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IRAK : FORMATION PROCHAINE D'UN NOUVEAU GOUVERNEMENT

Alors que depuis huit mois les dirigeants irakiens n'avaient pas réussi à s'accorder pour former un nouveau gouvernement, le 8 novembre, le porte-parole du Premier Ministre sortant, Ali Al-Dabbagh, a annoncé que Nouri Al-Maliki serait reconduit dans ses fonctions, les principaux partis chiites et l'Alliance du Kurdistan étant parvenus à s'entendre. Restait cependant à obtenir l'approbation finale du bloc sunnite principal, Al-Iraqiyya, qui remportait, quant à lui, la présidence du Parlement. Son leader, Iyyad Allawi devait choisir parmi les membres de sa liste qui doit succéder à l'actuel président par intérim, le kurde Fouad Massum.

Les chefs des principaux blocs politiques d'Irak se sont ensuite rendus ensemble à Erbil, invités par le président de la Région du Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani, afin d'approuver officiellement cet accord, à l'issue d'une ultime réunion de trois jours.

La principale difficulté était de concilier les positions des chiites menés par Nouri Al-Maliki et celles des sunnites de la liste Al-Iraqiyya, qui souhaitaient une représentation au sein du gouvernement égale à celle des premiers, comme l'a expliqué Iyyad Allawi : « Il faut former rapidement un gouvernement qui reflète les résultats des élections, et nous devons être égaux en droits, en devoirs et dans (le partage) du

pouvoir, sans que quiconque n'ait la haute main sur les autres. »

Un des principaux griefs formulés à l'encontre du Premier Ministre sortant par son rival sunnite est celui d'avoir « accaparé le pouvoir et de l'exercer de façon personnelle », exigeant même une révision de la Constitution qui limiterait légalement les pouvoirs politiques du chef de cabinet irakien. Il est à noter que ces critiques sur les « dérives » politiques de Maliki et ses tentatives de concentrer les pouvoirs étatiques entre ses mains ont été formulées assez fréquemment par les Kurdes, au cours de son exercice précédent.

Mais Nouri Al-Maliki a refusé

d'envisager tout changement constitutionnel, arguant qu'un partenariat politique viable ne peut se faire qu'avec de « vrais partenaires attachés à la Constitution. La nouvelle page est conditionnée à l'attachement à la Constitution, c'est une condition indispensable au partenariat ».

Aussi, à l'issue de trois jours prévus pour cette réunion d'Erbil, seuls les Kurdes et les chiites avaient réussi à s'entendre et ont entériné l'accord, les sunnites hésitant encore entre le poste de chef de l'État, brigué également par le président sortant Jalal Talabani, appuyé par les Kurdes et les chiites, et la présidence du Parlement. Par conséquent, deux jours supplémentaires de débats, ont été décidés pour permettre aux discussions de se poursuivre à Bagdad, comme l'a annoncé à la presse, le 8 novembre, Massoud Barzani : « L'attribution des trois présidences doit être discutée demain et après-demain et des choses importantes doivent être décidées ces deux prochains jours ».

Les « choses importantes » ont été explicitées très vite par Roj Nouri Shawish, le vice-Premier ministre d'Irak, initiateur important des rencontres préalables entre les courants politiques irakiens, dans un entretien accordé au journal arabe *As-Sabah* : « Il s'agit notamment d'amendements à la Constitution, de réformes dans le

fonctionnement du gouvernement, de garanties exigées par les Kurdes, de l'avenir de la commission Responsabilité et Justice (chargée de retrouver les anciens Baathistes) et des attributions du futur Conseil national pour la politique stratégique ».

Malgré le ton optimiste des Kurdes, la presse irakienne se montrait sceptique sur les chances de réussite de ce qui lui apparaissait comme une énième rencontre ne devant aboutir à rien de concret. « Réunion d'Erbil: un pas en avant, deux pas en arrière », a ainsi titré le quotidien *Ad Dustour*, en jugeant que « les dirigeants politiques n'ont rien apporté de nouveau à ce que les Irakiens attendent ces derniers temps. Ils n'ont fait que répéter les mêmes problèmes sans avancer de solutions ».

Mais au terme d'une ultime réunion, cette fois à Bagdad, Nouri Al-Maliki s'est vu reconduit dans son poste de Premier Ministre, après un accord conclu avec les sunnites, ceux-ci ayant finalement accepté de laisser la présidence du pays à Jalal Talabani, et d'exercer celle du Parlement.

Autre compromis, la création d'un nouveau conseil qui traitera des questions de sécurité intérieure, conseil qui serait présidé par un membre de la liste *Iraqiyya*, idée préalablement

suggérée par les Américains afin de ne pas isoler les sunnites du gouvernement.

Enfin, le 11 novembre, le sunnite Oussama al-Noujaifi, député issu de la liste *Iraqiyya* a été élu président du Parlement irakien, par 227 voix sur 295 députés, tandis que Jalal Talabani était également reconduit dans ses fonctions présidentielles, avec 195 voix, 18 bulletins ayant été déclarés invalides.

Mais la séance fut surtout marquée par le boycott inattendu d'une soixantaine de députés de la liste *Iraqiyya*, qui ont invoqué le non respect des conditions fixées par leur liste, à savoir qu'ils auraient voulu voter l'accord conclu avec les autres listes sur la formation du gouvernement avant d'élire le président de la république irakienne.

Ainsi, après huit mois de négociations jusqu'ici infructueuses, afin de doter l'Irak d'un gouvernement, la répartition « ethnique et confessionnelle » du pouvoir reprend la même donne, un Kurde président du pays, un chiite à la tête du gouvernement et un sunnite à la tête du Parlement – et hormis ce dernier, les mêmes hommes ont été reconduits dans leurs fonctions.

Le nouveau Premier Ministre disposera d'un délai d'un mois pour former son gouvernement.

TURQUIE :

L'UNION EUROPÉENNE CRITIQUE SUR « L'OUVERTURE KURDE »

L'Union Européenne, dans son rapport annuel sur les progrès faits par la Turquie en vue de son adhésion, a jugé assez sévèrement le bilan de « l'ouverture kurde » qui avait été annoncée l'année dernière par le gouvernement turc, afin de résoudre la question kurde

dans ce pays. Les rapporteurs ont en effet estimé qu'il n'y avait eu aucun pas concret de fait en ce sens, même si par ailleurs le travail de réformes législatives se poursuivait, avec des amendements constitutionnels et une refonte structurelle de la Cour constitutionnelle et la Haute Commission des procureurs et

des juges. Les droits syndicaux ont été renforcés et des mesures pour la protection des femmes et des mineurs ont été mises en place.

Mais en ce qui concerne le problème kurde, la Commission a déclaré que le gouvernement n'avait que partiellement réalisé

son « ouverture kurde » depuis août 2009 : « Il est important de soutenir les tentatives de résoudre le problème kurde. Afin d'éviter les arrestations disproportionnées sous couvert de crimes de terrorisme et d'améliorer la situation des droits de l'homme dans la région, des changements nécessaires doivent être apportés à la loi anti-terreur. »

Les mines et le système des gardiens de villages restent une source de préoccupation. Le dédommagement prévu des personnes déplacées (après la destruction de leurs villages) est sans effet sur le terrain.

Les atteintes à la liberté d'expression et d'opinion n'ont pas décliné envers les médias kurdes. Les rapporteurs rappellent que l'enquête sur l'attaque d'une librairie à Şemdinli (Hakkari) a été suspendue (l'armée commençait à être directement mise en cause) et que les pressions exercées contre les journaux en langue kurde ou bien ceux traitant de la question kurde n'avaient fait que s'accroître. Le quotidien kurde *Azadiya Welat* (Liberté du pays) a ainsi été saisi plusieurs fois et ses journalistes condamnés pour « propagande terroriste ».

Bien que certaines améliorations aient pu être constatées, l'attitude des forces de l'ordre lors des manifestations de rue au Kurdistan de Turquie continuent à être source de violences. Ces mêmes forces de l'ordre jouis-

sent d'une large impunité pour leurs bavures, en vertu d'une loi votée en 2007. Le rapport de l'UE souligne que cette impunité nuit à l'efficacité des enquêtes pénales et administratives ouvertes contre des policiers qui auraient usé d'une violence excessive et disproportionnée.

La dissolution du parti pro-kurde DTP, ainsi que l'interdiction de nombreuses ONG et autres organisations montrent le besoin de réformes constitutionnelles pour protéger davantage la liberté d'opinion.

Il est également mentionné que des maires issus du parti kurde BDP et des représentants d'ONG sont actuellement jugés pour leur appartenance à l'organisation kurde KCK, accusée d'être une émanation du PKK.

Tout en reconnaissant des améliorations au sujet de la place réservée à la langue kurde, le rapport de l'UE a rappelé le fait que toute autre langue que le turc reste cependant illégale dans la vie politique.

Le rapport a également critiqué l'impossibilité pour les minorités linguistiques (celles non reconnues par le traité de Lausanne) d'apprendre leur langue maternelle dans les écoles privées et publiques. Il est également précisé que ceux qui parlent d'autres langues que le turc ne peuvent pas être employés dans les services publics, que des interprètes ne sont jamais présents dans les

interrogatoires judiciaires, alors même que la loi l'autorise.

Les cours de religion musulmane restent obligatoires dans les écoles publiques turques malgré les plaintes de minorités religieuses comme les Alévis et ce malgré l'avis contraire de la CEDH dans son protocole facultatif (n°1).

La représentation des femmes au sein des partis politiques et des syndicats reste faible, même si des améliorations ont été observées dans le domaine du droit des femmes, de l'égalité des sexes et les violences exercées contre elles. Le rapport indique également que les droits syndicaux en Turquie ne sont pas compatibles avec les normes de l'UE et l'OIT.

Près de 200 000 enfants sont actuellement scolarisés dans des internats, surtout dans les régions de l'est et du sud-est du pays. La Commission a fait part de sa préoccupation au sujet de la sécurité des élèves dans ces écoles, aux équipements souvent défectueux ou hors normes. Elle a souhaité aussi que des enquêtes objectives et transparentes soient menées pour élucider des accidents récemment survenus.

En conclusion, les rapporteurs estiment que le gouvernement turc a échoué à mettre en place de façon concrète « l'ouverture kurde » qui n'a jamais été réellement appliquée dans les faits.

KURDISTAN D'IRAK :

AFFLUX ATTENDU DE RÉFUGIÉS CHRÉTIENS APRÈS LE MASSACRE DE BAGDAD



près l'attaque sanglante par al-Qaeda de l'église Notre-Dame de la Délivrance à Bagdad, qui a fait 70 morts et 75 blessés, une « fatwa » des terroristes islamistes a été lancée

contre tous les chrétiens d'Irak, déclenchant une vague de terreur parmi cette communauté religieuse, et un certain émoi de la communauté internationale, même si les violences sont aussi nombreuses contre l'ensemble

des populations irakiennes.

Le président de la Région du Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani, a une fois de plus déclaré que le Kurdistan était prêt à accueillir et protéger les chrétiens qui voudraient s'y installer.

« Je veux qu'ils sachent que la Région du Kurdistan leur est ouverte. S'ils veulent venir, nous les protégerons et leur fourniront toute l'aide nécessaire. Nous sommes profondément navrés des crimes dont ils sont les victimes et nous condamnons ces actes criminels. Ce sont des gens innocents et une part précieuse de notre nation. »

D'autres attaques depuis le 31 octobre ont visé des maisons chrétiennes dans l'ouest de Bagdad, tandis qu'à Mossoul, plusieurs chrétiens ont été assassinés, soit dans leur voiture soit à leur domicile.

Le président d'Irak, Jalal Talabani, a de même indiqué que les chrétiens pouvaient trouver un refuge temporaire dans la Région du Kurdistan en s'épargnant une émigration définitive, offre que plusieurs familles chrétiennes ont accueilli avec soulagement.

« En ce moment, pour nous, la vie n'est plus possible à Bagdad » a ainsi expliqué Milad Butros, qui vit au sud de la capitale, au National, au journal anglophone d'Abu Dhabi. « Le gouvernement ne semble pas se préoccuper sérieusement de nous protéger ici, et donc, si plus personne ne veut de nous à Bagdad, nous partirons. Les Kurdes nous ont offert leur protection et nous irons (là-bas). Je ne pourrais rester davantage à Bagdad même si elle était bâtie en or. »

Âgé de 52 ans, Milad Butros a vu

deux de ses filles enlevées par des combattants d'Al-Qaeda en 2006. Il n'a plus jamais entendu parler d'elles, en dépit de ses efforts intenses, aidé par de puissantes tribus d'Irak.

Des milliers de chrétiens d'Irak ont déjà trouvé refuge dans les provinces gouvernées par les Kurdes. Ainsi à Ankawa, dans la banlieue d'Erbil, tout le quartier connaît une expansion florissante avec une population majoritairement chrétienne, la plupart du temps arrivée après 2003.

De plus, dans la province de Ninive, non comprise dans la Région du Kurdistan mais avec des zones protégées par les Peshmergas kurdes, des villages chrétiens ont été construits par le gouvernement d'Erbil, au nord et à l'est de Mossoul, pour accueillir les réfugiés de cette ville.

« Nous espérons que beaucoup de chrétiens viendront au nord (de l'Irak), a déclaré un député chrétien du parlement kurde, Romeo Higari. « Au moins ils resteront en Irak. Je refuse d'accepter que les chrétiens doivent absolument partir pour l'Europe s'ils veulent un avenir. Nous vivons ici depuis des milliers d'années, c'est notre pays et nous devons rester. »

Même Yunadam Kanna, le leader du Mouvement démocratique assyrien, qui s'était fait un temps le relais des accusations arabes au sujet de la « mainmise kurde sur les terres de Ninive », ne voit plus

de solution qu'en un exode des chrétiens au nord, sous protection kurde : « Je suis en contact avec des chrétiens actuellement à Bagdad, des médecins, ingénieurs, professeurs, et ils sont prêts à partir pour le Kurdistan. Ils sont tristes de quitter leur ville, mais au moins ils pourront rester en vie. »

Yunadam Kanna a admis que l'offre kurde était préférable à un exil de tous les chrétiens hors d'Irak. Auparavant, le Mouvement démocratique assyrien avait sommé le gouvernement de Bagdad d'améliorer la sécurité dans la capitale, par exemple en formant des unités de gardes chrétiens pour défendre les églises et les quartiers résidentiels, s'inspirant en cela du système des gardes kurdes ou chrétiens formés et entretenus par le gouvernement kurde, tant pour Ankawa que pour les villages chrétiens ou shabak de Ninive ou les villages yézidites de Sindjar, système que son parti avait pourtant décrié.

Du point de vue irakien, l'exode des chrétiens, une population plus éduquée que la moyenne nationale, serait un désastre économique comme l'explique Muthana Al-Jafani, un sociologue bagdadi : « Les chrétiens forment une large part de l'élite éduquée, et sans eux, les services médicaux, l'éducation ou les projets d'ingénieur souffriront à Bagdad. Si les chrétiens partent, cela déchirera tout le tissu social de Bagdad. C'est une menace sérieuse. »

PARIS :

CONFÉRENCE À L'ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE « L'IRAN EN 2010 »

Le 27 novembre s'est tenu à l'Assemblée nationale une conférence organisée par l'Institut kurde de Paris, avec pour thème : L'Iran en 2010.

Les manifestations massives qui ont suivi la réélection contestée

de Mahmoud Ahmedinejad à la présidence de la République Islamique, ont montré l'ampleur du mécontentement des populations urbaines et celle des climats internes qui travaillent le régime iranien depuis plusieurs années.

Malgré son intensité, la crise de 2009-2010 a également démontré la capacité du « système Ahmedinejad », qui dispose du soutien du Guide de la Révolution, de contrôler la quasi-totalité des rouages de l'Etat et de mobiliser autant les Pasdaran,

les Bassidj qu'une série de fondations para-étatiques.

En s'éloignant des débats autour de l'enjeu nucléaire, qui occupe souvent la une de l'actualité en Europe, cette journée d'études souhaitait offrir quelques éléments pour comprendre la situation iranienne depuis le premier mandat d'Ahmedinejad (2005) et sans chercher l'exhaustivité, a tenté de répondre à une série de questions :

Quel est le rôle de l'héritage de la révolution de 1979 et de la Guerre Iran-Irak dans le tournant « millénariste » pris sous le régime d'Ahmedinejad ?

Comment le Velayet-e faqih (gouvernement des juriconsultes), organe suprême du pays, légitime-t-il son pouvoir ?

Comment les structures du pouvoir ont-elles évolué depuis une demi-décennie ?

Qu'en est-il des inégalités sociales et économiques entre les différentes provinces ?

Comment comprendre les nouvelles formes de contestation de certaines communautés non-persanes et/ou non-sunnites du pays ?

Comment peut-on cartographier les mouvements politiques et sociaux des populations persanes ?

Qu'en est-il aujourd'hui des luttes féministes si importantes au tournant des années 2000 ?

Qui sont les acteurs du « cyberespace » qui, dans le contexte du contrôle étroit de la presse, est devenu le principal vecteur de nombre de communications et de socialisations parallèles dans les centres urbains ?

La première table ronde modérée par Jonathan Randal, ancien correspondant du Washington Post au Proche-Orient, réunissait Hashem Ahmadzadeh, maître de conférences à l'université d'Exeter, Thierry Coville, professeur aux écoles supérieures de commerce et de management Negocia et Advancia, de Paris, Christian Bromberger, professeur d'ethnologie à l'Université de Provence, Christian Bromberger, professeur d'ethnologie à l'Université de Provence, et Ahmed Salamatian, ancien député iranien. La table ronde a débattu des dynamiques de la crise de 2009-2010.

Selon Ahmed Salamatian, s'il faut chercher un élément constant de la situation iranienne depuis la révolution islamique, c'est la « dépendance entière de l'État à l'égard du pétrole ». dépendance qui, d'ailleurs, peut être retracée dès 1926, « depuis que la compagnie BP a organisé le coup d'État de 1926 », dépendance qui lui permet par ailleurs de se passer du peuple pour faire fonctionner son économie, tout en se heurtant au même type d'opposition venue de la rue, presque inchangée depuis le début du 20^{ème} siècle :

« Cet Etat a toujours disposé de revenus fixes et importants en raison de la continuité de la demande pour le pétrole. Imaginons que Louis XVI n'ait pas eu besoin de lever de nouveaux impôts, il n'aurait pas eu besoin de convoquer les états généraux. Les dirigeants iraniens n'ont pas besoin de consulter leur peuple et de percevoir ses impôts pour prendre des décisions politiques. Mais depuis 1905, la population cherche à prendre en main son propre destin : les sujets veulent devenir des citoyens. Ainsi, en 2009, on retrouve dans les rues des grandes villes iraniennes les

mêmes mots d'ordre que ceux de la révolution constitutionnelle, qui se mobilisa pour défendre le Parlement, bombardé par les soldats du chah. »

Mais un des changements spectaculaires de l'évolution de la société iranienne est l'urbanisation accélérée du pays, processus entamée à la fin du règne du dernier Chah. Aujourd'hui, la population de l'Iran est urbaine à 65 %, ce qui implique de profondes mutations dans la société iranienne. « Il y a 30 ans, l'imaginaire iranien — incluant la perception de la religion — était essentiellement campagnard. Maintenant c'est Téhéran, la mégalopole, qui rassemble le plus de minorités : kurdes, sunnites, azéris ! Il faut parler azéri pour faire ses courses en ville ! Il y a à Téhéran plus d'un million et demi de sunnites [...] À Ispahan, il y a maintenant un quartier entier des Sanandajis ! Lors d'une visite à l'université libre de cette ville, j'ai pu voir que les dortoirs universitaires hébergent des étudiants de 17 origines différentes. »

Conséquence de l'urbanisation, l'affaiblissement des liens traditionnels, l'abaissement de l'âge du mariage se sont affaiblis, l'âge moyen du mariage (26 ans), et le « développement d'une classe moyenne si dynamique que sa sphère culturelle dépasse largement sa sphère sociale. Maintenant, le premier investissement pour une famille se fait dans l'éducation. »

Sur le caractère « religieux » prêté volontiers au régime iranien (et ostensiblement affiché par ce dernier), Ahmed Salamatian apporte une nuance en rappelant que « en 2005, l'élection d'Ahmadinejad survient huit ans après la guerre Iran-Irak. Lui et son équipe sont

tous des jeunes engagés à la 25e heure de la révolution islamique et de la guerre Iran-Irak, et formés dans cette guerre : les pasdaran et bassidji des années 80 deviennent alors membres des cabinets ministériels. On est bien loin des vicaires de l'Imam caché sur terre. On assiste à la naissance d'une sorte de « religion séculière ».

On n'en est même à dire comme l'a fait Khomeiny, que si le Velayat-e Fagheh l'exige, on pourra interdire le Hajj ! Dès la succession de Khomeini, on supprime la nécessité pour le Guide d'être une source d'imitation.

On a quitté le champ du religieux pour considérer la capacité du guide à assurer au mieux la cohésion des différents services de renseignement, la lecture quotidienne des rapports de ses services a remplacé celle des textes théologiques !

Loin des idées de l'Imam caché etc., ce qui compte, c'est la survie de l'appareil militaire et de renseignement grâce à la rente pétrolière. »

Enfin, la donne nouvelle dans les rapports des Iraniens avec leur pouvoir est l'essor des nouvelles technologies de l'information dans un pays qui compte 27 millions d'internautes, avec des sites comme YouTube ou Facebook qui ont une audience dépassant celle des media traditionnels comme la BBC en persan.

« C'est la première fois qu'une société fait l'expérience de l'utopie islamiste est arrivée à la position de chercher à sortir ce qui est devenu un cauchemar — une religion idéologisée à outrance, un véritable désenchantement.

Aujourd'hui le choix n'est pas entre un pouvoir religieux et une

société a religieuse, mais entre une société civile qui cherche les moyens de vivre ensemble et un pouvoir qui se rend compte qu'il ne peut survivre qu'en se militarisant.

D'où l'importance de la situation géopolitique, et non pas de la question nucléaire. »

Le professeur Hashimzadeh, qui a pris ensuite la parole, a évoqué la question des minorités en Iran, en prenant principalement la question des Kurdes en exemple, et de leur participation ou non aux élections présidentielles depuis 1979. « La tendance de la périphérie est de s'intégrer quand le centre s'ouvre. Mais quand le centre se referme, la périphérie réagit par le boycott. Juste après la révolution, il y a eu des négociations entre les Kurdes et M. Radjavi, qui s'était dit prêt à accepter les 14 points de la délégation kurde. Mais Radjavi ne put finalement participer aux élections, et les autres candidats furent confrontés au boycott kurde. À noter que 80 % des Kurdes d'Iran, qui sont sunnites, ne peuvent donc être élus à la présidence. Le Kurdistan fut le seul le lieu d'Iran où le candidat Rafsandjani n'arriva pas avec le plus grand nombre de voix. »

Ce qui a rompu la politique de boycott des mouvements kurdes fut l'attitude plus favorable des candidats Moussavi et Karroubi aux élections de 2009 concernant les droits culturels des minorités ethniques, énoncés dans les articles 15 et 19 de la constitution, le premier mentionnant les droits de l'enseignement dans une langue autre que le persan et le second « faisant référence à l'appartenance ethnique ». Beaucoup d'étudiants kurdes (ils sont 70 000 en Iran) ont ainsi soutenu la candidature de Mehdi Karroubi (lui-même appartenant à l'ethnie lur).

Cependant il faut noter une relative passivité des régions rurales lors des manifestations de la « révolution verte » contestant la réélection d'Ahamdinejad, qui est un mouvement essentiellement urbain.

La question des minorités est poursuivie par le professeur Christian Bromberger qui rappelle que « en 2006-2007, le slogan du Guide était : « unité nationale, cohésion islamique » c'est-à-dire induisant une « répression classique de tout intérêt pour la pluralité ethnique. »

Cette politique d'unification ethnique « volontariste » remonte à l'avènement de Reza Chah (1925) : « À partir de Reza Shah, l'Iran mène une politique volontariste d'unification ethnique. « Unité nationale » signifie que le persan est considéré comme la langue unique et jusqu'à la diversité vestimentaire est interdite. Le terme de « Ostan », utilisé pour désigner les provinces, provient de l'époque sassanide. Aucun Ostan ne correspond à un groupe ethnique, et c'est volontaire. »

La question minoritaire ethnique se double d'ailleurs souvent du problème des minorités religieuses puisque, hormis les Azéris, la plupart des ethnies musulmanes non persanes sont sunnites, alors que les Persans et les Azéris chiites barrent l'accès, en plus du pouvoir religieux, à la représentation politique des provinces sunnites et à leur développement économique : « : rappelons qu'il n'existe pas une mosquée sunnite à Téhéran ! De même, le gouvernement ne comprend pas un seul ministre sunnite. En faisant référence à ces zones sunnites entourant l'Iran, on a pu parler d'un « arc sunnite oriental » en partie située en Asie centrale. À la difficulté politique

vécue par ces groupes ethniques périphériques, vient s'ajouter la médiocrité de leur situation économique. »

Les revendications de toutes ces minorités ethniques sont très diverses, en fonction de leur nombre démographique, de leur histoire et des mots d'ordre de leurs mouvements politiques, allant de « manifestations culturelles, radicalisation autonomiste, jusqu'à l'action violente », par exemple le PJAK kurde, face auquel l'État par des exécutions, et par le bombardement de villages kurdes situés au Kurdistan d'Irak, à l'instar de la Turquie.

« Mais il existe d'autres procédés moins visibles. Ainsi, la « semaine de la défense sacrée », consiste en un défilé des minorités en habits traditionnels. Et dès qu'une association locale est créée par une minorité, le centre réagit en créant ses propres associations, officielles, le soutenant. La même technique est utilisée pour les revues. Les services culturels du Centre savent très bien récupérer les festivals locaux, ainsi que les activités qui prennent place dans la maison des groupes ethniques, à Téhéran, où on insère des discours religieux ou de soutien à l'État. »

Concernant la situation des Kurdes, Christian Bromberger note la vitalité culturelle et politique de la société kurde en Iran, avec une « véritable fièvre éditoriale et associative ».

Le professeur Thierry Coville se livre à une analyse poussée de la situation économique de l'Iran, qu'il qualifie d'emblée de « mauvaise », notamment avec les deux chocs de 2008 : d'une part « l'injection populiste des pétrodollars dans l'économie par le président Ahmadinejad a provoqué une inflation de 10 à 20 % puis un freinage de l'économie.

Ensuite, suite à la crise financière de l'été 2008, la demande en pétrole ayant chuté en raison du ralentissement économique général, le prix du pétrole a baissé. Ainsi le FMI, après avoir calculé une croissance de 6 %, a fait une estimation à 2 % pour 2010. » Les sanctions de la communauté internationale, et notamment bancaires, ont également pesé sur l'économie.

Malgré cela, l'Iran a de quoi faire face à de telles sanctions. 65% de ses recettes proviennent des revenus pétroliers, et la hausse du baril (de 70 à 80 \$) lui est évidemment favorable, permettant à ce pays d'être très peu endetté (moins de 10% du PIB), et de se constituer de grosses réserves monétaires, de 80 à 100 milliards de dollars. De plus, le secteur de l'exportation connaît un grand essor vers les pays frontaliers.

Passant en revue les maux dont souffre l'économie iranienne, Thierry Coville en pointe plusieurs : l'inflation, le mauvais état du système bancaire, le déficit budgétaire et le taux de chômage :

« Le grand problème demeure l'inflation, qui a eu un impact sur la campagne électorale de 2009. La banque centrale iranienne a annoncé un ralentissement de l'inflation, de 20 % en 2009 à 10 % pour mars 2010. Mais personne n'y croit ! Les citoyens iraniens sont par exemple confrontés à une augmentation de 22 % des frais médicaux. Et c'est la classe moyenne qui souffre le plus de cette situation.

Le système bancaire iranien est en très mauvais état. Le développement des prêts a été un échec total, le FMI estime que 20 % de l'actif des banques iraniennes n'a aucune valeur. Depuis deux ou trois ans, on assiste à un grand développement des banques pri-

vées. C'est peut-être pour contourner les sanctions, mais la frontière est très floue entre public et privé en Iran. Ainsi de nombreuses fondations sont très liées avec les pasdaran. Il existe un assez important déficit budgétaire : officiellement il est à 6 % du PIB en 2008 et à 4 % de 2009. Ces chiffres soulèvent des doutes [...] Le taux de chômage, officiellement à 9 % de 2009 et à 14 % en 2010, doit certainement en réalité être beaucoup plus élevé. »

L'effet des sanctions internationales se fait moins sentir sur « les groupes qui sont proches du régime [...] car ils ont su depuis 20 ans développer les moyens de les contourner, mais le secteur privé, lui, en souffre beaucoup. Ainsi « le taux de change du marché noir s'est effondré en octobre 2010 alors que jusqu'alors il était identique au taux officiel. Ce pourrait être lié à une inquiétude par rapport aux sanctions, car les banques iraniennes ne parviennent plus à trouver de partenaires extérieurs, même aux Émirats Arabes Unis : les banques étrangères ont peur des représailles américaines si elles travaillent avec l'Iran. L'Iran travaille donc plus à présent avec l'Asie, notamment la Chine et la Russie, mais aussi avec la Turquie. »

Les mesures « populistes » prises par Ahmadinejad dans le domaine de l'économie ont eu des effets pervers : ainsi les importations massives qui ont nui aux industries locales.

On peut enfin s'attendre à de grandes difficultés sociales et économiques touchant les plus pauvres avec l'adoption de la nouvelle loi supprimant les subventions pour tous les produits de première nécessité comme l'essence, l'eau, le blé, la farine, le lait. « Cette suppression doit s'étaler sur cinq ans, mais doit

commencer ce mois-ci, il paraît difficile de comprendre comment le gouvernement a pu se lancer dans une telle réforme dans la situation difficile qu'il connaît. Pour les gens les plus pauvres, il est prévu que l'État compense l'augmentation de prix qui suivra cette suppression des subventions par des aides compensatoires qui seront versées directement. Le centre des statistiques a demandé aux gens de s'inscrire sur Internet pour déterminer leur droit à recevoir ces aides. La grande inquiétude est que cette suppression pourrait mener jusqu'à 50 % de hausse des prix et provoquer un important choc inflationniste. Les conséquences sociales également sont potentiellement effrayantes. Enfin, les chiffres montrent que les aides compensatoires coûteraient à l'État plus cher que les économies qu'il réaliserait. »

La dégradation économique qui toucherait les classes les plus pauvres peut amener, selon Thierry Coville, à « une alliance entre le mouvement vert et le mouvement ouvrier si la situation économique se dégrade. En ce moment, se discute le plan quinquennal 2010-2015. Ahmadinejad vient d'être exclu du comité de direction de la banque d'Iran. Le rachat récent de la plus grande entreprise de télécommunications par les pasdaran a été très critiqué, et remis en cause au parlement. Il y a une lutte des conservateurs modérés contre Ahmadinejad. Le gouvernement, quant à lui, met en avant la lutte contre la corruption, en avançant le slogan : « il y a des mafias en Iran », ce qui est bien la réalité. Ainsi l'économie est beaucoup utilisée dans le débat politique interne. »

La seconde table ronde, modérée par Marc Semo, journaliste à Libération, réunissait Hamit

Bozarslan, directeur d'études à l'EHESS, Abdolkarim Lahidji, Vice-Président de la FIDH et Bernard Hourcade, directeur de recherche au CNRS (Monde iranien). La table ronde portait sur les perspectives envisageables à la crise iranienne.

Hamit Bozarslan a tout d'abord émis deux interrogations : pourquoi l'Iran inquiète-t-il tant ? en doutant que la seule raison en soit la question nucléaire et la raison pour laquelle le « moment Khatami » n'a été qu'une « parenthèse » de la vie politique iranienne.

Concernant ce second point, Hamit Bozarslan émet l'hypothèse que « Khatami n'a pas été en mesure de s'attaquer à la contradiction au cœur du système. Il a choisi la logique de la stabilité de l'État par rapport à celle de la démocratie. »

Il développe ensuite les « contradictions » de la révolution iranienne, contradictions portées, selon lui, au « paroxysme » avec l'arrivée au pouvoir de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad :

« La Révolution islamique a représenté à la fois un nouvel ordre à l'intérieur du pays et une ambition d'exportation. Elle a commencé comme une révolution de gauche mais il ne faut pas sous-estimer l'impact de la guerre Iran Irak sur la direction qu'elle a prise, notamment parce que l'Irak a à l'époque été extrêmement soutenu par l'Occident [...] Pour l'Iran, cette révolution s'est transformée en révolution conservatrice. Son radicalisme est directement venu des champs de bataille avec l'Irak. Le président actuel Ahmadinejad a joué à l'époque un rôle important, même si il demeura discret, dans les provinces kurdes. Nous avons peu de connaissances sur cette période de sa vie. »

N'ayant pas de « pouvoir unifié », l'Iran ne peut être qualifié d'État totalitaire. Il est, selon le chercheur, « traversé par trois rationalités contradictoires » « :

1. Une rationalité bureaucratique. Ahmadinejad représente la génération des 20 ans au moment de la révolution. Il faut noter que lors de son arrivée au pouvoir, il a fait remplacer tous les ambassadeurs du pays et tous les gouverneurs de province. Il s'agissait réellement d'une clôture brutale de la période Khatami.

2. Une rationalité paramilitaire et para-étatique, très inquiétante. Elle a trois composantes : les basidji, les pasdaran, qui sont des forces à la fois officielles mais agissant en dehors de l'État, auxquelles il faut ajouter les fondations pieuses ou les fondations de martyrs. On a une coexistence État – non-État ou État et para étatique particulière en Iran.

3. Une dimension millénariste. Le totalitarisme, c'est la composition d'une utopie millénariste et d'une rationalité positiviste. Le millénarisme joue un rôle dans la fondation du shiisme. Mais dans la durée, pour construire les institutions étatiques, on se trouve dans la nécessité d'ajourner ce millénarisme. Ici, on a au contraire la sensation qu'il y a une volonté d'anticiper sur le millénarisme. Il y a auto-alimentation de ce millénarisme. »

Abdolkarim Lahidji, Vice-Président de la FIDH, est revenu sur cette notion d'État total ou totalitaire (en refusant, de même que Hamit Bozarslan, de l'appliquer à l'Iran) et en analysant la part du religieux et du politique dans le pouvoir actuel. Même si le pays est doté de « toutes les instances de l'État moderne : parlement, président, instances judiciaires... Mais ces trois pouvoirs sont-ils réellement

fonctionnels, où y a-t-il fusion entre droit divin et droit humain ? Car il y a un pouvoir au-dessus de ces instances, qui tire sa légitimité du divin. Le chef de l'État est un représentant de cet Imam caché... Alors que les titres des mollahs n'ont aucun fondement ni hiérarchique ni théologique. Mais celui qui est sans légitimité populaire détient selon la constitution 80 % du pouvoir. La marge de manoeuvre du parlement est limitée, car les lois doivent être contrôlées par un conseil de six théologiens nommés par le Guide suprême. Si cette loi est reconnue contraire aux règles islamiques elle est déclarée caduque. Cependant les règles islamiques dont il est question ne sont définies nulle part. On se trouve donc dans l'arbitraire total. »

Sur les discriminations pratiquées en Iran, Abdolkarim Lahidji démontre qu'elles sont à la fois ethniques et religieuses, en prenant l'exemple du Baloutchistan, région sunnite, qui est la plus privée de services publics et la plus pauvre du pays. [...] Dans les régions sunnites aucun préfet (ostandar),

aucun sous-préfet (fermandar) n'est sunnite. »

La discrimination envers les sunnites (15 à 20% de la population) concerne l'ensemble du pays : « À Téhéran, qui compte entre 20 et 25 % de sunnites, il n'existe pas de mosquée sunnite, alors qu'il y a des églises et des synagogues. »

Pour les discriminations ethniques elles se traduisent par un déni culturel, linguistique et une répression politique : « En ce qui concerne les langues des minorités, elles sont théoriquement autorisées à l'enseignement, mais dans les faits, la loi n'est pas appliquée. Il y a même répression, et depuis un moment, une sorte d'état de siège, de nombreuses arrestations, les prisonniers qui sont éloignés vers Téhéran, jugé à huis clos devant les tribunaux révolutionnaires.

Lors des manifestations pacifiques, des dizaines de personnes ont été assassinées. Certains avocats ont été mis en prison, dont trois femmes, incarcérées pour avoir fait leur métier en défendant des prisonniers politiques. »

Enfin, pour Bernard Hourcade, les sanctions de la communauté internationale et l'opposition au programme nucléaire de l'Iran ne font que conforter le régime et empêche l'ensemble de la société iranienne d'entretenir des contacts avec l'extérieur.

« Les sanctions mènent à un retrait de l'Iran. La France interdit aux universitaires de s'y rendre. Ce retrait aboutit en fait à laisser tomber la classe moyenne iranienne. Le nucléaire est un prétexte. En particulier, l'arme iranienne justifie celle d'Israël [...] Il y a 30 pays dans le monde qui ont un programme nucléaire du genre de celui de l'Iran.... »

Ainsi, pour Bernard Hourcade, « cette politique des Occidentaux ne fait que renforcer les radicaux iraniens. Les sanctions mènent aussi à l'émigration des opposants, ce qui est contre-productif [...] Donner des visas aux Iraniens pour qu'ils émigrent est une solution de désespoir [...] La grande crainte du gouvernement iranien n'est pas le bombardement israélien, ni les sanctions, mais les contacts avec les étrangers. »

CULTURE :

SULAÏMAINIEH HONORE LA MÉMOIRE DE L'ÉCRIVAIN GREC NIKOS KAZANTZAKIS

Du 10 au 14 novembre 2010, s'est tenue à Sulaïmanieh la 14ème édition du festival culturel Gelawêj. Plusieurs personnalités littéraires, kurdes ou européennes avaient été invitées dont Georges Stassinakis, le fondateur et président de la Société internationale des Amis de Nikos Kazantzakis, venu de Suisse, qui, se disant "ravi par l'accueil et l'hospitalité des organisateurs et du peuple martyr kurde" a rédigé une note sur son séjour au Kurdistan sur Voici.

« Du 10 au 14 novembre 2010, a

eu lieu à Sulaymania (ville située à l'est du Kurdistan) la 14e édition du Festival Galawezh. Il comprenait des expositions de livres, de peintures et de calligraphies, de la musique et des chants traditionnels kurdes et un nombre impressionnant de conférences littéraires. Inauguré par Mme Hero Talabani, épouse du président de la République irakienne, et en présence d'un grand nombre de personnalités de la culture et de la politique, il a connu un réel succès.

Invités par le Dr. Mohsen

Ahmed Omer, chef du département français à la faculté des langues de l'université d'Erbil (capitale du Kurdistan), traducteur et écrivain, ont participé des écrivains, poètes, universitaires et chercheurs francophones, tels qu'André Velter (France), Ahmad Mala (Espagne) Fawaz Hussain (France) et Georges Stassinakis (Suisse).

Georges Stassinakis, président de la Société internationale des amis de Nikos Kazantzaki (SIANK) a inauguré, le 10 novembre, le salon du livre.

Puis, le 12 novembre, il a donné en français une conférence sur « Nikos Kazantzaki et le monde », suivi d'un intéressant débat sur la nature, les femmes, la politique, la spiritualité et la position de Kazantzaki sur les Kurdes.

Dans le cadre du Festival, le président de la SIANK a rencontré plusieurs écrivains, poètes et traducteurs kurdes, arabes, iraniens et européens. Il a constaté avec une grande satisfaction leur parfaite connaissance et leur admiration pour l'œuvre de Nikos Kazantzaki. Rappelons que huit de ses romans ont été traduits en kurde (du persan, ou de l'arabe) : *Alexis Zorba*, *La liberté ou la mort*, *Le Christ recrucifié*, *La dernière tentation*, *Rapport au Greco*, *La pauvre*

d'Assise, *Le jardin des rochers* et *Les frères ennemis*.

Les deux moments les plus émouvants du Festival furent la visite, le 12 novembre, de la prison de Sulaymania, aujourd'hui lieu symbolique, où des milliers de patriotes kurdes furent atrocement torturés et exécutés et le pèlerinage, le 13 novembre, du musée-monument de Halabja, village martyr bombardé aux gaz chimiques, le 16 mars 1988. Il s'en suivit, en quelques minutes, la mort de plus de 5 000 femmes, enfants et vieillards.

Ces massacres, perpétrés par Saddam Hussein et ses acolytes, resteront gravés à jamais dans la mémoire des hommes et des

femmes épris de justice et de liberté.

Le 15 novembre, Georges Stassinakis a rencontré à Erbil le Dr Frédéric Tissot, Consul général de France, et Amélie Banzet, directrice du Centre culturel français. Il a offert sept romans de Nikos Kazantzaki, *Le dissident*, biographie de son épouse, un CD de la télévision belge francophone et le texte d'une de ses conférences sur "Kazantzaki et la France".

À l'issue de ces rencontres fructueuses, le professeur Mohsen Ahmad Omer, responsable local depuis un an de la SIANK, procédera à la création au cours des prochains mois d'une section de la SIANK au Kurdistan. »

AFP

ATTENTAT D'ISTANBUL: LE PKK DÉMENT SON IMPLICATION ET PROLONGE LA TRÊVE

1 novembre. 2010 / De Nicolas CHEVIRON (AFP)

ISTANBUL — Les rebelles kurdes de Turquie ont démenti lundi toute implication dans l'attentat-suicide qui a fait 32 blessés dimanche à Istanbul et ont annoncé la prolongation de la trêve qu'ils avaient décrétée en août, a rapporté l'agence Firat News, proche du PKK.

"Il n'est pas possible pour nous de mener une telle action au moment où notre mouvement a décidé de prolonger une trêve. Nous ne sommes en aucune manière impliqués dans cette attaque," a indiqué la direction du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans un communiqué, selon Firat.

La trêve, décrétée le 13 août, puis prolongée d'un mois le 30 septembre, devrait être prolongée jusqu'aux prochaines élections législatives, que le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a prévu début juin 2011.

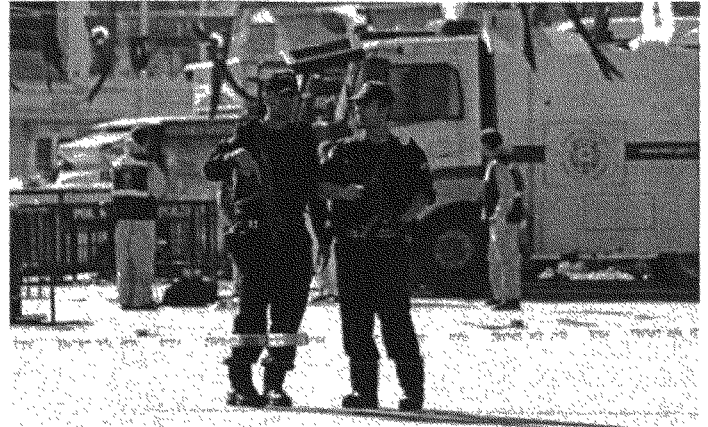
"Notre mouvement (...) a décidé de prolonger son processus de non-action jusqu'aux élections générales de 2011 pour imposer (à Ankara) un processus de solution démocratique et assurer que les élections législatives en Turquie se tiendront de manière saine", a affirmé le PKK.

La fin du cessez-le-feu a coïncidé dimanche avec un attentat-suicide visant des policiers anti-émeutes en faction sur la place de Taksim, en plein centre d'Istanbul, qui a notamment blessé 15 policiers.

Les autorités se sont abstenues de tout commentaire sur les pistes qu'elles privilégiaient.

"Nous avons en mains certaines données, mais nous sommes prudents, nous ne devons pas faire de déclarations prématurées", a affirmé lundi devant des journalistes le ministre de l'Intérieur Besir Atalay, précisant que la police n'avait procédé pour l'heure à aucune arrestation.

Le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan a toutefois dénoncé lors d'une conférence le fait que "dans certains pays européens des entités (...) liées à l'organisation terroriste agissent librement", un reproche qu'il avait déjà exprimé dans le passé, en faisant référence au PKK.



Policiers et enquêteurs sur les lieux de l'attentat, le 31 octobre 2010 à Istanbul

Dans un entretien publié jeudi par le quotidien turc Radikal, le chef militaire du PKK, Murat Karayilan, avait assuré que les rebelles s'engageraient à épargner les civils et à poursuivre sans limitation de temps leur cessez-le-feu unilatéral si le gouvernement turc acceptait le dialogue.

Ses déclarations sont intervenues alors que M. Erdogan a lancé une nouvelle initiative visant à résoudre le problème kurde. Les autorités ont, selon la presse, associé à cette initiative Abdullah Öcalan, emprisonné à vie.

Les avocats d'Öcalan devaient s'entretenir lundi avec leur client sur l'île-prison d'Imrali, où il est enfermé, a indiqué l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Les médias désignaient lundi les rebelles comme les auteurs les plus plausibles de l'attaque, même s'ils n'excluaient pas d'autres pistes, comme celle du mouvement armé clandestin d'extrême gauche DHKP-C, visé dimanche matin, peu avant l'attentat, par un coup de file de la police qui a procédé à 16 arrestations, selon le journal libéral Radikal.

Le réseau Al-Qaïda, auquel ont été imputés des attentats commis en 2003 à Istanbul contre deux synagogues, le consulat britannique et une banque britannique, qui ont fait 63 morts, était également mentionné comme une piste possible.

AFP

ATTENTAT D'ISTANBUL: LE KAMIKAZE IDENTIFIÉ COMME UN MEMBRE DU PKK

2 novembre 2010 (AFP) , De Nicolas CHEVIRON

ISTANBUL , L'auteur d'un attentat-suicide qui a fait 32 blessés dimanche dans le centre d'Istanbul était un jeune homme de 24 ans qui avait rejoint les rangs des rebelles kurdes en 2004, a affirmé mardi le gouverneur d'Istanbul dans un communiqué cité par l'agence de presse Anatolie.

L'enquête a permis d'identifier l'auteur de l'attaque, qui visait des policiers des forces anti-émeutes, comme étant Vedat Acar, un Kurde né à Gürpınar, dans la province de Van (est), qui avait rejoint les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) six ans plus tôt, a indiqué Anatolie.

Les déclarations des autorités turques interviennent alors que les rebelles ont démenti lundi toute implication dans l'attentat, qui a notamment blessé 15 policiers, et ont annoncé une prolongation de la trêve qu'ils avaient décrétée en août jusqu'aux prochaines élections législatives, prévues en juin.

La fin de la trêve a coïncidé dimanche avec l'attentat d'Istanbul.

La police de cette ville a identifié les proches du kamikaze et procédé à l'arrestation de sept suspects dans différents quartiers, tous des membres du PKK, écrit Anatolie.

La chaîne d'information télévisée NTV a pour sa part rapporté que l'auteur de

l'attentat avait pénétré en Turquie trois mois plus tôt en provenance d'Irak par le poste-frontière de Habur (sud-est).

Les rebelles du PKK disposent de camps dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak, depuis lesquels ils lancent des attaques contre les forces de sécurité dans le sud-est anatolien de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes.

Si l'implication du PKK dans l'attentat est confirmée, ce développement devrait compliquer la tâche du gouvernement dans ses efforts de dialogue avec les Kurdes, face à une opinion publique qui considère le PKK comme l'ennemi public numéro un et est hostile à toute concession faite à la violence.

Ankara s'est récemment engagé dans des échanges discrets et prudents avec les Kurdes pour convaincre le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie et de nombreux pays, d'abandonner les armes et de mettre un terme à un conflit qui a fait plus de 45.000 morts en 26 ans, selon l'armée.

Le chef emprisonné du PKK Abdullah Öcalan semble associé à cet effort, ses avocats servant d'intermédiaires. Des agents de l'Etat ont également des contacts avec lui sur l'île-prison d'Imrali ou il est incarcéré, affirment ses avocats.

Le quotidien Milliyet a écrit mardi que le PKK avait prolongé sa trêve après avoir reçu un courrier d'Öcalan transmis aux chefs militaires du mouvement, basés dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak, avec l'aide de responsables turcs.

Dans un entretien publié jeudi par le quotidien turc Radikal, le principal chef militaire du PKK, Murat Karayilan, avait assuré que les rebelles s'engageraient à épargner les civils et à poursuivre sans limitation de temps leur cessez-le-feu unilatéral si le gouvernement turc acceptait le dialogue.

Plusieurs journaux avaient évoqué au lendemain de l'attentat la possibilité que celui-ci ait été commandité par des "faucons" du PKK dans le but de torpiller ces efforts de dialogue.

Le kamikaze a déclenché sa charge d'explosif dimanche vers 08h30 GMT sur la place de Taksim, une esplanade très fréquentée en plein cœur d'Istanbul, où sont stationnées en permanence des unités de police anti-émeutes. L'explosion a eu lieu alors qu'il tentait de pénétrer dans un minibus de la police.

LE FIGARO 5 novembre 2010

L'entre-deux irakien s'éternise



Par Georges Malbrunot
blog.lefigaro.fr

En moins d'une semaine, trois attaques terroristes d'envergure signées Al Qaida ont causé la mort d'une centaine de civils irakiens. L'une d'elle a tué plus de quarante chrétiens en prière dans une église de Bagdad. Une autre a massivement frappé plusieurs quartiers chiites de la capitale.

Mais contrairement à son habitude, la branche irakienne de la mouvance terroriste n'a pas visé des symboles d'un pouvoir qu'elle a longtemps cherché à affaiblir. Sous les coups de boutoir des forces américaines et irakiennes, Al Qaida a dû en effet changer de stratégie : jusqu'au printemps dernier, les terroristes commettaient de spectaculaires attentats à la voiture piégée contre des ministères et des hôtels. Il s'agissait de démentir les progrès en matière de sécurité remportés par le premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki.

Mais en avril, la liquidation des deux cerveaux d'Al Qaida en Irak – Omar al-Bagdadi et Abou Ayyoub al-Masri – a contraint les sicaires de Ben Laden à revenir à des cibles civiles, tout en cherchant à conserver le caractère spectaculaire de leurs crimes.

