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TURKEY: LARGE-SCALE ARRESTS OF DTP MEMBERS AND LEADERS

About a hundred people, mostly members of the pro-Kurdish DTP party were arrested in a vast police operation carried out in 90 localities, including 13 towns in Turkey: Diyarbakir, Adana, Ankara, Aydin, Elazig, Gaziantep, Istanbul, Mardin, Sanliurfa, Sirnak, Bingol and Hakkari. According to the police they are accused of membership of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) or else of justifying the movement or of being linked to the burning of cars that had

occurred in several towns by way of protest.

Several prominent political public figures or activists were arrested in the police trap: Seracettin Inmak, one of Ocalan's lawyers, or leaders of the DTP like Kamuran Yuksek, Bayram Altun, Selma Irmak or members of the DTP local council teams of Tunceli (Dersim) or Diyarbakir. No one was arrested in Ankara, but there were several raids on the homes of DTP members and

documents were seized. Demonstrations in support of the DTP took place in the Turkish capital.

Some days later, the Mayor of Diyarbakir, Osman Baydemir, was sentenced by the 4th Court of the Diyarbakir High Court, as well as the newly elected Mayor of Batman, Necdet Atalay, to 10 months imprisonment for "*propaganda in favour of the PKK*".

These charges are based on events going back to 25 February

2008, when the Turkish Army had launched a land assault on PKK bases in Iraq, thus violating the borders. Osman Baydemir, like many DTP elected representatives, had condemned these military raids and called for a peaceful solution to the Kurdish question, declaring that not a single soldier or guerrilla deserved to die. The accusation of “propaganda in favour of the PKK” comes from his calling the PKK fighters “guerrillas” instead of “terrorists”.

These two mayors won the recent municipal elections against AKP candidates in by unchallengeable margins, although the latter had vowed to counter the DTP influence in the major Kurdish towns: 65% for Baydemir and 59% for Atalay. Neither attended the Court hearing, only their lawyers were present.

Ali Simsek, President of the Diyarbakir Provincial DTP, was also brought before a court because of a speech he made at the funeral of a PKK fighter known as Zilan Amed. He was sentenced to a year's imprisonment for “PKK propaganda”, while to others, charged with him, were acquitted in the same case.

Reacting to these sentences, the DTP called them a roundabout retaliation by a government party incapable of accepting its electoral defeat. Thus the leader of the DTP group in parliament accused the AKP of wishing to eliminate his party from the democratic interplay: “Such operations and such pressures are the sign of a new period in which our party is pushed out of the political struggle. However, everyone should know that we will never give up”. Ahmet Turk also suggested that “some forces” in Turkey were trying to topple the country into a phase of

violence by such provocations. *“If they persist in these confrontations things will be even worse than in the past. If the ship sinks, we will all sink with it”.*

Although the police stated that the police operation had been planned “a long time ago” observers stress that this operation comes soon after the DTP had called on the state to recognise the PKK as a representative for resolving the Kurdish conflict. The newly elected mayors had, indeed, met in Ankara to discuss the party's new political line. At the end of this meeting the DTP had made a statement in which it suggested that the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan, imprisoned on Imrali Island, be considered as one of the recognised negotiators for settling the Kurdish question. In this they refused to give way to the recommendations of the European Union and the United States that frequently urge the DTP distance itself from the PKK.

Hitherto, the DTP has always refused to describe the Kurdistan Workers' Party as a terrorist organisation. Moreover, the DTP leaders consider that their election campaign, based on Kurdish identity and claims has born fruit. This can explain the firm stand adopted by the party after the elections: *“The world will take time to analyse the results of the municipal elections. We will not change — the world will have to accept us as we are. Our party thinks that the municipal elections will give a fresh direction to politics in Turkey. In this new period, our party's mission will be more important than ever”*, emphatically declared one of the leaders. This stand, with exultant overtones, was echoed by an official PKK statement, which saw this election success as the proof that the Kurdish

conflict could not be resolved without the DTP or the PKK — or, implicitly, Abdullah Ocalan.

One of the immediate results that the DTP might hope for would be more changes in the anti-terrorist law, which is still very restrictive of freedom of expression and the dropping of legal proceeding to ban it. Indeed, the DTP is being threatened with a banning order and 221 of its members are facing loss of political eligibility and civic rights. *“If we take the election results into account, we do not think that the DTP can be politically banned”*, declared this leader to the newspaper *Zaman*.

Thus these arrests of elected members of the DTP could have the effect of a cold shower or at least a scathing refutation of the confident statements made by the Kurdish party. Unless it be, as is often the case with the AKP's dithering style of political manoeuvres, a spectacular stroke to impress the media so as to reassure public opinion and the nationalists of its firmness regarding “terrorists” before adopting more conciliatory political approaches.

During a visit to London for a meeting of the Kurdish Community Centre, the leader of the DTP parliamentary group, Ahmet Turk, stated that Turkey had reached a stage in which *“it was withdrawing into its shell”* unlike the last few years. He refuted the view expressed by the European Union that the country had made marked advances with regard to democracy. He himself was the subject of judicial investigations initiated by the Diyarbakir Public Prosecutor following a speech he had made in that town the month before, in which he had compared Abdullah Ocalan, the PKK President, to Nelson Mandela (a comparison

that is common amongst the party's supporters), suggesting that as the race conflict ended with the release of the ANC leader, so the Kurdish question could be resolved by Abdullah Ocalan's release. It is not surprising that such a remark is the subject of legal proceedings — much milder stands have already resulted in sentences for "terrorist or separatist propagandas". The question of lifting his Parliamentary immunity has even been raised.

The DTP's reaction to these arrests took the form, in the night of 23 to 24 April, of a sit in inside the Turkish house of parliament, in which all 21 of the party's Members of Parliament took part.

In circles normally considered conservative and nationalist, similar contrasting attitudes can be observed, combining intransigent statements about the PKK with quite unexpected attitudes that break some of the

Turkish Republic's oldest taboos. Thus, on 14 April, the Turkish Armed Forces Chief of Staff, Ilker Basbug, during his annual speech to the War Academy, created a shock by going back on one of the articles of the Kemalist credo, that the "Turkish people" was the sole component of the Turkish Republic (apart from the Christian and Jewish religious minorities usually described as "internal foreigners" or "Turkish citizens of foreign nationality"). The general thus advocated amendments to Turkish citizenship, previously recommended by Baskin Oran and Ibrahim Kaboglu in 2006 in a report on minorities that the AKP government had commissioned of them. That time, however, their proposal had landed them in court, even though they were, eventually, acquitted. This was that non-Turkish citizens, who are not described as minorities under the Lausanne Treaty, should be described as "Turkeli" (of Turkey) and not as "Turks".

Paradoxically rejecting the "ethnic" character of the Kurdish conflict but also rejecting the State's policy of assimilation, he recommended that the specific Kurdish identity be officially recognised, even daring to invoke Ataturk's sacred shades to back his proposals. "Let me remind you what Ataturk said: it was the people of Turkey (Turk Halki) that founded the Republic of Turkey. If you say it was the Turks (Turkler) who did it, this distinction loses the depth of its meaning. Who founded the Republic of Turkey? The people of Turkey. Ataturk here indicated all the components of the nation, without ethnic or religious distinctions. If he had used the word "Turks" instead of "the people of Turkey" it would have had an ethnic distinction".

However, some people think that the shock effect of this speech also had the intended purpose of turning public attention away from the Ergenekon case, which has shaken circles close to the Army.

IRAQ: A DIFFICULT POST-ELECTION PERIOD

Tension between the Baghdad and Kurdistan Regional governments have not eased since the local government elections — on the contrary. Moreover the Kirkuk issue is still pending, with the uneasy expectation that they may be postponed indefinitely or even cancelled. There is also a UN report due for publication that is to make proposals for alternative solutions to the referendum provided for by the Iraqi Constitution. The most probable UN proposal is that Kirkuk be given a "special status" for a period of 10 years. This envisaged status would give the province a "high degree of autonomy" but without the right

of entering the Kurdistan region, still remaining financially dependent on the central government.

The Kurds see this as just a way of postponing the Kirkuk issue to some possible date in the future and of supplanting their influence and the presence of the Kurdish security forces in the region — which fits in very nicely with the ambitions of present Iraqi Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki. Thus on 26 March, troops of the 12th Division of the Iraqi Army, mostly Arabs, were deployed on the roads round the provincial capital, trying, according to the Peshmergas and the Kurdish intelligence services, to compel

them to abandon the city. Massud Barzani was not slow in reacting and on 30 March he again demanded that the referendum be held, while a delegation of Leading Kurds came from Kirkuk to support his demand. The Iraqi President himself, Jalal Talabani (who is also a Kurd), declared on 1st April that Article 140 was part of the Constitution and that no one could change it.

In the provinces of Nineveh, Sinjar and Diyala, where the elections were able to take place, the political climate has also grown acrimonious. As these districts voted massively for the Kurdish Fraternity list, which was allied to the Christian and

Yezidi parties, many considered the results as tantamount to a referendum. Thus hundreds of Kurds, especially those living in Sheikhan and Sinjar (mainly inhabited by Yezidis, but also Christians and Moslem Kurds) paraded through the streets of Mosul, demanding their unification with the Kurdistan Region. Since the Arab nationalist list has won Mosul (admittedly after ethnic and religious cleansing campaigns that, in a few years has cleared the city of the major part of its Kurds and Christians) the Province's non-Arab and non-Moslem population is at the moment complaining that it is unrepresented in the Provincial Council's Administration, completely dominated by the nationalist and Islamist parties, who have cornered all the leading functions. Prior to these elections, the Kurds had, broadly speaking run the Province, because of the Sunni Arab boycott of the 2005 elections. However, since 21 January, the al-Hadba list has 19 of the 37 seats on the Nineveh-Mosul Provincial council against 12 for the Kurdish Fraternity list. We came second in number of seats so we deserve to occupy some executive functions", explained Darman Khatari, the Kurdish Fraternity spokesman. However, the elected counsellors of the winning al-Hadba list have rejected these demands that they describe as "unreasonable".

Thus several local Kurdish political leaders have called for a boycott of the Provincial Council, walking out at the end of the first session. Hissu Narmo, mayor of the Sheikhan district, declared to the Irbil Kurdish press: "We, the representatives of three districts, have decided to boycott the Nineveh Provincial Council. This will be followed by other measures,

including the submission of a memorandum to the Presidential Council in Baghdad. If our demands are not attended to, we will submit a memorandum to the Kurdish Parliament in Irbil, calling for our annexation by the Kurdish Region".

Some hours after this announcement, Qassim Dakeel, the mayor of Sinjar, a district whose population is about 70% Yezidi, declared to AFP: "The al-Hadba list (Arab nationalist) has monopolised all the important administrative positions and brushed aside the rest of the lists, particularly those of the (Kurdish) Fraternity. What is happening is unjust and a deliberate marginalisation as well as the return to the single party system. The boycott is the result of popular pressure and comes from the inhabitants of the district, who have come out on the streets to demonstrate and call for a boycott of the new Nineveh Council. The demonstrators have also called for their district to be made into an independent governorate, which will be part of Kurdistan".

The Yezidi mayor of Sinjar stated that he no longer recognised the authority of Mosul but only that of Massud Barzani, the President of the Kurdistan Regional Government, saying that Sinjar would remain detached from Mosul so long as al-Nujaifi were governor.

For his part, Atheel al-Nujaifi, the newly elected Sunni Arab Governor of Mosul, rejected these allegations, which he regarded as a rejection of his electoral victory: "Such behaviour by these little Kurdish leaders is not in keeping with that of the great Kurdish leaders. The Iraqi Constitution is the law and it says that Sinjar is answerable to Mosul", he retorted, forgetting, however, that Article 140 of that Constitution specifically mentions Sinjar as one

of the districts liable to decide by referendum whether to join the Kurdistan Region.

Al-Nujaifi also described this boycott as illegal: "They are administrative employees placed under the authority of Nineveh Province. The governors of these three districts are just an administrative team of the State of Iraq. They have no right to politicise their functions and their power in a partisan fashion or in the interests of a particular party. Their duty is to calm things down so as to carry out the law and to open talks with the official leaders".

Insisting that those absent should rejoin the provincial Council, the new Governor of Mosul also threatened that they would be personally struck off the list of Council members but added that this striking off was purely personal and did not apply to the Fraternity List itself.

In the opinion of a Sunni Arab lawyer who is a member of the nationalist party, these disagreements are worrying, coming so soon after the elections: "This is only the beginning. We can expect things to get worse".

In fact, there was a suicide car bomb attack in Zummar, one of the 16 towns with a Kurdish majority, which joined the boycott movement. This occurred at a checkpoint manned by Peshmergas, while a major of the same forces escaped another car bomb attack in another locality.

"The situation will get even more tense if there is no political agreement", considered Ahmed Qassim, a 35-year-old Arab shopkeeper in the town. "There are armed groups, like al-Qaida, that will try to exploit these disputes. There will soon be other

explosions, in Arab zones, in retaliation for the bombs that exploded here today in Zummar”.

In Diyala Province, which includes Kurdish districts that were arbitrarily attached to an Arab province by Saddam Hussein, the tension has not eased since last summer, particularly between the Kurdish and Iraqi forces. Here, too, the elections seem to have made this worse. American soldiers even had to be called to

escort members of the Provincial Council after the Iraqi police had tried to surround the building claiming that arrest warrants had been issued for some of the members of the new Council. It was, finally, possible to elect a Governor but, here too, many of the elected councillors called for a boycott.

