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MASSUD BARZANI UNANIMOUSLY ELECTED PRESIDENT OF IRAQI KURDISTAN

ON 14 June, Massud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), assumed the Presidency of the Autonomous Region of Iraqi Kurdistan while committing himself to strengthening the national unity of the country and fraternity between Kurds and Arabs. On 12 June, Mr. Barzani had received the 42 votes of his own party, the 42 votes of his ally

Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the 27 votes of the other smaller Kurdish organisations.

The swearing in ceremony, which the Kurds wanted to be particularly splendid, was postponed because of a sandstorm, which had prevented important public figures arriving from Baghdad. Massud Barzani's installation at the head of the three Kurdish

Provinces assumes a major importance for the Kurds. It was under a gigantic picture of Mustafa Barzani, who had led and inspired Kurdish resistance to Baghdad's central authority for many long years, that the son took his oath of office, one hand on a copy of the Quran. The ceremony, which took place in the 111-seat Kurdish House of Parliament, was attended by the Iraqi President, Jalal Talabani and the Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, Hajem al-Hassani.

The Iraqi Prime Minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, was unable to

make the journey to Irbil, but UN General Secretary Kofi Annan's envoy, Ashraf Qazi and several foreign diplomats were present.

"I will spare no efforts for strengthening national unity, fraternity between Kurds and Arabs and unity within Kurdistan", declared Mr. Barzani after taking his oath at the Kurdish Parliament's rostrum, before an audience of diplomats and public figures. *"We have a historic opportunity for drawing up a permanent Constitution that will determine our destiny and it is essential that it guarantee a free and worthy life for every Iraqi citizen",* he added. *"We have fought together to bring down the dictatorship with out friends, the United States and Great Britain, and we now have the task of building a new democratic, federal and plural Iraq",* he continued. The head of the KDP also undertook a solemn commitment to *"preserving the rights and gains of Kurdistan",* whose autonomy dates, in fact, from 1991, with the setting up of the air exclusion zone over part of Iraqi Kurdistan.

The Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, Adnan Mufti, declared *"this is a historic day for the Iraqis, and particularly the Kurds. A day that marks the beginning of a new era, devoted to consolidating democracy".* Then, addressing the audience, he stressed *"Your presence here bear witness to the solidity of the bonds between the various components of the Iraqi people — the Arabs, the Kurds, the Turcomen as well as the Assyrio-Chaldeans".* For his part, President Talabani stressed: *"This event is likely to strengthen national unity, a genuine unity between ethnic groups, built on a free choice".* *"We believe that the democratic experiment in Kurdistan can serve as an example of that democracy to which we aspire for Iraq",* he added.

The Kurdish Parliament first met in Irbil on 4 June, more than four

months after the General Election that had elected this 111-member assembly, as well as the 275-member Iraqi Parliament and 18 Iraqi Provincial councils. This delay was due to differences between the two main Kurdish parties on the method of electing the President of the Autonomous Region, the KDP insisting on direct election by universal suffrage (which would have meant holding another election). On 29 May they reached an agreement that involved confiding the Presidency to Mr. Barzani for four years and asking Parliament to elect his. The Bill adopted by the Kurdish Parliament makes the President the Chief Executive and co-ordinator between the regional authorities and Baghdad, the head of the Regional security forces and spokesman for the Iraqi Kurds with international bodies. This Bill, proposed by both the KDP and the PUK, was passed after three sittings. It envisages the direct election of the President of Kurdistan by universal suffrage for a four-year term of office, with the possibility of standing for re-election once only — but that, in view of the circumstances, the Kurdish Parliament should, exceptionally, the elect first president.

The whole of Kurdistan welcomed the election of Massud Barzani with jubilation. People came out of their houses onto the streets in the main towns to celebrate Mr. Barzani's election to the Region's top post. Cars, draped in the Kurdish national colours, ran hooting round the streets of Irbil, now officially established as the Region's capital. Popular celebrations and parties lasted for several days, in an atmosphere of calm, without any violent incidents. In Iran, demonstrators came out into the streets to celebrate Massud Barzani's swearing-in at Mahabad, a historic stron-

ghold of Kurdish nationalism — and also the city where the Kurdish president was born (during the short-lived Kurdish Republic of 1946). However, the Iranian police moved in to disperse the crowds, which provoked clashes. Peaceful demonstrations of support took place in several towns in Turkish Kurdistan, particularly in Diyarbakir where pictures of him were displayed. In Syria, as well as in the Kurdish communities of Europe, the Kurdish President's election was celebrated with parties. In Paris, several hundreds of people were invited to a reception organised by the Kurdish Institute. Many foreign and Kurdish public figures sent messages of congratulation to President Barzani, including George Bush, Tony Blair, Kofi Annan, and Javier Solana. Evidently, Mrs. Danielle Mitterrand, a long-standing defender of the Kurdish cause, also sent a message in which she wrote, in particular:

"I have learnt with great joy of your election as President of Kurdistan. I am very glad to have lived long enough to see the realisation of the dream of a President, democratically elected by the people of Kurdistan.

I am glad to see that struggles for freedom and dignity, when they are led by lucid, just and courageous leaders enjoying the support of their populations, end up by triumphing, despite apparently insurmountable difficulties and obstacles. A few years ago I celebrated the victory of my friend Nelson Mandela — today I am celebrating yours with many and faithful friends of the Kurdish people. First ever President of Kurdistan, you will henceforth have to assume historic responsibilities for your people. Knowing your wisdom and sense of justice, I am convinced that, henceforth, you will act as President of all the people of Kurdistan, without political or religious discrimination, and not just as leader of a party. You will have a crucial role to

play in laying down, in your Region, the foundations of a just, equitable and united society, observing the rights of the working classes, women and minorities. The unity of your people, which is your most precious asset, can only be achieved and maintained if the political system you establish is based on justice, democracy and equality of opportunity for all its citizens.

No doubt the Kurds of other parts of Kurdistan will see the elected President of Iraqi Kurdistan as the spiritual president of all the Kurds. There too, you will have to maintain solidarity with your brothers of countries of the region still struggling for their freedom to help them peacefully to secure their rights.

Finally, you will have to play an important part in setting up institutions in a democratic and federal Iraq, by cooperating closely with President Talabani, with the political parties and the Kurdistan Parliament and with all those forces that are working for a peaceful, stable and sovereign Iraq.

The task awaiting you is immense, but it is also exciting because history has given you the chance and the honour of realising a centuries-old dream of your people. I am sure that your father, who devoted his life to the realisation of this dream, would be most proud of you, as all of us, Kurds by birth and Kurds at heart, are very proud of you.

Wishing you every success in your eminent office, I embrace you most affectionately."

For his part, the President of the Paris Kurdish Institute, in his message, stressed: *"Your election is a political event of the utmost importance in the history of the Kurdish people. It crowns a three-century long struggle to create a Kurdish State. A struggle first launched by Ehmedê Xanî, pursued with courage by the*

great figures of our national history such as Mîr Mohammad of Rawandîz, Mîr Bedîrxan of Botan, Sêx Ubeydullahê Nehrî, Sêx Saîdê Pîran, Sêx Mahmûd Barzanjî, Ihasan Nûrî Pasa, Pêsewa Qazî Mohammed, Mela Mustafa Barzani and Dr. Abdul Rahman Qasimlou. You have, with Brêx Jalal Talabani, embodied in these last decades, this glorious struggle for the freedom of the people of Kurdistan.

The fact that Jalal Talabani is today President of Iraq and you of Kurdistan, that you have been cooperating hand in hand in the national interests of our people, is a source of great pride for all the Kurdish nation and for all our many faithful and devoted friends throughout the world. Democratically elected by the Kurdistan National Assembly, you are henceforth, in effect, President of all the Kurds. You embody the hopes and aspirations of 35 million Kurds of the Near East. From California to Kazakhstan, from Norway to Australia, all the Kurdish communities of the world have their eyes on you, on the Kurdistan Government and parliament. The success of your Government will serve as a model and source of inspiration to the Kurdish national as a whole and will open the way for a peaceful settlement of the Kurdish problem in the neighbouring States and for their indispensable democratisation.

This is why we are all with you with all our heart. The heart of every Kurdish patriot is beating in Irbil and they are all ready to be mobilised for the success of the Federated State of Kurdistan, for its President, its Government and its Parliament..

I am sure that you will know how to mobilise and channel these energies and that, together, we will build a free, democratic and fraternal Kurdistan.

With my respects and brotherly greetings".

No sooner elected, Massud Barzani went to Baghdad on 19 June to put the demands of the Kurds before the Members of the Transitional Assembly that is charged with drawing up the future Constitution, repeating his commitment to the fundamental transitional law passed in 2004. *"If we base ourselves on the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) and our agreements made before the fall (of Saddam Hussein) then we will be able to write and approve the Constitution in time"* declared the President of the Kurdish Region to the Members of Parliament. *"We are all agreed that the TAL should be the basis and we must stand by that, We must not be deviated from it"* he insisted.

The TAL was drafted and adopted by the Iraqi Government Council set up by the American authorities who ruled Iraq after the overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime, from April 2003 to June 2004. This law stipulated the drafting of a definitive Constitution by 15 August, which was to be submitted for approval by a referendum before 15 October. An extension of the deadline of up to six months was authorised. *"We promise, once more, to cooperate in the building of a federal, democratic and plural Iraq"*, repeated Mr. Barzani, who had replaced his traditional Kurdish dress with a dark suit. *"We must correct all the reasons and consequences of the changes imposed by the old regime on the demographic composition of the country, at Kirkuk and in other Kurdish regions"*, he stressed.

The Kurds are claiming the return to this city of all those who had been driven out during the campaign of forced *"Arabisation"* conducted by the Saddam Hussein regime, as well as the restoration of their property. This point is stipulated in Article 58 of the TAL.

"We must apply Article 58 and recognise the specifically Kurdish character of Kirkuk and make it a symbol of coexistence" insisted Mr. Barzani.

During a Press conference the day after his speech in Baghdad, Massud Barzani expressed the hope that his country should henceforth be called the Federal Republic of Iraq and that this name be written into the Constitution. *"We want the new name of our country to be the Federal Republic of Iraq"*, he stressed. He presented the arguments in favour of this system and offered to help regions that wished to become Federal Regions. *"Those who want to impose a centralised government want to divide Iraq. Our experience proves that federalism represents the unification of Iraq and not its division, and those who believe the opposite are mistaken"*, pointed out Mr. Barzani.

The idea of forming one or more autonomous Shiite regions in the centre and the South of Iraq has been in the air for several months. Thus, at the beginning of June, the governor of Kerbala, Okail Khazali, announced the setting up of a committee with the responsibility of determining, by the end of the month, whether it were better to associate with the Province of Najaf, further South, or with Babylon, further North and Wasset, further East. The committee has until 30 June to resolve this issue. It will be on the basis of its recommendations that the other provinces will be approached, the Regional officer had indicated. In March a tribal chief and Member of Parliament, Abdel Karim al-Mohammadawi, had issued a call for setting up a Shiite autonomous region in the South, modelled on the Kurdistan region. On the basis of the fundamental law, at present in force in Iraq, three governorates (provinces) can group together to form an autonomous region, with

the exception of Baghdad and Kirkuk.

"Since the creation of the Iraqi State, over 80 years ago, we have only experienced tyranny and dictatorship, we have been governed by un-elected governments that imposed their force with tanks" declared Mr. Barzani, referring to the monarchy and then the republican regime that followed in 1958. *"What do you want? To repeat the experience (...) of the past or that we set to work to install a federal mechanism that works and resolves our problems, such as they have in Germany"* he concluded.

On the other hand, Massud Barzani denied news reports of acts of violence against the Arab and Turkic minorities by Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan. *"The news published in the Washington Post is base-*

less and the accusations made are false", he stated. On 15 June the *Washington Post* had stated that the Kurds in Kirkuk had summarily arrested hundreds of Arabs and Turcomen and forcibly conducted them to prisons in Irbil and Suleimaniyeh with the support of American forces. According to Mr. Barzani, *"the American Army arrested suspect in Kirkuk and other regions and asked to be able to send them to Irbil for a specific and limited period of time, till the end of their interrogation or till the Americans took them back"*. *"We have not arrested anyone, and all those who were transferred to Irbil were sent there at the insistent request of the Americans and who have since taken them back"*, added Mr. Barzani. The State Department spokesman, Sean McCormack, categorically denied any US involvement in these acts.

THE BRUSSELS CONFERENCE: THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY SUPPORTS "A DEMOCRATIC, PLURALIST, FEDERAL AND UNIFIED IRAQ"

THE Conference on Iraq, which brought together, in Brussels on 22 June, over 80 countries and international organisations, ended with the adoption of a declaration of support for the Iraqi transition government in its efforts to restore security and rebuild the country. *"What we ask is exactly that for which your people ask you. The children of Iraq are exactly like yours, they do not want to lose their fathers and become orphans. The women of Iraq are exactly like yours, they do not want to lose their husbands and become widows"*, exclaimed the Iraqi Prime Minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, who arrived with several members of his cabinet. This was the first time the new Iraqi authorities had had the opportunity of expounding their vision of the future before the international

community that was present in full, from Russia to China, including Syria and Iraq.

The government had set itself four priorities, pointed out the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Hoshyar Zebari: to draw up a Constitution and ensure that the elections took place in December as planned; to ensure the stability of the country; to rebuild the economy; to establish solid links with the neighbouring countries, including Syria and Iran. Baghdad, declared the Minister, does not underestimate the *"very real challenges"* with which Iraq is faced. One of these challenges is to ensure that all the components of Iraqi society take part in the political future of the country, in particular the Sunni Arab minority that used to dominate the country under the Saddam Hussein regime and

which is sustaining the ranks of the insurgents. *"We want a stable constitutionally elected government established by a democratic process"*, Mr. Zebari summed up. The Iraqi government, he explained, will ask for help in training its army, building up its police force and its magistracy. Moreover, Baghdad expects concrete measures from its neighbours to control their borders and prevent infiltration of insurgents into Iraq.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice considered that, in return, the new Iraqi executive must improve security, develop its economy and *"open a political area for all the members of Iraqi society who reject violence"*. She also stressed later during a Press Conference, that Syria *"has a responsibility"* — that *"of not letting its territory be used"* as a rear base for terrorist operations in Iraq.

No concrete initiative was expected of the Brussels Conference, which was attended, in particular, by the UN Secretary, General, Kofi Annan, and the heads of the American and European foreign offices. It was principally held to express a political message of support, which is reflected in the final statement: the Conference supports the efforts undertaken by the transition government with a view *"to achieving a democratic, plural, federal and united Iraq that reflects the will of the people and fully observes political and human rights"*.

A Conference of donor countries will be held separately on 17 and 18 July in Amman in Jordan. During the previous one, in 2004, the donors promised some 32 billion dollars. The Paris Club, which includes the United States, Japan, Russia and the countries of the European Union, moreover, cancelled over 80% of Iraq's debt in 2004, that is, some 24 billion euros. This represents a quarter

of the Iraqi debt. The other countries to which Iraq is estimated to owe about 57 billion euros, will be encouraged to do likewise.

"This is a very important day for Iraq", commented British Foreign Minister Jack Straw. "This stresses that the international community, deeply divided" before the US launching of the conflict in 2003 without UN approval is *"henceforth rallying round in an active way to support the building of a democratic, peaceful and prosperous Iraq"*.

The participants have decided *"to support the democratically elected Iraqi transition government ... (which) has carried out a complete survey of its political and economic programmes as well as those in the area of public security, by stressing the areas that need priority action"*.

The participants *"expressed their support for the efforts of the Iraqis aiming at a democratic plural federal and unified Iraq reflecting the will of the people where political and human rights are fully observed"*.

The participants *"urged all Iraqis to participate in the political process and called on the Iraqi transition government (...) to continue and intensify its efforts to involve all parties to renounce violence (...) so as to*

promote national reconciliation. The participants firmly condemned the terrorist actions, including the kidnappings and assassinations".

The participants *"called on Iraq and the States of the region (...) to cooperate with one another so as to prevent cross border transit of support for the terrorists, to strengthen neighbourly relations and improve regional security"*. They *"welcomed the Iraqi vision of economic reconstruction and reaffirmed the importance of creating the conditions for a social-economic development (of Iraq) likely to benefit all Iraqis"*.

The participants *"recalled the commitments they had made to lighten Iraq's debt and called on other creditors to undertake a lightening of the debt on terms as generous as those given by the members of the Paris Club"*.

The participants *"agreed to decide between now and the Amman meeting (on 17 and 18 July) on means for stimulating the co-ordination of their aid to Iraq"*. *"The participants fully recognised the importance of the agreement of the sovereign Iraqi government to the presence of multinational forces and these forces have indicated their commitment to acting in conformity with international law, including the obligations of international humanitarian law"*.

DAMASCUS: THE BAATH PARTY CONGRESS BACKS THE STATUS QUO AND PROMISES REFORMS

THE Baas Party Congress that met from 6 to 9 June *"affirmed the necessity of settling the problem of the 1962 'census' organised at Hassaké (which had arbitrarily stripped tens of thousands of Kurds of their citizenship) and of working for the development of the (Kurdish) region"*. According to the recommendations of the Congress published on 14 June by

the Syrian press, it invited the government to grant Syrian nationality to some 225,000 Kurds who had been considered foreigners. According to the Syrian Kurdish parties, 225,000 Kurds are deprived of their nationality as a result of the 1962 census, to which must be added 75,000 others *"without identity documents"*. The Kurdish leaders deny any secessionist aims and

assure that they only want recognition of their language and their culture, as well as their political rights.

Furthermore, the Congress of the Baath Party, in power in Syria, re-elected President Bachar al-Assad as General Secretary of the Party and recommended a revision of the State of Emergency law as well as the promulgation of new laws on political parties and the media. The delegates also elected a new national leadership, into which several new public figures close to President al-Assad have entered, while the bulk of the veterans are no longer members. The Baath Congress, the first for five years, declared itself in favour of a *"revision of the State of Emergency"* proposing *"to limit its application to crimes that attack the security of the State"* declared Mrs. Boussaina Chaabane, Minister for Emigrés and spokesperson of the Congress, during a Press Conference. The State of Emergency, which has been in force since the Baath Party took power in 1963, gives very wide powers to the security services, bans meetings and authorises press censorship.

In a blaze of propaganda, the regime also promises *"profound political and economic reforms"* such as *"the adoption of a law on political parties and the revision of the electoral law"* for local and general elections. Some Syrian leaders had indicated, before the end of the work of the Congress, that the parties that would be authorised should not have *"any ethnic, sectarian, religious or regional basis"*. This automatically excludes the Moslem Brothers and the Kurdish parties, banned at the moment and yet the only real opposition organisations. The Baath only tolerates six small parties, of a more or less socialist orientation, on the political checkerboard.

The delegates also recommended the drafting of a *"law on news and information"*, according to the Sana News Agency. They recommended the *"constitution of a higher council for news and information"* and *"the amendment of the law on publications"*, which at present allows prison sentences for journalists who contravene it. According to Mrs. Chaabane, the Congress also recommended that Syria be steered towards *"a social market economy"*, that is by maintaining the social role of the State. It called on *"the government to set up a plan of global economic reform, with a timetable"*. Mrs. Chaabane further indicated that the party *"outlined the strategy"* that will be carried out by the government. According to her, the delegates elected a Central Committee of 96 members, including 18 women.

At the end of its work, Mr. Assad made a 3-hour speech. Five members of the old leadership are in the new 21-man national command. Besides President Assad, there remain the Foreign Minister, Faruk al-Chareh, the Prime Minister, Mohammed Naji Otri, the Finance Minister, Mohammed al-Hussein, and the President of the Committee of national Security, Mohammad Said Bkhetane. Notable new members are the Minister of Defence, Hassan Turkmani, the Director of General Intelligence Services, Hicham Bakhtiar, the Speaker of Parliament, Mahmud al-Abrach, and one of President al-Assad's advisors, Hayssam Satayhi. On the other hand, most of the veterans have left the party's leadership, in particular Vice-Presidents Abdel Hakim Khaddam and Zuheir Macharka, the former Minister of Defence, Mustapha Tlass, and former Prime Minister Mustapha Miro. Only the posts of Prime Minister and Speaker of Parliament will be reserved to

Baathist Party members.

Slight improvements in the Syrians' daily lives are also promised. *"Syrians will be exempted from having to obtain prior authorisation from the Security Services for certain activities. Sixty seven situations are covered by this measure, while includes organisation of a wedding"*, the paper *Al Quds al-Arabi* reported in its 9 June issue. This London based Pan-Arab daily quotes other events that *"benefit from this exemption, like opening a hairdressers, a bakers, a grocers, a video games or a ready made clothes shop. Syrians will also be able to import car spares parts. Syrian students will no longer need authorisation to enrol in universities, training colleges or nursing schools."* These measures must still be passed by the Baath-dominated Syrian Parliament — which in all can take over a year.

On 14 June, one week after the end of the 10th Congress of the Syrian Baath, President Assad appointed Abdallah Dardari as Deputy Prime Minister, responsible for economic affairs. A Dardari is not a member of the ruling Baath party — a first in Syrian history since the Baath took power. The day before President Assad had appointed a new head of the Intelligence Services who also has not emerged from the Baath party ranks. For its part, *Al Quds al-Arabi* indicates that *"contrary to what might be thought, the appointment of General Mamluk as new head of Intelligence Services indicates a toughening of the regime"*. Mamluk, the daily recalls, *"has been head of the Air Force Intelligence Services for the last two years"*. (Editor's Note: the *coups d'états* that have taken place in Syria and in Arab countries have all been led by Air Force officers. Control of the air gives them a head start on the other armed forces.).

The daily quotes the Syrian Human Rights organisations, which fear that the *"appointment of Mamluk at the head of General Intelligence might be the sign of the regimes determination to continue using the 'big stick' against its population"*. The more so as *"Mamluk is known for having practiced torture to a great extent on political detainees"*. The foreign-based Syrian NGOs denounce his appointment and demand his trial for torture by international bodies.

Pending the promised reforms, the repression against Kurds continues and all State organs are pressed into service. Some 60 young Kurds were arrested in Qamichlo, in the North of the country, after a demonstration, on 5 June, demanding the truth about the death of an influential Kurdish cleric, Maachuk Khaznawi, whose death had been announced on 1 June by the Syrian authorities. According to these authorities, a *"criminal gang"* was responsible for his assassination. Shortly before his death, Sheikh Khaznawi had toured Europe in the course of which he had met Kurdish leaders, but also a leader of the Moslem Brotherhood, a movement that is banned in Syria, Ali Sadreddin al-Bayanuni.

On 6 June, a meeting took place between representatives of Kurdish parties and Arab tribes in the region, to contain the disturbances, which had taken on an ethnic character, opposing *"Arabs to Kurds"*, according to certain Kurdish leaders. *"Our problem is not with the Arabs but with the authorities who are throwing the Arabs into this conflict and using them as tools against us"*, stated Kheireddin Mrad, general secretary of the *Azadi* party (banned, like the other eleven Kurdish organisations in Syria). According to the general secretary of the *Yekiti* Kurdish party, Hassan

Saleh, *"dozens of small shops owned by Kurds were pillaged by Baathist militia"* consisting of Arabs, during the 4 June disturbances. *"We want dialogue to settle the Kurdish problem, especially on the occasion of the holding of the Baath Party Congress"* Mr. Saleh assured his hearers. He accused the authorities of *"refusing any dialogue up to now"*.

"The Kurds have some legitimate claims and postponing the solution to this question is not in the country's interest", stated, for his part, the moderate Islamist member of Parliament Mohammad Habash, who is also President of the Damascus Centre for Islamic Studies, of which Sheikh Khaznawi was Vice-President. The authorities have several times made promises that have remained dead letters. He also explained that the Kurdish organisations *"have taken a stronger line as they've realised that international circumstances were more in their favour"* at a time when *"Kurdish national feelings have grown"* because of the situation in Iraq. *"The solution is for the State rapidly to respond to Kurdish demands to avoid the situation being exploited by foreign parties"* added the parliamentarian.

Moreover, on 12 June the State Security Court, a special State of Emergency court, sentenced two Kurds to two and a half years jail for being members of *"a secret organisation seeking to have parts of Syrian territory annexed by a foreign country"*, reported the civil rights lawyer Anouar Bounni. The two Kurds, Mohammad Ali Bakr and Abdel Kader Kader, are members of the Democratic Union Party (formerly the Turkish PKK) pointed out Mr. Bounni.

The parents of about 26 detainees, from Qatana, a locality about 25 Km from Damascus, also assembled before the Court to *"learn the*

fate" of these detainees, who have been kept incommunicado for 13 months without any visiting rights. According to Mr. Bounni the detainees, many of whom are under 20 years of age, had been incarcerated *"for being members of an islamist movement"*. The lawyer attacked all these arrests *"contrary to all the news that is being propagated about the changes taking place in Syria, in particular regarding the State of Emergency, which is still in force"* in the country as it has been for the last 42 years.

On the other hand, on 26 June, a Syrian Court acquitted one of the country's principal Human Rights defender, accused of anti-government activity, turning down all the charges levelled against him. The National Security Court considered that Aktham Naisse, President of the Committees for the Defence of Democratic Freedoms and Human Rights in Syria, was cleared of all charges. Aktham Naisse was arrested in April 2004, for *"having revealed false information on behalf of a clandestine group that had links with international Human Rights defence organisations"* and other charges connected with his activity against the Baath party. He had been released four months later on payment of a 200-dollar bail.

His lawyer, Anouar Bounni, stressed that the National Security Court *"was unconstitutional, illegal and unjust"*, despite this acquittal. *"(Four) months jail — what can compensate for that?"* he stressed. But Ammar Qurabi, spokesman of the Arab Organisation for Human Rights welcomed an *"excellent"* verdict and hoped that the other political prisoners would be freed shortly.

About fifty Syrian intellectuals also condemned *"the campaign of assassination and terror that targeted the Lebanese writer and journalist Samir Kassir and the Kurdish cleric*

Mohammad Maashouk Khaznawi" in a communiqué published in Beirut on 3 June. *"These two aggressions are part of a series of criminal and terrorist acts that are drowning the Arab world in blood (...) thanks to the maintenance of totalitarian and dictatorial regimes",* the communiqué asserts. *"We denounce this campaign, which is aimed at freedom of expression, diversity of opinion, and the calls for democracy of which Arab societies*

have urgent need" says this document signed, in particular by the opponent Michel Kilo, the sociologist Bourhane Ghalioun, and the Human Rights defender Aktham Naysse. *"We protest against this campaign of assassinations and terror that is taking place and against its authors; we demand that the truth be made known rapidly and that the assassins be brought to justice"* it adds.

VIOLENCE CONTINUES IN IRAQ, BUT THE NUMBER OF CASUALTIES IN JUNE WAS 36% LESS THAN IN MAY

ACCORDING to figures supplied by the Iraqi government on 1 July, violence in June cost the lives of 430 Iraqis, including 266 civilians — thus a drop of 36% compared with May. The number of injured is 933, — a drop of 20%. These figures do not cover American soldiers killed in June, which amounted to at least 75, according to the Pentagon. In all, 160 attacks, 53 of which were with car bombs, were recorded throughout the country.

In May, 672 Iraqis had been killed by the islamo-Baathist insurgents, 19% more than in April, which meant an increase for a second consecutive month. Since the Americans handed over to a provisional Iraqi government, years before, over 10,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed according to the Non-Governmental Organisation Iraq Body Count.

Furthermore, during a 30 minute speech on 28 June at Fort Bragg, in North Carolina, to mark the first anniversary of the transfer of power to the Iraqi interim

government on 28 June 2004, the US President George Bush avoided setting any deadline for the withdrawal of the soldiers at present in Iraq, while excluding the idea of sending extra troops there. He asked the Americans to show patience, despite the painful cost of the war. The US President considered that setting a date for the withdrawal of the 135,000 GIs in Iraq would be *"a serious mistake"* at a time when the Iraqi forces cannot yet manage to curb the violence. *"Bush's speech changes nothing for the Iraqi people and is no answer to its needs for water, electricity, transport and security against car bomb attacks. I think that the Iraqi people is quite indifferent to this speech because it is too concerned with its own daily needs"* considered Mahmud Othman, a Kurdish Member of Parliament. President Bush's speech *"was addressed to the American people, not the Iraqi people"* he added. *"For us, there is nothing new in it. But Bush wanted to raise the morale of the American people at a time when the polls show that a majority of Americans is against his policy in Iraq"*.

The US Secretary for Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, for his part,

denied that there were any contacts being made between the Americans and the al-Qaeda chief in Iraq, Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi, even if there are *"encounters"* between American military leaders and some insurgents. Questioned during a Press Conference, on 27 June, on the eventuality of negotiations with the insurgents, Mr. Rumsfeld replied *"No. And certainly not with people like Zarqawi"*. Donald Rumsfeld, however, repeated that some American Army leaders *"regularly met with local and tribal leaders. We also continue to meet Sunni leaders at national level"*. Mr. Rumsfeld had recognised, the day before, that contacts had taken place with the insurgents in Iraq, while minimising their importance. According to the British paper, the *Sunday Times*, two meetings took place in June between American representatives and the chiefs of a certain number of Iraqi movements, including representatives of the terrorist organisation, Ansar al-Sunna.

This new approach has reinforced the Iraqi Sunni Arab representatives, both political and religious, who have been calling for several months for a dialogue with the insurgents so as to involve them in the political process and lower the level of violence. The Iraqi President, Jalal Talabani, himself went part of the way in this direction after his election at the beginning of April, calling for discussions with *"Iraqis who have borne arms against the foreign forces" but excluding the groups linked with al-Qaeda*.

On the other hand, a report by the American Democratic opposition, published on 27 June, indicated that excessive billing by the Halliburton oil services company appears to have cost the American tax-payer at least 1 billion dollars or even 1.4 billion. According to this report, quoting

Defence Ministry and US Army audits, Halliburton, long directed by Vice-President Dick Cheney, is said to have bill over a billion dol-

lars of costs "*considered unacceptable*" either because "*unreasonable*" or not justified by the terms of the contract.

KIRKUK AND IRBIL ARE TARGETED BY TERRORIST ATTACKS

ON 20 June, thirteen police were killed and 103 others wounded in a suicide car bomb attack made on a police training ground of the city of Irbil, according to an assessment supplied by the city's governor. "Thirteen police were killed and 103 others wounded in the explosion of a booby-trapped car driven by a kamikaze onto a sports ground where traffic police were being trained", stated the governor of Irbil, Nozad Hadi. "*It was 7.40 am when a kamikaze, dressed as a policeman, entered the field where 160 traffic police were being trained, driving a red Chevrolet*" before blowing himself up with it, stated one of the wounded in an Irbil hospital.

"*The dead were all dressed for jogging and did not carry any identity papers on them*" stated the head of the forensic institute, Dakhil Said. For his part, the Kurdish Minister of Health, Jamal Abdel Hamid, indicated that the wounded had been transported to the city's four hospitals, but that most of them only suffered light injuries. In May, a kamikaze had mingled with police recruits outside a recruiting centre in Irbil before activating his belt of explosives, killing 46 people.

On the same day, six Iraqis, four of whom were police, were wounded in a car bomb attack near

Kirkuk, according to the chief of Police of Taamim Province. "A car bomb attack aimed at lieutenant Colonel Nawzad Abdallah, Chief of Police of Lailan, 10 Km East of Kirkuk, caused six injured, including four police" stated General Shirko Shaker Hakim. The Chief of Police escaped unharmed. Amongst the six wounded, who were all hospitalised, three were in a serious condition.

In Kirkuk, twenty people died and 81 others, mainly civilians, were injured, in another kamikaze attack outside a bank in Kirkuk. About twenty suspects were arrested. According to Police Colonel Chirzad Abdallah, the attack was committed by a kamikaze wearing a belt with about 50 Kg of explosives, a very animated commercial quarter. In a communiqué on internet, the Ansar al-Sunna group, linked to the al-Qaeda terrorist network, claimed responsibility for this attack which took place at about 10 am local time when civil servants, police and old age pensioners were queuing up before the bank for their pay. According to police chief General Turhan Yussef, "*the attack took place some 400 metres from the police HQ located on a crossroad leading to the Kurdish cities of Irbil and Suleimaniyah*".

On 2 June, twelve people were killed in a suicide car bomb attack

targeted at a convoy of the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Roj Nuri Shwech, stated the Iraqi Ministry of Defence. Mr Shwech was without bodyguards when the car exploded at Tuz Khurmatu, South East of the oil producing city of Kirkuk, according to a statement by the Information committee of the Defence Ministry. The explosion set seven cars alight. At least 38 people were injured in this attack.

Furthermore, on 25 June, the governor of a Kurdish province in the Autonomous Kurdish Region, proposed sending Kurdish *peshmergas* (militiamen) to help re-establish security in the regions further South devastated by the insurgents. "*We are ready to send members of our peshmergas to the provinces of Diyala, Salaheddin and Kirkuk if we are asked*" stated Dana Ahmed Majid, Governor of Suleimaniyah Province. "*We observe provincial borders, but we are offering our help to re-establish peace and security*" he added. He said this at a meeting of Governors held at Baaquba (60 Km North East of Baghdad), capital of Diyala Province. The Iraqi President, Jalal Talabani, had already proposed in April the use of "*popular forces*" (i.e. Kurdish and Shiite militias) against the insurgents, (essentially Sunni Arabs) regretting American opposition on this issue.

Since the American intervention in Iraq and the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime in 2003, the *peshmergas* have continued to ensure security in these regions while the Kurdish members of the coalition in office in Baghdad, and particularly Mr. Talabani, have opposed calls for disarming them. The Kurds do not want the total integration of their *peshmergas* (about 10,000 men) into the Iraqi national Army.

IRAN: MAHMUD AHMADINJAD, AN ULTRA-CONSERVATIVE, ACCEDES TO THE PRESIDENCY

ON 25 June, the ultra-conservative Mayor of Tehran, Mahmud Ahmadinjad became the new President of Iran. He beat his pragmatic conservative rival, the cleric Hashemi Rafsanjani, a former President and Speaker of Parliament, who is, today, in charge of the Council of Discernment, a powerful arbitration organ with extensive legislative powers. Mahmud Ahmadinjad secured 62.2% of the votes as against 35.3% for his opponent, Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani, according to the latest figures of the Ministry, the remaining ballot papers having been declared invalid. According to the Ministry, about 23 million Iranians went to the polls, that is a participation of about 49%, compared with 63% in the first round a week earlier. This is the first time in the history of the Islamic Republic that a second round was needed for a Presidential election. However, many observers consider that the figures have been falsified. The participation, they consider, was really much lower and the ballot boxes were stuffed by the powerful "Guardians of the Revolution" network, which Mr. Ahmadinjad led.

This result reinforces the hold of the conservatives over the Iranian political system, after their victory in the general elections last year, and gives a wider margin of manoeuvre to the unelected clerical leaders, who have the last word on all the major political orientations.

During the voting on 24 June, the reformist-led Ministry of the

Interior, reported "interferences" in certain Teheran polling stations. A member of the Ministry's staff, responsible for preventing electoral infringements, was arrested after an argument with the representative of one of the candidates, and a group of the Ministry's observers recorded 300 complaints of fraud in Teheran. The partisans of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani also denounced "enormous irregularities". After the first round, Mahmud Ahmadinjad's opponents had brought up charges of "stuffing" ballot boxes, buying of votes, pressure on electors and mobilisation in his favour of the Islamist ideological army and militia. In a communiqué, H. Rafsanjani considered that the ultra-conservatives in control of the "mullaharchy" had "used every means available within the elite in power, in an organised an illegal manner, to attack his credibility". "I can only complain to God", he added, however, considering it useless to complain officially before judges already partisan in favour of his opponent.

The pasdarans (Guardians of the Revolution) and other extremist factions intimidated the electors and manipulated the ballots in favour of their candidate. Without even bothering to hide his game, the Supreme Guide of the Revolution, the Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, displayed his satisfaction: "the United States are humiliated by this election" he wrote. The council of Guardians, the ultra-conservative body that oversees the elections, and the armed forces, conducted a vast operation of mobilisation in favour of Mr. Ahmadinjad in the Armed forces and among the

radical organisations, say the accusers.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) denounced this election in a communiqué published on 27 June. The KDPI expressed its astonishment that a candidate placed last in the polls before the elections could have won 5 million votes in the first round and over 17 million in the second, thus tripling his score. The KDPI also denounces his involvement in the "terrorist plot resulting in the assassination of Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlu, former General Secretary of the KDPI, of his assistant, Abdullah Ghaderi Azar, a member of the Party's Central Committee, and of an Iraqi Kurd of Austrian nationality, Fadhel Rassul, ". These assassinations took place on 13 July 1989 in Vienna, during a meeting with emissaries of the Iranian government, who had come from Teheran to discuss "peace" and find a "peaceful" solution to the Kurdish question in Iran. A witness, called witness "D" recently confessed to the former Iranian President, Banisadr, now exiled in France, and to Peter Piltz, a Member of the Austrian Parliament, that two teams had been planned for this assassination. "He was one of the second terrorist group, in which he was responsible for supplying the arms needed to accomplish this dirty work", concluded the KDPI.

Mahmud Ahmadinjad, 49 years of age, created a surprise by winning 19.5% of the votes against 21% for Hashemi Rafsanjani in the first round. During his campaign he courted those disappointed in their hopes for social change, the victims of a tottering economy, as well as the powerful forces, mainly clerical, opposed to any development of the Islamic regime, set up in 1979. Mahmud Ahmadinjad, virtually unknown before becoming Mayor of

Teheran in 2003, stated he wished to set up and "exemplary Islamic regime" and intends to encourage the Iranian oil companies. The Islamic Republic is in danger of taking the path of greater radicalisation with this former member of the ideological army, which preaches a stricter observance of Islamic values as well as intransigence towards the West.

The Supreme Guide, who he claims to represent, forbade any street demonstrations in the evident concern of preventing any violence after an election contested in such a tense atmosphere. Thus no public walkabout — Mahmud Ahmadinjad had to satisfy himself with appearing on television. He cultivated his image of a simple man, a good Moslem, whose demagogic populist discourse attracted considerable sympathy in socially disadvantaged circles. *"I am very proud that people have shown me this kindness and confidence. Above all else, there is the honour of serving, whether as mayor or as President or as street sweeper"*, stressed this man who had not hesitated to dress as a dustman. A few days later, the Iranian President made a much more virulent speech, declaring that the sensation caused by his election meant a *"new Islamic Revolution"* whose "wave will soon sweep the whole world". *"A new Islamic Revolution has taken place thanks to the blood of the martyrs and the 1384 revolution (this year's date in the Iranian calendar) will, God willing, uproot injustice in the world"* he stated during a meeting with the families of victims of a bomb attack against the Islamic Republic's party in 1981.

This speech recalling the first years of the Revolution, whose "purity" Mr. Ahmadinjad has already extolled, worries Westerners. The Iranian elections have provoked a shock wave, the international communi-

ty being particularly worried about its nuclear intentions. The new President advocates the formation of a new team including some of the country's most anti-Western clerics. The US Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, described the poll as *"an electoral sham"*. According to him, Mr. Ahmadinjad *"is not a friend of democracy or freedom. He is someone very close to the Ayatollahs"*. The Europeans reacted to the election of Mr. Ahmadinjad with a mixture of caution and anxiety. The new President is making a *"serious mistake if he thinks that we are going to be soft, because we are not going to be soft"* declared British Prime Minister Tony Blair on 27 June.

Moreover, according to testimonies published on 30 June by the *Washington Times*, former hostages in the American Embassy in Teheran affirm that the elected Iranian President was one of the principal actors in that taking of hostage for 444 days between 1979 and 1981. Mr. Ahmadinjad's services have denied that he took part in the assault on the Embassy, but have not commented on his possible role throughout the crisis. On 4 November 1979, Iranian revolutionaries took the American Embassy in Teheran by storm. There were 90 people there at the time, and 52 of them remained captive for 444

days before being released in January 1981.

The Iranian election was neither equitable nor free, since the only candidates allowed were Shiites who had been vetted by an unelected committee of clerics. The election law, indeed, forbids candidates who are outside the elite in power to stand for President. Eight candidates stood for the first round of on 17 June. Over a thousand had registered, but the 12-member Council of Guardians only allowed six. Two reformers were later added, after the intervention of Ayatollah Khamenei. The Council, made up of Shiite clerics and jurists, excluded all 89 of the women who wanted to stand, as well as a good number of opponents of clerical power in Iran. The second largest oil producer in OPEC, the huge potential consumer market of this oil producing theocracy makes foreign investors' mouths water. But all business and contracts are controlled by the mullahs. Hence a clannish system of corruption, denounced by Transparency International that places Iran in the middle of its list of corrupt countries, before India but just after Mongolia. Unemployment is officially 16%, but in reality exceeds 30%. And about 40% of the population lives below the poverty threshold.

WASHINGTON: THE IRAQI PRIME MINISTER IS WELCOMED AT THE WHITE HOUSE

ON 24 June, the Iraqi Prime Minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, who was on a visit to Washington, was received at the White House by President G.W. Bush. President Bush and Iraqi Prime Minister al-Jaafari, strove to boast of the progress achieved in Iraq, while agreeing that the

coming months would remain difficult, at a time when the Americans were expressing increasing doubts. *"This is not the time to retreat"*, declared Mr. Jaafari, thanking the Americans for their commitment. *"We owe it to those who have sacrificed themselves to continue to pursue the objectives that they defended. I see what is*

happening in Iraq from close up and I know that we are making steady and substantial progress" stressed the Iraqi Prime Minister, sure that *"the political process, which includes the Sunni Arabs, will undermine the terrorists"*

Since the transfer of sovereignty, a year ago, *"the Iraqis can claim extraordinary successes, despite terrible difficulties"* stressed Mr. Bush as well. Evoking the January elections, the setting up of the government and getting the constitutional process under way, Mr. Bush declared that *"these are monumental tasks and yet, at every stage, right up to now, the Iraqis have reached their objectives and the terrorists have failed to stop them"*.

In a Press Conference on evening of 23 June, the head of the Iraqi government had stressed *"there is a very strong determination of the Iraqi people"*. Evoking the insurrection he asked: *"Can we really call this a resistance? I wonder who on earth would accept that such activities occur in their country and be proud of them"*, the Prime Minister asked. The Prime Minister also expressed himself in favour of a rapid enquiry into precise crimes committed by the former Iraqi dictator, hoping that his trial might be able to being in the coming months. He considered that it was time to try Saddam Hussein and recognised that *"terrorism remained a major threat"* in Iraq. *"A lot of time has been lost, and I speak as the principal judge responsible for Saddam Hussein's trial"* he declared on 23 June after his arrival in Washington. *"If we conduct an intensive enquiry (into Saddam Hussein's crimes) the search will be unending, because there is no crime he hasn't committed"* he added. *"We do not want a full enquiry. All we want is a verdict"*.

On 20 June, the House of Representatives voted in favour of

granting an extra 45 billion dollars for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as part of a Bill increasing the American Defence budget to 409 billion dollars. The Representatives approved this emergency fund, which will bring the cost of American military operations to over 300 billion dollars.

Moreover, on 20 June, the Assistant spokesman for the

Defence Department, Adam Ereli, announced that the new US Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmav Khalilzad, had left Afghanistan to take up his new duties in Iraq. Zalmav Khalilzad made a short stopover in Baghdad, where he presented his credentials to President Jalal Talabani before going on to Brussels to take part in the Conference on reconstruction in Iraq.

NEW YORK: KOFI ANNAN FIRES A U.N. CADRE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE "FOOD FOR OIL" SCANDAL WHILE IRAQ ASK THAT IT SHOULD NO LONGER BE PUNISHED FOR SADDAM HUSSEIN'S CRIMES

ON 28 June, Iraq asked UNO for an end to the payments it is obliged to make to compensate the victims of the 1990-91 Gulf War. At the start of a 3-day session of the UN Indemnity Committee, the Iraqi Deputy Foreign Minister, Mohammed Hamud-Bidan stated to the press that it was time to stop paying 5% of Iraqi oil revenues to the victims of a conflict 15 years in the past.

This is the last session of the UN Indemnity Commission, in the course of which it is due to approve the claims resulting from the occupation of Kuwait by the Saddam Hussein regime between 2 August 1990 and 2 March 1991. In all, the Commission has received nearly 2.7 million claims totalling 254 billion dollars. Claims have been made by 96 governments on behalf of their citizens, their firms and on their own behalf. Composed of representatives of States that are members of the Security Council, the Board of the Commission has so far approved indemnities of 52.1 billion dollars, of which 19.2 billion have, in fact been paid out.

The Council must this examine, by the end of the month, 33,000 claims amounting to over 50 billion dollars, in particular for environmental damages in Kuwait. The resources for paying these indemnities are deducted from the UN Indemnity Fund, which originally was supplied by 30% of the oil revenues generated by the export of Iraqi oil products.

In December 2000, the Security Council decided that 25% of the funds deposited from the "Food for Oil" programme would be transferred to the Indemnity Fund. In May 2003, UN resolution 1483 set the share to be paid to the Indemnity Fund at 5% of the revenues generated by the exportation of all Iraqi oil and Natural gas products.

On the fringe of the session, several NGOs protested before the Palace of Nations in Geneva against the indemnities, which aggravate the economic situation of the Iraqis. A representative of the movement, Caomihe Butterly, declared that the Iraqis has no choice when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, that it was he who was at fault and that it was

also a fault to continue punishing the Iraqi people for Saddam Hussein's crimes.

On another level, on 15 June, the Vice-President of a Swiss company — the author of correspondence suggesting that Kofi Annan was aware of the granting to this companies (for which Kofi's son Kojo was working) of a contract for reconstruction in Iraq in the context of the "Food for Oil" programme — denied having raised this question with the UN General Secretary. The day before, the commission of enquiry in the "Food for Oil" programme had revealed that it had examined, "urgently" two internal emails sent in 1998 by the Vice-President of Cotecna Inspection, Michael Wilson. The first mentioned a brief discussion with the UN General Secretary "and his entourage" during a meeting in Paris at the end of 1998 on the firm's candidacy for a 10 million dollar contract in the context of the "Food for Oil" programme.

It refers to KA, who might be Kojo Annan, the General Secretaries son, who was a Cotecna consultant at the time. In the second email, Michael Wilson reports his optimism regarding the granting of the contract thanks to Cotecna's "discreet but effective lobbying" in New York circles. Michael Wilson's lawyers affirm that their client had never raised the subject of the granting of a contract to his firm with Kofi Annan.

On 1 June the UN spokesman, Stephen Dujarric, announced that the UN General Secretary had fired Joseph Stephanides, an official who managed the "Food for Oil" programme contracts with Iraq. Joseph Stephanides, who is a Cypriot national, was Director of the business Division of the Security Council. He is the first UN official to be fired since the

publication of the Volker report on the "Food for Oil" programme, which revealed the existence of corruption. Two other people have been implicated. Kofi Annan considered that Joseph Stephanides had committed a "serious professional fault". He is criticised for having manipulated the call for tender so as to favour a firm in the context of contracts regarding inspection of humanitarian supplies for Iraq. Joseph Stephanides, who has been working for the UN since 1980 had planned to retire in September, at 60 years of age, the obligatory retirement age at UNO.

The Volker Commission report accuses two other UNO officials of misappropriation of funds of this programme, which amounted to a packet of 64 billion dollars, at a time when Baghdad was subjected to an embargo. No penalties have been taken against other people implicated, pending the publication of the full and final report.

Moreover, on 1 June the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Hoshiyar Zebari, declared to the United Nations that Iraq will leave an independent organisation oversee its oil production and the management of resulting revenues. This decision taken by Baghdad to extend the existence of the international supervisory agency (IAMB) aims at proving that Iraq will use its oil resources "in a transparent manner to the benefit of the Iraqi people", explained Mr. Zebari in a letter to the Security Council. This monitoring is also liable to reassure Iraq's donors and creditors, by showing that the latter will manage its revenues and debts "in a responsible manner, to the benefit of the Iraqi people", he continued.

The Security Council created the IAMB — which includes members of UNO, the World Bank and

the International Monetary fund — in May 2003 to oversee the management of Iraq's natural resources. Set up during the American intervention in Iraq, the IAMB saw its mandate extended after the take over of sovereignty by an Iraqi government in June 2004.

The last audit carried out by KPMG at the request of the IAMB covering the period from 29 June to 31 December 2004, identified a number of problems in the management of Iraqi oil revenues. According to this audit, made public a week ago, Iraq does not know where 618,000 tonnes of oil have gone (representing a value of 69 million dollars), has still not set up a system enabling it to measure its production, and attributes many contracts without invitations to tender. Moreover, the organisation responsible for selling Iraqi oil, SOMA, has illegally deposited 97.8 million dollars obtained from oil sales, in three bank accounts in Jordan in Iraq and carries out barter trades to the value of 461 million dollars, of which the IAMB disapproves as they are hard to supervise, according to KPMB. Hoshiyar Zebari declared that the IAMB recommendations were welcome, considering that they helped the Iraqi authorities to take measures to correct fault in the system.

Furthermore, on 31 May the UN Security Council accepted to prolong 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 of this force does not expire until the end of the year and the formation of a permanent Iraqi government. But Baghdad has, nevertheless, the possibility of asking for their departure before this date. The Security Council considered that the mandate of the multinational

force (in which 28 countries are represented) should continue till "the successful outcome of the political process", as stipulated in the May

2003 resolution 1546, declared the Danish Ambassador to UNO, Ellen Loj, who is the current Council Chairperson.

THE TURKISH PRIME MINISTER VISITS WASHINGTON AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF STRAINED RELATIONS

ON the evening of 6 June, the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, visited Washington against a background of relations still strained after Ankara's refusal to be associated with the war in Iraq. *"For over two years, relations between the United States and Turkey have been marked by a succession of mistakes. There is no going back on them, and relations will take years to be re-established"* considered Michael Rubin, a research worker at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington. The White House prevaricated a long time before giving Recep Tayyip Erdogan an appointment, just as the American Ambassador to Ankara had to put up with delays to get an meeting with the Turkish Prime Minister.

Relations between Ankara and Washington, two NATO allies whose relations were traditionally good, became considerably looser after the cooling off mainly provoked by the refusal of the Turkish Parliament, in 2003, to authorise the passage of American troops through Turkish territory on their way to Iraq. Washington also did not appreciate the comments of the Turkish government about their Fallujah operations, which were described as "genocide" by the Turks. The differences of views seem to have been overcome, but Ankara is still frustrated by the lack of action of American troops against the

Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), thousands of whom sought refuge in the mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan before the war.

In press statements before his departure for the United States, Mr. Erdogan tried to play down the differences. "We do not want to offend our strategic partner", he declared to the daily *Yeni Safak*. *"There may be unfavourable developments, but we can overcome them (...), in fact we have overcome the majority of them"*. With the aim of putting relations back on the right rails, the two countries have made a series of gestures. Washington has continued to support Turkey's membership of the European Union and some members of Congress and American businessmen visited the Turkish enclave in North Cyprus (unrecognised internationally—to support this mini "republic" isolated from the rest of the world. Ankara, for its part, has authorised the United States to use its Incirlik air force base (southern Turkey) for conduction its operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Welcoming Turkish P.M. Recep Tayyip Erdogan to the White House on 8 June, US President GW Bush considered that Turkish democracy was an example for the "Great Middle East" region. The two leaders affirmed that the links between the two countries were solid, despite differences on the war in Iraq. *"Turkey and the United States*

have a strategically important relationship", declared Mr. Bush. *"I told the (Turkish) Prime Minister how grateful I was for his support"* for the American "Great Middle East" project, which aims at promoting democracy in a vast area from Morocco to Pakistan. *"Turkish democracy is an important example for the inhabitants of the Great Middle East"* declared Mr. Bush, in front of his guest before the television cameras. The US President thanked Mr. Erdogan for Ankara's support for the process of democratisation in Afghanistan and Turkey's work in helping the Palestinians create an independent state.

Mr. Erdogan made the point of having also discussed with Mr. Bush a project for the reunification of Cyprus, divided since the Turkish invasion of 1974 into a Turkish-Cypriot North, where Turkey has 40,000 troops stationed, and the South under Greek-Cypriot control. He also hoped for more US cooperation in fighting the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) retrenched in Iraqi Kurdistan. The US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice assured Turkey that her country would never allow any anti-Turkish "terrorist action" coming from Iraq indicated the Turkish Foreign Minister on 7 June after discussions with his American opposite number in Washington. *"Mrs. Rice promised us that no terrorist action against Turkey coming from Iraqi territory will be allowed"*, he told some journalists. Mr. Gul indicated that he had explained Turkey's expectations regarding the struggle of the US Army against the PKK to his opposite number. *"I saw positive signs on the part of the Americans on this subject"* said Mr. Gul, congratulating himself. He said he was convinced that Turks and Americans would cooperate more in the future against the PKK. *"Turkey cannot*

tolerate a fresh outbreak of acts of violence and infiltrations. We expect more determination from the Americans", he nevertheless added.

Furthermore, during his working visit, Mr. Erdogan had discussions on 9 June with the UN General Secretary Kofi Annan on the Cyprus issue. The Turkish Prime Minister called on the Security Council to break the isolation of the Northern part of the Cyprus, occupied by Ankara, stating that his country had done more than Greece to overcome the divisions on the island. *"We have said that would always be in advance of the Greek Cypriots and we have kept this promise"* declared

Mr. Erdogan before the Council after a meeting with the UN General Secretary Kofi Annan.

In 2004, the Turkish Cypriots approve Kofi Annan's plan for reunification, which the Greek Cypriots rejected. Since then, Cyprus has entered the European Union, but only the Southern part of the island enjoys this integration, the Northern part being only recognised by Ankara. Recep Tayyip Erdogan regretted that the Security Council has still not made any decision of Kofi Annan's plan. *"We think that a decision must be made, that recognition must take place and we hope for a happy outcome"*, he stated.

to end its 5-year unilateral truce is the inevitable consequence of what they consider to be the continuation of discrimination and persecution of Kurds. Many Kurds fear now that the agitation may threaten the fragile freedoms they have recently begun to enjoy as well as the economic progress they hope to see for their disadvantaged region.

At least 65 fighters and 32 soldiers have been killed since April, according to the Turkish authorities. Five PKK fighters were killed on 24 June in the mountains of Bingol Province. Their funeral, on 27 June, turned into demonstrations that degenerated into clashes with the police resulting in several injuries.

THE PKK ANNOUNCES THAT HENCEFORTH IT WILL BE CAMPAIGNING FOR A "DEMOCRATIC CONFEDERATION" AND IS SEEKING A DIALOGUE WITH THE TURKISH AUTHORITIES – BUT CLASHES ARE MULTIPLYING

ON 28 June, a leading member of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) urged Turkey to open a dialogue with his organisation on the model of the contacts made between the American Army leaders and the Iraqi insurgents. *"We say to them (to Ankara) come and let us talk about a solution. Send us a senior official for discussions"*, declared Murat Karayilan, a military chief of the PKK in an interview given to the German-based Mesopotamia news agency. He gave the example of the contacts being made in Iraq between American officers and the insurgents: *"Look at Iraq, the United States announce that they have undertaken discussions with the organisations that are resisting with every means and who answer to no laws"* declared Karayilan,

who is reputed to be one of the most radical PKK leaders. He deplored the fact that the Turkish State had never engaged in any discussions with his organisation. *"Is America humiliated? No, it is made greater by these negotiations"* he considered.

Clashes have been multiplying since the beginning of spring, the Turkish Army launching vast mopping up operations in the mountainous regions of Turkish Kurdistan. The region has experienced relative calm for some years now but the wounds of the past have reopened. During funerals, the relatives of victims do not conceal their anger when they express their dissatisfaction at the reforms undertaken by Ankara to increase freedom for the Kurds. For them, the decision of the PKK

These events come a few days after a bloody incident in Van, where a young demonstrator was killed when the gendarmes fired on an angry crowd, which was protesting against the fact that the authorities had buried a PKK fighter without giving his body back to his family. Furthermore, on 18 June the Turkish Army announced that seventeen Maoist fighters, members of a clandestine movement, the Maoist Communist Party (MKP), were killed in the course of a two days of fighting with the Turkish Army in Kurdistan. They were executed by machine gun fire from three Sikorsky helicopters sweeping down to fire directly at them.

The Turkish media headlined this for at least three days after, the press particularly stressing the fact that it was, undoubtedly a *"death-blow"* to the Maoists. The mass circulation daily *Milliyet*, in particular, predicted that *"the Maoists have thus been eliminated at a single blow"*. The fighting took place in an isolated valley in the mountainous region of Dersim.

On 22 June, some 300 Kurdish intellectuals urged the Turkish government to proclaim a general amnesty for the Kurdish fighters and their imprisoned chief Abdullah Ocalan. *"Should there be a general amnesty, it ought also to cover Abdullah Ocalan"*, declared, to journalists, Tarik Ziya Ekinçi, spokesman of the signatories of a document supporting a previous call for a general amnesty by intellectuals who called on the PKK to lay down its arms. *"We totally accept this appeal, we ask the PKK immediately to cease its activities and that the State do what is incumbent on it to find a solution to the Kurdish question"*, stressed Mr. Ekinçi, former Member of Parliament or Diyarbakir and former General Secretary of the Workers Party of Turkey. He added that amongst the solutions to this question was the proclamation of a general amnesty. The Turkish State has, in the past, repeatedly offered partial amnesties, which exclude leaders of the PKK — and thus A. Ocalan, who was sentenced to death in 1999 on charges of separatism. His sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, which he is serving in the island prison of Imrali (North West Turkey), when Turkey abolished capital punishment in 2003 in the context of its aim of joining the European Union.

Abdullah Ocalan does not want to be re-tried in Turkey, where he considers that such a trial would not be *"independent and impartial"*, one of his lawyers indicated on 3 June. *"My client does not want a new trial in Turkey. He does not want to be tried under present circumstances"*, declared Mrs. Aysel Tugluk, who met A. Ocalan on 1 June. On 12 May, the European Court for Human Rights had found Turkey guilty of an inequitable trial in Ocalan's case and recommended Ankara to organise a new trial. The Turkish

leaders have stated that they would observe the Strasbourg Court's ruling.

To have the benefit of a retrial, the condemned man must apply for it, but Abdullah Ocalan has denounced the existing laws and will not make such an application, his lawyer stressed. *"Ocalan said that he will not play the lead in farce that Turkey will be staging"* Mrs. Tugluk indicated, particularly criticising the declarations of the Turkish Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gul who had affirmed that A. Ocalan would get the same sentence were he retried *"a hundred times"*. The PKK chief has let his defence lawyers know that he wished to be tried by *"a special court"* to be set up by the Council of Europe. Mrs. Tugluk, moreover, denounced the restrictions imposed on her client's defence by the authorities under the new criminal procedure that has just come into force. Thus, she and two other colleagues had their notes of their last discussion with their client confiscated. Someone was also present to record their conversation. *"This is unacceptable. We cannot conduct a defence under these conditions"*, she said. A. Ocalan also asked his lawyers to stop visiting him until the conditions for a new trial had been fulfilled to his satisfaction. On 5 June the Turkish Minister of Justice, Cemil Cicek expressed his opposition to the organisation of a trial outside Turkey. Explaining that no request to this effect had reached him, Mr. Cicek stated to the journalists as he was going to a

Congress of his party at Uludag (West Turkey) that *"such a thing is inconceivable (...). The Courts of the country where the crime was committed are alone competent. This is a matter of national sovereignty"*, he added.

Furthermore, on 1 June, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, meeting in Congress in Iraqi Kurdistan near the Iranian border, proposed a cease-fire and a dialogue with the Turkish authorities. *"We send out an appeal to the Turkish government, asking it to cease military operations so as to open the way to a dialogue, and we are ready, on our side, to decree a cease fire"*, declared Murat Karayilan to the press on the fringe of the congress, held in the village of Lijwa, 500 Km North East of Baghdad. *"We are not making it a condition that the government engage in a direct dialogue with us. We accept that the Turkish government dialogue with the Kurdish parties, political trends, public figures and elected representatives in the Kurdish towns so as to resolve the problem with them"*, he added.

Mr. Karayilan called on the Turkish, Syrian and Iranian governments to *"find a solution to the Kurdish problem through dialogue"*, while denouncing *"the military campaigns in Turkey and Iran against his party"*. According to him, his organisation has changed its strategy, and campaigns henceforth for a *"democratic confederation"* and no for a united and independent Kurdistan any more.

AS WELL AS ...

KIRKUK: DISCUSSION ON THE STATUS OF THE CITY MAY BE POSTPONED SO AS NOT TO DELAY THE DRAFTING OF THE NEW IRAQI CONSTITUTION. The thorny

debate on the status of the city of Kirkuk, which threatened to delay the drafting of the new Iraqi Constitution, may be postponed to a later date, this opening the way to the members of

Parliament being able to adopt the new Constitution by 15 August as planned. *"The definitive administrative status of Kirkuk (i.e. whether or not the city is part of Kurdistan) will be decided after ratification of the Constitution"* declared Barham Saleh, Iraqi Minister of Planning. *"We hope that the status of Kirkuk be settled as soon as possible (...) but we recognise that Kirkuk is a multi-ethnic city"* added the former Deputy Prime Minister who is of Kurdish origin.

Determining the status of the city is one of the most sensitive questions in post-war Iraq, where ethnic and religious tensions regularly degenerate into scenes of violence, from which Kurdistan is less immune. According to some analysts, postponing the debate on Kirkuk risks postponing to a later date the disturbances to which this question will not fail to give birth. But the Iraqi leaders have accepted, in line with the recommendations of the interim Constitution drafted last year, that the fate of Kirkuk should only be decided once the definitive constitution has been adopted and a census of the disputed regions carried out. Once adopted by the Members of Parliament, hopefully by 15 August, the Iraqi Constitution will be the subject of a referendum on 15 October at the latest. Fresh General elections aimed at completing the institutional normalisation will then be organised in December.

A leader of the Shiite party, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), Ammar Hakim, had said he was opposed to the inclusion of Kirkuk in Kurdistan. *"We do not accept the annexation of the city of Kirkuk by that region (...) because it belongs to all Iraqis"*, stated Ammar Hakim, son of the head of the SCIRI, Abdel Aziz Hakim. *"We are opposed to the forced resettlement of Iraqis, because all have the*

right to live in the town of their choice", he indicated, in reference to the return to their city of Kurds who had been driven out by the Saddam Hussein Regime.

Under Article 58 of the Fundamental Law, which is the present provisional constitution of the country, the government should favour the return of Kurds expelled by the former regime's policy of forced Arabisation, and make proposals for the city that should be part of the permanent Constitution.

THE GERMAN BUNDESTAG ADOPTS A RESOLUTION ON THE ARMENIAN MASSACRE BUT AVOIDS TALKING OF GENOCIDE. On 16 June, the German parliament, the Bundestag, adopted a resolution in memory of the massacres committed by Turkey between 1915 and 1917 against the Armenian people, while avoiding describing them as genocide. In this resolution, all the parliamentary parties ask the government to *"commit itself to ensure the observance of freedom of opinion in Turkey, in particular with regard to the massacres committed on the Armenians"*. *"An arrangement must be found between Turks and Armenians for reconciliation and pardon for the (Turkish) historic responsibility"*, adds the resolution, adopted by the parliamentary groups of social-democrats (SDP), conservatives (CDU-CSU), Greens and liberals (FDP). The German members of Parliament also ask Berlin to work to work to ensure that *"Turkey immediately normalises its bi-lateral relations with Armenia"*.

Turkey described the resolution as *"irresponsible"* and *"narrow spirited"*. *"The German Parliament has adopted a resolution on the events of 1915. We deeply deplore and criticise it"*, declared the Foreign Ministry in a communiqué. *"The approval of such a resolution by Germany will*

bring chaos to our relations" the communiqué stressed.

Turkey fiercely denies the Armenian genocide that, according to current estimates, caused between 1,2 and 1,5 million deaths. It states that if hundreds of thousands of Armenians were killed by the Ottoman Turks, even more Turks were killed during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and on the various fronts of the First World War.

THE NEW PENAL CODE COMES INTO FORCE, DESPITE SHARP CRITICISMS. On 1st June, the new Turkish Penal Code came into force after having been revised to meet the European conditions for opening negotiations with Ankara for membership. And this despite the criticisms of journalists who fear that freedom of the press be henceforth threatened. Past last year, the new Penal Code is destined to harmonise Turkish measures with the conceptions of Human Rights current in the E.U. It should have come into force in April, but Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan postponed it for fresh amendments, adopted by parliament on 27 May.

This is the first revision of the Penal Code, which was originally borrowed from Fascist Italy, in 79 years. It improves the status of women and children, recognises that rape in marriage and sexual harassment are crimes and toughens penalties for rape, paedophilia, people trafficking and torture. However, the press complains of vague formulations that facilitate restrictive interpretation and even repression of freedom of expression — even to the extent of imprisonment for opinions. A group of journalists, moreover, announced that they would start a hunger strike to protest against the coming into operation of this

code. The Turkish press greeted the new code with distrust and scepticism: "*The freedom of the press is in danger*" headlined the daily *Aksam*, while *Milliyet* evoked "*a bitter beginning*".

However, on 3 June the Turkish President vetoed one controversial law that allowed those responsible for illegal religious schools to avoid imprisonment, considering that the law was contrary to secularism. This law, which was introduced at the last minute by the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) as part of a package of amendments to the penal reform being adopted, provoked an uproar in opposition and the liberal press. It allows those responsible for clandestine Qoranic schools merely to be fined and not be jailed for three years as at present. "Secularism in the keystone of the constituent values of the Turkish Republic" pointed out the Head of State in a communiqué by his press office, laying out this reasons for rejecting it.

Mr. Sezer considers that the new measure "*encourages*" the pro-fundamentalist circles to set up such institutions and warns against the "*perverse thinking*" that people educated in such schools would have and the "*threat*" this would be for national unity. Mr. Sezer can veto a law presented to him once only. If Parliament adopts this law a second time, in the same wording, he is obliged to endorse it, though he may refer it to the Constitutional Court.

The Turkish secular elite is categorically opposed to any measure that would facilitate the opening of private schools on the grounds that such measures would allow Islamist movements to found their own education centres. There are regular police raids on schools of this kind, which are mainly located in the Istanbul suburbs, which

are breeding grounds for pro-Islamist parties.

IRAQI INSTITUTIONS ARE BEING SET UP BUT THE POPULATION IS GETTING IMPATIENT. On 14 June, the government formed by the Shiite Ibrahim al-Jaafari received its vote of confidence at the end of a sitting devoted to its action programme. In his general policy speech of 31 May, the Prime Minister committed himself to building a federal and democratic country and to reinforcing the security services against violence.

Furthermore, the Parliamentary commission charged with drafting permanent Constitution for Iraq managed, on 16 June, to reach an agreement guaranteeing the Sunni Arabs to take part in it with up to 15 members. This agreement was confirmed by Sunni Arab public figures — the community represents about 17% of the Iraqi population, but so far has not participated in the transition process. The agreement provides for consensus rather than voting to be the rule in the 55-member Commission, which must complete the drafting of the new fundamental law before 15 August. The Sunni Arabs boycotted the 30 January General Elections and so only sent a handful of members to the 2750-member Parliament.