Ce regain de violence ne doit, toutefois, pas faire illusion. L'insurrection a reculé dans la plupart des régions. L'Irak a connu en octobre le mois le moins meurtrier depuis un an (120

civils tués). Al Qaida a perdu la quasi-totalité de ses djihadistes arrivés des quatre coins du monde musulman.

Aujourd'hui, le groupe est d'abord irakien, composé à 90% de salafistes locaux et d'anciens fidèles de Saddam Hussein, dont l'expertise militaire lui est bien utile pour répandre la mort parmi la population. Mais sa capacité de nuisance a décliné, comme le montre les explosifs de moindre qualité utilisés dans ses derniers attentats. Et ce n'est pas en ciblant des civils – une erreur que n'a pas commise la branche yéménite – qu'Al Qaida va regagner du crédit auprès des Irakiens.

Reste que le blocage de la situation politique à Bagdad lui procure un certain répit. Plus de sept mois après les élections législatives, l'incapacité des dirigeants irakiens à s'entendre pour former un gouvernement offre de l'espace aux terroristes, lesquels peuvent toujours être instrumentalisés par un pays voisin (Iran, Syrie, Arabie saoudite...) mécontent de l'évolution de la situation à Bagdad.

Même si Nouri al-Maliki apparaît le mieux placé pour se succéder à lui-même, ses réticences à faire de la place à la minorité sunnite – défendue par son rival Iyad Allaoui – ne peuvent qu'alimenter la violence de certains groupes radicaux. Sa récente décision de désarmer des anciens rebelles, qui avaient rejoint les rangs américains et irakiens contre al Qaida à partir de 2007, a provoqué leur retour au sein de la guérilla.

Le gouvernement Maliki à majorité chiite et kurde refuse de les intégrer dans les forces de sécurité... par

manque de confiance. On touche là le principal problème qui empêche l'Irak de redécoller. Les vainqueurs des élections ne veulent pas partager le pouvoir. Et sept ans après la chute de la dictature, le nouvel Irak reste incapable de dépasser ses conflits confessionnels, comme l'a montré la semaine dernière la condamnation à mort de Tarek Aziz, 74 ans, malade et déjà condamné à 22 ans de prison.

Entre violence résiduelle et crise politique, l'Irak vit un entre-deux qui risque de durer encore longtemps. L'ancienne Mésopotamie se retrouve plongée au cœur de tous les paradoxes. C'est à la fois le pays qui dispose du système le plus démocratique du Moyen-Orient, avec le Liban. Mais aussi celui où la violence et la corruption y sont les plus importantes. Et il lui faudra encore au moins dix ans pour régler ses problèmes institutionnels (Quelle constitution ? Quel type de fédéralisme ? Quelle place pour les Kurdes ?). « C'est un passage indispensable. Il faut que la démocratie et l'état de droit domestiquent la violence, cette composante ancienne de l'histoire irakienne », souligne un diplomate français bon connaisseur du pays.

Mais en attendant, les risques d'une nouvelle guerre civile sont limités. Pour une simple raison : l'Irak est un pays riche grâce au pétrole. Aucun de ses dirigeants n'a intérêt à tuer la poule aux œufs d'or. Et autour aucun voisin n'a intérêt à voir un nouveau chaos déborder chez lui.

La Croix

MARDI 2 NOVEMBRE 2010

Les chrétiens de Bagdad frappés en pleine messe

Une prise d'otages puis un assaut des forces de sécurité ont fait plusieurs dizaines de victimes dans la cathédrale syrienne-catholique de la capitale irakienne

Les chrétiens d'Irak ont connu dimanche une de leurs pires journées depuis l'attaque anglo-américaine contre le régime de Saddam Hussein en 2003. En fin d'après-midi, une prise d'otages puis un assaut donné par les forces de sécurité dans la cathédrale Sayidat al-Najat (Notre-Dame du perpétuel secours), au centre de Bagdad, ont tourné au bain de sang. Le bilan est d'au moins 46 morts, dont deux prêtres, et 60 blessés.

C'est vers 17 heures (15 heures GMT) que la cathédrale syrienne-catholique a été envahie par des terroristes se revendiquant de l'«État islamique d'Irak», la branche irakienne d'Al-Qaïda, alors que 100 à 150 fidèles étaient rassemblés pour la messe de veille de la Toussaint. «Des hommes en habits militaires ont pénétré dans l'église et ont immédiatement tiré sur un prêtre», a raconté un jeune de 18 ans, qui s'était réfugié dans une petite salle avec quatre autres fidèles. «Peu après, deux des hommes armés sont entrés dans la pièce, ont tiré en l'air et sur le sol, blessant trois personnes, puis nous ont poussés dans la nef. Il y a eu des échanges de tirs, des bruits d'explosions, et des vitres sont tombées sur les gens», a-t-il ajouté.

À peine deux heures plus tard, l'armée irakienne, en présence de

troupes américaines (1), donnait l'assaut pour «libérer» les otages. «Cet assaut a été mené de manière archaïque, très violente; ce n'est pas comme ça qu'il fallait agir», s'indignait d'emblée Mgr Basilios Georges Casmoussa, archevêque syrien-catholique de Mossoul, joint hier par *La Croix* à Karakosh, ville chrétienne à 400 km au nord de Bagdad. Selon des survivants, au moment de l'attaque par les forces de sécurité, les terroristes, au nombre de cinq ou six, ont lancé des grenades et fait sauter leurs vestes bourrées d'explosifs.

«C'est un immense sentiment de tristesse qui m'envahit. C'est inhumain. Même les animaux ne se comportent pas ainsi entre eux», a déploré Mgr Shlimoune Wardouni, évêque chaldéen de Bagdad. Le major-général Qassem Al Moussaoui, porte-parole des forces de sécurité à Bagdad, s'est, lui, félicité, selon l'Agence France-Presse, d'une «opération (...) conclue avec succès», alors que sept policiers ont été tués et quinze autres blessés. Selon un responsable du ministère de l'intérieur, «cinq terroristes ont péri et huit suspects ont été arrêtés».

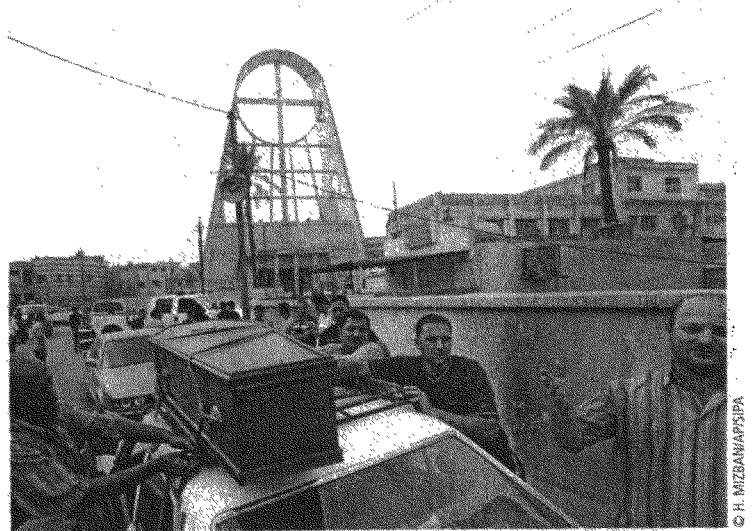
Pour Mgr Casmoussa, ce nombre élevé de victimes ne s'explique que parce que «le gouvernement a voulu en finir rapidement, sans négocier avec les preneurs d'otages». Ceux-ci avaient lancé leur attaque en faisant d'abord sauter une voiture piégée et en tuant plusieurs gardes

«Le manque de volonté politique des dirigeants irakiens laisse le champ libre aux terroristes», juge Mgr Casmoussa, archevêque de Mossoul.

armés devant la cathédrale. Selon le P. Yousif Thomas Mirkis, supérieur des dominicains à Bagdad, «l'opération avait été préparée de longue date, vu les armes et les munitions retrouvées dans la cathédrale».

Avant l'assaut des forces de sécurité, les terroristes avaient donné un ultimatum de 48 heures à l'Église copte d'Égypte pour libérer deux épouses de prêtres coptes, soi-disant converties à l'islam et qui seraient «emprisonnées dans des monastères» de ce pays, selon le centre américain de surveillance des sites islamistes (SITE). «Un prétexte fallacieux», juge Mgr Casmoussa persuadé qu'il ne s'agit là que de «racontars».

Selon lui, c'est plutôt dans «le vide politique actuel en Irak» qu'il faut chercher une explication à ce nouvel acte de terrorisme visant les chrétiens. Depuis les élections législatives du 7 mars dernier, aucun gouvernement n'a été formé et des factions armées continuent de se déchirer pour le contrôle des territoires et du pétrole. «Le manque de volonté politique des dirigeants irakiens laisse le champ libre aux



Le cercueil d'une victime quitte le lieu du drame, hier, devant la cathédrale Sayidat Al-Najat de Bagdad.

terroristes», poursuit l'archevêque de Mossoul, qui sait que ces attaques visent aussi à intimider les chrétiens et les obliger à fuir leur pays. «Une grande peur règne dans les cœurs», estime-t-il en constatant que nul n'osait parler de cet assaut hier dans les rues de Karakosh. Les chrétiens redoutent en effet que les «retombées de cette affaire» n'entraînent d'autres actions similaires.

À Karakosh, ville où réside la plus grosse communauté syrienne-catholique, on attend l'arrivée des dépouilles d'au moins sept défunts originaires de la ville pour pouvoir les enterrer. Mgr Casmoussa, qui connaissait bien les deux jeunes prêtres tués, tous deux originaires de Karakosh – «ils étaient des amis» –, s'inquiète aussi du cas

d'un troisième prêtre grièvement blessé aux reins et aux jambes: «Il a été opéré et nous attendons avec inquiétude d'en savoir plus sur son état.»

Les réactions internationales, hier, restaient encore peu nombreuses. «La France condamne fermement cette action terroriste qui fait suite à une campagne de meurtres et de violences ciblées», a déclaré dans un communiqué Bernard Kouchner, ministre des affaires étrangères, à Paris. Une délégation de chefs d'entreprise français conduite par Anne-Marie Idrac, secrétaire d'État chargée du commerce extérieur, était arrivée la veille à Bagdad pour la Foire internationale annuelle. Bernard Kouchner a rappelé l'attachement de la France «au respect des libertés

fondamentales, dont la liberté religieuse», et son soutien aux autorités irakiennes dans leur lutte contre le terrorisme.

De leur côté, les évêques irakiens rejettent tout lien entre le Synode pour les Églises orientales qui s'est clos le 24 octobre à Rome et cette prise d'otages. «Nous continuons d'affirmer notre désir de vivre avec nos compatriotes musulmans, poursuit Mgr Casmoussa. Nous cherchons à dialoguer, à travailler ensemble, à renforcer les courants modérés... Aujourd'hui ou demain, nous célébrerons l'enterrement des sept victimes de Karakosh dans le recueillement. Et dans l'espérance, malgré tout. Cela n'efface pas la douleur mais nous ne voulons pas que la rancune remplace l'amour. Jamais! C'est cela notre force, même si certains la considèrent comme une faiblesse.»

CLAIRE LESEGRETAINE

(1) Malgré la fin de leur mission de combat fin août, les troupes américaines peuvent toujours utiliser la force, si elles sont attaquées ou si l'Irak sollicite leur aide. Elles ont démenti, hier, avoir participé à l'assaut.

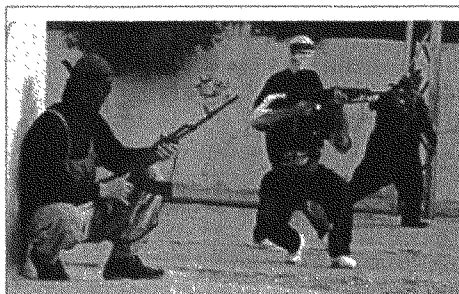
Arab Sunni Insurgent Threatens Kurdish Officials in Kirkuk

By RUDAW

KIRKUK: As the ethnic tensions running high in a country without a government, a Sunni Arab militant group is threatening Kurdish officials in Kirkuk with promises to do everything they can to undermine the activities of Kurdish security forces who have played a notable role in drawing down violence in the oil-rich city.

The letter, published on October 30, comes a few days after a tradeoff was made between the police forces of Kirkuk and an insurgent group that released 2 Kurdish girls that it was taking hostage in return for the release of five women who had been arrested for alleged ties with al-Qaeda.

"We will answer any activity you



Some members of an insurgent group in Iraq.

may make in the city," said the letter published a group identified itself as Mujahidw Arab Kirkuk.

But Brig-Gen Sarhad Qadir, Chief of Police of Kirkuk Districts and Sub-Districts, dismisses the letter as "nonsense and teenage words."

"Of course, we will keep doing our task and not be discouraged by such threats," he said.

However, Qadir believed that the threat was particularly made against the security men answering to the ruling Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) led by President Massoud Barzani in Erbil and Duhok.

"The letter threatens all the security agencies, but it is also a particular threat to the KDP officials in Kirkuk since they have cornered them prevented them from doing much their planned terrorist acts,"

said Qadir, himself a KDP member.

But deputy-director of KDP's headquarters in Kirkuk, Mohammed Khurshid, has several other reasons for why KDP officials appears to have become a bigger target of the insurgents.

The first reason, Khurshid asserts, is that KDP take a more serious position regarding the Kurdish issue in Kirkuk, an approach that Arab ultranationalists do not like as they oppose to any attempts, including Article 140 of the Constitution, that adds Kirkuk to the federal region of Kurdistan.

The second reason, Khurshid adds, is Barzani's initiative to bring all Iraqi leaders together in Erbil to form a new government.

A possible inclusive government will be determinant decrease violence and give a blow to insurgents having vested interest in a destabilized Iraq.

"The KDP cadres working in security institutions have been so skillfully crushing terrorists," said Khurshid as the third reason.

The US and International Think-Tanks have all warned of the seriousness of the problem of the disputed regions in Kirkuk and Nineveh and their surroundings.

These regions, claimed by Arabs, Kurds and Turcomans, are considered to have a great potential of civil war between/among different ethnic groups.■



NOVEMBER 1, 2010

Iraq's National Alliance and Kurdistan Coalition refuse Saudi Monarch's Initiative:

BAGHDAD / Aswat al-Iraq: Iraq's National Alliance and the Kurdistan Blocs Coalition have issued a joint statement on Sunday saying that the settlement of the government's crisis must be solved locally, in their first official reaction towards the initiative of the Saudi Monarch, Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz.

Both Coalitions have issued a joint statement, read by the leader of the Islamic al-Daawa Party, Hassan al-Suneid, expressing "appreciation for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, expressing their position that the Iraqi political leaderships have received the said Initiative with a spirit of appreciation and keenness by the Brothren."

But, both Coalitions have expressed "strong rejection of the initiative," saying that "Iraqi leaders are working within the initiative of Kurdistan Region's President, Massoud Barzani, towards the formation of a government of partnership and national concord, representing all trends of the Iraqi people."

The statement, which Sunaid said was issued by the National Alliance and the Kurdistan Blocs Coalition had reiterated "confidence of the representatives of the people have reached the final stages in their dialogues to form such government." adding that the "Iraqi parliament would resume its session soon to elect the three leading State posts, according to the constitution."

"The Saudi initiative shall complicate things once again and postpone the process of forming the new Iraqi government," Sunaid said, reiterating that "the Iraqi political leaders have begun to reach a fruitful national consensus in its current meetings."

On his part, the leader in the Islamic Daawa Party and Member of

the State of Law Coalition, Walid al-Hilly, told Aswat al-Iraq: "Our position is clear towards the Saudi initiative, which was not to attend the meeting (proposed in the initiative)."

The Saudi Monarch, King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz had called on Saturday night on Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and the leaders of the Iraqi political blocs to meeting in Riyadh after the forthcoming Eid al-Ad'ha, under the umbrella of the Arab League, to overcome the crisis of forming the new Iraqi government.

The semi-official Saudi news Agency had pointed out that King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz had called on Iraqi President, Jalal Talabani and all Iraqi political parties which participated in Iraq's March 7th nationwide elections and other political groups to attend his proposed Riyadh meeting after the end of the Haj (Pilgrimage) occasion, under the auspices of the Arab league, in order to reach a settlement for the issue of the Iraqi government's formation.

The Saudi Monarch had reiterated that the current circumstances "necessitate the Iraqis to unify their ranks and overcome their wounds, as well as keeping away the ghost of differences."

King Abdullah also called for unity of the Iraqi political forces, their solidarity and cohesion that would reflect the power of Iraq, also calling for "unity, patience and wisdom, in order to build a powerful dam in the face of those who try to create differences, whatever their motives might be, in order to restore the building of the Rafidain (Mesopotamia) Homeland, that had been and still is supported by its Arab brethren, forming a strong dam against differences and games that serve nobody but the enemies of the (Islamic) Nation."

Kurdish group claims responsibility for suicide bombing in Istanbul

AP Associated Press

November 4, 2010 / Suzan Fraser, Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — A Kurdish militant group claimed responsibility for a suicide attack that wounded 32 people in Istanbul over the weekend, a pro-Kurdish news agency reported Thursday.

The Kurdistan Freedom Falcons, an offshoot of the autonomy-seeking Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, claimed responsibility for Sunday's attack, the pro-Kurdish Firat News agency reported on its website. The PKK had denied any role in the suicide bombing Monday, when it extended a unilateral rebel cease-fire until parliamentary elections next summer in hopes of opening a dialogue with Turkish leaders.

The main Kurdish rebel group has always distanced itself from violent attacks by the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons in Turkish cities. The Falcons operate with some autonomy, and it said Thursday it had had no involvement in the PKK's decision to extend the cease-fire and would press ahead with attacks, Firat reported.

Turkish authorities have identified the suicide bomber as 24-year-old Vedat Acar, a Kurd trained in a Kurdish rebel camp in the Hakurk area in northern Iraq, Turkish media reported Thursday. The Falcons said Acar was a senior member of their group, according to the Firat agency.

Firat quoted Dogan Baz, a spokesman for the Falcons' group, which is known by its Kurdish acronym TAK, as saying Acar had "organized the attack and acted on his own initiative."

"As long as actions aimed against the Kurdish people and its values continue, the TAK will continue with its actions," the group said.



AP — Police forensic officers inspect the scene after an explosion in Taksim square where riot police were

Baz said Sunday's attack, in Istanbul's Taksim square, was aimed at police rather than civilians. It wounded 15 riot police officers and 17 passers-by.

Kurdish rebels have been fighting for autonomy mainly in the Kurdish-dominated southeast since 1984. The Falcons surfaced after the capture of Kurdish rebel chief Abdullah Ocalan in 1999.

The Falcons are known to be recruiting former Kurdish rebels as well as Kurdish youth who have migrated to big cities such as Istanbul, authorities say.

The conflict has killed tens of thousands of people. The rebels and Kurdish militants have also carried out numerous bombings and suicide attacks around the country.

TODAYS ZAMAN

2 November 2010

KCK prolongs cease-fire until next year s elections

ISMAIL AVCI

The Kurdish Communities Union (KCK), the urban arm of the terrorist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), has announced that they will be prolonging a unilateral cease-fire that ends on Oct. 31 until the 2011 general elections. The KCK said that if the Turkish state also stands by the cease-fire, it could turn into a permanent truce.

The KCK's statement was posted yesterday on the website of a news agency affiliated with the group. The KCK said that Turkey has entered a crucial phase to solve the Kurdish question, defending

that five steps were needed for a truly democratic solution and lasting peace. These are, the KCK said, Ending military and political operations [against the PKK], release of Kurdish politicians under arrest, allowing PKK's jailed leader Abdullah Ocalan to actively participate in the process and bring the currently ongoing dialogue up to the level of full negotiations, the establishment of a constitution and a fact-finding commission to help the process unwind and the abolishment of the country's ten percent election threshold for parliamentary representation of political parties.

The announcement comes a day after a suicide bombing in Istanbul

wounded 32 people, half of them police. The police are still investigating the attack but there have been no official announcement about who was responsible for the attack. No one has claimed responsibility.

In related developments, co-chairwoman of the Democratic Society Congress (DTK) and a former member of the now-defunct Democratic Society Party (DTP) Aysel Tuluk yesterday went to the Omrali Island, where PKK chief Ocalan is being held, to talk to him in her capacity as his lawyer. Ocalan's other lawyers Mehmet Sabirtas, Sebahattin Kaya and Obrahim Bilmez accompanied Tuluk. The meeting, which was still underway as Today's Zaman went to print, is crucial in the process. Tuluk had intended to go last week, but her trip to the island was canceled due to adverse weather conditions.

In church massacre, 'spirit of Iraq' is victim

BAGHDAD

Survivors and families weep for their dead, and for their cultural mosaic

BY ANTHONY SHADID

Blood was still on the walls of Our Lady of Salvation Church on Monday. Scraps of flesh remained between the pews. But for survivors of the worst massacre of Iraqi Christians since the war began here in 2003, the attack went deeper than the toll of human wreckage: A fusillade of grenades, bullets and suicide vests had unraveled yet another thread of the country's once eclectic fabric.

"We've lost part of our soul now," said Rudy Khalid, a 16-year-old Christian who lived across the street. He shook his head. "Our destiny, no one knows what to say of it."

A critic might argue that the attention on the 58 dead — all but seven of them hostages — was unseemly. Since the American invasion of Iraq, so many thousands more have died here, Sunni Muslims and Shiite Muslims, and far too few of them have generated the outrage expressed Monday. But no one seemed to argue that Christian blood was being valued more than Muslim blood this day. Rather, many mourned what the massacre meant for a country that once represented a remarkable entrepôt of beliefs, customs and traditions that glided across boundaries gracefully ill-defined.

The massacre seemed to draw another border in a country of identities hardened by war, occupation and deprivation. Nearly all of Iraq's Jews long ago left, many harassed by a xenophobic government. Iraq's Christians have dwindled. Once numbering 800,000 to 1.4 million, at least half are thought to have emigrated since 2003, their leaders say.

"They came to kill Iraq, not Iraqis," said Bassam Sami, who huddled in a room in the church for four hours before security forces managed to free him. "They came to kill the spirit of Iraq. They came to kill the reason to live, every dream that you want to make true."

Down the street was Rudy Khalid, as upset as he was anxious at a country that seems to grasp at the mirage of normalcy, fleeting as it might be, only to turn away in disgust at the resilience of violence. "No one has any answers for us," he said.

On the morning after security forces stormed the Catholic church, freeing hostages but leaving far more dead and



A coffin Monday outside the Roman Catholic church in Baghdad that was attacked the day before. Confusion still reigned over what happened as the security forces moved in.

wounded behind, there were no answers. Not in the statements of outrage from the Iraqi leaders, themselves blamed for the dysfunction of the Iraqi state. Not from Pope Benedict XVI, who condemned the "absurd and ferocious violence." Not from security officials, whose accounts contradicted other stories and prompted suggestions that they might have inadvertently worsened the carnage. Most of all, not from the survivors, one of whom said the gunmen who seized the church Sunday evening had only one task in mind. "They came to kill, kill, kill," Mr. Sami said.

Even the police who stood guard at the church, its doors barricaded with barbed wire and its walls lined with roses, orange trees and a plant Iraqis call "the ears of an elephant," did not know quite what to say. One discouraged anyone from entering the shattered doors, under a portico that celebrated the glory of God "on the land of peace."

"Blood, flesh and bones," he described the scene. "You can't bear the smell."

Knots of survivors and their friends and relatives stood in the street amid bullet casings and wrappers for bandages, some of them crying. The Rev. Meyassr al-Qasboutros was among them. His cousin, Wassim Sabih, was one of the two priests killed. Survivors said he was pushed to the ground as he

"We've lost part of our soul now. Our destiny, no one knows what to say of it."

grasped a crucifix and pleaded with the gunmen to spare the worshippers. He was then executed, his body riddled with bullets.

"We must die here," Mr. Qasboutros said defiantly. "We can't leave this country."

Some survivors echoed his sentiments. "If we didn't love this country, we wouldn't have stayed here," Radi Climis, an 18-year-old who wore a floppy bandage on his forehead, where he was wounded by shrapnel from a grenade thrown by gunmen.

But many others looked in disbelief when asked whether they would stay in a place still so unsettled, so dangerous.

"Why? That's no question to ask," said Stephen Karomi, who had come to Baghdad a day before from Karakosh, a troubled Christian town in the north. "Everyone wants to leave for one reason: to protect ourselves and to keep our sanity."

Confusion still reigned Monday over what happened in the attack, which was claimed by a front for Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, a homegrown group led by Iraqis.

An American official, who was not au-

thorized to speak on the record, said security forces had made the decision to storm the church after coming to believe that the assailants had begun killing the hostages. Had they not, he said, the toll would have been even worse. "Our information was the hostage takers had begun to systematically execute hostages," he said.

But Interior Ministry officials and survivors offered other accounts. One official said 23 of the hostages were killed when two of the gunmen detonated suicide vests as security forces stormed the church. Another official confirmed that account but said many hostages were killed soon after the gunmen entered the church. An estimated 6 to 15 gunmen seized the building.

"We received orders to raid the church, so when we did, they blew themselves up and killed many, but they had already killed a number of civilians before the raid, those cowards," said Jihad

al-Jabiri, a senior official in the Interior Ministry.

Several survivors said that many of the casualties happened when the gunmen entered and began firing randomly at people, church icons and even windows. They described a ferocity on the part of the gunmen, some of them speaking dialects from other Arab countries, as though the sight of the church's interior had enraged them.

"They seemed insane," said Ban Abdullah, a 50-year-old survivor.

Her daughter, Marie Freij, was shot in the right leg as the gunmen entered. She lay in her own blood for more than three hours.

"I thought I would make it, but even if I didn't, I was in the church, and it would have been O.K.," she said from her hospital bed in Baghdad.

Before the gunmen entered, the Rev. Rafael Qutaimi herded many of the survivors into a back room, where they bar-

ricaded themselves behind two bookshelves.

"Peace be upon you, Mary," some prayed. "God in heaven, help us," others said. In time, the gunmen learned they were there. Unable to break in, they hurled four grenades inside, killing four people and wounding many more, survivors said.

Mr. Sami was lucky. He escaped the back room without any visible wounds. But on Monday, he listed his friends who had died the day before: Raghda, John, Rita, Father Wassim, Fadi, George, Nabil and Abu Saba. "A long list," he said.

He shook his head, growing angry. "Why was Father Wassim killed? I don't know," Mr. Sami said. "Why was Nabil killed? I don't know."

He turned silent, and his eyes softened with the trace of tears.

Herald ^{INTERNATIONAL} Tribune NOVEMBER 3, 2010

Hiker freed by Iran says group was directed to cross border

American challenges military report that said they strayed from Iraq

BY NEIL MACFARQUHAR

The three Americans accused of espionage by Iran stepped off an unmarked dirt road — inadvertently crossing from Iraq — only because a border guard of unknown nationality gestured for them to approach, according to Sarah E. Shourd, the only one to be released.

Ms. Shourd, a teacher freed in September after nearly 14 months in Ev-in Prison, contacted The New York Times, whose global edition is the International Herald Tribune, to give her fullest public account yet of the capture of the three in July 2009.

Ms. Shourd, 32, said she wanted to correct the gathering false impression, fueled by a classified U.S. military report made public last week by WikiLeaks, as well as earlier U.S. and British news reports, that the three were detained inside Iraq and forced across the border.

Her comments came Sunday, less than a week before the scheduled start of the trial of the other two Americans, her fiancé, Shane M. Bauer, and their friend Joshua F. Fattal, both 28.

But Iran announced Monday that the proceedings would be postponed because Ms. Shourd was not summoned to appear, according to a report by the



SHANNON STAPLETON/REUTERS

Sarah Shourd was imprisoned nearly 14 months. On Monday, Iran delayed the trial of 2 other Americans including her fiancé.

state-run Islamic Republic News Agency cited by Bloomberg News. Prosecutor General Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei did not announce a new trial date.

What seemed like a casual encounter on the fateful day has mushroomed into a lengthy incarceration and an extended cause of tension in Iranian-American relations.

When they approached the armed border guard who had gestured to them, Ms. Shourd said, "he pointed to the ground and said 'Iran' and pointed to the trail we had been on before he waved to us, then said 'Iraq,'"

"We did not actually enter Iran until he gestured to us," Ms. Shourd said by telephone from her home in Oakland, California. "We were confused and worried and wanted to go back."

The U.S. State Department has main-

tained that it did not know how their arrest transpired. "We don't know whether they had two feet on one side or the other or one foot on each," the State Department spokesman, Philip J. Crowley, said. "All we know is Iran has held them far too long."

But the U.S. military report, by an anonymous official, that appeared on WikiLeaks said that the three Americans were definitely captured in Iraq. "The lack of coordination on the part of these hikers, particularly after being forewarned, indicates an intent to agitate and create publicity regarding international policies on Iran," it said.

Ms. Shourd said she was mystified by that conclusion. The three had no idea they were near the border and had not been warned about anything, she said. "Those claims are illogical and unsubstantiated," she said. "It is ridiculous to claim that mountain climbers would be agitating along a border."

According to Ms. Shourd's account, it began as a relaxed overnight camping trip, undertaken by three reunited friends from the University of California, Berkeley, happy to escape to the fresh, green Kurdish mountains from the sweltering Syrian plains.

She had been teaching English to

"He pointed to the ground and said 'Iran.'"

Iraqi refugees in Damascus, where Mr. Mr. Bauer was working as a freelance journalist while both studied Arabic. Mr.

Fattal came to visit, and they set off to Kurdistan after a friend raved about the place and a Web site they read said the area was safe.

Various Kurds suggested they visit Ahmed Awa, a spectacular mountain waterfall where local people camp overnight. The three Americans had no idea it abutted Iran, Ms. Shourd said, and they twice encountered Kurdish peshmerga troops who greeted them warmly. The music and laughter around scores of campfires at the waterfall gave no sense of imminent danger.

The next day, they trekked up a dirt road past the waterfall. After a lunch-time nap, a soldier with a gun appeared on a ridge above them and gestured for them to keep climbing. He was the first person they saw on the mountain, Ms. Shourd said.

About 500 paces farther up, with nary a sign to indicate the border, she said, a guard standing by a stone hut gestured for them to approach. A news report that a shot had been fired over their heads was wrong, she said.

At a second, larger structure, accord-

ing to Ms. Shourd, more guards who were repeating in Persian, "Mushkil nadereh," or "no problem," blocked their attempt to run away and ignored their pleas to return to Iraq. Four days and several moves later, they ended up in Evin Prison, where Mr. Bauer and Mr. Fattal remain.

"I think we were extremely unlucky," Ms. Shourd said, concluding that their one mistake was hiking too far. "I guess I never believed there would be so many hundreds of people close to a border."

BAGHDAD

FROM NEWS REPORTS

Al Qaeda's front group in Iraq has threatened more attacks on Christians after a siege on a Baghdad church that left 58 people dead, linking the warning to claims that Christians in Egypt are holding women captive for converting to Islam.

Egyptians were quick to condemn the threat from the front group, the Islamic State of Iraq, an umbrella group that includes Al Qaeda in Iraq and other allied Sunni insurgent factions. Security was reinforced at churches in Egypt, where Christians make up 10 percent of the 78 million people, the biggest Christian population in the Middle East.

"This threat is not directed only at Christians but at the Egyptian state," said Father Abdel Maseeh Baset of the Coptic Orthodox Church, the biggest Christian community in Egypt. "Egypt's security ended terrorism in the 1990s and it is capable today of eradicating these threats."

The Muslim Brotherhood, a banned group that long ago renounced violence to bring political change, condemned the threat and said security forces could stop militants. Its own members are regularly rounded up by the authorities.

"Egypt's security apparatus has three decades of experience in stemming jihadist activity and penetrating extremist groups," said Abdel Moneim Abul Futuh, a senior member of the Muslim Brotherhood. "I doubt they would fail in handling such threats."

But even if the Iraqi group has no allies or network in Egypt to carry out its threat, some said it could stir radical Islamists into action against the Christian community.

"That kind of call may find some receptive ears in Egypt, but it won't find the receptive ears of an existing organization capable of striking with the kind of sophistication that we see in Iraq," said Issandr El Amrani, a political analyst based in Cairo.

Bishop Morkos of Shubra al-Khaima in Cairo echoed the comments: "The massacre will not lead to a rise in sectarian strife in Egypt, but it could catalyze dangerous attempts by extremists."

Islamists in Egypt contend that the

From Iraq, threats toward Christians



SHIHO FUKADA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Residents of Baghdad returned to places like the Majid market on Wednesday, a day after bombings and mortar strikes across the city killed dozens of people.

two women identified by the Iraqi group, both wives of priests, converted to Islam and were being detained by the church. A priest denied this and said they were in monasteries for their safety.

"I think those responsible for the massacre were looking for a justification for what they did by linking it to Egypt's church," said Wasim Badia, a Coptic deacon.

In announcing its reasons for its attack on Sunday, the Islamic State of Iraq said the Coptic Church had until Tuesday to release the women. It also demanded the release of its members held in Iraqi prisons.

With the passing of the deadline, the group said its fighters would attack Christians wherever they could be reached.

Over the past few years in Egypt, arguments over conversions in both directions have worsened tensions between Muslims and Christians, which were already high over issues like the construction of new churches. The two communities generally live in peace, though clashes and attacks have taken place.

The conversion issue has become a rallying point for hard-line Islamists in Egypt. Youssef Sidhom, editor in chief of Al Watani, a Coptic newspaper, said militants were using techniques different

from those used by Egyptian groups in the 1990s.

"Handling Al Qaeda threats and its new technology requires higher levels of security monitoring and scrutiny," he said. "These groups see that they penetrated places like Iraq and think they can penetrate Egypt."

He pointed to the interception of two parcel bombs on cargo planes in Britain and Dubai last week.

Though analysts say the militant threat in Egypt has eased, tensions between Muslims and Christians periodically emerge. Frequent security sweeps against any Islamist activity reflect official concerns that, without vigilance, militants might regroup in Egypt.

The Baghdad church siege horrified Iraq's Christian community, hundreds of whom gathered Tuesday for a memorial service in Baghdad. One of the officials read a letter from Pope Benedict XVI to the crowd.

"For years the violence hasn't stopped hitting this country, and Christians are becoming the target of these cruel terrorist attacks," the letter read.

The attack on Sunday was the deadliest ever recorded against Iraq's Christians, whose numbers have plummeted as they fled to other countries after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. (AP, REUTERS)

Baghdad silent, US pans new KRG deals with American oil firms

By Ben Lando of
Iraq Oil Report

BAGHDAD, Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government has signed at least five deals with two big American oil companies, asserting its oil autonomy as the central government, usually a vocal critic, is hushed to avoid upsetting coalition talks eight months after a disputed national election.

The U.S. government, which has regularly condemned the KRG's now more than 30 deals for what it views as furthering the Kurd-Baghdad divide over oil development and other constitutional issues, also warned Marathon.

The United States position remains that it is in the interest of all Iraqi parties to enact a set of national laws to govern the development, management, and distribution of Iraq's hydrocarbons resources, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad said in an emailed statement.

We have encouraged all companies, including Marathon, to refrain from signing deals with the KRG independent of the central government's approval, the statement continued, we have consistently advised companies of the significant legal and financial risks they may incur by signing contracts with any party independent of the central government's approval.

Marathon announced Oct. 20 it was awarded a production sharing contract worth 80 percent ownership in two previously open exploration

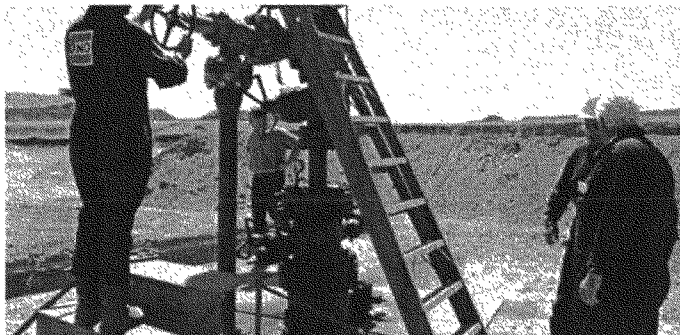
blocks and 25 percent working interest in the Sarsang block, operated by American firm Hillwood Energy, and 20 percent in the Atrush block, operated by Aspect Energy, also a U.S. company.

Iraqi, U.S., and European sources confirmed that other deals have been signed by the KRG, including with Murphy Oil, a Fortune 500 company and one of the bigger American operators. The production sharing contract for at least one block has already been signed and is to be announced Nov. 4. Phone calls and emails to Murphy officials went unanswered.

Two European firms, possibly including Spain's Repsol, and an unnamed Irish company is also said to be in final stage talks for KRG deals.

The KRG deals date back to 2002, but nearly all have been signed since early 2007, a timeframe that signifies a breakdown in talks over key oil legislation. The KRG demands autonomy in developing its oil sector and says Baghdad should pay for them, as long as the revenues from the secret deals it signs are sent to the central government. Baghdad, meanwhile, maintains the central government has the sole right to sign oil contracts and develop oil fields. It has awarded 14 oil and gas deals to foreign oil companies since June 2009 in three transparent auctions — though the contracts still remain secret — to such firms as ExxonMobil and BP in a massive push for production capacity increases.

Those that have signed contracts with the KRG have



Workers at Norwegian oil company DNO's Tawke oil field in June 2008. (BEN LANDO/Iraq Oil Report)

been blacklisted from winning deals from Baghdad as well as purchasing Iraqi crude. Marathon, in fact, required Canada's Western Oil Sands to spin-off its KRG assets into independent Western Zagros before completing a takeover in 2007. Both Marathon and Repsol were pre-qualified to bid in the three auctions but opted for the north.

Netting big name American firms is a strategic move by the KRG, adding prestige to its nascent oil sector and a little stronger standing in its political negotiations. Until now the biggest and most controversial was the contract signed in fall 2007 with Hunt Oil. Led by Ray Hunt, who at the time was an international security advisor to President George W. Bush, the company first denied it discussed the oil deal with U.S. officials in Iraq or Washington, D.C. It was later found that the company was advised by the U.S. not to sign the deal, both because of legal uncertainty and its perceived affect on political discussions.

Political disputes, including but surely not limited to the KRG's

oil contracts, have thus far killed any chance of passing a new oil law that would govern the sector and related laws governing revenue collection and redistribution, a new Iraqi National Oil Company and a reorganization of the oil ministry.

Meanwhile, the Oil Ministry has refused to comment on the new deals. Usually the KRG's announcements of a contract are followed by declarations that the deals violate (Baghdad's interpretation of) the 2005 Constitution.

Sources within the ministry say the silence is on purpose, a directive to ensure Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's attempt to get Kurdistan Alliance support for his second term in office.



Turkey's decades-long conflict with the PKK: Questions & Answers

November 2, 2010 / (Reuters) / By Ayla Jean Yackley

ISTANBUL - Some Turkish security officials have made Kurdish militants the prime suspects in a suicide bombing in central Istanbul on Sunday, but the Kurdistan Workers Party, the main militant group, denied involvement.

No group has claimed responsibility and the attack, which wounded 32 people, has cast renewed attention on one of Europe's longest-running and deadliest conflicts.

Issuing its denial the PKK, which has waged a 26-year armed campaign against the Turkish state, also extended a ceasefire until elections next year.

Turkey, a NATO member and candidate to join the European Union, has so far refused to talk with the PKK, or Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan in Kurdish, though separatist struggles elsewhere in Europe have been subdued through negotiations.

Some 40,000 have died in the Kurdish conflict; nearly 30,000 of them members of the PKK.

Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan has tried to expand Kurdish rights, but his initiative suffered a backlash following images of flag-draped coffins of soldiers killed by the PKK.

The latest PKK ceasefire could create breathing space for Erdogan to renew efforts to resolve the Kurdish question later.

Here are questions and answers about the conflict:

WHAT ARE THE PKK'S MILITARY CAPABILITIES?

The PKK says it is calling the ceasefire when it is at "full strength," but analysts say the group lacks real military capacity. "They have hit-and-run capabilities, but are far from being able to wage battle with the Turkish armed forces," said David Phillips of Columbia University.

The PKK has said it targets military and strategic assets to avoid civilian casualties. Its main tactic is roadside bombs aimed at military convoys in the mainly Kurdish southeast. Less frequently, it has ambushed army outposts in remote areas.

Groups linked with the PKK have attacked urban sites. The Kurdistan Freedom Hawks (TAK) said in June it bombed a military bus that killed five people. TAK also claimed responsibility for a string of bombings in cities between 2006 and 2008.

The PKK itself says it attacked an oil pipeline carrying Iraqi crude to Turkey's Mediterranean coast, most recently in July and August. In August 2008, a bomb the PKK planted on a BP-led <BPL> pipeline carrying Azeri oil knocked out flows for three weeks and drove up global oil prices.

COULD A PKK SPLINTER GROUP BE BEHIND THE LATEST ATTACK?

PKK leaders, based in northern Iraq, deny the movement is fractured, and say its forces are under control. Jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan still runs the movement, they say.

Many observers do not believe that the PKK, which tolerates little internal dissent, is fragmenting. Rather, the PKK trains and retains loose control over TAK and others and uses them

as a shield for less popular tactics, said Gareth Jenkins, an independent Istanbul-based analyst.

"Co-operating with these marginal groups serves the PKK purpose of being able to distance itself if things go wrong, like civilian casualties," he said.

HOW MANY CEASEFIRES HAS THE PKK DECLARED?

The PKK has called eight ceasefires since taking up arms in 1984. In past truces, violence has not completely ceased, though the PKK says it abstains from offensive attacks. For its part, the state has in the past rejected the PKK's one-sided truces and has continued to wage operations. The army has a mandate from parliament to enter northern Iraq in pursuit of the PKK.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO END THE CONFLICT?

A settlement of the fight with the PKK would help ease the planned withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq in 2011 by helping preserve stability in that country's most peaceful region. The PKK has been based mainly in northern Iraq since the 1990s.

Ending the war and improving the plight of Kurds is also essential if Turkey is to meet European Union membership criteria and fulfil its decades-long dream of joining the bloc.

WHAT ARE THE PKK'S DEMANDS?

The PKK has abandoned its fight for an independent homeland for Turkey's 14 million ethnic Kurds and says it is now fighting for greater autonomy and expanded political and cultural rights.

To make the ceasefire permanent, the rebels want the army to quit operations and the government to release 1,500 or so Kurdish politicians and activists held on charges of backing the rebels. The PKK wants an end to a vote threshold of 10 percent that political parties must cross to enter parliament. It has also said Ocalan must participate in any peace process.

WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT DOING TO RESOLVE THE CONFLICT?

The army and government both acknowledge that the Kurdish issue cannot be solved through military means alone. Erdogan last year introduced a "democratic opening" to address Kurdish grievances and encourage peace.

The government has pledged billions of dollars to develop the southeast, where incomes are a quarter of those in affluent western Turkey. It has also eased restrictions on the Kurdish language. Less than 20 years ago, Kurdish was completely banned.

According to sources close to the matter, authorities in recent weeks have held talks with Ocalan, once unthinkable.

But Erdogan may now wait until the 2011 election before making any significant -- and politically risky -- reforms.



France's Trade Minister opens agriculture and environment house in Erbil

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) – France's Trade Minister Anne-Marie Idrac arrived yesterday in Erbil to inaugurate the French House for Agriculture and the Environment. The centre paves the way for French firms to work in agricultural, water and environmental projects in the Kurdistan Region.

Ms Idrac and Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani together cut the ceremonial ribbon to open the House, which is attached to France's Consulate General in Erbil.

President Barzani said, "I would like to warmly welcome the Minister and thank the French Ambassador and Consul General for today's important event. France and the Kurdistan Region have enjoyed a historic friendship, from the days of De Gaulle until the present day."

He added, "During our recent official visit to Paris we signed a letter of intent to increase our cooperation with France in a number of important sectors, with special attention to agriculture. I invite French firms to help the Kurdistan Region develop its agricultural sector and other aspects of our economy, and I thank the Minister for her visit."

Minister Idrac said that France is willing to provide technical cooperation and professional expertise in the Kurdistan Region and throughout Iraq, and emphasised the importance of agricultural production and sustainable development. She said that she was most pleased to participate in this opening with President Barzani, and hoped that the opening would lead the way for the activity of French companies in the Kurdistan Region.

Ms Idrac was joined by France's Ambassador to Iraq Boris Bouillon and several officials and business representatives. The Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) Deputy Prime Minister Azad Barwari and other KRG ministers also participated.

A representative of the French firm Canal du Provence later signed an agreement with the Minister for Agriculture and



Water Resources Jamal Haider to develop a master plan for integrated water management in the Kurdistan Region. The France's Trade Ministry is providing funding for the project.

The House for Agriculture and the Environment will facilitate the participation of French firms in agricultural, water-related, and environmental projects throughout the Kurdistan Region.

The Kurdistan Region rolled out a five-year plan to renew the agriculture sector in 2009, and the KRG has pursued cooperation with international companies which possess modern technology and expertise in all aspects of food and agriculture. Earlier this year President Barzani conducted an official visit to Paris, meeting with President Nicolas Sarkozy and other officials, and signing a letter of intent that outlined the direction of further cooperation.

Iraq's insurgency Another spasm

Baghdad -

A wave of atrocities raises the spectre of a return to sectarian mayhem

BAGHDADIS were badly shaken this week when dozens of Christians died in a massacre in a church in the city's centre, followed two days later by at least 14 car bombs exploding in mostly Shia areas of the capital, killing another 100 or so people. The

atrocities were presumed to have been the work of Iraqi Sunni groups tied to al-Qaeda. After eight months of vicious political infighting since March's inconclusive election, tension was already high. The strain on Iraq's fledgling security services and fragile institutions has been mounting.

Yet the attacks, though the worst for two months, were not that unusual. In August, just before American combat forces left the country, more than 20 car-bombings and other attacks occurred simultaneously across Iraq. Al-Qaeda, regenerated after two of its leaders were killed earlier this year, seems to be concentrating on spectacular attacks every few months. American commanders have often said that assaults would fall only to an "irreducible minimum". But two large-scale attacks in a week, as well as a bomb in a Shia area in Diyala, a mixed Shia-Sunni province north of Baghdad, where another 25 civilians were killed, raise the

spectre of widespread sectarian violence if a national-unity government is not formed soon.

Despite such recent setbacks, the burgeoning Iraqi army and police, numbering more than 400,000 in all, have been coping better. They have generally contained the insurgency. The violence is still far less intense than it was three years ago.

But the security forces are plainly unable to stop the occasional big attack. Factionalism does not help, with branches of the forces loyal to different political leaders and ministries. Intelligence gathering, a crucial tool in counter-terrorism, is still patchy, because different branches are reluctant to share information with each other. American forces still share intelligence across the board, but have shifted many of their best people and units to Afghanistan.

In particular, the Sunnis are still underrepresented within the

intelligence services. The Awakening Councils, drawn largely from Sunni former insurgents, whose recruitment by the American army was instrumental in lessening sectarian violence during the American military surge in 2007, have not been adequately incorporated into the Iraqi forces. As a result of the ensuing resentment, extremism may once again become more tolerated among Sunnis. Last year's budget freeze after the fall in oil prices in 2008 has left little money for training forces in intelligence. A new budget cannot be passed until a government is in place.

The incumbent prime minister, Nuri al-Maliki, and his Shia-led State of Law group are still trying to build a ruling coalition, as is his chief rival, Iyad Allawi, whose mainly Sunni-backed group won two more seats than Mr Maliki's. Mr Maliki was recently boosted by the endor-

sement, with Iran's approval, of an anti-Western, Shia religious party led by Muqtada al-Sadr, a fiery populist. The Kurdish parties are back as kingmakers but have a long list of tough demands still to be met. After a court ruling, it has been decided that members of parliament must meet on November 8th to choose a speaker, who might in turn speed up the search for a new government.

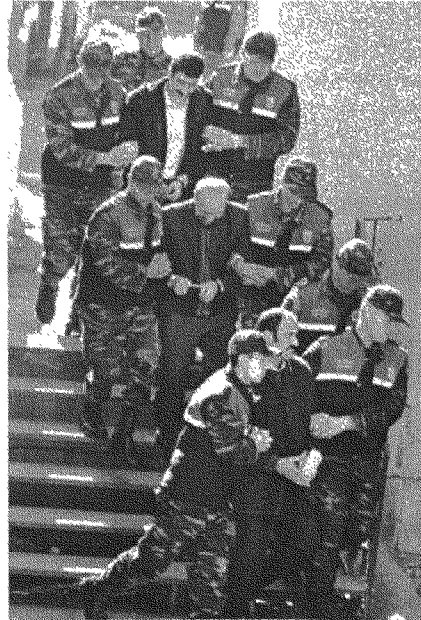
No one is betting on one soon. But one thing is sure: if Mr Allawi fails to get a top job, bringing his group into government, the disaffected Sunni minority will make it much harder for the security forces to prevent the sort of atrocities that occurred this week—and which, if they again become frequent, could plunge the country back into wholesale sectarian violence. ■

Tensions erupt over Kurdish in Turkish court

ISTANBUL – A Diyarbakır court was forced to recess during a trial of the alleged urban wing of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, on Thursday, after arguments erupted regarding Kurdish being spoken during the proceedings, news agencies reported.

When Bayram Altun, deputy head of the shuttered pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party, or DTP, began to read a defense statement in Kurdish, the head judge had his microphone turned off. "The defendant is making his defense in an unknown language," he reportedly said.

Following this eruption, defendant Ramazan Morkoç also reportedly addressed the court in Kurdish, and then in Turkish. "You cannot insult the language of a people," he said. The head judge moved to expel Morkoç from the courtroom, sparking protests from the other defendants who asked to be expelled from courtroom collectively.



Gendermerie officials bring suspects in the Kurdistan Communities Union, or KCK, case to the courthouse. DHA photo

When the judge decided to remove all the defendants from the courtroom the defense lawyers objected. Lawyer Tahir Elçi said the suspects' request to defend themselves in Kurdish is not a political request but a legal request. Elçi said calling Kurdish an "unknown language" would have heavy political consequences.

The case against the urban alleged wing of the PKK, the Kurdistan Communities Union, or KCK, started last month. Among the more than 150 suspects are mayors of several southeastern Anatolian cities elected from the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party, or BDP, as well as alleged PKK members. The suspects are charged with being members of the KCK.

