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## **MASSUD BARZANI DEFENDS THE NATURAL RIGHT OF KURDS TO INDEPENDENCE**



ON 26 February the President of Iraqi Kurdistan, Massud Barzani, in an interview televised on the NTV channel, called on Turkey to engage in direct talks to put an end to the tensions resulting from the use of Iraqi Kurdistan as a rear base by Kurdish fighters from Turkey. "*Dialogue is the best method of resolving problems and misunderstandings*", he declared. He also insisted on the fact that independence constituted "*a natural right*" of the region's Kurds, recalling that the

Iraqi Kurds want to include Kirkuk in their autonomous region. This oil-producing city is "*the heart of Kurdistan*", he added. Massud Barzani pointed out, on the Turkish television, that the countries of the region would have to accept the fact that the Kurds had a right to independence. This reminder of the rights of the Kurds to self-determination aroused sharp criticism from Turkish political leaders. The next day, the Turkish Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gul, accused Massud Barzani of being "*irrational*". "An

irrational leadership and maximalist dreams in the Middle East have always plunged the peoples into conflicts", he declared to journalists in a plane bringing him back from a visit to Afghanistan. He considered that Mr. Barzani's remarks were "irresponsible in a context, particularly in Iraq, where the situation is critical and where Turkey is pursuing a constructive policy". For his part, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared on 26 February to the semi-official News Agency Anadolu in reaction to Mr. Barzani's remarks that "*Kirkuk is like Iraq in miniature and is the property of no single ethnic group alone*".

The Kurds' attachment to Kirkuk is far from just being linked to its underground wealth since exploration of other parts of Kurdistan are increasingly attracting investors. especially as the Iraqi government approved a Bill on hydrocarbons on 26 February. This Bill offers legal security to the Kurds, since important deposits have been discovered in Kurdistan and experts are expecting fresh discoveries, since their proven reserves only represent 2.9% of those of Iraq as a whole. Moreover, the major oil companies are likely to be more inclined to invest in the Kurdish region, rather free of violence. *"The Kurds have broadly reached the objectives they had set themselves"*, considered, on 27 February, Alex Munton, an analyst who has been closely following the negotiations on behalf of a firm of consultants specialising in fuel and power, Wood Mackenzie.

The Kurdistan regional government, was obliged to make some concessions since it will not directly manage the oil revenues of deposits in its territory, operation if which have begun. However, it will be able to supervise their exploitation. *"The initial contracts will be placed under the responsibility of the Kurdistan government, then after a certain time transferred to the Federal government"*, declared the Kurdish government's spokesman, Khalid Saleh. Concretely, these arrangements allow the Kurds to preserve the advance they have acquired with foreign investors and to continue prospecting in the only region of Iraq where a relative stability reigns. DNO, a Norwegian company, had already concluded an agreement with the Kurdish authorities even before the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and announced the discovery of a deposit at Tawke, near Kirkuk. The Tawke wells could rapidly supply up to 50,000 barrels of crude a day and to the company. By accepting a compromise over revenues, Kurdistan has confirmed the contracts already signed, as the

Bill gives them legal security. Thus, even though it shares its good fortune, it will benefit from the direct local spin-offs — especially in terms of jobs and taxes.

In a speech broadcast by the public television service channel *Al-Iraqia*, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki welcomed this, hoping that it would have *"positive repercussions on the consolidation of relations between all the components of the Iraqi people"*. This Bill, that will soon be put before Parliament, is the fruit of a difficult compromise on a burning issue — the oil reserves, the third largest in the world, are mainly concentrated in the Shiite South and in Kurdistan. Once adopted, the new law should allow an equitable sharing between the 18 provinces of Iraq. It also provides for the supervision of this sector by the Federal government and for an independent National enterprise. The oil revenues will be paid into a Federal account, then redistributed to the provinces *pro rata* to their population — that is 20% for the Kurds. The law will thus favour the country's "unification", rejoiced in unison the American and Iraqi authorities.

The Bill will be examined by the 275 members of the Iraqi Parliament.

The government had promised to promulgate a new law before the end of 2006 but, because of objections from the Kurdish parties, it had not been possible to reach an agreement. *"This law will guarantee the Iraqis, not only today but also for future generations, complete control of this natural wealth"*, stressed the Iraqi Minister for Oil, Hussain al-Shahristani.

The White House had often been accused, before the intervention in Iraq by the Americano-British armed forces, of seeking to lay hands on Iraq's black gold on behalf of the major American and British oil companies. However, four years later, the major American and British companies hesitate to venture into Iraq while Russian and Chinese State companies try to re-activate contracts signed in the 90s with the former dictator Saddam Hussein.

Iraq has the third largest oil reserves in the world, but is still obliged to import refined oil products, and its output of crude has still not reached its pre-2003 level because of inadequate infra-structures and bomb attacks. It stands, at present, at about 2 million barrels a day is essentially under the control of the Iraqi National Oil Company

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## **A HEATED EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE TURKISH ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF AND THE GOVERNMENT OVER THE SUITABILITY OF DIALOGUE WITH THE IRAQI KURDISH LEADERS**

**A**NKARA is showing a growing impatience at the American and Kurdish reluctance to act against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). On 23 February, the Turkish National Security Council (MGK) called for the strengthening of diplomatic efforts with a view to resolving the problem raised by the Kurdistan Workers' Party. during a Press conference in Washington on 17 February,

following discussions with American officials, the Turkish Armed Forces Chief of Staff, General Yasar Buyukanit, accused the two principal Kurdish parties in Iraqi Kurdistan of supporting the PKK and supplying it with explosives. General Buyukanit expressed his scepticism about the recent statements by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in which he said he was inclined to improve relations with

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the Iraqi Kurdish parties *"if that would contribute to the establishment of peace in the region"*. *"I cannot interfere if political contacts are to take place. But what am I to discuss with those who support the PKK?"*, he concluded. On the other hand, the Turkish Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gul, retorted that the government would seek dialogue with all the Iraqi groups so as to ensure that the problems were resolved by political means. *"Soldiers talk with weapons (...) but before coming to that, political men and diplomats have work to do"*, he declared to the press, before taking the plane for Saudi Arabia. *"This question must not be transformed into a controversy"*, added the head of the Turkish diplomatic services, stressing that the points of view of the government and the Army were parts of the same efforts to resolve the problem. For his part, the President of Iraqi Kurdistan, Massud Barzani, called on Turkey to for direct talks to end the tensions. He recalled that the question of the PKK was apolitical question, for which there was no military solution. Since 1984, Turkey has carried out about thirty incursions into the region without any lasting results. The PKK is present throughout Turkish territory, even in Istanbul, he recalled, calling on Ankara to engage in a political process including a general amnesty. He also indicated that the Iraqi Kurds would not fight other Kurds, but would not allow their territory to be used for military actions against neighbouring States. He asked Ankara not to seek excuses for interfering with Iraqi affairs.

For its part, the United States advised Turkey not to intervene militarily against the PKK in Iraqi Kurdish territory, as they fear that such an operation would destabilise an Iraqi region that has remained relatively calm. According to the head of the Turkish armed forces, some 3,500 members of the PKK are at present stationed in Iraq and 1,500 are in Turkey. On 6 February, the US Secretary of State, Condoleezza

Rice, asked her Turkish opposite number not to have recourse of violence against the PKK fighters who find refuge in Iraq. *"We have clearly said, obviously, that we do not want to see any further recourse to violence"* in Iraq stated the State Department spokesman Sean McCormac, giving an account of a

meeting between Mrs. Rice and Abdullah Gul, Turkish Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. In August, Washington had appointed a former NATO Commander, Reserve General Joseph Ralston, as special American envoy, charged with co-ordinating the struggle against the PKK.

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## **THE IRAQI-AMERICAN PLAN FOR BAGHDAD SECURITY: 17,000 PEOPLE KILLED IN SECTARIAN VIOLENCE**

**O**N 28 February, the office of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki announced, in a communiqué, that it had issued invitations to an international conference on 10 March, adding that the aim *"of this conference was to help advance the political process, to support the efforts of the Iraqi Government of national Union in favour of security and stability"*. The same source made the point that the conference will also have to favour *"national reconciliation"*. Amongst the guests are the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, Iraq's six neighbours, the Arab League and the Islamic Conference Organisation. The United States and Syria have announced that they would take part, while Iran let it be understood that its presence was possible. France has indicated that it would examine the Iraqi government's invitation. According to the US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, a first meeting should take place in March at top level followed by a second meeting at ministerial level, no doubt in April *"with the same guests plus the G8"*.

Meanwhile, in Washington, the Director of US National Intelligence services, Michael McConnell, declared that the political situation in Iraq was developing *"in the wrong direction"*. He also considered that the term *"civil war"* was an apt description of *"the essential elements of the Iraqi conflict"*.

*"Unless the efforts aimed at reversing this situation really have some effect in the next 12 to 18 months (...), we consider that the security situation will continue to deteriorate"*, he pointed out speaking before the Senate Armed Forces Commission.

On 10 February, US General David Petraeus took command of the 140,000 American and allied soldiers in Iraq, with the task of applying a new security strategy that many in Baghdad have described as the last chance plan. *"It is time for all Iraqis to reject violence, crime and corruption and hold up their heads and take a stand against those who employ such methods"*, declared General Petraeus. He is familiar with Iraq, where he spent two and a half years following the intervention of March 2003. In particular he had commanded the prestigious 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, whose headquarters were in Mossul, and as such was responsible for the Northern region. He also supervised the setting up of Iraqi forces until September 2005. On his return to the United States he re-revised the Army's counter-insurrection manual.

His arrival coincides with the beginning of the application of the security plan for Baghdad, where nearly 17,000 people were killed in 2006 in sectarian violence, according to UNO. This plan, often described as a *"last chance plan"* by the Iraqis,

involves the deploying of 35,000 GIs in the capital and 50,000 Iraqi soldiers and police. General Petraeus' taking command comes after a particularly bloody week, both for the Iraqis and for the American troops. On 3 February, Baghdad was hit by one of the bloodiest bomb attacks since 2003, when a lorry bomb killed 130 people in a market. The suicide bomber was transporting foodstuff when he detonated his explosives late in the afternoon, destroying shops and stalls that made up the Sadriyah open air market, according to the police. This bloody attack is one of a series aimed at Shiites, especially the Shiites in Baghdad. The Sadriyah market is in street of fruit and vegetable shops and stalls selling other foodstuff. The district is largely inhabited by Shiite Kurds and is only about 500 metres from a Sunni pilgrim centre.

In Kurdistan, a double car bomb attack on 17 February caused at least ten deaths and 80 injured in a crowded market in Kirkuk, still within Iraqi jurisdiction. Several vehicles and stalls were destroyed by fire. On 15 February, three of the Iraqi Foreign Minister's guards were killed in an ambush as they were returning home to Kurdistan on leave. Five people, all guards, traveling in the same vehicle, were ambushed to the South of the city of Kirkuk, three being killed and two wounded. Eight bombs were detonated in the space of two hours in Kirkuk on 3 February. The first, a suicide car bomb attack, aimed at the offices of Massud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party, caused two deaths and 30 injured, according to Police Colonel Dishtun Mohammed. Thirteen other people were injured in the series of explosions that followed. responsibility for these attacks was never claimed, but some people fear that they were the work of terrorists fleeing North to escape the imminent drag net in Baghdad. Rizgar Ali, head of the

Kirkuk Provincial Council, accused insurgents trying to destabilise the city.

Elsewhere, on 21 February the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, announced that Great Britain was going to reduce its forces in South Iraq from 7,100 to 5,500, but would keep them in a combat-ready state. 'Mr. Blair did not give any timetable for the withdrawal of these 1,600 troops except that it should take place "in the next few months". Tony Blair also made the point that the British Army would remain in Iraq until 2008. For its part, Denmark is also going to withdraw its land forces, at present deployed in South Iraq, next August, and replace them by a unit of helicopters, the Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen announced. At the moment, Denmark has 460 men in Iraq, including a 4330 strong battalion deployed in Basra under British command.

As against this, the United States is going to reinforce its contingent in Iraq, following the announcement by its President George W. Bush of the despatching of 21,500 additional troops to restore security in Baghdad and Anbar Province. The US has over 140,000 soldiers in Iraq. An Iraqi-American plan for make Baghdad secure was started on 14 February. Shops, closed because of the insecurity have reopened and inhabitants driven from the quarters where they lived by acts of violence between Shiite and Sunni Arabs have returned home. Well aware of the failure of previous security operations carried out last year, the US military leaders have stressed that the activists were liable to adapt their tactics and to lie low watching the situation for a while. Over 110,000 Iraqi and American troops are taking part in this "*Imposing Law*" operation, which aims at reducing the clashes that cause hundreds of deaths every week and split the capital

along sectarian lines, driving tens of thousands of inhabitants from their homes.

The Iranian and Syrian borders have been closed for the duration of the Baghdad security operation. The Iraqi government affirms that half of the Sunni extremists responsible for bomb attacks in Iraq come through Syria. "*We have confirmation that 50% of the takfiris and assassins who claim to be Arab jihadists arrive by crossing the Syrian borders*", declared the government spokesman, Ali al-Dabbagh, on 4 February, on the Al-Arabiya TV channel, referring to the Sunni radicals who consider it permissible to murder any Moslems they consider unbelievers. "*Syria shuts its eyes to this. As we have already said, and as we say again today, we are going through painful and bloody times because of Syria's unreliability in controlling its borders*", continued the Iraqi government spokesman. Syria, for its part, states that it is doing all it can to control its long desert borders with Iraq. "*The Syrian regime possesses powerful intelligence (services) and not a single bird can fly across the Golan plateau, but as soon as it concerns Iraq (...) they say they do not have the equipment necessary or that they lack something or other*", insisted Dabbagh. On 12 February, the General Secretary of the Islamic Conference Organisation (ICO) Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, considered, for his part, that the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq would be the worst solution in view of the present "*catastrophic*" situation. In an interview given to Reuters on the occasion of a visit to Indonesia, the leader of the largest Moslem organisation in the world stressed, furthermore that the ICO, which has 57 members, has undertaken to fight against the ideas of "*radical movements, fanatics and extremists*" that "*present Islam in a very distorted manner*".

## DAMASCUS: THE SYRIAN BAAATH PARTY ANTICIPATES A REFERENDUM IN 2007 TO ENSURE A FRESH TERM OF OFFICE FOR BACHAR AL-ASSAD

**O**n 17 February, the President of the National Organisation for Human Rights in Syria (ONDHS), Mr. Ammar al-Qorabi announced the release in Damascus of the N°2 of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (Yekiti — banned in Syria) two months after his arrest in Aleppo. Moheddin Sheikh Aali had been arrested on 20 December by the Security services while he was sitting in an Aleppo café with a friend. *“He was transferred to the Security services detention centre in Damascus, where he was freed”,* the lawyer pointed out. This Kurdish leader *“is a moderate, and his arrest was unjustified — especially as no charges were made against him”,* added Mr. Qorabi, who expressed the hope that this release would be *“a first step towards that of all political detainees”*.

Otherwise, on 4 February, the High Court for State Security sentenced twelve young Kurds, including two minors, charged with *“belonging to a secret organisation”* to between two and a half and seven years imprisonment, according to the ONDHS. They were arrested at the end of 2005, after throwing Molotov cocktails in Aleppo, according to the director of ONDHS, Ammar Qorabi. Amongst them are two minors, each sentenced to two and a half years jail. The ONDHS calls on the Syrian authorities to abolish the High Court for State Security, which is an emergency court. Under the State of Emergency, in force in Syria since 1963, the authorities can arrest suspects without any warrant of arrest. About 2 million Kurds live in Syria, out of a total population of 18 million. There are eleven Kurdish parties in Syria, all of them banned. Their leaders deny they have any secessionist aims and insist that they just want

recognition of their language and of their cultural rights. In addition, some 300,000 Kurds also demand restoration of their Syrian nationality, that was arbitrarily withdrawn after a census in 1962.

On 17 February, President Bashar al-Assad began a two-day visit to Iran for discussions with his ally and opposite number Mahmud Ahmedinjad. This is the Syrian President's second visit to Iran since the ultra-conservative Ahmedinjad took office in August 2005. Accompanied by his Vice-President, Faruk al-Chareh, and his Foreign Minister Walid Muallem, Mr. Assad met former Iranian President Rafsanjani and also had discussions with the Supreme Guide, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Mohammad Said Bikhaitan, a senior official of the Baath Party, in power in Syria, declared early in February that a referendum on a renewed term of office for Bashar al-Assad as Syrian head of state would take place during 2007. *“The referendum on a fresh term of office for president Bashar al-Assad will be a national and patriotic occasion that will enable the people to express its support for (Mr. Assad's) policy”* declared Mr. Bikhaitan, without specifying any date. Bashar al-Assad *“leads the country and manages the crises with wisdom. He courageously defends (Syria's) dignity and rights”,* advanced Mr. Bikhaitan in a speech in Damascus.

*“The next few months will see other important and democratic dates during which the people will express its choices directly”,* he continued, referring to the general and municipal elections that are also planned for this year in Syria. On 11 July 2000, Bashar al-Assad became President of the Syrian Republic with 97% of the vote following a plebiscite organised a month after his father's death on 10 June 2000.

Since May 2004, Syria has been subjected to American economic sanctions that forbid, in particular, the import by Syria of American products other than food and medicines. According to the Syrian Prime Minister, Naji Otri, his country had replaced the dollar by the euro for almost half of its currency reserves as a preventive measure against the possibility of American sanctions. The amount of Syria's currency reserves is not given in the list of some 170 countries that the Bloomberg agency issues every week, as they are kept secret. On the other hand, on 1 February Syria announced that it had passed a series of laws to promote foreign investments. The decree, promulgated on 27 January, in particular authorises investors *“to repatriate profits from the capital introduced into the country via Syrian banks”*. It also provides *“exoneration from customs duties of the means of production, including means of transport”* and the creation of an *“organisation for investment in Syria”*, according to the texts of the laws as published in the official media. Syria estimates its needs for investment at 37 billion dollars over the next five years.

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## THE COURT OF APPEAL'S INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT RELEASES THE KURDS ARRESTED IN FRANCE AND BELGIUM FOR “TERRORIST ACTIVITIES”

**F**OLLOWING the arrest, in general round up, over 5 and 6 February, of 14 Kurds and an Australian of Kurdish origin in the Paris region and in Brittany the French courts decided, on

17 February, to release four Kurds taken in for questioning for alleged *“terrorist activities”* and incarcerated on 9 February. All those arrested were legally settled in France. The investigating office placed Canan

Kurtyilmaz, considered the European representative of the PKK, on probation contrary to the demand of the Prosecutor, who demanded she be imprisoned. Mrs. Kurtyilmaz, 33 years of age, had been arrested in Belgium, where she was traveling, on 5 February, and transferred to France on 16 February to be detained for questioning two days later. The magistrate, Thierry Fragnoli, one of the three investigating judges charged with the case had detained her for questioning for *"criminal associations regarding terrorist activities and financing terrorism"*, according to sources close to the case. The investigation conducted by judges Thierry Fragnoli, Philippe Coirre and Jean-Louis Bruguière had been initiated in July 2006 after two Kurds, who were trying to change 20,000 euros into dollars, had been taken in for questioning. Eight other Kurds had been released on 23 February. Amongst them were Riza Altun, Attila Balikci, Nedim Seven, respectively considered former PKK representative in Europe, his secretary and the treasurer of the movement. They were placed on probation and forbidden to leave the Paris region, according to their lawyer. The lawyers denounced *"an intention by the police to fabricate"* a case *"out of nothing"*, considering that it was *"incomprehensible that what had been known and tolerated for years be brutally criminalised today"*. Messrs. Antoine Comte, Jean-Louis Malterre and Sylvie Boitel stated that *"What had struck the court was that we were able to show that the French authorities had maintained regular contact with our clients between 2000 and 2006, thus tolerating their collections (of money) and could not have failed but be aware of and closed their eyes to the offenses of which they were now being accused"*. Mr.

William Bourdon stated, for his part, that *"the Court is again faced with all the consequences of the incoherent attitudes of different departments responsible for the struggle against terrorism: on the one hand the DST (counter-espionage) had been fully aware of their activities for years and on the other hand the DNAT (National Anti-terrorist Division responsible for this case) that suddenly decides to criminalise them"*. Several of the people being charged explained that they had had *"regular relations"* with the DST since 2000. The DST confirmed the existence of contacts with the PKK Kurds but solely, they said, to prevent illegal activities. *"These arrests are part of a move towards criminalising, and thus disqualifying, those peoples who are struggling against oppression and for recognition of basic rights"*, Mr. William Bourdon had earlier said to the French news agency AFP.

Moreover, Mr. Balikci had stated that he had met Mr. Devedjian, at that time junior Minister responsible for local freedom, under Nicolas Sarkozy, *"in the name of the Kurdish community in France"*. *"I have no memory of this, but it is not impossible"*, stated Mr. Devedjian, now Nicolas Sarkozy's political advisor. *"I often met delegations of Kurdish representatives but I never met a PKK delegation as such"*, he added. Mr. Devedjian indicated that, on 12 February, he had visited, at the request of the Kurds, the Cultural Centre searched the week before, and which was just next to Nicolas Sarkozy's election campaign Headquarters. *"They told me that it was because of Nicolas Sarkozy (Editor's Note: that here had been the round up). I told them that it was on the basis of a search warrant issued by an investigating*

*judge and that the police were obliged to carry it out"*, declared Mr. Devedjian.

During a press conference held at the Kurdish cultural Centre on 12 February, Ahmet Kaya, representatives of the MRAP (Movement against Racism and for Friendship between Peoples), the CIMADE (a third world solidarity organisation), the Peace Movement, the Greens, the Communist party and José Bové had jointly called for the *"immediate release"* of those people kept in detention. *"This is not the first time that, under cover of charges of terrorism, Kurds are arrested when the case against them is completely groundless"*, declared these representatives meeting as a collective of support. Renée Le Mignot, Vice-President of the MRAP pointed out that he ten of the Kurds arrested had *"possessed the status of political refugees for over ten years"*. According to Patrick Farbiaz, for the Greens, this was France's way *"of appeasing Turkey by giving it some gesture after passing the law sanctioning the negation of the Armenian genocide"*. On 6 February, a thousand Kurds had demonstrated in Paris against the police round up. *"We are not terrorists"* the demonstrators had shouted. The Kurdish Cultural Centre had closed as had many Kurdish shopkeepers in the neighbourhood.

The Turkish police had welcomed this round up, calling on other countries to do the same. The Turkish newspapers had called it the biggest *"round up"* against the PKK in France and Belgium. According to police sources, *"more or less forced collections"* enabled the amassing of about five million euros a year from Kurds living in Europe— about a quarter of which came from France.



## SOUVENIR PHOTOS OF POLICEMEN WITH THE ARMENIAN JOURNALIST'S MURDERER CREATE A SCANDAL IN TURKEY

**A** video, in which policemen can be seen posing before a Turkish flag alongside the alleged murderer of the Armenian journalist, Hrant Dink, is embarrassing the Turkish authorities. The pictures clearly lead one to think that the suspect is being treated as a hero. On the video and photos published by the media on 2 February, the young suspect can be seen, visibly both tired and amazed, unfurling a Turkish flag flanked by two smiling policemen in front of a calendar bearing the following quotation of the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk: *"The soil of the mother-country is sacred. It must never be abandoned"*. The scene is set in Samsun, the Northern harbour town where Ogun Samast confessed having killed the journalist. The Samsun Public Prosecutor, Ahmet Gökçinar, indicated that an enquiry into this incident had been opened, aimed at the police and the gendarmerie (an army corps attached to the Ministry of the Interior). *"All that's lacking is kisses on the assassin's forehead"*, thundered the daily paper *Radikal* on 6 February, while, for the paper *Vatan* *"these pictures are even more serious than the murder itself"*.

Turkey's Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan also intervened, declaring that it was completely inappropriate to allow it to be thought that people in the service of the State could act against it. The fact remains that this matter embarrasses the Turkish security forces. The policemen involved in this incident were suspended and an enquiry has begun. Ahmet Ihsan Guler, head of the Istanbul Police Intelligence Services, implicated in a report of the Ministry of the Interior report, was suspended on 5 February. He is accused, in particular, of negligence regarding infor-

mation, obtained before the crime, about a key suspect, Yasin Hayal, whom is suspected of having incited the 17-year-old Ogun Samast to assassinate Hrant Dink. The police officer is said not to have pursued his efforts to find Hayal and prevent the murder. The governor and police chief of Trabzon (Trebizon), also accused of negligence, were fired last month. Four Samsun policemen and four gendarmes, where the alleged murderer was arrested the day after the events, were also suspended.

Hrant Dink was shot down in front of the offices of his review on 19 January last. His funeral was the occasion for 100,000 demonstrators to denounce the nationalist extremism which the young assassin claimed to represent. The journalist was detested by nationalist circles, especially because he had publicly recognised the existence of the Armenian genocide, which Turkey officially denies.

On 23 February, faced with criticism from the international community, and to correct the country's increasingly deteriorating image, the Turkish Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gul, met 23 elected representatives of various European parliaments who were of Turkish descent to ask for their help in fighting what he considered anti-Turkish prejudices in Europe. These representatives, some sitting in the European Parliament some in regional or national assemblies in Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden, were invited to Ankara to discuss Turkey's aspirations to membership of the European Union. *"There is a lack of understanding of Turkey in Europe"*, pointed out Abdullah Gul. *"We need your support (...) to overcome the prejudices against us"*. *"You know European social structures (...) you are an asset for us"*, he added in front of the press before continuing the meeting in closed session. Earlier, a polemic had arisen regarding the invitation sent to two German elected representatives of Kurdish origin, Giyasettin and Helin Baba. The Turkish authorities had, at first, excluded them from the list of those invited because of their pro-Kurdish stands and the fact that they openly stated their Kurdish origins.

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## TEHERAN: IRAN CELEBRATES THE 28<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF ITS ISLAMIC REVOLUTION IN THE MIDDLE OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL TENSIONS

**I**RANIAN President, Mahmud Ahmédinjad, marked the opening of the celebrations for the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution by insisting, on 1 February, that Iran would not be affected by UN sanctions over its nuclear programme. At the end of December, the UN Security Council had imposed sanctions on Iran's nuclear and ballistic programmes because of Teheran's refusal to suspend its uranium enrichment activity. The

United States also put pressure on their allies to restrict their trade relations with Iran. The celebrations of the 1979 revolution, planned to last ten days and known as the *"Fajr (dawn) decade"*, began on 1 February at exactly 9.33 am local time — the time at which the plane bringing Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini from Paris landed at Teheran airport. Factory sirens, school bells, train whistles and Iranian ships' sirens all sounded at that moment

throughout the country. From the airport, the founder of the Islamic Republic went directly to the capital's main cemetery, the Beheste Zahra. A mausoleum, ritually covered with flowers every year, marks the place where he addressed the crowd to announce that he was going to set up a new government. The highlight of the celebrations took place on 11 February, the official date of the revolution, with a speech by President Ahmedinjad in Azad (Freedom) Square. The Iranian President confirmed the pursuit of his country's nuclear programme before hundreds of thousands of Iranians who had assembled in the streets of Teheran. He also stressed that the state of progress in nuclear technology would be progressively made public between that date and 9 April, the anniversary date of Teheran's first announcement of its success at enriching uranium.

Furthermore, the Turkish Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gul, announced an improvement in Turkish-Iranian relations and considered that Turkish accusations that Iran wished to export its Islamic regime to Turkey (a Moslem but secular State) were things "of the past". "The days when our relations with Iran were desperately worried by fear of the exporting of their regime are far behind us", stressed the Minister in an interview with his party's the monthly review *Turkey Bulletin*, published on 5 February. "Today our opinion of Iran is very different", stated Mr. Gul, who welcomed a "constant" development of trade relations between the two countries. On a bi-lateral level, Ankara and Teheran have reached agreement on security matters over the last few years. The two countries are united in the struggle against Kurdish fighters and fear that the situation of the Iraqi Kurds might encourage emulation by their own Kurdish population.

On 28 February, the commander of the Guardians of the Revolution, the Islamic regime's ideological army, threatened to attack the Iranian Kurdish fighters in Iraq if the Iraqi government did not expel them from the border areas. "If the Iraqi government does not expel the armed Iranian rebels linked to foreigners from the area, the Guardians of the Revolution reserve the right to hunt them down beyond the borders" of Iran, warned General Yahya Rahim Safavi, as quoted by the Iranian *Mehr* news agency. "The United States and the Zionists spend millions of dollars to create television networks and to buy arms and ammunition for these counter-revolutionary groups so as to create insecurity in Iran", he charged. Since 23 February, there have been violent clashes between the Army and the Guardians of the Revolution and Kurdish fighters of the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PEJAK), which is close to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) — clashes that have caused about forty deaths in North-Western Iran, not far from the Turkish and Iraqi borders. "Over thirty rebels have been killed", according to General Yahya Rahim Safavi, commander of the Guardians of the Revolution as quoted by the *Irna* news agency. Fourteen Iranian troops died on 23 February when their helicopter crashed during operations against PEJAK. The Guardians of the Revolution stated they had killed 17 Kurdish fighters during this operation, about 20 Km from the Turkish border. The province of North-West Azerbaijan, which borders on both Turkey and Iraq has a large Kurdish minority.

The authorities in Teheran accuse Washington and London of helping the "rebels" in the border provinces where there are large ethnic and religious minorities, notably in

Khuzistan, with a large Arab population and Sistan-Baluchistan. On 14 February, eleven people were killed in a bomb attack in Iran directed at a bus belonging to the Guardians of the Revolution in the Province of Sistan-Baluchistan, which has been the scene of several armed attacks and kidnappings in recent months. The Sunni extremeist group, Jundallah (Soldiers of God), claimed responsibility for the attack. The Arabic-language Iranian television channel, Al-Alam, showed pictures of the bus, which was completely destroyed. The bomb, placed in a car, exploded as the bus was passing, carrying personnel employed at the Guardians of the Revolution's Mir-Mohsen army base. According to a witness, the attackers, on motorbikes, first stopped the bus by firing at it with sub-machine guns before exploding the bomb by remote control. This is the first time an operation on this scale has been carried out in the middle of a town, by an armed group against Iranian troops. Reputed for being a centre of drug smuggling, Sistan-Baluchistan is located at the borders with Pakistan and Afghanistan and has a substantial minority of Sunni Baluchis — whereas the majority of the Iranians are Shiite Moslems. The Jundallah group first appeared in December 2005 by kidnapping nine soldiers near the Pakistani border, before freeing eight of them and killing the ninth. In March 2006, a group killed 22 people traveling in a car along a road not far from the Pakistani border. In May of the same year the group killed twelve passengers of four cars in the Province of Kerman, neighbouring on Sistan-Baluchistan. Finally, on the eve of local elections on 15 December, a car bomb exploded at Zahedan, killing one person.

## IRAQI KURDISTAN ATTRACTS INCREASING NUMBERS OF IRAQI REFUGEES

**A**CCORDING to the UN High Commission for Refugees (HCR), while up to 3,000 Iraqis a day are fleeing their country, some 85,000 Iraqi Arabs have chosen the autonomous region of Kurdistan, almost entirely spared from the violence, the car bombs and suicide attacks, the mutual assassinations of sunni and Shiite Arabs that are the daily lot of people in Baghdad, but also in the centre and South of the country. The three provinces that compose Kurdistan are enjoying a veritable economic boom and many jobs in the building sector are filled by Iraqis who have come from the South. This influx of refugees, however, weighs heavily on the provision of social services in Kurdistan. The governor of Suleimaniyah, Dana Ahmad Majid, encourages Iraqis to come to Kurdistan rather than to leave the country, but he deplores the fact that the support provided by the central government for these displaced persons is so slight and calls for more medicines, fuel and electric power to help them. Some 30,000 displaced persons live in Suleimaniyah Province, according to Anita Raman, of the UN High Commission for Refugees. The HCR is providing emergency assistance for the most vulnerable, including paraffin and kerosene lamps, food and blankets. According to the governor, the province, some ten families arrive every day, quite apart from the 25,000 Arabs who have simply come to find work in the region. The Kurdish authorities are keeping a close watch on the borders and impose security measures to prevent any infiltration by terrorists. While families can enter without special authorisation, single men must have a Kurdish sponsor and a valid work permit before being allowed to pass. The displaced persons also have to overcome the language barrier.

While Kurdish is written, in Iraq, using the Arabic script, it is nevertheless an Indo-European language. Since its *de facto* autonomy in 1991, while Arabic remains the official language, it has largely been replaced in everyday usage by Kurdish, and the new generation of Kurds do not speak Arabic.

On 14 February, the United States announced that they would accept 7,000 new Iraqi refugees by October, that is 10 times as many as they have accepted since 2003. Widely criticised for its apparent disinterest in the face of the distress of millions of people who have had to flee their homes in Iraq, Washington has also announced an emergency aid of 68 million dollars for Iraqis displaced inside the country. According to the UN High Commission for Refugees, over two million Iraqis have sought refuge abroad, mainly in Syria and Jordan, while 1.8 million are displaced inside the country. Some 50,000 Iraqis continue to flee their homes every month, that is the most large-scale exodus in the region since that of the Palestinians in 1948 on the creation of the State of Israel, whereas the population of Iraq is estimated at some 26 million, still according to HCR figures. Yet the United States has only granted refugee status to 466 people since 2003, according to State Department figures.

The US Administration's about turn was announced after a meeting in Washington between the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres. In the course of a joint press conference with leading officials of the State Department, Mr. Guterres also announced the holding of a conference in Geneva of donors for the Iraqi refugees and displaced per-

sons. Mrs. Rice has committed herself to contributing up to 18 million dollars to the fund that the UN High Commission for Refugees intends to devote to this programme indicated, for her part, the Assistant Secretary of State Paula Dobriansky. The American donation should cover about 30% of the appeal launched last month by the HCR to collect 60 million dollars. These funds are intended to help some 200,000 of the 2 million Iraqis whom have found refuge in neighbouring countries, particularly Syria and Jordan as well as up to 250,000 if the 1.8 million Iraqis displaced inside their own country by the violence.

Already, according to the HCR, the Iraqis represent some 5% of the Syrian population (18 million inhabitants). By receiving 700,000 Iraqis, Jordan has increased its population by 12% and Amman is taking measures to contain the influx. As is Egypt, which has received some 130,000 Iraqis. According to Human Rights Watch, Amman refuses any entry to males aged between 17 and 35. Syria, however, has not closed its borders to Iraqis fleeing the war. In some Damascus neighbourhoods only Iraqi accents can be heard... In al-Sayda Zeinab, in the suburbs, the Shiite mosque has more Iraqi than Iranian pilgrims. Amongst the refugees are some 300,000 Shiites. In those areas with a high presence of refugees, the schools now often have as many as 50 children per class. The country's schools are said to have received up to 28,000 little Iraqis. According to the HCR's Damascus Office, some 40,000 fresh refugees arrive from Iraq every month. They may remain six months with a visa then must leave Syrian territory and return for another six months. The most simple way of doing this being a journey to neighbouring Lebanon that is organised for 20 dollars.

According to a report of the Minority Rights Group (MRG), published on 24 February, the ethnic and reli-

gious minorities of Iraq, that amount to some 10% of the population, are victims of an "unprecedented" violence that could make them disappear from the land. "The ethnic and religious minorities of Iraq face unprecedented levels of violence and, in certain cases, are in danger of completely disappearing from their ancestral homeland", warned the Human Rights defence organisation. These minorities (Armenian and Chaldo-Assyrian Christians, Baha'is, Failis, Jews, Mandeans, Palestinians, Shabaks, Turkomen, and Yezidis) many settled in Iraq for over 2000 years, are targeted by attacks, kidnappings, and threats from all sides. The report, entitled "Assimilation, exodus, eradication: the minority communities of Iraq since 2003", notes that the flight of this section of the Iraqi population is "enormous" and is said to represent a third of the 1.8 million Iraqi refugees seeking asylum.

"Despite the fact that many Iraqi Christians flee because they are accused of associating with British and American troops, only a few Iraqis have secured refuge in the United States and Great Britain", deplored Mark Lattimer, Director of MRG and quoted in the report. In view of these facts, the organisation has launched an appeal to the international community, and in particular to the two countries directing the intervention in Iraq since 2003, to "share the refugees' burden and not let it weigh in a disproportionate manner on Iraq's neighbour States". "The MRG calls on the international community and on the Iraqi government to recognise the particular vulnerability of the country's minorities. This must be the fundamental starting point for the survival of the minority groups of Iraq from the present aggressions", called Preti Taneja, the author of the report.


According to a recent report by the Mandaean Society of America, published on 12 February, only 5,000 to 7,000 the Mandeans, over 60,000

strong in the early 90s, are left in Iraq today. These followers of a minority religion that considers John the Baptist as its prophet, are among the victims of the war that has been drenching the country in blood for the last four years. Faced with murders, rapes, forced conversions and the confiscation of property by Islamic extremists, many Mandeans have fled the country. For specialists in Mandaean

culture, their disappearance would be a great loss, the end of this religious movement going back to the time of the Roman Empire. The Mandaean Gnostics of the Middle East claim their religion is directly descended from John the Baptist and regard him as their prophet. They advocate baptism to come closer to a "world of light" that in their eyes is better than that reigning on earth.

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### READ IN THE TURKISH PRESS: "THE CLOSE LINKS BETWEEN THE TURKISH SECRET SERVICES (MIT) AND THE MAFIA ARE DISPLAYED ON THE TELEVISION SCREENS"

 ON 8 February, the Turkish daily *Milliyet* splashed across its front page the sensational statement of Nuri Gundes, a former head of the Turkish Intelligence Services (MIT). Questioned on one of the principle television news channels, about Alaattin Cakici, one of the most formidable Turkish "godfathers", with over forty "executions" to his credit, today imprisoned in Turkey, Nuri Gundes declared his friendship for him, saying "I kiss Alaattin on the cheeks". Headlined "Kisses from a former chief of the MIT for Cakici! The close links between the MIT and the mafia also shown on the screens" the paper carried the story written by Can Dandar, the journalist who also conducted the interview broadcast in the NTV news channel. Here are extensive extracts of this interview, which once again highlights the collaboration between the Turkish secret services and the mafia godfathers, linked to the *Grey Wolves*, the Turkish extreme Right organisation, always willing and ready to do the States dirty work.

"The former head of the External Department of the Turkish Intelligence Services (MIT) Nuri Gundes, was the guest of my "Why?" broadcast on Tuesday evening (**Edi-**

**tor's Note:** 6 February 2007) dealing with the "deep State" and broadcast on the NTV channel.

This was the first time he (Nuri Gundes) had taken part in a broadcast discussion and he made some important revelations. To become more fully aware of the extent of these declarations, we must remember that Gundes, who served 23 years in the MIT, led the operation against ASALA (**Editor's Note:** the Secret Armenian Army for the Liberation of Armenia) during the 12 September period (**Editor's Note:** 12 September 1980, the date of the Army coup d'état led by General Evren). He was also accused, in the first report on the MIT drafted by Mehmet Eymur (**Editor's Note:** head of the Counter-Terrorist Office of the MIT) of having taken part in some illegal dealings with Dundar Kilic and Sukru Balci (**Editor's Note:** respectively a drug and arms trafficker, assassinated in 1999, and a former head of Istanbul security, who got caught engaging in some major corruption scandals). Nuri Gundes was promoted Prime Minister's Intelligence Advisor during Tansu Ciller's period in office.

It was about the operation against the ASALA that he began the con-

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versation. As you know, while the ASALA had targeted Turkish diplomats, the MIT for its part planned ambushes abroad against ASALA leaders and at the same time plastic bombed the Armenian Memorial in Marseilles, with the help, it is said of Abdullah Catli's gang (**Editor's Note:** a Turkish mafia chief linked to the extreme Right, killed in a car accident in 1996 at Susurluk, which brought to light the links between the mafia and State institutions).

Gundes gave his account of the operation, which had cost some 17 million Turkish lire at the time in this way:

*"In Marseilles, an Armenian Memorial had been built and inaugurated by the Prime Minister ... We went there as people having some war experience, as neither the police or State troops could go there. I didn't go there personally, but my team did. Must we talk about the "deep State" in this context? If fellow citizens, guided by nationalist feelings carried out an operation, must we describe it as a procedure by the "deep State"?"*

*"What is the "motivation" that guided these people to carry out this operation? Was it from "national feelings"?"*

*"They are either nationalist ones, or fueled by hate and ill feelings or again for money. Motivation by hate and ill feelings can wear off with time. (...) We had to make every effort to avoid Turkey being classed amongst the terrorist states".*

*We then reminded Gundes that the criticisms of this State operation were that nit instrumentalised men who were not only wanted by Interpol for their involvement in killings but that it had procured passports form them and supplied them with arms. He had indicated that the latter "were not his elements but had taken part guided by their Turkist consciousness". Then he added "if there's a fire and someone brings me four buckets of water and someone else says he'll bring four more, am I to*

*tell him not to? Must I say "You have done this or that in Turkey, don't throw any water on it let it burn?". That unreasonable. Who can one send? (...) The State took the decision to carry out this operation through its chain of command. (...) If you consider this as a struggle of the deep State, so be it. But I don't see it that way".*

Gundes told how some people who came from the ranks of the MHP (National Action Party —extreme right, neo-fascist) and of the Ulkucu Hearths (Turkish Fascist Movements) had provided assistance to the State. They had then used these powers, obtained thanks to the State, for personal ends, to set up mafias and indulge in check trafficking and people trafficking. This was why Gundes was opposed to the system of "village protectors" in the south-East (Kurdistan) (...).

We then reminded him that the assassins of Hrant Dink (**Editor's Note:** The Armenian Journalist assassinated by Turkish nationalists in January 2007) had taken as their example Abdullah Catli. "Lets talk about Abdullah..." he cried out then continued, however, about Cakici: "I was questioned about Cakici in a periodical and I stated that I had not worked much with people who could have put the state in an embarrassing position". He then wrote me a letter from prison. If he hears me today, I would like to kiss him of the cheeks if he has served the State ... I do not think he had any ulterior motive in his remarks. If I found myself mixed up in this kind of business or if I was harming the state or again if the state was likely to be criticised because of me, then i would have said nothing when faced with such remarks about myself".

*We later learnt that Cakici had written in that letter "I will no longer call you my big brother".*

In the course of the broadcast, we read out a sentence by Fikri Saglar, a member of the Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry on the

Susurluk scandal, taken from the report of the same name written by Kutlu Savas: "The State was unable to put an end to the activities of Behçet Canturk (**Editor's Note:** a Kurdish business man involved in drug trafficking, assassinated in 1994). Instead of paying allegiance to the State, Canturk set up a new organisation. The Turkish Security Directorate then decreed his death and the decision was executed".

On this subject, Gundes retorted that: "The person who laid hands on Behçet Canturk is I. We had arrested him at Erzurum and we brought him before Sadattin Tantan (**Editor's Note:** Head of the Inspection Committee of the Istanbul Police, became Minister of the Interior in 1999) for interrogation. He frequented certain people, but what had this man done? With what kind of drug ... had he poisoned my Turkish children? One never thinks about these things. But I have never agreed to eliminate someone inside the country. The State has laws, it holds public authority, it can therefore proceed to arrest (criminals) and hang them, since at that time the death sentence by hanging was legal. So let us say that Behçet Canturk was executed. The Baader-Meinhof gang was executed in prison, no one expressed the slightest criticism in Germany. The German press did not even write a single article on the subject. As I have already stressed, the State must, sometimes, protect itself"

*In conclusion I questioned him about the attack on Hrant Dink ... He found it strange that the latter had not been given protection, despite the threats. Had he been deprived of protection so as to eliminate him?*

"I feel unable to say that ... such a statement would amount to betrayal and that I cannot do. It is as if it had been said "he were better dead", but i cannot manage to persuade myself of that..." concluded the former head of the Turkish Intelligence Service.

## AS WELL AS ...

### READ IN THE TURKISH PRESS: THE STORY OF THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF MILITARY COUPS D'ÉTAT IN TURKEY.

In an interview given to the Turkish daily *Radikal*, Halil Berktaş, Professor at Sabancı University, analysed the *modus operandi* of presidential Elections in Turkey, punctuated by successive military *coups d'état*. He went back to the period of the single party system and the difficult passage to a multiparty system. Here are extensive extracts from this interview, published on 12 February:

*"We found the way Saddam Hussein was hanged shameful. Yet Murat Bardakı (a journalist and historian) has described the ignoble fate suffered by Menderes (Editor's Note: After the victory of the Democratic Party (DP) at the first multi-party elections of the Turkish Republic, Adnan Menderes became the first Turkish Prime Minister to be deposed by a military coup d'état, on 27 May 1960. He was hanged in September 1960 with members of his cabinet). Before proceeding to his execution, he was subjected to a prostate examination. Why have we never heard tell of this humiliation till now?"*, asked Nese Duzet.

*"We generally know about the ill-treatment suffered by members of the Democratic Party (DP) and by Menderes in particular on Yassıada Island after the 27 May coup d'état. For a long time historians in Turkey have not developed any dialogue or carried out any research in the important events in Turkish History of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It is also possible that they were unable to reach any scientific consensus on this question" (...)*

*With the Democratic Party's (DP) taking office one can talk of the first populist power in Turkey. The political elite that had founded the*

*republic, that is the cadres of the bureaucracy and the regular Army officers, had had a monopoly of power from the Young Turks revolution of 1908 and the Babiali coup d'état of 1913 (Editor's Note: Orchestrated by the Union and Progress party) and until 1950. Faced with those privileges, the DP politicians were babes in arms who had succeeded the amazing feat of abstracting power from the political elite that, till then, had monopolised it and taking it over with a party that dominated both the Presidency and the government (...) And they were civilians (...) without any military uniforms, which is why the Army opposed them. They did not conform to the ideological pattern, whereby the Army was the true depository and real guardian of the Republic. They were damaging the legend. Probably the treatment meted out to the families of the politicians after the 27 May coup was not unconnected with this. Moreover, the 1958 measures, adopted after the elections of 1957 to help stabilise the economy, as well as the devaluation carried out, not only considerably impoverished those wage earners receiving a fixed salary but also impoverished the Army officers. The impoverishing of the army is one of the reasons generally cited for the coup d'état. indeed, the substantial increase in the wages of the Armed forces only took place after 27 May, since till then the regular Army cadres did not receive a salary so much higher than that of other state officials (...)*

*It must not be forgotten that this coup d'état did not confine this ill-treatment to the DP politicians and their families. The elitist ideology launched the "tail theory", which can be summed up as follows: "The DP leaders have been imprisoned, but its tail is outside". The 4.5 million people who had voted for the DP were considered the "tail", while*

*the head was in prison, like a a snake whose head, imprisoned, was about to be crushed — yet the tail remained outside (...)*

*Until 1945-6, Turkey was not multi-party. Compared with a number of third world countries, it had adopted reforms 20, 30 or 40 years before them. The third world countries, in the main achieved their independence after 1945 and even in the 50s in the context of the decolonisation movement. In Turkey, the nation-state and the modern republic were created in the course of two waves of modernity, from the "Young Turks revolution" to the "Kemalist revolution", from 1908 to 1923. Just why this revolution ended with a single party (...) the conditions of the time, linked to a very weak (economic) development, led to the monopoly of power by the military bureaucracy, entrusted with the mission of modernising the country. The proclamation of the Republic and of the one-party government, was followed by social and economic development. However, Turkey already bore the sociological and economic advantages of an Ottoman Empire that had never been colonised. In the end, the Unionists and the Kemalists were justified by the creation of a "national bourgeoisie". This new class, for a long time overshadowed by the military bureaucracy that had founded the Republic, did not limit itself just to the economic sphere but became restless to confirm its political maturity and embark on the political scene. (...)*

*We came out of the one-party system in 1946. Why is it that many intellectuals in Turkey describe this as "counter revolutionary?"* asked Mrs. Duzet.

*It is, indeed, one of the great errors of historic assessment, the fruit of a Turkish combination of marxism and Kemalism. The elections and the period between 1946 and 1950 were considered by the (Turkish) Left — with some variations within*

it — as “counter revolutionary”. And this theory persists to this day. (...) Some fascistic movements of the left take advantage of this theory. By describing the multi-party period as counter revolutionary, they show that they attach no value to democracy and to democratic advances. This idea that the 1946-50 period was counter revolutionary is combined with a historic account that goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century According to this hypothesis, in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the ruling forces in Turkey handed Turkey over to capitalism and imperialism, in particular by the Baltalimani trade treaty (**Editor’s Note:** 1839-1876) between the leaders of the Tanzimat (Reform) and the English.

In a way they sold out the country. (...) On that basis, the modernising reforms of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the development of Turkey, the achievement of the basis of a modern State are all swept out of sight. There is rather a tendency to see the imperialist objective as the defeat of Turkey. (...) Came the Kemalist revolution, led by Mustafa Kemal, that succeeded in lifting Turkey out of the abyss, break the stranglehold of imperialism and found a Republic outside the world capitalist system — autonomous, autarkic and statist (...) This was Turkey’s only period of enlightenment, but the one-party regime that followed the Kemalist revolution experienced difficulty in evolving towards a multi-party system after 1945. The dominant reactionary class, composed of the compradore bourgeoisie and the but agricultural landlords won by fooling a credulous people, that voted for them. They then tried to destroy the gains of the Kemalist revolution and incited Turkey to become part of the american-dominated world imperialist system.

In reply to the question: “What could the DP-led government have done to change things in Turkey?” Halil Berktaý replied: “The mecha-

nisation of agriculture, the favourable situation created by the Korean war alongside the increase in agricultural prices (...) The attraction and interest for politics in Turkey thanks to the existence of two political parties and an electoral system that worked (...) lead to political education (...). However, this (improvement) did not last, because the political multiplication (of representation) declined with populism (...) And this populism indulged in terrible behaviour. The events of 6-7 September 1955 were not just the outcome of nationalist populism. (**Editor’s Note:** On 6-7 September 1955, a hate-filled mob in Istanbul attacked the houses and shops of Christians in “reprisal” for a phoney bomb attack in the house where Atatürk was born in Salonica) (...) The DP, that came to power with vast popular support, acted increasingly undemocratically and the democratic opposition slipped towards the Republican People’s Party (CHP — Kemalist) (...) The DP panicked and did not want to let go of office. It carried out changes in the balloting methods for the 1957 elections. In the course of these elections the number of votes for the CHP shot up and it won as many votes as the DP. But, because of the unfair changes in the ballot, the DP won even more seats than in the previous parliament. The party seemed to be tending towards a fascist development based on a parliamentary majority”. (...)

“If the 27 May coup d’état had not been stirred up, would elections have taken place? Were the people in favour of such a coup?”, asked Mrs. Duzel in conclusion.

“There had been no coup d’état till then. The Babiali events of 1908 and 1913 were already far in the past. A majority of people pinned their hopes on the CHP and on İsmet İnönü. However, in certain intellectual circles of leftist, of kemalist or of marxists, this desire for military intervention did exist. Every indiscretion that revealed the

discontent of the Army was greeted with jubilation”, Halil Berktaý pointed out.

**READ IN THE TURKISH PRESS: “THE TURKISH SPECIAL FORCES WERE ORCHESTRATING AN ATTACK AGAINST THE GOVERNOR OF KIRKUK”.** In an interview given to the Turkish daily *Radikal*, Henry Barkley, Professor of the International Relations Department of Lehigh University (USA) and one of the principal advisors at the US State Department during Bill Clinton’s Presidency, analysed American-Turkish relations and Ankara’s Kurdish policy. The following are extensive extracts from this interview carried out by Ms. Nese Duzel and published in the 5 February edition of *Radikal*.

**The first time we heard you spoken about was in 2004 because of an alleged meeting at the US State Department. The Turkish press wrote at the time that those taking part had been assured that the AKP government (Justice and Development Party — in office) had accepted to let the Kurds have Kirkuk. You later stated that you had never taken part in any such meeting, as did other of the participants cited. Have you never taken part in a meeting where such remarks were made?**

I have never taken part in such a meeting at the State Department. Moreover, I was in Istanbul at the time. However, everyone believed in the reality of that meeting.

**Why, in your opinion, was the news of the holding of a nonexistent meeting published by the Turkish press, highly embarrassing the government.**

Saying that such a meeting had taken place did, indeed, embarrass the Turkish government. This news was put about by Hakan Yavuz, a lecturer at Utah University, but was denied by the State Department.

Yavuz, nevertheless, maintained to Fikret Bila (**Editor's Note:** a journalist on the daily Milliyet) that the meeting had, indeed, taken place and that he had been present. Hakan Yavuz was a close friend. For a friend to do such a thing he would either have to be psychologically disturbed or else compelled to do it..

**What position did you have at the State Department at that time?**

*I had no position at the State Department at the time. I worked directly with the Secretary of State in the Department of political planning on questions regarding Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Iraq and in the Intelligence Department. I worked there during Bill Clinton's term and I left in 2000. Talking of Intelligence, the State Department has its own Department for Intelligence. This organisation receives reports drawn up by the State's different services, including the CIA and carries out an analysis of these items of information. One of my tasks was to carry out a new organisation of these reports.*

**(...) Turkey is again talking about Kirkuk while you're in Istanbul. (...) Kirkuk is an oil-rich region, which is why it attracts so much greed. What do you think will happen to Kirkuk?**

*Turkey's position is that «Kirkuk should remain outside the Kurdish Federated State and that the oil be controlled by the central Iraqi State». And the population talks about a military operation in Kirkuk. As if going to Kirkuk was just child's play. Yet the town is 450 Km from Turkey. It's no joke. In fact, what will happen to Kirkuk? It is an Iraqi city—but what is going to happen to Iraq? If Iraq does not split up, Kirkuk will enter the Kurdish region and its oil income will go to the Central government. New fuel and power discoveries, such as oil, on the other hand, will belong to Northern Iraq (Kurdistan).*

**Can Kirkuk be taken by the Kurds?**

*It depends what you mean by taken. Can they take it forcibly? They can, but that would aggravate the situation. The Kurds will try and take Kirkuk by democratic means by having a referendum. They are increasing the city's population.*

**(Editor's Note:** Kirkuk has gone through a series of demographic changes. In 1957, the date of the last Iraqi census with ethnic records, Kirkuk had 178,000 Kurds, 48,000 Turkomen, 43,000 Arabs and 10,000 Assyro-Chaldean Christians. Then during his 23 years in power, Saddam Hussein organised a forcible Arabisation of the city, with mass deportation of Kurds to refugee camps in the neighbouring provinces of Suleimaniyah, Irbil and Dohuk. Since 2003, these deportees have been returning to the city.) *They are trying to make the Kurds expelled by Saddam, return. Of course it was not only Kurds that were forced to leave at that time who are returning, a certain number of other Kurds are coming to the city.*

**What will be the consequences if the Kirkuk returns to the Kurds?**

*We are faced with three possible outcomes for Iraq. Firstly, Iraq may remain united. The second is a divided Iraq, and the third is an Iraq in which the present chaos persists. An Iraq reconciling Kurds and Turkomen in a Kirkuk that is part of the Kurdish region is in Turkey's interests. A Kurdish entity under Turkish protection would not only lower tension inside Turkey but also constitute a secular buffer zone and provide it with important economic income. Moreover, Northern Iraq (Kurdistan) needs Turkey (...) Because the Kurds are secular, they look to the West and want binding relations with Europe. They will not be opened to Europe accompanied by Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia or again with an Iraqi Sunnistan or Shiitistan. Only Turkey can provide them*

*with this opportunity. The Kurds are even carrying out a policy of favouring the development of links with Turkey and thus are providing as many contracts as possible to businessmen of Turkish origin. Businessmen of Kurdish origin have even expressed dissatisfaction at this. Your President refuses to send an invitation to (Jalal) Talabani because of his Kurdish origins, but Talabani being President of Iraq is a stroke of luck for Turkey (...)*

*Talabani is a force in Northern Iraq (Kurdistan). Even though the Kurds there have been psychologically detached from Iraq, Talabani has renewed their connection with Baghdad. In a way, Talabani is preserving the unity of Iraq, which Turkey wants so much. Yet Turkey continues to describe Talabani and Barzani as mere tribal chiefs. They are acting as if the Turkomen constitute a coherent people, despite their being so scattered, while refusing to so recognise the Kurds ... The Turks of Northern Cyprus are said to be a people, but not the 4 million Iraqi Kurds ... The Kurds often question me on this point, as they find these terms very offensive. Yet Turgut Ozal (Editor's Note: a former Turkish President) had taken them into account (...) by receiving them at Cankaya (Editor's Note: The official residence of Turkish Presidents) and giving them Turkish diplomatic passports. This was towards the end of 1992 and at that time tension in Turkey had considerably diminished, even obliging the PKK to announce a cease fire.*

**Can the Kurds accept that Kirkuk should not belong to them?**

*No, they are fully committed to that idea.*

**President Bush recently announced a new plan for Iraq with the despatch of 20,000 additional troops. What will be the consequences of this new plan?**



*In my opinion, the chances of it succeeding are about 25%. It is a plan that covers Baghdad and the surrounding area, because 80% of the terrorist operations occur in and around Baghdad, populated by a strong Shiite community. Baghdad must be brought under control, otherwise it will be impossible to control the rest of Iraq. A country whose capital is in a state of continual chaos cannot remain united. Iraq, today, is on the verge of a civil war (...)*

*The United States has overthrown the Iraqi State, but has not succeeded in building a new State in its place, because of the mistakes it has committed. With this plan, Bush has transferred the responsibility to the Iraqi government, saying "Go ahead then and build a State. If you fail it will let me withdraw. I'm sending you 20,000 soldiers for the last time". The fact remains that the Americans cannot withdraw their troops entirely. In my opinion, between 50,000 and 140,000 troops will have to be positioned along the borders as a dissuasion force. Because, if the Americans were to withdraw their troops overnight, blood would flow. All the neighbouring countries would start meddling in Iraq's affairs and start raiding into Iraq.*

***Iraq has become confusing place, the scene of unbelievable events. Do you remember when some American soldiers arrested Turkish soldiers and covered their heads in cloth sacks. What was behind that incident, which caused considerable deterioration in Turkish-American relations?***

*The American troops had been informed about the organisation of a terrorist attack against the governor of Kirkuk, orchestrated by elements of the Turkish Special Forces. They thus proceeded to carry out those arrests (...)*

*I think that plan was hatched by the command of the Special Forces stationed in Iraq. Neither Akara nor*

*The Turkish Armed Forces General Staff knew about this business. The General Staff is a responsible institution, it would never take such a risk (...) It would have seriously endangered relations with the United States. However the Turkish General Staff has very good relations with the United States, despite the refusal of March 1st (**Editor's Note:** 1 March 2003 is the date of the refusal by the Turkish Parliament to allow the passage of US troops through Turkish territory at the outbreak of the war in Iraq). The bowler-hatting of two Special Forces generals was just a message from the General Staff to the United States: "See, we have liquidated them". The Americans took due note and there has not been any reason to treat Turkish officers as al-Qaida agents (...)*

*Neither Bush nor the US General Staff decided on the way they were treated. It was a reaction by the American soldiers on the spot. They use the same method for all people they arrest. The full truth will come out when some officers have retired (...)*

***What policy does the United States intend to carry out regarding the PKK***

*American policy after the war in Iraq has been not only to help Turkey but also to prevent as far as possible the entry of Turkish troops into Northern Iraq (Kurdistan). The United States had hoped that (the Iraqi Kurds) would find a solution to the problem of the PKK, but they had not succeeded or, more exactly had not wanted, to provide a solution. The American PKK policy thus came to a dead end, but the nomination of co-ordinators was opportune (...)*

*Today it is possible to envisage a American OK to a Turkish incursion against the PKK into Northern Iraq (Kurdistan). The Turkish General Staff claims to see PKK (fighters) positioned just behind the border. Turkey could envisage launching an operation by ground-to-ground or*

*even air to ground bombing rather than infantry, I am told. On the other hand approval would be needed from the Americans and (Massud) Barzani and (Jalal) Talabani for such an operation. They would, of course, condemn the incursion once the operation has been achieved. In a few days, (Abdullah) Gul will be visiting Washington and he will be followed by (Yasar) Buyukanit, the Chief of the Turkish Armed Forces General Staff (...). The questions of Kirkuk and the PKK will be tackled. If I was in Abdullah Gul's place, these would not be my priority issues. I would rather be asking "What can we do to maintain Iraqi unity?" (...)*

***What will happen if the Turks intervene in Northern Iraq (Kurdistan)?***

*There will be an enormous problem, both with the Americans and with the Kurds. If Turkey were to launch such an operation despite opposition from the Americans and the Kurds with the aim of resolving the Kirkuk problem or preventing the autonomy or independence of the Kurds, this would lead to breaking relations with Europe. But an operation against the PKK with some helicopter-carried infantry would be accepted by everyone (...). In 1999 Turkey intervened in Northern Iraq (Kurdistan) with 35,000 troops and 200 tanks (...) It could not launch such an operation today. An operation without Kurdish acceptance would produce protests and be Turkey's biggest mistake. The price paid would be heavy. Thus, in my opinion, neither the General Staff or the government wish to do anything of the kind. Apart from the Press, no one seriously wants to send troops into Northern Iraq (Kurdistan) (...) as this would lead to war against the Kurds. (Moreover,) the Americans could be accidentally targeted by Turkish soldiers. Anything might happen. Yet, alongside transborder military pressure against the PKK, Turkey could allow the return to Turkey of PKK members without*

announcing an amnesty. They must be enabled to succeed in being integrated into society. (...) I think that many members of the PKK would surrender, but for this Turkey needs the help of the Iraqi Kurds(...), Because it is not Turkey that can pass such a message on to the PKK but the Iraqi Kurds could do this. I am not talking about the PKK's cadres, who are another problem» These last, if they want to return to Turkey, will be tried and imprisoned.

