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**IRAQ:
THE GENERAL ELECTIONS ARE REVIVING TENSION
BETWEEN SHIITE AND SUNNI ARABS**

As the Iraqi general elections are due to take place on 7 March, the election campaign has been going full swing all month long as the contesting coalitions were at last fully formed.

The State of Law, the list lead by Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, brings together, in addition to his own Dawa Party, various groups going from Sunni Arab tribal leaders to independent public figures, Christians and Shiite Kurds. His political line appears secular and

his programme is essentially centred, as during the Provincial elections in January 2009, on the issues of security and the struggle against terrorism, as well as on a stronger State and reliable public services. This discourse had an undeniable success in the Iraqi Provincial Elections. Since then, however, the latest terrorist attacks on Baghdad have possibly blemished his record.

The National Iraqi Alliance is the Shiite list that rivals al-Maliki. It brings together the Supreme

Islamic Council of Iraq, the largest Shiite party, as well as public figures from other factions like Moqtada al-Sadr, former Prime Minister Jaffari and Ahmed Chalabi, formerly the USA's favourite political leader prior to 2003, as well as a few Sunni leaders.

On the Sunni Arabs side, the principal list is the *Iraqiyya* list, led by former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, a former Baath official of Shiite origin. Its ranks also include the present Iraqi Vice-President,

the Sunni Arab Tareq al-Hashemi as well as another Sunni Arab, Saleh al-Mutlaq, whose links with the Baath provoked heated protests from other Iraqi parties until several other candidates were banned from standing. Their programme is above all a nationalist one.

The Iraqi Unity list is led by the present Minister of the Interior, Shiite Jawad al-Bolani, a Sunni tribal leader Ahmed abu-Risha and Abdul Ghafur al-Samaaim who leads another Sunni Arab movement. As with the *Iraqiyya* list, several of its members were banned by the Electoral Commission for their links with the former Baath party.

The Iraqi Islamic Party and some tribal chiefs make up the Concord Front list, led by Ayad al-Samarrai, the Iraqi Parliament's Speaker. This had been the principal Sunni Arab coalition in 2005, when most Sunni Arabs boycotted the elections, but its membership has since melted away.

On the Kurdish side, several parties are standing this time and the united front of the Kurdistan Region is jeopardised by the rivalry between the Kurdistan Alliance, which brings together the KFP and the PUK and the new Gorran Party, a break away from the PUK. However their differences are moreover power sharing inside the Region and the handling of Kurdish issues. On the major Iraqi-Kurdish issues like Kirkuk their views are practically identical and the election campaign in Kurdistan is quite independent of that in Iraq.

The banning of hundreds of Sunni candidates (about 450) considered too close to Baathist circles at first stirred up the political scene in Iraq, the banned politicians taking the matter to court. This "black list" had been vigorously chal-

lenged in Sunni Arab circles that accused the Shiite government of using this legal weapon to neutralise the main rival lists. Nor were the Americans in favour of this because of the political tensions that could ensue and fearing a return of the "Sunni insurrection" in Iraq. Similarly the Iraqi Election High Commission considered striking off so many candidates as too hasty, and demanded that their real links with Saddam's old party be carefully examined by the courts. The President of Iraq, Jalal Talabani's views were close to this position — he proposed that the disputed candidates be authorised to stand but that they should not be allowed to hold any official positions until they had been cleared of the charges against them — a position finally adopted by the Election High Commission.

However, the opposition to these suspect candidates was not abated in public opinion especially in Shiite circles and on 8 February hundreds of demonstrators opposed this decision with slogans like: "No to the Baath Party" and "The return of the Baath = the return of mass graves".

Finally, of the 450 candidates who would later have to prove they had no links with the Baath, only 37 did, in fact, present their cases to the courts. Moreover the majority had already been replaced by other candidates on their lists — none of those banned carried any political weight.

Since 2005, the Kurds have been looked on as "kingmakers" in Baghdad arbitrating between the two main Arab camps of Sunni and Shiite Moslems as their support was indispensable for any Iraqi coalition to be able to govern, as Shores Hajji, of the Gorran party confirms: "No one can become Prime Minister without Kurdish support since he would have to be either a

Sunni Arab or a Shiite Arab. Since they can't stand one another, we will always be the determining factor in holding the scales".

However Kurdish-Arab relations are very tense because of issues such as the Status of the Peshmergas in Iraq, management of hydrocarbon resources and the contracts signed with foreign companies but above all over Kirkuk.

However, as Joost Hiltermann, Middle East Assistant Director of the International Crisis Group (ICG), explains: "I think that there will be very tough negotiations but I don't think the Arab parties will let the Kurds join the opposition — it would be too dangerous".

Even the division between the two competing Kurdish lists will not change this state of affairs, according to Gala Riani, an analyst with Global Insight Middle-East (HIS): "Even though they campaign on different lists, when it comes to having problems with the Federal Government they have always succeeded in rallying and displaying a unity that, internally, is perhaps absent".

In this campaign, the Kurdish parties and the other Iraqi parties are only competing against one another in the regions covered by Article 140 of the Constitution, which Irbil government is claiming should be attached to Kurdistan. The main stake, of course is Kirkuk, where Arab Sunni, Arab Shiite and Turcoman are confronting one another. Facing them, the Kurdistan Alliance is also being attacked on its own ground by Gorran, the new protest movement in the Kurdistan Region, which does not hide its ambition to win this province. It is attacking the Kurdistan Alliance in the subject of the fight against corruption, improvement of public services as well as that of employment, this

trying to rake in some non-Kurdish votes: *"Many towns in Kurdistan need improvement, but Kirkuk most of all. Look round you—nothing is working. The parties in office have abandoned the people. Now everyone is suffering: the Kurds, the Turcomen, the Arabs, the Christians—everyone"*, states Anna Khanaqa, Gorran party candidate there.

The same themes are dealt with by

the Kurdistan Alliance, covering improvement in water and electricity and other services. The list has the active support, in this town, of Jalal Talabani, who is a native of Kirkuk and leader of the PUK. According to his party's spokesman, Muhammad Osman, he intends staying in the town throughout the campaign. Like its Kurdish rival, the Alliance is trying to win Arab and Turcoman votes.

Inter-ethnic assembling is, in any case, a general trend in Kirkuk for these elections, the Arab and Turcoman parties are also calling on Kurdish and Christian electors to vote for them, but under major national lists such as Allawi's. This is a break from previous elections when the province's Arabs and, especially the Turcomen, had formed their own local lists, which had weakened them.

KURDISTAN: TWO COMPETING LISTS

The election campaign in the Kurdistan Region was dominated by the rivalry between the Kurdistan Alliance and the new Gorran Party. The other Kurdish parties standing, like the Islamism and other micro parties, had been unable to agree so as to form coalitions of any weight.

Unlike the Kurdistan Regional parliamentary elections of July 2009, these had both a local character, since it was an opportunity for Gorran to confirm its position in Kurdistan, but also a national one since this division might have some impact on the Kurds' influence in Baghdad. Opinions of outside analysts are divided on this point. Thus according to Joost Hiltermann (International Crisis Group) this political rivalry could weaken the Kurds in the Iraqi Parliament because, whereas the smaller Kurdish parties, like the Socialist Party or even the Islamic parties formerly rallied round the Kurdistan Alliance during debates in the Iraqi Parliament, the disagreements between Gorran and the PUK do not augur well for a united Kurdish line on all questions such as the re-election of Jalal Talabani as national President.

On the other hand, Wayne Wright, former Assistant Director of the Middle-East-S-E Asia Department

of the US Information and Research Office, considers that the competition between the two main Kurdish parties will not necessarily reduce their position but *"could diversify and strengthen their popular base inside the KRG"*. On the issue of Gorran's support for Jalal Talabani's Presidency, while Wayne Wright thinks that too aggressive an election campaign between Talabani's supporters and Nawshirwan's could undermine Kurdish influence in Baghdad he stresses, nevertheless, that it would be unwise of both the Sunni and Shiite Arabs to remove the Presidency from the Kurds.

He recalls that Jalal Talabani has played an indispensable role in easing communal tension and has been able to be seen as a symbol of national unity. Wayne Wright also suggests that it is precisely his involvement in broader Iraqi affairs and his distancing himself from Kurdish grass-roots issues that has contributed to the defection of some of the Kurdish electorate.

Another major question mark regarding the election campaign in Kurdistan concerns the possibility of violence between factions, especially in Suleimaniyah where, during the Region's parliamentary elections last July, supporters of Gorran and of the PUK had sometimes clashed sharply, but without

any bloodshed. Since relations between the two parties have not improved, some people again express fears that demonstrations and meetings might turn into armed conflict.

To forestall any such outbursts, the Kurdish authorities set up a curfew in Suleimaniyah Province, with the agreement of the Iraqi Election High Commission. This decision was taken after three Gorran supporters were injured by gunfire. Their party accused pro-PUK police forces, alleging they had attacked its members. The curfew was immediately criticised by the opposition party, which saw it as a PUK manoeuvre to prevent it from campaigning.

For its part, the Suleimaniyah Security Committee denies Gorran's version of the incident and points out that the PUK forces had arrested 11 people during the Gorran meeting, but only after 3 others had been wounded by shots fired in the air by other supporters. The PUK also accused Gorran of having thrown stones at a convoy of officials driving through the centre of Suleimaniyah. Ferhad Mollah Rassoul, who heads of the Kurdistan Alliance list has declared that, for his part, he would observe the curfew.

Despite this, for the month as a

whole eleven people are recorded as wounded by bullets and shots were often heard at night, but these were, essentially, shots fired into the air as is often done at meetings — and also at private celebrations. Nevertheless, the curfew did not prevent Suleimaniyah's night life from being fairly lively and it even seems that it encouraged the younger supporters to defy the authorities, as it is not always easy to distinguish between real political protest demonstrations and adolescent games of hide and seek with the police.

In the opinion of Suleimaniyah residents, the tension is greater than in July 2009. Rebwar Karim, who teaches political science at the city's university, explains this by the fact that *"during the previous elections the PUK were unaware of the strength of the opposition. This time it knows what it has to face and the atmosphere is thus more tense"*.

In parallel to the competition between the parties, the representation of minority or socially disadvantaged groups, like the women, within the Baghdad Parliament was the subject of demands of anxiety about their weight in the new Iraqi National Assembly. Thus the women candidates of the Kurdistan Region, though they are strongly represented in the Irbil parliament, considered that their political weight insufficient or even fairly unsubstantial in Baghdad, despite the quota of 25% women, imposed by the Constitution.

During a forum organised in Suleimaniyah on 20 February by the International Institute for Human Rights (USA), a variety of candidates, Iraqi Kurds or Arabs standing for secular parties, debated the political representation of women in Iraq. While they all agreed that the 25% quota helped women to secure some political visibility in Parliament, the majority stressed that there remains much to do with regard to any real exercise of power within the Iraqi State.

"Equality doesn't just mean giving us posts", explained Amal Jamal, a candidate on the Kurdistan Alliance list for Suleimaniyah. *"We need to be included in the decision making process"*.

Bushra al-Ubaidi, candidate on the Iraqi Unity list for Baghdad states that the Iraqi political parties, dominated by men, have a tendency to fill their quotas with unqualified candidates, which then gives them the opportunity of exploiting their incompetence and so keeping control of the management of political and social questions. Thus the 25% quota is sometimes used against the interests of women. In general, she deplored a *"strategy of discouragement"* to dissuade women from getting recognition of their rights.

Some expressed more comments, especially those from religious parties. Thus Dilxwaz Abdullah, from the list of the Islamic Union of Kurdistan, considered that the problems of equality between the

sexes were not specific to Iraq, pointing out that American women only have a 17% representation in the American Congress. However, most of them wished for a strengthening of the laws protecting women and a greater effective equality in society.

Apart from meetings and poster sticking campaigns, Kurdish political life has seized upon a new communication tool, that of Internet social networks like Facebook. Some Kurdish politicians even have their own personal page, like the veteran Kurdish Socialist Mahmud Othman, who has 2000 fans on his site. The President of the Kurdish Socialist Party points out he uses Facebook to reach electors living outside Iraq: *"We cannot travel abroad because of the limited time available for this election campaign. Moreover, using Facebook is the easiest and quickest way to contact Iraqi electors of the diaspora"*, he told the newspaper *Rudaw*.

The Arab lists also use Facebook. The site is thus the field of several virtual confrontations between supporters, whether they live in Iraq, in Kurdistan or abroad. Which is, as experienced Kurdish net surfers admit, is the lesser of two evils: *"You can see many supporters of the Kurdistan and Gorran lists fighting one another on various Facebook pages using foul language"*, summed up Barzan, 24 years of age, who watched the behaviour of supporters of each party for a week. *"However, I'm happy to say that they did not confront each other with guns or knives, and it is just an electronic war on Facebook"*.

PARIS:

A CONFERENCE ON THE "DEMOCRATIC OPENING" IN TURKEY

On 26 February, an international conference took place in Paris at the national Assembly, organised by the Kurdish

Institute and entitled "Turkey: Democratic opening and perspective of joining the European Union". The participants included politicians, academics, well-known

artistic personalities and journalists. The aims of this conference were as follows:

In July last year, the Turkish govern-

ment announced its intention of starting a process for settling the Kurdish question, which, for several decades, has weighed like a millstone on any development of Turkey's domestic and external policies. First called the "Kurdish Opening" then the "Democratic Opening" to include the country's other ethnic and religious minorities (e.g. the Alevis), this initiative aroused hopes amongst those affected but also met strident opposition from the powerful Turkish nationalist forces, particularly the Armed Forces.

This is happening in a turbulent situation in which, for the first time in Turkey's history, some retired generals are being brought to court for their involvement in preparations for military coups d'état together with a vast Turkish criminal network made up of extreme right activists, Army and Gendarmerie officers and also academics and journalists, combined in a Turkish edition of the former Gladio.

At the same time, the Constitutional Court, essentially composed of Kemalist nationalist judges, which recently came close to banning the AKP party — recently re-elected for a second term in office — has gone on to ban the pro-Kurdish DTP party, which was supposed to be the legal Kurdish partner of the government's "democratic opening". The two joint presidents of this party have been stripped of their elected mandate as Members of Parliament. Similarly about twenty mayors, directly elected by popular vote with scores of between 60% and 70% have been arrested, handcuffed and thrown into jail.

It is in this period of tension and confusion that the city of Istanbul has been chosen as Europe's 2010 cultural capital, while the 15 to 18 million Kurds of Turkey, as well as the country's other minorities of which Turkey

is composed, are still awaiting cultural recognition, protection of their material heritage and their right to free expression.

Over an above the effects of this announcement, the Kurdish Institute of Paris is proposing to analyse the real changes that have occurred in the areas of Human Rights, fundamental freedoms and on the present lot of the Kurds. What are the hopes and perspectives for the process of democratising the Turkish regime?

In view of Turkey's application to join the European Union, this question is of the greatest interest to the citizens of France of Europe. It deserves to be the subject of public and plural discussion.

The conference being organised by the Kurdish Institute proposes to highlight these issues by giving the floor both to public figures and experts from Turkey, including members of Parliament from the governing AKP party and the recently banned pro-Kurdish DTP, as well as to European Members of Parliament and specialists with a variety of viewpoints, so as to contribute to providing public opinion with a wide range of information.

The first panel covered the Human Rights situation in Turkey. The moderator was Yavuz Onen, former President of the Foundation for human Rights in Turkey and former President of Turkey's Union of Architects' and Engineers' Chambers. The speakers were Murat Bilge, Professor at Bilgi University, Istanbul, President of the Helsinki Citizens Association; Dr. Necdet Ipekyuz, former President of the Diyarbakir Chamber of Medicine; Mrs. Zubeyde Kiliç, President of the National Education Union of Turkey (Egitim-Sen); and Mrs. Nadire Mater, journalist at Bianet.

The second panel was entitled "What is the democratic opening?", presided by Hamit Bozarslan, Professor Political Science at the *Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales* (EHESS). It included Dr. Tarik Ziya Ekinçi, former Member of Parliament for Diyarbakir; Dr. Gencay Gursoy, President of the Turkish Union of Chambers of Medicine; the musician Sivan Perwer and Reso Zilan, President of the Language and Literature Department of the Paris Kurdish Institute.

The panel on "Democratic Opening and the new Turkish diplomacy" was presided by Mr. Gérard Chaliand, a writer and expert in geopolitics. After screening the videoed contribution of Fuad Hussein, Chief of staff of the Kurdistan Region Presidency, the panel heard Mrs. Bejanmatur, journalist on the Turkish daily Zaman; Marc Semo, a journalist on the French daily Libération; Jonathan Randal, former correspondent of the Washington Post and Dorothee Schmid, in charge of the Contemporary Turkey programme of the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI).

Finally the last discussion tried to foresee the perspectives of this "Democratic Opening". Moderated by Kendal Nezan, President of the Paris Kurdish Institute, the panel included Bayram Bozyel, President of the Party of Law (HAKPAR); Bernard Dorin, ambassador of France, Mir Dengir Firat, former Vice-President of the justice and Development Party (AKP and Altan Tan, a journalist and writer. A videoed message from Osman Baydemir, Mayor of Diyarbakir was also screened.



SYRIA:

THE OPPOSITION IS DIVIDED ON THE ISSUE OF KURDISH AUTONOMY

On 12 February, the House of Lords (Great Britain) the government was questioned about the situation of the Kurds in Syria, on the discriminations from which they are suffering as citizens and the bans on their cultural and linguistic rights.

The House also questioned the legality of the arrest of four Kurdish members of a political party, the Yekiti, namely: Hassan Ibrahim Saleh, Mohammed Mustafa, Maruf Mulla Ahmed and Anwar Nasso, on the grounds that they had expressed the wish for autonomy of Syria's Kurdish regions and, in general, on the large number of arrests of Kurdish activists and students in Syria since 2002. Amongst these are Dilbixwin Osey Hamdin, a student at Derbassieh, arrested on 16 August 2009 and Hevraz Amin Hassan, a student at Qamishlo, arrested on 14 December 2009.

According to the Minister of State of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead, the British Foreign Office had raised the Kurdish question during a meeting with his Syrian opposite number, and had expressed his concern about the situation of Kurds in Syria. *"My colleagues in Damascus are in regular contact with the defenders of human rights in Syria and are watching the situation closely, including the rights of citizens and linguistic rights"*.

Lady Kinnock of Holyhead also recalled that the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ivan Lewis, had considered, during a debate in Westminster Hall on 24 August 2009, that Kurdish rights were still not guaranteed by the Syrian Constitution and that the annual report on Human Rights of his Ministry for

2008 had paid particular attention to the rights of Syrian Kurds.

The Minister of State recognised, in her reply to the Lords, that the Syrian legal system needed to be reformed, especially the Syrian Supreme Court, where lawyers only see their clients on the day of the trial itself for half an hour, and where they have neither the right to plead or even to call witnesses. Finally the defence cannot appeal against sentences passed.

Two days later, on 14 February, the Syrian Committee for Human Rights announced the death under torture of a Kurdish detainee in Aleppo Prison. The man was Mohammed Musto Rasid, a native of Afrin. Imprisoned for the last four months, he had been subjected to severe ill treatment before being sent to Aleppo Hospital for four days. Sent back to detention, he died on 19 January last. The reason for his arrest and detention have never been explained by the authorities and the Syrian Committee is not even in a position to say whether this had any connection with political activities.

Sentences, even for short terms of imprisonment and often for fairly trivial reasons, have multiplied this month against members of the Yekiti party, in what seems to be a tactic of harassment. On 16 February, Hassan Saleh, a member of its Political Committee, was sentenced in absentia to a term of a year's imprisonment (commuted to 8 months by the judge) for membership of a secret and banned organisation and for incitement to sectarian and race hatred. The Qamshilo Army judge also sentenced Shahbaz Nazir Ismail and Siwar Abdul Rahman Darwish to six months imprisonment (commuted to 4 months) for being in possession of Yekiti publications.

On 18 February, two Kurds from Amude were arrested by the Qamshilo security forces for no known reason and kept in detention. They are Montasir Ahmad Khalaf, a photographer and owner of a café and Alan Ahmed Hussein, a florist.

On the same day, Mohammed Salih Khalid, a member of the Political Committee of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria appeared before the Aleppo Army Court. He was accused of membership of a secret organisation by virtue of Article 288 of the Syrian Penal Code. His trial was finally postponed to 25 March.

Born in Afrin, in 1953, Mohammed Salih, who now lives in Damascus, was arrested on 11 November 2009 by the Army Security and detained in that service's Palestine branch in Damascus, before being transferred to Aleppo.

Moreover the recent statement of 4 members of the Yekiti party, wishing for autonomy in the Kurdish regions of Syria has strongly agitated the Syrian opposition.

Last December, indeed, during the party's congress, some members of the Political Committee had declared that the solution to the Kurdish problem in Syria was through some form of autonomous government. These members were arrested soon after, but this statement has split the common platform, called the "Damascus Umbrella", formed in 2005 to bring together the various opposition parties and movements in Syria, whether Kurdish or Arab, Islamist or secular. The Arab parties vigorously condemned the proposal made by those Kurds, that they described as "untimely" and "separatist".

However Fuad Aliko, Tekiti's General Secretary, retorted that the Kurds of Syria had the legitimate right to manage their own affairs and to enjoy autonomy so long as this did not harm the country's territorial integrity. Fuad Aliko quoted as an example Turkey's "opening" regarding the Kurdish question and the case of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq, which he considered models for resolving the Kurdish problem in Syria.

This is the first time in the political history of the Kurds in Syria that autonomy has been openly proposed and this new step has provoked the irritation of some Arab movements who are disin-

clined to see the Kurds as anything other than a silent minority in Syria. Hassan Abdel-Azim, leader of the Arab Socialist Democratic Union "rejected outright the use of terms such as "Syrian Kurdistan", self-government or any other "separatist" remarks. He added that the opposition groups in Syria sought solutions to the Kurdish problem "within the limits of the unity of Syrian land and its people" adding that he supported the right to the civic equality of the Kurds and their cultural rights.

Faik al-Mir, a member of the Syrian Democratic Party considered, for his part, that "separatist demands" divided and weakened

the opposition: "Today the Syrians need to be in a situation of total unity and solidarity in their struggle to build a free society and a democratic State".

Ever since this Damascus platform of opponents was formed in 2005, its resolutions on Kurdish rights have been limited to vague declarations of intent, so as to avoid offending Arab nationalism. However, according to Fuad Aliko, this rejection is the result of an ignorance of the principle of autonomy by these Arab movements that automatically identify it with separatism. He said he was "disappointed" by these reactions, which he compared with the intransigence of the Syrian Baath.

TURKEY:

A WAVE OF HEAVY PRISON SENTENCES AND ARRESTS IN KURDISH CIRCLES

Two Kurdish publishers in Turkey are facing heavy prison sentences to 21 years and 525 years respectively for "separatist propaganda".

On 11 February, the fifth Chamber of the Diyarbakir Assize Court sentenced *in absentia* Ozan Kilinc, owner of the newspaper *Azadiya Welat* to 21 years and three months for "propaganda in favour of a terrorist organisation", that is for having published reports and photos of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and its imprisoned leader Abdullah Ocalan in June 2009. He was also found guilty of membership of "a terrorist organisation".

This sentence was condemned by a variety of organisations for the defence of the press. The Director of the International Press Institute (IPI), David Dudge, described this prison sentence as "unacceptable", deploring that "too often the authorities in Turkey or elsewhere use the anti-terrorist laws just to restrict freedom of the press". In its annual

report the IPI had already criticised the Turkish Government for its attempts to muzzle the press by using verbal attacks, disproportionate fines and the use of Articles of the law to sue journalists.

Reporters sans Frontières, for its part declared that: "freedom of expression must be extended, once and for all, to all the pro-Kurdish press. The disproportion between the facts with which he is charged — the expression of opinion that can be opposed — and the sentence passed is striking. It is not by banishing the democratic expression of minority demands that the Turkish Republic will be able to overcome extremist violence".

However, on 23 February, an even more outrageous sentence was passed on Vedat Kursun, former director of the same paper, who has been held in detention for the last 13 months and charged with "glorifying the crimes of criminals" and with "having helped the Kurdistan Workers' Party in its propaganda".

The Public prosecutor, in fact,

called for 525 years imprisonment for a total of 105 charges against the newspaper *Azadiya Welat* for "terrorist" propaganda and the fact that it had described Abdullah Ocalan as a "leader of the Kurdish people".

Founded in 1994, the weekly *Azadiya Welat* became a daily in 2006 and has often been the target of legal actions, being regularly accused of being the press organ and mouthpiece of the PKK.

In any case, the month of February has been very tense, with many demonstrations and arrests because of commemorations of Ocalan's capture, which took place on 15 February 1999. All gatherings were violently repressed by the police, as in Diyarbakir, where 3,000 people tried to march through the town centre, braving the tear gas and water canons. Other protesters replied with setting up street barricades and setting tyres alight.

Similar violence occurred in

Istanbul, where a busy road was blocked by demonstrators.

Some days before the anniversary date, police raids and roundups took place in Kurdish political circles, with hundreds of arrests, mainly aimed at the pro-Kurdish BDP party. The dragnets took place in the towns of Hakkari, Diyarbakir, Van, Siirt, Batman, Mardin, Gaziantep, Urfa and Mus, as well as at Istanbul and Adana, Turkish cities with a concentration of Kurds.

Finally, many cases of minors being arrested, some of whom were severely sentenced for "terrorism", have been widely reported in the Turkish and international press.

Thus a young 15-year-old Kurdish girl, arrested during a demonstra-

tion in Batman, in support of the DTP last October, was sentenced to 8 years jail. The Diyarbakir Court found him guilty of membership of an illegal organisation (the DTP that had just been banned!), of shouting slogans, throwing stones at the police, of having taken part in illegal meetings and demonstrations, and of propaganda in favour of a banned organisation. Berivan, however, denied having taken part in the demonstration, stating that he had just stopped, on his way back from visiting his aunt, and looked on out of curiosity. During her detention, after being beaten, she signed a confession to all these charges. When Berivan's mother heard the sentence she exclaimed: "has she killed anyone? Even murderers get lighter sentences!". There are 83 other children imprisoned in Diyarbakir, arrested in

similar circumstances and charged with similar offenses. According to the Turkish Association for Human Rights (IHD) the total number of minors sued for having taken part in demonstrations, thrown stones or Molotov cocktails at the police is about 3,000. As they are charged under the "anti-terrorist" laws they all face very heavy prison sentences — between 20 and 24 years. Indeed, since 2006 Turkish law has allowed the trying of minors in the same way as adults, as the lawyer Canan Atabay explained to the French daily *Figaro*: "Some are sentenced to twenty years jail without any reduction of sentence. It seems a total farce to pass such sentences for throwing stones, whereas the whole future of these children is at stake. The whole legal arsenal has to be revised from top to bottom".

CULTURE: THEATRE PROJECTS AND RECONSTRUCTION IN IRAQ

The Network for Cultural Reconstruction in Iraq, a German NGO, has started several projects for theatrical activity in Iraq and in Kurdistan, in partnership with several German institutions and organisations or Berlin theatres. In an interview given to the paper *Deutsche Welle*, one of its officers, Ihsan Othman, explained that, from its origins, the Iraqi Kurdistan theatre was a form of resistance to the dictatorship, as well as a cultural movement, since the Kurds, as an oppressed ethnic group, also used this means of self expression.

Since 2006, Ihsan Othman, in cooperation with the Theaterhaus Mitte, IT Germania and the Goethe Institute has concentrated his cultural assignment in Iraq, and especially in Iraqi Kurdistan, on the theatre, in the context of cultural

exchanges. The first project was "The young girl and Death" by the Chilean author, Ariel Dorman (1990), that dealt with the torture to which political prisoners were subjected in Latin America. The second project was an adaption of a play by Samuel Beckett "Waiting for Godot" renamed "Waiting for the rain", and the last play the put on was entitled "The women's Hammam".

"We have worked with these plays with four groups and have acted them in German, Arabic, Kurdish, Turkish and Persian", explained Ihsan Othman.

Last year, the works of Bertolt Brecht and Heiner Mueller were also used for theatre projects. Asked if such authors and their plays could find any echo in contemporary Iraq and its public, Ihsan Othman replied positively:

"Of course, because I think these themes are universal. Brecht did not write about local themes, even though a local theme can be understood in a universal way. When you see what Heiner Mueller or Brecht wrote, most of their subjects are located elsewhere, inspired by far off countries. For example, we have taken some scenes from the Caucasian Chalk Circle or Mother Courage, which are stories of events in foreign countries, in places like Russia, Asia or Greece. Brecht, in particular, is an outstanding figure in the history of the theatre in Iraq — and throughout the East, I think. Nearly all the Iraqi theatres know him, as well as Heiner Mueller. Brecht was banned in Iraq for a long time, which is why he, as well as Heiner Mueller, are particularly adapted to a country that has experienced violent wars and has had to rebuild. Heiner Mueller and Brecht will never go out of fashion in the world, especially in countries going through a crisis". (Deutsche Welle)

Dans le nord de l'Irak, Kirkouk reste une poudrière



Policiers irakiens en patrouille dans les rues de Kirkouk. La ville reste sous le contrôle du gouvernement central de Bagdad.

À l'approche des élections législatives de mars, la tension monte dans cette province où coexistent Kurdes, Arabes et Turcomans

KIRKOUK
De notre envoyé spécial

Une détonation courte et sèche retentit. La bombe placée sous un véhicule vient d'exploser à une centaine de mètres du Conseil de province de Kirkouk. Immédiatement, des blindés et des véhicules de police filent en direction de l'attentat et forment un cordon sécuritaire. Cet événement traduit bien la sourde inquiétude qui règne à Kirkouk. À quelques semaines des élections législatives prévues début mars en Irak, chacun redoute une reprise de la violence.

« Si la politique menée actuellement se poursuit, nous allons connaître de graves problèmes », martèle Rakan Saed, le vice-gouverneur arabe. Située à plus de 200 kilomètres au nord de Bagdad, Kirkouk est principalement composée de trois grandes communautés, les Arabes, les Kurdes et les Turcomans, qui se disputent cette province riche

Kirkouk est la première réserve pétrolière du pays. Pour le chef du gouvernement, il n'est donc pas question de la laisser entre des mains kurdes.

en pétrole. Sous Saddam Hussein, les Arabes étaient favorisés, mais, depuis l'invasion américaine en 2003, les « peshmegas » – les militaires kurdes – y ont déployé leurs unités dans le but avoué d'intégrer la province à la région autonome du Kurdistan. Arabes et Turcomans s'y opposent fermement.

Le docteur Karim Najmaldin, candidat kurde pour les prochaines élections législatives, n'en démord pas : « Pour nous, l'enjeu des élections est l'application de

l'article 140 de la Constitution, qui va nous permettre d'organiser un référendum pour faire reconnaître Kirkouk comme une province kurde. Ce sera ma priorité numéro un. »

Hassan Touran, chef d'un parti turcoman, milite, lui, pour que la province ne soit ni kurde ni arabe, mais indépendante. « Il n'est pas possible que les Kurdes obtiennent tout ce qu'ils veulent. Nous devons trouver une solution intermédiaire où chaque partie gagnera et perdra un peu. Pas question d'utiliser les armes. Mais si les Kurdes pensent user de la force alors, nous agirons de la même manière », menace-t-il.

Actuellement, Kirkouk est rattachée au gouvernement central de Bagdad. Autrement dit, elle se trouve sous le contrôle des Arabes. En 2008, Nouri Al Maliki, l'actuel chef du gouvernement, a d'ailleurs renforcé les effectifs militaires autour des sites pétroliers et nommé à la tête des forces locales

le général Zyaid Abdel Amir, qui fut proche du parti Baas de l'ancien dictateur Saddam Hussein.

Kirkouk est la première réserve pétrolière du pays. Il n'est donc pas question pour le gouvernement de la laisser entre des mains kurdes. Saddam Hussein voulait déjà s'en assurer le contrôle. Il avait alors engagé une politique violente d'« arabisation » de la province.

L'enjeu du pétrole

► Kirkouk est la première province où du pétrole a été extrait en Irak. Dès 1927, durant le mandat britannique, l'Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) exploite les champs de Baba Gurgur et Ain Zala. Très rapidement, ils deviennent un enjeu politique. Il est alors décidé que l'IPC partagera 50 % de ses revenus avec le gouvernement irakien. À l'époque de Saddam Hussein, la compagnie est nationalisée. Aujourd'hui, Kirkouk représente 13 % des réserves prouvées en Irak, soit 15 milliards de barils, selon l'International Crisis Group (ICG). En tout, l'Irak possède les troisièmes réserves mondiales d'or noir : 115 milliards de barils.

De nombreux Kurdes avaient été déportés, leurs territoires confisqués, puis donnés à des Arabes. Parfois même, l'origine ethnique de certaines personnes avait été modifiée par la force, d'après Joost Hilterman, chercheur à l'International Crisis Group. En 1988, des villages entiers avaient été rasés et des dizaines de milliers de Kurdes furent assassinés par le régime de Saddam Hussein.

Pour les Kurdes, l'article 140 serait en quelque sorte une réparation des meurtres commis sous la dictature baasiste. Il s'agirait de renvoyer les populations venues du Sud chez elles, en échange d'une compensation financière, d'organiser un recensement, puis un référendum sur le statut de la province. Au cours de ce scrutin, les anciens déportés reconnus pourraient également voter. Dans ce cas de figure, chacun sait que la province choisirait le rattachement au gouver-

nement régional kurde (KRG). À l'évocation de cet article de la Constitution, les yeux de Rakan Saeed se plissent, sa mâchoire se crispe. Puis il affirme: «Cet article n'a aucune valeur, il n'est plus valide.» Mais, pour les Kurdes, il reste légal et Karim Najmaldin met un point d'honneur à vouloir l'appliquer. «Si nous

Un nouveau plan de sécurité prévoit d'intégrer les peshmergas dans des unités mixtes.

n'enregistrons pas de progrès à ce sujet, alors, toutes les options seront ouvertes, dont celle de l'indépendance du Kurdistan.» Une telle pers-

pective engendrerait inévitablement la guerre.

Dans cette bataille politique, les Kurdes semblent prendre l'avantage. Un nouveau plan de sécurité

prévoit d'intégrer les peshmergas dans des unités mixtes au côté des militaires américains et irakiens. Cette initiative provoque la colère des partis arabes et turcomans. En effet, la milice kurde ne devrait pas opérer dans cette province sous contrôle de l'armée nationale. «Tous les jours, il y a des assassinats, des bombes artisanales qui explosent ici, cette mesure nous conduit au conflit», regrette Rakan Saeed. Il y voit aussi un complot: «La présence des peshmergas sera un moyen de contrôler le résultat des élec-

tions législatives et ceci avec l'aide des Américains.»

Mais le Turcoman Hassan Touran se montre plus modéré. «Nous avons déjà connu des problèmes lors des dernières élections, explique-t-il. Nous avons alors créé un comité réunissant tous les partis et finalement nous avons trouvé un terrain d'entente.»

VINCENT VULIN



LES KURDES DE TURQUIE NE POURRONT PAS CHANGER DE PRÉNOM (COUR EUROPÉENNE)

STRASBOURG (Conseil Europe), 2 février 2010 (AFP)

Huit Kurdes de Turquie, qui demandaient le changement de leurs prénoms turcs en kurde en invoquant une discrimination, ont été déboutés mardi par la Cour européenne des droits de l'Homme.

Kemal Taskin et sept autres plaignants d'origine kurde dénonçaient une atteinte à leur vie privée et une discrimination après le refus des tribunaux turcs de changer leurs prénoms, au motif que les prénoms demandés

"contiennent des caractères inconnus de l'alphabet officiel turc".

M. Taskin demandait ainsi que son prénom Kemal soit remplacé par "Dilxwaz", un prénom kurde qui signifie "désiré". D'autres souhaitaient être prénommés Xosewist (auguste) ou encore Berxwedan (résistance).

Leurs demandes furent rejetées en 2004 par les tribunaux turcs car les prénoms choisis contenaient les caractères "q, w ou x" qui ne figurent pas parmi les 29 lettres de l'alphabet officiel énumérées dans la loi.

Les juges de Strasbourg ont estimé que "rien ne donne à penser que les autorités turques auraient agi différemment si la demande d'orthographe avait été émise par des personnes non kurdes", ce qui exonère les autorités turques de l'accusation de discrimination.

Ils ont rappelé mardi leur jurisprudence en matière de changement de nom: "l'Etat jouit d'une large marge d'appréciation et les désagréments et sentiments qui en résulteraient ne sauraient emporter violation de la Convention européenne des Droits de l'Homme".



LE CHEF DES FORCES AMÉRICAINES EN IRAK À ANKARA POUR DISCUTER DU PKK

ANKARA, 2 février 2010 (AFP)

Le chef des forces américaines en Irak, le général Ray Odierno, a affirmé mardi lors d'une visite à Ankara l'engagement des Etats-Unis à coopérer avec la Turquie et l'Irak pour lutter contre les rebelles kurdes de Turquie retranchés dans le nord de l'Irak.

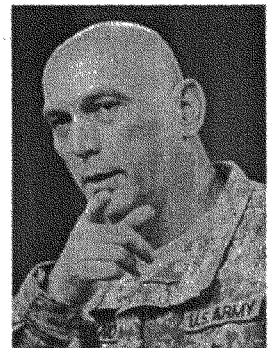
Les rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) utilisent depuis de nombreuses années les montagnes du nord de l'Irak comme bases arrière pour leurs opérations dans le sud-est de la Turquie.

En 2008, la Turquie, l'Irak et les Etats-Unis ont créé un comité tripartite pour coordonner la lutte contre le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, Washington et de nombreux pays.

"Dans ce cadre trilatéral, les Etats-Unis travaillent avec les gouvernements de Turquie et d'Irak (...) pour assurer la sécurité transfrontalière et mettre fin au terrorisme du PKK", a déclaré le général Odierno dans un communiqué à son arrivée à Ankara.

"Il est important de développer une compréhension commune des racines de la violence de façon à pouvoir aider à déterminer les mesures politiques, économiques et sécuritaires qui vont contribuer à une sécurité et une sûreté renforcées pour les peuples turc et irakien", a-t-il affirmé.

L'officier doit rencontrer mercredi le chef d'état-major des armées turques, le général Ilker Basbug, le ministre des Affaires étrangères Ahmet Davutoglu et le ministre de l'Intérieur Besir Atalay.



U.S. bolsters Gulf defenses against Iranian missiles

WASHINGTON

Deployments increase pressure on Tehran as Obama seeks sanctions

BY DAVID E. SANGER
AND ERIC SCHMITT

The administration of President Barack Obama is accelerating the deployment of new defenses against possible Iranian missile attacks in the Gulf, placing special ships off the Iranian coast and antimissile systems in at least four Arab countries, according to administration and military officials.

The deployments come at a critical turning point in Mr. Obama's dealings with Iran. After months of unsuccessful diplomatic outreach, the administration is trying to win broad international consensus for sanctions against the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, which Western nations say control a covert nuclear arms program.

Mr. Obama spoke of the shift in his State of the Union address, warning of "consequences" if Iran continued to defy United Nations demands to stop manufacturing nuclear fuel. And Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton publicly warned China on Friday that its opposition to sanctions was shortsighted.

The news that the United States is deploying antimissile defenses — including a rare public discussion of them by Gen. David H. Petraeus — appears to be part of a coordinated administration strategy to increase pressure on Iran.

The deployments are also partly intended to counter the impression that Iran is fast becoming the most powerful military force in the Middle East, to forestall any Iranian escalation of its confrontation with the West if new sanctions are imposed. In addition, the administration is trying to show Israel that there is no immediate need for military strikes against

Iranian nuclear and missile facilities, according to administration officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

By highlighting the defensive nature of the buildup, the administration was hoping to avoid a sharp response from Tehran.

Military officials said that the countries that accepted the defense systems were Qatar, the United Arab Emirates,

Bahrain and Kuwait. They said the Kuwaitis had agreed to take the defensive weapons to supplement older, less capable models it has had for years. Saudi Arabia and Israel have long had similar equipment of their own.

General Petraeus, whose Central Command area includes the Gulf region, has declined to say who was taking the American equipment, probably because many countries in the area are hesitant to be publicly identified as accepting American military aid and the troops that come with it. In fact, the names of countries where the antimissile systems are deployed are classified, but many of them are an open secret.

The general spoke about the deployments at a conference at the Institute for the Study of War here on Jan. 22, saying that "Iran is clearly seen as a very serious threat by those on the other side of the Gulf front."

General Petraeus said that the acceleration of defensive systems — which began under President George W. Bush — included "eight Patriot missile batteries, two in each of four countries." Patriot missiles are capable of shooting down short-range offensive missiles.

He also described a first line of defense: He said the United States was now keeping Aegis cruisers on patrol in the Gulf at all times.

Those cruisers are equipped with advanced radar and antimissile systems designed to intercept medium-range missiles. Those systems would not be useful against Iran's longest-range missile, the Shahab 3, but intelligence agencies believe that it will be years before Iran can solve the problems of placing a nuclear warhead atop that missile.

Iran contends that it is not trying to develop nuclear weapons, and that its program is for energy production. The White House declined to comment on the deployments.

But administration officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity said the moves had several aims. "Our first goal is to deter the Iranians," said one senior administration official. "A second is to reassure the Arab states, so they don't feel they have to go nuclear themselves. But there is certainly an element of calming the Israelis as well."

As Iran's nuclear program proceeds — more slowly, American intelligence officials say, than the United States had once thought — Israel has hinted at various times that it might take military



SAAD SHALASH/REUTERS

Gen. David Petraeus described the buildup.

action against the Iran's military facilities unless it is convinced that Mr. Obama and Western allies are succeeding in stopping the program.

Mr. Obama's national security adviser, Gen. James L. Jones, made an unannounced trip to Israel in January, partly to take the temperature of the Israeli government and to review both economic and covert programs now under way against the Iranian program, according to officials familiar with the meeting.

U.S. officials argue that the willingness of Arab states to take the American emplacements illustrates the region's growing unease about Iran's ambitions and abilities.

Gulf countries are also taking steps of their own to harden their defenses. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have bought more than \$15 billion in American arms in the past two years, including missile defense systems.

The United States is helping support a plan by Saudi Arabia to triple the size, to 30,000 people, of a Saudi force that protects the kingdom's ports, oil facilities and water-desalination plants, a senior military officer said. The Washington Post reported both steps on its Web site on Saturday.

Incremental Steps in Iraq to Let Kurdistan Oil Flow

By SAM DAGHER

ERBIL, Iraq — The semiautonomous region of Kurdistan is the one place in battered Iraq that promised economic boom times, but some of the foreign oil companies that rushed in over the past few years are becoming increasingly restless.

Their multibillion-dollar deals are still mired in a bitter political dispute between the Kurdish region and the central government in Baghdad.

They may have a stake in what is shaping up to be one of the greatest oil bonanzas of modern times, but the prospect of earning a profit, let alone recovering their costs, remains highly uncertain.

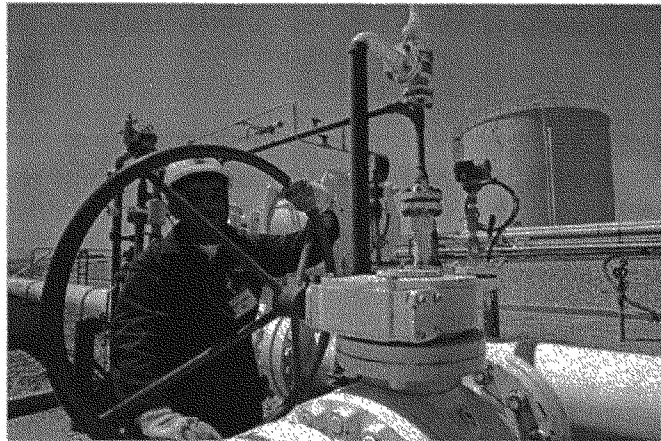
More potential headaches loom as public demands for scrutiny of local oil contracts for suspected improprieties have gathered momentum. The calls have come in the wake of revelations in November that a former American diplomat had a business relationship with a Norwegian company drilling for oil here, while also acting as a political adviser to the Kurds during the drafting of Iraq's Constitution in 2005.

"It is the single most important question for all of us: How to get paid?" said Grant Harms, an executive with Niko Resources Ltd., during a gathering Thursday night of oil companies in a plush hotel conference room in the region's capital, Erbil.

The issues of payment and the delays all the political wrangling was imposing on their business plans were high on the agenda as the oilmen dined on lamb roast and shrimp and sipped imported wine.

Several companies had already invested billions of dollars and supplied oil and gas without receiving any compensation.

In a bid to ease some of the immediate business concerns of the more than 30 foreign oil companies now working in the region, the Kurdish government recently presented Baghdad with a major compromise that would allow the Norwegian company DNO and a Chinese-Turkish joint venture called Ttopco to resume exports of about 100,000 barrels a day via Iraq's pipeline network. They were stopped in October following disagreement between



Hadi Mizban/Associated Press

The Tawke oil field in Kurdistan. Several companies have invested billions of dollars and supplied oil and gas without payments.

Baghdad and Erbil over how the companies should be paid.

The thrust of the proposed compromise involves the two producers' offering the oil to Iraq's State Oil Marketing Organization, or SOMO, which would compensate them initially just for their costs, according to Barham Salih, the region's prime minister.

"It is a practical proposal and a way to getting beyond the impasse," Mr. Salih said in an interview at his home in Sulaimaniya.

"It generates an environment of good confidence where we can move to settling this issue in a fundamental way."

Mr. Salih said he outlined the proposal in a letter to Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki appended with copies of the contracts with DNO and the two partners in Ttopco — Turkey's Genel Energy and the Swiss-based Addax Petroleum Corp., now owned by China's Sinopec Corp.

He said he subsequently spoke by telephone with Mr. Maliki, who told him he was "impressed" with the proposal and promised to discuss it with Hussain al-Shahristani, Iraq's oil minister.

The main elements of the Kurdish proposal were also outlined in a statement by Ashti Hawrami, the region's minister for natural resources, and posted on the local government's Web site last month.

The more contentious issue of profit sharing and the question of the ultimate legitimacy of the region's production-sharing agreements in the eyes of

Baghdad will be dealt with on a separate track, added Mr. Salih.

The Kurdish region contends that it has every right under Iraq's Constitution to sign the contracts, while Baghdad maintains that they are illegal in the absence of a national hydrocarbons law, and has blacklisted the companies operating in the region.

A manager with Genel welcomed Mr. Salih's initiative and predicted that exports would resume soon from the Taq Taq and Tawke fields, where the company owns stakes of 51 percent and 25 percent respectively.

But another oil executive said the initiative was a temporary fix and might even lead to financial and contractual complications. "It is going to be disturbing, to say the least, to the contractual economics for each investor," said the executive, who was not authorized to make public statements and requested anonymity.

Mr. Hawrami, the regional minister, did not respond to several requests for comment.

Adding to the uncertainties are national elections in March, increased pressure on Mr. Salih's government from an emboldened internal Kurdish opposition, and calls in the raucous local news media to publish all oil contracts.

A senior Kurdish government official said all contracts were currently being audited for any potential financial improprieties.

The same official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the

delicacy of the matter, expressed anger at reports last week that Peter W. Galbraith, an influential former American ambassador, and a Yemeni businessman could potentially reap up to \$144 million in a court settlement with DNO.

"This guy was supposedly a friend of the Kurds, come to defend the Kurds, but for him to engage in business activities on the side like that, it is not nice, it is not proper," the Kurdish official said of Mr. Galbraith.

"He says that he has told people, but I am sure he has not disclosed the whole thing."

Ahmed Mira, a Kurdish investigative reporter and lecturer at a university near Sulaimaniya, said there were serious rifts between Mr. Salih and his predecessor, Nechirvan Barzani, whose government signed most of the contracts and who remains an influential business figure.

He said officials inside key minis-

tries remained loyal to Mr. Barzani and were pushing back efforts by Mr. Salih for greater transparency.

"Nechirvan remains the prime minister of a shadow government," said Mr. Mira.

Mr. Salih strongly denied any splits and said his government enjoyed the full support of the Barzanis, including the region's powerful president, Massoud Barzani. He said the region's 2010 budget would require more disclosure of the government's financial activities relating to oil and gas.

Amid all the political uncertainty, most foreign oil executives tried to put on a brave face and focus on the ultimate prize during their monthly event in Erbil.

John Ashbridge, chief operating officer of ShaMaran Petroleum Corp., who flew in from Geneva for the occasion, said he was confident the differences between Baghdad and Erbil would even-

tually be sorted out.

He said his main concern was the lack of adequate pipeline infrastructure to export the oil particularly given all the contracts signed recently by Baghdad with oil companies to sharply increase production.

ShaMaran, a subsidiary of Swedish oil and mining conglomerate Lundin, has interests in three oil blocks in the Kurdistan region, including Pulkhana, which is south of the city of Kirkuk in the heart of a volatile area subject to a bigger territorial dispute between the region and Baghdad.

"This place is a time warp, the whole of Iraq is a time warp," said Mr. Ashbridge. "If you are an investor in oil and gas, this is the place to be."



Pro-Kurdish BDP elects Demirtas, Kisanak as co-leaders

The pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party's first congress elects first co-presidents and expresses political determination

ANKARA – Hürriyet Daily News

Selahattin Demirtas has been elected as chairman of the Peace and Democracy Party, or BDP, and Gülten Kisanak has been named co-chairman.

Monday's meeting in Ankara was the first congress for the party and more than 450 members attended. They also voted for an administrative board.

The BDP was formed in early 2008, just a few months after the indictment against the Democratic Society Party, or DTP, was announced in November 2007. The Constitutional Court ruled to close the DTP due to its links with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which is listed as a terror organization by a number of international communities, including the European Union and the United States.

After their party was outlawed in December 2009, 19 DTP deputies joined the BDP.

Regardless of criticism from the international community and other political parties in Parliament, the BDP did not make a big distinction between it and the outlawed PKK when it held its first congress to elect a party leader and an administrative board under the theme of "Democratic Participation for Democratic Politics."

The hall was decorated with big

posters of mayors who were arrested under the scope of the police operations against an urban branch of the PKK.

Names of some killed PKK militants as well as arrested mayors were read out in a show of respect. Also, the national anthem was not played at the opening of the meeting, contrary to other political parties traditionally do.

A group in the audience raised posters of jailed PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan and flags of the outlawed organization while the crowd chanted Kurdish slogans in favor of Öcalan.

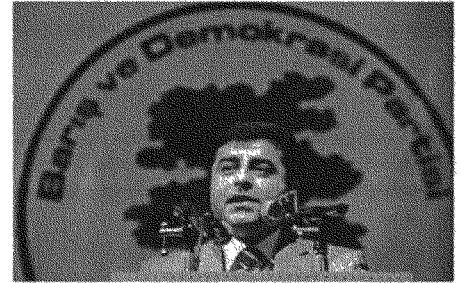
Sevahir Bayındır, a deputy from Sırnak province, was elected as meeting chairman and then addressed the assembly in both Kurdish and Turkish.

Bayındır criticized the police crack down on the urban branch of the PKK shortly after the closure of the DTP in which dozens of mayors were arrested.

"You assert democracy and people's sovereignty. What about [the arrested] mayors elected by the people. Those [arrested] are convicted in the public's conscience," Bayındır said.

BDP leader Demir Çelik entered the congress hall along with a group of deputies, including Selahattin Demirtas and Gülten Kisanak.

"No matter whether its name is DTP or BDP, it is continuing the organized fight for Kurdish freedom," Çelik said, claiming the government's



Selahattin Demirtas. AA photo

Kurdish initiative is part of efforts to damage the Kurdish struggle.

Demirtas accused the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, of not being sincere to secure democratic standards in the country. "Those who hope the AKP will bring a solution will feel upset and tricked."

Demirtas, vowing to defeat the AKP, said: "This congress will be a landmark to defeat the AKP across the country and to wipe it out in the region, which is our stronghold."

Kisanak, for her part, asserted a new administrative system for Turkey, which she called the "democratic autonomy model." She also said, "Öcalan should be listened to if the government really wants to solve the Kurdish issue."

Political violence threatens stability in Iraq's Kurdish north

Iraqi Kurd's political tensions escalate sharply as police investigates attacks on opposition figures.

By Shorish Khalid - SULAIMANIYAH, Iraq

Attacks on members of Iraqi Kurdistan's main opposition group have raised fears in Sulaimaniyah that political tensions could spill over into further violence ahead of March elections.

The Change Movement claims that at least seven attacks on its members last month, including one fatal shooting and the torching of a lawmaker's office, were "organised political crimes", according to a statement released by the party.

"The incidents were planned against our members and happened in the places where Change list gained many votes in the July 25 [2009] election," the Change statement continued.

However, its main rival, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, PUK, has denied any involvement in the crimes, countering that Change has exaggerated the attacks for political gain ahead of the elections.

"The Change movement has sought to show the incidents as the consequence of political conflicts. Change wants to make the situation bigger and shows Sulaimaniyah as an unstable city," said Anif Rushdi, a member of the PUK leadership committee.

"In fact, the incidents were not related to political conflict. They were all personal."

According to Change, the first shooting occurred on December 4, when party activist Sardar Qadir was shot and wounded in his sister-in-law's living room in downtown Sulaimaniyah.

On December 12, Change member Rauf Zarayani was killed by gunmen in front of his home in the town of New Halabja.