The PKK is recognized as a terrorist group by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.

Kurd-Arab Tensions Are Running Higher After Recent Incidents in Kirkuk

By NAWZAD MAHMOUD

SULAIMANI, Iraqi Kurdistan -- According to the evidence gathered by the Kurdish security forces in Kirkuk, the oil-rich city is facing a major threat as al-Qaeda fighters, hard-line Arabs and other groups are getting closer together in order to oppose Kurds.

A Kurdish security source in Kirkuk told Rudaw that "90 percent of the attacks in Kirkuk are aimed at Kurds and the perpetrators are Arabs." There appears to be a consensus on this among Kurdish security sources in Kirkuk who say "Kurds are the target of terrorists and hard-line Arabs in the city."

Sherzad Mofari, the chief of Oruba police station in Kirkuk said, "Now the chauvinist Arabs, terrorists and extremist Turcomans all are standing against Kurds. We have been saying for quite some time that the influx of Arabs into Kirkuk should be stopped because we have arrested dozens of terrorist groups whose members were from those incoming Arabs."

"More than a thousand Arab families have entered Kirkuk under the cover of immigration. There are tens of terrorist groups among them."

"We have lots of evidence pointing out that those Arabs are trying to buy houses worth 60 million Iraqi Dinars (nearly \$50,000) and they are terrorists. How can they buy those houses if they are not backed by terrorists?" said Mofari.

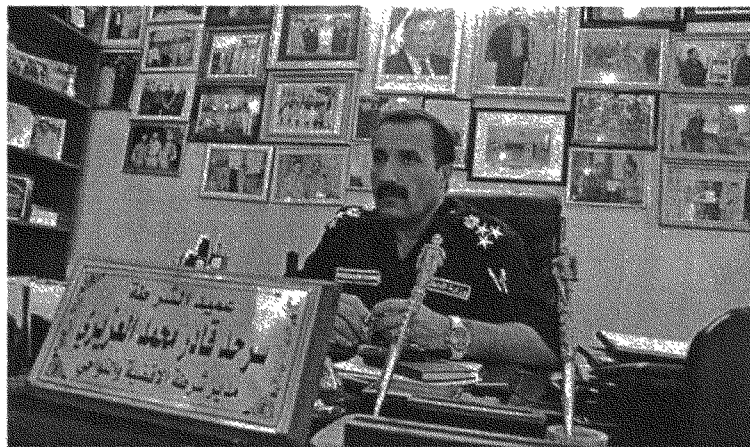
One of the armed men Mofari had recently arrested had confessed that he was a member of a "terrorist" group. The group had killed one person and injured another one in Kirkuk.

"The enemies of Kurds have everything but helicopters and chemical weapons," said Sherzad.

Since the preparations for the population census started, violence in Kirkuk has increased. There has been even a further increase since Kurds voiced opposition to removing the ethnicity item from the census questionnaire. Among other incidents in Kirkuk did recently a big armed robbery attempt take place in the city's jewelry-stores area and two Kurdish girls were kidnapped.

The militant Ansar al-Sunnah group attacked the jewelry stores in Kirkuk market leading to clashes with security forces that left several people dead and injured among the attackers, the police and store owners.

On his part, Brig. Gen. Sarhad Qadir, a high-ranking police official in



Brig. Gen. Sarhad Qadir, Top police officer for Kirkuk's countryside, said the insurgent groups have connections with the officials inside the city.--- Photo by Rudaw.

Kirkuk said the insurgents have connections with the officials inside the city.

He said while the directorate of Kirkuk police was just 100 meters away from the site of the armed robbery in the jewelry-stores area, the police forces in the directorate took no action. As a result Brig. Gen. Qadir had to send in his forces to fight the assailants.

"How did three cars full of armed men enter the city? What were the checkpoints doing? Who allowed them to enter," Qadir said asking about the Ansar al-Sunnah members who attacked the jewelry stores.

He called for a committee to be formed to investigate all security and police units in the city.

"Even among the security forces, the stations run by Arab officials are not as serious as the ones run by the Kurds," claimed Qadir calling this an alarm bell.

Sherzad Mofari confirmed Qadir's words saying the hard-line Arabs and even the United Nations office in Kirkuk have complained against him.

"Let everybody know that the hard-line Arabs in Kirkuk have relations with the terrorists and al-Qaeda here in order to oppose Kurds. And the latest incidents prove that," said Qadir.

Ahmed Askari, a member of Kirkuk provincial council said an Arab member of the body has defended "terrorists" numerous times. He said there is no "concrete evidence" to prove the guilt of some of the detainees.

"We hear words from some council members that make them smell like terrorists. Someone who defends terrorists has to be one himself," Askari said.

Kurdish sources say in the recent years around 8,000 Arab families have

moved into Kirkuk paving the way for violent activities in the city.

Gen. Jamal Tahir, Kirkuk's police chief says the Kurdish politicians need to work on the issue because the security forces can only try to provide security.

Halo Najat, the head of Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)'s security apparatus in Kirkuk, said "There is now coordination between terrorists and some of the officials in Kirkuk against Kurds. We have got evidence but cannot reveal them."

The KDP is one of the two main Kurdish parties that run the autonomous region of Kurdistan and has a major presence in Kirkuk.

He said there is a renewed process of re-Arabization in Kirkuk saying it is even worse than what Saddam Hussein did during his 35 years of ruling the country.

Unlike the security officials, Kirkuk's political and administrative officials see the situation differently and say the situation in the city is tied to the security and political situation in the whole country.

Rebwar Talabani, the deputy head of Kirkuk provincial council believes the chaos engulfing Iraq as a result in the delay in forming the country's new government has spread to Kirkuk as well.

Rejecting claims that the armed groups and the hard-line Arabs have joined efforts to oppose Kurds, Talabani said, "They are not only opposing the Kurds the threat is directed at all ethnicities in Kirkuk." ■

Telegraph 4 November 2010

Iran arrest 'Kurdish rebels who worked for British-based militant'

Iran has arrested four Kurdish rebels of a banned group who worked for a militant based in Britain, according to reports.

MARIWAN

Majid Bakhtiar, Hajeer Ebrahimi, Loqman Moradi and Zanyar Moradi who are members of the banned Komala group were arrested in Iran's western city of Marivan, the English-language Press TV said on its website.

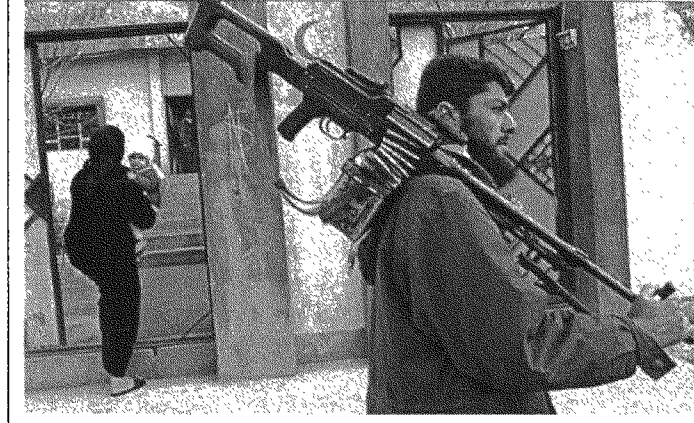
The five are accused of carrying out five assassinations in Iran in the past two years, the report said.

It claimed that they have confessed to getting orders in the Iraqi city of Sulaimaniyah from their commander, who is residing in Britain, and added that documents and weapons were confiscated from them.

The report described the alleged commander as "one of the commanders of the Komala terrorist group which has been perpetuating several assassinations in the western cities of Iran since the Islamic revolution in 1979."

The four men claimed "they were originally promised \$20,000 (£12,300) for each murder, but they only received \$8,000 (£5,000) after accomplishing the mission," the report said.

The British government dismissed



A fighter of the Islamic group of Kurdistan 'Komala Islamy' carries his machine gun
Photo: AP

the allegations as "another in a long line of slurs against the United Kingdom from the government of Iran."

In early September, Iranian security forces killed four members of Komala in the Iranian province of Kordestan.

Western Iran, which has a sizeable Kurdish population, has seen deadly clashes in recent years between security forces and Kurdish rebel groups operating from bases in neighbouring Iraq.

In May, Iran hanged four Kurds, including a woman, after convicting them of belonging to another outlawed Kurdish group, the Party of Free Life of

Kurdistan (PJAK).

Unlike the United States, Britain still has diplomatic relations with Iran.

The head of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service, John Sawers, said in a speech last week that "intelligence-led operations" were needed to prevent Iran getting a nuclear bomb, a comment interpreted in Tehran as proof that Britain was using subterfuge against the government.

REUTERS

Blasts target Iraq Christians, 3 dead, dozens hurt

BAGHDAD - November 10, 2010 / (Reuters)

BOMBINGS and mortar attacks targeting Christians killed at least three people and wounded over two dozen in Baghdad on Wednesday, Iraqi security sources said, 10 days after a brazen assault on a Catholic cathedral that killed 52.

Attackers detonated at least 14 roadside bombs across the Iraqi capital and a mortar round struck in the southern Doura district within a two-hour period, all apparently targeting Christians, an Interior Ministry source said.

"These operations, which targeted Christians, came as a continuation of the attack that targeted the Salvation church," the source said.

An Iraqi police source put the toll at three dead and at least 32

wounded in attacks. Some of the attacks began late on Tuesday, the source said. Both sources asked not to be identified.

Tensions have been running high since a March parliamentary election that produced no clear winner, leaving Iraq's Shi'ite, Sunni and Kurdish political factions jockeying for position in a new government and raising fears of renewed violence.

Sunni Islamist insurgents have claimed responsibility for a string of recent attacks that appeared aimed at reigniting the sectarian warfare that ravaged Iraq after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion and which began to abate three years ago.

Fifty-two hostages and police were killed on Oct. 31 in a raid on the Our Lady of Salvation Church in central Baghdad, prompting vows from the Iraqi government to step up security for Iraq's Christian minority.

That attack was followed two days later by a series of explosions across mainly Shi'ite areas in the city in which at least 63 people died.

Le génocide kurde vu d'Irak

CINÉMA « Les Fleurs de Kirkouk », premier grand film tourné en Irak depuis la chute de Saddam Hussein, a marqué le festival du cinéma de Rome.

RICHARD HEUZÉ
ROME

Cest la première fois que le génocide kurde perpétré par l'armée irakienne (180 000 morts dont 6 000 gazés à Halabja le 16 mars 1988), épisode tragique de l'histoire jusqu'à présent oublié par le cinéma, est porté à l'écran dans un film qui n'est pas un documentaire.

Le réalisateur, le Kurde ira-

nien Fariborz Kamkari, présente son long-métrage *Les Fleurs de Kirkouk* comme la « grande histoire d'un amour interdit » sur le front de guerre entre deux médecins, une jeune femme de la haute bourgeoisie de Bagdad, Najla, et un insurgé kurde, Mokhtar. Scènes dramatiques au milieu de la mitraille, directement inspirées par Roberto Rossellini, le maître à penser de Kamkari, qui dit avoir voulu exalter le rôle des femmes courageuses dans les sociétés musulmanes.

Marjana Alaoui, la jeune Marocaine qui interprète Najla, se souvient d'un tournage « bouleversant au quotidien. Dans un camp, nous tournions devant un grand mur criblé d'éclats de balles. Quand je suis arrivée sur les lieux, j'étais loin d'imaginer un tel génocide ».

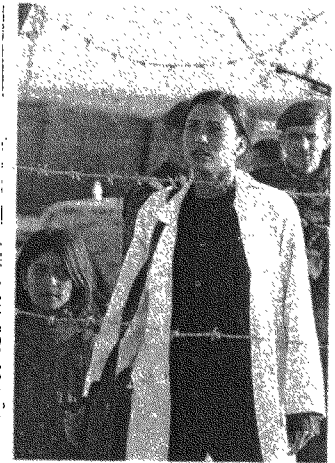
Le film a été tourné près de Kirkouk, dans des villages ra-

sés par l'armée irakienne et avec pour figurants des habitants qui ont eux-mêmes connu les horreurs de la guerre. Les soldats de Saddam Hussein, cruels et violents, ont été choisis parmi les forces armées du régime actuel.

« Quand j'ai pensé à le tourner il y a trois ans, cela semblait une folie », explique Fariborz Kamkari. Et pourtant les autorisations pour tourner sur les lieux des massacres lui ont été accordées.

Huit nationalités se sont re-

trouvées sur le plateau de cette coproduction internationale (Italie, Suisse et Irak). « Les Kurdes ont tourné avec passion, ajoute le réalisateur. Une fois qu'ils ont compris ce que nous voulions montrer, ils ont coopéré avec enthousiasme. » ■



Marjana Aaloui interprète Najla, une femme médecin sur le front de guerre. DR

Le Monde

Mercredi 10 novembre 2010

Atatürk reste le « père de la nation », et son mausolée est « la Mecque turque »

On a tiré sur Atatürk, début octobre. Sur une sculpture géante de 42 m, taillée dans un rocher, dessinant le visage du fondateur de la Turquie moderne. Cet extravagant « mont Rushmore turc », situé près d'Izmir, a été la cible d'un vandale. « Personne ne peut détruire l'unité de notre pays », s'est ému Aziz Kocaoglu, le maire d'Izmir, troisième ville du pays et bastion des « laïcs » radicaux. « Je demande aux autorités policières de faire la lumière sur cet acte. Je le dis avec honte, mais je suis prêt à aller près de la statue d'Atatürk pour monter la garde. »

Soixante-douze ans après la mort de Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, le 10 novembre 1938, le culte qui lui est voué ne faiblit pas. Les Turcs célèbrent, ce mercredi, l'anniversaire de la mort du « Père de la nation ». A 9 h 05, pendant trois

minutes, le pays se fige. Les pèlerins se recueillent sur le lit de mort, au palais de Dolmabahçe, à Istanbul, dont les pendules sont arrêtées à 9 h 05 depuis 1938. A la télévision, sur les panneaux publicitaires, dans les écoles, au balcon des appartements, on affiche un portrait, visage pâle et regard

perçant, de Mustafa Kemal.

Né à Salonique en 1881, ce militaire est à la fois le héros de la guerre de libération contre l'occupation grecque, italienne et française, au lendemain de la première guerre mondiale, et le bâtisseur de la République sur les décombres de l'Empire ottoman. L'idéologie officielle porte son nom, le kémalisme, et le code pénal protège sa légende. Il instaura un régime laïc et autoritaire qu'il présida jusqu'à sa mort, d'une cirrhose du foie.

10 millions de pèlerins

Son corps repose au mausolée que lui ont fait construire ses successeurs, en 1953. Ce temple, au sommet d'une colline, dans la capitale, Ankara, est visité par plus de 10 millions de personnes chaque année. Tout chef d'Etat de passage vient s'incliner devant Atatürk, avant même de se rendre au palais présidentiel. « L'idéologie d'Atatürk est devenue une religion et son mausolée est la Mecque turque », compare Murat Belge, éditeur et professeur de littérature à l'université Bilgi d'Istanbul, évoquant un culte de substitution

à l'islam. « Quand les gens ont peur des islamistes, ils brandissent son image ou des slogans à l'arrière de leur voiture », poursuit-il. D'autres se font tatouer la signature du leader sur le bras.

Des centaines de lieux et d'institutions – stades, aéroports, barrages, bibliothèques, hôpitaux, rues, quartiers – sont baptisés du nom d'Atatürk. « Son effigie figure sur la place des villes et dans chaque école, sans exception, souligne Esra Elmas, chercheuse à l'université Bilgi et auteure d'un ouvrage, *Mon cher Atatürk*, sur la perception du mythe par les écoliers. Atatürk est tellement omniprésent qu'avec le masque géant situé près d'Izmir, il est le seul Turc que l'on peut voir depuis la Lune. »

Les milieux artistiques commencent à interroger ce mythe. Une exposition d'art contemporain, en octobre, a voulu ironiser sur le culte d'Atatürk, en ajoutant la silhouette de Kemal à côté des symboles des trois religions du Livre, sur un panneau signalétique. L'œuvre a été détruite par un groupe de militants kémalistes. ■

Guillaume Perrier

(Istanbul, correspondance)



UN GÉNÉRAL TURC ÉCROUÉ DANS UNE ENQUÊTE SUR LA MORT DE SIX SOLDATS

ANKARA, 7 novembre 2010 (AFP)

UN TRIBUNAL MILITAIRE d'Ankara a ordonné le placement en détention provisoire d'un général dans le cadre d'une enquête sur la mort de six soldats tués par une mine dans le sud-est de la Turquie en 2009, un incident alors imputé aux rebelles kurdes, a rapporté la presse dimanche.

La cour a prononcé vendredi la mise sous écrou du général de brigade Zeki Es pour avoir causé la mort des six militaires, ont indiqué les journaux.

Six soldats turcs avaient été tués et huit autres blessés le 28 mai 2009 par l'explosion d'une mine au passage de leur véhicule à proximité de la localité de Cukurca, dans la province de Hakkari, près de la frontière irakienne.

Les autorités avaient imputé l'incident aux rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui utilisent souvent des mines dans leurs attaques contre les forces de sécurité.

L'aviation turque avait riposté le même jour en bombardant des positions des rebelles kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak, que le PKK utilise comme base arrière pour ses opérations.

Mais l'enquête a révélé que l'engin provenait des stocks de l'armée.

Des enregistrements de conversations téléphoniques supposées entre le général Es, qui commandait alors une brigade de gendarmerie dans la région, et d'autres officiers ont par ailleurs été diffusées sur internet, dans lesquels le général admet avoir fait poser la mine, pour des raisons de sécurité, affirment les quotidiens.

Longtemps intouchable, l'armée, qui se considère comme la gardienne du régime laïque turc, a été amenée au cours des dernières années à répondre de ses actes devant la justice, conséquence de la lutte de pouvoir qui l'oppose au gouvernement, issu de la mouvance islamiste.

Un officier turc a été condamné en novembre 2009 à neuf ans de prison pour la mort de quatre soldats, alors qu'il avait ordonné à l'un d'eux en guise de punition de garder dans sa main une grenade dégoupillée. L'armée avait dans un premier temps conclu à un accident, mais la presse avait révélé l'affaire.



IRAK: LES DIRIGEANTS RÉUNIS À ERBIL POUR SE PARTAGER LE POUVOIR

ERBIL (Irak), / 8 novembre 2010 / (AFP)

LES DIRIGEANTS POLITIQUES IRAKIENS ont entamé lundi à Erbil, capitale de la région autonome du Kurdistan, une réunion cruciale pour se partager le pouvoir et déterminer notamment la place à accorder aux sunnites, afin de sortir de huit mois d'impasse politique.

La réunion devrait durer trois jours et se poursuivre mardi à Bagdad. Dès l'ouverture, les deux rivaux, le Premier ministre sortant Nouri al-Maliki et son prédécesseur Iyad Allawi, ont campé sur leur position.

"L'objectif de la réunion d'Erbil est d'obtenir la présence au gouvernement d'Iraqiya (la formation de M. Allawi, NDLR) et de la convaincre d'accepter la présidence du Parlement", a affirmé à l'AFP le député de cette liste Hassan Allawi.

Cette formation, arrivée en tête lors du scrutin du 7 mars, est soutenue par les sunnites qui ont perdu le pouvoir lors de l'invasion conduite par les Etats-Unis en 2003, après avoir dominé ce pays depuis sa création au début des années 1920.

"Il faut former rapidement un gouvernement qui reflète les résultats des élections, et nous devons être égaux en droits, en devoirs et dans (le partage) du pouvoir, sans que quiconque n'ait la haute main sur les autres", a affirmé le chef d'Iraqiya, l'ancien Premier ministre Iyad Allawi.

M. Allawi, dont la liste a obtenu 91 siège contre 89 à celle de Nouri al-Maliki, reproche à ce dernier d'avoir accaparé le pouvoir et de l'exercer de façon personnelle. Il exige donc une révision de la Constitution pour réduire les pouvoirs du Premier ministre.

Pas question, a rétorqué M. Maliki. "Le partenariat doit être conclu avec de vrais partenaires attachés à la Constitution. La nouvelle page est conditionnée à l'attachement à la Constitution, c'est une condition indispensable au partenariat", a déclaré le Premier ministre sortant.

Ces prises de position augurent mal des résultats de cette réunion, alors que le Parlement est convoqué pour jeudi afin d'élire son président, comme lui a enjoint la Cour suprême.

L'élection du président du Parlement est une étape indispensable avant la désignation du chef de l'Etat et du Premier ministre, selon la Constitution.

Le vice-président de la République, le sunnite Tarek al-Hachemi, s'est montré



pessimiste. "Il y a eu des convergences politiques lors de nos réunions à Bagdad mais il reste des points essentiels non résolus et je ne pense pas qu'ils le seront lors cette réunion, car il faut du temps", a-t-il dit.

Devant des positions aussi tranchées, l'ancien Premier ministre Ibrahim Jaafari a poussé un cri de colère: "Il faut que chacun fasse des sacrifices car le peuple attend des actions concrètes".

M. Maliki arrive en position de force à cette réunion, car un accord a été conclu samedi entre l'Alliance Nationale, regroupement de formations chiites auquel il appartient, et l'Alliance Kurde.

Après d'intenses négociations, M. Maliki dispose du plus vaste soutien au Parlement, avec 148 élus, mais il lui manquait encore 15 sièges pour obtenir la majorité absolue des 325 sièges du Parlement. Les différentes formations kurdes ont obtenu 57 sièges au total.

Théoriquement, chiites et kurdes peuvent former à eux seuls un gouvernement, mais cela entraînerait une exclusion de la majorité des sunnites, avec un risque de regain de violences de la part de cette communauté qui s'estime-rait lésée.

Selon cet accord politique, détaillé par le porte-parole du gouvernement Ali al-Dabbagh, le kurde Jalal Talabani continuerait à être chef de l'Etat, Nouri al-Maliki resterait Premier ministre, et Iraqiya se verrait offrir le poste de président du Parlement.

Mais cette répartition n'a pas obtenu l'aval d'Iyad Allawi, qui souhaite pour sa formation le poste de chef de l'Etat.



LA TURQUIE VEUT ENGAGER DES SOLDATS PROFESSIONNELS POUR LUTTER CONTRE LE PKK (MINISTRE)

ANKARA, / 9 novembre 2010 / (AFP)

LA TURQUIE envisage de déployer des unités composées de professionnels notamment à sa frontière avec l'Irak pour enrayer l'infiltration sur son sol des rebelles kurdes depuis le nord de l'Irak, a affirmé le ministre de la Défense dans des déclarations publiées mardi.

"Dans une première étape" 50.000 hommes seront engagés dans les rangs de l'armée pour une durée d'"au moins trois ans" et seront "utilisés dans le cadre de la lutte anti-terroriste", a précisé Vecdi Gönül, cité par le journal Milliyet.

Par lutte anti-terroriste, le ministre entend parler du combat engagé par les forces d'Ankara contre les rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) que la Turquie et nombre de pays considèrent comme un mouvement terroriste.

Ces hommes, qui deviendront de simple soldats, sans grade, seront choisis parmi d'anciens conscrits, a-t-il souligné.

La frontière turco-irakienne, longue de quelque 350 km et particulièrement montagneuse, est propice aux infiltrations des militants du PKK.

Le PKK compte environ 2.000 hommes dans ses repaires de la montagne irakienne, selon Ankara. L'aviation turque les bombarde régulièrement depuis 2007 mais cela n'a pas empêché les attaques rebelles.

M. Gönül n'a pas précisé quand les unités composées entièrement de professionnels seront déployées.

Malgré certaines démarches en faveur d'une armée de métier, l'armée turque, la deuxième en nombre au sein de l'Otan (515.000 hommes environ) après les Etats-Unis, est largement composée de conscrits.

Le conflit kurde en Turquie a fait 45.000 morts depuis le début, en 1984, de l'insurrection armée du PKK, qui a cependant déclaré une trêve unilatérale contre les forces turques à la mi-août dans le but de favoriser les initiatives du gouvernement turc visant à en finir avec ce conflit.



IRAK: LES DIRIGEANTS DOIVENT S'ENTENDRE SUR UNE DIZAINE DE SUJETS ÉPINEUX

BAGDAD, 9 novembre 2010 (AFP)

LES DIRIGEANTS politiques irakiens devaient se retrouver mardi soir au domicile du chef kurde Massoud Barzani à Bagdad, pour trouver un terrain d'entente sur une dizaine de dossiers épineux qui bloquent la formation du gouvernement depuis huit mois.

Après s'être rencontrés lundi à Erbil, au Kurdistan, ils se sont donné deux jours supplémentaires pour surmonter leurs divergences avant la réunion jeudi du Parlement, qui est censé choisir son président puis élire un chef de l'Etat, qui désignera ensuite un Premier ministre.

L'accord sur l'attribution de ces postes dépend avant tout de la résolution de questions qui empoisonnent la vie politique irakienne.

"Il s'agit notamment d'amendements à la Constitution, de réformes dans le fonctionnement du gouvernement, de garanties exigées par les Kurdes, de l'avenir de la commission Responsabilité et Justice (NDLR: chargée de traquer les baassistes) et des attributions du futur Conseil national pour la politique stratégique", a affirmé mardi Roz Nouri Chawis au quotidien As-Sabah.

A la demande de Massoud Barzani, dont il est proche, M. Chawis, vice-Premier ministre d'origine kurde, a initié ces dernières semaines des rencontres entre les différents courants politiques qui ont abouti à la réunion des chefs à Erbil.

Mais cet ordre du jour illustre surtout l'opposition entre le Premier ministre sortant Nouri al-Maliki, qui entend préserver toutes les attributions que lui accordent la Constitution, et son principal rival et prédécesseur à la tête du gouvernement, Iyad Allawi, qui l'accuse d'avoir accaparé le pouvoir et de l'exercer de façon personnelle.

"L'attribution des trois présidences (chef de l'Etat, président du Parlement et Premier ministre, NDLR) doit être discutée demain et après-demain (mardi et mercredi) et des choses importantes doivent être décidées", avait affirmé lundi M. Barzani aux journalistes.

La presse se montrait pessimiste mardi sur l'issue de ces discussions. Sous le titre "Réunion d'Erbil: un pas en avant, deux pas en arrière", le quotidien Ad Dustour (indépendant) constate que "les dirigeants politiques n'ont rien apporté de nouveau à ce que les Irakiens attendent ces derniers temps. Ils n'ont fait que répéter les mêmes problèmes sans avancer de solutions".



Même si la violence n'a pas atteint le niveau de 2006 et 2007, les attentats sont en pleine recrudescence dans le pays. Lundi, jour de la réunion d'Erbil, trois voitures piégées ont fait 28 morts et 90 blessés dans trois villes chiites.

Pour le quotidien al-Adala, organe du Conseil suprême islamique d'Irak (CSII, part chiite d'Ammar al-Hakim), les divergences entre les Irakiens favorisent les interventions étrangères.

"Certains espèrent que ces réunions démontreront que nous sommes capables de résoudre seuls nos problèmes, mais dans le cas contraire, les portes de l'enfer s'ouvriront sur l'Irak et chaque pays voudra interférer chez nous pour en tirer profit", avertit le journal.

M. Maliki est en position de force face à M. Allawi, car il dispose, grâce au ralliement de plusieurs groupes, du plus vaste soutien au Parlement, avec 148 élus. Il lui manque encore 15 sièges pour obtenir la majorité absolue des 325 sièges. Les différentes formations kurdes ont obtenu 57 sièges au total.

Or, selon le porte-parole du gouvernement, un accord a été conclu samedi entre l'Alliance Nationale, un regroupement de formations chiites auquel appartient M. Maliki, et l'Alliance kurde.

Théoriquement, chiites et kurdes peuvent donc former seuls un gouvernement, mais l'exclusion de la majorité sunnite, qui soutient l'alliance laïque de M. Allawi, risquerait de raviver les violences, cette communauté pouvant s'estimer lésée.

OPINIONS | COLUMNISTS

Barzani is doing everything possible to annex Kirkuk

If the situation is not addressed, a civil war seems likely to break out in Iraq

* By Jasim Al Azzawi, Special to Gulf News/UAE

The steady rise of Kurdish power in Iraq in the last two decades has increased regional concerns and confounded Iraqis across the political spectrum. With the fall of Saddam Hussain's regime, the Kurds have emerged as kingmakers; their parliamentary swing bloc has become indispensable to forming governments and passing crucial bills and their regional capital, Irbil, has become a magnet for party political bosses who visit to pay homage and seek support.

The extraordinary rise in Kurdish fortune is the direct result of Kurdish unity, Baghdad's disintegration — both in political and military terms — and vital American support given to the Kurds at crucial junctures in their struggle for power and prominence. The northern no-fly zone, imposed by the US immediately after the first Gulf War in 1991, and the invasion of Iraq have given the Kurds the freedom and power to prosper, expand their influence throughout government institutions and create fait accompli on the ground.

"The Kurds feel they have the legitimacy to expand their influence and extract greater advantage. They are practising realpolitik," says Dr Ali Alawi, an Iraq expert who also served as defence and finance minister in 2004-2005. Kurdish ambition seems relentless and shows no signs of stopping at securing a semi-independent region composed of the three Kurdish provinces of Arbil, Sulaimania and Dhook. While Iraqi Arabs were murdering each other in a horrendous civil war the Kurds were busy extending their hegemony to oil-rich Kirkuk, Diyala and Mosul, and creating the so-called "disputed areas".

But is this unchecked power expansion sustainable? Under what future circumstances would the Iraqi army challenge the Kurdish forces? The humiliation suffered by the Iraqi army at the hands of Peshmerga forces in Mosul, Kirkuk and Diyala has provoked calls by Iraqi nationalists to put an end to this degradation. And des-



The extraordinary rise in Kurdish fortune is the direct result of Kurdish unity, Baghdad's disintegration - both in political and military terms - and vital American support given to the Kurds at crucial junctures in their struggle for power and prominence

* Image Credit: Gulf News

pite disingenuous denials by Kurdish and Arab politicians that future confrontation between Baghdad and Arbil is impossible, events on the ground paint a different picture. When Washington announced the sale of advanced US fighter jets to modernise the Iraqi air force, the speaker of the Kurdish parliament Adnan Al Mufti blasted the deal and said the planes would be used against the Kurds. In 2008 US Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker had to personally intervene to avert a major military clash between Peshmerga forces and Iraq's Third Army on the outskirts of the city of Khanaqeen. The Third Army was sent by Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki to answer calls for help by the Arab and Turkmen inhabitants of Khanaqeen protesting Kurdish oppression.

The Kurds perceive Baghdad's current weakness as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to achieve unchallenged Kurdish power in Iraq and Massoud Barzani, president of the Kurdistan Regional Government, is determined to extract all possible concessions, whether through political bargains or brute military force, before Baghdad regains its balance and determination to reasserts its central role. "Resistance by those who have been given the short end of the stick to form a countervailing force, without the backing of Baghdad, is not imminent," says Alawi.

Barzani's eyes are fixed on Kirkuk as the ultimate prize. To achieve that, the Kurds have presented the three main political factions with a list of 19 thorny demands in return for their support to form a new government. It is hard to see, however, how party leaders will be able to keep their coalitions intact if they succumb to Kurdish dictates. Even if they agree to oblige the Kurds, will the new nationalist parliament agree to play along?

Darkening clouds

Today, the Kurds enjoy unchallenged influence in Kirkuk. They control the security and economic life of

the city, to the bitter resentment of its Turkmen and Arab inhabitants. Anger, cries of oppression and charges of torture, killings and kidnappings committed by Peshmerga forces have become a staple diet of the city's political life. These accusations are resonating in Baghdad, especially among politicians who perceive Kurdish actions as confrontational and thwarting efforts to achieve Iraq's holy grail of national reconciliation.

"The Kurds are facing a moment of crisis and feel trapped. They've overplayed their hands over Kirkuk and oil. They produce oil but cannot sell it," says George Joffe, a lecturer at Cambridge University. "They've become extremely dependent on Turkey's economic investment. Now they realise they cannot achieve independence and that is why they are trying to play the role of mediators and not kingmakers."

Yet, despite this explosive situation, Arab political leaders remain silent because they know they are currently not in a position to challenge Barzani and his fierce Peshmerga forces. The Iraqi army is still very weak and it will take several years of modernisation and training to regain its former strength. A modern Iraqi air force is also several years away.

This deteriorating situation has the hallmark of a major future military confrontation and may drive the entire country into an all out north-south war. That eventuality is perhaps a decade away, if the current situation is not reversed in time. A war over Kirkuk may become Barzani's Waterloo.

Jasim Al Azzawi is the presenter of Inside Iraq on Al Jazeera English.



November 8, 2010

"Arbil Meeting historic moment for Iraq's development" - Barzani

ARBIL / Aswat al-Iraq: The President of Kurdistan Region, Massoud Barzani, has said in the opening of Arbil's Meeting of the Leaders of Iraq's Political Blocs "is a historic moment of deep meaning and content, to participate in defining the trend for Iraq's development."

"This is a historic meaning and content for us to meet together to participate in defining the trend of the country's development and the cohesion of our efforts to raise it to the level of the Iraqi people's ambitions," Barzani said in his speech.

He said that "a meeting on this level is a national achievement, if we take into consideration the sensitivity of the state passing on the democratic political process and its direction, as well as what we and our people is facing, along with the questions coming from abroad, expressing anxiety and loss of patience, as well as doubts, caused by the formation of the government."

"Baghdad dialogues, that took place with the participation of all of us and their positive results, have expressed our ability to overcome all obstacles and their settlement, as the past few days have proved the potential to mold understanding and to find solutions to settle our problems," Barzani said.

The Arbil meeting is held with the attendance of Iraq's President Jalal Talabani, his two Vice-President, Adel Abdul-Mahdi and Tareq al-Hashimi, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, the Chairman of the National Alliance, Ammar al-Hakim, Representatives of al-Fadhila (Virtue) Party, the Free Bloc, the Iraqi Accordance Bloc and others.

The meeting is also attended by leaders of the Patriotic



Kurdistan President Massoud Barzani speaks at a news conference in Erbil, November 8, 2010. Iraq's political blocs met on Monday to try to break an eight-month deadlock over forming a new government, a move increasingly expected to assure incumbent Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of a second term.

Union of Kurdistan, among them the Party's Assistant Secretary General, Kosrat Rasoul, leaders of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, among them its Vice-Chairman, Nichervan Barzani and Kurdistan Parliament's Speaker, Kamal Kirkuki.

Kurdistan Region's President, Massoud Barzani had launched an initiative to settle the current political crisis on Sept. 16 2010, comprising the formation of an 8-12-member committee to represent the representatives of the political blocs, to start talks among them to settle the suspended differences, discuss the issue of the formation of the formation of a government of national-partnership, as well as the settlement of the issue of the three leading State presidencies.



Kirkuk: a ticking time bomb in volatile north Iraq

November 10, 2010 /By Maria Golovnina / (Reuters)

KIRKUK, Iraq - Haji Mohammed Ismail, a tribal elder in Kirkuk, home to one of Iraq's biggest oilfields, is bracing for the worst once U.S. troops leave the country and Arab and Kurd face off with no one to halt the fight.

"As soon as U.S. forces leave Iraq, there will be civil war. In a place like this, the strongest will devour the weakest," said Ismail, 80, an Iraqi Arab, as he leaned over a mud brick wall in his village near the disputed northern city.

"There is a lot of tension. People are being thrown out of their homes and humiliated. They want revenge. Something bad is going to happen."

Ismail's anguish was echoed by ordinary people and Iraqi officials alike in Kirkuk, whose sun-bleached plains are dotted with blazing oil fires flickering like torches in the haze.

The region is believed to be sitting atop four percent of global oil reserves and is attractive to foreign investors, but exploration has been blocked by fears of fresh violence.

In this low-rise city of dust and squat houses, the faint smell of oil is a constant reminder of the riches that lie under the sand, and Arabs and Kurds both claim Kirkuk as their own.

As violence fades in other parts of the country, the row is seen as a chief threat to Iraq's efforts to restore stability after years of sectarian violence, and could yet plunge the province into bloodshed when U.S. troops pull out next year.

Tensions have flared ahead of a census, slated for December after several delays -- a crucial event because it might determine if Kurds are now the biggest ethnic bloc in Kirkuk.

The Arab-led central government recently said it might delete a question about ethnicity from the survey, prompting outrage among Kurds who fear that would deprive them of an opportunity to prove that Kirkuk -- and the vast lake of oil that lies beneath it -- is rightfully theirs.

Arab families have accused Kurds of forcing them to leave in order to tilt the demographic balance, prompting U.S. forces to step up joint patrols with Iraqi soldiers in disputed areas.

The feud dates back to Saddam Hussein's "Arabisation" push that uprooted thousands of Kurds and leveled their villages in the 1980s. After 2003, Kurds returned en masse and want to fold Kirkuk into their semi-autonomous northern enclave of Kurdistan -- a move the Arab-led government in Baghdad is loath to allow.

Unlike restive Kirkuk, Kurdistan is relatively peaceful. It has been successful in luring investors and rebuilding its cities, signing about 40 deals with international oil companies.

Highlighting the political risks investors face and the potential for a protracted and worsening dispute over Kirkuk, Baghdad considers all deals signed by the Kurdish Regional Government illegal as Iraq's oil and gas are federal resources.

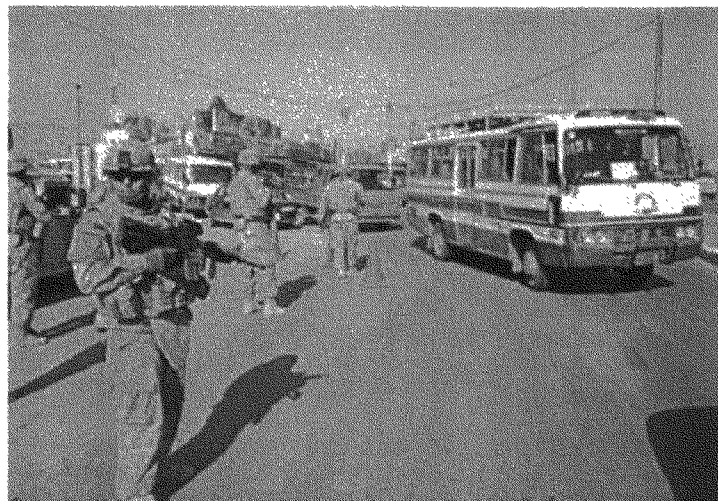
The dispute has halted exports from the northern region.

The United States formally ended combat operations in Iraq in August, more than seven years after its troops ousted Saddam Hussein, and says Iraq is a much safer place.

Stationed on a dusty Saddam-era military outpost outside Kirkuk, U.S. forces have long provided a buffer in the Arab-Kurdish conflict and tried to pacify the old adversaries.

U.S. commanders said they were aware of the latest round of tension in Kirkuk and were ready to deal with any new flare-ups.

"In and around the census time there will be a lot of emotion," said



Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Holland. "People will go into the streets to demonstrate. If someone really feels they have been shut out then there could be violent episodes."

The contested areas, which include other areas besides Kirkuk, are thought to contain up to 13 percent of Iraq's proven oil reserves, but the stakes are broader than just oil.

Protracted wrangling over a new government, eight months since an inconclusive vote, has cast Kurds as kingmakers, and they are pressing Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to heed their claims over Kirkuk in exchange for backing him for a new term.

Disputes over Kirkuk have come close to violence in the past but so far have been largely limited to angry rhetoric.

Speaking underneath a portrait of President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, General Turhan Yussef, deputy head of Kirkuk city police, said the fragile balance could unravel rapidly.

"U.S. forces are leaving too early. They preserve a certain balance that keeps the situation stable," he said. "If they leave before a solution is found, that would be a deadly decision."

Asked if open hostilities were possible, he paused and added: "Yes, that is probably what will happen."

With its fate undecided and investment sidelined, Kirkuk remains a depressed place, many of its neighborhoods devoid of basic services like clean water and electricity.

"If I was an oil company I wouldn't want to come here," said Colonel Larry Swift, commander of U.S. forces in Kirkuk. "So once that uncertainty is eliminated, I think oil investment here will dwarf any of the foreign aid that the province is getting."

VIOLENCE

On a hilltop north of Kirkuk, Ali Hassan al-Majeed, the Saddam aide who oversaw the Anfal campaign of attempted annihilation against Kurds, once owned a lavish villa. Majeed, also known as Chemical Ali, was executed in January and a senior Kurdish official now lives on the hill.

The surrounding plains are dotted with new flat-roof blocks -- built by thousands of Kurds who have poured back since 2003.

A referendum on Kirkuk's status was supposed to have been held no later than December 2007 but was shelved after Arabs and Turkmen accused Kurds of flooding the city with their kin.

The unrelated census has also been delayed several times because of fears it would trigger bloodshed if Kurds proved to be the most

numerous community in the city.

Its beat-up streets lined with crumbling house-fronts and strewn with rubbish, Kirkuk appeared to seethe with emotions.

Speaking outside her shop, Shatha Abdul Wahid, an Arab woman, said her family had been receiving threats since early September to pack up their belongings and leave the city.

"When they came, they said: you must leave Kirkuk," said Wahid, 33, her face alternating between fear and anger.

She refused to describe the perpetrators, shaking her head in fear: "We want to stay here. Please God help us. But if they come again, we will have to leave."

Mumtaz Mohamed, 53, said one of his Arab neighbors had to pay \$1,700 this month to unidentified men to be able to stay in his house.

Another woman, Suham Ahmed, 37, also a shop owner, said 16 Arab families in her neighborhood had left Kirkuk for other parts of Iraq after receiving threats over the last two months.

"Before it was much better. Now it's only getting worse," she said. "People are very afraid."

The Washington Times

NOVEMBER 11, 2010

Obama bid to pick Iraq leader spurned

Talabani rebuffs request to resign



By Eli Lake

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, one of America's closest allies in the country, has rebuffed the personal request of President Obama and Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. to relinquish his post as Iraq's form a new government in Baghdad.

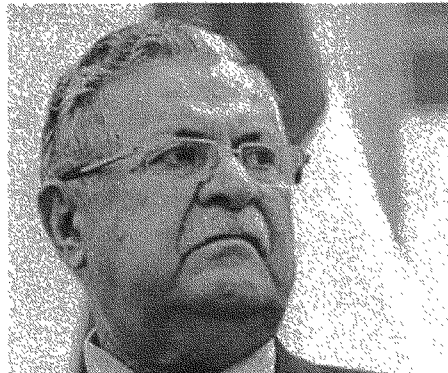
Iraqi leaders announced Thursday a new government in which Mr. Talabani remains president, Nouri al-Maliki remains prime minister and Iyad Allawi's Iraqiya party, which won the most votes in March's election, controls the speakership of Parliament and the presidency of the National Security Council.

Mr. al-Maliki and his top rival Mr. Allawi sat next to each other in the parliament chamber in an apparent sign of unity after a contentious, eight-month political fight over the formation of the government, the Associated Press reported. But that didn't last long, as he later joined a walkout of the Iraqiya members in protest.

A parliament vote on the government could still take weeks, but the session Thursday paved the way with the first formal steps, starting with the naming of a parliament speaker -- Osama al-Nujaifi, a Sunni Arab, AP reported.

Mr. Allawi is a Shi'ia Arab, though his party has attracted support from former Baathists and Sunni Arabs.

The lawmakers had demanded that before parliament vote on the president, it vote first to formally dissolve decisions by a De-Baathification program



Iraqi President Jalal Talabani rejected a request by President Obama to give up his post in the new government.

purging former members of Saddam Hussein's ruling party which had barred three of their members from taking part in government positions, the AP reported. That demand was rejected, and the Iraqiya members left. The parliament session was able to continue without them.

Last Saturday, Mr. Obama phoned Mr. Talabani and asked him to give up the seat he has held since 2005 so that Mr. Allawi could be Iraq's president, according to U.S. and Iraqi officials familiar with the diplomacy. Mr. Obama on Saturday also urged the president of the Kurdistan region, Massoud Barzani, to accept Mr. Allawi in the role of the presidency.

Since late summer, U.S. officials had been trying to get Mr. al-Maliki and Mr. Allawi to share power in the government because neither man's party won the majority of votes. But Mr. al-Maliki's Rule of Law party ultimately formed an alliance with the Kurds and another Shiite bloc with ties to Iran known as the Iraqi National Alliance.

Qubad Talabani, Mr. Talabani's son and the Washington representative of the Kurdistan Regional Government, said the Kurds were disappointed with the United States.

"As the deadlock continues, Iyad Allawi has said the only post he wants is prime minister or president. The Americans have come to us and have asked us to step aside and relinquish the post of president to Iraqiya and specifically to Iyad Allawi, which we find very disappointing," he said.

Mr. Obama's personal diplomacy in Iraq stands in contrast to the State Department's stated position that it would prefer a government that included Mr. Allawi's party, but was not trying to impose an arrangement on the Iraqi people.

"The formation of a new government will require decisions by Iraqi leaders. We are not trying to impose any solution on Iraq. We are pleased to see serious interaction among the leaders to form an inclusive government," State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said in response to a query about Mr. Obama's efforts to get Mr. Talabani to resign.

Mr. Obama's efforts are also a reminder that despite the president's announcement in August of the end of major combat operations in Iraq, the U.S. is still closely engaged in the country it invaded in 2003.

While "combat operations" have technically ended, the nearly 50,000 remaining troops continue to train Iraq's military and conduct joint counterterrorism operations. U.S. military assets continue to provide intelligence to Iraq's government and protect the supply line for Iraq's military. U.S. fighter jets continue

to patrol Iraq's skies.

A White House official Wednesday declined to comment on the specifics of the diplomacy.

"We continue to encourage all the parties to form an inclusive government that reflects the will of the voters, involves significant power-sharing among the major blocs, and will guide Iraq through its next chapter," the official said.

Mr. Talabani, however, said the pressure on his father to resign was reigniting old fears for many Iraqis.

"The Kurds have been the strongest ally and partner of the United States since before the liberation and certainly during it," he said. "And for the United States to be leaning on us, as they are now, in effect handpicking the new leaders of Iraq, is not respectful of Iraq's parliamentary system and touches on all of the insecurities of the Kurds, that the United States will once again betray us."

Kurds consider the first U.S. betrayal to have occurred in 1975, when the U.S. and the Shah of Iran agreed to end all support for the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq

in exchange for Iraqi concessions on water rights over the Shatt al Arab waterway between Iraq and Iran. In 1988, then-Iraqi President Saddam Hussein began the Anfal campaign to depopulate the northern Iraqi Kurdish regions, a military campaign that included the use of nerve gas on Kurdish civilians in the town of Halabja. The U.S. during this period sold Iraq grain credits and only made a symbolic protest.

At the close of the 1991 Persian Gulf War, President George H.W. Bush gave a speech urging Iraqis to rise up against Saddam, but privately the U.S. allowed him to use attack helicopters to put down the rebellion even though the U.S. and its coalition partners controlled Iraq's air space.

According to U.S. and Iraqi officials, Mr. Biden in a phone call last week offered the Kurds the speakership of the Parliament and the Oil Ministry and also a public statement offering the Kurds a security guarantee.

Mr. Biden's office declined to comment for this report.

On Tuesday, Republican Sens. Lindsey

Graham of South Carolina and John McCain of Arizona, and Sen. Joe Lieberman, Connecticut independent, urged Massoud Barzani, president of the Kurdistan region, to replace Mr. Talabani as well.

Reidar Visser, a researcher at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and proprietor of the Gulf Analysis blog, said: "I find this strange that the Obama administration is pushing so hard for Iraqiya to get the presidency, because the speakership will be more powerful."

Mr. Visser added that the veto powers of the president will expire this year.

"The Americans do not appreciate the challenges involved in upgrading the presidency to the level where it has power that would make it attractive to Allawi," he said. "That will require constitutional change, and that would require a referendum. So it's hard to see how the Americans can make good on their promise."

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REUTERS

Five facts about Iraqi President Jalal Talabani

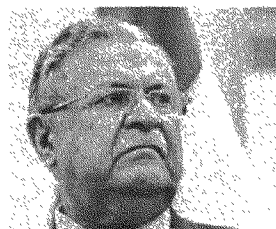
November 11, 2010 / (Reuters) -

Here are some facts about Jalal Talabani after Iraq's main factions agreed on the top three political posts, following an eight-month deadlock after elections.

Lawmakers have said that Talabani, a Kurd, would return as president.

* Talabani was born near Arbil in northern Iraq in 1933 and became a lieutenant to Mullah Mustafa Barzani, patriarch of Iraqi Kurdish nationalism and founder of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which is now led by Barzani's son Masoud. Talabani joined the KDP at the age of 13 and by 1958 was a lawyer and an inner member of the party.

* Talabani split from the KDP in 1974 and formed the PUK in Damascus the following year. A bitter rivalry with the Barzanis followed and led to alliances with neighbouring Iran, Turkey and even Saddam Hussein. With Saddam weakened after the 1991 Gulf War, the Kurds carved out an autonomous zone in northeastern Iraq but Talabani and Barzani disputed control of a Kurdish regional government and fought a bitter civil war.



* Talabani became a key player in post-war Iraqi politics after the Kurds, who had managed to make peace, formed a powerful voting bloc in the Iraqi legislature. Talabani became Iraq's first elected president in more than 50 years in April 2005 and was selected for a second term by parliament in April 2006 as a national unity government was put together.

* Talabani's power base has been threatened by the desertion of a former lieutenant, Noshirwan Mustafa, who established the Change List, or "Goran," which made a strong showing in Kurdish elections in 2009. The top complaint of many Kurds is corruption.

* Talabani had said in April that minority Kurds could be expected to join the country's main Shi'ite blocs if they united to form the next government following inconclusive elections in March 2010. Kurdish support gave Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki the muscle he needed to persuade former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi to join a new government led by him. Allawi's cross-sectarian Iraqiya alliance won the most seats in the March vote after gaining the broad backing of Iraq's Sunni minority.

la Croix

MARDI 9 NOVEMBRE 2010

Trois jours pour sortir l'Irak de l'impasse politique



Les dirigeants irakiens réunis depuis hier. De gauche à droite, devant : l'ancien Premier ministre Ibrahim Al Jafari, le premier ministre Nouri Al Maliki (chiite), le président Jalal Talabani (kurde) et Iyad Allaoui (soutenu par les sunnites).