In the rest of Iraq, with its Shiite Arab majority, serious differences also made themselves felt. This in the essentially Shiite province of

Wasit, all the political factions decided to boycott the last council meeting, which was due to elect a Governor, after street demonstrations had taken place the day before against the principal candidate in the running.

In Basra, the Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki, was obliged to intervene personally to mediate quarrels within his own coalition — also over the choice of Governor.

SYRIA:

SEVERAL KURDISH ACTIVISTS RECEIVE HEAVY SENTENCES

On Sunday, 5 April, in Damascus, the High State Security Court sentenced twelve people, including five Kurds and a woman, to terms of between five and fifteen years imprisonment, announced the National Organisation for Human Rights in Syria (NOHRS).

The one most heavily sentenced was Jamal Abdel-Wahab Hafez, who was charged with committing *“actions not authorised by the State and having made contact with the enemy”*. Rasmi Mohammad Bakr, Ahmad Maasum, Mouaouia Qatranji and Mirvat Mohammad Midani were sentenced to eight years imprisonment and Ahmed el-Atrache and Ali Arslan to five years for *“violent actions against public security and for having sheltered people who had committed acts of violence”*.

The five Kurds were all members of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). They were also found guilty of having *“attempted by actions, plans or writings to amputate part of Syrian*

territory to annex it to a foreign country”. Ezzat Abdel-Hanan Horo, Khalil Sido, Wahid Rachid Horor, were sentenced to eight years jail and Adnan Ali Hussein and Hussein Salim Mohammad to seven years.

The President of the ONDHS, Ammar Qorabi, attacked these *“arbitrary and irrevocable sentences”* and expressed his *“profound anxiety”*. He also called on Syria to abolish the High State Security Court, which is just a special emergency court, as well as to free all the prisoners of opinion that this Court has sentenced.

Some days earlier, the same Court had sentenced four Kurds for *“membership of a banned political group that aims at amputating a part of Syrian territory and annexing it to a foreign State”*. Jihad al-Saleh Abdo (42 years), Abdel-Qader Ben Sido Ahmad (35) were also accused of having *“weakened national feelings and incited racial dissention”*, were sent down for five years. Saleh ben Mohammad Abdo (32) and Hussein ben Hamid Mohammad

(29) were sentenced to four years.

All were members of the Kurdish Azadi (Freedom) Party, which is banned in Syria. They were arrested in September 2007 at Afrin, a Kurdish town in the Aleppo governorate, and imprisoned in the Saïdnaya Prison in Damascus. This has recently been shaken by detainees’ revolts. Since the majority of the prisoners sentenced by this Court end up in this incarceration centre, the work of the High Court for State Security was suspended for seven months.

The President of the Syrian Human Rights League, Abdel-Karim Rihaoui, also called for the suppression of this Court: *“The High Court for State Security does not allow an appeal by detainees. This represents a violation of the right to a fair trial. We call on the Syrian government to close it down and quash all its verdicts, and then rapidly to take measures to ensure that all rights are respected”* (according to the AFP).

KIRGHIZSTAN: ANTI-KURDISH RIOTS INSTIGATED BY THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION

Since the end of the 1980s, the some 8,000 Kurds living in Kirghizstan, as well as in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, have been regularly the target of acts of hostility from local nationalists. This Kurdish population was forcibly displaced here by the Georgian and Azerbaijani Soviets in the 1930s and 40s.

Nearly 30,000 Kurds live in Kirghizstan following their deportation there by Stalin in 1937 and 1944. This month the Kurds of Petrovka, a town about 40 Km from the Kirghiz capital of Bishkek, had to face riots that ravaged and pillaged their homes. Inhabited by Russians, Ukrainians and Kirghiz, the town has hosted about a hundred Kurds since 1990. The Kirghiz authorities affirm that the situation is now under control, but an independent local radio has summoned all the Kurdish inhabitants to leave within 24 hours.

“Several hundreds of residents destroyed Kurdish homes. Nearly twenty houses were affected in several streets and about a dozen cars were destroyed”, stated the Assistant Minister of the Interior, Talantbek Isayev, to the press.

Over a hundred rioters were arrested, half of whom were released fairly quickly. They claimed they wanted to “avenge” the rape of a 4-year-old girl by a Kurd. Thus nearly 200 Petrovka Russians and Kirghiz demanded the expulsion of the Kurds, according to Azatyk Radio, that also reported two people wounded by bullets fired by Kurds at the rioters.

The Kirghiz authorities are at the moment enquiring to see whether the source of the incidents is “ethnic, race or interregional hatred”, and the region’s Public Prosecutor has stated proceedings for “incitement to race hatred”, indicated the spokesman of the Ministry of the Interior, although some officials had, previously categorically denied the ethnic character of the conflict.

The thesis that the original motive of the riots was the rape of a 4-year-old girl by a Kurd, initially put forward by the Interior Ministry, has been refuted by the enquirers. They pointed out that no case of rape had been recorded in the region and that this rumour seemed to have been spread by a group close to the leader of the opposition and presidential candidate, Almazbek Atambayev,

in a speech he made in Petrovka, to stigmatise the local authorities and the management of security by those in power. “Our children are raped and the police puts the blame on the opposition”, declared Atambayev to the press, persisting in his allegations.

Almazbek Atambayev is considered to be the principal rival of the current President, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, in the elections due in July. The opposition is thus keeping up political pressure by targeting the Kurds. A few days later, the police was obliged to disperse nearly 500 people who were blocking the Bishkek-Osh motorway, which connects the North and South of the country. These demonstrators again demanded the expulsion of the Kurds.

This case recalls the anti-Kurdish riots that shook Kazakhstan last January. These also started with the same pretext or rumours of sexual aggression on a child. A Kurdish teenager was accused of sexual aggression on Kazakh boy. Groups then, in the same way, attacked Kurdish houses in reprisal, set them on fire and manhandled the inhabitants. The violence then spread to the whole region inhabited by Kurds.

IRAQ: THREE CHRISTIANS ASSASSINATED IN KIRKUK

While a pall was cast over the end of the year 2008 by the innumerable acts of violence against the Christians in Mosul, it seems as if this violence has spread to Kirkuk, where three Christians were assassinated on the eve of Easter, as the city’s Archbishop, Louis Sako, lamented. In his view, it is clear that these murders were

premeditated and that the key reason was the determination to force the Christians to leave. Susan Latif David and her mother-in-law, Muna Banna David, were executed by a group of armed men, who entered their home in the Domiz quarter of Kirkuk. They were both members of the Chaldean Catholic Church. Susan David had recently married a restaurant owner

whose restaurant is close to the Cathedral.

In another part of the city, Basil Shaba, who was a member of the Syriac Orthodox Church, was killed in a similar attack. His brother, Thamir, and his father Yussif were wounded.

The Archbishop of Kirkuk pointed out that all the city’s

leaders, whatever their denomination, were shocked and saddened by these murders. Many of them, including the city's mayor and the sheikhs of tribes, attended the funerals: *"People were crying. We are all saddened. We only hope that the blood of the martyrs will one day bring us peace and stability"*.

The head of the Kirkuk Police assured the bishop that he would do everything he could to find and arrest those guilty.

According to some Kurdish leaders, the similarity of these attacks with those in Mosul indicated an attempt by nationalist or islamist groups to take over the city as has happened in Mosul, the Christians being the first victims of this ethnic or religious cleansing. Louis Sako also thinks that the uncertainty hanging over Kirkuk's future, whether the province will become part of the Kurdistan Region or remain under the authority of Baghdad, is developing an atmosphere of

tension favourable to such acts of violence.

Furthermore, a petition is going around, initiated by pro-Kurdish groups, calling for Kirkuk to be immediately annexed to the Kurdistan Region — to the annoyance of other political groups. The initiators of this campaign of signatures indicate that they have collected nearly 80,000 signatures amongst the inhabitants of Kirkuk — Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians and Turcomen.

DENMARK: ROJTV AT THE HEART OF TURK-DANISH RELATIONS

Relations between Denmark and Turkey have experienced no little friction, the origin of which is the presence, on Danish soil, of the Kurdish Television station, RojTV, close to the PKK. For years Turkey has called for it to be closed down — without any success, despite the numerous official complaints lodged with the authorities by its Copenhagen Embassy. The Danish Audiovisual Council has three times rejected the demands for it to be banned.

Thus the nomination of former Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, to NATO's top post was delayed, if not blocked, by Turkey's official reluctance. According to Turkish journalists, Ankara's final consent is said to have, secured, in return, the imminent ban on RojTV from broadcasting from Denmark, as it has done since 2003.

Thus a few days before the NATO summit on 3 and 4 April, three Danish public prosecutors were sent to Ankara to enquire about the Kurdish television and establish the truth about the links between the channel and the

PKK, even though Denmark affirms, moreover, that this has no connection with the NATO issue.

However, in a television interview given that month by the Turkish Prime Minister, the link between Turkish reticence at Mr. Rasmussen's nomination and RojTV's presence in Denmark was quite clearly raised. Recep Tayyip Erdogan told how he had several times phoned the latter, when he was head of the Danish government, to ask for RojTV to be closed down. *"This has been going on for four years and they've still not settled the problem"*.

Another motive invoked is Denmark's attitude at the time of the caricatures of Mohamed. According to the Turkish Prime Minister, the nationality of the future NATO Director *"would offend Moslem feelings"*.

However, Turkey has not used its veto as the Turkish President, Abdullah Gul, pointed out in a calmer manner: *"We do not have any particular stand against the Prime Minister or anyone else for that matter"*. Abdullah Gul also described the former Danish Prime Minister *"one of the most important and most successful of Prime Ministers"*, thus, in the

opinion of some diplomats, playing a duet of blowing alternately hot and cold with Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Finally Turkey ended its reservations and accepted Mr. Rasmussen's candidature. Several Turkish papers then raised the possibility of an agreement between the two countries to put an end to RojTV. An enquiry has been, officially, under way in Denmark since 2005 to determine whether Turkish accusations against the Kurdish channel are well founded. However, the Public Prosecutor in charge of the case, Liselotte Nikas, denies any bargaining between the two governments on this subject: *"The enquiry is in our jurisdiction and it is up to us to make a decision"*.

The Director in Denmark of RojTV, Yilmaz Imdat, also declared to the press: *"We will not close down just because Turkey demands it. It is not Turkey that decides thinks in Denmark. We live in a democratic country that respects freedom of expression and the freedom of the press. They don't do things here as in Turkey and close down a television channel or a radio just because they don't like it"*.

IRAQ: BAGHDAD PENALISES KOREAN FIRMS BECAUSE OF CONTRACTS MADE WITH THE KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

The Iraqi Oil Minister has penalised two South Korean oil companies for having signed contracts worth a billion dollars with the Kurdistan Regional Government. Hussein al-Sharistani said to have told the South Korean Ambassador Ha Tae-yun that the Korean National Oil Company (KNOC) and SK Energy would not be authorised to take part in any tenders because they had signed contracts with Irbil: *"Signing these contracts is against Iraqi law and Constitution",* the Minister stated to the Ambassador. *"For this reason, these two companies cannot participate in tenders. However, if they cancel their contracts they could be accepted for future tenders".*

The agreement signed between Kurdistan and the major refinery groups KNOC and SK Energy cover eight oil deposits located near Irbil. The two companies are already sure of pumping 3 billion barrels in exchange for investments in Infrastructures in

Kurdistan amounting to 2.1 billion dollars.

In fact, the disagreement with the Iraqi Minister is because this contract, like other oil contracts signed by the Kurdish government and foreign companies have not been approved by Baghdad. For several years, at the instigation of Hussein al-Shahristani (whose relations with the Kurds are appalling), there has been a trial of strength being played (or tried on) between Baghdad and Irbil, the former trying to get total control over any such agreements. The questions of sharing oil revenues and of the budget allocated to Kurdistan by the central government depend on these conflicts of jurisdiction. Baghdad wants, as in the past, to have complete control of the extraction and management of the whole of Iraq's oil resources. The Kurdish Region, on the basis of the Constitution, wants freely to conduct its trade and oil policy even though sharing its hydrocarbon income with all the Iraqi provinces.

These political differences have delayed the exploitation of rich deposits as well as the adoption of a new law on hydrocarbons by the Iraqi Parliament. Last January, the Iraqi government suspended a contract with the principal Korean oil refining company, which was due to export 90,000 barrels a day to Seoul because the Koreans had, at the same time signed an agreement with the Kurds to exploit a the Barzian deposit, capable of producing 500 million barrels.

Falah Mustafa, Kurdistan's Foreign Minister, is said to be furious at this statement. *"These contracts are not illegal or unconstitutional. We are extremely shocked by Mr. al-Shahristani's declaration. He would do better to look after his Ministry's business and serve the interests of the Iraqi people by increasing oil production".*

The Korean company, for its part, has refused to make any comment.

DIPLOMATIE Ankara reconnaît le Kurdistan (irakien)

En visite en Irak, le président turc a pour la première fois utilisé le terme Kurdistan pour désigner le nord de ce pays.

En échange, les Kurdes irakiens lui ont promis de liquider le PKK.

