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Directeur de la publication : Mohamad HASSAN

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INSTITUT KURDE, 106, rue La Fayette - 75010 PARIS

Tel. : 01-48 24 64 64 - Fax : 01-48 24 64 66

www.fikp.org

E-mail: bulletin@fikp.org

Bulletin 295 October 2009

Contents

- **IRBIL: THE NEW CABINET IS SWORN IN.**
- **IRAQI KURDISTAN: A HISTORIC VISIT BY THE TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTER.**
- **TURKEY: THE PKK'S SENDING OF "PEACE GROUPS" STIRS UP TURKISH PUBLIC OPINION.**
- **IRAQI KURDISTAN: A VISIT BY MRS DANIELLE MITTERRAND, WHO OPENS TWO FRENCH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS.**
- **CULTURE: KURDISH FILMS ARE BECOMING MORE VISIBLE ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE.**

IRBIL: THE NEW CABINET IS SWORN IN

The new Cabinet of the Regional Government of Kurdistan has been sworn in, led by Barham Salih, former Deputy Prime Minister of the Iraqi Government and a member of the PUK, who thus takes over from Nechirvan Barzani. The Irbil Parliament endorsed the appointment of Ministers on the 26th of this month. At the opening of the session, which was presided by the Speaker, Kamal Kirkuki, assisted by the Deputy Speaker Arslan Bair and the Secretary of the Assembly, Farsat Ahmed, the

Laws Commission presented a Bill reorganising the Ministries.

Article 1 dissolved three Ministries: Human Rights, Extra-Regional Affairs and the Environment. After a debate, these dissolutions were adopted without any amendment.

The second article announced the creation of a Ministry of Transport and Communications, which was unanimously agreed, while a third clause set up a Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, which was approved by a majority vote.

The fourth article confirmed the maintenance of the Ministry Culture and that of Sport, approved by a majority vote, while a fifth article amalgamated the Ministries of Local Government and Tourism, adopted unanimously, and a sixth amalgamated those of Trade and Industry.

Article 7 reported the reorganisation and restructuring of the Ministries, with various legal measures, and was agreed unanimously.

The next day, on 28 November, the new Cabinet was sworn in, with Barham Salih as Prime Minister.

Barham Salih was born in Suleimaniah in 1960. He joined the PUK in 1976, at the age of 16. In the next two years he was twice arrested by the Baathist regime, imprisoned and tortured. On being released, he continued his education, winning third place in the national listing of Iraqi Advanced Level graduates. He then left for the United Kingdom to escape further persecution, spending several years in various positions representing the PUK with various international bodies, as well as information activities and campaigning against the dictatorial Iraqi regime. At the same time he continued studying engineering, securing a Cardiff University degree in civil and structural engineering in 1983, followed by a PhD in Statistics and Computer applications from Liverpool university in 1987.

After 1991 and the emergence of the autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan, he was appointed PUK representative in Washington. Between 2001 and 2004 he was Prime Minister of the PUK's zone of Iraqi Kurdistan. After the reunification of the Kurdistan Region and the overthrow of the Baath he was Minister of Planning in the Provisional Iraqi Government and finally Deputy Prime Minister in Nuri al-Maliki's Cabinet. In addition to his mother tongue, he speaks fluent Arabic and English.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Azad Barwari, is a veteran member of Massud Barzani's KDP. Like the latter, he was born in Mahabad in 1946, in a family of Peshmergas who were taking part in that Republic's and Mustafa Barzani's

epic struggles. Having returned to Iraq with his family, he was arrested in 1963 and imprisoned for 3 months for activity in support of Kurdish rights. On his release, he joined the KDP in 1964. He studied chemistry at Mosul University then at Basra, becoming Secretary of the Kurdish Students Union in 1970.

After the collapse of the 1975 Kurdish revolt he found refuge in Iran, where he worked closely with Idris Barzani, the present President's older brother. He was elected to the KDP Central Committee in 1979. In 1982 he ran the KDP office in Syria. He played an important role in the 1991 uprising and was elected to the KDP Political Committee in 1993, in which he has held and still holds a number of responsible positions. Azad Barwari speaks fluent Arabic and Persian.

The Minister of the Interior is Abdul Karim Sultan Sinjari, who had already held the post of Secretary of State for the Interior in the 7 May 2006 reunited government. In 1973 he was at first a lawyer in Baghdad, then became a Peshmerga and was appointed to the KDP's provisional leadership between 1976 and 1980. He then went into exile in Sweden until 1988, before returning to Kurdistan as head of the KDP's security services. Following the 1992 parliamentary elections in the autonomous region. He was appointed Director General of the Kurdistan security forces before being appointed Minister of the Interior in the Irbil Government while still holding posts in the KDP Central Committee until 2001. Karim Sinjari also speaks Swedish, English Arabic and Persian.

The Minister of Finance and the Economy is Bayiz Sayeed Mohammad Talabani, who has already replaced Sargis Aghajian in the previous Cabinet when the

Assyrian Minister had felt obliged to resign for reasons of health.

In addition to the above mentioned Ministries, the other Ministries that have been retained are those of Justice, Education, Electricity, Religious Affairs, Health, Higher Education & Research, Housing & Reconstruction, Labour & Social Affairs, the Ministry for Martyrs & Victims of the Anfal, of Natural Resources, at the top of which Ashti Hawrami has been renewed in office, the Ministry of Peshmergas and of Planning, The Government has thus sharply reduced the number of its members, going from 42 to 20 Ministries. Only 4 of the former Ministers were renewed in office: Karim Sanjari, Ashti Hawrami, Bayiz Talabani and Jafar Mustafa Ali, (Minister of Peshmergas.

The new Government thus consists of the following:

Prime Minister: Barham Salih

Deputy Prime Minister: Azad Barwari

Minister of the interior: Abdul Karim Sinjari

Minister of Finance and the Economy: Bayiz Saeed Mohammad Talabani

Minister of Justice: Raouf Rashid Abdulrahman

Minister of Agriculture Water Resources: Jamil Sleiman Haider

Minister of Culture and Youth: Kawa Mahmoud Shakir

Minister of Education: Safeen Mohsin Diyazee

Minister of Electricity: (pending confirmation)

Minister of Religious Affairs: Kamil Ali Aziz

Minister of Health: Taher Abdullah Hussein Hawrami	Minister of Local Government & Tourism: Samir Abdullah Mustafa	Communications: Anwar Jabali Sabo
Minister of Higher Education and Research: Dlawer A. A, Ala'Aldeen	Minister of Natural Resources: Ashti Hawrami	President of the Council of Ministers: Nouri Othman
Minister of housing and Reconstruction: Kamaran Ahmed Abdullah	Minister of Peshmergas: Jafar Mustafa Ali	President of the Investment Committee: Herish Muharam
Minister Labour and Social Affairs: Asos Najib Abdullah	Minister of Planning: Ali Osman Haji Badri Sindi	Secretary of Cabinet: Mohammad Qaradagi
Minister for Martyrs & Anfal: Majid Hamad Amin Jamil	Minister of Trade & Industry: Sinan Abdulkhalq Ahmed Chalabi	Director of the Department for International Relations: Falah Mustafa Bakir
	Minister of Transport &	

IRAQI KURDISTAN: A HISTORIC VISIT BY THE TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTER

This month saw a concrete improvement in the diplomatic relations between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan, as shown by the visit to Irbil, on 11 October, of the Turkish Foreign Minister together with the announcement of the opening of a Turkish Consulate in the Kurdish capital in the near future.

Mr. Ahmed Davotoglu is the first Turkish Minister to visit the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, since hitherto Turkey has refused officially to recognise the Kurdish government as a real political partner, even though informal contacts have never ceased since the creation of the autonomous Kurdish zone in 1992.

"It is high time that each of us took some bold measures", declared the Minister. *"Arabs, Turks, Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis, we must all together rebuild the Middle East"*.

The Foreign Minister came on 31 October, accompanied by the Minister of Trade, Zafer Cahlayan, 20 journalists and an 80-man strong delegation of officials and businessmen. They were met at Irbil airport by the newly elected Prime Minister of Kurdistan, Barham

Salih, and the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Hoshyar Zebari, who is, himself, a Kurd.

They later met the Region's President, Massud Barzani, who praised the Turkish decision to open a consulate in his capital. *"The decision to open a consulate at Irbil is a very positive step. Turkey's role is important for the Region's future and for the development of our economic links. The Kurdistan Region serves as a bridge between Iraq and Turkey"*.

Ahmed Davotoglu also stressed the economic and geographic interdependence of Turkey and Iraq. *"Iraq, as a multi-ethnic state, is very important to us and we will consider any security threat to Iraq as a threat to us. We are your gateway to Europe and you are our gateway to the South, to the Region and the Gulf"*.

Although Ahmed Davotoglu would have wished for *"cooperation against terrorism"*, (this is, basically, the obligatory preamble for any politician or journalist when addressing their public opinion or to parry in advance the inevitable criticisms from warmongering circles) before going on to talk about the relations between the Kurds of Iraq and their State. Massud Barzani also supported and con-

gratulated the present Turkish government on its initiatives to try and resolve the Kurdish question in Turkey: *"I think that the Turkish leaders can deal with the PKK problem. They have taken a very courageous decision and we totally support the policy of reconciliation with the Kurds of Turkey. May God wish that violence cease as soon as possible and that the Kurdish and Turkish youth no longer have to shed their blood"*.

According to the Turkish Minister, the Kurds and Turkey have a common part to play in ensuring the stability not only of their borders but also of the whole of the Middle East, which, in his view, should be a political area of security, of dialogue and of multi-ethnic and multi-religious coexistence, expressing the hope that *"people could travel from Basra to Edirne without any security problems"*.

As for the delegation of Turkish businessmen who accompanied the Minister of Trade, they took part in an encounter with officials of the Kurdish Government at the Irbil Convention Centre as well as a dinner organised by the Kurdistan Chamber of Trade and Industry and the Kurdistan Region's Businessmen's Union.

For his part, the Minister for Trade,

Zafar Caglayan, announced that two further border crossing points would be opened with Iraq by the end of 2010, after the two States had signed a memorandum.

However, Turkish-Iraqi relations had been subjected to several sensitive issues at the beginning of the month, while the Turkish Prime Minister was visiting Baghdad. Thus the renewal, by the Turkish Parliament, of authorisation to the Army to again cross the borders in the event of operations against the PKK led the Iraqi government to

protest again. Nuri al-Maliki declared that Iraq “sought to protect its sovereignty”.

The two Prime Ministers also discussed the drying up of the Euphrates, from which Iraq is suffering and the controversy over the volume flow of water that Turkey allows to pass by opening the valves of its dams. Thus last month the Turkish Minister of Power and Natural Resources, had ensured, in the case of the Euphrates, a flow rate of 517 m³ per second while the

Syrian Minister of Irrigation had, on the contrary, reported that it had fallen to an average flow of 400 m³ per second for the previous eleven months. The Iraqi government spokesman, Ali al-Dabbagh, for his part, reported a flow rate of 440 m³ per second, before adding that a protocol was under discussion.

However, Recep Tayyip Erdogan reaffirmed that Turkey was at the moment ensuring a flow rate of 550 m³, recalling that an earlier agreement, signed in 1987, only stipulated 500 m³.

TURKEY: THE PKK'S SENDING OF “PEACE GROUPS” STIRS UP TURKISH PUBLIC OPINION

On 19 October, 26 Kurds from Turkey, in the Makhmur refugee camp in Iraqi Kurdistan, including nine women and four children as well as 8 PKK fighters from Qandil, announced their intention of returning to Turkey as a “peace group”, to meet, according to PKK officials, in the first place delegations of the Kurdish DTP party and “create a dialogue and open the way to negotiations” with Turkey. As soon as this announcement was made, the Turkish President, Abdullah Gul, expressed himself in favour of this initiative, which is, in fact, just a renewal of PKK delegations that had returned to Turkey, shortly after Ocalan’s arrest and his call for a unilateral cease-fire. At that time these delegations were immediately arrested, tried and imprisoned. Since then, an amnesty law allows PKK members, coming and surrender, to be pardoned provided they had not taken part in armed actions against the security forces. Thus the first “peace group” entered Turkey on the 19th through the village of Basverimli ((Tilqebîn in Kurdish) in the border district of Silopi. According to the Firat press agency, the group from Makhmur carried letters addressed to the Turkish

President, Prime Minister and parliament. The two joint Presidents of the DTP, Ahmed Turk and Emine Ayra went to welcome the group in the morning, during which they made a joint statement:

“We must not exploit the PKK’s good intentions nor must we approach this process in a spirit of elimination. Peaceful groups have been sent to Turkey before, in 1999, but the State did not take advantage of the opportunity, as it should have done. On the contrary, the delegations were imprisoned. Ten years later, Turkey has another major opportunity, which must not be wasted. Turkey must not repeat past mistakes. Our expectations, our hopes and our wishes depend on this. We call on the State and the government to tackle this stage in a responsible manner and to seize this chance for peace and for finding a solution”.

A senior PKK official, Duran Kalkan, for his part laid out the group’s demands: stopping military operations; a bi-lateral cease fire and ending of the conflict; publicly announcing Ocalan’s road map, which will be given to its addressees; beginning discussions on a reform of the Turkish Constitution; the recognition of Kurdish identity, guaranteed by

the Constitution; freedom to use the Kurdish language; freedom to give children Kurdish first names, to educate them in their mother tongue; freedom to study Kurdish culture, history and arts.

Very soon, through leaks to the Turkish press, top-ranking officers in the Turkish Army let it be understood that other surrender groups could be expected “if they were not sabotaged” (Murat Yetkin, in *Radikal*).

The first group was rapidly taken for brief questioning before four prosecuting attorneys who had come specially to meet them so as to evaluate whether or not any charges should be charged for any offences, while dozens of lawyers, close to, or actually members of, the DTP party, “stood by” ready to defend them against any possible charges.

At the same time, demonstrations took place in several Kurdish towns, including Batman, Mardin, Dersim (Tunceli), Van, Mush and, of course, Diyarbakir, where 5,000 people had answered a call by the DTP. Alongside slogans in support of Ocalan, the crowd shouted calls in support of “an honourable peace”.

Apart from the Kurdish towns, 2,500 people marched in Istanbul, along Istiklal (Independence) Avenue carrying a banner "Open the road to peace".

The first government reactions to the arrival of this group were fairly favourable. Thus the Minister of the Interior, Besir Atalay, declared in Ankara: "We hope that this will continue. Allow me to point out that the fighters in the mountains see that they are in a dead end". The Minister also indicated, to the *Anatolia* press agency, that the PKK was also sending 100 to 150 people "in little groups".

However, this official government version, presenting the delegations as surrender groups, allowing the idea of a complete surrender of the PKK was simultaneously refuted by the PKK leaders. Thus Cemil Bayik affirmed that his troops would not surrender without something in return, namely the recognition of the Kurds in Turkey and their being given political rights. For the PKK officials, therefore, these groups are emissaries who have come to propose negotiations, whereas the AKP discourse, for the moment, is one of refusing to negotiate with this party.

On the government side, satisfaction was very soon replaced by embarrassment in the face of the demonstrations organised by the DTP and the triumphal welcome given to the delegation, giving the impression of a victory parade rather than a surrender. As Nihat Ali Ozcan, an expert of the Ankara Institute for Political and Economic Research, remarks: "The pictures of the celebrations on television, which look like Caesar's return to Rome after a victory, are liable to provoke lines of division throughout the country".

Indeed, the political opposition that, from the start had been

highly critical of the initiatives announced by the AKP to resolve the Kurdish problem, intensified its attacks on the government and the authority's leniency towards the groups, all of whose members were left free, under the already existing amnesty laws, or at least pending possible trial. An association of families of soldiers killed in the fighting has accused the government of organising "an official ceremony to welcome terrorists" and its president, Hamit Kose, has not hesitated in talking of treason.

With his back to the wall, Tayyip Erdogan has also ended by criticising the turn of events by describing the demonstrations of support as "irresponsible provocations", with special reference to the PKK flags being waved in the crowds and the slogans in support of Ocalan. Then it was the turn of the Minister of the Interior, Besir Atalay, to "warn" that the "irresponsible" manner in which a show was being made of the surrender of the 34 PKK envoys would not be tolerated any further. "It is impossible to accept such scenes, which disturb everyone. No one should even think of organising any more such scenes. No one should even think that we are going to show any tolerance of any more such scenes. The Turkish Republic is a State of Laws".

A few days later, it was the turn of the Armed Forces Chief of Staff, Ilker Basbug, to protest about these convoys: "No one can accept what has recently been going on in Turkey. I share the feelings of our veterans and the families of our martyrs".

However, the DTP does not seem, for the moment, to wish to give up these demonstrations "for peace" and even announced on 28 October, that another "convoy" of PKK members was due to come

from Europe. Mustafa Avci, co-president of the Istanbul DTP, who made this announcement added that he intended to celebrate the arrival of these newcomers and that he would be asking the government for official authorisation to do so. "The DTP has become a scapegoat since the last meeting. The PKK members will be arriving at the airport with roses in their hands. The Kurds want peace".

The PKK members arriving from Europe are supposed to be 15 in number, come from Dusseldorf and due to hold a Press Conference in Brussels on 27 October before flying from there to Istanbul on the 29th.

In the end, however, neither that group nor a 3rd, which was due to leave Qandil, reached Turkey, since Recep Tayyip Erdogan decided to call a pause in these surrender operations that were attracting too much media attention. No doubt he hope thus to allow time for public opinion to cool down and also, perhaps, to put pressure on the DTP to change its communication tactics. The PKK, through one of its spokesmen, Zubeyir Aydar, immediately declared, over the Roj TV satellite channel, that Turkey had "closed its gates on peace" by postponing the reception of further groups to an unspecified date.

In reply to critics, the DTP co-president, Ahmet Turk, who had recently met the Prime Minister to discuss a peaceful solution, denied having orchestrated a "show". "This is not a show, it's the people's enthusiasm. Everyone must understand this enthusiasm and take part in it. The groups have come for the peace process. This enthusiasm is one for peace. Thus we are going to continue our action in pursuit of the peace process together with the Turkish people and the political parties. Our sole desire is for peace. All our efforts are being made in consequence of this".

Dogu Ergil, a political analyst, explained the shock of the Turkish television viewers on seeing PKK members arriving in battle dress and acclaimed as heroes by the

Kurds in these terms: *"We were expecting the rebels to express their remorse and to go to prison, which would have allowed us to say that we had won. But the PKK refused to play*

the part we expected of it — and we felt offended. The picture of peace, in our minds, is that of one side bringing the other to its knees".

IRAQI KURDISTAN: A VISIT BY MRS DANIELLE MITTERRAND, WHO OPENS TWO FRENCH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

Early in October, Danielle Mitterrand visited Iraqi Kurdistan at the official invitation of President Massud Barzani. The widow of President François Mitterrand and founder of the *Fondation France-Libertés*, was thus officially welcomed by the Irbil Parliament and inaugurated two French schools in Iraqi Kurdistan, one at Irbil, which bears her name, and the other at Suleimaniah. Teaching in these schools will be in French, English, Kurdish and Arabic, and the teaching staff will be of French nationality.

The following is the speech she made to the Kurdish Parliament:

Mister president
Lady and Gentleman Members of Parliament

I am very happy and moved to speak here before you. It is not often, in fact, that I have the opportunity to address an elected assembly. In Kurdistan, however, I feel at home, with members of my family, so it is in this spirit that I would like to say a few words.

You have just been elected.

I first want to congratulate you and tell you how proud the friends of Kurdistan are at the way your free and democratic elections have been organised. I am glad to see that there are a number of women in your Parliament — proportionally more than in the French Parliament — and that all the

political trends and social, religious and linguistic components of the population are here represented.

This diversity is a boon and its representation here is a tribute to your parliament. Similarly, the presence of a Parliamentary opposition is a sign of democratic good health. Because democracy is not just a matter of periodic elections, however free they may be. It is a culture of plural discussion, a system of power and counter-balancing forces. In order to work properly, it needs solid institutions, an active civil society, an independent judiciary and free but responsible media.

I must say that Kurdistan has made some impressive progress on the road to democracy. I still have vivid memories of my very first visits to this part of Kurdistan.

When, at the end of April 1991, I came to meet you, travelling through Iranian Kurdistan, I saw people on the road, an exodus of people fleeing persecution and Saddam Hussein's armies. I had to cross the border illegally, according to the Iranian government officials, who accompanied me. I met Massud Barzani and other resistance leaders at Hai Omaran, in a meadow only a few metres from a minefield.

The picture of this exodus deeply distressed me, as did the testimony of the Kurdish refugees who had survived the chemical weapon attacks and who I met in

May 1989 in the refugee camps in Mardin, Diyarbekir and Mush, in Turkish Kurdistan.

These pictures also upset French and international public opinion. France then played an active role in getting the Security Council to accept the famous resolution 688 that created the judicial basis for the creation of a protection zone in Kurdistan. They tell me it was the first time in the history of UNO that a resolution even mentioned the Kurdish people.

This shows how much international diplomacy can be cut off from the human realities of peoples. Thus tens of years of persecution and tragedy were needed before UNO could finally notice the existence of your people and, for a short time, take an interest in your fate.

Fruit of a UNO compromise and of the sacrosanct principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign State, this resolution 688 had many weaknesses, as you all know. Nevertheless, it had the merit of allowing you to return to your lands, to your homes, gradually to take your fate into your own hands and not just become a people of refugees.

I remember my journey in 1992 to see the setting up of your first government of national union resulting from elections. I travelled through a country devastated and in ruins where NGOs like my Foundation, were trying, with a great deal of enthusiasm and very little means, to rebuild, along side yourselves, schools,

villages and bridges. To ensure the new scholastic year we had to have printed, at the National Printing Office in France, hundreds of thousands of school-books. Your teachers, who were barely being paid a few dollars a day, showed an extraordinary devotion to teach the children and build the future of Kurdistan with them.

Despite the double embargo, of which you were victims, despite much interference, including military actions, from your neighbours, and also despite a black period of inter-Kurdish conflict, you have found a way to rebuild your country, build roads, airports, schools, hospitals and universities. The economic prosperity, the freedom and security of your region are often cited as an example and are an inspiration to your brother Kurds in neighbouring countries.

However, seen from a distance, we have a feeling that this progress, however remarkable it may be, still remains fragile. Certainly the fearsome Saddam Hussein dictatorship no longer exists but your problems with Baghdad are not yet settled. Your neighbours do not all wish you well and the future of Iraq remains uncertain.

Briefly, Kurdistan is not yet Switzerland. In the face of the many challenges that await you, you need, more than ever, to strengthen your people's unity and to deploy serious efforts to make your cause known to international public opinion and to multiply the network of friendship and solidarity.

Popular unity is not something you can take for granted as given. It can only be built by constant efforts to ensure that the people have confidence in its political system. To achieve this, the system

must be democratic, transparent, fair and based on solidarity. In times of tragedy, you had shown solidarity, brotherhood, you shared the same fate. If, in times of peace, you follow the path of wild, faithless and lawless economic liberalism, you will create a society of great inequality, to the detriment of the greatest number. Corrupt phenomena will gangrene society and weaken the bonds of brotherhood that has been your people's strength.

I have heard that some people proposed to transform Kurdistan into a Dubai or Qatar. I don't know if such a perspective is realistic, but in any case it would really be a shame to want to make of this country, of great culture, which was one of the cradles of human civilisation, into a consumerist emirate living of its oil rents. Your people would lose its soul and its identity there.

For my part, I dream, for Kurdistan, a model of sustainable development, based on fairness and solidarity. You have of the good fortune of living on fertile soil, of having abundant water resources. Agriculture and stock rearing, that for millennia have created the wealth of Upper Mesopotamia, seem, today, neglected. That is really a shame — self-sufficiency in food supply is the basis for a people's survival. Water is a far more important source of wealth than oil. Humanity has been able to live for millennia without oil, but it cannot survive without water.

The question of the management and control of water is going to be the great strategic issue of the 21st Century — this needs to be understood and taken into account in Kurdistan.

The *France Libertés Fondation* (France Freedom Foundation) is devoting itself, today, to promot-

ing a very simple idea that clashes with all those, be they States or multi-national companies, who despise the most elementary Human Rights: water must not be treated as a marketable commodity — it is the common wealth of humanity, the essential necessity of life, like the sun, the earth and the air. These, together, pre-condition the maintenance of the biosphere. Humanity must respect water and define its status of unalienable public property. This is my struggle, as for all men of good will.

I know that this message will be heard and understood by the Kurdish people and that your government will be capable of joining the international movement of "Water Bearers" that the France Freedom Foundation initiated and which is spreading over all the continents.

You, even better than I, know that the future of the Kurdish nation as a whole is at stake today in Iraqi Kurdistan. If you succeed in building an exemplary democracy, this will inspire the Kurds in neighbouring countries and will convince international public opinion that the Kurds are capable of managing their affairs within existing State borders. This can only work in favour of a peaceful settlement of the Kurdish Question in neighbouring countries.

Your government, which now has access to the Western chancelleries, can act discretely in this direction. It will be in its interest and in the interest of all the Kurds that, in all the main capital cities of the world, there be strong and active Kurdish diplomatic representatives and cultural institutions to popularise your cause and strengthen the ranks of the friends of Kurdistan.

In some of the most difficult moments of your history, you had the advantage of the support of many public figures throughout

the world, from Andrei Sakharov to Edward Kennedy and Nelson Mandela. Some heads of State like François Mitterrand and Bruno Kreisky, intellectuals like Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, took up your defence, thanks to the efforts of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe to arouse their awareness.

This diaspora is a piece of good fortune and a great source of human wealth for you. Do not neglect it!

Similarly, it seems to me that you owe a debt of active solidarity towards your brother Kurds in neighbouring countries. It has often been Kurdish intellectuals and artists from Turkey who have made known your cause abroad. I can bear witness, having seen the brotherly welcome given by Kurds from Turkey and Iran to

Iraqi Kurdish refugees. I have seen how Kurds of all kinds mobilised when we brought the *Anfal* survivors to France from camps in Turkey.

Now it is up to you to show fraternal solidarity to them, be it only in the areas of culture, education and media. They have been your best allies in difficult days. By in turn helping them, now you are free, to preserve their language and culture, you will strengthen the unity of the Kurdish people — the ultimate guarantee of your own survival.

In brief, to not act towards them like the people of the Emirates do towards their Palestinian or Egyptian brothers. Act like Kurds have always acted, by fraternal sharing, be it only of dry bread.

In the course of nearly 30 years of being in contact with Kurds I have learnt to love your people, which, to some extent, has become my own. I know that your cause is a just one and your traditions friendly and attractive. That is why I am convinced that the day when the Kurds reach mutual understanding the whole world will sympathise with them and act on behalf of their freedom. A mother always wants her children to agree amongst themselves and be united.

By speaking today to the elected representatives of the people, I have wanted to open up my heart and share my concerns with you, as in a family meeting. The future will be what you make of it.

Good luck to you all. Long live Kurdistan!

CULTURE: KURDISH FILMS ARE BECOMING MORE VISIBLE ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

Long marginal and condemned to a certain back stairs and even clandestine status, Kurdish films are gradually acquiring an international audience, although still held up by a still limited number of film directors who are in any position to shoot films in their mother tongue and come out openly under the Kurdish label.

While a festival of Kurdish films has been in existence in London since 2001, the first Kurdish film festival in New York took place this year from 21 to 25 October with a wide range of short and full length films, fictional and documentary, with the theme of "Films without Borders".

Nine full-length films were screened, including the latest film by Bahman Ghobadi "Nothing is known about Persian cats" and Hiner Saleem's "Vodka Lemon. The latter described to American film critics

and audiences the peculiar situation of Kurdish filmmaking: "Unfortunately, today, it is very difficult for Kurds of Turkey, of Syria and of Iran to make films. It is very hard to work there because there is a kind of apartheid towards the Kurds there, there is no equality, no human rights, no freedom. However, young Kurds, girls and boys, are making films under very tough conditions".

Even with regard to the Kurdish public in the diaspora, Hiner Saleem notes a lack of interest in Kurdish films that recount their own tragedy, as compared with the American blockbusters. Similarly, in Iraqi Kurdistan, the television channels prefer to follow the public's taste for Egyptian or Turkish melodramas and serials rather than socially or politically committed works.

Jano Rosebani, who is also a Kurd from Iraq who lives in California, presented his film "Jiyan", which tells the story of a 10 year-old

orphan, a survivor of the Halabja chemical bombing raid. According to him, one of the brakes on the development of the cinema in his country is the terrorist threat, which prevents the opening of cinemas for security reasons: "In this region, no one wants to go to sit in a dark theatre full of people — at least not now. So much so that cinema going is not well established".

Another obstacle is equipment difficulties: thus Jano Rosebani tells how, in 2000, while he was filming *Jiyan*, he had to smuggle his equipment in from Turkey, since there was non usable in Kurdistan. After the shooting, the film was sent to Belgium for editing and postproduction. The overthrow of the Baathist regime and Iraqi Kurdistan's opening up to the rest of the world, were not enough to develop a film industry or to reach a wide Kurdish public, as the film director explained: "We do not yet have a

film industry in Kurdistan because the majority of our potential public lives in Kurdish regions where they do not have the right to see Kurdish films. Thus 60 to 70% of the Kurdish regions are in Turkey, where you can't watch Kurdish films. It's much the same in Syria and Iran. The only area where you can see Kurdish films is in Iraqi Kurdistan, but there are only 5 or 6 million people there — half of whom are too young to go to the pictures!"

Yuksel Yavuz, a Kurd from Turkey who lives in Germany, tells how in 2004, he had the surprise to receive a call from a Turkish distributor who wished to screen his film. *"A bit of freedom in Turkey"*. When, a little later, he went to that country and wanted to see where his film was being screened, he discovered that the sole theatre where it was possible to see it in Istanbul was a tiny one on the premises of a cinema that showed pornographic films.

"Bawke" is a 15-minute short film, the work of a Kurd from Iraq, Hisham Zaman, that tells of the attempt of a father and his son to cross Europe to seek asylum. Living in Norway for the last 17 years, Hisham Zaman considers that the Kurdish cinema, though not yet much developed, already has certain characteristics of its own: *"For me, what makes Kurdish films different from others is the way it presents human beings, the way it uses amateur actors, the way it shows their existence, their living conditions and their cultural traditions"*.

The festival also had a session devoted to women filmmakers entitled "Women in Kurdish films", with short films made by and about Kurdish women. Unfortunately the planned discussion was cancelled because

the intended moderator, Mujde Arslan, was unable to get a visa for the United States.

A week later, several Kurdish films were shown at the Golden Orange Festival in Antalya, where they were competing alongside Turkish films.

One of them, "Min dit" (I saw) describes the execution of a Kurdish couple by the secret police in front of their children, tackling the subject of the dirty war in Kurdistan through the eyes of two children. Despite the very political subject, the most sensitive issue was the language in which it was filmed, entirely in Kurdish. As its director, Miraz Bezer said: "When we made this film we did not know if Turkey would agree to allow it to be shown. This is all very paradoxical — on the one hand we have a Kurdish channel on the State TV, on the other they forbid Kurdish Members of Parliament to speak in their own tongue. So we took the first step in shooting in Kurdish, and what's more on a tabooed subject. Then, of course, we needed have steady support to be able to show it. Now we are happy that it has happened and I am really relieved.

The screening of this film at Antalya did not fail to cause a stir. Many spectators left the theatre. During the debate with Miraz Bezar a woman accused him of "dividing the country" by speaking of "shame". However, the majority of the spectators who chose to see the film to the end applauded it.

A documentary also attracted a lot of attention. It was *"On the way to school"* by Ozgur Dogan and Orhan Eskikov. It showed the

class of a Turkish schoolteacher, Emre Aydin, sent to a little Kurdish township where most of the pupils did not know Turkish.

"What we expected most was to start discussion through this film", explained Ozgur Dogan, who defends the idea that education in Kurdish is a fundamental human right. The present situation penalises both the pupils and the teachers and the documentary shows the difficulties and disillusionment of a young and enthusiastic teacher coming up against a totally unexpected situation. The documentary's success has enabled it to be shown on a Turkish television channel.

Somewhat earlier a film that, while not in Kurdish, dealt with Kurdistan, opened the 4th Roman Film Festival, on 15 October. This was *"Sorting out"* by the Bosnian film director Danis Tanovic, describing the fate of two photographic reporters covering the Anfal genocide campaign of Kurds in 1988. The principal actors were the American Colin Farrell, the almost mythical English actor Christopher Lee, now 84 years of age, and the Spanish Paz Vega.

Adapted from the novel by Scott Anderson, it is the story of a photographer, Mark Walsh, confronted with the violence of the war in Iraqi Kurdistan, who did not come out of it unscathed. *"It is not a war film, but a film about human reactions (face with war) and what people on both sides feel"*, stated Christopher Lee, who had himself served in the RAF during the Second World War and taken part in secret operations in the famous Long Range Desert Group and the Special Operations Executive.

AFP

IRAK: DANIELLE MITTERRAND INAUGURE UNE ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE AU KURDISTAN

ERBIL (Irak), 5 octobre 2009 (AFP)

L'ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE internationale Danielle Mitterrand, premier de deux établissements dont l'ouverture est prévue au Kurdistan irakien, a été inaugurée lundi à Erbil en présence de l'ex- Première dame de France.

Le nom de Mme Mitterrand, qui soutient depuis les années 80 la cause kurde, "exprime la fidélité du peuple kurde envers" la veuve de l'ancien président "pour la défense de ses droits", a déclaré Delshad Abdoulrahman, le ministre de l'Éducation de la région autonome du nord de l'Irak, lors d'une cérémonie pour la rentrée des classes.

Une seconde école doit être ouverte prochainement à Souleimaniyeh, l'autre principale ville de la région.

"Nous ouvrons ces écoles non seulement pour enseigner aux enfants les sciences modernes mais aussi pour montrer que les Kurdes veulent avoir des relations avec toutes les nations développées", a-t-il ajouté.

Danielle Mitterrand a rappelé son engagement dans la cause kurde depuis les opérations militaires menées par le régime de Saddam Hussein qui avaient fait 180.000 morts à la fin des années 1980. "Ceci m'a ouvert les yeux sur les souffrances du peuple kurde et m'a poussé à l'aider", a-t-elle déclaré.

Mises en place par la "mission laïque française", un organisme gouvernemental chargé des établissements d'enseignement à travers le monde, l'école française d'Erbil suivra le cursus français et les diplômés seront reconnus en France.

Selon Marcel Muller, le directeur de l'école, 70 élèves sont inscrits de la maternelle au cours préparatoire. Les frais d'inscription ne devraient pas dépasser 3.000 dollars par an et par élève.



Les deux écoles françaises au Kurdistan compteront des professeurs français, mais les cours seront aussi donnés en kurde, en arabe et en anglais par des enseignants dont c'est la langue maternelle.

Il existe deux écoles turques à Erbil depuis 1994 et une école libanaise depuis 2005. L'Institut Goethe prévoit aussi d'ouvrir une école allemande à Erbil cette année.

Une université américaine a été ouverte en 2007 à Souleimaniyeh.

Le magazine **Observateur**

4 octobre 2009

Des slogans pro-PKK scandés au congrès d'un parti turc à Ankara

Par Umit Bektas (Reuters)

ANKARA- Des partisans du seul parti politique kurde autorisé en Turquie ont scandé dimanche des slogans favorables au Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan, un mouvement séparatiste interdit, lors du congrès de leur parti, à Ankara, a rapporté un correspondant de Reuters.

L'incident s'est produit lors d'une convention du Parti de la société démocratique (DTP), poursuivi en justice pour des liens présumés avec le PKK. Il risque de compliquer les efforts déployés par la Turquie pour mettre en oeuvre des réformes répondant aux revendications de la communauté kurde et mettre un terme à un conflit armé qui dure depuis un quart de siècle.

Le Premier ministre Tayyip Erdogan, qui cherche à parvenir à un règlement avec les hommes politiques kurdes, a assoupli la position d'Ankara envers le DTP. Mais l'incident de dimanche pourrait accentuer les pressions sur le DTP pour qu'il prenne ses distances avec le PKK, lequel réclame la création d'une patrie kurde dans le sud-est de la Turquie.

Le DTP se défend d'entretenir des liens avec le PKK, considéré par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les États-Unis comme une organisation terroriste, mais il



s'est refusé à condamner les violences perpétrées par le PKK.

Jeudi, les généraux turcs ont mis fin à un boycottage du Parlement, qui durait depuis deux ans, en assistant à la cérémonie de rentrée parlementaire, ce qui a été interprété comme un geste conciliant à l'adresse du DTP.

INITIATIVES PLUS AMBITIEUSES

Les responsables militaires avaient promis de ne pas siéger "sous le même toit" que des députés du DTP tant qu'ils ne condamneraient pas la violence et ne réclameraient pas le démantèlement du PKK.

Un correspondant de Reuters a pu voir dimanche, au congrès du DTP, un groupe

d'une vingtaine de sympathisants de ce parti scander des slogans en faveur du PKK et brandir des portraits d'Abdullah Öcalan, chef emprisonné du PKK.

Le gouvernement et l'armée excluent que le PKK puisse jouer un rôle quelconque dans le processus de réformes que les autorités veulent engager pour étendre les droits politiques et culturels de la minorité kurde.

Ce processus de réformes est considéré comme vital dans le cadre de la demande d'adhésion de la Turquie à l'Union européenne.

Le DTP réclame de son côté au gouvernement des initiatives plus ambitieuses, et notamment une amnistie, pour convaincre le PKK de déposer les armes.

"Résoudre le problème kurde implique une prise de risques. Nous soutiendrons le processus si des mesures sincères sont prises, mais si la solution au problème est seulement reportée, alors nous nous opposerons au processus", a déclaré le président du DTP, Ahmet Turk, aux membres du parti.

Le parti AK d'Erdogan, qui plonge ses racines dans l'islamisme et est parvenu au pouvoir en 2000, a pris certaines mesures pour étendre les droits des quelque 12 millions de Kurdes que compte la Turquie.

«L'OPTION MILITAIRE NE RÉSOUDRA PAS LE PROBLÈME KURDE»

POURPARLERS | De son repaire situé au nord de l'Irak, Murat Karayilan, chef militaire du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) tend la main à Ankara.

Gabrielle Danzas

Expulsé de Syrie en 1999, c'est dans les monts Qandil, au nord de l'Irak, que le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) a installé son poste de commandement. Il y disposerait de 4000 combattants qui, depuis ces bases arrière, lancent leurs opérations en Turquie et font face aux incursions et aux bombardements de l'armée turque.

C'est là que nous avons rencontré Murat Karayilan, chef militaire du PKK, lequel appelle la Turquie à s'engager dans des négociations pour mettre un terme au conflit, qui dure depuis un quart de siècle et a fait pas moins de 45?000 morts.

- Les discussions lancées par Ankara cet été peuvent-elles résoudre le problème kurde en Turquie?

-Pour la première fois, un gouvernement turc cesse de nier le problème kurde et s'engage à le résoudre. Il s'agit d'un progrès indéniable. Ce nouvel état d'esprit, après des décennies d'humiliation et d'assassinats, soulève un espoir dans les sociétés kurde et turque. Dans le passé, le simple fait de dire: «Je suis Kurde» pouvait conduire en prison, la langue kurde était interdite. Pendant vingt-cinq?ans, les Turcs ont usé de tous les moyens militaires pour nous anéantir, sans succès. Aujourd'hui, une période politique doit s'ouvrir. Nous sommes très clairs: la solution peut être apportée uniquement par la voie politique et pacifique.

- Les dynamiques en cours au Moyen-Orient n'offrent-elles pas aussi une opportunité pour mettre un terme au conflit?

-Bien sûr. Le contexte régional s'est transformé et la Turquie est appelée à être un acteur plus important. Tout d'abord, les Américains en ont besoin pour le retrait de ses troupes d'Irak. Ils veulent également accroître le rôle de la Turquie pour contrebalancer celui de l'Iran. Sur le plan énergétique, le territoire turc devient un important corridor. Les



© DR | Murat Karayilan, chef militaire du PKK, assure renoncer au séparatisme et invite la Turquie à mettre fin à une guerre qui dure depuis vingt-cinq ans.

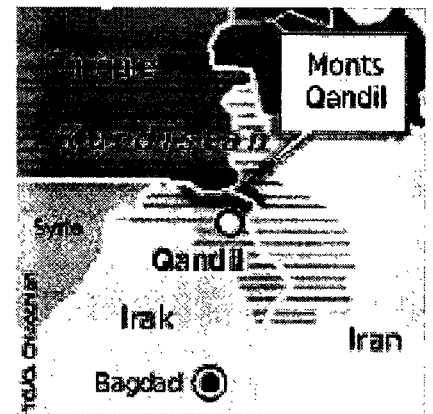
Etats-Unis comptent dessus pour évacuer le pétrole et le gaz d'Irak et du Kurdistan. Pour toutes ces raisons, il faut qu'Ankara résolve son problème kurde. Sinon elle ne pourra pas remplir ses nouvelles fonctions.

- D'où vient alors votre scepticisme?

-Depuis l'annonce d'une «ouverture kurde» (ndlr: en juillet), la fenêtre de négociations rétrécit de jour en jour. Aucune proposition concrète n'a été annoncée. A la place, les Turcs n'ont fait qu'énumérer ce qu'ils n'allaient pas faire: pas d'amnistie, pas de négociation avec le PKK, pas d'enseignement de la langue kurde dans les écoles, pas d'autonomie pour la région kurde, pas de reconnaissance du peuple kurde dans la Constitution turque, pas d'arrêt des opérations militaires... Connaissez-vous un autre problème dans le monde qui se soit réglé sans prendre en compte les attentes de la partie adverse? Avec cette approche unilatérale, la Turquie joue un jeu dangereux, qui peut conduire à des clashes.

- Quelles sont les revendications du PKK pour déposer les armes?

- Nous ne sommes plus séparatistes. Nous réclamons des droits culturels et linguistiques pour notre peuple, la liberté d'organisation politique. Il faut que la Constitution turque fasse une place à la reconnaissance de l'identité kurde. Une



Turquie plus démocratique doit permettre une autonomie politique, culturelle et sociale des Kurdes. Elle peut prendre, par exemple, la forme d'un parlement. Sans oublier, un pardon mutuel pour le passé, qui est nécessaire à un projet de société commun aux Turcs et aux Kurdes. A ces conditions, nous acceptons de déposer les armes.

- Malgré tout, le 23 septembre dernier, le PKK a de nouveau prolongé une trêve unilatérale...

-Mais l'avenir dépendra des signaux envoyés par la Turquie. Si elle donne la priorité à son plan militaire au détriment de l'option politique, nos troupes sont prêtes à riposter.

Mitterrand speech must be taken seriously

by Azad Aslan

The issue of the 21st century will be about water I hope you handle this problem with care.

Widow of the late and famous French President Francois Mitterrand and a long-time supporter of the Kurdish cause, delivered a historic speech to the MPs of Kurdistan Regional Parliament last Tuesday.

In her speech she touched upon a number of sensitive and strategic issues relating to the general Kurdish national movement and specifically Kurdistan Region. In the beginning of her speech she said that she feels at home in Kurdistan. Indeed, Kurdistan must be proud of being a home for such a distinguished friend.

During her 30-minute speech she dealt with number of serious issues in Kurdistan, including the democratization process and the last election, Kurdistan Regional government's relation with other parts of Kurdistan, economic development, and management of natural resources in Kurdistan.

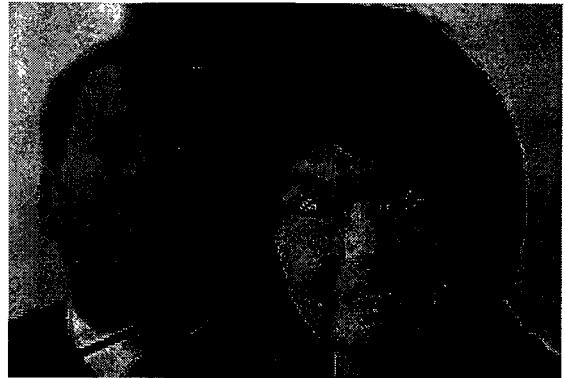
With regard to the last parliamentary election, Mitterrand stated that "it was a free and democratic election? The existence of opposition inside Parliament is very healthy for developing democracy." Mitterrand also acknowledged that despite all the obstacles that the region faced, such as sanctions, military interference of neighboring countries, civil wars, the region "was able to overcome all the obstacles and reconstruct the country build roads, airports, schools, universities, and hospitals, and above all provide people with a unique security."

Mitterrand critically argued that "all these developments can

be reversible; it is true that the bloody dictator Saddam Hussein is gone for good, but until now the constitutional problems between Baghdad and Kurdistan Region have not been solved and neighboring countries interfere in Iraqi internal affairs." This is a serious point that explains that Kurds should not take for granted what they have and be more alert to possible developments that may affect the region positively or negatively.

The way to protect and preserve the achievements of Kurdistan Region and improve conditions of the Kurds in other parts, Mitterrand underlined, was through the categorical imperative of unity amongst Kurds. "Now, more than anytime, you need to be united and work hard to introduce your issues to the world; also work to make strong ties with other countries."

The way for unity, explained Mitterrand and this is very crucial is to establish a very strong democratic system and a system that rules by law: "The law must be above everyone. In any society when there is a lot of corruption and injustice, it will create disunity among the society." To fight against corruption and injustice should be the top priorities of the upcoming Kurdistan Regional Government and its principle guidance. Kurdish political actors should realize that democracy is the only proper system that can establish healthy and strong relations between the state and individuals or in the case of Kurdistan between the government, political parties, and individuals. Proper and healthy relations between individuals and political agencies in Kurdistan are imperative as they are the safety belt for the masses to struggle for national and democratic rights. Mass participation and mass mobilization are the two essential tools to deter any dark forces in



Kurdistan. An accountable and transparent political entity that bases its relation with the masses on democratic unity rather than a ruler-ruled mentality can realize voluntary mass participation to protect their political entity and thus their national and political interests.

Mitterrand, in her speech, urged the Kurdish parliamentarians on the strategic importance of water in the region: "The issue of the 21st century will be about water I hope you handle this problem with care." Indeed, water as a strategic and scarce natural resource will play a significant role in shaping the political landscape of the Middle East in the near future. Kurdistan is rich in its natural resources. Oil, water, soil suitable for agriculture and other minerals are abundant. The question is how the KRG could exploit these resources properly for the development of Kurdistan and improvement of living standards of people. Management of natural resources indeed is a very serious business particularly when the KRG faces irreconcilable Baghdad and not very friendly neighbors to develop and utilize its natural resources. There are certain circles that do not miss any opportunity to corner the KRG and reduce its credibility. The case of DNO is a prime example. The KRG should not bow to any pressure to yield on the right of the Kurds to utilize and control its own natural resources. This is not only strategic for the development of the

country, but at the same time it is imperative for the consolidation of sovereignty of KRG in its own territory.

Mitterrand strongly urged the representatives of Kurdistan Parliament to be more vigilant toward the problems of Kurds in other parts of Kurdistan.

"A developed and democratic Iraqi Kurdistan will also affect the Kurds of other parts of Kurdistan; it will convince the world that Kurds can run their affairs within the current countries.

In the past, during the miserable times, Kurds from Iran and Turkey helped you a lot, and now it is time for you to help them in the field of culture, education, and media.

Do not deal with your brothers like the United Arab Emirates deal with Palestinian and Egyptian people." This is one of the most crucial aspects of Mitterrand's speech to Parliament. The Kurdish political actors should realize that their future is dependent on the political developments of other parts of Kurdistan. Without proper solution to the Kurdish national question in Turkey, or in Iran or in Syria, the future of Kurdistan Region can never be consolidated. This is particularly the case for the Kurdish question in Turkey and the KRG's position toward it. Since its establishment, one of the most serious issues challenging the KRG is the relation with Turkey and the PKK question.

Relations with Turkey and

the presence of the PKK in Iraqi Kurdistan is one of the most serious issues awaiting the new KRG. On one hand, the KRG needs proper and good neighborly relations with Turkey both for economic and political imperatives. On the other hand, Turkey's problematic relations with its own Kurds and its military confrontation with the PKK place serious obstacles in the way of developing proper relations. To resolve this complicated issue, Kurdistan Parliament

must take initiative and develop strategies and policies that both preserve the general Kurdish national interests and the interests of the KRG. Kurdistan Parliament must deal with the PKK issue seriously and find suitable solutions for its problematic presence in Kurdistan Region. As a military armed group, the presence of the PKK diminishes the sovereign rights of the KRG and Kurdistan Parliament in its own territory. This is the case also for the exis-

tence of Turkish military detachments in Kurdistan Region. Both military presences in Kurdistan Region should be one way or another removed for securing proper sovereignty of Kurdistan Parliament in its own territory. The KRG can do this through dialogue and diplomacy by involving all the parties involved. However, where dialogue and diplomacy fails, then the KRG must be ready for all other alternatives.

delivered a crucial speech at Kurdistan Parliament. The new MPs of Kurdistan Region and all other Kurdistan political actors should pay serious attention to Mitterrand's view and subject it to serious consideration and analysis.

Danielle Mitterrand indeed



October 1, 2009

Kurdish observers optimistic over forming strong govt. in region

ARBIL / Aswat al-Iraq: Kurdish

political observers said they were optimistic over the possibility of forming a "strong government" in the Iraqi Kurdistan region one day after the region's president, Massoud Barazani, designated Burham Saleh, a leading member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), to make a lineup of a new government.

"The official designation by the region president to the Kurdistan List candidate Burham Saleh to form a government, though a bit late, indicates insistence on the part of the Kurdish leadership to on seeking success through contacts with all parties," said Bashar Hameed Mahmoud al-Kiki in statements to Aswat al-Iraq news agency.

Barazani had officially entrusted on Wednesday (Sept. 30) Saleh and his deputy Azad Birwari, both belong to the main two Kurdish parties – Iraqi President Jalal Talabani's PUK and Barazani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) respectively – to set up a new cabinet

The assignment was expressed during a meeting held in the resort of Salah Al-Din in Arbil, more than two months after the semi-autonomous region's presidential and parliamentary elections on July 25, in which the Kurdistan List, which comprises the PUK and KDP, won 59 out of a total of 111 seats, enabling it to form the government alone.

Kiki expressed support for forming a "strategic alliance government between the two main Kurdish parties, but not a national unity one," noting the two parties would capable of delivering on their election platform pledges and achieve the region's interests better if they formed a strategic alliance government.

Working for years in the media field, Kiki pointed out that the Kurdistan leaders should not delay the formation of a government because they have to

get prepared for the Iraqi parliamentary elections, scheduled to take place in mid-January 2010.

"These elections acquire a special importance and require unified Kurdish efforts and discourse so as to maintain balances inside Iraq and guarantee that Kurds would be represented ad the second largest power in Baghdad," he added.