Réunis dans la région autonome du Kurdistan, les dirigeants irakiens essaient de trouver la recette pour la formation d'un gouvernement incluant les sunnites

Après huit mois sans gouvernement, les dirigeants politiques irakiens ont trois jours pour se mettre d'accord sur la répartition des pouvoirs entre les partis politiques représentant à égalité les trois communautés principales, chiïtes, sunnites et kurdes. Les dernières élections législatives du 7 mars avaient donné 91 sièges à la liste *Iraqiya*, la formation laïque d'Iyad Allaoui, ancien premier ministre par intérim du gouvernement irakien entre mai 2004 et avril 2005. Bien qu'Iyad Allaoui soit chiïte, sa formation était soutenue par les sunnites qui avaient perdu le pouvoir lors de l'invasion conduite par les États-Unis en 2003, après avoir dominé ce pays depuis sa création au début des années 1920.

Iyad Allaoui reproche au premier ministre sortant, le chiïte Nouri Al Maliki, d'avoir accaparé le pouvoir et de l'exercer de façon personnelle. Il exige donc une révision de la Constitution pour réduire les pouvoirs du premier

ministre. « L'objectif de la réunion d'Erbil est d'obtenir la présence au gouvernement d'*Iraqiya* et de la convaincre d'accepter la présidence du Parlement », a affirmé le député de cette liste Hassan Alaoui. Pour

Iyad Allaoui, l'enjeu est de « former rapidement un gouvernement qui reflète les résultats des élections ». « Nous devons être égaux en droits, en devoirs et dans le partage du pouvoir », plaide-t-il.

L'Alliance nationale (regroupement de formations chiïtes) du premier ministre sortant, Nouri Al Maliki, avait, elle, remporté 89 sièges le 7 mars. Elle est en position de force car elle a conclu un accord samedi dernier avec l'Alliance Kurde – les formations kurdes avaient obtenu 57 sièges.

« Nous devons être égaux en droits, en devoirs et dans le partage du pouvoir », plaide Iyad Allaoui dont le parti est soutenu par les sunnites.

Selon cet accord, le Kurde Jalal Talabani continuerait à être chef de l'État, Nouri Al Maliki resterait premier ministre, et la formation *Iraqiya* se verrait offrir le poste de président du Parlement. Mais

cette répartition n'a pas obtenu l'aval d'Iyad Allaoui, qui souhaite pour sa formation le poste de chef de l'État.

Après d'intenses négociations, Nouri Al Maliki dispose du plus vaste soutien au Parlement, avec 148 élus, mais il lui manque encore 15 sièges pour obtenir la majorité absolue des 325 sièges du Parlement. Si, théoriquement, chiïtes et kurdes peuvent former à eux seuls un gouvernement, cela entraînerait une exclusion de la majorité des sunnites, avec un risque de regain de violences de la part de cette communauté qui s'estimerait lésée. Iyad Allaoui dispose du soutien de l'Arabie saoudite et de la Syrie. Les dirigeants de ces deux pays, à majorité sunnite, se sont réunis à plusieurs reprises pour aider à débloquer la crise gouvernementale en Irak en aidant au retour des sunnites, marginalisés dans l'Irak de l'après-Saddam Hussein.

Les dirigeants irakiens tenteront de se mettre d'accord avant jeudi, date à laquelle le Parlement est convoqué afin d'élire son président, comme il en a été enjoint par la Cour suprême. Cette élection est l'étape indispensable avant la désignation du chef de l'État et du premier ministre, selon la Constitution.

AGNÈS ROTIVEL

LE FIGARO

mercredi 10 novembre 2010

Ali Khamenei tente de redorer son blason

DELPHINE MINOUI

CORRESPONDANTE AU MOYEN-ORIENT

IRAN Le guide suprême iranien n'est pas un adepte des voyages. Encore moins des bains de foule. Pourtant, événement sans précédent, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei est resté, le mois dernier, pendant dix jours d'affilée à Qom. Un choix stratégique : c'est au cœur de la ville sainte, berceau de la révolution islamique de 1979, qu'il fait aujourd'hui face à la fronde la plus redoutable - celle des membres d'une partie de la nomenklatura religieuse qui n'a jamais autant mis en cause son pouvoir.

Âgé de 71 ans, atteint d'un cancer de la prostate, il semble également préoccupé par son legs

Les discours qui ont ponctué le déplacement du numéro un du régime iranien se lisent comme autant de mises en garde à leur attention. « *L'ennemi a décidé de transformer Qom en quartier général des contre-révolutionnaires* », s'est-il insurgé dans une de ses nombreuses interventions retransmises à la télévision d'État, en référence au mouvement de contestation qui sévit en Iran depuis la réélection controversée d'Ahmadinejad, en juin 2009.

Quand il succède à l'ayatollah Khomeyni, en 1989, Ali Khamenei n'a ni le charisme ni les compétences a priori requises pour remplacer le « père » de la révolution islamique. L'ex-président de la République islamique n'a pas rédigé le fameux *resaleh*, ce traité portant sur des questions de jurisprudence lui permettant d'accéder à la dignité

d'ayatollah - même si, plus tard, il sera élevé à ce haut rang. Choisi par un collègue de 80 religieux, il est régulièrement chahuté par ses adversaires, mais s'attelle à son rôle d'arbitre, au-dessus de la mêlée.

Crise de légitimité

Il y a un an et demi, la donne a changé. En cautionnant la réélection frauduleuse d'Ahmadinejad et en soutenant indirectement la répression post-électorale, il est descendu dans l'arène politique. Un geste impardonnable aux yeux de nombreux clercs réformistes, qui osent parler de « *dérives fascistes* » et de « *sultanisation* » du régime iranien.

Depuis, les critiques n'ont jamais été



En octobre, Ali Khamenei a passé une dizaine de jours dans la ville sainte de Qom (notre photo), afin de mettre en garde les nombreux clercs qui ne lui ont pas pardonné son soutien à la réélection frauduleuse d'Ahmadinejad.

UPI/HO/MAXPPP

aussi acerbes. Récemment interrogé par un fidèle sur la légitimité du « *velayat-e faghi* » - la « *tutelle du juriste théologien* », qui accorde les pleins pouvoirs au guide suprême -, le grand ayatollah Ali-Mohammad Dastgheib n'a pas hésité à épingle Khamenei en s'inquiétant de la concentration du pouvoir entre les mains d'un seul homme. Pour être légitime, a-t-il ajouté, le « *vali* » doit avoir une « *place particulière dans les cœurs et les esprits* ».

« *Khamenei fait face à une réelle crise de légitimité. Son voyage à Qom, c'est une ultime tentative d'asseoir son pouvoir et de redorer son blason* », remarque, depuis Téhéran, un analyste iranien qui préfère taire son nom.

Le clan conservateur s'est empressé de saluer le voyage de Khamenei comme un rempart contre tout risque de « *sédition* ». Dans son intervention sur la place Astaneh, Khamenei s'est félicité de la « *vaccination* » du pays contre les « *microbes* » - sous-entendu les anti-Ahmadinejad. Dans un autre discours, tenu cette fois-ci devant des étudiants, il a mis en garde ses détracteurs contre l'abus des « *valeurs humanistes et démocratiques* » qui peuvent mener « *aux pires guerres* ».

Âgé de 71 ans, atteint d'un cancer de la prostate, le guide suprême semble également préoccupé par son legs. D'après certains observateurs, ses proches supporteurs se réfèrent désormais

à lui comme étant « *l'imam Khamenei* » - un qualificatif qui incombait, à ce jour, uniquement à l'ayatollah Khomeyni, que les révolutionnaires de l'époque avaient désigné comme le représentant sur terre de Mehdi, le douzième imani chiïte. Profitant de sa visite à Qom, ses fidèles se sont également chargés de distribuer des photocopies de son arbre généalogique, afin de prouver qu'il est bien descendant de la famille du prophète Mahomet.

« Actes erronés commis au nom de la religion »

Mais, si son déplacement a été vivement salué par la presse progouvernementale, les sites Web réformistes ont mis l'accent sur le silence volontaire de certains dissidents religieux. L'un d'entre eux, l'ayatollah Khorassani, aurait ouvertement fait savoir qu'il refusait de le rencontrer. Plusieurs journaux libéraux en ligne sont même allés jusqu'à publier une lettre de l'ayatollah Montazeri, un ex-leader spirituel de la dissidence, décédé l'année dernière, dans laquelle il appelait les clercs à résister aux « *actes erronés commis par l'État au nom de la religion* ». ■

UE : la candidature turque dans l'impasse

La Commission de Bruxelles doute de l'engagement européen d'Ankara.

JEAN-JACQUES MÉVEL
CORRESPONDANT À BRUXELLES

UNION EUROPÉENNE L'UE renvoie la balle à Ankara : « Il est urgent que la Turquie remplisse ses obligations » et normalise ses relations avec Chypre, sans quoi le processus d'adhésion relancé il y a cinq ans mène tout droit à l'impasse, avertit la Commission européenne dans son rapport annuel sur l'élargissement.

A cinq semaines d'un sommet européen peut-être crucial pour la survie de la candidature, « personne ne peut se satisfaire du rythme actuel de la négociation », disait hier le commissaire à l'élargissement Stefan Füle. Bruxelles fait porter la responsa-

Le couple franco-allemand oppose un « partenariat privilégié » à l'adhésion. Ankara n'est pas d'accord

bilité de l'impasse sur les épaules turques et met en cause l'engagement européen du tandem Gül-Erdogan. Dans cette « phase exigeante, la Turquie doit faire plus d'efforts pour souscrire aux conditions posées », insiste le texte.

C'est une façon de maintenir une façade d'unité, sans se prononcer pour ou contre. L'UE est notoirement divisée sur le ticket européen d'un pays périphérique, musulman et dont l'économie est aussi dynamique que la démographie. Il compte la Grande-Bretagne et la Suède parmi ses soutiens. Les adversaires recrutent en France, en Allemagne, en Autriche et désormais aux Pays-Bas. A l'adhésion, Nicolas Sarkozy et Angela Merkel opposent un « partenariat privilégié », demi-mesure rejetée par Ankara.

La question de Chypre, divisée entre le Sud qui appartient à l'UE et le Nord où stationnent les troupes turques, plombe le dossier depuis 2005. Les Chypriotes grecs exigent de la Turquie qu'elle ouvre ses ports à leurs navires, conformément à la parole donnée. Faute de l'obtenir, ils maintiennent le veto. Bruxelles s'impatiente : « Il n'y a eu aucun progrès vers une normalisation des relations bilatérales », constate le rapport de la commission.



Le président turc, Abdullah Gül, a dénoncé, lundi à Londres, l'attitude « à courte vue » des dirigeants européens opposés à l'adhésion de son pays. ALISTAIR GRANT/AP

Avec l'opposition de la République de Chypre et de la France, conjuguées à celle de l'UE sur des chapitres ponctuels, la candidature piétine. Seuls 18 des 35 terrains d'accord imposés à la Turquie ont pu être explorés. Techniquement, trois pourraient être encore ouverts. Pour les diplomates, il faudrait un miracle pour échapper à un blocage définitif en 2011 ou 2012. La commission, comme pour mieux souligner ses frustrations, met en avant les convergences sur d'autres fronts. La Turquie s'est embarquée dans « une profonde révision de sa Constitution et se rapproche des normes européennes », estime-t-elle. Réserves récurrentes, elle s'inquiète d'un cadre légal qui « ne garantit pas assez la liberté d'expression ». Elle relève aussi des manquements à la liberté religieuse, aux droits des femmes et à ceux des syndicats.

Travailler main dans la main

Au contraire de beaucoup, Bruxelles se garde encore de conclure que la Turquie regarde moins vers l'Europe et davantage vers l'Orient. Le rapport mentionne sans commentaire qu'Ankara s'est dissociée des Européens et de ses alliés de l'Otan, pour voter contre le renforcement des sanctions imposées à l'Iran par le Conseil de sécurité de l'Onu. Le geste a alerté les deux rives de l'Atlantique. La Commission

veut croire que l'UE et la Turquie, travaillant main dans la main, « peuvent renforcer la sécurité énergétique, s'atteler au règlement des conflits régionaux et prévenir l'apparition de fossés ethniques et religieux ». Le rapport fait le point sur huit

autres candidatures à l'UE, officielles ou encore à l'ébauche. Parmi ces dernières, la commission soutient fermement l'Albanie. Mais elle temporise pour la Bosnie, handicapée par l'absence de réformes et « le manque de vision de ses dirigeants ». ■

Iran : Israël et les républicains américains remettent en avant « l'option militaire »

Alors que les grandes puissances espèrent de nouvelles discussions sur le nucléaire iranien, Barack Obama est invité à durcir le ton face à Téhéran

L'option militaire contre l'Iran est de nouveau mentionnée. Mais comme le dit un officiel occidental : « *Entre l'envisager sérieusement, et en parler, il y a une différence.* » Au lendemain de la victoire des républicains aux élections au Congrès américain, le thème revient dans des déclarations publiques, à la fois comme un angle de critique contre le président Obama, dont la diplomatie peine à enrayer le programme nucléaire iranien, et comme sujet de ralliement au sein du camp conservateur aux Etats-Unis, où les tendances isolationnistes du mouvement du Tea Party suscitent des inquiétudes.

Ce double objectif de durcissement semblait poursuivi par le sénateur républicain, membre de la Commission des forces armées, Lindsey Graham, quand il déclara, le 6 novembre, lors d'un colloque sur les questions de sécurité internationale organisé à Halifax (Canada) par le groupe de réflexion German Marshall Fund : « *J'aimerais que le président indique de la manière la plus claire que toutes les options sont sur la table. (...) La force militaire ne devrait pas seulement consister à neutraliser le programme nucléaire, qui est probablement dispersé et consolidé, mais aussi à couler leur marine, détruire leur for-*

ce aérienne et porter un coup décisif aux Gardiens de la révolution. En d'autres termes, châtrer ce régime. »

Pour le premier ministre israélien, Benyamin Nétanyahou, la mention de l'option militaire vise à adresser un message à Téhéran sur la gravité des enjeux, tout en pesant sur M. Obama, au moment où ce dernier cherche à sauver le processus de paix au Proche-Orient.

En visite aux Etats-Unis, M. Nétanyahou a évoqué, le 8 novembre, un « *paradoxe* » au cœur du dossier nucléaire : « *Si la communauté internationale, menée par les Etats-Unis, veut arrêter l'Iran sans user de l'action militaire, elle doit le convaincre qu'elle est prête à y recourir.* »

Ces propos interviennent alors que les grandes puissances espèrent parvenir, ce mois-ci, ou début décembre, à de nouveaux pourparlers avec l'Iran qui pourraient porter sur un nouveau schéma d'évacuation d'uranium enrichi iranien vers l'étranger.

La Turquie, sollicitée par les Iraniens, s'est déclarée prête à accueillir cette réunion, dont le calendrier et le contenu demeurent incertains. Le président iranien, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a en effet déclaré, le 10 novembre,

que le programme nucléaire ne devait pas être inscrit à l'ordre du jour, mais seulement « *les problèmes internationaux* » et « *l'établissement de la paix* ».

Malgré l'impact des sanctions internationales qui aggravent les difficultés économiques de l'Iran,

La force militaire devrait permettre de « châtrer ce régime »

Le sénateur Graham

les responsables israéliens se montrent dubitatifs sur la capacité de ces pressions à modifier *in fine* le comportement du régime iranien sur la question nucléaire.

Présent à la conférence d'Halifax, le ministre israélien Ehoud Barak a déclaré devant des journalistes qui l'interrogeaient sur la perspective de discussions entre les grandes puissances et l'Iran : « *Nous sommes encore dans la phase de la diplomatie et des sanctions. Bien sûr, si l'Iran cessait d'enrichir l'uranium, ce serait une évolution positive. Mais, si on se fonde sur les expériences passées et l'exemple nord-coréen qu'ils suivent probablement, on voit que leur objectif de base est de défier le monde entier.* »

L'administration Obama entend tester les intentions de Téhéran, et a rejeté les dernières demandes israéliennes concernant une reprise de la thématique militaire comme moyen de pression sur l'Iran. Réagissant aux propos de M. Nétanyahou, le secrétaire à la défense, Robert Gates, a souligné que « *les sanctions mordent plus profondément que cela était anticipé.* »

Dans ses mémoires publiés le 9 novembre, George Bush raconte qu'il avait demandé au Pentagone d'étudier un plan de frappes militaires sur les installations nucléaires iraniennes, afin que « *l'option soit toujours sur la table* », mais qu'il avait dû y renoncer après la publication, fin 2007, d'un rapport des renseignements américains affirmant « *qu'il n'y avait pas de programme nucléaire militaire actif.* »

M. Obama gère depuis des mois la double pression des républicains et des Israéliens à propos d'un rappel de l'option militaire. Début août, l'amiral Mullen, chef des forces américaines, avait déclaré qu'une telle option « *restait sur la table* ». En avril, la sous-secrétaire à la défense, Michèle Flournoy, la décrivait, *a contrario*, comme « *retirée de la table, à moyen terme.* »

Natalie Nougayrède



IRAK: LE CANDIDAT D'ALLAWI, OUSSAMA AL-NOUJAIFI, ÉLU PRÉSIDENT DU PARLEMENT

BAGDAD, 11 novembre 2010 (AFP)

LE SUNNITE Oussama al-Noujaifi, député sur la liste laïque Iraqiya dirigée par Iyad Allawi, a été élu jeudi président du Parlement irakien, a annoncé le doyen d'âge le kurde Fouad Massoum.

"Oussama al-Noujaifi a été élu par 227 voix sur 295 députés ayant pris part au vote", a précisé M. Massoum. Soixante-huit votes ont été annulés, a-t-il dit sans expliquer les raisons de ces annulations.

Le nouveau Parlement compte 325 sièges.

Seul candidat pour ce poste, à la suite de l'accord conclu mercredi soir entre les principales forces politiques irakiennes, M. Noujaifi succède à un autre sunnite Iyad al-Samarraï du Parti islamique.

Âgé de 54 ans, cet ingénieur électrique, diplômé de l'université de Mossoul, ville du nord de l'Irak où il est né, a passé la première partie de sa vie professionnelle (1980 à 1992) à la Compagnie nationale d'électricité avant de démissionner pour créer une société de produits agricoles.

Elu en 2005 sur la liste Iraqiya, il fut durant un an ministre de l'Industrie dans le gouvernement d'Ibrahim al-Jaafari. Il a été réélu en 2010 dans la province de Ninive où son frère Athil est gouverneur.

Après son élection comme son président, le Parlement a commencé ensuite un second vote pour élire les deux vice-présidents, le sadriste chiite Qoussaï Abdel Wahab al-Souhail et le kurde Aref Tayfour.

L'entente consacre la répartition ethnique et confessionnelle des trois plus importantes charges du pays. Le président de la République sera kurde, le Premier ministre chiite, et le président du Parlement sunnite.

La deuxième étape sera l'élection du chef kurde Jalal Talabani comme président de la République à la majorité des deux-tiers, aux termes de l'accord annoncé par le porte-parole du gouvernement Ali al-Dabbagh.

Selon ce dernier, M. Talabani devra désigner, après la fête de l'Adha célébrée à partir du 16 novembre, le Premier ministre sortant Nouri al-Maliki pour former le nouveau gouvernement. M. Maliki aura un mois pour le constituer.

Kurdish show trial shames Turkey

The trial of 151 Kurdish politicians, lawyers, mayors and leaders of Kurdish civil society is an affront to human rights



Margaret Owen

A trial that would shame any democracy is now in its fourth week in Diyarbakir, Turkey. Named the KCK trial, its processes have been widely condemned by the several hundred independent observers who attended during its first few days.

Charged with "violating the unity of the state" and "abetting terrorism" are 151 Kurdish politicians, lawyers, mayors and leaders of Kurdish civil society. Of these, 103 have already been in detention for the past 18 months, but details of the charges were not disclosed until 12 weeks ago.

This Friday is "crunch day" when the judge will decide whether to accept the defence team's argument that there is no case to answer and release those detained, or to let the trial continue with the "suspects" remaining in prison or released on bail.

The manner of gathering evidence and procedures in the courtroom breach all international and European standards on human rights and fair trials. I was a member of the independent UK delegation that attended the first week of this trial. It could last for months, even years. It is vital that those in prison are released on bail, and that the prosecutions are dropped for this is a "political trial", not a legal one.

The pro-Kurdish political parties, and recently the PKK, have made repeated attempts to obtain a resolution of the 30-year-old conflict through democratic dialogue and negotiations rather than violence. The PKK has called for "ceasefires" on several occasions, and has just now declared that the present ceasefire, due to expire at the end of the month, will continue until the elections taking place next June.

But time and again the authorities have closed down pro-Kurdish political parties, imprisoned Kurdish political leaders and declared Kurdish civil society and human rights organisations illegal. Peaceful protests and demonstrations calling for an end to armed conflict and respect for human rights are subject to brutal harassment by the police.

The Democratic Society party (DTP) was the last of several parties to be closed in 2009. Today, legal-democratic Kurdish politics continues under the roof of the newly named BDP (Peace and Democracy party). Not only have many of its members been arrested and imprisoned, but its distinguished chair, Ahmed Turk, has been banned from all political activities for the next five years, and the brilliant and charismatic mayor of Diyarbakir, Osman Baydemir, faces not only prosecution but also assassination threats as he continues to speak out on behalf of the Kurdish population whose lives are wracked by persecution, extrajudicial killings, torture, displacement and extreme poverty.

Some 5,000 Kurds are in prison on charges of supporting terrorism, but this trial will reveal Turkey's true status in the context of democracy, justice and the rule of law.

This trial of the 151 "suspects" is the most repressive action yet to shut down the lawful and democratic activities of Kurdish organisations and eliminate all political activity. The manner by which the evidence in the trial was gathered gives cause for extreme concern.



It is clear from the 7,500-page indictment and so-called supporting evidence that there are no grounds for suspecting any actual crimes have been committed, such as references to weapons, acts of violence, or conspiracy for terrorism. Most of the evidence is based on (unlawful) wiretapping and bugging to draw conclusions from private daily conversations, or on routine political propaganda and secret statements by anonymous prosecution witnesses.

Innocent conversations, for example, referring to the purchasing of "tomatoes" or "bread", are construed as codes for bombs and grenades and have found their way into the indictment, along with intimate and personal conversations between family members and friends.

To prepare for this event, and accommodate not only the 151 defendants, but their 250 lawyers, the press, the many relatives of the accused, the members of foreign observer delegations, and more than 60 armed prison police, the Turkish government built a vast new courthouse in the yard between existing courts.

The joke went round that everyone should be grateful to the Kurds for this new courtroom, and will probably need to thank them again for a new prison. Security has been intense. There were more than 1,500 armed police on duty around the building and armed snipers on the surrounding rooftops. It took ages to get into the court, going through body searches and scanning. My purse containing some Turkish lira in coins was confiscated because I might "use them as missiles to throw at the judge".

Many of the accused are lawyers. One is Muharrem Erbey, head of the IHD (Human Rights Commission), who has continually spoken out on the need for diplomacy and dialogue to end the conflict.

The trial began with the judge, Menderes Yilmaz, dismissing the defence lawyers' submissions – firstly, that the defendants should be able to defend themselves in their Kurdish mother tongue.

On these opening days the accused lawyers argued ferociously and passionately that these proceedings were in fact a show trial, a political trial, that there were no victims of the alleged crimes, that the evidence was based on hearsay, and that the trial should be abandoned.

There is still time for Turkey's AKP government to acknowledge that this trial has no basis in law, and order its closure and the immediate release of those detained.

Q&A: Iraqi Kurdistan leader Massoud Barzani

Barzani discusses the deal on forming a new government in which he played a crucial role and what lies ahead for Kurdistan and for Iraq as a whole.

By Ned Parker
Los Angeles Times

Reporting from Baghdad — Massoud Barzani, president of the Kurdistan regional government in northern Iraq, was feeling triumphant. The onetime Kurdish fighter against Saddam Hussein's regime had hosted three days of talks and pushed through a deal Wednesday meant to end Iraq's eight-month political stalemate and form a stable government that could rule until elections planned for 2014. Even if the arrangement breaks down before a full government is seated — the secular Iraqiya bloc walked out of a parliamentary session Thursday, suggesting the difficult road ahead — Barzani will be remembered for his efforts to end the impasse. In an interview Thursday with *The Times*, Barzani made clear his insistence that the power-sharing agreement be honored by all sides, including by Prime Minister Nouri Maliki, who retains his post under the deal despite the fears of many that he is seeking to monopolize power.

Did you expect the deal last night on naming a government?

I had hoped we would succeed in our efforts. In fact, the developments that happened last night were ... beyond my expectations.

How long did you think it would take?

I expected some of the key issues would not be sorted out or finalized decisively. The good thing was last night and the previous night some of these key issues were sorted out.

Which issues are settled now clearly, with no ambiguity?

There are a number of very complicated issues that have been there for five or six years and have not been sorted out: the issue of accountability and justice, the issue of balance, the issue of consensus, the issue of partnership in the government, the issue of the three presidencies. ... These had all become problems, but it was good we were able to sort them out.

Is it fair to say that you and the



Kurdistan Alliance were the kingmakers of Iraqi politics, that there is a government today because of the Kurdistan Alliance?

Our fate and destiny is with that of Iraq. The Kurdistan region is part of Iraq. It doesn't work for us if we say let's do well in Kurdistan and let what happens in Baghdad happen. That's not a true approach, and that's not a sound policy. ... Therefore, we tried seriously to solve the problems in Baghdad and elsewhere in Iraq together. And, of course, we do not want to exploit our position and our situation in a way to gain achievements for the Kurds alone. We want to gain achievements for the Kurds and Kurdistan region, but also for all of Iraq. And we feel proud that the Kurds have been able to play this role.

What was a key moment in the negotiations that helped to convince Iraqiya [which won the largest number of parliamentary seats in March elections but could not leverage that to gain the prime minister post] to join?

There was a lot of sensitivity and lack of trust or mistrust among many of the colleagues. So we did our best either to eliminate the lack of trust ... or at least to minimize it. ... We played and acted as guarantors so that no sides will step back from the pledges that they have

made.

Was there a key meeting with [Iraqiya leader Iyad] Allawi and Maliki in the last days that tipped the balance?

I have spent time talking to them one on one and privately, and I felt there was a desire from both to get out of the crisis. ... Maybe each saw the situation a different way, each had a fear in a way, and we tried to allay the fears, and also to work together.

You warned in early 2009 that Maliki risked drifting toward authoritarianism and not honoring his commitment and friendship to the Kurds. What restored your confidence in Maliki, so that you could do business with him again?

There is no doubt that the last four years were a rich experience for us, for Prime Minister Maliki, for [Maliki's] Dawa party, for our party and for all the other parties involved in the political process. So a fact was known to all of us, to everyone, that with confrontation and challenges the situation in Iraq will deteriorate. We have to find common ground, and common points that bring us together and we have to work together.

What gives you confidence that the prime minister has learned as well? Is it his acceptance of Iraqi Kurdistan's position papers [19 points that look to limit the powers of the prime minister's office, to promote power-sharing and to resolve outstanding issues regarding Iraqi Kurdistan's semi-autonomy]?

A number of reasons: our conversation with him, the 19-point paper, the program or agenda of the government, the bylaws and statutes of the council of ministers, the bylaws of the parliament, the practices of the parliament, the basis of partnership, the balance of governance. So these all make sure the process goes the right way.

Do you want U.S. [military] forces to stay in Iraq after 2011, when the country's current security agreement expires? Is that important for Iraqi

Kurdistan?

Of course, this issue has to be studied thoroughly, and based on the requirements of the circumstances on that day after. When the time has come, based on that, the federal government has to decide upon it. I've always stated that we are for friendly and continued relations with the United States, but not necessarily that that relationship is confined only to the presence of their troops on the ground.

So it is not as crucial an issue as it was in the past when you had said you wanted U.S. bases in the north.

The crucial point is for the relationship to continue. Instead of having combat troops, we could have experts to train the Iraqi forces, so the relationship could change, and the same with the [Kurdish] *peshmerga* forces — to train the [Kurdish] forces.

Do you want that personally as the

head of the Kurdistan regional government?

I certainly would welcome and like our forces to be trained, to be equipped and to be helped.



November 9, 2010

Kurds hold to presidency, Iraq stalemate rolls on

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraq's Kurds are holding firm to their claim on the country's presidency and the once-dominant Sunni minority is trying to push for checks on the powers of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki as the country faces a looming parliamentary deadline to choose a new political leadership. Iraq's top political leaders are to meet Tuesday for the second day in a row for face-to-face talks to find a way out of the country's eight-month political deadlock since March 7 elections.

But producing a deal by Thursday's scheduled parliamentary session is difficult. Standing in the way are issues such as how to apportion key government posts, what role to give the Sunni-backed Iraqiya coalition led by a senior Shiite politician and the deep distrust between political factions.

Iraq has yet to cobble together a new government after the March vote. That inconclusive election set off a bitter fight between al-Maliki, now partnered with anti-American cleric Muqtada al-Sadr in an Iranian-backed coalition and, on the opposite side, the Iraqiya coalition led by former prime minister Ayad Allawi. The Sunnis see Allawi's coalition as their only hope for political power.

With momentum recently shifting in al-Maliki's favor, the question appears to be what role to give to Allawi's Iraqiya coalition. If the coalition is shut out altogether and the Sunnis left feeling disenfranchised again, the risk is a return to sec-



leaders of Iraq's main political blocs, front row, from left to right: former Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim Jafari, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and former Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, are seen during their meeting in Erbil, the capital of Kurdistan region in Iraq's north, Monday Nov. 8, 2010. Leaders of Iraq's main political blocs concluded their first meeting since parliamentary elections in March without an agreement on the makeup of a new government. AP Photo

tarian violence.

But members of Iraqiya have balked at joining a government with al-Maliki at the helm and have been pushing for some way to limit his powers.

During a news conference Tuesday, a senior Iraqiya leader, Saleh al-Mutlaq, said the issue of who will be the next prime minister has not yet been settled and will be discussed in the next few days.

Alluding to Iraqiya's concerns over al-Maliki, he said the next prime minister should be someone who would not repeat the country's dictatorial past and would cooperate with everyone in running the country.

A lawmaker backing al-Maliki, Bahaa

al-Aaraji, said the main issue keeping Iraqiya from joining in a power-sharing government with al-Maliki is that they want positions with real power in the next government. This is to serve as a check on al-Maliki, who they say is consolidating his power.

Another politician linked to al-Maliki said Tuesday's talks would focus on the three top positions in the government — the prime minister, president and parliament speaker — and how to apportion them.

He said officials are trying to persuade Iraqiya to accept the parliament speaker's post, which Allawi has already rejected, or persuade the Kurds to give up the presidency.

Iraq Lawmakers Approve Deal to Form New Government

By BUSHRA JUHI
Associated Press

BAGHDAD -- Iraqi lawmakers approved an agreement on Saturday that aims to bring all of Iraq's feuding political blocs into a new government led by Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, although deep disagreements remain about the role to be played by the country's minority Sunnis.

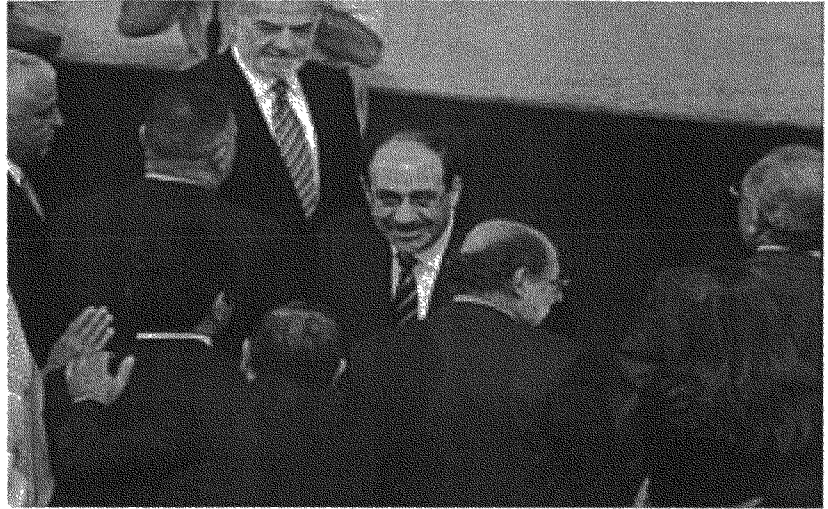
The deal struck this week ended an eight-month impasse that had stalled the formation of a new government and threatened to reignite sectarian violence. But the agreement appeared on the brink of collapse almost immediately after it was announced because of the deep-rooted distrust that pervades Iraq's sectarian politics.

The Sunni-backed Iraqiya bloc had threatened to boycott the Saturday session to approve the deal after storming out of parliament on Thursday and raising fears the group would abstain from government altogether. Iraqiya lawmakers said they had been betrayed by al-Maliki's Shiite coalition, who they fear is trying to deprive them of a significant role in the next government.

Leaders of the major parties met early Saturday to try to iron out their differences and salvage the deal. When parliament convened later in the day, Iraqiya was present and took part in the parliament vote to approve the power-sharing agreement.

"There was a misunderstanding in the last session," Iraqiya spokesman Haider al-Mulla told lawmakers. "We here stress that we will be an active part in producing a national unity government."

There was no immediate tally of how many members attended or voted for the deal, which was des-



Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, center, shakes hands with a lawmaker during a parliament session in Baghdad, Iraq, Thursday, Nov. 11, 2010. Iraq's president gave Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki the nod to form the next government Thursday after an eight-month deadlock, but a dramatic walkout from parliament by his Sunni rivals cast doubt on a power-sharing deal reached by the two sides less than a day earlier. (AP Photo/Karim Kadim)

cribed as a general outline for the new government but with few specifics. Kurdish lawmaker Mahmoud Othman said it passed by a large margin.

Under the agreement, al-Maliki and President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, keep their current posts. Iraqiya, meanwhile, gets the parliament speaker's post as well as the top spot on a council intended to serve as a check on al-Maliki's powers. That job is supposed to go to Iraqiya leader Ayad Allawi.

But in comments to CNN television late Friday, Allawi said he would not take part in the al-Maliki government and described the power-sharing deal as dead. Allawi did not attend the parliament session, and other lawmakers said he had already left the country.

While Allawi absent, Iraqiya official Fattah al-Sheik said the majority of the bloc's members were there.

The lawmakers also agreed Saturday to lift a ban on three Iraqiya members who were prevented from taking seats in parliament because of alleged ties to Saddam Hussein's regime, said Hadi al-Ammari, a Shiite lawmaker aligned

with al-Maliki. The issue of whether or not to lift the ban was the reason the Iraqiya lawmakers stormed out of parliament Thursday.

A day after President Barack Obama praised the power-sharing deal, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad voiced his support for it, calling the agreement "a great victory for the Iraqi people."

Iran's official IRNA news agency said Ahmadinejad spoke with al-Maliki and Talabani by telephone Saturday to congratulate them.

Iran, also a Shiite majority country, has backed al-Maliki's efforts to seek another term as a way to consolidate Shiite power in Baghdad. Iran had also lobbied heavily to sideline Sunnis in the new government.

The months of political jockeying after inconclusive March 7 parliamentary elections have left Iraqis disillusioned and fearful that sidelining the minority Sunni community could fuel more violence. Iraqiya won 91 seats to 89 for al-Maliki's State of Law coalition, but neither was near the 163-seat threshold necessary to govern.

Iraqiya argued it should form

the government, but after months of negotiations it was al-Maliki who cobbled together enough support to keep the prime minister's post. After intense negotiations and amid signs that al-Maliki would form the government with or without them, Iraqiya decided to join forces with him.

The key test going forward for the Sunnis will be to see how many ministerial posts Iraqiya receives in the new al-Maliki government.

Iraqiya lawmaker Wahda al-Joumaili said al-Maliki's alliance must adhere to what she said were previous agreements allocating Iraqiya some influential ministries.

American officials have stressed the risk of a return to sectarian violence if Sunnis do not have a legitimate role in the new government and lobbied hard for Iraqiya to be a part of it.

"If the people don't consider it to be an inclusive government there

may be elements in the community who would want to express their displeasure in the form of violence," said the top American commander in Iraq, Gen. Lloyd Austin, speaking to reporters Saturday.

"It's hard to predict how this is going to come out. The best case for security is an inclusive government, and we're just hopeful that we'll see that," he said.

★★★

THE DENVER POST November 5, 2010

Al-Qaida claims Baghdad attacks on Shiites

By BUSHRA JUHI
Associated Press

BAGHDAD—Al-Qaida's front group in Iraq on Friday claimed responsibility for a string of attacks on Baghdad's Shiite districts this week that left 91 people dead, and threatened more strikes against the country's majority sect.

The Islamic State of Iraq—an umbrella group that includes al-Qaida in Iraq and other Sunni insurgent factions—said in a statement posted on a militant website that the attacks against Shiite civilians at restaurants and cafes across the capital on Tuesday was just "the first of many bloody days to come."

It also appeared to link the violence to remarks made by a hard-line Kuwaiti Shiite scholar who called the Prophet Muhammad's wife, Aisha, an "enemy of God" during a recent event in London, saying "the smell of death won't leave their (Shiite) gathering where they insult the wives of the Prophet."

Sunnis consider such remarks about the prophet's wife blasphemous.

The Islamic State of Iraq's threat of more attacks on Shiites comes days after the group also vowed to launch more strikes on Iraq's Christians following a bloody siege

on Sunday at a Baghdad church that left 58 people dead.

In its claim of responsibility for that attack, the group cited events outside of Iraq, saying the siege was meant to force the Coptic Christian Church in Egypt to release Muslim women that the militant group claims are being held captive.

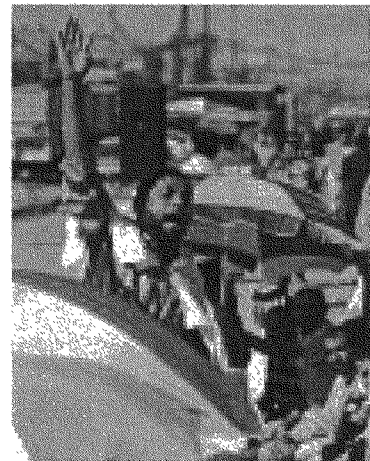
The group also demanded the release of al-Qaida-linked prisoners held in Iraq.

Sectarian tensions in Iraq remain high despite a drop in violence from its height in 2006 and 2007 when battling Sunni and Shiite militias pushed the country to the brink of civil war.

Meanwhile, a long-awaited parliament session that had been called for Monday is being postponed yet again. The acting parliament speaker, Fouad Massoum told The Associated Press that the session would not be held Monday. He did not elaborate.

Another member of parliament, independent Kurdish lawmaker Mahmoud Othman, said the session would be held Thursday to give the political blocs more time to come up with an agreement on who will claim the top jobs in the next government.

Iraq's parliament has met only once since the March 7 election. No single bloc won an outright majority, leaving the blocs scrambling to



An Iraqi man chants anti-U.S. slogans as followers of radical Shiite... (AP Photo/Karim Kadim)

cobble together enough political allies to form a coalition government.

A Sunni-backed bloc led by former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi won 91 seats—two more than a coalition led by current Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

But as the political process drags out and violence continues, many Iraqis have become increasingly frustrated with their lawmakers' inability to come to an agreement on the next government.

□ □ □

Iraq is left in a sectarian rut after the elite's horse trading

The war-ravaged country finally has a government, but what kind of precedent does it set for the future?



Nussaibah Younis

Iraq's new power-sharing deal is certainly an improvement on the recent prospect of a Shia-Kurdish coalition that excluded Sunni and secular Iraqiya supporters.

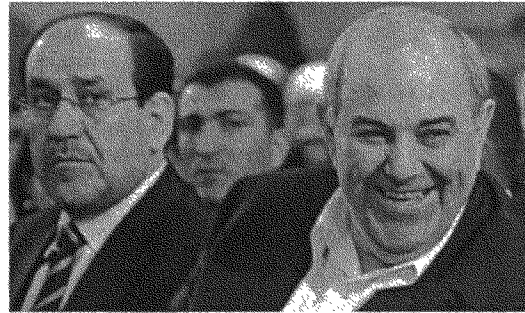
Without wishing to read doom into every development, I find it difficult to see a bright future at the end of the road chosen by Iraq's political elite. The intransigence and self-interest of Iraq's politicians over the past eight months may have squandered the country's last opportunity to build a truly democratic political system.

The Iraqi people voted for nationalism and against sectarianism in the 2010 elections – for Iraqiya and not for Sunni Islamists, for the Da'wah party and not for the ultra-Shia Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq. But the electorate's supposed representatives are rewarding them with a sectarian government par excellence.

In fact the new government promises to be very similar to the old government: the same Shia prime minister will govern alongside the same Kurdish president, with the simple addition of a new role for the Sunni representative – chair of the National Council for Strategic Policy.

Dividing up political roles like this sets a dangerous precedent. Politicians should come into office because of electoral success based on political programmes – and not simply because they claim to represent ethnic or religious groups.

If Iraqi politics is to continue in this way, we can all sit back and relax – waiting every five years for the elections that mean nothing, the backstage horse trading in which politicians nakedly vie for personal advantage, and finally the divvying up of power between groups in a way that promises to hamstring the new government before it has even begun.



Iraq's prime minister Nuri al-Maliki (left) and former Iraqi premier and Iyad Allawi Iraq's prime minister, Nuri al-Maliki (left) with Iyad Allawi, head of the secular Iraqiya coalition. Photograph: Reuters

The 2010 elections gave Iraq's politicians a rare opportunity to take politics in another direction. Together, Allawi and Maliki gained overwhelming support because they spoke of Iraqi unity, reconciliation, and reconstruction. But when it came to forming a government, self-interest won. Neither could bear the thought of not being prime minister, and both were content to drag the process on and on – waiting to clinch a political advantage while ordinary Iraqis paid with their lives in the escalating violence.

The months of negotiation led Iraq's parties to retreat into their sectarian identities, which is exactly what the electorate voted against. Iran's involvement bolstered the position of the Shia parties, while the US desperately sought Sunni participation to stymie the recent resurgence of sectarian violence in Iraq.

In a dangerous parallel with Lebanon's "National Pact", which led to two civil wars and continuing political volatility, Iraq's developing political model spells trouble for the years ahead. It does not take constitutional amendments to institutionalise identity-based politics. The allocation of top jobs according to community in Iraq may set a precedent just like Lebanon's unwritten Pact.

Governments based on communal power sharing can be extremely damaging for national reconciliation in a country like Iraq which is recovering from civil war. Political leaders discover that it pays to be in charge of a strong, well-defined religious or ethnic group. And communities realise that the political system will reward them the more they act like a unified interest group.

These arrangements also empower political elites at the expense of ordinary voters. Elites from each ethno-religious group can quickly gain a stranglehold over their communities, quelling dissent by pointing to the threat posed by the other Iraqi communities.

By undermining national unity, such a government also renders itself vulnerable to meddling from external powers. Iran and the US, for instance, are able to wield far greater leverage in Iraq when Sunnis, Shia, and Kurds are more concerned about protecting themselves from other Iraqis rather than protecting Iraq from foreign exploitation.

While we should be relieved that Allawi's Iraqiya is being included in the new Iraqi government, the compromise that has been cobbled together should not be seen as a long-term political solution for Iraq.

Iraqis want a transparent and accountable government that wins power on the basis of its political policies and that can be held responsible for its actions come election time. After all, the Middle East does not need yet another government run by political elites who ignore their duty of public service and content themselves with sharing the spoils of power behind closed doors.

L'Irak met fin à huit mois d'impasse politique et se dote d'un gouvernement

Nouri Al-Maliki serait reconduit comme premier ministre et Jalal Talabani resterait à la présidence

Il aura fallu huit mois d'impasse et trois jours d'après discussions pour y parvenir. Les quatre principaux groupes politiques d'Irak se sont accordés, mercredi 10 novembre au soir, sur les grandes lignes d'un partage du pouvoir. Le pays, sauf coup de théâtre dont il n'est pas avare, pourrait disposer d'un gouvernement dans les prochaines semaines.

L'accord conclu consacre la répartition ethnico-confessionnelle précédente puisque le président de la République reste kurde, le premier ministre, Nouri Al-Maliki, continuera d'incarner la majorité arabe chiïte du pays, tandis que la minorité arabe sunnite conserve la présidence du Parlement.

Le président américain, Barack Obama, a déclaré, vendredi à Séoul, en marge du G20, que cet accord était « une étape importante dans l'histoire de ce pays ». Les Etats-Unis, qui veulent retirer leurs 50 000 soldats du pays fin 2011, ont suivi les tractations de près. Néanmoins, selon Joost Hiltermann, un expert de l'International Crisis Group (ICG), le scénario agréé « n'est pas celui qui avait la faveur de Washington ».

Sauvegardée par Téhéran qui a poussé les trois principales formations chiïtes religieuses rivales à l'union, la domination des chiïtes pratiquants sur le pouvoir fédéral d'Irak « joue plutôt en faveur de l'Iran », relève encore M. Hiltermann. Anthony Blinken, conseiller du vice-président américain, Joe Biden, a contredit ce jugement et qualifié l'événement de Bagdad de « grand pas en avant ».

Reste à concrétiser l'ensemble de l'accord, ce qui pourrait prendre plusieurs semaines. Réunis, pour la seconde fois seulement depuis huit mois, les 295 députés présents de l'Assemblée nationale (sur 325)



Oussama Al-Najafi, député sunnite du parti Irakiya d'Iyad Allaoui, a été élu président du Parlement irakien. THAIER AL-SOUDANI/REUTERS

ont franchi, jeudi soir, dans un climat acrimonieux, les deux premières étapes du plan agréé.

Jalal Talabani, le politicien kurde (77 ans) qui préside la République depuis avril 2005, a été difficilement reconduit pour quatre ans à la majorité requise des deux tiers, et Oussama Al-Najafi, un député arabe sunnite d'Irakiya (74 ans), la liste « laïque » arrivée première aux élections de mars, a été élu président de l'Assemblée.

M. Talabani, qui occupe une présidence largement cérémoniale, doit appeler M. Maliki à former son gouvernement dans les quinze jours, celui-ci ayant alors, selon la Constitution, un mois supplémentaire pour le composer et obtenir l'aval de l'Assemblée nationale. Les chefs de partis s'étant abstenus d'entrer dans les détails, les marchandages pour l'attribution des postes vont durer.

Selon certains élus, il semble

que, outre la présidence de l'Assemblée nationale et, peut-être, le ministère des affaires étrangères, Irakiya, la liste majoritairement sunnite conduite par Iyad Allaoui, ait obtenu l'assurance de diriger une nouvelle institution, le Conseil national de la politique supérieure (CNPS).

Nouvel organe

Suggéré depuis des mois par les Etats-Unis, qui voyaient là le moyen de « compenser » le recul accepté par leur protégé (M. Allaoui répétait depuis huit mois qu'il ne se satisferait que de la direction du gouvernement), ce nouvel organe, qui reste à créer par une loi spécifique, devrait théoriquement « approuver » toutes les décisions « majeures » du gouvernement, économiques (pétrole), militaires et sécuritaires, avant que celles-ci ne deviennent effectives.

Vendredi matin, on ignorait encore ce que seraient les attributions, les pouvoirs réels et les membres de cet organisme, chacun supputant que M. Maliki, à qui il est reproché de « personnaliser » le pouvoir à outrance, tenterait de conserver le maximum de pouvoirs que lui conférait la Constitution.

M. Allaoui a posé trois autres conditions à son acceptation : examen par un comité ad hoc de la situation des prisonniers politiques (très majoritairement sunnites), annulation du « bannissement » de trois de ses élus pour liens présumés avec le parti Baas (interdit) de Saddam Hussein et officialisation par écrit des accords conclus. « Nous espérons, indique la liste Irakiya, ne pas avoir à revenir sur la décision de participer à ce processus politique, si nos conditions n'étaient pas respectées. » ■

Patrice Claude

Le Monde
15 novembre 2010

En Turquie, la désillusion à l'égard de l'Union européenne progresse

Seuls 38 % des Turcs se disent favorables à l'adhésion de leur pays à l'UE, selon un sondage

Istanbul
Correspondance

L'Europe est votre première femme!» A sa manière, Daniel Cohn-Bendit a rappelé au chef de la diplomatie turque, Ahmet Davutoglu, que la poursuite des négociations d'adhésion à l'Union européenne (UE) devait rester une priorité pour Ankara. Le ministre a apprécié son échange « franc et sincère » avec le président du groupe Verts du Parlement européen, mercredi 3 novembre. Mais, face à l'opposition parfois agressive de plusieurs pays membres, principalement la France et l'Allemagne, l'enthousiasme proeuropéen s'essouffle.

A peine 38 % des Turcs se déclarent en faveur d'une adhésion à l'Union, selon le dernier sondage Eurobaromètre établi par la Commission européenne. Plus qu'une véritable opposition, ce chiffre traduit une résignation sur l'issue des négociations. « Rien n'avance, constate Cengiz Aktar, directeur du département d'études européennes à l'université Bahçesehir d'Istanbul. Les raisons sont connues : la méthode de M. Sarkozy, la politique de revanche de la République de Chypre et l'absence d'une perspective claire donnée à la Turquie. Il faut

fixer une date pour l'adhésion. L'Europe ne sert plus de levier au processus de changement qui est à l'œuvre en Turquie », poursuit-il.

Les pourparlers, commencés il y a cinq ans à Bruxelles, avancent au ralenti. « Trop lentement », s'est plaint Ankara. Sur les 35 chapitres de règles communautaires auxquelles la Turquie doit se conformer, seuls 13 ont été ouverts. Aucun nouveau volet n'a pu être entamé cette année, et 18 restent bloqués par Chypre ou par la France, qui font obstruction à l'adhésion turque. Il en va ainsi du dossier

L'enthousiasme européen peut renaître facilement, plaide un universitaire turc

pourtant crucial de l'énergie, sur lequel Chypre a mis son veto. « Cela fait cinquante ans que la Turquie est laissée à la porte de l'Union européenne », a regretté le premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan, amer, le jour de la sortie du rapport annuel de suivi de la Commission européenne sur les progrès de la candidature.

