle les États-Unis, ce qui rend nerveux les militants. Ali Bayanouni a été attentif aux signaux envoyés récemment par Condoleezza Rice, laissant entendre que Washington ne serait plus opposé à l'arrivée de gouvernements islamistes « *modérés* » dans le monde arabe. « *J'espère que Condi a suffisamment de poids, répond-il prudemment. Car les États-Unis sont haïs dans le monde arabe...* »

In Turkey, New Fears That Peace Has Passed Army Takes Offensive As Kurdish Rebels Return From Iraq

By Karl Vick - Washington Post - May 10, 2005

PERVARI, Turkey — Residents of this town nestled in the cliffs of southeastern Turkey counted 86 military vehicles lurching deeper into the mountains one day last month, with foot soldiers peering out. Overhead, Cobra attack helicopters stuttered across an epic blue sky laced by the contrails of F-16 warplanes

The Turkish military was attacking a guerrilla army in its alpine camp. The combined-arms assault here, sweeping a remote mountain stronghold by air and ground, was precisely the kind of offensive that Turkey has spent most of the last two years asking U.S. forces to mount in northern Iraq — against the same rebel group. The Kurdistan Workers' Party, an armed group of Turkish Kurds that the State Department calls a terrorist group, maintains a large base in Iraq's Qandil range, about 200 miles north of Baghdad.

Although the Bush administration has vowed repeatedly to confront the PKK, as the guerrilla force is known, its fighters have not only continued to enjoy a haven in Iraq, they have begun returning in force to Turkey. And with them come reminders of a conflict that people here, after almost five years of peace, had begun to believe was over.

"And now we can't leave our houses. We are fearing again," said Metin Ozel, 43, who owns a service station in Pervari. "You feel lonely. You feel encircled. You feel stuck in the middle of nowhere with all these things happening around you."

The new fighting has mostly been like the mid-April assault on the PKK base near here, which the military later said resulted in the deaths of three soldiers and 24 guerrillas from a camp said to hold 350. In scope and intensity, it is several magnitudes below the civil war that raged here in the 1980s and '90s and claimed an estimated 30,000 lives, most of them civilians caught between soldiers or paramilitary fighters and PKK guerrillas.

But memories of that conflict are still raw, and the prospect of renewed fighting is a matter of profound concern here. Some Kurdish activists fret that a return to arms would cost not only lives but also the fragile gains that Kurds have won since the fighting stopped.

"It looks like five years of a calm, peaceful environment are turning into another conflict," said Giyasettin Sehir, a playwright and activist in Diyarbakir, a provincial capital crowded both by displaced villagers and by the business

travelers who have returned with the peace. "I can say the people definitely don't want armed struggle.

"Of course," he added, "there's a small minority in the population who are emotional, especially at funerals."

Sehir was sitting at a table in the Tigris and Euphrates Cultural Center, a combination cafe, performance space and rehearsal complex that embodies the changes in Turkey's southeast. The center exists for Diyarbakir residents to express their Kurdish heritage — the language, music and customs that set them apart from the country's Turkish majority.

Modern Turkey was founded on the notion of "Turkishness," a rigid concept that made no accommodation for ethnic diversity. The country's estimated 14 million Kurds, who trace their ancestry to the mountains above the Mesopotamian plain rather than the steppes of Central Asia, were called "mountain Turks." The three letters that occur in the Kurdish alphabet but not in Turkish — x, w and q — were officially banned. Parents who gave their children Kurdish names were prohibited from registering them. The impulse to insist on an ethnic identity helped give rise to the PKK, which mixed Kurdish aspirations with Marxist dogma, overlaid by the brutal cult of personality encouraged by the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan.

The PKK's campaign for a Kurdish state in the Turkish southeast erupted into warfare in 1984. The conflict raged for 15 years, with both sides accused of widespread atrocities. But when Ocalan was captured in 1999, the PKK was paralyzed, called a cease-fire and retreated to northern Iraq, which Iraqi Kurds controlled under the protection of a U.S.- and British-enforced "no-fly" zone.

In Turkey, the "Kurdish question" shifted tracks, becoming bound up with Turkey's ardent desire to join the European Union. To bring its laws into line with E.U. norms on human rights, Turkey eliminated the death penalty, sparing Ocalan's life. Parliament voted to allow the broadcast and private teaching of the Kurdish language. The Tigris and Euphrates Center, which three years ago was raided by Turkish police and intelligence agents almost daily, went weeks without an official visit.

"But the atmosphere is changing," said Sehir, who served 10 years in prison for a bit of street theater glorifying the PKK. "It's almost starting to feel like the early '90s again."

The change began last June, when the PKK announced it

was dissatisfied with the pace of change inside Turkey and with Ocalan's restricted access to his attorneys. Small guerrilla bands sneaked back across the heavily fortified Iraqi border. Reports of skirmishes began appearing again in Turkish newspapers. In recent weeks, tensions have increased sharply. The spark was a widely publicized street demonstration in which a Kurdish teenager burned a Turkish flag, fueling a surge of Turkish nationalism that many Kurds fear will reverse momentum on legal reforms.

Already, "there is a strong resistance within the judiciary and the military against applying these laws," said Mihdi Perincek, who represents the Turkish Human Rights Association in the country's southeast. The association, which works closely with the E.U., had documented a reduction in reports of torture, detentions and other abuses by Turkish security forces last year. But the trend reversed after the E.U. voted in December to give Turkey what it wanted: a date to begin negotiations for membership.

"So we see the government was trying to protect its image until December 17," Perincek said, "and after that the numbers jumped." In February, for example, the association fielded 120 complaints of torture in Turkey's 22 eastern provinces, more than one-third the total for all of 2004.

The U.S. refusal to move against the PKK in Iraq has fueled not only anti-Americanism in Turkey but also what opinion polls indicate is a core conviction that Turkey must act on its own because it has no reliable friends. In a recent speech, Turkey's top general, Hilmi Ozkok, com-

plained that putting the PKK's "name on the list of terrorist organizations does not have any meaning in practice." "Failure to take action so far," Ozkok added, "is thought-provoking."

U.S. officials insist they will get to the PKK eventually. But with American troops overstretched battling Arab insurgents in central Iraq, there is scant appetite to mount an offensive in the relatively quiescent north.

"We agree that, over time, we must deal with the PKK," Gen. John P. Abizaid, head of the U.S. Central Command, said in the Turkish capital, Ankara, in January. Analysts estimate that 6,000 PKK guerrillas remain in Iraq, while their numbers inside Turkey have swelled to 2,000. Most are believed to be scattered in caves and other mountain redoubts.

"It's not like we don't want this problem to be solved," said Haci Senci, 44, a member of the paramilitary "village guard" the government recruited more than a decade ago to fight the PKK and its supporters at the local level, a strategy that pitted neighbor against neighbor. "We've been on duty nonstop for 14 years," Senci said, cradling a bare foot with his hand as he kept watch outside a stone hut on the main road into town, his AK-47 assault rifle within easy reach. "The closer to the border you get, the more clashes. When the nights get longer and the leaves grow, of course there'll be more clashes."

In town, a bus driver who declined to give his name looked into the mountains and then at his feet. "All we know," he said, "is this is not good."

WILL THE TURKOMAN SPLIT END TURKISH INTERFERENCE IN IRAQ?

RFE/RL IRAQ REPORT

Vol. 8, No. 15, 9 May 2005

The Iraqi Turkoman Front broke up in late April in what appears to be an internal conflict over Turkey's influence on party decisions, which detractors have said has adversely affected the party's ability to gain ground on the Iraqi political scene. The Turkoman Front comprised six Turkoman political parties and reportedly received more than \$300,000 per month in support from the Turkish government, which claims an ethnic kinship to Iraq's Turkomans.

The meager performance of the Turkoman Front in the 30 January elections and the subsequent breakup of the front may have little impact on Turkey's ability to influence politics in Iraq, and particularly on the future

status of Kirkuk. While Turkey appears to have lost its base of support in Irbil, it remains well-entrenched in Turkoman politics in Kirkuk.

Critics of the Turkoman Front claim that it was destined to fail because of its staunch policy of noncooperation with the Kurds, the majority ethnic group in Kirkuk, Mosul, and Iraqi Kurdistan, areas where much of the Turkoman population resides. That policy "drove [the front] to the periphery, not only among the people of Kurdistan but also among the Turkomans themselves," claimed a 30 April commentary in the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan's daily, "Kurdistani Nuwe." The policy also "deprived the

Turkomans of a number of political, cultural, and intellectual gains, which is considered a strategic loss for the Turkomans," it continued. Following the front's relocation of its headquarters to Kirkuk after Operation Iraqi Freedom, "they preferred working and cooperating with remnants of the Ba'ath and Arab settlers [rather than] joining forces with the [Kurdish] people of Kirkuk," the commentary contended.

Turkish Aims Spark U.S. Concern

Turkish designs on Kirkuk were clear before the start of the war. Then Turkish Foreign Minister Yasar Yakis hinted in a January 2003 interview that Turkey had legitimate historical rights to oil-rich Kirkuk and Mosul (see "RFE/RL Iraq Report," 13 January 2003). While those claims have not been reissued, Turkey has, in the past two years, routinely warned Kurdish parties against trying to change the demographic character of the city. Kurds have long contended that Kirkuk should be included in a federal Kurdistan, and the Turkish-funded front served as a major voice of opposition to that goal. The Turkoman Front supported the claim that Kurds were driving Turkomans from Kirkuk, while other Turkoman groups said they faced no problems with their Kurdish neighbors in the city.

U.S. military officials in Kirkuk expressed concern over Turkey's meddling in local politics through the Turkoman Front as early as June 2003. Local residents told the "Cairo Times" that month that the Turkoman Front was creating problems and fueling fears among locals that Kurds would come to dominate them. "It's a great concern to us," U.S. military spokesman Major Robert Gowen said of the Turkish involvement. One month later, 11 Turkish special forces and 13 others were detained in a U.S. raid in Al-Sulaymaniyah. U.S. forces found a large cache of weapons, explosives, and a map of Kirkuk identifying the interim governor's home during the raid. Among those detained was a Turkish colonel who had been expelled from Iraq by coalition forces on two previous occasions for "suspicious activities."

The Front's Steady Disintegration

The Turkoman Front began unraveling this year following its poor performance in January elections, and particularly in the Kirkuk Governorate Council election, where Kurds won an overwhelming majority of seats. Abd al-Qadir Bazirgan, the Kurdish-leaning Turkomani Party leader and head of the Irbil office of the Turkoman Front, expressed regret for not aligning the Turkoman Front with the Kurdish-led Kirkuk Brotherhood list, reportedly calling the decision a "tactical error" (see

"RFE/RL Iraq Report," 7 March 2005).

Since the election, the Turkoman Front has aligned with some Arabs (both Sunnis and Shi'ites) in Kirkuk, and refused to take their seats as minority members of the governorate council. Arab and Turkoman council members stormed out of a 29 March meeting that was to elect a governor, deputy governor, and council head. Their actions, by some media accounts, have rendered the council ineffective.

The final split came during the Turkoman Front's 22-24 April conference, the fourth such meeting for the party since its establishment in 1995. Bazirgan, along with others at the conference, objected to the actions of party leaders in Kirkuk, whom he accused of being Turkey's "plaything." Bazirgan told RFE/RL's Radio Free Iraq (RFI) in a 26 April interview that he decided to leave the Turkoman Front because of its "political and organizational instability," which he said "created a state of anarchy among its members." He contended that the Turkoman Front "has become only a tool in the hands of a foreign party."

A 25 April statement issued by the by the Irbil branch of the Turkoman Front described the defection of Bazirgan and others. "After the former regime's fall in 2003, the Iraqi Turkoman Front leadership moved to Kirkuk city. Since that time, the front's policy has taken a course of relying upon instruction from abroad. These have gradually infiltrated into and affected the system of the front's activities," RFI reported the same day. The statement contended that some members of the Turkoman Front "have been receiving instructions from particular centers of Turkish [political] forces" rather than developing their own political platform. A statement reportedly issued by the Turkoman Front after the conference blamed an unidentified group (implying the Kurds) for splitting the front.

The Ethnicity Question

The split has prompted a debate in the media by Turkomans attempting to set the record straight on their ethnicity. Korjan Bayatli, a Turkoman writing in the 26 April issue of the Kurdistan Democratic Party's daily "Al-Ta'akhi," said that Iraqi Turkomans are the descendants of nomadic Turks from the Oghuz tribes. "We emigrated from Azerbaijan, Central Asia, and Bukhara in human waves and have settled in Iraq since the reign of the Prophet Muhammad," he noted, adding: "We are the Turkomans of Iraq, and not the descendants of the Ottomans. We are not even descendants of the Turks of Turkey."

Leaders such as Bazirgan have already said that they are looking into forming a new umbrella group comprising the parties that left the Turkoman Front. For its part, the remaining parties in the front have said little about the split. The Turkish government has also not commented, but Bazirgan told the Irbil weekly "Govari Gulan" in an interview published on 1 May that he has received some "external threats." "They warned me that what I had done was not a good act."

It remains unclear whether the Kurdish administrations played any role in the breakup of the Turkoman Front. But based on comments by Bazirgan, it appears likely that whatever group he forms will align itself closely

with the Kurdish administrations. Although he has yet to meet directly with Kurdish representatives in Irbil, he told "Govari Gulan" that there are "indications" that the Kurdish parties will support his efforts to establish a new party, which he said will operate "within the framework of the Kurdistan region's law."

Asked his opinion on Kirkuk, he said: "While I was inside the Turkoman Front, I used to be reserved in speech. However, in fact, it is true that Kirkuk is a city in Iraq and Kurds and Turkomans live in it, but it is inside the geography of Kurdistan and is a Kurdistan city and it has to be Kurdistan."

(Kathleen Ridolfo)

Close The Rift Between KDP And PUK!

Kurdistan Observer

By: Dr. Nazhad Khasraw Hawramany May 11, 2005

In the political skies of Kurdistan there are some dark clouds nowadays due to the ever increasing distrust and political wrangling between KDP and PUK. The old-new differences between the two parties and the rivalry which unfortunately still exists between them have surfaced up, in spite of the futile public assurances from their top political figures that every thing is under control and that it's about some trivial opinion differences.

It has always been the policies of previous Iraqi regimes and neighbouring countries to struck a wedge between KDP and PUK, to prevent agreement and reconciliation between those parties, and they have always tried to favor one of them over the other so that those two parties remain always as rivals and in a conflict situation (divide and conquer policy).

Those policies dominated politics in Iraqi Kurdistan and succeeded in initiating a civil war in Kurdistan between those parties from 1994-1996, which in turn caused thousands of victims and displaced people on both sides as well as the splitting of the Kurdistan regional governments into two rival administrations in Slemani and Hawler (Erbil).

The Kurdish public saw in the Iraqi and Kurdistan elections of 30 January 2005, a unique opportunity to settle those differences once and for all and to unite the Kurdish political front as well as unifying the two administrations, and therefore they have participated energetically in record numbers in those elections and the Kurdistan List achieved thereby excellent results.

Since then however certain negative developments occurred which led to coolness and deterioration in relation between KDP and PUK like a chain reaction:

1. As Mr Jalal Talabani was appointed as the first ever Kurdish president of Iraq, some elements in the PUK initiated celebrations in a very divisive way, where only the green flags of PUK and only portraits of Mr. Talabani were raised there by provoking the supporters of KDP. It could have been much more beautiful and glorious when only flags of Kurdistan were raised and also portraits of other Kurdish leaders like Mr. Barzani were raised to cement the atmosphere of reconciliation, because Mr. Talabani after all was a candidate of the victorious Kurdistan List and not the PUK.
2. As a tit for tat the KDP deprived the PUK of any posts in the governorate councils of Hawler (Erbil) and Duhok, although that the PUK was the second strongest block and should have got the post of deputy governor or head of the council. This has created bitter response among the rank and file of PUK.
3. As a result of that the PUK put obstacles in the nomination of Mr Abdulrahman Mustafa as governor of Kirkuk and put forwards its own candidate Mr. Rizgar Ali. This competition has left the governorate council of Kirkuk in limbo, thereby destroying the good results of Brotherhood List with 26 seats out of 41 seats in the Kirkuk elections. Any further delay in establishing a working government in Kirkuk jeopardizes the efforts to rejoin Kirkuk to Kurdistan.
4. This rivalry has led to differences over the authorities

of the proposed president post for the federal region of Kurdistan, which Mr. Barzani is supposed to overtake.

5. The Parliament of Kurdistan has failed so far to hold its first session some three and half months after the elections because of intransigence of political leadership of both parties. This created a great dismay and frustration among Kurdish public and casts doubts about the actual attitude of those parties about democracy and the importance of a parliament directly elected by the people of Kurdistan.

This atmosphere of distrust and rivalry can harm the Kurdish cause to great extent and threatens our ability to

achieve federalism, democracy and rejoining of Kirkuk, Shangal, Shekhan and Khanaqin into Kurdistan federal province.

There are certain elements in both parties who are trying to escalate this conflict instead of reconciliation. Such elements must be exposed and thrown out.

All Kurdish intellectuals and political forces are called upon to put pressure on both KDP and PUK and encourage them to settle their differences through dialogue and to strengthen their cooperation to achieve a unified democratic government in Kurdistan and enshrine Kurdish rights in the permanent constitution.

Iranian Kurds Inspired by Success in Iraq

By YAHYA BARZANJ - Associated Press May 22, 2005

QANDIL MOUNTAIN RANGE, Iraq - Some 200 Iranian Kurds marched in single file up an icy mountain path, carrying automatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenades. They were training for the day when they hope to cross the nearby Iraqi border into Iran, recruit supporters and reopen a rebellion they reluctantly abandoned long ago.

After more than 20 years of calm, fighters based in northern Iraq are itching to resume the Iranian Kurds' campaign for greater autonomy, emboldened by the success of their brethren in post-Saddam Iraq.

"We want to break the peace we were forced to accept," Piryar Gabary told an Associated Press reporter visiting Qandil Mountain, the group's base in northeast Iraq.

Such talk, however, doesn't sit well with the Iraqi Kurdish leadership, which is wary of provoking Iran and disturbing its new stature in Iraq's government and has vowed to prevent cross-border attacks.

The situation illustrates the Iraqi Kurds' delicate position in the reshuffled deck that has emerged in post-Saddam Hussein Iraq.

Their policy of preventing attacks on Iran is not new. Already in 1991, when they won their Western-protected autonomy in Iraq, Kurdish leaders banned the exiles among them from mounting cross-border attacks.

But the empowerment of Iraq's Kurds since the U.S.-led invasion has inspired their brethren spread across an area from western Turkey and Syria to eastern Iran, who yearn for an independent unified Kurdistan that would

take chunks out of all those countries.

That means heightened pressure on the Iraqi Kurds not to antagonize neighboring Turkey and Iran, which have both sent troops into Iraq in the past to put down Kurdish rebels. Moreover, Iraq's Kurds are now in a government alliance with Shiite parties closely tied to Iran's clerical rulers.

When the AP visited the base in March, Gabary, a leading figure in the rebels' Free Life Party, vowed to open hostilities after the snows melted. Then, on May 9, after the thaw began, he claimed that some fighters had already crossed into Iran and waged a small clash with Iranian troops. He gave no details, and the skirmish could not be independently confirmed.

But the strong response from mainstream Kurds illustrates how anxious they are to keep the peace.

"Iran is a neighbor country and we will not allow any side to use our borders for military operations," warned Mustafa Sayid Qadir of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, one of the two parties that rule Iraq's Kurdish provinces.

Other Kurdish leaders in Iraq said they did not know of any clashes. Iran refused to comment, but former lawmaker Abdollah Sohrabi was among several Iranian Kurdish activists who told the AP they haven't heard of the Free Life Party.

Qadir dismissed it as a "very small" organization. Gabary claimed to have around 2,000 fighters a number that could not be independently confirmed.

The four main Iranian Kurdish groups in Iraq said they had no plans to start a fight. Hassan al-Sharify, no. 2 in the largest one, the Democratic Party of Kurdistan, said: "The Free Life Party consists of enthusiastic young men who cannot topple the regime alone."

The last full-scale rebellion by Iranian Kurds broke out in 1979, and after intense fighting the Tehran government re-established control over its Kurdish areas in 1983.

Since then Iranian Kurdistan has been largely peaceful. Kurds, who make up about 11 percent of Iran's 70 million people, complain of discrimination but have made no significant moves to break away. When Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani was chosen this month as Iraq's new president, some Kurds in Iran celebrated in the streets, and there were unconfirmed reports of arrests.

The U.N. counts 4,600 Kurdish refugees from Iran in the Kurdish provinces of Iraq, with more drifting there from camps in western and southern Iraq. The Free

Life Party, grouping separate factions of Kurds from Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, was formed in 2003.

Its fighters are operating under the radar of Iraqi and Iranian officials. Qandil Mountain, in Iraq's northeast corner near Iran and Turkey, is a rugged, isolated region where Kurdish authorities have little control.

The AP reporter who visited saw about 50 fighters being taught to dismantle and reassemble an automatic rifle. Women wearing traditional male Kurdish clothes sat in a circle with the men. Other recruits jogged uphill carrying bags of rocks.

In one of several rooms with tables fashioned from mud, a teacher wrote on a chalkboard, instructing students how to carry out hit-and-run shootings.

The diplomatic issues mean little to fighters like Gabary, 42. "Politics in the Middle East is of no avail without military forces," he said.

Remarks by KDP Leader Massoud Barzani and US Secretary Rice

US Department of State
May 15, 2005

MR. BARZANI: (Translated from Kurdish) First of all, I would like to welcome Madame Secretary Condoleeza Rice, on behalf of the people of Iraqi Kurdistan, and me personally, and the accompanying delegation for this visit. We value this visit, and we have appreciation for it, we feel honored to have you here, and we see this visit as a kind of reconfirmation of the United States' support for the people of Iraq, and also for the Kurdistan region, support for the democracy process, and for building a democracy and a federal Iraq. Once again, I would like to welcome you.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much, sir, for the wonderful welcome and the wonderful hospitality. I want to thank the Kurdish people for the great welcome, with flowers, with lovely children, when I first arrived. We have a wonderful friendship and a history of friendship between the Kurdish people and the American people and now we have an opportunity to use that friendship to help to bring about a democratic and unified and federal Iraq. I know that the Kurdish people sacrificed greatly in the last regime and now it is wonderful to see that there is an opportunity for a democratic and peaceful Iraq. Thank you.

QUESTION: (Translated from Kurdish.) A question from Kurdistan Satellite television. As you kindly talked about the sacrifice of the Kurdish people, and also the future, could we see any role and any position for the Kurdish people, the Kurdish leadership, in the policies of the United States for the future? And the other question was addressed to President Barzani, through the meetings that you have with high-level officials, Sir, to what extent do you see the role of the Kurdish people in the policies and the cooperation.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, one reason that I am here is to have consultations with our friends, we've just had those consultations, and I think Mr. Barzani is a very wise man and I have listened thoroughly. We agree that the future now is to have a constitutional process that is inclusive so that Iraq can take the next step toward a democratic and federal Iraq.

MR. BARZANI: (Translated from Kurdish) There is no doubt that the Kurds play a major role in the building of a federal democratic Iraq and, the current visit of Madame Secretary is another indicator of the role that

the Kurds will play in the new Iraq, in building a federal democratic, and her mere visit is a response to your question.

MODERATOR: Anne Gearan, Associated Press.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, U.S. military officials have recently talked to the new Iraqi leadership about getting tougher and doing so more quickly with the insurgency. Do you feel that the new government is saying and doing the right things, and doing them fast enough?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, let's remember that it is indeed a new government, just a few weeks old now, not even a few weeks old, and so I'm here to consult with members of the new Iraqi Government. Obviously, terrorism has to be fought, and it has to be fought actively and aggressively because these terrorists are killing innocent Iraqi people. And I know that all responsible Iraqis, especially the leadership, wants to put an end to that. And so we are I will be here to talk with them about the role that the coalition is playing in helping to train Iraqi security forces, but I think there can be no doubt that there is only one way to deal with terrorists who are killing innocent people, and that is to fight them.

QUESTION: (Translated from Kurdish) A threefold question. First of all, what role do you see, Madame Secretary, for President Barzani in the writing of the constitution for the new Iraq; and secondly, as you concede that Kurdistan is in the forefront of fighting terrorism, is there any specific support or assistance for upgrading the level of security forces in the KRP (inaudible) to the government; and third, economic development and growth, do you have anything specific to help the (inaudible) (being partners and allies with you in this process.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we talked about the fact that the political process, the security situation and economic development are all intertwined and we have already developed a number of projects, economic development projects, infrastructure projects, that we will continue to work with all parts of Iraq. I hope that some of those will benefit this area, including the place in which we stand, Irbil.

Secondly, we did discuss the need to increase the security capacity of all of Iraq and all Iraqis and I'm certain that the leaders from this region will participate in that process.

And finally, we talked about how Iraq's democratic founding fathers now will need and mothers will need now to have a constitution that is inclusive of all people of Iraq and the very important role that Mr. Barzani can play in that because he has good relationships and respect of many of the people of Iraq.

MODERATOR: Last question, Boston Globe.

QUESTION: Why is the administration so eager and insistent on having the constitution writing process meet the August deadline? Particularly given that the major parties are still far apart on fundamental issues, and there's security challenges that make it hard to have the meetings you need to have quickly if you're trying to be very inclusive?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the August deadline, of course, was set in Iraqi processes, and there needs to continue to be a certain momentum to the political process. But I would just say that we have to remember that the Iraqi people have managed to meet every deadline that they that was put before them. People said that it would not be possible to transfer sovereignty on June 30th of last year, and it's amazing, it's only one year since the transfer of sovereignty, not even one year since the transfer of sovereignty. People said that the Iraqis would never be able to have elections on January 30th. They had elections on January 30th. I am quite confident that the Iraqis, because they are committed, and they are dedicated and they are determined to make this process work, will find a way to move the constitutional process along so that there can be elections for a permanent government at the end of April.

QUESTION: A quick follow up what's the significance, what's the message of you coming straight from America to meet with Mr. Barzani, especially with regard to the future of Kurdish autonomy and territory?