L'utilisation par le président Gül du terme "Kurdistan", fût-ce de manière indirecte, pour qualifier le nord de l'Irak marque incontestablement un tournant dans les rapports entre Ankara et Erbil [capitale du Kurdistan irakien]. En réalité, le président a simplement fait allusion à la Constitution irakienne, qui consacre l'existence d'une administration régionale kurde dans le nord du pays, appelée Kurdistan tant par ses habitants que par les diplomates étrangers et la presse mondiale. Il s'agit donc d'un terme parfaitement accepté par la communauté internationale. Comme Abdullah Gül l'a rappelé lui-même, ce que la Grèce continue de nommer "ex-République yougoslave de Macédoine" n'en demeure pas moins qualifié de Macédoine par le reste du monde. Jusque-là, dès que l'on évoquait les régions kurdes d'Irak, la Turquie ne voulait entendre parler que du "nord de l'Irak". Bien entendu, l'attitude ambiguë des Kurdes d'Irak à l'égard

de la Turquie, en particulier au sujet du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), n'a pas été de nature à favoriser l'utilisation du terme Kurdistan en Turquie. Son utilisation aujourd'hui montre le chemin qui a été parcouru depuis lors tant sur le plan des rapports entre Ankara et Erbil que vis-à-vis de l'évolution de la question kurde à l'intérieur de la Turquie elle-même.

En recourant à ce terme dans un contexte où il rappelle les Kurdes irakiens à leur devoir à l'égard du PKK, Abdullah Gül a voulu délivrer le message suivant : si vous êtes vraiment une entité autonome au sein de l'Irak, vous êtes alors en mesure d'assumer vos responsabilités et vos engagements. Les leaders kurdes irakiens semblent avoir compris le message. Tant le président irakien d'origine kurde, Jalal Talabani, que Nechirvan Barzani, le Premier ministre de l'entité kurde autonome, ont en effet souligné dans leurs discours la nécessité de désarmer et de "liquider" le PKK. Les pourparlers actuels portent ainsi désormais sur la façon de

mettre un terme aux activités du PKK et, au-delà, en cas de succès, sur la manière de développer une coopération sur le plan économique ainsi que dans d'autres domaines avec cette région kurde limitrophe de la Turquie. La région kurde du nord de l'Irak est bien le voisin de la Turquie. Les deux parties ont alors intérêt à développer de bonnes rela-

tions. Cette visite de Gül en Irak témoigne qu'une vision commune entre les deux parties est en train de prendre forme. Avec l'utilisation du mot "Kurdistan", nous constatons qu'un tabou est tombé. La Turquie est désormais en mesure de passer outre l'allergie et l'inquiétude que ce genre de mot pouvait provoquer. Dans ces conditions, le sud-est de la Turquie [à majorité kurde], qui se développe rapidement et où les droits de l'homme sont respectés, peut devenir un exemple – voire un pôle d'attraction – pour ses voisins immédiats. La région septentrionale de l'Irak est appelée Kurdistan dans le cadre d'un système fédéral inscrit dans la Constitution irakienne. Celle-ci garantit par ailleurs le caractère unitaire de l'Etat irakien. Il est donc tout à fait naturel d'appeler cette région par son nom.

Sami Kohen, *Milliyet*, Istanbul

L'Élysée prêt à un retour du débat sur l'adhésion de la Turquie

LE FIGARO mardi 7 avril 2009

Depuis son élection, Sarkozy a maintenu son refus, mais il en a assoupli les modalités.

QUAND ce n'est pas le plombier polonais, c'est la Turquie qui s'invite à la veille des scrutins européens. Face à la gauche « internationaliste » et à l'Amérique « multiculturaliste », Nicolas Sarkozy a régulièrement affiché son hostilité à l'entrée de la Turquie dans l'Union européenne. « Si la Turquie était en Europe, ça se saurait ! », avait-il lancé en janvier 2005, faisant la joie des électeurs de droite et causant l'irritation de Jacques Chirac, chaud partisan du processus d'adhésion au nom du « dialogue entre les civilisations ».

Depuis son élection, Nicolas Sarkozy a mis de l'eau dans son vin. Il a rencontré le premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan deux fois lors de l'Assemblée générale des Nations unies à New York et l'a assuré que la France ne s'opposerait pas

à la négociation en cours tant qu'elle ne toucherait pas aux chapitres décisifs. Il lui a fallu aussi convaincre la Turquie que son projet d'Union méditerranéenne n'était pas une ruse pour la détourner de l'UE. Mission accomplie : Erdogan était le 13 juillet à Paris pour le lancement de l'Union pour la Méditerranée.

Délicate clause du référendum

Mais la passe la plus délicate fut la modification de l'obligation de recourir au référendum pour ratifier toute nouvelle adhésion à l'Union européenne. Cette clause, inscrite dans la Constitution par Jacques Chirac pour rassurer les adversaires de l'adhésion turque, était difficile à défendre vis-à-vis des autres nouveaux venus et jugée discriminante par Ankara. Un compromis a donc laborieusement été dégagé : « Le principe du référendum est maintenu, sauf si plus des trois cinquièmes des parle-

mentaires des deux Assemblées ratifient une adhésion lors d'un vote préalable », résume l'Élysée.

« Le retour du débat sur l'adhésion turque ne nous dérange pas du tout, on est au clair, le président a encore réaffirmé dimanche sa position, en désaccord avec Barack Obama », fait savoir l'Élysée. Les adversaires de la réintégration pleine et entière de la France à l'Otan vont néanmoins s'employer à souligner que Nicolas Sarkozy va devoir désormais se faire le zélé serviteur des intérêts américains et faciliter l'entrée d'Ankara, à terme, dans l'Union européenne.

Le chef de l'État aura donc à cœur de montrer qu'il ne s'est pas laissé prendre dans les filets américains. Tout comme lors du G20, où il avait mis la pression sur les États-Unis, il devrait s'efforcer de convaincre qu'il est « l'ami », mais « l'ami debout », des États-Unis.

CHARLES JAIGU

Le Monde
2 avril 2009

Le trouble des sunnites irakiens ralliés au pouvoir

Les miliciens du « Réveil » redoutent d'être les laissés-pour-compte du désengagement américain de l'Irak

L'Amérique « *tiendra les promesses* » faites aux anciens combattants et sympathisants d'Al-Qaida en Irak qui ont décidé en 2006 et 2007 de changer de camp pour devenir, sous l'appellation de « comités du Réveil », les supplétifs des soldats étrangers et irakiens dans ce pays. Prononcée lundi 30 mars par le général David Perkins, porte-parole du contingent américain, cette « *réaffirmation* » des engagements de soutien pris en 2008 à l'endroit des quelque cent mille hommes, à 80 % sunnites, qui sont crédités d'avoir aidé à la défaite des djihadistes irakiens vise à limiter l'esprit de révolte qui semble gagner une partie de cette force paramilitaire. Elle fait également suite à la rébellion armée d'une centaine de miliciens, samedi 28 et dimanche 29 mars à Bagdad.

Limitée à un quartier dénommé Al-Fadhil – l'un des deux derniers à majorité sunnite dans la partie orientale de la capitale –, la révolte des « *Fils de l'Irak* », comme les nomme le haut commandement américain qui les a structurés, armés et rémunérés, a finalement été matée par les soldats irakiens après deux jours d'affrontements. Déclenchée suite à l'arrestation, samedi, du leader de ce groupe, un ancien d'Al-Qaida en Irak dénommé Adil Machadani, la rébellion qui, trente-six heures durant, a transformé le quartier en champ de bataille, avec rafales nourries, tireurs embusqués sur les toits des immeubles et survols d'hélicoptères de combat américains sollicités « en soutien » à l'opération irakienne, a finalement fait quatre morts et plusieurs dizaines de blessés. Mardi, alors que la plupart des rebelles avaient rendu leurs armes et regagné leurs foyers, Al-Fadhil avait retrouvé son calme.

Recherché pour meurtre, kidnapping, racket et d'autres crimes « *contre la patrie* », Adil Machadani et son second, à présent sous les verrous, sont également suspectés, selon un porte-parole de l'armée

irakienne, d'appartenir en sous-main à un groupe armé clandestin proche de l'ancien parti Baas de Saddam Hussein, aujourd'hui interdit. Avant de « travailler » pour Al-Qaida à partir de la mi-2003, intéressé, un grand costaud chauve et moustachu, était officier dans la Garde républicaine de Saddam.

Le problème est que ce profil cor-

Pour ces sunnites, le gouvernement de Nouri Al-Maliki « agit pour l'Iran »

respond à bon nombre de membres des « comités du Réveil » répartis dans toute la partie nord et ouest de l'Irak, ce qui ne laisse pas de les inquiéter. A Diyala, une province mixte chiite-sunnite où Al-Qaida dispose encore de combattants, Khaled Khodeir Al-Kouhaibi, chef de la milice locale, reprend l'antienne qui court les rangs de tous les

« réveillés » sunnites du pays, à savoir que le gouvernement essentiellement chiite de Nouri Al-Maliki « *obéit à l'Iran, est loyal à l'Iran* » et « *agit pour l'Iran* ». Mis à part quelques chefs de tribus sunnites de la province d'Al-Anbar qui se sont vraiment ralliés au gouvernement en échange d'avantages pour leurs affidés, la plupart des miliciens du « Réveil » n'ont qu'une confiance très limitée en sa parole. « *Nous craignons beaucoup, résume Al-Luhaibi, de nous retrouver entre deux feux, celui du gouvernement et celui d'Al-Qaida, lorsque les Américains seront partis.* »

M. Maliki, qui se méfie beaucoup de la nouvelle sincérité « patriotique » de ces « retournés » sunnites, en a déjà fait arrêter plusieurs centaines à travers le pays. Suite aux fortes pressions exercées sur lui par l'armée américaine, le premier ministre a accepté de prendre en charge les salaires de ces miliciens (de 250 à 300 dollars par mois) depuis octobre 2008 et pro-

Une force supplétive

Environ 100 000 miliciens

A 80 % sunnites, ils ont été recrutés comme supplétifs par l'armée américaine depuis début 2006. Quelque 54 000 miliciens sont présents dans les seules ville et province de Bagdad.

Le mouvement du « Réveil »

Initié fin 2005 par des chefs de tribus sunnites de la province d'Al-Anbar, outrés par l'extrémisme des djihadistes d'Al-Qaida en Irak, le mouvement dit du « Réveil » – *Sahwa* en arabe – s'est peu à peu étendu à toutes les villes confessionnellement mixtes du pays.

Le calendrier de retrait américain (140 000 hommes) Présenté début mars, il s'étale jusqu'au 31 août 2010. Douze mille soldats seront redéployés au cours des six prochains mois.

mis d'en embaucher quelque vingt mille dans l'armée et la police. Problème : alors que les prix du pétrole, unique ressource extérieure de l'Irak, s'effondrent, le gouvernement a gelé toute embauche nouvelle dans ses forces de sécurité. Moins d'un tiers du nombre promis aurait été à ce jour intégré.

De nombreux chefs miliciens à travers le pays se plaignent de n'avoir pas été payés depuis deux à trois mois. Le gouvernement plaide la bonne foi et la désorganisation bureaucratique de ses services pour expliquer ces retards. Mais en haut lieu, certains ne cachent pas leur aversion à l'endroit de ces miliciens « *achetés par les Américains* ». Ils estiment que les quelque 620 000 membres des divers services de sécurité sont « *assez nombreux pour maintenir l'ordre* » et que, d'ici au départ des Américains, prévu au 31 août 2010 pour le gros des troupes, « *peu de miliciens pourront y être intégrés* ». ■

Patrice Claude (avec AP et AFP)



Violences en Irak: 252 morts en mars

BAGDAD, 1 avril 2009 (AFP)

LES VIOLENCES en Irak ont coûté la vie à 252 civils, militaires et policiers irakiens en mars, un bilan stable par rapport à février, selon des chiffres recueillis mercredi par l'AFP auprès des ministères de la Défense, de l'Intérieur et de la Santé.

Au total, 252 Irakiens ont péri et 647 ont été blessés dans des attentats et attaques en mars, contre 258 en février, confirmant la hausse des deux derniers mois, après 191 morts en janvier, le mois qui avait enregistré le niveau de violences le plus bas depuis l'invasion américaine en 2003.

Dans le détail, 185 civils ont été tués et 445 blessés dans des actes de violences. Dans le même temps, 14 militaires irakiens ont péri et 45 ont été blessés.

La police irakienne a également été touchée avec 53 de ses agents tués et 157 blessés. Par ailleurs, 45 insurgés présumés ont été tués et 650 arrêtés.

La semaine dernière, le porte-parole de l'armée américaine, le général David Perkins, s'était félicité de la baisse des violences, indiquant que le nombre d'attaques en Irak avait atteint son niveau le plus bas depuis les premiers mois de l'invasion américaine en mars 2003.

Cette baisse s'explique par la nouvelle stratégie de contre-insurrection de l'armée américaine et le renforcement des forces de sécurité irakiennes, même si les attentats restent presque quotidiens.

En 2008, 6.772 Irakiens avaient été tués dans des violences.

A titre de comparaison, 17.430 personnes avaient péri en 2007. 2006 et 2007 avaient enregistré les pires bilans de victimes depuis mars 2003.

De son côté, l'armée américaine a perdu huit militaires en mars, soit le bilan le plus bas depuis l'invasion, ce qui porte à 4.262 les pertes américaines en Irak depuis mars 2003, selon un bilan établi à partir du site www.icasualties.org.

Le bilan des victimes en mars s'explique notamment par au moins quatre attentats de grande ampleur, qui ont fait en moyenne 30 morts à chaque fois.

Début mars, deux attentats suicide perpétrés à trois jours d'écart à Bagdad et à Abou Ghraïb, dans la banlieue ouest de la capitale, avaient ravivé les craintes pour la sécurité en Irak, alors que l'armée américaine prévoit de retirer 12.000 de ses soldats dans les six mois à venir, en plus des 4.100 soldats du contingent britannique qui doivent avoir quitté le pays d'ici juillet.

Le mode opératoire de ses attentats très meurtriers - un kamikaze portant une ceinture d'explosifs ou conduisant un véhicule bourré d'explosifs - porte la signature de la branche irakienne d'Al-Qaïda.