« Depuis que le match a commencé, les règles du jeu ont été modifiées », et la Turquie « prend ombre de cette situation », a-t-il ajouté. Dans un entretien à la BBC, le président de la République Abdullah Gül a dénoncé les « obstacles artificiels et injustes » placés devant la candidature turque, censée satisfaire des critères techniques, mais qui doit finalement répondre à des arguments politiques.

Le rapport de la Commission présenté reste nuancé. Suffisamment pour permettre au ministre chargé des affaires européennes, Egemen

Bagis, de se laisser aller à l'autosatisfaction. « Nous avons progressé dans tous les domaines. Les progrès réalisés par la Turquie ces huit dernières années sont sidérants », estime-t-il. Les chapitres restant à ouvrir sont quasiment épuisés. L'impasse de la question chypriote demeure le principal obstacle. La Turquie refuse d'ouvrir ses ports et ses aéroports aux Chypriotes grecs qui, de leur côté, empêchent la levée de l'embargo sur la partie turque de l'île, une promesse faite par Bruxelles en 2004. Chypre joue « le gamin capricieux de l'Union », selon Daniel Cohn-Bendit.

Dès lors, Ankara menace de poursuivre d'autres objectifs, même si, officiellement, la volonté d'adhé-

rer à l'Union européenne ne faiblit pas. La Turquie, dont l'économie est l'une des plus dynamiques de la planète, veut rejoindre le club des BRIC (Brésil, Russie, Inde, Chine), les grands pays émergents. A Oxford,

le 8 novembre, Abdullah Gül a expliqué que l'équilibre mondial se déplaçait vers l'Est et que, pour rester forte, l'Union devait intégrer la Turquie. « Peut-être que, le jour venu, les Turcs diront : "Nous avons lancé les réformes, nous avons adopté les standards européens, ça nous suffit", et peut être qu'ils ne sentiront pas le besoin de devenir membres de l'Union », a conclu M. Gül.

L'enthousiasme européen peut renaître facilement, plaide l'universitaire Cengiz Aktar, pour qui ce désamour est « conjoncturel ». Un accord sur l'assouplissement des procédures de visa pour les Turcs voyageant dans l'Union, actuellement en négociation, permettrait d'apaiser les susceptibilités. « Nous avons besoin de la dynamique, des techniques, des normes et des valeurs européennes pour continuer à nous réformer », insiste M. Aktar. ■

Guillaume Perrier



SYRIE: DES KURDES PRIVÉS DU DROIT À LA SANTÉ (RAPPORTEUR DE L'ONU)

DAMAS, 14 novembre 2010 (AFP)

QUELQUE 300.000 KURDES en Syrie sont privés de nombreux droits, notamment l'accès à la santé, a affirmé dimanche à Damas le rapporteur spécial de l'ONU sur la santé, Anand Grover.

"La situation de l'un des groupes vulnérables en Syrie, environ 300.000 personnes d'origine kurde, est inquiétante, car elles sont privées de beaucoup de droits, y compris celui à la santé", a estimé le rapporteur de l'ONU dans une déclaration écrite distribuée lors d'une conférence de presse.

A l'origine, plus de 100.000 Kurdes ont été privés de la nationalité syrienne, après un recensement réalisé en 1962, qui ne les a pas comptabilisés. "En conséquence, ils ont été privés de beaucoup de droits", a expliqué le rapporteur.

"Pour ce groupe, l'accès au droit à la santé est semé d'embûches", a-t-il ajouté, en appelant le gouvernement syrien à "suivre" cette question.

En 2007, le président syrien Bachar al-Assad avait annoncé que des mesures concrètes allaient être prises pour accorder la nationalité à des Kurdes syriens qui en sont privés, évoquant alors "un projet de loi en phase d'élaboration".

Représentant environ 9% de la population en Syrie, les Kurdes sont estimés à plus de 1,5 million.

Les responsables kurdes réclament la reconnaissance de leur langue, de leur culture et de leurs droits politiques, mais se défendent de toute visée sécessionniste.

L'accord de partage politique mis en oeuvre en Irak

par Khalid al Ansary

BAGDAD (Reuters) - Au terme de huit mois de paralysie, les responsables irakiens se sont entendus sur l'attribution des trois principaux postes politiques en Irak, avec notamment le maintien du chiite Nouri al Maliki comme Premier ministre.

Le Kurde Djalal Talabani a été réélu dans la soirée au poste de chef de l'Etat et a aussitôt reconduit Maliki dans ses fonctions. Un peu plus tôt, le poste de président du parlement était revenu à Oussama al Noudjaïfi, un sunnite du bloc Irakia de l'ancien Premier ministre Iyad Allaoui, arrivé de justesse en tête des élections législatives le 7 mars dernier.

D'autres membres du bloc Irakia entreront au gouvernement et l'un d'eux prendra le poste de ministre des Affaires étrangères. Allaoui lui-même sera placé à la tête d'un nouveau conseil de stratégie politique.

Mais la réélection de Talabani puis la nomination dans la foulée de Maliki, qui dispose désormais d'un délai de trente jours pour former son gouvernement, ont été marquées par le départ d'une soixantaine d'élus, soit les deux tiers, du bloc Irakia. Leur décision illustre les difficultés de la cohabitation à venir.

"Grâce à Dieu, nous avons franchi hier soir une grande étape, ce qui est une victoire pour tous les Irakiens", a déclaré le président du gouvernement autonome kurde, Massoud Barzani, lors d'une conférence de presse jeudi



Nouri al-Maliki et Jalal Talabani conservent leur place dans le nouveau gouvernement irakien. (Reuters)

dans la journée à Bagdad.

L'inclusion d'Irakia au sein de ce que Barzani a appelé un gouvernement de "partenariat national" devrait aider à prévenir le risque d'une reprise des violences confessionnelles, après huit mois de bras de fer entre Maliki et Allaoui.

SAUVER LA FACE"

Nouri al Maliki avait pu conforter son statut de favori à sa propre succession en s'assurant mercredi soir le soutien d'une trentaine de membres du bloc Irakia, arrivé en tête aux élections législatives avec deux sièges de plus que l'alliance du Premier ministre.

"Ce qui est le plus important, c'est que nous soyons enfin sortis de l'impasse", a dit Amer al Fayyadh, doyen de la faculté de sciences politiques à l'université de Bagdad. "La formation d'un gouvernement est maintenant en vue", a-t-il ajouté.

Mais le maintien au pouvoir de Maliki ne peut que déplaire aux "durs" de la communauté sunnite, hostiles à l'influence de l'Iran sur les dirigeants chiites irakiens. Nombre d'entre eux jugeront certainement insuffisantes les garanties obtenues pour la formation du prochain gouvernement.

Minoritaires face aux chiites, les sunnites détenaient les postes-clés du pouvoir du temps de Saddam Hussein.

"Dans tous les cas, nous nous retrouvons dans le même climat qu'en 2005, lorsque les sunnites estimaient être sous-représentés au gouvernement, ce qui avait grandement contribué à l'instabilité du pays", déclare Yahya al Koubaïssi, chercheur à l'Institut irakien des études stratégiques.

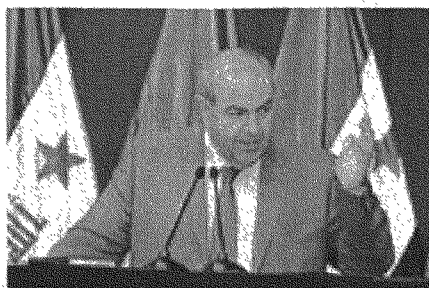
Pour lui, le poste réservé à Allaoui à la tête d'un conseil de stratégie vise simplement à tenter de "sauver la face".

Le Journal du Dimanche

13 NOVEMBRE 2010

Le Journal du Dimanche

A peine signé, l'accord de partage du pouvoir en Irak bat de l'aile. Deux jours après l'annonce de la formation d'un nouveau gouvernement, l'ancien Premier ministre, Iyad Allaoui, annonce samedi le retrait de sa formation, Irakiya. Mais ses alliés élus au Parlement ont malgré tout confirmé leur intention d'être présents au sein du nou-



Iyad Allaoui n'accepte pas le partage du pouvoir. (Reuters)

Irak: Le gouvernement fragilisé

vel exécutif. En cas d'absence des sunnites au sein du gouvernement, le pays pourrait replonger dans la violence interconfessionnelle.

A peine entériné, et déjà il vacille. L'accord de partage du pouvoir en Irak, annoncé il y a deux jours après huit mois de paralysie politique, a été remis en cause samedi par l'ancien Premier ministre, Iyad Allaoui, à la tête du bloc Irakiya. "Nous pensons que le concept de partage du pouvoir est mort maintenant. C'est terminé. Je ne participerai

pas à cette comédie. C'est l'établissement d'une nouvelle dictature en Irak", a-t-il ainsi déclaré sur CNN, depuis Londres où il est officiellement en voyage pour "raisons familiales".

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Si le Premier ministre chiite, Nouri al-Maliki, reconduit dans ses fonctions, peut gouverner sans Irakiya - une alliance mêlant représentants laïques et sunnites -, l'absence de ce bloc pourrait entraîner de nouvelles violences inter-confessionnelles, les seuls chiites et kurdes étant alors représentés au gouvernement. "Pour l'Irak, cela [le retrait

d'Irakia] signifie probablement des tensions et de la violence", a ainsi estimé Iyad Alloui, alors que le pays a connu ces derniers jours une recrudescence des attentats, en sus des attaques visant la communauté chrétienne.

Dans un premier temps, le bloc Irakiya - qui a remporté les élections législatives du 7 mars dernier avec 91 sièges contre 89 pour la coalition de l'Etat de droit emmenée par Nouri al-Maliki - avait accepté de soutenir ce nouveau gouvernement. Mais jeudi, les deux tiers des élus se réclamant de cette alliance ont claqué la porte du Parlement, estimant que l'accord de partage n'était pas respecté par les autres forces en présence.

Au Parlement, Irakiya confirme l'accord de gouvernement

Au sein d'Irakiya toutefois, tout le monde ne partage pas la position d'Iyad Alloui. L'alliance a d'ailleurs confirmé samedi au Parlement son intention de participer au futur gouvernement. "Tous les blocs vont continuer à appliquer l'ensemble des accords. Nous confirmons qu'Irakia fera partie d'un gouvernement

de partenariat national", a ainsi déclaré le porte-parole d'Irakiya au Parlement, Haïdar al Moulla. Quelques heures plus tôt, le député Djaber al Djaberi avait estimé que toute cette situation relevait d'un simple "malentendu". "L'intention d'Irakia n'est pas de boycotter le processus politique", avait-t-il ainsi assuré.

Selon les termes de l'accord de partage du pouvoir conclu mercredi, Nouri al-Maliki, Premier ministre depuis 2006, conserve son poste, le kurde Djalal Talabani garde son fauteuil de président et le sunnite Oussam al-Noudjaïfi, membre du bloc Irakiya, devient président du Parlement, ou l'alliance d'Alloui est majoritaire. Le poste de ministre des Affaires étrangères devait également aller un membre d'Irakiya et Iyad Alloui devait prendre la tête d'un nouveau Conseil de stratégie politique, une institution ad hoc. Mais avec les déclarations de l'ancien Premier ministre, les cartes sont désormais rebattues. Reste encore à savoir qui parle au nom d'Irakiya.

REUTERS

Nouri al Maliki chargé de former un gouvernement en Irak

BAGDAD / 25 novembre 2010 / (Reuters)

LE PRÉSIDENT irakien Djalal Talabani a officiellement chargé jeudi le Premier ministre, Nouri al Maliki, de former d'ici un mois un gouvernement réunissant les factions politiques chiite, sunnite et kurde.

Les élections législatives du 7 mars n'ont pas dégagé de majorité claire en Irak et après huit mois de tractations un accord de partage du pouvoir a été conclu il y a 15 jours.

Maliki, d'origine chiite, a été reconduit pour un second mandat à la tête du gouvernement tandis que Talabani, un Kurde, était maintenu à la présidence et qu'Ossama al Noudjaïfi, un sunnite, a été nommé président du parlement.

"Je m'adresse au grand peuple irakien, à toutes ses religions, ses obédiences et ses nationalités, et à nos frères les dirigeants politiques, pour souligner la nécessité de coopérer afin de surmonter les différends du passé (...) et d'ouvrir une nouvelle page", a dit Maliki lors d'une cérémonie au palais présidentiel à Bagdad.

A l'heure où l'Irak doit reconstruire ses infrastructures et relancer son secteur pétrolier ravagés par des années de guerre et de sanctions économiques, le choix des ministres du Pétrole et des Finances sera particulièrement important.



La coalition de l'Etat de droit de Maliki, à dominante chiite, est arrivée en deuxième position aux élections législatives. Mais il a réussi à conserver son poste de Premier ministre en rassemblant une alliance de factions chiites qui a obtenu le soutien de l'Iran.

Il a ensuite reçu l'appui des députés kurdes et d'une partie de l'alliance Irakia dirigée par Iyad Allaoui. Irakia est arrivé en tête des élections du 7 mars avec 91 sièges contre 89 à l'Etat de droit de Maliki, mais Allaoui n'a pas trouvé de partenaires pour atteindre la majorité parlementaire.

Maliki a effectué le mois dernier une tournée des capitales arabes pour obtenir leur soutien à sa reconduction à la tête du gouvernement, offrant aux voisins arabes des possibilités d'investissements en Irak en échange de pressions sur Irakia pour que l'alliance accepte un compromis, dit-on de source politique.

Des dirigeants d'Irakia ont indiqué qu'ils voulaient le ministère des Affaires étrangères actuellement détenu par un Kurde, Hoshiyar Zebari. Cependant, des divisions au sein d'Irakia pourraient compromettre ces prétentions, alors même que les Kurdes souhaiteraient conserver le poste.

Iraqi breakthrough deal returns leader to power

BAGHDAD

Maliki gets 2nd term, while Sunnis appear to be grudging partners

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Iraqi Parliament approved key leadership positions Thursday in the first step toward forming a new government, after a breakthrough deal that returns the country's Shiite prime minister, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, to office for a second term but falls short of Sunni hopes for greater political power.

Mr. Maliki and his top rival, Ayad Allawi, who had hoped to take the prime minister's post at the top of a Sunni-backed coalition, sat next to each other in the Parliament chamber in an apparent sign of unity after a contentious, eight-month political fight over the formation of the government.

The deal, reached late Wednesday, ends the deadlock, but raises concerns that Sunnis disillusioned with the political process could return to the ranks of the insurgency, fueling new violence as the United States prepares to remove the last of its troops from the country by the end of next year.

The deal is potentially a setback for the United States, which had been pushing for a greater Sunni say in power, and a boost for Iran, a regional rival. The Sunni minority had put great hopes in the March elections and succeeded in lifting its bloc to a narrow victory, only to be outmaneuvered by Iranian-allied Shiites who preserved their domination of the new government.

A parliamentary vote on the government could still take several weeks, as the factions work out the details of who gets what posts. But the session Thursday paved the way with the first formal steps, starting with the naming of a Parliament speaker.

Under the agreement, the post went to a figure from Mr. Allawi's Iraqiya bloc — Osama al-Nujaifi, a Sunni hard-liner who holds staunch support among his community in northern Iraq but is widely hated by Kurds. His power and personality may be able to bring more authority to what has been a lackluster position in the past. Lawmakers were then electing two deputy speakers — a Kurd and a Shiite — and would possibly elect the president later Thursday.

Sunnis appeared to be grudging junior partners in what could be a fragile government.

"I don't think we got what we wanted," said Jaber al-Jaberi, an Iraqiya lawmaker from the Sunni stronghold Ramadi. "We are the biggest bloc, and we won the election. We earned the right to form the government." He said Sunnis compromised because of "powerful forces."

Mr. Jaberi warned that Iraqiya could withdraw its support if Mr. Maliki did not follow through with his promises. "We can always change our minds," he said. "We have 91 seats in the Parliament."

Iraqiya won the most seats in the March 7 elections, but not a majority. That opened the door for Mr. Maliki, whose State of Law party came in second, to cobble together alliances with religious Shiite parties, gathering enough seats to force Mr. Allawi to make a deal, thwarting his bids for both the prime minister's job and the presidency.

Instead, Mr. Allawi will lead a newly created council to oversee issues of security and foreign policy. But the council's powers remain vague: Mr. Maliki is unlikely to give up the reins over security issues, and one of his key Shiite partners — the staunchly anti-American Sadrist movement — also appears to be angling for a hand, as well.

The United States praised the fact that the new government would have at least some Sunni presence. "The apparent agreement to form an inclusive government is a big step forward for Iraq," said Tony Blinken, national security adviser

The deal is potentially a setback for the United States.

to Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., the administration's point man for Iraq.

The deal preserves the sectarian breakdown of positions that has held since the first elected government in 2005: Shiites hold the prime minister's office, Sunnis the Parliament speaker's seat, and the Kurds the presidency. President Jalal Talabani was expected to be elected to a second term.

But it leaves unresolved the sectarian wounds that have bloodied the country since Saddam Hussein was toppled in the 2003 U.S.-led invasion. His fall ended political domination by the Sunni minority and brought the Shiite majority to power. Sunnis responded by becoming the backbone of the insurgency against the government, sparking vicious Shiite-Sunni violence.

With the insurgency eased since 2008, the Americans had hoped the election could create a new sectarian political balance to ensure stability as U.S. troops withdraw from Iraq. Sunnis turned out in droves for the March election despite purges of their candidates.

The drawn-out wrangling over the government left a political void that many feared was fueling new bloody attacks by Sunni insurgents and Al Qaeda's branch in the country.

Iraq coalition hits trouble in first meeting as Sunni group walks out

BAGHDAD

BY STEVEN LEE MYERS

Only three hours into a parliamentary session called to begin the process of approving an agreement on a new unity government, members of an alliance led by the former prime minister, Ayad Allawi, walked out in protest.

While the walkout Thursday did not immediately scuttle the agreement, which was reached only the night before, it was a stark illustration of the fragility of a broad coalition that was not yet 24 hours old and a portent of the

political struggles ahead.

The U.S. government has insisted during Iraq's protracted political deadlock that a new government should mirror the will of the electorate. It got its wish: The government — if it holds together — will be fractured and unwieldy, rife with suspicion, hobbled by a shaky grasp of the rule of law and prone to collapse, or at least to chaos.

Despite reaching a tentative agreement, Iraqi leaders continued to squabble over positions and power, and to make threats that could unravel a deal that took eight months to reach.

Members of Mr. Allawi's bloc walked

out after failing to force a vote on demands that included a release of detainees. They also sought to reverse a decision that disqualified three of the alliance's candidates on the grounds that they were loyal to Saddam Hussein's Baath Party. Both are contentious issues among the country's Sunni Arabs.

"We can't go on with a government that begins with a violation of its agreements," said Haydar al-Mullah, an Allawi supporter. Mr. Allawi's alliance narrowly defeated Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki's bloc last spring but failed to win enough support to unseat him.

Although many politicians spoke of

national unity after the agreement was announced Wednesday night, there was little in evidence of it either in the Iraqi Parliament or on the streets. Nor was there much celebration outside the narrow circle surrounding Mr. Maliki, a dour, divisive leader who nonetheless secured the official nomination for a second term as prime minister as Parlia-

ment ended its session Thursday night.

The new 325-member Parliament re-elected Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, as president, though he failed to win the required two-thirds majority on the first vote after Mr. Allawi's walkout. Increasingly frail he won a second vote, as allowed by law, with a simple majority of 195 votes, hardly a mandate.

At a news conference in Seoul on Friday, President Barack Obama praised Iraqi moves to form an "inclusive" government, despite the Sunni walkout, The Associated Press reported. "All indications are that the government will be representative, inclusive, and reflect the will of the Iraqi people who cast their ballots in the last election," he said.



November 11, 2010

Iraqi Christians welcome in north, Kurdish leader says

From Jomana Karadsheh, CNN

Baghdad, Iraq (CNN) -- Iraqi Christians under siege by Islamic militants are welcome in the country's north, a Kurdish leader said Thursday, after a string of attacks that have killed dozens of the faith.

"I want to let them know that the Kurdistan Region is open to them. If they want to come, we will protect them and provide them with all services," said Massoud Barzani, president of the Kurdistan regional government. "We are extremely sorry for the crimes they have been subjected to and we condemn these criminal acts, they are innocent people and a precious part of this nation."

In the past, the regional government has opened its doors to other persecuted minorities.

Many Christian families that CNN spoke to Wednesday said they feared for their own safety and wanted to leave Iraq, but didn't have the means to do so. Some Iraqi church leaders and politicians such as Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki have been discouraging Iraqi Christians, one of the oldest Christian civilizations in the world, from leaving.

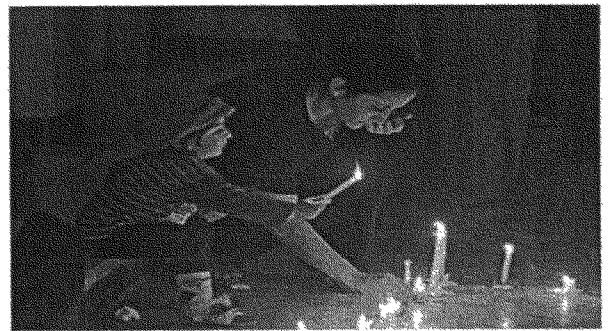
CNN reporters in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish north have noticed an influx of Christians in the country's north in recent days, but there has been a general migration since 2003.

Barzani's comments came after the United States, the U.N. Security Council and an American Catholic archbishop expressed concerns Wednesday about the continuing attacks on Christian and other religious groups in Iraq.

At least three people were killed and 25 wounded Wednesday morning, an Iraqi interior ministry official said.

On Tuesday evening, three people were wounded in western Baghdad when bombs exploded outside Christian homes there, the ministry said.

"The United States strongly condemns the recent terrorist attacks in Iraq, which were perpetrated by al Qaeda in Iraq against Christians in Baghdad in their homes and in their churches," said Mike Hammer, spokesman for the White House's National Security Council. "We also strongly condemn additional attacks against innocent civilians throu-



Iraq's Christians remember victims

ghout Iraq, to include pilgrims in the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala."

The U.N. Security Council also decried attacks on places of worship in Iraq.

The archbishop of Chicago, Illinois, urged U.S. President Barack Obama to take steps to protect Christians in Iraq.

"Having invaded Iraq, our nation has a moral obligation not to abandon those Iraqis who cannot defend themselves," wrote Cardinal Francis George of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

A group called the Islamic State of Iraq claimed responsibility for the gruesome October 31 siege of the Sayidat al-Nejat cathedral that left 70 people dead and 75 wounded. The umbrella group includes a number of Sunni extremist organizations and has ties to al Qaeda in Iraq.

Thirty-five Christian survivors of the attack arrived in France this week, where they will be able to seek asylum.

The gunmen who led the attack demanded that the Iraqi government release a number of detainees and prisoners in Iraqi prisons, saying the Christian hostages would be freed in return, according to the police officials.

Iraq's defense minister later said on state television that the kidnappers had demanded the release of a number of prisoners in both Iraq and Egypt.

THE IRISH TIMES November 13, 2010

Combined revolutions begin to bear fruit for Kurdish women guerrillas

The Irish Times

Catrina Stewart
in the Qandil Mountains,
northern Iraq

A JEEP screeches to a halt in front of the house, and with a slamming of doors, three Kurdish fighters emerge, two of them women. They stride into the villagers' house, and even though it is late and the family wants to sleep, their hosts bring out some fruit and tea.

Sitting cross-legged on the floor, their rifles propped up in the corner of the room, the two women light cigarettes and crack a joke to ease the tension with the men in the room.

Since joining the Kurdish resistance in the early 1990s, these women have cut themselves off almost entirely from their families and loved ones, dedicating their lives to a cause that has cost an estimated 40,000 lives from both sides in the past three decades.

"When I was a student, I wrote a letter to my parents, setting out my reasons for leaving, and left it for them to read," recalls Evindar Ararat, a fighter in her late 30s, of how she left for the Kurdish resistance over 15 years ago.

"I knew they wouldn't let me go," she adds.

The women are soldiers of the Kurdish Workers' Party, or PKK, which for 26 years has waged a bloody war for autonomy in Turkey from the mountains in northern Iraq that straddle southern Turkey and part of Iran.

Only in the last two years has the movement lowered its sights, settling for equal democratic and cultural liberties in a bid to end the

conflict.

It is every parent's nightmare to lose a child to the PKK. In southeastern Turkey, a predominantly Kurdish area, thousands of mothers have watched helplessly as their children were recruited to the cause, only to see them return in a body bag, if at all.

Every young girl that joins the PKK does so in the knowledge that she is forsaking a life with marriage and children. Sex between men and women in the movement is discouraged, and soldiers rarely leave.

"I saw the woman in my society had a very hard life, and I didn't want to live like that," says Raperin Derik, a female guerrilla originally from Syria, referring to the traditional role played by many Middle Eastern women.

"I joined the PKK to escape marriage."

She paid a price for that choice, though. Within two years of joining up Derik was captured by Turkish troops, and over the next 12 years she was shunted from prison to prison, including the notorious Diyarbakir facility.

"At the beginning, they tortured me very badly," says Derik, who was released only four years ago.

"But what kept me going was the hope that I'd return to the mountains."

The PKK is proud of its attitude towards women. Abdullah Ocalan, the movement's revered head who languishes in a Turkish prison, argued that the Kurds could only be emancipated if they freed their women, too.

Inevitably, there was resistance at first from the men, who viewed women as a liability in battle, and a distraction. When the females proved themselves again and



again, opposition to them gradually melted away.

They receive training alongside their male counterparts in the use of explosives and weapons, and are trained in guerrilla combat. Women operate in mixed or single-sex bands of 10 or 15 fighters, and move stealthily through the mountainous region, seeking out Turkish military targets and evading shelling or capture.

Turkey, which regards the PKK as a terrorist organisation, has repeatedly sought to rout the movement militarily, more recently through cross-border attacks, but with little success. Indeed, many Kurds believe it was the PKK's armed struggle that reversed the repressive policies of denial and assimilation.

But the movement argues that the freedoms do not extend far enough.

Kurdish language is still not taught in local schools, some 1,500 prominent Kurds have been arrested in the past year for allegedly supporting PKK ideology, and the vote threshold is high at 10 per cent, denying the Kurds adequate representation in parliament.

When prime minister

Recep Tayyip Erdogan held out an olive branch to the Kurds last year, the PKK declared a ceasefire, raising hopes that the fighters could finally lay down their arms. But while the ceasefire still largely holds, Erdogan has backtracked on those promises, fearful of appearing weak on terrorism ahead of next year's elections.

Nevertheless, for the first time in years, Kurds say they sense that change is in the air, and parents can now dare to hope that their sons and daughters may finally come home – perhaps not next year, but soon.

So, too, do the guerrillas.

"I read a novel once about the daughter of a partisan," says Ararat, a faraway look on her face.

"In that book, the partisans return to the town, which is full of cheering crowds throwing flowers. I have a dream that I'll return like that." □

Sunnisme et chiisme entre coexistence et conflits

Le conflit entre les deux branches de l'islam n'est pas uniquement une question religieuse. L'Histoire, la vision du monde, les disparités sociales les séparent aussi.

OpenDemocracy (extraits) Londres

Pendant des années, la division entre les deux grandes sectes de l'islam (en réalité, deux religions à part entière) est restée taboue. Nous, Arabes, avons une fâcheuse tendance, face aux problèmes, à nous réfugier dans le déni, ce qui explique la situation où nous sommes. A vrai dire, le schisme n'est pas fondamentalement religieux : c'est une question où les différences religieuses reflètent plus largement des disparités sociales et politiques.

Il n'est pas exagéré de dire que cette division trouve ses origines dans les rivalités entre les clans hachémite et omeyyade, à la période pré-islamique, quand n'existaient ni le sunnisme ni le chiisme [aux VII^e et VIII^e siècles]. La compétition prit par la suite de nombreuses formes et ne cessa d'être entretenue. Si sunnites et chiites partagent une même vénération du Coran, ils ne furent que brièvement unis dans la même entité politico-religieuse, sous le règne des premiers califes.

Traditionnellement, les sunnites ont consi-

déré le "Livre" comme un manuel pour agir, alors que les chiites, eux, ont poussé plus loin sa glorification, de sorte que son caractère sacré a fini par l'emporter sur sa vocation pratique. Les deux communautés considèrent la vie du prophète Mahomet (*sira*) et ses paroles (les hadith) comme des sources d'inspiration essentielles, mais chacune s'appuie sur des récits différents provenant d'autorités distinctes. De plus, elles portent sur certaines figures historiques de la vie du Prophète des regards diamétralement opposés, en particulier sur son épouse Aïcha.

Les persécutions des chiites

Par ailleurs, tout comme le christianisme s'est fondé sur une mythologie autour de la crucifixion du Christ, le chiisme est né de l'assassinat d'Ali, le gendre du Prophète, puis de son fils Hussein, commis par ceux qui devaient devenir les sunnites. Le rite de l'Achoura, au cours duquel les chiites pleurent la mort de Hussein, est une sorte de théâtre populaire qui met en scène les persécutions des chiites par les autorités sunnites tout au long de l'Histoire. En commémorant chaque année ces persécutions, les chiites ravivent ces haines séculaires et renforcent leur sentiment de différence.

Traditionnellement, les sunnites ont tenu les rênes du pouvoir dans la plupart des pays musulmans, tandis que les chiites étaient dans l'opposition. C'est resté vrai à l'époque moderne, quand, dans les années 1960 et 1970, les jeunes militants chiites sont allés grossir les rangs des

partis radicaux, de Bahreïn au Liban, en passant par l'Irak. Cette règle n'a connu que de rares exceptions au cours de l'Histoire, sous la dynastie bouyide, qui régna sur l'Irak et l'ouest de l'Iran aux X^e et XI^e siècles, et sous les Fatimides, qui gouvernèrent l'Égypte et d'autres régions d'Afrique du Nord du X^e au XII^e siècle.

Dans la plupart des villes, les habitants sont en majorité sunnites, et ce au moins depuis la période ottomane. Comme les minorités chrétienne et juive, les sunnites ont produit une classe de marchands, de fonctionnaires et de lettrés. Le sunnisme a toujours dominé également la classe défavorisée des artisans citadins, et avec eux leurs corporations, les arts, la musique et d'autres coutumes. En revanche, les chiites vivent traditionnellement en zone rurale, pour l'essentiel, loin des regards suspicieux des autorités sunnites ; c'est pourquoi leur vie était liée à l'agriculture. Autre conséquence, leur culture se caractérise par une transmission orale, presque mécanique, des traditions et des croyances.

L'infaillibilité de l'imam

Il est révélateur que les Safavides, qui régnaient sur l'Iran au XVI^e siècle, aient décidé, pour se distinguer des Arabes, d'embrasser le chiisme – comme si, ce faisant, ils définissaient l'identité de leur empire en fonction de différences religieuses avec leurs voisins sunnites.

Les spécialistes sunnites de la loi se sont toujours intéressés à la question du pouvoir et aux moyens de le conserver. Pour le grand juriste sunnite Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328), un dirigeant despotique est préférable au chaos et à la discorde. En revanche, les idées développées par les premiers penseurs chiites mettaient l'accent sur la quête de justice, sur la définition de la société idéale et la perfection

de l'imam dit "caché", le dernier chef vénéré des chiites qui aurait été soustrait au monde et dont ils attendent de nos jours encore le retour, à la manière d'un messie. L'infaillibilité de l'imam (que l'ayatollah Khomeyni étendit au chef suprême de sa république islamique) est un concept qu'ignore totalement la tradition sunnite.

En Europe, les guerres de religion qui opposèrent protestants et catholiques étaient liées à la question de la réforme de la religion, processus qui conduisit par la suite à l'émergence de l'Etat-nation. Dans le monde musulman, la divergence presque absolue entre l'islam des sunnites et celui des chiites rend peu probable une évolution semblable à celle de l'Europe. On a du mal à voir comment les différends entre ces deux confessions, ajoutés à la faiblesse de l'Etat-nation et à l'absence de cohésion sociale

Eclairage

Les Américains n'ont toujours pas compris

En décembre 2006, **The New York Times** révélait que la différence entre les sunnites et les chiites n'était pas toujours très claire aux Etats-Unis, et pas seulement pour l'Américain ordinaire. Aux questions "Al-Qaida est-elle sunnite ou chiite ?" et "Quelle secte domine le Hezbollah ?" posées à l'improviste par le journal du Congrès, Silvestre Reyes, candidat présenté par le Parti démocrate pour diriger la Commission du renseignement de la Chambre, était incapable de fournir les

bonnes réponses. Il s'est trompé sur Al-Qaida, qu'il a présentée comme étant majoritairement chiite, et a séché sur le Hezbollah, qui, lui, est majoritairement chiite. "Cela n'engage que moi", a-t-il dit aux journalistes, "mais il est difficile de replacer les choses dans leur contexte." Il n'est pas le seul à avoir fourni des réponses inexactes. D'autres membres du Congrès, démocrates et républicains, se sont montrés tout aussi ignorants. A vrai dire, certains des hommes d'Etat occidentaux les plus intelligents du siècle

dernier n'ont pas toujours été très sûrs de leurs connaissances sur l'islam. En 1921, alors qu'il était en train de redessiner les frontières du Moyen-Orient, Winston Churchill demandait à un collaborateur une note de trois lignes sur les "tendances religieuses" du roi hachémite qu'il envisageait de placer à Bagdad. "S'agit-il d'un sunnite ayant des sympathies chiites ou d'un chiite ayant des sympathies sunnites ?" interrogeait-il. Je confonds toujours les deux."

typique du Moyen-Orient, pourraient déboucher sur autre chose que la destruction et la guerre civile dans les pays où ces deux communautés cohabitent – et s'entre-déchirent.

Les tentatives d'«union» des deux branches de l'islam ont toujours été d'une superficialité pathétique. De la Première Guerre mondiale à la fin de la guerre froide, l'inclination traditionnelle des Arabes à faire table rase des différends entre sunnites et chiites s'accompagna d'un engouement certain pour la modernité (qui nous conduisit à considérer les divisions religieuses comme «honteuses»). Après la révolution islamique de Khomeyni, en 1979, des appels retentirent à nouveau en faveur d'une «unité islamique» pluriconfessionnelle et anti-impérialiste. Mais le tournant iranien, avec son expérience politique inédite, est survenu précisément alors que la gauche s'affaiblissait partout ailleurs et que l'Union soviétique commençait à se scléroser. **Hazem Saghieh**

Réflexion

Un autre chiisme est-il possible ?

*«Une bataille se déroule depuis des siècles au sein du chiisme. Il existe une vision plus modérée, plus démocratique du chiisme – qui a été balayée par la révolution islamique iranienne de 1979», affirme Mohammed Bazzi, chercheur libano-américain, dans la revue **Foreign Affairs**. «Le modèle de pouvoir absolu qui domine l'Iran d'aujourd'hui n'est qu'une des multiples doctrines au sein du clergé chiite. Le velayat-e faghih, ou le 'gouvernement des doctes', a triomphé sous la direction de l'ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeyni. Le charisme et le talent politique de Khomeyni ont éclipsé une vision plus modérée du chiisme venue de la ville irakienne de Nadjaf.» En Iran, et ailleurs, nombreux sont ceux qui ont*

commencé à regarder vers l'Irak pour imaginer une nouvelle relation entre clergé et Etat, estime également Mehdi Khalaji. Sur son site, MehdiKhalaji.com, cet intellectuel irano-américain affirme qu'«après la chute du régime de Saddam, la renaissance d'une forme de chiisme plus traditionnelle et politiquement moins engagée a commencé à changer les dynamiques dans l'ensemble du monde chiite». Pourtant, prévient-il, «ce serait une erreur de penser que les institutions de Nadjaf, en Irak, pourraient remplacer l'autorité religieuse mise en place par Khomeyni, notamment à Qom, en Iran. L'establishment clérical irakien ne prendra jamais aucune décision pouvant affaiblir ou menacer la république islamique d'Iran, car il voit dans la survie de ce puissant Etat la meilleure protection pour le chiisme. Dans un futur proche, le chiisme irakien restera en grande partie dans l'ombre du clergé iranien. Les séminaires en Irak n'ont que quelques milliers de religieux, contre 300 000 en Iran. Partout où il émerge et s'implante, le clergé chiite ne peut pas se développer s'il est déconnecté de Qom. Les membres prééminents du clergé irakien peuvent critiquer le mélange du politique et du religieux prôné par le velayat-e faghih iranien, et peuvent sympathiser avec les couches moins religieuses de la société iranienne, mais ils se retiendront de se confronter au régime ou de collaborer avec ses opposants.»

Trop de tensions

Les conflits entre sunnites et chiites risquent de déstabiliser le monde arabe. Mais l'Iran, qui joue au pyromane, peut aussi prendre feu.

Asharq Al-Awsat Londres

Afin de mettre un terme à l'escalade des tensions entre sunnites et chiites, les rassemblements ont été interdits au Koweït. On en était arrivé là après des déclarations outrageantes de la part d'une personne qu'on ne peut que qualifier d'extrémiste à propos de la personne d'Aïcha [épouse de Mahomet et ennemie du calife Ali, considéré comme le père du chiisme – voir ci-dessus]. Finalement, le chiite Yasser Habib, auteur de ces déclarations incendiaires, qui vit à Londres, s'est vu retirer sa nationalité koweïtienne.

Au même moment, à Bahreïn un chiite a été déchu de sa nationalité et un autre a été interdit de prêcher. Au Liban, on assiste à des attaques en règle contre les sunnites. Et au Yémen, des rebelles houthistes [chiites] se drapent de l'idéologie du *velayat-e faqih* [doctrine politique en vigueur en Iran, justifiant la suprématie du religieux sur le politique]. En Irak, on entend des voix réclamant que le pouvoir reste aux mains des chiites, démocratie ou pas... A qui profite toute cette agitation ?

En premier lieu, nous ne pouvons, à chaque fois qu'un extrémiste a envie de faire parler de lui, accepter de mettre en danger la stabilité de nos pays. De tels extrémistes existent des deux côtés, et l'outrance, d'où qu'elle vienne, engendre l'outrance. Il faut raison garder et éviter les généralisations. En second lieu, il est de notre intérêt de renforcer le concept de citoyenneté, de vivre-ensemble et de droit à la différence. Il en va de la responsabilité des gouvernements. Evidemment, les médias doivent prendre soin de ne pas verser de l'huile sur le feu. Toutefois, nous ne pouvons passer sous silence le rôle dangereux que joue l'Iran dans la région. Il faut le dénoncer sans pour autant courir le risque d'une déstabilisation. La stabilité est un bienfait précieux.

De même, la consolidation de l'idée de citoyenneté ne signifie pas baisser les bras devant ceux qui portent atteinte aux religions ou qui insultent les prophètes, les compagnons ou les épouses de Mahomet. Il faut cependant garder son sang-froid et ne pas accorder à tel ou tel comportement plus d'importance qu'il n'en mérite. Ceux qui veulent faire vibrer la corde du confessionnalisme oublient que, tôt ou tard, ils en seront les principales victimes. Car l'Iran lui-même est une mosaïque d'ethnies et risque plus que quiconque d'être déstabilisé. Il en va de même pour d'autres Etats au Moyen-Orient.

Tareq Al-Humayed

In Turkey, Kurdish writers once needed pseudonyms. Now they have a master's program.

The first graduate program in Kurdish language and culture is a rare bright spot in Turkey's initiative to improve the cultural rights of its Kurdish minority, whose language was banned for decades.

By Scott Peterson,
The Christian Science Monitor

Mardin, Turkey —For 20 years, Tekin Cifci explored his native Kurdish language in secret, hiding behind a pseudonym when writing for semi-underground Kurdish magazines. For much of that time in Turkey, the use of Kurdish was banned — an utterance on the street could mean time in jail.

But today Mr. Cifci is writing the thesis for his master's degree, in Kurdish and about Kurdish — and under his real name — as part of Turkey's first-ever graduate program in Kurdish language and culture.

"I'm still not used to this new period," says Cifci, who is part of the pilot Kurdish program of Mardin Artuklu University in southeast Turkey's ethnic Kurdish heartland. The region has been plagued by civil war between Kurdish rebels and the state security forces since 1984, and witnessed tens of thousands of deaths.

That conflict has eased in the past decade. And the Turkish government last year announced a "Kurdish Opening" aimed at improving the lives of ethnic Kurds, by restoring some long-denied cultural rights.

But while many Kurds feel that little has changed — and point to some 1,500 Kurdish politicians and activists rounded up and jailed across the region since the "opening" — the Kurdish language program is planting new seeds that could transform attitudes.

New opportunity

"Each time our teachers explain about Kurdish language and culture, I find myself in a different world," says Cifci. "It's like coming into the world again, like being reborn to the culture.... Kurdish was a forbidden language for



Led by senior Kurdish politicians such as Selahattin Demirtas (center), co-chair of the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), thousands of Turkish Kurds hold a protest march to the courthouse in Diyarbakir, southeast Turkey, on November 11. Kurds in Turkey may be seeing a change, as the study of the Kurdish language is now a graduate-level program there.
(Scott Peterson / Getty Images)

many years; never mind academic work, even speaking was forbidden.... Now the Kurds are recognized as a nation in Turkey."

Cifci says he is proud to be one of Turkey's first crop of "Kurdologists," one of 30 accepted for the two-year master's program. The university began its work in Kurdish last summer, teaching a crop of 50 language instructors whose certification will allow them to teach elsewhere in Turkey as new Kurdish programs are founded.

The interest was overwhelming. Some 550 people applied for the three-month summer course, and 350 to be candidates for the master's degree.

"It's incredible for me to see the numbers," says Abdurrahman Adak, assistant chairman for the "live languages" program, which will include the Syrian and Arabic languages, as well as Kurdish. So far only Kurdish faculty have been chosen. "This is making preparation for coming years, if Turkish universities have these [Kurdish] branches. We are preparing from now."

When setting up the program, the directors visited other well-established Kurdish programs at universities in northern Iraq and in Europe. In coming weeks Mardin will host a number of experts from the Center for Kurdish Studies at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom.

President Abdullah Gul visited the Turkish university last month and praised the new language program. The Kurdish language also received an unexpected vote from Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, who last June used some Kurdish words when speaking to Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani.

"Kurdish is one of the languages for which we should have respect, and it is also a language that is used by a considerable part of our people," Mr.

Davutoglu explained last week. "I addressed Massoud Barzani as 'Kak.' This means 'mister.' This respect is part of our culture. My duty is not to create enemies for Turkey, but to create friends."

The limits

But there are limits: Even though there is now an official Kurdish-language state television channel, TRT6, and Turkey's Higher Education Board has announced that Kurdish is an official language for academia, that board has so far refused permission for creation of a Kurdology institute.

And legal hurdles remain: In a court case against 153 Kurds in Diyarbakir — among them 12 elected mayors — judges in recent weeks have dismissed efforts to mount defense arguments in Kurdish, writing that it was an "incomprehensible language."

The conflict also continues to simmer beneath the surface, and the main rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which still has wide popular support and declared a ceasefire until next summer, is deemed a "terrorist" group by Turkey, the US, and the European Union. Some factions continue attacks, and Turkish forces also counter them in southeast Turkey and at PKK bases in northern Iraq.

Yet at the university in Mardin, a project is under way to create a library of original historical handwritten Kurdish texts, and to play catch-up with more established Kurdish programs in the region and beyond, in a bid to make Mardin the recognized center of Kurdology.

"In the beginning, we had difficulty finding some educators, because in Turkey there is no one whose official profession this is," says Dr. Adak, who himself speaks five languages. "But this university has found us and brought us

together.... It is a very important step. We believe this will impact Turkish society, and help bring peace."

Graduate student Cifci says he wants to be there, on an academic front line where Kurdish writers and intellectuals no longer need pen names for their poe-

try.

"We are not discussing anymore if there is a Kurdish nation or not, but how the education of Kurds can be in their mother tongue," says Cifci. "Now more and more people accept that the Kurdish issue is not a terrorist issue...."

When I started this program, the rector asked: 'Where were you until now?' I replied: 'I was among those hiding my name.'"

THE INDEPENDENT

18 NOVEMBER 2010

Iraqi President bars execution of Tariq Aziz

By Kim Sengupta,
Diplomatic Correspondent

Tariq Aziz, a multilingual Christian, was the man Saddam Hussein put in front of the cameras to defend his regime to the world's media

Iraq's president, Jalal Talabani, is refusing to sign the execution order for Tariq Aziz, 74, the prominent former member of Saddam Hussein's inner circle who was sentenced to death.

Aziz, who is reported to be seriously ill, is already serving a 22-year prison sentence over charges that he authorised the execution of businessmen accused of profiteering in the black market and for his role in the forced displacement of Kurds. The former deputy prime minister has 30 days to lodge an appeal against his sentence of death by hanging for his part in the suppression of Shia opponents of the regime, imposed two days after being handed over to Iraqi officials by the Americans.

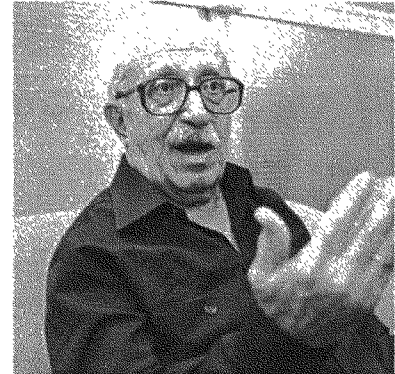
Aziz was the highest ranking Christian in Iraq's power elite and often portrayed as the public face of Ba'athist rule. The country's Christian community has faced repeated attacks since the US-led invasion of 2003 and many have fled abroad.

Speaking in Paris, Mr Talabani said:

"I cannot sign an order of this kind because I am a socialist. I feel compassion for Tariq Aziz because he is a Christian; an Iraqi Christian. In addition, he is an elderly man – aged over 70 – and this is why I will never sign this order."

The Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, was one of the leaders of the Shia opposition Aziz is accused of persecuting and the refusal by Mr Talabani, who is a Kurdish Sunni, to sign the death sentence is likely to lead to Shia protests. Officials in Baghdad said discussions "will have to be held at the highest level". Tariq Harb, a leading Iraqi constitutional lawyer, said: "We do not see how this execution can be carried out legally without the President's signature. According to the Iraqi constitution the President has the power to ratify death sentences before they are carried out and they cannot be carried out without his approval."

Saddam Hussein was hanged in 2006 despite the fact that Mr Talabani's signature was not on the execution order. But the Iraqi government has been attempting to stick to the tenets of the constitution since then and going through with Aziz's death sentence against the wishes of the head of state would be more of a problem. Such a decision will also have a damaging effect, say analysts, at a politically fragile time that saw a long impasse in forming a government after elections in March.



Tariq Aziz, a multilingual Christian, was the man Saddam Hussein put in front of the cameras to defend his regime to the world's media

The EU, the Vatican and Russia have urged the Iraqi government not to proceed with Aziz's execution. Bernard Valero, a French foreign ministry spokesman, said his government was "delighted" by the stance Mr Talabani is taking. The US did not join in the call for clemency for Aziz although some senior officials in the Obama administration are thought to believe that hanging him would needlessly antagonise sections of the community, when he is unlikely ever to be freed.

Aziz had claimed that he tried to dissuade Saddam from the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, which led to a humiliating defeat in the first Gulf War.

Although a long-standing member of the Ba'ath party's higher echelon, Aziz was not regarded as one of the more brutal members of the regime.

Turkey and the Kurds: back to arms?

Piotr Zalewski,
The National/UAE

Last year, the Turkish government led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced a series of reforms to address the grievances of its 12 to 15-million-strong Kurdish minority. Following a series of political missteps, a nationalist backlash and the closure of a Kurdish political party, the initiative has imploded. A recent referendum has given it a new lease on life.

On a bus ferrying a delegation of academics from Turkey to a conference in northern Iraq, the Kurds are jittery. Many are entering Iraqi Kurdistan for the first time in their lives. My neighbour, a doctoral student from Mardin, a city in south-east Turkey, snaps pictures of the border gate at Habur and the fatigues-clad Kurdish peshmerga (fighters) manning the crossing. As his eyes climb the nearby flagpole, he grows emotional. "To be a Kurd and to see the Kurdish flag for the first time, really, it's a very special feeling," he says.

Once the passport check begins, the Kurds from the group separate from their Turkish colleagues to exchange spirited greetings with the peshmerga. Before posing for pictures against the backdrop of the KRG (Kurdish Regional Government) flag, a few of them try on the guards' berets. Laughing, the peshmerga seem flattered by the excitement and the adulation. The Turks on the bus look on in consternation. Their government's historic nightmare - that northern Iraq, home to nearly five million Kurds, might become a magnet for Turkey's own Kurdish population - seems to be unfolding before their eyes.

In Dohuk, about an hour south of the border, their dismay increases. Stepping off the bus and into the reception hall of a local university, the group comes face to face with a fictional map of "The New Middle East". On it, a "Greater Kurdistan" stretches from Kirkuk in the south to the Black Sea in the north, covering large swathes of eastern Turkey in between. The map draws loud protests from the Turkish professors and amused bewilderment from the Turkish Kurds.

At the university, the Kurdish quasi-state's oil-powered economic miracle is on full display. The reception hall - upholstered furniture, flat screen TVs



Men wave a flag of the banned Kurdish group, the PKK. (Reuters)

and air-conditioning at full blast - gives way to a gleaming sports arena, the likes of which few European universities can boast. A girls' volleyball match is taking place. "I'd love to teach here," whispers one of the Turkish Kurds when we step outside. "The kids are motivated, confident, not like some of my students in Turkey. They can get jobs here, the economy is strong. There is hope for Kurds here. But not in Turkey."