SECRETARY RICE: My understanding with Mr. Barzani, and we've just had a discussion about it, is that he is one of the many leaders of Iraq, several leaders of Iraq, who are dedicated to a unified and federal and democratic Iraq. He talked about what the Transitional Administrative Law has meant to him personally. Of course the Kurdish people have a very special culture and a very special place. But it is a place within a democratic and federal Iraq, and so I am now in a very important and special part of Iraq.

Turkey Beefs Up Forces for Kurdish Rebels

By SELCAN HACA OGLU

Associated Press May 20, 2005

SIIRT, Turkey — During the national day celebration this week, helicopter gunships circled over Siirt's stadium and snipers stood watch on rooftops — signs of the rising tension in southeast Turkey as Kurdish separatists rekindle an insurgency after a five-year lull.

Turkish intelligence officials say some 2,000 fighters of the rebel Kurdistan Workers Party have recently infiltrated from their bases in the mountains of northern Iraq to carry out attacks. The group, known as the PKK, is believed to have 3,500 more guerrillas still in Iraq.

So far this month, 10 police officers and soldiers have been killed in southeastern Turkey, and the rebels are vowing to step up their attacks and also strike at Turkish cities in the west that have been largely spared fighting during a two-decade-old insurgency.

Turkey is demanding that U.S. and Iraqi officials crack down on Turkish Kurds who for more than a decade have taken advantage of instability in Iraq to run their rebellion from hideouts in the predominantly Kurdish region in northern Iraq.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan stressed his government's concerns during a meeting Friday with his Iraqi counterpart, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, who said Iraq "will not allow any group to harm any neighboring country." But Iraq's government is barely able to control its own cities. U.S. commanders, who are battling the Iraqi insurgency in the middle of the country, are stretched too thin to take on Turkish Kurds hiding in remote mountains near the frontier. A further complication: The U.S. has long been allied with Iraqi Kurds, who are now part of Iraq's struggling new government.

The fight in Turkey has brought instability to a key U.S. ally that strategically straddles Europe and the Middle East, and it has some Turks questioning just how strong their ties should be with a United States that is not moving against the rebels.

The rebellion, which began in 1984 and has caused 37,000 deaths, also adds a further kink to predominantly Islamic Turkey's bid for membership in the European Union, which is already complicated by questions of cultural and religious compatibility with Europe.

Human rights groups have repeatedly accused Turkey's government of using brutal tactics in fighting the

rebels, who were at their peak of power in the 1990s. Last week, the European Court of Human Rights called for Turkey to retry rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan, saying his 1999 trial was not fair. Turkey's population of 71 million people includes some 12 million Kurds, about half of whom live in the southeast.

A decade ago, fighting had desolated huge swaths of the southeast, leaving villages burned or abandoned. But in 1999, the rebels faced defeat on the battlefield and after the capture of Ocalan declared a unilateral cease-fire that brought some calm. The rebels ended the truce last year amid reports the PKK had split between those who wanted to resume fighting and those who favored a political struggle, largely by lobbying the EU to pressure Turkey for increased Kurdish rights.

"There are claims that the PKK is finished, so they will inevitably try to prove this wrong," said Ilnur Cevik, editor in chief of The New Anatolian newspaper.

With the recent influx of rebels, the government has reinforced its army in the region to 100,000 soldiers, half the number who were here in the 1990s. Turkey also has 2,000 soldiers in northern Iraq trying to guard against cross-border attacks.

A new army battalion of some 500 soldiers was just deployed outside Pervari, a town of 6,000 people 55 miles east of Siirt. On the snaking road between the two towns, the army has put back four roadblocks guarded by soldiers and armored personnel carriers that were a fixture in the 1990s. At night, another armored personnel carrier stands on a hill overlooking Pervari, and hundreds of soldiers climb into the green hills to try to ambush guerrillas. "Things are getting very nasty here again," said Mayor Abdurrahman Dundar, a former member of the government-sponsored village guard militia.

On Tuesday, four soldiers were killed near Pervari when the rebels exploded a remote-controlled bomb.

Many residents fear a return to the 1990s, when the rebels often blocked the road out of Pervari and attacked cars.

"I avoid driving after dusk," Suheyl Sevinc, a 36-year-old shopkeeper, said, echoing a sentiment expressed by others.

MOYEN-ORIENT A un mois de l'élection présidentielle en Iran, sur fond de tensions liées à la surenchère nucléaire

Téhéran et ses incertitudes

2005 est pour l'Iran une année charnière chargée d'incertitudes qui peuvent entraîner d'importantes conséquences quant à l'avenir de ce pays. En effet, que ce soit sur le plan ex-

terne ou à l'intérieur du pays, les évolutions qui se dessinent peuvent modifier sensiblement les rapports de forces, élargir les fractures et accentuer les tensions.

Le contexte international de l'Iran est pour l'heure essentiellement marqué par les délicates négociations entre Téhéran et la troïka européenne, formée par l'Allemagne, la France et la Grande-Bretagne, au sujet du programme nucléaire iranien. Ces négociations, qui depuis mars 2005 sont aussi soutenues par les Etats-Unis, se déroulent dans un climat tendu et progressent (si progression il y a) très lentement.

Pour le moment, elles servent surtout à éloigner le spectre d'une nouvelle crise internationale qui pourrait commencer par une saisine du Conseil de sécurité, conduire à des interventions militaires et même à l'enclenchement d'une nouvelle guerre. Si, pour le moment, nous n'en sommes pas là, le risque d'un dérapage ne peut cependant être totalement écarté, cela d'autant plus que les arguments avancés par Téhéran quant à son option irrévocable pour le nucléaire pacifique ont du mal à convaincre tout le monde, à l'extérieur comme d'ailleurs à l'intérieur du pays, tant la possession de l'armement nucléaire serait du pain bénit pour le régime islamique.

Au niveau régional, l'Iran doit tenir compte de nouvelles données qui ne lui sont pas nécessairement favorables. Ainsi, la victoire chiite et kurde aux élections législatives irakiennes

de janvier 2005, la nature pluraliste de ce scrutin, la transformation de l'Irak en Etat de type fédéral, etc., peuvent être porteurs d'inquiétudes pour le pouvoir iranien. La victoire chiite en Irak renforce le courant quiétiste et anti-*velayat-e faqih* (« la tutelle du juriste théologien » sur toutes les institutions politiques et militaires iraniennes, c'est-à-dire l'autorité absolue et à vie du guide, Ali Khamenei) au sein du chiisme en général. L'accession des chiites au pouvoir en Irak peut aussi favoriser la prééminence progressive de Nadjaf sur Qom, dont les ayatollahs ira-

niens ont voulu faire le centre du chiisme révolutionnaire.

De même, le refus du grand ayatollah Sistani de participer directement à la vie politique de l'Irak contribue à délégitimer l'implication directe du clergé iranien dans la politique politicienne. Par ailleurs, l'amélioration de la situation politique des Kurdes en Irak ne peut évidemment pas laisser indifférents les Kurdes iraniens qui ont eux aussi des revendications culturelles et économiques mais qui, de plus, majoritairement de confession sunnite, ont des griefs contre un pouvoir ultrachiite qui marginalise comme jamais les sunnites iraniens (environ 15 % de la population). Enfin, le mode de scrutin appliqué en Irak, où tous les partis politiques ont le droit de participer aux élections, est aux antipodes de la « démocratie islamique » pratiquée par Téhéran où seules les tendances islamistes, après une sévère sélection, peuvent présenter des candidats. La mise

en parallèle des deux modes d'élection discrédite encore davantage le modèle islamique d'élection aux yeux de la population iranienne.

Mais, toujours au plan régional, un autre événement réduit aussi la marge de manœuvre iranienne. Le retrait syrien du Liban est très mal ressenti à Téhéran dans la mesure où, depuis un quart de siècle, la Syrie est considérée comme le seul allié de la République islamique au Moyen-Orient. C'est par l'entremise de ce pays que l'Iran a mis en place toute sa politique en direction du Proche-Orient. L'aide de Téhéran à la formation du Hezbollah libanais a toujours transité par la Syrie qui, en échange, a bénéficié des largesses iraniennes en matière économique et pétrolière. Ce sont aussi les liens tissés avec Damas qui ont permis à Téhéran de développer des rapports étroits avec le Hamas et le Jihad islamique afin de jouer un rôle dans le conflit israélo-palestinien. Le front anti-israélien formé ainsi par la Syrie et l'Iran subit un revers important avec l'affaiblissement général des capacités d'action de Damas au-delà de son territoire national.

Les changements du contexte géopolitique de l'Iran coïncident aussi avec la transformation du paysage politique interne du pays. L'échec de la politique réformiste du gouvernement Khatami, évident depuis plusieurs années, a été pour ainsi dire confirmé par les élections parlementaires de février 2004 marquées par une faible participation et remportées haut la main par les conservateurs. Il est fort probable qu'il en aille de même pour l'élection présidentielle du 17 juin prochain, dont l'enjeu principal est sans doute plus le nombre de participants que le choix du nouveau président.

Parmi les candidats en liste se trouve Ali Akbar Rafsandjani, qui, bien que n'ayant pas encore posé officiellement sa candidature, est présenté comme le grand favori. Ayant déjà occupé le poste de président de la République de 1989 à 1997, Rafsandjani est, depuis la fondation de la République is-

lamique, un acteur clé du régime. Ce conservateur, connu pour son pragmatisme, est un homme très riche, puissant, contrôlant des réseaux influents qui transcendent les factions islamistes rivales.

Autoritaire et partisan d'une politique répressive à l'égard des opposants au régime, il est aussi très impopulaire : aux élections législatives de février 2000, il n'est pas parvenu à se faire élire comme simple député au Parlement islamique. Mais, faute de mieux il a des chances d'être élu cette fois à la présidence de la République.

Que ce soit Rafsandjani ou un autre, le prochain président de la République islamique devra affronter des défis sans précédent parmi lesquels figurent le règlement de la question nucléaire, la mise en place d'une politique étrangère cohérente, en rapport avec l'évolution de la situation internationale et régionale, ce qui nécessitera une révision de fond en comble des principes qui ont régi cette politique depuis vingt-cinq ans. Tâche rude s'il en est, dans la mesure où les orientations en matière de politique extérieure sont un des principaux enjeux des luttes factionnelles au sein du régime. Sur le plan politique et économique, les nouveaux conservateurs rêvent tous du modèle chinois : croissance économique sans libéralisation politique. Ils oublient cependant que, d'une part, l'Iran n'est pas la Chine et que, d'autre part, la priorité d'une majorité d'Iraniens n'est pas exactement aujourd'hui celle des clans cléricaux qui les dirigent déjà depuis trop longtemps.

*Professeur à l'Institut universitaire des hautes études internationales de Genève, vient de publier *Géopolitique de l'Iran*, Editions Complexe, Bruxelles 2005.

PAR
MOHAMMAD-REZA
DJALILI

Iraq and Iran pledge an era of cooperation

Tehran foreign minister visits Baghdad

From news reports

BAGHDAD: Iraq and Iran pledged Tuesday to turn the page on nearly a quarter-century of war and bitter rivalry during a visit here by Iran's foreign minister, who expressed support for Iraq's new Shiite-led government.

"I have no doubt this visit will open up significant new horizons for cooperation between the two countries," the Iraqi foreign minister, Hoshyar Zebari, told a joint news conference after talks with his Iranian counterpart, Kamal Kharazi.

"Post-Saddam Iraq is a new Iraq, at peace with its neighbors, far removed from its bellicose predecessor," Zebari said.

He also said Iran had pledged to cooperate on security and not provide any support to the insurgency.

Kharazi said: "We will not allow terrorists to use our lands to access Iraq. We will watch our borders and will arrest infiltrators, because securing Iraq is securing the Islamic Republic."

Iraq, struggling to contain insurgent attacks that have killed more than 400 people since a new government was unveiled three weeks ago, has accused neighboring countries of not doing enough to secure their borders.

Kharazi, the highest-ranking Iranian official to visit Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein two years ago, assured his counterpart that Iran would not interfere in its neighbor's affairs.

"Iraqis are in charge of their own affairs," he said. "Any interference would be an insult to the Iraqi people."

"It is in Iran's interest to support by all possible means the Iraqi government," he added. "It is not in the interest of any of Iraq's neighbors to see the current situation continue because it would have negative consequences on the entire region."

Baghdad and Tehran re-established diplomatic ties in September, although many issues, including a peace treaty, remain unresolved following the devastating 1980-1988 war that left about one million dead.

Relations between Iran, with a Shiite majority, and the interim Iraq government set up by the United States in June 2004 were awkward.

But the formation this month of a Shiite-dominated government has helped ease relations. Many of the new Iraqi ministers spent years in exile in Iran, an archfoe of Washington, and Zebari made a point of repeatedly speaking in Farsi during the news conference.

Kharazi's visit comes against a backdrop of increasing tension between majority Shiites and previously dominant Sunni Arabs in Iraq, where a recent series of tit-for-tat killings have raised the specter of a sectarian war.

Three of the country's top Shiite figures — Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and

Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari — warned Monday against rising violence after the discovery of 46 mutilated bodies and the killing of both Shiite and Sunni clerics.

The warning was echoed in Denmark where an intelligence report sent to the government last week said: "There is huge hostility between a number of groups in Iraq. That's why civil war is probable if the coalition forces retreat now."

The report was leaked as the Danish Parliament began debate on whether to extend the country's troop mandate in Iraq after its 530 soldiers complete their current tour of duty on June 2.

Meanwhile, the new British defense secretary, John Reid, met in Baghdad with his Iraqi counterpart, Saadun al-Dulaimi, as the British Foreign Office pledged that London would "continue to provide troops for as long as the Iraqi government wants us to remain."

In other developments, a roadside bomb killed one U.S. soldier and wounded another north of Baghdad, bringing the American death toll to 25 over the past 11 days.

Other violence against Iraqi security forces and civil servants continued Tuesday, when an employee of Iraq's anti-corruption body was assassinated in Baghdad.

Alaaeddin Wazir al-Obeidi, the second member of the Commission on Public Integrity to be killed in a month, was gunned down.

A man and his three sons were also killed by unknown attackers in a village near Mahawil, 70 kilometers, or 45 miles, south of Baghdad, the police said. (AFP, Reuters)

Iran Parliament backs 'peaceful' atoms

From news reports

TEHRAN: Iran's conservative-dominated Parliament approved a bill Sunday pressing the government to pursue the "peaceful use" of nuclear energy, including uranium enrichment.

But an Iranian official said that Tehran had put off a decision to revive its uranium enrichment program this week after agreeing to a European request to hold another round of talks on Iran's nuclear program. The talks are set to take place in the coming days.

Hamid-Reza Asefi, a spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, said in Tehran that the talks, between the Iranian authorities and the foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany,

would be "the last chance" to reach an agreement before Iran resumed uranium reprocessing activities at Isfahan Uranium Conversion Facility.

Foreign Minister Michel Barnier of France confirmed Sunday that the talks would take place.

The bill approved Sunday by the Parliament does not require the immediate resumption of uranium enrichment, but it brings greater pressure on the government not to abandon its nuclear program, including enrichment.

The EU has threatened to refer Iran to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions if it resumes the reprocessing of uranium, as it had said it would.

"The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is required to pursue,"

within the framework of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, "peaceful use of nuclear energy, including the cycle of nuclear fuel," the legislation said. It was approved by 188 of the 205 deputies who attended the parliamentary session. Asefi said that Iran had postponed the resumption of uranium reprocessing at the request of many governments, but he said Tehran would eventually resume its nuclear activities.

France, Britain and Germany, acting on behalf of the 25-nation European Union, want Tehran to abandon its enrichment activities in exchange for economic aid, technical support and backing for Iran's efforts to join mainstream international organizations.

(AP, Bloomberg, AFP)

IRAK

Plus de 500 cadavres anonymes par mois

Avec la multiplication d'attentats de plus en plus sanglants en Irak, la morgue de Bagdad doit accueillir chaque jour des dizaines de cadavres que personne ne vient réclamer. Reportage.

AL-HAYAT

Londres

Le responsable de la morgue de l'hôpital Yarmouk, à Bagdad, se souvient encore du cadavre qui est resté à la morgue plus de cinq mois sans que personne vienne le réclamer. Les médecins et employés de l'hôpital l'avaient surnommé "Abou Ghayeb" [père de l'absent] puisque aucun parent ne semblait s'en préoccuper ! Abou Ghayeb faisait partie des dix victimes touchées par l'explosion d'une voiture piégée, dans la région d'Al-Biyaa, à l'ouest de Bagdad ; dépouilles transportées à l'hôpital et qui demeurent sans identité, comme plus de 500 autres cadavres retrouvés chaque mois en Irak. Pour le ministère de la Santé irakien, il peut y avoir deux explications à cela : l'impuissance des médecins légistes à identifier des corps lorsqu'ils sont gravement mutilés par la violence des explosions et le long laps de temps écoulé avant qu'on les retrouve.

Ce problème de l'identification des cadavres préoccupe nombre d'Irakiens dont les proches ont été liquidés par les services secrets du régime de Saddam Hussein. Une inquiétude qui s'est amplifiée depuis que l'on a découvert plus de 700 charniers et fosses communes dans lesquels gisaient les dépouilles d'Irakiens exécutés au cours de nombreuses années. Certains décès remontaient à plus de vingt ans ; dans plusieurs cas, seuls ont été retrouvés des crânes et squelettes, qui ne peuvent être

d'aucun secours pour l'identification des individus. Les plus fortunés des proches de ces disparus ont eu recours aux tests d'ADN pour déterminer l'identité de cadavres qu'ils pensaient pouvoir être de leur parenté. Parfois, ce sont les ONG œuvrant en Irak qui ont offert ces tests fort coûteux. Et la majorité des familles ne sont souvent pas certaines de l'identité de ceux pour qui elles ont organisé la traditionnelle séance de condoléances.

Un auxiliaire de police, Mour-tada Abdel-Karim, nous assure qu'il

► Les carnages continuent en Irak...
Dessin d'Habib Haddad paru dans Al-Hayat, Londres.

■ **Saddam et ses frères**
"Saddam Husseln ne voit pas le soleil, ne reçoit pas les journaux ; avec ses mains, il lave ses vêtements ; mais le moral tient bon. Son livre de chevet s'intitule 'Ne sois pas triste', titre en première page le très nationaliste Al-Quds Al-Arabi. En revanche, nous apprend Al-Hayat, Abed Hammoud, le secrétaire spécial du dictateur déchu, accepterait de collaborer pleinement avec la justice pour obtenir un verdict plus clément. Le demi-frère de Saddam, Barzan, et "Ali le chimlique", accusé d'avoir gazé la localité kurde de Halabja, seraient eux aussi prêts à livrer des secrets.



a été obligé de tirer plusieurs fois en l'air devant l'hôpital Al-Mahmoudiyya, au sud de Bagdad, afin de disperser la foule rassemblée pour tenter d'identifier les corps de jeunes gens de la ville chiite de Sadr City, où venaient d'être découverts quinze cadavres de sunnites originaires de

la région d'Al-Madayen, au sud-ouest de Bagdad.

On craint de plus en plus que les attentats à la voiture piégée et les assassinats ne nourrissent l'hostilité entre Irakiens de différentes confessions, puisqu'on explique les objectifs des opérations armées par des raisons confessionnelles. Pourtant, les recherches du sociologue Yassine Saad, qui étudie la diversité dans la société irakienne, vont à l'encontre de cette analyse des événements. Il affirme que les attentats, dont la gravité et le nombre ont énormément augmenté durant les derniers six mois, "ont été interprétés de manière sommaire, en se fondant sur des critères exclusivement confessionnels. En fait, la plupart des attentats ont été justifiés par les groupes armés extrémistes à partir du seul critère de la collaboration des personnes visées avec les forces d'occupation ou avec le gouvernement irakien, ou en raison de leur appartenance à la police et à l'armée irakiennes."

Yassine Saad ajoute : "On peut ne pas être d'accord avec les motifs avancés par ceux qui ont égorgé des centaines de nos concitoyens, il faut reconnaître que ces

meurtres ont été perpétrés comme punition des 'collabos', même si quelques attentats ont pu avoir des motivations directement confessionnelles, ethniques ou personnelles."

Ce professeur de sociologie à l'université de Bagdad a reçu dernièrement une lettre de menaces : "Ferme ta gueule ; autrement, tu nous coûteras tout juste le prix d'une balle !" Il rappelle que la liquidation physique en Irak "n'est pas née d'hier. Elle est la continuation d'une habitude contractée sous Saddam : celle d'éliminer les opposants plutôt que de dialoguer avec eux. Cela ne concerne pas un groupe particulier de la société, mais crée un climat politique et social dévastateur, qui influence l'ensemble des Irakiens. Ils continuent d'en payer le prix de leur sang répandu sur les pavés des rues et dans les fosses communes"

Les attentats se poursuivent. Toutes sortes de raisons l'expliquent. Ali, responsable de la morgue de l'hôpital Yarmouk, recueille chaque jour de 40 à 50 cadavres, le plus souvent victimes d'explosions ou d'assassinats. Le dernier en date est celui du directeur général du ministère des Communications, abattu par un groupe armé. Ali a rangé son corps aux côtés des autres cadavres inconnus qui attendent d'être identifiés avant qu'ils ne deviennent définitivement méconnaissables

Mouchreq Abbas

Plusieurs centaines de milliers de Kurdes n'ont toujours pas regagné leur village.

En Turquie, le difficile retour des «réfugiés de l'intérieur»

Diyarbakir (Turquie) envoyé spécial

Les murs sont en ruine mais la belle cour intérieure de pierre noire rappelle les splendeurs passées d'une demeure patricienne. Dans deux petites pièces du rez-de-chaussée s'entassent Cemil Duman, sa femme et ses quatre enfants, son frère et sa belle-sœur avec leur progéniture, ainsi que les parents. «Nous sommes enfermés dans la non-vie», soupire le jeune homme, dont le salaire de cuisinier intérimaire reste le seul revenu de toute la famille.

Bijoux. Ils végètent là depuis douze ans, après avoir été chassés de leur village par l'armée. La «sale guerre» entre l'Etat et les rebelles turcs kurdes du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, indépendantiste) d'Abdullah Öcalan, qui a fait, entre 1984 et

1999, plus de 36 000 morts, est peu ou prou finie. Mais des centaines de milliers de «réfugiés de l'intérieur» n'ont toujours pas pu rentrer chez eux. Sans travail et ne bénéficiant d'aucune aide publique, ils survivent au jour le jour dans les villes du Sud-Est anatolien, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes,

Entre 1984 et 1999, la «sale guerre» entre l'Etat et les rebelles turcs kurdes du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan) a fait plus de 36 000 morts.

et notamment sa capitale, Diyarbakir, dont la population a triplé.

Année après année, ces déplacés ont vendu pour survivre les quelques biens – notamment les bijoux – qu'ils avaient pu emporter dans leur exode précipité. Les familles se délitent et la petite délinquance explose. «Avant, nous craignons la

violence de l'Etat; maintenant, c'est celle de la rue qui nous fait de plus en plus peur», s'inquiète Mahmoud Kaya, ex-président de l'ordre des médecins de Diyarbakir. Travaillant aussi dans un dispensaire de quartier, il est quotidiennement confronté aux effets ravageurs de la drogue – colle ou solvants de peinture – sur les enfants des rues. «Nous estimons leur nombre à 20 000 rien qu'à Diyarbakir. La moi-

tié travaillent comme petits vendeurs ou cireurs de chaussures; les autres sont complètement livrés à eux-mêmes», affirme Ali Ackingi, d'une association de défense des droits de l'homme. Des pères vendent un de leurs gosses à des gangs opérant à Istanbul ou dans les grands sites touristiques de l'Ouest, qui les utilisent pour le vol à la tire.

«La famille reçoit du chef de la bande entre 50 et 100 euros par mois», souligne un fonctionnaire de la mairie.

Liberticide. L'histoire des Duman est celle de milliers d'autres familles. «Nous avions cinq vaches, deux taureaux, trente brebis et 70 hectares de bonne terre, mais l'armée nous a laissé à peine une heure et demie pour quitter le village avant de l'incendier», raconte Cemil, qui n'a jamais oublié Caliyân, à l'est de Diyarbakir. C'était le 13 avril 1993, au pire de la guerre. Les villages qui n'acceptaient pas de s'engager dans les milices supplétives, «les gardiens de village», étaient impitoyablement rasés par l'armée, qui cherchait à isoler la guérilla. L'arrestation



d'Öcalan, en 1999, puis son jugement ont entraîné la déroute du PKK.

Sous la pression des Européens, Ankara a lancé de vastes réformes afin d'obtenir le feu vert pour l'ouverture des négociations d'adhésion. La peine de mort a été abolie, ainsi que les cours de sûreté de l'Etat et les articles les plus liberticides de la législation antiterroriste. Le droit à des émissions sur la télévision d'Etat en langue kurde a aussi été reconnu.

Mais pour les habitants des quelque 3 000 villages rasés rien n'a changé, et l'UE, dans son dernier rapport d'évaluation annuel sur la Turquie, rappelait que la situation de ces déplacés restait «encore critique». L'ONG américaine Human Rights Watch dressait en mars un état des lieux accablant, affirmant que «les conditions actuelles ne permettent pas à ces personnes de rentrer chez elles dignement et en sécurité, conformément aux principes de l'ONU».

Les autorités reconnaissent 378 000 déplacés, affirmant que le tiers est revenu. Les ONG multiplient ce nombre par quatre ou cinq; certaines les estiment à 2 millions. Depuis des années, les plus jeunes et les plus déterminés sont partis vers les grandes villes de l'Ouest. Les autres attendent de pouvoir revenir.

«Si on le pouvait, on le ferait immédiatement. Mais tout a été détruit et il nous faut de l'argent pour reconstruire la maison, racheter du bétail et du matériel agricole», explique Cemil, qui n'a pu revoir les lieux de son enfance qu'en 2000, une fois levé l'état d'urgence.

Lacunes. Sous la pression de l'UE, et surtout par crainte d'une avalanche de recours devant la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme de Strasbourg, les autorités d'Ankara ont commencé à agir, annonçant l'an dernier la création d'une agence spéciale pour les déplacés et la mise en chantier d'une loi d'indemnisation. «C'est un bon texte malgré ses nombreuses lacunes, mais il faudra vraisemblablement deux ans au moins pour que les droits soient reconnus, et nul ne sait quand les aides arriveront effectivement», souligne Sezgin Tangirkulu, bâtonnier du barreau de Diyarbakir engagé depuis des années dans le combat pour les droits de l'homme. Le retour est d'autant plus problématique que souvent les terres des villages évacués ont été entre-temps occupées par d'autres villageois qui servaient de supplétifs à l'Etat. Et ils accueillent l'arme au poing les propriétaires légitimes qui tentent de s'y réinstaller.