The Iraqi Kurds enjoy a peculiar status, never before achieved. Do you think they'll sacrifice their future for the PKK? It is in this perspective that they are seeking a dialogue with Turkey. However, Turkey does not face these issues and keeps its distance. A year ago, the head of the Intelligence Service (MIT), Emre Taner, went to have talks with Barzani(...) Emre Taner had a revolutionary approach, but there was no follow up because the climate in Turkey was unfavourable. (...)

You people only see the Kurds when you talk about Iraq. Yet it is not only the Kurds who do not want Turkish presence in Iraq. The Iraqi Shiites don't want it either. Some time ago some of the more anti-Shiite Iraqi Sunni groups met at a gathering in Istanbul. The Shiites had such a strong reaction to this that they declared: "Let us also organise a conference in Iraq of Kurds from Turkey" ...

Can the United States support a process outside the democratic system in Turkey?

It is impossible now to have such an American support. If Turkey leaves the democratic system, relations will deteriorate (...) The USA would withdraw all its support for Turkish membership of the European Union, Turkish economy would be hard hit and there would be strong political pressure on Turkey.

• **IRAQI PRESIDENT JALAL TALABANI TAKEN TO HOSPITAL FOR "A STATE OF GENERAL**

**EXHAUSTION"**. On 25 February, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, was taken to a hospital in the Jordan capital where he is recovering from a state of general exhaustion. King Abdullah II of Jordan visited him the next day. Jalal Talabani last appeared in public on 24 February in Suleimaniyah, where he met the American Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad and Massud Barzani. President of Iraqi Kurdistan. The President's Office made the point, in a communiqué issued from Baghdad, that the first results of the tests "showed that his condition is normal and stable and that all his vital organs are in a satisfactory condition". "The examination shows that His Excellence was suffering from extreme exhaustion in the last few days and was suffering from dehydration", according to the communiqué.

Elected President in April 2005, Jalal Talabani is the first Kurdish President in the history of modern Iraq. He was re-elected for a four-year term in April 2006. Jalal Talabani has acquired the reputation of a man of peace for his efforts to reduce the divisions between the country's different communities. Since the beginning of his Presidency he has tried to ease relations with neighbouring countries, including Syria and Iran. But he has also considered that any premature departure of the GIs would be "catastrophic".

• **SOME KURDISH POLITICAL LEADERS SENTENCED BY THE TURKISH COURTS FOR HAVING DRAFTED LEAFLETS IN KURDISH.** On 26 February, two leading officials for the main pro-Kurdish party in Turkey, were sentenced to 18 months jail for distributing leaflets on the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March 2006. The President of the Party for a Democratic Society (DYP — unrepresented in Parliament), Ahmet Turk, and his Assistant, Aysel Tugluk, were found guilty of having "praised criminals" because the leaflet mentioned Abdullah

Ocalan. The two political leaders were also found guilty of having broken the law on political parties because the leaflets were written in the Kurdish language. Although Turkey has, recently, eased restrictions on the use of Kurdish, the law specifies that only Turkish can be used by political parties in their writings and working.

Several dozen DTP members are at present being sued before the Turkish courts for "supporting the PKK". In Diyarbakir, a local DTP leader, Hilmi Aydoglu, was arrested for "inciting violence" and immediately incarcerated on 23 February, for statements reported by the Turkish press, in which he declared that any Turkish Army intervention in Kirkuk would be considered as an attack on Diyarbakir. Moreover, Ibrahim Sunkur, the DTP provincial chief in Van was locked up on 22 February. Some books written by Abdullah Ocalan as well as some photos, banners and documents were seized in the course of a search carried out a few days before. Some members of the party's youth organisation were also arrested.

Furthermore, the Council of Europe considers that Turkey has fulfilled "at this stage" all its obligations regarding the PKK boss, Abdullah Ocalan, particularly with regard to a retrial. In a resolution passed on 15 February, the Ministerial Committee, the Council of Europe's executive, considered that Ankara had fulfilled its obligations and decided to close the case opened by the European Court for Human Rights' ruling of May 2005. "We considered that Ocalan had had the possibility of asking for the re-opening of his trial. Turkey rejected that request, as would have done many other European countries, judging that there were good reasons for thinking that the courts would have ruled in the same way as before", according to a representative to the Ministerial Committee. "We found nothing to say against this decision", nor against other measures adopted by Ankara to conform to

the May 2005 ruling, the representative added. On the other hand, the Ministerial Committee, one of whose functions is to supervise the effective application of the European Court's rulings, is suspending judgement on the latest four petitions filed by the PKK chief, until the Strasbourg Court has ruled on them. One of these, basing itself on the May 2005 ruling, calls for a retrial, the three others mainly concerning the conditions of detention and isolation in the island prison of Imrali.

On the other hand, the Danish Court has demanded a new enquiry on the Denmark-based Kurdish television channel Roj-TV, which Turkey accuses of being a PKK spokesperson. *"We have asked the Copenhagen police to conduct a new enquiry on this channel, as the matter is not sufficiently clear"*, declared the Prosecutor Hanne Schmidt on 14 February. The Prosecutor refused to provide any more details on the conclusions of the enquiry carried out since 2005 into Roj-TV by the Copenhagen police. On the basis of those enquiries, the Kingdom's Public Prosecutor's Office had judged the conclusions "insuffi-

cient" for closing the case. Ankara, with Washington's support, has repeatedly demanded that the Danish government close down this channel. Based on Denmark, from which it has been broadcasting to some 78 countries since 2004, Roj-TV has always rejected their accusations. The police enquiry should establish whether Roj-TV has breached Danish law, inciting hatred and openly supporting a "terrorist organisation", as Ankara alleges. It will then be up to the courts, in the last resort, to rule on whether or not to withdraw the broadcasting license in the event of any broadcasts that break Danish legislation.

• **FORMER IRAQI VICE-PRESIDENT, TAHA YASSIN RAMADAN, IS SENTENCED TO DEATH.** On 12 February, the Iraqi High Criminal Court sentenced to death on appeal, the former Iraqi President, Taha Yassin Ramadan. He had previously been sentenced to life imprisonment, in November 2006, for the execution of 148 Shiite villagers in Doujail, North of Baghdad. Moreover, about 200 to 250 corpses of Kurdish detainees were discovered on 1 February in a mass grave to the West of the locality of

Salman in a province adjoining the Saudi Arabian border. Information gathered from inhabitants enabled the discovery of this mass grave, brought to light by a commission of enquiry less than a kilometre from a former detention camp of the Saddam Hussein regime. According to Amin Mohammed Amin, a leading official of the desert province of Muthanna, the mass grave covers an area of 200 m<sup>2</sup> and contains the remains of men, women and children — probably Kurdish judging from their traditional clothing.

The commission of enquiry — consisting of a judge and a representative of the provincial council from Samawa, the capital of Muthanna, of the sub-prefect and the head of the Salman municipality — began removing the corpses and reburying them in accordance with Moslem religious practices, pointed out Mr. Amin, himself a member of the commission of enquiry. Over 180,000 Kurds were killed during the *Anfal* military campaigns in Kurdistan in 1987 and 1988, in the course of which thousands of villages were destroyed and hundreds of thousands of peoples displaced.

PARIS  
MATCH

du 1<sup>er</sup> au 7 février 2007

# Le président Talabani PRISONNIER DE BAGDAD



**EXCLUSIF**  
**MATCH**

Sa résidence est un bunker. Premier président de l'Irak post-Saddam, élu pour quatre ans en avril 2006, Jalal Talabani vit cloîtré dans son palais de Bagdad, protégé par des miliciens, tous kurdes comme lui. De retour de Damas, le nouveau numéro 1 irakien a reçu notre reporter Stéphane Ravion pour une interview exclusive. Dans un pays à feu et à sang, cet homme jovial de 73 ans, légendaire opposant au raïs et au Baas, croit en l'avenir. « Des bases solides de la démocratie sont jetées quotidiennement, assure Talabani. Nous disposons d'une Constitution, d'un Parlement, d'une police. » Fier du potentiel économique et culturel de l'Irak, mais impuissant à en contrôler la dérive sanglante, le président accuse les « terroristes » fondamentalistes venus de l'extérieur. Et les Américains qui ont « transformé la libération du sol irakien en occupation ». Autre ennemi implacable de Saddam Hussein, le procureur Mounkiss al-Faroune, qui a donné à Michel Peyrard sa version de cette nuit controversée du 29 au 30 décembre où le raïs a été pendu.

La main sur le cœur, le chapelet à la main, le président irakien Jalal Talabani se recueille sur la terrasse de son palais de Bagdad aux façades murées par des sacs de sable. Face à lui, le Tigre et, au-delà du fleuve, les quartiers de ses principaux ennemis, les milices.

**Reclus dans un des anciens palais de Saddam, le chef de l'Etat irakien a reçu nos journalistes. Sous très haute protection**



A l'intérieur du palais présidentiel, des peshmergas, miliciens kurdes, veillent sur l'un des dix checkpoints.

Le président, ici avec son conseiller Fakhri Karim, est un inconditionnel, en toutes circonstances, des cigares Davidoff.

# JALAL TALABANI

## Bien sûr que j'ai peur, comme tout le monde ici. Je n'ai jamais voulu être président, mon rêve était de devenir professeur d'université. Mais j'ai une mission à remplir

L'avion effectue des virages serrés, d'aucune utilité pour atterrir. Juste des manœuvres pour éviter une zone désertique au nord de Bagdad tenue par les extrémistes sunnites équipés de lance-roquettes et de missiles sol-air. Une prudence indispensable quand, de retour de Syrie, le président Jalal Talabani est à bord. Quelques minutes plus tard, sur le tarmac de l'aéroport où nous venons de nous poser, après un vol d'une heure trente, nous descendons en trombe de l'appareil présidentiel. En fait, un Boeing 737 un peu décati de la compagnie aérienne kurde Azmar Air, spécialement affrété pour l'occasion. Des soldats américains nous pressent. Au pas de course, nous rejoignons un hélicoptère de l'U.S. Airborne dont les turbines hurlent, poussées à plein régime. A bord, j'ai droit à une poignée de main vigoureuse d'un G.i. aux yeux bleus qui me prend pour l'un des siens. Un gamin de 20 ans à peine. Sourire complice. Lui et sa mitrailleuse seront nos seuls anges gardiens pendant la traversée de Bagdad la sanglante... Quinze minutes de vol à haut risque, et nous survolons le Tigre, l'un des deux fleuves nourriciers de l'Irak, puis

### INTERVIEW STÉPHANE RAVION



Le 23 janvier, dans son bureau du palais présidentiel, Jalal Talabani accorde une interview à notre reporter.

la résidence présidentielle, un ensemble de cinq palais équipés de piscines majestueuses, bordées de palmiers, d'eucalyptus et d'orangers. Autrefois, un paradis terrestre où la femme et les filles de l'ancien raïs festoyaient. Le symbole est lourd de sens pour Talabani qui a passé sa vie à défier la dictature de Saddam Hussein. Nous nous posons, enfin...

Le lendemain de notre arrivée, sur ce même trajet, un hélicoptère sera abattu. Notre heure n'avait pas encore sonné... Était-ce le même équipage ? Nous ne le saurons jamais. Le regard

bleu azur de ce jeune G.i. continuera de nous hanter le reste du séjour. Bienvenue en enfer.

La veille encore, à Damas, nous ignorions si ce voyage aurait lieu. L'heure du départ a été tenue secrète jusqu'au dernier moment. Un déplacement officiel du président irakien Jalal Talabani n'est jamais de tout repos. Les visages des membres de sa délégation étaient sombres, leurs traits tirés. Les services secrets étaient sur le pied de guerre. Certains craignent un attentat contre celui qui se veut, depuis le 22 avril 2006, le chantre de la démocratie dans un pays considéré aujourd'hui comme le plus dangereux du monde. L'un de ses proches conseillers ne mâchait pas ses mots : « Nos ennemis sont partout, le président est devenu l'homme à abattre. »

Aujourd'hui, il foule le sol en marbre où son ancien bourreau déambulait. Dans l'enceinte de la présidence aux allures de camp retranché, pas un seul Américain. Nous sommes à l'extérieur de la zone contrôlée par les G.i. Ici, la langue kurde remplace l'arabe. Un autre monde. Tout le personnel, les militaires, les membres des services secrets et même la gouvernante personnelle du président, sa confidente et seule femme du camp, viennent de Souleymanie, au Kurdistan, la patrie de Jalal Talabani. Ses plus fidèles compagnons d'armes veillent sur lui, encadrés par une société privée américaine comme il en existe beaucoup ici. Black Water (littéralement : eaux troubles) a dépêché cinq anciens officiers des forces spéciales : un Américain et quatre Sud-Africains. Ils sont supposés éviter le pire. Le président est isolé à Bagdad, politiquement et physiquement. Son gouvernement est fragile et peut, à tout moment, voler en éclats. Ses deux vice-présidents, l'un chiite, l'autre sunnite, se livrent une guerre de l'ombre sans merci au travers de leurs milices, dont on dit qu'elles ont infiltré le système depuis quelques semaines. Effectivement, ses ennemis sont « partout » : le parti Baas de Saddam et les anciens membres de la police secrète reconvertis dans le terrorisme aveugle... Les sunnites extrémistes revigorés par des combattants « étrangers » venus de Jordanie, du Yémen, d'Arabie Saoudite et même d'Europe. Ceux-là ont traversé la frontière illégalement, pour se battre contre des milices chiites dont certaines prennent

### UN REBELLE KURDE DEvenu LE SYMBOLE DE L'UNITÉ IRAKIENNE



Jalal Talabani en 1963, entouré de deux combattantes du P.d.k. (Parti démocratique du Kurdistan).

**1933.** Naissance de Jalal Talabani dans le village de Kelkan au Kurdistan irakien.  
**1946.** A 13 ans, il crée une association secrète d'étudiants kurdes à Erbil.  
**1956.** Il entre en clandestinité.  
**1961.** Il reprend les armes lors de la révolte kurde contre le gouvernement irakien.  
**1974-1975.** Il est chef de commando. Première insurrection

kurde contre la dictature baasiste.  
**1976.** Il crée l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan et organise la résistance armée contre Saddam Hussein.  
**1987-1988.** Saddam lance une campagne génocidaire contre le peuple kurde.  
**1988.** Gazage du village d'Halabja.  
**1991.** Talabani devient l'allié des Occidentaux, se rapproche de la C.i.a.

**22 avril 2006.** Talabani devient le premier président irakien élu sous la nouvelle Constitution. Durée du mandat : quatre ans.

En ht : Jalal Talabani en famille, au côté de sa femme Hero; au second rang : ses fils Bavel (à g.) et Qubad, avec leurs femmes. Pour leur sécurité, le président a prêté qu'ils restent à Souleymanie. En bas : rencontre avec Saddam Hussein, en 1991. En négociant l'arrêt de l'insurrection kurde, Jalal Talabani a sauvé des milliers de vies.



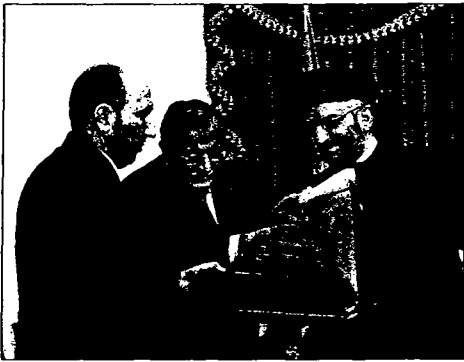
leurs ordres directement de Téhéran... Les Américains ont ouvert la boîte de Pandore.

La sécurité est imposante et oppressante. Les trois entrées du camp présidentiel sont contrôlées par une dizaine de checkpoints. Ils sont tenus par la fameuse « advanced team », les peshmergas, des miliciens kurdes, « ceux qui sont prêts à mourir » pour leur « Oncle » Jalal. Depuis son installation à Zwiya, sur cette rive est du Tigre (la zone s'appelle officiellement Jadrya), Talabani a sécurisé son territoire des deux côtés du fleuve. Pourtant, les mitrailleuses continuent de crépiter un peu partout autour du « camp ». Pendant tout notre séjour, des hélicoptères de combat américains effectuent d'incessants passages en rase-mottes au-dessus de nos têtes vingt-quatre heures sur vingt-quatre.

Premier déjeuner en tête à tête avec le président. La tension du voyage s'est dissipée, l'homme est jovial et souriant. C'est avec une voix de baryton et dans un français parfait qu'il nous parle. Les plats défilent, l'appétit de cet homme de 73 ans est légendaire. Puis il s'éclipse dans ce qui fut autrefois le salon d'honneur et de réception de Mme Saddam Hussein. Un cigare Davidoff vissé aux lèvres, il nous invite à le rejoindre. Son conseiller privé, Fakhri Karim, lui annonce à l'oreille le dernier bilan des attentats du jour: 19 morts dans l'explosion d'un bus et un hélicoptère de l'armée américaine abattu au-dessus de Bagdad. Chronique banale de la vie quotidienne de la capitale irakienne.

Un peu plus tard, nous regagnons les quartiers qui nous ont été attribués dans l'un des palais d'hôtes de Mme Hussein. Marbre et or à tous les étages, Jacuzzi et fontaines sculptées: un faste exubérant aujourd'hui déplacé. Pas d'électricité, l'eau est coupée depuis vingt-quatre heures. Cette nuit encore, tous feux éteints, nous aurons du mal à nous endormir. Les mitrailleuses font entendre leurs claquements métalliques. Les raids, de l'autre côté du fleuve, vont durer jusqu'au petit matin. En plein jour, ce n'est pas mieux. Ce lundi, à 12 heures, nous entendons les échos d'une explosion formidable, sur la rive est du Tigre. Elle a eu lieu au beau milieu du marché aux puces. Les sirènes des ambulances ne se tairont que très tard dans la soirée. Bilan: 100 morts et plus de 130 blessés. Ce soir encore, pour une bonne partie de la nuit, le camp présidentiel est en sécurité... mais pour combien de temps?

Le lendemain matin, nous faisons nos adieux à « l'Oncle » Jalal. Il est temps de partir pour éviter les embouteillages, l'heure des embuscades. Le président a bien fait les choses, une escorte de quatre Toyota Land Cruisers blindés aux vitres fumées nous attendent pour nous faire traverser « la zone chaude » jusqu'à l'aéroport. Une vingtaine de peshmergas armés jusqu'aux dents veillent sur nous. Le trajet dure trente minutes, une éternité quand on sait que l'on joue sa vie. Notre convoi déboûle à 140 km/h dans de petites artères de la banlieue de Bagdad. Les voitures de protection se positionnent de chaque côté de notre véhicule pour, à chaque carrefour, faire écran aux éventuels tirs de roquette et de missile. Finalement, l'aéroport est atteint. Les peshmergas repartent. Mission accomplie. Ils nous ont reconduits vivants.



En haut: séance de travail avec Shireen-o-Kadir. Kurde, comme tout l'entourage de Jalal Talabani, elle est la seule femme du camp, et « l'homme de confiance » du président. Au milieu: le 20 janvier, rencontre confidentielle avec Said Abdel Aziz Hakim (à dr.), leader chiite du Parti révolutionnaire islamique irakien. Le président lui offre un cadeau ramené de Damas. Ci-dessus: Jalal Talabani et Tariq Al-Hashimi, le vice-président sunnite de son gouvernement, le 22 janvier, à la sortie d'un entretien dans les bureaux privés de la présidence.

**Paris Match.** Comment expliquez-vous l'échec total, depuis trois ans, des forces américaines et britanniques à rétablir la paix en Irak?

**Jalal Talabani.** Des fautes graves ont été commises. Souvenez-vous, au lendemain de la libération de l'Irak par les forces de la coalition, l'ambition première du général Gardner et de l'administration Bush a été de transformer cette libération du sol irakien en occupation. Vous savez, je connais bien les Irakiens, c'est un peuple fier, éduqué. Ils ne l'ont pas accepté. Cette annonce a créé de facto une défiance générale à l'égard des Américains.

Le deuxième point découle du premier. Sachez, mon jeune ami, que ce ne sont pas moins de 30 000 à 40 000 terroristes provenant d'Égypte, du Yémen, d'Arabie Saoudite, etc., qui ont traversé illégalement nos frontières dans le seul but de se battre aux côtés de

certaines factions sunnites extrémistes, contre les chiites et l'occupation américaine. Quatre mille ont déjà été tués, ceux qui restent continuent de sévir.

La troisième faute incombe plus particulièrement aux forces américaines sur le terrain, la manière dont ils ont traité la population. Vous connaissez notre religion? Imaginez aux checkpoints ces femmes pieuses, chiites ou sunnites, qui se font palper partout sur le corps. C'est considéré comme du viol; c'est une atteinte à la dignité de la personne humaine. Il en est de même pour ces grands chefs tribaux à qui on a passé des cagoules noires de condamné avant de les interroger, Abou Ghraib... Tous ces écarts graves de comportement, j'ose l'espérer par ignorance, ont contribué à échauffer les esprits.

**Les Américains sont, semble-t-il, dans l'impasse. Six mois pour rester ou six ans pour partir?**

Ils ont entièrement le droit de se poser des questions au vu de leurs problèmes intérieurs, mais je pense que le nouveau plan Bush sera accepté par le Congrès démocrate. L'administration Bush ne peut aujourd'hui se permettre de quitter l'Irak par la fuite, « la queue entre les jambes », en prenant le risque de plonger tout le Moyen-Orient dans le chaos et sans avoir eu le temps d'accomplir la première mission qu'ils s'étaient fixée: la sécurité.

**Depuis le 22 avril 2006, vous êtes le premier président irakien élu démocratiquement. Il vous reste trois ans de mandat. Quelles sont vos ambitions?**

Vous parliez à l'instant d'échec total, permettez-moi de vous dire que nous disposons désormais d'une Constitution, d'un Parlement où le jeu démocratique est respecté, d'une police qui doit, il est certain, se renforcer en effectifs, d'une force armée que nous voudrions multiconfessionnelle... Mais sachez que ce vent de démocratie qui souffle aujourd'hui sur notre pays fait très peur à nos voisins. Ici, tous les partis sans exception ont leur organe de presse, leur propre chaîne de télévision. Nous sommes actuellement en train de réintégrer une branche de l'ancien parti Baas de Saddam au Parlement. Des bases solides de démocratie sont jetées tous les jours pour permettre à notre pays de se relever, de prospérer.

**Quel avenir pour l'Irak?**

Notre pays peut devenir, vous le savez, l'un des plus riches du monde. Nous sommes autosuffisants sur le plan agricole, nous avons de l'eau, du pétrole, une population qui ne demande qu'à faire partie d'une nation forte et unie. Mon principal chantier portera, dans les prochains mois, sur la réconciliation nationale. Pour cela, il va nous falloir pardonner beaucoup à beaucoup de personnes pour faire le deuil de la « saddamisation » de la société.

**Avez-vous peur pour votre vie?**

Bien sûr que j'ai peur, comme tout le monde ici. Je préférerais rentrer à Souleymanie où je serais en sécurité, mais j'ai une mission à accomplir ici auprès de ceux qui se battent pour un Irak pacifié, uni et prospère. Je n'ai jamais voulu être président, vous savez, mon rêve aurait été de devenir professeur d'université. ■

## Les nationalistes turcs relèvent la tête, après l'assassinat de Hrant Dink

ISTANBUL

CORRESPONDANCE

Dix jours après l'assassinat, le 19 janvier, de Hrant Dink, qui suscita en Turquie une vague de solidarité sans précédent avec son combat pour le dialogue arméno-turc, ce sont les réactions des nationalistes dans le « pays profond » et les ombres dans l'enquête qui font débat dans le pays. Furieux du slogan « *Nous sommes tous des Arméniens* » inscrit sur des milliers de pancartes brandies parmi les 100 000 personnes qui ont suivi les funérailles du journaliste, les tenants de « *La Turquie aux Turcs* » se sont, à leur tour, manifestés.

A Trabzon (l'ancienne Trébizonde), la ville du jeune assassin et de ses complices présumés, le match de football dominical a rempli le stade de porteurs de banderoles proclamant « *Nous sommes tous turcs, nous sommes tous Mustafa Kemal* » ou « *Je suis turc, je suis droit, je suis de Trabzon* ». Leur slogan, « *les martyrs ne meurent pas, l'unité du pays est éternelle* », était un clair soutien à la dizaine d'inculpés issus de leur ville.

Ailleurs, des groupes de fans ont manifesté de même. A Izmir, un ancien ser-

gent a pris en otage les passagers d'un ferry avec de faux explosifs, disant protester contre les slogans pro-arméniens. Arrêté, il a crié aux journalistes : « *J'ai fait cela pour la patrie.* » Un des inculpés pour l'assassinat de Hrant Dink avait déjà été montré à la télé hurlant « *Orhan Pamuk, prends garde !* » – une menace contre le Prix Nobel de littérature, « coupable », comme Hrant Dink, de parler de génocide arménien.

Les médias turcs, comme dégrisés après leur couverture exceptionnelle des condamnations du crime qui ont semblé,

au début, unanimes, ont fait bonne place à ces « contre-réactions ». En pêchant peut-être par pessimisme après un excès d'optimisme. Selon l'universitaire Cengiz Aktar, « *la foule qui a suivi le cercueil de Dink – ceux qui partagent sa vision du monde humaniste, démocrate et ouverte – est une espèce en voie de disparition* ». Il parle pourtant de « *société civile naissante* » en Turquie, mais rappelle qu'elle a encore besoin, pour avancer, d'appuis du pouvoir.

### « Etat profond »

Or le gouvernement qui, en cette année électorale, surfe sur la vague nationaliste issue de la déception européenne, n'a pas embayé sur le sursaut civil provoqué par le meurtre : ses chefs n'ont pas assisté aux funérailles, ne veulent toujours pas annuler l'article 301 du code pénal qui punit l'« *insulte à l'identité turque* » et aborderaient cet assassinat politique comme un simple cas criminel. Alors que les médias abondent de faits troublants : deux des inculpés, arrêtés et relâchés il y a deux ans, auraient été des informateurs de la police, la Sécurité à Ankara aurait été informée d'un projet d'assassiner Hrant Dink, etc.

Tout ceci a relancé le débat sur « l'Etat profond » – dont le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a, à son tour, reconnu, dimanche 28 janvier, l'existence, le définissant comme « *des gangs au sein d'institutions d'Etat* » contre lesquels le gouvernement a des moyens limités mais qu'il faut « *réussir à minimiser et, si possible, éliminer* ». Le renvoi du gouverneur et du chef de la police de Trabzon n'est qu'un premier pas dans l'enquête sur le meurtre de Hrant Dink, qui sera menée à son terme, a promis M. Erdogan. ■

SOPHIE SHIHAB

l'Humanité 1<sup>er</sup> février 2007

## À Toulouse, ces Kurdes qu'on ne voit plus

Nicolas Séné,

animateur radio, Toulouse (Haute-Garonne).

Un froid glacial saisissait la Ville rose, en ce samedi après-midi. À 15h30, sur la place du Capitole, les Toulousains s'affairaient à la folle course des soldes, ignorant là le rassemblement qui se formait. Des banderoles étaient pourtant déployées, des drapeaux flottaient au vent. Mais rien n'y faisait. Personne ne voulait voir ces soixante hommes et femmes qui bravaient le froid pour la reconnaissance de leur peuple. Cette indifférence quasi générale est symptomatique du traitement des Kurdes à travers le monde.

Ce peuple issu d'une des plus vieilles civilisations est, en effet, éclaté dans le monde entier car dans chacun des pays (Turquie, Iran, Irak, Syrie) d'où ils sont originaires, ils sont persécutés. Ils ont cru voir un début de résolution quand le Kurdistan irakien a pris son autonomie sous Jalal Talabani, nommé président du pays en 2005. Mais l'espoir ne fut que de courte durée, la main des États-Unis, comme celles des Européens d'ailleurs, trace un Moyen-Orient selon ses propres intérêts. À Toulouse, la communauté kurde n'en est pourtant pas à sa première action. Avant l'été dernier, 83 d'entre eux avaient entamé une grève de la faim pour alerter sur leur sort en Turquie. Ils y sont persécutés et l'on veut les assimiler à la population turque à part entière, niant par là même leur culture ancestrale. La manifestation de samedi n'est donc que la continuité d'une grève de la faim incomprise.

Ils protestaient contre l'emprisonnement de leur leader, Abdullah Ocalan, emprisonné depuis 1999 dans les geôles de Turquie. Le mouvement d'Ocalan est, certes, scindé en deux factions depuis : ceux qui se sont ralliés à son frère Osman, qui renonce à toute confrontation armée ; et ceux qui restent dans les rangs d'Abdullah, qui a appelé à la lutte armée en 2004. Dans notre monde moderne, toute résistance est implacablement esquivée pour être proclamée terrorisme. Pour les autorités turques, Abdullah n'est donc qu'un terroriste.

L'Union européenne et les États-Unis, qui pourraient venir en aide au peuple kurde, s'excusent derrière la définition turque du mouvement. Les enjeux



Toulouse, juin 2006. Grève de la faim pour la régularisation de familles kurdes.

économiques n'y sont probablement pas pour rien. Le récent assassinat de Hrant Dink, cet écrivain arménien soutenant la cause kurde, par une folle équipée sauvage dont les auteurs n'ont pas trente ans, renforcent les Kurdes dans leur sentiment d'indifférence générale dont ils souffrent.

Ils ne veulent pourtant pas d'un État unique, rien que pour les Kurdes. Ils souhaitent l'avènement de réelles démocraties au Moyen-Orient, où ils pourraient participer dans chaque pays à l'épanouissement de leur culture. Une vision sans haine aucune qui force le respect quand on revient sur l'histoire kurde. En attendant, ici, en Europe, les Kurdes qui restent dans des situations précaires, souffrent bien plus de l'ignorance d'Occidentaux incultes. Ils n'ont en effet pas compris que le Moyen-Orient qu'ils ont eux-mêmes façonné renforce les extrémismes à leur égard.



# Chirac muses on Iran, and then he retreats

## French leader suggests Iranian bomb would be little danger

By Elaine Sciolino and Katrin Bennhold

**PARIS:** President Jacques Chirac said in an interview that an Iran that possessed one or two nuclear weapons would not pose much of a danger, adding that if Iran were ever to launch a nuclear weapon against a country like Israel, it would lead to the immediate destruction of Tehran.

The remarks, made in an interview Monday with the International Herald Tribune, The New York Times and the weekly magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur*, were vastly different from stated French policy and from what Chirac repeatedly has said.

So in a remarkable turnaround, Chirac summoned the journalists involved to the Élysée Palace again Tuesday to retract many of the things he had said.

Chirac said repeatedly during the

second interview that he had spoken casually and quickly the day before because he had believed he was talking about Iran off the record. Finally, he admitted that he had made a mistake.

"It is I who was wrong and I do not want to contest it," he said. "I should have paid better attention to what I was saying and understood that perhaps I was on the record."

The interview was conducted under an agreement that it would not be published until Thursday, when *Nouvel Observateur* prints.

On Monday, Chirac began by describing as "very dangerous" Iran's refusal to stop producing enriched uranium, which can be used to produce electricity or to make nuclear weapons.

Then he made his remarks about a nuclear-armed Iran.

"I would say that what is dangerous about this situation is not the fact of hav-

ing a nuclear bomb," he said. "Having one or perhaps a second bomb a little later, well, that's not very dangerous. But what is very dangerous is proliferation. This means that if Iran continues in the direction it has taken and totally mastering nuclear-generated electricity, the danger does not lie in the bomb it will have, and which will be of no use to it."

Chirac explained that it would be an act of self-destruction for Iran to use a nuclear weapon against another country. "Where will it drop it, this bomb? On Israel?" Chirac asked. "It would not have gone off 200 meters into the atmosphere before Tehran would be razed to the ground."

It was unclear whether Chirac's initial remarks reflected what he truly believed about Iran or whether he had misspoken. In the past year and a half, he is said by some French officials to have become much less precise in diplomatic conversations and to have even expressed the view that a nuclear-armed Iran might be inevitable.

Further confusing the issue, on Monday evening, the Élysée prepared a heavily edited 19-page transcript of the interview that did not include Chirac's assessment of a nuclear-armed Iran or his prediction of what would happen if it ever tried to use it.

Instead, the transcript added a line that Chirac had not said; it read, "I do not see what type of scenario could justify Iran's recourse to an atomic bomb."

The attempt by the Élysée to change the president's remarks in a formal text is not unusual. It is a long-held tradition in French journalism for interview subjects, from the president to business and cultural figures, to be given the opportunity to edit the texts of question-and-answer interviews before publication.

During the Monday interview, Chirac made clear that a more profound problem than Iran's possession of a nuclear weapon was that a nuclear-armed Iran might encourage other regional players to follow suit.

"It is really very tempting for other countries in the region with large financial resources to say: 'Well, we too are going to do that; we're going to help others do it,'" he said. "Why wouldn't Saudi Arabia do it? Why wouldn't it help Egypt to do so as well? That is the real danger."

In the second interview, Chirac retracted his comment that Tehran would be destroyed if Iran launched a nuclear weapon.

"I take it back of course when I said, 'One is going to raze Tehran,'" he said. "It was of course a manner of speaking."

He added that any number of third countries would stop an Iranian bomb from ever reaching its target.

"It is obvious that this bomb, at the moment it was launched, obviously would be destroyed immediately," Chirac said. "We have the means, several countries have the means to destroy a bomb."

Chirac also retracted his prediction that a nuclear Iran could lead Saudi Arabia and Egypt to follow suit.

"I drifted — because I thought we were off the record — to say that, for example, Saudi Arabia or Egypt could be tempted to follow this example," he



Ed Alcock/NYT

"I should have paid better attention to what I was saying and understood that perhaps I was on the record," President Chirac said of his remarks about Iran.

said. "I retract it, of course, since neither Saudi Arabia nor Egypt has made any declaration on these subjects, so it is not up to me to make them."

As for his musing in the first interview that Israel could be a hypothetical target of an Iranian attack, Chirac said, "I don't think I spoke about Israel yesterday. Maybe I have done so but I don't think so. I have no recollection of that."

There were other clarifications. In the initial interview, for example, Chirac referred to Iran's Islamic Republic as "a bit fragile." In the subsequent interview, he called Iran "a great country" with a "very old culture" that "has an important role to play in the region" as a force for stability.

Chirac's initial comments contradicted long-held official French policy, which holds that Iran must not go nuclear. The thinking is that a nuclear-armed Iran would give Iran the ability to project power throughout the region, threaten its neighbors and encourage other regional players to seek the bomb.

Under Chirac's presidency, France has joined the United States and other countries in moving to sanction Iran for refusing to stop enriching uranium, as demanded by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations Security Council.

Just a few weeks ago, Chirac wanted to send his foreign minister to Iran to help resolve the crisis in Lebanon, an initiative that collapsed when members of his own government said that it not only would fail, but would send a wrong signal to Iran at a time of sanctions against it.

But there also are divisions within the French government about how far Iran should be punished for behavior that the outside world might not be able to change. There are also concerns



whether the more aggressive course of action toward Iran is reminiscent of the prelude to the American-led war in Iraq which France opposed.

Indeed, in noting the sanctions that were imposed by the Security Council against Iran last month, Chirac warned that escalation of the conflict by both sides was unwise. "Of course we can go further and further, or higher and higher up the scale in the reactions from both sides," he said. "But this is certainly not what he had in mind nor what we intend to do."

Chirac, who is 74 and about ready to end his second term as president, also had a different demeanor during the two encounters.

In the first interview, which took place in the morning, he appeared distracted at times, grasping for names and

dates and relying on advisers to fill in the blanks. His hands shook slightly. When he spoke about climate change, he read from prepared talking points printed in large letters and highlighted in yellow and pink.

By contrast, in the second interview, which came just after lunch, he appeared both confident and completely comfortable with the subject matter.

The exclusive purpose of the initial interview was for Chirac to talk about climate change and an international conference for which he will be host in Paris later this week. The conference parallels a United Nations conference that will unveil a long-awaited report on the global environmental crisis.

The question about Iran followed a comment by Chirac on the importance of developing nuclear energy programs

that are transparent, safe and secure.

Iran insists that the purpose of its uranium enrichment program is to produce peaceful nuclear energy; France, along with many other countries including the United States, is convinced that the program is part of a nuclear weapons program.

In the midst of his initial remarks on Iran, Chirac's spokesman passed him a handwritten note, which Chirac read aloud. "Yes, he's telling me that we have to go back to the environment," Chirac said. He then continued a discussion of Shiite Muslims, who are by far the majority in Iran but a minority in the Muslim world.

"Shiites do not have the reaction of the Sunnis or of Europeans," he said.

## La politique arabe de Chirac : un échec cuisant

La presse arabe adule depuis toujours le président français. Mais ses récentes initiatives en direction de l'Iran chiite irritent les sunnites. Le quotidien panarabe *Asharq Al-Awsat*, financé par Riyad, est sévère.

ASHARQ AL-AWSAT

Londres

**A** lors qu'à l'Élysée le rideau se baisse sur Jacques Chirac, ce dernier continue d'entretenir le doute sur un troisième mandat. Tandis que ses derniers amis essaient de le peindre en "vieux sage" de la politique internationale, il joue ses dernières cartes diplomatiques et rêve d'un grand coup de politique internationale. Avant la fin du mois de mars, date à laquelle il a prévu d'annoncer s'il comptait se représenter ou non, il veut tenter sa chance avec la République islamique d'Iran. Son objectif est de l'amener à réduire ses ambitions nucléaires, à renoncer à soutenir le Hezbollah et à se joindre à la France dans un nouveau "front du refus" de la domination américaine au Moyen-Orient.

L'idéal aurait été d'obtenir quelque chose de retentissant avant le sommet consacré à la reconstruction du Liban qui s'est tenu fin janvier à Paris. Selon certaines sources, un envoyé français, l'ancien chef des services de renseignements Jean-Claude Cousseran, serait allé à Téhéran pour rencontrer le Guide suprême Ali Khamenei et lui faire part de quelques informations censées être secrètes, souligner le déploiement d'activité de la marine américaine dans le golfe Arabe-Persique et faire comprendre que les "Anglo-Saxons" s'apprêtaient à lancer une opération militaire contre l'Iran. Pour épargner ces ennuis à Téhéran, Cousseran aurait suggéré à Khamenei de désigner l'ancien président Hachemi Rafsandjani [réputé modéré en politique étrangère] pour gérer la question

nucléaire et pour marginaliser l'actuel président, le bruyant Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Si les Iraniens avaient émis des signes encourageants, Chirac aurait envoyé son Premier ministre, Dominique de Villepin, conclure le marché : annonce de l'arrêt du programme iranien d'enrichissement d'uranium et annulation de la réunion du Conseil de sécurité prévue pour mars.

### "LA DIPLOMATIE CHIRAQUIENNE N'A RIEN APPORTÉ À LA FRANCE"

C'est ce qui aurait permis au "doyen de la politique internationale" et au "héros de la paix" d'annoncer sa candidature pour la présidentielle et d'appeler ses "chers compatriotes" à le réélire afin qu'il puisse sauver le monde de la bêtise de George Bush. En s'appuyant sur les sentiments traditionnellement antiaméricains et anticapitalistes des Français, il aurait fait passer Nicolas Sarkozy pour "infodé à Bush" et pour un "chantre du libéralisme économique", un mot qui effraie les Français.

Or, depuis deux ans déjà, tous les sondages indiquent que les Français sont las de Jacques Chirac et souhaitent qu'il s'en aille le plus tôt possible. Pis, la plupart de ses amis l'ont abandonné, et

d'autres trouvent indigne de se servir de l'Iran pour préparer une nouvelle candidature. Le problème, c'est que Chirac n'a pas appris grand-chose de sa longue expérience politique : ce n'est pas la première fois qu'il est victime de ses illusions. Entre 1974 et 1976, quand il était Premier ministre, il a soutenu le programme nucléaire irakien en contrepartie de subsides versés par Saddam Hussein au RPR. De nouveau Premier

ministre de 1986 à 1988, il a refusé à l'aviation américaine le survol de l'espace aérien français pour bombardier

la Libye. Il comptait ainsi gagner l'amitié de Muammar Kadhafi. Mais quand, plus tard, celui-ci a choisi de sortir de son isolement diplomatique, ses premiers contacts ont été avec la Grande-Bretagne et les Etats-Unis, et non avec la France. De même, en 1987, Chirac a permis à Vahid Gordji, coordinateur des activités terroristes iraniennes à Paris, de quitter la France en contrepartie d'une promesse iranienne de ne pas perpétrer d'actes terroristes sur le sol français. Promesse vite rompue, puisque Téhéran n'a pas tardé à lancer une campagne d'assassinats contre des opposants iraniens réfugiés en France. Finalement, en 1991, Chirac [alors dans l'opposition] a milité contre le renversement de Saddam Hussein. Il espérait que les régimes "laïcs et progressistes" l'emporteraient contre les régimes "réactionnaires proaméricains" et comptait faire de la France le principal allié occidental des Arabes. Et, là encore, il s'est trompé et s'est fourvoyé.

La diplomatie chiraquienne n'a rien apporté ni à la France ni à personne, puisqu'elle a encouragé les tendances extrémistes d'aventuriers de la pire espèce - tels Saddam Hussein, Muammar Kadhafi ou Khomeyni. Aujourd'hui, Chirac joue une fois de plus son vieux numéro de claquettes et cherche à permettre aux mollahs iraniens de tromper le monde entier et de narguer le Conseil de sécurité. Son action risque surtout de précipiter une nouvelle guerre au Moyen-Orient.

Amir Taheri

**Diplomatie** Il n'est « pas tellement dangereux [que l'Iran ait] une bombe nucléaire », confie le président français

**Le Monde**  
Vendredi 2 février 2007

## Nucléaire iranien : Chirac hésite et se contredit

Jacques Chirac a fait, lundi 29 janvier, une série de déclarations sur les agissements nucléaires de l'Iran qui tranchent avec la position officielle de la France, et le mettent en porte-à-faux avec ses partenaires occidentaux traitant, au sein de l'Union européenne et de l'ONU, de ce dossier diplomatique. Le président français a évoqué, dans un entretien accordé à des journalistes du *Nouvel Observateur*, du *New York Times* et de l'*International Herald Tribune*, la possibilité que l'Iran se dote de l'arme atomique.

« Je dirais que ce n'est pas tellement dangereux par le fait d'avoir une bombe nu-

cléaire – peut-être une deuxième un peu plus tard, bon... ça n'est pas dangereux. Mais ce qui est dangereux, c'est la prolifération », a commenté M. Chirac lundi. Il a ajouté : « Le danger, ce n'est pas la bombe qu'il va avoir, et qui ne lui servira à rien... Il va l'envoyer où, cette bombe ? Sur Israël ? Elle n'aura pas fait 200 mètres dans l'atmosphère que Téhéran sera rasée. »

Le lendemain, mardi, l'Elysée invitait les mêmes journalistes à revoir M. Chirac, qui souhaitait préciser sa pensée et déclarait s'être exprimé de façon « schématique ». Le président français a expliqué qu'en évoquant une attaque sur

Téhéran au cas où l'Iran ferait usage d'une éventuelle arme atomique, il avait à l'esprit le principe de la « dissuasion nucléaire ».

L'Elysée a souligné, jeudi matin, que la position de la France, s'agissant du dossier nucléaire iranien, est « inchangée ». L'entourage de M. Chirac précisait qu'il n'était pas le seul dirigeant à évoquer une éventuelle détention de la bombe atomique par l'Iran, puisque cette hypothèse a été mentionnée par le premier ministre israélien, Ehoud Olmert. ■

## BAGDAD DANS LA SPIRALE DE LA VIOLENCE

**Liberation**

5 FÉVRIER 2007

L'attentat qui a fait plus de 130 morts samedi dans le quartier chiite de Sadriya démontre une fois de plus l'impuissance américaine.



Sur le lieu de l'attentat de samedi, dans le quartier chiite de Sadriya, à Bagdad. Selon les autorités, la charge contenue dans le camion suicide était d'une tonne d'explosifs.

Un grand cratère au milieu de la chaussée et partout autour, dans cette rue étroite du vieux quartier de Sadriya, des boutiques réduites en cendres et plusieurs bâtisses à moitié effondrées par le souffle. Le camion piégé contenait plus d'une tonne d'explosif selon les autorités irakiennes. L'attentat de samedi a fait au moins 130 morts dans ce quartier kurde chiite déjà frappé en décembre par une attaque qui fit 51 victimes. Le bilan est l'un des plus lourds depuis l'occupation américaine de l'Irak en mars 2003.

Le Premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki et le président Jalal Talabani ont dénoncé un « crime ignoble », qu'ils ont attribué aux « saddamistes », partisans de l'ancien président Saddam Hussein, et aux « takfiris », extrémistes sunnites qui vouent une haine féroce aux chiites, qu'ils considèrent comme des hérétiques. Les autorités ont promis d'indemniser les familles. A la télévision publique

Irakia, Ali al-Dabbagh, porte-parole du Premier ministre a affirmé que 50% des actes criminels et des attentats sont commis par «des Arabes takfiris qui viennent de Syrie». Damas a protesté.

**Compte-gouttes.** Les autorités irakiennes et l'armée américaine doivent lancer un nouveau plan de sécurité pour la capitale,

ensanglantée par des violences, en grande partie confessionnelles, qui ont fait plus de 16800 tués à Bagdad en 2006 selon les Nations unies. Plus de 50000 soldats et policiers irakiens et 35000 soldats américains doivent participer à cette opération, mais les renforts promis par le président George W. Bush arrivent au compte-gouttes. L'armée américaine a par ailleurs reconnu pour la première fois dimanche que les quatre hélico-



ptères qui se sont écrasés en moins de deux semaines en Irak, faisant 20 morts, ont été abattus.

**Couvre-feu.** Toutefois, les violences ne sont pas circonscrites à la capitale. Des couvre-feux ont ainsi été imposés à Kirkouk, samedi, à la suite d'une vague d'attentats à la voiture piégée qui ont fait quatre morts et dans plusieurs quartiers de Mossoul après des combats entre insurgés et

## 100 morts par jour

En moyenne, depuis début janvier, 100 civils sont tués quotidiennement en Irak, selon les évaluations des Nations unies. En 2006, 16800 Irakiens ont été tués dans des attaques et des attentats, toujours selon l'ONU.

forces de l'ordre. Ville ethniquement divisée entre Arabes, Turkmènes et Kurdes, Kirkouk est situé au cœur de la région pétrolière du nord de l'Irak. Les voitures piégées ont explosé à proximité des bureaux des deux principales formations politiques kurdes, le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan et l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan, dirigée par le président irakien Talabani. Le

groupe Etat islamique en Irak affilié à Al-Qaeda a revendiqué ces attentats dans un communiqué mis en ligne sur l'Internet. A Mossoul, troisième ville du pays, des affrontements ont eu lieu dans plusieurs quartiers entre insurgés et policiers. La police a fermé les ponts et ordonné à la population de quitter les rues. ◆

AFP, REUTERS

5 FÉVRIER 2007



# Impossible marche arrière pour Washington

Un rapport des renseignements américains prédit un enlèvement plus profond encore.

Washington de notre correspondant

Les Etats-Unis mènent la guerre d'Irak non plus pour gagner, mais pour ne pas perdre. Tels sont les enseignements du rapport très attendu des seize agences de renseignements américaines (National Intelligence Estimate, NIE), en partie rendu public ce week-end. Ce document officiel de 90 pages, dont l'administration Bush avait repoussé la publication l'an dernier, décrit une situation de plus en plus périlleuse, sur laquelle les Etats-

Unis ont de moins en moins d'emprise, et qui a de fortes chances de se détériorer davantage. Une analyse que les derniers événements confirment, qu'il s'agisse de la recrudescence des attentats (lire ci-dessus), ou du nombre croissant d'hélicoptères abattus par les insurgés (quatre en deux semaines). Ce harcèlement concentré des moyens aériens, sur lesquels repose une bonne partie du dispositif tactique américain, pose un défi redoutable à l'armée, déjà en mal de stratégie cohérente. Le général George Casey, le commandant des forces en Irak, qui doit bientôt céder son poste, bafouillait presque jeudi dernier devant les sénateurs qui lui demandaient des comptes.

**«Animosités».** Le rapport du NIE, intitulé «Perspectives pour un Irak stable: une voie ambitieuse», écrit que «la sécurité va continuer à se détériorer au cours des dou-

ze à dix-huit mois à venir, dans les mêmes proportions qu'à la fin 2006, [...] mais, même si le niveau de violence diminue, les dirigeants irakiens auront beaucoup de mal à forger une réelle réconciliation nationale, compte tenu des animosités sectaires qui continuent la scène.» et de l'attitude de la majorité chiite souhaitant conserver tout le pouvoir. Le rapport déplore l'«absence de dirigeants qui pourraient transcender les divisions» entre sunnites et chiïtes, le «refus des sunnites de se résigner à leur statut minori-

taire» et la volonté des Kurdes de renforcer leur statut autonome.

**Divisions sectaires.** La loyauté de nombre d'unités des forces de sécurité irakiennes, reconnaît le NIE, est érodée par les divisions sectaires, et il est peu probable qu'elles parviennent, dans leur ensemble, «à améliorer la sécurité». A cet égard, la décision de George W. Bush de déployer 21 500 hommes supplémentaires censés combattre «aux côtés» des forces de sécurité irakiennes paraît nial engagée.

Ce noir tableau de l'impasse américaine en Irak contraste avec celui dressé par le stratège de la Maison Blanche, le vice-président Dick Cheney. «Le fait est: nous avons remporté d'énormes succès en Irak, et nous allons continuer de remporter d'énormes succès», a-t-il soutenu le 24 janvier sur CNN. Dans un fortuit mo-

ment de franchise, il a exposé la raison pour laquelle, selon lui, les GI devaient persévérer en Irak: «Si nous devons quitter l'Irak, nous validerions la stratégie des terroristes, selon laquelle les Américains n'ont pas assez de cran pour se battre.» «J'ai l'impression que l'équipe du Président est déterminée à se retrancher plus profondément encore. Et si ça ne réussit pas en Irak, certains responsables les plus téméraires ont l'air de vouloir élargir le conflit à l'Iran», expliquait ce week-end au Washington Post l'ex-conseiller à la sécurité nationale Zbigniew Brzezinski, qui avait prophétisé l'enlèvement en Irak. Hillary Clinton, l'un des candidats démocrate à la présidentielle de 2008, a affirmé vendredi que «si le Congrès ne parvenait pas à mettre fin à la guerre avant janvier 2009», date d'investiture du nouveau président, «je le ferais».

**Budget record.** Opiniâtre, en dépit de l'opposition majoritaire des membres du Congrès, la Maison Blanche agite la perspective d'un conflit embrasant toute la région en cas de dérobade des GI. Un pronostic de Cassandra, validé par le rapport du NIE, qui pourrait malgré tout convaincre le Congrès d'approuver le budget record demandé par le Pentagone pour l'année 2008: 622 milliards de dollars. Jamais l'armée n'a encouru de telles dépenses depuis la guerre de Corée, selon l'expert Steven Kosiak. Cette somme, note-t-il, ne représente toutefois que 4% du PIB américain. ◆

PHILIPPE GRANGEREAU

Ankara envoyé spécial

Les menaces sont arrivées par mail, accompagnées d'insultes sur sa mère et ses aïeux. Des avertissements explicites aussi bien contre lui que contre d'autres intellectuels «*traîtres*» comme le romancier et Prix Nobel Orhan Pamuk que «*rien ni personne ne pourra protéger quand nous voudrons le tuer*». Professeur de sciences politiques à Ankara et coauteur en 2004 d'un rapport officiel dénonçant «*le climat de paranoïa*» entourant les droits des minorités en Turquie, Baskin Oran est habitué à recevoir ce genre de messages d'intimidation. Mais depuis l'assassinat le 19 janvier par un jeune chômeur ultranationaliste de Hrant Dink, journaliste symbole des Arméniens de Turquie, il est réellement inquiet. Les autorités lui ont finalement attribué un garde du corps, comme à quelques dizaines d'autres intellectuels ou activistes des droits de l'homme considérés comme autant de cibles potentielles. Certains, comme le romancier Orhan Pamuk, ont néanmoins préféré quitter le pays au moins pour quelque temps.

«**Irrationnel.**» «*Il y a un climat général de lynchage encore plus préoccupant qu'un complot organisé: il s'agit d'un phénomène irrationnel, incontrôlable, avec des dizaines de milliers de jeunes paumés ultranationalistes prêts à tout contre ceux qu'ils considèrent être une cinquième colonne de l'étranger et des gaiours [infidèles, ndr]*», explique Baskin Oran, indigné que les deux plaintes déposées les années précédentes après des menaces de mort n'aient jamais abouti. «*Pour la première fois depuis des années, je ne me sens plus en sécurité, et j'avais ce sentiment avant même l'assassinat de Hrant Dink*», renchérit Yavuz Önen, président de la Fondation pour les droits de l'homme, pourtant habitué à devoir faire face aux procès à répétition: «*Nous nous trouvons là face à quelque chose de beaucoup plus dangereux, car plus impalpable et diffus.*» Le bonnet blanc que portait Ogün Samast, le jeune tueur de Hrant Dink, est devenu un objet culte dans la mouvance des groupes les plus ra-

Après l'assassinat de Hrant Drink, les menaces ultranationalistes se multiplient.

# Intellectuels turcs, le retour de la peur



Une marche nationaliste, dimanche, à Istanbul, en réaction au défilé pour les obsèques de Hrant Dink.

dicaux héritiers des Loups gris, les bandes d'extrême droite qui s'illustrèrent tout au long des années 80. Une situation d'autant plus inquiétante qu'il y a entre 5 et 7 millions d'armes à

«**Il y a un climat général de lynchage encore plus préoccupant qu'un complot organisé.**»

Baskin Oran, professeur de sciences politiques

feu illégales en circulation dans le pays.