Back on the Turkish side of the border, outside the local cultural centre in Sirnak, a group of gun-toting gendarmerie officers, accompanied by an armoured vehicle, keep watch over the surrounding streets. Inside, the opening ceremony of a conference on the future of the region is under way. Much like the enormous signs ("Homeland above all" or "Happy is he who calls himself a Turk") etched by Turkish soldiers into the nearby hillsides, the decor and the mood yield nothing to Sirnak's Kurdish heritage. A portrait of Ataturk, the founding father of the modern Turkish state, hangs above the hall. So does a Turkish flag. Prompted by one of the hosts, the guests rise to observe a moment of silence for Ataturk and his comrades-in-arms. They remain standing to sing the *Istiklal marsi*, the Turkish national anthem.

At street level, beyond the security detail, the scene is very different. Here, the dress of choice, instead of the suit and tie, is the jacket and *chalwar*. People speak *Kurmanji*, a Kurdish dialect. It is a telling sign of the change that has taken place over the past decade. Perceived as a threat to national unity, speaking Kurdish in public was unthinkable - that is to say, punishable by law - until the 1990s. These days, people have no qualms about speaking it in shops, restaurants and even in schools. On October 9, a university in Mardin launched a master's programme in Kurdish language and culture, a first in Turkey.

In the wake of a separatist insurgency launched in 1984 by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) - since listed as a terrorist group by Turkey, the European Union and the United States - Sirnak and the rest of the south-east fell into a spiral of violence that has claimed the lives of more than 40,000 people, among them Kurdish militants, government troops and civilians, victims of terrorist attacks and of brutal reprisal campaigns by the Turkish army. As many as three million people abandoned their countryside homes in the 1980s and the 1990s. Some left out of fear of revenge killings perpetrated against "collaborators" by the PKK. Others were forcibly cleared from some 3,000 remote villages destroyed by government troops in order to deprive the insurgents of local support.

Things improved during the past

decade. In February 1999, Turkish commandos captured the founder and leader of the PKK, Abdullah Ocalan, in Kenya. Having been on the run for months, Turkey's most wanted man was spirited away to an island prison off Istanbul, tried, and sentenced to death for treason. The sentence was later reduced to life imprisonment when Turkey abolished the death penalty. Following Ocalan's capture, the PKK declared a unilateral ceasefire in September 1999 and relative calm was restored. The bombings, the extrajudicial killings, the kidnappings, and the fierce shootouts subsided. Ceasefires have since come and gone, but the violence has never returned to previous levels. In places like Sirnak, the local economy has begun to show signs of life. The border crossing with northern Iraq, 40km away, is now a lifeline. Flush with oil money, Iraq has become the destination for 99 per cent of Sirnak's exports.

All the same, the scene outside the cultural centre in Sirnak speaks volumes about the region's enduring problems. It is Friday morning and the local cafes are already full of men playing backgammon. In Istanbul, these would be moustachioed 60-year olds, making the best of their retirement. In Sirnak, they are working-age men. The local unemployment rate, at 22 per cent, is the highest in Turkey. Per capita GDP is a third of the national average.

Turkish governments have been slow to adopt any comprehensive policy to improve living standards in the south-east and a massive infrastructure programme launched in the 1990s has gone only some way towards solving the problem. But they have been even slower to recognise Kurdish minority rights and freedoms. Bureaucratic inertia, a narrow understanding of national identity and lingering fears of western plots to weaken Turkey have always impeded efforts in this direction. According to a 2009 poll, 76 per cent of Turks believe that the European Union, which Turkey aspires to enter, has a secret agenda to divide their country. Any concession to Kurdish ethnic identity is seen as a potential blow to the very existence of the Turkish state. Only five years ago the Turkish environment ministry changed the official Latin name of the red fox, *Vulpes vulpes Kurdistanica*, to *Vulpes vulpes*. Use of the old name, the ministry explained, challenged national unity.

After last year's local elections, a change finally seemed to be on the horizon. With its share of the vote increasing in each election since 2002, Turkey's governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) had reason

to believe it could finally wrest control of the south-east from the Democratic Society Party (DTP), the standard-bearer of Kurdish politics. The AKP had an Islamist lineage, which would appeal to Kurdish conservatives. It had a record, however patchy, of catering to EU demands for greater minority rights, which would appeal to Kurdish nationalists. And, most importantly, it had cash. AKP members repeatedly intimated that mayors from the ruling party could tap into the government's coffers. By winning the south-east, they would finally give the Kurds what they were said to need most - jobs, factories, roads and funds. The DTP, they warned, could only offer more of the same - identity politics and conflict.

But the AKP miscalculated. Its mayoral candidates lost in eight Kurdish provinces, including Diyarbakir, the region's most important urban centre. Overall, the governing party saw its share of the vote drop by eight per cent in comparison to the 2007 elections for parliament.

"They try to fool us with religion and with money. They give refrigerators to the poor to buy votes. We are Kurds and we will stay Kurdish. We cannot renounce that," says Mehmet, a young man from Diyarbakir. "Still, we need jobs, a place to work. Otherwise, there will be more crime." Mehmet, as he readily admits, has just been released from jail. He pulls up his shirt to reveal dozens of barely healed scars lining his stomach, clear evidence, as he appears to see it, of having done time in a Turkish prison. The guards, he says, slashed him repeatedly with razor blades.

The disappointing election results, the lack of major breakthroughs in the EU accession process, plus a series of bloody PKK attacks against army targets, persuaded the AKP government that the time was ripe to reach out to the Kurds. Launched several months after the elections, the "Kurdish opening" initially appeared no more than a catchphrase. Gradually, it turned into talk of an economic package, optional Kurdish language courses at schools, the restoration of Kurdish place names, and partial amnesty for members of the PKK.

The initiative began to unravel just as it got under way. On October 19, 2009, a group of 34 people - eight PKK members and 26 Kurds from the UN-run Makhmour refugee camp in northern Iraq - crossed the Habur border gate and handed themselves over to Turkish authorities. Originally intended as a show of support for the Kurdish opening, the move turned into a PR disaster for the AKP. Released after questioning, the returnees received a heroes welcome from tens of thousands of

Kurds who travelled to Habur for the occasion. Television images of PKK members greeted by victory parades across the south-east were too much for many Turks to swallow. For the people watching, says Kemal Kirisci, a professor at Istanbul's Bogazici University, this was scandalous.

A month after the Habur debacle, Ocalan added more fuel to the fire, complaining about conditions in his new prison cell. Here they want to constrict me even more... Here, I cannot breathe at all, he said in a statement released through his lawyers. In the past, similar complaints, echoing the widespread belief that the Turkish state wants to expedite Ocalan's death in jail, have been known to provoke riots across the south-east. This time was no different. Protests and street fighting erupted in Kurdish areas across the country. Ocalan's new prison cell turned out to be 17 square centimeters smaller than his previous one.

From there, things got rapidly worse. On December 11, 2009, Turkey's Constitutional Court decided to ban the DTP, having found that the party had become a focal point for terrorist activities. The party denies being the political wing of the PKK, but Kurdish politicians have been reluctant to condemn PKK violence. The ruling prompted a massive wave of arrests of prominent DTP politicians including Osman Baydemir, the popular mayor of Diyarbakir.

The fallout has continued up to the present day. Though the DTP has reconstituted itself as the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), its leaders remain banned from politics. In June, Baydemir and 150 others were indicted on charges of abetting a terrorist organisation. Roadside attacks by the PKK and air strikes by the Turkish military on the group's positions in northern Iraq once again feature regularly on the daily news. With the government accused of appeasement, funeral services for soldiers killed in PKK attacks more than 100 have died since the beginning of the year have seen physical assaults on the ruling party's dignitaries. During one service, Taner Yildiz, the minister for energy, was punched in the face. We don't want openings, we want blood, chanted mourners during another. Worryingly, reports of inter-communal fighting between Turks and Kurds are on the increase. With Kurds dispersed throughout the country, explains Henri Barkey, an expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, violence can erupt "anywhere, at any time".

Despite some reforms - the launch of a Kurdish TV channel, a measure allowing the use of the Kurdish language at political rallies, and the repeal of a law that sent thousands of children to prison

for participating in anti-government demonstrations – the AKP has put the Kurdish initiative in the deep freeze. Even its name has become taboo. Caught off guard by the nationalist backlash, AKP politicians no longer speak of a “Kurdish opening”, but of a “democratic” one.

According to experts, the implosion of the Kurdish initiative threatens to undo the recent trade-fuelled rapprochement between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan. With many PKK fighters operating out of the mountains of northern Iraq, warns Barkey, Ankara is expected to place renewed pressure on the KRG to deliver the militants. Should that fail, it may launch new incursions. This would spell trouble for the Americans. As Barkey recently explained in Foreign Policy: “Washington cannot afford... for Turkish military action in Iraq to undermine that country’s stability.” With the looming US withdrawal, a major eruption of hostilities between Turkey and the KRG would weaken the region’s defences against sectarian violence, bringing it one step closer to civil war after the US withdrawal.

The night of last spring’s municipal elections, I found myself sitting opposite Ahmet Turk, then the DTP’s leader, in a crowded office on the second floor of the party’s headquarters in Diyarbakir. Sitting at his desk, Turk peered calmly into a TV placed on the other side of the room, tracking the vote tally. Every now and then, elderly women – invariably dressed in puffy overcoats, puffy trousers and green, yellow and red DTP flags – would pour into the room to heap blessings on the grand old man of Kurdish politics. They were received with a generous grin, accentuated by Turk’s equally generous grey moustache.

At times, taking a break from the TV and the Kurdish grannies, Turk would approach the window. Two storeys below, a crowd of several thousand people had gathered to celebrate the DTP’s landslide victory in the Diyarbakir mayoral race. Men and women were dancing in circles. The mood oscillated between jubilation and menace. “This is Amed,” the crowds chanted, referring to Diyarbakir by its ancient Kurdish name, “Turks go home!” “Hang Erdogan!” shouted one group. A masked teenager raised himself up on the shoulders of two of his friends and, maintaining an uneasy balance, began to wave the outlawed flag of the PKK. A banner featuring Ocalan’s face unfurled from a window of one of the DTP offices. “PKK is the people!” shouted the crowd, “And

the people are here to stay!”

When I asked Turk over a year later why the crowd didn’t chant his name, or Baydemir’s, or that of any other DTP candidates, Turk was guarded. “This is a 30-year process,” he said. “There is still a lot of sentiment towards the PKK. You cannot change this overnight. The PKK was founded 30 years ago, and the parties only came much later.”

Osman Ocalan, Abdullah’s younger brother, was more straightforward. “The [Kurdish parties] act on a foundation that the PKK has set,” he said earlier this summer, inside his home in Koy Sanjak, a town in northern Iraq. Ocalan, who briefly led the PKK after his brother’s capture, he says, split from the group in 2004. Despite having faced at least one assassination attempt by his former comrades, he remains adamant – like most Kurds – that a solution to the Kurdish issue must involve the PKK and, as such, Abdullah Ocalan. “The state’s approach to put the leader in jail and to dismiss him as an interlocutor is not going to produce a solution,” he says. “I think 95 per cent [of PKK fighters] would prefer a political struggle to a military one. But because Turkey has not talked to the PKK, because it did not open the road for a solution, these 95 per cent... have not laid down their arms.”

In Osman Ocalan’s view, the solution, wherever it might lie, must include a general amnesty for all PKK members, including his brother. The PKK leadership itself has proposed that Ocalan be released and placed under house arrest.

It is, however, unlikely that the government will free a man viewed by most Turks as a terrorist mastermind. Turks are not ready, says Kemal Kirisci. No government, even one as powerful as the AKP’s, can hope to free Ocalan without risking a massive outcry and a subsequent drubbing in the polls.

Moderates like Turk are careful not to include Ocalan’s release among their key demands. Cultural rights, more freedoms, and more decentralisation is what they want most, says Turk

There is some reason for optimism, however. In a referendum held on September 12, Turkish voters backed a government-sponsored package of constitutional amendments that, among other things, will give politicians greater oversight of the secularist judiciary. By handing the AKP a fresh vote of confidence, the referendum may yet breathe new life into the

EU process, pave the way for a wholly new democratic constitution to replace the one written by a military junta in 1982 and, just as importantly, resuscitate the Kurdish initiative.

Despite the ongoing violence, moderates on both sides are now trying to recover lost ground. The government is said to be in secret talks with Abdullah Ocalan. Ahmet Turk, meanwhile, has called for armed PKK units to leave Turkey so as to avoid provocation and clashes with the military. For a political solution, that has to be done through democratic means, he explains over the phone. You cannot do this with weapons. That’s what the state sees, and that’s what the Kurds see.

But not all of them. On October 31, a day before the PKK extended its ceasefire until next spring, a 24-year-old named Vedat Acar walked up to a row of police vehicles parked in Taksim Square, the heart of Istanbul, and blew himself up. Fifteen policemen and 17 civilians were wounded. Acar was the only fatality.

Even if Osman Ocalan is right, claiming that 95 per cent of PKK members are willing to forsake violent struggle, what of the remaining five per cent? It is they who might be behind the Taksim attack. And it is they who might yet turn out to be the last and the most difficult obstacle to peace.

And then there is Osman’s brother. Accustomed to being seen as nothing less than the embodiment of the Kurdish cause, Abdullah Ocalan insists, from his jail cell, that it is he, not people like Turk or Baydemir, who should call the shots. Some say that armed struggle is no longer valid, the pro-Kurdish F1rat News Agency quoted him as saying last week. How do they decide such a thing on their own? Some decisions, including the decision to withdraw, are vital issues. And these decisions can’t be made by anyone other than me.

Back in Iraq, inside a dark SUV headed for the bus terminal in Koy Sanjak, the conversation turns to the subject of family and home. The driver, a former PKK fighter, has not seen his family for more than a decade. But it is only a matter of time before he does, he assures me. For certain, he says, I will return.

Piotr Zalewski is a freelance journalist living in Istanbul

Rapport en demi-teinte de la Commission européenne sur l'état d'avancement de la candidature de la Turquie.

Jean Marcou

La Commission Européenne a rendu une fois de plus un rapport annuel d'évaluation de la candidature turque à l'UE en demi-teinte, le 9 novembre dernier. Sur le plan politique, ce rapport observe que depuis la fin de l'année 2009, l'actualité a été dominée par la réforme constitutionnelle, par l'ouverture kurde et par les multiples procès qui visent principalement la hiérarchie militaire. Cela ne l'empêche pas de se livrer à une analyse méticuleuse de la situation des droits fondamentaux dans ce pays.

En ce qui concerne la révision constitutionnelle adoptée le 12 septembre 2010 par référendum, le «Turkey Progress Report 2010» réitère l'opinion qu'avait formulée à son égard la Commission européenne : les changements proposés «vont dans la bonne direction» et «traitent les priorités soulignées par le Partenariat d'adhésion». Le rapport estime notamment que la modification des compositions de la Cour constitutionnelle et du HSYK (Hakimler ve Savcılar Yüksek Kurulu - Conseil supérieur des juges et des procureurs, équivalent du Conseil supérieur de la Magistrature en France), ainsi que la soumission des décisions des tribunaux militaires à la justice de droit commun, sont des «pas positifs». Toutefois, observant que la présidence du HSYK échoit désormais au seul ministre de la justice, il souligne la nécessité d'appliquer les réformes adoptées, «en respectant les standards européens et en suivant une voie ouverte, transparente et consensuelle». Le rapport regrette aussi, à plusieurs reprises, que cette réforme constitutionnelle n'ait pas fait l'objet d'une consultation plus large des partis politiques et de la société civile.

En ce qui concerne la question kurde, si le rapport salue les efforts qui ont étendu les possibilités d'usage des langues kurde et arabe dans le sud-est ainsi que l'accroissement des investissements régionaux découlant du GAP (Güney Anadolu Projesi, projet d'Anatolie du sud-est : opération d'aménagement du territoire menée par le gouvernement turc, reposant d'abord sur le développement corrélatif de l'hydroélectricité et de l'irrigation), il regrette que «les mesures annoncées dans le cadre de l'ouverture démocratique aient été en deçà des espérances et n'aient finalement pas pu être suivies d'effets concrets». Sont en outre pointés du doigt : la dissolution du DTP (parti parlementaire kurde remplacé depuis par le BDP) en décembre 2009, la rafle massive des membres du KCK (organisation kurde suspectée par les autorités turques d'être une branche urbaine du PKK) qui a suivi, le maintien des champs de mines et du système des gardiens de village, et le caractère particulièrement meurtrier des affrontements armés avec le PKK qui ont repris en 2010. Le rapport recommande une atténuation du caractère d'exception de la législation anti-terroriste ainsi qu'une réduction des arrestations opérées dans le cadre de cette législation.

Si le rapport souligne les résultats obtenus en matière de lutte contre la corruption et observe les efforts législatifs et réglementaires qui ont amélioré la parité homme-femme, le droit des enfants ou le droit des fonctionnaires, il s'attarde



également sur le maintien d'un certain nombre de situations choquantes concernant notamment les droits des femmes (crimes d'honneur, mariages forcés...) ou la stigmatisation des homosexuels (propos homophobes récents de la ministre en charge des femmes et de la famille ou réglementation militaire qui continue à qualifier l'homosexualité de maladie).

Le «Progress Report 2010», par ailleurs, tout en observant les améliorations découlant de la loi sur les fondations religieuses de 2008, estime que la situation des minorités non musulmanes reste préoccupante. En particulier, il relève peu de modifications dans le sort fait à la minorité grecque orthodoxe et remarque que le procès des assassins du journaliste d'origine arménienne, Hrant Dink, «se poursuit sans progrès significatifs» depuis plus de 3 ans.

Pour ce qui est des multiples affaires complots, le rapport se montre moins optimiste que les années précédentes. Il évoque plusieurs enquêtes et procès en cours (Balyoz, Ergenekon, Cage, Erzincan...). Il estime que ce processus peut permettre à la Turquie de renforcer la crédibilité de ses institutions démocratiques et de son État de droit. Mais il insiste à plusieurs reprises sur la nécessité impérieuse de respecter les droits des personnes arrêtées ou mises en cause, et relève des dysfonctionnements importants de la procédure pénale à cet égard.

Parmi les observations les plus sévères effectuées par la Commission européenne, à l'occasion de cette évaluation annuelle, figurent celles concernant le conflit chypriote. Le rapport 2010 observe que la Turquie n'applique toujours pas les obligations de non-discrimination et de totale ouverture des mouvements commerciaux à l'égard de Chypre, qui découlent de l'accord d'Union douanière et de son protocole additionnel. On sait que la non ouverture des ports et aéroports turcs à la République de Chypre gèle 8 chapitres de négociations d'adhésion depuis 2006. Dans son rapport 2010, la Commission européenne critique vertement le maintien du statu quo en la matière, comme d'ailleurs l'absence d'amélioration des relations bilatérales turco-chypriotes.

A bien des égards ce rapport peut sembler similaires à ceux des années précédentes (cf. notre édition du 26 octobre 2009), très marqués par une ambivalence du propos. Au-delà de l'évaluation technique des différents aspects de l'état d'avancement de la candidature turque, on remarque que la

Commission s'inquiète beaucoup «du climat de confrontation politique ambiant caractérisé par un manque de dialogue et d'esprit de compromis.» A cet égard, les efforts de conciliation du président de la République sont à nouveau salués, tandis que si les initiatives du gouvernement pour relancer les réformes nécessaires à l'intégration européenne de la Turquie sont relevées, tout en étant considérées comme «de portée limitée».

On peut toutefois regretter que l'analyse politique de la Commission n'aille pas un peu plus loin que cet appel au consensus et qu'elle n'essaye pas d'appréhender la modification des équilibres politiques qui sont en cours ; en particulier, le recul de l'armée (sortie très affaiblie du dernier YA_), les divisions du pouvoir judiciaire, les mutations de la hiérarchie universitaire (de plus en plus acquise à l'AKP), les transformations en cours dans le domaine de la presse et des médias (disparition programmée du groupe Do_an notamment) ou les mutations de la diplomatie turque. Il est vrai que le propre d'un tel rapport est de coller aux conditions de l'adhésion et aux réponses qui sont apportées chaque année par le pays candidat. Que cette méthode soit strictement respectée dans la 4ème partie du rapport, qui expose la capacité de reprise de l'acquis communautaire, chapitre par chapitre, on le comprend. Toutefois, la 2ème partie du rapport (consacré au «Critère Politique») pourrait peut-être

laisser place à une analyse politique plus ouverte et plus stratégique. Sans quoi la Commission européenne risque d'être condamnée à répéter, chaque année, ce sempiternel discours exposant que la Turquie n'a pas démerité mais qu'elle peut mieux faire. Une telle démarche aboutit finalement à donner l'impression que rien ne change en Turquie, alors même que des mutations politiques (recul de l'armée et de la hiérarchie judiciaire), économiques (résultats spectaculaires de l'économie turque au cours des derniers mois) et diplomatiques (nouvelle politique étrangère) majeures sont en cours depuis 2007. Ces mutations ne présument pas forcément d'ailleurs de la capacité de la Turquie à entrer dans l'Union Européenne, mais sans doute serait-il intéressant de les aborder avec une plus grande audace et dans un esprit plus prospectif.

Jean Marcou ,
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IRAK: AU KURDISTAN, UNE ÉCOLE AMBULANTE POUR AMÉLIORER LE SORT DES ROMS

SOULEIMANIYEH (Irak), 27 novembre 2010 (AFP)

AGÉS DE 6 à 45 ans, les élèves suivent sous une tente des cours que leurs professeurs ont préparés dans leur voiture: bienvenue à "Al-Rouhal" (les nomades), une école pas comme les autres, la première créée au Kurdistan irakien pour une population Rom démunie.

Elle a ouvert ses portes mercredi dans la banlieue sud de Souleimaniyeh, à 270 km au nord de Bagdad, à l'initiative d'une enseignante, Hana Fadhel Ahmed, bouleversée par les conditions dans lesquelles vit cette communauté dans la seconde ville du Kurdistan.

"J'avais suggéré au printemps aux services de l'éducation de Souleimaniyeh de mettre en place des formations professionnelles pour les gitans vivant près de la ville", explique Hana Fadhel Ahmed, qui a été nommée directrice d'Al-Rouhal.

"Ils m'ont demandé de recenser les personnes susceptibles d'être intéressées."

Selon elle, 383 Roms vivent dans des tentes installées aux abords de Souleimaniyeh, soit environ 70 familles. "Aucun d'entre eux ne sait lire ou écrire."

Les élèves ont été répartis par tranches d'âge. Six heures de cours collectifs sont ainsi prévues le matin pour 70 enfants de 6 à 12 ans tandis que l'après-midi, deux classes ont lieu simultanément pendant deux heures, la première pour les 13-24 ans, la seconde pour leurs aînés, la limite d'âge ayant été fixée à 45 ans.

"Et quand ils bougeront, nous les suivrons", annonce Mme Ahmed. "Ils se déplacent environ tous les quatre mois, mais uniquement à l'intérieur du Kurdistan car la Turquie ne veut pas d'eux."

A en croire l'historien kurde Serdar Mohamed, la plupart de ces gens du voyage vivant en Irak sont originaires d'Iran. Il n'existe pas de chiffres précis mais les chefs de tribus Roms estiment leur nombre à 60.000 en Irak.

Relativement protégés par l'ancien régime de Saddam Hussein dont ils pimentaient avec leur musique et leurs danses les fêtes les plus fastueuses, ils ont été rejetés après la chute de l'ex-président en 2003 et contraints à vivre dans le dénuement le plus total.

"Le gouvernement autonome du Kurdistan nous a donné des papiers", indique Hassan Rahim, 65 ans. "Mais nous demeurons des citoyens de seconde zone et nous vivons dans des tentes."

Des conditions de vie qui choquent Bahyah Rahim, une enseignante de 37 ans: "Certains élèves ne mangent pas à leur faim et ne se lavent même pas le visage parce qu'il n'y a pas assez d'eau dans leur camp."

"Alors il faut repartir de zéro avec eux car ils ne connaissent rien du système scolaire. Ils ne savent pas qu'il faut rester assis en cours, respecter et écouter son professeur", poursuit-elle.

Certains des Roms parviennent tant bien que mal à gagner un peu d'argent en vendant des vêtements qu'ils fabriquent, mais beaucoup sont livrés à la mendicité.

"Et certains ont recours au vol ou à la prostitution", affirme la directrice. "Alors cette école vise aussi à les ramener sur le droit chemin."

Près d'elle, Karim, 12 ans, reconnaît qu'il faisait la manche sur un marché de Souleimaniyeh avant de venir à l'école. "Je suis content de ne plus devoir mendier et j'espère que l'école me permettra de trouver un bon travail."

La petite Maryam, 9 ans, se dit elle aussi "heureuse" de cette opportunité d'étudier: "Nos parents nous ont encouragés à venir à l'école avec mon frère."

Al-Rouhal dispose de moyens limités, au point que les cinq enseignantes préparent leurs cours dans leur voiture, garée à proximité de la tente. Selon la directrice, les autorités ont promis d'augmenter le nombre de professeurs.

Du haut de ses 65 ans, Hassan Rahim regrette lui que l'école n'ait pas été ouverte il y a 10, 20 ou 30 ans.

"Mais au moins, elle sera profitable à nos enfants."

Le bouclier antimissile

La Turquie placée dans une position difficile

Zoom

Les documents publics du sommet de Lisbonne ne devraient pas désigner explicitement l'Iran comme étant la menace principale qui justifie l'édification, par l'OTAN, d'une défense antimissile sur le continent européen. Même s'il ne fait pas de doute aux yeux des alliés qu'elle provient du Moyen-Orient, le contour précis de cette menace balistique pourrait être renvoyé à des documents classifiés. En cause : les réticences de la Turquie, qui a posé des conditions pour un accord de principe au bouclier proposé par les Etats-Unis.

L'antimissile a placé la Turquie, membre de l'OTAN depuis 1952 et adepte d'une doctrine du « zéro problème avec les voisins », dans une position difficile. Le gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan souhaite conserver sa capacité de médiation

avec l'Iran, comme il l'avait tenté, en mai, avec le Brésil sur le dossier nucléaire. « Nous ne considérons pas l'Iran comme une menace », a répété le ministre des affaires étrangères, Ahmet Davutoglu, en marge du G20 à Séoul.

Le pays, qui pourrait utilement héberger un radar en raison de sa frontière commune avec l'Iran, ne veut pas non plus risquer d'être la première cible en cas d'attaque. « Nous ne voulons pas d'une zone de guerre froide autour de nous », a précisé M. Davutoglu. Une autre garantie demandée est que l'antimissile, relevant de l'OTAN et non des seuls Etats-Unis, protège l'ensemble de son territoire, au-delà des zones limitrophes de l'Iran.

Même si les questions concrètes liées à l'architecture du système antimissile, comme l'implantation des intercepteurs et des radars, ne seront pas tranchées à Lisbonne, la Turquie a réclaté d'être présente à un niveau opérationnel dans le commandement et le contrôle du bouclier. « Qui va

Irak

Jalal Talabani refuse de signer l'ordre d'exécution de Tarek Aziz

PARIS. La France a apporté son soutien, mercredi 17 novembre, au président irakien, Jalal Talabani, qui ne veut pas signer l'ordre d'exécution de Tarek Aziz, ancien vice-premier ministre de Saddam Hussein. « La France étant favorable à l'abolition de la peine de mort partout dans le monde, nous nous réjouissons de cette décision », a déclaré le porte-parole du ministère des affaires étrangères, Bernard Valero. « Je ne signerai pas un ordre de ce genre parce que je suis socialiste. Je compatis avec Tarek Aziz, car c'est un chrétien irakien; et c'est en outre une personne âgée qui a plus de 70 ans. C'est pourquoi je ne signerai jamais cet ordre d'exécution », a assuré le président Talabani, d'origine kurde, à la chaîne France 24. Tarek Aziz a été condamné à mort le 26 octobre pour son rôle dans l'élimination des partis religieux par le régime baasiste. — (AFP) ■

presser le bouton ? Qui va avoir les commandes ? » a demandé M. Erdogan avant le sommet.

Dans la réforme en cours de l'OTAN, le pays veut sauver le quartier général d'Izmir. La base d'Incirlik, où sont stationnés des moyens de surveillance aérienne, est évoquée pour accueillir une partie du système radar du bouclier.

« Qui va presser le bouton ? Qui va avoir les commandes ? »

Recep Tayyip Erdogan
premier ministre turc

Le gouvernement turc souhaiterait encore avoir un accès direct à toutes les informations échangées sur la menace balistique, avec l'assurance que ces données ne soient pas accessibles à des pays non membres de l'OTAN, tels qu'Israël, note Avnish Patel, membre du cercle de réflexions britanniques Royal United Services Institute (RUSI). La Turquie, relèvent toutefois les experts, ne pourra aller jusqu'à bloquer le projet de ses alliés. ■

N. G., avec Guillaume Perrier
(Istanbul, correspondance)

REUTERS

Le Parlement européen demande à l'Irak d'épargner Tarek Aziz

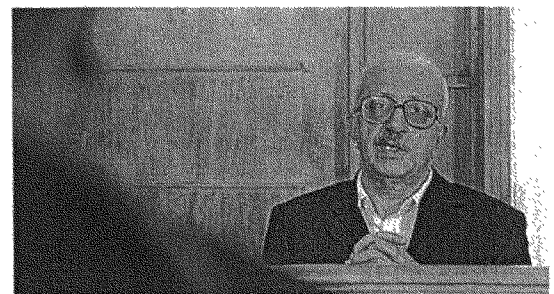
STRASBOURG / 25 novembre 2010 / (Reuters) -

Le Parlement européen a demandé jeudi à Bagdad de ne pas exécuter les peines de mort prononcées contre l'ancien vice-Premier ministre irakien Tarek Aziz et deux autres anciens proches de Saddam Hussein.

Il leur demande également, dans une résolution adoptée à Strasbourg, d'abolir la peine capitale.

La Cour suprême irakienne a condamné l'ancien bras droit de Saddam Hussein à la peine de mort le 26 octobre pour avoir participé à la « persécution de partis islamiques ».

« Ce n'est pas le cas de Tarek Aziz qui est important. Nous ne pouvons pas avoir demain sur nos écrans de télé l'image de la pendaison de Tarek Aziz comme symbole de la libération de l'Irak », a affirmé dans l'hémicycle l'eurodéputée socialiste belge Véronique De Keyser.



Le Parlement européen souligne "l'importance qu'il y a à traduire en justice les auteurs de violations des droits de l'homme, y compris les hommes politiques", mais demande à Bagdad d'abolir la peine de mort "en toutes circonstances".

Le président irakien Jalal Talabani a dit qu'il ne signerait pas l'acte de condamnation à mort de Tarek Aziz, 74 ans, mais l'exécution peut être mise en oeuvre par la voie parlementaire.

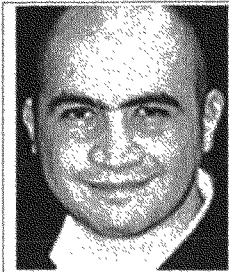
Celui qui fut considéré comme la personnalité la plus "fréquentable" de l'ancien régime irakien purge déjà une peine de 15 années de prison pour son implication dans le meurtre de commerçants en 1992 et une autre de sept ans pour la déportation forcée de Kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak.



The Shaky Government of Iraq

Months in the making, what lies in store for the new Baghdad administration?

By Daniella Peled - Iraq, IWPR
November 19, 2010



IWPR Iraq chief of mission Ammar al-Shahbender

A power-sharing agreement has finally been reached in Iraq, after eight months of political stalemate.

With a government now due to be formed within 30 days, IWPR Iraq chief of mission Ammar al-Shahbender identifies the main problems facing the new authority.

What are the most immediate challenges confronting Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki?

This coalition came about because there were just no other choices — and it seems likely that its members are going to clash on some major policy decisions, not least security.

Disarming and integrating the militias is likely to be a fraught undertaking.

The followers of Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who are the prime minister's strongest allies, have secured an agreement to be given 25 per cent of senior positions within the security forces. This could pose problems for Maliki because they would be loyal to no-one other than Sadr. Sadr might in future use this fact to exert pressure on Maliki, possibly even threatening or staging a coup.

As a condition for supporting the coalition, the Kurds insisted that around 80,000 Kurdish peshmerga be integrated into the military. This is a daunting logistical and financial task: the total size of the Iraqi army was initially supposed to be around 300,000 and it is already almost double that size. Moreover, central government would have concerns over the loyalty of these troops in the event of a clash between Baghdad and the Kurdish Regional Government, KRG.

There are likely to be tensions over foreign relations too. Maliki has been isolated by Arab neighbours, particularly Saudi Arabia. His overtures to them in the months following the March election were rejected, while his backing from Iran has grown.

Meanwhile, Maliki's arch rival for the prime minister's post, Iyad Allawi, the leader of the secular but largely Sunni Iraqiya party, enjoys close relations with Arab countries.

The fear here is that - with Iran's influence in Iraq perhaps slightly diminished, yet still greater than that of the Arab countries - Tehran may try to deepen the divisions between Maliki and the Arab world to further its own interests.

Then there is Article 140 of the constitution, which deals with a referendum to decide the fate of disputed territories such as Kirkuk. Maliki promised to push forward with this, a move which Allawi will definitely resist. Strangely, Maliki is being backed by the Sadristes who, like the Iraqiya bloc, are staunch nationalists, supporting a strong central government and oppose Kurdish independence. But the Sadristes believe that the referendum will show that Arabs — rather than Kurds - are a majority in Kirkuk, and most Arabs in the city are followers of Sadr.

As well as dealing with major differences on policy within his coalition, Maliki may face a serious challenge to his authority.

The new National Council for Strategic Policy has apparently

mainly been created as a concession to Allawi, who will head it. It is as yet unclear just exactly what the composition and purpose of this body will be. Its mandate needs to be fixed within the next two weeks and approved by parliament, but it is anticipated that it will have a supervisory role regarding the performance of government ministers and include departments dealing with a wide range of issues, such as domestic, foreign and economic affairs.

US president Barack Obama reportedly phoned Allawi to reassure him that this role would not be merely symbolic and provide him with real authority. But if this is true, then it would be to the detriment of the prime minister. We could have two authorities with different strategies and both with executive power.

Iraqi citizens have spent the last eight months witnessing bitter disputes as the politicians they elected failed to form an administration to govern them. How much legitimacy does this new government have in the eyes of the electorate?

This government definitely has less legitimacy than the pre-election administration did. For example, there is the way Maliki and the government handled the recent attacks on Christian sites. The church siege, in which at least 52 people were killed, and which was followed by another string of attacks against Christians, were all clear indications of incompetence.

What has also cost Maliki credibility is the fact that he campaigned on an anti-Baathist agenda, but has agreed to suspend the Justice and Accountability Commission for two years until it can be turned into a judicial rather than political body — at which point only former Baathists found guilty of committing crimes will be punished.

What kind of future does this government face and how stable is it likely to be?

I think this coalition will break down within a year. Either there will be a plot to remove Maliki or it will just disintegrate. Maliki has been making enemies left, right and centre and while his alliance with the Sadristes is important, it is very unstable. Sadr can change his mind at any time, for strategic reasons or just in a fit of pique.

Despite the problems, what positives can be drawn from the formation of the new government?

Apart from some fraud, the elections were more or less successful. Violence was largely avoided and the parties engaged in a proper competition for votes. What became clear during the months the parties spent arguing and fighting over a coalition was that no single person or party can dominate the political scene here. The political process in Iraq is real.

Although we don't know yet who will get the ministry of oil, I think they will be able to pass the oil and investment laws which are needed to develop Iraq's natural resources. That doesn't mean that there will be an immediate economic dividend, however, because foreign investors are deterred by the security situation despite assurances from the government. So we need to see security first, then development.

Who benefits most in this government?

All the parties are equally unhappy. But the most satisfied members of the coalition are the Kurds, who more or less got what they wanted — at least on paper. They came to Maliki with a list of 26 requests and he signed off on all of them. These included jobs for the peshmerga; ensuring action on Article 140 and the disputed territories; and a clause whereby the resignation of Kurdish ministers would force the entire cabinet to step down. But if the National Council for Strategic Policy is given executive power, then Maliki's promises could become irrelevant.

Kurdish intellectuals say shady forces at work to form CHP-BDP bloc

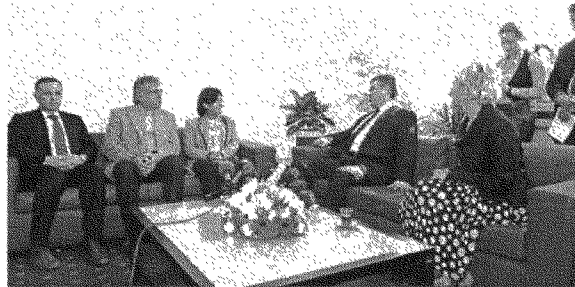
**TANJU OZKAYA /
ERCAN YAVUZ,**

ISTANBUL/ANKARA

Kurdish intellectuals are strongly opposed to the idea of an alliance between the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) and the Republican People's Party (CHP) to garner more votes in the general elections next year.

According to Umit Firat, one of these prominent intellectuals who spoke to Today's Zaman, the warming atmosphere between the two parties is the latest step by the same circles that ousted former CHP leader Deniz Baykal from his post by releasing a video of Baykal in an intimate affair with a party deputy in May. For Firat, both the removal of Baykal from the CHP's helm and pushing it closer to the BDP are efforts to forge a more popular opposition to the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party). Baykal resigned from CHP leadership over the sex tape scandal but no one claimed responsibility for the secret recording. Speculation focused on efforts to make the CHP a government alternative because under the leadership of Baykal, the party had constantly lost ground to the AK Party. Rights and Freedoms Party's (HAK-PAR) Bayram Bozyel and Participatory Democracy Party (KADEP) deputy-chairman Nizamettin Maskan also denounced CHP-BDP election bloc efforts. In particular, they pointed out that Kurds would utterly lose ground in their demands for cultural rights because the CHP has been one of the most outspoken critics of initiatives to expand rights and freedoms for people of different ethnicities, cultures and religions in Turkey.

This is the latest move in the Baykal tape incident process. The alliance [proposal] is based on winning more seats in [eastern and southeastern] regions rather than a new political formation or becoming a democratic establishment. At the foundation of this



A delegation from the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party visited the main opposition CHP's headquarters in Ankara on Nov. 17 to wish CHP deputies a happy Eid.

alliance is their opposition to the AK Party, said Firat. Bozyel agreed with Firat on the matter and added that if the BDP allies with the CHP it would mean a denial of their raison d'être. Naturally, the Kurds will not find what they're looking for in this alliance and will be the losing party because the CHP mentality is completely closed to Kurdish demands, he said.

Maskan, on the other hand, drew attention to the lack of discussion concerning possibilities that such an alliance could facilitate, with the parties only interested in additional seats in Parliament. Both parties have problems in their approach to democratization. They should first achieve progress with that, Maskan added.

Will an election bloc dethrone the AK Party?

The CHP-BDP alliance discussions began a week ago when CHP Secretary-General Suheyli Batum said they are open to cooperating with any party committed to alleviating inequality in Turkey, in response to an alliance proposal from BDP leader Selahattin Demirtas. Batum's remarks drew the ire of some CHP deputies and later on CHP leader Kemal Kiliçdaroglu who said they are not in search of an alliance. Demirtas later said, Forming an election bloc with the CHP is not possible under present circumstances.

However the possibility of forming an election bloc with the BDP has not ceased as CHP deputy-chairman Mesut Deer recently said people residing in eastern and southeastern parts of the country are warm to an alliance that would result in a CHP government in Turkey. He also called on all left-

The prospect of an alliance between the main opposition CHP and the pro-Kurdish BDP ahead of the 2011 general elections has caused unease among Kurdish intellectuals, who believe that the relatively warm atmosphere between the two parties is the latest step by the same circles that unseated former CHP leader Deniz Baykal

wing parties to join this planned alliance.

In Ankara, the corridors of Parliament have been filled with discussions focusing on the ambitious plans of some groups -- who have conventionally adopted anti-democratic means -- to create a much more popular opposition to dethrone the ruling AK Party in the 2011 elections. According to those speculations, those efforts may reconcile even the most distant ideologies on the grounds of hostility to the AK Party. Though it seems pretty unlikely at the moment, some even note that those efforts may even lead to a left-wing government including the CHP and the BDP and supported by the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) from outside the government after the next elections.

However, there are some other interpretations as to the outcome of an election bloc between CHP

and BDP. If it became a reality, some say this alliance would harm both parties because the CHP would lose its nationalist voters to MHP and some leftist parties, while the BDP would lose its religiously sensitive voters to the AK Party because these two groups cannot stand the idea of such cooperation. While the CHP's nationalist constituents are uneasy about the BDP's hesitancy to proclaim the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) as a terrorist organization, the BDP's conservative voters are unhappy with CHP's staunchly secularist stance and opposition to religious freedoms. Esat Canan, a

former CHP deputy who has also worked with current BDP politicians, told Today's Zaman it is impossible for the two parties to engage in such an alliance; however, if it actually happened, it would not be a good decision for either party because it would lead Kurds to vote for parties other than the BDP. Sedat Yurtdas, another leading Kurdish politician, agrees completely with Canan. He said the CHP's current stance against Kurdish rights will never seem sympathetic to Kurds.

Predecessors of the two parties -- the Social Democratic People's

Party (SHP) and the People's Labor Party (HEP) -- entered into an alliance in the 1991 elections. The SHP-HEP alliance led to much controversy. HEP members resigned from the SHP after just five months, and founded the Democracy Party (DEP). At the same time, an attempt by HEP deputy Leyla Zana to take her parliamentary oath in Kurdish harmed the SHP greatly. Its successor, the CHP, has been making great efforts for years to make voters forget about that incident.



Kurdistan Region Presidency (KRP)

25 November 2010

UK to Open Consulate General in Kurdistan Region

Salahaddin, Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRP.org)

PRESIDENT BARZANI today met with British Foreign Office Minister for the Middle East Mr. Alistair Burt and an accompanying delegation which included British Ambassador to Iraq John Jenkins and British Consul General to Erbil Chris Bowers.

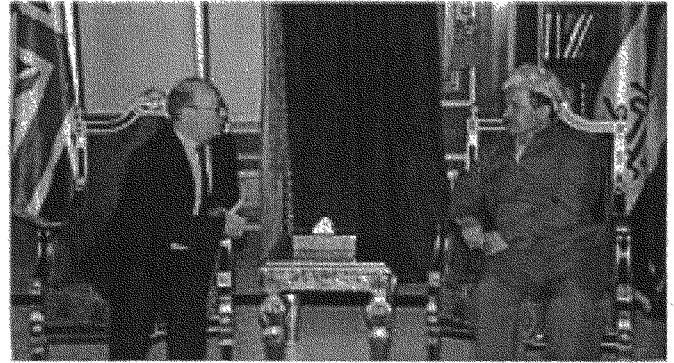
In today's meeting, the British Minister stated that his government has decided to upgrade the current UK Embassy office in Erbil to a full consulate general, a decision which President Barzani warmly welcomed.

"The British government has made the decision to upgrade our Embassy Office in Erbil to a full consulate general, and this is a sign that our relations are strengthening and that we intend to further improve our relations," said Minister Alistair Burt. He expressed his admiration for the economic progress and rapid development that Erbil is witnessing and hoped that with the opening of the British consulate, more British businesses and companies will come here for investment.

The British Minister also congratulated President Barzani for his role in breaking the Iraq government formation deadlock which led to the appointment of the three main posts of President, Prime Minister and Speaker of the Council of Representatives.

President Barzani thanked the UK government for their decision to upgrade their Embassy Office and described it as an important step toward further improving bilateral relations in various fields including energy, commerce, agriculture, tourism, industry and education.

On the plight of Christians in Iraq who have been targeted by terrorists in recent weeks, President Barzani repeated that the



Kurdistan Region is prepared to provide them with a refuge and with security until the security situation improves in other parts of Iraq.

"Christians fleeing violence in other parts of Iraq are welcome in the Kurdistan Region and we will do all we can to help them with security and shelter, however we would also need financial assistance from Baghdad and the international community to address their needs here if the numbers are high and if they have to stay here for a long period," stated President Barzani, urging Christians at the same time to avoid leaving Iraq.

Minister Burt commended the offer by the President and the KRG for receiving the fleeing Christians and for their support for them.

The President and the British Minister also discussed women's rights in the Kurdistan Region, especially in light of some recent media reports about the practice of honor killing. President Barzani said the figures given in the media are unclear and sometimes exaggerated, but that the KRG takes the matter very seriously and has taken many measures to combat this practice leading to visible improvements and a reduction in the number of crimes against women.

What we must do for Iraq now

Iraq still needs U.S. help to strengthen its security forces and get its new government running smoothly.

Joseph R. Biden Jr.

WASHINGTON Nine days ago, Iraqi political leaders agreed on a framework for a new government to guide their country through the crucial coming years. Since the elections there in March, our administration has said that the Iraqi people deserve a government that reflects the results of those elections, that includes all the major blocs representing Iraq's various communities and that does not exclude or marginalize anyone. That is what they will now have.

While President Obama and I — and an outstanding team of U.S. officials in Washington and Baghdad — played an active role in supporting this effort, the most important steps were taken in Iraq, by the leaders of Iraq's largest political parties. Their accomplishment is the latest and strongest evidence of a key development in Iraq: Over the past two years, politics has emerged as the dominant means for settling differences and advancing interests.

Time and time again in recent months, Iraqi leaders have painstakingly worked through thorny issues — including disputes over who is eligible to run for office or serve in government, challenges to the election results and power-sharing arrangements — without resorting to violence. It hasn't always been pretty, but politics rarely is, in Iraq, in America or anywhere else. By agreeing to form a national partnership government, however, Iraqi leaders have sent an unmistakable message to their fellow citizens, their region and the world: After more than seven years of war and decades of dictatorship, Iraqis seek a nation where the rights of all citizens are recognized and the talents of all are harnessed to unlock the country's full potential.

In a country that still faces enormous challenges on the road to security and prosperity, that goal has never been more essential. The next step is for the leaders of Iraq's new government to honor their landmark commitment to share power — a pledge embodied in the new National Council for Higher Policies, whose responsibilities and authority are still being determined but will eventually be enshrined into law.

Politics has emerged as the dominant means for settling differences and advancing interests.

The United States must also continue to do its part to reinforce Iraq's progress. That is why we are not disengaging from Iraq — rather, the nature of our engagement is changing from a military to a civilian lead. Since taking office, the Obama administration has withdrawn nearly 100,000 troops from Iraq and ended our combat operations. The 50,000 troops who will remain until the end of 2011 have a new mission: to advise and assist their Iraqi counterparts, protect our personnel and property and participate in counterterrorist operations. Meanwhile, we are establishing a diplomatic presence throughout the country and, under the terms of our Strategic Framework Agreement, building a dynamic partnership across a range of government sectors, including education, energy, trade, health, culture, information technology, law enforcement and the judiciary.

In a country where extremists remain bent on sowing chaos, and where innocent civilians still suffer unspeakable hardship, the transition to a safer society depends on the continued development of Iraq's security forces, now more than 650,000 strong.

Over the six visits I have made to Iraq since January 2009, I have seen the remarkable progress its police and soldiers have made. Iraq today is far safer and more stable than at any time since the outbreak of war in 2003. More than a year ago, Iraqi forces took charge of security in major cities, and last August, when the American combat mission ended, they assumed primary responsibility nationwide. In recent months, using their own intelligence, Iraqi forces have killed or captured dozens of senior leaders of Al Qaeda in Iraq and other terrorist groups. The weekly tally of violent incidents throughout Iraq has dropped to about 160, from nearly 1,600 in 2007.

Nevertheless, Iraq's security forces are not yet ready to operate fully on their own, and we must continue to support them. We must also help Iraq's leaders with a range of challenges that lie ahead: conducting a census; further integrating Kurdish security forces into the Iraqi security forces; maintaining

commitments to the Sons of Iraq, the Sunni groups that banded together against insurgents; resolving disputed internal boundaries and the future of the northern city of Kirkuk, which is claimed by both Arabs and Kurds; passing a hydrocarbon law that would distribute oil revenues and maximize the benefit to all Iraqis; stabilizing the economy through foreign investment, private sector development and new sources of revenue beyond oil; passing a fiscally responsible budget; and bringing to a close its post-Gulf war obligations to the United Nations.

While the day will come when Iraq's vast natural wealth can fully finance its security and investment needs, and when its civilian institutions no longer require such intensive support, it has not yet arrived. Iraq has increased its own spending in these areas, and with sustained American engagement, it will emerge from generations of trauma to become a stable and self-reliant nation.

That is why, even at this difficult economic time, we are asking Congress to fulfill our budget requests to support America's continued engagement, including our broader diplomatic presence, a modernization plan for the Iraqi security forces and financing for a police development program. The drawdown of U.S. troops will save \$15 billion in the coming fiscal year — we seek to direct less than one-third of that amount to provide needed assistance to Iraq's security forces and to our State Department's civilian-led efforts.

The Iraq war has cost our nation dearly, with the greatest price of all paid by the 4,430 heroes who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Now it is in America's fundamental interest to help preserve the gains Iraq has made, prevent the re-emergence of violent extremists and encourage Iraq to become a pivotal American ally in a strategically critical region, and a responsible regional actor in its own right.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR. is the vice president of the United States.



Ocalan Warns Kurdish Mayor, Armed Struggle Against Turkey Is Not Over: Taraf

November 23, 2010 / ekurd.net

IMRALI ISLAND, Turkey,— Abdullah Ocalan, the imprisoned Kurdish leader and head of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, rebuked the mayor of Turkey's largest Kurdish-majority city for saying the Kurds' armed struggle was over in Turkey, Taraf newspaper reported.

Osman Baydemir, one of Turkey's most popular Kurdish politicians and the mayor of Diyarbakir in southeast Turkey [Turkey Kurdistan], said that the time for armed struggle had come to an end.

Speaking through visitors to his prison cell on the island of Imrali, Ocalan said that Baydemir wouldn't be in his position for two months without the support of armed militants, the Istanbul-based newspaper reported.

Ocalan warned Baydemir to stick to his own area of responsibility, saying the mayor had no authority to speak for the armed wing of the Kurdish movement Taraf said. Some elements of the PKK and Baydemir's own party are pressing for his resignation, the paper reported.

Since it was established in 1984, the PKK [Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan] has been fighting the Turkish state, which still denies the constitutional existence of Kurds, to establish a Kurdish state in the south east of the country.