Kurds are currently holding 58 seats inside the Iraqi parliament, 53 of them are reserved for the Kurdistan Alliance (KA) bloc while five others are occupied by the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) bloc, out of a total of 275 seats, next only to the Shiite United Iraqi Alliance (UIA).

Political essayist Abdullah Mashkhathi referred to "the Kurdish street's concerns regarding the delayed formation of a government in the Kurdistan region despite accordance reached over all general bases".

Mashkhathi was also optimistic about the possibility a "good government is formed provided that the two main parties have the will by relying on efficient figures and dignitaries known for their integrity, fairness and experience".

He called for brushing aside any partisan loyalty when selecting the members of the new cabinet.

He said that there is a pressing need that the government would "focus on the economic aspect and improve infrastructure and that the region's economy should not depend only on the oil money coming from Baghdad and trade".

"We have to re-build the sectors of tourism, agriculture and animal wealth and optimize them to have them as a source of power for the Kurdish economy," Mashkhathi stressed



October 1, 2009

Key PUK member says no differences with KDP

ARBIL / Aswat al-Iraq: A leading member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan said there is an understanding between the PUK and Iraqi Kurdistan President Massoud Barazani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) over the formation of a "strong" government in the region, dismissing differences between the two sides.

"There are no differences between the PUK and the KDP over the distribution of responsibilities and posts. There might be some different views over some matters but not amounting to differences," Faeed Asasirdan told Aswat al-Iraq news agency.

Asasirdan, who runs Iraqi President Jalal Talabani's PUK Strategic Research Center, said he was optimistic about the success of the new government in its tasks thanks to an agreement between the two parties over its leadership.

Barazani had officially entrusted on Wednesday (Sept. 30) Burham Saleh and his deputy Azad Birwari, both belong to the main two Kurdish parties – Iraqi President Jalal Talabani's PUK and Barazani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) respectively – to set up a new cabinet

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TODAYS ZAMAN

October 03, 2009

Erdogan has a good heart, self-exiled Kurdish singer says

TODAY'S ZAMAN

Famous Kurdish singer Sivan Perwer, who resides in Germany, has lent his support to the government's recent democratic initiative to settle Turkey's long-standing Kurdish issue, saying Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has a good heart, which is a must for a statesman to settle the issue.

In August, Erdogan referred to Perwer while announcing details of the democratic initiative and calling for unity in the country. Addressing his deputies in Parliament, Erdogan referenced Kurdish singers and poets, underlining their importance to Turkish culture. "Are we not affected in the same manner when we read the verses of Ahmedi Hani as we are when we read those of Fuzuli Our hair stands on its end when we listen to songs of Nesat Ertaş. Similarly, we jump to the depths of our emotional world when Sivan Perwer sings 'Halpeçe' and 'Hazar'," the prime minister said. Perwer previously expressed hope that the government's plan on the Kurdish question would help restore peace in

the country. Perwer concert organizer Ali Gedik later announced that Perwer is likely to perform in Diyarbakır to contribute to peace.

The self-exiled Perwer, who left Turkey in the mid '70s to evade a court case pending against him, spoke in detail about the government's recent efforts to settle the Kurdish issue in an interview aired on Thursday. Perwer, speaking to Kanal 24 at the Paris Kurdish Institute, said he sees for the first time in his life that a statesman has been influenced by Kurdish art and his music, referring to Erdogan. "Kurdish art, which has for many years been humiliated, is being understood by a top Turkish statesman today. I would like to thank Erdogan. I hope he can improve this initiative with more courage and determination," he said.

When reminded that Erdogan had invited him to Turkey, Perwer said he is thankful to the prime minister, who, he said, has a special place in his heart. "These [democratic initiative] steps have started with good will. The initiative process should not be managed by those who are pro-status quo," he said.

Stressing that he is ready to do his part in the resolution process, he said he can im-



mediately return to Turkey if it would contribute to the initiative. "When you look at history, you see that artists and intellectuals have even changed the law at times. But even Kurdish artists in Turkey are afraid of the Kurdish issue. Artists in Turkey should be engaged in serious issues," he added. Stating that he is in exile for singing songs in his native language, he said everyone should discuss why this is considered such a contentious issue.

TODAYS ZAMAN

October 04, 2009

President supports Kurdish initiative in Parliament opening

TODAY'S ZAMAN

President Gül addressed deputies this Thursday on the occasion of the start of the new legislative year.

"Today, while protecting the basic characteristics and unitary structure of our state, we are going through a process of deliberation that aims to improve the relationship between the state and diverse ethnic, religious and cultural groups. The raison d'être for the state is to meet the democratic aspirations and expectations of our nation in a satisfactory manner," he said in remarks which were interpreted as open support for a planned initiative by the government to solve the Kurdish question through a democratization package, which opposition parties have so far stood against. The package is thought to envisage granting



broader cultural and political rights to the country's Kurds. The Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) have strongly opposed to the package. "If we look at our country, our nation and our state through the prism of 'our own' eye in the light of our historical experience, we

conclude that our differences are our wealth; if we look with an eye that is 'alienated,' we think they are threats," said Gül.

"We, the heirs to a centuries-old history and tradition of government, should think that our differences are the contributions that we have made to each other in the long centuries that we have lived together and see them as elements that reinforce our national unity," the president underlined, adding that a state that fears its differences cannot achieve the target level of modernity set by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the modern republic. Gül's speech was often interrupted by the applause of AK Party and Democratic Society Party (DTP) deputies. CHP and MHP deputies, however, avoided applauding the president's speech.

Stateless Kurds seek better life and future

Imelda Moss

DOHUK, IRAQI KURDISTAN // Moqoble refugee camp does not get many visitors. Its grey tents are laid out in grim rows, and it nestles anonymously in the mountains of Dohuk in Iraqi Kurdistan, near the border with Syria.

The sufferings of its inhabitants are overshadowed by Iraq's war to the south and Syria's international entanglements to the west, but the people who live in these tents have a story to tell about years of discrimination and ill-treatment at the hands of Syrian authorities.

They are Kurds from Syria, part of a population of around two million, making up close to 10 per cent of Syria's people and by some distance the biggest ethnic minority in the country. In this camp there are 55 families and 48 single people, all of whom have fled Kurdish areas of Syria and none of whom would contemplate going back.

"I came five years ago," said Qassim, who did not want to use his real name. "If we had not run away, they would have put us in jail and killed us." His friend Asad Mohammed Salim, 27, said people had moved from Syria to Iraq "for political reasons". "We cannot live without freedom," he said.

He, and others in the camp, said they had suffered beatings and detention without warrant at the hands of Syrian authorities, that land had been taken away, all political activism forbidden and cultural Kurdish gatherings outlawed.

The Kurdish population has faced discrimination at the hands of security forces and legislators since the 1960s, as Arab nationalism became more influential, and authorities began to worry that ethnic Kurds would call for independence.

The independence movements of Iraqi and Turkish Kurds served to reinforce these fears, and over decades, government initiatives against Kurds have included transplanting Arabs to live in Kurdish areas, banning the registration of Kurdish baby names and outlawing teaching of Kurdish language in schools.

Analysts now say those measures are increasing, and while it is difficult to get official verification of numbers, the refugees in Moqoble said Kurds from Syria were still fleeing to the autonomous Kurdish region of Iraq, as well as to other countries.

Noureddine, 22, who did not want his full name used, said he left Syria recently to study journalism in Iraq, because as he is one of a category of Kurds known as "maktoumeen" he is forbidden to do so in Syria.

Barkhoudan Salahuddin, 18, another refugee, laughed when asked if she knew whether many of her Kurdish friends were leaving Syria. "It would take three days to tell all their stories," she said. "They try to go to Europe, to Turkey and to here ... you hear a lot of stories of people coming here."

Many of the refugees said they did not have citizenship in Syria and as such could not



The Moqoble refugee camp houses 55 families and 48 single people. Imelda Moss / The National

work, own property or legally marry.

A report by London's Royal Institute of International Affairs in 2006 explained that in 1962, a census was carried out over one day in al Hasaka province in the north-east of Syria, where most of the country's Kurds lived. The census "arbitrarily stripped 120,000-150,000 Kurdish citizens of Syrian citizenship", and subsequently denied them civil rights. They were declared "ajanib" or foreigners, and as of 2004, number approximately 200,000.

Some Kurds, who failed to participate in the census, are known as "maktoumeen" or the muted ones, who now number around 100,000. They, like the ajanib, have no passports and are not allowed to travel or work in the public sector (where the vast majority of Syrian jobs are), but they are also not allowed to finish high school or book a room in a hotel. Their marriages are not recognised and they cannot own property.

Nadim Houry, researcher for Syria and Lebanon for Human Rights Watch (HRW), said tensions between Arabs and Kurds in Syria intensified after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. The Kurds saw the establishment of the Kurdistan regional government, in Iraq, he said, and felt they too deserved a degree of autonomy. Meanwhile, he said, Syria was under international pressure to stop supporting extremists in Iraq, and "worried about the way that the Kurds in Iraq supported the US".

This combination of rising resentment among Syrian Kurds and increased anxiety among Syrian authorities led to a showdown at a football match in the Kurdish town of Qamishli in 2004. A Kurdish team was playing an Arab one, and when post-match banter turned to brawling, security forces moved in.

Most residents of Moqoble camp say they fled to Iraqi Kurdistan after the Qamishli violence.

Qassim explained that at the match, there was a heavy Syrian security presence, checking Kurds to see if they were armed. But, he said, "the Arabs chanted 'Long live Saddam Hussein' and 'Down with [Iraqi Kurdish leader] Barzani', so the Kurds rose up against this." In the ensuing three-day riot, "the Syrian government moved tanks and aeroplanes to the Kurdish area ... Kurdish people came from other cities to help the people in Qamishli."

Accounts of how many Kurds were killed

and detained by Syrian authorities vary, but Amnesty International estimates that more than 30 died and 2,000 were detained, and that afterwards Syria's Kurds became both more politically active and more repressed.

"There was mass mobilisation," said Mr Houry of HRW, "which was a surprise to everyone. You don't have spontaneous demonstrations in Syria."

"The Syrians have got a lot tougher since 2004," said Robert Lowe of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. "They were rattled but pretty quickly regained control. They have been turning the screws, slowly, cleverly, not very obviously but there is no doubt the pressure has increased."

After the Qamishli riots, approximately 14 Kurdish political parties which had previously been tolerated, not least because of their division and disorganisation, "were told to stop all political activity", said Mr Houry. "Since then, there has been a more systematic forbidding of all public gatherings." These include celebrations of Kurdish culture like dance events, and the Nourouz celebrations in March.

"There isn't a week when some Kurd isn't detained," he said, adding, "I am not exaggerating." Detainees that are charged face accusations including rioting, which is defined as more than seven people meeting to protest a government policy.

Legislation on property rights has also been tightened by "Decree 49" which was passed last year, and which makes ownership and inheritance of land more difficult.

Since the election of Barack Obama's as President of the United States, there has been more international engagement with Syria, and the issue of Syrian Kurds has been raised as part of general concerns about human rights in Syria. But, says Mr Lowe, "it is not a priority. More important is Syria's relationship with Iraq and with Iran, their support for Hamas and Hizbollah."

Meantime, the situation of Syria's Kurds seems unlikely to change soon.

Syrian President Bashar al Assad promised in 2005 to address the issue of stateless Kurds, saying, "we will solve this issue soon in an expression of the importance of national unity in Syria."

However, no progress has been made and the promises were dismissed by critics as playing for time.

TODAYS ZAMAN
October 05, 2009

DTP sets conditions for backing Kurdish initiative

AYSE KARABAT

Turkey's main pro-Kurdish party yesterday announced the conditions that need to be met for it to throw its support behind the government's ambitious democratization initiative, a set of planned reforms mainly aimed at solving the decades-old Kurdish issue, calling for swift changes to the Constitution and dialogue with Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) who is now imprisoned on an island off Istanbul.

The support from the Democratic Society Party (DTP), as Turkey's largest pro-Kurdish party, is a key element for the success of the democratization initiative, commonly known as the Kurdish initiative, but the conditions set by party leader Ahmet Türk at a party congress in Ankara yesterday, are, to say the least, not easy to meet.

The government rejects any sort of dialogue with Öcalan, who is serving a life sentence for treason, saying there will be no talks with terrorists, and it's unlikely that he will have any role in the future stages of the Kurdish initiative with the government saying the issue will be discussed with legitimate interlocutors in the political arena. But the DTP disagrees. During the congress, some DTP supporters, who masked their faces, chanted slogans in favor of Öcalan and the PKK.

As for the second condition, the constitutional changes, they may prove to be less problematic but still difficult to implement, given the unyielding opposition on the part of the two main opposition parties in Parliament.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government will find it hard to successfully push for any constitutional reform unless these reforms are backed by at least a certain number of deputies from the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) and/or independent deputies. The other opposition party, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), is a diehard opponent of the planned reforms.

Two months ago the government launched an initiative to solve Turkey's decades-old Kurdish question, but the details of the plan have not been announced yet. The government officials have frequently emphasized that the details of the plan will be shaped after consultations with different segments of society. Erdogan, within the framework of the initiative, met with Türk and some other DTP officials.

Türk said at the congress that in the beginning they were excited and developed hope because of the government's initiative but now they have some concerns. "It should be very well understood that the DTP and the Kurds will not be the side to obstruct the process, but if the process turns into a process of keeping of Kurds in sus-



Kurdistan Workers' Party members held up pictures of jailed PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan during the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party's third extraordinary congress, held in Ankara on Sunday. Öcalan is serving a life sentence on the island of Imralı in the Sea of Marmara.

pense or a process of delaying the solution we will oppose it," he said.

He recalled Erdogan's remarks in which he said they are ready to take risks and said they are expecting Erdogan to do so: "We hope the prime minister does not slip towards to non-risky areas. In order to achieve progress in Turkey, first the Constitution has to be changed. The solution should be started from there," he said.

Türk added that their second concern about the process is that it does not address the issue of cooperation with the political representatives of the Kurds and their "will," a euphemism for Öcalan.

"For months Öcalan has been saying he wants to stop the bloodshed. The prime minister is also saying they aim to stop the bloodshed. The importance of Öcalan in the solution is obvious; therefore the government should address the problem with Öcalan. To have the defenders of wars as their counterpart and try to set the path of the initiative in accordance with their reactions will lead Turkey to loose a lot," he said.

Türk also gave another reason for the DTP being the counterpart in the process. "A process in which the DTP is not actively involved is impossible. The DTP has to be regarded as the main actor of the process of dialogue, consultation and negotiation. So in order to successfully improve this process, the DTP has to be given the opportunity to be an active intervener," he said.

Türk also pointed to the PKK as another party which has to be taken into consideration.

"In order to remove guns from the agenda, the party which has guns in its hands, the PKK, should not be excluded from the solution process," he said.

Every time Türk mentioned the PKK and Öcalan the audiences chanted pro-PKK and pro-Öcalan slogans, despite frequent warnings not to do so by party officials.

A DTP closure case has been taking place in the Constitutional court for two years and the use of such slogans can be also prosecuted.

The aim of the extraordinary congress of the

DTP is to fill the party's empty chairs, especially in its main executive board, the party council.

As Türk pointed out, 54 members of the 80-chair party council were arrested in addition to many other party members in April during police operations. Security officials said that the operations were aimed at the urban extensions of the PKK.

In his almost hour-long speech, Türk also underlined that Öcalan's "roadmap" has to be made public.

Öcalan reportedly prepared a roadmap for the solution to the Kurdish problem, but according to his lawyers, the 160-page of roadmap was taken by the public prosecution for inspection.

"Knowing that this roadmap is a right for our people and democratic public opinion, why is the government is ignoring this fact and refraining to release it?" Türk asked in his speech.

He also recalled the efforts of the government to create a stable and peaceful Middle East, but added that the government has to start to work at home. "The democratization of Turkey will lead to the democratization of Iraq, Syria and Iran. We are talking about 40 million people who are living in these four countries. The recognition of the rights of Kurds will bring peace to the Middle East," he said.

After Türk finished his speech, several people with covered faces jumped onto the podium and opened Öcalan posters, but the party officials removed them from the stage. The same scene has repeated while the co-chairperson of the DTP, Emine Ayna, was delivering her speech, this time there was a scuffle between masked people and the party officials.

Ayna in her speech underlined that the discourse of war which is using the words "terror" and "terrorist" has to be changed:

"If the states are using guns to suppress the people, how will the people defend themselves? In order to answer this question by 'democratic politics,' first of all the militarist tutelage and militarist politics have to be removed," she said.

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Le nucléaire iranien Décryptages

Un dialogue impossible ?

Natalie Nougayrède

Cela ressemble, depuis plus de quatre ans, à un dialogue impossible. Depuis 2005, l'Iran a fait preuve d'une grande obstination pour faire progresser ses travaux nucléaires. Il a refusé de faire la lumière sur ses activités illicites, dont certaines étaient cachées depuis les années 1980. Les grandes puissances ont été dans l'incapacité d'obtenir la moindre inflexion iranienne susceptible d'ouvrir la voie à une négociation.

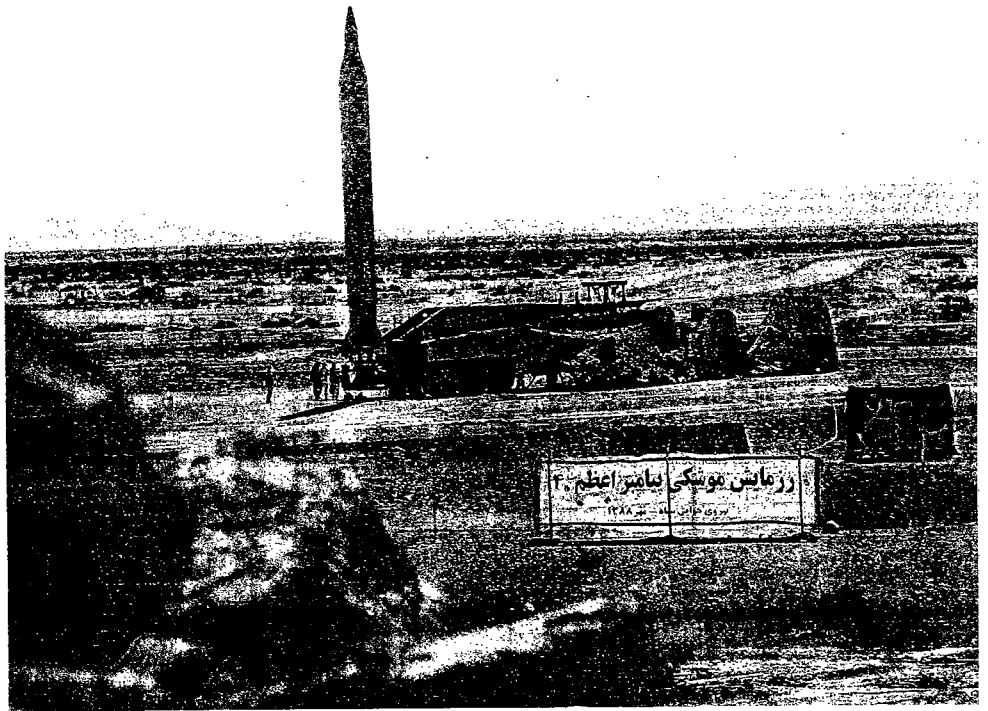
Les huit premiers mois de l'administration Obama n'ont pas, non plus, permis une percée. Le durcissement du régime à Téhéran, après la réélection controversée du président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, en juin, n'a pas aidé. Mais les remous politiques profonds qui se sont emparés du pays, combinés aux difficultés économiques ambiantes, et au soulèvement d'une partie de la jeunesse, pourraient encore faire bouger les lignes.

Les multiples tentatives de négociation avec l'Iran, depuis l'été 2005, ont ressemblé à un dialogue de sourds. En sera-t-il autrement le 1^{er} octobre à Genève ? Les attentes sont modestes, soulignent les diplomates. Les représentants du groupe des six pays traitant ce dossier de prolifération (États-Unis, Royaume-Uni, France, Russie, Chine, Allemagne), ainsi que le haut représentant européen, Javier Solana, doivent rencontrer un officiel iranien, le négociateur sur le nucléaire, Saïd Jalili.

Ce n'est pas une nouveauté. Mais pour la première fois, un émissaire de l'administration Obama sera autour de la table. Il s'agit de William Burns, le même diplomate auquel George W. Bush avait déjà confié ce rôle, en juillet 2008, lors d'une précédente réunion multilatérale, restée sans résultat.

Lors de la rencontre de 2008, également tenue à Genève, l'Iranien n'avait à aucun moment adressé directement la parole au responsable du Département d'État. Ni voulu évoquer l'offre de coopération faite depuis deux ans à l'Iran par les grandes puissances, qui sont prêtes à aider le pays dans les domaines du nucléaire civil, du commerce, et à ouvrir des discussions sur la sécurité au Moyen-Orient.

Cette offre demeure sur la table aujourd'hui. Elle repose sur le principe du « double gel » : gel de l'accroissement des sanctions de l'ONU contre l'Iran, contre un gel de l'augmentation du nombre de centrifugeuses, les appareils qui enrichissent l'uranium et peuvent, au choix, fabriquer soit



Un missile de longue portée Shahab 3 prêt à être lancé pour test, le 28 septembre 2009, dans un endroit non précisé, en Iran. AFP

du combustible pour centrale nucléaire, soit de la matière fissile pour l'arme atomique.

L'idée du « double gel » est une façon de contourner, sans la dénoncer, l'exigence de « suspension » des activités liées à l'enrichissement. Une demande inscrite dans les résolutions successives de l'ONU sur l'Iran, mais auxquelles la République islamique, depuis 2006, n'a jamais voulu se conformer.

La rencontre de Genève est importante pour l'administration américaine, car elle matérialise une volonté d'engagement au dialogue avec l'Iran, un des thèmes essentiels utilisés par Barack Obama, auprès de l'opinion publique, pour se différencier de l'action de son prédécesseur. En toute logique, elle devrait être suivie d'autres rendez-vous, car étant donné la technique iranienne de discussions, rien ou si peu pourra être abordé en une seule séance.

De façon réaliste, le président américain se dit qu'avant de passer à l'étape suivante, celle de sanctions percutantes au plan financier et énergétique, il a tout intérêt à se montrer encore patient, et à faire la démonstration de sa complète disponibilité à aller le plus loin possible dans les ouvertures diplomatiques. Afin que personne ne puisse lui reprocher, à l'avenir, de ne pas avoir essayé.

Cette politique a connu plusieurs phases. Avant le scrutin iranien du 12 juin et la répression policière qui a suivi, Barack Obama a enchaîné les gestes d'ouverture, comme ses deux lettres adressées au « Guide » Ali Khamenei, son message de Norouz aux Iraniens, ou encore sa façon de reconnaître, dans son discours du Caire, que la CIA avait trempé dans le renversement de Mossadegh en 1953. Après le mois de juin, il a été plus en retrait, dénonçant avec retard les violences, et semblant considérer que la balle était dans le camp du régime iranien.

Le président américain sait aussi qu'il doit éviter d'avoir l'air naïf ou faible. C'est la raison pour laquelle, à quelques jours de la réunion du 1^{er} octobre, l'Iran a subitement été mis sur la défensive par une série de révélations fracassantes faites par les dirigeants occidentaux, en plein G20 à Pittsburgh. Celles-ci portaient sur la signification d'un site nucléaire iranien resté secret pendant des années, creusé sous une montagne dans la région de Qom.

Il s'agit du deuxième site clandestin d'enrichissement d'uranium à être exposé en Iran depuis le dévoilement de celui de Natanz, en 2002, par un groupe d'opposants exilés. L'épisode avait fourni le point de départ de la crise nucléaire iranienne, longue saga diplomatique jalonnée de rebondissements dignes de romans d'es-

pionnage.

A Pittsburgh, M. Obama a aussitôt durci son langage sur l'Iran, allant jusqu'à rappeler qu'« aucune option n'est exclue », même si sa préférence va clairement à la diplomatie. Dans les discussions avec les partenaires européens, l'échéance de la fin de l'année semble confirmée : si l'Iran n'obtempère pas avant ce délai, notamment en faisant toute la transparence sur son programme nucléaire, de nouvelles sanctions, mordantes, seront prises.

L'un des grands changements est que, depuis le coup de tonnerre qu'a constitué la « découverte » du site de Qom, il est devenu plus difficile pour la Russie et la Chine d'apporter une « couverture » diplomatique à l'Iran. L'unité des « Six » est jugée cruciale par les Américains et les Européens. M. Obama a beaucoup misé sur sa politique de *reset* (redémarrage) avec la Russie, et il doit se rendre en novembre en Chine.

Après plus de sept années de tensions autour de l'atome iranien, la leçon qui peut être tirée est celle d'un lent échec diplomatique, en tout cas à ce jour. En 2003-2004, les Européens (France, Royaume-Uni, Allemagne) avaient bel et bien obtenu des gestes de l'Iran, notamment la suspension de l'enrichissement d'uranium et des inspections inopinées et larges de l'AIEA. Mais c'était à une période où, peu après l'invasion de l'Irak, la République islamique était prête à se montrer

coopérative pour gagner du temps et échapper à un scénario militaire.

A partir de la mi-2005, l'Iran basculait dans un ton de confrontation, encouragé par la remontée des prix du pétrole et le constat des vulnérabilités de l'armée américaine en Irak. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad parvenait au pouvoir. Mais avant même que ce radical issu des rangs des pasdarans ne prenne ses fonctions, les activités de conversion d'uranium avaient repris. L'Iran rompait l'accord avec les Européens. Côté occidental, les efforts diplomatiques se tournaient vers un transfert du dossier au Conseil de sécurité, chose réalisée début 2006. Téhéran a alors commencé à dépeindre la campagne des Occidentaux dénonçant ses activités d'enrichissement d'uranium comme une violation des droits des Etats non nucléaires signataires du Traité de non-prolifération de 1968. Il trouvait des soutiens à cette idée notamment du côté du Brésil et des pays non alignés.

Face à la communauté internationale, l'Iran continue aujourd'hui de louvoyer, de jouer sur les divisions de ses interlocuteurs. Il souffle le chaud et le froid, dans un savant dosage hérité d'une diplomatie persane millénaire. Par exemple cet été, quand les inspecteurs de l'AIEA ont été autorisés à se rendre sur le site nucléaire d'Arak. Un geste en particulier salué par la Russie.

Ou encore quand l'Iran a apporté le 9 septembre un texte très hermétique, en guise de réponse à l'offre des « Six » réitérée cinq

mois plus tôt. Moscou applaudissait. L'administration Obama, elle, constatait la vacuité du document, qui n'abordait pas le dossier nucléaire, mais elle ne s'opposait pas non plus au principe d'une rencontre à six avec l'émissaire iranien. La date, le 1^{er} octobre, fut choisie par l'Iran.

Habile manœuvre de Téhéran, car cela permettait en principe de franchir sans encombre l'étape de l'Assemblée générale des Nations unies, à laquelle M. Ahmadinejad devait se rendre. Une échéance qui avait durant l'été été considérée par les Occidentaux comme la date-butoir donnée aux Iraniens pour jauger de leurs intentions. Toutefois il y eut un boomerang pour les officiels iraniens : l'affaire du site secret de Qom surgissait, comme preuve embarrassante de leurs efforts de dissimulation.

Durant les années Bush, l'Iran refusait de négocier sur son programme nucléaire en invoquant la crainte que cela mettrait en œuvre des forces de changement de régime, dans le cadre d'un complot ourdi par les Etats-Unis. M. Obama, en parlant au début de sa présidence de « *respect mutuel* », a cherché à neutraliser ce soupçon. C'était avant que le régime iranien réagisse à la vague de contestations de rue en criant aux ingérences de l'Occident, et qu'à Téhéran plus personne ne paraisse capable d'assumer un rapprochement avec Washington. On voit mal comment le nucléaire iranien cessera d'être le dossier des rendez-vous ratés. ■

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Le nucléaire iranien Décryptages

Pourquoi les voisins arabes s'inquiètent ?

La crise iranienne a pour théâtre une zone stratégique, notamment pour ses ressources pétrolières. Pour les monarchies du Golfe, un Iran nucléarisé servirait les desseins d'un nouvel expansionnisme perse

Gilles Paris

Installées face aux côtes iraniennes, sur l'autre rive du Golfe, les monarchies arabes apparaissent, à leur corps défendant, comme en première ligne dans la crise qui oppose les Occidentaux au régime de Téhéran à propos des ambitions nucléaires de ce dernier.

Alors que des traités de sécurité les lient depuis des décennies, à des titres divers, aux principales puissances hostiles à une nucléarisation de la République islamique (Etats-Unis, Royaume-Uni et France), l'Arabie saoudite et les micro-Etats pétroliers et gaziers de la région ont beaucoup à perdre d'une escalade militaire aux conséquences régionales difficilement calculables. Ces pays ont beau nourrir une méfiance séculaire vis-à-vis de l'expansionnisme prêté à Téhéran et qu'a résumé l'expression d'« arc chiite »

(appuyé sur l'allié syrien et le Hezbollah libanais) par le roi Abdallah II de Jordanie, ils n'en sont pas moins restés obstinément silencieux ces derniers mois.

Ce mutisme peut s'expliquer parce que les monarchies du Golfe ne sont pas logées à la même enseigne face au puissant voisin iranien. Elles ne partagent pas avec lui la même histoire, qu'il s'agisse du Bahreïn, dont l'Iran a longtemps disputé

la souveraineté à la dynastie Khalifa, ou des Emirats arabes unis, qui contestent encore aujourd'hui l'annexion par le régime du chah de trois îles (Abou Moussa, la Grande et la Petite Tombe) situées près du détroit stratégique d'Ormuz qui ferme le Golfe. Au contraire, le Qatar exploite un champ gazier stratégique avec la République islamique et Oman a bénéficié, dans les années 1970, d'une aide militaire iranienne de poids dans sa lutte contre la rébellion du Dhofar qui explique les liens et la proximité entre les deux pays.

Différences également avec la présence ou non, dans ces monarchies, de minorités chiïtes – à l'exception de Bahreïn où les sunnites, bien que minoritaires, détiennent les rouages de l'Etat. Cette présence chiïte est importante (environ un tiers de la population) au Koweït, Etat frontalier de l'Iran. Elle est significative aux Emirats (principalement dans celui de Dubaï). Elle est, enfin, non négligeable dans le royaume saoudien, où elle se concentre dans la province orientale qui recèle une bonne partie des ressources pétrolières du pays.

Dans ces pays, on redoute qu'une crise ouverte, plus que des bombardements, n'entraîne des tentatives de déstabilisation venant de populations dont la loyauté fait l'objet d'interrogations ou reste ouvertement contestée en Arabie saoudite. Volontiers alarmiste, un haut responsa-

ble de services de sécurité de la région, de passage à Paris n'hésitait pas, cet été, à évoquer la menace que constitueraient selon lui des dizaines de « cellules dormantes » prêtes à être activées, si nécessaire, par le régime iranien.

Ces différences expliquent pour partie l'absence d'une stratégie commune pour les pays du Conseil de coopération des Etats arabes du Golfe (CCEAG). Les nuan-

« Il est impossible d'obtenir sur place un discours rationnel sur l'Iran, la parole se situe entre la thèse du complot et le fantasme »

Un journaliste du Golfe

ces, au sein de la fédération des Emirats, entre Dubaï, qui a longtemps entretenu des relations économiques et financières privilégiées avec l'Iran, et Abou Dhabi, où le prince héritier, Mohammed, se montre beaucoup plus tranché face au régime de Téhéran, montrent bien la vanité d'une telle perspective.

En dépit de ces divergences, les monarchies du Golfe développent pourtant en regard de l'Iran des caractères communs.

En premier lieu, selon un journaliste du Golfe désireux de ne pas être identifié, une « ignorance totale de l'Iran », qui alimente un complexe d'infériorité vis-à-vis du régime iranien, renforcé par le vieillissement du pouvoir égyptien et celui du royaume saoudien.

Une « peur structurelle » ensuite. « Il est impossible d'obtenir sur place un discours rationnel sur l'Iran, la parole se situe entre la thèse du complot et le fantasme, ajoute-t-il. Il y a, enfin, une conviction sur la nature du régime, perçue définitivement comme une dictature militaire islamique. »

La situation des monarchies arabes a été fragilisée au cours des dernières années. Après la détente relative qui avait coïncidé avec les deux mandats de la République islamique (1997-2005), le renversement du régime de Saddam Hussein à Bagdad par l'allié américain en 2003, a remis en cause le principe du « double endiguement » (Irak et Iran) en vigueur dans les années 1990 et qui correspondait assez bien aux attentes arabes régionales. En 2003, le sentiment qui a prévalu et prévaut encore, est que l'Irak a été abandonné à l'Iran. L'élection de Mahmoud Ahmadi-nejad, en août 2005, en a ensuite sonné la fin des illusions.

Le second point de convergence ren-

voie à la situation géostratégique des monarchies du Golfe. « Il s'agit de pays qui sont avant tout des consommateurs de sécurité et non des producteurs de sécurité », selon la formule d'Emile El-Hokayem, analyste installé à Abou Dhabi. D'où les traités de sécurité conclus dans la foulée de la tentative d'annexion du Koweït par l'Irak avec les Etats-Unis, en 1990, qui partent du principe selon lequel l'assurance-vie des monarchies réside à Washington, et la présence à Bahrein et au Qatar de centres de commandements américains. S'y ajoutent, comme autant de « couches de sécurité supplémentaires », selon Emile El-Hokayem, les traités similaires conclus avec le Royaume-Uni et la France, comme l'a montré l'ouverture d'une base française à Abou Dhabi qui pérennise la présence militaire française dans les eaux du Golfe.

Nul doute que les monarchies de la région soupèsent les avantages et les inconvénients de la réponse militaire au défi nucléaire iranien. Mais leur réticence à sortir de l'ambiguïté, comme l'a montré l'accueil tiède à la promesse de la secrétaire d'Etat américaine d'étendre le parapluie nucléaire de Washington à ses alliés arabes, témoigne également de leur volonté à échapper le plus longtemps possible à un reclassement binaire. Il les placerait en effet, aux yeux du régime iranien, dans le camp de ses ennemis déclarés. ■

Le Monde
Jeudi 1^{er} octobre 2009.

Le nucléaire iranien Décryptages

L'option militaire est-elle toujours de mise ?

Gilles Paris

Peut-on arrêter l'Iran par la force ? En août 2007, dans une formule spectaculaire, le président de la République française, Nicolas Sarkozy, avait évoqué « une alternative catastrophique : la bombe iranienne ou le bombardement de l'Iran ». L'option militaire n'a jamais été écartée par les pays ouvertement hostiles au programme nucléaire iranien. Déjà déployées en nombre dans la région (Irak, Golfe, Afghanistan), les forces armées des Etats-Unis disposent des moyens nécessaires pour une opération d'envergure, mais à Washington, le discours sur l'Iran privilégie depuis des mois la double voie de la diplomatie et des sanctions économiques. Il en va de même pour les alliés européens.

Les autorités israéliennes sont de fait les seules à défendre ouvertement la légitimité d'une attaque préventive de l'Iran pour le cas où toutes les tentatives diplo-

matiques en cours seraient jugées impuissantes.

Les déclarations provocatrices du président iranien, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, annonçant régulièrement la fin de l'Etat juif ont alimenté un discours israélien sur une « menace existentielle » justifiant un recours à cette option. La réalité d'une menace directe contre Israël doit être relativisée compte tenu des capacités de seconde frappe israéliennes. Le ministre israélien de la défense, Ehoud Barak, l'a écartée le 17 septembre. Mais un Iran nucléarisé constituerait la première remise en question de la doctrine Begin, selon laquelle Israël doit conserver dans la région le monopole du nucléaire, même si le pays, non signataire du traité de non-prolifération (TNP), entretient une ambiguïté de plus en plus formelle sur la question.

Une intervention militaire s'inscrirait dans une histoire déjà longue de raids spectaculaires comme la destruction de la

centrale nucléaire d'Osirak (1981), ou plus récemment le bombardement d'Al-Kibar, en Syrie (2007), un site suspecté par Israël d'accueillir des installations nucléaires. Mais le cas iranien constitue cependant un redoutable défi à la fois en termes de renseignements et de réalisation.

Que sait Israël du programme nucléaire iranien et de son éventuelle application militaire ? En juin, lors d'une audition à la Knesset, le responsable du Mossad, l'agence de renseignements israélienne, Meir Dagan, a créé la surprise en indiquant que, selon ses estimations, l'Iran ne pourrait disposer d'une arme nucléaire qu'à l'horizon 2014, alors que les pronostics sont ordinairement plus alarmistes.

Couloir aérien

Compte tenu de l'importance du programme iranien et des moyens israéliens, une opération militaire israélienne devrait se concentrer, selon une étude publiée en mars des experts Abdullah Tou-

kan et Anthony Cordesman (du Centre d'études stratégiques et internationales de Washington), sur un nombre limité de sites. Deux modes opératoires sont possibles. Le premier consisterait à recourir à des missiles (balistiques ou de croisière) que l'Iran serait incapable de détruire en vol. Les limites de cette option résident à la fois dans la puissance limitée de ces missiles (sauf à les doter d'une charge nucléaire, ce qui paraît exclu) et dans leur précision au sol. Des bombardements aériens sont également envisageables mais comportent aussi leur part de risques.

Pour pouvoir frapper les sites iraniens, Israël devrait tout d'abord s'assurer d'un

couloir aérien, alors que les routes les plus directes (par la Jordanie ou par l'Arabie saoudite) sont délicates pour des raisons politiques, et mobiliser une flotte importante de bombardiers, d'avions de combat, de ravitailleurs et d'appareils chargés de brouiller les réseaux de communication et les radars des zones survolées.

L'armée israélienne a cette capacité mais les obstacles n'en sont pas moins multiples. Il y a tout d'abord les défenses anti-aériennes iraniennes. Les Israéliens tentent d'empêcher l'achat par l'Iran du système de défense anti-aérien russe S-300. Dans l'étude déjà mentionnée, MM. Toukan et Cordesman soulèvent un autre problème : les limites des bombes

« brise bunkers » (les installations iraniennes sont souterraines et protégées par des boucliers de béton), GBU-27 et GBU-28, fournies par les Etats-Unis et qui requièrent, pour être pleinement efficaces, d'être larguées avec une précision absolue et un angle déterminé.

Quel serait le bilan d'une telle attaque ? Une destruction définitive du programme iranien est exclue par les experts militaires. Dans le meilleur des cas, ce dernier ne serait que retardé de quelques années. Pour un prix humain, géopolitique, voire environnemental qui ne pourrait être que très élevé. ■

Le Monde
1^{er} octobre 2009

Le nucléaire iranien Décryptages

Les sanctions sont-elles efficaces ?

Le bilan est mitigé. Les initiatives de l'ONU ne sont pas parvenues à faire plier le régime iranien, mais ont assurément appauvri son peuple en laissant en jachère des pans entiers de son économie

Jean-Michel Bezat

Les étrangers qui arpentent le centre de Téhéran s'étonnent de la profusion de produits occidentaux dans les magasins. Rien de plus facile que d'acheter un jean Calvin Klein, un iPhone ou un sac Gucci. Il semble que ce soit *business as usual* pour certains secteurs de l'économie. Or les apparences sont trompeuses, car la plupart des produits de première nécessité, jusqu'au thé, sont en partie importés et hors de prix. Et, derrière les flux commerciaux licites (et illicites), nombreux sont les investissements stratégiques gélés.

« Et les sanctions minent l'économie et augmentent le coût des importations », assure Clément Therme, chercheur à l'Institut des hautes études internationales de Genève. Avec plus ou moins d'intensité, l'Iran est sous un régime de sanctions économiques depuis trente ans pour la prise d'otages de l'ambassade américaine à Téhéran en 1980, puis pour son soutien à des mouvements terroristes et, récemment, le développement d'un programme nucléaire. En 2006 et 2007, trois résolutions des Nations unies ont graduellement resserré l'étau, sans toucher l'essentiel : la capacité de Téhéran à exporter son or noir.

Mais le pétrole et le gaz, cœur de l'économie iranienne, sont le plus durement frap-

pés. La production quotidienne de pétrole stagne autour de 4 millions de barils. Loin des 6 millions pompés à la veille de la révolution islamique de 1979 – une production que Téhéran escomptait retrouver dans les années 2000. Le pays est incapable de

valoriser les deuxièmes réserves mondiales de gaz (6%) et doit en importer du Turkménistan durant l'hiver !

Shell, Repsol ou Total ont suspendu leurs grands projets d'extraction et d'usines de gaz naturel liquéfié (GNL) sur Pars Sud, l'énorme gisement découvert il y a vingt ans dans le Golfe et partagé avec le Qatar. Les Iraniens enragent que l'émirat voisin soit devenu le premier exportateur mondial de GNL. Ostracisés, ils sont aussi incapables d'exporter leur gaz par pipeline vers l'Europe. « L'Iran a été exclu d'une récente réunion en Turquie sur le projet de gazoduc Nabucco, alors que la Syrie y a été conviée », note Djamchid Assadi, enseignant-chercheur à l'ESC de Dijon. Quant au projet de « gazoduc de la paix » Iran-Pakistan-Inde, il se heurte aux réticences de New Delhi.

La prochaine étape sera-t-elle un embarco sur l'essence ? Pour quelques milliards d'euros annuels, les pétroliers européens en livrent légalement à l'Iran, qui importe 40% de son carburant faute de pouvoir construire des raffineries avec l'aide des technologies occidentales. « L'Iran s'en inquiète et s'y prépare », assure M. Therme. Il aurait accumulé des réserves stratégi-

ques depuis le printemps 2008 pour environ deux mois de consommation. »

Ceux qui voyagent en avion s'inquiètent d'une dégradation de la flotte commerciale. Elle explique la fréquence des accidents, notent les experts. La construction automobile a aussi souffert. L'extension du métro de Téhéran prend du retard, les financiers internationaux n'acceptant pas la garantie apportée par les instances publiques iraniennes. L'approvisionnement en médicaments est perturbé par les sanctions qui frappent les banques finançant l'industrie pharmaceutique.

L'ONU, qui cherchait des sanctions « intelligentes » sans impact sur la population, a raté sa cible. L'économie n'a pas atteint son potentiel de croissance et le chômage frappe la jeunesse. Les sanctions, entraînant le renchérissement du coût des transactions financières et des importations de produits transitant par de nombreux intermédiaires, ont accru l'inflation. Elles expliqueraient un quart de la hausse des prix, qui atteint 16%. Mir Hossein Moussavi, chef de la contestation née de la réélection de Mahmoud Ahmadi-nejad, est opposé à leur renforcement. « Elles vont augmenter la souffrance d'une nation qui souffre déjà de la misère » et qui est « au bord d'une crise ».

Certains prospèrent sur ces sanctions, notamment les entreprises dirigées par des responsables du régime. « Cela renforce le marché noir et les réseaux informels des Gardiens de la révolution, qui se chargent d'importer illégalement les produits frappés par les sanctions », note M. Therme. « Elles n'empêchent pas la Fondation des déshérités d'acheter des armes russes à Dubaï. » De nombreuses transactions s'effectuent par cette plaque tournante. A l'Elysée, on affirme que « Paris travaille avec Dubaï, car c'est par là que passent les

flux financiers». Et ceux des marchandises réexportées vers l'Iran. Les Emirats arabes unis ont, selon M. Assadi, durci leur politique et refusent l'implantation d'intermédiaires iraniens.

Les entreprises hésitent. Selon le rapport 2010 « Doing Business » de la Banque mondiale sur le climat des affaires, le pays est au 142^e rang sur 183. Un marché pour les Chinois et les Russes, hostiles aux sanctions ? On en est loin, souligne M. Assadi, rappelant que le président iranien de la chambre de commerce Iran-Chine se plaignait récemment de la faiblesse des échanges. L'Europe assure 22% des échanges commerciaux de la Chine contre 4% pour

tout le Moyen-Orient.

Avec 75 millions d'habitants, l'Iran reste un marché prometteur, où les entreprises occidentales ne veulent pas perdre de terrain. « Le discours des Etats sur les sanctions ne coïncide pas exactement avec leurs pratiques économiques et commerciales », constate M. Therme. L'Italie, l'Allemagne, la France, la Gran-

Le pétrole et le gaz, cœur de l'économie iranienne, sont le plus durement frappés

de-Bretagne sont en concurrence. Au point que leurs ambassades à Téhéran se surveillent sous couvert de veille économique, raconte un bon connaisseur de l'Iran.

Le relatif isolement économique de l'Iran a conduit M. Ahmadinejad à puiser régulièrement dans les réserves en devises alimentées par le pétrole, dilapidant une grande partie de ces richesses. C'est une des principales critiques adressée au président iranien, y compris par les conservateurs pragmatiques. ■

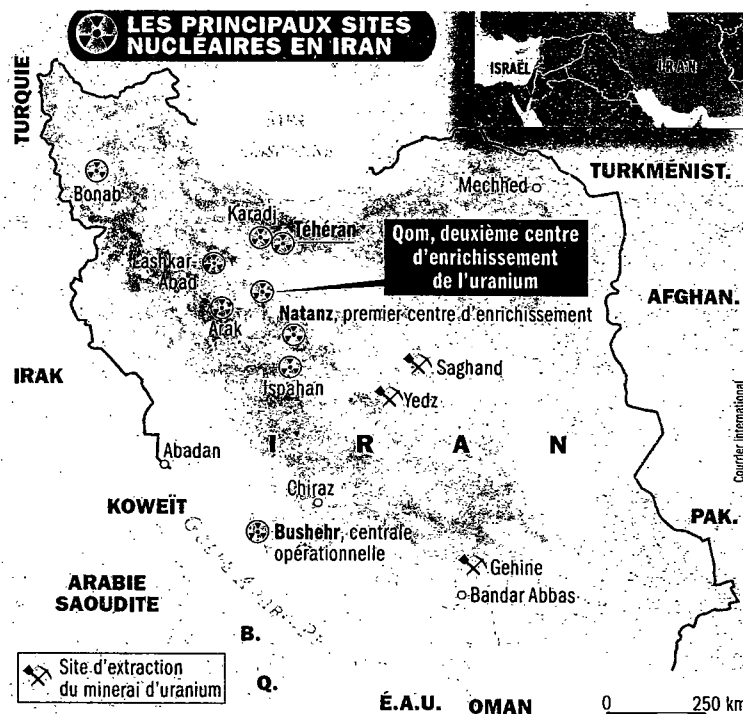
Téhéran en position de force

Pour le quotidien ultraconservateur iranien, l'existence d'une nouvelle usine d'enrichissement montre que les menaces occidentales n'ont aucun effet.

KAYHAN
Téhéran

La révélation concernant la construction d'une nouvelle usine d'enrichissement de l'uranium en Iran a été un choc dans les milieux diplomatiques et les médias occidentaux. Le 25 septembre dernier, l'Iran a officiellement annoncé qu'une nouvelle installation nucléaire était en cours de construction à Qom, en plus de celle de Natanz. Les médias et les responsables occidentaux avaient déjà commencé, la veille, à transformer cette information en événement, assurant qu'il s'agissait d'une « découverte des services de renseignements occidentaux ». Ils arrivaient à la conclusion que l'Iran avait de nouveau occulté des éléments dans le dossier nucléaire ! Même les plus hauts responsables politiques ont repris cette version. Barack Obama, le président des Etats-Unis, a prononcé clairement, dans une conférence de presse à Pittsburg, le mot « dissimulation ». Nicolas Sarkozy, le président qui accumule les bourdes, en a conclu un peu hâtivement que les discussions d'octobre seraient inutiles.

Selon la presse occidentale, l'Iran a été obligé de coopérer et de révéler l'existence de son installation à la suite des pressions exercées par les grandes capitales. Mais, si la République islamique craignait vraiment des sanctions, continuerait-elle à construire des installations ? Comme l'ont remarqué les médias iraniens, ce nouveau site prouve que Téhéran n'a pas ressenti les effets de l'embargo et entend poursuivre son programme nucléaire. Le 26 septembre, des journaux occidentaux ont affirmé que leurs services de renseignements connaissaient l'existence de ces installations. « Les Américains cherchent à démontrer



▲ En couverture : dessin de Tioumine paru dans Kommersant, Moscou.

qu'ils savent tout. Il est normal qu'ils aient repéré par satellite des bâtiments, mais ils n'avaient aucune idée de ce qui s'y passait», estime un spécialiste du programme nucléaire iranien. « Ce que les Occidentaux considèrent comme des renseignements, ce ne sont que des hypothèses qu'ils ont formulées à partir de ce qu'avait dit l'Iran il y a quelques années. » Finalement, la presse occidentale a fini par reconnaître que l'Iran avait mentionné l'existence de cette installation le 21 septembre dans une lettre à l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA).

Téhéran a choisi le meilleur moment pour faire cette révélation, une semaine avant les discussions de Genève. L'Iran a pratiquement vidé de leur sens la totalité des menaces occidentales concernant une attaque militaire. Les Occidentaux ne pourront pas détruire les multiples installations iraniennes. L'Iran a prouvé que l'enrichissement de l'uranium était un fait, et non plus un sujet de discussion. ■

Iran Le grand défi



▲ Le chef de l'Etat iranien Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visite les installations d'enrichissement de Natanz. Document tiré du site officiel de la présidence iranienne.

Faut-il punir le régime des mollahs ?

Les Etats-Unis semblent décidés à mettre la pression sur Téhéran. Mais, en se concentrant sur le dossier nucléaire, Obama risque d'échouer.

THE NEW YORK TIMES
New York

La France et l'Allemagne se sont fait la guerre à trois reprises en soixante-dix ans avant que ne leur vienne l'idée brillante d'intégrer leurs problèmes à quelque chose de plus grand : la Communauté européenne. Les Etats-Unis et l'Iran n'ont jamais été en guerre, mais leurs relations sont marquées par une méfiance pathologique. Ils feraient bien de s'inspirer des Français et des Allemands, et d'élargir le contexte de leurs rapports. Les révélations sur une deuxième usine d'enrichissement d'uranium construite en secret par l'Iran ne modifient pas l'équation nucléaire, si cette dernière se mesure à la capacité du pays à fabriquer une bombe. Ce qui a changé, c'est la psychologie du programme nucléaire iranien. La méfiance était déjà profonde, elle est désormais sans fond. Avec l'usine d'enrichissement de Natanz, capable d'accueillir 54 000 centrifugeuses (à peine plus de 8 000 s'y trouveraient), et alors que son unique centrale nucléaire en est encore au stade expérimental, l'Iran n'avait manifestement pas 54 000 raisons de creuser dans le flanc d'une montagne

près de la ville sainte de Qom pour en installer 3 000 de plus.

Téhéran veut disposer d'une option nucléaire militaire, bien que la réalité suscite autant sa nervosité que son hésitation. Le projet nucléaire de Qom est révélateur de l'état d'esprit qui règne chez les dirigeants iraniens.