That same day, bullets were fired into the home of Change member Bakhtyar Shekh Muhammad, who lives behind Sulaimaniyah's main police station.

A week later, Change members Yasin Abdullah and Burhan Hama Ramadan were shot in Shanadar village outside of Sulaimaniyah.

Then on December 30, the office of Change lawmaker Seewail Osman Ahmed was burned in the town of Koya.

"I just want to know why only our members were shot and threatened?" said Safin Mala Qara, a senior Change official. "Most of the people in Sulaimaniyah are frightened and alarmed about the destabilised situation in their city. These incidents have put the city on the verge of civil war."

Salahadin Babekir, spokesman for the opposition Kurdistan Islamic Union, KIU, told IWPR that although members of his party had been threatened in the past, "since the tension between PUK and Change, the threats [against KIU] have decreased considerably".

He said that the public was concerned about growing hostilities between Change and PUK.

"The situation between Change and PUK makes people very upset," he said. "If they continue like this there will likely be a civil war in the city."

Iraqi Kurdistan's deputy interior minister Jalal Karim said that locals should not assume the rash of violence will continue into the election period as the Kurdistan Regional Government, KRG, has launched a plan to provide safety during the vote.

But others warn that a period of calm that followed a January 10 call from Kurdistan region president Masoud Barzani to end the political tension may be short-lived.

"The political situation in Sulaimaniyah is almost ready to explode. The two

sides (Change and PUK) are in a deep conflict over the attacks and I don't think this calm is going to last," said Yusuf Muhammad, a political science lecturer at the Sulaimaniyah University.

"As the election gets closer, the tension heats up. Neither side nor the government can guarantee that there won't be violence," Muhammad added.

Najmaddin Qadir, head of the Sulaimaniyah police directorate, said investigations into the incidents had not produced any arrests or identified any suspects.

A KRG parliamentary committee assigned to investigate the attacks has submitted a preliminary report claiming the security forces were negligent in investigating the attacks, according to Samir Saleem, a KIU legislator who serves on the committee.

He said that security forces told committee members that the attacks were personal, without providing any evidence.

Saleem said that the five-member committee, which includes two PUK and two Change members of parliament, was itself trying to determine whether the incidents were political or personal.

However, Saleem said he felt it was unlikely that any action would be taken in the run-up to the elections. "If it turns out that a political party was behind these acts, people won't vote for that party," he added.

"The investigations are not complete and it is not yet clear whether [the attacks] were personal or political," Sulaimaniyah police chief Najmaddin Qadir said. "We are waiting for the results of the investigations."

But Qadir Hama Jan, director general of security in Iraqi Kurdistan and senior to Qadir, told IWPR that preliminary police investigations indicated that the crimes were personal attacks.

"The incidents are not as you see in the media. The attacks in Sulaimaniyah were personal problems. The Change Movement has exaggerated the issue for their political purposes," said Jan, who is also a senior member of the PUK.

"We have not arrested anyone, but we are not careless about the security of our people."

Change was established last year by Nawshirwan Mustafa, a PUK co-founder who resigned from the party following a power struggle with PUK leader and Iraqi president Jalal Talabani. Mustafa has claimed the party was plagued by corruption and unwilling to enact reform.

Competition between the PUK and Change has been intense since the newly-founded movement won 25 seats in the 111-member Kurdish parliament and swept Sulaimaniyah province in the July 2009 Kurdish parliament elections. While tensions between the two groups ran high, that election was relatively peaceful.

Mustafa owns Wusha, a powerful and influential media company that includes local and satellite TV stations, a newspaper, a website and radio station which are enormously popular among Kurds, especially in Sulaimaniyah.

The recent attacks on Change members were widely covered by these outlets and sparked a fierce media campaign between Change and PUK that dredged up the PUK's history.

Talabani accused Mustafa, his former deputy, of betraying the Kurds by ignoring Baathist threats to use chemical weapons on Halabja in 1988. He also held him responsible for the bloody civil war between the PUK and Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party in the 1990s.

Mustafa denied the allegations and launched an attack on Talabani, blaming him for not standing up for Kurdish interests.

On the Change website, Mustafa recently claimed that Talabani's description of him as "anti-Kurdish" in an October conference was "a green light for attacks".

As the media battle grew increasingly personal, Barzani and other party leaders stepped in to mediate between Change and PUK.

The parties agreed to halt their feuding, but some worry that the tense truce will not hold as elections season approaches.

"I do worry that there will be bloodshed between the Change movement and PUK," said Hoshiyar Karim Ahmed, a 70-year-old shopkeeper in Sulaimaniyah. "I hope things will be sorted out."

Some senior Change leaders feel the party is treated unfairly in Sulaimaniyah by PUK officials. For instance, most members of Sulaimaniyah's security forces are PUK loyalists.

"We don't feel safe because the security forces and police are under the control of the political parties. We don't have a military and [security] forces. We are a civil movement. We want the government to protect all parties without exception," former Kurdish Peshmerga commander and senior Change leader Mam Rostam told IWPR this week.

"We have not exaggerated [the incidents] ... our activists have been killed, abducted, beaten and fired [from their jobs] and they want us to be silent? One of our activists killed and it is exaggeration to say he was killed?"

Some like Qadir, who was shot twice in the legs while drinking tea with his extended family on Iskan Street in Sulaimaniyah, are left wondering why they were targeted and by whom.

"I don't have any problems with the police, but I am concerned that they say it was personal assault. I don't think so," he said. "I know myself better than anyone and I don't have any problems with anyone."

[Shorsh Khalid is an IWPR-trained journalist in Sulaimaniyah. Hemin H Lihony is IWPR's local editor in Sulaimaniyah. IWPR Iraq editor Mariwan Hama-Saeed also contributed to this report.]

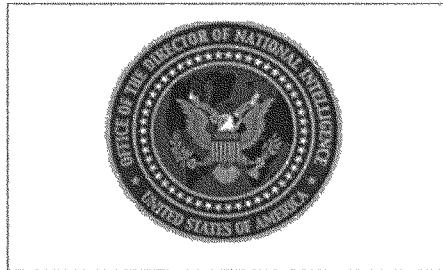
Rudaw.Net 2 February 2010

US intelligence chief: Arab-Kurdish tensions could derail Iraq

By Wladimir van Wilgenburg

Rudaw - Dennis C. Blair, the director of US national intelligence, testified Tuesday at a congressional hearing about threats to US security. He said Iraq will be able to secure a path, if the Iraqi government manages Arab-Kurdish tensions and integrates the Sunni Arabs.

Blair also mentioned the ability of the Iraqi Security Forces to combat threats to the state. Blair mentioned that the upcoming March parliamentary elections and



the August 2010 withdrawal of US combat forces - 'will be important indicators of the new government's ability to adapt, as well as manage and contain, conflict'.

But he said that Arab-Kurd tensions have potential to derail Iraq's generally positive security trajectory, including triggering conflict among Iraq's ethno-sectarian groups. "Many of the drivers of Arab-Kurd tensions—disputed territories, revenue sharing and control of oil resources, and integration of peshmerga forces—still need to be worked out, and miscalculations or misperceptions on either side risk

an inadvertent escalation of violence," Blair testified. The intelligence chief thinks US involvement is necessary. "US involvement—both diplomatic and military—will remain critical in defusing crises in this sphere."

Recently the Kurdistan Regional President Barzani visited the US and met with the US administration leaders. The US officials told the Kurdish delegation that the US will remain engaged and help the political forces in Iraq overcome their differences.

In January the US launched a strategy of manned checkpoints by the Iraqi army, Kurdish peshmerga, and U.S. soldiers in the disputed regions of Diyala, Mosul and Kirkuk. These joint operations are meant to help ease tensions between Baghdad and Kurdistan, as well as improve security.

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The Hawler Tribune 4 February 2010

Kurdistan establishes its own stock exchange

The Hawler Tribune/By Mihemed Eli Zalla

IN A PRESS conference, the establishment of Erbil Stock Exchange Co. (ESX) was announced. The establishment committee of ESX held a press conference today and announced that it has been working on establishing this market for almost two years. This is expected to play a key role in boosting the economy of Kurdistan and the region.

ESX Finally received a license from Baghdad. Ahmed Adul-Rahim the head of Establishment Committee stated "our stock exchange market is completely independent of that of Baghdad, and is licensed by Baghdad".

"We hope to advance Kurdistan economy, and link Kurdistan economy to the outside world" said Rahim. Several big corporations have already taken part in this market. KRG as for its part is the main participant holding 20% of the market's stocks.



The Board of the Erbil Stock Exchange Meeting
Photo by: Mihemed Eli Zalla

Opening a stock exchange market here in Kurdistan is significant; due to the security problems other parts of Iraq are not as valid as Kurdistan for such a market said the head of the committee. Any company holding 5% capacity of the overall ESX's stocks can take part in ESX, including foreign companies.

REUTERS

Turkey's latest Kurdish party vows cautious approach

ANKARA, February 5, 2010 - (Reuters) - By Pinar Aydinli

TURKEY'S KURDISH Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) has pledged to be more cautious than a predecessor party banned last year for ties with separatist militants, whilst continuing to fight for rights for Kurds.

Politicians from the Democratic Society Party (DTP) joined the BDP last December, enabling them to stay in parliament, after the DTP became the sixth Kurdish party to be banned by the Turkish state, which has been locked in a 25-year conflict with separatist Kurdish rebels.

BDP Chairman Selahattin Demirtas, himself a former DTP member, told Reuters in an interview that the PKK was an entirely separate organisation and it was a mistake to believe the BDP had any autho-

city to persuade them to lay down their arms.

"We can be involved in the process of solving the Kurdish issue, but matters related to abandoning arms and returning to Turkey must be discussed between the government and the PKK."

Turkey's top court closed the DTP, which had 21 deputies in parliament, for having links to the PKK, which is branded a terrorist organisation by Washington, Brussels and Ankara.

The ruling was criticised by the European Union and Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan.

"The PKK is a group which has a structure and administrative mechanism separate from us. If they have a word to say, they will say it ... If we would be the voice of something, it would be the BDP," Demirtas said.

He called for tougher criteria for closing down political parties.

"Regulations that allows the closing down of political parties should be lifted. It's a step the government should take to strengthen freedom of democracy."

The ruling AK Party wants to push reforms aimed at ending the conflict by increasing the rights of Turkey's Kurds, who account for up to 20 percent of the population of 72 million, thereby eroding support for the PKK.



(Israelnationalnews.com)
05 February 2010

Israel Reportedly Training Kurdish Forces

by Avi Yellin

According to recent media reports, Israeli military and intelligence agents are currently operating in Iraqi Kurdistan. Their primary role, according to reports, is to train elite Kurdish commandos in guerrilla warfare and anti-terror tactics. The Kurds - whose country is currently occupied by Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria - are reportedly again, after many years, accepting Israeli assistance in their struggle for independence.

Fearing an al-Qaeda backlash, Kurdish leaders have denied cooperating with the Jewish state and have refused to even issue comments on the matter.

When the New Yorker asked Mark Regev, then spokesman for Israel's Embassy in Washington, to comment on allegations of Israeli-Kurdish cooperation in 2004, Regev denied the claims, telling the magazine that "the story is simply untrue and the relevant governments know it's

untrue."

But American intelligence officials at the time sought to expose Israel's assistance to the Kurds. "They [the Israelis] think they have to be there," a senior CIA official told the New Yorker, adding that Israel's presence in northern Iraq is widely acknowledged in the United States intelligence community.

Apart from rumors of Israel training Kurdish commandos, Israeli-Kurdish relations have expanded considerably in recent years. In July 2003 the Israeli government reversed its embargo on Iraq, allowing trade between the two peoples including the export of Israeli military products to the Kurds.

Kurdish commandos have also reportedly accompanied Israeli operatives across the Iraq-Iran border in recent years to install sensory devices meant to monitor suspected Iranian nuclear facilities.

Like Jews, Kurds are a non-Arab indigenous Middle Eastern people seeking independence in their ancestral homeland. Active Israeli support

towards a free Kurdistan is seen as a natural and pragmatic policy by many in the region. "By aligning with the Kurds, Israel gains eyes and ears in Iran, Iraq and Syria," a former Israeli intelligence officer told the New Yorker.

Hamas leaders are reportedly concerned by reports of Israel operating in Iraqi Kurdistan and have begun investigating the possibility of Israeli infiltration into their own ranks. According to the terror group, the recent assassination of Hamas leader Mahmoud al-Mabhouh in Dubai could have been planned and executed by Israeli agents operating beyond the Jewish state's borders.

Les États-Unis se renforcent dans le Golfe face à l'Iran

Washington déploie des intercepteurs de missiles dans plusieurs pays de la région.

ADÈLE SMITH
NEW YORK

ÉTATS-UNIS Washington accélère le déploiement de systèmes antimissiles dans le Golfe afin de parer à une éventuelle attaque iranienne. L'Administration Obama l'a fait savoir ce week-end par le biais d'informations divulguées au *New York Times* et au *Washington Post*. Citant des sources anonymes à la Maison-Blanche, ces deux quotidiens rapportent toute une série d'initiatives américaines visant à « accroître la pression sur l'Iran », mais aussi à « rassurer les pays arabes voisins », « calmer Israël » et dissuader l'État hébreu de mener une attaque préventive contre l'Iran, alors que Téhéran refuse de se conformer à ses obligations internationales concernant son programme nucléaire.

Les pays arabes accueillent avec soulagement les initiatives américaines

Ces révélations interviennent alors que les États-Unis, soutenus par les alliés occidentaux et désormais la Russie, ont du mal à convaincre la Chine de voter de nouvelles sanctions contre l'Iran au Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU. « Nous développons une véritable capacité de défense régionale, avec des systèmes de missiles, une défense aérienne et le renforcement d'infrastructures essentielles (...) depuis un an », a déclaré au *Washington Post* un membre de l'Administration Obama.

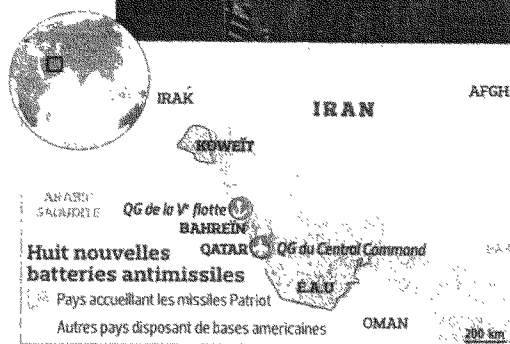
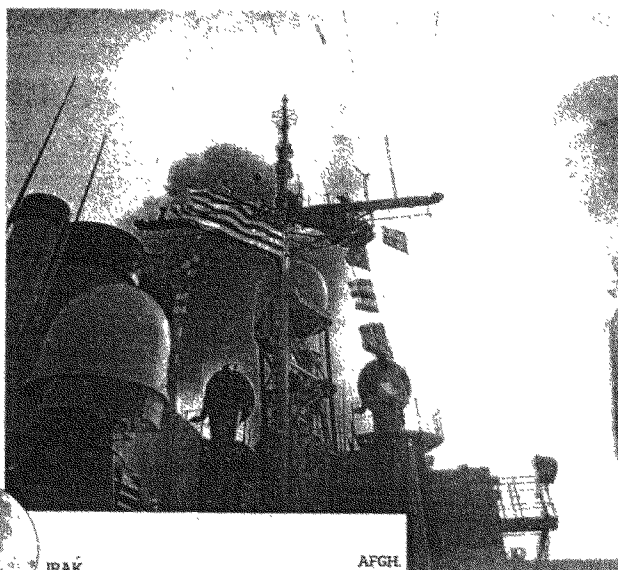
Missiles Patriot

Selon le *New York Times*, Washington déploie des navires spécialisés Aegis au large des côtes iraniennes ainsi que des intercepteurs de missiles dans quatre pays : le Qatar, les Émirats arabes unis, Bahreïn et le Koweït. Ils négocient également avec Oman. L'installation de systèmes de défense inclut « huit batteries de missiles Patriot, soit deux dans chaque pays », avait récemment déclaré le général Petraeus, commandant des forces américaines dans le Golfe, lors d'une intervention à l'Institut de l'étude de la guerre.

Ces systèmes de défense, inefficaces contre les missiles iraniens de longue portée Shahab, sont prévus pour inter-

cepter des missiles de moyenne portée, dont le développement avance apparemment plus rapidement.

Les pays arabes sont soucieux de ne pas afficher l'existence d'une aide militaire américaine incluant la présence de GI pour ne pas contrarier leur opinion publique. Mais ils sont aussi inquiets de la montée en puissance de l'Iran dans la région et ont donc accueilli avec soulagement le soutien de Barack Obama. Ils craignaient initialement une approche trop complaisante du nouveau président à l'égard de l'Iran. D'après le *Washington Post*, la coordination militaire des pays du Golfe avec les États-Unis ne cesse de se renforcer depuis un an. L'Arabie saoudite est en train de mettre en place une armée forte de 30 000 hommes, avec le soutien américain, pour faire face à des attaques potentielles iraniennes mais aussi d'al-Qaïda, précise le quotidien. Les Émirats arabes unis, premier client des États-Unis pour l'achat d'armes, ont dépensé 17 milliards de dollars depuis deux ans pour des équipements incluant le système de défense THAAD ainsi que 80 avions F16 acquis récemment. Ils négocient également l'achat de Rafale avec



Un navire Aegis spécialisé dans la défense antimissile procède à un tir d'essai dans le Pacifique en juin dernier. Washington déploierait actuellement plusieurs de ces bâtiments au large des côtes iraniennes. US NAVY/AFP

la France. Les États-Unis espèrent en faire une force régionale de premier plan.

Nombre d'experts arabes craignent qu'un Iran nucléaire profite de sa supériorité militaire pour chercher à déstabiliser les États voisins en provoquant des révoltes des populations chiïtes présentes dans tous les pays du Golfe. Mais côté américain, on craint surtout aujourd'hui qu'un Iran doté de l'arme atomique ne conduise à une prolifération nucléaire potentiellement catastrophique dans la région. ■

Iran : l'anniversaire de la révolution fêté sous forte tension

Malgré la répression, les chefs de la contestation civile appellent à manifester le 11 février

Est maintenant ? Les célébrations du 31^e anniversaire de la révolution islamique qui ont débuté lundi 1^{er} février et culmineront par une journée de défilés et de manifestations, le 11 février, s'annoncent comme un test crucial pour la cohésion du régime et la survie du mouvement de contestation civile, né après l'élection contestée du président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, en juin.

Surprises par l'ampleur et la résistance de ce mouvement spontané, sans structure ni organisation, qui a survécu à plus de 4 000 arrestations, à la torture, aux « aveux télévisés » de procès orchestrés, les autorités fondamentalistes en place s'étaient cabrées, fin décembre. Les cérémonies du deuil chiite de l'Achoura avaient dégénéré. Pour la première fois, les forces de l'ordre avaient tiré sur la foule (faisant 8 morts). Pour la première fois aussi, les manifestants, en principe pacifiques, s'étaient rebellés, attaquant, comme à Téhéran, des miliciens bassidjis, fer de lance de la répression.

Depuis, l'inquiétude avait gagné les deux camps, devant les risques de dérapages de cette double radicalisation. De timides tentatives pour esquisser la voie d'un dialogue ont même eu lieu ces dernières semaines, de la part d'un pouvoir que l'on sait très divisé

sur la réponse répressive à apporter à la contestation.

Ainsi plusieurs débats inédits ont été organisés à la télévision d'Etat sur la situation intérieure, auxquels ont surtout participé des suppôts du gouvernement, mais pas seulement. On y a vu des députés de la majorité critiques et même un professeur de science politique, Javad Etaat, proche de la figure de proue de l'opposition, l'ex-premier ministre et candidat malheureux à l'élection de juin, Mir Hossein Moussavi, évoquer les fraudes électorales et réclamer que soient appliqués les « droits donnés aux citoyens par la Constitution ». Mais le record enregistré par l'Audimat a incité le gouvernement à faire machine arrière et à mettre un terme à cette « ouverture » jugée contre-productive.

Ensuite, pour calmer le scandale suscité par les révélations de Mehdi Karoubi, l'autre chef de l'opposition, sur la prison secrète de Kahrizak, tenue par les services de renseignement où des détenus sont morts sous la torture ou ont été violés, le pouvoir s'est trouvé un « bouc émissaire » : lâchant le jusque-là très redouté procureur de Téhéran (impliqué dans la mort en prison de la journaliste irano-canadienne Zahra Kazemi en 2003) Saïd Mortazavi, démis de ses fonctions et soumis à enquête.

De leur côté, les chefs de la contestation ont multiplié les déclarations pour calmer le jeu, se présentant comme des « soutiens » de la République islamique et de son Guide suprême l'ayatollah Khamenei, mais pas de son président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Rien n'y a fait et l'annonce, vendredi 29 janvier, de la pendaison de deux « manifestants » (des personnes arrêtées en réalité trois mois avant l'élection de juin) a gelé tout espoir de conciliation. Pour preuve, notent les analystes, le même jour, les partisans du grand ayatollah dissident Ali Montazeri qui commémoreraient, selon la tradition chiite, le 40^e jour de deuil après sa mort ont été attaqués par les miliciens à Najafabad, sa ville natale. Et à Qom, la ville sainte où il résidait, l'entrée de son domicile était ceinturée par un cordon de police. Enfin, à la prière du vendredi à Téhéran, l'ayatollah Jannati a lancé un mot d'ordre sans équivoque : « Pour la gloire de Dieu, plus d'opposants doivent être exécutés ! »

« Depuis des mois, le noyau fondamentaliste au pouvoir qui soutient Ahmadinejad hésite sur le dosage exact de répression et de terreur à utiliser pour décourager la contestation, nous a confié, par téléphone, un journaliste iranien proche des réformateurs. Il semble que pour les fêtes du 22 Bahman (11 février), ce noyau ait tranché : ils feront de cette journée un jour d'épopée nationale contre « les for-

« Pour la gloire de Dieu, plus d'opposants doivent être exécutés ! »

L'ayatollah Jannati

ces de l'anti-révolution », comme ils les appellent. On peut s'attendre à tout, y compris à un bain de sang. »

D'autant que la répression s'est encore accrue : plus de 150 arrestations ont été effectuées après l'A-

choura ; 9 autres contestataires ont été condamnés à mort et un procès de 16 manifestants, dont plus de la moitié pourrait finir sur le gibet s'est ouvert samedi. De plus, les mesures d'intimidation se poursuivent, quinze journaux ont été menacés de fermeture s'ils reproduisaient des propos des chefs de l'opposition et la police fait circuler des photos de manifestants, appelant à la délation. Dimanche, le chef de la police, Hamadi Moghaddam, s'est vanté d'avoir réalisé ainsi « 70 % des dernières arrestations, grâce au soutien indéfectible du peuple ».

En réaction, MM. Moussavi et Karoubi se sont réunis pour lancer un appel commun à manifester pacifiquement mais en nombre le 11 février. La vidéo prise par Saha news a fait le tour d'Internet. Là aussi, c'est un pas de plus vers l'épreuve de force : lors des précédentes manifestations officielles, « vampirisées » par l'opposition pour se faire entendre, les chefs du mouvement s'étaient abstenus d'appeler à manifester, pour garder le côté spontané de la désobéissance civile.

Premier test, la cérémonie commémorant, lundi, le retour de l'ayatollah Khomeiny en Iran. Elle aura lieu, non au mausolée de l'imam comme à l'accoutumée, mais au cimetière de Behecht-e-Zahra, plus facile à contrôler. C'est un proche du Guide, Hadad Addel, qui lira le discours. En signe de désaccord, la famille Khomeiny, très critique des dérives autoritaires du régime, n'avait pas précisé si elle assisterait ou non. ■

Marie-Claude Decamps

Irak

Une femme kamikaze tue 41 pèlerins chiites près de Bagdad

BAGDAD. Une kamikaze a tué, lundi 1^{er} février, au moins 41 pèlerins chiites et en a blessé une centaine d'autres, dans la banlieue nord de Bagdad. « La kamikaze a fait détoner sa ceinture d'explosifs au milieu d'une foule de pèlerins se rendant à Kerbala », a indiqué le commandement militaire de Bagdad. Des dizaines de personnes étaient réunies près de

tentes dressées pour servir des rafraîchissements aux pèlerins. Le premier ministre, Nouri Al-Maliki, a accusé des membres du parti interdit Baas, de l'ex-président Saddam Hussein : « nous tenons pour responsables de ce massacre les baasistes et leurs alliés takfiris », a-t-il dit, désignant les extrémistes sunnites membres d'Al-Qaïda. Selon le gouvernement, la kamikaze venait de la province de Dyala, ex-place forte d'Al-Qaïda : « Il y a déjà eu 25 attentats commis par des femmes kamikazes venant de cette province. Elles sont issues de milieux pauvres, faibles mentalement et proches de la délinquance. » - (AFP) ■

En Irak, la purge antibaasiste empoisonne le processus électoral

Soutenue par les Américains, la minorité sunnite s'alarme devant la mise à l'écart de 500 de ses candidats aux législatives du 7 mars.

GEORGES MALBRUNOT

MOYEN-ORIENT Mauvaise nouvelle pour Nouri al-Maliki : l'attentat perpétré avant-hier par une femme kamikaze, qui a fauché 41 pèlerins chiïtes sur une route près de Bagdad, obère son bilan sécuritaire et complique une réconciliation, déjà mal en point, avec la minorité sunnite. À un mois des élections législatives, le premier ministre se retrouve affaibli face à ses challengers, regroupés autour de l'ancien chef du gouvernement Iyad Allaoui et de son ministre de l'Intérieur, Jawad al-Bolani.

« Pourtant, souligne un diplomate à Bagdad, la tendance de fond reste à une reprise du contrôle de la situation par les forces de sécurité et l'armée, à l'exception toutefois des zones mitoyennes du Kurdistan, où des troupes américaines restent déployées » pour contenir les affrontements entre Arabes et Kurdes. En janvier, le nombre de morts violentes s'est élevé à 196, soit nettement moins que le même mois en 2009 (367). Mais, à l'approche de la consultation, al-Qaïda et les derniers affidés de Saddam Hussein pourraient chercher à rallumer la guerre confessionnelle, une option que la mouvance terroriste avait abandonnée depuis un an pour concentrer ses attaques sur des symboles du pouvoir, les ministères notamment.

L'affaire des 500 candidats baasistes exclus récemment de ces élections vient grossir le mécontentement chez les sunnites, qui fournirent le gros des bataillons de la guérilla contre les Américains et leurs alliés au pouvoir à Bagdad. Alors que la campagne électorale commence officiellement dimanche, le différend devrait être tranché d'ici à la fin de la semaine. « Si la majorité des candidats sont définitivement écartés, cela va poser un vrai problème », anticipe l'analyste Adel al-Kayar.

Mal ficelée à l'arrivée des Américains en avril 2003, la débaasification n'en finit pas d'empoisonner la vie politique irakienne, a reconnu hier pour la première fois un haut responsable américain, en l'occurrence



Cortège funéraire, hier au nord-est de Bagdad, accompagnant les cercueils des victimes de l'attentat suicide perpétré la veille et qui a tué 41 pèlerins chiïtes. SHALASH/REUTERS

l'ambassadeur en Irak, Christopher Hill. La purge, opérée sans la moindre nuance, jeta des milliers d'anciens militaires du côté de la rébellion. Et depuis, les différentes instances en charge de la réhabilitation des anciens cadres baasistes sont « loin d'avoir travaillé dans la transparence », a déclaré à l'AFP Christopher Hill. Sous-entendu : les partis chiïtes, qui dominent la scène irakienne, ne veulent pas entendre parler d'un vrai retour des baasistes dans les rouages du pouvoir.

Compromis en vue

Que va faire Nouri al-Maliki ? Lors de sa dernière visite à Bagdad, le vice-président américain, Joe Biden, l'a clairement mis en garde : « Sans les sunnites, et tous les sunnites, vous ne pourrez pas stabiliser l'Irak. » À Bagdad, les Nations unies lui conseillent également la transparence, afin de ne pas décrédibiliser un processus électoral déjà laborieux.

Mais « Ali al-Lami, le président du Conseil de débaasification, est un proche d'al-Maliki », relève le diplomate. En pleines tractations électorales, le premier ministre semble encore prisonnier de ses alliances passées. Il va exploiter au maximum la division des sunnites. « Même s'ils ont exprimé leur mécontentement, poursuit ce diplomate, aucune formation sunnite n'a encore pris la décision de boycotter » ces deuxièmes élections législatives depuis le renversement de Saddam Hussein en 2003. Leur boycott du précédent scrutin législatif en 2005 avait accru leur marginalisation. Les sunnites ne veulent pas refaire la même erreur. Un compromis de dernière minute pourrait éviter une aggravation de la crise : que les 500 « candidats douteux » puissent se présenter et, en cas de disqualification prononcée à l'issue d'un examen équitable de leur passé, ces ex-baasistes devraient alors renoncer à leur élection. Réponse dans les tout prochains jours. ■

Le Monde
4 février 2010

La grève de salariés du cigarettier turc, symbole de la lutte contre les privatisations

Depuis décembre 2009, près de 2 000 anciens ouvriers de Tekel, vendu à British American Tobacco en 2008, campent à Ankara. Jeudi, une grande manifestation est prévue dans la capitale

Reportage

Ankara
Envoyé spécial

Le campement de fortune de milliers d'anciens ouvriers de Tekel, l'ancien monopole turc des tabacs, a pris racine dans les rues glacées du centre-ville d'Ankara. Sur des barbecues, des sardines et des marrons grillent, et les caisses de bouteilles de raki circulent dans les allées bondées.

Emmitoufflés sous des couvertures, près de 2 000 travailleurs, licenciés ou menacés de l'être en raison de la privatisation de leur entreprise, font grève depuis cinquante jours, installés devant le siège de la centrale syndicale Türk-İs. Calés autour de poêles à charbon, sous des bâches en plastique, les « Tekel » sont bien décidés à ne pas bouger de leur camp, tant qu'un compromis n'aura pas été trouvé avec le gouvernement.

Environ 12 000 fonctionnaires sont directement concernés par la dissolution du groupe, vendu en 2008 au géant British American Tobacco (BAT) pour 1,72 milliard d'euros. Pour compenser la perte de leur emploi, après la fermeture d'une centaine de sites à travers le pays, l'Etat a proposé aux salariés des postes précaires dans l'administration.

« Le gouvernement essaie de nous faire travailler dans des conditions indignes, tonne le président du syndicat Tek Gıda-İş, Mustafa Türkel. Les ouvriers perdraient leur statut de fonctionnaire, sans aucune sécurité d'emploi sur la durée. Nous nous opposons aux privatisations telles qu'elles sont menées par ce gouvernement. »

Ce conflit social, qui a commencé en décembre 2009, embarrassa au plus haut point le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, dont la politique économique est contes-



Une réunion d'anciens ouvriers de Tekel à Ankara, mardi 2 février. ADEM ALTAN/AFP

tée par les fonctionnaires et les classes populaires.

Ignorés pendant plus d'un mois par le gouvernement, les grévistes se sont remis à espérer une issue positive. Mais, après plusieurs rencontres, les négociations entre les syndicats et le gouvernement sont restées dans l'impasse, mardi 2 février. « C'est une lutte pour notre honneur. Nous continuerons à nous battre par tous les moyens », clame Binali İldan, un ancien ouvrier de l'usine d'Istanbul.

Depuis cinquante jours, les « Tekel » ont multiplié les manifestations dans les rues de la capitale, parfois réprimées sans ménagement par la police, et ont même observé, pendant plusieurs jours, une grève de la faim, qui a conduit trois d'entre eux à l'hôpital. « Nous sommes très affectés par l'inhumanité du gouvernement », se plaint l'un d'eux, Ibrahim Kiraç. Nous

sommes sous la pression du FMI [Fonds monétaire international] et du capitalisme international. »

Une société rentable

Inflexible, Recep Tayyip Erdogan a dénoncé, mardi, « une campagne idéologique contre le gouvernement » et une « instrumentalisation » des travailleurs. A Ankara, de nombreux passants continuaient pourtant à venir soutenir le mouvement. « Sans le soutien des citoyens, nous n'aurions pas pu tenir tout ce temps », avoue un ouvrier.

Mais si le gouvernement maintient sa position, le conflit risque de se durcir. Les « Tekel » devaient reprendre, mercredi, leur grève de la faim. Les six principales centrales syndicales représentant fonctionnaires et salariés du privé ont appelé à une journée de grève jeudi. Une grande manifestation est prévue à Ankara.

Depuis 2002, plusieurs centaines d'entreprises publiques ont été privatisées par le parti islamoc-conservateur au pouvoir. La loterie nationale, les centrales électriques ou les usines de sucre sont parmi les prochaines sur la liste. Le plan a été supervisé par le FMI, avec lequel la Turquie négocie depuis plus d'un an un nouvel accord. De toutes ces sociétés, Tekel était l'une des plus rentables.

Née en 1925 de la nationalisation de la Régie intéressée des tabacs de l'Empire ottoman, une entreprise française, elle avait déjà cédé sa branche alcool en 2003. Le parti de M. Erdogan, réélu en 2007 pour ses bons résultats économiques, est accusé par l'opposition de mener une politique ultralibérale et doit faire face depuis plusieurs mois à une série de mouvements sociaux dans les services publics. ■

Guillaume Perrier

KURDISH INITIATIVE RELEGATED TO THE DUSTY SHELVES OF PARLIAMENT

BETÜL AKKAYA DEMIRBAS

The exposure of another suspected military plan for a coup d'état and its repercussions have once again brushed aside government efforts for a solution to the decades-old Kurdish question.

It is not, however, the first time the country gave up discussing the prospective results of the Kurdish package and focused on other developments instead. Also dubbed the "Kurdish initiative," the democratization package is indeed a massive one that aims to expand the rights and freedoms of citizens.

The Justice and Development Party (AK Party) government in the summer months announced its intention to settle the Kurdish question -- which turned violent after the establishment of a terrorist organization -- peacefully and without resorting to military means. The party has yet to announce the full content of its Kurdish initiative, but it is believed that the government will grant broader cultural and political rights to the country's Kurds to thaw the ice between the state and Kurdish citizens in Turkey. The package was discussed in Parliament in November. Though the government voiced several times its decisiveness to move forward with the package until it is finalized, saying the package is a top priority for the country, it has lagged behind many other important developments in Turkey.

It is currently sitting on the dusty shelves of Parliament as politicians are busy discussing an apparent Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) plot to overthrow the AK Party government.

According to Star columnist Ergun Babahan, the subversive plot -- titled the Balyoz (Sledgehammer) Security Operation Plan -- has forced the Kurdish initiative to take a backseat. "Even if we do not realize it, Turkey has a Kurdish question. This question is indeed a matter of human rights. It is not possible for Turkey to become a real democratic country unless this question is settled," he remarked.

The Sledgehammer document

was exposed by a Turkish daily last month. It mentions a systematic military plan to foment chaos in society through violent acts, among which were planned bomb attacks on the Fatih and Beyazit mosques in Istanbul. The desired result would be increased internal pressure on the government that would lead to a military takeover.

The plan was drafted in 2003, shortly after the AK Party came to power. The masterminds of the plan were retired Gen. Çetin Doğan, the then-commander of the 1st Army, retired Former Air Forces Commander Gen. İbrahim Fırtına and retired Gen. Ergin Saygun.

Since its exposure, Turkey has been fervently discussing the plan.

Ümit Fırat, a Kurdish writer and intellectual, said recent developments are indeed harbingers of the yields of the democratization initiative. "I mean the [Sledgehammer] document has been exposed thanks to the initiative. When the initiative is finalized, no individual or authority will dare to prepare such documents. The initiative has reached a point that cannot be rewound," he remarked.

The writer also pointed to growing public criticism that the government is proceeding slowly with the democratization package.

"There is growing criticism over the performance of the package. But the government needs time. What is included in the package is not something to be prepared in a few hours. However, this does not mean that the government was fully successful during the [initiative] process. The government picked the right targets for the democratization package, but its calculations to that end were wrong," he noted.

Asked about the shortcomings of the AK Party government concerning the package, Fırat pointed to a lack of political will to call to account instigators of Sledgehammer-like plans.

In the past few months, many alleged military plots have been uncovered. The main point of all those documents is their intention to undermine the power of the AK Party

government. The Action Plan to Fight Reactionaryism, for example, was drafted by a colonel on active duty with the ulterior motive of discrediting the government in the eyes of the public. The Cage Operation Action Plan, on the other hand, mentions a subversive plot to assassinate prominent figures of the non-Muslim community and kill dozens of young students visiting a museum in Istanbul. The desired result of the plan was to increase internal and external pressure on the AK Party, which would eventually lead to a military takeover.

Fırat also voiced his own criticism of the government on the democratization package. "Kurds, including myself, have urgent expectations of the package. One of them is the restoration of Kurdish village names. The government has been very slow to make this move. It put forward some conditions for the move, which caused disappointment among the public," he noted.

The democratization package includes a plan by the government to restore Kurdish names to some villages in eastern and southeastern Turkey, which are predominantly Kurdish. The move will depend on the will of residents of those places. If any village or town wants to change its name, it will apply to the district governor, and after a referendum or referendum-like research, it will be possible to change the name of a village or town if the majority of the inhabitants want it.

Forgotten people : Iraq's Kurds

The fight for power in northern Iraq



By Peter Fragiskatos
special to CBC News

With a population approaching 30 million, roughly the size of Canada's, the Kurds are the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East, after the Arabs, Turks and Persians.

Their lament, of course, is that they do not have a country of their own, living as they do in parts of Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria.

Nor do they speak a common language or practise a single religion, although most are Sunni Muslims. Instead, what binds these dispersed Kurdish communities together is a shared and often violent history.

This is why the recent execution of Ali Hassan al-Majid, Saddam Hussein's cousin and loyal follower — known to much of the world as Chemical Ali — has been treated with such jubilation in Kurdish Iraq.

Almost as much as Saddam himself, al-Majid was the face of the slaughter that was unleashed upon Iraq's Kurds in the late 1980s, in particular the chemical weapons attack on the community of Halabja.

After Kurdish leaders, seeking more cultural and political control over the oil-rich north, decided to side with Iran during the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988, Iraq unleashed a policy of terror against its Kurdish population known as the al-Anfal (spoils of war) campaign.

Put in charge of maintaining order in the region, al-Majid played a leading role in planning and overseeing the operation, and in destroying the rural communities that were the backbone of Kurdish rebellion.

Change for the better?

Iraq's Kurdish region is often held up as a success story in the troubled history following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

Kurdish is now an official language in Iraq alongside Arabic. Hoshiyar Zebari, a prominent Kurd is Iraq's foreign minister while Jalal Talabani, a former Kurdish rebel leader, serves as the country's president.

As well, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has had its autonomy over everything except foreign and defence policy officially recognized in Dohuk, Arbil and Suleymaniya, the three northern provinces under its control.

Depending on the outcome of a future (and long-delayed) referendum, the regional government's reach might yet extend to cover the province and city of Kirkuk, whose oil field makes up around 13 per cent of Iraq's proven reserves.

Perhaps most importantly, the violence that has plagued the rest of Iraq has not been seen in Iraqi Kurdistan.

The problem, though, is that very little of the change has trickled down. Much of the population, particularly outside of major cities such as Arbil and Suleymaniya, lack access to clean water, electricity and adequate hospitals.

More importantly, judging by a recent bout of very public protests, Iraq's Kurds seem to believe that their leaders are failing them and that they have not felt the improvements to their lives that were expected to follow the U.S. invasion of 2003.

Halabja again

Halabja is a good example. In March 2006, hundreds of Kurds, young and old, took to the streets to protest against government corruption, in the process setting fire to a museum built as a memorial to Halabja vic

They accused local officials of using the tragedy for their own benefit by pocketing millions of dollars donated by the international community for roads, hospitals, schools, access to clean water and job creation.

It was the largest protest Iraqi Kurdistan has seen in 15 years and was followed by several other violent demonstrations held in response to similar concerns.

That feeling of betrayal has not gone away. In late December, large crowds again confronted security forces in riots that broke out in Pirmargrun, a town on the outskirts of Suleymaniya.

Again, the demands of the protesters were the same: jobs, schools, hospitals, clean water, electricity. The KRG's response to these outbursts is that Iraqi Kurdistan is still trying to overcome the legacy of war and the brutality of Saddam Hussein.

Social and economic transformation, Kurdish leaders say, will take decades and they must be given time to craft the necessary policies that will attract more foreign investment, particularly in the oil fields that hold the region's future potential.

Movement for change

The fact that war-torn societies can't be transformed overnight is obvious. But at the same time the problems of Kurdish Iraq are much more complex and deep-rooted.

Opening a business here often depends on one's willingness to give a cut of the profits to one or both of the region's two main parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

The ruling Talabani and Barzani families have amassed impressive fortunes through their dominance of trade, private businesses and land.



A Kurdish woman shows off her ink-stained finger at the polling station in Kurdish Iraq in July 2009. There has been political stability in the north but not the economic boost Kurds were expecting. (Reuters)

The many civil society organizations in Iraqi Kurdistan — which the KRG regularly boasts about and presents as symbols of an emerging democracy — are almost always controlled by the KDP and PUK.

The same is true for the media and criticizing any of this carries the risk of imprisonment and even torture.

In July 2009, a challenge to the ruling parties was made by the Gorran (change) movement, which captured 23 per cent of the vote in local parliamentary elections.

Whether Gorran can succeed in cleaning up government is unclear as the Kurdish security forces are still ruled over by the two old-line parties and Gorran activists have already come under violent attack on occasion.

For all its promise, therefore, the future of Iraqi Kurdistan looks bleak.

The KRG could well end up fighting the central government for Kirkuk — which could lead to the dismemberment of Iraq.

And even if the Kurds win control of the oil-rich territory, there is no guarantee — given the power fiefs that exist — that these oil profits will flow to the poor and deserving, those victims of Saddam's brutality who had set so much store in the cultural and political rights obtained in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion.

Peter Fragiskatos is a PhD candidate at Cambridge University. His research focuses on aspects of peacebuilding, economic development and democratization, with particular reference to the Middle East, South Asia and Western Africa.

In Northern Iraq, a Vote Seems Likely to Split

By STEVEN LEE MYERS

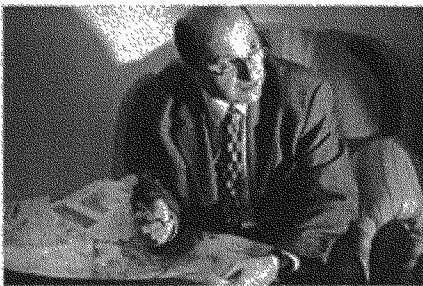
QARAQOSH, Iraq — There was a hope, not long ago, that democracy would mean peace and stability for Nineveh, a place where cultures and armies have clashed since biblical times. Instead, democracy is hardening divisions — of people, of resources, of land — in ways that threaten the future of Iraq itself.

Last year's election of a new provincial governor and council spawned political deadlock, inflamed by ethnic tensions. A boycott by a third of the council's new members since last summer has crippled the government's work at a time when Iraqis were promised that the elections would improve it.

Basic services remain meager, the economy feeble. The violence, though diminishing, is relentless, ravaging a crossroads of peoples and faiths in the plains where Arab Iraq meets the Kurdish mountains.

"This is the democracy the Americans brought," said Hussein Mahmoud Ahmed, a Shabak, a member of a small minority group that occupies the plains.

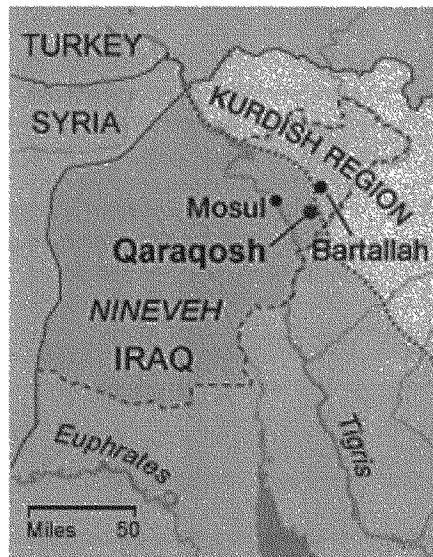
It is a sentiment increasingly heard across Iraq as the country prepares to elect a new Parliament on March 7. The vote — only the country's third since the American invasion in 2003 — is consid-



Khasro Goran, the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Mosul, has led a boycott of the provincial council in Nineveh.

red crucial to forging a unified, functioning democratic state. Here in Nineveh Province, though, as elsewhere, it is highlighting Iraq's alarming fragmentation.

Lebanon is a model Iraqis often cite, a democracy that produces gridlock among ethnic and sectarian parties as divided before elections as after them, resulting in an ever tense political paralysis. Bosnia is another. When it comes to land and bor-



Nineveh borders the region under Kurdish authority.

ders, disputed between the Arabs and the Kurdish regional government, the divisions are as intractable as those of Israelis and Palestinians.

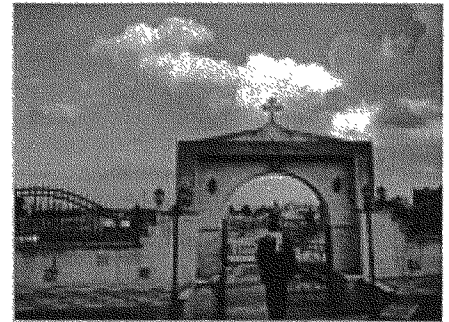
When the federal government started to build a textile factory in Mr. Ahmed's village, Bartallah, in a part of Nineveh controlled by the Kurds, the Kurdish regional government halted the project lest it create jobs for workers loyal to Mosul, the largely Arab provincial capital.

In Qaraqosh, the ownership of land is so fraught politically that the community council created a "black book" to register the name of any Christian who sold property to "an outsider."

"We are living as doves among wolves," said Staifo Jamil, a leader of a community council that represents Qaraqosh, a Christian town that lives in such fear that it mustered its own irregular militia to stand watch.

Iraq's democracy is still young, and compared with those of other countries in the region, it remains the most competitive, if not exactly robust. Voter apathy and disillusionment, however, are already taking root. The election, delayed for months by bickering in Baghdad, has become a contest not of ideas as much as for advantage in the way the vote itself will be conducted and the parliamentary seats distributed.

The murky process to disqualify candidates with ties to Saddam Hussein's Baath Party knocked out at least 10 candidates allied with the governor, Atheel al-Nujaifi, a Sunni who sought to restore Arab dominance in a still divided pro-



A Christian church in Karamless, Iraq. In Qaraqosh, a Christian town in Nineveh Province, townspeople have organized their own irregular militia to stand guard.

vince. Among them was the mayor of Mosul, Zuhar al-Araji, who once worked closely with the American military.

Nineveh remains split, as it has since 2003, between Arab- and Kurdish-controlled regions. The tensions are so high that the American military this month joined troops from both sides to police the line of control along a series of new checkpoints.

Politicians on both sides on the line complain of restrictions when they campaign on the opposite side: harassment of candidates, pressure on parties, violence. When Mr. Nujaifi recently crossed the unofficial boundary on his way to Tall Kayf, his convoy was pelted with stones and tomatoes and briefly held up by Kurdish troops, the pesh merga. On Sunday evening a woman running with a secular coalition that includes Mr. Nujaifi and a former prime minister, Ayad al-Allawi, was shot to death outside her home in Mosul.

Mr. Nujaifi's election last year raised hopes that the post-2003 disenfranchisement of Sunnis in Nineveh, which once fueled the insurgency, was coming to an end, and some measure of reconciliation would result.

That it has not is one reason that few interviewed here expressed hope that the coming election would result in anything better.

"Nothing is going to happen," said Saleh Hassan Ali al-Jubouri, the mayor of Ash Shura, a town on the Arab side of the Tigris River not far from the ancient ruins of Kalhu, or Nimrud.

"We know which part belongs to the Kurds and which part to Nineveh," he said, when asked how the results in March might affect the territorial dispute that has cleaved the province. He repeated, with evident disdain, "Nothing is going to hap-

pen.”

What is striking is how faithfully Iraqis expect to vote by identity, despite campaign appeals to national unity.

Issues — basic services, economic development, security — all seem to stem from identity as much as politics. “First ethnicity, second political party,” was how the leading Kurdish official here, Khasro Goran, put it.

The new Parliament will include 31 members from Nineveh, and Mr. Goran expects the main national Kurdish coalition to win 10 seats — based not on polls, but on the estimated percentage of Kurds in the province. Nineveh’s small minority communities — Yazidis, Shabaks and Christians — have dedicated parliamentary seats reserved for their representatives.

Mr. Goran, who has led the boycott of the provincial council, blames the governor and his party for the increasing bitterness, saying stability in Nineveh will come only with respect for minority parties, like his.

He also acknowledged that Nineveh’s border with the three officially recognized Kurdish provinces to the north is enmeshed in the impasse between the government of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki and that of the Kurdish regional president, Massoud Barzani, over the extent of Iraq’s federalism. That, as much as the local disputes, has perpetuated Mr. Goran’s boycott. Becoming the loyal opposition in Nineveh might imply recognition of Mosul’s political authority over the whole region.

“Some of the problems are local, but

others are Iraqi,” Mr. Goran said in the Kurdish regional capital, Erbil, referring to the disputes that plague Nineveh. “And we have to pay the price.”

Khalis Isho, a candidate from Qaraqosh vying to win one of the Christian seats in Parliament, said that the country’s political leaders had failed — failed to embrace democratic values of rights and representative government, failed to learn that elections are only one part of democracy.

“I don’t believe we will reduce the activities of the terrorists until the thinking in Iraq generally and in Mosul in particular improves,” he said, “until they understand that peace in Mosul means peaceful coexistence.”



February 10, 2010—

Kirkuk's Arabs seek national unity despite sectarianism

Monsters and Critics.com

By dpa correspondents

Kirkuk - The area around the disputed northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk is perhaps a strange place to look for politicians urging civil reconciliation - when much of the embattled country is gripped by fierce sectarianism.

The city and its environs have long been embroiled in a dispute so fraught that they were left out of previous parliamentary elections.

A row over voter-registration in the city delayed passage of the country's elections law for months, whilst warring politicians in the city regularly issue incendiary invectives on the main issues of the day.

Many Iraqi Kurds hope to make the city and its nearby oilfields the capital of a future independent state, calling it their 'Jerusalem.' Iraqi Arab and Turkmen politicians view the region as an integral part of Iraq.

In recent days, in Baghdad and elsewhere, massive crowds loyal to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, a Shiite Muslim, have come out to protest against the electoral commission.

The commission decided last week to reverse a January ban on some 500 candidates' participation in the March parliamentary elections, imposed because of their alleged connections to the former ruling Baath Party.

The issue has brought tensions between Iraq's Sunni and Shiite political parties to a boil.

Yet in the sleepy agricultural district of al-

Huwaija, just outside Kirkuk, candidates preparing for the start of campaigning for the March parliamentary polls say they will fight alongside al-Maliki for national unity and reconciliation.

Here the dispute is not between Shiite and Sunni Arabs, but between Arabs and Kurds.

Here, Sunni tribal leaders have found common cause with local Turkmen politicians, some of them Shiite, and with Shiite political parties in Baghdad that now share power with the Kurds.

The 80 or so farming villages that make up al-Huwaija may be rural, but their location and its demographics makes them vital.

The district is heavily Arab. Pipelines linking nearby oilfields to Turkey via Syria run through the territory. It abuts predominantly Kurdish districts. It sits at the crossroads of the entry to the critical territories of Mosul, Tikrit, Diyala and Baghdad.

In this critical district, Sheikh Khairi Nathem al-Asimi is running for parliament with al-Maliki's State of Law Coalition.

'I decided to join this list because I am confident in al-Maliki's policies, and to participate in the eradication of sectarianism and sedition,' he told the German Press Agency dpa.

'Although he was unable to achieve everything he set out to do after Iraq's experience with war, destruction, and occupation, he placed the first building blocks for a state of justice and the rule of law,' al-Asimi said. 'He needs support.'

'I believe in and strive for maintaining the unity of Iraq, and for Kirkuk's remaining an Iraqi area, as well as complete rights for all

groups in Kirkuk, without one dominating the other,' al-Asimi said.

'I have never been nominated before,' Sheikh Ibrahim Nayef Al-Mahbari, running with the former Prime Minister Iyad al-Allawi's National Accord list, told dpa. 'I will work to ensure the rights of Arabs in Kirkuk, and to ensure that the city remains Iraqi.'

Al-Mahbari said he would aim to 'secure a decent livelihood for the farmers and peasants, to ease some of their suffering, and to bring back jobs.'

'I want to be a moderate, Arab voice for unity, rights and security,' he said.

The area was formerly the site of a vigorous and lethal insurgency led by al-Qaeda and Naqshbandi militants allied with Baathists - but, while its pipelines have still come under attack - al-Huwaija has been relatively quiet since 2008.

That was when Iraqi and US forces enticed insurgents to switch sides and join Sahwa, or 'Awakening,' militias to police the region.

Abdel-Raziq Mohammed al-Jaburi is running with the National Front, led by Saleh al-Mutlaq, one of the most prominent politicians previously banned from running because of his alleged Baathist connections.

'Al-Huwaija is more anxious than ever to participate in the elections and to ensure a strong representation in parliament,' he told dpa.

'Now that they're not threatened (by militants), people are free to consider and choose for themselves,' he said.

The next month will tell whether that hope comes true.

