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GENERAL ELECTIONS IN IRAQ: THE SHIITE ALLIANCE, UNSURPRISINGLY, WINS THE ELECTIONS AND THE KURDISH COALITION WINS 53 SEATS WITH AN INCREASE IN VOTES



AFTER having examined at length the complaints and settled the disputes, the Iraqi Election Commission, with the help of UNO experts, made the 15 December election results public. During these latest elections

12,191,133 valid votes were cast as against 8,361,961 for the 30 January 2005 elections. The Kurdish coalition increased its score of votes cast even though the number of seats it won decreased. It won 2,642,172 votes and 53 seats, whereas in the January

elections, with 2,175,551 votes it had secured 71 seats in the Iraqi Parliament. The system of allocation of seats worked against it, the higher poll reducing its percent score. Despite many objections, no political group denied the overall result, which put the Shiite conservatives (UIA) in the lead with 128 seats (5,021,137 votes) in the future 275 member Parliament (in the previous election this list had scores 4,075,295 votes and 132 seats).

According to the International Mission to the Iraqi elections, published on 19 January, many irregularities and cases of ballot rigging had sullied the 15 December elections. The body, which includes 10 countries and is presided by Canada, proposes changes for future polls but did not recommend any cancellation of votes. Some of the 220,000 Iraqi staff employed had indulged in "doubtful or illegal" practices, according to the report, while certain members of the security forces voted again, after having voted the day before in a poll specially organised for them.

The report of the International Mission is very cautious in its evaluation of the impact of the observed frauds. The report makes the point that the Iraq Election Commission had invalidated the results of 227 of the 30,000 ballot boxes (**Editor's note:** that is under 1%) after investigating the most serious frauds. The Mission considered it "regrettable" that a fresh vote was not organised in the constituencies concerned, but did not demand that it take place. The election officials received 2,000 complaints, alleging the stuffing of ballot boxes, intimidation, violence, inaccurate electoral registers, lack of ballot papers, fraud and breaches of the end of the campaign. However, despite these problems, the International Mission considered that the Iraqis were to be congratulated for this poll that took place in a relative calm,

despite the atmosphere of violence. "*Despite these conditions, the Iraqi people voted in number that would honour democracies in calmer parts of the world*" the report observes.

The parties on the Iraqi political scene are preparing for delicate negotiations on the composition of a government of national union. Iraqi secular and Sunni organisations have agreed to form a united front in their future discussions with the Kurdish and Shiite parties on the formation of a new coalition government. The Iraqi Concord Front, the country's principal Sunni Arab organisation, and the National Iraqi List, led by former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, a secular Shiite, have decided to join forces with the Unified Iraqi Front, led by the Sunni Arab Salih Mutlak. "*By negotiating together, they will increase their chances*", declared Abdul Hadi Zubeidi, a member of the Concord Front. "*They have the same ideas, such as the formation of a government of technocrats, opposition to federalism in the South and Centre and they agree that the Ministry of the Interior should not be controlled by people linked to political parties*". By joining forces, the Sunni Arab and secular forces will have a total of 80 seats in Parliament, making them the second largest political block in the Assembly.

During a visit to Baghdad on 7 January, the British Foreign Minister, Jack Straw, brought

London's support for a broadened government in Iraq that would unite all the country's communities. "It is not enough for political leaders to say, as is the case today, that there must be a government of national unity — the manner in which it must work has to be ensured", declared Mr. Straw, in the middle of his discussions with Iraqi leaders. Mr. Straw had arrived in Basra, (Southern Iraq) where his country has 8,000 men stationed, the day before. He met the Iraqi Prime Minister, Ibrahim Jaafari (a Shiite) and the President of Iraq, Jalal Talabani (a Kurd).

The composition of the new Parliament is as follows:

United Iraqi Alliance (Shiite): 128 seats. Formed prior to the January 2005 interim election with the blessings of the most influential Shiite Imam, the great Ayatollah Ali Sistani, it is by far the largest political force. The list includes 18 Shiite groups, but is effectively dominated by three organisations: present Prime Minister Jaafari's Islamic Dawa party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI — pro-Iranian) led by Abdel Aziz Hakim and the nationalist Sadr movement, loyal to the radical Imam, Moqtada Sadr.

The Kurdistan Coalition: 53 seats. This secular coalition unites the two main Kurdish parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), led by the present President of Iraq, Jalal

Talabani, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) led by Masoud Barzani, President of Iraqi Kurdistan, as well as a dozen small Kurdistan political organisations, including four Christian parties and the Communist and the Socialist parties — with the notable exception of the Islamic Union of Kurdistan.

The Iraq Concord Front: 44 seats. The principal Sunni Arab political block, it unites three political groups, the Iraqi Islamic Party, the main Sunni Arab organisation, led by Adnan Sulaimi and Tariq al-Hashemi; the Iraqi National Dialogue and the General Conference for the Iraqi People.

The Iraqi National List: 25 Seats. This list, led by the first post-war Prime Minister, Iyad Allawi, a secular Shiite, includes 15 parties of varied views and religious affiliations, including the Iraqi Communist Party, the Sunni public figure Adnan al-Pashashi (who was Iraqi Foreign Minister before Saddam Hussein came to power) as well as tribal Sheikhs and liberal Shiite Imams.

The Iraqi Front for National Dialogue: 11 seats. This list is led by a controversial public figure, the Sunni Arab Salih al-Mutlak, and includes Baathists and former Sunni Arab nationalists opposed to the government. Salih al-Mutlak, a rich businessman, is a secular Moslem, has links with Baathists close to the insurrectionary forces. He has promised

to repeal the "De-Baathification" laws and reintegrate the former regime's army officers.

Other organisations represented in Parliament are the Kurdistan Islamic Union, 5 seats (157,688 votes) and the Liberation and Reconciliation Block, 3 seats. The Risaliyun, a Shiite islamist list former by some followers of

Moqtada al-Sadr has two seats. The Umma (Community) Party of the Sunni leader Mithal al-Alussi, the Turkomen Front (87,993 votes as against 93,000 in January), the Yezidi Reform Movement and the Rafidain List (representing a fraction of the Assyro-Chaldean population) each won one seat.

IRAQI KURDISTAN: NECHIRVAN BARZANI GIVEN THE TASK OF FORMING A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION, WHILE JALAL TALABANI IS DESIGNATED KURDISH CANDIDATE AS PRESIDENT OF IRAQ

ON 21 January, Jalal Talabani, President of Iraq and leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, and Massud Barzani, President of Iraqi Kurdistan and of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, signed an agreement preparing for the setting up of a single administration in Iraqi Kurdistan. The agreement was initialled during an extraordinary session of the Kurdistan Parliament at Irbil by Messrs Talabani and Barzani.

On 7 January the two major Kurdish parties announced that they were putting the finishing touches to this agreement that will end the presence of two administrations in Kurdistan which, on 30 January 2005, had elected a single, 111-member Kurdish Parliament in for a four-year period. The agreement, however, does not plan for the fusion of the PUK and KDP departments of the Interior, of Finance, of Justice or of the

Peshmergas (armed forces). The Kurdish parliament charged Neshirvan Barzani to form a government of national union, and the two major parties have also decided to propose Jalal Talabani, the present interim Head of State, as President of the Iraqi Federal Republic. *"It is an important achievement, which will protect Kurdistan that has become a solid base for democracy, unity and national agreement"*, stressed Mr. Talabani in a speech made during the sitting. Mr. Barzani stated, for his part, that the emergence of a single administration in the region will "help in the recovery of other parts of Kurdistan", a reference to the city of Kirkuk and other regions inhabited by a Kurdish population. Several diplomats attended the session, including the US Ambassador in Baghdad, Zalmay Khalilzad.

Furthermore, on 21 January, AbdelAziz al-Hakim, head of the Supreme Council of the

Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) came out in support of a federal Iraq, at the risk of tension with the Sunni Arab parties, that want a strong central government and fear that their region be deprived of the oil wealth, concentrated in the North and South of the country. In an address on the occasion of Eid al-Adha, Mr. al-Hakim cited the red lines that should not be crossed in concluding alliances to form the next government. In particular, he stressed *"the necessity of not messing with certain articles of the Constitution"*. *"The question of the formation of autonomous regions cannot be the subject of any horse trading"*, he added.

The Constitution, adopted by referendum on 15 October, recognised the federal character of Iraq. Mr. Hakim's party, at first reserved, has come round to it, and at present is supporting the idea of an autonomous region in the Centre and South of the Country. The Sunni Arabs, who inhabit areas without any oil, are fiercely opposed to federalism, even though they do not challenge the autonomous status of Iraqi Kurdistan. While the Constitution was being drafted, they secured the possibility of amending the document, with the ulterior motive of blocking the creation of autonomous regions in other parts of the country. Indeed, one of their leaders, Adnan al-Dulaimi, head of the National Concord list at the December elections, recalled this: *"There is an article in the*

Constitution on its amendment and we are determined to change any article that carries the danger of leading to the partition of Iraq", he declared. *"We agree to giving more powers to the provinces to strengthen the decentralisation, but the creation of autonomous regions in Baghdad, in the Centre and the South threaten the country's unity"*, he added, going on to say *"We reject this and will defend the unity of Iraq"*.

In his good wishes for the Eid, televised on 11 January, Mr. al-Hakim hoped that the successful outcome of the discussions to

form a government *"with the participation of all Iraqis, in the next few weeks"*. He saw, in the 70% turnout for the elections, a *"sign of the unity of the Iraqis who have made the choice of the political process and not of that of the loyalists of the old regime and of the takfiris"*, the extremist groups. Mr. al-Hakim stated that it was up to his list, the United Iraqi Alliance, to appoint the next Prime Minister, in conformity with the Constitution and because of *"the victory it won at the elections"*.

THE NEW REFORM OF THE TURKISH PENAL CODE ALLOWS BOTH THE LEGAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST ORHAN PAMUK AND THE FREEING OF MEHMET ALI AGCA

ON 23 January, an Istanbul Court dropped the charges against the Turkish writer, Orhan Pamuk, prosecuted for having evoked the Armenian genocide in an interview with a Swiss paper in February 2005. This decision ends a trial that was extremely dangerous for Ankara, at a time when Turkey is knocking on the door of the European Union. The writer, winner of several literary prizes in Europe, including France's foreign writers *Prix Médicis* for his novel *"Snow"*, was facing three years imprisonment for his remarks to the weekly supplement of the daily *Tages-Anzeiger*, *Das Magazin*, in which he had stated, in particular, *"Thirty thousand Kurds and a mil-*

lion Armenians have been killed on these lands (in Turkey) and no one dares to speak about it except me".

As from the opening of the trial, on 16 December last, the hearing was adjourned to 7 February. This delay was to allow time for a ruling on whether Article 301 of the new Penal Code punishing attacks on and insults to the Turkish Republic could be retroactively be applied to the writer. *"The Court has dropped the charges. This case should never have taken place"*, stated Orhan Pamuk's lawyer, Haluk Inanici. The day before, the Turkish Minister of Justice, Cemik Cicek, had chosen to let the Court, before which the writer was appearing, decide whether or not to press the charges against him. According

to a senior official of the Ministry of Justice, Cemal Cicek considered that it was not up to the government to interpret Article 301 of the new Penal Code it had adopted last June. The nationalist lawyers, who had initiated the charges, promised to appeal. *"This is a scandal", reacted Kemal Kerincsiz, a member of the Union of Turkish lawyers. "Orhan Pamuk must be punished for having insulted Turkey ... It's a serious crime and must not remain unpunished".*

With Orhan Pamuk's trial, it was Turkey itself that risked being put on trial. *"The hardest thing to understand is why a country, officially committed to joining the European Union, should want to imprison an author whose books are well known in Europe",* the writer summed up last December. Amongst his best-known translated works are *"My name is Red"*, *"Istanbul"* and *"Snow"*. Indeed, the case has strengthened the opponents of Turkey's membership of the E.U. *"The trial of a writer who has expressed a non-violent opinion throws a shadow over the negotiations for Turkey's membership of the European Union"* remarked the European Commissioner for Enlargement, Olli Rehn. Dropping the charges, he remarked, is *"good news for freedom of expression in Turkey"*. *"However, Orhan Pamuk is not the only person charged for expressing non-violent opinions in Turkey. His is just the most visible case. Other journalist, writers and academics are the targets of similar proceedings. I*

hope that the decision on Mr. Pamuk forecasts other positive outcomes for their cases, so that freedom of expression may be fully observed for all Turkish citizens", the Commissioner stressed. Ankara must, at present, *"fill in the legal gaps"* in its new Penal Code that are liable to be used to attack freedom, he stressed. The Turkish Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gul, recently recognised that the proceedings against Orhan Pamuk have tarnished the country's image and has declared, for the first time, that the laws limiting freedom of expression could be modified.

Orhan Pamuk's books deal with the country's memory and identity, torn between Western and Oriental influences, conservative and modernist, Islamic and secular. The writer has frequently raised his voice about the treatment of Kurds and criticised the lack of democracy and Turkey's *"unbridled nationalism"*. In 1998 he refused the status of official artist.

At the same time, another disturbing event — the release and then re-imprisonment of Mehmet Ali Agca, the Turkish nationalist who had tried to kill Pope John-Paul II in 1981 — has shaken Turkey. He was re-imprisoned in Istanbul on 20 January, after a brief period of freedom and is due to be finally freed in 2010. Mehmet Ali Agca returned to the Kartal Prison he had left 8 days earlier by virtue of the laws on parole and reduction of sentence and an old

amnesty. In fact, the Court of Appeals quashed the decision to release him. The Court considered that the sentence served in Italy could not be deducted from the sentence he was serving in Turkey for completely different crimes, and that consequently his release had *"no legal basis"*. He had passed twenty-five years behind the bars, nineteen of which were in Italy after seriously wounding Pope John-Paul II on 13 May 1881 in St. Peter's Square, in Rome, when he was 23 years of age. The reasons for his act and the identity of his possible paymasters remain a mystery. To the labyrinth of the Turkish Penal Code was added a crude calculating error in the findings of the Judge, who released him on the basis of his years in jail in Italy — given as 20 when in fact he had only served 19 years and one month. In 2000, this ultranationalist activist was extradited to Turkey, where he was incarcerated to serve out his sentences for the assassination, in 1979, of the famous liberal Turkish journalist Abdi İpekçi (**Editor's note:** Editor in Chief of the daily *Milliyet* and one of the country's most influential left-wing journalists) as well as for two bank robberies in the 70s. The early release of Agca was made possible by an amnesty, dated 2002, and by the system of reduction of sentences. However, this decision was vehemently challenged. The Turkish media have published, since his release, letters

he wrote from prison in which the man, described by the press as a "national killer", offered his services to kill Ussama ben Laden or claimed to have refused an offer by the Vatican to become a cardinal. Mehmet Ali Agca's return to prison was applauded by the press the next day. *"This result was won by society, whose reaction was encouraged in a healthy manner by the Turkish media"*, stated a jurist Turgut Kazan. *"The murderer was not able to escape"*, *"March, march all the way to jail"*, wrote the dailies *Radikal* and *Hurriyet*, welcoming his arrest. *"Back home"* rejoiced the daily *Milliyet*, considering that *"a historic mistake has been corrected"*.

The ultra-nationalist circles, on the other hand, have multiplied tributes to him. *"He was born in Malatya, he wounded the Pope! Bravo Mehmet Ali Agca!"* shouted the supporters of the First Division Malatya football team during a match on 14 January. According to CNN-Turk, ultra-nationalist activists have taken it in turns to keep watch at the grave of his mentor, Abdullah Catli, in the event that Agca should come to pay tribute. Abdullah Catli died in 1996 in a motorcar accident that remains famous because a Member of Parliament and a Police Chief were fellow passengers in the car. This event publicly revealed the collusion existing between certain political circles, the police and the mafia. As soon as Agca came out of jail, sympathisers threw flowers on

his car. One ultra-nationalist group, claiming to be part of the Grey Wolves, a movement particularly active in the 70s in carrying out a large number of assassinations of left-wing activists, came to cheer him at the Army recruiting office to which he had later gone to enrol. The more liberal circles in Turkey fear that he might become a sort of idol of the extreme right, at a time when the country was negotiating its way into the European Union — already generally critical of Turkey's record in matters of Human Rights. Ironically, his release was partly linked to the reform of the Penal Code carried out at the request of the E.U. Apart from sporadic movements of sympathy here and there, a former Minister of Jus-

tice, Hikmet Sami Turk, suggested a connection between his release and the activity, within the State apparatus, of ultra-nationalist elements, regardless of the party in office, — a phenomenon generally summed up by the term *"the deep State"*. *"Unfortunately, this is a possibility that cannot be lightly set aside"*, he stated, linking this release with Agca's escape from prison in 1979, dressed in a Army uniform and with the collusion of ultra-nationalist elements. The liberal daily, *Radikal* recalled, indignantly, the number of killers, members of ultra-nationalist movements, who have been released, including a dozen notorious mafia chiefs, sentenced to death for multiple assassinations and then freed.

IRAQ: A DARK BALANCE SHEET FOR 2005: 4,020 CIVILIANS KILLED IN BOMB ATTACKS



ACCORDING to official Iraqi figures, 5,713 Iraqis, of whom 4,020 were civilians and 1,693 members of the security forces, died in the country through acts of violence in 2005. This means an average of 15 Iraqis killed every day from hundreds of attacks with car bombs, suicide bombers, and other armed assaults. The number of injured was 8,378, of whom 6,065 were civilians. These figures do not include the terrorists killed, who amounted to 1,702. The security forces

also carried out 9,264 arrests in their ranks.

The year 2006 has also begun with a flare-up of violence. On 5 January Iraq had one of its bloodiest days since the March 2003 intervention, even as its leaders were trying to form a government of national union. No less than 103 people, including nine Americans, died in bomb and other attacks, including two suicide bombs, which aroused the anger of the Shiite leaders. The country hadn't suffered as many deaths in a single

day since September 2005, when 150 were killed. Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari considered that this violence was a response by the terrorists to the advances of the political process. In the Shiite holy city of Kerbala, a kamikaze blew himself up barely thirty metres from the entrance to the tomb of Imam Hussein, one of the most revered of Shiite holy places. The explosion killed 63 people and injured 120 others. The kamikaze is said to have used 8 kilos of high explosives and several grenades. In the same morning, at Ramadi, 115 Km West of Baghdad, a kamikaze aimed at the queue of about a thousand recruits to the Iraqi police. At least 56 were killed and 60 others injured. A landmine also exploded as a US convoy to Kerbala was passing, killing five American troops. The day before, at least fifty-three people were killed, 34 of them by a kamikaze, who exploded his bombs during a Shiite funeral at Muqdadiyah, in Diyala Province, about 90 Km North of Baghdad.

The number of attacks on American troops and those of their allies in Iraq increased by 29% in 2005 compared with the year before, according to the 23 January issue of *USA Today*, quoting US Army figures. The insurgents made 34,131 attacks last year as against 24,496 in 2004. Despite this increase in the number of attacks, the US forces claim that they are more efficient in protection against terrorists. In 2005, 673 US soldiers were killed as against 714

in 2004. The number of wounded dropped by 26% over the same period. Also over the same period, the insurgents have extended their attacks to the Iraqi forces engaged in the fighting, the report points out. According to US Army sources, the number of trained and equipped Iraqi soldiers has increased to 227,000 and the Iraqi security forces are thus more often the targets for rebel attacks. The number of car bomb attacks has more than doubled in Iraq, going from 420 in 2004 to 873 in 2005. Bombs placed by the roadside continue to be the weapons most frequently used by the terrorists and attacks of this kind have risen from 5,607 in 2004 to 10,953 in 2005.

Moreover, on 29 January, a series of coordinated attacks hit seven churches in Baghdad and Kirkuk, killing three people and injuring 17 others. Five churches were targeted in the capital, causing 6 injured. The attacks in Kirkuk caused 3 deaths and 11 injured. Places of worship, Christian as well as Moslem, are regularly targeted in Iraq. Last August a series of attacks on Churches had caused 11 deaths. Car bombs exploded at 20 minutes interval in Baghdad and Kirkuk. Colonel Birhan Taha stated that three civilians had perished in the attack on the Church of the Virgin in Kirkuk at 4.30 pm. Quarter of an hour later, another car bomb exploded outside an Orthodox Church injuring five civilians. In Bagh-

dad, a car bomb blew up at 16.10 in front of the Catholic Church of Peter and Paul in Sina'a suburb, injuring two people, according to Major Qussai Ibrahim. Twenty minutes later another vehicle exploded outside an Anglican Church in the Eastern suburb of Nidhal, without making any victims. At about the same time, a fifth vehicle exploded about fifty metres from the Vatican Mission in the capital, without causing any casualties, according to police Major Abbas Mohammed. Christians only form 3% of the Iraqi population.

On the other hand, all cooperation is over between the Sunni Arab nationalists and their former al-Qaida allies since the attack that caused 80 deaths amongst the Iraqi police recruits on 5 January in Ramadi. According to US General Rick Lynch, not only are some nationalists engaged in armed fighting with the terrorists and foreign fighters, but, still more, they are coming to inform the authorities about them. Confirming this information, the international Arabic language daily *Al Hayat* published, on 23 January, a statement from six armed Iraqi groups announcing that they had formed a Front to fight the Iraqi branch of al-Qaida. Called the "*People's Cell*" this alliance condemns "*armed operations that are aimed at innocent people*" and declares "*the end of cooperation with al-Qaida*", whose Iraqi branch is led by the Jordanian Abu Mussab Zarkawi.

Moreover, on 21 January, the Kurdish authorities in Iraq declared that, while carrying out work on road improvements, they had brought to light a mass grave dating from the Saddam Hussein regime period. *"Some bulldozer drivers informed us that they had found the remains of four corpses near Shamshamal, 100 Km South of Suleimaniah, and had decided to stop the work"*, declared the head of the local police, Lieutenant-Colonel Mehdi Mohammed Ali. *"We are guarding the site pending the arrival of specialised teams from the Department of human*

rights ... this locality was used by members of Saddam Hussein's security forces to check on traffic in and out of Kurdistan after 1991", the police officer recalled. *"We believe that Saddam Hussein agents, who manned this post until the fall of the regime, were responsible for many kidnappings and executions"*, he indicated. Many mass graves have been brought to light since 2003 — of Kurds in the North and of Shiites in the South. They are attributed to the repressions carried out against members of these two communities under the old dictatorship.

"the deadlock" between Damascus and Beirut and to efforts of negotiations being made by Mr. Mubarak.

For his part, former Syrian Vice-President Abdel Halim Khaddam made public the discussions taking place between different components of the opposition in Syria to agree on the action to be taken for a peaceful political change *"Discussions took place between representatives of political, ideological, cultural and social trends, in Syria with the aim of achieving a united opposition"*, stated Mr. Khaddam in Arabic on his internet site *Elaph*, later reproduced in the Lebanese daily *An-Nahar*. Mr. Khaddam stated that his *"call for unification of the opposition was addressed to all categories of the Syrian people (...). It is an call to save Syria and to find a positive response"*, he declared. According to him, this *"opposition from outside is working for a change from inside, by peaceful and democratic means"*. *"The time for coups d'état is past"*, he pointed out. He stressed that no action had yet been decided and announced that *"broad consultations on this subject between Syrian leaders"* of the opposition were taking place, stressing that his *"action was solely Syrian, without being directed by any outside strings"*. *"When things will be riper (...)* there will be a general peoples movement in Syria" he added, pointing out that he would then return to his country.

On 5 January, the official Syrian

THE SYRIAN PRESIDENT MAKES SURPRISE VISITS TO SAUDI ARABIA AND EGYPT WHILE HIS FORMER VICE-PRESIDENT ARGUES FOR A CHANGE OF REGIME

ON 8 January, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad carried out some surprise visits to Saudi Arabia and Egypt to secure the support of their leaders at a time when Syria is being accused of the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. These visits coincided with accusations by former Syrian Vice-President Abdul-Halim Khaddam that the boss of Damascus had threatened Mr. Hariri before the bomb attack that had cost him his life — an accusation denied by Bashar al-Assad. The Saudi Foreign Minister, Saud al-Faisal, first went to Damascus, where

he met the Syrian President as well as his Syrian opposite number Faruk al-Shareh. Without giving any details, he made the point that this visit was to prepare an *"important"* visit to Saudi Arabia by Bashar al-Assad. A few hours later, the Syrian Head of State flew to the Daudi port of Jeddah, where he had discussions with King Abdullah. Following these talks, President al-Assad visited Sharm esh-Sheikh, in Egypt, for talks with his Egyptian opposite number Hosni Mubarak in another surprise visit. Suleiman Awad, Egyptian presidential spokesman stated in a communiqué that the one-hour meeting was devoted to

daily, *As-Sawra* announced that all property belonging to Abdel Halim Khaddam and his family had been "impounded" pending the conclusion of an enquiry into his involvement in scandals of corruption. "*The Minister of Finance has decided to impound the property of Abdel Halim Khaddam, of his wife, of his sons and their families as well as his grandsons, pending the conclusions of the enquiry*", wrote the paper. Mr. Khaddam has three sons and one daughter, who own many firms. Mr. Khaddam, hitherto considered one of the pillars of the Syrian regime, maintains, in

his interview, that the Syrian leaders, including President Bashar al-Assad, had uttered threats against former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri before his assassination on 14 February in Beirut. He also stated that the Syrian intelligence could not have assassinated Mr. Hariri without Mr. Assad's approval. Mr. Khaddam, 73 years of age, has been living in Paris for several months past. He had announced his resignation from his offices in the State and the Baath party, on the occasion of the last Congress of the ruling party.

lion dollars a year, the Iranian Ambassador indicated. Iranian investments in Syria, which are continuously increasing, have reached some 750 million dollars. Amongst the Iranian projects in Syria are the building of a cement works, (200 M US\$); ten silos for grains (200 M US\$) as well as projects in the area of fuel and power.

The Iranian President also met, in Damascus, leaders of ten radical Palestinian movements, including the Islamic Jihad and Hamas. The Iranian President reaffirmed that "he strongly supported the struggle of the Palestinian people" in the course of this meeting, in which took part the head of the Islamic Jihad, Abdallah Ramadan Shalah, of Hamas, Khaled Meshaal and of the PFLP-GC Ahmad Jibril. In the course of his visit Mr. Ahmedinjad returned to his old refrain by challenging the European countries to receive all the Jews from Israel and give them a State. "*Give these migrants permission to go to you and you will see that they will no longer live in the occupied (Palestinian) lands*", he challenged in a meeting with Syrian elites. Before leaving, Mr. Ahmedinjad visited the Shi-ite holy places there as well as the famous Omayyad Mosque in Damascus. Syria receives tens of thousands Iranian pilgrims every year.

WHILE VISITING DAMASCUS, THE IRANIAN PRESIDENT SEEKS TO CONSOLIDATE THE SYRIO-IRANIAN TANDEM

IRANIAN President Mahmud Ahmedinjad, elected in June 2005, saved his first bi-lateral visit abroad for Syria, responding to that made by the Syrian head of state, Bashar al-Assad, to Iran last summer. On 20 January he ended his official 2-day visit to Syria, consolidating the old alliance of Teheran and Syria, both being subjected to strong international pressure. This visit to the Syrian President comes while Iran is facing increasing pressure over the

resumption of its nuclear programme, while Syria has focused on it the limelights of the enquiry into the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. The Iranian President indicated that Syria and Iran formed a "*front*" against "*arrogance and domination*". "*Our relations are solid and deeply rooted and our countries have common stands*", insisted the Iranian President for his part, evoking the "excellent results" of his visit. Trade between Syria and Iran have reached 100 mil-

IRANIAN KHUZISTAN (ARABISTAN): TWO BOMBS CAUSE EIGHT DEATHS AND OVER 40 INJURED WHILE THE PRESIDENT WAS DUE FOR A VISIT

ON 24 January, two bombs exploded in the town of Ahvas (South-West Iran) causing at least eight deaths and 46 injured. The bomb attacks were directed at a bank and a Environmental Agency in this capital of the oil producing province of Arabistan (Khuzistan), on the Iraqi borders inhabited mainly by Arabs. The Iranian President, Mahmud Ahmadinjad had planned to visit this city — a visit that was cancelled at the last minute, officially for reasons connected with the weather, as rain had been forecast. Ahmadinjad and the whole of his government was expected in Ahvaz as part of a series of visits to provincial capitals.

The government spokesman indicated, in the evening, that Mr. Ahmadinjad had ordered an enquiry into what he described as a "brutal act", carried out by "international terrorists". An official close to the head of state indicated that the bombs had exploded at the very hour that Mr. Ahmadinjad was due to make a speech. The Manar television network, of the pro-Iranian Lebanese Hizbollah stated that the bombs were aimed at killing the Iranian President. The Teheran correspondent of the network asserts that the head of State had cancelled his

visit following a security alert regarding his safety.

Ahvaz had already experienced bomb attacks in June 2005. On 12 June 2005, three bombs exploded simultaneously near public buildings in that town, causing eight deaths and about twenty injured. On 15 October 2005 two bomb explosions hit a shopping centre in Ahvaz, killing six people and injuring 50 others.

The province of Arabistan, renamed Khuzistan by the Iranians, has long been an apple of discord between Iran and Saddam Hussein's Iraq. It is a major strategic issue as it contains Iran's largest oil fields. Last April, Ahvaz had been the scene of two days of riots after Arab separatists spread the news that Teheran was encouraging the transfer of populations to reduce the proportion of Arabs in the province. Iran unceasingly accuses London of stirring up trouble in Khuzistan, which borders the Southern zone of Iraq, which is controlled by 8,500 British troops.

KURDISTAN IS HIT BY BIRD FLU

AFTER Turkish Kurdistan, Iraqi Kurdistan has in turn, been hit by bird 'flu. Some 500,000 fowl were slaughtered in a wide border area of Iraqi Kurdistan, where a first case of death due to the H5N1 bird 'flu virus was confirmed, indicated Tahsin Namek Kurdish officer of Health for Suleimaniyah, on 31 January. Shanjin Abdelkader, a Kurdish adolescent from the region of Rania, died on 17 January from the H5N1 variety of the 'flu virus. In some sectors, 50% of the stock has been destroyed, in others 30%, according to the Kurdish authorities. Fourteen suspect cases have, moreover, been reported, two of which, (a man and a woman) are strongly sus-

pected of being contaminated by this deadly virus. The woman, Mariam Kader is in hospital in Suleimaniah. On 31 January, the Kurdish authorities received, from Geneva, a delivery of the Tamiflu anti-viral vaccine for treating people contaminated by this bird 'flu, stated a local health service official at Irbil Airport. Dr. Sirwan Nureddin made the point that "30 doses have been sent to Suleimaniah and 20 to Irbil to treat suspect cases".

For his part, the Health Minister, Abdel-Muttaleb Mohammed Ali, announced the despatch to Kurdistan of five mobile hospitals: two each for Suleimaniah and Irbil and one for Dohuk. Technicians and vets have been given the responsibility of

destroying hundreds of thousands of fowl. The area extends from the holiday resort of Dukan, 60 km from Suleimaniah to Rania, near the Iranian borders, that is about 50 hamlets and inhabited localities are involved. The disinfecting teams spray the cars, the drivers and passengers have to wipe their shoes on a mat impregnated with disinfectant. The teams' head, Abbas Ali, a vet, complains of the slowness of help coming from Baghdad to contain any danger of a pandemic of bird flu. *"We had to buy ten tons of disinfectant ourselves, which cost 200,000 dollars. That is money taken out of the province's budget"*, he stated. The head of the groups fighting against bird 'flu also regretted the lack of Tamiflu, the most effective treatment for bird 'flu, for treating his men, who after all, are in contact with the virus.

Furthermore, the means at their disposal are ludicrous compared with the sophisticated ones of developed countries. Chickens, ducks, nothing escapes. The birds are immediately put in a bag and carried away on a tractor to end up in a specially dug pit. At first the villagers were very unwilling to let their birds go, but after promises of compensation announced by the government, they accepted to do so.

The Iraqi government has committed 26 million dollars to compensate the villagers whose birds are destroyed. The Minister of Agriculture, Ali al-Bahadi,

announced a plan of systematic slaughter of birds in Iraqi Kurdistan to prevent the extension of the disease coming from Turkey. The World Health Organisation (WHO) announced on 31 January that a team would be sent to Iraqi Kurdistan to enquire into the danger of transmission to human beings of the virus that killed a young boy in this country.

The H5N1 virus has been rife in Turkish Kurdistan, where it has made human victims, with a total of 21 people infected, four of whom have died. It appeared at the end of December at Dogubeyazit, near the Iranian border, and has rapidly spread East and West. Parallel to a campaign of information in the media and the distribution of brochures throughout the country, the Turkish authorities have already slaughtered over a million birds. However the Kurdish villagers too often turn a deaf ear to the dangers that their fowl might mean, since they often are their only source of revenue. For her part, the mayoress of Dogubeyazit criticises the government's management of the crisis and attacks the *"prejudices"* against the Kurdish population. *"Neither precautions nor suitable measures are taken here to tackle the bird 'flu"*, stated Mrs. Mukaddes Kubilay, elected in 1999 on the ticket of the pro-Kurdish DEHAP party. *"At Kiziksa, the authorities reacted immediately, at Aralik as well so why not at Dogubeyazit?"*, she

asks. *"There is a refusal to accept us, some prejudices against the inhabitants of our region"*. The mayoress was referring to the village in Western Turkey where the first cases of the H6N1 virus were detected in geese, and to a township about 150 Km North of Dogubeyazit, where quarantine measures and the slaughter of birds were undertaken as from the end of December. According to veterinary sources, the sub-prefecture of Dogubeyazit, which has slightly over 56,000 inhabitants, has at present 12 teams of three people each to collect and slaughter the birds, backed up by the Army to transport them. In here view, the central administration is making the inhabitants of Dogubeyazit pay for their support of the pro-Kurdish party. *"The people in the administration who belong to the party in office say: 'You didn't vote for us, you voted for Dehap — go and ask for help from your Drhap mayor'"*, pointed out Mrs. Kubilay, adding that *"it is the local officials, the police who say this"*. Turkish Kurdistan is not only mountainous and hard of access, it is one of the most disadvantaged regions of Turkey. At Dogubeyazit, there is no industry. The population lives from stock rearing (cattle and sheep), a little agriculture — and smuggling alcohol and cigarettes into neighbouring Iran...

The Turkish Minister of Health, Recep Akdag, who arrived at Dogubeyazit, heavily escorted, on 9 January, was

booed by the inhabitants who attacked the government's inaction. Accompanied by a delegation of WHO experts, Mr. Akdag intended to show the local population that the authorities had not left them to their fate. However, it was to the journalists, and hidden behind a hedge of policemen preventing any access to the inhabitants, that he repeated his assurances about building a new hospital (**Editor's note:** there are only four doctors at Dogubeyazit hospital) and his advice on how to avoid the illness. First interrupted by a local journalist who exclaimed "It is not the bird 'flu that is hitting Dogubeyazit — it is poverty, unemployment and despair", the Ministers speech ended with his running as fast as he could to the bus that brought the delegation, to the boos of about forty inhabitants. "*We want doctors*", shouted the demonstrators as the convoy left at top speed. His visit, to a snow-covered hill on the outskirts of the town, was made under the protection of armoured cars positioned all along the route and soldiers armed with submachine guns on the heights overlooking the dilapidated houses.

The authorities are facing a great deal of criticism, which accuses them of dragging their feet: the first alarms about bird flu in Turkish Kurdistan go back almost two months. The Turkish Veterinary Union accused the government of

showing "lassitude", after having contained the first outbreak of bird 'flu in the North West in October. In Dogubeyazit fowl are still seen free in the streets and people are catching them

with their bare hands to slaughter them. Poor children in Batman kill chickens for one Turkish Lira (\$ 0.75) each without wearing any gloves.

A NEW JUDGE FOR SADDAM HUSSEIN'S TRIAL

THE new Kurdish judge, Rauf Rashid Abdel-Rahman, showed firmness when he presided, for the first time, the hearing of the Iraqi High Criminal Court that is trying Saddam Hussein and seven of his lieutenants for the massacre of 148 Shiites in 1982. This judge replaced his predecessor, Rizgar Amin, also a Kurd, who had resigned after being criticised for his alleged laxity towards the fallen president. From the outset the new Judge showed his will to establish his authority by dealing ruthlessly with Saddam Hussein's half-brother, Barzan al-Tikriti, who started to speak without asking leave and continued to make a speech after he had been told to be silent by the Judge. The latter then decided to expel the accused from the courtroom by force. "*Remove him from Court*" he ordered the ushers who, thereon, removed him under the dumbfounded eyes of the other accused.

In the course of the previous seven hearings, Barzan al-Takriti had repeatedly spoken and, even if regularly called to

order, had never been expelled by Judge Rizgar Amin. The new Judge then issued a warning to the other accused. "*Understand that you have the right to speak. But political speeches are out of place in this building. I ask you to observe the proper procedure. Any speech that is made out of this context will be deleted from the court's minutes*" he declared. "*Whosoever wants to make political speeches can do so elsewhere, because we will not allow any political speech or breach of regulations*" he thundered, as if to mark his difference from Judge Amin, who political leaders and the Iraqi press had accused of allowing the accused to speak and transform the Court into a "*political platform*". "*Any accused*", he continued, "*who oversteps these limitations or who attacks the authority of the court or one of its members will be expelled and his trial will continue in accordance with the law*" as if he were present. When Saddam Hussein asked to leave the courtroom he replied "*Go then*" and ordered the ushers to escort him out of the court, ordering them "*Take him out*". Despite this, the fallen president launched into a long diatribe on

his status as former master of Iraq and as a connoisseur of law. Unimpressed by this monologue the Judge sought to put Saddam Hussein in his place. *"I am the Judge and you are the accused and you must obey me, You have disturbed the hearing and I am here to carry out the law"*, he pointed out.

After Saddam Hussein's departure, followed by that of two other of the accused, Taha Yassin Ramadan, former Vice-President and Awad al-Bandar, a Judge on the Saddam Hussein's Special Revolutionary Court, Judge Rauf Rashid Abdel-Rahman wanted to give proof of his authority before the remaining four accused in the Courtroom. *"Measures will be taken against any who overstep the limits of courtesy and politeness inside this court ... (the presidency) of the court has expelled those who have overstepped these limits, by virtue of Article 58 of the procedural code that provides for measures to be taken against those who fail to observe the Courts regulations"*. Judge Abdel-Rahman's strong manner contrasts with the calm and serene manner of his predecessor, Rizgar Amin.

One of Saddam Hussein's lawyers, Saleh al-Armuti, stated on 31 January that the defence would not attend the next hearing, planned for 1st February, and that it *"would only return if the Judge was fired. The Court was behaved aggressively towards our clients and the lawyers"* he declared. Mr Armuti added that, in addition to the firing of the

Judge, the defence lawyers have presented a written demand for the Court to be transferred to Jordan or to Qatar, which the Judge rejected. On 17 January, Iraqi President, Jalal Talabani, proposed that the trial be transferred either to Baghdad or to Kurdistan so as better to ensure its safety. *"If there are any Judges here who feel that they might be in danger in the future, we are ready to take them to Kurdistan, where they will be safe and well protected"*, stated Mr. Talabani.

Rauf Rashid Abel-Rahman is 65 years old and born in the martyred Kurdish town of Halabja, bombed with chemical weapons by the deposed president in 1988, has a record of political and human rights activity. He entered Baghdad law school in 1959, a year after the overthrow of the monarchy and was arrested in 1963 for membership of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, then led by Mollah Mustafa Barzani, the father of Kurdish nationalism. He spent eleven months in jail but maws authorised to sit his law exams while in prison. Judge Rauf Abdel-Rahman still bears the marks of the torture undergone at this time, since according to those close to him he still has difficulty walking. Sentenced to life imprisonment for *"rebellion"* in 1965, he was pardoned two years later, then against sentenced under the same charge in 1973 and pardoned in 1975, the year of the Algiers agreement between the Shah of Iran and the strong man of Baghdad,

then officially only Vice-President. After 1975 Rauf Rashid Abel-Rahman settled in Baghdad, where he practiced law before moving to Suleimaniah in 1983, where he was elected, a year later, an executive member of the lawyers union. In 1991, the year during which Kurdistan escaped from the Baghdad regime's control when its troops were driven out of Kuwait in disorder, he took part in the creation of a local Human Rights Association. He was also active in Kurdish Lawyers Association and of an NGO involved in the reconstruction of Halabja, as well as taking part in commissions given the responsibility, by the Kurdistan Democratic Party, of setting up a legal system for the two provinces of Irbil and Dohuk. Rauf Rashid Abdel-Rahman also continued his legal career in Kurdistan, first as judge in the Irbil county court, then as President of the city's Assizes. Prior to being asked to sit on the Iraqi High Criminal Court, he was Vice-President of the Irbil Court of Appeals. A leading figure in Kurdish legal circles, he has translated legal terms from Arabic to Kurdish and supervised, as a judge, a number of elections, particularly those of the students' unions in Kurdistan and the municipal elections held in 2002.

Furthermore, the Dutch national Public Prosecutors Office has appealed against the verdict in the trial of the Dutch businessman Frans van Anraat, sentenced to 15 years imprison-

ment at The Hague for complicity in war crimes in Iraq, according to Dutch sources. In its ruling, the court had indicated that, while genocide did take place against the Kurdish population in Iraq, and that it found van Anraat guilty of having supplied the Saddam Hussein regime with chemicals used during the gas attacks on the population during the 80s, Frans van Anraat was nevertheless acquitted of complicity in genocide. It is on this last point

that the Prosecution want a ruling from "a higher legal authority" — in fact the Court of Appeals, according to a brief communiqué by the Public Prosecutor's office dated 6 January. Van Anraat was sued before The Hague Court following a ruling by the Dutch Supreme Court giving Dutch courts universal jurisdiction to try persons suspected of war crimes and genocide if they were resident in the country.

during which several million dollars evaporated. The report estimates that the Provisional Authority had, amongst other things, grossly underestimated the bad condition of the country's infrastructures. The audit drawn up by the services of the Inspector General on Reconstruction in Iraq considers that the CPA for the South-Central provinces (Anbar, Babil, Kerbala, Najaf, Qadissiyah and Wasit Provinces) "*did not manage correctly*" over 2,000 reconstruction contracts representing a total of \$88.1 million. The enquiry thus noted that in a number of cases there was no checking on whether projects, that had been paid for in advance, had really been carried out, that the staff had not reported lost money, that there was often no written trace of any follow up of projects financed etc. "*Indications of potential fraud*" were also found and "*enquiries are still going on*" added the audit. Already in 2005 Stuart Bowen had published several reports calling to question the management and supervision of reconstruction contracts in Iraq by the Provisional Authority, directed, at the time by US Administrator Paul Bremer. The report. That has just been published, supplies new information on this bad management. In particular it advises US Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad "*to secure the reimbursement of \$571,823 unduly paid on 11 contracts*". The US government is said to have no

THE FUNDS INTENDED FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF IRAQ ARE RE-ALLOCATED BECAUSE OF THE REIGNING INSECURITY

ACCORDING to a report of the US government audit, several billions of dollars, destined to improving the Iraqi water purifying, sewage and electrical systems in Iraq have been reallocated to maintaining security. Since 30 September last, nearly a third of the 18.4 billion dollars (15 billion euros) that the US Congress had released in 2003 for the reconstruction of Iraq (in fact 5.6 billion dollars) have been redirected to security priorities. In consequence a number of projects for repairing reservoirs, water purifying works and the building of sewers, all essential to improve the sanitary conditions in several Iraqi towns, will never see the light of day.

Only 49 of the 136 projects for the rehabilitation of the water

drainage systems will be completed and 300 of the 425 projects initially planned for electrical infrastructures, according to the report by Stuart Bowen, Inspector General for the reconstruction of Iraq. "*About 60% of the projects regarding water resources and sanitary installations have not been fully carried out*", the report indicates. In the case of the electricity network, production capacity has increased by 2,109 megawatts instead of the 3,400 initially planned. Budgets covering water supply installations have been halved — down to \$2.1 billion from the \$4.3 billion and those covering electricity cut by a quarter from \$5.5 billion to \$4.3 billion.

This report follows an enquiry into the reconstruction activity of the former Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Iraq,

intention of asking Congress for supplementary aid for Iraq when it presents its 2007 budget in February.

Furthermore, on 22 January, Assem Jihad, the Ministry of oil spokesman in Baghdad stated that Iraq will settle its arrears of payment to Turkish companies that have stopped their deliveries of oil products. *"Iraq will settle its arrears to Turkish and multinational firms and paid them \$250 million two days ago"* stated Assem Jihad. *"Production from Iraqi oil refineries has increased from 10 million litres of oil products a day to 14 million litres per day, and we hope to reach 18 million in the next few months"*, specified Mr. Jihad. *"If we reach this level of production the import needs will diminish as well as the bill, which at the moment is \$6 billion"*, pointed out the spokesman. The Turkish companies, active in the business of exporting oil products to Iraq decided, on 21 January, to stop deliveries because of Baghdad's substantial arrears of payment. In particular, the 34 Turkish companies active in the export of petrol to Iraq decided no longer to load their tankers, pending the reimbursement of a debt of over one billion dollars (824 million euros) according to the same source.

Iraq is having great difficulty in reaching its pre-war oil production level. In 2005, exports of crude had fallen by 4.7% compared with 2004, giving a total of 508 million barrels, or 1.41 million a day. Before the war

Iraq exported 2.2 million barrels a day and the government has set itself the target of reaching between 1.6 and 1.7 million barrels a day. Because of persistent acts of sabotage against the Kirkuk oil installations, the bulk of the exports are from the country's Southern terminals. Over the year, 496 million barrels were exported from the South as against 19 from the North. On 18 December the Iraqi government raised the prices of diesel fuel and kerosene in particular, multiplying them by a factor of five and even seven. A decision aimed at fighting against their resale on the black market abroad. The price of petrol has long been subsidised by the state and remains relatively low compared to the rest of the world. The government has denied rumours of a fresh increase in price.

Moreover, Iraq needs at least \$8 billion to reconstruct its health system, badly damaged by successive wars and the embargo in the recent past. *"In the course of the next four years we will need \$8 billion solely to rebuild our health system. Moreover this does not include the running costs"*, estimated Ammar al-Saffar, Deputy Minister of Health, in a statement on 11 January. The state of Iraqi finances don't allow such and investment, the Minister warned. *"We are sending out an appeal for help to the international community"*, he added. The United States has already been urgently asked for help. In 2004 it had promised to devote

\$786 million to building hospitals and purchasing equipment and medicines, but 25% of this budget was devoted to protecting the construction sites and the firms working on them. Washington had committed itself to building and equipping 150 health centres by mid-2006 but the number has been reduced to 142 and their completion date delayed to the end of the year — at best. The United States had also promised to renovate 19 Iraqi hospitals, but this has only been done to one, in the Shiite holy city of Najaf. Moreover it is again being repaired after having been the target of a bomb attack, according to a US official. As for the \$75 million earmarked for equipping Iraqi hospitals (beds, mattresses, sterilisation equipment, fans scanners etc.) they are due to be paid by April.

On 10 January, George W. Bush, faced with the exorbitant cost of reconstruction in Iraq, called on the international community to cancel the debts contracted by Baghdad and keep its promises to help in the reconstruction. After the United States, Slovakia and Malta, which have announced the cancellation of Iraqi debts, *"more countries must do the same so that the Iraqi people be not weighed down by the crushing load"* of the debts accumulated by Saddam Hussein, he declared in a speech in Washington before a Veterans association. He also appealed for *"all the governments that have promised help to put their promises into prac-*

tice as quickly as possible so that the Iraqis can reconstruct their country". "To date the members of the international community have promised \$13 billion of aid to Iraq, but many have shown themselves slow at holding to their commit-

ments", he pointed out. He called on "the many nations that have not yet release Iraqi assets frozen under the Saddam Hussein regime" to restore them to their "rightful owners".

AS WELL AS ...

• ABDULLAH OCALAN, CONFINED TO HIS CELL, DEMANDS TO BE RETRIED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE RULING BY THE EUROPEAN HUMAN RIGHTS COURT.

On 31 January, one of the lawyers representing Abdullah Ocalan, boss of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) declared that his client was demanding to be retried, in accordance with the ruling to this effect of the European Human Rights Court (ECHR). However, there are legal obstacles to this demand. "Our client has submitted his petition to the prison authorities for them to pass on to the Court his application to be retried", stated the lawyer, Ibrahim Bilmaz.

In 2005, the ECHR recommended to the Turkish authorities that they organise a new trial for A. Ocalan, since they considered that his 1999 trial was "inequitable". Since his trial, at which he was sentenced to death, he has been confined to the island prison of Imrali (North-West Turkey). Turkey

would have to amend a law that allows retrials of prisoners whose trial has been condemned by the ECHR, because it excludes A. Ocalan and about a hundred other people, explained Mr. Bilmaz. "This law is still in force and should be altered", stressed Mr. Bilmaz, recalling the commitments made by the Turkish authorities when the ECHR made public its ruling in Abdullah Ocalan's case. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan had affirmed, at the time, that "Turkish justice will follow the decision" of the ECHR. The sentence of death for "treason and separatism" had been commuted to life imprisonment in 2002 following on the abolition of capital punishment in Turkey — one of the measures adopted by Ankara so as to conform with European standards. A new trial for the PKK chief, who is still regarded as public enemy N°1, would be a headache for the government because of the many criticisms it would have to face domestically, especially from nationalist circles. The man most concerned, for his part, indicated a few

months ago that he refused to be retried in Turkey so long as the impartiality of the judges could not be ensured.

On 17 January, Abdullah Ocalan's lawyers also denounced, in Istanbul, the fact that their client was confined to his cell, a punishment that prevented him, from receiving the slightest visit. During a press conference, Irfan Dunder had pointed out that their client had been "confined to his cell for 20 days". "On 11 January, when they were preparing to visit Mr. Ocalan, members of his family were informed by the military authorities that they would not be able to meet him because he had been confined to his cell", Mr. Dunder had declared, reading a statement co-signed by several pro-Kurdish organisations. Mr. Dunder deplored the "obstacles" raised by the Turkish authorities for the past several months to prevent visits to their client by his lawyers, mentioning a succession of "unrealistic justifications" such as "unfavourable weather conditions" or "the car had broken down".

Furthermore, Selim Sadak and Hatip Dicle, former Members of Parliament of the Party for Democracy (DEP — pro-Kurdish and banned in 1994) were charged on 26 January by the Ankara Public Prosecutor for having made "favourable remarks" about Abdullah Ocalan, and face up to two years jail each. They are charged because of an interview they gave to the Denmark-

based Kurdish television network *RojTV*, which Turkey accuses of having “links with the Kurdish rebels”. The two men are accused, in particular, of having described Ocalan’s imprisonment as “isolation” and of having stated that “*this will never be accepted by the Kurdish people*” of Turkey. Messrs Dicle and Sadak, at present members of the Party for a Democratic Society (DTP — pro-Kurdish) have already spent ten years behind bars, with their comrades Orhan Dogan, and Leyla Zana, for “*separatism*”, until they were released in June 2004 pending a third trial (the two previous being judged “*inequitable*”).

• **THE FIRST VISIT TO SYRIA, OF A DELEGATION FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, IN NEARLY TEN YEARS.** On 22 January, the President of the Syrian State Security Court, emergency special court, received a delegation from the human rights organisation Amnesty International that had been visiting Syria since 17 January, the human rights lawyer Anouar Bounni let it be known. This visit, which ended on 23 January, is the first visit on an Amnesty International delegation since 1997. The two-member delegation was received by officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice, and the Interior. In addition it met many human rights activists and members of civil society. Mr. Bounni described the Amnesty visit as a “*positive step that allowed it to be*

informed about the human rights situation in Syria as well as violations”. In 2004, Syria joined the International Convention against torture, but expressed some reservations about the Committee responsible for checking that member countries were observing it.

The two officers of Amnesty International particularly visited five opponents who had been released on 18 January, amongst whom were two former Members of Parliament, Riad Seif and Maamoun Homsî, whose arrest in 2001 sounded the knell of the “*Damascus Spring*”, a period marked by a certain freedom of expression. “*The members of Parliament, Riad Seif and Maamoun Homsî were freed by decision of the Courts. Three other opponents, Habib Issa, Fawaz Tello and Walid Bounni were also released*” stated Anouar Bounni. These public figures had organised or taken part in the “*political salons*” that emerged in the country between September 2000 and February 2001. Messrs Seif and Homsî were sentenced to five years imprisonment by the Criminal Court for having wanted “*to change the Constitution by illegal means*”. The other three, tried by the State Security Court, received the same sentence for similar charges: attempts to change the constitution by illegal means and to harm the image of the State, incitement to sedition, propagation of untruthful information. Riad Seif stated that these releases had not been the

result of bargains with the authorities. “*We refused any prior conditions ... We even insisted on deleting the usual formula “I have mended my ways” when we signed our application for release ... We have not “mended our ways” because we have never done anything wrong... Four years and seven months after our arrest it has become evident that we were right*”, he stated. The five opponents were released by virtue of a law allowing detainees to be released after serving three quarters of their sentence, he said. Mr. Bounni “*welcomed*” these releases while considering it “*necessary to finally and permanently close this file by releasing all political prisoners and by abolishing the Special Courts*”. He estimated the number of political prisoners at about 1,500.

Both from Damascus and abroad the Syrian opposition regularly issues calls for a profound democratic reforms. The release of political detainees, particularly of the two Members of Parliament, was one on the conditions laid down by the European Union in the signing of the association agreement with Syria — which is still frozen for political reasons. Amongst the people arrested in 2001, the economist, Aref Dalifa, who is serving a ten-year sentence, Kamal Labouani, the founder of a movement that is not authorised in Syria and Habib Saleh, a human rights activist, are still behind bars. The other people arrested in 2001 are a teacher, Hassan

Saadoun, freed after two and a half years in jail, and the communist activist Riad Turk, released in 2002 after over a year in detention.

• **TEHERAN TEMPORARILY SUSPENDS AN ECONOMIC DAILY, BLOCKS THE BBC PERSIAN INTERNET SITE, JAMS THE CNN NETWORK AND CONTINUES TO JAIL JOURNALISTS.** On 2 January, the Iranian economic daily, *Asia Daily*, received an order from the government to suspend publication. "This morning the Ershad Ministry (Islamic Culture and Guidance) told us that the paper was temporarily banned", stated Saghi Baghernia, the paper's owner, making the point that the authorities had not "given any reason". "We did not receive any warning of this radical measure" and no indication of the length of time was given, she added.

This is the first time a daily paper has been subjected to such an order since the election last June of the ultra-conservative President, Mahmud Ahmedinjad. During the two term of his predecessor, the reformist Mahmud Khatami, several publications were closed down on the orders of the authorities and journalists had been jailed by the courts. *Asia Daily* was forced to close down from June 2003 to March 2005 after having published a photo of Maryam Rajavi, the leader of the People's Mujahiddeen organisation, the main armed opposition to the

regime. Now based abroad, this body is considered by Teheran as a terrorist organisation. Mrs Baghernia's husband, Mr. Jamshidi, was jailed for thirteen months during this period.

Furthermore, on 24 January the BBC announced that its Persian language news site had been blocked in Iran, at the order of the Teheran authorities. "Access to BBC Persian.com, the BBC's international news site and the biggest Persian language internet site, is blocked in Iran on the orders of the authorities", specified the BBC in a communiqué. "We are very concerned at this action and regret that it deprives a great number of Iranians of a reliable source of impartial and editorially independent news", stated Nigel Chapman, director of the BBC World Service.

The BBC's *Persian.com* site (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/index.shtml>) registers 30 million hits a month and is used by a third of the seven million internet users in Iran, according to the BBC. The BBC points out that its English language international site is not affected by this blockage. The BBC is the second major international medium hit by a measure of interdiction recently in Iran. The US television network, CNN was briefly banned for having reported the President Mahmud Ahmedinjad as saying that Iran wanted the atom bomb. CNN apologised the next day and the President authorised it to resume its activities.

During a Press Conference on 14 January by the Head of State, the network's simultaneous translation had shown him as saying "the recourse to nuclear weapons is a right for Iran". In fact what he had said was "Iran has the right to nuclear energy". The Atlanta based network corrected its report and apologised the next day. Mohammad Hossein Khoshivaght, responsible for the foreign press at the Ministry had, however, stated that the ban also covered the CNN stringers in Iran and that it was not due to the issue of the translation but CNN's coverage of Iran in general.

Furthermore, the wife of the imprisoned Iranian journalist Akbar Ganji, stated on 2 January that the physical condition of her husband "has deteriorated after 122 days in solitary confinement". "Ganji's illnesses have got worse, with the appearance of digestive problems, and he is receiving no treatment", pointed out Masumeh Shafiee, the day after her third visit to her husband since he came out of hospital, on 3 September.

The best known of Iranian political prisoners, he was sent back to prison after accepting to end a hunger two-month hunger strike. "There has been no improvement in his condition ... he still only weighs 50 kilos", added his wife who was allowed to see her husband for an hour, accompanied by her daughters, her mother and her lawyer. Mrs. Shafiee is worried at the judicial

authorities' silence about the possible early release for Mr. Ganji, which is in any case due to end on 21 March. Arrested in April 2000 when he was working for the daily Sob-e Emrouz, Akbar Ganji was sentenced in 2001 to six years jail after a series of articles implicating several of the regimes dignitaries in the murders of intellectuals and writers that occurred in 1998.

• **JACK STRAW, ON A VISIT TO BOTH PARTS OF CYPRUS, IRRITATES THE GREEK CYPRIOTS BUT HE STATES THAT "THIS DOES NOT MEANS RECOGNITION OF NORTH CYPRUS"**. On Tuesday, Turkey launched a diplomatic offensive, aimed at lifting the trade restrictions on Cyprus in the hope of reviving the peace process on the island, which has been at a standstill since 2004. On 26 January, the British Foreign Minister, Jack Straw, strongly supported the proposals formulated by Turkey on the 24th for settling the Cyprus conflict while Ankara called on the Greek Cypriots to give a positive response to its "plan of action". Following a meeting with his Turkish opposite number, Abdullah Gul, Mr. Straw declared "it is in no one's interest in Cyprus that the island remain divided to the detriment of both communities". Stressing that the ten-point plan proposed by Ankara had been welcomed by UNO and the European Union, the head of the Foreign Office

expressed the hope that the measures would be approved by the other parties concerned. "I hope that this is seen as a constructive initiative, that is not the last word on the question but helps things forward", he remarked.

The "plan of action" presented by Mr. Gul on the eve of Mr. Straw's arrival in Turkey envisages reciprocal lifting of the restrictions on economic exchanges with the island in the hope of facilitating the overall conflict that has divided the island since 1974. It was immediately criticised by the Greek Cypriot government, the island's only internationally recognised one, as well as by Greece, who considered that it contained nothing new. After having met Mr. Straw at Ankara airport, the Turkish Prime Minister called on the Greek Cypriots to consider the Turkish proposals carefully, and to take the necessary steps towards settling the conflict. "We are at ease, because we have always been one step ahead" in the efforts to reunite the island, declared Mr. Erdogan to the press. "We are now waiting for the other side to take a positive step in response to those we have made", he added.