Prudent, le commandement américain a toujours estimé qu'Al-Qaïda, même affaiblie, conservait la capacité de monter des opérations complexes. Et qu'il restait encore du travail pour que les forces irakiennes soient complètement prêtes à assurer seules la sécurité du pays.

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PÉTROLE: L'IRAK SANCTIONNE 2 FIRMES CORÉENNES EN CONTRAT AVEC LE KURDISTAN

BAGDAD, 2 avril 2009 (AFP) -

LE MINISTRE irakien du Pétrole a annoncé jeudi que les entreprises sud-coréennes qui avaient signé des contrats pétroliers avec le Kurdistan irakien ne pourraient pas participer aux appels d'offres lancés par Bagdad pour plusieurs gisements importants en Irak.

"Le ministre du Pétrole Hussein Chahristani a déclaré que les contrats signés étaient illégaux et contraires à la Constitution", indique son ministère dans un communiqué publié après une rencontre entre M. Chahristani et l'ambassadeur sud-coréen en Irak, Ha Tae-yun.

"Pour cette raison, ces deux compagnies ont été empêchées de participer aux appels d'offres. Mais si ces compagnies annulent leurs contrats, elles pourront participer au prochain appel d'offres", a ajouté le ministre cité dans le communiqué.

A Erbil, le chargé des relations extérieures du gouvernement kurde irakien Falah Moustafa s'est dit "très en colère" après les déclarations de M. Chahristani.

"Il ferait mieux de s'occuper de son ministère, de servir les Irakiens et d'augmenter la production pétrolière", a ajouté M. Moustafa à l'AFP.

Interrogée, l'ambassade sud-coréenne à Bagdad n'a pas souhaité faire de commentaires.

Les entreprises sud-coréennes SK Energy et Korea National Oil Corp (KNOC) ont signé deux contrats pétroliers avec les autorités du Kurdistan irakien.

En juin 2008, un accord avait été signé avec un consortium sud-coréen mené par la KNOC, compagnie publique, prévoyant l'exploration de huit champs pétroliers avec des réserves estimées à 7,2 mds de barils.

En contre-partie, la société sud-coréenne s'était engagée à investir deux milliards de dollars dans des projets de construction dans la région kurde.

L'accord avait été conclu malgré les protestations de Bagdad qui refuse à la région autonome du Kurdistan la possibilité de négocier, sans son accord, des contrats d'exploration pétrolière.

En janvier 2008, Bagdad avait suspendu un contrat d'approvisionnement de 90.000 barils par jour avec la compagnie nationale sud-coréenne. Cette dernière venait de signer avec le Kurdistan un accord d'exploration d'un champ à Bazian.

L'Irak a lancé fin décembre un second appel d'offres international portant sur 11 champs pétroliers et gaziers afin de relancer une production irakienne à la traîne en attirant les majors occidentales.

Cette initiative intervenait six mois après un premier appel d'offres portant sur six champs pétroliers et deux gisements gaziers.

Une nouvelle loi sur le pétrole est en discussion au Parlement, mais son vote a été reporté à cause de fortes oppositions entre factions chiites, sunnites et kurdes au sein de l'assemblée, notamment au sujet de la répartition des revenus pétroliers.

Membre fondateur de l'Organisation des pays exportateurs de pétrole (Opep), l'Irak possède les troisièmes réserves mondiales connues de pétrole brut avec plus de 115 milliards de barils, derrière l'Arabie Saoudite et l'Iran.



TURQUIE: TROIS PERSONNES INculpÉES POUR DES ASSASSINATS DE KURDES

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 2 avril 2009 (AFP)

UN TRIBUNAL de Diyarbakir (sud-est) a inculpé trois anciens "repentins" rebelles kurdes jeudi pour leur implication dans l'assassinat présumé de nombreux Kurdes dans les années 1990 dans cette zone, a-t-on appris de source judiciaire.

La cour a ordonné dans un premier temps l'inculpation de deux hommes, puis suivi d'une troisième. Ils étaient tous autrefois membres du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit), a-t-on précisé de même source.

Ils ont été écroués dans l'attente de leur procès dans le cadre de l'enquête baptisée "les puits de la mort".

Ces inculpations interviennent alors qu'un procureur de Diyarbakir, la principale ville du sud-est turc, dominé par les Kurdes, a ordonné de nouvelles fouilles jeudi sur un site proche du hameau de Karacali, à une dizaine de km de la ville.

Les autorités recherchent les restes de deux personnes portées disparues après

avoir été abattues par des éléments du service de renseignements de la gendarmerie turque, le Jitem, sur la base d'aveux formulés par un transfuge du PKK qui évoquait des exactions présumées.

Rien n'avait été trouvé en début de journée jeudi.

Abdülkadir Aygan, un ancien rebelle devenu informateur de l'armée et qui vit actuellement en Suède, a affirmé à la presse turque avoir été témoin de meurtres d'un certain nombre de gens, accusés de collaborer avec le PKK.

Ses allégations ont donné le coup d'envoi d'une large enquête sur des disparitions dans les années 1990, au plus fort de l'insurrection kurde dans la région.

Des excavations effectuées dans la province voisine de Sirnak ont permis de retrouver des fragments d'os humain et de tissu dans des endroits surnommés par la presse "les puits de la mort", parce que des corps y auraient été jetés puis recouverts d'acide, dans les années 1990.

Trois autres personnes ont été inculpées jusqu'à présent dans cette affaire, dont un colonel de l'armée.

Insurgents returning as U.S. leaves Iraq's cities

BAGHDAD

Militants back in areas that were largely quiet, but the threat is unclear

BY ALISSA J. RUBIN

As the U.S. military prepares to withdraw from Iraqi cities, Iraqi and American security officials say that jihadi and Baathist militants are rejoining the fight in areas that are largely quiet now, regrouping as a smaller but still lethal insurgency.

There is much debate whether any new insurgency, at a time of relative calm in most of Iraq, could ever produce the same levels of violence as at the height of the fighting here. A recent stream of attacks, however, like bubbles that indicate fish beneath still water, suggest the potential danger, all the more perilous now because the Americans who helped pacify Iraq are leaving.

Several well-planned bombings, one on a street that had recently reopened because it was thought to be safe, have killed 123 people, most of them in and around Baghdad. Three were suicide bombings, signatures of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, a Sunni extremist group.

Assassination attempts on members of the Awakening Councils, former insurgents who switched sides for pay, have increased, as are fears that some are joining Al Qaeda or other insurgent groups. On Saturday a key Awakening leader was arrested on charges, among others, of being a member of the military wing of the outlawed Baath Party that was led by Saddam Hussein.

Prisoners long held by the U.S. military are being set free every day, potentially increasing the insurgency's manpower. At least one has already blown himself up in a suicide attack.

Most of the attacks have targeted Iraqis, but one development affects the Americans. A new weapon has appeared in Iraq: the Russian-made RKG-3 grenade, which weighs just two kilograms, or five pounds, and, attached to parachutes, can be lobbed by a teenager. But it can penetrate the U.S. military's latest heavily armored vehicle, the MRAP. The

grenades cost as little as \$10, said U.S. military officials, who would not say how often they have killed soldiers.

To some experts, all of this amounts to ugly but unavoidable background noise, the deadly but no longer destabilizing face of violence in Iraq. In that view, there will still be attacks, but not ones that could topple the government.

Military officers here, who asked not to be quoted by name because they were not authorized to talk to the news media, asserted that they had reduced the number of militants linked to Al Qaeda from about 3,800 to less than 2,000.

"In most places there isn't an insurgency in Iraq any more," said an American military intelligence officer in Washington, who is not permitted to speak on the record. "What we have now is a terrorism problem and there is going to be a terrorism problem in Iraq for a long time."

Other officials, Iraqi and American, are more worried. They see Al Qaeda and other insurgent groups activating networks of sleeper cells, who now are striking government and civilian targets.

Insurgent groups linked to Saddam's regime are also reviving. Among the most powerful now is Nashqabandi, which has ties to a former vice president under Saddam, Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri. The organization, which gets financing from Iraqi exiles in Syria, has formed an alliance with Al Qaeda, said American and Iraqi military intelligence officials.

"Al Qaeda and the hardcore Saddamists are the main threats to the national security of Iraq," said Mouwaffak al-Rubaie, Iraq's national security adviser.

"Nashqabandi is the cradle; they are providing logistical support for Al Qaeda in Diyala, Kirkuk and some eastern parts of Salahiddin," Rubaie said. "What we are seeing is the resurgence of the hardcore Saddamists, but using Al Qaeda in Iraq as a front and as suicide bombers."

U.S. military officials said they believed they have checked the insurgency, but they likened it to a spring. "It can come up quickly as soon as it is released, but the longer you keep it down the less it rebounds," said Col. James Phelps, an insurgency expert.

In interviews with 14 leaders of the Awakening movement, all believed that the Al Qaeda presence in their areas had increased as American troops began to close combat outposts in rural areas or hand them over to the Iraqi Army, a first step toward withdrawing entirely. They reported subtle signs of trouble: assassination attempts, homemade bombs placed near their homes or under their cars, leaflets urging them not to work with the government.

"We notice when there is a bomb buried on a back road where there has not been one before," said Sheik Awad al-Harbousi, whose Awakening group works in the area around Taji, north of Baghdad, much of it empty country traversed by rugged dirt roads bordered by tall grasses that can serve as cover. He lost one fighter three weeks ago and had two wounded. He worries that some may be persuaded to go back to working with Al Qaeda if the government does not give them jobs.



The funeral for Abass Kadim, 13, who was killed last week by a car bombing in Najaf.

Undermining the stability of the last few months is the rising friction between the Awakening Councils and the Iraqi Army and police, much of it with a sectarian edge. The tensions turned violent in Baghdad on March 28 when members of the Fadhil neighborhood Awakening group had a shootout with a combined U.S. and Iraqi force. The Awakening Councils are largely Sunni and the security forces are dominated by Shiites. In addition, many Awakening members are angry because promises they would have jobs in the Shiite-dominated security forces have not been kept.

In Dhululiya, deep in the Tigris River Valley, Mullah Nadhim al-Jubori, a one-time insurgent linked to Al Qaeda who became an Awakening leader, worries that the situation is fraying in the swath of land he commands, long a redoubt for Sunni militants. He ticked off seven troubling events in the last month, including the abduction of four of his men. Two were executed and two were released after paying a ransom.

"The ransom was picked up in Baghdad," he said. "That tells me there is good coordination and organization among Al Qaeda members."

A few of his followers have changed sides. During the past four months 12 Awakening members were arrested as double agents, accused of killing Awakening leaders, Mr. Nadhim said.

Further east in Diyala Province, the situation is worse. The insurgency has never been fully eradicated there, the U.S. and Iraqi officers said. The province's geography favors those who know its dry high hills, empty patches of desert and thick groves of date palms along the rivers.

While the province is far more secure than in 2006 and 2007, when the capital of Baquba was known locally as "the city of death," attacks are now increasing. Forty-three people were killed in Diyala in March, up from 29 in February and 6 in January, according to the Diyala Operations Command.

Ali al-Tamimi, the chief of the provincial council's security committee, predicted an increase in violence both in Baghdad and in Baquba because the security commanders have not acted on warnings about the growing activities of armed groups on the outskirts of the capital.

"We have told them that Al Qaeda is still present in some neighborhoods and villages," he said. "They have not done enough to stop them."

TIME April 02, 2009

Kurdish Spring?

By PELIN TURGUT / SILOPI

A yellow digger, creaky and crusted with mud, sits in front of a crowd of about 200 people outside a little-used military facility in the Turkish town of Silopi. The digger's engine hums. In a minute it will roll forward, past the grieving relatives dressed in their Sunday best, past the chain-smoking lawyers in somber suits, past blank-faced sentries and a television broadcast van beaming pictures around the country, and head on into one of the most controversial issues in Turkey's murky recent history.

In the 1990s, at the height of a dirty war fought against Kurdish separatists, state-sanctioned death squads allegedly killed hundreds of people and then buried them in unmarked pits, according to human-rights groups. Those groups estimate 5,000 people died; 1,000 have never been found. Now, like the pale crocuses emerging underfoot, there are stirrings of change across Turkey. For the first time, a public prosecutor has authorized excavation of one of the sites where missing Kurds are believed to be buried. The ruling represents something of a revolution in a country that has long oppressed Kurdish rights. "It would have been unthinkable, up until recently, for a solo prosecutor to order this search," says Umit Kardas, a former military judge who served in the southeast in the 1980s. "This gives me hope about Turkey's future."

The military presence in the mainly Kurdish southeast remains strong and the only Kurdish party in parliament constantly worries it will be forced to disband. But in other ways, change is happening. After years under a ban, the Kurdish language is flowering, the result of European Union-mandated reforms introduced in 2006. In Silopi, the same store that once secretly sold bootleg Kurdish tapes is now plastered with pictures of budding Kurdish stars. Language courses in the unofficial regional capital Diyarbakir are packed, writers' groups have sprouted and at the local theater, young actors are staging the city's first ever original Kurdish-language play (*The Mutes*). "Diyarbakir used to be a place where Kurdish was spoken, but never written," says municipal cultural coordinator Cevahir Sadak Duzgan. "That's changing."

In cinemas nationwide, *I Saw the Sun*, a controversial film about a Kurdish family whose two sons find themselves on opposing sides of the conflict, is No. 1 at the box office. And while using Kurdish spelling remains officially forbidden, people make a point of using their Kurdish names when they can. "Rojhat," says one bright-eyed 29-year-old lawyer, extending a hand when I meet him on a recent trip to the Kurdish region of



FLAG DAYS: A Turkish Kurd celebrates New Year. MUSTAFA OZER / AFP / Getty

Turkey. "Not Resat". (Unlike Turkish, Kurdish uses x and j.)