Iraqi Elections – The View From Kurdistan

By SAM DAGHER

ERBIL, Iraq — A senior Kurdish leader here told me recently that anyone who aspired to become the next prime minister of Iraq needed the blessing of the Kurds. He said it was a “simple fact.”

Iraq’s Kurds have indeed come a long way since their leaders were guerilla fighters in the mountains confronting Saddam Hussein’s government, which did not hesitate to use chemical attacks to kill thousands of people.

The Kurdish region continues to solidify its position as a haven of security



and prosperity compared with the rest of Iraq. Oil companies and foreign investors are pouring into the region hoping to use it as a launch pad for expansion into the rest of Iraq when the right moment comes.

Last year the region’s booming capital, Erbil, became home to the first official General Motors dealership in all of Iraq since the fall of Mr. Hussein’s government.

This month the Lebanese pop sensation Elissa will make her Iraq debut at a concert in Erbil.

The Kurds’ status as major players and power brokers was amply demonstrated during the protracted negotiations over a new election law in the fall.

Crossroads

But like the rest of Iraq, Kurdistan stands at a crossroads in 2010. The outcome of several unresolved national issues involving Kurds will determine whether Iraq forges ahead on the road to democracy or spirals into endless cycles of violence.

Kurds generally refer to everything beyond their so-called fault line as “the other side.” The line cuts through oil-rich and disputed territories that stretch from northwestern Iraq close to the Syrian border all the way to the Iranian border to the east.

The American military recently began establishing joint checkpoints along this fault line in a bid to get Kurdish forces known as pesh merga and the Iraqi Army to cooperate on security and prevent insurgents and extremists



Elissa. Fayeze Nureldine/AFP/Getty

from exploiting the situation while giving politicians the space to work out a settlement.

“These sort of measures are Band-Aids to build confidence and generate stability that gives people a better environment to work through” their differences, said Barham Salih, the Kurdish region’s prime minister, in a recent interview.

The big question in 2010 and beyond will be whether or not the Kurdish region and the central government take advantage of these “Band-Aids” before the withdrawal of American troops by the end of 2011.

“I think as the Americans are leaving I am very, very concerned,” Mr. Salih cautioned.

However he dismissed mounting concerns over the Balkanization of Iraq.

“This is no Bosnia,” he said. “People have bumped along. My sense is that the story of Iraq in the next four years will be bumping along, trying different permutations and different coalitions.”

Kirkuk

There is, nevertheless, a lot at stake. The Kurds and the central government have to resolve the fate of the disputed territories including the oil-rich city of Kirkuk and agree on a formula to share resources and the revenue from Iraq’s oil wealth.

Also, they need to define the relationship between the Kurdish armed forces, the pesh merga, and Iraq’s army.

But more fundamentally they have to agree on the shape of Iraq itself, whether it should be a centrally governed state or more of a federation of regions and provinces, as favored by the Kurds.

None of this deliberation is possible without security, leading sometimes to draconian measures like requiring all Iraqis arriving from the south to obtain special clearance before entering Kurdistan – something that infuriates Arabs.

Masrouf Barzani, a Kurdish intelligence chief, said the region simply could not take a chance because Iraqi security forces farther south had demonstrated their failure to control the situation.

He said Kurdish forces needed to be present inside the disputed northern territories – even though their fate has yet to be decided under the Constitution – to protect Kurds living there and to create a buffer security zone.

Nineveh

He said neighboring Nineveh remains the strongest foothold in Iraq for insurgents linked to Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia and Mr. Hussein’s former governing Baath Party.

“We believe in democracy, we believe in coexistence, we have tried after all the atrocities to prevent the war between Kurds and Arabs,” Mr. Barzani said.

“Unfortunately some elements do not believe in that, and they push for it.”

But in addition to external threats, serious internal challenges have conjured up memories of Kurdish infighting in the 1990s.

For the first time ever, the region’s two ruling parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Democratic Party, face a serious challenge to their



political and economic hegemony.

A new movement called Gorran, which means “change” in Kurdish, did surprisingly well in July’s local elections running on a platform of social equality and an end to corruption and the decades-long patronage system associated with the two parties.

The competition between Gorran and the ruling parties is so intense in the weeks leading to March’s national elections that the regional president had to intervene last month to put an end to spiraling tensions that included the killing of a Gorran supporter and the burning of the office of a Gorran politician.

The Other Side

I just received a six-month residency permit here, and the top of the laminated card reads in both Kurdish and Arabic: “The Federal Republic of Iraq, Kurdistan Regional Government.”

A Kurdish security officer told me that it would not be recognized on “the other side,” farther south.

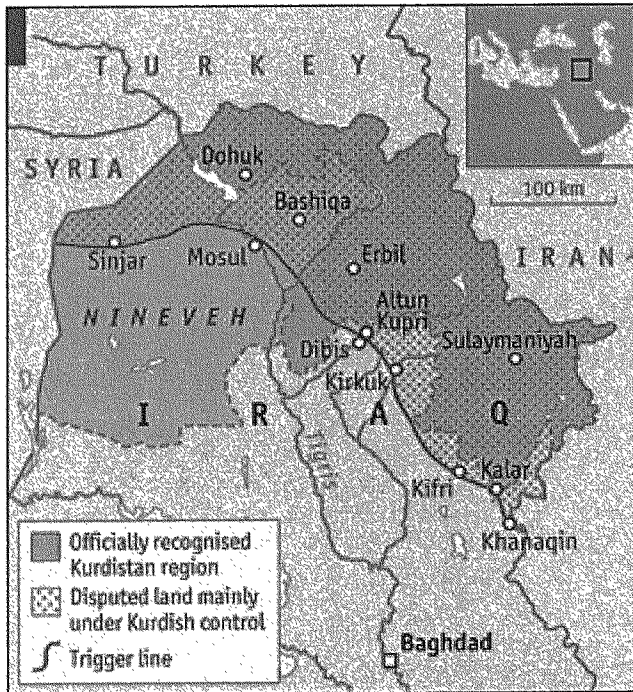
This truly sums up the current state of affairs between the Kurdish region and the central government: attached yet detached.

Iraq's dangerous trigger line

Too late to keep the peace?

KIRKUK AND MOSUL

The Americans are trying again to keep the peace between Arabs and Kurds



FROM the market town of Khanaqin, on the Iranian border, all the way to Sinjar, near the border with Syria, a fortified line snakes across northern Iraq. To the east and north stand Kurdish forces, known as the Peshmerga, keen to reclaim land taken from them by Saddam Hussein more than two decades ago. On the other side of the line, to the west and south, are Iraqi regular-army troops sent by the central government in Baghdad to stop ancient cities along the Tigris river falling into what it fears may become a purely Kurdish sphere.

The two forces have come close to flat-out fighting several times, usually outside the cities where commanders act off their own bat. Last year an Iraqi army unit drove into the disputed, though mainly Kurdish, town of Altun Kupri and took up sniper positions on rooftops. When residents, supported by armed Peshmerga, started demonstrating against their presence, the Arab soldiers were told to shoot to kill. Bloodshed was avoided at the last minute by American troops sta-

tioned nearby.

Small incidents of this kind could easily spark a wider conflict. Edginess along the "trigger line", as it has become known, is now the biggest threat to Iraq's stability. Sectarian tension between Sunni and Shia Arabs further south are far from resolved, but an ethnic conflict between Arabs and Kurds is more dangerous, partly because both sides are well-armed. Hence the Americans are making one last effort to dampen tension before their combat troops leave Iraq by the end of August.

Since late January, several hundred Kurdish and Arab soldiers have been patrolling parts of the disputed area together, under American tutelage. The idea, forged by General Ray Odierno, the overall American commander in Iraq, is to build trust between the two sides by bringing them into daily contact. In addition to staging joint patrols, they have started manning checkpoints together. In a few places they sleep and eat under the same roof.

Americans are always around to

keep the peace. Patrols are tripartite, so the Americans are now peacekeepers rather than counter-insurgents. Since they withdrew from all Iraq's cities last year, they have not been manning checkpoints outside their bases.

Will this work? Tension ran high before provincial elections a year ago—and is running even higher now, as the general election on March 7th draws near. The hope is that joint checkpoints will let voters move more freely in the disputed areas and prevent incidents such as one that occurred when Kurdish soldiers stopped the Arab governor of restive Nineveh province from visiting the Kurdish-controlled town of Bashiqqa, in the area he is supposed to govern. It is also hoped that the joint patrols may deter al-Qaeda's suicide-bombers, who want to exploit ethnic tension along the trigger line to reignite civil war.

But trust is scarce. The Kurds regard Abdul Amir, who commands an Iraqi army division near the disputed city of Kirkuk, as a former Saddam henchman who once slaughtered their people and may be ready to do so again. In turn, many Arabs believe the Kurds will never compromise on land they occupied after Saddam's fall.

Yet the two sides are co-operating well in Kirkuk, where they and the Americans jointly operate a police command-centre. But assassinations and kidnappings of officials persist. Efforts to co-operate along the trigger line can seem to make matters worse. In Khanaqin Kurdish soldiers and Iraqi interior-ministry forces run joint patrols in the town, but the commander on each side claims he is in sole charge. There is little chance that fortifications along the line in Kalar and Kifri, north-west of Khanaqin, will be dismantled soon or landmines removed. Nor are the Kurds likely to take down fortifications around Dibil, where a big oil-pumping station sits on top of one of Iraq's biggest oilfields.

So the American peace effort may have come too late. The two sides, both ruthless, are engaged in what they see as an existential struggle. In the end, a solid peace will emerge only if clear regional borders are agreed. And that has yet to happen.

Hilterman: Goran will weaken Kurdish bloc in Parliament

Erbil - Joost R. Hiltermann, deputy program director for the Middle East and North Africa at the International Crisis Group (ICG), spoke with Rudaw about the upcoming Iraqi elections. He says the decision of the Kurdish opposition group Gorran [Change] will weaken the Kurdish position in Baghdad.

Prior his job at the ICG, Hilterman was director of the Arms Division of Human Rights Watch. In his last book, *A Poisonous Affair: America, Iraq, and the Gassing of Halabja*, he examines the Anfal genocide carried out by Saddam against the Kurds. He was also involved in ICG reports on the situation of Kirkuk and is considered one of the most prominent analysts of Iraq.

In the last Iraqi elections of 2005, Kurds had two different lists. This time they have five lists. Will this affect the Kurdish position?

The main problem is Goran's decision to run separate from the Kurdistan Alliance. This will weaken the Kurdish bloc in parliament and may cost it some positions. It is also questionable whether Goran will support Mam Jalal for a return to the presidency. If they don't, the Kurds may lose that position altogether.

In general the Kurds do not have a clear message for the southern Iraqi cities Baghdad and Basra. What can the Kurds do, so that they can get Arab votes?

If you want to win over the Arabs, you should make clear that you intend to remain part of Iraq and play the Iraqi game – and really mean it. That's the only thing that really matters to them. That's why Kirkuk is so important. They see the Kurds' attempt to win it as laying down a building block toward Kurdish independence.

The Change list movement (Gorran)



claims to have a new motto. But they aren't very active in Baghdad and try to gain votes from the Iraqi Shia by talking positive about Imam Ali. Do you think this will be positive for the results for the Kurds in Baghdad and the other cities in south?

We will have to see.... Arabs politicians may try to woo Goran away from the Kurdistan Alliance. It may get votes in the south. But I think it will remain limited. After all, Goran takes the same line on strategic issues as the Kurdistan Alliance. They are different mostly on internal Kurdish issues.

Among all those tensions, do you think if the Kurds remain in power it will guarantee protection for Iraqi democracy?

Do you mean: if the Kurds remain part of the government in Baghdad? (They are not in power now; they are sharing it.) If that's what you mean: If the Kurds genuinely intend to stay inside Iraq and are not trying to use their power in Baghdad to facilitate their departure from Iraq sometime in the future, then their presence in Baghdad will be an important check on any undemocratic tendencies that other parties might have.

In 1980s there were nearly one million Shia Kurds (Fayli) living in Baghdad and they controlled most of trading cen-

ters in Baghdad. They were accused of supporting Iran and kicked out by Saddam to Iran. Currently the Kurds do not have a lot of support in Baghdad. Although there are many Kurds there. What's the reason?

Many Fayli Kurds seem to vote for the Ittilaaf or perhaps for Maliki; they voted for the Ittilaaf in 2005. As for Sunni Kurds, who might be more likely to vote for Kurdish parties in the north, many left to Kurdistan or abroad during the civil war in Baghdad, and they haven't come back. A lot of Baghdadi Kurds are secular and perhaps vote for Allawi.

It's very difficult to put a scale on Iraqi election, because since 1987 in KRG and since 1997 in other parts of Iraq, there hasn't been any census. Do you think this election will change the map of Iraqi political parties?

It should, and I think it will. I certainly hope so, because it would be healthy.

Do you think the refusal of some hundreds of Sunni Arab candidates in the election process like Salih Mutlaq, once again make Sunnis turn to Al-Qaeda and cause more violence in Iraq?

If a significant number of candidates is excluded, especially if they represent one coalition or one community, their followers are bound to respond, including with violence. This would be extremely unfortunate and should be avoided.

From the surface it seems the political parties won't be focusing on sectarian divide anymore, but don't you think the people still will vote on the base of sectarianism?

Many people still do, unfortunately. Not just sectarian, but also ethnic. How many Kurds vote for non-Kurdish parties?

© Rudaw

Displaced Arabs need Kurdish



A number of Arab IDPs attend a Kurdish language course in Ainkawa, Erbil.

The Kurdish Globe

Today, many Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan cannot speak Arabic.

Three months ago, Ali Abbas started learning Kurdish. Like many Arab Iraqis living in Northern Iraq, he is finding that fluency in Kurdish is vital for employment in the region.

Abbas, a 24 year-old graduate from the College of

Science at Salahadin University in Erbil, wants to find work in Kurdistan because his family, who moved there from Baghdad two years ago due to security fears, has no plans to return until it is much safer.

"To be honest, I don't want to work in shopping malls, because I am a university graduate. I want to work for an NGO or a company, but I have to speak Kurdish well to do that," he said in broken

Kurdish.

Today, many Kurds in Kurdistan cannot speak Arabic, particularly the younger generation. Older people - having served in the Iraqi army and worked in other parts of Iraq - speak very good Arabic. Since the 1991 uprising, English has become more popular among Kurds than Arabic. It makes it difficult for Iraqi Kurds and Arabs to communicate with each other.

Three months ago, the Kurdistan Youth Empowerment Organization (KYEO), with the help of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), began a Kurdish language course for around 500 Iraqi Arab and Christian displaced persons living in Iraqi Kurdistan Region.

The schools are located in Ainkawa, the predominantly Christian district of Erbil city. The classes are split according

to the students' ages. In one class the participants' ages are 50 and older.

Shad Muhammad, head of KYEO, said USAID has allocated US\$500,000 for the project. "Each student gets \$5 every day for transportation, and the teachers get monthly salaries."

According to Muhammad, around 2,000 people have registered their names for Kurdish lessons, but he could only accept 500 due to the limits of the financial support. "We want this course to be continued and to let everyone participate in the course, but we need support," he said.

Muhammad sees three possible ways to pay for the courses. USAID might offer more money. The Kurdistan Regional Government's Ministry of Education could step-in, or the students could pay themselves for their studies.

"We talked with the

Ministry of Education about funding and the atmosphere was positive," he said.

The students, who are allowed to speak only in Kurdish in class, spoke of their happiness with the course.

"In the downtown market, I communicate with shopkeepers in Kurdish and face no problems," said Dominique Safien, 17. His family left Kirkuk a year ago.

"Now, without difficulty, I communicate with my Kurdish friends at school," he added.

As part of the course, every week, the students watch a Kurdish movie and then discuss it. Soon they will start visiting supermarkets and public places as groups, with the aim of communicating with local Kurdish people. Local traffic policemen have visited the classes to talk in Kurdish to the students about traffic laws in Erbil city.

For the older students, lear-

ning Kurdish is mainly a means to getting a job.

"I went to the Coca Cola manufacturing company in Erbil city to apply for a job," said Basim Omer, a mechanical engineer. "The company's manager said he can't give me the job since he needs an engineer who can speak Kurdish language. The incident made me look for a way to learn Kurdish language."

The course has become well known among Arabs and displaced families living in Kurdistan Region.

Muhammad, head of KYEO, added that it is not just individuals looking for Kurdish language courses. He says he has been approached by a large number of Arab company directors and officials, working for the Kurdistan Region Government, as well as some Iraqi MPs, asking KYEO to open private courses for them to learn Kurdish.

Los Angeles Times February 23, 2010

Supreme Court weighs anti-terrorism law, free-speech rights

The justices sound closely split over whether a USC professor illegally advised the Kurdistan Workers Party, listed as a foreign terrorist group.

By David G. Savage

The Supreme Court struggled Tuesday to resolve a conflict between the free-speech rights of a Los Angeles-based advocate for international peace and a broad anti-terrorism law that makes it a crime to advise a foreign terrorist group, even if it means advising its members to seek peace.

The justices sounded narrowly split between those who saw the case as a terrorism issue and those who saw it as a free-speech issue.

The case is being closely followed by human rights groups and international aid organizations.

U.S. Solicitor General Elena Kagan urged the court to uphold the broad sweep of the terrorism law and to permit prosecutions of anyone who gives any support to a terrorist group.

"What Congress decided is that when you help Hezbollah build homes, you're helping Hezbollah build bombs," she said, referring to the Lebanese Shiite political party and militia.

But Georgetown University Law Center professor David Cole said the human rights advocates he represents are interested in urging foreign groups to avoid violence and to take their disputes to the United Nations.

"They seek to advise them on peaceful conflict resolution. They seek to support only lawful activities," he said.

Cole is representing the Humanitarian Law Project in Los Angeles and its president, Ralph Fertig, a USC professor who has advised the Kurds in Turkey.

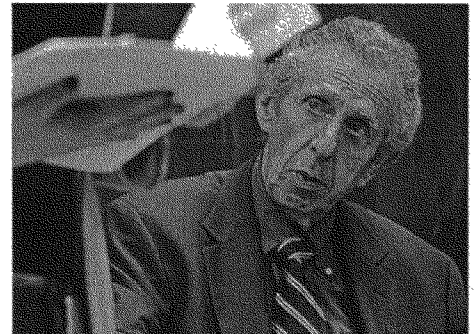
Since 1997, the State Department has listed the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, as a foreign terrorist group, which means that Fertig could go to prison for giving "expert advice or assistance" to Kurdish leaders.

Kagan agreed that Fertig could be prosecuted. She also agreed that an American citizen could be prosecuted for drafting a legal brief or writing a newspaper article in coordination with a banned group.

For his part, Cole urged the justices to rule that the 1st Amendment protects those who speak out on behalf of or advise foreign terrorist organizations, as long as they advocate only peace and non-violence.

Justice Antonin Scalia said he saw no constitutional problems with the law.

"The theory of this legislation is that when you aid any of their enterprises, you aid the organization. Why isn't that reasonable?" he asked Cole.



Ralph Fertig is a retired judge and a USC professor. "I am opposed to violence," he says. (Gary Friedman / Los Angeles Times)

But Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen G. Breyer and Sonia Sotomayor said Fertig and his allies are not seeking to aid terrorists or terrorism.

"All they want to do is speak about lawful activities," Ginsburg said.

"What's the government's interest . . . in forbidding training in international law?" Breyer asked.

Justice Anthony M. Kennedy quizzed both lawyers, but said he was troubled that the case itself was vague and abstract. Fertig had not been prosecuted or convicted, so it was hard to decide whether the government had gone too far, he said.

The justices will meet behind closed doors this week to vote on whether to uphold the law as it stands or carve out an exception for free-speech claims involving peaceful advocacy.

A ruling in *Holder vs. Humanitarian Law Project* will be handed down by June.

Le Monde
9 février 2010

Éditorial

Le jeu iranien

Les dernières péripéties sur le nucléaire iranien posent une question : y a-t-il un interlocuteur à Téhéran ? Plus que jamais, l'image donnée par les dirigeants de la République islamique est celle d'un groupe divisé aux propos contradictoires.

Il y a quelques jours, le président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad et son ministre des affaires étrangères, Manouchehr Mottaki, adoptent un ton conciliant. Ils laissent entendre qu'ils pourraient accepter une proposition qui leur a été faite en octobre : ils transféreraient à la Rus-

sie, puis à la France, quelque 1 200 kilos de leur uranium faiblement enrichi, à 3,5 % ; elles le leur rendraient traité à 20 %, selon un procédé qui rend improbable son emploi à des fins militaires. Ce serait un gage de la bonne volonté de l'Iran, alors que les États-Unis, les Européens et la Russie partagent la même conviction : la République islamique entend se doter de la possibilité de fabriquer une arme nucléaire.

Dimanche 7 février, changement de ton : M. Ahmadinejad annonce que les Iraniens vont commencer, eux-mêmes, à produire du combustible nucléaire enrichi à 20 %. C'est une façon de dire non à la proposition d'octobre, non à la reprise d'un dialogue sérieux avec l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA), bref un comportement qui confirme toutes les suspensions à l'égard du programme iranien.

En matière nucléaire, M. Ahmadinejad n'a pas le dernier mot. Il revient au seul Guide de la révolution, Ali Khamenei qui, lui aussi, est l'objet de pressions contradictoires. Le programme nucléaire est un enjeu de politique

intérieure iranienne au sein d'un pouvoir sorti décrédibilisé de la réélection contestée du président Ahmadinejad en juin dernier. Entre les clans qui entourent le Guide, il y a une surenchère nationaliste. Quiconque donne le sentiment de vouloir négocier sur le nucléaire est vite accusé de brader les « intérêts nationaux ».

Le débat est d'autant plus vif que la contestation des résultats truqués de juin ne faiblit pas. Pour la première fois, les chefs de l'opposition appellent leurs fidèles à descendre dans la rue. Ce doit être cette semaine, jeudi, à l'occasion du 31^e anniversaire de la révolution.

Que faire face à un régime instable, largement délégitimé à l'intérieur et incapable de répondre à la moindre offre d'ouverture ? La menace nucléaire est telle qu'elle impose de prendre des sanctions. Mais celles-ci doivent être calibrées pour épargner la population et tenir compte d'une situation encore très fluide au sein du pouvoir.

LE FIGARO 12 février 2010

Le chef de l'État défie l'Occident sur le dossier nucléaire

MAHMOUD AHMADINEJAD surenchérit. Devant des dizaines de milliers d'Iraniens rassemblés hier à Téhéran, à l'occasion du 31^e anniversaire de la révolution islamique, le président iranien est revenu sur le dossier nucléaire, au cœur d'un bras de fer entre son pays et la communauté internationale. Il a affirmé que l'Iran était devenu « une nation nucléaire » grâce à sa capacité de produire de l'uranium hautement enrichi.

L'Iran « est capable d'enrichir de l'uranium à plus de 20 %, et même à plus de 80 %, mais il ne le fera pas, car il n'en a pas besoin », a-t-il déclaré, avant de préciser que son pays avait procédé à l'usine de Natanz (centre) à son « pre-

mier chargement » d'uranium enrichi à 20 % et que la production triplerait dans un proche avenir. En réponse aux soupçons occidentaux sur les intentions réelles de la République islamique, Ahmadinejad a précisé : « La nation iranienne est assez courageuse pour que, si un jour nous voulions construire des bombes nucléaires, nous l'annoncions publiquement sans avoir peur de vous. »

« M. Obama désespère tout le monde »

Selon des estimations américaines, l'Iran ne sera pas en mesure de produire de l'uranium « de qualité militaire » avant 2013. À l'automne dernier, le

« groupe des six » (États-Unis, Chine, Russie, Grande-Bretagne, France et Allemagne) avait proposé à l'Iran de lui livrer du combustible enrichi à 20 % pour son réacteur médical de Téhéran, en échange de l'exportation de sa production d'uranium faiblement enrichi. Le but étant de l'empêcher de conserver un stock susceptible d'être enrichi à 90 % et utilisé à des fins militaires. Une

proposition que Téhéran se dit prêt à accepter, mais selon ses propres conditions. « Venez nous donner du combustible sans conditions préalables. Nous sommes prêts à en acheter à tout autre pays prêt à nous en fournir, y compris l'Amérique », a lancé Ahmadinejad

avec une pointe de défi.

Dans son discours, retransmis en direct à la télévision, le président iranien s'est également attaqué à son homolo-

gue américain. « Malheureusement, l'espoir de changement (aux États-Unis) est en train de se muer rapidement en désespoir », a affirmé Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. « M. Obama désespère tout le monde. (...) Malheureusement, il rate des occasions. Il n'agit pas correctement et va sur un chemin contraire à ses propres intérêts et à ceux du peuple américain, mais il sert la volonté des sionistes », a-t-il dit. ■

D. M.



Le président iranien pendant son discours, hier à Téhéran.
CAREN FIROUZ / REUTERS

Iran : pourquoi la politique des sanctions marche aussi mal

Certitude n° 1 en Europe, aux Etats-Unis, en Israël et dans le monde arabe : l'Iran est bien parti pour devenir une puissance nucléaire. Certitude n° 2 : pour tenter de l'en empêcher, il faut décider une nouvelle série de sanctions contre la République islamique. Certitude n° 3 : mieux vaut ne pas entretenir trop d'illusions sur leur efficacité.

En dépit du cauchemar que serait un Proche-Orient lancé dans la course aux armes nucléaires, les sanctions ne font pas l'unanimité. Membres permanents du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, la Russie et, plus encore, la Chine hésitent à s'en prendre à Téhéran. Aux Nations unies, Moscou et Pékin ont déjà voté avec les Occidentaux trois séries de sanctions, essentiellement commerciales. Mais ces mesures n'ont pas dissuadé le régime iranien : il n'entend pas

Il ne s'agit pas de pénaliser la population, dont une bonne partie manifeste chaque jour sa rébellion contre un pouvoir à la légitimité contestée

arrêter son programme d'enrichissement de l'uranium. Les sanctions ont été peu appliquées, détournées, contournées. Bref, elles n'ont pas « fait mal », ont observé, unanimes, les experts qui participaient, début février en Israël, au séminaire annuel de l'Institut pour la politique et la stratégie d'Herzliya (Herzliyaconference.org).

La Russie mène « un jeu compliqué et ambivalent », explique Bruno Tertrais, de la Fondation pour la recherche stratégique (FRS). La Russie est le plus gros fournisseur d'armements de la République islamique – un marché de quelque 2 milliards de dollars annuels (1,460 milliard d'euros), qui dope les comptes du complexe militaro-industriel moscovite. C'est une sonante

Analyse

Alain Frachon

Direction de la rédaction

et trébuchante raison pour ménager l'Iran. Certains au Kremlin ne pleureraient pas sur une explosion du prix du pétrole en cas de frappe sur les installations nucléaires iraniennes : les hydrocarbures représentent 80% des exportations russes... Mais la perspective d'une puissance nucléaire sur les bords de la mer Caspienne ne peut laisser le Kremlin impavide. Les Russes sont de plus en plus inquiets de l'évolution du programme nucléaire iranien. « Ils ont multiplié les avertissements sérieux à l'adresse de Téhéran », dit Bruno Tertrais.

Le cas chinois, lui, n'est pas ambigu. Jusque-là, Pékin suivait Moscou à l'ONU ; nouvelle venue dans le club des Grands, la Chine voulait jouer « modeste ». Cette époque est révolue. Les dirigeants du Parti communiste chinois (PCC) s'érigent en défenseurs du régime islamiste du président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Ton vengeur, très années 1960, le *Quotidien du peuple*, le journal du PCC, accuse les Etats-Unis d'avoir monté « une brigade d'internauts » pour déstabiliser M. Ahmadinejad. Dans l'affaire nucléaire, la Chine ne veut pas de sanctions. Pareilles mesures, dit-elle, menaceraient les chances de succès du dialogue avec Téhéran – dialogue qui a pour principale caractéristique de ne pas exister : depuis un an, l'Iran refuse la main tendue par Barack Obama. Pékin peut être tenté de se saisir de ce dossier à des fins de revanche : faire payer aux Etats-Unis leur récente décision de vendre pour 6,4 milliards de dollars d'armes « défensives » à Taiwan (que la Chine considère comme une province sécessionniste).

La politique étrangère chinoise, comme celle de pas mal d'autres pays, est essentiellement économique, voire énergétique :

les Chinois ont besoin de gaz et de pétrole, plus que jamais. Les échanges commerciaux sino-iraniens sont substantiels : 25 milliards de dollars en 2009 ; l'Iran fournit 13% des importations de pétrole chinoises... Professorale, la secrétaire d'Etat Hillary Clinton accuse la Chine de politique à courte vue, manière élégante de dire qu'elle est irresponsable. Enormes consommateurs d'hydrocarbures du Proche-Orient, les Chinois, dit M^{me} Clinton, devraient être les premiers à vouloir stabiliser une région qui pourrait être livrée à la prolifération nucléaire si Téhéran se dote de la bombe.

Petit paradoxe, bien dans l'air de l'époque : ouvertement menacé par l'Iran, Israël entretient de bonnes relations avec la Chine, particulièrement commerciales et notamment, dit-on, dans le domaine militaire (ce qui exaspère les Etats-Unis).

Le plus gros partenaire commercial de l'Iran reste l'Europe, avec deux pays en pôle position, l'Allemagne et l'Italie. Là non plus, on n'a pas été clair : indifférentes à la menace nucléaire, nombre de firmes européennes – surtout allemandes et italiennes – ont contourné les sanctions. Courant janvier, la chancelière Angela Merkel a promis à son homologue israélien, Benyamin Nétanyahou, que Berlin allait faire des efforts. Le chef du gouvernement italien, Silvio Berlusconi, en visite en Israël début février, a formulé la même promesse.

Compte tenu des réticences de Moscou et Pékin, Américains et Européens songent à des sanctions unilatérales. Elles devront cibler individuellement les hommes qui sont au cœur du régime, notamment les chefs des Gardiens de la révolution et leur empire industriel et financier. Il ne s'agit pas de pénaliser la population, dont une bonne partie manifeste chaque jour sa rébellion contre un pouvoir à la légitimité contestée. Il s'agit d'imposer à Téhéran un prix exorbitant à son aventure nucléaire. L'alternative aux sanctions pourrait être une autre aventure, au prix exorbitant elle aussi. ■

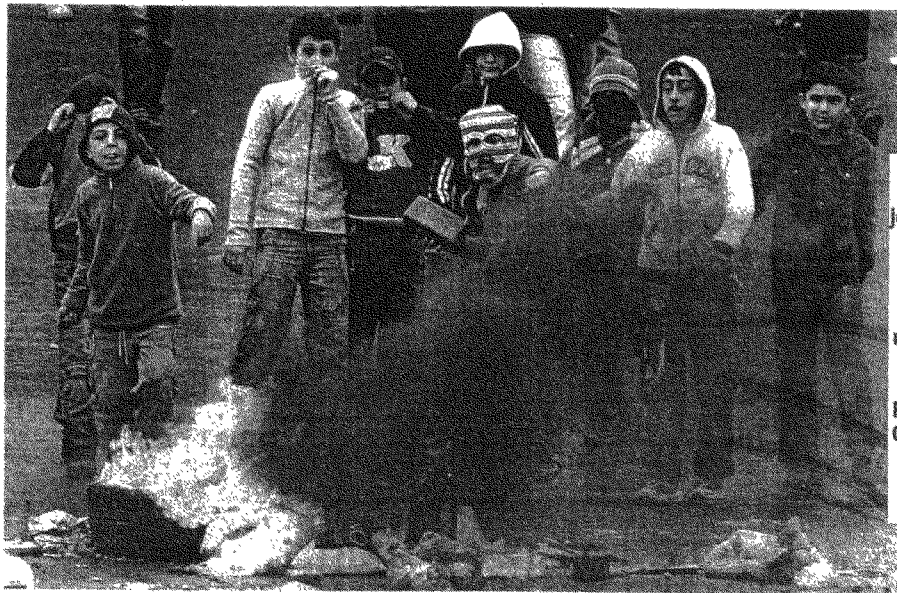
Courriel : frachon@lemonde.fr

LE FIGARO

11 février 2010

Ces enfants kurdes jugés comme des terroristes

Poursuivis par la justice turque pour avoir manifesté leur soutien au PKK, traités comme des adultes, ils peuvent être condamnés à vingt ans de prison.



En février 2009, de jeunes Kurdes affrontent la police à Istanbul pendant une manifestation de soutien au leader du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, arrêté en 1999.

MURAD SEZER/AP

3 000
poursuites
auraient été engagées en Turquie depuis deux ans contre des enfants ayant manifesté

LAURE MARCHAND
ISTANBUL

TURQUIE La photo de Berivan qui est accrochée au mur du salon familial, au-dessus d'un bouquet en plastique, a fait la une de tous les journaux. Avec son sourire timide, cette adolescente est devenue le symbole de la montée de la répression judiciaire turque contre les enfants kurdes qui participent à des manifestations de soutien à la guérilla du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan).

La jeune fille de 15 ans a été arrêtée le 9 octobre à Batman, dans l'est de la Turquie, au cours d'un rassemblement interdit. Fin janvier, une cour criminelle spéciale l'a reconnue coupable de « crimes commis au nom d'une organisation illégale », « manifestations hors la loi » et « actes de propagande pour une organisation illégale ». Verdict : sept ans et neuf mois de prison. « Ma fille est traitée comme la pire des criminelles, même un meurtrier peut s'en sortir mieux, se révolte Meryem, sa mère. Ils l'ont ramassée dans la rue et en ont fait une terroriste. »

À son procès, Berivan, ouvrière dans une usine d'emballage de vêtements, a déclaré ne pas comprendre la signification du mot « propagande ». Incarcérée depuis quatre mois, elle envoie à sa « maman chérie » de longues lettres sur du papier décoré de fleurs roses. « Je voudrais n'avoir jamais été séparée de toi, c'est si dur d'être ici, sors-moi de là », supplie-t-elle dans une écriture appliquée.

« Une vaste comédie »

Comme Berivan, 83 autres mineurs se trouvent dans la prison de Diyarbakir, la grande ville kurde de Turquie, déjà condamnés ou en attente de jugement. Ces deux dernières années en Turquie,

selon un décompte de l'Association des droits de l'homme (IHD), 3 000 enfants sont poursuivis pour avoir pris part à des manifestations, essentiellement dans les régions de l'est du pays. Les jets de pierres et de cocktails Molotov contre les forces de l'ordre ou une simple présence à un meeting tombent sous le coup de la loi antiterroriste et sont punis de très lourdes peines de prison.

Depuis 2006, à la suite d'un durcissement de la législation, les plus de 15 ans sont jugés comme des adultes, en violation de la convention onusienne relative aux droits de l'enfant, signée par la Turquie. « Certains se voient condamnés à vingt ans de prison, sans réduction de peine, s'insurge Canan Atabay, une avocate de Diyarbakir. Prononcer de telles sentences pour des jets de pierres ressemble à une vaste comédie alors que l'avenir de ces enfants est en jeu. C'est l'arsenal législatif qu'il faut revoir de fond en comble. » L'un de ses 22 clients mineurs, âgé de 16 ans, est accusé d'avoir lancé des cocktails Molotov. Il encourt jusqu'à 44 ans de prison.

« Ils sont tous en prison »

Le Parlement est censé s'attaquer à la situation des « enfants terroristes » depuis novembre. Mais le projet de loi n'a toujours pas été inscrit à l'ordre du jour. Victime de l'enlisement de cette « ouverture démocratique » que le gouvernement islamo-conservateur avait promis afin de répondre aux revendications des 12 millions de Kurdes de Turquie. Même si les mesures prévues sont votées, « il sera toujours possible de

condamner à une peine supérieure à dix ans » et l'option de la prison restera la norme, selon l'Association des droits de l'homme de Diyarbakir. « Ces jeunes en prison sont les enfants des Kurdes qui ont été tués ou torturés par l'État turc, dont les villages ont été rasés, estime Arif Akkaya, porte-parole d'un collectif de familles, en faisant référence au conflit qui a fait plus de 45 000 morts depuis 1984. Une telle expérience ne peut conduire qu'à leur radicalisation. »

Mehmet, 17 ans, fait partie de la génération de l'« Intifada kurde », comme les médias l'ont surnommée. Remis en liberté provisoire en novembre dernier, l'adolescent avait été arrêté en mars 2008 alors qu'il manifestait pour dénoncer les opérations de l'armée turque contre les bases arrière du PKK en Irak. « Je risque vingt-cinq ans pour des cocktails Molotov, mais dans mon dossier, il n'y a qu'une photo de moi les bras croisés », assure-t-il.

D'une voix tranquille, qui n'a pas encore fini sa mue, le jeune garçon raconte qu'il a eu le temps de réfléchir derrière les barreaux : « La seule explication que j'ai trouvée à ce qui m'arrive c'est que je suis kurde. Mon rêve est désormais de rejoindre l'organisation dans la montagne et de me battre pour mon peuple. » Et l'engagement politique ? « Regardez le résultat, ils sont tous en prison », rétorque-t-il. Depuis l'interdiction en décembre par la Cour constitutionnelle du parti pro kurde, qui était accusé de liens avec le PKK, une centaine de ses membres a été arrêtée. Plusieurs dizaines, dont huit maires, sont toujours détenues. ■



TURQUIE: UN JOURNALISTE KURDE CONDAMNÉ À 21 ANS DE PRISON

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 10 février 2010 (AFP)

LE DIRECTEUR de la publication d'un quotidien en langue kurde a été condamné mercredi par contumace par un tribunal du sud-est de la Turquie à 21 ans et trois mois de prison pour propagande en faveur des rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Un tribunal de Diyarbakir a jugé Ozan Kiliç, d'Azadiya Welat (la liberté de la patrie, en kurde, ndlr), coupable de 12 actes de "propagande en faveur d'une organisation terroriste" et de "crime au nom d'une organisation sans appartenance à celle-ci", rapporte un correspondant de l'AFP.

Le journaliste était poursuivi pour la publication, en juin 2009, d'articles et de photographies faisant selon l'acte d'accusation l'apologie du chef emprisonné du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan.

Un mandat d'arrêt a été délivré par la cour à l'encontre du prévenu, qui n'était

pas présent à l'audience.

Fondé en 1994 sous un format hebdomadaire, puis devenu quotidien en 2006, Azadiya Welat fait régulièrement l'objet de poursuites et de saisies pour propagande pro-PKK.

Le prédécesseur de M. Kiliç à la tête du journal, Vedat Kursun, est actuellement emprisonné pour des faits similaires, selon un rapport récent de l'ONG de défense de la liberté d'expression Bianet.

Le rapport fait état de 323 personnes, dont 123 journalistes, poursuivies en Turquie en 2009 pour des crimes liés, selon Bianet, à la liberté d'expression.

Le PKK, en lutte armée depuis 1984 pour l'indépendance puis l'autonomie des régions à population kurde de l'est et du sud-est de la Turquie, est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara et de nombreux pays. Le conflit a fait au moins 45.000 morts.

Le gouvernement a annoncé l'été dernier un projet de réformes visant à renforcer les droits des Kurdes.

Mais l'initiative a été mise à mal en décembre lorsque la Cour constitutionnelle a prononcé la dissolution du principal parti pro-kurde de Turquie pour cause de liens avec les rebelles.



IRAK: LE KURDISTAN REPRENDRA "BIENTÔT" SA PRODUCTION DE PÉTROLE (MINISTRE)

BAGDAD, 10 février 2010 (AFP)

LA PRODUCTION de pétrole au Kurdistan irakien, arrêtée mi-octobre en raison d'un différend entre Bagdad et Erbil, va reprendre "bientôt" et un nouveau mécanisme de gestion sera annoncé au cours des prochains jours, a annoncé mercredi le ministre irakien du Pétrole.

Hussein al-Chahristani a indiqué lors d'une conférence de presse à Bagdad que "la production des champs pétroliers du Kurdistan reprendrait bientôt", sans toutefois donner de date précise.

"Le gouvernement central a refusé de payer les compagnies étrangères travaillant au Kurdistan mais une annonce officielle sera faite au cours des prochains jours sur un nouveau mécanisme de gestion de la production pétrolière dans la région du Kurdistan", a-t-il ajouté.

La région autonome du Kurdistan irakien a cessé à la mi-octobre 2009 d'exporter son pétrole en raison d'un conflit avec le gouvernement central sur le paiement des compagnies étrangères qui exploitent les gisements.

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

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

M. Chahristani a précisé que le pétrole produit au Kurdistan devait "transiter par les oléoducs irakiens et tous les revenus du Pétrole doivent être alloués au gouvernement central".

Selon le gouvernement irakien, les revenus du pétrole doivent être centralisés à Bagdad et le Kurdistan se verra reverser 17% des recettes de l'Etat. Erbil, la capitale du Kurdistan, souhaite au contraire que l'ensemble des revenus tirés de l'exploitation du pétrole des champs se trouvant dans sa région autonome lui revienne.

Les champs pétroliers du Kurdistan, jusque-là exploités par le Danois DNO et le Turc Genel, produisaient environ 60.000 barils par jour avant l'arrêt des exportations.

Selon le gouvernement kurde, DNO et Genel ont investi chacune 500 millions de dollars dans l'exploitation des champs. La première exploitait le gisement de Tawke, près de Dohouk, avec une capacité d'exportation de 50.000 barils par jour (bj) et la seconde celui de Tak Tak, avec 10.000 bj.



IRAK: 1.350 SOLDATS AMÉRICAINS, IRAKIENS ET KURDES PATROUILLENT DANS LE NORD

SOULEIMANIYEH (Irak), 11 février 2010 -(AFP)

UNE FORCE commune de 1.350 soldats irakiens, américains et de pechmergas patrouille depuis le début du mois dans les zones disputées du nord de l'Irak, foyer de tensions entre Arabes et Kurdes, a affirmé jeudi un porte-parole du Kurdistan irakien.

"Une force de 1.350 hommes, répartis à part égale entre forces américaines, irakiennes et pechmergas, est déployée dans les zones disputées des provinces de Ninive, Kirkouk et Diyala", a affirmé à l'AFP Jabbar Yawar, porte-parole du ministère des pechmergas (forces de sécurité kurdes) de la région autonome du Kurdistan.

En dehors de la riche province pétrolière de Kirkouk, onze "territoires dont disputés" dont sept dans la région de Ninive, deux dans le gouvernorat de Diyala, un dans la province de Salaheddine et un dans celle de Souleimaniyeh.

Ces régions sont l'objet de conflits, à la suite de mouvements de populations ordonnés par Saddam Hussein et après que les forces kurdes ont pris le contrôle d'une partie des provinces de Kirkouk, Ninive et Diyala. Leur présence a suscité une forte animosité des populations arabes et turcomanes.

La moitié de la force commune est déployée dans la région de Ninive, dont Mossoul est la capitale. Une majorité d'Arabes sunnites fait face à une minorité kurde.

En dehors d'un centre de coordination, il existe selon M. Yawar 15 points de contrôle dans les zones disputées où sont affectés dans chacun à part égale 45 hommes.

Concernant la riche province pétrolière de Kirkouk, que les Kurdes veulent annexer, le porte-parole des pechmergas a confié qu'un "bataillon avait été formé et qu'il était composé de trois compagnies de 110 membres chacune où travaillent ensemble les pechmergas, l'armée américaine et l'armée irakienne".

Enfin, dans la province de Diyala, au nord-est de Bagdad, "il y a cinq postes de contrôle aux entrées des districts disputés et dans chacun d'eux sont postés 15 pechmergas, 15 soldats irakiens et 15 soldats américains", a-t-il précisé. En outre, il existe un centre de coordination formé de trois membres de chaque composante", a-t-il dit.

"L'objectif de cette force commune est de contrôler la situation sécuritaire spécialement aux entrées des régions disputées. Elle agira pour empêcher les terroristes d'y pénétrer et éviter que chaque force fasse des opérations séparées", dit-il.

Les pasdarans, ultime rempart du régime iranien

Défilé, à Téhéran en septembre 2007, des gardiens de la révolution pour commémorer la guerre entre l'Irak et l'Irak.

M. NIKOUBAZL/REUTERS



Leur nouveau face-à-face pourrait bien avoir lieu demain, à l'occasion du 31^e anniversaire de la révolution islamique. Plusieurs opposants ont appelé leurs partisans à défilé massivement dans les rues. Mais les gardiens de la révolution (*pasdarans* en persan) les attendent au tournant : « Nous ne tolérerons aucune manifestation du mouvement vert », la couleur de l'opposition, a prévenu Hossein Hamadani, haut responsable des pasdarans pour Téhéran. À l'avant-garde de la répression menée par le régime depuis l'élection du mois de juin, les pasdarans, et notamment leur garde rapprochée, la redoutée milice islamiste des bassidjis, vont-ils être à nouveau lancés contre l'opposition ?

Les nouvelles sanctions envisagées par la communauté internationale pour punir l'Irak de s'entêter dans son programme nucléaire militaire sont censées être dirigées contre eux. Israël a demandé à l'Union européenne d'inscrire les gardiens de la révolution sur sa liste noire des organisations terroristes. Ce sont eux qui auraient orchestré les derniers procès politiques, à l'issue desquels deux opposants ont été pendus le mois dernier. Ceux sont eux, aussi, qui quadrillent aujourd'hui la capitale. Dans l'Irak d'Ahmadinejad, ils sont devenus des acteurs incontournables du pouvoir, la clé des conflits larvés qui opposent les différents courants à la tête du régime. On assure aussi qu'ils ont leur mot à dire sur la question la plus sensible du moment, le programme nucléaire.

Premiers entrepreneurs du pays

Créés en 1979 par l'ayatollah Khomeyni pour protéger la République islamique et faire contrepoids à l'armée, à l'époque considérée comme trop proche de l'opposition et du chah, les pasdarans ont largement contribué à légitimer la révolution. Au fil des ans, l'armée idéologique du régime, qui est placée sous l'autorité du guide suprême, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a consolidé son pouvoir. Mais c'est l'actuel président, un ancien des bassidjis, qui en a fait les nouveaux maîtres du pays. « Au cours de la dernière décennie, les gardiens ont obtenu la primauté en utilisant comme un levier politique et économique l'accent de plus en plus mis en Iran sur les questions de sécurité », note une étude récente du think-tank américain la Rand Corporation.

Beaucoup de pasdarans, notamment des vétérans de la guerre Iran-Irak (1980-1988), ont intégré le Parlement à la faveur des élections législatives de 2004. Après avoir soutenu la candidature d'Ahmadinejad en 2005, ils sont entrés en force dans les cabinets ministériels. Aujourd'hui, ils sont infiltrés partout : dans les couloirs de la justice,

Force militaire autonome, dotée d'une puissance économique considérable et d'une grande influence politique, les gardiens de la révolution sont devenus le principal pilier de la République islamique. Ils seront à nouveau en première ligne demain face à l'opposition démocratique.

PAR ISABELLE LASSERRE

dans les prisons, dans les services de renseignement... Depuis 2009, ils ont investi les provinces afin de mieux contrôler le pays. « Ils sont le pilier du pouvoir d'Ahmadinejad », résume Mohsen Sazegara, l'un des fondateurs des gardiens de la révolution, aujourd'hui dans l'opposition et installé à Washington.

Depuis l'élection de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, les pasdarans ont aussi massivement investi dans le secteur économique. « À la fin de la guerre Iran-Irak, on leur a proposé de participer à la reconstruction du pays. On leur a confié de nombreux projets : la construction de barrages, de routes, de centres commerciaux, la gestion de champs gaziers et pétroliers. Avec la hausse des prix du pétrole, ils se sont enrichis. Mais c'est sous l'actuel président qu'ils ont commencé à récupérer tous les gros contrats du pays, la plupart du temps sans qu'il y ait d'appel d'offres », ex-

plique la sociologue Azadeh Kian, professeur à l'université Paris-VII. Ils sont aujourd'hui devenus les premiers entrepreneurs d'Irak, contrôlent une grande partie des sources énergétiques, les ports, les télécommunications, la poste, le bâtiment.

Polarisés sur la menace intérieure

Mais avant tout, ils sont le bras armé du pouvoir, le fer de lance des forces iraniennes. L'armée régulière, elle, a été marginalisée depuis longtemps, repoussée le long des frontières où elle est censée surveiller les trafiquants de drogue et veiller à l'étanchéité du pays. Selon l'Institut international des études stratégiques de Londres (IISS), les gardiens de la révolution comptent 125 000 membres, répartis entre les forces terrestres, l'aviation et la marine. Ils auraient, assure le centre britannique, hérité récemment de la surveillance des eaux stratégiques du Golfe et du détroit d'Ormuz. « Les gardiens peuvent menacer les États-Unis et les pays du Golfe en installant des mines flottantes ou en lançant de petites embarcations équipées de missiles antinavires. » Les pasdarans seraient ainsi en mesure de bloquer l'accès à ces régions riches en pétrole en cas de guerre ou de forte tension avec les Occidentaux.

Les gardiens de la révolution ont aussi le contrôle sur la fabrication des missiles balistiques Shahab, capables de frapper Israël, ainsi que sur le nucléaire militaire clandestin. « Ils sont prioritaires sur tout le monde pour la technologie militaire et les armements », explique Azadeh Kian. Ils devraient d'ailleurs aujourd'hui, à l'occasion de l'anniversaire

de la révolution de 1979, dévoiler de nouveaux projets d'armement.

Contrairement à l'armée régulière, qui s'occupe de la surveillance des frontières, les gardiens de la révolution sont polarisés sur la menace intérieure. « Le pouvoir sait que la menace ne vient pas d'Israël ou des États-Unis mais de l'opposition interne, qui affaiblit le régime et risque de le faire vaciller », poursuit la sociologue. Censés mater la rébellion, les bassidjis, armés de couteaux, de chaînes et parfois d'armes à feu, ont montré à plusieurs reprises depuis le mois de juin la brutalité de leurs méthodes. « Mais tous les pasdarans ne sont pas des brutes, loin de là. Pasdarans, cela ne veut rien dire, c'est une nébuleuse composée de plusieurs courants politiques », explique Bernard Hourcade, chercheur au CNRS et spécialiste de l'Irak. Entre les idéologues illuminés comme Mohammed Ali Jafari, le commandant général des pasdarans, et les pragmatiques investis dans les affaires comme le maire de Téhéran, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, il y a tout un monde.

Trois factions concurrentes

La question du nucléaire est au cœur des débats qui les opposent. « De nombreux pasdarans se déclarent aujourd'hui contre la bombe iranienne. Plus exactement, ils pensent que la défense du territoire est plus importante. À partir du moment, disent-ils, où l'Iran possède le savoir-faire atomique et est arrivé au seuil nucléaire, ce qui est le cas, il serait contre-productif de risquer une attaque des États-Unis ou d'Israël. Ils estiment qu'Ahmadinejad a mal géré le dossier nucléaire, que le prix à payer pour la bombe est trop élevé et qu'il est temps de faire des concessions et d'attendre tranquillement que la situation se calme », explique Bernard Hourcade. Le consensus nucléaire qui existait jusque-là en Iran

aurait ainsi été brisé. Les pragmatiques reprochent aux radicaux au pouvoir depuis 2005 de ne pas avoir pris la mesure des changements au sein de la société iranienne et de mettre le pays en danger.

Depuis l'automne, les gardiens de la révolution semblent répartis en trois factions. « Les premiers, réunis autour du président du Parlement, Ali Larjani, pensent qu'il faut se débarrasser d'Ahmadinejad, car sinon le régime s'effondrera. Les deuxièmes estiment qu'il faut non seulement le garder mais être plus ferme et plus brutal encore avec l'opposition, comme le général Ali Naghdi, chef des bassidjis. Et, au milieu, autour de l'ayatollah Khamenei, on trouve ceux qui hésitent, qui soufflent le chaud et le froid. Comme on vient de le voir avec l'exécution de deux opposants, ce sont les radicaux qui ont la haute main

sur le pouvoir aujourd'hui », explique Mohsen Sazegara. Mais ils ne le garderont peut-être pas. Car la journée du 11 février sera selon lui « un tournant ». « Ils ont essayé d'empêcher les gens de manifester en les effrayant. Mais si cela ne marche pas, la faction qui réclame le départ d'Ahmadinejad pourrait bien reprendre l'initiative », poursuit l'opposant iranien. Sur la question nucléaire, la décision finale sera prise par le guide suprême, Ali Khamenei. « Mais le leader suit de très près les débats des gardiens de la révolution », ajoute-t-il. ■

Le Monde
11 février 2010

Iran : pouvoir et opposition se disputent la révolution

Le 31^e anniversaire de la victoire des révolutionnaires en 1979 est un test crucial pour la stabilité du gouvernement iranien

L'Iran s'apprête à fêter, jeudi 11 février, le 31^e anniversaire de la révolution islamique. Mais, cette année, ce qui est en général une démonstration de « solidarité nationale » dûment orchestrée, risque de tourner à l'épreuve de force entre le pouvoir fondamentaliste en place et le mouvement d'opposition civil, né à la suite de la réélection contestée du président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad en juin 2009. Une épreuve de force avant tout politique et symbolique.