Ankara's plan envisages the opening of Turkish ports and airports to Greek Cypriot ships and planes, as required by the E.U. in exchange for a lightening of the economic sanctions against the so-called "Turkish Republic of North Cyprus", promised by the European block

but not applied. Jack Straw acknowledged, in Istanbul on 25 January, that "The E.U. as well as Turkey has some responsibilities to fulfil", but considered that they were two "separate" problems that did not necessarily have to be settled simultaneously. Although the Turkish plan may "lead to a better atmosphere in Europe", Ankara has, nevertheless, to fulfil its obligations so be able to join the European Union he pointed out. "Turkey, like any other candidate member, is subject to certain obligations ensuing from its application for membership of the E.U." he stated.

Negotiations for Turkey's membership of the E.U. began on 4 October 2005. In an interview on the Turkish news channel CNN-Turk, Mr. Straw deplored the hostility with which the Greek Cypriots reacted to his visit, the day before, to both parts of Cyprus. "If we are to find a solution and if we are going towards a federative solution, with two parties and two regions (...) it is then necessary to be able to meet both parties and discuss with the Turkish Cypriot leaders", Mr. Straw consider. "This does not mean recognition of the TRNC", he insisted. On 25 January, the Cypriot Foreign Minister, George Iacovou, stated to Jack Straw that Nicosia rejected the proposal. "I asked Mr. Straw to transmit our reply to the Turkish Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gul", declared Mr. Iacovou. "Opening up the ports and airports is an obligation that Turkey must fulfil to become a member of the Euro-

pean Union. *This has nothing to do with the Cyprus problem*", affirmed Mr. Iacovou.

The President of the Republic of Cyprus, Tassos Papadopoulos, refused to meet Mr. Staw in protest at his visit to the "President" of the TRNC. Mehmet Ali Talat, perceived as a form of backstairs recognition of a unilaterally proclaimed entity. Cyprus has been divided since 1974 and the invasion of the island by Turkish troops in reaction to an attempted coup d'état by Cyprus Greek nationalist aiming at uniting the island to Greece. In April 2004 the United Nations had proposed a plan for the reunification of Cyprus. In a referendum on it, the plan had been approved by the Turkish Cypriots (against the recommendation of their "President") but was rejected by the Greek Cypriots.

• CREATION OF A UNITED KURDISH FRONT TO DEFEND THE RIGHTS OF KURDS IN IRAN. On 2 January, Bahaeddin Adab, a former Iranian member of Parliament, announced the creation of a United Kurdish Front to defend the rights of Kurds "neglected" by the Islamic Republic. *"A considerable number of prominent Kurdish activists and NGOs have come*

together in an independent front peacefully to demand rights denied to the Kurds" declared its founder, Mr. Adab, to the Press. He insisted that his movement did not have any separatist objectives, unlike, according to him, many Kurdish opposition parties. *"We insist on working within the framework of the law and of avoiding any violence"*, he stressed, explaining that the decision to create the Front had been accelerated by the disturbances between the authorities and the population of two provinces whose population was essentially Kurdish, those of Kurdistan and Western Azerbaijan. "The Kurds have not had any say in decisions that affect them and they are denied those of their rights mentioned in the Constitution" added Mr. Adab, who expressed the hope that the regime would authorise the registration of his movement or at least not oppose its activity. Political parties and NGOs have to be registered if they want to publicise themselves, hold meetings or enrol members. Iranian Human Rights defenders, like the Nobel Prize winner Shirin Ebadi, regularly accuse the Ministry of the Interior of obstructing the registration of such organisations.

Mr. Adab, who was disqualified

from standing at the last elections, in 2004, by the Council of Guardians, deplored the rise in unemployment and the proportion of drug addicts that afflict the Kurdish population and provinces, as well as the restrictions imposed on Kurdish language publications. Several Kurdish activists and journalists have been sentenced to long periods in prison following disturbances, particularly those last August. *"You cannot keep a country united by threats. If there were freedom and equality, separatist movements would die"*, he pointed out.

Over 10 million Kurds, out of a total Iranian population of 68.5 million, live, mainly in the four Northwestern provinces, which are amongst the least developed in the country. The Kurds massively took part in the Presidential elections of 1997 and 2001, which saw the victory of the reformist President, Mahmud Khatami, who had promised recognition of Kurdish cultural rights. According to Mr. Adab, *"the government did not do enough to satisfy Kurdish demands and they showed their dissatisfaction by not taking part in the (recent) elections"* of 2005, which brought the ultra-conservative, Mahmud Ahmedinjad, to power.

Treason trial sought for Assad accuser

The Associated Press

DAMASCUS: Syria's ruling Baath Party stripped former Vice President Abdul-Halim Khaddam of membership and joined Parliament in demanding his trial on a charge of high treason, the official news agency SANA reported Sunday.

The move came two days after Khaddam said in a television interview from Paris that the Syrian president, Bashar Assad, threatened the former Lebanese prime minister, Rafik Hariri, months before Hariri was assassinated in a truck bombing last Feb. 14.

Khaddam told the Al Arabiya satellite channel that Assad warned Hariri in August 2004 that the Syrian leader would "crush whoever attempts to over-

turn our decision" to extend the term of the pro-Syrian president of Lebanon, Emile Lahoud.

While Khaddam said in the interview that he planned to return to Syria with his family to write a book, it was unclear if he would go back facing a treason charge. Conviction would bring the death penalty.

"Khaddam has joined the band of enemies who are targeting the country and its attitudes," the Baath Party statement said.

The French Foreign Ministry confirmed Khaddam had been in France for several months but declined to give any details on his whereabouts or whether he had asked for protection.

Syria's push for the three-year extension of Lahoud's presidency in Septem-

ber 2004, which Hariri opposed, was considered responsible for the crisis in Lebanese-Syrian relations that preceded Hariri's assassination.

Widespread street protests by Lebanese and international pressure forced Assad's government to end a nearly three-decade Syrian troop presence in its neighbor.

A United Nations investigation has since implicated top Syrian security officials in the bombing that killed Hariri and 20 other people in central Beirut. Assad's government has denied being involved.

The decision to strip Khaddam of party membership was announced in a statement issued by the Baath Party's National Leadership, Syria's highest decision-making authority.

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune
January 2, 2006

Le Monde
2 janvier 2006

M. Chalabi nommé ministre du pétrole en Irak

L'ex-protégé du Pentagone, tombé en disgrâce en 2004, sera, jusqu'à la formation du nouveau gouvernement, vice-premier ministre et titulaire par intérim du portefeuille du pétrole

Il lui a fallu moins d'un an pour se refaire une santé politique, et il se retrouve désormais cumulant deux fonctions gouvernementales : Ahmad Chalabi, vice-premier ministre dans le gouvernement irakien depuis février 2005, s'est vu confier, vendredi 30 décembre, les fonctions de ministre du pétrole par intérim, en remplacement du titulaire, Ibrahim Bahr Al-Ouloum, qui a démissionné de ses fonctions.

M. Bahr Al-Ouloum a justifié cette démission par son opposition à l'augmentation des prix du carburant prévue par le gouvernement. M. Chalabi va devoir faire face, pendant trente jours – durée annoncée de son intérim en attendant la formation d'un nouveau gouvernement après les élections législatives du 15 décembre – à une situation difficile, l'augmentation prévue étant très impopulaire. Mais l'intéressé, qui dirige le Congrès national irakien (CNI), en a vu d'autres. Il n'est pas exagéré de dire qu'il revient même de loin.

Ancien protégé du Pentagone – contre les vues du département d'Etat et de la CIA – avant la chute du régime de Saddam Hussein, il était tombé en disgrâce à



Ahmed Chalabi, lors de la campagne pour le scrutin législatif du 15 décembre 2005 dont les résultats sont prévus début janvier.

Washington après avoir été identifié comme le principal pourvoyeur d'informations sur le programme d'armes de destruction massives de l'Irak, dont on n'a pas retrouvé de traces. Début août 2004, il avait par ailleurs fait l'objet d'un mandat d'arrêt irakien pour trafic de fausse monnaie. Il avait en outre été soupçonné par Washington d'avoir transmis des renseignements militaires importants à l'Iran, dont les codes de communication de l'armée américaine.

Fin septembre de la même année, les poursuites pour fraude et contrefaçon avaient été retirées. M. Chalabi entretient de bonnes relations avec l'Iran, où il a été reçu début novembre, avant d'effectuer une visite aux Etats-Unis où, visiblement revenu en grâce, il a été reçu par de hauts responsables, dont le secrétaire à la défense, Donald Rumsfeld.

M. Chalabi ne semble toutefois avoir aucune chance d'accéder aux fonctions de premier ministre auxquelles il espé-

rait se hisser lors de la formation de l'actuel gouvernement, en février. Les deux principaux partis chiites – une communauté à laquelle il appartient et à laquelle est dévolue la fonction de premier ministre –, le parti Al-Daawa et le Conseil suprême de la révolution islamique en Irak (CSRII) sont en effet convenus, vendredi, que le futur chef de gouvernement serait membre de l'une des deux formations. Le choix est désormais limité à deux personnalités : Ibrahim Al-Jaafari, actuel premier ministre et dirigeant d'Al-Daawa et Adel Abdel Mahdi, membre de la direction du CSRII.

Les résultats du scrutin législatif devraient être connus début janvier. Une mission d'observateurs internationaux de réévaluation des résultats doit notamment procéder à l'examen d'échantillons de bulletins de vote prélevés dans des urnes et à la vérification des décomptes des voix. ■

MOUNA NAÏM

Sunni rights and wrongs

Last month the big challenge was to encourage Sunni Arabs to vote in Iraq's parliamentary election. They did, in hearteningly high numbers. Now the challenge is to convince the Sunnis that the results, giving them only a modest minority of seats, reflect not systematic fraud, but the fact that Sunni Arabs make up only a modest minority — roughly 20 percent — of Iraq's population.

Convincing them has been no easy task, despite declarations by United Nations and other neutral observers that the elections were fair, credible and transparent. This page has emphasized the need for Iraq's majority Shiites and their Kurdish allies to be more inclusive in dealing with the Sunni Arab minority. But the other side of that coin is that the Sunnis themselves need to accept that in democracies, majorities rule, and that the special privileges they enjoyed under a succession of Sunni-dominated regimes are not a birthright.

Sunni Arabs have disproportionately dominated Iraq's political elite since even before the modern Iraqi state was created after World War I. The Ottoman Turks favored their fellow Sunnis. The British worked through a Sunni family they installed on the Iraqi throne.

The Baathist dictatorship was Sunni-led and, under Saddam Hus-

sein, mercilessly persecuted Shiites and Kurds. It persecuted many Sunnis as well, but as a group they were favored with more than their share of scarce economic resources. Many Sunnis came to believe, and still believe, that they are not a minority at all and account for as much as half the Iraqi population.

The new political power of the long-oppressed Shiites and Kurds is proving very hard for many of Iraq's Sunni Arabs to accept. But until they can, it will be hard for them to find their legitimate place in a new democratic order.

Only the Iraqis themselves can come together in a new national compact. Their willingness to do so in the near future is likely to depend to a large degree on how deftly America wields its enormous political influence during the next few weeks of political and constitutional bargaining.

Washington needs simultaneously to press the Shiites and Kurds to take a far more inclusive approach toward the Sunnis than they have over the past year and to press the Sunnis to accept the legitimacy of the latest election results. The Sunnis need to bargain more realistically and less menacingly for their fair share of power. They must recognize that they cannot continue to keep one foot in the insurgency and the other

in the political process.

The chances of weaning armed jihadists and diehard Saddam Hussein loyalists from the insurgency any time soon are probably small. But what matters more to Iraq's future stability is whether Sunni Arabs who have taken up arms over local grievances can be brought to recognize that the most effective way to deal with those issues is through peaceful politics, not armed insurgency.

Sunni Arabs have every right to insist that Shiite militias not be allowed to terrorize Sunnis, that Shiite-run police ministries not torture Sunni prisoners and that the Sunni middle class not be excluded from the army, the professions and politics through discriminatory anti-Baathist laws. They are right to demand that oil revenues, Iraq's main source of national wealth, be fairly shared by all provinces, not hoarded by the Shiite- and Kurdish-controlled provinces in which most known deposits are located.

But the Sunnis have no legitimate claim to hold on to the special privileges lavished on them by past undemocratic regimes. And they surely have no right to invoke their loss of political dominance as an excuse for violence against government institutions and Shiite and Kurdish Iraqis.



4 JANVIER 2006

POLITIQUE

Pourquoi l'opposition syrienne est-elle aussi incapable ?

Longtemps réprimée par le pouvoir, coupée de la jeunesse, l'opposition syrienne reste fortement idéologisée et manque de culture démocratique, constate l'opposant syrien Akram Al-Bounni.

La nécessité de réformes démocratiques en Syrie est une évidence que plus personne ne conteste, sauf le régime baasiste de Damas, qui persiste dans son ambiguïté. Alors, pourquoi l'opposition syrienne semble-t-elle incapable de gagner la confiance de la population et de mettre en œuvre un rapport de forces favorable ? Premièrement, elle est profondément marquée par des décennies de mainmise totalitaire. Aussi est-elle faible et hésitante, prisonnière de la peur et pusilla-

nime. Beaucoup d'opposants continuent de se positionner en fonction des réactions supposées du régime, et non des attentes de la société. Ils ne pointent le bout de leur nez qu'aux moments où le régime lâche du lest, pour reculer aussitôt dès qu'un durcissement paraît s'annoncer. Ils dosent savamment leurs critiques parce qu'ils veulent se préserver de la répression féroce et finissent par s'embourber dans leurs propres manœuvres. Certains ont même opté pour un armistice avec le pouvoir en espérant obtenir une part du gâteau.

Deuxièmement, cette opposition est encore imprégnée de la culture du secret et de la clandestinité, au détriment de réflexes démocratiques. De même, on constate la persistance d'un esprit de compé-

tition pathologique sur le "droit légitime" de se déclarer leader unique et propriétaire exclusif de la parole oppositionnelle.

Troisièmement, l'opposition syrienne est un mélange hétérogène aux racines idéologiques et politiques extrêmement diverses. Certes, l'évolution internationale a poussé tout le monde à placer la démocratie en tête de ses préoccupations, mais la plupart des opposants traînent encore leurs doctrines idéologiques respectives, démenties par l'Histoire et incompatibles avec l'esprit démocratique. Et cela même si l'aile du Parti communiste dirigée par l'avocat Riad Turk a changé son nom pour devenir, en 2005, le Parti démocratique du peuple ; même si les Frères musulmans ont adopté des objectifs et méthodes compatibles avec

la démocratie et si la plupart des partis kurdes ont mis la démocratie au-dessus de leurs revendications nationalistes.

Quatrièmement, malgré les étroites marges de manœuvre dont elle a disposé ces dernières années, l'opposition syrienne n'arrive toujours pas à établir un lien avec les différents secteurs de la société, notamment avec la jeunesse, la catégorie qui a pourtant le plus intérêt à ce que les choses changent. Cinquièmement, beaucoup cultivent encore l'illusion d'une souveraineté nationale comme rempart absolu contre "l'Occident et le capitalisme". L'incapacité de l'opposition syrienne à comprendre que le bloc socialiste a disparu et que la révolution des télécommunications et la mondialisation ont fait du monde un village planétaire

l'enferme dans un choix binaire entre le régime baasiste et les Etats-Unis. Et, puisqu'il est difficile de s'inspirer des Américains, hostiles aux causes arabes, nom-

breux sont ceux qui préfèrent implorer le régime d'engager des réformes de sa propre initiative, en proposant une sainte alliance contre l'étranger, dont ils exagèrent à dessein le danger. Voilà

pourquoi l'opposition n'a toujours pas trouvé le moyen de s'adresser aux citoyens et de mobiliser la population. Aussi, le fossé que le régime a creusé entre les citoyens et la politique, et la méfiance vis-

à-vis de l'opposition qu'il a instillée au sein de la population continuent d'agir au détriment d'un changement démocratique.

Akram Al-Bounni,
Al-Hayat (extraits), Londres

IRAK

Le vainqueur des élections législatives ? Téhéran

SHARGH
Téhéran

Dans le grand jeu qui oppose Téhéran à Washington, les résultats des élections législatives irakiennes donnent pour l'instant l'avantage à l'Iran. En effet, la coalition chiite, dont l'ossature se compose de personnalités et de partis bénéficiant de la protection de Téhéran, a réussi à renouveler la victoire qu'elle avait déjà connue en janvier 2005, ce qui forcera encore une fois l'Amérique à solliciter son vieil ennemi iranien pour obtenir des arrangements en Irak. Ces élections ont donc une nouvelle fois prouvé que l'Iran disposait des bonnes cartes pour influencer sur les changements politiques régionaux. En effet, si les partis chiites pro-iraniens et les partis kurdes, également en bons termes avec Téhéran, ont su confirmer leur assise électorale, les partis proaméricains, en revanche – dont ceux regroupés au sein de la coalition d'Iyad Allaoui –, non seulement n'ont pas progressé mais ont même vu se réduire leur base populaire. Quant aux partis liés à la minorité sunnite, qui sont farouchement opposés à la présence américaine en Irak et qui organisent une partie des actions de résistance antiaméricaines, ils ont précisément réussi à remplir électoralement le vide laissé par l'échec de la coalition d'Allaoui. Certes, les Américains n'ont pas caché leur satisfaction de voir les sunnites s'engager dans cette élection, mais cela a débouché sur une configuration dans laquelle l'influence américaine est faible comme jamais.

Compte tenu de cette redistribution des cartes, la république islamique d'Iran est persuadée qu'elle entretiendra, au moins pour les quatre prochaines années, d'excellentes relations avec le futur gouvernement irakien. Ce dernier sera en effet dirigé par une coalition où les partis chiites et kurdes seront omniprésents. Cela permettra à l'Iran d'aplanir les différends qui s'étaient accumulés du temps de Saddam Hussein et d'envisager la perspective d'une paix totale entre les deux pays. Pour que ce scénario soit possible, il faudra toutefois que la majorité chiite irakienne évite de marginaliser les sunnites et les intègre dans le nouveau gouvernement. De même, ce

scénario suppose que la majorité chiite puisse convaincre les sunnites, ainsi que les pays arabes de la région qui se considèrent comme leurs protecteurs, que l'amélioration des relations entre l'Iran et l'Irak ne constitue une menace ni pour les sunnites irakiens ni pour le monde arabe en général, mais que, au contraire, cette réconciliation traduit un rapprochement entre les pôles arabe et perse du monde musulman.

D'autre part, la position relativement confortable de l'Iran vis-à-vis de l'Irak est susceptible de renforcer sa position diplomatique sur le dossier nucléaire, et Téhéran pourrait accélérer le processus qui devra lui permettre de se doter des moyens de ses ambitions nationales. En d'autres termes, la république islamique d'Iran ne peut pas obtenir les résultats souhaités à la table des négociations sur le dossier nucléaire sans utiliser son atout irakien. Elle doit donc pour cela établir un lien direct et fort entre les deux questions.

Alors que le temps joue plutôt en faveur de l'Iran, les Etats-Unis voient au contraire leur situation se compliquer avec chaque jour qui passe. Le problème de l'Amérique se situe

d'avantage chez elle que véritablement en Irak. En effet, si l'on compare les pertes subies par les Américains ces derniers mois à ce qu'ils ont réalisé sur le plan politique, on peut considérer que le bilan devient, après bien des déboires, plutôt positif. Toutefois,

l'attitude de plus en plus négative de l'opinion publique américaine, conjuguée aux pressions du Parti démocrate visant à fixer un calendrier pour le retrait d'Irak des troupes américaines, conduit tout doucement l'administration Bush vers une impasse. Dans ce contexte, les Etats-Unis peuvent bien affirmer qu'ils ont remporté une victoire militaire, ils sont encore dans l'impossibilité de convaincre que celle-ci se traduit par une victoire politique. Dans la mesure où le gouvernement qui va se mettre en place à Bagdad est proche de l'Iran et dès lors que, tôt ou tard, l'administration Bush devra annoncer une date de retrait de ses troupes, les Etats-Unis donnent l'impression d'avoir échoué politiquement.

Les autorités américaines n'ignorent pas que la situation n'a jamais été aussi favorable à une reprise du dialogue avec l'Iran. Dans cette éventualité, la République islamique serait d'ailleurs certainement en mesure d'obtenir d'importantes concessions, en échange d'une aide permettant aux Etats-Unis de quitter l'Irak sans trop de difficultés. Plus largement, la conjoncture politique irakienne place l'Iran dans une position avantageuse, qu'il conviendrait d'utiliser au mieux pour s'affirmer davantage sur le plan mondial, revenir sur la scène diplomatique et renouer avec une communauté internationale avec laquelle les liens s'étaient pour le moins distendus.

Mahran Karimi



◀ George W. Bush, le vote chiite en Irak et le président iranien Ahmadinejad.
"Victoire !
Victoire ! Victoire !"
"D'accord, t'as gagné."
Dessin de Sandy Huffaker, Etats-Unis.

■ "Une claque !" *"Les élections ont été un grand succès pour l'Irak, mais pas pour les occupants américains", commente le quotidien Keyhan, proche du président iranien. Avant même les résultats officiels, il prédit que "les Américains doivent faire face à un Parlement dominé par les croyants [chiites], les Kurdes qui entretiennent d'excellentes relations avec Téhéran et les sunnites qui réclament la fin de l'occupation et l'instauration d'un régime islamique."*
Et de conclure : *"La nouvelle configuration géopolitique est clairement à l'avantage de l'Iran."*

Courrier International

DU 5 AU 11 JANVIER 2006

Iran: création d'un mouvement de défense des droits des Kurdes



TEHERAN, 2 jan 2006 (AFP) - 13h24 - Un ancien député kurde iranien a annoncé lundi la création d'un Front uni kurde pour défendre les droits de cette large minorité ethnique, "négligée" selon lui par la république islamique.

"Un grand nombre d'activistes et ONG kurdes proéminents se sont ralliés dans un front indépendant pour demander pacifiquement les droits niés aux Kurdes", a dit à la presse son fondateur, Bahaeddin Adab.

Plus de six millions de Kurdes, sur une population iranienne de 68,5 millions, habitent principalement quatre des provinces du nord-ouest, qui sont parmi les moins développées du pays.

M. Adab a insisté sur le fait que son mouvement n'avait pas d'objectif séparatiste, à la différence selon lui de nombreux partis d'opposition kurdes situés dans les Etats voisins d'Irak et de Turquie.

"Nous insistons pour travailler dans le cadre de la loi et en évitant la violence", a-t-il dit, en expliquant que la décision de créer le Front avait été accélérée à la suite de troubles entre les autorités et la population des deux provinces à population majoritairement kurde du Kurdistan et de l'Azerbaïdjan de l'ouest.

"Les Kurdes n'ont presque pas eu leur mot à dire sur les décisions les affectant et ils se sont vu nier leurs droits mentionnés par la constitution", a dit M. Adab.

Il a déploré les hausses du chômage et du taux de toxicomanie affligeant les provinces à population kurde, ainsi que les restrictions touchant selon lui la presse de langue kurde.

Plusieurs activistes et journalistes kurdes ont été arrêtés par les autorités ces dernières années. Un certain nombre ont été condamnés à de longues peines de prison à la suite de troubles survenus notamment en août.

M. Adab a exprimé l'espoir que le régime autorisera l'enregistrement de son mouvement ou ne s'opposera pas à son activité.

"Vous ne pouvez pas conserver un pays uni avec des menaces. Si la liberté et l'égalité existent les mouvements séparatistes meurent", a-t-il dit.

Les partis politiques et ONG doivent être enregistrés s'ils veulent pouvoir faire de la publicité, tenir des réunions et admettre des membres.

Des défenseurs iraniens des droits de l'Homme, comme le prix Nobel Shirin Ebadi, accusent régulièrement le ministère de l'Intérieur de faire obstruction à l'enregistrement de telles organisations.

M. Adab avait été disqualifié par le Conseil des gardiens pour participer aux dernières élections législatives de 2004.

Les Kurdes avaient participé en masse aux élections présidentielles de 1997 et 2001, qui avaient vu la victoire du président réformiste Mohammad Khatami.

Mais selon M. Adab, "le gouvernement n'a pas fait assez pour satisfaire les demandes des Kurdes et ils ont montré leur insatisfaction en ne participant pas à la (récente) élection", de 2005, qui a vu l'arrivée au pouvoir de l'ultraconservateur Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Sunni Group Near Deal With Kurds on Iraqi Government

By RICHARD A. OPPEL Jr.

BAGHDAD, Iraq, Jan. 2 — The largest Sunni Arab political group in Iraq unexpectedly moved close to agreement with Kurdish leaders Monday on a broad framework for a coalition government. The group, the Iraqi Consensus Front, also said it would abandon claims that national elections last month had been rigged once international election monitors finish their review of the allegations.

The move drew a rebuke from other Sunni Arab political leaders who accused the Sunni consensus party of violating an agreement to press ahead with claims of Sunni disenfranchisement during the vote on Dec. 15 and to not bargain on their own for a role in the new government.

"They violated an agreement with us that they will not go alone to talk about the government," Saleh Mutlak, a leader of the Iraqi National Trend, another leading Sunni Arab political group, said Monday night.

The Sunni consensus party and the Kurds remain far apart on at least one crucial issue: the Kurds support introducing federal states throughout Iraq, while the Sunnis, who fear the loss of revenue from large oil fields in the Shiite-dominated south, want only the Kurds in the north to have a semi-autonomous state.

A Sunni consensus party official, Ahmad Rushdi, said that meetings in Iraqi Kurdistan between the party and the Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani yielded "an agreement that the results from the international monitoring committee" — which is examining the vote — "would be approved." After results are final, he said, "discussion will continue about the formation of the upcoming government."

Also late Monday, President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, said he would not object if the dominant Shiite political alliance were to once again select Ibrahim al-Jaafari as prime minister. Mr. Talabani and Mr. Jaafari have clashed, but Mr. Talabani said Monday that the problems were in the past. Mr. Jaafari's top rival for the post is a fellow Shiite, Adel Abdul Mahdi, a member of the most influential Shiite party, the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

The current government is controlled by Shiites and Kurds and largely excludes Sunni Arabs. But in

the election last month, Sunnis turned out in force, and the consensus party is expected to win around 40 of 275 seats in Parliament. The

Kurds are expected to win more than 50 seats, while the Shiite coalition is expected to win more than 130 seats. It takes a two-thirds majority to form a government.

Sunnis have pressed allegations of widespread election fraud. But Iraqi and United Nations officials said that despite some fraud the elections were credible.

Baghdad continued to struggle with a gasoline shortage on Monday. Iraqi leaders insisted the worst of the crisis had passed, but new data disclosed by Iraqi officials underscored the grave problems facing an energy infrastructure plagued by insurgent attacks and dilapidated facilities.

The new figures show that the gasoline shortages in Baghdad are as much as 1.6 million gallons each day — nearly as much fuel as the capital uses in a normal day. The imbalance has been driven by acute electricity shortages and insurgent attacks or threats on two large refineries.

Iraqi officials also reported Monday that oil exports remained at postwar lows again in December amid electricity failures and rough seas in the Persian Gulf where tankers load oil. The departing oil minister, Ibrahim Bahr al-Uloum, esti-

A party draws criticism for taking action on its own.

mated in an interview that exports averaged 1.3 million barrels per day last month. But other officials still working at the Oil Ministry told news agencies that the actual average was about 1.1 million barrels per day.

Mr. Bahr al-Uloum formally resigned Monday, days after Mr. Jaafari ordered him suspended after he criticized government price increases that tripled the cost of gasoline as part of a deal with the International Monetary Fund to restructure Iraq's debt.

The Iraqi government said Monday that trucks were again transporting gasoline to the capital from the large northern refinery at Baiji under guard of Iraqi soldiers. Drivers had refused to make the journey because of threats from insurgents.

Mr. Bahr al-Uloum estimated that only 15 trucks made the journey on Sunday. As many as 90 trucks are needed to ship up to 800,000 gallons of

gasoline the refinery normally sends to Baghdad daily, he said. Whether the refinery can ship its full allotment "depends on the security situation," he said.

It remained unclear how long other major factors in Baghdad's fuel crisis would go unresolved. Demand for gasoline in the capital has soared by half a million gallons a day — to about 12.4 million gallons — because of severe electricity shortages, Mr. Bahr al-Uloum said. Residents are hoarding gas at filling stations for use in fueling electricity generators.

Mr. Bahr al-Uloum also said the Dawra refinery in Baghdad, the other major source of gasoline for the capital, is operating at 30 percent of its normal capacity of up to half a million gallons daily. The slowdown is a result of the sabotage of a pipeline. The remaining gasoline supply for Baghdad typically comes from imports and other refineries, he said.

For years, Iraq provided gasoline to its citizens at a fraction of its true cost. While Mr. Bahr al-Uloum says prices must be increased somewhat, he said the I.M.F. agreement was draconian. "We have to have a balance between the Iraqi people and the requirements of the I.M.F.," he said. "We know there is a problem with the price scheme, but the only way to do it is to go gradually."

Across Iraq, insurgents renewed attacks on Iraqi security forces, striking a busload of police recruits with a suicide car bomb near Baquba, north of Baghdad, killing seven. Three of the dead were identified as police recruits but the other four were burned beyond recognition, according to the Interior Ministry.

At Al Asad, an American air base in western Iraq, four American contractors were killed Sunday when their bus was struck by a seven-ton truck, the military said in a statement.

In Baghdad on Monday, the Turkish ambassador dodged an assassination attempt near the airport. And in Kirkuk, where there were riots over fuel prices on Sunday, a would-be car bomber and the insurgent who intended to photograph the attack both died when their car detonated prematurely, said Col. Bakhtiar Abdullah of the Iraqi Army.

Last year, 1,693 members of the Iraqi security forces were killed, according to ministry statistics obtained by Agence-France Presse.

Yet Iraqi ministry figures have proven in the past to be far understated. An independent group that tracks the deaths of Iraqi forces, Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, estimates that 2,590 Iraqi police officers and soldiers were killed last year.

The ever-increasing spotlight on al-Assad's Baathist regime

By Bashdar P. Ismaeel
The Globe

With the ever-ubiquitous global terrorist threat and in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks, one of the countries placed directly in the spotlight is Syria. This spotlight was magnified further in recent weeks, by a new UN resolution, designed to further pressurise the government by calling for an independent inquiry

into the alleged assassination of popular anti-Syrian former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

Long present on the infamous axis-of-evil, Syria's policies and authoritarian grip on society were perhaps only over-shadowed by the now ousted regime of Saddam Hussein. Its dictatorial grip on society and lack of democratic freedoms is perhaps a good enough reason, but new events have provided

even more ammunition for reform and change.

Alleged cross-border Syrian support for insurgents in Iraq, the aforementioned assassination of Hariri and general hostility towards the US and Israel have propelled

their status as the next country in the radar for greater Middle Eastern change under US hegemony. This has placed Syria into a difficult position, with the might of the US military on its right and the ever-present Israeli threat on its left.

Perhaps, with the turn of events in Iraq propelling Iraqi Kurds to greater prominence and recognition, another crucial factor and potential pawn on the US chessboard is the long forgotten and disenfranchised Syrian Kurdish population who seemingly have acquired new found confidence and inspiration to demand greater recognition and change without fear of government reprisals which have been common in the past. This has propelled the 2.5 million or so Kurds, many of whom are stateless and deprived of common state services, into the foreground. The increased coverage of the Syrian Kurdish issues seemingly ties in nicely with US views on Syria and provides a potential wildcard.

The threat of opposition domestically has often been

lacking or never materialized as Syria's diverse but seemingly fractious opposition have often bickered and posed no real threat to the autocratic grip on power of the Arab nationalist Baath Party. Yet with the ever-growing isolation of Syria in the international arena and with the threat of military actions and economic sanctions, the opposition parties have found a new lease of life. The new impetuous to unite and propose a more effective message to the government, recently resulted in the signing of the Damascus Declaration by a dozen or so groups, to further pressure Bashar Al-Assad's regime for political reforms and a new more encompassing and liberalized constitution. The government long attempted to drive a wedge between Syrian Kurdish and Arab opposition parties using the Arab nationalist wildcard and the image of Kurds as separatists but the new found prominence of the Kurds in the region, means that the carrot and stick approach to the Syrian Kurdish question may no longer work.

The long impoverished Syrian Kurdish areas predominantly in North-Eastern Syria, have recently witnessed well-documented uprisings and ethnic violence and pro-US demonstrations, bringing their plight to the international media.

The promise of more economic and political reforms since his sudden inception to power in 2000 as a result of his father's death has never materialized in reality. Some 300,000 stateless Kurds classified as foreigners still exist with no access to state health, education or facilities and are unable to travel. The recent Baath Party congress promised to resolve this situation along with loosening of the political noose around non-Baathist parties.

Modern Syria gained its independence from France in 1946 but has lived through periods of political instability, mainly because of the

conflicting interests of the various groups in society.

Since then, Syria's political position has been colorful, to say the least, resulting in periods of political instability due largely to varying interest in its political and social spectrum. Its political stance, leading to many years of neo-military occupation in Lebanon, where it only recently pulled its forces out, and having come under intense international pressure to withdraw particularly after the assassination of Hariri, coupled with its historic bitterness to Israel and its support and harboring of Islamic militant groups, which have resulted in sporadic conflicts between the

two nations. However, Syria now only needs to look across its shoulder at the new democratic and liberal Iraq which undertook its 3rd elections in December this year alone. Its ability to placate power by force, intimidation and trepidation may now backfire as its diverse community may no longer fear a backlash to demand greater change and say on Syrian destiny.

Although the UN resolution on Syria ratified by a unanimous majority primarily focused on the need for an internal inquiry in to the death of Hariri, it was also a veiled threat of not only economic sanctions, but 'further action' if cooperation is not undertaken. This perhaps may also be on the issue of taking firmer action on insurgents in Syria and introducing political reforms. The US seemingly is not in the position of dictating regime change with its hands tied in Afghanistan and especially across the border in Iraq. A general change of mindset and behavior is advocated, however this does not mean the US would not welcome regime change. With heightened international pressure and the newfound unity of the Syrian opposition groups, the US may have more than a great military arsenal in its quest to oust the current regime.



Long present on the infamous axis-of-evil, Syria's policies and authoritarian grip on society were perhaps only over-shadowed by the now ousted regime of Saddam Hussein.

TURQUIE

Une pluie de procès pour "insulte à l'identité nationale"

Courrier
INTERNATIONAL

DU 5 AU 11 JANVIER 2006

L'écrivain Orhan Pamuk n'est pas le seul à être traduit en justice en vertu d'un Code pénal récemment réformé. Et si les procureurs sont aussi zélés, explique *Cumhuriyet*, c'est bien parce que le Premier ministre le leur a demandé.

CUMHURİYET
İstanbul

Voici le Premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, qui intervient à la télévision pour lancer des accusations de "crime contre la Constitution" et pour appeler les procureurs de la République à faire leur boulot, c'est-à-dire à agir contre Deniz Baykal [leader du principal parti de l'opposition, social-démocrate], Mustafa Koc [dirigeant de la puissante association des entrepreneurs, TUSIAD, l'équivalent du MEDEF français] et Erdogan Teziç [président du Conseil de l'enseignement supérieur], tous accusés d'avoir cherché à "influencer la justice". Et le parquet d'Ankara de s'exécuter immédiatement, car l'injonction émane du Premier ministre en personne.

De quoi s'agit-il au juste ? De l'affaire Yücel Askin, le recteur de l'université de Van. [Ce dernier est emprisonné depuis des mois, malgré un non-lieu rendu par la justice, et son adjoint s'est suicidé en prison.] Mustafa Koc, le patron des patrons, avait pris sa défense en disant exactement ceci : "Le recteur Askin subit un traitement que personne ne peut approuver. La durée de sa garde à vue est excessive. Ce genre de comportements jette une ombre sur la justice." Voilà la déclaration dont chaque mot a sûrement été pesé avec une extrême prudence.

Tant qu'il y est, le Premier ministre ne devrait pas se contenter de commander des procès contre Koc et Teziç, mais contre absolument tous ceux qui s'insurgent contre le traitement indigne infligé au recteur Askin. Il peut en effet se permettre, lui, de chercher à "influencer la justice" puisque son immunité statutaire le protège contre toute plainte. Il peut prendre parti, lui, dans une affaire judiciaire et déclarer ouvertement sa position sans être poursuivi. Idem pour le ministre de la Justice, qui aurait pu éviter que l'écrivain Orhan Pamuk ne soit traduit en justice, mais qui ne l'a pas fait*. Bien au contraire, il a poussé à l'ouverture d'un procès pour délit d'opinion. Idem pour le ministre de l'Intérieur, qui a quasiment apporté son soutien aux attaques contre Pamuk avant, pendant et après le procès. Idem pour le



ministre des Affaires étrangères, qui s'est permis de faire des déclarations publiques concernant le procès de Pamuk. A tout moment, le Premier ministre Erdogan, ses ministres et son gouvernement ont démontré qu'ils étaient partie prenante dans ces affaires, sans que l'on puisse ouvrir une instruction judiciaire contre eux pour "tentative d'influencer la justice".

Et l'on parle déjà d'un autre procès à venir, contre l'écrivaine grecque Mara Meimaridi, auteur du roman *Les Sorcières d'Izmir*, publié dans notre pays en 2004. Je ne sais pas si le livre s'est beaucoup vendu en Grèce, mais il a eu un énorme succès en Turquie. Avec plus de 50 000 exemplaires écoulés, il vient d'être réédité pour la vingt-cinquième fois et reste parmi les meilleures ventes. Au bout de deux ans, on découvre soudainement qu'il "dénigre les Turcs", selon la loi 301. L'ouverture d'un procès est donc imminente. Bravo ! Bravo, nos procureurs zélés ! Même si c'est avec deux ans de retard, ils y ont enfin déniché un "dénigrement des Turcs".

Le roman raconte l'histoire d'une certaine Katina, qui a vécu à Izmir au siècle dernier, et qui s'attachait les hommes par des potions, des herbes

et de la magie. L'écrivaine, une anthropologue de l'université d'Athènes, ne comprend rien aux accusations portées contre elle et dit en riant qu'elle viendrait bien à Istanbul assister à son procès s'il devait vraiment avoir lieu. Quant à la presse grecque, vous devinez les commentaires que cela lui inspire à propos de notre justice. Mais, en fait, je me fous des réactions de la presse grecque, je me fiche de celles de l'Union européenne. Si je suis furieuse, c'est que je me sens humiliée – non par ces réactions étrangères, mais par cet article 301 de notre propre Code pénal. C'est cet article lui-même qui humilie et qui dénigre les Turcs.

Avant la réforme du Code pénal, nous avions les articles 141 et 142. Depuis la réforme, nous avons les articles 301 et 306. Le contenu est le même. Certains œuvrent délibérément à mettre la Turquie dans une mauvaise posture : on appuie sur un bouton, et les procureurs zélés se mettent en branle. Ne voyez-vous toujours pas ? Ne comprenez-vous pas ce qui se passe ? Supprimez cet article 301 et arrêtez tous ces procès. Que le gouvernement arrête d'influencer la justice, qu'il arrête d'être partie prenante. Je le veux pour moi-même, mais surtout pour mes enfants.

Zeynep Oral

▲ Dessin d'Igor Kopelnitsky paru dans The New York Times Book Review, États-Unis.

■ **Acharnement**
Récemment réformé dans un souci d'harmonisation avec la législation européenne, le Code pénal turc permet toujours de lancer des procès pour délit d'opinion, notamment "insulte à l'identité nationale turque". C'est ce qui vaut à l'écrivain Orhan Pamuk de se retrouver devant les tribunaux après avoir parlé du génocide arménien dans un journal suisse. Chaque jour de nouveaux noms s'ajoutent à la liste des accusés. *Sabah* cite les plus célèbres : le chanteur populaire Ferhat Tunc, le rédacteur en chef du quotidien *Cumhuriyet* et son équipe, cinq journalistes du quotidien *Radikal* et trois autres du journal *Agos*, et même... Joost Lagendijk, le président de la commission mixte UE-Turquie.

IRAN-ISRAËL

Sharon compte-t-il sérieusement attaquer Téhéran ?

Des militaires israéliens seraient-ils à l'origine des informations du *Sunday Times* selon lesquelles l'armée israélienne aurait déjà prévu d'attaquer les installations nucléaires iraniennes ?

YEDIOT AHARONOT
Tel-Aviv

Il y a deux explications possibles aux informations "sensationalistes" (et infirmées depuis) qu'a publiées le correspondant du *Sunday Times* en Israël, Ouzi Mahnaimi, et selon lesquelles Israël aurait déjà programmé une opération militaire contre l'Iran pour la fin mars 2006. La première explication est que cette information est une pure intoxication journalistique. Mais cela semble improbable de la part d'un journaliste aussi sérieux employé par un journal aussi sérieux. L'autre explication est que certains hauts responsables du ministère de la Défense israélien ont intérêt à faire croire à l'opinion internationale qu'Israël prépare une attaque aérienne imminente contre l'Iran.

Pourquoi "certains hauts responsables" ? Parce que tout journaliste israélien s'étant risqué à publier des informations aussi confidentielles sur une opération censée être aussi capitale se serait déjà fait éreinter par la censure militaire. Et il va sans dire que des mesures radicales auraient été prises si jamais le journaliste en question s'était risqué à refuser de soumettre ses informations à l'approbation préalable de la censure.

D'un autre côté, cela fait maintenant des années que le *Sunday Times* et son correspondant Uzi Mahnaimi jouissent d'une totale impunité, et ce

en dépit des informations capitales qu'ils ne cessent de révéler, que l'on songe à l'identité réelle de Cheryl Bentov, la fausse "Cindy"* qui avait tendu un piège à Mordechai Vanunu [accusé d'avoir livré des informations sensibles concernant le programme nucléaire israélien], ou à d'autres informations ultrasensibles sur le saint des saints de la sécurité israélienne.

L'inflation impressionnante de déclarations alarmistes concernant l'Iran peut s'expliquer par les élections législatives israéliennes toutes proches. Ce ne serait pas la première fois que l'Iran joue un rôle central dans une campagne électorale israélienne. En 1996, Shimon Pérès avait prétendu disposer d'"informations irréfutables" (ensuite infirmées par la *qehillia*, la

► Dessin paru dans
Die Tageszeitung,
Berlin.

■ Antisémitisme

Les propos antisémites du président iranien ont été commentés dans l'ensemble du Moyen-Orient. Tous s'accordent à penser qu'Achmadinejad était bien conscient que sa négation de la Shoah allait déclencher un mouvement de protestation dans le monde.

Le blog Iranien www.hoder.com a trouvé trois raisons à ces attaques détestables :

- 1) faire oublier aux Iranien la crise économique et la pollution qui ravage Téhéran ;
- 2) gagner le soutien des masses arabo-musulmanes sur le dossier du nucléaire iranien ;
- 3) pousser les diplomates Iranien modérés à démissionner.

communauté des renseignements) "prouvant" que la terrible vague d'attentats terroristes palestiniens du printemps 1996 qui avait mené Nétanyahou à la victoire n'était que le produit d'un complot iranien destiné à renverser le gouvernement travailliste.

Mais les fuites du *Sunday Times* peuvent également s'expliquer par le désir de certains hauts responsables des milieux de la Défense de forcer l'Occident à agir contre Téhéran. En d'autres termes, "si les Occidentaux ne font rien pour bloquer le programme nucléaire iranien, nous passerons à l'offensive".

Dans le jargon du monde des renseignements, on parle à ce sujet d'IW (*Intelligence War*) ou de PW (*Psychological Warfare*) : le recours à des



moyens secrets pour semer la confusion et répandre la désinformation parmi une population ennemie. Cela fait cinq ans que l'unité de campagne et d'information de l'Aman [renseignements militaires] a été démantelée. Mais il faut croire que cet organe de désinformation est en train de faire son come-back. Pourtant, les responsables israéliens, ou supposés tels, seraient bien inspirés de prendre des leçons avant de réactiver ce type de guerre psychologique. Ils seraient sages d'évaluer dans quelle mesure ce type d'arme peut échapper à leur contrôle et de se rappeler pourquoi l'unité de campagne de l'Aman a été démantelée. La raison, c'est que l'impact d'une telle tactique, dans un monde globalisé et à l'heure d'Internet, ne se limite plus au "public" visé et que la guerre psychologique risque de se retourner comme un boomerang contre la population israélienne.

De nombreux Israéliens ont été affolés par les infos publiées par le *Sunday Times*. Ceux, qui, en Israël sont chargés de gérer la menace iranienne feraient donc mieux de neutraliser correctement cette menace plutôt que de perdre leur temps à se risquer dans des domaines auxquels ils ne connaissent rien : les médias et la communication.

Ronen Bergman

* Cet agent du Mossad était devenue la fiancée de Vanunu et avait réussi à le droguer et à l'embarquer à son insu pour Israël, où il fut condamné à dix-huit ans de prison.

DU 22 DÉCEMBRE 2005 AU 4 JANVIER 2006

Contier

Les pourparlers sur le nucléaire iranien en suspens

MOYEN-ORIENT

L'intransigeance des autorités iraniennes remet en question les négociations entre l'Union européenne et Téhéran.

LES POURPARLERS entre l'Union européenne et Téhéran sur le programme nucléaire iranien paraissent voués à l'échec. En dépit d'une reprise annoncée des discussions le 18 janvier, le pessimisme est monté d'un cran avec de nouvelles déclarations d'intransigeance des dirigeants iraniens.

La décision de reprendre prochainement des activités sensibles « n'est pas négociable » a affirmé hier Ali Larijani, le responsable iranien du dossier. L'Iran a « dit il y a longtemps que la question de la recherche ne faisait pas partie des négociations » a-t-il précisé. La fermeté iranienne est confirmée par le président ultraconservateur Mahmoud Ahmadinejad qui a exclu « un pas en arrière ». Dans des propos rapportés par la télévision nationale, le chef de l'État a usé d'un ton caustique pour anticiper une réaction négative des Occidentaux. « Peut-être qu'ils commenceront demain leur cirque habituel, mais nous ne pouvons pas fonder notre intérêt national sur leurs politiques », a-t-il commenté.

Cette position unilatérale est jugée inacceptable par l'Union européenne, pour qui l'Iran doit cesser tous ses travaux liés à l'enrichissement de l'uranium. Elle pourrait, selon le gouvernement allemand, remettre en question les pourparlers exploratoires entre l'Iran et la troïka européenne (Allemagne, Grande-Bretagne, France). D'autant plus que les services de renseignements européens sont plus que jamais convaincus que l'Iran a bel et bien réussi à se procurer la technologie nécessaire à la confection de missiles à tête nucléaire.

Mise au point d'un missile balistique

Citant un rapport de synthèse des services britanniques, français, allemands et belges, le quotidien britannique *The Guardian* a ainsi jeté hier un nouveau pavé dans la mare nucléaire iranienne. Selon ce document de 55 pages, les chercheurs iraniens disposent désormais de l'ensemble des éléments destinés à la mise au point d'un missile balistique d'une portée de tir suffisante pour toucher des ob-



« Nous ne pouvons pas fonder notre intérêt national sur la politique des Occidentaux », a déclaré hier le président iranien Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

jectifs éloignés de ses frontières tels des cibles en Israël. « La prochaine génération de *Shahab* (« tir d'étoiles » en persan) sera capable d'atteindre l'Autriche et l'Italie » prévient le document.

Le rapport insiste sur le travail de recueil « presque quotidien d'importantes données » effectué par les scientifiques iraniens associés au projet. « L'Iran, en plus de produits sensibles, continue activement à rechercher les techniques et le savoir-faire pouvant déboucher sur des applications militaires dans tous les domaines », souligne l'expertise.

Les composants nécessaires pour assembler les armes nucléaires mais aussi chimiques et biologiques suivent un cheminement complexe. Des sociétés d'ingénierie européennes, des laboratoires, des universités et des groupes de réflexion scientifiques sont pillés par de nombreux intermédiaires. Ces pourvoyeurs sont en général des scientifiques et des fonctionnaires employés par les gouvernements iranien, syrien et pakistanais. Des ingénieurs ira-

niens s'approvisionnent ensuite discrètement en produits chimiques et en technologie indispensable à l'enrichissement de l'uranium et au développement des programmes de missiles. *The Guardian* évoque également le rôle déjà connu joué par d'importantes sociétés chinoises dans l'armement de la Corée du Nord et revient sur l'action déterminante de la Russie dans le programme militaire iranien. Selon le journal, le rapport datant de juillet 2005 a servi de signal d'alarme pour les différents gouvernements européens et permis d'attirer la vigilance des industriels sur les risques liés à l'exportation d'équipements sensibles aux États voyous. T. O. (avec AFP)

LE FIGARO

5 janvier 2006

Iran rejects demands it stop atom activities Official says research is 'non-negotiable'

By Elaine Sciolino

PARIS: Iran vowed Wednesday to proceed with a plan to restart sensitive nuclear research next week, even as the government has yet to explain to the United Nations' nuclear monitoring agency what activities it intends to carry out.

Ali Larijani, Iran's senior official in charge of nuclear issues, was quoted on state television Wednesday as saying

that the decision to resume nuclear research was "non-negotiable."

Responding to criticism that the decision would violate Iran's formal agreement with Europe to suspend all uranium conversion and enrichment activities, Larijani said: "Research has its own definition. It is not related to industrial production. Hence, it was never part of the negotiations." Late Tuesday, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran took a similar hard line. "We will

not take a step back on our path," he was quoted by state television as saying.

Iran's student-run press agency ISNA further quoted Ahmadinejad as saying that Western countries "are so rude that if we allow them they will tell us to shut down all our universities, whereas research has no restrictions or red lines."

Iran, informed the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna in writing on Tuesday that it planned to resume nuclear fuel research and development next Monday and asked the nuclear agency to make the necessary preparations to monitor the renewed activities.

Mohamed ElBaradei, the IAEA's director, on Wednesday pressed Mohammad Mehdi Akhondzadeh, head of the Iranian delegation that has been conducting talks with British, German and French negotiators, for an explanation of Tehran's intentions and warned

him that it should not proceed, said officials from two European countries who were briefed on the meeting.

ElBaradei informed Akhondzadeh that Iran's decision to restart nuclear research on its fuel cycle was a regrettable development, adding that Tehran must consider the potential consequences of its action, the officials said. Akhondzadeh responded that Iran was not ready to provide the IAEA with the "technical" details of its decision, the officials said. The technical meeting could take place as early as Thursday, although clarifications could take a few days.

Because of the importance of the matter, Mohammad Saeedi, deputy head of Iran's atomic energy agency, is expected in Vienna to clarify Iran's an-

nouncement, they added. The officials insisted on anonymity because their governments have not authorized them to talk on the record.

Criticism of the Iranian decision continued on Wednesday. "We regard the recent announcement by Iran of its intention to resume research and development activities with concern," the spokesman for the German Foreign Ministry, Martin Jaeger, said at a news conference in Berlin. He added, "We would encourage Iran to abstain from unilateral steps."

A French Foreign Ministry spokesman, Jean-Baptiste Mattei, called Iran's announcement "very worrying," adding, "We firmly call on Iran to revoke this announcement."

On Iranian state television Wednesday, Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said: "Iran is ready for negotiations with the European Union. The next round is scheduled for Jan. 18."

But Britain, France and Germany — which negotiated the November 2004 nuclear accord with Iran — have said publicly that Iran's decision could jeopardize talks designed to build on the 2004 agreement and give Iran a package of rewards in exchange for voluntary curbs on its nuclear program. But Iran seems confident it can go ahead with nuclear research and keep the talks going.

The New York Times

Irak : Paris et Washington sur la même longueur d'ondes

La France, qui approuve désormais le rôle des Américains en Irak, les a remerciés pour leur rôle dans la libération.

LA LIBÉRATION de l'otage français Bernard Planche a valu hier aux Américains les remerciements appuyés de Paris. Ces égards traduisent le rapprochement des deux partenaires sur l'Irak comme sur d'autres dossiers au Proche-Orient. Exprimant sa reconnaissance « à tous ceux qui se sont mobilisés » pour que l'otage français retrouve la liberté, Jacques Chirac a « remercié les forces de la coalition qui ont permis cette libération ».

Dominique de Villepin a été plus explicite. Félicitant « les services diplomatiques et les services de renseignement », le premier ministre a également remercié « les autorités américaines qui ont apporté leur concours à cette libération ». De telles expressions de gratitude, plutôt rares ces dernières années dans le contexte irakien, découlent logiquement des conditions dans lesquelles a été mis fin à la captivité de Bernard Planche.

Le ministre des Affaires étrangères, Philippe Douste-Blazy, a confirmé hier que l'otage français avait été « retrouvé à l'occasion d'une opération de contrôle par des forces de la coalition ». Les soldats américains ayant été les premiers à le récupé-

rer, il eût été difficile de ne pas saluer leur rôle. L'affaire démontre en tout cas que, si elle ne participe pas à la coalition, la France peut avoir besoin de son appui ou tout au moins affirmer en avoir besoin.

Car d'autres motifs que la simple courtoisie diplomatique ont pu inciter les autorités françaises à faire patte de velours vis-à-vis des Américains. « Dans ce genre d'affaire, ils sont en mesure, grâce à leur système d'écoute et de renseignements, d'obtenir de nombreuses informations qui peuvent s'avérer parfois plus ou moins embarrassantes. Il vaut mieux ne pas les inciter à les rendre publiques... », indique une source ayant suivi de près les enlèvements d'Occidentaux en Irak. Libéré samedi, Bernard Planche est resté environ 24 heures aux mains des Américains avant d'être remis à l'ambassade de France à Bagdad.

« Éviter le chaos »

Les remerciements français ont pour toile de fond les nouvelles convergences de Paris avec Washington, en Irak et dans la région. Hostile à l'intervention militaire contre Saddam Hussein en 2003, la France entend aujourd'hui veiller à ne pas « gêner » les Américains et leur rôle stabilisateur. Le nouveau ton a été donné en novembre 2005 par Dominique de Villepin. Interrogé par CNN sur la perspective d'un retrait des forces américaines, le premier ministre

avait plaidé contre toute précipitation en soulignant que « le vrai calendrier concerne la situation irakienne ». « Nous devons éviter à tout prix le chaos en Irak », avait-il ajouté.

La prudence française a été encouragée par le déroulement des élections du 15 décembre et les laborieuses tractations engagées depuis pour former un gouvernement à Bagdad. Paris ne peut qu'approuver les efforts auxquels ont fini par consentir les Américains pour tenter d'intégrer les sunnites au pouvoir. Cette option fut défendue dès le début par la France, qui l'estimait indispensable pour sortir du cycle de la violence. Le processus politique, estime-t-on à Paris, doit être soutenu dans la durée tant il paraît laborieux. La semaine dernière a encore été l'une des plus sanglantes en Irak depuis la chute de Saddam. Soucieux pour la stabilité régionale, Paris entend aussi cultiver avec Washington une concertation nouée sur deux dossiers clés, la Syrie et le nucléaire iranien. Dans ces deux crises, les Français, et plus largement les Européens, savent qu'ils ne peuvent guère agir sans l'appui américain.

ALAIN BARLUET



Un point de contrôle à Bagdad. Désormais, la France entend veiller à ne pas « gêner » les Américains et leur rôle stabilisateur. (AFP)

LE FIGARO

9 janvier 2006

A Bagdad, la foire aux alliances bat son plein

■ Les dernières élections irakiennes étaient supposées avoir plus d'importance que les précédentes. Elles auraient dû déboucher sur une Assemblée nationale reflétant l'identité nationale et capable de mener le pays vers la stabilité et la sécurité. Seulement voilà : les résultats vont exactement dans le sens contraire. Les rues de Bagdad et les grandes villes du pays voient se dérouler de bruyantes manifestations de protestation contre les élections et leurs résultats. On accuse le comité de surveillance de diverses manipulations et l'on exige un nouveau scrutin au moins dans la moitié des provinces, si ce n'est dans toutes. Ces élections avaient fait renaître l'espoir d'une réconciliation nationale, fruit d'une démocratie honnête qui placerait tous les Irakiens, quelle que soit leur communauté religieuse ou ethnique, face à une nouvelle réalité leur permettant de travailler en commun au sein d'une représentation parlementaire reflétant véritablement toutes les composantes

de la société. Et ce grâce à la décision des sunnites de revenir sur leur [choix initial de] boycott afin de prendre part au processus politique en proposant leurs propres listes aux électeurs. Tout aussi remarquable était le fait que la résistance ait respecté une trêve et se soit abstenue d'attaquer les bureaux de vote, les postes de police et la garde nationale irakienne. Cette trêve a même été respectée par la branche d'Al-Qaïda en Irak, dirigée par Abou Moussab Al-Zarqawi. Il n'y a pas eu de ces voitures piégées qui ont déjà coûté la vie à des milliers de civils dans les zones chiites. Cela semble indiquer qu'il existe bel et bien une direction centralisée qui décide des actions de résistance et des attentats, et que l'anarchie ne règne pas totalement. Cette direction a donc décidé de laisser le champ libre aux hommes politiques sunnites, de les laisser participer aux élections et de ne pas abandonner le Parlement aux extrémistes du confessionnalisme,

qui voudraient confisquer l'identité arabe de l'Irak et poursuivre le découpage du pays sous le label du fédéralisme. Mais ces élections n'ont pas tenu leurs promesses et n'ont pas résolu la crise. Elles ont même créé de nouveaux problèmes et ont débouché sur de nouvelles divisions et alliances, impensables il y a encore six mois. Qui aurait pu imaginer que l'ancien Premier ministre [chiite laïc] Iyad Allaw, qui se vante d'avoir donné l'ordre de frapper la ville [sunnite] de Falloudjah et de l'avoir fait s'écrouler sur la tête de ses pieux habitants, deviendrait un héros aux yeux des sunnites et prendrait la tête d'une coalition regroupant quarante partis et rassemblements protestant contre le résultat des élections ? Qui aurait pu imaginer que le différend qui allait en s'aggravant entre les partisans de Moqtada Al-Sadr [leader chiite radical] et ceux d'Abdel Aziz Al-Hakim, du Conseil suprême pour la révolution isla-

mique en Irak [CSRII, pro-iranien], se métamorphoserait en une solide alliance dirigée contre les partis sunnites et laïcs ? Quel retournement par rapport à un passé récent, où ces mêmes habitants de Falloudjah s'étaient portés volontaires pour se battre aux côtés d'Al-Sadr contre le gouvernement d'Allaw et Al-Hakim ! Après les élections de janvier 2005, la formation d'un gouvernement par Ibrahim Al-Jaafari avait pris trois mois, en raison des divergences au sein de la coalition chiite et de la coalition kurde. Combien de mois prendra cette fois la formation du prochain cabinet, vu les scissions et les accusations de fraude que se lancent les uns et les autres ?