Over two years after the fall of Saddam Hussein and five months after the national elections, which were presented as a chance to rebuild the country, the Baghdadis cannot hide their bitterness at the situation. Two million Baghdadis are deprived of drinking water because, according to the authorities, of sabotage of a water works supplying the Iraqi capital by the insurgents. As the ambient temperature reaches 40°C, the inhabitants of West Baghdad have dug down into the ground to find underground

paper pipes carrying hot water, that they then take home in bottles to drink or cook with. Apart from the shortage of water, many inhabitants only have electricity for a few hours a day, unless they are equipped with their own generator set.

A SERIES OF BOMB ATTACKS IN THE ARABIC-SPEAKING PROVINCE OF KHUZESTAN AND IN TEHERAN. According to the Iranian police, on 12 June a series of bomb attacks, the first in Iran for several years, caused six deaths and 70 injured in the largely Arabic-speaking town of Ahvaz (an oil producing town in the Province of Khuzestan, in South West Iran), the scene of recent ethnic clashes. Four explosions occurred before the offices of the governor of Ahvaz, the capital of this oil-producing province, bordering on Iraq, and also in front of the director of the Ahvaz radio-television station.

The Popular democratic Front of Ahvaz, that is campaigning for an independent Khuzestan (Arabistan) has denied any responsibility for the attacks while stating that they have been claimed by another Arab group calling itself the Brigade of Revolutionary Martyrs of Ahvaz

Some hours earlier, a low powered device exploded in the centre of Teheran, causing one death and three injured. The police sealed off the area where the explosion had occurred, in a street leading into Imam Hussein Street, in a busy commercial quarter of the Iranian capital. The device had been hidden in a dustbin. The opposition People's Mujahiddin has denied any involvement in these attacks.

Khuzestan, which contains the bulk of Iran's oil reserves, has been plagued by ethnic incidents since April, in the course of which

five people have been killed. Some 300 people had been arrested following these violent incidents.

anted to be particularly splendid, was postponed because of a sandstorm, which had prevented important public figures arriving from Baghdad. Massud Barzani's installation at the head of the three Kurdish Provinces assumes a major importance for the Kurds. It was under a gigantic picture of Mustafa Barzani, who had led and inspired Kurdish resistance to Baghdad's central authority for many long years, that the son took his oath of office, one hand on a copy of the Quran.

The ceremony, which took place in the 111-seat Kurdish House of Parliament, was attended by the Iraqi President, Jalal Talabani and the Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, Hajem al-Hassani. The Iraqi Prime Minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, was unable to make the journey to Irbil, but UN General Secretary Kofi Annan's envoy, Ashraf Qazi and several foreign diplomats were present.

"I will spare no efforts for strengthening national unity, fraternity between Kurds and Arabs and unity within Kurdistan", declared Mr. Barzani after taking his oath at the Kurdish Parliament's rostrum, before an audience of diplomats and public figures. "We have a historic opportunity for drawing up a permanent Constitution that will determine our destiny and it is essential that it guarantee a free and worthy life for every Iraqi citizen", he added. "We have fought together to bring down the dictatorship with out friends, the United States and Great Britain, and we now have the task of building a new democratic, federal and plural Iraq", he continued. The head of the KDP also undertook a solemn commitment to "preserving the rights and gains of Kurdistan", whose autonomy dates, in fact,

from 1991, with the setting up of the air exclusion zone over part of Iraqi Kurdistan.

The Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, Adnan Mufti, declared *"this is a historic day for the Iraqis, and particularly the Kurds. A day that marks the beginning of a new era, devoted to consolidating democracy"*. Then, addressing the audience, he stressed *"Your presence here bear witness to the solidity of the bonds between the various components of the Iraqi people — the Arabs, the Kurds, the Turcomen as well as the Assyrio-Chaldeans"*. For his part, President Talabani stressed: *"This event is likely to strengthen national unity, a genuine unity between ethnic groups, built on a free choice"*. *"We believe that the democratic experiment in Kurdistan can serve as an example of that democracy to which we aspire for Iraq"*, he added.

The Kurdish Parliament first met in Irbil on 4 June, more than four months after the General Election that had elected this 111-member assembly, as well as the 275-member Iraqi Parliament and 18 Iraqi Provincial councils. This delay was due to differences between the two main Kurdish parties on the method of electing the President of the Autonomous Region, the KDP insisting on direct election by universal suffrage (which would have meant holding another election). On 29 May they reached an agreement that involved confiding the Presidency to Mr. Barzani for four years and asking Parliament to elect his. The Bill adopted by the Kurdish Parliament makes the President the Chief Executive and co-ordinator between the regional authorities and Baghdad, the head of the Regional security forces and spokesman for the Iraqi Kurds with international bodies. This Bill, proposed by both the KDP and the PUK, was passed after three sittings. It envisages

the direct election of the President of Kurdistan by universal suffrage for a four-year term of office, with the possibility of standing for re-election once only — but that, in view of the circumstances, the Kurdish Parliament should, exceptionally, elect the first president.

The whole of Kurdistan welcomed the election of Massud Barzani with jubilation. People came out of their houses onto the streets in the main towns to celebrate Mr. Barzani's election to the Region's top post. Cars, draped in the Kurdish national colours, ran hooting round the streets of Irbil, now officially established as the Region's capital. Popular celebrations and parties lasted for several days, in an atmosphere of calm, without any violent incidents. In Iran, demonstrators came out into the streets to celebrate Massud Barzani's swearing-in at Mahabad, a historic stronghold of Kurdish nationalism — and also the city where the Kurdish president was born (during the short-lived Kurdish Republic of 1946). However, the Iranian police moved in to disperse the crowds, which provoked clashes. Peaceful demonstrations of support took place in several towns in Turkish Kurdistan, particularly in Diyarbakir where pictures of him were displayed. In Syria, as well as in the Kurdish communities of Europe, the Kurdish President's election was celebrated with parties. In Paris, several hundreds of people were invited to a reception organised by the Kurdish Institute. Many foreign and Kurdish public figures sent messages of congratulation to President Barzani, including George Bush, Tony Blair, Kofi Annan, and Javier Solana. Evidently, Mrs. Danielle Mitterrand, a long-standing defender of the Kurdish cause, also sent a message in which she wrote, in particular:

"I have learnt with great joy of your election as President of Kurdistan. I am very glad to have lived long enough to see the realisation of the dream of a President, democratically elected by the people of Kurdistan.

I am glad to see that struggles for freedom and dignity, when they are led by lucid, just and courageous leaders enjoying the support of their populations, end up by triumphing, despite apparently insurmountable difficulties and obstacles. A few years ago I celebrated the victory of my friend Nelson Mandela — today I am celebrating yours with many and faithful friends of the Kurdish people.

First ever President of Kurdistan, you will henceforth have to assume historic responsibilities for your people. Knowing your wisdom and sense of justice, I am convinced that, henceforth, you will act as President of all the people of Kurdistan, without political or religious discrimination, and not just as leader of a party. You will have a crucial role to play in laying down, in your Region, the foundations of a just, equitable and united society, observing the rights of the working classes, women and minorities. The unity of your people, which is your most precious asset, can only be achieved and maintained if the political system you establish is based on justice, democracy and equality of opportunity for all its citizens.

No doubt the Kurds of other parts of Kurdistan will see the elected President of Iraqi Kurdistan as the spiritual president of all the Kurds. There too, you will have to maintain solidarity with your brothers of countries of the region still struggling for their freedom to help them peacefully to secure their rights.

Finally, you will have to play an important part in setting up institutions in a democratic and federal Iraq, by cooperating closely with President Talabani, with the political parties and the Kurdistan Parliament and with all those forces that are working for a peaceful, stable and sovereign Iraq.

The task awaiting you is immense, but it is also exciting because history has given you the chance and the honour of realising a centuries-old dream of your people. I am sure that your father, who devoted his life to the realisation of this dream, would be most proud of you, as all of us, Kurds by birth and Kurds at heart, are very proud of you.

Wishing you every success in your eminent office, I embrace you most affectionately."

For his part, the President of the Paris Kurdish Institute, in his message, stressed: "Your election is a political event of the utmost importance in the history of the Kurdish people. It crowns a three-century long struggle to create a Kurdish State. A struggle first launched by Ehmedê Xanî, pursued with courage by the great figures of our national history such as Mîr Mohammad of Rawandiz, Mîr Bedirxan of Botan, Şêx Ubeydullahê Nehrî, Şêx Saîdê Pîran, Şêx Mahmûd Barzanji, Ihasan Nûrî Pasa, Pêsewa Qazî Mohammed, Mela Mustafa Barzani and Dr. Abdul Rahman Qasimlou. You have, with Brêz Jalal Talabani, embodied in these last decades, this glorious struggle for the freedom of the people of Kurdistan.

The fact that Jalal Talabani is today President of Iraq and you of Kurdistan, that you have been cooperating hand in hand in the national interests of our people, is a source of great pride for all the

Kurdish nation and for all our many faithful and devoted friends throughout the world. Democratically elected by the Kurdistan National Assembly, you are henceforth, in effect, President of all the Kurds. You embody the hopes and aspirations of 35 million Kurds of the Near East. From California to Kazakhstan, from Norway to Australia, all the Kurdish communities of the world have their eyes on you, on the Kurdistan Government and parliament. The success of your Government will serve as a model and source of inspiration to the Kurdish national as a whole and will open the way for a peaceful settlement of the Kurdish problem in the neighbouring States and for their indispensable democratisation.

This is why we are all with you with all our heart. The heart of every Kurdish patriot is beating in Irbil and they are all ready to be mobilised for the success of the Federated State of Kurdistan, for its President, its Government and its Parliament.

I am sure that you will know how to mobilise and channel these energies and that, together, we will build a free, democratic and fraternal Kurdistan.

With my respects and brotherly greetings".

No sooner elected, Massud Barzani went to Baghdad on 19 June to put the demands of the Kurds before the Members of the Transitional Assembly that is charged with drawing up the future Constitution, repeating his commitment to the fundamental transitional law passed in 2004. "If we base ourselves on the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) and our agreements made before the fall (of Saddam Hussein) then we will be able to write and approve the

Constitution in time" declared the President of the Kurdish Region to the Members of Parliament. "We are all agreed that the TAL should be the basis and we must stand by that, We must not be deviated from it" he insisted.

The TAL was drafted and adopted by the Iraqi Government Council set up by the American authorities who ruled Iraq after the overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime, from April 2003 to June 2004. This law stipulated the drafting of a definitive Constitution by 15 August, which was to be submitted for approval by a referendum before 15 October. An extension of the deadline of up to six months was authorised. "We promise, once more, to cooperate in the building of a federal, democratic and plural Iraq", repeated Mr. Barzani, who had replaced his traditional Kurdish dress with a dark suit. "We must correct all the reasons and consequences of the changes imposed by the old regime on the demographic composition of the country, at Kirkuk and in other Kurdish regions", he stressed.

The Kurds are claiming the return to this city of all those who had been driven out during the campaign of forced "Arabisation" conducted by the Saddam Hussein regime, as well as the restoration of their property. This point is stipulated in Article 58 of the TAL. "We must apply Article 58 and recognise the specifically Kurdish character of Kirkuk and make it a symbol of coexistence" insisted Mr. Barzani.

During a Press conference the day after his speech in Baghdad, Massud Barzani expressed the hope that his country should

henceforth be called the Federal Republic of Iraq and that this name be written into the Constitution. "We want the new name of our country to be the Federal Republic of Iraq", he stressed. He presented the arguments in favour of this system and offered to help regions that wished to become Federal Regions. "Those who want to impose a centralised government want to divide Iraq. Our experience proves that federalism represents the unification of Iraq and not its division, and those who believe the opposite are mistaken", pointed out Mr. Barzani.

The idea of forming one or more autonomous Shiite regions in the centre and the South of Iraq has been in the air for several months. Thus, at the beginning of June, the governor of Kerbala, Okail Khazali, announced the setting up of a committee with the responsibility of determining, by the end of the month, whether it were better to associate with the Province of Najaf, further South, or with Babylon, further North and Wasset, further East.

The committee has until 30 June to resolve this issue. It will be on the basis of its recommendations that the other provinces will be approached, the Regional officer had indicated. In March a tribal chief and Member of Parliament, Abdel Karim al-Mohammadawi, had issued a call for setting up a Shiite autonomous region in the South, modelled on the Kurdistan region. On the basis of the fundamental law, at present in force in Iraq, three governorates (provinces) can group together to form an autonomous region, with the exception of Baghdad and Kirkuk.

"Since the creation of the Iraqi State, over 80 years ago, we have only experienced tyranny and dictatorship, we have been governed by un-elected governments that imposed their force with tanks" declared Mr. Barzani, referring to the monarchy and then the republican regime that followed in 1958. "What do you want? To repeat the experience (...) of the past or that we set to work to install a federal mechanism that works and resolves our problems, such as they have in Germany" he concluded.

On the other hand, Massud Barzani denied news reports of acts of violence against the Arab and Turkic minorities by Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan. "The news published in the Washington Post is baseless and the accusations made are false", he stated. On 15 June the Washington Post had stated that the Kurds in Kirkuk had summarily arrested hundreds of Arabs and Turcomen and forcibly conducted them to prisons in Irbil and Suleimaniyeh with the support of American forces. According to Mr. Barzani, "the American Army arrested suspect in Kirkuk and other regions and asked to be able to send them to Irbil for a specific and limited period of time, till the end of their interrogation or till the Americans took them back".

"We have not arrested anyone, and all those who were transferred to Irbil were sent there at the insistent request of the Americans and who have since taken them back", added Mr. Barzani. The State Department spokesman, Sean McCormack, categorically denied any US involvement in these acts.

Op-Chart

ADRIANA LINS de ALBUQUERQUE, MICHAEL O'HANLON AND AMY UNIKEWICZ

The State of Iraq: An Update

More than two years after the fall of Saddam Hussein, Iraq remains a complex mix of tragedy and hope. To give a sense of the ebb and flow, the chart below shows data for three key months: May 2003 (the first full month after the fall of Baghdad), June 2004 (the last month before the Coalition Authority gave way to the interim Iraqi government) and May 2005.

Many Iraqis today are wealthier than they were before the invasion, with more bustle in the streets and a new stock market that is trading billions of shares a month; yet by other measures, like electricity availability and the unemployment rate, Iraq's economy appears weaker than it was during the Baathist reign.

Much has been made, rightly, of the intensification of the insurgency. Last month's toll on United States troops was well above the average for the last two years, and was the deadliest yet for Iraqi security forces. Still, Iraqis are providing authorities with far more tips on insurgent activities than even a few months ago. And most people remain optimistic about the future. Even Sunni Arabs, who provide the largest pool of recruits for the insurgency, seem slightly more hopeful than a year ago. This optimism is welcome, because with security conditions poor and the economy a mixed bag, the fledgling political process has increasingly become Iraq's main good news — and main hope.

	MAY 2003	JUNE 2004	MAY 2005		MAY 2003	JUNE 2004	MAY 2005
Oil Production/Oil Exports (millions of barrels per day; prewar: 2.9/2.1)	2.3/0	2.3/1.1	2.1/1.3	U.S. Troops Killed/ Wounded (per month)	37/54	42/584	17/615
Fuel Supplies for Public (percentage of estimated need)	10	75	94	Iraqi Security Personnel Killed (per month)	FEW	150	270
Average Electricity Production (in megawatts; prewar: 4,400)	500	4,300	3,700	Iraqi Civilians Killed by Warfare (per month)	25	350	600
Telephone Users (prewar: 833,000)	800,000	1,200,000	3,300,000	Foreign Civilians Killed/ Kidnapped (per month)	0/0	22/3	11/3
Internet Subscribers (prewar: 4,500)	1,000	55,000	160,000	Estimated Number of Iraqi Insurgents/ Foreign Fighters (in thousands)	3/0.1	15/0.3	18/1
Wheat Production (millions of tons per year; prewar: 1.9)	2.6	2.2	1.5	Average Number of Insurgent Attacks per Day	10	52	70
Cumulative U.S. Assistance Disbursed (in billions of dollars)	0	2.5	7.7	Number of Top Insurgent Leaders at Large	53	34	31
Percentage of Public Believing Country Is Headed in the Right Direction	65	50	65	U.S./Other Coalition Troops in Iraq (in thousands)	150/23	138/23	138/23
Percentage of Sunni Arabs Believing Same	35	33	40	Proficient, Well-Equipped Iraqi Security Forces	0	0	50,000
Percentage of Iraqis Who Support Iraqi Government	—	85	75	Trained Judges	0	175	351
Commercial TV Stations (prewar: 0)	0	21	23				
Commercial Radio Stations (prewar: 0)	0	80	80				
Independent Newspapers and Magazines (prewar: 0)	8	150	170				

TURQUIE

Recep Erdogan, tel un militaire en campagne...

Avec les désillusions sur l'Europe, l'autoritarisme gagne du terrain à Ankara. Le Premier ministre se conduit comme un général, constate amèrement l'intellectuel Ahmet Altan.

GAZETEM
Istanbul

En Turquie, chaque homme politique est un général et chaque général se découvre des talents de politicien. Tandis que les généraux souhaitent gérer le pays en concentrant dans leurs mains tous les mécanismes de contrôle de l'Etat, les hommes politiques, pour leur part, rêvent de créer un système leur permettant d'interdire toute critique et de faire taire les intellectuels. Toutefois, alors que nous étions dans un processus de rapprochement avec l'Union européenne, nous avons connu une période euphorique frisant la démocratie. Le chef d'état-major de l'armée, qui avait compris que ce ne serait qu'en démocratie qu'on pourrait mettre sur pied une armée conforme aux normes contemporaines, avait réussi à cantonner l'armée dans ses limites. De même, les représentants politiques de l'AKP [le parti islamique au pouvoir] avaient compris qu'ils ne pourraient réellement accéder au pouvoir que grâce à la démocratie et avec le soutien de l'Union européenne. Ce constat les avait civilisés.

ERDOGAN ET LA GROSSIÈRE SURENCHÈRE NATIONALISTE

Sauf qu'une fois obtenue la date de début des pourparlers d'adhésion avec l'Union européenne, tout est à nouveau redevenu comme avant. Le politique qui sommeillait chez le militaire et le militaire qui se cachait chez le politique se sont à nouveau réveillés. On en est revenu à la république du comité Union et Progrès [régime jeune-turc responsable du génocide arménien].

Pourtant, cette fois, ce retour en arrière n'a pas été amorcé par des généraux, mais bien par des hommes politiques. Le Premier ministre Erdogan a en effet déclaré la guerre à peu près à tous ceux qui, à l'intérieur comme à l'extérieur, l'avaient soutenu dans son périple qui l'a mené de la prison au pouvoir. Il s'est ainsi lancé dans une grossière surenchère nationaliste en se répandant dans des déclarations bizarres où il affirmait que "l'Union européenne [cherchait] à dépecer la Turquie". Il a alors fait preuve d'une tolérance coupable vis-à-vis, pêle-mêle, des policiers qui ont matraqué des

femmes à Istanbul [lors de la manifestation de la Journée des femmes], des fanatiques nationalistes qui ont tenté de lyncher des jeunes militants gauchistes à Trabzon, ou encore à l'égard d'un procureur qui avait tenté de saisir tous les livres d'Orhan Pamuk [écrivain "coupable" d'avoir déclaré dans un journal suisse que "les Turcs ont tué 30 000 Kurdes et 1 million

d'Arméniens"]. Pour couronner le tout, il a introduit dans le nouveau Code pénal, actuellement en préparation, des peines de prison qui vont affecter le travail des médias. Il a défini de nouveaux délits en relation avec un concept aussi vague que l'"intérêt national". Il y aurait même dans ce nouveau Code pénal des dispositions visant à régenter les pratiques vestimentaires féminines. Le général qui sommeillait en lui s'est donc réveillé. Erdogan, j'en suis sûr, peut compter

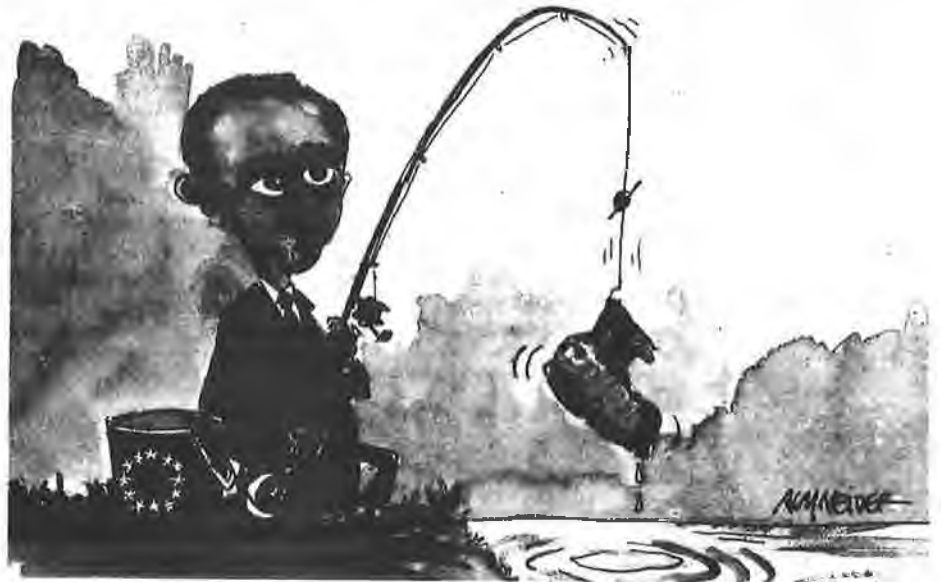
sur de fidèles partisans. Ces derniers soutiendront certainement cette tendance à la répression et à l'interdiction. Dans les pays sous-développés, ceux qui se donnent une contenance pieuse sur le plan religieux trouvent toujours une base dans la société.

Dans ce contexte, les démocrates qui considéraient positivement l'action d'Erdogan et de l'AKP vis-à-vis de l'intégration européenne sont en train de consommer leur rupture avec eux. En effet, les démocrates qui se sont toujours opposés à l'interdiction du voile ne l'ont pas fait parce qu'ils considéraient que la meilleure chose

qu'une femme puisse faire était de se couvrir la tête. Ils ont défendu cette position parce qu'ils croyaient et croient toujours que les femmes doivent être libres de s'habiller comme elles le veulent, et parce qu'ils ont pour principe de ne jamais accepter que l'on puisse s'en prendre au choix vestimentaire de quiconque. Lorsque ces mêmes démocrates ont défendu la liberté d'Erdogan de lire des poèmes, ce n'est pas parce qu'ils étaient béats d'admiration devant le poème pour lequel il a été condamné. C'était tout simplement parce qu'ils croient sincèrement à la liberté de chacun de pouvoir dire ce qu'il pense. Voilà ce qui a guidé leur attitude. Or, ce que l'on constate aujourd'hui, c'est que le Premier ministre semble bel et bien avoir l'intention d'imposer ses idées et sa vision de ce que doit être, par exemple, l'attitude vestimentaire, et de ne pas tolérer l'expression d'opinions divergentes sur le sujet.

Nos généraux et nos bureaucrates civils ont donc la même approche. Les deux parties souhaitent en effet chacune imposer ses idées et son mode de vie. Il n'y a donc finalement aucune différence entre elles. Jusqu'à maintenant, les vrais démocrates n'ont jamais lié leur destin à des généraux se mêlant de politique. Dès lors, il n'y a aucune raison pour qu'ils le fassent avec un politicien qui se prend pour un général.

Ahmet Altan



▲ Recep Erdogan.
Dessin de Carlo
Schneider, Suisse.

TURQUIE Avant l'ouverture en octobre des négociations d'adhésion avec l'Union européenne

Ankara prend la mesure des difficultés qui l'attendent

LE FIGARO VENDREDI 3 JUIN 2005

Ankara :
de notre envoyé spécial
Thierry Oberlé

Le chef d'état-major de l'armée turque, le général Emin Sirin, a été le premier à le reconnaître : les victoires du non au référendum, posent un « gros problème ». Bien sûr, l'influent patron de l'establishment militaire ajoute que l'Union européenne est assez forte pour le résoudre. Et le premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan se déclare confiant. Il n'y a pas, répète-t-il, d'incidence sur les négociations d'adhésion qui doivent débiter le 3 octobre. Mais en Turquie les votes français et néerlandais inquiètent.

Quelques jours après le passage du « tsunami français » – l'expression barrait mardi la une du quotidien à grand tirage *Hürriyet* – la classe dirigeante constate les dégâts. Il y a eu d'abord le changement de gouvernement en France. Soulagée d'avoir échappé à l'arrivée de l'« anti-Turc » Nicolas Sarkozy à la tête du gouvernement, Ankara suit avec une attention anxieuse les circonvolutions de la politique intérieure française. « Villepin a un profil qui nous correspond mieux et il a une vraie popularité en Turquie », se rassure un diplomate. Puis est venue la réplique néerlandaise. Là aussi, une partie des votants a justifié son choix par le refus de l'intégration de la Turquie musulmane.

Dans les nombreux débats organisés par les chaînes de télévision, les analystes divergent sur les conséquences des non. Les uns le considèrent comme un handicap, les autres y voient un retour à moins d'obligations turques. Pour les premiers, Jacques Chirac soutient la Turquie dans un isolement grandissant. Sa défaite la fragilise et sa promesse d'ouvrir un référendum sur l'adhésion renforce l'hypothèque. Comment dans de telles conditions compter encore sur la France, « l'homme le plus malade de l'Europe » ? Le journal *Milliyet* pose la question en détournant avec malice la méta-



phore qui désignait dans les salons parisiens de la fin du XIX^e siècle l'empire ottoman, alors sur le déclin.

Les risques de fêlure du couple franco-allemand accroissent les doutes. Car en cas de victoire du camp conservateur aux élections anticipées, Angela Merkel a fait savoir qu'elle fermerait la porte à la Turquie. L'an dernier, elle était venue sur les rives du Bosphore pour clamer bien haut sa préférence pour un « partenariat privilégié ». Le message était mal passé. Seule lueur d'espoir : le poids des libéraux allemands,

les alliés des chrétiens démocrates qui sont des partisans convaincus de l'intégration.

En parallèle, l'idée selon laquelle l'UE exige de la Turquie plus que des pays récemment

entrés dans le club européen continue de gagner du terrain. L'opposition commence à demander aux islamistes modérés, au pouvoir à Ankara, s'ils ont des garanties de l'UE pour exiger de la population les nécessaires sacrifices d'une marche forcée vers l'Europe. L'AKP, le parti du premier ministre Erdogan, reconnaît qu'il n'a pas toutes les cartes en main.

Le scepticisme naissant est contrebalancé par les arguments des adeptes du paradoxe. Selon eux, un blocage de la constitution pourrait simplifier la tâche d'Ankara. Paralysée par sa crise interne, l'UE serait obligée de renoncer à des avancées difficiles pour la Turquie. La constitution est, par exemple, plus exigeante que le traité de Nice sur les droits de l'homme. Le traité constitutionnel aurait pu permettre des référendums d'initiative populaires, ce qui aurait donné un moyen supplémentaire à la diaspora arménienne pour faire reconnaître le génocide.

Confiants malgré tout, les optimistes rappellent que le chemin vers l'Europe est semé d'embûches depuis le début. En 1995, l'accord d'Union douanière avait été signé après dix années de tergiversations. En 1997, l'Europe s'était, une première fois, opposée à une demande d'adhésion turque. Même Jacques Chirac ne fit pas mine à l'époque d'aller au-delà d'une association privilégiée. Ce qui n'avait pas empêché, deux

ans plus tard, une volte-face d'ouvrir la voie à l'actuel processus d'adhésion (1).

Conscients des enjeux, les Turcs avaient, ces derniers mois, pris soin d'éviter d'attirer l'attention. La consigne était de ne pas répondre aux éventuelles outrances et aux provocations des turcophobes. Pas question de permettre au débat de sortir de son axe constitutionnel. L'appel venait d'Ankara, mais aussi de Bruxelles et de Paris. « On a conseillé à la Turquie de ne rien faire et de ne pas être trop visible dans ce moment délicat pour l'Europe », reconnaissait la semaine passée Mustafa Oguz Demiralp, le délégué permanent de la Turquie auprès de l'Union européenne, dans un entretien accordé à un journal marocain. Quant à la date d'ouverture des négociations, elle avait été artificiellement fixée au 3 octobre pour éviter une « instrumentalisation » des campagnes référendaires. Des précautions européennes en fin de compte plutôt vaines.

(1) A lire : « Faut-il intégrer la Turquie ? », Eric Blegala, Editions de l'Aube.

La France, un allié discret

Si les relations franco-turques se mesuraient au nombre de visites ministérielles, elles seraient au plus bas. Depuis le début de l'année, les déplacements de membres du gouvernement français sont presque inexistantes. Durant les temps incertains du combat référendaire, Paris se veut discret. Sur le fond comme sur la forme, la position française reste favorable

au projet européen de la Turquie. Reste à savoir si le rythme des nouvelles adhésions ou le principe même d'entrées supplémentaires dans l'espace européen résisteront aux crises de hoquet de la Constitution et à la panne de l'Europe. Et à connaître, à l'automne, l'avenir de Gerhard Schröder, le « moteur » de l'intégration de la Turquie.

T. O.

33 killed in a wave of insurgent attacks across Iraq

By Edward Wong

BAGHDAD: Employing a range of weapons, including a motorcycle suicide bomb and several car bombs, insurgents carried out attacks across a broad swath of central and northern Iraq on Thursday that killed at least 33 people and wounded scores of others.

The strikes continued a series of bloody assaults begun last Sunday that appear to be the guerrillas' response to the start of an ambitious offensive led by the Iraqi government, in which tens of thousands of Iraqi security officials have been assigned to police Baghdad.

Much of the violence earlier in the week unfolded in Baghdad, but almost all the deadly attacks on Thursday took place outside the capital, as the insurgency, largely led by recalcitrant Sunni Arabs, sought to apply pressure on a number of fronts.

The insurgents may have deliberately chosen targets outside of the capital to show their ability to adapt to the strategies of Iraqi government, and to demonstrate that the guerrilla war is being waged on as large a scale now as it ever has been.

The American military said on Thursday that two Marines and a sol-

dier died on Wednesday in separate incidents in western and northern Iraq, regions where hostility toward the Americans and the Iraqi government has been highest.

In the capital, officials on a Shiite-led panel that is overseeing the writing of a permanent constitution met on Thursday with Sunni leaders to try to placate politically frustrated Sunni Arabs. Following a visit last month from Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. secretary of state, Shiite officials have been saying they intend to broaden Sunni participation in the constitution-writing process in hopes of calming the insurgency.

In the deadliest attack on Thursday, insurgents gunned down nine people in a bazaar in the northern Baghdad neighborhood of Hurrea. The insurgents drove up in three sedans and opened fire at shoppers in the area, an Interior Ministry official said.

In the morning, a car bomb detonated outside a restaurant in the town of Tuz Khurmatu, about 95 kilometers, or 60 miles, south of the contested oil-rich city of Kirkuk, killing at least eight people and wounding 22 others, the official said. The bomb was aimed at a convoy of bodyguards assigned to protect Rozh Shawees, a deputy prime min-

ister and a senior member of one of the two main Kurdish parties. Television footage showed twisted metal and glass strewn across the road and people milling around blackened cars.

Shawees, who was not with the convoy, said in an interview in Baghdad with Al-Arabiya, the Arab satellite network, that several of his guards were killed in the attack.

In Baquba, about 55 kilometers north-east of Baghdad, a suicide car bomb exploded by a convoy carrying Hussein Alwan al-Tamimi, the deputy head of the provincial council, killing Tamimi and three of his guards and injuring four policemen, the Interior Ministry official said.

Far to the north, in the city of Mosul, a suicide motorcycle bomb detonated at 3:45 p.m. at a traffic light in the center, killing at least seven people and injuring at least 10 others, said Mishal Rahoo, an employee in the local health department. The explosion took place near the headquarters of the Mosul police force, which may have been the target.

The New York Times

An Iraqi employee of The New York Times contributed reporting from Mosul.

IRAK

"Rétablir la peine de mort, c'est la sagesse"

Le quotidien irakien proaméricain Al-Sabah publie un reportage montrant la joie des Irakiens de voir leur gouvernement appliquer la peine capitale.

Après les premières condamnations à mort prononcées à l'encontre de criminels qui ont mis en danger la sécurité du pays et ont assassiné des dizaines de citoyens innocents, la rue irakienne a été rassurée. La population attendait depuis longtemps, de la part du gouvernement, une mesure rigoureuse, proportionnelle à l'atrocité des crimes commis par ces crapules ! Les Irakiens demandaient avec insistance le rétablissement de la peine de mort afin de dissuader tous ceux qui voudraient encore, au mépris de la vie humaine, s'attaquer aux citoyens innocents en leur infligeant enlèvement, viol ou meurtre. Seul le décret rétablissant la peine de mort pouvait rendre justice aux Irakiens dont le sang a été versé.

Longtemps, la mère dont on a tué l'enfant, le père effondré par la mort de son fils et l'orphelin privé de ses parents ont attendu que la justice les rétablisse dans leurs droits et les délivre de leur douleur en punis-

sant ceux qui ont été la cause de leurs souffrances. Bien sûr, certains pays se sont opposés à la peine capitale par respect des droits de l'homme ou au nom de la civilisation moderne. Mais les crimes commis en Irak ont été trop atroces pour demeurer impunis, et c'est l'extrême cruauté des meurtriers qui a poussé l'ensemble des Irakiens – et non le seul gouvernement – à exiger et à prendre cette mesure.

Ali Saheb, un ouvrier irakien de 35 ans, déclare que, pour les crimes outrepassant toute limite perpétrés par les terroristes, il ne peut y avoir qu'une réponse : la peine capitale, qui seule peut les mettre définitivement hors d'état de nuire.

Abdel Razek, un ingénieur dans la trentaine, nous l'affirme : "Rétablir la peine de mort, c'est la véritable sagesse, comme nous l'a révélé le saint Coran, où il est écrit : 'En guise de châtiment, vous pourrez prendre une vie, vous qui êtes doués d'intelligence.' Tout pays dans lequel arriverait ce qui est arrivé chez nous devrait suivre le conseil du Coran."

Dans cette rue de la ville de Nadjaf, tous sont d'accord pour considérer que c'est le juste châtiment de crimes inhumains.

Même Mohammad Jaber, le représentant de la Ligue des droits de l'homme, approuvait en déclarant : "Le commandement de châtier par la peine de mort est inscrit non seulement dans le Coran des musulmans mais aussi dans le droit positif des pays occidentaux. Il sert à dissuader les auteurs de crimes inhumains que les peines de prison, même longues et pénibles, n'arrivent pas à décourager." Interrogé sur l'incompatibilité entre ce châtiment et les exigences des organisations de défense des droits de l'homme, qui appellent à l'abroger, Mohammad Jaber répond : "Celui qui tue avec sauvagerie un être innocent n'a respecté aucun des droits humains de sa victime. Le défendre serait prendre la défense du crime et des criminels !" Certaines mesures, malgré leur dureté, doivent être prises, afin que l'honnête homme puisse vivre en sécurité et pour que rien ne vienne empêcher de tourner la roue du progrès et de la reconstruction.

Hussein Al-Kaabi, Al-Sabah, Bagdad

La « dérive corruptive » du programme « Pétrole contre nourriture »

UN UNIVERS CONFINÉ, où l'on retrouve deux ambassadeurs, un ancien ministre de l'intérieur, des lobbyistes, des gaullistes historiques, des affairistes et, en toile de fond, une entreprise pétrolière de renom, Total. C'est ce monde opaque que tente de pénétrer le juge Philippe Courroye, chargé, depuis 2002, d'enquêter sur un éventuel contournement par Total du programme « Pétrole contre nourriture », qui avait desserré l'embargo de l'ONU sur l'Irak, entre 1996 et 2003.

Dans un procès-verbal de synthèse daté du 5 avril, la brigade de répression de la délinquance économique (BRDE) dresse un portrait sans concession de cette micro-société. Les policiers disposent, depuis leur récent déplacement à New York, des archives des Nations unies, ainsi que de celles de la SOMO, société habilitée à écouler le brut irakien.

Ces documents se complètent, selon les enquêteurs, même si les archives de l'ONU ne mentionnent pas l'identité des particuliers, allocataires de barils de pétrole irakien. « L'attribution de ces allocations à ces personnes physiques, explique la BRDE, permettait à celles-ci, dans le cadre de la revente des produits pétroliers, de percevoir des commissions, et de manière totalement opaque aux yeux des contrôleurs des Nations unies. »

Les policiers suspectent onze personnes d'avoir profité des fastes du régime irakien. Parmi elles, un homme d'affaires proche de Jacques Chirac, Patrick Maugein, un intermédiaire, Elias Firzli, l'ancien secrétaire général du Quai d'Orsay, Serge Boidevaux, un ancien ambassadeur de France à l'ONU, Jean-Bernard Mérimée, un ancien ministre de l'intérieur, Charles Pasqua, et son conseiller diplomatique, Bernard Guillet, ou encore le responsable de l'association Amitiés franco-irakiennes (AFI), Gilles Munier.

« TRAFIC D'INFLUENCE »

« Concernant les allocations pétrolières, écrivent les enquêteurs, les infractions de corruption active et passive et trafic d'influence semblent avoir été relevées, et ce jusqu'en mai 2002. » M. Courroye, qui a demandé, en avril, l'extension de sa saisine – ouverte pour « abus de biens sociaux, complicité et recel » – à ces incriminations n'a toujours pas, à ce jour, reçu de feu vert du procureur de Paris.

Selon les policiers, « la plupart des personnes physiques qui ont perçu ces allocations ont eu à véhiculer une image positive du régime ira-

kien avec prise de position pro-irakienne, en particulier MM. Munier et Boidevaux, en contrepartie d'allocations pétrolières accordées par les autorités gouvernementales irakiennes de l'époque. Ceci peut constituer des faits de trafic d'influence aggravé ». « De même, assure la BRDE, il convient de souligner l'influence de MM. Pasqua et Guillet et leur prise de position pour le régime irakien à l'époque. »

Mis en examen, le 28 avril, pour « recel d'abus de biens sociaux » et « trafic d'influence aggravé », M. Guillet a relaté au juge Courroye les conditions dans lesquelles Saddam Hussein avait voulu récompenser M. Pasqua (Le Monde du 19 mai) : « Tarek Aziz m'a dit que l'Irak voulait remercier Charles Pasqua du rôle qu'il avait eu lorsque, en 1993, il avait organisé la première visite et le premier contact avec un officiel de haut rang en France, Tarek Aziz. »

Gilles Munier, 60 ans, œuvrait à un niveau inférieur. Il a bénéficié de barils irakiens dans le seul but de propager les idées de Saddam Hussein. Il avait réussi à attirer à l'AFI des personnalités comme Marc Bonnefous ou Paul Depis, ambassadeurs de France, ou Philippe de Saint-Robert, ancien haut commissaire à la langue française.

« Les bénéficiaires des allocations pétrolières étaient choisis en fonction de services rendus à la cause du régime irakien, a reconnu

M. Munier, le 1^{er} mars, devant les policiers, qui l'ont interrogé comme témoin. Le but n'était pas de faire du négoce pétrolier. (...) Tout le pétrole dont j'ai pu bénéficier est passé par Aredio. » Cette société avait été créée de toutes pièces, à sa demande : « J'ai donc rencontré Tarek Aziz, à qui j'ai expliqué l'intérêt qu'il y avait à ce que cette société signe un contrat (...), car elle nous aiderait dans nos activités. » C'est ainsi qu'Aredio fut agréée par la SOMO et finança l'AFI à hauteur de 14 000 euros.

BESOIN DE PÉTROLE IRAKIE

Au cœur de toutes les transactions, on trouve Elias Firzli, un avocat libanais visé par un mandat de recherche. Du fait de ses relations avec le régime irakien, ce membre du parti Baas jouait les intermédiaires, notamment pour Total. Les enquêteurs ont établi qu'en 1999 et 2000 il avait rétrocédé près de 1,5 million de francs à Bernard Guillet, qui a affirmé ne pas être le destinataire final de ces fonds. A qui étaient-ils destinés ? « Je dis qu'un ami peut rendre servi-

ce à un ami », s'est contenté de répondre, elliptique, M. Guillet.

Ce dernier s'est rappelé, lors de sa garde à vue, le 26 avril, avoir assisté à un déjeuner entre Charles Pasqua et Thierry Desmarest, président de Total : « J'ai rencontré M. Desmarest au conseil général [M. Pasqua présida le conseil général des Hauts-de-Seine de 1988 à 2004] entre 1995 et 1998, au cours d'un déjeuner de travail avec M. Pasqua (...). Je me souviens que des questions de pétrole sont apparues dans la conversation. »

Les enquêteurs ont acquis la certitude que Total avait, à la fin des années 1990, un grand besoin du pétrole irakien. Mis en examen en septembre 2004, le responsable de la comptabilité du groupe jus-

qu'en 2000, Gilbert Covinhes, l'a expliqué, le 25 avril, au juge : « Les quantités que Total achetait directement auprès de la SOMO ne suffisaient pas. »

Une carence en brut qui a débouché, selon les enquêteurs, sur une véritable « dérive corruptive » du système. Et les policiers de conclure : « De nombreux éléments démontrent que la société Total a été particulièrement impliquée dans différentes infractions, soit directement par l'acquisition de produits pétroliers, soit indirectement, rémunérant les uns et les autres, en utilisant différents intermédiaires. »

Gérard Davet
et Fabrice Lhomme

Onze personnalités sont visées par l'enquête du juge Courroye

L'ENQUÊTE DU JUGE Philippe Courroye vise onze personnalités, suspectées d'avoir bénéficié de barils de pétrole de Saddam Hussein en récompense de leur action en faveur du son régime. Dans sa synthèse du 5 avril, la brigade de répression de la délinquance économique (BRDE) détaille les éléments recueillis contre elles.

► **Charles Pasqua.** L'ancien ministre de l'intérieur (1986-1988, 1993-1995) aurait bénéficié, selon les policiers, « d'environ 10,7 millions de barils » dans le cadre de trois contrats signés en 1999, correspondant aux phases 6, 7 et 8 du programme « Pétrole contre nourriture », qui en comptait treize.

► **Bernard Guillet.** L'ancien conseiller diplomatique de M. Pasqua aurait été, en 2001, « allocataire dans le cadre d'un seul contrat (phase 10) d'une quantité d'environ 2 millions de barils ». M. Guillet a été mis en examen, le 28 avril, pour « recel d'abus de biens sociaux » et « trafic d'influence aggravé ».

► **Elias Firzli.** Visé par un mandat de recherche du juge Courroye, l'avocat libanais est l'homme-clef du dossier. Personnellement allocataire, à travers les sociétés Genmar et Aredio, de près de 11 millions de barils, il aurait reversé une partie des fonds détournés à des proches de Saddam Hussein. Ce membre du parti Baas a permis à Total, qui lui a versé 30 millions de francs entre 1998 et 2002,

d'avoir accès au marché irakien.

► **Patrick Maugein.** Ce proche de Jacques Chirac aurait été, via sa société Trafisura, allocataire, en 1998 et 1999, d'une quantité évaluée par les enquêteurs à 13,2 millions de barils. Président d'une société pétrolière, M. Maugein nie avoir contourné l'embargo de l'ONU (Le Monde du 19 mai).

► **Jean-Bernard Mérimée.** Représentant permanent de la France au Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies entre 1991 et 1995, puis ambassadeur de France à Rome jusqu'en 1998, M. Mérimée aurait perçu, en 2001, des commissions sur « environ 2 millions de barils ». Le diplomate aurait eu recours à deux sociétés agréées par l'ONU pour commercer avec Bagdad : Aredio Petroleum et Fenar Petroleum.

► **Serge Boidevaux.** Ancien secrétaire général du Quai d'Orsay, ce diplomate, président de la chambre de commerce franco-arabe depuis 1992, s'est reconverti dans le commerce pétrolier. Il aurait été allocataire de 32,6 millions de barils de brut entre 1998 et 2003.

► **Claude Kasperelt.** Le fils de Gabriel Kasperelt, ancien député et maire (RPR) du 9^e arrondissement de Paris, est à la tête de la société European Trading International. A travers cette société, il aurait bénéficié de 8,5 millions de barils, lors des phases 9 à 13, soit entre 2000 et 2003.

► **Michel Grilmard.** Ancien membre du conseil national du RPR, il aurait été allocataire, via la société Addax, dans le cadre de cinq contrats, entre 1997 et 2002, de 7,5 millions de barils de brut.
► **Gilles Munier.** Le secrétaire

général des Amitiés franco-irakiennes aurait été allocataire de 9,5 millions de barils, via la société Are-dio.

► **Hamida Na'na.** Mise en examen par le juge Courroye, cette journaliste palestinienne aurait

également bénéficié d'allocations en barils, dont le nombre n'a pu être évalué. Elle aurait par ailleurs perçu environ 100 000 francs suisses de M. Firzli entre 1999 et 2000.

► **Ruy di Souza.** Associé avec

M. Maugein dans la société monégasque Toro Energy, il aurait aussi bénéficié d'allocations, que l'enquête n'a pu évaluer précisément.

G. Da. et F. Lh.

SYRIE Discours présidentiel, hier à Damas, en lever de rideau du congrès du parti Baas

Bachar el-Assad déçoit les espoirs d'ouverture politique

Pierre Prier

Rien de nouveau sous le soleil du Baas. Devant les 1 231 délégués du parti qui gouverne la Syrie depuis 1963, le président Bachar el-Assad a laissé hier peu d'espoir aux tenants d'une ouverture politique.

En des termes vagues, Bachar el-Assad, successeur de son père, Hafez, en 2000, a évoqué la possibilité « d'élargir la participation populaire », en l'associant « à la prise de décision » à travers « une plus grande ouverture en direction des forces nationales ».

Mais le président a en substance démenti les rumeurs de suppression de l'article 8, qui donne au Baas la direction de la politique et de la société : « Je vous appelle à consacrer le rôle du Baas, à développer son idéologie et à moderniser son projet social. » Pour Bachar el-Assad, qui dirige aussi le parti, « le rôle du Baas restera essentiel » en Syrie.

« Nous sommes convaincus que les idées et les préceptes du Baas sont toujours d'actualité et répondent aux intérêts du peuple et de la nation », a-t-il martelé. L'insistance sur le caractère « national » exclut d'avance toute participation des islamistes et des partis kurdes à une éventuelle nouvelle donne politique.

Cette fin de non-recevoir a été délivrée dans une atmosphère de reprise en main : arrestation d'opposants et de militants des droits de l'homme, tests de missiles Scud en forme d'avertisse-



En échange de la fermeture politique, le président Bachar el-Assad a promis devant les 1 231 délégués du parti de faire de la lutte contre la corruption « une priorité ». (Photo R. Haidar/AFP)

ment. En échange de la fermeture politique, le président syrien a promis au peuple de faire de la lutte contre la corruption « une priorité ».

Une gageure dans la mesure où le centre du système de corruption, selon l'opposition et la plupart des observateurs, se trouve dans l'entourage du président lui-même. Sur le plan économique, Bachar el-Assad a salué les « importantes réalisations, qui ont conduit à l'amélioration des conditions de vie des citoyens ».

Le régime, a-t-il affirmé, a accompli des « pas importants dans la réforme financière et promulgué les lois nécessaires pour le développe-

ment économique ». Une vision optimiste de la situation d'un pays où 2,2 millions de personnes vivent sous le seuil de pauvreté, soit 12,2 % de la population.

L'avocat et opposant Anouar al-Bounni a déploré qu'« on ne soit pas parvenu encore à trouver le mécanisme pour lutter contre la corruption qui a redoublé ces cinq dernières années ». Selon M^e al-Bounni, le discours montre que « les autorités syriennes ne sont prêtes à renoncer à aucun de leurs privilèges ».

Le chef de l'État syrien n'a pas évoqué dans le détail les pressions internationales exercées sur la Syrie depuis la chute

du régime de Saddam Hussein, se contentant d'affirmer qu'il était « nécessaire de faire face d'une manière courageuse et raisonnable » aux développements internationaux.

Les pressions conjuguées des États-Unis et de la France sont montées d'un cran depuis l'assassinat de l'ex-premier ministre libanais Rafic Hariri à Beyrouth le 14 février accélérant le retrait total des troupes syriennes du Liban, après une présence de 29 années au pays du Cèdre.

P. P. (avec AFP, Reuter)

IRAN Avant l'élection présidentielle du 17 juin, les candidats invoquent la « volonté populaire »

A Téhéran, tous les présidentiables défendent le droit à la technologie nucléaire

Téhéran : Delphine Minoui

S'il est un sujet sur lequel les huit candidats à la présidentielle ne se contredisent pas, c'est bien celui du nucléaire. A deux semaines des élections qui mettront un terme au deuxième mandat du réformateur Mohammad Khatami, la campagne est largement dominée par des thèmes comme le chômage, l'inflation et la relance économique. Sur la question d'un « meilleur Iran », ça bataille dur, également, entre les défenseurs des valeurs de la révolution qui s'accrochent aux fondements de la République islamique, les pragmatiques qui prônent la relance du dialogue avec l'Amérique, et les réformistes qui voient dans la liberté d'expression la condition nécessaire à une évolution positive du pays. Pourtant, tous les prétendants à la présidence s'accordent, sans exception, sur l'idée qu'un « Iran fort » est un Iran qui ne renoncera pas à l'énergie nucléaire.

Le candidat conservateur Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, ancien chef de la police iranienne, réputé proche du guide religieux, s'explique sur son site Internet : « *Le nucléaire ne doit pas être utilisé comme un outil pour détruire ses rivaux ou gagner des voix. C'est un dossier national qui n'est lié ni à une personne ni à un groupe politique en particulier... L'accès à la technologie nucléaire à des fins pacifiques est une demande qui vient du peuple.* » Ghalibaf et tous les candidats font de la « fierté nationale » leur fonds de commerce pour défendre le programme nucléaire du pays. Il n'est pas rare, en effet, d'entendre les Iraniens revendiquer ce qu'ils appellent « le droit à la technologie ». Selon un sondage mené en décembre

par l'agence de presse iranienne Mehr, 80 % des Iraniens s'opposent à une interruption des activités nucléaires.

Dans le clan des réformateurs, même son de cloche. Ancien ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur, Mostafa Moïn met l'accent sur « le droit de tous les pays à accéder à l'énergie nucléaire, dans le cadre des lois internationales ». De son côté, le conservateur pragmatique Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsandjani, favori dans les sondages, a prévenu qu'il ne renoncerait pas au nucléaire, « droit légitime du peuple », s'il était élu. Pour lui, mettre un terme au nucléaire, ce serait comme

« abandonner une partie de notre territoire ».

Autant de déclarations qui laissent présager d'interminables discussions avec les Européens et plus de pressions de la part de Washington, alors que les négociations avec la troïka (France, Allemagne, Grande-Bretagne) ont déjà failli tourner au vinaigre. Le 25 mai, la crise a été désamorcée à la dernière minute lorsque l'Iran a finalement accepté de ne pas reprendre immédiatement ses activités nucléaires sensibles – suspendues en novembre – comme ses dirigeants l'avaient d'abord annoncé. L'UE et l'Iran se sont donné jusqu'à l'été pour tenter de débloquent le dossier. En cas d'échec, il

pourrait être envoyé au Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU. Ce scénario, que préfère éviter l'Europe, est fermement soutenu par Washington, qui reste convaincu de la mauvaise foi des Iraniens.

En mars dernier, la troïka avait néanmoins remporté une petite victoire en obtenant des Américains certaines mesures incitatives (comme la vente à l'Iran de moteurs d'avions made in USA, soumis à l'embargo) en contrepartie desquelles l'Iran donnerait des « garanties objectives » qu'il ne fabrique pas l'arme atomique. Mais les experts européens du dossier présentent des signes d'épuisement. D'autant plus que les Iraniens mul-

Huit prétendants au fauteuil de Khatami

Les électeurs iraniens sont appelés aux urnes le 17 juin pour choisir leur futur président. Huit candidats ont été autorisés à se présenter.

► **Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsandjani** : il est en tête des sondages, avec environ 30 % de voix. A 70 ans, Rafsandjani, qui a déjà été président de 1989 à 1997, dirige le Conseil de discernement, une instance conservatrice du régime. Dans sa campagne, ce conservateur pragmatique mise sur un rapprochement avec les Etats-Unis et une plus grande participation des femmes.

► **Mustafah Moïn** : proche du président sortant Mohammad Khatami, il est le favori des réformateurs. Sa campagne tourne autour de la question des droits de l'homme. En 1999, il avait démissionné de son poste après la répression contre les mouvements étudiants pour manifester son désaccord. Ses chances de l'emporter sont diminuées par l'appel au boycott des étudiants, anciens supporters des réformes.

► **Mehdi Karroubi** : il est le deuxième candidat des réformateurs. Cet ancien chef du Parlement est un religieux modéré, dont les idées se rapprochent de celles de Khatami.

► **Mohsen Mehralizadeh** : vice-président chargé

du sport, il est peu connu des Iraniens et ses chances de l'emporter sont minimes.

► **Mohsen Rezaï** : il a longtemps été à la tête des Gardiens de la révolution, les pasdarans, l'armée d'élite du régime. « *Si nous voulons la démocratie, nous avons besoin d'une personne forte, qui connaisse les affaires militaires et politiques* », déclarait-il récemment.

► **Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf** : classé dans le clan des conservateurs, il a récemment dirigé la police iranienne. Né en 1961, il a rejoint l'armée pendant la guerre Iran-Irak. En 1996, il fut nommé commandant de l'armée de l'air des pasdarans.

► **Ali Larjani** : cet ancien chef de la télévision d'Etat, fidèle aux valeurs révolutionnaires, a lui aussi occupé un poste militaire. Ses discours de campagne mettent l'accent sur le développement économique.

► **Mahmoud Ahmadi Nejad** : considéré comme un dur du régime, il s'est fait connaître en politique après les élections municipales de 2003. A la mairie de Téhéran, il a mis l'accent sur le développement de la ville. Mais les Iraniens lui reprochent d'avoir « noirci » la capitale, en dépensant des fortunes pour célébrer le deuil des imams chiites.

D. M.

tiplient les déclarations provocatrices, avec, par exemple, l'annonce d'une nouvelle loi obligeant le pays à développer sa technologie nucléaire, y compris l'enrichissement d'uranium (qui peut servir à fabriquer une bombe).

« Les discussions, avec l'Europe d'un côté, et les pressions américaines de l'autre, sont devenues très complexes et difficiles », concède le candidat Ghalibaf, tout en précisant : « Comment l'Iran peut-il sortir de cette crise la tête haute, comment protéger nos intérêts

nationaux et accroître notre pouvoir national ? »

C'est peut-être du côté de Rafsandjani qu'il faut aller chercher la réponse, comme le suggère Fazel Nikzad, ce lecteur du quotidien *Eteelaat* dans une lettre ouverte. « Rafsandjani, écrit-il, est le seul à pouvoir mener des négociations bilatérales, surtout celle du nucléaire. » Dans sa campagne haute en couleur, menée à coups de slogans séducteurs, - la défense des droits de l'homme, la participation des femmes à la vie publique - cet

ancien religieux conservateur transformé en libéral pragmatique, promet en effet « une diplomatie active, interactive et constructive ». En coulisses, ses proches évoquent même un « deal » possible entre Iraniens, Européens et Américains.

Mais pour un candidat ultra-conservateur comme Ali Larijani, ancien chef de la télévision d'Etat, il n'est pas question de négocier. Ce dernier dresse un parallèle entre le coup d'Etat fomenté en 1953 par la CIA contre le premier

ministre iranien Mohammed Mossadegh qui avait nationalisé le pétrole iranien et l'actuelle pression américaine sur le nucléaire. « Les Anglais, écrit-il en première page de son site, disaient que les Iraniens n'étaient pas capables

de gérer leur industrie pétrolière. Aujourd'hui, les Américains prétendent que nous ne pouvons pas développer la technologie nucléaire. » Faisant allusion aux mesures incitatives des Etats-Unis, Larijani ne ménage pas ses mots. « Nous avons troqué une perle contre un bonbon », enrage-t-il.

Reformists wait in vain for Syria to break with its repressive past

Fear of popular upheaval has led Damascus to tighten its grip ahead of the ruling party's congress, say Roula Khalaf and Ferry Biedermann

When Syria bowed to international pressure and pulled the last of its troops out of Lebanon in April, some government officials thought Bashar al-Assad, the country's young president, would turn his attention to developing his own country.

The new, reformist direction would become evident, they predicted, in the congress of the ruling Ba'ath party, which begins tomorrow. Mr Assad had declared back in March that the meeting would mark "a great leap" in the reform process. His foreign minister, Farouq al-Shara'a, said last week that the meeting would even accord "great importance" to the issue of human rights.

But as the date of the con-

ference has neared, repression rather than reform has seemingly dominated the behaviour of the Syrian regime, undermining hopes that the meeting would herald a break with the past.

The meeting has been preceded by a series of arrests of political opponents, including human rights activists. Members of the Atassi Forum, a reformist group, were detained on charges that a member had read a statement on behalf of the banned Muslim Brotherhood. Some were released last week.

Analysts in Damascus say the crackdown was designed to counter perceptions that the regime had been weakened by the withdrawal from

Lebanon and the pressures exerted by the US on Damascus for its alleged interference in Iraq.

"The arrests were intended to show that the government is still very much in control and that they have many cards to play," said Anwar Bounni, a dissident human rights lawyer.

Over the past week, other events have added to the confusion over Syria's intentions. A prominent cleric belonging to Syria's Kurdish minority who had disappeared last month was found dead on Wednesday, inflaming anti-government feelings in Kurdish areas of the country.

The government vehemently denied involvement,

pointing out that Sheikh Mohammed Maashuq al-Khaznawi was not an opponent of the regime. But human rights activist said reports of contacts between the Sheikh and the Muslim Brotherhood provided a possible motive for government involvement in the killing.

A day after the cleric's body was handed over to his family, a new crisis erupted in Lebanon, fuelling international suspicions that Damascus has yet to remove all its intelligence officers from the country. The assassination in Beirut of Samir Kassir, a prominent columnist and outspoken critic of Syria, prompted accusations that Syria had a hand in the killing. The charges were

strongly denied in Damascus but still revived the anti-Syrian sentiment that swept Lebanon after the February 14 assassination of Rafiq Hariri, the former prime minister.

The killing provoked massive Lebanese and international pressure on Syria to end its 29-year military presence in Lebanon.

Syrian officials said they still expect the Ba'ath party conference to signal some readiness to move to a multi-party system. There has been talk of holding local elections, for example. However, they said they expected the meeting to place greater emphasis on economic rather than political reform.

Young members of the party predict that any meaningful political change will be delayed for at least two years to allow Mr Assad to run unopposed for a second term in 2007.

"The regional command meeting is dominated by the same old faces. They elected themselves to participate," said Ayman Abdul Nour, a young reformist Ba'ath party member.

He said some reform-minded colleagues had succeeded in getting at least some modernisers invited to the congress who will present reports on foreign and domestic politics and the economy. But in another sign of the determination of the regime to keep a tight grip on the agenda, the delegates to the meeting were to

be given these reports only the night before the opening ceremony.

Perhaps the most important sign to emerge from the Congress will be the make-up of the new party leadership committee, which will give an indication of the balance of power between the factions inside the regime.

Western observers say international pressures on Syria have sharpened the divisions in the ruling establishment. One group, assumed to be associated with the president, appears to be looking for ways of improving relations with the west. Another, dominated by hardliners, insists that only defiance and a continued

show of force could protect the regime.

Syria, after all, now finds itself surrounded by its arch-foe Israel, a pro-US Iraq and a Lebanon that no longer blindly answers to the demands of Damascus. The US is keeping up the pressure on the government and the European Union is delaying the signing of a crucial trade agreement with Syria. Even the mood in Egypt, where reformists are taking to the streets to demand political change, exacerbates the anxiety of the Syrian regime.

The concern in Damascus, observers say, is that any political opening could snowball, leading to an uncontrollable popular upheaval.

IRAQ

Kurds meet to pave way for unified self-rule area

By Steve Negus in Baghdad

Iraqi Kurdistan's newly elected regional parliament convened for the first time on Saturday in the northern city of Irbil, paving the way for the unification of a Kurdish self-rule area divided between two rival parties.

Many Kurds believe the merger is vital if they are to realise their national aspirations - including regional autonomy and control over the disputed province of Kirkuk.

Jalal Talabani, Iraq's first-ever Kurdish president, told the 111-member body: "Your democratically elected parliament faces a critical period in the history of Iraq. Our sacred task is to draft a permanent constitution that guarantees equality for all of Iraqi society and protects democratic and federal freedoms."

Kurdish leaders now expect the announcement within weeks of a cabinet composed jointly of the Kurdish Democratic party led by Massoud Barzani, which controls the centre

and west of the zone, and Mr Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

This joint government will then attempt to merge the competing ministries the two parties have run in their respective zones since fighting a small civil war in 1996.

Many Kurds believe that if the state of disunity persists it will disadvantage the Kurds in negotiations with other Iraqis over a permanent constitution.

"This division is the stumbling block" for the Kurds realising their national aspirations, said Hiwa Osman, a Kurdish affairs analyst. "If you have divided governments, and a decision was taken on Kirkuk [to join it to Kurdistan], which region, which administration, would you have put it under?"

Mr Talabani and Mr Barzani have agreed the outline of an agreement to merge their two governments that would see Mr Barzani become the president of Kurdistan in exchange for supporting Mr Talabani's candidacy for the largely symbolic presidency of Iraq.

Many Kurds say this agreement was suited to the personalities both of Mr Talabani, a more cosmopolitan politician, and the more traditionalist Mr Barzani.

The two parties ran a joint list in January 30 elections for the Kurdish regional parliament, the first in the northern autonomous zone since 1992. However, the formation of the joint government was held up for four months by a dispute between the two leaders over the powers that Mr Barzani would wield as president.

Kurdish leaders, however, expect parliament to approve a compromise bill, which allows for heavy parliamentary oversight over the presidency, within days.

■ Separatist Kurds killed four Turkish soldiers in an ambush in eastern Turkey, security officials said, **Reuters reports from Tunceli.** Members of a local commando unit were on patrol near a village in the mountainous province when they came under attack from Kurdistan Workers party (PKK) rebels.

Ankara still hopeful of joining EU

By Haig Simonian

Turkey believes it is still on track to become a full member of the European Union, in spite of last week's referendum defeats for the constitutional treaty in France and the Netherlands.

In the first comprehensive comments by a senior official, Abdullah Gul, Turkey's foreign minister, said potential Turkish membership had not played a big role in the emphatic No votes.

"Turkey wasn't the reason for a No in these referendums. It wasn't about full Turkish membership of the EU," he said.

By contrast, the leaders of Austria and Slovenia, two of the EU member states with

the biggest doubts about Ankara's accession, showed clear reservations in the wake of last week's decisions.

At the annual European Forum organised by the Lower Austria state government, Wolfgang Schüssel and Janez Jansa, the Austrian and Slovenian leaders, were conspicuously silent about Turkey, while stressing the need for the EU to embrace Romania, Bulgaria and the western Balkans.

The idea of Turkish membership is deeply unpopular in Austria and Slovenia.

Mr Schüssel had been among those expressing caution in the run-up to the decision to open accession talks with Ankara next Octo-

ber. "I think we should go forward unemotionally, professionally and step by step," he said.

Mr Jansa said Turkish membership should be made subject to a referendum, and criticised the French government for not grasping the degree of anti-Turkish sentiment, which had helped swing the No vote in France.

Mr Gul said: "We will continue to live up to the expectations of our people and deliver on further reforms."

He said Ankara was committed to encouraging free speech and addressing difficult issues in Turkey's past, in spite of the cancellation of an academic conference on the alleged genocide of Armenians under the Otto-

man empire. Mr Gul said the conference, organised by the Bosphorus University, had been "postponed".

The conference, bitterly attacked by Turkish nationalists and a senior minister, had been widely seen as a breakthrough on what has been a taboo subject.

Armenians, backed by a number of governments, describe the events of 1915 as a genocide in which up to 1.5m people were killed. Turkey recognises large numbers died, but alleges atrocities took place on both sides and puts these in the context of the chaos of the first world war and the twilight of the Ottoman empire.

In the desert, evidence for case against Saddam

At burial site, U.S. team aids Iraqi court

By Christopher Drew
and Tresha Mabile

A chain of evidence that investigators believe will help convict Saddam Hussein begins at a wind-swept grave in the desert near Hatra, in northern Iraq.

The burial site — a series of deep trenches that held about 2,500 bodies, many of them women and children — is one of many mass graves that dot the country. But it was the first one excavated by an American investigative team working with a special Iraqi tribunal to build legal cases against Saddam and others in his government.

A senior Iraqi court official has said the tribunal is planning to start the first trial of Saddam by late summer or early fall in a case that focuses on the killings of nearly 160 men from Dujail, a Shiite village north of Baghdad, after the former dictator survived an assassination attempt there.

But American legal advisers say the Hatra grave holds a key to what is likely to be one of the broadest charges against Saddam — that he is responsible for the killing of as many as 100,000 Iraqi Kurds in the late 1980s, some in chemical weapons attacks. They say those charges could be filed later this year, and Iraqi officials said last weekend that there would be 12 separate cases against Saddam and others. Each would require a separate trial, and multiple convictions could mean multiple death sentences for any defendant.

According to Gregory Kehoe, the American who set up the investigative

team, what was found at Hatra shows how Saddam's leadership made a "business of killing people" — the scrape marks from the blade of a bulldozer that shoved victims into the trench, the point-blank shots to the backs of even the babies' heads, the withered body of a 3- or 4-year-old boy, still clutching a red-and-white ball.

Much rests on the prosecutions of Saddam and his lieutenants — for Iraqis seeking a reckoning and for the Bush administration, which hopes the trials and the Iraqi-American partnership will help vindicate its involvement in Iraq and serve as a model of justice and democracy in the Arab world.

Yet in the 18 months since Saddam's capture, questions have been raised from several quarters about whether the process can produce a fair trial. Not only has

covery Times Channel in the United States, Kehoe, the top American adviser to the tribunal from March 2004 until this spring, and other investigators provided a detailed look at how the cases were being built.

More than 50 American advisers have been training several hundred Iraqi investigators and judges, none of whom had experience with human rights laws or handling such complex cases. The Americans have provided forensics expertise, while the Iraqis have fanned out to find witnesses. With American advice, the Iraqis will decide what charges to bring and will run the trials.

What the investigators are ultimately trying to do, Kehoe said, is "connect the circle" to prove "command responsibility" — that Saddam violated human rights by knowing about indiscriminate killings, before or afterward, and doing nothing to stop or punish those who carried them out.

The way to do that, Kehoe said, is through basic detective work, starting with bodies in the ground and tracing the orders up the chain of command.

The tribunal initially planned to leave Saddam out of the Dujail case and charge only five associates, partly to test the new court system. But Gregg Nivala, now the top American adviser,

The trench held only the bodies of women and children — about 300 in all.

Saddam challenged the tribunal's legitimacy, mocking an Iraqi judge for "applying the invaders' laws to try me," but also the United Nations and most European countries have refused to help, partly out of opposition to the death penalty. Human-rights advocates have questioned whether the tribunal's standards for finding guilt will be high enough to link Saddam justly to the killings.

In their first extensive interviews, with The New York Times and the Dis-

said that new evidence, including the testimony of new witnesses and documents found last month, had strengthened the case against him.