« Ce sera un test crucial pour les deux camps, chacun va tenter de se légitimer en récupérant le symbole "fondateur" de la révolution, nous a expliqué par téléphone un analyste iranien, ex-diplomate qui a pris ses distances avec le régime. Les partisans d'Ahmadinejad pour montrer qu'ils tiennent la situation en main après tant de mois de contestation et qu'ils sont les vrais fils de la révolution. Les manifestants pour affirmer que le sens de cette célébration de la révolution n'est pas de conforter le pouvoir en place mais, au contraire, d'en contester les dérives, en faisant de cette journée, une journée contre le despotisme : celui du chah en 1979, celui d'Ahmadinejad en 2010. »

A cet effet, les mots d'ordre du mouvement « vert » d'opposition ont été très clairs : manifester mais de façon pacifique pour affirmer la force et l'unité de la contestation mais éviter toute violence qui ne servirait que le régime. Ce sera d'ailleurs la première fois que tous les partis d'opposition réforma-

teurs, les organisations d'étudiants, les féministes ou certains religieux, qui font partie de cette galaxie informelle qu'est encore aujourd'hui le mouvement vert, appellent à manifester en masse.

Mir Hossein Moussavi, candidat malheureux à l'élection de juin et chef de file de la contestation, a lancé un appel sur son site Kaleme demandant de « ne pas céder à la provocation ». « Les pasdarans et les bassidji ne sont pas nos ennemis, écrit-il, nous sommes non violents et célébrons la révolution qui est contre le despotisme. »

Avant la confrontation qui s'annonce, chacun a fourbi ses armes. Dans Téhéran quadrillée par les miliciens et les agents de sécurité venus pour 70 000 d'entre eux des provinces, des haut-parleurs ont été placés, selon des témoins, dans les grandes avenues de façon à couvrir les slogans hostiles. Des parcours balisés par les forces de l'or-

dre devraient aussi servir à canaliser la foule et la grande place Azadi, où doit s'exprimer M Ahmadinejad, est devenue un bunker policier.

Des portraits du guide suprême, Ali Khamenei, qui ornent généreusement de nombreux bâtiments publics en ville auraient été retirés pour éviter qu'ils ne soient détériorés. Enfin, la projection de vidéos et de films de la révolution est « déconseillée » pour éviter tout parallèle avec la réalité actuelle.

Lors des manifestations du deuil chiite de l'achoura, le 27 décembre 2009, des miliciens ont tiré sur la foule faisant au moins huit morts et des centaines de blessés. Des manifestants avaient en retour incendié des motos de voltigeurs bassidji. C'est cette double radicalisation qui a inquiété les manifestants, mais aussi les autorités, les incitant à accroître davantage la répression.

Manifestations devant des ambassades européennes

Une centaine de miliciens bassidji ont participé à une manifestation « hostile » à l'Italie, mardi 9 février à Téhéran, et tenté de prendre d'assaut l'ambassade, en criant « Mort à l'Italie, mort à Berlusconi », a déclaré, mardi à Rome, le chef de la diplomatie italienne, Franco Frattini, lors d'une audition au Sénat. M. Frattini a annoncé qu'en conséquence l'ambassadeur d'Italie ne par-

ticiperait pas aux cérémonies prévues à Téhéran pour l'anniversaire de la révolution islamique, le 11 février. Selon M. Frattini, des attaques similaires ont eu lieu contre les ambassades de France et des Pays-Bas. Il a indiqué que « des contacts sont en cours au niveau européen » pour parvenir « à une position commune » et « donner un signal de forte préoccupation ». ■

65 journalistes arrêtés

Depuis décembre, selon un décompte de Human Rights Watch (HRW), plus de 1 000 nouvelles arrestations ont eu lieu (il y en avait eu 4 000 après les événements de juin). Les journalistes ont été visés en particulier, plus de 65 sont sous les verrous, y compris ceux qui appartiennent à des agences officielles ou de simples blogueurs. Des professeurs ont été mis à pied dans certaines villes de province et des étudiants inquiétés.

De lourdes peines ont enfin été infligées à une trentaine de dirigeants de l'opposition, dont Behzad Nabavi, un ex-ministre proche de M. Moussavi condamné à cinq ans de prison ; ou encore Mohsen Aminzadeh, qui fut secrétaire d'Etat aux affaires étrangères durant la présidence du réformateur Mohammad Khatami, condamné à six ans de réclusion.

Par ailleurs, après l'exécution, le 28 janvier, de deux monarchistes présentés comme des manifestants, une condamnation à mort a été confirmée mardi en appel. En tout, douze manifestants seraient détenus dans le couloir de la mort. « C'est une intimidation de plus à la veille des célébrations de l'anniversaire ; ils veulent maintenir le pays sous une chape de silence et n'imposer que leur version : Internet a été ralenti qu'il est difficile à utiliser, ils ont brouillé aussi des émissions venues de l'étranger », constatait Mahmoud Faranghi, un étudiant qui vient de quitter le pays. ■

Marie-Claude Decamps

Iran raises stakes on nuclear fuel

CAIRO

Ahmadinejad orders higher enrichment of uranium supply

BY MICHAEL SLACKMAN
AND DAVID E. SANGER

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran ordered the country's atomic energy agency Sunday to begin producing a special form of uranium that can be used to power a medical reactor in Tehran, but that also could move the nation much closer to possessing fuel usable in nuclear weapons.

The announcement followed several days of conflicting signals from Mr. Ahmadinejad and other Iranian officials about whether they were ready to reopen negotiations about giving up much of their country's fuel in exchange for enriched uranium from another country. The exchange would allow Iran to meet some of its energy needs, but would ease fears in the West because the fuel sent to Tehran would be in a form that would be very difficult to use in a bomb.

The deal fell apart when it was rejected by the leadership in Tehran.

Mr. Ahmadinejad's order Sunday may represent nuclear gamesmanship; it is unclear if the country has the capacity to enrich its fuel to roughly 20 percent, from about 5 percent, as Mr. Ahmadinejad ordered. Doing so would require retooling the configuration of Iran's centrifuges at a moment when it appears to have run into considerable technical difficulties at its nuclear plants.

It is unclear if those troubles have been caused either by its own technical failings, or sabotage by Western intelligence agencies, or both. American intelligence officials have told the U.S. Congress and close allies, in closed briefings, that covert efforts to interfere with Iran's production capability are extremely active.

The announcement by Mr. Ahmadinejad comes at a time of intense diplomatic maneuvering over how to deal with Iran's nuclear program. The United States has been working hard to persuade other nations to go along with new and punishing sanctions, while Iran is trying to stave off those efforts.

Mr. Ahmadinejad is betting that the threat itself may force the United States, Europe and Russia to provide fuel on his terms; American officials have said the move would only speed the effort to impose sanctions. It may also affect Isra-

el's calculation about how far it is willing to allow Iran to get to a weapons capability before launching an attack on Iran's nuclear or missile facilities.

Until now, Iran has never enriched significant quantities of fuel beyond the level needed in ordinary nuclear reactors, part of its argument that its program is entirely for peaceful purposes. But any effort to produce 20 percent enriched uranium would put the country in a position to produce highly-enriched uranium — at the 90 percent level used for weapons — in a comparatively short period of time, according to experts.

The deal announced in October would have required Iran to ship about 1200 kilograms, or 2,600 pounds, of its low-enriched uranium to Russia, and then to France, where it would have been produced for the Tehran reactor. But that would have left Iran with too little fuel to produce a weapon, at least for a year or so.

The deal was initialed at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna more than three months ago, and was supposed to take effect by Jan. 15. But it became a source of huge contention in Iran, criticized by both hardliners in the government and opposition leaders.

"We have to agree, that deal is dead," said Valerie Lincy, senior associate at the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control.

Speaking at a laser technology conference in Tehran on Sunday, Mr. Ahmadinejad announced the decision that Iran would produce the fuel itself. He directed Ali Akbar Salehi, head of the atomic energy agency, who was seated in the audience, to move ahead.

"Mr. Salehi, you start enriching up to 20 percent and we are still open to negotiations on the issue," Mr. Ahmadinejad said. He added: "The path to cooperation is open, if they come and agree to exchange without preconditions, we will exchange."

That reference to "preconditions," while vague, appeared to reinforce recent Iranian statements that the government was open to a new deal that did not require it to give up so much of its existing stockpile, or ship it out of the country.

But such a deal has no appeal to President Barack Obama, his aides have said. "For us, the only utility of the agreement was to buy considerable additional time before they could produce a weapon," a strategist for Mr. Obama said during a recent interview. "If the deal doesn't meet that test, we're not going ahead."

According to state-run Press TV in Iran, the country had to take the step to

further enrich its uranium because it would run out of fuel for its research reactor, which produces isotopes used for medical purposes.

Reaction to the announcement was swift, even though it remained unclear whether Iran had the technical capacity to proceed.

The U.S. defense secretary, Robert M. Gates, called on the international community Sunday to bring greater economic and political pressure on Tehran. During a news conference in Rome with Ignazio La Russa, the Italian defense minister, Mr. Gates said, "if the international community will stand together and bring pressure to bear on the Iranian government, I believe there is still time for sanctions and pressure to work." But we must all work together," he said.

"No one has tried more sincerely to reach out and engage with the government of Iran than President Obama," Mr. Gates said. "The results have been very disappointing."

The Iranian announcement appeared to be part of Tehran's dual approach to confront western capitals seeking to isolate and penalize it for backing away from the exchange deal negotiated in



President Ahmadinejad of Iran visiting a laser technology exhibit Sunday in Tehran.

Geneva in October. Iran has been testing missiles and holding war games, and on Saturday announced mass production of two missiles, one that can destroy "low-altitude aerial targets that fly at low speed and the other "equipped with two warheads and can destroy armored vehicles," according Press TV.

The plans to increase enrichment to 20 percent fit with that leg of Iran's strategy. The second leg calls for presenting itself as ready and able to negotiate. The White House had given Iran until the end of the year to settle the dispute, or face new sanctions.

David E. Sanger reported from Washington. Thom Shanker contributed reporting from Rome and Mona El Naggar from Cairo.

Democracy's downside in Iraq

QARAQOSH, IRAQ

In Nineveh Province, having a political voice has intensified gridlock

BY STEVEN LEE MYERS

There was a hope, not long ago, that democracy would mean peace and stability for Nineveh Province, a place where cultures and armies have clashed since biblical times. Instead, democracy is hardening divisions — of people, of resources, of land — in ways that threaten the future of Iraq itself.

The election of a new governor and provincial council last year spawned political deadlock, inflamed by ethnic tensions. A boycott by a third of the council's new members since last summer has crippled the government's work at a time when Iraqis were promised that the elections would improve it.

Basic services remain meager, the economy feeble. The violence, though diminishing, is relentless, ravaging a crossroads of peoples and faiths in the undulating plains where Arab Iraq meets the Kurdish mountains.

"This is the democracy the Americans brought," said Hussein Mahmoud Ahmed, a Shabak, a small minority group that occupies the plains.

It is a sentiment increasingly heard across Iraq as the country prepares to elect a new Parliament on March 7. The vote — only the country's third since the American invasion in 2003 — is considered crucial to forging a unified, functioning democratic state. Here in Nineveh, though, as elsewhere, it is highlighting the country's alarming fragmentation.

Lebanon is a model that Iraqis often cite, a democracy that produces gridlock among ethnic and sectarian parties as divided before as after the elections, resulting in an ever-tense political paralysis. Bosnia is another.

When it comes to land and borders, disputed between the Arabs and the Kurdish regional government, the divisions are as intractable as those among Israelis and Palestinians. When the Iraqi federal government started to build a textile factory in Mr. Ahmed's village, Bartella, in a part of Nineveh controlled by the Kurds, the Kurdish regional government halted the project lest it create jobs for workers loyal to Mosul, the largely Arab provincial capital.

In Qaraqosh, a predominantly Christian town, the ownership of land is so fraught with political significance that the community council created a "black book" to register the name of any Christian who sold property to "an outsider."

"We are living as doves among wolves," said Staifo Jamil, a leader of a community council that represents Qaraqosh, where people lived in such fear that they mustered their own irregular militia to stand watch.

Iraq's democracy is still young, and compared with other countries in the region, it remains the most competitive, if not exactly robust.

Voter apathy and disillusion, however, are already taking root. The election, delayed for months by bickering in Baghdad, has become a contest not so much of ideas as of advantage in the way the vote itself will be conducted and the seats distributed.

The murky process to disqualify candidates with ties to Saddam Hussein's Baath Party knocked off at least 10 candidates allied with the governor, Atheel al-Nujaifi, a Sunni who sought to restore

The election has become a contest not so much of ideas as of advantage in the way the spoils will be distributed.

Arab dominance in a still-divided province. Among them was the mayor of Mosul, Zuhar al-Araji, who once worked closely with the U.S. military.

Nineveh remains split, as it has been since 2003, between Arab- and Kurdish-controlled regions. The tensions are so high that the U.S. military this month joined troops from both sides to police the line of control along a series of new checkpoints.

Politicians on both sides of the line complain of restrictions imposed on the other: harassment of candidates, pressure on parties, violence. When Mr. Nujaifi recently crossed the unofficial boundary on his way to Tall Kayf, his convoy was pelted with stones and tomatoes and briefly held up by Kurdish troops, the peshmerga. On Sunday evening a woman running with a secular coalition that includes Mr. Nujaifi and a former prime minister, Ayad al-Allawi, was shot and killed outside her home in Mosul.

Mr. Nujaifi's election last year raised hopes that the post-2003 disenfranchisement of Sunnis in Nineveh, which once fueled the insurgency, would produce

stability and a measure of reconciliation.

That it has not is one reason that few interviewed here expressed hope that the coming election would result in anything better.

"Nothing is going to happen," said Saleh Hassan Ali al-Jubouri, the mayor of Ash Shura, a town on the Arab side of the Tigris River not far from the ancient ruins of Khalu, or Nimrud.

"We know which part belongs to the Kurds and which part to Nineveh," he went on, when asked how the results in March might affect the territorial dispute that has cleaved the province. He repeated, with evident disdain, "Nothing is going to happen."

What is striking is how faithfully Iraqis expect to vote by identity, despite national campaign rhetoric appealing to national unity.

Issues — basic services, the economy, security — all seem to stem from identity as much as politics. "First ethnicity, second political party," was how a local Kurdish official, Khasro Goran, put it.

The new Parliament will include 31 members from Nineveh, and Mr. Goran expects the main national Kurdish coalition to win 10 of them — based not on opinion polls, but on the estimated percentage of Kurds in the province. Nineveh's small minority communities — Yazidis, Shabaks and Christians — have dedicated parliamentary seats reserved for their representatives.

Mr. Goran, who has led the boycott of the provincial council, blames the governor and his party for the increasing bitterness and division, saying that stability in Nineveh will come only with respect for minority parties — that is, like his.

He also acknowledged that Nineveh's border with the three officially recognized Kurdish provinces to the north was enmeshed in the larger political impasse between the government of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki and that of the Kurdish president, Massoud Barzani, over the extent of Iraq's federalism.

Khalis Isho, a candidate from Qaraqosh vying to win one of the Christian seats in Parliament, said that the country's political leaders had failed — failed to embrace democratic values of rights and representative government, failed to learn that elections are only one part of democracy.

"I don't believe they will reduce the activities of the terrorists until the thinking in Iraq generally and in Mosul, in particular, improves," he said. "Until they understand that peace in Mosul means peaceful coexistence."

A show of army force tests rule of law in Iraq

TIKRIT, IRAQ

BY STEVEN LEE MYERS
AND ANTHONY SHADID

Iraq's Fourth Army Division cordoned off the provincial council building here overnight Tuesday and showed no sign Wednesday of leaving. It was the latest in a series of actions by the government of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki that have infuriated his political opponents, while raising doubts about the strength of the country's laws and democratic institutions.

Mr. Maliki ordered in the military here — for the second time — to exert his influence in choosing a new governor. American military commanders and diplomats expressed alarm at his willingness to use force to resolve a simmering dispute over the provincial council's legal powers to appoint a governor.

"You have the law on your side," Col. Henry A. Arnold III, commander of the First Infantry Division's Fourth Brigade, told a council member outside the besieged building on Wednesday morning. "Maliki knows it. The Americans know it. And they're going to keep reminding him of it."

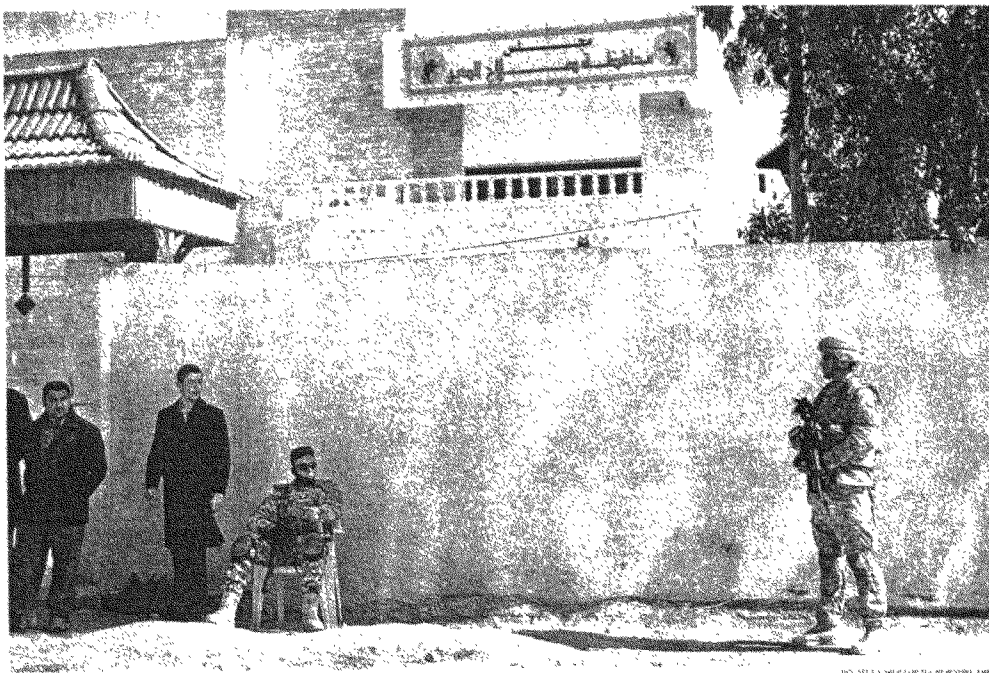
The intervention in Tikrit, a Sunni Arab area that includes Saddam Hussein's hometown, occurred during an increasingly tense election campaign that has heightened fears of politically tinged violence. It highlighted what Mr. Maliki's critics have denounced as an abusive use of the law and the security forces to settle political disputes and jockey for advantage in the election, scheduled for March 7.

The political turmoil now convulsing Iraq stems not just from a suspenseful election in which Mr. Maliki appears to be losing popular support and potentially his chances for re-election. It also stems from untested separations of power, opaque back-room agreements and a loose fidelity to the country's laws, whose interpretation often depends on who is reading them. One U.S. official marveled recently that he often cited passages of the Iraqi Constitution to lawmakers seemingly unfamiliar with what it said.

"Iraq is like a sick person," the speaker of Parliament, Ayad al-Sammarai, said at a recent news conference. "All its organs are ailing."

In just the last week, Mr. Maliki's government has acted with, at best, disputed legal authority.

In Diyala, a leading candidate from one of the main blocs challenging Mr. Maliki's party, known as State of Law, was arrested on Sunday night by special forces sent from Baghdad only days after participating in a recorded debate



Iraqi troops, left, kept an eye on a U.S. soldier in Tikrit on Wednesday. The Iraqi prime minister sent in troops amid a political dispute over the appointment of a provincial governor.

in which he criticized the security forces.

Warrants are said to have been issued for five other members of that province's legislature on charges that remain unclear. The same night a candidate from the bloc was shot and killed in Mosul. When an appeals court last week reversed the disqualification of hundreds of candidates because of reported ties to Mr. Hussein's Baath Party, Mr. Maliki denounced the ruling as illegal. He later met with parliamentary leaders and the chairman of Iraq's Supreme Judicial Council to hash out a compromise that opponents said amounted to undue political pressure on a supposedly independent judiciary.

"A prime minister who should be the first defender of the Constitution, the first defender of the supremacy of law and law and order in the country — and

"The emotional weight of this issue is too heavy for the nascent democratic institutions to manage."

this incidentally in the name of his group — should be the first person to defend a decision of the court and the judiciary," Ayad al-Allawi, a former prime minister whose bloc has emerged as a potent rival to Mr. Maliki's, said in an interview.

The process for disqualifying candidates accused of Baathist backgrounds

was so murky that foreign diplomats, United Nations officials and even Iraqi officials knew little about what was happening — and still do not.

"The emotional weight of this issue is too heavy for the nascent democratic institutions to manage," another American official said, referring to the disqualification process.

The confrontation in Tikrit began with the newly elected provincial council's vote in October to dismiss the governor of Salahuddin, Mtasher Hussein Ulaiwi, citing negligence. Mr. Ulaiwi was elected by the council last year after provincial elections intended to expand the powers of Iraq's 18 regions to govern themselves after decades of control from Baghdad.

The dispute has clearly become part of the larger electoral battle in Iraq. Mr. Maliki has sided with the former governor's party, the Iraqi Islamic Party, whose support he is likely to need after the national election if he hopes to remain in office.

For weeks after his dismissal, Mr. Ulaiwi refused to leave office, appealing to Iraq's federal court and suing the council's chairman on charges that he had a criminal record and a falsified high school diploma. Mr. Maliki intervened first with a letter refusing to recognize the governor's dismissal. When the federal court upheld the council's actions, though, he ordered the governor removed from his office. Then he ordered the Fourth Army Division to occupy the building on the night of Jan. 20 to block the council from seating a new governor, elected by a council vote of 20 to 2.

U.S. gambles in pursuit of Iran sanctions

WASHINGTON

BY DAVID E. SANGER

As President Barack Obama heads into the newest and riskiest phase of his engagement effort with Iran — adding economic pressure and military containment to force the leadership to negotiate on its nuclear program — he is taking three big bets on his ability to defuse an increasingly tense confrontation.

Each will be a test of his powers of persuasion after a year in office in which very little in his dealings with Iran has gone the way the White House expected.

Mr. Obama's first bet is that he can accomplish what President George W. Bush tried, and failed, to do three times: Win global agreement on a set of sanctions that are strong enough to convince Iran's divided leadership that its nuclear ambitions are not worth the price. But for Mr. Obama, that effort is complicated by the fear that sanctions could crush the anti-government movement that appears ready to take to the streets again on Thursday, the anniversary of the Iranian revolution.

His second gamble is that he can win over the reluctant Chinese, by convincing them that sanctions are a better alternative than the instability and oil cutoffs that would arise if Israel attacked Iran's nuclear facilities. Mr. Obama's own aides concede that they have diminishing hopes of winning that argument with Beijing.

And finally, Mr. Obama is relying on his ability to dissuade the Israelis from carrying out that attack.

For now, the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, while worried that Mr. Obama may go soft on Iran, seems to believe that the Iranian regime is so fragile that truly harsh sanctions might crack it. But Iran's announcement that it was increasing its enrichment of uranium to a level closer to weapons-grade may well change that calculation.

"The next step is sanctions," Mr. Obama said at a brief news conference at the White House on Tuesday, just before the Treasury Department named several companies belonging to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the protector of the regime and overseer of part of the nuclear effort. "They have made their choice so far, although the door is still open."

Domestic politics and global strategy lie behind Mr. Obama's new stress on the "dual track" nature of his approach — his insistence that he will always be open to a negotiated solution, even as he tries anew with sanctions, surrounds Iran with more anti-missile defenses and attempts to step up long-running



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

President Barack Obama in the White House briefing room in Washington.

covert action against the nuclear program. His aides clearly fear he could be vulnerable to the Republican argument that his engagement effort with Iran was naïve from the start, and has accomplished little so far.

The reality, Mr. Obama's aides insist, is far more complex. From the first month he was in office, they argued that the lesson of the Bush years was that it would be impossible to exert real pressure on Iran until the world was convinced that he had made a bona-fide effort to conduct a sustained dialogue with a country that Washington has only talked to in fits and starts in the 31 years since the Iranian revolution. Only then, they argued, would he be able to make the case for harsher action.

"He had to build up political capital," said R. Nicholas Burns, who was the State Department's lead Iran negotiator during Mr. Bush's second term, and who argued unsuccessfully for a strategy similar to the one Mr. Obama has pursued. "The reality is that Iran is more isolated today because of this strategy, and because of their own behavior, that they were a year ago."

But "isolating" a country diplomatically does not necessarily translate into

changing its behavior. North Korea, Cuba and Myanmar have been economically isolated for decades, with little effect. In Iran's case, isolation is even harder — second only to Saudi Arabia in oil production in the Gulf, and a crucial customer for companies from Germany to Italy to China and Japan, it has a lot of leverage in the sanctions struggle.

That points to Mr. Obama's first challenge: Coming up with sanctions that will really bite, without turning the Iranian people against the United States.

In 2006, then again in 2007 and again in 2008, the U.S. led an effort to pass such sanctions at the United Nations Security Council. Add them together and there is a list six pages long of individuals in the nuclear program and the military who are banned from international travel, of banks who are barred from doing busi-

ness in the West, of companies that are supposed to be barred from buying goods. But while the sanctions have pinched Iran, they have not accomplished their central goal: forcing compliance with the Security Council's demand that Iran halt uranium enrichment.

Interestingly, Mr. Obama's aides say they do not necessarily think that even "crippling sanctions," to use Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's term, will accomplish that goal. "This is about driving them back to negotiations," said one senior official, "because the real goal here is to avoid war."

But Mr. Obama is also moving cautiously. During the campaign he talked about cutting off refined petroleum supplies to Iran, which cannot refine enough of its own to keep cars rolling and factories running. That sanction is included in resolutions passed by the House and Senate in recent months, though they have not been reconciled into a single bill. But Mr. Obama has rejected that approach, at least for now, for fear it would turn people against the United States.

"What you've been hearing on the streets is 'Death to the Dictator,' not 'Death to America,'" one of Mr. Obama's top strategists said in an interview in December. "We'd be foolish to do anything to change that."

It is an open question whether any sanction designed solely against the Iranian elite can succeed. But Mr. Obama's second challenge is to get the Chinese to agree to real sanctions.

China has long opposed sanctions. It took eight months to get the watered-down resolution that passed the Security Council in 2008, largely because of Chinese objections. Mr. Obama has sent aides to Beijing to convince them that there is something worse than sanctions against Iran — war breaking out between Israel and Iran.

They have painted a picture for the Chinese leadership of what would happen if Israel believed Iran was nearing a nuclear weapons capability and acted on its own: oil cutoffs in the Gulf, and instability that threatens China's daily shipments. They have tried to convince the Chinese that their business links to Saudi Arabia — which is deeply worried about Iran's rising military power — are more valuable than links to Tehran.

Similar arguments appear to have won over the Russians. But the Chinese are unmoved. A senior aide to Mr. Obama insisted in an interview this week that "we haven't given up." But given the tensions between Beijing and Washington on other issues — currency rates, cyber attacks, weapons sales to Taiwan, a forthcoming meeting between Mr. Obama and the Dalai Lama of Tibet — Beijing appears in no mood to cooperate.

La crise politique menace après les législatives en Irak

Par Reuters,

BAGDAD - Les élections législatives du 7 mars en Irak pourraient déboucher sur une impasse politique si la coalition du Premier ministre chiite Nouri al Maliki ne recueille pas, comme le craignent les investisseurs étrangers, un large soutien.

Si le scrutin ne désigne pas un net vainqueur, le pays risque de s'engager dans une longue période de tractations au cours de laquelle le gouvernement sortant ne pourra qu'expédier les affaires courantes.

Or, la coalition chiite du chef du gouvernement a peu de chances de renouveler le large succès qu'elle avait enregistré l'an dernier aux élections municipales.

Entre-temps, le pays a connu une série d'attentats particulièrement meurtriers qui ont occulté aux yeux des Irakiens l'amélioration sensible de la sécurité au quotidien.

"Nous aurions beaucoup de chance si un gouvernement était formé au début de l'été", estime l'analyste Reidar Visser de www.history.org.

Un pronostic partagé par un autre expert, Peter Harling, de l'International Crisis Group. "Je m'attends à un vide politique, qui pourrait durer des semaines, voire des mois pendant lesquels le pays n'aura ni gouvernement ni Premier ministre", prédit-il.

Politiquement autant qu'économiquement, l'Irak a pourtant besoin plus que jamais d'une vie démocratique stable.

Ses institutions, entièrement refondées après l'intervention militaire anglo-américaine de 2003, demeurent fragiles et les contrats pétroliers récemment signés pour l'exploitation des énormes réserves irakiennes dépendent en grande partie pour leur mise en oeuvre de la stabilité politique.

La nouvelle stratégie des insurgés - frapper moins souvent mais plus fort - constitue



A Bagdad, affiche de campagne pour le parti du Premier ministre Nouri al Maiki. Les élections législatives du 7 mars en Irak pourraient déboucher sur une impasse politique si la coalition du Premier ministre chiite Nouri al Maliki ne recueille pas, comme le craignent les investisseurs étrangers, un large soutien. (Reuters/Thaier al-Sudani)

un défi pour l'armée et la police irakiennes, alors que les Etats-Unis comptent bien, après le scrutin de mars, accélérer un retrait qui doit être achevé fin 2011.

INCERTITUDE

"Si l'Irak parvient vraiment à survivre à cette année extrêmement difficile, je vois son avenir avec un grand optimisme. Mais le risque est grand, au contraire, de voir tout s'effiloche", analyse Peter Harling.

Dans un paysage politique irakien en permanente évolution, nul ne peut dire aujourd'hui quelles alliances se noueront après les législatives.

Cette incertitude pourrait inquiéter les investisseurs étrangers si la pérennité des contrats signés sous l'autorité du gouvernement Maliki ne correspondait pas à l'intérêt bien senti des deux parties.

"Ces accords survivront probablement parce que la marge engrangée par les compagnies étrangères est très faible et que peu gens de gens doutent que ces contrats ne bénéficient pas d'abord et avant tout à l'Irak", juge Reidar Visser.

Le sort électoral de Maliki est loin d'être scellé, car le chef du gouvernement, qui dis-

pose d'un réseau efficace sur l'ensemble du pays, est la seule personnalité politique "visible" face à une noria d'adversaires quasiment inconnus.

"Si son score n'est pas à la hauteur de ses ambitions, mais ne constitue pas non plus un revers fatal, on peut s'attendre à beaucoup de négociations", estime Toby Dodge, de l'université Queen Mary de Londres.

Les Kurdes, habitués à jouer les arbitres ces dernières années, pourraient profiter de ce contexte pour faire monter les enchères et chercher à mieux contrôler encore les ressources pétrolières de leur région, notamment autour de Kirkouk.

Dans la communauté chiite, le Conseil suprême islamique irakien et les partisans du chef religieux Muktada Sadr présentent des listes communes, cette alliance de la carpe et du lapin n'ayant pour objet que d'affaiblir Maliki.

Le Premier ministre ne doit pas non plus attendre beaucoup d'aide des sunnites, qui n'apprécient guère l'interdiction de candidats issus du parti Baas, l'ancienne formation de Saddam Hussein.

CONFLIT GOUVERNEMENT-JUSTICE EN TURQUIE

ANKARA , 18 février 2010 (AFP)

LES TENSIONS récurrentes entre le gouvernement islamo-conservateur turc et l'élite judiciaire laïque ont dégénéré aujourd'hui en conflit frontal, provoquant une nouvelle polarisation politique en marge d'une affaire de complot présumé visant à encourager un coup d'Etat.

"La Turquie n'est pas un pays de juges, elle est un pays démocratique avec un Etat de droit", a sèchement déclaré jeudi le vice-premier ministre Bülent Arinç, lors d'une conférence de presse. "Le fonctionnement de la justice indépendante a été entravé. Comment désormais les procureurs peuvent-ils mener des enquêtes librement ?" s'est interrogé M. Arinç.

Des dizaines de personnes sont jugées depuis 2007 dans l'affaire Ergenekon, un complot présumé visant à encourager un coup d'Etat militaire contre le gouvernement du Parti pour la justice et le développement (AKP, issu de la mouvance islamiste).

Le gouvernement est accusé de vouloir se servir de cette procédure pour faire taire les milieux pro-laïcs.

La dernière crise entre l'élite du pouvoir judiciaire, bastion de la laïcité, et le gouvernement, est née de l'arrestation du procureur en chef de la province d'Erzincan (est), İlhan Cihaner, qui a été inculpé d'appartenance à Ergenekon, provoquant une grave crise institutionnelle.

Ce procureur, qui avait tenté d'enquêter sur les agissements dans sa zone d'une confrérie musulmane, a affirmé avoir été la cible de pressions du gouvernement pour abandonner son enquête.

Plusieurs Kurdes débarqués en Corse ont déjà quitté la France

Un tiers des clandestins découverts en janvier sur une plage de Bonifacio n'ont pas déposé de demande d'asile.

CYRILLE LOUIS

IMMIGRATION Trois semaines après leur arrivée en France, un tiers des 123 Kurdes découverts sur une plage de Bonifacio (Corse-du-Sud) ont manifestement choisi de poursuivre leur route. D'après un décompte établi par le ministère de l'Immigration, de l'Intégration et de l'Identité nationale, seuls 48 des 81 adultes répertoriés par les autorités ont déposé une demande d'asile auprès de l'Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides (Ofpra). « Les autres ont choisi de continuer leur périple - soit pour rejoindre des proches déjà installés en France, soit pour gagner divers pays d'Europe du Nord », explique-t-on à la Cimade. Le 3 février dernier, quatre d'entre eux ont été interpellés pour séjour irrégulier alors qu'ils venaient d'entrer en Allemagne. Quatre autres ont pu gagner le Danemark en voiture, avant d'y être arrêtés le 4 par la police locale.

« Nous avons le sentiment que ces huit personnes sont en quelque sorte parties en éclaireurs afin d'ouvrir la voie aux autres », confie une source proche du dossier

Ces embryons de périples, qui ont pu être interrompus grâce à la coopération policière européenne, intéressent au plus haut point les enquêteurs chargés de démanteler la filière d'immigration clandestine empruntée par les migrants. « Nous avons le sentiment que ces huit personnes sont en quelque sorte parties en éclaireurs afin d'ouvrir la voie aux autres, confie une source proche du dossier, qui ajoute : la France n'était manifestement qu'une étape sur leur route. » Après vérification, les policiers de l'Ocriest (Office central pour la répression de l'immigration irrégulière et de l'emploi d'étrangers sans titre) ont par ailleurs établi que trois des migrants découverts à Bonifacio étaient déjà répertoriés par le fichier Eurodac, qui regroupe les empreintes digitales des demandeurs d'asile et immigrants clandestins. Selon la base de données, ils ont



Le 25 janvier, les dix migrants kurdes de Syrie transférés de Corse au centre de rétention administrative de Lyon Saint-Exupéry ont été remis en liberté par le juge de la liberté et de la détention de Lyon. B. AMSELLEM/SIGNATURES

déposé une demande d'asile en Allemagne courant 2008. Devant les autorités locales, ils auraient à l'époque déclaré avoir gagné l'Europe depuis la Russie.

« À leur remise en liberté, bon nombre des migrants découverts en Corse nous ont spontanément dit être venus en France dans l'espoir de gagner la Belgique, l'Allemagne ou la Norvège pour y rejoindre des proches, relate Jean-Paul Nunez, représentant de la Cimade pour la région Languedoc-Roussillon. Aujourd'hui, nous avons perdu tout contact avec une quarantaine d'entre eux. » « Il est possible que certains cherchent aussi à gagner la Suède, où les conditions d'accueil comptent parmi les meilleures d'Europe », avance Gérard Sadik, responsable du secteur de l'asile au sein de la Cimade.

Itinéraire imprécis

Agissant sur commission rogatoire des juges marseillais Dominique Voglimacci et Philippe Dorcet, les enquêteurs de la gendarmerie et de l'Ocriest travaillent toujours à déterminer l'itinéraire emprunté par ces migrants pour gagner la pointe sud de la Corse. Lors de leurs auditions, ceux-ci ont indiqué d'une même voix avoir quitté la Syrie pour fuir l'oppression dont ils disent avoir été victimes, avant de gagner la Tunisie et

d'embarquer à bord d'un cargo en partance pour l'Europe. À ce stade, aucun élément matériel ne corrobore cependant ce récit. Au contraire, les policiers se sont récemment étonnés d'observer de nombreuses communications entre les téléphones emportés dans leur périple par certains des migrants et des numéros enregistrés en Turquie. « Pour l'heure, nous sommes donc bien incapables de dire par quel pays ces personnes sont réellement passées avant d'arriver sur notre territoire », confesse une source proche de l'enquête.

Inlassablement, les hommes de la gendarmerie maritime continuent par ailleurs d'éplucher la liste des quelque 300 navires qui ont croisé au large de Bonifacio durant la période présumée d'arrivée des clandestins. Un yacht, vu par certains pêcheurs corses dans la nuit du 21 au 22 janvier dernier, retient tout particulièrement leur intérêt. « Ce n'est toutefois pas la seule piste », assure un militaire engagé dans ce travail de bénédictin. ■

L'Iran progresse dans le nucléaire militaire malgré des difficultés techniques

En enrichissant de l'uranium à 20 %, Téhéran cherche à créer un nouveau fait accompli

Mis sous pression par la rue, le président iranien, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad brandit les réalisations iraniennes dans l'atome comme un moyen de retrouver une légitimité. Mais le pouvoir iranien poursuit aussi une autre stratégie. Il place les Occidentaux devant des faits accomplis successifs, qui rapprochent l'Iran de la capacité de produire une bombe atomique. Tout en prenant soin de rester en deçà du moment de rupture totale que représenterait le passage ouvert à la production de matière fissile ou un retrait fracassant du traité de non-prolifération (TNP).

L'Iran évite ainsi d'emprunter la voie choisie en 2003 par la Corée du Nord, et semble procéder par un lent grignotage technologique, en misant sur l'absence de réaction radicale de la communauté internationale.

Pourtant, le passage, mercredi 10 février, à une production d'uranium enrichi à 20 % sur le site iranien de Natanz représente un tournant sensible, qui fournit des arguments aux tenants de sanctions accrues, à l'ONU ou ailleurs.

Même si les quantités produites sont faibles, ainsi que l'ont constaté les inspecteurs de l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA), il s'agit du franchissement d'un palier symbolique, vers un degré d'enrichissement à caractère militaire (90 %). Le nouveau directeur de l'AIEA, le japonais Yukiya Amano, a exprimé sa « préoccupation ».

Les travaux iraniens se concentraient depuis 2003 sur l'accumulation d'uranium enrichi à 4,5 %,

**Barack Obama
parle désormais
de la « militarisation »
du programme**

bien que le pays ne soit doté d'aucune centrale nucléaire susceptible d'utiliser ce combustible pour la production d'électricité (l'argument officiel invoqué). Pour justifier maintenant le passage au « 20 % », l'Iran argue de l'absence d'accord avec les grandes puissances sur un projet de « circuit » d'uranium proposé en octobre 2009 par l'AIEA après avoir été conçu par l'administration Obama.

L'Iran dit vouloir utiliser cet uranium à 20 % dans un réacteur de recherches à Téhéran, qui produit des isotopes médicaux pour le traitement du cancer. Or il ne maîtrise pas la technologie pour alimenter seul ce réacteur, qui avait été livré dans les années 1960 par les États-Unis et fourni en combustible jusqu'en 1993 par l'Argentine.

Le véritable objectif serait donc ailleurs. Selon l'expert américain David Albright, de l'Institute for Science and International Security, une fois atteints les « 20 % », le passage aux étapes suivantes, 60 % puis 90 % (le degré pour la matière fissile) peut se produire sans grande difficulté. Il suffirait pour cela de « surenrichir » l'uranium dans une petite installation comportant « entre 500 et 1000 centrifugeuses », pendant une période d'environ six mois. Une telle installation serait « difficilement détectable par l'AIEA ou des services de renseignements », estime M. Albright.

Ce qui renvoie à une question lancinante : existe-t-il encore en Iran des sites nucléaires clandestins, où de tels travaux pourraient être menés dans le secret ? La révélation, en septembre 2009, du site de Qom, passé sous silence par l'Iran pendant des années, a réveillé les soupçons de plus belle. D'autant que l'Iran a annoncé entre-temps son intention de mettre en chantier « dix nouveaux sites d'enrichissement », sans préciser où ni quand.

Si l'Iran se dote, ou est déjà doté, d'autres sites d'enrichissement

Les installations nucléaires iraniennes



secrets – en remplacement de celui de Qom, divulgué –, les activités qui se déroulent à Natanz, sous l'œil des inspecteurs internationaux, pourraient servir avant tout à accaparer l'attention des Occidentaux, tout en améliorant peu à peu la maîtrise technologique.

Car celle-ci serait en réalité toute relative. « Nous ne pensons pas qu'ils aient la capacité d'enrichir au niveau prétendu », a commenté, jeudi, le porte-parole de la Maison Blanche, Robert Gibbs. Les déclarations de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad sur l'avènement d'une « puissance nucléaire » iranienne depuis le passage aux « 20 % », sont « fondées sur la politique, pas la physique », a-t-il ajouté, « le programme nucléaire iranien a rencontré une succession de problèmes pendant toute l'année 2009 ».

L'AIEA a en effet constaté, en novembre 2009, que seule la moitié des quelque 8 000 centrifugeuses de Natanz était en train de produire. La raison ? Dans une étude fouillée du programme iranien, publiée jeudi, David Albright avance des explications. Les Iraniens rencontreraient des problèmes liés

à l'installation trop rapide d'un grand nombre de centrifugeuses. L'uranium qu'ils utilisent contiendrait des impuretés. Et un travail de sabotage mené par des services secrets occidentaux, notamment au niveau des circuits de fourniture d'équipements, ne serait pas étranger à ces déconvenues. C'est la raison pour laquelle Barack Obama, qui parle désormais ouvertement de la « militarisation » du programme iranien, semble confiant qu'il reste du temps pour la diplomatie et les sanctions. ■

Natalie Nougayrède



FRANCE: DES MILLIERS DE KURDES MANIFESTENT À STRASBOURG POUR ÖCALAN

STRASBOURG (France), 13 février 2010 (AFP)

PLUSIEURS milliers de Kurdes (plus de 30.000 selon les organisateurs, 6.500 selon la police) ont manifesté samedi à Strasbourg, dans l'est de la France, pour réclamer la libération de l'ancien chef du parti séparatiste PKK Abdullah Öcalan, détenu en Turquie depuis 1999.

Cette manifestation était organisée par la Fédération des associations kurdes en France (Feyka).

Venus massivement et en famille d'Allemagne, de Belgique, des Pays-Bas ou de Suisse, les manifestants ont défilé derrière des banderoles réclamant la "liberté pour Öcalan" et une "solution démocratique pour la question kurde".

"Nous voulons un Kurdistan autonome. La vie de 40 millions de personnes est en jeu", a déclaré à l'AFP l'un des porte-paroles de la Feyka, Faruk Doru.

Selon lui, l'Union européenne a tout intérêt à trouver une solution rapidement.

"Le projet de gazoduc européen Nabucco (qui doit acheminer à partir de 2013 le gaz de la mer Caspienne à l'Europe, ndr) passe par le Kurdistan. Il ne pourra pas fonctionner si le problème kurde n'est pas réglé", a-t-il estimé. Les manifestants étaient principalement venus demander la libération d'Öcalan, fondateur et ex-chef du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Öcalan avait été arrêté en 1999 au Kenya par des agents turcs avec l'aide des services de renseignement américains.

Transféré en Turquie, il a été condamné à mort pour "séparatisme" en juin 1999, peine commuée en 2002 en prison à vie après l'abolition de la peine capitale. La Cour européenne des droits de l'Homme a recommandé en mai 2005 l'organisation d'un nouveau procès, estimant que celui de 1999 était "inéquitable".

"Ses conditions de détention sont déplorable. Le gouvernement turc fait croire qu'elles se sont améliorées uniquement pour faire plaisir au CPT (Comité anti-torture du Conseil de l'Europe)", a affirmé Veli Tekiner, du comité national de soutien à M. Öcalan.

Une délégation du CPT avait rendu visite en janvier 2010 au chef rebelle dans sa cellule, après que ce dernier se fut plaint par le biais de ses avocats des conditions carcérales.



HEURTS EN TURQUIE LORS DE COMMÉMORATIONS DE LA CAPTURE D'ÖCALAN

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 15 février 2010 (AFP) —

DES MANIFESTATIONS organisées lundi dans plusieurs grandes villes turques, à l'occasion du onzième anniversaire de l'arrestation du chef rebelle kurde Abdullah Öcalan, ont dégénéré en heurts avec la police, ont rapporté des correspondants de l'AFP et l'agence de presse Anatolie.

A Diyarbakir, principale ville du sud-est turc peuplée majoritairement de Kurdes, environ 3.000 personnes rassemblées dans le centre-ville ont dénoncé la capture le 15 février 1999 au Kenya d'Öcalan avant de tenter de marcher sur l'un des grandes axes de la cité.

Empêchés par les autorités d'avancer, les manifestants se sont heurtés à coup de pierres et de bâtons aux policiers anti-émeutes qui ont répondu avec des gaz lacrymogènes. Une trentaine de manifestants ont été interpellés.

La plupart des commerces avaient fermé à Diyarbakir, mesure traditionnellement utilisée pour appuyer la cause kurde et protester contre l'Etat turc dans

le sud-est de la Turquie.

A Istanbul, quelque 500 personnes ont manifesté à Taksim, sur la rive européenne de la métropole, en faveur du chef-fondateur du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), selon un photographe de l'AFP.

Plusieurs dizaines de manifestants ont fait fi des avertissements de la police de se disperser et ont affronté les forces de l'ordre qui ont aussi procédé à des jets de grenades lacrymogènes.

A Hakkari (est), des manifestants ont lancé des engins incendiaires sur les forces de sécurité, et allumé un incendie, vite éteint, dans un bâtiment d'habitation, selon l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Des affrontements de rues ont été signalés également dans les provinces de Sînak et Batman (sud-est) et dans les villes d'Adana et Mersin (sud), où vivent de nombreux Kurdes, selon Anatolie.

Des agents turcs, aidés par les services de renseignement américains, avaient capturé Öcalan à Nairobi, où le chef rebelle avait trouvé refuge plusieurs jours durant à l'ambassade grecque. Il avait été transféré en Turquie et condamné à mort pour trahison en juin 1999, peine commuée en prison à vie.



IRAK: TROIS BLESSÉS LORS D'UNE RÉUNION ÉLECTORALE, ENLEVÉS À L'HÔPITAL

SOULEIMANIYEH (Irak), 18 février 2010 (AFP)

TROIS PERSONNES blessées par des tirs au cours d'une réunion électorale au Kurdistan irakien ont été enlevées par des hommes en armes de l'hôpital de Souleimaniyeh où elles avaient été transportées, a-t-on appris jeudi auprès de l'hôpital et de la sécurité.

Les tirs ont eu lieu au cours d'une réunion électorale de la liste Goran (Changement) qui a été perturbée par des membres dépendants de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), selon un responsable de Goran.

"Une milice dépendant de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) a perturbé mardi soir une réunion électorale de notre liste avant d'ouvrir le feu blessant trois personnes", a indiqué à l'AFP Chaho Saïd, vice-président du groupe Goran au Parlement du Kurdistan.

"Ses membres se sont rendus ensuite à l'hôpital de Souleimaniyeh et ont

enlevé les blessés pour les transporter vers un lieu inconnu", a-t-il ajouté.

"Nous avons reçu trois blessés, dont un gravement atteint, à 00H30 (mardi 21H30 GMT) et une demi-heure plus tard alors que nous étions en train de les soigner des hommes armés sont venus les prendre", a affirmé jeudi un médecin.

Ce dernier a tenu à garder l'anonymat en raison de la tension qui règne à l'approche des élections dans cette ville située à 270 km au nord de Bagdad.

Les forces de sécurité de l'UPK "ont arrêté onze personnes qui avaient tiré en l'air lors d'un meeting électoral de Goran mardi soir", a indiqué le porte-parole du comité de sécurité de la province de Souleimaniyeh, Zana Hama Saleh.

Pour la première fois, le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK), dirigé par le président de la région Massoud Barzani, et l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), du président irakien Jalal Talabani, qui ont régné en maîtres sur la politique du Kurdistan pendant trois décennies, font face à une liste dissidente, celle de Goran, pour les élections au Parlement national le 7 mars.

En juillet, les réformateurs ont créé la surprise en se hissant à la deuxième place lors des élections au Parlement kurde, grâce à une campagne axée sur la lutte contre la corruption et contre l'hégémonie des deux partis historiques.

La justice turque jette en prison de nombreux «enfants terroristes»

DROITS DE L'HOMME

La répression s'accroît contre la génération de «l'intifada kurde». Des mineurs sont condamnés à de très lourdes peines.

GABRIELLE DANZAS/DIYARBAKIR

Depuis la prison de Diyarbakir, dans l'est de la Turquie, Berivan envoie de longues lettres à sa mère sur du papier coloré de fleurs roses, dans une écriture enfantine: «Tu me manques tellement maman, essaie de me sortir de ces quatre murs.»

L'adolescente de 15 ans a été condamnée fin janvier par une cour criminelle spéciale à 7 ans et 9 mois de prison pour «crimes commis au nom d'une organisation illégale», «manifestations hors-la-loi» et «actes de propagande pour une organisation illégale. La jeune Kurde avait été arrêtée en octobre à Batman, une ville voisine, au cours d'un rassemblement de soutien à la guérilla du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan), classée terroriste par la Turquie et l'Union européenne.

A son procès, elle a nié avoir jeté des pierres contre les forces de l'ordre. «Ma fille se rendait chez son oncle. En descendant du bus, elle est allée voir par curiosité le rassemblement, rien de plus», s'insurge Meryem, sa mère, assise sur un coussin dans le salon dépourvu de chauffage. «Elle est traitée comme la pire des criminelles», ajoute-t-elle.

Avec son sourire timide et ses traits sages, Berivan est devenue le symbole de la répression accrue de la justice turque contre les enfants kurdes interpellés lors de manifestations pro-PKK.

Quatre-vingt-trois autres jeunes sont actuellement incarcérés à Diyarbakir. Selon l'Association turque des droits de l'homme, 3000 mineurs ont été condamnés ou poursuivis en



© DR/epa/2009 | La mère de Berivan, une adolescente de 15 ans condamnée à 7 ans et 9 mois de prison. De nombreux mineurs kurdes emprisonnés ont participé à des manifestations contre les forces de l'ordre turques, comme ici à Diyarbakir.

2008 et 2009, essentiellement dans les régions à majorité kurde.

La génération de l'«Intifada kurde», comme les médias l'ont surnommée, tombe sous le coup de la loi antiterroriste. Elle est condamnée à de très lourdes peines de prison pour des jets de pierre et de cocktails Molotov contre les policiers, ou pour une simple participation à une manifestation interdite.

Les plus de 15 ans ne sont pas jugés par des tribunaux pour mineurs. «Certains écopent de vingt ans, sans réduction», fustige Canan Atabay, une avocate de Diyarbakir. «Prononcer de telles sentences ressemble à une vaste comédie, proteste-elle. Il faut revoir de fond en comble l'arsenal législatif». L'un de ses 22 clients mineurs, âgé de 16 ans, est accusé d'avoir jeté des cocktails Molotov. Il risque jusqu'à 44 ans de prison.

Le gouvernement islamo-conservateur a promis de s'attaquer à la situation. Mais le projet de loi, présenté en novembre, n'est toujours pas à l'ordre du jour du parlement. S'il était voté en l'état, estime l'Association des droits de l'homme de Diyarbakir, «il resterait possible de prononcer une peine supérieure à dix ans». Les condamnations à la prison

ferme demeureront la norme.

Les sirènes de la guérilla

«Ces jeunes en prison sont les enfants des Kurdes tués ou torturés par l'Etat turc», estime Arif Akkaya, porte-parole d'un collectif de familles, qui fait

référence aux 45 000 morts, victimes du conflit depuis 1984. «Une telle expérience, poursuit-il, ne peut conduire qu'à leur radicalisation.»

Il redoute que son fils, condamné à sept ans et six mois de prison et remis en liberté au bout de dix mois dans l'attente de la décision de la Cour d'appel, ne cède aux sirènes de la guérilla. La mère de Berivan, elle, assure que sa famille «n'a jamais été politisée»: «Mais si l'Etat ne pardonne pas à ma fille et si, dans huit ans, elle veut partir dans la montagne, je ne lui dirai jamais non.»

Iranian leadership silences opposition

CAIRO

President touts capability of nuclear program on anniversary of revolution

BY MICHAEL SLACKMAN

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad boasted Thursday that Iran had the capacity to make weapons-grade nuclear fuel if it chose to, in a speech designed to rally the nation as it marked the 31st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

The president's remarks, which focused on nuclear power and taunting the West, were part of the government's effort to deny the political opposition the chance to once again commandeer a national holiday by filling the streets with protesters. And, for the day, the government seemed largely to have succeeded.

There were demonstrations and clashes between security forces and protesters across Iran, and state broadcasters cut away from Mr. Ahmadinejad's speech early as chants of "death to the dictator" could be heard clearly. But the opposition failed to reach a critical mass on the street, and the sentiment among the protesters was that the government had won the battle this day.

Witnesses reported the "greens," as the opposition members call themselves, turned out in large numbers but were prevented from gathering in large groups. As soon as they appeared, the witnesses said, Basij militias and other security officers descended on them, beating them with clubs until they dispersed.