Brandissant des pancartes «*Nous sommes tous arméniens*», plus de 100 000 personnes - turcs, kurdes ou arméniens - défilèrent à Istanbul pour les obsèques de Hrant Dink, qui se transformèrent en une immense manifestation pour une Turquie plurielle. «*C'était bouleversant, mais il s'agit d'un feu de paille. C'est le groupe qui fait bloc quand un de ses membres tombe, mais cette partie du pays ouverte et libérale qui s'est mobilisée reste malheureusement minoritaire, d'autant qu'il n'y a aucune force politique organisée à même de relayer son appel*», analyse

Cengiz Aktar, universitaire spécialiste des questions européennes, soulignant que «*tous les partis ont protesté contre cet assassinat. Aussi bien l'AKP, du Premier ministre Erdogan*

*issu du mouvement islamiste, et plus encore l'opposition de gauche, qui se réclame de Mustapha Kemal, veulent capitaliser à leur profit le nationalisme montant.*

**Paranoïa.** Celui-ci se nourrit des frustrations face à l'Union européenne, accusée de ne pas traiter la Turquie comme les autres pays candidats et soupçonnée de vouloir démanteler le pays par ses pressions en faveur des droits des minorités. La mobilisation, notamment en France, pour exiger des autorités turques une reconnaissance de la réalité du génocide arménien de 1915-1917 a encore accru la paranoïa dans une partie de l'opinion turque. A cela s'ajoute un antimérianisme, qui a explosé depuis la guerre en Irak, accusant Washington de jouer ouverte-

ment la carte kurde au risque d'encourager le séparatisme des Kurdes turcs (13 millions de personnes sur 70 millions de citoyens). Ce nationalisme représente un mouvement de fond qui explique aussi l'arrêt depuis 2004 des réformes exigées par l'Union européenne. Ainsi, malgré les pressions de Bruxelles et les appels des ONG, le gouvernement refuse toujours d'abroger l'article 301 du nouveau code pénal sanctionnant «*les insultes à la nation turque*», qui, sur plaintes d'associations nationalistes, ont valu des poursuites à plus d'une soixantaine d'intellectuels et une condamnation de Hrant Dink à six mois de prison avec sursis.

«*L'inquiétude est d'autant plus forte que les ultranationalistes disposent aussi d'évidentes complicités au sein de certains secteurs de l'Etat*», assure Baskin Oran, qui se refuse à croire que cet assassinat a été «*un acte isolé*», comme l'affirment les autorités.

«**Gangs infiltrés.**» Peu après l'arrestation du jeune tueur, des affiches avec son portrait sont apparues posant sur fond de drapeau turc avec le slogan de Mustapha Kemal: «*La terre de la patrie est sacrée, elle ne*

*peut être abandonnée à son destin.*» La photo avait été mise en scène par les policiers apparemment admiratifs du geste d'Ogün Samast lors de son arrestation, comme le prouve une vidéo pirate (lire ci-dessous). L'enquête a aussi permis de découvrir que l'un des chefs du petit groupe ultranationaliste de Trabzon, où évoluait le tueur, avait par quatre fois informé la police du projet d'un assassinat de Dink. Mais aucune mesure ne fut prise.

Le Premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a fini par admettre lors d'une conférence de presse la réalité, déjà depuis l'époque ottomane, de «*l'existence d'un Etat profond que l'on pourrait décrire comme des gangs infiltrés au sein de l'organisation étatique*». Il reconnaissait, amer: «*Notre nation a déjà payé très cher dans le passé le fait de n'avoir pu éradiquer de tels réseaux.*» Mais il est resté muet sur la montée de cet ultranationalisme qui alimente la haine contre les intellectuels libéraux et les minorités. ◆

MARC SEMO

6 FÉVRIER 2007



# Perquisition chez les Kurdes, manif chez Sarko

**Des tiroirs vides, des chaises renversées et des vêtements éparpillés.** Le centre culturel kurde Ahmet Kaya, mitoyen du QG de campagne de Nicolas Sarkozy, rue d'Enghien (10<sup>e</sup>), a été retrouvé sens dessus dessous, hier matin vers 6 h 30 par un des membres de l'association. « Les forces de l'ordre ont défoncé toutes les portes et ont abîmé l'ensemble du mobilier et des objets. Ils ont également emporté trois ordinateurs et des dossiers », explique-t-on au centre. « Nous avons été saisis pour évaluer si la perquisition s'est déroulée dans un cadre légal », explique l'un des deux avocats de l'association, Jean-Pierre Berthilier. Cette perquisition s'est déroulée dans le cadre d'une enquête sur un réseau soupçonné d'avoir participé au financement d'attentats en Turquie. Dans le même temps, treize Turcs d'origine kurde ont été interpellés en région parisienne. Parmi eux figurent des cadres importants du PKK, organisation séparatiste kurde considérée comme une organisation ter-



Dans le centre culturel kurde Ahmet Kaya.

PHOTOS : T. CAPLAIN / L'ÉQUIPE / 20 MINUTES



Devant le QG de campagne de Sarkozy, rue d'Enghien (10<sup>e</sup>).

roriste par l'Union européenne et la Turquie. Dans l'après-midi, une cinquantaine de Kurdes ont manifesté devant le centre, tout près du QG de Nicolas Sarkozy, mobilisant une présence policière hors du commun. Une dizaine de camions de CRS ont d'ailleurs bloqué les deux entrées de la rue d'Enghien, empêchant ainsi d'au-

tres manifestants de rejoindre le centre culturel. « Cela ne fait qu'illustrer ce qu'on subit depuis que le ministre-candidat s'est installé ici », fustige un passant. Depuis son installation dans le quartier, les riverains dénoncent, en effet, un dispositif policier abusif. Les responsables kurdes ont appelé à une manifestation aujourd'hui. *William Molinié*

## Manifestation des Kurdes dans le 10<sup>e</sup>

**Un millier de Kurdes ont manifesté hier après-midi entre la rue du Château-d'Eau (10<sup>e</sup>) et la place de la République.** Ils ont dénoncé le coup de filet policier qui a conduit à l'arrestation lundi de treize Turcs d'origine kurde, dont des cadres de l'organisation séparatiste kurde PKK. « Nous ne sommes pas des terroristes », ont scandé les manifestants. Le centre culturel kurde Ahmet Kaya a baissé ses rideaux, ainsi que plusieurs boutiques kurdes du quartier. Lundi, le centre avait fait l'objet d'une perquisition dans le cadre d'une enquête soupçonnant un réseau d'avoir participé au financement d'attentats en Turquie.

LE FIGARO 6 FÉVRIER 2007

## Avec 13 personnes interpellées, le PKK est décapité

**TERRORISME.** La Direction centrale de la police judiciaire (DCPJ) a lancé hier un coup de filet contre les dirigeants présumés du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) en France. Treize responsables ou membres de ce groupe, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par l'Union européenne, ont été interpellés dans les Hauts-de-Seine, la Seine-Saint-Denis, le Val-d'Oise et les Yvelines. Douze des personnes placées en garde à vue sont turcs et le treizième australien. Elles sont soupçonnées d'association de malfaiteurs en relation avec une entreprise terroriste, blanchiment et financement du terrorisme en bande organisée. L'opération est l'œuvre de la sous-direction antiterroriste (SDAT) de la DCPJ avec le concours de

l'Office central pour la répression de la grande délinquance financière et de la section financière de la PJ de Versailles. L'affaire remonte à l'été dernier. En juillet 2006, deux individus de nationalité turque se rendent dans un bureau de change parisien avec la bagatelle de 200 000 euros en dollars américains. L'alerte est aussitôt donnée. Les intéressés sont interpellés et une perquisition permet de découvrir 100 000 euros supplémentaires. Les premières investigations permettent également de faire le lien avec une enquête menée par la PJ de Versailles sur un blanchiment présumé de quelque 800 000 euros. Avec un total de plus d'un million d'euros, l'affaire tranche sur le

tout-venant des dossiers instruits contre le PKK en France et en Europe. Un élément supplémentaire intrigue également les enquêteurs. Une analyse scientifique des 200 000 euros saisis dans le bureau de change a établi la présence de traces de cocaïne et d'héroïne. Reste à savoir pourquoi : les billets ont-ils été manipulés par des toxicomanes ? Ont-ils été transportés avec des stupéfiants ou ont-ils fait l'objet d'une transaction avec des trafiquants. En règle générale, les services antiterroristes estiment que le PKK se finance grâce à l'impôt révolutionnaire collecté, plus ou moins volontairement, auprès de la communauté kurde. Le coup de filet d'hier n'a pas visé que des individus. Le local d'un centre culturel kurde a notamment été perquisitionné également. Des ordinateurs et des documents ont été saisis. *J. C.*

Iraq ■ By Edward N. Luttwak

# To help Baghdad, let it fend for itself

**T**he sooner President George W. Bush can get his extra troops for a "surge" in Iraq, the sooner he will be able to announce that all U.S. troops are coming home because of the inevitable failure of the Iraqi government to "live up to its side of the bargain."

In fact, in the run-up to the surge proposal, it is unlikely that there was any real bargaining before Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki was induced to issue promises — particularly in terms of government troops taking on Shiite militias — that he cannot possibly fulfill. Maliki, it seems, simply agreed to whatever was asked of him, to humor the White House and to retain American support for a little while longer.

For the Iraqi Army and police to disarm the Shiite militias, the prime minister would have to be a veritable Stalin or at least a Saddam Hussein, able to terrorize Iraqi soldiers into obedience. Maliki, of course, has no such authority over Iraqi soldiers — indeed he has little authority over his own cabinet, the members of which mostly represent sectarian parties with militias of their own.

Actually the situation is even worse than that, because only the Kurdish militias unfaithfully obey their political leaders — one is the president of Iraq no less, Jalal Talabani — while, for the rest, it may be more true to say that Iraqi militias have political leaders to represent their wishes. The largest and most murderous of the Shiite militias, the Mahdi Army, which is invariably described as belonging to the truculent cleric Moktada al-Sadr, actually is divided under local commanders, some of whom obey Sadr some of the time. In sum, the most that Maliki can do is to not interfere when U.S. troops fight militias.

Nor can the Iraqi leader fulfill his other major promise: to lead a new effort to reconcile the warring sects of Iraq. He is not another Gandhi, but rather a leader of the fiercely sectarian Dawa Party. It is very much as a militant Shiite that he speaks out. It would be remarkable if Maliki could even reconcile with his Shiite rivals, let alone the Sunni insurgents.

Fortunately there is a promising, long-term policy waiting for Bush whenever he decides to call off his surge: disengagement. I don't mean a phased withdrawal, let alone total abandonment.

## If the U.S. disengaged, Sunnis and Shiites would be forced to stabilize relations.

Rather it would start with a tactical change: American soldiers would no longer patrol towns and villages, conduct cordon-and-search operations or man checkpoints. An end to these tasks would allow the greatest part of the troops to head home. The remaining U.S. forces would hole up within safe bases in Iraq to support the elected government, deter foreign invasion, dissuade visible foreign intrusions, and strike at any large concentration of jihadis that should emerge. This would mean that U.S. personnel could not remain embedded in large numbers within the Iraqi Army. At most, the Americans would operate training programs within safe bases.

What would be the result of disengagement along these lines? First, it would not be likely to increase the violence afflicting Iraqi civilians. The total number of U.S. troops in Iraq is so small,

and their linguistic skills so limited, that they have little effect on day-to-day security. Nor have they really protected Iraqis from one another.

Disengagement should actually reduce the violence. U.S. power has been interposed between Arab Sunnis and Arab Shiites. That has relieved the Shiite majority of responsibility to such an extent that many, notably the leaders of the Mahdi Army, feel free to attack the U.S. and British troops who are busy protecting their co-religionist civilians from Sunni insurgents. For many Arab Sunnis, on the other hand, the United States must be the enemy simply because it upholds the majority of the heretical Shiites.

Were the United States to disengage, both Arab Sunnis and Arab Shiites would have to take responsibility for their own security, as the Kurds have been doing all along. Where these three groups are not naturally separated by geography, they would be forced to find ways to stabilize relations. That would most likely involve violence as well as talks, and some forcing of civilians from their homes. But this is happening already, and there is no saying which group would be most favored by a reduction of the U.S. footprint.

One reason for optimism on that score is that the violence itself has been separating previously mixed populations, reducing motives and opportunities for further attacks. That is how civil wars can burn themselves out. In any case, it is time for the Iraqis to make their own history.

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# Les griefs s'accumulent entre la Syrie et l'Irak malgré la reprise des relations diplomatiques

BEYROUTH

CORRESPONDANTE

Moins d'un mois après la visite du président irakien, Jalal Talabani, en Syrie et un peu plus de deux mois après le rétablissement, le 26 novembre 2006, des relations diplomatiques entre Damas et Bagdad, le climat s'est à nouveau détérioré entre les deux pays. Les griefs irakiens contre leur voisin tiennent à la porosité des frontières syriennes, à l'accueil accordé par le régime syrien à des opposants soupçonnés d'aider les djihadistes et aux restrictions nouvellement imposées par les autorités de Damas à l'accès de leur pays aux ressortissants irakiens.

Dimanche 4 février, Ali Al-Dabbagh, porte-parole du gouvernement irakien, a déclaré que c'est de Syrie que viennent 50 % des « Arabes takfiris [djihadistes qui légitiment le meurtre de tous ceux qu'ils jugent comme déviants] » à l'origine des actes de violence en Irak. « Nous avons des preuves et nous l'avons dit aux frères syriens, mais nous voulons aussi le dire à tous les Arabes. (...) La Syrie dit qu'elle n'accorde pas de refuge à des tueurs, mais les groupes terroristes reçoivent toute forme d'aide de gens installés en Syrie », a ajouté M. Dabbagh. Si les autorités irakiennes « avaient la moindre preuve de ce qu'elles affirment, elles l'auraient exhibée depuis

longtemps », a rétorqué Mahdi Dakhallah, ancien ministre syrien de l'information, selon lequel « ces accusations visent à perturber les relations entre les deux pays ».

## Limitation de visas

Pourtant, la tendance semblait plutôt à l'embellie, après la visite de six jours que M. Talabani avait effectuée en Syrie à la mi-janvier. Les questions de sécurité avaient été, entre autres sujets, à l'ordre du jour. Le président syrien, Bachar Al-Assad, avait offert ses bons offices pour contribuer à « réconcilier les Irakiens entre eux et à favoriser l'unité du pays, sa sécurité et sa stabilité ».

February 7, 2007

INTERNATIONAL  
Herald Tribune

Le Monde  
Mardi 6 février 2007



Compte tenu des tiraillements au sein du pouvoir irakien, il est difficile de savoir si M. Talabani est sur la même longueur d'onde que le gouvernement irakien. Ce n'est toutefois pas la première fois que Bagdad, à l'unisson des États-Unis, reproche à Damas, au mieux, de ne pas contrôler hermétiquement ses frontières, au pis, de fermer intentionnellement les yeux sur l'entrée en Irak de djihadistes en provenance de différents

pays. Mais à la différence des États-Unis, l'Irak espérait régler cette affaire par une coopération bilatérale incluant les questions de sécurité.

Le porte-parole du gouvernement irakien a également déploré les limitations récemment imposées par Damas à l'accueil des Irakiens. Les visas sont désormais limités à 15 jours renouvelables une seule fois – au lieu de trois mois plusieurs fois reconductibles dans un passé récent. Selon

le Haut Commissariat aux réfugiés (HCR), 600 000 Irakiens résideraient déjà en Syrie. Les avions d'Iraki Airways ne peuvent plus par ailleurs se rendre en Irak qu'à la condition, selon Damas, de satisfaire aux normes de sécurité et après avoir obtenu une autorisation d'atterrissage préalable. Ces explications techniques n'ont manifestement pas convaincu Bagdad. ■

M. NA.

## Menacé, Pamuk se réfugie aux États-Unis



Le 21 janvier, Orhan Pamuk (à droite) rendait un dernier hommage au journaliste d'origine arménienne Hrant Kiuk assassiné à Istanbul. Menacé lui aussi pour ses propos sur le génocide arménien, l'écrivain a préféré partir. Sipa.

### TURQUIE

Le Prix Nobel de littérature 2006 a quitté la Turquie pour fuir une campagne d'intimidation orchestrée contre lui, en marge de l'assassinat de Hrant Dink.

MENACÉ de mort par les ultranationalistes, Orhan Pamuk, Prix Nobel de littérature 2006, a décidé de se mettre au vert aux États-Unis. L'écrivain turc a pris l'avion jeudi dernier pour se rendre à New York où il a ses habitudes. Il n'a pas commenté publiquement son départ, mais ses proches refusent de parler d'exil. Orhan Pamuk n'a pas fixé de date de retour en Turquie. Sa décision de prendre ses distances avec son pays est liée à l'assassinat le 19 janvier de Hrant Dink, journaliste turc d'origine arménienne et directeur de la revue *Agos*.

Le chantre d'Istanbul est depuis ses déclarations sur le tabou du génocide arménien dans le colimateur de la mouvance nationaliste turque. Victime d'une campagne haineuse, il est contraint de quitter sa ville de prédilection après les développements de l'enquête sur le meurtre de Hrant Dink. Quelques jours après le crime, Yasin

Hayal, l'un des complices d'Ogun Samast, le jeune tueur venu de Trabzon, s'est permis de s'en prendre à l'écrivain lors de son transfert au tribunal d'Istanbul. « *Ohran Pamuk sois intelligent, sois intelligent* », a-t-il hurlé en pénétrant dans le palais de justice. Suspect

d'être le guide de Samast, Hayal avait posé une bombe en 2004 dans un établissement Mac Donald's de Trabzon pour protester contre l'intervention américaine en Irak. Il aurait reconnu avoir poussé l'adolescent à passer à l'acte et lui aurait fourni une arme. Peu après l'envol précipité d'Orhan Pamuk, les chaînes de télévision nationales avaient diffusé des images témoignant du climat délétère qui règne dans l'appareil sécuritaire. On y voyait Samast, un drapeau turc dans les mains, contraint de poser aux côtés des policiers qui venaient de l'arrêter. En fond d'écran, on pouvait lire sur une affiche cette citation d'Atatürk : « *La terre de la patrie est sacrée, elle ne peut être abandonnée à son sort.* » L'affaire aggrave le discrédit de la police turque dont les errements provoquent un profond malaise. Elle s'ajoute aux attaques anonymes contre l'auteur de *Neige* circulant sur Internet. Une organisation dénommée « Commando

turc pour la vengeance » a ainsi diffusé des clichés du cadavre de Hrant Dink et des photos de Pamuk légendées d'un « *il y aura d'autres morts* ».

### Insultes à la nation turque

De retour d'un déplacement à la foire internationale du livre du Caire, le Prix Nobel de littérature a tout d'abord annulé une tournée en Allemagne où vit une forte communauté turque. Il devait se rendre au début du mois à Hambourg, Cologne et Stuttgart pour une série de lectures publiques puis recevoir à Berlin le titre de docteur honoris causa de l'université libre de la capitale allemande. À l'instar d'une douzaine d'intellectuels et d'écrivains, il était placé depuis le meurtre de Hrant Dink sous protection par le ministère de l'Intérieur turc.

Orhan Pamuk enseigne à l'université Columbia de New York, mais son séjour américain devrait être consacré, selon des précisions

des Éditions Gallimard, à l'écriture de son nouveau roman et à la préparation de son discours de réception. « *Il s'éloigne des menaces et cherche la tranquillité* », expliquait-on. Il devrait être à Paris fin avril pour une réception à la Sorbonne et pour la sortie d'un ouvrage intitulé *Istanbul*.

Bête noire des nationalistes, l'écrivain avait déclaré en février 2005 au journal suisse *Tages Anzeiger* : « *Un million d'Arméniens et 30 000 Kurdes ont été tués sur ces terres, mais personne d'autre que moi n'ose le dire.* » Ces propos lui avaient valu des appels à l'autodafé de ses livres et une inculpation pour « *insulte à la nation turque* ». Les poursuites avaient été abandonnées par un gouvernement soucieux de son image auprès de l'Union européenne. En octobre, l'annonce de son prix Nobel avait été fraîchement accueillie dans son propre pays.

THIERRY OBERLÉ

**LE FIGARO**

jeudi 8 février 2007

# U.S. blames Iran for Iraqi arms surge

From news reports

## American helicopter crashes, killing 7

**BAGHDAD:** U.S. officials say they believe that Iran is supplying Shiite militias with new weapons, including more powerful roadside bombs, some of which they say could have found their way into the hands of Sunni insurgents who operate around Taji, north of Baghdad.

A Sunni group linked to Al Qaeda on Wednesday claimed responsibility for the downing of a Sea Knight helicopter that crashed in the Taji area, killing all seven people on board. It was the fifth chopper lost in Iraq in just over two weeks.

A senior U.S. defense official said the helicopter did not appear to have been hit by hostile fire, but an Iraqi Air Force officer said that it was downed by an anti-aircraft missile.

In Baghdad, meanwhile, a U.S. military spokesman, Major General William Caldwell, said Wednesday that the long-awaited security operation in the Iraqi capital was under way, a day after Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki acknowledged that the plan to pacify Baghdad had been slow to start and had allowed insurgents time to step up attacks that have killed hundreds of Iraqis in recent weeks.

U.S. military officials have said the operation began to be put in place when President George W. Bush announced it Jan. 10, and Caldwell said Wednesday that it was "ongoing as we speak." Officials have said there would be no announced start of the security sweep but that it would instead build gradually.

General Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Tuesday that the number of improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, that had been placed alongside roads or in public places in Iraq had "doubled over the course of the last year," and he blamed Iran for supplying the most deadly of them.

The use of "explosively formed projectiles, which are a much more deadly form, that are coming into Iraq from Iran," had become much more prevalent, Pace said.

At the same time, greatly improved equipment, like electronic jammers, as well as new tactics and techniques for finding and defusing the explosive devices, meant that the average roadside bomb was taking a lower toll, Pace told the Senate Armed Services Committee. The result was that, despite the increase in such devices, the casualty toll attributed to them had stayed roughly even.

"The basic material for an IED is ammunition," Pace said. "So far we have cleared 430,000 tons of ammunition from over 15,000 sites in Iraq. The amount of ammunition available is incredible."

The helicopter that went down Wednesday was a Marine twin-rotor CH-46. It crashed in an insurgent stronghold



AP Television News, via The Associated Press

The U.S. helicopter that crashed Wednesday northwest of Baghdad, killing 7.

about 30 kilometers, or 20 miles, northwest of the capital, Caldwell said.

"A quick reaction force is on site and the investigation is going on as we speak," he said.

The military said later that the helicopter went down in the volatile Anbar Province while conducting routine operations and that all seven crew members and passengers were killed.

U.S. forces sealed off the area and helicopters buzzed overhead as flames and a huge plume of black smoke billowed from the wreckage in an open field.

A U.S. defense official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the investigation was still under way, said the crash appeared to have been related to mechanical problems.

But an Iraqi Air Force officer, who was familiar with the investigation but declined to be identified because he was disclosing confidential information, said the helicopter went down after it was hit by an anti-aircraft missile.

Witnesses also said the helicopter had been shot down in a field in the Sheik Amir area northwest of Baghdad in a Sunni-dominated area between the Taji Air Base and Karmah.

The claim of responsibility came in an Internet statement signed by the Islamic State in Iraq, an umbrella group of several Sunni insurgent groups, including Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia. The same group claimed responsibility for downing two other helicopters recently.

The authenticity of the statement, posted on a Web forum where the group often issues statements, could not be independently confirmed.

The military has said the four other helicopters that have crashed since Jan. 20 were believed to have been shot down, raising new questions about whether Iraqi insurgents are using more sophisticated weapons or whether U.S. tactics need changing.

Iraqi insurgents have used heavy machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades and shouldered-fired SA-7 anti-aircraft missiles throughout the conflict.

Bush is increasing the number of U.S. troops in Iraq by 21,500, including 17,500 for Baghdad, as part of the new security plan. But the series of helicopter crashes underscores the dangers facing American troops as they step up their presence.

The U.S. military relies heavily on helicopters to avoid roadside bombs and insurgent ambushes. Any new threat to helicopters would be a serious challenge.

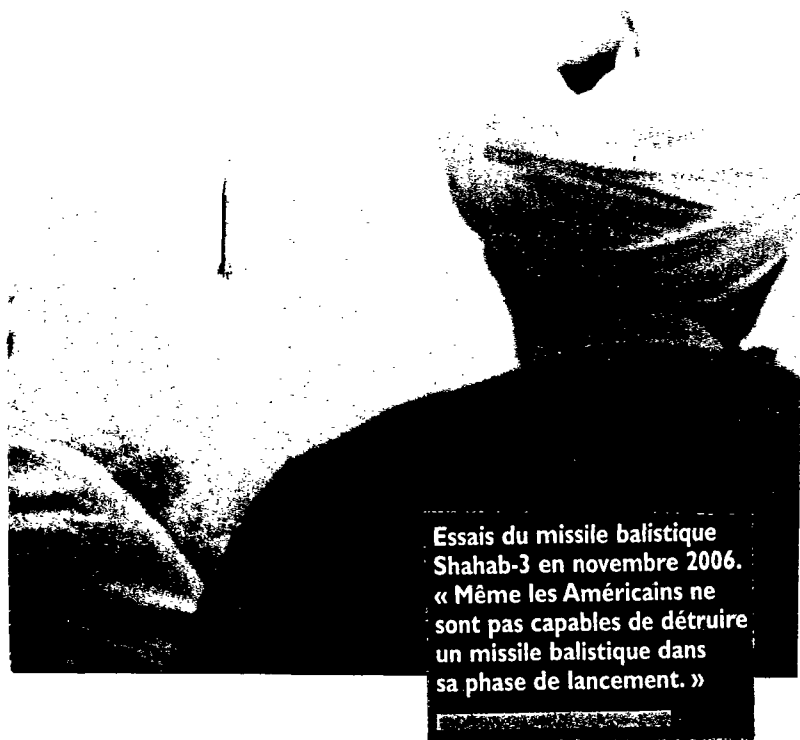
At least 15 Iraqis died in attacks throughout the country Wednesday. Two employees of the government-funded Iraqi Media Network in Baghdad were killed and a female government official was shot and killed while she was riding to work with her husband in the northern city of Mosul. (AP, IHT)

February 8, 2007  
Herald Tribune



# Si l'Iran avait la bombe

Que se passerait-il si l'Iran parvenait à se doter de l'arme atomique ? Et si Téhéran déclençait une frappe nucléaire contre Israël ? Quels pays du Proche et du Moyen-Orient pourraient être tentés de se doter à leur tour de la puissance nucléaire si l'Iran en disposait ? A ces questions posées par les déclarations aventureuses du chef de l'Etat, Vincent Jauvert apporte les réponses des principaux spécialistes des questions stratégiques



Essais du missile balistique Shahab-3 en novembre 2006. « Même les Américains ne sont pas capables de détruire un missile balistique dans sa phase de lancement. »

## L'Iran doté d'une bombe atomique serait-il dangereux ou pas ?

Commençons par insister sur deux points : un, l'Iran n'a pas pour l'instant d'arme atomique et dément vouloir en acquérir ; deux, les experts pensent que les Iraniens cherchent bien à se doter secrètement d'une capacité nucléaire militaire mais qu'ils n'y parviendront pas avant deux, voire cinq ans.

Cela dit, au cours de son interview controversée avec « le Nouvel Observateur »,

Jacques Chirac a déclaré que, s'il avait d'ores et déjà « une ou deux bombes », l'Iran ne serait finalement pas « très dangereux ». Pourquoi ? Parce que, selon lui, les leaders de la République islamique savent que, s'ils utilisaient ces engins contre Israël, « Téhéran serait rasé ». Jamais un chef d'Etat occidental n'avait parlé publiquement de la sorte.

Que pensent les spécialistes de ces considérations stratégiques fort peu diplomatiques (et, de ce fait, amendées le lendemain) ? A l'évidence, beaucoup partagent la vision politiquement incorrecte de Jacques Chirac.

Selon Hubert Védrine, les experts sont « nombreux dans le monde, et même aux Etats-Unis », à penser que l'on pourrait, sans trop de danger, s'accommoder d'un Iran nucléaire. « Un pays qui possède la bombe ne s'en sert pas, explique l'ancien ministre des Affaires étrangères. Il entre automatiquement dans le schéma de la dissuasion et ne prend pas de risque absurde. » Le président du prestigieux Institut international d'Etudes stratégiques de Londres, François Heisbourg, est d'accord : « Le danger primordial, ce n'est pas un Iran nucléaire – s'il l'attaquait, il commettrait

un suicide – mais bien, comme Jacques Chirac l'a dit, la prolifération des armes atomiques. »

D'autres géostratèges ne sont pas aussi optimistes. « On dit que le nucléaire rend sage. Je n'en suis pas si sûr, explique Bruno Tertrais, spécialiste en dissuasion à la Fondation pour la Recherche stratégique. Parce qu'il se sent invulnérable, un pays doté de l'arme atomique se comporte différemment dans sa région. S'il avait la bombe, l'Iran pourrait se montrer plus agressif, et par exemple tenter de régler en sa faveur l'affaire des îlots du détroit d'Ormuz, voire contester à l'Arabie

Saoudite la garde des lieux saints de l'Islam. Et puis, surtout, qui peut être certain que les leaders iraniens sont versés dans les mêmes raisonnements stratégiques que nous, qu'ils ne sont pas prêts au suicide collectif ? »

## Que se passerait-il si l'Iran lançait un (hypothétique) missile nucléaire contre Israël ?

A cette question effrayante (et qui ne se poserait que dans le scénario cauchemar où les Iraniens feraient fi de la dissuasion),

Jacques Chirac a répondu de façon pour le moins approximative. Il a d'abord affirmé que, si l'Iran envoyait une bombe atomique sur Israël, l'engin « n'aurait pas fait 200 mètres dans l'atmosphère » que Téhéran serait anéanti. Or les spécialistes sont formels : cette affirmation n'a tout simplement pas de sens. « Israël ne pourrait pas frapper l'Iran instantanément, explique Yves Boyer, directeur adjoint de la Fondation pour la Recherche stratégique. Même si les satellites israéliens ou américains repéraient très tôt le départ d'un engin, la riposte ne pourrait

pas toucher Téhéran avant plusieurs dizaines de minutes, voire plus, c'est-à-dire après que le missile iranien eut lui-même atteint Israël ou eut été anéanti en vol. »

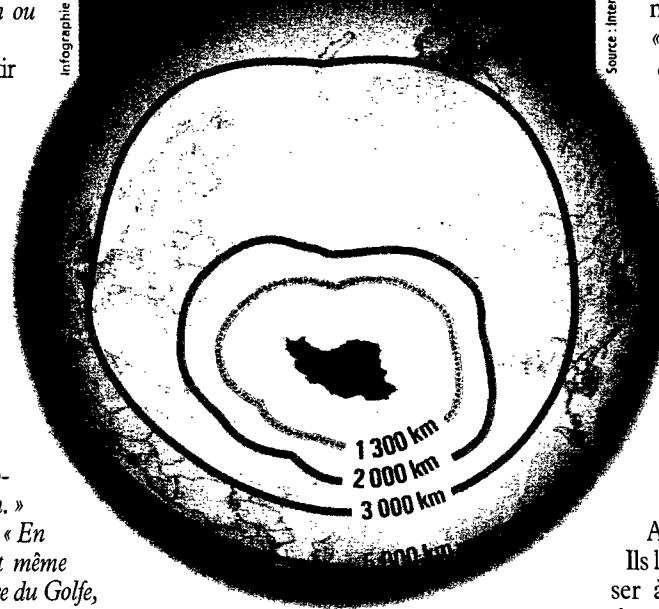
Jacques Chirac a ensuite modifié son propos et affirmé qu'en fait, « si [une bombe] était lancée, elle serait immédiatement détruite avant de quitter le ciel iranien ». Là encore, d'après tous les spécialistes consultés, cette nouvelle affirmation, pourtant mûrement réfléchie, est tout aussi inexacte. « Même les Américains ne sont pas encore capables de détruire un missile balistique dans sa phase de lancement. Cela n'est possible que plus tard, en phase dite intermédiaire, c'est-à-dire dans la stratosphère, ou au cours de la descente – dans tous les cas très loin du lieu de lancement de l'engin », explique Pascal Boniface, directeur de l'Institut de Relations internationales et stratégiques (Iris). Yves Boyer ajoute : « Au mieux, les missiles anti-missiles dont dispose Israël, les Arrow, pourraient anéantir la bombe à mi-parcours, donc dans le ciel irakien ou jordanien. »

Plus important encore : un tir atomique serait-il intercepté à coup sûr, comme le sous-entend Jacques Chirac ? A cette question cruciale tous les experts répondent sans hésiter : non. « Loin s'en faut, précise même Yves Boyer. Les Arrow ont un pourcentage de réussite élevé, mais ce n'est pas 100%, ni même 80%... » Il ajoute : « En fait, ce n'est pas comme cela, par une interception en vol, que les Israéliens et les Américains espèrent avant tout stopper un éventuel tir nucléaire iranien. » Comment s'y prendraient-ils ? « En détruisant le missile au sol avant même qu'il soit lancé. Car, depuis la guerre du Golfe, le Pentagone a dépensé des sommes considérables en satellites de reconnaissance et d'écoute afin de repérer tout préparatif d'un départ de missile et de pouvoir frapper l'engin préventivement. Mais là encore le résultat n'est pas assuré à 100%. » Bref, dans tous les cas de figure et si, malgré les risques de représailles massives, l'Iran décidait d'attaquer l'Etat hébreu, « Israël pourrait être touché », dit Pascal Boniface.

Dernier point : une frappe iranienne qui aurait atteint son but en Israël pourrait-elle priver Tel-Aviv des moyens d'une riposte nucléaire ? « Non, car la force de frappe israélienne est à la fois constituée de missiles sol-sol Jéricho mais aussi de bombes et de missiles embarqués sur des avions et des sous-marins, dit Yves Boyer. Et même si Israël n'était pas en mesure

## La portée des principaux missiles iraniens

<b>X-55</b> Opérationnel	<b>Shahab-3</b> Opérationnel	<b>Shahab-4</b> En développement	<b>Shahab-5</b> En développement
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de riposter, conclut Bruno Tertrais, les Etats-Unis ne manqueraient pas de le faire à sa place au moyen de leurs missiles ou de leurs bombardiers intercontinentaux. » Autrement dit, sur ce point Jacques Chirac a raison : Téhéran serait bien « rasé », et « probablement tout le pays avec », précise Yves Boyer.

### Si l'Iran avait la bombe, combien de pays chercheraient à s'en doter aussi ?

Pour Jacques Chirac, le vrai danger, c'est la prolifération. Si l'Iran se dote de la bombe, expliquait-il au « Nouvel Observateur », il serait « très tentant pour d'autres pays de la

région » d'essayer, eux aussi, d'en acquiescer une. « Pourquoi, demandait-il, l'Arabie Saoudite ne le ferait-elle pas à son tour ? Pourquoi n'aidait-elle pas l'Egypte à le faire également ? » Sur ce sujet, les experts sont d'accord avec le chef de l'Etat : au cas où Téhéran accèderait à l'arme nucléaire ou serait sur le point de le faire, le Moyen-Orient connaîtrait une course folle à la bombe atomique.

D'ailleurs, tous les grands rivaux régionaux de l'Iran sont déjà dans les starting-blocks. Tous ont fait connaître l'année dernière leur intention d'accéder, comme Téhéran, au nucléaire civil : la Turquie d'abord, au printemps, puis l'Egypte, en octobre, et enfin l'Arabie Saoudite en décembre. Et les menaces se sont faites plus précises encore. « En décembre, raconte François Heisbourg, le patron des services secrets saoudiens a déclaré que, si l'Iran poursuivait son programme, d'autres pays chercheraient à en faire autant. L'avertissement était très clair. » Début janvier, la menace est même venue de plus haut. Le président égyptien lui-même a prévenu publiquement la communauté internationale : « Nous ne voulons pas d'arme atomique dans la région mais nous sommes obligés de nous défendre, a déclaré Hosni Moubarak. Nous devons avoir les armes appropriées. » Ces déclarations sont passées inaperçues dans les médias internationaux mais elles ont alerté toutes les chancelleries de la planète – et l'Elysée.

### Pourquoi Jacques Chirac a-t-il tenu de tels propos ?

Le discours approximatif de Jacques Chirac ne vise qu'un seul objectif : contrer les Etats-Unis. Car, depuis quelques semaines, les Américains font le siège des Européens. Ils leur demandent avec insistance d'imposer à l'Iran de nouvelles sanctions plus drastiques que celles prises par le Conseil de Sécurité en décembre dernier. En réponse, et à l'instar de beaucoup d'autres, Jacques Chirac voudrait que les Etats-Unis acceptent une autre solution : au lieu de chercher à isoler l'Iran un peu plus encore, parler avec la République islamique. De quoi ? De la sécurité de l'ensemble du Moyen-Orient. Pourquoi ? Afin, justement, qu'aucun pays de la région n'ait besoin de la bombe, ni l'Iran, ni l'Arabie Saoudite, ni aucun autre. Ce n'est pas gagné.

VINCENT JAUVERT

Infographie : Mehdi / « le Nouvel Observateur »

Source : International Crisis Group - www.globalsecurity.org

# Plan offered to revise law on insulting Turkishness

By Sebnem Arsu

**ISTANBUL:** A group of civic organizations submitted suggestions Thursday for rewording a section of the Turkish penal code under which noted intellectuals and writers have been charged with the crime of insulting the Turkish identity and state.

But some groups broke with the main umbrella organization and said the law need not be revoked, not amended.

Even Deputy Prime Minister Abdullahi Sener said that textual changes would not mean much in themselves.

Many in Turkey consider the law, known as Article 301, to be at the root of the murder of the Armenian-Turkish journalist Hrant Dink last month. According to this argument, his conviction under the article, for comments he made about the mass killings of Armenians by Turkish forces in the early 20th century, branded him a traitor in the eyes of many Turks and put his life in jeopardy.

For Turkey, the Armenian question is among the thorniest issues of free speech, since a characterization of the killings as genocide is often interpreted by the courts as an "insult against the Turkish state" under Article 301.

Late last year, following harsh EU criticism of Article 301, the government indicated that it was receptive to changes in the law, but not its abolition.

That was not enough for one civic group — the Turkish Chamber of Doctors — which broke with the umbrella group that made the proposal Thursday.

"Leading up to the general elections in November, the government has escaped from political responsibility on a controversial issue like Article 301 in fear of losing voters," said Gencyay Gurun, the general secretary of the doctors' group. "Changes are only a facade and can never prevent bitter consequences, as we've witnessed with Mr. Dink's murder."

Signed by 10 civic organizations, the proposal aims to better distinguish between legal criticism and illegal insult. Instead of "insulting Turkishness" it the draft issued Thursday proposed new wording, of "openly abusing and deriding" the Turkish identity.

Turkey's Kurds

## Let justice be done

VAN

A human life is worth 60 sheep

SIXTEEN years ago, Semsettin Korkmaz, a member of a government-run Kurdish militia called "the village guards", was hunting separatist PKK rebels near Turkey's border with Iraq when his left foot was blown off by a landmine. The Turkish state, he says, offered neither medical care nor compensation, leaving him to hobble on a wooden foot that he made for himself.

Now, "thanks to Rojbin", he feels "like a man again". Rojbin Tugan, a 35-year-old human-rights lawyer, last year managed to get Mr Korkmaz fitted with a prosthetic foot, so adding to her reputation in Turkey's mainly Kurdish south-east as a dogged defender of the poor or oppressed. Heads turn as she enters restaurants; patrons vie to pay her bill.

Miss Tugan's myriad crusades include a project to rid the mountainous terrain bordering Iran and Iraq of tens of thousands of landmines planted by Turkish security forces and PKK rebels alike during the Kurdish insurgency in

the 1990s. At least 68 people—nine of them children—were killed and 152 others injured in landmine blasts in 2005 alone. When Miss Tugan is not bullying the government to demarcate mined areas, she is pressing for compensation for the thousands of villagers who lost loved ones and livestock in the armed forces' scorched-earth campaign against the PKK. Recently, she won 14,400 liras (\$10,000) for a client who lost 60 sheep and 14,500 liras for another who lost a son: "For the Turkish authorities", she notes, "a human life is worth 60 sheep."

Miss Tugan's brush with the authorities began early. Her father, a Kurdish-rights activist, was frequently arrested, tortured and jailed. Special security forces would ransack the family home in the province of Hakkari. Incensed by such indignities, Miss Tugan resolved to become Hakkari's first woman lawyer, a dream she fulfilled in 1996.

She instantly became a target for the town's military commanders. Detained numerous times, Miss Tugan's closest shave came when she was held at the local headquarters of the secret police. Happily, an intrepid prosecutor came to the rescue, vowing to press charges of attempted murder against the general who had ordered her arrest. "He saved my life but lost his job," she recalls.

At least for some officials, Miss Tugan is now a treasured asset, one who can help dispel fears among Kurdish women that inoculation campaigns are a Turkish plot to make them barren. But not everyone is happy. Miss Tugan continues to be threatened—including, it seems, by her former captor. Determined she may be, but she is also scared.



Lawyer and client

The umbrella group's spokesman, Davut Okutcu, said "we do not claim that this is the best version."

"We consider this draft as an encouragement to support better applications of law, which will ultimately be worded by Turkey's lawmakers," Okutcu said.

The next step is for the government to assess the proposal and decide on the exact wording it will propose to Parliament for changing the law. Political analysts say the government did not take the lead in order not to provoke the nationalists.

Perihan Magden, a columnist for the Radikal newspaper who was given private police protection following Dink's death, said the suggested changes were too mild to make a difference.

"The fact that I have to live in my own country under police protection shows the government acknowledgment that something's is wrong," said Magden, who was once charged under a separate law that penalizes those who discourage military service. "They can and they have to prevent this."

## Briefing Dealing with Iran

The Economist February 10th 2007



## A countdown to confrontation

### Can anything deter Iran from its nuclear ambitions?

**T**HE streets of Iran are festooned this week with revolutionary bunting. Black and green banners commemorating the martyrdom of the third Shia imam, Hussein, still flutter from lamp-posts, even though the mournful Ashura rites of late January are over. They now hang beside flags looking forward to February 11th, when Iranians mark the anniversary of the Islamic revolution of 1979.

Such celebrations usually go unnoticed in America. But not this time. The two countries are moving slowly towards confrontation, both over Iraq—where Iran is meddling—and over Iran's nuclear programme. Its provocative president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (above right), has hinted that February's celebrations will include "good news" about the progress of nuclear work. Iran says it is fiddling with uranium and plutonium to produce more electricity. But America and many other countries suspect it is building a bomb.

Last month, when President George Bush announced the deployment of extra troops in Iraq, he also laid out a new strategy to confront Iran. A second carrier strike group, led by the USS *John Stennis*, is about

to join the USS *Dwight Eisenhower* in the Gulf region. American aircraft will patrol more aggressively close to Iran's airspace. At about the same time as Mr Bush's speech, American forces raided an Iranian office in Arbil, in Iraq, and arrested five men. On January 26th Mr Bush appeared to confirm that he had authorised American forces to kill or capture Iranian agents in Iraq, where they are accused of providing training and sophisticated weapons to Iraqi insurgents. In the words of John Negroponte, America's outgoing director of national intelligence, Iran is beginning to cast a shadow over the whole Middle East.

The United States says it has no intention of attacking Iran's nuclear facilities. Robert Gates, the new defence secretary, stresses that "We are not planning for a war with Iran." But he will not take the military option off the table. One line of thought is that since Mr Bush is not up for re-election, and because his legacy will be defined mostly in terms of security, he might not be prepared to leave office with the Iranian question unresolved, especially if he looks likely to be succeeded by a Democrat. That points to the possibility, at

least, of a military strike.

Those keen to avoid a conflict over Iran's nuclear ambitions now pin their hopes on diplomacy toughened by sanctions. Iran has repeatedly rejected an offer made more than a year ago by Britain, France, Germany, America, Russia and China to persuade it to stop its troubling activities. That offer included a proper dialogue with America, improved trade and political ties, co-operation in less proliferation-prone nuclear technologies that would have allowed Iran to produce electricity, but not weapons, and discussions on regional security. Now tougher measures are being tried.

After months of haggling, in late December the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1737, for the first time ordering, rather than asking, Iran to halt its suspect nuclear activities. Sanctions were imposed on ten organisations and 12 individuals involved in either Iran's nuclear or its missile programmes, or both. Further measures may follow unless, within 60 days, Iran suspends its uranium and plutonium-related work and resumes talks.

Time is almost up, and Iran remains defiant. Its president has called the UN resolution a "piece of torn paper". That attitude seems self-defeating. Iran is not isolated, as North Korea is: it depends heavily on trade, and not just as a seller of oil. Two-thirds of its population is under the age of 30, and unemployment is high; it needs to attract as much outside investment for its oil and gas industry, and finance for building roads and other projects, as possible. ▶▶

Already, the investment pinch from sanctions is being felt across the country: the government now offers cash for some priority jobs, such as building oil refineries, but it struggles to attract reputable international contractors to build them. Sanctions have a better chance of working here than they did in North Korea. But will better be good enough?

For Iran's clerical regime, gaining advanced nuclear technology means irresistible regional clout. By declaring Iran a member of the "nuclear club", Mr Ahmadinejad puts his country on a par with India and China—as well as Israel (see box). Meanwhile, at home, nuclear achievements are a way to rally popular support round Iran's "inalienable" right to whatever nuclear technologies it chooses. The regime calculates that it can ride out sanctions, and so far it has been proved right. Ordinary Iranians barely feel them: the shops of Tehran are still crammed with foreign goods, from televisions to cornflakes.

Iran has also been doing its damndest to exploit what it perceives to be divisions within the Security Council, and especially among the six heavies that have taken the diplomatic lead against it. They are in many ways a disparate bunch. Rus-

sia, the country Iranian officials have been counting on to protect them from real pressure, deliberately dragged its feet at the UN. It knew America was impatient for results and wanted to flex its muscles. But Russia also wanted to protect its investment in the nuclear reactor it is building for Iran at Bushehr. Tortuous exemptions were written into Resolution 1737 to enable Russian companies to be paid for construction costs, the future supply of reactor fuel, and even for anti-aircraft missiles recently sold to Iran (see page 41) that could be used to protect its nuclear sites against attack. China, a big buyer of Iranian oil, is no keener on sanctions than Russia is.

Yet the six have nonetheless managed to keep in step. Over the past year America's secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, has persuaded Mr Bush to keep the diplomacy on track, both by accepting that Iran can have a nuclear programme (just not a weapons-building one) and by agreeing that, if Iran does decide to suspend its nuclear work, America will join in serious talks "any time, anywhere". Those were big concessions from what Iran likes to call "the Great Satan". Meanwhile Russia, for all its truculence, has repeatedly delayed supplying the nuclear fuel for Bushehr.



Small but defiant

So the six all still see mileage in their diplomatic efforts. And already, in diplomatic terms, Iran is quite isolated. Although it claims the backing of the 114 members of the non-aligned movement for its right to enrich uranium, many are unhappy at its defiance of the Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN's nuclear guardian.

The ponderous process of adopting a new sanctions resolution at the UN will probably get under way next month. But Iran is already feeling a much sharper pinch from financial sanctions that do not require further UN approval. Operating under the United States Patriot Act, as well as on the basis of a presidential directive adopted in 2005 to target the funds of proliferators, officials from America's Treasury Department have been criss-crossing the globe to persuade governments and banks to curb their business with Iran.

As a result, Iran is finding it increasingly expensive to borrow money. Foreign government-backed credits are getting harder to come by; Japan is among countries that have scaled back their plans to invest in Iran's oil and gas industries. Even legitimate businesses are suffering, as foreign banks find it hard to be certain that the transactions they handle are not being diverted, for nefarious purposes, through Iran's network of front companies. All dollar exchanges, including small transfers for private individuals, have become extremely complicated, and it is very hard to use a credit card to buy online from inside Iran. Already capital is fleeing the country, much of it reportedly ending up in Dubai.

Inside Iran a heated debate is now under way over how to respond to its growing isolation and the prospect of more sanctions to come. There are signs of rising popular discontent with Mr Ahmadine- ▶▶

#### Israel and Iran

## How MAD can they be?

TEL AVIV

### Deterrence and its limits

**E**VEN if Iran got the bomb, it would know that Israel had one too, and that knowledge would deter both countries from using their weapons, just as the doctrine of "Mutual Assured Destruction" kept America and the Soviet Union at peace during the cold war. That is the soothing assumption of those who say Israel can live with a nuclear Iran. Is it correct?

In the cold war, the foes were both big countries with big populations. But at 65m Iran's population is ten times bigger than Israel's, and Iran is 80 times bigger. In 2001 Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Iran's once and perhaps future president, mused ominously in a Friday sermon that "an atomic bomb would not leave anything in Israel, but the same thing would just produce damage in the Muslim world".

This lack of symmetry may be more apparent than real. Israel is reckoned to have around 200 nuclear warheads, more than enough to destroy all Iran's towns and cities. Some strategists argue that tiny Israel could be disabled by a first strike. But to prevent any Israeli retaliation, an Iranian attack would not only have to overcome Israel's Arrow

air-defence missiles and destroy its airfields but also penetrate the silos of its nuclear-tipped Jericho missiles. In recent years, moreover, Israel is rumoured to have put nuclear cruise missiles on board its three Dolphin submarines.

In contemplating an attack on Israel, Iran would have also to weigh the (possibly nuclear) reaction of the United States. "In the event of any attack on Israel," George Bush said last May, "the United States will come to Israel's aid." If Iran got the bomb, America might formalise this promise—and maybe put an umbrella of "extended deterrence" over other American allies in the region.

All in all, this suggests that deterrence can be made to work. But for Israel it would still be a gamble. During the cold war America and the Soviet Union communicated constantly in order to avoid a miscalculation. Even so, they came close to nuclear war over Cuba. Iran, in contrast, refuses to talk to "the Zionist entity", and its president yearns noisily for Israel's disappearance. Indeed, his apocalyptic threats have started to erode the previous conviction of most Israeli analysts that, for all its proclaimed religiosity, Iran is still a rational actor.

► jad's firebrand rhetoric and his capricious management of the economy—as well as worries about sanctions, and how much the nuclear programme will cost Iran. More pragmatic politicians, such as Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, would prefer to re-open negotiations with the West to avoid open confrontation.

When Mr Ahmadinejad and his allies did badly in recent local elections, criticism came into the open. Last week, for the first time, a newspaper editorial even argued the case for suspending nuclear work, as the UN has demanded. Mr Ahmadinejad's wings have been clipped a little. But there is no sign yet that Iran's leaders will reconsider their nuclear ambitions.

### The ticking atom bomb

Last summer Mr Negroponte reckoned that Iran could become a nuclear power sometime between 2010 and the middle of the next decade. A recent study by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London reckoned that it would take two to three years "at the earliest" for Iran to go nuclear.

Once Iran has learned how to enrich uranium to make nuclear fuel, it will quickly be able to make highly enriched uranium for bombs. So far, it has assembled two experimental "cascades" of 164 interconnected high-speed centrifuges to produce small amounts of the low-enriched sort. It may soon announce the first cascades in the underground hall at Natanz, where it seeks to link up 3,000 centrifuges by June. Once up and running, these could produce enough highly enriched uranium for one bomb in less than a year—if left undisturbed.

Nuclear experts, however, are sceptical about Iran's real progress. Running high-speed centrifuges reliably for a long period of time is a difficult task which Iranian engineers appear not to have mastered. According to the IISS, setting up the 3,000-centrifuge plant would be a "political act", designed to show defiance and improve Iran's bargaining position if negotiations are resumed.

Israel, which has tried for years to mobilise international action against Iran, suddenly appears more sanguine. Ehud Olmert, the prime minister, this week insisted "there is still time" to apply diplomatic pressure. Many people, including America's vice-president, Dick Cheney, have suggested that Israel could take matters into its own hands and bomb Iran's nuclear facilities as it did Saddam Hussein's Osirak nuclear reactor in 1981. But the task may defeat even Israel's air force. Iran has buried many of its nuclear facilities deep underground and has carefully dispersed them, so there is no single target. Senior Israeli security officials argue that, if there is to be military action, it should be carried out by the United States.

Arguably, the best opportunity for a surgical strike has already passed. The Isfahan conversion plant, which produces uranium hexafluoride (UF<sub>6</sub>, the uranium compound that is passed as a gas into the centrifuges to be enriched), is above ground and vulnerable to attack. It was the first part of the nuclear programme to be restarted by Iran in 2004, and has since produced about 250 tonnes of UF<sub>6</sub>—enough for 30-50 atomic bombs. But it is now thought to be stored in underground bunkers, much harder to hit.

Another choke-point is the Natanz enrichment facility; but this is buried some 15-18 metres under soil and concrete, and modern bunker-busting bombs might not be able to destroy it. The use of ground forces to secure the area long enough to do the job would be highly risky; the use of a low-yield nuclear weapon, as some suggest, might work physically but is hardly conscionable politically—or morally.

In any case, centrifuges can be rebuilt and hidden elsewhere in a large, mountainous country like Iran. A study last August by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a think-tank in Washington, DC, said there were 18 known nuclear sites, many of them underground or close to populated areas, and perhaps as many as 70 unknown ones. One place alone, the Parchin military complex (where research on nuclear warheads may be being done), has hundreds of bunkers and several tunnels.

Many of the sites are protected, and any operation would have to suppress at least part of Iran's air defences, and all its missiles and naval power, to limit any retaliation. The CSIS study concluded that even a large-scale attack, taking several weeks to complete, could leave much of Iran's technological base intact, and allow the coun-

try eventually to reconstitute an underground nuclear programme. In short, it would be very difficult to stop a determined Iranian regime from going nuclear, either by military action or by sanctions, if it were willing to pay the cost.

### The cost of striking

Military action could be painful not just for Iran, but for America as well. The Muslim world would see it as yet another instance of "attacking Islam". Iran, moreover, has several means of retaliation. It could fire missiles at American bases or Israel, perhaps tipped with chemical or biological weapons. It could also attempt to close off the flow of oil from the Gulf.

A less overt response would be to stir up its allies to attack coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran could do much worse than its current meddling in those places. (Indeed, though its political influence in Iraq is undisputed, the scale of its military involvement in the anti-American insurgency has still not been proved for sure.) It could also resort to terrorist tactics farther afield, perhaps even assisting al-Qaeda, some of whose leaders may be under house arrest in Iran.

According to Mr Negroponte, the ability to carry out terrorist attacks is "a key element" of Iran's security strategy. "It believes this capability helps safeguard the regime by deterring United States or Israeli attacks, distracting and weakening Israel, enhancing Iran's regional influence through intimidation, and helping to drive the United States from the region," he said last month. For the moment, everything Iran does is drawing America in closer, and the risks of an Iranian miscalculation are growing by the day. But America is still uncertain which is worse: to let Iran go nuclear, or to try to stop it by force. ■



How much will she suffer for what her government does?



## La Syrie ferme sa frontière irakienne

Un million de réfugiés irakiens en Syrie sont menacés d'expulsion.

UNE NOUVELLE catastrophe humanitaire pourrait ajouter à la déstabilisation du Proche-Orient. La Syrie a décidé d'instaurer des visas pour les réfugiés irakiens, au nombre d'un million environ sur son sol. Quant à ceux qui sont déjà installés en Syrie, leur sort est incertain. Des représentants du Haut Commissariat aux réfugiés de l'ONU (HCR) tentaient hier d'éclaircir la question avec le ministre des Affaires étrangères, Walid Mouallem.

La nouvelle attitude de Damas, si elle se confirme, serait d'autant plus inquiétante que la Syrie est pratiquement le seul pays à accueillir les Irakiens fuyant la guerre civile. «*Au début, expliquait en décembre Laurens Jolles, le représentant local du HCR, c'étaient les ex-dignitaires baasistes du régime de Saddam Hussein qui débarquaient. Maintenant, toutes les confessions et tous les secteurs de la société se présentent à la frontière.*»

Jusqu'ici, la Syrie leur ouvrait les bras sans compter, comme elle continue à le faire pour les ressortissants des autres pays arabes, autorisés à entrer sans visa. En ce qui concerne les Irakiens, la fidélité à l'idéologie panarabe du parti Baas s'accompagnait d'un calcul politique, le régime pouvant opposer sa générosité à l'égoïsme des autres «*frères arabes*».

Damas aurait décidé de mettre fin à cette exception. Les Irakiens se verraient désormais délivrer un visa de quinze jours, au terme duquel ils devraient se présenter aux services d'immigration pour obtenir une prolongation, «*en donnant des raisons*



Des réfugiés à la frontière syrienne. La Syrie est pratiquement le seul pays à accueillir les Irakiens fuyant la guerre civile. Louai Beshara/AFP.

précises», selon Ibrahim Darraji, universitaire proche du régime. «*Les autorités se sont mises également à vérifier les permis de séjour des Irakiens qui vivent en Syrie et à expulser ceux qui commettaient des infractions ou des crimes*», écrit Darraji dans le quotidien *Al-Watan*.

Des réfugiés irakiens ont manifesté devant les bureaux du HCR à Damas aux cris de «*non à la déportation*», ou «*le retour signifie la mort*». La présence d'un million d'Irakiens au milieu de 18 millions de Syriens ne peut passer inaperçue. Certains faubourgs comme celui de Jarramana sont devenus de petits Bagdad. Des comédiens exilés jouent à guichets fermés des pièces satiriques sur la situation irakienne dans deux théâtres de la capitale. Mais le gouvernement estime que l'hospitalité syrienne a atteint ses limites. «*La colère monte, dit Ayman Abd el-Nour, membre réformateur du parti Baas. Les Irakiens ne respectent pas nos traditions de politesse, ils sont durs et brutaux. Les*

*Syriens n'osent plus sortir dans les parcs publics. Les jeunes Irakiens importunent les femmes. Moi-même je n'y vais plus depuis que ma femme a été blessée par un pétard.*» Les réfugiés n'ayant pas de papiers, «*on ne peut en général pas les poursuivre*».