Even the state seems to be shaking its hard-line stance. In January, it launched a Kurdish-language television station with a flashy Kurdish singer as main billing. "The state is recognizing, in effect, that Kurdish is a language and that it can be used to deliver a public service like broadcast," says Ahmet Birsin, of Gun TV, a local station.

More change might flow from a landmark trial underway in Istanbul. The case pits the state against a shadowy ultra-right-wing network allegedly led by retired generals. Prosecutors accuse the group of staging bomb attacks and assassinations in a bid to overthrow the ruling Justice and Development Party and create a pretext for military rule. Turkey is no stranger to coups — the military has stepped in to push the government this way or that three times in as many decades. As recently as 2007, a veiled threat prompted early elections.

But the trial is the first time a coup plot has landed high-ranking military officials in court. The 40 soldiers now being held include a retired general and colonel believed to have cofounded JITEM, a secretive military-intelligence unit which many Kurds suspect is responsible for most of the dirty work in the southeast, including the extrajudicial killings of dozens of Kurdish activists. The Ergenekon trial — the group named itself after a mythic central Asian valley Turks believe they come from — "is a milestone," says Nuserivan Elci, who represents some 50 families of the 'missing' in Silopi. "It's a historic opportunity for Turkey to deal with its past."

Izzettin Aslan, a retired civil servant, knows how elusive justice can be. In 1993, his son Murat, a 24-year-old university student in Diyarbakir, stepped out to pay an electricity bill. According to witnesses, four men grabbed Murat off a busy street in broad daylight and pushed him into a waiting car. "It was as if the ground opened up and swallowed him," Aslan says.

In 2004, a former JITEM member now living in Sweden went public with details of

abductions he witnessed in the 1990s. He named Aslan's son and described how he was tortured, shot in the head and set on fire. Based on his description, Aslan drove out to a valley near Silopi and found bones near a tree by a riverbed. He badgered a local prosecutor who eventually put him on a bus to Istanbul with a plastic bag carrying the bones for forensic identification. The tests proved the bones were Murat's.

Four years ago, Aslan tried to have military commanders in charge of the region at the time of his son's abduction subpoenaed. The military has still not responded to his appeal. That snub doesn't surprise Kardas, the former military judge. "Turkey's most fundamental issue is how to get the military back into the barracks," he says. "The Kurdish problem is at the heart of that. The military have been deciding policy. If military officers committed crimes, they should be held accountable, but how?"

The carrot of E.U. membership is one way of scaling back the military's influence. "A chief condition of joining the E.U. is that the military is transparent and accountable to parliament," says Kardas. But that process has largely stalled, with European leaders divided over Turkey's future membership. New hope has arrived in the shape of U.S. President Barack Obama, who will visit Turkey next week and whose administration is keen to have Turkey — Muslim yet officially secular and democratic — play a larger role in the region.

But Turkey will need to deal with its Kurdish problem, including ending hostilities with a militant group, the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), who have about 3,000 guerrillas based in the mountains of northern Iraq. Turkish officials seem to recognize this. A trilateral commission of Iraqi Kurd, Turkish and U.S. officials meets regularly to discuss a possible PKK amnesty. Other measures on the agenda in Ankara include restoring Kurdish place-names and cleaning up the jingoistic billboards that litter the southeast. What's really needed is a more democratic constitution. But the government has backtracked on that promise before, and is weakened after losing support in local elections last month. "To make this sense of progress stick, we need Kurdish identity to be constitutionally recognized," says lawyer Elci. "Otherwise it will never be secure." Pointing from the window of his cramped office to the dusty town beyond he says: "This is the farthest point from democracy in Turkey. But it will get here."

It helps that Turkish Kurds now have a role model of their own. Kurdistan is still a taboo word in Turkey, but Turkish Kurds have watched with fascination the developments in neighboring Iraq over the past few years. Iraqi Kurds have built up a largely self-governing region with its own parliament and flag. For the first time in history, the Kurds — an ancient people spread out across Iran, Syria, Turkey and Iraq — have

what looks like a state. "The emergence of Kurdistan has fostered a sense of self-confidence here," says Sezgin Tanrikulu, a prominent lawyer in Diyarbakir. "Not because people want independence. Or to live there. But it shows that there is indeed a distinct Kurdish culture. For a long time we were told 'you don't exist', 'there's no such thing as a Kurd,' and yet, look, there they are."

That first day in Silopi, the dig is called off. The prosecutor cites security concerns, the lawyers are despondent. But the next morning, the digger reappears and, this time, the gate opens. Every day since has brought reports of new bones. But as we drive out of Silopi, we pass convoys of tarpaulin-covered military trucks rumbling towards the Iraqi

border, as they have every March in recent memory. Spring means a return to good weather, and fighting the PKK in the mountains. The trucks are a reminder that the road ahead for Turkey is long and bumpy. But change seems inevitable.

The Economist

April 2nd 2009

Turkish politics

A wake-up call from the voters

ISTANBUL / Turkey's ruling party did unexpectedly badly in local elections

DEFEAT is an unfamiliar concept for Turkey's prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Yet his Justice and Development (AK) Party felt it for the first time in local elections on March 29th, when voters gave it only 39% of the vote. That was more than any rival but still a sharp drop from the 47% AK took in the 2007 general election. Mr Erdogan, who treated the local elections as a referendum on himself, was visibly shaken as he declared his unhappiness with the result. AK lost 12 cities, among them Siirt in the south-east, the home town of Mr Erdogan's wife, Emine. It lost the mainly Kurdish city of Van to the Democratic Society Party (DTP), whose strident Kurdish nationalist message trumped Mr Erdogan's talk of the common bond of Islam.

The elections were a triumph for Turkey's shaky democracy. In 2007 the fiercely secular generals led a crude campaign to unseat the government. They threatened a coup when Mr Erdogan nominated Abdullah Gul, his foreign minister, as president, because his wife's Islamic-style headscarf threatened Ataturk's secular principles. Their campaign backfired: AK swept back for a second term and Mr Gul became president. The generals then egged on the chief prosecutor to bring a case before the Constitutional Court to ban AK on charges of seeking to impose sharia law. The party narrowly escaped closure when the court delivered its verdict last July.

Chastened, the army kept quiet in the latest elections. The secular opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) made modest gains, taking 23% of the vote. It put up a tough if losing battle against AK in Ankara and Istanbul. In the largely Kurdish south-east the DTP took a thumping 75% in the provincial capital, Diyarbakir. Elsewhere, the far-right Nationalist Action Party (MHP) and



Flags down for Erdogan

the overtly Islamist Felicity Party did well. The message from the voters, one Western diplomat suggested, was that "they want a check on AK hegemony."

As Mr Erdogan's people lick their wounds, two lessons stand out. One concerns the economy. Mr Erdogan's claims that the global meltdown had not affected Turkey angered voters, who face rising unemployment (13.6% in December), shrinking GDP and a tumbling lira. The second stems from Mr Erdogan's waning appetite for the reforms that led the European Union to open membership talks with Turkey in 2005. Liberals, hitherto among AK's staunchest defenders, are defecting.

Attempts by more radical AK types to emphasise the role of Islam in public life spooked others. The AK incumbent lost in Antalya, even though Mr Erdogan is said to have visited the resort 26 times. Mr

Erdogan's authoritarian bent and his quarrels with the secular press did not help. On the other side, Mr Erdogan's failure to deliver on issues dear to his pious constituents, such as easing the ban on the headscarf, allowed Felicity to snatch some voters away. AK no longer unites the different strands of Turks, be they sectarian, ethnic or ideological, as it once did. The conundrum for Mr Erdogan is how to please one constituency without antagonising another.

One way forward might be to re-embrace the reformist zeal that first propelled AK to power in 2002. In the south-east, AK's efforts to strike a deal with Iraqi Kurdish leaders to disarm rebels from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) holed up on the Iran-Iraq border are encouraging. But they will not succeed if AK keeps snubbing the biggest Kurdish party, the DTP.

The MHP's success will make both dealing with the PKK and rewriting the Turkish constitution, drawn up by the generals after their coup in 1980, trickier. Meeting the EU's year-end deadline to open Turkey's ports to Greek-Cypriot ships and planes will also be a challenge. And Mr Erdogan must be ready to strike a fresh standby arrangement with the IMF to reassure jittery foreign investors.

Such an agenda suggests that Mr Erdogan should reach out to the mainstream opposition CHP, which he has been reluctant to do in the past. Yet if he wants to remain Turkey's most popular politician, he may have to set aside his pride. ■

Talabani talks security with KRG



ERBIL, Iraq, April 1, 2009 (UPI) --

IRAQI PRESIDENT Jalal Talabani traveled to a resort town in northern Iraq on Wednesday to discuss political developments with his Kurdish counterpart.

Talabani led a delegation from his political party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, to meet with President Massoud Barzani of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq to discuss a variety of political issues, the Voices of Iraq news agency reports.

Both leaders had met last week with Turkish President Abdullah

Gul, marking the first visit to Iraq by a Turkish head of state in more than three decades.

Turkish and Iraqi leaders addressed security issues related to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. Talabani said he would convene a summit of top Kurdish officials in Erbil later this spring.

Meanwhile, Nechirvan Barzani, the prime minister in the KRG, met with U.S. military officials to discuss security in northern Iraq and issues related to the so-called disputed territories.

Kirkuk lies at the center of territorial disputes between the KRG and the central government in Baghdad.

At least 10 people were wounded in Mosul from a car bomb. A separate attack in Kirkuk wounded another eight people Wednesday.

Public Service Review

www.publicservice.co.uk
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April 06, 2009

By Jonathan Fryer

Some people are impatient that Turkey's application for EU membership is taking so long but there are still serious questions about a country that bans the letters q, w and x because they exist in Kurdish but not in Turkish

It is exactly 60 years since Turkey applied for associate membership of the EEC, the precursor of the European Union, and 10 years since the country officially became a candidate for full EU membership. So it is not surprising that some public servants in Ankara are getting impatient with the slow progress of accession negotiations, not to mention the outright hostility of EU member states such as Austria and France.

However, there are good reasons for Brussels' slow-but-steady approach, which even a keen advocate of Turkish membership such as myself acknowledges. Quite apart from economic matters, there are still many political issues which Turkey needs to resolve before it can qualify.

The EU — unlike other supra-national regional bodies, such as ASEAN or the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) — has strict political conditions for membership: the so-called Copenhagen criteria. These go way beyond bland statements about democratic government and a respect for human rights, notably including the specific recognition of the political and cultural rights of minorities.

This is particularly relevant in the case of Turkey. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the 'father' of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, set about creating a Turkish national identity, based on the principle that every citizen of Turkey is a Turk and should speak Turkish. Some ethnic minorities, such as the Greeks, largely left or were expelled, but others, including Armenians and Arabs, were faced with compulsory assimilation. That included the approximately one-fifth of Turkey's population who identified themselves as Kurds, but who were henceforth described as 'mountain Turks'.

The Kurds — whose traditional homelands straddle south-eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, western Iran and a small corner of Syria — have a distinct culture and language (albeit divided into distinct dialects). But they have never had a state of their own. The British and the French put an end to any such aspirations following the First World War.

In Iraq, the region of Kurdistan has acquired a large degree of autonomy. But in Turkey, the Kurds of south-eastern Anatolia faced both physical and cultural oppression for most of the 20th century, especially after a militant Kurdish organisation took up armed struggle. Not only was the Kurdish language banned in public and Kurds treated as second-class citizens, but whole Kurdish villages were wiped off the map. Large numbers of Kurds also left the south-east and moved to cities in western Turkey in search of work. There are said to be up to two million of them in Istanbul alone. Hundreds of thousands moved abroad, including many who suc-

Turkey must sort out its Kurd issues

cessfully sought asylum in Britain. London boroughs such as Hackney and Haringey are now home to numerous Turkish Kurds.

Quite rightly, the EU has been putting pressure on Ankara to alleviate the situation of Kurds. This action has taken place on two main fronts: by officials in the European Commission in Brussels, as part of the accession negotiations, and by concerned members of the European Parliament.

It was in the European Parliament building in Brussels, at the end of January, that the Fifth International Conference on EU, Turkey and the Kurds was held, bringing together leaders of the Kurdish community, MEPs, academics, NGOs, journalists and others, to review progress so far and the challenges ahead. I was there as someone who has covered the trials in Ankara and Istanbul of writers, journalists and publishers who had fallen foul of draconian Turkish laws which make even discussing the Kurdish issue a minefield. I also gave a paper at the conference on the role of civil society in promoting democratic change.

The good news is that the current Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has overseen some moderate reforms that are a step in the right direction. The most dramatic of these has been the creation of a Kurdish-language TV station, though Kurdish civil society groups complain that they have had no say in the type of programmes it broadcasts. The bad news is that week after week, Kurds are still being prosecuted for exercising what should be their normal civil and cultural rights.

In what seems to the average British person an almost Alice in Wonderland situation, it is illegal in Turkey to use publicly the letters q, w and x (which exist in Kurdish, but not in Turkish). And if any of the Kurdish MPs try to use their language in parliament, they are shouted down, may face prosecution and the Turkish equivalent of Hansard records simply "the member spoke in an unknown language". Kurdish mayors have been subject to repeated malicious prosecutions, for example, for producing council literature in minority languages.