Al-Quds al-Arabi, Londres



DU 5 AU 11 JANVIER 2006 -

Iraqi marathon talks in Kurdistan

By Ibrahim Ali Murad
The Globe

Iraqi politicians flowed into the Kurds' ruled area of south Kurdistan during the last week while some Iraqi political blocs still ask the elections to be re-done. After a visit by Abdul-Aziz Al-Hakeem, the head of the Shiite list, to meet both Barzani and Talabani in Kurdistan, the prime minister, Ibrahim Ja'afari followed the same route only to be followed by the Sunni Arab leaders who complained fraud in the Iraqi elections. Such visits are part of marathon talks that the winning parties in the late

Iraqi election have to make to form the next Iraqi government. Al-Ja'afari, who was accused by Kurdish officials of being the cause of suspension of a special committee for solving the problems of the oil rich city of Kirkuk, disavowed the guilt.

"Authorities in Kirkuk asked the scheduled projects of the city to be suspended after the cabinet provided them with \$50 million," Al-Ja'afari said in a joint press conference with Kurdish president, Masoud Barzani in Salahaddin summer resort after their meeting. "It became clear that the suspension had nothing to do with the prime ministry."

Ja'afari seemed to reject Hakeem's visit and talks in Kurdistan though he is included in Hakeem's Iraqi United Coalition.

"Al-Hakeem visited Kurdistan as the head of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq and he was accompanied by no members from the other Shiite parties," Ja'afari told reporters in Salahaddin.

Jawad Al-Maliki, a high official from Ja'afari's Al-Da'wa party echoed his colleague when he commented on Hakeem's visit to Kurdistan indirectly. He said he is the head of the IUC committee for talks with the Kurdish list.

"But we did not start talks since we are still waiting for election results," Al-Maliki told the media in Baghdad.

Unofficial news says that the two Shiite parties in the IUC, Al-Hakeem's SCIRI and Ja'afari's Da'wa may have intense dispute about the prime ministry post that seems to be held, once more, by the Shiites. The SCIRI supports its candidate, Adil Abdul-Mahdi, the current

vice president while the other party prefers Ja'afari, according to some reports.

Sunni Arabs also attended Kurdistan for the same talks while Ayyad Allawi's Iraqia list said that they were not invited to Kurdistan. The Sunni delegation includes three parties while the Iraqi Islamic Party, one of the major Sunni Arab parties announced an agreement with Al-Sadr bloc, a Shiite party included in the IUC. Official spokesman of the IIP, Ala' Maliki said that his party shares common ideas with Al-Sadr bloc about the political process in Iraq.

"The IIP and Al-Sadr bloc have reached an agreement for coalition in the national assembly, defining the authorities of the president and choosing a prime minister to be acceptable by all Iraqis," Maliki said.

These incongruous events and releases may be signs of a whirlpool of differences among the major constituents of the Iraqi parties and political blocs. The differences may let the Iraqis wait for a good deal of time before they can see their first permanent parliament and government born.



January 3 2006

CFP

Plus de 140 tués en deux jours, avant les négociations pour la formation du gouvernement.

Terreur antichite en Irak

A l'automne, l'organisation d'Abou Moussab al-Zarqaoui, la branche d'Al-Qaeda en Irak, avait juré de livrer une «guerre totale» contre les chiites. A quelques jours du résultat définitif des élections législatives, cette mouvance ou l'un de ses avatars a mis sa menace à exécution en organisant une véritable campagne de terreur. Hier, au moins 44 personnes ont été tuées et 85 autres blessées dans la seule ville sainte de Kerbela (à 110 km au sud de Bagdad), où un kamikaze a fait sauter ses explosifs au milieu des pèlerins près du mausolée de l'imam Hussein. La veille, un autre attentat-suicide avait visé le cimetière de Maqadidiya (nord de Bagdad), où 37 autres personnes avaient trouvé la mort. Elles étaient venues à

l'enterrement du garde du corps d'une personnalité chiite tué dans un attentat. Parallèlement, les attaques ont continué à prendre pour cible les sunnites qui cherchent à collaborer avec l'actuel pouvoir. Ainsi, dans la ville sunnite Ramadi (à 110 km à l'ouest de Bagdad), un autre kamikaze s'est fait exploser hier devant un centre de recrutement en présence d'un millier de candidats âgés de 20 à 35 ans. On compte cette fois 67 morts et 105 blessés. Il faut encore ajouter d'autres attentats, dont trois voitures piégées à Bagdad et l'explosion d'une bombe artisanale qui a tué cinq soldats américains au passage de leur patrouille, au sud de Kerbela.

Fraudes massives. Il s'agit de la journée la plus sanglante qu'ait connue l'Irak depuis le 14 septembre où 140 personnes avaient péri dans une série d'attaques. En moyenne, 20 Irakiens, dont onze civils, meurent chaque jour en Irak,

selon les chiffres officiels. Cette recrudescence de la violence s'explique par l'annonce prochaine du résultat des élections prévues d'ici à quatre jours. Elle vise à radicaliser encore les partis chiites pour empêcher toute formation

La journée d'hier est la plus sanglante qu'ait connue l'Irak depuis le 14 septembre où 140 personnes avaient péri dans une série d'attaques.

d'un gouvernement national avec la minorité sunnite, comme le voudraient les Etats-Unis. Le contexte s'y prête déjà: les partis sunnites ayant participé au scrutin du 15 décembre ont en effet remis en cause les résultats, faisant état de fraudes massives de la part des formations religieuses chiites. D'où un climat de ten-

sions intercommunautaires exacerbées, comme le montrent les accusations lancées hier par l'Assemblée suprême de la révolution islamique en Irak (Asrii, formation islamiste pro-iraniennne) dans un communiqué. Pour ce mouvement, que dirige Abdel Aziz Hakim, tête de liste des chiites radicaux qui sont donnés grands gagnants du scrutin, ces attentats «sont interve-

nus après les déclarations et les menaces publiques d'une guerre civile de la part de partis irakiens ayant échoué à atteindre leurs objectifs électoraux». L'entourage du Premier ministre chiite, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, lui a fait écho en dénonçant une campagne de terreur liée aux législatives. «C'est un nouveau crime qui montre la sauvagerie et le confessionnalisme» de ses auteurs, a déclaré

Jawad al-Maliki, en parlant de l'attentat de Kerbela. Mais les responsables chiites n'ont pas seulement dénoncé le rôle des partis sunnites dans la «campagne d'extermination» visant leur communauté. Ils s'en sont pris aussi... à l'armée américaine. Parce que celle-ci cherche à empêcher les exactions des milices chiites et les assassinats des escadrons de la mort du ministère de l'Intérieur - contrôlé par l'Asrii - et de la défense. Or, ces escadrons sont jugés nécessaires par les responsables chiites dans la lutte contre le terrorisme. D'où les accusations lancées par l'Asrii selon laquelle les attentats ont été rendus possibles par «les importantes pressions de la Force multinationale sur les ministères de la Défense et de l'Intérieur pour les empêcher de

pourchasser les terroristes». «Empêcher les deux ministères et les services de sécurité de rem-

plir leur mission expose les Irakiens à un terrorisme cruel», ajoute-t-elle.

Cabinet. Même si sunnites et chiites ont participé ensemble aux élections, le fossé s'est encore élargi entre les deux communautés, les uns dénonçant les fraudes, les autres le terrorisme confessionnel. Au risque de rendre encore plus difficile la naissance d'un gouvernement d'union nationale issu des élections. Le président irakien, le Kurde Jalal Talabani, a affirmé hier que l'actuelle campagne de terreur n'empêcherait pas sa formation de ce cabinet. Celle-ci demandera sans doute de longues semaines à un moment où la déstabilisation du pays pourrait encore s'amplifier. Washington risque d'avoir à assumer de longues heures de négociation avant de pouvoir le mettre sur pied. ♦

JEAN-PIERRE PERRIN



Des proches de victimes d'attentats hier à l'hôpital Hussein de Kerbela.

At least 100 killed in 2 attacks in Iraq

Violence risks talks on new government

By Richard A. Oppel Jr.
and John O'Neil

BAGHDAD: Two new suicide bombings rocked Iraq on Thursday, killing at least 100 people in attacks at a shrine in the Shiite city of Karbala and a police recruiting station in the Sunni city of Ramadi.

Also Thursday, five American soldiers were killed when their vehicle struck an improvised explosive device while operating in the Baghdad region, the U.S. military said.

Preliminary reports from Iraqi police said that 52 people were killed and 64

The wave of violence could complicate the negotiations going on between Shiite, Kurd and Sunni political parties over the formation of a new government. The insurgency is mostly led by Sunnis, the smallest group of the three, and U.S. officials have pushed strongly for the current Shiite-Kurd alliance to be broadened to include Sunnis.

President Jalal Talabani issued a statement condemning the recent attacks. "These groups of dark terror will not succeed through these cowardly acts in dissuading Iraqis in their bid to form a government of national unity," he said.

Colonel Razzak Tae, the chief of police in Karbala said the attack took place about 20 meters outside a shrine

that is one of the Shiite region's holiest sites at 10:15 a.m. in the middle of a large crowd. The area is packed with vendors' stalls, he said, and the shrine had a higher number of visitors than usual.

Tae said the bomber had been wearing an explosive belt under clothing packed with metal balls, and was also carrying hand grenades, one of which failed to detonate.

In Ramadi, the target of the attack was a line of about 1,000 potential recruits waiting to apply for a position in the Iraqi police force, according to a statement released by the U.S. military. The statement gave a lower fatality figure than the doctor at the hospital, reporting 30 deaths.

An official in the Iraqi Interior Ministry said that witnesses reported two separate blasts in Ramadi just before 11 a.m. A firefighter who took part in the rescue efforts said that he personally helped to load 40 bodies into trucks for removal.

The American military statement said that the applicants were responding to a four-day recruiting drive in Ramadi for a new Iraqi police contingent being created for Anbar Province, an area in the western part of the country that has been at the heart of the insurgency. The first three days of the drive produced 600 qualified candidates, the statement said.

Incidents of violence were reported across Iraq, according to news services. Reuters reported that two more U.S. soldiers and two civilians were killed by a roadside bomb in Najaf. The report was not confirmed by the U.S. military.

Reuters also reported that: A major gas pipeline near the northern city of Kirkuk was seriously damaged in attacks Wednesday night and Thursday morning; the head of criminal intelligence in Diyala Province east of Baghdad was wounded in an ambush; and two people were killed by three car bombs in central Baghdad.

The most lethal attack on Wednesday, hit a frequent target — a funeral packed with Shiite mourners — killing more than 30 people and wounding 36 during a two-stage bombing of a mourning procession in Miqdadiya, 60 miles north-east of the capital.

A spokesman for the Iraqi police in Karbala said that a suicide bomber had been arrested there on Wednesday before he could detonate his device. The arrested man said that four other suicide bombers had entered the city.

The New York Times

Richard A. Oppel Jr. reported from Baghdad for this article, and John O'Neil reported from New York.

The arrested man said that four suicide bombers had entered the city.

were wounded in Karbala, south of Baghdad. In Ramadi, 50 people were killed and 60 were wounded, said Ammar Al-Rawi from Al-Ramadi Hospital.

The killings come on top of attacks that left more than 50 people dead on Wednesday, as violence was escalating again after a lull around the time of last month's parliamentary elections.

Shiites in Karbala reacted angrily to the bombing, the police said, with many shops closing after the attack.

■ Refinery closed after attack

Iraq's largest oil refinery closed again Thursday, a day after insurgents ambushed a convoy of tanker trucks carrying gas from the facility, The Associated Press reported from Baghdad.

Dow Jones Newswires quoted an Iraqi official as saying that pumping to the Beiji refinery also had been suspended because its reserves were full, The Associated Press reported. It said Dow Jones did not identify the official because he feared militants could kill him for speaking to the media.

Beiji is located in a restive area 250 kilometers, or 155 miles, north of Baghdad. Iraqi police officials said the ambush Wednesday destroyed four tankers and damaged another 15.

The refinery, which pumps 140,000 barrels a day, closed Dec. 18 after insurgents threatened to kill drivers transporting oil and blow up their trucks. It reopened Sunday and drivers again began carrying fuel after the government promised extra protection.



Mushtaq Khatami/Reuters

Residents load victims onto a cart after the suicide bombing in Karbala on Thursday.

January 6, 2006

Herald Tribune

Iraq's Political 'Census'

Final results of Iraq's election for a new, four-year parliament have yet to be announced. But it seems as if the body will look very much like the current one. Which means that we're about to find out if Iraq's political leaders—names like Talabani, Barzani and Hakim—really are as dedicated to democracy as their brave electorate obviously is.

Early signs are mildly encouraging, Kurdish and Shiite parties in the current interim governing coalition have said they'll share power with the Sunni Arabs newly elected in this round of voting. This could help deprive Baathist and Islamist terrorists of whatever popular support they have. And while the Sunnis initially cried foul at early returns, the larger of the two main Sunni factions has lately struck a more conciliatory pose.

The election's less fortunate outcome is that Iraq has yet to move even a baby step beyond identity politics. Although everyone expected the main Shiite, Kurdish and Sunni parties to do well, many of us had hoped for a stronger showing by the few pan-sectarian parties. In the end, the sectarians took nearly 90% of the nationwide vote, with former interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's party picking up most of the scraps. The Iraqi columnist Nibras Kazimi exaggerated only slightly when he wrote recently in the *New York Sun* that "Iraq did not hold an election...it held a census."

One factor here was probably security, which caused some Iraqis who might have voted for policy in peaceful times to vote for ethnic solidarity and protection this time around. One Muhammed Wattan, for example, told Knight Ridder that he had intended to vote for Deputy Prime Minister Ahmed Chalabi's non-sectarian slate but switched his vote at the last minute. "I felt that we are at war," said Mr. Wattan, understandably traumatized by continued terror attacks on his fellow Shiites.

Opponents of Iraq's liberation are spinning the vote as evidence of Iraq's looming breakup or incipient Shiite theocracy. But both fears

have been asserted for years and haven't been realized yet. Religious and ethnic parties were always going to play a prominent role in the politics of a Free Iraq, and the realities of wielding power may well promote compromise.

The dominant Shiite United Iraqi Alliance (which will likely take about 130 of 275 seats) in particular has a lot to prove. Fuel and electricity shortages have been problems on its current watch, and prisoner abuses at the Interior Ministry are cause for concern. The government's decision to appoint Mr. Chalabi as acting Oil Minister last week—despite his poor electoral performance after separating from the Alliance—is a sign it recognizes the importance of competence over ideology in key posts.

UIA leaders also face suspicion of their close ties to Iran. Our guess is that most of the Alliance's supporters are Iraqi nationalists who will not put up with an overclose relationship to their powerful neighbor. The fact that rival clerics Moqtada al-Sadr and Abdul Aziz al-Hakim and their supporters form an uneasy coalition to say the least also makes domination by a monolithic Shiite bloc highly unlikely.

The Kurds, meanwhile, are said to harbor separatist ambitions. But their wiser leaders, such as Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, surely recognize the danger of breaking away as a landlocked statelet. That holds even if—or especially if—they succeed in gaining control over oil-rich Kirkuk, which powerful neighbors will covet. The Kurds are likely to fare best by retaining exactly the same status they have now, as a semi-autonomous region in federal Iraq.

The biggest challenge will be convincing Iraq's Sunni Arabs that the new federal arrangement will protect, not threaten, their interests. This should be obvious, since they are a minority and Shiites will dominate the central government in Baghdad. But Sunnis fear losing money from the oil fields, which will be concentrated in Shiite and Kurdish regions. Here Mr. Chalabi's proposed oil trust—which would guarantee all Iraqis equal, individual payments—could prove a solution.

The U.S., Britain, the Arab League and other outside powers will also have to tread carefully lest they encourage Iraq's Sunni parties to become thinly

veiled front groups for terror—like Sinn Féin in Northern Ireland or the Palestine Liberation Organization. If these parties are allowed to believe that threatening or actually perpetrating violence will bring foreign pressure to accommodate Sunni demands, such a temptation will be irresistible. That's what President Talabani was getting at recently when he said "we cannot accept those who join the terrorists at night and stand on our side in the morning."

On the lessons-learned side, the election was final and definitive evidence of what a mistake it was for U.S. and British

intelligence to bet all their chips on Mr. Al-lawhi as the standard bearer for secularism in Iraq. We warned for a long time that the ex-Baathist would probably have a hard time winning the trust of many Iraqis traumatized by Saddam Hussein. The CIA's role here—and in simultaneously undermining Mr. Chalabi—is yet another of its Iraq intelligence failures.

Another lesson is that so-called "proportional representation"—in which voters choose lists of candidates, not individual representatives—is an inferior form of democracy that exacerbates exactly the sort of sectarian divisions that threaten Iraq. The proportional list was a United Nations preference backed by former Iraqi regent L. Paul Bremer, and it now looks to have been a mistake.

On balance, however, there are far more reasons for hope than despair in Iraq. A year ago few would have believed that the country would have held three successful votes and completed its transition to a legitimate and increasingly autonomous government. Washington's political role now is largely to stand back and let Iraqi leaders arrive at their own solutions, which will be the only durable kind.

Once a new government is formed, President Bush can make a long overdue visit to address the Iraqi parliament. Iraqis will want reassurance of continued American support and a chance to offer the thanks their liberator deserves.



Jalal Talabani

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

JANUARY 6 - 8, 2006

Abdel Halim Khaddam veut « œuvrer à la chute du régime » syrien

Le Monde
Dimanche 8 - Lundi 9 janvier 2006

L'ex-vice-président, réfugié à Paris, s'attaque au président syrien Bachar Al-Assad, l'accusant d'être influençable, impulsif, et de défendre un système de corruption

Cinq jours après que la commission d'enquête internationale a demandé à l'auditionner à propos de l'assassinat de l'ancien premier ministre libanais Rafic Hariri, l'ancien vice-président syrien Abdel Halim Khaddam a été entendu, vendredi 6 janvier à Paris, pendant deux heures, par Detlev Mehli. Le juge allemand continue d'assumer la présidence de la commission jusqu'à la nomination officielle – prévue le 11 janvier – de son successeur, le juge belge Serge Brammertz. M. Khaddam refuse de faire la moindre confidence. Dans son hôtel particulier du 16^e arrondissement, il affiche néanmoins la sérénité d'un homme qui estime avoir fait son devoir.

La commission veut également entendre le chef de l'Etat syrien, Bachar Al-Assad. Si ce dernier « accepte, ironise l'ancien vice-président, il faudra que les enquêteurs se fassent accompagner par un expert psychologue. Bachar Al-Assad est un impulsif, un nerveux et un grand peureux. Il suffit que le dernier venu lui rapporte qu'un tel a médité de lui pour que ce dernier se retrouve immédiatement en prison, quitte à être libéré trois ou quatre jours plus tard,

parce qu'un autre quidam aura assuré le président du contraire ». Influençable aussi, si l'on en croit M. Khaddam, qui raconte comment, dès 1999, lorsque feu son père lui avait confié le dossier du Liban,

Bachar Al-Assad avait été littéralement dressé contre Rafic Hariri par un groupe de jeunes Libanais de son âge, à l'instigation d'officiers des services de renseignement de l'armée de leur pays et du président libanais, Emile Lahoud.

Plus sérieusement, M. Khaddam, devenu un paria dans son pays pour avoir osé critiquer publiquement le pouvoir, est déterminé à « œuvrer à la chute du régime » dont « les politiques erronées » à l'intérieur et avec l'étranger « infligent au peuple syrien de grandes souffrances, étouffent les libertés et interdisent toute participation politique, alors que la crise économique est étouffante et que les pressions extérieures suscitent de vives inquiétudes ». Ses biens en Syrie ainsi que ceux de ses enfants viennent d'être saisis, et il dit savoir que « la décision a été prise de [le] tuer », avant même les critiques publiques qu'il a faites au régime. Mais il affirme n'en avoir cure et qu'il fallait une « décision courageuse ». Il est convaincu que « le processus de changement va se déclencher ». Il est « hostile à un coup d'Etat militaire, et à l'ingérence de l'armée dans la politique ». « La Syrie en a suffisamment pâti, dit-il. C'est le peuple qui doit conduire le changement. Ce n'est pas la voie la plus facile, mais c'est la plus sûre et une meilleure garantie pour l'avenir. »

Fautes présidentielles

Est-ce l'âge et/ou son entrée dans l'opposition « extérieure au régime » ou encore le rôle qu'il veut visiblement se donner de sauveur de la Syrie ? Abdel Halim Khaddam a en tout cas changé. Le dirigeant sévère, au regard bleu d'acier, glacial et glaçant, est aujourd'hui un homme affable, disponible, qui assure que « depuis des années, en particulier depuis l'accession à la présidence de Bachar Al-Assad [en juillet 2000], il est porteur de vues différentes des vues officielles ». Il affirme aussi ne pas être seul, que d'autres que lui en Syrie « se manifesteront en temps opportun », le temps que « certaines dispositions soient complétées et grâce au cadeau que le régime » offre aux partisans du changement « par l'effet accumulé de ses erreurs ».

Lui-même a des « contacts » et des « amis » dans son pays, où une « coopération s'est instaurée avec différents courants », hommes politiques et dirigeants « de l'intérieur et de l'extérieur du parti » Baas au pouvoir. « Un processus est en cours, affirme-t-il, pour les réunir autour d'un programme dont l'objectif est de bâtir un système démocratique, qui autorise les libertés publiques, abroge la loi sur l'Etat d'urgence [en vigueur depuis 1963], trouve des solutions à la crise économique et permette à la Syrie de recouvrer sa place sur les plans arabe et international. »

M. Khaddam admet que, sous la présidence d'Hafez Al-Assad, dont il était l'un des plus proches compagnons, le régime ne s'illustrait pas par son ouverture et son respect des libertés. Mais il s'en distancie en faisant valoir que, en tant que ministre des affaires étrangères puis vice-président, il ne s'occupait que de politique extérieure. Ce qui ne l'a jamais empêché de dire sa différence, comme en attestent, selon lui, dès 1971, les procès-verbaux des réunions des instances dirigeantes du parti et de l'Etat, et en 2002 dans un ouvrage, *Le Système arabe contemporain*.

« Les choses sont devenues plus évidentes pour moi après la chute de l'Union sovié-

que, indique-t-il. J'ai dit alors que la Syrie devait changer l'aiguillage d'une politique intérieure pratiquée à l'ombre de nos relations avec ce pays qui nous apportait son soutien à l'intérieur et sur le plan international. J'étais un opposant de l'intérieur. »

M. Khaddam est plus mal à l'aise lorsqu'on lui demande pourquoi il ne s'est pas insurgé contre la répression qui s'est abattue sur les Frères musulmans en 1982 et qui a fait entre 10 000 et 15 000 victimes dans la ville de Hama. « Un quart de siècle est passé sur cette affaire, et je préfère ne pas en parler pour ne pas rouvrir des plaies à un moment où nous avons besoin de l'unité nationale qui requiert la participation de tous les citoyens, Frères musulmans inclus », fait-il valoir. Il fait tout de même remarquer que les Frères musulmans « furent les premiers à tuer » – des cadets alaouites de l'Académie mili-



Abdel Halim Khaddam, ici dans son hôtel particulier à Paris, affirme que le président syrien Bachar Al-Assad a sacrifié la politique de son pays au Liban au profit d'« intérêts véreux de membres de sa famille ». PATRICK ARTINIAN/CONTACT PRESS IMAGES POUR « LE MONDE »

taire d'Alep en 1979 —, tout en admettant que « la répression officielle fut totalement démesurée ».

Ce qui a amené ce vieux routier des cercles officiels à entrer en dissidence, à annoncer, en juin 2005, au 10^e congrès du Baas, sa démission de ses fonctions au sein de l'Etat et de la direction du parti,

c'est « la désespérance de voir le pays se réformer en dépit de tous les efforts, des études et des dossiers » plaidant en ce sens qu'il a lui-même présentés au président syrien. C'est aussi une accumulation de fautes présidentielles, tant dans les relations avec la France qu'avec le Liban, où Bachar Al-Assad a, selon lui, sacrifié l'in-

ton arabe dit « vous goûterez à la saveur de vos actes ». Dieu fait aujourd'hui goûter à Sharon ce qu'il a fait subir à des milliers de gens innocents. » Yehya Agami est un ancien général égyptien, occupant actuellement un poste sécuritaire à Charm

For veteran U.S. troops, a new challenge in Iraq

More comfort, but few clear victories

By Thanassis Cambanis

KIRKUK, Iraq: Captain John McLaughlin's company of U.S. combat veterans has returned to Iraq. His paratroopers have brought far fewer illusions this time around, exchanging unalloyed enthusiasm for the war in Iraq in the spring of 2003 for a mix of professionalism, resignation and cynicism.

The enlisted men from the 101st Airborne Division now know much more about the country, confidently factoring in competing ethnic agendas as they navigate the claims of Kurds, Sunni Arabs, Shiites and Turkmen.

Most dismiss the debate over the merits of the war as irrelevant, many of them saying they fight out of loyalty to the U.S. Army even if they think its mission in Iraq is unrealistic. Most profess no love for Iraq or its people.

When these paratroopers returned to Iraq in October, the theater of battle was barely recognizable to them.

In April 2003, the 2nd Battalion of the division's 327th Infantry Regiment fought its way through the nastiest combat of the Iraq invasion, leaping out of helicopters to fight Saddam Hussein loyalists in Najaf and in Mosul, where the paratroopers eventually established a base and stayed until February 2004.

The division suffered 59 deaths that year. Its members returned to their post at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, for a year and a half before returning to Iraq.

But 2003 seems like ages ago to the young veterans. The battalion that arrived in Kirkuk — about two-thirds of them veterans of Iraq or Afghanistan — found a forward operating base, or FOB, so cushy that commanders worried that the soldiers would go soft, forgetting they are stationed in a war zone.

Instead of sleeping on the floors of gutted warehouses, eating military rations and burning their own sewage in trenches behind their quarters, the soldiers now benefit from the infrastructure of a long occupation.

FOB Warrior, as it is called, has facilities like hot showers, a swimming pool and a beauty parlor that gives massages. There is a Burger King restaurant and a 24-hour coffee shop, where soldiers line up for lattes and brownies in the middle of the night.

The permanence of facilities at the Kirkuk base also hints of a mission without end.

The surrounding city is still a deadly place — less lethal than Falluja, but more so than the Shiite south. On this tour, 26 soldiers from the 101st had been killed by mid-December.

After the 2003 invasion, U.S. troops had clear marching orders: Catch Saddam and his lieutenants and stabilize Iraq. During the first few months, criminal gangs posed the greatest law-and-order challenge, not insurgents.

Some returning soldiers said that while they once believed they could quickly train the Iraqi police to replace U.S. troops, they have now set their sights much lower, hoping perhaps to set a decent example for police officers and soldiers they train but do not entirely trust.

"Regardless of whether this is the great march of democracy or protecting the shores of America, whether I bought into that or not, it doesn't matter,"

McLaughlin said. "My obligation as a soldier, as an officer, as a leader is to do the mission to the best of my ability. That's the only saving grace out of the whole thing."

During a four-day visit to the base, soldiers and their commanders said they see the Iraq mission as less ambitious, less achievable and more stressful than they did almost three years ago.

The soldiers still work at battle rhythm, always on call and with no days off. And while still dangerous, their daily routine involves patrolling be-

sees ambiguity. As he and his troops see it, most Iraqis do not like the Americans and tolerate their presence only when U.S. interests coincide with their own.

In that sea of doubt, there are a few safe harbors. For McLaughlin's unit, one safe harbor to protest is the putrid settlement they call the Gypsy Camp, an abandoned factory inhabited by squatters and prostitutes.

All of the major ethnic groups in Kirkuk — Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen — share contempt for the gypsies. To McLaughlin, the gypsies represent the most blameless victims of the complex conflict in Iraq and their mistreatment at the hands of the Iraqi security forces trained by Americans reflects the greatest pitfall of the new U.S. Army mission: that the Iraqi authorities might abuse their growing powers.

Many of the Iraqi soldiers and police officers whom McLaughlin trains violate the ban on visiting the brothel. In mid-December, Iraqi soldiers were accused of beating several of the women and burning the tents the squatters had pitched behind the half-finished shell of a building.

"We — you, me, police — we're all here to secure everybody within the city, and that includes the gypsies," McLaughlin thundered at a young Iraqi lieutenant during a visit to the camp. "By going down there and slapping them around, burning down their tent, it makes you look no better than a criminal."

The raid on the camp exemplifies the new mission for the U.S. military in Iraq: The top priority is no longer to kill insurgents and search neighborhoods. Now, U.S. troops are supposed to pour their energy into training Iraqi forces to do that job.

In a war without any benchmarks coming up, First Sergeant Jason Larson said, commanders have to constantly refine their message to soldiers, billing small turning points like the improvement of an Iraqi battalion as major victories. "For us, the challenge will be to keep everyone focused," Larson said.

The Boston Globe

**'We — you, me, police —
we're all here
to secure everybody
within the city.'**

tween the Kirkuk police stations and army bases, investigating assassinations and bomb attacks against Iraqis and, often, investigating the very Iraqi security forces they are trying to train.

Everywhere he looks, McLaughlin

Herald Tribune

January 9, 2006

Nucléaire : Bush et Chirac mettent en garde l'Iran

LE FIGARO mercredi 11 janvier 2006

MOYEN-ORIENT

La réouverture par la République islamique, hier, du centre de recherche atomique de Natanz, rapproche la perspective d'une saisine du Conseil de sécurité.

LA TENSION est montée d'un cran hier après la décision de Téhéran de rouvrir l'un de ses centres de recherche nucléaire, à Natanz dans le centre du pays. L'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA) a confirmé la levée, sous la supervision de ses inspecteurs, des scellés de ce centre, prévu pour des activités nucléaires ultrasensibles. Les Iraniens en avaient suspendu le fonctionnement depuis octobre 2003. Téhéran avait indiqué il y a une semaine sa volonté de reprendre ses recherches à compter du 9 janvier.

Quoique menées théoriquement « dans des buts pacifiques » et ne constituant pas, à proprement parler, de l'enrichissement de l'uranium, ces recherches alimentent le soupçon sur les intentions de Téhéran qui, selon les Occidentaux et l'AIEA, pourrait vouloir relancer son processus de prolifération. Exprimant sa « profonde inquiétude », le directeur général de l'AIEA, Mohammed ElBaradei a précisé que l'Iran était en train de retirer les scellés non seulement du

centre de Natanz mais aussi de deux autres sites qui lui sont liés. Cela montre « le dédain de l'Iran pour les inquiétudes de la communauté internationale (au sujet de son programme nucléaire) et son rejet de la voie diplomatique », a déclaré au Figaro le représentant américain auprès de l'AIEA, Gregory Schulte. Téhéran « fait aujourd'hui délibérément un pas supplémentaire vers la reprise de l'enrichissement d'uranium, un procédé qui, on le sait, permet de créer la bombe », a-t-il ajouté.

Ce défi a soulevé une vague de condamnations dans les capitales occidentales, notamment à Washington. La Maison-Blanche a mis en garde l'Iran contre les risques d'une « grave escalade ». « Toute reprise de l'enrichissement ou des activités de conversion constituerait une nouvelle violation de la part de l'Iran de ses accords avec les Européens », a dit le porte-parole de la présidence américaine. Il a rappelé l'engagement pris par Téhéran en novembre 2003 (avec le Royaume-Uni, la France et l'Allemagne) de suspendre son programme nucléaire. L'un des signataires de cet accord, le ministre britannique des Affaires étrangères Jack Straw, s'est déclaré « profondément inquiet » du pas franchi par l'Iran en estimant que celui-ci n'avait « aucune bonne raison » de le faire « si ses intentions sont réelle-



Jacques Chirac, lors de ses vœux au corps diplomatique, a estimé que Téhéran commettait une erreur en renonçant à ses engagements en matière nucléaire.

ment pacifiques ».

Surdité de Téhéran

A Paris, Jacques Chirac a profité de la traditionnelle cérémonie de vœux au corps diplomatique pour mettre en garde le régime iranien contre le non-respect de ses engagements en matière nucléaire, adressant également son propos à la Corée du Nord. Ces deux pays « commettraient une grave erreur en ne saisissant pas la main que nous leur tendons », a déclaré le chef de l'État devant les ambassadeurs en poste à Paris. « Chacun reconnaît à l'Iran ou à la Corée du Nord le droit à l'usage pacifique de l'énergie nucléaire. Mais la communauté internationale doit faire impérativement respecter les engagements consentis pour la

sécurité de tous », a-t-il poursuivi.

Ces derniers jours, les membres permanents du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU n'ont pas ménagé leurs efforts pour dissuader l'Iran de passer à l'acte. Les Cinq (Chine, États-Unis, France, Grande-Bretagne, Russie) ont fait parvenir chacun des messages aux autorités iraniennes, les enjoignant à ne pas rouvrir le centre de Natanz et à renouer le dialogue diplomatique. La surdité de Téhéran pourrait conduire à un transfert du dossier par l'AIEA à New York, en vue d'éventuelles sanctions contre Téhéran. Une perspective qui, en se rapprochant inexorablement, embarrasse au plus haut point les Occidentaux et explique la vigueur de leurs mises en demeure.

ALAIN BARLUET

Le complexe nucléaire de Natanz : un site officiellement « pacifique »

Situé à 250 km au sud de Téhéran, le complexe atomique de Natanz abrite à la fois un centre d'assemblage de centrifugeuses, une usine pilote d'enrichissement de l'uranium, et une autre, plus grande, en cours de construction. De quoi passer sans peine de la phase de recherche à la phase de la production industrielle, à condition de se débarrasser des équipe-

ments de surveillance de l'AIEA, toujours en place : des caméras placées aux endroits-clés transmettent des images toutes les trente secondes.

Natanz est dans le collimateur des inspecteurs de l'AIEA depuis le début de leur travail de vérification, en février 2003. Lorsqu'ils parvinrent à pénétrer dans les installations fraîchement repeintes, ils découvri-

rent, stupéfaits, d'immenses pièces souterraines vides, capables d'abriter des milliers de centrifugeuses. Un total de 164 montées en cascade, sont opérationnelles. Les autres, si elles existent, restent introuvables.

Encore faut-il disposer de suffisamment de matière première pour pouvoir assembler des têtes nucléaires. Depuis le 8 août, c'est

chose faite : l'Iran, dont le sous-sol regorge de minerais d'uranium (« yellow cake »), a relancé la phase préalable à l'enrichissement, la conversion d'uranium. Plus de 50 tonnes d'uranium gazeux (UF₆) n'attendent plus que d'être enrichies « à des fins de recherche ». Il y a là largement de quoi produire plusieurs armes nucléaires.

Maurin Picard (à Vienne)

Pourquoi il est urgent de répondre au défi iranien

A l'aube de la 6^e année du nouveau millénaire, Adolf Hitler est ressuscité. Plus exactement, il s'est réincarné, après sa mort dans les ruines de Berlin, sous les traits d'un obscur terroriste iranien, petit et chétif comme lui, mais propulsé à la présidence de la République islamique d'Iran pour d'interminables répliques d'un séisme khomeynique qui n'en finit pas de tuer, vingt-six ans après. Le président Ahmadinejad a lu le Führer. Au demeurant, *Les Protocoles des sages de Sion*, le brulôt antisémite dont on connaît les ravages, n'ont-il pas été réédités à Téhéran dès 1985 par l'Organisation pour la propagande islamique afin de servir à l'édification des masses ? La filiation « intellectuelle », si l'on ose dire, saute aux yeux pour qui veut bien comparer le discours du leader iranien à la version originale de *Mein Kampf*.

Mais la différence entre Hitler et Ahmadinejad est que le premier a échoué, là où le second est en train de réussir : accéder à la bombe atomique. Selon les rapports de l'AIEA et de son directeur, le prix Nobel de la paix Mohammed ElBaradei, l'Iran se rapproche aujourd'hui dangereusement du « seuil » nucléaire. Et l'acquisition de l'arme nucléaire, qui constitue depuis des décennies l'objectif du programme clandestin iranien, en complète violation de ses engagements internationaux, transformerait cet Etat, qui s'est depuis longtemps affranchi des règles du monde civilisé – que l'on songe à la prise d'otages à l'ambassade américaine de Téhéran en 1979 ou à l'épisode du « diplomate » iranien Wahid Gerdji en 1986, qui n'était qu'une illustration de sa pratique ordinaire du terrorisme, y compris sur notre sol –, en une menace autrement plus sérieuse pour la paix et la sécurité internationales.

Ainsi parle aujourd'hui le dirigeant d'un grand pays musulman. Et que dit le reste du monde musulman, un milliard d'hommes, lesquels ne sont pour l'essentiel ni chiites, ni persans ? Réponse : rien. Aucun président, aucun ministre des Affaires étrangères, aucun média

Par
Pierre Lellouche *



« Au train où vont les choses, l'Iran d'Ahmadinejad aura la bombe d'ici un an ou deux, tout au plus »

arabe, y compris dans les Etats modérés amis de l'Occident, ne s'est élevé pour dénoncer cet appel au génocide des Juifs. Mieux, il s'est même trouvé quelques thuriféraires de la foi islamique pour se féliciter de la force de conviction du président iranien. Deuxième question : si le monde arabo-musulman ne réagit pas, que fait l'Occident et surtout que fait l'Europe, qui a vu naître la folie hitlérienne et sa conclusion : la Shoah. Réponse : les démocraties occidentales « condamnent » et « s'indignent » de propos « scandaleux » et naturellement « inacceptables »... mais au-delà des mots, elles ne font rien.

L'inexistence de l'Europe sur un sujet aussi fondamental n'a d'égale que son échec, aujourd'hui patent, dans le bras de fer qui oppose l'Iran et la Communauté internationale sur ses ambitions nucléaires. Il est clair aujourd'hui que les négociations conduites par les trois Européens avec l'Iran ont fait long feu. Des solutions de compromis raisonnables avaient pourtant été proposées, en vain, aux Iraniens. Ceux-ci viennent d'annoncer, il y a deux jours, la reprise de leurs activités de recherche et d'enrichissement.

Au train où vont les choses, l'Iran d'Ahmadinejad aura la

bombe d'ici un an ou deux, tout au plus. Les équilibres régionaux s'en trouveront bouleversés. Outre Israël, les pays arabes modérés, mais aussi la Turquie, qui est notre alliée au sein de l'Otan, risquent de se voir directement soumis à son chantage. Nous-mêmes pourrions a contrario nous féliciter d'avoir eu la sagesse de conserver une force de dissuasion en cours de modernisation. Mais compte tenu des liens étroits entretenus par l'Iran et en particulier par les pasdarans – que M. Ahmadinejad dirigeait encore récemment – avec plusieurs mouvements terroristes djihadistes, dont le Hezbollah, le pire serait à craindre – c'est-à-dire

re l'emploi de l'arme nucléaire au cœur de nos villes par une nébuleuse d'acteurs terroristes non étatiques –, alors que le territoire iranien serait « sanctuarisé ».

On objectera que le président iranien n'est pas aujourd'hui détenteur de la totalité du pouvoir et qu'il demeure soumis en théorie à l'autorité du guide de la révolution Ali Khamenei, sorte de Hindenburg en turban. Mais pour combien de temps encore ? On assurera aussi que ses positions seraient affaiblies par ses propres outrances et plus encore par l'alliance réalisée de facto entre Américains et chiites en Irak. Cela est peut-être vrai. Mais la fuite en avant qu'il a déclenchée est une sorte de quitte-ou-double : soit nous laissons Ahmadinejad poursuivre sur sa lancée programmatique, et c'est l'assurance d'un nouveau conflit majeur au Proche-Orient, dans lequel nous risquerions d'être impliqués ; soit il en est empêché, ce qu'il faut évidemment souhaiter. L'idéal serait qu'il le soit de l'intérieur, à la faveur d'un changement de régime en Iran. On peut malheureusement douter que les circonstances s'y prêtent.

A défaut, il conviendrait, avant que la situation échappe à tout contrôle, que le Conseil de sécurité soit saisi de cette affaire, en espérant qu'il ne fasse pas une nouvelle fois la preuve de son incapacité à agir. Car il ne faut pas se voiler la face : l'un des dom-

mages collatéraux du débat sur les armes de destruction massive en Irak – alors que l'intervention de la coalition aurait très bien pu être justifiée, à mon sens, par la seule nécessité d'écarter un dictateur particulièrement sanguinaire – aura été d'affaiblir durablement toute capacité de mobilisation des opinions publiques occidentales sur les questions de prolifération, qui sont aujourd'hui pourtant le danger le plus pressant. Ahmadinejad le sait : aussi pousse-t-il ses feux. A nous de savoir relever ce défi, sans faiblesse. Plus nous attendrons, plus le coût sera élevé.

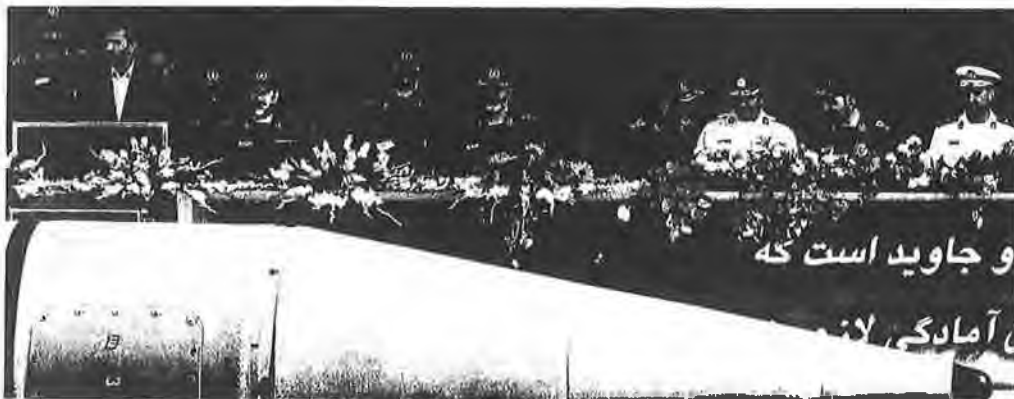
** Député et conseiller de Paris, président de l'Assemblée parlementaire de l'Otan.*

Cette tribune est cosignée par les députés UMP Alfred Almont, Richard Dell'Agnola, Bernard Depierre, Claude Goasguen, Arlette Grosskost, Jean-Yves Hugon, Jean-Marc Lefranc, Pierre Lellouche, Lionnel Luca, Richard Mallié, Pierre Micaux, Marc Reymann, Jean-Marc Roubaud et Philippe Vitel.

LE FIGARO

12 janvier 2006

Washington cherche la réplique au défi iranien



NUCLÉAIRE

L'Administration Bush voudrait à passer à l'action contre Téhéran. Mais Kofi Annan considèrerait hier que l'AIEA « demeure clairement aux commandes » sur ce dossier.

Après la décision de Téhéran de reprendre ses recherches nucléaires, les Occidentaux s'efforcent de trouver la riposte. Les chefs de la diplomatie de la tria européenne – France, Allemagne, Grande-Bretagne – se réunissent aujourd'hui à Berlin et pourraient décider de saisir le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU.

De notre correspondant à Washington

L'IRAN n'est pas l'Irak. Trois ans après le cavalier seul de l'Administration Bush contre Saddam Hussein, la démarche américaine face à l'Iran en offre presque le négatif : diplomatie, approche graduelle, recherche du consensus sont les maîtres mots à Washington. Un seul reste toutefois valable dans les deux cas : action.

Les autorités américaines ont réagi avec fermeté à la reprise du programme d'enrichissement nucléaire iranien, « une grave escalade », pour le porte-parole du département d'État, Sean McCormack. « La communauté internationale a clairement indiqué à l'Iran que son comportement est inacceptable », a-t-il dit. Et d'ajouter : « Il est plus probable que jamais que nous nous dirigeons vers le Conseil de sécurité sur cette question ». Pour la Maison-Blanche, l'ONU a toujours été le point d'arrivée prévisible de la crise, prélude à l'imposition de sanctions internationales. Mais la nuance réside dans les méandres qu'elle est prête à suivre pour y arriver.

Après avoir soutenu les négociations menées par l'Allemagne, la France et la Grande-Bretagne (UE 3) et approuvé une offre russe de sous-traitance de l'uranium iranien, la diplomatie américaine est encore prête se montrer patiente pour obtenir l'appui d'une large coalition. Son premier objectif est d'envoyer un message unifié à Téhéran, lors de la prochaine réunion de l'Agence internationale à l'énergie atomique (AIEA), début février à Vienne. « Nous avons les voix nécessaires » pour un transfert du dossier au Conseil de sécurité, a assuré le secrétaire d'État, Condoleezza Rice, vendredi dernier. « Le consensus euro-américain est très fort. D'autres s'y joignent. Ce n'est pas de l'intimidation, c'est de la diplomatie. »

Pour apaiser ceux qui redoutent de signer un chèque en blanc à Bush, le transfert à l'ONU pourrait ne déboucher dans un premier temps que sur une déclaration politique condamnant l'attitude iranienne. Pour passer à des sanctions, Washington et ses alliés doivent convaincre la Chine et la Russie, déten-

trices d'un droit de veto et liées à Téhéran par des intérêts stratégiques : Pékin importe 12 % de son pétrole d'Iran, et Moscou – qui fait des affaires lucratives avec le régime des mollahs en matière d'armements et de nucléaire civil – redoute une déstabilisation dans le Caucase et en Asie centrale. Le récent durcissement de ton des deux capitales à l'égard des provocations iraniennes ne garantit pas leur soutien à l'ONU.

La voie diplomatique recèle donc des incertitudes pour Washington. Aux yeux des « durs » de l'Administration et des groupes de pression conservateurs, elle n'a pas fait la preuve de son efficacité. L'idée européenne « de la fermeté est apparemment de prier les Iraniens à déjeuner », raillait hier l'éditorial du *Wall Street Journal* en s'élevant contre « un consensus inepte ». Charles Krauthammer, chroniqueur néoconservateur, accuse Téhéran de « s'armer pour l'Apocalypse ». L'Aipac, le lobby pro-israélien aux États-Unis, a fait circuler au Congrès une rare critique de George Bush, lui reprochant sa « politique dangereuse et inappropriée » à l'égard de l'Iran, qui aurait pour effet de « faciliter sa quête de l'arme nucléaire ».

« Sanctions multinationales »

Sous pression, Washington passe donc en revue ses options. Le renvoi il y a deux ans de la Corée du Nord devant le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU n'avait été suivi d'aucune action concrète. Lui préférant la formule des « coalitions de volontaires », le chef de la majorité républicaine au Sénat, Bill Frist, a récemment préconisé l'enrôlement des alliés (en particulier européens) dans un programme de « sanctions multinationales », commençant par un embargo sur les technologies à usage nucléaire et menant progressivement à l'isolement déjà pratiqué par les États-Unis. Le département d'État maintient l'Iran sur sa liste des États terroristes, bannissant tout commerce sensible avec le régime et sanctionnant les entreprises qui s'y livrent.

« A moins d'agir vite, nous allons nous retrouver avec une crise nucléaire sur les bras », insiste Bill Frist. L'option militaire reste sur la table mais, cette fois-ci, elle apparaît vraiment comme le dernier recours. Des frappes aériennes contre une douzaine de sites enterrés au milieu de zones habitées exigeraient des semaines de bombardements. L'effet de domino dans tout le Moyen-Orient est garanti, quoique difficile à calculer. Quant à la tentation israélienne d'y recourir, elle causerait sans doute encore plus de problèmes à Washington.

PHILIPPE GÉLIE

LE FIGARO jeudi 12 janvier 2006

An incendiary threat in Iraq

Iraq's most powerful Shiite politician has just dealt a huge blow to American-backed efforts to avoid civil war through the creation of a new, nationally inclusive constitutional order. That leader, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, leader of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, has turned his back on the crucial pledge, made before last October's constitutional referendum, that the new charter would be open to substantial amendment by the newly elected parliament. Instead, al-Hakim, who runs the dominant fundamentalist party, which has close ties to Iran, now says no broad changes should be made. In particular, he defends the current provisions allowing substantial autonomy for the oil-rich Shiite southeast.

The vote count from last month's parliamentary election is not yet complete. But it is already certain that the Shiite religious alliance, in which al-Hakim is the most important lead-

er, will hold enough seats to block any constitutional changes it doesn't like. The only recourse is to persuade him to respect that earlier pledge.

Al-Hakim's latest position is a prescription for a national breakup and an endless civil war. It is also a provocative challenge to Washington, which helped broker the original promise of significant constitutional changes. On the basis of that promise, Sunni voters turned out in large numbers, both for the constitutional referendum and for last month's parliamentary vote. Drawing Sunni voters into democratic politics is essential for creating the stable, peaceful Iraq that President George W. Bush has declared to be the precondition for an American military withdrawal.

The most unacceptable defect of the new constitution for Sunnis is its provision for radically decentralizing national political and economic power by transferring it to Iraq's disparate regions. In a quirk of geology,

most of Iraq's known oil deposits lie under provinces dominated by Shiites or Kurds, while the Sunni provinces of the west and north are resource-poor and landlocked. Iraq as a whole is rich enough to support all of its people relatively comfortably. But a radically decentralized Iraq would leave the Sunnis impoverished, aggrieved and desperate, and would drive them into the arms of radical Sunni groups in neighboring lands.

Although Sunnis are a minority in Iraq, they are an overwhelming majority in the Arab world. An irreconcilable split between Iraq's Shiites and Sunnis would leave the Shiites even more dependent than they are now on Iran and American troops.

Constitutional changes are needed in other areas as well, especially in regard to women's rights and the overly broad prohibitions against former members of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party. But decentralization is the most dangerously explosive issue right now. Al-Hakim seems perversely determined to inflame it.

« Pétrole contre nourriture » : les avertissements de Bercy

JUSTICE

Deux hauts fonctionnaires de l'Industrie affirment avoir alerté le Quai d'Orsay sur certaines sociétés inconnues candidates au programme de l'ONU.

DÈS 2001, le ministère de l'Industrie était informé, des fraudes commises dans le cadre du programme des Nations unies « Pétrole contre nourriture » conçu pour alléger les conséquences de l'embargo imposé à l'Irak. Après avoir entendu, en décembre dernier, deux hauts fonctionnaires de Bercy, le juge Philippe Courroye cherche à savoir si l'administration française a couvert des malversations.

Didier Houssin, directeur des matières premières et des hydrocarbures puis directeur des ressources énergétiques et minérales (Direm) entre 1998 et 2004, a ainsi livré une version inédite de l'histoire. Aujourd'hui patron du Bureau de recherches géologiques et minières (BRGM), il avait au moment des faits la haute main sur les questions pétrolières au ministère de l'Industrie. Devant le juge Courroye,

Didier Houssin a expliqué avoir été « consulté par l'administration des Douanes et par le ministère des Affaires étrangères » sur les entreprises susceptibles d'être agréées pour « Pétrole contre nourriture ».

Une résolution adoptée en 1995 aux Nations unies prévoyait que l'ONU fixe le prix d'achat du pétrole irakien par les compagnies occidentales et que l'argent de la vente était séquestré sur un compte à New York pour servir exclusivement à l'achat de denrées et de médicaments. Au préalable, les compagnies pétrolières devaient se munir d'une autorisation de leurs autorités nationales pour acquérir de l'or noir irakien.

Commissions occultes

Didier Houssin a expliqué avoir donné aux Douanes et au Quai d'Orsay un « avis favorable concernant les sociétés historiquement présentes sur le marché français », telles que Total mais avoir « refusé de se prononcer sur des sociétés inconnues » de sa direction. Or, comme le souligne un rapport du procureur de la République du 28 décembre dernier, ce sont pré-

cisément ces sociétés aux noms plus ou moins exotiques qui auraient servi aux malversations financières. Réfutant toute implication, Didier Houssin a renvoyé la responsabilité du choix des sociétés sur le Quai d'Orsay, indiquant sur procès-verbal « qu'il appartenait au ministère des Affaires étrangères d'accorder ou non un agrément ».

Interrogé lui aussi comme témoin, Dominique Maillard, directeur général de l'énergie et des matières premières (chargée au ministère de l'Industrie de la mise en œuvre de la politique énergétique), a livré la même analyse.

Mais Dominique Maillard et Didier Houssin ont fourni au juge Courroye un autre détail. Ils lui ont expliqué avoir eu connaissance dès 2001 de paiements de « surcharges » par les compagnies agréées. Or ces « surcharges » réclamées par le régime de Saddam Hussein permettaient le versement de commissions occultes à des dignitaires irakiens et à des personnalités, notamment françaises. Les deux hauts fonctionnaires ont déclaré au juge « ne pas avoir alerté les opérateurs sur cette difficulté au motif

qu'il n'appartenait pas à leur administration de faire respecter le système mis en place par l'ONU ».

Dans les prochaines semaines, le juge Courroye devrait procéder à l'audition des responsables du ministère des Affaires étrangères. Il semble cependant acquis que le Quai d'Orsay n'ait pas été très sourcilieux. Dans un entretien au *Figaro* (nos éditions du 15 octobre 2005), Hubert Védrine, qui fut ministre des Affaires étrangères du gouvernement Jospin entre 1997 et 2002, affirmait simplement avoir été « vigilant » concernant deux anciens ambassadeurs, Serge Boidevaix et Jean-Bernard Mérimée, aujourd'hui mis en examen pour avoir bénéficié des largesses du régime irakien de Saddam Hussein.

ERIC DECOUTY

LE FIGARO

12 janvier 2006

West finds its options on Iran are limited

Tehran has prepared to deal with sanctions

By Steven R. Weisman

WASHINGTON: In ignoring international protests and pressing ahead with nuclear enrichment activities, Iran has ended hopes, at least for now, of resolving the crisis over its alleged nuclear arms ambitions and has also set in motion a confrontation with the West, diplomats involved in the process agree.

But based on what European and American officials were saying and doing Wednesday, one day after Iran moved to break the internationally monitored seals on its nuclear facilities, it was unclear whether a consensus for sanctions could be formed, or that Iranian behavior would be changed even if new pressure were applied.

A year ago, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice declared that "the time for diplomacy is now"

News Analysis when she encouraged European allies to negotiate with Iran. But now the Bush administration is in an awkward position of having few results from its negotiating gambit and few alternatives to change Iranian behavior.

"I believe the West has played this game too late and played into Iranian hands," said Abbas Milani, director of Iranian studies at Stanford University. "At this stage, they are convinced that the more hard ball they play, the more the West will collapse."

Milani said that reports of statements by Iranian officials suggest that Iran has not only been using the last few years to sign up oil deals with countries around the world to shield themselves against sanctions, they also have been stockpiling food, medicine and other materials to be able to survive at least three years of sanctions.

Nevertheless, American and European officials say that two years of trying to negotiate with Iran, and offering incentives for Tehran to abandon its nuclear programs, may not have changed Iranian behavior — but at least these efforts have brought a measure of unanimity in the West for applying new pressure now that talks have failed.

Bush administration officials indicate that they plan to take the next phase of pressure step by step, perhaps starting with a referral of Iran's case by the International Atomic Energy Agency to the United Nations Security

Council, and then discussing passage of some sort of condemnation of Iran before the imposition of sanctions.

Vice President Dick Cheney, in an interview with Fox News, said Wednesday that the United States would seek adoption of "a resolution that could be enforced by sanctions were they to fail to comply with it."

Among the possibilities being discussed, officials said, were a ban on travel by Iranian diplomats, restrictions on commercial contracts or sports contests and other small steps falling short of what would be the toughest sanction of all — either a ban on oil purchases or on the export of refined gasoline to Iran.

One school of thought holds that symbolic steps might have an impact.

"A lot of what can be done is simply related to Iran's status in the world," said Mitchell Reiss, a policy planning director at the State Department in the first Bush term. "The Iranians are very sensitive to challenges to their own legitimacy, and there are a lot of things you can do before bringing down the hammer big time."

But others are less sure of such a course of action, even within the Bush administration.

"I've been surprised that so many people are acting like referral to the Security Council is some important event that will bring about change in government of Iran," said an administration official, asking not to be identified. "I don't buy it."

For the time being, there is no talk of military action, except hypothetically, in part because any kind of air strike or covert attempt to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities by the United States, Israel or anyone else would still provoke a counter-reaction, Western diplomats agree.

The key to what the United States does next is still Russia and China.

Russia has been surprisingly tough on Iran in the last 24 hours, in part because it was embarrassed that its own offer of a joint effort to enrich uranium on Russian soil, as an alternative to Iran's activities, was treated dismissively by Iran. China is considered likely to go along with sanctions if Russia does.

But Iran has not been complacent in the last two years while conducting negotiations with the West. It has signed oil contracts with Russia, China and other countries to try to head off the possibility of the West playing the energy card.

Various diplomats said that while Russia has sounded supportive of some action against Iran, they expect Moscow to try to delay any quick action. European and American officials are hoping to agree on Thursday to a meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency by the end of January.

"What we try to do is not the same as what will happen," said the administration official. "We can try to get a condemnation with preliminary sanctions, but the Russians and the Chinese are a problem."

If the Iranians were fearful of eco-

nomie threats, some Europeans suggested, they might have been better persuaded than they have been with some of the economic threats that were made over the last six months.

For example, Britain, France and Germany persuaded the Bush administration to let them offer discussions on trade preferences, and aircraft spare parts, if Iran agreed to suspend its nuclear enrichment activities and agreed in principle to ending such activities outright over the long term.

Iran is believed to need the spare parts desperately. There have been at least two military plane crashes in the last month, one of them earlier this week, in which a large number of top Revolutionary Guard figures were re-

ported killed.

Last month, more than 100 people died in a crash and Mohammad Khatami, Iran's former president, accused the United States of criminal conduct in not selling new planes and parts to Iran.

"They need us — after all they're planes are dropping out of the skies," said a European diplomat. But he added that it was too soon to say if Iran would act on those needs as opposed to its determination that for status and security, it needs a nuclear weapons program.

The New York Times

Iran dismisses sanction threat

From news reports

TEHRAN: Iran's nuclear program will not be impeded by any sanctions that the West may impose, former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani said Wednesday as calls mounted for Iran to be referred to the UN Security Council for its decision to break the seals at a uranium enrichment plant Tuesday and resume nuclear research.

In Iran's first reply to the chorus of protests by the United States and European nations, Rafsanjani, who heads the powerful Expediency Council, said he was "astonished" by the West's attempt to "bully" Iran.

Warning the West against trying to curb Iran, he said: "If they cause any disturbance, they will ultimately regret it."

Rafsanjani accused the West of trying to limit the progress of the developing world.

"Keeping the Third World and the Islamic world several steps behind has been the West's traditional colonial policy," he said in remarks broadcast on state television. (AP, Reuters, AFP)

Herald  Tribune

January 12, 2006

"Les Américains doivent envahir la Syrie !"