Les réfugiés sont accusés de favoriser la montée des prix des denrées alimentaires et de l'immobilier. Le prix des appartements a doublé. Les Irakiens, sans papiers, travaillent au noir, autre facteur de déstabilisation dans un pays qui connaît un chômage élevé. Les réfugiés sont également accusés de se livrer à la mendicité et à la prostitution. La proximité des élections parlementaires, même si elles restent symboliques, pourrait avoir joué, estime Ayman Abd el-Nour. Le régime ne souhaiterait pas voir le ressentiment contre les réfugiés devenir un thème de campagne.

Enfin, les mesures annoncées par Damas signalent un nouveau refroidissement des relations avec le gouvernement de Bagdad, un mois à

peine après la visite à Damas du président irakien Jalal Talabani et l'annonce de la reprise des relations diplomatiques, rompues en 1980. La Syrie avait promis d'agir pour arrêter le passage par ses frontières de combattants étrangers à destination de l'Irak. Mais dernièrement, le premier ministre irakien, Nouri al-Maliki, a accusé Damas de n'avoir pas tenu ses promesses. «*Le rapprochement est bloqué, estime Ayman Abd el-Nour. L'ambassadeur syrien, Abd el-Fattah Amoura, attend toujours de se rendre à Bagdad.*»

Ces attermoissements témoignent du jeu syrien. Damas, marginalisé par Washington, semble chercher à démontrer son pouvoir de nuisance. Les réfugiés, si la menace se précisait, fourniraient une arme de plus dans l'arsenal des pressions exercées par la Syrie pour obliger la communauté internationale, et en premier lieu les États-Unis, à reprendre le dialogue, en vue d'un règlement global du problème des frontières dans la région. Une stratégie qui pourrait s'avérer payante, à en juger par l'annonce de la secrétaire d'État américaine, Condoleezza Rice. Cette dernière a révélé hier devant le Congrès que les États-Unis discutaient avec Damas du problème des réfugiés irakiens. «*J'ai autorisé le chargé d'affaires américain en Syrie à discuter de cette question avec les Syriens*», a déclaré le chef de la diplomatie américaine. Un exode des réfugiés irakiens embarrasserait Washington, accusé par l'ONG Human Rights Watch de n'accueillir qu'au compte-gouttes les réfugiés d'une guerre déclenchée par les États-Unis.

PIERRE PRIER

## La France reporte l'ouverture de sa représentation à Erbil

Redoutant un attentat contre un de ses diplomates, Paris ne veut prendre aucun risque pendant la campagne électorale.

PRÉVUE en ce début d'année, l'ouverture d'un bureau d'ambassade à Erbil, dans les provinces kurdes d'Irak, n'aura pas lieu avant l'élection d'un nouveau président de la République en France. «*Il n'est pas question de prendre le moindre risque avec la vie de nos diplomates durant la campagne électorale*», souligne l'un d'entre

eux. Même si le calme règne dans les régions kurdes, la dégradation constante de la situation sécuritaire dans le reste de l'Irak a lourdement pesé sur cet ajournement.

Décidée entre Jacques Chirac et son homologue irakien, Jalal Talabani, lors de la visite de ce dernier à Paris en novembre, cette représentation diplomatique marque la volonté française de prendre acte de l'autonomie croissante du Kurdistan irakien. Mais le titulaire du poste, qui a déjà été désigné, devrait étendre ses activités à Kirkouk, la cité pétrolière plus au sud revendiquée par les Kurdes, voire Mossoul à l'ouest, où ses collègues de Bagdad ne peuvent plus se rendre, compte tenu des violences.

**Paris refuse d'aller s'abriter dans la zone verte**

Après la mort d'un membre du service Action de la DGSE en novembre à Bassora (sud), la France redouble de vigilance pour son personnel diplomatique encore présent à Bagdad (une demi-douzaine d'agents, dont un conseiller culturel). Leurs déplacements sont strictement limités, y

compris pour la valise diplomatique, qui ne parvient plus qu'une seule fois par mois dans la capitale irakienne. Leur protection nécessite le détachement d'un important dispositif de sécurité (membres de l'Escadron parachutiste d'intervention de la gendarmerie nationale, et 70 vigiles irakiens). Sur les bords du Tigre, le quartier de l'ambassade est au cœur des attaques qui secouent chaque jour Bagdad. Mais jusqu'à présent, Paris refuse d'aller s'abriter dans la zone verte, la forteresse ultraprotégée, siège de l'ambassade améri-

caine et des principaux ministères, comme le lui propose le gouvernement irakien.

« Comment calibrer notre présence pour minimiser les risques et les coûts? », s'interroge un responsable des questions sécuritaires. Évoquée lors de récentes réunions interminis-

térielles, l'option d'un repli sur Amman, en Jordanie, a, pour l'instant, été abandonnée. « De plus en plus de pays européens, les Anglais ou les Allemands par exemple, viennent de transférer leurs activités culturelles et économiques en Jordanie », constate ce responsable. En 2005

déjà, l'ambassadeur de France de l'époque, Bernard Bajolet, avait reçu des menaces émanant d'un groupe armé lié à al-Qaida. Et déjà, l'Élysée s'était interrogée sur l'opportunité de le renvoyer en Irak. Mais, politiquement, de telles décisions sont lourdes de sens. « Si nous réduisons notre

voilure à Bagdad, où alors, si nous ouvrons, comme c'est toujours prévu, un bureau à Erbil, chez les Kurdes, ce n'est pas pour faire croire aux autorités irakiennes que nous avons déjà entériné la partition de leur pays », insiste-t-on au Quai d'Orsay.

GEORGES MALBRUNOT

## IRAN LE GUIDE DE LA RÉVOLUTION MENACE LES ÉTATS-UNIS

# Ali Khamenei : « Toute invasion entraînerait une riposte globale »

BEYROUTH  
CORRESPONDANTE

Une nouvelle mise en garde contre toute velléité d'action militaire contre l'Irak a été adressée, jeudi 8 février, aux États-Unis par l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Guide de la République islamique, c'est-à-dire son autorité suprême. « L'ennemi sait bien que toute invasion entraînerait une riposte globale aux envahisseurs et à leurs intérêts dans le monde », a-t-il déclaré.

Cet avertissement ne relève pas uniquement de la rhétorique classique à l'approche de l'anniversaire, le 11 février, de la révolution qui a renversé la monarchie en 1979 - date à laquelle Téhéran réserve une surprise, à en croire le président de la République Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Il correspond à une réelle recrudescence de la tension entre Washington et Téhéran, tant à propos du programme nucléaire de la Républi-

que islamique qu'en ce qui concerne la situation en Irak.

La mise en garde vise aussi à rassurer les Iraniens qui, comme l'a dit M. Khamenei, pourraient avoir « peur des rumeurs d'une attaque » contre leur pays, à un moment où les États-Unis ont renforcé leur présence militaire dans la région. Personne, y compris le président américain, George Bush, « dont on dit qu'il ne mesure pas la portée de ses actes », a ironisé

M. Khamenei, « ne commettra une telle bêtise, risquant ainsi de mettre en danger les intérêts de son pays ».

L'apparition du Guide et la fermeté de ses déclarations ont permis également de démentir les rumeurs sur son état de santé déclinant après une éclipse de quelques semaines à la fin 2006, à cause de ce que les autorités iraniennes ont qualifié de « mauvaise grippe ».

M. NA.

## IRAK GUÉRILLA

# Les hélicoptères américains, nouvelle cible des insurgés irakiens

NEW YORK  
CORRESPONDANT

Six hélicoptères américains se sont écrasés en Irak depuis trois semaines, le nombre le plus important

sur une telle période depuis l'invasion de mars 2003. Même s'il semble, selon les premières indications, que l'appareil d'assaut CH-46 Sea Knight à deux rotors qui s'est abattu, mercredi 7 février, non loin de Fallouja; tuant sept marines, a été victime d'un incident mécanique, l'insurrection paraît faire des hélicoptères une de ses cibles privilégiées.

A en croire les experts militaires, la guérilla semble avoir appris à anticiper les plans de vol et les manœuvres d'évasion des pilotes et a également réussi à trouver de nouveaux moyens pour toucher les appareils. La plupart sont équipés de systèmes antimissiles sophistiqués qui brouillent les systèmes de guidage, mais restent vulnérables aux armes plus conventionnelles.

Historiquement, réussir à abattre les hélicoptères a été un des éléments importants du succès des guérillas en Afghanistan, en Somalie et au Vietnam. La défaite soviétique en Afghanistan est, notamment, liée à la fourniture aux rebelles par la CIA de quelque 2 000 missiles sol-air Stinger. Au Vietnam, l'armée américaine a perdu 5 000 hélicoptères dont les deux tiers abattus par des missiles sol-air, des lance-roquettes et

des tirs de mitrailleuse. Par comparaison, 59 hélicoptères américains se sont écrasés en Irak.

« Je ne sais pas si nous sommes victimes de la loi des séries », a déclaré au Sénat le chef de l'état-major combiné, le général Peter Pace. « Une autre possibilité est qu'il y a eu un changement de tactiques, de techniques et de procédures de l'ennemi », a-t-il ajouté.

### Armes classiques

Les insurgés n'hésitent plus à ouvrir le feu avec leurs armes automatiques, même de petit calibre, sur les hélicoptères, ce qu'ils faisaient peu auparavant. Plusieurs sites Internet de l'insurrection sunnite affirment que « Dieu a donné de nouveaux moyens » de s'en prendre aux hélicoptères américains. Mais les avions abattus ces derniers jours semblent l'avoir été, selon des sources militaires, par des armes classiques et pas par des missiles sol-air russes de la dernière génération comme les SA16.

« Compte tenu de ce qui s'est passé, nous avons procédé à des changements dans nos tactiques d'utilisation des hélicoptères », a déclaré le général William Caldwell, porte-parole, en Irak, des forces de la coalition. Dans le passé, les mesures prises pour protéger les appa-

reils consistaient à voler rapidement et à basse altitude, à changer de routes et à multiplier les zig-zags dans les zones dangereuses.

L'insurrection cherche aujourd'hui clairement, selon plusieurs experts militaires, à infliger des pertes aux troupes américaines au moment où elles commencent à se renforcer à Bagdad et dans la province d'Anbar. « La guérilla veut prouver aux Irakiens et à nous que la nouvelle stratégie est futile », explique un observateur.

Les hélicoptères remplissent de nombreuses missions en Irak : ravitailler les unités isolées, transporter les troupes pendant les raids, évacuer les blessés et fournir un appui feu contre des insurgés retranchés. « Il s'agit d'une plateforme vulnérable par définition. Il vole bas et lentement et cela signifie des pertes », explique Daniel Goure, expert militaire du Lexington Institute. « Mais après avoir volé des millions de kilomètres en Irak, le taux de pertes est très bas », ajoute-t-il.

Plus sûr que la route, l'hélicoptère est apprécié des soldats. Selon le secrétaire à la défense Robert Gates, 70 % des pertes américaines en Irak ont été causées par des engins explosifs placés le long des routes.

ERIC LESER





# U.S. copter fires on Kurdish guard post As many as 9 dead in apparent mistake

From news reports

**BAGHDAD:** An American helicopter apparently fired on friendly Kurdish pesh merga fighters by mistake on Friday, killing as many as nine people.

The attack took place in the northern city of Mosul, when the helicopter attacked a guard post overlooking the offices of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the party of the Iraqi president, Jalal Talabani.

The attack stunned officials of the party, who said that their base and the surrounding guard posts were well known to the American military.

"Everybody knows that it is a PUK base, and is used for protecting the main road between Mosul and Erbil," said Kabir Goran, a senior party official.

He said the guard post that was attacked was about one kilometer from the headquarters. "We have daily contacts with the Americans and they have been to the base," he said.

The American military command in Baghdad said the helicopter crew thought it was attacking the hideout of a Qaeda bomb-making cell. The command said the strike killed five Kurds, described as policemen; Kurdish officials said nine were killed.

A Qaeda-linked insurgent group, meanwhile, posted a Web video Friday showing what it said was the downing of a U.S. military helicopter earlier this week. Seven Americans were killed in the crash.

The video was issued by the Islamic State in Iraq, an umbrella group of Iraqi insurgent groups that includes Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia.

The Kurds and their 200,000-strong pesh merga fighters are crucial allies of the United States in Iraq. They live mainly in the mountainous northeastern part of the country, but their area of control extends west to the Tigris River and to Mosul, a city of close to 2 million. Kurds dominate the eastern half of the city, Sunni Arabs the western half.

When Sunni Arab insurgents overran police stations in western Mosul in late 2004, the under-strength American brigade assigned to the city concentrated its own troops on the more dangerous western side of Mosul while the pesh merga units took over security for much of eastern Mosul. Kurdish officials say

the pesh merga, many of whom operate under the titular authority of the Iraqi Army, remain the largest security force east of the Tigris River.

The American command released a statement Friday saying that after observing armed men at a bunker, American troops fired warning shots and called out in Arabic and Kurdish for the men to put down their weapons. A helicopter then "observed hostile intention" and fired on the bunker. The military statement did not describe specifically what the helicopter crew saw the Kurdish troops do.

But it did say that American ground troops were fired on from the bunker.

Kurdish officials said that, in addition to the men who were killed, six pesh merga fighters were wounded, and that some of them were cared for by American troops after the fighting ceased.

Mulla Bakhtyar, another senior PUK official, said the party had demanded an investigation. "We are sad and upset," he said.

A pesh merga fighter who said he was a survivor of the attack told a Kurdish television channel that the fighters at the bunker did not fight back against the American troops "so we wouldn't be considered terrorists — we did not even shoot a bullet."

There have been accidental attacks on pesh merga fighters before, according to Mahmoud Othman, an influential Kurdish member of the Iraqi national assembly. But he said that they have not caused frictions between Kurdish and American forces, and he predicted that the incident Friday would not do so either.

"Many of these things have happened in the past four years — it's quite unfortunate," Othman said. "But I don't think it will seriously affect any relations."

In the video of the crash, a helicopter that appears to be a Sea Knight is shown flying.

An object trailing smoke is seen in the sky nearby, and then the craft bursts into orange and red flames, with a spray of debris emerging from it.

It is not clear whether the object is a rocket, and it cannot be clearly seen connecting with the craft. In the footage, the helicopter heads downward, but appears to be at least partly in control, though smoke and bright flames are trailing from it. The helicopter then disappears behind a line of trees as it hits the ground.

The two-minute video, titled "The Hell of Christians and Apostates in Iraq," was posted on a Web forum where the group and other Islamic militants often post messages. Its authenticity could not be independently confirmed.

The U.S. military has said it did not believe the CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter was shot down in the crash Wednesday northwest of Baghdad.

In other violence Friday, clashes between Iraqi police and gunmen in Baghdad's southern neighborhood of Doura killed 3 civilians and wounded 10, the police said. A British soldier was killed and three were wounded by a roadside

bomb in Basra, the British military. And the U.S. military said Friday that three U.S. soldiers died Thursday of wounds sustained in combat in the western province of Anbar. (IHT, AP, Reuters)

# Iran vows to hit U.S. worldwide if attacked

By Nazila Fathi

**TEHRAN:** Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, warned the United States on Thursday that Iran would retaliate against American interests worldwide if it was attacked, the latest volley in an escalating rhetorical war between the countries.

Speaking to a group of air force commanders about rumors of an imminent U.S. military strike, Khamenei said the "Iranian people should not get scared of such issues," the Iranian Students' News Agency reported. "Our enemies know very well that any aggression will have a response from all sides by Iranian people on their interests all over the world."

He added, "No one would commit such a blunder and jeopardize the interests of his country and people."

Separately, the Revolutionary Guards said Thursday that as part of war games, they had successfully test fired a land-to-sea missile capable of sinking large warships. "These missiles, with a maximum range of 220 miles, can hit different kinds of big warships throughout the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman and the northern Indian Ocean," Ali Fadavi, a senior Revolutionary Guards naval commander, said on state television.

The speech was Khamenei's first major public appearance since the United Nations Security Council approved limited sanctions against Iran on Dec. 23 because of its refusal to halt efforts to enrich uranium. The United States and some European countries accuse Iran of having a secret weapons program, but Iran contends that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only.

Khamenei brushed off the sanctions as insignificant, saying: "The United States and some other countries have imposed sanctions on Iran for many years now. But we achieved great scientific and technological progress under such circumstances. So they cannot scare this great nation with sanctions."

In Seville, where he was meeting Thursday with NATO defense ministers, the U.S. defense secretary, Robert Gates, seemed to play down the significance of

the strong language from Iran. "My impression is that they make threats like this from time to time," Gates said. "We have no intention of attacking Iran."

He added, "Obviously, when it comes to things like these tests, we watch them closely." But he concluded, "Other than that, I think, it's just another day in the Persian Gulf." Khamenei also dismissed

rumors that he was suffering from a serious illness, saying they were aimed at weakening the Iranians' resolve.

The war games, the second Iran has held this year, are seen as a response to the U.S. naval buildup in the Gulf. Washington has sent two aircraft carriers to the region and provided anti-missile batteries to some Gulf states.

# Bombs kill 67 Shiites at Baghdad markets

## Saddam aide is sentenced to death

By Damien Cave

**BAGHDAD:** Four back-to-back explosions at two markets in central Baghdad killed at least 67 people and wounded 155 on Monday, charring drivers in their cars, shredding stores and setting ablaze a seven-story clothing warehouse that burned for more than six hours, witnesses and officials said.

The blasts — three at Shorja market, the capital's largest bazaar, and one at Bab al-Sharji a few blocks away — struck shortly after the Shiite-led government marked the first anniversary, by the Islamic calendar, of an attack that destroyed a revered Shiite mosque in Samarra. That bombing, which shattered the shrine's golden dome, ignited a wave of sectarian violence in Iraq that has yet to be extinguished.

And with its timing and severity, the attack Monday seemed designed to both fuel the country's sectarian hatreds and upstage the new U.S.-Iraqi security plan for Baghdad.

One thunderous explosion could be heard in the middle of an upbeat outdoor news conference led by Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki in the Green Zone, roughly three kilometers, or two miles, from the market.

Although he did not flinch or address the sound, the bombing only underscored the challenge Maliki faces in trying to inspire public confidence as

sectarian violence continues.

The attack at Shorja market was at least the fifth bombing there since August. It was one of more than a dozen strikes at markets in the past year, which have killed a total of more than 500 people. And it came on a day when the Iraqi High Tribunal ruled that Saddam Hussein's vice president, Taha Yassin Ramadan, should follow his former boss to the gallows, despite objections from U.S. officials and Western observers who feared that another rapid hanging would further undermine the credibility of the government.

The court initially sentenced Ramadan to life in prison for his role in the killing of 148 Shiites in the town of Du-jail in the 1980s, and the Iraqi judges who switched his punishment to death "didn't give any legal reasons for their change of action," said Miranda Sissons, leader of the Iraq program at the International Center for Transitional Justice in New York. She said no new evidence had emerged since Ramadan's conviction in November. "The court is no longer making a judicial decision," she said. "It's political."

There were calls for peace on Monday, too — most notably from Iraq's leading Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani — but they were largely drowned out by fury and cries for vengeance.

After he was sentenced to death, Ramadan said he was innocent and

promised that God "will take revenge on everyone who oppressed me."

At Shorja market, where a roadside bomb, a car bomb and a truck bomb blew up just after noon, people directed their anger at Sunni insurgents who they believed were responsible for the attacks.

Ali Hassan Flayha, a merchant from the market who witnessed the explosions, said the insurgents wanted only destruction, to stop daily life, to kill as many people as possible and to keep the public angry at the Iraqi and American governments.

"The insurgents won't let us do our work," he said. "They are shooting at us, kidnapping our workers, starting fires, just to keep us a way from the market. And they're using car bombs all the time."

He said he could recall at least seven bomb attacks at the market since 2003. Bloodied bodies had become a familiar sight. Checkpoints and government protection had not.

"The goal of the insurgents is to show us that the government is weak," he said. "We understand. They're right."

Flayha and other witnesses said that one of the bombs Monday was concealed in a pick-up truck that parked outside the Abu Hanifa building, a seven-story concrete structure with shops and restaurants on the first floor and clothing wholesale businesses filling the rest of the structure.

The explosion, witnesses said, set the building on fire, trapping workers amid mannequins and clothing. Fire trucks arrived but were unable to put out the blaze for hours, leading some to question whether they had enough water.

In the streets, bodies sat in cars, blackened. Young men pushed wooden carts with wounded survivors, their heads and bodies bandaged.

At one point, about four hours after the explosions, Methal al-Alussi, a Sunni member of Parliament, visited the scene. The merchants told him, "You have to do something to help us."

He replied, "We will try to figure it out."

Meanwhile, in the southern Baghdad neighborhood of Dora, which American and Iraqi troops initially labeled a success after clearing houses this summer, two people were killed in a drive-by shooting, an Interior Ministry official said. Three people were killed by mortars in western Baghdad and the authorities found 28 bodies throughout the city.

In Diyala Province, where American and Iraqi troops have been fighting Sunni insurgents for control, gunmen publicly beheaded seven people, the police said. One group of suspected insurgents shot six people in the head in a public garden in one of Baquba's northern neighborhoods. A few kilometers to the north, another group of insurgents beheaded a policeman with a sword in a public square where children usually played soccer.

In both cases, the police said, the gunmen forced residents from their homes and made them gather to watch the killings.

INTERNATIONAL  
Herald Tribune  
February 13, 2007



A building burned in one of two Baghdad markets targeted Monday by insurgent car bombers. Four bombs went off.

**Omer Taspinar**

# Turkey Eyes the Shia Crescent

**I**F YOU WERE A MULLAH IN TEHRAN FACING A NEW WESTERN “coalition of the willing,” there’s one country you would try to get on your side: next-door NATO neighbor, Turkey. And lately, the Iranians have been doing this quite well. The reason: Ankara and Tehran increasingly share a cause that unites them: Kurdish guerrillas operating in northern Iraq, and America’s failure to do anything about them.

It would be premature to speak of any entente. Yet Iran clearly seeks to lure Turkey away from its traditional moorings to the West, and the Kurds may be just the wedge they need. During visits to Ankara in recent months, Iranian officials and other state representatives—including Ali Larijani, head of the supreme National Security Council—have gone out of their way to stress the troubles created for both nations by the PKK terrorist movement. Despite myriad promises, U.S. troops in the region do nothing to prevent cross-border raids. Suggesting that Turkey should join with Iran and Syria to establish a tripartite platform of security cooperation against the Kurdish separatists, Larijani and others impressed upon their counterparts the advantages of a large-scale Turkish military incursion to clean out the guerillas—possibly in coordination with Iranian forces, according to Turkish and Iranian news reports.

Nothing so dramatic appears to be imminent. Yet clearly, the prospects of a Turkish intervention are growing. It is certain to be an issue when Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul and military Chief of Staff Gen. Yasar Buyukanit visit Washington over the next week. And, just as clearly, Tehran has every incentive to stir up trouble. An intervention in northern Iraq would all but end Turkey’s already troubled European journey and spark a monumental crisis with the United States. Estranged from Brussels and Washington, Turkey would see less benefit in toeing the Western line against Iran. To be sure, a Sunni Turkey would have some problems with its historic Shia rival’s acquiring nuclear weapons. Yet that still-hypothetical threat is considered modest next to the reality of Kurdish separatism. On this score, at least, Turks do not see America as being on



**PASSION PLAY:** Marking a religious anniversary in Istanbul

## Iran clearly seeks to lure Turkey away from its traditional moorings to the West, and the Kurds may be just the wedge it needs.

their side. Iran, however, is.

Ten days ago, the Turkish Parliament met in a closed session under the strictest rules of secrecy. The agenda: northern Iraq and Turkish options. The country’s military spent most of the last 20 years fighting a bloody war against the PKK, causing 40,000 deaths and costing close to \$150 billion. The guerillas have since regrouped in northern Iraq and, between 2004 and the summer of 2006, launched a new terrorist campaign against Turkey. Most Turks believe that the current ceasefire is merely tactical and will last only until spring.

As Ankara sees it, the PKK is only part of a bigger problem. Turkey’s longstanding fear that independence-minded Kurdish nationalists in Iraq would set a dangerous precedent for Kurds in Turkey is now being borne out. Emboldened by their partnership with Washington,

Iraqi Kurds have embarked on an ambitious nationalist journey with a clear destination: an independent state with the oil-rich city of Kirkuk as its capital. This Kurdish dream is a Turkish nightmare.

The fact that the closed session of the Turkish Parliament focused on Kirkuk,

where many ethnic Turks live, is not a good sign. With a local referendum on the city’s status scheduled for late 2007 and a critical census coming in April, events could quickly turn volatile. Iranian forces, grouped along the Kurdistan border, have shelled a PKK offshoot in Iraq’s Kandil Mountains, and turned terrorists caught there over to Ankara. According to various reports, the Iranians

have proposed a coordinated military campaign—an escalation of hugely unpredictable consequence.

It is no coincidence that Gul and Buyukanit are going to Washington. The meetings should put an end to the Bush administration’s happy talk about the stability of Iraqi Kurdistan. Unless U.S. forces act decisively against the PKK, the Turks will warn, Ankara will take matters into its own hands. This is an election year in Turkey, and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has every incentive to demonstrate his nationalist credentials against political rivals, many favoring military intervention. All this will inevitably push Turkey toward Iran—and may even end up creating an unprecedented Sunni-Shia axis of frustration against America.

TASPINAR is a fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

# Opportunity For Turks And Kurds?

— *The Washington Post* —

February 12, 2007

By Richard Holbrooke

IRBIL, Iraqi Kurdistan -- Whatever happens in Iraq, we must try to limit the terrible fallout from the war. The place to start should be with our indispensable NATO ally Turkey, the front-line state of the post-Cold War era, whose relations with the United States have deteriorated dramatically in the past six years.

The immediate issue is raids by Kurdish terrorists across Turkey's border with Iraq, which divides an area inhabited on both sides by Kurds who have long felt that they deserve their own country. Despite centuries of enmity, rapprochement is in the long-term interests of both Turkey and the Kurds of northern Iraq. But such an effort would be controversial and could be undertaken only with strong American encouragement.

First, some essential background from Irbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, which I am visiting after talks with Turkish leaders in Ankara. This peaceful city is disorienting: Am I in war-torn Iraq or booming Kurdistan? Will Irbil eventually become the capital (or part) of an independent Kurdistan? Or will this region become a battleground for another war, this one between Kurds and Turks?

You can call this place Kurdistan, as its citizens do, or northern Iraq, as the Turks do. But either way, the overwhelming majority (98 percent in a 2005 referendum) of its 4 million people do not want to remain part of Iraq. Who can blame them? Nothing here feels like the Middle East. The Iraqi national flag is banned; only the Kurdistan flag flies. And although the Kurds are sending some of their famously fierce warriors to Baghdad to support the Americans, they fear that Gen. David Petraeus's plan to turn the tide in Baghdad will not succeed.

Ever since a nation called Iraq was carved out of the debris of the Ottoman Empire by Winston Churchill and Gertrude Bell at the Cairo Conference of 1921, Turkey and Iran have opposed independence for the Kurds of northern Iraq because both fear that an independent Kurdistan on their borders would encourage existing separatist movements among their large Kurdish populations.

This symmetry of fears has led to semi-secret discussions and even some cooperation between our NATO ally and that charter member of the "axis of evil" on dealing with the PKK, a terrorist group that has conducted raids against both Turkey and Iran from bases just inside northern Iraq for many years. I would not rule out limited Turkish military action against some of those bases -- especially since Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is under enormous political pressure to show strong nationalist credentials against hawkish rivals in an election year.

After years of mishandling relations with Turkey, last year the administration appointed retired Gen. Joe Ralston, the universally respected former NATO commander, as special envoy for the PKK problem. Ralston's intervention helped avoid a Turkish attack in Iraq last summer, and he is accelerating his efforts to get Irbil to rein in the PKK.

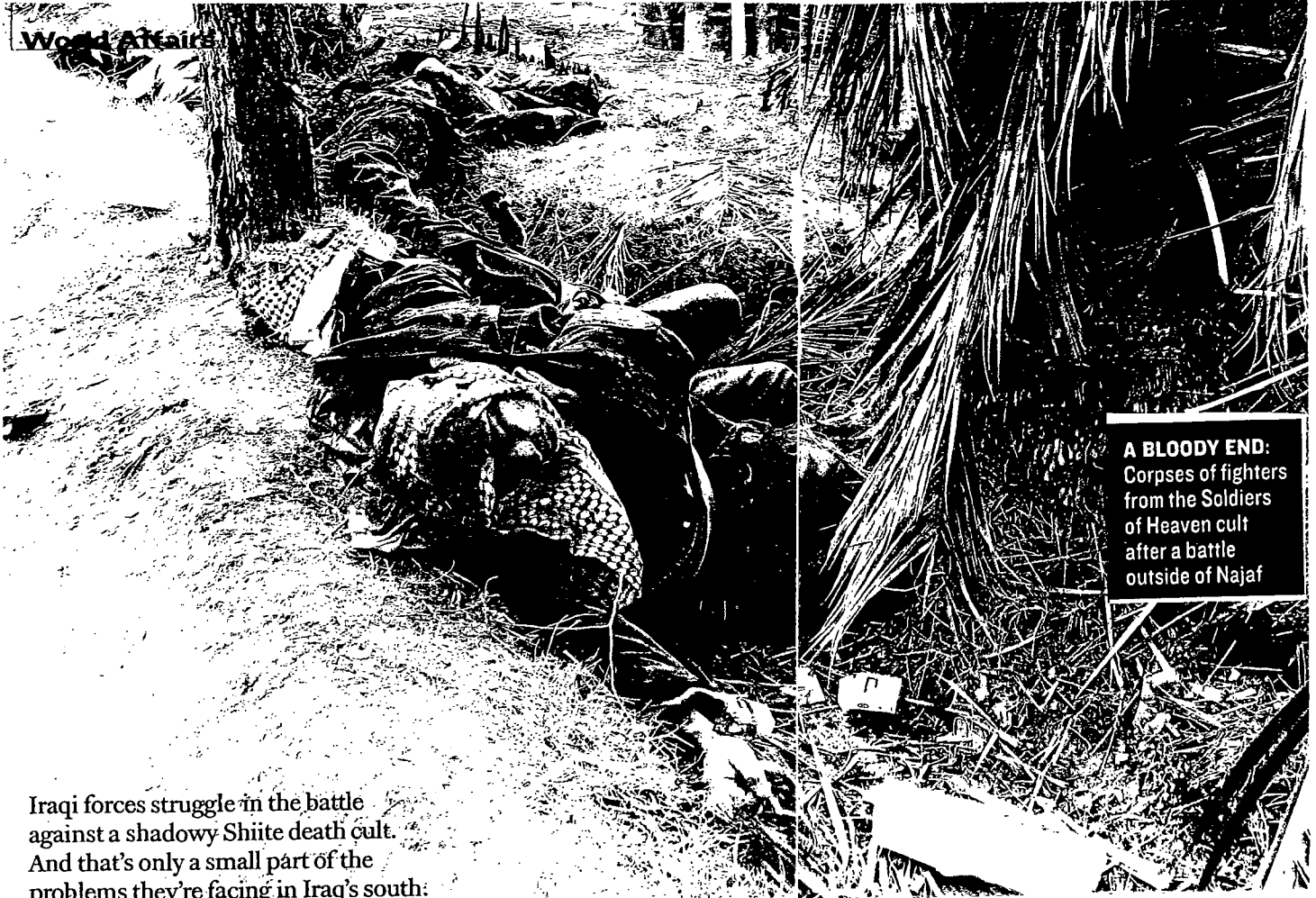
But there is a larger issue: the final status of Kirkuk, the multiethnic city that sits in the middle of a huge oil field and lies just outside the official boundaries of Iraqi Kurdistan. The new Iraqi constitution calls for a referendum this year on whether Kirkuk is to be incorporated into the Kurdistan region. The Turks -- who refer repeatedly to the dangers to the Turkmen, their ethnic cousins who live in Kirkuk -- have said that they will not accept such an event. Avoiding a full-blown crisis will require intense mediation by the United States; unfortunately, Ralston's current mandate does not include Kirkuk.

Despite their history, Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan need each other. Kurdistan could become a buffer between Turkey and the chaos to the south, while Turkey could become the protector of a Kurdistan that, though still technically part of Iraq, is effectively cut loose from a Baghdad government that may no longer function. In addition, Turkey has a major economic opportunity in northern Iraq; already, more than 300 Turkish companies and substantial investment are a primary engine of Kurdish growth.

Rapprochement would require major undertakings by both sides. The legendary Kurdish leader who is now president of the Kurdish regional government, Massoud Barzani, needs to rein in the PKK and pledge not to interfere in Turkey's internal affairs. A compromise that took into account legitimate Turkish concerns would be necessary on Kirkuk; while this would be difficult, especially for the Turkish military, I believe it needs to be attempted, with strong American encouragement.

History and myth make a Turkish-Kurdish deal extremely difficult. It takes visionary leaders to alter the stream of history. Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer did it for France and Germany. Nelson Mandela did it in South Africa. But such people are very, very rare. Still, the crisis in Iraq requires Turks and Kurds to think of their common interest. Having just talked to the impressive leaders of both sides, I believe they understand that they face not just a crisis but an opportunity.

*Richard Holbrooke, a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, writes a monthly column for The Post.*



Iraqi forces struggle in the battle against a shadowy Shiite death cult. And that's only a small part of the problems they're facing in Iraq's south:

# APOCALYPSE NOW

**BY BABAK DEGHANPISHEH**

**D**HIA ABDUL ZAHRA CLAIMED he was the messiah. And on the eve of the holiest day in the Shiite calendar, Ashura, when believers beat themselves bloody with chains and swords, Zahra tried to deliver salvation. Hundreds of his followers, armed with heavy weapons, clashed with Iraqi and American soldiers northeast of the holy city of Najaf on Jan. 28. The Soldiers of Heaven, as the cultists called themselves, apparently planned to storm Najaf and assassinate top Shiite clerics. They fought fiercely: an American helicopter was shot down, killing two soldiers, and Iraqi forces called for reinforcements at least twice. Iraqi police say this was no ordinary enemy. Fighters repeatedly tapped into their radio frequency and repeated an ominous message, "Imam Mahdi

is coming." The return of the Mahdi—the 12th and last Shiite saint, who, believers say, vanished in the ninth century—signals the end of times.

It would be easy to write off the thirtysomething Zahra, who was killed along with more than 250 others in the battle, as an Iraqi David Koresh and his followers as misguided zealots. But the Soldiers of Heaven are only one of dozens of Shiite factions, some

of whom have similar millenarian ideas, that have sprung up across southern Iraq. Dominated as it is by one sect, the south has generally been thought remote from the civil war that has engulfed Baghdad and its environs. The Iraqi Army took over security in Najaf from the Americans in late December; few if any of the 20,000 new U.S. troops heading to

Iraq will be sent to the region. But as the new National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq released last week points out, the country is plagued by four overlapping battles—Al Qaeda and Sunni insurgent attacks on Americans, sectarian killings and Shia-on-Shia violence in the south. If left unchecked, that factional fighting could grow into as great a threat to Iraq's stability as the ethnic cleansing farther north. "The collapse of authority in southern Iraq could be devastating for both the United States and for Iraq," says Vali Nasr, author of "The Shia Revival."

Under Saddam Hussein, the Shiite south was viewed as a hotbed of Iranian intrigues and deliberately neglected. Its infrastructure is noticeably worse than other parts of the country: roads are full of potholes, and open sewers are common. And, despite millions of dollars pumped into projects since 2003, most recently under the Shiite-dominated government in



**HEAVEN'S HEAD:** Shiite cult leader Dhia Abdul Zahra Kadim

## The Soldiers of Heaven is only one of dozens of Shiite factions that have sprung up across southern Iraq.

Baghdad, the situation hasn't improved significantly. Unemployment in some areas is as high as 60 percent, and Iraq's five poorest provinces are all in the south. Many reconstruction projects have been abandoned because of corruption, kidnappings and killings.

The two biggest players in the region are Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army and the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, run by cleric Abdul Aziz al-Hakim. But in Basra alone, whose oilfields account for about 90 percent of Iraq's budgetary revenue, at least half a dozen parties are competing for power—often violently. Basra's murder rate tripled in the first half of last year. "Security is bad in the Shiite south and may be getting worse," says Juan Cole, a professor of history at the University of Michigan and an expert on Iraq's Shiites.

In this chaotic environment, talk of the *dhuhoor*, or appearance of the Mahdi, has been growing. "The decrease of the things people need—electricity, water, a salary, peace of mind—makes them want to find something like a miracle," says Salama Khafaji, a former member of the Iraqi Governing Council from Najaf. Sadr has astutely tapped into this longing for a better world; loyalists have hinted that he may be the Mahdi himself. Fringe groups that take the Mahdi more literally—and that rail against a Shiite leadership who are doing nothing to hasten his return—are also growing, says

Khafaji. "When you have the complete collapse of society is exactly when you get these pretenders who combine social anxiety, political frustration and fear with millenarian expectations," says Nasr.

Senior clerics familiar with Zahra say the Soldiers of Heaven was an offshoot of the Sadrist movement and had few friends among the Najaf establishment. "They were against the *marjaiya* [senior clerics], against the government, against the Americans," says Sheik Fatih Kashif al-Ghitta, a senior cleric from Najaf. On more than one occasion, Ghitta says, Zahra's followers had fought pitched battles against the Mahdi Army. They were particularly well entrenched in Zarqa, a village about 16 km northeast of Najaf. The group had dug two-meter-deep trenches around their property and set up defensive sand berms. Weapons were buried underground or covered with palm leaves. Iraqi troops later found sniper rifles, heavy machine guns and even anti-aircraft guns around the property. But the Soldiers of Heaven is hardly the only heavily armed faction in the south: gunmen from another Sadrist offshoot, the Fadhlia Party, control Basra's oilfields. Baghdad security officials worry that even more Shiite fighters will soon flood into the area to avoid the "surge" of U.S. troops in the capital.

If Zarqa is any indication, that could spell

trouble. Although President George W. Bush praised Iraqi forces after the battle ("The Iraqis are beginning to show me something," he said), in fact the Iraqis were nearly overrun. At one point, Col. Ahmad Silawi, the director of Najaf intelligence, and Abdul Hussein Abtan, the deputy governor of Najaf, were pinned down. "Help us! There's heavy shooting!" Abtan cried over the radio. Silawi later told NEWSWEEK he'd recited the *shahada*, the traditional prayer before death. Only repeated U.S. airstrikes crushed the cultists.

Ironically, Iran—which U.S. military officials have blamed for fueling attacks against American soldiers in the south—probably has more influence in the region than the Coalition. "If, after this attack, the Americans haven't realized that they need our help to stabilize Iraq, I don't know when they're going to learn anything," says a Tehran official who has close ties to the senior Iranian leadership and asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the subject. If he's expecting Washington to ask for help in the south, though, he may as well wait for the Mahdi, too.

With reports from Iraqi staff in Najaf and MAZAR BAHARI in Tehran, CHRISTOPHER DICKEY in Paris and KAREN FRAGALA SMITH in New York

## A Simmering South

While predominantly Shiite, Iraq's south is not immune from the sectarian violence that plagues Baghdad. A snapshot of the region:



**63%** of Iraq's Shiite population, about 9.5 million, live in the south.

**51%** of Iraqis in urban areas of southern Iraq live "where sewage can be seen in the streets," compared with 40 percent nationwide.

**5** of the nine provinces in the south suffer from the lowest income levels in the country.

**40%** of the 479,000 newly displaced Iraqis are in the south. —JESSICA RAMIREZ

SOURCES: SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION, WORLD BANK, UNITED NATIONS, NEWS REPORTS



# Les militants kurdes informaient le contre-espionnage français

**TERRORISME.** Parmi les 14 activistes arrêtés la semaine dernière et incarcérés, plusieurs têtes de pont du réseau étaient des informateurs de la DST, le contre-espionnage français. Ce service se défend d'avoir « fermé les yeux » sur leurs activités.

**L**A POLITIQUE des autorités françaises à l'encontre des militants du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan) est-elle à géométrie variable ? La semaine dernière, un coup de filet mené par la sous-direction antiterroriste (SDAT) a conduit à l'arrestation puis à l'incarcération de 14 militants de cette organisation, qui figure sur la liste des entités terroristes de l'Union européenne et des Etats-Unis. Des perquisitions avaient eu lieu, notamment tout près du QG de Nicolas Sarkozy à Paris. La justice française soupçonne ces militants d'avoir participé à une « association de malfaiteurs en relation avec une entreprise terroriste » ainsi qu'à des opérations de « blanchiment d'argent » et de « financement du terrorisme ». Selon nos informations, au cours de leurs auditions, plusieurs membres présumés du PKK ont déclaré avoir été en contact régulier avec la DST (Direction de la surveillance du territoire), le contre-espionnage français. « En moyenne, une fois par mois », ont affirmé les suspects.

Selon une source proche du dossier, ils ont indiqué avoir fourni à un fonctionnaire de la DST des informations sur le fonctionnement de cette structure, notamment sur les collectes de fonds effectuées en France et sur l'organigramme du PKK en France. Parmi ces contacts réguliers de la DST figureraient notamment Nedim Sellem, 38 ans, considéré comme le « trésorier » du PKK en Europe. Ce dernier, soupçonné d'avoir tué quinze personnes en Turquie, fait l'objet d'un mandat d'arrêt international diffusé par Interpol. Mais aussi Canan Kurtilymaz, une femme de 33 ans, l'une des têtes dirigeantes du mouvement interpellée en Belgique, recherchée par Ankara dans le cadre d'attentats perpétrés en Turquie. « Il y avait un accord tacite, souligne un observateur : pas d'attentat en France et l'on vous laisse tranquilles. » La réalité de ces contacts est confirmée par la DST :



**RUE D'ENGHEN (PARIS X<sup>e</sup>), LE 5 FEVRIER.** Le centre culturel kurde, après une perquisition. Plusieurs militants étaient en contact avec la DST mais également recherchés par Interpol ou les autorités turques. (LP/FREDERIC DUGIT)

« Nous sommes en relation avec ces gens, souvent réfugiés politiques, dans le cadre d'une action de police administrative, souligne un responsable du contre-espionnage. Mais en aucun cas cela ne les autorise à se sentir couverts. » Et de poursuivre : « Nous n'avons fermé les yeux sur aucune activité suspecte. Au contraire, nous les mettons en garde pour qu'ils ne franchissent pas la ligne jaune. »

Une position qui n'est pas partagée par M<sup>e</sup> William Bourdon, avocat de trois mis en examen : « Ils étaient surveillés et contrôlés par la DST, mais aussi par les Renseignements généraux. Brutalement, on criminalise leurs actions, alors que les services savent tout de leurs activités. Cela pose la question de l'utilisation à la carte de la DST et des RG, en fonction des agendas politiques. »

## Comptabilité occulte

Cette situation devrait relancer le débat sur la double casquette de la DST, à la fois service de renseigne-

ment et de police judiciaire. Dans le cadre de sa première fonction, les espions français sont légitimement au contact d'informateurs, parfois impliqués dans des réseaux sous surveillance. Au titre de sa deuxième mission, ce service antiterroriste est chargé de dénoncer et poursuivre des infractions pénales. Or l'enquête menée par les policiers de la SDAT a mis en évidence des opérations délictuelles. Les perquisitions ont permis de retrouver la comptabilité occulte du mouvement, soupçonné d'exercer de fortes pressions sur la diaspora kurde : environ 4 millions d'euros seraient récoltés par an en France. Une partie de l'argent retrouvé (34 000 €) portait des traces de stupéfiants. Des faux papiers assurant la clandestinité des cadres ont également été saisis, ainsi qu'une arme de poing. Selon nos informations, l'un des suspects a déclaré qu'une section du PKK appelée « commandos suicides » disposait d'une réserve de « martyrs » prêts à se sacrifier pour la cause kurde.

CHRISTOPHE DUBOIS

# Dans l'enfer mystique de Najaf



12 FÉVRIER 2007

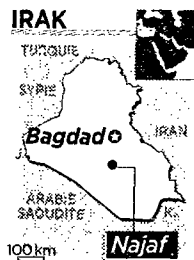
Les 28 et 29 janvier, les forces irakiennes et américaines ont maté une rébellion de la secte chiite «les soldats du paradis», faisant un carnage.

**Q**ue s'est-il passé près de Najaf, le plus grand sanctuaire du monde religieux chiite, les 28 et 29 janvier? Une seule certitude: un effroyable carnage. Le ministère irakien de la Défense fait état de 263 tués dans les seuls rangs des insurgés et d'un demi-millier de personnes arrêtées, dont plus de la moitié étaient des blessés. Sans doute ce bilan est-il sous-estimé, comme c'est souvent le cas en Irak. Des sources convergentes parlent de centaines de morts, dont des femmes et des enfants. En fait, c'est une véritable bataille qui s'est déroulée non loin de la cité sainte qui abrite le mausolée d'Ali, le premier imam historique du chiisme, à la fois grand-père et cousin de Mahomet, mais aussi les plus grands ayatollahs de cette confession et les écoles théologiques les plus réputées.

**Black-out.** Dans cet engagement qui a duré deux jours, les Américains, appelés en renfort par les troupes irakiennes, ont fait intervenir leur aviation et procédé aux bombardements les plus violents depuis la bataille pour Fallouja, le bastion de l'insurrection sunnite, reconquis fin 2004. L'événement témoigne que la guerre civile en Irak a largement débordé le seul clivage sunnite-chiite et que, dans un climat de déliquescence quasi général, elle oppose désormais les partis et tribus chiïtes entre eux. C'est probablement pour cette raison que les autorités irakiennes et américaines ont imposé un black-out sur cette tragédie, tenu les journalistes à l'écart de la zone et diffusé nombre de contrevérités.

C'est le meurtre de Cheikh Saad Nayef al-Hatami, un vieillard à la tête de la tribu arabe chiïte des Hawatem, qui semble être à l'origine des combats. Le chef tribal,

sa femme et son chauffeur ont été tués le 28 janvier à un barrage de l'armée irakienne sur le chemin de Najaf, où ils se rendaient en pèlerinage à bord d'une vieille voiture. Leur mort provoque immédiatement la rébellion de la tribu qui, dans un esprit de subordination et de respect envers leur chef, attaque le poste de contrôle, tuant plusieurs soldats. L'armée irakienne appelle alors à la res-



cousse des renforts et l'US Army, tandis que le gouvernement de Nouri al-Maliki affirme que l'attaque est menée par des jihadistes d'Al-Qaeda alliés à des baasistes, partisans de Saddam Hussein. Aussitôt, les forces spéciales américaines se déchaînent, pilonnant les palmeraies où se cachent les rebelles. Un hélicoptère américain est abattu.

Mais si la bataille prend une telle ampleur, c'est sans doute parce que la région de Zarka accueille aussi un mystérieux groupe chiïte messianique connu sous le nom de «soldats du paradis», peut-être en relation avec la tribu des Hawatem. Le chef de l'organisation, Dhia Abdoul Zahra Kazem al-Gar'awi, selon certains témoignages, Ahmed Hassan al-Yamani (le Yéménite), selon d'autres, se prétend le descendant du douzième imam des chiïtes – connu sous le nom de l'imam caché ou de la Résurrection – et affirme être son représentant sur terre. Il aurait fait croire à ses partisans que son avènement se produirait ce 28 janvier, jour des grandes lamentations de l'Achoura, qui commémorent le sacrifice de Hussein, le troisième imam historique des chiïtes, à la bataille de Kerbela, non loin de Najaf. Faut-il pour autant donner crédit au gouvernement irakien qui affirme que ce groupe allait attaquer la ville sainte et tuer les hauts dignitaires chiïtes, y compris le grand aya-

tollah Ali Sistani? L'hypothèse est possible, mais, faute d'enquête indépendante – celle de l'Assemblée nationale irakienne a été annulée –, on ne peut lui apporter de crédit.

Cé qui, en revanche, est significatif, c'est la violence de la réaction américaine. Comme si Washington, à l'heure où commence à se mettre en place le nouveau plan américain visant à reprendre le contrôle du pays aux milices armées, avait voulu faire un exemple en châtiant le plus durement possible toute rébellion. Les sectes telles l'Armée du ciel et l'Armée d'Allah prolifèrent en effet en Irak, notamment à Bassora, la capitale du Sud. A l'heure où l'Irak sombre dans le chaos, la tentation est grande dans la population de se tourner vers les groupes millénaristes se réclamant de l'imam caché, au détriment des imams de l'actuelle hiérarchie religieuse et des corps de l'Etat, impuissants à contrôler la situation.

**Impuissance.** Pour le Premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki, les combats de Najaf sont un sérieux revers. Ils témoignent que les forces de sécurité ne sont toujours pas capables d'endiguer seules une vague de violences – qu'elles soient à caractère tribal ou mystique – et qu'elles ont été impuissantes à découvrir une telle concentration de rebelles à proximité de Najaf, la ville la mieux protégée d'Irak. Tout aussi grave, ces événements montrent que la communauté chiïte, qui occupe pourtant le pouvoir en Irak depuis la chute de Saddam Hussein, est traversée de conflits violents et que la guerre civile couve en son sein. Un constat que Robert Gates, le secrétaire d'Etat à la Défense, a formulé récemment en déclarant que l'Irak faisait face à quatre conflits: celui provoqué par Al-Qaeda, celui des sunnites contre le pouvoir, des sunnites contre les chiïtes et des chiïtes entre eux. ◀

NEIL AHMED et JEAN-PIERRE PERRIN



Des «soldats du paradis», le 30 janvier, après la bataille de Najaf.



# Les intellectuels turcs réduits au silence

## TURQUIE

Menacés dans leur pays, de nombreux défenseurs des droits de l'homme se sentent également lâchés par l'Union européenne.

Istanbul

« ON VA te régler ton compte » : l'avertissement était punaisé sur la porte du bureau d'Ibrahim Kaboglu, à l'université Marmara d'Istanbul. Ses étudiants ont reçu des SMS : « Le professeur Kaboglu a été tué dans un attentat. » Les messages ont été envoyés depuis son propre téléphone portable, dérobé à son domicile au cours d'un cambriolage nocturne. Le professeur de droit constitutionnel a porté plainte, sans résultat. Il a également demandé une protection policière qui lui a été refusée par le gouverneur adjoint d'Istanbul en 2006.

Ce même haut fonctionnaire avait mis en garde Hrant Dink des dangers qu'il encourait. « J'ai décidé de rendre publiques ces menaces après son assassinat, au cas où il m'arriverait quelque chose », explique Ibrahim Kaboglu. Le journaliste d'origine arménienne, abattu le 19 janvier, a payé de sa vie son combat pour la démocratie et le dialogue turco-arménien. De nombreux autres intellectuels et défenseurs des droits de l'homme continuent d'être menacés en Turquie. Leurs noms sont couchés sur une liste noire, cible des ultranationalistes, dans une indifférence quasi générale des pouvoirs publics.

Le plus médiatique d'entre eux, Orhan Pamuk, a quitté le pays le 1<sup>er</sup> février en toute discrétion pour les États-Unis. Le Prix Nobel de littérature, qui a été traîné devant les tribunaux pour avoir évoqué le génocide arménien, était régulièrement menacé depuis 2005. Ces derniers jours, l'étau se resserrait. « Dites à Pamuk de prendre garde ! » avait lancé l'un des principaux suspects de l'attentat contre Hrant Dink après son arrestation. La semaine dernière, la photo de l'écrivain est apparue sur Internet à côté de la dépouille du journaliste, dans une vidéo signée des « Brigades turques de la vengeance », avec une mise en garde : « D'autres vont mourir. »

Le cas de Pamuk est l'arbre qui cache la forêt : les chefs de file

démocrates font l'objet d'une véritable traque. Dans la ligne de mire, ceux qui cherchent à briser le tabou sur le massacre des Arméniens commis sous l'Empire ottoman, défendent des droits pour les Kurdes, critiquent la dérive idéologique du culte d'Atatürk... Les articles 301 et 216 du Code pénal font partie de l'arsenal utilisé contre ces partisans de l'ouverture démocratique. Plusieurs dizaines d'entre eux ont été poursuivis, notamment à l'initiative d'un groupe d'avocats d'extrême droite. Les menaces de mort sont un autre volet du plan destiné à les réduire au silence.

Dans les heures qui ont suivi l'assassinat du rédacteur en chef d'Agos, les autorités ont attribué d'office des gardes du corps à au moins sept personnalités, comme Etyen Mahçupyan, qui a pris la suite de Hrant Dink à la tête de l'hebdomadaire. Ou la romancière Elif Safak, traduite en justice en septembre, à cause des propos tenus par un de ses personnages sur « les bouchers turcs de 1915 ». Ismet Berkan, rédacteur en chef du quotidien libéral *Radikal*, harcelé par des lettres anonymes, est éga-

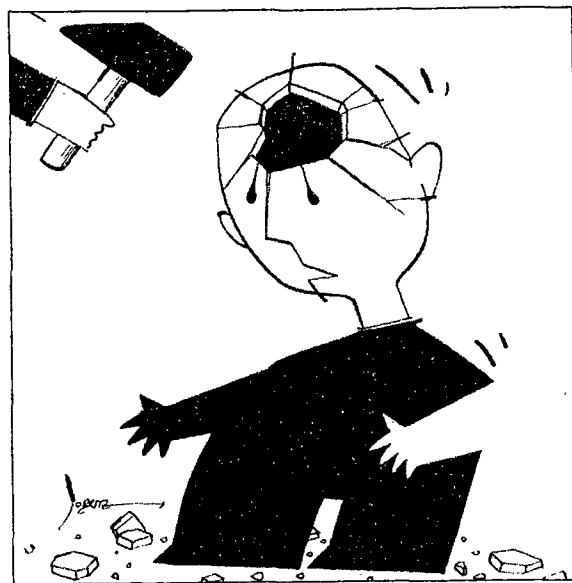
lement sous protection. Avec quatre autres journalistes, il avait été poursuivi pour avoir dénoncé une décision de justice visant à interdire une conférence sur les Arméniens, en 2005.

### « Génération sacrifiée de la mondialisation »

Cette vague d'intimidations se déroule sur fond de retour en force du nationalisme. Ces dernières semaines, des slogans ultranationalistes ont remplacé les encouragements sportifs dans les stades de foot de villes anatoliennes. À Afyon les supporteurs ont scandé « Nous sommes tous Oğün ! » (l'assassin présumé de Hrant Dink, NDLR) « Pas éduquée, sans travail et sans

espoir, c'est la génération sacrifiée de la mondialisation et de la modernisation de la Turquie », analyse Mehmet Altan, professeur d'économie. Réclamé par tous les médias pour dresser un diagnostic de la société, cet intellectuel en vue a également reçu des menaces par e-mails, « les mêmes que Pamuk ». Il est évacué d'un rire sonore car « c'est dans l'air pour chacun de nous ».

Ces invectives lancées dans les tribunes sont révélatrices du gouf-



fre qui s'est creusé entre une élite pro-européenne, et une partie de la population arc-boutée sur sa vision d'une Turquie entourée d'ennemis. « Nous sommes des traîtres à la patrie, achetés par l'Union européenne », résume Baskin Oran. « Je vais te tuer ». « Je baise ta mère »... Ce professeur de sciences politiques à Ankara a reçu des menaces. Il est également sur la liste noire. En 2004, il était membre du Conseil consultatif des droits de l'homme, une instance créée par le gouvernement et alors présidée par Ibrahim Kaboglu. Les conclusions accablantes d'un rapport sur les droits de l'homme en Turquie ont valu aux deux universitaires un procès devant le tribunal correctionnel d'Ankara en 2006 pour « insulte à l'identité turque ». Ils ont été acquittés, mais le procureur général s'est pourvu en cassation, signe de l'acharnement d'une justice hostile au processus de démocratisation. Pour Kaboglu, le pouvoir est responsable du climat actuel : « Le jour de la remise du rapport, un syndicaliste me l'a arraché des mains et l'a déchiré. Le gouvernement n'a pas réagi. » Un silence qui laissait la voie libre aux meurtriers de Hrant Dink. En guise de protection, Kaboglu, lui, essaye de se faire discret, évite les plateaux de télévision et trouve un peu de réconfort dans les poignées de mains d'anonymes qui le reconnaissent dans la rue.

Aux abois, les intellectuels turcs se sentent également lâchés

### L'article 301 et la liberté d'expression

■ Un groupe d'ONG a remis jeudi au gouvernement un projet de modification de l'article 301 du Code pénal turc, qui punit le crime de « dénigrement de l'identité turque » d'une peine pouvant aller jusqu'à trois ans de prison. En remplaçant le terme « dénigrement » par « outrage » et « offense », l'amendement vise à limiter les abus d'interprétation des magistrats. Les médias turcs ont accusé cette disposition juridique et ceux qui y ont recours d'être responsables de l'assassinat de Hrant Dink. Le journaliste d'origine arménienne avait été condamné à six mois d'emprisonnement avec sursis au nom de cet article. La Commission européenne réclame également la modification de ce texte, utilisé contre la liberté d'expression. Le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a laissé entendre qu'il y était favorable. Mais, à trois mois de l'élection présidentielle, il n'est pas certain que le gouvernement s'empare de ce sujet sensible.