Ces problèmes fragilisent le processus de démocratisation. «Il y a eu de réels changements; nous n'avons plus peur de parler kurde et de tenir des meetings, mais les réformes promises restent encore sur le papier», résume Nuri Sinir, essayiste et écrivain.

Couleurs. Le printemps kurde est une réalité. Pour le Newroz, la fête du nouvel an le 21 mars, de grands artistes d'Istanbul ou Ankara sont venus exposer

leurs œuvres à Diyarbakir et des centaines de milliers de personnes ont assisté sans incident à un immense rassemblement aux portes de la ville. Partout flottaient les couleurs kurdes, ce qui auparavant était passible de prison. Les cas de

mauvais traitements dans les commissariats sont devenus plus rares et ne sont plus totalement impunis. « La mentalité de l'Etat évolue, mais lentement et seulement sous la pression constante de la société civile et de l'UE », précise Nuri

Sinir, inquiet. Affaibli et divisé, craignant d'être toujours plus marginalisé, le PKK a annoncé l'été dernier la reprise de la lutte armée. Les incidents sont désormais presque quotidiens et plusieurs gros attentats ont

été déjoués à la mi-mai. Exigé le 12 mai par la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme, le nouveau procès d'Öcalan, condamné à la prison à vie, risque de faire encore monter la tension. ◀

MARC SEMO

IRAK

Tortures dans les camps des Moudjahidins du peuple iraniens

Thierry Oberlé

Après avoir réuni voici quelques jours à Paris une partie du gotha parisien des défenseurs des droits de l'homme, les Moudjahidins du peuple iraniens essuient une volée de bois vert de la part d'Human Rights Watch (HRW).

La très scrupuleuse ONG stigmatise dans un rapport de 28 pages le groupe armé qui a su en France mobiliser en sa faveur des personnalités telles les avocats Henri Leclerc et William Bourdon, la présidente du Syndicat de la magistrature, Aïda Chouk, ou encore Mgr Gaillot, Noëlle Chatelet ou la chanteuse Françoise Hardy. HRW accuse, ni plus ni moins, le mouvement iranien d'opposition de torturer à mort ses propres dissidents.

Maintenus en isolement cellulaire durant des années dans des camps militaires en

Irak, souvent frappés, les Moudjahidins contestataires payent leurs divergences avec la direction de l'organisation ou tout simplement leur intention de s'en aller. Rendu public hier, le document s'appuie sur des récits dignes de foi d'ex-militants qui vivent en Europe.

Plusieurs d'entre eux ont assisté en 1995 au meurtre de l'un de leurs camarades dans une prison interne du groupe installée en Irak. Un survivant raconte : « La porte s'est ouverte et un prisonnier a été jeté dans la cellule. Il est tombé face contre terre. Tout d'abord, nous ne l'avons pas reconnu. Il avait été sauvagement battu. Nous l'avons retourné ; il s'agissait de Parviz Ahmadi qui avait été emmené pour être interrogé juste quelques heures auparavant. Il avait des os cassés partout, ses jambes étaient enflam- mées ; il allait tomber dans le coma... il est mort dix minutes plus tard alors que je tenais sa tête posée sur mes genoux. »

Dans *Mojahed*, le journal du mouvement, Parviz Ahmadi a été décrit comme un

« martyr » tué par des agents des services secrets iraniens. Deux autres cas de décès sont relatés dans le rapport.

Mohammad Hussein Sobhani, un ex-haut responsable des Moudjahidins du peuple, a eu plus de chance : il a été remis en 2001 aux autorités irakiennes après huit années de quarantaine et détenu ensuite à la prison d'Abou Ghraïb.

Chassé d'Iran après avoir tenté de renverser l'ayatollah Khomeïni en 1981, le mouvement avait bénéficié du soutien irakien jusqu'à la chute de Saddam Hussein. Il est resté neutre lors de l'invasion de l'Irak par l'armée américaine.

La défaite du dictateur irakien a privé l'organisation de soutien financier et logistique.

Désarmés par l'armée américaine, les combattants sont confinés dans le camp principal d'Ashraf situé près

de al-Khalis au nord de Bagdad. Considérés comme une secte, classés parmi les orga-

nisations terroristes par Washington et Bruxelles, les Moudjahidins du peuple cherchent contre vents et marées à obtenir la reconnaissance et le soutien des capitales occidentales. « Le gouvernement iranien affiche un bilan effroyable en matière de droits de l'homme, mais promouvoir un groupe d'opposition responsable de graves atteintes aux droits de l'homme constituerait une énorme erreur », commente Joe Stork, le directeur de la division Moyen-Orient et Afrique du Nord d'HRW. Ce point de vue ne fait visiblement pas l'unanimité.

En France, les Moudjahidins ont récupéré des appuis après l'offensive judiciaire lancée en 2003 par le juge anti-terroriste Jean-Louis Bruguière contre le Conseil national de la résistance, la branche politique du groupe. L'arrestation de Maryam Rajavi avait provoqué une vague de suicides par le feu parmi les disciples.

Véritable gourou, Maryam et son mari Massoud imposent à leurs émules le renoncement à la sexualité, la rédaction régulière de rapports d'autocritique et le dévouement mental et physique absolu envers les dirigeants.

Iran opposition group is accused of torture

Agence France-Presse

NEW YORK: Human Rights Watch has accused an exiled Iranian opposition group of torturing dissident members who criticized or sought to leave the organization.

In a 28-page report, the New York-based rights watchdog said Wednesday that the Mujahedeen Khalq organization regularly subjected members to beatings, torture and prolonged solitary confinement at military camps in Iraq.

Mujahedeen Khalq said in a statement in Paris that the report was nothing more than "a highly politicized invective against the Iranian resistance

movement."

It also said the rights group had based its report on inaccurate, outdated and discredited information coming from dissidents who it said were in many cases working for Iranian intelligence.

The report was based on direct testimony from a dozen former members of the organization, including five who were turned over to Iraqi security forces and held in Abu Ghraib prison under Saddam Hussein's government.

Joe Stork, Washington director of Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa division, said that members who tried to leave the group "pay a very heavy price."

"These testimonies paint a grim picture of what happened to members who criticized the group's leaders," he said.

One former high-ranking member of the armed group, Mohammad Hussein Sobhani, recounted how he was held in solitary confinement for more than eight years until he was turned over to the Iraqi authorities in January 2001.

The United States classified the group as a foreign terrorist organization in 1997, and the European Union followed suit in 2002. Founded in 1965 as an Islamic urban guerrilla group, the organization went underground in 1981. After exile in France, the group's leaders relocated to Iraq in 1986.

La confessionnalisation du pouvoir renforce le spectre d'une guerre civile

Georges Malbrunot

Vice-ministre des Affaires étrangères, Mohamed Haj Hamoud a dû se plier à la règle : plus question de rentrer chez lui chaque soir dans une banlieue de Bagdad. Sécurité oblige, le voici désormais confiné six jours sur sept non loin de son bureau dans la zone verte, le périmètre ultra-protégé autour de l'ambassade américaine. Haj Hamoud est chiite, mais ses gardes du corps sont des pechmergas, ces combattants kurdes qui assurent la sécurité du ministère, détenu par un des leurs, Hoshiyar Zebari.

Kurdes aux Affaires étrangères, chiites au Pétrole ou au ministère de l'Intérieur : les groupes les plus en cour auprès des Américains fortifient leurs positions. « Il s'agit de recréer un équilibre communautaire rompu sous Saddam qui favorisait les sunnites », explique Haj Hamoud. D'aucuns y voient plutôt une dérive lourde de menaces. D'autant que les forces de sécurité, appelées à succéder aux troupes étrangères, sont l'enjeu d'un entrisme de la part des vainqueurs des élections législatives de janvier. Ainsi, les responsables chiites viennent d'éliminer des ministères de l'Intérieur et des services de renseignements des ex-bassistes sunnites recrutés par le premier ministre sortant, Iyad Allaoui.

Les Kurdes, eux, ne cessent de renforcer leurs réseaux dans la ville de Kirkouk, arabisée par Saddam Hussein et « nettoyée »

des habitants arabes et turcomans, afin d'être rattachée aux trois provinces kurdes du nord. Les pechmergas tentent également d'investir la nouvelle armée, dont le chef d'état-major est un des leurs. Autre signe alarmant : l'arrestation récente de Palestiniens auteurs d'un attentat, par les miliciens chiites de l'organisation Badr, a relancé les interrogations sur les factions armées liées à l'ex-opposition irakienne à Saddam. Le veto américain à leur maintien n'a pas suffi à les faire disparaître.

Conséquence de cette confessionnalisation, l'unité des forces

persuader Washington d'avaliser la désignation de ce partisan d'une débaathification sans nuances.

« Nous redoutons un face-à-face entre d'une part les forces de sécurité chiites et kurdes et de l'autre une guérilla sunnite », déclare au Figaro un diplomate britannique de retour après un an passé à Bagdad. « A terme, nous avons peur d'une purification ethnique larvée qui déboucherait sur une guerre civile. »

Chaque confession ayant renforcé ses positions autour de ses bastions, les régions mixtes chiites sunnites risquent d'être les zones de frictions : al-Doura ou le nouveau Bagdad, Hilla ou al-Maiden, au sud de la capitale, pour ne citer

Les régions mixtes chiites sunnites risquent de devenir des zones de frictions

de sécurité laisse à désirer. Pendant le siège du Mausolée d'Ali, à Nadjaf, l'été dernier, beaucoup d'appelés chiites ont refusé d'attaquer leurs coreligionnaires.

Après la mise en garde contre les purges lancée par Donald Rumsfeld lors de sa récente visite à Bagdad, les Américains veillent au grain. Ils ont tenu à maintenir le général David Patrios comme « superviseur » des ministères de la Défense et de l'Intérieur, un dernier poste que l'Administration Bush ne voulait pas voir attribuer au général Bayan Jabbar, un chiite jugé trop proche des Iraniens. Il a fallu un déplacement outre-Atlantique du nouveau vice-président de la République, Adel Abdel Mahdi, pour

qu'elles. Dans ces zones, où la primauté de l'appartenance tribale sur la religion constitue toutefois un frein aux dérapages, une série de récentes attaques alimente la crainte d'un conflit ethnique. A Maiden, une quarantaine de chiites ont été jetés dans le Tigre. Tandis que non loin de Sadr City, quatorze corps de paysans sunnites ont été découverts.

« De toutes parts on exploite les discours radicaux », déplore Haj Hamoud. Côté sunnite, le groupe terroriste d'Abou Moussab al-Zarqawi, qui vient de dénoncer l'appel de Condoleezza Rice à une participation des sunnites au processus politique, est le promoteur de cette guerre ci-

vile. Mais au-delà, de nombreux membres de cette communauté aujourd'hui marginalisée voient la main des services secrets iraniens derrière les violences persistantes. En réaction, des chiites dénoncent les anciens saddamistes pour mieux justifier leurs purges antibaassistes. Un engrenage verbal qui se nourrit d'une atmosphère de complot permanent. Mais pas seulement. Depuis des mois, en effet, de nombreuses mosquées chiites sont attaquées, et certains imams sont assassinés.

« On ne propose pas de solutions politiques à l'impasse sécuritaire », regrette un responsable qui vient de refuser le ministère de la Culture. Les sunnites se plaignent que le comité chargé de la débaathification ait récusé la plupart de leurs candidats à la Défense et à l'Intérieur. L'ancien président de la République, Ghazzi Yawar, avait proposé l'universitaire Nabil Salim, proche des insurgés de Mossoul, sa ville d'origine. Sans succès. Trop proche de l'ancien régime, lui rétorqua-t-on.

Un état fédéral ou un Irak central fort ? L'ambiguïté autour des objectifs américains nourrit ces dérives. « Nous les avons constatées dès l'après-Saddam, se souvient un ancien diplomate à Bagdad, et pas seulement dans les ministères sensibles, mais aussi à l'Habitat tenu alors par un chiite qui faisait appel à des associations charitables chiites pour redistribuer des logements aux plus nécessiteux. On n'a visiblement pas tiré les leçons du passé ».

La tension s'exacerbe entre sunnites et chiites

Le Comité des oulémas, la principale association religieuse sunnite, a appelé hier à la démission des ministres de l'Intérieur et de la Défense, en accusant les services de sécurité d'avoir « tué » 14 sunnites à Bagdad, malgré le démenti des ministères de l'Intérieur et de la Défense, ce dernier promettant même d'arrêter rapidement la violence. « Ces agissements pourraient conduire, s'ils se poursuivent, à une guerre civile voulue par cer-

tains à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur » du pays, a averti le Comité. Son secrétaire général, cheikh Hareth al-Dari, a accusé l'organisation Badr, liée au principal parti chiite, l'Asrii, d'être responsable de l'assassinat d'un imam sunnite.

Les tensions intercommunautaires sont exacerbées par une récente vague d'attaques ciblées. Deux imams chiites ont été également assassinés ces derniers jours à Bagdad. La possibilité



d'un conflit ethnique refait surface. Soucieux d'apaiser les craintes, le nouveau ministre de la Défense, le sunnite Saadoun al-Doulaymi, a promis la fin des perquisitions dans les mosquées. De son côté, le premier ministre Ibrahim Jaafari, un chiite, a déclaré à l'issue d'une rencontre avec Ali Sistani, le leader spirituel de la majorité chiite, que ce dernier avait recommandé d'accorder une place importante aux sunnites dans la rédaction de la

Constitution définitive, le prochain chantier des nouvelles autorités. Cependant, la branche irakienne d'al-Qaïda, dirigée par Abou Moussab al-Zarqaoui, a appelé les dirigeants sunnites à ne pas participer aux travaux préparatoires de cette Constitution.

Sur le terrain, la violence a continué hier. Deux policiers ont été tués dans un attentat suicide à la voiture piégée près de Baiji, au nord de Bagdad. Un civil a été tué et trois autres ont été blessés

dans un accrochage entre la police et la guérilla à Mossoul. Le général Ibrahim Khamas, à la tête du département des enquêtes criminelles au ministère de l'Intérieur, a été abattu et sa femme blessée par des hommes armés, alors qu'ils sortaient de leur domicile à Bagdad. L'assassinat a été revendiqué sur Internet par le groupe Zarqaoui. Enfin, les corps de sept agents de sécurité turkmènes de Kirkouk, capturés lors d'une attaque de leur convoi près

de Faludja, ont été découverts à l'ouest de Bagdad.

Malgré la persistance du chaos, le gouvernement promet de vaincre rapidement la violence, en comptant notamment sur l'aide des pays voisins. « Nous allons travailler dur pour faire de l'Irak un havre de paix », assure Saadoun al-Doulaymi. « Nous serons prêts, en coordination avec le ministère de l'Intérieur, à assumer cette tâche et nous allez voir que

nous serons capables de préserver le sang des Irakiens », a poursuivi M. Doulaïmi.

Pour sa première visite à l'étranger depuis qu'il a pris ses fonctions, Ibrahim Jaafari a choisi la Turquie, où il effectuera une visite de deux jours vendredi et samedi. La question des rebelles kurdes de Turquie, dont quelque 5 000 sont réfugiés dans les montagnes du Kurdistan irakien, devrait être évoquée.

(AFP, Reuters.)



LE FIGARO JEUDI 19 MAI 2005

VISITE À BAGDAD DU CHEF DE LA DIPLOMATIE IRANIENNE.

L'Iran et l'Irak, ennemis d'hier aujourd'hui dirigés par des élites chiïtes, se sont engagés à ouvrir une nouvelle page dans leurs relations, à l'issue de la visite à Bagdad du chef de la diplomatie iranienne Kamal Kharazi (à droite). « Nous devons tourner la page du passé et bâtir des relations fondées sur le respect mutuel et la non-ingérence », a déclaré Hoshyar Zehari, son homologue irakien. L'Iran et l'Irak ont été en guerre de 1980 à 1988. « L'Irak est responsable de ses propres affaires. Une quelconque ingérence serait une insulte au peuple irakien », a souligné Kamal Kharazi, qui a affirmé la volonté de son pays de contrôler ses frontières avec l'Irak. Entre les deux voisins, des contentieux subsistent. Téhéran et Bagdad n'ont toujours pas signé de traité de paix. (Photo Sabah Arar/AFP.)

Iraq blames Saddam for Iran war

In issuing statement, officials seek closure

By Sabrina Tavernise

BAGHDAD: The new Shiite-led government publicly acknowledged for the first time on Thursday that Iraq and its leader at the time, Saddam Hussein, were the military aggressors in a bloody eight-year war with Iran.

In what officials said was an effort to move past the bitter legacy of the war, in which nearly a million people were killed, Iraq's government, together with the Foreign Ministry of Iran, said that Saddam and other former leaders must be tried for "committing military aggression against the people of Iraq, Iran

and Kuwait," among other crimes.

The statement came on the final day of a visit by the Iranian foreign minister, Kamal Kharazi, that country's first since the American invasion here two years ago. It was a stark illustration of how the political landscape here has shifted, with Iraqi Shiites, many of whom spent many years in exile in Iran, now running the government.

An Iraqi Foreign Ministry official, Labeed Abbawi, said the statement was intended to put the blame for the wars with Iran and later with Kuwait squarely on Saddam and other Baath Party leaders who face trials this year for killing Iraqis.

Abbawi argued that Iraq as a state was not responsible, as the aggression was also directed at Iraqis, who suffered staggering casualties in the war. Iraqis still flock to a war memorial sculpture in central Baghdad on public holidays to mourn their dead.

An aim of the acknowledgement of responsibility, he said, was closure.

"The file of the war, we want to put it behind us," said Abbawi, who helped write the statement. "We want to open a new path of cooperation."

The statement was not likely to sit well with Sunnis, who have been largely

left out of the new power structure in Iraq.

Sunni resentment has hardened in recent months, as Shiites, who are the majority in this country of 25 million people, took power for the first time in modern history. Shiite leaders have said they wanted to include Sunnis in the new government, but haggled for weeks over Sunni choices for a few positions. Since then, the insurgency, led predominantly by Sunni extremists, has staged a relentless stream of attacks, killing hundreds in three weeks.

In what have become increasingly shrill public remarks, two prominent Sunni religious groups on Thursday called for a temporary closure of Baghdad's Sunni mosques to protest what they say have been abuses by Iraq's predominantly Shiite security forces.

The Association of Muslim Scholars and another Sunni political group, the Iraqi Islamic Party, told clerics to close the dozens of Sunni mosques in Baghdad from dawn on Saturday to Monday evening. The groups were responding to what they said were arrests and killings of clerics by Iraqi security forces, a charge the government has denied.

The New York Times

TIME

MAY 16, 2005

INTERVIEW

THE VIEW FROM TEHRAN

Kamal Kharrazi, Iran's Foreign Minister, spoke in New York City last week with TIME's Adam Zagorin about nuclear politics, the Middle East and the U.S. occupation of Iraq

TIME Iran has acknowledged that it is holding members of al-Qaeda. What is happening with those detainees?

KHARRAZI There are a bunch of them [in Iran]. They are in custody, and certainly we will take care of them.

TIME How quickly would Iran like to see the U.S. withdraw from Iraq?

KHARRAZI Once security can be maintained by Iraqi forces, then foreign troops have to be asked by the Iraqi government to leave. I believe Iraqis are very much capable of taking care of their own interests.

TIME Would Iran ever accept permanent U.S. bases in Iraq?

KHARRAZI We are against that. That is not in the interest of anyone.

TIME Let's talk about Iran's nuclear program. Are there any circumstances that could lead to a permanent freeze on uranium enrichment by Iran?

KHARRAZI There will not be any permanent freeze, because [it] is our legitimate right to have this [nuclear] technology and produce what we need for the country. No incentive can substitute for our legitimate right.

TIME What would happen if the U.N. Security Council is asked to deal with Iran's nuclear program?

KHARRAZI Our engagement with the European side was not to stop enrichment but to continue with enrichment in a manner that would assure the other side that we would not divert material for weapons. [In] legal terms, nothing has



CHRISTOPHER SMITH FOR TIME

Americans make allegations that Iran is pursuing a nuclear-weapons program without being able to prove it.

been done wrong by Iran that could be taken to the Security Council. If for political reasons the Americans want to push an Iranian foreign policy to the Security Council... I don't think that would lead to any result that would be wished by the Americans.

TIME The Security Council could vote for sanctions.

KHARRAZI But we are used to sanctions. We have man-

aged to live and have managed to develop our capacities. One of the capacities that we have developed is nuclear technology.

TIME Is there an inherent clash between your position and that of the U.S.?

KHARRAZI On the nuclear-weapons issue, there is no clash. But what remains is that Americans make allegations that Iran is pursuing a nuclear-

weapons program without being able to prove it.

TIME There have been reports that the U.S. is flying unpiloted drones over Iran and has introduced surveillance teams into Iran. Is that the case?

KHARRAZI There are such rumors. If true, it proves that the U.S. is violating our sovereignty. And it certainly cannot be tolerated.

TIME The Middle East peace process is moving slowly...

KHARRAZI It has not moved. But there is some cease-fire. That doesn't mean there is new movement. I believe the Israelis are playing games. They are not sincere. We are not optimistic about any improvement in the situation.

TIME What could Iran do to advance the peace process?

KHARRAZI I don't think there is anything Iran can do. It is the responsibility of the Palestinians themselves and regional countries.

TIME Vice President Dick Cheney has suggested that Israel might take care of the nuclear problem in Iran. But Ariel Sharon has said that Israel has no plans to do so.

KHARRAZI I don't know if [the Israelis] have such a plan, but we are ready to defend ourselves.

TIME How would you describe the American attitude toward the People's Mujaheddin, which opposes your government and has been on the U.S. terrorist list for years?

KHARRAZI The People's Mujaheddin has been designated as a terrorist organization by the European countries and the U.S., and there is no reason they should be free to move around [in the U.S.] to collect money, to hold seminars and to contact members of Congress in the United States. This proves the U.S. is not serious about fighting terrorism.

« QUELLE EUROPE VOULONS-NOUS ? », une série du « Figaro »

L'Union et la Turquie, une promesse d'avenir

LE FIGARO SAMEDI 21 - DIMANCHE 22 MAI 2005

Nous poursuivons notre série sur la construction européenne avec les tribunes du premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, et du premier vice-président du Parlement européen, l'Espagnol Alejo Vidal Quadras. Nous publions aussi l'appel de l'organisation non gouvernementale EuropaNova en faveur du oui au traité constitutionnel.

Les citoyens de l'Union européenne mesurent-ils combien ils ont lieu d'en être fiers ? Elle porte à leur meilleur les nations qui la composent et celles qui aspirent à la rejoindre : elle garan-

PAR
RECEP TAYYIP
ERDOGAN*

tit les conditions d'une paix durable, elle assure un haut degré de prospérité économique et de protection sociale, elle défend sans relâche les libertés individuelles et les valeurs les plus universelles de l'humanité. C'est bien parce que la Turquie partage ardemment ces aspirations qu'elle souhaite intégrer l'Union. Celle-ci bénéficierait, en retour, du dynamisme économique de mon pays, de la croissance soutenue qu'il connaît, de sa jeunesse avide d'entreprendre et d'échanger.

Je sais que cette perspective suscite inquiétudes et critiques dans une partie de l'opinion française. Je peux comprendre certaines d'entre elles même si je n'y souscris pas : mais il est aisé de les apaiser, pour celles, du moins, qui sont accessibles à une argumentation rationnelle.

L'évocation de quelques traits significatifs du mouvement historique dans lequel la République de Turquie est engagée, et du « désir d'Europe » qui anime l'im-

mense majorité de mes concitoyens, devrait suffire à rassurer ceux qui craignent que nous ne puissions partager pleinement les valeurs et les objectifs de l'Union. Quant aux prétendues menaces de « dumping social » et de délocalisations, supposées découler de la différence de revenus moyens entre la France et la Turquie, je montrerai ici que notre volonté est, au contraire, de mettre tout en œuvre pour remonter résolument le niveau de vie et la protection sociale dans notre pays afin qu'ils rejoignent les standards européens. De nouveaux marchés s'ouvriront ainsi, au plus grand bénéfice de tous les partenaires.

L'échange public et libre d'arguments raisonnés est un élément essentiel du débat démocratique. Il est naturel que des questions et des attentes soient formulées à l'égard de la Turquie par les citoyens et les gouvernements de l'Union et c'est mon devoir, en tant que premier ministre, d'y répondre. En revanche, je suis, je l'avoue, choqué de voir parfois l'amalgame et l'insinuation prendre le pas sur le dialogue honnête et serein : quel sens y a-t-il à nous objecter le siège de Vienne ou les luttes entre l'Empire ottoman et celui des Habsbourg ? Comment ne pas être consterné d'entendre d'aucuns considérer tout musulman comme un intégriste, voire un terroriste en puissance ?

Nous veillons tout particulièrement, au prix d'une action volontariste, à rendre nos lois pénales et notre jurisprudence conformes aux critères européens. La peine de mort a été



officiellement abolie en 2004 mais elle n'était plus appliquée depuis 1984. Après cet *aggiornamento* du cadre législatif, nous concentrons nos efforts sur l'amélioration et la régularisation complète des pratiques judiciaires et policières pour lesquelles, reconnaissons-le, des progrès restent à accomplir.

Sur le plan économique, également, nous faisons beaucoup pour aligner notre législation sur les normes européennes : ouverture des marchés, autonomie des agents économiques, par rapport au pouvoir politique, Banque centrale indépendante.

Si la Turquie entre dans l'Union européenne, son développement industriel et commercial rapide offrira de nouvelles et fortes opportunités de croissance aux autres pays membres, et, notamment, à la France avec laquelle elle partage une si longue histoire commune et des liens culturels forts. Notre taux de croissance était de 10 % en 2004, il sera encore d'au moins 7 % en 2005 compte tenu des mesures que nous avons prises pour éviter les effets pervers d'une progression excessive. Nous jugulons efficacement l'inflation, préoccupante il y a

encore quelques années : elle devrait passer de 9 % en 2004 à 7 % en 2005. Le taux de chômage a d'ores et déjà été ramené à 10 %. Tous les indicateurs vont dans le bon sens. Ils confirment que nous sommes et serons toujours davantage des partenaires fiables et motivants pour vos entreprises.