Interrogé par *The Washington Post*, le leader de la gauche libanaise, le Druze Walid Joumblatt, appelle les États-Unis à intervenir en Syrie pour chasser Bachar El-Assad du pouvoir par la force.

THE WASHINGTON POST
Washington

Dans les films de gangsters, on sait que ça va barder quand un vieux boss mécontent décide de changer de camp et de lâcher le jeune parrain. C'est à peu près ce qui est en train de se passer en Syrie et, dans un Moyen-Orient déjà turbulent, c'est une bombe à retardement. Le boss qui, dans le cas présent, a décidé de retourner sa veste n'est autre que l'ancien vice-président syrien Abdel Halim Khaddam. Depuis son exil en France, il a récemment accordé une interview fracassante dans laquelle il dénonce le rôle du régime du président syrien Bachar El-Assad dans l'assassinat de l'ancien Premier ministre libanais Rafic Hariri, survenu en 2005.

Khaddam a dévoilé des détails dévastateurs. Il affirme que, après la mort de Hariri, il est allé voir Assad pour dénoncer le chef des services de renseignements syriens au Liban, le général Rustom Ghazali. "J'ai dit à Bachar qu'il devrait rappeler immédiatement ce criminel [Ghazali] et lui couper la tête pour avoir créé cette situation au Liban." Ces révélations ont aussitôt fait de Khaddam le témoin clé dans l'enquête des Nations unies sur la mort de Hariri, et ont sérieusement accentué la pression sur Assad et son régime. Au cinéma, Khaddam se verrait proposer des mesures de sécurité par les autorités et les caïds sorti-

raient leurs sulfateuses. Dans la réalité, les choses pourraient se passer de manière assez similaire. Mais cette guerre entre mafias risque de s'élargir jusqu'à impliquer des armées bien réelles en Syrie, au Liban, en Israël et jusqu'au lointain Iran.

Pour comprendre les récents développements intervenus en Syrie et au Liban, j'ai joint au téléphone Walid Joumblatt, qui est le chef de la com-

munauté druze libanaise et lui-même une sorte de caïd. Il a qualifié les révélations faites par Khaddam – qu'il définissait comme "l'un des principaux architectes de la politique syrienne depuis trois décennies" – de "coup très dur" pour Assad et son principal allié libanais, la milice chiite du Hezbollah.



■ ◀ **L'Ire de Joumblatt**
Se sentant menacé après la longue série d'attentats au Liban, le leader druze Walid Joumblatt adopte la stratégie de l'attaque et tire à boulets rouges sur le régime syrien et ses alliés libanais et iraniens. Dans les colonnes de *L'Orient-Le Jour*, il dit "non à un axe qui partagerait de la Méditerranée pour finir à Téhéran". Sur l'avenir du régime de Damas, Joumblatt réaffirme les idées développées dans *The Washington Post* : "Un régime oppresseur ne peut être évincé que par un appui extérieur."

Dessin de Tamer, Egypte.

Mais plus Assad se sentira acculé, prévient Joumblatt, plus la situation deviendra dangereuse pour le Liban. "Plus vous ferez pression sur les Syriens, dit-il, plus ils deviendront agressifs ici au Liban."

Le chef druze se terre dans sa forteresse ancestrale de Moukhtara, dans les montagnes libanaises du Chouf. Comme d'autres Libanais que j'ai pu interroger, il craint une nouvelle agression violente de la part des Syriens, qui pourraient être tentés de raviver les conflits religieux au Liban – ce qui permettrait à Assad de gagner du temps en détournant l'attention du monde de l'affaire Hariri. Pour Joumblatt, la seule solution effective serait un changement de régime à Damas, une "solution à la Milosevic" qui amènerait Assad devant la justice grâce aux Nations unies.

Ce qui rend la situation syro-libanaise aussi explosive, souligne

Joumblatt, c'est que la Syrie est liée au nouveau régime radical du président iranien Ahmadinejad. Pour lui, l'Iran se sert de son alliance avec Assad et le Hezbollah dans son combat stratégique contre Israël et les États-Unis. "C'est comme si nous défendions les installations nucléaires iraniennes depuis la frontière

libanaise", dit-il. Joumblatt espère que les États-Unis continueront à soutenir la révolte des Libanais. "Si Bush considère le Liban comme l'une de ses plus grandes réussites, l'heure est venue de le protéger", souligne-t-il. Interrogé sur ce qu'il attend des États-Unis, il me répond : "Vous êtes allés en Irak pour porter la majorité au pouvoir. Vous pouvez faire la même chose en Syrie."

Que peuvent raisonnablement faire les États-Unis pour empêcher la situation syro-libanaise de dégénérer ? Il importe tout d'abord que soit menée jusqu'au bout l'enquête des Nations unies qui met peu à peu au jour la vérité concernant la mort de Hariri. Le nouveau procureur belge, Serge Brammertz, a déclaré qu'il souhaitait interroger Assad lui-même, et, d'après certaines rumeurs, il s'apprêterait à demander à la Syrie d'arrêter le général Ghazali en tant que suspect numéro un. Le défi, pour les États-Unis, est d'aider le Liban à se renforcer suffisamment pour être en mesure de résister à l'hégémonie syrienne. Un accord conclu sous l'égide des États-Unis sur un retrait israélien du secteur des fermes de Chebaa, le long de la frontière libanaise – dans le cadre d'un accord des Nations unies stipulant que ces territoires appartiennent au Liban –, représenterait une avancée significative. Elle fournirait une victoire symbolique à un gouvernement libanais aux abois et priverait du même coup le Hezbollah de toute raison de continuer à entretenir sa milice.

David Ignatius

Courrier
INTERNATIONAL

DU 12 AU 18 JANVIER 2006

Un entretien avec Abdel Halim Khaddam « Bachar va tomber »

Sur les menaces proférées par le chef de l'Etat syrien contre le Premier ministre libanais Rafic Hariri, la corruption du régime de Damas..., l'ex-vice-président syrien livre ses vérités

Le Nouvel Observateur. – *Qu'est-ce qui vous fait dire que Damas est impliqué dans l'assassinat de l'ancien Premier ministre libanais Rafic Hariri ?*

Abdel Halim Khaddam. – L'été 2004, deux mois avant la prolongation du mandat du président libanais Lahoud [soutenu par Damas, NDLR], j'ai eu un entretien avec le président Bachar, à 9 heures du matin. Il paraissait très énervé : « J'ai appelé Hariri ce matin à 7 h 30. Il conspire contre nous. Je lui ai dit qu'on ne l'avait pas fait Premier ministre pour qu'il fasse nommer un président libanais qui nous est hostile ! Sans parler de ses relations avec la France, les Etats-Unis et l'Arabie Saoudite ! » Hariri a nié, mais Bachar lui a dit : « Fais attention ! C'est moi qui décide qui sera le président du Liban. Celui qui s'opposera à ma décision, je vais l'anéantir ! » J'ai dit au président Bachar : « Hariri est un allié, vous savez combien il a servi la Syrie. Mais il n'est pas à votre service ! » Bachar s'est repris et m'a dit d'inviter Hariri à Damas, en signe de conciliation. En réalité, quand Hariri est sorti de l'entretien avec Bachar, il était hypertendu et saignait du nez. Et c'est moi-même qui l'ai fait venir dans mon bureau pour le soigner. Autre exemple : en octobre 2004, j'ai eu une réunion à la présidence du parti pour discuter de la résolution 1559 [demandant le retrait des forces étrangères, donc syriennes, du Liban. NDLR]. Le président Bachar a dit : « Cette résolution est l'œuvre de Chirac, d'Hariri et des Américains. M. Hariri rassemble autour de lui sa communauté sunnite et conspire contre la Syrie. C'est une affaire très grave. » Voilà pour le climat. Vous savez, j'ai dit plusieurs fois à Hariri de quitter le Liban. Dix jours avant son assassinat, je l'ai vu à Beyrouth pour lui dire : « Démissionne et pars à l'étranger. » Il m'a répondu : « J'ai des élections. Je ne peux pas ! »

N. O. – *Quel est la raison principale de l'assassinat d'Hariri ?*

A. H. Khaddam. – Quand le président Bachar a voulu pro-

longer de deux ans le mandat de Lahoud, Hariri y était opposé, comme tous les Libanais, le peuple syrien et les Arabes... Le monde entier était contre cette décision ! Mais Lahoud et les services de sécurité libanais sont impliqués avec les services syriens dans la corruption au Liban. Au centre de cette corruption, il y a le président Bachar, son frère Maher et son beau-frère Assef Chawkat. Lahoud a dit à Bachar qu'un autre président ouvrirait forcément les dossiers de la banque Al-Madina ou celui du transfert de l'argent de Saddam Hussein au Liban. Les élections approchaient et Hariri, proche de l'opposition, répétait : « Le Liban ne peut être présidé ni contre la Syrie... ni par la Syrie. » C'est cette dernière phrase qui l'a tué.

N. O. – *Il s'agissait de couvrir la corruption ?*

Abdel Halim Khaddam est aujourd'hui en exil à Paris. « Bachar a échoué dans tous les domaines... »



A. H. Khaddam. – Dans l'entourage présidentiel, les sommes volées au Liban et en Syrie dépassent les 20 milliards de dollars.

N. O. – *Le « suicide » de l'ex-chef des services de sécurité syriens au Liban, Ghazi Kanaan, est un mystère...*

A. H. Khaddam. – Je crois qu'on l'a poussé au suicide. On l'a sans doute menacé de le juger, de l'envoyer en prison, de le briser. Il devait être interrogé par la commission d'enquête à l'extérieur du pays. On a sans doute craint qu'il parle et ne revienne jamais en Syrie.

N. O. – *Dans quel état est le pouvoir en Syrie aujourd'hui ?*

A. H. Khaddam. – Il va tomber. Bachar a échoué dans tous les domaines. La crise économique s'est accentuée, la pauvreté et le chômage ont augmenté, les libertés ont reculé, la police est très active et il suffit d'une phrase pour se retrouver en prison.

N. O. – *Qui dirige vraiment la Syrie ? Bachar ? Bachar sous surveillance de la vieille garde ?*

A. H. Khaddam. – De ceux qui ont vécu avec son père, il ne reste plus que moi, mais il n'écoute rien ! Il est coléreux, impulsif et agit avant de réfléchir. C'est lui et lui seul qui décide.

N. O. – *Dans quel état est l'opposition ?*

A. H. Khaddam. – L'opinion publique est très remontée contre le régime, mais l'opposition, sous pression, n'a pas pu s'exprimer ouvertement. Au sein même du parti Baath, après mon départ, une fraction va prendre le chemin de l'opposition. Ce qui m'intéresse, c'est de sauver la Syrie, avec deux objectifs : la débarrasser du régime actuel et instaurer un régime démocratique. Le processus doit rester secret.

Je n'ai pas envie de faciliter le travail aux services syriens.

N. O. – *Allez-vous former un gouvernement en exil ?*

A. H. Khaddam. – Pourquoi pas ? Cela va être discuté avec certaines personnalités syriennes.

N. O. – *Quelle place réservez-vous aux Frères musulmans ?*

A. H. Khaddam. – Les Frères musulmans, dont la présence est historique, forment un parti musulman syrien. Comme le Baath, ils ont le droit de participer à la vie politique...

N. O. – *Vous appelez à des manifestations de rue ? A une révolution blanche ?*

A. H. Khaddam. – Bachar va tomber. Le peuple va le faire tomber ! Je suis contre les coups d'Etat militaires. Avec le peuple syrien dans les rues, je suis convaincu que les militaires ne bougeront pas. Bachar est fragile.

**Propos recueillis par
JEAN-PAUL MARI**

'The time has come' on Iran, 3 in EU say

They want UN to act on atom activity

By Richard Bernstein

BERLIN: Saying that negotiations had reached a dead end, France, Germany and Britain announced Thursday that they wanted Iran's nuclear development activities to be taken to the United Nations Security Council, adding new pressure on Tehran to reverse its decision to do research that could develop the technology to create nuclear weapons.

"From our point of view, the time has come for the UN Security Council to become involved," Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier of Germany said at a news conference after meeting here with his French and British counterparts and the European foreign policy chief, Javier Solana. They were reacting to Iran's decision to resume experiments at a nuclear enrichment plant in Natanz.

In Moscow, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Russia was putting a heavy premium on Iran's compliance with international regulations on nuclear development.

Lavrov said that Russia, the three European Union countries, the United States and China would meet in London next week to discuss the situation surrounding Iranian nuclear development.

"Iran has removed the seals from a uranium enrichment plant and therefore urgent consultations are needed," Lavrov said, according to the Interfax News Agency.

In Washington, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice predicted that Iran would be referred to the UN Security Council, saying that "a very important threshold has been crossed."

Iran, Rice said, was now in "danger-

ous defiance of the entire international community."

Asked whether Russia and China would, within the Security Council, support a strong approach to Iran, she noted that both countries warned Iran not to restart its nuclear research, and when it said it would resume experiments, had made their views known to Tehran.

In Tehran, officials expressed anger at the Europeans even before they announced their plans to turn to the Security Council. "Colonial taboos" will not keep Iran from developing its nuclear abilities, former President Hashemi Rafsanjani said on state-run radio. Rafsanjani, who now heads the Expediency Council, also said that the standoff with the West "has reached its climax," according to an Associated Press report from Tehran.

At the United Nations in New York, Secretary General Kofi Annan said Thursday that Iran was still interested in "serious and constructive negotiations" with the EU, Reuters reported. Annan said he was told by Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, that Tehran remained "interested in serious and constructive negotiations, but within a time frame."

The foreign ministers meeting in Berlin also called for a later session of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, which has carried out inspections of Iran's activities over the last two years and has the authority to refer the Iranian matter to the Security Council.

The decision of the three European countries marks a new phase in the diplomatic effort, begun in 2003 by Brit-

ain, France and Germany, to persuade Iran to give up an effort that the United States and Europe believe is aimed at making Iran a nuclear weapons power.

Iran says that its nuclear activities are aimed only at generating electricity, but this claim is disputed by the Americans and many Europeans, who cite some 18 years of clandestine nuclear activity by Iran and, since that activity was discovered, an unwillingness to provide IAEA inspectors with much of the information they have asked for.

The talks between the EU and Iran have gone through several phases, some of them hopeful, as when Iran signed an additional protocol to the nonproliferation treaty, which greatly increased the inspectors' right to probe undisclosed sites where nuclear activity is suspected. But in recent months, the negotiations have foundered on Iran's insistence that it has the right to develop nuclear fuel on its own soil.

In August, violating an agreement with the Europeans to suspend all nuclear activity as long as negotiations were continuing, Iran resumed converting uranium at a plant in Isfahan, leading the Europeans to suspend the negotiations.

In the past few weeks, the Iranians rejected a Russian proposal by which Ira-

nian uranium would be enriched in Russia and re-exported to Iran. The Europeans had hoped the idea would bring new momentum to the negotiations.

Then, this week, Iran broke IAEA seals on a research plant in Natanz, where experts believe they have conducted experiments in the past on uranium enrichment. Under that process, uranium that has been converted into a gas is purified into a material that can generate electricity or, at a higher level of purification, build a bomb.

Russia, a longstanding ally of Iran, is in a pivotal position, being both a member of the Security Council with veto power, and a country that has lucrative energy deals with Iran that would presumably be at risk if the Security Council voted to impose sanctions on Iran.

"What is most important for us in this situation is not our bilateral relations, our investments in the Iranian economy or our economic profit from cooperation with Iran," Lavrov said, in Moscow. "The highest priority for us in this situation is the prevention of the violation of the nuclear non-proliferation regime."

He added: "Until we make sure that we have averted this threat, we cannot look calmly at what is going on."

Earlier on Thursday, The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal reported that the Russians committed themselves, in conversations with Secretary of State Rice, to abstain on a Security Council referral by the IAEA and not to veto it.

Last autumn, the IAEA board of governors formally found that Iran had violated its obligations under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. But even then the Europeans, with the consent of the



Philippe Douste-Blazy of France, left, Jack Straw of Britain and Frank-Walter Steinmeier of Germany appeared Thursday in Berlin with Javier Solana, the EU foreign policy chief.

United States, delayed asking the organization to send the matter to the Security Council, hoping either that Iran would reverse course or else that a move to increase pressure on Iran could gain greater international support.

"It's a very gradual approach, in order to send the clearest message possible to Iran," said a European diplomat privy to the discussions here.

"We need to have as much support as possible from the international community, including such key players as China and Russia and important non-aligned countries, like Brazil, South

Africa and India.

"An approach that has the support of all countries is the best one to tell the Iranians that the path that they have chosen is the wrong one," the diplomat said.

Diplomats said the next step would be a series of intense consultations, beginning next week with the meeting in London and soon extended to include some of the non-aligned countries, leading to a meeting of the IAEA in early February.

Once the matter is before the Security Council, the United States will undoubtedly press for economic sanctions against Iran. But European diplomats

have said that a more moderate approach is also possible, beginning perhaps with a resolution calling on Iran to do what it has failed to do until now: provide full access to its nuclear plants to IAEA inspectors, and also to make a full accounting of the work it has done until now, including the work it carried out during the 18 years when its program was clandestine.

The New York Times

Kurdish-American ties thrive remarkably

By Baqi Barzani
The Globe

The Middle East, in contrast to other world regions where the USSR's demise drastically improved the international situation, remains a "zone of turmoil" characterized by continuous security challenges. In the Middle East the use of force is still widely considered a viable option, and even receives popular sup-

variables affecting this situation include the regional strategic environment; the US ability to deter and/or overcome emerging challenges; and its freedom to act according to its own assessment of strategic requirements. Given the level of mistrust and conflict in the Middle East, there can be no real hope of establishing an effective, verifiable arms control regime. Still, the probability of large-scale military engagement in the near future is a surro-

the liberation of Iraq, most Iraqi and Arab state members turned more skeptical about Kurdish frank expression of support for Israel and reaffirming of US persistence, notably in Kurdistan domain. The burgeoning alliance between the US and Kurdistan has a more fathomless and more fundamental basis than is commonly appreciated. The amiable bonds between Americans and Kurds in Kurdistan reflect one of the most unusual and of the essence alliances in the Middle East. Contrary to other authoritarian or undemocratic masking elements in the new Iraq, or some combination of the two, Kurds continue to safeguard American dear lives by their momentous intelligence, defense and military cooperation.

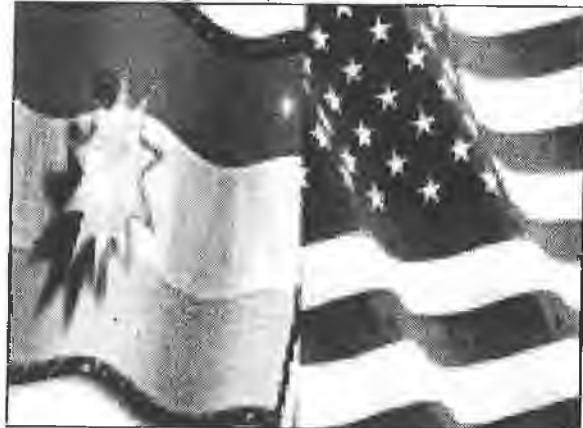
In their decades-long struggles against dominant despotism, Kurds have long striven to expose the fabri-

and taken more concrete steps to brazen out these bully regimes threatening global peace and security. The two nations confront the analogous dissidents and the same allies. They're both in the balance by radical regimes, notably Iran, Syria and Iraq. They both have similar systems as democratic states. They're both distinctive in the region because they are not Arab states and to some degree are excluded from the region. Both share a number of common strategic interests and concerns.

Both nations also have intense concerns about Middle Eastern nations from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. The continuing attempts by Syria, Turkey and Iran to acquire WMD and nuclear weapons are, however, the largest American strategic nightmare because nuclear devices are by far the most destructive weapons. Had the US backed Kurdish incipient upheavals opposed to Iraqi tyrant, the US wouldn't have incurred such lofty cataclysms.

Understanding that the Kurds are key to securing a triumphant war not only in Iraq, the US is making every effort to indemnify the last catastrophes markedly in a time geared up for a military hit on Iranian nuclear and military installations.

cated guise of Syria, Iran, Iraq and Turkey which the US underestimates moderately, as states sponsoring, harboring and manufacturing international terrorism. The US and Kurds share a common interest in curbing the influence of radical Islam. Kurds see fundamentalism primarily as an internal problem, while the US sees it as an external threat. Following the emotive tragedy of 9/11, the US has more grasped the sobriety of terrorism issue



port as such. Thus, while the inclusive Iraqi government clearly indicates that Arab insurgency toward the coalition forces is weakening, it is by no means certain that—whatever the degree of success on this specific front—the result will be a long-term regional detente. Therefore, the US will have to continue to devote considerable attention and resources to its national security. The main

gate if rouge states are not committed to harmony and good relations. In the light of above facts, the awareness and further strengthening of ties between the United States and the 40-million Kurdish population bears incomparable significance than ever.

At present, there is a striking convergence of opinion concerning the relationship between the US and Kurdistan. In the wake of

The New York Review January 12, 2006

Kurds in Turkey: The Big Change

Stephen Kinzer

1.

Diyarbakir, in southeastern Turkey, has for centuries been the center of Kurdish political and cultural life. For much of the 1990s it was under a harsh form of military rule. Turkish soldiers and police officers, many in plain clothes, were everywhere. Armored personnel carriers crawled along main streets, manned by soldiers with automatic rifles who kept constant watch over sullen crowds. People who supported the idea of Kurdish nationalism lived in constant fear. Several hundred were murdered on the streets or abducted and tortured to death.

This autumn, I spent a week traveling through the region where guerrilla war was fought for years. My first walk through Diyarbakir made it instantly clear how much has changed. There are no soldiers or armored vehicles on the street anymore. Police officers keep out of sight. Most important, people now say whatever they please.

A book fair was underway while I was in Diyarbakir. At the first stand I visited, wedged between Turkish translations of *War and Peace* and *For*

Whom the Bell Tolls, I found a selection of books with titles like *History of Kurdistan* and *Turkey's Kurdish Problem*. No such books could possibly have been sold here during the 1990s, when the very word "Kurdistan" was taboo and the term "Kurdish problem" was taken to refer to an illegal form of separatism.

"Before, we were afraid to speak out," a Kurdish writer named Lutfi Baski told me at the fair. "The government was insisting that there were no Kurds, that there was no Kurdish language or culture. They arrested us and closed our organizations. Now, so much has changed, especially in the last few months. Our problems haven't been solved, not at all, but at least we can talk about them honestly. It's a huge difference."

Later that day, I walked past city hall and saw a large banner advertising a conference that was being held inside. Its subject was "The European Union Accession Process and the Kurdish Problem." When I walked into the packed hall, a local politician was delivering a passionate harangue.

"For so many years, the Turkish state

called us criminals, saying that it was not possible to have dialogue with us and that we had to be crushed," he told the rapt crowd. "This is the repeated tragedy that created the Kurdish problem. The only reason Kurds were forced to begin armed struggle was the way the Turkish state has treated Kurds at every stage in the history of this country."

These would have been highly dangerous words a couple of years ago. Even now, police agents monitor and videotape conferences like this one. Their presence, however, did nothing to intimidate the speakers in Diyarbakir. "They watch us just like before, but they can't do anything to us anymore," one man told me. "This is a democracy now. We're becoming European. The state can't touch us."

The next morning, I visited the mayor of Diyarbakir, thirty-four-year-old Os-

man Baydemir, who since his election last year has become a leading spokesman for the rising generation of Kurds in Turkey. He told me that although the emergence of a quasi-independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq has thrilled most people here, they are not eager to join it. Instead, he said, they want to remain citizens of Turkey—assuming that Turkey changes its attitude toward them.

Nearly all of the Kurds I met told me the same thing. The prospect of remaining part of a large country that is associated with Europe, and has Istanbul among its many attractions, appeals to them more than the abstract satisfaction of living under a Kurdish flag in an isolated, landlocked Mesopotamian "entity."

"Revolutionary steps are now being taken within the framework of democracy," Mayor Baydemir said. "But in a country where change comes slowly, we need an outside influence to push us along. The prospect of getting into the EU gives us that external pressure. It's why more has changed for us in the last few years than in the entire period since the founding of the Turkish Republic. It's also our main hope for the future. This problem can only be solved peacefully, but who can make Turks and Kurds realize that? Only the EU."

On October 3, after a frantic series of last-minute maneuvers, leaders of

the twenty-five European Union countries agreed to begin formal membership negotiations with Turkey. These talks could last for a decade or more, and the final outcome is far from guaranteed. Some European leaders, including Angela Merkel, the new German chancellor, and the French interior



François Lenoir/Reuters

Turkish Kurds carrying portraits of Abdullah Ocalan at a demonstration to demand Kurdish participation in Turkey's negotiations for entry into the EU, Brussels, October 1, 2005

minister Nicolas Sarkozy, oppose Turkish membership. A host of issues, from terrorism in Europe to the status of Cyprus, could erupt to block Turkey. Yet in the Kurdish region, people are behaving as if they are already under Europe's protection.

The prospect of EU membership, which has given Kurds this new confidence, is reshaping Turkish political life. Old barriers to free expression have fallen, and everyone realizes that the remaining ones must also fall if Turkey is to join the EU. As more Turks step forward to challenge longstanding taboos, however, guardians of the old order are mounting a counter-offensive. Their most visible weapon is legal harassment. A prosecutor in one district of Istanbul has indicted the novelist Orhan Pamuk for telling a Swiss newspaper earlier this year that "thirty thousand Kurds and a million Armenians were killed in these lands." The publisher Ragıp Zarakolu is facing criminal charges against three works in his catalog. One is said to insult the memory of Atatürk, founder of the modern Turkish state. Another describes brutality suffered by Armenians during the last years of Ottoman rule. A third is accused of using "derogatory language" to describe Turkey's policies in the Kurdish region.

Prosecutions like these embarrass and undermine the government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, which is strongly backing the EU project. They are part of a campaign by nationalist defenders of the old order to block Turkey's progress toward the EU. This group of nationalists, which Turks call "deep state," includes many local prosecutors, and also has powerful supporters in the army and bureaucracy. They fear the scrutiny of their operations and the strict limits on military power that EU membership would entail. To upset relations with the EU, they prosecute freethinkers in ways calculated to make Turkey look un-European. Government leaders believe that during the years ahead, they must not only try to bring their country into line with Europe, but also suppress forces within Turkey that seek to block their country's transformation.

The European Union has been one of the most effective peacemaking institutions of the modern era. It eased transitions from dictatorship to democracy in Spain, Portugal, and Greece. More recently, it helped manage the peaceable breakup of the Soviet empire. Now, although torn by internal problems, the EU is the main factor

drawing Turkey toward democracy, and perhaps even toward resolving the seemingly intractable Kurdish problem.

Kerim Yildiz, executive director of the London-based Kurdish Human Rights Project, writes in a new book, *The Kurds in Turkey*, that the EU accession process "opens unprecedented political space to press for human rights and to draw attention to the need for political dialogue between Turkey and the Kurds." If this process actually leads Turkey into the EU, Yildiz predicts, Kurds will greatly benefit: "Full EU membership will impose checks on the behaviour of the Turkish state, and could ultimately provide the Kurds with some of the tools necessary to protect their political and legal status within Turkey."

This process will not proceed smoothly. The forces of "deep state," and the natural fear of change that accompanies any political transition of this magnitude, have led some Turks to oppose their country's entry into the EU. Still, most of them—63 percent, according to a recent poll—are in favor. They realize that what the EU wants for them is also what they themselves want. That includes ending a festering conflict that has taken tens of thousands of lives, devastated a generation of Kurds, and blackened Turkey's name in the world.

2.

Since the 1991 Gulf War, and with new momentum after the recent invasion of Iraq, Kurds in northern Iraq have been building a state of their own, something unique in Kurdish history. Officially it is part of Iraq, but it makes its own laws, maintains its own army, and is as close to being a nation as is possible without formal independence. The traditional heartland of the region known as Kurdistan, however, is in Turkey. Slightly more than half of the estimated 26 million Kurds live here, making up about 20 percent of Turkey's population. Apart from them, there are some five million Kurds in northern Iraq, another five million in Iran, 1.7 million in Syria, and smaller numbers in nearby countries.

The Turkish Republic was founded in 1923 after the rebellion led by Mustafa Kemal, the World War I hero who later became known as Atatürk, or "father of the Turks." He forced European powers to give up their plan to divide the Turkish homeland among themselves, but Turks still resent the attempt. Memory of it feeds a defiant Turkish nationalism that is today far more visceral and authentic than

the attachments most Europeans feel for their countries. Some Turks still believe that foreign powers are secretly hoping, or even actively plotting, to divide their nation. They interpret any attempt to assert ethnic or religious identity as a step toward separatism that must be mercilessly crushed, and view Kurdish nationalists as enemies of the state. The Kurds, for their part, remember that in the years after World War I, Turks prevented them from carving their own state out of the wreckage of the Ottoman Empire.

"In 1938, when Atatürk died, it was forbidden to speak of Kurds, and in towns the authorities could fine people who spoke Kurdish in public," writes Andrew Mango, one of Atatürk's biographers, in his new book, *The Turks Today*. "The assimilation of linguistic minorities was official policy."

Yet Kurdish militants have launched two dozen rebellions against the Turkish Republic since the most famous one, in 1925, led to the hanging of rebel leaders in Diyarbakir. They have never stopped demanding that Kurds be recognized as a distinct people and guaranteed political, cultural, and linguistic rights that are abhorrent to Turks who fear the rise of separatism.

The most recent revolt, and perhaps the broadest-based, was led by a group of hard-core Marxists who called themselves the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. They launched their first attack on Turkish soldiers in 1984, and by the early 1990s had built a formidable guerrilla army. President Turgut Özal, who was partly Kurdish, made indirect contact with them in search of a truce, but he died in 1993 before succeeding. A few years later Prime Minister Tansu Çiller suggested that Turkey's Kurds be given rights like those enjoyed by Basques in Spain, but military commanders quickly persuaded her to drop the idea. Instead she went to the opposite extreme, giving the army full power to fight the PKK as it saw fit.

The war in southeastern Turkey during the 1980s and 1990s was a very dirty one. Both sides routinely used tactics that amounted to terrorism. The army, seeking to dry up the PKK's support network, forcibly evacuated and burned as many as three thousand villages and hamlets. Thousands of Kurds were arrested and tortured. Government-backed death squads killed hundreds who were suspected of aiding or sympathizing with the PKK.

The PKK waged a savage campaign. Militants made a special point of killing schoolteachers, whom they considered agents of the Turkish state, and also news dealers who sold Turkish papers. They destroyed hundreds of public buildings, including many schools and clinics. Their leader, Abdullah Ocalan (pronounced OH-jalan), turned the PKK into a personality cult and fiercely repressed dissent. He founded the PKK with twenty-two comrades, and during the years that followed he denounced twelve of them as traitors and had seven murdered. The United States and the European Union have placed the PKK on their lists of terrorist organizations.

Turkish security forces finally captured Ocalan in Kenya in 1999. He was tried by a military tribunal and given a death sentence, commuted to life imprisonment after Turkey abolished its death penalty under pressure from the European Union. At his trial, Ocalan repented much of what he had done and urged his followers to lay down their arms. Most did so, and peace began to settle over southeastern Turkey. Last year, some bands of PKK fighters, angry that the Turkish government has not responded to their overtures, called off their 1999 ceasefire and began launching sporadic attacks. These do not amount to a return to war, but they have concentrated attention on the government's policy of refusing to deal with the PKK or to recognize it as anything more than a terror band.

These days, most PKK militants are based at semi-clandestine camps inside northern Iraq. The Kurdish regime there says it deplores their presence, but is doing nothing to force them out. This outrages the Turks. During the 1990s they regularly sent army units to attack the PKK inside Iraq. Now that Iraq is under American military occupation, they can no longer conduct these operations. Nor are the Americans, tied down as they are in Iraq, willing to attack PKK strongholds themselves. Turks are watching American and Iraqi Kurd tolerance of the PKK in Iraq with rising frustration.

During the war years, it was difficult to discover what ordinary Kurds in southeastern Turkey felt about the PKK. I was reluctant to ask them, since spies were everywhere and an unguarded comment could lead to arrest or worse. On my recent trip, however, I found Kurds willing and even eager to express thoughts they had kept hidden for years.

I set out from Diyarbakir one morning, drove alongside the Tigris River, and made my first stop in the town of Silvan. This had been an especially violent place, where shadowy ultra-right groups, working with government security agents, carried out some two hundred "mystery killings" during the 1980s and 1990s. Now it seemed as free from fear as the rest of the Kurdish region. I asked a man in a teahouse which political group people in Silvan favored, and without hesitating he replied, "One hundred percent PKK."

Many Kurds I met told me they sympathize with the PKK. A surprising number said they have sons, brothers, or friends who have "gone to the mountain." Others told of being arrested or abused for sympathizing with the PKK. Perhaps the most important reason the PKK has attracted so much popular support, however, is that it is the only organization Turkish Kurds have. For years the Turkish state banned almost all Kurdish political, social, and cultural groups. That left the field to the PKK.

With the war in a lull now, this policy has put the government in an uncomfortable position. Many Kurds I met professed to know little about the PKK's militant Marxist background, its years of separatist demands, or its many acts of terror. They consider it a benign movement dedicated only to defending their communal identity. So the group that many Kurds consider legitimate is precisely the one with which the Turkish state categorically refuses to deal.

"The government can't negotiate with the PKK now," said Emin Yasar Demirci, a sociologist who teaches at the University of Van in the Kurdish region. "The public reaction, and the reaction in the army, would be too strong. In the future, though, things might change. If negotiations with the EU stay on track, the Kurdish problem will be solved step by step. No one in the government will stand up and say, 'Let's negotiate with the PKK,' but there are indirect ways of doing it."

One of those "indirect ways" may have emerged in December, when a senior prosecutor asked the Supreme Court to lift six-year prison sentences given to two convicted PKK members because they had surrendered voluntarily and had not been proven guilty of violent acts. Then the Diyarbakir Criminal Court rejected another prosecutor's appeal for a life sentence against a former guerrilla leader on the grounds that the only evidence

against him was his own testimony. In the days that followed, judges ordered eight convicted PKK members freed from prison pending retrials.

Some Turks interpreted these extraordinary steps as the beginning of a seismic policy shift. The newspaper columnist Yusuf Kanli called them "modest but great moves," and asserted that in effect, they constituted a "discreet and limited amnesty" aimed at "healing the wounds caused by our twenty years of trauma." Using phrases that were taboo until recently, he described PKK fighters as "sons and daughters of our society," and called for a "comprehensive amnesty" that would bring them down from the mountains and "rehabilitate them back into society as productive citizens."

Over the last few years, pressed by the EU, the Turkish state has granted Kurds rights that it long denied them. It has done so, however, with little enthusiasm. The much-awaited legalization of Kurdish-language television broadcasting has led only to a single half-hour program per week. Private schools are now allowed to offer classes in Kurdish, but since most Kurds in the southeast cannot afford private schools, only a few such classes exist. Europeans expect these freedoms to be considerably broadened. If they are, the Europeans may press Turkey to go further by licensing all-Kurdish TV stations or allowing the free use of Kurdish in public schools and universities. Today, many Turks would consider those proposals radical. As Turkey

moves closer to EU membership, however, they may come to seem reasonable and perhaps even obligatory.

3.

The poorest of Turkey's eighty-one provinces is Hakkari, deep in the almost entirely Kurdish southeast. During the war years, it was a battleground. I tried several times to visit there, but was always turned back at military checkpoints. Once I was arrested, accused of spying for the PKK, and made to spend the night in a prison cell. This time, I was only stopped at one checkpoint. A young soldier checked my passport and then sent me on my way with the words "*Gule gule*"—go with a smile.

Many of Hakkari's residents consider themselves Kurds first, then Turks. In this they are different from millions of their fellow Kurds who have moved westward and established themselves in big cities like Istanbul

and Izmir. Many of those who left are by now well assimilated into Turkish society. More than a few have risen to high positions in business, entertainment, government, and the army. In Hakkari, however, people cling to their Kurdish identity.

The bravest person I met in the provincial capital, also called Hakkari, is a thirty-four-year-old lawyer named Rojbin Tugan. She attended law school in Istanbul, and after graduating was hired by an established firm there. Less than a year later, anguished by reports of the violence that was spreading in the Kurdish region, she returned. For nearly a decade she has been one of the few human rights lawyers in this part of Turkey, doggedly representing clients who claim that soldiers or police have abused them.

One evening, Ms. Tugan invited me for dinner at the apartment she shares with her parents. For most of the evening, we talked about the physical and spiritual devastation that overwhelmed this region during the 1990s. Ms. Tugan has dealt with many horrific cases, and she strongly identifies with the Kurdish cause. Her brother is serving a prison term after being convicted of membership in the PKK. Yet as I was leaving, she surprised me with a burst of optimism.

"I am very hopeful for Turkey's future," she said. "These last few years have been like paradise. I can travel on the roads and not have to worry about being back before dark. When the doorbell rings, we answer it without being afraid. When someone in my family goes out shopping and isn't home in an hour, I'm not terrified. We used to be without hope, but there have been so many changes."

Besides occasional firefights in remote areas, there are also violent attacks on Kurds that recall the terror of the 1990s. Soon after I passed through Hakkari, a car bomb exploded in an outlying town, the second such attack there in a week. It was staged to look like the work of the PKK, but bystanders chased and caught the fleeing bombers, and they turned out to be men tied to government security forces.

These events set off violent protests in both Hakkari and Diyarbakir, with thousands of people shouting pro-PKK slogans. Their intensity showed how angry many Kurds are at what has happened to them, but it also showed

how free they are to express their anger. I found more evidence of this in the town of Sirnak, a provincial capital with a population of about 60,000.

When I talked to a group of men in a barber shop, I heard graphic accounts of what people described as a four-day military sweep through the town that began on August 18, 1992, and ended with scores dead and much of the town burned.

"Who are the real terrorists?" one of the barbers indignantly asked me. "Our organization [the PKK] or the security forces that burn and torture and kill? Why do Europe and the United States call our PKK fighters terrorists?" "What do you call them?" I asked.

"Kurds," he replied simply.

The men in this barber shop were so outspoken that even my Kurdish traveling companion, who lives in Diyarbakir, was amazed. He told me that as recently as a year ago, a conversation like this in a public place would have been unthinkable. I asked the barber what had changed, and he answered immediately.

"We're becoming part of Europe," he said. "If we're European, we can say whatever we want."

The anger of the men in the barber shop became most bitter and intense when they talked of the Turkish general, now retired, whom they blame for the 1992 military sweep. The ferocity with which they cursed his name suggests another trauma that may lie ahead for Turkey. People will inevitably want to know the full truth about the Kurdish war, and either an official "truth commission" or a private one will probably attempt to conduct a serious investigation. One way or another, Turks are going to be forced to face ugly truths about how this war was fought.

European leaders have pressed Turkey to repeal laws that limit open discussion of delicate topics like this. In June, responding to their pressure, the Turkish parliament adopted a new and somewhat more tolerant penal code. People who challenge accepted dogma on issues related to the Kurds, however, still face indictment. An Istanbul publisher, Fatih Tas, has recently been charged with distributing a Turkish translation of a 1997 book called *Spoils of War: The Human Cost of America's Arms Trade*. A prosecutor seeks to suppress this book because it asserts what nearly everyone in southeastern Turkey knows: that during the 1990s, Turkish soldiers abused Kurds, burned their homes, and forced them to leave their villages.

This case recalls one brought against the journalist Nadire Mater in 1999. The charge against her—she was eventually acquitted—was publishing

a poignant compilation of recollections by former soldiers who fought in the Kurdish war. An English translation, called *Voices from the Front*, has just been published. In it, Turkish army recruits tell of the crimes they saw and committed, from beating civilians to trafficking in heroin. One recalls his emotions upon finding the bodies of several fallen comrades:

The PKK slaughtered all of them.... They not only cut their throats, but they sliced their ears, pierced their eyes out, cut their penises and thrust them into their mouths. But we did worse things.

Ask four to five martyrs' families if they opened the coffins of their sons and looked at their faces...ask if the families have been shown their sons' faces. They don't let them see because there is nothing left to see. I beg your pardon for crying. I had no idea it would hurt this much.

In many parts of southeastern Turkey today, roads are being widened and schools are being built. This region, however, needs psychic as well as physical reconstruction.

"We have an exercise at the women's center where I work," Nurcan Baysal, a social worker in Diyarbakir, told me at dinner one evening. "We put a group of women together, and ask them to close their eyes for three min-



utes and think of things that have happened to them because they are women. By the end of three minutes, every woman is crying. Then come the stories: my village was burned, my husband was tortured, my son was killed. This war devastated our soci-

ety. Even now, there is no work for people here. The girls become prostitutes. The boys are thieves. They're proud of it. They come to me and say, 'I'm happy because I was able to steal some money today and bring it to my family.' Our people are suffering. We have deep and painful wounds that will take a very long time to heal."

In August, Prime Minister Erdogan, the first modern Turkish leader who does not come from the political establishment, flew to Diyarbakir to deliver a speech that was almost shocking in its candor. He promised to "resolve every issue with more democracy":

A great and powerful nation must have the confidence to face itself, recognize the mistakes and sins of the past, and march confidently into the future. The Kurdish issue does not belong to a part of our nation, but to us all. It is also my problem.... We accept it as real and are ready to face it.... We are ready to listen to anyone who has something to say, and ready to consult anyone who has a sense of justice.... Turkey will not retreat from the point we have reached. We will not step back from our process of democratization.

Erdogan's speech provoked loud protests from Turkish nationalists, but many Kurds were impressed. Some hope the next step will be an offer of

amnesty to PKK fighters. No one knows how many fighters there are, but most informed guesses place the number at five thousand or more, with

about two thirds encamped across the border in northern Iraq. The idea that they might return to enter civilian life without paying for their crimes is abhorrent to many Turks. For any form of amnesty to work, these Turks would have to change their minds. The PKK would also have to change.

"It is objectively impossible to deny the power of the PKK in this region," one thoughtful Kurd, Dagistan Toprak, a businessman and former deputy mayor of Diyarbakir, told me at a café overlooking the majestic city wall. "If we're going to have real peace here, though, the PKK needs to adjust itself to the new world situation. The Turkish state is becoming more democratic. The PKK needs to do the same. It should give up the idea of armed struggle, and open respectful dialogue with Kurds who think differently. It also needs to renovate its leadership. This organization was formed with a cold war mentality. It needs to evolve."

Some PKK leaders say they want to negotiate with the Turkish state. In July the PKK military commander, Murat Karayilan, told an AP reporter that the group has given up "extreme socialist ideas" and now seeks only to assure that Kurds can live "in a democratic way." In view of other statements, and recent PKK attacks, that claim is dubious, and in any case the army maintains a firm policy of rejecting all overtures from the PKK. A Turkish general recently asserted that "no one in his right mind" would urge the army to halt offensive operations in the southeast.

Many Kurds in this region dream

that one day, PKK militants might return to their homes, under protection of an amnesty, and resume civilian life. It is by no means clear that the PKK is ready to accept this prospect. Certainly the Turkish state is not. Neither are most Turks. The EU, having classified the PKK as a terrorist organization, can hardly pressure Turkey to negotiate with it.

Despite all of this, however, Kurds in southeastern Turkey have a boundless, almost childlike hope that the EU will lead them out of their situation. Even Selahattin Demirtas, chairman of the Human Rights Association in Diyarbakir, whose office is decorated with portraits of assassinated comrades, fervently believes in the transforming power of the EU.

"If our own government were the only hope for accomplishing all this, I don't think it would be possible," he told me. "But there is a powerful external dynamic in this process now, the European Union. That gives us great hope."

Today, this dream is the central fact of life for many Kurds in southeastern Turkey. Like millions of people across their country, they are convinced that Turkey's entry into Europe, of which many Europeans are wary, will resolve their deepest political, social, economic, and cultural problems. The mere prospect of joining the EU has already changed Turkey. What actual membership could do—and whether it will ever materialize—remains tantalizingly uncertain. □

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IRAN NUCLÉAIRE

Téhéran s'insurge contre « les agressions des Occidentaux »

LE PRÉSIDENT iranien, Mahmoud Ahmadi-néjad, a déclaré, mercredi 11 janvier, dans un grand discours en province que son pays ne se « laisserait pas intimider par l'agitation. Je dis à ces puissances que le peuple iranien et son gouvernement continueront sur la voie de la maîtrise et de l'utilisation de

l'énergie nucléaire à des fins pacifiques », a-t-il insisté.

De son côté, Akbar Hachemi Rafsandjani, président du Conseil de discernement – la plus haute instance politique du régime – a fait savoir : « nous ne pouvons pas renoncer à notre droit. Aucun Iranien n'est prêt à y renoncer et ils doivent savoir que nous restons fermes. Avec sagesse, nous défendrons nos droits, et s'ils nous créent des troubles, ils le regretteront et l'Iran sortira vainqueur de toute crise », a-t-il poursuivi.

« Depuis la reprise de nos activités, une vague énorme d'agressions injustes des milieux politiques et militaires occidentaux a commencé contre l'Iran », a dénoncé M. Rafsandjani, affirmant que les Occidentaux voulaient, en réalité, « mainte-

nir un Iran sous-développé ».

Le ministre des affaires étrangères, Manouchehr Mottaki, a affirmé la nécessité de différencier la recherche de la production du combustible nucléaire. Il a appelé les « Européens à comprendre cette question et, en coopération avec la Russie, la Chine et les pays non-alignés » à négocier sur ce dossier avec l'Iran. Le Guide suprême, Ali Khamenei, avait, dès lundi, donné le ton en prévenant que « les menaces de sanctions n'auront aucun effet » sur la détermination de l'Iran, faisant allusion à la possible saisine du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU. Le vice-premier ministre russe, Sergueï Ivanov, a jugé « décevante » et « alarmante », la décision de Téhéran de reprendre l'enrichissement du combustible nucléaire. ■ (AFP.)

Kurd páriák

Szokatlan eseményre került sor tavaly decemberben Párizsban: megtartották az első európai konferenciát a szíriai kurdok helyéről, amely a környező, jelentős kurd közösségekkel rendelkező államokéhoz képest is rosszabb. Pedig az Oszmán Birodalom felbomlása utáni francia mandátum időszaka (1921–1945) és a köztársaság első másfél évtizede alatt – a kisebbségi jogok külön biztosítása nélkül is – kedvezőek voltak a kurd kulturális fejlődés körülményei. Olyannyira, hogy a harmincas–negyvenes években Damaszkusz volt a kurd értelmiség legfontosabb kulturális központja, ahol a török elnyomás elől menekülő kurdok is menedéket találtak.

Az ötvenes évek második felétől kezdve azonban lassan megváltozott a Szíria lakosságának jelenleg 10 százalékát kitevő, kétmillió kurd kisebbség jogi helyzete. A panarab nacionalizmus hevében Szíriában betiltották a Szíriai Kurd Demokrata Pártot (KDPS), és mindennemű kurd nemzeti öntudat kinyilvánítását egy „második Izrael” megalakítására törekvő szándéknak nevezték. A jelentős kurd népesség lakta körzetben, az iraki és a török határ háromszögében 1961-ben soron kívül tartott népszámlálás következményeként 120 ezer szír kurd vált hontalanná. Csak az tarthatta meg állampolgárságát, aki igazolni tudta, hogy ő vagy felmenői már 1945 előtt is Szíriában laktak. Ám az „öslakos” kurdoktól igazolványcsere címén a hatóságok beszédtek a személyi iratokat, amelyeket azonban „elfelejtettek” visszaadni. Az államtalanított kurdok száma ma a 360 ezret is elérheti.

A hontalan kurdok nem rendelkeznek szavazati joggal, nem tölthetnek be állami tisztséget, nem birtokolhatnak házat, földet, üzleti vállalkozást, autót, nem is örökölhetnek, és nem hagyhatnak örökül szinte semmit. Nem alkalmazhatók orvosként, ügyvédként, mérnökként, újságíróként vagy bármely olyan munkakörben, ahol a szakszervezeti tagság követelmény. Nem mehetnek külföldre, hisz nincs útlevelük, és az országon belül is csak a belügyi szervek engedélyével utazhatnak. Ám miközben az államtalanított kurdok többsége idegennek, külföldinek – azaz „adzsanibnak” – számít, és a külügyminisztérium különleges személyi igazolványt állít ki a számukra, a hontalanok mintegy harmadát adó rejtett, nem regisztrált kurdok – vagyis a „maktumiinok” – még ilyen igazolvánnyal sem rendelkeznek, gyakorlatilag „láthatatlanok,” és a teljes jogfosztottság állapotában élnek. Ők az általános iskolán túl általában nem tanulhatnak, vezetői jogosítványt nem szerezhetnek, még csekket sem válthatnak be. A cifra szíriai családjog még azt sem teszi lehetővé, hogy vegyes házasság révén kiszabaduljanak kasztjukból.



Szíriai kurdok. Már nem ülnek ölbe tett kézzel

Az államtalanítási programot az arabizációs program követte, melynek során a hatvanas években egy 300 kilométer hosszú és 15 kilométer széles „arab biztonsági övezetet” hoztak létre a török határ mentén. Az övezeten belül 332 kurd falu lakosságát, mintegy 140 ezer embert fosztottak meg földjeiktől. Többségük ma abból él, hogy alkalmi munkát vállal hajdani földjén, amit a kormány délről betelepített beduin araboknak adományozott.

Az ország egyéb területein élő kurdoknak sem irigylésre méltó a helyzetük. A kurd nyelvet a hivatalokban és a munkahelyeken tilos használni, nincs kurd nyelvű oktatás (bár más nyelvi kisebbségeknek vannak iskoláik), és hivatalosan tilos kurd nyelvű nyomtatványokat, illetve zenét terjeszteni. A kurd újév hagyományos megünneplése – hegytetőkön rakott máglyákkal – minden évben sorozatos letartóztatásokkal jár. A törvények értelmében minden kurd szervezet be van tiltva, egyedüli kivétel a Törökországgal szemben aduként kijátszott, az Abdullah Öcalan vezette szélsőséges baloldali Kurd Munkáspárt volt 1998-ig. Azokat, akik felszólalnak a kurdok jogaiért, etnikai izgatás és polgárháború szításának vádjával letartóztatják. Különböző emberjogi szervezetek jelentése szerint a bíróságok eljárása ritkán felel meg a nemzetközi előírásoknak, a börtönökben gyakoriak a kínzások, a titokzatos halálesetek.

Az utóbbi két év jelentős változásokat hozott a kurdok helyzetében. A Kamisliben 2004 márciusában egy futballmeccsen kitört kurd–arab közelharc felszította a mélyen izzó elégedetlenséget, és azóta több zavargás is történt. Az egyre bátrabb szíriai kurd vezetők fellépése hátterében nyilván ott van az iraki kurdok önállósodása, illetve Szíria kényszerű katonai kivonulása Libanonból, vagyis a rendszer fokozódó gyengülése. **SPÁT ESZTER**

13 JANVIER 2006



Soutenu par tous les ténors du régime, peu impressionné par les menaces de sanctions, le président Ahmadinejad est déterminé à ne pas céder.

Nucléaire: l'Iran maître du jeu



Chaîne humaine le 18 novembre autour du site de recherche de Natanz pour défendre le programme nucléaire iranien.

Sanctions ou pas, le régime islamique de Téhéran est déterminé à avancer à tout prix sur la question du nucléaire. Le régime, c'est-à-dire non seulement le président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad mais aussi le Guide suprême du régime, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei, et l'adversaire le plus acharné du Président, Ali Akbar Hachémi-Rafsjandjani. A la tête du Conseil de discernement – l'organe d'arbitrage politique du régime –, ce dernier a tenu hier des propos encore plus virulents que son rival.

Nationalisme. «L'opposition des pays occidentaux (au programme nucléaire iranien, ndlr) est fondée sur leur mentalité coloniale. (...) Ils veulent priver les nations islamiques de la connaissance de l'énergie nucléaire et les maintenir dans l'arriération, mais nous poursuivrons notre programme car c'est le souhait de notre nation», a déclaré celui que toutes les chancelleries occidentales voulaient voir réélu au dernier scrutin. L'affaire est entendue: Ahmadinejad a rassemblé derrière lui tous les ténors du régime. C'est donc un front unanime que Téhéran oppose aux pays occidentaux. C'est

«D'ores et déjà, Téhéran a la capacité théorique de faire la bombe. On peut la ralentir, pas l'empêcher.»

Bernard Hourcade, chercheur au CNRS

aussi le seul sujet sur lequel le jeune Président a l'initiative et n'est pas contesté, ses projets sociaux ayant été battus en brèche par ses adversaires.

Pris au piège d'un dossier qui touche au nationalisme, ceux-ci sont obligés de le suivre. Jusqu'au bout.

Avant la dernière présidentielle, le régime iranien s'employait à trouver une solution

avec Washington permettant de rouvrir des relations diplomatiques. Ahmadinejad, lui, était contre. En vertu de ses principes idéologiques.

Grâce à la question nucléaire et à ses déclarations appelant à l'anéantissement d'Israël, il a mis fin à toute vel

léité de reprise de telles relations. Il est d'autant plus déterminé à suivre une ligne radicale que ses rivaux politiques lui mènent la vie dure et qu'il craint de perdre le pouvoir.

Du temps de Mohammed Khatami, l'Iran certes condui-

sait un programme nucléaire clandestin – découvert en août 2003, il existait depuis une dizaine d'années – mais, en même temps, l'ex-Président était prêt à négocier. Pour lui, les accords commerciaux ou culturels avec

●●● l'Europe avaient un sens. Pas pour Ahmadinejad. «Il représente une nouvelle génération qui arrive au pouvoir et veut mettre à la porte les caciques. Grâce à cette crise, il peut apparaître comme le révolutionnaire qu'il a toujours voulu être. Au regard de l'Egypte, de la Syrie..., il peut présenter l'Iran comme un petit pays victime des grandes puissances et lui-même se présenter comme un leader à leurs populations», explique Bernard Hourcade, directeur de recherches au CNRS. «Le régime continuera son programme. Il n'y a personne pour réagir. Pas de risques extérieurs. Israël a fait savoir "ne comptez pas sur moi" (pour bombarder les sites nucléaires, ndlr). Le Hezbollah passerait dans l'instant à l'attaque. Il y aurait de graves répercussions en Irak. De plus, personne ne veut de nouvelle crise au Proche-Orient. Sans parler du pétrole qui se mettrait à flamber», ajoute-t-il.

Matelas financier. Selon ce chercheur, il est même probable qu'Ahmadinejad espère

des frappes aériennes qui ne feraient que retarder d'environ six mois le programme nucléaire mais justifierait sa politique et ses provocations. Dans un tel contexte, la menace de saisine du Conseil de sécurité risque de n'avoir aucun effet pour infléchir la position iranienne. D'autant que la Chine et la Russie pourraient s'y opposer. Autre élément: grâce à la hausse du pétrole, Téhéran dispose d'un matelas financier de 30 à 40 milliards de dollars, de quoi lui permettre d'atténuer l'effet des sanctions. «En fait, c'est l'Iran qui mène la danse, impose son calendrier. D'ores et déjà, Téhéran a la capacité théorique de faire la bombe. On peut la ralentir, pas l'empêcher. C'est un fait acquis. La seule solution, c'est de sortir de cette crise par le haut. Il peut y avoir une révolution républicaine en Iran. Cette société embryonnaire, il faut la pousser pour qu'elle passe du culturel au politique. De manière qu'au jour J, quand l'Iran aura la capacité nucléaire, la démocratie soit là pour empêcher que la bombe se fasse. C'est un chemin difficile et que personne ne prend», estime Hourcade. Pour le moment, aucune sortie de crise n'est visible. Au jour J, qu'au boutisme iranien risque de répondre celui de Washington – l'ambassadeur américain à l'ONU, John Bolton, est connu pour être un adversaire déterminé de Téhéran. Pour l'UE, qui avait tout misé sur sa politique du «dialogue critique» avec Téhéran, l'échec est cuisant. Penaude, elle est obligée de s'aligner sur les Etats-Unis et, s'il y a des sanctions, ce sont ses entreprises implantées en Iran qui en paieront le prix. ♦

JEAN-PIERRE PERRIN



Evidence increases of an Iraqi-Qaeda split

By Sabrina Tavernise
and Dexter Filkins

BAGHDAD: The story told by the two Iraqi guerrillas cut to the heart of the war that Iraqi and American officials now believe is raging inside the Iraqi insurgency.

In October, the two insurgents said in interviews, a group of local fighters from the Islamic Army gathered for an open-air meeting on a street corner in Taji, a city north of Baghdad.

Across from the Iraqis stood the men from Al Qaeda, mostly Arabs from outside Iraq. Some of them wore suicide belts. The men from the Islamic Army accused the Qaeda fighters of murdering their comrades.

"Al Qaeda killed two people from our group," said an Islamic Army fighter who uses the nom de guerre Abu Lil and who said that he attended the meeting. "They repeatedly kill our people."

The encounter ended angrily. A few days later, the insurgents said, Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia and the Islamic Army fought a bloody battle on the outskirts of town.

The battle, which the insurgents said was fought Oct. 23, was one of several clashes between Al Qaeda and local Iraqi guerrilla groups that have broken out in recent months in cities and towns across the Sunni Triangle.

American and Iraqi officials said they believe that the conflicts present one of the biggest opportunities since the insurgency burst upon Iraq nearly three years ago. They have begun talking with local insurgents, hoping to en-

list them to cooperate against Al Qaeda, said Western diplomats, Iraqi officials and an insurgent leader.

It is impossible to say just how far the split extends within the insurgency, which remains a lethal force with a shared goal of driving the Americans out of Iraq. Indeed, the best that the Americans can hope for may be a grudging passivity from the Iraqi insurgents when the Americans zero in on Al Qaeda forces.

But the split within the insurgency is coinciding with Sunni Arabs' new desire to participate in Iraq's political process and a growing resentment of the militants.

Iraqis are increasingly saying that they regard Al Qaeda as a foreign-led force, whose extreme religious goals and desires for sectarian war against Iraq's Shiite majority override tribal and nationalist traditions.

While American and Iraqi officials have talked of a split for months, detailed accounts of clashes were provided by men claiming to be local insurgents.

Abu Lil was one of four Iraqi men interviewed for this article who said they were fighters for the Islamic Army, one of the main insurgent groups. Despite its name, its members have nationalist and largely secular motivations. While their membership in the insurgency could not be independently verified, the descriptions that the four men offered of themselves and their exploits were lengthy, detailed and credible.

One clash occurred in Samarra, north of Baghdad, which had been infiltrated by Al Qaeda fighters. In desperation, a

local sheik, Hekmat Mumtaz al-Baz, traveled to Baghdad in September to meet with Iraq's defense minister and ask for help, said one of the sheik's aides, Waleed al-Samarrai.

A few weeks after the visit, the sheik was shot dead by Qaeda gunmen in his

yard. The tribe was furious and its members tracked down the three men who had carried out the killing.