L. MA.

par l'Union européenne. Attablé dans une pâtisserie sur les bords du Bosphore, Soli Ozel, chroniqueur au quotidien *Sabah*, ne s'habitue pas à son nouveau garde du corps :

« Je ne sais pas pourquoi la Sûreté me l'a attribué, car je n'ai jamais été menacé. Je dois faire partie du contingent juif. » Pendant que le policier surveille la porte d'entrée, Ozel confesse sa rancœur envers

l'UE : « À longueur d'articles, nous avons défendu les réformes réclamées par Bruxelles. Nous nous sommes opposés aux adversaires de l'adhésion. Et maintenant qu'on a besoin de soutien, plus rien ! » Bas-

kin Oran ne digère pas non plus « la politique hypocrite de l'UE » qui a poussé un peu plus la Turquie dans le piège du nationalisme. Pour lui, les réformes démocratiques ont déjà révolutionné le pays :

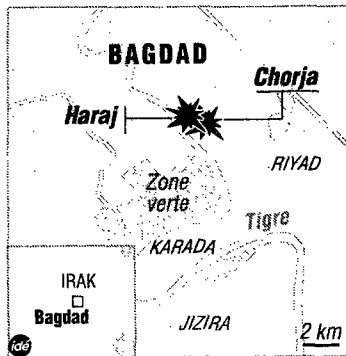
« Nous sommes en route pour le paradis, mais le chemin est long et il passe par l'enfer. On y est. »

LAURE MARCHAND

## Vague d'attentats antichiites à Bagdad

### MOYEN-ORIENT

Une double explosion, faisant 88 morts, a marqué hier l'anniversaire de la destruction de la Mosquée d'or de Samarra.



Désespérés, les secours s'activent au milieu des décombres après l'attentat qui a dévasté hier le marché de gros de Chorja, où travaillent de nombreux chiïtes, en plein centre de Bagdad. Khalid Mohammed/AP.

De notre envoyé spécial à Bagdad

UN QUART D'HEURE d'arrêt du travail avait été décrété hier à midi par le premier ministre irakien, en mémoire des victimes de l'attentat de la Mosquée d'or de Samarra, commis l'an dernier contre ce sanctuaire chiïte par un mystérieux commando. Deux violents attentats ont secoué Bagdad vers midi et quart, comme pour renouveler le sanglant défi lancé l'année dernière par les extrémistes sunnites à la majorité chiïte irakienne, lors de la destruction du mausolée de l'imam al-Askari.

Trois voitures piégées, dont l'une aurait été placée dans le sous-sol d'un immeuble, ont d'abord dévasté le populaire marché de gros de Chorja, où travaillent de nombreux chiïtes, en plein centre de Bagdad, faisant environ 88 morts et près de deux cents blessés. Les vitres ont tremblé à plusieurs kilomètres à la ronde, faisant décoller des vols de colombes des toits de la ville, alors qu'une épaisse colonne de fumée noire s'élevait au-dessus du Tigre.

Cette triple explosion est un triple défi aux tentatives d'enrayer le déchaînement de violence qui secoue l'Irak. Un défi au gouvernement de Nouri al-Maliki, tout d'abord. Le premier ministre avait ordonné hier le renforcement du

dispositif de sécurité dans la capitale irakienne et décrété un arrêt de travail national en mémoire de l'attentat de Samarra. Ces deux mesures symboliques ont été ouvertement bafouées par un autre attentat commis en plein centre de la capitale, au bout du pont de la Jamouhirya. Vu depuis les remparts de la Zone verte, le panache de fumée de l'explosion venait rappeler au gouvernement irakien, retranché derrière ces murs, l'impunité avec laquelle les extrémistes sunnites lui disputent le contrôle de la capitale.

Le défi s'adresse aussi à l'ensemble de la communauté chiïte. Les explosions ont eu lieu le jour anniversaire, selon le calendrier musulman, de la destruction du sanctuaire chiïte de l'imam al-

Askari. Cette opération commando avait presque entièrement détruit le dôme doré et millénaire de l'un des importants lieux de pèlerinage chiïte, l'endroit même où avait été « occulté » le douzième imam, le Mahdi, et où ses partisans ne cessent, depuis lors, d'attendre le retour. Elle avait surtout déchaîné une violente campagne de revanche sectaire chiïte contre les sunnites irakiens, qui n'a cessé depuis d'accumuler les cadavres dans les rues de la capitale, contraignant les habitants des

quartiers mixtes à s'enfuir et accentuant la fracture religieuse de la société irakienne.

### « Appels aux croyants »

Mais, malgré les tueries déclenchées en représailles par les escadrons de la mort chiïtes, qui opèrent parfois la main dans la main avec les troupes spéciales du ministère de l'Intérieur, les extrémistes sunnites viennent de rap-

peler leur capacité de riposter de façon éclatante.

« Le timing a été bien choisi. Le message est clair : ils veulent continuer la destruction des symboles religieux et provoquer la rupture entre les différentes composantes du peuple irakien et la destruction de ce peuple », a estimé hier à l'AFP le général Abdel Karim Khalaf, chef des opérations au ministère de l'Intérieur. « Trois suspects ont été arrêtés. Deux d'entre eux sont des étrangers non arabes », a-t-il aussi annoncé, sans qu'aucune source indépendante ait pu le vérifier.

Le défi est enfin lancé aux Américains. Le général Petraeus, le nouveau commandant des troupes américaines en Irak, a déployé ses renforts dans la capitale, afin de reprendre le contrôle de la ville, où opèrent impunément les insurgés sunnites et leurs adversaires chiïtes, qui enlèvent et assassinent

plusieurs milliers de personnes par mois. Ceux qui ont fait exploser

trois voitures en plein centre de Bagdad, presque sous le nez des sentinelles américaines qui protègent la Zone verte, annoncent de façon sanglante que leur capacité de destruction, comme leur volonté de ruiner les moindres tentatives de rétablir un semblant de sécurité dans la capitale, reste intacte.

Hier, quelques heures avant les nouveaux attentats, le grand ayatollah Ali al-Sistani avait encore lancé, depuis sa retraite de Nadjaf, à l'occasion de l'anniversaire de l'attaque de Samarra, un « appel aux croyants », leur enjoignant de « ne rien dire ou faire qui puisse blesser nos frères sunnites, qui sont innocents de ce qui s'est passé, et qui ne l'acceptent pas ». Le vieux chef religieux n'avait pas réussi à enrayer les représailles chiïtes l'an dernier. Il risque de ne pas être plus entendu cette fois-ci.

ADRIEN JAULMES

# Bush prend l'Iran de front

Les Etats-Unis accusent Téhéran d'armer les milices terroristes en Irak.

Washington de notre correspondant  
**L'**Iran a été, preuves à l'appui, accusé pour la première fois d'être derrière les attentats à la bombe en Irak. Des bombes de fabrication iranienne importées illégalement en Irak ont entraîné la mort de 170 soldats américains et alliés depuis juin 2004, a ainsi affirmé, hier à Bagdad, un haut responsable américain. «L'Iran est impliqué dans la fourniture de projectiles explosifs et d'autres matériaux à des groupes extrémistes irakiens», a indiqué à plusieurs journalistes un haut responsable américain. «Nous estimons que ces activités sont commanditées par les plus hauts niveaux de l'administration iranienne», a-t-il ajouté, affirmant que les Brigades al-Qods rendent compte directement à l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Ces responsables ont montré à la presse des photographies de bombes saisies, dont un missile et des engins explosifs, «preuve», selon eux, de leurs assertions.

Ces accusations suivent un renforcement de la présence militaire dans le Golfe. A la fin du mois, le porte-avions américain USS John Stennis devrait ainsi avoir rejoint l'USS

Dwight Eisenhower au large de l'Iran. Ce sera la première fois depuis l'invasion de l'Irak, en 2003, que deux groupes d'attaque navals seront positionnés simultanément dans le golfe Persique. Ils seront, dès lors, potentiellement en mesure de lancer des centaines de missiles de croisière Tomahawk sur les sites nucléaires iraniens. Un déploiement de forces visant à interrompre le soutien présumé des autorités iraniennes aux milices chiïtes en Irak. Washington reproche à l'Iran de fournir à ces groupes d'insurgés des fonds, des équipements et des technologies. La Maison Blanche dément, pour l'instant, avoir l'intention d'intervenir militairement sur le territoire iranien.

«Diplomatie». Quelques jours après avoir accusé «le régime iranien» de «financer et armer des terroristes comme le Hezbollah, qui après Al-Qaeda est le groupe terroriste ayant pris le plus grand nombre de vies d'Américains», le président Bush a assuré, le 26 janvier: «Nous croyons que nous pouvons résoudre nos problèmes avec l'Iran par la diplomatie et nous travaillons dans ce sens.» La diplomatie de la canonnière défendue par l'adminis-

tration républicaine a néanmoins reçu le soutien implicite d'un candidat démocrate à la présidentielle comme John Edwards, pour qui «toutes les options, je dis bien toutes les options, doivent rester sur la table pour s'assurer que l'Iran n'obtiendra jamais l'arme nucléaire». Cette approche risquée laisse perplexes beaucoup d'experts. «Le problème avec cette stratégie est qu'elle peut conduire accidentellement à une confrontation militaire», note Afshin Molavi, de la New America Foundation, à Washington.

«Pression». «L'Iran paraît conduire sa politique étrangère avec un triomphalisme dangereux», avait déclaré le directeur de la CIA Michael Hayden, le 25 janvier, tandis que le secrétaire à la Défense Robert Gates, plus pugnace encore, expliquait: «L'Iran croit que nous sommes coincés en Irak, qu'ils ont l'initiative et qu'ils

peuvent nous mettre la pression.

Nous allons montrer à la région que nous sommes là pour longtemps encore.» Richard Haass, ancien responsable du département d'Etat, estime que la Maison Blanche n'a pas encore choisi entre l'option militaire et l'option diplomatique. Mais d'autres ne sont pas loin de penser que George W. Bush est en quête d'un prétexte pour justifier une frappe contre l'Iran.

LIBERATION 12 FÉVRIER 2007

Mardi, l'Iran a accusé les Etats-Unis de l'enlèvement, dimanche dernier, du deuxième secrétaire de l'ambassade d'Iran à Bagdad. Le 11 janvier, des soldats américains avaient arrêté cinq employés du consulat iranien d'Erbil, au Kurdistan irakien, et saisi des documents. Un «haut responsable du renseignement» américain, cité par le Washington Post, estime que les Etats-Unis ont pour objectif de «provoquer un conflit inutile» avec l'Iran, en vue de détourner l'attention du problème irakien. Quelques mois avant l'invasion de l'Irak, alors que les préparatifs étaient très avancés, Bush avait déclaré «ne pas avoir de plans de guerre sur son bureau». Le 30 janvier dernier, le même expliquait: «Certains tentent de me faire dire ce que je n'ai pas dit. Ils disent "Eh bien voilà, ce qu'il essaie de faire en réalité, c'est d'envahir l'Iran." Personne ne parle de ça.»

PHILIPPE GRANGEREAU

## L'arme fatale des rebelles chiïtes viendrait d'Iran

Washington a exhibé des preuves de la fourniture d'explosifs sophistiqués aux extrémistes irakiens.

LA PLUS dangereuse, la plus «mortelle» des armes auxquelles sont confrontés les GI en Irak viendrait d'Iran. Plus de 170 soldats américains auraient été tués par ces engins, et 620 autres blessés. Selon l'armée américaine, «leur utilisation a considérablement augmenté ces six derniers mois».

Après des semaines de polémique – de nombreuses voix esti-

mant que l'Administration Bush n'avait guère de preuves en main –, dimanche, dans la «zone verte», le cœur sécurisé de Bagdad, des officiels américains ont présenté des engins explosifs made in Iran. Un point de presse «spécial», puisque les trois responsables

américains qui l'animaient ont requis l'anonymat, ce qui en dit long sur la sensibilité du sujet.

La nouvelle «arme fatale» des rebelles irakiens est désignée par l'aride acronyme d'EFP (projectile à charge formée). Il s'agit en fait d'engins fonctionnant selon le

principe de la charge creuse. À la différence d'un engin explosif simple, la charge est ici dirigée, canalisée, avec un cône métallique propulsé sur la cible. Le «dard» ainsi projeté peut percer d'épais blindages.

«C'est évidemment beaucoup plus sophistiqué qu'un simple IED (engin explosif improvisé), souvent un obus sur lequel on place une charge explosive, explique une source militaire, il faut donc des matériaux et un savoir-faire particuliers». Les IED classiques sont déjà responsables de quelque

60 % des pertes américaines en Irak.

### Le groupe al-Qods impliqué

Ce savoir-faire, pour Washington, vient sans nul doute de l'Iran. Les services américains assurent avoir les preuves – non présentées – de livraisons à des groupes chiïtes. Ils pointent du doigt la

Force al-Qods des gardiens de la révolution iranienne. Ils fourniraient «conseils, entraînement et armes» aux rebelles et extrémistes. Les mêmes officiels, dimanche,

LE FIGARO

13 février 2007

ont révélé qu'un haut gradé en charge des opérations d'al-Qods a été arrêté en décembre chez le chef du Conseil suprême de la révolution islamique irakien, Abdel-Aziz

Hakim, en possession d'une liste d'armes à livrer. « Ces activités sont commanditées au plus haut niveau du gouvernement iranien » ont-ils encore affirmé, le groupe al-Qods relevant directement du guide

suprême, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei. À l'appui de leurs dires, les militaires américains ont également présenté des photos de missiles sol-air

Misagh-I iranien, ainsi que d'obus de mortier où l'on pouvait distinguer la date de fabrication – fin 2006 –, excluant qu'il s'agisse d'armes remontant à la guerre Iran-Irak. « Difficile de savoir si tout vient d'Iran, commente la

même source militaire, mais il est vrai que les EFP sont utilisés par des groupes chiites essentiellement, dans la région de Bagdad. Et que le Hezbollah libanais parrainé par l'Iran en a la maîtrise. »

Londres est venu hier appuyer les assertions américaines en parlant « d'armes qui ne peuvent venir d'autre part que d'Iran. Téhéran a réagi en déclarant que ces accusa-

tions étaient « sans fondement ». Elles viennent en tout cas opportunément nourrir le dossier à charge que les États-Unis instruisent contre l'Iran.

ARNAUD DE LA GRANGE

Jean-Pierre Milelli, enseignant à Sciences-Po (1)

# La stratégie du pire des djihadistes

D'où vient le déchaînement de violence contre les chiites auquel nous assistons depuis plus de trois ans en Irak, et qui a mené ce pays au bord de la guerre civile? Sans remonter jusqu'au schisme qui a donné naissance au chiisme au VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, rappelons qu'au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, celui qui est le maître spirituel du wahhabisme et des djihadistes actuels, Ibn Taymiyya, prononça l'anathème contre les chiites, notamment à cause de leur culte des tombeaux des imams. Le wahhabisme, à proprement parler, apparut, lui, à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. En 1802, ses adeptes saccagèrent le sanctuaire chiite irakien de Kerbala et n'hésitèrent pas, l'année suivante à Médine, à abattre la tombe du Prophète pour empêcher tout culte de son tombeau durant le pèlerinage.

Depuis l'invasion américaine de l'Irak et la chute du régime de Saddam Hussein, un nouveau chapitre de l'hostilité envers les chiites a été écrit. On peut en suivre dès 2004 la piste dans un texte attribué à Abou Moussab Al Zarqaoui, et révélé par les services secrets américains.

Cette hostilité y était justifiée de la sorte: les chiites sont complices de l'occupation américaine qu'ils ont laissé faire en échange d'une remise du pouvoir à leur communauté, ce qui prouverait leur trahison contre laquelle les anciens oulémas avaient déjà mis en garde.

**La politique de Saddam Hussein a semé une haine interconfessionnelle vivace.**

À en juger par les documents qui ont filtré de l'organisation d'Al Zarqaoui, on peut donc lui imputer la responsabilité d'avoir allumé la mèche de la guerre civile en Irak, pour punir les chiites de leur alliance passive avec les Américains et empêcher ces derniers de se prévaloir d'avoir rétabli l'ordre en Irak. Cet acharnement des djihadistes sunnites n'est pas étonnant si l'on se souvient de leur compagnonnage avec leurs homologues sunnites pakistanais et afghans, lesquels ont mené plusieurs cam-

pagnes terroristes contre leurs compatriotes chiites au Pakistan comme en Afghanistan.

Ainsi, en termes idéologiques comme en termes tactiques, le fait de s'attaquer aux chiites peut fort bien se comprendre: il découle du fanatisme doctrinal des islamistes (et de leur reproduction systématique des thèmes conçus par les oulémas médiévaux); pour eux les populations chiites irakiennes constituent une proie facile, les attaquer mènera l'Irak à la guerre civile qui découragera les Américains, lesquels à la longue quitteront l'Irak, laissant ainsi le champ libre à un règlement de compte final dont les islamistes sortiront vainqueurs.

Cela dit, l'exceptionnelle virulence des attaques contre les chiites irakiens a conduit certains responsables du mouvement djihadiste à exprimer des réserves sur cet aspect de la stratégie suivie en Irak. En 2004, le mentor jordanien d'Al Zarqaoui, Al Maqdisi, s'est publiquement dissocié de cet aspect du djihad mené par son disciple, et en 2005, l'Égyptien Al Zawahiri, dans un document interne à son

organisation, lui aussi intercepté et publié par les Américains, rappelait à Al Zarqaoui qu'il y avait un grand risque de perdre ainsi le capital de sympathie des djihadistes auprès des masses arabes du monde entier.

L'année 2006 n'a fait que confirmer les craintes que l'on pouvait avoir sur la réussite de cette entreprise funeste pour l'Irak. Elle s'est achevée par l'exécution de Saddam Hussein qui, en tant que manifestation d'une mentalité revancharde jusqu'au pied de la potence, nous a rappelé que la politique du dictateur avait semé une haine interconfessionnelle vivace; elle nous a aussi révélé l'envie d'en découdre avec les chiites, surtout depuis l'attentat contre la mosquée de Samarra en février 2006, cet équivalent irakien du 11 septembre qui, en évoquant les saccages des wahhabites, ont conforté les chiites dans leur méfiance, leur colère et leur volonté d'indépendance politique.

(1) Coauteur avec Gilles Kepel d'Al-Qaida dans le texte, PUF, 2005.

Le Croix

VENDREDI 16 FÉVRIER 2007

## Straight talk on Iran

Herald INTERNATIONAL Tribune February 14, 2007

**B**efore things get any more out of hand, President George W. Bush needs to make his intentions toward Iran clear. And Congress needs to make it clear that this time it will be neither tricked nor bullied into supporting another disastrous war.

How little this administration has learned from its failures is a constant source of amazement. It seems the bigger the failure, the less it learns.

Consider last weekend's super-secret briefing in Baghdad by a group of U.S. military officials whose names could not be revealed to the voters who are paying for this war with their taxes and their children's blood. The briefers tried to prove the White House's case that Iran is shipping deadly weapons to Shiite militias in Iraq.

Unlike Colin Powell's infamous prewar presentation on Iraq at the UN, this briefing had actual weapons to look at. And perhaps in time, the administration will be able to prove conclusively that the weapons came from arms factories in Iran.

But the officials offered no evidence to support their charge that "the highest levels of the Iranian government" had authorized smuggling these weapons into Iraq. Nor could they adequately explain why they had been sitting on this evidence since 2004.

We have no doubt about Iran's malign intent. Iran is defying the Security Council's order to halt its nuclear activities, and it is certainly meddling inside Iraq. But we are also certain that the Iraq war has so shattered this president's credibility that shrill accusations and saber rattling are far more likely to frighten the allies America needs to contain Iran's nuclear ambitions than to change Tehran's behavior.

If Bush is truly worried about Shiite militias killing Americans in Iraq — and he should be — he needs to start showing this evidence to Iraq's prime minister, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki. He needs to demand that Maliki stop protecting the militias and make it clear that there will be serious consequences if he continues to refuse.

If Bush is truly worried about Iran fanning Iraq's civil war — and he should be — he needs to stop fantasizing about regime change and start trying to find a way to persuade Iran's leaders to help rein in the chaos.

And if Bush is worried that Americans no longer believe him when he warns of mortal threats to the country — and he should be — he needs to

start proving that he really understands who is most responsible for the Iraq disaster. And he needs to explain how he plans to extricate U.S. troops without setting off a bigger war.

That's the briefing the American people need to hear. And they need to hear it from the most senior U.S. official of all, George Walker Bush.

## EU agrees to broaden restrictions on Iran

By Steven R. Weisman

**WASHINGTON:** European negotiators, yielding to pressure from the United States, have agreed to widen a ban on financial transactions with Iran and on the export of materials and technology that Iran could use to develop nuclear weapons.

European officials said a resolution embodying the wider ban had been negotiated over the past week and should go far toward satisfying the Bush administration.

Cristina Gallach, spokeswoman for Javier Solana, the EU's foreign policy chief, said Tuesday that the EU was growing increasingly frustrated by Iranian intransigence. She acknowledged that the EU's approach had so far failed to yield results. "We have not been successful so far as getting the Iranians to stop enrichment," she said. "But we will continue to pursue a two-track approach of working toward a negotiated solution while pursuing the UN track of sanctions."

Gallach said the EU was preparing to extend the scope of its sanctions beyond the December UN resolution, for example, by expanding the list of names of Iranian individuals and institutions who will face EU restrictions like the freezing of financial assets. But she said the EU was still unprepared to go as far as the sanctions being pushed by United States.

"Our aim is double suspension: We suspend the UN resolutions and Iran suspends its nuclear enrichment," she said, adding that no breakthrough was imminent.

She said Iran appeared to show a willingness for further diplomacy, but so far had failed to make the moves necessary for the EU to return to the negotiating table.

The administration has been pressing European governments for firmer action against Iranian individuals and companies as part of a campaign to isolate the Tehran government because of its suspected nuclear arms program.

"This is a very positive initiative because it takes the European Union beyond where they were until recently,"

said R. Nicholas Burns, under secretary of state for political affairs. "It's not everything we would like to see happen. But the trajectory is good and the momentum is good, so we think this is a positive event."

A text of the resolution, made public Monday evening by officials of the EU, calls for steps to carry out a United Nations Security Council resolution

adopted in December.

Europeans have been slow to follow through, saying their governments do not have the legal tools to act against Iranian companies.

Two European officials said that in some respects the draft complied with American wishes for a broad move against Iran, but that in other respects it could fall short. If the EU adopts the resolution, European governments individually will have to enact laws to carry it out.

"The point is that it takes time for the Europeans to work out exactly where the center of gravity is so they can do something like this," said a European official, asking not to be identified because of the delicate nature of the discussions. "It's not as if the European Union can snap its fingers and get it done right away."

In a separate development, two top EU diplomats said in Brussels that their talks in Tehran during the weekend had left them encouraged that talks might resume over Iran's nuclear program.

There was no sign, however, that Iran would be willing to suspend its enrichment of uranium, which the West has insisted is a precondition for a resumption of talks.

"We got the impression that in Iran there's a new ambition to return to the negotiating table," said the German foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who has taken the lead for the EU because Germany serves as its current president.

The Security Council resolution of Dec. 23 listed a dozen individuals and several Iranian corporations as effectively off limits to transactions with European banks and European companies.

# Au Kurdistan irakien, George Bush est « aimé », et tous redoutent le retrait de l'armée américaine

**Le Monde**  
16 février 2007



Le président Talabani (à g.) avec M. Barzani. S. PETERSON/GETTY/AFP

## REPORTAGE

ARBIL, SOULEIMANIYÉ (KURDISTAN)

ENVOYÉE SPÉCIALE

Avec ses néons chignotants et une interdiction de port d'arme affichée au-dessus du bar, The Edge est l'un des lieux de prédilection des Américains d'Ainkawa, près d'Arbil, la capitale du Kurdistan d'Irak.

Quelques officiers instructeurs, des membres de l'USAID, des marines en provenance de la base militaire de Kirkouk s'y retrouvent le soir pour jouer aux fléchettes, boire bière, whisky ou tequila, et danser la Macarena. Blocs de ciment et gardes armés : l'endroit est protégé, mais guère plus que les bâtiments officiels kurdes.

Ici, les habitants l'affirment, le président américain, George Bush, est « aimé » et ses soldats bienvenus. Grâce à eux, le régime de Saddam Hussein est tombé et le Kurdistan jouit d'une autonomie et d'une relative sécurité.

Même si les forces américaines ont tué « par erreur » huit peshmergas (combattants kurdes) le 9 février, à Mossoul, provoquant la colère du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan, elles sont considérées comme la garantie vitale de cette situation privilégiée. Et les Etats-Unis comme le seul allié d'un Kurdistan encerclé par des pays, notamment la Turquie et l'Iran, qui redoutent sa sécession et possèdent les moyens de s'y opposer par la force en cas de désintégration de l'Irak.

L'opposition croissante de l'opinion américaine à la guerre et la défaite des républicains aux élections de novembre 2006 sont étonnamment passés inaperçus au Kurdistan. En revanche, la publication en décembre du rapport Baker a eu l'effet d'une douche glaciale. Alors que les principales revendications kurdes semblaient assurées par la Constitution adoptée le 15 novembre 2005, les Kurdes ont découvert qu'elles pouvaient être remises en question.

Le renforcement du gouvernement central de Bagdad, préconisé par le rapport Baker, menace le fédéralisme et la notion d'autonomie. Inacceptable, du point de vue kurde, le référendum qui doit décider du rattachement du gouvernorat de Kirkouk au Kurdistan, prévu fin 2007, est jugé « explosif », susceptible de créer de graves « violences communautaires ». Enfin, le rapport n'est pas tendre envers ceux qui se croyaient les meilleurs élèves à l'école du « nouvel Irak ». « Les Kurdes, y est-il écrit, font peu d'efforts pour la réconciliation nationale. »

A l'issue d'une session spéciale, le 17 décembre 2006, l'Assemblée nationale du Kurdistan a envoyé une lettre furieuse à George Bush et au Congrès américain, dénonçant le manque d'« objectivité » du rapport Baker. Il a été « écrit avec l'argent saoudien et la mentalité turque », accuse un dirigeant kurde. Un autre se demande « pourquoi leurs enquêteurs ne se sont pas donnés la peine de passer un coup de téléphone dans la seule partie de l'Irak

où le rêve de Bush est devenu réalité ».

Pour la première fois depuis le début de la guerre, les Kurdes se sont sentis floués. La conviction d'avoir bâti un Kurdistan à l'écart des turbulences, protégé par la superpuissance américaine, a cédé la place à l'inquiétude. L'annonce du président américain de poursuivre sa mission en Irak n'a pas dissipé le malaise.

Des dirigeants kurdes doutent dorénavant de l'existence d'une « stratégie américaine au Kurdistan ». La grande affaire de George Bush, disent-ils, est la bataille de Bagdad, et, s'il échoue, le rapport Baker reviendra à l'ordre du jour.

La nomination du général David Petraeus à la tête des forces américaines en Irak suscite également des réserves. Avant de remplacer le général Casey, il a été commandant de la région nord-irakienne en 2004-2005, basé à Mossoul, en bordure du Kurdistan. En novembre 2004, une série d'attaques menées par l'insurrection sunnite avait provoqué la débandade des 8 000 Irakiens des forces de police et de sécurité de Mossoul qu'il avait été chargé de réorganiser.

Pour les Kurdes se pose surtout la question des délais. Il ne reste que 23 mois avant la prochaine élection présidentielle américaine, et personne ne sait ce que décidera le successeur de George Bush. Le pire scénario, estime Asos Hardi, rédacteur en chef d'Awene, un hebdomadaire de Souleimaniyé, « serait un départ américain. Il s'agirait alors du plus grand défi que les Kurdes aient jamais eu à relever. Je ne vois aucun élément permettant d'affirmer que nous aurions les capacités à nous défendre contre l'Iran ou la Turquie. La bravoure des peshmergas est célèbre, mais ils ont été formés à la guérilla, aux tactiques d'attaque, pas à la défense ».

## Référendum à Kirkouk

Dans un bureau de l'Assemblée nationale du Kurdistan, l'écran de la télévision allumée montre Ali Hassan Al-Majid, dit « Ali le Chimique », poursuivi pour génocide contre les Kurdes lors des opérations militaires d'Anfal qui ont fait plus de 100 000 morts entre 1987-1988. Depuis que le principal accusé, Saddam Hussein, a été exécuté, le 30 décembre, les télévisions kurdes continuent de diffuser le procès, mais ont arrêté les traductions simultanées en langue kurde. Que l'ancien président d'Irak ait été pendu avant d'avoir été jugé pour ses crimes contre les Kurdes a mécontenté toute la région, mais, « au moins, commente un député, personne ne pourra accuser les Kurdes d'être responsables de la mort d'un chef arabe ». Rester à l'écart des conflits communautaires, tel est l'objectif prioritaire.

La récente décision de Massoud Barzani d'envoyer deux brigades (officiellement 6 000 hommes) à Bagdad dans le cadre de



la nouvelle stratégie américaine suscite de nouvelles inquiétudes. Une dizaine d'imams ont émis des fatwas interdisant leur départ, provoquant des désertions. Ces soldats seront incorporés dans l'armée irakienne, comme à Kirkouk et Mossoul, mais « un Kurde reste un Kurde, même sous uniforme irakien », commente un étudiant d'Arbil. *Dans l'enfer des milices de Bagdad, s'ils sont amenés à tuer des Arabes, chiïtes ou sunnites, pourrions-nous échapper aux représailles ?*

Les scénarios du pire, personne ne veut y croire. En attendant, l'année 2007 s'annonce critique pour le Kurdistan,

confronté à deux événements concomitants et potentiellement explosifs. D'un côté, les élections en Turquie où le problème des « terroristes » du PKK (Parti des travailleurs kurdes, dont la branche armée a trouvé refuge dans les montagnes du Kurdistan irakien), enflamme déjà une partie de la presse ; de l'autre, le référendum sur le rattachement de Kirkouk au Kurdistan, une revendication essentielle du peuple kurde à laquelle s'opposent la Turquie et une grande partie des Turcomans et des Arabes irakiens.

« Pour la suite, on verra, tant que les

*Américains sont là, la Turquie ne bougera pas », assure Adnan Mufti, le président de l'Assemblée nationale kurde. « Les relations avec les Etats-Unis restent notre absolue priorité, poursuit-il. Nous pensons qu'après Bush il y aura peu de changements, les Etats-Unis ne peuvent plus faire marche arrière. Ils perdraient leur influence au Moyen-Orient et leur prestige. Leur retrait équivaldrait à une victoire des terroristes. Ce serait un désastre, pour eux, pour les Kurdes et pour l'Irak. »*

CÉCILE HENNON

## Irak La région autonome kurde envoie 6 000 combattants

Le Monde  
16 février 2007

intégrer l'armée nationale irakienne à Bagdad

# Massoud Barzani : « Le Kurdistan, point de départ des réformes en Irak »

Dans un entretien au « Monde », le président du Kurdistan d'Irak commente la guerre civile entre sunnites et chiïtes, la stratégie américaine et le risque d'une intervention turque

SALAHEDDINE (Kurdistan)

ENVOYÉE SPÉCIALE

**Quelles seraient les conséquences pour le Kurdistan d'un retrait américain ?**

Il est trop tôt pour prédire ce qui arriverait et quelles seraient les conséquences. Le plus important est que nous sommes déterminés à nous défendre, à protéger ce que nous avons acquis, quel qu'en soit le prix. En ce qui concerne les Etats-Unis, nous avons de bonnes relations avec les démocrates et les républicains.

Notre situation actuelle n'est pas comparable à celle de 1975, quand nous avions des contacts secrets. Cette fois, il ne s'agit pas seulement de nous, mais de tout l'Irak. Nous allons continuer à jouer un rôle positif. Quand il y aura des développements, quand il sera question d'un retrait (américain d'Irak), nous essaierons de préserver ce que nous avons accompli. Même si la situation tourne au chaos, le Kurdistan pourrait devenir le point de départ pour mener des réformes dans le reste de l'Irak.

**La guerre américaine n'est pas un succès. Les Kurdes donnent parfois l'impression que, pendant que les sunnites et les chiïtes s'entre-tuent, eux estiment qu'ils en deviennent plus forts.**

Si certains se réjouissent des combats entre sunnites et chiïtes, c'est une erreur. Sur le plan humain, nous som-

mes accablés par la guerre et son lot de morts quotidiens. Sur le plan des intérêts, nous appartenons à l'Irak. Tout ce qui touche Bagdad a un impact sur le Kurdistan.

Imaginez que la maison de votre voisin est en feu. Même si les flammes n'atteignent pas votre maison, la fumée vous affecte. Donc, pour vous protéger, vous allez essayer de résoudre son problème. Nous poursuivons nos efforts. Mais nous ne faisons pas partie du problème et ne ferons jamais partie du problème.

**Le référendum sur le statut de Kirkouk est un sujet sensible pour les Kurdes mais aussi pour la Turquie, qui s'y oppose. Redoutez-vous une intervention turque ?**

Kirkouk est une ville du Kurdistan et une ville d'Irak. L'article 140 de la Constitution irakienne stipule une solution qui consiste à normaliser la situation [renvoyer les populations déplacées par l'ancien régime baasiste dans leur lieu d'origine et ramener les habitants qui en

avaient été chassés], procéder à un recensement puis organiser un référendum avant la fin 2007. Il s'agit d'un processus légal. Kirkouk est pour nous une affaire importante. Nous ne sommes prêts à aucune concession. Nous avons fait preuve de la plus extrême flexibilité pour obtenir une solution légale.

La Turquie n'a aucun droit d'interférer dans les affaires internes d'Irak. Je ne crois pas que les Turcs iront jusqu'à l'agression, ni même qu'ils traverseront la frontière. Je suis confiant dans le fait qu'ils comprennent les conséquences

[d'une telle décision]. La route ne serait pas pavée de fleurs pour les accueillir.

**Pensez-vous qu'il sera plus facile de renouer le dialogue avec Ankara après les élections turques, quel que soit le vainqueur ?**

Même maintenant, nous faisons des efforts. Nous abordons des sujets sur lesquels nous pouvons nous entendre, mais aussi des sujets qui suscitent chez eux des craintes. Après les élections, la situation sera probablement plus claire. Si les extrémistes et les nationalistes prennent le pouvoir, je ne crois pas qu'il y aura beaucoup de possibilités de dialogue. Si c'est le parti actuel, le Parti de la justice et du développement [AKP], qui l'emporte, je pense qu'il est plus ouvert au dialogue.

**Cela fait des années que vous et Jalal Talabani (le dirigeant kurde actuellement président de l'Irak) essayez de**

**convaincre les Etats-Unis d'établir une base militaire au Kurdistan. Est-ce toujours une possibilité ?**

Cela ne pourra se faire que dans le cadre d'un accord entre le gouvernement irakien et les Etats-Unis. Cette question a été discutée dans le passé. Les vraies négociations n'ont pas vraiment commencé concernant les relations à long terme entre le gouvernement fédéral d'Irak

« Nous pouvons constituer une sorte de force d'interposition entre les sunnites et les chiïtes »



Massoud Barzani (à gauche) visite, en compagnie de l'ambassadeur américain en Irak, Zalmay Khalilzad, le site d'un nouvel aéroport à Erbil, en septembre 2006. Le gouverneur du Kurdistan se dit prêt à accueillir une base américaine. KHALID MOHAMMED/AP

et les Etats-Unis, sur la présence américaine et le nombre de soldats dans le futur. Officiellement, cela n'a pas été discuté. Ce serait dans l'intérêt des Etats-Unis mais aussi de l'Irak. Nous, Kurdes, accueillerions volontiers [la base américaine] au Kurdistan.

**Vous avez annoncé l'envoi de deux brigades à Bagdad. Cela ne crée-t-il pas un danger de voir les Kurdes entraînés dans le conflit entre sunnites et chiïtes ?**

Jusqu'à présent, les Kurdes ont réussi à éviter de s'impliquer dans les violences

communautaires. Selon la Constitution, ces hommes seront incorporés dans l'armée irakienne, qui dépend du ministre de la défense. Beaucoup d'entre eux sont d'anciens peshmergas [combattants kurdes] mais ils appartiennent maintenant à l'armée irakienne. Nous n'avons pas de problème quand il s'agit de combattre le terrorisme et nous pouvons constituer une sorte de force d'interposition entre les sunnites et les chiïtes.

**Etait-ce une demande américaine ?**

Plus que les Américains, ce sont les sunnites et les chiïtes qui nous ont

demandé de faire preuve de solidarité et de les aider. Les brigades kurdes n'interviendront pas dans les quartiers de Bagdad, elles seront chargées de protéger les hôpitaux, les universités, l'aéroport. Le plus important est qu'ils ne donnent pas l'impression de prendre parti, de soutenir l'un ou l'autre des deux camps. ■

PROPOS RECUEILLIS PAR  
CÉCILE HENNION

## Barzani urges neighbors to stay out of Iraq

Sardar Mohammad  
Globe-Erbil

Iraqi Kurdistan's president says that regional countries continue to be part of the sectarian strife that has transformed the Iraqi capital to a battleground between the Shiites and the Sunnis. Masoud Barzani, a prominent Iraqi politician and the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party told the Voice of America (VOA) that Iraq has turned to a "front line" for powerful regional countries' own disputes.

"Regional nations who interfere in Iraq's domestic affairs believe if this process (US intervention in Iraq) succeeds, it'll have an effect on them as well. This is why they wish the United States faced more setbacks in the country," President Barzani said urging neighboring nations to stay out of Iraq's sectarian war.

More than 300 people were killed last week in separate bombing attacks across Iraq, leaving hundreds more seriously injured. The attacks, predominantly concentrated

in the Iraqi capital, came just days before American and Iraqi forces were expected to start an all-inclusive attack on Sunni and Shiite gunmen in Baghdad.

On Saturday, US intelligence agencies made public a National Intelligence Estimate that said conditions in Baghdad were dangerous.

"Unless efforts to reverse these conditions show measurable progress ... in the coming 12 to 18 months, we assess that the overall security situation will continue to deteriorate," a declassified outline of

the report stated.

Meanwhile the United States' ambassador to NATO defended US military build-up in the Gulf in response to what she said was an increasingly "aggressive" stance by Iran. Victoria Nuland, in an interview with Sky News television, vowed to defend US interests in the region, where she said many people were "very scared" of the Islamic republic's intentions.

In regard to the US possible strike against Iran, President Barzani said that Iraq's crisis will escalate even further if

Washington decided to attack Iran. Barzani said that in any case he hoped none of the neighboring nations become a threat to Iraq's Kurdistan region.

"We would like to have friendly relations with both Turkey and Iran, but if they threaten us we will defend ourselves."

The Kurdish Globe

February 6, 2007



# Car bomb targets bus, killing 11 Iran Guards

By Nazila Fathi

**TEHRAN:** A car loaded with explosives blew up Wednesday in front of a bus carrying members of the Revolutionary Guards in southeastern Iran, killing at least 11 and wounding 34, according to state-run press outlets.

The explosion took place in the city of Zahedan, near the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan. The governor of Zahedan, Hassan Ali Nouri, told state television that the car exploded at 6:37 a.m. as a bus carrying Revolutionary Guards approached it. Video footage was broadcast of the mangled bus and of wounded people being carried away on stretchers.

An official told a state student press agency that six people had been arrested in connection with the blast.

The explosion was the largest in Iran in nearly a year. Last March, 22 officials were killed when their convoy was attacked in the same province.

Iranian officials have repeatedly accused the United States and Britain of stirring up ethnic unrest in Iran and supporting opposition groups. Zahedan, capital of Sistan-Baluchistan Province, is home to many ethnic Baluchis, who are mostly Sunni Muslims; the majority Persian ethnic group in Iran is mainly Shiite.

Hossein Ali Shahriari, who represents Zahedan in Parliament, said Wednesday that the attack had been carried out by "insurgents and smugglers who are led by the world imperialism," a reference to the United States and Britain.

Baluchis in the region complain of discriminatory and repressive policies by the Tehran government.

The region has also been a major gateway for drug traffickers from Pakistan and Afghanistan, who often clash with security officers. The government said that more than 3,300 of its officers had been killed in fighting in the area since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Iran has dug a trench along the border in hopes of obstructing the smugglers.

The semiofficial Fars press agency reported that a Baluchi group opposed to the government, the Jondollah Organization of Iran, claimed responsibility for the attack Wednesday. Jondollah also claimed responsibility for the attack in March.

Iran has said that the Jondollah organization and its leader, Abdolmalek Rigi, are linked to drug traffickers and to Al Qaeda. But the group denied those accusations in a letter published in October by The Guardian newspaper.

The government has stepped up punishment of those behind ethnic unrest. A state news agency reported that two men accused of kidnapping and hostage-taking were hanged in Zahedan last June.

Herald INTERNATIONAL Tribune

February 16, 2007

## Baghdad push expands; Sadr's location disputed

By Damien Cave

**BAGHDAD:** American and Iraqi forces continued to step up their security push in Sunni and Shiite areas of Baghdad on Thursday, as questions swirled around the whereabouts of the militant anti-American Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr.

Two Shiite leaders asserted that Sadr had gone to Iran, as American officials said early this week. The two — Sami al-Askari, a member of Parliament from the Dawa Party, and a senior official from Sadr's organization who refused to be identified — said the visit would probably be a short one and did not necessarily signify that Sadr feared the new security plan.

Still, in a sign of how volatile Sadr's role here has become, several of his aides immediately responded with a chorus of denials.

"We endured a hard time before, much longer and harder than this," said Saleh al-Igaili, a member of the Sadr group in Parliament, referring to battles in 2004 between American forces and Sadr's militia, the Mahdi army. "And he didn't run away. He has always stayed."

Two competing narratives are colliding in the back-and-forth over Sadr's whereabouts. On one hand, American officials have insisted that Shiite militias like the Mahdi army are the main cause of instability in Iraq now, and that

they are receiving weapons from Iran.

Sadr loyalists, meanwhile, portray themselves as nationalist partners with the Shiite-led government and supporters of the security plan, and say that they do not intend to fight American troops.

Sadr has become the centerpiece of the larger debate, not just about his own organization, but also about the Iraqi government's ability to rein in sectarian violence, and about Iran's role in the region.

Askari said he did not understand why there was so much fuss: Sadr, he said, has frequently traveled to Iran and rarely appears in public while in Iraq.

Meanwhile, two car bombs went off in a Sunni area of southern Baghdad just after 1 p.m. Thursday, killing four people. A few hours later in the Shiite stronghold of Sadr City, six people were killed when a bomb in a minibus exploded outside a popular restaurant.

All three explosions occurred near where American troops were surrounding houses and searching for hostile fighters and their weapons.

In another Sunni district, the Jamiaa neighborhood of western Baghdad, a car packed with explosives blew up near an Iraqi patrol, wounding two soldiers.

Khalid al-Ansary, Qais Mizher and Ahmad Fadam contributed reporting.

## Iraqis review draft oil-revenue law

By James Glanz

**KARABILA, Iraq:** A draft version of the long-awaited law that would govern the development of Iraqi oil fields and the distribution of revenue from them has been submitted to the Iraqi cabinet, the first step toward approving the legislation, two members of a senior negotiating committee said over the weekend.

The move appeared to signal that negotiators had arrived at the outlines of a compromise that would satisfy the Kurdish, Shiite and Sunni constituents on the committee and break a deadlock that has held up approval of the law for months. Because the Iraqi budget depends almost entirely on oil revenue, the law is considered an essential element of creating a stable and functioning government.

Earlier drafts of the law obtained by The New York Times indicated that the

Iraqi central government in Baghdad would retain substantial control over oil revenue and the right to review, and possibly approve, the contracts that regional governments sign with Iraqi and international companies to develop the fields and pump oil.

Negotiations had snagged, however, because of insistence by the Kurds that they maintain a degree of autonomy in managing their northern fields. But two members of the negotiating committee confirmed that a draft has been sent to the cabinet, indicating that a compromise may be in sight.

Neither of those negotiators — Husain al-Shahrastani, the current oil minister, and Thamir Ghadban, a former oil minister — would provide details of the compromise.

But a senior official in the Kurdish Regional Government also said that a deal was near and hinted that the Kurds had received concessions on how the

law would affect existing contracts with oil companies that agreed to perform work in the north.

The official said that the Kurdish regional government was insisting on maintaining control of those contracts and not having them subject to approval by central government in Baghdad.

"That is a right is entitled to KRG in the Iraqi constitution," the official said, referring to the Kurdish regional government.

If the cabinet approves the draft law, it would then be sent to the Iraqi Parliament for ratification. Parliament has turned out to be a weak body that for the most part automatically passes laws that

have been approved by leaders of the main political parties, most of which run along ethnic and sectarian lines.

*Qais Mizher contributed reporting from Baghdad and Yerevan Adham contributed reporting from Kurdistan.*

# Blasts kill at least 60 in a Baghdad market

## Attack underscores security challenge

By Marc Santora

**BAGHDAD:** Two days after Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki called the first days of the security crackdown in this capital city a "dazzling success," two car bombs tore through a crowded market and killed at least 60 people.

The attack occurred only minutes after American soldiers passed through the area on patrol, underscoring the difficult nature of trying to quell violence on the streets of Baghdad, where car bombs have been an almost daily occurrence and suicide attacks directed at civilians so common that many of the markets have been closed to vehicle traffic in recent days.

The blasts on Sunday occurred in the mostly Shiite neighborhood of New Baghdad, devastating an open-air market, setting dozens of cars ablaze and causing the partial collapse of a two-story building that housed electronics stores. The street was littered with charred televisions, satellite dishes and small generators. Shattered blue tiles and glass and blood were trampled over as the survivors tried to rush the more than 131 people wounded in the attack to the hospital. They wrapped the dead in rugs and blankets and whatever else they could find.

Abdul Hussein Ameer ran when he

heard the first blast shortly after 3 p.m.; he is so familiar with the pattern of the suicide bombers that he knew another explosion was likely. But before he could get out of his shop, where he sells plastic containers and dishes, the second bomb detonated.

"I hold the American forces responsible for this," he said, black soot on his face and clothes.

Fifteen minutes before the attack, a joint patrol of American soldiers and Iraqi police officers had stopped on the corner where the second bomb exploded, posing for pictures, according to a Reuters photographer who was embedded with the American unit.

President George W. Bush has acknowledged that the attacks of suicide bombers will be difficult to eliminate. He said the immediate goal of the plan was to establish "relative peace."

Another car bomb on Sunday targeting a police checkpoint in the Shiite stronghold of Sadr City killed 2 people and wounded 11 others, according to Iraqi officials.

Major General Joseph Fil Jr., commanding general of Multi-National Division Baghdad and the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division, said Friday that one way they were hoping to stem the bloodshed was to limit access to the major markets — where Iraqis have no choice but to shop

for essential goods — to pedestrians.

Residents and witnesses said that the market where the attack occurred Sunday had been closed to traffic, and they were at a loss to explain how the attackers had been able to get into the area.

The bombers were likely Sunni militants, according to American and Iraqi officials, seeking to undermine the security plan and to fuel the sectarian tensions that have torn Baghdad apart.

There had been a noticeable increase in the presence of both American and Iraqi forces throughout the capital over the last four days.

Fighter jets can be heard flying over Baghdad all day long, and on the ground, dozens of new checkpoints have been established throughout the city.

During a three-day lull in extreme violence, since Maliki announced the start of the crackdown, there had been a palpable sense of tension in Baghdad. Iraqi civilians, in interviews over the past week, expressed hope that the plan would work but no confidence that it would succeed.

American officials have been much more cautious than Iraqi politicians and military commanders in trying to damp expectations for immediate results. Fil said that the recent respite in violence was likely due to the militants trying to figure out what the new strategy entailed.

"They are watching us carefully," he said.

Beyond setting up checkpoints, American troops are reinserting themselves in neighborhoods in ways that they have not done since the earliest days of the campaign here, establishing a series of joint security stations where they are living with and fighting alongside Iraqi forces.

The increased presence comes with increased risk, and on Saturday two American soldiers were killed in separate attacks in Baghdad, the military said Sunday. But American and Iraqi officials also pointed to recent successes that they attributed to the stepped-up military campaign.

Over the past year, it has been common for as many as 50 bodies to turn up in the street each day, showing signs of torture and indications that they had been killed execution-style. In the past two days, only eight bodies had been recovered, according to Iraqi officials.

The Americans also announced Sunday that they had captured a militant who they believed to be responsible for planning a series of car bomb attacks directed at civilians.



Iraqis evacuating one of the wounded Sunday. An American-Iraqi patrol had been in the Baghdad market minutes before the attack.

Iran Washington nie des préparatifs militaires contre Téhéran et mise sur les sanctions financières

# La stratégie américaine d'« étranglement » de l'Iran

Le Monde  
Samedi 17 février 2007

WASHINGTON  
CORRESPONDANTE

**P**lus ils en parlent, moins on les croit. Tous les jours, les responsables américains affirment qu'il n'est pas question de bombarder l'Iran. « Pour la énième fois, a encore dit, jeudi 15 février, le secrétaire à la défense, Robert Gates, nous ne sommes pas à la recherche d'un prétexte pour entrer en guerre contre l'Iran. » Rien n'y fait. L'administration Bush est créditée de préparatifs secrets. Nancy Pelosi, la présidente démocrate de la Chambre des représentants, a encore lancé jeudi une mise en garde : le président n'a « pas l'autorité pour aller en Iran ».

Ce n'est pas la première fois que la fièvre monte à Washington. Les rumeurs sur une « solution militaire » coïncident généralement avec une échéance diplomatique importante. Le 23 février, le directeur de l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA), Mohamed ElBaradei, doit présenter à l'ONU son rapport sur l'application de la résolution 1737, adoptée en décembre 2006, imposant des sanctions à l'encontre de l'Iran.

La température a également monté du fait des accusations portées quotidiennement par les responsables américains contre les « réseaux iraniens » en Irak. Le Pentagone assure qu'il n'est question que de défense, pas d'attaque, et que l'escalade verbale répond au souci de protéger la vie des soldats, menacée par les engins explosifs fabriqués en Iran. Mais si Washington a décidé de « s'affirmer activement en Irak », comme l'a confirmé Nicholas Burns, le numéro trois du département

d'Etat en charge du dossier iranien, c'est aussi dans une perspective plus éloignée.

Quoi qu'ils en disent, les Américains préparent l'après-escalade : la phase de retrait d'Irak. Or ils n'entendent pas laisser le terrain à la frange dure du régime de Téhéran et claironnent leur intention de rester au Moyen-Orient. « Nous sommes dans le Golfe depuis 1949. Nous avons la responsabilité d'assurer la sécurité de nos amis », a déclaré récemment M. Burns. Dans un spectaculaire entretien au *New York Times*, l'ambassadeur iramien à Bagdad, Hassan Kazemi Qumi, lui a répondu, le 29 janvier, que les Iraniens étaient là, eux aussi, pour « aider », et qu'ils avaient l'intention d'étendre leur rôle et même d'implanter une succursale de la Banque nationale iranienne aux portes de la « Zone verte », à Bagdad...

Malgré les constantes références à la menace « grandissante » que représente l'Iran, la guerre n'est peut-être pas au programme, du moins « pas pour l'instant ». L'Iran n'est pas l'Irak. Début 2003, on sentait un appétit d'en découdre. Aujourd'hui, même les « faucons » n'évoquent l'idée d'une attaque contre l'Iran que comme « la pire des situations à l'exception d'un Iran nucléarisé ». Dans une conférence, mercredi, au Sénat, l'ancien néoconservateur Francis Fukuyama a même dit qu'il ne voulait pas « faire la même erreur que Jacques Chirac » et qu'il lui paraissait hors de question de se satisfaire d'une « solution qui reposerait sur la dissuasion ». Mais il sous-entendait qu'il faudrait peut-être en arriver là...

L'administration a développé une stra-

tégie – l'étranglement – et elle commence à la trouver efficace. « On serre et on voit si ça fait mal », résume un officiel. Les Américains estiment qu'ils ont du temps. « Nous sommes convaincus que, tôt ou tard, le coût pour l'Iran de son isolement sera tel qu'il viendra à la table des négociations », a expliqué mercredi Nicholas Burns. La stratégie américaine pour « contenir l'Iran » est « multiforme », a-t-il déclaré lors d'une intervention à la Brookings Institution.

Après avoir hésité, compte tenu des trois mois et demi de pourparlers à l'automne 2006, l'administration a décidé de se réengager dans un cycle de négociations à l'ONU sur les suites à donner à l'adoption de sanctions en décembre. Onze pays seulement font l'objet de sanctions internationales, signale M. Burns. « La résolution 1737 a eu un impact majeur en Iran. Elle a déclenché un débat. »

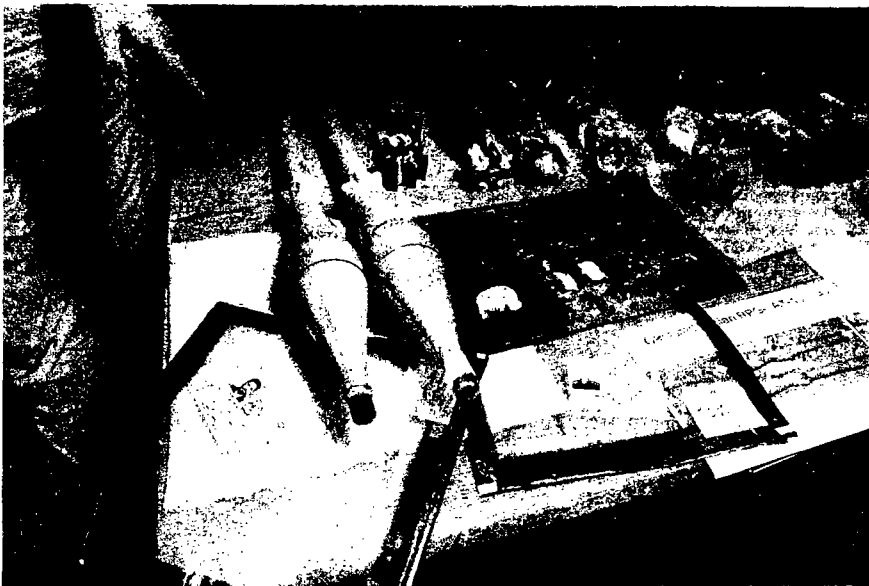
Les Américains ont l'intention de resserrer l'étau en incluant dans la discussion le sort des combattants d'Al-Qaida qui ont été arrêtés en 2002 en Iran alors qu'ils fuyaient l'Afghanistan. Ces combattants sont en résidence surveillée mais les « durs » de l'administration les accusent de continuer à diriger des attaques. Selon le *Washington Post*, la Maison Blanche voudrait qu'ils soient mis en accusation quelque part et elle invoque le respect des résolutions antiterroristes de l'ONU pour forcer les Iraniens à les juger ou à les extraire.

L'administration Bush, enfin, a découvert un nouvel outil. Les sanctions financières. Celles-ci ne nécessitent pas de passer par l'ONU. « C'est très précis. On vise tel ou tel individu. On les applique, on les suspend. C'est comme de la chirurgie au laser », explique Matthew Levitt, l'ancien adjoint du chargé du renseignement au département du Trésor.

En vertu du Patriot Act, la loi antiterroriste, plusieurs institutions financières iraniennes ont eu l'interdiction d'utiliser le dollar pour leurs transactions ou de passer par des banques américaines. Les responsables américains sont allés dans les banques d'une quarantaine de pays pour leur présenter les inconvénients à travailler en Iran. Selon un expert financier, les institutions craignent des contrôles administratifs si elles ne coopèrent pas. « Nous ne formulons aucune menace, affirme Matthew Levitt. Nous leur disons : Est-ce que vous voulez que votre réputation soit associée à un régime comme celui-là ? »

Cette diplomatie financière a été appliquée contre la Corée du Nord, contre le Hamas palestinien, et Washington vient de l'étendre au Soudan. Affaiblis sur le plan politique et militaire, les Etats-Unis entendent utiliser la puissance qui reste entière : Wall Street. ■

CORINE LESNES



Pièces à conviction réunies par les militaires américains pour démontrer que les insurgés irakiens reçoivent une aide iranienne. La présentation a eu lieu lors d'une conférence de presse à Bagdad, mercredi 14 février. SAMIR MIZBAN/AFP

## Diplomatie : Ankara et Washington au bord de la crise de nerfs

COURRIER INTERNATIONAL - 19 février 2007

**La perspective d'un vote, par le Congrès américain, d'une loi reconnaissant le génocide arménien accroît les tensions entre les Etats-Unis et la Turquie. La dégradation des relations entre les deux pays pourrait avoir de lourdes conséquences sur la situation en Irak.**

Le partenariat américano-turc bat sérieusement de l'aile, au point de remettre en question l'alliance qui lie les deux pays membres de l'OTAN. "A l'heure actuelle, leur relation se dirige vers une rupture qui pourrait être spectaculaire, à la suite de la décision de la nouvelle majorité de la Chambre des représentants de suivre la voie de la France et de condamner officiellement le génocide de 1915 des Arméniens chrétiens par les Turcs musulmans. Dans le rapport de forces actuel, la loi pourrait être adoptée si elle était mise au vote comme prévu dans les prochaines semaines", note *The Guardian* de Londres.

Le général turc Yasar Büyükanit

Les consultations à divers niveaux entre représentants turcs et américains se sont multipliées ces derniers jours, avec les visites à Washington du ministre des Affaires étrangères turc Abdullah Gül et du chef d'état-major, le général Yasar Büyükanit. Mais le chef de la diplomatie turque a essuyé un camouflet de la présidente de la Chambre des représentants, la démocrate Nancy Pelosi, qui n'a pas souhaité le rencontrer. La position de Pelosi s'explique par la forte minorité d'origine arménienne vivant en Californie, Etat dans lequel elle a été élue.