Investigators have authenticated Iraqi government documents and audiotapes seized by Kurdish militias in the early 1990s. In a June 1987 document, Ali Hassan al-Majid, one of Saddam's cousins and top deputies, commanded Iraqi troops "to carry out random bombardments using artillery, helicopters and aircraft at all times of the day and night in order to kill the largest number of persons present" in areas linked to Kurdish fighters. On an audiotape, Majid, who became known as "Chemical Ali," can be heard shouting, at a Baath Party meeting about Kurdish villagers: "I will kill them all with chemical weapons."

Saddam's lawyers say that he and his former top associates are not guilty, and that they will counter any charges by attacking the tribunal as a "kangaroo court." Still, one of the lawyers, Issam Ghazzawi, said, "We know his chances are grim and very slim."

The trenches lie hidden in a dip in the sand that for centuries was an oasis during spring rains.

The dig began last September just outside Hatra, about 320 kilometers, or 200 miles, north of Baghdad. What investigators found in the first trench suggested a powerful link to the campaign to drive the Kurds from their lands. Kehoe said it was also the first step in piecing together evidence that Saddam's government had turned the cam-



Tyler Hicks/The New York Times

Iraqi men in Baghdad watched a television broadcast of Saddam Hussein's court appearance last July. The new Iraqi government wants Saddam's trial to begin soon.

paign, code-named "Anfal," or "the spoils," into a killing spree.

Iraqi officials have said their main goal was to root out Kurdish militias siding with Iran during the Iran-Iraq war. But Human Rights Watch, a New York-based group, has estimated that as many as 100,000 Kurds, mostly civilians, were killed, and 2,000 villages destroyed, including dozens bombed with chemical weapons.

Michael Trimble, an archaeologist who headed the forensics team, said the first surprise was that the trench held only the bodies of women and children — about 300 in all. The bodies were stacked haphazardly in four or five layers. Nearly all had a single .22-caliber pistol shot behind one ear.

A second trench held the bodies of 150 men, each sprayed with fire from automatic weapons. Most had been blindfolded and tied together in a chain.

Kehoe said the rolling field held as many as a dozen other trenches, with at least 2,000 more bodies. Nivala said a second grave site, at Samawa in southern Iraq, yielded similar results. In April, investigators excavated one trench and found the bodies of 114 Kurds, all but five of them women and children.

At the Hatra grave, there was a break: the investigators found identification cards tucked inside some of the women's clothes. A few cards turned out to be for children who escaped when their villages were destroyed. Those cards took the investigators back to remote

mountain areas, where the now-grown children and others confirmed that the Hatra victims had indeed been seized by Iraqi forces during the Anfal.

In building this case, the investigators are expanding on research done by Human Rights Watch, which has found that Iraqi forces made at least 40 chemical attacks to kill Kurdish fighters or destroy villages thought to have supported them.

Ghazzawi, the lawyer for Saddam, said the Kurds were traitors, and "there are always casualties, innocent casualties, in every war." As for killing civilians, he said, "I know for sure that the government under Saddam Hussein, the president, that they didn't do it."

The New York Times

20 Iraqis are killed by 3 suicide bombs

Area around Sunni stronghold attacked

By Edward Wong

BAGHDAD: In one of the most audacious and organized strikes in recent weeks, insurgents set off three simultaneous suicide car bombs Tuesday at checkpoints around a rebel town in northern Iraq, killing at least 20 Iraqis and wounding 30, a police chief said.

At least seven other Iraqis were killed or found dead elsewhere in the country, and a suicide car bomb in Baghdad wounded 28 people.

The bombs that took the heavy toll exploded in the morning at checkpoints ringing the Sunni Arab stronghold of Hawija, 200 kilometers, or 120 miles, north of Baghdad. The casualties were Iraqi soldiers, police officers and civilians, said the police official, Major General Torhan Abdul-Rahman.

The police discovered a bomb in a fourth car and defused it, he said.

The attacks pointed to a revival of the relentless suicide car bombs that followed the appointment of the cabinet of the new Shiite-led government. Though such attacks have decreased in Baghdad in the last two weeks, the insurgents have demonstrated again and again that they can easily shift their targets, with startling and deadly results.

Hawija is a bastion of the insurgency in the northern Sunni triangle, an area that has remained loyal to Saddam Hussein and the former ruling Baath Party. It is almost equidistant between Kirkuk, an oil center, and Tikrit, Saddam's hometown.

Many senior officials in Saddam's government came from Hawija, including top officers in the Republican Guard and the Mukhabarat, one of Saddam's most feared intelligence services.

Throughout the occupation, American forces have repeatedly raided Haw-

ija to try to stamp out the insurgency there. But the Sunni Arabs in the town have remained firmly resistant to both the foreign military presence and the Iraqi government.

During the elections in January, Hawija was one of the few exceptions to the widespread Sunni boycott. Many Sunni Arabs in Hawija voted, largely in an attempt to keep the Kurds in the province, Tamim, from dominating the provincial elections. The Sunni Arabs were aware that control of Kirkuk, which is the county seat of Tamim, and its vast oil fields were at stake.

The bombs on Tuesday morning went off at checkpoints in the areas of Dibis, Aziziya and Al Bakkara, Abdul-Rahman said.

The American military said Tuesday that two U.S. marines died Monday of wounds in two roadside bomb attacks near the town of Falluja. The military also said a soldier died on Sunday of noncombat injuries at Camp Dublin near Baghdad International Airport.

Farther north, in Tal Afar, west of Mosul, American armor rolled through the streets in another attempt to root out the insurgency there. Tal Afar lies near the Syrian border and is believed to be a staging post for foreign fighters entering the country from Syria. American forces have never been able to control the town, and it was a "no-go zone" for much of last summer.

More recently, during the American-led offensive in Falluja last November, Tal Afar and the Sunni neighborhoods of Mosul erupted in open rebellion, forcing the Stryker Brigade and army units to step up the pace of operations and patrols.

In northeast Mosul on Tuesday, four Kurds were killed when gunmen in three cars surrounded their vehicle and

opened fire, witnesses said.

The body of a Sunni cleric, Sheik Saalam Abdul-Kareem al-Kerdisi, was discovered beneath a bridge in the southern city of Basra. There were signs of torture on the body, said Alaa Sabah, spokesman for the Iraqi Islamic Party, a Sunni political group.

In Abu Ghraib, west of Baghdad, the body of a police officer was found beneath a bridge, an Interior Ministry official said. In the western Baghdad neighborhood of Aamil, gunmen shot and killed a commando of the Interior Ministry, the official said, and in northern Baghdad, a suicide car bomb exploded near an Iraqi police convoy, wounding 28 people.

Members of a committee of the National Assembly said Tuesday that they were still working on plans to include more Sunni Arabs in the drafting of the permanent constitution.

A Shiite on the panel, Bahaa al-Aaraji, said the 55-member committee's latest proposal was to get 12 to 15 names of Sunni Arabs from Sunni leaders on Thursday and add those informally to the committee, in a nonvoting capacity.

The latest plan harkens back to a proposal put forth last month, but is a step back from a previous proposal, which would have added 25 to 35 Sunnis to a drafting commission, Aaraji said.

When asked why the committee had decreased the proposed number, Aaraji simply said that "something had changed."

There is a possibility that the 15-member Kurdish bloc on the committee felt threatened by the potential addition of dozens of Sunnis. There are now two Sunni Arabs on the committee.

The Shiite-dominated committee has come under pressure from the White House to increase Sunni participation in the drafting of the constitution.

The New York Times

Herald Tribune

June 8, 2005

In Iran, election poses a dilemma

Some wonder if reform is best achieved by boycotting vote

By Neil MacFarquhar

TEHRAN: With two weeks left in Iran's short presidential election campaign, the reformist camp finds itself facing a fork in the road: to vote or to boycott the ballot.

Iran's reform movement emerged full-blown after the surprise triumph of President Mohammad Khatami in 1997. After he defeated the chosen candidate of Iran's mullahs by a wide margin, hopes soared among many Iranians that he could usher in greater political and social freedoms. But hard-line clerics retained control over the powerful police, judiciary and intelligence agencies, reigning in demonstrations, shutting down outspoken newspapers and disqualifying reformist candidates for office.

Now reformists are split in a debate that goes to the heart of the movement's future. One faction wants people to vote so that voices demanding change are heard. The rest say that approach has been a dismal failure. They argue that only a boycott of the vote will embarrass the ruling mullahs, who exercise near-absolute power over elected officials, including the president, into loosening their stranglehold on power.

Some politicians around Khatami argue that he created enough political dialogue so that they must continue working within the system to make it freer.

But a whole swath of other Iranians, students and some politicians find this notion laughable. They exude a widespread bitterness and frustration with Khatami for not using his whopping popular mandate to push harder for basic civil liberties. This faction is loosely organized and admits to having no real strategy or clear agenda, wanting change but simultaneously at a loss over how to achieve it.

"There is a kind of deadlock in the process of reformation and peaceful change, so the people are indifferent," said Hermidas Davoud Bavand, a professor of international law at Alameh University in Tehran. "Their only option is passive resistance. It is a vote of no confidence in the system."

To these voters, a boycott increasingly seems like the only way to register their objections to the current system.

"The experience of the past eight years has proven to us that nobody who comes to power can achieve anything if his ideas clash with those of the supreme leader or the establishment," said Mehdi Aminzadeh, a student leader imprisoned for 90 days in 2003.

The loudest, most influential voice calling for an election boycott has been that of Akbar Ganji, a crusading writer imprisoned for, among other things,

exposing the killing of dissidents by government death squads in the 1990s.

In a 20-page manifesto written from jail, Ganji states in strikingly blunt terms that basic civil rights are nonexistent in Iran because they would obstruct the absolute power of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme religious leader. Ganji urges Iranians to avoid voting on June 17 to signal their rejection of a system that grants to just one man sweeping powers over the military, judiciary, key appointed bodies and the state-controlled media.

"The path that the reformers have picked for reform will not lead to democracy," says the manifesto, which electrified student activists because it suggested a strategy for moving the reform movement ahead. "The transition requires taking legitimacy away from the ruler and not cooperating with him. The despotic system will be

'Their only option is passive resistance. It is a vote of no confidence in the system.'

weakened and undermined if there is no continuous cooperation with it."

Ever since the 1979 Islamic revolution, the mullahs have used high turnouts at everything from Friday prayers to elections to signal the public's support for clerical rule. Attendance at prayers grows ever more sparse, but turnout in presidential elections has remained high.

In the last presidential race in 2001 with 42 million eligible voters, turnout was put at 68 percent, somewhat lower than the 90 percent turnout in 1997, when Khatami swept to power with 70 percent of the vote. In both cases, the ranks were swelled by the young — a huge number in a country where two-thirds of the population of 70 million is under 30 — mobilizing in the hope that Khatami would institute reform.

University professors, politicians and foreign diplomats are predicting the turnout this year at anywhere from 60 percent to below 30 percent, with voting in large cities expected to be particularly light.

Although the ruling clerics will retain power without the support of Iranian voters, a high turnout would strengthen their hand in everything from negotiating with the West over Iran's nuclear development program to dispelling the Bush administration's veiled threats about regime change.

Temporarily, at least, a boycott also would help hard-line candidates, because the well-organized true believers in the Islamic revolution, about 20 percent of the population, would make it to the polls in disproportionate numbers.

The main reformist camp of politicians thinks a boycott would be a mistake, a surrender to the hard-liners. Their candidate for president, Dr. Mostafa Moin, along with some long-persecuted opposition figures like Ibrahim Yazdi, is urging Iranians to vote.

Moin, a pediatrician, was initially eliminated by the Guardians Council, an appointed hard-line group that vets all candidates. But he was reinstated at the behest of Khamenei. Boycott proponents urged him not to run, suggesting the stigma of being beholden to the supreme leader for his slot just underscored all the weaknesses that plagued Khatami.

But Moin decided to run anyway. "I have come to reform the incorrect relations in the power structure," read a statement confirming his candidacy.

Yazdi, an American-trained research physician barred from running for president for a third time by the Guardians Council, also supports voting. Khatami's problem, Yazdi said in an interview, was that he left the reformist movement essentially rudderless.

Freedom of the press was squashed, with more than 100 publications shuttered and dozens of journalists jailed. The Guardians Council rejected Khatami's attempts to reform the election laws and to give the president the right to overrule some judicial decisions.

"Because of his failure, people are in deep despair, apathetic and indifferent toward political decisions," Yazdi said. "An election is an opportunity to address people, motivate them, fight against despair."

Others fear the cost of inaction might be the conservatives' sweeping to power and reversing hard-won social freedoms like the minimalist long shirts and skimpy scarves young women now wear to obey the law that they be veiled. Some reformists argue that no matter who wins, change is inevitable because the population is so young and so hungry for technology and other fruits derived from contact with the rest of the world.

"The Iranian people are on a train moving toward democracy that cannot be derailed," said Mohammad Ali Abtahi, a cleric and former vice president turned blogger. "If the government pushes this train it will move faster, but it will keep moving no matter what."

The New York Times

Syrie: l'ouléma kurde assassiné a été "torturé à mort" en prison



BEYROUTH, 1er juin (AFP) - 20h45 - L'organisation de défense des droits de l'Homme Amnesty International écrit mercredi que l'ouléma kurde syrien Mohammad Maachouk Khaznaoui dont le corps a été rendu aux siens mercredi, "a été torturé jusqu'à la mort" dans une prison syrienne.

"Cheikh Mohammad Maachouk Khaznaoui décédé le 30 mai, 20 jours après sa +disparition+ a été apparemment détenu par les services du renseignement militaire syriens dans un endroit inconnu", écrit Amnesty dans un communiqué reçu à Beyrouth.

"Il a été torturé jusqu'à la mort", ajoute l'ONG, selon qui il est "le sixième kurde à mourir en prison à la suite de tortures ou de mauvais traitements depuis mars 2004", date d'affrontements meurtriers entre Kurdes et forces de l'ordre ou membres de tribus arabes.

Cité par le communiqué, Neil Sammonds, responsable de l'unité de recherches d'Amnesty sur la Syrie, a appelé "les autorités syriennes à lancer immédiatement une enquête indépendante sur la mort de cheikh Khaznaoui en prison", à en "rendre les résultats publics et à traduire les responsables devant la justice".

Vice-président du Centre d'études islamiques à Damas, le cheikh Khaznaoui bénéficiait d'une grande popularité, y compris en dehors de sa communauté.

Agé de 46 ans, il était connu pour s'efforcer dans son enseignement de mettre l'accent sur la compatibilité de l'islam et de la démocratie.

Selon Amnesty, le cheikh Khaznaoui était également un des porte-parole de la communauté kurde et imam dans la ville de Qamichli (nord-est).

L'ONG ajoute qu'il était opposé à la violence et avait appelé dernièrement à introduire des réformes en Syrie et à approfondir le dialogue entre les différents groupes religieux du pays.

En février et mars, il s'était rendu en Norvège, à Bruxelles et en Allemagne "apparemment dans le cadre de son travail en vue d'établir des relations entre sa communauté et l'Union européenne".

La nouvelle de la mort du cheikh Khaznaoui, porté disparu depuis le 10 mai, a été rendue publique mercredi matin, notamment par Nazir Moustapha, secrétaire général du Parti démocrate kurde (PDK), principal parti kurde en Syrie, joint au téléphone depuis Beyrouth.

M. Moustapha a indiqué que l'ouléma avait été "vu il y a quelque temps à l'hôpital militaire Tchrine à Damas portant, selon des médecins, des traces de tortures".

Les obsèques du cheikh Khaznaoui, 46 ans, ont eu lieu mercredi à Qamichli (700 km au nord de Damas). Selon des sources kurdes, plusieurs dizaines de milliers de personnes étaient présentes.

La "disparition à Damas" du cheikh Khaznaoui avait été annoncée par plusieurs organisations de défense des droits de l'Homme. Certaines avaient laissé entendre que l'ouléma avait été enlevé par les services de sécurité syriens.

Trois soldats turcs tués lors de combats avec des rebelles kurdes



DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 5 juin 2005 (AFP) - 9h29 - Trois soldats turcs ont été tués samedi soir lors d'affrontements avec des rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans la province de Tunceli, à l'est de la Turquie, ont affirmé dimanche des sources sécuritaires locales.

Les combats ont eu lieu dans une zone rurale proche du village de Cicekli, ont précisé ces sources, qui ont ajouté que l'armée poursuivait ses opérations dans la région.

Le PKK mène depuis 1984 une lutte armée pour un Etat kurde indépendant dans le sud-est anatolien, qui a fait près de 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'organisation séparatiste, réunie en congrès mercredi dans le nord de l'Irak près de la frontière avec l'Iran, a proposé un cessez-le-feu et un dialogue avec les autorités d'Ankara.

Celles-ci, surtout les militaires, n'ont jamais répondu jusqu'à présent à des appels de ce genre et ont juré de pourchasser les rebelles jusqu'au dernier.

Une relation entre les Kurdes d'Irak et Israël "n'est pas un crime" (Barzani)



DUBAI, 7 juin (AFP) - 13h57 - Massoud Barzani, l'un des deux leaders kurdes d'Irak, a estimé qu'une relation entre les Kurdes et Israël "n'est pas un crime", évoquant la possibilité d'ouvrir un consulat israélien au Kurdistan dès l'ouverture d'une ambassade à Bagdad.

Dans des déclarations publiées mardi par le quotidien arabe Al-Hayat, le dirigeant du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) a jugé qu'une relation entre les Kurdes d'Irak et Israël "n'est pas un crime du moment que la plupart des pays arabes entretiennent des rapports" avec l'Etat hébreu.

"Dès lors qu'une ambassade israélienne sera ouverte à Bagdad, il sera possible d'ouvrir un consulat israélien à Erbil", chef-lieu du Kurdistan irakien, a ajouté le dirigeant kurde, cité toujours par le journal à capitaux saoudiens.

L'Irak n'entretient pas de relations diplomatiques avec l'Etat hébreu, mais son ministre des Affaires étrangères, Hoshyar Zebari, et le ministre israélien des Infrastructures, Benyamin Ben Eliezer, se sont serrés la main en marge d'une réunion du Forum économique mondial (WEF), fin mai en Jordanie.

M. Zebari avait ensuite minimisé cette poignée de main, affirmant qu'elle n'impliquait pas un changement dans la politique de l'Irak à l'égard d'Israël.

Soulignant les relations "fraternelles historiques" qui lient les Kurdes et les Palestiniens, M. Barzani a conseillé aux Palestiniens vivant en Irak de "ne pas s'impliquer dans des actions terroristes", toujours selon le quotidien Al-Hayat, édité à Londres.

Interrogé sur les récents affrontements en Syrie entre la police et des Kurdes qui protestaient contre l'enlèvement et l'assassinat d'un de leurs oulémas, cheikh Mohammed Maachouk Khaznaoui, il a déclaré: "les Kurdes où qu'ils soient dans le monde sont les frères des Kurdes d'Irak et nous les soutenons".

La direction du Kurdistan irakien entretient "des relations d'amitié" avec les autorités syriennes auxquelles "nous conseillons (...) de gérer la question (kurde) par le dialogue pour que la crise n'empire pas".

En mars 2004, de violents heurts avaient opposé en Syrie des Kurdes, dont la communauté est forte de 1,5 personnes (9% de la population syrienne) aux forces de l'ordre ou à des membres de tribus arabes faisant 40 morts, selon des sources kurdes, 25 selon Damas.

Un chef chiite irakien contre un rattachement de Kirkouk au Kurdistan



NAJAF (Irak), 6 juin (AFP) - 15h44 - Un dirigeant du parti chiite du Conseil de la révolution islamique en Irak (CSRII), Ammar Hakim, s'est dit opposé lundi à un rattachement de la ville pétrolière et multiethnique de Kirkouk au Kurdistan.

"Nous n'acceptons pas l'annexion de la ville de Kirkouk à cette région (...) car elle appartient à tous les Irakiens", a affirmé à l'AFP à Najaf, Ammar Hakim, fils du chef du CSRII, Abdel Aziz Hakim.

"Nous nous opposons aussi à la réinstallation forcée d'Irakiens car tous ont le droit de vivre dans la ville de leur choix", a-t-il en référence au retour dans la ville de Kurdes qui en ont été chassés par le régime de Saddam Hussein.

Selon l'article 58 de la Loi fondamentale qui régit actuellement le pays, le gouvernement doit favoriser le retour des Kurdes expulsés par la politique d'arabisation de l'ancien régime et faire des propositions sur le statut définitif de la ville qui devront figurer dans la Constitution permanente.

Cette constitution doit être rédigée avant le 15 août afin d'être adoptée par référendum le 15 octobre.

"Des négociations sont en cours sur les questions fédérales mais le fédéralisme fondé sur une base ethnique est un prélude à la division de l'Irak et nous ne l'acceptons pas", a averti par ailleurs Ammar al-Hakim, membre de la direction du CSRil, l'un des piliers du gouvernement dominé par les chiites en association avec les Kurdes.

Les Kurdes souhaitent que Kirkouk soit rattaché aux trois provinces d'Erbil, Dohouk et Souleymanieh, qu'ils contrôlent depuis 1991 de manière autonome.

Le Monde MERCREDI 8 JUIN 2005

Les Turcs, responsables ou victimes

CHRONIQUE INTERNATIONALE

S'IL FALLAIT une preuve que l'Union européenne n'est pas seulement un club chrétien, elle a été apportée, le week-end dernier, par les Autrichiens. Dans le cadre majestueux et baroque de l'abbaye bénédictine de Göttweig, en Basse-Autriche, le ministre turc des affaires étrangères, Abdullah Gül, membre d'un parti dit islamique modéré, était l'invité d'honneur du 11^e Europa-Forum-Wachau. Cette conférence a lieu tous les ans depuis 1995 pour célébrer l'entrée de l'Autriche dans l'Union européenne. Le thème officiel était : les perspectives d'avenir, l'Europe un an après l'élargissement. La préoccupation générale était : quel avenir pour l'Europe quelques jours après le double non français et néerlandais ?

Abdullah Gül ne pouvait y échapper. Il sait que la candidature turque a joué un rôle, direct ou indirect, dans la décision des électeurs, en France comme aux Pays-Bas. Il avait le choix entre deux attitudes : celle, indignée, de l'offensé pris injustement comme bouc émissaire d'un mécontentement qui le dépasse ; celle, humble, du candidat à un club en proie à des difficultés passagères. Le chef de la diplomatie turque a gagné l'estime de ses interlocuteurs en optant pour la seconde.

Sans doute, le rejet du projet de Constitution par la France et les Pays-Bas n'arrange pas les affaires d'Ankara. Mais Abdullah Gül a placé l'aventure européenne sous la protection d'une trinité : compromis, confiance, compréhension. Des revers, la construction européenne en a déjà connus. Elle surmontera celui-là. Les perspectives stratégiques doivent l'emporter sur les problèmes nationaux à court terme. Un jour ou l'autre, il faudra bien définir les frontières de l'Europe, mais ce moment n'est pas encore venu. Enfin, les Européens auraient tort de s'inquiéter à cause de la Turquie. Les négociations, qui ont pour but l'adhésion pleine et entière à l'UE, seront longues.

Pendant ce temps, l'Union se transformera autant que la Turquie et, à la fin du proces-

sus, il est normal que les peuples européens soient amenés à se prononcer. En attendant, a ajouté Abdullah Gül, les négociations doivent s'ouvrir le 3 octobre comme décidé à l'unanimité par les vingt-cinq membres du Conseil européen en décembre 2004. La relève qui pourrait intervenir d'ici là en Allemagne et l'arrivée au pouvoir des chrétiens-démocrates hostiles à la candidature ne changeront rien à cette décision, sinon la Turquie, a averti le ministre, « perdrait confiance dans l'Union européenne ».

Abdullah Gül sait que la candidature de son pays a joué un rôle dans la décision des électeurs, en France comme aux Pays-Bas

Il ne faudrait pas cependant qu'entretiens les Européens perdent confiance dans les Turcs. Or, depuis que la date de l'ouverture des négociations a été officiellement fixée, les observateurs de la politique turque constatent un certain essoufflement des réformes intérieures. Les autorités d'Ankara le contestent, mais les dernières modifications du code pénal, destinées pourtant à mettre les règles turques en conformité avec les pratiques européennes, laissent sceptiques. La liberté de la presse reste encadrée par une conception très large de la diffamation qui permet à n'importe quel homme politique de traîner devant les tribunaux des journalistes critiques. Sans parler de la question toujours sensible du génocide arménien, que la Turquie continue de nier.

On peut à la rigueur comprendre cet entê-

tement. En revanche, les tracasseries subies par ceux qui veulent rompre avec l'interprétation officielle de l'histoire sont inadmissibles. Il faudrait ajouter les dispersions musclées des manifestations, les brimades qui s'abattent toujours sur les défenseurs de la langue kurde... L'indulgence prônée par le gouvernement envers les écoles coraniques plus ou moins clandestines souligne l'attitude ambiguë du parti au pouvoir, qui est d'autant plus prompt à défendre la liberté d'expression que celle-ci sert ses objectifs religieux ou idéologiques.

De là à penser que la perspective européenne est autant un instrument pour assurer une mainmise sur la société qu'un engagement à long terme, il y a un pas qu'il ne faudrait pas franchir trop vite. Car les partisans de cette stratégie risquent d'être un jour dépassés par le mouvement qu'ils auront contribué à lancer. La société turque est traversée par des courants si divers que la décision sur son ancrage européen pourrait fort bien être tranchée en son sein avant que les membres de l'Union aient à se prononcer sur l'accueil de la Turquie.

C'est pourquoi l'alternative entre l'adhésion et le partenariat privilégié est artificielle. Les Turcs ont évidemment tout intérêt à mettre la barre le plus haut possible pour obtenir les aides promises à tout candidat. Il sera temps pour eux, après un délai qu'ils ont la sagesse d'estimer à plus de dix ans, de se contenter d'un autre statut après avoir engrangé le maximum d'engagements de la part de leurs interlocuteurs. Quant aux membres de l'Union européenne, ils auraient tort de préjuger l'état dans lequel ils se trouveront à l'issue du processus de négociations. D'ailleurs, Jacques Chirac a fait école en Europe, au moins sur un point : un nombre croissant de pays ont annoncé qu'ils soumettraient l'adhésion turque à l'approbation populaire. Toutes les surprises sont donc possibles.

Daniel Vernet

TURQUIE Le premier ministre va s'entretenir avec George W. Bush

Recep Tayyip Erdogan en visite de réconciliation à Washington

Istanbul :
Marie-Michèle Martinet

Le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, est à Washington où il doit s'entretenir aujourd'hui avec le président américain George W. Bush. Cette rencontre a pour objectif de dissiper la brouille installée entre les deux pays depuis le refus, opposé en mars 2003 par le Parlement turc, d'autoriser l'accès de son territoire national aux soldats américains en route pour l'Irak.

Depuis lors, les relations entre Washington et Ankara n'ont cessé de se détériorer. Force est de constater que la Turquie n'a rien fait pour empêcher cette dégradation ; bien au contraire : après avoir qualifié l'exécution du chef du Hamas par Israël de « terrorisme d'État », Recep Tayyip Erdogan n'a pas ménagé ses critiques sur les méthodes employées par l'armée américaine en Irak.

Victime expiatoire de cette guerre des invectives, l'ambassadeur des Etats-Unis à Ankara, Eric Edelman, a jeté l'éponge. Au plus fort de la tourmente, en mars dernier, à la suite d'un malencontreux commentaire sur l'opportunité d'un voyage du président turc, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, en Syrie, il s'était violemment fait prendre à partie par la presse, qui emboîtait alors le pas aux critiques gouvernementales : « Edelman se comporte plus comme un gouverneur colonial que comme un ambassadeur », lançait alors l'éditorialiste du quotidien islamiste *Yeni Safak*. « Ce départ sera sans doute une



Après avoir qualifié l'exécution du chef du Hamas par Israël de « terrorisme d'État », Erdogan n'avait pas ménagé ses critiques sur les méthodes américaines en Irak. (Photo AP.)

perte pour Ankara, remarque aujourd'hui un observateur. Cet homme influent, très proche du pouvoir, va devenir le numéro trois au Pentagone. » Pas sûr qu'il soit désormais l'un des meilleurs avocats d'une franche réconciliation.

Principale pomme de discorde entre les deux pays : le laxisme dont l'armée américaine ferait preuve, selon Ankara, dans sa lutte contre les séparatistes kurdes du PKK, dont l'organisation figure sur la liste du terrorisme international reconnue tant par l'Union européenne que par les Etats-Unis. La Turquie reproche aux Etats-Unis de ne rien faire pour déloger les combattants kurdes du nord de l'Irak, qualifiés récemment par le premier ministre

turc de « terrain d'entraînement pour groupes terroristes ». Selon l'armée turque, les rebelles qui sont réfugiés par milliers au Kurdistan et s'infiltrent en Turquie en nombre croissant font peser de lourdes menaces sur le pays. Dimanche dernier, sept militants du PKK qui s'approprièrent, selon la police turque, à commettre des attentats ciblés sur la ville ont été arrêtés à Istanbul. Les sept hommes étaient en possession d'une grande quantité d'explosifs venus d'Irak.

La Turquie donne donc du fil à retordre aux Etats-Unis. Et le temps semble désormais lointain où les Etats-Unis, tout à leur projet de « Grand Moyen-Orient », ne juraient que par le « modèle turc ». Cependant, en dépit d'une déception évidente, la Maison-Blanche peut difficilement oublier le « partenariat stratégique » qui unit les deux pays, alliés au sein de l'Otan. Et même si la Turquie n'est plus le modèle rêvé, cet État à la fois laïc et musulman, qui dirige actuellement, dans le cadre de l'ONU, le commandement de l'état-major de la Force internationale d'assistance à la sécurité (Isaf) en Afghanistan, reste un maillon essentiel de la stratégie américaine au Moyen-Orient.

Visiblement soucieux de tourner la page, les deux pays ont multiplié récemment les gestes de bonne volonté. Après avoir longtemps tergiversé, la Turquie vient d'autoriser les Etats-Unis à utiliser la base aérienne d'Incirlik pour ravitailler ses bases militaires installées en Irak et en Afghanistan. De son côté, Washington a redoublé d'efforts en faveur d'un règlement de la

question chypriote et plaidé pour une levée rapide de l'isolement qui pèse toujours sur les Chypriotes turcs.

« Pour Washington, la Turquie n'est plus un partenaire de premier plan, analyse un diplomate français. Mais elle reste quand même un partenaire important, que les Américains n'ont pas envie de voir échapper de leur sphère d'influence. » Pas envie non plus de voir se distendre les liens noués entre l'Europe et la Turquie, mis à mal par la crise ouverte depuis le référendum du 29 mai : « Je crois que les Etats-Unis s'inquiètent surtout de voir glisser la Turquie vers d'autres partenaires tels que l'Iran, la Syrie ou la Russie. » La secrétaire d'Etat américaine, Condoleezza Rice, a déclaré récemment qu'une éventuelle rupture entre la Turquie et l'Europe serait « une chose terrible » et que son pays ne souhaitait pas assister à un tel conflit de civilisation entre la Turquie musulmane et l'Europe chrétienne.

UE : Fischer en faveur des négociations

Le ministre allemand des Affaires étrangères, Joschka Fischer, s'est dit hier favorable à l'ouverture des négociations d'adhésion de la Turquie à l'Union européenne le 3 octobre, comme prévu. Il a estimé qu'un « abandon » de ce projet « allait entraîner un risque considérable ».

presidency, and Jack Straw, Britain's foreign minister, sought to emphasize that Europe's attitude had changed. Britain sided with the United States on the war, while Germany and France opposed it.

"Europe was divided over the Iraq war, but the fact of this delegation today" allows Europe and Iraq "to put the past behind us and work forward in a united way," Straw said at a news conference in a marble-floored room in the office of Iraq's prime minister.

Meanwhile, Iraqi political leaders continued to wrestle with the problem of how to include more Sunni Arabs in

By Sabrina Tavernise

BAGHDAD: A delegation from the European Union made a surprise visit to Iraq on Thursday, the first since the American-led invasion two years ago, and held talks with Iraq's Shiite-led government on a conference planned later this month.

The visit came more than two years after European countries were divided over whether to support the war. The delegation members, led by Jean Asselborn, the foreign minister of Luxembourg, which now holds the union's

Delegation from EU visits Iraq

Leaders talk of need to 'put past behind us'

the process of writing of the country's constitution. A lead negotiator, Adnan al-Janabi, a member of the constitutional committee in the National Assembly, said the sides could not agree on the number of committee seats to be added for Sunni Arabs, a day after Sunnis demanded more than 20, a number that Shiites said was far too high.

"The problem is with the numbers," Janabi said.

The government sent mixed signals about the negotiations Thursday, with the Iraqi president, Jalal Talabani, saying the committee was prepared to give Sunnis 25 seats. But a Shiite committee member, Bahaa al-Aaraji, denied that a deal had been struck and said the sides would meet next Thursday to resolve the issue.

Sunni Arabs make up about a fifth of Iraq's population and have grown increasingly isolated after boycotting national elections in January. American officials have pressed Shiite and Kurdish leaders, who swept to power in the elections, to draw more Sunnis into the political process.

Iraq is five weeks away from a dead-

line to finish writing a constitution, and experts have warned that the process should be delayed in order to be complete.

At a news conference after the meeting, Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari reiterated that the deadline would not be extended, nor would elections for a permanent government in December.

"We're keen that the constitution will be as scheduled," Jaafari said, "and we're insisting that elections will be on Dec. 30."

The European ministers began their visit around noon with Talabani, an Iraqi government spokesman said. Security was tight, and the visitors' identities were not announced until later in the afternoon. Britain supplied the security, and the delegation members joked that they would otherwise not have been able to make the trip.

"We hope it's the last time we have to come with you," Asselborn said. "The Luxembourg Army is not as developed as yours."

The delegation, which also included Javier Solana, the European Union's for-

eign policy chief, and Benita Ferrero-Waldner, its external relations commissioner, spent most of the visit discussing a conference on Iraq that is scheduled to be held June 22 in Brussels. More than 80 countries are expected to attend to discuss aid to Iraq as well as security issues and investment projects, officials said.

Ferrero-Waldner said the European Union was the largest single donor to Iraq, after the United States, with about €500 million, or about \$610 million, in aid pledged and about €300 million already spent "for the basics of daily life, like health, jobs and education."

Solana announced a new aid project focused on training judges in Iraq.

Asked whether the Iraqi government had been talking with insurgents, Jaafari said simply that "we need to reach out to Iraqis who want to talk to us."

Jaafari said the delegation's visit was an opportunity for the ministers to discuss what aid Iraq needed and how it can be distributed. "We gave a very detailed proposal of Iraqi needs," he said.

The New York Times

Leaders of Iraq praise Iranian-trained militia

By Edward Wong

BAGHDAD: In a move certain to inflame sectarian tensions, Iraq's Shiite and Kurdish leaders said Wednesday that they supported the existence of an Iranian-trained Shiite militia and praised the militia's role in trying to secure the country.

It was the first time the new Iraqi government has publicly backed an armed group that was created along sectarian lines and it was an implicit denial of repeated requests by U.S. officials that the government disband all militias.

The widening sectarian rift was further underscored Wednesday when Sunni Arab leaders demanded that a 55-member constitutional committee dominated by Shiites and Kurds add at least 25 Sunni seats to the committee. The Sunnis said they wanted those seats to have full membership powers.

In recent days, Shiite committee members have proposed adding 12 to 15 seats to the committee for Sunnis and having those new members act in an advisory role.

The remarks supporting the Shiite militia were made in the morning at an unusual news conference where speakers included Ibrahim al-Jaafari, the Iraqi prime minister and a Shiite Arab; Jalal Talabani, the Kurdish president and a militia leader himself, and Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim, leader of the Shiite political party that created the Shiite militia, known as the Badr Organization.

In recent weeks, some Sunni Arab leaders have vociferously blamed the Badr militia for the murders of prominent Sunni clerics. Among the Badr's harshest critics is Harith al-Dhari, leader of the Muslim Scholars Association, a powerful group of clerics that says it represents 3,000 mosques.

Since the Badr militia entered the country from Iran during the American-led invasion of Iraq more than two years ago, Sunnis have blamed Badr fighters for assassinations across Iraq, especially of former Baath Party officials.

The joint appearance of Talabani and the Shiite leaders indicated that Shiite and Kurdish leaders seemed willing to approve of the existence of each group's militias. The two main Kurdish parties together have the strongest militia in the country, a force that totals 100,000 fighters and is known as the pesh merga, or "those who face death."

In negotiations with the Shiites to assemble the current government, Kurdish leaders argued vehemently that the Kurds, as part of their right to autonomy, must be allowed to keep the pesh merga intact. The issue was expected to be raised again during the drafting of the new constitution, but Talabani's support of the Badr Organization appears to show that the Kurds and Shiites have reached some sort of understanding that their respective militias should

continue to exist.

"You and the pesh merga are wanted and are important to fulfilling this sacred task, to establishing a democratic, federal and independent Iraq," Talabani said, addressing the Badr.

Hakim, leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, known as SCIRI, said: "Badr represents all Iraqis; it represents the wide spectrum of Iraqis and has a wide base in Iraq."

The Badr Organization, originally called the Badr Brigade, was founded in the 1980s, while SCIRI was in exile in Iran, and it received training from the Iranian military. Hakim was appointed its leader by his older brother and SCIRI's founder, Muhammad Bakr al-Hakim.

The New York Times

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune

June 9, 2005

IRAN A une semaine de l'élection présidentielle, une grande partie de la population, déçue et démobilisée, a décidé de bouder le scrutin

A Téhéran, les candidats peinent à séduire

Téhéran : Delphine Minoui

Une ambiance festive. Sous un soleil de plomb, au pied des montagnes qui surplombent Téhéran, de jeunes Iranienues en foulards colorés, dressées sur des patins à roulettes, dessinent un cercle sur la place Tadjirich avant de s'engouffrer dans les embouteillages. Entre deux coups de klaxon, elles distribuent des roses rouges. On croirait voir les fans de l'équipe iranienne de football, fraîchement qualifiée au Mondial 2006. Mais à lire l'éti-

quette « Hashemi » collée sur leurs manteaux, on comprend vite que ces « pom pom girls » version islamique sont en fait les promotrices d'Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsandjani, un des huit prétendants à la présidentielle du 17 juin ! « Nous voulons encourager la jeunesse à voter », se justifie Yasser Hashemi, 34 ans, le plus jeune fils de ce candidat conservateur, coiffé du turban des religieux et qui se présente comme un « pragmatique ». A une semaine de l'élection, les candidats sont prêts à tout pour attirer les foules. Leur défi est de taille. Déçus par les réformes de Khatami, fatigués par un

régime qui ne répond pas à leur soif démocratique, désespérés d'obtenir un système économique plus transparent, la plupart des Iraniens ont décidé de bouder les élections.

Comme ses concurrents, Rafsandjani possède un site Internet à la pointe de la modernité. Un de ses rivaux, le réformateur Mustafah Moïn, dispose même d'un « weblog », journal intime sur la Toile. Partout, les meetings politiques se déroulent sur fond de pop musique, même chez les plus radicaux comme Ali Larijani, ancien chef de la télévision d'Etat ! En début de semaine, sa virée au stade

Shiroudi a frôlé le surréalisme. Sur la scène, des jeunes filles aux allures d'anges, dans leurs longs voiles bleu ciel, ont entonné en chœur des chants rythmés, pour annoncer son arrivée.

Les candidats, toutes tendances confondues, ne rougissent pas, non plus, à reprendre à leur sauce les formules magiques de Khatami, le président sortant : « société civile », « liberté d'expression ». « Au fond, ils disent tous la même chose », remarque Hassan Nikzad, un fonctionnaire de l'Etat. « Mais lequel d'entre eux sera finalement capable de tenir



Pour convaincre les électeurs iraniens, les candidats à la présidence reprennent à leur compte les slogans de Khatami, le président sortant : « société civile » et « liberté d'expression ». (Photo Vahid Salemi/AP.)

ses promesses ? » s'interroge-t-il.

« Moi, je ne voterai pour personne », clame, pour sa part, Saba Esfandiari, une des « pom pom girls » de Rafsandjani. Si elle participe à sa promotion, c'est, dit-elle, « pour s'amuser et se faire des copains ! » Comme Saba, de nombreux jeunes, les principaux électeurs de Khatami en 1997, sont tentés par un boycottage du scrutin.

Si tout le monde évoque déjà un second tour, c'est Rafsandjani, 70 ans, qui arrive en tête des sondages. « Il propose de briser le tabou des relations avec l'Amérique, en proposant un rapprochement. C'est un homme de pouvoir, qui peut transformer ses

paroles en acte », souffle Kaveh Tabatabaï, un des déçus de Khatami, qui a retourné sa veste en participant à la campagne de Rafsandjani.

Personne ne peut, pourtant, ignorer le succès croissant de Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, 43 ans, l'ancien chef de la police. Détesté des intellectuels, qui craignent, avec lui, une militarisation de la politique, il pourrait remporter un bon nombre de voix en province, où il vient de mener une grande tournée. Son nouveau look, - lunettes fumées et veste en daim, lui donne des airs de sympathique technocrate. Fatigués des débats politiques, les mil-

lieux traditionnels voient en lui un homme qui sait prendre des décisions concrètes. C'est lui, notamment, qui est à l'origine du numéro d'appel gratuit « 110 », destiné à lutter contre la criminalité. Quant au réformateur

Mustafah Moïn, ancien ministre de l'Education, il est remonté à la dernière minute dans l'estime des femmes et des jeunes, après s'être allié avec le mouvement libéral d'opposition, « les Nationalistes religieux », pour créer un « front pour la démocratie et les droits de l'homme ». Au final, la partie pourrait donc s'annoncer serrée entre ces trois candidats.

Trois candidats sont issus des pasdarans

La militarisation de la politique inquiète

Sur leurs affiches électorales, ils ont tombé la veste militaire et s'affichent en élégants costumes de ville. Trois des cinq candidats conservateurs sont issus du corps des pasdarans, les Gardiens de la révolution, la puissante armée d'élite, fidèle au guide religieux et aux valeurs révolutionnaires.

Mohsen Rezaï, barbe brune et visage carré, en a été le chef pendant seize ans. Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, originaire de la ville sainte de Mashhad, y a dirigé les forces de l'air, avant d'être projeté, en 1999, à la

tête de la police iranienne. Quant à Ali Larijani, qui a officié pendant des années comme directeur de la télévision d'Etat, également proche conseiller du guide religieux, il fut un temps où il occupa le poste d'adjoint au chef des pasdarans.

De quoi inquiéter les Iraniens, qui redoutent une militarisation de la politique. « Quand Ghalibaf dirigeait la police, de nouvelles directives ont commencé à circuler pour obliger les restaurants et les épiceries à fermer avant mi-

nuit. Les rassemblements politiques étaient ultrasurveillés. Si c'est un ancien militaire comme lui qui est élu, on va finir par nous imposer la loi martiale ! », s'exclame un responsable d'une ONG iranienne chargée de la question des droits de l'homme, qui préfère rester anonyme.

Dès son premier meeting de campagne, Ghalibaf s'est pourtant efforcé de disperser les doutes. « Quand j'étais chez les pasdarans, c'était pour défendre ma patrie. Mais quand j'ai rejoint la police, je me suis efforcé de me ranger du côté de

la société. Si je voulais abuser de mon pouvoir, je l'aurais fait avant », déclarait-il en insistant sur son « indépendance

Puissante armée d'élite, le corps des Gardiens de la révolution est soumis au guide religieux

politique ». Mohsen Rezaï, pour sa part, n'a pas honte de mettre en valeur son passé. « La situation actuelle de l'Iran, sous pression de la communauté internationale, nécessite un gouvernement qui ait une fibre à la fois politique et militaire », confiait-il récemment au quotidien Iran.

L'entrée des pasdarans dans l'arène politique a en fait commencé dès les législatives de février 2004, auxquelles de nombreux réformistes furent

interdits de se présenter. Au sein de la majorité conservatrice élue sans surprise, un grand nombre de nouveaux députés avaient des origines militaires. Créée en

1979, parallèlement à l'armée régulière, pour « combattre les ennemis de la révolution islamique d'Iran », les quelque 350 000 hommes de l'armée des pasdarans se trouvent sous le commandement direct du numéro un du régime, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Ils ont joué un important rôle militaire dans le conflit Iran-Irak (1980-1988). Plus de quinze ans plus tard, certains d'entre eux envisagent une reconversion et vi-

sent d'autres responsabilités.

Restés jusque-là à l'écart des grandes décisions économiques et politiques, les pasdarans n'ont pas hésité, l'an dernier, à utiliser leur pouvoir en ordonnant la fermeture du tout nouvel aéroport de Téhéran le jour même de son inauguration. Raison avancée : la société turque en charge des services aéroportuaires aurait eu des liens avec Israël. Mais la rumeur prétend plutôt que des sociétés proches de certains Gardiens de la révolution convoitaient le contrat.

D. M.

TURQUIE

Erdogan et Bush enterrent leurs contentieux

New York :
de notre correspondant
Jean-Louis Turilin

Une demi-douzaine de dossiers, allant des agressions kurdes dans le sud de la Turquie à l'Afghanistan, en passant par la question chypriote et le « grand Moyen-Orient », étaient au menu des discussions entre le premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan et George W. Bush hier à Washington. Mais, au-delà de la relance d'un « partenariat stratégique » que le président américain a qualifié de « très important », la rencontre aura surtout permis aux deux hommes de tirer un trait sur les tensions créées par l'invasion de l'Irak.

Ronald Rumsfeld n'a pas digéré le refus opposé par Ankara à l'utilisation du sol turc pour une offensive américaine par le nord en 2003. Il y a encore quelques semaines, le chef du Pentagone regrettait publiquement, « compte tenu du niveau de l'insurrection aujourd'hui, deux ans plus tard », l'impossibilité de « faire passer la quatrième division d'infanterie par la Turquie » qui aurait permis « la capture ou l'élimination

d'un plus grand nombre de membres du régime Baas de Saddam Hussein ».

L'absence d'un front Nord s'est peut-être retournée contre Ankara en laissant le champ libre aux rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, qui s'infiltrèrent dans le sud de la Turquie et dont les attaques à l'explosif ont tué plus de soldats turcs, au cours des quatre derniers mois, que les États-Unis n'ont perdu d'hommes en Irak sur la même période. A Washington, Tayyip Erdogan a plaidé pour une plus grande activité militaire américaine dans les montagnes du Nord, devenues selon lui « un terrain d'entraînement pour les groupes terroristes ».

Les Américains sont certes confrontés à la rébellion ailleurs en Irak, mais la stabilisation des territoires kurdes concerne aussi la sécurisation de leurs approvisionnements : deux mille

camions turcs transportant chaque jour des marchandises principalement destinées aux troupes américaines en Irak, et les attaques ont causé la mort d'une centaine de chauffeurs. Mais Washington a besoin d'Ankara sur bien d'autres fronts.

A commencer par la stabilisa-

tion politique de l'Irak. La Turquie, à majorité sunnite, soutient le premier ministre irakien, Ibrahim Jafari, dans sa tentative d'intégrer les sunnites irakiens au processus démocratique, et Washington ne peut qu'applaudir. Joignant ses propres intérêts à ceux de Bagdad, Ankara s'oppose par ailleurs aux prétentions kurdes sur les champs pétrolifères de Kirkouk.

Seul Etat musulman membre de l'Otan, la Turquie a accordé aux États-Unis le plein usage de la base aérienne d'Incirlik pour le transport de marchandises à destination de l'Irak et de l'Afghanistan, un pays où George Bush s'est félicité qu'elle joue un « rôle leader ». Mais elle en a interdit un usage militaire que Washington aurait pu être tenté de mettre à profit contre l'Iran ou la Syrie.

Tayyip Erdogan, qui s'est pour la première fois rendu en Israël le mois dernier, a le mérite, aux yeux du président américain, d'être « un ardent défenseur de notre initiative en faveur d'un grand Proche-Orient ». En retour, il a besoin de tout le soutien de George W. Bush sur les aspirations européennes de la Turquie et, dans l'immédiat, sur le désenclave-

ment de la partie turque de Chypre, dont le premier ministre devait s'entretenir, hier soir à New York, avec le secrétaire général des Nations unies, Kofi Annan.

Dans leurs déclarations respectives à l'issue de leur rencontre, Bush et Erdogan n'ont pas abordé la question de l'adhésion d'Ankara à l'Union européenne. Mais le porte-parole de la Maison-Blanche Scott McClellan a ensuite précisé que le président américain « avait indiqué au premier ministre que nous continuons de soutenir leurs aspirations pour ce qui concerne l'Union européenne ».

LE FIGARO

10 JUIN 2005

Turkey grows impatient with Europe

By Craig S. Smith

IZMIT, Turkey: Zeynel Erdem, a leading Turkish businessman, came to this seaside industrial town to give 400 of his prominent peers a message.

"Don't count on the European Union," he told the crowd after a chicken dinner in a hotel ballroom here. "Look to the U.S.; they're our real friends."

That view is spreading in this sprawling land of 70 million people who have yearned for decades to become a part of Europe. With the EU in political disarray following the French and Dutch rejections of a new European constitution, and opposition to Turkish membership gaining ground in Europe, many Turks are beginning to wonder whether their European dreams are worth the effort. They are reassessing instead their relationship with the United States, which has suffered since the start of the Iraq war.

Turkey's stated goal is still to join the EU. And in an interview in New York on Friday, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that Turks had a high regard

for the democratic principles of both Europe and the United States and did not make a distinction between the two.

"The EU and the U.S. are not mutually exclusive for Turkey," he said, adding that citizens of all countries had "emotional reactions" to immediate events. "If you look at the polls, support for the EU may have gone down just a little bit, but it is still at 60 percent."

But the shift in sentiment signals a deepening ambivalence.

This ambivalence, toward the vaunted vision of shared sovereignty, exists both inside and outside of Europe.

Just as French and Dutch voters expressed dismay at the increasing European-level control over their lives and worried aloud about immigrants diluting their nations, many Turks are now questioning whether their country should see its future as part of Europe.

Of course, few Turks have bought into the U.S. program for reshaping the Mideast, and relations with the United States lost their pre-eminence in the

wake of the Iraq war, which Turkey opposed. Turkey's focus shifted to Europe.

That is beginning to change. Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan's fence-mending trip to Washington this week played well here. Erdogan even won some support from Washington in ending the economic and political isolation of Turkish Cypriots.

EU leaders agreed in December to begin membership negotiations with Turkey on Oct. 3, and the country has done a great deal required to make that happen. It has implemented a new penal code and agreed to sign a protocol extending its customs union with the EU to all of the Union's new members — including the Greek-dominated Republic of Cyprus.

Yet, despite all that, the prospects for Turkey's membership look gloomier than ever. Turkey will have a larger population than any EU country by the time it completes its membership process — a projected 80 million — and will likely still be far poorer. More troubling to many Europeans is that Turkish membership would create a powerful Muslim presence within the union and push Europe's eastern borders out to Syria, Iraq and Iran.

Some European politicians have started talking openly about offering Turkey a "privileged partnership" instead of full membership, something roundly rejected here. The idea, first mooted publicly three years ago by the former French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, has most recently been taken up by Germany's Christian Democrats, whose leader, Angela Merkel, is expected to run against Chancellor Gerhard Schröder in September. Merkel's party has stated un-

equivocally that it will try to block Turkey's membership if it comes to power.

Hanging in the background is the pledge last year by President Jacques Chirac of France to submit Turkish membership to a national referendum. After last month's rejection of the constitution, few people believe such a referendum would pass.

Many Turks say they are getting fed up with meeting Europe's manifold demands without some guarantee that they

will become a part of Europe in the end.

"Europe is playing a dangerous game with Turkey," said Can Paker, chairman of the Turkish Economic and Social

Turks are reassessing their relationship with the United States, which was hurt by the Iraq war.

Studies Foundation. "It's giving a stronger hand and more motivation to people who want the status quo to prevail." It's also fueling Turkish nationalism. In April, General Hilmi Ozkok, head of Turkey's powerful military, complained that Europe was "trying to change our national culture by imposing foreign values, fashion and languages that do not match Turkish customs and traditions."

Nationalist sentiments were stirred again when the European Court of Human Rights ruled last month that Turkey must give the Kurdish separatist Abdullah Ocalan a new trial.

Some Turks are beginning to imagine a day when Turkey doesn't need Europe at all, particularly because it gets so much support from the United States.

Turkey's economic output surged nearly 10 percent last year and is expected to grow as much as 6 percent this year. The current 10 percent inflation rate is the lowest in more than 30 years. Foreign investment from the West, slow because of Turkey's chronic corruption, has picked up.

Pekin Baran, a Turkish shipping tycoon, believes negotiations with Europe will start in October, as planned, but that "it will be a very, very nasty ride."

Under the negotiating rules laid out in December, all 25 EU members have to agree. That gives Cyprus or any other country hostile to Turkish membership effective veto power.

"The pity is that we are convinced that Turkey could have contributed to the future of Europe much more than she could reasonably have expected to get in exchange," said Baran, in his office overlooking the glittering Bosphorus.

He nonetheless maintains that Turkey should stay the course and press ahead for full membership, in part because the negotiation process itself is valuable in driving ahead political and economic changes.

While there is still strong support for EU membership, polls have recorded a steep decline in national enthusiasm and Hans-Jorg Kretschmer, the EU representative in Turkey, warns that without better understanding on both sides, Turkish attitudes could turn quickly.

"Strong support based on ignorance is not good, because it can collapse very quickly," Kretschmer said before meet-



Feeding pigeons outside a mosque before Friday prayers in Istanbul.

Many Turks are expressing ambivalence toward the EU.

ing Tuesday with representatives of nongovernmental organizations in the Black Sea port of Trabzon.

"The key element is that Turkey does its homework and completes the necessary political and other reforms," he said. "No one will say no to a Turkey which has become a liberal democracy in the European understanding."

During the interview Friday, Erdogan

said in regard to polling on support on the EU: "In fact, in the last couple of weeks the situation in France and the Netherlands may have had a negative effect that brought down the numbers, but when the time arrives to begin the negotiations in the fall, I think that these numbers will start climbing up again in support of membership."

Saban Disli, deputy chairman in

charge of foreign affairs of the Justice and Development Party said Europe shouldn't try to project a decision of 10 years from now by looking at Turkey today. "Who knows?" he said. "Maybe in 10 years' time, it will be Turkey who holds a referendum to see if Turks still want to become a part of the EU."

The New York Times

Tehran's enabler ■ By Ilan Berman

Russia can help U.S. curb Iran

WASHINGTON

By now, the notion that Russia and Iran are long-term strategic partners has become something of an article of faith within the corridors of the Kremlin. Since the start of strategic ties between Moscow and Tehran more than a decade ago, Russian officials of all political stripes, spurred by concerns about the rise of radical Islam in the Caucasus and Iran's role as a lucrative client for Russia's ailing defense industry, have steadily gravitated to the idea of cooperation with Iran's ayatollahs. Over time, that pragmatic partnership has also evolved into much more — a geopolitical alliance intended to counter American policy in the Middle East.

The fact that a number of Russian officials, including President Vladimir Putin himself, have emphasized their solidarity with Tehran of late is a testament to the durability of these ties. In March, with the tenuous nuclear deal between Iran and the "EU-3" — Britain, France and Germany — on the verge of collapse, Alexander Rumyantsev, the head of Russia's Atomic Energy Agency, announced plans to deliver nuclear fuel to the recently completed nuclear reactor at Bushehr, the public centerpiece of Iran's nuclear program, in late 2005 or early 2006.

Just as significant, Moscow has sent unmistakable signals to the world community about its diplomatic stance on the Iranian nuclear program. Officials like Igor Ivanov, secretary of Russia's powerful National Security Council, have made clear that the Kremlin opposes taking Iran's "nuclear file" to the United Nations. "Passing the issue to the UN's Security Council, which is a political body, is hardly likely to be in the best interests of the case," Ivanov told Russian reporters last autumn. Concerns over this sort of continued solidarity were among the reasons for Secretary General Kofi Annan's recent warning to Washington that the Iranian nuclear issue could well deadlock the Security Council.

But change could be on the horizon. Russia's nuclear assistance to Iran over the past decade has been spurred by the traditional notion that such third-world proliferation was by and large a cost-free exercise. This illusion, however, is becoming harder and harder to sustain. Indicators suggest that Iran's expanding capabilities are emerging as a real and direct threat to Russian security.

According to informed estimates, Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile advances could put roughly 20 million people in the south of Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine at risk by as early as next year. Moreover, it has certainly not been lost on Moscow,

the traditional driver of the Russo-Iranian relationship, that Iran's progress is also greatly expanding the potential for nuclear blackmail from the Islamic Republic.



At the same time, Russia is grappling with Iran's inroads on another front: Central Asia and the Caucasus. While carried out in response to American military deployments, new Iranian defense arrangements with Azerbaijan and Tajikistan — as well as Tehran's recent energy diplomacy with Kazakhstan and Armenia — threaten to alter the strategic status quo in the "post-Soviet space," and further loosen Russia's already tenuous grip on the former Soviet republics.

Several other issues — from Iran's continuing meddling in Iraq, where Russian companies are deeply engaged, to troubling evidence of recent Iranian support for radical Islamic groups in the post-Soviet space — have similarly become the source of considerable unease in Moscow.

Over the past decade, policy makers in Washington have attempted repeatedly to coax, cajole and bribe the Russian government into rolling back its nuclear ties to Tehran. Yet as the international community edges closer to crisis over Iran's nuclear ambitions, the Bush administration has remained strangely silent on the role that Iran's chief strategic enabler can and should play in curbing Tehran's mounting international menace.

That is certainly a shame, because rallying Russia constitutes a key part of any successful containment strategy vis-à-vis Iran. And, given the foregoing strategic considerations, Washington might soon find that, with the proper inducements, it has a more receptive audience in Moscow than ever before.

Ilan Berman is vice president for policy at the American Foreign Policy Council in Washington, and the author of "Tehran Rising: Iran's Challenge to the United States," which will be published in September.



La guerre à venir ? L'Iran et le système stratégique américain

Jean-Michel
Valantin



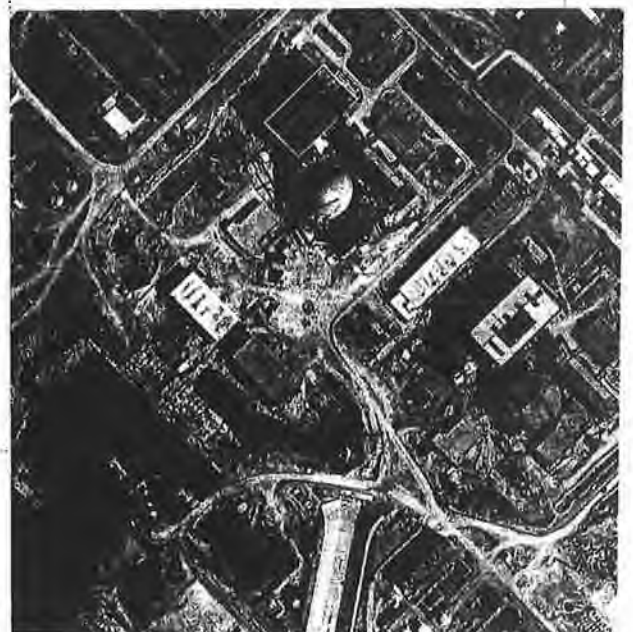
Depuis la fin de la guerre froide, l'Iran est successivement qualifié d'Etat voyou (« Rogue state »), de membre de l'Axe du Mal et, depuis janvier 2005, d'avant-poste de la tyrannie par le système stratégique américain. La question essentielle est de savoir ce qui motive cette façon américaine de qualifier l'Iran, en prenant en compte la complexité de la stratégie US.

Ces définitions éthiques de l'adversaire ont, dans le système américain, une fonction primordiale : mettre au point une définition de la menace autour de laquelle les différents centres de décision de l'appareil de sécurité nationale peuvent s'aligner de manière consensuelle. Durant la guerre froide, la définition de la menace soviéto-communiste permettait d'articuler cet appareil gigantesque qu'est

Photo droite

Prise par le satellite IKONOS le 1^{er} mars 2001, cette vue montre le réacteur de Bushehr, en Iran. Ce réacteur nucléaire situé à environ 17 km au sud de la ville de Bushehr s'étend sur 2,5 km², et comprend des halls d'assemblage, un canal pour acheminer l'eau des circuits de refroidissement depuis la mer ainsi qu'un port pour charger et décharger des matériaux étrangers requis pour la construction et l'exploitation. L'Iran et la Russie ont signé le 27 février 2005 un accord qui prépare le terrain au lancement de la première centrale nucléaire du pays - projet que les Etats-Unis accusent d'être une couverture pour le développement d'armes. (AFP PHOTO/SPACE IMAGING/HO)

la sécurité nationale américaine, composée de la Maison-Blanche, des grandes commissions du Congrès, du Pentagone, des différents services armés, des agences de renseignement, des think tanks, du complexe militaro-industriel, de certains médias, des universités, de nombreux films, des grands laboratoires fédéraux... Plus tard, la disparition de l'URSS a induit un « éparpillement » de la menace, qui s'est traduit par l'invention de nouvelles catégories géopolitiques, comme les « Etats voyous ». En 1990, la guerre contre l'armée irakienne au Koweït inaugure ce glissement de l'appareil de sécurité nationale d'un type de menace à l'autre. Cette guerre se perpétue par l'embargo entre 1991 et 2003, puis par l'invasion et l'occupation du pays par la coalition rassemblée par les Etats-Unis. Dans le même temps, la question des relations entre les Etats-Unis et l'Iran devient une problématique essentielle à Washington. La défiance à l'égard du régime de Téhéran ne cesse de monter en puissance. Afin de saisir cette « attention stratégique », il faut garder à l'esprit que l'Iran est considéré comme un « Etat pivot » dans la pensée stratégique et énergétique US depuis la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Entre 1941 et 1945, Washington intègre ce pays à sa sphère d'influence, afin d'éviter qu'en cas de victoire de l'Allemagne sur l'URSS, les puits de pétrole iraniens ne soient captés par le régime nazi. A cette époque, le responsable des renseignements américains est d'ailleurs le père du général Norman Schwarzkopf, qui écrasera l'armée irakienne en 1991.

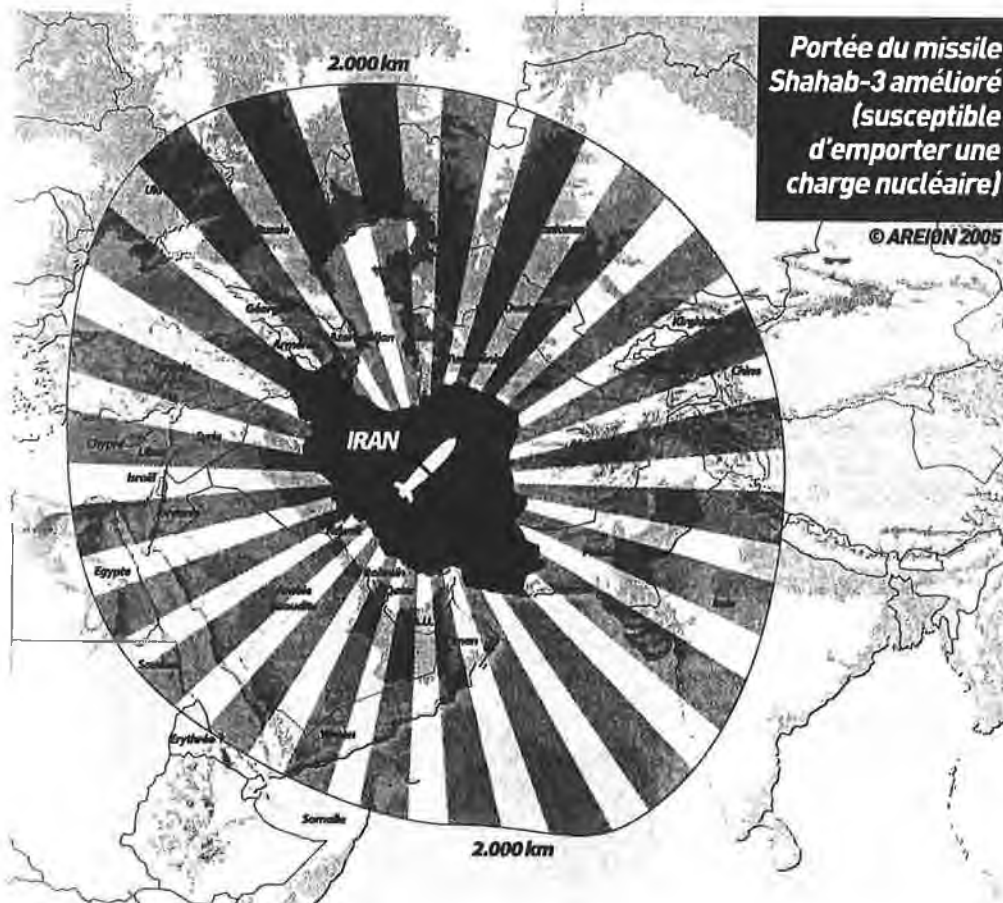


A partir de 1945, les Etats-Unis sont attentifs à cultiver leur influence en Iran. En 1951, le Premier ministre Mossadegh tente d'obtenir un contrôle étatique de l'exploitation des ressources pétrolières, mais son initiative est neutralisée par la CIA, et il est emprisonné en 1953. En 1955, en pleine guerre froide, l'Iran adhère au Pacte de Bagdad, qui associe l'Irak, l'Iran, la Turquie, le Pakistan, la Grande-Bretagne et les Etats-Unis. La vocation de ce Pacte est de bloquer le risque d'une expansion de l'URSS au Moyen-Orient, ainsi que d'empêcher la diffusion des idéologies panarabes et nassérienne dans la région. Durant les années 1960-1970, le régime du Shah se livre à une politique de modernisation brutale, grâce à la rente pétrolière. Il en découle une déstabilisation profonde de la société iranienne, qui se manifeste par l'émergence de multiples mouvements de contestation - le principal d'entre eux provenant des autorités chiites conservatrices, dont l'inspirateur est l'ayatollah Khomeiny. Le tout débouche sur la révolution, la chute du Shah et la guerre civile entre 1978 et 1980. Cette révolution est interprétée par le système américain

comme une crise de son hégémonie au Moyen-Orient. Or, la « Grande Stratégie » américaine dans la région reprenant le principe de l'empire britannique, vise à empêcher l'émergence d'une puissance régionale au Moyen-Orient. L'administration Carter est accusée par l'opposition républicaine, avec en tête Ronald Reagan, d'avoir « perdu » l'Iran, alors que, du point de vue américain, l'Union soviétique paraît plus puissante et dominatrice que jamais. La propension des Etats-Unis à se sentir « menacés » en est aggravée. Afin de rétablir son influence sur l'Iran en l'empêchant de développer ses propres ambitions en politique étrangère, Washington encourage et soutient les ambitions du régime baasiste irakien, dirigé par Saddam Hussein, qui attaque l'Iran afin de s'emparer des champs pétrolifères. De 1980 à 1988, les Etats-Unis prêtent des milliards de dollars à l'Irak, mais lui vendent également des armes et de la nourriture, dans leur stratégie « d'endiguement » de l'Iran.