Nous entendons profiter de ce contexte favorable pour faire monter en puissance une politique de protection sociale ambitieuse. Sur ce point encore, l'exemple français est une de nos sources d'inspiration. La Turquie as-

pire, en ce domaine, à se doter de dispositifs proches de ceux des premiers pays fondateurs de l'Europe et non, comme certains semblent le penser, à entretenir la précarité pour conquérir plus aisément des marchés ! Je jugerais indigne de ne pas faire prioritairement profiter les travailleurs de mon pays du progrès économique. En cela aussi, nous adhérons au projet européen de prospérité et de bien-être social.

Mais l'Europe est en outre un pôle déterminant du nouvel équilibre mondial. La France y joue un rôle éminent, en défendant des posi-

tions dont nous nous sentons souvent très proches. C'est une autre raison pour nous, et non des moindres, de vouloir que notre pays devienne membre de l'Union européenne. Il est essentiel que cette dernière affirme de plus en plus fortement son identité propre et sa vision originale sur la scène internationale. La Turquie entend être un partenaire loyal dans le concert des nations européennes pour contribuer à ce que l'Europe puisse s'imposer comme puissance en faisant valoir les va-

leurs et les réalisations qui font sa grandeur.

Mon souhait le plus cher est que les négociations entre l'Union européenne et la Turquie soient couronnées de succès : j'ai, bien sûr, la conviction que ce serait l'intérêt de mon pays mais je suis

certain, également, que ce serait celui des autres pays membres. Une synergie nouvelle entre les Etats qui composaient « l'Europe des 15 » et les nations plus récemment intégrées ne pourrait que relancer la marche de l'Union

vers son plein épanouissement économique, social, culturel et géopolitique. C'est une « nouvelle frontière », au sens que le président Kennedy avait donné à cette expression, qui s'ouvrirait aux citoyens de l'Europe.

On ne saurait s'étonner des « hésitations » que provoque le « désir d'Europe » de la Turquie : l'inattendu, en politique, est générateur d'angoisses.

Comme le remarquait l'un de vos grands auteurs qui a inspiré sa génération en

Turquie, Paul Valéry, « nous entrons dans l'histoire à reculons » car « l'histoire est la science des choses qui ne se répètent pas ». Mais cela ne doit pas nous conduire à ne pas faire ce qui mérite d'être fait !

* Premier ministre de la Turquie.

IRAK Publiées par le journal britannique « The Sun »

Les photos de Saddam qui fâchent Washington



Le tabloïd affirme avoir obtenu ces clichés auprès de militaires américains. (Photo Martinez/Reuter.)

Deux tabloïds du magnat Rupert Murdoch, le *Sun* (britannique) et le *New York Post* (américain), ont publié hier des photos de Saddam Hussein en prison. A la une du *Sun*, l'ancien président irakien, âgé de 68 ans, qui attend son procès pour crimes contre l'humanité, apparaît en caleçon blanc sous le titre « Le tyran en sous-vêtement ». D'autres clichés le

montrent lavant son linge à la main ou dormant dans le lit de sa cellule exiguë. Le journal britannique affirme que ces photos lui ont été fournies par « des sources militaires américaines (...) dans l'espoir de porter un coup à la résistance en Irak ».

Embarrassée, l'armée américaine a précisé que l'origine de ces photos était

« inconnue », mais qu'elles « pourraient remonter à plus d'un an ». Elle a annoncé qu'une « enquête sérieuse est en cours sur cet écart » et a déploré cette « violation des règlements du département de la Défense et probablement des conventions de Genève sur le traitement des détenus ».

Tandis que le directeur du quotidien arabe *Al-Quds Al-*

Arabi (Londres) estimait que ces photos allaient « mettre du sel sur la plaie » et « provoquer davantage d'attaques à la bombe », le président américain George W. Bush affirmait à la presse qu'il ne craignait pas un regain de violence : « Je ne pense pas qu'une photo déclenche des meurtres. »

Al-Jazira, la chaîne du Qatar, a annoncé qu'elle s'abstenait de montrer les photos du *Sun* « pour des raisons professionnelles et morales », alors que sa concurrente *Al-Arabiya* diffusait en boucle hier la une du *Sun*.

Le collectif de défense de Saddam Hussein a indiqué qu'il entendait porter plainte contre cette « violation des droits de l'homme ».

En visite à Washington, le ministre irakien de la Planification, Bahram Saleh a annoncé après un entretien avec la secrétaire d'Etat Condoleezza Rice que le procès de Saddam Hussein pourrait avoir lieu dans « les tout prochains mois ». Il n'a pas donné davantage de détails, affirmant sim-

plement qu'en Irak, le pouvoir judiciaire était désormais « indépendant » et que le prési-

dent déchu serait traité « conformément à la loi ».

A Bagdad, la violence a encore frappé avec un attentat à la voiture piégée contre un convoi de l'armée irakienne, dont deux soldats ont été tués. L'armée américaine a annoncé pour sa part que quatre de ses soldats avaient péri dans différentes attaques depuis mercredi et qu'un cinquième était mort dans un accident de la route provoqué par l'explosion d'une bombe.

Mais des signes d'apaisement sont apparus entre chiites et sunnites en Irak, les uns appelant à l'unité nationale et les autres donnant un caractère pacifique à une grève de la prière destinée à protester contre le meurtre de religieux de leur communauté à Bagdad.

Enfin, le premier ministre irakien, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, a affirmé à Ankara, où il effectue son premier voyage officiel à l'étranger, que son pays mènerait prochainement des discussions avec la Syrie sur les mesures à prendre contre les infiltrations d'insurgés en Irak via le territoire syrien.

(Reuters, AFP.)

LE FIGARO

22 MAI 2005

BRUSSELS MEETING

FINANCIAL TIMES MAY 21/MAY 22 2005

Conference to help Iraq draft constitution

By Roula Khajaf at the Dead Sea, Jordan

The US and European Union will sponsor an international conference on Iraq next month to support the newly elected government as Washington seeks to re-engage its partners and Baghdad's neighbours to defeat an escalating insurgency.

Preparations for the conference, to be held in Brussels in the third week in June, come as the US appears to be taking a more visible role in Iraq's political process and pushes the new government to intensify efforts to include the Sunni Arab minority, whose members dominate the insurgency.

Hoshiyar Zebari, Iraq's foreign minister, told the Financial Times yesterday that the conference, in which as many as 80 countries will participate, will discuss plans for the drafting of Iraq's permanent constitu-

tion, the most challenging task facing the democratically-elected national assembly.

It will also address ways of accelerating the disappointing flow of donor funds and speeding up the training of Iraqi security forces. "The US wants to re-engage the international community. And this is our chance to face the world after the elections and the formation of the new government," said Mr Zebari.

Despite the large turnout in the January 30 elections and the formation of a new government, Iraq's insurgency has shown no sign of abating, with more than 500 Iraqis killed this month.

Having taken a step back from Iraq's political scene after the summer transfer of sovereignty to Iraqis, the US has appeared more engaged in recent weeks, with visits to Baghdad by Condoleezza Rice, the US secretary of state, and this week by Robert Zoellick, her deputy.



Greater US engagement: Robert Zoellick (left) at a news conference this week with

Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Iraq's prime minister (right) Getty Images

Both have urged Iraqi leaders to follow an inclusive governing process.

Speaking to reporters at a World Economic Forum conference in Jordan yesterday, Mr Zoellick cautioned against reading too much into his visit. But he emphasised the need for a multi-pronged approach to crush the insurgency, including political and economic strategies. This approach would

be highlighted by the June conference, he said.

"You can't succeed solely on military grounds, you need a political, economic and military process," he declared. "The leaders I met [in Iraq] seemed to have a sense of purpose and commitment but there will be tough issues - one question is how you bring the Sunnis into that process."

Mr Zebari said the US

administration's main concern was to ensure adequate Sunni Arab participation in the writing of the constitution and to avoid a delay in the production of the vital document. "We have reached a critical point. If we fail on this - the writing of the constitution - the situation will deteriorate," he said.

With a weak representation in the elected national assembly, the Sunnis have only two seats on a 55-member committee charged with drafting the constitution.

However, the government is still seeking ways to give the Sunnis a greater say and the United Nations is expected to provide experts to help legitimise the process.

Meeting the constitution's August 15 deadline will also be a challenge, given that it took two months to form Iraq's government.

Les Américains accusent la Syrie d'aider les insurgés irakiens

A Bagdad, le Comité des oulémas accuse les forces de sécurité d'avoir tué 14 sunnites.

Les Américains ont accentué, hier, leur pression sur Damas, accusant la Syrie d'être le principal point de passage des insurgés irakiens, de les approvisionner en armes et d'être une «source d'instabilité dans la région». Sous le sceau de l'anonymat, un officier supérieur américain a même affirmé que la décision d'intensifier les attentats en Irak a été prise par le Jordanien Abou Moussab Al-Zarqaoui, chef de la branche

locale d'Al-Qaeda, lors d'une récente réunion en Syrie. Al-Zarqaoui, a-t-il confié à la presse, «n'était pas content du cours de l'insurrection» et «a ordonné d'utiliser plus de véhicules piégés». Cette rencontre se serait tenue il y a un mois environ, a précisé l'officier américain sans dire clairement si Al-Zarqaoui y a lui-même participé. Sans tarder, la Syrie a démenti ces informations «dénuées de tout fondement» et s'est dite prête à

coopérer avec Bagdad sur les problèmes de sécurité.

Par ailleurs, les tensions intercommunautaires semblent être à leur paroxysme en Irak. Le Comité des oulémas, principale association religieuse sunnite du pays, a accusé hier les services de sécurité d'avoir tué quatorze sunnites - dont trois imams - à Bagdad. Le Comité des oulémas s'en prend plus précisément à l'organisation chiite Badr, ancien bras armé du Conseil suprême de la

révolution islamique en Irak (CSRII), devenu l'un des piliers de l'actuel gouvernement. D'après un communiqué du même Comité, les forces gouvernementales «ont torturé, tué et se sont débarrassées des corps dans des décharges d'ordure du quartier de Chaab», dans l'ouest de la capitale irakienne. Le ministre sunnite de la Défense a démenti l'implication de ses services dans des meurtres de civils à Bagdad. ◆

AFP

20 MAI 2005



Iraq's Kurds

Now stop bickering

ARBIL

The Kurds must put their own house in order if Iraqi federalism is to succeed

THE Kurds were delighted that America's secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, stopped off first in their own quasi-independent region on her way to Baghdad. She was welcomed by Massoud Barzani, head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), one of two groups that run the show. But less rosy, from the Kurdish point of view, was a renewal of discord between the KDP and its old rival, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), run by Jalal Talabani, now Iraq's national president. Since a national government has at last emerged three months after a general election, the Kurds are supposed to have formed a new government in their own region, with Mr Barzani as its president, but they are painfully failing to do so.

The Kurdish assembly, often cited as a model for the rest of Iraq, has yet to recon-

vene. Under a deal struck in December between Messrs Barzani and Talabani, it was agreed that the latter would go to Baghdad after January's election and seek one of Iraq's high offices of state; he duly got the presidency. Mr Barzani would stay up north as the Kurdish region's president. But the two parties are now arguing over his powers and responsibilities.

The Kurdish parliament's first session since the January election was due to start on April 30th but has yet to do so. Honoured guests, many of whom had been twiddling thumbs and sipping tea for weeks in the lobby of Arbil's fanciest new hotel have drifted away.

Mahmoud Othman, a veteran Kurdish politician who has been trying to mediate, explains that the two parties agreed in principle that Mr Barzani should become

the region's president on the basis of December's "gentleman's agreement". But nobody had worked out the details. Senior PUK and KDP people have locked horns over the regional president's powers, method of election and duration of mandate. Broadly speaking, the KDP wants a stronger presidency for their man, while the PUK wants a more ceremonial one, a bit like the national one in Baghdad.

To the delight of most Kurds, the two leaders had previously announced that the KDP and the PUK would unify their twin administrations at the first meeting of a freshly mandated Kurdish parliament. This would be a big step. In the mid-1990s Iraq's Kurds fought each other in a fratricidal civil war. This ended in 1998 when the Americans helped broker a deal whereby the PUK would run the eastern and south-eastern part of Iraqi Kurdistan from Sulaymaniyah, while the KDP would control the north and west from Arbil, now the overall region's capital.

Haunted by the prospect of another bout of fratricide, with each party controlling large militias, ordinary Kurds are twitchy. "Kurdistan is Iraq's most stable area and our economy is doing well," says a lecturer at Arbil's Salaheddin university. "Shall we throw away all we've won because of these two parties?" "How can Kurds go to Baghdad to fight for a federal region, when we can't unite ourselves?" asked an exasperated local official. "How can we ask for [the disputed city of] Kirkuk? The Arabs will just laugh at us." ■

Iraq's constitution

Now get drafting

BAGHDAD

It may be easier for Kurds and Shias to get along than to satisfy Sunni Arabs

WITH Iraq's government at last up and running, parliament is getting down to the business of drafting a permanent constitution. But while that could take another nine months of wrangling, the spectre of sectarian violence still looms. In the past week, the bodies of some 15 Sunni Arabs who were members of the influential Muslim Scholars' Board or related to them, including four preachers, have been found ditched, mostly on the edge of Baghdad. In turn, the bodies of some 50 others, mainly Shias, have been found in similar places, they too apparently victims of sectarian killings, many with bullets in the back of the head, execution-style.

More than a score of car-bombings have hit Baghdad alone since the government took shape three weeks ago, killing nearly 500 Iraqis, though this week the rate went down a bit. In return, relatives of the Scholars' Board, which has generally endorsed the insurgency (but some of whose members say the insurgents should now stop fighting and engage in peaceful politics), accuse Iraqi interior-ministry commandos of targeting Sunni families suspected of links to the rebels.

On her first visit to Iraq since becoming secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice this week urged the new government, dominated by Shias and Kurds, to reach out to the

disaffected Sunni community. And the new defence minister, Saadoun al-Dulaimi, himself a Sunni Arab, said that counter-insurgency troops, presumably including the Americans, should not barge into mosques, even if insurgents seemed to be seeking refuge in them, for fear of sowing further sectarian hatred.

The 55-strong constitution-drafting committee has been drawn from the main parties in proportion to their tally of seats. So the dominant Shia-led United Iraqi Alliance has 28 members; the Kurdish coalition has 15; the mixed Sunni-Shia secular nationalist party of the outgoing prime minister, Iyad Allawi, has eight; four other spots have been filled by a Communist, a Turkmen, a Christian and a Sunni Arab.

According to the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), the interim constitution approved by unelected Iraqi politicians last year, the parties have until August to produce a draft of a permanent version, to be presented to parliament for approval, then submitted to a popular referendum. If approved, a fresh general election will be held under the new constitution—and the Iraqi government that emerges will no longer be deemed transitional.

If the committee cannot produce a draft by August, it can ask for a six-month extension.

sion, but the Americans want the job done sooner rather than later. This, they argue, would sustain the political momentum and make the insurgents realise that Iraq's new system is there to stay. Moreover, the sooner the new elections, the sooner that Sunni Arabs, who make up the bulk of the insurgents and who largely stayed away from the poll in January, will have a chance to take part in peaceful politics.

Many Iraqis say this timetable is unrealistically tight. A controversial clause in the TAL allows two-thirds of the voters in at least three of Iraq's 18 provinces, notably the trio that makes up the Kurdish region in the north, to veto a proposed constitution. This means that pretty well every main party will have to agree to the draft for it to have a chance of being endorsed.

There is much mistrust between the two major blocks—the Shia alliance, led by religious parties, and the more secular-leaning Kurds. But they have made progress. Both have agreed to use the TAL as the basis for the draft, even though some Shia Islamists had previously argued that they had accepted the document only under American pressure and that it had

given too much ground to the Kurds. But thanks to earlier debates over the TAL and during the formation of the cabinet, some

of the most divisive constitutional issues may already have been resolved. For example, many Shia Islamists now accept the TAL's wording that Islam should be a source rather than the source of Iraqi law.

It also provides a road map for settling the dispute over the status of the northern province and city of Kirkuk, a big cause of discord between Kurds and Shias. During Saddam Hussein's Arabisation of the area, which peaked in the 1990s, Kurds were ejected from the oil-rich province and replaced by Arabs, mostly from the impoverished Shia south. But the main Shia leaders now seem to accept the TAL's blueprint for resettling both Kurds and Shias (with compensation) in their original homes.

Committee members expect the issue of federalism to spark the fiercest debates. The Kurds, who have enjoyed de facto independence in their northern autonomous zone since the Gulf war of 1991, are willing to discuss the sharing of revenues from the northern oilfields but do not want people in the capital meddling in their internal affairs. Most Shias say they must draw the line at anything that might lead to the partition of Iraq. Between these two views, however, lies quite a lot of room for manoeuvre. Though initially hostile to the idea of federalism, Shia public opinion may be coming round to it, largely

due to the efforts of Shias from the oil-rich but impoverished southern province of Basra, who want to ensure that their riches are no longer siphoned off to the capital.

The Americans, meanwhile, are anxious to get more Sunni Arabs involved in writing the constitution. One problem is that the Sunni Arabs, themselves divided, have yet to articulate what kind of system

they want, except to rule out any kind of federalism that would leave their oil-poor provinces starved of funds. Other Sunni groups have yet to sound willing to engage in the necessary give-and-take of constitutional debate. The Muslim Scholars' Board has rejected in advance any version based on the TAL or any other "western" model; it says it will draw up its own constitution based solely on Muslim legal tradition.

So far, then, there are signs that Shias and Kurds may resolve their differences over a constitution. But any hope that the Sunni Arabs will easily join the debate, so undercutting the insurgency, is a long way from fulfilment. Meanwhile, the chance of sectarian warfare may be increasing. ■

A divided Iraq

The Bush administration has finally awakened to the grave dangers that Iraq's new government is courting by failing to reach out convincingly to credible representatives of the disaffected Sunni Arab minority.

Washington's concern helped prompt Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's urgent mission to Baghdad earlier this week. Unless her pleas for greater inclusiveness are heeded, the new government will not be able to establish the nationwide legitimacy it needs to draw significant numbers of Sunnis away from the continuing insurgency.

The implications of that are clear. As senior U.S. military commanders now acknowledge, Iraqi forces aren't militarily strong enough to prevail over the insurgency and will not be for a long time. If Baghdad continues to shun a serious political strategy to draw away Sunni support from the insurgents, large numbers of U.S. troops will be stuck fighting a prolonged and bloody counterinsurgency war in much of northern and western Iraq.

Such a sorry comedown from the high hopes of January's election would be tragic for Iraq. It would also be very bad for the United States. The one country it would serve quite

nicely is Iran. Tehran is not eager to see a successful, broadly based Shiite democracy, which might lead Iran's discontented millions to wonder why they put up with a corrupt, repressive and economically benighted Islamic dictatorship. Tehran is also understandably distrustful of Iraq's Sunni nationalists, having fought a long and costly war against Saddam Hussein's regime in the 1980s. And as the Iranian authorities test the world's patience with their nuclear programs, they can only be relieved to see the bulk of U.S. ground forces tied down indefinitely in counterinsurgency operations in Iraq.

Iran is already reinforcing its ties to Iraq's new Shiite leadership. Iran's foreign minister, Kamal Kharrazi, flew into Baghdad two days after Rice departed, and left Thursday brandishing a joint communiqué that blamed Saddam for that 1980s war. Moreover, the Iraqi party that has been most resistant to a more inclusive approach toward the Sunnis is the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, or Sciri, the Iraqi Shiite party with the closest ties to the Iranian ayatollahs.

Sciri is just one of several parties in the current government coalition. But none of the others, including the

Dawa Shiite religious party and the two secular Kurdish parties, have done much to resist Sciri's exclusionary views and vetoes of prospective Sunni nominees. As a result, qualified and representative Sunnis have been kept out of key positions in the new security forces, the cabinet and now the constitution-drafting process. Shockingly, only two Sunni Arabs were chosen to sit on the 55-member parliamentary panel named to draft Iraq's new constitution.

It is understandable that Iraq's Shiites and Kurds, who suffered so much under Saddam, are uncomfortable about letting people who served his predominantly Sunni regime back into positions of power. But unless lower- and middle-echelon Baathists are allowed to serve, much of the Sunni professional class will remain excluded from government and sympathetic to the insurgents.

Millions of Shiites and Kurds risked their lives to vote in January because they wanted to help build a better, more democratic Iraq. The intervening months have been hugely disillusioning, with polls now showing a stunning 40-percentage-point drop in public confidence since January, as politicians have squabbled, insurgent attacks have soared and public services have further deteriorated.

The dream of a new Iraq will ebb away unless leaders of the ruling Shiite and Kurdish coalition reach out boldly and bravely to their Sunni neighbors.

Sunnis form alliance in Iraq, seeking a say in government

By Sabrina Tavernise
and Richard A. Oppel Jr.

BAGHDAD: In a stark reversal from earlier this year, when Sunni Arabs boycotted national elections here, a broad gathering of Sunni sheiks, clerics and political leaders formed a political alliance, seeking to win back the political ground they lost to Shiites.

The meeting Saturday was the first wide-scale effort by Iraq's embittered and increasingly isolated Sunnis to band together politically, and was broadly attended by what organizers said were about 2,000 Sunni Arabs from Baghdad and nearby cities.

The gathering was an implicit acknowledgment that it had been a mistake to turn away from the political process and allow Shiites to control the government for the first time in modern Iraqi history.

"Lots of Sunni Arabs feel that they made a mistake by boycotting Iraq's election," Adnan Pachachi, a prominent Sunni whose representative attended the conference, said in a telephone interview from London. "They are really concerned about having a real participation in the writing of the constitution, not as advisers but as equal partners."

In speech after speech at the meeting, held at a Baghdad social club, delegates called on fellow Sunnis to cast aside past doubts and throw themselves into politics to try to weigh in on the writing of a constitution, which is already under way in a Shiite-controlled committee in the National Assembly. Even the Association of Muslim Scholars, a leading voice in the Sunni election boycott, signed on as one of the conference's organizers.

"We are passing through a very hard time, and we decided that all Sunnis should gather and rebuild our own

house," said Tarik al-Hashimy, leader of the Iraqi Islamic Party, one of the conference organizers. "We're trying to build a concrete coalition for the next election."

Conference organizers said in interviews that they would set up an office to coordinate political work with Sunni Arabs. They also appeared to have backed away from previous demands, including that the U.S. military leave Iraq as a condition for Sunni participation in any elections. The Muslim Scholars, however, continued to press that demand, but said it would not stand in the way of those who wanted to vote.

A crucial question is whether the Sunnis will be able to put aside their differences and work together. Sunnis are a fractured group and are not united around one single religious leader, as the Shiites are around Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.

The New York Times

Zaineb Obeid contributed reporting.

■ Al-Sadr tries to quell tension

Aides to the radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr met Sunday with a key Sunni group in a bid to soothe sectarian tensions that have flared since the new Shiite-dominated government was announced April 28, The Associated Press reported from Baghdad.

In a television interview, Sadr tried to dampen fears that extremists within Iraq's Shiite and Sunni communities were pushing the country toward civil war. "Iraq needs to stand side by side for the time being," Sadr told Al Arabiya in the interview Sunday.

Sadr resurfaced this week after lying low following fierce battles last year in the southern holy city of Najaf and Baghdad's impoverished Sadr City between his supporters and U.S. forces.

Reformists rejected as candidates in Iran

The Associated Press

TEHRAN: The hard-line Guardian Council, the constitutional watchdog that supervises elections in Iran, on Sunday rejected all reformists who registered to run in this year's presidential race, approving only six out of the 1,010 hopefuls. Leaders of the reform movement threatened to boycott the vote.

The final list effectively barred reformers seeking democratic changes within the ruling Islamic establishment from the presidential election. The move came as ruling clerics seek to consolidate their power in the June 17 vote following the departure of President Mohammad Khatami, a reformist.

Iran also is facing international pressure over its controversial nuclear program, trying to convince the United States and Europe that it is not seeking to develop weapons.

The approved candidates included the powerful former president, Hashemi Rafsanjani, who moves frequently between the hard-line and more moderate camps and was seen as a front-runner in the race.

A leader of the Islamic Iran Participation Front, Iran's largest reformist party, said the party will boycott the polls.

"We are warning the Guardian Council that we will not participate in the election if it doesn't reverse its decision," said Rajabali Mazrouei, a top party member.

Similar outrage was provoked last year when the Council disqualified more than 2,000 reformists from legislative elections, leading to a low turnout. Reformists denounced that vote as a "historical fiasco."

The Guardian Council is controlled by hard-liners loyal to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the final say on all state matters. The council barred women from running for the office.

The other approved presidential candidates were a former police chief, Muhammad Bagher Qalibaf; the former radio and television chief Ali Larijani; the mayor of Tehran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad; the former parliamentary speaker, Mahdi Karroubi; and the former head of the elite Revolutionary Guards, Mohsen Rezaei.

Mostafa Moin, the former culture



Mohammed Uraibi/The Associated Press

Sunni Muslims listen to speeches at the gathering in Baghdad. Sunni Arabs will form a political and religious organization to represent them in the government.

minister, who was the sole candidate of Iran's largest reformist party, the Islamic Iran Participation Front, was among those disqualified.

Khatami, who came to power in a landslide in 1997, was regularly stifled in his attempts to enact political and social reforms by hard-line clerics led by Khamenei. He is barred by law from seeking a third term.

Rezaei, Larijani, Ahmadinejad and

Qalibaf are widely seen as Khamenei candidates because of their strong loyalty to him. All of them are former military commanders.

Karroubi is a hard-liner-turned-reformer who has lost his popularity among the youth and reformists because of his increasing support of Khamenei and his hard-line policies.

With the reformist movement severely weakened, Rafsanjani is seen

as the most credible force to stop hard-line allies of Iran's supreme leader from seizing the post of president. But the savvy politician has changed his stripes frequently in the past, sometimes backing the hard-liner camp, sometimes taking a more moderate line and seeking to build ties with the West.