Le général Yasar Büyükanit a exprimé sans détour l'embarras de la Turquie, qui, selon lui, "n'a jamais été confrontée à autant de risques et de menaces depuis la création de la République turque en 1923", rapporte

*Hürriyet*, le grand quotidien turc. Le chef de l'armée turque s'en est même pris à la diaspora turque, qu'il accuse de ne pas se mobiliser en faveur des intérêts nationaux de la Turquie. "Si la voix des Turcs vivant à l'étranger pouvait s'élever aussi haut que celle des autres, les revendications arméniennes sur le génocide n'auraient pas éclaté de cette façon et les Turcs n'auraient pas à subir tout cela."

Reste que le général Büyükanit compte plus sur l'administration américaine pour faire échec au projet de loi. A propos de sa rencontre avec le vice-président américain Dick Cheney et le conseiller à la Sécurité nationale Stephen Hadley, il s'est publiquement félicité de la détermination de la Maison-Blanche à faire avorter la "résolution arménienne", rapporte *Zaman*.

Pour Washington, l'enjeu est de taille sur le plan stratégique. "Les responsables américains assurent que des intérêts vitaux sont en jeu", rapporte *The Economist*. Si Ankara a refusé l'utilisation de son territoire par les troupes américaines pour entrer en Irak, "la Turquie a accepté depuis le début de la guerre quelque 4 900 sorties américaines à destination de l'Irak à travers son espace aérien pour des missions de soutien au combat, ainsi que le traitement de soldats américains blessés dans des hôpitaux turcs".

Jusqu'à présent, "les administrations

américaines successives avaient tué dans l'œuf toute résolution sur le génocide, considérant que la Turquie était un allié trop précieux pour risquer de le perdre. Les groupes juifs, reconnaissants en raison des chaleureuses relations que la Turquie entretient avec Israël, ont appuyé dans ce sens. Mais la donne a changé", prévient *The Economist*.

D'après *The Guardian*, "des appels circulent déjà en Turquie pour une réduction de la coopération militaire bilatérale". Pour le chroniqueur du *Turkish Daily News* Mehmet Ali Birand, "la Turquie joue la carte de la sécurité contre la loi sur le génocide arménien". L'auteur souligne ainsi la contribution d'Ankara aux forces de l'OTAN en Afghanistan et au Kosovo, son appui substantiel aux Etats-Unis dans le Caucase mais aussi dans les questions relatives à la sécurité d'Israël, sa fonction d'intermédiaire dans la crise iranienne, et, bien sûr, son soutien considérable en Irak.

Si la loi sur le génocide arménien devait passer, considère *The Guardian*, la Turquie, qui se plaint déjà des attaques du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) contre des cibles turques depuis le nord de l'Irak, pourrait "décider d'ignorer Washington et d'envoyer ses troupes, avec des conséquences potentiellement désastreuses pour les efforts américains de stabilisation du pays".

IRAK « PLAN DE SÉCURITÉ » AMÉRICAIN

# Moqtada Al-Sadr et des cadres de son parti seraient en Iran

BEYROUTH  
CORRESPONDANTE

Où se trouve le jeune dirigeant chiite irakien Moqtada Al-Sadr, chef de l'« Armée du Mahdi » ? En Irak, répètent à l'envi, depuis mercredi, des députés du mouvement sadriste ; en Iran, a affirmé, jeudi 15 février, Sami Al-Askari, conseiller du premier ministre irakien Nouri Al-Maliki, confirmant ainsi une information fournie, la veille, par le colonel William Caldwell, porte-parole des forces américaines à Bagdad. Moqtada Al-Sadr s'est rendu en République islamique d'Iran « il y a quelques jours », a déclaré M. Askari à l'agence américaine Associated Press à Bagdad, tout en démentant les informations selon lesquelles M. Sadr aurait « fui ».

De son côté, le président irakien, Jalal Talabani, a déclaré, jeudi, qu'il ignorait où se trouvait M. Sadr. « Je pense », a-t-il néanmoins ajouté, que le dirigeant

chiite a ordonné à certains responsables de l'Armée du Mahdi de quitter l'Irak « afin de faciliter la mise en application du plan de sécurité » lancé par le gouvernement irakien à Bagdad. Dans le même ordre d'idées, le correspondant en Irak du quotidien saoudien *Asharq Al-Awsat* a rapporté, jeudi, citant un homme d'affaires irakien « surnommé Al-Khafaji », résidant dans la ville sainte chiite irakienne de Nadjaf, que « les membres de l'Armée du Mahdi, qui se faisaient notamment remarquer dans les rues de la cité par leur présence armée, ont brusquement disparu » depuis la fin janvier. Le quotidien ajoute, sur la foi des déclarations d'un étudiant en religion joint dans la ville iranienne de Qom, que certains responsables du mouvement sadriste se trouveraient dans la ville sainte chiite de Machad, d'autres à Qom et d'autres encore à Téhéran.

Ce qui est certain, c'est que M. Sadr n'est pas apparu en public depuis quelque temps. Mais ce n'est pas une première. Personnage très controversé, il

s'est souvent abstenu de paraître pour, entre autres, des raisons de sécurité. Il s'est par ailleurs déjà officiellement rendu en Iran début 2006 sans que sa visite ne provoque de vagues. C'est le moment choisi pour sa visite en République islamique qui, si elle est avérée, suscite cette fois-ci tant de remous et qui poussent certains à y voir une « fuite ». Elle survient en effet alors que la nouvelle stratégie américaine en Irak et le « plan de sécurité » du gouvernement irakien visant, entre autres, à mettre fin au règne des milices, sont entrés en vigueur.

Depuis près d'un an, l'Armée du Mahdi est en effet largement impliquée dans la « sale guerre » qui oppose les milices chiites aux djih-

adistes sunnites, et dont les populations civiles sont les principales victimes. Les responsables et militants du mouvement sadriste sont dans le collimateur, au même titre, en principe, que tout autre

formation paramilitaire. Cette pression est sans doute ce qui a poussé les 32 députés et les 6 ministres du mouvement à renoncer, le 21 janvier, à leur décision de « suspendre » leur participation au Parlement et au gouvernement. Une décision qui avait été adoptée deux mois plus tôt, pour protester contre une rencontre entre M. Maliki et le président américain, George Bush, à Amman, en Jordanie.

Officiellement, le mouvement sadriste s'est déclaré favorable au nouveau « plan de sécurité » pour Bagdad annoncé par le premier ministre. Il redoute néanmoins de voir des responsables de l'Armée du Mahdi en faire les frais, notamment après l'arrestation en janvier par l'armée américaine de 600 de ses membres, dont certains dirigeants. Deux d'entre eux, Abdel Hadi Al-Daraji et Hakem Al-Zamli, sont derrière les barreaux. Le second, secrétaire général du ministère de la santé, est officiellement mis en cause pour « corruption » et « concussion ». ■

MOUNA NAÏM

TURQUIE TERRORISME

# Attentats d'Istanbul : prison à vie pour sept islamistes

ISTANBUL  
CORRESPONDANCE

Le procès des islamistes et auteurs présumés des attentats d'Istanbul qui, en novembre 2003, avaient visé deux synagogues, une banque et le consulat britannique, tuant 63 personnes, s'est achevé vendredi 16 février par la condamnation de 7 des 74 accusés à la prison à vie par la cour d'assises de Besiktas, à Istanbul. Quarante et un autres accusés ont écopé de peines variant entre trois et dix-huit ans de réclusion.

Celui qui a été présenté comme le cerveau des attentats, un Syrien de 32 ans du nom de Luai Al-Saqa, purgera une peine à perpétuité, incompréhensible et sans amnistie possible. Il aurait organisé et financé les attaques de 2003, fournissant 170 000 dollars aux exécutants. Arrêté deux ans plus tard à Diyarbakir, il projetait, selon ses propres aveux, de lancer des attaques contre des navires israéliens en croisière dans le sud de la Turquie. « Nous sommes proches de la victoire », a affirmé le principal accu-

sé. *Je sortirai et je rejoindrai le djihad.* » Lié au Jordanien Abou Moussab Al-Zarkaoui, le chef d'Al-Qaida en Irak tué en 2006, Luai Al-Saqa est également soupçonné par la police britannique d'être mêlé à l'enlèvement et à la décapitation de l'ingénieur britannique Kenneth Bigley, en 2004 en Irak.

Les dernières journées de ce procès, qui s'est déroulé sous très haute surveillance, n'auront pas permis de lever toutes les zones d'ombre sur cette cellule turque d'Al-Qaida constituée d'islamistes radicaux d'Anatolie et d'anciens militants du Hezbollah turc.

Vendredi, le Turc Harun Ilhan, qui a reconnu son appartenance au mouvement d'Oussama Ben Laden et a été condamné à la prison à vie, s'est livré pour sa défense à une longue diatribe contre le régime kémaliste. En raison d'irrégularités constatées dans la procédure, les avocats de la défense craignaient, vendredi soir, que certains condamnés ne fassent appel. ■

GUILLAUME PERRIER

LE FIGARO samedi 17 - dimanche 18 février 2007

EN BREF

## Irak : la Chambre inflige un désaveu à Bush

**ÉTATS-UNIS.** La Chambre des représentants a désavoué, hier, la stratégie du président Bush en Irak. Par 246 voix contre 182, les parlementaires ont désapprouvé l'envoi de 21 500 militaires supplémentaires, avec le soutien de 17 élus républicains. L'opposition démocrate a fait bloc. La résolution, bien que non contraignante, représente le plus cinglant désaveu jamais essuyé par le président Bush sur sa conduite de la guerre. Le Congrès rappelle néanmoins son soutien aux soldats « qui servent ou ont servi (...) en Irak ». La Maison Blanche a réagi peu après en soulignant le caractère non contraignant pour elle de cette résolution. Son porte parole a signifié que l'administration Bush accordait une toute autre importance au débat à venir sur le financement de la guerre, dont l'issue sera, elle, contraignante.

# Une série télévisée nationaliste turque suscite la polémique

## TURQUIE

Le dernier épisode de « La Vallée des loups » n'a pas été diffusé, pour répondre aux critiques, formulées après l'assassinat de Hrant Dink, sur l'incitation à la violence de tels programmes.

Istanbul

LA DÉCEPTION a été immense pour les millions de Turcs installés devant leur poste de télévision : ils attendaient, jeudi soir, le nouvel épisode de *La Vallée des loups - Terreur*, la série culte en Turquie diffusée par la chaîne Show TV. Mais à la place des aventures de leur héros Polat Alemdar, un mafieux qui joue les justiciers, les téléspectateurs ont dû se consoler avec une émission fleuve à la gloire des actions commandos de l'armée contre les séparatistes kurdes du PKK au plus fort de la guerre civile. Ils pouvaient aussi télécharger la musique de l'hymne national turc sur leur portable, à défaut de celle de la bande-annonce.

## « Une bombe à retardement »

Face à la polémique déclenchée dès le début de la diffusion de la troisième saison de *La Vallée des loups*, la chaîne a préféré retirer temporairement le feuilleton de sa grille de programmation. En une semaine, le Conseil supérieur de la radio et de la télévision (RTÜK) a reçu 14 000 plaintes réclamant sa suppression. Jeudi dernier à Istanbul, à l'occasion de

la diffusion du premier épisode, des manifestants ont protesté devant les locaux de Show TV contre les « valeurs » véhiculées par Polat et ses acolytes : violence, ultranationalisme et racisme. Privés de leur série, les fans crient à la censure sur les innombrables forums consacrés à *La Vallée des loups*. Sana Film, la société de production, dénonce une décision qui « ne respecte pas les opinions de ceux qui regardent le feuilleton ».

Le débat sur la violence du scénario intervient alors que la société turque commence enfin à s'interroger sur les causes de la dérive nationaliste actuelle. Après l'assassinat du journaliste d'ori-

gine arménienne Hrant Dink, le 19 janvier dernier, par un adolescent, la presse avait justement accusé ce type de programmes télévisés d'influencer la jeunesse turque. Dans un éditorial du *Turkish Daily News*, Yusuf Kanli compare *La Vallée des loups* à « une bombe à retardement », estimant qu'une « différence doit être faite entre le divertissement et l'incitation à la violence ».



Violence, nationalisme et racisme sont au menu de la série culte, également déclinée au cinéma, où l'acteur Necati Sasmaz incarne Polat Alemdar, un mafieux qui joue les justiciers. Too Cool productions & distribution.

Dans le dernier volet de la série, Polat Alemdar, plongé dans les années sanglantes de la guerre civile qui a ravagé le Sud-Est turc, défend la patrie menacée par les « terroristes » kurdes. Mais au final, ce sont les 15 millions de Kurdes du pays qui sont présentés comme des ennemis potentiels. « Cette idéologie raciste crée une animosité entre les Turcs », constate Ali Fuat Bucak, un avocat d'origine kurde. « Pour les jeunes, il s'agit d'un pousse-au-crime. » De quoi encourager tous les Ogün Samast – le meurtrier présumé de Hrant Dink – potentiels du pays et redouter un regain des tensions ethniques. Les tentatives de lynchage de Kurdes se multiplient depuis deux ans.

L'an dernier, dans une adaptation de la série au cinéma, le

ténébreux Polat avait déjà sévi dans le nord de l'Irak, vengeant l'honneur de la nation bafoué par les Américains. Surfant sur l'anti-américanisme de l'opinion publique, *La Vallée des loups-Irak* avait battu tous les records d'entrées dans les salles de cinéma du pays.

LAURE MARCHAND

## IRAN LA VISITE DU PRÉSIDENT SYRIEN BACHAR AL-ASSAD

# Téhéran et Damas renforcent leur alliance face aux « complots » ourdis par Washington

## BEYROUTH

### CORRESPONDANTE

La République islamique d'Iran et la Syrie ont annoncé, dimanche 18 février, le renforcement de leur alliance face aux « complots » que, selon ces pays, trame « le front de l'arrogance conduit par les Etats-Unis », pour reprendre les propos du Guide de la République islamique, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Ce renforcement a été annoncé à l'issue d'une visite de quarante-huit heures à Téhéran du président syrien, Bachar Al-Assad. Pour ce dernier, c'est même la visite « la plus importante et la plus réussie depuis des années ».

« Nous avons adopté des mesures exécutoires qui seront appli-

quées au cours de l'année 2007 », a affirmé le président syrien, sans autre précision, lors d'une conférence de presse avec son homologue iranien, Mahmoud Ahmadi-nejad. Visiblement, les différences de vues « sur certaines questions » évoquées samedi, sans spécifications, par le quotidien officiel syrien *Al-Baas*, n'ont pas affecté l'alliance nouée entre les deux pays dès l'avènement de la République islamique, en 1979. Les pressions exercées sur eux, en particulier par les Etats-Unis, pour leur ingérence supposée en Irak et au Liban ont, au contraire, consolidé le « front face aux défis et aux menaces » qu'ils ont décidé de constituer il y a deux ans.

## Soutien au Hezbollah

Les « complots », que M. Assad et ses hôtes ont dénoncés à l'envi durant la visite, et qui touchent l'Irak, le Liban, la Palestine et l'Afghanistan, visent principalement à semer, selon M. Ahmadi-nejad, « la discorde entre les musulmans » et, selon M. Assad, « à diviser des pays riches de leur histoire, de leur culture et de leur pluralisme, en mini-Etats dressés les uns contre les autres ».

Pour contrecarrer ces « conspirations », les deux parties ont apporté leur soutien au gouvernement du premier ministre ira-

kien, Nouri Al-Maliki, et à l'accord conclu le 8 février entre le président et le gouvernement palestiniens à La Mecque.

Le gouvernement libanais dirigé par Fouad Siniora ne bénéficie pas de la même sollicitude. D'après le communiqué commun publié à l'issue de la visite, Téhéran et Damas appuient « un gouvernement capable de faire face aux complots ourdis par les ennemis du Liban » et soutiennent « le droit des Libanais à la résistance jusqu'à la libération des territoires encore occupés » par Israël, ainsi que « tout ce qui ferait l'unanimité des Libanais ». Ils réaffirment donc leur parti pris en faveur des exigences de l'opposition, conduite par le Hezbollah.

## Le Monde

Mardi 20 février 2007



Des propos tenus vendredi par M. Ahmadinejad annonçaient déjà la couleur. En recevant l'ambassadeur (sortant) du Liban en République islamique, Adnan Mansour, venu lui faire ses

adieux, le président iranien avait déclaré que « *l'Iran et le Liban sont un seul corps* ». « *Le Liban, aujourd'hui, est malheureusement, l'organe blessé de ce corps* », avait-il ajouté.

Choqué par cet « *amour-fusion* » indésirable, Ah Hamadé, chroniqueur au quotidien libanais *Al-Nahar*, s'inquiétait, dimanche, de tant de sollicitude et de ses conséquences probables pour le pays du Cèdre. Les propos

de M. Ahmadinejad rappellent aux Libanais ceux régulièrement tenus par les dirigeants syriens : « *Les Libanais et les Syriens sont un seul peuple dans deux pays.* » ■

MOUNA NAÏM

LE FIGARO 22 février 2007

# Les États-Unis ne peuvent pas lancer aujourd'hui une offensive militaire contre l'Iran

**L'analyse**  
de Renaud Girard \*

Depuis que le président George W. Bush a ordonné l'envoi d'un second groupe aéronaval dans le golfe Persique, la rumeur enfle à Washington de la possibilité de frappes aériennes américaines visant à détruire le potentiel nucléaire iranien. La conférence de presse que le chef suprême des forces armées des États-Unis a donnée le 14 février n'a fait qu'alimenter encore la rumeur : Bush s'y est plaint de l'envoi par l'Iran en Irak d'engins explosifs ayant été utilisés contre les soldats américains et il a exclu toute possibilité d'un dialogue direct entre Washington et Téhéran.

Maints observateurs de l'Administration américaine en ont conclu que le président cherchait à provoquer un « *conflit accidentel* » avec l'Iran, pays qui figurait au même titre que l'Irak et la Corée du Nord dans sa fameuse liste de l'« *axe du mal* » révélée au monde lors de son discours au Congrès du 29 janvier 2002. De nombreux analystes vali-

« **Personne à Washington ne peut prédire ce qui se passerait au Moyen-Orient après une frappe américaine** »

dent cette hypothèse en affirmant que le président a désespérément besoin de laisser dans l'histoire un succès de politique étrangère, qui compenserait le fiasco de son intervention en Irak, son absence de solution au conflit israélo-palesti-

nien, ainsi que l'embourbement de l'Otan en Afghanistan.

La réalité, pourtant, c'est que de trop nombreux obstacles rendent aujourd'hui invraisemblable une frappe américaine sur l'Iran. Ces obstacles sont aussi bien techniques, politiques que diplomatiques.

Techniquement, l'emplacement exact de toutes les installations iraniennes d'enrichissement d'uranium n'est pas connu par l'aviation américaine. L'espionnage par satellite a clairement démontré ses limites le jour où George Tenet, le patron de la CIA, a appris, comme tout le monde par la radio, un matin de 1998, que l'Inde avait procédé à une explosion nucléaire. Aucun stratège américain ne peut garantir aujourd'hui que des frappes aériennes anéantiraient efficacement et pour longtemps la capacité de l'Iran à enrichir l'uranium. Les centrifu-

geuses sont des outils relativement peu encombrants (de la taille d'un porte-parapluies), qu'il est facile de démanier et de cacher.

Politiquement, une opération militaire aurait en Iran deux conséquences immédiates, que les stratèges du Pentagone et du Département d'État sont obligés de prendre en compte. La première serait de rassembler, dans un réflexe patriotique, toute la population iranienne derrière le très radical président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Les tendances modérées, telles qu'elles se sont récemment exprimées lors des élections à l'Assemblée des Experts (Chambre correspondant à notre Sénat), seraient pour longtemps balayées du paysage politique local. L'espoir se dissiperait d'un changement interne du régime sous l'effet des aspirations avérées de la jeunesse à davantage de liberté.

La seconde conséquence immédiate serait évidemment le retrait par l'Iran de son adhésion au

TNP (traité de non-prolifération nucléaire) et le renvoi du pays de tous les inspecteurs de l'AIEA (Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique, basée à Vienne). Les autorités de Téhéran ont toujours affirmé que leur volonté de maîtriser le cycle de production de l'uranium enrichi ne visait qu'à produire de l'électricité et qu'elles n'avaient

pas l'intention de se doter de l'arme atomique. Des bombardements américains scelleraient la fin de ces bonnes intentions proclamées, sinon réelles.

À plus long terme, les stratèges américains doivent s'être interrogés sur l'étape suivante, question qu'ils avaient éludée lors de la planification de l'invasion de l'Irak, une défaillance que l'Amérique paie aujourd'hui très cruellement. Or personne à Washington ne peut actuellement prédire avec un minimum d'exactitude ce qui se passerait au Moyen-Orient après une telle frappe. Oui ou non, assisterait-on à une vague populaire sans précédent d'antiaméricanisme ? Les régimes alliés des États-Unis dans la région (Arabie saoudite et autres pétromonarchies du Golfe, Égypte, Jordanie, Liban, Irak) s'en trouveraient-ils renforcés ou fragilisés ? Des insurrections, voire des révolutions, éclateraient-elles ? L'Amérique serait-elle en mesure de les contenir ? Tant que les stratèges américains n'auront pas de réponse à ces questions, ils resteront enclins à la prudence.

Enfin, il y a les obstacles diplomatiques, considérables. Il n'y a aucune chance aujourd'hui pour que le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU donne son aval à de telles initiatives militaires. La Russie y opposerait certainement son veto, comme l'a montré le récent discours de Vladi-

mir Poutine en Arabie saoudite, où le chef du Kremlin s'en est pris très directement à l'« *interventionnisme*

extérieur » des États-Unis. La Chine, qui entend maintenir ses liens pétroliers privilégiés avec l'Iran, suivrait très probablement la Russie sur ce terrain, en brandissant son propre veto.

Aux États-Unis même, l'hypothèse d'un nouveau viol du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU par l'Administration Bush serait très mal reçue, y compris dans le camp républicain. Fondatrice de l'ONU en 1945, l'Amérique croit encore majoritairement à l'avantage de conserver intact le système actuel du droit international. En outre, l'Amérique n'aurait, pour une telle aventure, même pas le soutien de ses alliés habituellement les plus inconditionnels. Au Royaume-Uni, deux généraux viennent d'affirmer qu'attaquer l'Iran constituerait une « *pure folie* ».

L'envoi de forces navales américaines supplémentaires dans le Golfe doit donc se comprendre aujourd'hui comme une simple gesticulation, destinée à faire réfléchir les dirigeants iraniens. C'est le bâton qu'on agite dans l'espoir que l'adversaire réclamera une carotte raisonnable.

\* *Grand reporter au service étranger du Figaro*

# Iran : Ali Akbar Velayati presse les Européens de « tempérer les Etats-Unis »

Dans un entretien au « Monde », le conseiller diplomatique d'Ali Khamenei, Guide suprême iranien, affirme la volonté de Téhéran de négocier sur le dossier nucléaire

SUITE DE LA PREMIÈRE PAGE

Ce dossier nucléaire est encadré par deux lignes rouges à ne pas franchir : la première, c'est le droit fondamental de l'Iran à la technologie nucléaire civile dans le cadre du traité de non-prolifération [TNP] ; l'autre, c'est que l'Iran s'engage à donner des garanties que son programme n'aura aucune dérive militaire. Entre les deux, tout est envisageable à la table des négociations.

**Même une suspension, provisoire, de l'enrichissement d'uranium ?**

M. Larijani est ouvert à toutes les propositions, sans exclusion. Nous avons déjà essayé de suspendre l'enrichissement. On l'a fait pendant deux ans et demi, et ça n'a rien réglé.

Il y a aussi d'autres idées à prendre en compte, comme celle de créer un consortium international d'enrichissement d'uranium sur le sol iranien géré par les Européens et avec toutes les garanties de contrôle de l'AIEA. La France est tout à fait à même de former ce consortium. Après tout, nous avons un passé de coopération et de confiance avec la France qui voulait construire un réacteur nucléaire à usage civil à Darakhoin près d'Ahwaz, dans les années 1970. Nous-mêmes avons été et sommes encore actionnaires d'Eurodif. Tout cela rend plus facile une reprise des discussions sur ce projet avec la France, ce qui répondrait aux inquiétudes de certains pays. Le moment est propice.

**L'Iran s'exprime par plusieurs voix sur le dossier nucléaire et cela « brouille » le message, surtout lorsque certains hauts dirigeants lancent des slogans contre l'Occident ou Israël, dont ils prônent la « disparition ». Qui décide sur le nucléaire en Iran ?**

Qu'il y ait plusieurs tonalités dans le discours de nos dirigeants montre, disons, que nous sommes un pays ouvert à la pluralité, mais il ne faut pas s'arrêter à cela. Sachez que c'est M. Larijani qui est le négociateur en charge du dossier nucléaire et surtout, que le seul qui ait la haute main sur les décisions dans ce domaine, comme dans toutes les grandes décisions stratégi-

ques, en accord avec la Constitution, c'est le Guide suprême, M. Khamenei. Quant à notre position officielle sur la Palestine, au-delà des « slogans », c'est à chaque Palestinien, juif, musulman, chrétien, de se prononcer sur son avenir par voie démocratique. Rien d'autre.

**Nous sommes arrivés à la date butoir fixée par le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU pour que l'Iran mette un terme à ses activités d'enrichissement. On parle d'une nouvelle résolution, peut-être de nouvelles sanctions. Si cela se produit, pour vous ce sera la fin des négociations ?**

Je ne pense pas qu'une nouvelle résolution contribuera à régler le problème. Nous nous mettrons au diapason du degré de réalisme dont feront preuve les pays qui décident au sein du Conseil de sécurité. C'est presque une équation mathématique : si l'extrémisme prévaut là-bas, il prévaudra ici. Mais je constate que dans le groupe des 5 + 1, il y a quatre pays qui ont de bonnes relations avec nous : l'Allemagne, la Russie, la Chine et la France. Ne vont-ils rien faire pour tempérer les Etats-Unis ?

**Ne faudrait-il pas pour cela un geste de l'Iran ?**

Oui, je suis d'accord. On est prêts à faire tout ce qui peut garantir nos droits et la poursuite des discussions...

**Un dialogue direct avec les Etats-Unis est impensable ?**

On a eu plusieurs fois des discussions avec eux, notamment sur l'Afghanistan, dans le cadre de l'ONU. Mais s'ils veulent juste se comporter en gérants du monde, quel intérêt ?

**Croyez-vous à une attaque militaire américaine ou israélienne sur l'Iran ?**

Il y a eu des signes avant-coureurs, les Américains ont déjà essayé en Irak, et Israël au Liban : un échec cuisant dans les deux cas ! Les Israéliens se disaient invincibles, après 33 jours de guerre face au peuple libanais, ils ont échoué. Quant aux Américains, c'est leur situation intérieure qui leur interdit de s'aventurer sur un terrain aussi glissant : les élections gagnées par les démocrates d'abord, puis le récent vote au Congrès rejetant la politique belliqueuse de Bush.

Vous savez, l'Iran c'est quatre fois la superficie de l'Irak et trois fois sa population, avec un degré bien supérieur de mobilisation populaire et une armée préparée. Non, je ne les vois pas s'y risquer.

**Comment analysez-vous la politique française au Liban ?**

La France est en train de gaspiller l'investissement politique et culturel qu'elle avait dans ce pays. Elle s'est jetée dans le puits creusé par les Américains ! Si Paris ne veut pas perdre son crédit, il doit s'abstenir de prendre parti en faveur d'une petite fraction de la population. De plus, il a délaissé d'anciens alliés comme Michel Aoun [chef du Courant patriotique libre, chrétien]. Jacques Chirac avait envisagé d'envoyer un émissaire à Téhéran pour discuter du Liban. Qu'en pensez-vous ?

C'est une très bonne idée. Les intérêts communs de la France et de l'Iran font que ces deux pays devraient se donner la main pour défendre le Liban. Des consultations entre nous ne peuvent être que bénéfiques, au-delà du Liban, pour tout le Moyen-Orient et le Golfe. A l'heure actuelle, les Etats-Unis font cavalier seul au Moyen-Orient et cet « unilatéralisme », dénoncé aussi par M. Poutine, est mauvais. Mais force est de constater que l'Europe est absente, elle ne joue plus aucun rôle au Moyen-Orient, je le déplore. Une présence politique européenne dont la France serait le moteur deviendrait un bon moyen de rééquilibrer la situation au Moyen-Orient.

**M. Chirac refuse de parler à la Syrie. Quelle est votre opinion ?**

Sincèrement, la France a pris une position extrême sur la Syrie qui ne joue pas en sa faveur. Ce sont les pays tiers qui profitent de cette hostilité. Mais l'Iran pourrait jouer un rôle de médiateur entre Damas et Paris.

**Les guerres d'Afghanistan, d'Irak et du Liban ont renforcé votre rôle central dans la région. L'Iran prône la stabilité mais dans le même temps aide le Hezbollah libanais et Moqtada Sadr en Irak. Les Américains vous accusent d'armer les insurgés. Pourquoi ne pas faire un geste pour calmer le jeu, en cessant de financer le Hezbollah par exemple ?**

Certainement pas ! Ce n'est pas en abandonnant les chiïtes et le Hezbollah, seuls face à Israël, que nous serons utiles. Pour le reste, l'Iran a besoin de stabilité à ses frontières. Sans notre aide, croyez-vous que les forces de la coalition seraient parvenues à l'époque à mettre en échec les talibans ? En Irak, nous soutenons le gouvernement Maliki et nous travaillons pour assurer la paix. Il n'y a pas d'insurgés mais des résistants face à l'armée d'occupation. ■

PROPOS RECUEILLIS PAR  
MARIE-CLAUDE DECAMPS



# Critical Momentum

The Kurdish Globe

February 20, 2007

The evident rise of ultra-Turkish nationalism in various forms and contradictory reactions to such organizations from a wide spectrum of Turkish political life indicate a profound crisis within the Turkish establishment. At the root of this evident crisis lies the Kurdish national question. Radical global and regional political developments altered the Kurdish political condition and gave it an international political agenda. The recognition of Kurds as one of the main constitutive national elements of post-Saddam Iraq and the legal status of Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and its Parliament, combined with the referendum on Kirkuk at the end of this year, inevitably pressures Turkey to alter its current Kurdish policy.

By Azad Aslan  
Globe Political Editor

## Turkish National Crisis

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the status quo in the Middle East crumbled. Old and new political actors now struggle to formulate a new Middle East within the framework of a "New World Order" launched by the U.S. As a country, Turkey was mainly established as a result of a balance of power in the post-World War I period, and is now in search of novel reasons to justify its artificial existence in this time of "anything is possible."

Turkey has no reason to exist with its current political mindset and its territorial integrity is in question. Following the dismantlement of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I the Kemalists, which was the combination of the CUP cadets both in military and bureaucracy of the Ottoman Empire, the tradesmen and landlords that bourgeoned over the forcefully confiscated properties of Armenians, Jews, and Greek elements of the Ottoman Empire, and some section of Kurds who collaborated with the Turkish nationalists for fear of both the establishment of a greater Armenian state over Kurdistan and the retribution from Great Powers due to their role in the Armenian Genocide, by exploiting the conflicting policies and interests of Britain, France, and the U.S. over the Ottoman Asiatic lands managed to set up a Turkish Republic over the remaining parts of the Ottoman Empire. What the Turkish nationalists called "Misaki Milli" 'the land of Turks' was in fact included parts of Kurdistan, Armenia and Anatolia.

The Kemalists managed to use the Bolshevik threat against Western interests in order to gain recognition from Great Powers. They did so initially with France in 1921 and with Britain during the Lausanne Conference. The tension and conflict between Soviet and capitalist powers

provided ample opportunity for the Kemalists to establish a "modern" republic. Despite its pseudo-modernity, the Turkish Republic followed its predecessor's (CUP) path to invent or construct a Turkish nation over the multi-ethnic Ottoman cultural communities. Sadly, due to the Armenian Genocide, there was not a sizeable Armenian community left to threaten such an endeavor. With only a small number of non-Turkish elements left, but not enough to cause a threat, there remained only the Kurds who represented a genuine threat against the Republic and the imagined Turkish identity. This fact alone explains why the Kemalist representative at the Lausanne Conference allowed the treaty to include articles to protect non-Muslim minorities while making no mention of the Kurds.

Since its establishment, Turkey perceived the Kurds as the sole threat to its existence. Such perception is not paranoia. To the contrary, it explains a deep-rooted, unspoken reality that right from the beginning of the Republic's construction, the Turkish nation was a doomed effort and has survived so far only under its military wings within the framework of polarized international politics. Western capitalist powers assumed that Turkey would be a strong political entity to be a barrier for the Soviet expansion to the Middle East and Mediterranean Sea. International political conditions since 1921, thus, allowed the Kemalists to set up a Turkish state over the lands of Kurds and Armenians. Retrospectively this was a false beginning.

It would be naïve to expect Turkey to recognize the Kurdish national identity without reconsideration or reconstruction of Turkish identity. Anything that is Kurdish is a genuine threat for the Turkish Republic. In that sense, there are no genuine differences between the Turkish government and its military. Civil and military officials perceive the Kurdish national issue the



Regular PKK guerrilla fighters share a discussion in this file photo. Recently Ankara expressed willingness to start negotiating with Kurdish leaders in northern Iraq over the PKK issue.

same way, and their solutions are not far from each other.

Turkey pursues two integrated and complimentary policies toward the Kurds. On one hand, it portrays the legitimate Kurdish national aspiration in northern Kurdistan/southeastern Turkey as terrorism, and defends its undemocratic military oppression policy in Kurdistan as a fight against terror. On the other hand, it deploys a subtle diplomacy and military might to thwart political development in Iraqi Kurdistan. Turkey rightly perceives that Kurdistan Federal Region with Kirkuk in Iraq would be a genuine threat against Turkey, because it would set up an example, a road map, for the millions of Kurds in its political but illegitimate territory. Using PKK presence in Iraqi Kurdistan and minority Turkmen in Kirkuk, Turkey aims to downplay the Kurdish gains in southern Kurdistan.

It is imperative to underline that Turkey would do everything it can in order to suppress the legitimate Kurdish

national struggle, in not only its part of Kurdistan but also all parts of Kurdistan. Turkey would exploit its international relations, being a member of NATO and the UN, and its geo-strategic position to turn international political insti-

tutions against the Kurds. It would use its military power to threaten Kurds in both Iraqi and Turkish Kurdistan.

## Kurdish Politics: A New Vision

It is not enough for Kurds just to perceive Turkey as a threat for their national rights or a state of oppression. The Kurds of south and north Kurdistan must develop cohesive Kurdish national policy to thwart the Turkish threat. At such a historical juncture, it seems almost impossible to avoid political, diplomatic, and possibly military clashes between Kurdistan Federal Authorities (KFA) and Turkey.

Political gains that the southern Kurds enjoy now must be protected at any cost, because such gains are a monolithic step toward Kurdish national democratic rights for all of Kurdistan. For the Kurds to face Turkish threats, they must develop new, appropriate national policies and apply them immediately.

There are two main fronts within Kurdish politics; the first is the Kurdistan Federal Region and the second is the PKK. Each side has vital responsibilities with historical momentum. Failure to shoulder the responsibilities would be detrimental to the general Kurdish national cause.

KFA must make sure that the referendum on Kirkuk is carried out this year and that there is no bargaining over it.

Kirkuk is part of Kurdistan and should legally acquire that status this year. Once integrated, Kirkuk would not only extend the richness of Kurdistan Region, but at the same time, it would elevate Kurdish national self-esteem and have a positive impact on the Kurds of other areas who live under oppression. The Kirkuk referendum must be combined with stiff opposition to any Turkish military involvement in Kurdistan Region.

Any armed forces in Kurdistan Region apart from those under the jurisdiction of Kurdistan Parliament must be declared illegal and asked to leave the country; this includes the existing small Turkish military attachments and PKK guerrillas.

The position of PKK, or rather the question of PKK, is a complicated one that requires profound attention. Since its establishment in late 1970s, the political practices of PKK have eroded the legitimate Kurdish national struggle in north Kurdistan, and its so-called extreme "tactical operations" served only to portray the Kurdish struggle as something akin to terrorism. Turkey exploited this exten-

sively both for its internal and international public. PKK has never been a means to the end, but an end itself. Despite its initial rhetoric, PKK has never developed a cohesive national policy and mobilized Kurdish masses for legitimate Kurdish national democratic rights. By reducing the Kurdish national liberation movement to guerrilla warfare, including terrorizing its opponents, PKK played the role of instruments at the hands of regional powers for their regional conflicts,

and at the same time deepened the division within the Kurdish national movement.

Today there is an observable contradiction between political discourse and political practice of PKK. Emphasizing the democratization of Turkey and reducing the Kurdish national question to basic individual

cultural rights, thus stripping it from politics and achieving this objective through guerrilla warfare, is hard to comprehend.

For the general Kurdish national interests, PKK must abandon its guerrilla warfare immediately and call its guerrillas either to join Kurdish Peshmarga forces under Kurdistan Parliament command or seek asylum from the KRG. By doing so, PKK would eliminate the Turkish threat to southern Kurdistan and open legal democratic channels in north Kurdistan for mass democratic mobilization. It must be remembered that any advancement toward realization of Kurdish national rights can be through mass uprising. Guerrilla warfare within the geo-political conditions of Kurdistan is not a proper mechanism toward a solution.

Liberation of the Kurdish nation will be the act of the nation itself.

Turkey has been threatening southern Kurdistan for two unjustified reasons, in effect the presence of the PKK military camps at the Southern Kurdistan Mountains and the minority Turkmen community in Kurdistan. Since the fall of the Saddam regime Turkey implied that Turkmen constituted majority in certain areas in 'North Iraq' including Kirkuk. Turkish officials argued that the Kurds are op-

pressing the Turkmen and Turkey has historical duty to protect Turkmen. Such arguments are melting down at the face of historical and political facts. The January and December 2005 general elections in Iraq clearly indicated the approximate population of Turkmen both in Kirkuk and in Iraq

in general. The Turkish thesis that Turkmen constitute majority in Kirkuk was ridiculed as the abovementioned results of the elections provided healthy information with regard to the Turkmen population in Iraq in general and in Kirkuk in particular. Representation of the Turkmen community in Kurdistan Parliament and democratic minority rights of Turkmen practiced under the jurisdiction of KRG contradicts Turkey's argument that the Kurds oppress the Turkmen minority.

However, the presence of PKK guerrillas in southern Kurdistan allows Turkey, according to hypocritical international politics, to take advantage of the situation and interfere in the affairs of the KRG. Even a small military operation against PKK camps in southern Kurdistan would

diminish the sovereignty of Kurdistan Federal Region.

Every indicator in global politics demonstrates that the world is not a safe place. Everything is changing, and changing very fast. The prospect for further bloody confrontations is looming in the Middle East, where Kurdistan is strategically located. When the region is under new construction due to warfare of any kind, Kurdish national forces need vision, cohesiveness, and courage. Time is crucial and the Kurds must act fast.

## Kirkuk turns into a violence hotbed

February has been one of the deadliest month in the city with tens of people dead and many more injured.

Two car bombs exploded on Saturday, February 17, in Raheem Awa, a largely Kurdish neighborhood in Kirkuk city, killing at least 10 people and wounding 78. Eight bombs exploded within two hours on Saturday, February 3, killing at least two people and wounding more than 40. Abductions and organized crime acts have also largely increased recently.

The targets have included the various groups living in the city such as Kurds, Turkomans and Arabs.

"There is no life in Kirkuk," said Zryan Ramadan, a Kurdish student at Kirkuk University.

"We can't go out for a walk just like ordinary people, and we go out only when it's very necessary to buy essentials."

Nazhat Abdulgani Zeynel, the chief of Iraqi Turkoman Front branch in Kurdistan Region, directed his accusations at "ex-Baathists and Islamic extremists" of being behind the Kirkuk violence.

"After the Iraqi govern-

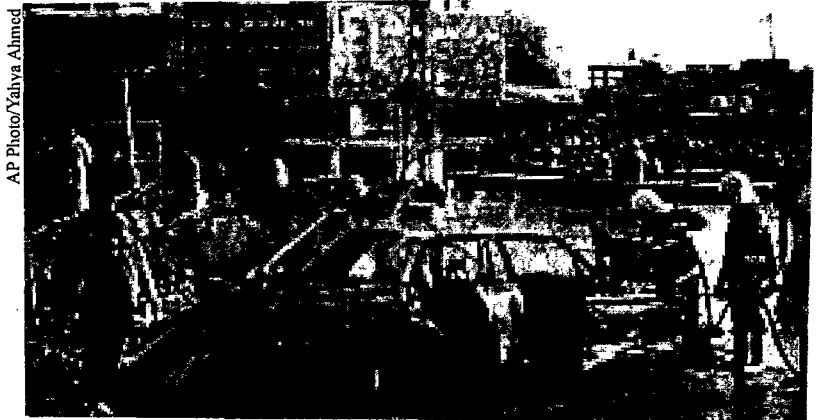
ment and coalition forces decided to carry out the new security plan in Baghdad, terrorists changed their tactics; they fled Baghdad and went to nearby provinces, and it is temporary," said Zeynel, who was a general in former Iraqi army.

Turkman Front, which is an umbrella group for several Turkman factions, has been at odds with the KRG, in among others, the Kirkuk related questions. Kurdish leaders have accused the front of being manipulated by regional powers and not representing the true demands of the Turkman people. Turkman Front which was established in KRG capital of Erbil in 1995, has faced severe internal conflicts and was on the verge of disintegration more than a year ago.

Zeynel denied that the implementation of the constitutional article on Kirkuk situation has any role in fueling tensions in the city.

"I don't think there is conflict between Kurds, Turkmen, and Arabs in Kirkuk city. I think there is misunderstanding among them," said Zeynel.

Kurdistan parliament condemned the explosions



Iraqi firefighters put out a burning car after two bomb blasts in Kirkuk, 290 kilometers north of Baghdad, Iraq, Saturday, Feb. 17, 2007.

and violence in Kirkuk in a strongly-worded statement on February 17th. "Terrorists and agents are continuing their efforts to destabilize Kirkuk's security situation, and they will continue with their cowardly acts until Article 140 is carried out. But after fulfilling Article 140, their existence and acts will be completely uprooted," read parliament's statement.

Last month, Kurdish Regional Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani told

Kurdish parliamentarians that once Kirkuk becomes part of Kurdistan, his government could restore order to the city less than six months.

Article 140 that sets a plan to restore the situation in

the city to the pre-Arabization era and hold a referendum on the city's fate is a major source of dispute among Kurds, Turkmen, and Arabs. Under Arabization program, Saddam expelled tens of thousands of

Kurds and Turkomans from Kirkuk and replaced them with Arab tribes from the southern parts of the country. The question in the referendum will be on whether the city should become part of Kurdistan or be an independent federal unit. Most of the non-Kurds in the city oppose Kurds' attempts to incorporate Kirkuk into their northern region.

But Kurdish officials say the article will not endanger the interests of other groups

and that their rights would be preserved once the article is implemented.

"There are attempts to create tensions among Kirkuk citizens through violence in the neighborhoods that are inhabited by different ethnicities, and they want to draw an ugly picture of Kirkuk city," said Rizgar Ali, a Kurd and chief of Kirkuk's Provincial Council who said article 140 is not only for Kurds but for all the residents of the province.

ERBIL



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The Kurdish Globe

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Courting disaster ■ By Hans Blix

# Will the United States attack Iran?

STOCKHOLM

**W**ill the United States use armed force against Iran? Hardly any foreign policy issue is hotter right now. American planes are reported to be patrolling along the border between Iraq and Iran, and U.S. forces have been authorized to kill Iranian agents in Iraq. Two U.S. aircraft carriers are in the Gulf and missile defenses have been installed in Gulf states. The military buildup is either to scare Tehran or to prepare for American attacks on Iran.

Many remember that there was a U.S. military buildup in the Gulf during the autumn of 2002 and the first months of 2003 and that the U.S. attack on Iraq followed in March. Is something similar underway now?

Most commentators note that a large part of the American people would disapprove of more military adventures. Yet many worry that the Bush administration might be tempted to play up Iran's activities as an important reason for the anarchy in Iraq and to reduce the attention to the debacle in Iraq by opening a new front through bombings in Iran.

Many governments share the conviction of the Bush administration that the aim of Iran's program for the enrichment of uranium is to give Tehran at least the ability to make a nuclear weapon in a few years. They support the demand of the UN Security Council that Iran stop the program and believe that economic sanctions that prohibit the delivery of material and equipment for the program may influence

Iran. However, practically all are of the view that a military attack would be disastrous. Although it might delay the program of enrichment a few years, it would, at the same time, probably lead to full national acceptance of the program, increased Iranian support for terrorism and perhaps a crisis in the supply and delivery of oil.

Iran's response to the action of the Security Council has so far been to reduce UN inspectors' access to Iranian nuclear installations and at the same time declare a readiness for talks — provided that the council drop the demand that the program for enrichment must be suspended before talks are opened. Iran is thus on

collision course with the resolution adopted by the council. While Washington declares that diplomacy rather than military action is on the agenda, the administration evidently believes that naval demonstrations may have an impact. A recent column in the Washington Times suggested an even more explicit demonstration: the launching of a missile on the former U.S. Embassy in Tehran — now used by the Iranian revolutionary guards.

In Europe and elsewhere, people are worried that mistakes might lead to an armed conflict or to an Iranian withdrawal from the Nonproliferation Treaty or refusal of inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency. So, what can be done?

In the case of North Korea, the United States seems able to sit down for talks without demanding that the production of plutonium be stopped prior to the talks and even to indicate that an agreement could constitute the opening of diplomatic relations and guarantees against attacks in return for denuclearization.

It is difficult to understand why, in the case of Iran, the suspension of the program for enrichment of uranium has been made a precondition for any talks in which such suspension is the main subject. It is not

long ago that an American commission led by former Secretary of State James Baker and former Representative Lee Hamilton declared that the United States ought to engage in talks with Iran and Syria. Yet, despite the dire situation in Iraq, the Bush administration prefers to talk to Iran and Syria through public

statements and military threats. It is a little like the boss who said that he liked to have exchanges of views with his subordinates: They should come in to present their views and walk out with his views.

A less humiliating approach might give better results. Such an approach is now being tested in the case of North Korea. Why not in Iran, too?

*Hans Blix was the chief UN arms inspector for Iraq from 2000 to 2003. Distributed by Tribune Media Services.*

## In the case of North Korea, talks got results. Why not talk with Iran?

INTERNATIONAL  
Herald Tribune  
February 20, 2007

# Iraqi Sunnis gain hope: Oil is found in their land

By James Glanz

**KARABILA, Iraq:** In a remote patch of the Anbar desert, a single blue pillar of flanges and valves sits atop an enormous deposit of oil and natural gas that would be routine in this country except

for one fact — this is Sunni territory.

Huge petroleum deposits have long been known in Iraq's Kurdish north and Shiite south. But now, Iraq has substantially increased its estimates of oil and natural gas on Sunni lands after quietly paying foreign oil companies tens of millions of dollars to re-examine old seismic data across the country and re-train Iraqi petroleum engineers.

The development is likely to have significant political effects. The lack of natural resources in the central and western regions where Sunnis hold sway has fed their disenchantment with the nation they once ruled. And it has driven their insistence on a strong central government, one that would collect oil revenues and spread them equitably among the country's factions.

While it was known that there were oil formations beneath Sunni lands, the issue now comes into much sharper focus, according to Iraqi Oil Ministry officials. The question of where Iraq's oil reserves are concentrated takes on more importance as it appears that negotiators are close to agreement on a long-debated law that would regulate how Iraqi and international oil companies would be allowed to develop Iraqi fields.

The new studies have raised estimates of the amount of oil in a series of deposits in Sunni territory to the north and east of Baghdad and in a series of deposits that run through western Iraq and could contain as much as 28 billion cubic meters, or about a trillion cubic feet, of natural gas.

« La mort de Hrant Dink nous laisse face aux démons de ce pays... »

# Turquie Le révélateur arménien

« Nous sommes tous des Arméniens », proclamaient les 100 000 personnes en suivant l'enterrement du journaliste assassiné. Mais à côté de cette Turquie de la démocratie et de la tolérance, il existe toujours une Turquie de la haine, du refus de l'autre, qui a contraint le prix Nobel de littérature Orhan Pamuk à s'exiler aux Etats-Unis...



23 janvier : des dizaines de milliers de personnes aux obsèques de Hrant Dink (en médaillon)



Ogün Samast le 21 janvier après son arrestation

De notre envoyée spéciale,  
Ursula Gauthier

C'est l'Arménien – le seul – que les Turcs pleurent comme un frère. En tombant le 19 janvier sous les balles d'un jeune chômeur ultranationaliste devant les locaux de l'hebdomadaire qu'il dirigeait, Hrant Dink a secoué la société turque plus encore qu'il ne l'avait fait en rappelant les pages honteuses de son histoire. Des semaines durant, toute la presse, chroniqueurs de sport compris, ne parlera que de cette mort sidérante : trois balles tirées à bout portant, en plein jour, en pleine ville, et l'ami arménien qui perd son sang face contre terre sur un trottoir d'Istanbul, réveillant des souvenirs que l'on croyait abolis. Les journaux s'interrogent sur l'assassin, Ogün Samast, 17 ans, repéré par les vidéos de télésurveillance et arrêté en trois jours grâce à une diligence exceptionnelle du gouvernement islamiste

modéré. Samast, tête brûlée, était manipulé par un groupe d'extrême droite dont l'enquête révèle chaque jour davantage les connexions avec ce qu'on appelle ici « l'Etat profond », cette nébuleuse malsaine où se côtoient militaires à la retraite, agents des services, policiers en activité, petite et haute pègre.

Dans la gauche démocrate, on accuse l'article 301 du Code pénal punissant toute atteinte à l'identité turque d'avoir désigné Hrant Dink à l'exécration des tueurs : poursuivi comme le prix Nobel Orhan Pamuk et

des dizaines d'autres, pourquoi Dink est-il le seul à avoir été condamné en 2005 à six mois de prison ? N'est-ce pas parce qu'un Arménien a encore moins que quiconque le droit de toucher à la « turcité » ? Sur toutes les unes s'étale un éloge vibrant de « notre Hrant », pour son courage, son humanisme, son inflexibilité face à la tentation de l'amnésie, mais aussi pour son amour sincère de la Turquie. « Cet homme était un miracle », écrit un éditorialiste éminent. « Il était devenu la conscience de la nation, reprend un autre en écho, notre professeur en démocratie, [...] une chance pour la Turquie... » « Nous avons perdu une part de nous-mêmes », constatent les commentateurs, sans réussir à définir la nature de cette part.

Quand on interroge, un mois après les faits, les intellectuels, les artistes, les militants qui ont partagé avec Dink les combats pour les droits des opprimés, ils ont encore du mal à retenir leurs larmes. Orhan Pamuk proclame : « Le

meurtre de mon ami au cœur d'or m'ôte le goût de vivre, j'en veux à la terre entière et ma honte est immense. » Inconsolable aussi, la grande danseuse Zeynep Tanbay, qui dirige une compagnie de danse contemporaine à Istanbul tout en militant activement pour les droits de l'homme, a vécu cette mort comme un douloureux réveil. « Avec Hrant, dont le cœur était sans haine, nous pouvions espérer sortir ensemble de l'horreur et des mensonges du passé. Nous pouvions pleurer ensemble et vivre ensemble. Sa mort nous laisse seuls avec les démons les plus noirs de la Turquie. »

Les funérailles, le 23 janvier, sont une révélation plus consolatrice. Depuis celles du père de la nation, Atatürk, en 1938, on n'avait pas vu une telle marée humaine, plus de 100 000 personnes de toutes origines, de tous âges, de tous horizons, marchant en silence jusqu'à l'église du Patriarcat arménien. Au-delà du microcosme, le grand public a donc, lui aussi, été touché par son parler-vrai et sa générosité. Les pancartes

brandies par milliers – distribuées par des associations de médecins, d'architectes, de femmes, de Kurdes... – portent des inscriptions inouïes : « Nous sommes tous des Hrant Dink », « Nous sommes tous des Arméniens ». Dans quinze villes de Turquie, des manifestants scanderont ces formules d'empathie collective, de réconciliation affective dont Dink a toujours rêvé sans trop y croire. Il y a peu, l'adjectif « arménien » était une injure.

Trop fraternel, trop soudain, trop beau ? La réaction est quasi immédiate : dans les stades des provinces sinistrées, les foules jeunes et survoltées se déchangent aux cris de « Nous sommes tous des Mustafa Kemal ! », du nom du fondateur de la Turquie. Pis : « Nous sommes tous des Ogün ! », du nom de l'assassin de Dink. « Il existe une Turquie de la haine, du refus de l'autre, du culte de la violence, dont l'identité nationale est de nature ethno-religieuse, explique le politologue Ahmet Insel, professeur à l'université Galatasaray et Paris-I. Elle déteste l'autre Turquie, d'identité citoyenne, attachée à l'égalité

quelles que soient l'ethnie ou la religion et qui valorise le multiculturalisme. » Combien sont-ils de part et d'autre de la ligne de haine ? Selon le professeur, des recoupements de sondages donnent une majorité à l'aile chauvine et xénophobe. « Que voulez-vous ! De 50 à 80% des enseignants de ce pays sont des nationalistes, tonne Oral Çalısır, éditeur de la revue très nationaliste "Cumhuriyet", tout comme la majorité de l'administration, de l'armée, de la justice, des services de sécurité et de maintien de l'ordre ! Comment voulez-vous que les jeunes échappent à ce climat ? »

Selon tous les observateurs, en se livrant à une surenchère de thèmes xénophobes (anti-américain, anti-Union européenne, voire anti-

sémite), les partis politiques et certains médias ont assis l'idée que « la Turquie aux Turcs » est un combat noble, et encouragé des milliers d'agités connectés via internet en réseaux lâches – comme on l'a vu dans le cas d'Ogün Samast – à dresser des listes noires, à discuter ouvertement le coup dans les cafés, à s'exercer au tir dans les bois et à exécuter leur projet sans éprouver l'ombre d'un remords.

Publiquement menacé par les complices de Samast pour ses déclarations sur les Arméniens et les Kurdes massacrés, Orhan Pamuk a préféré s'exiler aux États-Unis. Des gardes du corps ont été affectés à la protection de dizaines d'intellectuels. Côté extrémistes, la fanatisation est telle qu'ils agissent désormais de leur propre initiative. Le dirigeant du parti d'extrême droite MHP – qui a condamné l'assassinat de Dink – est jugé trop « tiède » par ces bandes de chiens fous qui se réjouissent sur leurs sites de l'exécution d'un « ennemi » de la Turquie.

Ils ne sont pas les seuls. Quelques jours après l'arrestation de Samast, une vidéo « privée » filmée par les enquêteurs – et communiquée à la presse – montrait des policiers traitant tendrement l'assassin de « lion », de « petit frère », et se pressant à ses côtés pour se faire prendre en photo devant le drapeau national. Le scandale est tel qu'il entraîne des sanctions contre huit fonctionnaires (policiers et gendarmes) ainsi que le limogeage d'un haut responsable de la police d'Istanbul. Plus extraordinaire, le Premier ministre Recep Erdogan (islamiste modéré présenté comme un « musulman-démocrate ») sort de sa prudence pour condamner en termes inhabituellement vigoureux le fameux « État profond », son racisme, son national-fanatisme et ses compromissions avec l'extrême-droite.

Désormais, la Turquie ne peut ignorer qu'elle est profondément scindée entre ceux qui s'arc-boutent sur une identité fascisante et ceux

qui veulent tourner la page de ce dangereux archaïsme. « On peut dire que les Turcs ont, comme les Russes, un fond nationaliste fait d'orgueil blessé et de peur face au changement, analyse Ali Bayramoglu, intellectuel démocrate qui officie dans les colonnes du quotidien gouvernemental (islamiste modéré) "Yeni Safak". C'est un état d'esprit très volatil qui peut mener à voter en masse pour un parti fasciste lors de la présidentielle de mai, ou à se laisser manipuler par "l'État profond". » Le seul parti capable d'éviter cette dérive est, selon lui, l'AKP d'Erdogan, dont la victoire permettrait de calmer la crise de chauvinisme aigu que traverse le pays.

Plus critique, le juriste Ibrahim Kaboglu, professeur à l'université de Marmara, rappelle que le gouvernement AKP a fait preuve d'une grande tolérance à l'égard de l'extrême-droite, notamment en refusant d'abolir l'article 301. Des protestations s'élevant de tous côtés contre l'article 301, y compris dans les rangs de la

Tüsiad, le Medef turc, le gouvernement s'est décidé à étudier la question. Ce n'est pas la seule réforme à laquelle il devra s'attaquer. « La mort de Hrant met en pleine lumière le caractère ségrégatif de notre système », estime Raffi Hermonn, vice-président de la Ligue turque des Droits de l'Homme. Les non-musulmans, arméniens, grecs ou juifs, ne peuvent devenir juges, diplomates, officiers, ni professeurs de

langue, de culture ou d'histoire turques.

Une commission spéciale, non prévue par la Constitution, peut seule autoriser une nomination à une fonction subalterne. Sur le plan collectif, des expropriations abusives frappent les organisations minoritaires, comme ce camp de vacances arménien de Tuzla que Hrant Dink construisait avec ses élèves avant qu'il ne soit purement et simplement saisi en 1973.