Le programme d'enrichissement est dorénavant sacré car il symbolise l'indépendance du pays, un peu comme la nationalisation du secteur pétrolier dans les années 1950. Les usines de Natanz et de Qom ont pour effet de précipiter la menace de nouvelles sanctions. Nicolas Sarkozy a évoqué l'idée de les imposer à partir de décembre si aucun "changement en profondeur" n'était constaté. Le président Obama, qui préfère laisser le côté va-t-en-guerre aux Européens, a évité le mot "sanction" mais s'est montré aussi sévère que possible. Toutefois, plus que les mots, ce sont les absents qui ont pesé lourd. L'Iran se serait immédiatement repris si Obama avait eu à ses côtés les dirigeants de l'Allemagne, de la Russie et de la Chine – ces trois pays sont les principaux partenaires commerciaux de l'Iran. La chancelière Angela Merkel n'a pas trouvé le temps. La Russie a fait part de ses "sérieuses ►

► inquiétudes". La Chine a grommelé quelque chose à propos du "dialogue". Un peu faible, en guise de ferme résolution.

J'ai déjà dit que les sanctions seront sans effet. Ray Takeyh, qui a travaillé sur l'Iran avec Dennis Ross au ministère des Affaires étrangères avant de perdre son emploi, en août, m'a expliqué que "les sanctions, c'est la solution pour se donner bonne conscience". Bonne conscience, parce qu'on a le sentiment d'avoir fait quelque chose, mais cela n'aide guère. Dans cette affaire, les sanctions ne seront effectivement d'aucune aide, pour quatre raisons. Un : l'Iran est immunisé contre les sanctions. Il vit avec depuis des années, et Dubaï lui permet d'importer des produits au prix d'une surtaxe tolérable. Deux : la Russie et la Chine ne soutiendront jamais des sanctions autrement que du bout des lèvres. Trois : ce n'est pas en interrompant les ventes d'essence que l'on sape un symbole presque sacré, à savoir la puissance nucléaire. Quatre : les sanctions alimentent le complexe de persécution qui permet au régime iranien de prospérer.

ZÉRO ENRICHISSEMENT, CE N'EST PLUS ENVISAGEABLE AUJOURD'HUI

La malhonnêteté est un élément inévitable du programme nucléaire iranien. Téhéran pratique la dissimulation. Israël, à l'origine de l'ambiguïté nucléaire dans la région, a répété à l'envi depuis le début des années 1990 que les Iraniens étaient sur le point d'avoir la bombe. Or, à en croire les renseignements américains, il leur faudra encore quelques années. Nous avons donc bel et bien le choix : soit nous procédons à une frappe militaire, soit nous acceptons de vivre avec un Iran nucléarisé. Mais qu'est-ce qu'un "Iran nucléarisé" ? Est-ce un Iran qui dispose d'armes atomiques – évolution dangereuse s'il en est – ou bien un Iran dont les installations d'enrichissement sont supervisées par l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA) ? Je pense qu'un enrichissement sous surveillance sur le territoire iranien, au nom de ce qu'Obama a appelé le "droit" de l'Iran à "une énergie nucléaire pacifique", constitue une base possible pour parvenir à un accord qui mettrait un terme à la militarisation. Zéro enrichissement, aujourd'hui, ce n'est plus envisageable. Pour éviter que ne soient votées des sanctions stériles, les Etats-Unis ne doivent pas oublier qu'il faut élargir le contexte. Le régime iranien est faible. Son désarroi a une fois de plus été patent.

William Burns, le sous-secrétaire d'Etat américain aux Affaires politiques, qui assiste aux discussions multilatérales avec l'Iran, se doit d'ouvrir en parallèle des négociations directes avec Téhéran, du moins au sujet de l'Afghanistan et de l'Irak (où les intérêts des deux pays sont souvent convergents), du Hezbollah et du Hamas (pour lesquels ce n'est pas le cas), les droits de l'homme, les actifs iraniens bloqués aux Etats-Unis, les relations diplomatiques, les accords de sécurité régionaux, le trafic de drogue, la lutte contre Al-Qaïda, les visas et la libre circulation des personnes. Isolées, les discussions sur le nucléaire sont vouées à l'échec ; intégrées à un

cadre plus général, peut-être qu'elles ne capoteront pas. L'Iran souffre d'un complexe vis-à-vis de l'Amérique, source de son sentiment d'humiliation. Son programme nucléaire a avant tout pour but de renouer avec son orgueil national. Il faut résoudre ce complexe pour freiner le programme. Il faut trianguler, penser en grand. Penser Union européenne, pas traité de Versailles.

Roger Cohen

DILEMME Sanctionner ou attaquer

Il y a deux réponses possibles aux fins de non-recevoir du régime iranien, estime *The Times* : soit la communauté internationale parvient à s'unir pour imposer des sanctions contre Téhéran, et cela nécessitera la coopération de la Russie et de la Chine ; soit Israël déclenche une action militaire. "Une alternative à un front uni est une attaque d'Israël, une option qui aurait des conséquences imprévisibles. Le régime iranien a beau être réactionnaire et obstiné, il ne peut pas être indifférent à la pression. Le monde a été incapable jusqu'à présent d'exercer une telle pression : c'est maintenant ou jamais", affirme le quotidien.

VU DU LIBAN Quelle sera la réaction du Hezbollah ?

Après les révélations sur l'existence d'un nouveau site d'enrichissement de l'uranium, la crise entre l'Iran et la communauté internationale a pris une nouvelle tournure. On voit apparaître les contours d'une alliance internationale décidée à faire face aux ambitions nucléaires iraniennes et à sa politique étrangère – de l'Afghanistan au Yémen, en passant par l'Irak, la Palestine et le Liban. L'élément le plus important est que les grandes capitales du monde, y compris Moscou, estiment que ce programme n'est pas de nature pacifique. Ainsi, l'option militaire reste ouverte, d'autant plus que celle-ci bénéficie du soutien implicite de la plupart des puissances moyen-orientales. Ces dernières pensent que l'Iran a franchi la ligne jaune.

A partir de là, nous autres Libanais sommes ramenés à la question centrale de savoir comment le Hezbollah réagira au renforcement des sanctions internationales contre l'Iran, voire à la concrétisation de l'hypothèse militaire.

A ce sujet, le président du Liban et le Premier ministre nommé doivent poser la question aux dirigeants du Hezbollah dans leurs consultations, publiques ou à huis clos. Les liens qui unissent le Parti de Dieu à Téhéran font que les affaires iraniennes concernent directement le Liban. La possibilité de frappes israéliennes suscite les craintes des Libanais. Ce n'est pas qu'ils s'inquiètent pour l'Iran, mais ils appréhendent les réactions du Hezbollah et redoutent que celui-ci se laisse entraîner dans un vaste conflit régional qui pourrait se solder par une nouvelle destruction de leur pays. A mesure que la tension monte entre l'Iran et la communauté internationale, on s'interroge sur les buts réels d'un Hezbollah armé jusqu'aux dents. Son armement ne correspond pas aux besoins du Liban, mais aux visées impériales iraniennes et à la volonté de la Syrie [de faire monter les enchères] face à la communauté internationale.

All Hamadé, *An-Nahar*, Beyrouth

Les Israéliens ont déjà démontré leur capacité d'agir : en 1981, Tel-Aviv avait bombardé la centrale nucléaire de Tammouz, en Irak. Plus récemment, en 2007, son aviation a

détruit un site nucléaire en Syrie. Enfin, en mai 2009, le pays a procédé à un exercice à grande échelle simulant une attaque de missiles iraniens.

1ER OCTOBRE 2009

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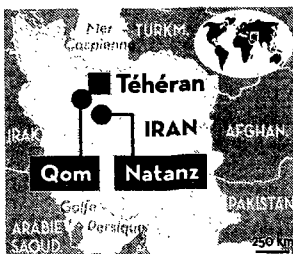


«L'Iran s'est préparé à toutes les situations et notre nation a appris, durant ces trente dernières années, à tourner toute situation en sa faveur.»

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad hier à la télévision iranienne

14

C'est le nombre de résolutions votées à l'encontre de l'Iran. Le Conseil de sécurité en a adopté 5, et l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique 9.



METFAZ, AUTRE LABORATOIRE SECRET ?

L'organisation des Moudjahidin du peuple d'Iran (OMPI) vient de révéler l'existence d'un autre centre de recherches qui serait un élément clé du programme nucléaire iranien. Baptisé Metfaz, ce laboratoire serait spécialisé dans la détonique, phase essentielle de la fabrication d'une arme atomique. La fission nucléaire ne démarre qu'à la suite de la détonation extrêmement sophistiquée d'explosifs conventionnels. De source indépendante, il est impossible de vérifier l'exactitude des déclarations de l'OMPI.



Vue satellite du site de Qom suspecté d'enrichir de l'uranium.

Iranians put Arabs on edge

CAIRO

Some say military strike by the West or by Israel would be better for region

BY MICHAEL SLACKMAN

As the West raises the pressure on Iran over its nuclear program, Arab governments, especially the small, oil-producing nations in the Gulf, are growing increasingly anxious. But they are concerned not only with the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran, but also with the more immediate threat that Iran would destabilize the region if the West pressed too hard, according to diplomats, regional analysts and former government officials.

On Thursday, Iran began meetings with six world powers to discuss a variety of issues in the first direct talks between Washington and Tehran since the 1979 Iranian revolution.

Iran appears to have entered the discussions weakened by a bitter political dispute at home and by the recent revelation of a second, secret nuclear enrichment plant being built near Qum. But instead of showing contrition, Iran test-fired missiles — an example of the kind of behavior that has caused apprehension among some of its Arab neighbors.

The cause and effect of conflict between Iran and the West mainly plays out in the Middle East, where Iran has committed allies like Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza.

“If the West puts pressure on Iran, regardless of the means of this pressure, additional pressure, increased pressure, do you think the Iranians will retaliate or stand idly by and wait for their fate to fall on their head?” said Ambassador Hosam Zaki, a spokesman for the Egyptian Foreign Ministry. “The most likely answer is they will retaliate. Where do you think they will retaliate?”

Among Iran’s Gulf neighbors, there is growing resignation that Iran cannot be stopped from developing nuclear arms, though Iran says its nuclear program is for peaceful uses. Some analysts have predicted that a regional arms race will begin and that vulnerable states, like Bahrain, may be encouraged to invite nuclear powers to place weapons on their territories as a deterrent. The United States already has a navy base in Manama, the capital of Bahrain.

“I think the Gulf states are well ad-

vised now to develop strategies on the assumption that Iran is about to become a nuclear power,” said Abdul Khaleq Abdullah, a political science professor at United Arab Emirates University. “It’s a whole new ballgame. Iran is forcing everyone in the region now into an arms race.”

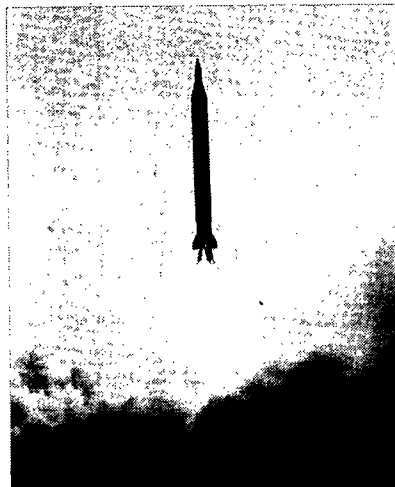
This realization, in turn, is raising new anxieties and shaking old assumptions.

Writing in the pan-Arab newspaper Al Quds Al Arabi, the editor, Abdel-Beri Atwan, said that with recent developments “the Arab regimes, and the Gulf ones in particular, will find themselves part of a new alliance against Iran alongside Israel.”

The head of a prominent research center in Dubai said that it might even be better if the West — or Israel — staged a military strike on Iran, rather than let it emerge as a nuclear power. That kind of talk from Arabs was nearly unheard of before the revelation of the second enrichment plant, and, while still rare, it reflects growing alarm.

“Israel can start the attack, but they can’t sustain it; the United States can start it and sustain it,” said Abdulaziz Sager, a Saudi businessman and former diplomat who is chairman of the Gulf Research Center in the United Arab Emirates. “The region can live with a limited retaliation from Iran better than living with a permanent nuclear deterrent. I favor getting the job done now instead of living the rest of my life with a nuclear hegemony in the region that Iran would like to impose.”

The Middle East is a region defined by many competing interests, among re-



ALISHAIGAN/FARS NEWS, VIA AP

Iran’s missile tests are the kind of behavior that worries some of its Arab neighbors.

gional capitals, foreign governments and religious sects, and between people and their leaders. An action by one, in this case Iran, inevitably leads to a chain reaction of consequences. It is too early to say how the latest revelation will play out.

Some regional analysts have said that fear of a nuclear Iran could yield positive results, possibly inspiring Saudi Arabia and Egypt to work harder at reconciling with Syria, which has grown closer to Iran in recent years as its ties have frayed with Arab states.

The report in Al Quds Al Arabi said Gulf states were taking measures to try to persuade Russia and China to stop supporting Iran. The report said that Saudi Arabia had offered to buy billions of dollars of weapons from Russia if it agreed not to sell Iran sophisticated missiles. And it said Gulf states might join together to offer China one million visas for its citizens to work in the region.

The latest conflict over Iran’s nuclear program has also allayed some longstanding fears. Arab capitals aligned with the West are now less worried, for example, that President Barack Obama will strike a deal with Tehran that might undermine Arab interests, analysts, diplomats and regional experts said.

But that is a relatively small consolation, given concerns that Iran might develop nuclear weapons or, if pushed, activate its allies, Hezbollah or Hamas, political analysts said. Arab states have already accused Iran of fueling fighting between Shiite rebels and the government in Yemen, and of inciting conflict between Shiite and Sunni Muslims in places like Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait — charges Iran has flatly denied. Egypt has accused Iran of using its ties with Hamas to undermine Palestinian negotiations with Israel.

“There is no doubt, given the recent events, that the degree of threat and amount of fear has increased,” said Anwar Majid Eshki, director of the Middle East Center for Strategic and Legal Studies in Jidda.

But Arab analysts are also not sure how the United States and its allies should proceed. Mr. Zaki and others offered little advice, other than to call on Washington to press to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which many see as the root cause of regional instability.

“No one said it was an easy situation,” Mr. Zaki said.

Mona el-Naggar contributed reporting.

Big powers begin talks with Iran

GENEVA

Tensions ease as Tehran agrees to inspections of uranium enrichment site

BY STEVEN ERLANGER
AND MARK LANDLER

Iran and the big powers opposed to its nuclear program appeared to make progress Thursday in talks that included the highest-level direct discussions with the United States in many years, as the Iranians pledged to allow foreign inspectors into a newly disclosed uranium enrichment factory within weeks and both sides agreed to hold more negotiations.

The talks here defused some of the tensions that have escalated rapidly in recent weeks over Iran's nuclear intentions and represented a victory of sorts for the Iranian government of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, whose legitimacy has not been universally recognized since his disputed re-election in June.

The tone of the discussions, at least, was considerably more positive than just a week ago, when the United States and its European allies were threatening Iran with tough new sanctions if it refused to halt its nuclear program, which they suspect is meant for creating atomic weapons.

Javier Solana, the European Union's foreign policy chief and the host of the meeting, said Iran had pledged to "cooperate fully and immediately" with the International Atomic Energy Agency in allowing inspectors into its new facility, and he added that he expected Tehran to do so "in the next couple of weeks."

Saeed Jalili, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, called the discussions "good talks that will be a framework for better talks."

Speaking at the United Nations, the Iranian foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, also described Thursday's discussions as "constructive" and said they focused on a wide range of issues Iran had laid out in a five-page proposal for talks, among them a general goal of global nuclear disarmament but no specifics about the Iranian nuclear program.

He added that Iran would be ready to enhance the level of the talks up to that of a summit meeting, meaning that heads of state would be involved.

Held at the isolated Villa Le Saugy, an 18th-century building in the countryside here, Thursday's meeting brought together Iran, the five members of the United Nations Security Council — China, Russia, the United States, France and Britain — along with Germany and

the European Union for what one senior American official called the beginning of an "extraordinarily difficult process."

The United States was represented at the meeting by the under secretary of state for political affairs, William J. Burns, and Iran by Mr. Jalili. Mr. Jalili's European counterpart is Mr. Solana.

During the morning session, Mr. Burns had a one-on-one meeting with Mr. Jalili, said Robert Wood, the deputy State Department spokesman. Mr. Wood said he had no other details on the private meeting.

Mr. Burns, a career diplomat with a long history in the Middle East, attended a similar meeting with Iran in July 2008 during the Bush administration, though he had instructions not to negotiate.

Washington had hoped to begin bilateral talks with Iran on a range of issues, among them trade and Tehran's support for Palestinian, Lebanese and Iraqi insurgent and terrorist groups, including Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad.

But after new disclosures of a hidden Iranian enrichment facility dug deep into a guarded mountain near the holy city of Qum, the focus shifted to persuading Iran to permit serious nuclear inspections and suspend its nuclear enrichment program.

Mr. Solana said Iran had also agreed to export its own low-enriched uranium from one specific facility for further enrichment to make isotopes for medical purposes. Mr. Solana portrayed that agreement as progress toward Iran agreeing to limit its own enrichment activities in its nuclear program.

Iran maintains that all of its uranium enrichment is for peaceful purposes, mostly for energy production.

On Wednesday, Mr. Mottaki, the foreign minister, visited his country's unofficial embassy in Washington, the first trip to the capital by an Iranian of that rank in a decade. Mr. Mottaki said Thursday that he had gone to ensure that the Iranian diaspora in America were being well looked after.

The visit by Mr. Mottaki, who had been at the United Nations, was approved by the White House, and it was seen as an effort to help thaw the atmosphere as the Obama administration put its policy of engagement with Iran to the test.

Iran maintains a diplomatic outpost in the Pakistani Embassy in Washington. The last time an Iranian foreign minister was permitted to make such a visit was in the late 1990s, during the Clinton administration.

"It is an unusual coincidence; whether it's a happy coincidence, we'll see," said Philip J. Crowley, a State Department spokesman. "It doesn't make the serious issues we confront any easier, but if it's

taken as a small gesture and contributes in some way, that will be terrific."

Many diplomats and analysts believe that the Qum facility is only one of a series of hidden installations that Iran has constructed alongside its public ones for what is considered to be a military program. Iran insists its program is purely peaceful and insists on its rights to enrich, but has regularly lied to the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency about its facilities.

The United States was thought to be likely to offer Iran a repackaged version of something it has offered before: an agreement to hold off on new sanctions if the Iranians agree to freeze their enrichment of uranium, so that serious negotiations can take place. The West remains wary of talking while Iran continues enrichment, fearing a negotiation without end or result.

The proposal had not interested the Iranians before. But officials planned to try again, hoping that a new American administration, the pressure from disclosure of the nuclear enrichment complex, internal divisions after Iran's chaotic elections and the ensuing crackdown on demonstrators would make it more acceptable, American and European officials said.

But some American officials believed that the turmoil in Iran would make its government less willing to compromise and appear weak.

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OCTOBER 3, 2009

Iraqi Arabs Wary Of Joint Patrols With Kurds In North

by QUIL LAWRENCE

Despite a commitment to draw down troops in Iraq, the U.S. commander in Iraq, Gen. Ray Odierno, has proposed to step up involvement along a tense and violence-prone seam of land in the north that is claimed by both Iraq's ethnic Kurds and its Arabs.

Odierno's proposal for joint patrols in the north involving U.S. troops, Kurdish forces and Iraq's predominantly Arab army was initially rejected by the central government in Baghdad. Iraqi Arab leaders are distrustful of Kurds, who have long laid claim to additional lands outside their autonomous region in the north.

American military leaders say that joint security measures are already working in some parts of northern Iraq, though not all of Iraq's politicians are happy about it.

Dam Security Provides Positive Example

The largest hydroelectric dam in Iraq is north of the city of Mosul, holding back a trillion gallons of water. Earlier this year, the government in Baghdad sounded the alarm after it realized that no government forces were guarding the aging dam. A single car bomb there could unleash a flood that might kill 500,000 people in Mosul and other cities on the Tigris River.

Army Brig. Gen. Robert Brown, who commands U.S. forces in the province around Mosul, says the government was ignoring the fact that the dam has been guarded for years by Kurdish defense forces, known as peshmerga. The Kurdish forces had recognized the vulnerability of the dam and began guarding it in 2004.

"The central government in Baghdad said, 'Hey, get the Iraqi army up there!'" Brown says.

When troops from the mostly Arab Iraqi army reached the dam, they walked into a standoff with the Kurdish peshmerga.

"Both sides think the worst — the peshmerga are thinking they're going to kick us out, and the army thinking the peshmerga aren't going to leave," Brown says.

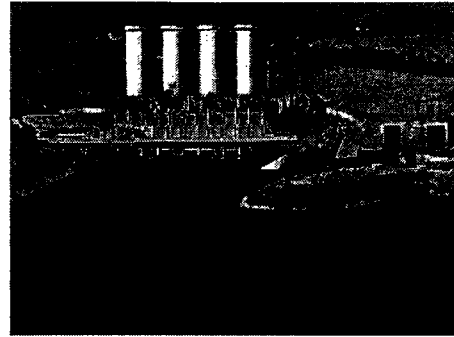
It was not the first time that Kurds and Arabs have nearly come to blows. But Brown says the Mosul dam has turned into a positive example.

With some help from the Americans, the Kurdish and Iraqi army forces started protecting the dam together. In fact, when the Iraqi army troops arrived, Iraqi officers soon realized they hadn't arranged for supplies, and the Kurdish soldiers ended up providing them with food and water.

Last week, Brown visited the Mosul dam, which is now protected by about 450 Kurdish peshmerga and the same number of Iraqi army soldiers. He formally thanked the peshmerga for protecting the dam over the past five years and handed out commendations.

But almost no Iraqi Arab troops turned up for the ceremony. The Iraqi army commander in the province, Gen. Hassan Abbas, canceled at the last minute.

The local Kurdish liaison to the Iraqi army says the Arab general often finds an excuse not to be seen with the peshmerga. Cooperation between Kurds



The hydroelectric dam outside the northern Iraqi city of Mosul (shown here in 2007) is the country's largest. A joint security patrol consisting of Arab and Kurdish soldiers began protecting it this year.

and Arabs is still politically sensitive in Iraq.

Arab Opposition To Joint Patrols

The American proposal for joint Kurd-Arab patrols was immediately embraced by Kurdish leaders, who have had good working relations with the U.S. Army for almost 20 years.

But the fact that Kurds liked the proposal may have been enough to make Iraqi Arab leaders wary, especially in an election year with strong Arab nationalist feelings.

The Arab governor of Nineveh province, Atheel al-Nujaifi, rejects the idea of any Kurdish forces in Mosul or the surrounding province. Nujaifi says that even if the Kurdish security were needed in the past to secure the dam, they are not welcome anymore.

"I do not know what happened there, and I do not care. Nobody asked them to come. Now we ask them to go," Nujaifi says.

Iraqi Arab politicians like Nujaifi fear that joint patrols will help the Kurds keep control of hundreds of towns and villages they have occupied since 2003. Nujaifi claims the Kurdish soldiers have abused and even murdered Arabs under their control. The Kurds say they moved into those areas, including parts of Mosul, to protect Kurdish civilians from the same sort of repression.

At a news conference after the ceremony at the Mosul dam, Brown was anxious to accentuate the positive, despite the politics back in the capital.

"It's a great success story, and both sides point to that and say we can work together to defeat the terrorists. The lower level you get, the less tension there is. Distrust can cause rumors. The more you get them together, the more they work together for a brighter future," he said.

Brown avoided the subject of where joint patrols might take place next, perhaps because the U.S. Army doesn't want the idea to look like it is being imposed by Americans.

A senior adviser to Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki says the joint patrols probably are the best way to prevent conflict between Kurds and Arabs, and that they may start soon along the disputed boundaries of northern Iraq.

Opposition backs out of Kurdish government



October 5, 2009 —United Press International,

MEMBERS of the opposition Kurdistan Islamic Union announced they would not take part in the next government in the Kurdish provinces of Iraq.

The Change List and Kurdistan Islamic Union emerged as an opposition to the incumbent Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Democratic Party during parliamentary elections in July in the Kurdish provinces, Erbil, Dahuk and Sulaimaniya.

Massoud Barzani, president of the Kurdish government, called on his prime minister-elect, Barham Saleh, to form a new government based on experience, not political allegiances.

Khalil Ibrahim, a top lawmaker with the KIU, told the Voice of Iraq news agency that his party would not join the new government, however.

"We have been officially invited to participate in the government, but we have announced our official and final stance," he said.

Instead, the lawmaker said, the KIU would remain as a viable opposition operating outside the Kurdistan Regional Government.

The efforts to form a new Kurdish government come as lawmakers face a frustrated population concerned about a lack of public services. The next government must also tackle territorial disputes and differences over sharing the revenue from Iraq's oil with the central government in Baghdad.

Kurdish Iranian party: “We are not rejecting the armed struggle”

By Wladimir van Wilgenburg

Loghman Ahmedi is the representative of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan in the United Kingdom. He spoke with Rudaw about KDP-I's relations with other Kurdish parties and the future of the Iranian Kurds.

Can you introduce yourself?

I was born in the city of Diwandere in Iranian Kurdistan in 1983. My family and I had to flee to Sweden in 1987. I became active in the Democratic Youth Union of Iranian Kurdistan and the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan at the age of eighteen. Currently, I have a consultative position in our party leadership and work as the party's representative to the United Kingdom.

Why do you use Twitter? Does it help?

I think that the rise of information technology, especially in the form of the social networking sites like Twitter, Facebook and Youtube, offer great recourses for everyone that needs to disseminate information. For a Kurdish opposition party like ours that is struggling against a regime like the Islamic Republic of Iran, information technology is indispensable. Twitter, Facebook and Youtube have helped us raising awareness and disseminating information in a way that was not possible before.

How do you get your information about what is happening in Iranian Kurdistan, via phone calls or do you have contacts with people inside of Iranian Kurdistan?

Our party has a very large network of members and supporters that work in underground cells that provide us with information on an hourly basis. We receive information from Iranian Kurdistan through different means. For the safety of our members in Iranian Kurdistan, I cannot elaborate on those means.

Does the PDKI also follow the internal developments in Iraqi Kurdistan with the creation of the new Kurdish opposition party Change (Gorran). Do you have any contacts with them, since they won many votes in region where the PDKI camps are located?

Our party follows the internal developments in all parts of Kurdistan. Regarding Gorran, up until now we have not had any official meeting with them and, to my knowledge, they have stated that they are not working as a political party but as block in the Iraqi Kurdistan parliament.

Last month Iran claimed it killed fighters of several Kurdish parties (PDKI, Komala and PJAK). What is the real background behind this? Are these parties cooperating?

I can only talk about what happened to our party's Peshmergas. Four of our Peshmergas, by the names of Yousef Feghehi, Hussein Mohammedi, Azad Barabi and Seifola Dniabi, were on a political mission in the district of Feyzolabegi outside the city of Saghez when

they clashed with a very large group from the Revolutionary Guards in the valley between the villages of Tomarqamish and Koltepe on the 20th of August. The Peshmergas managed to respond to the fire by the regime's forces, killing and injuring an unknown number of them, and flee from the area.

The following morning, on Friday the 21st of August, the regime gathered forces from all of the sounding areas and attacked the Peshmergas in the villages of Papshkhan and Qere. Unfortunately, after several hours of fighting, all four of our Peshmergas died in the battle. It is important for us to underline that our Peshmergas were not on a military mission but rather on a political one.

Regarding your question about cooperation between the Kurdish parties, we have regular meetings with Komala and other Kurdish parties from Iranian Kurdistan, but we do not have any relationship with PJAK.

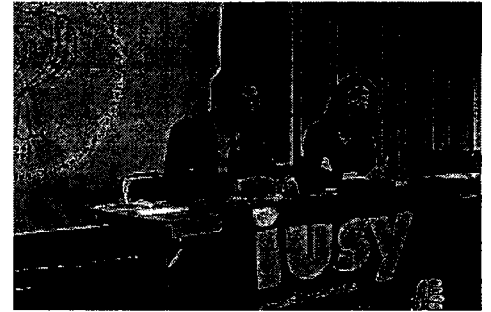
Why did a split occur within the PDKI? Aren't the Iranian Kurdish parties divided enough? Can you explain the split more for our readers that do not have any knowledge about it?

It is now almost three years ago that a small minority broke away from our party. Many individuals in this group have previously at three different times split from our party. The first time was at our fourth Congress after the revolution in Iran. That time they joined the communist Tudeh party of Iran. The second time they split from our party was following our eight Congress, after which they allied themselves with the Peoples Mujahidin of Iran. And since they did not get a majority in the party leadership at our thirteenth Congress, they chose to split from our party again, and this time they supported Mehdi Karroubi in the Iranian presidential elections. There are many different reasons for why they split from our party, but the main reason is that they are only interested in having control of PDKI. If they cannot achieve this, they split from our party, but without changing their name.

We think that it is very unfortunate when any Kurdish political party is divided and we hope that stronger cohesion within the parties will be brought about, but we cannot compromise our political and internal principles to satisfy a small minority.

Why do Iranian Kurdish groups claim that Iran is poisoning the Kurdish population with drugs? Isn't this because of the proximity of Afghanistan and Pakistan's drug routes?

The large amount of drugs that is spread in Iranian Kurdistan cannot be compared to other parts of Iran and we have a lot of evidence that Iranian officials are spreading drugs deliberately. Several witnesses have testified about being forced by Iran's Intelligence Service and the Revolutionary Guard to sell drugs. For example, witnesses testified on a Kurdish TV program called "God Doesn't Exist Here" about how agents of Iran's intelligence services forced them to sell and consume drugs and commit acts of espionage



and sabotage against our party.

A couple of weeks ago there were several attacks on Iranian officials in Kurdistan. Are there any indications about who is behind these attacks? Is there a new Sunni Kurdish rival to the secular nationalist Kurdish parties?

If you are referring to the assassinations that took place in the city of Sine, the circumstances surrounding these assassinations remain a mystery. The same goes for the identity of those who ordered and carried out the assassinations.

The Iranian regime first blamed Kurdish opposition groups and then foreign agents for the assassinations. But in the end, the regime announced that Sunni extremists linked to Al-Qaeda were responsible for the assassinations. The Sunni-extremists that Iran is claiming to be behind the assassinations are a network of groups that the Islamic Republic actually supported, funded and in some cases even established. Kurdish political organizations have condemned the assassinations. They also warned at an early stage that Iran could very well be behind the assassinations in order to have a pretext to increase its crackdown on Kurdish activists.

The Islamic Republic has pursued a policy in which it attempts to establish and support different Islamist groups to undermine the support that the secular Kurdish parties enjoy in Iranian Kurdistan. But this policy has had exactly the opposite effect, because the Kurdish population is very politically conscious and they know that the Islamic Republic is using these groups to oppress the Kurdish people.

Why do Kurdish parties condemn the attacks? If they have armed forces, why do they not carry out armed operations and target Iranian officials?

There are two main reasons for why Kurdish parties have condemned these assassinations. The first reason being that the Kurdish parties have traditionally not carried out political assassinations but we have at several times been subjected to political assassinations. The second reason being that many Kurdish political parties believe that the Islamic Republic might very well be behind the recent assassinations in Sinne [Sanandaj].

We are not rejecting armed struggle as a method, we have waged a armed struggle against the Islamic Republic in the past and we would restart an armed struggle if we believed that it was in the interests of our people, but at the moment we

think that there are other opportunities that are less costly in terms of human lives that are worth pursuing.

You posted Youtube videos of PDKI training its fighters. How many fighters do your PDKI fraction have? And are you planning to use them?

The number of our Peshmergas is not something that I could reveal, but we have enough Peshmergas to protect ourselves. And as I mentioned before we are currently not planning to carry out any military operations against the Islamic Republic we have military forces in order to protect ourselves against any possible attacks by the military forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

What are PDKI's relations with other parties fighting Iran? Like the Iranian People's Mujahideen of Iran, nationalist Turkish Azeris or the Baluchi nationalist Jundallah (Soldiers of Allah)?

We have a good relationship with many of the other political organizations that are struggling against the Islamic Republic. The PDKI and fourteen other political organizations jointly established the Congress of Nationalities for a Federal Iran in 2005, which seeks to establish a democratic, secular and federal Iran.

Regarding the organizations that you mentioned, we do not have any contact with any of them.

What's PDKI's position on Camp Ashraf near Baghdad, since it's known that PMOI have killed Iraqi Kurds in Kirkuk and supported Saddam in the past?

We have expressed concern about the Iraqi army's use of violence against the people residing in Camp Ashraf. From a humanitarian perspective, we object to the human tragedy that happened at Camp Ashraf. Politically, we have expressed concern about the fact that it seems that the Shiia-led government in Bagdad is bent on targeting Iranian opposition groups that have a presence in Iraq.

Regarding the PMOI's involvement in the killing and oppression of Iraqi Kurds, we have always condemned this and it is also one of the main reasons why we have no relationship with the PMOI.

Does the PDKI or any other Kurdish Party have any ties with Mousavi or the Iranian 'green movement'?

The PDKI has no ties with the Green Movement that is lead by Mousavi or any other individual that belongs to the so-called reformist fraction of the Islamic Republic. But our party has in different statements and actions expressed its solidarity with the brave people that are standing up against the regime. We support the political struggle for liberty and democracy in Iran. This should be differentiated from taking sides in the regime's factional infighting between "conservatives" and "reformists".

There have been several claims of Iranian protesters being killed in

Iranian cities after the presidential elections, but there was not much news from the Kurdish region. How so?

Due to several factors, the Kurdish people did not take to the streets after the announcement of

the so-called election results. Our party leader, Mr. Mustafa Hijri, made a statement when the regime announced the approved candidates for the presidential post, in which he outlined our party's position and urged the Kurdish people to boycott the elections. Moreover, our party predicted very early that Ayatollah Khamenei would not let anyone except Ahmedinejad to become President.

As a result, the Kurdish people did not turn out in large numbers on election-day. Furthermore, the Kurdish people do not want to become pawns of an internal power struggle between the different fractions of the Islamic Republic. Another factor is the fact that the leaders of the Green Movement take every opportunity to pledge their loyalty to the Islamic Republic's undemocratic constitution and its theocratic system of governance. They also refuse to even take any of the Kurdish nation's demands into consideration, making it impossible for the Kurdish people to support them.

Some Kurds in the Diaspora and even in Iraqi Kurdistan claim that Iranian Kurds do not care about their Kurdish identity in Iran. They mostly speak Persian and that they are more busy with working. What do you think about this?

I don't know whom you have been talking to but claims like that just sounds ignorant and ridiculous.

Are members of the PDKI or other Kurdish parties still being deported from Turkey to Iran and hanged?

Since 1995, many members of our party, up to seven thousand, that have sought political refuge in Europe have been stuck in Turkey waiting for their cases to be handled by international organizations like UNHCR. Unfortunately, Turkey have at different times deported some of them to Iran were they have been imprisoned and executed. There are also several cases were agents of the Islamic Republic have assassinated members of our party in Turkey. Pressure from the European Union has resulted in some changes in Turkey's actions against the Kurdish political refugees, but Turkey still deports some of them.

Do you think Iran and America can 'solve their crisis'?

No, I do not think that the United States can solve its issues with the current regime in Iran due to several factors. Regarding the nuclear issue, Iran sees this as a long-term strategic issue. The regime believes that a nuclear bomb will work both as a deterrent against any force attempting to undermine the Islamic Republic's security. It also seeks nuclear weapons in its pursuit of regional hegemony. The Islamic Republic has since its establishment had an aggressive foreign policy, in which spreading the Islamic revolution outside Iran's borders is a cornerstone. Thus, it is highly unlikely that Iran will give up its attempts to attain nuclear weapons.

The same goes for Iran's support to different terrorist groups in the region. Through its support to these groups, Iran has been able to act as a regional hegemon. Iran wants to be the only actor that can decide whether there will be peace and stability in Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Palestine and so forth. So a strategic rapprochement with Iran is impossible for the U.S.

There are some signs of America resetting its

relations with Iran. If

America becomes an 'ally of Iran' (although it's unlikely), will the

Iranian Kurdish parties then turn against America? What are they going to do?

I think that the shift in the United States policy towards Iran should be seen based on the fact that it seems that they have realized that sanctions, in any form, or aerial strikes targeting Iran's nuclear sites will not stop Iran from attempting to attain nuclear weapons. The Americans seem to believe that they do not have any real leverage over Iran, thus forcing them to propose all kinds of incentives to try to persuade Iran to give up its nuclear program. This policy will also fail. What the Americans and other Western states need to do is to support the democratic opposition in order to bring about regime change.

I do not think that the United States will become an ally of the Islamic Republic and even if that would happen our party would not change its policy towards the United States. Our struggle against the Islamic Republic will continue regardless of the policies and actions of the U.S. or other powers. The United States was a very close ally of the former regime and it did not affect our struggle. We hope that the U.S. will realize the morally justified and politically prudent rationale for an alliance with us and the rest of the democratic Iranian opposition. However, our struggle is directed against Iran, not against its current or potential allies.

How do you analyze the news reports that claim that the Iranian president has Jewish background? Is this a plot by the 'Iranian reform movement'?

I really have not given it much thought. It is an insignificant matter if he has Jewish ancestors or not. It will not change his stance against the Jewish people and the state of Israel. But one should recall that rumors of his purported Jewish background surfaced even before the recent crackdown on the so-called reformists.

In the past PKK was supported by Iran, but now they have established PJAK to fight against Iran. Recently it became know that the legal Kurdish party DTP from Turkey (which is close to the PKK) has plans of opening offices in Iran (Urmiyeh) and Syria. What does the PDKI think of this?

The DTP is free to open offices wherever it wants, it is not up to our party or any other party to judge whether this is good or bad.

Why do you think PKK established the PJAK? Is it because of the weaknesses and splits within Komala and PDKI? Are they supported by USA?

From our point of view, PJAK has only been created for tactical reasons by the PKK. The PDKI and other political organizations in Iranian Kurdistan have emerged inside of Iranian Kurdistan and have been created by the Kurds in this part of Kurdistan. This is very different from other political formations created by external actors and imposed on either the people of Iranian Kurdistan or other parts of Kurdistan for the parochial interests of such external actors. Such tactics will fail and only turn out to be counterproductive even for those political organizations that try to create such secondary orga-

nizations for their short-term interests.

PDKI seeks good relations with all Kurdish organizations in all parts of Kurdistan, including the PKK, but we do not think that it is justified for any of these organizations to dictate for Kurds in other parts of Kurdistan, either directly or through their off-shots, what goals or demands they should pursue.

Only the PKK is in a position to answer whether PJAK is supported by the USA.

It's known that PUK has very good relations with Iran and Iran's intelligence services. PUK officials have often called Iran the 'brothers of Kurds'. The Iraqi Kurdish parties were also involved in targeting Iranian Kurds in the past, but on the other hand they shelter the PDKI and Komala. Is the past forgotten? Why do PDKI and Komala accept these statements of PUK?

First and foremost, our party is not being sheltered by either the PUK or the any other Iraqi Kurdish party. One of the reasons why we are not waging an armed struggle against the Islamic Republic is because we do not want to become a pretext for the Islamic Republic to attack Iraqi Kurdistan. The security interests of Iraqi Kurdistan are of paramount importance to us.

Regarding the PUK's relationship with Iran, our party understands that the PUK needs to have relations with Iran due to several factors. This does not preclude that we have good relations with the PUK. If any problems arise between us, we address them through dialogue. We have done so in the past and will do so in the future in the event of problems of any nature.

Why is Iran bombarding the border regions of Iraqi Kurdistan? Is it because of the presence of the PKK, PDKI or Komala? Or is there another explanation?

Iran has bombarded the border regions of Iraqi Kurdistan since the No-Fly-Zone was set up in 1991. The Revolutionary Guard has at several times also entered Iraqi Kurdistan with large forces. In 1996 between 2000-4000 Iranian soldiers attacked one of our bases in Koya-Sanjaq, which is located in the middle of Iraqi Kurdistan. But in general, Iran uses our party and other Kurdish opposition parties presence in Iraqi Kurdistan as a pretext to undermine the security of Iraqi Kurdistan. The bombardment could also be seen as a kind of psychological war with the civilian population of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Some PDKI members I spoke with in Iraqi Kurdistan were not very positive about the

future; others were citing the recent progress Kurds made in Iraq and Turkey. What's your view on the future of Iranian Kurds?

I think that it is very important to stay optimistic about the future. We have a brutal enemy that will do anything in its power to destroy us, but history has shown that a regime like the Islamic Republic will not be able to continue to rule forever. There is a new generation of young Kurds that will slowly take over the leadership of the Kurdish liberation movement and I think that this new generation will be more effective in the struggle against the regime and if they do not succeed there will be a new generation after them and a new one following them and so on. Some individuals' pessimism, even within our ranks, will not constitute any hurdle to the historical dynamic in the struggle for democracy and national rights in Iran. Like other countries in the region or other regions that have suffered from war and dictatorship, Iran too will go down the path of peace and democracy. There is no reason whatsoever to be pessimistic on that historical end-goal (Photo: lawan.nu).

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OCTOBER 12, 2009

INTERVIEWED BY SABIR QADIRI

Abul Hassan Bani Sadr, the first president of Iran (1980-81) after the overthrow of the Shah regime, says that the problems that now exist in Iran will be over with the end of one of the political factions and he says that the factions of the Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei will topple the Rafsanjani camp. But above all he says that the end of the theological regime is approaching, "I see the extinction of the Islamic republic of Iran."

Rudaw: It has been said that you had testified as a witness in the court for the case of assassinating Dr. Sadiq Sharafkandi, the secretary of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran. Can you tell us about that?

Bani Sadr: I introduced two people who were aware of this assassination. One of them was Abulqasim Misbahi, who was an official of the Itlaat (Intelligence) Ministry of Iran and had accurate information about this case. When I participated in this court, I talked about how the Iran government carries out assassinations in an organized way and also about the involvement of the organizations, governmental establishments and officials who were connected to Hashmi Rafsanjani and Ali Khamenei. I also talked about the groups that are known for carrying out espionage and terrorist acts which left no doubt for the court that high ranked Iranian are involved with the assassination (of Sharafkandi). It has been proved that these terror acts had been carried out by the orders of Khamenei and Rafsanjani. We brought a person from Iran that talked entirely about another group that was involved in this terror act. The second group that is involved is Ahmadinejad's group which provided weapons

The nature of the Iranian regime is similar to that of Saddam



for the assassins from a German merchant. The merchant confirmed the incident.

Rudaw: The Kurdish political parties of the Eastern Kurdistan had for a long time raised the slogan of autonomy, but now they demand federalism, what is your view?

Bani Sadr: In the past I talked to the late (Abdulrahman) Qasmlu about the autonomy of Kurdistan and I supported it. It depends on the two sides; they must persuade the public view of the Iran citizens that the country will not be torn apart.

Rudaw: Now you are talking about a suitable condition for the solution of this issue, but did you push for a solution when you were the president of Iran?

Bani Sadr: Yes, at that time I talked with the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran about autonomy for the Kurds and we were working the solution of this issue, but the direction of the events didn't allowed these efforts to bear fruit.

Rudaw: Do you think that Kurds will get their demands from the Islamic Republic of Iran?

Bani Sadr: The events that we now can see in Iran are...brutally (repressing the opposition

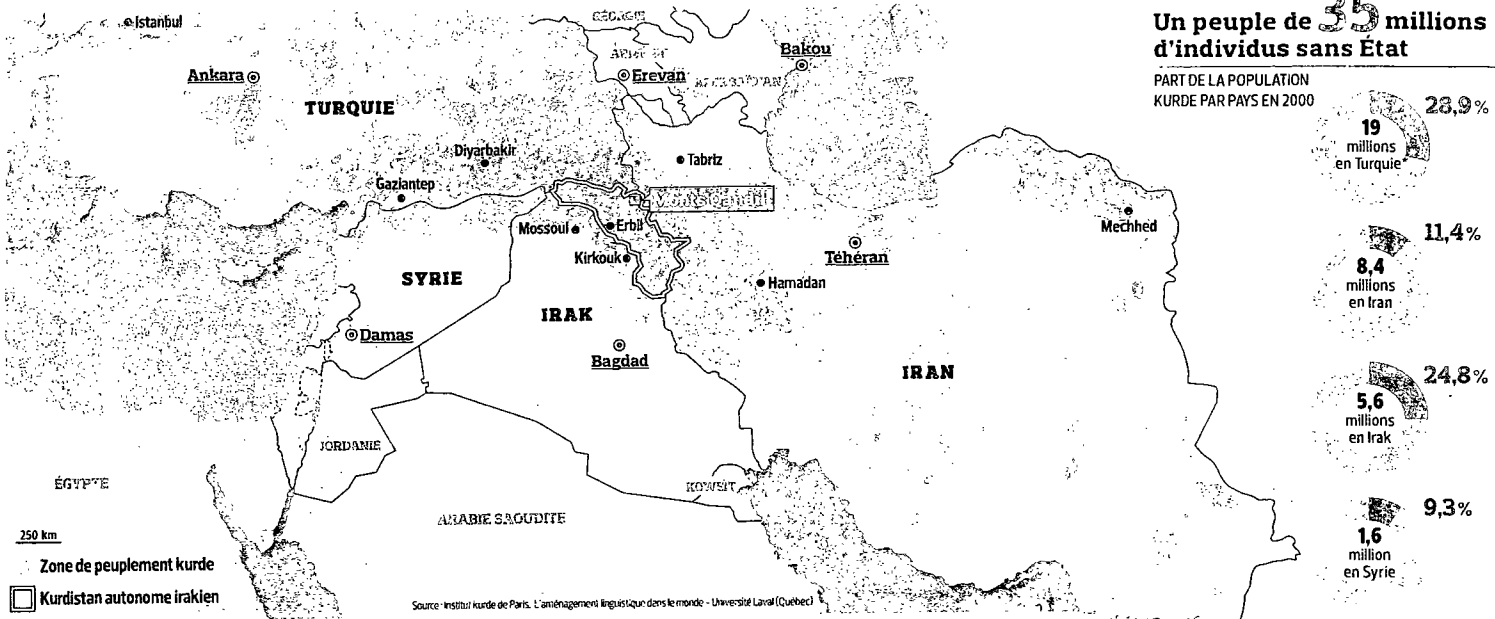
candidates). Because of that I believe there is not even the slightest not only for Kurd but for any other nations (to get their demands).

Rudaw: It has been some years since the Iran regime built relation with the Kurdistan Regional Government, what is your view on that?

Bani Sadr: For the response of this question I need accurate information, but what I can say is that the relation is not a (genuine) friendship. However there must be cooperation, even if it is in the lowest level. And this must be considered that the nature of the Iranian regime is similar to that of Saddam, and it won't keep any promise.

Rudaw: The western countries especially France and Germany had put pressure on the Iranian government for repressing the Iranian people especially after the presidential elections and because of the nuclear project, do you think that Iran will face more pressure in the future?

Bani Sadr: before the elections I issued a statement for the Iranian people and said 'if you don't hold Iran's future in your own hands, the problems that the high ranked officials created will develop to a very dangerous level.'" In present condition, the threats of Ahmadinejad might contribute to a war. A while ago Joe Biden, the US vice president, said that they would not prevent Israel from attacking Iran. And according to the Sunday Times, the Saudi officials say that they will allow Israeli jets to use their airspace to attack the nuclear facilities of Iran. These are the crises that are happening as a result of the adventures of Iran. The eight industrial countries of the world said that they want to solve the nuclear issues of Iran through dialogue, but these countries will not waste their time for the solution of this issue.



La voie étroite des Kurdes entre Irak et Turquie

LAURE MARCHAND
ENVOYÉE SPÉCIALE DANS LE KURDISTAN IRAKIEN

Retranché dans sa forteresse de Qandil, dans le nord de l'Irak, le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), en lutte contre la Turquie, ne rend pas les armes. Dans la plaine d'Erbil, les checkpoints gardés par les peshmergas et les portraits de Massoud Barzani, le président de la région autonome kurde en Irak, se succèdent avec la régularité d'un métronome. Passé un premier col, la voie se rétrécit et plonge dans les canyons ocre. On ne croise plus guère qu'une mule chargée de fagots, un troupeau de chèvres, des maisonnettes en terre battue. Nouvelle guérite. Cette fois-ci, un drapeau rouge frappé d'une étoile verte claque au vent. L'étendard du PKK signale l'entrée de la zone contrôlée par la rébellion kurde. Impossible de rater l'immense portrait du leader Abdullah Ocalan, emprisonné à vie sur une île turque, incrusté sur le flanc de la montagne. Environ 4 000 combattants de l'organisation rebelle kurde de Turquie seraient retranchés dans les reliefs escarpés des monts Qandil, en alerte permanente pour contrer toute incursion ou bombardement de l'armée turque. Le PKK ne baisse pas la garde, malgré l'annonce par Ankara d'un « plan de paix » pour mettre fin au conflit qui a fait plus de 40 000 victimes, majoritairement kurdes, en vingt-cinq ans.

Fin juillet, le gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan s'est engagé à répondre aux revendications des 12 millions de Kurdes de Turquie. Dans la forteresse de Qandil, la démarche est perçue comme une première avancée positive. Largement insuffisante, néanmoins, pour rendre les armes. Murat Karayilan, le chef militaire, reçoit

dans l'un des campements de fortune, cachés dans les bois. Sous les



LAURE MARCHAND

Nous sommes très clairs : il est temps d'emprunter une voie politique et pacifique, c'est la seule solution

MURAT KARAYILAN,
CHEF MILITAIRE DU PKK

Dans leur région autonome bénéficiant d'un quasi-statut d'État indépendant, les Kurdes d'Irak n'ont plus les mêmes intérêts que leurs frères du PKK, en lutte contre un pouvoir turc qui souffle le chaud et le froid.

branchages, un réchaud, des chaises en plastique, une télé, une parabole plantée dans les herbes. De jeunes Kurdes, filles et garçons, kalachnikov en bandoulière, sont en fac-

tion sur les talus. « Nous sommes très clairs : il est temps d'emprunter une voie politique et pacifique, c'est la seule solution. En vingt-cinq ans, les Turcs ont essayé toutes les options militaires, sans succès, juge-t-il, mains croisées sur un embonpoint débonnaire. Pour la première fois, ils ont cessé de nier l'existence du problème kurde et se sont engagés à le régler, ce changement constitue indéniablement un progrès. »

Mais l'absence de propositions suscite la suspicion.