Elders from the tribe held a trial in a local farmhouse and interrogated the men for days. They said that they worked for a fighter from Saudi Arabia who bankrolled the attacks, Samarrai said.

Samarrai and his brother, Salim al-Samarrai, the sheik's bodyguard, said Al Qaeda's appeal was based less on religion than on money. The Iraqis who

killed the sheik were believed to have received \$500 to \$1,000 for the job, and the same amount for dozens of other similar killings, Samarrai said.

Members of the tribe swept the town and arrested 17 people who they suspected were associated with the sheik's killing. In one house raid, the tribe found men from Sudan, Morocco, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia, a member of the tribe said.

Al Qaeda's fighters struck back during the tribe's offensive. A foreign Arab, believed to be a Saudi and wearing a suicide belt, blew himself up at the sheik's funeral, killing one guest and wounding two, said Salim al-Samarrai, who said he witnessed the attack.

As a lesson to all those associated with the sheik's death, the tribe staged a public execution. While the sheik's father watched, men with machine guns shot the three men who carried out the assassination, the Samarrai brothers said.

"Someone from outside the tribe should not tell us what to do," said Waleed al-Samarrai, standing next to the hospital bed in Baghdad where his brother was recuperating from wounds suffered in a fight with Al Qaeda forces. "It is unacceptable for us."

Abu Lil, who fought in Taji in October, claimed to have met with Qaeda fighters in late 2003. The militant group had just claimed responsibility for a double car bombing in Baghdad and insurgents from a nationalist group that Abu Lil belonged to at that time were angry about the high civilian death toll and tried to get the Qaeda fighters, several of them from Pakistan, to leave.

It took two more years for Sunni Arab sentiment to turn against the militants.

Last January, Sunnis boycotted an election, giving them few seats in the new Parliament and leaving them out of the drafting of a new constitution.

In the predominantly Sunni town of Dhuluiya, north of Baghdad, locals began to feel politically isolated and blamed insurgents.

In the days leading to a vote on the constitution last October, they went to the resistance, demanded that they let people vote, and got a promise of protection. Clerics from five local mosques encouraged their congregations to vote,



Johan Spanner/Polars for The New York Times

Abu Lil, left, and another insurgent said that they were Islamic Army fighters and considered Al Qaeda to be foreign extremists.

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Herald Tribune

even sending people to put up posters about the election.

The excitement over the vote spurred Al Qaeda into action. At night, men put up their own posters threatening, "He who votes will be beheaded."

Then, two days before the Oct. 15 referendum, a group of Qaeda fighters, at least two of them foreigners, confronted an imam in one of the local Sunni mosques and vowed to kill anyone who removed their posters.

"Why are you driving the troubles into our town?" the Sunni cleric said he asked the men. "If you want jihad, the U.S. military is there."

Imams from five Sunni mosques tore down the Qaeda posters wherever they could find them.

Al Qaeda got the message. On Election Day, Dhululiyah's voters streamed to polling places. The streets were quiet, with only a single attack on a polling center.

"All of them voted," the resident said. "All of Dhululiyah. There was no one sitting in his house."

Two and a half years into the American occupation, the towns and villages south of Baghdad are divided among the insurgent groups like gang territory in big American cities.

The arrangement is largely invisible to American troops who patrol the towns, the insurgents said in interviews. But guerrillas themselves say they must seek permission to travel through towns that their groups do not control.

Abu Marwa, a 32-year-old guerrilla leader from Yusufiya, a city south of Baghdad, told of a blood feud with Al Qaeda in a village that it controlled called Karagol, south of Baghdad.

Bookish and soft-spoken, Marwa said he might never have clashed with Al Qaeda, but the group's sectarian war against Shiites clashed with his loyalty to a Shiite relative who the group had

kidnapped and tortured.

According to Marwa's story, the feud with Al Qaeda began with the kidnapping on Oct. 13.

For the next three days, Marwa searched for his relative through miles of lush farmland before he got to Karagol and found the man in the local morgue. Burns marked his body and his knees were raw, as if he had been dragged.

"I was totally crazy," Marwa recalled. "A mad man was more rational than me."

Enlisting the most trusted members of his cell, Marwa set out to take revenge. They tracked two Syrian members of Al Qaeda and in late October killed them on a country road as they drove out of town, taking their two kaffiyeh, or headaddresses, to the dead relative's wife, Marwa said.

The New York Times

Senators back sanctions against Iran's nuclear efforts

From news reports

WASHINGTON: Several U.S. senators of both parties expressed strong support Sunday for economic sanctions against Iran unless it halts its nuclear activities, and a few would not rule out military options.

Tensions over Iran's nuclear intentions rose sharply last week after Iran — over the objections of the United States and the European Union — took the seals off uranium enrichment equipment at its Natanz nuclear facility and resumed work.

Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona, said on CBS-TV that the United States should press for sanctions even if this led to higher oil prices.

Another Republican, Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, pointed to tougher measures, saying that "all options," a phrase generally implying use of military force, should be kept open.

But Graham also said on Fox-TV that

"we need to work together with our European allies" — none of which have condoned military force against Iranian targets — "to stop them from developing a nuclear weapon."

Two other senators — Trent Lott, Republican of Mississippi, and Evan Bayh, Democrat of Indiana — strongly supported economic sanctions but said that the use of force would be premature.

"We should impose economic sanctions unless there's some dramatic change in the Iranian position," Lott said on CNN. As to military force, he said, "We have the capability, we could take action, but it would be difficult, and we have to see if there are other options."

The Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, held a news conference over the weekend and declared that Iran would not abandon its nuclear program, even if it was taken to the UN Security Council, where it could face punitive measures.

"They keep on threatening us that we

have to either accept what they say or they will send us to the Security Council," he said, referring to the United States and other nations that, through the International Atomic Energy Agency, have been pressing Iran not to resume its nuclear activities.

"The Security Council is not an instrument for you to pressure us with," he added. "They have the right to make comments. We follow our national interests within the framework of international regulations and have the leverage to defend our interests."

Ahmadinejad would not say whether the research would include small-scale uranium enrichment, a step that can lead to production of nuclear fuel for an energy plant or, as part of a more complex process, for a nuclear bomb.

"Now it is time for the Western countries to build confidence and prove to us that they will allow our people to achieve scientific progress," Ahmadinejad said Saturday. "Despite their own

scientific and technological development, these countries have a medieval mind-set. They tell us that we do not have the right to scientific progress. This kind of language has expired."

Representatives of France, Germany and Britain, the three European nations that have been leading talks with Iran, ended discussions with Tehran on

Thursday about a range of incentives to end its nuclear activities. On Friday, Germany's chancellor, Angela Merkel, met with President George W. Bush in Washington and promised to step up pressure on Iran.

The same day, Iran's foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, said that if the country is taken before the Security Council, Iranian law would require the government to ban international inspectors from its nuclear sites.

Iran also said Sunday that it would sponsor a conference to examine the scientific evidence supporting the Holocaust, a new step in Ahmadinejad's campaign against Israel and a move that was likely to deepen Tehran's international isolation.

Ahmadinejad already has called the Nazis' slaughter of European Jews a myth and said the Jewish state should be wiped off the map or moved to Germany or the United States.

Those remarks prompted a global outpouring of condemnation, and it was not clear who would be willing to attend an Iranian-sponsored conference.

Late last year, however, the leader of Egypt's main Islamic opposition group joined Ahmadinejad in characterizing the Holocaust as a myth and lambasted Western governments for criticizing disclaimers of the Jewish genocide.

"Western democracies have slammed all those who don't see eye-to-eye with the Zionists regarding the myth of the Holocaust," the Muslim Brotherhood chief, Mohammed Mahdi Akef, wrote on the group's Web site.

(IHT, AP, NYT)

Les présidents syrien et iranien font cause commune

PROCHE-ORIENT

Le président iranien effectue une visite de solidarité à Damas alors que l'Iran et la Syrie sont dans le collimateur des Nations unies.

La Syrie s'est engagée à coopérer pleinement avec la commission d'enquête de l'ONU sur l'assassinat de Rafic Hariri, désormais dirigée par le magistrat belge Serge Brammertz, a indiqué hier le secrétaire général de l'ONU, Kofi Annan.

POUR SA PREMIERE visite bilatérale depuis son élection, l'ultra-conservateur président iranien Mahmoud Ahmadinejad a mis le cap sur la Syrie pour une visite de deux jours. Le choix pourrait à première vue surprendre tant la République islamique des cléricaux iraniens paraît éloignée de l'État arabe laïc et baasiste dirigé par Bachar el-Assad. Mais les pressions internationales exercées contre les deux pays en font des partenaires obligés dans une sorte de nouveau front du refus. Le rapprochement n'est pas nouveau : en août dernier, Ahmadinejad avait promis à son homologue syrien, le premier chef d'État de passage à Téhéran après son investiture, un renforcement de la coopération irano-syrienne afin de mieux résister aux « menaces ».

Aujourd'hui, le voyage d'Ahmadinejad à Damas tombe à pic pour prouver qu'il n'est pas aussi isolé qu'il n'y paraît sur la scène internationale. Et surtout de démontrer à l'opinion publique musulmane qu'il a l'appui indéfectible d'une capitale arabe dans son bras de fer avec l'Occident. Le président syrien Bachar el-Assad a ainsi exprimé à l'issue du premier jour de discussions son soutien à la volonté de l'Iran de se doter d'« une technologie nucléaire à des fins pacifiques ». Avant d'appeler au démantèlement de l'arsenal nucléaire d'Israël.

Antisémitisme compulsif

De son côté, le président iranien persiste et signe. A Damas, il affiche son soutien à un régime lui aussi dans le collimateur des Nations unies depuis l'assassinat voici près d'un an de l'ex-premier mi-

nistre libanais Rafic Hariri. Un meurtre suivi quelques mois plus tard par un retrait forcé de l'armée syrienne du Liban en application

de la résolution 1559 de l'ONU. « Notre position à propos des questions régionales est claire : nous rejetons toute ingérence étrangère », avait indiqué dès mercredi Ahmadinejad en évoquant la demande de désarmement du Hezbollah par les Nations unies en vertu de la résolution 1559.

Rattaché par des liens historiques à l'Iran, le puissant parti chiite libanais prosyrien est le trait d'union entre les uns et les autres. Mardi, ses partisans ont encore manifesté à proximité de l'ambassade des États-Unis à Beyrouth pour fustiger les « dik-tats US ». Le Hezbollah prend pour prétexte le différend frontalier libano-israélien des fermes de Chebaa pour justifier son refus de déposer les armes. Le président Ahmadinejad ne peut qu'appuyer l'intransigeance de la milice libanaise.

Antisémitisme compulsif, il entend « rayer Israël de la carte » et qualifie l'Holocauste de « mythe ». Le cheikh Hassan Nasrallah, le chef du Hezbollah, a estimé hier que ces propos ont « dérangé certains dans la région et gêné

d'autres », mais qu'après tout, ils expriment « le sentiment d'un milliard de musulmans dans le monde ».

Mais dans le même temps, l'étau continue de se resserrer cran par cran contre son allié syrien. A la veille du déplacement du président iranien, l'Administration Bush a annoncé le gel des avoirs d'Assef Chaoukat, chef des services secrets syriens et beau-frère du président Bachar el-Assad en lui reprochant notamment ses relations avec le Hezbollah. L'homme de l'ombre est aussi présenté par Washington comme l'« un des architectes essentiels de la domination de la Syrie au Liban » et de la politique « suivie par la Syrie pour former le terrorisme contre Israël ». Les Américains vont même jusqu'à l'accuser d'être mêlé à l'insurrection en Irak.

Pouvoir de nuisance

Source potentielle de désaccord entre Téhéran et Damas, l'Irak n'est pas pour l'instant une pomme de discorde. Car les deux proscrits ont intérêt au maintien d'un conflit, au moins de moyenne intensité, sur les terres de ce voisin frontalier. Le chaos irakien permet à Téhéran et à Damas d'entretenir un pouvoir de nuisance sur les Américains. Les Iraniens

peuvent menacer d'une déstabilisation accrue via des groupes chiites. Et les Syriens de servir de point d'appui à la guérilla sunnite.

L'alliance entre le régime alaouite et les chiites iraniens remonte d'ailleurs à la guerre qui avait opposé de 1980 à 1988 l'Iran à l'Irak. « Nos relations avec la Syrie sont profondes, fraternelles et durables », a commenté le président Ahmadinejad. Mais c'est la cause palestinienne qui, une fois de plus, donne l'occasion de déclarations offensives. « Nous nous sommes mis d'accord pour appuyer le peuple palestinien dans sa résistance contre Israël », a assuré Bachar el-Assad.

THIERRY OBERLÉ



En visite officielle à Damas, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (à droite) veut prouver qu'il n'est pas aussi isolé qu'il y paraît sur la scène internationale. Beshara/AFP

LE FIGARO

20 janvier 2006

Tel Afar's ethnic tug of war puts Iraq army to the test

US military leaders express confidence in the Iraqi troops but local Sunnis are less happy, writes Ferry Biedermann

Seen through a bullet-proof window in an armoured truck with a heavy machinegun on the roof, security vehicles ahead and air support nearby – the Iraqi people in western Nineveh province look happy

Young shepherds wave from the fields to the passing US army convoy, and the Iraqi army and police manning the checkpoints snap smartly to attention when the trucks thunder by.

The Tel Afar district, a mixed Turcoman, Kurdish and Sunni Arab area some 180 miles northwest of Baghdad, is held up by the American military as one of the success stories of the "multinational" forces in Iraq.

This time last year, the region was known as the 'Fallujah of the North' after it had become an important staging point for what the American commanders call "the terrorists".

After action last September called "Operation Restoring Rights", the commander of the 3rd Armoured Cavalry Regiment, or 3ACR, Colonel 'HR' McMaster, says his men "lifted a pall of fear" from the population. He gives graphic descriptions of kidnappings, murders, beheadings and random mortar fire into children's playgrounds before the operation.

But a self-appointed council of Nineveh province – comprised of dignitaries, sheikhs and *ulema* (clerics) – put out a statement in late December that complained bitterly of persecution of the Sunni population in Tel Afar. It demanded an international inquiry into the "truth of what is happening in Tel Afar, of the extreme use of force and the use of internationally forbidden weapons..."

The statement claims the Sunnis are being ethnically cleansed from the Tel Afar region and the nearby city of Mosul, blaming Kurdish and Shia militias that it says are

part of the Iraqi army.

The area borders on the Kurdish autonomous area in the north and is subject to a constant tug of war between ethnic groups. The statement says the Kurds are intent on annexing parts of Nineveh province and alleges the Shia Badr brigades, associated with the SCIRI party that dominates the government in Baghdad, say they have come "to break the noses of the Sunnis" as they enter towns and villages in the province.

At the forward operating base of Sykes, just outside Tel Afar, Col McMaster and his men dismiss much of the talk about Badr brigades as exaggerated. They say they work closely with the third division of the new Iraqi army based in the area and deem the quality of the Iraqi leadership "excellent". Rather than posing a problem, the Iraqi army in their view is part of the solution.

"We have made partnering with the Iraqi army our number one priority," Major James Gallivan, the regiment's operations officer says. He and Col McMaster want to put the Iraqi army, and the police – now being reconstituted – up front to gain the trust of locals.

The American officers say they are aware of the precarious ethnic and religious mix, as it was also exploited by insurgents to stir up trou-

ble. They say they encourage the police to have "representative" and mixed units in all parts of the town and they have impressed upon the army and police leadership the importance of fairness and the rule of law vis-a-vis the local population.

From the confines of US military facilities it is hard to gauge if this has borne fruit. But statistics on the 3rd Iraqi army division are not encouraging. More than 40 per cent of its men are Kurdish and the rest are overwhelmingly Shia, with only some 10 to 15 per cent Sunnis.

In the past the Kurdish soldiers, predominantly former fighters against Saddam Hussein's Sunni-backed Ba'ath regime, have followed their own Kurdish nationalist agenda.

During Operation Restoring Rights, a Kurdish brigade from Irbil was included and Shia-dominated ministry of interior troops arrived, but "they were kept in the outlying areas"

Col McMaster and his officers say the operation in and around Tel Afar has been a resounding success. The number of violent incidents has dropped dramatically. The main indicator that things are moving in

the right direction, they say, is that ordinary Iraqis now provide increasing amounts of valuable "human intelligence" on militants in their

midst and increasingly straight to the Iraqi army and police, rather than to the American forces. This shows, they say, that people are no longer intimidated.

But the attacks – albeit at a lower level, less organised and less sophisticated – continue, pointing to a remaining reservoir of mainly Sunni resentment at being dominated by other groups locally and being governed by mostly Shia politicians in Baghdad. In the past, US forces thought they had achieved success, only to see it crumble – for example during a troop rotation. The 3ACR was in Western Abbar province – including the restive towns of Fallujah and Ramadi – in 2003, where trouble increased after they pulled out. And militants around Tel Afar were able to capitane on the troop rotation when they took over there in April and May 2004.

Maj Gallivan says this time things are different, "because now the Iraqi troops have the prime responsibility for security, not the coalition troops".

He contends that in the case of a total withdrawal of US forces, the 3rd Iraqi army division "will stand and fight. They will not fall or fade away as happened in the past."



US troops patrol a stretch of highway in the Tel Afar district. The Americans say partnership with the Iraqi army and police is a number one priority

Jeroen Kramer

Ahmadinejad ■ By Dariush Zahedi and Omid Memarian

A firebrand in Iran's house of cards

BERKELEY, California

In defying international monitors and breaking the seals on its nuclear facilities, Iran seems to be courting confrontation.

But Western leaders would do well to consider what President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's bravado really says about Iran's likely posture in the region and at the nuclear talks that are scheduled to resume at the end of January. To continue down the path of conflict could be very costly, both for the regional interests of the United States and most of all, for the territorial integrity of Iran.

Ahmadinejad is surely motivated by ideology and the desire to solidify the position of the security faction within Iran's ruling elite. But he also appears to be acting on the perception that the United States is in a position of considerable weakness.

America's military is overstretched in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Washington has focused on monitoring North Korea's nuclear program rather than Iran's. If threatened, Iran could wreak havoc in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and Israel. These observations may lead Ahmadinejad to an incorrect assessment of Iran's strength relative to any American threat.

In fact, Iran has serious domestic frailties, including a shaky economy, soaring levels of drug abuse and a brain drain.

But Ahmadinejad no doubt takes comfort in the knowledge that Shiite religious parties aligned with Iran are now the dominant political forces in Iraq, while the American public hardly seems amenable to waging another war in the region.

Moreover, it is very likely that Ahmadinejad believes the best way to guard against regime change from without is to emulate North Korea by swiftly advancing Iran's nuclear capacity.

The new president also surely knows that even if Iran's nuclear dossier were referred to the UN Security Council, meaningful multilateral sanctions would most likely be vetoed by Russia or China. Iran has become a major purchaser of Russian technology, and China has quickly emerged as one of Iran's largest trading partners.

Given this favorable strategic picture, Ahmadinejad might even welcome an American or Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear facilities. Tehran could then retaliate against American and Israeli interests by mobilizing its Shiite allies in Iraq, the Gulf countries and Lebanon — or even by making common cause with some Sunni rivals.

All the while, Ahmadinejad's faction in government would make full use of the war footing to marginalize its rivals at home and

crush the remnants of Iran's civil society.

But the Iranian regime is not invulnerable, and Washington knows this. Just as Iran can use the Shiite card to create mischief in the region, the United States could manipulate ethnic and sectarian tensions in Iran, which has significant, largely Sunni, minority populations along its borders.

Many of Iran's ethnic and religious minorities see themselves as victims of discrimination. Two million disgruntled Arabs reside mainly in the oil- and gas-rich province of Khuzestan. The United States could make serious trouble for Tehran by providing financial, logistical and moral support to Arab secessionists in that province.

Other aggrieved Iranian minorities would be emboldened by the Arabs' example — for example, the

Kurds and the Baluchis, or even the Azeris (though the Azeris, being Shiites, are better integrated into Iranian society). A simple spark could suffice to set off centrifugal explosions.

Furthermore, the plummeting Iranian economy will only worsen if the United States succeeds in referring Iran's nuclear file to the Security Council, whether or not meaningful sanctions follow.

Iran should endeavor to regain the trust of the international community by engaging in compromise, and the United States should allow this compromise to be sufficiently face-saving for Iran's ruling elite.

To regain the confidence of the international community, Iran should accept the Russian offer to process Iranian uranium gas into fuel and voluntarily stop, for a specified time, insisting on its right to do so at home.

In return, the United States should lift its unilateral sanctions from Iran. These sanctions, which include a ban on the sale of aircraft

and spare parts to Iran, have absolutely no effect on the regime's nuclear capacity, but harm Iranian civilians.

If the United States responds to a perceived Iranian threat by exploiting Iran's ethnic, sectarian and economic cleavages, it is not just the Islamic Republic that will be threatened — Iran itself could be dismembered as well.

Dariush Zahedi is a political scientist at the University of California at Berkeley. Omid Memarian, an Iranian journalist and blogger, is a visiting scholar at the university's Graduate School of Journalism.

**The Iranian regime
is not invulnerable,
and Washington
knows this.**

January 16, 2006

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune

L'Irak au bon vouloir des Kurdes

ANALYSE

SOPHIE SHIHAB

Le Kurdistan, devenu la Mecque des chefs de partis irakiens voulant former le premier gouvernement régulier du pays, continue, près de trois ans après la chute de Saddam, à jouer le rôle du médiateur sauvant l'unité du pays et celui du stabilisateur offrant des appuis aux Américains. C'est devenu encore plus vrai après l'échec cuisant, au scrutin du 15 décembre, de la liste laïque d'Iyad Allaoui sur laquelle Washington fondait des espoirs.

Pourtant, cette issue kurde, pour les Américains, est frappée d'un paradoxe que chacun préfère taire : les « faiseurs de rois » siégeant au Kurdistan sont en effet ceux que l'avenir de l'Irak inquiète le moins. A lire la Constitution irakienne, ce serait même l'avenir le plus sombre qui pourrait avoir la préférence des Kurdes... La Constitution affirme en effet que l'unité de l'Irak, issue de l'union volontaire des Irakiens, « est garantie par le respect du texte » de cette Constitution. Autrement dit, si celle-ci « n'est pas appliquée, si le pouvoir à Bagdad prend une direction antidémocratique, antifédérale, agressive à notre égard, ou celle d'un Etat islamique, nous avons le droit de décider seuls de notre avenir », comme l'explique Fouad Hussein, chef de cabinet du président de la région du Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani.

Or, nul au Kurdistan ne fait mystère de l'avenir dont il rêve, celui d'un Etat kurde indépendant. Même si les dirigeants affirment y avoir renoncé, sous condition, au profit du fédéralisme, ils rappellent haut et fort que leur peuple s'est prononcé à 98 %, lors d'un scrutin officieux en janvier 2005, en faveur de l'indépendance pour laquelle ils se sont battus durant des décennies. De plus, la Constitution irakienne étant d'ores et déjà un ensemble de propositions contradictoires, estimer qu'elle est « violée » ne présente aucune difficulté. Est-ce à dire que les jeux sont faits et que les Kurdes d'Irak n'attendent plus que l'instant favorable pour se déclarer indépendants ? La réalité est bien sûr plus complexe.

C'est d'abord la présence américaine qui la définit – pour l'instant. Si le président Barzani fut reçu pour la première fois à la Maison Blanche en novembre, ce fut, officiellement, pour le remercier de ses bons offices ayant permis d'accoucher d'une Constitution irakienne. C'est-à-dire, surtout pas pour bénir ses rêves d'indépendance qui menacent de livrer l'Irak aux déchirements entre Arabes sunnites et chiites, et de déstabiliser les trois grands pays voi-

sins ayant des minorités kurdes. Même s'il ne manque pas, à Washington, de partisans d'un tel bouleversement qui affecterait deux « mauvais » régimes à Téhéran et Damas. L'ancien ambassadeur américain en Croatie Peter Galbraith, devenu conseiller du président Barzani, estime que les Etats-Unis devraient s'y préparer, notamment en repliant certaines de leurs bases au Kurdistan, le seul endroit de la région où elles sont bienvenues.

Les activistes sunnites crient pour cela au complot, rappelant que l'idée d'une division de l'Irak remonte à certains pères du sionisme, dont les tenants ont toujours aidé les Kurdes irakiens dans leurs guerres d'indépendance. Raison forte pour discréditer les aspirations nationales des Kurdes aux yeux de la quasi-totalité des Arabes, qui ont détourné les yeux, voire applaudi, lorsque « les alliés d'Israël » se faisaient massacrer. A l'inverse, les Kurdes ne leur pardonnent pas cette attitude passée qui pèse lourd dans le refus de la population de s'identifier comme irakienne.

Ces handicaps à un Irak unitaire pourraient s'accommoder d'une Fédération très lâche, telle qu'inscrite dans la Constitution – et dans les faits : la région du Kurdistan a le contrôle de ses forces armées, de ses frontières, de sa législation et, partiellement, de ses ressources naturelles – notamment du pétrole, qu'elle aura elle-même trouvées et exploitées. Les sunnites modérés sont résignés à ce qu'un tel fédéralisme s'applique aux Kurdes, amis, mais refusent de le voir étendu aux Arabes chiites du Sud.

Les Anglo-Américains le refusent aussi, par crainte d'une emprise de l'Iran sur le pays chiite irakien –, même si celle-ci est déjà bien avancée. Jack Straw, le ministre britannique des affaires étrangères en tournée à Bassora, tout en reconnaissant que « les chefs des partis irakiens ne sont pas encore convaincus dans leur cœur » de la nécessité d'un Irak uni, a assuré qu'ils en sont « certains dans leur tête ».

Peut-on donc fonder un pays par la seule raison contre ses passions ? La réponse normale est non. Mais pour défendre un Irak uni, il n'y a pas que des facteurs extérieurs, c'est-à-dire la volonté des pays voisins et des forces d'occupation. Des obstacles intérieurs s'opposent toujours à son éclatement. En commençant, côté arabe, par ce qui devrait compter le plus, si le pays n'était pas en

guerre : le désir d'unité d'une partie des chiites – les laïques et ceux du courant de Moqtada Sadr –, de tous les sunnites et de la plupart des minoritaires.

Ces courants, peut-être majoritaires ensemble, sont cependant trop disparates pour faire bloc. Mais côté kurde aussi, l'indépendance reste un rêve brumeux pour une raison interne : la rivalité entre les deux partis, le PDK de Massoud Barzani et l'UPK de Jalal Talabani, qui se partagent géographiquement le pouvoir au Kurdistan. L'unification promise de leurs deux administrations est régulièrement repoussée. Elle attend désormais que la situation à Bagdad se décade et que l'actuel président irakien Jalal Talabani soit, ou non, reconduit à un poste central qui lui convienne. Les Kurdes sont nombreux à exprimer la crainte que ne reprenne leur guerre des chefs, que seule la nécessité de présenter un front commun face aux autres composantes de l'Irak avait calmée.

Cette rivalité nuit à la « grande cause » des Kurdes d'Irak, la récupération de Kirkouk et des autres zones pétrolières d'où ils furent chassés ces dernières décennies. A qui, en effet, rendre Kirkouk si les récipiendaires ne s'accordent pas sur un mécanisme ? Or il est entendu, parmi les Kurdes, qu'aucune indépendance n'est à réclamer avant qu'ils n'aient pu retrouver Kirkouk, leur « Jérusalem »... Seule lueur d'espoir, sur le plan régional : les généraux turcs ont cessé de clamer qu'une mainmise kurde sur Kirkouk justifierait leur intervention armée au Kurdistan d'Irak. Le début des négociations avec l'Union européenne comme la fin du mythe d'une « majorité turkmène » dans cette ville et les conseils pressants de leurs alliés américains auraient eu raison de ces plans guerriers.

C'est désormais les hommes d'affaires et les ouvriers de Turquie – turcs ou kurdes – qui viennent en masse investir et travailler au Kurdistan d'Irak, préfigurant ce qui, dans le meilleur des cas, pourrait être une future coopération régionale apaisée. Même si, en attendant, se multiplient au Kurdistan d'Irak les conférences pour l'indépendance organisées par diverses associations d'émigrés kurdes d'Europe et des Amériques. ■

Roger Cohen

Globalist

Herald Tribune

JANUARY 21-22, 2006

Kurd wants Iraq unity, but not at any price

BAGHDAD

At the approximate pinnacle of Iraqi politics sits Jalal Talabani, a rotund fellow with a ready smile. A Kurd, he has weathered his share of a stateless people's hardships, including chemical-weapons attacks from Saddam Hussein. But the president of Iraq seems to have reached a late-life tranquillity.

Until, that is, something riles him. "We will never accept this dirty game," he says in an interview, twinkling eyes hardening from bonhomie to steel. "Never, never, never." His voice rises: "One leg with the government, one leg with the terrorists, if they do this they will lose everything."

The catalyst to this outburst is a question often posed in Baghdad these days: might Sunni Arab political parties, now entering Iraq's political theater for the first time since the

American invasion, join a new government while also lending quiet support to the Sunni-led insurgency?

Could their politics just be war by additional means?

As Sinn Fein and the Irish Republican Army



Jalal Talabani

once demonstrated in Northern Ireland, such arrangements are not easy to disentangle.

Sunni politicians, under fire from insurgents for participating in Iraq's Dec. 15 elections, have become masters of ambiguity. "Working with the resistance is a red line for my party," insists Tarik al-Hashimi, the Sunni leader of the Iraqi Islamic Party. "But we respect their option. There is a national resistance with legitimate reasons."

Talabani, the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, knows resistance. He fought a decades-long Kurdish struggle using arms and diplomacy, sometimes simultaneously, before America's quixotic attempt to shape a democratic Middle East landed him here, in the former house of Saddam's imprisoned half-brother, of all places.

But the difference he sees is that his fight was against Saddam's dictatorship, whereas the government that will emerge from the elections after weeks of horse-trading will be an expression of democracy, however rudimentary, at work.

"Using arms against an elected government, this is terrorism," Talabani says. "It is in the Sunni Arabs' interest to tell the so-called resistance to lay down their arms and come into the political process."

With the announcement Friday of election results showing Shiite and Kurdish parties within three seats of the two-thirds majority they need to form a government, this process has reached a critical juncture.

Iraq has a Constitution, albeit contested, and the new government will hold office for four years. At the same time the loss of so much blood and treasure has strained American patience: pressure is building to cut the troops and funding that keep Iraq from a worse fate.

If the politics of division prevail as party leaders discuss what governing coalition to form, this pressure to get out of Iraq will grow in Congress. Washington wants conclusiveness, and that means bringing in Sunni parties. Talabani and other Iraqi politicians know this. But, as a Western official here put it, "the tinder is dry in Iraq's political landscape."

Arabs and Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis, are striving to balance their ambitions in an occupied country racked by violence, rich in sectarianism and replete with people disoriented by decades of dictatorship.

"We need a national unity government that must not be in the control of one group or list or nationality," Talabani says. "We must have a consensus to work together, give everyone a share. It's the new game and we did not learn that yet."

But what is he prepared to offer the Sunni Arabs to lure them into the government, coax them from the trauma of losing a power they regarded as a birthright, and convince them that as a minority they can play the political game but not dominate it? Might he even surrender the presidency to them?

Talabani, who is 72, smiles. His is the all-knowing smile of the Middle Eastern fighter-turned-politician who has played every angle, known every deceit, seen every horror and worked every ephemeral alliance of a rough neighborhood.

"If the Sunni Arabs present a person acceptable to all, one who upholds the constitution, I personally will resign and let him come and replace me," he declares. "But it must be

a capable Sunni who believes in democracy and human rights."

Asked if such a person exists, Talabani replies, "I don't think so."

Then he reconsiders. Maybe a good Sunni candidate could be found. But they ruled Iraq for many years and "the result is a very rich country that is among the poorest." There are fewer Sunnis, he points out, than Shiites and Kurds, so "why should they have the right to the presidency?"

He continues: "The Sunni Arabs are not yet out of the dream, the dream of ruling Iraq. They need someone to convince them it's a new day, a new morning, a new dawn. Our Sunni brothers must become effective partners."

The Sunnis, however, tend to think it is Talabani who is deluded. They view themselves as the only true Iraqi patriots. The real interest of the Kurds, they argue, is an independent state. As for the Shia, they are no more than the means by which Shiite

Could Sunni politics just be war by additional means?

Iraq achieves its long-held aim of dominating Iraq.

"We are not dreaming, Talabani is dreaming," says Hassan al-Bazzaz, an American-educated political scientist at Baghdad University. "He is president, but only under an occupation, and he should know that. The smart and educated people are us, the Sunnis. This is no more than a temporary setback."

Who is really dreaming in Iraq? The Kurds now enjoying unimagined prosperity? The Sunnis with their shaken sense of manifest destiny? The majority Shiites working religion and politics with remorseless subtlety? The suicide bombers pursuing a resurrected Islamic caliphate? Or the United States with its vision of Iraqi democracy?

It hardly seems to matter: One clear reality is that all this could produce a disastrous regional conflict. But another reality for now is a jovial Kurd calling for national unity, dismissing an independent Kurdish state as an unrealizable dream, engaging in coalition discussions, and sitting comfortably in a room where Saddam's murderous clan once plotted its ravages. The tangle of Iraqi politics is also the give and take of a free country.

E-mail: rocohen@nytimes.com

JANUARY 21, 2006

The New York Times

ELECTION RESULTS

Votes in Iraq Show Shiites And Kurds Falling Short

By ROBERT F. WORTH

BAGHDAD, Iraq, Jan. 20 — The first official results in Iraq's landmark December elections showed Friday that the Shiite and Kurdish coalitions once again dominated the voting, but came up just short of the two-thirds majority needed to form a government on their own.

Sunni Arab parties won 58 of the new Parliament's 275 seats — the

second-largest bloc of seats — giving them a much stronger political voice than they had before. That raised hopes that the Sunnis, who dominate the insurgency, might choose the political process over violence, and underscored the looming question of what role they would play as Iraq's leaders begin negotiating in earnest to form their first full-term government.

That process is likely to take weeks, if not months, though American diplomats here are pushing the politicians to move as fast as possible.

With a combined total of 181 seats, the Shiite and Kurdish alliances could in theory shut the Sunni Arabs out by luring just 3 members from the other 10 winning lists to create the two-thirds majority needed for a government. But diplomats in Washington, Arab as well as American, said the United States would lean hard on the government to be as inclusive as possible, taking into account the needs of minority blocs in the assembly, particularly the Sunnis and secular Shiites.

"There aren't any unexpected challenges in these results," said a senior State Department official who asked to remain anonymous because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

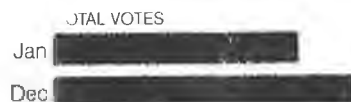
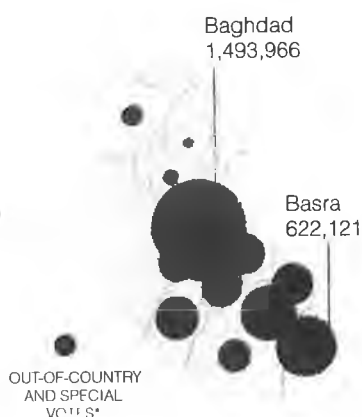
"It's interesting that the Sunnis are the second-largest bloc and that the results break down basically according to the population. But the difficulty will be the same: overcoming the identity politics of Iraq."

The election results appeared along with the passing of a deadline set by kidnappers who had threatened to kill an American journalist, Jill Carroll, unless all women held as prisoners in Iraq were released. There was no word on her fate.

Adnan Dulaimi, a prominent Sunni Arab politician whom Ms. Carroll was trying to meet when she was abducted, appealed for her release at a news conference in Baghdad, saying, "I'm asking those men who kidnapped her to release her unconditionally, and I promise, with the help of God, to work on releasing Iraqi prisoners in Iraqi and American jails."

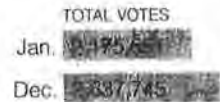
United Iraqi Alliance

Alliance of main Shiite parties

128 SEATS
(-12 FROM JAN.)


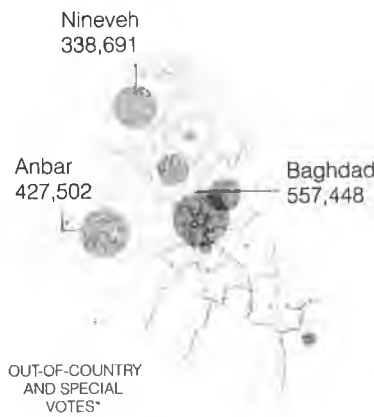
Kurdistan Alliance

Alliance of main Kurdish parties

53 SEATS
(-22)


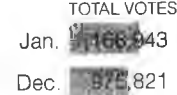
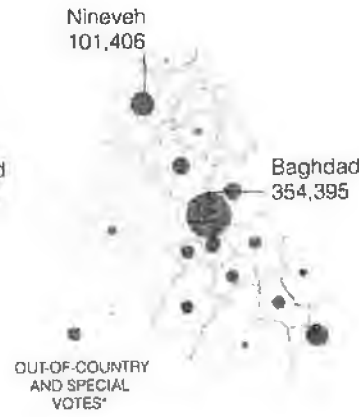
Iraqi Consensus Front

Alliance of main Sunni parties

44 SEATS
(+44)


Iraqi List

Alliance of main Secular parties

25 SEATS
(-15)


*Includes votes from hospitals, detention centers and security forces.

OTHER SHIITE SLATES WITH SEATS

Progressives

145,009 votes 2 seats

Followers of Moktada al-Sadr, the young cleric who led anti-American uprisings. He joined the United Iraqi Alliance himself, but he did not discourage some of his followers who wanted an independent ticket.

OTHER KURD SLATES WITH SEATS

Islamic Union of Kurdistan

157,585 votes 5 seats

Part of the Kurdistan Alliance in the January elections, but members were unhappy with Kurdish leadership in 2005. The party may rejoin the Kurdistan Alliance in the future.

OTHER SUNNI SLATES WITH SEATS

Hewar National Iraqi Front

499,735 votes 11 seats

Hard-line, extremely religious group.

Liberation and Reconciliation Gathering

129,839 votes 3 seats

More secular and moderate.

OTHER COALITIONS WITH SEATS

VOTES SEATS

Iraqi Turkmen Front

86,941 1 Turkmens in Iraq.

Al Rafidain List

45,800 1 Christian group.

Mithal al-Alusi List for the Iraqi Nation

32,173 1 Moderate group.

Al Yazidi Movement for Progress and Reform

21,905 1 Religious group.

Source: Results from the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq

Hannah Fairfield and Archie Tse/The New York Times

The results of the balloting, released five weeks after the Dec. 15 elections, illustrated the overall strength of the country's Shiite and Sunni religious parties and the relative weakness of more secular groups.

The list led by Ahmad Chalabi, the former Pentagon favorite who was considered a strong candidate for prime minister, did not win a single seat. The coalition led by the former prime minister, Ayad Allawi, another secular figure and former exile leader who is favored by the White House, won just 25 of Parliament's 275 seats, making it virtually impossible for him to put together a government.

Some Sunni Arab leaders said they would mount a legal challenge to the election results, which they believe were marred by widespread fraud that favored Iranian-backed Shiite parties. But they conceded that the challenge was unlikely to succeed, and also made clear that they would not follow through on earlier threats to boycott the political process.

"We will deal with this subject positively," said Mahmoud Mashadani, a Sunni and leading member of the Iraqi Consensus Front, which won 44 seats. "We will not ask our members to go home. We will tell them to go to the Parliament."

Shiite leaders believe the election was generally free and fair. But the Shiite alliance is lodging its own legal challenge, arguing that it lost 10 seats because election officials allocated seats using a formula that was biased toward smaller parties, said Hussein al-Shahristani, a leader of the alliance and deputy speaker of the current Parliament.

In other election results, Iraq's main Kurdish alliance saw its share of seats drop to 53 from 75 in last January's vote. A rival Kurdish splinter group, the Islamic Union of Kurdistan, won 5 seats.

The remaining seats were divided among a handful of smaller parties representing, among others, ethnic Turkmen, Christians and Iraq's Yazidi religious minority. Mithal al-Alusi, an independent Sunni Arab candidate, won one seat, and the Progressives, a party loyal to the renegade cleric Moktada al-Sadr (who also has a large bloc of supporters in the Shiite alliance), won two.

Along with the results, election officials released statistics showing that voter turnout among Sunni Arabs, who largely boycotted the January elections, was even higher in December than previously disclosed. In Salahuddin Province, which is mostly Sunni, turnout was 96 percent, the highest in the country. Anbar Province, which is overwhelmingly Sunni, had an 86 percent turnout.

American and Iraqi military officials had warned for days that the re-

lease of the results could set off a surge of violence. In preparation for the announcement on Friday, Iraqi military forces largely sealed off the borders of three provinces with large Sunni populations: Anbar, Salahuddin and Diyala, Interior Ministry officials said. In the event, the day was relatively quiet, with a handful of attacks in central and western Iraq that left 15 people dead and at least a dozen wounded.

In Muqdadia, roadside bombs killed four policemen and three Iraqi soldiers in two separate attacks. In nearby Baquba, a pair of gun battles left three policemen and one soldier dead. In Baghdad, a bomb killed two civilians, and gunmen opened fire on a police patrol, killing an officer and a civilian.

Candidates have until Monday to register protests or appeals, which will be decided by a three-judge panel appointed by the Supreme Judicial Council, Iraq's highest legal authority.

A team of experts that reviewed allegations of fraud in the elections released a report on Thursday, saying there had indeed been some fraud and criticizing Iraqi election officials for throwing out 227 tainted ballot boxes without calling for new elections in those areas. But the team, sent by the Jordan-based International Mission for Iraqi Elections, generally praised the ballot as a well-run effort under difficult circumstances.

Even as the appeals and procedural issues are ironed out, Iraqi leaders have begun negotiating the shape of a new government. The Shiites and Kurds disagree with the Sunnis on a number of key issues, like how oil revenues should be distributed and whether semi-autonomous regions should be created in the country.

But if the Sunnis are denied their say, that could further inflame the insurgency and complicate plans to start reducing the 160,000 American troops here. For that reason — and, perhaps, because of American diplomatic pressure — the Shiites and Kurds say they plan to draw some Sunnis into a much broader "national unity" government.

"We want all of the three main communities of Iraq included in a meaningful way," said Barhem Salih, the current planning minister and a leader of the Kurdish alliance.

Mr. Shahristani said the Shiite alliance was already planning meetings with the Kurdish alliance and the largest Sunni group, with the intent of forming a three-way governing coalition.

Mr. Shahristani said neither Mr. Allawi's secular alliance nor the Sunni Arab party of Saleh Mutlak, which won 11 seats, would be invited into the coalition. Cabinet members do not have to be members of the parties represented in Parliament, so the government could well include some of those who failed to win seats, like Mr. Chalabi.

But it is not clear that the Kurds, who are mostly secular, would be comfortable with cutting out Mr. Allawi, despite his public differences with some Shiite leaders.

In any case, it is too early to say anything definite about the negotiations. Last year it took more than four months after the January elections to form a government, and this time, with an elected body that will last four years, the stakes are that much higher.

The Parliament will soon face a major test apart from forming a new government. Under an agreement reached last fall, it must appoint a committee to discuss revisions to the Constitution, which was approved by a narrow majority in October. Sunni Arabs are fiercely opposed to features of the charter, especially its provision allowing for the creation of semi-autonomous regions, but earlier this month, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the leader of the Shiite alliance, said it opposed any substantial changes in the document.

The election results, broadcast on state television Friday afternoon, drew a range of responses from Iraqis. In the largely Sunni Arab city of Falluja, once a hotbed of violent resistance to Iraq's new leaders, many residents seemed encouraged by what they heard.

"No one would deny that there's fraud in the results," said Qais Hamad, 40. "But we, the Sunnis, don't have any choice but to participate in the upcoming government so we don't get marginalized or leave the leadership to a particular sect, as happened last time."

Shiite areas

Kurdish areas

Sunni areas



Iranian Kurds complain about violation of their rights

By Jamal Ekhtiar
The Globe

Setting balance between different ethnic groups has always remained a challenge for Iran in modern history.

Rahim Abbasi has been involved in political activities in Iran and fled his country after he was revealed to the Iranian police. Now a refugee in Irbil recognized by UN Refugee Agency, he told the Globe, "the Iranian government takes away all rights, those of manifesting ideas, political activities, and various religious practices and violates economic, cultural and national rights of minorities."

Abbasi further explained, "in recent history, this policy has been applied by all Iranian governments consecutively, especially during the rule of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). Systems that do not respect rights of citizens do not meet measures of a democratic system." He added, "in the regions of Iranian Kurdistan, even teachers are prohibited to use the Kurdish language."

Kamal Karimi, head of relations in the Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iran in Irbil says that from the day the IRI was established, it has not been regarding the rights of Iranian citizens without discriminating against Kurds, Azarises and Baluchis. That is one reason why the international human rights agencies, the EU and other International Socialist have condemned the Iranian government more than 20 times repeatedly. Karimi added that there is a difference between the Kurd-



A scene showing Kurdish demonstrators rising Kurdistan flag.

ish and other areas of Iran and with all the common persecution put in force against all Iranian minorities, Kurds receive more persecutions than any other for being who they are.

Post Pahlawi's Monarchy

Karimi further added that after the collapse of the Pahlawi Monarchy, the Kurds immediately asked for their rights. They tried, through their representatives, to negotiate with the Iranian government as soon as it came into power, but the problems arose when the Iranian government treated Kurds harshly and started to assassinate Kurdish leaders. So far, the IRI has not recognized any of the Kurds' national rights. Karimi sets up two reasons behind violations in Iran. Firstly, he says, "the IRI essentially does not believe in human rights. Secondly, it neglects and disregards all international conventions and views of the international community aside from those of its own."

Human rights: An international assertion

Hisam Dast Pish an Iranian holder of M.A in International Relations explained that human rights is an international assertion, and regional explanation would not be imposed on it since it causes inadequacy and facilitates violations. The IRI sees human rights from its regional points of view, something that results in human rights violations by a normal mechanism since a regional interpretation brings limitations. "For example, the IRI sees human rights strictly within Islam and a more limited

framework of the Shiite sect, which ends in violation of rights of the Kurds in Iran," Dast Pish said.

He further categorized the Kurdish problem in Iranian Kurdistan in four points. "First, is that the Kurds ask for democracy and human rights according to universal standards, and this does not meet with the IRI views." Secondly, he said that, "Kurds ask for their rights outside the circle of the IRI interpretation and Kurdish political factions believe their rights will not be recognized under the IRI." Thirdly, he commented "the issue is related to the ruling law and structure of the Kurdish society in Iranian Kurdistan. Since the IRI laws carry limitations that only help a dictatorial system, and that results in problems when Kurds are asking for a democratic law." And lastly, he said, concerns the unity of Iran. The IRI sees the Kurdish question as a separatist movement who wants to break up Iran into pieces. Kurds who ask for their national rights, according to Dast Pish, would be treated based on that, protecting unity of Iran, which means Kurds are suppressed, once again.

Echoes of Kurdish voice

Karimi discussed that due to longstanding friendly relations between the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran and other European parties, particularly the leftist ones, the KDP-Iran has always tried to reflect the voice of the people of Kurdistan to the world and their association with International Socialist has been helpful in this field. They have also attempted to inform western countries in Europe



Kamal Karimi, head of relations in the Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iran in Irbil.

and America about the situation in Kurdistan in order to draw their attention, he said, toward the cruel persecution imposed on Kurds. "We have also tried to inform the UN Secretary General, human rights organizations and other related sides about the issues concerning the violations of the rights of the peoples through letters, special reports and meetings," he said.

He partially criticized the international commu-

nity by saying that the IRI has been censured from international community's side which still remains of great importance carrying a strong message, but contrary to the demands of Iranian people, this has not affected the foreign policy of the western countries; they always put their own national interests first. He sees it as an oversight that perpetuates the rule of dictatorial government, something that is against the principles of

democratic countries, but he hopes that "the times comes when the IRI will have to pay for that."

Human rights will be on a better agenda

Dast Pish believes that the formal assertion has somewhat changed and it signals that human rights will be on a better agenda, especially when the need for democratization in regions such as the Middle East is felt more. However, informal asser-

tion, due to globalization of human rights has become an international issue and thus, both, formal and informal assertions have affected Iran. He believes that in such an atmosphere, democratic countries could have a strategic role and Iran is no exception. "The Iranian public opinion accords with the world and limits the scope of the ruling system. We would be optimistic," he added.

Hawar Bazyan, another Iranian Kurd currently

studying at Salahaddin University, stated that "founding a democratic system in Iran depends on common understanding, mutual respect amongst the different minorities and creation of democratic culture."

If minorities have not respected the rights of each other, we cannot expect a democratic system in Iran. This mutual respect is something that essential for both, the Kurds as well as other segments," he concluded.

Les chiïtes irakiens confirment leur emprise sur le Parlement



Le Parlement irakien issu des urnes est à l'image d'un pays plus que jamais morcelé selon ses clivages communautaires. Au vu des résultats officiels des législatives du 15 décembre, les Irakiens ont voté non pour des partis ou des programmes, mais en fonction de leurs appartenances ethniques ou confessionnelles.

Bonne surprise. D'après les chiffres fournis vendredi par la commission électorale indépendante, la coalition islamiste chiïte arrive largement en tête. Cette alliance qui rassemble à la fois des partisans de l'imam radical Moqtada al-Sadr, du Dawa, le parti du Premier ministre sortant Ibrahim al-Jaafari, et de l'Assemblée suprême de la révolution islamique en Irak (Asrii) rafle 128 des 275 sièges à pourvoir, mais ne recueille pas la majorité absolue. Même s'ils ne retrou-

vent pas leur score précédent (146 élus), les chiïtes ont tout lieu d'être satisfaits. «C'est pour eux une bonne surprise. Au moment de la constitution de la liste, les partis qui la composent s'étaient âprement disputés les cent premiers sièges car ils ne pensaient pas avoir davantage», indique l'anthropologue irakien Hosham Dawod. Lors du précédent scrutin, ils avaient bénéficié, ainsi que les nationalistes kurdes, de l'absence des sunnites arabes, la troisième communauté du pays. Pour les mêmes raisons, les deux grands partis kurdes, regroupés au sein d'un

même bloc, n'obtiennent que 53 élus, contre 75 précédemment.

Grand perdant. Le scrutin confirme la perte de pouvoir des sunnites, qui avaient dominé l'Irak depuis sa création. Alors qu'ils avaient boycotté les premières élections libres de janvier 2005, ils ont participé

en masse à ces législatives. Les deux grandes listes sunnites totalisent à peine plus que le bloc kurde. Le Front irakien de la concorde et le Front pour le dialogue national récoltent respectivement 44 et 11 sièges. L'ex-Premier ministre Iyad Allawi, chiïte mais laïque, apparaît aussi comme le grand perdant du scrutin. Ce nationaliste irakien, partisan d'un exécutif fort, n'obtient que 25 députés. Ahmed Chalabi, l'ex-favori des néoconservateurs américains, subit une défaite encore plus cinglante. Sa liste recueille 0,5% des suffrages.

De concert avec les chefs sunnites, Allaoui dénonce une fraude massive et réclame l'annulation des élections. Près de 2000 plaintes pour violences, intimidations, bourrage d'urnes, ont été enregistrées. La mission internationale d'experts n'a pas été en mesure de mettre fin à la polémique. Elle s'est déclarée jeudi inca-

pable «dans les circonstances actuelles» d'évaluer l'étendue des irrégularités commises.

Marchandages. Les soupçons qui pèsent sur le scrutin et les risques de guerre civile plaident en faveur d'un gouvernement d'union nationale. Cette solution, qui a la faveur de la plupart des leaders irakiens et des Etats-Unis, va nécessiter de longs et laborieux marchandages. La coalition chiïte, qui revendique le poste de Premier ministre, n'est toujours pas parvenue à s'entendre sur un candidat. Le chef du Dawa, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, compte bien succéder à lui-même et peut compter sur le soutien de Moqtada al-Sadr. Mais l'Asrii réclame le poste pour l'un des siens, Adel Abdel Mahdi. L'autre grand enjeu sera de savoir qui contrôlera les appareils de sécurité. Le ministre sortant de l'Intérieur, Bayan Jaber, autre membre de l'Asrii, est accusé d'avoir favorisé le noyautage de la police par son ancienne milice, Al-Badr, et de couvrir les exactions de véritables escadrons de la mort.

Un homme sort vainqueur des législatives. Moqtada al-Sadr, le rebelle qui, à l'été 2004, était avec ses hommes encerclé par l'armée américaine à Najaf, dirige aujourd'hui le premier parti du pays. Le Parlement compte une cinquantaine de députés «sadristes» et apparentés. Le roi Abdallah d'Arabie Saoudite ne s'est pas trompé. Pendant le pèlerinage à La Mecque, il s'est longuement entretenu avec le jeune imam. ♦

CHRISTOPHE BOLTANSKI

TURQUIE TENSIONS APRÈS LA SORTIE DE PRISON DE L'HOMME QUI TENTA D'ASSASSINER LE PAPE

La libération de l'ultranationaliste Mehmet Ali Ağca révolte les pro-européens

ISTANBUL

CORRESPONDANTE

Partout dans le monde, Mehmet Ali Ağca est connu comme l'homme qui a blessé le pape Jean-Paul II en 1981. Mais en Turquie, il est aussi celui qui avait assassiné deux ans plus tôt le journaliste Abdi İpekçi, « conscience » de la gauche dans ces années de quasi-guerre civile en Turquie. Pour cela, Ağca est devenu, il y a un quart de siècle, un des héros des Loups gris – le mouvement ultranationaliste dont il faisait partie. Et sa sortie de prison, le 12 janvier à Istanbul, n'a pu que raviver les tensions dans le pays.

Il n'y eut pourtant guère plus d'une vingtaine d'admirateurs pour saluer Ali Ağca ce jour-là, face à une centaine de contre-manifestants communistes. Mais, très médiatisée, cette sortie aurait stimulé le camp des Loups gris : des supporters de l'équipe de football de sa région d'origine ont scandé : « Il est né à Malatya, il a blessé le pape, bravo Mehmet Ali Ağca ! », alors que des militants se relayaient sur la tombe d'Abdullah Cati, son ancien chef, espérant qu'il vienne s'y recueillir.

Ce Cati fut le numéro deux des Loups gris, maître ès assassinats, activité qu'il poursuivit en France (contre l'Asala, avec

Oral Celik, compagnon d'Ağca lors de l'attentat contre le pape) ; il finit par être inculpé en Turquie, notamment pour narcotrafic, avant de périr dans le fameux accident de Susurluk, qui prouva les liens entre parti au pouvoir, mafia et police.

Même si ces partis extrémistes ne sont plus qu'un pâle reflet de ce qu'ils furent, des acteurs connus de cette nébuleuse restent libres et puissants, liés à ce que les Turcs appellent l'« Etat profond » – les réseaux ultranationalistes dans les appareils de l'Etat. Ceux que les milieux pro-européens accusent d'avoir fait libérer

leur « *türker national* », par anticipation – « une honte pour la Turquie », titraient divers journaux.

Ali Ağca purgeait, depuis juin 2000, une peine de dix ans, pour l'assassinat d'Abdi İpekçi, dans la prison turque où il fut placé après ses dix-neuf ans de détention en Italie. Mais il a été libéré au bout de cinq ans et demi. Compte tenu des cinq mois qu'il passa déjà en 1979 dans cette prison militaire de haute sécurité avant de s'en échapper – grâce à des complicités dans l'armée, habillé en officier – et de réapparaître à Rome...

Réseaux anticommunistes

Des Turcs libéraux en profitent pour dénoncer la persistance en Turquie, contrairement aux autres pays de l'OTAN, des réseaux anticommunistes Gladio de la Guerre froide, dont Ağca aurait été un pion. Dégénérés et mafieux, ces réseaux restent manipulés par « l'Etat profond, dont le temps est compté avec les perspectives européennes de la Turquie, mais qui s'active pour signifier qu'ils ne faut pas le toucher », estiment ces commentateurs.

Pour parer ces réactions, le ministre de la justice, Cemil Cicek, promet de faire réexaminer le cas Ağca par la cour de cassation. L'armée, elle, a renoncé à ce qu'il effectue son service militaire. Il a été jugé inapte, lundi, lors de sa visite à un hôpital militaire, où il fut entraperçu pour la première fois depuis sa libération. Selon la presse turque, il compte retirer 50 millions de dollars de ses futures révélations aux médias. Mais si elles devaient être moins confuses que lors de ses procès, sa vie ne serait-elle pas menacée, comme l'affirme, notamment, un de ses juges italiens, Ferdinando Imposimato ? ■

SOPHIE SHIHAB

SYRIE DIPLOMATIE

Damas et Téhéran entendent « résister » ensemble

BEYROUTH

CORRESPONDANTE

Le président iranien, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a achevé, vendredi 20 janvier, une visite d'Etat de deux jours en Syrie destinée à valoriser une alliance trentenaire entre les deux pays, dans le face-à-face qui les oppose à la communauté internationale. Tant dans la forme que sur le fond, la visite était destinée, du point de vue officiel, à adresser un message d'union et donc de force. Le président iranien l'a ainsi exprimé : « La République arabe syrienne, qui résiste en première ligne à l'agression israélienne, et la République islamique d'Iran, qui porte le flambeau de l'éveil islamique dans le monde musulman, joueront un rôle vital dans la région. »

« Cela tient plutôt de la gestulation, qui vise à assouplir les exigences des Nations unies envers l'un et l'autre pays, en brandissant,

en filigrane, une capacité commune de nuisance », commente l'universitaire franco-syrien Bourhane Ghalioune. « Les deux pays ont besoin l'un de l'autre pour affronter le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU. C'est une erreur de la part de la Syrie, qui cherche des compromis avec la communauté internationale », tant à propos du Liban que de l'Irak, ajoute M. Ghalioune, qui dirige le Centre des études arabes et de l'Orient contemporain à la Sorbonne-Nouvelle - Paris-III.

Outre un entretien – en grande partie en tête-à-tête –, jeudi, avec le président syrien Bachar Al-Assad, M. Ahmadinejad a discuté, vendredi, avec les secrétaires généraux de dix formations palestiniennes opposées à l'Autorité palestinienne, entre autres le Hamas, le Jihad islamique et le FPLP - Commandement général d'Ahmad Jibril. Ce furent autant d'occasions de défier par le geste

et la parole l'Occident qui, entre autres reproches faits tant à Damas qu'à Téhéran, est celui de soutenir ces mouvements considérés comme « terroristes ».

Comme il l'avait fait la veille, le président iranien a renouvelé « avec force » son soutien à « la lutte du peuple palestinien pour recouvrer ses droits ». Ce fut aussi l'occasion, pour le président iranien, qui a récemment déclaré qu'il fallait « éliminer Israël de la carte » et pour qui la Shoah est un « mythe », de revenir sur le sujet. Il a affirmé que si les pays européens luttèrent à domicile contre l'antisémitisme, « ces migrants » [les Israéliens] ne « voudront plus vivre sur la terre occupée », c'est-à-dire en Palestine.