Several Kurdish MPs have been sent to prison at various times, including the most celebrated victim of the system, Leyla Zana, who addressed the Brussels conference. She is going to be hauled before the courts yet again on 31 March. The leaders of all the political groups in the European Parliament have urged the Turkish authorities to stop harassing her and the European Court has repeatedly complained about the matter.

Just two days before Leyla Zana's new trial, Turkey's local elections are due to be held. I will be one of a number of foreign observers monitoring the conduct of these, in my case in the main Turkish Kurdish city of Diyarbakir. It is vital for the Kurds to have independent witnesses during potentially tense situations, but also important that Europe is kept abreast of what is going on in its largest aspirant member state.

The writer, lecturer and broadcaster Jonathan Fryer is Number 2 on the Liberal Democrats' London list for this June's European elections

The Washington Post

April 4, 2009

In Iraq, Political Ambiguity

Old Alliances Shift After January Vote

By Anthony Shadid

RAMADI, Iraq -- In the wake of clashes this week that pitted government forces against U.S.-backed Sunni fighters in Baghdad, the divergent views of two of the fighters' leaders brought to light two visions of the direction Iraqi politics are headed.

One belonged to Karim Hussein, known as Abu Maarouf, who holds sway in the outskirts of Baghdad, the kind of place where a skittish soldier can be seen carrying an assault rifle in each hand. The Shiite-led government, he said, is out to destroy the Awakening, the name for Sunni fighters and former insurgents who joined hands with the U.S. military. "Not only the government, but the American forces, too," he declared.

The other view belonged to Ahmed Abu Risha, brother of the slain founder of the Awakening. That same government, he said, was absolutely right to crack down on the fighters in Baghdad and arrest their leader. "No one is above the law," Abu Risha said.

Politics in Iraq have long been facilely described as a competition among Sunni Arab, Shiite Arab and Kurd. Divisions have long beset each community. But as Hussein and Abu Risha's views suggest, at no time since the fall of President Saddam Hussein six years ago have politics been so fluid and old assumptions so discredited, with traditional alliances crumbling and new ones emerging in the wake of January's provincial elections. Iraq's politicians are trying to forge the grand coalition that can deliver victory in national elections by January.

No one seems to trust the other, but many politicians speak about agreeing on a formula emphasizing Iraqi nationalism, a strong state and an ostensible rejection of the sectarian and ethnic divisions that have dominated Iraq since 2003.

Former prime minister Ayad Allawi is negotiating with Abu Risha, who is in turn eager for an alliance with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. All three are talking, sometimes through mediators, with Shiite followers of Moqtada al-Sadr, whose militia Allawi and his U.S. allies once battled. In a visit unimaginable a year ago, Iraq's Sunni vice president visited a hospital this week in the Sadr City section of Baghdad that is the stronghold of Sadr's militia.

"Everyone is trying to reach out to everyone else," Allawi said.

Allawi said he didn't foresee a deal until this summer, and some have predicted that alliances may eventually fall back along sectarian and ethnic lines. But the talks have consumed so much of politicians' attention that many believe parliament will set aside action on crucial legislation like revenue sharing and hydrocarbons until after the vote.

The negotiations seem to be building on coalitions between unlikely forces in

provincial councils -- for instance, loyalists of influential Sunni politician Saleh al-Mutlaq, who draws the backing of supporters of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party, and Maliki's State of Law coalition, which won a majority of seats on the council in Basra, Iraq's second-largest city, and emerged as the single biggest bloc in Baghdad and four other provinces.

Maliki and Sadr have also agreed to work together, though many of the coalitions seem driven as much by pragmatism as ideology. While Sadr has allied with Maliki in Babil province, Sadr officials say they also expect to reach an agreement with their erstwhile foes in the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq in Maysan province.

In Baghdad and western Iraq, Karim Hussein and Abu Risha demonstrate the contradictory but potentially groundbreaking courting going on among Sunnis grouped under the banner of the Awakening, whose support was crucial in defeating the insurgency. Both display the flag of Saddam Hussein's old government but share little else.

Next to Karim Hussein's house in Radwanayah, on the outskirts of Baghdad, spills the wreckage of a building destroyed in a U.S. strike in 2005. "Long live the mujaheddin," is scrawled on it. "We will avenge the American infidel state."

Hussein pledges loyalty to the Americans and Maliki but remains suspicious. Last month, Iraqi security forces raided his house, arresting his son and brother. "When they're finished with you, they toss you to the side," he complained.

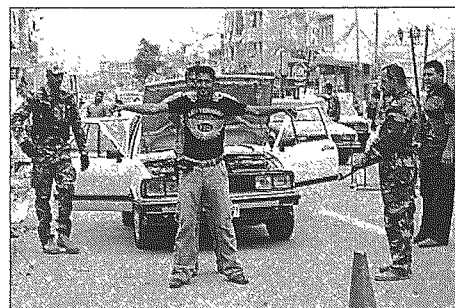
At his compound in Ramadi, Abu Risha dismissed Hussein as a militiaman. "We don't want to build militias," he said. "I'm not a militia leader. I'm a politician."

Asked whether he envisioned an alliance with Maliki in the coming elections, Abu Risha answered, "Without a doubt." "If he's willing, we have no objection," he said. "If this project will keep Iraq united and on the path of reconciliation, we support it."

He said an alliance was possible that might draw together Mutlaq's Sunni supporters, Maliki's Shiite-led coalition, Arab nationalists in the restive northern city of Mosul and even followers of Sadr, whose Mahdi Army militia is widely blamed by Sunnis for playing a gratuitous role in the sectarian bloodletting of 2006 and 2007.

"There is work toward this alliance," Abu Risha said.

Salah al-Obeidi, a Sadr spokesman, said the movement began tentative talks with Awakening leaders through tribal intermediaries at the beginning of the year. While Abu Risha said he wanted to determine the status of Sadr's militia before any agreement, Obeidi said Sadr's followers were worried that Abu Risha and other Awakening leaders were too close to the United States, Sadr's traditional enemy, and



Members of the Sunni Awakening group searched a motorist at a vehicle checkpoint in northern Baghdad on Monday. The U.S.-backed Awakening group is at the center of contradictory but potentially groundbreaking political courting. (By Khalid Mohammed -- Associated Press)

too hostile to neighboring Iran.

But he insisted Sadr's followers were still looking to bridge the religious divide. "We don't want to go back to sectarian work," he said. "We don't want that. We want to work with others. Let it be two or three new alliances, not like before."

Perhaps most mercurial so far has been Maliki. Officials of his Dawa party acknowledge his outreach to Mutlaq, Sadr, the Awakening and others. But he seems to be guarding the capital his success in the provincial elections delivered him, and the opacity of his intentions has generated suspicion among his rivals.

Even as Maliki has courted Sadr's followers, Obeidi and others have accused the prime minister of dragging his feet in releasing their loyalists and of backing a campaign of arrests against their supporters in Basra, Karbala and Diwaniyah. Maliki has maintained a channel to the rival Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, humbled by its poor performance in the January election. Iraqi officials say Maliki also plans to send a delegation to the northern city of Irbil next week in an attempt to reconcile with Massoud Barzani, president of the autonomous Kurdish region. Their animosity has emerged as one of Iraq's most combustible disputes, and Allawi has sought to build on it by reaching out to the Kurds.

Some of Maliki's rivals insist he eventually will have to succumb to what they describe as pressure from Iran and Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, the preeminent Shiite cleric in Iraq, to recreate the overarching Shiite alliance that competed in the 2005 vote, though perhaps on Maliki's terms this time. Others see Maliki's ambitions as greater.

"He has proven to be the ultimate opportunist," said a senior Iraqi official, who was interviewed on the condition of anonymity in order to speak frankly about Maliki. "He has no permanent enemies, and he has no permanent friends."

'Don't ignore Kurds'

by Gül Demir - Niki Gamm

ISTANBUL - The Kurds cannot be left out of the equation. The Kurds are like the mortar among the peoples of the Middle East. The Kurds are a very important partner in the Middle East, says Osman Baydemir, the mayor of Diyarbakır who is from the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party.

The U.S. president would be well advised to keep in mind that Kurds in general and the Kurdish population in Turkey particularly should not be forgotten in any peace effort in the Middle East, according to Diyarbakır Mayor Osman Baydemir.

Speaking to the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review, Baydemir, who won a second term in office in the March 29

local elections, said: "It shouldn't be forgotten that there are more than 20 million Kurds living in Turkey. And when Turkey enters the EU, there will be a population of 70 million entering, including the Kurds.

"The Kurds can't be left out of the equation. The Kurds are like the mortar among the people of the Middle East. The Kurds are a very important partner in the Middle East." The mayor, who first came to prominence earlier this decade as one of the young lawyers defending the jailed leader of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, said Turkey was one of the most sensitive and important countries in the Middle East. "I am hoping and wishing that this visit will contribute to peace in the future in the Middle East," he said.

He said U.S. President Barack Obama should be aware of the historical heritage of Southeast Turkey. "The town of Hasankeyf has a history that goes back

12,000 years and is one of the rarest places of human history. It should not be forgotten that 33 civilizations have left their mark on Diyarbakır," he said.

When the construction of the Ilisu Dam is completed, the town of Hasankeyf in the southeastern province of Batman will be submerged under water. He said Kurds could be the key to regional peace and stability. "The Kurds know Armenian, Persian, Arabic and Turkish. In terms of the cultural interaction of the peoples of the Middle East, they are a really important factor. I don't think that a point of view that considers the Kurds as zero will be able to provide peace in the Middle East," said Baydemir. The Middle East is a very sensitive region, he said, adding that it also has a serious need for peace and stability. "My wish for it and this visit is that it will contribute to Middle Eastern peace and offer an opportunity to confront real problems," he said, adding people of the region need to work jointly and any effort should not ignore the Kurds.

DTP told violence is no solution

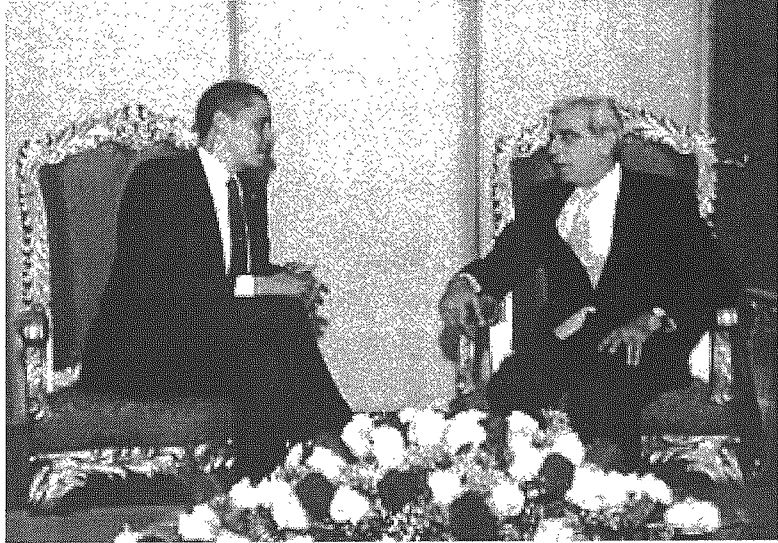
ANKARA - Ahmet Türk, leader of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party, or DTP, said U.S. President Barack Obama advised his party that "violence or armed struggle will not solve the Kurdish problem."

Obama met briefly with opposition party leaders yesterday at Parliament and spoke with each of them for five minutes. He met with Deniz Baykal, leader of the Republican People's Party, or CHP; Devlet Bahçeli, leader of the Nationalist Movement Party, or MHP; and the DTP's Türk.

"I told him that we also denounce the violence. But I informed him that more than 17,000 extra judicial killings have happened in [southeastern Anatolia] over the years," the leader of the pro-Kurdish party said.

He said he handed Obama a dossier that includes the DTP's views on the solution of the problem. Türk also gave the U.S. president cufflinks and a brooch for Michelle Obama as presents.

Baykal thanked Obama for meeting with the opposition. "I know the importance of the opposition in democracies. I was in the opposition for years, too," Obama replied to Baykal, according to people who were present during the meeting. Baykal gave Obama two novels, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's "Huzur" (Comfort) and Sait Faik Abasıyanık's "Haritada bir nokta" (A Point on the Map). During the Bahçeli-



Obama meeting, the importance of the two countries' ties was mentioned without going into detail.

Positive views on Obama's speech

Turkish lawmakers appreciated Obama's historic speech. "He touched upon democracy, secularism and Atatürk. He delivered a message that Israel and Palestine are two states, which we also defend. He defined the PKK as a terrorist organization, CHP deputy leader Onur Öymen said.

Democratic Left Party, or DSP's, Istanbul deputy Ahmet Tan drew attention

to former President Bill Clinton's address in 1999 and said there was no difference between the two speeches.

"Just there is a difference of 10 years. His stress on the opening of a seminary was a surprise," he said. Justice and Development Party, or AKP, Mu? deputy Seracettin Karayaz submitted a letter to Obama that drew attention to the 1915 events.

"Armenians killed my two uncles and many relatives. They put my father in a prison camp. Both sides experienced great losses during the war, but this is not a genocide," Karayaz wrote in his letter.

AP Associated Press

Attentats à Bagdad: au moins 33 morts

2 avril 2009 (AP)

Une série d'attentats à la bombe a fait 33 morts et 93 blessés aujourd'hui dans des quartiers chiïtes de Bagdad, selon la police et des sources médicales.