* 10 millions (15% de la population) selon les autorités turques

« La marge de manœuvre devient chaque jour plus étroite. En lieu et place d'avancées concrètes, la Turquie se borne à énumérer ce qu'elle ne fera pas », résume Murat Karayilan. La liste est longue : « Pas d'amnistie pour les rebelles, pas de négociation avec le PKK, pas d'enseignement de la langue kurde dans les écoles, pas d'autonomie pour la région kurde, pas de reconnaissance du peuple kurde dans la constitution turque, pas d'arrêt des opérations militaires... » La fin de non-recevoir concerne, peu ou prou, l'ensemble des revendications contenues dans la « feuille de route » d'Abdullah Ocalan. En revanche, l'état-major turc a juré de poursuivre « les opérations jusqu'à la mort du dernier terroriste ». Presque chaque jour, des accrochages dans les montagnes turques allongent la liste des « martyrs » de chaque côté. Et, mardi, le parlement turc a prolongé d'un an l'autorisation accordée à l'armée de frapper les bases du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak.

Réformes culturelles

Quelques réformes culturelles ont bien été annoncées. Comme le projet de libéraliser l'usage de la langue kurde sur les chaînes de télévision et de radio ou celui de redonner leur nom d'origine aux villages turquifiés. « C'est de la poudre aux yeux, juge Mehmet, 44 ans. Nous avons déjà douze chaînes sur le satellite, il va falloir en faire plus. » Engagé dans la guérilla dès 1978, il est redescendu de la montagne en 2006, côté irakien, avec une jambe en moins, mais avec « les idées intactes ». Comme lui, reconverti dans le civil comme contremaître sur des chantiers de construction, au moins 3 000 vétérans du PKK sont installés au Kurdistan irakien, bénéficiant de la bienveillance des autorités, à défaut de pouvoir retourner en Turquie. « La nuit, mon village me rend visite dans mes rêves », soupire Umit, 35 ans, dont près de la moitié donnée à « la lutte », et cheveux gris avant l'heure. Pour cet ancien commandant, qui tient aujourd'hui une petite bijouterie, « l'ouverture actuelle n'existerait pas si nous n'avions pas lutté. À l'école, l'instituteur me battait parce que je parlais kurde. Mais je ne connaissais pas d'autres langues. » Derrière le comptoir encombré de bagues et de boucles d'oreilles, les réflexes de stratège reprennent vite l'avantage : « Comme pour les Russes lors de la campagne de Napoléon, le temps et la patience jouent en la faveur de notre peuple. Erdogan veut peser au Moyen-Orient. Il est obligé de résoudre le problème kurde pour atteindre son but. »

Carrefour stratégique

Les dynamiques régionales en cours poussent les différents acteurs à éteindre ce foyer d'instabilité au carrefour de l'Iran, de la Syrie, de la Turquie et de l'Irak. À Bagdad, le président irakien, Jalal Talabani, engagé dans un processus de rapprochement avec Ankara, presse le PKK de déposer les armes. Les intérêts américains se déclinent, eux, en trois volets : géopolitique, militaire et

énergétique. « Les États-Unis souhaitent renforcer l'alliance turco-irakienne pour contrebalancer l'influence de l'Iran », estime Murat Karayilan. Dans la perspective du départ de ses troupes d'Irak, fin 2011, Washington envisage notamment un retrait par la Turquie, via le Kurdistan. Le pétrole et le gaz irakien, en partie acheminés sur la rive turque de la Méditerranée, suivent le même parcours. Le couloir énergétique turc, également emprunté par l'oléoduc Bakou-Tbilissi-Ceyhan et le futur gazoduc Nabucco, doit donc être sécurisé. Tout en fournissant des renseignements à l'armée turque sur les positions du PKK à Qandil, les États-Unis accentuent la pression sur Ankara pour qu'il ouvre des négociations. Au cours de sa visite en Turquie, en avril, le président Obama avait rencontré Ahmet Türk, le chef du parti kurde légal (DTP), envoyant un signal très clair à son allié turc. Enfin, Massoud Barzani, le président de la région kurde en Irak, a tout à gagner dans la résolution du conflit. Mais le Kurdistan est tiraillé entre son soutien à ses frères du PKK et sa nouvelle politique de bon voisinage avec la Turquie, qui lui permet de consolider son statut de quasi-État indépendant.

En 2007, sous la pression turque, les autorités kurdes d'Irak ont fermé les bureaux du Parti pour une solution démocratique au Kurdistan (PCDK), la vitrine locale de la rébellion des Kurdes de Turquie. Un centre de renseignement tripartite - irakien, turc et américain - pour empêcher les attaques du PKK depuis l'Irak devrait être installé à Erbil. Officiellement, la guérilla n'est donc plus la bienvenue. La zone de Qandil montre une réalité plus nuancée. Le Kurdistan y envoie les instituteurs. L'organisation rebelle se charge de faire la police lorsqu'un problème surgit dans l'un des 100 villages sous son contrôle. Un dispensaire, tenu par des volontaires, assure soins et consultations à la population locale. Et, en juillet dernier, des bureaux de vote avaient été placés à l'entrée de la zone pour permettre aux habitants de participer aux élections législatives organisées dans la province kurde d'Irak. « Nous l'avons toujours dit, nous n'avons pas créé le PKK, il s'agit d'une organisation indépendante politiquement avec qui la Turquie doit dialoguer », tranche Fouad Hussein, le secrétaire général de la présidence du Kurdistan.

« Chercher à liquider le PKK ne mènera à rien, affirme Mehmet. Une autre organisation verra le jour, nos enfants sont prêts à prendre la relève. » À Qandil, au bout d'un chemin de terre, 197 tombes, tournées vers le Levant, remplissent déjà le nouveau cimetière. Dans un cadre jaune, vert et rouge, les couleurs du Kurdistan, une photo des derniers « martyrs » a été apposée sur chaque stèle. La plupart avaient tout juste 20 ans. Le 23 septembre, le PKK a prolongé une trêve unilatérale. « La suite dépendra des signaux envoyés par la Turquie, avertit Murat Karayilan. Si elle joue le jeu dangereux de donner la priorité à son plan militaire, au détriment de l'option politique, nos troupes sont prêtes à riposter. » ■

La Turquie prolonge l'autorisation d'opérer en Irak contre le PKK

ANKARA Le Parlement turc a voté hier le renouvellement pour un an de l'autorisation de procéder à des raids contre les rebelles kurdes en territoire irakien. La motion gouvernementale, qui autorise l'armée à effectuer des opérations militaires contre le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) en territoire irakien, a été votée à très large une large majorité. Ce vote intervient à un moment où le gouverne-



ment du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP, issu de la mouvance islamiste) s'apprête à présenter prochainement devant les députés des mesures en faveur de sa communauté kurde afin d'estomper le soutien, au sein d'une partie de la population du sud-est du pays, dont bénéficie le PKK, en lutte armée depuis 1984. Le parlement turc a déjà prolongé une fois cette autorisation, votée initialement en 2007. ■

Dialogue de sourds avec les Kurdes

Les chances qu'ait lieu un règlement de la question kurde s'éloignent. Les deux parties campent sur leurs positions, et un compromis semble désormais difficile à atteindre.

Le vent d'optimisme suscité au mois d'août par le changement d'attitude du gouvernement turc à l'égard de la question kurde, avec la rencontre [inédite] entre le Premier ministre Erdogan et le leader du DTP [prokurde], Ahmet Türk, semble retomber. Les propos du ministre de l'Intérieur, qui a rejeté l'idée d'une révision constitutionnelle pour faire du kurde une langue d'enseignement officielle, ont provoqué des réactions négatives du côté du DTP. "La montagne n'a même pas accouché d'une souris", a déclaré Ahmet Türk. Lors d'un meeting organisé le 1er septembre à Diyarbakir [ville du Kurdistan turc], il a défini ses positions sur le sujet, soulignant les divergences de vues importantes qui l'opposent au gouvernement turc.

En premier lieu, le désaccord à propos d'Abdullah Öcalan, le leader emprisonné du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Le DTP insiste pour qu'il soit partie prenante dans le processus de négociation. En déclarant que "ceux qui ont sacrifié leur vie pour combattre doivent participer à la négociation", Ahmet Türk a clairement fait allusion au chef du PKK. Or ce dernier ne fait pas partie des plans du gouvernement. Sur cette question, le DTP n'est donc pas du tout sur la

même longueur d'onde que les autorités. La modification éventuelle de la Constitution constitue une autre pierre d'achoppement entre les deux parties. Le ministre de l'Intérieur veut maintenir le chapitre III de la Constitution [établissant le turc comme langue officielle], ce qui signifie qu'une révision constitutionnelle n'est pas à l'ordre du jour. Or le DTP ne manque jamais une occasion de rappeler que, sans cette révision, une solution à la question kurde n'est pas envisageable. Le parti veut donner à l'identité kurde une reconnaissance constitutionnelle et insiste fortement pour que le chapitre de la Constitution définissant la notion de "turcité" soit amendé. L'enseignement du kurde est le troisième point de désaccord. Ahmet Türk réclame en effet que le kurde devienne une langue d'enseignement officielle, tandis que l'AKP [le parti islamiste turc au pouvoir] préfère le cantonner au statut d'"option". Par ailleurs, dans le domaine de l'audio-visuel, il défend le principe de "chaînes de télévision kurdes privées".

Actuellement, le DTP est incapable d'agir indépendamment du PKK et d'Öcalan. Cette réalité a été maintes fois rappelée par Ahmet Türk. En répétant : "Nous ne sommes pas assez forts, prenez Öcalan comme interlocuteur", les

porte-parole du DTP ont posé leurs limites. Compte tenu de ces blocages, la perspective que le front kurde accepte un compromis semble peu probable. Tous les conseils suggérant au DTP de "prendre ses distances avec le PKK" n'ont aucune prise sur cette formation, qui ne cesse de démontrer sa dépendance à l'égard du PKK et d'Öcalan. Voilà pourquoi il faut admettre que le problème kurde ne se règlera pas par une simple poignée de mains sanctionnant une réconciliation. Les revendications qui émanent du front DTP-PKK traduisent leur volonté de se définir "comme une nation [kurde] à part entière avec à la clé la reconnaissance et la proclamation de cette reconnaissance au niveau constitutionnel". Il s'agit donc pour le DTP de passer à un système fédéral. Il n'en parle pas ouvertement de cette manière, préférant une "autonomie démocratique". Quant au gouvernement AKP, il doit comprendre que, sans une évolution de la structure unitaire actuelle vers un système fédéral binational, sans la désignation du kurde comme langue d'enseignement officielle, sans la participation d'Öcalan et sans une amnistie générale pour les militants du PKK, il ne pourra pas compter sur le soutien du DTP ni espérer que le PKK abandonne les maquis dans un geste de bonne volonté.

L'inquiétante montée de l'intolérance

L'antisémitisme progresse avec, en toile de fond, la situation au Moyen-Orient. Mais les Juifs du pays ne sont pas les seuls à être victimes de ce désamour turc. Toutes les minorités sont concernées.

Derya Sazak / Milliyet

Un sondage financé par l'Union européenne, intitulé "La perception du regard sur la judéité et les identités différentes", vient d'être rendu public lors d'une conférence organisée par le centre culturel de la synagogue de Neve Shalom, dans le quartier de Beyoglu, à Istanbul. Bien que la présence juive dans ce quartier remonte à plus de cinq siècles, on ne peut que constater l'érosion démographique qui frappe la communauté juive vivant dans cette ville. Celle-ci connaît, notamment pour des raisons de sécurité, un repli sur elle-même. Pour les hommes et les femmes qui ont

connu le génocide, Istanbul a incarné un lieu sûr où pouvaient se réfugier les Juifs fuyant l'Allemagne nazie.

Cependant, la violence de la politique israélienne à l'encontre des Palestiniens a suscité en Turquie une réaction qui se traduit désormais par une hausse perceptible de l'antisémitisme. Cette étude sur la "perception de la judéité" permet de mesurer le changement à l'œuvre dans la société turque. L'enquête a été réalisée par téléphone entre le 18 mai et le 18 juin 2009 dans l'ensemble de la Turquie sur un échantillon de 1 108 personnes. Tant l'offensive israélienne sur Gaza en décembre 2008 et

janvier 2009 que le "One minute" du Premier ministre Erdogan à Davos [où il a eu une altercation publique avec le président israélien Shimon Pérès] ont pesé sur cette enquête d'opinion. Par ailleurs, ce sondage confirme la baisse du seuil de tolérance de la population turque à l'égard de l'"autre", déjà mis en lumière par une autre étude sur les valeurs effectuée par plusieurs universités turques. On constate que les Turcs expriment un rejet même à l'égard d'identités à propos desquelles ils n'ont pourtant aucune information ! Alors que 75 % des personnes interrogées admettent ne rien savoir des Juifs, des Grecs et des Arméniens, 42 % déclarent

rent qu'elles préféreraient ne pas avoir de Juifs comme voisins. Ce taux est de 35 % s'il s'agit de membres des minorités chrétiennes (et de 52 % s'il s'agit d'athées). Il en ressort donc qu'environ un tiers des Turcs ne souhaitent pas vivre aux côtés d'individus appartenant à des minorités. A la question : "Selon vous, les Juifs de Turquie se sentent-ils liés à la République turque ?" seuls 15 % des sondés ont répondu par l'affirmative, tandis que 48 % ont répondu non. Les sondés se sont également vu proposer un tableau leur permettant d'évaluer les citoyens turcs appartenant à diverses obédiences religieuses sur une échelle allant de 0 à 10. Les Juifs ont été notés de la façon suivante : 3,6 pour la

fiabilité, 6,8 pour l'assiduité au travail et 4,7 pour le respect accordé à l'être humain. Les musulmans sont mieux perçus, avec respectivement 7,5, 6,7 et 7,6.

Une hostilité qui mène à la diabolisation

L'intolérance à l'égard des minorités enregistre une augmentation inquiétante. Selon la sociologue Nilüfer Narli, "le danger de ces préjugés, que l'on constate en particulier dans le cas de l'antisémitisme, c'est qu'ils suscitent une hostilité qui confine de plus en plus à la diabolisation d'un groupe précis. Ce groupe endosse tous les défauts et se trouve alors complètement déshumanisé". Hakan Yılmaz, de

l'université de Bogaziçi (Istanbul), estime que, "au lieu de vivre sur le mythe voulant que la Turquie ait été tolérante au temps de l'Empire ottoman, le pays ferait mieux de regarder en face ses problèmes de discrimination". Akile Gürsoy, de l'université de Yeditepe, explique pour sa part que, pendant les vingt-cinq premières années de la République, dix-sept députés appartenant à des minorités ont siégé à l'Assemblée nationale turque, mais qu'au cours des soixante années suivantes ce chiffre a spectaculairement baissé, pour aboutir à une sous-représentation parlementaire flagrante des minorités en Turquie.

LA TURQUIE VEUT POURSUIVRE LE PKK ET L'IRAK PRÉSERVER SA SOUVERAINETÉ

AFP

BAGDAD, 15 octobre 2009 (AFP)

LE PREMIER ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a affiché jeudi à Bagdad sa "détermination" à combattre les rebelles kurdes du PKK réfugiés dans le nord de l'Irak et a jugé difficile d'accroître le débit de l'Euphrate en dépit des demandes de l'Irak frappé par la sécheresse.

"Nous continuerons à combattre (le PKK) et nous (la Turquie et l'Irak) confirmons notre détermination à éradiquer ce terrorisme qui menace nos deux pays", a déclaré M. Erdogan lors d'une conférence de presse, selon la traduction arabe de ses propos.

Plus tôt dans la journée, M. Maliki avait demandé à la Turquie de "respecter sa souveraineté" lors d'opérations militaires turques contre les rebelles kurdes du PKK au Kurdistan irakien.

Le chef du gouvernement irakien "a demandé de respecter la souveraineté de l'Irak, assurant que personne ne pouvait la violer", a déclaré à l'AFP le porte-parole du gouvernement irakien Ali al-Dabbagh.

M. Maliki "a dit que l'Irak n'avait rien à voir avec les opérations (turques contre le PKK) et cherchait simplement à protéger sa souveraineté", a ajouté le porte-parole.

Mis en place en novembre 2008, un comité tripartite composé de la Turquie, de l'Irak et des Etats-Unis, est chargé de régler la question de la présence du PKK dans la région autonome irakienne, a-t-il souligné.

Mardi devant le Parlement turc, M. Erdogan a indiqué que la question de la lutte contre les rebelles du PKK en Irak, figurerait à l'ordre du jour de ses discussions. Les députés turcs ont approuvé le même jour le renouvellement pour un an de l'autorisation de procéder à des raids contre les rebelles kurdes en territoire irakien.

Les rapports turco-irakiens se sont nettement améliorés depuis l'an dernier après que l'administration de Bagdad et celle kurde (nord) se sont engagées à faire en sorte que le Kurdistan irakien ne devienne plus un sanctuaire pour le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Les deux dirigeants ont également discuté de la question sensible de l'eau. L'Irak reproche à Ankara de ne pas ouvrir les vannes de ses barrages sur



Le Premier ministre irakien Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki (D) serrant la main du Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan à Bagdad le 15 octobre 2009

l'Euphrate pour permettre à son voisin de lutter contre la sécheresse qui le frappe.

"J'ai donné des ordres pour augmenter le débit vers l'Irak et la moyenne est actuellement de 550 mètres cubes par seconde", a expliqué M. Erdogan, soulignant qu'un accord de 1987 prévoyait un débit de 500 m³/s. Ali al-Dabbagh avait auparavant précisé qu'Ankara laissait actuellement passer 440 m³/s.

"J'ai rencontré des députés irakiens qui m'ont demandé plus d'eau, a lancé M. Erdogan. J'ai réalisé qu'ils ne comprenaient pas les détails (de l'accord), ou alors il y a une autre raison derrière leur extrémisme."

Lors de cette visite officielle, 48 protocoles d'accord renforçant la coopération politique, énergétique et commerciale ont été signés, selon le chef du gouvernement turc qui était accompagné de neuf ministres.

"Les échanges commerciaux représentent 5 milliards de dollars actuellement et ils passeront à 20 milliards bientôt", a précisé M. Erdogan.

Le Monde
10 octobre 2009

Editorial

Arménie-Turquie

L'Arménie et la Turquie vont nouer des relations diplomatiques. C'est une bonne nouvelle. La République d'Arménie, créée par l'URSS en 1920, a accédé à l'indépendance en 1991. Mais sans normaliser sa relation avec le voisin turc. On imagine pourquoi : le poids du passé. Erevan, la capitale d'Arménie, se heurtait au refus d'Ankara de qualifier de génocide les massacres dont plus d'un million d'Arméniens furent victimes à l'aube de la dissolution de l'Empire ottoman, dans les premières

années du XX^e siècle.

Sous les auspices de la Suisse, Arméniens et Turcs devaient signer, samedi 10 octobre, à Zurich, le protocole d'accord sur l'échange de missions diplomatiques et l'ouverture de la frontière entre les deux pays. La version la plus banale de l'événement conduit à faire l'observation suivante : aux confins de l'Europe, deux pays voisins normalisent leurs relations.

C'est toujours souhaitable et, de ce seul point de vue, l'accord de Zurich – patronné par Moscou et Washington – est le bienvenu. On salue au passage les mérites de la diplomatie du football et les gestes de détente qu'autorise la passion des uns et des autres pour le ballon rond : le président turc, Abdullah Gül, s'est rendu en Arménie pour le match aller entre les deux équipes nationales pour les qualifications à la Coupe de monde 2010 ; son homologue arménien, Serge Sarkissian, pourrait se rendre en Turquie pour le match retour.

Mais il y a plus. Cette normalisation, si elle est menée à bien, porte en elle une forte charge symbolique. Quand Turcs et Arméniens

signent un accord, ce n'est pas qu'affaire diplomatique. On touche au passé. Encore prudemment, certes : Ankara se refuse toujours à qualifier de génocide le massacre des Arméniens ; Erevan ne cesse de revendiquer une telle reconnaissance. Les deux pays vont créer une commission historique. Elle devra étudier « de manière scientifique et impartiale les données historiques et les archives » relatives au drame. C'est un pas. Comment ne pas y voir, en filigrane, un geste important d'Ankara, peut-être l'acceptation d'une première confrontation de la Turquie avec un passé terrible ?

Qui s'oppose à l'accord de Zurich ? Les plus ultras des nationalistes arméniens craignent que cette normalisation n'enterre l'exigence de reconnaissance du génocide. Les plus ultras des nationalistes turcs redoutent qu'Ankara abandonne au passage un de ses protégés régionaux, l'Azerbaïdjan, avec lequel l'Arménie est en conflit. Mais quand les modérés s'entendent sur le dos des plus extrémistes, ce n'est pas forcément mauvais signe. ■

Herald Tribune INTERNATIONAL OCTOBER 12, 2009

For Turkey and Armenia, a historic breakthrough

ZURICH

With help from Clinton, longtime foes agree to normalize diplomatic ties

BY MARK LANDLER AND SEBNEM ARSU

Turkey and Armenia have signed a historic agreement to establish normal diplomatic relations and reopen their borders after a last-minute dispute over wording sent diplomats into frantic efforts to salvage the deal.

For Turkey and Armenia, neighbors sundered by a century of bitterness over the mass killing of Armenians by Ottoman Turks, the tumultuous events Saturday illustrated how hard it was to heal the wounds of history. For Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, nine months into her job, it was a bracing taste of down-to-the-wire limousine diplomacy.

The arduous negotiations between the countries had been actively encouraged by the Obama administration, and with an agreement in sight, Mrs. Clinton flew to Switzerland to witness the signing as a show of American support. Instead, she found herself performing triage.

Sitting in a black BMW at a hilltop hotel in Zurich, with aides thrusting papers at her, Mrs. Clinton worked two cell-phones at once as she tried to resolve dif-



POOL PHOTO BY PATRICK B. KRAEMER

Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian, left, shaking hands Sunday with his Turkish counterpart, Ahmet Davutoglu, as Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, right, looked on.

ferences between the Armenian foreign minister, Eduard Nalbandian, and his Turkish counterpart, Ahmet Davutoglu.

Mrs. Clinton continued her efforts inside with Mr. Nalbandian and then gave him a ride to the University of Zurich, where the ceremony was to be held. By her own account, she did most of the talking on the brief trip, appealing to him not to let months of talks go up in smoke.

"There were several times I said to all the parties involved, 'This is too important, this has to be seen through, we

have come too far,'" she recalled. Mrs. Clinton declined to describe the differences between the sides.

Shortly after 8 p.m., three hours late, the two men sat down to sign the agreements, though in a compromise worked out beforehand, neither delivered a statement. To take effect, the agreement must be ratified by the parliaments of both countries, by no means a sure thing.

Any easing of tension between Turkey and Armenia was bound to be fragile. The deal faces particularly fierce opposition

from Armenia's far-flung and politically potent diaspora. Many Armenians insist that ties should not be normalized until Turkey acknowledges that the killing of more than one million Armenians at the end of World War I constituted genocide.

Most scholars agree that those killings fit the definition of genocide. But Turkey has vehemently denied that judgment, and the government has supported the prosecution of Turks who have spoken out about the issue.

As part of the agreement, the two countries would pledge to establish an international commission to research World War I-era archives to clarify the extent of

the massacre. Some Armenians fear this would produce a revisionist history that dilutes the enormity of the killing.

The countries would have to open their borders within two months after ratification and establish the historical commission within four months.

For their part, Turks protest that Armenia has yet to settle an ugly fight with Azerbaijan, its neighbor and a close ally of Turkey, over Nagorno-Karabakh, a breakaway enclave. Turkey sealed its border with Armenia in 1993 in solidarity with Azerbaijan after Armenian troops occupied territories around Nagorno-Karabakh. The Turkish prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose

party holds a clear majority in Parliament, has threatened to delay ratification of the deal until Armenia cedes the territories.

For the United States, a reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia would alter the strategic balance in southeastern Europe. It could open new routes for oil and gas pipelines to the West, as well as an alternative supply line for U.S. troops in Afghanistan, though administration officials insisted that had nothing to do with their eagerness for a deal.

Op-Chart

JASON CAMPBELL, MICHAEL O'HANLON, JEREMY SHAPIRO and AMY UNIKEWICZ

States of Conflict: An Update

	AUGUST 2005	AUGUST 2007	AUGUST 2009
IRAQ			
Iraqi Civilian Deaths From War	30	2,000	800
Iraqi Security Force Deaths	28	78	42
U.S. Troop Deaths	0	84	7
U.S. Troops in Iraq	138,000	362,000	130,000
Iraqi Security Forces	138,000	360,000	650,000
Crude Oil Production (in millions of barrels per day)	2.15	2.15	2.5
Electricity Production (average megawatts, official grid, prewar: 4,000)	4,000	4,400	6,500

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune
OCTOBER 7, 2009

Bombings in succession strike Iraq

BAGHDAD

Over 20 killed in blasts aimed at reconciliation meeting; officials unhurt

BY TIMOTHY WILLIAMS

A series of apparently coordinated bombings aimed at a meeting for national reconciliation killed at least 23 people and wounded 60 others in western Iraq on Sunday, but they did not in-

jure the officials who were at the gathering, the authorities said.

The bombings, which occurred in Ramadi, the capital of Anbar, were the latest in a string of deadly attacks in that province during the past few months that have focused on tribal leaders and members of Iraqi security forces and Awakening Councils.

The province had been among the more peaceful in Iraq during the past two years after many tribal leaders dropped allegiances to Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, an extremist Sunni Arab group, and joined Awakening Councils linked with the U.S. military and the Iraqi government.

Hekmet Jassim Zeidan, the deputy governor of Anbar, said the province's police officials had been negligent.

"The police commanders are not doing their job the way it should be done," he said. "We have pointed out the mistakes and failures among the police, but no one has done anything to correct the

problems."

The first bomb Sunday exploded about 11 a.m. outside the headquarters of Ramadi's main government building, where the provincial governor and council have offices.

The Iraqi police said a car in a parking lot adjacent to the building was detonated as a meeting took place inside on reconciliation efforts between the Shiited government of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki and local Sunni Arabs.

About seven minutes after the first bomb, a second car in the parking lot exploded, wounding security force members and others who had responded to the original explosion, officials said.

Many of the victims of the bombings were taken to Ramadi General Hospital. About one hour after the first two bombings, a man driving a car filled with explosives tried to speed through a security checkpoint near the hospital, the police said. He was shot by the police but managed to explode the car, killing himself and wounding two others, officials said.

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune
OCTOBER 12, 2009

KURDISHGLOBE

October 10, 2009

DNO Letter to distinguished leaders in KRG and Iraq

By The Kurdish Globe

From what we know today, it is clear that the KRG bought the DNO shares from DNO and this was done legally.

DNO International ASA

To: Excellency Jalal Talabani

President, Republic of Iraq

Excellency Masoud Barzani

President, Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Excellency Kamal Kirkuki

Speaker of Parliament, Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Excellency Nechirvan Barzani

Prime Minister, Kurdistan Region of Iraq

5 October 2009

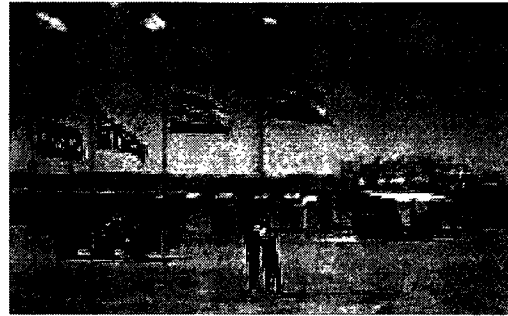
Your Excellencies,

With reference to recent events, we would like to express our regret for the harm and the difficulties caused to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), and Dr. Ashti Hawrami, the Minister of Natural Resources in particular, as a result of DNO's internal disagreements with the Oslo Stock Exchange (OSE). The KRG is not, and has never been, under any investigation by the OSE in relation to the issue.

This has recently been confirmed by the OSE itself in their official statement dated 28th September 2009, in which the OSE stressed that the exchange does not have any issues with the KRG and that the KRG has not at any time been subject of investigations by the exchange.

From what we know today, it is clear that the KRG bought the DNO shares from DNO and this was done legally, officially and using the KRG's funds directly. The sale of the shares was approved by the Board of Directors of DNO International ASA. The fact that this was done under a nominee account set up for the KRG by HSBC is a very standard practice used by Governments, organizations and companies to protect their privacy.

The purchase of the shares by the KRG was done to facilitate funding for DNO to complete the outstanding work program in the Duhok province and to therefore enable the KRG to achieve its primary goal,



DNO Company, Norway, Iraq, and Kurdistan flags wave at the Tawke oil field in Iraqi Kurdistan - 2009

which was to demonstrate its ability to export oil from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Had it not been for this assistance from the KRG in the very difficult financial market at the time, we would not have been able to accomplish the important goal of commencing oil export from the region, which was successfully achieved on 1st of June, 2009. This was one of the most important events in the recent history of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, which you witnessed yourselves and where you delivered your own speeches accordingly. We were proud to be part of that achievement under your exemplary policy to establish a modern, effective and transparent oil industry in your Region.

We would like to reassure you that nothing improper has taken place in these share transactions. It has been clearly demonstrated that the account was in the KRG's name and not that of any individual. We are therefore witnessing wrong and speculative information appearing in the media where some elements of the press are inventing stories with the view to damaging the reputation and integrity of Dr. Hawrami and hence to undermine the achievements of the KRG.

Once again, we are greatly troubled by the fact that our disagreements with the OSE were exploited to create unfair and damaging insinuations, designed to undermine the KRG's policies. Therefore, we will do all that we can to find out the motives for these deliberate and unjust actions which were orchestrated from our country.

Yours Sincerely,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of DNO International ASA

Berge Gerdt Larsen

Chairman of the Board

TheNational OCTOBER 14, 2009—UAE

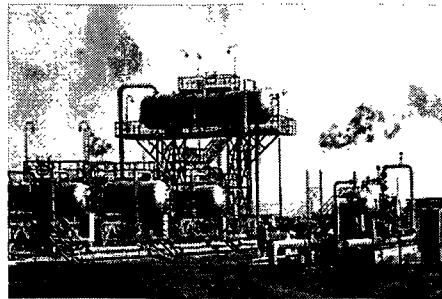
Chaos over Iraq's oilfields spills over

Tamsin Carlisle

It is business as usual in Iraq's chaotic oil patch, with prospective deals inflaming a conflict between the country's parliament and its oil minister.

The ministry has also released conflicting information on a high-profile auction of licences and Iraqi Kurds have suspended crude exports from their semiautonomous northern enclave.

No sooner had Baghdad announced that three teams of foreign energy firms had agreed to the ministry's tough terms for developing two of Iraq's biggest oilfields, than the Iraqi parliament summoned the oil minister for another grilling over his handling of Iraqi oil



wealth.

The minister, Dr Hussain al Shahrstani, would face questioning on October 27, said Jabir Khalifa Jabir, a member of the parliament's oil and gas committee.

Analysts said the minister, who is a key

supporter of the Iraqi prime minister Nouri al Maliki, could also face a vote of confidence as preparations are under way for national elections in January.

Dr al Shahrstani said yesterday a consortium led by Italy's Eni had agreed to Baghdad's offer of US\$2 (Dh7.34) a barrel to lift output from the Zubair oilfield in southern Iraq to 1.125 million barrels per day (bpd) from about 227,000 bpd within six years. He said two competing teams, led respectively by the US oil company ExxonMobil and Russia's Lukoil, were willing to accept \$1.90 a barrel for raising production from the West Qurna field.

Long-term contracts to develop the two oilfields, each containing billions of barrels of reserves, were among those snubbed in June by

foreign oil firms at Iraq's first post-war auction of oil and gas licences, after most participants balked at the government's tough terms. Only one contract emerged from the bidding round, after Britain's BP and China National Petroleum Corporation agreed to halve the payment they wanted for increasing output from Iraq's biggest oilfield, Rumaila.

Dr al Shahrstani nonetheless claimed the bidding round was a success, because it had yielded an agreement that would enable the ministry to achieve its goal of raising Iraq's oil output to 4.5 million bpd by 2015 from about 2.5 million bpd and had been a model of transparency. But now, parliamentarians are reviving their previous objections to direct negotiations between the ministry and foreign oil companies and to any contracts for foreign firms to work on fields already producing oil.

"After a major effort from the oil ministry, our price was accepted," Dr al Shahrstani said yesterday in reference to the negotiations over West Qurna. "Iraq has an opportunity to go ahead and sign this contract with Iraqi conditions."

But Paolo Scaroni, the Eni chief executive, said that as far as the Zubair agreement was concerned, some as yet unspecified elements of the deal had been sweetened considerably to compensate for the lower per barrel remuneration. "You cannot compare the \$2 today to the \$4.80 (sought) two months ago," he said.

That could make it difficult for Dr al Shahrstani and Mr al Maliki to sell the politically charged contracts to a hostile parliament, said Sanuel Ciszuk, the Middle East energy analyst at the consulting firm IHS Global Insight.

The contracts would need to be ratified by an "increasingly moribund" Iraqi cabinet, he added.

But Dr al Shahrstani is pulling out all stops to ensure his oil development programme unfurls swiftly in the months leading up to the election. A second bidding round is scheduled for December, the ministry said yesterday, after announcing on Tuesday that it would be postponed for a month.

Dr al Shahrstani told reporters yesterday that Baghdad was now aiming to raise Iraq's

crude output to between 10 million and 12 million bpd within six years, more than doubling its previous target. One conflict that is unlikely to be resolved soon, however, is Baghdad's protracted dispute with the Kurds over territory and resource jurisdiction, which has already stalled for two years the passage of a crucial federal oil law for Iraq.

Yesterday, the Kurdistan regional government said Kurdish oil exports had been halted because the foreign companies pumping the oil had not been paid.

"Oil exports from Kurdistan's fields have been stopped until an agreement is reached with the Iraqi oil ministry for mechanisms to pay the dues of the oil companies working in the region," said Ashti Hawrami, the Kurdish natural resources minister. According to Mr Ciszuk, Baghdad has responded by disqualifying China's Sinopec from participating in the Zubair development consortium over its recent agreement to purchase Addax Petroleum, one of the companies producing Kurdish oil.

The New York Times OCTOBER 13, 2009

Defying Baghdad, Kurds Halt Oil Exports Over Payment

By TIMOTHY WILLIAMS

BAGHDAD — The semiautonomous Kurdish region has reopened a rift with the central government after announcing that it had halted all petroleum exports from Kurdistan until Baghdad pays the international companies that are pumping oil in the region.

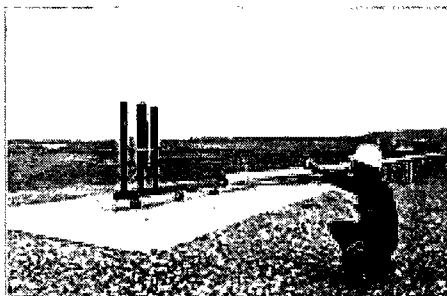
Oil extracted in Kurdistan can be exported only through Iraqi government pipelines running to Turkey, giving Baghdad a stranglehold on the transport of oil produced there. At the same time, the government needs all the revenue it can get to pay for a host of pressing needs.

The amount of oil involved currently, about 100,000 barrels a day, is relatively small compared with Iraq's total production of 2.4 million barrels a day. But with production from the Kurdish areas likely to increase markedly in coming years, the dispute has taken on added importance.

Kurdistan's minister of natural resources, Ashti Hawrami, said in a letter dated Oct. 9 and posted on the Kurdish government's Web site Monday that the decision to stop exports had been made in concert with the two international companies now extracting oil there.

"We have jointly agreed that no free oil will be pumped for export, and payments have to be made," Dr. Hawrami wrote in the letter. "We will only resume exports with guaranteed payments."

Kurdistan has awarded more than 30



The Iraqi government has refused to recognize the contracts of foreign companies operating in fields like Tawke in

contracts to international oil companies during the past few years over the objections of Baghdad, which has barred international companies working in Kurdistan from competing for oil contracts in the rest of Iraq.

Kurdistan began signing its own deals with foreign oil companies after becoming impatient with the central government's inability to adopt a national oil law that would regulate the industry. The Iraqi Parliament still has not approved an oil law, but earlier this year Baghdad began seeking oil production deals of its own with international companies, including a preliminary agreement with a consortium of British Petroleum and the Chinese National Petroleum Company to develop the enormous Rumalia field in southern Iraq.

After DNO, a Norwegian company, and Genel Energy, a Turkish company, struck oil at the Tawke field in Kurdistan this year,

Baghdad originally refused to export their production over its pipelines. The cash-poor government eventually relented, however, giving its approval in late May.

Exports from Tawke and from a second site in Kurdistan, at the Taq Taq field, started June 1, but Baghdad has refused to pay the companies for the oil because it continues to regard their contracts with Kurdistan as illegal.

Meanwhile, officials in Kurdistan said they could not afford to pay because revenue from the fields went directly to Baghdad.

DNO has a 55 percent share in the Tawke field; Genel Energy owns 25 percent; the remainder is owned by the Kurdish government.

Dr. Hawrami, who oversees Kurdistan's oil sector, said the Norwegian and Turkish companies, which had invested \$500 million in Kurdistan, had not received a penny so far for their exports.

Khalid Saleh, an adviser to Hussain al-Shahrstani, Iraq's oil minister, confirmed Monday that oil exports from Kurdistan had stopped. He said the government had no plans to abide by the terms of the Kurdish contracts.

"At this moment, the government is not willing to pay," he said.

Dr. Hawrami also acknowledged in the letter a complex web of financial arrangements that the Kurdish government had with the two companies, including secret government investments and loans of as much as \$50 million.

The deals, which were negotiated with the permission of the president of Kurdistan, Masoud Barzani, were intended to bolster the financially strained oil companies so they could continue exploration in Kurdistan, according to the letter.

AP Associated Press

Trouble for Iraqi elections brewing in oil hub

OCTOBER 10, 2009 —By BRIAN MURPHY — Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) -- Iraqi lawmakers appear to be snagged again at a familiar impasse: how to settle power-sharing disputes in the oil-rich city of Kirkuk before important national elections.

Parliament officials have scheduled a Thursday session to seek some compromises in the three-way dispute that has held up critical laws on oil investment and increased worries about more ethnic-driven violence. But each side - Kurds, Arabs and Turkomen clans - has shown little sign of giving in as they did in January's races for provincial councils.

At stake is political control of Iraq's northern oil field and its hub city. But the Kirkuk showdown is further tangled by historical claims and rivalries in one of Iraq's most ethnically mixed regions.

Arabs and Turkomen - both minorities in the region - boycotted preliminary parliament discussions on Kirkuk on Wednesday, claiming the Kurds are unwilling to consider any proposals that could threaten their control of the Kirkuk city council and parliament seats in the area. The Arabs and Turkomen seek a new formula that would guarantee an equal split in political clout.

"We cannot make Kirkuk a stumbling block on the path to the elections," said Hadi al-Amiri, head of the defense and security committee in parliament.

But so far appeals have failed to nudge the three sides closer to a pact over sharing political power and resources. The dispute could also complicate the expected political dealmaking at the national level after the Jan. 16 election, which will stand as a test of the political strength of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. Iraq's majority Shiites should claim most of the seats in the voting but will need alliances with Sunni Arabs, Kurds and others to effectively govern.

The deputy parliament speaker, Khalid al-Attayah, told The Associated Press that the parliamentary elections cannot be delayed and "must take place in all provinces."

This would mean a showdown to force a deal over Kirkuk in the coming months or use the existing election rules that had no power-sharing pacts and gave most seats to Kurds - whose near-autonomous northern region does not include Kirkuk, though the city is considered by many Kurds to be part of their historical territory.

Rebwar Talabani, a deputy head of the Kirkuk provincial council and a Kurd, said the election must go ahead in January as planned, but it's possible the voting "could be suspended for Kirkuk" until some kind of compromise is reached.

U.S. diplomats and military commanders have often described Kirkuk as one of the linchpins for long-term stability in Iraq. During a September visit to Iraq, Vice President Joe Biden noted that Iraq's law on foreign oil investment is still not on the horizon - an indirect reference to the stalemate over Kirkuk.

The ethnic friction in Kirkuk is centuries old but was enflamed in past decades by Saddam Hussein's program to move tens of thousands of Arabs into the area in an attempt to shift the demographic balance.

Kurds currently make up an estimated 52 percent of Kirkuk's population, compared with Arabs at 35 percent. Turkomen make up about 12 percent. Also, about 12,000 Christians live in Kirkuk.

In April, a U.N. report recommended giving Kirkuk a "special status" with oversight by both the near-autonomous Kurdish region and the central government in Baghdad.

TODAYS ZAMAN

october10, 2009

Mourners pay respects to Kurdish intellectual Fırat in modest funeral

TODAY'S ZAMAN

Prominent Kurdish politician Abdülmelik Fırat, who died of leukemia in Ankara on Tuesday, was laid to rest yesterday in his hometown of Erzurum.

The 75-year-old Fırat died in the intensive care unit of Güven Hospital in Ankara, where he was taken early this week for deteriorating health due to complications from leukemia. He was buried in the Hınıs district of the eastern province of Erzurum following a funeral. No memorial ceremony was held for the former deputy in Parliament as he had said prior to his death that he did not want an official ceremony at Parliament on the grounds that Parliament did not support him during his hardest times.

In addition to his children and relatives, ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) Erzurum deputy Saadetin Aydın, Erzurum Mayor Ahmet Küçükler, Rights and Freedoms Party (HAK-PAR) leader Bayram Bozyel and the for-



mer leader of the now-defunct pro-Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) Democratic People's Party (DEHAP), Murat Bozlak, were present at the funeral prayer in Erzurum.

A grandson of the Kurdish rebel leader Sheikh Said, Fırat became a deputy from the Democrat Party (DP) in 1957 and was sent to prison following the May 27, 1960, military coup

d'état, which resulted in the execution of the prime minister and two other ministers. Fırat was also sentenced to execution, but his sentence was later commuted to imprisonment.

In 1991, he entered politics under the True Path Party (DYP) but subsequently left the party because he did not agree with its policies toward Kurds. He was sent to prison again for two months on charges of helping the outlawed PKK.

A harsh critic of the PKK, he remained on the political scene and finally established HAK-PAR in 2001. He left three years ago because of health problems and handed over the post of the party's presidency to Sertaç Bucak. Fırat also lent his support to the government's recent democratic initiative to settle Turkey's long-standing Kurdish issue. His son Abdülkadir Fırat said a settlement of the Kurdish issue was one of his fathers' biggest dreams.

Iraq Kurdistan denies wrongdoing in DNO affair

REUTERS

BAGHDAD —October 9, 2009 —(Reuters) -

IRAQI KURDISTAN'S oil minister has denied wrongdoing in a murky stock deal that has left some outsiders raising questions about doing business in a relatively stable corner of Iraq.

Ashti Hawrami, natural resources minister of the semiautonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq, defended financial assistance made privately over the past year to two foreign companies working in the region's Tawke oilfield.

Hawrami issued a wide-ranging, nine-page statement late on Friday. Earlier, in Oslo, Norwegian authorities pushed for an investigation of transactions made in shares of oil company DNO International, including trades involving the Kurdish Regional government.

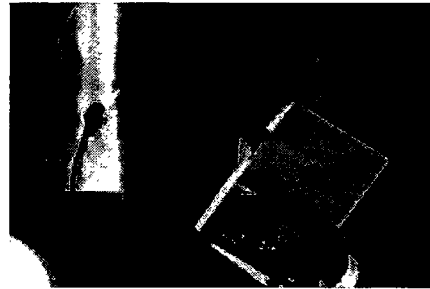
Hawrami also vowed Kurdistan would not export oil until a row with Iraq's central government over payment to foreign companies was settled.

DNO International sold 44 million of its own shares last year to the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), which ended up in the hands of privately held Turkish company Genel Energy, in the process of merging with Heritage Oil -- a London-listed oil company active in Kurdistan.

After the sale became public last month, the KRG suspended DNO's activities for allegedly tarnishing its reputation, but the firm's local operations have since restarted.

In the statement, Hawrami said he arranged assistance for the companies, whose financial woes he said were due partly due to oil export restrictions imposed by Iraq's central government, in order to keep the region's energy plans on track.

"The reasons for the help were very clear and sounded. Failure of these two companies would have meant failure of the KRG's overall policy," he



Dr Ashti Hawrami, Kurdistan Regional Government minister of natural resources

said.

He wrote that "the \$50 million sum involved, which I used for both purposes (initially for DNO and later on for Genel), was approved by my prime minister. It is important to realize that we had clear justifications to help DNO and Genel, as that was to our own self interest."

Kurdistan is feuding with the Oil Ministry in Baghdad as it seeks to exploit its considerable energy resources independently. The ministry deems Kurdish contracts such as the one with DNO illegal.

While exports from Kurdish fields began this year with backing of the ministry, foreign companies working in Kurdistan have not yet been paid for those exports.

There are few signs the central government, whose oil marketing agency is actually exporting the Kurdish oil, is going to budge on its refusal to provide Kurdish officials with that money.

"We will only resume export with guaranteed payments," Hawrami wrote.

The minister also blamed political opponents for trying to exploit the DNO situation, faulted the bank which facilitated the stock deal for failing to provide complete information and heaped criticism on the Iraqi Oil Ministry.

Aswat al-Iraq

October 17, 2009

Kurds and Shiites, though split, would make fine bedfellows, say Kurdish writers

ARBIL / Aswat al-Iraq: Two Kurdish political analysts ruled out the Shiite Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (SIIC)'s backpedaling on the idea of federalism in central and southern Iraq would have negative impact on its alliances with the Kurdistan leaders.

They agreed that Kurdish alliances with the SIIC and other powers would be determined by their stance on Kurdish demands, noting the Kurds' alliance with the Shiite parties, though split into two separate lists, is still the best option for the stakes on the Sunni powers would not be that high.

"The SIIC, as an organization, is still seeking a federacy and believes in its importance for the building of a stable Iraq. Accordingly, the recent statements made by SIIC chief Ammar al-Hakim to the media about federacy not being a priority for them are part of election and political tactics," Ribeen Rassoul told Aswat al-Iraq news agency.

Ammar, the son of late Shiite leader Abdulaziz al-Hakim and who succeeded him as SIIC chief, had said in statements that many of the concepts, slogans and platforms of the council need to be upgraded while others would not be accepted by the Iraqi man in the street at present. "It is not part of the SIIC's agenda at the moment to focus on federacy in central and southern Iraq. This is a right for the Iraqi people as guaranteed by the constitution and only the people would decide whether they want this right fulfilled or postponed."

Rassoul pointed out that the SIIC might not fully back down on its pro-federacy position but it would not concentrate on this for the time being.

"This new attitude by the SIIC was mainly driven by its decline in the provincial councils elections early this year, which prompted it to reconsider some of the general policies and to re-arrange priorities anew based on the notion that the people today need to have services and living standards problems addressed," Rassoul said.

He viewed that the council will most probably steer clear of any issues that

lack Iraqi consensus.

"There are some views within the SIIC that federacy as a project to build a new state is not ripe on the Shiite street now and that perhaps the adoption of a federacy has impinged upon the SIIC's popularity. On the other hand, the other Shiite adversary, the Dawa Party (of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki) fended off the idea and focused instead on security and service trump cards, let alone its calls for setting up a powerful government in Baghdad, which earned it support by Iraqi Shiites," said Rassoul.

He added that the provincial councils elections have brought about changes within the Shiite and Sunni ranks alike, which impose on the Kurdistan Alliance, the second largest bloc in the Iraqi parliament, to re-draw the map of its alliances accordingly.

"The Sunnis are no longer represented by one single front led by the Iraqi Islamic Party, nor are the Shiites by one alliance a single coalition led by the SIIC. Based on this, the KA should re-draft its alliances and election strategies to be in harmony with the new state. The KA should never rely on a friendship of one party or coalition. Rather, it should expand its alliances and stand on one equal space from all parties," he said.

Dawa leader Maliki had announced the formation of the Dawlat al-Qanoon coalition, in which more than 40 political parties and movements are participating to prepare for the January 16, 2010 parliamentary elections, versus the SIIC-led Iraqi National Coalition which comprises the Sadrist Movement, or Iraqi loyal to Shiite leader Muqtada al-Sadr, the Fadila (Virtue) Party and other political powers.

This should lead to the re-drawing of alliances with powers outside the Shiite house after the expiry of the honeymoon between the Dawa and the SIIC, which entered the 2005 general elections together on the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) list that grabbed the majority of the seats in parliament.

Le Monde
13 octobre 2009

Accepter l'« autre » de l'Europe L'intégration d'Ankara à l'UE correspond à une réalité de plus en plus multiculturelle

On s'est rappelé en Turquie, le 31 juillet dernier, le cinquantenaire de la relation formelle avec l'Union européenne. Il n'y a pas eu de célébration, tout juste la projection d'un documentaire relisant le passé, le présent et l'avenir de la relation dans le marc de café. Dans la salle, on a beaucoup gloussé.

Aucun membre de l'Union n'a attendu autant que la Turquie, mais aucun n'a bénéficié autant de la dynamique européenne lorsque celle-ci se faisait tangibler. En effet, il y a eu des hauts et des bas dans cette longue relation, d'ailleurs plutôt des bas que des hauts. Les moments forts de ce récit demi-centenaire sont 1963 où l'on signe l'accord d'Ankara - acte originel toujours en vigueur ; 1987 où la Turquie fait une demande formelle d'adhésion - rejetée ; 1995 où l'on signe une union douanière toujours en force, chaudement conseillée à l'époque par Raymond Barre ; 1999 où la candidature turque est réaffirmée à la suite de la chute du Mur et l'arrivée de nouveaux candidats, décision dans laquelle le président Chirac a pesé ; 2004 où la Turquie satisfait suffisamment au critère politique et passe à la dernière étape de l'adhésion, les négociations, qui débutent en 2005.

« Aucun membre de l'Union n'a attendu autant que la Turquie »

A l'ouest du continent régnait un esprit fort de solidarité et de partenariat avec l'Est, dont le point culminant a été atteint à Laeken, ce bourg de Bruxelles, en décembre 2001. Les Occidentaux ayant généreusement pris en charge l'autre Europe depuis le fait accompli de 1989, ils se sont résolus à couronner la résurrection du continent en lançant les travaux d'une Constitution européenne. On connaît la suite.

Le traité constitutionnel a avorté après les référendums français et hollandais, l'esprit de solidarité qui régnait sur le continent s'est essouffé pour faire place aux petits calculs blasés, malgré les succès pourtant avérés du projet « Europe ».

Le coût de l'élargissement, par exemple, que l'on s'est plu à exagérer à plaisir fut le vingtième de ce que le plan Marshall avait déversé sur l'Europe occidentale. Ses bénéficiaires, en revanche, n'avaient pas de prix. C'est grâce à des sommes modiques que l'Europe a su éviter l'embrasement généralisé dans l'ère postcommunisme - à

Cengiz Aktar

Politologue à l'université
Bahçeşehir (Istanbul)



Dans le cadre de la Saison de la Turquie en France, l'Université de tous les savoirs organise un cycle de dix conférences consacrées au

présent et à l'avenir de ce pays, du 9 au 18 octobre, à l'université Paris-Descartes. Pour tout renseignement, voir le site www.utls.fr

l'exception de la Yougoslavie - et a installé les bases d'une paix et d'une prospérité durables, vitales pour le continent tout entier. Qui se le rappelle aujourd'hui dans la cacophonie européenne ?