« La stabilité en Irak »

La veille, M. Ahmadinejad et son hôte avaient vibré à l'unisson à propos des trois principaux sujets inscrits à leur ordre du jour – l'Irak, la Palestine et le Liban. Au sujet de l'Irak et du Liban, leur position a de quoi étonner. En effet, alors que Damas et Téhéran sont accusés de s'immiscer dans les affaires irakiennes et de contri-

buer à la déstabilisation de l'ancienne Mésopotamie, MM. Ahmadinejad et Assad ont dit soutenir « le processus politique en cours en Irak, le rétablissement de la stabilité, le refus de toute ingérence étrangère et le retrait de toutes les forces étrangères » de ce pays. Et, alors que la Syrie est dans le collimateur de l'ONU à propos du Liban, les présidents iranien et syrien, selon ce dernier, se sont prononcés pour « la stabilité du pays du Cèdre » et ont apporté « leur appui à la résistance [le Hezbollah] et leur refus de toute ingérence étrangère et de toute internationalisation ». M. Ahmadinejad a également rencontré les chefs des principaux mouvements chiites libanais Hassan Nasrallah, chef du Hezbollah et Nabih Berri chef d'Amal, avant d'achever sa visite à Damas. Le président iranien a appelé les Libanais à s'entendre et à faire preuve de patience. Par ailleurs, la Syrie a apporté son soutien officiel au droit de l'Iran de développer la technologie nucléaire « à des fins pacifiques ». ■

MOUNA NAÏM

Iran crisis ■ By Flynt Leverett

Bridging the Gulf

WASHINGTON

As the United States and its European partners consider their next steps to contain the Iranian nuclear threat, let's recall how poorly the Bush administration has handled this issue.

During its five years in office, the administration has turned away from every opportunity to put relations with Iran on a more positive trajectory. Three examples stand out.

In the aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks, Tehran offered to help Washington overthrow the Taliban and establish a new political order in Afghanistan. But in his 2002 State of the Union address, President George W. Bush announced that Iran was part of an "axis of evil," thereby scuttling any possibility of leveraging tactical cooperation over Afghanistan into a strategic opening.

In the spring of 2003, shortly before I left government, the Iranian Foreign Ministry sent Washington a detailed proposal for comprehensive negotiations to resolve bilateral differences.

The document acknowledged that Iran would have to address concerns about its weapons programs and support for anti-Israeli terrorist organizations. It was presented as having support from all major players in Iran's power structure, including the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

A conversation I had shortly after leaving the government with a senior conservative Iranian official strongly suggested that this was the case. Unfortunately, the administration's response was to complain that the Swiss diplomats who passed the document from Tehran to Washington were out of line.

Finally, in October 2003, the Europeans got Iran to agree to suspend enrichment in order to pursue talks that might lead to an economic, nuclear and strategic deal. But the Bush administration refused to join the European initiative, ensuring that the talks failed.

Now Washington and its allies are faced with two unattractive options for dealing with the Iranian nuclear issue. They can refer the issue to the Security Council, but, at a time of tight energy markets, no one is interested in restricting Iranian oil sales.

Other measures under discussion — travel restrictions on Iranian officials, for example — are likely to be imposed only ad hoc, with Russia and China as probable hold-outs. They are in any case unlikely to sway Iranian decision-making, because unlike his predecessor, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad disdains being feted in

European capitals.

Alternatively, the United States (or Israel) could strike militarily at Iran's

nuclear installations. But these are spread across Iran, and planners may not know all of the targets that would need to be hit. Moreover, a strike could prove counterproductive by hardening Iranian resolve to acquire a nuclear weapons capacity.

Is there a way out of this strategic dead end? Nuclear diplomacy with Iran, never an easy proposition, has been made harder not only by poor policy choices in Washington, but also by trends in Iranian politics.

Ahmadinejad's electoral victory last year against former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani suggests that a significant number of Iranians linked Rafsanjani's call for rapprochement with the West with his corrupt past and rejected both in favor of Ahmadinejad's populist nationalism. Moreover, Ahmadinejad's execrable rhetoric about Israel and the Holocaust threatens to make future Western engagement look like appeasement.

These developments have severely circumscribed the possibilities for diplomacy between the United States and Iran. Iranian officials with ties to Khamenei continue to stress in private conversations that

key players on Iran's National Security Council — the chief decision-making body for foreign policy — remain interested in a strategic dialogue with Washington. But the popularly elected Ahmadinejad could easily marshal resistance to any "grand bargain" with the United States.

And absent a more positive strategic context, efforts to reopen discussions on a discrete issue of mutual interest, like Iraq, would at best only reprise the experience of short-lived tactical cooperation over Afghanistan.

Last week, the Saudi foreign minister, Saud al-Faisal, suggested a way out of this impasse — one that might also help address other pressing challenges in the Gulf.

The Saudi prince noted that if Iranian nuclear weapons were deployed against Israel, they would kill Palestinians, and if they missed Israel, they would hit Arab countries. And so he urged Iran "to accept the position that we have taken to make the Gulf,

as part of the Middle East, nuclear free and free of weapons of mass destruction."

While Prince Saud blamed Israel for starting a nuclear arms race in the Middle East, his implica-

tion that a nuclear-weapons-free Gulf might precede a regionwide nuclear-weapons-free zone is a nuanced departure from longstanding Arab insistence that regional arms control cannot begin without Israel's denuclearization.

The United States and its partners should build on this idea and support the creation of a Gulf Security Council that would include Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the other Arab states in the Gulf, as well as the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.

The Gulf Security Council would not replace American alliances with traditional security partners, but it would operate alongside them, much as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has operated alongside NATO.

The council would provide a framework under which the United States could guarantee that it would not use force to change Iran's borders or form of government, provided that Iran committed itself to regionally defined and monitored norms for nonproliferation (including a nuclear weapons ban), counterterrorism and human rights. States concerned about Iran's nuclear activities would then have new leverage to ensure Iranian compliance with these commitments.

Additionally, pressing Iran to abide by standards defined and administered multilaterally might be more acceptable to China and Russia than pushing Iran to accept an American reinterpretation of its nonproliferation obligations.

Such a framework would leapfrog over proposals for establishing a "contact group" of Iraq's neighbors and offer all parts of the Iranian political spectrum — even the hard-liners around Ahmadinejad — something they want: recognition of Iran's leading regional role.

Besides rejuvenating efforts to contain the Iranian nuclear threat, it could provide essential support for stabilization in Iraq, as the inclusion of Iran and Saudi Arabia would bring together the two states that could be most useful in brokering compromises between Shiite and Sunni communities there.

A diplomatic resolution of the Iranian nuclear problem is still within reach. But successful diplomacy will require a bold new vision. The next time the five permanent members of the Security Council convene to discuss Iran, perhaps they should meet in Riyadh rather than London.

Les Kurdes sont les vrais maîtres de Kirkouk

KIRKOUK (Irak)

ENVOYÉE SPÉCIALE

Il y a un an encore, la route menant du Kurdistan d'Irak à la cité pétrolière de Kirkouk, sous juridiction de Bagdad, mais que les Kurdes revendiquent, était considérée comme peu sûre. De même que Kirkouk elle-même, multiethnique et promise alors à la guerre civile.

Mais, cet hiver, un flot continu de voitures la relie au Kurdistan et la guerre en semble absente. Même si la cité vit comme toutes celles que se disputent diverses communautés – sous le régime des intimidations, assassinats compris, visant le groupe adverse. Ainsi, le chauffeur de taxi kurde rechigne à s'aventurer dans les quartiers sud de Kirkouk, ceux des Ara-

bes installés par Saddam Hussein à la place des Kurdes. Après une incursion dans les quartiers mixtes au pied de la citadelle, le taxi regagne sans déplaisir la partie purement kurde de la ville. « *Tant que ces Arabes ne seront pas repartis, leurs terroristes resteront ici une menace* », dit le chauffeur. « *Je ne parle pas de ceux qui ont toujours vécu ici...* », se reprend-il cependant. Sans dissiper l'impression que l'humeur, ici non plus, n'est pas à la réconciliation. D'abord, parce que des dizaines de milliers de Kurdes attendent encore leur réinstallation dans ces zones pétrolières bordant tout le sud du Kurdistan autonome actuel, d'où ils furent chassés par des campagnes successives d'arabisation.

L'un d'eux, dont le village situé près de

Kirkouk fut détruit par l'armée en 1987, raconte : « *Nous avons fui chez notre grand-mère, à Kirkouk. En nous cachant, car seuls les Arabes avaient le droit de s'y installer. On interdisait aux enfants de sortir jouer, mais nous fûmes dénoncés et envoyés ici, sous une tente.* » Ce patriarche de la famille Dawoud vit toujours, avec ses enfants et petits-enfants, dans la mesure en béton qui a remplacé la tente, dans un des tristes camps du Kurdistan remplis de leurs semblables. « *Si, demain, notre chef, Barzani [le président du Kurdistan], nous l'ordonne, nous irons tous nous battre pour Kirkouk* », assure un fils de la famille.

Elle fait partie de celles qui, bien qu'originaires de Kirkouk, n'ont pu y voter le 15 décembre 2005 pour les élections législatives, ne s'y étant pas inscrites au titre du programme alimentaire de l'ONU. « *Nous avons peur, nous voulions que tous les Arabes partent de Kirkouk avant d'y retourner, et maintenant le transfert d'adresse n'est plus accepté* », dit une des filles Dawoud.

Mais l'on estime que 70 % des réfugiés de la région de Kirkouk ont déjà pu s'y réinstaller ou, du moins, s'y faire enregistrer. Ce qui a rétabli l'ancienne prépondérance kurde locale. Aux élections de décembre, la liste kurde y a reçu plus de 300 000 voix sur près de 560 000 votants, soit largement plus que les diverses listes arabes et celle du Front turkmène, réduit à quelques 58 000 voix. Ces perdants accusent les Kurdes d'irrégularités, mais l'importance de l'écart signifie que le référendum qui doit être organisé à Kirkouk avant fin 2007 entraînera, s'il a lieu, un rattachement à la région fédérale du Kurdistan.

Maîtres en sous-main

Le président Massoud Barzani l'a publiquement promis cet hiver. Ce rattachement est en effet la première condition posée par les Kurdes, forts de leur position pivot en vue de la formation du gouvernement à Bagdad, à leurs futurs partenaires. Beaucoup de réfugiés en sont si convaincus qu'ils reconstruisent les villages détruits de la région sans attendre les diverses aides promises pour cela. Ainsi Tayyeb Zorab, aidé de ses enfants, bâtit à l'endroit même où son village a été rasé en 1963 et où dix personnes de sa

famille ont été tuées. « *Depuis lors, dit-il, nous vivions à Huweija* », un bourg arabe entre Kirkouk et Bagdad. « *Il y a un an, quatre Kurdes y furent tués, puis trois autres. Alors nous avons fui, mais nous avons pu y vendre nos terres et louer nos maisons. Pour presque rien, mais ça aide pour reconstruire ici, sans dépendre des commissions de compensation entre Kurdes et Arabes, qui ne marchent plus.* » Bagdad bloque en effet le travail de ces commissions – créées en application de l'article 58 de la Constitution – pour tenter de freiner le passage de la ville sous l'autorité des deux grands partis kurdes.

Majoritaires à son conseil élu, ces partis sont surtout les vrais maîtres, en sous-main, des Kurdes faisant partie des forces armées et de la police locales. Ces *peshmergas* portant casquette irakienne sont parfois accusés d'enlever des Arabes et des Turkmènes, de les emprisonner au secret au Kurdistan, voire de les assassiner. Les Américains, qui gardent des bases dans la région, laisseraient faire, dans la cadre de la lutte anti-terroriste, sans pour autant avoir de position apparente sur le statut futur de Kirkouk. Peut-être dans l'espoir – nullement garanti – de voir les transactions financières, comme celles de Tayyeb Zorab, finir à la longue par l'emporter sur les découpages par les armes et le sang ? ■

SOPHIE SHIHAB

Le Monde

Dimanche 22 - Lundi 23 janvier 2006

Irak Les résultats des élections législatives du 15 décembre 2005

Les chiites perdent la majorité absolue au Parlement

Il aura donc fallu cinq semaines pour que soient connus avec certitude les résultats des élections générales du 15 décembre. Finalement, la physionomie du nouveau Parlement irakien connue vendredi 20 janvier est conforme aux résultats préliminaires divulgués quelques jours après le scrutin en dépit des forts soupçons de fraudes qui ont constamment pesé sur la vérification des urnes. Toutefois, l'examen de près de 2 000 plaintes, n'a pas remis en cause les grands équilibres de l'Assemblée qui régira le destin de l'Irak pendant quatre ans.

En définitive, comme lors du scrutin du 30 janvier 2005, le vote communautaire a prévalu et la liste chiite de l'Alliance irakienne unifiée (AIU) qui regroupe notamment le parti Al-Daawa, le Conseil suprême de la révolution islamique en Irak (CSRII) des proches de la mouvance radicale de Moqtada Al-Sadr, arrive une nouvelle fois largement en tête des élections, avec 128 sièges sur 275, soit 41 % des suffrages. Mais, l'AIU n'obtient pas la majorité absolue en sièges comme ce fut le cas lors la dernière consultation (140 députés). Elle devra donc s'allier avec la coalition kurde regroupant le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan de Massoud Barzani et l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan de Jalal Talabani, qui elle aussi perd du terrain. Elle passe de 75 à 53 députés avec 21,6 % des voix.

Entrée massive des sunnites

Le recul de ces deux coalitions s'explique par la participation des sunnites qui avaient boycotté les élections de 2005. Représentés par 17 parlementaires seulement dans la dernière assemblée, les sunnites font une entrée massive avec 55 députés pour les deux principales listes et devraient donc peser dans le débat

CHIFFRES

LES SIÈGES. Alliance irakienne unifiée : 128 ; coalition kurde : 53 ; Front irakien de la Concorde nationale : 44 ; liste Iyad Allaoui : 25 ; Front irakien pour le dialogue national (sunnites) : 11 ; Union islamique du Kurdistan : 5 ; Réconciliation et libération (sunnites) : 3 ; Rissalioun (proche de Moqtada Sadr) : 2 ; Liste Mathal Al-Aloussi : 1 ; Liste turcomane : 1 ; Liste Yazidi : 1 ; Liste Rafidain (chrétiens) : 1.

LA PARTICIPATION. Elle a dépassé les 75%.

politique irakien. Le Front irakien de la Concorde, qui regroupe le Parti islamique, principale formation sunnite, ainsi que la Conférence du peuple d'Irak et le Conseil du dialogue national, forment désormais le troisième groupe politique avec 44 sièges (15 % des voix). Le responsable du Conseil du dialogue national Salah Motlaq, farouche opposant à nouvelle Constitution irakienne à laquelle il reproche de diviser le pays a réussi sa percée et obtient 11 députés (4 % des suffrages). Trois autres députés sunnites ont été élus sur la liste Réconciliation et libération.

La nouvelle Assemblée représente donc plutôt fidèlement les trois grands blocs communautaires irakiens au détriment des personnalités politiques qui avaient choisi de faire cavalier seul. C'est le cas de l'ancien premier ministre intérimaire, le chiite laïc Iyad Allaoui qui pensait devenir le pivot indispensable du Parlement après avoir fait une campagne électorale de grande ampleur. Il obtient à peine 8 % des voix contre 13,8 % en janvier et passe ainsi de 40 à 25 députés. Candidat favori des Américains, il avait élargi son assise en s'associant aux communistes et à des sunnites libéraux. Ce pari s'est soldé par un échec en raison, notamment, de la campagne hostile menée à son encontre par les chiites qui l'accusaient d'être « un Saddam sans moustache ».

Autre grand perdant, l'ancien protégé de Washington, Ahmed Chalabi, vice-premier ministre, qui avait choisi également de faire cavalier seul sous ses couleurs (Congrès national irakien) et donc de quitter l'AIU sur laquelle il s'était présenté en janvier. Ce chiite libéral qui souhaitait contrebalancer la liste conservatrice de l'AIU n'obtient finalement aucun élu.

Une fois que tous les recours seront examinés et que les résultats seront certifiés, la nouvelle Assemblée devra désigner un nouveau président à la majorité des deux-tiers. Le Kurde Jalal Talabani qui, dans un premier temps, avait refusé de se représenter estimant que ses pouvoirs étaient insuffisants, a finalement accepté d'être de nouveau candidat. Il devra ensuite choisir un premier ministre parmi le parti majoritaire, c'est-à-dire l'AIU. Ibrahim Al-Jaafari, du parti Daawa, sera-t-il reconduit dans ses fonctions en dépit de ses performances jugées médiocres et de sa mésenten-

te avec le président Talabani ? Ou bien le choix se portera-t-il sur le numéro deux du CSRII, Adel Abdel Mahdi, chiite modéré, qui fut un ministre des finances apprécié dans le gouvernement Allaoui ? Les jeux sont ouverts.

Ce qui est sûr est que toute la classe politique irakienne ainsi que les différentes puissances de la force multinationale plaident pour un gouvernement d'union nationale afin d'associer toutes les communautés et notamment les sunnites à la direction du pays. Une conférence de réconciliation nationale sous l'égide de la Ligue arabe est prévue fin février-début mars. Dans un premier temps, la principale pierre d'achoppement sera les modifications à apporter à la Constitution dans un délai de quatre mois. Les sunnites qui, désormais, ont leur mot à dire entendent bien renégocier le fédéralisme qu'ils contestent ainsi que la répartition des richesses qu'ils souhaitent être beaucoup mieux définie pour l'avenir. ■

MICHEL BÔLE-RICHARD

Le Monde

Dimanche 22 - Lundi 23 janvier 2006

Iraqi leaders face race against U.S. restlessness

By Roger Cohen

BAGHDAD: When Iraqi leaders gather this week to begin the elaborate horse-trading required to fashion a coalition government, one non-Iraqi will be very much at the table: Zalmay Khalilzad, the unabashedly hands-on U.S. ambassador here.

The advice of Zal, as he is known here, will not be subtle. The United States did not expend its blood and treasure to go

News Analysis coy at this critical time.

"A Kurdish-Shia government will not solve the problem," he said. "Iraq needs a government of national unity."

In other words, it needs one including the Sunnis, whom Khalilzad has assiduously courted since his arrival last year. The Sunnis' main grouping took 44 seats in the 275-member assembly, a score suggesting nascent interest in democracy, but piling beside the 181 seats taken by Shiite and Kurdish parties, three short of the two-thirds majority needed to form a government.

To the Sunnis, the Kurds are secessionists-in-waiting, the Shiites little more than agents of Iran. To the Kurds, the Sunnis are Baathist irredentists deluded into believing their manifest destiny is to rule.

As for the now dominant Shiites, who took 128 seats, their intermittent short-hand for the Sunnis is "the terrorists."

A government uniting such bedfellows would, in many ways, be an exercise in political perversion. But Iraq, which is born a little and dies a little every day, defies all rules. Almost three years after Saddam Hussein's fall, and after the largest U.S. injection of rebuilding funds since the Marshall Plan, it finds itself at a second zero hour: its four-year government about to be formed, its constitutional framework in place, its army being born and, not least, its American benefactor losing patience by the minute.

A race against the clock has begun. Iraq must convince the U.S. Congress that it is moving in the right direction, otherwise mounting pressure to cut troops and money will grow. With the American presence standing between Iraq and all-out civil war, those developments could be devastating. This is why a unity government has assumed such importance: It would be a tangible sign of headway in the morass.

"This is a tough lift, made more difficult by a lot of mistakes, but it's not impossible," said Senator John Kerry, Democrat of Massachusetts, during a visit last week to Iraq. "If there's a government of national unity, with a real program of reform and ministerial development, things have a chance of



Pool photo by Akram Saleh

Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. envoy to Iraq, is prodding Sunnis to play a greater role.

coming together, but without that all bets are off."

With the \$21 billion already pledged by the United States almost exhausted, and the needs still great, the uncertainty may focus Iraqi minds. Dawn Liberi, the director of the U.S. Agency for International Development in Iraq, estimates that the money will run out in August if new funds are not approved. "I'm very concerned," she said.

But Iraqi time is not American time. The former may be measured in the months needed to agree on a new government. The latter is that of what one concerned American officer in Iraq, Colonel Jeffrey Snow, called "an instant-gratification society that wants results now and doesn't see that the Iraqi timetable is generational."

For now, Iraqi politicians are talking a line that will please Khalilzad. In an interview, President Jalal Talabani of Iraq, a Kurd, said: "The Shia and Kurds could rule the country together, but it would not be right, because there would be no peace and security. National unity now will serve the country. Then perhaps in 12 or 15 or 20 years, our democracy will be strong enough to have one group dominate."

Adel Abdul Mahdi, a strong candidate to become prime minister and a member of the most influential Shiite party, sounded equally accommodating. "We have to do it with the Sunnis," he said.

Such declarations, however, cannot mask a deep distrust of the Sunnis and differences over a host of Sunni demands, including the revision of the just-drafted Constitution to ensure a more centralized state and a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. troops. With the drift toward sectarian violence, the

fight for control of the two most powerful ministries — defense and interior — will be venomous.

Sunnis say they believe the current Shiite control of the Interior Ministry has allowed Shiite militias to run riot. Shiites counter that the previous Sunni control of the ministry allowed Baathist abuse.

Another problem is that the Sunni political involvement appears guarded: Is it simply war by additional means, an exploratory gambit while assistance to the insurgency persists? As Sinn Fein and the Irish Republican Army demonstrated in Northern Ireland, such arrangements are not easy to disentangle.

Sunni politicians, under fire from insurgents for participating in the elections, have become masters of ambiguity. "Working with the resistance is a red line for my party," said Tarik al-Hashimi, leader of the Iraqi Islamic Party. "But we respect their option."

"There is a national resistance with legitimate reasons."

Khalilzad, a Sunni Muslim born in Afghanistan, has succeeded in fashioning a partial shift in his efforts to prod the Sunnis toward an embrace of the

cut-and-thrust of democratic politics.

"Right on arrival he bridged 60 percent of the problem," said Mahmoud al-Mashadani, the leader of a Sunni party. "He saw the problem was in the Sunni areas, and he knows that Sunnis only give things through dialogue and respect. His message was the train is moving and we should jump in before it's too late. We listened."

The ambassador painted for the Sunnis a dire picture of a protracted conflict: The wealthy flee, schools decline, businesses collapse while their rivals move ahead. Learn from the Palestinian mistake and opt in.

It is too early to say to what degree the Sunnis have reversed course or what effect this would have. But a decisive test of Iraqi bridge-building is imminent. If division prevails, the outlook will be bleak for Iraq and for U.S. involvement.

"I think American impatience has to do with the notion that we don't know what we're doing," Khalilzad said. "If we could project that we are moving in the right direction, Americans are ready to be very patient."

International Herald Tribune

Herald Tribune
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TELEVISION REVIEW

In Iraq, a Search So Grim That Corpses Are a Hoped-for Prize

By VIRGINIA HEFFERNAN

There's so much driving in "Saddam's Road to Hell," a Frontline documentary tonight on PBS, and so much of it is in the colorless desert of Iraq, that the program induces a kind of highway hypnosis. It's uncomfortable. The film is a quest, one that sets up longing and frustration in the viewer; you half hope to see a mirage. A green oasis or a glimpse of arable land would be gratifying. Anything but more of this dead sand, hot sun and long war.

But the object of the program's quest is not refreshment or peace — far from it. Rather, the journalist Gwynne Roberts is looking for corpses. To make "Saddam's Road to Hell," he accompanied Dr. Moham-med Ihsan, the minister for human rights in the Kurdish regional government, along with a team of investigators, as they sought material proof of Saddam Hussein's guilt in the 1983 disappearance of some 8,000 Barzani Kurds.

This powerful tribe enraged Mr. Hussein when its leaders elected to side with Iran against Iraq in their 1980's war. Now the film shows a circle of Kurdish women in northern Iraq who lost fathers, sons and husbands more than 20 years ago; they clutch photos of the dead men. The abduction mystifies them. "He didn't drink, smoke or do anything bad," one says. Another wonders, idly, "If

someone is good and quiet and handsome, isn't that enough for a woman?"

Off goes Mr. Roberts's caravan from the Kurdish village in the mountains, down through the desert of southern Iraq to places where various tipsters direct Dr. Ihsan's team to search or bulldoze. The process of acquiring these tips is the most remarkable part of the film — and one exchange in particular is disconcertingly suspenseful — a complete short film in itself.

First, at the desert fortress called Nugra as-Salman, a notorious prison, the team collects accounts of the torture of Kurds, including boys as



The remains of Barzani Kurds are discovered in the Iraqi desert.

young as 8, there. People say they remember seeing buses taking Kurds away from there and returning empty. But no one knows where they went.

Next, a kind Shiite shepherd has some heartfelt suggestions, and seems willing to be helpful, but it's not clear he knows anything.

Finally we meet the men who do know — or seem to know. They're a group of sullen Sunnis, whom Dr. Ihsan suspects might have been involved with the killings. This is the cinematic scene. Sitting on prayer rugs in a semicircle on the floor of a bunkerlike room, the handsome, glowering men in kaffiyehs fondle

prayer beads as Dr. Ihsan rolls out his sales pitch. The Sunnis pay close attention, but they appear unmoved, and Dr. Ihsan seems to sense this as he clumsily persists with his flattery and his plea. (Like most of the dialogue here, Dr. Ihsan's words appear in subtitles in translation.)

"Imagine," he begins, "for 22 years, 8,000 Barzanis have been missing. We need one of you to say, 'Man, come and dig here!' I promise I can give a big reward to anyone who can help us find where these people are buried. I can tell that you are hospitable and generous in spirit. No one will be able to imagine the size of the reward. The present is

Frontline

Saddam's Road to Hell

PBS, tonight at 9, Eastern time; check local listings.

Stephen Talbot, series editor for Frontline/World; Sharon Tiller, series executive director, Frontline/World. David Fanning, executive producer, Frontline/World. Produced by WGBH Boston.

money. The person who receives it will be very happy."

He's coming on a little strong. Anyway, any takers? One man speaks: "Sorry to interrupt you," he says, not interrupting at all. "If anyone knows anything, I swear by God, they will tell you immediately. It is a great thing for God's work to help you! What does money mean? Nothing!"

Ah, right. Dr. Ihsan and his confreres head back out into the desert. Fortunately some bounty hunters do say "Man, come and dig here," but the bulldozers turn up nothing.

At last some Shiite contacts lead them to a new spot in the desert, and the team disinters 500 dismembered bodies with Barzani clothing. It's a start. It will be evidence against Mr. Hussein. But those Sunnis are as unyielding as the desert.

Des Kurdes d'Irak affirment avoir découvert une fosse commune

SOULAIMANIYAH (Irak), 21 jan 2006 (AFP) - 10h57 - Les autorités kurdes d'Irak ont déclaré samedi avoir sans doute mis au jour une fosse commune datant de l'époque du régime de Saddam Hussein lors de travaux d'aménagement d'une route.

"Des conducteurs de bulldozers nous ont signalé la découverte de quatre restes humains près de Chamchamal, à 100 km au sud de Soulaïmaniyah et on a décidé d'arrêter les travaux", a déclaré le chef de la police locale, le lieutenant-colonel Mehdi Mohammed Ali.

"Nous surveillons le site en attendant l'arrivée d'équipes spécialisées du département des droits de l'Homme" de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan, qui administre la province de Soulaïmaniyah, dans le nord de l'Irak, a-t-il dit.

"L'endroit était utilisé par les membres de la sécurité de Saddam Hussein pour filtrer les entrées et les sorties du Kurdistan après 1991", date à laquelle le nord de l'Irak a commencé à échapper au contrôle de Bagdad, a rappelé le chef policier.

"Nous pensons que les agents de Saddam Hussein, qui tenaient ce poste jusqu'à la chute de son régime en 2003, sont responsables de nombreux enlèvements et exécutions", a-t-il indiqué.

De nombreuses fosses communes de Kurdes, dans le nord, et de chiïtes, dans le sud de l'Irak, ont été mises au jour depuis 2003 et sont attribuées aux répressions contre les membres de ces deux communautés sous l'ancien régime.

Deux ex-députés kurdes inculpés pour apologie d'Ocalan

ANKARA, 26 jan 2006 (AFP) - 14h06 - Deux ex-membres kurdes du parlement turc ont été inculpés par un procureur d'Ankara pour avoir utilisé des propos élogieux à l'égard du chef séparatiste kurde emprisonné Abdullah Ocalan et risquent jusqu'à deux ans de prison chacun, a rapporté jeudi l'agence Anatolie.

Selim Sadak et Hatip Dicle, anciens parlementaires du parti de la démocratie (DEP, pro-kurde, dissous en 1994), sont poursuivis pour un entretien accordé en septembre à la chaîne de télévision kurde Roj TV, basée au Danemark et accusée par la Turquie de liens avec les rebelles kurdes, précise l'agence.

Les deux hommes sont accusés notamment d'avoir qualifié l'emprisonnement d'Ocalan en Turquie d'"isolation" et d'avoir affirmé que "cela ne sera jamais accepté par le peuple kurde" de Turquie, selon Anatolie.

MM. Dicle et Sadak sont actuellement membres du Parti de la société démocratique (DTP, pro-kurde).

Ils avaient passé dix ans derrière les barreaux avec leurs compagnons, également ex-députés, Orhan Dogan et Leyla Zana, pour soutien au Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatistes kurdes de Turquie), avant d'être libérés en juin 2004 dans l'attente d'un troisième procès à leur encontre.

Un policier turc enlevé par des rebelles kurdes libéré en Irak

ANKARA, 27 jan 2006 (AFP) - 11h18 - Des rebelles kurdes de Turquie retranchés dans le nord de l'Irak ont libéré un policier turc qu'ils avaient enlevé il y a presque quatre mois en Turquie, a annoncé vendredi une organisation de défense des droits de l'homme.

Le policier, Hakan Acil, avait été enlevé au début du mois d'octobre par des rebelles du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans un petit village de la province de Sinak, dans le sud-est de la Turquie, voisine de l'Irak et de la Syrie.

L'otage libéré était vendredi sur le chemin du retour vers la Turquie, accompagné par un groupe de militants des droits de l'homme qui ont assuré la sécurité de sa libération, a déclaré à l'AFP un responsable de l'Association pour les Droits de l'Homme, Mihdi Perincek.

La rébellion armée du PKK, qui a installé des bases dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak, combat les forces turques depuis 1984 dans le sud-est de la Turquie pour réclamer la création d'un Etat kurde autonome dans cette région.

- إن تأييدنا ودعمنا لنضال الأمة الكردية في أجزاء كوردستان الأخرى وعلاقاتنا معها مبنية على أساس قومي وطبيعي ، وعلاقاتنا بالقوى الكوردستانية تقوم على أساس الاحترام المتبادل واستقلالية قرارنا السياسي دون وصاية أو تبعية.
- وضع أهداف الشعب الكوردي في هذه المرحلة فوق أي اعتبار أيديولوجي وحزبي.

29.01.2006

بارتي ديموقراطي كوردستاني سوريا

Partî Demokratî Kurdistanî Sûriye

Democratic Party of Kurdistan - Syria

Demokratische Partei Kurdistans - Syrien

Syria To Grant 300,000 Kurds Citizenship

GMT 1-29-2006 17:47:1

Syria plans to grant citizenship to 300,000 Kurds living in the country, a Kurdish representative revealed to the London based A-Sharq Al-Awsat.

Shakib Hajou, a representative of the Kurdish Haderkan tribe from the Al-Hasakah district, said a 43-member delegation representing all the Kurdish tribes in Syria, met recently with Ba'ath Party official Muhammad Sa'id Bakhtian, and two other regional politicians in Damascus.

They discussed restoring citizenship to Kurds at the earliest possible opportunity.

Bakhtian said an order will be issued within the next month granting citizenship to about 300,000 Kurds, Hajou said, adding that it was unclear whether they will be granted gradually or at one time.

The citizenship idea was mentioned by the Syrian government last year as part of a "comprehensive plan" to develop the Syrian-Iraqi-Turkish border region.

The Media Line's analysts say a gesture of this kind from Damascus toward its Kurdish residents could be a way to appease the international community which has often criticized Syria over its treatment of Kurds. Syria is currently under heavy international pressure regarding the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Al-Hariri in February 2005. The international commission probing the killing has implicated senior Syrians in the incident.

Kurds are a non-Arab ethnic group numbering between 25 and 30 million people, although some put it to closer to 40 million. They inhabit a mountainous region known as Kurdistan, spanning northwest Iran, northeast Iraq, east Turkey, northeast Syria and a small community in Armenia.

The Kurds constitute a minority in all these countries and have been oppressed, to varying degrees, in all areas.

In 2004 a riot during a football game in the Syrian town Qamishli sparked protests by Kurds across the country. Dozens were killed by Syrian security forces, and riots soon spread to neighboring districts.

Syrian Kurds number less than one million people and constitute between 8 and 10 percent of the Syrian population.

Kurds who have been in Syria since the state was formed are fully recognized citizens. Over the years, many Kurds infiltrated the country to flee persecution in Iraq and Turkey. These Kurds are not registered as citizens, and are called 'maktoumin,' or 'hidden ones.' They are denied Syrian citizenship, cannot vote or own property and are denied passports or internationally recognized travel documents.

The Media Line

Iraq

Time for that sea change

DUBAI

With a new parliament in place, the drive for a unity government has begun

NOW that Iraq's election commission has broadly endorsed the results of mid-December's general election, negotiations between parties speaking for Iraq's three main groups—Shia Arabs, Sunni Arabs and Kurds—have begun in earnest, with the Shias informally airing the names of four of their number for the post of prime minister. Sectarian killings continue to complicate such dealings. But, for the first time in weeks, American diplomats in Baghdad sound cautiously hopeful that a sea change in Iraqi and particularly Sunni politics is nigh. They are encouraged, too, by reports that the nationalist and al-Qaeda-minded groups of insurgents have started sporadically to fight each other, even carrying out tit-for-tat assassinations.

A month after Iraqis voted to elect their first permanent parliament since Saddam Hussein's ousting nearly three years ago, the country's independent electoral commission finally announced the results. As expected, the Shia-led United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), which dominated the previous year-long transitional government, easily won, taking 128 out of 275 seats, with 41% of the votes cast, down only slightly from its near-majority in January 2005. A Kurdish alliance of two main parties took 53 seats and 22% of the vote, also down a bit from last January's total. Finally, the two main Sunni-led coalitions took 55 seats and 19% of the vote between them, a big gain on the 17 seats the country's former ruling minority won a year ago, when most Sunni Arabs abstained.

The Americans and their allies were disappointed, however, by the poor showing of secular-leaning parties; most voters cast their ballots along ethnic and sectarian lines. An alliance led by a former prime minister, Iyad Allawi, a tough, secular-minded Shia, took only 25 seats (8% of the vote), while the Iraqi National Congress, headed by Ahmed Chalabi, whom leading neo-conservatives in Washington had once hoped to see as prime minister of a new Iraq, failed to win a single seat, getting less than 0.3% of votes cast.

The final count took so long (five weeks) because the poll's validity was disputed. Sunni Arabs and secularists had cried foul, saying that UIA supporters had threatened voters and stuffed ballot boxes in Baghdad and the Shia south. At times, the aggrieved parties demanded a revote and threatened to abandon the political arena altogether. In the end, however, the

electoral commission said they would invalidate fewer than 1% of the ballot boxes due to irregularities. A number of international institutions, including the United Nations, declared the poll free and fair enough. The Sunni Arabs, though still grumpy, may have accepted the result largely because they believe the Bush administration wants to help them in negotiations for decent representation in a coalition government.

On paper, the Shias and Kurds could recreate last year's coalition government, as their combined tally falls only a few seats short of the two-thirds necessary to appoint a presidency council, the first step in forming a government. But this would incense the Americans, who want a unity government to draw Sunnis into peaceful politics and away from the insurgency. The Americans also want to persuade the Sunnis that the Shias, especially the Iran-backed Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), will not dominate the security services: many insurgents say they are fighting a war of self-defence against Tehran. America's ambassador, Zalmay Khalilzad, has given warning against the reappointment of a "sectarian" (in fact, SCIRI) interior minister: "We're saying, if you choose the wrong candidates, that will affect [American] aid."

Most Iraqi parties pay at least lip service to the need for a unity government. The Kurds seem fairly happy with a handful of ministries, with Jalal Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, one of their two main parties, as Iraq's president. And they may genuinely think that bringing some credible Sunni Arab leaders into power would be a good idea.

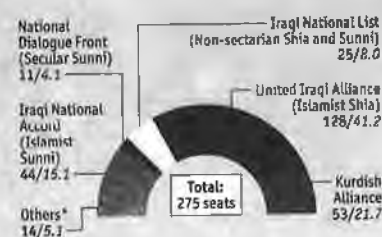
The Shias, however, do not yet sound in a mood to make such compromises. SCIRI's head, Abdelaziz al-Hakim, has said that placing Sunnis "in this or that post" would not have much effect on the insur-



Hakim wants power, with help from above

The Islamists have it

Iraqi election results, seats/%



*Kurdistan Islamic Union, Reconciliation and Liberation Block, Iraqi Nation List, Iraqi Turkmen Front, Independent Sadrist, Al Edeziyah Movement (Yazidis), Al Rafiddeen List (Assyrians)
Source: Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq

gency. Instead, "the important thing is that they [the Sunnis] believe there is a new reality in Iraq": ie, that rule by the Shia majority is there to stay. Followers of Muqtada al-Sadr, a firebrand Shia cleric who, after flirting with the Sunni insurgency, is now a full-blooded member of the Shia coalition, are equally determined that Shias should keep control over Iraq's security forces. Both SCIRI and the Sadrist have strong militias which Iran is thought to support, so they may not be especially rattled by American threats to make some kinds of military help conditional.

But the Shia front may be weakened by rows between different parts of the UIA: SCIRI, the Sadrist and the Dawa (Islamic Call) party. Many Iraqis, particularly Mr Talabani's Kurdish followers, think the current prime minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, the Dawa leader, has been ineffective, and favour Adel Abd al-Mahdi, a relatively liberal SCIRI man. Dr Jaafari, however, has lobbied hard to keep his job, and has the support of the Sadrist, who detest SCIRI. If Dawa keeps the prime minister's post, then SCIRI will probably insist on holding on to the interior ministry. But that, in turn, would enrage the Sunnis, who blame the present SCIRI-dominated interior ministry for a string of assassinations of prominent Sunnis.

Reports of increasingly bad blood between nationalist and extreme Islamist insurgents are fuzzier but, in the eyes of those trying to establish a peaceful new order, more promising. Many nationalist insurgents have apparently been appalled by two recent attacks on Sunnis trying to join the security forces with the blessing of local tribal sheikhs, which left a total of more than 100 dead. They may try to drive the radicals out of former fundamentalist strongholds such as Ramadi. And once the new Sunni MPs take up their seats in parliament, some of the insurgent groups may use them as a conduit for putting their demands on a national agenda. If their voices are better heard, then—the hopeful logic goes—they may forsake their guns and bombs, and help a unity government to regain control of the country. ■



27 JANVIER 2006

Walid Joumblatt, leader antisyrrien au Liban, défend l'idée d'un tribunal international sur les attentats politiques:

«Arrêter Damas, ce régime d'assassins»

Moukhtara envoyé spécial

Walid Joumblatt, l'une des principales figures de la vie politique libanaise, vit aujourd'hui reclus dans son château de Moukhtara, au cœur de la montagne druze. Ayant rompu en 2004 sa longue alliance avec Damas, le chef du PSP (Parti socialiste progressiste) est considéré, avec Saad Hariri, le fils de l'ex-Premier ministre assassiné, comme la personnalité libanaise la plus menacée par un attentat. Plusieurs de ses proches participent au cabinet de Fouad Siniora, actuellement paralysé par le boycott de cinq ministres chiites qui protestent contre la décision du gouvernement de demander l'extension de l'enquête internationale sur la mort de Hariri aux autres assassinats politiques. A l'occasion de l'anniversaire de l'assassinat de Hariri, le 14 février, il a annoncé une manifestation monstre à Beyrouth pour rassembler à nouveau le front antisyrrien, dont il est le principal leader.

Le gouvernement est paralysé depuis qu'il a réclamé qu'un tribunal international s'occupe de tous les attentats commis au Liban. Comment sortir de cette impasse?

Il faut trouver un équilibre entre les partisans de l'indépendance du Liban et ceux qui veulent une nouvelle alliance du Liban avec la Syrie et l'Iran. C'est un enjeu fantastique. Cette nouvelle alliance va contre l'intérêt du pays. Nous

ne sommes pas obligés au Liban de défendre le réacteur nucléaire ou l'arme atomique de l'Iran.

Les cinq ministres chiites boycottent-ils le gouvernement sur instruction de Damas?

Oui. Parce que le seul point, à long terme, qui fasse mal au régime syrien, c'est le tribunal international. Je dis bien : à long terme.

Le 20 janvier, Nasrallah, le leader du Hezbollah, et Nabih Berri, le chef du parti chiite Amal, sont allés faire allégeance au président iranien en visite à Damas. Cela vous a-t-il surpris?

Le Hezbollah, non. On comprend que Nasrallah appuie les intérêts iraniens car il reçoit beaucoup d'aide de Téhéran. Mais Berri est le président du Parlement libanais. Il n'était pas obligé d'y aller. Il m'a déçu.

Les attentats n'ont pas cessé, le gouvernement est paralysé. Tout est bloqué...

Nous ne pouvons que maintenir nos positions de principe : exiger un tribunal international, élargir l'enquête aux autres assassinats (*que celui de Hariri, ndlr*). C'est vrai, les attentats ne vont pas s'arrêter. Mais nous n'avons pas le choix. C'est une question de vie ou de mort. Et, face à ce nouvel axe Iran-Syrie-Liban, nous sommes en droit de dire en tant que Libanais : nous voulons un Liban indépendant.

Les attentats visent-ils à déstabiliser le Liban?

Non. Ils visent à nous faire peur. C'est pour cela que les Syriens ont tué Hariri. Mais



Walid Joumblatt.

nous n'avons pas eu peur. Il y a eu cette protestation massive qui a conduit au départ des troupes syriennes. Mais comment arrêter ce régime d'assassins?

On parle aussi beaucoup de la menace d'Al-Qaeda...

Les intérêts de Damas et d'Al-Qaeda concordent. Damas a exporté plusieurs milliers de combattants d'Al-Qaeda vers l'Irak pour soi-disant lutter contre les Américains mais, dans ce pays, on n'a pas besoin d'eux pour combattre les Américains. Maintenant, le régime les exporte chez nous. C'est comme si Bachar el-Assad avait une armoire avec, dans chaque tiroir, un mouvement terroriste.

On a l'impression que l'enquête sur l'assassinat de Hariri ne progresse pas beaucoup.

Nous avons beaucoup d'éléments qu'on ne peut pas divulguer. Mais la situation n'est pas pire que sous le contrôle totalitaire du régime libano-syrien où une camionnette bourrée d'une tonne de TNT (*allusion à l'attentat, ndlr*) a pu circuler dans Beyrouth sans que les services secrets soient au courant. Il faut reconstituer les éléments de ce puzzle, c'est ce que font le juge Mehli et son successeur. Mais c'est comme si on interrogeait un officier de la Gestapo. On a en face de nous la Gestapo syrienne, cela prend du temps.

Quarante jours après l'assassinat du député Gibran Tuéni, pourquoi aucun juge d'instruction n'a-t-il été nommé?

Parce que le président de la

République, le dénommé Lahoud, est pire que Laval. Je dis bien : pire que Laval. C'est un pionsyrien qui paralyse toutes les nominations judiciaires, diplomatiques... Ce n'est pas un président libanais. Il a été imposé par Damas contre les intérêts du pays. Mais comment faire pour empêcher ce régime de sévir au Liban ? Vraiment, je ne sais pas.

Etes-vous d'accord avec Nasrallah qui a exclu tout risque de guerre civile?

C'est vrai. Le seul parti politique armé, c'est le sien. Il prétend nous «libérer». Très bien. Mais je ne crois pas que ce soit dans son intérêt de tourner les armes contre nous. Ça lui enlèverait sa crédibilité. Nous, nous comptons sur la libanité des chiites. Pourquoi Nasrallah veut-il nous entraîner dans un axe syro-iranien ?

Vous êtes hostile à la médiation des pays arabes...

Je ne vois pas un pays arabe

souhaiter un changement de régime à Damas. Les régimes arabes ont peur du changement. Je ne suis pas d'accord avec le chantage de Damas : moi ou le chaos. La Syrie peut avoir un régime démocratique. Elle possède des partis, des intellectuels, des nationalistes... Elle ne sera pas un nouvel Irak. Mais ce chantage vise les pays occidentaux, et surtout les pays arabes.

Etes-vous satisfait du soutien de Paris?

Heureusement qu'il y a Jacques Chirac et cette conjonction avec les Américains pour essayer d'apporter la justice avec le tribunal international. Mais il ne faut pas que l'affaire du Liban soit personnalisée par Chirac. Car il termine son mandat. C'est pourquoi j'adresse un message à tous les partis politiques français : Le Liban est redevenu démocratique, il ne faut pas le lâcher. ➤

Recueilli par JEAN-PIERRE PERRIN

Pourquoi Ahmadinejad est passé à l'offensive

Iran : ils n'ont plus peur de l'Amérique

La chute du régime de Saddam Hussein et de celui des talibans puis l'enlèvement des Etats-Unis en Irak ont débarrassé Téhéran de ses deux principaux ennemis et rassuré la République islamique sur le risque d'une intervention américaine

Le Nouvel Observateur. – *Comment expliquez-vous les déclarations provocatrices du président Ahmadinejad, en particulier à propos de l'Etat d'Israël qu'il souhaite voir « rayé de la carte » ?*

Farhad Khosrokhavar. – Pour comprendre le comportement d'Ahadinejad, il ne faut pas oublier qu'il est le représentant de l'armée des pasdarans, c'est-à-dire de cette partie de la population qui, depuis la fondation même de la République islamique, se réclame de l'idéal du martyr, de l'abnégation, de la mise à mort de soi et de l'autre pour la réalisation des idéaux de la révolution. Il y a chez les pasdarans (1) comme chez les bassidji (2) une idée solidement ancrée selon laquelle on peut réaliser miraculeusement les objectifs de la révolution par le martyr, le passage à l'extrême. Depuis vingt-cinq ans, les bassidji, qui possèdent, au sein des pasdarans, leur propre « sous-culture », incarnent et défendent ce que l'on pourrait appeler la pureté idéologique. Quant au président actuel, ce qui le caractérise, c'est qu'il n'a jamais été en contact avec le monde extérieur, avec l'Occident. Pour lui, l'Occident tout entier est opposé à l'islam et à l'Iran, et il n'y a aucune issue à ce conflit.

La plupart des gens qu'il a nommés – des ministres aux ambassadeurs – sont issus de cette élite militaro-politique qui s'est formée sur le tas au cours de la guerre contre l'Irak, et qui pense que les considérations géopolitiques, par exemple, n'ont qu'une importance secondaire face à la solution évidente qu'est le sacrifice ultime. Ces gens n'ont pas une grande compétence et pratiquement aucune expérience de la politique internationale. Ils pensent que, compte tenu de l'hostilité systématique de l'Occident, tout contentieux en politique étrangère se résume à une épreuve de force.

N. O. – *Pourquoi Ahmadinejad a-t-il concentré son offensive verbale contre Israël et les juifs ?*

F. Khosrokhavar. – D'abord parce que, à ses yeux, Israël incarne, entre autres oppressions, celle de l'Occident contre les musulmans. Il estime en effet – et ce n'est pas une conviction

purement iranienne – que l'Etat d'Israël a été créé pour dominer les musulmans. Ensuite parce que, pour lui, Israël ne pourrait pas faire ce qu'il fait s'il ne bénéficiait pas d'un soutien inconditionnel de l'Occident, ou au moins des Etats-Unis. Enfin pour une troisième raison, qui est aussi invoquée souvent dans d'autres pays de la région et qu'on pourrait résumer ainsi : si les Occidentaux ont perpétré, il y a un demi-siècle, un crime contre les juifs, il n'y a aucune raison pour que ce soit les musulmans qui en paient le prix.

En réalité, ce qu'Ahadinejad a dit tout haut sur Israël, c'est ce que disent à voix basse, dans une grande partie du monde musulman, des gens qui pensent qu'Israël transgresse les règles internationales dans l'indifférence totale de l'Occident. Parce qu'il est une sorte de notable provincial qui n'a aucune culture de politique internationale, Ahmadinejad pense devoir dire ce que les autres n'osent pas dire. Qu'importe si cela peut porter tort à la politique iranienne. Ce qui est paradoxal, c'est qu'il dit cela dans une société où une grande partie de la population n'est plus tellement sensible au problème palestinien. Dans le monde musulman, je ne vois aucun autre pays, aujourd'hui, où le problème palestinien soit aussi marginalisé. En Iran, ce désintérêt est lié à un désamour vis-à-vis du pouvoir. Comme le pouvoir se proclame en faveur des Palestiniens, une partie de l'opinion publique iranienne se détourne des Palestiniens par rejet du pouvoir.

Il en va de même, d'ailleurs, pour les relations avec les Etats-Unis. L'antiaméricanisme ardent de la génération de ceux qui ont fait la révolution en Iran a peu à peu cédé la place à une vision quelque peu irénique de l'Amérique terre d'abondance, vision partagée d'ailleurs par une bonne partie du monde musulman. A cela s'ajoute la présence aux Etats-Unis d'une diaspora de plus de 1 million d'Iraniens, qui entretiennent d'innombrables liens familiaux avec l'Iran. De ce point de vue, Ahmadinejad, en disant ce qu'il pense, abonde dans le sens



Farhad Khosrokhavar, directeur d'études à l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences sociales (EHESS), a publié notamment « L'Islam des jeunes » (Flammarion, 1997), « les Nouveaux Martyrs d'Allah » (Flammarion, 2003), et avec Olivier Roy « Iran, comment sortir d'une révolution religieuse » (Seuil, 1999).



des groupes politico-militaires dont il fait partie, mais se retrouve à l'écart d'une partie de l'opinion publique iranienne, qui pense différemment mais qui n'est pas organisée.

N. O. – *L'Iran souhaite-il vraiment, selon vous, produire une arme nucléaire ?*

F. Khosrokhavar. – Lorsque vous abordez la question du nucléaire avec les Iraniens, voici ce qu'ils vous disent : il y a dans la région deux jeunes Etats, créés il y a à peine plus d'un demi-siècle – le Pakistan et Israël –, qui ont la bombe. Le Pakistan est un pays frontalier de

l'Iran. Si ces deux jeunes Etats se sont dotés de la bombe atomique sans que personne s'insurge, pourquoi l'Iran, qui existe depuis au moins trois mille ans, ne pourrait pas l'avoir ? Cet argument, il faut le dire, touche une corde sensible en Iran, où même les classes moyennes laïques, qui s'opposent à Ahmadinejad en raison de sa vision islamiste, le soutiennent sur ce point par nationalisme.

En fait, il y a encore quelques mois, cette question n'était pas un thème national. Je veux dire que le pouvoir n'en avait pas fait un thème national. Maintenant c'est fini. Le soutien dont dispose le président dans cette affaire dépasse de loin sa clientèle politique habituelle. Pour nombre d'Iraniens, c'est une question de dignité : si l'enrichissement de l'uranium n'est pas contraire au traité de non-prolifération, pourquoi veut-on nous interdire de faire ce que d'autres ont fait sans même se soumettre au

cléaire. Une partie des classes moyennes s'oppose, disons par réalpolitik, à cette attitude qui risque d'envenimer les relations de l'Iran avec l'Occident, mais, comme je l'ai dit, ces gens ne disposent d'aucune organisation politique. Ce qui fait qu'on ne les entend pas.

N. O. – *L'invasion de l'Irak et la chute du régime de Saddam Hussein ont-elles eu une influence sur l'attitude des dirigeants iraniens ?*

F. Khosrokhavar. – Oui, et c'est un point très important. Avant l'intervention des Etats-Unis et de leurs alliés, les dirigeants iraniens avaient vraiment peur d'une attaque terrestre américaine. L'enlèvement de la coalition les a conduits à penser que l'Amérique pourrait peut-être un jour bombarder des cibles sur leur territoire, mais qu'elle ne tenterait jamais une opération terrestre. Débarrassé simultanément de l'ennemi irakien et de la menace américaine, l'Iran a aussi été débarrassé par Washington de

risque de provoquer une baisse de la production de pétrole, donc une hausse du prix du baril, alors qu'il est déjà au-delà de 60 dollars ? Autre atout : l'appui de la Chine, qui achète à Téhéran entre 25 et 30% de son pétrole et qui ne peut, dans cette période, accepter de perdre un de ses principaux fournisseurs. Les sources de revenus sont assurées, les deux ennemis les plus dangereux sont éliminés, l'Amérique a déjà fort à faire avec l'Irak : comment voulez-vous que les dirigeants iraniens n'aient pas l'impression que le rapport de force stratégique leur est favorable ?

N. O. – *A vous entendre, l'hypothèse d'éventuelles frappes aériennes américaines n'est pas prise très au sérieux à Téhéran...*

F. Khosrokhavar. – Les Américains eux-mêmes estiment qu'ils ne détruiraient pas plus de 50 à 60% des cibles visées. J'ajoute qu'une attaque de ce genre libérerait Téhéran de ses engagements et de certaines restrictions, et ferait de l'Iran une sorte de martyr du monde musulman. En Egypte, où je viens de séjourner, des gens qui avaient compris à mon accent que j'étais iranien sont venus m'embrasser en me disant qu'Ahmadinejad était le seul homme d'Etat musulman à faire preuve de courage. Pourquoi ? Parce qu'il tient tête aux Américains et aux Israéliens. Au sein de l'élite politique iranienne conservatrice, le sentiment prévaut que le conflit avec les Etats-Unis existe depuis vingt-six ans et qu'il n'y a aucune possibilité de dialogue. Et cette méfiance s'étend au reste du monde occidental, c'est-à-dire aux riches face aux déshérités que prétend défendre Téhéran. Il ne faut pas ignorer la dimension « populiste » de la République islamique, qui fait vibrer une corde sensible chez nombre de gens en Iran. D'autant que les « réformateurs » ont beaucoup déçu et se sont largement discrédités lorsqu'ils étaient au pouvoir. Qu'ont-ils fait pendant ces huit années ? Parlé. Ils ont parlé de dialogue des civilisations, d'ouverture, alors qu'ils ne pouvaient mettre en œuvre ni l'un ni l'autre, pas seulement parce que tout était bloqué mais aussi en raison de leur gabegie, de leur incapacité à gérer et à mettre sur pied des groupes politiques. Et pendant ce temps l'inflation atteignait 15 à 20 % par an, les pauvres s'appauvrirent, les nouvelles classes moyennes et supérieures s'enrichissaient, on voyait un fossé de plus en plus large et profond se creuser entre les riches et les laissés-pour-compte. Ceux que prétend défendre Ahmadinejad.

**Propos recueillis par
RENÉ BACKMANN**

(1) Gardiens de la révolution.

(2) Anciens volontaires qui ont participé à la guerre contre l'Irak sans être des conscrits et qui par la suite ont été pris en charge par l'armée des pasdaran, dont ils constituent un sous-ensemble.



Manifestation antiaméricaine de femmes iraniennes le 22 janvier. Une attaque des Etats-Unis ferait de l'Iran une sorte de martyr du monde musulman.

contrôle international ? On en revient à la duplicité de l'Occident, accusé de faire « deux poids, deux mesures » lorsqu'il s'agit de l'Iran. Du point de vue d'une grande partie de l'opinion, c'est clair, l'Iran a droit à l'énergie nu-

son autre ennemi régional : le régime des talibans. La Turquie, qui connaît comme l'Iran des problèmes au Kurdistan, ne présente pas non plus un danger pour Téhéran. La Russie, si elle rompait avec l'Iran sur la question du nucléaire, perdrait plusieurs milliards de dollars de contrats, ce qui n'est pas négligeable, et risquerait de voir l'Iran renoncer à sa neutralité actuelle dans le conflit en Tchétchénie. A cela s'ajoute la question du pétrole. Les Iraniens estiment que le prix élevé du baril les met à l'abri d'une offensive. Qui prendrait le

IRAN

« Israël ne permettra pas à l'Iran de se doter de l'arme nucléaire », affirme M. Olmert

JÉRUSALEM

CORRESPONDANT

Le tour nouveau pris par le dossier du nucléaire iranien, depuis la décision de Téhéran de passer outre les avertissements internationaux, est suivi de très près par les autorités israéliennes. « Israël ne permettra en aucun cas à l'Iran de se doter de l'arme nucléaire », a rappelé, mardi 17 janvier, le premier ministre par intérim, Ehoud Olmert.

Une délégation de hauts responsables israéliens a été dépêchée le même jour à Moscou pour tenter de convaincre la Russie de reconsidérer sa coopération avec l'Iran en matière de nucléaire et pour s'efforcer de prévenir un éventuel veto russe contre une résolution des Nations unies sanctionnant l'Iran. L'inquiétude suscitée en Israël par les dérapages antisémites répétés du président iranien, Mahmoud Ahmadjad, depuis octobre 2005, n'a toutefois pas remis en cause l'attitude adoptée depuis le début sur ce dossier.

Israël, faute d'autre option, continue de s'en remettre aux efforts des Etats-Unis et de l'Union européenne. Même s'ils doutaient des résultats de la démarche, les Israéliens avaient soutenu les efforts de dialogue de la troïka européenne (Allemagne, France et Grande-Bretagne). L'option d'une frappe militaire sur

le modèle de l'attaque contre la centrale irakienne d'Osirak, en 1981, est régulièrement évoquée dans la presse, mais les autorités considèrent cependant que la piste du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU est la plus appropriée.

Selon le journal *Haaretz*, les diplomates israéliens auraient d'ores et déjà élaboré une liste de sanctions possibles qu'ils se proposeraient de transmettre aux Américains et aux Européens. Cette liste associe des mesures symboliques (bannir l'équipe de football de la prochaine Coupe du monde, en juin) à des sanctions économiques touchant les exportations de pétrole iranien, en dépit des tensions prévisibles sur les cours mondiaux, et politiques, avec le refus d'accorder des visas au président Ahmadinejad et aux responsables du programme nucléaire. ■

G. P.

L'Iran brandit la menace du pétrole

Le régime souhaite réduire fortement la production de brut pour maintenir le prix du baril à un haut niveau.



L'Iran produit chaque jour 4,2 millions de barils, dont 2,7 millions sont exportés vers l'Europe et l'Asie. AFP

MOYEN-ORIENT

Téhéran souhaite que l'Opep baisse ses quotas de production d'un million de barils par jour à compter du printemps.