Comme s'il fallait à tout prix conjurer l'horreur de ce meurtre, sur le terrain des dizaines de groupes militants fourbissent des projets tous azimuts. Pour certains, il faut racheter le camp de Tuzla pour en faire un centre de rencontre au nom de Hrant Dink. D'autres envisagent de planter une forêt de 53 000 arbres (1 000 pour chaque année qu'il a vécue). Pour Betül Tanbay, professeur de mathématiques à l'université du Bosphore, qui fut une des chevilles ouvrières de la première conférence internationale consacrée aux Arméniens ottomans, organisée en 2005 à Istanbul, « il est indispensable de fonder en terre turque un institut d'études arméniennes autour du riche fonds d'archives amassé par Hrant ». Elle songe aussi à introduire un enseignement de langue et d'histoire arméniennes – inexistant dans les études supérieures en Turquie – et à développer les échanges académiques avec l'Arménie. « Si les derniers Arméniens d'Istanbul se mettaient à partir eux aussi, les assassins de Hrant, qui rêvent d'une société monocolor, auraient gagné. »

URSULA GAUTHIER

## Talabani hospitalisé, nouvelle vague d'attentats à Bagdad

**IRAK.** Le président Jalal Talabani a été évacué hier soir en Jordanie pour des raisons de santé, alors que Bagdad venait de subir une nouvelle vague d'attentats. Victime officiellement d'un « *malaise lié à du surmenage* », le président irakien doit subir des examens médicaux. Selon des sources informées, M. Talabani, âgé de 74 ans, aurait été en réalité victime d'une attaque cardiaque. Hier, des terroristes ont encore mis en échec le plan de sécurité de la capitale, tuant 42 personnes. Un kamikaze, portant une ceinture d'explosifs à la taille, a tué une

vingtaine d'étudiants à l'entrée de la faculté d'économie de l'université Moustansiria. Au moins trente autres étudiants ont été blessés. Dans la capitale, toujours, une voiture piégée a blessé quatre passants dans le quartier de Karada (centre). Ces violences surviennent au lendemain d'un discours du premier ministre, Nouri al-Maliki, qui se félicitait des résultats du dernier plan de sécurité, qui a permis l'arrestation de 400 insurgés en trois semaines. Samedi, 52 personnes, dont 17 femmes, avaient également été tuées et



Trente étudiants ont été blessés dans cet attentat kamikaze. AFP.

**LE FIGARO**  
26 février 2007

plus de 60 autres blessées dans un attentat suicide visant une mosquée sunnite à Habbaniya, dans la province rebelle d'al-Anbar, à l'ouest de Bagdad. Par ailleurs, Ammar Hakim, un fils d'Abdel Aziz Hakim, le dirigeant d'un des principaux partis chiites, a été relâché au cours du week-end, après avoir été arrêté dix heures par l'armée américaine, à son retour d'Iran.

G.M.

## Nucléaire : Téhéran souffle le chaud et le froid

**LE FIGARO** 26 février 2007

### MOYEN-ORIENT

Alors que les membres du Conseil de sécurité se réunissent aujourd'hui à Londres pour étudier le dossier iranien, Téhéran règle ses comptes avec les États-Unis et tend une nouvelle perche à la France en libérant Stéphane Lherbier.

### Téhéran

LA GUERRE ou le dialogue sans condition avec les États-Unis. Alors que les membres du Conseil de sécurité se réunissent aujourd'hui à Londres pour examiner le dossier iranien, et envisager des sanctions renforcées, Téhéran campe sur son refus de suspendre ses activités nucléaires, tout en réglant ses comptes avec Washington. « *Nous nous sommes préparés pour faire face à toutes les situations, y compris s'il y a une guerre* », déclarait hier le vice-ministre des Affaires étrangères, Manouchehr Mohammadi, à l'agence de presse IRNA. Tout en ajoutant : « *Nous avons toujours dit être prêts à des négociations sans conditions avec les États-Unis mais ils ne l'ont pas accepté jusque-là* ».

Vu de Téhéran, les dernières déclarations menaçantes de Dick Cheney n'ont fait que renforcer la rhétorique va-t-en-guerre d'une partie de la classe politique iranienne. A commencer par le président Ahmadinejad qui rappelait,

hier, que le programme nucléaire iranien était irréversible. « *L'Iran maîtrise la technologie de la production du combustible nucléaire. C'est un train qui est en marche et n'a plus de frein de marche arrière car l'année dernière nous les avons arrachés et jetés* », a-t-il déclaré.

L'avant-veille, le vice-président américain avait rappelé à trois reprises, lors d'un entretien avec la chaîne ABC, qu'il n'écarterait « aucune option ». Coïncidence ou message de fermeté, la télévision iranienne annonçait également hier l'envoi, couronné de succès, de la première fusée iranienne dans l'espace. « *L'objectif de cette fusée, qui atteint une altitude maximale de 150 km, est d'aider au progrès scientifique et à la recherche* », a précisé Ali Akbar Golrou, l'adjoint du chef du Centre de recherche aérospatiale, selon l'agence Fars.

### Puissance régionale incontournable

Sur fond de tension avec l'Occident, ce geste peut être perçu comme un pas supplémentaire de Téhéran pour s'affirmer comme une puissance régionale incontournable. En parallèle, l'Iran ne manque pas une occasion pour rappeler que le coût d'une attaque serait très lourd pour l'Amérique. « *Si les installations nucléaires iraniennes sont attaquées, on assistera à une explosion régionale. Les populations de Bahreïn, d'Afghanistan, d'Irak du*



Le président iranien, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a rappelé, hier, que le programme nucléaire de son pays était irréversible. Mehdi Ghasemi/AP.

Koweït et d'autres pays pourraient s'attaquer aux intérêts américains », prévenait récemment Mohammad Nabi Roudaki, membre de la commission parlementaire en charge de la sécurité nationale et des affaires étrangères. Avant de préciser : « *L'Iran dispose de nombreuses capacités, - sous-entendu de nuisance - . Par exemple, l'Iran peut bloquer les exportations de pétrole dans le Golfe persique* ».

Messages provocateurs, certes, mais qui s'accompagnent également de signaux plus modérés. Si Téhéran semble se braquer, ses dirigeants sont loin d'avoir fermé la porte des négociations. En témoigne la récente « sortie » d'Ali Velayati, le conseiller diplomatique du guide suprême, clef de voûte du régime, et de nature habituellement très discret.

Lors de récents entretiens accordés à deux journaux européens, il affirmait la volonté de l'Iran de continuer à négocier « sans exclusion », appelait l'opinion internationale à ne pas s'arrêter aux slogans agressifs de certains dirigeants, tout en tendant une perche à l'Europe, lui suggérant de se distinguer de la position américaine. Roland Dumas, l'ancien ministre français des Affaires étrangères, arrivé ce week-end en Iran sur son invitation, s'est empressé de répondre présent à l'appel. Mais que cherche Téhéran ? Obtenir une reconnaissance que refuse de lui accorder Washington ? Ou tenter de diviser les pays membres du Conseil de sécurité ? Face aux menaces croissantes, la République islamique étudie, en tout cas, toutes les options.

DELPHINE MINOÛI



JUSTICE ENQUÊTE SUR L'ORGANISATION SÉPARATISTE KURDE

# La libération de huit Kurdes soupçonnés de liens avec la DST met à mal les services antiterroristes

Le Monde  
Dimanche 25 - Lundi 26 février 2007

CAMOUFLET pour les services antiterroristes : la chambre de l'instruction de la cour d'appel de Paris a décidé, vendredi 23 février, de remettre en liberté sous contrôle judiciaire huit personnes mises en examen, le 9 février, dans l'enquête sur l'organisation séparatiste kurde, le PKK. Elles sont soupçonnées d'extorsion de fonds et de blanchiment, afin de financer des attentats en Turquie. L'appel de sept autres mis en examen contre leur détention sera examiné le 27 février. « Cette décision signifie que la cour d'appel ne marche plus à n'importe quel prix dans les combines de l'antiterrorisme », se réjouit M<sup>e</sup> Antoine Comte, avocat de plusieurs Kurdes libérés.

Il semble que la sous-direction antiterroriste de la police judiciaire, chargée de l'enquête, ait interpellé des individus qui

avaient des contacts réguliers avec un autre service de police, la direction de la surveillance du territoire (DST). Attila Balıkcı, un des mis en examen, a ainsi expliqué au juge Thierry Fragnoli qu'il était, depuis 2002, l'intermédiaire entre la DST et Rıza Altun, responsable politique, en France, de l'organisation. Ces contacts ont été aussi évoqués par Canan Kurtyılmaz, présentée comme la déléguée européenne du PKK. Arrêtée en Belgique puis transférée en France le 16 février, elle a été placée sous simple contrôle judiciaire par un juge des libertés et de la détention (JLD), à la stupéfaction des juges antiterroristes et du parquet, qui a fait appel.

Interrogée par *Le Monde*, la DST confirme avoir eu des contacts - mais pas étroits - avec des membres du PKK, dans

le cadre classique de ses missions, afin de prévenir toute activité subversive. « Jusqu'à leurs arrestations, les activités de ces gens étaient parfaitement connues, explique M<sup>e</sup> Jean-Louis Malterre, avocat de M. Balıkcı. Certains pointaient à la Préfecture pour une autorisation provisoire de séjour, des contacts réguliers existaient avec les autorités. Et voilà qu'on les criminalise du jour au lendemain ! »

Lors de leur congrès annuel dans l'Aveyron, les membres de la branche française du PKK informaient la DST, prétendent-ils, du montant de leurs collectes, soit près de 1 million d'euros. L'enquête de la PJ a débuté, en juillet 2006, avec l'arrestation de deux Kurdes dans un bureau de change, s'appropriant à convertir 200 000 euros en dollars. ■

PIOTR SMOLAR

# Turkish military chief flexes some political muscle

By Vincent Boland in Ankara

The head of Turkey's armed forces used a visit to the US this month to fire a warning shot across the bows of his political masters at home.

Turkey was facing more threats to its national security than at any time in its modern history, General Yashar Buyukanit said, but its "dynamic forces" - its soldiers - would prevent any attempt to "break up the country".

Within days, the government in Ankara dropped a tentative plan to open official lines of communication with the civilian Kurdish leadership in northern Iraq - a controversial initiative but one that many countries are urging.

The government's acquiescence on an important foreign policy issue represents a decisive victory for military over political thinking. It also highlighted the continued influence of the military a decade after the generals ousted an Islamist government without firing a shot - an event that has become known as the "post-

modern coup".

Despite legal and constitutional changes in the past four years to reduce their visibility in public life, to give civilian leaders a bigger say in matters of national security and to make the armed forces more accountable to parliament, the Turkish general staff can still influence and change government policy in a way that would be impossible in other European countries.

Cengiz Aktar, a professor at Bahcesehir University, says Gen Buyukanit's Washington speech was meant to send a signal to the end-of-term government and the nation at large that the military retained a pre-eminent role on national issues such as the threat of separatism. "If there was the slightest will on the part of the political leadership of Turkey to talk to the Kurdish leaders in Iraq, that will has now gone," he says.

Turkey has a history of military interference in its political affairs. It is one of the legacies that most compromises its attempt to join the European Union.

In addition to the February 1997 coup there have been three coups d'état since 1960, complete with tanks on the streets, mass arrests, new constitutions and generals in uniform assuming top political positions. These interventions were sometimes welcomed by Turks, who regard the military as

the country's most trustworthy institution.

Reforms to the status of a status-obsessed military since 2002 were accepted by the general staff because they were necessary to secure the opening of EU entry talks. Now, some observers say, Gen Buyukanit is testing the revised constitutional arrangements to see where the new border between the politicians and the military in Turkey lies.

"It's his attempt to understand the new parameters," says Omer Faruk Genckaya, an associate professor of political science at Bilkent University.

'The general staff is once again filling a void and increasingly becoming a barometer of Turkey's stance'

In particular, some observers say, the generals are worried that the constitutional changes have weakened the national security council - which was once dominated by the military and is now run by a civilian

- without strengthening the political or civilian alternatives. This, they believe, has occurred at a time when Turkey's neighbourhood - it shares a border with Iraq, Iran, Syria, Georgia and Armenia - is going through profound upheaval.

Omer Taspınar, a fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, says Gen Buyukanit's prominence in recent weeks reflect the weakness of politicians as much as the new-found confidence of the military. "In the political vacuum created by inept politicians, both in power and in opposition, the general staff is once again filling a void and increasingly becoming a barometer of Turkey's stance," he wrote last week.

Gen Buyukanit has clashed with the government before, on issues from internal security to Cyprus. He seems certain to do so again in the run-up to presidential and parliamentary elections this year - as long as he feels the military is a better judge of the public mood than politicians. "Until politicians become more honest about the problems Turkey is facing, the military will always see a role for itself in society," Prof Genckaya says.

FINANCIAL TIMES TUESDAY FEBRUARY 27 2007



# Draft law on Iraq oil revenues is approved

By Edward Wong and Damien Cave

**BAGHDAD:** The Iraqi cabinet approved a draft of a law Monday that would set guidelines for countrywide distribution of oil revenues and foreign investment in the immense oil industry.

The endorsement was a major agreement of the country's ethnic and sectarian political blocs on one of Iraq's most divisive issues.

The draft law approved by the cabinet allows the central government to distribute oil revenues to the provinces or regions by population, which could reduce the economic concerns of the rebellious Sunni Arabs, who fear being cut out of Iraq's vast potential oil wealth by the dominant Shiites and Kurds.

It also grants regional oil companies the power to sign contracts with foreign companies for exploration and development of fields, opening the door for investment by foreign oil companies in a country whose oil reserves rank among the world's top three.

The approval of the draft law came as an explosion inside the headquarters of the Iraqi Ministry of Public Works killed at least five people and wounded the Iraqi vice president and the minister in what Iraqi officials described as a possible assassination attempt.

Though it was unclear where the bomb was hidden or who was the target of an assassination attempt, the attack was the most serious breach of an Iraqi government building since November, when dozens of employees at the Ministry of Higher Education were kidnapped by gunmen dressed in police commando uniforms.

Iraq has 80 known fields, and 65 of those are expected to be offered up for bids for development contracts once the draft law is approved by the Parliament, said Hussain al-Shahristani, the Iraqi oil minister.

The 275-member Parliament is in recess but will look at the draft once it reconvenes next month, Shahristani said. Ahead of the cabinet vote Monday, he added, the main Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish political blocs had agreed to work together to ensure that the law is approved by Parliament in an expeditious manner.

Since the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, Iraqi politics has often been split bitterly along ethnic and sectarian lines, and that kind of conflict

could still stall passage of the oil law through Parliament. Drafts had been debated for months by a committee overseeing the writing of the law before

the cabinet approved it Monday.

"At the end of the day, we all supported this thing because it's workable for all the parties and is all-inclusive," said Barham Salih, a deputy prime minister and the head of the committee.

Several members of the committee said they were confident that Parliament would ultimately endorse the law, but perhaps only after heated arguments.

"It will be tough," said Salih. The writers of the draft law tried to balance regional control of oil versus control by the central government, an issue related to the violence here in Iraq.

The minority Sunni Arabs, who ruled Iraq for decades before the toppling of Saddam Hussein and are now leading the insurgency, have chafed at rule by the Shiites and Kurds partly because they fear those two groups might hoard oil wealth for themselves. Most of Iraq's oil lies in the Shiite south and Kurdish north, and Sunni Arab leaders have resisted attempts to create laws allowing for greater regional autonomy.

The draft oil law says that all revenues from current and future oil fields will be collected by the central government and redistributed to regional or provincial governments by population, in theory ensuring an equitable distribution of oil. This could help calm Sunni Arabs hostile to Kurdish and Shiite autonomy.

The attitudes of Sunni Arabs could also soften if more oil exploration is done on their lands. Iraqi officials recently increased their estimates of the amount of oil and natural gas deposits on Sunni Arab territory after paying tens of millions to foreign oil companies to re-examine old seismic data across the country and retrain Iraqi petroleum engineers.

At the Ministry of Public Works, Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi, one of two Iraqi vice presidents, was approaching a conference room lectern to address ministry employees at the time of the blast, which tore through walls and hurled him to the ground, witnesses said. His guards threw themselves on top of him, and he was immediately taken to an American-run hospital inside the Green Zone where witnesses

**'It's workable for all the parties and is all-inclusive.'**

said he was received in a wheelchair, covered in dust but smiling.

Statements from several offices of the Shiite-led Iraqi government later said Abdul-Mahdi was released from the hospital and returned to work.

The minister of public works, Reyad Ghareeb, was also seriously wounded,

news agencies reported.

It was not clear if his injuries were life-threatening.

Witnesses and Iraqi officials said it was unclear whether a bomb had been carried in by an employee or had been slipped past security.

Assassination attempts on Iraqi officials are not uncommon, and members of all sects have been targets. The vice president and the public works minister are both Shiites, and the ministry is run by one of Iraq's leading Shiite parties, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

The blast came on a yet another day of violence in Iraq.

The police said a suicide car bomber exploded outside a police station in Ramadi, killing at least 13 people and wounding 10, The Associated Press reported.

A roadside bomb in southern Baghdad killed two policemen. A mortar exploded in central Baghdad, where security forces have set up blast walls around open-air markets, killing two people and wounding four. Gunmen attacked a fire station with grenades and machine guns in Mansour, in west Baghdad, killing three firemen and wounding three others.

The authorities found 25 bodies throughout the city.

Also Monday, the political bloc loyal to the militant Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr clarified his stance on the new security plan, declaring that Sadr still supported the plan despite a statement attributed to him on Sunday saying that the effort to pacify Baghdad was doomed to failure because it relied on American troops.

Saleh al-Ugaili, a member of Parliament and a spokesman for Sadr's political movement, said the statement was meant to emphasize a need for more Iraqi control.

The military also announced the death of a marine killed Feb. 26 during combat in the Sunni Anbar Province.

The office of President Jalal Talabani said in a statement Monday that he was recovering from exhaustion at a hospital in Jordan, and it denied reports that he had heart surgery.

*Ali Adeeb and Qais Mizher contributed reporting.*

# No 'reverse gear,' Ahmadinejad says

## Iran takes bold tone on eve of meetings

By Brian Knowlton

**WASHINGTON:** As six major world powers prepared for a crucial meeting Monday to devise a response to Iran's defiant nuclear-enrichment activities, the Iranian president remained undeterred and unapologetic, saying Sunday that the nuclear program had no reverse gear.

That comment, by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, drew a simple retort from Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who said: "They don't need a reverse gear. They need a stop button."

She emphasized that she remained personally ready for high-level talks — anytime, anywhere, on any topic — if Tehran would simply halt its nuclear work. "I am prepared to meet my counterpart or the Iranian representative at any time, if Iran will suspend its enrichment and reprocessing activities," Rice said on ABC-TV. "That should be a clear signal."

Iran has insisted that it is merely pursuing technology to produce fuel for nuclear power plants, and Ahmadinejad said the work would go on.

The comments came as the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, plus Germany, prepared for the meeting at which they are expected to consider new trade and other sanctions against Iran, four days after the UN nuclear watchdog agency reported that the country was continuing its enrichment work in defiance of Security Council demands.

Amid a swirl of signals, countersignals and perceived signals, the weekend launching of an Iranian rocket momentarily raised concerns, seen at first as a possible demonstration of technology that could be used to build intercontinental ballistic missiles. (Page 5)

Ali Akbar Bolrou, executive deputy of the Iranian aerospace research center, later told the Fars News Agency that the rocket was suborbital, incapable of reaching space, and was intended for atmospheric research.

Regardless, it was unlikely that the timing of the launching — at so sensitive a moment — was entirely coincidental.

And while Rice seemed intent on sending Tehran a message that it was

not too late to enter talks aimed at improving relations with the West, Vice President Dick Cheney said Saturday that Iranian atomic ambitions must be curbed.

"All options" are on the table, he said from Australia, wording that suggests the possibility of military attack. For Iran to be allowed to develop a nuclear weapons, Cheney said, would be a "serious mistake." But he also said he believed a diplomatic solution was still possible.

Ahmadinejad's most provocative comments sometimes seem aimed mainly at a domestic audience, but Sunday he seemed uninterested in di-

plomacy, or any scaling back of his country's nuclear ambitions.

"The train of the Iranian nation is without brakes and a rear gear," he said. "We dismantled the rear gear and brakes of the train and threw them away sometime ago."

He said Western countries were not genuinely interested in the centrifuges used to enrich uranium. "They are concerned about the collapse of their hegemony and hollow power," he said.

Ahmadinejad's tough language and Iran's unbowed attitude in its confrontation with world powers seemed to reflect a new Iranian confidence, built on knowledge that the U.S. military is preoccupied in Iraq, on its vast oil wealth, and on a canny awareness of splits within the Security Council itself — with Russia and China harboring deep reservations about painful sanctions.

The six countries meeting in London are expected to consider imposing a mandatory travel ban against some Iranians linked to nuclear work, and expanding the list of individuals and companies hit by economic sanctions.

But Russia and China, which have strong trade links to Iran, had prevented the other permanent members of the Security Council — Britain, France and the United States — from issuing such a travel ban in December, and their cooperation now remains unsure.

Separately, U.S. and British press reports — denied by American officials — have said the United States is planning for a possible bombing campaign against Iranian nuclear targets. The New Yorker magazine reports this weekend that a Pentagon committee was planning a bombing attack that could be launched within a day of an order from President George W. Bush.

The New Yorker article, by the investigative journalist Seymour Hersh and quoting unidentified U.S. intelligence sources, said that the United States had also increased its clandestine activities inside Iran to identify possible targets and "establish contact with anti-government ethnic-minority groups."

Such apparent news leaks are thought by some analysts to be used by



President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, center, at a meeting Sunday with clerics in Tehran, at which he called for more nuclear talks.

the administration to apply more pressure to Tehran.

The Pentagon issued a strong denial of the Hersh story, saying: "The United

States is not planning to go to war with Iran. To suggest anything to the contrary is simply wrong, misleading and mischievous."

Meantime, Iran itself was sending mixed signals.

In response to Cheney's comment, a Foreign Ministry deputy, Manouchehr Mohammadi, said, "We have prepared ourselves for any situation, even for war," Reuters reported, quoting the ISNA press agency. Iran conducted war exercises recently, firing several missiles.

Yet, the country's chief nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, said that Tehran wanted more talks, according to the IRNA press agency.

"Iran is ready to resolve existing differences over its nuclear program through fruitful and careful negotiations," he said, Reuters reported.

In December, the Security Council ordered sanctions on Iran, barring know-how and technology sales that could be used for nuclear or missile de-

velopment. It threatened further steps if Iran refused to halt enrichment by Feb. 21 — as a recent report by the International Atomic Energy Agency says is the case.

Washington has already imposed sanctions on two major Iranian banks and three other companies, and Rice said this clearly had gained the attention of some Iranian leaders.

“People in Iran are concerned about the fact that financial institutions are moving out of Iran and refusing to deal with Iran,” she said on ABC-TV. “They’re concerned that their oil and gas fields need investment that they’re probably not going to be able to get.”

But, underscoring her point on talks, Rice added:

“I just want to repeat, Iran has another course that it can take. If it stops its enrichment and reprocessing activities, as demanded by the international community, we’re all prepared to have full-scale negotiations any time and any place.”

# U.S. keeps options open on Iran

## Washington mixes diplomacy with shows of potential force

By David E. Sanger

**WASHINGTON:** As the Bush administration tries to rally allies to tighten sanctions on Iran yet again, it is sending mixed messages to Tehran about its commitment to a diplomatic solution, trying to create new openings for negotiations even while holding open, ever so vaguely, the possibility that the United States might some day resort to force.

In Australia on Friday, Vice President Dick Cheney, one of the strongest advocates of pressing for a “regime change” in Iran, reiterated his belief that a diplomatic solution was possible.

But Cheney noted that “the president has also made it clear that we haven’t taken any options off the table,” a phrase that George W. Bush frequently uses but has conspicuously avoided in recent weeks while discussing the issue.

At the same time, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice restated her willingness to meet the Iranians anywhere to talk about anything as long as they first agreed to stop producing nuclear fuel, even temporarily.

White House officials insist that there is no contradiction.

“The idea that we are ginning up another war — there is no evidence for that,” an administration official said.

The official added that Iran needed to know that it could not drag talks on forever and that any talk of military options was a signal that Washington would not sit around and negotiate endlessly while Tehran used the time to continue its work on uranium enrichment.

But, so far, the White House has declined to say at what point the Iranians will have pushed the United States too far — in other words, how many working centrifuges in Iran would be too many or at what point it would be im-

possible to guarantee that Iran could not achieve a “nuclear option,” the ability to turn ostensibly civilian nuclear facilities to bomb-making.

For now, administration officials say, Bush is happy to leave the Iranians guessing. He ordered an additional aircraft carrier into waters within striking distance of Iran and its nuclear facilities last month, a step that senior officials say they believe took the Iranian leadership by surprise. He has issued warnings to the Iranians not to meddle in Iraq and has focused on intelligence findings that the most deadly bombs used against Americans in Iraq bear marks of Iranian origins.

But Bush has denied that he is trying to provoke Iran into a response that would provide a pretext for direct confrontation.

“To say it is provoking Iran is just a wrong way to characterize the commander in chief’s decision to do what is necessary to protect our soldiers in harm’s way,” Bush said at a news conference Feb. 15, shortly after accusing Iranian forces, but not necessarily the country’s leadership, of worsening the violence in Iraq.

In interviews in recent days, three administration officials, all of whom insisted on anonymity because they were speaking about a strategy still being developed, said the carrier movements, the accusations about weapons in Iraq and the use of sanctions against the regime were all intended to provide Bush with some leverage in dealing with Iran.

The officials have made little secret of their desire to fuel dissatisfaction inside Iran with the country’s fiery president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who vowed anew Friday to continue enriching uranium, saying, “If we show weakness in front of the enemies, they will increase their expectations.”

R. Nicholas Burns, the under secre-

tary of state for policy and the lead negotiator on Iran issues, said Thursday that the multipronged approach was showing an effect.

“We’ve roiled their government, and I think we’ve shocked them a bit,” he said.

Burns was headed to London for a meeting on Monday with France, Germany, Britain, Russia and China about designing a new, tighter set of sanctions against Iran — one that might include a further crackdown on export credits or conventional arms sales.

He will undoubtedly run into more resistance from the Russians and the Chinese, who told U.S. officials in December that they would not put additional economic pressure on the Iranians. But Burns said he was not looking for a major escalation of sanctions, and other administration officials said that modest steps would be fine for now.

“The most important thing about the last resolution was that we achieved a consensus, we kept the Russians and Chinese on board,” a senior administration official said. “And in the end, that’s what has serious impact in Iran.”

Officials say that the need to hold that consensus together is overriding the differences on Iran that stirred the administration in its first term.

Back in 2002 and 2003, when the prospect of a nuclear-capable Iran was more distant, the administration decided not to explore several offers through intermediaries to open discussions. Cheney and others argued that the success they expected in Iraq would chasten the Iranians, bringing them to the table on more favorable terms.

Cheney, however, appears increasingly isolated now that many of his protégés have left the administration.

Nazila Fathi contributed reporting from Tehran.

# Female bomber kills 40 at Iraq university

## Sadr denounces Baghdad security plan

By Damien Cave and Wisam A. Habeeb

**BAGHDAD:** A female suicide bomber wearing a vest packed with explosives and ball bearings blew herself up at a Baghdad university Sunday, killing at least 40 people, and strewing fingers, pens, purses and bloody textbooks all over the ground.

The blast, at a campus of Mustansiriya University, was one of several bombs and explosions to hit Baghdad, making Sunday one of the worst days of violence since Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki announced a new security crackdown.

An hour after the blast, a new challenge emerged for the prime minister and the Baghdad security plan he has helped devise and has repeatedly called a success.

The radical Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr condemned the security plan in a signed statement, declaring that it had no hope of success as long as American troops were involved.

Read aloud to 1,000 shouting supporters in Sadr City, the large Shiite area near the site of the university blast, the statement called on Iraqi security forces to stop cooperating with the United States military.

"There is no good that comes from a security plan controlled by our enemies, the occupiers," the statement said. "If you stay away from them, God will protect you from horror and harm. Make sure your plans are purely Iraqi and not sectarian."

Sadr has long maintained public opposition to the American presence in Iraq, yet through intermediaries he has also expressed support for the security plan, ordering his militia not to fight when American troops enter their neighborhoods and disavowing some of his most extreme commanders.

His latest comments come after weeks of cooperation with the security plan and seem aimed at distancing Sadr from a joint American-Iraqi effort that relies on thousands of American troops but has yet to bring calm to the city.

Saleh al-Igaili, a member of the Iraqi Parliament from the Sadr bloc, said Sadr was renewing his demands for the withdrawal of American troops and for a security plan wholly run by Iraqis without American interference. Sadr controls 30 seats in Parliament, votes that made a crucial difference in making Maliki the prime minister.

"He is criticizing the plan because it is run by the occupiers and not by the Iraqi government," Igaili said.



Students at the Mustansiriya University campus after the blast. Blood, body parts, bloody textbooks and steel ball bearings littered the area where the explosion occurred.

Some of the Berlusconi forces have also courted moderates in the Prodi coalition, with the idea of forging a "great center" that could govern without the help of far-left or far-right law.

He asserted that Iraqis supported the effort.

"The coalition is committed to working together with our Iraqi partners to reduce the violence and help protect the population," Bleichwehl said.

Sadr's comments seemed to tap into spreading frustration among Baghdad residents whose hopes for security remain unfulfilled as the thud of explosions greet them every morning.

On Sunday, the explosions in Baghdad started before 8 a.m. local time. A car bomb exploded near the Iranian Embassy in central Baghdad, killing one person and wounding four. Several mortar shells landed in Abu Dshir, in southern Baghdad, and another car bomb in central Baghdad wounded four, sending black smoke into the sky.

The bomb at Mustansiriya University's college of economy and administration wounded at least 55 people, most of them students, many of them women. It was the second recent assault at a branch of the university, one of Iraq's elite institutes of higher learning, and one at which where most students are Shiite. Two car bombs and a suicide bomber killed at least 70 people at another campus nearby on Jan. 16.

About 10 American Humvees, along with Iraqi Army vehicles, were deployed about 180 meters, or 600 feet on either side of the blast site. The Iraqi police scoured the scene after hearing reports that a second suicide bomber might be on his way.

### ■ Iraqi president becomes ill

President Jalal Talabani is ill and traveled to Jordan for tests after a drop in blood pressure, a senior government official said Sunday, but his office said there was no cause for concern, Reuters reported from Baghdad.

Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih said Talabani left for Amman on Sunday afternoon and would be treated at a specialty hospital in the Jordanian capital.

A statement from Talabani's office said: "Because of his hard work in past days, President Jalal Talabani has become ill and the doctors advised him to take some tests and now he is on his way to Jordan."

A close aide to Talabani denied media reports that the president had suffered a heart attack.

Talabani's post is largely ceremonial but he is an influential political figure with close links to Washington.

## L'armée turque accuse les kurdes irakiens de soutenir les rebelles du PKK

ANKARA, 17 fév 2007 (AFP) - Le chef de l'Armée turque a accusé les deux principaux mouvements kurdes du nord de l'Irak de soutenir le groupe séparatiste du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan) et de lui fournir des explosifs, a rapporté samedi l'agence turque Anatolie.

"Ces deux factions soutiennent le PKK. Ils sont le principal soutien du PKK en ce moment... Ils (les rebelles du PKK) reçoivent aussi des explosifs de ces factions", a, selon Anatolie, déclaré le général Yasar Buyukanit, qui parlait à la presse à Washington après des discussions avec des officiels américains.

Les accusations du général Buyukanit visaient le PDKI (Parti Démocratique du Kurdistan (PDKI) et l'Union Patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), qui dirigent une administration autonome dans le nord de l'Irak à majorité kurde.

Ankara affirme que les militants du PKK utilisent le nord de l'Irak comme terrain d'entraînement, disposent d'une liberté de mouvement illimitée dans cette région et sont en mesure d'obtenir des armes et des explosifs pour des

attaques au delà de la frontière entre l'Irak et la Turquie, en territoire turc.

La Turquie a menacé d'engager une opération en territoire irakien pour écraser le PKK si les États-Unis et l'Irak ne prenaient pas des mesures pour contrôler ce groupe.

Washington a mis en garde Ankara contre une telle attaque de crainte d'une déstabilisation d'une des régions relativement les plus calmes en Irak et fasse monter la tension entre la Turquie et les Kurdes irakiens, alliés des Américains.

Selon le chef de l'armée turque, quelques 3.500 membres du PKK seraient actuellement stationnés en Irak et 1.500 autres en Turquie.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara et Washington, se bat depuis 1984 pour l'indépendance du sud-est anatolien à la population majoritairement kurde. Le conflit a fait quelque 37.000 morts.

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## Ankara accuse le Kurde Massoud Barzani de jeter de l'huile sur le feu

ANKARA, 27 fév 2007 (AFP - 18h03) - La Turquie a averti mardi les Kurdes irakiens que leur velléité d'indépendance pour un État qui comprendrait la ville pétrolière de Kirkouk serait "irrationnelle" et aggraverait la tension dans la région, a rapporté l'agence Anadol.

Le ministre turc Abdullah Gul a accusé le chef du gouvernement autonome de la région kurde d'Irak, Massoud Barzani, d'être "irrationnel" pour avoir déclaré à la télévision turque lundi que les pays de la région devraient accepter que les Kurdes, dispersés entre l'Irak, l'Iran, la Syrie et la Turquie, ont le droit à l'indépendance.

"Une direction irrationnelle et des rêves maximalistes au Moyen Orient ont toujours plongé les peuples dans des conflits", a déclaré M. Gul à des journalistes dans un avion le ramenant d'une visite en Afghanistan, a indiqué Anadol.

Il a estimé que les remarques de M. Barzani étaient "irresponsables dans un contexte, particulièrement en Irak, où la situation est critique et où la Turquie poursuit une politique constructive."

M. Barzani avait appelé lundi la Turquie à des négociations face-à-face pour mettre fin aux tensions qui résultent de l'utilisation du Kurdistan irakien comme base arrière par les combattants kurdes de Turquie dans un entretien télévisé à la chaîne NTV. "Le dialogue est le meilleur moyen de résoudre les problèmes et les malentendus", avait-il dit.

Il avait cependant insisté sur le fait que l'indépendance constituait "un droit naturel" des Kurdes de la région et rappelé que les Kurdes irakiens veulent intégrer Kirkouk à leur région autonome.

Cette ville pétrolière est "le cœur du Kurdistan", avait-il ajouté.

Kirkouk est également habitée par des Arabes et par des Turcomans de souche turque.

De son côté le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan avait déclaré lundi à Anadol, en réaction aux propos de M. Barzani, que "Kirkouk constitue un Irak en miniature et n'est la propriété d'aucun groupe ethnique en bien propre".

## L'Iran affirme avoir tué trois chefs du groupe kurde rebelle Pejak

TEHERAN, 27 fév 2007 (AFP) - Trois chefs du Pejak, un parti séparatiste kurde iranien proche du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, rebelles kurdes de Turquie), ont été tués lundi par les forces armées iraniennes, a déclaré un responsable militaire du nord-est de l'Iran, cité par l'agence Irna.

"Trois chefs du groupe contre-révolutionnaire Pejak qui avaient reçu pour mission de la part des ennemis de créer des troubles ont été anéantis", a déclaré le commandant Hassan Rastegar-Panah.

De nombreux "éléments blessés du Pejak, qui se cachent dans la région, sont recherchés", a-t-il ajouté, précisant que "des documents retrouvés montrent que l'objectif des rebelles était de créer l'insécurité dans la zone".

L'Iran avait reconnu lundi que quatorze militaires de l'armée régulière et du corps d'élite des Gardiens de la révolution,

dont deux haut gradés, ont été tués vendredi dans le crash de leur hélicoptère lors d'une opération contre le Pejak.

Cet accident est survenu lors d'affrontements armés avec des rebelles kurdes qui s'étaient infiltrés en Iran depuis les frontières irakienne et turque.

Les Gardiens de la révolution ont affirmé avoir tué 17 rebelles lors de cette opération, à une vingtaine de km de la frontière turque.

Le Pejak avait affirmé dimanche avoir abattu l'hélicoptère et tué 20 militaires iraniens.

La province d'Azerbaïdjan-ouest, qui a des frontières avec la Turquie et l'Irak, abrite une minorité de Kurdes. Cette zone a déjà été le théâtre d'affrontements armés entre gardes-frontières iraniens et militants kurde

## TURQUIE. Le chef de la diplomatie et un général sont rentrés bredouilles de Washington.

### Un certain refroidissement américano-turc

LE TEMPLE - 23 février 2007 - Delphine Nerbollier, Istanbul

L'opération séduction de la Turquie envers les Etats-Unis n'a pas porté ses fruits. Au contraire, certains commentateurs qualifient de véritable «fiasco» les récentes visites à Washington, à une semaine d'intervalle, du chef de la diplomatie turque, Abdullah Gül, et du commandant en chef des armées, le général Buyukanit.

Bredouilles, les Turcs l'ont tout d'abord été sur la question arménienne alors que le Congrès américain se prépare à passer une résolution reconnaissant le génocide des Arméniens en 1915. «Les relations turco-américaines ne devraient pas être prises en otage par ce sujet», a déclaré Abdullah Gül, qui a qualifié cette résolution de «véritable menace» à l'encontre des relations entre les deux pays, alliés de longue date, notamment au sein de l'OTAN.

Confronté à une opinion publique turque très réactive sur le sujet et à

quelques mois des élections législatives, Ankara a laissé entendre que le vote de cette résolution pourrait remettre en cause l'utilisation de la base militaire turque d'Incirlik par l'armée américaine dans le cadre de ses opérations en Irak. Une menace que le chef de la diplomatie turque n'aura pas réussi à faire entendre à Nancy Pelosi, la speaker de la Chambre des représentants et porte-parole de la cause arménienne américaine, qui a tout simplement refusé de s'entretenir avec lui, par «manque de temps».

#### L'épine du PKK

Bredouilles, les Turcs l'ont également été sur la question de la lutte contre le PKK, mouvement séparatiste kurde qui compterait plus de 3000 membres dans le nord de l'Irak. Les Etats-Unis sont restés sur leur position, à savoir un soutien officiel envers Ankara concernant la lutte contre le terrorisme mais un refus de voir intervenir l'armée turque dans les montagnes de Kandil afin de déloger

les combattants kurdes. «Le PKK dispose d'explosifs de type C-4 et de missiles Stinger, s'est emporté le député Turhan Comez, présent dans la délégation turque. Leurs fournisseurs d'armes n'ont pas été bloqués, et ils disposent au contraire d'un réseau de communication bien établi qui pourrait facilement être mis hors jeu. De nombreuses choses pourraient être faites mais nous sommes incapables d'agir. Le peuple turc est déçu.»

Déçus, les Turcs le sont aussi au sujet de Kirkouk, ville pétrolière du nord de l'Irak, dont l'avenir doit être débattu à la fin de l'année lors d'un référendum qu'Ankara souhaite voir reporté. «La structure démographique de la ville a été modifiée», a expliqué le général Buyukanit en référence à l'afflux massif ces derniers mois de populations kurdes. «A la fin de l'année 2007, il y aura dans cette ville des affrontements sectaires et ethniques qui détruiront l'unité de

l'Irak. Un Irak divisé n'est pas dans l'intérêt de la Turquie.» Des propos entendus mais jusqu'à présent pas pris en compte par Washington.

Parti aux Etats-Unis prêcher la même cause que le chef de la diplomatie turque, le général Buyukanit n'aura pas attendu longtemps pour révéler ses divergences d'opinion. A peine de retour des Etats-Unis, le chef d'état-major a critiqué la volonté, affichée la semaine dernière par le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, d'entrer en contact avec l'administration kurde d'Irak, qui avait récemment déclaré que le PKK n'était pas un problème de terrorisme mais un problème politique. Le message a cette fois été très bien entendu puisque, dans la foulée, le gouvernement turc a annulé une rencontre prévue à la fin du mois avec des membres des partis kurdes d'Irak. Le sujet sera débattu vendredi au sein du Conseil national de sécurité qui réunit membres du gouvernement... et généraux



# Kurds claim compromise deal on Iraqi oil law

By Steve Negus,  
Iraq Correspondent

Officials of the Kurdistan autonomous region in northern Iraq said yesterday they had reached a compromise with the central government on a key issue that had blocked the adoption of the country's oil law, but Baghdad's ministry of oil said differences still remained between the two.

A draft of the law will now be passed to the full cabinet for discussion but the need to draft other parts of an oil legislation package may mean that it will be some time before the law - deemed necessary to revive

Iraq's flagging oil industry - can be passed.

The US has reportedly been placing pressure on both Baghdad and the Kurdistan regional government to pass a law, the absence of which is holding back the foreign investment deemed critical to boosting oil production. Output is fewer than 2m barrels

a day, down from 2.5m bpd before the war.

Since last summer the oil ministry in Baghdad and the KRG have been at loggerheads over several issues, in particular the KRG's right to sign contracts with foreign oil companies to explore new fields in its territory.

The oil ministry says it should negotiate such deals but the Kurds insist that the clauses on federalism in Iraq's 2005 constitution clearly give that authority to regional governments.

Kurdish leaders said over the weekend they had approved a draft of the new law. The ministry of oil has failed to endorse it but has said it could be sent to the cabinet and parliament for further discussion.

The draft has not yet been made public. But a statement from the KRG summarising the document said: "The Kurdistan region will voluntarily share some of its constitutional powers to manage petroleum explora-

tion and development in Kurdistan with the federal government."

It said it would permit an independent panel of experts to "review the KRG's petroleum contracts against certain agreed commercial criteria" but would "retain the power to sign contracts for petroleum exploration and development in the Kurdistan region". In return, the draft said, "Kurdistan will be guaranteed a share of pooled revenues proportionate to its population."

However, the KRG said key annexes to the law, as well as new legislation to regulate the sharing of oil revenues, still needed to be

agreed before the final package could be presented to parliament.

The oil ministry said differences remained with the KRG on procedures for negotiating new contracts, as well as the review of contracts that had been signed in the past by both the government and the Kurds.

"There are differences on points of view between officials of the Kurdistan regional government and the oil ministry and some members of [the] energy council on some parts of the draft law," Dow Jones quoted Hussein Shahristani, the oil minister, as saying.

With the law in limbo, the

Kurdistan government has signed oil exploration and development contracts with DNO of Norway, the Turkish-Canadian Genel/Addax, Canada's WesternZagros, and the Turkish-American PetPrime and A&T Energy.

The KRG said it did not envisage any changes being made to those contracts but said it would submit them to the draft law's independent panel of experts "to ensure that they meet the Iraq-wide required standards".

"We will not finalise any new contracts for a couple of months or so to allow the federal oil law to be adopted [by parliament]," it said.

FINANCIAL TIMES TUESDAY FEBRUARY 27 2007

## A Londres, Américains et Européens confirment leur unité de vues pour accroître les sanctions contre l'Iran

Le Monde  
28 février 2007

EN DÉCEMBRE, au moment où la résolution 1737 de l'ONU qui allait frapper pour la première fois l'Iran de sanctions, était en cours de négociation, les responsables américains se montraient très irrités face à leurs interlocuteurs européens. Les sanctions

qui se préparaient, disaient-ils, étaient trop faibles. Ils accusaient les Européens d'avoir trop cédé face aux Russes, ces derniers rejetant des mesures sévères en arguant de leurs intérêts économiques en Iran.

Le prix de l'unité du Conseil de sécurité était une dilution des sanctions, et cela aboutissait, selon Washington, à un coup d'épée dans l'eau. Deux mois plus tard, le ton a totalement changé. Washington se réjouit désormais publiquement des effets qu'a provoqués la résolution 1737 sur le régime iranien, que l'on dit travaillé par des dissensions internes, et inquiet de sa situation économique face à l'assèchement des financements extérieurs.

Lundi 26 février, lors de la réunion de Londres des pays traitant du dossier nucléaire iranien (Etats-

Unis, Royaume-Uni, France, Russie, Chine, Allemagne), le sous-secrétaire d'Etat américain pour les questions politiques, Nicholas Burns s'est montré particulièrement coulant avec le représentant russe, Sergneï Kisliak.

C'est qu'entretemps Washington a pris la mesure des effets de sa triple stratégie d'endiguement de l'Iran, en partie destinée à faire entendre raison à ce pays sur le dossier nucléaire : déploiement militaire dans le Golfe avec l'envoi de deux porte-avions et de missiles Patriot ; sanctions financières uni-

latérales et pressions sur les banques et sociétés européennes traitant avec l'Iran ; et poursuite d'un travail collectif à l'ONU, aux côtés des Européens et des Russes, pour maintenir l'unité face au refus persistant des Iraniens de suspendre l'enrichissement d'uranium.

### Nouvelle résolution

Aucune décision sur un accroissement des sanctions n'a été annoncée, lundi soir, à l'issue de la réunion de Londres, décrite comme « préliminaire ». Les discussions

vont se poursuivre en vue d'une « nouvelle résolution du Conseil de sécurité, à partir de la résolution 1737 », a annoncé le représentant britannique, John Sawers, tandis que le ministre des affaires étrangères français Philippe Douste-Blazy estimait qu'une deuxième résolution pouvait « rapidement » intervenir. La 1737 a introduit un embargo sur les transferts de technologies nucléaire et balistique vers l'Iran, ainsi que des gels d'avoirs et des limitations de visas frappant des responsables iraniens.

Il est question désormais de rallonger la liste des structures et personnalités visées, dans une approche que les responsables occidentaux veulent « progressive et réversible ». La secrétaire d'Etat américaine Condoleezza Rice constatait avec satisfaction, avant la réunion de Londres, que l'ensemble des sanctions déjà prises avait eu un impact. « Les gens regardent de près les risques d'investissements en Iran, le risque sur leur réputation, le risque de faire affaire avec un pays placé sous le chapitre VII » de la Charte de l'ONU, qui autorise des sanc-

tions. Lors d'un entretien avec Jacques Chirac à Paris, le 25 janvier, M<sup>me</sup> Rice reconnaissait que la stratégie du consensus avait été payante.

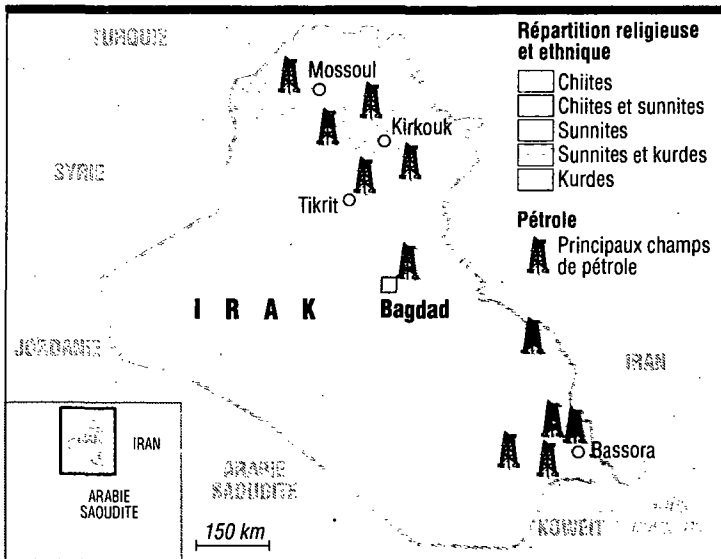
En raison des pressions américaines, bon nombre de sociétés européennes peinent aujourd'hui à obtenir des financements bancaires pour leurs projets en Iran. Les Etats-Unis, constate un diplomate occidental, ont ainsi « le beurre et l'argent du beurre » : l'unité du Conseil de sécurité est encore préservée - alors que les Iraniens ont multiplié les tentatives de division - et les retombées économiques sur l'Iran n'en ont pas été pour autant amoindries.

D'autant que les Américains ont pu constater que l'Union européenne, en transposant les mesures de la 1737 dans ses règlements, ce mois-ci, avait au passage durci certaines des mesures décidées à l'ONU contre Téhéran. Le fait que Moscou refuse toujours de livrer le combustible pour la centrale nucléaire de Bouchehr explique aussi le ton plus conciliant des Américains sur la suite des événements. ■

NATALIE NOUGAYRÈDE



# L'Irak organise le partage du pactole pétrolier



► Les principaux pays détenteurs et producteurs de pétrole

Arabie saoudite	264,2	
Iran	137,5	
Koweït	2,21	Réserve prouvée (en milliards de barils)
Emirats arabes unis	97,8	Production (chiffre 2006, en millions de barils/jour)
Venezuela	79,7	
	2,56	

Sources : AIE, OPEP, Photo : AFP

## GOLFE

Le gouvernement irakien a adopté le projet de loi sur la répartition des réserves pétrolières entre les groupes ethniques et confessionnels.

APRÈS DES MOIS de gestation, la loi sur les hydrocarbures irakiens est enfin prête. Fruit de rudes pourparlers entre les représentants des groupes ethniques et confessionnels, le texte sur la répartition des richesses pétrolières a été approuvé lundi par le gouvernement irakien. Il doit maintenant être présenté au Parlement, pour entrer en application en mai. Washington a pesé de tout son poids pour convaincre la coalition à dominante chiite au pouvoir à Bagdad de parvenir à un consensus sur le partage du pactole des hydrocarbures. Les Américains ont menacé de cesser de soutenir le gouvernement de Nouri al-Maliki en cas de nouveau report du projet, tandis que le président George W. Bush pressait Bagdad de parvenir à une « juste répartition pour garantir l'unité de l'Irak ».

La solution imaginée par les

concepteurs de la mouture définitive de la loi a le mérite de satisfaire les diverses communautés irakiennes, sans déplaire aux grandes compagnies étrangères. Son principe repose sur une redistribution équitable de la rente pétrolière entre les provinces. Les régions sunnites dénuées de champs pétroliers vont bénéficier d'une

manne financière aussi importante que les zones de production, situées pour la plupart en secteur dans le sud chiite et le nord kurde. De leur côté, les « majors » pourront exploiter des réserves, considérées comme les troisièmes du monde, dans un cadre législatif clair. Des dizaines d'entre elles, dont de nombreuses entreprises américaines, russes ou chinoises, sont sur les rangs.

### Infrastructures obsolètes

Un savant dosage de centralisme et de régionalisation a été nécessaire pour parvenir à satisfaire tous les appétits. Bagdad se charge de récolter et de redistribuer les revenus de l'or noir. Les dix-huit provinces obtiennent des sommes

au prorata de leurs habitants. Les déplacements de population provoqués par la violence sectaire rendent toutefois les calculs difficiles. Et les sunnites – les anciens maîtres du pays sous Saddam Hussein – se sentent lésés par la perte de leur mainmise sur Kirkouk, la cité pétrolière revendiquée par les Kurdes. Soucieux de les rassurer, les États-Unis ont insisté pour que le gouvernement central irakien garde les clés du coffre-fort de Kirkouk et de ses quelque 10 milliards de barils de réserve.

La loi transforme la compagnie nationale pétrolière irakienne (Inoc) en holding indépendant et établit un Conseil fédéral des hydrocarbures, forum de la politique nationale pétrolière. Le ministère du Pétrole devient le régulateur du secteur. Sous la pression des Kurdes et d'une moindre mesure des chiites, un certain degré d'autonomie est accordé aux filiales régionales de l'Inoc. Ces dernières pourront aussi négocier des contrats avec les « majors » sous réserve de respect des normes nationales. Cette nuance répond à

une exigence du gouvernement autonome du Kurdistan, qui œuvre au maintien de sa quasi-indépendance.

Décidées à profiter de la relative stabilité de leur région, les autorités kurdes avaient pris les devants en signant, sans en référer à Bagdad, des accords avec des sociétés étrangères comme la compagnie norvégienne DNO. Menacés pendant un temps, ces contrats devraient être en fin de compte consolidés.

Enjeu colossal, l'industrie pétrolière ne pourra véritablement redémarrer qu'en cas de décrue de la violence. En attendant, elle reste un secteur délabré aux infrastructures obsolètes. Les sanctions internationales imposées au régime de Saddam dans les années 1990, puis les attentats et les pannes qui accompagnent l'occupation américaine n'ont pas permis à la production de revenir à ses performances d'avant la guerre du Golfe. Incapable de subvenir à ses besoins en essence raffinée, l'Irak exploite deux millions de barils par jour.

THIERRY OBERLÉ

## Time for a clear policy

# The many faces of Ankara and Erbil

It seems that the issue of the Iraqi Kurds is now top of the news agenda in Turkey; it will certainly be a factor in November's up coming elections. As such, in this crucial election year, Turkey's main political parties are entering into a game of posturing on policy towards the Iraqi Kurds.

Djene Bajalan  
The Globe - Istanbul

Turkish PM Erdoğan, Foreign Minister, Gül and, leaders of Turkey's nationalist opposition CHP party, have all expressed their views on the subject. And it is not just the politicians that are jumping into the fray.

Turkey's all powerful Chief of Staff, General Büyükanit, also made his opinions known. With conflicting statements and press speculation abound, the only thing that can be agreed on is the fact that there is no agreement on the policy that Turkey should follow in regards to Iraq in general and the Iraqi Kurds in particular.

The whole debate centres on the question of whether Turkey should meet with the KRG leadership over the issue of the PKK, which Turkey, the EU and USA have designated as a terrorist group. Büyükanit's view was made clear during his recent trip to the US; no dialogue was possible with the Kurdish leadership. He accused both Regional President Barzani and Iraqi President Talabani of providing logistical support, included C4 explosives to the PKK, who maintain bases in the remote Qandil Mountains in the extreme North of the Kurdistan Region. Meanwhile, while tacitly accepting the military's assessment that the KRG was supporting the PKK, both Erdoğan and Gül hinted at the possibility of meeting with Barzani and Talabani in order to deal with the issue. At the same time, they vigorously denied that there was any rift between their position and that of the Chief of Staff, stating that due to the fact that

Büyükanit was a soldier he would not be expected to do the talking. This has not convinced anyone. Meanwhile, CHP number two, Oyman, attacked the

AKP government's suggestion of talks with the KRG. In an interview with the English language New Anatolian he stated "Was the premier not familiar with Buyukanit's view of the northern Iraq issue? What do Erdoğan and Buyukanit discuss during the National Security Council (NSC) meetings? If Erdoğan has information that regional leaders support PKK militants, how did he make a declaration (to meet with the KRG) like that?" Certain Turkish columnists have been even stronger in their attacks on the KRG and apparent attempts by the Government to relieve tensions. Radikal's Hasan Celal Güzel strongly rebuked the idea of talks, writing, "It would be unwise to speak to the CIA's puppet Kurdish leaders who support the PKK, who insult the Turkish army when they are cornered, and who have an eye on Turkish soil and do not refrain from expressing this in their legal texts." Clearly, Turkish policy on Iraq is highly volatile.

It is trapped between two points. US's desires not to see one of their main allies in the region, Turkey, fighting with their only reliable ally in Iraq, the KRG, and more nationalist positions emanating from the army and elements of public opinion.

On Tuesday, Safin Dezyi, KDP spokesman for extra-regional affairs, and a former KDP representative in Ankara, participated by phone with a popular Turkish discussion show, 'Neden', broadcast on the NTV news channel, to deny the accusations. He categorically stated that the PKK was not receiving support from the KRG and that the KRG had no intentions on Turkish soil. However, this probably has not convinced anyone in Turkey about the issue. This is indeed a risky state of affairs, most of all

for the KRG. Of course, any cross border action by Turkey, of course, will be extremely damaging for Turkey itself; not only could it lead to a full scale conflict with the KRG security forces, it would most likely inflame tensions between Turkey's Kurds and the central government. Hilmi Aydoğdu, leader of

the pro Kurdish DTP in Diyarbakir, recently went on record as saying "We consider an attack on Kirkuk as the same as one on Diyarbakir." (He was subsequently arrested by Turkish police) However in any major armed conflict between Turkey and KRG over PKK, the KRG and the Kurdish people would have more to lose. Such a conflict would risk creating a security vacuum in the region and destroy many of the gains the Kurds have achieved in the last few years.

What is also important to understand is that in Turkey, the Kirkuk issue and the PKK issue are often conflated in the debate. In reality these

are two separate issues; however, if Turkey intervenes into Iraqi Kurdistan over the PKK issue, it will no doubt use its position to force its wishes on the people of Kirkuk. The fact is that the PKK's presence in Qandil, under international law, does provide Turkey with a legitimate Casus Belli (reason for war) against Iraq and the KRG. What is more, if a resolution recognising the Armenian genocide is passed in the US congress later this year; the US may no

longer be able to restrain Turkish action. Thus, it is essential that the KRG develops a clearer policy towards on the PKK in order to remove any reason that Turkey could have for intervening into the KRG.

It would seem that the KRG has yet to develop a fully coherent policy towards the PKK. Recent statements by Kurdish figures have been along the lines that there should be a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue in Turkey. This is no doubt true.

But the fact is that the KRG simple is not in a position to be following such a policy. It needs to be establishing its presence fully across the region, including the Qandil Mountains. The Kurdish Federal Authorities must gain what was called 'the monopoly of violence' in the region. That is that the KRG's police and army must be the only armed grouping in the region. This is clearly not compatible with the presence of an armed group that defies the authority of the Kurdistan National Assembly.

The question then arises as to what should the KRG do? As a first step, a full scale military op-



Turkey's Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül and Chief of Staff General Yasar Büyükanit leave the Foreign Ministry flanked by officials after a meeting in Ankara February 1, 2007.

eration against the PKK would seem to be out of the question given that Qandil is a very secure position, and Kurdish public opinion most likely would not favour Kurd on Kurd violence. However, perhaps, a more realistic first step would be attempting to secure the border. This may well involve some limited clashes. But it

must be made impossible for the PKK to cross into Turkey. This could be supported by policies designed to encourage PKK militants to come down from the mountains and disarm and perhaps settle in Iraqi Kurdistan, such as land grants so some of the fighters could return to farming or places in the KRG's education or media facilities. This might

demonstrate to Turkey that the dynamics behind PKK do not radiate from Erbil.