En 1999 la Turquie a été invitée à ce grand projet, et elle a su s'en servir remarquablement pour se réformer et se transformer. Le désir de changement des Turcs propulsé par le vent d'Ouest a, malgré toutes les adversités, métamorphosé le pays de fond en comble. Dix ans après, la Turquie est aujourd'hui un autre pays.

L'Union avait vu juste lorsqu'elle avait pris la décision de composer avec elle. Après l'autre Europe, accepter l'« autre » de l'Europe signifiait un défi immense dont la portée dépasserait les protagonistes pour avoir une portée universelle. Accepter de composer avec la figure séculaire de l'altérité, héritière d'un Empire ottoman porte-flambeau de l'islam conquérant, demande en effet un courage politique et une solide vision de l'Europe.

Convier la Turquie à l'Union était une politique rationnelle qui se basait sur les intérêts réciproques et communs. Aider ce pays à jeter les bases d'une stabilité politique et économique allait contribuer à la paix et à la stabilité du continent, comme pour les pays d'Europe centrale.

Ancrée à l'Europe et membre de l'Union, la Turquie pouvait devenir un pôle d'attraction pour les pays du sud de la Méditerranée, du Moyen-Orient et du Caucase, et y exporter sa stabilité. Des questions en suspens comme la situation à Chypre, les disputes avec la Grèce, la question kurde, la migration clandestine, etc., pouvaient être résolues plus aisément

dans un cadre commun. Les avantages potentiels d'une population jeune, l'attrait économique d'un marché non saturé de 75 millions de consommateurs, les économies d'échelle dans le voisinage immédiat et asiatique, la valeur stratégique de la seconde armée de l'OTAN, la position géostratégique sur les routes d'énergie, ont, à un moment ou un autre, compté dans la prise de décision. Or voilà que ce conte de fées s'épuisa en Europe pour laisser la pla-

ce au doute, voire au mépris et à l'ignorance, provoquant la désillusion côté Turquie où l'on s'est de plus en plus senti ostracisé.

C'est que le débat sur l'adhésion turque a été victime de ce que l'on appelle la « fatigue de l'élargissement », pour finir par se fourvoyer dans un sens où la Turquie est traitée comme un fardeau. En particulier en France où la droite, mue par un opportunisme électoraliste scandaleux et fondé sur l'islamophobie, ne s'est pas embarrassée d'utiliser le dossier turc à sa guise, alternant islamophobie et turcophobie à volonté.

Concrètement, aujourd'hui, le gouvernement français empêche à Bruxelles l'ouverture des négociations de chapitres réputés en rapport direct avec l'adhésion pleine et entière de la Turquie à l'Union, en contradiction totale avec les actes signés par ses prédécesseurs et les règles établies des relations internationales.

Mais il y a plus. Exacerbé par la perspective de l'adhésion turque, le débat européen d'aujourd'hui porte sur l'identité et les frontières de l'Europe. Bien que légitimes, ces interrogations sont mues par l'anxiété et ont du mal à saisir le réel. Exacerbées par la crise économique, elles incitent à se murer dans cette supposée identité et ces frontières qui, pourtant, ne correspondent pas à la réalité d'une Europe déjà foncièrement multiculturelle. Or cette perspective positive et constructive se trouve également dans le partenariat avec la Turquie. Le débat sur l'arrivée d'un partenaire de type nouveau dans la famille européenne est à peine amorcé, sa poursuite en toute honnêteté est dans l'intérêt de tous, même si beaucoup feignent de l'ignorer. ■

AFP

LE KURDISTAN CESSE D'EXPORTER SON PÉTROLE EN RAISON D'UN CONFLIT AVEC BAGDAD

ERBIL (Irak), 14 octobre 2009 (AFP)

LA RÉGION AUTONOME du Kurdistan irakien a cessé d'exporter son pétrole en raison d'un conflit avec le gouvernement central sur le paiement des compagnies étrangères qui exploitent les gisements, a annoncé mercredi à l'AFP le ministre kurde des Ressources naturelles.

"L'exportation du pétrole provenant des champs situés au Kurdistan a été stoppée jusqu'à ce qu'un accord soit trouvé avec le ministère irakien du Pétrole sur la manière de payer les compagnies qui travaillent dans notre région", a déclaré Ashti Hawrami.

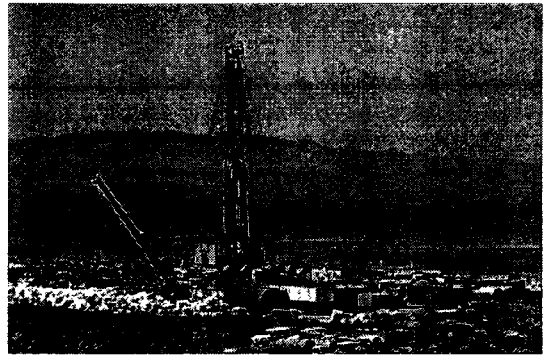
"Il est indispensable de trouver un moyen de les payer", a-t-il ajouté.

Le Kurdistan irakien avait commencé le 1er juin à exporter du pétrole pour la première fois de son histoire, dans un climat d'hostilité avec Bagdad qui nie à sa province du nord le droit de signer des contrats sans son aval.

Avec l'entrée en exploitation de deux champs pétroliers, 90.000 barils étaient acheminés quotidiennement vers l'oléoduc reliant Kirkouk au port turc de Ceyhan.

Dans une lettre publiée le 9 octobre sur le site du gouvernement du Kurdistan, M. Hawrami indiquait qu'en 2008, les compagnies norvégienne DNO et turque Genel avaient investi chacune 500 millions de dollars. La première exploitait le gisement de Tawke, près de Dohouk, avec une capacité d'exportation de 50.000 barils par jour (bj) et la seconde celui de Tak Tak, avec 40.000 bj.

Mais Bagdad a refusé de reconnaître les contrats pétroliers conclus par le Kurdistan avec des sociétés étrangères et veut des contrats de service, rémunérant les compagnies pétrolières au baril extrait plutôt que par un partage des bénéfices tirés de l'exploitation des ressources.



Depuis, ni DNO ni Genel n'ont été payées par le gouvernement irakien.

"Nous devons connaître les détails des contrats et le montant qui est versé à ces compagnies", avait affirmé mardi le ministre irakien du Pétrole, Hussein Chahristani, lors d'une conférence de presse.

"La responsabilité du gouvernement central est d'exporter le pétrole irakien par l'oléoduc national vers Ceyhan et de reverser les revenus au budget de l'Etat", a souligné mercredi à l'AFP le porte-parole du ministère, Assem Jihad.

Pour sa part, un haut responsable de ce ministère a été encore plus clair: "Le gouvernement irakien n'a signé aucun contrat avec ces compagnies et n'a pas vu le détail des contrats signés par la région du Kurdistan. La règle veut que les revenus pétroliers soient versés au budget de l'Etat qui reverse ensuite 17% à cette région".

L'Irak produit 2,4 millions de barils/jour dont 2 millions vont à l'exportation.

AFP

IRAK: LES TENSIONS ENTRE ARABES ET KURDES FACTEUR PRINCIPAL D'INSTABILITÉ (ARMÉE AMÉRICAINE)

BAGDAD, 12 octobre 2009 (AFP)

LES TENSIONS entre communautés arabe et kurde dans les territoires du nord et de l'est de l'Irak sont le facteur principal d'instabilité dans le pays, a jugé lundi un haut responsable militaire américain à Bagdad.

Par ailleurs, les influences "malignes" de la Syrie et de l'Iran sont sur le déclin mais sont toujours une source d'inquiétude, a ajouté le général Steve Lanza, porte-parole des forces américaines en Irak, lors d'une conférence de presse.

"Nous considérons les tensions arabo-kurdes comme le facteur numéro 1 de l'instabilité en Irak", a déclaré le général Lanza.

"Nous travaillons très dur pour aider à réduire les tensions dans le nord" du pays, a-t-il ajouté, soulignant qu'un comité composé de hauts responsables militaires américains, des représentants du gouvernement autonome kurde à Erbil ainsi que le gouvernement central irakien étaient réunis pour discuter d'initiatives visant à faire renaître la confiance.

Aucune mesure concrète n'a encore été décidée mais en août, le général Ray Odiemo, commandant des troupes américaines en Irak, avait émis l'idée d'une coopération des ses militaires avec les forces irakiennes et kurdes dans les territoires disputés du nord.

Selon le militaire, Al-Qaïda "a une ouverture (dans ces régions) pour conduire des opérations, attaquer des cibles vulnérables et poursuivre ses tentatives d'implantation".

Une coopération permettrait aux peshmerga (combattants kurdes) et à l'armée irakienne "de refermer ces ouvertures où Al-Qaïda a une liberté de mouvement", a-t-il souligné.

Selon le général Lanza, tout arrangement devrait être accepté par le Premier ministre irakien Nouri al-Maliki et le président kurde Massoud Barzani, ne pas violer l'accord de sécurité signé en fin d'année dernière entre Washington et Bagdad, et assurer que l'engagement des troupes américaines ne serait que temporaire.

Le gouvernement kurde, qui contrôle trois provinces (Erbil, Souleimaniyeh et Dohouk), réclame aussi la province riche en pétrole de Kirkouk ainsi que les parties majoritairement kurdes des provinces de Ninive et Diyala, ce que Bagdad refuse.

Concernant les interventions étrangères en Irak, le porte-parole militaire à fustigé "l'influence maligne de certains (...) qui veulent briser ce pays et (...) ne veulent pas que les élections (législatives de janvier 2010) se passent de manière crédible et légitime".

"Que des combattants étrangers entrent en Irak depuis la Syrie n'est pas un secret", a-t-il dit. Mais leur nombre a baissé de façon spectaculaire".

"Il y a une influence maligne de l'Iran, par l'argent, l'entraînement, l'aide ou les systèmes d'armement qui sont entrés dans le pays", a-t-il expliqué.

Dans la province de Missane (sud), nous trouvons encore de caches de systèmes d'armement, dont certains viennent d'Iran, selon le général Lanza.

Mais, a-t-il souligné, "je dirais que ces deux choses ont connu une baisse".

Tensions arabo-kurdes en Irak: Washington lance un SOS

Par Georges Malbrunot

Les tensions entre les communautés arabes et kurdes dans le nord et l'est de l'Irak sont le principal facteur d'instabilité dans le pays. C'est l'avertissement que vient de lancer un haut responsable militaire américain à Bagdad le général Steve Lanza.

Après la menace terroriste représentée par Al Qaida en 2006-2007, après le conflit interchiite de 2008, ces tensions représentent la « troisième phase de la crise » que vit l'Irak depuis le renversement du régime de Saddam Hussein en 2003, souligne un expert français de retour d'Irak.

Ces frictions sont nées de la décision américaine autorisant leurs alliés kurdes d'occuper 80 000 km² le long de leurs trois provinces du nord, dans la foulée de l'invasion de l'Irak en avril 2003. « 80 000 km², c'est trois fois la superficie de leurs trois provinces », rappelle l'expert. Pas étonnant que leurs



voisins arabes protestent aujourd'hui.

A l'époque, les Kurdes étaient avec les chiites – mais à un degré moindre – les principaux alliés des Américains. Ce sont eux qui ont par exemple rédigé, avec le pro consul américain, Paul Bremer, la Constitution fédérale post Saddam, dont l'Irak a tant de mal à se défaire six ans plus tard.

Comment faire rentrer les miliciens kurdes dans leurs trois provinces du nord ? C'est toute la question. Le Premier ministre Nouri al Maliki s'y essaie depuis des mois. Il teste ses voisins kurdes en envoyant ici ou là une brigade de l'armée ira-

kienne. Mais en face, les solides peshmergas campent sur leur refus de céder du terrain. Les Américains avaient proposé une coopération de leurs militaires avec les forces irakiennes et kurdes, mais en vain, là encore.

Conséquence du statu quo : la situation continue de pourrir sur le terrain. A Kirkouk, la cité pétrolière arabisée par Saddam Hussein revendiquée aujourd'hui par les Kurdes. Près de Mossoul, où les peshmergas sont également déployés. Tout comme plus au sud vers Khanaqin, non loin de la frontière iranienne. Autant de foyers de tensions entre Arabes et Kurdes, dont profite localement la mouvance terroriste Al Qaida.

Profitant du parapluie américain, les Kurdes sont allés loin dans leurs exigences autonomistes depuis 2003. Trop loin peut-être ? « Ils savent qu'entre Bagdad et Erbil, leurs parrains américains choisiront in fine l'Irak », avertit la source. D'où la révision de leurs relations

avec leurs voisins, en particulier la Turquie, avec laquelle les Kurdes d'Irak coopèrent désormais. Et ce contre leurs frères kurdes du PKK, réfugiés dans leurs montagnes.

A Bagdad, Nouri al-Maliki entretient de très mauvais rapports avec le président de la région autonome kurde, Massoud Barzani. Mais il a besoin des députés kurdes, s'il veut se succéder à lui-même comme chef de cabinet, à l'issue des élections législatives de janvier. Face aux Kurdes, la marge de manœuvre de Maliki est donc réduite.

« Nous travaillons très dur pour aider à apaiser les tensions dans le nord », poursuit le général Lanza. Un comité composé de hauts responsables militaires américains, des représentants du gouvernement autonome kurde à Erbil ainsi que du gouvernement central irakien sont réunis pour discuter d'initiatives visant à faire renaître la confiance. Mais plus le temps passe, plus le fossé se creuse entre communautés.

IRAK: 11 MORTS DANS UN ATTENTAT CONTRE UNE MOSQUÉE DANS LE NORD

AFP

MOSSOUL, 16 octobre 2009 (AFP)

ONZE FIDÈLES ont péri et plus de 40 ont été blessés vendredi dans un attentat suicide contre une mosquée dans le nord de l'Irak, a-t-on appris de source médicale.

"Nous avons reçu 11 corps jusqu'ici et plus de 40 blessés, et d'autres blessés ont été transportés dans des structures de soins près du lieu de l'attentat", a déclaré à l'AFP le Dr Hani Mohammed, de l'hôpital de Tal Afar (380 km au nord de Bagdad) où s'est produit l'attentat.

Un premier bilan fourni par la police locale faisait état de huit morts et 25 blessés.

"Le kamikaze, qui se trouvait dans une mosquée sunnite de Tal Afar, a tiré sur l'imam durant son prêche avant de se faire exploser parmi les fidèles", a indiqué un responsable policier local.

Tal Afar, dans la province de Ninive, est une localité habitée majoritairement par des turcomans chiites mais avec une forte minorité sunnite. Le réseau Al-Qaïda y était bien implanté et cette ville a connu de sanglants attentats.

Le 9 juillet, 35 personnes avaient été tuées et plus de 60 blessées dans un double attentat suicide dans un quartier résidentiel de la ville.

"Un kamikaze a visé un sergent de la police, Ali Nouh, dans sa maison du centre de Tal Afar. Il était vêtu d'un uniforme de police quand il a frappé à la porte de l'officier. Ali Nouh, sa femme et sa fille ont été tués" dans l'explosion, avait affirmé à l'AFP le général Khaled Al-Hamdani, chef de la police dans la province de Ninive.

"Quand des gens sont venus à l'aide, le deuxième kamikaze s'est fait exploser",

avait ajouté le général, soulignant qu'un des frères du sergent tué, lui aussi policier, avait aussi été grièvement blessé.

L'attaque du 9 juillet était la plus meurtrière depuis le retrait américain des villes irakiennes, le 31 juin. L'armée et la police irakiennes assurent désormais la sécurité dans les localités alors que les forces américaines, qui font profil bas, se cantonnent désormais dans des patrouilles en dehors des agglomérations.

Selon un rapport récent du groupe de réflexion International Crisis Group (ICG), la province de Ninive pourrait être un important foyer de déstabilisation de l'Irak, où les violences ont fortement diminué même si elles sont encore très fréquentes.

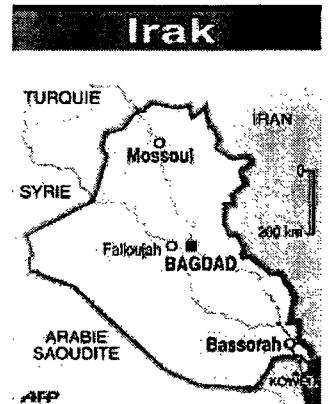
Le nord de la province comprend plusieurs zones que se disputent les communautés arabes, turcomanes et kurdes. Les autorités kurdes souhaitent rattacher ces zones à leur région autonome, ce que Bagdad refuse.

"La violence est plus faible presque partout en Irak par rapport aux années précédentes mais à Ninive, le carnage se poursuit", écrivait ICG.

"Les groupes d'insurgés restent actifs (...) même s'ils sont fortement diminués", ajoutait le rapport, précisant que le "conflit qui se poursuit risque d'entraîner d'autres parties du pays sur une mauvaise pente".

Ce nouvel attentat intervient alors que les violences ont baissé de moitié en septembre par rapport à août, avec 203 morts dans le pays, selon des chiffres officiels publiés au début du mois.

Le bilan de septembre était le plus bas depuis mai, quand 155 personnes avaient été tuées en Irak.



Le Monde
16 octobre 2009

Bruxelles réclame à la Turquie des progrès sur la liberté d'expression et la justice

Dans son rapport annuel sur l'élargissement, la Commission recommande de ne pas alourdir les sanctions à propos de Chypre

Bruxelles
Bureau européen

Olli Rehn, le commissaire européen chargé de l'élargissement, fait tout pour éviter la suspension des négociations d'adhésion ouvertes depuis quatre ans avec la Turquie. Cela ne l'empêche pas de dresser un état des lieux en demi-teinte du processus en cours dans son rapport annuel sur les pays de l'élargissement, présenté mercredi 14 octobre à Bruxelles. Tout en constatant des « progrès », le document note que « des préoccupations demeurent dans un certain nombre de domaines, comme la liberté d'expression, la liberté de la presse, la liberté de religion, les droits syndicaux, le contrôle civil sur l'armée, les droits des femmes et l'égalité des sexes ».

Les Vingt-Sept espéraient qu'Ankara normalise, d'ici la fin de l'année, ses relations avec la République de Chypre, membre de l'Union européenne (UE) depuis 2004, mais que la Turquie refuse de reconnaître. L'exécutif européen constate qu'« aucun progrès » n'a été fait à ce sujet, les ports et aéroports turcs restant, entre autres, fermés aux navires et

avions chypriotes. M. Rehn recommande néanmoins, contre l'avis de Chypre, de ne pas alourdir les sanctions déjà prises en décembre 2006, lorsque les Vingt-Sept avaient décidé de geler l'ouverture de huit chapitres de négociations liés à l'Union douanière. « Ajouter de nouvelles sanctions reviendrait à suspendre de facto un processus de négociation déjà très laborieux », déclare un haut fonctionnaire européen. *Personne ne veut de clash sur Chypre, alors que les pourparlers sur la réunification de l'île sont en cours.*

« Allégations de torture »

Dans son édition 2009, le rapport insiste sur le chantier de la réforme du système judiciaire turc. La Commission soutient les efforts entrepris cette année par le gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan afin de réduire la mainmise des forces laïques et nationalistes sur la justice du pays. « Des préoccupations demeurent au sujet de l'indépendance, de l'impartialité et de l'efficacité du système judiciaire », observe l'exécutif européen. M. Rehn regrette l'absence de progrès dans la composition du Haut Conseil de la magistrature, un bastion nationaliste, et la mise en pla-

ce des chambres régionales d'appel. La Commission se plaint aussi des lacunes dans la lutte contre la corruption. Elle note en revanche « certains progrès » dans le domaine des droits fondamentaux, mais elle souligne qu'en dépit des lois interdisant ces pratiques, « les allégations de torture ou de mauvais traitement et l'impunité des responsables restent une source de préoccupation ».

Toujours dans le domaine judiciaire, M. Rehn se réjouit des amendements apportés au code pénal turc pour limiter les poursuites contre des journalistes au nom de l'article 301, longtemps dénoncé par l'UE. « Des instructions et des condamnations sont toujours fondées sur un certain nombre d'autres articles du code pénal », regrettent ses services.

La Commission salue enfin la mise en place d'une chaîne publique diffusée en kurde, mais attend davantage de la part des autorités turques au sujet de cette minorité : « L'initiative du gouvernement sur la question kurde devrait mener à des mesures concrètes garantissant aux citoyens turcs des droits et libertés pleins et entiers, quelle que soit leur origine. » ■

P. Ri.

Le Monde
15 octobre 2009

Mehdi Karoubi poursuivi par la justice iranienne

Le religieux, figure de proue de la contestation, a dénoncé le viol et la torture d'opposants arrêtés

En Iran, quatre mois après l'élection contestée du président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, la répression se poursuit à l'encontre du mouvement de contestation. La justice iranienne a engagé des poursuites contre l'un des principaux animateurs de la contestation, le dirigeant réformateur Mehdi Karoubi. Ce religieux de 72 ans, autrefois proche du fondateur de la République islamique, l'ayatollah Khomeyni, ancien président du Parlement et candidat malheureux à l'élection présidentielle

du 12 juin s'est imposé comme le porte-parole le plus pugnace de la critique contre les méthodes de la police. Il a été le premier à dénoncer que des manifestants avaient été torturés. Et parfois aussi violés dans des prisons « secrètes » tenues par les services de renseignements liés aux milices bassidji, très actives lors de la répression des manifestations post-électorales.

Devant l'insistance de M. Karoubi – et certaines demandes d'explication formulées au sein même du Parlement, y compris dans les rangs

conservateurs –, la prison emblématique de Kahrizak, où des cas de mort suspecte avaient été dénoncés, a été fermée et une commission d'enquête a finalement examiné ses accusations. Le mois dernier, la commission les a pourtant rejetées affirmant qu'elles n'étaient pas fondées et a menacé de poursuivre en diffamation ceux qui porteraient de telles accusations.

Un dossier, selon l'agence officielle Irna, a été constitué à l'encontre de M. Karoubi et transmis au bureau du procureur révolutionnaire Abbas Jafari-Dolatabadi. « Karoubi est un religieux et ses propos devront être examinés par une commission spéciale pour le clergé », a-t-il déclaré, mardi 13 octobre, ajoutant, selon les agences de presse, que « certaines personnes ont également été convoquées en lien avec cette affaire ».

Intimidation

Ce n'est pas la première fois que

le pouvoir s'en prend à M. Karoubi, son journal, *Ettemad-e-Melli* a été fermé il y a quelques semaines et la presse officielle a plusieurs fois réclaté son arrestation.

Rien ne dit que l'action en justice contre M. Karoubi ira à son terme, ni quelle serait dans ce cas la sentence, mais ce « nouveau pas » pour réduire au silence une des voix les plus dérangeantes de la contestation, discrète mais toujours vive en Iran a été ressenti comme une tentative d'« intimidation » par plusieurs commentateurs réformateurs. Au même titre que la condamnation à mort (en première instance) de trois manifestants, ces derniers jours. Condamnation qui a suscité la « vive préoccupation » de la haut-commissaire de l'ONU pour les droits de l'homme, Navy Pillay, qui a demandé un « réexamen soigneux de leurs cas en appel ». ■

Marie-Claude Decamps

Kurdistan halts oil flow and angers Baghdad

BAGHDAD

BY TIMOTHY WILLIAMS

The semiautonomous Kurdish region has reopened a rift with the central government after announcing that it had halted all petroleum exports from Kurdistan until Baghdad pays the international companies that are pumping oil in the region.

Oil extracted in Kurdistan can be exported only through Iraqi government pipelines running to Turkey, giving Baghdad a stranglehold on the transport of oil produced there. At the same time, the government needs all the revenue it can get to pay for a host of pressing needs.

The amount of oil involved currently, about 100,000 barrels a day, is relatively small compared with Iraq's total production of 2.4 million barrels a day. But with production from the Kurdish areas likely to increase markedly in coming years, the dispute has taken on added importance.

Kurdistan's minister of natural resources, Ashti Hawrami, said in a letter dated Oct. 9 and posted on the Kurdish government's Web site Monday that the decision to stop exports had been made in concert with the two international companies now extracting oil there. "We have jointly agreed that no free

oil will be pumped for export, and payments have to be made," Dr. Hawrami wrote in the letter. "We will only resume exports with guaranteed payments."

Kurdistan has awarded more than 30 contracts to international oil companies during the past few years over the objections of Baghdad, which has barred international companies working in Kurdistan from competing for oil contracts in the rest of Iraq.

Kurdistan began signing its own deals with foreign oil companies after becoming impatient with the central government's inability to adopt a national oil law that would regulate the industry. The Iraqi Parliament has still not approved an oil law, but earlier this year Baghdad began seeking oil production deals of its own with international companies.

On Tuesday, Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani announced that three international oil consortiums had accepted Iraq's terms to develop two fields and submitted revised offers, The Associated Press reported.

Iraq asks Turkey to stop cross-border raids on Kurds

BAGHDAD

FROM NEWS REPORTS

Iraq asked Turkey on Thursday to respect its sovereignty and stop cross-border military operations against Kurdish rebels, a government spokesman said.

The raids have been a sore spot in Turkish-Iraqi relations, which have been warming since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion toppled Saddam Hussein.

Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki delivered the message to his Turkish counterpart, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, during a meeting in Baghdad before the signing of agreements enhancing economic ties, said Ali al-Dabbagh, a spokesman for Mr. Maliki.

"Iraq's prime minister reiterated that the government will not allow any forces to cross Iraqi borders," Mr. Dabbagh said.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party, or P.K.K., which is considered a terrorist organization by the European Union and United States, has been fighting for autonomy from Turkey since 1984 in the region along the border with Iraq. The group uses strongholds in Iraqi Kurdistan for cross-border raids.

Turkey recently intensified its offensive against the P.K.K., while Baghdad has been limited in its ability to act against the rebels and has been preoccupied with violence elsewhere in Iraq. Iraq has been trying to step up protection of its borders as it takes control of the country from U.S. troops.

Mr. Maliki also told Mr. Erdogan that Turkey should search for a peaceful solution through talks among the two countries and the United States over the P.K.K. incursions, Mr. Dabbagh said.

Also on the agenda between the prime ministers was finding a solution for a water dispute. Iraq has accused Turkey of taking too much water from the rivers and their tributaries that flow into Iraq, which has been stricken by drought.

Last month, Turkey agreed to increase water flow to Iraq.

The talks between the two leaders come at a time when Iraq is still struggling to rebuild, more than six years after war began, and reconstruction and economic improvements have become leading campaign issues with those running for office.

Despite the drop in violence in Iraq, insurgents continue to attack Iraqi security forces throughout the country.

Turkey recently intensified its offensive against P.K.K. rebels.

On Thursday, a roadside bomb struck an Iraqi Army patrol in Baghdad, killing one Iraqi soldier, a police official said.

The attack came a day after three homemade bombs exploded without warning amid crowds that had stopped to gather for evening prayers in the holy Shiite city of Karbala, killing 6 people and wounding 45 others, police and government officials said.

It was not immediately clear who was

responsible for the explosions, which happened within minutes of one another Wednesday at a shopping center, near a police checkpoint and inside a parking garage. All were near the Husseni and Abbas shrines in Karbala, about 80 kilometers, or 50 miles, south of Baghdad.

The blasts struck areas crowded with people but outside the security cordon that surrounds the shrines, said Amal al-Dheen al-Hir, governor of Karbala Province. Shiite mosques and shrines have been a frequent target of bombers in the sectarian violence that has engulfed Iraq since the U.S. invasion. The mayhem has sharply declined in recent months, but sectarian killings and vendettas remain a problem, along with other violent crime.

This week, a draft report by the Iraqi Human Rights Ministry said that from 2004 to 2008 — the period of the bloodiest sectarian strife — 85,694 people had been killed and 147,000 wounded.

The ministry's calculation of fatalities was based on the issuance of death certificates and would thus be very conservative. The report is the first Iraqi government study on the subject. (AP, IHT)

CRITICAL MOMENTS LIE AHEAD IN KURDISH-ARAB RELATIONS IN IRAQ

By Michael Knights

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Parliament elected in July convened for the first time on August 20, ushering in a new political era in Iraqi Kurdistan.

While the bloc including the long-dominant Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) currently controls a majority of 59 out of 111 seats, the new Gorran ("Change") Party has 26, and the Services and Reform bloc (including Islamists and socialists) has 13, in addition to a few seats won by smaller parties and 11 set aside for Turkmen and Christian minorities. Moreover, because Gorran is led by PUK founder Nawshirwan Mustafa and drew its votes mainly from PUK areas, the new situation is likely to spur calls for reform and leadership change within the PUK. That would make it a less reliable partner for the KDP, and will increase the likelihood of heated debate and multi-party bargaining in Parliament.

This political change in the KRG coincides with an important period in relations with the federal government in Baghdad, as Iraq prepares for national elections on January 16, 2010. It is not yet clear how large a role Kurds will play in the campaign. It is possible that Iraqi political campaigns will stress Arab nationalist themes at the expense of the Kurds; or alternatively that various factions will court Kurds, knowing they will need their votes in the new Parliament.

At present, the scenario of other factions courting Kurds seems more likely. The KDP and PUK will contest the national elections as one list and Gorran will compete as ano-

ther, but the two Kurdish blocs have agreed to pool their votes in the national Parliament. This means that Kurds are likely to win some 50 out of 275 seats, likely forming the largest single parliamentary bloc. If electoral legislation is passed as it currently stands, the Kurds will also probably receive a seat on the three-member presidency council alongside a Shiite Arab and Sunni Arab representative, allowing them to veto legislation or prevent its passage unless Parliament achieves the difficult task of mustering a two-thirds majority.

These factors could make the Kurds an indispensable ally in forming the next Iraqi government, particularly if Arab factions remain divided along factional and sectarian lines.

While there is now less risk of an anti-Kurdish theme emerging in the coming elections, as well as strong potential for a post-electoral compromise on federal-KRG revenue-sharing, agreeing on the joint administration of disputed territories will be more complex. The first problem to resolve is provincial elections in Kirkuk, the only governorate outside the KRG not included in the January 31, 2009 provincial elections. Kurdish groups were unable to obtain the holding of a national census on October 24, 2009, which was cancelled due to the political sensitivity of the issue. The KDP and PUK now want to hold provincial elections in Kirkuk to coincide with the January 16, 2010 national elections. Turkmen and Arab groups in Kirkuk want a special election law to be passed that allocates more seats on the provincial council to each ethnic group. Both sides appear to recognize that Kurds now significantly outnumber other ethnic groups in Kirkuk, though polling or voting in the region would be

undermined by disagreements over who is eligible to register as a resident of the province.

Although the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq has convened a task force of senior federal and Kurdish leaders, the key external influence on federal-KRG issues remains the United States. The US military presence in Iraq is due to decline during 2010 and largely disappear either at the beginning of 2011 (if the January 16, 2010 referendum rejects the US-Iraq security agreement) or by the end of 2011 at the latest. This puts Washington under pressure to move the political process forward, and to prevent local clashes between Arabs and Kurds in the meantime.

When Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki came to Washington last July, every US official he met advised him to boost his political efforts to reach an accommodation with the Kurds. When a string of senior US military leaders visited the KRG in late summer, they also strongly urged the Kurdish leadership to take steps to reduce tensions. These twin pressures – the political importance of the Kurds within Iraq as well as US lobbying – induced Maliki to make his first visit to the KRG on August 2, where he publicly congratulated President Massoud Barzani on his re-election and made a well-received symbolic speech at Halabja, the site of 1988 chemical weapons attacks that killed more than 5,000 Kurdish civilians.

On August 18, the US military commander, General Ray Odierno, proposed a temporary increase in the presence of US forces along the federal-KRG disputed internal border. This force would form tripartite US-federal-Kurdish security headquarters along the disputed areas to coordinate security and reduce the risk of clashes between Arab and Kurdish

security forces. Though smaller in scale, the idea resembles the US surge deployed to reduce sectarian violence in central Iraq in 2008.

The next year will be a critical moment in Iraqi federal-Kurdish relations. Some hard-line advocates of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq believe that the KRG will eventually be better off without Iraq and will instead form military and economic ties with Turkey, providing Ankara with a stable southern border and an interlocutor in its struggle with Kurdish nationalism.

Other Kurdish leaders such as KRG Prime Minister Barham Saleh have consistently looked to Baghdad as the KRG's long-term partner. The new parliamentary balance in the KRG has potentially given more strength to Kurdish advocates of a compromise with Baghdad. Strong US pressure is pushing toward a federal-KRG deal. The major Arab factions will probably need a Kurdish political ally to form a national government. These factors, combined, suggest that there may be hope for the beginning of an Arab-Kurdish compromise in 2010.

Michael Knights is the Lafer International Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. This commentary is reprinted with permission from the Arab Reform Bulletin. It can be accessed online at: www.carnegieendowment.org/arb, © 2009, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

US general blames Arab-Kurd tensions on Iraq unrest

Lanza says US is working on reducing tensions between Arabs, Kurds seen as main driver of Iraq unrest.

By Prashant Rao - BAGHDAD

Tensions between Arabs and Kurds along a tract of disputed territory in northern and eastern Iraq are the top driver of instability in the country, a senior US general said Monday.

Brigadier General Steve Lanza, the spokesman for US forces here, added that "malign" influences from Iran and Syria are on the decline but remain a concern.

"We assess Arab-Kurd tensions as the number one driver of instability in Iraq," Lanza told reporters at a press conference in central Baghdad.

"We are working very hard to help reduce tensions in northern Iraq," he noted, adding that a committee made up of top US commanders, senior members of the Kurdish government in Arbil, and the central government in Baghdad are meeting to discuss confidence-building initiatives.

He noted that no such initiatives have yet been tabled, but General Ray Odierno, the top US commander in Iraq, said in August that the US was discussing arrangements that could see its troops work alongside Iraqi and Kurdish forces in disputed areas of northern Iraq.

Kurdish leaders have long demanded that their autonomous region comprising three provinces be expanded to include historically Kurdish-inhabited parts of Nineveh and Diyala as well as all of Kirkuk.

Baghdad, however, says the Kurdish region's borders should not extend past Arbil, Sulaimaniyah and Dohuk provinces.

Lanza said any initiatives will need the approval of Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and Kurdish President Massud Barzani, must be in accordance with a Washington-Baghdad security agreement signed last year and should ensure that any involve-



'Malign influences from Iran and Syria are on the decline'

ment of US troops is temporary.

"We are going through every procedure possible right now to bring those two (Iraqi and Kurdish) armies together for the good of Iraq," he said.

On foreign interventions in Iraq, Lanza said that "the malign influence of some ... would indeed like to fracture this country and ... would not like the elections to occur in a credible and legitimate manner," referring to nationwide parliamentary elections due in January.

"It is no secret that foreign fighters have come into Iraq from Syria.

"There is influence from Iran, there is malign influence in this country, whether it be in money, whether it be in training, whether it be in resources or weapons systems that have come into this country."

He continued: "I would say in both those -- both foreign fighters coming in from Syria and malign influence not only from Iran but from other countries -- we have seen a downturn."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

October 12, 2009

Big Attacks in Iraq Decrease, but Arab-Kurd Tensions Remain

By GINA CHON

BAGHDAD -- While large-scale attacks in Iraq are decreasing, tensions between Arabs and Kurds remain high and represent the top driver of instability in the country, U.S. military spokesman Brig. Gen. Stephen Lanza said Monday.

In a news conference, Gen. Lanza also said he thinks the Iraqi parliamentary elections scheduled for next January would take place on time, despite concerns from Iraqi politicians that continued wrangling over an elections law could delay the vote. The parliament will meet later this week to consider the elections law, which needs to be passed by Thursday to give poll organizers enough time to prepare for the vote.

Those elections are a key barometer for U.S. officials gauging stability and planning for a large-scale U.S. troop drawdown

next year. Gen. Lanza said the U.S. military would make an assessment about 30 to 60 days after Iraq's elections to determine the next steps in the U.S. forces withdrawal. There are currently about 120,000 troops in Iraq, but that figure is scheduled to go down to about 50,000 by next August.

He made his comments a day after at least 25 people were killed in western Anbar province by three car bombs that went off near government buildings and a hospital in Ramadi. Gen. Lanza said overall, security has improved dramatically in the former insurgent stronghold of Anbar, and he said high-profile attacks have decreased by 51% so far in 2009, compared to the same period in 2008.

Attacks across Iraq are at their lowest levels since January 2004, while casualties among American forces have decreased by

more than 90% since June 2007.

But tensions between Arabs and Kurds, particularly in disputed areas that are claimed by both ethnicities, are a major concern for the U.S. military. Iraqi and Kurdish regional governments, along with American commanders, are looking at ways to jointly patrol those areas, where officials fear a security void caused by the tension can be exploited by al Qaeda-affiliated groups and other insurgents.

Gen. Lanza also said that foreign fighters are still entering Iraq through Syria. The Iraqi government has blamed a series of blasts in Baghdad on al Qaeda, but it also has blamed members of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party operating in Syria. Iraq and Syria have severed diplomatic ties because of Iraq's demand for Syria to hand over suspects related to those bombings.

SEEKING CONSENSUS IN IRAQ'S DIVIDED NORTH

By Heath Druzin, Stars and Stripes

COMBAT OUTPOST COBRA, Iraq — Capt. Michael Schmidt stepped on a cultural land mine during a recent meeting with Iraqi military commanders

aimed at easing ethnic tensions in Iraq's disputed north.

"The No. 1 threat is the Sunni insurgency," Schmidt said in response to an Iraqi commander's question about the most pressing security concern for northern Diyala province.

"When you say the Sunni insurgency, you are associating all Sunnis,"

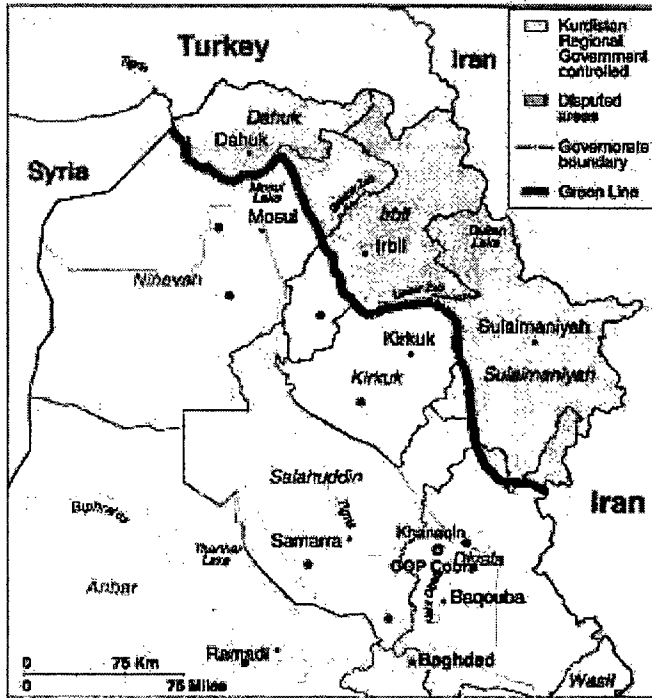
sniffed Col. Khamees Sulaiman Raja Ahmed, the local Iraqi army commander, himself a Sunni.

Khamees' Kurdish counterparts then jumped in and the meeting descended into chaotic bickering, the cross talk growing so loud and rapid-fire that the interpreter stopped trying to translate. The meeting abruptly broke up, and the Arab and Kurdish factions ate lunch separately at the base dining hall.

It was a stark reminder of the monumental task the U.S. faces in trying to mediate what so far has remained an intractable land dispute.

Nearly two months after Gen. Ray Odierno, the top commander in Iraq, announced plans to establish trilateral patrols and checkpoints manned by U.S., Arab and Kurdish forces to relieve tension in areas claimed by both Arabs and Kurds, negotiations are moving slowly and communities in the region that would benefit from increased cooperation and trade continue to languish.

A swath of northern Iraq, including the oil-rich region surrounding the city of Kirkuk, is claimed by both Kurds and Arabs and both the central government and Kurdistan Regional Government have been trying to increase their influence by sending soldiers to the area. Several incidents have threatened to turn violent. Odierno's plan for the trilateral patrols is intended to keep the peace and help resolve the long-simmering land dispute.



Source: International Crisis Group; Association of the United States Army. Stars and Stripes

The region: A primer

The current dispute between Iraqi Kurds and Arabs is over land and potential oil revenues in the north of the country, particularly in the area of Kirkuk, but the roots of conflict are far deeper.

Great Britain took control of what is today Iraq after World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

Britain imposed a monarchy on Iraq and defined its borders without taking into account the politics of the different ethnic and religious groups in the country, including the Kurds. During the British occupation, both Shiites and Kurds fought for independence.

Inspired by Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser, Iraqi military officers overthrew the monarchy in 1958. Saddam Hussein rose to power, and conducted mass killings and the "Arabization" of the region.

The Kurds have continually sided with the U.S. in hopes of self-governance.

Now, security forces from both Baghdad and the Kurdish region are vying for power in the area. The Iraqi government is not much closer to complying with Article 140 — which requires a census and a referendum to resolve whether Kirkuk and other disputed areas are part of Iraq or the Kurdish semi-autonomous zone — than when the constitution was written in 2005.

Further complicating the difficult task of sorting out who belongs in these areas, there was an influx of Kurds into the disputed zone after the 2003 U.S. invasion. Some were reclaiming land forcibly taken by Saddam's regime but many Arabs claim some were sent by the three-province Iraqi Kurdistan to inflate Kurdish population numbers.

'We are all Iraqis'

At the heart of the conflict along the so-called Green Line — a boundary that has marked the semiautonomous region of Kurdistan since 1991 — is who should qualify as a resident for a long-promised census that is supposed to set the stage for settling the boundary questions once and for all.

But carrying out that census will be complicated because during the 1970s and '80s, Saddam Hussein forcibly removed many Kurds and flooded the north with Arabs, while many Arabs accuse the KRG of sending waves of Kurds into the areas after the U.S. invasion in 2003.

"What we want to try to do is continue to reduce tensions in the disputed areas so we don't allow tensions to lead to some sort of violence which could really impact the overall stability inside of Iraq," Odierno told reporters earlier this month.

In public, both Arab and Kurd com-

manders preach togetherness.

"It is a shame on all of us to mention nationalities — he is Kurd, he is Arab," said Lt. Col. Ahmad Nuri, a commander of Kurdish national police in northern Diyala province, during the meeting at Cobra. "We are all Iraqis."

Privately, though, both sides acknowledge deep divisions, and are skeptical that trilateral patrols will lead to progress on resolving the land dispute.

A senior Kurdish military officer, who works at a joint command center with both Arab and Kurdish forces and is involved in negotiations over trilateral patrols, blamed Arab abuses of Kurdish civilians for the tension in disputed areas.

"Most of it comes from the Iraqi army," said the Kurdish officer, who requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the topic. "Only the Kurdish people are coming to us complaining."

Khamees dismissed Kurdish complaints about the flood of Arabs who came in under Saddam, skewing population figures.

"We all believe in democracy and if anyone wants to move to Baghdad, Sulaymaniyah or Irbil, we can't prevent

them," he said.

Waiting for the census

What most Iraqi officers seem to agree on is that trilateral military patrols are unlikely to lead to the census, which is promised in Article 140 of Iraq's constitution.

Under that article, the government must conduct the census of the disputed areas and then hold a referendum to allow residents to decide whether they want to be under direct control of Iraq's central government or become part of the Kurdish semi-autonomous zone.

Brokering the Kurd-Arab meetings are commanders such as Lt. Col. Joseph Davidson, who said he is optimistic the sessions will help solve the land dispute but conceded that talks about trilateral patrols are still in the early stages.

"I wish Article 140 would have been solved. My job would have been a lot easier. But it's not and that's my mission," he said. "We're trying to say, 'Hey, you guys can work together.'"

Davidson said his main aim is to keep the peace, while being fair to both groups.

"Really I'm maintaining the status quo of security," he said. "I'm a media-

tor."

The people most affected by the ongoing disagreement are residents of the disputed areas, and many say they that while both the central and Kurdish governments claim the land, neither government offers much in the way of services.

"The problem here is not safety, it's that people don't know, do we belong to Baghdad or the KRG?" said Staff Sgt. Ali Hamid, a police officer in the city of Khanaqin. "When we go to the Diyala government, they say, 'You belong to the KRG,' when we go to the KRG they say, 'You belong to Diyala.'"

Abdullah Muhammad Suleiman, the mayor of the mostly Kurdish town of Kulajo, says both the Sunni Arab-dominated provincial government and the Kurdish government ignore his pleas for clean drinking water and better electricity.

He turned to a U.S. Army lieutenant, and said hopefully, "You can talk to the Diyala province government for us?"

Los Angeles Times

October 19, 2009

Disputes over Kirkuk delay new election law

Liz Sly in Baghdad

The thorny question of how to organize voting in the disputed province of Kirkuk is threatening to undermine the integrity of crucial national elections that the U.S. military hopes will pave the way for a mass drawdown of American troops.

The Iraqi parliament today missed a second presumed deadline for passing an election law to regulate the poll, scheduled for January, because of the dispute over voting procedures in the oil-rich province, which is claimed by Kurds, Arabs and Turkomans.

At issue is the question of whether all the current residents of Kirkuk should be eligible to vote. In recent years, thousands of Kurds have moved into the area from Kurdistan, supposedly to reverse the Arabization policies of Saddam Hussein, who expelled Kurds and settled Arabs there.

But Arabs and Turkomans say the Kurdish influx has far exceeded the expulsion of Kurds during the Hussein era and that special measures needed to be taken to avoid the Kurds having an unfair advantage in Kirkuk.

Various proposals have been mooted, including one suggested by the U.N. that

would pre-assign the province's 13 seats to Kurdish, Arab and Turkoman candidates. Another proposal suggests dividing Kirkuk into regions in such a way as to guarantee representation to Turkomans and Arabs as well as Kurds.

But in negotiations today, the Kurds said they would reject any special arrangement for Kirkuk as anti-constitutional and instead proposed the formation of a committee to vet voter registration lists in all Iraq's provinces -- something that could prove a lengthy exercise.

Many legislators suspect delaying tactics. If no agreement is reached on a new election law in time for the Jan. 16 poll to be organized, the 2005 election law will kick in. That would give all Kurds in Kirkuk the right to vote -- and it would also mean that all Iraqis would vote on the basis of a so-called "closed-list" system instead of the "open list" provided for in the new election law.

Under a closed-list system, Iraqis get to vote only for party names. An open list would allow them to choose individual candidates, something it is presumed would favor the slate of candidates headed by Prime Minister Nouri Maliki, who is personally popular. Though public opinion and the powerful Shiite clergy favor an open list, many of Maliki's rivals --

including the Kurds -- would prefer to have a closed list.

Also, if the 2005 law is adopted, there is a real danger that Arabs and Turkomans will boycott the poll in Kirkuk. If the Kurds don't get their way, they may boycott.

It's an arcane dispute, and it may yet get resolved by one of those eleventh-hour compromises that have salvaged Iraq in the past. No one is yet talking about delaying the election.

But the dispute over Kirkuk is real and extends far beyond the immediate problem of how to organize voting there. The question of who should control the province remains perhaps the biggest unresolved issue hanging over Iraq as U.S. troops prepare to withdraw. Many legislators are starting to worry that a failure to compromise on Kirkuk could call into question the legitimacy of the entire election.

And as the recent experiences of Iran and Afghanistan have demonstrated, a flawed election can serve as a major trigger for new instability. That's the last thing the U.S. military needs as it packs up its gear and prepares to head home.

Endgame for Iran: No bomb required?

RIYADH

Analysts suggest Tehran might have goals short of a weapon in mind

BY MICHAEL SLACKMAN

Iran says it has no plans to build nuclear weapons. Western nations say they do not believe Iran and periodically release intelligence reports that they say prove it has been working on building a bomb.

For years, that has been the point of contention in an intractable international dispute.

But as the United States and its Western allies prepare for a second round of direct negotiations with Tehran this month, that may no longer be the central question. The more pertinent point, Iran experts and regional analysts say, is that Iran finally may be ready to make a deal.

The analysts cite a confluence of factors, from Iran's internal political crisis to the change in leadership in Washington, and one overriding point: Iran's leadership may have achieved much of what it set out to accomplish when it stepped up its clandestine nuclear program in 1999.

In contentious, high-stakes negotiations, deals are possible when both sides have a chance to declare victory, and that point may have been reached.

"If the Iranian endgame is to keep enrichment, and if the United States' endgame is to make sure there are no nuclear weapons in Iran, then it can be a win-win," said Trita Parsi, author of a book on Iran and president of the National Iranian American Council, an independent advocacy group in Washington. "Those who have been criticizing the administration for compromising or giving Iran a concession, they are wrong. It is not a concession to adjust to an unchanging reality."

For Iran, this is not exactly about compromising — which it has shown little appetite for — as much as cooperating. For the West, it is not about winning concessions but about developing verifiable assurances that Iran is not producing weapons.

"I think the Iranians are simply in no

mood to accept any serious limits on the expansion of their program," said Flynt Leverett, director of the Iran Project at the New America Foundation. "From their point of view, they already suspended enrichment for almost two years, from 2003 to 2005, and from their perspective, they got nothing for that, and they're not going to do that again."

But Mr. Leverett said Iran saw "that by expanding, they've gotten the attention of the international community, and they have cards to play."

And that may have been Iran's primary goal from the start.

Many analysts inside and outside Iran say that Tehran's objective has been to master — or at least appear to master — the process of preparing nuclear fuel,

"Nuclear latency has all the advantages of actual possession of a bomb without any of the unpleasant consequences."

fashioning a warhead and providing the means to deliver that warhead, but not actually to build a weapon.

This is in line with a recent report from the International Atomic Energy Agency, which found that Iran had acquired "sufficient information to be able to design and produce a workable" nuclear weapon but did not present evidence that it was trying to produce one. Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, issued a fatwa, or religious edict, in 2005 banning the production of nuclear weapons.

Tehran knows that actually deploying a weapon could undermine its regional strength by driving smaller, oil-rich neighbors to seek their own nuclear umbrella, presumably from the United States. Rather, experts say, Iran's intention all along was to strengthen its hand in dealing with the West, to achieve legitimacy, security and recognition of its regional leadership. Iran's meeting with the United States and Western powers in Geneva at the beginning of this month brought it within reach of those goals.

The meeting included the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council — China, Russia, the United States, France and Britain — along with Germany and the European Union.

The United States negotiated directly with Iran and, perhaps more important, Iran walked away with an implicit acceptance of its right to continue enrichment on its own soil, which it considers a matter of national sovereignty.

"They are already where they wanted to be," Abbas Milani, head of Iranian studies at Stanford University, said even before the Geneva meeting. "They are virtually a nuclear state; the issue of national pride is resolved."

Writing in his blog, Informed Comment, Juan Cole, an expert on Iran and the contemporary Middle East, described Tehran's goal as "nuclear latency," which he said explained why the leadership had insisted it was not trying to build weapons while also driving hard to master construction of a bomb.