LE BARIL de pétrole est à nouveau plongé dans une spirale infernale. Hier à New York, le brut s'envolait au-dessus de 67 dollars, se rapprochant dangereusement du record atteint le 30 août dernier, à 70,85 dollars. A l'époque, le cyclone Katrina avait mis hors service un certain nombre d'installations dans le golfe du Mexique, provoquant cette brutale accélération.

Aujourd'hui, c'est au tour de l'Iran de peser fortement sur les cours. Téhéran a demandé à l'Opep, dont il est un membre influent, de baisser ses quotas de production d'un million de barils par jour (Mbj) à compter du mois

d'avril. Officiellement, l'Iran veut prévenir la baisse des cours liée au recul de la consommation mondiale qui suit la fin de l'hiver. Mais, en pratique, face à l'ONU, Téhéran souhaite surtout agiter l'arme du pétrole.

De ce côté-là, le pays a été largement entendu par les marchés pétroliers. Depuis déjà quelques jours, de nombreux observateurs mettent en garde contre la flambée des cours qu'entraîneraient d'éventuelles sanctions contre Téhéran. Alors que ce dernier cherche aujourd'hui à rallier à sa cause les autres pays producteurs.

Le deuxième producteur de l'Opep

Deuxième producteur de l'Opep, quoique loin derrière l'Arabie saoudite, l'Iran délivre chaque jour 4,2 millions de barils (Mbj), dont 2,7 millions sont réservés à l'exportation, à destina-

tion de l'Europe, de la Chine, du Japon, de la Corée du Sud et de Taïwan. Parallèlement, ses réserves prouvées, évaluées à 125,8 milliards de baril, représentent près de 10 % du total mondial. Il faut y ajouter 15 % des réserves de gaz naturel.

Sans doute ce poids lourd n'a-t-il pas les moyens de se priver durablement des rentrées occasionnées par ses formidables richesses pétrolières. Mais une interruption, même brève, des livraisons iraniennes se répercuterait immédiatement sur les cours. D'autant que les prévisions de l'Agence internationale de l'énergie (AIE) sont formelles ; en 2006, la demande mondiale devrait progresser d'environ 2,2 %, à 85,1 millions de barils par jour. Or, comme l'Opep produit déjà presque au maximum de ses capacités, le marché dispose d'une faible marge de manœuvre pour

compenser une éventuelle « défaillance » d'un gros producteur.

A côté de l'Iran, un autre pays inquiète aujourd'hui les marchés pétroliers. Au Nigeria, les deux principaux syndicats du secteur des hydrocarbures ont agité la menace d'une grève dans le delta du Niger. Une action pour protester contre les nombreuses attaques dont sont victimes les installations pétrolières et qui pénalisent sévèrement la production de Shell dans ce pays. Ainsi, le 11 janvier dernier, quatre étrangers travaillant pour la compagnie, dont un Britannique et un Américain, étaient enlevés. Leurs ravisseurs exigent à présent le paiement de 1,5 milliard de dollars de rançon.

Premier producteur du continent africain et sixième exportateur mondial, le Nigeria, tout comme l'Iran, peut ébranler sévèrement le marché pétrolier.

F. M.

Téhéran transfère en Asie ses avoirs européens

LE FIGARO samedi 21 - dimanche 22 janvier 2006

L'Iran anticipe d'éventuelles sanctions économiques de la communauté internationale.

L'IRAN affirme ne pas croire aux sanctions de la communauté internationale, mais prend ses précautions.

Décidées à déjouer un éventuel gel de leurs avoirs en Occident, les autorités ont engagé un vaste mouvement de transfert de leurs réserves en devises d'Europe vers les pays du Sud-Est asiatique. « Nous transférons nos réserves de tous les secteurs, notamment les réserves provenant de recettes pétrolières, là où nous le jugeons nécessaire » a annoncé Ebrahim Sheibani, le président de la Banque centrale iranienne. « Nous avons commencé à le faire et cela est en train d'être fait » a-t-il ajouté.

Selon le quotidien arabe

Asharq Al-Awsat, le Conseil supérieur de la sécurité nationale d'Iran a ordonné à la Banque centrale, au ministère du Pétrole et aux institutions financières liées au gouvernement iranien de déplacer, dans des banques asiatiques à Singapour, Shanghai, Hongkong et en Malaisie, leurs fonds investis dans des banques européennes à l'exception des banques suisses.

Second pays producteur de l'Organisation des pays exportateurs de pétrole (Opep), l'Iran a dégagé 42 milliards de dollars de rentrées pétrolières en 2005. Ses placements financiers dans les établissements bancaires étrangers, principalement européens, sont évalués à plus de 36 milliards de dollars.

Dès jeudi, le ministre iranien de l'Économie et des Finances, Davoud Danesh Jafari, avait pris les devants en déclarant que les Européens n'avaient pas le droit

de bloquer les avoirs iraniens. « Les lois internationales ne permettent pas aux Européens de faire une telle chose. S'ils le faisaient ce serait contraire à leurs intérêts, car les pays pétroliers, qui ont des fonds importants, et d'autres pays, deviendraient anxieux et transfèreraient leurs réserves financières vers des endroits plus sûrs », avait-il déclaré.

Une chance de rétablir le dialogue

Le gel des avoirs peut figurer parmi les mesures de rétorsion des Nations unies en cas de vote de sanctions économiques. Reste que plusieurs étapes doivent encore être franchies dans l'escalade en cours avant d'arriver à cette extrémité. Londres, Paris et Berlin ont d'abord appelé à une réunion d'urgence de l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA) le 2 février, pour décider du renvoi d'un dossier

iranien vers le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU.

Mais Mohammed ElBaradei juge précipitée la volonté affichée par les Occidentaux : il rejette la requête d'un transfert immédiat du dossier iranien devant le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU. Le directeur général de l'AIEA a en effet promis aux Iraniens qu'ils auraient jusqu'au 6 mars, date prévue de la réunion du Conseil des gouverneurs, pour apporter les garanties demandées au sujet de leur programme nucléaire.

Et il refuse d'avancer, comme le demandent les pays européens, la publication de son prochain rapport sur le programme nucléaire iranien afin d'éviter toute accusation de partialité. Il s'agit pour le patron de l'AIEA d'entretenir une chance de rétablir le dialogue en dépit du pessimisme ambiant.

T. O. (AVEC AFP)

Les chiites d'Irak contraints à une coalition

PROCHE-ORIENT

Les résultats officiels des élections législatives ont été proclamés hier.

LES CHIITES arrivent en tête. Mais les résultats officiels des élections législatives irakiennes, proclamés hier à Bagdad plus d'un mois après le scrutin, ne satisfont pas complètement l'Alliance des partis islamiques chiites, pas plus qu'aucun des partis en lice.

Les chiites restent le premier groupe parlementaire, avec 128 sièges sur les 275 que compte le Parlement irakien. Mais au lieu de la majorité absolue, presque atteinte aux précédentes législatives de janvier 2005, leur représentation dans la nouvelle assemblée recule et ils se retrouvent contraints à former des alliances.

Le bloc des partis kurdes arrive de nouveau en deuxième position. Mais avec 53 sièges, les Kurdes voient aussi leur position s'éroder, et leur alliance avec les chiites, qui leur avait permis de dominer la précédente assemblée, ne suffit plus à former une majorité.

Les principaux partis arabes sunnites font leur entrée au Parlement, après avoir boycotté les premières législatives. Mais avec 44 et 11 sièges, leur résultat reste en deçà de l'espérance suscitée par la large mobilisation de leur électorat.

La liste nationaliste laïque de l'ancien premier ministre Iyad Allawi, seule formation à ne pas se réclamer d'un groupe ethnique ou religieux, n'obtient que 25 sièges, le reste de l'assemblée étant constitué d'élus de petites listes, turkmènes, chrétiens ou yézidis.

Alors que toutes les formations crient au scandale et à la fraude, les tractations déjà engagées depuis plusieurs semaines en vue de l'élection du président et de la formation d'un gouvernement continuent.

Les Américains, qui voient avec soulagement le poids relatif des chiites décroître et les Arabes sunnites entrer dans le processus politique, placent à présent leurs espoirs dans la création d'un gouvernement d'union nationale.

A. J. (AVEC AFP, REUTERS)



Des Irakiens ont suivi hier à la télévision les résultats des élections du 15 décembre, qui ont vu les sunnites faire leur entrée au Parlement. AP

LE FIGARO

samedi 21 - dimanche 22 janvier 2006

Hint of Iran sanctions tugs at trade ties

By Judy Dempsey

BERLIN: When Askar Sheibani started doing business in Iran more than a year ago, he was surprised by the opportunities and the speed with which he could establish contacts and sell his goods.

Sheibani, managing director of Comtek Network Systems, a specialist communications company with offices in Britain, the Netherlands and the United States, said he quickly established a foothold thanks to support from U.K. Trade and Investment, the official department that provides help to British exporters.

"I had sales of around half a million dollars last year," said Sheibani, who was born in Iran. "It is small compared to my total turnover, which is around £20 million sterling. Nevertheless, it's a good start. Things are going very well."

But as the European Union and the United States increase pressure on Iran to stop its uranium enrichment program and weigh referring Iran to the United Nations Security Council, companies like Comtek are becoming anxious about whether sanctions may be imposed on Tehran.

Germany, France and Italy lead the field among the Europeans, each exporting over €3.5 billion worth of goods to Iran in 2004.

Most of the exports consist of machinery, telecommunications, textiles, chemical products and financial services as well as equipment for oil exploration.

So far, the EU3, consisting of Britain, France and Germany, which have been negotiating with Iran to curb its uranium enrichment program and prevent it from developing a nuclear weapon capability, have avoided the issue of sanctions.

"It would be one of the most difficult debates ever," said one European diplo-

mat who requested anonymity because the issue was so sensitive. "Sanctions would hurt the people in Iran, not the elite. If we were to talk about sanctions, then maybe they would be targeted on certain people. But I repeat, we have not raised the option of sanctions."

On the other hand, some security experts say that by threatening sanctions, the EU3 could achieve considerable leverage over Iran.

Gary Schmitt, director of Advanced Strategic Studies at the conservative American Enterprise Institute in Washington, said the Europeans were reluctant to take the sanctions route because of the ever closer trade ties.

"There would be immense domestic pressure not to disrupt deals," Schmitt said in a telephone interview. "The EU has not yet thought about using trade as real leverage. But it is an option."

Over all, exports by EU countries rose from €5.3 billion in 2000 to €11.8 billion in 2004, making the EU Iran's largest trading partner and accounting for 35 percent of Iran's total imports, according to the European Commission.

Yet such trade represented only 1.23 percent of the EU's total exports in 2004.

Robert Dolger, who is responsible for Iran at the Association of German Industry, a government-backed lobby for companies, says sanctions would hurt the small firms particularly. "If you look at German trade with Iran, it is still small. But any sanctions would nevertheless hurt the small and medium-sized enterprises, which have been doing more and more business with Iran over the past few years."

Dolger says German exports to Iran have risen from €1.5 billion in 2000 to €3.57 billion in 2004.

In Sheibani's view, sanctions would present a big risk to the Western countries that depend on oil imports.

"Some companies would find a way around the sanctions," he said. "Person-

ally, I am not sure sanctions would work. They would have disastrous consequences for the energy markets since Iran is a leading exporter of oil."

Iran is OPEC's second-largest oil producer and has the second-largest reserves of gas in the world. At the same time, it depends increasingly on imports of machinery and technological know-how to upgrade its infrastructure and modernize its oil industry.

Iran's National Oil Co. has recently signed cooperation deals with major French, Italian and British energy companies to increase oil production. In 2004, it signed a \$2 billion deal with Total, the French energy group, and Petronas of Malaysia to boost the production of liquefied natural gas.

Britain, too, is re-entering the Iranian market after immensely difficult relations with Iran. In the 1980s the Islamic Republic had imposed a religious ruling, or fatwa, that amounted to a death warrant against the British author Salman Rushdie over his description of Islamic society.

According to U.K. Trade and Investment, exports to Iran have increased from £296 million in 2000 to £443.8 million in 2004. Its press officer, Jaimee Lewis, said Iran has become more attractive because it now pursues a more liberal economic policy.

Ulrich Ackermann, who is in charge of the Iranian department at Germany's Mechanical Engineering Association, says companies are now constantly seeking advice over trading with Iran from the association, which has a membership of 3,000 companies.

"Companies are telephoning us more often," said Ackermann.

"They want clarity. They want certainty over dealing with a country with whom Germany has had over a century of close commercial ties. Every company doing businesses with Iran knows it carries risks."

International Herald Tribune

Military assault on Iran could cost U.S. dearly

By David E. Sanger

WASHINGTON: Diplomats around the world keep repeating the mantra: There is no military option when it comes to slowing, much less stopping, Iran's presumed ambitions to get the Bomb. The Europeans say so. The Chinese, who need Iran's oil, and the Russians, who make billions supplying Iran's civilian nuclear business, say so emphatically.

Even the hawks in the Bush administration make no threats. When Vice

President Dick Cheney was asked last week, in a television interview, if the United States might ever resort to force to stop Iran, he handled the question as if it, too, were radioactive.

"No president should ever take the military option off the table," he said, carefully avoiding the kind of language he once used to warn Saddam Hussein in Iraq. "Let's leave it there."

Cheney, it seemed, was trying to sow just enough ambiguity to make Iran think twice. Which raises two ques-

tions. If diplomacy fails, does America have a military option? And what if it doesn't?

"It's a kind of nonsense statement to say there is no military solution to this," said W. Patrick Lang, former head of Middle East intelligence at the Defense Intelligence Agency. "It may not be a desirable solution, but there is a military solution."

Lang was piercing to the heart of a conundrum the Bush administration

recognizes: Iran could become a case study for pre-emptive military action against a gathering threat, under a policy Bush promulgated in 2002.

But even taking out Iran's facilities to delay the day the country goes nuclear would alienate allies and probably make firm enemies out of many Iranians who have come to dislike their theocratic government. And Iran simply has too many

News Analysis ways of striking back, in the oil markets, in the Gulf, through Hezbollah militants.

"Could we do it?" one administration official who was deeply involved in planning the Iraq invasion said recently. "Sure. Could we manage the aftermath? I doubt it."

The problem is not that Washington lacks targets. Many of Iran's nuclear facilities, or at least those that U.S. intelligence agencies know about, are in plain view or in underground sites whose construction was recorded by spy satellites.

The problem is the global consequences of an attack to cripple them.

International inspectors' reports have helped Pentagon planners who, in imagining every contingency, have already mapped out Iran's most vulnerable facilities.

"Elimination of the nuclear program is not possible, but with the right strikes you could decisively set them back," said Ashton Carter, an expert at Harvard University on nuclear proliferation problems.

In Iran's case, any attack would al-

most certainly start at Natanz, where Iran recently clipped off the International Atomic Energy Agency's seals and said it was preparing to reassemble a connected series of 164 centrifuges for purifying uranium.

Just beyond the research laboratories is a huge underground chamber, designed to hold as many as 50,000 centrifuges, yet unbuilt. Iran hid its existence for years.

Also on the target list, officials said, would be factories that make the centrifuge components and a plant at Isfahan where uranium is converted into a form that can be fed into the centrifuges.

Then there are research centers and military installations where the United States suspects — but cannot prove — that clandestine nuclear-related activity may be taking place.

Given the U.S. track record, however, there is always the risk that suspect facilities will turn out to be a watch factory, or, worse, a schoolhouse.

"You are talking about something in the neighborhood of a thousand strike sorties," Lang said.

Other former officials say fewer bombing runs would be needed.

The Israelis, who see Iran's nuclear program as a threat to their existence and have been far more outspoken about a military option, give a similar assessment. But they also say they lack the air power, or the reach, to do the job.

[In Jerusalem, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz hinted Saturday that Israel was preparing for military action to

stop Iran's program but said international diplomacy must be the first course of action, The Associated Press reported.

"[Israel will not be able to accept an Iranian nuclear capability and it must have the capability to defend itself, with all that that implies, and this we are preparing," Mofaz said.]

Yet it is one thing to talk about such strikes in purely military terms, and another to consider the political cost. "What you do with a bombing campaign is bring a whole country rallying around its radical leaders," said John Hamre, a deputy defense secretary from 1997 to 1999.

But if Iran knows the United States and its allies ultimately have no stomach to put military muscle behind their demands, what is its incentive to give up its weapons program?

The New York Times

■ Chirac's warning is assailed

Iran on Sunday denounced President Jacques Chirac for his warning that France could use nuclear weapons against state sponsors of terrorism, describing the remark as "shameful" and "unacceptable," Agence France-Presse reported from Tehran.

"It is shameful for the people of France that their president brandishes atomic weapons on the pretext of fighting terrorism," said Gholam Ali Hadad-Adel, president of Iran's Parliament. Chirac did not name any countries.

Election results in Iraq

There were no big surprises in the official Iraqi election results announced Friday, but there were some encouraging trends, including significantly expanded parliamentary representation for the discontented Sunni Arab minority. But real power will remain, as before, with the Shiite fundamentalist and Kurdish nationalist parties, a fair reflection of the demographic reality that Shiites and Kurds together account for almost 80 percent of the Iraqi population. Majorities rule in democratic elections, but they rule successfully only if they reach out to minorities and respond generously to their legitimate concerns.

Iraq has consolidated a crude electoral democracy. But it remains a democracy that is glaringly deficient in women's rights, minority rights, physical security and economic opportunity. Many of those deficiencies can and should now be addressed.

It is not yet clear how far the leading Shiite and Kurdish parties intend to go in this direction, and especially whether they will live up to their

earlier promises to open up the severely flawed constitution to far-reaching changes. Those changes can be agreed upon and ratified only with their full support.

With the combined strength of the leading Shiite and Kurdish blocs only a few votes shy of a decisive two-thirds majority in the new Parliament, these two groupings may have the raw numbers to shut out the main Sunni groups. They shouldn't. Such a narrow course would prolong the insurgency and divert the newly elected Parliament from the constructive opportunities of nation-building to the grim challenges of civil war.

The first step should be repairing the constitution by affirming the political and fiscal primacy of the central government; guaranteeing all women the right to resolve family and property disputes in civil courts, even if their husbands, parents or in-laws would prefer to have them settled by religious courts; and narrowing the restrictions against former Baath Party members to those top officials guilty of serious offenses.

The offending provisions of the current constitution were insisted on by the same Shiite fundamentalist and Kurdish nationalist parties that will dominate the new Parliament. The Bush administration has rightly been pressing them for months to repair the damage. But Iraq's most powerful Shiite politician, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, recently seemed to rule out some of the most badly needed changes.

Now that the votes have been counted, Iraqi politicians should not repeat last year's costly delay in forming a cabinet. Their extended dickerings demoralized voters and weakened the government that eventually emerged. They should move swiftly toward forming the national unity government that Hakim and other political leaders now say they want. That government should be sufficiently broad-based to include representative Sunni parties, as well as some of the small parties that tried to appeal across religious and community lines.

Conducting successful democratic elections in a country that has known mainly dictatorship is a substantial advance. Moving ahead to create a functioning, inclusive democracy would be a far more consequential achievement.

Unification far from over

By Cyrille Cartier
The Globe

In an overcrowded and sweltering hot hall in Kurdistan's parliament, Iraq president Jalal Talabani and Kurdistan president Massud Barzani, shook hands after signing the unification document they had promised over a year ago.

The two administrations of Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party were finally united. But after more than seven years of conflict and division in all things political and economical many Kurds are wary of the viability of unification.

Several PUK and KDP political bureau members greeted each other as if old school mates at a reunion,

exchanging pleasantries and hand-written notes during the ceremony.

On either side of the most influential PUK and KDP figures sat the ambassadors of China, United States, France, United Kingdom and Iran.

The influential presence of four permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and some Iraqi politicians, including former Iraqi prime minister Ayad Allawi, made a clear demarcation with the past when Kurds were treated as the underdogs.

"This gives us a sort of security and confidence," said Noori Talabani, an independent parliament member.

Although Kurds have historically been threatened by its neighboring countries, Talabani acknowledged their role in

helping Kurdish refugees during the conflict with Saddam Hussein's army.

"It has proven that Kurds do not only have mountains as a refuge and friend. Now we have very many friends," Talabani said. "It shows Kurdistan is not part of the problem of Iraq but part of the solution."

The parliamentarians broke into applause on several occasions during the proceedings but the celebratory atmosphere was not shared by all. Not every member raised their hands when the speaker, Adnan Mufti, asked for their approval of the agreement. Some were angered by the fact the promise of unification had been made over a year ago. Others were cautious of how far it would change the political and economic makeup

of the region.

Under the agreement all ministries were unified except for the four main ones of finance, interior, peshmerga and justice. They were given to the end of the year to work out the details of their merge.

The document also proposes a system of rotation between the two parties among the cabinet positions. Inherent in this agreement is that KDP and PUK will remain as the dominant parties and continue to occupy the key positions of power indefinitely.

"It is not fair," said Kurdistan Communist Party and parliament member, Diler Mohamed Sharif. "They have decided between themselves behind the curtain and didn't allow anyone else to be involved in the negotiations of the unification agreement."

For years the two rivaling parties have each had their own security forces, their own defenses and laws. They have been

trained on principles of rivalry against each other. In the lead up to unification, both Barzani and Talabani did a significant amount

of cajoling, persuasion, and discussion with key figures within their party ranks to get them to accept the unity, but some critics said it was not enough. Unification at the top will not automatically trickle down to the lower ranks.

Barzani in his speech called on the people to work together to build civil society and constitutional institutions.

"The time for armed struggle is over," he said. "We've tried other unfortunate means but as a result we have come back to sit down together." He then apologized to the victims of the civil war.

The Kurdistan president also addressed his future cabinet requesting that they choose between having commercial and business interests, and holding a cabinet position.

"They can't have both," said Barzani who is more vocal about his desire to fight corruption, a common grievance among Kurds here. Many hope the unification will offer new accountability where members of both parties keep each other in check.

"Absolute power leads to corruption," he concluded.



Barzani and Talabani are signing the unification document they agreed upon in Kurdistan Parliament emergency session Saturday January 21, 2006. The two administrations of Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party were finally united. Photo Saif Hamed

THE GLOBE

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2 bomb blasts fatal to 6 in Arab region of Iran

From news reports

TEHRAN: Two bombs exploded in a bank and outside a government building on Tuesday, killing 6 people and wounding 46 in the southwestern city of Ahvaz, which has a history of violence involving members of Iran's Arab minority, the official IRNA press agency reported.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his entire cabinet had been expected to meet Tuesday in Ahvaz as part of a series of visits to provincial capitals to address local issues. Ahmadinejad canceled the visit, citing a forecast calling for heavy rain, the Islamic Republic News Agency reported.

Interior Minister Mostafa Pourmohammadi said the attacks in Ahvaz, the

capital of oil-rich Khuzestan Province, were foreign-inspired and related to bombings in the same city last year. Arabs make up less than 3 percent of Iran's population and most live in Khuzestan.

Ahvaz was the scene of bombings in June and October that the government blamed on Iranian Arab extremists who were allegedly trained abroad and maintained ties to foreign governments, including Britain. The bombings in October killed six people and those in June killed at least eight. Britain has denied any connection.

"Today's explosions are a continuation of the same indiscriminate attacks directed from outside the country,"

INTERNATIONAL
HERALD TRIBUNE
January 25, 2006

IRNA quoted Pourmohammadi as saying.

The bombs targeted a bank and a state environmental agency building in the city, the agency said.

A deputy provincial governor of Ahvaz, Mohsen Farrokhtinejad, said the blasts killed 6 and wounded 46, IRNA reported.

Nezam Molla Hoveizeh, a Khuzestan lawmaker, asserted that the explosions were the work of Iranian Arab separatists who have offices in London and are supported by Britain.

"The bombers are directed by the British," he said. "Britain is the main

culprit behind the blasts. The British government offers financial and material support to these terrorists."

Iran has repeatedly accused Britain of provoking unrest in Khuzestan, which borders that part of Iraq where 8,500 British soldiers are based as part of the U.S.-led military coalition.

Tensions between the two countries have also flared recently over Britain's opposition to Iran's resumption of nuclear activities. The United States suspects Iran has ambitions of producing nuclear weapons and Britain supports moves to refer Iran to the United Nations Security Council, which could impose sanctions.

Iran says its nuclear program is for producing energy.

The Khuzestan region was devastated during the Iran-Iraq war between 1980 and 1988.

Many area residents have complained of continued poverty and a lack of job opportunities despite the province's huge oil reserves.

In April, residents of Ahvaz rioted for two days after Arab separatists circulated reports the government planned to decrease the proportion of Arabs in the province. The government denied the charge. (AP, AFP)

Firebrand politics of Iranian leader resonate on the streets

By Michael Slackman

TEHRAN: Since he took office as Iran's president nearly six months ago, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been the subject of many jokes sent via text messages on cellphones across Iran. He has been spoofed on television and radio, here and abroad, as a bumpkin and a bigot for declaring the Holocaust a myth and causing international outrage over Iran's nuclear program.

One joke has the president combing his hair in a mirror and saying, "O.K., male lice to the left, female lice to the right," ridiculing him as a religious extremist who wants to separate the sexes in public places.

But that is just part of the picture.

Leave the prosperous tree-lined hills of north Tehran and Ahmadinejad appears to be solidifying his support. He has traveled around the country, doling out promises of economic aid in some of the poorest regions, sticking with humble clothing and religion-infused language that attracted his voters in the first place.

"He is leading a simple life," said Zabiollah Baderlou, 18, as he worked in a bakery in the city. "TV showed us his house. It was very simple. He is making these efforts for the people and all he wants is Iran's dignity."

Most of all, despite the limited powers of Iran's presidency, Ahmadinejad, an ultraconservative former militia member, has used Western opposition to Iran's nuclear program to generate national unity and purpose. Those dynamics have compelled even people who oppose him to give him room to maneuver. Stop Iranians on any street in any neighborhood and they are likely to demand that Iran be allowed to pursue a nuclear energy program, a sentiment that has served as a launching pad for Ahmadinejad's firebrand



Supporters of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran with a poster of him and the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

politics.

"You get the feeling that Iran, under the present leadership, is looking for isolation and to go it alone," said a Western diplomat based in Tehran who spoke on the condition of anonymity so as to be able to continue working here. "They want to show their way is the right way, and the former guys were wrong."

While the top leadership had decided to take a more confrontational approach to the West even before Ahmadinejad was elected, the new president began with such a harsh style that many officials were initially unnerved. But when the West failed to stop Iran from defiantly starting its nuclear program, or to punish it, some opponents reluctantly accepted that the president

was right and they were wrong.

"First, we thought he is not right," said a senior government official who consults frequently with the ruling

clergy. "Now we understand he is right. You need us more than we need you," he said of the West.

The nuclear issue has provided fertile ground for the president to try to cultivate a new political class, one that is ideologically driven to provide a new, and at the same time reactionary, face to Iran. After years of reformers controlling the government, Ahmadinejad is doing exactly what he promised, resurrecting the priorities of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini — founder of Iran's Islamic revolution, who called for Israel "to be wiped off the map" — chastising the West at every turn, and striving to forge a distinctly anti-Western national identity while re-establishing Iran's revolutionary influence across the Muslim world.

At a conference in October titled "The World Without Zionism," he effectively called for wiping not just Israel, but America, too, off the map.

"Many have tried to disperse disappointment in this struggle between the

Islamic world and the infidels," he said. "They say it is not possible to have a world without the United States and Zionism. But you know that this is a possible goal and slogan."

While sprinkling like-minded people into positions of power across the country, Ahmadinejad and his allies have demonstrated that they are undeterred by complaints of the establishment, whether liberal or conservative. They have instead taken their appeal directly to the poor and middle class masses generally disgusted with a system widely viewed as corrupt and uncaring.

For the time being, they also have the quiet support of the nation's ultimate ruler, the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Even those members of Parliament who charge that the president's foreign and domestic policies are sending the nation hurtling toward disaster find there is little to do but watch from the sidelines.

"Right now, Ahmadinejad is an individual representing a new body in the whole Iranian political system that had been marginalized and disorganized," said a political professor who has close ties to many people in government and feared retaliation if identified. "They are in the process of making their identity — and making history."

Ahmadinejad was largely unknown when he ran for office in June. He was the mayor of Tehran, the son of a blacksmith who had served in the hard-line Basiji militia and the Revolutionary Guard, and he was not expected to win. When he was elected, he was expected to fall into lock step with the conservative forces that controlled every other institution of government.

Instead, he has charted his own course. From the start he alienated many hard-liners by ignoring their nominees for important cabinet posts, turning to people he knew well but who were largely unknown. Most of his choices had backgrounds in the mili-

tary, the Basiji or the security services.

With his team around him, Ahmadinejad has become the public face of Iran: aggressive, provocative and heatedly anti-American. He has adopted the phrase "World Oppressor," in place of "Great Satan," and his speeches are laced with religious references including an emphasis on one of the central principles of the Shiite sect of Islam: an appeal for justice.

Since ultimate power here is vested in the hands of appointed clergy, Ahmadinejad does not exert direct control over foreign affairs or nuclear policy. But his ascension came at a time when the region was in turmoil, with Iraq bogged down in a bloody insurgency, Islamic groups like Hamas in Gaza and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt emerging as powerful political forces, and Iran itself determined to develop a nu-

clear program which it says is peaceful and the West charges is aimed at developing weapons. And that insulates him from criticism.

"If it wasn't for the foreign pressures, perhaps Mr. Ahmadinejad, and his ministers, would have been called to the Majlis many times to explain themselves," said Akbar Alami, a member of the foreign affairs committee of the Majlis, or Parliament, and an outspoken critic of the president. "As the pressure has increased, the safety margins for him to operate have widened."

It is still very early in the president's term, and there is ample evidence that many powerful people within the establishment are still worried by the tone and direction Ahmadinejad has taken. And some people speculated that the Supreme Leader might in the end muzzle him, should consequences turn out to be too dire. But for now, hampered by nationalist reaction to the West's pressure on Iran, even some of his harshest critics are treading lightly.

From the sidelines, reformers are now trying to regroup. Many of them

say that the best factor in their favor is the president himself. The feeling is that the president cannot, ultimately, meet all his economic promises, and that his policy of confrontation will undermine, rather than improve, people's lives.

Abdullah Momeni, a leader within the student movement that called for a boycott of the presidential election, said: "We see the sensitivity of the world

community as a positive thing. Although we think it is an unwise action of power which may take the country to destruction, this might produce an opportunity for a democratic movement."

But so far the president has the upper hand. Ahmadinejad's comments at an Islamic conference in Mecca about wiping out Israel brought him international condemnation — and applause from his target audience.

"He raised the question in Mecca and he received a huge amount of praise," said Mehdi Chamran, head of the Tehran City Council and a close adviser to the president who often travels with him. "The people living in these countries, within their hearts, they are happy to hear these statements. If we can strengthen ties with the people that is most important. When we hear the Egyptians take him as a role model this is a real sign he has reached the people."

In practical terms, the management of Iran has begun to change since the new government came to power. The Parliament has been fighting with the executive branch over a budget proposal, saying that its generous spending could threaten inflation. But the budget seems to reflect the president's campaign promise to spend more money on people's immediate needs. The president has taken a few swipes at tightening up some social freedoms, banning Western music, for example, but that edict has hardly been enforced.

The New York Times

Procès de Saddam : audience agitée et sortie théâtrale du rais déchu

IRAK. Le procès du président irakien déchu Saddam Hussein a connu une nouvelle journée chaotique hier, avec le départ de la salle d'audience des principaux accusés et des avocats. Le nouveau juge kurde, Raouf Rachid Abdel Rahmane (*notre photo, AP*), a marqué immédiatement de son empreinte la conduite des débats. Vif et précis, il s'est montré strict, ne tolérant plus les incartades devenues habituelles chez Saddam Hussein et ses sept co-accusés.

L'ancien chef de l'Etat a de nouveau dénoncé un « tribunal américain », lui refusant toute légitimité et n'acceptant pas que le juge lui donne des instructions.

Le président du tribunal a répondu : « *Je suis le juge, vous êtes l'accusé et vous devez m'obéir.* » Dès les premiers moments de l'audience, Saddam et trois des principaux accusés ont quitté le tribunal ou ont été expulsés, et tous les avocats de la défense se sont retirés.

L'ancien maître de l'Irak est jugé, depuis octobre, avec sept de ses lieutenants, pour le massacre de 148 villageois chiites après une attaque contre son cortège en 1982 dans la localité de Doujaïl, au nord de Bagdad. Une nouvelle audience, la neuvième du procès, a été fixée à mercredi. Les avocats de la défense ont indiqué qu'ils refuseraient d'y assister.



Les échanges entre Saddam et son nouveau juge (*ci-dessus*) ont été vifs hler. AP

Le Monde

Vendredi 27 janvier 2006

21 cas déclarés, 4 enfants
morts, 25 nouveaux cas
suspects : la souche H5N1
de la « maladie du poulet »
a été détectée dans
13 des 81 provinces
de la Turquie.
Reportage dans
l'épicentre, à Dogubeyazit

GUILLAUME PERRIER



Le 10 janvier, les équipes vétérinaires arrivent à Dogubeyazit pour procéder à l'extermination des volailles et à la désinfection des poulaillers. La plupart des habitants, terrifiés par la maladie, coopèrent. STATION WINTER/POLARIS/DEADLINE

Les éradicateurs turcs de la grippe aviaire

Le petit camion blanc file sur la route tapissée de flocons. Le ciel laiteux et la terre blanchie par l'épais matelas de neige forment une enveloppe uniforme. Les cimes embrumées du mont Ararat, qui d'habitude écrase le paysage du haut de ses 5 165 m, se cachent dans ce décor de coton. La température est sibérienne, le silence assourdissant.

À l'intérieur du véhicule, quatre hommes de Dogubeyazit ont les mains collées au chauffage, et l'oreille rivée à l'autoradio. Ils écoutent les dernières nouvelles du front : désormais l'épidémie de grippe aviaire s'étend à toute la Turquie. Mahmut, Hasan, Kasim et Ayan appartiennent à l'une des dix brigades d'éradicateurs dépêchées par la municipalité. Ils partent à la chasse aux volailles. Protégés par une combinaison intégrale blanche, des gants, des bottes en caoutchouc et un masque de chirurgien, ils paraissent émerger d'une bande dessinée futuriste. Mais la traque au virus est bien réelle. Ce matin-là, pour la première fois, ils ont pour mission de porter secours aux villages isolés. Officiellement, cela fait quinze jours que la maladie s'est déclarée, et Gürbulak, dernier village

avant la frontière iranienne, à 35 km de Dogubeyazit, n'a toujours pas vu l'ombre d'un médecin ou d'un vétérinaire. Le petit camion quitte la route, bifurque droit dans la neige, essayant de deviner les traces à suivre. Il va se garer devant la mosquée. Le lieu de culte, fraîchement repeint en jaune, tranche au milieu des maisons, des cubes de béton sans fioriture.

Premier objectif : avertir l'imam. En Turquie, ils sont fonctionnaires et, dans ces lieux perdus, ils font autorité. Le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, leur a même demandé de consacrer leur prêche du vendredi à la prévention sur la grippe

aviaire. « Hoca (maître), nous avons besoin de vous ! » Regard perçant et barbe courte, l'imam accueille les « chasseurs de volailles » et prend consciencieusement note des instructions. Il s'exécute aussitôt. Sa carrure de lutteur enveloppée dans un grand manteau noir, il monte quatre à quatre dans son minaret : « Attention, lance-t-il en kurde dans son micro, la maladie progresse ! Rassemblez toutes vos volailles et apportez-les dans des sacs devant la mosquée ! Regroupement dans deux heures. Les vétérinaires seront là. C'est votre dernière chance ! »

Aux confins orientaux de la Turquie, dominés par des majorités kurdes, la population est souvent illettrée et beaucoup d'adultes ne parlent pas le turc, la seule langue nationale reconnue. Les brochures d'information distribuées par les autorités provinciales n'ont pas intégré ce particularisme régional encore largement nié en Turquie. « Venez chez nous, il y a des poules malades ! » Averti de leur présence, le muhtar, le maire du hameau voisin, accourt aux devants des éradicateurs. Il ne veut pas laisser passer l'occasion. « Dix jours qu'on vous attend ! » Sur le chemin verglacé et jalonné de camps militaires, on croise de jeunes soldats turcs qui surveillent la frontière. Quand il fait trop froid, ils s'abritent dans

de vieux greniers à céréales. L'équipe des éradicateurs parvient jusqu'à Salicavus : quelques fermettes grises au toit plat. Nous sommes à deux collines de l'Iran. Les enfants qui jouent dehors regardent débarquer ces nouveaux venus, les yeux comme des soucoupes. Les femmes, sur le pas de

leur porte, jettent un coup d'œil craintif. Les hommes en blanc entament un tour des poulaillers, leurs bottes jaunes vif s'enfoncent profondément dans la neige fraîche. « J'avais une cinquantaine de poules, raconte Kemal, un jeune père de famille. Je leur avais fabriqué un petit abri, mais les renards sont passés par là et les ont toutes mangées avant l'arrivée du virus. Du coup, j'ai racheté dix dindes, mais j'ai peur pour mes enfants : je vous les donne ! » Les volatiles se débattent un peu, puis disparaissent dans de grands sacs de toile. Solidement ficelés, ils sont jetés à l'arrière du camion.

Dans la ferme suivante, on s'agit dans la basse-cour. Deux enfants brandissent leurs animaux morts. « Mettez ça dans la brouette ! ordonne la grand-mère, une vieille Kurde, en leur assenant une tape sur la tête. Ils les ont tués sans aucune protection ! » Dans la grange, quelques poules ont survécu. Sans tarder, les éradicateurs leur volent dans les plumes. Drapée dans son foulard blanc traditionnel, la paysanne au visage rude comme sa terre supplie : « Prenez-les, mais ne les brûlez pas vivantes. J'ai vu à la télévision qu'à Erzurum ils les arrosaient d'essence et mettaient le feu. » Un voisin incrédule sort de chez lui, une poule en main. A contrecoeur, il la glisse dans un sac qu'on lui tend. « Certains ne veulent pas donner leurs volailles, souffle Hasan en désinfectant le poulailler. Du coup, ça crée des conflits dans les villages. » Dans les sociétés kurdes rurales, le clanisme et la vendet-

« J'ai acheté
dix dindes,
mais j'ai peur
pour mes enfants :
je vous les donne ! »

Kemal,
agriculteur kurde

ta se substituent souvent à la justice. « Si un enfant tombe malade et que le clan adverse a gardé des poules, ça peut mal tourner », confie Hasan. Les villages de l'est déshérités de la Turquie ont subi de plein fouet les conséquences économiques de cette crise sanitaire. D'habitude, à Dogubeyazit, les hommes des environs viennent vendre les œufs du jour et font vivre leur famille avec la maigre recette. « Sans les poules, que vont-ils faire ? se demande Mahmut, le vétérinaire des éradicateurs. Le gouvernement ferait mieux de leur donner une vache ou deux moutons plutôt que de l'argent. » Mais les paysans du coin vivent aussi de petits trafics, de contrebande. Les portraits des ayatollahs Khomeyni et Khamenei trônent à la porte d'entrée, et l'Iran est à deux pas. Une tolérance douanière leur permettait d'aller et venir sans contrôle, de revenir avec quelques bidons d'essence, dix fois moins chère côté iranien. Mais, avec la grippe aviaire, la combine a fait long feu. L'Iran impose des contrôles stricts et fouille tous les véhicules pour éviter toute contagion.

Le hameau dépouillé de ses volailles, la patrouille de « nettoyeurs » rebrousse chemin. Les deux heures sont largement écoulées. Devant la mosquée de Gürbulak, tout le village est là, attroupé. Femmes, enfants,

vieillards... Les roues des brouettes crissent dans la neige et les enfants apportent tous les poulets qui restent. Le chauffeur du minibus décharge à la hâte les bêtes entassées à l'arrière du véhicule. « Je rentre chez moi brûler tous mes vêtements. Avec cette saleté de maladie, on ne sait jamais. » L'équipe sanitaire comptabilise les poules, canards ou dindes, les charge machinalement dans le camion et, en échange, tend aux propriétaires un papier de dédommagement pour les bêtes confisquées : 12 euros par tête. Pour convaincre tout le monde de livrer le gagne-pain local, l'imam a parfois dû ruser. « Je leur ai dit que s'ils ne venaient pas avec leurs bêtes, les gendarmes viendraient les chercher. » Dans l'Est, beaucoup de villages ont été durement meurtris par une guerre civile qui a fait 37 000 morts entre 1984 et 1999. La peur du gendarme n'est pas un mythe. Plus loin pourtant, un éleveur récalcitrant résiste. « Je ne les apporterai pas ! L'imam est corrompu, payé par le gouvernement », s'emporte-t-il. Yusuf, un voisin, le pousse du coude, tente de le calmer. Après dix minutes de palabres, c'est gagné, les éradicateurs repartent, les poules sous le bras. « Il était temps qu'ils arrivent », souffle Yusuf, qui n'osait plus mettre un pied dans son poulailler depuis une semaine.

Le petit camion blanc alourdi d'un millier de volailles redémarre lentement, poussé par les hommes du village. « Attendez,

attendez ! » Deux enfants courent derrière, un poulet dans chaque main. « Il en restera toujours quelques-uns », lâche Kasim, harassé et transi de froid. Le ciel blanc commence à s'assombrir. Un dernier thé brûlant offert par les villageois et les éradicateurs font demi-tour, direction Dogubeyazit.

« Nos moyens sont insuffisants, il faudrait que le gouvernement nous envoie beaucoup plus de bras », constate, amer, le vétérinaire. La cellule de crise a répertorié 96 villages comme celui-là, à ratisser maison après maison. « A ce rythme, ça nous prendra un mois. » Il ôte sa combinaison maculée de fientes. Sur le chemin du retour, Mahmut déprime : « Au début, c'était une torture. Je n'en dormais pas la nuit. Mon métier, c'est de soigner les animaux. Là, c'est un massacre organisé. »

A l'entrée de la ville, une ancienne étape de la fameuse Route de la soie, c'est à la décharge que les éradicateurs achèvent leur journée. Sur un terrain vague cerné de montagnes, une pelleteuse creuse sans relâche. Les camions vont et viennent, vomissant leur récolte du jour. Les hommes en blanc balancent les sacs au fond de la fosse. Les oiseaux poussent leurs derniers cris, agonisent dans leurs sacs. Plus de 30 000 ont déjà été ensevelis et recouverts de chaux. Dogubeyazit est l'épicentre de la flambée de grippe aviaire. 1,3 million d'autres volatiles ont ainsi été éradiqués dans l'ensemble de la Turquie. ■

THE GLOBE

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Turkey warms to talk, not action, in Kurdistan



By Bashdar Ismaeel
Globe Staff Writer

Porter Goss, director of the US Central Intelligence Agency, visited Turkey on December 12 and informed Prime Minister Redep Tayyip Erdogan that the US was seriously considering striking Iran some time in 2006, and he asked the Turks to share intelligence on Iran.

More important, from a Turkish point of view,

Goss also told Ankara that if it cooperated, the US would "green light" a Turkish cross-border attack on the People's Liberation Army, the armed wing of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), now known as the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress. The PKK has a 10,000-strong militia in the mountains of southern Kurdistan.

Turkey is fearful of an independent Kurdish state being established in Iraq as this could ignite its Kurds in its eastern provinces. Turkey

fought a war with the PKK in the mid-1980s.

Moreover, Turkey is concerned that if the Kurds seize the oilfields of Kirkuk and Mosul in Iraq, independence would be a foregone conclusion. This in turn could revive separatist demands in the Kurdish populations in Syria, Iran and, of course, Turkey.

According to Conn Hallinan, a foreign-policy analyst for Foreign Policy In Focus, these developments suggest a quid pro quo between Washington and Ankara.

This would mean that the US attacks Iran, with minimal protest from the Turks, while at the same time Ankara hits the PKK and derails the formation of a Kurdish state, with minimal comment from the US.

This falls into the realm of speculation. On the ground, there are indications that Turkey is coming to the realization that armed intervention is not necessarily the answer.

Recipe for disaster

The seeds for hostility were sown in the

aftermath of the fall of the Ottoman Empire, as Kurds were denied self-determination and two main swaths of Kurdish land were submersed into Iraq and the newly founded Turkish republic. Suddenly, Turkey found a large Kurdish minority on its doorstep, with a further Kurdish headache in its back yard that, unchecked, would threaten the very foundations of the republic.

Battles ensued in both Iraq and Turkey intermittently, as a concoction of repression and rebellion dominated society. With the ruthless regime of Saddam Hussein taking adequate care of the Iraqi Kurds, Turkey could more evidently concentrate on its own far bigger problem - its own restive Kurds, thought to number about 15 million and long denied cultural and ethnic rights.

When the PKK took up arms in 1984, it was in the middle of the Iran-Iraq War. Southeastern Turkey became a daily battlefield, as successive Turkish governments largely failed to overcome militants, increasingly causing havoc on the economy.

However, in 1991, somewhat ironically, the tables turned as a mass of Kurdish refugees arrived at the Turkish border in frantic flight from Ba'athist repression, in the middle of the war with the PKK. With a fierce spotlight on Turkey, it eventually had no choice but to provide partial humanitarian relief and eventually support the establishment of a "safe haven" in the north of Iraq.

Turkey found it difficult to accept its new Kurdish neighbor, which embraced autonomy, a cultural renaissance and literal freedom. If unchecked, a discomforting paradox could soon develop, with one side of the border denying any existence of Kurds and the other side proudly welcoming visitors to

the "Kurdistan of Iraq" at the border crossing.

Perhaps from then on, a sense of inevitability hit Turkey, realizing that it could not actively control the dealings of the Kurds on both sides of the border. The Iraqi Kurds, although landlocked, had the benefit of much sympathy, with their plight brought into the international arena, and crucially they had support from the United States and the United Kingdom via daily air patrols.

In turn, Turkey's focus shifted to solving the PKK dilemma. Behind the scenes, a different stance was adopted and diplomatic cross-border relationships soon prospered. After all, creating two battles was almost unwinnable where the setting was in the middle of the Kurdish plains. Trade and commerce thrived.

However, the United States' invasion of Iraq served to cement Turkish fears as the Iraqi Kurds rejoined the greater Iraq, with guaranteed sovereignty and an influential role on the new blueprint of Iraq. Certain ride lines set by Turkey, such as control of oil-rich Kirkuk, now all but a certainty, with this being a key Kurdish stipulation, were soon discarded as the Kurds continued on a new path to promise. They won control of leading ministries as Iraqi coalition partners and became close allies of the US.

Turkish fears were highlighted further with most of the key Kurdish demands being enshrined in the Iraqi constitution and Kurdistan proclaiming its first official president - Massaud Barzani.

In this light, a continuing blind eye to the proceeding across the border would be counterproductive and dangerous.

This resulted in a more cooperative era between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan, with commerce thriving and billions of



Two PKK fighters listen on as they guard a conference last year. Perhaps as a more political solution was sought to the Kurdish problem, there came a realization that working with the Iraqi Kurds could actually bring about much-needed stability to Turkey itself.

US dollars' worth of contracts been awarded to Turkish construction firms in the process. Booming cross-border trade was highlighted by the commencement of daily flights from Istanbul to Arbil and Sulaimaniya, to facilitate popular demand for a more accessible route.

Perhaps as a more political solution was sought to the Kurdish problem, there came a realization that working with the Iraqi Kurds could actually bring about much-needed stability to Turkey itself. With Iraqi Kurds the potential benefactors of a land awash in oil, Turkey could kill two birds with one stone - solve its own Kurdish dilemma and also benefit from the democratic and economic developments in Iraq.

Massaud Barzani recently acknowledged the thawing of ties and confirmed that he would

be happy to mediate between the PKK and Turkey.

After all, the options left for Turkey are fast fading. If Iraqi Kurds win a strong federation, or even outright independence conducted via democratic means, a border blockade by Turkey would be catastrophic for the Iraqi Kurds, who heavily rely on Turkish supply lines, but this would not be sustainable. Any armed invasion, threatened on more than one occasion, would lead to mass bloodshed and would all but end Turkey's elusive dream of joining the European Union.

Kurdish National Assembly amends Presidency Law

By Aiyob Mawloodl
Globe Correspondent

An agreement between the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Democratic Party resulted in the unification of the two Kurdistan Regional Government's administrations Saturday, January 21, 2006 in the Kurdistan National Assembly.

"The unification of the two administrations necessitated the amendment of Article 1, the Presidency Law, and Article 3, the Ministerial Council Law of the Kurdistan Region Law signed in 1992," Sherwan Haidari, the newly elected head of the KDP bloc, and member of the legal committee of the Kurdish parliament explained for the necessity of the major amendments.

The Parliament arranged an emergency session to accomplish this duty Saturday, January 21, 2006.

Presidency Law

The main change that has been made in the Presidency law is that the President should have a deputy. This was absent in the previous law.

"Previously, the President was the General Commander of the Peshmarga Forces of the Kurdistan region and had only a deputy for that post with no other powers," Haidari told the Globe in an interview. "We changed this article and now the President will have a deputy who is also Deputy Commander of the Peshmarga Forces and has a full power as deputy President."

Deputy President's powers

Another important amendment is that the President has to give some of their powers to the deputy.

"The President must allocate some of his presidency powers to the dep-

uty," explained Haidari. "The powers that should be given to the deputy President are not mentioned, but they are to be agreed upon by the parties."

However when the President is absent, all powers will go to Deputy President.

In light of the above changes, some articles of the law have been removed altogether. Article 13, for example, read "the President has a deputy for Peshmarga issues." This removal was due to the fact that now the President has a full-powered deputy. Article 14 read "In the absence of the President, the Prime Minister will take his position." This provision has also been removed, since the deputy President will take the position of the President in the case of the latter's absence.

The newly amended law also defines the salaries and payments of the President and his deputy.

"If we take the current circumstances and a practical unification into consideration, we should

work on the basis of agreement and cooperation, a just distribution of powers and defining the authorities," MP Naznaz Mohammed Abdulqadir argued, showing her satisfaction with the amendments in light of unification. "I am not against any of the amendments of the two laws, though, if we had more time, we might have been able to do it better and more accurately."

Ministerial Council Law

The KRG Ministerial Council Law was also amended in the same session.

The major amendment required from unification was the decrease in the number of deputy Premiers from 3 deputies to only one. The President now has to ask the Premier and their single deputy to form the new ministerial council cabinet within thirty days.

According to the same amendment, the Kurdish Premier is free to grant some of his powers to

his deputy when he is present, but when absent, the deputy will assume full premiership responsibilities.

Number of ministries

Another important change is an increase in the number of KRG ministries. Previously the KRG had only fourteen ministries. This number has increased to 27.

The name of the Martyrs' Affairs Ministry is to include Anfals and is to be named the Martyrs and Anfals' Ministry. Tariq Mohammad Jambaz, deputy of the PUK bloc and member of the legal committee in Parliament said, "Anfals' affairs shouldn't be put in one ministry with Martyrs' Affairs since Anfals have some special characteristics that martyrs lack. For instance, the issue of Anfals is tightly related to human rights."

"It would be better to have a separate establishment for Anfals to give it more independence."

Apart from these amend-

ments, the Kurdistan Parliament amended two other articles from the Ministerial Council Law. The first was the age of ministers and the other was the academic degree of acting ministers.

"These were very important changes that we made in the law. Now the acting ministers should at least carry a BA degree, and the ministers should be at least 30 years of age," Haidari said.

What remains to be done?

"Ministers may lack an academic degree since it is more of a political post. However the deputy must have a degree and be professionally skilled in his field," emphasized Jambaz, while adding that they must work to empower those who may really serve their people and government.

"We must try to make the unification be reflected in reality. We must keep the government separate from parties. Politics should be in the service of the people."



The Parliament arranged an emergency session to accomplish the amendment Saturday, January 21, 2006. Photo Azad Lashkiri

IRAN

La bombe sera prête dans trois ans

Malgré leurs efforts, les Occidentaux ne sont pas parvenus à empêcher les Iraniens de se lancer dans la course à l'arme nucléaire. Ceux-ci disposeraient aujourd'hui de toute la technologie pour fabriquer leurs propres ogives.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH (extraits)
Londres

Si l'on en croit les derniers comptes rendus des services de renseignements occidentaux, l'Iran est en train de s'atteler à un programme d'enrichissement de l'uranium d'une envergure suffisante pour lui permettre de produire des armes nucléaires. Ces activités seront menées à Natanz, un centre d'enrichissement d'uranium ultrasecret situé à 150 kilomètres au nord-est de Téhéran. Selon les mêmes sources, avec les 164 centrifugeuses de Natanz, l'Iran pourra enrichir suffisamment d'uranium pour produire des armes nucléaires dans un délai de trois ans.

La décision unilatérale de Téhéran de relancer le processus d'enrichissement d'uranium est de loin l'initiative la plus dangereuse que le pays ait prise dans le bras de fer qui l'oppose actuellement à l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA). En tant que signataire du traité, l'Iran est tenu de fournir à l'AIEA une liste exhaustive de ses activités nucléaires. Téhéran assure que celles-ci sont destinées à développer l'industrie nucléaire civile du pays. Mais les incohérences relevées dans ses déclarations aux inspecteurs de l'AIEA – et la dissimulation de l'existence du site de Natanz – ont renforcé les soupçons sur son programme clandestin d'armes nucléaires, qui serait déjà bien avancé.

Les experts nucléaires des services de renseignements estiment que le pays possède les ressources nécessaires pour fabriquer l'arme atomique. *"L'Iran a passé les vingt dernières années à courir le monde pour se procurer les équipements et les matières premières requis. La question que nous nous posons n'est plus de savoir si l'Iran est capable de se doter de l'arme nucléaire, mais combien de temps il lui faudra"*, assure un officier des renseignements occidentaux. Malgré les efforts concertés de ces derniers, les Iraniens ont réussi à se procurer des éléments de première importance pour mener à bien leur programme. L'Iran détendrait plus d'un millier de tonnes de *yellow cake*, l'oxyde d'uranium, qui, une fois enrichi, fournit l'uranium militaire. Il l'aurait importé du Niger et d'Afrique du Sud à la fin des années 1990. Une fois traité, ce *yellow cake* pourrait produire suffisamment d'ura-

► *"Maintenant, c'est nous les modérés, j'imagine."* Dessin de Patrick Chappatte paru dans l'International Herald Tribune, Paris.

■ Stratégie
"L'absence de réaction concrète de la part des pays occidentaux à la reprise durant l'été 2005 des activités nucléaires à Ispahan a été un signe encourageant pour le régime iranien", note The BBC Persian Service. "Toutefois, certains réformateurs iraniens craignent que [le président] Ahmadinejad ne vole pas non plus d'un mauvais œil une action militaire occidentale qui resterait limitée et pourrait rehausser sa popularité."



nium pour fabriquer cinq bombes nucléaires. Les Iraniens se seraient également ravitaillés auprès d'A.Q. Khan, le scientifique considéré comme le "père" de la bombe atomique pakistanaise, qui leur aurait fourni des techniques et des matériaux essentiels pour traiter le *yellow cake*. Mais l'acquisition la plus dangereuse de l'Iran est la centrifugeuse P2, un équipement de pointe pour enrichir l'uranium. Pour être en mesure de fabriquer l'arme atomique, il est nécessaire de relier plusieurs centrifugeuses "en cascade". Lorsqu'ils ont fini par être autorisés à visiter le site de Natanz, il y a deux ans, les inspecteurs de l'AIEA ont été très inquiets de découvrir que les Iraniens avaient réussi à former une cascade de 164 centrifugeuses fabriquées sur le modèle de la P2 pakistanaise.

Si l'objectif du programme nucléaire iranien était vraiment de soutenir l'industrie civile, il n'aurait pas été nécessaire de pousser les travaux jusque-là. Quand on leur a demandé de s'expliquer sur la présence de traces d'uranium enrichi sur le site, les Iraniens ont fourni la piètre excuse que celles-ci avaient été introduites par inadvertance d'un pays non identifié (probablement le Pakistan) lors de l'achat des centrifugeuses. C'est là une des nombreuses incohérences relevées dans les communications fournies à l'AIEA, qui n'a pas réussi à arrêter les

Iraniens dans leur inexorable quête de la technologie nucléaire. L'Iran s'est ainsi doté de tous les moyens de production et matériaux nécessaires pour parvenir au stade final de la fabrication. Le processus d'enrichissement aura lieu à Natanz, mais c'est à l'usine de conversion d'uranium d'Ispahan que les travaux préparatoires ont été effectués. Ispahan a la capacité de traiter 300 tonnes de *yellow cake* par an et, avant la suspension du programme, en 2004, les Iraniens en avaient déjà converti 37 tonnes en hexafluorure d'uranium (UF₆), un gaz essentiel dans la production de l'uranium militaire.

Nul ne sait exactement quelle quantité d'UF₆ a été produite depuis que les scellés ont été levés à Ispahan, en août 2005, mais, selon des estimations, il y aurait suffisamment de stocks pour enrichir 30 kilos d'uranium, soit cinq fois la quantité contenue dans l'ogive de la bombe larguée sur Hiroshima.

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DU 19 AU 25 JANVIER 2006

The Saddam trial veers into chaos

New judge expels all 4 lead defendants

By Robert F. Worth

BAGHDAD: The trial of Saddam Hussein erupted into chaos Sunday, with the new chief judge ordering all four lead defendants removed from the courtroom and tried in absentia — one of them kicking and screaming as he went — as the entire defense team walked out in protest.

The new judge, Raouf Abdel-Rahman, made it clear as soon as the trial reconvened after its monthlong recess that he would not tolerate political diatribes by Saddam and the former dictator's fellow defendant, Barzan Ibrahim al-Tikriti, that have dominated the trial ever since it began Oct. 19.

The judge soon made good on his warnings. Ibrahim, who had twice called the court "a daughter of adultery" and refused to obey Abdel-Rahman's commands, was dragged howling from the courtroom by four bailiffs.

One of the lawyers, Saleh Armouti, began screaming at the judge, and he, too, was dragged out.

Saddam then had a furious exchange with the judge, but he left before the bailiffs could be ordered to remove him.

"Don't call yourself an Iraqi," Saddam yelled, after Abdel-Rahman told him he would be ejected. "I've led you for 35 years and now you say 'remove him!' Shame on you! Shame on you!"

The courtroom showdown raised the extraordinary prospect of a war crimes trial without the lead defendants or their lawyers. Abdel-Rahman warned the departing lawyers several times

that they would not be allowed back in if they left, and he promptly replaced them with a team of six court-appointed lawyers who sat silently as the trial proceeded for another three hours.

The walkout also suggested a deliberate defense strategy to give the tribunal the appearance of a show trial. Khalil Dulaimi, Saddam's lead lawyer, issued a call Sunday evening for the trial to be moved out of Iraq, saying the judge's decision to eject the lead defendants and their lawyers had made a fair trial impossible.

"What happened today is a shameful moment in the history of the Iraqi judiciary," said Dulaimi, who added that the defense team would agree to return only if a list of conditions was met.