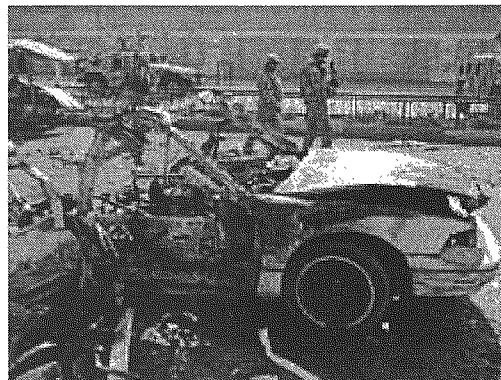
Il s'agit de la journée la plus meurtrière en Irak depuis les attentats du mois dernier qui avaient visé un marché à Abou Ghraïb, au nord de la capitale irakienne, et une école de police à Bagdad.

L'attaque la plus meurtrière d'aujourd'hui a été perpétrée à 11h30 locales: un double attentat à la voiture piégée sur le marché al-Maalif majoritairement chiïte, dans l'ouest de la ville, a fait 12 morts et 29 blessés, a précisé un responsable de la police.

Les violences avaient commencé vers 7h30: une voiture piégée avait explosé, dans le centre de la capitale irakienne, faisant au moins six morts et 16 blessés, selon un responsable de la police. La plupart des victimes étaient des saisonniers cherchant du travail.

Un peu plus tard, un véhicule piégé a sauté sur un marché du quartier chiïte de Saadr City, tuant dix personnes, dont trois femmes et quatre enfants, et en blessant au moins 28 autres, a-t-on appris de sources policières et médicales.

Dans les minutes qui ont suivi, une autre bombe a explosé sur un autre marché de l'est de Bagdad, coûtant la vie à deux personnes et faisant 12



blessés, a rapporté un représentant des services de sécurité.

L'explosion d'une bombe posée au bord d'une route qui visait un convoi de trois véhicules de police a par ailleurs fait trois morts et huit blessés, a-t-on précisé de source policière. Un responsable du ministère irakien de l'Intérieur, qui se trouvait à bord d'un des véhicules, n'a pas été blessé.

L'armée américaine a annoncé en outre qu'un soldat américain avait été tué dimanche dans la province de Diyala où se trouvent de nombreux insurgés, au nord de la capitale.



TURQUIE: DEUX MORTS LORS DE HEURTS ENTRE SYMPATHISANTS DU PKK ET POLICE

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 4 avril 2009 (AFP) -

DEUX MANIFESTANTS qui célébraient samedi dans le sud-est de la Turquie l'anniversaire du chef rebelle kurde emprisonné Abdullah Öcalan ont péri à la suite de heurts avec les forces de sécurité, ont affirmé des sources sécuritaires locales.

Les affrontements sont survenus lorsque des unités de la police et de l'armée ont tenté de faire barrage à plus de 5.000 manifestants qui tentait de rallier Ömerri, le village natal d'Öcalan, dans la province de Sanliurfa, pour y célébrer son 60e anniversaire, selon ces sources.

Les protestataires ont affronté à coups de bâtons et en jetant des pierres les forces de sécurité, qui ont fait usage de gaz lacrymogènes et de canons à eau pour les disperser.

Quatre personnes ont été blessées par des jets de pierre, et d'eux d'entre elles -deux hommes âgés de 21 et 27 ans- ont succombé à leurs blessures à l'hôpital de la ville de Sanliurfa, à environ 110 km au sud-est d'Ömerri.

De nouvelles altercations ont eu lieu à proximité de l'hôpital, au cours desquelles un policier a été blessé.

Fondateur et chef du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit), Öcalan a été arrêté le 15 février 1999 au Kenya. Transféré en Turquie, il a été condamné à mort pour "séparatisme", peine commuée en 2002 en prison à vie après l'abolition de la peine capitale.

Le PKK, classée organisation terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis, mène depuis 1984 une rébellion armée qui a coûté la vie à plus de 40.000 personnes.



ROJ TV, LA TÉLÉ KURDE QUI EMPOISONNE LES RELATIONS ENTRE DANEMARK ET TURQUIE

COPENHAGUE, 6 avril 2009 (AFP) -

ROJ TV, la télévision kurde basée au Danemark accusée par la Turquie d'être la porte-voix des séparatistes kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), empoisonne depuis plusieurs années les relations entre les deux pays.

Le conflit a ressurgi à l'occasion du bras de fer engagé par le gouvernement turc sur la nomination à compter du 1er août de l'ex-Premier ministre danois Anders Fogh Rasmussen à la tête de l'Otan, une nomination annoncée samedi après que les réserves turques ont été levées.

Selon plusieurs journaux turcs, Ankara, en échange de son feu vert à M. Rasmussen, a entre autres obtenu l'assurance que Roj TV sera prochainement interdite d'émettre depuis le Danemark, mettant ainsi un terme à sa diffusion sur des bouquets satellites.

Depuis que Roj TV a obtenu le droit d'émettre auprès du Conseil danois de l'audiovisuel en décembre 2003, la Turquie, via son ambassade à Copenhague a déposé plusieurs plaintes, devant l'autorité administrative et la police, pour l'instant sans succès.

L'ambassade accuse Roj TV de "contribuer ouvertement à atteindre les buts poursuivis par l'organisation terroriste PKK", selon un extrait d'une plainte de 2007 dont l'AFP a eu copie.

Une enquête de police a été ouverte durant l'été 2005 mais est toujours en cours, selon un procureur danois. Mais selon elle, il est hors de question que des pressions politiques puissent s'exercer sur cette enquête.

"Clairement, la réponse est non. L'enquête est de notre ressort, c'est à nous de prendre la décision", assure Liselotte Nilas.

Et après trois rejets par le Conseil de l'audiovisuel des demandes d'interdiction d'émettre formulées par la Turquie, le dernier en avril 2008, la direction de Roj Tv affiche sa confiance.

"Nous ne fermerons pas parce que la Turquie l'exige, ce n'est pas la Turquie qui décide au Danemark", a déclaré lundi à l'AFP Yilmaz Imdat, directeur de la station à Copenhague.

"Nous vivons dans des pays démocratiques qui respectent la liberté d'expression et la liberté de la presse. On ne peut pas faire comme en Turquie et fermer une chaîne de télévision ou une radio parce qu'on ne les aime pas", avance-t-il.

Sa chaîne émet depuis le Danemark mais a la plupart de ses locaux et ses effectifs en Belgique, où elle emploie une centaine de personnes, contre seulement quatre dans le pays nordique.

Diffusée 24 heures sur 24, elle propose principalement en langue kurde des émissions d'actualité, des émissions de débat politique, des programmes culturels ainsi que des programmes pour enfants, selon M. Imdat, qui nie tout lien avec le PKK.

"Nous n'avons rien à voir avec eux, ce sont des accusations du côté turc", affirme-t-il.

Selon lui, le budget annuel d'environ 30 à 35 millions de couronnes danoises (entre 4 et 5 millions d'euros) est financé "par le peuple kurde et des entreprises et des communautés kurdes à l'étranger".

Barack Obama en Turquie pour resserrer les liens avec un « allié stratégique »

Washington apprécie le rôle de médiateur des Turcs, de l'Afghanistan au Proche-Orient

Prague, Istanbul, Ankara
Envoyés spéciaux

L'effigie de Barack Obama trône désormais dans les boutiques turques aux côtés de celles d'Atatürk et du sultan Mehmet, conquérant de Constantinople. Ici comme ailleurs, le nouveau président américain, qui est arrivé dimanche 5 avril en Turquie pour une visite de 48 heures, a la cote. Il est devenu aux yeux des Turcs « le dirigeant politique le plus fiable » du monde, avec 40 % de suffrages, alors que George W. Bush, avec 9 %, était devenu presque aussi impopulaire en Turquie que Ben Laden.

Mais cela ne signifie pas que toutes les susceptibilités envers l'« allié stratégique » américain soient définitivement levées. A preuve, le feuilleton de la nomination du nouveau secrétaire général de l'OTAN. La liste des contreparties qu'aurait obtenues Ankara pour lever son opposition à la nomination du premier ministre danois, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, se lisait, dans la presse turque de dimanche, comme celle de tous les griefs nourris envers ses partenaires occidentaux. Bravades patriotiques à l'appui : « La Turquie a gagné le bras de fer », proclame le quotidien populaire à fort tirage *Sabah*. Le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, « a résisté jusqu'à la fin, obtenant des concessions majeures », précise le journal.

Depuis que l'administration Bush a accepté, en 2008, de fournir le soutien des satellites d'observation américains aux raids aériens de l'armée turque contre les bases du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le nord de l'Irak, les relations se sont réchauffées. La visite de Barack Obama, qui a été ajoutée tardivement à son voyage en Europe (son épouse Michelle est repartie dimanche à



« Obama, dehors ! » clament des manifestants opposés à la visite du président américain, dimanche à Istanbul. D. DILKOFF/AFP

Washington, arguant d'engagements prévus auparavant), souligne l'intérêt de l'administration Obama pour un pays qui cumule les avantages stratégiques. Les Etats-Unis, qui préparent leur retrait d'Irak, espèrent pouvoir compter sur l'aide des Turcs pour maintenir la stabilité dans ce pays.

Les Etats-Unis, qui préparent leur retrait d'Irak, espèrent pouvoir compter sur l'aide des Turcs pour maintenir la stabilité dans ce pays

Ils ont aussi apprécié la médiation turque entre Israël et la Syrie.

Le processus de désarmement doit permettre à la Turquie de mettre en avant ses atouts, généralement reconnus, de médiateur régional – en l'occurrence avec l'Iran. Alors que le dossier afghan,

nouvelle priorité de Washington, est celui où Ankara joue déjà un rôle important en appui des efforts américains. Outre le millier d'hommes que la Turquie fournit à la Force internationale d'assistance à la sécurité (FIAS), autour de Kaboul, Ankara, traditionnellement proche des Afghans comme des Pakistanais, organise des sommets entre les deux pays. Le troisième a eu lieu le 1^{er} avril à Ankara.

Comme son prédécesseur, Barack Obama est favorable à l'adhésion de la Turquie à l'Union européenne. Dimanche, à Prague, il a présenté cette perspective comme « un signe important » qui serait envoyé au monde musulman. Elle contribuerait à « forger une relation fondée sur le respect mutuel et des intérêts communs » entre les Occidentaux et les musulmans, a-t-il dit. Pendant la réunion, personne n'a osé commenter sa petite phrase. Les Européens, désorganisés par la crise politique qui secoue la présidence tchèque de l'Union, ont préféré insister sur la lutte contre le réchauffement climatique, leurs

efforts en Afghanistan ou les relations économiques bilatérales.

Mais en marge de ce sommet Etats-Unis - Union européenne, les réactions ne se sont pas fait attendre. « Je suis opposé à cette entrée, je le reste, et je crois pouvoir dire qu'une grande majorité des Etats membres est sur la position de la France », a lancé Nicolas Sarkozy, sur TF1. « C'est aux pays membres de l'Union européenne de décider », a-t-il ajouté.

Un peu plus tard, Angela Merkel a elle aussi pris ses distances avec M. Obama. « Nous débattons encore » pour savoir s'il faut accorder l'adhésion ou un « partenariat privilégié » à Ankara, a précisé la chancelière allemande. Les chrétiens-démocrates allemands sont, comme la droite française, favorables à la seconde option, contre l'avis de leur partenaire de coalition, le parti social-démocrate.

« Il est clair qu'il y a des opinions différentes » au sein des Vingt-Sept, a reconnu M^{me} Merkel. Le Royaume-Uni, l'Italie et les pays nordiques sont d'infatigables partisans de l'adhésion de la Turquie, qu'ils considèrent comme un pays stratégique sur le plan diplomatique, et énergétique. Ouvertes en 2005, les négociations d'adhésion patinent. Seuls dix chapitres – sur trente-cinq – ont été ouverts ; un seul refermé. Le conflit entre Ankara et Chypre, dont la Turquie occupe la partie nord, empêche tout progrès concernant l'Union douanière.

La France met par ailleurs son veto à l'ouverture de certains chapitres tels que l'entrée dans la zone euro ; les institutions et la politique agricole qui présupposent, selon Paris, l'adhésion à l'Union. Mais la France n'a pas bloqué l'ensemble du processus. ■

Philippe Ricard, Sophie Shihab et Corine Lesnes



SYRIE: LOURDES PEINES DE PRISON POUR 12 PERSONNES DONT CINQ KURDES

DAMAS, 5 avril 2009 (AFP) -

LA HAUTE COUR de sûreté de l'Etat, un tribunal d'exception, a condamné dimanche à Damas douze personnes, dont cinq Kurdes et une femme, à des peines de cinq à quinze ans de prison, a annoncé l'Organisation nationale des droits de l'Homme de Syrie (ONDHS).

Jamal Abdel-Wahab Hafez a éclopé de 15 ans de prison pour "avoir commis des actes non autorisés par l'Etat et avoir pris contact avec l'ennemi", a indiqué l'organisation dans un communiqué.

Rasmi Mohammad Bakr, Ahmad Maasoum, Mouaouia Qatranji, ainsi que Mme Mirvat Mohammad Midani se sont vus infliger huit ans d'emprisonnement, tandis que Ahmad al-Atrache et Ali Arslane cinq ans de prison "pour des actes de violence contre la sécurité publique et pour avoir hébergé des personnes ayant commis des actes de violence".

Cinq Kurdes, tous membres du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit), ont

été condamnés également pour avoir "tenté par des actes, des plans ou des écrits d'amputer une partie du territoire syrien pour l'annexer à un pays étranger", a indiqué l'organisation.

Trois d'entre eux, Ezzat Abdel Hanane Horo, Khalil Sido, Wahid Rachid Horo, ont été condamnés à huit ans de prison, et les deux autres Kurdes, Adnane Ali Hussein et Hussein Salim Mohammad à sept ans.