Au sud de Bagdad, les chiïtes fuient le «triangle de la mort»

Les violences entre les deux grandes communautés musulmanes d'Irak, les sunnites et les chiïtes, s'intensifient, malgré les appels au calme lancés par les leaders religieux

la Croix
Lundi 23 mai 2005

Des chiïtes ont fui en nombre le «triangle de la mort», au sud de Bagdad, où des groupes extrémistes sunnites et des bandes de malfaiteurs font régner la terreur et multiplient assassinats et menaces. Haidar, qui tait son nom par peur des représailles, a vécu un temps à Latifiyah, petite ville entre le Tigre et l'Euphrate, à 40 km au sud de Bagdad. Il a dû s'enfuir à Nadjaf après l'assassinat de son père et de son

Le «triangle de la mort» est peuplé actuellement d'autant de chiïtes que de sunnites. Mais cela n'a pas toujours été le cas.

frère. «Ils les ont tués devant notre maison, uniquement parce qu'ils étaient chiïtes», se lamente ce jeune homme de 28 ans. Notre maison se trouvait juste à côté d'une mosquée où viennent

prier des wahhabites», des rigoristes sunnites. Le «triangle de la mort», borné par les villes de Latifiyah, Mahmoudiyah et Youssoufiyah, est peuplé actuellement d'autant de chiïtes que de sunnites. Mais cela n'a pas toujours été le cas. Saddam Hussein, soucieux de contrôler cette région aux terres riches et à majorité chiïte, y avait implanté des sunnites, essentiellement dans la campagne alors que les chiïtes sont restés dans les villes. Après l'invasion américaine en mars 2003, les fidèles de l'ex-dictateur et les tribus wahhabites ont fondu sur les énormes dépôts d'armes et de munitions et pris le contrôle de la zone, au grand dam des forces américaines et irakiennes.

«L'an dernier, j'avais un projet avec mon frère de construire une mosquée à Youssoufiyah. Mais des tracts ont

été placardés dans la ville appelant à nous tuer, affirme Abdel Hussein, un religieux chiïte de 50 ans réfugié à Bagdad. Au début je n'ai pas pris ces menaces au sérieux. J'aurais dû, car mon frère a été tué dans notre rue peu après cet appel et mon fils de 7 ans a été enlevé. J'ai dû rassembler tout mon clan et menacer les wahhabites. Mon fils a été libéré, ce qui a permis d'éviter de justesse un bain de sang.» Après l'incident, la vie dans la ville est devenue «intenable» et le religieux a choisi de s'installer à Sadr City, le quartier chiïte de Bagdad.

Les témoignages de chiïtes ayant fui cette zone sont légion. Un nouvel habitant de Diwaniyah, à 180 km au sud de Bagdad, a quitté Latifiyah après avoir été menacé car il refusait de lancer des attaques anti-

américaines. Abdallah, un paysan de 42 ans, a été accusé d'être membre de l'organisation chiïte Badr, ancien bras armé du Conseil supérieur de la révolution islamique en Irak (CSRII). Il s'est enfui à Karbala, à 110 km au sud de Bagdad, avec sa

femme et ses huit enfants.

«Des centaines de familles ont fui la région ces dernières semaines ou ces derniers mois, affirme Salah Abdelrazzak, un porte-parole de l'organisation chargée des biens religieux (waqf) chiïte. Même phénomène dans d'autres régions mixtes comme Salman Pak, Madaïen (entre 25 et 30 km de Bagdad) ou le quartier de Dora dans le sud de Bagdad. À Dora, je connais personnellement 50 familles qui ont quitté le quartier et ça ne semble être que le sommet visible de l'iceberg.»

Ces dernières semaines, les meurtres de sunnites et de chiïtes, parmi lesquels des imams, se sont multipliés en Irak dans ce qui semble être une escalade des représailles entre les deux communautés. Pour Abdel Hussein, cette situation est très dangereuse. «Je suis un religieux et la marja'iya (l'autorité religieuse chiïte) nous interdit de nous venger. Mais je ne sais combien de temps nous pourrions éviter une guerre civile.»

SALAM FARRAJ
(AFP)



Enterrement d'une famille chiïte assassinée à Latifiyah. De nombreux chiïtes fuient la région pour rester en vie.

Un ouléma kurde disparu: 10.000 kurdes manifestent dans le nord de la Syrie



DAMAS, 21 mai (AFP) - 12h06 - Quelque 10.000 Kurdes ont manifesté samedi à Qamichli, dans le nord de la Syrie, pour exiger la vérité sur le sort de l'ouléma kurde Mohammad Maachouk Khaznaoui, porté disparu depuis le 10 mai, a indiqué à l'AFP un responsable d'un parti kurde syrien.

Le secrétaire du parti Yakiti, Hassan Saleh, a déclaré depuis Qamichli que ces manifestants, qui se sont rassemblés à l'appel de partis kurdes, ont aussi réclamé "un règlement de la cause kurde par les moyens démocratiques" et la libération des Kurdes encore détenus.

M. Saleh a indiqué avoir lancé devant les manifestants un appel au président Bachar Al-Assad pour que "toute la lumière soit faite" sur la disparition de l'ouléma kurde.

L'avocat Anouar Bounni, qui défend de nombreux opposants au régime baassiste, a confirmé que des milliers de kurdes avaient pris part à la manifestation à Qamichli, à 700 km au nord-est de Damas.

Mercredi, un responsable au ministère de l'Intérieur a démenti l'arrestation de cheikh Khaznaoui par les autorités.

Plusieurs organisations de défense des droits de l'Homme ont annoncé ces jours-ci "la disparition à Damas" du cheikh kurde, vice-président du Centre d'études islamiques. L'organisation arabe des droits de l'Homme a "exprimé des craintes que les services de sécurité soient derrière sa disparition".

Cheikh Khaznaoui, qui s'efforce dans son enseignement de mettre l'accent sur la compatibilité de l'islam et de la démocratie, bénéficie d'une grande popularité en Syrie.

Me Bounni avait dit qu'il tenait les autorités pour "responsables de la vie et de la liberté de cheikh Khaznaoui".

Les Kurdes de Syrie, quelque 1,5 million de personnes, représentent environ 9% de la population du pays et sont installés essentiellement dans le nord. Outre la reconnaissance de leur langue et de leur culture, ils revendiquent des droits politiques et administratifs.

5 morts dans des affrontements entre l'armée turque et des rebelles kurdes



DIYARBAKIR, (Turquie), 25 mai (AFP) - 16h00 - Cinq personnes ont été tuées mercredi dans le sud-est à majorité kurde de la Turquie au cours du dernier épisode de la tension renaissante entre l'armée turque et les rebelles kurdes de la région, a-t-on annoncé de source officielle.

Deux soldats et deux gardes villageois ont été tués dans une zone rurale de la province de Batman lorsque le véhicule militaire qui les transportait a sauté sur une mine placée par les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), ont précisé des sources de la sécurité locale.

Les gardes villageois sont des miliciens kurdes recrutés par le gouvernement pour épauler l'armée dans sa lutte contre le PKK.

Dans la province voisine de Diyarbakir, un militant kurde de nationalité syrienne a été tué au cours d'un affrontement entre des soldats turcs et un groupe de rebelles du PKK à proximité de la ville de Dicle, selon une source officielle.

Le sud-est connaît une recrudescence de la tension depuis que le PKK a mis un terme l'an dernier à un cessez-le-feu de cinq ans qu'il avait déclaré unilatéralement.

Le PKK a mené une campagne violente en faveur de l'autonomie des Kurdes de la région de 1984 à 1999. Les combats ont fait quelque 37.000 morts.

L'armée turque a mis en garde au début du mois contre l'augmentation des infiltrations de militants du PKK de retour en Turquie à partir du nord de l'Irak voisin où ils s'étaient réfugiés à la suite du cessez-le-feu de 1999.

Quatre soldats turcs tués par l'explosion d'une mine



DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 17 mai 2005 (AFP) - 12h18 - Au moins quatre soldats turcs ont été tués mardi par l'explosion d'une mine vraisemblablement posée par des rebelles kurdes dans le sud-est montagneux du pays, ont annoncé les autorités locales.

Le bureau de presse du gouvernorat de la province de Siirt a annoncé que quatre soldats avaient perdu la vie dans l'explosion survenue sur le mont Gabar.

La chaîne d'information NTV a donné un bilan de six soldats tués.

La mine aurait été posée par les membres du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatiste) qui a mené une lutte armée pour un Etat kurde indépendant dans le sud-est anatolien peuplé majoritairement de Kurdes et dont la principale ville est Diyarbakir.

Les combats, interrompus par une trêve unilatérale du PKK décrétée en 1999, ont repris en juin 2004, mais ont perdu de leur intensité.

PKK Threatens to Carry War in Turkey's Southeast to Western Cities

SELCAN HACA OGLU Associated Press 18 May 2005



The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has threatened to carry the war in Turkey's southeast to bigger cities in the west of the country if Turkey maintains its military drive against the PKK in the area, a pro-Kurdish newspaper reported Tuesday.

A senior PKK commander issued the threat in a statement carried by the website of the pro-Kurdish *Ozgur Politika* newspaper, as concern grows about a possible further increase in violence following a European court judgment that PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan did not receive a fair trial in 1999.

It is not clear if Turkey will retry Ocalan, but a retrial would be extremely unpopular with many Turks who blame the imprisoned PKK leader for the bloody insurgency that has killed some 37,000 people since 1984.

"In the upcoming period, if the solution of the Kurdish problem is based on classical oppressive actions instead of democratic, peaceful methods, then the location of the war that we will develop will be different," the newspaper quoted the rebel commander Yusuf Turhalli as saying. "That will be ... Turkey's cities."

The PKK threat followed Turkish intelligence reports saying the rebels are trying to smuggle plastic explo-

sives into Turkey from neighboring Iraq for attacks in cities. The PKK's main bases are in northern Iraq, where they have some 3,500 fighters.

Turkey has been pressing the U.S. Army to take action against the group in Iraq. Another 1,500 fighters are believed to be inside Turkey.

The PKK commander said there had been "serious preparations" for action in cities.

"From now on, the state should definitely see a danger for itself everywhere there is a Kurd," PKK commander Turhalli said, adding that the PKK decided that it had been a mistake to "limit their fight to the mountains of the southeast."

"We have determined that we cannot be a deterrent force and achieve major successes by fighting in the mountains ... alone."

Turkey rejected earlier attempts to transform the group into a political force by refusing any dialogue with the group. Today, the PKK is apparently fractured between groups that favor negotiations and those that believe they should return to the battlefield. Reflecting the split, the Kurdish rebels have intensified their attacks.



Irak: accord kurde sur la présidence de la région autonome et le Parlement

SALAHEDDINE (Irak), 29 mai (AFP) - 9h58 - Le président irakien Jalal Talabani et Massoud Barzani, chefs des deux grands partis du nord de l'Irak, ont trouvé un accord sur la présidence de la région autonome et fixé au 4 juin la date de la réunion du Parlement kurde, a indiqué dimanche une source politique.

Cet accord a été négocié lors d'une réunion samedi soir à Salaheddine, lieu de villégiature proche d'Erbil, ville kurde à 350 km au nord de Bagdad, a déclaré à l'AFP un responsable kurde proche du dossier.

"L'entretien entre le président Talabani et M. Barzani a été un succès et tous les problèmes sur la durée et les prérogatives de la présidence de la région autonome kurde qui doit revenir à M. Barzani ont été résolus", selon cette source qui s'exprimait sous le couvert de l'anonymat.

"Les deux responsables se sont mis d'accord pour que M. Barzani exerce les fonctions de président de la région kurde durant quatre ans", a-t-il ajouté.

Selon lui, "les deux dirigeants ont aussi décidé que le Parlement kurde (élu le 30 janvier) se réunira pour la première fois le 4 juin". C'est à cette date que le précédent Parlement kurde issu "des premières élections libres au Kurdistan en 1992 s'était réuni", a-t-il rappelé.

La session inaugurale du parlement kurde de 111 sièges, élu en même temps que l'Assemblée nationale irakienne le 30 janvier, qui devait se tenir fin avril, avait été reportée en raison de différends entre les deux formations.

M. Talabani voulait que le président de la région kurde soit nommé par le Parlement régional tandis que M. Barzani voulait se soumettre au suffrage universel, ce qui supposait un nouveau scrutin dans le nord de l'Irak.

Le Parlement kurde regroupant des représentants des trois provinces autonomes d'Erbil, de Dohouk et de Souleimaniyah, est dominé par les élus de l'Alliance kurde formée de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK, de M. Talabani) et du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK, de M. Barzani) qui ont envoyé aussi 75 députés au Parlement national et auxquels deux autres députés se sont alliés.

Bagdad accepte de déplacer 3.100 Kurdes iraniens vers un site plus sûr



GENEVE, 31 mai (AFP) - 15h42 - Le gouvernement irakien a décidé de transférer 3.100 réfugiés kurdes iraniens du camp d'Al Tach, à l'ouest de Bagdad, vers une région plus sûre dans le nord du pays, selon le Haut commissariat de l'Onu pour les réfugiés (HCR).

"Nous venons juste d'être informés que les services du Premier ministre irakien ont approuvé une proposition de déménagement des réfugiés demeurés à Al Tach vers un site beaucoup plus sûr près de Souleimaniyah", dans le Kurdistan irakien, a déclaré une porte-parole du HCR, Jennifer Pagonis.

Près de 3.200 réfugiés du camp d'Al Tach ont déjà fui ces derniers mois, beaucoup d'entre eux se rendant près de Souleimaniyah où les autorités locales leur ont apporté de l'aide, a rappelé la porte-parole.

Le camp d'Al-Tach est situé à l'ouest de Bagdad entre les villes de Ramadi et Falloujah, dans l'une des régions les plus instables d'Irak.

Les réfugiés avaient commencé à fuir le camp en novembre dernier, après une attaque dirigée contre un poste de police du camp.

Iraqi insurgents kill 33 in car-bomb attacks

Shiites again targets in fresh wave of attacks

By Richard A. Oppel Jr.

BAGHDAD: Insurgents killed at least 33 Shiites and wounded more than 120 others in three car-bomb attacks in northern and central Iraq in what appeared to be the latest in a wave of terrorist violence designed to exploit the sectarian divisions that have wracked the country as political leaders from every stripe try to tamp down rising tensions among Sunni Arabs and Shiites.

In the northern city of Tal Afar near the Syrian border, two suicide car bombers tried Monday night to kill a community leader in a Shiite neighborhood. The first bomber was shot and killed by security guards; the second missed his target but killed 15 people and wounded 20 others, Khasro Goran, the deputy governor of Ninewa Province, said in a telephone interview.

Goran said people in the neighborhood speak the Turkish language but are Shiites. "They are close friends of the Kurds," he said.

The attacks marked a return to the heavy violence that dominated Iraq in late April and early May. Last week, a senior American commander in Baghdad said he believed insurgents were lying low and preparing for a new round of attacks. At least 40 people were killed in Iraq in the past 24 hours.

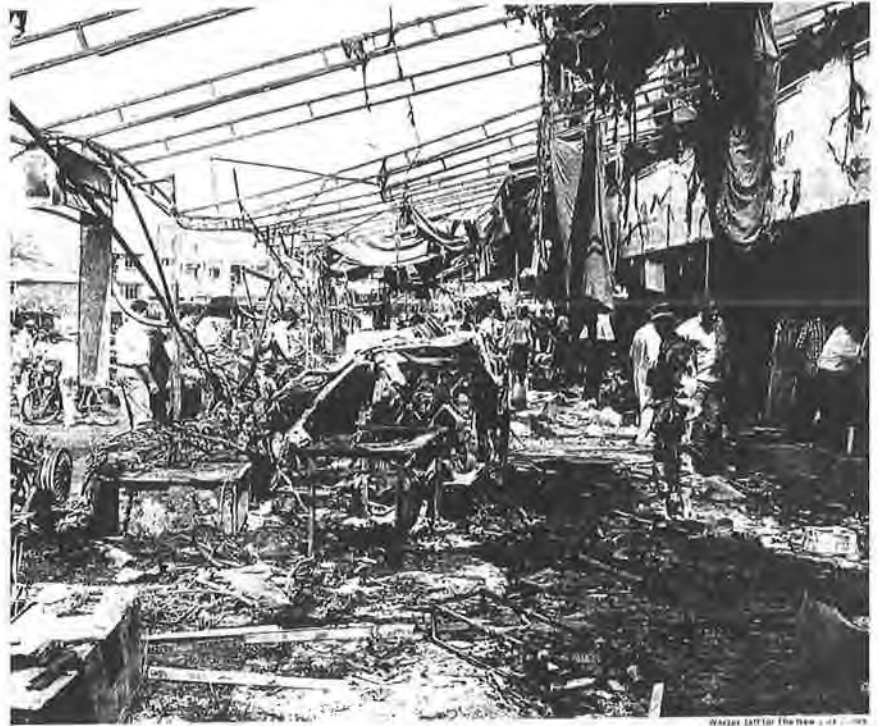
In the first major attack on Monday, a car bomb exploded outside a popular and crowded restaurant near the heavily-Shiite slum of Sadr City in Baghdad, killing eight and wounding 89.

On Monday evening, a car bomb exploded outside a large Shiite mosque in Mahmudiyah, a restive and dangerous town of Sunnis and Shiites south of Baghdad, killing at least 10 and wounding 15 more.

Many victims were children, an interior ministry official said.

At least three American soldiers were killed in attacks in the large northern city of Mosul on Sunday, the military said, without providing other details. An aide to Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Wael Al Rubaie, was assassinated along with his driver in the capital's upscale Mansur neighborhood early Monday, an interior ministry official said.

And five people were also killed in Tuz Khurmatu, about 190 kilometers, or 120 miles, north of Baghdad, when insurgents attacked a convoy carrying members of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the party that controls the eastern and southern reaches of the Kurdish



Heavy damage was inflicted when a car bomb went off during lunchtime outside a Baghdad restaurant popular with police officers. At least seven people were killed.

territories, party officials said.

The bombing near Sadr City demolished the Habayibnah restaurant and much of the apartment building above it and ignited at least a dozen cars parked nearby.

An Iraqi reporter for the New York Times who was near the scene when the bomb detonated said that after the blast, friends and relatives of people at the restaurant rushed to the scene amid the screams of pain from victims inside. Iraqi policemen, who had a checkpoint set up nearby, arrived quickly, fired pistols into the air and warned people to get away for fear that another bomb could be timed to go off.

Zuheir Rajab, a 26-year-old engineer at a cell phone company, said he and his roommate Ahmad were in their apartment nearby when they heard the loud blast. "It was really fast and all we man-

aged to do was protect our faces with our hands from glass shards from the window," Rajab said.

The blast wrecked their apartment. "I searched for Ahmad and found him under some wreckage," Rajab said. "Our neighbor came and took us to the hospital." At al-Kindi hospital, Zuheir and Ahmad held each other, their T-shirts torn and stained with blood.

For the second day, the U.S. military said seven battalions of Iraqi troops and a force of American soldiers swept through a particularly hostile region of western Baghdad near the Abu Ghraib prison, sealing off large areas and detaining what it said was 285 suspected insurgents. The objective is to kill and capture insurgents responsible for many of the recent attacks in Baghdad, said American officials who described the operation as the military's largest joint operation so far with Iraqi forces.

Other American soldiers arrested 15 terror suspects and seized \$6 million during early morning raids on Sunday throughout Baghdad, the military said.

The New York Times

■ Shiite cleric said top choice

A Shiite Muslim cleric who is an aide to the leader of Iraq's largest Shiite Arab party will most likely head the committee drafting the country's new constitution, three lawmakers said Monday, The Associated Press reported in Baghdad.

The chairman will be announced during Tuesday's meeting of the National Assembly, or parliament, said Hussain al-Shahristani, a deputy parliament speaker.

Although al-Shahristani would not

May 24, 2005

Herald Tribune

say who the choice was, three legislators said it probably would be Hummam Hammoudi, a Shiite Muslim cleric who is a senior aide to Abdul-Aziz al Hakim.

Hakim, a cleric, leads the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, which is Iraq's largest Shiite Arab party, and controls the largest bloc in the 275-member National Assembly.

The deputies — Abdul-Khaleq Zangana, Jalaleddine al-Saghir and Bahaa al-Araji — said Hammoudi will have a Kurdish deputy, legislator Fouad Mas-soum.

The Kurds have asked that a second deputy be named and requested that he be a Sunni Muslim Arab, a proposal that the Shiites have accepted, he said, adding that the Sunni Arab legislator of choice was Adnan al-Janabi.

■ Sadr to help ease tensions

A day after a large group of anti-

American Sunni leaders pledged to enter the political process, a rebel Shiite cleric who led uprisings against the American military suggested that he would forgo military efforts and work to ease rising sectarian tensions throughout Iraq. The New York Times reported in Baghdad.

The cleric, Moktada Sadr, led revolts against American forces last year and was accused of murdering a rival Shiite cleric the year before. Many American officials view him as untrustworthy and continue to fear that he has been lying low so he can bring his militia back in force.

In an interview Sunday with the Arabiya satellite news channel, Sadr said he now wanted to solve problems "po-

litically, socially and peacefully."

Referring to the current wave of sectarian violence, "Each period of time has its own necessities, and now I see that we face a political and cultural

war." He also said: "We cannot face political war in a military action. The military war is to be faced with a military war, but the political war is to be faced with itself."

Sadr has a history of making promises to renounce violence only to break them. He was driven underground in August after the American military decimated his militia during a siege of the Imam Ali Shrine in the southern city of Najaf that left hundreds of Iraqis dead.

Iraq's top Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, ordered him to stop making trouble before elections in which the Shiites, who are a majority of the population, were assured of winning control of the government after decades of oppression under the Sunni minority.

Syria cuts U.S. military and intelligence ties

By Douglas Jehl and Thom Shanker

WASHINGTON: Syria has halted military and intelligence cooperation with the United States, its ambassador to Washington said during an interview, in a sign of growing strains between the two countries over the insurgency in Iraq.

A Bush administration official said that Syria's stance had prompted intense debate at high levels about new steps that might be taken against the Damascus government. The official said the options included possible military or other action that might be taken against people inside Syria who are providing support for the insurgency.

"There's a lot of discussion about what to do about Syria and what a problem it is," said the administration official, who works for a government agency that has been involved in the debate.

Relations between Syria and the United States have been souring for months, and some Bush administration officials said that the level of cooperation provided by Syria had been dwindling even before the latest move. The American officials declined to provide an on-the-record response to the statements by the ambassador, Imad Moustapha, citing the sensitivity of the issue.

Moustapha said Syria had in the past 10 days "severed all links" with the U.S. military and Central Intelligence Agency because of what it called unjust American allegations. The Bush administration has complained bitterly that the Damascus government is not

doing enough to halt the flow of men and money to the insurgency in Iraq.

Moustapha said Syria had done all it could to respond to the U.S. complaints, including taking steps to build barriers and add to patrols along Syria's long border with Iraq. Syria has jailed about 1,200 foreign fighters who sought to enter Iraq from Syria, the ambassador said, and has returned scores of others to their home countries, including Saudi Arabia and Jordan, he said.

But Moustapha said the renewal of U.S. complaints had caused his government to abandon the idea of providing further help.

"We thought, why should we continue to cooperate?" Moustapha said. He said he believed that the Bush administration had decided "to escalate the situation with Syria" despite the steps Syria had taken against the insurgents in Iraq and despite its withdrawal in recent weeks of troops from Lebanon, in response to international demands.

Moustapha was interviewed on Friday at the Syrian Embassy in Washington. He spoke as the Bush administration continued to sharpen its criticisms of Damascus, with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice saying the same day that Syria was "allowing its territory to be used to organize terrorist attacks against innocent Iraqis."

Administration policy makers, intelligence officials and military officers have all criticized Syria.

They have complained of what they say has been its role in permitting Iraqi Baathists and others loyal to the former Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein to undermine the new government in Bagh-

dad from havens in Syria. They say Syria has also permitted foreign fighters to cross its territory into Iraq, sometimes with assistance from the Iraqi Baathists.

A senior U.S. military officer acknowledged that "the Syrian government has in some cases been helpful" in building border obstacles and otherwise taking action against people involved in providing support to the insurgency. Still, the officer said, "our sense is that they protest a bit too much and that they are capable of doing more. We expect them to do more." U.S. intelligence officials have said that Syria has provided important assistance over the last four years in the campaign against Al Qaeda. Syria has also worked with American officers on issues related to patrolling the Iraqi border. Any scaling back of either effort could have a notable impact.

The New York Times

■ UN verifies Syrian pullout

A UN team has verified the pullout of all Syrian troops and intelligence officials from Lebanon, Secretary General Kofi Annan announced Monday. The Associated Press reported from the United Nations in New York.

"We have verified all the withdrawal, including the border area," he said.

The UN Security Council adopted a resolution last Sept. 2 calling on Syria to withdraw all its troops and intelligence operatives from Lebanon. But it was the international pressure following the assassination of Hariri on Feb. 14 that spurred the Syrians to leave.

Syria's last soldier in Lebanon walked across the border on April 26, ending a 29-year military presence.

Peter S. Canellos

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune May 25, 2005

Trying Saddam

WASHINGTON
Saddam Hussein's return to the headlines last week — in a leaked photo showing him in his underpants — served as an odd reminder that the deposed dictator is still awaiting trial 17 months after his capture.

Saddam's lawyer seized the moment to declare that the long captivity without an indictment is unfair. But fairness to the accused mass murderer is the least of the problems with the delay in bringing Saddam to justice. What seemed 17 months ago to be an ideal opportunity both to peel back the curtain on Saddam's brutal regime and inaugurate a new era of justice for the Iraqi people may have been squandered.

With a new government struggling to get its footing, and relations between the majority Shiites and Saddam's fellow Sunnis at a delicate stage, putting Saddam on trial at any point in the near future would require more delicacy than the new government has shown in most of its dealings. The U.S.-trained Iraqi Special Tribunal has drafted its procedures and is edging toward indictments of two of Saddam's henchmen, to be followed closely by charges against Saddam himself.

But a quick trial may not be in Iraq's immediate interest. A stomach-turning recitation of Saddam's crimes against Shiites and Kurds could inflame public anger against Saddam's Sunni defenders at a time when Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari is trying to assuage Sunni fears at being outnumbered in the new government. And giving Saddam a platform to rally his supporters with anti-American rhetoric — and possibly claims that the United States approved of crimes that occurred while he was an American ally in the 1980s — could raise the threat level against U.S. troops.