"The Iranian nuclear issue has become the main pillar of the regime's legitimacy," said Mustafa el-Labbad, an expert on Iran in Cairo. "So Ahmadinejad is putting it in the center of the scene in order to conceal the internal differ-

ences and huge domestic challenges they face."

Speaking before an enormous crowd assembled in Tehran's Azadi Square, Mr. Ahmadinejad relied on familiar anti-Western themes, blaming America and Europe for trying to hold Iran down and challenging them by saying that Iran had already succeeded in enriching uranium to 20 percent.

But in Washington, the White House spokesman Robert Gibbs disparaged Mr. Ahmadinejad's claims, saying the Iranian leadership has made a series of statement based on politics, not physics.

While it is not at all clear how much uranium had been enriched or whether Iran has the capacity to transform that into the fuel rods necessary for running the medical research reactor it says it aims to supply, those details were beside the point on Thursday.

The point was for Mr. Ahmadinejad to regain political ground after having initially supported a deal with the West that called for Iran send most of its enriched uranium out of the country. The president was pilloried by all political factions for the deal, and it was soon abandoned.

The goal also was to project a nationalist defiance as Washington moves to implement new sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program.

"Please pay attention and understand that the people of Iran are brave enough that if it wants to build a bomb it will clearly announce it and build it and not be afraid of you," he said. "When we say we won't build it that means we won't."

The president also repeated his declaration that Iran was a "nuclear state," adding that it had the capacity to enrich uranium to weapons grade if it chose to. The West has accused Iran of running a nuclear weapons program, while Iran has insisted that it is pursuing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

His speech, delivered from a platform

decorated with flowers, was heard by a crowd that was bused in from around the country to celebrate the most important political celebration of the year. It is a day similar to the Fourth of July in the United States or Bastille Day in France, and like those holidays it is steeped in myth and symbolism.

Both the opposition and the government hoped to control the message of the day. The opposition leaders, Mir Hussein Moussavi and Mehdi Karroubi, had called on their supporters to fill the streets, though they did not offer a clear plan or approach for how to proceed.

The government provided no room for the opposition to gain traction. It sent thousands of forces into the square the night before to both block and intimidate opposition from participating. Those who attended the rally disappeared in a sea of government supporters.

Indeed, when Mr. Karroubi tried to enter the procession leading to Azadi Square, he and his supporters clashed with security forces and plain clothes militia members, according to opposition Web sites and news services. There were also reports that the police arrested many demonstrators around country and briefly detained Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's grand daughter, Zahra Eshraghi, and her husband Mohammad Reza Khatami, the brother of a former pro-reform president.

There were pockets of protests in many cities, including the holy city of Mashad, Shiraz, Esfahan and around Tehran.

Videos were distributed on the Internet showing demonstrators stepping on pictures of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, burning a motorcycle belonging to the Basij and chanting anti-government slogans like "Khamenei is a murderer, his rule is illegitimate," and "political prisoners must be freed."

Given how the opposition had totally overwhelmed and defined past holidays, especially the religious observance of Ashura in December, the 31st anniversary day belonged to the leadership and its security forces.

But as the sun set, there were once again people climbing to their roof tops screaming "God is Great" and "Death to the Dictator," according to people in Tehran.

Rudaw.Net 24 February 2010

Fethullah Gulen opens new Kurdish TV station

Rudaw - The Turkish Islamic preacher Fethullah Gulen will open its first Kurdish TV Channel "Dunya TV" (world TV).

Gulen was born in 1938 in a village near Erzurum in eastern Turkey. Starting with the wealthy businessmen of Izmir, Gulen mobilized resources allowing him to control big

Turkish newspapers like Zaman and his movement has a large number of private schools and universities around the world, including in the Kurdistan region.

The latest Gulen project will be supervised by Samanyolu group, which is related to Gulen and runs the Zaman daily newspaper, which is one the famous newspapers in Turkey.

Currently Samanyolu group has six channels and they are planning to open seventh channel Dunya TV. The channel will broadcasts its programs from Antep, near the Syrian border.

Executives of the channel revealed that



they have finished the entire channel's technical works and are waiting for the official opening.

It appears Remzi Ketenci the former director of Samanyolu group will be the first boss for the Kurdish channel. The programs will be shown on Turksat 3-A

Iraqi Kurdistan to publish oil contracts

*** No formal contact from Baghdad about resuming oil exports**

*** About 38 companies working in Kurdish region**

By Jack Kimball (Reuters)

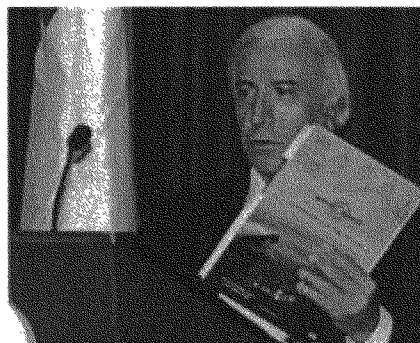
ARBIL, Iraq - Iraqi Kurdistan said on Sunday that the semi-autonomous region planned to publish disputed oil deals it had made with foreign firms, a move that may help end an impasse with Baghdad over who will pay them.

Kurdistan and Baghdad have been at loggerheads for months over oil deals Kurdistan signed independently with foreign firms. The Arab-led government in Baghdad refuses to pay the firms, and oil exports from Kurdistan stopped last year.

One problem is a lack of transparency in the deals, Baghdad lawmakers say, and the contracts' publication on the internet may help defuse the row. The Kurdish authorities have already sent copies of at least two contracts to Baghdad as both sides talk increasingly, ahead of a March 7 election, of an accord.

"The sooner we compile and scan them, they will be out," Kurdistan natural resources minister Ashti Hawrami told Reuters in an interview on Sunday, referring to deals with some 38 firms currently working in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Small firms including Norway's DNO <DNO.OL>, Genel Enerji of Turkey and London-listed Heritage Oil <HOIL.L> have struck production sharing agree-



Dr Ashti Hawrami, Kurdistan Regional Government minister of natural resources.

ments in the largely autonomous northern Kurdish region. The central government in Baghdad prefers service contracts, for which developers receive a set fee for each barrel of oil produced.

Questions were raised about Kurdistan's agreements with foreign firms last year, when the Oslo bourse revealed details of a murky share deal between DNO and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The KRG denied any wrongdoing.

Kurds want the central government to pay the oil companies working in Kurdistan, but Baghdad insists the KRG pay from its annual cut of the national budget.

KURD-ARAB THAW?

Tensions between Kurds and the Arab-led government in Baghdad over contracts and larger issues about resources and land are seen as a major threat as

Iraq emerges from years of sectarian war since the 2003 U.S. invasion.

Hawrami has in the past used interviews to rail against the Baghdad government, but his latest comments were more diplomatic, perhaps a sign of sensitivity ahead of the March 7 parliamentary vote, after which the Kurds will seek allies.

Baghdad's hand in the dispute has also strengthened, after the Oil Ministry signed a raft of deals last month for oil fields outside Iraqi Kurdistan that may turn Iraq into one of the three top global oil producers.

Kurd-Arab ties seemed to thaw recently, and Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani said last week that he expected oil exports from Kurdistan to resume within days [ID:nLDE619139].

Hawrami, however, said the Kurdish regional government had still not received a message from Baghdad about exports, which Kurdish leaders had targeted at 100,000 barrels per day.

"We have not formally, as far as I'm aware, received any written response from the office of the prime minister in Baghdad, but we're expecting that," he said.

When asked whether Kurdish authorities would use their 17 percent share of the budget to pay companies, Hawrami said: "No, absolutely not."

Hawrami estimates there are 45 billion barrels of recoverable reserves in Kurdistan, adding that he expected 11-12 new wells to be dug this year. Iraq's total reserves are estimated at 115 billion barrels -- the world's third largest.



February 14, 2010—Monsters and Critics.com

Kurdish PM: Kurds inside and outside the region must vote

By dpa correspondents

Baghdad - The Prime Minister of the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region of Iraq called on Sunday for Kurds both inside and outside the area to participate in upcoming Iraqi elections.

Premier Barham Salih said in a statement carried by the Kurdish government site that the polls set for March 7 would be 'a turning point based on which new political systems will be built.'

'This is why it is important that the sons of the Kurdish nation both inside and outside the area participate in these elections with vigor,' he added.

Debate between Kurdish and Arab lawmakers delayed the passage of the Kurdish region's elections law for months.

The disputed city of Kirkuk, which many Kurds hope will be the capital of a future Kurdish state, was left out of elections in previous years as lawmakers could not agree on a system for weighing its votes.

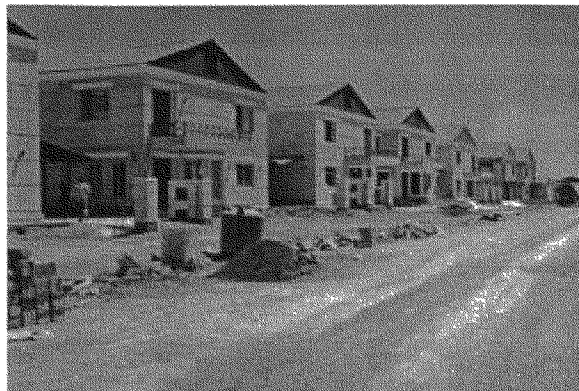


Salih added: 'There are still many problems between us and the federal government, which means we must maintain a heavy Kurdish presence in the parliament so as to resolve these disputes to the favor of the Kurdish nation.'

Kurdistan Region attracts 12 billion dollars investment in three and half years

*** Kurdish Arbil gets majority of investment**
*** \$6 bln UAE project fell through**

By Jack Kimball and Shamal Aqrabi (Reuters) -



ERBIL, IRAQ, Iraqi Kurdistan has attracted more than 12 billion US dollars from local and foreign investors in non-oil sectors over the last three-and-a-half years, mainly in housing, the region's investment body said on Monday.

Iraq's largely autonomous northern region has enjoyed relative stability compared with its south, which has been wracked by violence since the 2003 US invasion, and is trying to lure investors into real estate, banking and industry.

"We want to tell companies that we have a very different situation than the rest of Iraq," said Kamaran Mufti, a director general at the Kurdistan Regional Government's Board of Investment. "Those who come early will get more benefits."

Foreign companies have invested around \$3.1 billion from August 2006 to February this year, according to the investment body. Figures would be higher, but a \$6 billion deal in real estate with a firm from the United Arab Emirates fell through, Mufti said

in an interview with Reuters.

The largest foreign investors in terms of money were from Kuwait and Lebanon, according to the board's figures. The Kurdish capital of Erbil was the most popular destination for investor cash.

Investment from Iraqi national companies was about \$8.59 billion during the same period, the body said. Joint ventures accounted for around \$660 million, it said.

The board's investment figures do not include the oil sector where oil firms such as Norway's DNO, Turkey's Genel Enerji and Jersey-based Heritage have struck production-sharing agreements.

Kurds, who were slaughtered by Saddam Hussein in the 1980s and fought a bloody civil war amongst themselves in the 1990s, maintained de facto independence from Baghdad after the first Gulf war, protected by a UN no-fly zone.

Since the US-led invasion, a larger row between Arabs and Kurds about land and oil rights, including control

over the oil-rich area of Kirkuk, has posed a major threat to stability in Iraq, which has a national election on March 7.

Mufti said that public and high-income housing, industries like cement, and agriculture were top destinations for investment. Banking was also a large attraction, he said.

According to the board's figures, the body issued 241 investment licences from August 2006 to February 2010. Mufti said that of about 1,200 foreign companies working in Kurdistan, the greatest number - some 620 - were from Turkey.

Housing attracted around \$4.7 billion in the same period with \$2.29 billion in banking, \$1.6 billion in industry and \$1.1 billion in tourism, the board said.

"We want to tell investors that we need them ... it doesn't make a difference if they are local or foreign investors," Mufti said.

Khaleej Times 15 February 2010

Iraq may pay costs of oil firms in Kurdish north

(Reuters)

BAGHDAD - Iraq's government could end up paying exploration and extraction costs of oil firms working in Iraqi Kurdistan but not their profits, the oil minister said on Monday, signalling a further thaw in a row over oil wealth.

"We will not pay any profits to the companies but we will look into the receipts of the work they carried out," Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahrastani told al-Salam television station in an interview.

He said he continued to have reservations about the contracts signed by the Kurdistan Regional

Government (KRG) with oil firms, especially production-sharing elements of the deals, but that would not stop the resumption of crude exports soon.

Kurdistan and Baghdad have been at loggerheads for months over oil deals Kurdistan signed independently with foreign firms, a move the central government in Baghdad considers illegal.

The Arab-led government in Baghdad refuses to pay the firms, and oil exports from Kurdistan stopped last year.

A joint committee that includes officials from the oil and finance ministries along with representatives of the KRG will study the expenses

foreign firms incurred in developing oilfields and decide whether or not to pay them.

"We will discuss them (the receipts) and if the prices are accepted, we will pay it," he said.

Shahrastani has said in recent days that oil exports from Kurdish fields - suspended after having flowed for only two months or so last year - would resume soon.

He said on Monday that the first exports would come from the Tawke field, operated by Norwegian oil producer DNO and Turkey's Genel Enerji.

DNO was the first foreign company to drill for oil in Iraq after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion. Around 38 oil firms are present

in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Exports from Tawke and another field, Taq Taq, resumed last June in a brief signal of detente between Kurdish authorities and Baghdad, but halted when the Iraqi government refused to pay DNO and the other companies.

Both sides have made overtures to each other in recent weeks to end the impasse.

Baghdad's hand has been strengthened by a series of deals for oilfields outside the semi-autonomous Kurdish region that could turn it into one of the world's top three crude producers.

Iraq-expert: Kurdish competition will not weaken the Kurds

By Hawar Abdul-Razaq Ali

Iraq-expert Wayne White says that the competition among Kurdish parties for the Kurdish vote will not necessarily weaken Kurdish power. He also says that's likely that the Kurdish opposition parties will attain a more favorable result than the ruling Kurdish parties KDP and PUK.

White is a former Director Deputy Director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research Office of Analysis for the Near East and South Asia and Adjunct Scholar at the Middle East Institute.

This time around, the Kurdish political parties won't be one list and they will have several different lists for the upcoming election, do you think this division will weaken Kurdish future power?

I do not think greater competition within the KRG necessarily weakens future Kurdish power. In fact, it might diversify and strengthen the popular base upon which the KRG government rests. When the chips are down, unless, as in that sad year of 1996, individual Kurdist political movements make highly questionable and potentially destructive deals with political elements outside the KRG for the specific purpose of damaging other players within the KRG, Kurds usually recognize vital moments in which they must remain united in defense of Kurdish interests. Alliances and cooperation between the KRG and other non-Kurdish political elements within Iraq are sorely needed, but not if the purpose is merely an effort to position Kurdish elements to damage other elements within the KRG.

Do you expect Gorran movement to do well again just like last election, or do you think the main parties like KDP-PUK alliances this time will achieve more votes?

If the upcoming elections are free, fair and unmanipulated, I believe elements within the KRG independent of the traditional KRG and PUK should achieve an even more favorable electoral result.

In your opinion, what the Kurds should do to get more votes outside the KRG borders?

Political actions on the part of the KRG and parties within it must demonstrate a

greater and more genuine sympathy for the interests of certain non-Kurdish political entities and ethno-sectarian elements. Many Kurdish actions in the past simply appear to Arabs, Turcomen and Christians as efforts to engage in a one-dimensional zero-sum game aimed at enhancing Kurdish interests at their expense. In some areas, Kurdish interests are best served by listening--seriously and meaningfully--to the concerns of other ethno-sectarian groups. After all, historically the greater Kurdish community in Iraq has been inclusive (and even protective) of other ethno-sectarian minorities in its midst and nearby, not exclusionary--a key factor in its greatness.

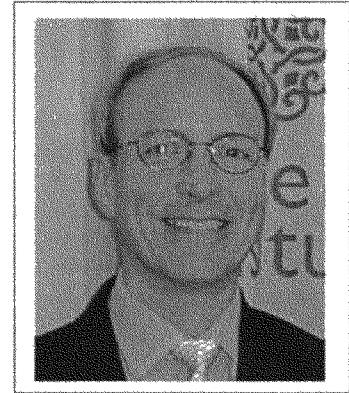
Do you see a possible alliance between Maliki and a Kurdish political list, and if that to happen, which list will you fancy becoming a partner with Maliki?

It is very difficult for me to sort out whether Maliki will align himself formally with a KRG list because it appears Maliki is even less than certain about what he should do with respect to even the greater Arab-Iraqi community beyond!

Some experts believe that because of Kurdish division, after the election they will lose the president's post as well, what do you think of that?

If lists within the KRG are too bitterly competitive, they could undermine Kurdish power outside by raising the possibility of some measure of disunity at key moments in the political process beyond. However, on balance, it probably would be unwise if either Sunni and Shi'a Arab parties move to take the presidency from the Kurds. The [Iraqi] Kurdish presidency has played an important function at times in recent years by rising above the darker politics of the day to remind all of the national interest. Jalal Talabani has even suffered the loss of some of his support within the KRG because, at times, it has appeared to some Kurds that he was insufficiently mindful of Kurdish interests in his actions. I believe they are mistaken. Quite often Jalal has tried to defend the greater national good by acting the part of a fully "Iraqi" president, but Kurds must understand that this is exactly what he should be doing in that important post.

Don't you think the process of banning hundreds of Sunni candidates and then letting them return to the fold has damaged the credibility of the election?



Yes, nothing has been more damaging to the election's basic legitimacy than attempts on the part of various elements through one body in Baghdad of iffy legitimacy itself to engage in any exclusionary witch-hunt. And it is not even clear at present whether those Sunni Arab, but also a good number of relatively secular, candidates have truly been restored. That is being opposed, and even the manner of the restoration has merely postponed the final decision until the potentially politically unstable period following the elections.

A lot of people believes that after the election, the Kurds will be weakened and they predicts a bleak future for them, what do you think of this?

The Kurds can only be truly weakened if some of the key Kurdish players lose sight of their own collective Kurdish interest or elements outside the KRG foolishly try to reduce the Kurdish role in the central politics of Baghdad to gain further narrow-minded advantages for themselves.

In the last Kurdish election campaign, there were a lot of violence between Gorran and PUK supporters, do you expect the same things happen again?

I hope there is less strife between competing Kurdish elements in the coming elections, but the possibility of violence cannot be excluded.

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FEBRUARY 19, 2010

Resolution of Turkey's "Kurdish Question" in Critical Stage as PKK Threatens to End Peace Initiatives

The Jamestown Foundation

By: Emrullah Uslu

LAST OCTOBER, eight unarmed Kurdish militants and 28 Kurdish civilians returned to southeast Turkey from bases of the Parti Karkerani Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers' Party - PKK) in northern Iraq. It was intended as the first of a series of government-sponsored "returns" of PKK activists and part of a larger scheme of reconciliation between the Kurdish militants and the state. When Kurdish activists in Turkey organized a massive parade for the returnees that looked more like a victory march, the ensuing public relations disaster brought the government's repatriation scheme to a halt. Progress on the "Kurdish Initiative" (the government's comprehensive approach to resolving the Kurdish issue) quickly dissipated as a result of public reaction to the massive welcoming ceremony.

The Kurdish initiative began to collapse when it became the foundation of an ethnic confrontation that erupted in street violence. While the opposition parties agitated the Turkish public against the Kurdish initiative, the Kurdish nationalist Demokratik Toplum Partisi (Democratic Society Party - DTP) organized several political rallies to protest the new prison conditions of imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, further escalating the division between the Turkish and Kurdish people (see Terrorism Monitor, December 3, 2009).

Who's Behind the Street Violence?

Turkish counterterrorism units believe that the violence in the Kurdish region is organized by the Koma Civaken Kurdistan (Peoples' Confederation of Kurdistan - KCK), an umbrella organization that combines pro-PKK organizations and aims to mobilize Kurdish youth in city centers whenever Ocalan orders it. To end the street violence, police raided various addresses and arrested approximately 100 KCK members, including human rights activists, politicians, students and ten mayors (Sabah, December 25, 2009). The police raid on KCK militants disappointed many Kurdish and Turkish intellectuals who supported the Kurdish initiative. In



addition to the police operations against Kurdish nationalist activists, the Constitutional Court finalized a two-year long court case against the Kurdish nationalist DTP, shutting the party down because of its ties with PKK terrorists (ntvmsnbc.com, December 11, 2009).

Both Turks and Kurds were disappointed with the immediate results of the Kurdish initiative. In order to placate Turkish public anger the government slowed down the initiative's implementation. In recent weeks, however, there are signs that the government is going to resume the Kurdish initiative to end the ethnic violence. Interior Minister Besir Atalay held a press conference on January 15 to restate that the government is determined to finalize the Kurdish initiative (Akparti.org.tr, January 15). Furthermore, the ruling Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (Justice and Development Party - AKP) sent out a handbook to the local branches of the AKP explaining the government's aims behind the Kurdish initiative (Hurriyet, January 22).

Reviving the Kurdish Initiative

The AKP also invited public figures, including singers, artists, writers, and celebrities to a meeting with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to discuss the Kurdish initiative. The AKP government believes that celebrities and intellectuals could help the government reach out to the larger segments of Turkish society to convince them that the Kurdish initiative is a necessary step to solving the ongoing problem (Zaman, February 6).

The AKP has also invited a delegation from the Council of Europe's

Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) to examine the prison conditions of Abdullah Ocalan and five other inmates. The Turkish press reported that the delegation had the opportunity to ask questions of Ocalan and the other inmates (Cihan Haber Ajansi, January 27). The government's aim in inviting the CPT delegation was to reduce existing tensions based on the speculation that Ocalan's new prison conditions do not correspond to international human rights standards.

With regard to how to deal with the PKK members still in northern Iraq, the Turkish government invited the Commanding General, United States Forces - Iraq, General Ray Odierno, to discuss possible measures. General Odierno had a meeting with Interior Minister Besir Atalay and discussed details of how to evacuate the Mahmur U.N. refugee camp, where 10,000 Turkish Kurd refugees have been residing since 1993. Mahmur is a major source of recruitment for the PKK and its closure will be an important part of any peace settlement (Hurriyet, February 4).

New Parties, New Politics?

While the Turkish government undertakes a comprehensive public campaign to explain why it is necessary to address the Kurdish question, the Kurdish opposition is sending mixed signals regarding cooperation with the government. After the DTP's closure, the Kurdish nationalist parliamentary deputies formed a new political party, Bedis ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democracy Party - BDP), to continue their political life. PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan warned the BDP leaders not to

associate with the PKK or be its spokesman but rather to work in the legal arena (Gundem-online.net, February 4). This is a new approach in Kurdish politics. In the last 20 years of the Kurdish struggle a succession of pro-PKK parties have always acted as if they were the spokesman of the PKK. These ties with the PKK have become a major point of contention between the Kurdish nationalist movement and the European Union (E.U.) since 2004. E.U. representatives have unsuccessfully asked DTP politicians to distance themselves from the PKK.

The new Kurdish BDP party, however, follows a new path. Following Ocalan's advice, BDP leader, Selahattin Demirtas declared, "The PKK and the BDP are two separate organizations. If the PKK want to say something they have the right to say so. We will not be their voice" (aktifhaber.com, February 6). In a recent interview Selahattin Demirtas thanked Ocalan for allowing the BDP to develop its own political program as an independent party from the PKK (ANF News Agency, February 4).

Parallel to these developments, the PKK's acting leader, Murat Karayilan, has issued a statement presenting three principles and four steps to end the violence. Karayilan thinks that a peace settlement based on these principles will require a new Turkish constitution.

The three principles that Karayilan believes are the basis of a potential peace agreement are:

- A "democratic nation" in which no ethnic group and identity is dominant and privileged.
- A "democratic country" which accepts the fact that the country

belongs to all ethnic groups

- A "democratic republic" which acknowledges the national and democratic rights of all ethnic groups.

Karayilan's four steps to bringing peace:

- Both the PKK and the Turkish military need to declare a ceasefire. The Turkish state should stop military and political operations against the PKK.

- The local politicians who were arrested as part of operations against the KCK since April 14, 2009 should be released immediately.

- Abdullah Ocalan should be released from prison and put under house arrest.

- Negotiations between the Kurdish political leaders and the government should begin (ANF News Agency, February 3).

PKK leaders have issued similar demands in the past and Karayilan's principles reflect the position the PKK has adopted since 1999. The core demand remains recognition of the PKK as a legitimate representative of the Kurdish people in Turkey.

The Kurdistan Freedom Falcons

Parallel with Cemil Bayik's statement, the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (Teyrebazen Azadiya Kurdistan - TAK) issued a new declaration. The TAK is an offshoot PKK organization that concentrated its attacks in major metropolises and tourism destinations in 2006 and 2007, but stopped the attacks in 2008 (see Terrorism Focus, October 17, 2006; January 22, 2008). In January 2008 the TAK was added to the U.S.

list of designated terrorist organizations. In its declaration the TAK threatens to resume its terror campaign in major metropolises. As a target the TAK names the major Turkish political parties: the AKP, the Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi - MHP) and the Republican Peoples Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi - CHP). In addition to these targets the TAK threatened to hit economic targets and civilians who play critical roles in maintaining the existing political system. TAK further warns tourists not to come to Turkey.

The TAK accuses the PKK of being passive in its fight with the Turkish state, but is leaving the door open to cooperate with the PKK if it agrees to intensify its struggle (teyrenkurdistan.com, January 24).

Conclusion

Given that the TAK was formed by PKK leader Murat Karayilan and commanded by Dr. Bahoz Erdal (a.k.a. Fehman Hussein, the former commander of PKK military units), it is unlikely to organize an intense terror campaign in Turkish metropolises if the PKK leaders, particularly Ocalan, do not approve their strategy. Thus, the TAK's public statement cannot be considered an independently-issued declaration. Rather, it could be a tactical maneuver on behalf of the PKK to convince the AKP government it needs to recognize the PKK as a reasonable negotiating partner. As it watches how the AKP's Kurdish initiative unfolds, the PKK will retain the option of playing its TAK card if it thinks further violence will serve the PKK's organizational interests.

Kurdish president fiercely criticizes Kurdish opposition party

ERBIL – Massoud Barzani, president of the autonomous Kurdistan region fiercely criticized the Kurdish opposition Change (Gorran) for calling the Kurdish Regional Guard (Peshmergas) a militia. "Those who today have the guts to denigrate the name of the Peshmergas, will tomorrow also do this with the names of martyrs."

According to Barzani there is no place for people in Kurdistan who don't have respect for the Kurdish security forces. The regional president said that he could

live with Iraqi chauvinists calling the Kurdish forces bad names, but 'unfortunately there are now voices in the Kurdistan region and in the Kurdish parliament that call the Kurdish forces militias and doubt the legality of these troops.'

Kurdish MP Adnan Osman said the Peshmerga forces are militias, because they are controlled by the political parties. On Tuesday hundreds of Peshmergas demonstrated in front of the Kurdish parliament and demanded the removal of the MP. Gorran didn't want to take distance from their declarations and described the



reactions as a campaign strategy of the Kurdistan Alliance, which consists of the ruling parties KDP and PUK, the main rival for Gorran in the Iraqi elections upcoming 7 March.

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Iraq's oil industry poised to re-enter world stage

DUBAI

Oil field auction bolsters revival after years of war, decline and sanctions

BY TOM HUNDLEY

When coordinated bomb blasts killed more than 120 people in Baghdad in December, days before a scheduled auction of Iraqi oil field development rights, the carnage raised fears that major oil companies might be deterred from showing up for the bidding.

An earlier auction attempt, in June, the first since Iraq nationalized its oil production in 1972, had already fizzled when the majors balked at Iraq's tough bargaining stance.

Yet, amid extraordinarily tight security, they did show up: and more important, they were in a mood to gamble. The two-day event turned into the biggest oil field auction in history.

"The terrorists tried to send a message to the oil companies through the bombings," the oil minister, Hussain al-Shahristani, declared on Iraqi television. "But this message was not delivered."

After three decades of decline, sanctions and war, Iraq's oil industry now appears poised to recover its place among the world's leading producers — and perhaps even to challenge Saudi Arabia for the top spot by the end of the decade.

If all the companies participating in the industry's revival "are reasonably successful in delivering on the commitments we've made, it is quite likely we will see Iraq increase its production to around 10 million barrels per day within about 10 years," Tony Hayward, chief executive of BP, told the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland, last month.

Iraq now produces about 2.4 million barrels a day and ranks below the top dozen producers.

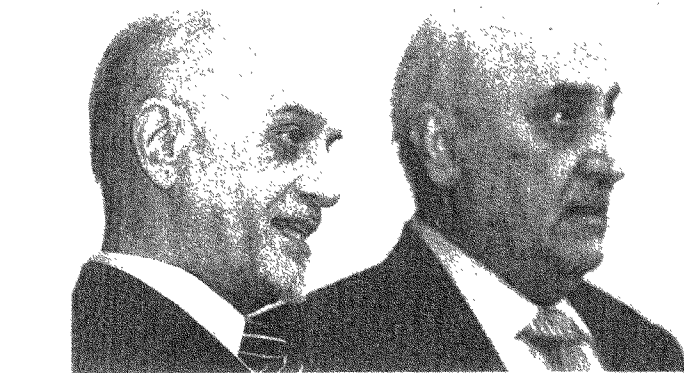
Saudi Arabia produced about 10.7 million barrels a day in 2008, but reduced output slightly in 2009. It has a capacity of about 12.5 million barrels a day, but could increase that to 15 million.

The Saudis, with 266 billion barrels in proven reserves, have far more oil than anyone. Iraq ranks fourth, behind Canada and Iran, with 115 billion proven barrels: but that figure dates from the 1970s. Most oil experts believe that, with new technology, it has a lot more oil to be found and that these reserves will not be particularly difficult to develop.

Absent unforeseen political events, "the resources there are relatively easy to bring on-stream," Mr. Hayward said.

That, industry analysts say, is the main reason that oil companies decided to take their chances and meet Iraq's asking price.

Royal Dutch Shell and the state-run company Petronas in Malaysia were



Hussain al-Shahristani, left, Iraq's oil minister, with Ali Ghalib Baban, the planning minister. Harnessing the country's oil wealth could bring about a realignment of power in the Gulf region.

among the biggest apparent winners. They will jointly develop the giant Majnoon field, with proven reserves of 12.5 billion barrels and are expected to increase daily output to 1.8 million barrels, from 46,000 barrels now. Lukoil, of Russia, and Statoil, of Norway, will develop the similarly sized West Qurna 2, with reserves of 13 billion barrels. Other companies that came away with major prizes included Gazprom, of Russia, China National Petroleum, Sonangol, of Angola, and Total, of France.

The successful bidders will sign service contracts that will pay them a fee ranging from \$5.00 to \$1.15 a barrel for each barrel they produce above an agreed minimum.

U.S. companies went home from the December auction empty-handed, although they were somewhat more successful in the June bidding, when Exxon Mobil, after protracted negotiations, eventually won the right to develop the West Qurna 1 field in a partnership with Shell. The only other U.S. company that will be producing oil in Iraq is Occidental Petroleum, as junior partner in a deal with Eni, of Italy, and Korea Gas, of South Korea, to develop the Zubair field.

Still, in the oil-services sector, U.S. companies are likely to do better. The success of the auction in December "implies a huge amount of service activity over the next two or three years," Andrew Gould, chief executive of Schlumberger, the oil field services giant, said during a conference call from Houston.

Halliburton, Schlumberger and Bechtel are among U.S. companies in line to win contracts worth billions of dollars to repair pipelines, rebuild terminals and upgrade other infrastructure so that Iraq will be able to bring its crude oil to market, industry analysts say.

A revitalized Iraqi oil sector would challenge the pecking order in OPEC and weaken Saudi dominance as the world's "swing producer" — the single mega-producer that in the past has been able to tweak the global price of oil by adjusting the spigot of its own production.

It would also put Iraq on course to pass its perennial rival Iran as the Gulf's second-largest producer — a development that would imply a significant realignment of power in the region. While Iran would remain the dominant power in the Gulf, even if its oil production slipped behind Iraq's, Tehran could feel an even greater urgency to develop

its nuclear capability in order to maintain that dominance.

"A lot of things have to happen before Iraq gets up to six or seven million barrels a day and passes Iran, so this won't have an immediate impact" on Iran's nuclear strategy, said Christian Koch, a security expert at the Gulf Research Center, in Dubai. "But over the long term, it will certainly be a factor."

Still, as Mr. Koch noted, Iraq has a long way to go before it can cash in on the bounty of the auction in December. Security remains a major worry, and the weak and highly factionalized central government will have to find some way to deliver stability and continuity.

One big concern for the oil companies is the lack of a comprehensive national law to guarantee that contracts will be honored by future governments. Already, some opposition lawmakers have challenged the legality of those signed by Mr. Shahristani.

Another problem is the dispute over control of reserves in the semiautonomous Kurdish region. Baghdad says contracts signed by more than two dozen foreign oil companies with the Kurdistan Regional Government are illegal.

The national elections due to be held in March will be watched carefully by the oil industry.

Handing over so much control of the nation's oil wealth to foreign companies is something that "runs against the grain" of many Iraqis, warned Tariq Shafiq, a founding director in the 1960s of the Iraqi National Oil Co.

Mr. Shafiq, writing in January in The Iraq Oil Report, questioned whether the next government would be so eager to court foreign oil companies.

Clinton says Guards push Iran toward a dictatorship

DOHA, QATAR

U.S. plans new sanctions on Revolutionary Guards as they widen control

BY MARK LANDLER

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said Monday that the United States feared Iran was drifting toward a military dictatorship, with the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps seizing control of large swaths of Iran's political, military and economic establishments.

"That is how we see it," Mrs. Clinton said in a televised town hall meeting of students at the Doha campus of Carnegie Mellon University. "We see that the government in Iran — the supreme leader, the president, the Parliament — is being supplanted and that Iran is moving toward a military dictatorship."

The United States, she said, is tailoring a new set of tougher United Nations sanctions against the Revolutionary Guards Corps, which controls Iran's nuclear program and which she said had increasingly marginalized the country's clerical and political leadership.

Mrs. Clinton's remarks were remarkably blunt, given her audience in Qatar, a Gulf emirate with close ties to Iran. But they build on the Obama administration's recent strategy of branding the Guards as an "entitled class" that is the principal menace in Iran.

The United States, Mrs. Clinton said, will protect its allies in the Gulf from Iranian aggression — a pledge that echoed the idea of a "security umbrella" that she advanced last summer in Asia. She noted that the United States already supplied defensive weapons to several of these countries and that it would do more if necessary.

"We will always defend ourselves, and we will always defend our friends and allies, and we will certainly defend countries who are in the Gulf who face the greatest immediate nearby threat from Iran," she said. "We also are talking at length with a lot of our friends in the Gulf about what they need defensively in the event that Iran pursues its nuclear ambitions."

Pressed by an audience of mainly students, Mrs. Clinton said the United States had no plans to carry out a military strike against Iran. Still, as the Obama administration moves from diplomacy to pressure — seeking to build the case for tough sanctions — its policy is edging closer to the hard line that Mrs. Clinton advocated as a presidential candidate.

At times on this trip, her public comments have sounded a lot like her words on the campaign trail. Indeed, as a senator and as a candidate seeking to establish her national-security credentials, Mrs. Clinton voted in 2007 for a nonbinding resolution to ask the Bush administration to declare the Revolutionary Guard Corps a foreign terrorist organization, a measure that Barack Obama as a U.S. senator said he opposed and which the Bush administration itself resisted.

Asked on Monday about the so-called security umbrella — a phrase that the White House did not embrace after she mentioned it in Thailand last summer — Mrs. Clinton said she still believed that it was the best way to counter the Iranian threat.

Iran's neighbors, she said, have three options. "They can just give in to the threat or they can seek their own capabilities, including nuclear, or they ally themselves with a country like the United States that is willing to help defend them," Mrs. Clinton said. "I think the third is by far the preferable option."

In singling out the Revolutionary Guards Corps, the Obama administration is also trying to drive a wedge between the average Iranian and a privileged and corrupt ruling class. Speaking to reporters later as she flew

The U.S. sees that Iran's leadership "is being supplanted and that Iran is moving toward a military dictatorship."

from Qatar to Saudi Arabia, Mrs. Clinton emphasized this rift.

"I think the trend with this greater and greater military lock on leadership decisions should be disturbing to Iranians as well as to those of us on the outside," she said.

Last week, the U.S. Treasury Department froze the assets within its jurisdiction of four companies controlled by the Revolutionary Guards, as well as those of Gen. Rostam Qasemi, a commander who oversees the Revolutionary Guards' construction and engineering conglomerate, Khatam al-Anbiya.

A number of analysts who follow the Revolutionary Guards have documented its vast influence, from ownership of laser eye-surgery clinics to control of some major Iranian ministries. In a 2008 report for the Pentagon, RAND Corp., the research organization, described the Guards as "an expansive socio-political-economic conglomerate whose influence extends into virtually every corner of

Iranian political life and society."

Some have described the Guards' expanding power as tantamount to a "rolling coup." But the analyses also suggest that cleavages within Iranian society, and within the Revolutionary Guards, with 125,000 members, would make an outright power grab difficult. Still, they do not completely dismiss the possibility of a Guards commander trying to push aside the mullahs.

In Saudi Arabia, Mrs. Clinton was expected to raise with King Abdullah the issue of Saudi Arabia's offering guarantees to China that it would offset disruptions in oil supplies that could occur if China were to support sanctions against Iran.

The Obama administration is also working on sanctions that would publicly single out the Guards' vast array of companies, banks and other entities.

Senior White House officials described what they said would be a "systematic" effort to drive a wedge between the Iranian population and the Revolutionary Guards, which the West says are responsible for running Iran's nuclear program and also have a record of supporting militant Islamist organizations and cracking down on anti-government protesters.

In putting together a U.N. Security Council resolution that names specific companies and the wide web of assets owned by the Guards — including even the Tehran airport — the administration is hoping to substantially increase pressure on the organization.

Mr. Obama said last Tuesday at a news conference: "We have bent over backwards to say to the Islamic Republic of Iran that we are willing to have a constructive conversation about how they can align themselves with international norms and rules and re-enter as full members of the international community. They have made their choice so far."

The United States, Mr. Obama said, will be working on "developing a significant regime of sanctions."

Previous resolutions have designated a handful of senior figures in the Iranian nuclear program. But the Obama administration's latest push would name dozens, if not hundreds, of companies.

Brian Knowlton contributed reporting from Washington.

Momentum fades for Iran opposition

Herald INTERNATIONAL Tribune FEBRUARY 16, 2010

BEIRUT

After anniversary protests fizzle out, dissidents see a lack of clear leadership

BY ROBERT F. WORTH

Many of Iran's opposition supporters expected last Thursday to be a moment of triumph, with calls for a vast street protest on the 31st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

Instead, the day set off a flood of self-criticism by the opposition. The protest was small — constrained by arrests, intimidation and simple crowd control. And the event was overshadowed by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's boasts about Iran's nuclear program.

Now dejected opposition supporters are reviewing their tactics and struggling to find a new catalyst for a movement that emerged with astonishing power just eight months ago, after the disputed presidential election.

"I think a failure has triggered debates and tactical analyses that have been needed for a long time now," said a 26-year-old woman in Tehran who attended the protest Thursday and many earlier ones, and who, out of fear for her safety, asked to be identified only as Saina. After the last major protest, around the Ashura holiday in late December, turned violent, she said, "it seemed like a lot of people were tired of being brutalized and continuing to go out into the streets."

Many in the opposition have concluded that their lack of clear leadership and their reliance on exiles who work through the Internet may now be holding them back, even though these factors provided crucial resilience in the waves of brutal government crack-

downs last summer and autumn.

"A protest movement without a proper relationship with its own leaders is not a movement," an anonymous blogger wrote online in a post titled "Lessons from 11 February."

"It is no more than a blind rebellion in the streets which will vanish sooner than you can imagine," the blogger wrote.

Although there are recognized opposition leaders, including the former presidential candidate Mir Hussein Moussavi and the cleric Mehdi Karubi, their ability to organize protests has proved limited, and their credibility is low among many younger protesters who regard them as insufficiently aggressive. Many other leading figures have been arrested.

Iranian Internet forums have echoed with recriminations, hand-wringing and questions about how to move forward. Some say the failure was a useful lesson and a motive for the movement to become more disciplined and mature.

One common focal point for self-criticism was the so-called Trojan horse plan for last Thursday that was widely disseminated on the Internet. Opposition members were to dress conservatively and aim to reach the center of the pro-government crowd, where, on a signal, they would pull off their shirts or cloaks to reveal bright green clothing — the symbol of the opposition.

Instead, according to witnesses, plain-clothes government supporters were able to identify the protesters, intimidating and quickly silencing many of them.

"Where were the Greens of Tehran?" Alreza Rezaie wrote on a popular Iranian blog. He offered three answers: "1. On the Internet reading about the Trojan horse plan; 2. On YouTube learning about the 'action'; 3. Chatting online in the afternoon about where to meet in the morning."

Many people also blamed exiled opposition figures, saying they were not in touch with the situation on the ground and created unrealistic protest scenarios. One Iranian journalist living in the United States, Mohsen Sazegara, had talked of last Thursday as a day that would change the balance of power and pave the way for a "final action" against the government, in comments that were widely circulated on the Internet.

Arash Sigarchi, a blogger, said of the exiles: "In my opinion, during the period from Ashura until today, they have only increased the expectations of the green movement."

Others were more hopeful, pointing out that, while the day was clearly a disappointment for the opposition, it was also less than triumphant for the government. Despite the official claims of as many as 50 million people attending the anniversary celebrations, turnout was noticeably down from previous years. This was true even though the government provided unusual work-related benefits to civil servants who signed up for organized trips to the rally.

Further, despite strict identity checks and elaborate police efforts to control the area where Mr. Ahmadinejad made his speech, cries of "Death to the Dictator" could still be heard there.

Some opposition supporters said it was inevitable that the outrage generated in June by Mr. Ahmadinejad's disputed re-election would fade, and that a new phase of action for his opponents should begin, with the focus returning to economic and social issues.

Last Thursday "signaled the end of the end of the euphoric buildup that had mobilized the movement until then," a 25-year-old Iranian now living abroad wrote in an e-mail message, asking to be identified only as Ali. "It was the day the Greens grew up and learned that fighting a government as determined as the Islamic Republic of Iran will require much more than Facebook fan pages, Twitter clouds and emotional YouTube clips."

But the next step is still not clear.

TODAY'S ZAMAN 20 February 2010

Court asks 480 years for Kurdish editor

TODAY'S ZAMAN

PROSECUTORS in Diyarbakir have demanded a prison sentence of 480 years for a former editor-in-chief of the

Kurdish-language Azadiya Welat daily.

At a hearing yesterday at the Diyarbakir 5th High Criminal Court, prosecutors demanded that Vedat Kursun be sentenced to 480 years for news stories in 94 issues of the daily. The prosecutors said Kursun was not a member of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) but was disseminating propaganda for it by publishing stories on the statements and activities of the organization.

Servet Özen, the defendant's lawyer, said they do not agree with the court and demanded Kursun's acquittal. The

court has delayed the trial, and Kursun remains under arrest.

Ozan Kiling, the current editor-in-chief of Azadiya Welat, was recently sentenced to 21 years, three months in prison for disseminating propaganda for the PKK.

The prosecutor demanding the jail term for Kiling said he had allowed 12 editions of the paper to go out with items promoting the PKK. Comments and acts judged supportive of the PKK and its jailed leader, Abdullah Öcalan, are a crime in Turkey.

Les États-Unis veulent sanctionner les Gardiens de la révolution en Iran

Hillary Clinton va demander à l'Arabie saoudite d'offrir des garanties de fourniture de pétrole à la Chine, en échange du soutien de Pékin à de nouvelles sanctions de l'ONU contre Téhéran

La secrétaire d'État américaine, Hillary Clinton est en tournée dans les pays de la péninsule Arabique. Elle tente d'obtenir le soutien des monarchies locales pour de nouvelles sanctions contre l'Iran, qui refuse toujours d'accepter la proposition de l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA) de faire traiter son uranium à l'étranger. L'Occident veut éviter que l'Iran ne s'équipe de l'arme nucléaire.

Les États-Unis veulent obtenir du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU qu'il vote de nouvelles sanctions contre Téhéran. Or, s'ils peuvent compter sur la France, la Grande-Bretagne et la Russie, le soutien de la Chine ne leur est pas acquis. Pékin a de fortes relations économiques et surtout énergétiques avec l'Iran, dont elle dépend pour son approvisionnement en pétrole. Aussi, à Riyad, où elle est arrivée hier, Hillary Clinton va-t-elle demander à l'Arabie saoudite d'offrir des garanties de fourniture de pétrole à la Chine, en échange du soutien de Pékin à de nouvelles sanctions de l'ONU contre Téhéran.

Les sanctions internationales contre l'Iran devraient viser « notamment les entreprises contrôlées par les Gardiens de la révolution, qui, à notre avis, sont en train de supplanter le gouvernement d'Iran », a précisé Hillary Clin-

ton. Appelés aussi « pasdarans », les Gardiens de la révolution passent pour la garde loyale de la République islamique d'Iran. Ils ont été créés par un décret du 5 mai 1979 de l'imam Khomeyni, fondateur de la République islamique. Il s'agissait de réunir différentes unités paramilitaires en un seul organe dévoué au régime, pour contrebalancer le poids de l'armée régulière, restée neutre dans la révolution, mais dont certains officiers pouvaient être demeurés fidèles au chah. Leur rôle a été prééminent dans la guerre contre l'Irak (1980 à 1988), de même que dans la lutte contre les groupes armés de l'opposition. Le président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad en est issu.

Placés sous les ordres directs du guide suprême, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei, les Gardiens de la révolution et les « bassidjis », miliciens islamistes qui dépendent d'eux, ont joué un important rôle dans la répression de la contestation de la réélection du président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Leur mission est de défendre le régime islamique contre ses « ennemis » extérieurs, mais aussi intérieurs.

Véritable armée parallèle, ils disposent d'un équipement beaucoup plus sophistiqué que l'armée régulière, possèdent leur propre aviation et marine mais aussi des missiles Shahab-3 et Sejil, d'une portée allant jusqu'à environ

Les sanctions viseraient « les entreprises contrôlées par les Gardiens de la révolution, qui, à notre avis, sont en train de supplanter le gouvernement d'Iran ».

2000 km et capables d'atteindre Israël. Ils sont aussi de plus en plus actifs dans l'économie par le biais de sociétés qui leur sont affiliées et qui ont décroché de gros contrats ces dernières années. Le président Ahmadinejad a en effet privatisé de nombreux secteurs industriels qui se retrouvent entre les mains de membres des Gardiens de la

révolution reconvertis en hommes d'affaires prospères.

Le 10 février dernier, les États-Unis ont renforcé les sanctions contre des entreprises liées aux pasdarans pour tenter d'étrangler leurs rentrées d'argent, en les accusant de jouer un rôle important dans les programmes nucléaire et balistique du pays et de liens avec des groupes terroristes étrangers. Selon le Military Balance 2009 de l'Institut international des études stratégiques de Londres, les pasdarans, dirigés actuellement par le général Mohammad Ali Jafari, comptent 125 000 membres, contre quelque 400 000 hommes dans l'armée régulière. Les effectifs des pasdarans restent un secret d'État, de même que ceux de la Force Al-Qods au sein des Gardiens de la révolution, chargée des opérations à l'extérieur de l'Iran, et dont l'existence n'a jamais été confirmée par les autorités. Washington accuse cette force de soutenir aussi bien des milices chiites irakiennes radicales que les talibans en Afghanistan, et les mouvements islamistes palestiniens du Hamas et du Jihad islamique.

AGNÈS ROTIVEL

Paris et Moscou démentent toute nouvelle offre occidentale sur le nucléaire iranien

Aucune nouvelle proposition en dehors de celle de l'AIEA en octobre – « qui, à ce jour, n'a pas reçu de réponse satisfaisante » – n'existe sur le nucléaire iranien, a déclaré lundi le porte-parole du ministère français des affaires étrangères, Bernard Valero, en réponse à des déclarations iraniennes sur une nouvelle offre occidentale. Le chef du nucléaire iranien, Ali Akbar Salehi, avait affirmé plus tôt que la Russie, la France et les États-Unis avaient fait une nouvelle proposition pour la fourniture de combustible à un réacteur de recherche de Téhéran, via un échange d'uranium, et qu'elle était examinée par l'Iran.

L'Iran a commencé le 9 février à enrichir de l'uranium à 20 % dans son site de Natanz, malgré les protestations des puissances occidentales qui soupçonnent Téhéran de chercher à se doter de l'arme nucléaire sous couvert d'un programme civil, ce que Téhéran nie. En octobre, l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA) avait présenté à l'Iran une proposition d'enrichissement à l'étranger de 1200 kg de son uranium faiblement enrichi, qui seraient ensuite transformés en cœurs nucléaires pour son réacteur de recherche de Téhéran. L'Iran n'avait jamais accepté cette offre, proposant des alternatives.

La Russie reste ambiguë sur l'Iran et le Proche-Orient

Moscou recevait hier le chef du gouvernement israélien, mais n'a pas encore fait savoir s'il voterait en faveur de nouvelles sanctions contre l'Iran

MOSCOU
De notre correspondant

Après le chef du Hamas, le premier ministre d'Israël... Les hôtes se succèdent à

Moscou. Ce ballet diplomatique confirme les ambiguïtés de politique de la Russie au Moyen-Orient, en particulier sur le problème du nucléaire iranien.

En visite hier dans la capitale russe, le chef du gouvernement israélien, Benyamin Netanyahu, a plaidé auprès du président russe Dmitri Medvedev pour des « sanctions dures » contre Téhéran. Hasard ou non de calendrier, cette visite suit de près celle de Khaled Mechaal. Le chef en exil du Hamas,

mouvement au pouvoir dans la bande de Gaza, considéré comme terroriste par l'État hébreu, les États-Unis et l'Union européenne, était dans la capitale russe le 8 février et s'est entretenu avec le ministre russe des affaires étrangères, Sergueï Lavrov.

La visite de Benyamin Netanyahu intervient surtout après l'annonce iranienne d'enrichir de l'uranium à 20 % pour produire du combustible nucléaire. Une annonce qui, renforçant les soup-

çons occidentaux sur les ambitions militaires du programme de Téhéran, a intensifié l'ire de Moscou.

« L'Iran dit qu'il ne veut pas avoir d'armes nucléaires. Mais ses actions ont semé le doute parmi les autres nations. Et ces doutes sont bien fondés », a ainsi franchement déclaré Nikolai Patrushev, le chef du Conseil de sécurité russe. Le ministère des affaires étrangères, lui, a mis en cause la « sincérité » de Téhéran. La semaine dernière, le message moscovite était donc clair, facili-

tant en apparence la mission de Benyamin Netanyahou qui s'était déjà rendu secrètement en Russie en septembre pour parler de l'Iran. «*Le Kremlin va voter les sanctions contre l'Iran à l'ONU. Il n'a plus de doutes sur les objectifs militaires de Téhéran qui, en ne suivant pas les conseils des Russes, a réussi à les vexer et à provoquer leur colère*», affirme d'ailleurs un diplomate européen en poste à Moscou.

Mais, alors que Washington veut une quatrième série de sanctions de l'ONU contre l'Iran, le soutien de Moscou reste incertain. D'autant que la Russie ne cesse de répéter que des sanctions «*ne résoudront pas le problème*», comme vient encore de l'affirmer le vice-ministre des affaires étrangères. La Russie pourrait notamment s'opposer à des mesures frappant le secteur

énergétique. Le pays qui participe aux négociations «*à Six*» a toujours multiplié les déclarations contradictoires sur l'Iran. «*Les Occidentaux ne doivent pas oublier un fait : géographiquement, l'Iran est loin des États-Unis et proche de la Russie. Le Kremlin agira donc avant tout en fonction de ses intérêts nationaux*», rappelle une source moscovite.

C'est précisément parce que la

menace nucléaire iranienne serait plus dangereuse pour Moscou que pour Washington que l'impatience russe s'accroît. «*Mais le Kremlin ne sortira pas pour autant de sa prudence*», prévient Fiodor Lukyanov, rédacteur en chef de la revue *Russie, Affaires globales*. «*Au Moyen-Orient, le poids des États-Unis et de l'Europe décroît. Au contraire, le rôle régional de l'Iran s'intensifie. Dans ce jeu d'influences, quel intérêt aurait Moscou de se rapprocher du perdant ?*»

D'autant que d'importants intérêts commerciaux sont en jeu. C'est la Russie qui construit la centrale nucléaire de Bouchehr, dans le sud de l'Iran, et qui lui fournit du combustible. Moscou vend par ailleurs des armes et Benyamin Netanyahou a peu de chance de voir Dmitri Medvedev revenir sur la fourniture à Téhéran d'un système russe de défense antiaérien.

«*Moscou, qui rêve d'un succès diplomatique sur le dossier nucléaire, a toujours voulu donner du temps aux Iraniens et cru pouvoir utiliser ses relations économiques comme d'un levier d'influence*», rappelle un autre diplomate européen. Une stratégie sans issue pour le moment.

BENJAMIN QUÉNELLE

Une victoire « policière » pour M. Ahmadinejad

Eclairage

S'IL EST VRAI que la célébration du 31^e anniversaire de la révolution de 1979, jeudi 11 février, était un test, pour le gouvernement de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, réélu dans la contestation en juin 2009, mais aussi pour cette opposition qui, depuis huit mois, clame son rejet des dérives autoritaires du régime, alors sans doute M. Ahmadinejad l'a-t-il réussi avec succès.