"Nuclear latency has all the advantages of actual possession of a bomb without any of the unpleasant consequences, of the sort North Korea is suffering," Mr. Cole wrote.

When Iran met with Western powers in Geneva, it offered what appeared to be a compromise. It said that it would allow inspectors into a recently disclosed enrichment facility near the holy city of Qum, and it agreed to send its modestly enriched fuel to Russia to be processed further.

Tehran also agreed to keep talking, which seemed to contradict President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's insistence that Iran would deal only with the International Atomic Energy Agency about its nuclear program.

Mona El-Naggar contributed reporting from Cairo.

China to build ties to Iran

Prime Minister Wen Jiabao said Thursday that China intended to strengthen its cooperation with Iran as Beijing joined Russia in signaling opposition to any new U.N. sanctions against Tehran for its nuclear program, The Associated Press reported from Beijing.

China will "enhance mutual understanding and trust" with Iran, Mr. Wen said, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

On Wednesday, Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin of Russia said talking about sanctions was "premature."

A new role for Turkey

Stephen Kinzer

Reaching last weekend's diplomatic breakthrough between Turkey and Armenia was not easy. It took six weeks of secret talks in Switzerland, seven last-minute phone calls from Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to the two countries' foreign ministers, and a wild ride in a Zurich police car, lights flashing and siren shrieking, for a Turkish diplomat carrying a revised draft of the accord.

This breakthrough could also be said to have taken 16 years, the length of time the Turkey-Armenia border has been shut, or 94 years, the time that has passed since Ottoman Turkish forces slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Armenians in what is now eastern Turkey.

In the end, pragmatism prevailed over emotion. Armenia is a poor, landlocked country that desperately needs an outlet to the world. Turkey is a booming regional power, but suffers from its refusal to acknowledge the massacres of 1915. With this accord, each side helps solve the other's problem. The border is to be reopened and diplomatic relations restored, giving Armenia a chance to rejoin the world. Questions about what happened in 1915 — was it genocide? — will be submitted to historians for "impartial scientific examination."

The most bizarre aspect of this process was the effort by Armenians in France and the United States to derail it. Earlier this month in Paris, President Serge Sarkisian of Armenia was met by shouts of "Traitor!" and had to be

protected by riot police. The potent Armenian-American lobby also rallied against the accord.

If President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran proposed that impartial historians examine the question of whether the Holocaust actually happened, most Jews would presumably accept happily. The failed rebellion by Armenians in the diaspora suggests that some are trapped by the past; Their cousins back home, meanwhile, seek a better future.

"There is no alternative to the establishment of relations with Turkey without any precondition," Mr. Sarkisian said as the new accord was signed. "It is the dictate of the time."

Both parliaments must ratify the accord. There will be disagreements over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave, which Armenia occupies but which the rest of the world considers part of Azerbaijan, Turkey's ally. Nonetheless, both countries seem resolved to thaw this long-frozen conflict. They will probably do whatever necessary to overcome remaining obstacles.

The accord will allow trade between the two countries to resume. It will also make it easier for Armenians to visit magnificent monuments from their past that lie within modern-day Turkey. Beyond that, it has far-reaching geopolitical importance.

For nearly all of its 86 years as a state, Turkey has kept a low profile in the world. Those days are over. Now Turkey is reaching for a highly ambitious regional role as a conciliator and peacemaker.

When Turkish officials land in bitterly divided countries like Lebanon or Afghanistan or Pakistan, every faction is eager to talk to

them. No country's diplomats are as welcome in both Tehran and Jerusalem, Moscow and Tblisi, Damascus and Cairo. As a Muslim country intimately familiar with the region around it, Turkey can go places, engage partners, and make deals that the United States cannot.

This new Turkish role holds tantalizing potential. Before Turkey can play it fully, though, it must put its own house in order. That is one

Neither Egypt nor Pakistan, nor Iran have emerged to lead the Islamic world — their societies are too fragmented.

reason its leaders were so eager to resolve their country's dispute with Armenia.

Turkey has one remaining international problem to resolve: Cyprus. Then it must solidify its democracy at home. That means lifting restrictions on free speech and fully respecting minority rights not just those of Kurds, whose culture has

been brutalized by decades of repression, but also those of Christians, non-mainstream Muslims, and unbelievers.

Under other circumstances, Egypt, Pakistan, or Iran might have emerged to lead the Islamic world. Their societies, however, are weak, fragmented, and decomposing. Indonesia is a more promising candidate, but it has no historic tradition of leadership and is far from the center of Muslim crises. That leaves Turkey. It is trying to seize this role. Making peace with Armenia was an important step. More are likely to come soon.

STEPHEN KINZER is the author of "Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change From Hawaii to Iraq."

Attacker hits a mosque in northern Iraq

BAGHDAD

Imam was killed first; gunfire and bomb leave 15 worshippers dead

BY TIMOTHY WILLIAMS AND SAAD AL-IZZI

A man stood up during Friday prayers in a violence-plagued town in northern Iraq and shot the prayer leader at point-blank range with an assault rifle before spraying the kneeling worshippers around him and detonating a suicide belt, killing 15 people, witnesses said.

The attack wounded 100 inside the Taqwa mosque in Tal Afar, a town in the northern province of Nineveh that is among several areas contested by various ethnic and religious groups in the north of Iraq.

The town, which is about 65 kilometers, or 40 miles, from Iraq's border with Syria, is made up primarily of Shiite Turkmen. It has been the scene of dozens of attacks since the outbreak of

sectarian violence in Iraq in 2006, and violence has continued there even as it has ebbed in much of the rest of Iraq. In one of the deadliest attacks since the American invasion, a truck bomb exploded in a market there in March 2007, killing 152 people and wounding 347.

The mosque, which was attacked Friday just after noon, was one attended primarily by Sunni Arabs. The prayer leader, Abdel Satar Hassan, was a member of the Iraq Islamic Party, the country's largest Sunni Arab political group.

Witnesses said they heard gunshots, and then an explosion followed by a thick cloud of dust and dirt that rose into the air, adding to the confused scene inside.

"I was sitting in the back rows in the mosque when one of the worshippers in the front stood up and loudly interrupted the imam while he was preaching," said Akram Haseeb, who had shrapnel wounds to his head and chest. "He raised his assault rifle and shot the imam dead first, and then turned and shot the people around him. When the ammo was finished, he blew himself up."

Ameer Issa, who was also struck in the head and chest by flying shrapnel,

said he had arrived late to Friday Prayers with his 11-year-old son. "We sat on the ground on the outer yard of the mosque," he said. "A few minutes later, we heard what sounded like a loud argument inside the mosque, which was followed by shooting. I immediately held

"When the ammo was finished, he blew himself up."

my son to me and then the explosion happened. My son is in a state of shock."

At one of the local hospitals where the wounded were taken, Omran Ahmed, an ambulance driver, said the floor of the mosque had been littered with the dead and wounded. Blood, he said, stained Korans and the carpet.

Under a pile of bodies near the front of the mosque, he said, he found the lower half of the man suspected of being the suicide bomber, and an unexploded grenade next to the remains.

After the bombing, roads in and out of Tal Afar were closed as the police searched for accomplices, said the town's police commander, Col. Ibrahim

al-Jobouri.

Also Friday, Ali al-Musawe, an adviser to Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, said the authorities in Malaysia had arrested a former member of the Iraqi Parliament accused of planning several deadly attacks, including a suicide bombing in the Parliament's cafeteria in 2007. The Iraqi government has formally requested the extradition of the former Sunni lawmaker, Mohammed al-Dayni, Mr. Musawe said.

30,000 migrate to U.S.

More than 30,000 Iraqis have moved to the United States under a resettlement program that began in 2007, while much smaller numbers have gone to other countries, the United Nations refugee agency said Friday, The Associated Press reported from Geneva.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees has recommended to the participating countries the names of 82,500 Iraqis who should be moved, but so far only 33,000 have been able to go to their new homelands, said an agency spokesman, Andrej Mahecic.

IRAK



DU 15 AU 21 OCTOBRE 2009

Le pétrole ne fait pas le bonheur

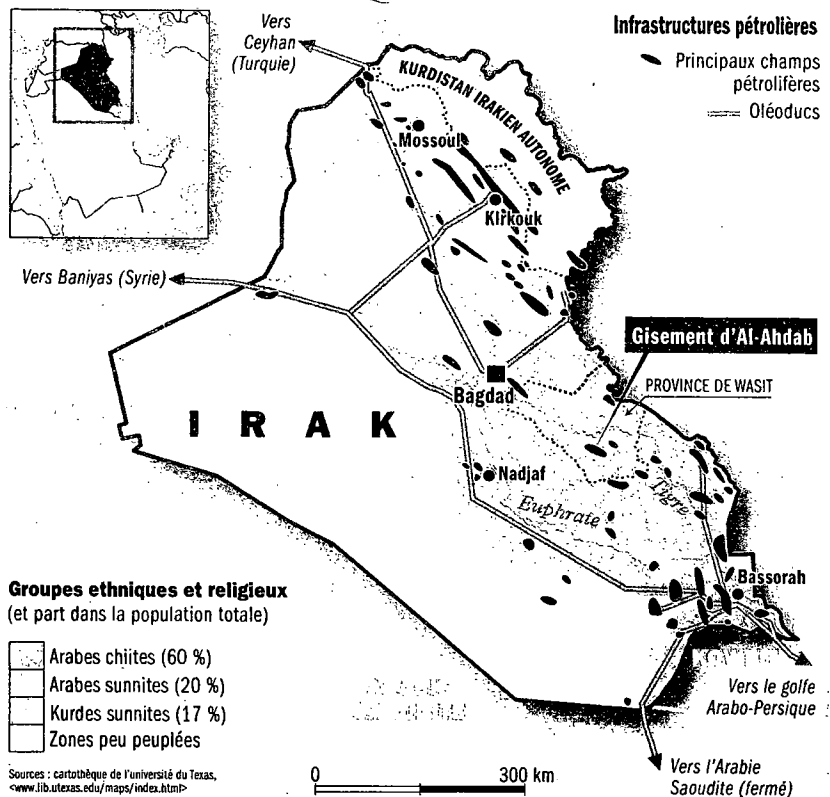
La population est peu satisfaite des retombées liées à l'implantation d'entreprises étrangères. Les habitants d'Al-Mazzagh, au sud de Bagdad, sont les premiers à en témoigner.

BBC (extraits)
Londres

C'est la première compagnie pétrolière étrangère à conclure un accord de production avec l'Etat irakien depuis 2003 [chute du régime de Saddam Hussein]. Ironie du sort, elle est originaire d'un pays qui fait de plus en plus figure de grand rival des Etats-Unis : la Chine. Un an après avoir signé un contrat de 3 milliards de dollars [2 milliards d'euros] pour l'exploitation pendant vingt-trois ans du petit gisement d'Al-Ahdab, dans la province de Wasit, au sud de Bagdad, la China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) a déjà trouvé du pétrole. Mais, à Al-Mazzagh, le village voisin, la grogne gagne les habitants. Ils se plaignent d'avoir été oubliés.

L'accord avec les Chinois montre que l'Irak est prêt à accueillir des groupes pétroliers étrangers. BP, Shell et de nombreux autres géants occidentaux se bousculent pour accéder à ce que le ministre du Pétrole, Hussein Sharistani, appelle la "dernière frontière" pour les grandes découvertes d'or noir. Avec un budget presque entièrement tributaire des revenus pétroliers, le gouvernement irakien s'efforce d'accroître la production, qui est à peine revenue au niveau d'avant 2003. Aussi s'est-il tourné vers les entreprises étrangères, lesquelles sont décidées à saisir une chance qui ne s'était pas présentée depuis des dizaines d'années. Les réserves de l'Irak figurent au troisième rang dans le monde et comprennent de nombreux gisements encore inexploités. Et, comme beaucoup de compagnies étrangères sont habituées à travailler dans des régions difficiles, la situation toujours délicate sur le plan sécuritaire ne sera pas de nature à les décourager.

Les autorités régionales du Kurdistan irakien ont signé quelques accords séparés avec des pétroliers étrangers. Mais le gouvernement central de Bagdad a jusqu'ici refusé de les reconnaître, et menace d'interdire aux compagnies signataires de participer aux appels d'offres pour d'autres contrats. Toutefois, la plus grosse difficulté viendrait des Irakiens vivant dans les zones productrices, comme les Chinois s'en sont aperçus à leurs dépens.



Leurs opérations de forage sur le champ d'Ahdab se trouvent juste à côté du village d'Al-Mazzagh. Abou Abed, un habitant du village, voit se dresser juste en face de sa porte les murs antidéflagration et les miradors en béton qui protègent l'une des plates-formes de forage chinoises. "Ils m'ont promis de m'indemniser, explique-t-il. Mais je n'ai toujours rien reçu." L'arrivée des pétroliers avait également fait espérer la création de nombreux emplois. "On croyait que tout le monde trouverait du travail", se souvient Zahi. Jusqu'à présent, la CNPC n'a engagé que quelques vigiles. Elle assure ne pas pouvoir faire plus pour les gens du coin. "Nous sommes désolés, mais ils ne possèdent pas les compétences nécessaires et ne parlent pas anglais", justifie un cadre de la CNPC.

Même si, au village, certains continuent à dire que les Chinois sont les bienvenus, le climat s'est détérioré. Des actes de sabotage ont été signalés. Par exemple, des lignes électriques desservant les installations de forage ont été coupées. Le gouvernement irakien a renforcé la surveillance du complexe, et des hélicoptères d'une base américaine des environs survolent parfois le site. Une fois que la production aura

démarré pour de bon, le projet sera appelé à se développer. Zahi met en garde contre des ennuis possibles si son village n'en tire pas alors quelques avantages tangibles. "Les gens qui n'ont pas de boulot risquent de se mettre à piller."

Si le ministre du Pétrole exhorte les habitants à la patience, il prévient qu'il faut tenir compte de leurs intérêts. "Nous demandons aux compagnies pétrolières de construire les routes, les ponts et les autres infrastructures prévues par les contrats signés avec l'Etat, de façon que la population locale ait l'impression qu'elles sont là pour développer la région et pas seulement pour extraire le pétrole et l'emporter ailleurs." Une nouvelle ruée vers l'or noir se prépare peut-être en Irak. Mais la production va représenter la partie la plus facile de la tâche qui attend les Chinois et les nombreux groupes étrangers qui rêvent de s'y implanter. Pour le moment, une seule route goudronnée mène aux maisons d'Al-Mazzagh. Rares sont les villageois à avoir un emploi stable. L'électricité est pratiquement absente et les logements n'ont pas l'eau courante. "La vie n'a pas changé depuis le départ de Saddam Hussein", rappelle un homme.

Andrew North

Sommes-nous en train de perdre la Turquie ?

Les choix de la Turquie constituent l'un des phénomènes les plus passionnants à suivre sur la scène internationale. Ils touchent aux grands enjeux du fameux arc de crise qui court du Proche-Orient à l'Afghanistan. Ils soulèvent la question de l'évolution identitaire d'un pays soucieux de s'affirmer, à la confluence de l'Europe, de l'Orient, de l'Asie.

La diplomatie turque est active. Elle assume une posture de puissance régionale et ne recule pas devant des gestes susceptibles de bousculer les paramètres. La Turquie a conclu ce mois-ci un accord ouvrant la voie à une normalisation des relations avec l'Arménie.

La Turquie entend concilier la diversification de sa diplomatie avec la préservation des alliances

La Turquie vient d'évincer Israël d'exercices militaires communs, pour marquer sa désapprobation de la guerre de Gaza. Le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a annoncé qu'il serait prochainement reçu par Barack Obama à Washington, et qu'auparavant il se rendrait en Iran, rappelant ainsi la volonté turque de jouer les médiateurs sur les dossiers brûlants.

En avril, le voyage de deux jours du président américain en Turquie avait souligné l'importance conférée à ce pays, perçu comme un appui stratégique et un symbole fort pour le dialogue recherché avec le monde musulman.

La Turquie veut accroître sa visibilité sur les grands dossiers, mettant en œuvre les concepts de « *profondeur stratégique* » et de « *zéro problème* » avec ses voisins mis au point par Ahmet Davutoglu, le nouveau ministre des affaires étrangères. Cet intellectuel est à l'origine des orientations prises par les néo-islamistes du parti AKP, au pouvoir depuis 2002.

Analyse

Natalie Nougayrède

Service International

Parfois surnommée « néo-ottomane », cette diplomatie soulève chez certains alliés de la Turquie de fortes interrogations. La Turquie se détournerait-elle peu à peu de ses attaches euro-atlantiques ? Certains se sont demandés si le phénomène de l'AKP ne cachait pas des ambitions cachées de panislamisme. Les contacts avec le Hamas, la volonté de ménager l'Iran malgré ses travaux nucléaires ou encore les suggestions de dialogue avec les talibans relèveraient, selon cette logique, d'une filiation idéologique.

La Turquie a aussi accéléré son rapprochement avec la Russie, suscitant d'autres questions. S'agit-il de sceller l'option « eurasiennne » ? Cette relation s'est en grande partie nouée autour des approvisionnements énergétiques et des projets de gazoducs. La Russie fournit 66 % du gaz importé par la Turquie. Le récent rapprochement turco-arménien a été facilité par Moscou. Il a mit sous pression l'Azerbaïdjan, pays dont Gazprom voudrait contrôler les réserves énergétiques.

Ayant le sentiment d'être rejetée par l'Union européenne, du moins par certains de ses dirigeants, qui répètent que les négociations avec Bruxelles n'ont pas vocation à déboucher sur une adhésion, la Turquie semble chercher des amis sous d'autres cieux.

Les représentants de l'AKP expliquent que le pays ne fait là que s'adapter à de nouvelles circonstances. La fin de la guerre froide a élargi les options de la Turquie. Il est naturel qu'elle utilise des cartes régionales, au sud, à l'est, au nord, le long de nouveaux axes commerciaux.

Rien de tout cela, insistent les responsables turcs, n'entraîne une quelconque

remise en cause des grandes orientations stratégiques : l'ancrage dans l'OTAN depuis 1952 et la candidature à l'UE. La Turquie entend concilier la diversification de sa diplomatie avec la préservation des alliances. Elle se dit en mesure d'apporter ainsi « plus » à l'Europe.

Le débat n'est pas clos. Aux Etats-Unis, la question « Sommes-nous en train de perdre la Turquie ? » est apparue en 2003, au moment des désaccords à propos de la guerre d'Irak. Le rééquilibrage de la diplomatie américaine par Barack Obama devrait recréer des synergies, notamment sur l'Afghanistan. Mais beaucoup doutent de convergences sur l'Iran, Ankara s'opposant à un scénario de sanctions.

La Turquie a, de son côté, discrètement demandé le soutien de Washington sur la question chypriote. L'Europe se pose-t-elle la question du danger de « perdre » la Turquie ? Ses propres enjeux de voisinage suffiraient à le justifier.

Dans la zone mer Noire - Caucase, la Turquie ne perçoit pas l'UE comme un véritable interlocuteur. Seule le face-à-face avec la Russie compte, comme l'a montré l'initiative de la « Plateforme pour la coopération et la stabilité dans le Caucase », réactivée en urgence pendant la guerre de Géorgie en août 2008, sans consulter aucun des alliés.

La Turquie se prépare à devenir un pays majeur pour le transit de gaz naturel vers l'Europe en provenance de la Russie, de la Caspienne, d'Irak, et un jour peut-être d'Iran. C'est parce que la Turquie a le sentiment d'être au cœur d'une nouvelle géopolitique qu'il lui est difficile de se contenter d'un statut de candidat à l'UE.

Selon un récent sondage du German Marshall Fund, seuls 35 % des Turcs jugent l'OTAN indispensable à la sécurité du pays (contre 53 % en 2004). 48 % restent favorables à l'entrée dans l'UE (contre 73 % en 2004), mais 65 % sont convaincus que cela n'arrivera jamais. Deux fois plus de Turcs (43 %) veulent que le pays agisse seul, plutôt qu'en concertation avec l'UE. ■

Courriel : nougayrede@lemonde.fr

Ankara libère des rebelles kurdes du PKK

Le gouvernement turc encourage les combattants à « rentrer dans leur pays ».

LAURE MARCHAND
ISTANBUL

TURQUIE Les autorités turques ont libéré, hier, cinq membres du PKK qui s'étaient présentés volontairement à la frontière turco-irakienne, la veille. Ils restent inculpés d'appartenance à un groupe terroriste, un crime passible d'une peine de prison. Mais cette décision de la justice turque apparaît comme le premier résultat concret de « l'ouverture démocratique » lancée par le gouvernement turc, cet été pour mettre un terme au conflit avec la guérilla kurde. Lundi, après avoir quitté la base arrière du PKK dans les monts Qandil, au nord de l'Irak, huit militants se sont rendus au poste-frontière de Silopi. Ils étaient accompagnés par 26 réfugiés kurdes, dont des femmes et des enfants, qui vivaient dans le camp de Makhmour, également au Kurdistan, depuis les années 1990. Les procureurs turcs dépêchés à la frontière n'avaient placé en garde à vue que cinq personnes sur 34.

En envoyant ce « groupe de paix », selon l'appellation du PKK, et dépêché par son leader Abdullah Öcalan, l'organisation kurde souhaitait tester la volonté du gouvernement de s'engager dans la résolution du problème kurde.

« Établir la paix »

Ses émissaires sont porteurs d'une lettre destinée aux autorités turques. « Nous venons en Turquie pour participer à l'établissement d'une base réelle pour la paix », expliquent-ils dans la missive.

Mardi après-midi, après la remise en liberté des rebelles, des milliers de sympathisants kurdes ont acclamé le groupe venu d'Irak, qui a pris place à bord d'un bus en faisant le signe de la victoire. L'ambiance festive n'avait rien à voir avec la dernière opération de ce type : en 1999, la délégation envoyée par le PKK avait été arrêté, condamnée à une peine de prison et certains de ses membres sont toujours derrière les barreaux.

Cette fois-ci, le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a estimé que ce

dénouement était « extrêmement positif et plaisant » et a encouragé tous les rebelles « à rentrer dans leur pays sans tarder ». Pour déposer les armes, la rébellion kurde réclame notamment une amnistie générale, incluant ses chefs militaires, et la reconnaissance de l'identité kurde dans la Constitution turque. « Un accueil positif envers un groupe de paix ne suffira pas à faire redescendre le PKK de la montagne », a déclaré Cemil Bayik, un commandant du PKK en Irak. ■



L'éditorial

Pierre Rousselin

Iran : l'heure du choix



L'attentat qui a causé la mort, hier, de cinq gardiens de la révolution confirme la dégradation de la situation intérieure dans la République islamique au moment où le dossier du nucléaire iranien retrouve sa place en tête des priorités des préoccupations internationales. L'attentat suicide revendiqué par un groupe

sunnite au Baloutchistan survient à la veille d'une rencontre cruciale à Vienne, dans le cadre de l'AIEA, destinée à mettre en œuvre l'accord conclu le 1^{er} octobre à Genève entre l'Iran et la communauté internationale. La rapidité avec laquelle Téhéran a accusé les États-Unis d'être à l'origine de l'attaque contre les gardiens de la révolution est révélatrice. Ali Laridjani s'est saisi de l'attentat pour dénoncer une preuve de l'« animosité » américaine et affirmer : « Obama a dit qu'il tendait la main à l'Iran, mais, avec cette action, il s'est brûlé la main. » Cette réaction du président du Parlement iranien trahit la hantise créée au sein du régime des mollahs par la politique d'ouverture de Washington. Comment réagir aux offres de dialogue alors qu'il était si facile de se contenter de profiter du très large rejet que suscitait l'Administration de George W. Bush ? À Vienne, les Iraniens vont devoir répondre à cette question. Ils ont accepté, à Genève, de livrer l'uranium qu'ils ont faiblement

enrichi pour qu'il soit traité à l'étranger afin de servir de combustible pour un réacteur de recherche aux applications uniquement civiles. Accepteront-ils de livrer tout le minerai enrichi dont ils disposent ? Ou bien vont-ils chercher à en conserver, à en dissimuler et à susciter de nouveaux problèmes pour gagner du temps ? De deux choses l'une. Ou bien un mécanisme peut être mis en place pour assurer une désescalade dans cette affaire. Téhéran choisirait de rentrer dans le rang tout en suivant la face afin de pouvoir concentrer son énergie sur le règlement de ses problèmes intérieurs. Ou bien, au contraire, la fragilité croissante du régime iranien le conduit à se crispier et à tenter de refaire l'unité en suscitant un réflexe nationaliste. Des deux hypothèses, la première n'est pas la plus probable. Il faut toutefois espérer qu'elle prévaudra. La rencontre de Vienne devrait nous fournir une bonne indication de l'orientation choisie à Téhéran.



TURQUIE: MANIFESTATION POUR LES REBELLES REVENUS D'IRAK, ANKARA CRITIQUÉ

DIYARBAKIR, 21 oct 2009 (AFP)

ENVIRON 100.000 personnes ont accueilli en héros à Diyarbakir (sud-est de la Turquie) les rebelles kurdes revenus d'Irak dans un geste de soutien à une résolution du conflit kurde, tandis que le gouvernement d'Ankara était sous le feu des critiques pour sa gestion de cette affaire.

Sous un feu d'artifice, les huit militants du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) qui sont arrivés lundi en territoire turc de leur base dans la montagne irakienne, ont salué la foule dans la principale ville du sud-est, peuplée majoritairement de Kurdes, a constaté un journaliste de l'AFP.

Les manifestants brandissaient les enseignes du PKK et des posters de son chef emprisonné à vie en Turquie, Abdullah Öcalan. "Vive la paix", chantaient-ils, dansant aux mélodies des chansons folkloriques.

"Combattants du peuple libre, bienvenue dans votre capitale", pouvait-on lire sur une banderole.

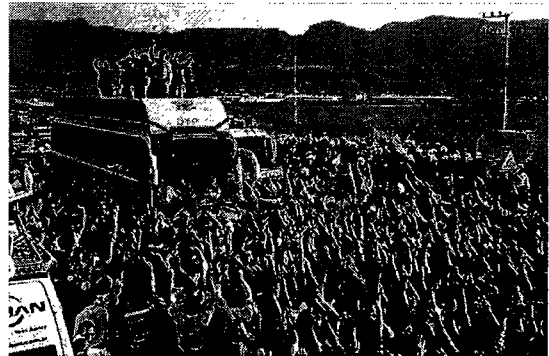
Mehmet Serif Gençdag, l'un des rebelles rentrés d'Irak, en uniforme gris-vert et pantalon bouffant, est intervenu devant la foule, indiquant qu'ils n'étaient pas revenus pour demander pardon. Il a affirmé que leur retour avait été planifié par Öcalan, exhortant le gouvernement à "bien saisir" leur geste de paix.

D'autres groupes, notamment d'Europe, sont attendus en Turquie dans les prochains jours, selon les autorités turques.

A Ankara, le gouvernement turc a fait l'objet mercredi de vives critiques de l'opposition et des milieux nationalistes après la décision prise la veille de maintenir en liberté un groupe de rebelles kurdes.

Le principal parti d'opposition, le Parti républicain du peuple (CHP) s'est indigné de "l'amnistie de fait" offerte selon lui aux huit rebelles.

"Les politiciens qui ont préparé le terrain à cette initiative commettent une trahison (...) La nation les en tiendra pour responsables", a pour sa part déclaré Hamit Köse, président d'une association de familles de soldats tués par le PKK.



Les huit rebelles, ainsi que 26 "civils" venant d'un camp de réfugiés kurdes de Turquie dans le nord de l'Irak, ont été libérés mardi, une décision judiciaire d'une mansuétude inhabituelle en Turquie, où la simple expression de sympathies pour le PKK peut conduire en prison.

Le PKK a dépêché en Turquie ces "groupes de paix", à l'appel d'Öcalan, pour marquer son soutien aux efforts du gouvernement, qui s'apprête à présenter au Parlement des réformes améliorant les droits des Kurdes et visant à résoudre le conflit kurde, qui a fait quelque 45.000 morts depuis son commencement en 1984.

Balayant les critiques, le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan s'est réjoui de l'arrivée des rebelles et a dit espérer que "beaucoup plus vont venir". "Nous allons insister sur ce processus (...) et j'ai l'espoir que nous allons le mener à son terme", a-t-il déclaré, cité par l'agence de presse Anatolie.

"Nous avons fait ce que nous avons à faire", a pour sa part affirmé Murat Karayılan, le chef militaire du PKK, cité par l'agence Firat News. "Nous allons voir à présent ce que va faire le gouvernement (...) Avant tout, les opérations (militaires) doivent cesser et un dialogue doit commencer."



IRAK : LE PARLEMENT ÉCHOUE À SE METTRE D'ACCORD SUR UNE LOI ÉLECTORALE

BAGDAD —21 oct. 2009 - De Ammar KARIM (AFP)

LE PARLEMENT IRAKIEN a échoué mercredi à trouver un accord sur une nouvelle loi électorale, rendant problématique la tenue d'élections générales à la mi-janvier, étape cruciale au moment où les forces américaines s'apprêtent à se retirer.

A Washington, la sous-secrétaire à la Défense Michèle Flournoy a ainsi fait valoir devant le Congrès que les incertitudes électorales pourraient avoir des "conséquences" sur le retrait américain.

Si le scrutin est reporté, l'armée américaine devra se coordonner avec Bagdad pour "s'organiser sur la façon de sécuriser les élections (...) et cela pourrait bien avoir des conséquences", a-t-elle dit devant la commission des Services armés de la Chambre des représentants.

Mais, a-t-elle ajouté, "notre idée est de s'en tenir à la date actuelle".

Auparavant, à Bagdad, le président du Parlement, Iyad al-Samarrai, avait annoncé à la presse que "les groupes politiques" n'étaient "pas arrivés à un accord sur la question de Kirkouk". "Cette question est devenue encore plus compliquée malgré les négociations et les médiations", avait-t-il noté.

M. Samarrai avait ajouté avoir "transmis la loi électorale au Conseil politique de sécurité nationale pour qu'il prenne une décision d'ici dimanche". "S'il y arrive, le Parlement se réunira lundi pour voter la nouvelle loi".

Le Conseil politique, organe consultatif, rassemble le Conseil présidentiel, le Premier ministre, les deux vice-Premiers ministres et les chefs des principales formations politiques du pays.

Les élections sont prévues le 16 janvier et la Commission électorale a dit à plu-



Le président du Parlement irakien, Iyad al-Samarrai, le 17 octobre 2009 à Bagdad

sieurs reprises qu'il lui fallait 90 jours pour préparer ce scrutin décisif.

Les Kurdes exigent d'être majoritaires dans cette province de 900.000 habitants, qu'ils veulent annexer à leur région autonome, alors que les Arabes et turcomans accusent ces derniers de s'y installer en masse pour modifier l'équilibre démographique.

"Je fais porter la responsabilité (de cet échec) aux députés qui ne cessent d'afficher leurs points de vue devant les médias, a pour sa part déclaré M. Samarrai. Tout ceci a conduit (...) à l'impossibilité d'arriver à un accord."

La question de Kirkouk avait déjà conduit au report des élections provinciales dans ce gouvernorat en janvier dernier.

Les partisans du chef radical chiite Moqtada Sadr ont annoncé qu'ils boycotteraient le Conseil politique. "La décision doit être prise au Parlement car c'est la seule instance élue et transférer le dossier à une autre instance va retarder encore l'adoption de la loi", a expliqué le porte-parole du mouvement, Salah al-

Obeidi.

"Le Parlement démontre son incapacité à légiférer et, en transmettant le dossier au Conseil politique, la présidence a planté le dernier clou au cercueil du Parlement", a affirmé Haïdar al-Abadi, député du Dawa, proche du Premier ministre Nouri Al-Maliki.

"C'est une honte d'avoir envoyé le texte au Conseil politique car c'est à nous de légiférer", a commenté le sunnite indépendant Hatchem al-Hassani.

Le président de la commission électorale Faraj al-Haïdari a lui jugé que son instance se trouvait "dans une situation critique à cause du retard pris dans l'adop-

tion de la loi électorale".

Le président Barack Obama avait appelé mardi au vote rapide de la loi électorale par le Parlement pour que les législatives puissent se tenir en janvier comme prévu, après avoir reçu Nouri Al-Maliki à la Maison Blanche.

Mercredi, dans un communiqué transmis avant la décision du Parlement, l'envoyé spécial du secrétaire général de l'ONU en Irak, Ad Melkert, avait de son côté souligné que le temps devenait "critique". "Tout report dans l'adoption de la loi risque d'affecter la crédibilité du processus électoral", avait-il noté.

LES RÉFORMES EN FAVEUR DES KURDES DÉPENDENT DE LA REDDITION DES REBELLES (ERDOGAN)

AFP

ANKARA, 23 oct 2009 (AFP)

Les plans du gouvernement turc en faveur d'une amélioration des droits de la minorité kurde risquent d'être bloqués si les rebelles kurdes ne s'engagent pas fermement sur la voie de la reddition, a affirmé le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan, cité vendredi par la presse.

L'avertissement intervient alors que le gouvernement est vivement critiqué pour son attitude jugée laxiste à l'égard d'un groupe de rebelles, rentrés lundi de bases irakiennes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), en geste de soutien au plan de réformes pro-kurdes.

Laissés en liberté après une série d'interrogatoires, les huit rebelles, accompagnés de 26 "civils" venant d'un camp de réfugiés kurdes de Turquie en Irak, ont été accueillis dans la liesse par des dizaines de milliers de Kurdes scandant des slogans pro-PKK, organisation considérée comme terroriste par Ankara.

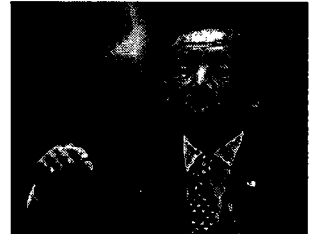
Dans des commentaires publiés par plusieurs journaux, M. Erdogan a prévenu que le malaise créé par cet accueil pourrait mettre à mal les projets de réforme

que le gouvernement s'apprête à présenter au Parlement pour améliorer les droits des Kurdes et faciliter une résolution du conflit qui a fait 45.000 morts depuis 1984.

"Cela pourrait affecter négativement le processus (...) Ce n'est pas ce que nous voulons, mais cela pourrait nous ramener à la case départ, a-t-il déclaré, soulignant que le processus ne pourrait continuer dans de bonnes conditions que si les rebelles déposaient les armes et se rendaient.

"Nous attendons qu'elles (les redditions) continuent. Si ce n'est pas le cas, il n'y a rien que nous puissions faire", a-t-il affirmé.

Le PKK, qui ne parle pas de "reddition" mais de "groupes de paix" dépêchés en gage de bonne volonté, a annoncé l'arrivée prochaine d'un nouveau groupe, en provenance d'Europe.



IRAK: L'AMBASSADRICE AMÉRICAINE À L'ONU AU KURDISTAN POUR DISCUTER DES ÉLECTIONS

AFP

ERBIL (Irak), 24 oct 2009 (AFP)

L'ambassadrice américaine à l'ONU, Susan Rice, s'est rendue samedi au Kurdistan irakien pour s'entretenir avec le président de la région autonome Massoud Barzani notamment des élections, a-t-on indiqué de source officielle.

"Aussitôt après son arrivée à Erbil, elle s'est entretenue avec M. Barzani des questions politiques, des prochaines élections (législatives) et des relations entre le gouvernement régional du Kurdistan et les Etats-unis", a indiqué à la presse un responsable des média au gouvernement kurde.

Le Parlement irakien a échoué mercredi à trouver un accord sur une nouvelle loi électorale, rendant problématique la tenue d'élections générales à la mi-janvier, étape cruciale au moment où les forces américaines s'apprêtent à se retirer du pays.

A Washington, la sous-secrétaire à la Défense Michèle Flournoy a ainsi fait valoir devant le Congrès que les incertitudes électorales pourraient avoir des "conséquences" sur le retrait américain.

La question la plus ardue demeure la région disputée de Kirkouk. Les Kurdes affirment être majoritaires dans cette province de 900.000 habitants, qu'ils veulent annexer à leur région autonome, alors que les Arabes et Turcomans accusent ces derniers de s'y installer en masse pour modifier l'équilibre démographique.

Jeudi soir, les dirigeants kurdes avaient rejeté tout régime spécial pour cette région. "Nous refusons l'adoption d'une loi électorale spéciale pour Kirkouk nous n'acceptons pas une distribution des sièges selon un quota décidé à l'avance", avait affirmé M. Barzani.

"Les élections à Kirkouk doivent avoir lieu en même temps que le reste du pays et nous refusons la création dans ce gouvernorat de circonscriptions électorales sur une base ethnique", avait-il ajouté.



Samedi matin, Mme Rice avait rencontré à Bagdad le chef de la diplomatie irakienne Hoshyar Zebari et avait visité le siège du ministère qui a été ravagé par un attentat au camion piégé le 19 août.

L'Irak a exigé une commission d'enquête internationale pour déterminer les auteurs de cet attentat qui se trouvent, selon lui, en Syrie.

Vendredi, Mme Rice avait discuté à Bagdad des moyens permettant à l'Irak de sortir des sanctions imposées par les Nations unies à la suite de l'invasion du Koweït par les troupes de l'ancien président irakien Saddam Hussein en 1990.

"Le Premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki a insisté sur la nécessité pour le comité de suivi irako-américain de mener les actions nécessaires pour faire sortir l'Irak du Chapitre VII (...) et l'ambassadrice américaine à l'ONU, a renouvelé lors de sa première visite à Bagdad, l'engagement des Etats-Unis de permettre à l'Irak de sortir de ce Chapitre", a indiqué un communiqué du bureau de M. Maliki

Lundi, après avoir reçu le chef du gouvernement irakien à Washington, la secrétaire d'Etat Hillary Clinton avait indiqué que les Etats-Unis et l'Irak avaient l'intention d'établir un comité commun "afin de discuter des problèmes relatifs au chapitre VII".

Accueillis en héros, des rebelles kurdes du PKK rentrent en Turquie dans l'espoir de négociations avec Ankara

Le gouvernement turc a supervisé l'opération du « retour à la maison » de Kurdes exilés dans le nord de l'Irak. Une étape dans le processus qui vise à mettre fin à vingt-cinq ans de conflit



Des rebelles kurdes à leur retour dans le Sud-Est turc, le 21 octobre – ici à Diyarbakir –, au lendemain de leur reddition. AP

Istanbul

Correspondance

Depuis qu'à la fin juillet, le gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan s'est engagé à trouver une solution politique au « problème kurde », les événements semblent se précipiter.

Pour la première fois en vingt-cinq ans de conflit entre l'Etat turc et la rébellion du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), un groupe de 34 membres ou proches des groupes combattant a été autorisé à rentrer en Turquie, lundi 19 octobre, relançant l'espoir de trouver une issue au conflit qui sévit depuis 1984 dans le sud-est du pays. Le « groupe de la paix », envoyé par le PKK pour apporter son soutien à la politique « d'ouverture démocratique » du gouvernement turc, rassemblait huit combattants désarmés des monts Qandil, la base arrière située dans le nord de l'Irak, et des familles du camp de réfugiés de Makhmour.

A peine franchie la frontière turco-irakienne à Silopi, le convoi de 4 x 4 a été accueilli dans la liesse. Plus de 50 000 Kurdes, et les responsables du parti pour une société démocratique (DTP), le parti kur-

de légal, les attendaient au point de passage. Après avoir été brièvement interrogés par la justice turque, les rebelles ont été laissés en liberté. Et depuis deux jours, ils sont fêtés en héros sur leur parcours par des dizaines de milliers de supporters accourus de toute la région. « Bienvenue aux ambassadeurs de la paix, le Kurdistan est fier de vous », scandaient les manifestants, alors que les membres du PKK faisaient le V de la victoire. A

Seize militants réfugiés en Europe sont aussi attendus à l'aéroport d'Istanbul

leur arrivée, mercredi, à Diyarbakir, près de 100 000 personnes célébraient leur libération. Les chants à la gloire de la guérilla et les feux d'artifice se sont prolongés toute la nuit.

En 1999, après l'arrestation du leader du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, une délégation similaire avait été envoyée à la frontière turque pour négocier avec l'Etat, mais tous ses membres avaient été immédiatement emprisonnés. Cette fois, le

« retour à la maison » de ces combattants et réfugiés, exilés depuis plus de dix ans, a été salué comme un pas « positif » par Recep Tayyip Erdogan, dont le gouvernement a supervisé l'opération. La manœuvre a été rendue possible par une concertation, depuis plusieurs mois, entre les institutions étatiques et les différentes composantes du PKK, mais aussi avec le président de la région kurde d'Irak, Massoud Barzani.

Le ministre turc de l'intérieur, Besir Atalay, a déclaré que le mouvement de reddition se poursuivrait dans les prochains jours et qu'il espérait voir revenir au moins 100 à 150 Kurdes du camp de Makhmour, en Irak : ce dernier abrite 12 000 personnes chassées de leur village par l'armée turque dans les années 1990. Un groupe de 16 militants réfugiés en Europe est aussi attendu à l'aéroport d'Istanbul.

En ouvrant la voie à un retour des rebelles et à une amnistie, la Turquie a répondu à la main tendue par le PKK d'Abdullah Öcalan, qui avait annoncé la publication d'une feuille de route pour la paix, au milieu de l'été. « Ce retour, c'est l'avancée la plus importante, mais il faut que cela se poursuive », esti-

me Abdullah Demirbas, le maire de l'arrondissement central de Diyarbakir, dont le fils, âgé de 17 ans, a rejoint le maquis du PKK. « Nous avons montré notre détermination à faire la paix. L'Etat doit maintenant autoriser ceux qui descendent de la montagne à rejoindre la vie politique. Il faut également modifier la Constitution », ajoute l'élu du DTP. Dans la montagne de Qandil, un porte-parole du PKK se satisfait lui aussi de la réussite de cette démonstration médiatique, mais « il ne faut pas s'attendre à ce que des centaines de gens descendent », avertit-il.

Le gouvernement de M. Erdogan est désormais attendu au tournant. « Il est grand temps d'annoncer ce que contient concrètement l'ouverture démocratique », souligne l'avocat kurde Sezgin Tanrikulu. Le détail des réformes doit être présenté au Parlement : les noms « turquifiés » des villes kurdes pourraient être abandonnés, la diffusion d'émissions en langue kurde libéralisée... M. Atalay a aussi annoncé que l'administration se préparait à mettre fin à l'isolement total d'Abdullah Öcalan sur son île prison d'Imrali. ■

Guillaume Perrier

Kurdish president rules out operations against PKK

Erbil - The president of the Regional Government of Kurdistan Massoud Barzani said in an interview on Thursday on CNN TÜRK that he supports the Kurdish opening of the Turkish government and better relations, but he ruled out support for military operations against the PKK.

On a program shown on CNN TÜRK, the Kurdish president said that he supports the Kurdish opening of the government. But despite of this he said that Turkey shouldn't



expect military operations of the Kurdish military forces against the Kurdistan Workers Party. "We support a peaceful solution".

Barzani said there should come an end to armed environment, because this doesn't solve the Kurdish issue in Turkey. The Kurdish president also expects a Turkish consulate to be opened in Erbil soon.

Recently the Turkish parliament approved cross-border operations of the Turkish army against the Kurdistan Workers Party located in Iraqi Kurdistan. The Iraqi government called on Turkey to stop the military operations, but recently the Kurdish border regions were fired upon by Turkish military forces (Photo: Rudaw).



Iran's enemy within strikes again

October 19, 2009 —United Press International,

THE WEEKEND slaughter of several Revolutionary Guards generals in suicide bombings in the border province of Sistan-Baluchistan marked a sharp intensification of a slew of simmering insurgencies throughout Iran's restive frontier regions.

Tehran has accused the United States, Britain and Pakistan of fomenting the violence. All have denied any involvement, but over the years all have had reasons for stirring up trouble in the Islamic Republic, as have Saudi Arabia and Israel.

The violence has been growing since 2004 -- a year after the Americans invaded neighboring Iraq and found themselves trapped in an insurgency that was frequently fanned by the Iranians.

Amid a steady stream of bombings, assassinations and attacks on military personnel, Tehran has executed dozens of "traitors and criminals" and conducted mass arrests.

But the unrest has continued. The twin suicide bombings in Baluchistan Sunday, probably the work of the minority Sunni Jundallah, or Soldiers of God, group, was the deadliest strike yet by any of the insurgent forces and will likely trigger heavy retaliation by Tehran.

So far, the violence has been largely confined to the republic's peripheral regions -- oil-rich Sunni-dominated Khuzestan in the southwest; the opium-smuggling region of Baluchistan in the southeast, also Sunni; the Kurdish provinces in the west; and the Azeri region in the northwest that has produced many prominent Iranian leaders.

As the Iranians have sought to exploit the bloodbath in Iraq, the Americans and their regional Sunni allies have sought to destabilize the Tehran regime and keep it off balance in the confrontation over Iran's nuclear program.

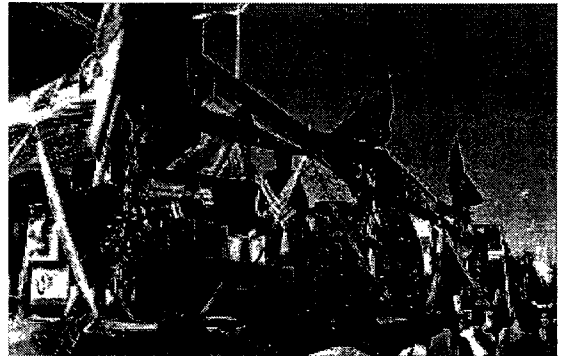
It is unclear whether these covert efforts will continue as Washington and Tehran engage in public diplomacy to find a political accommodation in Iraq, but Sunday's slaughter indicates the stakes may be rising.

The Americans could decide that continued internal unrest would be a useful, and deniable, means of pressure on Tehran.

Most analysts say that despite Iran's ethnic diversity, a strong sense of nationalism is likely to hold sway over ethnic separatism, as it has in the past.

Saddam Hussein sought to exploit an ethnic uprising when he invaded Arab-dominated Khuzestan, the heart of Iran's energy industry, in 1980. But his rhetoric only united the country rather than divided it.

"While ethnic separation is not -- in the short-term at least -- a



Residents of the south east of Iranian city of Zahedan attend the October 19, 2009 funeral ceremony of victims of a suicide bombing attack that killed seven Revolutionary Guards commanders and 37 others in the Sistan-Beluchistan province on October 18, 2009. UPI/ISNA News Agency |

serious threat to Iran's cohesion and territorial integrity, it is widely feared that ethnic tensions could be exploited by Western powers, some of which are already active in intelligence-gathering and sabotage operations in some provinces," said analyst Mahan Abedin of the Jamestown Foundation, a Washington think tank that specializes in terrorism issues.

Only about half of Iran's 70 million people are ethnic Persians, although some 90 percent of the population adheres to the Shiite branch of Islam, which is the state religion.

Most of the estimated 15 million Azeris, Iran's second-largest minority, are Shiite, but most of the 5 million to 7 million Kurds and 4 million Baluchis are Sunni.

The 2 million Arabic-speaking Iranians in Khuzestan are overwhelmingly Shiite, but they are looked down upon by ethnic Farsi-speaking Iranians and are among the most disadvantaged groups.

These Shiites have become more restive and critical of Tehran's rule since their cousins in Iraq, Iran's western neighbor, were catapulted into power in Baghdad by the U.S.-led invasion of March 2003 that toppled Saddam's minority Sunni regime.

Tehran has proved itself adept at rallying Iranians against foreign threats and is pulling out all the stops in the current confrontation with the West.

But this resonates largely with the ethnic Persians rather than with the minorities who are more prone to outside influences.

Of all the regions gripped by anti-Tehran unrest, Khuzestan is the most strategic, and thus the most attractive target in any U.S. or allied effort to undercut Tehran's economic stability.

The province contains 66 percent of the country's recoverable oil and nearly 22 percent of its natural gas deposits.

According to 2006 statistics, it also holds 28 percent of Iran's refining capacity, 34 percent of its gas plants, 25 percent of its electricity generating plants and 26 percent of its petrochemical facilities.

REUTERS

Turkey, Iraq eye closer ties with deals on gas, PKK

BAGHDAD, October 15, 2009 (Reuters) - By Pinar Aydinli

* Neighbours sign up to 44 agreements

* Iraqi gas exports to Turkey to start at 8 bcm - min

* Talks held on PKK rebel group

TURKISH PRIME Minister Tayyip Erdogan and Iraqi premier Nuri al-Maliki on Thursday signed deals from energy co-operation to water sharing and fighting Kurdish rebels.

Relations between Ankara and Baghdad have been strained in the past by the presence of Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) rebels who launch attacks on southeast Turkey from northern Iraq.

But trade and diplomatic ties have bloomed since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq that ousted Saddam Hussein as regional heavyweight Turkey has sought to expand its influence in the Middle East under Erdogan's Islamist-rooted AK Party government.

At a news conference with Maliki, Erdogan said trade between their countries was worth \$5 billion, a figure he said he hoped to increase fourfold as soon as possible.

"A new stage has begun in our bilateral relations," Erdogan said through a translator.

European Union-candidate Turkey aims to position itself as a vital energy and trade corridor with its eastern neighbours, including Iraq, Iran, Syria and the South Caucasus.

Turkish and Iraqi officials signed more than 40 agreements, including a memorandum of understanding to transport Iraqi natural gas to Europe via Turkey, Turkish officials said.

While Maliki hailed strengthened ties with Turkey, he made no mention of the PKK, and said he hoped relations would be "far from interference in each others affairs".

Government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh had earlier said the two countries had agreed to "respect each other's sovereignty".

The comments could be a reference to Turkish military strikes against PKK rebels in northern Iraq, which usually involve shelling and airstrikes, but have also included land offensives, raising the ire of some officials in Baghdad.

However, Washington and Baghdad both consider the PKK terrorists, and Iraq has pledged to crack down on the group.

"We confirmed our steadfastness in ending the terrorism that threatens both countries," Erdogan said, referring to the PKK.



Erdogan meets Talabani during Iraq visit

Agreements signed included one on security cooperation.

Other agreements focused on water sharing, transportation, health, agriculture, education and engineering.

ENERGY CORRIDOR

Under international sanctions imposed on Saddam, trade between Turkey and Iraq choked to a trickle. Turkey's complaint that Baghdad was doing little to crack down on PKK rebels also poisoned ties. But trade improved dramatically after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, with Turkish companies playing a leading role in reconstruction.

On Thursday, Turkish Energy Minister Taner Yildiz said Ankara would seek the involvement of Turkish firms in the construction of a 15,000-megawatt (MW) gas-fired power station Iraq wants to build. Iraq is expected to tender next month for \$500-600 million of gas-fired power station projects, he said.

Iraq will also start natural gas imports to Turkey at a level of 8 billion cubic metres, Yildiz said.