When Saddam was found in his spider hole in December 2003, the prospect of a trial seemed welcome to almost everyone — from the Bush administration, which was eager to spotlight Saddam's crimes; to the Iraqi people, most of whom celebrated his capture; and to the United Nations, which hoped to connect the prosecution of Saddam to its decades-long effort to build up international criminal law.

President George W. Bush made it clear, however, that he wasn't going to have the United Nations involved in Saddam's trial. The fact that Iraq has long practiced the death penalty — and the United Nations does not — played a role in some of the reactions, pro and con, to Bush's decision. And the fact that the United Nations might have used the trial as a way to

build support for its permanent international criminal court, which the United States opposes, also factored into the reactions.

In retrospect, though, the failure to enlist UN assistance for Iraqi prosecutors may have made a slow process even slower. The United Nations could have provided global credibility and an existing set of procedures. And Iraqi prosecutors, at the urging of their U.S. allies, could have pared back some of the flabbiness in the UN structure that allowed the former



Yugoslav leader, Slobodan Milosevic, to drag out his trial for 39 months.

Instead of enlisting the United Nations, however, the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority turned to Salem Chalabi, a London-based commercial lawyer and the nephew of the former Pentagon ally, Ahmad Chalabi. But eight months later, not only had both Chalabis fallen out of favor with the United States, but Salem was sought by Iraqi authorities for complicity in a murder.

Now under new leadership, the Iraqi Special Tribunal is moving ahead through a minefield of obstacles. The United Nations is resolutely on the sidelines, withholding approval. Human Rights

Watch has expressed alarm at the lack of procedural safeguards. A prominent judge was assassinated three months ago. And the more the government struggles to get its footing, the more likely that Saddam could stir up trouble with an aggressive defense.

The ongoing Milosevic trial is probably a cautionary flag. Dictators tend to be charismatic figures, and Milosevic has used his trial in The Hague to revive support for his nationalist allies back in Serbia. Saddam will almost certainly try to do the same for his Baathist allies, and the five-judge panel that will oversee his trial must strive to keep it focused tightly on the evidence.

There's great power and, potentially, great healing in watching the truth unfold in a courtroom, as witnesses build the case against a man who allegedly crushed Shiite and Kurdish rebellions with blood-curdling brutality. One way or another, Saddam's trial will be a landmark in the building of a new Iraq. The Iraqi Special Tribunal has its work cut out.

Peter S. Canellos is Washington bureau chief for The Boston Globe, where this column originally appeared.

Le Monde 25 MAI 2005

Ali Khameneï impose deux candidats à l'élection présidentielle iranienne

APRÈS le rappel à l'ordre, par le Guide de la République islamique d'Iran, Ali Khameneï, on assiste en Iran à une réédition des prolégomènes des élections législatives de 2004, version présidentielle cette fois-ci. Comme il l'avait fait, il y a un peu plus d'un an, l'ayatollah Khameneï a, en effet, appelé, lundi 23 mai, ledit conseil à réintégrer certains des candidats à la candidature pour l'élection présidentielle du 17 juin, que ce même conseil avait éliminés la veille. La seule différence tient au fait que le Guide, qui est l'autorité suprême de la République islamique et à qui les

membres du conseil des Gardiens de la Constitution doivent leurs fonctions, a nominalement désigné les postulants qu'il souhaite voir concourir : les dénommés Mostafa Moïn et Mohsen Mehraloizadeh, afin, a-t-il écrit dans une missive adressée au Conseil que « toutes les tendances politiques soient représentées ».

Les deux intéressés sont, en effet, les seuls postulants proches des réformateurs, alors que sur les plus de mille candidats à la candidature, le Conseil n'en avait retenu que six, dont cinq représentants de courants conservateurs.

Seul l'ancien président du Parlement, Mehdi Karroubi, autorisé à concourir est un centriste bon teint.

En Iran, les candidats à la candidature pour toute sorte de scrutin national ou régional passent obligatoirement par le filtre du conseil des Gardiens de la Constitution qui, depuis des années s'est arrogé

la prérogative d'éliminer ceux d'entre eux qu'il juge non conformes aux critères de « l'islamité », un concept suffisamment flou pour autoriser l'arbitraire politique. En 2004, la réhabilitation de quelques candidats aux législatives n'avait pas empêché un raz-de-marée conservateur. A moins d'un sursaut citoyen visant à signifier l'exaspération de la population face aux manœuvres du clan conservateur, la réédition du scénario de 2004 pourrait se refléter jusque dans le résultat du scrutin. Le dépit des Iraniens, des jeunes en particulier, envers leur classe

politique, toutes tendances confondues, risque fort en effet de les pousser à boudier les urnes. Un taux d'abstention élevé aboutirait à l'élection d'un candidat conservateur. Pour l'heure, selon les sondages, l'ancien président Ali Akbar Hachémi Rafsandjani tiendrait la corde.

Malgré le rappel à l'ordre du conseil des Gardiens par le Guide de la République, l'université de Téhéran a connu dans la nuit de lundi à mardi sa première manifestation contre la disqualification du principal candidat réformateur, Mostapha Moïn, ancien ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur. Les étudiants, qui voulaient entreprendre une marche de protestation en ont été empêchés par la police. D'après l'agence officielle Irna, les forces de l'ordre avaient reçu pour instruction de ne pas employer la force.

Mouna Naïm

Zarqawi wounded, Al Qaeda Web site says

By John F. Burns
and Terence Neilan

BAGHDAD: An Internet site used by Al Qaeda in Iraq said Tuesday that its leader, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, had been wounded, and it asked for Muslims to pray for his recovery.

"Let everybody know that the injury of our leader is an honor, and causes us to surround our enemy tighter," the statement said, in a translation by the Search for International Terrorist Entities Institute in Washington.

The institute monitors Islamic Web sites.

The wording of the six-paragraph statement, issued by the "information section" of the group, Al Qaeda Organ-

ization in the Land of Two Rivers, sounded as if Zarqawi has been badly hurt, and that his supporters were probably being prepared for his death.

There was no way to assess the veracity of the statement or to determine whether it might even be a ploy to dilute the pursuit of Zarqawi, the American military's "most wanted man" in Iraq with a \$25 million bounty on his head.

The statement came as a car bomb exploded Tuesday near a Baghdad junior high school for girls, killing six people, and the U.S. military said nine American troops had been killed in two days of insurgent attacks in and around Baghdad, The Associated Press reported.

Fourteen U.S. troops have been killed since Sunday, as insurgents carried out a string of explosions, suicide attacks and drive-by shootings around the country that also killed 49 Iraqis.

In Baghdad, a United States military spokesman, Lieutenant Colonel Steve Boylan, said he could not judge the Zarqawi report's credibility.

"We have no information on whether he's wounded or what the state of his health is," he told Reuters. "He's still our No. 1 target to be captured or killed and until that happens, the hunt is still on."

The Islamist Web site's posting Tuesday follows an announcement by the U.S. military command in Iraq on May 6

that Zarqawi, who is in his late 30s, narrowly escaped capture on Feb. 20 between the towns of Hit and Haditha, in the Euphrates Corridor.

Three days later, the military announced a major offensive by a 1,000-marine battle group in the stretch of the Euphrates running westward from Haiditha to the border with Syria at Al Qaim.

The military said at the time that the main targets were members of Zarqawi's terror troops, and it brought in air power to bomb targets. The offensive ended last week with the military saying that about 125 terrorists had been killed and that the rest had either fled to Syria or returned to the Iraqi interior.

Zarqawi is thought to have been behind many of the beheadings of foreign

hostages and car bombings that have taken hundreds of Iraqi lives.

While much about Zarqawi's operations remain unknown, some senior intelligence officials in Europe and the Middle East, as well as some terrorism experts, have argued that the United States has purposely overstated Zarqawi's importance, turning him into an almost mythic figure.

This portrayal may have enhanced his aura with young recruits, helping his organization entice new jihadists in Europe and the Middle East to join his group's ranks, they said.

The New York Times

John F. Burns reported from Baghdad
and Terence Neilan reported from New York.

INTERNATIONAL
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'Reformer' in front as Iran opens campaign

But Rafsanjani sticks to anti-U.S. rhetoric in bid to be president

By Neil MacFarquhar

TEHRAN: In the Iranian presidential campaign that officially began Tuesday, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the former president and presumed front-runner, has cloaked himself in the trappings of a reformist as carefully as he wears his tailored blue-gray clerical robes.

He and his aides present him as the sole candidate with the stature to tackle issues ranging from relations with Washington to the economy to the right of young Iranians to party in private.

Yet in an interview in his suite of offices in a stunning former royal palace built of pale green marble, Rafsanjani sounds less than conciliatory and more like the revolutionary firebrand who helped usher in the Islamic Republic after the fall of the shah. He says the United States is not a democracy, demands that it make the first concession before relations improve and, like all senior officials here, steadfastly defends Iran's right to develop nuclear technology.

"There is only a veneer of democracy in the United States and we have a real democracy," he said, brushing aside suggestions that Iran's election rules unfairly favor the hard-liners who control much of the government. "Election laws are so complicated in your country that people have no choice but to vote for one of the candidates who are with one of the two parties."

Rafsanjani, 70, perhaps embodies best the curious contradictions of this year's June 17 presidential race — even if defending Iran by attacking the United States is a favorite tactic of any official questioned about domestic issues here.

The popularity of political and social change is such that all candidates adopt the vocabulary and style of reform — the arch-conservative mayor of Tehran even showed up to register as a candidate in a remarkable pink shirt. Yet none of the eight candidates that an unelected watchdog group has allowed to run wants to alter what many Iranians see as their main political problem —



Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who was twice the president of Iran and is running again in the June elections, in Tehran.

all of the power rests in the hands of an unaccountable, supreme religious leader who can overrule elected officials at a whim.

Hence Iranians are expected to avoid the polls with the same zeal they flocked to them in the past two elections. This is particularly true given that the Guardian Council first eliminated then reinstated the main reformist candidate after the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, appealed to the council to give voters a choice.

The reinstatement of Mustafa Moin on Tuesday, as well as one other independent candidate, effectively signaled to the voters that the fate of any reformist remained in Khamenei's hands.

The remaining candidates hoping to succeed President Mohammad Khatami include one moderate cleric and four men who were once senior officers in the Revolutionary Guards and whose loyalty to the supreme leader is unquestionable. In this lineup, Rafsanjani is viewed as a compromise, the least distasteful conservative to the liberals and the most liberal among the conservatives.

At times Rafsanjani might be described as the most hated man in Iran — blamed with or without evidence for a host of ills, from corruption to the inability of reformers to push through even the mildest political change. At the same time many hope he might have sufficient religious and revolutionary credentials to confront Khamenei.

"They would like to see him as president, but they don't want to vote for him," said Nasser Hadian, a political scientist.

One of his rivals, Mehdi Karubi, a centrist cleric who used to be speaker of Parliament, laid out Rafsanjani's past democratic failings in a lengthy letter that was widely published in the press and distributed on the Internet. He attacked Rafsanjani for not defending

candidates who had been rejected by the Guardian Council in previous elections, for allowing the intelligence ministry to dabble in the economy and indirectly for the assassinations of dissident intellectuals during his presidency from 1989 to 1997, killings that were later traced to intelligence agents.

Rafsanjani's aides concede that he sometimes lost past confrontations with the conservatives, but suggest this time will be different because he wants to polish his legacy. His political stock had fallen so low by 2000 that he failed to win one of the 30 parliamentary seats from Tehran.

"Mr. Rafsanjani believes that we have to provide people with a better life, better education, more welfare, better urban life, and eventually these changes will lead to a bigger change, breaking the obstacle of tradition and the clergy," said Mohammad Atrianfar, a Rafsanjani advisor and editor of the Sharq daily.

"Mr. Khatami thought he could do it more directly and that's why he somehow failed," Atrianfar continued. "The direct approach in Iran isn't a very good approach because somehow the government rejects this approach by disqualifying candidates, weakening the Parliament and supervising the press."

His boss usually described as "wily," would never say anything quite so direct, but the mere fact that Rafsanjani gave his first interview to The New York Times, and has spoken to a few other foreign news organizations, is one sign that he seeks to convince voters that his reach stretches far beyond Iran's borders.

The reformists' main prop during the last eight years was the massive election victories that swept Khatami to power in 1997 and 2001. Despite loosening the social climate and easing much of the fear that once oozed through society here, supporters were disappointed by the meager political changes and constant assaults on civil liberties, like

closing down about 100 newspapers.

In his hour-long interview with *The Times* on Monday, Rafsanjani did not go so far as to suggest re-establishing ties with Washington. But after detailing a long list of domestic and regional ills caused by the United States, he ventured that it was time to retire the past. "It is not a priority for us, but the current state is not reasonable either," he said, repeating the demand he made as president that the first step should be Washington's release of \$11 billion in Iranian assets frozen since the American Embassy in Tehran was seized for 444 days right after the revolution in 1979.

Like all the presidential candidates, Rafsanjani is a staunch supporter of Iran developing its nuclear capabilities for electric power, medical applications and other uses, but says he opposes nuclear weapons. But that is somewhat in contrast to a Friday prayer sermon he delivered in 2001, in which he suggested that just one nuclear bomb could solve the problem of Israel threatening the region with its own nuclear arsenal.

On social issues, considered key among most young voters, he said the government should get out of people's private lives. "Even Islam says one should not interfere in the private lives

of people," he said. He would not, however, change keystones of the regime, like the enforcement of the hijab, the veil, for all women. Tehran has been rife with rumors that Rafsanjani, who holds the religious rank of *hojatolislam* — one step below *ayatollah* — would find a way to make veiling voluntary. "We are Muslims and we enforce Islamic law, which is also in our Constitution," he said.

Essentially, Rafsanjani's critics — and they are legion — accuse him of simply repeating old themes and point out that he had difficulty challenging the radicals in his first terms.

The New York Times

Iraqis plan big drive against insurgents

40,000 soldiers to deploy in search mission in Baghdad

By Sabrina Tavernise

BAGHDAD: In a sweeping effort to strike back at a violent insurgency that has hobbled Iraq's new government since it took power nearly a month ago, Iraq's defense and interior ministers said Thursday that they would deploy thousands of troops to stage a massive search-and-arrest operation in the capital over the next week.

It is the largest military action led by Iraqis since the U.S.-led invasion two years ago and is the first attempt by the government here to convince Iraqis, whose deaths have jumped five-fold since it took power, that it is serious about taking on the insurgency.

The two officials, Bayaan Baqer Solagh of the Interior Ministry and Sadoun al-Dulaimy of the Defense Ministry, said similar operations would be extended to the rest of Iraq over the next several weeks.

Their announcement came amid reports that America's most wanted man in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, had been wounded. The two ministers confirmed the reports, but said they did not know how serious his injuries were. U.S. forces have conducted two offensives in western Iraq in the past two weeks in an

effort to break Zarqawi's network.

More than 40,000 Iraqi soldiers and security forces will be deployed throughout Baghdad in what the ministers described as an aggressive cordon-and-search mission. Troops will build a security ring around the city, establish 675 checkpoints, check identity cards in hotels and restaurants, and patrol neighborhoods checking for bomb-making facilities.

The goal is "to turn the government's role from defensive to offensive," said Solagh, the interior minister. Dulaimy said "there is no timeline" to the operation and "the timeline is to defeat terrorists."

To many Iraqis, news of the operation came as a relief, after weeks of relentless car-bomb attacks and assassinations. The ministers displayed a chart at their news conference that showed civilian deaths had jumped five-fold in the first two weeks of May compared with the first two weeks of April, before the government took power. Iraqi officials have attributed the increase in deaths to what they say is an increasingly desperate insurgency, with militant fighters unable to reach military targets, striking at markets and busy streets instead.

For Sunni Arabs, however, the announcement of the impending operation was a cause for concern.

Sunnis make up about a third of the Iraqi population and were ascendant under Saddam Hussein. But they have grown increasingly embittered. They stayed away from the recent elections, opening the way for Shiites and Kurds to take power in the new Parliament.

So some Sunnis expressed concern that the raids, carried out by police and military forces that are predominantly Shiite and Kurdish, will take on a sectarian tinge and single them out.

Mejbel al-Sheikh Isa, a member of the National Dialogue Council, a Sunni group that has urged participation in politics, said: "The feeling from Sunnis is that the Shiites and the Kurds with

the help of the Americans are trying to undermine the Sunnis. We won't be neutral in this. We feel insulted by this." He was also involved in negotiations with the various political blocs over cabinet posts after the elections.

Raids by Iraqi soldiers and police have netted 587 suspected insurgents since April, the ministers said, some of whom were foreign fighters.

More than two-thirds of the arrests in a large sweep over the weekend came in the western suburb of Abu Ghraib, where mostly Shiite and Kurdish police and army commando units arrested 480 people in two days.

While some Abu Ghraib residents greeted the soldiers as they walked through quieter streets on Tuesday, other residents interviewed on Thursday expressed anger at the sweep.

"The arrests targeted the well-known people of the area, and targeted Sunnis," in and around Baghdad, said Taha al-Zobai, a 40-year-old farmer who was interviewed Thursday.

The New York Times

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune
May 27, 2005

For many Iranians, nuclear power is an issue of pride

By Neil MacFarquhar

TEHRAN: From nuclear negotiators to student dissidents, from bazaar merchants to turbaned mullahs, Iranians agree: The right to develop nuclear power is a point of national pride.

"For a country to have nuclear energy means that it has made progress in all other fields as well, so other countries have to respect its technology," says Nilufar, 29, a graduate student in energy management at the prestigious Sharif Industrial University.

Nilufar, covered in black so that only her face was showing, agreed to be interviewed on such a sensitive topic only if her family name were not used.

Ehsan Motaghi, 26, a seminary student in Isfahan, cited a parable from Imam Ali, the Prophet Muhammad's son-in-law and the inspiration for the Shiite branch of Islam, followed by most Iranians.

"They can offer me everything from the earth and heaven," he said, paraphrasing the prophet, "but in exchange if they want me to so much as take the food from an ant's mouth that is his

right to eat, I won't do it. Achieving the peaceful use of technology is really a matter of pride and we will not stop this for anything."

Such passions were echoed in two weeks of conversations with Iranians across all walks of life. Virtually all supported Iran's defying the West and moving ahead with its uranium enrichment program, which carries the threat of further UN sanctions.

This widespread sense of national pride complicates any attempt to persuade Iran's leaders to give up parts of the nuclear program, as European negotiators have been trying to do in talks over the past few months, offering various incentives.

It is clear that Iran's attachment to nuclear development is rooted in its own tumultuous history. The Islamic republic is trying to use its nuclear program as a bargaining chip to end the varying degrees of international isolation it has been forced to endure since the Islamic revolution in 1979.

The nuclear standoff also echoes an older fight: Iran's colonial struggle to control its oil resources, which it even-

tually wrestled away from the British.

Some reach further back, reflecting a desire to revive the glory of ancient Persia. Others want to claim Iran's future, to prove that the Islamic revolution can overcome its reputation for bad management.

"It is a symbolic thing for Iranians," said Mohammad Saeidi, the vice president for planning and international affairs at the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran. "Our people are very clever, very smart and they want to use all the advanced technology in the world — nuclear technology, biotechnology, Internet technology."

But for all the passion in the air, there are many nuances in Iranian positions, according to Iranian officials, scholars and foreign diplomats. In fact, they say, Iranian backing for nuclear development indicates neither automatic support for the government nor hostility to the United States.

Only a small group, mostly diehard revolutionaries, wants Iran to resign from the treaty and try to develop nuclear weapons, they say.

"It would be 100 percent better to have nuclear weapons, but only to use them against anyone who tried to attack us," said Reza Jaedi, 24, who has little sympathy for the government. "Iran should develop them as soon as possible."

It is rare to hear such views voiced in Iran, since they contradict the official line that Iran wants the technology only for peaceful means.

Another group opposes nuclear development as entirely too expensive, unnecessary given the country's vast oil or gas reserves and not worth the international political headache.

In fact, say some scholars who have interviewed ordinary Iranians, some back off their support for nuclear development if they are told it might bring further economic hardship and international isolation to Iran.

But most Iranians, the experts say, fall into two other groups. One believes Iran should use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. The other wants Iran to master the nuclear enrichment cycle both to avoid depending on foreign suppliers for nuclear fuel and to be able to move quickly to weapons development if Iran is threatened, by Israel,

the United States or a regional rival.

That group sees nuclear power as an insurance policy against a forced change in the government.

Many Iranians say the West should not worry about Iran's developing nuclear missiles because Islam forbids such weapons.

But Iran hid some of its nuclear preparations from the International Atomic Energy Agency for two decades — including its enrichment of low levels of uranium in a Tehran suburb, prompting deep suspicions in Western nations that Iran's goal is a weapons program.

The ruling mullahs are galled that the United States, which treated Iran under the shah as the natural leader of the region, blocks any such role for the current government. Nuclear technology might make them players again — as might the bargaining to limit it.

Iran's capacity to produce electricity is more than 30,000 megawatts, mostly from oil-fired plants, but demand is expected to top out around 110,000 megawatts. That alone, along with uranium deposits in the central deserts, makes nuclear power viable in Iran, scientists

say. Iranian officials all deny that Iran would try to develop weapons and say that international inspectors would have full access.

"They can come and see for themselves, and they will find out that there is no room for suspicion," Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the front-runner in the June 17 presidential election, said in an interview this week. "I say we do not want them at all, and that means we do not want to be close to producing them."

Nuclear experts estimate that weapons development is still some years away, especially because Iran has yet to master the technology for uranium enrichment.

Some Iranians worry that Western governments, in pressuring Tehran hard to abandon any nuclear development, will win the day for the hard-liners.

"Just asking Iran to stop enriching uranium is not going to work," said Nasser Hadian, a political science professor, "and the alternative is much worse; the alternative is weapons."

The New York Times

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune

May 30, 2005

Rise in sectarian killings feared in Iraq

By Sabrina Tavernise

BAGHDAD: No one knows who tortured and killed Hassan al-Nuaimi, a Sunni Arab cleric whose body was found in an empty lot this month, with a hole drilled in his head and both eyes missing. But the various theories have a distinctly sectarian tinge.

A Shiite police chief investigating the death said that he suspected Sunni Arab extremists who have driven much of the insurgency in Iraq, a lot of it aimed at Shiites. The Sunni family mourning the cleric pointed the finger at the Badr Organization, a Shiite militia. But with Nuaimi buried, the truth, as so often is the case with killings in Iraq, seemed lost in rumor and allegations.

The only sure thing was that Nuaimi, and another Sunni man who helped write sermons, were killed within 12 hours of their disappearance from a mixed Sunni-Shiite neighborhood in northeast Baghdad.

And their deaths, amid violence that has taken more than 550 lives across Iraq this month, renewed concern that the bloodshed might be shifting ever more toward crudely sectarian killings. Hard-line Sunni clerics have pressed the case.

"The killing in Iraq now is according to religious identity," said Sheikh Abdel Nasir al-Janabi, a religious Sunni and a hard-line member of the National Dialogue Council, a Sunni political group that says it has ties to the insurgency. "Now you're killed because you're a Sunni Arab."

Shiite leaders, including Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Iraq's most powerful Shiite cleric, have responded to such talk with calls for calm, and they renewed appeals to Shiites that they place their trust in Iraq's fledgling democracy, not revenge killings.

But the urgency of the Shiite leaders' appeals reflects a deepening anxiety that the welter of allegations about Shiite death squads targeting Sunni Arabs, true or false, may prompt still more sectarian killings, pushing the country to the brink of civil war.

"We are drifting into a sectarian society," said Ghassan al-Atiyah, a secular Shiite and the director of the Iraqi Foundation for Development and Democracy, a Baghdad research institute.

"The Americans, instead of strengthening liberal and secular, they are now hostage of Sciri," he said, referring to a Shiite political group, "and Kurds."

"They let the genie out of the bottle," Atiyah said.



Christoph Bangert/Polaris for The New York Times

Sheikh Yahya al-Nuaimi, above, is a cousin of Sheikh Hassan al-Nuaimi, a Sunni who was killed in what is feared to be increased sectarian violence. In another Baghdad killing, Shiites, below, gathered to mourn Sayed Mohammed Tahir Yasin Alaq.



Afan Chin for The New York Times

Members of Iraq's Shiite majority were the main victims of Saddam Hussein's repression and have been among the principal targets of the insurgents.

For the past year, Shiites have been attacked at mosques, weddings, funerals and crowded marketplaces. Shiite political and religious leaders have been assassinated. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the insurgent leader, calling

Shiites apostates and usurpers of the Sunni Arab primacy in Iraq that ended with Saddam, has urged yet more killing.

But when Iraq got its first Shiite-majority government three weeks ago, the transition was accompanied by attacks on Sunni Arab leaders, including clerics and even fruit and vegetable sellers. Sunni leaders have blamed Shiite mili-

tias for the attacks, saying that they work behind the scenes with official army and police forces.

Sunni leaders have accused Shiite-led security forces of raiding mosques, arresting more than 300 Sunni clerics and worshippers, and killing several of them, including Nuaimi. His family has said that he was taken from his home by men wearing Iraqi security force uniforms.

The Iraqi Islamic Party, a Sunni political group, this week condemned several sets of killings that it said were carried out by government forces.

Sheik Khalaf al-Aliyan, a member of the National Dialogue Council, the Sunni political group, said that he had evidence that Shiite political parties had drawn up a list of 4,000 Sunnis they intended to assassinate, a charge Shiite leaders have dismissed as preposterous.

"We are approaching the red line," said Saleh Mutlak, a moderate member of the council, which has also urged Sunni participation in politics.

Amid the turbulence of the insurgency, most Iraqis, whether Shiite or Sunni, Arab or Kurd, Muslim or Christian, have held tightly to a legend about the Iraqi past.

Iraqis, they say, have never defined themselves primarily by religion or ethnic origin, but have submerged themselves in a common identity as Iraqis. Even now, reporters who ask people which community they belong to tend to get a common answer. "I am Iraqi," men and women will say, or, with equal insistence, "I am a Muslim."

Even so, over the past two years, a strengthened religious and ethnic identity has begun to course through Iraqi

Shiite and Kurdish communities, which had endured the most repression under Hussein, and moderate Sunnis have expressed concern that the newfound identity, combined with their new positions of power, could deepen sectarian rifts.