Le gouvernement a gagné la bataille de la rue, sans trop de casse : des milliers de contestataires ont bien tenté de former des cortèges mais la police les en a empêchés. Et dans les heurts, sporadiques, à Téhéran, s'il y a eu des dizaines d'arrestations et si gaz lacrymogènes et matraques sont entrés en action, le sang n'a pas coulé comme lors des fêtes de l'Achoura, le 27 décembre 2009 : la milice avait tiré sur la foule, huit personnes étaient mortes.

M. Ahmadinejad a aussi gagné la bataille de l'intimidation : beaucoup n'étaient pas venus dans la rue en dépit des appels à le faire – une première – par tous les chefs de ce mouvement « vert » informel. Il est vrai que les jours précédents, une nouvelle vague d'arrestations avait eu lieu parmi les journalistes et les militants réformateurs. Deux opposants ont été pendus ; une dizaine d'autres condamnés à mort. De plus, les appels à la délation s'étaient multipliés. Quant aux chefs du mouvement, les candidats malheureux à l'élection Mehdi Karoubi, et Mir Hossein Moussavi, ils ont dû renoncer à manifester. Le premier a été brûlé au visage par des gaz lacrymogènes, après avoir reçu un coup de bâton en pleine tête selon un de ses fils. Le second a vu sa femme Zahra, une militante courageuse, battue par des agents de sécurité.

Enfin, d'une certaine façon aussi M. Ahmadinejad a gagné la bataille de la « communication » : dans un Iran transformé en huis-clos cybernétique (les connexions Internet avaient été ralenties, des serveurs coupés, les télévisions étrangères brouillées), la seule image officielle a été celle de son discours sous haute surveillance

sur la place Azadi (Liberté) – un comble. La contestation dans les rues n'était rendue que par des films clandestins et invérifiables pris au téléphone portable.

Une victoire donc, mais peut-être en trompe l'œil, et à quel prix ! Policiers, gardiens de la révolution, miliciens, le ban et l'arrière-ban des forces de l'ordre réquisitionnés dans toutes les provinces a quadrillé la capitale presque de mètre en mètre. Du jamais vu.

« Changer de tactique »

Et pourtant, malgré cela, des milliers de contestataires sont descendus dans la rue. A Téhéran, mais aussi Chiraz, Ispahan, Machad, Tabriz. Et la retransmission du discours présidentiel à la télévision a été perturbée à trois reprises. Car même dans ce fort Knox qu'était la place Azadi, grouillante de fidèles de M. Ahmadinejad emmenés souvent en bus et dûment triés, des cris de protestation se sont élevés.

La leçon à tirer ? «*Nous devons changer de tactique, jouer le long terme et le harcèlement*», nous confiera, vendredi matin par téléphone, une féministe du mouvement vert plutôt découragée. «*La répression et la terreur ont fonctionné*», constatait l'analyste Ahmad Salamatian, *le temps de l'opposition frontale est révolu. Ce qui est inquiétant, c'est que le guide Khamenei a qualifié, jeudi, les opposants de gens aidés par les ennemis de l'Iran. Ce qui montre que, dans la surenchère nationaliste actuelle, il peut accentuer encore la répression s'il croit avoir la situation en main.*»

Pour le président de la Ligue des droits de l'homme iranienne, Karim Lahidji, la démonstration de force n'est pas concluante : «*On ne peut mettre en permanence un policier derrière chaque Iranien ! Quant au discours de M. Ahmadinejad, il ignorait la crise intérieure pour s'en prendre aux ennemis étrangers opposés au programme nucléaire iranien. Qui est dupe ? On sait que bientôt l'Iran subira de nouvelles sanctions. Le gouvernement n'a aucun projet. Pour moi la situation est bloquée.*» ■

Marie-Claude Decamps

Iran : les pasdarans, clef de voûte d'un régime aux dérives autoritaires

M^{me} Clinton a déclaré, lundi, qu'elle redoutait que le pays ne devienne « une dictature militaire »

En visite dans la péninsule arabique, pour s'assurer, notamment, d'un soutien saoudien à de futures sanctions contre Téhéran en raison de son programme nucléaire, la secrétaire d'Etat américaine, Hillary Clinton, a déclaré, lundi 15 février, à Doha (Qatar), qu'elle redoutait que l'Iran ne devienne « une dictature militaire »

Cette question, de nombreux analystes se la posent en voyant que, huit mois après la réélection contestée du président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, face au mouvement pacifique de protestation, le régime fondamentaliste de Téhéran n'a répondu que par une répression accrue. Le 31^e anniversaire de la révolution islamique, le 11 février, n'a été qu'une immense démonstration de force, dans laquelle les gardiens de la révolution tenaient

la place d'honneur. « *Ces sont les Gardiens qui, à notre avis, sont en train de supplanter le gouvernement de l'Iran* », a ajouté M^{me} Clinton.

Au cœur de la répression, mais aussi de la survie du régime, ils contrôlent des pans entiers de l'économie, l'essentiel du programme balistique et nucléaire et ont la haute main sur les services de renseignement. Ils sont la clef de tout dénouement : bain de sang ? Scénario militariste à la pakistanaise ? Arbitrage ? Tout est possible. Mais ce corps d'élite n'est pas homogène, des lignes de fracture le traversent qui le rendent imprévisible.

Qui sont-ils, ces gardiens de la révolution ou pasdarans, créés par l'ayatollah Khomeyni en 1979, au sortir de la révolution ? Une véritable armée idéologique au service des valeurs révolutionnaires. Une

armée qui a gagné ses lettres de noblesse dans les sables de la guerre Iran-Irak (1980-1988), qui a fait un million de morts.

Les héros à peine démobilisés prétendaient avoir leur mot à dire sur les affaires de cette République islamique qu'ils avaient défendue. Ils sont vite devenus encombrants dans un pays pourtant prompt à exalter le martyr nationaliste. Beaucoup étaient aussi mécontents en voyant que le clergé s'était octroyé la part du lion au sommet de la jeune République islamique.

Décidé à les réinsérer dans la vie civile, le président Hachemi Rafsandjani (1989-1997) les aiguillera tout naturellement vers l'économie : la reconstruction du pays, voilà une autre forme de lutte

Ce corps d'élite est traversé par des lignes de fracture qui le rendent imprévisible

« *Tout a commencé sur la base militaire du génie de Khatamolania, contrôlée par les pasdarans, au sud-ouest du pays. Il y avait beaucoup de matériel de construction et d'équipement. Les pasdarans ont obtenu l'autorisation d'utiliser ces équipements en temps de paix pour des chantiers de construction d'habitations et pour créer des entreprises* », nous a raconté Mohsen Sazgara, aujourd'hui président de l'Institut de recherches sur l'Iran contemporain, à Washington, mais surtout l'un des fondateurs des gardiens de la révolution.

« *Très vite, ajoute-t-il, comme ils avaient des armes et assuraient la sécurité intérieure, les Gardiens se sont engagés dans n'importe quelle activité. Ils pouvaient arrêter un concurrent, imposer des contrats. Voir s'engager dans des activités illégales, comme la contrebande.* » C'était le début d'un empire économique qui va du gaz à l'immobilier, en passant par le pétrole.

Peu courtisés du temps de Mohammad Khatami, le président réformateur (1997-2005), les pasdarans se feront même mettre au pas sur le plan politique. Après tout, dans un document qui préfigure son testament, l'ayatollah Khomeyni, voulant écarter tout risque de « militarisation » du régime, avait précisé que ni « la police, ni les miliciens bassidji, ni les gardiens de la révolution, ni l'armée ne devaient entrer dans un parti ou un groupe politique et devaient se tenir à l'écart des jeux politiques ».

C'était sans compter avec les luttes du sérail. Le Guide suprême, Ali Khamenei, qui, à la mort de l'ayatollah Khomeyni, en 1989, a pris sa place, s'était incliné à contrecœur devant l'élection de M. Khatami à la présidence de la République, en 1997. Inquiet de ce qu'il considérait comme une dangereuse politique d'ouverture, il n'aura de cesse de lui mettre des bâtons dans les roues. Manquant d'appuis religieux, M. Khamenei, pour affirmer son pouvoir, va aider l'ascension des pasdarans et de leurs satellites, les miliciens bassidji.

À la fin des années 1990, des agents des services secrets à la solde de certains ultrafondamentalistes feront assassiner une série d'intellectuels et d'opposants iraniens.

L'occasion pour M. Khatami de faire le ménage dans les services. Beaucoup d'agents « indésirables » trouveront refuge au quartier général de la coordination des miliciens bassidji, à Téhéran, le centre Sarallah (« le sang de Dieu »). Un réseau de services secrets parallèles se tisse alors, avec une quarantaine de prisons secrètes. Il est protégé, depuis le cabinet même du Guide suprême, par un membre du haut commandement pasdaran, lié aux bassidji, Mohammed Hedjazi.

C'est l'époque où M. Ahmadinejad est actif chez ces miliciens. Il y fréquente des fondamentalistes venus des services secrets « purgés » qui rêvent de révolution permanente. Après s'être consacré à la poursuite des opposants en Azerbaïdjan occidental, il se rapproche de la division Qods des pasdarans,



Lors d'un défilé de gardiens de la révolution, dans la province de Fars. Ils comptent 125 000 hommes. AY-COLLECTION/SIPA

chargée d'exporter la révolution au Liban et ailleurs.

En 2004, aux élections parlementaires, les gardiens de la révolution se lancent à l'offensive politique : 125 députés sur 290 seront des

C'est une véritable armée idéologique au service des valeurs révolutionnaires

Les forces de répression

Les gardiens de la révolution Appelés aussi pasdarans, ils sont en tout 125 000 : forces terrestres (105 000 hommes, 4 divisions blindées, 16 divisions mécanisées, une brigade de marines), l'aviation (5 000 hommes) et la marine (2 000 hommes, des vedettes armées de missiles antinavires et des dizaines de patrouilleurs). Créés en 1979, ils maintiennent un contrôle strict sur le programme de missiles balistiques et nucléaires. Les unités Qods (5 000 à 15 000 hommes) effectuent des missions secrètes. Elles ont aidé à la création du Hezbollah libanais et à l'entraînement des brigades chiïtes irakiennes Badr. Le Guide suprême est en théorie leur commandant en chef. La coordination se fait à travers le Conseil suprême national de défense.

Les bassidji Ces miliciens islamistes seraient 12 millions, selon leurs dirigeants. On estime qu'ils ont un noyau dur de 90 000 personnes avec 2 millions de miliciens mobilisables en quelques heures. Ils sont les héritiers des très jeunes volontaires partis, ceints d'un bandeau de martyr, sur le front irano-irakien dans les années 1980. Ils sont présents dans les universités, les entreprises, les ministères. Près d'un million d'entre eux reçoivent un entraînement militaire. Ils sont peu armés. Il y a des bataillons d'hommes (Ashura) et de femmes (Zahra). Depuis des mois, ils assurent l'ordre contre les manifestants. Leurs familles reçoivent des aides, ils ont des quotas à l'université.

Les lebakhsari Ce sont les auxiliaires de la police en civil, souvent vêtus de chemises blanches. Beaucoup viennent des services secrets. Dans les manifestations, leur réputation de brutalité n'est plus à faire.

pasdarans. L'élection de M. Ahmadinejad, avec leur aide et surtout celle des bassidji, à la présidence en 2005 les renforce. Les réseaux bassidji et la base Sarallah, sous contrôle de l'homme de confiance du président, Hachemi Samareh, se rapprochent du bureau du Guide, où son fils, Mojtaba, fait la loi.

Aujourd'hui, avec le débat au sein du pouvoir sur la manière de réprimer les manifestations, la « guerre des services » a éclaté au grand jour. Le ministère officiel du renseignement, dirigé par Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei, qui désapprouvait les procès et les prétendus « aveux » obtenus des opposants en prison, a perdu la partie. Il a été limogé, ainsi que des centaines d'agents. Les réseaux de renseignements contrôlés par les gardiens de la révolution se sont imposés. Principaux « cerveaux » de la répression, ils sont sous la coupe de deux religieux venus des renseignements militaires, Hossein Taeb et Ahmad Salek, l'un des fondateurs de la division Qods, lui-même au cabinet du Guide.

Promu cheval de Troie de cette nébuleuse secrète qui veut radicaliser et purger le régime, M. Ahmadinejad n'est que la partie visible de ce mouvement en train de noyauter les organismes officiels.

Pouvoir militaire, pouvoir économique, pouvoir politique : la boucle est bouclée ? Pas tout à fait, car, déjà, dans le passé, des lignes de fracture sont apparues. Fracture « régionale » en 1994, lors des émeutes ethniques à Ghazvin, où des gradés ont refusé de tirer sur les manifestants. Fracture « tactique » en 1999 pour la révolte étudiante à Téhéran, où des pasdarans ont freiné la répression.

Fracture « religieuse » : ne dit-on pas que, mécontents du guide Khamenei comme « source d'imitation chiïte » depuis qu'il est sorti de son rôle d'arbitre politique, de nombreux commandants se réclament d'autres guides religieux. Fracture « sociale » enfin, entre des chefs enrichis sans vergogne et la base de vieux guerriers aux idéaux intacts.

A cela s'ajoutent les jeux de pouvoir. Ainsi, il y a quelques semaines, M. Ahmadinejad avait étudié l'offre occidentale d'enrichir de l'uranium iranien à l'étranger. Mais un groupe de commandants a refusé, le mettant en porte à faux. « Ils pensent que s'ils montrent au monde, dit M. Sazegara, qu'ils ont la technologie balistique et assez d'uranium enrichi pour

potentiellement faire une arme nucléaire, ils dissuaderont Israéliens et Américains d'attaquer. »

Alors, si tout s'accélère, l'armée au service du peuple tirera-t-elle sur le peuple ? Restera-t-elle derrière le Guide ? Ce dernier, pour noyauter les pasdarans, a mis sous leur coupe depuis près de deux ans les milices bassidji. Un moyen de « professionnaliser » les miliciens et de rappeler à ces pasdarans-businessmen la culture du martyr professée, officiellement, par les bassidji.

Des « commandos de la mort » ont été créés qui ne refuseraient pas de tirer sur la foule

Pour l'instant, les pasdarans tiennent tout. Les troupes d'élite de la division Mohammad Rassoul Allah (30 000 hommes), qui sont aussi la garde personnelle du Guide, sont chargées de Téhéran. Leur QG, c'est la base Sarallah. « Ils sont passés au code rouge : les Gardiens sont responsables, tous les services de sécurité doivent leur obéir, dit encore Mohsen Sazegara. C'est un code créé après les révoltes étudiantes de 1999 : code blanc, la police est responsable ; orange, ce sont les unités spéciales de la police ; rouge, le tour des Gardiens. » Faut-il s'attendre à plus de violence ? « Sans doute, répond M. Sazegara, mais les pasdarans sont en mauvaise posture. Ils ont des difficultés avec 80 % de leurs membres, qui sont des gens ordinaires, mais aussi avec des commandants au passé héroïque qui sont en désaccord avec leur coup d'Etat contre la nation. »

Dans l'hypothèse où des pasdarans refuseraient de tirer sur la foule – des commandants n'auraient-ils pas envoyé une lettre au Guide anticipant leur refus de le faire ? –, des « commandos de la mort » ont été créés, nous a confié l'analyste iranien Ahmad Salamati.

Et M. Sazegara confirme : « On sait que le général Naghdi, qui dirige les bassidji, a recruté 3 000 « chemises blanches » [agents de sécurité en civil]. On les a vus le jour de l'Achoura, le 27 décembre, avec des couteaux, des barres de fer, des bâtons. Certains étaient des criminels. Pourquoi font-ils cela ? Parce qu'il n'est pas si facile d'utiliser les pasdarans contre le peuple. »

Et d'expliquer que le corps des pasdarans « est fondé sur les convictions de ses membres, et beaucoup n'aiment pas être contre le peuple.

Ils savent aussi que certains de leurs commandants, au sommet, sont corrompus. Ils ne sont pas prêts à tuer le peuple dans la rue pour une poignée de ces commandants. »

M. Khamenei est théoriquement le commandant suprême des forces armées, mais qui commande dans cet entrelacs d'intérêts ? Pour le fondateur des pasdarans, il y aurait trois factions en lutte : le président du Parlement et ancien pasdaran, Ali Larijani, et d'autres qui, comme lui, estiment que « le Guide a perdu de la crédibilité en soutenant trop M. Ahmadinejad. Ils veulent le renverser et préserver le Guide ».

Ensuite, il y a le camp fondamentaliste radical : « Taeb, Mojtaba, Naghdi, qui veulent noyer la contestation dans le sang. » Et enfin Khamenei lui-même et ses conseillers, qui oscilleraient, selon M. Sazegara : « Khamenei est malade et déprimé. Si les radicaux veulent arrêter MM. Mousavi et Karoubi, les meneurs de la contestation, lui, conseille une assignation à résidence. Quand on lui demande de tuer plus de manifestants, il recommande de les battre. Parfois, il change aussi d'avis. Il est dur de dire s'il donne les ordres ou s'il est manipulé. »

Marie-Claude Decamps
(avec Philippe Bolopion,
à New York)

Pro-Kurdish politicians strongly advise judicial reform

AYSE KARABAT

The pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) and prominent Kurdish lawyers have pointed out that the government is right to describe a decision by the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK) as a second Semdinli case; however, they said the government also has to be criticized since it has done nothing to reform the judiciary or defend the public prosecutor of the Semdinli case, Ferhat Sarıkaya.

The HSYK on Wednesday decided to strip Erzurum Prosecutor Osman Sanal of his special authority due to his investigation into now-jailed Erzincan Prosecutor İlhan Cihaner, who was arrested on charges of membership in a terrorist organization and falsification of documents. Sanal was investigating the Erzincan prosecutor over his probe into a number of religious communities in Erzincan. Last year, Justice Ministry inspectors uncovered irregularities in the probe.

Justice Minister Sadullah Ergin called the HSYK decision unlawful and a second Semdinli case.

Semdinli was a turning point for Kurds when the government failed to prosecute the alleged suspects in the crime, including high-ranking military officers. Noncommissioned officers Ali Kaya and Özcan İldeniz and an outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) informant, Veyssel Ates, were caught red-handed in November 2005 at a bookstore bombing in Semdinli, Hakkari. The Van prosecutor, Ferhat Sarıkaya, ordered the arrests of the suspects, who were later indicted and tried in a Van court for "staging acts targeting the unity of the state and the territorial integrity of the country,

murder, attempted murder and causing physical injury."

Sarıkaya also started a number of investigations into top army commanders, including Gen. Yasar Büyükanıt, then the land forces commander and later the chief of general staff. In the ensuing debate, Sarıkaya was disbarred by the HSYK.

Former Diyarbakır Bar Association Chairman Sezgin Tanrıkulu said the government itself should be held responsible for what happened to Sarıkaya, since it indirectly approved the HSYK decision at that time.

Hasip Kaplan, a lawyer and BDP deputy, has a similar view and underlined that the government was not able to protect Sarıkaya at the time. If it maintains the same position this time, he said, it will be impossible to find prosecutors and judges courageous enough to investigate deep state cases.

Sırnak Bar Association Chairman Nusirevan Elçi recalled that the Semdinli incident happened in 2005 but since then the government has not taken any steps to prevent future Semdinli-like incidents, as was seen by the recent HSYK decision.

Diyarbakır Bar Association Chairman Emin Aktar pointed out one of the suspicions many of the pro-Kurdish jurists have -- that all these discussions are aiming to protect 3rd Army Commander Gen. Saldıray Berk, who has been summoned to testify as a suspect in the investigation into a plot in which Cihaner is also allegedly involved.

Titled the "Action Plan to Fight Reactionaryism," the plot mentions a subversive plan by the armed forces to overthrow the government. According to the plan, munitions

and bombs would be planted in the houses where followers of some religious communities lived, and these weapons would later be found during police searches. Thus, these religious communities would be categorized as "armed terrorist organizations."

The weapon-planting conspiracy had been put into operation in Erzincan; however, after the plot was exposed, unidentified parties dumped munitions into a reservoir in the city. An investigation into the weapons led to the arrests of three National Intelligence Organization (MIT) officials, two military officers and one noncommissioned officer. The conspiracy is believed to have been masterminded by Gen. Berk.

Kaplan of the BDP pointed out another argument about the real intention of the HSYK; he suggests that for a long time, as indicated by the progress reports of the European Union, the judiciary has been in need of reform, and the HSYK is trying to prevent this. He added that although he is surprised about the strong support of the Supreme Court of Appeals and the Council of State for the HSYK decision, these two high courts are also resistant to the idea of reform.

However, Tanrıkulu and Aktar underlined that the investigative methods that are used in Turkey can also be very harsh, as was seen in the case of Cihaner.

"Regardless of who is the subject, house searches, secret witnesses and similar methods of arrest are used in a very cruel way. They are legal, but from the point of view of the rule of law they are not legitimate. We have to discuss these issues, too," Tanrıkulu said.

REUTERS

Cinq policiers tués par une bombe dans le nord-est de l'Irak

DIYALA , 21 février 2010 - Reuters

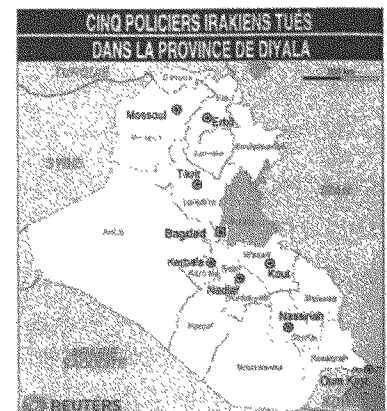
Cinq policiers ont été tués dimanche par l'explosion d'une bombe placée en bord de route dans la province de Diyala, dans le nord-est de

l'Irak, annonce la police.

Cette région revendiquée à la fois par les arabes et par les kurdes connaît toujours des flambées de violence.

L'explosion visait une unité de police chargée de la surveillance d'installations électriques près de Khanakine, à 140 km de Bagdad.

Située près de la frontière iranienne, cette ville est l'objet de tension entre les soldats irakiens et les peshmergas kurdes, qui a failli dégénérer en conflit violent en 2008.



CFR expert: Kirkuk will likely be added to Kurdistan



By Wladimir van Wilgenburg

Rudaw - Iraq-expert and officer at the U.S. State Department Rachel Schneller thinks that the incorporation of Kirkuk in Kurdistan is likely, due to the fact that the Kurdish bloc is likely to become the 'tie-breaker' in the Iraqi parliament after the 7 March Iraq elections.

RACHEL SCHNELLER is a Foreign Service Officer at the U.S. State Department, currently an International Affairs Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, D.C. researching Iraq and its refugees and displaced persons. Her opinion doesn't reflect the ideas of the US government nor State Department.

Despite that some Iraq experts think the Kurds are unlikely to become the kingmakers in the next Iraqi elections and that Kirkuk will get a separate status, due to external opposition of neighbouring countries and the opposition of the majority of Iraqi political groups against the Kurdish annexation of Kirkuk, Schneller disagrees.

She spoke with Kurds in Washington before, who were skeptical about Kirkuk becoming part of the KRG. "But mostly because they say people are not that enamored with the KRG government and not so interested in being part of it. They mentioned that Kirkuk/Tamim might be more interested in becoming its own region, which is possible under the Iraqi Constitution. This was an option I had not heard much about before," she said.

Incorporation likely

The CFR-expert think events and the current situation in Iraq make the incorporation of Kirkuk into the KRG more likely because, primarily, of the sequencing of them. "There was supposed to have been Constitutional reform before now; this has

not happened. Iraqis are heading into an election where Kurdish representation on parliament will likely increase, with Article 140 and other aspects of the Iraqi constitution still on the books. If it has not been possible to amend Article 140 until now, it seems even less likely that this will be done in a way that does not deliver Kurdish aspirations for Kirkuk after the elections," she claims.

Kurds won't lose power

Schneller thinks, that the Kurds, rather than losing power, after the elections the Kurdish bloc is likely to become the tie-breaker in Iraqi Parliament as neither the Shia nor the Sunni will likely have an absolute majority. "This is more important than the largely ceremonial role of President. Shia and Sunni both reject the idea of Kirkuk becoming part of the KRG, but the degree of opposition is likely to be affected by the interests of each group, and can change over time. Of course, there are unknowns in this equation. Without an accurate census, it is impossible to know what percentage each group is in the country. Also, this is assuming the elections take place without boycotts or major fraud."

Kurds don't want Kirkuk for independence

Some experts, like Joost Hilterman and others, claim the Kurds want to have Kirkuk as a stepping-stone towards Kurdish independence. But Schneller says this is not the case. "I do not believe incorporation of Kirkuk into the KRG means the same thing as independence for Kurdistan. As you and other experts mention, a move to declare independence for Kurdistan would be met with high opposition by all of the KRG's external neighbors, as well as the rest of Iraq, and the U.S. This argument appears to rest on the assumption that the incorporation of Kirkuk into the KRG would make Kurdistan economically viable."

Schneller argues that an independent country needs more than just a viable economy, despite that many countries exist that are not particularly economically viable. "The KRG's economic viability depends on its ability to transport oil to its neighbors, so the KRG would in effect be shooting itself in the foot if it moved toward independence without securing support from Turkey, Iran, Syria, and the rest of the Baghdad government. The realities of declaring independence will likely dissuade the KRG from seeking that route anytime soon- they would have to establish their own currency and monetary policy, negotiate visa requirements to travel to other countries, negotiate separate entrance into the UN and WTO, just to name a few."

Special status for Kirkuk

Some experts and organization have argued for a special status for Kirkuk. This is especially embraced by the Turkmen and Arabs in Kirkuk. "Some sort of special status for Kirkuk is an interesting proposition. I am not sure if this option is allowed under the current Constitution. If it is, and if the Kurds can be persuaded to accept it, this might be a compromise; however, it would also perhaps set a precedent for other sensitive areas of Iraq. There are other mixed cities that could also be good candidates for special status- Baqubah and Baghdad itself for example. And of course the Kurds would have to agree, which is a big unknown."

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IRAN: QUATRE REBELLES KURDES TUÉS (AGENCE)

TEHERAN, 21 février 2010 (AFP)

QUATRE rebelles kurdes iraniens ont été tués dimanche matin par les forces de sécurité dans le district de Sardasht (nord-ouest de l'Iran), selon un communiqué du ministère des Renseignements, cité par l'agence de presse Isna.

"Quatre membres du groupe terroriste Komala ont été identifiés dans le district de Sardasht et ont été anéantis lors d'une opération surprise", selon le communiqué.

Le texte ajoute que les quatre militants kurdes avaient tué trois membres des forces de l'ordre le 26 décembre.

Le groupe Komala (marxiste-léniniste) prône l'indépendance du Kurdistan et mène une lutte armée contre le régime islamique en Iran.

Les régions iraniennes frontalières de l'Irak et la Turquie, où vivent des minorités kurdes, sont le théâtre d'affrontements périodiques entre les forces armées iraniennes et divers groupes armés kurdes, basés dans le nord-est de l'Irak.

L'Iran accuse les Etats-Unis de soutenir les groupes ethniques ou religieux dans les zones frontalières de l'Iran pour affaiblir le pouvoir central, ce que Washington a toujours démenti.

Les Kurdes représentent environ 7% de la population en Iran.

New force emerges in Kirkuk

Asia Times / Hong Kong

By Charles McDermid

KIRKUK, Iraq - The first time Kurdish resistance hero Mam Rostam led a rowdy convoy through the streets of Kirkuk was March 21, 1991, after his guerrilla fighters stormed down from the surrounding dun-colored mountains to rout the occupying troops of Saddam Hussein's Iraqi army.

Twelve years later, he held his hometown for three days as field commander of the Kurdish Peshmerga after the United States-led invasion of Iraq that toppled Saddam and set off bloody sectarian and ethnic battles that continue to consume disputed parts of Iraq, notably Kirkuk.

Last Friday, Rostam was at it again; riding shotgun in the lead car of a 100-vehicle procession filled with boisterous young men, children and battle-scarred soldiers. Flags and AK-47s waved

from SUV windows and the beds of pick-up trucks as the procession wound past Kirkuk's crumbling ancient citadel, its perpetually flaming gas and oil fires, and its sprawling mud-brick refugee camps.

"In 1991, we liberated Kirkuk from dictatorship, this time we are liberating it from corruption," said Rostam.

This was opening day for political campaigning ahead of Iraq's much-anticipated national parliamentary elections on March 7, and Rostam was representing Goran (Change), an upstart political movement digging in at the frontline of what many believe will be the most hotly contested electoral battle in the country.

It will certainly be Iraq's most-scrutinized local election.

Kirkuk province sits on gargantuan oil fields with the potential to gush petrodollars - and the accompanying political capital - for decades. The 970-kilometer Kirkuk-Ceyhan is already Iraq's largest crude oil export line, pumping an estimated 500,000 barrels to the coast of Turkey every day.

Due to its ethno-religious diversity, Kirkuk is referred to as "Little Iraq" - a microcosm of the fractious nation's divided and uncompromising communities. If a panacea for Iraq's problems can be found, Kirkuk would be the ideal spot to test it.

Arabs, Kurds and Turkmen have fought for control of the millennia-old city since Iraq's independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1919. Each of the ethnic groups claims Kirkuk as a historical homeland, and all have made it clear their members are willing to die for it.

"Kirkuk is the Jerusalem of Kurdistan," Rostam told Asia Times Online.

Since the US-led invasion of 2003, Kirkuk has been a listed as a "disputed territory" between Baghdad and Irbil, the capital of Iraq's politically autonomous Kurdistan region. It stands as the main potential flashpoint on what's known as the "trigger line" - the boundary running from Iran to Syria that separates heavily armed Arab and Kurdish forces that are kept at arm's length by the presence of US forces.

Many power-sharing equations have been discussed to placate Kirkuk's competing factions, but none have been enacted. Most recently, the United Nations proposed creating a "special status" for Kirkuk for up to 10 years - a move supported by

Washington and Ankara. The UN proposal would give Kirkuk political autonomy but prevent it from joining or being annexed by Kurdistan.

Conventional wisdom holds that if the Kurds can control Kirkuk and its hydrocarbon bounty, they will be one step closer to their dream of an independent state. This ambition has been frowned on by the Kurds' biggest ally, the US, and has drawn outrage from Syria, Iran and Turkey, which have large Kurdish populations.

Now, for the first time in five years, Kirkuk's 12 seats in the Iraqi parliament are up for grabs and the results could send reverberations through Baghdad and beyond.

"The Kirkuk issue is hugely important to the international community because it has the biggest potential to break up Iraq, and they don't want that," said Joost Hiltermann, Middle East deputy program manager for the International Crisis Group. (To read an interview with Hiltermann, [click here](#) Searching for solutions, Asia Times Online, February 19)

"The UN scenarios are useful, and the US and UN plan to work on it once the elections are finished and they know who the new leaders are. I expect Kirkuk to get a lot of focus. Whether the Kurds and Arabs and Turkmen will embrace the solution is another matter."

But Rostam, for the moment, isn't worried about the world. A charismatic barrel of a man, Rostam's fierce reputation as a fighter is belied by an avuncular mien and hearty Kurdish humor. Cigarette in hand, he swept a burly arm at the Shorja slum where he grew up and explained that the people of Kirkuk have immediate needs that trump pipelines and geopoliti-

cal debates.

"Look around; this town is ruined. There are no services, the roads are terrible. People here don't even have electricity and water or fuel," said Rostam. "Iraq is a rich country, especially Kirkuk, but the ruling parties here are not representing the people. They money from the land and the oil is going right into their wallets."

Kurdistan's two main parties - the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) - have dominated Kirkuk's government and security apparatus since 2003. The two groups fought each other from 1994-1998 in a bloody civil war that killed as many as 5,000 Kurds, but in 2003 joined to form the Kurdistan Regional Government. The parties have controlled Kirkuk for the past seven years as the Kurdistan Alliance, but analysts say the partnership is unraveling and the entrance of Goran may be the final blow.

Arabs, Turkmen and Assyrian Christians claim widespread abuse from Kurdish authorities in Kirkuk. Allegations that Kurdish forces use murder, kidnapping and physical threats to intimidate minorities into leaving the area have skyrocketed since the start of the campaign season.

"We have no power in this city and our rights are violated. The Kurdish main parties control everything. Since the beginning of the election campaign we have had violence and problems every day. The Kurdish parties have armed militias; they are the cause of this violence," said Jamal Shan, head of the Turkmen National Party, a member of the Turkmen Front coalition in Kirkuk.

Critics claim the Kurdish parties have taken advantage

of a policy allowing resettlement of Kurds kicked out of Kirkuk by Saddam during his "Arabization" campaign to control disputed areas. Minority leaders say the parties have flooded Kirkuk with tens of thousands of Kurds and subsidized the newcomers to control a promised referendum to determine if local people want to be part of Kurdistan.

The Kurds of Kirkuk, roughly 55% of the province's estimated 900,000 people, have their own complaints about the ruling parties. Most agree that corruption and cronyism are a fact of life and complain of unlivable public utilities and infrastructure. Lingering animosities between the Irbil-based KDP and the Sulaymaniyah-based PUK have also made for a dysfunctional government, experts and locals said.

"The ruling parties did not have a good policy in Kirkuk, especially in terms of providing services. They did not work as a team. There are still two Kurdish security agencies - one KDP and one PUK - and some state employees are supported by the PUK and others by the KDP," said Kurdish political analyst Ali Kurdistani.

"They did not treat other ethnic groups well, and they did not fulfill the promises they made to people over the last seven years. In short, they couldn't solve the Kirkuk crisis, the Kurds are unhappy, and now Goran can take advantage of all this dissatisfaction."

There has been no election in Kirkuk since 2005. Escalating street violence and political bickering excluded the province from local council elections in 2009. In the last vote, the Kurdish parties won 26 of the 41 provincial council seats behind a strong showing by the PUK which earned the right to appoint

the city governor and head of the provincial council.

The PUK is now susceptible to the brunt of an angry public and an ambitious challenger in next month's vote. Some observers feel the political battle for Kirkuk could be the last stand of the PUK and its founder and general secretary, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani.

The PUK claims it isn't worried. Party spokesman Muhammad Osman said the people of Kirkuk would vote for the PUK because of the party's accomplishments in the area and its support during hard times.

Osman also pointed out that Talabani, who spent his childhood in Kirkuk, had arrived and would be spending the entire campaign in the city to raise votes. He estimated that the PUK would win six seats in parliament, and that Goran would be lucky to get one.

But Rostam wasn't having it. He estimated that 75% of veteran Peshmerga have joined Goran and those that haven't yet defected are only interested in keeping their paychecks. (Goran has been careful not to register itself as a political party so its followers can still belong to other parties. It is whispered that many Goran members still draw salaries from the PUK.)

"I was with the PUK for 34 years. The PUK broke its promise and sacrificed the people in the party in order to get rich. They said they would serve the people in Kirkuk but ended up oppressing them," said Rostam.

"I didn't spend all those years fighting for that."

By tapping into such popular discontent, the fledgling Goran movement is poised to become the spoiler in Kurdish politics. Its opposition to the two main parties is a direct threat to several years of lockstep Kurdish unity in

Baghdad over such issues as oil revenues and disputed areas like Kirkuk.

Goran began as a splinter group within the PUK intent on reform of the party. It split with the PUK last year and stood in July elections for the Kurdish parliament on a platform of anti-corruption, fiscal transparency and the abolishment of political party militias. The new group won 25 seats in the 111-seat parliament, 23% of the overall vote, and embarrassed the PUK by winning in the older party's stronghold of Sulaymaniyah.

Hiltermann of the International Crisis Group notes, "It's an interesting thing that the top leaders of Goran are from the same mould as the leaders of the PUK and KDP in terms of being former Peshmerga leaders who lived in the mountains and fought Saddam during the 1980s. The founder [Nowshirwan Mustafa] was Talabani's number two and the PUK ideologue for all those years. He's a noted historian of the period and has written some serious histories of the national movement. Now, here he is, still surrounded by all these old Peshmerga from the mountains, but he has managed to appeal to younger people who were never in the mountains."

Kirkuk will now be the proving ground for Goran's ability to attract votes from other ethnic groups in its push for parliament seats. According to Kurdistani, Goran is the first Kurdish political group that is actively trying to attract people from different political backgrounds, ideologies and ethnic groups.

"I see main common points between the platforms of the [Goran] list and our list so this paves the way to form a coalition after the election and better serve the people of Kirkuk. Together we could

show the Iraqi identity of the city, this is a vision the other Kurdish parties don't like," said Omar Jwad Aljbury, leader of the main Arab party in Kirkuk, the Iraqi Arab Coalition.

Even as some Goran candidates are predicting victory in Kirkuk, there is skepticism on the street about the untested movement facing off against older parties with well-established political networks. On Wednesday, Goran accused PUK security forces of opening fire on an opposition rally in Sulaymaniyah and wounding three supporters.

Still, if Goran wins parliament seats in Sulaymaniyah as expected and manages to pick up a few in Kirkuk, it could make for an intriguing political calculus in Baghdad.

"So much depends on post-election coalition-building. The number of seats they get overall may give them significant leverage," said Hiltermann. "This could play a key role in determining the presidency [a post held by Talabani]. The PUK and KDP want Talabani back in office. Nowshirwan is clearly opposed to that, but he may acquiesce if some key demands are met ... Clearly these other parties are worried that Goran will have some real power in Baghdad and ally with an Arab party."

Charles McDermid is an editor for the Institute of War and Peace Reporting in Iraq.

Suleimaniya witnesses clash as Election campaign starts in Kurdistan

The Kurdish Globe

The security forces were the first opened fire on the campaigners and a number of them fell wounded.

A number of people were wounded after gunshots and another group was arrested by security forces after midnight on February 17 in Suleimaniya.

Competing lists in the city interpret the occurrence with harsh accusation tones.

Goran (Change) list officials say their supporters have been shot by security forces while celebrating in favor of their list. Meanwhile, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) officials reply the accusation and add that their office in Suleimaniya was attacked by Goran supporters.

Goran, led by Nawshiran Mustafa, is a wing which has split from the PUK of the Iraqi president Jalal Talabani nearly two years ago. Supporters from both lists rush into streets in car convoys colored with posters and flags to show their loyalty to the lists. This routine first appeared in the Kurdistan Parliamentary July election.

"During the last days, people enthusiastically and with

enjoying absolute freedom go out into the streets expressing their happiness and support for the different lists," says Zana Hama Salih, spokesman of the Suleimaniya Province Security Committee.

With describing the period of the election campaign as "a sensitive stage," Hama Salih announced that a number of irresponsible people step in the public gatherings and "start offending supporters of the political lists; this sometimes is drawn into violence and quarrel."

His statement comes during a press conference following a clash between campaigners and security elements in front of the PUK office in the Salim Street Suleimaniya. He announced of arresting eleven people in the place of the clash noting that the outlawed ones are submitted to court without considering to which list they belong.

Meanwhile, He called on the Kurdistan lists and their supporters to help in protecting the situations in Suleimaniya city.

A Goran member of the Kurdistan Parliament, Sherzad Hafiz informed that that the security forces were the first opened fire on the campaigners



and a number of them fell wounded. The security took the wounded ones out of hospital, he reported to Sbei, Goran's mouth speaker website. He also announced six of the detainees are already released noting that they were exposed to tortures.

Relevantly, PUK Suleimaniya Office published a statement to express their view of the story.

"Armed people driving two cars passing through Salim Street and in front of the PUK Suleimaniya Office opened fire to the office and to the supporters," says the statement and adds that the security shot them back.

"At the place of the inci-

dent, three of them, a car, unlicensed gun and explosives were seized. The rest of the shooters flee away and the asayish (security) forces were able to arrest them later," says the statement adding that the arrested people were supporters from the Goran list.

Goran list was able to win 25 of the Kurdistan Region Parliament's 111 seats in the regional parliamentary elections last July. Allying the Kurdistan Democratic Party led by Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani together won 59 seats and formed the regional government.

Gorran shakes the Kurdish parliament

Erbil - The Kurdish faction of Gorran (Change) walked out of the parliament, in protest of being denied speaking time about the 2010 budget of Kurdistan.

Gorran MPS were allowed to speak for 5 minutes about the budget the Kurdistan region receives from Baghdad. But Kemal Kerkuki, the parliamentary speaker, wanted to vote to give the MPs 3 minutes or 5 minutes to speak.

Since the Change list MPS knew they would lose the vote, they started banging on the tables to stop the vote. As a result the parliamentary session was delayed

until tomorrow. Sozan Shahab, the leader of the Kurdistan list in the Kurdish parliament, criticized the actions of the Gorran MPS. "We don't accept it to make the Kurdish parliament, as the Iraqi parliament," she said.

"The KRG's projects are all halted waiting for the budget bill to be ratified, so it should soon be approved", Kurdish parliamentary speaker, Kemal Kerkuki, concluded, reported the AK news agency.

The Kurdistan region receives 17% of Iraq's general budget. The Kurdish opposition group Gorran says it wants more transparency on how the money is spent.



Arménie-Turquie : une réconciliation en suspens

Quatre mois après la signature, en octobre 2009 à Zurich, d'un protocole d'accord entre la Turquie et l'Arménie, sous le patronage de la Suisse, l'espoir d'une normalisation rapide des relations entre les deux voisins s'est déjà envolé. Ni le Parlement arménien ni l'Assemblée nationale turque n'ont encore approuvé le texte, qualifié, à l'époque, d'*« historique »* par l'ensemble des diplomates mondiales. Selon cet accord, les deux pays devaient établir des relations officielles, inaugurer des ambassades et, à terme, rouvrir leur frontière commune, fermée depuis 1993. Mais à Ankara comme à Erevan, le processus est mis en suspens. L'Arménie a annoncé, le 12 février, que les protocoles ont été

Le conflit du Karabakh, gelé depuis seize ans et qui a fait plus de 30 000 morts, entrave la pacification de la région

transmis au Parlement. Mais elle a précisé que la ratification ne pourrait pas intervenir avant que la Turquie ne se soit d'abord prononcée.

Passé l'enthousiasme de la signature, les négociations sont entrées dans une phase marquée par des *« déceptions réciproques »*, selon l'analyste Aybars Gorgülü. La Turquie, qui avait condamné sa frontière avec la jeune République d'Arménie, en 1993, en représailles à la sécession du Haut-Karabakh, une province majoritairement peuplée d'Arméniens et rattachée à l'Azerbaïdjan par Staline, réclame des contreparties pour sa réouverture.

« Sans une solution au Karabakh, nous ne pouvons pas ratifier les protocoles », a lancé le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, fermant la porte à un accord rapide. Le ministre des affaires étrangères, Ahmet Davutoglu, persiste à lier la réussite de ce rapprochement à des concessions arméniennes sur le Karabakh, bien que les

Analyse

Guillaume Perrier

Istanbul, correspondance

accords d'octobre 2009 n'en fassent pas mention. Début février, il a laissé planer la menace d'un échec si les négociations n'étaient pas *« menées de manière appropriée »*.

La Russie et les Etats-Unis exhortent Turcs et Arméniens à accélérer leur rapprochement. Les grandes puissances veulent éviter un nouvel embrasement du sud du Caucase, fragilisé par la crise géorgienne de l'été 2008. Mais le conflit du Karabakh, gelé depuis seize ans et qui a fait plus de 30 000 morts, entrave la pacification de la région. En dépit de la médiation du groupe de Minsk – coprésidé par la Russie, les Etats-Unis et la France –, les discussions ne progressent guère. En Azerbaïdjan, comme à Erevan, la question reste brûlante. Le président arménien, Serge Sarkissian, est originaire du Karabakh et il dirigeait les comités d'autodéfense, au début des années 1990.

En faisant marche arrière, la Turquie montre sa dépendance vis-à-vis de Bakou. L'Azerbaïdjan, de langue et de culture turque, est un allié traditionnel de la Turquie et un de ses principaux fournisseurs de gaz naturel. Les initiatives du grand frère turc, flirtant avec l'Arménie, ont jeté une ombre sur l'alliance. En Turquie, l'opposition nationaliste et kémaliste est aussi montée au créneau contre cette *« trahison »*, appelant à la solidarité panturque avec les Azéris : *« Un peuple, deux Etats »*. Surtout, la richesse des gisements de la mer Caspienne donne un argument de poids au clan Aliiev, au pouvoir depuis vingt ans en Azerbaïdjan. Le pays, à la source de l'oléoduc Bakou-Tbilissi-Ceyhan et du gazoduc Nabucco, s'avère stratégiquement incontournable. Bakou fournira 6 milliards de mètres cubes de gaz à la Turquie, en 2010.

En Arménie, les réticences se sont renforcées et la sincérité de la démarche de la Turquie est sérieusement mise en doute. L'accord de 2009 prévoit la création d'une commission historique, chargée d'examiner *« de manière scientifique et objective »* les pages sombres de l'histoire. Mais elle est souvent perçue par les Arméniens comme une manœuvre turque pour tenter d'atténuer la réalité du génocide.

Le 12 janvier, la Cour constitutionnelle arménienne a rendu un avis favorable sur les protocoles signés en octobre. Mais elle a rappelé qu'ils ne pourraient en aucun cas contredire la Constitution et la déclaration d'indépendance arménienne qui mentionne *« le devoir de réalisation de reconnaissance internationale du génocide de 1915, en Turquie ottomane et en Arménie occidentale »*. La Turquie juge cette référence historique *« inacceptable »*.

La question du génocide, que la position officielle turque qualifie toujours de *« massacres réciproques »*, pourra difficilement être éludée, si Ankara souhaite une sincère réconciliation avec son voisin. Pour le moment, la Turquie voudrait inciter l'Arménie à mettre ses revendications en veilleuse. Comme chaque année, la diplomatie turque se crispe à l'approche du 24 avril, la date anniversaire du déclenchement du génocide de 1915, lancé par l'arrestation, à Istanbul, de centaines de dignitaires arméniens. Ankara s'inquiète du lobbying de la diaspora arménienne aux Etats-Unis et d'une possible reconnaissance officielle par le Congrès américain.

Le 4 mars, le comité des affaires étrangères de la Chambre se prononcera sur une résolution démocrate, qualifiant de *« génocide »* les massacres de 1915. M. Davutoglu a manifesté son agacement à James Steinberg, secrétaire d'Etat adjoint, le 6 février, à la conférence de Munich sur la sécurité internationale. En 2007, un vote du Congrès avait été évité au dernier moment, désamorçant un risque de crise dans les relations américano-turques. ■

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LE FIGARO 19 février 2010

Ankara étend son rôle au Proche-Orient

La diplomatie turque veut se poser en médiateur dans les conflits qui touchent la région.

LAURE MARCHAND
ISTANBUL

TURQUIE. Avec son sens aigu des retombées médiatiques, Recep Tayyip Erdogan n'allait pas se priver d'une telle tribune. Le week-end dernier, le premier ministre turc a profité du Forum mondial Islam-Etats-Unis, organisé au Qatar et auquel participait Hillary Clinton, pour fustiger l'inaction de la communauté internationale face à la situation humanitaire à Gaza. Il a inclus sans les nommer les États présents et tançait ouvertement l'Égypte. Mais le Qatar a déroulé un tapis rouge de compliments pour son hôte turc: le vice-premier ministre qatarien a qualifié de «voix des musulmans» l'un «des leaders favoris dans le monde arabe». Ces éloges sont révélateurs de l'influence grandissante de la Turquie dans la région et du changement de perception des pays arabes à son égard. Profitant du déclin des puissances traditionnelles, comme l'Égypte et l'Arabie saoudite, les Turcs convoient désormais le leadership régional.

Cette conquête passe symboliquement par la cause palestinienne. «Le problème palestinien est une source de légitimité pour tout pays et dirigeant envers les populations arabes», explique Mustafa el-Labbad, directeur du Centre al-Sharq pour les études régionales et stratégiques, basé au Caire. Depuis son esclandre face au président israélien, Shimon Pérès, en 2009 à Davos, le chef du gouvernement islamo-conservateur a fait prendre à son pays un net avantage sur ses concurrents. Ses sorties musclées contre Israël lui valent même le surnom de «nouveau Nasser» dans la presse arabe et sa cote de popularité est au plus haut dans les opinions publiques.

Au-delà de ces succès oratoires, le retour de la Turquie dans une sphère en grande partie jadis intégrée dans l'Empire ottoman passe par une politique étrangère hyperactive. Après avoir tourné le dos à la région pendant la guerre froide, Ankara a normalisé ses relations avec ses voisins orientaux, a conduit les pourparlers secrets entre la Syrie et Israël en 2008 et intercedé auprès du régime iranien sur le dossier du nucléaire...

Erdogan en «nouveau Nasser»

À défaut d'une médiation couronnée d'un succès diplomatique majeur, le gouvernement turc se pose en agent de liaisons dans les conflits régionaux. La semaine dernière, c'est une délégation de l'Alliance nationale irakienne, chiite, qui sollicitait son intervention pour aider l'Irak à apaiser ses tensions internes ethniques et externes. «Pour vendre ses produits et sécuriser les routes énergétiques, la 16^e économie mondiale a également besoin que les relations avec ses voisins et les



celles entre ces derniers soient stables», souligne Cengiz Candar, éditorialiste spécialiste du Moyen-Orient.

Longtemps perçue avec méfiance à cause de son alignement sur Washington, la Turquie a commencé à gagner la confiance dès 2003, lorsqu'elle a refusé de laisser passer les soldats américains sur son territoire pour envahir l'Irak. Une étude conduite par la Fondation turque des études économiques et sociales (Tesev) dans six pays de la région et dans les Territoires palestiniens montre que, non seulement son implication n'est pas perçue comme une ingérence, mais qu'elle est plébiscitée: près de huit personnes interrogées sur dix souhaitent que «la Turquie joue un plus grand rôle» et pensent qu'elle a «un impact positif sur la paix» dans le monde arabe. Pour Mustafa el-Labbad, si la Turquie «manque encore de réseaux et d'alliances à cause de son engagement tardif», elle bénéficie de liens culturels et historiques avec les pays arabes et représente un «islam moderne» qui joue en sa faveur: «L'ascension de l'Iran comme puissance régionale et comme «big brother» des chiites conduit de plus en plus les populations sunnites à se rapprocher de la Turquie.» La voie est

La voie est d'autant plus libre pour les ambitions turques qu'elles concordent avec la politique de l'Administration Obama

d'autant plus libre pour les ambitions turques qu'elles concordent avec la politique de l'Administration de Barack Obama. «Les Américains essayent d'intégrer le monde musulman dans le système mondial, pour eux la Turquie est leur vitrine et peut servir d'exemple de pays démocratique», estime Mehmet Altan, un intellectuel turc. Un objectif qui conduit la Maison-Blanche à ne pas se formaliser lorsque Ankara ne suit pas sa ligne et dé-

fend ses propres intérêts.

Mais la Turquie ne doit pas tout à sa diplomatie: les séries télévisées turques, exportées dans tout le monde arabe, ont largement contribué à sa réputation «glamour». La saga sentimentale *Nour a été diffusée dans 22 pays et des millions de téléspectateurs ont suivi les péripéties amoureuses du héros Mohannad, un jeune Stambouliote au regard bleu de braise. Depuis la fin de la série, les touristes arabes ont pris d'assaut Istanbul.* ■



UN PREMIER train de voyageurs entre la Turquie et l'Irak est arrivé mercredi à Gaziantep dans le sud-est de la Turquie, venant de Mossoul au nord de l'Irak après la décision des deux voisins de relancer ce chemin de fer historique. «Le train transportera espoir, paix et stabilité, outre des passagers», a déclaré le gouverneur de Gaziantep, Süleyman Kamçı, lors d'une cérémonie organisée à l'occasion du voyage inaugural du train. Le voyage dure approximativement 18 heures, sur environ 500 km. Un protocole a été signé en octobre 2009 pour relancer ce service ferroviaire, qui devrait stimuler les relations économiques et culturelles entre les deux voisins. La voie Mossoul-Gaziantep fait partie d'une ligne historique entre Istanbul et Bagdad, construite sous l'Empire ottoman, au début du XX^e siècle. Elle était intégrée à la mythique route ferroviaire Berlin-Bagdad construite voici un siècle par les Allemands. Elle est restée désaffectée pendant une vingtaine d'années.

L'unité de l'Irak n'est pas au programme de la campagne électorale

Par Hamza Hendawi,
The Associated Press

BAGDAD - A trois semaines d'un scrutin national clé, le vieux rêve d'unité de l'Irak s'évanouit peu à peu face aux messages électoraux vindicatifs et sectaires des différents candidats aux législatives. A Bagdad, seule la surenchère sécuritaire semble unir encore les Irakiens de différentes confessions face à la peur de nouveaux attentats.

Le 7 mars prochain, les Irakiens éliront leur nouveau parlement et avec lui, le gouvernement qui aura la lourde tâche de présider aux destinées du pays après le retrait des soldats américains fin 2011. Il devra garantir la sécurité face à une insurrection de plus en plus audacieuse et négocier un accord de partage durable du pouvoir entre chiïtes, sunnites et kurdes.

L'échec dans l'une de ces missions pourrait replonger le pays dans le chaos et l'anarchie des années récentes, et raviver les conflits communautaires de 2006 et 2007.