Entre 1990 et 2003, l'Irak de Saddam Hussein concentre l'essentiel de l'effort stratégique américain, mais l'Iran n'est jamais oublié. Or, depuis la chute de Bag-

dad en avril 2003, le système stratégique se recentre sur l'Iran. Le même discours accusateur qui s'est déployé contre l'Irak se constitue à propos de l'Iran, de son programme nucléaire, de ses armes de destruction massive et de ses dirigeants qui ne respectent pas les Droits de l'Homme ni la démocratie. Cependant, comme le disait Clausewitz, « la guerre est la continuation de la politique par d'autres moyens ». Un Etat poursuit des intérêts précis, qui peuvent s'emboîter les uns dans les autres. Pour sa part, la « guerre éthique », ou « démocratique », est une contradiction dans les termes : une guerre ne peut être qu'offensive ou défensive, et l'emploi de la force armée n'est juste que dans le deuxième cas. Si la promotion de la liberté et des Droits de l'Homme sont des objectifs nobles que l'on ne peut que soutenir, le recours offensif à la force renvoie à d'autres préoccupations, que l'histoire des relations entre l'Iran et les Etats-Unis durant ce dernier demi-siècle fait assez largement apparaître. La production contemporaine de la stratégie américaine est largement dominée par les problématiques de la sécurité énergétique, dont le but est de maintenir l'approvisionnement en pétrole des Etats-Unis. L'analyste américain Michael Klare fait apparaître que le projet néo-conservateur de « remodelage du Moyen-Orient » (« Shaping Middle East »), embrasse les principaux pays producteurs de pétrole de la planète, et que les « avant-postes de la tyrannie » dénoncés par Condoleezza Rice en janvier 2005 correspondent aux grandes régions traversées par des oléoducs. Aux Etats-Unis, le maintien de la consommation d'hydrocarbures a une dimension particulière, dans la mesure où il détermine une activité économique créatrice d'emploi. Les dispositifs de protection sociale qui existent en Europe de l'Ouest n'y ont pas cours, ou ont été démantelés pendant la période Reagan. Le plein emploi joue le rôle de filet de protection assuré ailleurs par la solidarité fiscale collective. Un ralentissement énergétique, et non pas conjoncturel, de l'économie mettrait en



GÉOPOLITIQUE

Des femmes iraniennes défilent avec leurs mitraillettes le 22 septembre 1999 à l'occasion de la commémoration du 17^e anniversaire de la guerre de huit ans entre l'Iran et l'Irak. Pour la première fois, les chefs d'armée ont présenté du matériel militaire, dont deux missiles iraniens sol-sol. (AFP, ATTA KENARE)



danger les processus même de reproduction de la société américaine, et s'exerceraient sur toutes les failles de cette société déjà fragile. Le pétrole n'est donc pas seulement une question d'adaptation aux fluctuations du marché et de « chasse au gaspi », c'est aussi un élément déterminant de l'état du lion social et national aux Etats-Unis. Comme l'Iran est en mesure de menacer directement tous les grands champs pétrolifères de la région, d'Arabie Saoudite, du Koweït, d'Irak, des Emirats Arabes Unis, tout en s'affirmant comme un adversaire déclaré des Etats-Unis, le système américain se sent profondément menacé. Il faut conjuguer cela avec la crainte profonde ressentie à Washington devant l'idée d'un choc pétrolier long (déjà en cours), attribuable à la convergence d'une demande mondiale supérieure aux capacités de production actuelle, d'un refus des producteurs de pétrole d'augmenter leurs capacités, de l'imminence du pic mondial de production, et de la raréfaction des ressources pétrolières. Or, l'Iran est le principal vendeur de pétrole à la Chine, à l'Inde et au Japon, qui sont de plus en plus considérés, en particulier la Chine, comme des compétiteurs énergétiques dangereux. Dans ce jeu géopolitique, l'Iran devient une puissance non seulement régionale, mais internationale, malgré tous les efforts d'hégémonie effectués par les USA depuis 1941. Le pays possède en outre 16 % des réserves mondiales de pétrole, ce qui, vu son taux actuel de production, en fait le seul producteur de pétrole et de gaz naturel capable d'augmenter sa production. En cela, il représente pour les Etats-Unis une solution possible, à l'échelle d'une génération, dans l'hypothèse où leurs autres sources d'approvisionnement viendraient à ne plus suffire. Aussi la question de la gestion de la demande énergétique chinoise est-elle essentielle dans la planification stratégique américaine. Chalmers Johnson montre que depuis la fin de la guerre froide, l'influence américaine n'a cessé de se déployer dans le monde, en prenant comme relais la construction de nouvelles bases militaires. Or, depuis le milieu des années 1990, un réseau de bases s'étend en Asie Centrale, prenant la Chine en écharpe. Le phénomène n'a fait que s'amplifier avec

les mesures consécutives au 11 septembre (création de nouvelles bases en Afghanistan, en Ouzbékistan, au Pakistan, au Kirghizistan et en Irak). Ce réseau de bases possède une capacité d'intervention directe sur l'Iran et sur les relations entre l'Iran et la Chine, en prévision de possibles tensions énergétiques dans la décennie à venir. Les tensions américano-iraniennes ne se limitent pourtant pas à la question du pétrole. Elles s'aggravent avec l'avancement du programme nucléaire iranien. Le gouvernement de Téhéran clame son intention de créer un complexe nucléaire civil, mais l'idée dominante à Washington est que les dirigeants iraniens sont installés dans une dynamique de prolifération de l'arme nucléaire. De plus, de nombreux transferts de technologie nucléaire et balistique militaires semblent s'être produits entre l'Iran, le Pakistan, la Chine et la Corée du Nord depuis une bonne dizaine d'années. Or, si l'Iran accédait au nucléaire stratégique, cela supprimerait l'essentiel des moyens américains de pression sur Téhéran - le nucléaire étant un égalisateur de puissance, qui met ses différents détenteurs à égalité de « respect et de courtoisie » les uns à l'égard des autres. Il n'est, pour s'en convaincre, que d'observer la différence des politiques américaines à l'égard de l'Irak de Saddam Hussein et de la Corée du Nord. Le facteur nucléaire implique également *de facto* un affaiblissement de la puissance israélienne, l'Etat hébreu étant pour le moment le seul au Moyen-Orient à posséder l'arme atomique. Or le pays est considéré comme un élément essentiel de relais de la politique américaine dans la région. Ce fait inquiète particulièrement les néo-conservateurs très liés au Likoud, mais aussi la Droite chrétienne évangélique, qui considère - de façon très littérale - Israël comme le champ de bataille à venir entre les Chrétiens et les forces de l'Antéchrist lors de la bataille d'Armageddon. Bien que cela puisse paraître

Photo droite
Hassan Rowhani, chef du Supreme National Security Council iranien, lors d'une conférence de presse après la cérémonie d'ouverture de la conférence internationale sur la technologie nucléaire et le développement durable à Téhéran, le 5 mars 2005. Ce haut fonctionnaire responsable du nucléaire iranien a averti les Etats-Unis et l'Europe du danger d'une crise pétrolière si Téhéran était envoyé devant le conseil de sécurité de l'ONU à cause de son programme nucléaire. (AFP PHOTO/HENGHAMEH FAHIMI)





très surprenant à un lecteur français, il s'agit d'une préoccupation active, réelle, et politiquement puissante au Congrès des Etats-Unis. L'Iran, qui n'a cessé depuis 1979 de dénoncer le « Grand Satan », les « Croisés » et leurs alliés israéliens, n'a fait que renforcer cet état d'esprit par cette rhétorique théologico-raciste. Enfin, l'actuel néo-messianisme américain, cette idéologie religieuse qui identifie l'Amérique au « Bien », très active chez les néo-conservateurs, mais aussi à la Maison-Blanche, dans l'en-

semble de l'administration, et dans des pans entiers de la société américaine, voit dans l'aspect radical du régime des Mollahs une forme sécularisée du « Mal ». Le croisement des rhétoriques iranienne et américaine qui dénoncent le travail du « Diable » ou du « Mal » dans la politique de l'Autre, ainsi que le souvenir des foules hurlantes et fanatisées par le khomeinisme au début des années 1980, contribuent à créer un filtre de perception de l'Iran, considéré dès lors comme un pays dangereux,

irrationnel et fanatique. Ces différents niveaux s'entrecroisent dans la production américaine de stratégie à l'égard de l'Iran, et nécessitent de pendre au sérieux les menaces de bombardement des sites nucléaires par l'Air Force et la Navy, dont selon Seymour Hersh, les forces spéciales américaines ont commencé le ciblage au sol. Mais ces considérations nécessitent aussi de se demander ce qui en résulterait. ★

Jean-Michel Valantin

IRAN Cinq bombes ont explosé, à cinq jours de l'élection de vendredi, frappant Ahvaz et Téhéran

Série d'attentats avant la présidentielle

Téhéran : Delphine Minoui

Une bombe a explosé hier soir près d'une place au centre-est de Téhéran, faisant deux morts. Plus tôt dans la journée, la ville d'Ahvaz dans le sud de l'Iran, a été secouée, par l'explosion de quatre bombes visant toutes des bâtiments officiels, et revendiquées par un groupe séparatiste pro-arabe, selon les affirmations d'un haut responsable des affaires de sécurité. On dénombrait dans la soirée dix morts et une quarantaine de blessés. « J'étais au volant de ma voiture quand j'ai entendu une énorme explosion », raconte Ali Hosseini, 26 ans, un chauffeur de taxi local. Il se trouvait à un kilomètre d'une des déflagrations.

« J'ai vu un nuage de fumée noire se détacher du bureau du gouverneur. Sur la chaussée, il ne restait plus que la carcasse d'une voiture de marque coréenne », poursuit-il.

C'est apparemment dans cette même voiture qu'une des quatre bombes avait été camouflée. En face, toutes les vitres de l'hôpital Razi ont été soufflées. Un autre bâtiment officiel, qui héberge le département des travaux publics, aurait subi les plus gros dégâts. Les forces locales, rapidement dépêchées sur les lieux, n'ont retrouvé qu'un squelette de la bâtisse. Un troisième lieu administratif, chargé du cadastre, a été visé. Quant à la quatrième bombe, elle aurait explosé au moment où des experts cherchaient à la désamorcer. La pa-

nique s'est emparée de la ville. Les explosions, qui semblent s'être produites de façon quasi simultanée, ont pu être entendues à trente kilomètres à la ronde, d'après les témoins.

Ahvaz, une ville industrielle, se trouve dans la province du Khouzeistan, non loin de la frontière irakienne. Elle héberge une importante proportion de la communauté arabe, qui représente environ 3 % de la population d'Iran. En avril, la ville avait été le théâtre d'affrontements entre ses habitants et les forces de l'ordre après des rumeurs selon lesquelles le gouvernement iranien chercherait à déplacer la population arabe d'Ahvaz.

L'Iran a accusé des groupes « terroristes » et des séparatistes pro-arabes venus selon

lui d'Irak et soutenus par les Américains. « Les appels au boycottage des élections ayant échoué, les groupes terroristes basés en Irak cherchent par ces attentats à empêcher le bon déroulement de l'élection (présidentielle de vendredi), a déclaré hier un haut responsable des affaires de sécurité, Ali Agha Mohammadi. Ces terroristes sont entraînés sous l'égide des Américains. » « Nous demandons aux Américains et aux Britanniques qu'ils prennent position sur ces attentats et nous livrent les membres des groupes terroristes en Irak », a-t-il ajouté.

Ali Hosseini, lui, pointe du doigt « les opposant au régime iranien, peut-être les Moudjahidins du peuple ». Le procédé utilisé (notamment celui de la voiture piégée) rappelle plutôt les méthodes des terroristes en Irak. Par le passé, l'Iran a reçu des menaces de l'organisation al-Qaïda, exigeant que ses membres détenus par les autorités au pouvoir lui soient remis. Mais, jusqu'ici, le pays avait été épargné.

IRAN A Los Angeles, la diaspora vote « contre » la République islamique

Les exilés iraniens amers face aux élections

L'Iran a annoncé hier avoir arrêté des premiers suspects après les quatre attentats qui ont fait au moins huit morts la veille à Ahvaz et à Téhéran. Le pouvoir, qui a mis les attaques sur le compte « d'éléments liés à l'étranger », a assuré que l'élection présidentielle prévue vendredi ne serait pas perturbée. Le groupe armé islamo-marxiste des Moudjahidins du peuple, établi en Irak et en France, a démenti toute implication. A Los Angeles, où se trouve la principale communauté iranienne à l'étranger, les exilés dénoncent en bloc le régime, mais peinent à trouver une alternative à la République islamique.

Los Angeles : Delphine Minoui

La grosse horloge en forme de carte de l'Iran annonce la pause déjeuner. Collé au téléphone, dans son studio d'enregistrement ultra climatisé, Zia Atabay, costume sombre et cravate en damier jaune et bleu, n'a pas le temps de s'en préoccuper. Dans quelques heures, il s'adressera en direct à l'Iran, sa « chère terre perdue », pour dire non

aux élections. « Il ne me reste que quelques jours pour convaincre les Iraniens de ne pas aller voter », confie cet ancien chanteur pop exilé depuis vingt-cinq ans aux États-Unis.

Son outil de campagne contre le régime iranien s'appelle NITV (National Iranian Television), une petite chaîne d'opposition à la République islamique, lancée

il y a cinq ans à Los Angeles. Ses programmes sont diffusés en Iran via satellite. Depuis, une vingtaine de chaînes du même genre ont vu le jour. Au pro-

gramme : vidéo clips sulfureux, vieux films en noir et blanc et talk shows à gogo, que Zia Atabay, 62 ans, anime avec ses compères. Face à la caméra, ils y dénoncent, en persan, les religieux au pouvoir en Iran. Depuis Téhéran, Chiraz ou la ville sainte de Qom, les Iraniens les appellent en direct au téléphone pour vider leur sac. De quoi faire grincer des dents les autorités iraniennes, qui ont tenté, en vain, de brouiller ces chaînes.

A la veille de l'élection présidentielle, l'agenda se politise. Récemment, une équipe de NITV a interviewé le fils de l'ancien chah, renversé par la Révolution islamique de 1979. « Mais nous ne sommes pas monarchistes. Nous donnons la parole à tous

les opposants », précise Atabay. Les opposants interrogés sur NITV restent pourtant limités aux exilés qui ont fui le pays il y a un quart de siècle. Leurs débats

omettent souvent de prendre en compte les mouvements de l'intérieur. « Ces télévisions de l'opposition se contentent de reproduire l'image figée d'un passé révolu », observe Ali Modarres, professeur de géographie à la State University of California et auteur de recherches sur les immigrants iraniens.

Dans le quartier de Woodland Hills, la décoration du bureau d'Atabay en dit long. Ici, un drapeau flanqué de l'image du lion doré de l'époque impériale. Là, de petites reproductions des bas-reliefs des ruines de Persepolis, rappelant la grandeur de la Perse antique. Ce n'est qu'un exemple parmi d'autres de la façon dont vit la diaspora iranienne de « Tehrangeles » – un surnom faisant référence à la concentration à Los Angeles de centaines de milliers d'Iraniens.

Sur l'avenue Westwood, les enseignes des boutiques se lisent en persan et l'odeur du

« kebab » s'évade des restaurants. On se croirait à Téhéran, à l'exception, bien sûr, des belles Persanes qui se dandinent en minijupe. « Je vis au rythme des

événements iraniens. Le moindre événement qui survient au détour d'une ruelle de Téhéran est pour moi beaucoup plus important que n'importe quelle catastrophe mondiale », confie le poète Noosha Zokaie, croisé à la librairie Ketab (Livre). Comme beaucoup d'Iraniens de Los Angeles, il ne fréquente que des membres de sa communauté et ne parle que le persan.

Zokaie, qui n'a pas revu son pays depuis vingt-cinq ans, ne ménage pas ses propos contre

l'élection présidentielle. « Une mascarade ! Les candidats ? Tous les mêmes. Ils appartiennent au système. D'ailleurs, je n'ai jamais cru en Khatami. C'est un religieux comme les autres, avec un sourire en plus ! », dit-il en parlant du président sortant Mohammed Khatami, un réformateur. Des propos partagés par Bijan Khalili, 55 ans, le directeur de Ketab. « Quand je vois que seulement huit candidats ont été validés sur plus de 1 000, j'en conclus que ce sont des élections illégales ! » enrage-t-il. « Il faut un embargo international contre l'Iran pour que le régime s'effondre », suggère-t-il, tout en se disant « furieux contre les entre-

prises françaises qui font des affaires avec les mollahs ». Ancien membre de l'armée impériale, Zokaie, lui, ne cache pas sa nostalgie du chah et reconnaît un penchant pour son fils, « qui a plus d'expérience démocratique que les autres parce qu'il a vécu à l'étranger ». Des opinions partagées par de nombreux Iraniens de Los Angeles, où le jeune Pahlavi a fait des télévisions d'opposition une de ses tribunes d'expression.

Avec la nouvelle génération, le vent tourne. Behzad Tabatabai, 28 ans, vient de lancer *Namak* (« Sel »), un magazine culturel iranien en anglais. Au sommaire du premier numéro : l'interview

d'un chanteur branché, un article sur le cinéma iranien et un portrait de Miss Iran, élue aux États-Unis. Behzad n'est jamais retourné en Iran depuis la révolution, mais il y songe sérieusement, « pour rompre avec le cynisme des exilés iraniens ». « Je suis convaincu que le changement peut venir de l'intérieur », dit-il. « C'est une situation confortable que de se planter devant la caméra en répétant indéfiniment les mêmes rengaines ! Mais en vingt-cinq ans, aucun d'entre eux n'a été capable de proposer une alternative à la République islamique ! », lâche-t-il en référence à Zia Atabay et ses confrères.

Le Monde

11 JUIN 2005

Irak : 25 sunnites à la commission de rédaction de la Constitution

BAGDAD. Le président irakien, Jalal Talabani, a annoncé, jeudi 9 juin, que 25 places avaient été réservées aux sunnites dans la commission de rédaction de la Constitution permanente. M. Talabani répondait ainsi à la demande de quelque 150 personnalités sunnites récemment réunies en congrès. Cependant, le premier ministre, Ibrahim Al-Jaafa-

ri, et un membre de la commission, le chiite Ali Dabbagh, n'ont pas confirmé cette décision. Ils estiment qu'il revient à l'Assemblée nationale de fixer le nombre de représentants sunnites dans cette commission. Les sunnites ne devaient initialement pas participer à la rédaction de la Constitution, ceux-ci n'étant pas représentés au Parlement en raison de leur boycottage des élections générales du 30 janvier. Les membres de la Commission devront rédiger une Constitution permanente avant le 15 août. - (AFP.)

Video shows a weary Saddam being questioned

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD: The tribunal that will put Saddam Hussein on trial released a video Monday showing the 68-year-old former dictator — looking drawn and tired but dressed in a pinstriped suit — being questioned about the killings of at least 50 Iraqis in a Shiite town.

The video was released as insurgents, many of whom are believed to be Saddam loyalists, launched four suicide car bombings and other attacks around Iraq that killed at least 14 people.

Another 22 Iraqis were wounded after militants opened fire on authorities trying to evacuate the injured from one of the suicide blasts that killed three police officers and an Iraqi civilian in the northern city of Samarra.

Already tense relations between the majority Shiites, who dominate the government and Parliament, and the Sunni Arabs, who many hold responsible for

the insurgency, soured further Monday.

Strong disagreements also broke out over the number of representatives the once-powerful Sunni minority will have on a committee drafting the country's constitution.

Shiite lawmakers rejected calls for increasing Sunni representatives from 15 to 25 on the 55-member drafting com-

mittee, and Sunnis have renewed threats to boycott and sink the charter.

The wave of attacks in Baghdad, Samarra and Tikrit came as the radical anti-American Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr met with the Russia ambassador and tribal chiefs from the insurgent hotbeds of Fallujah and Ramadi. Russia and Sadr fiercely opposed the war.

It was likely that the Iraqi Special Tribunal trying Saddam issued the video in order to counter widespread beliefs that its process was being controlled by Shiites and Kurds who dominate the government and the 275-member National Assembly.

The Shiite-led government last week said that the ousted leader could appear before the tribunal within two months. They backtracked after complaints from Saddam's legal team and the tribunal, which issued statements saying that no trial date had been set.

The video showed a bearded Saddam, wearing a dark-gray suit and white open-collared shirt, being questioned by the chief trial judge, Raid Juh. There was no audio.

It was unclear when the video was made, and Saddam's chief Iraqi lawyer, Khalil al-Duleimi, did not want to comment. In Amman, another lawyer said his Jordan-based legal team was not aware that Saddam had been ques-

tioned.

At least two legal officials close to the case said the video was apparently made Sunday. They did not want to be identified for security reasons.

The video was the first time Saddam has been seen since his arraignment on July 1, 2004 in Baghdad. At the time he was arraigned on broad charges that include killing rival politicians over 30 years, gassing Kurds in the northern town of Halabja in 1988, invading Kuwait in 1990 and suppressing the Kurdish and Shiite uprising. Unlike in that appearance, where Saddam was combative and tried to exhibit his authority, the newly released tape shows a man who appears a shadow of his former self.

There are heavy bags under his eyes, he often clasps his hands and squeezes his fingers — often clutching them together when trying to make a point. Saddam's hair appears unkempt and he constantly runs his hand down his face and through his beard, which has more gray flecks in it than it did a year ago.

In early June, Juh. said in an interview that Saddam's morale had collapsed because of the charges he faces.

Herald Tribune

June 14, 2005

Turkey PM urges curbs on Kurd guerrillas

The Associated Press - By Louis Meixler
June 4, 2005

ANKARA, Turkey The prime minister of Turkey, one of Washington's most important Muslim allies, said Friday he will urge President Bush to clamp down on Kurdish guerrillas who are infiltrating into Turkey from mountain strongholds in northern Iraq.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan also said Turkey would press on with its campaign to join the European Union, arguing that anti-Turkish sentiment was not a major factor in this week's rejection of an EU constitution by voters in France and the Netherlands. Speaking in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press ahead of his Wednesday meeting at the White House, Erdogan said he wants the guerrilla bands of Turkish Kurds "to be totally taken out of northern Iraq."

At least 14 Turkish soldiers and 49 rebels have died since March in guerrilla attacks after a lull of several years, and the fight is becoming an increasingly sore point in already strained relations between the two NATO allies.

Turkish leaders have repeatedly demanded that the U.S. military move against guerrillas loyal to the Kurdistan Workers Party, which has been fighting for an autonomous Kurdish region in southeastern Turkey for two decades. But U.S. forces have their hands full with the Iraqi insurgency. American commanders are not willing to spare soldiers to chase guerrillas from bases in the forbidding terrain of northern Iraq, a Kurdish region that is one of the few stable spots in Iraq.

Erdogan said the problem has to be addressed.

"They are involved in armed training in northern Iraq and they infiltrate into Turkey," he said, sitting in the garden of his official residence. "Unfortunately terrorism which is being nourished there is continuing to create trouble."

Turkish intelligence officials say some 2,000 Kurdish guerrillas have moved into Turkey this year to launch attacks and estimate there are 3,500 more in Iraq. Some 37,000 people have died in the fighting since 1984. The issue is extremely sensitive for Turks, many of whom blame the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq for the rise in fighting.

Turkish leaders also worry that the growing power of Iraqi Kurds in their home region could encourage the rebels in southeastern Turkey and increase aspirations for a pan-Kurdish state that would take parts of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria.

Erdogan's demand for action comes amid a slow recovery in U.S.-Turkish relations that were damaged by Turkey's refusal to let U.S. troops or warplanes operate from Turkey during the Iraq invasion. Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, who was angered by that rebuff, said in March that Iraq's insurgents would be weaker if Turkey had permitted American soldiers to open a northern front in the Iraq war.

Erdogan complained that some officials and news commentators began questioning the value of the U.S.-Turkish partnership after the differences over the Iraq war. "These are steps that are being taken by people with bad intentions who are trying to cast a shadow over our solidarity. We will never allow this to happen," he said.

Erdogan also is certain to talk to Bush about Turkey's bid for European Union membership, which Washington has strongly supported. Erdogan said he was disappointed by the French and Dutch referendums, but insisted they were not caused by opposition to EU membership for his predominantly Muslim nation.

He said he expected EU governments to accept Turkey's bid once his country completes reforms. In 10 to 15 years the EU "will be a place where civilizations meet. ... It will become a global power with Turkey's accession," he said. Some opponents of the proposed EU charter have cited Turkish membership as a worry. There is growing opposition in Europe to immigration from Muslim countries and serious questions about whether the EU should allow in a mostly poor, Muslim country of 70 million people.

But Erdogan said fears of Turkish membership were not the primary concern. "In France there was no anti-Turkish sentiment," he said. "There was some in the Netherlands, but even there, unemployment, economy, security were at the forefront."

Erdogan has largely staked his premiership on winning membership for Turkey, which once was the heartland of the Ottoman Empire but is now a secular state that sees itself as a bridge between European and Asian cultures.

"I would have wished that the results in France or the Netherlands were not as such," Erdogan said. "There is a negative climate prevailing."

But, he added, "an EU which is on its way to becoming a global power will overcome this."

Kurdish dream of independence spurs militant youth

AFP - June 2, 2005

LIJWA, Iraq - On the sidelines of a Kurdish congress in this northeastern Iraqi village, young Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants from the region and Europe are bound together by the dream of an independent state.

"I will only get married when my people are free," said Sara Haldan, expressing the burning hope of these people who adhere to what has been labelled a terrorist group by the United States, European Union and Turkey.

"I decided to join the fighters at the age of 15 after I saw Turks drag my friend to her death behind an army vehicle. I decided then to abandon my family and join the guerrillas to fight injustice," Haldan said.

This young Turkish Kurd has not seen her family in years for fear of being recognized and arrested by Turkish authorities.

Kurds, who have sought independence since poet Ahmad Khani first called for a Kurdish state to fend for its people in 1695, share a common history, culture and language across four countries — Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey.

For the meeting in this village 500 kilometers (300 miles) northeast of Baghdad, the young militants broke out their traditional shalwar pants, multicolored shirts and wide belts. PKK flags, red and yellow with a red star, flapped in the wind.

Narin, 22, came from Syria and took advantage of a journalist's presence to denounce problems faced by Kurdish women. "Kurdish men fight for their freedom, while Kurdish women fight for their freedom and their rights," she said. "We should never give up the armed struggle before we regain all our rights."

Others who have gathered in Iraq's northern mountains agree.

"When my family emigrated from Turkey to France I was 12 years old. I lived there for eight years before the party called me back to join fighters in northern Iraq," said 23-year-old Jankiz. He now trains Kurdish fighters and insists

he "wants to remain in this natural, human landscape until my dream of a state in these mountains is fulfilled".

An Indo-European people descended in large part from the Medes and Scythian tribes, Kurds are mainly Sunni Muslims who have settled across nearly a half-million square kilometers (200,000 square miles).

Their total number vary according to official or Kurdish sources, from 25 to 35 million people, with between 13 and 19 million living in Turkey. Iran is home to six to eight million Kurds, Iraq has four to five million and Syria around 1.5 million.

Large Kurdish communities also exist in the former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as in European countries like Germany. The PKK waged a bloody campaign for Kurdish self-rule in southeastern Turkey between 1984 and 1999 in a conflict that has claimed some 37,000 lives.

Around 5,000 militants are believed to be based in Turkey and the mountains of northern Iraq. On Wednesday, the party said it was ready to declare a ceasefire and offered to begin peace talks with Ankara.

PKK official Murad Karayilan said the group was now seeking a "Kurdish democratic federation."

In Iraq, Kurds represent 15 to 20 percent of the population and were severely persecuted by the regime of former dictator Saddam Hussein. They have now become a political force, with Jalal Talabani becoming in April the first Kurd to assume the nation's presidency.

287 military operations have been held against Turkey's Kurdish rebels in a year

MHA (translated by International Initiative)
31 May 2005

BEHDINAN / The HPG (People's Defence Forces) has revealed the results of one year warfare. Within the 287 operations by the Turkish army against the guerrilla forces, contact was made in 184. In clashes and retaliations 630 soldiers, 55 officers, 21 police, 1 agent and 7 village guards were killed.

The People's Defence Forces (HPG) has announced the results of the 360 day warfare from 1 June 2004, the time it ended the 6 year old one-sided ceasefire, to 26 May 2005.

The results announced by the HPG Media and Communications Centre (MCC) is below:
Operations by the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF): 287
Contact with the TAF: 184 Retaliations by the guerrilla forces against the operations: 150
Total losses encountered by the TAF as a result of retaliations and contact with HPG: 718

In the statement the losses were put as:

Soldiers: 630, Officers: 55, Police: 21, Agent: 1, Village Guards: 7, No. of military goods taken: 22, No. of military vehicles destroyed: 49, No. of TAF panzers destroyed: 9,, No. of artillery destroyed: 2

The losses incurred by the HPG within one year:

Number of guerrillas who lost their lives in contact with the TAF and retaliations: 96

Number of guerrillas who lost their lives as a result of accident, drowning in waters and health problems: 12

According to the statement made by the MCC within the period of 1 June 2004 to 26 May 2005 military operations by TAF concentrated mainly in the Botan region as well as Amed and Dersim. According to the statement, these military operations have mainly been undertaken in the autumn of 2004 and has been continuing. It was pointed out that within these operations military technology was widely used and tens of thousands of soldiers participated.

TAF unsuccessful with its operations

The HPG officials said that the TAF has been unsuccessful in its operations and that the HPG's new way of actions on the basis of small groups of guerrillas with active and high action capacity led to TAF's classical operation tactic to be in vain.

HPG officials said that as a result of this new way of action, TAF (Turkish Army Forces) had difficulties in "imposing clashes on the guerrilla under its initiative" and that the TAF military troops have become an open target for the guerrilla teams who have spread well into the territory.

HPG officials drew attention that the guerrillas are no longer raid police stations but aim permanent points where TAF is well established in.

40% of HPG losses are as a result of informers and ambushes. HPG officials said that this was "a reflection of the strategic changes made" and that the military strategy changed accordingly". They underlined that "actions undertaken were no longer to establish free areas" but "to force the

other side to a resolution". They also added that guerrilla losses, as a result, decreased in comparison with past years, but the TAF's losses increased due to a change in guerrilla movement.

HPG officials said that in the last year TAF has been trying to gain control through on the spot operations based on intelligence and informants. Hence the 40% of the losses incurred has been due to informers and ambushes.

A decrease in the village guard losses

The balance sheet of one year also draws attention to the losses of village guards. It can be seen that after the decision of June it represents 1% of the total losses of the TAF as compared with hundreds of village guards losses in the 1990's. It was pointed out that this is in accordance with the decision "if the village guards do not participated in active warfare they will not be treated as targets" of the HPG II. Conference.

Syrian Police Clash with Kurds Protesting Cleric's Murder

Associated Press - June 6, 2005

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) - Syrian police clashed Sunday with stick-wielding protesters condemning a prominent Kurdish cleric's murder, and authorities arrested an activist who spoke at his funeral, witnesses and a human rights group said. Mohammed Mashouk al-Khaznawi, a 47-year-old Kurdish Islamic scholar, disappeared while visiting Damascus on May 8. His body turned up last week at a morgue in a northeastern city.

His son and Kurdish activists blamed state security for his abduction and death, saying his body bore marks of severe torture. But the state-run news agency SANA, which rarely comments on human rights cases, denied involvement and contended al-Khaznawi's death was a "purely criminal act."

SANA reported that authorities detained two of five men who belonged to a group that kidnapped al-Khaznawi in Damascus, killed him in the northern city of Aleppo and buried him in Deir el-Zor, 465 kilometres northeast of the capital.

Protesters gathered in Qamishli in northeastern Syria, responding to the Kurdish Azadi party call to demonstrate against "the policy of ethnic persecution and the Syrian

regime's negligence and indifference toward the Kurdish population."

The demonstrators threw stones at police and tried to attack them with sticks, witnesses reached by telephone told The Associated Press. But they broke up when police fired in the air, and no one was hurt in the 30-minute confrontation, two witnesses said on condition of anonymity.

Also Sunday, the Arab Organization for Human Rights said Syrian authorities arrested Riad Drar, a Kurdish human rights activist, after al-Khaznawi's funeral Wednesday, attended by thousands of people. A second Kurdish man, Qassem Said al-Ossayran, was arrested May 31, the group said.

An 11-year-old boy, Hoker Amin Ossy, was being guarded by police at the National Hospital in Qamishli after being severely beaten at the funeral, the group said. The statement did not say who beat him up or why police were watching over him, but seemed to suggest he was being kept against his will. About 1.5 million Kurds live in Syria, a country of 18.5 million, including about 160,000 who are denied Syrian citizenship. They often complain of harassment and persecution by security authorities.

Kurds in talks with Arab tribes in bid to contain Syria clashes

AFP - June 6, 2005

DAMASCUS - Representatives of banned Kurdish parties met with Arab tribal chiefs in northeastern Syria Monday in a bid to calm sectarian tensions following bloody clashes over the weekend, a Kurdish leader said. A security force action in Qamishli Sunday to disperse Kurdish demonstrators angry at the abduction and murder of a leading

Muslim cleric had "turned into Arab-Kurdish clashes", Kurdish Progressive Democrat Party leader Aziz Daud told AFP by telephone from the town.

Yakiti party leader Hassan Saleh said the situation in Qamishli remained tense after several demonstrators were wounded and dozens arrested. Daud said 50 Kurdish-owned shops had been ransacked by militiamen during

the clashes. Qamishli has been on edge since deadly clashes in March last year pitted Kurdish protestors against security forces and Arab tribesmen.

The Syrian authorities said that 25 people were killed. Kurdish sources put the death toll as high as 40.

Syria's 1.5 million Kurds make up about nine percent of the population and are mainly concentrated in the north. Some 200,000 have been denied Syrian citizenship, making it difficult for them to find work in the state-controlled economy.

Trespassers hoist Kurdish flag at Syrian embassy in Vienna

AFP - June 6, 2005

VIENNA, June 6 (AFP) - Trespassers have broken into the Syrian embassy in Vienna and replaced the national flag with a Kurdish flag, the police said on Monday.

Embassy staff arrived at work on Monday morning to find that a wooden door had been forced open and the red, white

and green Kurdish flag was flying from a balcony, a spokeswoman for the Vienna police said. "Nothing was stolen and we do not know who did this, or how many people were involved," she told AFP. The incidents follow violent clashes in Syria at the weekend between security forces and members of the Kurdish minority protesting the abduction and killing of popular Islamic leader Mohammed Maashuq Khaznawi.

Iraqi president sees Kurdistan as national model

Reuters - By Shamal Aqrabi - June 14, 2005

ARBIL - Iraqi President Jalal Talabani opened debate on what could be one of the most heated issues in Iraq over the coming months as he addressed the Kurdish regional parliament on Tuesday.

Attending the swearing-in of his one-time deadly rival Masoud Barzani as president of the Kurdish region, Talabani praised the success of Kurdish autonomy in the three northern provinces and said it could be a model for the rest of Iraq.

"Every group of three provinces has the right to form a region if the majority accepts that," Talabani told a crowd of dignitaries gathered for the ceremony, including several government ministers and a U.S. envoy.

"The experience in Kurdistan is appropriate as a model for the hoped-for democracy in Iraq," the Kurdish former guerrilla leader said to applause. The remarks touch on the issue of federalism, one of the most sensitive debates confronting Iraqi policymakers and one that is expected to pose tough obstacles as politicians try to draft a new constitution in the coming months.

The Kurds, who make up 15-20 percent of Iraq's population and live mostly along the borders with Iran and Turkey, have enjoyed broad autonomy since the 1991 Gulf War, when British and U.S. fighter jets kept Saddam Hussein's forces at bay.

In the mid-1990s Talabani and Barzani's militias fought a civil war, dividing the Kurdish region into two areas.

Since then, however, their two parties have formed a regional parliament, a defence force — the 100,000-strong peshmerga ("those who face death") — and administer a wealth of local affairs, including education, police and health.

The swearing-in of Barzani as president of the regional government effectively takes the autonomy process one step further, creating a united Kurdistan within Iraq.

FEDERAL DREAMS

It was understood that that would happen when Iraqi leaders, with the help of U.S. and British diplomats, drew up an interim constitution ahead of the handover of power last year.

The document, known as the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), made provision for any two or three of Iraq's 18 provinces to join together and form a federal unit if the move was approved by the national parliament.

Baghdad and the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, which is claimed by Arabs, Kurds and Turkmen, were exempted from the provision. However, the TAL did not precisely define the relationship between federal regions and the central government, and did not touch on issues such as how income from resources found in one province, such as oil, should be distributed.

Those issues, among the most sensitive in Iraq, will have to be tackled in the drafting of a new constitution. That is only now getting under way but is supposed to be completed by mid-August, before being put to a referendum in October. As well as federalism, Kirkuk alone could also pose a huge obstacle for the drafters of the charter. The Kurds not only claim the city as their own, they want it to be the capital of the Kurdish region, a goal that inspires fury in most Iraqis.

At present it lies some 25 km beyond the borders of Kurdistan. U.S. authorities are keen to see Iraq develop a federal structure, believing the devolution of power to the regions will limit the potential for a dictator to return. But so far only the Kurdish region has moved forward with the

process. Several Shi'ite Arab provinces in the south, around the oil fields near Basra, have indicated they would like to form a federal unit, but the move is in its infancy. How federalism is defined in the new constitution may determine whether they push ahead, given that the oil may not end up being theirs.

Other units could conceivably be formed around the Shi'ite holy cities of Kerbala and Najaf, southwest of Baghdad, or in the Sunni Arab heartland west and north of the capital, but the advantage of doing so will depend on how federalism is defined, an issue that will consume debate in the months ahead.

Transcript of Mr. Masoud Barzani's speech at inaugural ceremony as President

www.krg.org
15 June 2005

Delivered at his inaugural ceremony as President of the Kurdistan Region in the Kurdistan National Assembly, Erbil, Kurdistan-Iraq on 14 June 2005.

In The Name of God the Almighty, the Most Precious and Most Merciful. My dear brother Mam Jalal, President of the Federal Republic of Iraq. My dear brothers Vice-Presidents of the Federal Republic of Iraq

My dear brother the Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Iraq. My dear brother the President of the Iraqi National Assembly

Distinguished guests

My dear President and Members of the Kurdistan National Assembly

Ladies and gentlemen Greetings.

I warmly welcome you on this occasion and thank you for attending and participating in this event.

It is indeed an honor and a privilege for me as a peshmerga to be nominated for this duty and responsibility by my fellow citizens through their elected parliament. I consider this call from the people of Kurdistan as a gift and a tribute to all the peshmergas and freedom fighters of our people.

Forty three years ago when I took up arms as a peshmerga until today I have experienced many trials and tribulations and achievements of the Kurdistan revolution and witnessed many tragedies and the hardships of my people. But never had I any doubt about our eventual victory. I'm pleased to be with you here today to witness for myself the fruit of this lifelong endeavor. But what saddens me the most and hurts my soul is not to see here many dear ones and fellow peshmergas who shared the struggle and strife during our proud march and made the ultimate sacrifice.

To my grief, they are not here to witness this achievement. While physically they are no longer among us, their spirits are hovering over us and sharing our joy. I am confident the spirits of our eternal leaders are also celebrating this moment with us.

On this occasion, I extend my warmest greetings and deep respect to the families of our martyrs. I bow in reverence to the sacrifice of their loved ones and to the tears of their mothers. I consider myself a responsible member of the

families of each and every one of them. To me, the families of the martyrs of the Kurdistan Liberation Movement, no matter what political party or affiliation they adhered to, are all very dear to me and they are my sons and daughters.

The Kurdistan National Assembly, our regional parliament, is an institution to which we owe respect and which enjoys our confidence. It manifests the will and aspirations of our people. The parliament as a legal institution was created by the votes of our people and carries their diverse colors. It is the fruit of the blood of the martyrs, the struggles of the peshmerga, the victims of the Anfal and chemical weapons. It is also the fruit of the unity and unanimous stand of our people, especially the efforts of both the PUK and KDP.

I would like here to extend my greetings to all the people of Kurdistan both here and abroad, particularly to all the peshmergas of all political parties who faced the harshest conditions in defending the honor and dignity of our people. I also extend my greetings to members and affiliates of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the Kurdistan Democratic Party, and to all other political parties. All of you have contributed to this achievement, and all of us should develop it further and defend it. You are all dear brothers to me.

On this occasion it is time to acknowledge and review the past, but to look deliberately toward the future and open a new chapter of fraternity, peace, and unity. What has gone before cannot be undone. But let us strive to heal the wounds we carry in our hearts and overcome their hurtful impact, and proceed. From today onwards we leave the shortcomings of the past behind us and climb with vigor to the peak of victory and walk into a brighter future.

Henceforth we should take steps toward enhancing our national thinking and developing the spirit of democracy in Kurdistan's society. We should discard the constraints of factional interests, spurn closed mindedness, and avoid behavior that reopens the wounds of our people.

I would like to state here that we as Kurds are proud that our struggle never halted for a moment and all the tragedies never daunted us. Our goal since the outbreak of the September Revolution was always clear: democracy for Iraq and autonomy for Kurdistan. This mission is evidence of the wisdom, farsightedness, and realistic judgment of the leadership of the Kurdish Revolution.

Today, this mission has changed to that of a federal democratic Iraq. The source of this mission is the same thinking and realistic assessment because the issues of democracy and rights of the Kurdish peoples are intertwined and inse-

parable. Successive Iraqi regimes tried hard through wars imposed on Kurds, and our resistance to them, to portray our conflict as a one between Arabs and Kurds. Because those regimes had ill and ugly intentions, their efforts came to nought. On the contrary, many Arab freedom fighters joined us in our struggle for democracy, fought alongside us, and sacrificed their lives.

Here we are today continuing with those colleagues and freedom fighters on the march to freedom. Before, we were in the same trench together fighting dictatorship. Now, we are together in the same struggle to build democracy and a federal system of government. In the future, no conspiracy will be able to create division between our two oppressed nations. Our fraternity, which we protected by hard work and assiduousness, will be a solid foundation for a brighter future for all of us.

We clearly see today the results of the barbarity and disasters of the Baathist regime and those earlier regimes in the mass graves that hold the remains of Iraqis. This is an opportunity to benefit from the mistakes of past regimes and their futile efforts, and to work together for the creation of a better future founded on equality and fraternity as a basis to rebuild our country without distraction.

All Iraqis, regardless of their ethnicity or religious persuasion, were the targets of a war of annihilation and genocide. It is time now to start healing the wounds and to rebuild our country in a manner which protects and respects human rights.

We as Kurds are proud that throughout our long revolution in Iraqi Kurdistan we never resorted to terrorism, nor even gave it a thought. Iraqi regimes, however, from the beginning of the September Revolution applied terrorism against us in the worst forms. Their terrorism reached its peak in the cruelest atrocities of the Anfal Campaign of 1988, and the Anfal of the Faily and Barzani Kurds, attacking us with chemical weapons culminating in the infamously ugly crime of Halabja.

It is time now to rebuild a new Iraq on the basis of federalism, democracy, pluralism, in which the rule of law is supreme. The new Iraq should be based on voluntary coexistence between the two main nationalities, Kurds and Arabs. All Iraqi citizens, whatever their ethnicity and religious persuasion, should feel this country is their own in which their rights and responsibilities are clearly stated.

We sacrificed dearly to reach this day and we will continue to struggle to the end. Security and stability must prevail in Iraq. The safety, dignity, and property of all Iraqis must be protected. Iraq should occupy its proper place in the international community. We fully support all efforts conducive to this end, and stand by any government committed to these goals.

After a few days a new government will be formed in the Kurdistan region and will receive a vote of confidence from the regional parliament. This new government will be a broad based, united government with many difficult tasks to perform. We should all cooperate in the success of this government in its work.

Kurdistan's infrastructure which was totally destroyed by

Iraqi regimes should be rebuilt. Road communications should be built in a modern way along with new communication systems including post and telecommunications.

As for water and electricity, these services should reach every part of Kurdistan and shortages and deficiencies should quickly be dealt with. There also should be schools and healthcare facilities in all villages in nearby and remote areas, and healthcare in Kurdistan should be improved to international standards.

Reforms must be applied to the education system and curricula should be cleansed of Baathism. Education is the source of our future. Baathism tried hard to destroy the cultural basis of our society and our spirit. We should quickly remove its corrupt and inhuman effects.

We should pay greater attention to our institutions of higher education. Universities in Kurdistan should be no less than those of the greater region. The universities should become beacons of civilization and democracy and they should play a major role in Kurdistan's society. They should also establish broader relations and interaction with universities and scientific institutions throughout the world.

All institutions should undergo reform and all kinds of corruption should be uprooted. The needs of the people should be met in a just, fair, equal, and expeditious manner.

A full and comprehensive program for revitalizing Kurdistan's economy should be developed. Job opportunities should be created to minimize unemployment in our rich country. A happy and prosperous nation can build a bright future for itself.

Our people should be producers and not consumers and parasites. Kurds are active and hardworking, they must provide for themselves according to their physical and mental capabilities. To this end, production units should dot the landscape of Kurdistan, with special care given to industrial production. Special care should also be given to agriculture and tourism so that they become two vital aspects of our economy and contribute to the growth of the country.

Kurdistan's economy should be based on free market principles and the furthering of private and joint ventures. The government should offer all forms of assistance in this regard including facilitation and other support.

Freedoms in Kurdistan, individual and collective, are to be respected. All freedoms are to be secured according to laws and regulations. Peoples' opinions should be respected. Religious belief is a fundamental freedom.

I also hope we succeed in developing mutual confidence between the people and the Kurdistan Regional Government. This mutual trust and confidence guarantees the advancement of both.

Attention should be directed to students and all youth. Projects of interest to them should be developed and implemented. Their needs and desires are to be respected, and worthy and proper work opportunities should be provided.

Women must play worthy and dignified roles in all aspects of society, and there must be no legal discrimination in this regard. Women should struggle to change their own status in society and we shall provide all needed support.

The Holy religion of Islam and national traditions must be respected along with social and religious personalities who aspire from their position to serve Kurdistan's society and the new environment, and to play their role accordingly.

I would like here to reiterate respect for the activities of all political organizations in Kurdistan. Their views and suggestions are to be given due consideration. In Kurdistan, the media in all forms are free without censorship.

In the Kurdistan region there is no discrimination of its citizens, no matter what their ethnic or racial origins may be. They are all equal in both rights and responsibilities. Turkomen and ChaldoAssyrians are our respected brothers and sisters, and we will do whatever is within our capability and authority for the sake of their well-being. We all live together on this land. Our destiny, our joys and sorrows, are common. We consider ourselves their advocates and defenders of their rights.

All our various religions and sects should be respected. In Kurdistan, all religions are fully free and are viewed equally.

Our Yezidi brothers are original Kurds who participated in their nation's struggle. They enjoy a special place in our hearts and are highly respected and esteemed by all Kurds.

Our Faili brothers in the long struggle of their people were afflicted with the heaviest blows from the Baathist regime and they uniquely suffered. They should be compensated in the best way and play their proper role in society. Now that the struggle of their people is bearing fruit, they should enjoy their full rights with confidence.

Families of Anfal victims in Garmiyan, Qaradakh, Badinan, and Dashti Koya, also the families of Barzanis, Failis, those who suffered chemical attacks at Halabja and other locations, those deported and relocated, all are to be respected and esteemed. The effects of these tragedies must be erased from their lives and they should be assisted.

Our people who were dislocated due to hostilities and repression of the regime sacrificed uniquely and have suffered great losses. Those who fled to neighboring countries or were displaced internally are to be highly respected and esteemed. Those who have not yet been able to return to their original homes should be facilitated and assisted.

A comprehensive plan should be developed to reconstruct the villages of Kurdistan, provide essential services, and help rehabilitate their economies. The Iraqi regime, aiming to direct a crushing blow to our revolution and to Kurdistan's economy, razed thousands of villages and deported their inhabitants because they were sanctuaries and bases for the peshmerga and our revolution.

The peshmerga of Kurdistan are our dearest. They were the ones who struggled in the most difficult days of hardship and uncertainty. I am a peshmerga just like you and proud to be among you. Your place is at the peak and in the

hearts and minds of the people, and among the families of the martyrs. Kurdish people are still protected by your high morals and resolve. You were formed according to the decision of your own people, and a result of the sufferings and tears of the mothers of the martyrs. So long as the people of Kurdistan exist, you too will also exist.

There were days when you defended the existence of the Kurdish people and wrote history with the blood of your sacrifices. Now you are the same fellow sons of our nation. Your names, your positions, and your fame shall remain the same, only your duties and tasks have changed. In the past, you struggled to overthrow the dictatorial regime and to achieve federalism and democracy. Today, you struggle to protect what has been accomplished, and to provide security to Iraq and to Kurdistan.

Today, terrorism is the main threat to democracy and progress. We will never give up in confronting terrorism; we will always be vigilant. Terrorists have no future in this country. We should confront and uproot them. But this cannot be done by one or another institution. Citizens and political parties should support security organizations in this mission.

As for the question of Kirkuk, a genuine solution has been stipulated in the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL). We will not agree to any other solution. This is an agreement, signed into law by all of us. It must be applied without further delay. Article-58 of the TAL is a serious issue and we will not accept retreat in this regard. Similarly, all other detached areas should be returned because they are integral parts of Kurdistan.

What is stipulated in the TAL are the minimum rights of the Kurdish people. We will not accept less than what is stated in that law. These rights as they are, therefore, should be enshrined in the permanent constitution of Iraq.

Writing the new constitution is an important step, and all Iraqi constituencies should participate in its drafting. The constitution should also be founded on agreement and consensus to reflect the federal democratic identity of Iraq.

We respect all neighboring countries and extend a hand of friendship to them. We will also work to establish best relations based on mutual respect and friendship. This is a good opportunity to request them to cooperate with Iraq and the Kurdistan region. We do not interfere in their internal affairs, and likewise we hope they will not interfere in our internal affairs.

We thank those countries that hosted our people during times of tragedy and hardship.

Regarding the Kurdish nation divided among neighboring countries, we assure our brothers that our hearts and minds are with them and we feel their suffering. Since there is no place for violence in the world today, we hope they resort to civilized and modern methods for advocating their rights because violence brings only death and destruction to the Kurds. Similarly, we hope these countries listen to the demands of our brothers and dialog with them. I hope that the confidence and trust bestowed on me will become a factor that unifies our peoples. To tell you the truth, for me, being a peshmerga is more important and

sacred than any other position. But we today are building Kurdistan's institutions and the presidency of the region is among them. It would be a great privilege and honor for me to play a humble role in serving you.

There is no doubt that we should work seriously in building legal and constitutional institutions as our priorities. But that task should take social and revolutionary commitments into consideration on one hand, and on the other hand the need to establish a modern, legal, and constitutional administration.

I grew up in the school of life that taught me that struggle is the only way of life. Whenever I see a chain I remember those chains that bound the hands and legs of the freedom fighters. When I see a rope I remember the gallows that hung another hero. And whenever I see a river I remember the Aras River crossed by the peshmerga from Kurdistan.

When I joined the peshmergas and carried my weapon and walked behind the late Mustafa Barzani, I was greatly honored. And today as I assume this position I accept it with the aim of serving you as a continuation of being a peshmerga. I do not have any purpose but to serve you.

In these days we will start to form the Kurdistan Regional Government. Sometimes, due to exchanges of views and additional time in reaching understanding, agreements or works are delayed. This is the nature of democratic culture. Enemies are dreaming and they think that when reaching an agreement is delayed there is division. I assure them such dreams will not come true again. For us, what is

most important is the confidence and trust of our own people. Rest assured that I will do everything in consultation and exchange of views with my respected brother Mam Jalal. He may be in Baghdad and I here, but that does not mean we do not communicate and we are unaware of each other. On the contrary, neither will take a unilateral step. The leaderships of both our parties should also come closer, and there should be coordination with the other parties. We must not offer any chance to be exploited by those with evil intentions to meddle and destroy the Kurdish house.

On behalf of the Kurdish people I wish to thank the American President George W. Bush, the American administration, the American people and their military who helped in overthrowing the cruelest dictatorship and to liberate us. We will never forget this brave decision, and we reassure them that we will be together in confronting terrorism and in building a federal democratic Iraq. I would also like to thank British Prime Minister Tony Blair and the British people, their military, and all members of the coalition and multi-national forces.

I would like also to thank the dedicated people of Erbil, this ancient city that defeated dictatorships. Erbil continues to sacrifice and endure hardship. I realize that tight security measures including road blocks add to their inconveniences. I hope they accept my thanks and apologies.

Finally, I salute the spirits of all the martyrs who fought to liberate Iraq and Kurdistan.

Thank you.

The Wonder of Kurdistan

While bombs are exploding daily in Baghdad, the northern Iraqis are experiencing an economic boom.

Berliner Zeitung - By Olivia Schoeller - June 14, 2005

ERBIL/SULIMANIJA: Rashid Tahir Hassan's office in the Kurdish Ministry of Finance resembles a small Kurdish memorial. On the wall behind his gigantic black desk hang two pictures of the legendary Kurdish fighter Mullah Mustafa Barzani in heavy gold frames; on the console underneath is a plate with his likeness. The room is adorned with photographs of Kurdish villages and the city of Erbil, the seat of the Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq.

Hassan himself seems to embody the Kurdish mentality. When he has something positive to say, he looks melancholy. "Since the Fall of Saddam Hussein the Kurds have been born again," said Rashid Tahir Hassan, lowering his eyelids and pausing. He takes a sip from his glass of tea and glances out the window. Then he adds, "We no longer live from one day to the next; for the first time in our history we are planning for the future."

A glance out of the window of the Director General for Finance of the Kurdish regional government shows how far the future of Kurdistan has already flourished: around the Ministry of Finance, as in many places in the city, build-

ing are shooting up. Apartment buildings, offices, warehouses it looks as if everywhere in Erbil is under construction. The most recent strike on the headquarters of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), which killed 60 people, has not been forgotten. But the Kurds have clearly decided not to let this intimidate them. The worst told about the strike is that two Kurds helped to carry it out. The fact that Kurds betrayed their countrymen is painful. That they also took money for this is alarming. It helps little that a few days later the authorities arrested the two men and 41 others allegedly responsible.

Money that is a key word today in the northern part of Iraq. You are never allowed to call it Northern Iraq because that offends every Kurd. To the Kurds the region is Kurdistan liberated Kurdistan, as most residents call it today. Liberated from Saddam Hussein and years of oppression. Liberated from the religious constraints of the Islamists and seemingly ready for a new future that goes much further than the older generation can even imagine.

Traveling by car from Erbil to Sulimaniya, it's difficult to believe that this part of Iraq has anything to do with the country known from the TV news. While car bombs explode daily in Baghdad and new mass graves are disco-

vered around the so-called Sunni Triangle, the Kurds are experiencing a regular boom. Not only is Erbil under construction, but also in Dukan new roads are springing up, and in any villages vacation homes are being built. The demand for home ownership and the wish for improvement in the infrastructure are so great that the cement factory in front of the gates of Sulimaniya has been put back in operation.

The clearest sign of the new boom in Kurdistan is the increase in salaries. Before the fall of Saddam Hussein a white collar worker earned 22,000 Iraqi dinar (around \$148)—today 158,000, according to the Ministry of Finance. A clear sign of the upswing is the fact that Kurds have meanwhile become too expensive for some jobs. On the side of the road between Erbil and Sulimaniya you discover tents with Iraqi and Chinese flags in honor of guest workers from China. Thirty-eight men from Beijing who speak neither English nor Kurdish nor Arabic are widening Kurdistan's highway network. They sleep at night on cots in tents on the edge of the construction site.

In Sulimaniya you find more guest workers from their own country. Iraqis from Tikrit or Baghdad are moving to the north because there is work here and a better security situation. During the time of Saddam Hussein the Kurds suffered under the UN sanctions and the additional sanctions of Saddam Hussein's regime. Now the table has been turned. According to the Ministry of Finance, Kurdistan receives 17% of the receipts from petroleum sales. Under Saddam Hussein they received almost no oil money, according to Director of Finance Rashid Tahir Hassan. Kurdistan is today the most prosperous region of the country, and Sulimaniya is the poster child of economic growth. On every corner of the city you find internet cafes fully occupied, department stores opening, and naturally the inevitable Ma Donal Kurdish for McDonald's.

In the streets of Sulimaniya, not only is there more security than in Baghdad but also more freedom than in the southern part of the country. You see women with and without headscarves, you see them in black garments or in jeans with tight t-shirts, you see them openly drinking beer in the afternoons. In restaurants and on the streets you hear cell phones ringing, whose rings sound like pop versions of eastern music. According to young people, there is even a hill in Sulimaniya which is called the Necking Hill. Lovers can spend an evening alone without having to fear the penalty.

And something else is different in Kurdistan: they like Americans here. Both US presidents, father and son Bush, are considered liberators of Kurdistan. The elder, because he imposed the 1991 no-fly zone, which made the Kurds more independent and laid the ground work for today's turn for the better. They treasure the son because he brought down the dictator in 2003.

"We always believed that only communism would free us from Saddam Hussein. Now we've learned that we needed the Americans for that," said Nazar Kahailany. The Kurdish dissident was tortured under Saddam Hussein and fled to Germany 20 years ago. Now he contemplates the future of his country in the lobby of the Ashati Hotel in Sulimaniya. Every evening he meets with politicians from Sulimaniya,

and most of the time his friend Nahamd Baban is also there. Like Kahailany, he returned from exile in Germany to his homeland and soon wants to consider the University of Salahaddin. For him it wasn't difficult to understand the anti-war sentiment of the Germans. Nevertheless, as a Kurd he is still amazed that George W. Bush, in spite of all protests, had the courage to bring down this dictator, thereby liberating the Kurds. If one is an optimist and sees the upswing, you could almost forget that Kurdistan is still in a state of war. On every corner, men stand with Kalashnikovs. In front of hotels, in restaurants, in cars and at traffic stops you see armed Kurds who hold their weapons as if they wouldn't hesitate to use them in a moment's notice. Most of them are peshmerga, the Kurdish militia, who have taken over the responsibility for security everywhere.

Star Ahmed Amin works as a bodyguard for \$20 per day. At age 15 when he became a peshmerga for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the party of today's president Jalal Talabani, he wanted to fight for a free Kurdistan. Translated, peshmerga means "those who face death." Star Ahmed Amin has seen many warthe war against Saddam Hussein, the war against Kurdish brothers of Massud Barsani's KDP, the war against the Islamists. After the end of the Saddam-regime, Star Ahmed Amin feels like a winner. Now he wants to fight against terrorists, which could hamper the future of a liberated Kurdistan. Nevertheless, not all Kurds are completely happy with the development of their region. "We've become greedy," says a young man who doesn't want to be named. In spite all the economic growth and opportunity he is disappointed. "Before, I always believed that our leaders fought for nothing other than a free Kurdistan. We were surrounded by enemies and had to defend ourselves. We stuck together. Now, though, I see that everyone thinks only about himself. Even Mam Jalal and Kak Massud." These are the nicknames of both party leaders Talabani and Barsani.

In addition to this, Talabani and Barsani were able to develop their positions of power after the election in Iraq. Talabani became the president of Iraq. Barsani is the President of Kurdistan. Both have also well established themselves economically. For example, they have divided up the cell phone network among themselves and clarified their claim to oil in the Kirkuk region, in which they are urging Kurds to settle. There is no doubt: the Talabanis and the Barsanis are not only the most powerful, but also the richest families of Kurdistan. Some traditions are difficult to change in Kurdistan.

Vaman Mustafa experiences this daily. The 26-year-old works in the first women's shelter in the region. The "Khanzad Home for Women in Danger" was opened two years ago in Erbil and has since helped close to 400 victims. There are mostly women who are fleeing from violent husbands, fathers or brothers. There is currently a woman in the home who had to save herself from her children. They wanted to kill her because she had sexual intercourse with another man. "Traditional societal norms are not quickly removed," in the opinion of Vaman Mustafa. However, just the fact that there is such a center as the Khanzad shelter shows that a liberation in Kurdistan really is taking place.

(Translated from the original German by Donna Wiss, 17 June 2005.)

Barzani wants Kurdish recognition for Kirkuk, other Saddam "cleansed" areas

Associated Press - By Qassim Abdul-Zahra - June 20, 2005

BAGHDAD - The new president of Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region called on parliament Sunday to recognize the Kurdish identity of Kirkuk, the oil-rich and ethnically mixed city that Kurds want to annex as their capital.

Masoud Barzani, the veteran Kurdish guerrilla leader who was elected last week to lead Iraq's northern Kurdish-dominated region, also called for a repeal of "all demographic and political changes the former regime implemented in Kirkuk and other Kurdish areas."

Saddam Hussein promoted ethnic cleansing of the city during his rule, deporting most Kurds - whom he saw as subversives - while relocating fellow Arabs into the northern city. Since the first Gulf War, the Kurds - under the protection of U.S. and British air patrols - have run large parts of territory they had historically populated in northern Iraq. Huge numbers of Kurds also live in southeastern Turkey, Syria and neighboring Iran. The minority people have never had a country of their own.

Barzani's election last week by Iraqi Kurdistan's regional council gave the region its first single formal leader since it became autonomous under U.S.-protection in 1991. Until last week, Barzani had ruled a section of Iraqi Kurdistan, and his one-time foe and now president of Iraq, Jalal Talabani, was in charge of another.

Speaking before parliament in Baghdad, Barzani called for the implementation of the right to return to Kirkuk by all Iraqis as provided for in Iraq's interim constitution and said "we must ... acknowledge its Kurdish identity."

The Kurds, Washington's most reliable allies in Iraq, comprise 15 percent to 20 percent of Iraq's estimated 26 million people. Together with the Shiite majority, they had been oppressed for decades by the Sunni Arab minority.

The question of whether Kirkuk should join the Kurdish autonomous region or remain part of the remainder of Iraq is expected to be settled in an as yet unscheduled referendum. The city's 1 million residents also include Arabs - both Sunni and Shiite Muslims - as well as Turkomen, who are mostly Sunnis.

The Kurds are also seeking to annex parts of the province of Diyala close to the Iranian border, arguing that they too are part of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Many of Iraq's majority Arabs suspect that the Kurds, empowered by Saddam's ouster, will eventually seek to secede from Iraq, something that some of Iraq's neighbors - like Iran, Syria and Turkey - will try to prevent for fear that it will ignite secessionist sentiments among their own Kurdish minorities.

Kurdish Rebels Reject Appeal To Lay Down Arms

Reuters and AFP - June 16, 2005

DIYARBAKIR - A leading member of Turkey's banned Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) was quoted on Thursday as rejecting an appeal from leading Turkish intellectuals for the rebel organisation to lay down its arms.

A group of 100 intellectuals including best-selling novelist Orhan Pamuk issued a statement on Wednesday demanding the PKK halt all violence "without preconditions" and urging Ankara to seek a lasting peace in mainly Kurdish southeast Turkey.

Also, Kurdish politicians on Thursday joined calls on Kurdish rebels to lay down their arms, following a marked increase in deadly violence in the country's southeast after the militants called off a five-year ceasefire. The appeal came in a joint statement by 14 prominent Kurdish figures, including Leyla Zana, a former lawmaker and internationally renowned campaigner for Kurdish rights, and Tuncer Bakırhan, the head of Turkey's main pro-Kurdish party, DEHAP.

"We are also worried over the atmosphere of increasing confrontation and we hope the clashes will end in the shortest possible time," the statement said. "You cannot ask just one side to disarm ... You have to ask it of both sides. Only

then would it make sense," the Europe-based Mezopotamya news agency, which is close to the rebels, quoted senior PKK member Murat Karayilan as saying.

He said the government bore responsibility for the continued violence because it had showed no interest in a dialogue. Dozens of people have died in the past few months in clashes between the guerrillas and Turkish security forces, stirring fears of a return to the kind of large-scale violence which plagued southeast Turkey in the 1980s and 1990s.

Turkish newspapers on Thursday quoted EU ambassadors based in Ankara as expressing concern over the increased violence in southeast Turkey. The papers said the envoys had urged Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan during a dinner earlier this week not to rely only on military means to tackle the problems of the southeast but to devise economic policies to cut poverty and unemployment.

In response to the envoys' criticism, the deputy head of Turkey's powerful General Staff, General Ilker Basbug, said the prime responsibility of the security services was to fight "terrorists" and he vowed that they would continue to do so.

Gen. Basbug defends military operations in Southeast

Turkish Daily News - June 17, 2005

ANKARA - A top military commander said yesterday that Turkish security forces would continue to battle the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in southeastern Anatolia after European Union-member ambassadors criticized military measures in the impoverished region and suggested non-military alternatives.

"The responsibility of security forces in the region is to fight terrorists," Deputy Chief of General Staff Gen. Ilker Basbug told reporters yesterday.

"The security forces are carrying out their duties today, just like they have done in the past and will continue to do so in the future."

Dutch Ambassador Sjoerd Gosses told a dinner gathering hosted by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan for EU-member ambassadors in Ankara that the situation in the Southeast, the scene of large-scale military operations, is a matter of great concern for the bloc.

Erdogan, however, later said there was no mention of the issue at Wednesday night's dinner and added he would have explained the necessity of military operations if the issue had been raised.

"I would have told them the operations would continue as long as the terrorist organization maintained its stance," he said.

Turkey is expected to start accession talks with the EU on

Oct. 3, and the situation in southeastern Anatolia is a potential hitch in relations, with the EU advocating social and economic measures to eliminate regional economic discrepancies and better integrate the mostly Kurdish region with the rest of the country.

Basbug said non-military measures were already being taken and added that he could not understand why EU officials are complaining now.

The Turkish military launched military operations to hunt down PKK militants infiltrating Turkey from bases in northern Iraq after the outlawed group declared an end to a five-year unilateral cease-fire last year.

Reports have said militants enter from northern Iraq transporting explosives.

Turkey is pressing the United States and the Iraqi administration to crack down on the group, but there is no sign of any action yet.

Erdogan, speaking during a visit to Lebanon yesterday, said the PKK had murdered 50 security officials and civilians over the past five months and said commitments on paper are not enough to resolve the issue.

Emin Sirin, an independent deputy in Parliament, presented yesterday a formal question to Erdogan asking whether the prime minister was planning to seek parliamentary authorization for military action in northern Iraq.

Rebel group says eight Turkish soldiers killed in clashes in southeast

Roj TV (from BBC Monitoring)
June 18, 2005

The HPG [People's Defence Forces] has announced that violent clashes are taking place as a result of the Turkish army operations. Accordingly, eight soldiers were killed in Cukurca, including three officers.

Based on information released by the HPG Press and Liaison Centre, the Mesopotamia News Agency reports that the Turkish army is continuing to carry out operations in several areas in Kurdistan.

Violent clashes are taking place as a result of these operations. Lately, eight soldiers, including three officers, were killed in the Maruko area outside Cukurca District in Hakkari.

Violent clashes took place at Bilican pass and Serani hills. No information has been received yet about the outcome of these clashes.

Clashes are also reported in Geliyezap and Dejtahane areas in Cukurca and Garisa in Desta region in Sirnak. The HPG Press and Liaison Centre announced that Sahap Durmaz, a fighter known as Diyar, was killed in a clash in Pamuklu and Golek regions in Dersim's Mazgirt District. Meanwhile, Turkish military officials have announced that two guerrillas were killed in clashes outside Tutak village in Van's Gulpinar District.

The HPG has not issued a statement in connection with that development.

The funeral of the first lieutenant who was killed in a clash in Cukurca's Hakantepe area on 17 June took place in Adana today.

Also, Commando Corporal Zafer Konak who was seriously wounded in a recent clash in Elazig's Aricak District died in hospital.