"I came back to Iraq with the assumption that these religious and sectarian tendencies were not that strong," said Adnan Pachachi, an 81-year-old Sunni statesman and former foreign minister, who returned to Iraq in 2003 after years of exile and became one of the most trusted advisers of the American occupation authorities. "But in times of trouble, people tend to go toward religion and the religious parties make use of that very skillfully."

The New York Times

Many in Turkey fear defeat could hurt application for EU membership

Reuters

ANKARA: Turkey's government and financial markets shrugged off France's rejection of the European Union constitution, but lawmakers and political analysts said on Monday that it could damage Ankara's campaign to join the EU.

The defeat in the French referendum on Sunday raised the possibility of delays in the Union's further enlargement.

"This result is something which concerns the French public — not Turkey," the state Anatolian news agency quoted Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul as having said.

"The start of negotiations is in our hands," Gul was reported to have said,

and he added, "What would prevent Turkey starting the negotiations is doing things contrary to EU standards or not fulfilling the things it has promised to do."

Turkey is scheduled to start entry talks on Oct. 3 but is not expected to join the European Union before 2015 at the earliest.

The minister of state for the economy, Ali Babacan, who was named last week as Turkey's chief negotiator in EU talks, said that the country would stick to its target of EU membership.

"In our long negotiation process, various political currents will be seen in different countries," Anatolian quoted Babacan as having said. "Every stage of the negotiations will raise Tur-

key's standards one level higher."

Turkish financial markets, which were jittery for weeks before the referendum, closed firmer on Monday as the French no had largely been factored in-

would add to Turkey's concerns over its membership application because it could bring to power the Christian Democrats, who oppose Turkey's accession and favor instead a loosely defined "privileged partnership."

'The French result shows that European public opinion is not ready to welcome Turkey as a partner.'

to prices, brokers said.

The British foreign secretary, Jack Straw, whose country takes over the EU's rotating presidency on July 1, telephoned Gul to reassure him that negotiations would start on Oct. 3 as planned.

Straw also reaffirmed Britain's

strong support for Turkey's EU accession, Anatolian reported.

The constitution, which is intended to adapt EU institutions to an enlarged union of 25 or more countries, makes no reference to Turkey's possible accession. But many anti-constitution French campaigners played on voters' concerns over admitting Turkey, a large, mainly Muslim country.

Emin Sirin, an independent member of the Turkish Parliament, said, "The French result shows that European public opinion is not ready to welcome Turkey as a partner."

Sirin said that the general election that Chancellor Gerhard Schröder has called for September in Germany

"The idea of Turkey becoming a full member of the EU is virtually dead," said Hasan Unal, a professor of international relations at Bilkent University.

He said that President Jacques Chirac, one of the few leading French politicians strongly in favor of Turkey's EU

accession, was now a damaged leader because of the referendum defeat and in any case had lessened his support in recent months because of to French voter hostility on the issue.

The French rejection will erode support for the European Union among Turks who were dismayed by some of the anti-Turkey rhetoric used in the campaign, analysts said.

This could, in turn, limit the government's room for maneuver in making concessions during the negotiation process, they said.

Chirac has promised another referendum on whether to admit Turkey to the Union once the Turkish government has completed what are likely to be lengthy and difficult accession talks.

Herald  Tribune

May 31, 2005

le nouvel
Observateur

du 19 au 25 mai 2005

Voyage chez les candidats au « martyr »

IRAK QUI SONT LES KAMIKAZES?

D'où viennent-ils ? De quel milieu ?
Quel âge ont-ils ? C'est un document en arabe diffusé sur internet par les partisans du djihad – avec photos, témoignages, testaments – qui nous a permis de cerner les visages, souvent inattendus, de ces soldats de la terreur

Il est généralement saoudien, lorsqu'il n'est pas syrien ou koweïtien. Il a moins de 25 ans, est marié, avec ou sans enfants, et jouit d'un certain confort matériel. Il est diplômé ou jeune actif. Il est parti, via la Syrie, avec son frère ou son meilleur ami, sans entraînement préalable, pour accomplir son « devoir » de musulman – le djihad – et mourir en « martyr » en Irak. Il y a rejoint les insurgés irakiens qui combattent les forces américaines, ou l'un des groupes qui multiplient les attentats suicides. Il est mort en tuant.

Ce portrait-robot du combattant étranger en Irak n'a pas été établi par l'armée américaine, les services occidentaux ou encore les experts. Il ressort d'une liste de plus de 230 noms dressée par les partisans du djihad en hommage à « leurs » morts depuis le début des offensives américano-britanniques en Irak. Mini-biographies retraçant l'itinéraire d'une vie, récits de compagnons de combat, testaments, micro-

histoires internes aux groupes terroristes : ce document, rédigé exclusivement en langue arabe, est un témoignage de l'intérieur, apportant un autre éclairage sur ces hommes qui, aux côtés de la guérilla irakienne ou des groupes organisés multinationaux, ont contribué à la mort de quelque 1 500 soldats américains. Diffusé sur internet par les « islamonautes » à travers les forums en arabe prônant l'idéologie d'Al-Qaida, outils privilégiés de communication des clandestins du djihadisme, il rassemble une masse d'informations régulièrement mises à jour...

Ce recensement interne fait apparaître une majorité écrasante de ressortissants des pays frontaliers de l'Irak. Surtout des Saoudiens, notamment ceux de la région de Nadjd, berceau fondateur du royaume et creuset des grandes familles influentes d'Arabie, et de sa capitale, Riyad. Mais aussi des Syriens (dont quelques Palestiniens du camp syrien d'Al-Yarmouk), des

Koweïtiens et des Jordaniens, même s'ils sont en moins grand nombre. Les Maghrébins sont également représentés – Algériens, Tunisiens et Marocains, dont l'un résidant « en France ou en Espagne » –, ainsi que quelques Libyens. La liste mentionne également l'identité des trois « martyrs » français connus – Redouane al-Hakim, 19 ans, tué le 17 juillet 2004 ; Tarek Ouinis, 24 ans, tué deux mois plus tard ; Abdelhalim Bajoui, 19 ans, mort dans un attentat suicide le 20 octobre 2004 –, sans détailler davantage leur histoire.

Les points d'entrée, lorsqu'ils sont précisés, sont prioritairement la frontière syrienne. Plusieurs cas sont d'ailleurs rapportés de tentatives ratées de passage sur le territoire irakien via l'Afghanistan ou la Jordanie. A l'automne 2004, lors de l'assaut des forces américaines contre Fallouja – qui avait encouragé de nouvelles vocations – et malgré le renforcement des contrôles annoncé par les pays frontaliers de





Bagdad, 10 mai 2005 : après l'explosion d'un camion-piège

l'Irak, des volontaires parvenaient encore à s'infiltrer : « Certains jeunes disent que la route vers le djihad en Irak est coupée, mais ils mentent : la preuve, notre martyr est passé par la Syrie, et sans problème », commente un modérateur du forum Balsam al-Iman, évoquant le départ réussi pour Fallouja d'un commerçant saoudien d'El-Hael, âgé de 24 ans et mort un mois après son arrivée. Encore faut-il trouver la bonne filière : « C'est une question de volonté, pas de barrage de route suppose : le djihad est d'abord un effort et un acte, pas une parole en l'air ! », sermonne-t-il.

Cet autre Saoudien de 19 ans, étudiant en deuxième année d'études islamiques, fait figure d'exemple : « Parti d'Arabie une première fois, il a été arrêté en Syrie, raconte un de ses compagnons sur un autre forum. Il a essayé de nouveau, en partant pour la Jordanie, puis de la Jordanie vers les frontières saoudiennes, et là il a été emprisonné pendant deux mois. Libéré, il est retourné en Syrie par avion. Ils l'ont refusé à son arrivée et il a

dû revenir immédiatement en Arabie Saoudite. Deux mois plus tard, il est parti au Liban, est passé clandestinement en Syrie, et de là en Irak. Ses efforts ont payé deux mois plus tard, quand il est tombé en martyr » à Fallouja.

Ces jeunes qui appartenaient à la tranche d'âge des 19-25 ans avaient le plus souvent une vie sociale et familiale structurée. Au moment de leur départ pour l'Irak, la plupart de ces étudiants – en sciences, génie civil, médecine, droit religieux, études islamiques, informatique – ou jeunes actifs – commerce, administration – étaient mariés, parfois avec des enfants en bas âge. Ce profil est surtout caractéristique des Saoudiens, dont certains jouissaient d'« une vie matérielle très confortable ». Un avenir, des biens, une épouse enceinte ou avec enfants, des parents : les témoins et compagnons de ces « héros » confirment qu'ils ont tout quitté pour accomplir leur « devoir » de musulman.

L'auteur de l'attentat suicide contre le mess

de la base américaine de Mossoul, le 22 décembre 2004, qui avait tué 24 personnes dont 18 Américains, était l'un d'entre eux : étudiant en médecine à l'université de Khartoum, ce Saoudien de 20 ans « a interrompu ses études, retiré la totalité de sa bourse d'études à la banque, et s'est rendu en Irak via l'un des pays frontaliers ». Ou encore ce propriétaire marocain d'un restaurant à Tanger qui a abandonné sa femme et son futur enfant en apportant avec lui le capital familial.

Ce phénomène de défection au profit de « la cause » n'a pas épargné les centres de pouvoir de certains régimes, et non des moindres : on trouve ainsi un officier de la garde nationale saoudienne, le bras armé de la monarchie wahhabite, un soldat de l'armée saoudienne âgé de 32 ans, parti en février après avoir donné sa démission, ou encore cet autre militaire de carrière koweïtien, Fayçal Zaid al-Mouteiri, qui a également démissionné avant de rejoindre

le front irakien (voir encadré). Si la réalité d'une certaine porosité des services de sécurité à l'idéologie radicale dans ces pays, voire l'existence de complicités internes de ces services dans des actions violentes antioccidentales sur leur sol, était encore à établir, ces témoignages en apportent, s'il le fallait, une preuve écla tante...

Ce risque de contagion au cœur du système constitue l'une des préoccupations sécuritaires majeures des pays du Golfe. Il inquiète aussi, par conséquent, leurs partenaires occidentaux pour ce qui concerne la protection des installations et des expatriés. Des pays encore épargnés, comme les Emirats arabes unis – dont un ressortissant apparaît dans cette liste –, redoutent cet effet de gangrène. Doha – un Qatarien qui rend hommage dans ce document à son compagnon saoudien, rare vétéran comme lui de Bosnie, mort dans un combat dans le nord de l'Irak – en a mesuré l'effet dévastateur. L'attentat antibritannique du 19 mars dernier a été perpétré par un cadre égyptien résidant depuis quinze ans dans l'émirat et travaillant au sein de la société étatique d'hydrocarbures, Qatar Petroleum, autre centre névralgique du pouvoir local.

Pour les autorités locales, ces candidats au « martyr » venus des pays arabes sont difficiles à repérer car la plupart d'entre eux n'ont aucun passé de combattant : très peu d'Afghans arabes » et à peine quelques velléitaires engagés pour la Tchétchénie ou le Cachemire. Ils sont souvent partis sans aucun entraînement militaire, avec tout juste parfois quelques connaissances livresques du fonctionnement des armes, comme la kalachnikov. « Quand il est arrivé en Irak, notre martyr n'avait jamais participé au djihad, ni suivi un camp d'entraînement, ni même jamais été militaire », commente le modérateur d'un forum, s'appuyant sur le parcours d'un jeune Saoudien de 19 ans qui a « survécu » un mois en Irak. Cela démontre bien qu'il n'est pas nécessaire d'être un Khattab [ancien émir saoudien en Tchétchénie] ou un Abou Hafs al-Masri [ancien responsable des opérations d'Oussama Ben Laden, mort à Tora Bora] pour accomplir le djihad. Il n'est nullement requis de s'entraîner avant de partir : on s'entraîne sur place, en combattant. Les livres ne servent à rien. »

Dans la plupart des cas, ces candidats au suicide au passé sans histoire et sans préparation militaire n'appartiennent pas non plus à ce qui pourrait ressembler à une organisation structurée. Les témoignages et les testaments font état, au départ, d'un processus d'empathie mêlé d'un sentiment d'impuissance à l'égard de « l'insupportable souffrance du peuple irakien, [des] actions terribles des mécréants, pratiquant le meurtre de civils, la torture, le viol, l'emprisonnement des combattants ». Magnifiée, la résistance des insurgés lors du siège de Fallouja est hissée au rang de modèle du combat « noble » contre l'ennemi, et figure désormais parmi les grandes batailles marquant l'histoire de l'islam et son combat contre les infidèles.

Il faut y ajouter, bien sûr, le ciment d'un anti-américanisme profond. Et la validation religieuse de certains cheikhs qui encouragent les départs et favorisent le passage à l'action. Souvent, il s'agit de prédicateurs officiant dans la mosquée voisine du futur « martyr ». On re-

Paroles de terroristes



ABOU AL-HARETH AL-DOSSARI

SAOUDIEN de Burayda, dans la province d'Al-Qassim. Il est issu d'une grande famille saoudienne du Nadjd, les Al-Dakhil. Plusieurs membres de cette famille figuraient sur la liste saoudienne des *most wanted* depuis les attentats à Riyad en 2003. Age non précisé. Il est mort dans un attentat suicide contre un convoi américain sur le pont d'Al-Khalidiya, près de Bagdad (probablement au début de 2004), au volant d'un véhicule contenant 3,5 tonnes d'explosifs. Il était membre

du groupe dirigé par Abou Moussab al-Zarqawi. Son frère, Abou Abdallah al-Dossari, qui avait intégré le groupe irakien Jaish Ansar as-Sunna, avait été le kamikaze de l'attentat contre l'ambassade turque à Bagdad, le 14 octobre 2003. Tous deux avaient été des disciples d'un cheikh radical emprisonné à Burayda, Abdel Karim al-Hamid, libéré depuis par les autorités saoudiennes à la faveur des grâces de l'Aid-al-Adha en janvier 2005...

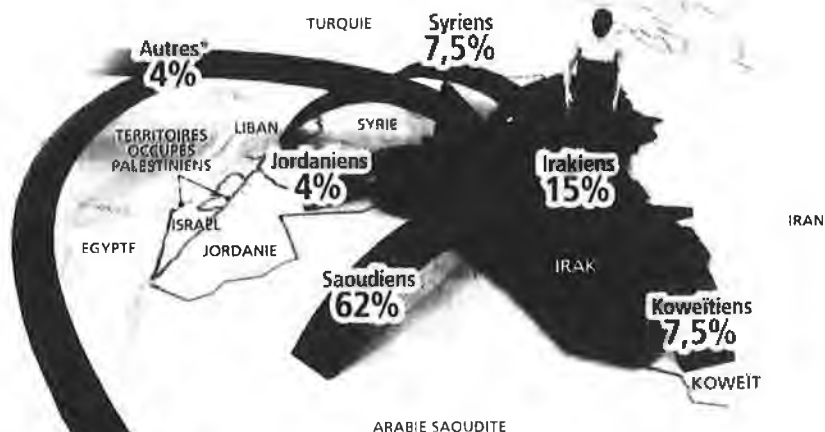
« Je l'ai rencontré la veille de son opération bénie. Je lui ai demandé comment il se sentait avant l'opération. Il m'a répondu : "Je suis entré depuis peu de temps en Irak. Les frères m'ont proposé une opération, la fameuse, contre les chiites de Kerbala, le jour de l'Achoura. Mais je n'ai pas voulu y participer ; je ne veux m'en prendre qu'aux ennemis croisés." Les frères lui ont appris comment conduire un camion car il ne savait pas. Quand on lui a proposé de filmer son opération, il a refusé, mais les frères ont insisté. Alors, à 3 heures du matin, on a réveillé le cameraman pour filmer la "cérémonie" [scène traditionnelle de lecture du testament, suivie d'accolades en guise d'adieux] et un autre pour filmer l'explosion de la voiture. Ensuite, il a dit adieu au groupe, plusieurs d'entre eux sont aujourd'hui près d'Allah. Et puis il a mené son opération. Dix jours plus tard, les Américains sont entrés dans un centre de police gardé par des espions irakiens. Ils portaient le corps, ils l'avaient trouvé près de l'explosion sur le pont. Ils ne savaient pas qu'il était l'auteur de l'opération. Ensuite, quand le frère Al-Ansari a vu le visage du mort, qui souriait, et l'odeur qu'il dégageait, très bonne malgré les jours passés, il a compris que c'était un moudjahid... »

ABOU ANNAS AS-SHAMI



JORDANIEN d'origine palestinienne (Tulkarem). Mort le 16 septembre 2004 au cours d'un assaut mené contre la prison d'Abou Ghraib. Surnommé « le Lion de la Mésopotamie », il était un activiste chevronné. On l'a vu à la gauche d'Abou Moussab quand celui-ci a tranché la gorge de l'otage américain Nicolas Berg. En décembre 2004, le groupe saoudien d'Al-Qaida dans la péninsule Arabique lui dédiait l'attentat contre le consulat américain de Djedda.

La galaxie du djihad



(*) Libanais, Yéménites, Libyens, Algériens, Tunisiens, Marocains



ABOU ABDALLAH AL-DOSSARI

SAOUDIEN de Burayda. Frère d'Abou al-Hareth al-Dossari, il est l'auteur de l'attentat suicide contre l'ambassade turque à Bagdad le 14 octobre 2003 pour le compte du groupe irakien Jaish Ansar as-Sunna.



ABOU OMEIR AS-SHAMI

JORDANIEN. Le deuxième kamikaze de l'attentat suicide contre les forces polonaises à Hilla.



ABOU ZOUBEIR AL-KOWEITI (alias Khalid al-Ajami)

KOWEÏTIEN. Il est l'un des deux auteurs de l'attentat suicide contre les forces polonaises à Hilla en février 2004. Membre du groupe d'Al-Qaida dans le Pays des Deux Fleuves dirigé par Abou Moussab al-Zarqaoui.

FAYÇAL ZAID AL-MOUTEIRI

(alias Abou al-Bara al-Koweïti)

KOWEÏTIEN, membre du groupe dirigé par Abou Moussab al-Zarqaoui. Il est mort à 28 ans, en juin 2004, au cours d'une attaque suicide contre les forces américaines. Militaire de carrière, il avait démissionné du ministère koweïtien de la Défense.

« Il étudiait sans cesse la religion. Il était généreux et très croyant. Il enseignait le judo et la boxe. Il est d'abord parti en Iran pour rejoindre ses frères arabes en Afghanistan au moment des événements, mais il n'a pas pu y arriver car il a été arrêté. Quand il a été libéré, il est revenu au Koweït. Il suivait les nouvelles de ses frères sur internet. Il était très influencé par le cheikh moudjahid Oussama Ben Laden et il incitait les jeunes au djihad. Il s'est mis à les entraîner dans un centre sportif et leur enseignait aussi la topographie, comment lire une carte et utiliser une boussole. Il avait fait des enregistrements sonores de ses appels au djihad et les distribuait dans les mosquées. Lorsque sont arrivés les événements en Irak, il a rejoint au début le djihad médiatique. Il a filmé de nombreuses opérations et continuait à former des jeunes sur place. Puis Dieu lui a offert la possibilité de combattre et il est mort en martyr. »



trouve ainsi des jeunes issus d'une même ville, comme Burayda et El-Hael, en Arabie Saoudite, ou encore Derna, au nord-est de la Libye, qui fréquentent la même mosquée, partent ensemble ou successivement. L'influence du meilleur ami ou du frère plus engagé aide également à franchir le pas. Les « islamonautes » racontent le cas de ces deux amis de Djedda, de 24 ans, dont l'un avait un frère de 19 ans en deuxième année d'études d'ingénieur qu'il a convaincu de partir avec eux. « Ce qui est magnifique dans cette histoire, commente un cousin sur le forum Ansar al-Islami, c'est que, quand Abou Ibada a contacté son petit frère pour lui dire qu'il partait à Fallouja, il ne lui a pas dit : "Reste auprès du père et sers-le à ma place" ; il ne lui a pas dit : "Un seul combattant suffit pour la famille" ; il ne lui a pas dit : "Je ne veux pas que mon père et ma mère soient doublement affligés"... Il lui a dit : "Viens avec moi". »...

Ce que révèle encore ce document, c'est l'ambiguïté du vécu familial d'un tel évène-

ment : la tristesse des départs, des disparitions, des deuils n'occulte pas une certaine fierté... Si des pères de famille ont tenté, quand ils étaient avertis du projet, d'interdire à leurs fils de partir, d'autres ont au contraire donné leur autorisation. Certains sont même restés en contact direct ou indirect avec leur enfant avant sa mort. Et presque tous ont organisé à leur domicile une cérémonie de condoléances et reçu les « félicitations » pour leur « martyr ». Même si leur fils a été enterré en Irak. Les numéros de téléphone et l'adresse précise de la famille sont ainsi mis en ligne très naturellement pour permettre à tous de les contacter des quatre coins du monde ou de les visiter si l'on est proche, avec un poème hagiographique en guise de faire-part.

L'affaire du jeune avocat jordanien Raed al-Banna, auteur présumé de l'attentat suicide de Hilla, le 28 février, a permis de révéler ces pratiques. Elle avait constitué un nouvel épisode dans le contentieux entre la Jordanie et le nou-

veau pouvoir irakien, Bagdad accusant Amman d'avoir autorisé la cérémonie organisée par la famille en l'honneur d'un « terroriste », preuve de la duplicité jordanienne à l'égard de la situation en Irak. Les autorités irakiennes auraient d'ailleurs largement plus de raisons de protester contre leurs voisins saoudiens ou syriens, où le nombre d'événements funéraires de ce genre est bien plus important. Les « révélations » apportées par les djihadistes eux-mêmes sur le rôle de la Syrie comme pays de transit vers l'Irak viennent le confirmer : un tel va-et-vient aux frontières ne passe pas inaperçu, même si quelques arrestations sont menées en signe de bonne volonté.

Quant au royaume saoudien, premier fournisseur non seulement de combattants pour la guérilla irakienne mais aussi de kamikazes, on ne peut imaginer qu'il ignore une telle ponction au sein de sa population jeune et active. Nombre des jeunes Saoudiens morts en Irak appartenaient d'ailleurs à de grandes familles et tribus – Al-Oreibi, Al-Dossari, As-Shamari, Al-Qahtani, Al-Rashid – dont les membres ont déjà été impliqués dans des actions sur le sol et hors du sol saoudien, y compris aux États-Unis, le 11 septembre 2001. En Arabie Saoudite, la lutte contre le terrorisme se limiterait-elle aux groupes actifs sur son seul territoire ?

Plus inquiétant encore : ces récits et témoignages révèlent la montée en puissance d'une forme de consensus social et moral autour de la pratique du djihad, inscrit dans un processus de normalisation du radicalisme. Quel pouvoir politique de la région se risquerait aujourd'hui à interdire à ses instances religieuses de présenter le djihad comme un terrorisme « halal » de légitime défense, alors que l'opinion arabe et musulmane s'émue du sort de la population irakienne ?

Le conflit irakien a produit une génération en état de mobilisation permanente. Ces jeunes radicaux constituent une armée de réserve qui n'a pas besoin d'une structure d'organisation déterminée pour agir et qui dispose d'une arme de destruction massive : le sacrifice de leur vie. Il s'agit là d'un constat qui bat en brèche les fondements stratégiques de la lutte antiterroriste menée depuis le 11 septembre 2001 et les « effets positifs » qu'elle aurait générés, selon Washington.

ANNE GIUDICELLI

23h15 - France 3

Documentaire: "Saddam Hussein, le meilleur ennemi de l'Amérique".

Je t'aime moi non plus

Avant d'être traqué puis capturé par les Américains, Saddam Hussein fut longtemps le plus fidèle allié de Washington au Moyen-Orient. Retour sur une page d'histoire un peu vite oubliée.

C'est l'un des exploits de la CIA les plus brillants et les moins connus: le coup d'Etat qui a mis fin, à Bagdad, en 1963, au régime pro-communiste du général Kassem. Les services secrets américains ont procuré les armes et les finances. Un parti irakien clandestin, le Baas, a fourni les hommes. Parmi eux, un jeune activiste, Saddam Hussein. Tortionnaire et assassin éprouvé, il avait servi aux dirigeants de son parti d'exécuteur des basses œuvres. Réfugié au Caire après une première tentative d'élimination de Kassem, il avait même joué le rôle d'honorable correspondant auprès de la CIA. A la chute de Kassem, on sable le champagne à l'ambassade américaine de Bagdad. Une répression sanglante se met en marche. La chasse aux communistes va faire des milliers de victimes. Au bout de quelques mois, les baassistes, déconsidérés par leurs excès, doivent céder le pouvoir aux militaires. Saddam Hussein rentre dans l'ombre. Mais le parti Baas revient pour de bon, cinq ans plus tard, toujours avec l'aide de la CIA. Cette fois, Saddam devient le numéro deux du régime. Son obsession: la modernisation de l'Irak. Il ouvre le pays aux investisseurs occidentaux et, grâce au pétrole, il



Une fois la menace iranienne disparue, Le Pentagone a commencé à rogner les ailes d'un Saddam Hussein devenu trop fort.

obtient d'eux tout ce qu'il veut, y compris des armes. Mais bientôt tout va basculer. En 1979, l'ayatollah Khomeiny triomphe en Iran. A Washington, c'est la panique. Toute la région pétrolière du Moyen-Orient paraît menacée par la révolution islamique. Désormais, Saddam Hussein, qui est devenu entre-temps le numéro un à Bagdad, fait figure d'ultime recours. Encouragé par l'Occident et soutenu financièrement par les

monarchies du Golfe, il se lance, en 1980, à l'assaut de l'Iran. La guerre va durer huit ans et fera un million de victimes. L'Amérique empêchera toute condamnation de l'agression par l'ONU. Les Occidentaux restent de marbre lorsque l'armée de Saddam Hussein commence à utiliser massivement les armes chimiques sur le champ de bataille, puis quand elle décimera la population kurde au gaz. Toute la technologie de ce qu'on appellera plus tard les «armes de destruction massive» – chimiques, biologiques et nucléaires – est fournie sans compter à Saddam Hussein par les firmes occidentales, américaines y compris, au vu et au su des gouvernements. La NSA (National Security Agency) américaine fournit à Bagdad les renseignements indispensables

pour garder l'avantage sur le champ de bataille grâce aux photos satellites et aux informations des avions Awacs basés dans la région. L'informatique, indispensable aux Irakiens pour améliorer le fonctionnement de leurs missiles Scud, est également fournie par les Américains. C'est grâce à ce soutien illimité que Saddam Hussein gagne la guerre contre l'Iran.