Car loin de prôner l'unité, la campagne électorale alimente les tensions. Les milliers d'affiches et de banderoles électorales qui ornent les rues de Bagdad jouent dangereusement avec les ressentiments communautaires. Les chiïtes, majoritaires dans la population et ainsi qu'au gouvernement, accusent les sunnites de rester fidèles à Saddam Hussein ou à Al-Qaïda. Les sunnites les accusent en retour d'opprimer le peuple.

Le porte-parole du gouvernement Ali Al-Dabbagh, candidat aux législatives, n'y échappe pas: il a lancé lundi son petit quolibet à l'encontre des parlementaires sunnites

qu'il a accusé de travailler pour Al-Qaïda.

Une affiche du candidat chiïte et ancien Premier ministre Ibrahim Al-Jaafari avertit qu'"il n'y a pas de place pour le Baas", parti de l'ancien dictateur Saddam Hussein, accusé par les Chiïtes de comploter pour revenir au pouvoir. Des accusations qui ne visent qu'à exploiter à des fins électorales les peurs de la population contre les sunnites, estiment ces derniers.

La candidature de plus de 440 postulants, majoritairement sunnites, a été interdite pour liens présumés avec le parti Baas par une commission de contrôle principalement composée de chiïtes. La querelle qui s'est ensuivie a envenimé les relations entre chiïtes et sunnites et alimenté les doutes sur la crédibilité du scrutin.

Dans une pique à peine voilée contre ses rivaux, le candidat sunnite Saleh Al-Moutlak a ironisé sur la présence en nombre de "voleurs" sur les affiches électorales, au détriment des "honnêtes gens".

"Je n'oublierai pas ceux qui vous ont opprimé", promet quant à lui Mahmoud Al-Machadani, ancien porte-parole du parlement, à ses électeurs sunnites.

Signe de ces tensions croissantes, des centaines de sunnites en colère sont descendus dans les rues de Bagdad et de Falloujah pour protester contre les commentaires insultants proférés par Bahaa al-Aaraji, un parlementaire chiïte, à l'encontre d'un des compagnons du Prophète, vénéré par les sunnites mais vilipendé par les extrémistes chiïtes.

Les quelques messages d'unité, placardés en général par les forces de sécurité -iro-

niqument, surtout sur les murs des postes de contrôle-, tels que "loyauté à la patrie et au peuple seulement", peinent à redonner l'espoir de voir un jour l'Irak unifiée et débarrassée de la corruption et du sectarisme.

"Les choses vont de mal en pis du point de vue de la sécurité et des services, car les responsables sont préoccupés par les élections et leurs seuls intérêts", estime Ali Mohesen, fonctionnaire chiïte de l'est de la capitale.

La physionomie de Bagdad n'est guère différente de celle des heures sombres de 2006, quand le pays était au bord de la guerre civile. Après une série d'attentats visant des cibles stratégiques en plein coeur de la capitale en août, les autorités ont renforcé les mesures de sécurité. Murs anti-explosion, checkpoints et patrouilles de police se sont multipliés dans les rues, et certains quartiers sont entièrement encerclés de murs de six mètres de haut. La plupart des Bagdadis hésitent à sortir de leur quartier après la tombée de la nuit, et les rues sont quasiment désertes passé 21 ou 22 heures.

"Je ne me sens en sécurité nulle part à Bagdad, les explosions et les fusillades peuvent arriver à tout moment", se lamente Salem Khatib Mahomet, un étudiant du quartier sunnite d'Azamiyah.

"Jusqu'à quand devons nous encore subir cette tragédie?", déplore Saleh Omran, un retraité sunnite du quartier Mansour à Bagdad. "Nous avons perdu notre humanité", regrette-t-il.



UN ATTENTAT DE REBELLES KURDES DÉJOUÉ À TÉHÉRAN (OFFICIEL)

TEHERAN, 24 février 2010 (AFP)

LES AUTORITÉS iraniennes ont affirmé mercredi avoir déjoué un attentat à la bombe d'un groupe rebelle kurde contre une usine du ministère de la Défense à Téhéran, accusant Washington de soutenir ces insurgés.

"Trois agents du groupe terroriste Komala qui planifiaient de mener une attaque à la bombe contre une usine appartenant au ministère de la Défense à Téhéran ont été identifiés et arrêtés", a indiqué le ministère de la Défense dans un communiqué reproduit par les médias locaux.

Les membres du Komala ont été arrêtés dans la province du Kurdistan iranien (nord-ouest) et leur tentative d'attaquer leur cible a été "déjouée", a-t-il ajouté sans plus de détails sur cette usine.

"Deux bombes de fabrication étrangère, cachées dans des haut-parleurs, et trois kalachnikovs, ont été saisis", a-t-il poursuivi.

Le ministère a accusé les forces américaines stationnées dans l'Irak voisin de soutenir le groupe Komala (marxiste-léniniste) qui prône l'indépendance du Kurdistan iranien et mène une lutte armée contre le régime islamique en Iran.

"Etant donné la présence en Irak des forces d'occupation américaines et de leur soutien à certains groupes terroristes comme le Komala, l'entraînement de ces rebelles et leur équipement militaire sont fournis par les services de renseignements américains", conclut le texte.

Dimanche, le ministère avait annoncé que quatre rebelles du Komala, accusés d'avoir tué des policiers, avaient été tués par les forces de sécurité à Sardasht (nord-ouest).

L'Iran accuse les Etats-Unis de soutenir les groupes ethniques ou religieux dans les zones frontalières de l'Iran pour affaiblir le pouvoir central, ce que Washington dément.

Les Kurdes représentent environ 7% de la population en Iran.



IRAK: INTERDICTION DES RÉUNIONS ÉLECTORALES NOCTURNES AU KURDISTAN

SOULEIMANIYEH (Irak), 19 février 2010 (AFP)

LE FIEF du président Jalal Talabani au Kurdistan irakien connaît un tel degré de violence depuis le lancement de la campagne des législatives du 7 mars que la Commission électorale a annoncé vendredi l'interdiction des réunions politiques en soirée.

"La Haute Commission électorale (HIEC) de la province de Souleimaniyeh interdit à partir de vendredi toute réunion électorale entre 21H00 (18H00 GMT) et 06H00 (03H00 GMT) pour permettre la bonne tenue de la campagne et protéger les citoyens", affirme cet organisme dans un communiqué.

Cette décision, précise-t-il, a été prise sur recommandation du comité de sécurité de la province et toute infraction sera punie. Ce comité de sécurité est contrôlé par l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) du chef de l'Etat irakien Jalal Talabani.

Depuis son lancement il y a une semaine, la campagne a pris un tour violent en raison d'une compétition sans précédent entre l'UPK et ses dissidents regroupés sur la liste Goran (changement).

Jeudi soir, selon un porte-parole de l'UPK, des partisans de Goran ont jeté des pierres sur le convoi de deux dirigeants de l'UPK, Mollah Bakhtiar et Imad Ahmad, à Souleimaniyeh.

Mardi, trois partisans de Goran ont été blessés par des tirs au cours d'une réunion électorale perturbée par des membres des forces de sécurité de l'UPK, selon la liste dissidente.

Onze personnes proches de Goran ayant tiré en l'air lors de cette réunion ont été libérées jeudi après deux jours d'incarcération, a indiqué pour sa part un porte-parole du comité de sécurité de la province.

"Nous considérons que la décision de la commission électorale n'est pas professionnelle mais résulte de pressions politiques et peut-être que l'UPK est derrière cette décision", a affirmé à l'AFP Latif Moustafa, tête de la liste Goran à Souleimaniyeh.

"Il faut que l'HIEC enquête sur l'utilisation de milices dans la campagne et si ce fait est avéré elle doit disqualifier les partis politiques auxquels elles sont liées", a-t-il ajouté faisant allusion à l'UPK.

En revanche son rival de la Liste Kurdistania (qui regroupe le PDK et l'UPK), Farhad Mollah Rassoul a assuré qu'il allait se conformer à la décision de la commission électorale. "Je demande aux autres listes plus d'efforts pour éviter que la haine entre Kurdes se développe", a-t-il dit.

Pour la première fois en 30 ans de règne sur le Kurdistan, l'UPK et le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK), dirigé par le président de la région Massoud Barzani, font face à une liste dissidente pour les législatives du 7 mars.

L'enjeu est considérable car si Goran obtient un bon score, les deux grands partis perdront le rôle incontournable qu'ils ont depuis quatre ans.

En 2005, en raison du boycottage des sunnites, les deux grands partis et les islamistes kurdes avaient remporté 58 des 275 sièges à l'Assemblée.

Dans le nouveau Parlement, qui comptera 325 sièges, les Kurdes sont assurés de remporter les 41 sièges attribués à leurs trois provinces du nord et pourront glaner dans les autres provinces et au niveau national une dizaine de sièges supplémentaires.

En juillet, Goran a créé la surprise en se hissant à la deuxième place lors des élections au Parlement kurde, grâce à une campagne axée sur la lutte contre la corruption et l'hégémonie des deux partis historiques.



ESPAGNE: UN HOMME ARRÊTÉ APRÈS AVOIR LANCÉ UNE CHAUSSURE SUR M. ERDOGAN

MADRID, 23 février 2010 (AFP)

Un Kurde de nationalité syrienne a été arrêté lundi soir à Séville (sud de l'Espagne), après avoir lancé une chaussure en direction du Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan, en visite en Espagne, a annoncé mardi la police.

"Il a été arrêté hier soir (lundi) après les faits", a précisé à l'AFP un porte-parole de la police à Séville.

Ce Kurde de 27 ans est accusé d'avoir "lancé une chaussure" en direction de M. Erdogan, a-t-elle précisé.

L'incident s'est produit lundi vers 21H30 GMT lorsque le premier ministre turc sortait de la mairie de Séville où il venait de recevoir un prix.

Selon des images de la chaîne de télévision CNN Turquie relayées par les médias espagnols, le jeune homme a visé M. Erdogan alors que celui-ci s'apprêtait à pénétrer dans sa voiture. La chaussure n'a toutefois pas atteint le dirigeant turc.

Le 14 décembre 2008, un journaliste irakien avait lancé ses chaussures sur George W. Bush, au cours d'une conférence de presse d'adieu à Bagdad de l'ex-président américain en criant: "C'est le baiser d'adieu, espèce de chien!".

Condamné à un an de prison pour "agression contre un chef d'Etat en visite officielle", Mountazer al-Zaidi, considéré comme un héros par beaucoup dans le monde arabe, a été libéré au bout de neuf mois pour bonne conduite.



TROIS CIVILS TUÉS À MOSSOUL DONT DEUX MEMBRES DE LA COMMUNAUTÉ CHABAK

MOSSOUL (Irak), 25 février 2010 (AFP)

Trois civils ont été tués jeudi à Mossoul, dont deux membres de la communauté kurdophone des chabaks, a annoncé la police de cette ville à 350 km au nord de Bagdad, théâtre ces derniers jours d'attaques meurtrières contre les chrétiens.

Les deux membres de la communauté chabak étaient dans leur magasin d'équipement électrique dans le centre de la ville quand deux hommes armés les ont abattus avant de s'enfuir en voiture. La police n'a pas donné le nom des

deux victimes.

Les chabaks, une minorité de la province de Ninive, sont environ 30.000.

Un troisième civil a été abattu jeudi par des hommes armés alors qu'il se trouvait devant sa maison dans le quartier al-Ommal, selon la police

Depuis le 14 février, huit chrétiens ont été tués à Mossoul, où vivent toujours 15.000 à 20.000 membres de cette minorité.

La communauté chrétienne de cette ville dénonce l'inaction des services de sécurité face à des tueurs qui s'échappent à chaque fois.

Les autorités de la région craignent pour leur part que les chrétiens ne soient les principales victimes d'une montée des tensions liée aux législatives du 7 mars.

Le gouvernement irakien a annoncé jeudi la création d'une commission d'enquête après les meurtres de chrétiens.

IRAK : UNE LISTE SUNNITE ANNONCE SON BOYCOTTAGE DES LÉGISLATIVES

BAGDAD De Salam FARAJ (AFP)

Un important parti sunnite a annoncé samedi son boycottage des législatives du 7 mars en Irak en raison de "l'interférence" iranienne, mais cette décision devrait avoir un impact limité sur une communauté qui a payé cher son refus de participer au scrutin de 2005.

Le Front du dialogue national, qui comptait neuf députés dans la dernière législature, n'est pas parvenu à convaincre ses alliés laïcs du Bloc irakien de l'ancien Premier ministre Iyad Allawi de se joindre à la démarche.

Ce dernier espère profiter de la popularité dont il pense bénéficier dans les régions sunnites et dans une frange de l'électorat chiite pour revenir au pouvoir après une éclipse de cinq ans.

"Après les remarques du général Ray Odierno et de (l'ambassadeur américain à Bagdad) Christopher Hill selon lesquelles la Commission responsabilité et justice est dirigée par la Force al-Quds iranienne, le Front ne peut aller dans un processus électoral dirigé par des forces étrangères", a pour sa part annoncé dans un communiqué le porte-parole du mouvement, Haïdar al-Mollah.

Le Front du dialogue national "annonce sa décision de boycotter le scrutin et invite les autres entités politiques à en faire autant", a-t-il ajouté.

Le général Odierno, commandant des troupes américaines en Irak, avait accusé mardi deux responsables politiques irakiens au cœur d'une polémique sur l'élimination de candidats aux

législatives d'avoir des liens avec les Gardiens de la révolution iraniens.

Dirigée par Ali al-Allami et Ahmed Chalabi, la Commission responsabilité et justice a éliminé près de 500 candidats, dont Saleh al-Motlaq, le leader du Front, pour des liens présumés ou apologie du parti Baas de Saddam Hussein.

Le général Odierno avait assuré que MM. Allami et Chalabi avaient participé à plusieurs réunions en Iran avec un proche collaborateur du commandant de la Force al-Quds, l'unité des Gardiens de la révolution chargée des opérations secrètes.

La décision du Front de boycotter le scrutin constitue un changement radical. Lundi, Saleh al-Motlaq avait dit à des chefs de tribus: "Ils veulent que nous boycottions les élections mais nous ne leur ferons pas ce plaisir car nous avons encore en bouche le goût amer du boycottage en 2005", avait-il dit.

La communauté sunnite, qui représente un quart de la population, était sous-représentée au Parlement à cause de son refus massif de participer au scrutin de décembre 2005, tant en raison des menaces des rebelles que du refus d'accepter après 80 ans de domination que les chiites puissent prendre les commandes.

Selon les analystes politiques interrogés par l'AFP dans les régions, le Bloc irakien --qui regroupe 22 composantes-- arriverait en tête dans trois des quatre provinces à majorité sunnites: Anbar à l'ouest, Ninive au nord et Salaheddine au centre. Dans le gouvernorat de Diyala, au nord-est de Bagdad, il se place derrière le Front



Un homme est assis à côté d'une affiche de campagne du Bloc irakien, formation de l'ancien Premier ministre Iyad Allawi, le 20 février 2010 à Kirkouk

de la Concorde, une coalition sunnite.

"Je voterai pour le Bloc irakien que Moutlaq participe ou pas. Allawi et (le vice-président Tarek) al-Hachémi sont des figures patriotiques et nous irons aux urnes car nous ne voulons plus perdre notre vote", a déclaré à l'AFP Haïdar Ali Mahmoud, un mécanicien de 41 ans à Samarra, à 110 km au nord de Bagdad.

Dans la ville pétrolière de Kirkouk, où s'opposent Arabes et Kurdes, Mohammad Ali Tamim, candidat sur la liste du Front du dialogue irakien, a affirmé que "les gens voulaient voir annulée la décision de boycottage".

"Face aux Kurdes, nous maintenons notre candidature pour affirmer l'identité irakienne de la ville", a-t-il ajouté.



TURQUIE: 86 ARRESTATIONS POUR LIENS SUPPOSÉS AVEC LE PKK

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 13 février 2010 (AFP) —

LA POLICE turque a arrêté samedi lors d'opérations simultanées dans dix provinces du pays 86 personnes soupçonnées de liens avec les rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), ont affirmé des sources sécuritaires locales.

Le coup de filet a été organisé dans le but de prévenir d'éventuelles émeutes à l'occasion du onzième anniversaire de l'arrestation du chef du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, capturé le 15 février 1999 au Kenya, selon ces sources.

Les arrestations ont eu lieu dans les provinces de Batman, Hakkari, Mardin, Siirt et Simak (sud-est) ainsi que de Agri, Mus et Van (est), majoritairement peuplées de kurdes.

Plusieurs personnes ont également été interpellées à Adana (sud) et Istanbul

(nord-ouest), deux villes accueillant d'importantes communautés kurdes issues de l'exode rural.

Parmi les suspects arrêtés pour des liens supposés avec la branche du PKK chargée d'encadrer la jeunesse, figurent des dirigeants et des élus locaux du principal parti pro-kurde de Turquie, le Parti pour la paix et la démocratie (BDP), ont indiqué ces sources.

Le PKK a pris les armes contre Ankara en 1984. Le conflit a fait plus de 45.000 victimes, selon l'armée turque.

Le gouvernement a annoncé l'été dernier un projet de réformes visant à renforcer les droits des Kurdes.

Mais l'initiative a été mise à mal en décembre lorsque la Cour constitutionnelle a prononcé la dissolution du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP), auquel a succédé le BDP, pour cause de liens avec les rebelles --une décision suivie d'émeutes dans le sud-est anatolien

Detention of prosecutor stirs tension in Turkey

ISTANBUL

BY SEBNEM ARSU

The arrest of a state prosecutor on orders from another prosecutor, and the ensuing power struggle in the judiciary, has again exposed the battle between the staunchly secular establishment in Turkey and the republic's religiously inspired government.

The controversy started when a prosecutor had a colleague, İlhan Cihaner, arrested Wednesday, saying he was allied with the Ergenekon network, a large and diverse group charged with trying to overthrow the Justice and Development Party government in a military coup.

The Supreme Council of Judges and Prosecutors, a powerful group nominally controlled by the Justice Ministry and known for its criticism of the governing party, then stripped special powers from Osman Sanal, the prosecutor who had ordered the arrest.

The move basically requires more oversight of his work in certain cases, including Ergenekon.

The council's action led the Justice Ministry to accuse it of playing politics and interfering in the business of the judiciary.

Government critics, concerned that the governing party would shift the Turkey's secular equilibrium toward religious conservatism, say they believe that the pro-government prosecutors detained Mr. Cihaner because of his ambitious investigation into the activities of religious networks.

His supporters also say it is clear that Mr. Cihaner was not biased against the governing party, pointing out that he also investigated military police officers for their possible role in extrajudicial killings in 1999.

The military has long supported the notion of secular governments in Turkey.

The underlying power struggle in Ankara, the capital, has been a theme in Turkey since the Justice and Development Party won a majority in elections in 2002 and began challenging the military and other secular institutions.

The Ergenekon trial is central to this power struggle.

Since 2007, more than 200 people have been detained during the investigation, including four-star generals, professors, editors and underworld figures.

Critics of the government say some

detainees seem to have committed no offense greater than speaking in favor of Turkey as a secular state. Prosecutors contend the group planned to engage in civil unrest, assassinations and terrorism to create chaos and undermine Tur-

key's stability as groundwork for a coup. Although many in Turkey support pursuing the case, controversial arrests like Mr. Cihaner's feed fears that justice is falling victim to political manipulation.

Herald INTERNATIONAL Tribunc

FEBRUARY 23, 2010

3 former top generals are arrested in Turkey

ISTANBUL

They are among dozens detained in investigation on anti-government plot

BY SEBNEM ARSU

In one of the toughest actions against the Turkish military in the history of modern Turkey, the police detained three of the highest-ranking former generals in the country on Monday as part of a vast and lengthy investigation into a shadowy ultranationalist movement accused of planning to overthrow the Islamist-inspired government.

News reports identified the detainees as a former deputy chief of the general staff, Ergin Saygun; a former air force commander, Ibrahim Firtina; and a former naval commander, Ozden Ornek. They were detained at their homes in Istanbul and in the capital, Ankara.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said more than 40 people were taken into custody during the operation, including 14 other former high-ranking military officers.

The case, which has riveted Turks, revolves around a suspected conspiracy by secular ultranationalists accused of developing a plot to attack civilian targets, including a mosque in central Istanbul, and to provoke a crisis with Greece, with a goal of paving the way for a coup.

More than 200 people have been indicted in the case, including military officers, intellectuals, academics and writers who are outspoken critics of the government, and others have been held for months without charge. A first trial opened two years ago. The case is widely referred to as Ergenekon (pronounced ahr-GEN-eh-kahn), after the mythic Turkish valley that lent its name to the suspected conspirators.

Mr. Erdogan would not elaborate on the operation. Speaking at a news conference in Madrid, where he was on an official visit, he said, "We are going to

learn about it once the judiciary makes an evaluation after the delivery of the security forces."

Details of the suspected plot first emerged in 2007, when a leftist publication printed what it said was a diary from 2004 kept by Mr. Ornek, the former naval commander detained Monday. He denied the authenticity of the documents, and the publication is now closed.

Since the establishment of the modern Turkish state in 1923, the military has cast itself as the guardian of the country's stability and secularism. It has usurped civilian governments at least four times in the past 50 years.

The arrest of high-ranking officers is widely seen here as part of the continuing struggle between the relatively new religiously conservative political leadership and secular institutions in Turkey.

Turkish society divides largely along those lines, as has reaction to the conspiracy case, with secularists seeing it as a crackdown against their freedoms and the conservative Islamic side regarding the case as necessary to protect their own democratically won power.

A political analyst who has been strongly supportive of the investigation, Oral Calislar of The Radikal, a newspaper, said that whatever failings there might be in the trial process, they were products of the military's distorting influence.

"Forces supporting military coups are still very powerful and resisting change," Mr. Calislar said. "If there is a political will to prosecute military coup perpetrators, it is a fantastic will to be supported, regardless of the criticism of the methods."

The Constitution, adopted after one of the military's coups in 1980, assigns the army to intervene in politics to defend the republic, a vaguely defined responsibility that has until now been read as granting the military unconditional immunity.

But the Turkish military, the second largest military in NATO, has been criticized by the European Union for its influence in civilian politics. Turkey aspires to join the European Union.

Largest Ergenekon probe touches all untouchables

TODAY'S ZAMAN

ELEVEN retired generals and several retired colonels were detained yesterday as part of the investigation into the Sledgehammer and Cage alleged coup plots, devised by military members of Ergenekon, a clandestine gang charged with plotting to overthrow the government.

At least 50 people were detained, a majority of them retired and active duty military officers.

Retired Air Forces Commander Gen. Ibrahim Fırtına, who was interrogated earlier in January by prosecutors conducting the investigation into Ergenekon, was detained yesterday in addition to former Naval Forces Adm. Özden Örnek, the writer of detailed journals kept between 2000-2004 on some of the force commanders' coup plans, former 1st Army Commander Ergin Saygun, Gen. Engin Alan and several retired colonels. Fırtına was detained in Ankara, where the police raided 14 locations.

In addition to the generals listed above, retired generals Feyyaz Ö?ütçü, Ayhan Poyraz, Ayhan Ta?, Mustafa Çalı?, Yavuz Yalçın, Özer Karabulut, retired Admiral Ali Deniz Kutluk and retired colonels Ümit Öcan, Emin Küçükılıç, Kubilay Akta?, Ahmet Metin Dikici and Ali Karababa were also taken into custody

Retired generals Deniz Kutluk and Yusuf Ziya Tokar were also detained and taken to the ?stanbul Prosecutor's Office. There were also searches in the homes of retired 1st Army Commander retired Gen. Çetin Do?an and retired Gen. Süha Tanyeli, the former head of the General Staff's Strategic Research and Study Center (SAREM), a foundation affiliated with the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK). Dogan was detained later in the afternoon.

Fourteen officers, seven retired and seven on active duty, were detained in Ankara. Yesterday's operation was carried out under the order of the Istanbul chief prosecutor, the Ankara Governor's Office said. The detainees were flown to Istanbul later yesterday.

In the face of the developments, Chief of General Staff Gen. İlker Basbug delayed a planned visit to Egypt yesterday morning. An announcement from the General Staff



ALL FORMER COMMANDERS TESTIFY IN ERGENEKON PROBE

From left to right, former Chief of General Staff Gen. Hilmi Özkök, who testified as a witness in Ergenekon, former Land Forces Commander Gen. Aytaç Yalman, who earlier testified as a suspect, former Naval Forces Commander Gen. Özden Örnek and former Air Forces Commander Gen. Ibrahim Fırtına, who both had testified as suspects earlier, and former Gendarmerie Commander Gen. Sener Eruygur, jailed as an Ergenekon suspect in 2008 but later released due to health problems. The former commanders are seen here attending a National Security Council meeting in 2003.

said Basbug would instead be flying to Egypt tonight.

There was also a search of the Turkish Armed Forces Mehmetçik Foundation's Istanbul representative office, in Istanbul's Caddebostan neighborhood. Police teams and prosecutors arrived at the Mehmetçik Foundation at 8 a.m. The search continued throughout the day. The police reportedly made copies of files found on the foundation's computers.

At the same time, in Izmir police launched another operation to apprehend suspects believed to be part of the Cage operation plan, yet another alleged military plot to create chaos in the country. Several suspects were detained, including a former navy colonel, in the operation conducted by the Izmir Police Department; however, no exact number was provided by officials.

Gen. Alan is best remembered for his role in an operation in Kenya in 1999, in which terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Öcalan was apprehended by Turkish Special Forces.

The Cage plan was exposed during a police raid on the office of retired Maj. Levent Bektas as part of a probe launched after the discovery of a large arms cache in Istanbul's Poyrazköy district in April within the

framework of the investigation into Ergenekon. The Cage Operation Action Plan sought to intimidate Turkey's non-Muslims and assassinate prominent non-Muslim figures to put domestic and international pressure on the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), which would in turn lead to diminishing public support for the party.

The Sledgehammer plan, revealed in January by a Turkish newspaper, was more than simply an outline of a plan to kill or injure various bureaucrats, journalists and the government. It included a plot to bomb one of Istanbul's largest mosques during Friday prayer and a subplot named Oraj (Thunderstorm) that called for the deliberate downing of a Turkish jet to trigger problems with Greece, which the conspirators hoped would give the army the upper hand in politics as the public would feel threatened by a foreign enemy.

Police said the operation yesterday was launched when the National Police Department's criminal investigations department examined and verified the authenticity of documents regarding the Sledgehammer and Cage plans. The original documents were handed to the Ergenekon prosecutors by the Taraf daily, which exposed both plans.

The Boston Globe

FEBRUARY 24, 2010

Anti-American bloc gains ground ahead of Iraq vote

By HAMZA HENDAWI and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA

Associated Press Writers

BAGHDAD (AP) -- The political movement of Iraq's best-known anti-American cleric has emerged as a major contender in next month's national elections, raising the possibility that the next prime minister could be openly hostile to the U.S. and friendly toward Iran.

A prime minister loyal to Muqtada al-Sadr might push the U.S. military to speed up its withdrawal timetable and pose a threat to future military and economic cooperation between the United States and Iraq.

Such a choice also could undermine efforts to reconcile Iraq's religious groups, with memories still fresh of brutal sectarian warfare between al-Sadr's Shiite militiamen and Sunni extremists.

The United States looks to the March 7 election as a key step to cement Iraq's infant democracy.

Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's alliance, backed by the powers of incumbency, has been widely viewed as the bloc that would emerge with the largest number of seats.

But al-Maliki's standing has been hurt by a series of horrific bombings in central Baghdad that exposed the inadequacies of Iraq's security forces. The lack of tangible improvement in basic services and allegations of corruption have further hurt his chances.

Al-Maliki's coalition is facing a tough challenge from a rival Shiite bloc, the religiously oriented Iraqi National Alliance. The main partners in this bloc are the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, or SIIC, and the Sadrists.

If the Iraqi National Alliance emerges as the largest bloc in the 325-seat parliament - and if the Sadrists win more seats than SIIC - that would likely place the fiery cleric in a strong position to pick the next prime minister.

SIIC officials are quietly acknowledging that the Sadrists are likely to emerge as the biggest winner in the bloc, thus robbing their own party of the chance to secure the prime minister's job.

They say Iran, which wields a great deal of influence within Iraq's Shiite establishment, is throwing its weight behind the Sadrists in the hope that they would do its bidding in a new government.

A top SIIC leader, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the topic, said the party would try to prevent the Sadrists from gaining control by securing the support of smaller groups within the coalition.

Officials at al-Maliki's Shiite-led "State of Law" coalition also have acknowledged the Sadrists will fare well in

the vote.

Salah al-Obeidi, al-Sadr's chief spokesman, told The Associated Press that party projections indicate the National Alliance would win 70 to 80 seats in the new legislature. Of these, he said, the Sadrists would have at least 35 seats.

While the forecast by the Sadrists could prove to be optimistic - there are no reliable polls - the movement has rebounded over the past year.

Al-Sadr's own political fortunes have been cyclical since he emerged as a power broker at the height of Iraq's violence. He maintained a low profile after leaving for Iran in 2007 as the U.S. began its buildup of troops, who cracked down on his militia and Sunni insurgents. But he recently has appeared to be positioning himself as a politician, replacing his militia with a grass-roots social welfare network.

His movement made a respectable showing in last year's provincial elections and has seen support grow in Baghdad and across the southern Shiite heartland. Much of its rise is tied to its social, health and education services and tireless calls for the withdrawal of the Americans, a stand that resonates with mostly poor Shiites who see the U.S. presence as the root of the country's problems.

A Sadrist prime minister, or one under the movement's influence, would likely call for a faster withdrawal of U.S. forces, who are currently scheduled to be gone by the end of next year.

A Sadrist-led administration also could jeopardize progress toward national reconciliation after years of killings and kidnappings, mostly at the hands of al-Sadr's Mahdi Army militia - which battled U.S. troops for years in Baghdad's Shiite slums and in cities across the south.

It also would deal a blow to the U.S. aim of creating a model Western-style democracy in the region, as the Sadrists would likely favor a strict interpretation of Islamic teachings. Al-Sadr himself believes in the right to rule by the most learned cleric, the concept that underpins the rule of the clergy in neighboring Iran.

Al-Sadr's supporters haven't commented on whether they have a specific candidate for the prime minister's post - and it's highly unlikely that the fiery cleric would himself take the job himself. Al-Sadr, who has been studying in Iran for the last two years, prefers to speak from the pulpit and is known to be seeking an elevated position in the Shiite religious hierarchy.

But al-Sadr, whose followers fought U.S. forces for years before being routed in a series of offensives, would be able to handpick a candidate for the job or at least play kingmaker if his supporters win enough seats in the new parliament.

Sami al-Askari, a close al-Maliki aide, questioned the Sadrists' ability to forge a postelection alliance with the



In this picture taken Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2010, a poster depicting Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, center top, is seen above an election campaign poster for Dr. Nasser al-Rubaiye in the Shiite city of Najaf, south of Baghdad, Iraq. Supporters of the radical cleric say they are confident of emerging from March's elections with more parliamentary seats than any of their partners in a major Shiite coalition, a likelihood that means Iraq's next prime minister would be openly hostile to the United States and an anathema to most Sunni Muslims. (AP Photo/Alaa al-Marjani)

country's main Kurdish bloc - a necessity in Iraq's fractured political scene since no single bloc is expected to win enough votes to claim an outright majority.

Iraq's Kurdish and Sunni minorities are expected to emerge with enough seats to allow them to be key partners in a Shiite-led government. In a similar position is a secular alliance led by former prime minister Ayad Allawi.

Another al-Maliki aide, Ali al-Adeeb, said the Sadrists would probably adopt a candidate from outside their ranks to ensure the support of other blocs. The two aides said an election victory for the SIIC-Sadrist alliance was far from guaranteed.

One-time Pentagon favorite Ahmad Chalabi and former prime minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari were among names mentioned by officials from SIIC and within the ranks of the Sadrists.

Many Sunnis particularly loathe Chalabi for what they see as his campaign to weaken them through his leadership of a panel that has weeded out thousands from government and armed forces jobs for their alleged ties to Saddam Hussein's regime.

Al-Jaafari's tenure as prime minister in 2005 and 2006 saw some of Iraq's worst sectarian violence, leading some to charge that he turned a blind eye to the slaughter of Sunnis.

Both men are known to be close to Iran.

Patriotic Union of Kurdistan: Revival or Mere Survival?

By Ahmed Ali

While all Iraqi political factions are competing strongly in lead up to the March 7 parliamentary elections, in Iraqi Kurdistan the internal competition is especially intense.

In particular, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK, the more secular and less tribal of the two major Iraqi Kurdish political parties) stands to lose or regain much. The PUK suffered major losses in the July 2009 provincial elections in its main powerbase of Suleimaniyyeh at the hands of the newly-formed Gorran (Change) list. This has created the perception that the PUK has become a junior partner to the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) in the power-sharing arrangement between the two major factions in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

Among the many important implications of the upcoming elections will be a signal as to whether the PUK can bounce back or Gorran is here to stay as a new force in Iraqi politics.

KDP-PUK Relations

For now, the KDP seems to be sticking to its 2005 agreement to share power equitably with the PUK. The agreement dictates the rotation of senior positions (in other words the president, prime minister, and speaker of Parliament) between the two parties. The KDP is behaving this way because it would prefer for the PUK to win back support from Gorran, which has been highly critical of the KDP as well as the PUK. There are also past animosities between Gorran leader Noshervan Mustafa and KDP leader (and president of Iraqi Kurdistan) Massoud Barzani.

The KDP has shown more subtly that it feels it has the upper hand over the PUK, however, via a series of appointments. For example, in the discussions leading up to the formation of a new KRG, there were rumors that Prime Minister Barham Salih, a PUK official, would not reappoint the incumbent minister of natural resources, Ashti Hawrami, given his reported ties to controversial oil deals. But Hawrami, who is considered close to KDP leaders, retained his position despite a public outcry. The reappointment signified a blow to Salih's efforts to implement the



PUK electoral slogan, "Renewal and Reform." The KDP is reportedly resistant to reappointing the PUK deputy leader, Kosrat Rasul Ali, to the vice presidency of Iraqi Kurdistan.

The KDP is also flexing its muscles regarding appointments to the Iraqi central government. The deputy prime minister position recently vacated by Salih, for example, has typically gone to the PUK, but this time it went to Barzani's Baghdad-based representative, Rozh Nouri Shawes.

Ongoing PUK-Gorran tensions

The fact that Gorran won 25 percent of Iraqi Kurdistan parliamentary seats was a wake-up call for the PUK. The group took steps to regain voters' trust in Suleimaniyyeh and to reenergize its political base, including a decision to expel Gorran members and to establish an internal integrity commission. PUK leader Jalal Talabani was the first to disclose his assets. Steps by the KRG, including the unprecedented disclosure of the budget and the announcement that 10,000 new KRG jobs will be created, also have helped the PUK.

Gorran says there is a less attractive side to the competition: continuous harassment and attacks on its members in PUK-controlled territory. Gorran alleges that the office of a one of its MPs in the town of Koya was burned down, that salaries of teachers suspected of ties to Gorran have been reduced, and that security officers and Peshmerga fighters sympathetic to Gorran have been punished.

Tensions mounted in January 2010 when Talabani strongly criticized Noshervan Mustafa during the PUK plenum, drawing a strong response from Mustafa in his newspaper Rozhnama. The media war only stopped when Barzani intervened, saying that "we will

never allow for the Kurds' blood to be shed by their Kurdish brothers again," a reference to the KDP-PUK civil war of the 1990s.

Kurdish Parties in the Upcoming Elections

The KDP is likely to do better than the PUK in the March 7 elections, which will strengthen its position as the senior partner in the KDP-PUK partnership. The PUK will face stiff competition from Gorran not only in Suleimaniyyeh but in Kirkuk, where Gorran has been establishing a presence (and where the PUK is now concentrating resources). In addition to Gorran, competition from the northern-based Islamist parties will produce more diverse Kurdish representation in Baghdad. Once the elections are over, all the parties will begin to regroup for the Kurdistan provincial elections scheduled for October 2010.

The parliamentary seat allocation has guaranteed the Iraqi Kurdish parties at least 43 future members of Parliament (out of a total of 325), which will make them sought-after government partners by either Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law alliance or its competitor, the Iraqi National Alliance. Either way, Iraqi Kurdish parties will lend their support only if they receive guarantees on the issues of oil revenue, effective power-sharing mechanisms, Kirkuk, and the status of the Peshmerga.

Whatever the electoral results among Kurdish parties, they will likely continue to speak with one voice on Kirkuk or other disputed internal boundaries. Although the three parties' positions on these issues differ a bit - Gorran has a more hardline stance than the other two - no Kurdish party wants to be the one that surrendered an inch of "Kurdistani" land.

Ahmed Ali is a researcher at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy focusing on the political dynamics of Iraq.

www.carnegieendowment.org

Turkey's religious-secular divide

By Jonathan Head / BBC News, Turkey

Investigations into an alleged attempted coup in Turkey in 2003 have led to the charging of 20 military officers in the latest tensions between the secular nationalist establishment and the governing AK Party, whose roots lie in political Islam.

Even in the very centre of Istanbul, you cannot avoid the military. The intimidating red and black signs depicting a soldier in silhouette that warn passers-by not to enter the restricted zones are found in every corner of this country.

Inside them, members of Turkey's one-million-strong armed forces live a secluded existence.

They have their own shops, hospitals, even hairdressers, to enable this powerful and unaccountable institution to insulate itself from the rest of society.

Throughout Turkey's modern history, the military has been a decisive force, overthrowing four elected governments.

As a senior officer, you are a member of an untouchable elite, even in retirement.

Operation 'Sledgehammer'

But membership privileges were suspended this week when special anti-terrorism units showed up at the doors of more than 40 officers and marched them off to the police headquarters in Istanbul.

They included former commanders of the air force, the navy and

“ There are plenty of people here who fear what the pious men who now run Turkey would do if no longer inhibited by the threat of military intervention ”

the army.

They are being questioned in connection with the latest in a string of alleged plots and conspiracies so twisted and murky that the term "Byzantine" scarcely does them justice.

There are secret operations with names like "Blondie", "Moonlight" and "Sledgehammer" - plans that purportedly involved planting bombs in mosques and having a Turkish Air Force jet shot down, thereby justifying another military takeover.

And there is talk of a shadowy network known as Ergenekon, which links mafia bosses, assassins and CIA-sponsored counter-insurgency units in a scarcely believable web of subversion.

It does not help that many of the allegations are based on documents leaked to a small, campaigning newspaper called Taraf.

The paper's courage in exposing military misdeeds has won it many admirers, but it has been unable to explain where the documents come from or how the newspaper is funded.

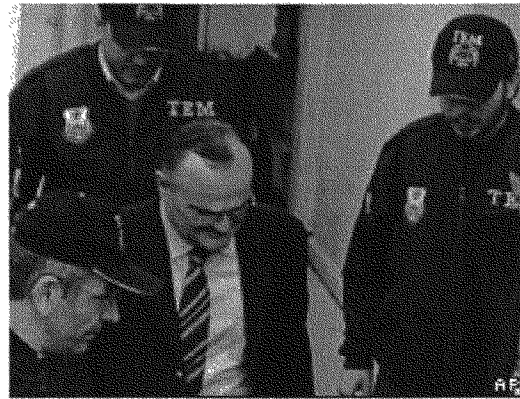
In a country as addicted to conspiracy theories as Turkey, that has given sceptics plenty of ammunition.

Dark episodes

Nor does it help that, after nearly three years and three indictments running to thousands of pages, the investigation has produced little hard evidence.

Yet dozens of people have been jailed and put on trial, some of whom seem unlikely plotters. They include journalists, university professors and - believe it or not - the head of a charity called the Turkish Santa Claus Foundation.

So is this just a stitch-up by the government to wrong-foot its opponents?



Former Deputy Chief of Military General Ergin Saygun is among those arrested and charged

That is what the opposition parties are claiming.

After all there is no love lost between the devout Muslims of the governing party and the rigidly secular officer class.

And yet there are many dark episodes in this country's history that make such wild conspiracies almost credible.

Hundreds of unsolved murders; thousands of cases of torture and disappearances during the war against Kurdish separatism; enough dirty tricks to make anyone at least a little paranoid.

Islamic restrictions

There are plenty of people here (reasonable people who want to see the soldiers return to barracks) who fear what the pious men who now run Turkey would do if no longer inhibited by the threat of military intervention.

Would the pulsating night-life in Istanbul, which is the envy of many European cities, be allowed to survive?

In some parts of Turkey, it is now impossible to buy alcohol. This in a country whose revered founding father Ataturk built a brewery as his first state-run industry.

And what about the freedoms women enjoy - unrivalled in the Islamic world - what would happen to them?

It is not Sharia law they worry about but more subtle pressures, like jobs and state business going only to observant Muslims.

Then you meet people like Mutlu Alkan, one of Turkey's most successful businesswomen, who is also on the board of the governing party.

She wears an Islamic headscarf which, under the existing laws, denies her access to universities and government buildings.

She says she respects secular lifestyles and happily serves alcohol to guests who want it, yet she burns with indignation over the restrictions on her lifestyle still upheld by the military and its allies.

Last month, the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan recalled a humiliating incident two years ago when his wife was barred from visiting a friend in a military hospital because she was wearing a headscarf.

They keep a box at the reception desk there for women to leave the pins that hold the scarves in place, so that they can enter the hospital with looser, more acceptable head coverings.

Mistrust and fear

I have found that in Turkey people fall into one of two camps (there is not much middle ground).

Either you mistrust the military, believing it poses the greatest obstacle to the country's onward march towards democracy and eventual membership of the European Union, or you fear the religious convictions of the governing party and what they will do to Turkey's secular traditions.

Even the judiciary is split.

There are few genuinely neutral institutions here.

Whatever verdict the courts conjure up from the avalanche of allegations they are now wading through, you can be sure that at least half the country will reject it.

Iran accused of murder campaign against Kurds

Adam Sage, Paris

Iran's religious leadership is orchestrating a campaign of killings and arrests in Kurd provinces as it seeks to prevent pro-democracy protests from spreading to the country's ethnic minorities, an Iranian Kurd leader has said.

In an interview with The Times, Abdullah Mohtadi, secretary general of the Komala Party, said Tehran had ordered a security crackdown that had brought renewed oppression to Kurd areas in the wake of protests against last year's contested presidential election.

He also accused Britain and other Western governments of turning their backs on the plight of the country's Kurdish population, estimated at five million by the US authorities and up to 12 million by Mr Mohtadi. "We need everything, but we get nothing," he said.

About 35 million Kurds live in Turkey, Iraq and Syria, as well as Iran, where Mr Mohtadi said they faced a long history of discrimination, harassment and violence.

The interview took place in Paris a day after Tehran had announced the capture of Abdolmalek Rigi, the leader of Jundallah, the Sunni militant group responsible for a series

of attacks on Iran's Revolutionary Guards. Mr Mohtadi said that he, too, was being hunted.

With Iran's regime desperate to stop the Green movement sparking rebellion among the minorities that constitute almost half the population, he said intelligence agents would be prepared to capture or kill him anywhere in the world, including Europe. "There are many people like me who really are in danger."

Unable to operate in Iran, his party has based itself in Iraq, where it has several hundred peshmergas, or armed fighters. Mr Mohtadi said their presence was necessary to prevent assassination attempts on Komala's leadership, but insisted that his party had abandoned violent action in favour of political strategies in Iran.

It has a television station, which is regularly blocked by the Iranian authorities, and a newspaper, which is smuggled across the border to promote calls for a democratic, decentralised political system in Iran. But anyone caught reading the newspaper is almost certain to be summoned by Iranian secret services and detained, said Mr Mohtadi.

"No kind of political activity is authorised" and retaliation for breaches of the law

was "very rapid and very harsh". Mr Mohtadi said Tehran had always treated Kurds "like enemies and looked at the Kurdish people only from a security point of view."

Now the repression had been stepped up. "They are arresting more people, threatening more of them, harassing more of them, calling more of them to the intelligence services. There are more clandestine killings going on as well."

He said more than 30 Kurds had been placed on death row, mostly for civil activism. Farzad Kamangar, 32, a teacher, had his sentence commuted to 30 years in prison this week following an international campaign to save him.

On the anniversary of the Iranian revolution this month, Mr Mohtadi said so many military vehicles were sent to Kurdish provinces "that it was like being in an occupied country. There was an unofficial curfew imposed and helicopters flying over all the main cities."

The show of strength was designed to nip a Kurdish protest movement in the bud "because they know that from the moment that happens, it will be difficult to contain," said Mr Mohtadi.

Nevertheless, there are signs of armed uprising in Iran's Kurdish provinces. Earlier this month, for instance, Tehran said it had killed four members of a Komala splinter group which it blamed for taking the lives of three policemen in December. This week, the Iranian authorities said they had foiled a bombing by the same faction.



EN VISITE EN IRAK, ESTROSI RENFORCE LA PRÉSENCE ÉCONOMIQUE FRANÇAISE

BAGDAD, 25 février 2010 (AFP)

LA FRANCE a affiché jeudi sa volonté de redevenir un des partenaires de premier plan de l'Irak en signant plusieurs contrats à l'occasion de la visite à Bagdad puis au Kurdistan irakien du ministre français de l'Industrie Christian Estrosi.

Ainsi, le groupe cimentier Lafarge, qui possède déjà deux cimenteries dans le nord de l'Irak, a signé une lettre d'intention pour la réhabilitation de la cimenterie de Kerbala (sud de Bagdad), et le groupe d'ingénierie pour l'industrie pétrolière Technip a conclu un accord pour un schéma directeur dans le secteur de la pétrochimie.

Par ailleurs, Renault Trucks (poids-lourds), filiale de Volvo, a signé un protocole d'accord pour l'installation de deux chaînes de montage. Aucune indication n'a été donnée sur le montant de ces contrats.

La France est pour l'instant un partenaire économique marginal de l'Irak. Les exportations françaises ont doublé l'an dernier pour atteindre 413 millions d'euros mais restent bien loin des niveaux connus dans les années 1970-80, lorsque la France était le partenaire privilégié du régime de Saddam Hussein.

Et les investissements sont à la traîne puisqu'ils ne représentent que 1% des placements étrangers dans ce pays.

A Bagdad, M. Estrosi a appelé les entreprises françaises à s'implanter en Irak pour gagner ce marché gigantesque, après les menaces du gouvernement irakien de refuser d'accorder des contrats à ceux qui refuseraient de s'y installer.

"Les affaires commerciales avec les Irakiens se traitent d'ici, à Bagdad, et non depuis les capitales avoisinantes", a déclaré le ministre français.

"Aujourd'hui il est possible, à condition de respecter certaines conditions de sécurité (...), de revenir à Bagdad et d'y faire des affaires", a insisté M. Estrosi,

venu inaugurer un centre d'affaires destiné à aider les entreprises françaises.

En visite pour une journée, il était accompagné de représentants d'une vingtaine de sociétés françaises et de quatre parlementaires.

Paris a bien reçu le message délivré par Bagdad. Le Premier ministre irakien Nouri al-Maliki avait récemment fait savoir qu'il ne donnerait des contrats qu'aux entreprises étrangères venant s'installer dans son pays. "Nous leur offrirons la sécurité et elles n'ont pas besoin de s'installer chez les voisins", avait-il dit.

Lors d'une rencontre avec M. Estrosi, M. Maliki a appelé la France à investir en particulier dans les domaines de l'agriculture, de l'aviation civile et de l'assainissement de l'eau, selon le ministre français.

M. Estrosi s'est ensuite entretenu avec le président Jalal Talabani dans la région autonome du Kurdistan.

Les échanges politiques et économiques entre la France et l'Irak se sont multipliés depuis un an. Le président français Nicolas Sarkozy puis le Premier ministre François Fillon, accompagné d'une dizaine de chefs d'entreprises, se sont rendus l'an dernier en Irak et M. Talabani a effectué une visite à Paris.

Pour Paris, il s'agit de ne pas passer à côté du gigantesque marché irakien, alors que le pays qui recèle les troisièmes réserves mondiales de pétrole a des besoins de reconstruction estimés à 400 milliards de dollars.

Pour autant, les sociétés françaises restent prudentes à cause des conditions de sécurité. C'est le cas de Technip, qui opère depuis l'étranger, en envoyant des équipes sur place pour des durées limitées.

La situation actuelle permet de le faire sans risque, à condition que les équipes soient escortées, "mais si la sécurité redevient critique, nous n'enverrons personne", explique son directeur général, Bernard Di Tullio.

Le Monde
26 février 2010

En Turquie, l'armée résiste à sa perte d'influence

Un projet de coup d'Etat illustre la guerre de l'ombre qui oppose les militaires aux islamo-conservateurs

Istanbul
Correspondance

Le palais de justice de Besiktas, à Istanbul, est, depuis lundi, en état de siège. Une cinquantaine d'officiers de l'armée turque, arrêtés par la police, y sont entendus par des procureurs civils et sont accusés d'avoir fomenté un complot pour renverser le gouvernement islamo-conservateur, au pouvoir depuis 2002. Douze hauts gradés, dont deux amiraux en activité, ont été inculpés et écroués, mercredi 24 février. Jeudi, ce sont deux anciens chefs de corps, le général Ibrahim Firtina, et l'amiral Ozden Örnek, ex-commandants de l'armée de l'air et de la marine, qui devaient être présentés au parquet. Ce vaste coup de filet vise les auteurs présumés d'un projet de coup d'Etat datant de 2003, baptisé « Balyoz » (« masse de forgeron »), révélé en janvier par le journal *Taraf*.

Selon les documents publiés, le plan « Balyoz » prévoyait de déstabiliser le gouvernement en lançant une série d'attaques spectaculaires, contre des chasseurs grecs au-dessus de la mer Egée et contre des mosquées à Istanbul. Des dizaines de milliers d'opposants et d'intellectuels, devaient être mis sous les verrous. En arrêtant ces officiers, « la Turquie a fait son plus

Une cinquantaine d'officiers sont accusés d'avoir fomenté un complot pour renverser le gouvernement au pouvoir depuis 2002

grand pas pour se débarrasser d'un régime semi-militaire sous lequel les coups d'Etat n'ont jamais été traités comme des crimes », écrit Yasmin Congar, rédactrice en chef adjointe de *Taraf*. Le chef d'état-major, le général Ilker Basbug, a catégoriquement réfuté les accusations. Une pleine valise de documents compromettants est pourtant parvenue à la rédaction de *Taraf*, attestant de l'existence d'un tel complot. Mais pour l'armée il ne s'agissait que d'un scénario concocté pour un exercice.

Ces arrestations sans précédent constituent une nouvelle escalade dans la guerre pour le pouvoir que se livrent, depuis 2002, le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) issu de la mouvance islamiste, et l'omnipotente institution militaire, qui se considère comme la gardienne des institutions nées de la junte au début des années 1980. Avec l'élection du gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan, le pouvoir des militaires s'est érodé, sous l'effet des réformes engagées dans le cadre des négociations avec l'Union européenne. « C'est aujourd'hui un moment crucial du processus de dé militarisation du régime et de la société turque, estime le politologue Ali Bayramoglu. Mais le système de tutelle militaire est très profond. C'est une histoire de cent cinquante ans. Cela demande un parcours long et conflictuel. Il y aura encore des résistances mais c'est irréversible. »

Jeudi matin, le premier ministre, M. Erdogan, le président de la République, Abdullah Gül, et le général Basbug tenaient une réunion pour tenter de montrer un semblant d'unité face à cette nouvelle crise. La rumeur d'une démission de l'état-major s'est propagée, mercredi. Le chef des armées, dont

le mandat se termine en août, est sous la pression des faucons qui le poussent à une réaction forte contre le pouvoir civil.

Quatre gouvernements ont déjà été renversés par la force depuis 1960. Mais, depuis 2002, l'intrusion des militaires dans le jeu politique a pris des formes moins directes. Les généraux ont d'abord boycotté les réceptions officielles, pour protester contre la présence des femmes des responsables de l'AKP, vêtues d'un foulard islamique.

Le lobby militaire a ensuite organisé de grandes manifestations « laïques » en 2007, contre la candidature d'Abdullah Gül à la présidence de la République... Sans succès. C'est enfin une action judiciaire menée par le procureur de la Cour de cassation qui, en 2008, a failli conduire à la dissolution du parti au pouvoir pour « activités antilaïques ». Une procédure qui pourrait être de nouveau à l'ordre du jour, comme l'a laissé entendre le procureur de la Cour de cassation, Abdurrahman Yalçinkaya. A un an des prochaines législatives, une telle manœuvre de la part des militaires et de leurs alliés, nombreux au sein de l'appareil judiciaire, risquerait de provoquer des élections anticipées et une nouvelle victoire écrasante de l'AKP, selon Ali Bayramoglu.

Ces menaces répétées contre les hommes d'Erdogan ont renforcé les antagonismes. Menacé, l'AKP s'est replié sur ces certitudes, sans pour autant entreprendre les réformes nécessaires à la démocratisation du pays, comme la refonte de la Constitution, attendue de longue date par l'Union européenne mais contestée par l'armée et par l'opposition. Solidement installé

L'AKP en ligne de mire

Juillet 2008 Vingt arrestations, dont celles de deux ex-généraux, pour « projets de coup d'Etat ».

Octobre Quatre-vingt-six membres présumés du « réseau Erge- nekön » jugés devant un tribunal spécial. Ils sont accusés d'avoir voulu renverser le gouvernement dirigé par le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP).

Janvier 2010 Le journal *Taraf* révèle un plan de l'armée baptisé « Balyoz », destiné à provoquer un coup d'Etat en 2003.