But now its aim is the creation an autonomous region and more cultural rights for ethnic Kurds who constitute the greatest minority in Turkey, numbering more than 20 million.



Abdullah Ocalan (L), the imprisoned Kurdish leader rebuked Osman Baydemir, the mayor of Turkey's largest Kurdish-majority city for saying the Kurds' armed struggle was over in Turkey.

PKK's demands included releasing PKK detainees, lifting the ban on education in Kurdish, paving the way for an autonomous democrat Kurdish system within Turkey, reducing pressure on the detained PKK president, stopping military action against the Kurdish party and recomposing the Turkish constitution.

PKK demanded demanded to stop military and political operations and to release Kurdish politicians who are unjustly detained. The organization also requested to enable imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's active participation in the process.

FINANCIAL TIMES November 25, 2010

France Telecom eyes stake in Iraq s Korek

By Lina Saigol and Andrew Parker in London

France Telecom is in talks to buy a minority stake in Iraq's third-largest mobile phone operator, as part of a strategy to expand its presence in the Middle East.

People familiar with the situation said it was considering purchasing a stake in Korek Telecom, in a deal that could give the Iraqi mobile operator an enterprise value of \$1.5bn.

Although no deal has been finalised, France Telecom is interested in eventually securing a controlling stake in Korek.

The French telecoms group is looking for growth in

emerging markets in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Although France opposed the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Baghdad government has urged French companies to play a significant role in the country's reconstruction.

The security situation has improved in Iraq since 2005, when the country was on the brink of civil war, but there is still regular violence.

Korek was founded in 2000 by Sirwan Mustafa, who is its sole shareholder and nephew of Massoud Barzani, president of Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region.

The company initially focused on mobile services in Kurdistan, but in 2007 it obtained a nationwide operating licence and now has

about 3m customers.

It is competing with two much larger groups: Zain, Iraq's largest mobile operator, which has 11.8m customers, and Asia Cell, the second largest, which has 7.9m.

Zain, which has mobile businesses in several countries in Africa and the Middle East, is in talks to sell a controlling stake in itself to Etisalat, the acquisitive Dubai-based telecoms group.

Asia Cell is part of Qatar Telecom, another acquisitive Middle East telecoms operator.

The Iraqi operators are still enjoying growth by providing people with their first mobile phones. Informa, the research and consulting organisation, estimates 76

per cent of the Iraqi population own a mobile.

Stephane Richard, France Telecom's chief executive, has set a target of doubling the group's revenue from Africa and the Middle East within five years. In 2009 the group reported sales of 3.4bn (\$4.5bn).

Mr Richard is interested in acquiring telecoms assets to help reach his target, and in September announced plans to buy a 40 per cent stake in Meditel, Morocco's second-largest mobile operator, for 640m.

France Telecom is also among several groups bidding for the third mobile operating licence in Syria.

TheNational

NOVEMBER 24, 2010

Iraqi Christians flee to Kurdish north for safety

Nizar Latif

The National/UAE

BAGHDAD // With attacks on their community continuing, Iraqi Christians in Baghdad are looking north to the Kurdish region, as they seek safety and an alternative to fleeing their country entirely.

Since last month's massacre at the Our Lady of Salvation church in the capital, which left about 50 worshippers dead, there has been a heightened sense of insecurity among Baghdad's Christian minority.

Despite a brief period of relative calm in recent days, a series of assassinations has done nothing to settle rattled nerves or inspire confidence in the ability of security forces to prevent further sectarian bloodshed.

On Monday, two Christian brothers were gunned down in their car workshop in the restive city of Mosul, 390km north of Baghdad.

Exactly one week earlier in eastern Mosul, another two Christian men were shot and killed after gunmen broke into their home.

There have been renewed calls in Europe for Iraq's Christians to be granted asylum, suggestions that sparked a quick rebuke from Iraqi officials - including many senior Christians - that such a move would only serve the Islamic extremists trying to rid the country of Christianity.

The Iraqi president, Jalal Talabani, a Kurd from the northern city of Sulamaniya, last week said that rather than fleeing overseas, Christians should move to the secure autonomously administered Kurdish areas until the situation elsewhere had stabilised. It is an offer that many Christians here are now seriously contemplating.

"Life isn't possible in Baghdad for us at the moment," said Milad Butros, a Christian resident of Doura, a neighbourhood in southern Baghdad in which Muslims and Christians long enjoyed a peaceful coexistence. But after the 2003 US-led invasion, the area quickly fell under the control of Islamist militants.

Mr Butros, aged 52, had two of his daughters abducted by al Qa'eda fig-



Civilians in Christian villages in northern Iraq have established their own security in an attempt to deter murders, abductions and would-be car bombers. AP

ters in 2006. He has heard nothing of them since, despite extensive search efforts aided by Iraq's powerful tribes.

The latest series of attacks on Christians, apparently carried out by al Qa'eda, and the Kurd's offer of sanctuary have convinced Mr Butros that he should now take his wife and son away to safety.

"The government doesn't seem to be serious about protecting us here, so if no one wants us in Baghdad, we will leave," he said. "The Kurds have offered us shelter and we will go. I couldn't stay in Baghdad even if it was built of gold."

Thousands of Iraqi Christians have already sought and found refuge in the Kurdish provinces. In Erbil, the Kurds' administrative capital, the flourishing Ankawa neighbourhood has been built up and populated by Christians, with the support of the Kurdish authorities.

Even outside of Kurd-run areas, in Ninewah province, Kurds have helped to secure the Christian villages to the north and east of Mosul, the provincial capital. That help has not been uncontroversial, with some viewing it as part of a land grab by the Kurds in their long territorial dispute with the country's Arabs.

"We expect many Christians to come north," said Romeo Higari, a Christian MP in Erbil. "At least they will still be in Iraq - I refuse to accept that Christians have to leave for Europe to have a future. We have lived here for thousands of years, it is our country and we should stay."

Yunadam Kanna, head of the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM) in Iraq and an MP, also said many of Baghdad's Christians were now preparing to move north.

"I have been in touch with Christian

doctors, engineers and professors now in Baghdad and they are ready to leave for Kurdistan," he said. "They are sad to leave their city, but at least they can keep their lives."

Mr Kanna said the Kurdish offer of a safe haven was a preferable alternative to Iraq's Christian's leaving the country altogether.

The ADM has urged the government to improve security in Baghdad, and has advocated the establishment of Christian guard units that would defend churches and residential neighbourhoods. Similar arrangements have already been made in some of the villages on the outskirts of Mosul, despite fears it would lead to the formation of Lebanese-style Christian militias. Mr Kanna stressed any such forces would remain under Iraqi government command, and would not be an independently controlled Christian fighting unit.

The prospect of Christians leaving Baghdad en masse would be "disastrous" for the country, said Muthana al Jafari, a sociologist based in the capital.

"Christians makes up a large part of the educated elite, and without them medical services, education and engineering projects in Baghdad will all suffer," he said. "If the Christians leave, it will tear up the very fabric of Iraq. It is a very serious threat."

An estimated 800,000 Christians lived in Iraq before the 2003 invasion but their number has shrunk, with tens of thousands moving to Syria and Jordan or gaining asylum overseas.

Les enjeux du futur marche commun entre la Turquie, la Syrie, l'Irak et l'Irak



Par Georges Malbrunot
blog.lefigaro.fr

Je vous livre l'analyse de Xavier Houzel, expert pétrolier et bon connaisseur du Moyen-Orient, sur le projet de création d'un bloc régional qui regrouperait la Turquie, la Syrie, l'Irak et l'Irak.

Pendant que les Russes et les Chinois préservent l'avenir par une confortable passivité sur le dossier nucléaire iranien, nous assistons à la reconstitution du CENTO, cet ancien rempart dressé contre l'ex-URSS plus connu sous le nom de Pacte de Bagdad, mais aujourd'hui sans les Etats-Unis et le Pakistan. Trente ans après la volatilisation de ce bloc anti soviétique sous l'effet de la révolution iranienne, la Turquie, la Syrie, l'Irak et l'Irak dessinent en effet à vive allure la matrice de leurs institutions communes, à l'instar, il y a cinquante ans, de l'Europe des Six. Malheureusement, la voix de l'Occident est absente de cette ébauche de marché commun régional.

Il s'agit pourtant d'un événement primordial. Les visas entre ces quatre pays sont désormais supprimés. Un consortium vient d'être créé pour rendre compatibles les réseaux des oléoducs et des gazoducs existants et à venir. Les ressources d'eau y sont administrées de conserve. La Turquie, déçue par le peu d'engouement des Européens à l'accueillir, s'est mise à regarder à l'Est. Elle paie son tribut mémoriel à l'Arménie et se détache d'Israël. Elle s'est réconciliée avec la Syrie, qui, de son côté, oublie Alexandrette, son vieux conflit territorial datant de l'empire Ottoman et du mandat français.

Depuis des mois, les trois voisins de l'Irak se sont penchés ensemble sur les fonts baptismaux du futur gouvernement de ce pays, comme s'il ne pouvait procéder que de leur seul consensus ; mais c'est finalement à Massoud Barzani, le président du Kurdistan Irakien, que va revenir le mérite de sceller l'accord définitif entre les composantes arabes du pays dans leur diversité. Le symbole en est considérable, car il rappelle que près du sixième de la population globale de l'Irak, de la Turquie, de la Syrie et de l'Irak est Kurde. Quelle revanche sur l'Histoire,

laquelle oublie parfois que le grand Saladin était lui-même Kurde, et que lesdits Kurdes, auxquels fut injustement dénié le statut de nation lors du démantèlement de l'empire Ottoman, sont aryens et persophones !

C'est aussi la raison pour laquelle, au moment où l'Irak envisage de concéder aux compagnies pétrolières de ses voisins des privilèges exorbitants, ces derniers - la Turquie la première - viennent d'accepter qu'aucun tracé d'oléoduc ou de gazoduc (comme suggéré par l'américain Bechtel et qui relierait le Golfe Persique à la Mer Méditerranée), ne puisse être dessiné sans l'accord préalable du Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

Il est temps pour la France d'accompagner cette nouvelle réalité qui consacre, qu'on le veuille ou non, la sortie de l'Irak de son splendide isolement et la résurrection (virtuelle) du Kurdistan après un siècle de disparition injustifiable mais vraie.

Ce futur « ensemble » de 250 millions d'habitants - qui contrôle à lui seul le Bosphore, le détroit d'Ormuz et la plus grande part des routes du gaz et du pétrole - possède 35% des réserves d'hydrocarbures de la planète. A terme, c'est une hyper puissance qui émergera. Sans la France, pénalisée par sa politique. Alors que les Américains[1], moins naïfs, sont déjà à la manoeuvre pour prendre leur part du futur consortium pétrolier régional.

La France, pourtant, a amélioré ses rapports avec la Syrie. Son entente est « neutre » avec la Turquie, et elle a repris langue avec l'Irak. Mais sa relation avec l'Irak est exécration. Or à terme, la seule démarche qui vaille consiste à renouer avec la « Perse de toujours », comme l'avait fait le Général de Gaulle avec la « Chine de toujours ».

Personne ne rirait d'un président français qui s'aventurerait à dire demain en farsi, comme son illustre prédécesseur l'avait osé en Chinois : « Vive la Perse, vive le peuple iranien ! » De même que personne ne rie aujourd'hui de voir le chef de l'Etat français recevoir en grande pompe son homologue chinois, l'homme devenu le plus puissant du monde, sans évoquer les entorses de son invité aux droits de l'homme et à celui des peuples.

Car l'Irak, par son histoire, sa culture, son économie - plus que par la force et les armes qu'on la soupçonne de détenir - crée à grands pas une situation irréversible. La Chine, qui n'existait pas en tant que puissance, il y a cinquante ans, tire avantage du boycott occidental pour s'y installer durablement. L'Union Européenne, qui, à la même époque, n'était qu'un marché commun réduit aux six Economies convalescentes, voit ses positions commerciales battues en brèche. Alors que nous ne sommes pas en guerre avec la République islamique, nous nous pénalisons en lui imposant des sanctions, peut-être efficaces mais qui ne feront pas tomber le régime.

Nous devons voir le monde tel qu'il est, pour trouver la porte de sortie honorable du dossier nucléaire dans lequel nous nous sommes embourbés. Et accessoirement ne pas laisser aux seuls Etats-Unis le bénéfice de trouver le « face saving » qui actera cette nouvelle réalité, une fois la crise actuelle dépassée. Ainsi la France serait-elle en mesure de reprendre sa place - je veux dire son rôle en Europe et dans le monde, pas seulement dans l'immense région qui va de Kaboul à Istanbul.

Les conséquences économiques de ce sursaut gaullien seraient pour elle salutaires. La voix de la France se ferait entendre avec une force décuplée. L'Europe, consolidée au Nord par un nouveau partenariat avec la Russie, se rééquilibrerait au Sud grâce à l'apparition de ce contrepois indispensable.

Car l'Union Européenne est actuellement démesurée. Sa taille paraît hypertrophiée en comparaison de l'espace qui la joute et qui donne l'impression d'être un no man's land abritant les débris toujours brûlants de l'empire Ottoman. Elle a absolument besoin d'une frontière à l'Est sur laquelle s'appuyer, et se reposer. C'est de cet autre empire que le sien, de cette civilisation sœur, tour à tour Aristotélicienne et Zoroastrienne, Chrétienne et Islamique, en passe de se reconstituer, qu'elle a le plus besoin.

Au moment où la finalité de l'OTAN est remise en cause par certains, il est impensable que la France, dont la tentation d'universalité a longtemps fait la spécialité, ne soit pas la première à admettre et même à faciliter ce retour en force de l'Histoire.

IRAQ : L'incertitude persiste sur la participation du bloc Iraquiya au prochain gouvernement, malgré la signature d'un accord sur le partage du pouvoir.

Le difficile équilibre des forces

Abir Taleb

AL-AHRAM Hebdo

Au moins huit personnes, dont quatre militaires, ont péri dimanche dans des attentats dans le centre et le nord de l'Iraq, selon des responsables des services de sécurité. L'attaque la plus sanglante a eu lieu dans la province riche en pétrole de Kirkouk, mosaïque ethnique et confessionnelle au nord de Bagdad. Il s'agit là des premières violences depuis la signature de l'accord de partage du pouvoir, conclu mercredi dernier entre chiites, sunnites et Kurdes après huit mois de blocage politique. Inutile donc de trop se réjouir de cet accord. Les huit mois de paralysie politique ont peut-être pris fin, ou presque, loin de là les clivages politiques, d'autant plus que pour le moment, c'est la confusion qui règne. En effet, l'alliance laïque Iraquiya, qui comprend des représentants de la communauté sunnite, a confirmé samedi au Parlement iraquien son intention de participer au nouveau gouvernement du chiite Nouri Al-Maliki, malgré l'hostilité de son chef Iyad Allaoui. Ce dernier, qui a quitté Bagdad pour Londres, officiellement pour des raisons familiales, avait auparavant affirmé sur CNN que l'accord de partage du pouvoir était « mort », prédisant de nouvelles tensions et des violences dans le pays.

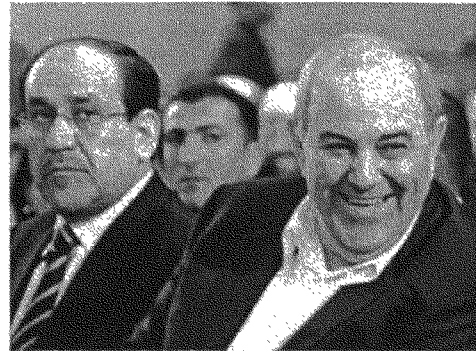
En fait, le premier ministre sortant, Nouri Al-Maliki, finalement reconduit à la tête du gouverne-

ment, dispose de suffisamment de soutien de la part des partis chiites et kurdes pour gouverner sans Iraquiya. Mais Washington et les pays sunnites voisins de l'Iraq tiennent à ce que la communauté sunnite soit bien représentée au sein de l'Etat, pour prévenir le risque d'une reprise des violences confessionnelles.

Or, au sein du bloc Iraquiya, c'est, semble-t-il, la confusion, voire la mésentente. Iraquiya a accepté de soutenir un gouvernement toujours dirigé par Maliki, mais les deux tiers des élus de l'alliance avaient claqué la porte du Parlement le lendemain en déclarant que le pacte de partage du pouvoir avait été violé. Et Iyad Allaoui a assuré que la majorité de l'alliance, dont lui-même, resterait à l'écart, même si des membres d'Iraquiya veulent toujours rejoindre le gouvernement. « Nous pensons que le concept de partage du pouvoir est mort maintenant. C'est terminé », a-t-il dit à CNN. « Je ne participerai pas à cette comédie. C'est l'établissement d'une nouvelle dictature en Iraq ». En revanche, d'autres personnalités d'Iraquiya ont défendu l'accord conclu et entendent toujours participer au prochain gouvernement. Plusieurs députés d'Iraquiya ont même dit leur étonnement de voir Allaoui partir pour Londres, un voyage dont il ne leur avait pas parlé.

Un mois pour former le gouvernement

Selon l'accord de par-



tage du pouvoir, Maliki, arrivé à la tête du gouvernement en 2006, conserve son poste de premier ministre, le Kurde Jalal Talabani garde la présidence et le sunnite Oussam Al-Noudjaifi, d'Iraquiya, prend la présidence du Parlement. Le poste de ministre des Affaires étrangères doit aller à un membre d'Iraquiya. L'accord prévoit aussi que M. Allaoui obtienne, comme compensation, la présidence du Conseil National de la Politique Supérieure (CNPS), une nouvelle instance dont l'idée avait été avancée par les Etats-Unis.

Iraquiya a en outre posé quatre conditions à sa participation au processus politique : vote d'une loi criant le CNPS, examen par une commission de la situation des détenus politiques, officialisation par écrit de l'accord de partage du pouvoir et annulation des décisions de bannir trois membres d'Iraquiya pour leurs liens présumés avec le Baas de l'ex-président Saddam Hussein.

A Séoul, le président américain Barack Obama a présenté l'accord politique comme une « étape importante » dans l'histoire de

l'Iraq, dont le gouvernement sera « représentatif, ouvert à tous et reflétera la volonté du peuple iraquien ». Le secrétaire général de l'Onu, Ban Ki-moon, a de son côté félicité « tous les partis politiques et leurs dirigeants pour avoir trouvé un compromis qui va servir les intérêts collectifs du peuple iraquien », les appelant à « continuer à faire preuve du même esprit de partenariat » pour former un gouvernement.

Aujourd'hui, l'heure est aux tractations pour la formation du gouvernement, une tâche à laquelle Maliki s'est attelé dès la signature de l'accord. Ce dernier doit être formellement désigné dans les prochains jours et aura alors un mois pour constituer son gouvernement. Encore faudra-t-il que la position d'Iraquiya soit claire.

Iraqi PM Maliki asked to form new government

Iraq's president formally asked Prime Minister Nuri Al Maliki on Thursday to form a new government, giving him 30 days to choose a cabinet

Reuters

BAGHDAD: Iraq's president formally asked Prime Minister Nuri Al Maliki on Thursday to form a new government, giving him 30 days to choose a cabinet from among Iraq's fractious Shiite, Kurdish and Sunni political factions.

The request from President Jalal Talabani came two weeks after political leaders reached an agreement to divide up the top government jobs, a deal that put Maliki, a Shiite, on track for a second term as premier. The power-sharing pact, more than eight months after an inconclusive March 7 parliamentary election, offered some hope that Iraq could avoid a return to the sectarian warfare that killed tens of thousands of people at its peak in 2006-07.

"I am addressing the great Iraqi people, all its religions, sects and nationalities, and our brothers the politicians, about the necessity to work to overcome the disputes from the past, to put them behind us and to open a new page," Maliki said in a ceremony at the presidential palace in Baghdad.

Among his biggest decisions are his choices to head the oil and finance ministries. Iraq is trying to rebuild its battered infrastructure and sagging oil industry after years of war, international economic sanctions and neglect and depends on oil revenues for about 95 percent of its federal budget.



The oil ministry, which has signed a raft of deals with global petroleum companies in the past year in a bid to vault Iraq back into the top echelon of producers, is led by Hussain Al Shahrstani, a close Maliki ally and a leader in his newly formed National Alliance.

"All ministries are important, but the National Alliance is interested in getting the oil ministry, then the finance ministry," said a senior lawmaker in Maliki's coalition who asked not to be named.

TOP OIL PRODUCER

The OPEC producer aims to ramp up crude output capacity to 12 million barrels per day from the current 2.5 million, which could boost it into the top tier with leader Saudi Arabia.

At the same time, Maliki's government is fighting a weakened but still lethal Sunni Islamist insurgency. Bombings and other attacks have fallen significantly in frequency from the height of the sectarian slaughter, but still occur daily.

The long political impasse after an election that produced no clear winner stirred concerns about increased violence from militants trying to take advantage of a power vacuum.

After his mainly Shiite State of Law alliance came second in the election with 89 seats, Maliki won a lengthy political fight for the premier's job by cobbling together an alliance of Shiite factions, cementing support from Shiite neighbour Iran.

He then won the backing of Kurdish lawmakers and from parts of the Sunni-backed Iraqiya alliance headed by his chief rival, former premier Iyad Allawi.

Cross-sectarian Iraqiya won 91 seats but Allawi was unable to reach agreement with others for a parliamentary majority.

Maliki toured regional capitals last month to win backing for a second term, offering Arab neighbours investment deals in Iraq in exchange for pushing Iraqiya towards a compro-

mise, political sources said. Senior leaders from Iraqiya have said they want the foreign affairs ministry, currently held by a Kurd, Hoshiyar Zebari.

But Iraqiya faces rifts within its ranks that may affect its bid for the ministry. Kurdish lawmakers want to keep it.

"We prefer to get the foreign ministry as a sovereign ministry because of the successes that we had the last four years. But if not, we will ask for the finance ministry instead," senior Kurdish official Adel Barwari said.

The Kurds' lack of seats may cost them a chance at the foreign ministry, Kurdish officials have said.

The power-sharing deal reached on Nov. 10 gave Talabani, a Kurd, another term as president and installed Sunni lawmaker Osama al-Nujaifi, a member of Iraqiya, as speaker of parliament. Allawi, who wanted Maliki's job, was to become head of a council for strategic policies that has yet to be created. □

The Washington Post November 26, 2010

Iraq Kurdish leader: A uniter in a divided nation

By HAMZA HENDAWI
The Associated Press

In his five years as Iraq's president, Jalal Talabani has shown a remarkable ability to rise above the ethnic and religious divisions defining the country's political scene - sometimes at the expense of his own Kurdish identity.

The 77-year-old statesman with his trademark grin, hearty laugh, portly girth and walrus-like mustache was elected to a second, four-year term in office this month and already has been thrust back into the public eye.

On Thursday, he formally asked incumbent Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to form a new government, fulfilling a key but rather symbolic duty as president. But only a week earlier, he gave an example of how he has flexed what real muscles his officially ceremonial position does have by refusing to sign off on the hanging of one of Saddam Hussein's closest aides, Tariq Aziz.

The move annoyed Shiite parties who have doggedly sought executions for the top figures of the Saddam era. But in rejecting the death sentence against Aziz - a Christian who was Saddam's longtime foreign minister - Talabani offered Iraq's small Christian minority a significant goodwill gesture at a time of deep uncertainty over its future in the wake of deadly attacks since 2003.

In polarized Iraq, most politicians press an unflinching sectarian or ethnic line - whether Sunni, Shiite or Kurdish - in a zero-sum game where another sect's win is often seen as your sect's loss. But Talabani, despite his past as a fighter for Kurdish autonomy, has given a sense of unity by largely avoiding presenting himself as the Kurds' advocate in power.



His elevation to the presidency had enough symbolic value in and of itself. It wasn't just that a member of a community brutally repressed by Saddam was now Iraq's head of state: It was also that a non-Arab was now leading a country long seen regionally as the protector of the Arab world's "Eastern Gate" against Persian enemies in Iran and later as a bastion of Arab nationalism.

Talabani was able to prevent any challenges to his presidency - unlike al-Maliki, his re-election by parliament was hardly ever in question - by positioning himself as a father figure for Iraq.

"I am casting off my Kurdish clothes and wearing Iraqi ones instead," Talabani told leaders of his Kurdish followers in 2005 as he became interim president - before being elected the following year to the first of his two, four-year terms.

"You must accept that," he said as some in the room shouted protests that he must not forget who he is.

Talabani's re-election this month does help enshrine the divvying up of the country's top jobs - the president a Kurd, the prime minister a Shiite Arab and the speaker of parliament a Sunni Arab. But even those who dislike having a Kurd as head of state see Talabani as the Kurd to have.

"We think that the president of Iraq should be an Arab because Iraq is an Arab state," said Talal al-Zubaie, a Sunni lawmaker. "But we do believe that Talabani has been a uniter and played the role of a peace dove among rival politicians for the sake of a united and strong Iraq."

Talabani's Patriotic Union of

Kurdistan and the other main Kurdish political party have been allies of al-Maliki in his Shiite-led coalition - and they will remain so in the new government still being formed.

Still, Talabani has stood up to al-Maliki on some policies, causing public spats, and the prime minister has berated him for overstepping the authority of the presidency.

The prime minister holds executive powers, and the president's duties are largely symbolic. But Talabani has worked his informal influence heavily. "I don't have constitutional powers, but I have Mam Jalal powers," he often tells aides, using an affectionate Kurdish term for uncle.

During the bloody days of Sunni-Shiite strife in 2006 and 2007, Talabani approved the dispatch of Kurdish troops to parts of Baghdad to act as a buffer between the two sides. The troops won the trust of residents and helped reduce violence.

Talabani "was close to all parties during the sectarian strife and acted as a bridge between the Shiites and Sunnis," said Kurdish analyst Aref Qurbani.

It's a contrast to al-Maliki, widely seen as a sectarian partisan at heart.

For example, like most Shiite politicians, al-Maliki has been a vigorous supporter of purging from public life members of the late dictator's Baath party, even at the risk of alienating Sunnis who made up the backbone of the party. Talabani - whose people were equally massacred by Saddam - has advocated a softer approach, insisting that only Saddam loyalists known to have committed crimes should be covered by the "de-Baathification" policy.

Talabani's argument for sparing the life of the 70-year-old Aziz, Saddam's foreign minister, is that he is both Christian and too old. Aziz was sentenced to death last month by an Iraqi court on charges related to a Saddam-led campaign that hunted and executed members of al-Maliki's Shiite Dawa Party.

In 2007, Talabani also refused to sign off on the hanging of former defense minister Sultan Hashim al-Taie on the grounds that he was a soldier who could have only disobeyed orders at a risk to his own life. Al-Taie was convicted of genocide for a 1980s crackdown that killed up to 180,000 Kurdish civilians and guerrillas.

Born in a tiny village north of the

city of Irbil in November 1933, Talabani has been at the heart of the Kurdish struggle for self determination for nearly four decades.

He has been an activist since age 13 when, as a student, he founded and led a movement to press for education reform. His involvement in Kurdish politics began five years later and in 1976 he and his comrades in the PUK, which he founded in neighboring Syria the previous year, took up arms against Baghdad to win self determination for Iraq's Kurdish areas.

In the post-Saddam era, many Sunnis and Shiites remain suspicious of the autonomous Kurds, believing they

intend to split Iraq, and take heavily Arab and oil-rich parts of the north with them - particularly the city of Kirkuk.

Even while his party pushes Kurdish causes in parliament and the Cabinet, Talabani has studiously avoided taking a prominent role in issues like the fate of Kirkuk. He has largely confined his comments on the issue of Kirkuk that a clause in Iraq's new constitution stipulating that a census and a referendum should determine the fate of the city be implemented.

"One of the reasons why we support Talabani is that he was fair to all groups and forgot his being a Kurd during all his time as president," said Abdul-Hadi

al-Hassani, a Shiite lawmaker allied with al-Maliki.

Ironically, it means Talabani's most vocal critics are fellow Kurds.

"The Talabani I see now is not the one who once struggled for democracy and freedom," said Ahmed Mirah, editor of the Kurdish political weekly Leven. "What I see is a man who wants to keep the presidency and pays no heed to the future of the Kurdish people or Kirkuk."



November 30, 2010

Disputes again delay nationwide census in Iraq

Iraq's government Tuesday once again pushed back a nationwide census that has been stalled in a years long dispute over how to count the ethnic breakdown between Arabs and Kurds in the nation's north.

LARA JAKES,
Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq's government said Tuesday it will again delay a nationwide census that could determine the real numbers of the country's religious and ethnic groups.

The census, which would be Iraq's first nationwide count in more than two decades, has been caught up in the larger dispute over territory and oil between Iraq's central government and the semiautonomous Kurdish region in the north.

Neither side trusts the other to conduct the count in the three provinces that make up the Kurdish north or in the disputed areas along its edge. It is crucial because determining the exact size of the bitterly divided Arab and Kurdish communities in the contested areas could bolster the territorial claims of one side or the other.

At stake is control over the

area's oil wealth.

The census was supposed to be held on Dec. 5, but political leaders have been unable to resolve the disagreements over who would do the counting in the disputed territories, said Planning Ministry official Mahdi al-Alaq. Officials will meet again on Thursday to try to settle the argument.

No new date has been set for the census, al-Alaq said.

"The reason behind the delays in holding the census is the deep mistrust among political groups regarding the disputed areas," said Kurdish lawmaker Mahmoud Othman.

A 1997 census that put Iraq's population at more than 26 million excluded the three northern Kurdish provinces because they were beyond the control of the central government.

Officials have agreed to count the three provinces in the new census and to ask the residents to identify

their ethnicity.

There is also disagreement over who can be considered a legal resident and be counted given that there have been so many population shifts since the fall of Saddam Hussein.

The disputed areas are home to Kurds, Arabs and Turkomen.

At the center of the dispute is the ethnically mixed city of Kirkuk, which sits on top of one-third of Iraq's estimated \$11 trillion in oil reserves. Arabs fear the Kurds want to annex Kirkuk to their northern autonomous region.

In Mosul, another ethnically mixed town in the disputed territory, police said a gang of four insurgents attacked an Iraqi army checkpoint, killing one soldier and wounding another. As police rushed to respond to the attack, they were hit by a blast from a bomb hidden in a shopping cart that was pushed into their path.

One policeman was wounded, officials said, and the attackers fled before they were captured. A medic at Mosul's public hospitals confirmed the casualties.

In another Mosul attack, gunmen raided a convenience store Tuesday evening and killed its Christian owner, police and medical officials said.

Also Tuesday, a bomb hidden on a car in Baghdad killed the driver and wounded three passers-by, city police said. The 1 p.m. bombing came in the capital's western Sunni neighborhood of al-Qadisiya. A medic at Yarmouk hospital confirmed the casualties. And an evening roadside bomb in a mixed Sunni-Shiite neighborhood in an eastern Baghdad area wounded three bystanders, police and officials at Al-Kindi hospital said. □

Maliki is Iraq's best defence against Iranian influence

Washington and the Arab world have little choice other than to back the new administration: it has legitimacy and experience



Ranj Alaaldin
guardian

Iraq is expected to have a fully functioning government in less than a month now president Jalal Talabani has formally asked Nouri al-Maliki to form a new one. Parliament convened two weeks ago to reappoint Talabani as president after nearly nine months of political deadlock.

As part of the efforts to form a national unity government the position of parliament speaker went to Osama Nujayfi, the controversial ultra-nationalist who contested the elections as part of the Iraqyiah bloc of Ayad Allawi, the United States' favourite. Allawi's coalition won 91 seats – two more than Maliki's bloc – in the March elections.

Irrespective of how the ministries are distributed it is now clear that Maliki and his State of Law coalition are the ultimate victors, having retained the premiership and preventing real power falling into the hands of rivals across the ethno-sectarian spectrum.

For the next four years it will, therefore, be Maliki who will be dictating Iraq's domestic affairs – with or without the support of his so-called coalition partners. This becomes particularly significant for the US, which is expected to complete its troops withdrawal at the end of 2011 and is hoping it can work with Maliki to ensure that it leaves the country in a condition favourable to its long-term interests in the region.

On the minds of Washington's policy- and decision-makers will be the extent to which Iran will have a stranglehold on the country once the US leaves. If Washington and its allies in the region truly want to manage Iranian influence when the withdrawal materialises then they need to start formulating policy around Maliki himself.

Of course, the winner of the elections is once again Iran, at least regionally.

It has won the eight month-long battle to swing the balance of power in Iraq in its favour: it is clear the Saudi-Arab world backed Allawi and his Iraqyiah bloc will not get the premiership, and is unlikely to get control of any meaningful national council that restrains the powers of the Iraqi premier.

Iran continues to successfully play its carefully planned, ruthless and strategic game in Iraq. It has audaciously sidelined historic ally the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), which has just 17 seats to its name, and replaced it with unlikely bedfellow Muqtada al-Sadr's Sadrist bloc, the effective grassroots movement that won nearly 40 seats in the elec-

tions. Muqtada al-Sadr is currently in Qom, pursuing religious studies.

As an indication of the level of influence that Iran now has over the Sadrists, it was Tehran that directed Muqtada to back his arch-enemy Maliki in October, in effect ending Allawi's hopes of becoming premier and preventing power returning to Iraq's Sunni-Arab leadership. That has, since 2003, been Iran's ultimate goal in Iraq, and it continues to succeed.

That may mean Maliki now owes Iran. Yet the fact is that the Iranians had no other choice: back Maliki or risk Iraqyiah taking office. In fact Sadrist and Iranian backing is more of a strategic catch for Maliki given that it was he who in 2008 deployed the Iraqi army to oust Sadrist militias from Basra, who has imprisoned hundreds of Sadrists and who broke from the Shia Iraqi National Alliance to contest the March elections independently, much to Iran's dismay.

Sadrist militias and other splinter groups armed, forced underground as a result of the 2008 Basra operation and funded and trained by Iran, may still cause a headache for Maliki and challenge the security environment. However, this will not be tantamount to challenging the increasingly effective Iraqi security forces and indeed challenging Maliki himself, who holds effective control over them.

Beyond the security perspective, politically Iran has tapped into every other major grouping. The Kurds, for instance, also enjoy a historic relationship with Tehran. One on-the-ground source even spoke of Iraqyiah's resistance to Talabani becoming president because "he is too close to Iran" (Tehran backed Talabani's PUK – Patriotic Union of Kurdistan – during the Kurdish civil war in the 1990s).

Much to Iran's advantage, both Talabani and Massoud Barzani, president of the Kurdistan region and leader of PUK rival the Kurdistan Democratic Party, rejected US pleas to give Allawi the presidency. However, that had more to do with Barzani wanting to make sure Talabani stays in Baghdad, lest he should return to undermine his authority in any way.

Iran benefits from the fact that its enemies in Iraq, like Allawi's Iraqyiah, are divided, and reluctant to forge any alliance with the major Shia blocs in case this upsets their sponsors in the Arab world. Senior figures within the movement were privately against an Allawi premiership, given that this would have denied them any entitlement to key posts.

However, though Iran may have that unparalleled web of influence in Iraq and though it may combine its vast economic and cultural interests in the country with its influence over the security and political environment, it cannot always be certain of determining Iraq's domestic affairs. In the past it tried to torpedo the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that extended the US troop presence to the end of 2011, but Maliki successfully resisted this.

Maliki may also decide to extend the troop presence beyond this deadline, just to counterbalance Tehran's influence. Politically independent and an effective and electorally legitimate leader unmatched by others in the current political arena, Maliki, based on his record as premier, could be Washington's and the Arab world's best hope of countering any rising Iranian influence in the country and indeed the region. They may not have any other choice.

Wikileaks: US Sees Kurds As Seasoned Political Masters Likely To Expand Influence

By WLADIMIR VAN WILGENBURG

AMSTERDAM, The Netherlands: The leak of 250,000 US diplomatic cables by Wikileaks shows that Kurdish leaders are seen as seasoned masters of the Iraqi political chessboard by the US embassy in Baghdad on 13 November 2009. Furthermore the cables indicate that the Kurdish opposition party Gorran is seen as "an unknown factor" by the US in their position towards Iran.

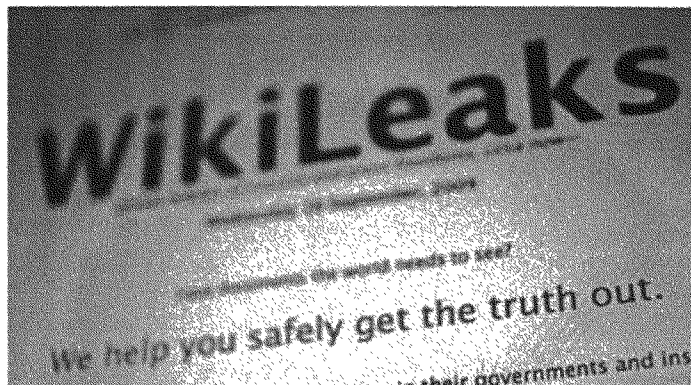
In a detailed analysis, the US embassy in Baghdad looks at the ways Iran is seeking to ensure that Iraq's elections produce a government favourable to its interests on 13 November 2009 before the Iraqi elections, which were held in Iraq on 7 March 2010.

Kurds Play Major Role in Iraq

According to the US embassy the Kurdish leaders are smart leaders. "Kurdish leaders such as Talabani and Barzani will likely exploit their political strength among Shia/Sunni counterparts to protect and expand Kurdish influence in a future government," the report notes.

But it also shows that the US sees the Kurds playing a major role to bring a pro-Iranian government to power with the coming to power of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

"Iran's historic ties to the PUK, and to a lesser extent KDP officials, make



the Kurds an important element in ensuring a pro-Iranian Shia victory in the election. INA officials are confident that the Kurds will join their coalition, all but guaranteeing an election victory."

Gorran Position Unknown

Wikileaks' documents say that the US embassy is yet to know the position of the Kurdish opposition party Gorran towards Iran. Gorran is led by Nawshirwan Mustafa, former deputy-leader of the PUK, Talabani's party, which the US sees as a pro-Iranian party, according to Wikileaks cables.

"Gorran is committed to unseating the PUK (and Talabani) in Sulaimani province but needs financial backing to ensure its long-term viability in the KRG and national politics. Iran could conceivably alleviate Gorran's financial woes, particularly through its close ties with the Kurdish Jaff tribe, some of whom are Gorran members. However,

doing so would undermine the IRIG's [Iran's] valued relationship with Talabani, while also proving exceedingly duplicitous, even by IRIG and KRG standards."

Turkey Is Iran's Rival in Kurdistan

Other parts of the leak show that Turkey is seen as the biggest economic competitor of Iran in Iraq, particularly in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Furthermore in February 2010 Turkey hoped for an early action plan from the US government to elicit more support from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) against the leadership of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Other documents show the US government is highly suspicious over the Islamist background of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey.

REUTERS

Recensement différé en Irak pour cause de différend arabo-kurde

Mardi 30 novembre 2010 / Reuters

LES AUTORITÉS IRAKIENNES ont de nouveau reporté le premier recensement complet du pays depuis 1987, faute de progrès dans un différend territorial et économique entre la majorité arabe et la minorité kurde.

Aucune nouvelle date n'a été fixée pour ce recensement, qui avait déjà été repoussé du 24 octobre au 5 décembre.

Ses résultats sont attendus avec intérêt parce qu'ils fourniront des réponses à des questions clés pour l'avenir des gisements de pétrole du Nord, situés dans les provinces de Kirkouk et de Ninive que se disputent Arabes et Kurdes.

Le ministre de l'Environnement Nermine Osman, présent à une réunion du cabinet où la décision a été prise mardi, a déclaré qu'une nouvelle date serait fixée dans les prochains jours, après une rencontre entre le Premier ministre Nouri al Maliki et des responsables de Ninive et Kirkouk.

Le recensement est de première importance pour les territoires contestés, que Bagdad tient à garder mais que les Kurdes veulent intégrer à leur enclave semi-autonome du Nord.

La province de Kirkouk, où se côtoient Arabes, Kurdes, Turkmènes et autres, est au coeur du différend. Selon des responsables américains, elle recèle quatre pour cent des réserves mondiales de pétrole.

Iraq oil output may hit 8 million bpd by 2017

Reuters,

*** Former oil min effectively cuts projected output target**

*** Most analysts see Iraq producing much more modest volumes**

*** Government sees Kurdish exports from January**

(Adds comment on Kurdish oil deals)

LONDON, - Iraq could more than triple oil output by 2017, a senior advisor to its prime minister said on Monday, effectively cutting previous estimates but giving a figure that would still make Iraq one of the world's top producers.

Iraq has signed deals with international oil companies following auctions last year that could in theory take capacity to 12 million barrels per day (bpd) by 2017 -- a figure that most analysts view as unrealistic.

"I expect we will reach a capacity of 8 million barrels per day within the next six-seven years," Thamer Ghadhban, who served as oil minister after the U.S.-led invasion of

Iraq in 2003 and now advises Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki on oil, told a conference on Monday.

Analysts have cited undeveloped infrastructure and security concerns as the key obstacles preventing Iraq from reaching output of 12 million bpd - which would make it the world's largest oil nation or put it on a par with current leader Saudi Arabia.

The country, which sits on some of the world's largest oil reserves, has struggled in the past years to push its output even close to the 3 million bpd it saw in the late 1980s before it invaded Kuwait and saw a U.S. military retaliation.

A Reuters poll suggested last month Iraq's crude oil output would rise to 2.8 million bpd by 2011 from roughly 2.5 million bpd now and reach only 4.6 million bpd by 2015.

Current Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani has said he expects 4 million bpd in three years' time and that there is no need for Iraq -- for now the only member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries exempt from its system of output curbs -- to have a production target until then.

Government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh told reporters that Iraq's output would be boosted by crude from its semi-autonomous Kurdistan region from January next

year.

Producers in Kurdistan, including Norway's DNO, stand ready to export over 100,000 bpd at short notice, industry executives say, but so far a dispute between Baghdad and the region's government has prevented this, except for a short period in 2009.

Shahristani has described contracts the regional government signed with foreign companies as illegal but Dabbagh told reporters a deal was under discussion.

"Part of smoothing the relation with Kurdistan is that these contracts need to be legitimised and we want to find a formula which makes this workable within Iraqi prevailing law, keeping the sovereignty of the federal government so that they have a hand with the region to manage the new oil fields," he said.

"I don't think it will be difficult," he added.

Last week, Iraq's president formally asked Maliki, leader of a Shia bloc, to form a new government, after he secured support from some Sunni Arab leaders and the Kurds.

Iraq's 2011 production target of 2.3 million bpd assumes Kurdish production of 150,000, Dabbagh said.

If the region doesn't reach this level, it will face penalties in the form of deductions, on a proportional basis, from the 17 percent of total oil revenues which the region is allocated by the central government. □

REUTERS

Bomb kills three, injures 15 in north Iraq

MOSUL, Iraq / November 25, 2010 / (Reuters) -

A BOMB blast in a pet shop in the town of Tal Afar on Thursday killed three people and wounded 15 others, a police source said, as a series of attacks hit restive northern Iraq.

The dead and most of the wounded were inside the shop, the source in the Nineveh province operations centre said.

The blast occurred in a mixed Shi'ite and Sunni area. Tal Afar lies about 420 km (260 miles) north of Baghdad and just west of the volatile city of Mosul, considered the last urban stronghold of the al Qaeda Islamist militant group.

Earlier on Thursday a roadside bomb wounded a police officer near Samarra, 100 km (62 miles) north of Baghdad, while roadside bombs also wounded police officers, soldiers and children in two separate incidents in Tuz Khurmato, 170 km (105 miles) north of the capital, police sources said.

Gunmen killed a tailor earlier on Thursday when they threw a hand grenade at his house in Baaj, 375 km (233 miles) northwest of Baghdad, a police source said.

Overall violence in Iraq has fallen sharply since its peak in 2006-07 but killings and bombings still occur daily. Tensions have been running high since a March parliamentary election that produced no clear winner.

Iraq's president formally asked Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki on Thursday to form a new government, giving him 30 days to choose a cabinet from among Iraq's fractious Shi'ite, Kurdish and Sunni political factions.

Foreign investment leads to more shopping malls in Arbil

Hewa Group has convinced several international names to open their first stores in Iraq in the Majidi Mall, a landmark in Kurdistan.

By Mariwan F. Salihi,
Special To Gulf News

Arbil It used to be that shopping in Arbil — Iraq's most popular business and leisure destination — was mostly centred on the Qaysaria Bazaar, which has been around since the 12th century.

It still is, selling everything from Kurdish dairy products to Swiss watches and Japanese electronics. But an influx of foreign investment in recent years has led to the opening of many large shopping malls. More are on the way.

At last count, there are over a dozen malls, and in their wake have come many global brands venturing into Iraq for the first time.

The French hypermarket chain Carrefour will open in Arbil before the end of this year.

The autonomous Kurdistan region — spared the violence and attacks since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 — is witnessing unprecedented growth in all aspects of its economy, including its retail sector.

International investments have reached more than \$16 billion (Dh58 billion), according to the Kurdistan Investment Board (KIB).

The region — with more than half of its population under the age of 21 and an expatriate community estimated at 250,000 to 300,000 by some unofficial sources — is seeing quite a substantial fund flow into retail.

With a population of nearly two million, Arbil is already a draw among Iraqis and tourists alike. Besides its own upscale citizens and Iraqis



* The Majidi Mall is one of the largest shopping centres in Iraq. The Kurdish capital has attracted more than \$16 billion in foreign investment in the past three years.

from outside the region, Iranians are allowed to enter the Kurdistan region. They are among the big spenders in Arbil's malls. It is now competing with Dubai as a favoured shopping and leisure destination for Iranians.

The Majidi Mall, which opened in November last year, has drawn much attention as Iraq's "most luxurious shopping complex".

Owned by the Hewa Group, an Arbil-based company owned by the prominent Majidi family, convinced several international names to open their first stores in the country.

High street favourites

They include Mango, Ecco, Chopard, Diesel, Levi's and many others. Kuwait's City Centre opened an anchor store, immediately becoming Arbil's most popular hypermarket.

Another entrant is Mane Mall, which will offer over 150 brands, a hypermarket, multiplex cinema, bowling lanes

and fine-dining experience.

It will also benefit from an exclusive rooftop restaurant giving spectacular views of Arbil and the nearby Tarin Hills. Directly linked to Mane Mall is a 250-room hotel.

"Mane Mall will not only have a significant impact on the retail market in Iraq, but also on the local and national economy," said Jamie Majid, a director of BTWShiells, one of the developers of the shopping complex.

"The Iraqi people have had many years of hardship; it's time for the country to prosper and return to the great nation it once was," said Majid.

"The country has sound fundamentals, and with the relaxed investment laws, the government is encouraging foreign companies to enter."

"The security situation has greatly improved. The northern Kurdish region is stable and considered the gateway to the rest of Iraq. The Iraqi people, like the rest of the Middle East, enjoy shopping, which is why there is great consumer demand."

"At BTWShiells we understand retail and therefore the importance of the right tenant mix to create a long-term sustainable mall," he added.

The company has over 30 years of retail sector experience and offices in London, Dubai, Belfast and Arbil. They currently manage 40 shopping malls in the UK and Ireland, with a total portfolio value of \$6.5 billion. Mane Mall is their first project in Iraq.

Future developments

BTWShiells has partnered with the Diyar Group to form Diyar Retail, which aims to develop a number of malls across Iraq in Duhok, Sulaimaniyah, Kirkuk, Mosul, Basrah, Najaf and Baghdad.

"We are speaking to a number of internationally recognised retailers from Europe, the Middle East and Turkey, and the overall feedback has been very positive," said Majid.

"We can give retailers confidence when entering the country as BTWShiells adheres to strict internationally recognised property management standards. And we are also in the enviable position of being able to offer a pipeline of sites through our local Iraqi partner, the Diyar Group."

A private company headquartered in Arbil, the Diyar Group has interests in construction, aviation, banking and retail.

Another shopping destination is the Family Fun Mall, located on 100 M Road in Arbil. Part of an already popular theme park, the shopping centre will have space for about 350 renowned brands.

Opening next month, it will also host Carrefour, the

world's second-largest hyper-market chain in terms of size and the world's second largest retail group in revenues.

'A different concept'

A project by Arbil-based Darin Company, it will also have an ice rink, cinema complex and bowling alley.

"We will become a different concept, one with more quality brands and entertainment facilities than any other mall in the Kurdistan region or Iraq," said Rawand Hussain Ali, advertising manager at Darin Company

The mall will be managed by GLL, which operates 75 shopping centres around the world, including Turkey's largest. Family Fun Mall is the first venture for GLL in Iraq.

All brands represented in the mall will be from outside Iraq, thus, making it the country's largest all-brand shopping mall.

Only open for a few months is Sofya Mall on the prestigious Gulan Road, close to the new hotels and housing projects under construction.

According to its director Fareed Tawfiq, it has leased space for 100 outlets on its four floors.

The 7,000-square metre property features a few cafes and restaurants and an indoor games section for children.

Owned by the same developer is Galerya Mall, just walking distance from the Sofya Mall. It is set to open early next year.

Exactly opposite both these malls, also on Gulan Road, is

City Mall, rapidly heading towards completion. It will incorporate 210 shops, 15 food outlets and a hypermarket.

Located between English Village and the Italian City housing development, Arina Shopping Mall, located on Gulan Road and opposite Sami Abdulrahman Park, is also under construction.

It will mainly cater to residents in the area and visitors staying in the five-star hotels under construction near the mall.

Other large projects include Tablo Mall (located near Francois Hariri Stadium) and Mega Mall (on Salahaddin Resort Road). Mega Mall is modelled on a shopping centre with the same name and concept in Sharjah.

More options

Shoppers and visitors are excited by the opening of a large number of malls in the city.

"We have more options and more global brands now," said Aveen Jaleel, a resident of Erbil.

A visitor from Iran, Laila Hussaini, considered Arbil a "women's paradise" when describing the city's retail sector.

"In Iran, not every design or brand is available, but in Iraqi Kurdistan, women have the freedom to shop for whatever they like to wear," the 24-year old said.

- The writer is a Dubai-based journalist.

Bloomberg

NOVEMBER 30, 2010

Kurdistan Expects to Resume Oil Exports in Early 2011

By Grant Smith

The Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq will resume oil exports in early 2011, Kurdish Natural Resources Minister Ashti Hawrami said.