El Watan

Edition du 13 juin 2005

LA GUERRE EN IRAK

Les Kurdes ont un président

Tout était réglé comme sur du papier à musique, et pour cette raison, les regards sont braqués sur le Kurdistan irakien, théâtre - il y a quelques jours - d'un congrès du PKK turc, et hier de l'élection d'un chef de l'Exécutif local.



Autant dire que le Kurdistan irakien se dote d'institutions qui font grincer des dents du côté turc de la frontière où l'on appréhende la proclamation d'un du même nom, ce qui porterait la contagion dans le Kurdistan turc. A vrai dire, les Turcs ont accru leur surveillance et leurs avertissements dès l'été 2002, soit près d'une année avant l'invasion de l'Irak par les Etats-Unis et l'émergence sur la scène politique locale de la communauté kurde, dont un des leaders, Jalal Talabani, a été désigné chef de l'Etat irakien. Un joli pied de nez à l'histoire d'où les Kurdes étaient exclus, voire pourchassés. Moment de grande solennité hier lorsque le Parlement kurde, réuni à Erbil à 350 km au nord de Baghdad, a élu à l'unanimité de ses 111 membres, Massoud Barzani président de la région autonome du Nord du pays et décidé de repousser à demain son investiture. M. Barzani a obtenu les voix des 42 députés de sa propre formation, le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan, les 42 de l'Union démocratique du Kurdistan (UPK), de son allié le président Jalal Talabani, et les 27 autres des petites formations kurdes, a-t-on annoncé après le vote. « Le choix de M. Barzani à la présidence de la région couronne des centaines d'années de lutte, jalonnées de milliers de martyrs », a déclaré après le vote le président du Parlement kurde, Adnane Al Mufti. « La prestation de serment, qui était prévue aujourd'hui, a été repoussée à mardi, plusieurs responsables n'ayant pas pu arriver à Erbil en raison des conditions atmosphériques », a-t-il dit en référence à une tempête de sable. « Je félicite les Kurdes, les familles des peshmergas (combattants kurdes) en cette journée qui verra l'un des leurs devenir président du Kurdistan pour oeuvrer à protéger leurs droits et défendre leurs intérêts. C'est une journée historique que tous les Kurdes doivent célébrer », a-t-il déclaré. Le chef de l'assemblée Adnane Al Mufti a déclaré vendredi que le Parlement devait élire au poste de président de la région autonome, M. Barzani, fils du légendaire Mollah Moustafa Barzani, père du nationalisme kurde. La réunion s'est d'ailleurs tenue sous un portrait géant du chef défunt qui avait revendiqué au milieu du siècle dernier l'autonomie et les bannières kurdes, vert, blanc et rouge avec un soleil jaune et du drapeau irakien d'avant l'arrivée au pouvoir du parti Ba'ath, du président déchu Saddam Hussein. Les deux grandes formations de la région le PDK et l'UPK ont voulu donner à la réunion un éclat particulier. Anciennes rivales qui se sont affrontées dans le milieu des années 1990 pour le partage des revenus de la région alors qu'elle échappait au contrôle du gouvernement de Saddam Hussein, les deux formations kurdes ont forgé une alliance depuis la chute de l'ancien régime en avril 2003 pour défendre l'autonomie de leur région, dans un Irak fédéral. Mais le PDK et l'UPK ont mis quatre mois, après les élections générales du 30

janvier, pour parvenir à un accord sur la présidence de la région, une entente qui a permis de réunir le 4 juin le Parlement régional kurde. En contrepartie du soutien du PDK à la candidature de M. Talabani à la présidence de l'Irak, qu'il a effectivement assumée le 7 avril, M. Barzani a obtenu celle de la région kurde pour une période de quatre ans. Qu'en est-il par ailleurs des relations avec les autres composantes de l'échiquier ethnique et politique irakien, et des voisins principalement la Turquie attentive tout ce qui se déroule à ses frontières ? L'on se rappelle que l'actuel chef de l'Etat irakien, Jalal Talabani, s'était montré rassurant avec les autorités turques dès l'été 2002, en rappelant qu'il n'était pas question de proclamer un Etat kurde. La question avait été relancée, avec la bataille de Kirkouk que les Kurdes d'Irak voulaient élever au rang de capitale de leur territoire. Mais c'était le pétrole qui suscitait les

convoitises, car estimaient certains spécialistes, en accaparant Kirkouk, les Kurdes d'Irak allaient se donner les moyens de leur politique. Ils avaient sous leurs pieds un fabuleux réservoir de pétrole. Les Kurdes qui disposent de nombreux symboles de souveraineté, franchiront-ils d'autres paliers ?

T. Hocine

Le Baas recommande d'accorder la nationalité syrienne à quelque 225.000 Kurdes



DAMAS, 14 juin (AFP) - 16h05 - Le parti Baas au pouvoir a recommandé d'accorder la nationalité syrienne à quelques 225.000 Kurdes qui étaient considérés comme des étrangers, selon les recommandations de son congrès publiées mardi par la presse.

Selon des responsables de partis kurdes syriens, 225.000 Kurdes sont privés de la nationalité à la suite du recensement de 1962 qui ne les avait pas comptabilisés, auxquels il faut ajouter 75.000 autres sans papiers.

Pour les autorités de Damas, des dizaines de milliers de Kurdes viennent des pays voisins tels que l'Irak et la Turquie, et n'ont donc pas le droit à la nationalité.

Le congrès du Baas qui s'est réuni du 6 au 9 juin a "affirmé la nécessité de régler le problème du recensement organisé en 1962 à Hassaké (nord) et d'oeuvrer pour le développement de la région" nord-est où sont installés la majorité des 1,5 million des Kurdes syriens.

Les responsables kurdes se défendent de toutes visées sécessionnistes et assurent qu'ils veulent uniquement la reconnaissance de leur langue et de leur culture, ainsi que de leurs droits politiques.

Des manifestations ont eu lieu début juin dans le nord de la Syrie notamment à Qamichli, après le décès d'un influent ouléma kurde, Maachouk Khaznaoui, assassiné selon les autorités par une "bande criminelle".

En mars 2004, de violents heurts avaient opposé la population kurde aux forces de l'ordre ou à des tribus arabes à Qamichli, faisant de 25 à 40 morts, selon les sources.

Dix-sept rebelles maoïstes et deux kurdes tués dans des affrontements



DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 18 juin 2005 (AFP) - 9h32 - Dix-sept rebelles maoïstes appartenant à un mouvement clandestin, le Parti communiste maoïste (MKP), ont été tués lors de deux jours d'affrontements dans l'est du pays avec l'armée turque, ont annoncé samedi les autorités.

Un bilan fourni vendredi par les autorités sur ces combats faisait état de neuf rebelles tués.

Les combats se sont produits dans une vallée reculée de la région montagneuse de Tunceli, fief des militants kurdes et de mouvements d'extrême gauche, précise un communiqué du gouvernorat de Tunceli.

Des opérations, soutenus par des hélicoptères, sont en cours dans cette zone, ajoute le document.

Le parti communiste maoïste souhaite renverser le gouvernement d'Ankara et instaurer en Turquie un régime communiste.

Il s'agit des combats les plus meurtriers de ces dernières années.

Dans des accrochages séparés, à Van, près de la frontière iranienne, les soldats turcs ont abattu deux rebelles du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatiste), a rapporté l'agence de presse semi-officielle Anatolie, citant les responsables locaux.

Le PKK a mené une lutte armée de 1984 à 1999 pour un Etat kurde indépendant dans le sud-est anatolien, qui a fait 37.000 morts.

19/06/2005 12:14

BAGDAD (AFP) - Irak: le résident du Kurdistan défend les revendications kurdes



Le nouveau président du Kurdistan irakien, Massoud Barzani, a défendu dimanche les revendications de sa communauté devant le parlement irakien, indiquant que la nouvelle Constitution devait être basée sur les accords précédents et l'actuelle loi intérimaire.

"Si nous nous basons sur la Loi administrative transitoire (TAL) et nos accords conclus avant la chute (du président déchu Saddam Hussein), alors nous pourrions écrire et approuver la Constitution à temps", a déclaré l'ancien chef combattant kurde aux députés lors d'une séance du parlement, à Bagdad.

"Nous sommes tous d'accord sur le fait que la TAL devrait être la base et nous devons nous en tenir à cela. Nous ne devons pas nous en éloigner", a-t-il insisté. La TAL a été rédigée et adoptée par le Conseil de gouvernement irakien mis en place par les autorités d'occupation qui ont gouverné l'Irak après la chute du régime de Saddam Hussein en avril 2003 jusqu'à juin 2004. Cette loi stipule la rédaction d'une Constitution définitive pour le 15 août qui doit être ensuite soumise à un référendum d'ici le 15 octobre. Un délai de six mois est autorisé.



"Nous promettons encore une fois de coopérer à la construction d'un Irak fédéral, démocratique pluraliste", a encore dit M. Barzani, qui avait troqué l'habit traditionnel kurde pour un costume sombre. "Nous devons rectifier toutes les raisons et conséquences des changements imposés par l'ancien régime à la composition démographique du pays, à Kirkouk et dans d'autres régions kurdes", a-t-il souligné. Les Kurdes, longtemps opprimés sous le régime de Saddam Hussein et désormais en position de force au gouvernement avec les chiites, font le forcing pour ancrer le principe du fédéralisme dans la nouvelle constitution.

Ils veulent aussi que la ville de Kirkouk, à 255 km au nord de Bagdad, fasse partie de leur région autonome, qui regroupe trois provinces dans le nord du pays. Cette revendication a suscité la colère des Arabes sunnites et Turcomans de Kirkouk, qui a été le théâtre de violences ces derniers jours. Les Kurdes réclament le retour dans cette ville de tous ceux qui en avaient été chassés lors de la campagne d'arabisation menée par le régime de Saddam Hussein, ainsi que le recouvrement de leurs propriétés. Ce point est stipulé dans l'article 58 de la TAL.

Attentat suicide à Kirkouk



KIRKOUK Dix-neuf personnes ont été tuées et 63 autres blessées dans un attentat suicide commis hier matin devant une banque de Kirkouk, selon le dernier bilan de la police de cette ville pétrolière du nord de l'Irak. L'attentat aurait été commis par un kamikaze, portant un ceinture d'explosifs, alors que fonctionnaires, policiers et retraités faisaient le queue pour toucher leurs salaires. Parmi les victimes figurent aussi de jeunes vendeurs ambulants de légumes de ce quartier très animé. D'après la police, l'attaque est l'une des plus sanglantes dans sa ville depuis la chute de l'ancien régime en avril 2003. Kirkouk est le centre de l'industrie pétrolière dans le nord de l'Irak. Les tensions y sont vives entre les Arabes, les Kurdes et les Turcomans qui l'habitent.



M. Barzani veut que son pays s'appelle République fédérale d'Irak

BAGDAD, 20 juin (AFP) - 16h03 - Le nouveau président du Kurdistan irakien, Massoud Barzani, a souhaité lundi que son pays s'appelle désormais la République fédérale d'Irak et que ce nom soit inscrit dans la Constitution.

"Nous voulons que le nouveau nom de notre pays soit la République fédérale d'Irak", a-t-il dit lundi lors d'une conférence de presse à Bagdad.

Il a fait un plaidoyer en faveur de ce système et s'est proposé d'aider les régions qui voulaient se constituer en région fédérale.

"Celui qui veut imposer un gouvernement centralisé veut diviser l'Irak. Notre expérience prouve que le fédéralisme représente l'unification de l'Irak et non pas la division, et celui qui croit le contraire se trompe", a dit le chef du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK).

Il a également lancé un appel aux autres provinces d'Irak à se constituer en régions autonomes.

"L'expérience d'autonomie au Kurdistan peut être appliquée sans aucun doute à d'autres régions irakiennes et nous sommes prêts à transmettre aux autres notre expérience et nous les invitons à venir au Kurdistan pour qu'ils se rendent compte de leurs propres yeux" de la situation, a souligné le chef kurde.

L'idée d'une ou de plusieurs régions autonomes pour les chiites dans le centre et le sud de l'Irak est dans l'air depuis plusieurs mois.

Ainsi début juin, le gouverneur de la province de Kerbala, Okaïl Khazali, a annoncé la création d'un comité chargé de déterminer, d'ici la fin du mois, s'il vaut mieux s'associer avec la province de Najaf, plus au sud, ou avec ceux de Babylone, plus au nord, et de Wasset, plus à l'est.

Le comité aura jusqu'au 30 juin pour trancher cette question. C'est sur la base de ses recommandations que les autres provinces seront approchées, avait indiqué le responsable régional.

En mars, un chef tribal et député, Abdel Karim al-Mohammadaoui, avait lancé un appel à la mise en place dans le sud du pays d'une région autonome chiite, à l'instar de la zone kurde dans le nord.

Selon la loi fondamentale, en vigueur actuellement en Irak, trois gouvernorats (provinces) peuvent se regrouper en région autonome, à l'exception de Bagdad et de Kirkouk.

"Depuis la création de l'Etat irakien, il y a plus de 80 ans, nous n'avons connu que la tyrannie et la dictature, nous étions gouvernés par des gouvernements non élus, qui imposaient leur force par les chars", a souligné M. Barzani, faisant allusion à la royauté puis au régime républicain qui a suivi en 1958.

"Que voulez-vous? Que nous répétions l'expérience (...) du passé ou qu'on se mette au travail pour mettre en place un mécanisme fédéral qui fonctionne et résolve nos problèmes comme c'est le cas en Allemagne", a-t-il ajouté.

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Syria under Bashar Assad

One of the last survivors of a dying breed

ALEPPO, DAMASCUS AND QAMISHLI

The regime shows no sign of collapse but under the surface all is not well

HOT winds scour the open plains of north-east Syria, whisking the chaff from a record wheat harvest into twirling genies and churning up dust clouds that seem to swallow whole villages of squat mud houses. Giant lorries ferry herd-loads of sheep to Iraq for sale, passing a returning stream of greasy tankers hauling smuggled petrol.

Away from the crush and intrigue of Damascus, Syria seems a peaceful and ruddily self-reliant if not prosperous place. Yet the appearance, like the cheap Iraqi fuel that tends to be diluted with engine-killing water, is deceptive. Here in the north-east, a sense of ferment extends not only to the large and much-oppressed Kurdish population. Poor native Arab tribes complain of perks, jobs and guns granted to tribeless Arab outsiders, settled here under the ruling Baath party's policy of diluting the mistrusted Kurds. Youthful Bagara and Tayy tribesmen, who have cousins in Iraq, are restive for a different reason. Fired by stories of *jihād*, and with the livelihood of smuggling threatened by shoot-first American patrolling of the border, they are said to chafe at being kept from fighting the infidel intruders.

Such tensions do boil over. Earlier this month, some 50,000 Kurds gathered in the dusty centre of Qamishli, the main (largely Kurdish) town of the north-east, to protest against the mysterious murder of a popular reformist preacher, Sheikh Mashuq

Khaznawi. When a smaller group tried to join, say the Kurds, police beat them back before parting ranks to allow a rabble of slum-dwelling Arabs to pillage Kurdish-owned shops. Pamphlets had earlier been distributed that accused the Kurds of being "agents of Bush and Mossad". Kurdish activists say most of the looters appeared to be from Baathist youth groups.

Syria's Kurds, 10% of the country's 18m people, are used to such things. Forty years ago, 100,000 of them were stripped of Syrian nationality. They and their descendants still have no right to passports, official employment or property ownership. In the 1970s, thousands more lost their lands when the state "Arabised" a 10km (six-mile) strip along the long Turkish border. Syria has no Kurdish ministers, generals, senior judges or Baath party officials. The country's dozen Kurdish parties that demand such things as language rights and fair parliamentary representation, are officially banned. Amnesty International lists Sheikh Khaznawi as the sixth Syrian Kurd to have died as a result of police ill-treatment in the past 15 months alone.

Obviously, Kurds share the general scepticism with which other Syrians greet the talk of reform coming now from Damascus. Such talk grew loud in advance of the Baath party congress earlier this month. In the event, the rhetoric sounded musty as ever, and the announced changes looked puny. These included,

among other things, a review of the emergency laws that have been applied since the Baathists took power in 1963, moves to disentangle the party from the state, and laws to lift some restrictions on the press and on the formation of political parties.

Many foreign commentators described Syria's government as having missed a last chance to improve its image at the congress. Noting mounting troubles, from Syria's recent humiliating exit from Lebanon, to American sanctions, to anger over Syria's alleged failure to stop *jihād* crossing the border into Iraq, to falling oil sales, soaring unemployment and stirring unrest among Kurds, Sunni Islamists and liberal intellectuals, some predicted an early end to Baathist rule. The latest rumblings from Washington, moreover, indicate that the Americans, after some hesitation, have opted to isolate the Baathist government still more. They will blame Syria for any political violence in Lebanon. And they have hinted at plans to impose a no-fly zone or perhaps a security corridor on Syria's side of the Iraqi border.

Yet, perhaps because they are used to being governed very badly, knowledgeable Syrians seem less edgy than might be expected. Five years after he succeeded his ruthless father, President Bashar Assad, aged 39, has certainly not lived up to initial hopes for change. The early release of hundreds of political prisoners was followed by the rounding up of dozens more. Moves to liberalise the economy became mired in corruption and red tape. Often, Mr Assad seemed to have little control over fiefs carved out by his father's cronies.

But there is no sign that the younger Assad's grip is weakening. In some respects it may be growing stronger. This is not only because opposition to Baathist rule has failed to coalesce: witness the Kurds' 12 rival parties. Nor is it only because middle-

class Syrians, wary of the messiness of their similarly sectarian neighbours, Iraq and Lebanon, tend to prefer the devil they know to ones they don't. ("Of course we all want change," says a Damascus trader. "But when you ask at what cost, most of us shut up.") Mr Assad remains peculiarly popular. This is hard for anyone who did not live under his father's regime to imagine. But simple things like allowing satellite dishes, letting the internet spread and cutting import duties have won him a great deal of goodwill.

Mr Assad has also, slowly but with increasing urgency, drawn the levers of power into his own hands. The Baath congress was less notable for action it failed to

take than for Mr Assad's sweeping changes in his ruling circle. Sixteen of 21 members of the Regional Command, the party's governing body, got sacked. The new command, cut to 15 members, is dominated by younger types directly loyal to the president. Similar changes have overtaken the army and security forces. Even in private business, Mr Assad's close kin and friends, many from his Alawite sect that makes up a bare tenth of Syria's population, have elbowed themselves into dominance.

And there are signs that the president, despite speechifying over the glories of the Baath, will ignore the party if necessary. The recent appointment of a respected non-Baathist, Abdullah Dardari, as deputy

prime minister with broad oversight of economic policy, suggests a will to push the limits of the party's new-found commitment to what it calls a "social market economy". About time. Forty years ago, Syria was the second richest of 22 Arab countries. Now its ranking has dived.

Yet if Mr Assad has given himself better means to effect rapid change, he must act quickly. The world is watching closely. He has been humiliated in Lebanon. His people are disillusioned, restless and tired of isolation. The Americans want him out. Despite his grip on the organs of repression, his long-term prospects for turning his country round—and staying on top of it—look increasingly bleak. ■

Iran

Bombs amid polls

TEHRAN

The presidential election campaign hots up in more ways than one

"PSYCHOLOGICAL warfare" is how Ali Yunessi, Iran's intelligence minister, described a spate of explosions that went off around the country on and after June 12th, killing seven people in the south-western town of Ahwaz and three in the capital, Tehran. He and other officials believe that the bombers' common aim was to throw Iran's presidential election campaign into disarray a few days before the polls opened, on June 17th, and to keep nervous voters at home.

Iranian officials have been at pains to distinguish between the three big bombs that targeted government officials in Ahwaz and the amateurish devices that exploded in Tehran and other places, including Qom, a seminary town. Many have linked the Ahwaz bombs to April's ethnic rioting there, which was probably caused by agents provocateurs and brought members of the city's Arab minority into conflict with the police. (The Arabs came out worse; five were killed.) Three Arab nationalist groups have put their names to the Ahwaz explosions, but the bombers, says Mr Yunessi, "have links abroad".

That would not be a surprise. Khuzestan, the oil-rich province of which Ahwaz is the capital, is home to most of Iran's 3m Arabs, and neighbouring Arab countries have a long tradition of stoking irredentism there. The Iranians feel uncomfortably close to the chaos across the border in Iraq, where they have as many enemies among the Sunni minority as they have friends among their fellow Shias. One official said that the bombs that went off in Ahwaz had similar devices to those used by Saddam Hussein's security forces. An-

other blamed the Americans and British for sending bombers across the border.

All agree that there was a foreign hand behind the Ahwaz blasts; there is no such consensus on whom to blame for the other explosions, which started several hours later. This week, an ally of Mostafa Moin, the reformist who aims to replace the outgoing president, Muhammad Khatami, observed drily that the conservative candidates, rattled by Mr Moin's recent surge in the polls, have most to gain from the increased insecurity. In private, another reformist official said that some conservative hardliners had been arrested in connection with the Qom explosion.

Whatever the truth, Mr Moin has had a good week, while his conservative foes have struggled. The editor of *Keyhan*, a hardline newspaper, castigated the conservatives for failing to unite around a single candidate, thus splitting the conservative vote; later this week, one dropped out.

Fighting against voter apathy and public scepticism over the reformists' ability to keep promises in the face of an all-powerful conservative establishment, Mr Moin's allies have campaigned vigorously—and to good effect. Some recent polls suggest that he has edged into second place, ahead of Muhammad Ghalibaf, a former police chief running as a modernising conservative, and that he is well-placed to challenge Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, a pragmatic former president and long-established front-runner, in a run-off between the two leading candidates, provided none gets more than 50% in the first round.

The Moin campaign's new zip was evident at a well-attended rally in Tehran on

June 14th. The most effective speakers were reformists who said that they had favoured boycotting the election in protest at the conservatives' disdain for democracy, but that they now believed that voting was the only way to prevent repression. "I hear the sound of military jackboots," declared one such reformist, Fatemeh Haqiqatju, in a dig at the military background of some of the conservative candidates.

As polling day drew near, Mr Moin threatened to withdraw from the race in protest against attacks on his supporters by conservatives. Such violence appears to have increased along with his popularity. A former parliamentary speaker now in the Moin camp was assaulted by conservative zealots as he tried to address a reformists' rally in Qom.

The campaign had threatened to be a pointless yawn when Mr Moin was disqualified from standing by a conservative watchdog body. Then the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, stepped in to reinstate him. The result is the most pluralistic and unpredictable presidential contest since the 1979 revolution—and a surprisingly good advertisement for Iran's supervised semi-democracy. ■

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Heroes wanted

BAGHDAD, MOSUL, TAL AFAR AND TIKRIT

Amid an explosion of insurgent violence, America pitches Iraqi forces into the fight

BAHRO TAHIR is not the brightest soldier in Iraq's new army. Last week, at an American-assisted military academy in Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's home town, he began basic training for the fourth time. It was not that he wanted to spend another month studying tedious human-rights law and drilling under a blistering sun; Mr Tahir did not want to do that at all. Rather, according to the academy's Iraqi instructors, Iraqi army commanders tend to send to basic training only those too friendless or dim to wriggle out of it, which included Mr Tahir. "They said they were sending me here for a computer course," he lamented, to the amusement of the recruits within ear-shot, except for another basic-training veteran, who turned out to be deaf.

The instructors had more pressing concerns than the quality of their recruits. Two months ago, Iraq's Ministry of Defence took over the job of paying its employees, up to then paid by America, and since then they had not seen a cent. Language is also a problem, with half the recruits speaking Arabic and the others Kurdish, and few instructors knowing both.

Perhaps the worst problem is the quality of leadership. The Iraqi colonel nominally in charge of the academy tried to employ his relatives, said his American supervisors, including one who was subsequently arrested in murky circumstances. He would not have been the first insurgent to practise on the academy's range: after the fighting in Fallujah, last November, American marines found the academy's badges on enemy corpses. Asked to estimate how many of the academy's students were motivated by a desire to help their country, Major Donald McArdle, the American in charge, reckoned 5%; his colleagues thought this too high.

Senior American officials have made somewhat bolder claims for the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), currently numbering 169,000 soldiers, paramilitaries and police. They are supposed, after all, to be America's exit strategy from a military intervention that has so far claimed nearly 1,700 American lives—and which, according to a poll released this week, six out of ten Americans now oppose (see page 39).

In recent weeks, ISF units have taken

charge of small areas of Baghdad and Mosul. By the end of this year, when elections are due to be held under a new constitution, they are supposed to number 230,000, and to be operating in divisions. America would withdraw, or so officials say, some troops early next year.

That is a pipedream. Corrupt, patchily trained and equipped, often abysmally led and devoid of confidence, most army units cannot operate above platoon-size. Between Iraqis and Americans there is deep mistrust: Iraqi units billeted on American bases are fenced off from their hosts as a security measure.

For every vaunted ISF success, examples of cowardice and incompetence abound. Even when stiffened by American forces, the ISF often flee when under attack. Iraqi marksmen have a habit of closing their eyes and spraying bullets in "death-blossoms", in GI slang. Some of the better units, including the 12-battalion, mostly Shia, police commandos, are accused of torture and sectarian violence.

Sleeping partner

Not that most American commanders—many of whom are on their second or third tour of Iraq, and want it to be their last—admit these deficiencies. To "put an Iraqi face" on operations, they are often accompanied by an Iraqi counterpart. But during operations observed by this correspondent in the violent northern town of Tal Afar last week, the "Iraqi face", that of a genial Kurdish general, spent much time ►►

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► with its eyes closed, gently dozing.

And yet and yet. Given that only a single American-trained Iraqi battalion existed a year ago, there has been a lot of progress. Desertion rates among the ISF, chronic last year when whole battalions hotfooted it, are currently low. With better leadership—if this could only be found—about 40% of army and paramilitary battalions are thought to be close to operating with minimal American support, and another 25% are only six months behind. Within 12-18 months, it is said, these units should be operating independently.

Furnishing them with the necessary headquarters and support units will take longer. As will the training of the police. Self-belief is likely to emerge only under an effective Iraqi government, which could still be a year away, or more. Top American officers in Iraq say that the United States should not contemplate making significant troop withdrawals for at least two years, perhaps longer.

A recent night-time raid with Iraqi soldiers and police commandos in Khalis, a mostly Sunni district north of Baghdad, illustrated both progress and shortcomings. The Iraqi officers were stirred to issue orders to move only on learning that their American mentors—part of a new scheme to embed 10,000 American troops in the ISF—were on the way. The orders then sparked terror in the ranks. Soldiers asked to be excused from the mission, complaining of sore limbs or faulty weapons. Many took sedatives, which Iraqi troops use to control their panic. "Better they take drugs than run away," an Iraqi officer explained. "Most of these guys haven't had much military experience or training and the insurgents are ferocious."

Having encircled the first target-house, the stoned warriors charged, firing their Kalashnikov assault rifles into the night sky. Inside the house, they grabbed two youths and shot a third in the shoulder as he tried to escape. They then ransacked every room, found a video camera and several cassettes and threatened the prisoners with summary execution. The youths admitted to having filmed insurgent attacks. Both were soldiers of the old regime and former residents of Fallujah. The injured prisoner received no medical attention as the ISF rampaged on to the next target.

The billowing violence

No wonder they were scared. The past two months have seen a staggering explosion in violence, even by Iraq's standards. Over 1,000 people have been killed, mostly by some 160 suicide bombers. On June 14th, a suicide bomber killed 22 people and injured more than 80 in Kirkuk, an oil-rich city disputed between Kurds and Arabs. Throughout this week, dozens of bodies of soldiers and government contractors were found littered across western Iraq, most of



them shot in the head.

So much for the notion that Iraq's elections in January had quelled the insurgency—a delusion to which some American officials are still prone. "I think everyone understands that it's getting better every day," said Lieutenant-Colonel Michael Gibler last week in Mosul, which was hit by over 30 suicide bombers in April and early May. "Of course, every nation that's got IEDs [improvised explosive devices] and drive-by shootings and suicide bombers has definitely got some security issues, and this country has got those. But we're working to change that." The colonel received a phone call minutes later, informing him that four of his men had been injured by a suicide bomber.

To be sure, there are some small causes for hope amid the savagery. Since the elections—in which few of the Sunni Arabs who dominate the insurgency voted—Sunni religious and political leaders have held talks with American and Iraqi officials, and some have indicated that they will support the next election. This week, the national security minister announced



Soldier and suspects

a plan to offer amnesty to some insurgents, in an effort to separate those Sunnis who merely fear being marginalised by the Shia majority from dead-end Islamist fanatics. Yet it is not clear what influence, if any, the Sunni leaders could wield over their divided people. Worryingly, members of the National Dialogue Council, a Sunni group negotiating to bring their community into the political process, this week rejected an offer of 15 seats on a committee formed to draft the country's new constitution.

The fact is that many more Sunni Arabs would have voted in the last election had they not been too afraid to do so. Their areas are no more secure now. Indeed, parts of Anbar province, the Sunni heartland, appear to be sliding deeper into war.

Several small towns, including al-Qaim and Haditha, are in effect held by insurgents—despite an American air assault on the former last month, which followed a firefight in which the marines were briefly outgunned. Even in Fallujah, the symbol of America's refusal to deny the insurgents sanctuary, they are said to have re-established a hold. Last month, Anbar's governor was killed after American troops attacked a house where he was being held hostage and ignited a stockpile of arms.

Eye for an eye

Meanwhile sectarian violence is rising. For two years, Shia pilgrims have been murdered on the road between Baghdad and the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala. Recently, in defiance of an edict by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the most influential Shia cleric, Shia militiamen have taken reprisals. Last month, 14 Sunni clerics were murdered, sparking a wave of tit-for-tat sectarian murders in Baghdad's slums. In the district of al-Bayaa, two men were shot dead in a photography shop prominently displaying a picture of Mr Sistani. "If the government does not find the killers, I will solve the problem myself," vowed the brother of the two men, arguing that Mr Sistani's edict forbids acts of random violence, but not rightful vengeance.

While lawlessness and insurgency endure, so will low-level sectarian killing. But few Iraqi commentators predict civil war anytime soon. The Sunnis are too fractured, and the Shia leaders, secure in their democratic majority, have no wish for it. On May 28th, Muqtada al-Sadr, a hitherto bellicose Shia leader, brokered talks between Sunni clerics and the Shia leaders of the Badr Brigade, a militia accused of killing the clerics. American officials in Iraq were relieved, but still wished Mr Sadr would stop using the American and Israeli national flags as doormats outside his mosque in Baghdad.

And then there are the jihadis. In Tal Afar last month, a Lebanese youth with his hands taped to the steering-wheel of a Chevrolet saloon drove a bomb into a fu- ►►

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► neral procession, killing 25 mourners. Two more suicide bombers then struck the town, killing 35. These death tolls were unremarkable, but the victims were not. They seem to have been selected merely for being members of two tribes, the Sada and the Jolak, who are the (wholly secular) rivals of another tribe, the Qarabash, which happens to be on good terms with the local Islamists. In Iraq these days, it seems, a suicide bomber can be had for the asking.

Who would die so wantonly? It beats American intelligence officers. Asked about Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a notorious—and, according to some reports, one-legged—Jordanian fanatic, a senior American official admitted, “We don’t even know how many legs he’s got.”

Until recently, it was said that all the paradise-seekers were foreigners: that Iraqis didn’t do suicide bombing. This is probably still largely true. In the rare case that a bomber’s nationality is established, it is usually foreign. Saudi, Palestinian, Yemeni, Syrian and Jordanian bombers have been identified. Most of them probably entered the country from Syria. But with Iraq’s own Islamists becoming increasingly radicalised amid the mayhem, a growing minority of suicide bombers appear to be homegrown. Several would-be Iraqi bombers were recently arrested in Mosul. Most were middle-class university students, though, according to the American soldiers who shot and arrested her, one was a middle-aged woman.

Iraq’s own Islamist terrorists?

Strategically, this is a disaster for America. An Iraq refashioned in its image was supposed to persuade angry Arabs of the joys of liberal democracy. Yet the country is now breeding Islamist terrorists of its own. Having no objective but to destroy Americans and the Iraqi government they have helped to create, they will not stop their attacks until American troops quit Iraq, or possibly even after then.

Tactically, for American troops, the suicide bombers are more manageable. Rarely have they penetrated American armour, with many American casualties the result of IEDs, which are much more numerous. Not so for the ISF, however, who drive around in soft-skinned pick-up trucks; 270 Iraqi soldiers and police were killed in May, mostly by suicide bombers. On June 15th, a suicide bomber wearing an Iraqi uniform killed at least 23 people and injured 29 in an army mess hall in Khalis.

In fact, even without killing Americans, the suicide bombers are scoring hits by ensuring that American troops remain deplorably trigger-happy, firing on many innocent motorists, and so creating more insurgents. In eastern Mosul alone, around five such incidents are reported each month. On June 14th, American marines killed five unarmed civilians after firing on

two cars at a checkpoint in Ramadi, having been attacked by a suicide bomber moments before.

In fairness, some American fighters are striving to develop a softer touch. On patrol in Mosul last week, soldiers dropped by shops to ask the locals how they were doing. But, running hunched from shop to shop, rifle at the shoulder, their faces hidden by helmets and mirrored shades, they remained an intimidating sight. One shopkeeper politely asked them not to come again during the day as they were scaring away his customers.

And yet Mosulis, like most Iraqis, do now seem more willing to co-operate with their occupiers. Last year, a hotline for Iraqis to call in with information about the insurgency received barely 100 calls a month. Since the election, it has been receiving 300-400 calls, leading to the killing or capture of several mid-level insurgents.

The impression that there is still hope for America’s forces in Iraq is reinforced farther west, towards the border with Syria, in Ninewa province. American hawks have accused Syria of flooding insurgents across this border, though it is hard to tell how they know this: until recently, America had deployed only 450 combat troops to police 200 miles (320km) of unfenced border and dozens of hostile towns, including Tal Afar, a place of 250,000 people, which saw a full-scale battle between American troops and insurgents last year.

In April, when a 4,000-strong American cavalry regiment was hastily sent to the area, it found virtually every town in insurgent hands, and Tal Afar a ghost-town. Shops were shuttered, schools were closed and the town’s hospital was filled with wounded insurgents. Tal Afar’s 200 policemen were besieged in an Ottoman fortress; the town’s mayor, being alive, was assumed by the Americans to be an

insurgent sympathiser.

Since then, the soldiers have set about proving a simple truth: where American troop numbers are increased, security improves. Columns of Abrams tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles now patrol Tal Afar’s bomb-blasted streets. On its previous deployment, to Anbar, the regiment made many of the mistakes common to American forces in Iraq, admits its thoughtful commander, Colonel H.R. McMaster. These included the tendency to arrest military-age males indiscriminately. In Tal Afar, it is acting according to the intelligence it receives. As a result better intelligence is forthcoming. On a foot-patrol with the regiment in Tal Afar last week, half a dozen people offered information on the insurgents terrorising them. On the strength of one such tip-off the day before, 28 carefully identified suspects were surgically seized.

Wanted: more Americans

Such operations are impressive, but they only confirm what every American soldier in Iraq knows full well: there are far too few of them to secure the place. Even the regiment in Tal Afar is hard-pressed. Though it was sent, in part, to police the border with Syria, it can spare only 300 soldiers to the crossing-point at Rabiya. The unit’s commander said they might be able to slow the flow of arms, but expected them to have no impact on the numbers of suicide bombers entering the country.

Moreover, while the cavalymen rode north, gaps opened behind them. They were previously charged with securing Baghdad’s southern approaches, including the towns of Mahmudiya, Latifiya and Iskandariya, an area riven with sectarian violence. They were replaced by a much smaller force, an exercise in futility, elegantly described by one commentator as “ironing the wrinkle around the shirt.” ■



The Iraqi army’s vulnerable version of a tank

The New York Times JUNE 16, 2005

DETAINEES

Kurds Are Illegally Jailing Arabs and Others, U.S. Says

By ERIC SCHMITT

WASHINGTON, June 15 — Kurdish security forces have seized scores of minority Arabs and Turkmen in the restive city of Kirkuk and secretly transferred them in violation of Iraqi law to prisons in Kurdish-controlled areas of northern Iraq, American officials said Wednesday.

The prisoners have been captured in operations by Kurdish intelligence agents and a Kurdish-led unit of the Kirkuk Police Department, sometimes with the support of American forces in the region, the officials said. The Kurds maintain broad autonomy in northern Iraq, and their intelligence agents are fiercely independent of Iraq's fledgling national intelligence service.

But American military and State Department officials condemned the transfers and said that American troops had not been involved with them, and when made aware of the practice, had sought to stop it.

"We have had serious and credible information about allegations of extrajudicial conduct, both arrests and detentions of individuals in the northern areas of Iraq," a State Department spokesman, Sean McCormack, said Wednesday at the department's daily news briefing.

"Our coalition forces, according to every report that I have, not only were not involved in these activities, but in fact raised their concerns about the fact that they had serious and credible reports that those activities were taking place."

The allegations are contained in a confidential nine-page State Department cable, dated June 5, that was first reported Wednesday by The Washington Post. Mr. McCormack confirmed the existence of the report and its major conclusions, but declined to provide any details.

Kirkuk, at the center of some of Iraq's richest oilfields, has emerged as a tinderbox for the country's major ethnic and sectarian groups, and is considered the most politically volatile city in Iraq.

Since the fall of Saddam Hussein, the Kurds have wrested control from Sunni Arabs and Turkmen of virtually every major government institution in Kirkuk, including the police. They have further consolidated their power by getting a huge turnout in the area during the elections and securing almost two-thirds of the seats in the provincial council.

Minority politicians have accused Kurdish leaders of using intimidation to exercise their authority.

About a week ago, Kurdish officials began saying the Interior Ministry in Baghdad had issued an order dismissing 2,500 Kurdish police officers in Kirkuk, telling them to return to Iraqi Kurdistan. But the Kurdish authorities balked, and Iraqi officials in Baghdad appeared to back away from their edict.

That incident reflected the power struggle between the Arab-dominated national government and the Kurd-dominated local government and police force in Kirkuk, and underscored a rift that American officials fear could intensify into broader violence in the city, which has nearly a million residents.

"The issues that we were talking about did concern the city of Kirkuk and surrounding areas in northern Iraq, and I did talk about the importance of protection of minority rights," said Mr. McCormack. "These allegations and these reports are of very serious concern to us, and we have raised our concerns in a forthright way with the authorities involved, or who we believe to be involved. There's no excuse for going

outside the rule of law to try to resolve any of these pre-existing tensions."

The secret transfers of prisoners pose a potential political problem for the Bush administration, which is perceived inside Iraq to be a strong supporter of the Kurdish leaders and their political parties. Some detainees have complained they were tortured or held for months.

Just this week, President Bush telephoned the Iraqi president, Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, to congratulate him and the Kurdish people on the formation of a unified regional government.

"There's a long-simmering problem we have with the Kurds, and the embassy is working hard to address it," said an American official who has read the cable and who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to comment.

Independent Iraq specialists said the seizures were indicative of the growing ethnic and sectarian tensions around Kirkuk.

"It's hard to know what's really going on," Joost R. Hiltermann, di-

rector of the Middle East office of the International Crisis Group, a conflict-resolution organization, said in a telephone interview from Amman, Jordan.

"The Kurds are very well organized and have security forces of their own," he said. "They arrest people,

Where they are in the majority, Kurds are tightening control.

detain them and interrogate them. Some may have been involved in attacks. But the perception among minorities is that the Kurds are taking people off the street to intimidate other Arabs and extend their control."

The United States military has been aware of allegations of the secret transfers since early this year after family members complained that their relatives had been abducted, said Maj. Richard Goldenberg, a spokesman for the military's 42nd Infantry Division, which has responsibility for much of northern Iraq.

Major Goldenberg acknowledged that some prisoners had been transferred by Kurdish police or security forces to jails outside Kirkuk without proper judicial oversight, in some cases because of overcrowding in the Kirkuk jails.

But he said officers of the Idaho Army National Guard's 116th Combat Brigade, which has specific responsibility for Kirkuk, had intervened with Kurdish authorities to end the practice whenever they learned of it. American officials in Washington said they were aware of about 180 cases of secret transfers, although Sunni Arab and Turkmen politicians have said the number is much higher.

"When they observe things that are less than ideal, soldiers in units like the 116th make every effort to show Iraqis what the right model should be," Major Goldenberg said in a telephone interview from Tikrit.

He said that while American forces had worked closely with Iraqi security forces, including the Kurdish-led Emergency Services Unit, an antiterrorism squad within the Kirkuk Police Department, "the Americans did not have oversight over the judicial process once the prisoners were handed over to Kurdish authorities."

22 are killed by suicide bomber at bank in Iraq

By Edward Wong

BAGHDAD: A suicide bomber blew himself up Tuesday morning in a crowd of retirees waiting to get their pensions from a bank in the contested oil-rich

city of Kirkuk, killing at least 22 people and wounding 80, including women and children, police and hospital officials said.

The attack was the deadliest in Kirkuk since the toppling of Saddam Hussein's government more than two years ago, police officials said.

Bombings in such a large group of civilians have occurred only sporadically in this war, and the assault signaled a rise in violence in Kirkuk, considered the most politically precarious city in Iraq.

Kirkuk is coveted by the country's major ethnic and sectarian groups because of its vast oil fields. The question of who will administer the city is expected to be one of the most contentious issues dur-

ing the writing of the permanent constitution, and analysts say the city could descend into large-scale civil strife.

In a speech before the National Assembly on Tuesday, Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, a Shiite Arab, said that the government was trying to solve the impasse over Kirkuk, but that it was difficult to balance the political demands of the city's Kurds and Arabs.

Most of those killed in the bombing on Tuesday were Kurds, the police said.

The American military said a soldier was killed by a rocket-propelled grenade while on patrol in Baghdad on Tuesday.

The New York Times

For GI's, Iraqi city emerges as test case

By Richard A. Oppel Jr.

TAL AFAR, Iraq: Nine months ago the U.S. military laid siege to this city in northwestern Iraq and proclaimed it freed from the grip of insurgents. Last month, the Americans returned in force to reclaim it once again.

After the battle here in September, the military left behind fewer than 500 troops to patrol a huge region. With so few soldiers and the local police force in shambles, insurgents came back and turned Tal Afar, a dusty, agrarian city of about 200,000 people, into a way station for the traf-

ficking of weapons and fighters from nearby Syria and a ghost town of terrorized residents afraid to open their stores, walk the streets or send their children to school.

It is a cycle that has been repeated in rebellious cities throughout Iraq, and particularly those in the Sunni Arab regions west and north of Baghdad, where the insurgency's roots run deepest.

"We have a finite number of troops," said Major Chris Kennedy, executive officer of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, which arrived in Tal Afar several weeks ago. "But if you pull out of an area and don't leave security forces in it, all you're going to do is leave the door open for them to come back."

"This is what our lack of combat power has done to us throughout the country. In the past, the problem has been we haven't been able to leave sufficient forces in towns where we've cleared the insurgents out."

While officials in Washington insist the military has all the troops it needs, on-the-ground battle com-



During a raid in Avgani, near Tal Afar, an American soldier marked a prisoner.

manders in the most violent parts of Iraq — particularly in such cities as Ramadi, Mosul and Mahmudiya — have said privately that they need more manpower to pacify their areas and keep them that way.

Now, with the pace of insurgent attacks rising and scores of Iraqis being killed daily in bombings and mass executions, Tal Afar and the surrounding area are becoming something of a test case for a strategy to try to break the cycle: using battle-hardened American forces working in conjunction with tribal leaders to clear out the insurgents and then leaving behind Iraqi forces to keep the peace.

Many tribal sheiks here say they favor an all-out assault to rout the city's insurgents, but American commanders say a major attack like the one that leveled Falluja last November is to be

avoided almost at all costs. The bloodshed, destruction of property and alienation of the Iraqi public are too high a price to pay, they say.

A political solution is best, they said, but fiendishly difficult, given the tangle of insurgent pressures and tribal loyalties and divisions.

"If you take all the complexities of Iraq and compressed it into one city, it is Tal Afar," said the commander of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Colonel H.R. McMaster.

The military's decision to reassign the regiment from the "Triangle of Death" area south of Baghdad to the region around Tal Afar was an acknowledgment that it had lost control of the area. The first troops began arriving in April, and nearly 4,000 were in place by mid-May.

On arrival here, commanders found a town that was, for all practical pur-

poses, dead, strangled by the violent insurgents who held it in their thrall.

"Anyone not helping the terrorists can't leave their homes because they will be kidnapped and the terrorists will demand money or weapons or make them join them to kill people," said Hikmat Ameen al-Lawand, the leader of one of Tal Afar's 82 tribes, who said most of the city is controlled by insurgents. "If they refuse they will chop their heads off."

Khasro Goran, the deputy provincial governor in Ninewa, which includes Tal Afar, concurred. "There is no life in Tal Afar," he said in an interview a week ago. "It is like Mosul a few months ago — a ghost town."

There are more than 500 insurgents in Tal Afar, he said, and they project a level of fear and intimidation across the city far in excess of their numbers.

Thoroughfares lined with stores have been deserted, the storefronts covered with metal roll-down gates.

In northeast Tal Afar, a young mother now schools her six children at home after a flyer posted at their school warned: "If you love your children, you won't send them to school here because we will kill them."

A neighbor, Mohammed Ameen, will not let his children play outside. "Standing out in the open is not a good idea," he said.

Tribes sympathetic to the new government have suffered constant assaults at the hands of insurgents and rival tribes. More than 500 mortars have struck lands belonging to the Al-Sada al-Mousawiyah tribe since September, said the tribe's leader, Sheik Sayed Abdullah Sayed Wahab.

"All of my tribe are prisoners in their own homes," he says. "We can't even taken our people to the hospital."

At least 40 members of two predominantly Shiite tribes of Turkomen, the Sada and Jolak, were killed in two car

bombings in May. The perpetrators, American officers said they believed, were members of the predominantly Sunni Arab Qarabash tribe, which they say has strong ties to Syrian fighters and links to the network of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the Qaeda leader in Iraq.

"I need someone to hear my cries for help because we are in a bad situation," Sheik Wali al-Jolak said in an interview at his compound in southwest Tal Afar, only a few blocks from the Qarabash neighborhood. He lost 28 tribe members in the two attacks.

The Tal Afar police force disintegrated last autumn, and the few who remain stay in an ancient hilltop castle, afraid to venture out. Military commanders here caution their men to assume that anyone on the street dressed as a policeman is an insurgent impostor. Insurgents wearing police uniforms shoot at American helicopters and threaten residents.

Even with the new regiment, the U.S.

military lacks troops to adequately patrol the outlying desert and grazing lands, where insurgents have taken over remote villages, providing sanctuary a short distance from Mosul, the country's dominant northern city and an active insurgent hub.

Insurgents use irrigation canals to elude American forces chasing them in armored vehicles that cannot cross the waterways. Smugglers drive through holes cut in the large berm that guards the Syrian border. Remote cinderblock farmhouses serve as safe havens.

At Rabiah, the principal northern border crossing to Syria, several hundred American soldiers arrived three weeks ago and say they have disrupted the smuggling of weapons and money. But they doubt there has been any curtailment yet in the infiltration of foreign fighters, often difficult to distinguish from legitimate travelers.

"As far as foreign fighters coming in

from the border control point, I can't say we've had any impact on that," said Captain Jason Whitten, the company commander whose troops oversee the Rabiah crossing.

In its first weeks here, the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment pressed sweeps deep into desert areas that had not seen a large American presence since the 101st Airborne Division left in early 2004. Instead, many areas had witnessed, at best, only sporadic patrols

that had done little to deter insurgents, commanders say.

"Resources are everything in combat, and when you don't have enough manpower to move around you have to pick the places," said Major John Wilwerding, executive officer of Sabre Squadron, a 1,000-strong unit that now oversees Tal Afar.

Two weeks ago more than 1,000 troops from the new regiment poured into Baij, a town of 15,000 about 65 kilometers, or 40 miles, southwest of Tal Afar, where insurgents had destroyed the police station, and the mayor and the police fled last autumn. Soldiers eventually searched every house in the town, capturing more than a dozen suspected insurgents without a shot being fired.

Baij faces a severe water shortage, and streets are filled with trash and sewage. But the markets and neighborhoods teem with children who give passing American patrols waves and a thumbs-up. Indeed, the town appears to be an example of what happens if there are enough troops to pacify an area and police it effectively afterward.

But commanders plan to withdraw all except 150 American troops and leave a battalion of about 500 Iraqi soldiers, and 200 police, in Baij. The real test, of course, as an American officer stationed there noted, will come once most of the American troops leave.

The New York Times

Plus de 300 entreprises françaises sont présentes en Turquie

ISTANBUL

correspondance

A l'image de Renault, près de 300 entreprises françaises, dont la plupart des grands groupes du CAC 40, ont pris pied sur le marché turc. « Tout a changé depuis 2004, affirme un conseiller du commerce extérieur français à Istanbul. Je constate un intérêt nouveau et soutenu pour le marché turc, qui avait subi un désintérêt profond ces dernières années. Le nombre de contacts a été multiplié par quatre. »

Un constat qu'a pu réaliser Louis Schweitzer, le nouveau président du Medef international, en visite, lundi 13 et mardi 14 juin, à Ankara et à Istanbul en compagnie de 40 grands patrons français. Le sidérurgiste Arcelor s'apprête à acquérir le producteur d'acier turc Erdemir, bientôt privatisé. Le groupe hôtelier Accor, dont la Turquie est une de ses priorités, a lancé une série de chantiers à travers le pays.

« Il est impensable de ne pas être présent en Turquie. Son instabilité faisait peur, mais tout semble rentrer dans l'ordre. Tous les clignotants

sont au vert », assure Patrick Fournier, le directeur régional d'Accor. Et de grands chantiers suscitent la convoitise, comme celui du Marmaray, un tunnel ferroviaire creusé sous le détroit du Bosphore, où Alstom essaye de se placer.

« UN PAYS OUVERT, PROCHE DE L'EUROPE »

« Les secteurs de l'eau, de l'énergie ou des transports ont des besoins particulièrement importants compte tenu de la croissance de la population et de l'urbanisation du pays », constate M. Schweitzer. Areva, par exemple, espère profiter du programme nucléaire concocté par le gouvernement turc qui prévoit la construction de trois ou quatre réacteurs d'ici à 2015. « Nous avions obtenu le contrat de la première centrale en 1997, mais le projet a finalement échoué sur des problèmes financiers, rappelle Paul Felten, vice-président du groupe Areva pour le développement. Maintenant, nous nous plaçons pour un contrat qui sera signé vers 2009. C'est un pays ouvert, proche de l'Europe et il n'y aura pas de difficultés politiques. La question sera le financement. »

Les finances turques ne laissent en effet que peu de marge. « Depuis que l'économie a été placée sous tutelle du Fonds monétaire international [FMI], tous les investissements sont arrêtés », note le conseiller au commerce extérieur. Toute dépense doit être soumise à la « garantie souveraine » du Trésor turc.

« La Turquie a longtemps été un pays de gros contrats pour la France, selon Jean-Antoine Giansily, chef de la mission économique française d'Istanbul. Le gaz d'Istanbul, le stade olympique Atatürk ou les turbines de barrages du Sud-Est anatolien en sont des exemples. Aujourd'hui, on s'attaque à la consommation. »

Des PME, des transporteurs, des sous-traitants automobiles, commencent à investir avec succès dans le pays. Le secteur bancaire tente de rattraper son retard. BNP Paribas a acquis la TEB, dixième banque privée turque. La Société générale ou le Crédit agricole pourraient aussi se lancer dans la bataille d'ici à la fin de l'année.

G. Pe.

17 JUIN 2005



République islamique d'Iran

Superficie 1,65 million de km²
Population 66,5 millions
 dont 50% de Persans,
 20% d'Azéris
 10% de Kurdes
Religion officielle Islam chiite,
 (90% de la population)
PIB/hab. 2 010 dollars (2003)



Guide de la révolution

La réalité du pouvoir appartient au Guide de la révolution. Choisi par les religieux de l'Assemblée des experts, c'est lui qui nomme les membres du Conseil des gardiens de la révolution (6 théologiens et 6 juristes), sorte de Conseil constitutionnel, et ceux du «Conseil de discernement», instance d'arbitrage.

Gardiens de la révolution

Les Gardiens de la révolution (pasdaran), 120 000 hommes, forment une milice créée après la fondation de la République islamique. Très bien encadrés, fortement idéologisés, ils restent le bras armé d'un pouvoir islamique qui continue à se méfier de l'armée.

«Aujourd'hui, l'Iran est dirigé par des hommes qui répriment la liberté chez eux et propagent le terrorisme dans le monde. Le pouvoir est entre les mains d'une minorité non élue, qui le garde par le biais d'un processus électoral qui ignore les règles de base de la démocratie.»

George W. Bush, président des Etats-Unis, hier

Pour les jeunes, «rien ne changera jamais ici»

Pas d'enthousiasme et beaucoup de résignation à l'université de Téhéran. Certains n'iront même pas voter.

Téhéran envoyé spécial

Sur l'avenue de la Révolution, à l'entrée de l'université de Téhéran, le trottoir est tapissé de tracts. Ceux de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, 49 ans, l'actuel maire de la capitale, et le plus radical des sept candidats à la présidentielle. Il incarne la nouvelle génération des «conservateurs idéologiques». Ce ne sont pas les passants qui s'en débarrassent mais le jeune distributeur lui-même, qui trouve sa pile trop grosse. Il n'a pas peur des foudres de l'ancien officier des forces spéciales des pasdaran (les gardiens de la révolution, l'armée idéologique du régime), mais la candidature d'Ahmadinejad, dur parmi les durs, a convaincu certains électeurs réticents d'aller voter pour les candidats réformistes. Pourtant, même sur ses affiches, où le Guide suprême, Ali Khamenei, se trouve en arrière-plan, il cache ses opinions radicales sous un slogan des plus ambigus: «*Le malheur des Iraniens ne vient pas de ce qu'ils n'ont pas mais de ce qu'ils ont.*»

«**Gros richard.**» Si la jeunesse est actuellement choyée par tous les candidats, les étudiants sont, dans l'ensemble, déprimés. Il y a eu la répression des manifestations de 1999 et 2001, et l'échec des deux mandats de Khatami, en qui ils avaient beaucoup cru. Nombreux sont ceux qui n'iront donc pas voter. Mais d'autres sont bien décidés à le faire, même si, comme l'estiment Sabah et Farzaneh, deux étu-



Manifestation de femmes contre la discrimination sexuelle instituée par la République islamique, devant l'université de Téhéran, le 12 juin.

diantes en gestion de 21 ans, «*aucun candidat n'est vraiment bien.*» Elles se résoudront «*à voter peut-être*» pour le religieux Mehdi Karubi, ex-président réformateur du Parlement, dont la mollesse est quasiment légendaire. «*On est bien obligées de choisir quelqu'un. Ça ne sert à rien de boycotter les élections. Les gens iront quand même aux urnes et la situation risque de s'aggraver.*» Elles ne veulent pas entendre parler de Rafsandjani. «*Pendant ses deux mandats, il n'a rien fait*», estime Sabah. «*C'est un gros richard, il ne sait rien*

du malheur des gens», ajoute sa copine. Mohammed, 23 ans, étudiant en mathématiques, hésite encore à aller voter. «*Peut-être pour Moïn (le principal candidat réformateur, ndlr) car si les conservateurs prennent le pouvoir, ça va empirer. Ce qu'il raconte n'est pas mal mais que pourra-t-il faire?*» A l'université, où les gardes ne laissent pas entrer les étrangers, l'ambiance est donc morose: aucun enthousiasme, beaucoup de résignation, parfois de l'indifférence, vraie ou fausse: «*Ce que les*

candidats disent ne m'intéresse pas. Ils sont tous mauvais, et rien jamais ne changera ici», assure Mohsen, 20 ans, qui étudie la musique iranienne. Il s'en prend ensuite à Moïn, le réformateur. «Il ne faut pas oublier son rôle pendant la révolution culturelle. Il a fait chasser des professeurs de l'université. Ceux qui le soutiennent sont d'abord des filles supermaquillées qui ne rêvent que d'une chose: enlever leur foulard. Mais la liberté, c'est autre chose, et s'il n'y en a pas en Iran, c'est parce que nous n'avons aucune culture de la liberté.» Surgit Towhid, 19 ans, étudiant en économie, qui adore Camus. Lui a vraiment la haine au ventre: «Je vous préviens, mon surnom, c'est Attila!» Et d'enchaîner: «On vit derrière un rideau de fer, celui du voile et de la religion. Ici, c'est la capitale, mais allez donc voir comment vivent les gens en province, c'est l'enfer. Il n'y

a qu'une seule solution, l'intervention américaine.»

«Les librairies brûlées». Rencontré dans un café, Abdallah Momeni, 26 ans, secrétaire général du principal syndicat étudiant, le Tahkim-e Wahdat (dont la direction est élue au suffrage universel, ce qui est unique en Iran), est lui aussi pessimiste. «C'est vrai, les étudiants sont dans le désespoir, à

cause de la branche réformatrice du pouvoir. Ils ont vu qu'elle s'est entendue dans leur dos avec les conservateurs. Ces élections ne peuvent pas faire évoluer les choses. Elles ne peuvent que donner de la légitimité à ce système, ce qui sera pire.» Aussi fait-il ouvertement campagne pour le boycott: «Un chemin difficile. C'est interdit, illégal, le gouvernement a dit que cela revenait à vouloir renverser le régime.» Selon lui, il ne fait pas de doute que Rafsandjani sera élu: «Il est là pour remettre le pouvoir en selle, et lui éviter de gros problèmes. A court terme, il va réussir et éviter les scandales. S'il prend le pouvoir, les urgences parallèles seront paralysées et les radicaux freinés. Cela dit, nous, les étudiants, sommes incapables d'oublier ce qu'il a fait sous ses deux mandats, les emprisonnements d'intellectuels, les librairies brûlées...»

Comme le leader étudiant, Reza, jeune économiste qui préfère taire son nom, a été emprisonné pendant plusieurs semaines et il est toujours interdit d'étu-

dier à l'université. Lui, pourtant, mise sur Rafsandjani, même s'il n'ira pas voter pour lui. «Nous lui devons beaucoup de ce que nous avons, comme une certaine détente en ville, la possibilité pour les femmes de faire du sport, et surtout les privatisations. C'est par ces privatisations que nous pourrions peut-être arriver à la démocratie. Il a aussi laissé publier certains journaux d'opposition et des grands poètes, comme Chamlou. Sa nouvelle équipe ne sera pas composée de bons démocrates mais de bons technocrates, qui sauront comment gérer la situation économique. Lui aura l'autorité nécessaire pour changer l'hégémonie culturelle que nos traditions nous imposent.»

«Potion amère». Encore plus convaincu, Mehdi, 25 ans, est venu spécialement d'Oxford, où il étudie la finance, pour participer à la campagne de Rafsandjani. Il voit dans l'ayatollah le remède à tous les maux de l'Iran. Il affirme que le leader a préparé depuis quatre ans son retour au pouvoir, ce qui contredit la version officielle d'une décision prise avec difficultés quelques semaines avant le scrutin, et que l'ex-Président a comparé à une «potion amère» qu'il a été contraint d'avalier pour le bien de la République islamique. «Vous verrez, il a déjà tout planifié, il a mis en place les infrastructures nécessaires, et il a le feu vert des Américains. D'ailleurs, au Royaume-Uni, les conservateurs comme les travaillistes le soutiennent...»

JEAN-PIERRE PERRIN

Le Monde 18 JUIN 2005

Reza Pahlavi, fils aîné du chah d'Iran et de l'impératrice Farah Diba, en exil aux Etats-Unis « Le régime est archaïque. Le pays est prêt à exploser »

Vous avez qualifié l'élection présidentielle de « mascarade », pourquoi ?

Un régime qui a une Constitution qui nie la souveraineté du peuple et où les candidats sont sélectionnés par le régime, où le Parlement ne peut voter les lois qu'il propose, n'est pas un système représentatif du peuple. Ce régime interprète la loi divine comme il l'entend et les élections sont comme des élections en URSS ou sous Saddam Hussein.

Tout cela, c'est pour faire croire au monde qu'ils ont une certaine légitimité. Il faut boycotter l'élection. Voter pour ce régime, c'est prolonger sa survie. S'abstenir sera la démonstration que le peuple rejette cette théocratie. Le peuple veut une nouvelle Constitution laïque basée sur la déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme. Les réformateurs n'ont rien pu faire. On a perdu dix ans. L'heure du changement est venue.

Quel est le taux de participation qui, pour vous, sera considéré comme une victoire ?

Nous pouvons nous attendre à une participation de 30 %, pas plus. Deux tiers d'abstention serait un très bon signe. Mais le régime peut manipuler les résultats et fait pression sur les

citoyens par le tampon obligatoire de vote sur la carte d'identité. Cela dit, je crois que le régime n'est plus en mesure de vouloir menacer nos concitoyens. La crainte et la peur se dissipent de plus en plus. C'est un mouvement collectif de plus en plus profond et qui se propage. Et, il n'est pas seulement le fait d'une élite intellectuelle. Il est de plus en plus enraciné dans le peuple.

Appelez-vous à un soulèvement populaire ?

Le monde libre doit faire pression sur l'Iran. Il ne doit plus céder au chantage nucléaire d'un régime terroriste qui veut accéder à la bombe. Le monde extérieur doit jouer la carte des Iraniens eux-mêmes, ne plus parler aux geôliers mais à ses prisonniers. Il ne faut pas retomber dans le piège du changement de sièges car le jeu de cartes est toujours identique même si les cartes qui sortent sont différentes. Il faut une campagne de désobéissance civile et démocratique appuyée par la communauté internationale. La confrontation est désormais inévitable.

Va-t-elle déboucher sur des violences ?

La violence est inutile. La désobéissance civile est un outil de travail nécessaire et efficace. Il

faut paralyser le système, favoriser la réconciliation nationale. Un Etat policier ne peut contrôler un soulèvement massif. Les Iraniens ne sont pas dupes de ce qui se passe dans le monde, surtout la jeunesse. Le régime est archaïque. Le pays est prêt à exploser. Mais cela ne doit pas se faire dans l'anarchie.

Nous voulons une implosion de manière démocratique et pacifique. Si le champion de la réforme Mohammed Khatami [le président sortant] n'a rien pu faire, ce n'est pas Ali Akbar Rafsandjani, le plus détesté et le plus corrompu du pays, qui va pouvoir faire changer les choses. C'est un régime mafieux, paralysé.

Êtes-vous pour une restauration de la monarchie ?

Le terme restauration a une connotation négative. Les Iraniens doivent pouvoir choisir librement leur avenir. Ma mission se terminera le jour où nous arriverons à des élections libres. A partir de ce jour, je serai prêt à servir mon pays. Je ne me préoccupe pas de mon avenir personnel.

Propos recueillis par Michel Bôle-Richard

Iran's sham democracy

Friday's presidential election in Iran was an affront to true democracy, just as the past record of Ali Akhbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, all along the leading candidate, is an affront to true moderation. As President George W. Bush rightly noted, the voting was effectively rigged in advance by the council of unelected clerics that decided who would and who wouldn't be allowed to run. And this is for a presidency, remember, that has no power to do anything the unelected clerical establishment does not want done, as amply shown by the frustrating eight-year tenure of the departing incumbent, Mohammad Khatami.

As for Rafsanjani, his moderate reputation is plainly undeserved. His

two previous presidential terms, from 1989 to 1997, were scarred by state-sponsored terrorism at home and abroad. Yet Rafsanjani claimed to stand as the sensible centrist alternative, between a right-wing former police chief and a reformist pediatrician whom the clerical council allowed to run at the behest of Iran's real ruler, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

These manipulations tempted millions to stay home, so as not to legitimize a sham exercise. We hope they steeled themselves and voted anyway. A boycott would benefit only the most anti-democratic forces on the clerical right.

For all of its multiple flaws, this election was the best tool available to the Iranian people to indicate which

way they want their troubled country to head over the next four years. It will affect how Iran is run and how it deals with the world. Particularly important is the nuclear weapons issue, now even more critical in light of the latest disclosure that Tehran has been experimenting not just with enriched uranium but also with an alternative nuclear bomb fuel, plutonium.

Some European leaders quietly rooted for Rafsanjani, who is close to the top ayatollahs, in the hope that he would be most able to reach an acceptable nuclear deal and then sell it to the clerical establishment. There is little in his record to justify such hopes.

The world would be better off if Western leaders used their little influence to press for more authentic democracy in Iran.

Iran's divided reformers join forces against a hard-liner

By Michael Slackman

TEHRAN: Warning that Iran's citizens faced the prospect of military interference in selecting their next president, the reform movement in Iran issued a statement Sunday night indicating that it planned to oppose the candidacy of the mayor of Tehran when he faces Ali Akhbar Hashemi Rafsanjani in a runoff for the presidency this week.

But the statement, by the Islamic Participation Front, revealed the fragility of Rafsanjani's candidacy and the factionalized nature of the reform movement. Nowhere in the statement did the party say it would throw its weight behind Rafsanjani, a clear indication that while it strongly opposed Mahmud Ahmadinejad, it was not wholeheartedly prepared to endorse Rafsanjani.

"Two fronts are being formed in the country," the statement said, "one front that wants to move forward by relying on a political military party and wants to be the winner of the election no matter what, and another front which is seriously worried about extremism."

Throughout the day, the reform movement in Iran appeared stuck be-

tween the impulse to boycott the runoff after its candidate came in fifth place on Friday, and to rush out to vote for Rafsanjani, a former president. The movement, as well as Rafsanjani's campaign, appeared thrown off balance by the outcome of the election on Friday.

Officially, the government said that Rafsanjani came in first and that Ahmadinejad, a favorite of the conservative hard-liners who was not expected to be

'Such efforts will lead to militarizing the regime.'

among the top finishers, was second. Even before the official results were announced, the third-place finisher, a former speaker of the Parliament, Mahdi Karroubi, said the election had been rigged and called on the nation's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, to order an independent investigation. He said the Guardian Council, the cleric-controlled panel that has final say over

all government decision, and elements of the Revolutionary Guards, were guilty of election fraud. Mostafa Moin, the reform candidate who came in fifth, also said the race had been tainted by outside interference of the military.

But state-run press organizations said Sunday night that neither of the candidates filed a formal complaint with the Guardian Council and that the runoff would be held Friday if none were filed by the end of the day Monday.

The government continued to deny the charges of election fraud and the religious leadership of the country did not respond, at least not publicly. But the idea that powerful forces inside the Iranian leadership tried to steer the election — whether true or not — became the backdrop of the contest for president, empowering conservatives and terrifying those who support more reforms.

"We must have a coalition for the sake of preserving democracy," wrote Mohammed Gohoschani, in a front-page editorial in the newspaper Chargh. "It has become clear now that Hashemi is our only option to preserve democracy in Iran. We can not hide that this is

the last political option to continue on the path of democracy."

The uncertainty over direction reflected the reality that the campaign for the runoff had begun, and that conservatives were quickly lining up behind Ahmadinejad while Rafsanjani's camp appeared nearly paralyzed with uncertainty. With just a few days to go, and no evidence the supreme leader would intervene, Rafsanjani's aides said they chose to focus on his campaign and not speak out on the charges of fraud.

A spokesman for Rafsanjani, Hamzeh Karami, said that he personally had information hard-line supporters tried to influence the election but that the campaign decided with such little time to prepare to not discuss charges publicly. "We believe, at this point in time, we need calm and not riots," he said.