L'Irak sort exsangue du conflit, mais militairement surarmé. Saddam Hussein croit – naïvement? – que les monarchies du Golfe lui doivent une fière chandelle et qu'elles vont financer sa reconstruction. C'est le contraire qui se passe. Non seulement les régimes pétroliers alliés de Washington réclament à cor et à cri le remboursement de leurs avances financières consenties pendant la guerre, mais ils asphyxient l'économie irakienne en faisant baisser le cours du pétrole: le Koweït, en particulier, accroît massivement sa production. La menace iranienne ayant disparu, c'est à Saddam, devenu trop fort, que le Pentagone veut maintenant rogner les ailes. Il commet en 1990 la grossière erreur d'envahir le Koweït. On connaît la suite. Son armée est défaite par l'opération américaine Tempête du désert, mais Washington prend bien soin de le garder en place à Bagdad, estimant qu'il peut encore servir (*voir encadré*). Son sort ne sera scellé que douze ans plus tard, en 2003, par une invasion américaine déclenchée à la suite de l'une des opérations les plus extraordinaires de désinformation et de mensonge de l'histoire moderne.

■ François Schlosser

Histoire ancienne

Après sa défaite au Koweït en février 1991, la chute de Saddam Hussein paraissait inévitable. Pour l'armée américaine, Bagdad était à portée de main. Au lieu de cela, le commandant en chef américain Norman Schwarzkopf a laissé volontairement échapper les meilleures unités de l'armée de Saddam. Car Washington voulait maintenant sauver le régime de Bagdad, menacé par le soulèvement général de la population chiite du sud. Comme le rappelle Pierre-Jean Luizard dans «la Question irakienne»: «Le 3 mars 1991 à Safwan, à la frontière entre l'Irak et le Koweït, des chefs mili-



Norman Schwarzkopf, commandant en chef américain.

itaires irakiens demandèrent au général Schwarzkopf d'autoriser la garde républicaine à faire voler ses hélicoptères. Le général donna son autorisation non seulement pour l'utilisation des hélicoptères, mais aussi, sous certaines conditions, de l'artillerie lourde.» Les chiites furent massacrés par dizaines de milliers. En 2003, après leur nouvelle victoire sur Sad-

dam Hussein, les militaires américains ont «découvert» et montré au public des fosses communes qui contenaient pour partie les restes de ces rebelles chiites que Washington avait laissé massacrer douze ans plus tôt.

■ F. S.

TURQUIE A quatre mois de l'ouverture des négociations d'adhésion à l'UE

Ankara pèse les conséquences du rejet français

Istanbul :
Marie-Michèle Martinet

Une photo faisait hier matin la une de plusieurs quotidiens turcs : celle de deux jeunes filles, arborant un badge favorable au non, et riant à gorges déployées à l'annonce des résultats. « Un non net », remarquait *Milliyet*, tandis que *Cumhuriyet* soulignait le « coup porté au projet européen ». Avant même que naissent les interrogations sur les conséquences que ce vote français pourrait faire peser sur la candidature de la Turquie à l'Union, le chef de la diplomatie turque tranchait : faux débat ! « Ce résultat concerne l'opinion française, pas la Turquie », martelait Abdullah Gül.

Au lendemain du vote français, la Turquie s'efforce de conserver son sang-froid. Ali Babacan, récemment nommé par le premier ministre pour diriger les futures négociations

d'adhésion de la Turquie, refuse de se perdre en conjectures, déclarant sobrement que le non de la France n'était pour lui « pas une surprise ».

Selon certains observateurs, il sera cependant difficile de réparer les dégâts. Présenté comme un « gros problème » par le très écouté général Hilmi Ozkok, chef d'état-major de l'armée turque, le vote négatif de la France pourrait mettre un frein supplémentaire aux ambitions européennes de la Turquie. Pour Hasan Unal, professeur de relations internationales à l'université Bilkent d'Ankara, les dommages peuvent être considérés comme irréparables et « l'idée d'une Turquie devenant membre à part entière de l'Union européenne est pratiquement morte ».

Egalement sous le choc, les diplomates français, dont certains espéraient encore, la semaine dernière, un résultat positif. Hier, ils avaient la migraine : « Nous nous

sommes trompés », avouait l'un d'entre eux, avant de lâcher : « Même s'il faut se garder de faire des amalgames, le dossier turc a indiscutablement pesé en faveur du non. »

Pas tant que l'on voudrait bien le dire, rétorque Kadri Gürsel, spécialiste des questions internationales au quotidien *Milliyet* : « En France, tout au long de cette campagne, la Turquie a été instrumentalisée par l'ensemble de la classe politique française. Mais je ne crois pas que la candidature d'Ankara ait été un élément décisif du vote français. Je pense plutôt que ce vote est l'expression d'une crise d'identité profonde en l'Europe. Et il est probable que le résultat des élections prévues aux Pays-Bas soit similaire au résultat français. Voir pire... »

Cependant, comme la plupart de ses confrères, Kadri Gürsel se refuse à tirer des conclusions trop sombres du refus enregistré dimanche en

France. Sans toutefois minimiser les inévitables complications politiques à venir, il considère qu'un rejet du projet constitutionnel pourrait même s'avérer favorable à Ankara. « C'est un peu paradoxal, explique-t-il. Le projet de Constitution prévoyait notamment des contraintes accrues pour les pays candidats à l'accession. La crise qui s'ouvre maintenant va plus ou moins bloquer la machine européenne... et nous laisser les coudées plus franches. Nous aurons plus de temps pour travailler, en restant sur la base du traité de Nice qui nous est beaucoup plus favorable. »

La Turquie espère surtout que l'ouverture des négociations le 3 octobre ne soit pas remise en question. D'ici là, elle demeure consciente du chemin qui reste à parcourir. Avec ou sans Constitution européenne, elle sait qu'elle sera jugée avant tout sur sa capacité à faire avancer les réformes exigées par Bruxelles.

« Ce qui empêcherait la Turquie d'entamer des négociations, ce serait de faire des choses contraires aux critères de l'Union européenne ou de ne pas honorer les promesses qu'elle a faites », a rappelé Abdullah Gül, qui ne cesse de réaffirmer la volonté du gouvernement en place de satisfaire aux exigences de Bruxelles.

Cependant, des voix de plus en plus nombreuses s'élèvent en Turquie contre un projet politique dont la nation et les plus pauvres de ses citoyens risquent de faire les frais. Les sondages réalisés pour mesurer le soutien dont bénéficie le projet européen montrent une baisse de l'enthousiasme. L'un des derniers en date, organisé au mois d'avril par l'institut Pollmark, donnait 63 % de personnes interrogées favorables à l'adhésion. Un chiffre encore très positif, mais de 10 points inférieur aux résultats obtenus neuf mois plus tôt.



Le premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan accueilli par des militants à son retour de Bruxelles à l'aéroport d'Istanbul, le 18 décembre dernier. Il brandit une bannière en fleurs où sont réunis les drapeaux de la Turquie et de l'Union. (Photo AFP.)

TIME

May 23, 2005

The Perils of Patriotism

Nationalism is on the rise in Turkey. Will it threaten accession talks with the European Union?

By ANDREW PURVIS

TEARS GLISTEN IN SENCAN BAYRAMOĞLU'S eyes. The retired schoolteacher is describing how her son was one of 30,000 victims of the 15-year-long Kurdish uprising that ended with the capture and imprisonment of rebel leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999. Bayramoğlu's tears are not of grief, but of anger. Last week, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg ruled that, in order to comply with European law, Turkey must give Öcalan a new trial. Her fury is directed not only at Öcalan, whom she blames for her son's death, but also at the European institutions that demand Turkey conform to their standards as a precondition for joining the European Union. "We can't just do everything the Europeans say!" she protests. "They behave as if we are some sort of banana republic. They demean us so much. Whenever I get tired, I tell myself I am speaking on my son's behalf and raise my voice even higher."

Many Turkish voices were raised in anger after the court's decision. The judgment inflamed nationalists, who fear and repudiate Kurdish militants as a threat to the unity of the Turkish Republic. Talat Salk, who prosecuted Öcalan in 1999, warned that a retrial would have "huge reverberations" and play directly into the hands of Kurdish "terrorists" by providing them with a pretext to hold demonstrations in major cities. Nationalist politician Devlet Bahçeli said the trial would be like a "time bomb" that ignited simmering ethnic tensions. But the decision also pits those who want to Westernize the country's judicial and political systems to speed E.U. accession against Turkish nationalists, many of whose idea of "Turkishness" dates back to the days of the nation's founding father, Kemal Atatürk, and which they insist is threatened by European reforms. Others go further back, citing Ottoman imperial might.

When General Hilmi Özkok, head of the powerful Turkish military, heard of the rul-

ing, he complained obliquely of "political manipulation" by the E.U. He was much more blunt in April. Outside influences "are trying to change our national culture by imposing foreign values, fashion and language that do not match Turkish customs and traditions," he said.

Suspicion of the E.U. has been increasing in the six months since Brussels agreed to open accession talks with the largely Muslim country. A poll published last week found

Islamic Justice and Development (AK) party, led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has added to the confusion. Eight AK M.P.s, including one Cabinet Minister, have defected to the opposition in the past six months, citing political differences. Erdoğan has so far failed to appoint a chief negotiator for E.U. talks in October or to sign a protocol establishing ties with existing member states, a key condition for the talks. "The government has lost its focus," says Cengiz Aktar, a political scientist at Galatasaray University. The result is an increasingly divided society and, in Turkey's volatile southeast where most Kurds live, a greater number of abuses by the authorities, claims Selahattin Demirtaş of the Human Rights Association in Diyarbakır. "The verdict by the European Court on Öcalan only reinforces the idea [in Turk-

TRIAL AND ERROR:
Turkish nationalists
denounce the call
for Öcalan's retrial



We can't just do everything the Europeans say. They behave as if we are some sort of banana republic. //

SENCAN BAYRAMOĞLU,
grieving Turkish teacher

support for joining the E.U. among Turks had fallen 12% in that period, to 63%. "Turks feel at the mercy of forces they don't understand," says Hakan Altınay, director of the Open Society Institute's Turkey office in

Istanbul. The long-awaited E.U. decision was "intoxicating for many Turks," he says. "This is the hangover." Suat Kinikioğlu, head of the German Marshall Fund's Turkey office, adds: "Before [the E.U. decision], everyone was holding together to get a date to start talks. Now people are becoming confused. There is fatigue, and nationalism becomes an escape route."

The embattled government of the pro-

ish minds] that Kurds are to blame," he says.

E.U. officials monitoring Turkey's progress toward accession talks say the recent problems are no reason to push the panic button—yet. Once talks start, "we will have real leverage," argues Krisztina Nagy, spokeswoman for Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn. "Nobody said it would be a walk in the park." If Öcalan gets a retrial, it could become a walk through a minefield as Erdoğan tries to pick his way between Turkey's E.U. commitments and growing nationalist sentiment. "Turks may seem quiet and patient right now," says Bayramoğlu, eyes still glistening, "but very soon there will come a moment when we say, 'Enough!'"

—With reporting by Leo Cendrowicz/Brussels and Pelin Turgut/Istanbul

TIME

MAY 30, 2005

I N T H E A R E N A

Joe Klein

Iran's Pragmatic Face

IRAQ APOLOGIZED TO IRAN LAST WEEK. IT ACKNOWLEDGED SADDAM Hussein's role in provoking the devastating eight-year war between the two countries in the 1980s. This is an extraordinary gesture, and perhaps a provocative one. No doubt Iraq's Sunnis were not thrilled by either the apology or the blatant Shi'ite bonding that accompanied the diplomatic visit of Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi to Baghdad. Nor was the Bush Administration comforted by Kharrazi's meeting with Iraq's de facto leader, the Grand Ayatullah Ali Husaini

Sistani in Najaf. Sistani has never met with a U.S. official.

Is it possible that Iran is the country that has benefited most from President Bush's Middle East policy? It's an argument I've heard in Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey over the past year—and also in Israel, where fear of Iranian intentions has become something of a mania. The argument goes like this: the U.S. has eliminated Iran's two neighboring enemies, Saddam Hussein and the Taliban. Although the U.S. Army is camped out on Iran's eastern and western borders, it is an exhausted, overstretched army. After a period of hawkish puffery in Washington, most military experts—even those in the Bush Administration—believe that a full-bore invasion of Iran would be extremely difficult, and very unwise absent the most flagrant provocation. If the mullahs decide that the development of a nuclear bomb is their highest priority, there may not be much America can do to stop them.

But Iran is a confusing place, even to many Iranians, who tend to laugh about the perversity of their political system. The government is shadowy and redundant, with all sorts of factions, secular and religious, competing for power. A lunatic paralysis prevails, which makes it unlikely that Iran will be able to exploit its newfound prominence in the region. Any pretense of democracy seemed to evaporate in 2004, when most of the reform majority in the parliament was blocked from running for re-election by the ruling mullahs ... and yet, a year later, Iran is in the midst of a raucous presidential election, scheduled for June 17, in which major issues—like rapprochement



A dealmaking pragmatist, Rafsanjani may push to repair ties with the U.S.

with the U.S.—are being debated freely in the press. "We've never had an election like this," a political scientist named Hadi Semati told me. "It is quite possible no one will win a majority and we will have a runoff for the first time."

The favorite is former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, but he is only running in the mid-20s in the polls. (Yes, there are polls, of a sort, in Iran.) The reformist candidate Mustafa Moin is not very strong or appealing. And the conservatives are divided. The "revolutionary" generation—that is, those who came to power with the Ayatullah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1979—have formally backed Ali Larijani, but he is limping along with less than 5% support. The younger "war" generation—those who fought against Iraq—is supporting former police chief Mohammed Ghalibaf, who may emerge as Rafsanjani's main rival. There are seven other candidates, including an Iranian-American professor from Rutgers.

Rafsanjani has long been Iran's most clever politician. He has impeccable revolu-

tionary credentials, strong ties to the *bazaari* community—he comes from a wealthy pistachio-growing family—and a history of byzantine dealings with reformers and hard-liners, which is why neither side trusts him very much. But Rafsanjani's ambidexterity gives him an excellent chance to build the coalition necessary to succeed in a second round.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Rafsanjani's candidacy is his platform: he wants to "solve the American problem"—that is, find a way to re-establish diplomatic relations with the U.S. and rejoin the world community. Not even departing reform President Mohammed Khatami has been so publicly candid about the need to deal with the Great Satan, but this has been an intermittent 30-year campaign for Rafsanjani. In the mid-'80s, he was the Iranian "moderate" who received the infamous key-shaped cake and a Bible signed by Ronald Reagan, which signaled the beginning of negotiations in the Iran-*contra* arms-for-hostages deal. As President in the 1990s, he tried to break the ice by offering Conoco a \$1 billion deal to develop the Iranian oil fields—an offer uncer-

emoniously rejected by the Clinton Administration. "Rafsanjani will have secret talks going with the Americans within three months after he takes office," says Gary Sick, an Iran expert at Columbia University.

But what is there to talk about? I was at Tehran University when Rafsanjani rhapsodized about the need for an "Islamic bomb" in December 2001. If he thinks U.S.-Iranian commerce and the nuclear program can proceed on separate tracks, he's bound to be disappointed. Still, Rafsanjani is a dealmaker, first and last. It seems to run in the family. I interviewed his brother Mohammed in 2001, and after a long discussion of Iranian politics, I asked if he had any questions about the U.S. He immediately raised the question of the Caspian Sea oil reserves. "I understand Dick Cheney likes our pipeline route," he said. Hmm ... but before we talk, give up your nukes. ■

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INTERVIEW

A Man for all Seasons?

In the run up to the elections, the newly appointed leader of Iraq President Jalal Talabani spoke to *Chris Kutschera* in this exclusive interview for *The Middle East* magazine. Although the interview was conducted before President Talabani was sworn into office, the Kurdish leader's opinions and concerns remain equally relevant in the building of a new Iraq

THE MIDDLE EAST (TME):
You warned the Americans about getting into a war in Iraq; did they listen to you?

Jalal Talabani (JT):

When the Americans came to liberate Iraq, they left a vacuum — no government. A country like Iraq cannot be ruled without government. We told the Americans before the war that it would be easy to topple Saddam Hussein. We said we needed only three weeks in Washington, the Iraqi opposition was there. But to rule Iraq is a very different matter, it is a very difficult country to run. It is also a very important country. Its situation affects Arabs, Turks, Iranians, in fact all the area. The regional regimes are especially worried about democratic development in Iraq. For the first time two oppressed Iraqi communities are on top. The Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan and the Shi'ites in the south and west were both oppressed by a minority.

TME: Do you mean the Tikritis?

JT: The Tikriti family and particularly Saddam Hussein's branch of it. It was one- person rule. What has happened now is that some are afraid of the Shi'ites in the south because it might affect their own Shi'ite populations. They are afraid of both democracy and of Shi'ites. And of course, we know many others are afraid of the Kurds. For the first time in history, Kurdistan is liberated and ruled by the Kurds.

Also, there has been an end to national and religious oppression not only against the Kurds, but also against Assyrians and Turkmens. Religious oppression was not only against the Arab Shi'ites but also against Kurdish Failis and Turkmen Shi'ites, who number about half the Turkmen community. Ending this policy of national and religious oppression was a huge event.

The other very important thing for the Kurds is ending the ethnic cleansing policy.

Kurds are no longer deported from towns and villages, on the contrary, they are now returning to places they were once forced to leave. This is also a very big achievement for the Kurdish people. It has been our dream for decades.

Now, for the first time in history, both coalition and central government officially recognise the Kurdish administration. According to the law, Iraqi Kurdistan Governments, (KRG), are the official government of the area. This is a very big thing for us.

For the first time in history, coalition forces are recognising *Peshmerga* forces as a part of the coalition forces. *Peshmergas* now have a right to be here and to bear arms. For the first time we have tanks, we have artillery — armoured cars, katyushas, we have all these things.

For the first time in history, instead of bureaucrats from the United Nations coming here and obstructing our development in the name of this or that, this funding is now being given to the regional government to spend.

The economy of Iraq is liberated also. It is now a free economy, which has really helped development. I can give you an example: Professor Abdul Hamid, the leader of the Iraqi Islamic Party and a Sunni has been a professor at the university for 32 years, until recently receiving a salary of around \$15 a month. Nowadays a university professor is receiving \$400, \$500, even \$1000 a month. A policeman was receiving \$3. He is now receiving \$300.

TME: There have been all these important achievements but there has also been chaos in Baghdad and other vital areas.

JT: Let's look at the negative side. Because of the problems with democracy, and with the Shi'ites, all the terrorist groups came pouring into Iraq: Al Qaeda, Wahhabis, fundamental Salafi Muslims, a group of Baathists also — all started to work against the Kurdish people, against the Iraqi people, against the new developments. Because we had no Iraqi government, no real police force, the American army cannot be the police force, the American army cannot be traffic police, the Army finished its job within 20 days,



CHRIS KUTSCHERA

Saddam Hussein was kicked out, and one army claiming to be one million strong was — *pouf* — finished. But to achieve security is the duty of the Iraqi people, unfortunately this duty was not given to the Iraqi people.

TME: So this is how chaos evolved?

Let me tell you something and it is self-criticism: Iraqi forces committed a big mistake. Two months after the collapse of the regime, General Garner came to Dukan and asked me to call Massoud (Barzani). He told us to go to Baghdad and form a government. We gathered Iraqi opposition forces — Ambassador Khalilzadeh was there, a political adviser of (US Secretary of Defence) Rumsfeld was there, they said: "Please choose among you a prime minister, a government and we will recognise it".

The Iraqi opposition could not reach agreement among themselves, for one month they discussed how many Shi'ites, how many Sunnis, how many...etc.etc. A month went by; the Americans cannot wait like this.

Then came UNSC 1483 (the United Nations Security Council resolution to lift sanctions). The UNSC changed a lot of things. First of all, liberation was changed to occupation. And occupation is hated by all Iraqis, including your old friend Jalal Talabani. Who likes occupation? Everyone welcomed liberation, then we were deprived

of our rights, of money and so and so...

Criminal gangs are using these things in their interest. I must give you the example of Muqtada Al Sadr. Muqtada was ruling in Bagdad as if he were the government, occupying towns, preventing people from coming and going and telling women what they must wear. They (Al Sadr's supporters) killed many Christians and many Yazidis, everywhere shops selling wine were destroyed, and even

Islamic party also came to me in the same way, they wanted me to mediate... I will tell you the story of Fallujah in detail when you come back...

TME: And the new government? As the leader of PUK, as a Kurdish leader, who do you want to be the prime minister of the new government?

JT: The new Prime Minister must be chosen by the Governing Council.

TME: OK, you are member of the

THERE HAS BEEN AN ENDING TO NATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS OPPRESSION NOT ONLY AGAINST THE KURDS, BUT ALSO AGAINST ASSYRIANS AND TURKMENS; ENDING THIS POLICY OF OPPRESSION WAS A HUGE EVENT

Christian girls were asked to wear the *chador*. Then everything changed. Now, by the way, I have a letter from the south, sent with the approval of Al Sadr, asking me to mediate between him and the government...

TME: So we have chaos in the Arab part of Iraq... Mr Ezzedine Ibrahim was killed. How long can you...?

JT: It is easy to kill. John Kennedy was killed, they tried many times to assassinate General de Gaulle... There is a kind of exaggeration in the media about the negative side...

TME: Are you willing to live with an Arab part of Iraq which is in such a chaos?

JT: Yes, because we are obliged to live. There is no other way. First of all, we are able, if the government is formed in a right way, to end this chaos.

Believe me, if the rule is given to the main Iraqi forces, it is possible within three to four months to end this chaos, depending on the people.

TME: You are not afraid of a civil war?

JT: No, not at all. Take one example, Fallujah. Fallujah was war, chaos. People came to me from Fallujah, I went to the Americans and I told them there are people who are ready to cooperate with you to secure the area, why must you fight all the people just because there are some terrorists there. They (the Americans) said it was a good idea to think again. The

Governing Council, which name will you support?

JT: There are many names...

TME: But do you think it should be a Kurd, a Shi'ite, a Sunni?

JT: It is not a matter of whether to choose Kurd, Sunni or Shi'ite, but rather to select a man who can hold...

TME: Are there a large number of candidates?

JT: Yes, there are. For example, SCIRI has its own, Dr Adel Abdoul Mahdi, one of my best friends, and a very good man; Dawa, they have Ibrahim Jaafari... Then there is Dr Baher Al Ulum; Ahmad Chalabi and 15 small groups of Shi'ites. Jalal Talabani, they say he can do it. Let me tell you, the Sunnis also, many of the Sunnis are thinking that Talabani can play this role, and Massoud Barzani supports the same idea. But Jalal Talabani is not supporting this idea, for many reasons...

There are good people, for example Adel Abdul Mahdi is a good man, and also there are other people. For us, the Kurds, I think we must strengthen our position. We must take into consideration many possibilities, what will happen in Iraq if the situation deteriorates; if animosity between Sunnis and Shi'ites will continue, it is very difficult for Iraq...

TME: When will there be a solution?

JT: This is the question:



TME: So if this problem between Sunnis and Shi'ites goes on, what will happen?

JT: The Kurds must mediate because we have good relations with both of them.

TME: And you say you must reinforce your own area?

JT: Yes, we must strengthen it, in all ways, politically, economically, agriculturally, culturally. We must reinforce our identity. Something is happening here, it's like Syria and Lebanon... Syria got lots of benefits from the chaos in Lebanon. The Kurdish area of Iraq has suffered in the same way. Now people are coming to this area because it is quiet and calm, large companies who want to work in Iraq come first to Suleimania. Trade between Iran and Kurdistan, via Suleimania, is very strong and the same is true of Turkey, China and Germany. Now, for the first time, this area is going to be prosperous and for the first time in history, the Kurds are thoroughly united.

TME: You are a political leader, you are a Peshmerga commander, you must also have considered the worse case scenario. If the government is unsuccessful; if conflict continues; if there is civil war in the Arab part of Iraq, what will the Kurds do?

JT: The Kurds will first take steps to protect and develop their area, then try to mediate between the Arabs to solve the problem. We must not sit down and watch the Arabs killing each other. It is our country, while we are Iraqis we are responsible for the security of Iraq, we are responsible for solving problems between Arab brothers, both Sunnis and Shi'ites, because we have good relations with both of them.

TME: So you will try to mediate and bring them together?

JT: Yes, we are doing our best.

TME: How do you see the make up of the future government?

JT: Well, there is a problem. We have two posts, president and prime minister but we have three communities: Shi'ites, Sunnis and Kurds.

TME: You have a third post, the Speaker of Parliament

JT: Not yet. If we had it, it might be possible to solve the problem...

TME: So how will you solve it?

JT: It is very difficult. Three people for two chairs, there must be a reconciliation between them. These three communities must sit down and reach an agreement.

TME: But you will have a president and two vice-presidents, maybe this is a way of solving the problem?

JT: No, the problem will be the first two seats.

TME: Which are the first seats?

JT: President and prime minister. The Kurds say they will never accept, as we have previously, the role of deputy or vice-president. It is impossible. This is the decision of the Kurdish group. The Sunnis cannot be neglected for ever. They say they will not agree to give the post of prime minister to the Shi'ites.

TME: They say that?

JT: Yes, they say they would prefer to see a Kurd as prime minister, not a Shi'ite. You know why? First, they don't want to see a Shi'ite in the first post, second because the Kurds are Sunnis. They look to the religious...

TME: Which is the most important post? Prime Minister or...

JT: Prime Minister!

On 7th April 2005 Jalal Talabani was sworn in as the first Kurdish President of Iraq; the two vice presidents appointed to serve with him were Adel Abdul Mahdi, a Shi'ite, and Ghazi Al Yawar, a Sunni. The position of prime minister was filled by Dr Ibrahim Jaafari, a Shi'ite from Karbala in central Iraq. ■

KURDS WILL NOT SIT DOWN & WATCH ARABS KILLING EACH OTHER. IT IS OUR COUNTRY, WHILE WE ARE IRAQIS WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SECURITY OF IRAQ