Government sources said Iraqi gas would be sent on to Europe, which would add to Turkey's plans to become a major regional energy hub for European supplies.

It was not clear whether the gas would go through the 7.9 billion euro European Union-backed Nabucco pipeline project, aimed to cut European dependence on Russian gas. Maliki said at a signing ceremony for the project in July that Iraq could supply 15 billion cubic metres of natural gas to Europe.

Turkish officials said the two countries also planned to extend an agreement over an Iraq-Turkey oil pipeline, complete new shared power lines and boost the capacity of existing ones.

In September, Turkey agreed to release more water from the Euphrates river to drought-ravaged Iraq, increasing the outflow to between 450 and 500 cubic metres per second until Oct. 20.

Months before that, Iraqi lawmakers agreed to block any pact signed with Turkey, Iran or Syria that did not include a clause giving Iraq a fairer share of water resources.



UNAMI urges Kurdish, Baghdad dialogue

October 19, 2009 —United Press International,

THE U.N. Assistance Mission in Iraq described its efforts at finding a political solution to disputed boundaries in the ethnically diverse north as positive.

The central government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government are at odds over northern territories along a de facto border stretching from Sinjar near Syria to Khanaqin in the eastern province of Diyala.

UNAMI said talks on disputed internal boundaries made progress

in terms of concerns expressed by local residents.

Negotiations centered on ways to resolve land and property issues in the disputed territories and considerations for native languages.

Analysts describe tensions between the KRG and Baghdad as potential security concern as U.S. forces prepare to wrap up their mission in Iraq.

Ad Melkert, the U.N. special envoy to Iraq, said political dialogue was the best way to avoid an escalation of the disputes.

"Dialogue between the government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region remains critical for the stability of the country and for addressing numerous outstanding issues that are central to its functioning," he said.



President Barzani Praises Turkey's Efforts to Engage with Kurds

KRP.org 19/10/2009

President Barzani's interview with CNN Turk

Translation of the full excerpts of the interview by President Masoud Barzani to the CNN Turk TV channel on 15 October 2009



CNN Turk: Mr. President, thank you very much for this interview. The time of using violence and force is coming to an end; the PKK is laying down their arms. What do you have to say about this?

President Barzani: First of all, you are very welcome here in Kurdistan and I am pleased to have this interview. We have never supported, support or will support the use of force. It is not right; it is wrong. Problems have always been resolved through political means and dialogue. We know that Turkey is now taking this route.

CNN Turk: How do you see the process in Turkey, opening up to the Kurds?

President Barzani: We certainly see this as an important political step and the correct one. We are always prepared to be part of any peaceful process because we no longer need the use of force.

CNN Turk: Mr. President, you consider this process as important. In what way could you help Turkey in this respect?

President Barzani: I believe that following through with peaceful policies and means is the best way forward. The PKK is beginning to appreciate this and I don't believe they will carry on with armed struggle forever. We are willing to play a role in any peaceful initiatives, as we have done in the past and we will continue with this policy. I am not going to delve into the details of how to resolve the Kurdish question. We leave this for the Turkish state. The important thing is that the deadlock has been broken. I see the steps taken by the Turkish state as very significant and as the foundation for breaking a psychological barrier in addressing the Kurdish question.

CNN Turk: So you are in favour of an end to the use of force?

President Barzani: Yes, as I mentioned at the outset, resorting to violence and force is not good. The killing of a Kurd at the hands of a Turk or the killing of a Turk at

the hands of a Kurd will only pave the way for more bloodshed. I have always emphasised this. It is therefore important that the political rights of Kurds in that area are not denied. I believe what is happening in Turkey now will pave the way for a more comprehensive resolution. These policies are courageous and strong. We are certainly prepared to support these steps.

CNN Turk: You, Mr President, commend this project, if we can call it the opening up of Turkey [towards the Kurds], or Erdogan's [Turkish Prime Minister] project or the national project; but in what way would the President support this project?

President Barzani: We have never supported the use of force in order to reach a resolution and will not do that. We would like a peaceful atmosphere to emerge and we would like an end to violence and the use of force. I don't believe that when there is the possibility of a peaceful resolution, we need the use of force and arms, because [using force] will not resolve anything. Of course one needs to look at each place [country] according to its particular dynamics. I said that Turkey is taking important steps and it could take even greater strides forward. However, what is being done in Turkey is less than that which has been done in Iraq and in Iraqi Kurdistan. No comparisons have been made with the model in Iraqi Kurdistan. Notwithstanding, I believe that the culture that is beginning to emerge in Turkey is a very significant change.

CNN Turk: Relations between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan have been through many ups and downs in the past; how is this relationship now?

President Barzani: Yes, it's true that our relations were deteriorating for some time, which we did not desire. We are taking serious steps to improve our relations.

Winter snow is melting away and we are on the eve of spring in our relations. I am very optimistic about the future of these relations and to develop strong relations.

CNN Turk: How about the possibility of opening a Turkish consulate in Erbil?

President Barzani: No doubt Turkey's current policies will have an affect on the relations between Kurds and Turkey. We view the opening of a Turkish consulate in Erbil as a great, beneficial step toward removing any obstacles in our way.

CNN Turk: Mr President, you just said that your relations with Turkey are improving; do you have plans to visit Turkey? Would you accept an invitation from Turkey?

President Barzani: I have respect for Turkish people and I always reiterate this. I would gladly visit Turkey anytime I receive an invitation.

CNN Turk: As the President of the Kurdistan Region, you are one of the key leaders of Iraq. How do you evaluate relations between Turkey and Iraq, and the relations between the Kurdistan Region and Turkey within this framework?

President Barzani: The Kurdistan Region has a legal and constitutional status within Iraq. Our rights are respected in the Iraqi Constitution. We are obviously part of Iraq and we work within this framework. Through this framework, we are always working to improve relations between Turkey and Iraq. We would like to build strong relations between Iraq, Kurdistan and Turkey. We should not forget that Iraq borders Turkey through the Kurdistan Region and therefore the Kurdistan Region is a gateway between Iraq and Turkey.

CNN Turk: Do you also believe that improving economic relations between you and Turkey is also important?

President Barzani: Turkey is obviously an important country to us. Neighbourly, cultural, and economic relations bind us together, as well as co-existence. The Kurdistan Region is very rich in oil resources. We should take mutual benefit from this and it will no doubt provide a strong basis for our relations. Turkey is very rich in water resources and water is now more important than oil. We have diverse relations with Turkey. Turkey also depends on us for many products. There are many Turkish companies working here. We hope that serious talks can begin between the

two leaderships.

CNN Turk: Only Turkish companies?

President Barzani: I don't really want to go into these details but the presence of Turkish companies in the oil sector is not a bad thing. We should also bear in mind that Turkish companies constitute the largest number of foreign firms investing in the Kurdistan Region and this is a known fact.

CNN Turk: How do you view Turkey becoming a member of European Union?

President Barzani: We would be very pleased by that.

CNN Turk: Do you believe this would have any benefits for Kurdistan?

President Barzani: This will no doubt be very beneficial to us.

CNN Turk: Iraq still lacks a law for oil and there are disagreements between you and Baghdad on this. How do you see your relations with Baghdad and with Turkey in this respect?

President Barzani: It is true that there are disagreements between us and Baghdad. These disagreements are like family disagreements. But the final referee for these disagreements is the Iraqi Constitution. We are bound to this constitution. We are prepared to resolve any disputes through the Constitution.

CNN Turk: Mr President, everybody is talking about the aftermath of the US withdrawal from Iraq. President Obama has set a deadline of the end of 2011 to withdraw all US forces from Iraq. Many people think the Kurds do not want the US to withdraw from Iraq. Do you have any comments on this?

President Barzani: I believe the size and number of US forces is not important; the question of a US withdrawal is a domestic political issue in the US. A US withdrawal could pose a threat to the whole country, not just Kurdistan.

CNN Turk: But there is also talk that the US may keep a small military base in Iraq. Could this base be in Kurdistan?

President Barzani: This issue would be discussed with the Iraqi government. If the US wanted to have a military base in Iraq, Kurdistan might be a possible location for such a base.

CNN Turk: Are you in favour of that?

President Barzani: We would like the security agreement, as well as strong relations between Iraq and the US to be maintained. We have never wanted Iraq to be occupied by the US. Iraq needs to enjoy security and stability and the US has a key role to play in this.

CNN Turk: Many people say that if the US leaves, the situation in Iraq will deteriorate?

President Barzani: Everything is possible, including the possibility of civil war. Yes, the possibility of civil war is real, but we would try to prevent that.

CNN Turk: How about the situation in Kirkuk?

President Barzani: A roadmap for the resolution of the Kirkuk issue exists in Article-140 of the Iraqi Constitution. This is a legal and constitutional article for the resolution of the status of this city. If the Kirkuk issue is not resolved through this solution, the problem will persist. We therefore want to resolve this issue through legal and constitutional means. Obviously those against the implementation of Article-140 are those people who do not want the problems of Iraq to be resolved. The sooner this article is implemented, the better for us, the city and all Iraq. There are many people with different requirements, including those calling for the return of centralization and avoiding the resolution of the status of Kirkuk. We cannot wait indefinitely.

CNN Turk: If the PKK lay down their arms, or if they continue with their armed struggle, how could this affect the stability in Kurdistan and Iraq and your relations with Turkey?

President Barzani: I don't see it appropriate that our relations with Turkey be bound to this issue. We are not responsible for the actions of the PKK. However if this problem is resolved, it would have a positive impact.

CNN Turk: No too long ago, US Vice President Biden visited the Kurdistan Region and you met with him. Could you tell us if Biden's old proposals were discussed in this meeting?

President Barzani: Biden had personal views when he was a Senator. He had a good grasp of the situation in Iraq. But naturally when he became US Vice President, he became part of an administration. Being a senator gives more freedom and independence. We discussed the issues facing Iraq with him. He emphasised the political process in the Kurdistan Region and his support for this Region. We agreed on all the outstanding issues with him. He indicated his support for this process.

CNN Turk: What do you think about President Obama being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize?

President Barzani: I congratulate him.

CNN Turk: Mr. President, back in 1993 you were asked that after so many years of

fighting in the mountains, whether you believed in independence for Kurdistan. You answered in the affirmative. You also said back then that if I was asked this same question after 15 years, I would have the same answer. Will this dream continue?

President Barzani: I have the same answer now. I believe that the dream cannot be realised by force but through dialogue and understanding. However, as a legitimate right, I believe in it. This will not be resolved by denying Kurds their rights. All problems can be resolved through peaceful means and fraternal co-existence. Our problems cannot be resolved by denying each other. No problems can be resolved through force. The only viable solution is through understanding and accepting each other. We have some constant and mutual requirements, which we must agree on. I would like to reiterate again that Turkey's current policies are a significant and important change.

CNN Turk: What is the last word from Masoud Barzani to millions of Turkish viewers via our channel?

President Barzani: I wish success for the people of Turkey. I congratulate the Turkish government for the process of opening up Turkey toward Kurds. I say this to Turkish people that whether we are Kurds or Turks, we are all brothers. We don't want the blood of Turkish sons or Kurdish sons shed at the hand of each other. We have wounds from our past experiences. We need to remedy these wounds and live in peace and fraternity.

-END-

PKK turnover offers hope for end to Kurdish problem

AYSE KARABAT / MELIK DUVAKLI

The outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) turned over a group of its members to Turkish authorities yesterday at the Habur border gate, a groundbreaking move that may lead to the disarmament of the PKK, strengthening the hand of the government in its recently launched democratization package to end the country's decades-old Kurdish problem.

The group was sent to Turkish authorities for processing.

The symbolic move was initiated after Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned leader of the terrorist PKK serving life in prison on the island of İmralı, urged the PKK last week to send what he described as "peace groups" to surrender to the Turkish authorities.

Eight armed members of the PKK, comprising four women and four men, the eldest being 57 and the youngest 24, joined a larger group coming from the Mahmur refugee camp in northern Iraq along the way. The total number of people in the group was reported to be 34.

The group entered Turkey from the Habur gate yesterday afternoon. Those present include pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) leaders Ahmet Türk and Emine Ayna, DTP party officials and deputies, and thousands of people, all of whom received the group with jubilation. The crowd chanted slogans in support of Öcalan and the PKK.

A tent was erected near the border in the early hours of the morning for five authorized public prosecutors, one judge and lawyers. They were expected to process the group and hand it over to authorities.

As the group approached the border area, the border gate was closed to all other passages. All the preparations were supervised by Sırnak Governor Ali Yerlikaya.

The group was expected to arrive early in the morning, but the convoy escorting the Mahmur group got into a traffic accident, leaving one dead and several injured. The armed PKK members then joined a group heading down the Arbil-Mosul road.

Upon arrival, the group was met by an overjoyed crowd, which had been waiting since the previous night. The 26 people coming from the Mahmur refugee camp, including four children and nine women, were immediately released after their identity was confirmed. But the procedure for the eight armed members of the PKK took longer.

Most of the nearly 10,000 inhabitants of the Mahmur refugee camp left Turkey in 1994, but some were born in the camp. Ankara claims the Mahmur camp serves as a safe haven for the PKK, though it is under the control of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The eight PKK members gave a deposition and were debriefed at a military post near the border after crossing the border yesterday. They then underwent a health checkup and were turned over to police to testify. After this



testimony, they were released, but a court case will be opened against them for being members of an outlawed organization, which is standard procedure.

The eight PKK members were not expected to avail themselves of Article 221 of the Turkish Penal Code (TCK), popularly known as the "active repentance law," which envisages lower punishments for PKK members who surrender if they provide information about the organization they belonged to and if they were not involved in violence.

According to the practice, members who surrender are asked if they regret joining the organization, but some lawyers, including Diyarbakır Bar Association President Emin Aktar, say the procedure should not be necessarily. Instead, they say, only saying "I am turning myself in of my own free will" should be enough.

Upon arrival, the PKK members reportedly said they had returned of their own free will and in accordance with the wishes of Öcalan in the hopes of opening the way for democratic politics.

The treatment of the PKK members might open the way for a wave of PKK members turning themselves in during the democratization process and was considered a "test for the government" by many experts, including Aktar. He said not forcing PKK members to say they regret joining the PKK will accelerate the process.

Both PKK members and residents of the Mahmur camp brought letters for President Abdullah Gül, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Parliament Speaker Mehmet Ali Şahin.

Öcalan suggested that these "peace groups" should meet with various segments of society to discuss possible solutions to Turkey's long-standing Kurdish problem.

The Turkish government launched an initiative in late July to solve the Kurdish question. The government has yet to provide details, but officials have frequently underlined that the process aims to make every Turkish citizen an equal and free member of a highly developed democracy.

But some circles, including the main oppo-

sition Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), both of which are against the initiative, claim that before taking any steps, terrorism should come to an end and that the PKK must surrender.

Öcalan, in urging for a small group of PKK members, dubbed a peace group, to surrender, underlined that such a move will help solve the deadlock in "democratic politics."

Speaking at a press conference in İmralı prior to the group's arrival, DTP leader Türk said the move is a sign of how Öcalan can contribute to peace efforts if he is given the opportunity. "Öcalan wanted the peace groups after he noticed a deadlock in the process. This is an indication of what he can achieve if he is taken as a counterpart [in negotiations]," Türk said.

He suggested that the groups' arrival is a move that will strengthen the government's position, though the government has up until now not been able to benefit from opportunities provided by the process.

Following this PKK gesture, Türk suggested, military operations should be stopped in order to discuss a solution in a free atmosphere. "If the state takes one step, the PKK will take 10 steps," he said, but added that the approach of the government and the state should not be based on the discourse of "they surrendered" and "they were liquidated."

"Such an approach did not lead us anywhere," he said, urging the parties to not repeat the failed process of 1999.

In 1999, when Öcalan was captured, he urged a group from the PKK to surrender. At that time, eight PKK members with guns surrendered to Turkish officials, but after their trial, they were sentenced to prison for up to 10 years. One of them, Seydi Fırat, who served seven years in prison, ushered the group onto Turkish territory yesterday.

Türk also warned that if members of the group are arrested, this will inflict a new disaster on the society. "Our people will not accept any arrests. When these groups are released, they will be able to convey their message to the public opinion and politics," Türk said.

Iraq's Worrisome Political Process

Interviewee:

Joost Hiltermann, Deputy Program Director, Middle East and North Africa, International Crisis Group

Interviewer:

Bernard Gwertzman, Consulting Editor, CFR.org

October 19, 2009



While Afghanistan dominates the attention of U.S. policymakers, Iraq is entering a critical phase of its political development. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, in Washington for White House talks this week, may win the most votes in January's national parliamentary elections but could be deposed because he has so many political enemies, says expert Joost

Hiltermann of the International Crisis Group. Hiltermann also warns about potential spoilers who would like to stir up violence ahead of the elections. And the likelihood of a split vote, he says, could lead to protracted negotiations amid a tense political climate at a time when the 130,000 U.S. troops in Iraq move ahead with their scheduled drawdown. "There are a bunch of exploiters out there who want to disrupt the political process, and they have an interest in making trouble ahead of the elections, and on election day," he says.

How would you describe the overall situation in Iraq: is it calm? Are people very worried about the upcoming national elections scheduled for January 16?

It's deceptively calm. I came back a week ago, I was in Baghdad for a couple of weeks. I was unprotected, unescorted, just by myself, and I was fine, but people are worried about elections and what will happen. And it's not like violence has disappeared. It is just less disruptive right now. There are a number of things that could happen. One, there are a bunch of exploiters out there who want to disrupt the political process, and they have an interest in making trouble ahead of the elections, and on election day.

But usually the government is in control on election day because there is a vehicular ban that seems to work quite well. But all of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's rivals--and he has a lot of them--have an interest in puncturing his image as the man who brought law and order to Iraq. There might be some among them--I don't think they would be the most prominent parties but there may be some people in the outlying areas of the political process who might want to undermine that image by setting off violence somehow. And so, there could well be violence before the elections, but my fear is that after the elections, the winners will have to get together to discuss the creation of a coalition government, and I don't think any party will emerge from the elections that would be able to form a government by itself, and so there's going to be fairly protracted negotiations over the shape of a new government as it was four years ago when it took several months. Just as then we will now see the Kirkuk issue appear as a disruptive element because the Kurds will raise it once again as a condition for their participation in a coalition government, and the Kurds, because of their electoral strength and their ability to bring out the votes in their own areas, remain king-makers in the political process.

Is there a likely new prime minister who other parties would support?

It's very hard to say now who that would be. But if you recall, four years ago the Kurds vetoed Ibrahim Jaafari, who was the prime minister of the first government that was elected five years ago. The

Kurds will veto Maliki this time probably unless Maliki makes them a very good deal on Kirkuk, which is hard to imagine. And the search is on for someone who also seems to be weak, as Maliki was four years ago, and clearly a compromised candidate who can be controlled, which Maliki in the end was not.

And you'd have to be a Shiite, I suppose.

It would have to be a Shiite, because the Shiites have got to keep the prime minister's position for themselves. And so, any number of persons could be brought in, but they would have to be from a smaller party, it would not be of one of the major parties. Just as Maliki was four years ago, when he headed the fairly weak Dawa Party.

With the ongoing scheduled drawdown of U.S. troops from Iraq, how capable are Iraqi security forces at shouldering the security burden in this uncertain political juncture?

It's a difficult question to answer, because we don't have good measures, and even less reliable data. Clearly, the security forces are improving, and are quite capable in several respects, but they also have certain weaknesses, which will keep them dependent on U.S. support for some time. Air, logistics and signals intelligence support come to mind in particular. The key question is less how strong they are than how cohesive they are. Once the bickering parties decide to fight instead of negotiate when U.S. troops are gone, will the security forces hold together, and if so, to whom will they answer? Alternatively, will they fracture along political, ethnic and sectarian lines and return to their original militia state? The risk is real.

And on the economic situation in Iraq, the oil situation is still not solved, right?

There's still no oil law, and we've seen the first bidding round and only one bid was awarded. So that is still going very slow, and the second bidding round has just been postponed, so we'll have to see what happens on that score. But the oil will flow, it may not just be at the level where it could be, but it's also partly due to corruption, and it's partly due to the absence of a regulatory system, including an oil law, that would protect companies' interests. I would expect things to start picking up, but we have to see now after the elections who will be the new oil minister, and whether a deal is possible between the oil minister and between the federal government on the one hand, and the Kurdistan regional government on the other, because one of the main obstacles to an oil law has been conflict over disputed territories and the Kurds' insistence on having the right to manage their own oil fields.

Is there a compromise in Kirkuk possible?

As we have said in the past in the International Crisis Group, it would have to lie on a grand bargain sort of idea because I don't think there's a strictly territorial bargain out there. Nobody will ever agree on Kirkuk in a strictly territorial sense, but the Kurds might agree on Kirkuk if they get something that they really need, which is guaranteed protection, in the long term, for the Kurdistan region, and for the powers that they have within that region. And what they need is a well-defined boundary for the region, and constitutional guarantees that their powers will not be diminished. Those things would be legitimate and reasonable, but they're not easily accomplished. But the Kurds would have to give up their notion that they have exclusive control over Kirkuk. Kirkuk would have to have some kind of special status outside the Kurdistan region--also meaning not directly under Baghdad--and have some internal power sharing arrangement that protects the communities that are there.

Why are you so sure Maliki won't be chosen again as prime minister?

If Maliki's list wins the elections, he will be given the right to form the next government, but he only has thirty days to do it. Should he fail--and I'm sure that his rivals will make sure he fails because he may not have the votes to build the kind of coalition that is required--then he has to resign from that position.

And you think the other parties will not support him?

The Iraqi National Alliance and the Kurds may have more votes than Maliki does, but if Maliki is the biggest list in the elections then he will have the right to form the government. But he may not have enough seats in the parliament to form a government.

He'll only have a plurality, not a majority.

Absolutely. Even last time, four years ago, when the Shiite parties were all in one list, they still needed the Kurds to form a government. And of course they set up what they called the National Unity government with some Sunnis as well, the Iraqi Islamic Party. And that was most probably a wise decision, and they may want to do something similar this time. And it's definitely possible to do it, but Maliki has now so many enemies that it may be difficult to have that kind of government with Maliki. But Maliki of course is going to insist and if he gets strong popular support as he might, he will have a strong case. It's not going to be easy for his enemies to depose him either. It's going to be an interesting battle.

Does the United States have a favorite?

My sense is that they silently favor Maliki, not because they like Maliki so much—they don't—but because they see the other Shiite list as sectarian, and they understand that the Iraqi people are fed up with sectarianism. So they, by default almost, might support Maliki, but they haven't said so openly and I doubt that they will.

Are Sunnis in this coalition with Maliki right now?

Maliki has some token Sunnis on his list, just like the other Shiite list has some token Sunnis. Maybe Maliki has a few more, but the main Sunni parties—and there aren't many anyway—haven't chosen any side yet. And the big question before the election really is whether

the Sunnis will manage to unify or not. If they do, they might make a serious bid for the presidency of Iraq, especially if the Kurds are divided as they seem they might be. But otherwise, if things remain as divided as they have been, it will be up to the other parties to pick up individuals or groups from the Sunni community and bring them into their alliance after the election.

That would be quite something if a Sunni became the president.

The Arab states would love it.

I assume the Kurds are counting on being president again, no?

They're counting on it, but they also realize it may not work this time for two reasons. One is that President Jalal Talabani's health is not in the best shape, but also he has indicated he doesn't want to run again. But he's also indicated he might change his mind, so we don't know. But secondly, with the emergence of a real opposition in the Kurdish parliament during the Kurdish elections on July 25, in the form of the Gorran movement, which means "Change." We see a split really at the national Kurdish level between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) on the one hand and Gorran on the other hand. And Gorran has emerged really as a critic within the PUK of Talabani's leadership. It is very unlikely that they would support Talabani's candidacy for the Iraqi presidency. And if the Gorran does well, and supersedes the PUK, then it would be very difficult for the KDP-PUK to impose Talabani candidacy and I don't see another Kurd to take his place.

Kurds released after surrender to Turkish authorities

REUTERS

October 20, 2009 - By Mehmet Emin Caliskan- (Reuters)

* Turkey releases PKK militants in peace gesture

* Minister says more to return to Turkey

* *Moves could boost efforts to end 25-year conflicts*
SILOPI, Turkey, - Turkey on Tuesday freed a group of Kurdish rebels who had surrendered to the army after returning from Iraq, a move which could help efforts to end a 25-year old separatist conflict.

The militants from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) rebel group had given themselves up on Monday to support Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan's reform process, which includes plans to grant more political and cultural rights to minority Kurds.

After being questioned by prosecutors, all 34 PKK members, sympathisers and refugees who crossed the border gate near Silopi in southeast Turkey were freed without charges to the cheers of several thousand jubilant supporters.

Interior Minister Besir Atalay said he expected more PKK rebels to return to Turkey.

Erdogan's Islamist-rooted AK Party has launched an initiative that is expected to give greater freedoms to the 12 million-strong Kurdish minority in Turkey's southeast. It has said PKK militants who surrender and are not found to be involved in attacks will be treated with leniency.

The reforms are important to advancing Turkey's European Union membership application, responding to demands that Ankara meet the bloc's human rights criteria.

The PKK had announced rebels would return to Turkey on the wishes of jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan to promote peace. The PKK, based in north Iraq, took up arms in 1984 to carve out an ethnic homeland in the predominantly Kurdish southeast.

It has since dropped its independence demand. Prospects of the current process leading to PKK disarmament are unclear with Ankara resisting Kurdish political calls for a rebel amnesty.



MORE EXPECTED TO RETURN

Atalay said the return of the Kurdish group was part of the wider reform plan and said more would follow.

"We expect the initial group which is coming to reach 100-150 people. We are advancing towards a solution with a good plan," he told reporters, according to broadcaster CNN Turk.

About 3,000 people spent the night in tents near the Iraqi border to show support for the group of refugees and militants.

Four lawmakers from the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) and several lawyers accompanied the group during questioning, witnesses said.

DTP Chairman Ahmet Turk has said the move "shows that the PKK is insisting on peace not war".

The DTP, Turkey's only Kurdish party in parliament, has long been suspected of links to the PKK, branded a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the United States and the EU. The DTP denies this, but risks a legal ban in a case before the Constitutional Court.

Turks and Kurds run risks for peace

By Jonathan Head
BBC News, Istanbul

The border crossing by 34 Kurds from Iraq to Turkey on Monday might not seem much of an event, in a region plagued for decades by a conflict which has cost tens of thousands of lives.

But it was an important symbolic gesture, which might yet give vital momentum to an as-yet undetailed government peace initiative launched in August.

All day on Monday, Turkish news channels broadcast reports and pictures from the dusty border crossing at Habur. There was not much to see. Just a few dozen police with anti-riot equipment, and the white border-control building in the distance.

The scene on the other side of the border post, though, was much livelier. A group of men - some in military fatigues - women and children were being cheered and clapped as they pushed through a crowd of well-wishers, escorted by Turkish police.

Most had come from the desolate refugee camp at Makhmur, 150km (95 miles) inside Kurdish Iraq; while eight were from the Qandil Mountains, stronghold of the PKK, the armed movement which has been fighting the Turkish military for the past 25 years.

Acting under orders

Once inside Turkish territory, they were detained and questioned at the border post; 29 were quickly released; the remaining five released over the next 24 hours.

All could have been charged and jailed for being members of an illegal organisation, and in previous years they almost certainly would have been.

The reason this small group attracted so much media interest in Turkey is that they declared that their border crossing was a peace gesture, and a test of the government's willingness to bury the hatchet with the insurgents.

The 34 Kurds could have surrendered and renounced their loyalty to the PKK, and faced little risk of prosecution.

But they did not. They insisted they were not surrendering - and they made it clear they were acting under the orders of Abdullah Ocalan, the jailed PKK leader so demonised in Turkey that even to mention his name, or show respect to him, can result in a long prison sentence.

Almost exactly 10 years ago another group of eight Kurds tried the same tactic, also under the orders of Ocalan, who had been caught a few months earlier.

The eight were carefully chosen - none had been involved in armed clashes with the Turkish military. But back then the Turkish authorities showed no leniency. They were charged and given prison sentences as long as 22 years.

"We could have solved this years ago, in 1999, when Ocalan was captured", says Professor Ergun Ozbudun of Bilkent University in Ankara, "but we missed that opportunity."



The Kurdish rebels insisted they were not surrendering

Army complicit

This time should be different. On 11, August Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan delivered an emotional speech to parliament, calling for an end to the bloodshed and tears.

"Where else should we look for reconciliation but here?" he asked the MPs, citing the unbearable pain felt by mothers on both sides of the conflict who have lost sons.

He called his initiative a "Democratic Opening", likening the reforms needed to win over the Kurdish minority to the broader political reforms his government has promised as part of its bid to join the European Union.

Opinion polls suggest around half the public supports the peace plan, with the other half opposed, or unsure.

Crucially, the Turkish army appears to be going along with it, despite the deep mistrust of this government in senior military circles. Officially, the army takes a hard line against the PKK. But privately top generals have acknowledged that the Kurdish conflict cannot be solved through military means.

The PKK has also been weakened, following successful diplomatic efforts by Turkey to win the co-operation of the Kurdish regional government in Iraq, together with US military support, in going after the insurgents.

But Mr Erdogan has not spelled out what reforms he is seeking, although these are presumed to include more freedom of expression and education in the Kurdish language, and changes to the definition of



Fighting between Turkey and the PKK is still taking lives on both sides



"Is it possible not to be hopeful when you look at the pictures from the Habur border crossing? Good things are happening in Turkey. This is hope"

Recep Tayyip Erdogan
Turkish prime minister

citizenship in the constitution (which currently defines all citizens as "Turks").

Instead he has called on all parties in parliament to hammer out a reform package with him.

Such is the sensitivity of the issue, he wants the opposition to sign off on the package with him, even though his AKP Party has a parliamentary majority.

And the main nationalist parties, the CHP and the MHP, are not co-operating. They accuse the prime minister of negotiating with terrorists. So, for two months, Mr Erdogan's plan has stalled.

Risky move

That has given the PKK an opportunity to take the initiative. From his prison island Abdullah Ocalan has for months been promising to produce his own road-map for peace, although all anyone outside the prison has heard from him recently is complaints about his health.

But the decision to send the 34 Kurds across the border into the arms of the Turkish authorities, with Ocalan's blessing, has now put the insurgent group at the heart of the government's peace initiative.

It is a risky manoeuvre. He is so feared and disliked in much of Turkey that the government cannot risk being seen to negotiate with him.

But, in parliament on Tuesday, Prime Minister Erdogan could only look on the bright side.

"Is it possible not to be hopeful when you look at the pictures from the Habur border crossing yesterday?" he asked. "Good things are happening in Turkey. This is hope".

LE FIGARO

25 octobre 2009

Nucléaire : l'Iran prend les Occidentaux à contre-pied

Téhéran n'a pas répondu à l'offre de l'AIEA et ne souhaiterait plus dialoguer avec les grandes puissances

ALAIN BARLUET

PROLIFÉRATION L'Iran a infligé un nouveau camouflet à la communauté internationale en omettant hier de répondre à la proposition qui lui était faite par l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA) d'enrichir à l'étranger les trois quarts de son uranium à usage civil. Tout en affirmant étudier « sous un jour favorable » l'offre négociée cette semaine à Vienne avec la France et les États-Unis, Téhéran a indiqué sa préférence pour l'achat à l'étranger d'uranium enrichi. Pire, le régime iranien aurait décidé d'interrompre le dialogue avec les Six (États-Unis, Russie, Chine, Grande-Bretagne, France et Allemagne). « Nous sommes dans une situation de blocage : Téhéran ne veut parler qu'avec l'AIEA », indique un diplomate.

À l'issue des pourparlers de Vienne, mercredi, le patron de l'AIEA, Mohamed ElBaradei, avait donné jusqu'à hier soir aux trois pays pour se prononcer sur ce texte qui prévoyait la sortie d'Iran de 1200 kg de son uranium faiblement enrichi (3,5 %). Ce stock devait être réenrichi en Russie (à 20 %) puis sous-traité ensuite en France pour la fabrication du combustible nucléaire. Marquée par les obstructions de l'Iran qui s'en était notamment pris à la France, la réunion de Vienne s'était achevée sur une note de pessimisme. Hier matin néanmoins, le chef de la diplomatie russe, Sergueï Lavrov, a été le premier à accepter l'accord. Les États-Unis ont emboîté le pas, la France aussi, sans trop y croire. « Notre conviction est que, d'emblée, l'Iran ne voulait pas d'un

Le négociateur iranien, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, mercredi à l'AIEA à Vienne, lors de la négociation avec les représentants de la France, de la Russie et des États-Unis. KUBANI/AFP



mique, Téhéran se voyait assuré en retour d'obtenir du combustible nucléaire à des fins civiles. En évoquant la sous-traitance de l'uranium réenrichi en France, le compromis permettait de contourner l'hostilité des Iraniens à l'égard de Paris.

Le pied de nez que les Iraniens viennent de faire à ce schéma idéal sape la fragile dynamique instaurée par l'amorce d'un dialogue avec les grandes puissances, le 1^{er} octobre à Genève, après quinze mois de blocage. Quelques jours plus tôt, les révélations concernant le site secret de Qom avaient encore renforcé les soupçons pesant sur les visées iraniennes dans le domaine nucléaire.

Ces nouvelles manœuvres dilatoires confirment les craintes selon lesquelles la République islamique viserait prioritairement à gagner du temps pour se doter de l'arme nucléaire, objectif que la plupart des experts jugent à portée de main.

Vers des sanctions renforcées

Le refus iranien du compromis proposé par l'AIEA ouvre à terme la voie à un renforcement des sanctions, même si, comme l'indique un diplomate, « plusieurs questions restent à évoquer ». Sur une ligne intransigeante, la France avait en effet fixé trois conditions à l'Iran après la réunion de Genève : l'enrichissement de l'uranium à l'étranger pour le réacteur expérimental de Téhéran, l'inspection approfondie du site de Qom et le gel de l'enrichissement contre le gel de nouvelles sanctions. Aucune n'est pour l'instant remplie. L'Iran a réitéré sa volonté de poursuivre l'enrichissement quoi qu'il en soit. Des inspecteurs de l'AIEA doivent se rendre à Qom aujourd'hui. Mais il y a fort à parier que le site aura été préalablement « nettoyé ». Rien n'indique en outre que Téhéran soit prêt à se livrer à une explication franche et transparente sur son programme nucléaire, ainsi qu'on le souhaiterait à Paris. ■

Israël redoute un piège de Téhéran

Les dirigeants israéliens ont le sentiment qu'un piège risque de se refermer sur eux si l'accord envisagé avec l'Iran devait être signé. Ils redoutent en effet que Téhéran profite de l'occasion pour poursuivre en secret son programme nucléaire militaire après avoir réussi à éloigner pour un temps le scénario d'une attaque israélienne ou américaine contre ses installations nucléaires. « En fait l'Iran a obtenu une légitimité internationale pour continuer à enrichir de l'uranium sur son territoire alors qu'il faudrait le lui interdire totalement », a affirmé avec une certaine amertume Ehoud Barak, le ministre de la Défense. Selon lui, cet accord ne va retarder que d'un an les plans iraniens et la seule solution passe par des sanctions économiques beaucoup plus dures, assorties d'une menace d'intervention militaire.

Sur la même longueur d'onde, les médias et les experts israéliens des questions iraniennes ont également estimé hier que Téhéran avait réussi à gagner du temps grâce à des concessions de façade. Ron ben Yishai, un des plus importants commentateurs militaires, affirme ainsi que dans le « climat actuel » l'État hébreu ne peut pas se permettre de recourir seul à la force contre l'Iran, comme cela avait été le cas en 1981, lorsque l'aviation israélienne avait mis le monde devant un fait accompli en détruisant une centrale nucléaire irakienne près de Bagdad à l'époque de Saddam Hussein.

M. H. (à Jérusalem)



« La France souhaite que la tension retombe et qu'une solution pacifique soit trouvée ».

BERNARD KOUCHNER,
MINISTRE DES AFFAIRES
ÉTRANGÈRES

accord, analyse-t-on à Paris. Contrairement à ce que disent les Iraniens, jamais l'option consistant à ce qu'ils puissent acheter de l'uranium enrichi à l'étranger n'a été évoquée », souligne un haut diplomate.

Un pied de nez

Le but du compromis était pourtant de créer la confiance en obtenant de l'Iran qu'il accepte de sortir, rapidement et en bloc, la majorité de son stock déclaré d'uranium faiblement enrichi (UFE). En donnant ainsi des gages sur son intention de ne pas chercher à se doter de l'arme ato-

A Bagdad, le pouvoir impuissant face aux attentats

Cent cinquante personnes ont été tuées dimanche dans le centre de la capitale par l'explosion de deux voitures piégées

Beyrouth
Correspondante régionale

Près de 150 morts et un demi-millier de blessés. Le double attentat à la voiture piégée qui a frappé Bagdad, dimanche 25 octobre, a été d'une violence telle que le bilan du nombre des victimes reste encore à établir.

Les cibles sont éloquentes. En visant le ministère de la justice, le ministère des municipalités et le gouvernorat de Bagdad, les attaquants – des kamikazes, selon la police – et leurs commanditaires ont frappé des symboles forts d'une autorité irakienne déjà fragilisée.

Le premier ministre, Nouri Al-Maliki, a bâti sa crédibilité sur l'amélioration de la situation sécuritaire. Les deux ministères ciblés par le premier véhicule piégé s'étaient réinstallés récemment à Haïfa, une rue du centre-ville considérée comme l'une des plus dangereuses de la capitale entre fin 2004 et fin 2005. Les blocs de béton érigés pour prévenir ce type d'attaques venaient d'être démantelés, tout comme ceux qui encerclaient la « zone verte », le cœur hypersécurisé.

Le 19 août, un double attentat avait déjà frappé aux abords de cette « zone verte » de Bagdad les ministères des finances et des affaires étrangères, avec une précision, une puissance de destruction et un mode opératoire similaires.

Les doutes des Irakiens sur la

capacité de leur armée à les défendre, au moment où les Etats-Unis ont entamé le retrait de leurs troupes, ne peuvent que se renforcer. Signe de la gravité de la situation, M. Maliki s'est rendu en personne sur le parvis calciné du gouvernorat de Bagdad, un geste dont il n'est guère coutumier.

La conjoncture est délicate. Voilà plusieurs mois que le premier ministre, de concert avec les Américains, met en garde contre une recrudescence de la violence à l'approche des élections générales prévues à la mi-janvier 2010.

Les élections pourraient être reportées. Ce vide constitutionnel pourrait entraîner un regain de violences

Or le Parlement irakien s'est montré jusqu'à présent incapable de s'accorder sur la loi électorale. Les députés doivent décider si les électeurs voteront pour des individus ou pour des listes fermées, mais ils butent aussi sur la question de Kirkouk.

Située en lisière de la région autonome du Kurdistan, cette province, riche en pétrole et chargée de symboles historiques, est âprement disputée entre populations arabes,



kurdes et turcomanes qui la composent.

Selon les modalités électorales, Kirkouk pourrait théoriquement passer sous domination des Kurdes qui réclament son annexion à leur région. Entre la crainte de perdre le contrôle de la manne pétrolière et la méfiance bien ancrée des Arabes envers les autorités kurdes, suspectées de vouloir faire sécession, la question de Kirkouk a pris des allures de conflit lourd de menaces. A l'échec des députés se sont en outre greffées des manœuvres politiques de toutes parts, créant un climat délétère peu fait pour améliorer l'image du régime aux yeux des Irakiens.

Le président du Parlement, Iyad Al-Samarraï, a fait aveu d'impuissance, mercredi, en transmettant la « patate chaude » de la loi électorale au Conseil politique de sécurité nationale (un conseil consultatif réunissant les chefs des principales formations politiques). Une décision controversée et éloignée du « processus démocratique » censé caractériser le nouvel Irak.

Entre les atermoiements politiques et la violence de ces attentats se profile désormais la possibilité d'un report des élections. Une hypothèse qui n'augure rien de bon pour l'Irak. Le vide constitutionnel créé pourrait déboucher sur un regain de violences face auxquelles

les forces de sécurité irakiennes ont déjà montré leurs limites. Un report risquerait en outre de perturber le retrait des troupes américaines, auquel s'est fermement engagé le président américain, Barack Obama.

Actuellement fort d'environ 120 000 militaires, le contingent américain doit être réduit à 50 000 hommes avant le 31 août 2010, et quitter définitivement le sol irakien à l'horizon 2011. D'ici là, sa mission consiste notamment à « sécuriser » ces élections. L'épine irakienne est ainsi venue contrarier l'administration Obama dont les priorités se sont déplacées sur le terrain afghan. « Une fois de plus, les Etats-Unis sont les otages de la politique irakienne », écrit le quotidien américain *Christian Science Monitor*, en constatant que l'agenda voulu par Washington est entravé par le manque d'empressement irakien à adopter une loi électorale. Tout en exprimant ses condoléances, M. Obama a encore souligné, dimanche, l'urgence d'un compromis irakien autour de cette loi.

D'un point de vue militaire et stratégique, la similitude des derniers attentats avec ceux du mois d'août, tous deux imputés à Al-Qaïda et à ses affiliés, prouve que la guerre en Irak n'appartient pas encore au passé. ■

Cécile Hennion

Les attentats les plus meurtriers depuis 2006

Novembre 2006 202 morts dans divers attentats à Bagdad.

Février 2007 L'explosion d'un camion piégé sur un marché de la capitale fait 135 morts.

Mars 105 pèlerins meurent au cours de deux attentats à Hilla, au sud de Bagdad. Peu après, 152 personnes périssent près de la frontière syrienne et de la ville de Mossoul.

Juillet 150 morts dans l'explosion d'un camion dans le nord.

Août Des camions citernes tuent ou blessent 796 personnes près de la frontière syrienne.

Février 2008 Deux femmes kamikazes se font exploser à Bagdad : 99 personnes meurent.

Juin 2009 145 morts dans des attentats à Kirkouk et à Bagdad.

October 24, 2009

Guardian

The Kirkuk conundrum

Iraqi democracy is stuck in a constitutional hiatus over the Kurdish-dominated region that threatens to derail elections



•Ranj Alaaldin

Iraq has once again met what very low expectations remain of it. Despite a 15 October deadline, the Iraqi parliament is yet to agree on a new election law for the national elections due to be held in January, and this may, as a result, throw its political, legal and constitutional framework into disarray.

Disagreement among parliamentarians centres on whether to use an open- or closed-list voting system. Under the former, voters elect their own preferred candidates into parliament, while under the latter system, the electorate votes for a political entity, as opposed to an individual, and that entity then awards parliamentary seats to its own fixed list of candidates, submitted to the electoral commission prior to the elections.

Under the closed-list system, parliamentary seats are generally awarded on the basis of party loyalty above all else. It is therefore the established politician, or party favourite, who would worry most about an open-list system – out of fear of being deselected by the electorate.

Most Iraqis prefer the open-list system because it holds politicians more accountable to their constituents; it takes away the vanguard of party loyalty behind which incompetent or unworthy officials hide, and an open-list system generally gives the whole democratic process more purpose and greater effect.

Such is the extent of the dispute that it has led to pro-open-list protests in the Muthanna, Basra, and Misan governorates and intervention by the influential religious authority, the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. His office has threatened to lead a boycott of the elections in the event the closed-list system is adopted; this would tarnish the entire electoral process with devastating consequences for political stability.

Ayatollah Sistani's intervention means that no serious Shia party would publicly defy him. Major parties like ISCI previously supported the closed-list system, but, since the Ayatollah's call, have changed their stance, with senior ISCI official and Iraqi vice-president Adel Mahdi publicly asserting preference for the open-list system in the past two weeks.

However, just because certain parties may no longer publicly call for the closed-list system, this is not to suggest that they can no longer push for it. The Iraqi electoral commission has said it will adopt the old 2005 law if parliament fails to vote and pass the new law soon, since it needs at least 90 days to organise the elections. The 2005 law used a closed-list system and the suspicion is that parliamentarians who still favour this are employing delaying tactics to keep the 2005 law in effect.

The only major group still to call publicly for the closed-list system is the Kurdistan Alliance; it will not, however, derail the elections over this issue. Instead, it is the question of what to do with the neglected governorate of Kirkuk that has, in predictable fashion, been the greatest cause of division within parliament. Indeed, the issue of Kirkuk itself could also become a pretext to delay the vote and keep the old 2005 law in effect.

Kirkuk, controlled by the Kurds after the 2005 elections, never took part in this year's provincial elections because of disagreements over responsibility for security and eventual control of the provincial council. Similar disagreements exist once again. Some have called for special arrangements that divide the area into four separate, ethnically-defined electoral constituencies, while the Turkmen and Arabs are calling for voting quotas in response to what they call the modified demographics of the governorate by the Kurds, who constitute the majority there.

The Kurds were forcefully removed from Kirkuk by Saddam and are now returning back, pursuant to the "normalisation" process under Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution, which seeks to reverse the Arabisation policies of the Ba'ath regime. According to UN reports and staff present in Iraq at the time, in November 1991 alone, eight months after the conclusion of the 1991 Gulf war, more than 150,000 Kurds were evicted from Kirkuk.

The Kurdistan Alliance, however, has rejected giving any special status to Kirkuk simply because it has a Kurdish majority. If the oil-rich area is given special status, then, by equal measure maintains the Alliance, so should other disputed territories where Kurds happen to be minorities. To implement a quota system would indeed be profoundly undemocratic.

During his visit to Washington this week, prime minister Nouri al-Maliki referred to the constitutional vacuum that will result if the elections are postponed, "because the current Iraqi parliament will lose its legitimacy after 16 January 2010", he said in a statement.

But herein lies the problem with Iraq. Issues concerning constitutional legitimacy or legal integrity now ring hollow in a country still, embarrassingly, mired in disputes over Kirkuk, centralisation and decentralisation of power, and the management and control of the country's resources. The inefficient and uninspiring Iraqi parliament is in a state of paralysis, with every man out for his own, while the country's institutions and ministries constitute individual fiefdoms dominated by the financially and militarily powerful.

The reality is that, until the chief outstanding problem of Kirkuk is resolved in line with Article 140, there may be no compromise on the other issues. Iraq's constitutional disputes started with Kirkuk and will end with Kirkuk.

Of course, now that election fever has kicked in, with groups seeking alliances and behind-the-scenes deals, attention will not actually be focused on any of the issues that matter. With officials taking the "let's wait until after the elections" stance, Iraqis will instead get an abundance of slogans and rhetoric for the next three months, and this could continue for another two months after January 2010, until the political framework settles in the country.

This is assuming the whole thing takes place in January in the first place. What is certain is that continued delay will increase public disenchantment and put in doubt US plans to end combat operations by August 2010. This, as a result, would threaten the wider plan to withdraw all troops by the end of 2011.

Kurd leader demands control of oil-rich Kirkuk

AP Associated Press

October 28, 2009 BAGHDAD -

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA —Associated Press Writer

The president of Iraq's Kurdish region demanded Wednesday that oil-rich Kirkuk be incorporated into his autonomous area, as parliament prepared for a showdown on the contentious issue of which of the northern city's residents can vote in upcoming elections.

Massoud Barzani's comments ratcheted up the pressure on the eve of a vote on the electoral law that will lay the groundwork for January's key parliamentary ballot. Lawmakers are split over amendments on which voting list will be used in Kirkuk - one favoring Kurds or one favoring Arabs.

The city has large populations of Arabs and ethnic Turkmens who resent the Kurds' aggressive efforts to take over the city. The Kurds see Kirkuk as historically theirs and describe it as their "Jerusalem."

Next to Sunni-Shiite tensions in Iraq, the issue of Kirkuk and Kurdish-Arab tensions has become a key flashpoint in this fragile nation. A political deadlock now could delay the elections and open the way for new violence and instability.

"We will not accept any (other) solution for Kirkuk," said Barzani, speaking in Irbil Wednesday after a new Kurdish regional government was sworn in. "We want it to be annexed to our region because the majority of its population are Kurds."

During the Saddam era, tens of thousands of Kurds were displaced under a forced plan to make Kirkuk predominantly Arab. Since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, many of these Kurds have returned. Now other groups claim there are more Kurds than before - which could sway the vote in their favor and bring Kirkuk and its oil fully under Kurdish control.

Arabs favor a plan that would use the 2004 voter registry, likely meaning Arab voters would be much more represented than Kurds. The Kurds favor a proposal by the United Nations that would use voter records from 2009, but only for a four-year period till the Kirkuk issue can be further clarified.

The 2004 proposal being put forward Thursday does contain some concessions to the Kurds, said Omar al-Jibouri, a Sunni Arab lawmaker. It would allow an additional 50,000 Kurdish families - who've been approved by a special committee as being residents of Kirkuk pushed out by Saddam - to vote.

"The parliament must be decisive in its decisions, and ... not bow to pressure," said al-Jibouri. "We hope tomorrow you see a strong parliament that can take and make decisions, and be brave in its decisions."

Those concessions seemed to hold little sway with Kurdish politicians, some of whom threatened to not even attend the vote if the 2004 option is on the table. Lawmaker Mahmoud Othman said Kurdish legislators warned the parliament speaker not to put the issue up for a vote.

If the proposal based on the 2004 list passes, Othman said Iraqi President Jalal Talabani - who's Kurdish - will veto it, a sign of the heavy pressure Talabani is under to align himself with his Kurdish brethren.



Kurdistan regional President Massoud Barzani, left, talks with newly elected Prime Minister of the Kurdish region Government of Iraq Barham Salih prior the swearing in ceremony of the new Kurdistan regional government (KRG) in Erbil, Wednesday, Oct. 28, 2009. Barzani demanded Wednesday the oil-rich city of Kirkuk be part of the northern autonomous Kurdistan area, as Iraq's parliament prepares for a showdown on the highly contentious issue of which Kirkuk residents can vote in January's crucial national elections. (AP Photo)

At least 138 of Iraq's 275 lawmakers must attend in order for the vote to go forward. A simple majority would pass the matter but it can then be vetoed by the president. Lawmakers would need 183 votes to override his veto, something that Othman said could trigger an even bigger fallout.

"If the law is passed, then we will boycott the entire elections," Othman said.

The Kurds were granted international permission to rule Iraq's three northern provinces independently from Baghdad after the 1991 Gulf war. Since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, the Kurds have become a key group in the Baghdad-based central government.

It has been during periods of political deadlock like these that Iraq becomes particularly vulnerable to renewed violence. In 2006, months of political wrangling over the country's first permanent post-invasion government allowed al-Qaida linked insurgent groups to provoke Shiite militias into a near-civil war that tore the country apart.

The last few months have seen an upsurge in violence. On Sunday, 155 people were killed when two suicide bombers hit government buildings in Baghdad, Iraq's largest attack in over two years. On Wednesday, three women were killed in a Shiite neighborhood of Baghdad when a bomb attached to a minibus exploded, said a local police officer and a medical official at the hospital. Both spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.