Ahmadinejad was appointed mayor by the conservatives in control of the Tehran City Council. He is a polarizing figure, adored by lower income city residents who see in him a man of the people, and abhorred by the wealthier and more urban Iranians who fear he will try to roll back the social freedoms

they have won over the last few years.

As mayor, he initially pursued a conservative cultural agenda, turning culture centers into prayer halls, for ex-

ample. But over time, his focus shifted to more practical issues, like paving the potholed streets, and for that he won support in many corners of the city.

His campaign was run with the precision and the feel of a religious organization and his supporters spoke about him with a reverence usually reserved for religious figures. They described

him as an honest man, who doesn't draw a salary from his job as mayor, goes to work with the trash collectors at night just to connect with common folks, and is a moral and ethical pillar of the community.

"We expect him to strengthen the infrastructure of ethics and Islamic values and prepare a just society," said Ali

Akbar Abdollahi, a campaign volunteer.

Melli said that there would be a return to conservative social practices if he were elected president. "Excessive practices, like we see between boys and girls, these kinds of freedoms will surely not be supported," he said.

The New York Times

Germans press Turks on Armenian slaughter

The Associated Press

BERLIN: Germany's Parliament on Thursday urged Turkey to examine its role in the killing of an estimated one million ethnic Armenians a century ago — an issue that could affect Ankara's hopes of joining the European Union.

Lawmakers adopted a cross-party resolution asking the German government to press Turkey to investigate the "organized expulsion and destruction of the Armenians" and foster reconciliation.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry said it "regrets and strongly condemns" the decision. A ministry statement added that Turkey had cautioned Germany that the text was "biased, contained serious errors and lacked information,"

and had warned that its approval would "deeply wound the Turkish people."

Armenia accuses Turkey of genocide in the killings as part of a campaign from 1915 to 1923 to force Armenians out of eastern Anatolia. At the time, Armenia was part of the Ottoman Empire.

Turkey remains extremely sensitive about the issue. It denies that the killings were genocide and insists that the death count is inflated and that Armenians were killed or displaced along with others as the empire tried to quell civil unrest.

The motion did not mention Turkey's effort to join the EU, but said the Armenian issue was an example of how Turkey needs to guarantee freedom of speech — an area where Ankara has been told it must improve if it is to join

the 25-nation bloc.

Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of Germany has been one of Turkey's strongest supporters in its campaign for membership. But the conservative opposition — which hopes to win national elections this autumn — argues that Turkey should be offered a lesser "privileged partnership."

The German motion noted that "numerous independent historians, parliaments and international organizations" describe the killing as genocide, but stopped short of using that label itself.

The motion proposed the establishment of a commission of Turkish, Armenian and international historians to examine the killings. It complained that the Turkish authorities were stifling debate at home. The Turkish Foreign Ministry statement retorted that the country "has opened up its archives to all researchers, including Germans and Armenians, on the premise that historic events can only be assessed by historians and not by parliaments."

23 killed by bomber in Baghdad restaurant

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD: A suicide bomber walked calmly into a popular kebab restaurant at lunchtime Sunday and killed at least 23 people waiting for plates of lamb and rice — the capital's deadliest attack in just over six weeks.

It was the bloodiest bombing in a day that saw at least 35 people killed in a series of insurgent attacks nationwide as militants struck back against twin U.S.-Iraqi offensives against their smuggling routes and training centers.

The attacks came as the American military announced the death of the first

U.S. marine since operations Spear and Dagger began Friday and Saturday in restive Anbar Province with about 1,000 U.S. forces and Iraqi soldiers in each.

U.S. marines also killed 15 insurgents in fierce battles near Falluja, the restive Anbar Province town that is located 65 kilometers, or 40 miles, west of Baghdad.

In a stark reminder of Iraq's recent past, the tribunal that will put Saddam Hussein on trial released footage of his notorious cousin — the man known as "Chemical Ali" because of his role in the 1988 poison gas attack that killed 5,000 people in the Kurdish town of Halabja.

Ali Hassan al-Majid was one of eight former regime officials shown testifying before an investigation magistrate on a tape released by the Iraqi Special Tribunal. There was no audio and no trials dates have been set for any former regime officials, including Saddam, who was shown on a video released earlier this month.

In Baghdad, the bomber detonated a vest laden with explosives at the Ibn Zambour restaurant, which is just 400 meters, or 1,300 feet, from the main gate of the heavily fortified Green Zone and is especially popular with Iraqi police officers and soldiers.

The dead included seven police officers, while the wounded included 16 officers and the bodyguards of Ali Abdel-Amir Allawi, Iraq's finance minister, the police and hospital officials said. The minister was not in the restaurant.

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's Al-Qaeda in Iraq claimed responsibility and said the attacker was from Qaim, near where one of the two major offensives was taking place. The statement appeared on an Islamic Web site. Its authenticity could not be verified.

Nearly 60 insurgents have been killed and 100 captured so far in operations Spear and Dagger, aimed at destroying militant networks near the Syrian border and north of Baghdad, the military said.

Troops participating in the operations fired Hellfire missiles at insurgents who had used mortars to attack marines. U.S. Air Force F-16 fighter jets also dropped laser-guided bombs on insurgents firing mortars, and British Air Force Tornados provided close air support.

Troops on the ground said they found numerous foreign passports and one round trip ticket from Tripoli, in Libya, to Damascus. They found two passports from Sudan, two from Saudi Arabia, two from Libya, two from Algeria and one from Tunisia.

15 Recruits, Mostly Kurds, Are Killed By Car Bomb

By JAMES GLANZ

BAGHDAD, Iraq, June 20 — A man wearing a police uniform drove a red Toyota on Monday into a field crowded with policemen and recruits, detonating a bomb that killed about 15, wounded about 125 and caused mayhem in Erbil, a northern Kurdish town that until recently had been one of the most peaceful in Iraq.

A 19-year-old recruit, Nawzad Kheralla, said the bomb went off 100 yards from him and left “the smell of blood and burned flesh everywhere.” After the bomb went off, surviving guards immediately began firing excitedly into the air, the custom among Iraqis after an explosion.

Mayor Nawzad Hadi said the well-planned strike was reminiscent of one in Erbil on May 4 that killed 60 people at a police recruitment center. The militant Ansar al-Sunna claimed responsibility for that one.

The bombing in Erbil was one of several on Monday that left a total of at least 30 people dead. Two bombs went off in near Kirkuk, also in the north, both apparently aimed at Iraqi security forces. One killed three soldiers from the Iraqi Army's Third Battalion, said Col. Safa Maolod, a local officer.

In Baghdad, four car bombs exploded Monday, killing 10 members of Iraqi security forces and wounding nearly 30. At 2 p.m. a suicide car bomber, apparently aiming at a convoy of American contractors, exploded at the main checkpoint at Bag-

dad airport, killing three guards.

The other car bombs in Baghdad were part of a coordinated attack on several police stations, and after the explosions the insurgents followed with rocket-propelled grenades and machine-gun fire, an official at the Interior Ministry said. After one of the attacks, on Al Bayaa police station, the insurgents placed burning tires across streets to hamper rescue efforts, the official said.

A terrorist group, Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, claimed responsibility in a Web posting for the attacks on the Baghdad police stations, calling the incidents “another historic act from the mujahedeen.”

Despite the violence rattling the country, members of the National Assembly said they had made modest progress in filling out a commit-



A Kurd in Erbil attends to a relative who was among the 125 wounded by a car bomb in northern Iraq.

tee to write a new constitution. Bahaa al-Aaraji, a member of the committee negotiating to add Arab Sunnis to the committee, said he had received a full slate of 25 names from a consortium of Sunni groups.

Mr. Aaraji said that there was still confusion over whether the fractured Sunni Arab minority had actually agreed to all the names, and that he was receiving messages from some Sunni groups to the contrary. But Dr. Saleh Mutlak, a member of the National Dialogue Council, one of the Sunni groups involved, said there was no disagreement. “We submitted the letter to them,” Dr. Mutlak said of the committee, “including the names of the people who are going to be in the constitutional committee.”

The letter did include some new conditions, Dr. Mutlak said. One was that the 25 people were not to be referred to as representing Sunni Arabs alone; instead, he said, they must be considered as representing all those who did not vote in the January elections, some 42 percent of eligible voters.

The precise percentage of Sunnis in the Iraqi populace has been a point of contention, at least among Sunni Arabs, who often assert that their numbers are far higher than the standard estimate of 20 percent.

Fighting continued Monday between Americans and local insurgent forces in western Iraq. American marines used tanks and light armored vehicles in another attack against Islamic militants in Karabilla, about two miles from the Syrian border. In all, about 1,000 marines and Iraqi security forces entered the

town on Friday to retake it.

The marines have faced pockets of resistance, including insurgents firing from a mosque, a trap involving a civilian as a decoy, and an insurgent who used a family as a shield.

On Monday just before 6 p.m., the attackers took the last house in the north-central part of the town without incident. Tanks blasted holes in locked gates of walled homes and marines streamed through to search the houses. In all, between 45 and 50 insurgents were killed; 3 are believed to be foreign. Marines reported finding nine foreign passports.

In the Erbil suicide attack, survivors got a close enough look at the car before it exploded to say that it was a 1985 Toyota model called a Super Saloon. Mr. Kheralla, the recruit, said about 150 people were gathered in a field behind the main Erbil police station when the car arrived.

The wounded were taken to three hospitals and Kurdish authorities appealed for blood donations. Kurdish militiamen set up checkpoints around the hospitals, fearing further attacks. Kamal Kirkukli, the first deputy of the Kurdish regional parliament, said he believed the attack had been carried out by “terrorists trying to stop the new democratic experiment in Iraq.”

“But we will stay unified,” Dr. Kirkukli said.

The New York Times

JUNE 21, 2005

IRAK Plus de quatre-vingts délégations venues du monde entier sont attendues aujourd'hui à Bruxelles pour une conférence internationale parrainée par les États-Unis

Washington bat le rappel de l'aide pour Bagdad

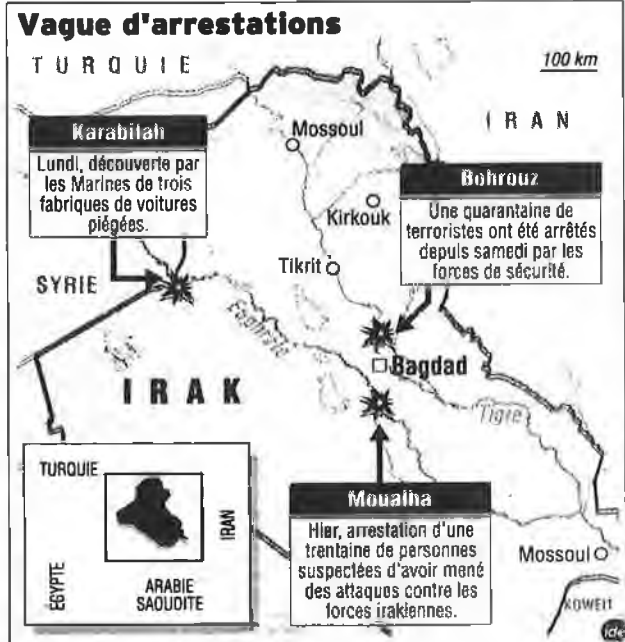
Des dirigeants et ministres de plus de quatre-vingts pays et organisations sont réunis aujourd'hui à Bruxelles pour une conférence sur l'Irak censée proclamer l'appui de la communauté internationale à ce pays en transition.

Bruxelles :
de notre correspondante
Alexandrine Bouilhet

À peine sortie d'un sommet de crise, la capitale européenne, groggy, accueille aujourd'hui un grand show à l'américaine sur l'Irak. Parrainé par les États-Unis, au cœur de la vieille Europe, l'événement vise à célébrer l'unité retrouvée de la communauté internationale, un an après la passation de pouvoirs à Bagdad. Quatre-vingts délégations venues du monde entier sont attendues à Bruxelles, aux côtés de Condoleezza Rice et du secrétaire général de l'ONU, Kofi Annan. Membres de l'Otan, de l'Union européenne, de la Ligue arabe et du G 8, les pays invités seront tous représentés par leur mi-

nistre des Affaires étrangères. Le premier gouvernement irakien élu, dirigé par Ibrahim Jafaari, sera présent en force, avec une vingtaine de ministres. Son but : obtenir le soutien de la communauté internationale, en dehors des États-Unis, pour la reconstruction du pays. « *Le fardeau de la reconstruction doit être partagé avec d'autres partenaires* », insiste le chef de la diplomatie irakienne, Hoshiyar Zobari. « *Si le processus politique et la stabilisation échouent, cela affectera les intérêts des autres pays* », ajoute-t-il en guise d'avertissement à l'Occident et au monde arabe. Le gouvernement du « *nouvel Irak* » ne cherchera pas à embellir le tableau. « *La situation là-bas est très critique* », a lancé hier le Dr Ahmoud, secrétaire d'État irakien aux Affaires étrangères. « *Nous avons réellement besoin d'aide* ». Devant un parterre de ministres, le gouvernement irakien fera le point sur les problèmes politiques de l'après-Saddam, le terrorisme, l'insécurité galopante, le marché aux otages, les problèmes d'approvisionnement en eau et en électricité.

Côté européen, cette plongée dans l'enfer irakien aura le mérite de relativiser la crise actuelle de l'Union. Le temps d'une journée, elle remet l'Europe en selle sur la scène internationale, en plaçant Bruxelles sous les feux de



la rampe. Côté américain, le coparrainage de l'Union européenne est une formidable opération de relations publiques, organisée de main de maître par George W. Bush lors de sa venue à Bruxelles, en février dernier.

Cette conférence, dont Condoleezza Rice sera la vedette avec Kofi Annan, ne servira ni à lever des fonds, ni à lancer des nouvelles initiatives, mais valoriser le gouvernement irakien de transition, tout en gommant l'image des États-Unis, puissance occupante de l'Irak, entrés en guerre sans l'aval de l'ONU.

Deux ans après la chute de Saddam Hussein, l'insécurité est telle qu'aucun ministre irakien n'ose réclamer le départ des troupes américaines. Sans être devenus des partisans de l'Administration Bush, les gouvernements européens sont devenus pragmatiques. Chantre du camp de la paix en 2003, Français et Allemands saisissent les perches

qui leur sont tendues par les Américains via les Irakiens. Avec la passation de pouvoirs à Bagdad, Paris et Berlin ont avalé de nombreuses couleuvres : annulation d'une grande partie de la dette irakienne, feu vert à une formation de l'Otan en Irak, ouverture d'un bureau de la Commission à Bagdad, mission de l'Union européenne pour former juges et policiers, et cadres de l'Administration. Au total, l'Europe aura déboursé plus d'un milliard d'euros pour l'Irak. D'autres contributions sont attendues lors de la prochaine conférence des donateurs, en juillet, à Amman (Jordanie). Ce pragmatisme retrouvé a permis de renouer le dialogue avec Washington, qui réclame plus que jamais une « Europe forte », à même de partager le fardeau irakien. Mais au sein de l'Union européenne, les plaies ouvertes en 2003 ne sont pas totalement guéries. La guerre entre Blair et Chirac témoigne d'un clivage durable entre « vieille » et « nouvelle » Europe. À Bruxelles, cette bagarre sera mise entre parenthèses une journée, le temps d'écouter les malheurs des Irakiens.



« *Si le processus politique et la stabilisation échouent, cela affectera les intérêts des autres pays* », souligne Hoshiyar Zebari, le ministre irakien des Affaires étrangères. (Photo Geert Van den Wijngaert/AP.)

Les opérations de contre-guérilla n'ont pas atteint leurs objectifs

Limites de la stratégie américaine

Thierry Oberlé

Haifa street était encore voici trois mois un bastion de la guérilla en plein cœur de Bagdad. Les insurgés avaient transformé cette large avenue proche de la rive occidentale du Tigre en un enfer pour la garde nationale et l'armée irakiennes, les forces de sécurité n'intervenaient dans ce quartier commerçant que pour des opérations mobilisant des centaines de soldats appuyés par des chars.

Désormais, des familles viennent prendre l'air le soir et acheter des bonbons sur Haifa street. Les snipers ont abandonné le terrain sous les coups de butoir des forces de la coalition. Mais ce succès spectaculaire a ses limites. Lorsqu'elle est sur le point de rompre, la guérilla se disperse. Elle s'égayé dans ses fiefs. Au lieu d'être anéantie, elle se dissémine à travers la banlieue ouest de la capitale, où règne une insécurité absolue.

Quelque 40 000 policiers et militaires irakiens tentent d'isoler ces combattants en multipliant les barrages fixes et volants autour et à l'intérieur de

Bagdad. L'idée est de créer une sorte de cordon sanitaire autour du centre-ville. Les concepteurs du projet tablent sur un processus de désintégration de l'adversaire, un lent mécanisme qui devrait prendre des années.

Si elle porte de rudes coups à la guérilla, la stratégie de contre-insurrection américaine est cependant loin d'atteindre ses objectifs. Elle ne parvient pas à réaliser le vœu de Zalmay Khalilzad, le nouvel ambassadeur américain en Irak, qui rêve de « briser le dos » à la guérilla. Aussi symbolique soit-il, le retour au calme à Haifa street ne peut faire oublier que des bombes explosent tous les jours.

Et il est difficile de parler de progrès lorsque le nombre d'Irakiens qui meurent dans des violences augmente sans cesse depuis les élections de janvier. Actuellement, une vingtaine de personnes sont tuées chaque jour en Irak. « Nous avons gagné tous les combats que nous avons engagés pour l'instant, mais il y a toujours des gens pour nous combattre », résume Anthony Cordesman, un spécialiste du renseignement militaire du Center for Strategic and Inter-

national Studies (CSIS) de Washington.

Pour tarir les réseaux d'aides extérieures, les forces américaines tablent sur le contrôle des frontières. Car, comme tout mouvement insurrectionnel, la guérilla irakienne doit disposer pour se pérenniser d'une base arrière ou du moins d'une porte d'entrée et de sortie du territoire.

Convaincus que l'une des clés du conflit est la frontière syrienne, considérée comme une passoire, les officiers de l'état-major conduisent de grandes manœuvres sur les rives de la vallée de l'Euphrate et dans les confins du désert de Jazira. Des combats s'y déroulent depuis début mai. Ils redoublent actuellement d'intensité à al-Karabilaune, une ville située à une vingtaine de kilomètres de la Syrie est. Des avions américains et britanniques y frappent depuis plusieurs jours à coups de missiles et de bombes laser téléguident des sanctuaires présumés des insurgés. Auparavant, les affrontements touchaient Qaim ou al-Anbar. Baptisée « Lance », l'opération vise à « extirper » les insurgés de la zone. En attendant, elle a déjà provoqué la fuite de dizaines de

milliers d'habitants.

Selon les marines, les cités sunnites de l'Ouest sont les points de passage obligés des combattants étrangers qui participent au soulèvement anti-américain en Irak. Infiltrés en Syrie, les candidats au djihad traversent sans encombre une frontière très étendue et peu surveillée. Ils troquent ensuite leur passeport contre des pièces d'identité irakiennes falsifiées et prennent la route de Mossoul, de Ramadi ou de Bagdad.

Les Etats-Unis accusent régulièrement la Syrie de faciliter leur passage. Les officiels syriens démentent. Et expliquent, comme ils l'ont fait hier devant des diplomates européens, qu'ils ont renforcé leur dispositif de vigilance en déployant 7 500 gardes-frontières et en installant 500 postes de surveillance.

Deux ans après son déclenchement, la guérilla conserve des forces, des appuis et des supports dans l'ensemble du pays sunnite. Selon une étude publiée par le *Boston Globe*, le soutien de la population aux attaques anti-américaines dépasserait même largement le cadre de la communauté sunnite.

« C'est comme quand on chasse les oiseaux. On en abat quelques-uns, mais les autres s'envolent », commente un colonel des marines interrogé à Karabila par Reuters dans les décombres d'une ville en ruine...

Bush veut reprendre l'initiative

La présence de 80 nations au chevet de Bagdad offre l'image dont George W. Bush a besoin à ce stade de son aventure irakienne. Le président américain est contraint de reprendre l'initiative sur une guerre qui résiste à la banalisation et à l'oubli. Le secrétaire d'Etat, Condoleezza Rice, compte saisir l'occasion de la conférence de Bruxelles pour pousser le pouvoir irakien à inclure la minorité sunnite dans le processus constitutionnel, obtenir un nouvel effacement de la dette et presser les pays voisins de jouer la stabilité régionale. Le Pentagone estimant qu'une part croissante de l'insurrection est le fait de « djihadistes » étrangers passant par la Syrie. Pour tout cela, un consensus international est désormais jugé crucial à Washington. En proie au doute, George Bush continue d'assurer : « Nous progressons vers l'objectif », à la fois politique et sécuritaire d'un Irak capable de se gouverner et de se défendre par lui-même. Mais il introduit un bémol : « Je réalise à quel point c'est

dangereux là-bas », a-t-il souligné lundi, ajoutant : « Je pense à l'Irak chaque jour. » Cette double précision vise à contredire les commentaires déso- bligeants sur une Maison-Blanche « déconnectée » de la réalité.

Le bilan humain continue de s'alourdir (1 715 morts américains) et les sondages s'en ressentent, 59 % de l'opinion souhaitant un retrait rapide. Les élus surfent sur cette vague : plusieurs républicains ont symboliquement déposé un projet de résolution demandant un calendrier de retrait. « La réalité est que nous sommes en train de perdre en Irak », a déclaré dimanche le sénateur républicain Chuck Hagel. L'état-major s'élève contre ces déclarations « défaitistes ». George Bush a lancé une contre-offensive. Il recevra vendredi le premier ministre, Ibrahim Jaafari, et doit prononcer un discours mardi prochain, pour le premier anniversaire du transfert de pouvoir aux Irakiens.

Ph. G. (à Washington)

IRAN Second tour de la présidentielle vendredi prochain

Les réformateurs exclus dès le premier tour à Téhéran

Téhéran :
de notre envoyé spécial
Georges Malbrunot

L'ancien président de la République islamique, Akbar Hashemi Rafsandjani, réputé pragmatique, va affronter l'ultraconservateur Mahmoud Ahmadinejad vendredi, au second tour de la présidentielle iranienne. Ahmadinejad, maire de Téhéran, a créé la surprise en se hissant vendredi dernier, lors du premier tour, à la seconde place du scrutin. L'écart entre les deux hommes est d'à peine 2 points : 21 % des suffrages exprimés pour celui qui fut un proche de l'imam Khomeyni et 19 % pour l'ancien officier des Gardiens de la révolution (pasdarans), l'armée idéologique au service du régime.

La participation, plus importante que prévu (63 %), a montré la faible audience du mouvement des jeunes, les déçus de la présidence de Mohamed Khatami, qui avaient appelé au boycott du scrutin. Les attaques proferées la veille du vote par George W. Bush contre « une démocratie de façade » ont pu aussi inciter certains à participer. Signe de l'éclatement d'un électorat désabusé, aucun des candidats n'a obtenu la majorité des suffrages. Pour la première fois depuis l'instauration de la République islamique en 1979, un second tour est donc nécessaire.

Avec à peine 14 % des voix, le porte-drapeau des réformateurs, Mostafa Moïn, est le grand perdant de la consultation. Il prônait la libération des prisonniers politiques et le rétablissement des relations avec les

États-Unis. Khatami en avait fait son dauphin. A travers lui, c'est donc le président réformateur qui essuie une dernière humiliation, au terme de huit années à la présidence.

Selon des analystes, le score d'Ahmadinejad s'expliquerait par la forte mobilisation, juste avant le scrutin, des instances les plus conservatrices du régime, notamment le conseil des Gardiens de la révolution et les pasdarans. Plusieurs ayatollahs influents ont apporté, in extremis, leur soutien au maire de Téhéran. Cette mobilisation a joué au détriment d'un autre conservateur, l'ancien chef de la police Mohamed Qalibaf (14 %). En flirtant avec la jeunesse, Qalibaf a sans doute heurté son électorat traditionnel. « Dans une situation marquée par l'inflation et le chômage, la promesse de plus de liberté n'attire que les

intellectuels », résume le politologue Reza Fathi.

Même si tous les deux appartiennent au camp de la droite, Rafsandjani et Ahmadinejad incarnent deux visions de l'Iran et de ses relations avec le monde extérieur. Vieux routier de la politique, Rafsandjani, 70 ans, a mis la modération politique et la reprise des contacts avec le « Grand Satan » américain au centre de sa campagne. Favori, il aura toutefois besoin des voix des réformateurs pour gagner. Hier, il a appelé à la mobilisation en sa faveur pour faire barrage aux extrémistes et a promis un gouvernement d'union nationale.

Pour son challenger, âgé de 49 ans, « le peuple attend des fondamentalistes qu'ils le servent ». Ahmadinejad s'est opposé à la libéralisation sociale de la présidence Khatami, fermant plusieurs centres culturels depuis son accession à la mairie de Téhéran en 2003. Adeptes de la rhétorique révolutionnaire, il prévient que « l'Iran n'abandonnera pas ses droits devant les pressions impérialistes ».

Iraq to claim stability to get pledged aid

By James Glanz

BAGHDAD: Although much of the world may see Iraq as mired in its insurgency, a high-level Iraqi official says that the country will assert at a major international conference this week in Brussels that the government is stable, secure and legitimate enough to begin receiving the vast economic and political help that countries other than the United States have promised.

The Iraqis also will have something besides their version of current events to offer the more than 80 countries and international organizations that the United States and the European Union have invited to the donors meeting Wednesday, the Iraqi foreign minister, Hoshiyar Zebari, said in an interview.

He said Iraq would also pledge to slash its enormous domestic fuel subsidies and impose new taxes on its citizens. The gesture is aimed at international institutions like the World Bank, but invites a serious political backlash at home.

The large Iraqi delegation at the conference — 25 to 30 officials, including eight ministers — will also present a new approach to rebuilding the country as the insurgency continues in many areas, Zebari said.

They also plan to warn that if the government were to collapse, the consequences would be felt not only in the

Middle East, but also around the globe.

“The message is, really, nobody should underestimate the dangers of failing in Iraq,” Zebari said. “Because this will affect you all, both in terms of the spread of terrorism to your country and the effect it will have on the entire region.”

With warnings like that, Iraqi officials will appeal for increased financial aid, even though the meeting “is not a donors’ conference per se,” Richard Jones, senior adviser on Iraq to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, said at a news briefing in Washington on Friday, according to a transcript of the event by Federal News Service Inc.

Discussion is likely to focus on the \$13 billion pledged by countries other than the United States for rebuilding Iraq at a conference in Madrid in 2003.

Iraqi government estimates of how much of that money has been delivered have hovered around 10 percent. The delays have been attributed to security problems and poor coordination among the countries involved.

Ayad Allawi, the former Iraqi prime minister and now a member of the Iraqi National Assembly, said in an interview that he had constantly struggled during his tenure with the practicalities of getting the aid to Iraq.

“Frankly, the Iraqi side should present the meeting with a complete idea on how to form the mechanisms and mechanics for such a relationship,”

said Allawi, who will not attend the Brussels conference.

The United States hopes that improvements in such practical matters will be “one of the deliverables, as we call it,” from the meeting, Jones said.

One seemingly insurmountable barrier is the unsettled security environment in Iraq, where U.S. and Iraqi forces still battle insurgent groups daily and where reconstruction contractors are regular targets of attack.

But, in a break with past policies, Zebari said the Iraqi government now contended that it could make progress by slowing reconstruction in the most dangerous parts of the country like the central, Sunni-dominated provinces and the capital, Baghdad, while proceeding in safer pockets, like the Shiite-controlled city of Basra in the south or the peaceful Kurdish regions of the north.

Previously, both American and Iraqi authorities insisted on pushing ahead with projects in virtually all areas simultaneously, leading to skyrocketing security costs and widespread delays by the Western contractors that effectively control the effort.

Rick Barton, director of the post-conflict reconstruction project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, said that pouring resources only into certain areas “really creates a favoritism that doesn’t help.”

The New York Times

■ POINT DE VUE

Aider les Irakiens, concrètement !

par Hoshyar Zebari

HOSHYAR ZEBARI est le ministre des affaires étrangères irakien.

CE 22 JUIN est à marquer d'une pierre blanche dans le processus d'évolution de l'Irak vers la démocratie et sa réintégration dans le système mondial.

De même que l'annonce, en avril, de la formation de notre premier gouvernement élu en cinquante et un ans constituait un pas important vers la démocratisation du pays, la conférence internationale qui s'ouvre aujourd'hui à Bruxelles est le signe de notre détermination à faire de l'Irak un membre responsable de la communauté internationale, loin de l'isolement auquel l'ancien régime nous a contraints.

Quatre-vingt-cinq participants, conviés à la demande du gouvernement irakien, se réunissent

pour discuter des moyens de mettre en œuvre la vision que nous avons du futur de l'Irak : celle d'un pays stable, avec un gouvernement élu conformément à une Constitution permanente, qui doit être adoptée d'ici à la fin de l'année. Celle d'un gouvernement soumis à la volonté populaire et gouvernant avec le consentement de ses sujets.

Celle d'institutions publiques réhabilitées procurant des services publics et sociaux efficaces ; d'une société civile puissante, participant pleinement à la vie publique.

Celle, enfin, d'un Irak en paix civile et en paix avec ses voisins, parfaitement réintégré à la communauté des nations civilisées, jouant naturellement son rôle dans les affaires régionales et internationales.

La stabilité est un premier pas essentiel dans l'accomplissement de cette vision. Les conséquences pour le Moyen-Orient sont trop importantes pour laisser faire, alors que l'instabilité perdure. Les forces antidémocratiques veillent sans relâche pour voir si les démocraties ont la capacité de maintenir le soutien apporté aux démocrates irakiens, alors même que la reconstruction est dans les limbes.

Beaucoup misent sur un échec, qui donnerait le signal d'un recul important des mouvements démocratiques naissants dans la région. Si le chaos l'emporte en Irak, ces forces utiliseront notre expérience comme un avertissement pour les réformateurs démocrates.

Les conséquences seront beaucoup plus importantes encore si la communauté internationale ne réussit pas à s'engager efficacement dans le soutien au processus politique actuel. Les extrémistes font de l'Irak un test. Si les forces démocratiques peuvent être mises en échec – ce qui arrivera avec certitude si la communauté internationale se désengage – ces extrémistes se sentiront enhardis dans le déploiement de leur haine et de leur violence à travers le monde.

L'Irak a émergé comme le principal champ de bataille dans la guerre menée par le monde civilisé contre le terrorisme et l'extrémisme. Les terroristes savent aujourd'hui que le peuple irakien est du côté des peuples libres.

Par la violence frénétique qu'ils déploient actuellement en Irak, ils cherchent à dénier la détermination du monde. Leur objectif consiste à pousser la communauté mondiale à se désengager : telle est leur stratégie ultime pour mettre fin au processus de démocratisation du pays.

Le monde ne doit pas permettre à ces forces de réussir.

En dépit de nos difficultés, nous avons fait de réels progrès, dont la passation pacifique du pouvoir du gouvernement intérimaire au gouvernement de transition ; peut-être le premier transfert de cette nature dans notre région. Les 8,5 millions d'électeurs qui ont défié les terroristes menaçant de faire couler le sang dans les rues le jour du scrutin l'ont rendu possible. Bien que certains groupes l'aient boycotté, les mêmes, depuis lors, ont fait beaucoup d'efforts pour être réintégrés dans le processus politique, à la fois en travaillant à l'ébauche de la Constitution et dans l'idée de participer aux futures élections.

Et, alors que les terroristes continuent à viser les forces de sécurité irakiennes, le peuple souhaite toujours que la transformation politique du pays soit menée à terme. La conférence de Bruxelles n'est donc pas juste une réunion de plus. Son but est avant tout politique. Il est d'envoyer un message clair : que la communauté internationale sera aux côtés du peuple irakien et fournira une aide tangible dans trois domaines distincts. Le premier pour lequel nous avons besoin d'une assistance vitale est la reconstruction politique. Le régime précédent a détruit tout semblant d'institutions politiques, celles-ci ayant été dans un premier temps transfor-

mées en l'alter ego du parti unique, puis, plus tard, d'un seul homme.

Le premier pas dans cette reconstruction est le projet de Constitution prenant en compte les problèmes de toutes les communautés irakiennes : ethniques, religieuses et politiques. Ecrire une Constitution ne devrait pas être l'œuvre d'une élite travaillant à huis clos. Le peuple irakien doit s'approprier entièrement cette Constitution, pas seulement le produit fini, mais également son processus d'élaboration.

Nous devons aussi nous interroger sur le référendum constitutionnel, qui aura lieu à l'automne, et sur les élections de fin d'année pour désigner un nouveau gouvernement, en portant une attention particulière aux enseignements tirés des dernières élections. L'expérience d'autres pays ayant vécu la transition d'une tyrannie à une démocratie, autant que celle de démocraties plus expérimentées, sera précieuse dans ce domaine. De par notre histoire, les institutions irakiennes sont devenues ignorantes des besoins qu'implique la citoyenneté. Créer un service public digne de ce nom, déterminé à fournir un soutien réel et imprégné d'un sentiment de professionnalisme, sera une priorité.

La réforme des échelons supérieurs sera nécessaire, mais nous aurons besoin d'aide pour que de telles institutions soient reconstruites alors qu'aucun fondement n'y préexiste. Il en est de même des organisations de la société civile, qui avaient complètement perdu leur indépendance sous le précédent régime. Ce sont là des réformes à long terme, qui nécessiteront un engagement international sur des années.

La reconstruction économique est aussi à l'ordre du jour. Bien que l'Irak soit une nation potentiellement riche, la mauvaise gestion ainsi que des années de sanctions économiques ont détruit son économie et ses infrastructures. Autre conséquence, la fuite des cerveaux est un frein à la reconstruction. Au-delà de l'aide financière pour réamorcer notre reprise économique, nous aurons besoin de diverses assistances techniques afin de programmer sur le long terme un système de développement durable.

Le régime précédent décourageait véritablement les initiatives, même dans les domaines strictement techniques. De ce fait, l'Irak a accumulé des décennies de retard de savoir-faire, y compris dans des secteurs vitaux comme le

pétrole et le gaz. Nos techniciens auront besoin de nouvelles formations pour faire face à la maintenance des infrastructures, plutôt que de trouver des palliatifs à un échec catastrophique.

Dans certaines parties du pays, un sous-développement contraint complique également le tableau. Mais, avec un engagement sérieux de la communauté internationale, nous croyons pouvoir atteindre les objectifs du Millénaire : abolir la pauvreté absolue et la faim, réintroduire l'école primaire pour tous les enfants, réduire la mortalité infantile, lutter contre la maladie et garantir la protection durable de l'environnement d'ici à 2015.

La troisième question soulevée à Bruxelles concernera l'autorité de la loi. Cela signifie une réforme des infrastructures juridiques. Un pouvoir judiciaire stable et indépendant, formé selon les normes internationales, avec des lois appliquées selon les procédures prévues et dans l'impartialité, n'est pas seulement nécessaire pour assurer une bonne gouvernance, mais également, et très fortement, afin d'attirer des fonds étrangers essentiels à notre reconstruction. Les professions juridiques ont véritablement besoin d'être formées aux méthodes et aux techniques médico-légales modernes ainsi qu'aux critères internationaux de respect des droits de l'homme.

Des normes de comportement humain doivent aussi faire partie des outils de base de la formation des agents de sécurité, des forces de police et du personnel pénitentiaire.

En fin de compte, seuls nous-mêmes, les Irakiens, pourrions fournir la sécurité à notre propre peuple. Mais il nous reste du chemin à parcourir pour être autosuffisants.

Voilà pourquoi nous avons besoin d'une aide tangible afin de mettre en œuvre l'installation d'une police et de forces de sécurité. Il y a beaucoup d'espaces dans lesquels la communauté internationale peut s'investir dans notre processus de reconstruction. La place me manque pour lister la myriade de domaines d'expertise technique dont l'Irak a besoin.

Mais, dans chacun d'eux, nous avons besoin de l'engagement et de la coopération de la communauté internationale.

Dans la mesure où des propositions concrètes émergeront pour faire avancer les objectifs décrits ci-dessus, la conférence de Bruxelles sera un succès.

Hoshyar Zebari

Traduit de l'anglais par
Nadja Berrebii

Président du pays de 1989 à 1997, il met en avant son expérience

Rafsandjani, le pragmatique en turban

LE FIGARO VENDREDI 24 JUIN 2005

Téhéran :
Delphine Minoui

Le voilà qui pénètre dans la salle de réception du Palais de marbre – joyau de l'époque du Chah dont il a fait ses bureaux –, son manteau glissant presque au sol comme une traîne. L'assemblée se lève, applaudit. Ce jour-là, l'ayatollah Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsandjani, 70 ans, turban blanc vissé sur la tête, a réuni les représentants des minorités religieuses. Une heure plus tôt, il s'entretenait avec de jeunes hôtesse de l'air, toutes émues de rendre visite à celui qui pourrait devenir le futur président. A la cour de Hashemi, on reçoit du matin au soir.

A l'exception d'une virée, ce mardi, à l'université de Téhéran pour s'assurer du soutien des étudiants, qui avaient boycotté le premier tour contre son rival ultraradical Ahmadinejad, Rafsandjani n'est pas sorti pour faire campagne. Les responsables de sa campagne lui ont, en revanche, organisé une armada de rendez-vous avec une multitude de syndicats et de coopératives. Convaincu, Abbas Baghaband, un industriel spécialisé dans les produits pharmaceutiques, a ainsi transformé ses locaux, situés sur l'avenue Vali-Asr, non loin du Palais de marbre, en bureau de soutien à Rafsandjani. « C'est un homme fort. Quand il était Président à la sortie de la guerre Iran-Irak, il a relancé l'économie. Par le passé, il a montré qu'il savait négocier avec l'étranger. Son projet de poursuivre la privatisation et de réinstaurer un dialogue avec l'Amérique, c'est une très bonne chose », confie-t-il.

Des permanences comme celle de Baghaband, il y en a des centaines à travers Téhéran. Dans les quartiers branchés du Nord, elles sont parfois tenues par de jeunes fils à papa qui roulent en 4x4 dernier cri. « C'est vrai qu'on dit qu'il est impliqué dans des assassinats d'intellectuels et qu'il est corrompu. Mais, franchement, ce que veulent les jeunes, c'est avant tout



Architecte de la République islamique, proche de feu l'ayatollah Khomeyni, Rafsandjani, religieux ambiteux, a toujours gravité dans les sphères du pouvoir. (Photo Far News.)

pouvoir avoir une vie privée, gagner leur vie. Rafsandjani est un homme qui a de l'expérience. Il saura imposer ses idées aux institutions conservatrices, puisqu'il en a dirigé une pendant des années (le Conseil de discernement). Il est capable de faire ce que Khatami n'a pas pu faire », explique, détachée, Neda, une jeune femme au foulard rose.

L'expérience de Rafsandjani : un terme qui revient souvent dans les propos de ses fans. Architecte de la République islamique, proche de feu l'ayatollah Khomeyni – père de la révolution –, ce religieux ambitieux et énigmatique a toujours gravité dans les sphères du pouvoir. Il a dirigé le Parlement, supervisé les forces armées à la fin de la guerre Iran-Irak et s'est retrouvé à la présidence du pays de 1989 à 1997. Depuis, il est à la tête du Conseil de discernement, une instance d'arbitrage du régime, dont le siège se trouve au fameux Palais de marbre. De sa famille – de grands cultivateurs de pistaches –, il a hérité une somme colossale, qu'il a su

développer avec un sens des affaires – certains disent même « des magouilles » –, qui le classe aujourd'hui parmi les grandes fortunes mondiales.

Durant sa campagne, cet ancien conservateur s'est taillé un look de réformiste modernisateur. Sans délaisser, pour autant, une autre partie de sa base : les milieux traditionnels du bazar et certains réseaux religieux. D'où une campagne rusée, qu'il a su adapter en fonction des quartiers. Dans le Sud populaire, c'est de « respect islamique » dont il s'agit, sur des affiches où il pose aux côtés des portraits d'Ali Khamenei,

le guide religieux, et de l'ayatollah Khomeyni. Mais au Nord – où chanteurs de pop et membres de l'équipe de patin à roulettes ont été mobilisés –, l'accent est mis sur « le développement démocratique » à côté d'une photo le représentant seul.

Ce double langage ne lui a pourtant pas assuré la victoire au premier tour. « Rafsandjani est un filou. Rien à voir

avec l'honnêteté de notre ancien maire », remarque Ali Akbari, ouvrier et partisan d'Ahmadinejad. Religieux capitaliste contre islamiste populiste : la partie s'annonce aujourd'hui serrée. Cette fois-ci, Rafsandjani bénéficie pour-

tant du soutien des réformateurs, ses rivaux d'hier, qui s'inquiètent, en cas de victoire d'Ahmadinejad, « du retour de l'intégrisme ». Les tracts qui circulent dans Téhéran en disent long : « Votez pour Hashemi pour écarter la censure et le despotisme », « Nous, les supporters de Moïn – réformateur évincé au premier tour –, nous voterons pour Hashemi ». « S'il est élu, j'ose espérer que Rafsandjani se souviendra de notre geste », souffle un réformiste, qui n'hésitait pas à récemment le comparer « à un petit Chah, avide de modernisation, mais méfiant à l'égard d'une presse trop libre ».

Le maire de Téhéran, élu en 2003, n'apparaissait dans aucun des pronostics

Ahmadinejad, le radical populiste

LE FIGARO VENDREDI 24 JUIN 2005

Il se présente comme « l'ami du peuple », conduit une vieille Peugeot et se déguise parfois en éboueur. Pendant la campagne électorale, on a pu découvrir son modeste intérieur, à peine meublé, sur le petit écran. A 49 ans, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, défenseur d'un islam pur et dur, costume gris, barbichette noire et léger sourire en coin, est le seul candidat à ne pas avoir été contaminé par le virus du marketing politique, utilisé à outrance par la plupart de ses concurrents. Discret, inconnu de nombreux Iraniens, il n'apparaissait dans aucun des pronostics établis par les analystes politiques. Et pourtant, contre toute attente, le voilà face à face à Hashemi Rafsandjani, pour un second tour inédit dans l'histoire de la République islamique.

« Cette élection me rend malade », se lamente une sociologue iranienne. La semaine dernière, elle a voté pour le réformateur Moïn, mais aujourd'hui elle songe à donner sa voix, à contre-cœur, à Rafsandjani, « pour éviter le pire ». L'idée d'un retour à la case départ, celle de l'intégrisme des premières années de la révolution, lui fait froid dans le dos. « On en a déjà eu un avant-goût depuis 2003, quand – à la suite d'élections municipales marquées par un record d'absentions – Ahmadinejad décrocha le poste de maire de Téhéran », explique t-elle.

Elle cite, pêle-mêle, les projets les plus insensés de ce conservateur idéologique lorsqu'il dirigeait la municipalité de la capitale : l'enterrement des corps de martyrs de la guerre Iran-Irak sur certaines places publiques de Téhéran, l'interdiction de porter des manches courtes pour les employés municipaux, le retrait d'une affiche publicitaire re-

produisant la photo du footballeur britannique David Beckham ou encore l'islamisation des centres culturels de Téhéran. Sans compter son idée de fermer la Bourse de Téhéran, qu'il compare à un jeu d'argent, comme au casino, et qu'il juge donc « haram » (proscrit par l'islam).

Fils d'un forgeron, originaire de Garmsar, dans le



Ahmadinejad incarne le retour à l'intégrisme des premières années de la révolution et draine son électorat parmi les laissés-pour-compte de la société iranienne. (Photo Eslami/Gamma.)

nord de l'Iran. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad appartient à cette seconde génération de révolutionnaires islamiques, les fameux Abadgaran (« les Bâtisseurs »), qui occupent aujourd'hui la majorité des postes à la municipalité de Téhéran et au Parlement. Cet ancien des Gardiens de la révolution, proche des milices islamistes, a fait partie, en 1979, des étudiants de « la ligne de l'imam », qui organisèrent la prise des 55 otages de l'ambassade des Etats-Unis. Fermement anti-américain, luttant acharné contre « l'invasion culturelle occidentale » et grand défenseur du « droit

au nucléaire », il n'hésite pas à rappeler que « nous n'avons pas fait la révolution pour avoir la démocratie ». A la question de savoir s'il libérerait les prisonniers politiques, s'il était élu, il répondait récemment à un journaliste du quotidien Shargh : « Quels prisonniers politiques ? Les prisonniers politiques aux Etats-Unis ? »

Pour cet islamiste populiste, la priorité, c'est le développement économique. Un programme séduisant dans un pays miné par l'inflation et le chômage. Sa base, ce sont avant tout les laissés-pour-compte de la société, « ceux pour qui le mot démocratie reste un luxe de petit bourgeois » d'après Mohammad Youssefzadeh, un de ses supporters. Lors d'une récente rencontre avec des députés, Ahmadinejad déclarait que « l'argent du pétrole doit apparaître à la table du peuple ». Sa modeste campagne – qui a tranché avec la promotion clinquante de Rafsandjani – a tourné autour d'un slogan : « C'est possible et nous pouvons le faire. »

Le message a fait discrètement le tour du pays, grâce aux puissants relais – mosquées, fondations religieuses, bureaux locaux des bassidjis, les miliciens islamistes dont il dispose. « Il ne se contente pas de parler, il agit. Avec lui comme maire, les routes ont

été réparées, les parcs embellis », commente Samad Azimpour, un ouvrier de chantier. Dans sa dernière intervention télévisée avant le second tour, Ahmadinejad est apparu souriant et détendu, tout en s'étonnant « d'être parfois comparé au diable ». « De la même façon que je me suis efforcé de faciliter la vie des Téhéranais en autorisant certains demi-tours sur les voies express, je souhaite participer à l'amélioration des conditions de vie de tous les Iraniens » déclarait-il à l'attention de ses détracteurs qui dénoncent d'importantes fraudes.

D. M.

15 die as bomb hits crowd of Iraqi police recruits

By James Glanz

BAGHDAD: A man wearing a police uniform drove a red Toyota into a field crowded with police recruits and traffic officers at 8 a.m. in the northern city of Erbil on Monday and detonated a concealed bomb, killing approximately 15 people, wounding 125 and creating mayhem in a Kurdish town that until recently had been one of the most peaceful in Iraq.

A 19-year-old recruit, Nawzad Kheralla, said that the bomb spread body parts all over the field, "with the smell of blood and burned flesh everywhere."

The mayor of Erbil, Nawzad Hadi, said that the well-planned strike was reminiscent of a suicide strike that killed 60 and wounded 150 in a line at a police recruitment center in Erbil on May 4. The militant group Ansar al-Sunna claimed responsibility for that attack.

Two bombs also went off in the area of nearby Kirkuk, both car bombs that targeted Iraqi security forces. The later blast killed three soldiers from the Iraqi 3rd Battalion and wounded two, said Colonel Safa Maolod of the Iraqi Army.

In Baghdad, four car bombs exploded on Monday, killing 10 members of the Iraqi security forces and wounding

nearly 30. At 2 p.m. a suicide car bomber, apparently targeting a convoy of American contractors, hit the main checkpoint at the entrance to the Baghdad airport, killing 3 Iraqi security guards.

The car bombs in Baghdad were part of a coordinated attack on several police stations. After the explosions insurgents attacked with rocket-propelled grenades and machine-gun fire, an Interior Ministry official said. After one of the attacks, on the Al Bayaa police station, the insurgents placed burning tires across side streets to hamper rescue efforts, the official said.

The terrorist group Al Qaeda claimed responsibility for the attacks on the Baghdad police stations, calling the incidents "another historic act from the mujahedeen." The claim, in a Web posting, could not be verified.

As violence rattled the country, members of Iraq's National Assembly said that they had made modest progress in filling out a committee that will be charged with writing a new constitution. Bahaa al-Aaraji, one of the officials who is negotiating to add Arab Sunnis to the committee, said that he had received a full slate of 25 names that a consortium of Sunni groups have nominated.

Aaraji said that there was still confusion over whether the historically fractured Sunni community had actually

agreed to all the names, and that he was receiving messages from some Sunni groups to the contrary. But Dr. Saleh Mutlak, a member of the National Dialogue Council, one of the Sunni groups involved in the talks, denied that there was any disagreement on the names among his colleagues.

"We submitted the letter to them," Mutlak said of the committee, "including the names of the people who are going to be in the constitutional committee."

The letter did include some new conditions, Mutlak said. One was that the 25 people were not to be referred to as representing the Sunni community alone; instead, he said, they must be considered as representing all those who did not vote in the January elections, some 42 percent of eligible voters.

The precise percentage of Sunnis among the Iraqi population has been a point of contention, at least among Sunnis, who often assert that their numbers are far higher than the standard estimate that 20 percent of all Iraqis are Sunni.

The New York Times

Iraqi employees of The New York Times in Erbil and Baghdad contributed to this report.

A pledge to speed Iraq aid

Nations tell Baghdad its complaints are heard

By Steven R. Weisman

BRUSSELS: An international conference of more than 80 nations pledged Wednesday to reinvigorate their efforts to provide financial aid and debt relief for Iraq and urged Iraqi leaders to make more efforts to reach out politically to disaffected minorities supporting the insurgency.

In a day of meetings, conference attendees led by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Secretary General Kofi Annan of the United Nations and the heads of the European Union listened to upbeat reports about Iraq, but also to appeals for more financial help, which the Iraqis said had not come through as promised.

"Today I believe that Iraq and the international community are turning a page together," Annan said. "I hope that all Iraqis take heart from today's conference. The people of Iraq have plenty of friends, and we do not intend to let them down."

Rice, who had first floated the idea of the conference on her initial trip to Europe shortly after the Iraqi elections on Jan. 30, said that despite press reports focusing on violence and instability, Iraq was "well on its way to democracy" and had "exceeded our expectations" in restoring political order.

Rice also continued what has become a rising tempo of criticism of Syria, which sent an envoy to the conference and joined in the final declaration, for allegedly allowing its territory to be used to help the insurgency, and she said Iraqis were more determined than the rebels to win in the end.

"When it is defeated in Iraq, it will be a death knell for terrorism as we know it," she said of the insurgency.

Presentations from Iraq came from Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari and Finance Minister Ali Allawi, all of whom pleaded for understanding of the difficulties of building a new nation on top of an insurgency and the ruins of war and misrule by Saddam Hussein.

"What do we want from you?" said Jaafari. "The Iraqis do not want to live in the dark in the age of light and electricity, or to live in poverty in a rich country."

He asked for global support for security and the Iraqi political process and for donors to fulfill the pledges they have already made for aid.

Most of the conference was closed to the press, but there were signs of disappointment in some public comments.

For example, Allawi, the finance minister, made it clear that Iraq was disappointed that little of the financial assistance promised in Madrid in late 2003 had materialized.

"The flow of grants and loans from the international community, which are essential for reconstruction, have not been within the expected levels," he said. American officials say that of the more than \$13 billion pledged in Madrid over three years, only \$2 billion had been raised, principally because security problems have prevented donors from assessing Iraqi needs and irritation among some donors that American aid has also not flowed as promised.

Of nearly \$19 billion in American aid appropriated by Congress and pledged at Madrid, only \$7 billion has been spent. At the time the money was appropriated, American officials said they hoped to spend most of it within a year.

The conferees urged participants to attend a conference next month in Amman, Jordan, and figure out ways to speed up the aid.

Allawi painted a bleak picture of Iraq's financial situation, particularly its problems in producing oil. The production of 1.4 million barrels of oil a day was below targets, he said, but revenues were higher than expected because of high oil prices.

However, he said the Iraqi budget, 95 percent of which is paid for by oil income, was drained by continued subsidies for gasoline, food and electricity for Iraqis, an elaborate system of welfare set up under Saddam that the new regime has been unable to dismantle for fear of angering Iraqi citizens.

Allawi said Iraq's burden of \$125 bil-

lion in debt — a figure calculated by the United States at \$110 billion — continued to strangle the nation's solvency, and other conference participants expressed frustration — but only in private — that Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries had not sent ambassadors to Baghdad or provided debt relief.

The major industrial nations of the West have agreed to relieve 80 percent of their \$40 billion in debts, but the Arab countries, whose debts date from decades ago, have been slow to do so. The conference called on them to do so "on generous terms comparable" to what had been done already.

An important running theme at the conference came in appeals to Iraqi leaders to make sure that their constitution-writing process, which is supposed

to be completed in less than two months, include Iraqis of all persuasions and ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Iraqi leaders repeated just as often that they would do so.

Zebari, the foreign minister, said at the conference that his government had finally concluded "a major political deal" with the Sunni Arab community to join in writing the constitution even though most Sunnis had boycotted the election.

"In the spirit of national dialogue, we have spared no effort to reach out and engage all who renounce violence to ensure that the political and constitutional processes are fully inclusive and truly representative of the Iraqi people," he said.

The New York Times

MOYEN-ORIENT La communauté internationale a affiché son unité, hier à Bruxelles, lors d'une gigantesque conférence

L'Europe prudente face au « nouvel » Irak

Bruxelles :
de notre correspondante
Alexandrine Bouilhet

Épaulé par Condi Rice, tout de blanc vêtue, le « nouvel » Irak a tenté de se vendre aux Européens, hier, à Bruxelles. Le résultat fut mitigé. Hôte de cette gigantesque conférence, organisée à la demande de George W. Bush, l'Union européenne s'est associée, bien sûr, au soutien de la communauté internationale, en faveur d'un Irak « stable, prospère et démocratique ». Sur le départ, le ministre luxembourgeois des Affaires étrangères, Jean Asselborn, a exprimé, au nom de l'Union, son soutien au « processus de transition » politique en cours à Bagdad, depuis

les élections du mois de janvier. Il a réitéré l'offre de l'Union en faveur de la reconstruction et du rétablissement de l'État de droit. « Nous voulons un Irak unifié, fédéral, qui respecte les droits de l'homme, des femmes, et des minorités », a-t-il affirmé.

En terme médiatique et diplomatique, la conférence sur l'Irak, même si elle tombait en pleine crise européenne, fut un succès. Quatre-vingt-cinq pays et organisations internationales se sont déplacés à Bruxelles, notamment Kofi Annan. Même la Syrie et l'Iran, ennemies de Washington, étaient représentées au niveau ministériel. « Il y avait deux fois plus de délégations qu'à Charm el-Cheikh ! » s'est félicité Jack Straw, le chef de la diplomatie britannique, bondissant. Une déclaration commune approuvée par tous

les participants promet aux Irakiens « efforts », « assistance » et « coopération » pour l'avenir. « Ce fut une bonne journée pour l'Irak, un succès pour les Irakiens », a estimé le premier ministre Ibrahim al-Jaafari.

Concrètement, l'Irak n'a pourtant rien obtenu. Le seul résultat tangible de cette formidable opération de relations publiques fut l'annonce de la nomination, à Bagdad, du premier ambassadeur venant d'un pays arabe : l'Égypte. Cette décision a été obtenue au Caire par Condoleezza Rice. « Nous saluons l'Égypte qui a fait preuve de leadership régional », a déclaré le ministre irakien des Affaires étrangères, Hoshiyar Zebari. Les autres pays arabes sont représentés à Bagdad, mais pas au niveau d'ambassadeur. L'insécurité explique en grande partie la réticence des chancelleries. La Commission européenne s'est engagée à ouvrir un bureau à Bagdad, mais les conditions de sécurité ne sont pas encore réunies pour envoyer des fonctionnaires européens sur place. « Nous demandons à la Commission européenne de présenter ses plans, ses exigences, pour ouvrir un bureau opérationnel le plus vite possible », a insisté le chef de la diplomatie irakienne.

Promise à chaque conférence, l'assistance financière tarde à se concrétiser. Seuls les États-Unis déboursent vraiment : 19 milliards de dol-

lars pour la reconstruction et 500 millions de dollars pour la formation des forces de sécurité. Les diplomates ont remarqué, hier, que leurs homologues irakiens étaient tous joignables sur des téléphones portables munis de numéros américains. À l'exception de la Grande-Bretagne, les Européens, comme les monarchies pétrolières – Koweït, Arabie saoudite –, ont toujours trouvé divers prétextes pour ne pas débloquer les sommes dues. Les Irakiens s'en sont beaucoup plaints, dans les couloirs, hier, à Bruxelles.

Aux Européens atones, uniquement préoccupés par leur crise interne, Kofi Annan a rappelé quelques vérités. « Nous avons bien compris que vous aviez quelques problèmes, a déclaré le secrétaire général de l'ONU. Mais sachez qu'il y a tant de régions dans le monde qui aimeraient avoir vos genres de problèmes ! » Au nom de l'Union, le chef de la diplomatie luxembourgeoise a conclu, avec humour, à l'intention des Irakiens : « Si vous rencontrez trop de problèmes avec votre Constitution, surtout n'hésitez pas à venir demander notre aide ! » Pour la première fois de la journée Condoleezza Rice a souri d'amusement.

Sur le terrain, trois attentats simultanés à Bagdad ont fait hier 18 morts et 46 blessés et un otage philippin détenu depuis plus de sept mois a été libéré...



Kofi Annan et Ibrahim al-Jaafari. « Ce fut une bonne journée pour l'Irak, un succès pour les Irakiens », a estimé le premier ministre irakien. (Photo Y. Logghe/AFP.)

La milice islamiste est soupçonnée d'avoir influencé le premier tour de la présidentielle en faveur de l'ultra-conservateur Ahmadinejad

L'ombre des bassidjs plane sur l'Iran

Un front du refus se constitue en Iran pour faire barrage à l'ultra-conservateur Mahmoud Ahmadinejad et pour appuyer la candidature de l'ancien président Rafsanjani. Certains redoutent que le second tour des présidentielles qui se déroulera vendredi soit entaché de fraude.

Les appels à voter Rafsanjani se sont multipliés : de la part des principaux partis réformateurs « contre le danger immédiat du retour de l'intégrisme », d'éminents ayatollahs, du propre frère du Guide suprême Hadi Khamenei, des grands artistes comme l'écrivain Mahmoud Dolatabadi et le cinéaste Bahman Gharmian, jusqu'aux étudiants pourtant si défilants vis-à-vis du scrutin.

M. Ahmadinejad jouit auprès d'une partie de l'opinion d'une image d'homme simple vivant d'un salaire d'enseignant, bon musulman dénué d'ambition personnelle. Pour ses adversaires, inquiets d'une remise en cause d'une relative libéralisation sociale, il faut convaincre ceux qui ne voudraient pas voter qu'il est un extrémiste.

Téhéran :
de notre envoyé spécial
Georges Malbrunot

Barbe grise, visage austère, Hassan Hosseini, 20 ans, arbore la morgue du milicien islamiste. « Les bassidjs sont là pour défendre les valeurs de la Révolution contre les extrémistes subversifs », assure ce jeune homme en chemise noire et pantalon kaki, la tenue des « volontaires » à la solde du régime.

La rencontre a lieu dans le sous-sol de la mosquée des Martyrs à Téhéran Pars, un quartier pauvre dans l'est de la capitale. Hassan et son compère Hojat, qui ne parlent qu'après avoir reçu le feu vert de leur commandant, gardent profil bas. « Nous venons ici seulement pour la prière, le maintien de la sécurité n'est pas de notre ressort », prétend Hassan.

Cette semaine, le ministère de l'Intérieur a mis en garde contre le risque de fraude, lors du second tour de la présidentielle vendredi, par « certaines personnes prêtes à tout pour rester au pouvoir ».

Il faisait allusion aux bourrages d'urnes et aux achats de voix que les bassidjs sont soupçonnés d'avoir pratiqués lors du premier tour, la se-

culaire est entre les mains des durs.

Les Iraniens avaient oublié un peu vite ces miliciens qui, dans les années 90, contraignaient les jeunes femmes à se voiler « convenablement » le visage ou interdisaient les soirées « impies » des quartiers huppés du nord de Téhéran. Il s'agissait alors de contrer la vague de libéralisation, encouragée par l'élection du réformateur Mohammed Khatami à la présidence de la République. « La liberté d'expression, le voile qui tombe, nous ne sommes pas d'accord, mais aujourd'hui que pouvons nous faire ? », se demande Hojat d'un air faussement ingénu.

Une nouvelle mission a été assignée à ces gardiens de l'orthodoxie révolutionnaire. « L'énergie des bassidjs est désormais focalisée sur une lutte davantage politique et militaire que sociale », explique un expert, qui veut rester anonyme. Leurs pressions en faveur d'Ahmadinejad en est la dernière illustration. L'Iran, placé sur « l'axe

du mal » par George Bush, a tiré la leçon de

la défaite de son voisin irakien face aux Américains. Rien ne sert de masser des troupes aux frontières, estiment les mollahs.

Mieux vaut opter pour la guérilla urbaine et se préparer à harceler, sur l'ensemble du territoire, des « envahisseurs » potentiels. Qui mieux que les bassidjs et les pasdarans, les 150 000 autres gardiens de la Révolution, peuvent livrer cette « guerre asymétrique » ?

Les pressions occidentales sur Téhéran, soupçonné de dissimuler une activité nucléaire militaire, ne font que renforcer les craintes d'une intervention militaire. Les autorités iraniennes se méfient de « l'ennemi intérieur ». D'autant que certaines informations sensibles sur le nucléaire ont été révélées par des Moudjahidins du peuple, un groupe islamomarxiste en exil qui disposerait de sources crédibles en Iran.

« Les bassidjs sont disséminés à travers le pays, observe l'expert. Ils ont un rôle de sur-

maine dernière, au profit de l'ultra-conservateur Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Ce dernier fut instructeur dans cette milice créée, dans les années 80, pendant la guerre contre l'Irak. Hojat dément toute pression exercée à la demande de leur mentor, le Conseil des gardiens de la Révolution. Selon lui, « Karroubi (arrivé troisième au premier tour) est mauvais perdant. Il a besoin d'un bouc émissaire. S'il a des preuves, qu'il les apporte devant la justice. Nous n'avons pas peur. » Et pour cause : le système judi-



La milice est formée d'un noyau dur de 300 000 à 400 000 jeunes, souvent issus des milieux déshérités. (Photo Eslami-Rad/Gamma.)

veillance mais, en cas de conflit, ils pourraient mener des opérations. »

La milice est formée d'un moya dur de 300 000 à 400 000 jeunes, souvent issus des milieux déshérités. « Dans chaque université, dans chaque entreprise et dans chaque lieu de prière, il y a un centre de recrutement de bassids », se félicite l'ayatollah Hossein Ashrafi Esfahani

à la mosquée des Martyrs. Selon lui, la Constitution leur donne le droit d'intervenir dès qu'ils perçoivent le moindre danger. « Ce sont, dit-il, de vrais partisans du guide Ali Khamenei », son ancien condisciple au séminaire religieux de Qom, dont les bassids dépendent directement, comme l'ensemble des forces de sécurité.

Les miliciens ne sont pas

payés mais bénéficient de nombreux privilèges. Si un étudiant s'enrôle dans la milice, il verra son service militaire réduit de deux ans à six mois.

Contrairement aux pasdars qui ne peuvent pratiquer le maintien de l'ordre, la section locale de telle université peut tout à fait intervenir contre des « fauteurs de trouble », comme ce fut le cas

en 1999 à Téhéran. Que vaut leur loyauté à l'égard d'un régime qui ne fait plus vibrer la population ? « Beaucoup sont là uniquement parce qu'ils ont besoin de manger ou parce que leur famille veut leur éviter la drogue, note un journaliste iranien. Il n'est pas sûr qu'ils aillent en masse affronter un ennemi, en cas de crise grave. »

Pour l'Europe, le nucléaire est l'un des enjeux du scrutin

Une victoire de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad entraînerait un durcissement de la position iranienne

TÉHÉRAN

de notre envoyée spéciale

Il n'a été évoqué qu'à la marge par certains candidats, mais le dossier nucléaire iranien était en filigrane de l'élection présidentielle iranienne, dont le second tour est prévu vendredi 24 juin. Alors que dans toute autre configuration post-électorale, aucune surprise n'aurait été à attendre, tant il est vrai que la position officielle sur cette question tient quasiment lieu de dogme en République islamique, la situation qui risque de prévaloir en cas de victoire du candidat ultraconservateur, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, est lourde de menaces.

Pour rassurer la communauté internationale sur le caractère civil de son programme nucléaire, et en échange de concessions commerciales, l'Iran a provisoirement suspendu l'enrichissement de l'uranium, et engagé des négociations avec la troïka européenne (Roya-

me-Uni, Allemagne, France), dont le but est de trouver un règlement définitif à cette affaire. Lors de nouvelles discussions au cours de l'été, les Européens, soutenus par les Etats-Unis, doivent concrétiser leur offre d'une coopération commerciale et politique à l'Iran, sous réserve que Téhéran renonce définitivement à l'enrichissement de l'uranium. Ils réclament, à ce sujet, des « garanties objectives », lesquelles ne peuvent être, selon eux, que l'arrêt total « et de manière vérifiable » des activités « liées à l'enrichissement et au retraitement », comme l'a souligné, lundi 20 juin, une déclaration commune américano-européenne. A ce jour, Téhéran continue de clamer son droit à reprendre l'enrichissement.

Bien qu'ayant souvent frôlé le point de rupture, les pourparlers irano-européens n'en ont pas moins continué grâce notamment, selon une source iranienne, à la for-

ce de persuasion exercée par l'ancien président Ali Akbar Hachémi Rafsandjani, le ministre des affaires étrangères, Kamal Kharazi, et le principal négociateur nucléaire et secrétaire du Conseil de sécurité nationale, Hassan Rohani. Ce sont eux qui auraient dissuadé le Guide de la République, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei, de reprendre l'enrichissement de l'uranium.

MOYENS DE PRESSION

Si M. Rafsandjani, qui affronte Mahmoud Ahmadinejad au second tour, vendredi, accède à la présidence, le dialogue et de possibles ouvertures sont envisageables, étant entendu que l'Iran n'acceptera jamais un arrêt définitif de l'enrichissement, ajoute cette source. Les Iraniens veulent que les Occidentaux leur reconnaissent le droit à une telle activité, fut-elle symbolique, et ils ont fait des propositions à ce sujet. De leur côté,

les Européens ont des doutes grandissants sur la sincérité des déclarations iraniennes : l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA) a récemment accusé l'Iran de lui avoir dissimulé des expériences sur le plutonium pendant cinq ans.

Mercredi, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad a accusé la diplomatie iranienne de se présenter à la table des pourparlers en position de faiblesse, d'avoir fait machine arrière avant même de négocier. Et d'ajouter que s'il est élu président, « la situation changera rapidement », qu'il n'acceptera de « coopérer », que si les Occidentaux « reconnaissent les droits légitimes de l'Iran » et qu'en décidant, le cas échéant, de mettre fin aux importations de produits occidentaux, l'Iran dispose lui aussi de moyens de pression « importants » sur l'Occident.

M. Na.

Malgré un chômage à 14 %, les candidats n'ont pas vraiment présenté de programme économique

TÉHÉRAN

de notre envoyée spéciale

C'est une étrange campagne présidentielle qui vient de s'achever en Iran. Les questions économiques y ont été à peine effleurées. Les candidats de ce que l'on pourrait qualifier, pour faire court, du centre et de gauche ont prôné la libéralisation et l'encouragement à l'initiative privée ; l'ultraconservateur Mahmoud Ahmadinejad a parlé, quant à lui, de redistribution des richesses ; tandis que l'ancien président du Parlement, Mehdi Karubi, promettait, d'une manière pour le moins démagogique, une allocation de 50 000 toman (environ 50 euros) à tout Iranien de plus de 18 ans. Tous ont évoqué la lutte contre le chômage. Mais plutôt que de programmes, on devrait parler ici de vagues promesses, et pas

uniquement pour l'économie.