Oil supplies from the semi-autonomous area halted a year ago as it failed to reach an agreement with Iraq's government on how to pay operators such as DNO International ASA and Addax Petroleum Corp. Iraq's main political factions are forming a coalition to end eight months of deadlock following inconclusive elections. A cabinet will be appointed before Christmas, government spokesman Ali Al-Dabbagh said yesterday.

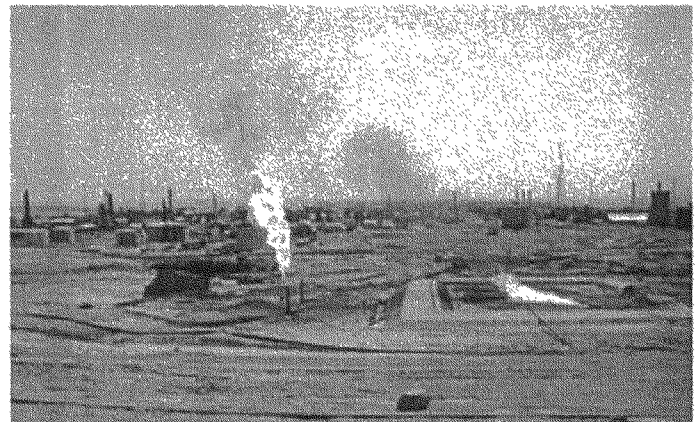
Hawrami said the 38 contracts signed by the KRG with foreign oil companies will "stand" under Iraq's new oil law, likely to be enacted by June. Legislation to be passed will incorporate, possibly amend and legitimize the KRG's contracts, previously considered invalid, according to Al-Dabbagh.

"Iraq needs to be rebuilt," Hawrami said in a speech at the Iraq Petroleum conference in London. "We need to put the past four years of dogma behind us."

The KRG's deals allocate a share of the oil produced to foreign companies while those adopted by the national Oil Ministry pay a per-barrel fee. Hawrami said that the KRG will consider adjustments to its agreements.

Turkey Supply

Kurdistan can supply 100,000 barrels a day to Iraq's northern export pipeline to Turkey and aims to boost production to 1



million barrels a day over the next three years. Iraq's 2011 budget assumes exports of 150,000 barrels a day from Kurdistan, Al-Dabbagh said.

In June, Hawrami had said that Kurdish exports would resume soon following a provisional accord on payments between the KRG and Baghdad.

Before exports halted last year, revenue for oil pumped by firms in Kurdistan were collected by the national government's State Oil Market Organization. The companies are still owed \$400 million to \$500 million in unpaid revenue, Hawrami said today.

Iraq aims to more than double its current oil output of 2.4 million barrels a day over the next four years and has said it has potential to reach 12 million a day during the next seven years.

Hawrami said that a "realistic" production target is between 4 million and 6 million barrels a day.

Grant Smith in London at gsmith52@bloomberg.net

STATE'S SECRETS In Arab world and beyond, deep distress over Iran

Diplomatic cables show how U.S. built support for harsher sanctions

BY DAVID E. SANGER, JAMES GLANZ AND JO BECKER

In late May 2009, Israel's defense minister, Ehud Barak, used a visit from a congressional delegation to send a pointed message to the new American president.

In a secret cable sent back to Washington, the American ambassador to Israel, James B. Cunningham, reported that Mr. Barak had argued that the world had 6 to 18 months "in which stopping Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons might still be viable." After that, Mr. Barak said, "any military solution would result in unacceptable collateral damage."

There was little surprising in Mr. Barak's implicit threat that Israel might attack Iran's nuclear facilities. As a pressure tactic, Israeli officials have been setting such deadlines, and extending them, for years. But six months

later it was an Arab leader, the king of Bahrain, who provides the base for the U.S. Fifth Fleet, telling the Americans that the Iranian nuclear program "must be stopped," according to another cable. "The danger of letting it go on is greater than the danger of stopping it," he said.

His plea was shared by many of the United States' Arab allies, including the powerful King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, who according to another cable repeatedly implored Washington to "cut off the head of the snake" while there was still time.

These warnings are part of a trove of diplomatic cables reaching back to the genesis of the Iranian nuclear standoff in which leaders from around the world offer their unvarnished opinions about how to negotiate with, threaten and perhaps force Iran's leaders to renounce their atomic ambitions.

In day-by-day detail, the cables, obtained by WikiLeaks and made available to a number of news organizations, tell the disparate diplomatic back stories of two administrations pressed from all sides to confront Tehran. They show how President George W. Bush, hamstrung by the complexities of Iraq and suspicions that he might attack Iran, struggled to put together even modest sanctions.

They also offer new insights into how President Barack Obama, determined to merge his promise of "engagement" with his vow to raise the pressure on the Iranians, assembled a coalition that agreed to impose an array of sanctions considerably harsher than any before attempted.

When Mr. Obama took office, many allies feared that his offers of engagement

would make him appear weak to the Iranians. But the cables show how Mr. Obama's aides quickly countered those worries by rolling out a plan to encircle Iran with economic sanctions and anti-missile defenses. In essence, the administration expected its outreach to fail, but believed that it had to make a bona fide attempt in order to build support for tougher measures.

Feeding the administration's urgency was American intelligence about Iran's missile program. The cables reveal for the first time that the United States believes that Iran has obtained advanced missiles from North Korea that could let it strike at West European capitals and Moscow and help it develop intercontinental ballistic missiles.

As it weighed the implications of this intelligence, the administration maneuvered to win Russian support for sanctions. It killed a Bush-era plan for a missile defense site in Poland — which Moscow's leaders feared was directed at them, not Tehran — and replaced it with one floating closer to Iran's coast. While the cables leave unclear whether there was an explicit quid pro quo, the move seems to have paid off.

There is also a U.S.-inspired plan to get the Saudis to offer China a steady oil supply, to wean it from energy dependence on Iran. The Saudis agreed, and insisted on ironclad commitments from Beijing to join in sanctions against Tehran.

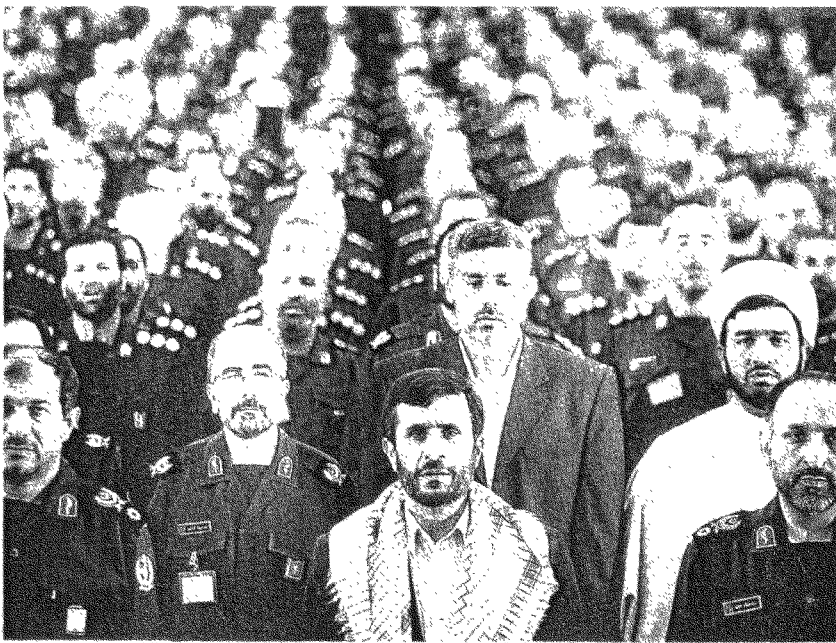
At the same time, the cables reveal how Iran's ascent has unified Israel and many longtime Arab adversaries — notably the Saudis — in a common cause. Publicly, these Arab states held their tongues, for fear of a domestic uproar and the retributions of a powerful neighbor. Privately, they clamored for strong action — by someone else.

If they seemed obsessed with Iran, though, they also seemed deeply conflicted about how to deal with it — with diplomacy, covert action or force. In one typical cable, a senior Omani military officer is described as unable to decide what is worse: "a strike against Iran's nuclear capability and the resulting turmoil it would cause in the Gulf, or inaction and having to live with a nuclear-capable Iran."

Still, running beneath the cables is a belief among many leaders that, unless the current government falls, Iran will have a bomb sooner or later. And the Obama administration appears doubtful that a military strike would change that.

One of the final cables, on Feb. 12 of this year, recounts a lunch meeting in Paris between Hervé Morin, then the French defense minister, and Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates. Mr. Morin raised the delicate topic of whether Israel could strike Iran without American support.

Mr. Gates responded "that he didn't know if they would be successful, but that Israel could carry out the operation." Then he added a stark assessment: Any strike "would only delay Iranian plans by one to three years, while unifying the Iranian people to be forever embittered against the attacker."



President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran, center, with commanders of the Basij militia, is distrusted by many leaders in the Middle East, according to diplomatic cables.

THE FEARS OF ARAB STATES

In 2005, Iran abruptly abandoned an agreement with the Europeans and announced that it would resume uranium enrichment activities. As its program grew, beginning with a handful of centrifuges, so, too, did many Arab states' fears of an Iranian bomb and exasperation over American inability to block Tehran's progress.

To some extent, this Arab obsession with Iran was rooted in the uneasy sectarian division of the Muslim world, between the Shiites who rule Iran, and the Sunnis, who dominate most of the region. Those strains had been drawn tauter with the invasion of Iraq, which effectively transferred control of the government there from Sunni to Shiite leaders, many close to Iran.

In December 2005, the Saudi king expressed his anger that the Bush administration had ignored his advice against going to war. According to a cable from the American Embassy in Riyadh, the king argued "that whereas in the past the U.S., Saudi Arabia and Saddam Hussein had agreed on the need to contain Iran, U.S. policy had now given Iraq to Iran as a 'gift on a golden platter.'"

Regional distrust had only deepened with the election that year of a hard-line Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

During a meeting on Dec. 27 with the commander of the U.S. Central Command, Gen. John P. Abizaid, military leaders from the United Arab Emirates "all agreed with Abizaid that Iran's new President Ahmadinejad seemed unbalanced, crazy even," one cable reports. A few months later, the Emirates' defense chief, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed of Abu Dhabi, told General Abizaid that the United States needed to take action against Iran "this year or next."

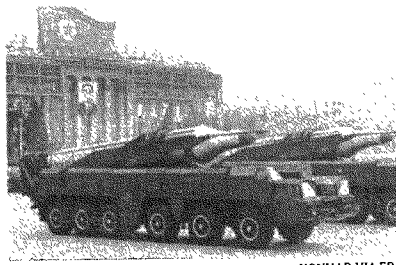
The question was what kind of action. Previously, the crown prince had relayed the Emirates' fear that "it was only a matter of time before Israel or the U.S. would strike Iranian nuclear facility targets." That could provoke an outcome that the Emirates' leadership considered "catastrophic": Iranian missile strikes on U.S. military installations in nearby countries like the Emirates.

Now, with Iran boasting in the spring of 2006 that it had successfully accomplished low-level uranium enrichment, the crown prince began to argue less equivocally, cables show. He stressed "that he wasn't suggesting that the first option was 'bombing' Iran," but also warned, "They have to be dealt with before they do something tragic."

The Saudis, too, increased the pressure. In an April 2008 meeting with Gen. David H. Petraeus, then the incoming Central Command chief, the Saudi ambassador to Washington recalled the king's "frequent exhortations to the U.S. to attack Iran," and the foreign minister said that while he preferred economic pressure, the "use of military pressure against Iran should not be ruled out."

Yet if the Gulf allies were frustrated by American inaction, U.S. officials

were equally frustrated by the Arabs' unwillingness to speak out against Iran. "We need our friends to say that they



YONHAP, VIA EPA

Oct. 10, 2010 • Pyongyang Iran obtained 19 advanced missiles from North Korea, according to a cable. Arms of the same type were later shown at a parade in the North, some experts said.

stand with the Americans," General Abizaid told Emirates officials, according to one cable.

By the time Mr. Bush left office in January 2009, Iran had installed 8,000 centrifuges (though only half were running) and was enriching uranium at a rate that, with further processing, would let it produce a bomb's worth of fuel a year. With that progress came increased Israeli pressure.

After Mr. Barak, the Israeli defense minister, issued his ultimatum in May 2009, the chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, followed up in November.

"There is still time for diplomacy, but we should not forget that Iran's centrifuges are working day and night," General Ashkenazi told a delegation led by Representative Ike Skelton of Missouri, the Democratic chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

That, in turn, led Arab leaders to press even more forcefully for the United States to act — before Israel did. Crown Prince bin Zayed, predicting in July 2009 that an Israeli attack could come by year's end, suggested the danger of appeasing Iran. "Ahmadinejad is Hitler," he declared.

Seemingly taken aback, a State Department official replied, "We do not anticipate military confrontation with Iran before the end of 2009."

So it was that the United States had put together a largely silent front of Arab states whose positions on sanctions and a potential attack looked much like Israel's.

BANKS AND BUSINESSES

Despite an American trade embargo and several rounds of United Nations sanctions, the Bush administration had never forged the global coalition needed to impose truly painful international penalties on Iran. While France and Britain were supportive, countries like Germany, Russia and China that traded extensively with Iran were reluctant, at best.

In the breach, the United States embarked on a campaign to convince foreign banks and companies that it was in their interest to stop doing business with Iran, by demonstrating how Tehran used

its banks, ships, planes and front companies to evade existing sanctions and feed its nuclear and missile programs.

The cables show some notable successes, particularly with the banks. But they also make it clear that stopping Iran from obtaining needed technology was a maddening endeavor, with spies and money-laundering experts chasing shipments and transactions in whack-a-mole fashion, often to be stymied by recalcitrant foreign diplomats.

One cable details how the United States asked the Italians to stop the planned export to Iran of 12 fast boats, which could attack U.S. warships in the Gulf. Italy did so only after months of "foot-dragging, during which the initial eleven boats were shipped," the embassy in Rome reported.

Another cable recounts China's repeated refusal to act on detailed information about shipments of missile parts from North Korea to Beijing, where they were loaded aboard flights to Tehran.

The election of Mr. Obama, at least initially, left some countries wondering whether the push for sanctions was about to end. Shortly after taking office, in a videotaped message, he reiterated his campaign offer of a "new beginning" — the first sustained talks in three decades with Tehran.

The United Arab Emirates called Mr. Obama's message "confusing." The American Embassy in Saudi Arabia reported that the talk about engaging Iran had "fueled Saudi fears that a new U.S. administration might strike a 'grand bargain' without prior consultations."

In Europe, Germany and others discerned an effort to grab market share. "According to the British, other EU Member states fear the U.S. is preparing to take commercial advantage of a new relationship with Iran and subsequently are slowing the EU sanctions process," the American Embassy in London reported.

The administration, though, had a different strategy in mind.

A NEW STRATEGY

The man chosen to begin wiping out the confusion was Daniel Glaser, a little-known official with a title that took two breaths to enunciate in full: acting assistant secretary of the Treasury for terrorist financing and financial crimes.

The first big rollout of his message appears to have come in Brussels on March 2 and 3, 2009, during what the cables called "an unprecedented classified briefing" to more than 70 Middle East experts from European governments.

Mr. Glaser got right to the point. Yes, engagement was part of the administration's overall strategy. "However, 'engagement' alone is unlikely to succeed," Mr. Glaser said. And to those concerned that the offer of reconciliation was open-ended, one cable said, he replied curtly that "time was not on our side."

The relief among countries supporting sanctions was palpable enough to pierce the cables' smooth diplomatese. "Iran needs to fear the stick and feel a light 'tap' now," said Robert Cooper, a

senior European Union official.

"Glaser agreed, noting the stick could escalate beyond financial measures under a worst case scenario," a cable said. The Czechs were identified as surprisingly enthusiastic behind-the-scenes allies. Another section of the same cable was titled "Single Out but Understand the E.U. Foot-Draggers": Sweden, considered something of a ringleader, followed by Cyprus, Greece, Luxembourg, Spain, Austria, Portugal and Romania.

The decoding of Mr. Obama's plan was apparently all the Europeans needed, and by year's end, even Germany, with its suspicions and longstanding trading ties with Iran, appeared to be on board.

Still, there could be little meaningful action without Russia and China. Both are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, where multilateral action would have to pass, and both possess a global reach that could effectively scuttle much of what the United States tried on its own.

The cables indicate that the administration undertook multilayered diplomatic moves to help ensure that neither would cast a council veto to protect Iran.

As of early 2010, China imported nearly 12 percent of its oil from Iran and worried that supporting sanctions would imperil that supply. Obama administration officials have previously said that the year before, a senior adviser on Iran, Dennis B. Ross, traveled to Saudi Arabia to seek a guarantee that it would supply the lost oil if China were cut off.

The cables show that Mr. Ross had indeed been in Riyadh, the Saudi capital, in April 2009. While there is no direct account of those meetings, a suggestion of dazzling success turns up later, in cables describing meetings between Saudi and Chinese officials.

The offer may have come during a Jan. 13 meeting in Riyadh between Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi of China and King Abdullah and other senior Saudi officials, one of whom told Mr. Yang, "Saudi Arabia understood China was concerned about having access to energy supplies, which could be cut off by Iran," according to one cable.

The conversation, evidently shaped by Mr. Ross's request, developed from there, the cable indicated. A later cable noted simply, "Saudi Arabia has told the Chinese that it is willing to effectively trade a guaranteed oil supply in return for Chinese pressure on Iran not to develop nuclear weapons."

That left Russia.

DEALING WITH RUSSIA

Throughout 2009, the cables show, the Russians vehemently objected to American plans for a ballistic missile defense site in Poland and the Czech Republic. Conceived under Mr. Bush and billed as a shield against Iranian missiles that U.S. intelligence said were under development, the site was an irritant to Russia, which contended that it was really designed to shoot down Russian missiles.

In talks with the United States, the Russians insisted that there would be no cooperation on other issues until the site

in Eastern Europe was scrapped. Those demands crested July 29, when a senior Russian official repeatedly disrupted a meeting with Russia's objections, according to one cable.

Six weeks later, Mr. Obama gave the Russians what they wanted: He abruptly replaced the Eastern Europe site with a ship-borne system. That system, at least in its present form, is engineered to protect specific areas against short- and medium-range missiles, not pulverize long-range missiles soaring above the atmosphere. Mr. Obama explained the shift by saying that intelligence assessments had changed, and that the long-range-missile threat appeared to be growing more slowly than previously thought.

The cables are silent on whether at some higher level Russia hinted that Security Council action against Iran would be easier with the site gone. But another secret meeting with the Russians last December, recounted in the cables, may help explain why Mr. Obama was willing to shift focus to the short- and medium-range threat, at least in the near term.

In the meeting, U.S. officials said nothing about a slowing of the long-range

"There is still time for diplomacy, but we should not forget that Iran's centrifuges are working day and night."

threat, as cited by Mr. Obama. They insisted that North Korea had sent Iran 19 advanced missiles, based on a Russian design, that could clear a path toward the development of long-range missiles. According to unclassified estimates of their

range, though, they would also immediately allow Iran to strike Western Europe or Moscow — essentially the threat the revamped system was designed for.

Russia is skeptical that Iran has obtained the advanced missiles, or that their North Korean version, called the BM-25, even exists. "For Russia, the BM-25 is a mysterious missile," a Russian official said. (That argument was dealt a blow last month, when North Korea rolled out what some experts identified as those very missiles in a parade.)

Whatever the dynamic, Mr. Obama had removed the burr under the Russians' saddle, and in January 2010, one cable reported, a senior Russian official "indicated Russia's willingness to move to the pressure track."

The cables obtained by Wikileaks end in February 2010, before the last-minute maneuvering that led to a fourth round of Security Council sanctions and even stiffer measures — imposed by the United States, the Europeans, Australia and Japan — that experts say are beginning to pinch Iran's economy. But while Mr. Ahmadinejad has recently offered to resume nuclear negotiations, the cables underscore the extent to which Iran's true intentions remain a mystery.

As Crown Prince bin Zayed of Abu Dhabi put it in one cable: "Any culture that is patient and focused enough to spend years working on a single carpet is capable of waiting years and even decades to achieve even greater goals." His greatest worry, he said, "is not how much we know about Iran, but how much we don't."

William J. Broad and Andrew W. Lehren contributed reporting.



King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia

"He told you to cut off the head of the snake."

— Adel A. al-Jubeir, the Saudi ambassador to the U.S., quoted in an April 2008 cable regarding King Abdullah's "frequent exhortations to the U.S. to attack Iran and thus put an end to its nuclear weapons program."



Saad Hariri
Lebanon's parliamentary majority leader (now prime minister)

"Iraq was unnecessary," claimed Saad. "Iran is necessary."

— Quoted in an August 2006 cable telling American officials that they "must be willing to go all the way if need be" to stop Iran's nuclear program if diplomatic efforts fail.



King Hamad of Bahrain

"That program must be stopped," he said. "The danger of letting it go on is greater than the danger of stopping it."

— November 2009 cable in which the king is quoted on the need to halt Iran's nuclear pursuit.



Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed
U.A.E. defense chief

"Ahmadinejad is Hitler."

— July 2009 memo in which Crown Prince bin Zayed is quoted as urging the U.S. not to appease Iran.

Bomb attacks strike 2 Iranian nuclear scientists in Tehran, killing one

TEHRAN

BY WILLIAM YONG
AND ALAN COWELL

Unidentified assailants riding motorcycles carried out bomb attacks on Monday against two Iranian nuclear physicists here, killing one of them and prompting accusations by Iran that the United States and Israel were behind the assaults.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said that "undoubtedly the hand of the Zionist regime and Western governments is involved" in the killing but did not identify those governments by name. The killing led Iran's nuclear chief, Ali Akbar Salehi, to warn the West and its allies not to "play with fire." Mr. Salehi and Mr. Ahmadinejad vowed that Tehran would not be deterred from expanding its nuclear project.

But Mr. Ahmadinejad publicly acknowledged, apparently for the first time, that Iran's nuclear program had recently been disrupted by a malicious computer software that attacked its centrifuges. "They succeeded in creating problems for a limited number of our centrifuges with the software they had installed in electronic parts," he said at a news conference.

Iranian officials had previously acknowledged unspecified problems with Iran's centrifuges, which are used to enrich uranium that can be used for peaceful energy generation or atomic weapons. But the Iranians had always denied that the problems had been caused by malicious computer code.

A computer program, Stuxnet, is believed to have struck Iran over the summer. Experts said the program, which is precisely calibrated to send nuclear centrifuges wildly out of control, was likely developed by a national government.

Mr. Ahmadinejad did not specify the malware or its perpetrators but said that "fortunately our experts discovered that and today they are not able anymore."

The dead scientist was identified as Majid Shahriari, a physics professor at Shahid Beheshti University, in northern Tehran. He was killed and his wife was wounded when a bomb that had been attached to his car was detonated remotely. A second professor at the same university, Fereydoon Abbasi, was wounded in a separate, simultaneous attack. His wife was also wounded.

Iranian news reports said the attackers had attached the bombs to the professors' cars and detonated them from a distance. The attackers escaped.

The Fars News Agency, a semiofficial outlet, declared, "The United States and the Zionist regime perpetrated a terrorist attack on two professors at Shahid



FARS NEWS AGENCY, VIA AGENCIE FRANCE PRESSE

The Iranian news agency Fars, which provided this image, said police officers inspected the car of a nuclear scientist killed by a bomb attached to the vehicle on Monday in Tehran.

Beheshti University."

Some reports from unofficial Iranian news media outlets, controlled by hardliners, described Mr. Abbasi as a loyalist supporter of the Iranian regime involved in nuclear research at the Defense Ministry and said both scientists were from the nuclear engineering department of Shahid Beheshti University.

A pro-government Web site, mashregnews.ir, said Mr. Abbasi had a doctorate degree in nuclear physics and described him in terms that suggested that he was closely associated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps.

According to some reports, Mr. Shahriari taught at the Supreme National Defense University, which is run by the Iranian Army.

Some Iranian news reports called the attacks terrorism. The attacks were similar to a bombing in January in which a remote-controlled bomb killed a physics professor, Masoud Ali Mohammadi, outside his home in Tehran. The Iranian authorities also attributed that attack to the United States and Israel, a charge that the U.S. State Department dismissed as absurd.

In 2007, state television said another nuclear scientist, Ardeshir Hosseinpour, had died of gas poisoning.

Mr. Salehi, who heads Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, told the Islamic Republic News Agency, another semi-official outlet, on Monday that Mr. Shahriari "was my student and he worked with the Atomic Energy Organization." Mr. Salehi called Mr. Shahriari the manager of "one of the organization's major projects" and said Tehran would "multiply our nuclear efforts."

"Don't play with fire," he warned Western powers and their allies. "The

patience of the Iranian people has its limits. If our patience runs out, you will suffer the consequences."

Mr. Mohammadi and Mr. Shahriari were associated with a nonnuclear scientific research unit. It is based in Jordan, operates under United Nations

auspices and is known as Sesame, for Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East. Unusually, its nine-member council includes representatives from Israel along with Iran and several other Muslim countries.

The attacks offered Iran another reason to argue that its nuclear program was under assault after the discovery of a computer worm that independent experts suspected of causing Iran's nuclear centrifuges, used to enrich uranium, to spin out of control. The worm is a ma-

licious program detected this year on computers, primarily in Iran but also in India, Indonesia and other countries.

In an apparent coincidence, the bombings on Monday came a day after leaked U.S. State Department documents quoted several Arab leaders as urging the United States to attack Iran's nuclear facilities. Iran says its nuclear program is for civilian purposes only, but many in the West and in Israel maintain that Tehran's aim is to build a nuclear bomb.

Alan Cowell reported from Paris.



IRAN: DEUX CHEFS REBELLES PRÉSUMÉS TUÉS DANS LE KURDISTAN IRANIEN (MINISTÈRE)

TEHERAN, 21 novembre 2010 (AFP)

DEUX CHEFS rebelles présumés ont été tués dans des affrontements avec les forces de sécurité iraniennes dans la région kurde de Sanandaj (ouest), a annoncé dimanche le ministère des Renseignements.

"Le chef d'un groupe terroriste formé de dévotionnistes wahhabites a été tué dans une embuscade ainsi que son adjoint" a dit le ministère dans un communiqué publié par l'agence de presse Mehr.

Le wahhabisme est une interprétation rigoriste de l'islam sunnite pratiqué en Arabie saoudite.

Le communiqué ne précise pas quand l'embuscade a eu lieu et n'identifie pas non plus le groupe rebelle. Il indique que les deux tués étaient soupçonnés du meurtre d'un responsable de la justice locale et d'avoir mené une série de vols à main armée.

"Le groupe entend utiliser l'argent volé pour augmenter ses actes terroristes dans les zones peuplées de sunnites dans l'ouest du pays", ajoute le communiqué.

L'ouest de l'Iran, où est concentrée une forte population kurde, a été le théâtre de violences meurtrières pendant des années entre les forces de sécurité iraniennes et des groupes rebelles kurdes opérant depuis l'Irak voisin.

Le 22 septembre, 12 personnes avaient été tuées et 81 blessées par l'explosion d'une bombe à Mahabad, une ville à forte population kurde de la province d'Azerbaïdjan occidental (nord-ouest), frontalière de l'Irak et de la Turquie.



IRAK: ESPÉRANT UN VISA, DES CHRÉTIENS SE RUENT SUR UN CONSULAT FRANÇAIS

ERBIL (Irak), 28 novembre 2010 (AFP)

PLUSIEURS centaines de chrétiens irakiens souhaitant échapper aux menaces d'Al-Qaïda se sont rués dimanche au consulat français d'Erbil, dans la région autonome du Kurdistan, sur la foi d'une rumeur affirmant que cette mission délivrait à tous des visas pour la France.

Face à l'afflux de ces réfugiés –des hommes, femmes, enfants et personnes âgées– munis de leurs papiers d'identité, le consulat a été contraint de fermer ses portes, selon un journaliste de l'AFP.

La plupart de ces chrétiens sont originaires de Bagdad, théâtre ces dernières semaines d'attaques sanglantes contre leur communauté, et de Mossoul, la deuxième ville du pays, où leur situation est également difficile.

"Nous sommes venus quand nous avons appris que le consulat français prenait les noms des déplacés pour leur donner un visa car, franchement, nous ne voulons plus rester dans ce pays", a déclaré dans la foule Girgis, 54 ans, originaire de Mossoul.

"J'avais une usine à Mossoul mais je l'ai quittée parce que j'ai peur des terroristes. Mais notre vie ici est très difficile et nous ignorons combien de temps nous allons devoir vivre de la générosité des proches qui nous accueillent".

Contactée par l'AFP, l'ambassade de France à Bagdad a simplement affirmé que "des dizaines de chrétiens" s'étaient rendus dimanche au consulat d'Erbil,

sans dire si celui-ci avait dû fermer ses portes.

La branche irakienne d'Al-Qaïda, qui a revendiqué l'attaque sanglante de la cathédrale syrienne catholique de Bagdad le 31 octobre, dans laquelle 44 fidèles, deux prêtres et sept membres des forces de sécurité avaient péri, a annoncé le 3 novembre que les chrétiens étaient désormais des "cibles légitimes" pour les combattants islamistes.

Des menaces qui se sont concrétisées une semaine plus tard par une série d'attaques contre des maisons appartenant à des chrétiens à Bagdad, et qui ont fait au moins six morts.

Ces violences ont poussé de nombreux chrétiens à fuir l'Irak ou à chercher refuge au Kurdistan, une région où Al-Qaïda ne commet aucune attaque.

"Que pouvons-nous faire si le gouvernement ne nous protège pas?", interrogeait de son côté dans la foule Mazin, arrivé de Mossoul il y a une dizaine de jours. "Nous voulons partir pour pouvoir vivre en paix."

Le Premier ministre irakien, Nouri al-Maliki, a appelé le 9 novembre sans la nommer le France à ne pas favoriser l'émigration des chrétiens, après l'évacuation vers ce pays de 35 Irakiens blessés dans l'attaque du 31 octobre contre l'église, selon un communiqué de son bureau.

Alors ministre français de l'Immigration, Eric Besson avait indiqué que l'asile en France leur serait "très généreusement accordé" s'ils en faisaient la demande.



PROCÈS DU MEURTRE DE KURDES FAÏLI EN IRAK: 10 ANS DE PRISON POUR TAREZ AZIZ

BAGDAD, 29 novembre 2010 (AFP)

L'ANCIEN vice-Premier ministre irakien Tarek Aziz a été condamné lundi à 10 ans de prison pour sa responsabilité dans le meurtre de membres de la communauté kurde Faïli à l'époque de Saddam Hussein.

Compagnon de la première heure de l'ancien président irakien, Tarek Aziz avait été condamné en octobre à la peine de mort pour "crimes contre l'humanité" dans un autre procès, celui de la répression des chiïtes dans les années 1980.

"La Haute cour pénale irakienne a condamné Tarek Aziz et Ahmed Hussein Khodeir à dix ans de prison", a indiqué à l'AFP Mohamed Abdel Sahab, porte-parole du tribunal. Ahmed Hussein Khodeir était un ancien conseiller de Saddam Hussein.

Pendant la guerre avec l'Iran (1980-1988), de nombreux Kurdes Faïli (chiïtes) furent chassés de leurs terres jugées trop proches de la frontière avec "l'ennemi" iraniens. Et beaucoup périrent dans ces déplacements de population.

L'ancien ministre de l'Intérieur, Saadoune Chaker, et deux ex-dirigeants locaux du parti Baas au pouvoir sous Saddam Hussein, Aziz Saleh al-Nohman et Mizban Khoder Hadi, ont été condamnés à mort.

Sept autres prévenus ont été acquittés "pour manque de preuve", a précisé le tribunal.

Emprisonné depuis sa reddition fin avril 2003, un mois après l'invasion américaine de l'Irak, Tarek Aziz, 74 ans, cumule désormais cinq peines de prisons.

En plus de la peine capitale, il avait écopé le 26 octobre d'une peine de 15 ans de prison pour des tortures, et d'une seconde de dix ans de prison pour crimes contre l'humanité.

Il avait été condamné en 2009 à 15 ans d'emprisonnement pour "crimes contre l'humanité" après l'exécution de 42 commerçants en 1992 et à sept ans de prison pour son rôle dans le déplacement des populations kurdes Faïli dans les années 1980.

Opposé à la peine de mort, le président irakien Jalal Talabani a affirmé qu'il ne signerait pas l'ordre d'exécution de M. Aziz.

Nucléaire iranien : la mission secrète de l'Elysée à Téhéran

A l'été 2007, Paris dialogue avec un conseiller du « Guide suprême »

La pointe du glaive : c'est l'expression que retient l'ambassade des Etats-Unis à Paris, en novembre 2009, pour décrire l'intransigeance de l'Elysée sur le dossier nucléaire iranien. *« Des responsables français de haut rang ont suggéré que la ligne dure de Sarkozy pouvait se révéler utile en tant que "pointe du glaive" pour faire face au défi iranien »*, relève un mémo figurant dans les documents obtenus par WikiLeaks et révélés par *Le Monde*.

Les télégrammes américains montrent à quel point la diplomatie française a insisté très tôt sur le renforcement des sanctions contre Téhéran. Y compris celles prises à titre national, allant au-delà des mesures décidées à l'ONU ou au sein de l'Union européenne. Paris presse aussi l'administration Obama d'exprimer plus de soutiens pour l'opposition iranienne, que le pouvoir réprime violemment. Le régime iranien est « fasciste », commente, en septembre 2009, Jean-David Levitte, le conseiller diplomatique de Nicolas Sarkozy.

Les motivations de M. Sarkozy sont décortiquées par les diplomates américains : *« Une croyance ferme en la non-prolifération (pour préserver la dissuasion nucléaire de la France), une préoccupation réelle s'agissant de la menace pour Israël, et une colère personnelle liée à la façon dont l'Iran a essayé de manipuler la France, y compris en détenant la Française Clotilde Reiss »*, énumère l'ambassade à Paris.

Une proximité saisissante entre la France et Israël sur le dossier iranien se lit dans les comptes rendus que font les Américains du « dialogue stratégique » noué entre Paris et Jérusalem à partir de mai 2008.

C'est précisément en se basant sur cette posture stricte que M. Sarkozy a aussi tenté une diplomatie secrète avec l'Iran. Les docu-

ments américains dévoilent cette démarche. Tout commence lorsque l'Elysée accède, en mai 2007, à une demande d'Ali Akbar Velayati, le conseiller diplomatique du « Guide suprême », Ali Khamenei. Un « canal de communication » est ouvert. Il vise à contourner le président iranien, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, jugé infréquentable.

Cela conduira à l'envoi à Téhéran, le 23 août 2007, d'une mission secrète de la présidence française. Elle est menée par François Richier, le conseiller pour les affaires stratégiques. *« Richier a dit à Velayati et à d'autres officiels iraniens que si l'Iran ne remplissait pas ses obligations, les sanctions internationales ne feraient que s'accroître. (...) Richier a ajouté que la France voulait éviter une action militaire contre l'Iran, mais qu'elle l'accepterait éventuellement comme un dernier recours de la communauté internationale, afin d'empêcher que l'Iran se dote de l'arme nucléaire »*, écrit un diplomate américain, le 7 septembre.

« Phrase saisissante »

Les Américains ont été tenus informés en amont. Cela n'avait pas été le cas, en décembre 2006-janvier 2007, lorsque Jacques Chirac avait déjà envisagé de dépêcher discrètement un émissaire à Téhéran (l'affaire ayant été éventée, il avait renoncé). L'initiative de M. Sarkozy fait long feu. *« Velayati, rapporte l'ambassade américaine, en s'appuyant sur des explications françaises, partait de l'idée erronée que M. Sarkozy libérerait la France de sa "dépendance" envers les Etats-Unis. »* Les émissaires français sont rentrés perplexes de Téhéran. Un conseiller de l'Elysée raconte aux Américains que *« les Iraniens ne semblent pas comprendre la gravité de la situation ni la position française. Ils souffrent d'une mentalité fermée,*

autiste ». Une autre source française insiste : *« Les Iraniens ne céderont pas tant qu'ils ne sentiront pas que la survie du régime est en cause. »*

Les diplomates américains s'interrogent cependant sur *« la phrase saisissante »* prononcée par M. Sarkozy lors d'un discours, le 27 août 2007, *« indiquant que le monde est confronté à un choix entre un Iran avec la bombe et le bombardement de l'Iran »*. Un conseiller de l'Elysée leur explique que *« cela ne signifie pas, comme l'ont avancé certains médias, que la France serait prête à participer à une telle action. Loin de là, la France s'oppose vigoureusement au recours à la force »*.

Fin septembre 2007, un télégramme constate que *« le canal que Velayati a essayé d'ouvrir n'est pas fermé, juste inactif, jusqu'à ce que la France décide de l'utiliser. (...) Le gouvernement français est pleinement conscient que Téhéran essaie par ce canal de diviser le P5 + 1 »*, le groupe des grandes puissances traitant le dossier nucléaire.

Mais aussi, *« l'Elysée s'inquiète d'être tenu dans l'obscurité si – et quand – le moment viendra d'une frappe militaire. Le timing et l'amplitude d'une telle action – frappe chirurgicale ou campagne plus généralisée – pourraient mettre en cause des intérêts français d'une façon majeure, en raison notamment des capacités de représailles de l'Iran contre des Etats du Golfe »*, résume un diplomate américain. Paris souhaite être mieux informé des plans de réserve élaborés côté américain. En mai 2009, M. Sarkozy inaugure une base militaire française à Abou Dhabi, renforçant le dispositif occidental dans le Golfe. L'accord de défense avec la Fédération des émirats arabes unis est renouvelé et approfondi. ■

Natalie Nougayrède

Comment les Israéliens ont poussé Washington à la fermeté face à l'Iran

Pour Israël, la diplomatie de Barack Obama à l'égard de l'Iran « ne marchera pas »

Jérusalem, 1^{er} décembre 2009. Amos Gilad, directeur des affaires politico-militaires au ministère israélien de la défense, s'adresse à Ellen Tauscher, la sous-secrétaire d'Etat américaine. « *Se penchant sur sa boule de cristal, écrit le diplomate américain qui relate la scène, Gilad dit qu'il n'est pas certain que l'Iran ait décidé de fabriquer une arme nucléaire, mais que l'Iran est "déterminé" à avoir l'option d'en construire une.* » La diplomatie du président Barack Obama, « *l'engagement stratégique avec l'Iran, c'est une bonne idée* », poursuit M. Gilad, selon ce télégramme, « *mais il est bien clair que cela ne marchera pas* ».

L'évaluation des intentions du régime iranien, ainsi que la façon de résoudre la crise nucléaire, qui dure depuis 2002, occupent une place importante dans les télégrammes de la diplomatie américaine obtenus par WikiLeaks et révélés par *Le Monde*. Les Israéliens semblent, pour leur part, appeler constamment l'administration Obama à durcir son approche.

On trouve, dans un télégramme américain daté du 18 novembre 2009, ces observations : « *Un représentant du Mossad affirme que Téhéran comprend qu'en réagissant positivement à l'engagement [américain], l'Iran peut continuer à "jouer la montre". (...) Du point de vue du Mossad, l'Iran ne fera rien d'autre que d'utiliser des négociations pour gagner du temps. De telle sorte qu'en 2010-2011, l'Iran aura la capacité technologique de fabri-*

quer une arme nucléaire. Réduisant ainsi la question de la militarisation [l'étape finale vers la bombe] à une décision politique. »

« *Le gouvernement israélien, ajoute un autre document américain, daté du même jour, décrit l'année 2010 comme une année critique. Si les Iraniens continuent de protéger et consolider leurs sites nucléaires, il sera plus difficile de les viser et de les endommager.* » Israël, est-il noté, attend que les Etats-Unis lui livrent des bombes GBU-28 capa-

En août 2007, le chef du Mossad énumère devant le sous-secrétaire d'Etat américain, Nicholas Burns, « les cinq piliers de la stratégie israélienne » face à l'Iran

bles de détruire des bunkers. Celles-ci seront fournies en mai 2010.

Washington envoie des émissaires pour tenter de calmer la nervosité israélienne. Robert Wexler, un influent élu démocrate du Congrès américain, rencontre, le 13 mai 2009, le chef des renseignements militaires israéliens, Amos Yadlin. « *Wexler explique que le président américain pourra plus facilement convaincre l'opinion américaine de soutenir une action militaire si les efforts d'engagement échouent*

après avoir été tentés. (...) M. Yadlin répond qu'il n'est pas en train de conseiller aux Etats-Unis d'ouvrir un troisième front, mais il faut comprendre qu'Israël voit les choses autrement, et ne peut retirer l'option militaire de la table », rapporte un « memo » américain.

Retour en arrière, à l'époque Bush. En août 2007, le chef du Mossad, Meir Dagan, décrit « *les cinq piliers de la stratégie israélienne* » face à l'Iran. Il les énumère devant le sous-secrétaire d'Etat américain, Nicholas Burns. Un télégramme diplomatique américain les résume ainsi : « *A) L'approche politique (Dagan salue les efforts pour transférer le dossier iranien au Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, mais il dit que cette approche ne résoudra pas la crise). B) Des mesures clandestines (Dagan et le sous-secrétaire décident de ne pas évoquer cette approche en large comité). C) La contre-prolifération (Dagan souligne le besoin d'empêcher l'Iran d'acquérir du savoir-faire et de la technologie. Il faut faire plus dans ce domaine). D) Des sanctions (Dagan dit que c'est dans ce domaine qu'ont été enregistrés les plus grands succès. Trois banques iraniennes sont sur le point de s'effondrer). (...) E) Forcer un changement de régime (Dagan dit qu'il faudrait faire davantage pour fomenter un changement de régime en Iran, si possible avec le soutien de mouvements étudiants démocrates et de groupes ethniques, Azéris, Kurdes, Baloutches, opposés au régime en place).* »

L'attitude russe sur le dossier iranien est, d'après des Israéliens, « *un mystère* », note un télégramme amé-

ricain daté de novembre 2009, près d'un an avant que le Kremlin renonce à livrer à l'Iran des missiles anti-aériens S-300. Les efforts pour rallier la Russie à la diplomatie occidentale sur l'Iran constituent un souci constant des Israéliens, qui en discutent avec l'administration Obama.

En coulisses, les tractations vont bon train. Devant Ellen Tauscher, le 1^{er} décembre 2009, Amos Gilad, « *a expliqué que Moscou a demandé des livraisons de drones israéliens sophistiqués en échange de l'annulation de la vente des S-300 à Téhéran* », écrit un diplomate. « *Gilad a dit que les Russes reconnaissent leur retard technologique sur les drones, et qu'ils sont prêts à payer 1 milliard de dollars pour la technologie israélienne sur ces appareils. Il a répété qu'Israël ne fournirait pas sa technologie la plus récente, expliquant qu'elle se retrouverait probablement entre les mains des Chinois.* »

Le même jour, devant cette responsable américaine, le directeur général du ministère israélien des affaires étrangères, Yossi Gal, « *affirme que "le calendrier est essentiel", et "le temps est venu de mettre en œuvre des sanctions paralysantes"* » contre l'Iran, note un télégramme diplomatique. « *Gal a comparé la nécessité de sanctions renforcées à une prescription d'antibiotiques par un médecin - il faut prendre tout le traitement pendant toute sa durée, sinon les médicaments n'agissent pas.* » A partir de juillet 2010, sur décision de Barack Obama, les sanctions américaines contre l'Iran franchiront de nouveaux paliers. ■

N. No.

WikiLeaks

L'obsession iranienne

Nombre de documents produits par WikiLeaks concernent la lutte de Washington contre Téhéran.

L'avalanche de documents américains publiés par WikiLeaks est une photographie assez réaliste des préoccupations du moment de la diplomatie américaine. Ces télégrammes, comptes rendus, mémos et autres notes révèlent une véritable obsession iranienne, dossier prioritaire et objet de tous les attentions des diplomates américains. Discussions serrées avec Israël, communications secrètes avec les pays arabes, coordination méfiante avec les Européens, bras de fer avec la Russie et la Chine, suspicions envers la Corée du Nord: tout est analysé, décortiqué, interprété au prisme du programme nucléaire iranien.

La principale révélation – ou plutôt confirmation – de ces communications tous azimuts tient dans l'exposé au grand jour du double langage des dirigeants arabes. Alors qu'en public, ils appellent à un règlement pacifique du problème iranien, en privé, ils poussent Washington à passer à l'action contre le grand rival perse et chiite. Ainsi, le compte rendu d'une entrevue avec l'ambassadeur saoudien à Washington, en avril 2008, mentionne les appels réitérés du roi Abdallah

d'Arabie saoudite «à attaquer l'Iran pour mettre fin [à son] programme nucléaire». Il parle même, dans le langage imagé des Bédouins, de «couper la tête du serpent». On se souvient qu'il avait confié, selon le *Figaro*, à Hervé Morin, alors ministre de la Défense, que «deux pays ne devraient pas exister», faisant référence à Israël et à l'Iran. Le roi Abdallah menaçait aussi, en février, d'une course régionale aux armements nucléaires, si l'Iran acquiert la bombe. Dans ses efforts pour entraver les efforts de son voisin et rival, Riyad propose même à la Chine de lui fournir du pétrole pour l'inciter à adopter des sanctions économiques contre Téhéran.

«Guerre». Le roi Abdallah n'est pas le seul.

Le prince héritier d'Abou Dhabi, cheikh Mohammed ben Zayed, estime carrément qu'«une guerre conventionnelle à court terme avec l'Iran est clairement préférable aux conséquences à long terme d'un Iran nucléaire». Il tenait ces propos à Timothy Geithner, secrétaire au Trésor américain, en juillet 2009. Le roi (sunnite) de Bahreïn, dont le pays est majoritairement peuplé de chiïtes, fait la même analyse, devant le général Petraeus, commandant en chef du Central Command. Téhéran a réagi à ces révélations embarrassantes avec magnanimité, du moins officiellement, assurant que les fuites n'auraient pas de conséquences sur les relations avec les «pays amis» voisins. Le président iranien, Ahmadinejad, a jugé les documents publiés «sans valeur», laissant entendre qu'ils relevaient de la «guerre psychologique».

Moins surprenantes sont, en revanche, les pressantes admonestations d'Israël à contre la menace iranienne avant qu'il ne soit trop tard. Le ministre de la Défense, Ehud Barak, parle d'une «fenêtre d'opportunité» qui court jusqu'à fin 2010 pour mener une opération militaire contre l'Iran, après quoi les «dégâts collatéraux» pourraient se révéler «intolérables». En 2007 déjà, le chef du Mossad, Meïr

Dagan, plaïdait auprès du sous-secrétaire d'Etat, Nicholas Burns, pour œuvrer à un changement de régime en Iran en attisant «l'instabilité» causée par l'inflation et «les tensions au sein des minorités ethniques». Lorsque l'administration Obama expose, dé-

cisme. Les émissaires américains lui rétorquent que l'opinion soutiendra plus volontiers l'option militaire si la preuve est faite que la voie diplomatique a échoué. Le gouvernement israélien s'est montré plutôt satisfait et soulagé des révélations de WikiLeaks, peu d'observateurs ayant relevé sa proposition à l'Egypte d'envahir et de prendre en charge la bande de Gaza après l'opération Plomb durci de janvier 2009.

Washington s'attache aussi beaucoup à évaluer le degré d'engagement de ses alliés sur le dossier iranien. Paris, dont les positions sont alignées sur Israël, est vu comme «la pointe du glaive» occidental contre l'Iran. Des propos de Jean-David Levitte, traitant le régime de Téhéran de «fasciste», sont rapportés dans un compte rendu. Paris a refusé de commenter. En revanche, les diplomates américains restent perplexes sur la phrase de Sarkozy d'août 2007 évoquant l'alternative infernale: «La bombe iranienne ou le bombardement de l'Iran.» Est-ce à dire que

Paris est prêt à participer à une opération militaire?

Missiles. La Russie est surveillée comme le lait sur le feu, surtout au sujet de la vente – annulée en septembre – de missiles anti-aériens S300 à l'Iran. La Chine est priée d'user de son influence auprès de Pyongyang pour empêcher la vente de missiles nord-coréens à l'Iran. Enfin, Washington cherche à s'informer des rapports de force interne à la République islamique. Ainsi, un homme d'affaires se rendant régulièrement à Téhéran affirme

«Deux pays ne devraient pas exister.»

Le roi Abdallah d'Arabie Saoudite évoquant Israël et l'Iran auprès d'Hervé Morin

but 2009, sa nouvelle politique de la «main tendue» à Téhéran, Amos Gilad, un représentant du ministère de la Défense israélien, prend note mais ne cache pas son scepti-

à une ambassade américaine en Asie centrale que le Guide, Ali Khameneï, souffre d'une leucémie en phase terminale. C'était en août 2009.

CHRISTOPHE AYAD

LIBÉRATION MARDI 30 NOVEMBRE 2010



RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN

«Erdogan haït tout simplement Israël», affirment des diplomates américains en poste en Turquie, indiquant soutenir la thèse de l'ambassadeur d'Israël à Ankara, Gabby Levy, selon laquelle les virulentes déclarations anti-israéliennes du Premier ministre turc sont avant tout «émotionnelles, car [Erdogan] est un islamiste». Pour Washington, l'«antipathie» du Turc envers Israël est un «facteur» dans la détérioration des rapports israélo-turcs.

Ankara et Al-Qaeda. Le quotidien panarabe *Al-Hayat* relève que «certains des documents attestent de la collaboration – passive et active – de la Turquie au terrorisme d'Al-Qaeda en Irak». Il est notamment question du laxisme d'Ankara le long de la frontière avec l'Irak, qui permet le passage de terroristes chargés d'armes et d'explosifs. Un document évoque l'implication d'An-

kara dans le financement d'un attentat contre un pont de Bagdad. Un câble américain en langage codé annonce ainsi qu'une «grande quantité d'eau est arrivée de Turquie, dont les vagues vont bientôt déferler sur Bagdad». En clair, des explosifs fournis par la Turquie à des terroristes basés en Irak. Le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères a été qualifié «d'exceptionnellement dangereux» par un informateur de l'ambassade.