None of them, including a call for a public apology to the lawyer who had been thrown out, were likely to be met.

The original defense team could be allowed back if its members file a formal legal request, said Raid Juhi, the chief investigative judge on the tribunal, who spoke to reporters after the court session Sunday.

The four defendants also could be allowed back if they commit themselves to behaving properly in the courtroom, Juhi said.

But Dulaimi's conditions made a return by the lawyers seem unlikely. And it seemed unlikely that Abdel-Rahman would go back on his word after repeatedly warning the lawyers that he would not let them back in.

"War crimes trials are always messy, but holding this trial in absentia would be extremely troubling to a lot of people,"



Pool photo by Darko Bandic

The new chief judge in Saddam's trial, Raouf Abdel-Rahman, in court Sunday.

said Miranda Sissons, a senior associate at the International Center for Transitional Justice who is observing the trial.

Another troubling sign, Sissons said, was the apparent passivity of the new court-appointed lawyers. They said nothing during three hours of testimony Sunday afternoon, even as prosecutors and the judge peppered the witnesses with questions about torture and executions allegedly ordered by Saddam and his lieutenants.

The original defense team threatened to boycott the trial in November, but its members relented after the former presiding judge, Rizgar Muhammad Amin, agreed to give the defendants more time to speak in the courtroom. In the weeks that followed, Saddam and Ibrahim virtually took control of the courtroom, unleashing frequent broadsides against the tribunal and complaining about ill-treatment.

Amin resigned from the tribunal earlier this month, saying he was fed up with a torrent of criticism by high-level Iraqi officials about his handling of the trial.

President Jalal Talabani and other Iraqi leaders tried to persuade Amin to reconsider, apparently hoping to avoid the impression that the judge had been forced out through political pressure.

Abdel-Rahman set a new tone as soon as the court came to order Sunday morning. "I can see that it is my duty to underline what Imam Ali said, that if your power has led you to oppress people, remember the judgment will be on you," he said, in a reference to the founding saint of Shiite Islam. Many of Saddam's victims were Shiites.

Abdel-Rahman banged his gavel angrily when Armouti insistently shouted questions at him, talking over the lawyer until Armouti fell silent.

But it was not until Ibrahim began talking that the judge made clear he would not accept any of the rants that had been so common in earlier sessions.

"Political speeches have no place in this courtroom," Abdel-Rahman said. "You must abide by the rules, any irrelevant remarks will be struck from the record, and anyone who breaks the rules will be removed from the courtroom and tried as if he were present."



Pool photo by David Furst

Saddam lecturing the court Sunday shortly after a fellow defendant was dragged out.

The New York Times

John Vinocur

Politician

On Iran, Chirac steps in as Bush fears to tread

JANUARY 31, 2006

Herald Tribune

PARIS

France, once more the contrarian, is offering up some carefully ambiguous hard talk these days on managing the emergence of Iran as a nuclear threat — at a time when Hillary Clinton has accused the Bush administration of downplaying the problem.

In today's context, that downplay would aim at keeping Iran out of the political debate in America as much as possible as its troops struggle in Iraq. All the more since the White House wants to avoid public controversy about a possible military confrontation with the mullahs in the run-up to congressional elections in November.

Contrarian France comes in here because Clinton also charged the administration with losing critical time by outsourcing negotiations with

Tehran aimed at stopping its drive for nuclear weapons capability to Britain, France and Germany.

Whatever positioning in the international pecking order or domestic politics is involved (both significant



Jacques Chirac

French concerns), the language of realism about the parameters of response to the Iranian threat comes easier, and more officially for the moment, in Paris than in Washington, London or Berlin.

Without referring to Iran, Jacques Chirac picked a blindingly obvious juncture a week after Iran resumed uranium enrichment this month to say that dealing with threats to France's vital interests posed by rogue states or state-sponsored terrorism fit the doctrine of French use of its nuclear arsenal. Those vital interests, determined by the president, he said, can be "French, European, or of another nature."

Chirac is certainly not menacing Iran with nuclear attack, but rather emphasizing France's prerogatives and independence at a time when he believes that his political interests at home and French status as a power-player are not best served by wordless caution.

Contrast the tone of remarks over the weekend by the British foreign secretary, Jack Straw, that current negotiations must allow Iran to "pre-

serve a sense of national dignity" — letting it produce "symbolic" amounts of the enriched uranium used in nuclear weapons manufacture, perhaps? — with what General Henri Bentegeat, the French chief of staff, was authorized to say as a follow-up to Chirac's nuclear pronouncement:

Bentegeat, while dismissing the prospect of raids on Tehran's nuclear facilities, described Iran as "demonstrating extremely warlike intentions."

You can read into the general's controlled ambiguity the idea that if there is no military frame of reference at the end of the current diplomatic road undertaken by the United States and Europe, then "an extremely warlike" Iran will see no incentive to abandon its weapons development.

In writing about how to approach Iran last year, Thérèse Delpech, director of strategic affairs at the French Atomic Energy Commission, and the country's best-known commentator on nuclear proliferation, said, "you've got to have credible means of dissuasion."

"It's not in exclaiming that military action never resolves anything that you get results," she said, "especially if you eliminate the use of oil sanctions at the same time."

Unlike in the United States, where new political grief would await whatever Bush might say, or shies away from saying, about dealing with Iran beyond its eventual referral to the United Nations Security Council, in France there is no serious domestic downside built-in to challenge Chirac's approach.

When the French were last specifically asked in a German Marshall

Fund poll in 2003 if they would support a Security Council-authorized attack on Iran (participant countries and means unspecified) to force it to give up weapons of mass destruction, a majority said yes. By contrast, the Germans canvassed replied no.

From within France's mainstream left, former Prime Minister Laurent Fabius, a would-be Socialist candidate in the 2007 presidential election, not only avoided criticism of Chirac's pointed reiteration of French nuclear doctrine, but has gone further, calling for an international ban on travel by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran in response to his assertion that Israel should be erased from the map.

On the right, even a backer of Nicolas Sarkozy like Pierre Lellouche — president of NATO's parliamentary

assembly, a former security adviser to Chirac, and now author of a new book harshly critical of the president — described Chirac's stance as "important and necessary."

It's no mystery, of course, that in talking about rogue states, threats of terrorism, and French nuclear weapons capabilities, Chirac created an I'm-in-charge-here event to project his role as French commander-in-chief both at home and on the world stage. It is unmistakably a response to a growing characterization that he is a lame duck less than a year and a half before presidential elections here, and his reminder that he remains in control at a time of a hard decisions for the Western allies.

But people familiar with his thinking emphasize that Chirac has been deeply and consistently mistrustful of Iran. In agreement on Iran's destabilizing role in Lebanon and Syria, France and the United States have worked increasingly closely in the Middle East over the past year.

At the same time, of all the nuclear players, France and the United States have been the firmest advocates of nonproliferation as opposed to disarmament. Beyond its concerns over proliferation's raising the risks of nuclear war, France knows its special levers on the international level would diminish in a world of nuclear promiscuity.

Another element in taking a tougher-sounding stance in relation to Iran may well come from a changing French assessment of its relationship

with the Germany of Angela Merkel.

As it becomes clearer that France will no longer operate as senior partner in an international strategic duo of the kind that existed during Gerhard Schröder's second term as chancellor, France can prop up its international status by emphasizing its autonomy within the Security Council and as a nuclear power — a compensatory alternative to its loss of leverage in Germany.

In all this, the reverberations from Iran's nuclear drive have an element or two of the nuclear equation of the early 1980s when François Mitterrand moved strategically alongside the Americans. Back then, both countries campaigned in favor of the publicly divisive stance that failure to prepare a military response to the Soviet targeting of SS-20 nuclear missiles on Western Europe might turn an ominous situation into a fatal one.

Now, before the potential challenge of a fanaticized and unpredictable regime that can actually put nuclear warheads on missiles, the Americans need all the help they can get from their friends. In a period of diplomatic effort, when sounding tough on Iran is awkward in Washington, it's not totally excessive to think that during the months he's got left, Chirac might extend a French hand.

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Tandis que sunnites et chiïtes se disputent le pouvoir à Bagdad, les Kurdes du Nord défendent résolument leur indépendance. Ils détiennent la clé d'un Irak réunifié, mais le veulent-ils ?

LES KURDES MAÎTRES DU JEU

À Sheraworn, dans le Kurdistan irakien, des soldats jouent sur des chars émiettés près d'un monument qui célèbre la victoire kurde de 1991 sur l'armée irakienne.

C'est un mardi matin, à 10 heures, dans une chaleur étouffante, que notre condamnation à mort est annoncée par téléphone. Le photographe Ed Kashi et moi-même sommes partis très tôt pour couvrir les 80 km qui séparent Arbil, la capitale régionale des Kurdes d'Irak, de Kirkouk. Deux représentants de la Compagnie pétrolière du Nord nous accompagnent jusqu'au sommet d'une petite colline. Noyé dans l'épais brouillard que forment la poussière et les émanations des raffineries, un soleil rougeoyant écrase l'ancienne cité que les Kurdes appellent « notre Jérusalem ». Des nuées de mouches survolent des flaques luisantes d'eau stagnante, qui dégagent une odeur âcre. Près de 9 milliards de barils de brut gisent sous nos pieds. Soudain, les téléphones mobiles de nos deux accompagnateurs sonnent en même temps. Tandis qu'ils écoutent en silence leurs interlocuteurs,

DE FRANK VIVIANO
PHOTOGRAPHIES DE ED KASHI



SUR LE QUI-VIVE, des policiers kurdes fouillent un véhicule à un poste de contrôle proche d'Arbil. Bien que le territoire kurde soit plus sûr que le reste de l'Irak, grâce à des mesures de sécurité renforcées, plusieurs kamikazes ont réussi, l'an dernier, à passer à travers les mailles du filet.

je vois leurs traits se figer, leurs yeux croiser le regard d'Ed et me fixer brièvement. Sans mot dire, l'un d'eux saute dans son pick-up avec ses deux gardes du corps, et s'éloigne à toute allure. Quant au second, il s'empresse de nous raccompagner avec les deux autres gardes du corps jusqu'à la porte de la société. « Un groupe terroriste vous a identifiés comme journalistes étrangers, nous explique-t-il. En ce moment même, il est en train de nous observer, et vous menace de mort. Nous ne pouvons pas être vus en votre compagnie. »

Il détourne la tête, gêné, et ajoute avant de s'éloigner : « Comprenez-moi, j'ai une famille. »

Au cours de l'angoissante demi-heure qui suit, notre chauffeur, pris de panique, s'élance à tombeau ouvert, en zigzaguant dans les rues de Kirkouk. À 1 km du poste de contrôle où les soldats kurdes barrent la route du Nord, nous sommes pris dans un embouteillage. À l'intérieur des voitures qui nous encerclent, chaque jeune barbu est pour moi le stéréotype du terroriste. Paranoïa ou pas, le fait est que moins de vingt-quatre heures plus tard, dans cette même rue, un kamikaze se fera exploser à quelque 300 m de nous. C'est la façon la plus directe qui soit de nous montrer ce que les Kurdes du nord de l'Irak voient lorsqu'ils regardent vers le sud : un pays à feu et à sang.

Depuis la fin de la guerre du Golfe de 1991, près de 4 millions de Kurdes vivent en totale autonomie dans la région du Kurdistan irakien.

Une zone d'exclusion aérienne située au nord du 36^e parallèle et la forteresse défensive que forment les *peshmergas* – l'armée kurde à la redoutable discipline – les protègent de Saddam Hussein. Ils ont organisé des élections régionales, formé une assemblée législative et élu un président, en un mot constitué un État indépendant *de facto*. Pour la première fois de leur longue histoire, les Kurdes disposent d'un réel pouvoir politique. Ils ont réussi à négocier le contrôle de leur propre armée et des nouveaux gisements de pétrole découverts sur leur territoire.

Dans l'Irak fédéré que réclame la communauté internationale, ils bénéficieraient d'une autonomie analogue, voire supérieure, à celle dont ils jouissent actuellement. Mais, au fond d'eux-mêmes, les Kurdes restent fondamentalement attachés à leur rêve d'indépendance totale. Après quatorze ans d'autonomie, ils ne se perçoivent désormais plus comme Irakiens. L'intense débat qui fait rage dans tout le Kurdistan ne porte plus sur les avantages et les inconvénients d'une séparation radicale d'avec l'Irak, mais sur le meilleur moyen d'y parvenir : par la négociation, prônée par ceux que j'appelle les « Bâtisseurs », ou par la guerre, comme le veulent les « Guerriers ».

Je retrouve ce débat jusque dans les propos d'une fillette de 13 ans, Mivan Majid, rencontrée sur les hauteurs de la ville de Souleimaniyé, un soir où elle prend le frais dans un parc, en compagnie de son père et de sa sœur cadette. Au nord et à l'est, les crêtes découpées des monts Zagros, qui marquent la frontière entre le Kurdistan irakien et l'Iran, disparaissent progressivement dans la pénombre. Au sud, l'immense plaine de Mésopotamie, qui s'étend vers Bagdad et le golfe Persique, se couvre d'or sous les derniers rayons du soleil.

Je suis moi aussi venu prendre l'air, lorsque quelqu'un me tapote le bras. Je sursaute en voyant qu'il s'agit d'une adolescente dégingandée, en jeans délavés.

« Salut, dit-elle, est-ce que vous êtes américains tous les deux ? »

La question est embarrassante, aujourd'hui, au Moyen-Orient, mais la simplicité de ton de la fillette me met en confiance. Elle commence à m'interroger, dans un argot californien quasi parfait qu'elle a acquis auprès d'une amie expatriée. Du haut de ses 13 ans, Mivan personifie à mes yeux le rêve kurde. Elle n'a jamais connu la domination de Bagdad. Souleimaniyé, sa ville natale et la capitale du secteur est du Kurdistan irakien, est sous contrôle kurde depuis 1992, année de sa naissance. Elle veut devenir ingénieur, parce que, dit-elle, « ils construisent des trucs trop cool : des maisons, des routes, des centres commerciaux. Quand t'es ingénieur, tu restes pas scotché au drame de notre histoire. Tu penses à l'avenir. »

Difficile de ne pas rester « scotché à l'histoire », lorsqu'on est un Kurde d'Irak. Ici, pas une seule famille qui n'ait pas fui sa maison à un moment ou un autre de ces vingt dernières années, pas un seul paysan qui n'ait vu son village bombardé par des obus ou par l'artillerie, pas une seule personne qui n'ait à raconter des attaques à l'arme chimique, des actes de torture ou des exécutions sous Saddam Hussein. Au cours de l'ignoble campagne Anfal, qui a atteint son paroxysme entre février et septembre 1988, l'armée irakienne a détruit des milliers de villages kurdes et tué 100 000 personnes.

Le père de Mivan se joint à notre conversation, souriant à sa fille pendant qu'elle traduit mes questions et ses réponses. Majid Nadir est un homme mince, approchant la cinquantaine, aux yeux pénétrants et à la moustache noire bien taillée. Lui aussi a une terrible histoire à raconter : arrêté pour ses opinions en 1979, il a été torturé et incarcéré pendant un an.

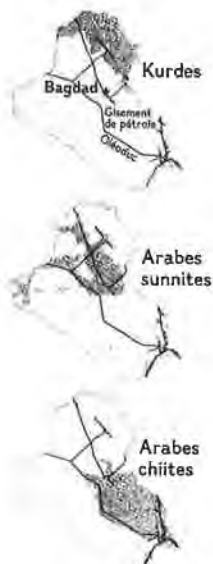
Les Nadir habitent une petite maison en pierre, non loin du centre de Souleimaniyé. Elle se compose d'une cuisine, avec une table en bois et six chaises, d'une chambre à coucher que partagent les deux filles et leur mère, Parwen, et d'un salon sans fenêtre où le fils de 5 ans, Parosh, et le

père dorment sur un canapé et un lit de camp. Majid et Parwen travaillent tous les deux six jours par semaine, lui comme mécanicien, elle comme ingénieur des ponts et chaussées. Âgée de 45 ans environ, la peau claire, Parwen pratique un islamisme modéré, comme la plupart des Kurdes. « J'aimerais bien faire le pèlerinage de

La Mecque un jour, si j'en ai les moyens », dit-elle. Mais elle refuse de se couvrir la tête, et hausse les épaules lorsque Majid dit ne pas s'intéresser à la religion. « C'est notre conscience qui est le meilleur juge du bien et du mal, pas ce qu'on entend à la mosquée, insiste-t-il. Si j'avais de l'argent pour voyager, j'irais en Europe ou chez mon frère, à Hamilton, en Ontario. »



LE NORD AFFIRME SON POUVOIR Depuis 1991, les Kurdes d'Irak sont autonomes dans une région des montagnes du Nord. Ils tentent d'élargir ce statut par une nouvelle constitution prévoyant un État fédéral, et revendiquent le contrôle de la ville pétrolière de Kirkouk, traditionnellement kurde, mais située au-delà de la zone autonome. Aujourd'hui, les militaires kurdes s'entraînent avec l'armée nationale irakienne (ci-dessous), qu'ils ont autrefois combattue.



MIVAN MAJID personnifie le rêve kurde. Sa ville natale, Souleimaniyé, est sous contrôle kurde depuis 1992, année de naissance de l'adolescente.

« Rendez-moi service, emmenez-le aux États-Unis ! », me lance Parwen, en tapant affectueusement sur le bras de Majid. Tous deux éclatent de rire. Au Kurdistan, il n'est pas plus inhabituel d'entendre les femmes parler librement que de les voir officiers, ministres ou ingénieurs, comme Parwen, qui dirige des hommes sur les chantiers. « Ce qui compte, ici, ce n'est pas d'être un homme ou une femme, affirme-t-elle. C'est de bien faire son travail. » Bien travailler, quel qu'en soit le prix, est de toute évidence la conception qu'ont les Nadir de l'éducation des enfants. Ils ont acheté un ordinateur, des livres, en anglais et en kurde, qui garnissent un mur du salon. Ils ont également épargné pour emménager dans une maison plus grande, plus proche de l'établissement privé que fréquente Mivan et où devraient la rejoindre sa sœur, Avin, âgée de 10 ans, et Parosh. Tout dans leur vie de famille traduit l'espoir et la volonté d'aller de l'avant.

« Construire » est un mot que l'on entend partout au Kurdistan. Des hommes, comme Majid, qui ont subi leur lot de violence, mais aussi les jeunes, l'utilisent comme une formule magique : « On ne peut pas construire une nation avec des armes », assène Ranja Tahir, 20 ans, étudiant en économie à l'université de Souleimaniyé. Chez les femmes, c'est une véritable profession de foi, y compris pour la « Mata Hari du Kurdistan », Feiza Majid Talabani.

Feiza est pourtant aux antipodes de l'image de l'espionne : petite, un peu ronde, joviale, elle vient vers moi en courant dans un centre d'entraînement de femmes officiers *peshmergas*. Nous bavardons pendant que les autres jeunes recrues s'exercent au tir à la grenade. À 25 ans, elle a été infiltrée à Kirkouk, au début de la guerre de 2003 contre Saddam Hussein, déguisée en vieille femme, et dissimulant sous ses vêtements un téléphone mobile et une caméra miniature. Pendant un mois, jusqu'à ce que la ville cède sous une attaque conjointe des Kurdes et des Américains, elle a fourni des rapports quotidiens sur les mouvements des troupes irakiennes.

A-t-elle eu peur ? « On ne meurt qu'une fois, répond Feiza, et, lorsqu'on est kurde, la mort est là presque tous les jours. »

C'est une réponse de guerrier – en kurde, *peshmergas* signifie « ceux qui affrontent la mort » –, et je m'attends à ce que notre conversation se poursuive sur le même ton. Je me trompe. « Il faut que vous compreniez que je ne me suis pas engagée dans l'armée pour tuer, précise-t-elle. C'est parce que je pense que les femmes ont une vision diffé-

rente de la mission d'une armée. Les femmes construisent, elles ne détruisent pas. Construire, c'est ce dont nous avons besoin maintenant. »

Et c'est bien ce que font les Kurdes d'Irak, au-delà de la zone protégée, saisis par une frénésie d'expansion urbaine. Les villes kurdes, telles que Souleimaniyé ou Arbil, dans le secteur ouest, sont des labyrinthes de rues non répertoriées, noyées dans le ciment, bordées de grues et d'immeubles d'habitation en construction. Majid Abdulrahman, le très demandé directeur du logement à Arbil, estime que le budget consacré aux immeubles à usage d'habitation en 2005 sera quarante fois supérieur à celui de 1996. Lorsque je lui demande quelle est la population actuelle d'Arbil, il secoue la tête : « Je n'en ai aucune idée. De plus, je ne dispose d'aucun plan complet de la ville, et, s'il en existe un – ce dont je doute fort –, je ne l'ai jamais vu. Je vous adresserais bien au ministre de la Planification, mais nous n'en avons pas ! »

La périphérie de la ville est une juxtaposition de bidonvilles abritant des réfugiés venus de l'extérieur de la zone protégée. Un tiers des Kurdes d'Irak y vivent encore. Des cabanes aux murs de terre crue aux villas à deux étages, en passant par les maisons en parpaings, chaque habitation témoigne du temps que chaque famille a passé là, ajoutant, année après année, des briques artisanales et des portions de toiture en papier goudronné. Dans l'ancien quartier résidentiel d'Arbil, près du marché central, un gigantesque

centre commercial, le City Centre Project, se construit au milieu des maisons basses. Ce complexe, qui coûtera environ 850 millions d'euros, comprendra notamment 6000 magasins, ainsi que quatre tours de bureaux de trente étages.

Pourtant, le boom immobilier que connaît le Kurdistan ne parvient pas à dissimuler l'absence d'industries. De 1996 à 2003, les fonds ont afflué dans le cadre du programme controversé de l'ONU – Pétrole contre nourriture – qui permettait à l'Irak d'exporter du pétrole en échange de farine, de riz, de lait et d'autres denrées de base. Cette source de revenus est à présent tarie. Entre-temps, le programme a ruiné l'activité agricole de la région, autrefois rentable : pourquoi les paysans auraient-ils continué à cultiver du blé, alors qu'il était distribué gratuitement ?

Les expatriés kurdes rentrés au pays après la chute de Saddam Hussein constituent à l'évidence un moteur de modernisation. Ils arrivent par centaines, tous les mois, avec des valises bourrées d'euros, de dollars ou de livres sterling, sans parler des coutumes, des attitudes, des mentalités ou des compétences étrangères, acquises en exil. Pourtant, aucun des fonctionnaires, aucun des entrepreneurs que je rencontre, n'est

capable de préciser le nombre d'émigrés revenus au pays, pas plus que la provenance des énormes sommes engagées dans la construction. Les sources de financement sont trop diverses pour être identifiées, si tant est qu'une telle comptabilité est possible dans des villes dépourvues de service de planification, de plans d'urbanisme et de recensement de la population.

À la fin du premier semestre 2005, le nord de l'Irak ne disposait pas non plus de banques, de cartes de crédit ou de mécanismes opérationnels pour gérer les investissements étrangers. Jusqu'à très récemment, les investisseurs, comme tous les autres visiteurs, devaient prendre un taxi pour franchir les dangereuses frontières turques ou iraniennes, principaux points d'accès au Kurdistan irakien, avec des liasses de billets dans leurs bagages. La situation s'est légèrement améliorée en fin d'année, lorsque la compagnie Kurdistan Airlines a inauguré une liaison bi-hebdomadaire entre Arbil et Dubaï, ainsi qu'un vol hebdomadaire vers Francfort.

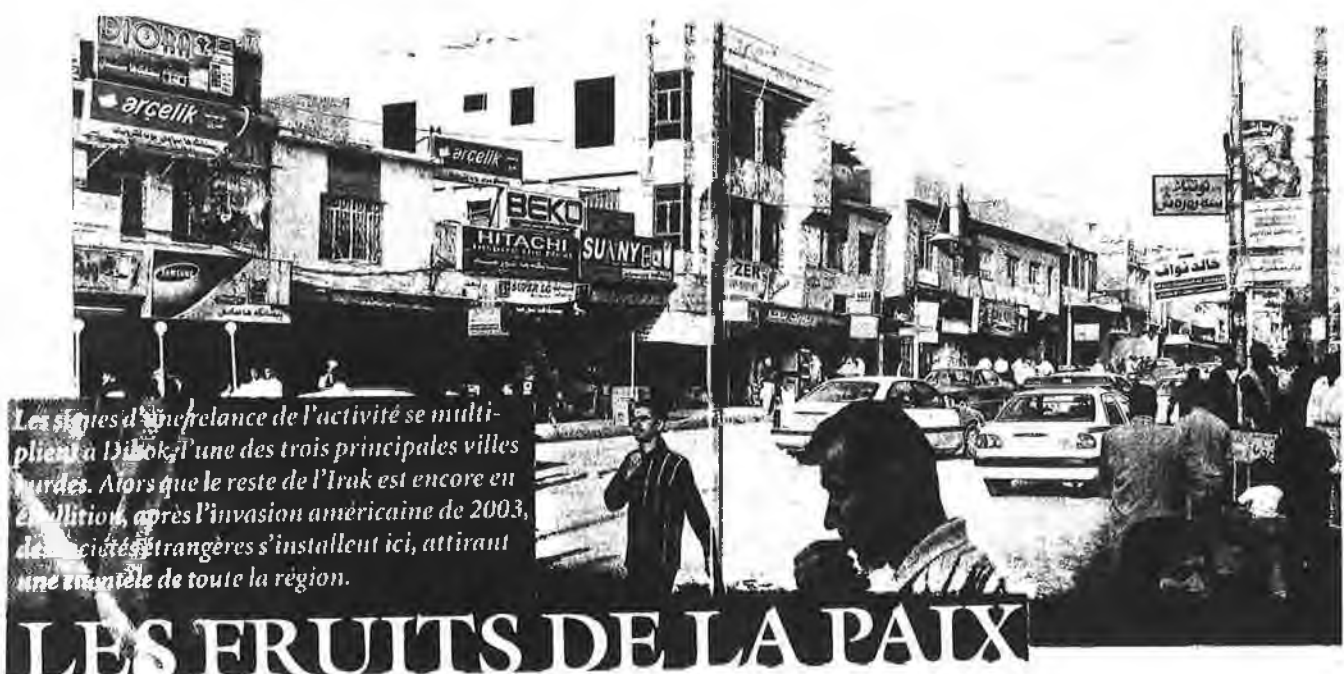
Parwen Babaker, la ministre de l'Industrie du secteur est, a bien du mal à citer des investissements industriels étrangers dans le pays. Elle finit par mentionner une manufacture de tabac britannique, dont les capitaux ne dépassent pas 3 millions d'euros, et une petite usine de vêtements appartenant à des Italiens. De son côté, le ministre adjoint de l'Économie et des Finances de la région, Abdullah Abdulrahim, n'est pas plus loquace. «Le produit intérieur brut du Kurdistan ? Je ne peux pas vous fournir de chiffres là-dessus.»

Quant aux institutions politiques, elles semblent aussi chaotiques – et prolifiques – que le boom immobilier. En 2005, selon mes interlocuteurs, le Kurdistan comptait deux, trois ou quatre instances suprêmes. Il y avait le gouver-

nement central théorique de Bagdad, élu par toute la nation et soutenu par les autorités d'occupation, mais totalement impuissant au-delà de la capitale irakienne et de quelques villes périphériques. À Souleimaniyé, il y avait l'autorité de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) de Jalal 'Ialabani, l'une des deux principales coalitions kurdes. À l'ouest, à Arbil, il y avait l'instance parallèle du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) de l'ancien chef de guerre Massoud Barzani. Et, depuis le mois de juin, Arbil abritait également l'hypothétique gouvernement régional du Kurdistan irakien uni, présidé par le même Barzani.

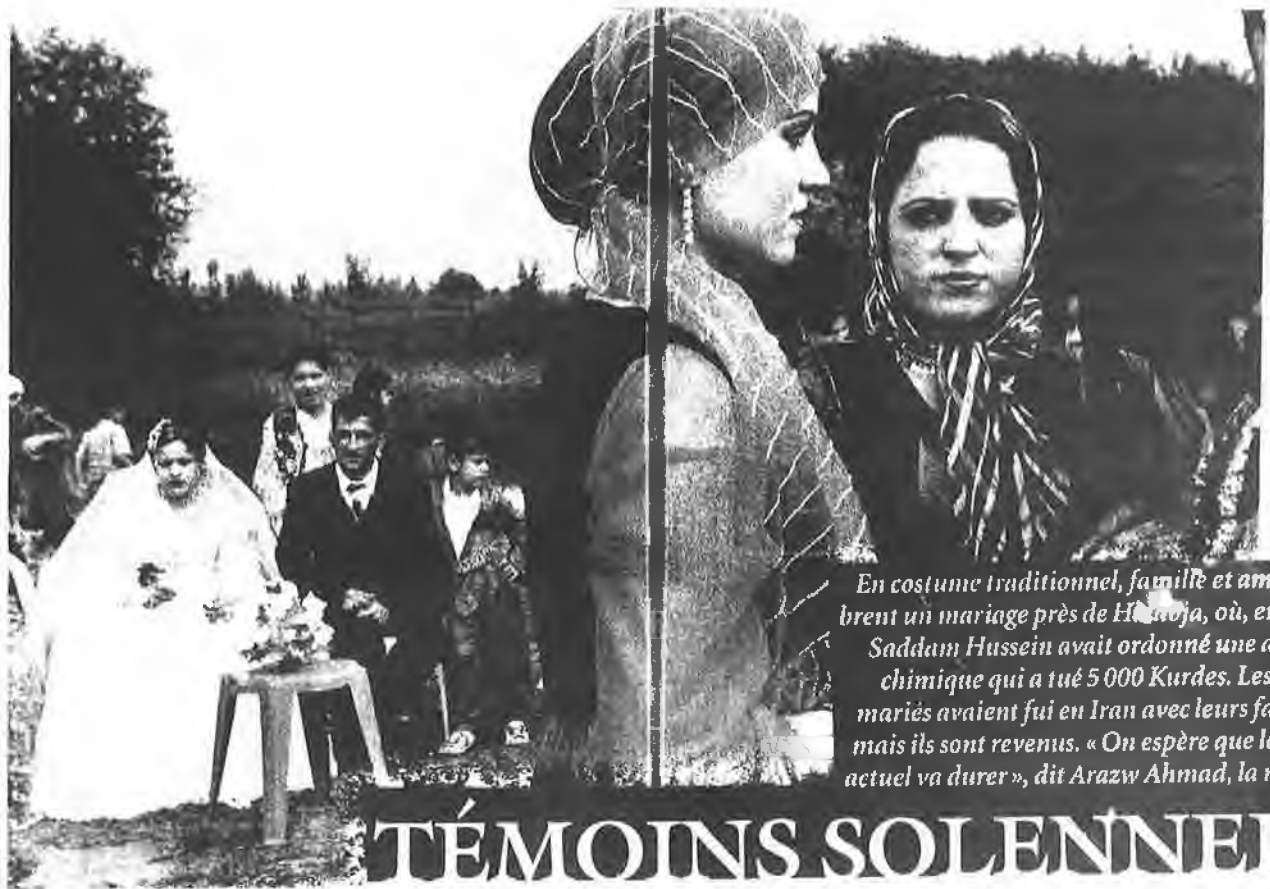
La région est tellement subdivisée qu'il est impossible de téléphoner entre les villes rivales de Souleimaniyé et d'Arbil, distantes de 150 km seulement, et le bureau de poste flamboyant neuf de Souleimaniyé n'achemine le courrier qu'à l'intérieur de la province. Cette situation pour le moins déconcertante résulte non seulement du conflit qui oppose de longue date le Kurdistan à l'Irak arabe, mais aussi des tensions qui règnent entre les Kurdes eux-mêmes.

Pas plus tard qu'au milieu des années 1990, l'UPK et le PDK se livraient une guerre qui a fait des milliers de victimes. Ce sont les combats entre Kurdes, et non contre l'armée de Saddam Hussein, qui ont fait fuir à l'étranger la plus récente vague d'émigrés, et qui ont poussé résolument d'anciens Guerriers, tels que Majid Nadir, dans le camp des Bâtisseurs. Un soir, alors que je le retrouve devant sa maison, il me confie son amertume envers les Guerriers. «Les problèmes entre les deux parties du Kurdistan nous ont entraînés dans une guerre honteuse. Et qu'ont-ils fait pour nous pousser en avant ?»



Les signes d'effacement de l'activité se multiplient à Erbil, l'une des trois principales villes kurdes. Alors que le reste de l'Irak est encore en ébullition, après l'invasion américaine de 2003, des sociétés étrangères s'installent ici, attirant une multitude de toute la région.

LES FRUITS DE LA PAIX



En costume traditionnel, famille et amis célèbrent un mariage près de Hama, où, en 1988, Saddam Hussein avait ordonné une attaque chimique qui a tué 5 000 Kurdes. Les jeunes mariés avaient fui en Iran avec leurs familles, mais ils sont revenus. « On espère que le calme actuel va durer », dit Arazw Ahmad, la mariée.

TÉMOINS SOLENNELS

IL N'EST PAS PLUS INHABITUEL
d'entendre les femmes parler librement
que de les voir officiers, ministres ou ingénieurs.
« Ce qui compte, c'est de bien faire son travail. »

Cependant, c'est à Kirkouk que l'avenir paraît le plus sombre. C'est une ville sans Bâtisseurs, une ville que son maire kurde, Abdulrahman Mustafa, mis en place par les États-Unis, décrit comme « pratiquement en ruine, même si plus d'un million de personnes y vivent ». L'histoire a appris aux Kurdes l'importance du territoire, et Kirkouk, disent-ils, leur appartient. La ville a été pendant des siècles leur pôle culturel, et elle cristallise aujourd'hui tous leurs rêves.

Kirkouk n'est pas seulement leur Jérusalem : c'est leur Eldorado, une faramineuse mine d'or qui pourrait leur permettre de réaliser leurs rêves. Le champ pétrolifère de 9 milliards de barils qui est déjà en exploitation représente un chèque de 500 milliards de dollars (de quoi négocier leur indépendance !), et certains experts estiment que les réserves du Nord atteignent les 40 milliards de barils. Le problème est que la ville est située en dehors de la zone actuellement contrôlée par le gouvernement régional kurde. Il faudra des armes, martèlent les Guerriers, pour conserver le contrôle des champs pétrolifères.

Le seigneur de guerre de ce royaume chaotique est le général Rostam Hamid Rahim. Après les menaces de mort proférées contre nous, la plupart de nos déplacements de la zone protégée

vers Kirkouk se font à bord du 4 x 4 du général, qu'il conduit lui-même. Le véhicule est entouré de pick-up équipés de mitrailleuses et transportant des tireurs d'élite *peshmergas*. Chaque déplacement est une incursion dans l'univers inquiétant des Guerriers, que me décrit un soir, par une anecdote, une amie des Nadir.

« Vers le milieu des années 1990, raconte-t-elle, Rostam a été grièvement blessé, et les *peshmergas* l'ont envoyé se faire soigner en Allemagne, où nous étions réfugiés. Il y est resté un an, et, à sa sortie d'hôpital, on lui a demandé comme à nous tous de remplir un formulaire. À la première question (« emploi précédent »), il a répondu : « Général ». Et, à la seconde (« compétences particulières ») : « Tuer mes ennemis. » Rostam Hamid Rahim est un homme à la forte carrure, qui passe sans transition de l'autoritarisme brutal – à l'origine de sa réputation de chef de guerre – à une sensiblerie larmoyante, aidée par l'absorption d'énormes quantités d'alcool. Au cours d'un interminable dîner, je l'ai vu ingurgiter à lui seul une bouteille de whisky et une demi-douzaine de bières. Lors de ces soirées arrosées, il y a presque toujours quelqu'un dans l'entourage du général pour chanter des chansons kurdes – elles parlent de la vie dans les montagnes, de l'amour, de la mort et de l'absence – qui lui tirent inmanquablement des larmes. Mais, dès le lendemain matin, le Guerrier est de retour, prêt à exercer ses « compétences particulières »... Il me confie que son héros et modèle est Hulagu, le petit-

fil de Gengis Khan, qui, en 1258, a saccagé Bagdad et ordonné le massacre de 800 000 Arabes. Bien entendu, Rostam méprise les Bâtisseurs lassés par la guerre, surtout les étudiants: « Les jeunes d'aujourd'hui sont aussi mous que des barres chocolatées. »

À Kirkouk, où réside Rostam Hamid Rahim, les « barres chocolatées » n'ont pas leur place. Au cours des sept décennies qui ont précédé la guerre du Golfe, les Kurdes ont tenté d'innombrables soulèvements contre Bagdad. Dans un premier temps, certains ont été encouragés par les Américains, qui s'en sont ensuite désintéressés pour les abandonner à la répression de l'armée irakienne. Chacune de ces insurrections avait pour enjeu le contrôle de Kirkouk et de sa richesse pétrolière.

Dès les années 1980, Saddam Hussein a voulu arabiser Kirkouk en expulsant des milliers de Kurdes. Depuis sa chute, beaucoup sont revenus, et se sont installés sous des tentes et dans des taudis proches de leurs anciennes demeures, désormais occupées par les milliers d'Arabes qui ont pris leur place. Kirkouk est la ville d'Irak qui présente le plus de divisions ethniques. C'est une poudrière de revendications contradictoires qui dressent les Turkmènes, les chrétiens assyriens,

les musulmans chiites et sunnites les uns contre les autres, mais tous ligüés contre les Kurdes. Chacune des parties se dit en principe favorable à une solution pacifique des problèmes ethniques, mais personne n'y croit vraiment.

La position des Guerriers est d'une simplicité confondante: tout Arabe installé à Kirkouk depuis l'arabisation doit être chassé. Les deux générations d'Arabes non originaires de Kirkouk qui y sont nés doivent eux aussi partir. C'est un appel non déguisé à un nettoyage ethnique à l'envers... « Pour nous, c'est une question de justice », affirme Rostam Hamid Rahim, et la plupart des Kurdes l'approuvent. En tant que journaliste, j'ai eu l'occasion d'observer de près – en Bosnie, en Croatie, au Kosovo – les effets du type de justice que réclament les Kurdes à Kirkouk. J'ai vu le carnage provoqué par le nationalisme ethnique en Irlande du Nord et au Pays basque espagnol, la haine aveugle en Israël et en Cisjordanie. Après les Balkans et le Rwanda, je redoute la justice du nationalisme ethnique... mais je ne suis pas un Kurde d'Irak !

C'est un matin comme les autres à Kirkouk. Nous sommes en route pour une interview lorsqu'une sourde détonation déchire l'air; puis une colonne de fumée s'élève en tourbillons dans le ciel. Un jeune homme s'est fait sauter avec 40 kg d'explosifs et de boulons attachés à la ceinture. L'explosion, qui s'est produite devant une mosquée située à environ 500 m du lieu où nous nous



« JE VEUX QUE TOUS LES OUVRIERS conservent leur emploi », répond Parwen Babaker (en rose), ministre de l'Industrie du secteur est du Kurdistan irakien, à des employés d'une usine de ciment menacés de réduction d'effectifs. L'université prépare de nombreuses étudiantes (ci-dessous) à des postes de cadre. « Au Kurdistan, affirme-t-elle, les femmes ont obtenu beaucoup de droits: s'habiller comme elles veulent, bien sûr, mais aussi participer à la vie politique et sociale. »



trouvons, a fait vingt-trois morts et plus de quatre-vingts blessés. Rostam fait demi-tour et file vers le quartier général de l'Emergency Services Unit (ESU, ou Unité des services d'urgence), une force de déploiement rapide constituée de troupes d'élite essentiellement kurdes. Une cohorte de véhicules blindés se forme dans la cour, prêts à gagner le lieu de l'attentat.

À peine avons-nous pris place pour assister à une réunion d'information dans le bureau du commandant de l'ESU, Khattab Omar Arif, que

LA POSITION DES GUERRIERS est simple : tout Arabe installé à Kirkouk depuis l'arabisation doit être chassé. C'est un appel non déguisé à un nettoyage ethnique à l'envers...

six hommes se postent discrètement derrière nous. Ils appartiennent à l'une des brigades contre-insurrectionnelles américaines qui apparaissent après les attentats terroristes. « Peut-être la Delta Force, peut-être la CIA, peut-être autre chose, personne ne sait au juste qui ils sont », me chuchote notre interprète à l'oreille.

Les hommes ne portent ni uniforme ni badge d'identification, et les seules paroles que le responsable de la brigade nous adresse sont: « Pas de questions, pas de photos. » Crânes rasés ou



Le nord de l'Irak est truffé de millions de mines. L'une d'elles a explosé sous les pas de Hamina Khidhir Abdullah, alors qu'elle cueillait des herbes dans la montagne. Soignée à l'hôpital de Souleimaniyé, elle va rentrer chez elle, en attendant une prothèse.

VICTIME CIVILE

cheveux mi-longs ramassés en catogan, ils seront dans leurs bras des fusils à lunettes et portent des revolvers contre la jambe, sous l'aisselle et à l'arrière de la ceinture. L'un d'eux arbore une tête de mort sur son tee-shirt noir. Une heure durant, nos « Rambos » – comme les appellent les Kurdes – restent assis sans rien dire, mangeant des fruits et buvant du thé, mais très attentifs à l'interview que m'accorde le commandant Arif. Ce seront les seuls Américains que je rencontrerai à Kirkouk.

Derrière une prétendue recherche d'unité nationale, Kirkouk est engluée dans une guerre civile ethnique non déclarée. Certains des Rambos auraient collaboré avec l'ESU dans les disparitions inexplicables de centaines d'Arabes et de Turkmènes de Kirkouk, dont beaucoup ont atterri dans les prisons kurdes, sans chef d'accusation précis.

À l'extrémité nord de la ville, le responsable d'un poste de police m'accueille avec les galons d'un commandant *peshmerga* aux épaulettes. Mais, au milieu de l'entretien, il les remplace par les insignes de capitaine de l'armée nationale irakienne : il attend la visite d'une délégation de Bagdad. La plupart de ses hommes sont d'anciens *peshmergas* comme lui, et il dit avoir refusé catégoriquement d'obéir à l'ordre du gouvernement central de les remplacer peu à peu par des Arabes.

Un ordre analogue donné à la Force de protection du pétrole a également été ignoré par son commandant. Les 3 000 hommes qui

patrouillaient sur les 1 000 km² de champs pétrolifères de Kirkouk en 2005 étaient des Kurdes. Mais, selon une source de la Compagnie pétrolière du Nord, il n'y avait que 160 Kurdes sur les 10 000 ouvriers, dont la majorité devaient leur emploi au parti Baas de Saddam Hussein.

Cette guerre larvée a conduit à une quasi-paralyse de l'activité. Le gigantesque site pétro-

lifère est jonché de tuyaux abandonnés, de pompes rouillées et de machines cassées. Les responsables de la compagnie refusent de communiquer les chiffres de production, visiblement en chute libre, et aucun investissement important n'a été fait depuis 1991. « Ce que vous voyez est un musée du pétrole, tout y est obsolète », s'attriste un ingénieur de la compagnie. Puis il devient grave : « J'estime qu'au moins la moitié de nos employés ont des liens avec les terroristes. Les autres ont peur. »

Selon le ministre irakien du Pétrole, 642 attentats contre des installations pétrolières ont été enregistrés en 2004, faisant environ 8,5 milliards d'euros de dégâts. Au cours du premier semestre de l'année 2005, plus de 12 000 attaques terroristes ont visé des objectifs militaires américains et irakiens situés en dehors de la zone protégée.

Comment les Kurdes peuvent-ils imaginer une réunification avec l'Irak arabe ? Comment les instances internationales peuvent-elles leur demander cela ?

Le réseau routier du Kurdistan montre parfaitement à lui seul comment la population envisage l'avenir. À l'ouest de Souleimaniyé, sur une autoroute à plusieurs voies où Parwen Nadir travaille comme ingénieur, des ouvriers venus en camion des camps de réfugiés manient la pelle et la pioche, 24 heures sur 24. Ils transpirent sous un soleil torride pendant la journée, et peignent la nuit à la lumière aveuglante des projecteurs, préparant le terrain pour les bulldozers et les rouleaux compresseurs. Des centaines de kilomètres de routes vont traverser la montagne. Toutes relient des villes du Kurdistan entre elles ou aux frontières. En revanche, les routes qui

vont vers le sud, vers l'Irak arabe, sont dans un état lamentable : elles seront inutiles lorsque le Kurdistan irakien sera libre. Le réseau routier est bien le seul point de convergence entre les Bâtisseurs et les Guerriers, chaque partie refusant l'unification avec l'Irak.

« Les Arabes nous ont trop maltraités, et pendant trop longtemps », affirme Omar Rahan, un berger de 64 ans, qui habite un hameau de quatre-vingts familles dans les montagnes du Nord. Ils ont attaqué le village en 1977, puis de nouveau en 1986 et en 1991. Ils ont détruit toutes les maisons, tous les arbres. Chaque fois, nous sommes revenus, et nous avons reconstruit. Vous ne rencontrerez personne ici qui souhaite faire de nouveau partie de l'Irak. »

Lors d'un référendum non officiel organisé dans les régions sous domination kurde pendant les élections irakiennes de janvier 2005, 98,7 % des Kurdes ont voté pour l'indépendance plutôt que pour la réconciliation avec l'Irak arabe. Ne serait-ce que d'un point de vue pratique, remarque le grand écrivain kurde Mohsen Omar, « il est très difficile pour nous, surtout pour les plus jeunes, de s'imaginer vivre dans un Irak réuni. Après une quinzaine d'années d'éducation kurde en zone protégée, presque personne parmi les moins de 30 ans ne parle arabe. »

En parcourant le secteur contrôlé par le PDK, nous n'avons vu aucun drapeau irakien flotter, aucun signe d'une prétendue autorité irakienne. « Quand j'étais enfant, on parlait de nos belles montagnes du Nord, mais, maintenant, je vois que les Kurdes en ont fait leur Nord à eux, et que nous n'y sommes pas les bienvenus, constate Inaam Hassan al-Yasiry, 26 ans, une militante des droits des femmes arabes du centre de l'Irak

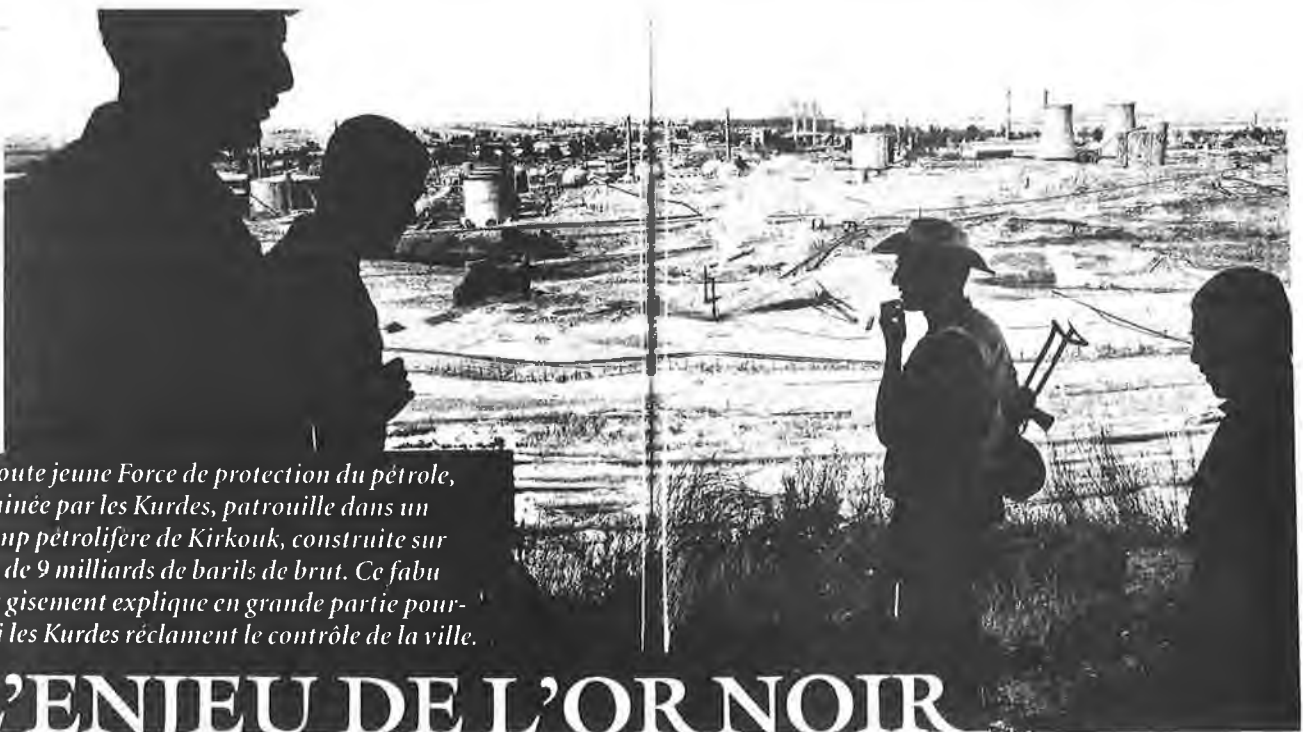


AMINA NAMIQ est domiciliée à Kirkouk, et ses papiers d'identité le confirment. Mais, comme des dizaines de milliers d'autres Kurdes, elle en a été chassée au début des années 1980, lorsque Saddam Hussein a tenté de faire de Kirkouk une ville arabe. Une fois le dictateur en prison, les exilés sont revenus en masse... pour atterrir dans des camps. Depuis, Arabes et Kurdes sont en guerre pour le contrôle de la ville. Pour les policiers, le déjeuner est un rare moment de répit (ci-dessous).



venue assister à une conférence à Arbil. Personnellement, je considère toujours les Kurdes comme des Irakiens, mais ils nous ont bien fait comprendre qu'ils n'étaient pas de cet avis. »

La situation semble un peu moins dramatique dans le secteur est de la région, en raison



La toute jeune Force de protection du pétrole, dominée par les Kurdes, patrouille dans un champ pétrolifère de Kirkouk, construite sur près de 9 milliards de barils de brut. Ce fabuleux gisement explique en grande partie pourquoi les Kurdes réclament le contrôle de la ville.

L'ENIEU DE L'OR NOIR

de l'accession de Jalal Talabani, le chef de l'UPK, à la présidence de l'Irak en avril dernier. Talabani plaide en public pour un État fédéral, avec une importante autonomie locale pour les Kurdes et un gouvernement national à Bagdad. Mais, dans son fief de Souleimaniyé, beaucoup sont convaincus que son objectif personnel est de ne pas entraver la marche inexorable du Kurdistan vers l'indépendance totale. Pour sa part, Massoud Barzani, le chef du PDK, n'y va pas par quatre chemins lorsqu'il évoque la destinée du Kurdistan : « L'autodétermination est le droit naturel de notre peuple, et, le moment venu, ce sera une réalité », a-t-il déclaré après le référendum de 2005.

Toutefois, les Kurdes d'Irak ne vivent pas en vase clos et la possibilité d'une autodétermination complète ne repose pas que sur leur propre ténacité. En effet, ils doivent aussi combattre leurs voisins : l'Iran, la Turquie, la Syrie. Ces trois pays possèdent leur propre communauté kurde et sont profondément hostiles à la création, dans le nord de l'Irak, d'un Kurdistan indépendant susceptible de contrôler leurs populations kurdes, en proie elles aussi à une certaine agitation.

« Nous avons besoin de nos voisins, proteste Shafiq Qazzaz, proche conseiller de Massoud Barzani. Nous avons besoin de leur commerce, de leur coopération et d'une coordination sur les questions de sécurité. Mais ils jettent tous l'anathème sur la moindre aspiration nationaliste kurde. » L'une des conséquences de cette position kurde a été une stratégie politique

ambivalente. « Oui, nous nous engageons auprès de l'Irak en faveur d'un État fédéral, poursuit Qazzaz. Mais, en même temps, nous devons rechercher une autre voie, au cas où ce projet s'avérerait irréalisable. »

Il est probable qu'aucun des alliés actuels des Kurdes – y compris les États-Unis – ne défendra leur indépendance face aux volontés conjuguées de Téhéran, d'Ankara et de Damas. Quand le moment espéré par Barzani sera venu, les Kurdes se retrouveront seuls. Ni les Bâtisseurs ni les Guerriers ne se font d'illusions sur ce point.

« Les Américains nous ont libérés de Saddam Hussein, mais ils l'ont fait dans leur propre intérêt, me confie Majid Nadir. L'histoire nous a appris qu'ils nous abandonneront – comme l'a toujours fait le monde extérieur – quand leur intérêt leur dictera de le faire. » □



LE PLAISIR SIMPLE d'un pique-nique en famille dans la montagne est aujourd'hui recherché par de nombreux Kurdes, qui reprennent une vie normale. Il y a une vingtaine d'années, les guérilleros kurdes y combattaient l'armée irakienne. Le week-end, la région attire Kurdes et Arabes, venus y compris de Bagdad. Si le destin politique des Kurdes n'est pas scellé, une chose est certaine : plus la violence sévira dans le Sud, plus les Kurdes lutteront pour leur indépendance.

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Out of Exile

The celebrated Kurdish film director Hiner Saleem talked to *Chris Kutschera* about the joys and sometimes sadness of coming home.

“**L**OOK, LOOK, THESE HILLS look like the body of a woman. Their shape is gentle because they are fondled by the wind...

And look at these spots of light in the sky...” Driving through the mountains near his home town of Akkra, in Iraqi Kurdistan, Hiner Saleem, a Kurdish film director living in France, is ecstatic. “It is so beautiful that when I am alone, I feel like crying.”

And every time he sees a Kurdish flag along the road – and there are plenty of them – flying over official buildings, or carved into the slopes of the mountains, he is enraptured. “It is as if I am seeing it for the first time,” he confesses.

Hiner Saleem is not unknown to the readers of *TME* who learned through its pages in October 1998 of his first professional film, *Long live the Bride... and the liberation of Kurdistan*.

Born in Akkra in 1964, Hiner Saleem

described in his book *My Father's Rifle* how, when a child, he would watch TV, where all the presenters spoke in Arabic, and he swore that one day he would make programmes in which everyone would speak in Kurdish.

He kept his pledge. Since *Long Live the Bride*, he has directed several other films, including *Dream Smugglers*, *Absolitude* and *Vodka Lemon*, all of which were shot in France and in Armenia, partly in Kurdish.

Immediately after the fall of Saddam Hussein, after nearly 20 years of exile, he went back to Iraqi Kurdistan and shot *Kilometer Zero*, which tells, in Kurdish, the story of a young Kurdish villager unwillingly sent to war on the Iraq-Iran front. The second part of the film is a road movie: the hero is sent to Kurdistan as an escort to a taxi carrying back the body of a “martyr”. During this long journey from the south of Iraq to Kurdistan in the north, a trip marked by several encounters



with a lorry carrying a huge statue of Saddam Hussein. The ongoing dialogue between the Arab taxi driver and the Kurdish soldier illustrates that, exceptional circumstances notwithstanding, there is little possibility of ever finding much common ground between them. The film, which was shown at the prestigious Cannes Festival, ends with a scene that takes place in Paris (and actually shot in Hiner Saleem's flat), where the young Kurdish soldier and his wife have succeeded in escaping to France and, seeing on French TV news that the Americans have reached Baghdad, they go to a window and with the Eiffel tower in the background, shout "Long live G.W.Bush!"

Hiner Saleem is clearly not afraid of expressing views that could be interpreted as politically incorrect.



"When Saddam Hussein was captured, I rejoiced. How could I not rejoice when a bloody tyrant who had put thousands of victims under the earth was put in prison?"

He asks, adding: "I want the Americans to stay here, and to open bases in Kurdistan. In 1945, the Jews who were reduced to a mere 25kg of bones in the Nazi concentration camps had no possibility of choosing their liberators."

Hiner Saleem is one of the many Kurds who want their own state and, he says forcefully, "If we cannot create a Kurdish state, I will work against those states, Turkey and Syria, which are opposed to the creation of a Kurdish one."

For the time being Hiner Saleem is busy shooting his latest film whose working title is *The Drum*. In a scene in which two brothers are talking about a woman one of them plans to marry, the director underlines the desperate situation of many women who have to deal with the aftermath of war. "She is a whore," one brother tells the other. "All the Iraqi army made love with her."

"It is one of the topics of my film: men who come out of jail are heroes, but in Kurdistan the women who were freed from jail are treated like prostitutes," claims Hiner Saleem.

Drum, he remembered his brother's cruel fate.

During the same scene, four women extras – villagers from the neighbouring area – also wept spontaneously: "I didn't need to tell them what to do, recalls Hiner Saleem, "they had gone through similar experiences to the ones they were acting out – the extras here have lived through all those scenes in their personal history, such suffering is engraved on their memory".

Another scene of the film, set in Iranian Kurdistan, involves the wedding of the film's two chief protagonists – played by Belcim Bigin and Nazmi Kirik, also the leading actors in *Kilometer Zero*. During the marriage ceremony, the village is bombed, but the wedding goes on regardless. "We are used to it," says one of the guests. The next day, however, the village is deserted: the whole population has left.

For that particular scene Hiner Saleem, held negotiations with the mukhtar of a small mountain village to establish whether a few villagers would agree to having their homes blown up in return for financial compensation. The discussions took place in a small school built of clay, in the traditional Kurdish style, where a teacher was conducting lessons with three pupils, two boys and a

HINER SALEEM NEGOTIATED WITH LOCAL VILLAGERS AT EVERY STAGE OF PRODUCTION. FOR SOME, VERY SAD MEMORIES WERE RESURRECTED

The story of *The Drum* takes in all areas of Kurdistan, in Turkey, Iran and Iraq.

In one scene, one of the main characters retrieves the bones of his late sister from a mass grave. The role is played by Abdullah Keskin, in real life the manager of the Istanbul based publishing house Avesta. When he played the scene, Keskin burst into tears. For him, explains Hiner Saleem, the scene provoked desperately sad memories. Abdullah, whose brother had "disappeared" three years before, was summoned by the mukhtar of his village who took him to a place in the countryside and revealed: "The bones of your brother are here". When he saw the bones in The

girl. Altogether the school has just eight pupils and although it looks like a school that might have been built especially for the purpose of filming, it is a real one, built by the Kurdish government of Erbil, which has vowed to create a school and appoint teachers in all the newly rebuilt villages of Kurdistan. *The Drum* closes with a scene that takes place in Turkish Kurdistan: the newly wed couple go back to the village of the groom but, when they arrive, Turkish troops surround the village and both bride and groom are shot, "dying" says Hiner Saleem, "in a final dance".

The end is bitter, as Hiner Saleem, despite his joy at being allowed to shoot films in a free Kurdistan with the help of a Kurdish government, still feels desperately sad.

"I no longer have any home," he says, "when one has been in exile once, there is no longer any such place as home." ■

**"IT IS SO BEAUTIFUL
that when I am alone,
I feel like crying" –
Hiner Saleem**