Comment va l'économie iranienne ? « Pas mal pour l'Etat, compte tenu des revenus pétroliers qui ont atteint cette année 45 milliards de dollars, soit un excédent de 25 milliards par rapport aux 20 milliards sur la base desquels est établi le budget », répond l'économiste libéral Moussa Ghaninejad. « Le taux de croissance s'est établi entre 5,5 % et 6 % cette année grâce à ces revenus et aux importations. Mais, si l'on exclut le secteur pétrolier, l'économie est en récession », ajoute cet universitaire, qui dirige le mensuel théorique du quotidien économique Dounia Eqtasad (Le monde de l'économie). « Le chômage, avec 3 millions de sans-emploi, pour la plupart des jeunes, soit 14 % de la main-d'œuvre active, et l'inflation, qui n'est jamais descendue au-

dessous de 14 % et qui s'établit cette année entre 15 % et 16 %, sont les deux principaux problèmes. » Ce n'est pas la première fois que les prix du pétrole offrent à l'Etat iranien, dont le pays se place au deuxième rang des pays membres de l'OPEP (Organisation des pays exportateurs de pétrole), un confortable coussin financier, mais le nombre des chômeurs ne diminue pas pour autant.

« PENSÉE MARXISTE »

La manne pétrolière autorise certes l'Etat à continuer sa politique de subventions aux produits de base et à l'essence, qui lui permet de circonvenir les troubles en assurant le minimum indispensable aux plus déshérités. Mais les investissements se font quasi invariablement dans le secteur de l'industrie lour-

de, non créatrice d'emplois, explique un autre expert. Ainsi, en l'espace de quinze ans, la filière gaz, pétrole et, plus récemment, pétrochimie a-t-elle absorbé à elle seule et à parts égales la somme totale de 150 milliards de dollars. D'importants investissements sont également engagés dans la sidérurgie, l'aluminium et le secteur automobile.

C'est dans la Constitution de la République islamique que se trouve l'explication, souligne M. Ghaninejad. Celle-ci dispose, souligne-t-il, que « l'économie doit être fondée sur l'industrie lourde, les banques devant être contrôlées, voire entre les mains de l'Etat et le secteur privé n'étant qu'un complément de l'économie étatique ». Ce qui équivaut, ironise-t-il, à « faire du marxisme sans le savoir. De fait, depuis la

révolution constitutionnelle de 1906, et surtout après la seconde guerre mondiale et la surface prise par le Parti communiste Toudéh, ce pays a été imprégné de pensée marxiste. Et la révolution [islamique] de 1979 l'a été elle aussi à 95 %, alors qu'en Islam rien ne s'oppose à une économie de marché, au commerce libre, à la propriété privée ».

FUITE DES CAPITAUX

Foin des demi-mesures et d'une politique de privatisation qui a montré ses limites, enchaîne-t-il. « Le défi de l'emploi ne peut être relevé sans investissements dans le secteur privé. Il faut libéraliser l'éco-

nomie, tout faire pour faciliter les investissements, mettre fin à une bureaucratie étouffante, garantir le droit de propriété » et en finir avec les tribunaux révolutionnaires qui ont toujours le pouvoir d'exproprier les gens, faisant ainsi peser sur les têtes « une épée de Damoclès qui handicape toute velléité de création d'entreprise. Il faut enfin contrôler le volume de la monnaie et le déficit budgétaire pour juguler l'inflation ».

Des deux candidats au second tour de l'élection présidentielle, l'ultraconservateur Mahmoud Ahmadinejad et l'ancien président Ali Akbar Hachémi Rafsandjani,

généralement qualifié de « pragmatique », c'est ce dernier qui, avec des réserves, lui paraît le plus à même de comprendre les réalités du monde et les rouages de l'économie de marché. En revanche, si M. Ahmadinejad est élu, « ce sera, dit-il, une catastrophe pour l'économie du pays ». Le modèle économique qu'il propose est « un modèle très flou, à la manière talibane ou national socialiste », dit-il. « Déjà, la Bourse est en panne depuis près de huit mois, à cause des politiques préconisées par le Parlement [élu en février 2004 et à écrasante majorité conservatrice]. Résultat : les gens sont inquiets et on assiste à une

fuite de capitaux, alors qu'il y a quatre ans le mouvement se faisait en sens contraire. »

Fin mai, dans la foulée de la levée par les Etats-Unis de leur veto à toute adhésion de l'Iran à l'Organisation mondiale du commerce, celle-ci a décidé d'ouvrir des négociations avec Téhéran en vue de son adhésion. Pour l'heure, c'est une victoire diplomatique pour la République islamique, mais elle va devoir engager un long travail d'ouverture qui ne pourra se faire que progressivement, commente un diplomate.

M. Na.

David Brooks

The long haul in Iraq

WASHINGTON

There are times in the course of war when the outcome is simply unknowable. Victory is clearly not imminent, yet people haven't really thought through the consequences of defeat. Everybody just wants the miserable present to go away.

America is at one of those moments in the war against the insurgency in Iraq. The polls show rising disenchantment with the war. Sixty percent of Americans say they want to withdraw some or all troops.

Yet I can't believe majorities of Americans really want to pull out and accept defeat. I can't believe they want to abandon to the Zarqawis and the Baathists those 8.5 million Iraqis who held up purple fingers on Election Day. I can't believe they are yet ready to accept a terrorist-run state in the heart of the Middle East, a civil war in Iraq, the crushing of democratic hopes in places like Egypt and Iran, and the ruinous consequences for American power and prestige.

What they want to do, more likely, is to somehow escape the current moment, which is discouraging and uncertain. One of the many problems with fighting the insurgency is that it is nearly impossible to know if America is winning or losing. It's like watching a football game with no goal lines and chaotic action all over the field.

On the one hand, there are signs of progress. U.S. forces have completed a series of successful operations, among them Operation Spear in western Iraq, where at least 60 insurgents were killed and 100 captured, and Operation Lightning in Baghdad, with over 500 arrests. American forces now hold at least 14,000 suspected insurgents, and have captured about two dozen lieutenants of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. There were reports this week of insurgents fighting each other, foreign against domestic.

There is also the crawling political progress that is crucial to success. Sunni leaders now regret not taking part in the elections and Sunnis are helping to draft the constitution.

These tactical victories, however, have not added up to improvement over all. Insurgent attacks are up. Casualties are up. Few Iraqi security forces can oper-

ate independently, so far. There aren't enough U.S. troops to hold the ground they conquer. The insurgency is adaptable, organized and still learning.

Still, one thing is for sure: Since we Americans don't have the evidence upon which to pass judgment on the overall trajectory of this war, it's important we don't pass judgment prematurely.

It's too soon to accept the defeatism that seems to have gripped so many. If governments surrendered to insurgencies after just a couple of years, then insurgencies would win every time. But they don't because insurgencies have weaknesses, exposed over time, especially when they oppose the will of the majority.

It's just wrong to seek withdrawal now, when the outcome of the war is unknowable and when the consequences of defeat are so vast.

Some of you will respond that this is easy for me to say, since I'm not over there. All I'd say is that we live in a democracy, where decisions are made by all. Besides, the vast majority of those serving in Iraq, and their families, said they voted to re-elect President George W. Bush. They seem to want to finish the job.

Others will say we shouldn't be there in the first place. You may be right. Time will tell. But right now,

this isn't about your personal vindication. It's about victory for the forces of decency and defeating those, like Zarqawi, who would be attacking us in any case.

On Tuesday, Senator Joe Biden gave a speech in Washington on Iraq, after his most recent visit. It was, in some ways, a model of what the president needs to tell the country in the weeks ahead. It was scathing about the lack of progress in many areas. But it was also constructive. "I believe we can still succeed in Iraq," he said. Biden talked about building the coalition at home that is necessary if we are to get through the 2006 election cycle without a rush to the exits.

Biden's speech brought to mind something Franklin Roosevelt told the country on Feb. 23, 1942: "Your government has unmistakable confidence in your ability to hear the worst, without flinching or losing heart. You must, in turn, have complete confidence that your government is keeping nothing from you except information that will help the enemy in his attempt to destroy us."

That's how democracies should fight, even in the age of polling.

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INTERNATIONAL
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U.S. will stay the course in Iraq, Bush pledges

He tells Jaafari he won't set a pullout date

By David E. Sanger

WASHINGTON: President Bush on Friday promised the Iraqi prime minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, that he was "not giving up on the mission" in Iraq despite rising pressure on the White House to describe a strategy for gradual American withdrawal.

Bush shrugged off suggestions that the military and members of his administration disagree on the strength of the insurgency.

Standing in the East Room beside Jaafari, a longtime dissident-in-exile when Saddam Hussein ruled Iraq, Bush once again promised that he would not set a schedule for drawing down the American presence, in the face of growing calls in Congress and from the public to do so.

"There are not going to be any time-tables," Bush said in the news conference. "Why would you say to the enemy, you know, here's a timetable, just go ahead and wait us out?"

Suggesting that would be a sign of weakness, he said that if a schedule were set "you're conceding too much to the enemy."

Jaafari, who spoke primarily in Arabic, broke into English to state his agreement with Bush. "This is not the time to fall back," he said.

He echoed the White House view that good news in Iraq is being drowned out by the steady string of bombings and other attacks, and argued that "I see from up close what's happening in Iraq, and I know we are making steady and substantial progress."

Yet Bush's insistence that he will stay the course sets up a delicate political task for Tuesday night, when the president has asked the major networks to broadcast a prime-time address at Fort Bragg. It will mark the first anniversary of the end of the American occupation and the handover of power to the Iraqis.

With American casualties showing no signs of tapering off, Bush is having an increasingly difficult time convincing even members of his own party that his strategy is working.

The White House is having to contend with televised images each day reinforcing the constant carnage, while military leaders report no letup in attacks or the influx of foreign fighters, and the training of Iraqi forces progresses with painful slowness.

Bush seemed to preview next week's speech when he said the development of political institutions in Iraq gave him optimism about the future.

But he was most vociferous on the question of not giving in to the insur-



Doug Mills/The New York Times

President Bush and Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari at the White House on Friday.

gents, and seemed to link their attacks with the polls showing growing American sentiment to find an exit.

"They figure if they can shake our will and affect public opinion, then politicians will give up on the mission," he said. "I'm not giving up on the mission. We're doing the right thing, which is to set the foundation for peace and freedom."

Bush declined to answer directly when asked about apparent disagreements — or at least notable differences in language — between Vice President Dick Cheney and General John Abizaid, commander of U.S. troops in Iraq.

Cheney reiterated Thursday his view that the insurgency in Iraq was in its "last throes."

But Abizaid told a Senate committee the same day that the insurgency's "overall strength is about the same" as six months ago, and that the number of foreign fighters coming to Iraq was increasing.

"The very same commanders that say that these folks are terrible killers are also reminding us that we're making good progress," Bush said, noting he

had just emerged from a briefing with Cheney, Abizaid and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Bush did not offer details.

On Thursday, Jaafari confidently predicted that a constitution to guide his country toward democracy would be concluded by the end of August and then ratified in a referendum, The Associated Press reported.

"We are going to do it within two months," he said as he inspected the U.S. Constitution in the dimly lit, cool rotunda of the National Archives.

In the meantime, the U.S.-led multinational force must stay in Iraq until Iraqi forces are fully prepared to defend the country by themselves, Jaafari said.

Setting a timetable for the withdrawal of foreign forces would be a sign of weakness, he said. "The country would be open to increased terrorist activity," he said in a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations.

The New York Times

IRAK A Washington, hier, al-Jaafari s'est transformé en ambassadeur de la politique américaine

Le premier ministre irakien au secours de Bush

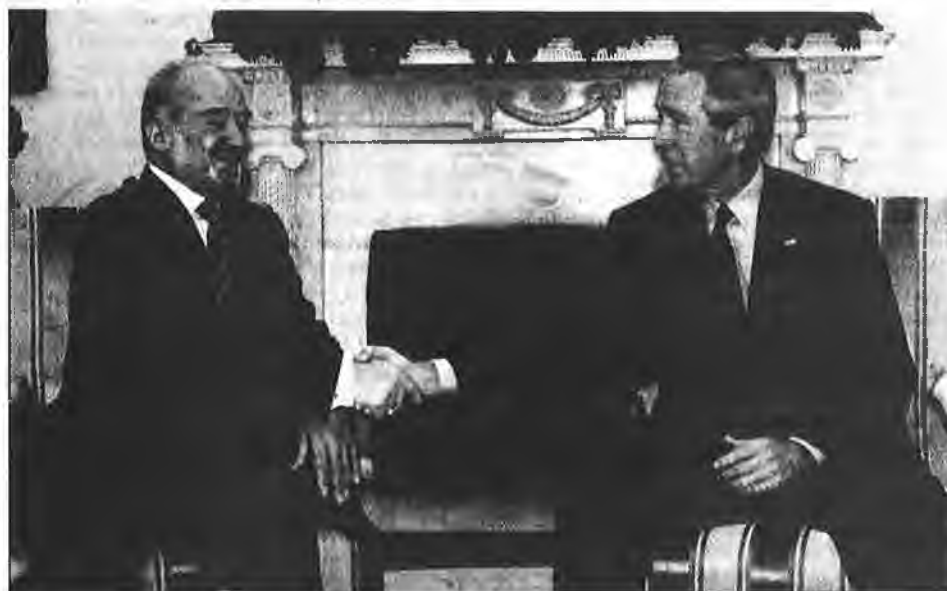
Washington :
de notre correspondant
Philippe Gélle

L'Irak va mal, mais c'est son premier ministre qui vient prêter main-forte à George W. Bush. En visite officielle à Washington, hier, Ibrahim al-Jaafari s'est transformé en ambassadeur de la politique américaine en Irak, offrant la version arabe d'un discours volontariste martelé sans relâche par la Maison-Blanche.

« Ce n'est pas le moment de reculer », a souligné M. al-Jaafari. Nous faisons chaque jour des progrès importants. » Le président américain s'est fait l'écho de cet « optimisme », tout en reconnaissant que « la tâche est difficile » et que l'Irak est « à un moment critique ». Mais leur discussion n'a produit aucune inflexion stratégique : « Nous sommes là-bas jusqu'à ce que la mission soit remplie », a répété Bush. Le but de l'ennemi est de nous chasser, mais il ne réussira pas. »

Les deux hommes sont d'accord pour refuser de fixer un calendrier de retrait des troupes américaines, « qui ferait le jeu des terroristes », et pour miser sur la formation accélérée des forces irakiennes (des pays non-membres de la coalition comme la France pourraient finalement voir leur offre acceptée par Bagdad). Ils partagent aussi l'analyse selon laquelle la Syrie joue un rôle négatif en laissant des terroristes s'infiltrer en Irak. Al-Jaafari compte se rendre à Damas tandis que Washington se propose de durcir le régime de sanctions contre le régime de Bachar el-Assad. La Maison-Blanche préparerait un décret sanctionnant les entreprises qui fournissent des armes à la Syrie, à l'Iran et à la Corée du Nord.

Côte à côte sous les moulures de la Maison-Blanche, George W. Bush et Ibrahim al-Jaafari ont offert le spectacle d'une



Ibrahim al-Jaafari et George W. Bush ont offert le spectacle d'une connivence inattendue entre le cow-boy du Texas et le médecin de Kerbala, chiite dévot longtemps exilé en Iran.

(Photo Charles Dharapak/AP)

connivence inattendue, les points communs ne sautant pas aux yeux entre le cow-boy du Texas et le médecin de Kerbala, chiite dévot longtemps exilé en Iran. Mais le président américain a salué en lui « un homme audacieux, franc et ouvert, qui ne craint pas de dire ce qu'il pense ». La panoplie des meilleurs compliments dans la bouche de l'actuel occupant du bureau Oval.

Derrière son sourire plissé de lutin, on devine un caractère trempé et un esprit manœuvrier qui peuvent faire du premier ministre irakien un partenaire utile de l'Amérique, aussi longtemps qu'il partage ses objectifs. Or, quand il décrit la situation de son pays, on croit entendre Bush lui-même. « Les terroristes ont la mentalité des hommes des cavernes, ils ne connaissent aucune limite ni frontière », expliquait-il jeudi soir lors d'une conférence devant le Tout-Washington. Le sang de nos fils s'est mélangé au sang des vôtres. Le combat pour la démocratie et les droits de l'homme n'est pas un slogan, mais une réalité pour la-

quelle des Américains sont prêts à sacrifier leur vie. Nous ne l'oublierons jamais. »

Le premier ministre apporte des réponses que l'Administration espère convaincantes aux questions posées de plus en plus ouvertement par l'opinion et les élus. Jeudi, devant la commission des Forces armées du Sénat, le secrétaire à la Défense, Donald Rumsfeld, a eu droit à une nouvelle audition agitée. Le sénateur démocrate Ted Kennedy a dénoncé « une guerre dramatiquement mal gérée de bout en bout » et demandé la démission du ministre. Le général John Abizaid, commandant des forces américaines dans la région, a reconnu que l'insurrection « avait à peu près la même force » qu'il y a six mois et que « plus de combattants étrangers » rejoignent ses rangs. C'est un démenti à l'analyse du vice-président, Dick Cheney, qui continue d'affirmer que la violence en Irak connaît ses « derniers soubresauts ».

Pour Ibrahim al-Jaafari, tout va bien mieux qu'on ne le dit : « Le nombre de voitures pié-

gées est tombé d'une douzaine à une ou deux par jour », la population collabore en donnant « plus d'informations qu'on ne peut en traiter » sur les terroristes et « les gens peuvent se promener tard le soir » sans crainte pour leur sécurité. Ceux qui en doutent sont les victimes de « l'image totalement déformée de l'Irak dans les médias », arabes et occidentaux confondus.

La Constitution, dont pas une ligne n'est encore rédigée, fait l'objet « d'un accord sur les principes » qui devrait permettre « de l'achever à la date prévue », le 15 août prochain. La multiplication des milices « ne pose pas le moindre danger » à la stabilité du pays. La place de l'islam et le rôle des femmes dans la société ne doivent pas susciter d'inquiétudes : « En Amérique, vous avez la devise In God we trust, mais peut-être que tout le monde ne croit pas en Dieu », dit le facétieux al-Jaafari. Quant aux femmes, « elles sont l'autre aile qui permet à l'humanité de voler ».

Selon des rapports officiels de la CIA, le terrorisme se renforce

Le pays devient une « école de la guérilla »

Contredisant les déclarations optimistes de l'Administration américaine sur l'évolution de la situation en Irak, des rapports officiels de la CIA estiment pour leur part que ce pays est en passe de devenir une « école de la guérilla » pour les extrémistes islamistes. Selon le rapport de l'Agence de renseignement américaine, dont des fuites circulent à Washington, les djihadistes engagés aujourd'hui contre le corps expéditionnaire américain entre le Tigre et l'Euphrate, loin de jeter leurs dernières forces dans la bataille, seraient au contraire en train de se renforcer et d'acquiescer une redoutable expérience de guérilla urbaine. A l'instar des volontaires des brigades internationales islamistes engagées aux côtés des moudjahidins afghans contre les Soviétiques dans les années 80, ces combattants pourraient former un réservoir de terroristes expérimentés, susceptibles de répandre les savoir-faire acquis sur le terrain en Irak vers des pays voisins, comme la Jordanie ou l'Arabie saoudite.

La CIA craint même que les méthodes mises au point en Irak, basées sur le terrorisme urbain et utilisant les voitures piégées, les enlèvements et les

assassinats, ne soient encore plus redoutables que les techniques de guérilla rurale des moudjahidins afghans.

L'armée américaine est pour sa part de plus en plus préoccupée par les progrès des insurgés en matière d'explosifs. La puissance des engins utilisés, mais aussi leurs techniques d'emploi, représentent une menace de plus en plus préoccupante contre le corps expéditionnaire.

Selon le commandement américain en Irak, plus de

700 attaques par des mines télécommandées auraient été dénombrées le mois dernier, chiffre le plus élevé depuis l'invasion du pays en 2003. Utilisant des charges spéciales pour percer les blindages, ou des mises à feu déclenchées par infrarouge pour déjouer les systèmes de brouillage radio utilisés par les Américains, les insurgés améliorent constamment leurs techniques.

Sur le terrain, l'opération « Eclair », lancée fin mai par l'armée américaine et les forces irakiennes pour tenter de démanteler les réseaux de l'insurrection sunnite dans Bagdad, n'a pas atteint son

objectif de mettre fin aux attentats dans la capitale.

Malgré la mobilisation de plus de 40 000 soldats ou policiers irakiens, épaulés par plusieurs milliers de soldats américains, la mise en place de nombreux barrages, la capture d'au moins 1 200 suspects et la découverte de nombreuses caches d'armes et d'explosifs, les insurgés sunnites ont démontré ces derniers jours qu'ils étaient capables de continuer leurs actions et de frapper au cœur de la capitale.

Une série d'attaques kamikazes et à la voiture piégée ont fait mercredi et jeudi une trentaine de morts et plusieurs dizaines de blessés en plein Bagdad, frappant notamment le quartier commerçant de Karata, en plein centre-ville. Un porte-parole de l'armée américaine a souligné qu'il n'était pas possible d'empêcher tous les attentats, mais a affirmé que les insurgés avaient vu leurs activités désorganisées par les barrages et les arrestations menées dans la capitale.

Les opérations menées par les Américains dans le nord-ouest du pays, où les villes

sunnites et les déserts qui s'étendent le long de la frontière avec la Syrie sont devenus un bastion des insurgés, continuaient aussi, avec des résultats mitigés.

Parmi les succès remportés, figure la mort de l'un des activistes islamistes saoudiens les plus connus et les plus recherchés, Abdallah al-Rachoud, qui aurait été tué dans cette région au cours d'un raid aérien américain, selon un message diffusé par Internet et attribué au chef d'al-Qaïda en Irak, Abou Moussab al-Zarqaoui. L'annonce de sa mort confirme l'implication de combattants saoudiens dans les combats en Irak entre les troupes américaines et les insurgés sunnites. A Bagdad, une maison servant de cache au groupe d'al-Zarqaoui a aussi été détruite par l'armée américaine.

Mais malgré leurs revers, rien n'indique que les insurgés soient sur le point de déposer les armes. A Faloudja, l'ancien fief de l'insurrection, repris par les Américains après une opération d'envergure en novembre 2004, et placé depuis sous contrôle de l'armée américaine, un nouvel attentat a été commis contre les troupes stationnées dans cette ville de l'ouest de Bagdad. En plein jour, une voiture piégée s'est jetée contre un convoi, tuant deux marines et en blessant une dizaine d'autres.

A. J. (avec AFP et Reuter)

George Bush : « Nous nous attendons à d'autres durs combats en Irak »

« LA MISSION de notre pays en Irak est difficile et nous pouvons nous attendre à d'autres durs combats au cours des semaines et des mois à venir », a averti George Bush, samedi 25 juin, au cours de son discours radiodiffusé hebdomadaire. « Notre stratégie militaire est claire : nous allons entraîner les forces de sécurité irakiennes jusqu'à ce qu'elles puissent défendre leur liberté et protéger leur peuple, puis nos soldats reviendront à la maison avec les honneurs qui leur sont dus », a réaffirmé le président, qui, la veille, a repoussé les requêtes pour un calendrier de retrait des troupes américaines en Irak.

Vendredi, George Bush a reçu, pour la première fois, à Washington, le premier ministre irakien, Ibrahim Al-Jaafari. Les deux hommes se sont efforcés de vanter les progrès accomplis en Irak, tout en convenant que les mois à venir resteraient difficiles. « Je n'abandonne-

rai pas ma mission », a déclaré M. Bush. « Pourquoi dirait-on à l'ennemi : voilà le calendrier, allez-y et attendez notre départ ? », a-t-il ajouté. « Le processus politique, qui inclut les Arabes sunnites, sapera les terroristes », a, de son côté, estimé le chef du gouvernement irakien qui, à propos de la résistance, a déclaré : « Peut-on appeler cela une résistance ? Je me demande qui sur terre accepterait que de tels agissements surviennent chez eux et en soient fiers. » « Les insurgés n'ont aucun calendrier à leur programme, et ils n'agissent pas au nom du peuple irakien », a-t-il ajouté.

M. Bush estime que de grands progrès ont été accomplis depuis le début de l'année. « Ce sont des tâches monumentales, et pourtant, à chaque étape jusqu'à présent, les Irakiens ont atteint leurs objectifs stratégiques, et les terroristes ont échoué à les arrêter », a-t-il indiqué.

Au moment même où le chef du

gouvernement irakien arrivait à la Maison Blanche, le Pentagone a annoncé que deux nouveaux soldats américains avaient été tués, treize autres blessés et que quatre marines étaient portés disparus dans un attentat-suicide, jeudi soir, à Fallouja, le bastion rebelle sunnite à l'ouest de Bagdad. Ce qui porte à plus de 1 700 le nombre de militaires tués en Irak depuis le début de la guerre.

LE RISQUE DU « BOURBIER »

Pour beaucoup d'élus américains, comme notamment le sénateur républicain Chuck Hagel, « la réalité est que nous sommes en train de perdre en Irak ». L'ancien conseiller américain à la sécurité nationale, Zbigniew Brzezinski, a dénoncé, vendredi, « l'incompétence tactique et stratégique » de la conduite de la guerre en Irak, réclamant du président Bush « un plan décrivant les principaux éléments

d'une stratégie réussie en Irak ».

« Le patriotisme et l'amour de son pays n'exigent pas un sacrifice sans fin de la part de nos troupes engagées dans une guerre justifiée par des slogans », déclare M. Brzezinski dans un message au nom de l'opposition démocrate. Le pays « mérite une explication honnête pour la façon dont nous nous sommes retrouvés en Irak. Et nous méritons une définition réaliste du succès dans une guerre qui menace de plus en plus de devenir un bourbier », selon M. Brzezinski.

Pour l'ancien conseiller du président Carter, « l'Amérique se trouve plus isolée que jamais et fait l'objet d'une défiance internationale sans précédent ». Le président Bush doit s'adresser mardi soir à la nation, à une heure de grande écoute, pour marquer le premier anniversaire du transfert de souveraineté aux autorités irakiennes. - (AFP, Reuters.)



27 JUIN 2005

Résultats 2^e tour

Votants: **27 959 254**

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad: 17 248 782 voix (**61,69%**)

Akbar Hachémi Rafsandjani: 10 043 489 voix (**35,92%**)

Taux de participation: **59,7%**

1^{er} tour

Akbar Hachémi Rafsandjani: **21%**. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad: **19,47%**. Mehdi Karoubi: **17,28%**. Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf: **13,82%**. Ali Larijani: **5,93%**. Mohsen Mehralizadeh: **4,39%**.



République islamique d'Iran

Superficie 1,65 million de km²

Population 66,5 millions
dont 50% de Persans,
20% d'Azeris
10% de Kurdes

Religion officielle Islam chiite,
(90% de la population)

PIB/hab. 2 010 dollars (2003)



MER CASPÉ

Téhéran

100 km

«Nous n'avons pas fait la révolution pour avoir la démocratie».

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

L'IRAN RETOURNE À LA CASE ULTRARADICALE

La victoire à la présidentielle de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad fait craindre une reprise en main des mœurs et une détérioration des relations diplomatiques.



Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, vendredi, lors du scrutin.

Téhéran envoyé spécial

La police s'est invitée à la noce. Elle est entrée sans frapper samedi, vers 3 heures du matin, au moment où commençaient de tomber les premiers résultats laissant prévoir le triomphe de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, le candidat ultraradical. Heureusement, la plupart des invités étaient déjà partis, les bouteilles d'alcool avaient été bues et la musique, que l'on entendait d'un bout à l'autre de la rue de ce quartier du nord de Téhéran, s'était assoupie depuis le départ du DJ. Les policiers ont aussitôt flairé les verres, regardé les filles qui avaient vite passé un foulard, et menacé d'embarquer tout le monde. Puis, la négociation a commencé jusqu'à ce que le jeune marié fasse une offre de 100 euros. Affaire conclue. Les policiers ont empoché l'argent et sont repartis. Commentaire de Shirin, l'une des invitées. «Cela faisait des mois

que l'on n'avait pas entendu parler d'une descente de police dans une soirée à Téhéran. Comme par hasard, cela tombe au moment où l'on apprend la victoire de Ahmadinejad.»

Si les milieux d'affaires s'inquiètent d'une détérioration du climat économique, si la mouvance réformiste s'alarme de possibles restrictions des libertés, si les diplomates à Téhéran redoutent une surenchère dans le nucléaire, la jeunesse des beaux quartiers et d'une partie de la classe moyenne craint, elle, que la relative libéralisation des mœurs, dont elle a profité pendant les deux mandats de Mohammed Khatami, soit remise en cause par la victoire de Ahmadinejad, élu vendredi avec près de 62% des voix.

Même si ses premières déclarations sont empreintes d'une certaine aménité, les propos violents tenus pendant sa campagne et lorsqu'il était maire de Téhéran sont encore dans toutes les mémoires.

«Notre grande mission aujourd'hui consiste à édifier en Iran une société islamique exemplaire, développée et puissante», a-t-il simplement affirmé

avant de tendre la main à ses adversaires d'hier. Celui du second tour, Ali Akbar Hachémi Rafsandjani, s'est gardé de la moindre réciprocité. Ils s'en est pris au Conseil des gardiens, institution ultraconservatrice

qui supervise les élections, et à «ceux qui ont dépensé des centaines de milliards de rials [1 euro vaut 10 000 rials]

pris sur l'argent du peuple pour me salir, moi et ma famille». Ses partisans ont dénoncé «d'énormes irrégularités».

Même s'il y a eu des fraudes, elles ne peuvent expliquer ce

raz-de-marée de voix en faveur de celui qui se présente comme «le balayeur des rues

de la nation iranienne». D'autant que Rafsandjani s'était lui-même engagé dans la surenchère populiste en promettant de faire verser à chaque famille iranienne l'équivalent de 10 000 euros s'il était élu.

Hachémi Rafsandjani, battu, a payé le prix de son impopularité. Trop riche dans un pays où 15 millions d'Iraniens vivent sous le seuil de pauvreté.

De plus, il avait derrière lui les partis réformistes, le haut clergé chiite, la plupart des technocrates, les mouvements étudiants et même certains dissidents.

A l'évidence, l'ancien président iranien a payé le prix de son impopularité. Trop riche

dans un pays où 15 millions d'Iraniens vivent en dessous du seuil de pauvreté. Trop lié au régime islamique, dont il a été l'un des fondateurs, ce qui lui a fait perdre beaucoup de voix des jeunes et des milieux réformistes. Trop tourné vers l'Occident dans un pays où l'emprise des milieux traditionnels reste forte. «Plus qu'une victoire des pauvres sur les riches, c'est celle des acteurs traditionnels contre les modernistes, analyse le philosophe Ramin Jahanbegloo. Rafsandjani a misé sur le modernisme, la bourgeoisie. Il a utilisé des éléments que les gens du peuple ont trouvés scandaleux. Com-

me la distribution de cravates ou de cartes Internet. L'Iran étant un pays de symboles, c'est comme si le Shah avait cherché des partisans au sein de la mouvance Hezbollah [la fraction idéologique la plus radicale].» Ahmadinejad ayant été élu sans programme, les regards se tournent vers la Bourse, qui avait bondi lors de l'annonce de la candidature de Rafsandjani. Beaucoup s'inquiètent de voir l'épargne partir à Dubaï et les investissements étrangers s'éloigner. Les femmes craignent l'exacerbation de la ségrégation, les universitaires la fermeture des centres de recherches. Même s'il a été confortablement élu, Ahmadinejad est bel et bien le président de toutes les peurs. ◆

J.-P.P.

Le pouvoir absolu pour Khamenei

Le «guide suprême» n'a désormais plus d'opposants réformateurs face à lui.

Téhéran envoyé spécial

Seulement un sondage des bassidji (les milices islamiques) avait prévu sa victoire. Les autres le voyaient loin derrière Rafsandjani, les candidats réformistes, et même derrière un autre ultraradical, l'ex-chef de la police de Téhéran, le populiste et populaire Mohammed Qalibaf, qui, de surcroît, avait les faveurs du numéro un du régime, le Guide Ali Khamenei. Aujourd'hui encore, le succès électoral fracassant de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad n'a pas levé tous les mystères. S'il y a eu un incontestable mouvement populaire en sa faveur, le combat s'est aussi déroulé, comme souvent en Iran, derrière le rideau.

Puissants réseaux. Comme l'ont déploré ses adversaires, tout l'appareil révolutionnaire s'est mobilisé pour lui: les milices, les pasdaran (gardiens de la révolution), le réseau des mosquées, les anciens combattants de la guerre Irak-Iran, les très riches associations de charité... L'argent dont il a bénéficié a semble-t-il été considérable. «Quelque 300 000 bassidji avec entre leurs mains plusieurs milliards de tomanis [1000 toman valent 1 euro], cela peut changer beaucoup de choses», déclare Issa Saharkhiz, un intellectuel proche de Moustapha Moïn, l'un des candidats réformateurs. Un responsable de la campagne de Rafsandjani confiait avoir été sidéré par les capacités mobilisatrices des forces soutenant Ahmadinejad. Selon Saharkhiz, c'est bel et bien Qalibaf, dont la campagne électorale avait été magistrale, qui aurait dû être le champion du

camp conservateur. «Mais, avant le premier tour, ses deux fils se sont fait prendre alors qu'ils distribuaient des «chab nameh» [pamphlets distribués clandestinement la nuit, hostiles à Rafsandjani]. Ce dernier a alors obtenu du Guide que Qalibaf sorte du jeu et soit remplacé par un autre ultra: Ahmadinejad.»

C'est donc un relatif inconnu qui prend en main le destin de l'Iran. Non seulement il n'a pas fait connaître son programme, se contentant de répéter sa fidélité aux dogmes de la révolution islamique qu'il entend revivifier, mais on ignore avec quelle équipe il gouvernera. Considéré comme l'idéologue du nouveau radicalisme islamique, il peut compter aussi sur le soutien de Khamenei, des jeunes religieux, de certaines écoles théologiques et du Parlement, dont la majorité des députés ont des idées tout aussi radicales.

Ce qui inquiète beaucoup d'acteurs de la société civile, c'est la militarisation de la nouvelle classe dirigeante. Nombre de députés sont issus des milices ou des pasdaran. Ahmadinejad fut officier des forces spéciales de ce corps d'élite – et les deux autres candidats conservateurs présents au premier tour ont exercé des responsabilités dans l'armée idéologique.

Concentration. Avec cette élection, les courants conservateurs conquièrent le dernier rouage qui leur échappait. C'est la première fois depuis le début de la Révolution islamique que tous les pouvoirs sont concentrés entre les mains d'une seule tendance du régime. L'élection de Ahmadinejad à la présidence renforce

encore Khamenei, dont il est très proche. «Le Guide suprême n'a aucune faiblesse car si tel était le cas, les médias de l'oppression mondiale [Etats-Unis] nous auraient cassé les oreilles», a-t-il déclaré avant d'ajouter qu'aussi bien du temps de l'imam Khomeiny qu'aujourd'hui, «le plus précis et le plus beau leadership divin est appliqué dans ce pays».

Rupture. Son élection intervient après celle d'un autre «clerc» à la tête du Parlement, ce qui diminuera encore le poids de ces deux responsables, toujours au profit d'Ali Khamenei. Ce dernier règne donc pour la première fois sans partage sur l'Iran, ce qui constitue une rupture par rapport aux présidences de Rafsandjani, puis de Mohammed Khatami, lesquels s'étaient régulièrement opposés à lui. On s'attend même à ce qu'il modère les inclinaisons extrémistes du nouveau président. «Le Guide n'est pas aussi conservateur qu'on le croit», indique Bijan Khajepour, qui dirige un cabinet de consultations pour des firmes étrangères. Ce qu'il ne veut pas, c'est que des lignes rouges soient franchies, que le processus politique échappe à son contrôle comme cela s'est passé avec Khatami.»

«Dès que les conservateurs auront pris tout le pouvoir, ils vont se diviser», prédit pourtant Ahmad Zaidabadi, un responsable du quotidien *As-Shahr*. Même s'il a boycotté le scrutin, cet analyste a préféré voir élire le candidat «le plus dur»: «Cela obligera d'autant plus l'opposition à s'organiser et alors on pourra voir quel leader surgira.» ◆

JEAN-PIERRE PERRIN

la Croix
Lundi 27 juin 2005

VU DES ÉTATS-UNIS

La victoire de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad apparaît presque comme une aubaine pour les durs de l'entourage présidentiel américain

Pour Washington, plus de raison de prendre des gants avec Téhéran

NEW YORK

De notre correspondante

«Le fait que l'Amérique soit une nation religieuse a été d'un grand secours dans la lutte contre le communisme, athée», avançait il y a quelques jours Rachel Bronson, spécialiste de l'Arabie saoudite au Council on Foreign Policy. Reste à savoir comment cet élément pourrait jouer un rôle vis-à-vis du radicalisme religieux de certains pays», ajoutait-elle. Depuis l'annonce des résultats de l'élection présidentielle iranienne, qui a vu la victoire surprise du candidat ultraconservateur Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, l'heure n'est pas, à Washington, à une réflexion sur cette problématique de long terme. Même si le nouveau président a déjà prévenu qu'il souhaitait revenir à une «société islamique exemplaire».

Les soucis de l'administration américaine sont plus immédiats. Et concernent avant tout la sécurité. «La première question que l'administration se pose maintenant est de savoir si l'élection d'un tel président change la donne en ce qui concerne la politique nucléaire iranienne», estime Tamara Cofman Wittes, chercheuse au Saban Center for Middle East Policy. Cela reste d'ailleurs à prouver. Car il n'est pas sûr, en effet, que le président élu ait une grande influence, selon les experts. C'est le Conseil national pour la sécurité qui gère les négociations avec la France, l'Allemagne et la Grande Bretagne, visant à ce que Téhéran renonce à enrichir de l'uranium à des fins militaires. «Et ce conseil s'en remet aux autorités

religieuses, pas au président élu», souligne Patrick Clawson, directeur de recherche au Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Toutefois, ajoute-t-il, «si le président a une influence, elle ne pourra qu'être négative». Mahmoud Ahmadinejad n'a-t-il pas clamé, après son élection, que l'Iran ne pouvait abdiquer ses droits souverains (de se doter du nucléaire) «sous les pressions impérialistes»?

Du coup, les choses ont maintenant au moins le mérite d'être claires pour Washington. «En fait, les Américains auraient pu finir par être trop gentils avec l'ancien président Rafsandjani», relève Patrick

Il n'est pas sûr que le président élu ait une grande influence sur la politique nucléaire iranienne. Mais s'il en a une, «elle ne pourra être que négative».

Clawson. «Il n'y a plus maintenant de raison de prendre des gants avec l'Iran», conclut ce spécialiste. C'est d'ailleurs une éventuelle indulgence américaine que dénonçait Danielle Pletka, spécialiste des questions de politique étrangère et de défense à l'American Enterprise Institute, dans un récent éditorial paru dans le *New York Times*. «Rafsandjani n'est pas notre homme», écrivait-elle, en s'appuyant sur le fait que le Guide de la révolution, l'ayatollah Khamenei, aurait déclaré qu'avec une élection de Rafsandjani, l'Iran «pourra enfin avoir l'arme atomique et faire ainsi face aux armes israéliennes». Cette conservatrice estimait donc qu'essayer de négocier un accord, comme les Européens le souhaitent, «avec des mollahs», ne pouvait pas correspondre à une «vraie politique» étrangère....

Dans ces conditions, l'élection de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad apparaît presque comme une aubaine pour les durs de l'entourage présidentiel américain. Toutefois, Tamara Cofman Wittes estime de son côté que George Bush, qui «soutenait les Européens dans leurs efforts diplomatiques vis-à-vis de l'Iran, ne devrait pas changer de position au vu des résultats de l'élection». Toujours est-il que le président Bush pourrait être plus déterminé au G8, qui réunira prochainement les pays industrialisés en Écosse. «Il devrait insister en particulier sur la nécessité d'avoir une démocratie en Iran et sur la protection des droits humains», précise Patrick Clawson.

Washington ne s'était d'ailleurs pas privé, avant le scrutin, d'en critiquer le processus, estimant que les élections, auxquelles plusieurs candidats n'avaient pu participer, n'étaient qu'une mascarade. Et, contrairement à la tradition, Washington n'a apparemment pas l'intention de féliciter le nouvel élu iranien. En outre, l'administration américaine s'inquiète évidemment de l'influence iranienne en matière de recrudescence du terrorisme émanant de la région. Et enfin, elle s'émeut du nationalisme prôné par le nouveau président, principalement en ce qui concerne le pétrole. «Mais des groupes français comme Total et même Renault, qui a consenti un investissement de 1,2 milliard de dollars dans l'automobile sur place, ont aussi de quoi se poser des questions, puisque le gouvernement pourrait bien nationaliser des pans entiers de son économie», assure Patrick Clawson. Bref, que ce soit au point de vue politique, social ou économique, les Américains estiment maintenant qu'ils n'avaient sans doute le choix qu'entre deux maux – et que le pire est arrivé.

IRÈNE FRAT

L'ultraconservateur Ahmadinejad, élu vendredi, ferme la porte aux relations avec les Etats-Unis

Iran : le défi à l'Occident

LE FIGARO LUNDI 27 JUIN 2005

Le nouveau président iranien Mahmoud Ahmadinejad a promis hier un gouvernement de « modération », qui poursuivra les négociations sur le nucléaire avec les Européens. Dès sa première conférence de presse, Ahmadinejad, qui prise la traditionnelle rhétorique de la République islamique sur ses « ennemis », a expliqué que son pays n'avait « pas vraiment besoin » d'établir des liens avec les Etats-Unis, repoussant ainsi durablement la perspective d'une détente entre Washington et Téhéran. « Il n'y aura pas de place pour l'extrémisme », a-t-il assuré, décrivant son gouvernement comme celui de « l'amitié ». Élu vendredi avec 61,69 % des voix contre 35,92 % pour son adversaire Hachemi Rafsandjani, cet ultraconservateur entrera en fonction le 3 août.

► **Les réformateurs évoquent « d'énormes fraudes ».** L'ancien président Rafsandjani a dénoncé samedi, dans une lettre aux Iraniens, « ceux qui, pour affaiblir un concurrent, ont décidé d'affaiblir la révolution. »

► **La « main de l'amitié ».** « Nous formulons le vœu que les autorités iraniennes nouvellement élues puissent continuer le travail (...) dans le but d'une suspension des activités nucléaires », a indiqué hier le chef de la diplomatie française Philippe Douste-Blazy. Après avoir « tendu la main de l'amitié » à la communauté internationale, le nouveau président iranien s'est dit « prêt à travailler avec tout pays qui ne montrera pas d'animosité envers l'Iran » et a annoncé la poursuite des négociations sur le nucléaire avec l'Union européenne.



Des partisans de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad célébraient sa victoire, samedi à Téhéran, malgré les appels du guide suprême Ali Khamenei à ne pas manifester. Son élection a créé la surprise mais aussi l'inquiétude à l'intérieur comme à l'extérieur du pays. (Photo Mehri Behrouz/AFP.)

Ahmadinejad a toutefois réaffirmé le « droit » de l'Iran à développer une technologie nucléaire « dans un objectif pacifique ».

► **Inquiétude des Occidentaux.** La communauté internationale a exprimé son anxiété de voir succéder au réformateur Khatami un homme qui prêche un strict respect des valeurs islamiques et l'intransigeance envers les Occidentaux.

A l'aube, acte hautement symbolique, Ahmadinejad s'est rendu comme tous ses prédécesseurs sur la tombe de l'imam Khomeiny : « La voie de l'imam, c'est la voie absolue de la République islamique, il est la référence de la Révolution. » Ahmadinejad, qui promet une « société islamique exemplaire, développée et puissante », a ensuite été reçu par le

guide suprême Ali Khamenei, auquel il passe pour entièrement dévoué.

► **Israël s'alarme.** « Il y a en Iran une combinaison dangereuse d'extrémisme religieux, d'armes non conventionnelles et d'isolement international qui va continuer et provoquer de graves problèmes », a affirmé le numéro deux du cabinet israélien, Shimon Peres.

► **Félicitations de l'Afghanistan.** Le Hezbollah chiite libanais s'est félicité que l'élection d'Ahmadinejad soit un échec face « aux paris des Etats-Unis et d'autres Etats occidentaux ».

Quant au président afghan Hamid Karzai, il « espère que les relations entre l'Afghanistan et l'Iran s'épanouiront ».

La perspective d'une détente s'éloigne

Washington dans l'embarras

New York :
de notre correspondant
Jean-Louis Turlin

L'élection de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad n'est pas de nature à faire sortir rapidement l'Iran de « l'axe du mal ». Mais George W. Bush, embourbé en Irak, n'a pas les moyens d'utiliser une

nouvelle fois la force pour transformer le Proche-Orient. Sa rhétorique musclée semble d'ailleurs avoir davantage fait le jeu du régime des mollahs que le sien : réagissant aux commentaires du président américain avant le scrutin, selon lesquels Téhéran avait fait fi des « exigences de base de la démocratie », le ministre des Renseignements, Ali Yunesi, avait iro-

nisé au lendemain du premier tour : « Je dis à Bush : merci. » Et Ahmadinejad en disait autant de la forte participation : le peuple iranien « a foulé au pied les commentaires et les désirs américains ».

Washington, qui avait décrété l'élection « faussée depuis le début », est resté sur la même longueur d'ondes après les résultats du deuxième tour. Samedi, une porte-parole du département d'Etat estimait que les résultats étaient « à contre-courant du reste de la région et des courants de liberté qui sont visibles en Irak, en Afghanistan et au Liban ». « Nous jugerons le régime à ses actes, a poursuivi Joanne Moore, mais à la lu-

mière de la façon dont ces élections ont été menées, nous restons sceptiques quant aux intentions du régime iranien. » Maria Tamburri, une porte-parole de la Maison-Blanche, a pour sa part réitéré que l'Administration Bush « continue de soutenir ceux qui veulent plus de liberté pour les Iraniens ».

Formule de circonstance dont l'ambiguïté dissimule mal l'embarras d'un gouvernement à court d'options. Car Washington, confronté à un président populiste qui s'est fait les dents lors de la prise d'otages de l'ambassade américaine en 1979, pourrait être tenté de répondre du tac au tac et de se cantonner dans une position sans conces-

sion. Ce qui n'est sans doute pas dans son intérêt, comme l'explique le *New York Times* :

« L'Administration se prépare à un été chaud et long de confrontation avec l'Iran, d'abord sur son programme nucléaire, puis sur le terrorisme, et peut-être même sur l'alimentation de l'insurrection en Irak. »

Tout en refusant d'avance une quelconque légitimité au nouveau président, Washington n'en avait pas moins misé sur l'élection de Rafsandjani, qui s'était dit ouvert à une reprise du dialogue avec les États-Unis. L'arrivée de l'intransigeant Ahmadinejad risque de renforcer la main des faucons au sein d'une Administration divisée sur l'Irak. La décision de laisser les Européens négocier un accord sur le nucléaire pouvait être mise au compte des partisans de l'ouverture avec Téhéran. L'élection d'Ahmadinejad semble donner raison aux sceptiques qui ne croient pas au succès de la négociation menée par Paris, Londres et Berlin.

« *Wait and See* » sera la devise de l'Administration Bush dans l'immédiat, car elle n'a pas le choix. Elle peut parler sur le fait qu'Ahmadinejad n'aura peut-être pas plus d'influence que son prédécesseur Khatami sur la politique nucléaire iranienne, déterminée au plus haut niveau, celui de l'ayatollah Khomeini. Et si le nouveau président a son mot à dire, il sera plus libre d'afficher une certaine souplesse avec les Occidentaux sans craindre d'être accusé de faiblesse par les durs. Mais un échec de la négociation européenne conduirait au Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies, où la Chine opposerait probablement son veto à l'imposition de sanctions sur l'Iran, son fournisseur de pétrole.

Reste la question du terrorisme. Washington n'a cessé de durcir le ton sur la question depuis deux ans et le conseiller à la Sécurité nationale, Stephen Hadley, disait encore récemment que « l'Iran est l'Etat sponsor de la terreur n° 1 », ajoutant que sa politique est « de se débarrasser d'Israël ». La fermeté restera de rigueur sur ce front. Pour le reste, comme l'écrit le *New York Times* : « Bush n'aura pas d'autre solution que de traiter avec le nouveau gouvernement, même s'il en a rejeté la légitimité. »

LE FIGARO LUNDI 27 JUIN 2005

La présidence veut favoriser les sociétés nationales

Les compagnies pétrolières étrangères s'inquiètent



Anne Bodescot

A peine élu, le nouveau président iranien, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a pris des accents nationalistes pour annoncer une reprise en mains du secteur pétrolier. Il a juré de favoriser les compagnies pétrolières nationales au détriment des sociétés étrangères dans l'attribution des contrats. Il a aussi souhaité davantage de transparence. « *Ce qui prédomine aujourd'hui autour de notre industrie pétrolière, c'est que la production, l'exportation, le commerce sont un peu opaques* », a-t-il déclaré à la télévision.

Pendant la campagne électorale, il s'en était déjà pris violemment à l'organisation de cette filière en Iran, deuxième

plus gros producteur au sein de l'Opep. Il dénonçait notamment que les revenus pétroliers « *soient pratiquement entre les mains d'une seule et même famille, et d'un gang politique* ». Il avait même promis de balayer la domination de ce clan et de nationaliser ces ressources vi-

tales pour le pays. Ces attaques visaient son adversaire, Akbar Hachémi Rafsandjani, qui passe pour avoir, avec les siens, des intérêts considérables dans ce secteur.

Ces propos virulents surviennent à un moment crucial pour les compagnies pétrolières internationales. L'Iran conserve en effet un énorme potentiel : ses réserves sont les deuxièmes au monde. Mais ses champs pétroliers sont anciens et leur production décline. Il doit aujourd'hui engager d'importants investisse-

ments pour moderniser ses installations et développer de nouvelles capacités. Pour cela, il risque d'avoir besoin du savoir-faire et des capitaux des opérateurs étrangers.

Jusqu'à présent, ceux-ci n'obtenaient que des contrats de « buy-back », qui leur assurent le remboursement de leurs investissements et d'une partie de la production initiale. Total a décroché quatre contrats de ce type. D'autres ont été accordés à Shell, à Agip, une des plus grandes marques du groupe italien Eni, ou encore à la filiale chypriote de la société canadienne Sheer

Energy (rachetée depuis par le chinois CNPC), selon un rapport de l'ambassade de France en Iran publié en mai dernier.

Mais ces contrats, dont les termes se sont durcis ces dernières années, sont désormais jugés trop contraignants par les étrangers, et même, semble-t-il, au sein de la société pétrolière nationale iranienne (NIOC). Pour les inciter à accompagner davantage le développement nécessaire de la production, le quatrième plan quinquennal iranien, adopté fin 2004, ouvrait la porte à une évolution.

Il y a quelques mois, le ministre du Pétrole iranien, Bijan Namdar Zanghaneh, avait certes rappelé que les sociétés étrangères ne pouvaient recevoir d'actions en échange de leurs investissements. « *Mais, à l'avenir, nous prendrons probablement en considération les demandes de nos partenaires* », avait-il expliqué. Une ouverture que les déclarations nationalistes du nouveau président semblent remettre en question.

La menace réactivée de la bombe islamique

Arnaud de La Grange

Sur le sujet, Mahmoud Ahmadi-nejad est clair. « *Les Iraniens n'ont pas fait la révolution pour avoir la démocratie* », a un jour lancé le nouveau président iranien. L'ont-ils faite pour avoir la bombe ? Et là, le tombeur de Rafsandjani est plus ambigu. Posture, il est vrai, souvent de mise dans le domaine nucléaire, mais qui ne fait guère sourire à Washington, Londres ou Paris.

Pour sa première intervention, hier, Mahmoud Ahmadi-nejad l'a joué *mezzo voce*. Il a promis de poursuivre les négociations avec la troïka européenne composée de la France, de l'Allemagne et de la Grande-Bretagne. « *C'est dans l'intérêt national de l'Iran*. » Un intérêt qui passe par des contreparties, politiques et économiques. « *La confiance doit être réciproque*, a martelé l'ancien militant révolutionnaire, tout en réaffirmant que son pays avait « *droit à la technologie nucléaire, avec un objectif pacifique* ». Il poursuivra donc ce programme, « *à des fins énergétiques et médicales* ».

Le feuilleton dure depuis deux ans. Les Européens exigent la suspension des activités iraniennes d'enrichissement d'uranium. De leur côté, les Iraniens rétorquent que leur programme nucléaire est civil. Et soufflent le chaud et le froid.

En novembre 2004, dans le cadre de l'accord de Paris, ils acceptaient de suspendre ces activités. Pour, le 30 avril dernier, annoncer vouloir reprendre leurs travaux au « *centre de conversion* » d'uranium d'Ispahan. De l'eau au moulin d'Américains sceptiques. Washington accuse l'Iran d'œuvrer secrètement à construire la bombe nucléaire. Et souhaite depuis longtemps que le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU se saisisse du dossier afin d'imposer des sanctions à Téhéran.

Pour les Européens, bien sûr,



Le 30 avril dernier, les Iraniens avaient annoncé vouloir reprendre leurs travaux au « *centre de conversion* » de l'uranium d'Ispahan (ci-dessus), à environ 400 kilomètres au sud de Téhéran. (Photo Vahid Salemi/AP.)

l'élection de Mahmoud Ahmadi-nejad n'est pas une bonne nouvelle. Ils avaient clairement « *voté* » Rafsandjani. C'est avec cet homme réputé plus conciliant qu'ils espéraient relancer le dialogue. « *Nous devons présenter fin juillet-début août une série de propositions aux Iraniens*, confirme un diplomate, *elles concernaient tous les volets : cadre politique, coopération économique et nucléaire, garanties de sécurité*. » En contrepartie, Téhéran devait donner des « *garanties objectives* » que son programme nucléaire ne serait pas utilisé à des fins militaires.

On sait encore peu de chose des intentions de Mahmoud Ahmadi-nejad. Sinon qu'il entend poursuivre les discussions, mais qu'il estime que les négociateurs iraniens se sont « *couchés* » devant les Européens. Enfin, il considère que Téhéran est en position de force, avec notamment de bonnes cartes économiques dans la main. La bombe n'est pas sa priorité, mais la maîtrise nucléaire donne

à l'Iran rang de puissance technologique.

Sans repartir de zéro, les négociations devraient être retardées. « *Le plus probable est qu'elles reprennent, avec une équipe de négociateurs iraniens remaniée, puisque Mahmoud Ahmadi-nejad a critiqué directement leur chef Hassan Rohani, pourtant nommé par le guide* », explique Bruno Tertrais, maître de recherches à la FRS (Fondation pour la recherche stratégique). On entretrait alors dans un scénario proche de celui du début 2004, quand les Iraniens essayaient de grignoter l'accord de 2003 en reprenant leur programme. « *Mais ce n'est pas lui qui décide tout seul*, rappelle Bruno Tertrais, *sur ce dossier, Khamenei reste le décideur ultime*. »

Un signal inquiète les diplomates. La rapidité avec laquelle le Pakistan a salué l'élection du candidat ultraconservateur, en formulant l'espoir que les relations entre les deux pays voisins se renforcent. Pourquoi pas dans le domaine nucléaire ? Le

père de la bombe atomique pakistanaise, Abdul Kader Khan, a été soupçonné d'échanges inavouables avec – entre autres – le régime des mollahs.

Un axe « *proliférant* » qui fait ressurgir le spectre de la « *bombe islamique* ». Et le risque d'une crise majeure, voire de frappes préventives israéliennes.

LE FIGARO

27 JUIN 2005

Anti-américain, il refuse « l'invasion culturelle occidentale »

Ahmadinejad, « le balayeur des rues »

Sur ses photos de campagne, on l'a vu poser auprès des pauvres, marcher à travers les foules en mocassins mal cirés, et sourire sur fond de ciel bleu. A 49 ans, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, enfant modèle de la révolution islamique, se présente comme « l'ami du peuple ». Les sondages d'opinion ne lui donnaient pourtant aucune chance de l'emporter. Modeste, discret, peu enclin aux interviews avec la presse étrangère, le voilà, contre toute attente, à la tête de la république islamique.

C'est le 17 juin dernier que son nom a commencé à circuler. Arrivé, de manière inattendue au premier tour, en deuxième position avec 19,5 % des voix derrière l'ancien président Hachemi Rafsandjani, il s'est retrouvé, en l'espace d'une semaine, propulsé à la première place. Entre deux tours, ses ad-

versaires ont pourtant tout essayé pour éviter « le retour de l'islamisme radical ». Avec une ferveur inattendue, réformateurs, étudiants et intellectuels se sont tous ralliés derrière Hachemi. Dans les allées des universités, les blagues les plus acerbes à son égard avaient même commencé à circuler. Exemple : « *Ahmadinejad annonce ses ministères : ministère du Voile, ministère de la Censure, ministère des Gardiens de la révolution...* »

Car, en matière de respect des valeurs de l'islam, Ahmadinejad est connu pour être « un dur ».

Ce fils de forgeron, originaire de Garmsar, dans le nord de l'Iran, est un ancien des gardiens de la révolution. Dans sa jeunesse, il a fréquenté les étudiants de « la ligne de l'imam » qui organisèrent la prise des 55 otages de l'ambassade des Etats-Unis.

Anti-américain, il est fermement opposé à toute forme d'« invasion culturelle occidentale ». Depuis son élection à la mairie de Téhéran, en 2003, de nouvelles mesures, plus strictes, avaient été imposées, comme l'obligation de porter des chemises longues pour les employés masculins, et le respect d'un voile qui cache bien les cheveux pour les femmes.

Mais, dans un pays miné par le chômage et l'inflation, les propos de cet homme à l'apparence modeste et aux allures de M. Tout-le-Monde ont séduit une bonne partie de l'électorat. Submergé de critiques, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad s'est d'ailleurs efforcé d'adoucir son image, quelques jours avant son élection, pour s'attirer les votes de certains jeunes indécis. « *Je ne comprends pas pourquoi tout le monde s'acharne à penser que*

je vais imposer de nouvelles règles, comme la coupe de cheveux des garçons. Pensez-vous vraiment que c'est le problème principal de notre pays à l'heure actuelle ? », lançait-il dans une intervention télévisée, mercredi dernier, où il apparaissait étonnamment détendu et souriant. « *J'ai voulu lui donner*

sa chance, car c'est un homme proche du peuple, qui n'est pas corrompu », confie Sara Firouz, 19 ans, qui dit avoir apprécié « son honnêteté ». La jeune fille avait pourtant voté pour le réformateur Moïn au premier tour...

Ses détracteurs l'attendent pourtant au tournant. Ils s'interrogent sur la capacité d'Ahmadinejad à traiter de diplomatie avec ses interlocuteurs étrangers, « *lui qui n'a presque jamais mis les pieds en dehors de l'Iran* », souffle un intellectuel. Il lui faudra également ne pas décevoir sa « base », les laissés-pour-compte et les déshérités, qui attendent avec impatience les allocations qu'il leur a tant promises.

D. M.

Un entretien avec la sociologue Azadeh Kian-Thiébaud.

« Une régression sur le plan intérieur »

Azadeh Kian-Thiébaud vient de publier *La République islamique d'Iran. De la maison du guide à la raison d'Etat*, aux éditions Michalon (collection « Ligne d'horizon »).

LE FIGARO. – Comment expliquer cette victoire haut la main de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad ?

Azadeh KIAN-THIEBAUD. – Il a tenu un discours populiste en s'adressant presque exclusivement aux classes défavorisées, aux laissés-pour-compte des politiques économiques appliquées depuis le début des années 90. Il y a un écart sans cesse grandissant entre riches et pauvres. Mais, au-delà des démunis, Mahmoud Ahma-

nejad a drainé les votes des classes moyennes inférieures.

Ces derniers ont voté contre le népotisme dans l'administration et pour la méritocratie. Une méritocratie incarnée par le nouveau président, fils de modeste artisan devenu enseignant à l'université.

Rafsandjani a-t-il payé le fait de symboliser cette caste de « riches » ?

Certainement, même si les choses sont beaucoup plus compliquées. L'économie iranienne est aujourd'hui gérée par une oligarchie. Rafsandjani et ses proches en font partie, bien sûr, mais aussi un certain nombre de fondations révolutionnaires – comme la Fondation des déshérités, le Comité

de l'assistance de l'imam – dont les directeurs sont nommés par le guide Ali Khamenei. Elles gèrent 40 % de la richesse nationale. Et des mil-

liards de dollars de produits de contrebande entrent dans le pays à travers des réseaux liés à cette oligarchie. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad a été soutenu par une partie d'entre eux.

Mais ce vote n'a pas que des ressorts socio-économiques...

Non, en effet. L'électorat de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad n'est pas homogène. Il a aussi été soutenu par les ayatollahs les plus durs et une partie des gardiens de la révolution et des volontaires. Pasdarans, militants extrémistes ou animateurs des réseaux de mosquées ont, eux, voté pour des raisons idéologiques et politiques.

Quels sont et seront les rapports du nouveau président avec le guide Ali Khamenei ?

Le guide, évidemment, ne s'est

pas prononcé. Mais sa « maison » – notamment son fils – a clairement penché en faveur de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Toutes les instances en Iran sont aujourd'hui dominées par des conservateurs ou des ultra-conservateurs.

Sans contre-pouvoirs ?

Si, quand même, puisque les décisions sont prises de manière collégiale. Rafsandjani, ainsi, qui était le seul capable de limiter les abus de pouvoir

du guide et des instances non représentatives comme le Conseil des gardiens, devrait rester à la tête de l'important Conseil de discernement. Lui et quelques autres devraient continuer à faire partie du système et tenter de pondérer les choix de l'Iran, notamment en matière de politique étrangère.

Faut-il craindre une période de régression ?

Oui, sur le plan intérieur, notamment pour les droits de l'homme, la condition féminine. Mais je pense qu'il ne faut pas s'attendre à des revirements importants sur les grandes lignes de la politique étrangère. Il est en tout cas trop tôt pour le dire.

Propos recueillis par A. L.G.

Turkey's sex trade entraps Slavic women

Many are lured by false promise of jobs

By Craig S. Smith

TRABZON, Turkey: The women arrive here by ferry from across the Black Sea, sometimes dozens at a time. Whatever their real names, they are known in Turkey as Natashas, and often end up working as prostitutes in this country's growing sex trade, sometimes against their will.

Turkey, with its now booming economy and lax visa requirements, is becoming the world's largest market for Slavic women, one of the most visible exports of the former Soviet Union's struggling new states.

"Think of many rivers flowing into one sea," said Allan Freedman, who coordinates countertrafficking programs at the Ankara bureau of the International Organization for Migration, an independent body that works closely with the United Nations. "That sea is Turkey."

Most of the women come of their own free will but many end up as virtual slaves, sold from pimp to pimp through

hind a guarded metal gate, touts accost visitors with whispered promises of beautiful young Russian girls at not much more than the price of the older Turkish women waiting for customers inside.

"I can bring you any kind of girl you want," promised an eager man in a black shirt and pants with a gold-faced watch, saying that his girls were kept in a building in the city center.

Part of the reason Turkey has become a magnet is that the more lucrative markets of Western Europe are protected by increasingly strict visa requirements that take weeks to work through, with only uncertain results. A young woman from Moldova can be in Istanbul in a day by paying just \$10 for a monthlong visa at the border.

Turkey is also becoming a staging area for illegal migration elsewhere. "This is one of the reasons why the EU is so worried about Turkey," said Freedman, referring to European resistance to Turkey's quest to join the bloc. "It's increasingly a migrant hub."

Turkey has been working over the past two years to stop the trafficking and get off the U.S. government's blacklist. In 2003, the State Department listed Turkey in its report on trafficking as a "Tier 3" country, meaning that it had taken no significant action to eliminate the trade. The status jeopardized American financial aid to Turkey and helped spur it to act.

In the State Department's most recent report, issued this month, Turkey was moved up to "Tier 2," which means it is making significant efforts but still falls short of U.S. government expectations.

Turkey lists trafficking as a separate crime in its new penal code, which took effect this month. A one-year, \$600,000 U.S. grant is being used to train police officers to recognize trafficked women among the unlicensed prostitutes they arrest.

The money is also paying for a hot line to help women caught in a trafficker's grip. A campaign to publicize the phone number includes billboards in the country's international airports and inserts that immigration officers slip into the passports of women arriving at Turkish border crossings.

Freedman said the hot line led to the rescue of a Moldovan woman in Antalya, a southern city, within days of its inauguration this month. Her captor was arrested.

Turkey's Interior Ministry has also enlisted nongovernmental organizations to provide support for women

identified as victims.

Because of that support, Turkey's independent Human Resources Development Fund opened the country's only shelter for trafficked women last October in central Istanbul. But the shelter, which has helped 74 women, holds only 12 people.

"That's nothing when compared with the number of victims," said Berna Eren, president of the organization. More than 200 trafficked women were identified in Turkey last year but the authorities said they represented as little as 10 percent of the women bought and sold during that time.

Most of the women Eren's organization has seen are from Ukraine and Moldova, but the group has also helped women from Russia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, Georgia and Iran.

"Some girls in the shelter say they have been sold more than once," she said, but added that as the women are sold "from city to city, the traffickers are hard to trace."

Every victim identified by the police is interviewed by a psychologist and referred to a psychiatrist if needed. Eren said that women living in the shelter were kept under constant watch by a counselor and, when eventually repatriated, were met by a protective authority in their home country in an effort to keep them from falling back into the hands of traffickers.

"In the past they were simply deported as a prostitute and would arrive in their home countries with no money," Eren said. "Traffickers would pick them up, get them new passports and send them back."

The New York Times

Sebnem Arsu contributed reporting from Istanbul for this article.

'Once they are across the border their passports are taken away and they are beaten and raped.'

a loosely organized criminal network that stretches from Moscow to Istanbul and beyond.

Prostitution is legal in strictly secular Turkey where the government licenses brothels, known as "general houses," and issues prostitutes identity cards that give them rights to some free medical care and other social services. But women working in general houses — there is usually one in each large city — tend to be older, and the demand for young, slender women has outstripped supply as Turkey's economy has improved. Slavic women are meeting that need.

"Women are recruited at home with the promise of employment," Freedman said. "But once they are across the border their passports are taken away and they are beaten and raped and forced into prostitution." The women are typically kept locked in an apartment except when they are taken out to customers.

The trade is not hard to find. Outside Istanbul's general house, a collection of tiny brothels in a warren of alleys be-

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Victor in Iran vows to press atom work

But president-elect, dismissive of U.S., agrees to more talks with Europeans



Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at his first press conference Sunday as president-elect.

He said the Europeans needed "to come down from their towers" on Iran's nuclear program.

By Michael Slackman

TEHRAN: Iran's conservative president-elect, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, said Sunday that he planned to move forward with his nation's nuclear program, insisting that it was a matter of national pride. But he also agreed to continue discussions with three European countries that, along with the United States, fear the Islamic Republic is intent on building nuclear weapons.

In his first press conference since his surprise victory Friday, Ahmadinejad demonstrated the kind of positions that made him the choice of this country's hard-liners, dismissing the need for any relationship with the United States, telling the Europeans they needed "to come down from their towers" and vowing to move forward with the nuclear program.