All this might sound very Machiavellian, but it is essential to protect the KRG, if civil war is not to be spread north. The KRG must establish full control of its territory not simply to placate Turkey but due to the fact that it is an essential fac-

tor in the unification, security and establishment of the Kurdistan Region. The Regional Government must do this before Turkey intervenes to deal with the PKK as well as to impose its favoured solution on the people of Kirkuk.



The Kurdish Globe February 27, 2007

## Kirkuk cuts through Diyarbekir

### Globe Editorial

Relations between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Turkey are highly complicated and must be scrutinized very cautiously. The last meeting of the Turkish Security Council (MGK) opened the possibility for the Turkish government to hold talks with representatives of the KRG. It is clear that Kurdish leaders are open to such diplomatic channels, but the question here is what are the fundamental principles and red lines that they should follow in their discussions with their Turkish counterparts.

It should be remembered that there is an irreconcilable interest between the two parties. On one hand, there is Turkey, where, at the roots of its establishment, lays the principle of anti-Kurdism. On the other hand, there is the Kurdistan Federal Region and Kurdish masses who aspire to their democratic and national rights, which necessarily includes the right to self-determination. Kurdish leaders in the south, due to diplomatic and international concerns, do not clearly express their vision of an inde-

pendent Kurdistan. Despite some Kurdish leaders, like Jalal Talabani and Abdullah Ocalan, who genuinely do not believe in the possibility of an independent Kurdistan, most of the leaders and mainstream cadets of various Kurdish political parties and the overwhelming Kurdish majority aspires for an independent and united Kurdistan. What really concerns Turkey is not lily-livered statements of a few Kurdish leaders, but the general tendency of the Kurdish masses and political cadets. The arrest of Hilmi Aydogdu, the chairman of the Democratic Society Party (DTP) branch of Diyarbekir, indicates that very clearly. Aydogdu was arrested by Turkish authorities due to his statement regarding Kirkuk. He stated that any Turkish attack on Kirkuk would galvanize 20 million Kurds in Turkey and they would consider any attack on Kirkuk an attack on Diyarbekir. Aydogdu's statement mirrors the general views of Kurds both in the south and the north.

What determines the tone and the outcome of the talks between Turkish and KRG officials is the general tendency of the Kurdish masses to demand their national and

democratic rights in Kurdistan and their attitude toward the issue of Kirkuk. For any political or military observer, it is very clear that Turkish involvement in the south and particularly in Kirkuk is impossible. Turkish threats are nothing but empty bluffs. These bluffs, however, are not for nothing. They do serve a specific purpose. Through such threats and subtle diplomacy, Turkey will try to pressure Kurdish leaders to step back from their demand on Kirkuk and to limit the southern Kurds' federal status in Iraq. Here a historical responsibility lies on the shoulders of the Kurdistan Federal Region's authorities not to bow to Turkish pressure, but to persist in the preservation and protection of the federal status of Kurdistan and implementation of Article 140 of the Iraqi permanent constitution to resolve the issue of Kirkuk.

This should be done in a delicate way within the framework of general Kurdish national interest. In other words, southern Kurdish leaders must not exploit the sensitivity of the northern Kurds as a bargaining chip in their relations with Turkey. Strong opposition of mil-

lions of Kurds in the north is a serious threat for Turkey in its adventure in southern Kurdistan. This strong resistance in the north is a safe belt for the political gains of the Kurds in the south. It would be a historical faux pas should the Kurds fail to exploit this juncture for a genuine unification of Kurds on both sides.

Any political and social development in one part of Kurdistan, due to geo-strategic and historical and political conditions of Kurdistan, inevitably affects the other parts. In that sense, the destiny of any part of Kurdistan inexorably depends on the other parts. This is specifically true for south and north Kurdistan. Aydogdu was right to link Kirkuk with Diyarbekir and vice versa. Once, ex Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz said that the road to the EU will pass through Diyarbekir. It is time to state that the road to the Kurdistan identity of Kirkuk will cut through Diyarbekir. The Kurdish masses are ready and it is time for Kurdish leaders to have vision, audacity, and wisdom.

Azad Aslan  
Globe Political Editor

Assembly and a private meeting with President Jacques Chirac. Talabani came with gifts for each of the French V.I.P.s he met. ("He's a great believer in prez-zies," Rubaie told me. "I don't think he's ever visited anyone without bringing a gift.") Ségolène Royal, the Socialist candidate for President of France, was given a hand-woven Kurdish kilim and a two-foot silver sculpture of a date palm, Iraq's national tree. "There were thirty million of these trees in Iraq before Saddam Hussein—now there are only ten million," Talabani informed her. Royal looked slightly confused but graciously accepted the gift.

Talabani was also in France to talk about oil. Estimates of Kurdistan's reserves range as high as forty-five billion barrels. In 2005, the regional Kurdish government, on its own authority, signed an exploration agreement with a Norwegian firm, which has begun drilling wells, and Turkish, British, and Canadian companies either have signed contracts or are in negotiations. (The Kurds fought hard for clauses in the new constitution, ratified in 2005, which they read as giving them the power to make such deals.) Until the nineties, France was among Saddam's closest European allies and business partners, and in 2003 opposed the U.S.-led war to oust him. For a time, the Americans punished the French by shutting them out of business deals in the "new Iraq," but those days are over. In his suite at Le Meurice, Talabani met with the C.E.O. and another executive of the French oil company Total.

"I want to say that Total and France are welcome in Iraq," Talabani told the French executives. "Iraq needs friends like Total."

The Frenchmen agreed. The company was putting together a joint venture with an American partner, one executive said, in the hope that the U.S. military would help with security. No one mentioned that, two weeks earlier, one of Total's directors and a former senior executive had been detained for questioning regarding bribes and kickbacks that Total allegedly paid for Iraqi oil under the scandal-ridden Oil for Food Program. (Total denies any wrongdoing.)

One of the executives said that Total was not interested only in oil. "We have brought some Iraqi children with heart defects to France for surgery," he said.

Talabani replied, "What would be really useful is to have a heart hospital *there*." Kurdistan, he said, would be the ideal spot; it was secure enough so that a Chinese mobile-phone company had recently set up operations there. Talabani smiled and stared expectantly at the Frenchmen. They exchanged a few words in rapid-fire French, and then one of them muttered something noncommittal.

Once his official Paris schedule had ended, Talabani spent several days seeing old friends, such as Danielle Mitterrand,

the former French First Lady, who had championed the Kurdish cause for many years. Mme. Mitterrand, who lives in an old house with tiny, low ceilinged rooms on a back street in Sainte-Germaine, ushered Talabani and his retinue into her dining room, where, on a rustic table, she had placed a small plate of quiche, cut into dainty slices.

Talabani had barely arranged his bulk on a little chair before he launched into an effusive discourse about how conditions had improved in Kurdistan since she had been there. (Mme. Mitterrand had visited in 2002, for the opening of a new Carrefour superstore, which bore the name of her late husband, in the Kurdish capital of Erbil.) "There are now twenty billionnaires and two thousand millionnaires in Sulaimaniya alone!" Talabani said. The smile on the face of the staunchly Socialist Mme. Mitterrand seemed to freeze at this unexpected revelation, but she quickly recovered.

On November 8th, Talabani's chief of staff signed the bill at Le Meurice, which reportedly came to more than half a million dollars. (Talabani's suite alone cost thirteen thousand dollars a night.) French security men drove us to Orly's V.I.P. terminal, and we took off for Iraq on a chartered 767 that flew the colors of Iraqi Airways but was licensed in Djibouti and flown by an American pilot. The jet was said to be owned by a wealthy Iraqi businessman. When it was time for dinner, the flight attendants, who were Iraqi, served Talabani first, after a valet had fastened a Presidential bib around his neck.

In Baghdad, Talabani lives in a yellow brick mansion on the eastern shore of the Tigris River, outside the Green Zone. Until April, 2003, when Talabani seized it, the mansion belonged to Barzan al-Tikriti, Saddam Hussein's half brother and the former chief of the secret police, who, like Saddam, was sentenced to die for his role in the Dujail massacre. (Barzan was executed on January 15th, but his hanging was bungled when the rope ripped off his head.) The Presidential offices are next door, in a palace that once belonged to Saddam's wife Sajida. The palace was looted and damaged after the American invasion in 2003; Talabani had it restored. I had visited the palace a couple of days after Saddam was overthrown, and found its marble floors littered with children's scooters, and, oddly, several chain saws in the master bedroom. The centerpiece of the domed foyer was a large Hussein family portrait made of inlaid marble. The portrait has been removed but, as before, the palace is furnished with faux French antique furniture. Talabani's official Presidential offices lie within the Green Zone, but he rarely visits them.

Talabani's complex sits on the north side of the ramps of the Jadiriya Bridge; on the south side is the home of his political ally Abdulaziz al-Hakim, the

Shiite leader of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq. Hakim's house is where Tariq Aziz, Saddam's Deputy Prime Minister, once lived. The approaches on Talabani's side are heavily guarded by Kurdish peshmerga ("those who face death") fighters—Talabani commands some fifty thousand peshmerga in the militia of his party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, or P.U.K.—and on Hakim's by militiamen of the Badr Organization, his party's armed wing. More gunmen from both groups are posted across the river and along the half-mile stretch of avenue that leads to the Green Zone.

The two leaders and their militias work closely on political and security matters, though in other ways the Kurds, who are largely secular, and the Shiites, who are very devout, present a sharp contrast in styles. During weeks spent in Talabani's company, I never saw him or any of his aides pray. Talabani is not averse to alcohol, either, and he enjoys playing cards with a small group of his cronies. One day, I watched from a car as men from Hakim's compound, in black athletic uniforms, got ready for a soccer game on a dusty, fenced-off section of the narrow strip of vacant land between the two security corridors. Before the game, Islamic prayers were intoned through a megaphone; the players stood with their heads bowed. A Kurdish official who was in my car shook his head. "What does God have to do with sports?" He turned to me and added, "You see what we have to deal with?"

Talabani's wife, Hero, does not live in Baghdad with her husband. She stays in their home city of Sulaimaniya, where she runs a foundation and a television station, and publishes a newspaper. Years ago, Hero taught herself how to operate a video camera, and she filmed battles between peshmerga fighters and the Iraqi Army. She and Talabani have two sons: one, Bafel, runs the counterinsurgency wing of his father's party; the other, Qubad, represents the autonomous Kurdish government in the U.S.

At home in Baghdad one morning, Talabani invited me up to his private quarters. It was early, and he was still dressed in loose-fitting pajama bottoms and an immense yellow-and-blue striped rugby shirt. A valet brought us Nescafé stirred with sugar into a creamy mixture. (I later learned that this was "Mam Jalal style.") Talabani lit a cigar. (He favors the long ones known as Churchills.) The day before, two suicide bombers had blown themselves up at a police recruitment center just outside the Green Zone, killing thirty-eight potential recruits. It was the latest incident in what almost everyone but Talabani acknowledged was an accelerating sectarian war. "I don't think Iraq is on the eve of a civil war," he said stubbornly. "Day by day—and this is

not an exaggeration—Sunni and Shiite leaders are coming close to each other."

Iraq's main problem was not sectarianism, he said, but a terrorist war waged by Baathists and foreign forces like Al Qaeda. Without losing his habitual equanimity, he added that the situation had been made worse by American ineptitude, arrogance, and naiveté, saying, "I think the main one responsible for this was Rumsfeld"—Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who had resigned days earlier. (Talabani has since welcomed President Bush's plan to send an additional twenty-one thousand five hundred American soldiers to Baghdad in a so-called "surge." He said in a statement that it showed "a new effort to improve security in Iraq" and that it "concur and corresponds with Iraq's plans and ideas"—although some members of the government had been openly skeptical. His media adviser Hiwa Osman told me, "As far as we are concerned, the Americans are liberators. If they want to decrease or increase their troops, we are not going to object.")

After breakfast, Talabani went downstairs to deal with the affairs of the day. A half-dozen senior personnel were waiting, as they do each morning; among them was Wafik al-Samarrai, a former general in Saddam's military intelligence service, who defected to Talabani in the mid-nineties. He is Talabani's national-security adviser, and runs his security team, which includes several South African military veterans. When Talabani has an appointment elsewhere, he is driven in a BMW 7 Series armored black saloon, preceded and followed by a sizable fleet of white Nissan Patrols carrying peshmerga guards. But, more often than not, people come to Talabani. His meetings tend to go on all day, and, punctuated only by meals, late into the night.

It is a measure of Talabani's ascendancy that Nuri al-Maliki, the Prime Minister, usually comes to Talabani, rather than vice versa. Maliki is the third Prime Minister since 2004, while Talabani has been a constant fixture. Maliki does not have Talabani's access to American and other foreign leaders, and must often work through him. In public, Talabani tries to defer to Maliki, and he ap-

pears to wish him to succeed. This winter, reports were circulating that the White House had misgivings about Maliki, and that Iyad Allawi, the former Prime Minister, was the Americans' favored candidate for a "strongman" to replace him. Talabani scoffed, telling me, "Allawi! He cannot even control his own family." He added, "Maliki can be a strongman—if we support him."

While I was at Talabani's house, a Sunni Arab sheikh from Anbar province came to ask for help in obtaining weap-

ons. His tribe would fight the terrorists, he said, if it had the arms. (When he left, Talabani told me he thought that the Americans should give such tribal leaders guns; they had held back, he said, out of fear that the guns might be used against American troops.) Next, Talabani met with the Russian Ambassador, and, according to minutes I obtained, they discussed a weapons-buying trip to Moscow that Iraqi officials had planned. Talabani said to the Ambassador, "You should tell your companies to come and invest here; the French will be opening an office in Erbil—you should do the same." Talabani repeated a remark he had made to Vladimir Putin: "We are not putting all our eggs in one basket; we are spreading our eggs between American and Russian and French baskets."

However much the Iraqi government is still tied to U.S. interests, Talabani has no hesitation about exercising—and exceeding—his mandate as President. One example came in 2005, when he clashed with then Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari over who should control a former NATO building in the Green Zone. An armed standoff between Jaafari's guards and Talabani's peshmerga ended only after the American Ambassador, Zalmay Khalilzad, intervened. Talabani got the building, which he later made available to Maliki.

One source of Talabani's power is his wealth. Together with his old rival Masoud Barzani, who is the President of the autonomous Kurdish region, Talabani is believed to have amassed many millions of dollars in "taxes" on oil smuggled out of Iraq through Kurdistan between 1991 and 2003, when the country was under U.N. sanctions. And Talabani obsessively dispenses gifts, trades favors, and buys allegiances, on the assumption that, in Iraq, the richest suitor has the best chance of winning the bride.

In many ways, Talabani's behavior and his life style are those of a clandestine party boss. He inhabits his mansion as if it were a temporary base camp. His private quarters are cramped, poorly lit, and undecorated, with counters cluttered with satellite phones. His indulgences are food and a large personal staff. He wanders into the kitchen to taste whatever the cooks are making, and plans menus for special guests. He and Ambassador

Khalilzad have regular meetings over *kallapacha*, an Iraqi dish consisting of the head and stuffed intestines of a sheep. ("I love *kallapacha*, it's true," Khalilzad told me later, laughing.) Twice a month, Talabani sends consignments of Kurdish yogurt, cheeses, honey, and handmade sweets to foreign ambassadors and leading politicians.

Several of Talabani's aides told me privately about men in his entourage who, they suspected, profited from government contracts that they steered toward their friends. In this, Talabani's circle is not unusual. Mahmud Othman, a



Talabani with (from left) Saddam Hussein, Nuri al-Maliki, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Donald Rumsfeld, Zalmay Khalilzad. Over the years, he has made deals with everyone from Ayatollah Khomeini to both Bush Presidents.



Kurdish M.P., is close to Talabani but is scathing about the entire government's profligacy, corruption, and moral cowardice. "How does the government expect to have respect when it is closed off?" he said. "The leaders live in Saddam's palaces, and in the Green Zone, and they never go out. The Prime Minister and the President have discretionary funds to spend as they like of a million or more dollars a month. I think the corruption is widespread and systemic and comes from the very top; it began when the political leaders, including the Kurdish parties, came to Baghdad and seized the best houses for themselves. All of this is against a reality in which the families of killed soldiers or police are given pensions of only a hundred dollars a month."

Before accepting a second term as President, last year, Talabani insisted that his powers be more than ceremonial, and a clause was added to the constitution allowing him to convene a

biweekly Council on National Security, a conclave of leaders from all parties, including the Prime Minister. The council usually meets at Talabani's palace.

A few hours before one recent meeting, a group of gunmen wearing police uniforms, in cars that bore the markings of the Interior Ministry, which is dominated by Shiites, pulled up outside the Ministry of Higher Education, which is run by a Sunni. The men forced scores of

people into the cars, and drove off. In a country where mass abductions have become common, this was by far the most brazen. Sunnis concluded that the kidnapers belonged to a militia operating out of the Interior Ministry. If so, it would be the clearest example yet of how Iraq's sectarian war was being played out within the government itself, ministry by ministry. (The incident is so politicized that no one can agree on the number of victims. Sunnis say up to a hundred and fifty, with eighty missing; Shiites say forty, with all returned safely; and Americans say fifty-five, with many released right away.)

As a result, the national-security meeting, which was supposed to focus on securing Baghdad, descended into angry arguments between Shiites and Sunnis over responsibility for the abductions. According to notes taken by a participant, Prime Minister Maliki berated his squabbling colleagues, saying, "You ask me to work, and yet you weaken the government by these disputes. You are the source of half of my problems."

Maliki's government had been cobbled together after four months of tortuous negotiations following the December, 2005, parliamentary elections. The so-called Shia List, including Hakim's party, the Dawa religious parties, and the Sadrists, won forty-one per cent of the vote. The two Kurdish parties, Talabani's and Barzani's, won the second-largest bloc, with twenty-two per cent. The Shiites and the

Kurds agreed to form a government with a coalition of Islamist Sunni parties and a secular alliance headed by former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, but the choice of a new Prime Minister became a protracted struggle. In the end, the job went to Maliki, a Dawa official, who had the backing of the radical Shiite militia leader Moqtada al-Sadr.

Sadr, a chunky, sullen man in his early thirties, is the son of the cleric Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, a revered figure among Shiites. The elder Sadr was killed in 1999; many Iraqis suspect that he was assassinated on Saddam's orders. Immediately after the U.S. invasion, Moqtada, the cleric's youngest son, who was virtually unknown, gained sudden prominence by openly declaring his opposition to America's presence in Iraq. Within days, he had taken control of Saddam City, a vast Shiite slum of some two million people in northeastern Baghdad, renamed it Sadr City, and begun building his militia, the Mahdi Army. In 2004, about ninety Americans and hundreds of Iraqis were killed when Sadr called for armed resistance after the Coalition Provisional Authority, which had a warrant for his arrest on murder charges, closed down his newspaper. But, after Sadr promised to disarm his militia and enter politics, the Americans backed down.

Sadr did not disarm his militia—it is now more or less directly financed and armed by Iran—and he has become a de-



cisive force. His followers, on his orders, took part in the election, and won the largest number of votes of any Shi'ite party. Sadr was given control of four ministries, then had his ministers suspend their participation in the government in protest

when Maliki met with President Bush at the end of November. A few weeks later, however, as Maliki moved to arrest hundreds of his followers, Sadr ended the boycott. (While contradictory friendships are characteristic of Talabani, contradictory positions distinguish Sadr.)

Talabani helped make sure that many of the high-level jobs that didn't go to Shi'ites went to Kurds. (A number of them are Talabani's friends and relatives.) One of the two Deputy Prime Ministers is a Kurd, and Kurds head several ministries, including the Foreign Ministry; the Minister of Water Resources is Talabani's brother-in-law. From the American perspective, there is simply an abundance of qualified Kurds—or, at least, many with whom the U.S. feels comfortable. (Khalilzad said that as far back as 2002 he had seen Talabani as a potential President. "He's a good interlocutor; we work well together," Khalilzad told me. "I'm prejudiced, though—he's a friend of mine.")

One of the biggest problems facing all factions in the Iraqi government—and the Americans—is the woeful state of Iraq's armed forces. Much of Iraq's arsenal was destroyed in the 2003 invasion, and its Army was

disbanded by the Coalition Provisional Authority. What equipment remained was promptly looted; Talabani and Barzani are believed to have been major beneficiaries of the plunder. As soon as Saddam fell, they sent their peshmerga to haul heavy weapons, including dozens of tanks, back to Kurdistan. Criminal gangs and insurgents took much of what was left.

The training of the "new Iraqi Army" has been a dismal chronology of desertions and corruption. (A former Defense Minister stands accused of stealing more than a billion dollars; he has denied it.) The loyalties of many soldiers are questionable; it is believed that insurgents have infiltrated the ranks, and many soldiers refuse to serve anywhere but in their home provinces. The Army has a hundred and twelve battalions, but, according to testimony by General John Abizaid last fall, none are capable of operating without U.S. help.

The Shi'ite-dominated Interior Ministry runs the intelligence services and the police. In Baghdad and in southern Iraq, the Badr Organization, Sadr's Mahdi Army, and other militias are believed to control the local police forces: the militias, the death squads that carry out revenge killings, and the police, in other words, are all but indistinguishable. In Sunni areas, the police are similarly compromised. Police are a favorite target for terrorists; some twelve thousand have been killed since 2003.

The Kurdish forces, by and large, have kept to the north, where as many as a hundred thousand are stationed. Barzani has suggested that some could be used in Baghdad or to replace Iraqi troops in the northern cities of Kirkuk and Mosul; the obvious subtext is that Kirkuk, which has large oil reserves, would be the Kurds' prize.

After the national-security meeting, I spoke with Vice-President Adel Abdul Mahdi, a secular member of Hakim's party. I had last seen Mahdi a year earlier, at a mourning ceremony for his brother, who had been assassinated, presumably by Sunnis. "We are meeting, but it's not only the nonviolent who are here," he said. "And meanwhile there are those out on the streets who have a lot of force, and guns, and they know what they want to do." Some members of the government "like this situation," he said. "They think

they can use it to their benefit, to their political advantage."

Later, in Amman, I heard something similar from former Prime Minister Allawi, who now spends much of his time outside Iraq. He accused people within the Interior Ministry of killing some of his associates; a few days earlier, his chief of security in Baghdad had been tortured to death. "His eyes were taken out and his body was dumped on the street," Allawi said. "And this is the government doing it."

Like many politicians, Allawi had stopped expecting the Iraqi Army to provide security. The problem his faction had, Allawi said, was that it didn't have its own militia: "If we did, we'd be stronger."

Talabani and his ally Hakim do not consider their militias to be problems in the way that Sadr's is a problem. Since 2003, in fact, they have tried to persuade the Americans to allow their militias to be placed under a unified command so that they can fight freely against the insurgents. The Americans, fearing Iranian penetration of the Shi'ite groups, have resisted.

An official in Hakim's party told me, "Instead of letting us act against the Baathists and the terrorists, they made us sit on the fence, and this gave the others—the Mahdi Army and such people—the power of the street." He added, "The problem is that young Shi'ite men will no longer listen to the Marja"—the paramount Shi'ite clerical authority—"and their political organizations. They want revenge."

The turning point for Shi'ites came last February, when bombs destroyed the sacred Shi'ite shrine of Askaniya, in Samarra. The official said, "You have to understand that the Samarra attack was to Shi'ites what 9/11 was to you Americans."

After Samarra, Sadr's militia carried out indiscriminate reprisals against Sunni civilians. One of his main henchmen in Sadr City, Abu Dera, led death squads

that targeted Sunnis and murdered one of Saddam's lawyers. But when I asked a senior Iraqi security official, who is a Shi'ite, how such activities could be reined in, his response raised its own questions. He pointed out that Abu Dera had relatives in Sadr City, and said, "I'd go and get his family and friends"—in other words, to hold them hostage. "And then I'll sit down with Moqtada and say, 'If you don't hand him over, I'll go loose in Sadr City.' Because he's one of Moqtada's lieutenants. And Moqtada doesn't understand anything but force." The security official smiled.

Talabani, like many senior Iraqi politicians, views Sadr with a mixture of condescension and contempt. ("He is depending on his father's name," he told me.) The key to weakening Sadr, Talabani said, was Iran. "If the Iranians will calm down the Mahdi Army, if there will be no assassination, if these—what do you call them?—'death squads' will be no more, then only the terrorists will remain. And if Syria will be silent, only Al Qaeda will remain, and we can defeat Al Qaeda very easily."

Talabani went on, "One of the main mistakes the Americans have made in fighting terrorism is tying our hands and the hands of the Shi'ites, while at the same time the terrorists are free to do what they want. If they let us, within one week we will clean all Kirkuk and adjacent areas." (Talabani's implication was clear: "to clean" is a euphemism for wiping out your opposition, for killing or capturing your enemies.)

Talabani then adopted a high-pitched, whining voice, to mimic the Americans: "No-o, Kurds must not move to the Arab areas, this is sensitive." If they let the Shi'ites clean the road from Najaf to Baghdad, they can do it within days. If they permit the people of Anbar to liberate their area, they will do it, but they say, "Ah, no, this is another kind of militia." They don't understand the realities of Iraq. From the beginning, we have had this problem with them." He added, "Wrong plan, wrong tactic, and wrong policy."

Jalal Talabani has been involved in politics since 1946, when, at the age of thirteen, with Iraq still ruled by the British-installed Hashemite monarchy, he joined an underground Kurdish student organization. It was part of a Kurdish in-

dependence movement that had taken shape during the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, after the First World War, when the victorious European powers failed to give the Kurds their own state. The division of the empire left the Kurds spread among Iraq (with an estimated four million Kurds today, or between fifteen and twenty per cent of Iraq's population), Turkey, Syria, and Iran; the greater Kurdistan envisaged by some separatists would encompass parts of each of those countries.

Talabani was born in the village of Kelkan, in southeastern Iraqi Kurdistan,

an area dominated by his clan, the Talabani; his father was a local sheikh. By eighteen, Talabani was the youngest member of the central committee of the Soviet-backed Kurdistan Democratic Party, led by Mullah Mustafa Barzani (the father of Massoud Barzani). He studied law in Baghdad (interrupted by a period spent in hiding) and completed his obligatory service in the Iraqi Army. Then, in 1961, Talabani joined an armed uprising launched by Mustafa Barzani.

Three years later, Talabani split with Barzani to join a splinter group founded by Ibrahim Ahmed, the father of his future wife, Hero. Ahmed did not like the terms of Barzani's negotiations with the central government. This was a period of violent political instability in Iraq, with four Presidents in the space of ten years. After a Baathist coup in 1968, Talabani made a deal with Saddam Hussein, who was then the Deputy President, to obtain more rights for the Kurds and to get his help in fighting Barzani—only to reconcile with Barzani when Saddam switched sides. It was the beginning of a dizzying sequence of schisms within the Kurdish rebellion, for which Talabani bears significant responsibility, and which, for a time, strengthened Saddam.

Talabani was a Marxist, and then a Maoist, attracted by "Mao's idea of popular war, of fighting in the mountains against dictatorship." He had travelled to China in 1955, at the head of an Iraqi Socialist student delegation. "I met with Chou En-lai," the Chinese Prime Minister, Talabani recalled. "I kissed him, too. And I saw Chairman Mao. But not from very close." He was also drawn to the anti-colonial Arab nationalist causes of the day. On trips during the nineteen-sixties, he made important contacts—

with Gamel Abdel Nasser of Egypt, King Hussein of Jordan, Muammar Qaddafi, Yasir Arafat, and President Hafez al-Assad of Syria. (In Talabani's office, there is a single photograph on the wall, of him with Assad. "He was very, very kind to me," Talabani said.)

In the mid-seventies, Talabani spent time in Beirut, working with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a Maoist Palestinian guerrilla organization. It is a murky period about which Talabani says little, but Kurds close to him suggest that he was then at his most radical, and at one point became involved in a Palestinian plot to hijack an American plane in Europe. He is said to have abandoned the scheme when a contact warned him that Mossad planned to assassinate him.

"We considered the U.S. the enemy of the Iraqi Kurdish people," Talabani told me. Through the eighties, the U.S., for its part, saw the Kurds primarily as troublemakers and as pawns of Syria and Iran. In Turkey, America's NATO ally, Kurdish separatists had been waging a remorseless guerrilla war, to which the Turkish military responded with a vi-

cious counterinsurgency campaign; thousands of Kurdish civilians were killed.

At the height of the Iran-Iraq War, Talabani once again allied himself with Saddam, then opposed him and helped Iran. Saddam's next move was the genocidal Anfal campaign.

Saddam razed thousands of Kurdish villages, primarily in Talabani's territory. In the town of Halabja, between March 16 and March 17, 1988, five thousand Kurdish civilians were killed when planes dropped a lethal chemical cocktail that reportedly included mustard gas and nerve agents like sarin, tabun, and VX. Although these attacks later became part of the current Bush Administration's case for overthrowing Saddam, the Reagan Administration, which was supporting Saddam in his war with Iran, paid little attention; when the news of Halabja broke, the White House blamed Iran.

After the Anfal campaign, Talabani lived in Damascus and Tehran, amongst other places. "We were trying to have good relations with the United States, but at that time the United States was siding with Saddam Hussein—with the governments of Iraq and Turkey, and other countries," Talabani said. "I must tell you that even when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, the State Department was not ready to listen to me. I went to the United States, but it refused to see me."

After Saddam's defeat in the first Gulf War, in early 1991, Shiites in the south and Kurds in the north carried out uprisings. Talabani led his forces into Sulaimaniya and Kirkuk. With the U.S. looking on, Saddam dispatched his Army against them. Hundreds of thousands of

Kurds fled, in the midst of a harsh winter, provoking a humanitarian crisis. The U.S. and its allies declared a safe haven in the north; Talabani and Barzani (who had temporarily reconciled) began negotiating terms of settlement with Saddam.

There is an unfortunate photograph from this period that shows Talabani kissing Saddam on the cheek. "But, you know, at that time the Kurdish people were in danger of being annihilated," Talabani told me, by way of explanation.

Saddam, he said, "was very polite. Especially with us. He came to the door to receive us and he kissed us. He was very friendly in the meeting." The talks unravelled, but not before Talabani exchanged what he called "tough words" with Tariq Aziz, the Deputy Prime Minister, about Halabja. When he met Saddam afterward, Talabani said, Saddam apologized for Aziz's lack of manners and, without expressing further regret, said, "I understand your feelings about Halabja and Anfal."

Talabani also met with Saddam's cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid, who is known as Chemical Ali because of his role in the attacks. (Majid is now on trial in Baghdad. In a tape played in court, he

is heard discussing his plans to use chemical weapons; in another, he calls Talabani "wicked and a pimp because he even wants a truce for one day in order to depict himself as a savior of the Kurds.") In the meeting, according to Talabani, Majid told him, "You are exaggerating—

the number killed in Anfal is not a hundred and eighty-two thousand, it is only a hundred and six thousand." Talabani laughed.

"Fighting is not playing Ping-Pong," Talabani said. "Fighting is killing each other. When we were fighting Saddam Hussein, we killed them, they killed us. It's something ordinary. It's war. And when we stop the war both killers sit down to receive each other. And this happens all over the world. Mao, he sat down with Chiang Kai-shek! Chiang Kai-shek killed his wife. His son! And thousands and thousands of Communists. But when the time came to talk peace they must sit down with each other. This is the process of life."

As the Kurdish "safe haven" developed into a "no fly zone" policed by U.S. and British warplanes—a de-facto Kurdish autonomous zone, beyond the authority of Saddam Hussein—Barzani and Talabani fought for preeminence. One dispute was over revenues from oil smuggling.

"Jalal is at his best when he is down, and is prone to making mistakes when he is up," a longtime friend of Talabani's told me. "In 1991, he was emerging as a statesman of the Kurds, internationally renowned. Instead of moving to become the nation builder that he was supposed to be, he moved into battle, playing with fire, undermining all that he built. He would not like me to say this: he is a risk taker, perhaps even a gambler."

In 1994, a civil war broke between the armies of Talabani and Barzani. In the midst of the fighting, Talabani provided a base for a C.I.A. task force, and for Ahmed Chalabi, the Iraqi exile leader, who were involved in various failed coup plots. Talabani launched an offensive against Saddam's forces, but it also failed. Hundreds of people died in these efforts. Talabani continued fighting Barzani, who at one point, astoundingly, invited Saddam's Army into the north.

When President Clinton signed the Iraq Liberation Act, in 1998, promising American support for Iraqi opposition groups, Talabani and Barzani went to Washington and settled their differences. By then, ten thousand or more Kurds from both sides had been killed. "They fought, they literally fought—and with so many casualties," Rubaie said. "But now they are friends."

Kurdish history suggests that nothing is permanent, however. When I asked a close friend of Talabani's if the days of fratricidal violence would return, he said that he couldn't rule it out.

For some in Washington, giving the Kurds an independent homeland in the north and the Shiites a home in the

south, leaving the Sunnis in the center—dividing Iraq into three parts—has come to seem like a way out of a civil war. The leading advocate of this view is Peter Galbraith, a former State Department official, who in "The End of Iraq," a book published last year, wrote that "every Kurd I know wants an independent Kurdistan." (In a 2005 referendum, ninety-eight per cent of Kurds in the autonomous region voted for independence.)

"He is sometimes writing wishful thinking," Talabani said of Galbraith. "If he says that there is no Kurd who does not want to see an independent Kurdistan, in some way it's true. But there is not, I think, a realistic Kurdish leader who would say, 'We want independence.' Why? Because it is impossible.

"Let me tell you: I am a socialist"—he paused at that self-description and added, "in my opinion"—"but I think it is impossible to create a socialist society now in Iraq. Let us imagine that Iraqi Kurdistan declared independence, and Iran, Syria, Turkey, and Iraq didn't fight it but just closed their borders. How could we live? Let us say, we've got our oil—how could we export it?" He went on, "And you can

be sure that if Kurdistan declares independence Iran will attack, Turkey will attack, Syria will attack—and Iraq will not accept it. We cannot resist all these countries."

Later, Galbraith told me that although he knew that Talabani wanted independence, it would be "suicidal" now. He added, "It's also true that he is serving the Kurdish cause by being President of Iraq. First, by helping to keep the authority the Kurds now enjoy, and, second, by being an outsized player in Iraq, he can better promote the Kurdish cause."

Talabani seems to share that view. "Before, we were faced by Arab anger," he told me. "But now, when Arabs themselves are asking, 'Please send peshmerga, send Kurdish forces to calm down the area,' we must reply. Nowadays, they feel the Kurds are their protectors."

Indeed, according to an official who attended an emergency security meeting in late November—convened after a quintuple car bombing killed more than two hundred Shiite civilians—Mahmoud al-Mashadani, the Sunni speaker of parliament, asked Talabani to bring peshmerga to Baghdad.

At the meeting, Maliki complained that the Americans were not giving him enough control over security. His troops didn't even have heavy machine guns, because the Americans wouldn't let them.

"My dear brother Maliki," Talabani said, according to the participant, "we are all with you, and we will try and work with our American friends. And don't worry—we can try to get you heavy weapons secretly." When he said this, Talabani put a finger over his mouth and said, theatrically, "Sh-h-h."

When the bipartisan Iraq Study Group's report was published, on December 6th, Talabani was incensed.

Among other things, the report called for increased American involvement in the Iraqi Army's military operations and central government control over Iraq's oil revenues (it said that regional deal-making was incompatible with national reconciliation). Talabani called the report "unfair" and "unjust"; he compared it to terms imposed on a "colony."

One recommendation that Talabani had no problem with was that President Bush begin direct talks with Syria and Iran. "It is in our interest that relations between the U.S. and Iran about Iraq be

at least normal, and if they have other differences let them take them to other parts of the world," he had told me a couple of weeks earlier. He was about to leave for his delayed trip to Iran, which he was coordinating with Maliki and others in the government. He was also keeping the Americans informed. "One thing I must tell you," he said. "We never hide our relation with Iran from America."

When I asked Khalilzad about Talabani's initiatives with Iran, he said, cautiously, that they could potentially be useful, but added, "I know he has good relations with the Iranians, a long history of dealing with them. But I think on Iran he is a little too optimistic in his comments and a little too optimistic about the Iranians' performance and their intentions. I am more suspicious of them. I think that he actually is, too, because he knows them very well."

The Iraqis are aware that their country is not the only concern the U.S. has with Iran—there is also Iran's nuclear program and its support for Hezbollah and Hamas. The senior Shiite security official said that even if Talabani won concessions the U.S. would have to follow up with negotiations, because Iran "will take advantage of this and try to impose the nuclear issue on them. But this is their issue, between them."

One senior Kurdish official told me that Iran had to be "shown that Iraq and the U.S. don't come to the table empty-handed. They need to be hit back in the same way, through their ethnic minorities." He named several groups, including the Azeris, the Baluchis, and, of course, the Kurds. He said that I should pay attention to the Kurdistan Free Life Party, an Iranian Kurdish group that has staged guerrilla attacks inside Iran and has reportedly received covert U.S. support. (The Pentagon declined to comment.) "It's operating out of Mam Jalal's territory in Kurdistan," he said.

Tehran was cold and gray on November 27th, when Talabani and his entourage arrived in the same 767 that had flown them to Paris. Several ministers and a clutch of Iraqi journalists and photographers were on board.

During our descent into Tehran, one of Talabani's junior aides came down the aisles, handing each person a form to sign. It was printed in Arabic, and,



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Saddam, he said, "was very polite. Especially with us. He came to the door to receive us and he kissed us. He was very friendly in the meeting." The talks unravelled, but not before Talabani exchanged what he called "tough words" with Tariq Aziz, the Deputy Prime Minister, about Halabja. When he met Saddam afterward, Talabani said, Saddam apologized for Aziz's lack of manners and, without expressing further regret, said, "I understand your feelings about Halabja and Anfal."

Talabani also met with Saddam's cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid, who is known as Chemical Ali because of his role in the attacks. (Majid is now on trial in Baghdad. In a tape played in court, he

is heard discussing his plans to use chemical weapons; in another, he calls Talabani "wicked and a pimp because he even wants a truce for one day in order to depict himself as a savior of the Kurds.") In the meeting, according to Talabani, Majid told him, "You are exaggerating—

the number killed in Anfal is not a hundred and eighty-two thousand, it is only a hundred and six thousand." Talabani laughed.

"Fighting is not playing Ping-Pong," Talabani said. "Fighting is killing each other. When we were fighting Saddam Hussein, we killed them, they killed us. It's something ordinary. It's war. And when we stop the war both killers sit down to receive each other. And this happens all over the world. Mao, he sat down with Chiang Kai-shek! Chiang Kai-shek killed his wife. His son! And thousands and thousands of Communists. But when the time came to talk peace they must sit down with each other. This is the process of life."

As the Kurdish "safe haven" developed into a "no fly zone" policed by U.S. and British warplanes—a de-facto Kurdish autonomous zone, beyond the authority of Saddam Hussein—Barzani and Talabani fought for preeminence. One dispute was over revenues from oil smuggling.

"Jalal is at his best when he is down, and is prone to making mistakes when he is up," a longtime friend of Talabani's told me. "In 1991, he was emerging as a statesman of the Kurds, internationally renowned. Instead of moving to become the nation builder that he was supposed to be, he moved into battle, playing with fire, undermining all that he built. He would not like me to say this: he is a risk taker, perhaps even a gambler."

In 1994, a civil war broke between the armies of Talabani and Barzani. In the midst of the fighting, Talabani provided a base for a C.I.A. task force, and for Ahmed Chalabi, the Iraqi exile leader, who were involved in various failed coup plots. Talabani launched an offensive against Saddam's forces, but it also failed. Hundreds of people died in these efforts. Talabani continued fighting Barzani, who at one point, astoundingly, invited Saddam's Army into the north.

When President Clinton signed the Iraq Liberation Act, in 1998, promising American support for Iraqi opposition groups, Talabani and Barzani went to Washington and settled their differences. By then, ten thousand or more Kurds from both sides had been killed. "They fought, they literally fought—and with so many casualties," Rubaie said. "But now they are friends."

Kurdish history suggests that nothing is permanent, however. When I asked a close friend of Talabani's if the days of fratricidal violence would return, he said that he couldn't rule it out.

For some in Washington, giving the Kurds an independent homeland in the north and the Shiites a home in the

south, leaving the Sunnis in the center—dividing Iraq into three parts—has come to seem like a way out of a civil war. The leading advocate of this view is Peter Galbraith, a former State Department official, who in "The End of Iraq," a book published last year, wrote that "every Kurd I know wants an independent Kurdistan." (In a 2005 referendum, ninety-eight per cent of Kurds in the autonomous region voted for independence.)

"He is sometimes writing wishful thinking," Talabani said of Galbraith. "If he says that there is no Kurd who does not want to see an independent Kurdistan, in some way it's true. But there is not, I think, a realistic Kurdish leader who would say, 'We want independence.' Why? Because it is impossible.

"Let me tell you: I am a socialist"—he paused at that self-description and added, "in my opinion"—"but I think it is impossible to create a socialist society now in Iraq. Let us imagine that Iraqi Kurdistan declared independence, and Iran, Syria, Turkey, and Iraq didn't fight it but just closed their borders. How could we live? Let us say, we've got our oil—how could we export it?" He went on, "And you can

be sure that if Kurdistan declares independence Iran will attack, Turkey will attack, Syria will attack—and Iraq will not accept it. We cannot resist all these countries."

Later, Galbraith told me that although he knew that Talabani wanted independence, it would be "suicidal" now. He added, "It's also true that he is serving the Kurdish cause by being President of Iraq. First, by helping to keep the authority the Kurds now enjoy, and, second, by being an outsized player in Iraq, he can better promote the Kurdish cause."

Talabani seems to share that view. "Before, we were faced by Arab anger," he told me. "But now, when Arabs themselves are asking, 'Please send peshmerga, send Kurdish forces to calm down the area,' we must reply. Nowadays, they feel the Kurds are their protectors."

Indeed, according to an official who attended an emergency security meeting in late November—convened after a quintuple car bombing killed more than two hundred Shiite civilians—Mahmoud al-Mashadani, the Sunni speaker of parliament, asked Talabani to bring peshmerga to Baghdad.

At the meeting, Maliki complained that the Americans were not giving him enough control over security. His troops didn't even have heavy machine guns, because the Americans wouldn't let them.

"My dear brother Maliki," Talabani said, according to the participant, "we are all with you, and we will try and work with our American friends. And don't worry—we can try to get you heavy weapons secretly." When he said this, Talabani put a finger over his mouth and said, theatrically, "Sh-h-h."

When the bipartisan Iraq Study Group's report was published, on December 6th, Talabani was incensed.

Among other things, the report called for increased American involvement in the Iraqi Army's military operations and central government control over Iraq's oil revenues (it said that regional deal-making was incompatible with national reconciliation). Talabani called the report "unfair" and "unjust"; he compared it to terms imposed on a "colony."

One recommendation that Talabani had no problem with was that President Bush begin direct talks with Syria and Iran. "It is in our interest that relations between the U.S. and Iran about Iraq be at least normal, and if they have other differences let them take them to other parts of the world," he had told me a couple of weeks earlier. He was about to leave for his delayed trip to Iran, which he was coordinating with Maliki and others in the government. He was also keeping the Americans informed. "One thing I must tell you," he said. "We never hide our relation with Iran from America."

When I asked Khalilzad about Talabani's initiatives with Iran, he said, cautiously, that they could potentially be useful, but added, "I know he has good relations with the Iranians, a long history of dealing with them. But I think on Iran he is a little too optimistic in his comments and a little too optimistic about the Iranians' performance and their intentions. I am more suspicious of them. I think that he actually is, too, because he knows them very well."

The Iraqis are aware that their country is not the only concern the U.S. has with Iran—there is also Iran's nuclear program and its support for Hezbollah and Hamas. The senior Shiite security official said that even if Talabani won concessions the U.S. would have to follow up with negotiations, because Iran "will take advantage of this and try to impose the nuclear issue on them. But this is their issue, between them."

One senior Kurdish official told me that Iran had to be "shown that Iraq and the U.S. don't come to the table empty-handed. They need to be hit back in the same way, though their ethnic minorities." He named several groups, including the Azeris, the Baluchis, and, of course, the Kurds. He said that I should pay attention to the Kurdistan Free Life Party, an Iranian Kurdish group that has staged guerrilla attacks inside Iran and has reportedly received covert U.S. support. (The Pentagon declined to comment.) "It's operating out of Mam Jalal's territory in Kurdistan," he said.

Tehran was cold and gray on November 27th, when Talabani and his entourage arrived in the same 767 that had flown them to Paris. Several ministers and a clutch of Iraqi journalists and photographers were on board.

During our descent into Tehran, one of Talabani's junior aides came down the aisles, handing each person a form to sign. It was printed in Arabic, and,

assuming it was an official landing document of some sort, I did so, whereupon he handed me a thick envelope and moved on. Inside were twenty hundred-dollar bills. After we landed, I asked the aide why he had given me money, and he said it was "a gift from the President." I thanked him, but said that I could not accept it, and handed the envelope back. He looked very confused.

A senior aide translated my explanations about "journalistic ethics," which left the man looking only more mystified. The senior aide then opened his own envelope and, whistling, counted out fifty hundred-dollar bills. "I think he's given me the same amount as the ministers," he exclaimed. "He does this from his own pocket, you know." He said that, on each trip, Talabani gives money to all those on board, including the bodyguards, the flight attendants, and the pilot. We calculated that during the one-hour flight Talabani had given away about a hundred thousand dollars.

In Tehran, Talabani was ushered into a black Mercedes limousine while the rest of us were driven in smaller cars. As we made our way through the city, the contrast with Baghdad was striking. There were no armed soldiers or blast walls and security barricades to negotiate; instead, we drove through street after street of brightly lit stores with neon signs; the sidewalks were full of people, casually window-shopping or running errands. But what most caught the attention of the Iraqis was the large number of women and girls out on the street; the sight of women in public has become a rarity in Baghdad. A couple of the men in my car became rambunctious, taking snapshots of women with their camera phones.

The next morning, Talabani awoke early and visited the tomb of Ayatollah Khomeini. Then he met with President Ahmadinejad and the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Sources close to Talabani told me that in their talks he requested a reversal in Iran's policy—specifically, that Iran's leadership "control" Sadr's militia and ally itself instead with his government, and that it persuade its allies and proxies, including Syria, Hamas, and Hezbollah, to do the same. Talabani then asked that Iran open up communications with the mul-

tinational forces in Iraq, and cooperate with the Iraqi and U.S. governments in their security plan for Baghdad. And, perhaps most controversial from the Americans' point of view—assuming that they knew about it—Talabani proposed that Tehran and Baghdad exchange intelligence, and that Iran help train and equip Iraq's security forces.

One of the Iraqis who attended the meeting said that Talabani told Khamenei that Iraq was "at a make-or-break point and needed Iran's help." He went on, "The Supreme Leader said that he understood and would do everything he could. In return, he wanted the Iraqis to

take more control over their own security from the Americans."

The officials in Talabani's entourage felt that the talks were going well. One told me that, as Talabani spoke about the violence in Iraq, Khamenei had repeatedly said, "Oh, how terrible, we are praying for you." Finally, Talabani interrupted him: "What we need is not prayers, we need medicine," to which Khamenei replied, "I will provide the prayers and he"—he gestured toward Ahmadinejad—"will provide the medicine."

Later, at a press conference, Ahmadinejad said, "Iraq is like a wounded hero." Talabani, standing next to him, said, smiling, "We can only hope that he recovers." The crowd laughed; it was a classic Mam Jalal moment. Ahmadinejad added, "The best way to support Iraq is to support its democratically elected government." However disingenuous this may have sounded under the circumstances, Talabani's officials took it as a further sign that the Iranians were prepared to help. They told me it was the first time that the Iranians had explicitly endorsed the current Iraqi government.

An Iraqi minister came up to me afterward, looking enthusiastic, and said, "You see? I told you it was more than symbolic!" After a short pause, the official leaned over and whispered excitedly, "These guys even offered us weapons!" That evening, I asked a senior Iraqi official whether he thought that the Iranians would come through. He said, "Let's see—you never know with these guys."

The official said that he was worried about the "mixed messages" coming from the West. "I emphasized with the

Iranians that they should not just assume that because the Americans were bogged down in Iraq they were incapable of taking action against Iran; I said that they were entirely capable of it."

Later, the official recounted a conversation he had had with the Iranian President: "Ahmadinejad said, 'We are prepared for the worst-case scenario.'" The official said that Ahmadinejad did not seem to be bluffing. "He said that they have been importing food intensively for the past three months, and stockpiling it."

The next afternoon, we departed for Baghdad. One of Talabani's bodyguards was carrying a gift the President had received: a large framed carpet with a likeness of Talabani woven into it.

On December 3rd, Christopher Shays, a Republican congressman from Connecticut, and Ambassador Khalilzad paid Talabani a visit at his mansion in Baghdad. In addition to the usual Kurdish peshmerga units, a small army of U.S. military vehicles and soldiers stood guard outside. Shays, a hale man of sixty, wearing a blue shirt and tie and khaki trousers, had just narrowly won reelection to Congress.

He had been an ardent advocate of the Iraq war in 2003, and was the first U.S. legislator to visit Iraq after the toppling of Saddam. This trip, as he informed Talabani, was his fifteenth. However, after a visit last August, Shays's position on the war changed. He became the first congressional Republican to call for a timetable for the withdrawal of American troops. In October, he called for the resignation of Donald Rumsfeld.

Talabani seemed to want to reassure Shays about the Republicans' losses in the midterm elections. "When Churchill won the Second World War, he didn't win reelection," he said. His son Qubad, who lives in Washington, had told him that there were three main issues in the elections: Iraq, health care, and the economy.

"Well, but the war in Iraq was fifty per cent of it," Shays said. He assumed the tone of a man making a speech. "What I need to leave you with is that Iraq is a big issue; about half of my constituents were against it and the other half were for it. And all people see is killing and torture. They ask, 'What good was getting rid of Saddam Hussein if all we see every day is Sunnis and Shiites killing each other?' It's a question I don't know how to answer."

"The U.S. people basically don't understand that we have our rights now," Talabani said. "We have had three elections. In the north it is free, and in the south there are places where it is stable."

It didn't seem to be the answer Shays was looking for, and, a moment later, Talabani changed course. "Let me be frank," he said. "We need to have more for the Iraqi security forces."

"We do have some obligations," Shays said. "We made some huge mistakes—disbanding your armed forces, for example—but my constituents need to see real progress and real efforts on national reconciliation."

The atmosphere in the room had turned brittle. "We must do these things; it's our duty," Talabani told Shays, with an irritated look. "But this country was ruled by a dictatorship." He then began a disquisition on Saddam's rule.

Shays interrupted him. He told Talabani that there needed to be a timetable to get U.S. troops home. He asked, "If the Shia and the Sunni fighting continues, and if the U.S. leaves by the time of the next election, what will happen to Iraq?"

"I'll tell you," Talabani said. "There will be no Iraq."

Toward the end of the meeting, Shays noted that the campaign for the 2008 Presidential election would soon begin. He was supporting John McCain, and he guessed that it would be Hillary Clinton for the Democrats. "In the campaign, there will be a lot more cautious voices on Iraq," he said. "So

improvements need to be made, but not on Iraq time."

Shays went on, "I grew up studying the greatness of these two great civilizations Egypt and Iraq. We are sensitive to your greatness. We see that you may have more oil than Saudi Arabia, and you have water that could make Iraq the breadbasket of the Middle East. The thing is, we went into Iraq saying Saddam had weapons of mass destruction, and then we said it was because of a vicious dictatorship, but, if my constituents see vicious actions between the people we are supposed to have freed, it becomes very difficult for me."

"I am confident that we can do a lot," Talabani said.

Khalilzad said, "Mr. President, the big question is the sectarian violence."

Talabani repeated that his government was working on it.

It was an odd exchange; Talabani and Shays were like two actors rehearsing a scene but reading from different scripts, neither of which quite fit the moment. At one point, when Shays said that the Iraqis needed to get their house in order, Talabani replied, "It will work if you allow us to build our troops and buy arms and so on—"

"That's your decision," Shays said, interrupting him.

"No, that was your decision," Talabani retorted. "Now it's our decision."

Through December, Talabani seemed to be in suspense about his Iran initiative. He had reason to be uneasy, as it turned out. In raids on December 21st, U.S. soldiers captured several Iranians, including two men staying across from Talabani's mansion, in Hakim's compound. The Americans accused the men of being senior Iranian agents, and claimed to have captured documents outlining preparations for attacks in Iraq. Talabani came forward to say that he was "unhappy" about the arrests and that the men were his "guests." After eight days, the Iranians, who had diplomatic passports, were released from U.S. custody and returned to Iran.

According to an official in Talabani's party, Talabani believed that the agents "were acting according to the spirit" of the understanding that he had reached in Iran. Giving the episode a somewhat

face-saving spin, the official added that Talabani had been shown the captured Iranian documents and had informed the Americans that there was a "mis-translation"—that in fact the documents outlined "a plan to draw the Mahdi Army closer to Badr"—thus persuading the Americans to release the two men.

Then, on January 11th, a day after President Bush said that the U.S. would act forcefully to end Iranian and Syrian interference in Iraq, American commandos raided an Iranian office in Erbil, the Kurdish capital. Five Iranians were

detained, and a firefight nearly broke out between American troops and peshmerga fighters. Barzani vehemently protested the incident, as did Iran. Talabani, who was about to fly to Syria, maintained a discreet silence.

The official in Talabani's party told me that the President had taken offense at the incident in Erbil, especially coming after the one in Baghdad. But then Ambassador Khalilzad came to Sulaimaniya to see Talabani. According to the official, Khalilzad told Talibani to convey to the Syrians, on behalf of the White House, that the U.S. was open to a dialogue. (Khalilzad denies this.) The official added that Talabani's subsequent

reception in Syria was very warm, and left him believing that the Syrians were ready to deal. The official noted that, unlike Iran, which has worked the chaos in Iraq to its strategic advantage, all that Syria had got out of the conflict was hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees.

Saddam Hussein's execution, which came at dawn on December 30th, was a clumsy and brutish affair. As he stood on a scaffold with the noose around his neck, he was taunted by some of his hooded executioners and by spectators. Among the last words that he heard were chants invoking the name of Moqtada al-Sadr. Maliki is said to have vehemently

resisted the arguments of Ambassador Khalilzad, among others, to wait until after the religious festival of Eid al-Adha, which began for Sunnis that day.

At the time of Saddam's hanging, Talabani was in Sulaimaniya. Hours before the execution, he had found the perfect solution to his dilemma concerning the death warrant. "It couldn't have been any better," Hiwa Osman, his media adviser, explained. "He found that in cases of international war crimes the constitution did not give him the authority to alter the court's ruling. In a way, it was a blessing from the sky, and it solved his ethical dilemma."

As for Talabani's reaction to the exe-

cution, Osman said, "Remember what he did in Paris when the death sentence was announced, and he went into his bedroom for an hour or so? This time, it lasted three or four days. No one saw him." ♦

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# The painful shift towards reality in Turkey



Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Turkey with its sizable and restive Kurdish population has had a reoccurring nightmare since 1923 going to great lengths to quell any notion of Kurdish nationalism or liberalism.

However, almost with a touch of irony and inevitability that same fear was realised on their doorsteps in 1991. Iraqi Kurds have seldom looked back, excelling economically and politically as their autonomous region has grown in strategic standing. Turkey has had great difficulty dealing with a de-facto independent Kurdish state as its neighbour with the oxymoronic reality of denial of Kurds at home.

Despite ominous threats and 'red lines' been frequently set by the Turkish authorities since 2003, Turkey has had to bitterly sway itself to a new reality.

Not only does Kurdish nationalism and self-rule exist only a few miles from the

mystical borders of Ataturk but it is also flourishing, gaining power and respectability and more worryingly growing rapidly in prominence and influence. De-facto rights and existence has now been enshrined into a new Iraqi constitution with a kingmaker role in parliament and a firm place as the idyllic and prosperous 'other Iraq'.

More ominously, with the Kurdish grip on the much coveted and oil-rich Kirkuk and practical control of the city by Kurds powerful militia, what was a headache for Turkey could result in the creation of a Kurdish 'monster' that they feel could readily swallow a chunk of Turkey.

However, logical actions to prevent such a reality are thin if not finite. A much-touted Turkish invasion of northern Iraq would be disastrous politically ending any chance of Turkey entering the EU and

certainly militarily as a clash with powerful Kurdish forces on either side of the border will be more ill fated than the current insurgency against the US.

Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution advocates a normalisation of Kirkuk followed by a referendum to determine the cities final status with the elections heavily tipped in Kurdish favours.

Both politicians and military leaders in Turkey have been quick in warning Kurds and pressuring the US and Iraqi government for a delay in the referendum and spelling out the disastrous circumstances that will engulf neighbours if Kurds gain control of Kirkuk.

Furthermore, Turkey has been at odds with the US over much promised action against PKK guerrillas in the Qandil mountains and has threatened unilateral action on numerous occasions. The US understandably has been very reluctant to drag the only stable part of Iraq into a new quagmire.

However, there are signs of a growing shift between politicians and military men, long the dominating factors in Turkish society with indications that Turkish deep state syndrome is changing.

With weakening powers already from EU reform, a peaceful resolution to the PKK dilemma would serve a blow to their dependency and influence in Turkey.

Different stances were clearly highlighted by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's recent efforts to engage Iraqi Kurdish powers in direct dialogue to resolve PKK and other issues. This was not well received by General Yasar Buyukanit, chief of the Turkish General Staff, who refused to engage with 'supporters' of the PKK but stated politicians were free to do so.

The drive to bolster diplomatic initiatives was endorsed by Turkey's top security body, acknowledging the current aggressive stance was only causing bitter feuds with the Iraqi Kurds.

The KRG has long been bold in its stance to Turkey, adamant that ties should be based on mutual respect but welcomed the idea of forming bilateral and expressed their readiness for joint cooperation.

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