OCTOBER 28, 2009

IRAQIS' ELECTION-LAW BATTLE RAGES OVER STATUS OF KIRKUK

By SAHAR ISSA AND HANNAH ALLAM
McClatchy Newspapers

Up against the clock, Iraqi politicians spent Wednesday hammering out the final sticking points of an election law they hope to present to parliament for a vote within days to avoid a risky and embarrassing delay of the January polls.

How to handle the oil-rich city of Kirkuk remains the key snag, several Iraqi officials said. The debate now hinges on whether election administrators will count voters based on the city's 2009 population, which would favor Kurds, or include residents from 2004, which would boost Arab representation in the divided city.

A senior aide to the speaker of parliament said there was serious talk of bringing the issue to a vote Thursday, despite the opposition of Kurdish politicians, who seek more time to ensure their interests are addressed.

Massoud Barzani, the president of the Kurdistan region, added to the pressure Wednesday with a public demand to incorporate Kirkuk into his semiautonomous region.

"We will not accept any (other) solution for Kirkuk," Barzani said at the swearing-in of a new Kurdish regional government. "We want it to be annexed to our region because the majority of its population are Kurds."

Timetables set forth by the Iraqi Constitution and the electoral commission make it imperative that an election deal be reached soon. The original

deadline was Oct. 15, and there's concern that even a rushed agreement won't leave enough time for election officials to approve candidates, oversee the campaign and ensure voters have enough information before they head to the polls.

Smooth elections are also important for the Obama administration, which had hoped to withdraw most U.S. military forces by next summer and leave Iraq in the care of a newly elected government. A political standoff could leave the country vulnerable to more insurgent attacks, such as the devastating truck bombings that killed 155 people and wounded hundreds more last Sunday.

"We cannot wait forever for the election law to be passed, and we've said this to parliament," said Judge Qassim al-Abboudi, a senior administrator on the elections commission. "But we have seen that there is a real effort to finalize the law. Kirkuk remains the issue. With the grace of God, they should have a final draft within the next few days, and within that time frame we will work night and day in order to make do with what time we have left."

Pushing for an outcome that angers either Arabs or Kurds could backfire, with riots of the sort that occurred after previous debates over election laws. Arabs insist on using the 2004 registry, but Kurds favor a U.N. proposal to use 2009 voter records for the January election until a broader resolution is reached.

Arab and Kurdish camps blamed

each other Wednesday for delaying the election law.

Khalid Shwani, a Kurdish legislator, said the "rigidity and stubbornness" of his Arab counterparts were sinking hopes for a consensus. He said the 2009 census was the most accurate count of voters and that the Arabs were pushing to use older records in order to deny the reality of a Kurdish majority in Kirkuk after years of reversing the Saddam Hussein-era policy of "Arabization," which drove Kurds from the city to give it an Arab identity.

"These people, our brothers, call for the use of the 2004 census in order to reap political gains because it will give them the upper hand," Shwani said. "We have failed to reach an accord, and it is they who must bear the responsibility for that."

Sunni Muslim Arab legislators, however, charged that bias toward the Kurds was stalling progress, with the Shiite Muslim- and Sunni Kurd-dominated government throwing its weight behind a proposal that could disenfranchise some Arab voters in Kirkuk.

"In Iraq we've gotten used to resolving our issues by consensus, but if an accord can't be reached today, we will vote tomorrow," said Saleem al-Jubouri, a spokesman for the main Sunni Arab political bloc. "Either we have an election law or we don't, (but) we must vote and the vote will be final."

Fate of oil-rich Kirkuk stalls Iraq electoral law, amid fears key elections will be delayed

AP Associated Press

October 27, 2009—By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA —AP

BAGHDAD - A long-sought political consensus in Iraq over how to conduct crucial upcoming elections fell apart Tuesday over the thorny issue of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, an Iraqi lawmaker said.

The new snag came as an al-Qaida-linked group claimed responsibility for the twin suicide bombings in the heart of Baghdad Sunday that killed at least 155 people.

Many fear the political deadlock over the new law will delay elections, now slated for January, and open the door to renewed violence in Iraq after it stepped back from the brink of civil war two years ago.

Mahmoud Othman, a Kurdish lawmaker, told The Associated Press that an emergency proposal by the nation's leaders to break the deadlock over the election law had fallen apart over the fractious northern city split between Arabs and Kurds.

Othman said the vote over the election law would not take place

Tuesday. There was no information about when the matter would be addressed.

Just one day after the massive security failure in the capital, there appeared to be quick progress on the election law. With Iraq's public already angry over the bombing and the resurgence of violence, the politicians appeared to not want to risk further angering people by delaying the elections with their internal wrangling.

On Monday night, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and others agreed on a compromise over voting in Kirkuk as the Shiite-dominated government pushed to smooth over differences in the divided parliament and wrap up the law so elections could proceed on time.

However, the compromise later fell apart because it did not address a key dispute, leaving it instead to the electoral commission: how to count voters in Kirkuk, which is claimed by Kurds, Arabs and Turkomans.

Kurds Plan to Boycott Iraqi Vote On Kirkuk

By GINA CHON

BAGHDAD -- Kurdish lawmakers said they will boycott an Iraqi parliament session on Thursday if members are asked to choose which voter-registration records to use to hold polls in the disputed area of Kirkuk.

A national election law has stalled over voting procedures in Kirkuk, a contested, oil-rich region in the north claimed by Kurds, Arabs and Turkomen. To move the legislation forward, parliament's legal committee and Speaker Ayad al-Sammaraie wanted lawmakers to vote Thursday over which voter-registration records to use in Kirkuk.

Sunni Arabs and Turkmen favor the 2004 records because that list doesn't account for a big population increase of Kurds in Kirkuk after that year. Under Saddam Hussein's Arabization policy,

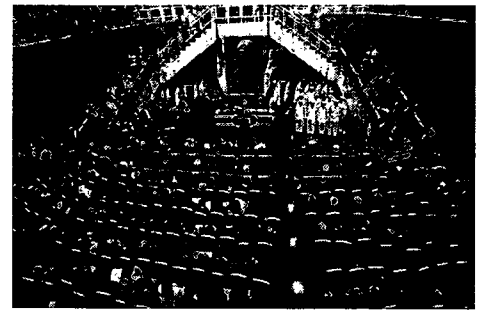
thousands of Kurds were kicked out of Kirkuk, but returned after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003.

The other alternative would use records for 2005 or 2009, favored by the Kurds. On Wednesday, the Kurdish bloc, the second-largest in parliament, said a decision shouldn't be put to a vote but instead negotiated.

"If they vote on this, we will not enter the hall and we will boycott the session," independent Kurdish lawmaker Mahmoud Othman said.

Parliament missed an Oct. 15 deadline to pass the elections law, which is needed to hold parliamentary polls as scheduled on Jan. 16. Election organizers say they need 90 days to prepare the vote. If a law isn't passed this week, they may have to consider delaying the polls or making other choices that could affect the quality of the elections, they have said.

The January elections are seen as a



Guests and MP's sat for the swearing in of the new Kurdish regional government in the northern city of Arbil on Oct. 28, 2009.

key indicator of stability and will determine the pace of a large U.S. drawdown expected next year.

Lawmakers were expected to continue talks late Wednesday and it was unclear whether any voting will be held Thursday.

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

The Turkish Temptation

The Erdogan government shifts its allegiances to anti-Western Islam.

It's been a decade since Turkey threatened to invade Syria because Damascus was harboring Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the Kurdish PKK terrorist group. "We will say 'shalom' to the Israelis on the Golan Heights" is how one Turkish newspaper then described the country's mood, capturing its attitude toward Syrians and Israelis alike.

Times change—and so do countries. Earlier this month, Turkey cancelled an annual multinational air force exercise because Israel was scheduled to participate in it, despite historically close ties between the Turkish and Israeli militaries. In a recent interview with Britain's Guardian newspaper, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said of Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that "there is no doubt he is our friend."

Mr. Erdogan was also among the first to offer Ahmadinejad a congratulatory call after June's fraudulent elections and has called Iran's nuclear program "peaceful and humanitarian." As for Syria, relations have never been warmer: The two countries are even planning joint military exercises.

Nations do not have the luxury of picking their neighbors, and the Turks can certainly be forgiven for not wan-

ting to be at daggers drawn along several hundred miles of common borders. But what's happened to Turkey's foreign policy—and the values that inform those policies—since Mr. Erdogan and his Islamist AKP party came to power in 2003 looks more like a fundamental shift in Turkey's strategic priorities than it does a mere relaxing of regional tensions.

In January, for instance, Mr. Erdogan publicly rebuked Shimon Peres at a meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, calling the Israeli President a "liar" and saying—in connection to the war in Gaza—that "when it comes to killing, you know well how to kill." Soon thereafter, Mr. Erdogan hosted a dinner in honor of Ali Osman Taha, the vice president of Sudan. Apparently, there were no lectures about Darfur.

Nor has Israel been the only country in the Middle East affected by Turkey's changing attitudes. As analyst Soner Cagaptay of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy notes, "the AKP's foreign policy has not promoted sympathy toward all Muslim states. Rather, the party has promoted solidarity with Islamist, anti-Western regimes (Qatar

and Sudan, for example) while dismissing secular, pro-Western Muslim governments (Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia)." That also goes among the Palestinians, where Mr. Erdogan has called on the world to recognize Hamas while being dismissive of Mahmoud Abbas, the Authority's more secular-minded president.

In other words, Mr. Erdogan's turn against Israel is symptomatic of a broader shift in Turkish policy, one that cannot bode well for core U.S. interests. As a secular Muslim state, Turkey has been a pillar of NATO and a bulwark against the political radicalism (Communist, Baathist, Islamist) of its various neighbors. Now Mr. Erdogan may be gambling that Turkey's future lies at the head of the Muslim world, rather than at the tail of its Western counterpart.

Perhaps none of this should be all that surprising, given how long Europe has brushed off Turkish ambitions to join its Union. One may hope that the Turks, who have long been proud of their traditions of secularism, tolerance, freedom, and as a bridge between East and West, may not be so tempted to trade them in for darker glories.



Kurdistan Regional Government
KRG.org - 28 October. 2009

Profile of Prime Minister Barham Salih

Prime Minister, Kurdistan Regional Government

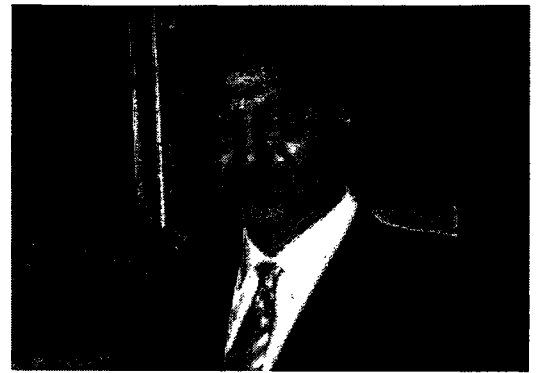
Prime Minister Barham Salih is a veteran Kurdish politician with years of public service and leadership in both the Kurdistan Region and in Iraq. His life and political outlook have been defined by his experience as a political activist committed to freeing the Kurdistan Region and Iraq from tyranny and to the pursuit of democracy and human rights.

Dr Salih was appointed Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region on 30 September 2009, leading the sixth Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) cabinet. In the July 2009 Kurdistan Region parliamentary elections he headed the Kurdistan List, which won 59 out of 111 seats.

Born in the city of Suleimaniah in 1960, Dr Salih joined the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in 1976. At the age of 18 and 19, he was twice arrested by the Ba'athist regime for his involvement in the Kurdish national movement, and was detained and tortured. On his release he studied hard to complete his education, achieving the third highest baccalaureate grade in all of Iraq that year. Following continued persecution, he left Iraq for the United Kingdom.

During his years of exile, Dr Salih worked hard to improve Kurdistan's relations with the West and campaigned against Saddam Hussein's dictatorial Ba'ath regime. He was put in charge of the PUK's foreign relations in London and at the same time continued his studies. He gained a degree in Civil Engineering and Construction in 1983 from the University of Cardiff, and a Doctorate in Statistics and Computer Applications in Engineering in 1987 from the University of Liverpool.

Following the 1991 Gulf War and the withdrawal of the Iraqi army and administration from Kurdistan, Dr Salih was elected to the PUK's leader-



ship and appointed as the PUK representative in Washington. He developed relations with influential groups and decision-makers in Washington, and participated in the Iraqi opposition's conferences and meetings before the fall of the Ba'athist regime.

From 2001 to mid-2004, Dr Salih served as Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region Suleimaniah Administration. Despite a double embargo for much of that time by both the UN and Saddam Hussein, he made every effort to improve the standard of living and service delivery, and laid the foundations for ambitious development projects.

After the 2003 liberation of Iraq, Dr Salih served in Iraq's post-war governments. He served as the Deputy Prime Minister in the Interim Iraqi Government in mid-2004, Minister of Planning in the Transitional Government in 2005, and most recently as Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister to Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

Under Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki, Dr Salih also became Head of the Economic Committee. Representing the Iraqi Government, he launched the International Compact with Iraq, a mutual commitment between Iraq and the international community to help build a prosperous, democratic and federal country, at peace with itself, with the region and the world.

Prime Minister Salih is married to Dr Sarbagh Salih, a women's rights activist, and they have a son and a daughter. He is fluent in Kurdish, Arabic and English.



Kurdistan Regional Government
KRG.org - 28 October. 2009

Kurdistan Regional Government announces new cabinet ministers

Erbil - Kurdistan, Iraq (KRG.org) - Today in parliament the new Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) cabinet was sworn in, with Prime Minister Barham Salih at the head of the new ministerial team. The members of the cabinet are:

Prime Minister:Barham Salih

Deputy Prime Minister:Azad Barwari

Minister for the Interior:Abdul Karim Sultan Sinjari (Karim Sinjari)

Minister of Finance & the Economy:Bayiz Saeed Mohammad Talabany

Minister of Justice:Raouf Rashid Abdulrahman

Minister of Agriculture and Water Resources:Jamil Sleiman Haider

Minister of Culture and Youth:Kawa Mahmoud Shakir

Minister of Education:Safin Muhsin Mohammad Amin Dizayee

Minister of Electricity:To be updated soon

Minister of Endowment & Religious Affairs:Kamil Ali Aziz



Newly elected Prime Minister of the Kurdish region Government of Iraq Barham Saleh swears in during a ceremony of the new Kurdish regional government in Erbil

Minister of Health:Taher Abdullah Hussein Hawrami

Minister of Higher Education & Scientific Research:Dlawer A.A. Ala'Aldeen

Minister of Housing and Reconstruction:Kamran Ahmed Abdullah

Minister of Labour and Social Affairs:Ms Asos Najib Abdullah

Minister of Martyrs and Victims of Anfal:Majid Hamad Amin Jamil

Minister of Municipalities and Tourism:Samir Abdullah Mustafa:

Minister of Natural Resources:Abdullah Abdulrahman Abdullah (Ashti Hawrami)

Minister of Peshmerga Affairs:Jafar Mustafa Ali

Minister of Planning:Ali Osman Haji Badri Sindi

Minister of Trade and Industry:Sinan Abdulkhalq Ahmed Chalabi

Minister of Transport and Communications :Anwar Jabali Sabo

Turkey and the Kurds

Return of the natives

ANKARA

A trickle back of PKK terrorists may herald a lasting peace

"DON'T waste time, come back!" The call by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's prime minister, to rebels of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) this week sounded like an invitation to a party. And a party it was when tens of thousands of ululating Kurds flocked to the Iraqi border on October 19th to greet 34 PKK fighters and their sympathisers, who gave themselves up in a gesture that may bring peace. (Five of the fighters were arrested but later released on the orders of a judge.) The move comes after a year of secret talks between Turkey, America, the Iraqi Kurds who control the mountainous territory in which the fighters have been based, and probably the PKK itself.

Plans to give an amnesty to PKK fighters who stand aside from the terrorist group's vicious 25-year-old war have long been opposed by Turkey's hawkish generals. Hoping to bully Turkey into recognising their quasi-independent state, the Iraqi Kurds let the rebels roam free. But the impending withdrawal of American troops and the risk of spiralling ethnic and sectarian violence in Iraq has concentrated minds.

The Turks and the Iraqi Kurds are setting aside their quarrels. Turkey now

imports oil from Iraqi Kurdish fields. It plans to open its first consulate in Erbil, the regional capital. In exchange, the Iraqi Kurds are squeezing the PKK. An Iraqi Kurdish satellite-television channel, Kurd Stat, even carries Turkish-language news broadcasts. The PKK is feeling increasingly isolated. Scouting an opportunity, Abdullah Ocalan, the imprisoned PKK leader, has appealed to more of his men to return. The government may yet reward Mr Ocalan, who has spent a decade in solitary confinement in an island prison near Istanbul, with some cell-mates and a television set.

All of this chimes with Mr Erdogan's broader Kurdish overture: an assortment of measures that are intended to satisfy the Turkish Kurds' demands for more political and cultural freedoms. More were listed in a letter that was carried by the repatriated rebels. They include an immediate end to the army's operations and a new Turkish constitution that recognises the Kurdish identity. Predictably, Turkey's opposition leaders have cried treason. The PKK was not surrendering to the government but the other way round, fumed Deniz Baykal, leader of the Republican People's Party.

Although most Turks support the



In the bad old days

government's initiative, many share the opposition's suspicions that the PKK is engaged in salami tactics that may lead to the dismemberment of Turkey. Reckless talk of "going our own way" by hotheads in the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party has not helped. But the distrust is mutual. Some Kurds worry that, having lured the rebels down from the mountains, Turkey will return to its old repressive ways. That seems unlikely. Turkey's chief of staff, Ilker Basbug, has repeatedly asserted that military means alone cannot solve the Kurdish problem. As somebody who served in the predominantly Kurdish south-east of Turkey, he should know.

PKK leader: Kurdish initiative is a fairy tale

Imrali - The imprisoned leader Abdullah Öcalan declared that the 'Kurdish initiative' is a fairy tale and is meant to destroy the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). The PKK-leader also indicated that the third 'peace group' from Europe is not going back to Turkey.

The Kurdish politician said that the Turkish government should take it's initiative more serious and emphasized that not only supporters of the Democratic Society Party (DTP) participated in the welcome of the 34 PKK members at the border on 19 October, but also supporters of the Islamic AKP government.

Three groups from Makhmur, Qandil and Europe were supposed to go to Turkey, but the last group was denied access by the

government.

The PKK head also criticized the role of the Turkish premier. "Erdo?an plays so many roles, this will not convince the Kurds. The AKP is not serious in her goals."

Corsica example

Öcalan compared the rights Corsica received from France to Corsica. "After the attitude of the Turkish government, there won't come anymore 'peace groups' to Turkey. I give the Turkish premier Erdo?an an example for a solution. Just like the French gave rights to Corsica, the Turkish government can give right to Kurds."

Corsica has a degree of political and administrative autonomy and cultural protection of the Corsican language and culture. Cultural protection were major demands by the Corsican public, particularly those who do not favor full independence.

Iraqi Kurdish leader backs Turkey's reform steps

REUTERS

ARBIL, Iraq, October 30, 2009 —By Zerin Elci , (Reuters) -

IRAQI KURDISH leader Massoud Barzani on Friday praised Turkish steps to address a decades-old Kurdish conflict and called for an end to ethnic violence during a visit to the region by Turkey's foreign minister.

Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan's Islamist-rooted AK Party has launched an initiative that is expected to give greater freedom to the 12 million-strong Kurdish minority in Turkey's southeast.

The reforms, which include easing restrictions on the Kurdish language and culture, are important for advancing the country's application for membership in the European Union, which wants Ankara to meet the bloc's human rights standards.

Ahmet Davutoglu is the first Turkish foreign minister to travel to Iraq's largely autonomous Kurdish region.

Ties between Ankara and the government of Iraq's Kurdistan region were marred for years by the presence of Kurdish rebels along the border, but relations have improved under the AK Party government as the two sides have increased cooperation on security and expanded energy and trade deals.

"I want to congratulate the prime minister for the policies and the steps taken for a democratic opening. We support all the steps taken," Barzani told a news conference with Davutoglu.

Acknowledging the very existence of the Kurdistan regional government, which has enjoyed de facto autonomy from Baghdad since 1991, had been taboo among Turkish politicians mindful of reigniting Kurdish hopes of statehood on Turkish soil.

"God willing, the violence will end as soon as possible and Turkish and Kurdish youth will shed no more blood," Barzani said.

Turkey has accused Barzani of failing to stop rebel attacks, even as Iraq's Kurdish leaders have openly called on the separatist PKK to lay down its arms.

Improving ties with Turkey has gained urgency as U.S. forces withdraw from Iraq, leaving behind a possible security vacuum.

Davutoglu called for cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Turkey, along with the EU and the United States, considers the PKK a terrorist group.



Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani (R) holds a joint conference with Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu in Arbil, 310 km (190 miles) north of Baghdad, October 30, 2009. Picture taken October 30, 2009. REUTERS/Azad Lashkari (IRAQ)

"Arabs, Kurds, Shia and Sunni -- we will re-build the Middle East altogether. Everybody must take bold steps. But terror is the most serious threat to this vision," he said.

Turkey will open its next consulate in Arbil, after Mosul and Basra, Davutoglu also said.

The two sides are also keen to work together on energy. Turkey has positioned itself as a key transit route for Middle East gas to Europe. The oil-rich city of Kirkuk, claimed by both Iraqi Kurds and Arabs, is a particularly sensitive issue.

Turkey worries that if the Iraqi Kurds win the battle over Kirkuk, that would give them enough revenues to form a viable state, stoking separatist aspirations among its own Kurds.

Turkey regularly shells PKK targets in northern Iraq. It blames the PKK for 40,000 deaths since 1984, when the group took up arms to carve out a homeland in southeast Turkey.

Turkey and Iraq are major trading partners, and some 500,000 barrels of Iraqi oil a day – about a quarter of its exports – are piped through the Turkish port of Ceyhan.

AP Associated Press

Turkish Troops Kill 5 Kurdish Rebels

ANKARA, Turkey —October 27, 2009—Associated Press

Turkish troops killed five Kurdish rebels in a clash in the country's southeast Tuesday, the state-run Anatolia news agency reported.

Separately, it said a Turkish court convicted a Kurdish lawmaker of spreading rebel propaganda.

The fighting occurred near the southeastern city of Bingol. One soldier and two civilians were also injured, Anatolia said.

Last week the rebels, who have been fighting for autonomy in the country's Kurdish-dominated southeast, sent a small group of Kurdish guerrillas to Turkey from their hideouts in Iraq in a peace gesture in response to a government initiative to try to end the conflict by expanding Kurds' democratic and human rights.

But celebrations upon their arrival by thousands of Kurds angered the government and nationalists across the country, threatening to derail the process.

Also on Tuesday, a Turkish court sentenced Aysel Tugluk to 18 months in prison for spreading rebel propaganda. Because she is a member of parliament, she will not have to serve the time until she is out of office, or until parliament votes to lift her immunity.

Tugluk, 44, said she was innocent and will appeal Tuesday's conviction for a 2006 speech she made praising a petition by hundreds of Kurds declaring imprisoned rebel chief Abdullah Ocalan their leader.

The case was one of several against Tugluk and other members of her Democratic Society Party, which faces closure for alleged ties to Ocalan's outlawed Kurdistan Worker's Party, or PKK.

The PKK is considered a terrorist group by the U.S. and the EU.

THE GLOBE AND MAIL*

October 30, 2009

Arab-Kurd tensions threaten to ignite volatile Iraqi province

Ninewa a cauldron of old wrongs and new grievances

Globe and Mail/ Canada

PATRICK MARTIN

MOSUL, IRAQ

If the ethnically mixed and oil-rich Iraqi province of Kirkuk is a bomb waiting to explode, then the divided province of Ninewa, 100 kilometres to the northwest, may be the fuse.

The province is home to Mosul, Iraq's third-largest city, and a capital of Arab culture. While Kirkuk may be the Kurds' Jerusalem, it is Mosul that is the heartland for Sunni Arabs.

It is said that more Iraqi army officers and more members of the Baath Party hierarchy came from Mosul than from any other place in Iraq.

And while there are large numbers of predominantly Kurdish villages in the countryside north of Mosul, no more than a third of the capital's residents are Kurds.

Imagine the consternation then, on April 11, 2003, when Kurdish peshmerga fighters overran the great Arab city after the surrender to U.S. forces by Iraq's Mosul-based 5th Army Corps.

Resistance to the new reality was immediate as Arabs resented the presence of both American and Kurdish elements running their city and patrolling their province.

Most of Ninewa's Arab population boycotted a provincial election in 2005 and a Kurdish majority government resulted.

Saadi Pira, a Kurd, and now senior adviser to Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, ran the 2005 election in Mosul. "We knew we weren't the majority. We won three-quarters of the seats, even though we only had a third of the population," he said. "So we appointed an Arab as governor, and spread around a lot of the key positions."

That may be so, but the next four years also provided an opportunity for Kurdish administrators to redress some of the ethnic practices of Saddam Hussein's time when Kurds were often forced to leave the province and Arabs moved in.

During all this time, radical Sunni groups, including al-Qaeda in Iraq, grew in strength and went on the offensive. Terrorist acts against the Kurdish administrators were met with harsh responses.

Khasro Goran was the Kurdish deputy

governor but, in reality, was the strongman during those years.

"I am not an executioner, as Arabs claim," he told the International Crisis Group earlier this year. "It is all too easy to blame us for the disorder and violence ... while absolving the terrorists. We had to take matters into our hands because Arab leadership was wholly lacking."

The outcome of all this Arab-Kurd conflict was twofold.

First, Kurdish forces pulled back to the east bank of the Tigris River that runs through Mosul, leaving the insurgents for the Iraqi and U.S. forces to deal with.

Then, in January this year, the province's Arab majority returned with a vengeance when a hard-line Arab party, al-Habdaa, running on an anti-Kurdish platform, convincingly won election.

This time, there was no talk of power sharing, despite the widely practised concept of muhasasa, in which positions are distributed in a way that reflects each party's electoral vote. Governor Atheel Najayfi declared there was too much to redress; he would govern as a majority.

Kurds have insisted on their share of administrative positions and are boycotting the government until they get it. They forcibly control some 16 of the province's 31 subdistricts and will have no part of the administration as constituted.

As a result, when Mr. Najayfi recently tried to visit one of the subdistricts, he and his motorcade of heavily armed four-by-fours were turned away by Kurdish peshmerga troops with shoot-to-kill orders.

National and regional leaders now are getting into the act.

In Baghdad, Shia Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, perhaps preparing to run on an anti-Kurd platform of his own in January's election, has repeatedly criticized the idea of muhasasa and even questioned the nature of federalism, declaring that a central authority was the most important thing.

An outraged Masoud Barzani, president of the Kurdistan Regional Government, accused the Prime Minister of seeking to restore dictatorship.

High emotions are like sparks in a tinderbox such as Ninewa, where some of the country's most violent Sunni extremists hide out.

Driven there from Anbar province to

the south, and enjoying the more-or-less open Syrian border, the extremists have proliferated.

Just two weeks ago during Friday prayers, a gunman in a Ninewa mosque shot dead the imam and 14 others in the congregation before blowing himself up. The imam, it turns out, was a member of the moderate Iraqi Islamic Party, a group that had not joined other Arabs in the 2005 election boycott and had worked with the Kurds. Assassination, it seems, was the price this man paid.

More than a share in the province's administration, Kurds also contend those Ninewa districts with a majority Kurdish population, and which their forces occupied in 2003, belong in the Kurdistan Regional Government, a special region within a federal Iraq.

For his part, Mr. Najayfi says there are no such disputed territories to be claimed. "In 1991 [during the uprising against the Saddam Hussein regime] the Kurds took over all areas inhabited by their people," he said. "The Green Line [that marked their enclave] is the border they deserve."

"Najayfi would like his entire province without any Kurds," Mr. Pira, the Kurdish adviser, said. "He's speaking the language of Goebbels."

But behind the bravado and politicking, the Kurds may be angling for a deal.

"Kirkuk is a pressing issue for Kurdish politicians of both parties," a Kurdish MP told the ICG in a report issued Sept. 28. "It has more far-reaching results than demands on the other disputed territories. We rather exaggerate the latter so as to gain leverage for negotiations on Kirkuk."

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

October 28, 2009

Iraq's oil-rich province of Kirkuk vulnerable to violence

Who has the right to govern there? The Iraqi constitutional battles are a lot like Canada's, but with guns

The Globe and Mail / Canada

Patrick Martin

Kirkuk, Iraq

An organization calling itself al-Qaeda in Iraq has claimed responsibility for Sunday's deadly bombings in Baghdad that killed 155 people.

Earlier this month, the same group claimed it carried out a suicide car bombing that killed 11 Iraqi policemen here in the capital of the ethnically diverse and oil-rich province of Kirkuk. The police were part of a special unit charged with guarding the area's oil facilities.

This Kirkuk attack may prove the more ominous, for if there is to be further armed conflict in Iraq, this is where it is likely to be, as a showdown looms between Arab and Kurd over who has the better claim to the province.

Already, in the past three months, more than 200 people have been killed in assorted bombings and assassinations in this province and in nearby Ninewa.

The issue of Kirkuk also is bedeviling federal lawmakers in Baghdad. An attempt to agree on a new election law collapsed Tuesday over the issue of who would be eligible to vote in Kirkuk.

When Kurdish peshmerga (meaning those who face death) rushed into Kirkuk from their position northeast of the city in early April of 2003, they were doing more than contributing to the U.S. defeat of Saddam Hussein's forces: They were laying claim to what Jalal Talibani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and now President of Iraq, calls "the Kurdish Jerusalem."

They also were serving notice that the territory, and its extensive oil reserves, rightfully belong to Kurdistan.

In the 1991 Kurdish uprising against Saddam Hussein, which had followed the Iraqi setback in the first Gulf War, Kurdish forces had fallen back to a ceasefire line that stretched across northern Iraq from the Syrian to the Iranian borders. This Green Line, as it would become known, fell well short of encompassing all the Kurdish towns and villages. Many, including the city of Kirkuk, were left in Saddam's hands.

On April 10, 2003, the Kurds took back a lot of that territory, claiming most of it as Kurdistan's. The Green Line from 1991 to 2003 has been replaced by a new

"trigger line," a position from which Kurdish leaders say they will not withdraw. And the disputed territories fall in between.

Ramadan Rashid, who turned 50 that year, was the leader of the Kurdish underground in Kirkuk. With a small satellite phone he had been directing U.S. air strikes against targets in the city. When Saddam's forces fled Kirkuk, and PUK peshmerga moved in to fill the void, Mr. Rashid rejoiced.

"As far as I was concerned, we were just taking back what was ours," he said.

Over the years of Baath Party rule, a program of Arabization had reduced the Kurdish population in Kirkuk considerably, while increasing the number of Arabs in the city by encouraging immigration from the South.

By the time the Kurds had "liberated" Kirkuk in 2003, the Kurdish majority was gone.

They quickly set about reversing that trend. In a program they refer to as "normalization" and Arabs refer to as takrid, or Kurdization, Arabs who had been brought into the city were "encouraged" to leave, often with financial incentives. Some left out of fear. At the same time, Kurds were encouraged to return to the city of their birth. The northern outskirts of Kirkuk are filled with newly built Kurdish homes.

Today, the conflict is over who has the right to govern here, and where does the future of the province lie.

Kurds want to have elections in Kirkuk; every other province and city has held them. Arab and Turkomen residents have objected to the idea, since the 2005 provincial vote created a government dominated by Kurds. They say that Kurds benefited from inflated numbers at that time and the numerical disparity has only grown since.

While there has been no national census conducted (also postponed because of the Kirkuk issue), most parties agree that the number of Kurds in Kirkuk province has grown to more than 1.2 million today from about 800,000 in 2003, an increase of 50 per cent.

"That's a perfectly normal growth rate," said Rizgar Ali, the Kurdish head of the provincial council, "when you take into account both natural growth and the return of thousands of families."

Rakhan Saeed, the Arab deputy gover-

nor of Kirkuk, disagrees. "There are a lot of fake documents being used by people to register as residents. There's no way that many are legitimate Kirkuk people."

"We want elections, too," he said, "but fair ones."

What he and many Arab and Turkomen leaders want is a power-sharing arrangement that would allot 32 per cent of the provincial seats to Kurds, 32 per cent to Arabs, 32 per cent to Turkomen and 4 per cent to remaining, mostly Christian, groups.

"That way, no one feels they are second-class citizens," Mr. Saeed said.

Kurdish leaders say they are happy to share power, but after an election determines what share each major party should get. The concept, known as muhasasa, has been widely practised almost everywhere in the country. Even federal cabinet positions are assigned that way.

As for the future, Kurds want to hold a referendum to decide whether the province should join the three other provinces that make up the Kurdistan Regional Government. The KRG still is part of Iraq, but with a special regional status.

For the same reason they oppose elections until a proper census is conducted, Arabs and Turkomen object to a referendum.

"The only referendum we favour is one in which all Iraqis are asked if Kirkuk should become part of Kurdistan," said Mr. Saeed, using an idea familiar to Canadian federalists. Indeed, the Iraqi constitutional battles are a lot like Canada's, but with guns.

Mr. Saeed said that even if the people of Kirkuk are ultimately required to hold a referendum of their own, a decision to become part of the KRG should be approved "by at least 75 per cent of the people."

"If there's any attempt to impose a decision on us, people will fight," he said.

In the meantime, the city and province of Kirkuk are governed by a mostly Kurdish administration, while members of a special police force stand guard every 100 metres or so in mixed and Arab neighbourhoods, keeping what passes for peace.

For every Iraqi party, an army of its own

Iraqis will not trust their security forces so long as they remain heavily politicized.

Najim Abed Al-Jabouri

Sunday's coordinated suicide bombings in Baghdad, which killed more than 150 people, were a brutal reminder of how far Iraq still has to go in terms of security. While things are far better than a few years ago, one huge task remains: getting the public to trust the Iraqi security forces.

From 2005 to 2008, I was the mayor of Tel Afar, a town in Nineveh Province in northern Iraq that became the model for the "clear, hold and build" strategy credited with turning the war around during the surge.

In some ways, the story of Tel Afar is indicative of what we are now seeing on a larger scale in Iraq.

In 2004, Tel Afar was plagued by insurgency and terrorism, the result of missed chances and poor decisions by both the American and the Iraqi governments.

In early 2005, however, I was approached by Col. H. R. McMaster, an innovative American brigade commander (he is now a brigadier general), who agreed with me that security efforts should focus on gaining the confidence of the people and not only on killing the enemy. We went to work building bridges with the population.

First, the American and Iraqi security forces were taken out of their bases and moved full-time into city neighborhoods.

Recognizing that the local police force was dominated by a certain ethno-sectarian group and that members had harmed people of other religions and ethnicities, I fired any police officer with a record of violence or other unprofessional actions. Then I recruited officers from other ethnic groups, and integrated all the units. Shiite worked with Sunni, and Turkmen and Kurd worked with Arab.

We also put a new focus on meeting the needs of the people — not just keeping people safe, but trying to avoid violence from starting by encouraging Tel Afar's different groups to talk to one another.

Once we gained widespread trust in our impartiality, we could be fairly sure that any resident who saw something suspicious would quickly report it to the authorities.

The Iraqi government needs to apply these same principles to the national security forces. Both the military and the police remain heavily politicized. The police and border officials, for example, are largely answerable to

the Interior Ministry, which has been seen (often correctly) as a pawn of Shiite political movements. Members of the security forces are often loyal not to the state but to the person or political party that gave them their jobs.

The same is true of many parts of the Iraqi Army. For example, the Fifth Iraqi Army Division, in

Diyala Province northeast of Baghdad, has been under the sway of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, the Shiite party that has the largest bloc in Parliament; the Eighth Division, in Diwaniya and Kut to the southeast of the capital, has answered largely to Dawa, the Shiite party of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki; the Fourth Division, in Salahuddin Province in northern Iraq, has been allied with one of the two major Kurdish parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

More recently, the Iraqi Awakening Conference, a tribal-centric political party based in Anbar Province (where Sunni tribesmen, the so-called Sons of Iraq, turned against the insurgency during the surge) has gained influence over the Seventh Iraq Army Division, which was heavily involved in recruiting Sunnis to maintain security in 2006.

These political schisms are partly responsible for coordinated terrorist attacks like those on Sunday or the so-called Bloody Wednesday bombings of Aug. 19, which killed more than 100.

The aim of such assaults is to pull the rug from under Prime Minister Maliki in advance of the January elections. Mr. Maliki has used the security gains of the last two years as his political trump card, a strategy that gave Dawa huge gains in provincial elections last February. However, if attacks on the government rise, his opponents will harp on them in order to break Dawa's political momentum.

I do not suggest that the political parties committed these crimes directly. But ethno-sectarian political party influence over the security forces indirectly makes it easier for enemies of Iraq to carry out their attacks.

The Iraqi government also made a huge mistake by failing to find a place for the Sons of Iraq in the national government. This was because of pressure from ethno-sectarian parties and their gatekeepers in the Defense and Interior Ministries, who didn't want the political balance in the forces to be altered.

The Sons of Iraq, who had thrown in their lot with the new Iraq, are now politically marginalized and unemployed and may be more susceptible to settling their political differences with the government by serving the enemies of Iraq.

How can Iraq create a trustworthy security force? There are three lessons from the Tel Afar experience.

First, remove the high-level officers in the Defense and Interior Ministries who are more loyal to their political parties than to Iraq. It does not matter if their replacements are Kurdish, Shiite, Sunni or Turkmen — the important thing is that they are professional and not puppets of religious or ethnic militias and parties.

Second, the government should diversify the police forces in mixed areas and move the Iraqi Army's battalions from areas that are dominated by local political parties. This might require United States military support as intermediaries in politically sensitive areas like Kirkuk.

Last, the Iraqi government can do more to employ members of the Sons of Iraq, either in the security forces or with jobs in the provincial and national governments. Baghdad and Washington should also do more to jumpstart the economy in Sunni-dominated Anbar Province, which is a likely tinderbox for the next widespread insurgency.

In a little more than two years, the United States drawdown of forces will be complete. In that time, the Iraqi security forces can go further in the direction of ethno-sectarianism, or they can find a new nationalism.

True, the status quo offers a temporary balance of power between the incumbent parties, likely providing relative peace for the American exit. But deep down, ethno-sectarianism creates fault lines that terrorist groups and other states in the Mideast will exploit to keep Iraq weak and vulnerable.

The better alternative is to reform and gain the confidence of Iraqis. The people will trust the security forces if they are seen as impartial on divisive political issues, loyal to the state rather than to parties, and if they embody the diversity and tolerance that we Iraqis have long claimed to be a defining characteristic.

NAJIM ABED AL-JABOURI, a fellow at the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies at the National Defense University in Washington, was the mayor of Tel Afar, Iraq, from 2005 to 2008. This article was translated by Sterling Jensen from the Arabic.

AFP

IRAK: LE GOUVERNEMENT KURDE OBTIENT LA CONFIANCE DU PARLEMENT RÉGIONAL

ERBIL (Irak), 28 octobre 2009 (AFP)

Le nouveau gouvernement kurde irakien a obtenu mercredi à Erbil la confiance du Parlement régional, mais les députés de l'opposition ont quitté la séance en signe de protestation car ils n'avaient pas obtenu un vote séparé sur chaque ministre, selon un journaliste de l'AFP.

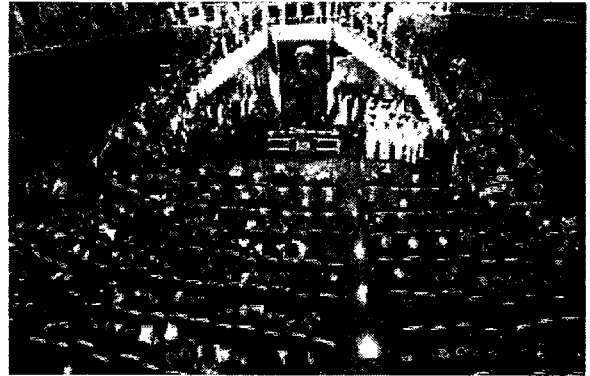
Le nouvel exécutif, dirigé par l'ancien vice-Premier ministre irakien Barham Saleh, compte 21 ministres contre 42 (dont 13 sans portefeuille) dans le précédent gouvernement de Nachervan Barzani, a-t-on indiqué de source parlementaire.

Dans ce nouveau gouvernement, seulement quatre ministres conservent leur portefeuille, ceux des Ressources naturelles, de l'Intérieur, des Finances et celui chargé des Peshmergas (combattants).

Il compte six membres du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK de Massoud Barzani, président de la région autonome du Kurdistan) et six autres du l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK, de Jalal Talabani, président d'Irak). Les autres sont des indépendants ou appartiennent à des minorités religieuses.

Les députés contestataires du Goran ("Changement" en kurde) de Noucherwan Moustapha, devenu première force d'opposition avec 25 sièges, ont quitté la salle, suivis des dix parlementaires islamistes sur les 13 que comptent l'autre liste d'opposition "Services et réformes". Le Parlement compte 111 sièges.

"Nous avons décidé de nous retirer car le président du Parlement nous a refusé



la possibilité d'interroger Barham Saleh alors que nous avons beaucoup de réserves sur la manière dont il a dirigé le gouvernement (kurde) de 2001 et 2004", a déclaré le député de Goran Abdallah Mollah Nouri.

"La présidence ne nous a donné aucune chance de demander des informations sur le programme gouvernemental et la qualité des ministres", a dit pour sa le député islamiste Samir Salim.

Après le vote, les députés ont prêté serment en présence du président de la région du Kurdistan Massoud Barzani.

Les grands partis traditionnels du Kurdistan irakien, l'UPK et le PDK, avaient obtenu le 25 juillet la majorité absolue au Parlement régional.

AFP

IRAK: PAS D'ACCORD SUR LA LOI ÉLECTORALE MALGRÉ LES EFFORTS DE L'ONU

BAGDAD, 27 octobre 2009 - (AFP)

LES CHEFS des groupes parlementaires irakiens ont échoué une nouvelle fois mardi dans leurs tentatives de trouver un accord sur une loi électorale, indispensable à la tenue d'élections le 16 janvier, en dépit de l'entrée en scène de l'ONU, selon un député ayant assisté aux débats.

"Aucun accord n'a été trouvé aujourd'hui et ils se réuniront de nouveau mercredi", a-t-il dit à l'AFP, alors qu'il devient chaque jour plus difficile de tenir le scrutin à la date prévue, la commission électorale ayant répété qu'elle avait besoin de 90 jours pour organiser le scrutin.

Le représentant spécial de l'ONU en Irak, Ad Melkert, qui a assisté à une réunion des principaux chefs des groupes parlementaires, a fait une proposition pour surmonter le principal obstacle, à savoir la question de la région pétrolière de Kirkouk, a dit ce parlementaire qui a tenu à garder l'anonymat.

Il a proposé que les élections aient lieu à Kirkouk en même temps que dans le reste du pays en prenant en compte, exceptionnellement et pour ce scrutin uniquement, la liste des inscrits en 2009 comme l'exigent les Kurdes.

Après le scrutin, cette liste électorale serait révisée pour tenir compte de l'opposition des Arabes et des Turcomans.

Les Kurdes exigent d'être majoritaires dans les instances dirigeantes de la province de Kirkouk (quelque 900.000 habitants), qu'ils veulent annexer à leur région autonome, alors que les Arabes et les Turcomans accusent ces derniers de s'y installer en masse pour modifier l'équilibre démographique.

Pour leur part, les Kurdes accusent les Arabes d'avoir agi de la même façon dans certains secteurs à majorité kurde de la province de Ninive (nord).

La proposition de l'ONU est totalement différente de celle avancée lundi lors de la réunion à laquelle participaient notamment le président Jalal Talabani (Kurde), le Premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki (chiite) et le président du Parlement Iyad al-Samarraï (sunnite) ainsi que d'autres responsables.

Selon Abdel Hadi al-Hassani, du parti Dawa (de M. Maliki), trois propositions ont été faites pour Kirkouk: reporter les élections dans ce gouvernorat, revenir à la liste électorale de 2004 ou créer deux circonscriptions, l'une kurde et l'autre arabe et turcomane.

Le député kurde Mahmoud Othman a refusé ces propositions. "Je ne pense pas que



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nous allons accepter la proposition de revenir aux listes électorales de 2004 et 2005. Des dizaines de familles (kurdes) ont été expulsées et nous ne pouvons pas faire l'im-passe", a-t-il dit à l'AFP. Il est en revanche ouvert à la proposition de l'ONU.

Le porte-parole de l'ONU à Bagdad, Said Arikat, a souligné que le message des Nations unies "n'était pas une proposition mais est venu dans le cadre de la discussion. Il y a eu un grand débat auquel l'ONU était partie prenante", a-t-il dit à l'AFP.

"Nous avons insisté sur la nécessité de faire passer la loi car c'est essentiel de tenir les élections le 16 janvier. Chaque jour qui passe sans que la loi soit adoptée met en cause le calendrier politique", a-t-il ajouté.

Selon un porte-parole des Etats-Unis, "l'ambassadeur Christopher Hill et d'autres diplomates américains suivent de très près les discussions au Parlement".

"Nous exhortons les dirigeants politiques irakiens à surmonter leurs différences dans l'intérêt du peuple irakien", a-t-il dit dans un communiqué.

Samedi, plusieurs dirigeants irakiens, dont M. Maliki, avaient exprimé leur inquiétude quant à un éventuel report des élections, après l'échec des discussions au Parlement. "Si le scrutin n'est pas organisé à la date indiquée, aussi bien le gouvernement que le Parlement n'auront aucune légitimité", avait averti le Premier ministre.

L'ouverture kurde

Ankara est tenté de reconnaître de nouveaux droits culturels à sa minorité du Sud-Est. L'espoir d'un règlement trouve un écho jusque dans la guérilla du PKK.

Après vingt-cinq ans de lutte sanglante – 45 000 morts – avec la guérilla marxiste du PKK, la Turquie est-elle en passe de résoudre sa question kurde ? C'est, en tout cas, le pari prudent du gouvernement d'Ankara, qui devrait annoncer, cet automne, un train de réformes en faveur de cette minorité. Le droit à l'identité de ces 12 à 17 millions d'individus, sur un total de 75 millions, est resté nié au nom du centralisme jacobin hérité d'Atatürk, fondateur de la Turquie moderne. Ankara pourrait annoncer de nouvelles concessions en matière d'enseignement et de langue, telle que la déturquisation des noms de lieux kurdes.

Dans un discours remarqué, en août 2005, à Diyarbakir



HÉROS ? A Silopi, le 19 octobre, la population kurde accueille dans la joie les guérilleros du PKK venus se rendre.

(sud-est du pays), le Premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, avait évoqué « les erreurs passées » et promis de régler « le problème » avec « plus de démocratie, plus de droits civils et plus de prospérité ». De fait, l'état d'urgence a été levé dans le Sud-Est. Et des programmes en

langue kurde sont désormais autorisés à la télévision.

Plusieurs facteurs encouragent ce vent de la réforme. Tout d'abord, la persistance de la question kurde gêne la marche vers l'Europe. Ensuite, les relations avec la région autonome kurde d'Irak, naguère sanctuaire du PKK,

mais dont le développement passe par les capitaux et marchés turcs, sont en voie de normalisation. Détenue dans une prison turque depuis 1999, le chef-fondateur du PKK, Abdullah Ocalan, a fait savoir, enfin, qu'il abandonnait son rêve de sécession et plaçait ses espoirs dans la démocratisation des institutions. Laquelle bénéficierait de la fin d'un conflit qui a favorisé une collusion entre certains cercles de la sécurité nationale et des trafiquants de tout poil.

A l'appel d'Ocalan, huit guérilleros et 26 « civils » ont quitté les camps irakiens du PKK, le 19 octobre, et sont rentrés en Turquie pour se rendre. Ils ont été accueillis en héros par la population kurde. ● JEAN-MICHEL DEMETZ

IRAK: VISITE HISTORIQUE DU CHEF DE LA DIPLOMATIE TURQUE AU KURDISTAN



ERBIL, Irak —30 oct 2009 (AFP)

Le chef de la diplomatie turque Ahmet Davutoglu a souligné vendredi que l'Irak représentait un point stratégique et une voie obligée pour les relations de son pays avec le Golfe, lors d'une visite historique à Erbil, au Kurdistan irakien.

"L'Irak comme Etat multiethnique est très important pour nous et ce qui menace sa sécurité est une menace pour nous (...) Nous sommes votre porte pour l'Europe et vous êtes notre porte pour le sud, vers les pays du Golfe, via Bassora", a-t-il souligné lors d'une conférence de presse commune avec le chef kurde irakien Massoud Barzani.

Il s'agit du premier séjour d'un ministre turc dans cette région du nord de l'Irak, avec laquelle les relations ont longtemps été difficiles en raison des accusations d'Ankara sur l'aide que fournirait le gouvernement régional aux séparatistes kurdes turcs du PKK.

Arrivé en compagnie du ministre du Commerce, Zafer Caglayan, et de 70 hommes d'affaires et responsables gouvernementaux, M. Davutoglu a été reçu par le ministre irakien d'origine kurde, Hoshyar Zebari, et le nouveau Premier ministre kurde Braham Saleh.

"Cette région représente un grand intérêt pour nous et nous voulons bâtir de bonnes relations au Moyen-Orient avec les Turcomans, les Kurdes, les chiites et les sunnites. (...) C'est une visite historique et j'appelle les Arabes, les Kurdes et les Turcomans à reconstruire cette région", a ajouté le ministre turc.

La visite intervient au moment où le processus électoral en Irak est bloqué en raison d'une controverse sur la région pétrolière de Kirkouk revendiquée par les Kurdes, les Turcomans et les Arabes.



Pour sa part, le président de région autonome du Kurdistan Massoud Barzani a noté que son territoire, qui "bénéficiait d'une stabilité et de la sécurité, pouvait être un pont pour la Turquie pour atteindre les autres régions d'Irak" avant de rendre hommage à la politique actuelle du gouvernement turc envers les Kurdes.

"Je pense que les dirigeants turcs peuvent traiter le problème du PKK. Ils ont pris une décision très courageuse et nous soutenons totalement la politique de rapprochement avec les Kurdes de Turquie", a-t-il dit.

Le gouvernement turc a annoncé qu'il préparait des réformes pour améliorer les droits et la situation de la minorité kurde de Turquie.

Les rapports entre Ankara et Bagdad se sont nettement améliorés depuis l'an dernier après que l'administration centrale irakienne et celle du Kurdistan se sont engagées à faire en sorte que le Kurdistan irakien ne devienne plus un sanctuaire pour le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Le conflit, vieux de 25 ans, entre la Turquie et le PKK a fait 45.000 morts.

La Turquie est par ailleurs le premier partenaire commercial du Kurdistan et de nombreux Turcs ont investi dans cette région.

La Turquie a actuellement une ambassade à Bagdad, un consulat à Mossoul (nord) et compte en ouvrir un autre prochainement à Erbil.