"We need this technology in medicine and engineering, and for the progress of our youth, and we will pursue it," he said referring to nuclear technology during his hourlong press conference.

But on the most disputed issues, like the nuclear program, the president-elect always left himself some room to maneuver. Unlike hard-line members of the Iranian Parliament, for example, Ahmadinejad said he would continue the talks with the European Union just as the outgoing president, Mohammad Khatami, had done.

"We will defend the right of Iranian people and this is definite," Ahmadinejad said. "If they have a reasonable approach, the Europeans are obligated to fulfill their promises. In that case we will reach a conclusion soon."

With his election in a landslide victory over a former two-term president, Ali Akhbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Ahmadinejad gained a seat at the table in setting the course of Iran's nuclear program. As is the case with all of Iran's policies, the ultimate decisions are made by appointed clerics, chiefly the supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

According to final figures issued Saturday by the Interior Ministry, Ahmadinejad got 17.2 million votes, compared with just over 10 million for Rafsanjani. The ministry said about 28 million voters went to the polls, for a turnout of about 60 percent.

Although Iran is one of the world's largest producers of oil, it has said that it needs nuclear technology so that it can export more of its oil to raise money for development. But many Western countries believe Iran plans to use its nuclear program to build weapons, an allegation the country denies.

[The EU justice commissioner, Franco Frattini, threatened to freeze talks with Iran if the EU did not get commitments from him on human rights and the nuclear issue. Frattini

was quoted Sunday in La Repubblica as having said, "We are waiting for clear words on human rights and the nuclear issue from the new president."

["But if the responses are negative," Frattini said, "the European Union can't but freeze the dialogue with Iran."]

[At his press conference, Ahmadinejad accused the EU of highhandedness, according to The Associated Press. "Our nation is a great nation," he said, "and they cannot talk to the Iranian nation in such an arrogant manner."]

Talks are scheduled to resume between the EU and Iran this summer, and European leaders are concerned that their efforts to stop Iran's nuclear development will be thwarted by the ascension of a hard-line religious conservative to the presidency.

But Ahmadinejad does not appear overly concerned about what anyone outside Iran is thinking of him. He speaks with a nationalist pride, and a determination to have Iran treated as an equal, not as a second-class party at the negotiating table. At the news conference, the new president carried himself as a rehearsed politician, staying on message, deflecting questions he did not want to answer, always returning to the themes of moderation, progress and development, even when it came to the United States.

"Our nation is continuing on the path of progress and on this path has no significant need for the United States," Ahmadinejad said.

But, he added: "We would like to have relations with any country that doesn't have hostile relations toward us. I think those in the United States who want to have relations with Iran should state their policies transparently so that we can examine the possibility of having relations."

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said Sunday that he did not know much about Ahmadinejad, but then spoke of him sharply as "no friend of freedom."

Noting that Iranian officials had barred hundreds of candidates from running, Rumsfeld referred to the Iranian exercise as a "mock election."

"Now, I don't know much about this fellow," he said on Fox News. "He's young. I've read backgrounds on him. But he is no friend of democracy. He's no friend of freedom. He is a person who is very much supportive of the current ayatollahs, who are telling the people of that country how to live their lives."

"And my guess is over time, the young people and the women will find him, as well as his masters, unacceptable."

Ahmadinejad offered a conciliatory gesture to his political opponents, including the reform movement leaders who have been vanquished from power with this election. He also tried to reassure the public he was not about to impose a government like that of the Taliban on the nation, as his critics charged during the campaign.

"In domestic policy, moderation will be the policy of the government," he said. "We will confront any kind of extremism."

Ahmadinejad also sought to calm the

concerns of investors and the business community. He said that he never called for closing down Tehran's stock market, as has been reported in Iran, and he said he welcomed foreign investment.

"I will support the stock market," he said, adding that he wants to make some changes to rid the market of corruption and favoritism.

Ahmadinejad, 49, is a religious man whose style and manner harken back to the early days of the revolution, when strict codes of conduct and dress for women were strictly enforced, often by militants called Basiji, of which the new president was once one. Ahmadinejad began his press conference by having

someone read from the Koran, a throw-back to the early days of the revolution.

He was greeted by supporters who shouted out religious greeting and then he began by reciting passages from the Koran himself.

The new president is diminutive and seemed to disappear behind the sea of microphones placed on a desk. A banner stapled to the wood paneling behind him tried to support his image as a man of the people. It read: "The cabinet of 70 million people... We can do it."

He avoided the issue completely when he was asked if he would impose a stricter dress code on women, who in recent years have been allowed to wear

brightly colored scarves and modest overcoats, instead of more restrictive Islamic cover-ups.

"This is the duty of the current government," he said. "I have stated my opinions in the past." His most direct remarks were in his praise of Iran's blended government, where elected bodies, like the presidency, must adhere to the decisions of the religious rulers.

"Religious democracy is the only path toward human prosperity and it's the most advanced type of government that humans can ever have," he said.

The New York Times

For Bush, challenges on Iran are rising

By David E. Sanger

WASHINGTON: Even before Iranians voted in their presidential election, the administration of President George W. Bush declared the process rigged, saying that no matter what the outcome, Iran would be ruled by men who "spread terror across the world."

Yet almost no one in **News** Washington expected **Analysis** the landslide victory on Friday of the mayor of Tehran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a hard-line conservative, as Iran's next president.

And now, facing a populist who came of age in the student group that took over the American Embassy in Tehran in 1979, the administration is bracing for a long, hot summer of confrontation with Iran, first over its nuclear programs, then over terrorism, and perhaps over the fueling of the insurgency in Iraq.

Ahmadinejad has made little secret of his determination that, one way or another, Iran is going to become a nuclear country, though he has rejected Washington's charge that Iran's ultimate goal is to build a nuclear weapon.

"Nuclear energy is a result of Iranian people's scientific development, and no one can block the way of a nation's scientific development," he said Friday. "This right of the Iranian people will soon be recognized by those who have so far denied it."

Bush and his aides have insisted that Iran cannot be trusted with the ingredients for a nuclear

weapon, even if they are legally entitled to them, as Iran argues, under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

The United States argues that Iran gave up that right by hiding 17 years of nuclear work from international inspectors.

Now, there is an undercurrent among U.S. officials and outside experts that the outcome of the election might actually make it easier for the administration to press that case.

Earlier, one of Bush's closest aides said that no matter who won, "we may be looking at a summer of simultaneous crises on opposite sides of the world," one in Iran and one in North Korea.

Ahmadinejad's victory may well bolster the skepticism within the administration that European negotiators can persuade Iran to trade away its ability to produce its own nuclear fuel.

"It will feed the arguments of those in the Bush administration who think the only option is to come down hard because they can expect the Iranians will take a harder line, too," said Kenneth Pollack, a Brookings Institution scholar.

"That may not be a valid argument, because it is not clear that the decisions about the nuclear issue are going to be made by Ahmadinejad, any more than they were made by his predecessor," President Mohammad Khatami.

Washington has assumed that the nuclear decisions have been made by Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has been viewed as unwilling to give up his country's nuclear options but also as careful not to drive the Europeans, with whom Iran has growing diplomatic and trade relations, onto the side of Americans arguing for sanctions.

Officials at the White House, the State Department and the U.S. Treasury have said work was under way on new programs — clearly aimed at Iran and North Korea — to intercept suspected shipments of weapons technology programs.

Whether the election results turn out to be the result of manipulation or a true measure of the Iranian mood, Ahmadinejad's victory consolidates the power of Tehran's most conservative members, closing the gap between the mullahs and a government that had

tried to encourage dialogue with Washington's European allies and, at least in its early years, to introduce greater social freedom.

Ahmadinejad's government will soon face difficult choices.

The three European powers that have taken over the nuclear negotiations — Britain, France and Germany — have set a deadline of next month for making a full offer of financial incentives to Iran.

Already the Iranian Foreign Ministry has said that it will end its self-imposed moratorium on enriching uranium — one way to produce nuclear fuel for reactors or weapons — but it has made this threat before.

Apart from the nuclear issue, Iran is a challenge to other parts of Bush's agenda for the Middle East. U.S. military officials say there is still a flow of foreign fighters into Iraq, some of them from the Iranian border. Bush's national security adviser, Stephen Hadley, recently argued that "Iran is the No. 1 state sponsor of terror," noting in an interview that "Iran's policy is to get rid of Israel."

Mark Gasiorowski, an Iran expert at Louisiana State University, said Khamenei may "want to avoid provoking the U.S." In an e-mail message from Tehran, he speculated that Iranian hard-liners, having achieved their victory, might want to keep their talks going, though they may be "less likely than before to reach an agreement on U.S. terms."

The unanswered question is whether Bush, already tied up in Iraq and unlikely to get many of his allies to go along with harsh sanctions, will have any choice but to deal with the new, hard-line Iranian government.

The New York Times

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Herald Tribune



A mural with a ghostly Statue of Liberty has been painted on the wall of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, where many Iranians lament the government's anti-American acts.

On streets of Tehran, 'We like Americans'

By Michael Slackman

TEHRAN: Outside the mosque where Iran's president-elect, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, went to vote Friday, a parade of cars, trucks and scooters rumbles by, day in and day out, right over a picture of an American flag painted on the blacktop road.

The message is unmistakable, that America is still the Great Satan, the enemy of the people of Iran, the nation vilified by the grandfather of this country's Islamic revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and to this day chided by today's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

But Hamid Reza Solimaai is embarrassed by that flag on the ground. So are Sayed Reza Mirsani, Manochek Janshidi and Mohsen Malek Mohammadi. All work in shops on Samanegan Street, the road in East Tehran where the flag is painted, and all said they see that flag in the road as a relic of an era that has passed.

"The government has imposed this on people's minds, painting flags on the road," said Solimaai, who was working Monday in a closet-sized storefront repairing tires. "Almost all the people hate this."

Mirsani labored over a blast furnace of an oven, baking bread.

"I can recall the good old days, before the revolution, when we had good relations with the United States," he said. "We all lived better. Now we live worse."

In the realm of international relations, the United States and Iran are enemies. American officials attacked Iran's presidential elections as un-

democratic, while Khamenei said that the 60 percent turnout "humiliated" the United States. But on the streets of Tehran, from the gritty neighborhoods in the south, to retail areas in the center of town, to the posh northern neighborhoods, America is spoken of more like an estranged cousin, maybe an annoying cousin, but nevertheless one with whom people would like to reconcile.

"The people of the U.S. live like us,"

said Mohammadi, as he worked inside his film processing shop along Samanegan Street. "The politics are in the hands of politicians. Ordinary people cannot change this. I would love to go to the United States, not necessarily to live there, but to see how they live and how they feel about Iranians."

The election of Ahmadinejad, a religious conservative aligned with some of the country's most reactionary forces and who takes office Aug. 3, has raised some concern in Europe and the United States that the new president would aggravate the already strained relations with the West.

But in his first news conference on Sunday, Ahmadinejad sprinkled small overtures to the West between his bombast. On the streets, it was clear in conversations with dozens of people over the last week that there is no appetite for getting into another showdown with the United States. In fact, most people said they are hoping for just the opposite.

"This is stupid," Mahmoud Saferi said of the flag on the roadway, as he stopped into the bakery to buy some bread. "Tell them it's not the Iranian people. Tell them it's the government."

Ahmadinejad and his followers have

taken a tough line on foreign policy, one rooted in a sense that the United States does not show Iran respect, and that resonates with the public. Almost everyone interviewed said that for relations between the two countries to improve, the United States would have to treat Iran as an equal, not as a second-class country.

At Ahmadinejad's headquarters two days before the election last Friday, Hassan Khalili, a spokesman for the campaign, said, with his voice rising in anger: "When foreigners talk about this country, they laugh and make fun of us."

But like many others, even Ahmadinejad's closest supporters made a distinction between the elected leaders, and the people. When asked if he meant all Americans, Khalili looked shocked, and said "No, we like the American people," then leaned over and kissed an American reporter on the cheek.

Throughout the Middle East, attitudes toward the United States are often far more nuanced than the images suggested by images often played on evening television news programs of protesters burning American flags or effigies of President George W. Bush.

Many people who want more democratic governments in this region, whether on the left or the right, say, however reluctantly, that they view the United States as an effective vehicle to force change in regimes unwilling to yield power.

In Iran, attitudes toward the United States are even more positive, in part, it seems, because so many Iranians know someone living there. Solimaai, the tire repairman, reached behind a stack of tires and grabbed a laminated business card for a body shop in Harbor City, California. He said it is owned by his sister, Fatima, and her husband, who have lived in the United States for 20 years.

"I'd very much at least like to go and see the United States," he said.

Across town, as the roadway feeds into an overpass leading to the center of the city, motorists see a huge image of an American flag painted on the side of an apartment building. The image, which is about five stories tall, has skeletons in place of stars, and the red stripes are the trails of bombs falling to the ground. "Down With U.S.A." it says in English at the top of the flag, and on the bottom, in Persian, it says "We won't go along with America, even for one moment."

"It's ridiculous," said a man standing on the sidewalk below. The man, a driver for a government official, became frightened when his boss arrived, and he hurried off without giving his name.

But two blocks up the road, Ahmad Yaghobi, who was working behind the counter of his jewelry shop, said, "We don't hate America. We like to have better relations. It's just the governments."

The single largest symbol of Iran and America's troubled relations is still the former U.S. Embassy, which was sacked and its employees taken hostage during the revolution that brought the Islamic government to power in 1979.

"We will never go along with the

United States, the Great Satan," reads one of many anti-American slogans on the red brick wall that surrounds the compound. "The United States is the top of all criminals," read another.

But there are no longer crowds in the

streets chanting slogans. Pedestrians hurry by without even glancing up.

"These are things that are done by the government people and people don't necessarily like them," said Mohsen Hasseni, an accounting student

as he walked by the wall. "It was political tit for tat as far as Iran was concerned. That's all."

The New York Times

metro / lundi 27 juin 2005

Les Américains rencontrent des rebelles irakiens

BAGDAD Le secrétaire américain à la Défense Donald Rumsfeld a reconnu hier que des rencontres avaient eu lieu récemment avec des insurgés en Irak, où les forces de sécurité ont une nouvelle fois été la cible de plusieurs attentats qui ont fait une quarantaine de morts.

«Nous facilitons de temps à autre ce type de rencontres entre rebelles et responsables américains, a reconnu M. Rumsfeld, confirmant des informations publiées par le journal britannique 'Sunday Times'.

Deux rencontres auraient eu lieu en juin entre les chefs de certains mouvements rebelles irakiens -dont des membres d'Ansar al-Sunna, lié au réseau terroriste Al-Qaïda- et des représentants américains à Balad, au nord de Bagdad, selon le 'Sunday Times'.

Cette nouvelle approche de la rébellion par les Etats-Unis vient conforter les représentants sunnites irakiens, politiques et religieux, qui appellent depuis plusieurs mois au dialogue avec les insurgés afin de les intégrer dans le processus politique et faire baisser le niveau de la violence. Le président irakien, le Kurde Jalal Talabani, était lui-même allé dans le même sens après son élection début avril, appelant à discuter avec «les Irakiens qui portent des armes contre les forces étrangères», mais en excluant toutefois les groupes liés à Al-Qaïda.

Les rencontres entre des responsables américains - un militaire,



un membre des services de renseignements, un membre du Congrès et un représentant de l'ambassade des Etats-Unis à Bagdad- et des membres des groupes rebelles auraient eu lieu le 3 juin puis une dizaine de jours plus tard.

Du côté de la violence, 25 personnes ont péri hier dans trois attentats suicide contre les forces de sécurité irakiennes dans la région de Mossoul, à près de 400 km au nord de Bagdad. Le plus sanglant a eu lieu devant le camp militaire de Kassak, à 70 km au nord de Mossoul. Au moins quinze Irakiens y ont été tués et sept blessés lors-

qu'un kamikaze s'est fait exploser vers 8 heures dans une file d'attente devant le camp. Dans deux autres attentats à Mossoul, dix personnes, dont neuf policiers, ont été tués et dix-neuf autres blessées. Les trois attentats ont été revendiqués sur Internet au nom de la section irakienne d'Al-Qaïda, dirigée par le Jordanien Abou Moussab al-Zarqaoui. Selon une source du ministère de l'Intérieur, six membres des commandos de la police ont également été tués par des rebelles dans le sud de Bagdad au cours d'une patrouille, et un colonel de police a été abat-

tu devant chez lui, dans l'est de la ville. Le groupe de Zarqaoui a aussi revendiqué ce dernier assassinat.

Quatre personnes, dont deux enfants, et cinq chauffeurs ont péri dans deux attaques séparées, à Bagdad et au sud la capitale, selon des sources sécuritaires.

Par ailleurs, neuf bergers chiites, originaires de la ville sainte de Kerbala et qui s'étaient récemment rendus dans une région sunnite pour vendre leurs moutons, ont été assassinés, selon une autre source policière.

Insurgents in Iraq kill at least 37 in bombings

By Richard A. Oppel Jr.

MOSUL, Iraq: Four suicide bomb attacks struck the Iraqi police and an Iraqi Army base in a 16-hour wave of insurgent violence that swept the northern city of Mosul on Saturday night and Sunday morning, leaving at least 37 people dead and scores more wounded.

One U.S. commander said the violence was the latest sign that insurgents in northern Iraq were increasingly focusing coordinated attacks on the growing ranks of Iraqi security forces.

Mosul, the hub of the north, saw a total security meltdown in November, when almost all of the police officers and most Iraqi troops stationed around the city abandoned their posts and in some cases helped ransack their own bases. The crisis forced the military to pull troops out of the fight in Falluja to reinforce American soldiers to Mosul, Iraq's third-largest city.

After November, insurgents increased attacks on U.S. troops, but the violence receded after the Jan. 30 election — only to pick up at a ferocious pace in late March and April. Over a six-week period the unit that oversees most of western Mosul, the 1st Battalion of the 24th Infantry Regiment, was hit with 27 suicide car bombs, said Major Mike Lawrence, the battalion's executive officer.

In the months that followed the November collapse, U.S. military units boosted efforts to train and equip the



Karim Sahib/Agence France-Presse

A sheik weeping Sunday at a memorial in Baghdad for victims of suicide car bombs.

Iraqi police and troops here, and U.S. commanders hope Iraqi forces will be able to provide much of the security for the constitutional referendum scheduled for October and the subsequent national elections in December. Those hopes have been bolstered by the capture in recent days of top terrorist leaders in Mosul, including Mohammed Shakara, also known as Abu Talha, the head of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's network in northern Iraq.

But the attacks this weekend — for which Zarqawi's network claimed credit in an Internet posting — demonstrated how susceptible the Iraqi forces remain to suicide strikes, a vulnerability the insurgents now appear to be trying to exploit once again.

So far this time, Lawrence said in an interview, Iraqi forces aren't running away from attacks. In November, he said, they bolted their posts after what in most cases was only the threat of violence from insurgents. Now, despite being hit hard in bomb attacks in recent weeks, the Iraqis are not wavering, he said. In

one of the attacks this weekend, an early Sunday morning strike against a police station in central Mosul that killed 10 policemen, Iraqi forces responded within minutes accompanied by only a handful of U.S. military advisers, he said.

Among other weekend attacks was one on the east side of the Tigris River Saturday night, when a suicide car bomb exploded at an Iraqi police checkpoint at about 8 p.m.

Then, in the morning, came the 6 a.m. strike on the Bab al-Tob police station in west-central Mosul. A truck laden with what the military initially estimated to be 455 kilograms, or 1,000 pounds, of explosives, hidden underneath a layer of fruit and melons, drove up and parked next to the police station. The driver appeared to fiddle around in his cab for a few minutes before the bomb exploded, ripping apart the station and killing 10 policemen who were in what was either a sleeping area or a recreation area within the station immediately on the other side of the wall from the truck.

The New York Times

Iraqi leader speaks of 2 years to establish security

From news reports

BAGHDAD: Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari of Iraq said Monday that two years would be "more than enough" to establish security in his country.

Following talks with Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain, Jaafari said factors like building up Iraq's own security forces, controlling its porous borders, and pushing ahead with the political process would all play a part.

"I think two years will be enough, and more than enough, to establish security in our country," he said, speaking through an interpreter. "As far as the time needed, I think the time depends on many factors — first the develop-

ment of the security forces. We are working on this.

"There are also the borders with other countries in the region. If the countries cooperate with us in controlling these borders, then the time will be shorter."

Asked about recently disclosed U.S. and British contacts with insurgent groups, he said he had no objections to having "dialogue with all the political forces" so long as they were not engaged in violence. "We have not negotiated with anybody who has been involved in bloodshed or explosions," Jaafari said.

Violence, which has worsened sharply in the two months since Jaafari's Shiite and Kurdish-led government took office, continued to rage Monday. Dozens of

Iraqis were killed or wounded by attacks, including a car bomb at a Baghdad mosque, two roadside bombings, a mortar strike on a restaurant, the assassinations of two senior police officers and a raid by gunmen on a barbershop.

American forces reported two soldiers dead in a helicopter crash and at least one other gunned down.

Separately, the U.S. military raised the death toll in last week's Falluja attack to six, announcing Monday that two more women were killed in the ambush on an American convoy.

The U.S. defense secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, said Sunday that revolt among Sunni Arabs could go on for many years. His remarks appeared to

signal a change in the White House stance ahead of President George W. Bush's keynote speech on Iraq planned for Tuesday. A few weeks ago Vice President Dick Cheney said the insurgency was in its "last throes."

Although Rumsfeld did not say whether or when the United States would pull some or all of its 140,000 troops out of Iraq, he made clear Washington did not plan to leave the fight until Iraq was at peace. (AP, Reuters)

Bush défend la présence américaine en Irak

Le président américain George W. Bush devait prononcer hier soir un discours télévisé, à une heure de grande écoute, pour essayer de convaincre les Américains, très partagés sur le sujet, de la nécessité de rester en Irak. Il devait les avertir que des « moments difficiles » étaient encore à prévoir. Bush devait s'exprimer depuis la base de Fort Bragg (Caroline du Nord), à l'occasion du premier anniversaire du transfert par la coalition américano-britannique, le 28 juin 2004, du pouvoir à Bagdad aux nouvelles autorités irakiennes. Sur le terrain, au moins 29 personnes ont été tuées hier, dont le doyen du Parlement, Dhari al-Fayyad, qui a péri avec son fils dans un attentat suicide contre son convoi.

New York :
de notre correspondant
Jean-Louis Turlin

George W. Bush a pris un risque hier soir. Pour marquer le premier anniversaire du transfert de souveraineté aux autorités civiles irakiennes, le 28 juin 2004, il a choisi de s'adresser à la nation dans le décor qui convient pour un pays en guerre : Fort Bragg, l'énorme base militaire de Caroline du Nord, qui a payé un lourd tribut au « combat contre la terreur » avec 44 soldats tués, la plupart en Irak. La mise en scène en rappelait une autre : celle du 1^{er} mai 2003 qui avait vu le président américain atterrir, dans un avion de chasse, sur le porte-

avions USS Abraham Lincoln, au large de San Diego, pour proclamer que « les principales opérations de combat en Irak sont terminées ».

Cette fois, on s'est bien gardé de ressortir la bannière qui avait servi de toile de fond au discours de San Diego, avec un clin d'œil aux fans de Tom Cruise : « Mission accomplie. » Le bilan parle de lui-même : 91,5 % des pertes américaines en Irak sont intervenues depuis la fin « des principales opérations ». Alors que « seulement » 109 soldats avaient été tués et 426 autres blessés au cours de l'invasion, ils sont près de 1 600 à avoir trouvé la mort depuis, le nombre des blessés ou mutilés dépassant les 6 000. La guerre se fait à crédit

(d'un devis de 60 milliards de dollars on est passé à un coût de 208 milliards) mais la facture humaine, qui s'alourdit chaque jour, se paie comptant. « Au milieu de toute cette violence, devait déclarer Bush hier soir selon des extraits publiés à l'avance, je sais que les Américains se demandent : « Le sacrifice en vaut-il la peine ? » Cela en vaut la peine et c'est vital pour la sécurité future de notre pays. »

Selon une estimation de la chaîne CNN et du quotidien USA Today rendue publique le 20 juin, 59 % d'Américains se prononcent pour un retrait au moins partiel des quelque 135 000 soldats encore présents en Irak. Deux sondages différents montrent qu'une majorité de la population, entre 51 % et 53 %, estime que la guerre était une erreur, alors que les deux tiers la soutenaient en 2003. D'autres études révèlent que la façon dont elle se déroule fait 60 % de mécontents.

Il était donc plus que temps, pour le « commandant en chef », de rallier les troupes, au propre comme au figuré, car le désaveu de l'opinion s'accompagne d'un sévère déficit du recrutement militaire (lire ci-dessous). Au Congrès, la nervosité a gagné les rangs du parti présidentiel. Des républicains se sont joints à des démocrates pour présenter une résolution qui demande le rapatriement des troupes à partir du 1^{er} octobre 2006. Hostile à la fixation d'un calendrier, la Maison-Blanche avait d'avance fait savoir qu'aucun changement



Des Irakiens inspectent les véhicules blindés du convoi de Dhari al-Fayyad, le doyen du Parlement irakien, victime hier avec son fils d'un attentat à 23 km au nord de Bagdad. (Photo Ali Vassell/AFP)

majeur de stratégie ne serait annoncé hier soir. Le président devait humblement demander la patience et le soutien de ses compatriotes. Foin des fanfaronnades du printemps 2003 : l'heure était hier à la compassion et à l'explication. « Nous avons encore du travail à faire et il y aura des moments difficiles qui mettront la résolution des Etats Unis à l'épreuve », devait-il prévenir.

George W. Bush, privé de son argument principal pour renverser Saddam Hussein (les introuvables armes de destruction massive) fait de la démocratisation de l'Irak son principal cheval de bataille, en rappelant au passage que la guerre contre les insurgés irakiens est aussi un combat contre le terrorisme alimenté par les réseaux étrangers, notamment al-Qaïda. « Les terroristes peuvent tuer les innocents mais ils ne peuvent arrêter la marche vers la liberté. Nos ennemis ne gagneront que si nous oublions les leçons du 11 Septembre, si nous abandonnons les Irakiens à des hommes comme al-Zarqawi et si l'avenir du

Moyen-Orient est laissé à des hommes comme Ben Laden », devait déclarer le président.

Depuis le transfert du pouvoir, il a pu se prévaloir de succès : celui des élections de janvier 2005, l'installation d'un gouvernement légitime (dont il a reçu le premier ministre la semaine dernière à Washington), le soutien des Européens, réaffirmé par Gerhard Schröder à la Maison-Blanche lundi, et la rédaction prochaine de la future Constitution irakienne.

Mais, victime de sa rhétorique, George W. Bush est confronté à ce que le sénateur démocrate et futur candidat à la présidence, Jo Biden, appelle « un manque de crédibilité » quand les Américains comparent « ce qu'ils entendent et ce qui se passe sur le terrain ». Donald Rumsfeld a commencé à corriger le tir : il a admis que l'insurrection pouvait durer des années, alors que le vice-président Dick Cheney déclarait il y a peu qu'elle était « au bout du rouleau ».

Push for autonomy develops in Iraqi south

By Edward Wong

BASRA, Iraq: With the Aug. 15 deadline for writing a new constitution bearing down, some powerful, mostly secular Shiite politicians are pushing for the creation of an autonomous region in the oil-rich south of Iraq, challenging the country's central authority.

The politicians argue that the long-impooverished south has never gotten its fair share of the nation's oil money, even though the bulk of the country's oil reserves lie near Basra, at the head of the Gulf.

They also say they cannot trust anyone holding power in Baghdad because of the decades of oppression under the Sunni government of Saddam Hussein.

"We want to destroy the central system that connects the entire country to the capital," said Bakr al-Yasseen, a former foe of Saddam who spent years in exile in Syria.

He is a chief organizer of the autonomy campaign, which is supported by Ahmad Chalabi, a one-time favorite of the Pentagon and the scion of a prominent Shiite family from the south, among others.

American officials have remained publicly silent on the matter. The interim constitution that the Americans co-wrote last year says that Iraq must adopt a federal system "to avoid the concentration of power."

"We want a moderate federalist system," said a U.S. official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of government protocol. But it is up to the Iraqis to figure out exactly how governing powers should be divided, he added.

Yasseen, who has ties to Jalal Talabani, the Iraqi president and a Kurd, is demanding for the south the same broad powers that the Kurds currently have, including an Independent Parliament, ministries and regional military force.

The Kurds have long demanded a strong measure of autonomy in any future Iraqi state. But the issue of an autonomous south is new and complicates the already heated discussions on federalism in the new constitution.

The religious Shiite parties and the Sunni Arabs have generally opposed Kurdish autonomy, but the emergence of a southern drive for greater regional independence could lend important support to the Kurds' quest.

Here in Basra, Iraq's second-largest city, banners have appeared on the streets in recent weeks calling for an autonomous region similar to Iraqi Kurdistan. Academics and local politi-

cians are holding meetings at night to try to define their demands. Some talk on the phone to members of the constitutional committee in Baghdad on an almost daily basis.

While religious Shiite parties now dominate the national government, many people here fear that the parties may not adequately defend the rights of the south and worry about the rise of another authoritarian government, perhaps a conservative Islamic one.

"There's no democracy in Iraq," said Yasseen, expressing the deep suspicions of moderate and secular Shiites. "Anyone who says there's democracy has a little Saddam in his head. He wants to become a Saddam."

Chalabi and Sheikh Abdul Kareem al-Muhammadi, a prominent member of the National Assembly, are planning to propose a regional vote on the question of southern autonomy in October, at the same time as a national referendum on the constitution, said Ali Faisal al-Lami, an aide to both politicians.

Chalabi comes from the southern city of Nasiriya and, though he is distrusted by many Iraqis, he could use his family and political ties to wield considerable influence in an autonomous south.

The advocates of autonomy say that while the south has 80 to 90 percent of Iraq's oil reserves, the country's only ports and its richest date palm groves, the neglect under Saddam's rule is evident: Many of the avenues here resemble garbage dumps, open sewage floods some streets and shantytowns dot the landscape.

The south should have partial or full control over how its oil wealth and other income are distributed, the federalists say.

Yasseen recently sent a letter to the National Assembly demanding that it begin discussing the possibility of southern autonomy. Dozens of Kurdish assembly members signed the letter, forcing the issue to the table.

"I support a real region in the south," said Abdul Khalik Zengana, a senior official in the Kurdistan Democratic Party, one of the two main Kurdish

'We want to destroy the system that connects the country to the capital.'

parties. "That will help our interests and it will help to enhance federalism in Iraq."

"We bless this step. But we also think

southern federalism should be decided on by a referendum of people in the south."

Any move toward federalism and autonomy is anathema to religious Shiite parties, which made big gains in the January elections and now wield considerable power in both Baghdad and the south. They say they distrust American-backed goals and they argue that Islamic states have historically favored a strong central government. Furthermore, they want all the oil revenues to be controlled from Baghdad.

The staunchest Shiite opponents of autonomy are Moktada al-Sadr, the young firebrand cleric who led two uprisings against the Americans, and Ayatollah Muhammad Yacoubi, an activist cleric who was close to Sadr's martyred father.

Yacoubi's Fadilah Party governs Basra, while Sadr's organization and his militia have a formidable presence here.

The two groups believe that a legendary imam called the Mahdi will appear soon and cleanse the world of infidels, creating universal Islamic rule. Any division of powers is incompatible with that belief, they say, and could also lead to the breakup of Iraq.

"Most of the people reject the idea of autonomy," Sheikh Abdul-Sattar al-Bahadli, a senior cleric in the Sadr organization, said in an interview in his office here. "The idea of federalism arose after the occupation of Iraq and it's the idea of the occupiers."

Countries in the region, especially Iran and Saudi Arabia, are also likely to balk at the idea of an autonomous south, since those governments fear independence movements from ethnic or religious minorities in their own oil-rich areas. Kurdish autonomy already inspires anxiety in Turkey, Iran and Syria, all countries with significant Kurdish populations.

Yasseen and his allies envision a unified political south that would encompass the cities of Basra, Nasiriya and Amara. It would be one of a half-dozen autonomous regions in Iraq, each with powers approaching true sovereignty, as in Kurdistan.

Another group of federalists, most of them academics, disagrees with that plan. This group wants a more moderate system of federalism that would divide power between Baghdad and the existing 18 provinces or similar-sized areas, rather than creating large regions.

Some people think that "the Kurdish model of federalism is not a successful

one," said Dhiaa al-Asadi, a spokesman for the group and a supervisor in a project promoting local governance that has financing from the American government.

"It is not a federal region right now," he said. "It is almost a separate country."

The New York Times

Ali Adeb and Abdul-Razzaq al-Saeidi contributed reporting from Baghdad.

IRAN Pour le numéro deux de l'AIEA

Pierre Goldschmidt : « Un sentiment d'urgence sur le nucléaire iranien »

L'élection à la présidence iranienne, le week-end dernier, de l'islamiste radical Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, fait craindre un durcissement de la position de Téhéran dans les négociations sur le nucléaire. Les Européens, soutenus par les Américains, cherchent à obtenir des garanties fermes que le programme atomique iranien soit exclusivement civil. Mais l'Iran proclame son droit à produire de l'uranium enrichi, qui peut servir à fabriquer la bombe atomique.

Les Etats-Unis ont de nouveau menacé, avant-hier, de réclamer des sanctions de l'ONU contre Téhéran. Dans un entretien au *Figaro*, le Belge Pierre Goldschmidt, 66 ans, qui quitte aujourd'hui ses fonctions de directeur-général adjoint de l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA), revient sur le dossier nucléaire iranien, qu'il a géré depuis février 2003.

Propos recueillis
à Vienne
par Maurin Picard

(construite par Moscou et qui doit être inaugurée en octobre 2006, NDLR), car les Russes se sont engagés à leur fournir

LE FIGARO. - L'Iran n'a jamais facilité la tâche à l'AIEA dans son travail d'inspection, depuis février 2003. Voyez-vous une issue optimiste à cette crise ?

Pierre GOLDSCHMIDT. - Il y a un sentiment d'urgence parmi les protagonistes de ce dossier, que ce soient les Iraniens, impatients de reprendre l'enrichissement de l'uranium, ou les Européens et les Américains, qui veulent les en empêcher car ils craignent que l'objectif de l'Iran ne soit pas pacifique. Nous sommes engagés dans une course contre la montre. Objectivement, j'ai du mal à comprendre l'urgence du côté iranien. En effet, il n'y a pas de besoin physique pour les approvisionnements de leur centrale de Bouchehr

« La coopération n'est pas si bonne que ça. A Ispahan, notamment, les Iraniens continuent de creuser des tunnels pour stocker leurs matières nucléaires »

du combustible et à le retraiter pour les dix années à venir.

Comment l'AIEA répond-elle à ce sentiment d'urgence ?

L'AIEA a un seul et unique objectif : aboutir à la conclusion qu'il n'y a plus de matières et d'activités nucléaires « non déclarées » en Iran. Dans un pays aussi vaste, qui a entre-tenu un programme depuis

dix-huit ans, cela n'a rien de commode. Cela va prendre encore du temps. Tout dépendra du degré de coopération et de transparence des Iraniens. Sur ce point, ils ont beaucoup de progrès à faire. Pour tout dire, nous n'avons pas beaucoup avancé ces derniers temps. Cela dépendra aussi des discussions politiques entre les Européens et les Iraniens. Il est très important que les Etats-Unis et la Russie soutiennent l'Union européenne dans ses efforts de médiation, de façon à ce que les offres des Européens soient prises au sérieux à Téhéran.

L'Iran n'a toujours pas ratifié le protocole additionnel du Traité de non-prolifération nucléaire, qui prévoit des « inspections renforcées et inopinées ». Cela complique-t-il la tâche des inspecteurs ?

Dans les faits, l'Iran applique malgré tout ce protocole additionnel. Attention, cela ne veut pas dire que l'on peut arriver à l'improviste dans le pays ! Les inspecteurs sont très étroitement surveillés. Mais une fois sur place, ils peuvent mener une inspection avec un très court préavis : 24 heures, voire moins. En revanche, s'il s'agit d'obtenir l'accès à un site non répertorié à l'avance, c'est beaucoup plus difficile.

Nous devons alors convaincre nos hôtes de la nécessité de le faire. Cela peut prendre beaucoup de temps, comme à Parchine (un site militaire, donc hors du champ d'application du protocole additionnel, NDLR). Dans certains cas, nous sommes arrivés trop tard (comme à Lavizan ou à Kalaye Electric, en 2003, NDLR). La ratification du protocole additionnel reste un objectif primordial. Comme l'a dit notre directeur général Mohammed ElBaradei, il y a un « déficit de confiance » avec l'Iran. Une fois le protocole ratifié, ne pas le respecter, c'est plus grave que de dire simplement : « On l'applique sur une base volontaire... jusqu'à ce qu'on change d'avis. » Le protocole dans son essence doit être appliqué sur une base définitive et non volontaire.

Donc, les Iraniens continuent de jouer au chat et à la souris avec l'AIEA ?

La coopération n'est pas si bonne que ça. A Ispahan, notamment, les Iraniens continuent de creuser des tunnels

pour stocker leurs matières nucléaires, afin sans doute de les mettre à l'abri de bombardements éventuels. Il y a une politisation très forte du dossier, ce qui est mauvais parce que les hommes politiques, par leurs déclarations publiques, s'en-

ferment parfois dans leur propre discours. Il est alors plus difficile de changer d'avis et d'envisager avec sérénité des solutions constructives dans l'intérêt de tous.

Est-il plausible que les Iraniens disposent de sites mobiles, indétectables avec les moyens dont vous disposez ?

Je n'ai pas entendu parler de cette hypothèse dans le cadre de l'Iran. Mais il n'est pas impensable qu'existent des installations modulaires de conversion d'uranium. Si de telles installations sont dissimulées dans des sites militaires, pétroliers ou même urbains, les détecter est extrêmement difficile.

Vous prenez votre retraite après six ans au service de l'AIEA, mais le dossier iranien suit son cours. Avez-vous l'impression de quitter le train en marche ?

Il reste beaucoup à faire. Mais j'ai le sentiment d'avoir contribué au renforcement du régime de garanties. Cette période n'a pas d'équivalent dans l'histoire de l'AIEA. Nous avons complètement transformé la façon de travailler de l'agence et cela, je crois, a été apprécié par la communauté internationale. De toute façon, le train ne s'arrêtera jamais ! Le dossier iranien est l'un des plus complexes et des plus importants aujourd'hui. Je me suis souvent réveillé la nuit en me demandant si nous n'avions pas manqué quelque chose. Les conséquences d'une omission, d'un oubli pourraient être considérables pour la sécurité et la paix mondiales. Je ne voudrais pas que l'on me dise, dans trois ans ou dans cinq ans : « Vous étiez là-bas et vous n'avez rien vu. »

LE FIGARO

30 JUIN 2005

Le rêve européen plombé en Turquie

Les Turcs s'inquiètent pour leur intégration dans l'UE après la crise sur la Constitution.

Ankara envoyé spécial

C'est un vieil homme tremblotant sous perfusion avec, au cou, un panneau «Europe». Le fauteuil roulant est poussé par le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan, issu du mouvement islamiste, habillé en cow-boy pour bien souligner le réchauffement entre Ankara et Washington. «Ne t'en fais pas, ça passera», murmure Erdogan, dans ce dessin paru dans le quotidien à grand tirage *Sabah*. L'ironie console... Jour après jour, la crise de l'UE fait la une des médias turcs qui, toujours plus inquiets sur l'avenir européen du pays, scrutent et dissèquent la moindre phrase des dirigeants des Vingt-Cinq.

Contrecoup. Massivement favorable, même dans les régions les plus reculées, à une intégration européenne, synonyme de bien-être et de libertés, l'opinion est saisie par l'angoisse. «On sent de plus en plus qu'on gêne et qu'il y a deux poids, deux mesures quand on est un pays musulman», soupire Selim qui a pompeusement appelé «Avrupa» (Europe) son échoppe-bazar à Samandag, petit port limitrophe de la Syrie. «Je doute de plus en plus que nous fassions un jour pleinement partie du club et, même si la route vers l'UE est aussi importante que le but final, je crains que l'opinion ne finisse par se lasser», explique, préoccupé, un homme d'affaire d'Istanbul. Après le double non français et néerlandais à la Constitution européenne, les autorités d'Ankara ont d'abord évité toute dramatisation excessive. Tant pour rassurer l'opinion que pour empêcher un contrecoup sur le marché boursier dopé par la perspective de l'adhésion turque. Désormais, elles reconnaissent la gravité de la situation.

«Nous ne pouvons dire dès à présent que tout ce qui se passe au sein de l'Union n'affectera pas l'élargissement et la Turquie. Il faut attendre que la poussière retombe», a ainsi reconnu le ministre des Af-

fares étrangères, Abdullah Gül, dans une interview au quotidien *Radikal* (libéral), tout en soulignant que les réformes vont continuer. Certes nul ne pense que l'ouverture des négociations d'adhésion, prévue pour le 3 octobre, puisse être remise en cause. Mais les diplomates turcs craignent que, sous la pression des capitales les plus «turco-sceptiques», les Vingt-Cinq ne rajoutent d'ici là de nouvelles conditions, malgré une présidence britannique très favorable à Ankara.

Une petite phrase du président de la Commission européenne, José Manuel Barroso, soulignant lourdement «l'issue ouverte» de ces négociations a encore accru le doute. «L'adoption de l'acquis communautaire va impliquer de plus en plus de réformes. Jusqu'ici, nous avons pu les imposer grâce à la perspective de l'adhésion. Cela sera plus difficile si les gens doutent de l'issue finale», reconnaît un haut diplomate, au ministère turc des Affaires étrangères. «Quelle crédibilité auront les partisans de l'Europe s'il n'y a pas de lumière au bout du tunnel, même pas une chandelle», renchérit, indignée, Nilgun Cerrahoglu, spécialiste de l'Europe au quotidien *Cumhuriyet* (gauche républicaine).

Réformes. Le représentant de Bruxelles à Ankara, Hansjörg Kretschmer, se veut rassurant. «Cette crise, souligne-t-il, n'est pas la première au sein de l'Europe à propos de l'élargissement.» «La Turquie ne doit pas se décourager car son avenir est entre ses mains avec la pleine mise en œuvre des réformes auxquelles elle s'est engagée», a-t-il insisté lors d'un colloque de l'UE à Antioche sur le dialogue interculturel. Il n'empêche que les doutes deviennent de plus en plus palpables. «Le ballon du rêve européen se dégonfle», ricane dans ses éditoriaux Emin Colasan, un des chefs de file du «souverainisme» turc. Ce sen-

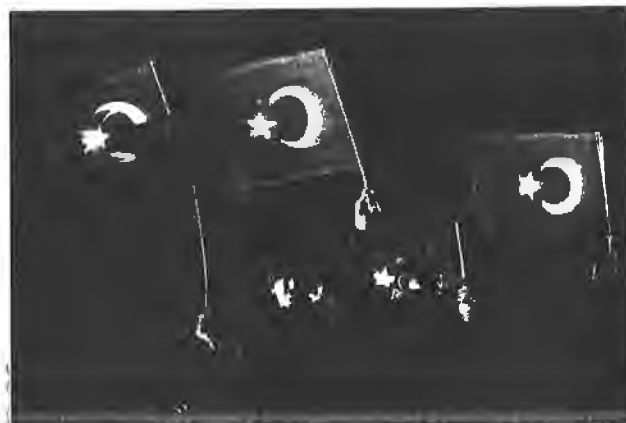
timent reste très fort dans une partie de l'appareil d'Etat et de l'armée, au nom de la défense de l'héritage de la République laïque et jacobine créée par Mustafa Kemal sur les décombres de l'Empire ottoman après la Première Guerre mondiale. Ils ne remettent pas en cause l'Europe mais les abandons de souveraineté qu'elle impose. Principale force d'opposition, le CHP, le Parti républicain du peuple (gauche kémaliste), critique toujours plus durement «les excessives concessions» des islamistes modérés au pouvoir. «Négociateur, cela signifie des concessions réciproques et non à sens unique», martèle Onur Oymen, vice-président du CHP chargé des relations internationales.

Ces thèmes trouvent un écho croissant dans une opinion fortement nationaliste. Selon une enquête de l'université du Bosphore, si 70 à 75% des Turcs sont favorables à l'UE, 60 à 65% se disent aussi persuadés que les Européens veulent «diviser la Turquie» et «l'affaiblir». Les «kémalistes» sont en outre convaincus que l'AKP au pouvoir utilise avant tout «l'Europe comme un bouclier» pour mener son propre projet de réislamisation progressive du pays.

Protectionniste. L'ampleur des réformes effectuées depuis trois ans n'en est pas moins réelle, y compris en matière de

libertés et de respect des droits des minorités. Certes, beaucoup restent encore sur le papier et leur rythme s'est considérablement ralenti depuis que les Européens, réunis en sommet le 17 décembre, ont fixé la date du début des négociations. Il y a aussi des ratés, notamment dans le nouveau code pénal, certains articles sur la presse jugés «liberticides» par de nombreuses organisations des droits de l'homme. «Il n'y a pas de plan B et nous voulons continuer notre longue route vers l'Europe», insiste Sefi Tasan, directeur du Centre d'études de politique étrangère de l'université de Bilkent à Ankara. Il se veut optimiste: «Il y a deux conceptions de l'Union, celle de Tony Blair, qui a le vent en poupe, ouverte et dynamique, dans laquelle la Turquie trouvera naturellement sa place. Et il y a l'autre, celle d'une Europe timorée, protectionniste, fermée. Je ne crois pas que cette vieille Europe l'emporte, mais, si c'était le cas, la Turquie n'aurait pas grand-chose à y faire.»

MARC SEMO



Istanbul, le 18 décembre dernier. Des membres de l'AKP accueillent le Premier ministre Erdogan à son retour du sommet européen.

libération

30 JUIN 2005

Iran Unveiled

To gauge the radicalism of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran's next president, consider that prior to Friday's run-off election Western media widely described him as a "hardliner," whereas rival candidate Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani was a "moderate."

Mr. Rafsanjani is the former president whose tenure was marked by repression at home and dozens of terrorist attacks and assassinations abroad, including the 1994 bombing of the Jewish cultural center in Buenos Aires. Yet that record seems positively benign next to Mr. Ahmadinejad's. If there's a silver lining here, it is that the West may at last see the unveiled face of the Iranian regime and begin acting accordingly.

A student radical during Ayatollah Khomeini's revolution in the late 1970s, Mr. Ahmadinejad was involved in planning the seizure of the U.S. embassy and helped organize Khomeini's Islamic Cultural Revolution, during which universities were shut down and ideologically suspect lecturers and students were arrested and shot.

In the mid-1980s, he worked as an interrogator, or worse, in Tehran's infamous Evin Prison, according to Iranian sources. Mr. Ahmadinejad then joined the Special Brigade of the Revolutionary Guards, where he was an officer in the "Jerusalem Force," which had responsibility for terrorist attacks and assassinations abroad, including against prominent Iranian dissidents.

In the late 1990s, he was one of the organizers of Ansar-i-Hezbollah, government-sponsored vigilantes assigned to break up peaceful demonstrations. In April 2003, Mr. Ahmadine-



Mahmoud
Ahmadinejad

jad was appointed (not elected) mayor of Tehran, where he set about organizing "Abadgaran" (Developers) groups, which seek to return Iran to sterner Khomeinist principles.

Now this man is president-elect of Iran. Some reports have explained his victory as a populist backlash against Mr. Rafsanjani's corrupt clericalism. Yet such "analysis" ignores the facts that 1,000 reform candidates were banned from running, that all the presidential candidates were chosen to run by Supreme Leader Ali Khomeini, that the first round of voting was marred by fraud, that turnout was low (notwithstanding the regime's claims), and that the winner benefited from the strong-arm tactics of his erstwhile comrades in the Revolutionary Guards and Ansar. Whatever else Mr. Ahmadinejad's victory represents, it does not represent the will of Iran's people.

Mr. Ahmadinejad's victory also has consequences abroad. His regime may well create more trouble in Iraq in order to disrupt the chances for a democratic, pluralist and moderate Shiite government. The same goes for Lebanon, whose tenuous democracy is imperiled not only by Syrian meddling but by the Shiite Hezbollah, Iran's proxy in the country.

Most important is the question of Iran's nuclear program, with which Mr. Ahmadinejad promises to press ahead even as he holds out the prospect of further negotiation with the Europeans. We have been skeptical of past negotiations, not least because we did not think there were "moderates" in Iran who could be relied upon to honor the commitments they failed to honor in the past. Still, we're sorry to see Mr. Ahmadinejad's victory prove the point so brutally.

There will be time in the coming months to devise a serious policy to contain the Iranian regime and defeat its nuclear ambitions. The best place to start is not to be deceived by its nature, which Friday's election unmasked.

Bush's speech on Iraq

President Bush told Americans on Tuesday night that the war in Iraq was difficult but winnable. Only the first is clearly true. Despite buoyant cheerleading by administration officials, the military situation is at best unimproved. The Iraqi Army, despite Bush's optimistic descriptions, shows no signs of being able to control the country without American help for years to come. There are not enough American soldiers to carry out the job they have been sent to do, yet the strain of maintaining even this inadequate force is taking a terrible toll on the

ability of the United States to defend its security on other fronts around the world.

We did not expect Bush would apologize for the misinformation that helped lead us into this war, or for the catastrophic mistakes his team made in running the military operation. But we had hoped he would resist the temptation to raise the bloody flag of Sept. 11 over and over again to justify a war in a country that had nothing whatsoever to do with the terrorist attacks. We had hoped that he would seize the moment to tell the United States how he will define victory, and

to give Americans a specific sense of how he intends to reach that goal — beyond repeating the same wishful scenario that he has been describing since the invasion.

Sadly, Bush wasted his opportunity Tuesday night, giving a speech that answered only questions no one was asking. He told America, again and again, that a stable and democratic Iraq would be worth American sacrifices, while America was wondering whether American sacrifices could actually produce a stable and democratic Iraq.

Given the way this war was planned and executed, the president does not have any good options available, and if American forces were withdrawn, Iraq would probably sink

into a civil war that would create large stretches of no man's land where private militias and stateless terrorists could operate with impunity. But if Bush is intent on staying the course, it will take years before the Iraqi government and its military are able to stand on their own. Most important of all — despite his lofty assurance Tuesday night that in the end the insurgents "cannot stop the advance of freedom" — all those years of effort and suffering could still end with the Iraqis turning on each other, or deciding that the American troops were the ultimate enemy after all. The critical challenge is to gauge, with a clear head, exactly when and if the tipping point arrives, and the American presence is only making a terrible situation worse.

Bush has been under pressure, even from some Republicans, to come up with a timeline for an exit. It makes no sense to encourage the insurrectionists by telling them that if their suicide bombers continue to blow themselves up at the current rate, the Americans will be leaving in six months or a year. It is Iraq's elected officials, who desperately need an American presence, who have to be told that Washington's

support isn't open-ended.

The elected government is the only hope, but its current performance is far from promising. While the support of the Shiites' powerful Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani for the democratic elections was heartening, the Shiite majority in Parliament is mainly composed of religious parties competing for the ayatollah's ear. The Kurds continue to put broader national interests behind their own goal of an autonomous minstate that would include the oil fields of Kirkuk. The Sunnis, who boycotted the election, are only now being brought into the constitution-writing effort and so far have made no real effort to mobilize against the terrorists in their midst.

U.S. pressure for the government to do better has increased since the State Department took control of Iraq policy from the Pentagon. But there is much more to do, and the president needed to show the American people that he is not giving the Iraqi politicians a blank check to fritter away their opportunities.

Listening to Bush offer the usual emotional rhetoric about the advance of freedom and the sacrifice of American soldiers,

our thoughts went back to some of the letters we received in anticipation of the speech. One was from the brother of a fallen marine, who said he did not want Bush to say the war should continue in order to keep faith with the men and women who have died fighting it. "We do not need more justifications for the war. We need an effective strategy to win it," he wrote. Another letter came from an opponent of the invasion who urged the American left to "get over its anger over President Bush's catastrophic blunder" and start trying to figure out how to win the conflict that exists.

No one wants a disaster in Iraq, and Bush's critics can put aside, at least temporarily, their anger at the administration for its hubris, its terrible planning and its inept conduct of the war in return for a frank discussion of where to go from here. The president, who is going to be in office for another three and a half years, cannot continue to obsess about self-justification and the need to color Iraq with the memory of Sept. 11. America does not want it and cannot afford it.

EU drafts tough rules for talks on Turkey

Conditions affirm a 'long and difficult' road to membership

By Graham Bowley

BRUSSELS: Amid stiffening public skepticism in Europe, the European Commission on Wednesday unveiled draft negotiating rules for membership talks with Turkey, setting the toughest conditions yet for a country seeking to join the European Union.

The rules, which mark another historic step in Turkey's quest to join the Union, set the scene for a bruising battle over the coming months between EU national governments, which must still approve the draft framework for talks to open as expected on Oct. 3.

"Turkey will not become a member

of the union today or tomorrow," said Olli Rehn, the EU enlargement commissioner, as he unveiled the framework at the commission. "It will be a long and difficult journey."

The draft framework emerged after a fractious two-hour debate between the commission's college of 25 commissioners, underlining the sensitivities surrounding Turkey's campaign to join.

"We had a lengthy, argumentative and also very political debate," Rehn said.

The draft rules also face a tough passage during discussions among the 25 EU members in September, when Germany is expected to hold national elections. The elections are expected to be won by the opposition Christian Democrats, which oppose Turkey's entry into the Union.

The draft rules echo the conclusions reached by EU governments at a summit meeting in Brussels in December, but the rules and conditions have taken on a new significance following the rejections of the constitution in referendums in France and the Netherlands and a hardening of public opinion against taking in more members, especially Turkey.

Turkey will sign a customs agreement that recognizes Cyprus "within the next few weeks," the commission said, a step that was seen as one of the main obstacles for talks to open. Turkey fulfilled another key condition by introducing six new laws on June 1.

But the framework sets out the tougher tests the country will face during the detailed negotiations that are

expected to last at least 10 years. And the commission underlined that the negotiations would not necessarily end in full membership for Turkey.

Among the provisions would be a clause to stop the talks if Turkey persistently breached human rights or the rule of law. If Turkey joined, other countries would be able to erect barriers to stop Turks migrating to Western Europe.

Rehn also emphasized that talks were likely to last at least until 2014.

"The process is as important as the outcome," Rehn said, adding that Turkish membership was in the strategic interests of Europe. "Europe needs a stable, prosperous and democratic Turkey," he said.

He said talks would be a recognition of the changes made and an encouragement for further changes.

"It will give a strong push to all those who want more progress for human rights and rule of law in this country," he said.

Rehn said the EU would insist far more than during previous enlargements on the implementation of changes and not just the promise of them.

"We focus less on words and more on deeds," he said.

To allay European public concern about Turkey, and increase understanding, the commission said it would spend €40 million next year to improve links between civil groups such as trades unions and women's rights groups, in Europe and Turkey.

Turkey signed an association agreement with the EU in 1963. It applied for

membership in 1987.

According to the draft documents, the talks will be divided into 35 chapters, including such areas as food safety, education and foreign policy. Turkey must also commit to resolving the three-decade division of Cyprus.

Following the referendums, EU governments have recognized increasing reservations within Europe about accepting a large, poor nation like Turkey into the union, so soon after last year's historic enlargement through which 10 nations, mainly from Central and Eastern Europe, joined.

Turkey's bid also comes at a time of growing wariness in some European countries, notably the Netherlands, about the presence of large Muslim communities within their populations that have so far failed to integrate.

Nicolas Sarkozy, the French interior minister, said Monday that enlargement should stop until Europe had resolved its current political crisis.

"We have to suspend enlargement at least until the institutions have been modernized," he said, adding: "Europe must have borders. Not all countries have a vocation to be in Europe."

On Tuesday, before the publication of the draft, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey urged the EU to embrace his country.

"If you really claim that the EU is not a Christian club, if you believe this, then you should take Turkey among you," he said, in comments reported by the Anatolia news agency.

International Herald Tribune

MERCREDI 29 JUIN 2005

Le Monde
ÉDITORIAL

Iran, une régression

L'ÉLECTION de l'ultraconservateur Mahmoud Ahmadinejad à la présidence de l'Iran est une mauvaise nouvelle. Pour les Iraniens, sans doute ; pour la communauté internationale, à coup sûr ; enfin, paradoxalement, peut-être aussi pour la République islamique elle-même. Non pas que son rival, le conservateur Ali Akbar Hachemi Rafsandjani, défait vendredi 24 juin au second tour d'un scrutin vraisemblablement entaché de fraudes, eût transformé le pays en une plaisante démocratie scandinave. Mais du moins cet apparatchik enrichi de la révolution iranienne avait-il fait part d'un programme pragmatique : maintenir les quelques acquis du président sortant, le réformateur Mohammad Khatami, en matière de libertés civiles et culturelles ; approfondir le dialogue avec l'Europe et amorcer une normalisation avec les États-Unis. Cette disposition à l'apaisement dans la relation entre Téhéran et Washington aurait pu faciliter le règlement du dossier nucléaire iranien.

Au contraire, l'accession à la présidence d'un populiste de 49 ans, produit du bras armé de la révolution de 1979, les Gardiens de la révolution, et de leur milice civile, les *bassidjis*, provoque une crispation. Sur le front extérieur, d'abord. Même si M. Ahmadinejad a pris soin de réaffirmer que les intentions nucléaires de son pays restaient purement civiles, il appartient à l'un des groupes du pouvoir iranien qui s'est toujours défini par son opposition résolue aux États-Unis. Le fond du dossier ne change pas. L'Iran veut être en mesure de

pouvoir décider un jour de fabriquer une arme atomique ; les Européens cherchent à l'en dissuader ; et le président George W. Bush a redit samedi qu'il ne permettrait pas que ce pays devienne une puissance nucléaire militaire. Mais l'un des acteurs change. L'installation au pouvoir à Téhéran d'un homme au passé aussi radical que M. Ahmadinejad est un élément de tension et de défiance supplémentaire dans l'affaire nucléaire.

Sur le front intérieur, cette élection marque aussi une crispation. Elle est le résultat d'un vote de protestation sociale, marquant l'échec des gouvernements Khatami. Avec le baril à 60 dollars, l'Iran est plus que jamais une riche puissance pétrolière. Mais la rente est mal utilisée, qui laisse près de 15 % de la population active au chômage et beaucoup des 68 millions d'Iraniens dans la misère. M. Ahmadinejad n'a pas de programme. Il est ce que son homologue Hugo Chavez est au Venezuela : un populiste, porte-parole des laissés-pour-compte. Ses origines et son entourage, formé d'anciens des Gardiens de la révolution, soulignent une tendance à la militarisation du régime, aux dépens de l'État de droit.

Ce scrutin marque enfin une uniformisation de la République islamique : les conservateurs règnent maintenant à tous les échelons d'un régime jusqu'alors partagé entre différents centres de pouvoir. Le Guide suprême, Ali Khamenei, parrain direct de M. Ahmadinejad, est en première ligne - dorénavant directement comparable et responsable.

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« Bourbier » irakien

LE MOT est tabou pour George W. Bush. « Bourbier » était le terme employé pour qualifier l'enlèvement des Américains au Vietnam au début des années 1970. L'administration le refuse aujourd'hui afin d'écarter tout parallèle entre les deux guerres. Sans doute les deux situations ne sont-elles pas comparables. Mais il n'en reste pas moins que les États-Unis ne volent ni la fin de leur engagement en Irak ni la fin des violences.

Plus de deux ans après la chute de Saddam Hussein, un an après le transfert de souveraineté des forces d'occupation à un gouvernement irakien, six mois après les premières élections démocratiques, le nombre de victimes n'a jamais été aussi élevé. Les forces de sécurité irakiennes, péniblement formées par la coalition, semblent être les principales cibles de la guérilla, ainsi que les personnalités ayant pris le risque de participer à la mise en place d'un pouvoir politique local.

Cependant, les soldats américains paient un tribut de plus en plus lourd à la « guerre contre le terrorisme », axe de la politique américaine. Car le président n'en démord pas, comme le montre encore le discours qu'il a prononcé, mardi 28 juin, dans le cadre martial de Fort Bragg, en Caroline du Nord. Malgré l'impopularité croissante de la guerre, les critiques de la manière dont les opérations sont menées, la conviction partagée aujourd'hui par plus d'un Américain sur deux qu'il les a « intentionnellement trompés » sur les raisons du conflit, George W. Bush maintient son cap. Pas question de

céder au terrorisme et d'abandonner l'Irak à la guerre civile. Il y va, toujours selon le président, de la sécurité des États-Unis. Sur ce point, au moins, il peut se targuer d'avoir le soutien de la majorité de ses concitoyens.

A-t-il le choix ? Un retrait des troupes et même l'annonce d'un calendrier de désengagement signeraient un échec cuisant pour George W. Bush, qui, depuis les attentats du 11 septembre 2001, a construit toute sa politique étrangère sur sa détermination à combattre le terrorisme, sur une démonstration de la force inégalée de son pays et sur la promotion de la démocratie, dont l'Irak devait être le premier fleuron au Proche-Orient.

A Bagdad, la démonstration est en train de tourner à la confusion. Et ce ne sont pas les bonnes paroles prodiguées par les quatre-vingts États réunis à Bruxelles la semaine dernière pour apporter une aide économique à l'Irak dévasté qui régleront le problème.

En catimini, les Américains tentent de nouer des contacts avec les groupes insurgés sunnites, qui sont une composante essentielle de l'opposition. Auront-ils plus de succès que le gouvernement irakien, qui avait déjà proposé une amnistie aux insurgés s'ils déposaient les armes ? La perspective d'une solution politique, liée à une action militaire déterminée et à des pressions sur la Syrie, qui sert de refuge à des bandes armées opérant en Irak, est peut-être la seule issue de secours, entre un enlèvement sans fin et un départ sans gloire.

Colloque

Les droits de l'homme en Turquie : une réalité en construction ?

Des acteurs de la défense des droits de l'homme en Turquie ont été invités à s'exprimer en France, lors d'une journée d'information et de réflexion, en mars 2005, organisée à l'Assemblée nationale par le Collectif pour les droits de l'homme en Turquie⁽¹⁾, dont l'ACAT-France est membre.

Les intervenants français, qui ont pris la parole au début du colloque, ont surtout traité de la possible intégration politique de la Turquie dans l'UE.

Aux yeux de J.-F. Bayart (directeur de recherche au CNRS), l'UE est une machine à faire la démocratie et donc la paix en dépassant les conflits intérieurs. Elle a déjà permis à des pays sortant de dictatures sévères comme l'Espagne, le Portugal ou la Grèce de rétablir les libertés publiques et d'institutionnaliser les droits de l'homme. Il en ira de même en Turquie où la perspective de l'adhésion rendra irréversibles les réformes démocratiques lancées par le gouvernement. De manière analogue, l'Europe permettra à la Turquie de dépasser son horizon nationaliste moyennant la reconnaissance des identités intérieures (pas seulement celle des Kurdes) et le règlement des conflits nationaux (Arménie).

Si par contre l'adhésion échoue, il faut redouter une flambée nationaliste nourrie par l'obsession de la Turquie. d'affirmer sa souveraineté nationale ainsi qu'une remise en cause de l'Islam républicain et laïque de Mustafa. Kémal.

P. Kalfayan (secrétaire général de la FIDH), s'interroge davantage sur la capacité de la Turquie de s'adapter aux institutions et aux critères politiques de l'UE. Qui de l'UE ou de la Turquie va imposer ses valeurs ? Beaucoup d'exemples de discriminations, de non respect des minorités, de répressions montrent que le nouveau code pénal n'est pas encore passé dans la pratique. À l'Europe de durcir son discours, d'élaborer des outils de suivi (rôle du Conseil de l'Europe) d'exercer une vigilance critique, comme le demandent instantanément les défenseurs turcs des droits de l'homme.

Les intervenants de la seconde partie⁽²⁾ ont dressé un constat sévère quant à la réalité des droits de l'Homme dans un pays où les autorités semblent se satisfaire d'avoir obtenu, du Conseil de l'Europe, le 17 décembre 2004, la décision d'ouvrir des négociations préalables à l'adhésion à l'UE. Aujourd'hui, la Turquie marque un arrêt sur la voie de la démocratisation après avoir voté depuis 2000 toute une série de réformes capitales telles que l'adoption d'un nouveau code pénal, l'abolition de la peine de mort, l'extension

des libertés culturelles... Mais la Constitution n'a pas été réformée en profondeur, reste très autoritaire, renforce le pouvoir de l'État et réduit l'espace de liberté des citoyens : des jugements se font sans procès, des exécutions judiciaires existent encore, notamment dans le sud-est de la Turquie, des personnes peuvent être jugées pour délit d'opinion, les personnes ne circulent pas librement, les députés sont nommés et non élus. La législation extrêmement complexe et ambiguë ne permet pas d'imposer facilement les directives de l'UE, car si l'état d'exception a été aboli, l'administration, elle, est restée en place, limitant souvent la portée de ces réformes. Ainsi la tolérance zéro concernant la torture n'est pas appliquée car toujours pas, ou peu, de sanctions pour les tortionnaires, la torture reste systématique. Au sujet des femmes, les violences restent multiples, au sein de la famille, dans les prisons. L'impunité des coupables et la passivité de la police sont les règles : les règles de l'Union Européenne le sont actuellement à un niveau minimum. L'état d'exception a été aboli, mais l'administration ne s'est pas modifiée.

Le Conseil national de sécurité, autrefois tout puissant, a perdu certaines de ses prérogatives mais continue d'inspirer des pratiques peu compatibles avec la démocratie. Il est vrai que le personnel administratif n'a pas reçu la formation nécessaire pour modifier son comportement (police, juges...),

que les mentalités et les traditions ne changent pas du jour au lendemain et que le gouvernement ne supporte pas les critiques. A-t-il une réelle volonté de démocratisation ?

Par ailleurs le personnel administratif n'a pas reçu la formation nécessaire pour modifier son comportement (police, juges...), les mentalités et les traditions ne changent pas du jour au lendemain et le gouvernement ne supporte pas les critiques. A-t-il une réelle volonté pour faire avancer le changement vers une vraie démocratisation ?

Ceux qui se sont battus pour les droits de l'homme en Turquie espèrent que la pression de l'UE récompensera leurs efforts mais soulignent la nécessité de faire respecter en Turquie les critères de Copenhague et d'élaborer des outils de suivi permettant de mesurer les progrès consentis par Ankara.

Il ne saurait y avoir de chèque en blanc pour la Turquie.

**FRANÇOISE LEFÈVRE,
MARCELLE ADDÈS**

1. Membre du collectif : ACAT, AISF, ACORT (Assemblée citoyenne des originaires de Turquie), association Primo Levi, CIMADE, France Libertés, Fondation Danielle Mitterrand, LDH, FIDH, Médecins du monde. 2. Autres intervenants : Yavuz Onen, architecte, président de la TIHV (Fondation pour les droits de l'Homme de Turquie) ; Yusuf Alatas, avocat, président l'Association des droits de l'Homme de Turquie (IHD) ; Sezgin Tanrikulu, président du Barreau et représentant de la TIHV de Diyarbakir ; Eren Keskin, avocate ; Dr Sebnem Korur Fincanci, de l'Ordre des médecins d'Istanbul.