Février Plus de quarante officiers arrêtés, sept sont inculpés pour tentative de coup d'Etat.

au pouvoir, le parti islamo-conservateur est entré dans une phase de revanche politique. Avec le soutien tacite des Etats-Unis, selon l'éditorialiste et professeur d'économie, Mehmet Altan : « Ils ne pourraient pas agir sans un accord américain, l'armée turque est la deuxième de l'OTAN, rappelle-t-il. L'AKP cherche un compromis avec l'armée, son but n'est pas une révolution démocratique. » Washington a souhaité, mercredi, que les arrestations de militaires turcs s'inscrivent dans un « processus transparent ». ■

Guillaume Perrier

LE FIGARO

28 février 2010

Bachar el-Assad s'affiche aux côtés d'Ahmadinejad et de Nasrallah

En recevant le président iranien et le chef du Hezbollah, le n° 1 syrien veut faire monter les enchères face à Washington.

GEORGES MALBRUNOT

MOYEN-ORIENT Simple repositionnement tactique ? Ou réelle volonté de se réaligner sur ses vrais alliés ? En l'espace de vingt-quatre heures, le président syrien Bachar el-Assad, avec lequel l'Occident s'est rapproché, a rencontré dans son palais de Damas tout ce que le Moyen-Orient compte comme forces opposées à la paix et à la stabilité.

Jeudi, il a reçu à dîner les deux fers de lance de la lutte armée contre Israël : le président iranien, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, et le chef du Hezbollah libanais, Cheikh Hassan Nasrallah. Le même jour, il a abrité, toujours au palais présidentiel, une rencontre entre Ahmadinejad et les chefs palestiniens du Front du refus à la paix avec l'État hébreu, emmenés par le leader du Hamas, Khaled Meshaal, et l'inoxydable Ahmed Djabril du Front populaire de libération de la Palestine-Commandement général.

Cheikh Nasrallah - dont les déplacements sont rarissimes - s'est entretenu avec Ahmadinejad « des menaces sionistes contre le Liban et la Syrie », a indiqué al-Manar, la télévision du Hezbollah. Israël et Damas se sont récemment menacés de représailles en cas de conflit, tandis que Nasrallah a prévenu que son organisation bombarderait les infrastructures de l'État hébreu, si Tshalh attaquait le Liban.

Devant les leaders palestiniens, Ahmadinejad a juré que « l'Iran se plaçait près de (leur) peuple, afin qu'il libère ses terres occupées ». Téhéran est devenu un important soutien logistique et financier du Hamas.

Ces démonstrations d'unité tombent mal pour les États-Unis

Ces démonstrations d'unité tombent mal pour les États-Unis, déjà sceptiques face aux intentions syriennes. La veille,



Bachar el-Assad (au centre) a reçu, jeudi soir à Damas, Hassan Nasrallah (à gauche) et Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, deux tenants de la lutte armée contre Israël. AFP

la secrétaire d'État, Hillary Clinton, avait demandé à Damas de « commencer à s'éloigner de l'Iran » priant également la Syrie de cesser d'armer le Hezbollah, de coopérer davantage dans le dossier irakien et de reprendre les pourparlers de paix avec Israël. Mais les dirigeants syriens ne détestent rien tant que les leçons. Bachar el-Assad l'a clairement signifié en usant d'une ironie cinglante à l'égard de Washington : « Nous nous sommes rencontrés (avec Ahmadinejad, NDLR) pour signer un accord de séparation entre la Syrie et l'Iran, mais en raison d'une mauvaise traduction, nous avons signé un accord sur la suppression des visas », s'est moqué le raïs syrien. « Je suis étonné, a-t-il ajouté, qu'ils (les États-Unis) demandent aux pays de s'éloigner les uns des autres, alors qu'ils évoquent la stabilité et la paix au Proche-Orient, et tous les autres beaux principes. »

La réponse de Washington, qui vient de nommer un ambassadeur à Damas, ne s'est pas fait attendre. La Syrie doit changer d'attitude face à son allié iranien sous peine de se marginaliser, a souligné le porte-parole de la diplomatie américaine. « Dans son évaluation des

intérêts à long terme de la Syrie, le président Assad n'a qu'à regarder autour de lui pour reconnaître que la Syrie est de plus en plus marginale », a constaté Philip Crowley.

Entretenir l'ambiguïté

Que cherche Damas ? D'abord faire monter les enchères dans son rapprochement avec Washington. « La Syrie n'est pas opposée à l'exigence américaine de se repositionner », explique un expert français. « Mais à partir du moment où on leur demande explicitement, ils ne font pas, ou pas tout de suite, on connaît cette tactique syrienne qui consiste à entretenir l'ambiguïté pour se rendre incontournable. » Second objectif syrien : apaiser ses alliés iraniens et du Hezbollah, inquiets du rapprochement entre Damas et l'Occident. « Et puis n'oublions pas que le cadre du Hamas qui a été liquidé à Dubai venait de Damas, ajoute l'expert, le Hezbollah et l'Iran se méfient des infiltrations à partir de la Syrie. » ■

Arrestations en Turquie - La division

Le Devoir/Montréal
Serge Truffaut

Il y a deux jours, la police turque a menotté une quarantaine de généraux et amiraux. Hier, elle a poursuivi son opération de nettoyage en emprisonnant près d'une dizaine de hauts gradés, dont certains étaient dans l'armée active. Cette ribambelle d'inculpations est en fait une addition aux deux cents personnes, dont des journalistes ou de simples opposants au Parti justice et paix (AKP) actuellement au pouvoir, écrouées en 2007. Toutes sont accusées d'avoir concocté un coup d'État qui aurait permis aux gradés de reprendre le pouvoir.

Les coups de filet de ces derniers jours confirment, comme si besoin était, qu'entre le gouvernement islamiste et l'armée la guerre est de moins en moins sourde. D'autant qu'au cours des récents mois, le premier ministre Recep Erdogan s'est employé à réduire l'influence d'un corps militaire si puissant et si riche qu'il est un État dans l'État, ne ratant pas une occasion de marteler

qu'il est, davantage que le gouvernement, le gardien sourcilieux de la laïcité de la Turquie.

Il y a peu, Erdogan et son ministre de la Justice ont fait un geste propre à aiguïser la colère des gradés, la susceptibilité des soldats. De quoi s'agit-il? Ils ont décrété que les tribunaux civils pouvaient désormais juger l'artilleur, l'aviateur, l'adjutant. Auparavant, histoire d'obtenir son billet d'entrée dans l'Union européenne (UE), Erdogan et ses alliés ont pris des décisions, arrêté des politiques, qui ont eu pour conséquence une réduction du pré carré sur lequel les généraux régnaient sans partage. Quoi d'autre? Le premier ministre s'est promis d'amender la Constitution du pays que les officiers avaient composé il y a 30 ans de cela avec la subjectivité ou les privilèges que cela suppose.

On fait l'impasse sur d'autres mesures pour mieux avancer que l'inclination de l'armée pour le renversement de l'AKP était évidemment plus marquée ces derniers mois qu'en 2002 lorsque



cette formation politique a été portée au pouvoir. Toujours est-il, selon la version des procureurs, que des amiraux et leurs collègues souhaitaient renvoyer l'AKP dans les câbles en provoquant un conflit avec la Grèce voisine et honnie, tout en favorisant une escalade de la guerre contre les indépendantistes kurdes.

Bien évidemment, cette histoire est empreinte de flou. Les partis d'opposition n'ont pas manqué de souligner que le ministère de la Justice estime les personnes emprisonnées ces jours-ci

coupables d'un complot dessiné en 2003. Et alors? Il y a trois ans, 200 individus, on le répète, ont été regroupés derrière les barreaux pour avoir composé le menu du coup d'État. Plusieurs d'entre eux n'ont toujours pas été jugés. Certains d'entre eux étaient de simples adversaires politiques d'Erdogan. Bien des élus ont donc beau jeu de remettre en cause la crédibilité du procureur général de la Turquie. Et comme ils se font entendre au sein de la population, il y a fort à parier que les divisions au sein de celle-ci vont aller s'exacerbant.



IRAK: NOUVELLES VIOLENCES ÉLECTORALES AU KURDISTAN

ERBIL (Irak), 27 fév 2010 (AFP)

UN MILITANT de la liste dissidente Goran (Changement) a été blessé par des partisans du président irakien Jalal Talabani samedi à Erbil, au Kurdistan irakien, a affirmé à l'AFP le porte-parole des opposants Jafaar Khayat.

"Une quinzaine d'hommes en arme à bord de deux véhicules ont pénétré vers 13H00 (10H00 GMT) dans notre local au centre-ville, ils ont enlevé toutes les affiches de nos candidats pour les remplacer par des posters du président Talabani et de son second Kousrat Rassoul", a-t-il dit.

"Ils ont frappé un de nos gardes avec la crosse de leur fusil et après une demi-heure quand la police est arrivée, ils sont partis", a-t-il ajouté.

Le chef de la police d'Erbil, la plus importante ville du Kurdistan irakien, le général Abdel Khakeq Talaat, a confirmé l'incident. "Nous avons pu identifier les personnes et l'ordre a été donné de les arrêter car nous ne permettrons à personne de déstabiliser la situation", a-t-il souligné.

De nombreux incidents émaillent la campagne électorale du 7 mars au

Kurdistan. Ainsi les réunions électorales nocturnes ont été interdites dans la province de Souleimaniyeh à cause de violences sans précédent entre partis en lice pour les législatives du 7 mars.

Depuis son lancement, la campagne a pris un tour extrêmement violent dans cette province, fief de M. Talabani, chef de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK).

La semaine dernière, l'UPK a accusé des partisans de Goran d'avoir jeté des pierres sur le convoi de deux de ses dirigeants et par ailleurs, trois partisans de Goran avaient été blessés par des tirs lors d'une réunion électorale perturbée par des membres des forces de sécurité de l'UPK, selon Goran.

Pour la première fois en 30 ans de règne sur le Kurdistan, le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK), dirigé par le président de la région autonome Massoud Barzani, et l'UPK, font face à une liste dissidente, Goran, aux élections.

En juillet, Goran a créé la surprise en se hissant à la deuxième place lors des élections au Parlement du Kurdistan irakien, grâce à une campagne axée sur la lutte contre la corruption et l'hégémonie des deux partis historiques.



IRAK: LE SORT DE LA FORCE MIXTE ÉTABLIE PAR LES USA TRANCHÉ APRÈS LE SCRUTIN

KIRKOUK (Irak), 28 février 2010 - (AFP)

LE SORT d'une force commune arabo-kurde mise en place il y a deux mois par les Etats-Unis dans le nord de l'Irak pour éviter une guerre ethnique sera tranchée juste après les élections de dimanche.

Des officiers américains et irakiens à Kirkouk (240 km au nord de Bagdad), ont indiqué qu'une réunion de haut niveau se tiendra le 9 mars à Bagdad, soit deux jours après le scrutin, pour déterminer si elle doit poursuivre sa tâche et définir sa taille.

L'armée américaine et les responsables irakiens estiment que les tensions entre Arabes et Kurdes représentent la principale menace pour la stabilité du pays qui se relève d'un conflit confessionnel entre chiïtes et sunnites.

Une remise en cause de cette force de 1.350 hommes chargée d'empêcher tout dérapage dans les zones disputées, pourrait avoir de graves effets sur les efforts de réconciliation.

Policiers et militaires irakiens, soldats américains et pechmergas (combattants kurdes) ont commencé leurs patrouilles il y a deux semaines dans la riche province pétrolière de Kirkouk, en dépit des objections des Arabes et des Turcomans pour qui l'inclusion d'une force paramilitaire kurde remet en cause la souveraineté de l'Etat.

"La réunion du 9 mars donnera une indication sur la longévité de cette force et sur sa taille. Elle peut décider d'accroître, de maintenir à son niveau actuel ou de démanteler cette force", affirme le lieutenant-colonel américain Daniel Cormier, commandant du 1er bataillon, du 30ème régiment d'infanterie, basé près de Kirkouk.

Le général Torhan Youssef, chef de la police de Kirkouk, a confirmé la tenue de cette réunion décisive à Bagdad.

Entraînée par les Américains, cette force, constituée en janvier à l'issue de

mois de négociations au plus haut niveau, a établi une série de points de contrôle mixtes à Kirkouk et dans les provinces de Diyala et Ninive, où se trouvent des territoires disputés entre Arabes et Kurdes.

Le gouvernement autonome du Kurdistan a l'ambition d'annexer le gouvernorat de Kirkouk et des parties de Ninive et de Diyala. En revanche, le gouvernement central à Bagdad n'a pas l'intention de laisser les Kurdes aller au delà des provinces d'Erbil, Souleimaniyeh et Dohouk.

Les trois provinces formant le Kurdistan représentent 40.000 km² mais les forces kurdes, dans le sillage de l'invasion conduite par les Etats-Unis en 2003, ont étendu leur présence sur 75.000 km² en prenant le contrôle d'une partie des provinces de Kirkouk, Ninive et Diyala.

Le Premier ministre irakien Nouri al-Maliki a poussé ces deux dernières années pour un déploiement de l'armée dans des zones disputées, face aux pechmergas kurdes, le long d'une "ligne de friction" de 650 km allant de la frontière iranienne à la frontière syrienne.

L'armée américaine estime que le manque de coopération entre pechmergas et forces gouvernementales irakiennes a été exploité par les insurgés pour mener des attaques contre des minorités dans les zones disputées.

Le commandant des forces américaines en Irak, le général Ray Odierno, a déjà averti en janvier que le problème de Kirkouk doit être pris à bras le corps par le prochain gouvernement.

La question est d'autant plus sensible que les troupes de combat américaines s'appêtent à quitter l'Irak en août, ce qui rendra difficile l'implication militaire américaine sur la ligne de front.

A Kirkouk, des officiers ont affirmé à l'AFP qu'ils seraient déçus si cette force était abandonnée. Mais pour le lieutenant-colonel Cormier, la décision n'est pas entre les mains des militaires.

"Nous suivons les ordres et nous faisons ce qu'ils nous disent de faire (...) C'est une décision politique car du point de vue de la sécurité, la force est très bonne".



IRAK: LES KURDES COMPTENT SUR UN NEUROLOGUE AMÉRICAIN POUR CONQUÉRIR KIRKOUK

KIRKOUK (Irak), 28 février 2010 (AFP) -

LES KURDES misent sur un neurologue américain d'origine irakienne pour remporter les législatives du 7 mars à Kirkouk, étape obligée pour réaliser leur rêve d'annexer cette riche province pétrolière multiethnique.

Rentré il y a seulement deux mois de Washington en y laissant sa femme et ses trois enfants, Nejm Eddine Karim, 61 ans, s'est installé dans la résidence que possède le président Jalal Talabani dans la ville et en a fait son quartier général.

Tête de liste de l'Alliance kurde, formée essentiellement des deux partis traditionnels, le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PKK de Massoud Barzani) et l'Union Patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK de M. Talabani), il fait campagne pour faire rentrer cette province dans le giron du Kurdistan.

"Je propose qu'un Arabe devienne vice-président du Kurdistan et qu'un Turcoman soit nommé vice-Premier ministre dans le cadre d'un rattachement au Kurdistan", lance ce médecin personnel de Jalal Talabani qui, après avoir obtenu son diplôme à l'université de Mossoul, a émigré aux Etats-Unis en 1975.

Selon lui, "les Arabes et Turcomans connaîtront une situation mille fois meilleure qu'aujourd'hui car leur voix se fera entendre dans les instances dirigeantes du Kurdistan".

La décision d'aller chercher un candidat qui a quitté le pays il y a 35 ans laisse perplexes, même parmi les membres de sa communauté. "C'est un fidèle allié

de Talabani, il a un carnet d'adresses aux Etats-Unis et il fait l'objet d'un consensus entre les deux grands partis kurdes qui pensent le propulser à d'importants postes politiques" à l'avenir, affirme Khabab Abdallah, un analyste politique au Kurdistan.

Pour Rafea al-Marsoumi, un autre analyste basé à Kirkouk, ce médecin "est proche des Américains, c'est un homme politique de poids pour l'UPK qui traverse une crise interne mais je pense qu'il n'a pas de base populaire".

Si son discours est favorablement accueilli par les siens, il n'a pas d'écho dans les autres communautés qui se disputent le pouvoir. Le nombre d'habitants est passé de 850.000 à 1,4 million en sept ans avec l'arrivée de 92.000 familles kurdes qui affirment avoir été chassées par la politique d'arabisation menée par Saddam Hussein.

Cette arrivée est ressentie comme une invasion par les Turcomans, qui se considèrent comme ses habitants historiques, les Assyro-chaldéens (chrétiens) ou les Arabes, qui veulent que leur province reste attachée à l'Etat central tout en obtenant un statut d'autonomie.

Alors que 13 sièges sont en lice dans cette province et que les Kurdes espèrent obtenir la majorité, les détracteurs du médecin à Kirkouk estiment qu'il ignore la réalité chaotique du pays.

"Il aurait pu mettre ses compétences médicales au service de ses compatriotes au lieu de débarquer avec un projet de division", ironise Omar Khalaf al-Joubouri, candidat du Bloc irakien (laïc) de l'ancien Premier ministre Iyad Allaoui.

"Il agit de manière partisane", assure Ammar Kahia de liste des chiïtes conservateurs (Alliance Nationale irakienne) alors que pour l'Alliance de l'Etat de droit du Premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki, Kirkouk doit rester "une province irakienne".

"Personne ne doit nous imposer son programme. Kirkouk ne doit pas être annexée au Kurdistan et elle restera une province irakienne", assure cheikh Khaïr Nazem al-Assi.

UN JOURNALISTE KURDE RISQUE 525 ANS DE PRISON EN TURQUIE

VIENNE, 22 février 2010 - (AFP)

L'INSTITUT international de presse (IPI) a fait part lundi de son inquiétude sur le sort d'un journaliste kurde menacé de 525 ans de prison lors d'un procès en Turquie.

Vedat Kursun, ancien responsable du quotidien kurde Azadiya Welat, est poursuivi pour avoir "glorifié des crimes et des criminels" et "aidé le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) à faire de la propagande" dans ses articles.

Entendu vendredi après 13 mois de détention provisoire, M. Kursun attend en

prison le délibéré du tribunal de Diyarbakir. Le parquet a réclamé 525 années de prison.

Le successeur de M. Kursun à la tête de la rédaction d'Azadiya Welat a été condamné le 12 février à 21 ans de prison pour les mêmes motifs, ajoute l'IPI.

"Ce n'est pas la première fois que les autorités utilisent des lois antiterroristes pour étouffer la liberté de la presse et la liberté d'expression en Turquie", a déploré David Dudge, directeur de l'IPI, cité dans un communiqué.

L'organisation basée à Vienne avait épinglé la Turquie dans son dernier rapport annuel.

EuroNews

26 février 2010

Des cellules du PKK démantelées en Italie et en France

IL S'AGIT de cellules de recrutement et d'entraînement. Au total 22 personnes, 11 dans chaque pays ont été interpellées. Ces arrestations s'inscrivent dans le cadre d'une enquête antiterroriste ouverte fin 2008. Elle visait notamment le recrutement de jeunes gens pour l'organisation séparatiste kurde du parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan.

"Nous avons repéré qu'une organisation internationale,

dont les quartiers généraux sont implantés en Italie et en France, était impliquée dans le recrutement et l'entraînement de jeunes-hommes kurdes, mais aussi de filles, pour la plupart des adolescents, a expliqué le chef de la police antiterroriste de Venise. Une fois formés, ces jeunes étaient destinés à aller grossir les rangs de l'organisation terroriste PKK".

Des membres du PKK en France et en Italie seraient en contact avec d'autres membres de l'organisation dans plusieurs pays d'Europe. L'enquête a d'ailleurs été menée avec le concours des polices antiterroristes allemandes, belges et néerlandaises.

Le PKK livre une lutte armée depuis plus de 25 ans contre le pouvoir central turc. Il est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne.

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27 Février 2010

Les Kurdes manifestent à Montpellier et Marseille contre l'arrestation des membres du PKK

Bruno CAMPELS

Les Kurdes de France n'ont pas tardé à réagir après le coup de filet lancé jeudi par la SDAT (sous-direction anti-terroriste) qui a procédé à l'arrestation de onze personnes soupçonnées d'avoir formé des militants du PKK, parti séparatiste, sur le Larzac. A Marseille, plusieurs centaines d'entre eux ont défilé avec des représentants de la ligue des droits de l'Homme, tout comme à Montpellier où quelque 200 Kurdes ont rallié hier midi la place de la Comédie pour témoigner de leur colère et demander la libération des interpellés.

Deux Montpelliérains font partie des mis en cause, et notamment Ali Dogan, 50 ans, chef local de la communauté, propriétaire de la ferme de Nant, sur le Larzac, où la SDAT soupçonne que des dizaines de Kurdes ont été conditionnées à la cause du PKK avant d'être envoyées au Kurdistan pour combattre (1).

« C'est absurde ! On n'a jamais rien



caché dans cette ferme du Larzac, les gendarmes viennent y boire le café ! On ne forme personne à la guérilla, on ne joue pas à la guerre, c'est délirant ! On discute de notre histoire, de notre pays, pour savoir qui on est, d'où on vient, qu'est-ce qui se passe là-bas parce qu'on est en situation de guerre, réagit Deniz. Mais à Montpellier on fait pareil en louant des salles et tout le monde le sait. »

Défilant avec des portraits d'Ocalan, fondateur du PKK, les Kurdes ont crié à

l'envie : « Nous ne sommes pas des terroristes », tout en essayant de sensibiliser les badauds à leur cause. « Moi, sur le Larzac, j'y ai appris les danses folkloriques », s'emporte Martine, amie d'Ali Dogan, qui voit dans ce coup de filet une manœuvre de la France pour séduire la Turquie dans le cadre d'échanges commerciaux. Hier, le quinquagénaire, dont la garde à vue devrait se poursuivre jusqu'à lundi, devait être transféré à Paris.

StarTribune

February 27, 2010

Renewed tension looms in Turkey after military arrests

By Alexandra Hudson

ISTANBUL (Reuters) – A retired Turkish general charged over a plot to unseat the government said "the struggle has now started," after high-profile arrests risked aggravating tension between the ruling AK Party and the armed forces.

Two former generals became the most senior figures late on Friday to be charged over an alleged 2003 plot, state-run news agency Anatolian reported, their arrests closing a week of high political drama that has stunned Turkey and shaken markets.

Hours earlier, police had conducted a second wave of detentions of military officers, widening an unprecedented investigation that has seen some 33 officers arrested and prompted an emergency summit among Turkey's leaders.

President Abdullah Gul, a former member of the AK Party which has its roots in political Islam, pledged "Turkey will overcome all of its problems." But, in an interview published in the *Hurriyet* newspaper on Saturday, he also warned those who act outside the law within Turkish institutions would be purged.

Retired general Cetin Dogan was the former head of Turkey's First Army and as such had occupied a position often seen as a step toward becoming head of the Turkish Armed Forces.

"When Dogan learned he was to be charged he said 'the struggle has now started'," his lawyer Celal Ulgun said on Saturday, according to Anatolian.

Ulgun added there was no concrete evidence and prosecutors went to great lengths to have him charged.

The other high-ranking official to be charged was Lieutenant-General Engin Alan, a former special forces commander who led a successful operation to capture



Reuters – (From L-R) Turkey's parliamentary speaker Mehmet Ali Sahin, President Abdullah Gul, Prime Minister

the country's most wanted man, Kurdish separatist leader Abdullah Ocalan, and bringing him back to Turkey in 1999.

Turkish newspapers on Saturday printed pictures of an elderly-looking Dogan, dressed in a dark coat and cravat and walking with a slight stoop, as police took him for questioning.

Turkish markets, weakened by five days of tension since a first wave of detentions on Monday, had begun to recover on Friday on hopes that the likelihood of a confrontation between the government, in power since 2002, and the secularist military was receding with the release of three other retired generals.

But reports police had detained 17 more serving military officers and one retired officer in a second wave of detentions sparked renewed selling, and fresh concern over a standoff.

Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan has warned the military they are not above the law and accused the media of fanning alarm among investors.

Erdogan's party, which denies accusations it has a secret Islamist agenda, is

banking on an economic recovery to win over voters ahead of an election due early next year.

ON EDGE, NOT PANICKY

The military has overthrown four governments in Turkey in the past 50 years and with some of its officers still in detention, and more than 30 charged, markets remain nervous.

Investigations of the three released commanders continue.

"Dogan, the former commander of the First Army where the alleged 2003 coup plan is said to have been drafted, was a key player in the campaign that in 1997 ousted from power the Islamist Welfare Party led by Erdogan's mentor, Necmettin Erbakan," said Wolfgang Piccoli, Eurasia Group analyst.

The Turkish military forced Erbakan's government from power with a series of threats and demands. Erdogan was the Welfare Party's vocal mayor of Istanbul at the time. Gul meanwhile, was a prominent parliamentarian in the party.

Despite Turkey's history of military coups and interventions in politics, most people believe the generals would not dare challenge the AK Party, which has a huge parliamentary majority, and destroy newfound confidence in democracy.

Turkey is a NATO member and EU membership candidate, and its Western allies want to see it mature as a democracy.

Analysts fear politics appear increasingly polarized between the secular, conservative nationalists who represent the old guard and the AK Party, which has won over investors with market-friendly reforms despite its Islamist background.

While markets have been edgy, investors have not hit any panic buttons since trouble first erupted last week between the government and the judiciary, ano-

Telegraph

February 28, 2010

Turkey's AKP to change constitution

Turkey's Islamist-rooted ruling party will present proposed reforms of the constitution to parliament by the end of March, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the prime minister, said on Sunday, amid an unprecedented crisis with the powerful military.

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) says its constitutional reform package is needed to curb the power of judges and prosecutors, and has threatened to call

a referendum on reforms.

The proposals come in the midst of renewed tensions with the military following the arrests of more than 30 officers, including two retired generals, charged with plotting in 2003 to overthrow the government.

"We are not talking about an A to Z change in the constitution," Mr Erdogan said, adding that the changes would focus on areas such as the judiciary and articles relating to political parties.

Turkey adopted a military-

drafted constitution in 1982, two years after a coup by the armed forces. It enables Turkey's Constitutional Court to ban parties which it deems a threat to Turkey's secular identity.

The AKP narrowly survived an attempt to ban it in 2008, while the constitution was used most recently to shut down the only pro-Kurdish party in parliament last December.

Previous government attempts to change Turkey's constitution, a key requirement



for the country's EU membership bid, have been blocked by the opposition, which suspects Mr Erdogan of seeking to impose Islamist rule by stealth and overturn the strict separation of religion and state.



Iraqi Crisis Report: Kurdish War of Words

Political tensions escalate sharply as parliament and police investigate series of attacks on opposition figures.

By Shorish Khalid in Sulaimaniyah (ICR No. 321, 28-Jan-10)

Attacks on members of Iraqi Kurdistan's main opposition group have raised fears in Sulaimaniyah that political tensions could spill over into further violence ahead of March elections.

The Change Movement claims that at least seven attacks on its members last month, including one fatal shooting and the torching of a lawmaker's office, were "organised political crimes", according to a statement released by the party.

"The incidents were planned against our members and happened in the places where Change list gained many votes in the July 25 [2009] election," the Change statement continued.

However, its main rival, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, PUK, has denied any involvement in the crimes, countering that Change has exaggerated the attacks for political gain ahead of the elections.

"The Change movement has sought to show the incidents as the consequence of political conflicts. Change wants to make the situation bigger and shows Sulaimaniyah as an unstable city," said Arif Rushdi, a member of the PUK leadership committee.

"In fact, the incidents were not related to political conflict. They were all personal."

According to Change, the first shooting occurred on December 4, when party activist Sardar Qadir was shot and wounded in his sister-in-law's living room in downtown Sulaimaniyah.

On December 12, Change member Rauf Zarayani was killed by gunmen in front of his home in the town of New Halabja.

That same day, bullets were fired into the home of Change member Bakhtyar Shekh Muhammad, who lives behind Sulaimaniyah's main police station.

A week later, Change members Yasin Abdullah and Burhan Hama Ramazan were shot in Shanadar village outside of Sulaimaniyah.

Then on December 30, the office of Change lawmaker Seewail Osman Ahmed was burned in the town of Koya.

"I just want to know why only our members were shot and threatened?" said Safin Mala Qara, a senior Change official. "Most of the people in Sulaimaniyah are frightened and alarmed about the destabilised situation in their city. These incidents have put the city on the verge of civil war."

Salahadin Babekir, spokesman for the opposition Kurdistan Islamic Union, KIU, told IWPR that although members of his party had been threatened in the past, "since the tension between PUK and Change, the threats [against KIU] have decreased considerably".

He said that the public was concerned about growing hostilities between Change and PUK.

"The situation between Change and PUK makes people very upset," he said. "If they continue like this there will likely be a civil war in the city."

Iraqi Kurdistan's deputy interior minister Jalal Karim said that locals should not assume the rash of violence will continue into the election period as the Kurdistan Regional Government, KRG, has launched a plan to provide safety during the vote.

But others warn that a period of calm that followed a January 10 call from Kurdistan region president Masoud Barzani to end the political tension may be short-lived.

"The political situation in Sulaimaniyah is almost ready to explode. The two

sides (Change and PUK) are in a deep conflict over the attacks and I don't think this calm is going to last," said Yusuf Muhammad, a political science lecturer at the Sulaimaniyah University.

"As the election gets closer, the tension heats up. Neither side nor the government can guarantee that there won't be violence," Muhammad added.

Najmaddin Qadir, head of the Sulaimaniyah police directorate, said investigations into the incidents had not produced any arrests or identified any suspects.

A KRG parliamentary committee assigned to investigate the attacks has submitted a preliminary report claiming the security forces were negligent in investigating the attacks, according to Samir Saleem, a KIU legislator who serves on the committee.

He said that security forces told committee members that the attacks were personal, without providing any evidence.

Saleem said that the five-member committee, which includes two PUK and two Change members of parliament, was itself trying to determine whether the incidents were political or personal.

However, Saleem said he felt it was unlikely that any action would be taken in the run-up to the elections. "If it turns out that a political party was behind these acts, people won't vote for that party," he added.

"The investigations are not complete and it is not yet clear whether [the attacks] were personal or political," Sulaimaniyah police chief Najmaddin Qadir said. "We are waiting for the results of the investigations."

But Qadir Hama Jan, director general of security in Iraqi Kurdistan and senior to Qadir, told IWPR that preliminary police investigations indicated that the crimes were personal attacks.

"The incidents are not as you see in the media. The attacks in Sulaimaniyah were personal problems. The Change Movement has exaggerated the issue for their political purposes," said Jan, who is also a senior member of the PUK.

"We have not arrested anyone, but we are not careless about the security of our people."

Change was established last year by Nawshirwan Mustafa, a PUK co-founder who resigned from the party following a power struggle with PUK leader and Iraqi president Jalal Talabani. Mustafa has claimed the party was plagued by corruption and unwilling to enact reform.

Competition between the PUK and Change has been intense since the newly-founded movement won 25 seats in the 111-member Kurdish parliament and swept Sulaimaniyah province in the July 2009 Kurdish parliament elections. While tensions between the two groups ran high, that election was relatively peaceful.

Mustafa owns Wusha, a powerful and influential media company that includes local and satellite TV stations, a newspaper, a website and radio station which are enormously popular among Kurds, especially in Sulaimaniyah.

The recent attacks on Change members were widely covered by these outlets and sparked a fierce media campaign between Change and PUK that dredged up the PUK's history.

Talabani accused Mustafa, his former deputy, of betraying the Kurds by ignoring Baathist threats to use chemical weapons on Halabja in 1988. He also held him responsible for the bloody civil war between the PUK and Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party in the 1990s.

Mustafa denied the allegations and launched an attack on Talabani, blaming him for not standing up for Kurdish interests.

On the Change website, Mustafa recently claimed that Talabani's description of him as "anti-Kurdish" in an October conference was "a green light for attacks".

As the media battle grew increasingly personal, Barzani and other party leaders stepped in to mediate between Change and PUK.

The parties agreed to halt their feuding, but some worry that the tense truce will not hold as elections season approaches.

"I do worry that there will be bloodshed between the Change movement and PUK," said Hoshiyar Karim Ahmed, a 70-year-old shopkeeper in Sulaimaniyah. "I hope things will be sorted out."

Some senior Change leaders feel the party is treated unfairly in Sulaimaniyah

by PUK officials. For instance, most members of Sulaimaniyah's security forces are PUK loyalists.

"We don't feel safe because the security forces and police are under the control of the political parties. We don't have a military and [security] forces. We are a civil movement. We want the government to protect all parties without exception," former Kurdish Peshmerga commander and senior Change leader Mam Rostam told IWPR this week.

"We have not exaggerated [the incidents] ... our activists have been killed, abducted, beaten and fired [from their jobs] and they want us to be silent? One of our activists killed and it is exaggeration to say he was killed?"

Some like Qadir, who was shot twice in the legs while drinking tea with his extended family on Iskan Street in Sulaimaniyah, are left wondering why they were targeted and by whom.

"I don't have any problems with the police, but I am concerned that they say it was personal assault. I don't think so," he said. "I know myself better than anyone and I don't have any problems with anyone."

Shorsh Khalid is an IWPR-trained journalist in Sulaimaniyah. Hemin H Lihony is IWPR's local editor in Sulaimaniyah. IWPR Iraq editor Mariwan Hama-Saeed also contributed to this report.



institute for war & peace reporting

25 February 2010

SYRIA BRIEFING

Kurdish Autonomy Calls Split Dissidents

Opposition wants to retain unitary Syrian state, rejects self-rule for Kurds.

By an IWPR-trained reporter (SB No. 94, 25-Feb-2010)

A rift has emerged between Kurdish opposition groups and other Syrian dissidents over calls for Syrian Kurds to be granted autonomy.

Against the backdrop of Kurdish minorities in neighbouring Turkey and Iraq gaining more rights, the Syrian Yakiti party, one of the main Kurdish opposition groups, declared that the solution to the Kurdish issue would be to give Kurds the right to self-government.

The statement, which came during the party's convention last December, sparked a wave of criticism from other elements of the Syrian opposition.

Pro-democracy dissidents, who in 2005 formed a united opposition front against the Syrian regime known as the Damascus Declaration for National Democratic Change, rejected these demands as "untimely" and "separatist".

The Damascus Declaration is an umbrella gathering of secular, Kurdish, and Islamist dissidents and other minority groups.

Kurds constitute around ten per cent of the 22 million Syrian population and live mostly in the agricultural areas of the north and northeast. International and local organisations say they suffer political and cultural discrimination.

The Kurdish language is not recognised and is banned from being taught in schools. Many Kurds are denied Syrian nationality even if they were born and live in the country.

New-York based Human Rights Watch said in a report in November, "Syria has been especially hostile to any Kurdish political or cultural expression."

The report said that repression greatly intensified following large-scale Kurdish demonstrations in March 2004.

Fouad Aliko, the Yakiti party's secretary general, said Syrian Kurds had a legitimate right to govern their own affairs and be granted autonomy as long as this does not harm Syria's security and geographical integrity.

Aliko added that the opening of the Turkish government towards the Kurds and the autonomy of Kurds in Iraq had encouraged Syrian Kurds to hope for a regional solution to the issue.

But neither Aliko nor the Yakiti party have elaborated on the nature of their demands for autonomy.

Following their conference, the Syrian authorities rounded up four leading members of the Kurdish group, Hassan Saleh, Mohamad Mustafa, Maarouf Mala Ahmad and Anwar Naso. They remain behind bars.

The human rights watchdog Amnesty International called for their uncondi-

onal release in a January statement.

"Four Kurdish political activists were detained on December 26 in Syria, and have been held incommunicado since then. They are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment," Amnesty said.

Although Kurdish groups in Syria had been calling for recognition as the country's second largest ethnic group after the Arabs since 1957, it is only lately that Kurdish dissidents have clearly expressed their desire for autonomy.

"The universal declaration of human rights gives Kurds the right to self-determination, like any other ethnic group in the world," said a Kurdish advocate who wished to remain anonymous.

Their demands have clearly irritated other members of the opposition. Hassan Abdel-Azim, leader of the Democratic Arab Socialist Union, said, according to media reports, that the opposition "rejected categorically the use of terms like Syrian Kurdistan, self-rule or any separatist talk".

He said that Syrian opposition groups in general seek solutions to the Kurdish issue "within the limits of the unity of Syrian land and people", adding that they supported granting Kurds equal citizenship and cultural rights.

Many in the opposition believe that the moment is not ripe in Syria for talk of self-rule.

Separatist demands are divisive and weaken the opposition, said Faek al-Mir, a member of the Syrian Democratic Party, an opposition group.

"Syrians today need to be in a state of total unity and solidarity in their struggle to build a free society and democratic state," he said.

The Syrian opposition has been violently crushed by the authorities for decades and hundreds of prisoners of conscience remain in jail for their peaceful opposition to the regime.

Twelve prominent figures from the Damascus Declaration are in prison today, serving sentences of two and a half years.

Another dissident said that there was no point in raising the issue of autonomy while the whole country remained under the tyranny of emergency laws, effective since the Baath party took power in 1963.

In 2005, when the Damascus Declaration voiced its vision for democratic change in Syria, the solutions presented to the Kurdish issue remained vague and contentious, according to observers.

"The rejection by Arab groups of the notion of autonomy results from a misunderstanding of that principle, which had been confused with separatism," Aliko said.

He added that Kurdish dissidents were disappointed with the rest of the opposition, which viewed their demands the same way the government did.

A lawyer and civil rights activist based in Damascus who asked to remain anonymous agrees that Kurds should be allowed to decide their own future.

"Unity cannot be forcefully imposed on people who see themselves as independent. This only complicates the situation," he said.



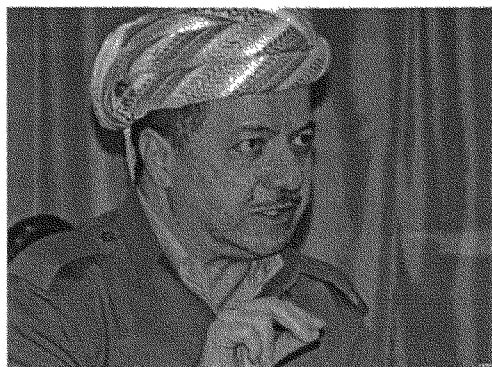
FEBRUARY 28, 2010

COMMENTARY

IRAQ'S KURDISH REGION GEARS UP FOR NATIONAL VOTE

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

By Lara Fatah, Tanya Goudsouzian /www.rferl.org/



Kurdish region President Mas'ud Barzani, who is also leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party.

A horse's head over a rising sun serves as the symbol of the Kurdistan Alliance, a union of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The alliance will be making its bid, alongside three other Iraqi Kurdish lists, for seats in the Iraqi parliament in the national elections set for March 7.

As campaigning heats up, people on the street are joking that the emblematic horse originally had a body, but by the time these two parties were through with it, only the head was left.

While the punch line invariably generates hearty laughter, it is a tragic allusion to the widespread perception that in the seven years since the U.S.-led war ousted the dictatorial Saddam Hussein regime, Iraqi Kurdistan's two principal parties -- which valiantly led Iraqi Kurds through decades of resistance and have dominated the Iraqi Kurdish political scene since the 1991 uprising -- have finally succumbed to the myriad problems associated with governance. These range from exuberance to do in a few years what most societies accomplish over decades to inevitable nepotism that favors on group over another and often leads to corruption.

Ordinary citizens are asking questions of the leaders of both parties. "Since 2003, both Kurdish parties have received \$35 million every month from the Iraqi budget," one resident of Sulaymaniyah said recently. "Where has that money gone? There is nothing to show for it."

The rise of the Goran (Change) party, a PUK splinter group, in last summer's regional elections marked the frustration felt across the board by Iraqi Kurds. Even those who claimed that they voted for either the PUK or KDP -- out of loyalty or habit -- confessed at the time that they admired the new party's refreshing campaign.

The 23.75 percent of votes garnered by Goran ushered two fundamental changes to the Iraqi Kurdish political arena. First, it put the two stalwart parties on their toes, compelling them to improve the services they are rendering to the people. For instance, the Kurdistan parliament recently voted to decrease the salaries of ministers and increase the monthly stipends for martyrs' families. Second, the rise of a bona-fide opposition party has signaled to the Western world that the Kurdish region is on the right track toward something akin to democracy.

In a way, it may be argued that Goran is strengthening both the KDP and the PUK, as the two established parties relearn the practice of democratization.

Ablaze With Political Fervor

Since the campaigns officially began on February 12, cities across the Kurdish region have been plastered with posters and lampposts strewn with banners and bunting. For the first time, an open-list system will be in operation, meaning that Iraqis will be voting for individuals rather than political groupings.

The streets of Sulaymaniyah, the cultural capital of the Kurdish region, are ablaze with political fervor. Late into the nights, cars crowd the streets, honking or blasting political hymns, with passengers waving banners and flags to profess support for one party or another.

While internally this palpable spirit of openness and democracy has been welcomed across the board in Iraq's Kurdish region, Goran's decision to go it alone in the upcoming national elections rather

than join the alliance has met harsh criticism. There are concerns among the Iraqi Kurdish cadre from all factions that competing in the national elections in fragments will weaken their heretofore powerful position in Baghdad over pending issues, such as disputed territories, the hydrocarbons law, and federalism.

Equally important is the fate of Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution, which aims to reverse the Arabization policy employed by the Hussein government, a policy that culminated in the tragic Anfal campaign.

In fact, the implementation of Article 140 -- touted as the road map for resolving the issue of disputed territories, notably Kirkuk -- has repeatedly been delayed by the interference of external forces and other elements in Baghdad. Turkey and most Arab countries view the inclusion of Kirkuk in the Kurdish region as a precursor to independence, although Kurdish leaders have repeatedly said they are not looking to break away. The growing political and economic relationship between Turkey and the Kurdistan regional government (KRG) seems to be gradually allaying these fears.

Likewise, the hydrocarbon law has met snags, namely over who has the right to sign oil and gas contracts and what percentage of profits the government should receive. There is even a dispute over how oil revenues should be distributed. The constitution in its current form is ambiguous, saying that undeveloped fields are the responsibility of the regions, which KRG used to justify signing various contracts. Although in recent weeks some headway has been made, Barham Salih, prime minister of the KRG, has brokered a temporary truce between Baghdad and Irbil allowing the oil to flow from the Kurdish oil fields through the pipeline to Turkey.

During the last four years, senior Kurdish officials have enjoyed the unusual position of holding power in Baghdad. It may be argued that they took advantage of the Arab disunity there and maneuvered to maximize the federal nature of Iraq, enshrining it and Kurdish rights in the constitution. Yet, with Sunni participation in these elections, Kurdish leaders may no longer be the kingmakers. If the Kurds fail to present a united front in Baghdad, then a putative Sunni-Shi'a alliance could emerge that might diminish the power of the KRG and federalism in Iraq.

All of the Kurdish lists, however, have tried to allay these fears by promising to vote as a united bloc on issues of national importance for the Kurds.

One young Goran supporter enthused: "It will actually strengthen the democratic process having many Kurdish lists in Baghdad, and it will increase the level of accountability. If the Kurdistan Alliance does not keep its promises, then Gorran can use its votes in Baghdad to pressure them to fulfill these promises for the good of the Kurdish people."

These days, few seem to be recalling the proverb that "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

Nevertheless, the inability of the Kurds to unite against external threats has always been their Achilles heel. Indeed, internal divisions may cost Kurds critical positions of power in Baghdad, the most symbolic of these being the presidency. Following a recent meeting between Goran head Nawshirwan Mustafa and Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, who is also the secretary-general of the PUK, Goran has begun hinting that it may not back Talabani's reelection.

This time, Iraqi Sunnis will vote

BAQUBA, IRAQ

Beset on many sides, but they're determined not to miss opportunity

BY MARC SANTORA

In Diyala, a quarter of the provincial council, all Sunnis, have warrants against them.

Most don't show up for votes, fearing they will be jailed. The leading Sunni candidate was arrested this month on what supporters call trumped up terror-

ism charges. Crushing poverty in the area is the norm. So is mistrust of a central government and the Shiite dominated security forces.

Yet Sunnis here say they are determined to participate in the parliamentary elections on March 7 rather than repeat past boycotts. Even after a call last week by a national Sunni political party to boycott — a call they later rescinded — Sunnis continue to hang the banners of their preferred candidates, including those banned from running.

In some ways, it is an inspiring measure of progress in Iraq that Sunni Muslims, the minority that long ran Iraq under Saddam Hussein, are trusting in

the ballot box to improve their fortunes.

But the hope they place in politics also reflects weakness — how sharply Sunnis' choices have narrowed after nearly seven years of war. Past boycotts denied them electoral positions they might have won and deprived them of power's spoils. Violence drew deadly retribution, from both American soldiers and Shiite death squads. Now elections seem the only way to forge a more formal and enduring political role.

Interviews in this once restive area make clear that Sunni expectations from these elections are high — and that renewed violence may not be far behind electoral disappointment.

"If the government does not change, there will be a problem between the Sunni and the Shia and it will not be good," said Sami Dawoud Salman, a local leader of a branch of the Sunni militia that allied with the Americans to do

battle with Al Qaeda.

Without a change, he said, "I think the government will hunt down every Sunni person and the Sunnis will have no choice but to hold their own weapons and defend themselves."

He plans to vote in any case.

Driving across Diyala, some 44,000 square kilometers, or 17,000 square miles, stretching from Baghdad to the Iranian border, the conditions that existed as the fighting subsided have hardened in place. Once-mixed villages have either been razed to the ground or remain firmly in control of one sect. Few of the people displaced from their homes have returned. Lingering blood feuds bring daily reports of violence.

Shiite towns, like Khallis, bustle with commerce and religious tributes to revered Shiite figures adorn the landscape. In Sunni neighborhoods, the shops are fewer, the tension is higher and the uncertainty palpable.

Shiites dominate the local police and Iraqi Army in the region, making up some 90 percent of the force, according to American officials, although the population is more than 50 percent Sunni. Sunnis see reminders of Shiite ascendancy and intimidation all around. For instance, during a recent Shiite holiday nearly every police checkpoint was decorated with portraits of Imam Hussein and Ali, two revered Shiite martyrs.

There is also concern, expressed by American military officials, that a largely Shiite police force, responsible for security at the 382 polling stations in the region, could intimidate Sunni voters.

The mistrust has deepened in recent months as government security forces have staged a series of arrests.

In a three-day period in December, 101 people were arrested, predominantly Sunni, according to an American intelligence briefing paper.

"Continued, pervasive, and biased

Leader in Turkey defends inquiry on coup plotting

ISTANBUL

BY SABRINA TAVERNISE AND SEBNEM ARSU

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan weighed in on Turkey's worsening political crisis Friday, declaring that an investigation into allegations of coup preparations was "for the benefit of the people," as the police detained an additional 18 current and retired military officers.

The new detentions capped a week of high political drama in Turkey, where the Islamic-inspired political party that runs the government is locked in a power struggle with the secular establishment, led by the military.

Sixteen of the 18 officers are active duty, the Anatolian News Agency reported. They were arrested in cities around the country and were being transported to Istanbul. They brought the number of detentions of military officers during the week to more than 60.

Mr. Erdogan, speaking to lawmakers in Ankara, the capital, used strong, pointed language to defend the investigation, which is tied to a broader legal case that critics say has become a witch hunt against Mr. Erdogan's enemies.

"Those who plot to crush people's will, behind closed doors, should realize that from now on they will face the law," Mr. Erdogan said. "The process under way is painstaking, but it is for the benefit of the people. Today's developments are setting free the consciousness of the people."

The detentions are part of an investigation into what prosecutors say was a plot by the military in 2003 to foment civil unrest, like attacks in mosques, to provide a pretext for a coup to unseat the elected government. The military, for its part,



Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, left, speaking to his deputy in Ankara this week.

has vigorously denied the allegations.

The military in Turkey has a record of being immensely powerful and has carried out four coups against elected governments in Turkey's short history. With a separate court system, it has long been considered untouchable, far above civilian control.

But it has been badly dented in the struggle with Mr. Erdogan, with allegations of military misdeeds leaked to the news media, a development that would have been unheard of a decade ago.

The 18 detentions came just a day after the release of three of the country's highest-ranking former generals, the most senior military officers ever to be called for questioning into a civilian court. It remains unclear if the three former generals, who had been detained for three days, will still be charged.

About 200 people are already in detention in a related case.

targeting by the Iraqi Security Force, and other factors," raised the possibility militants might have more success in recruiting fighters, according to the report. In recent weeks, there is evidence that those networks have stepped up their recruitment efforts, according to American military commanders.

In the provincial elections last year, Sunnis took control of the local government, which helped ease tensions. However, there are seven members of the 29 member provincial council with arrest warrants issued against them. The arrest in early February of Najim al Harbi, the Diyala leader of the important Sunni political bloc called the National Dialogue Front, which won six seats on the Provincial Council, was the most recent provocation.

Mr. Harbi, who gained widespread support for his outspoken role battling Al Qaeda in Iraq, has been the frequent target of assassination attempts and 23 members of his family have been killed by militants. Six months ago, his 6-year-old son was kidnapped by Al Qaeda and murdered. His arrest on terrorism charges, with no evidence against him made public, stirred widespread anger and was viewed as politically motivated since his list of candidates poses a serious challenge to both Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al Maliki's alliance and those of other Shiite parties.

"Of course the sectarian nature of the politics will be reflected on the street," said Rasam Esmael Hamud, a member of Mr. Harbi's party and an adviser to the governor in Diyala. "If we fail to control the politics, then we will fail to control the street."

"Of course the sectarian nature of the politics will be reflected on the street."

There was a hope that the elections would be a step toward reconciliation, but as the campaign as heated up so has the rhetoric with distinct sectarian overtones among leading national figures.

The fiery campaign speeches have been coupled with actions by the government security forces and political leaders that are viewed by Sunnis as an attempt to diminish their standing.

For months, Mr. Maliki — who once hoped to court a substantial alliance with powerful Sunni political blocs only to be largely rebuffed — has repeatedly raised the specter of the Baath party to justify a crackdown on Sunni and secular leaders.

Mr. Maliki's rival, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, a secular Shiite who has been joined by powerful Sunni blocs to pose a serious electoral challenge, has accused the Shiite dominated blocs and the prime minister of being beholden to Iran.

When the Iraqi government pressed ahead with its anti-Baath campaign by seeking to bar more than 500 candidates from running in the election, Mr. Allawi suggested that such heavy handed tactics could lead to "civil war."

Diyala, an ethnically mixed province once known for its orange groves but

now more for its killing fields, was a central battleground and remains a place where all of Iraq's most vexing problems can be seen on a smaller scale.

American military commanders are especially concerned about insuring that the Sunni militia men recruited to fight Al Qaeda do not return to battling the government. In Diyala, the militia remains a powerful force, with 8,300 fighters, and little progress has been made in bringing them into the government security forces.

With the election approaching, Sunnis still view the voting booth as the best place to secure influence in Iraq, according to American and Iraqi officials and dozens of interviews with residents. Even after the party of a prominent Sunni political bloc, whose leader was banned from running, called for a boycott, most Sunni residents interviewed said they planned to vote.

"We are always facing pressures by the security forces which are dominated by the Shiite parties," said Baqir Jalalaldin al Khashali, a 24-year-old employee of the education department in Baquba. "I think that the pressures will be useless because there is a great desire of Sunni to participate in election."

How they will react once the votes are counted — especially if there is a perception of fraud — remains to be seen. The reaction could range from apathy to violent change.

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Iraq Kurds again likely to be kingmakers post

*** Weeks or months of political horse trading post-election**

*** Kurds wary of strong central government, unhappy with PM**

**By Jack Kimball-
(Reuters)**

ARBIL - Tensions between Iraq's Kurds and Arabs may one day lead to armed conflict but, after an election in March, Arab parties will be vying with each other to court Kurdish allies expected to emerge as powerful kingmakers. Brutally suppressed under dictator Saddam Hussein, Kurds became one of the

nation's most cohesive political forces after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, strengthened by U.S. support and by having made their own peace after a civil war during the 1990s. Since the last national vote in 2005 and the years of sectarian carnage that followed, the central government in Baghdad has strengthened its hand, violence has fallen and political coalitions have become more cross-sectarian. Yet none of Iraq's major Shi'ite or Sunni Arab parties is expected to win enough parliamentary seats on March 7 to be able to form a government on its own, making Kurdish support possibly the key for

any coalition wanting to take power.

"No one can be a prime minister without the backing of the Kurds, because it will be either the Sunni Arabs or the Shi'ite Arabs, and they don't support each other, so we will be the critical factor in this balance," said Shores Hajji of the Kurdish opposition party Change.

The semi-autonomous Kurds are likely to exact a high price for their support, analysts say, ranging from a solution over the city of Kirkuk, which they claim as their ancestral home, to acceptance of oil contracts signed independently with oil firms.

"The Kurds have serious

demands which the Arab parties will have a hard time satisfying," said Joost Hiltermann, deputy Middle East director at the International Crisis Group (ICG).

"I think it will take some very hard bargaining, but I don't think the Arab parties are ready to let the Kurds go into opposition ... that is too dangerous."

Spats between Arabs and Kurds over land, resources and power are seen as one of the most fundamental threats to Iraq's future stability as it tries to shake off years of stagnation and boost exports from its economic crown jewel, the oil sector.