En Syrie, les détenus kurdes sont systématiquement accusés de vouloir rattacher une partie du territoire syrien à un futur Etat indépendant du Kurdistan.

Le président de l'ONDHS Ammar Qorabi a affirmé ne pas avoir de détails concernant les chefs d'accusation ou les personnes accusées.

Il a dénoncé dans une déclaration à l'AFP "les jugements arbitraires et sans appel" émis par ce tribunal d'exception.

Il a exprimé sa "profonde inquiétude" et appelé les autorités syriennes à "supprimer la Haute Cour de sûreté de l'Etat et à libérer tous les détenus politiques condamnés par ce tribunal".

LesEchos 9 avril 2009

La Turquie : l'allié qui se veut indispensable

JACQUES HUBERT-RODIER

La Sublime Porte », comme on qualifiait autrefois l'Empire ottoman, est-elle de retour ? Vraisemblablement pas. Mais, au cours des derniers mois, la Turquie a donné l'impression d'être le point de passage obligé de la diplomatie et de la géostratégie au Moyen-Orient, entre Israéliens et Palestiniens, ou entre la Syrie et Israël, face à l'Iran, en Asie, en Afghanistan ou encore aux Nations unies face à la Corée du Nord.

Lors d'une exceptionnelle visite en Turquie, Barack Obama lui a décerné le titre « d'allié déterminant », mettant définitivement un terme à la parenthèse de 2003 lorsque Ankara s'était opposé à l'invasion de l'Irak par les Etats-Unis.

En provoquant l'ire de Nicolas Sarkozy, le président américain est allé plus loin. Il a répété, presque mot pour mot, la formule de son prédécesseur, George W. Bush, lancée lors du sommet de l'Otan à Istanbul en 2004, selon laquelle la Turquie devait faire partie de l'Union européenne. Une petite phrase qui avait, là encore, été perçue comme une interférence américaine dans les affaires européennes par un Jacques Chirac, pourtant favorable, lui, à cette perspective d'adhésion turque.

Et la Turquie marque des points presque partout. Le « grand bazar diplomatique » de l'Otan à Strasbourg-Kehl s'est soldé en sa faveur. En échange de « garanties sérieuses » de la part du président américain, Ankara a accepté de lever son veto à la nomination comme secrétaire général de l'organisation du Danois Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

Au Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies aussi, la Turquie qui occupe depuis le 1er janvier un des 10 sièges de membre non permanent, pour le groupe des « Etats d'Europe occidentale et autres Etats », s'est vu confier

le dossier nord-coréen, souligne-t-on au palais de verre à New York.

Mais pour combien de temps la diplomatie hyperactive de la Turquie peut-elle tenir, alors que la nouvelle administration a décidé de se réengager diplomatiquement dans les affaires du monde, en particulier au Moyen-Orient ? Le président Obama, en trouvrant la porte à des contacts directs avec l'Iran et la Syrie, risque bien de changer la donne. « Si la Syrie et l'Iran parlent directement aux Etats-Unis, que reste-t-il aux Turcs ? Ils seront très déçus », souligne le professeur Henri Barkey, de l'université Lehigh, en Pennsylvanie. Car, pour beaucoup, le retour sur la scène internationale de la Turquie a tenu au vide créé par la précédente administration Bush, ajoute cet ancien conseiller à la Maison-Blanche sous l'administration Clinton. Mais l'Iran se considère comme une « grande puissance » et ne souhaite pas que la Turquie soit l'intermédiaire et la Syrie a des canaux diplomatiques avec Washington.

C'est sur l'Irak que vraisemblablement la Turquie et les Etats-Unis ont un intérêt conjoint : la Turquie a compris que son intérêt était le maintien d'un Etat fédéral en Irak, institué après l'invasion américaine de 2003. La diplomatie turque a été « très efficace en négociant avec le gouvernement de la région autonome du Kurdistan », souligne Dorothee Schmid de l'Ifr (Institut français des relations internationales). Ankara a désormais bien compris la nécessité du maintien au sein de l'Irak de la région pour éviter un embrassement nationaliste des Kurdes. Résultat, avec le feu vert américain, la Turquie a exercé un droit de suite en lançant des attaques militaires contre des éléments du PKK turc, le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, qui se sert du nord de l'Irak comme base arrière pour des opérations terroristes.

En Turquie même, aux élections municipales de mars dernier, l'AKP (Parti de la justice

et du développement), du Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan, n'a certes pas répété son score des élections législatives de 2007 (qui atteignait près de 60 % du vote kurde), mais il s'est maintenu dans la région.

Sur le front économique, la Turquie est touchée de plein fouet par la crise économique, avec une chute violente de la production et une très forte progression du chômage. Mais la Turquie tente de résister. Elle a finalement ouvert des négociations sur un crédit relais de plusieurs milliards de dollars avec le FMI qui pourrait lui permettre d'amortir les effets de la crise.

Pourtant, avant de redevenir une puissance indispensable, Ankara a encore beaucoup à faire. Diplomatiquement, il lui faut rouvrir de véritables relations avec l'Arménie. Un sujet qui a été à peine effleuré par Barack Obama quelques semaines avant la commémoration, le 24 avril, du génocide arménien de 1915, que refuse de reconnaître Ankara. Et même si la démocratie en Turquie s'est consolidée, Ankara doit reprendre sa marche, presque totalement arrêtée depuis trois ans, sur la route de l'Europe. Une longue route entreprise en 1923 par Atatürk, mais avec de très longs détours depuis lors.

Jacques Hubert-Rodier est éditorialiste aux « Echos ».

LesEchos

7 avril 2009

Kouchner n'est plus pour l'entrée de la Turquie dans l'UE depuis le sommet Otan

Le ministre des Affaires étrangères Bernard Kouchner a affirmé mardi qu'il n'était plus favorable à l'entrée de la Turquie dans l'Union européenne, précisant avoir été "très choqué" par les pressions turques contre le choix du Premier ministre danois comme patron de l'Otan.

"Moi, j'étais partisan de l'entrée de la Turquie dans l'Union européenne", a déclaré sur RTL le ministre, qui a participé à plusieurs gouvernements socialistes avant de rejoindre celui de Nicolas Sarkozy, précisant qu'il ne l'était plus depuis le sommet de l'Otan samedi à Strasbourg.

Lors de cette réunion, la Turquie a longtemps bloqué l'approbation du Danois Anders Fogh Rasmussen comme secrétaire général de l'Otan, avant de céder à des pressions américaines en échange de plusieurs garanties.

Comme on lui demandait pourquoi il parlait à l'imparfait de son soutien à l'entrée d'Ankara dans l'UE, Bernard Kouchner a répondu: "Oui, parce que j'ai été très choqué par cette forme de pression qui a été exercée sur nous" lors du sommet de l'Otan.

A l'appui de son opposition, la Turquie a reproché à Anders Fogh Rasmussen d'avoir défendu la publication au Danemark de caricatures controversées de Mahomet qui avaient

provoqué la colère du monde musulman en 2005. Les Etats-Unis se sont portés garants de plusieurs engagements du Danois à favoriser, une fois à l'Otan, un dialogue avec le monde musulman.

Selon la presse turque, plusieurs postes clés au sein de l'Alliance devraient aussi revenir à Ankara.

Ce rappel de l'affaire des caricatures de 2005 "me semblait le moins qu'on puisse dire, maladroit". Et "l'évolution de la Turquie dans le sens, disons, d'une religion plus renforcée, d'une laïcité moins affirmée, m'inquiète", a aussi souligné Bernard Kouchner.

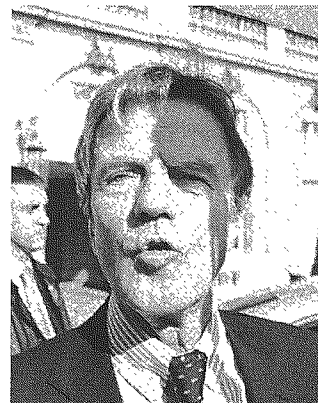
Au sommet de l'Otan, "la pratique (des Turcs) m'a choqué", a-t-il insisté.

"Ce n'est pas aux Américains de décider qui entre en Europe ou pas", a ajouté Bernard Kouchner.

Barack Obama a affirmé dimanche lors d'un sommet UE/Etats-Unis à Prague que "l'adhésion de la Turquie à l'UE (...) assurerait que (l'Occident continue) à ancrer fermement la Turquie en Europe".

"J'ai toujours été opposé à cette entrée et je le reste", a répliqué vertement peu après Nicolas Sarkozy.

Les négociations d'adhésion de la Turquie,



entamées en 2005, piétinent. Paris et Berlin sont contre cette adhésion, Londres est pour comme le président de la Commission européenne, le Portugais José Manuel Barroso. AFP

la-Croix

5 avril 2009

Sarkozy réaffirme son opposition à l'entrée de la Turquie dans l'UE

Le président français Nicolas Sarkozy a réaffirmé dimanche son hostilité à une entrée de la Turquie dans l'Union européenne, après le soutien apporté par le président américain Barack Obama à une telle adhésion.

"Je travaille main dans la main avec le président Obama, mais s'agissant de l'Union européenne, c'est aux pays membres de l'Union européenne de décider", a déclaré M. Sarkozy, interrogé sur TF1 en duplex depuis Prague où il participe au sommet UE-Etats-Unis.

"J'ai toujours été opposé à cette entrée et je le reste. Je crois pouvoir dire qu'une immense majorité des Etats membres (de l'UE) est sur la position de la France", a-t-il ajouté. "La Turquie, c'est un très grand pays allié de l'Europe et allié des Etats-Unis. Elle doit rester un partenaire privilégié, ma position n'a pas changé", a déclaré le chef de l'Etat.

M. Obama avait estimé un peu plus tôt devant les dirigeants de l'UE à Prague que l'entrée de la Turquie dans l'Union européenne "constituerait un signal important" envoyé à ce pays musulman. Les pourparlers d'adhésion de la Turquie au bloc européen, entamés en octobre 2005, marquent actuellement le



pas. Certains pays comme la France ou l'Allemagne sont opposés à la perspective de voir ce pays entrer dans l'UE et privilégient une association étroite avec lui.

Les Etats-Unis et le Royaume-Uni, en revanche, militent depuis longtemps pour une adhésion.

Vendredi et samedi, au sommet de l'Otan à Strasbourg/Kehl/Baden Baden, la Turquie s'était opposée à la nomination du Premier ministre danois Anders Fogh Rasmussen au poste de secrétaire général de l'Alliance avant de s'y ranger. Le Premier ministre turc Recep

Tayyip Erdogan a indiqué samedi que ce revirement suivait le fait que le président Obama se soit porté "garant" d'un certain nombre d'engagements, qu'il n'a pas précisés.

La désignation de M. Rasmussen, "posait des problèmes à nos amis turcs, parce qu'il y avait l'histoire des terroristes kurdes avec le PKK et puis l'histoire des caricatures. Mais nous nous étions déterminés à ne pas céder, parce que M. Rasmussen est un homme démocratique, un homme de grande qualité", a dit M. Sarkozy.

Interrogé sur d'éventuelles concessions, il a répondu qu'il "a

fallu convaincre nos amis turcs de notre fermeté. Le président Obama a joué un rôle considérable, s'est montré comme un vrai leader, et à la sortie, à l'unanimité, on a décidé que ce serait Rasmussen".

La Turquie reprochait au candidat son soutien à un journal danois qui avait publié des caricatures de Mahomet en 2005 et son refus de fermer la chaîne de télévision Roj TV, considérée par Ankara comme porte-voix des rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Selon plusieurs journaux turcs, Ankara a obtenu l'assurance que Roj TV sera prochainement interdite d'émettre depuis le Danemark, que M. Rasmussen allait adresser "un message positif" sur l'affaire des caricatures, ainsi que la désignation de responsable turcs à des postes clés de l'Otan. (AFP)

Le Monde
Jeudi 9 avril 2009

La Turquie « conquise » par l'ouverture d'Obama envers les musulmans

A Istanbul, le président américain a réaffirmé son soutien à l'adhésion du pays à l'UE

Istanbul
Correspondance

Les Turcs, il y a un an encore, voyaient dans les Etats-Unis leur « principal ennemi ». Avant de recevoir Barack Obama, ils étaient déjà retournés, conquis par l'honneur qu'il leur faisait. Et sa visite, les 6 et 7 avril, a encore renforcé l'enthousiasme qu'il suscite. Résultat d'autant plus remarquable, souligne Alexandre Toumarkine, de l'Institut Français d'Etudes anatoliennes, que M. Obama « a pu faire passer des messages aussi précis que peu agréables à entendre à chaque camp de la scène politique. Aucun étranger avant lui n'a su le faire ainsi. »

Alors que les titres de la presse turque rivalisent d'emphase – « Obama a conquis les cœurs », « Visite historique » « Message chaleureux » –, la phrase la plus citée est celle où il assure que son pays « n'est pas en guerre avec l'islam et ne le sera jamais ». Des mots qui ont fait

mouche, explique le jeune Farouk, un marchand du Grand Bazar d'Istanbul, car « les gens ici ont besoin d'être rassurés et défendus contre l'islamophobie de l'Occident, comme celle de Nicolas Sarkozy, plus détesté maintenant que George Bush ». Il ajoute : « Alors qu'Obama a rendu les gens moins pessimistes, ils disent que si l'Europe ne veut pas d'eux, ils ont maintenant l'Amérique... » Avant de se reprendre : « On a l'Amérique en paroles, mais dans les faits ? Nul ne sait. »

Ce sont les partis de l'opposition surtout qui ont émis des doutes et des réserves sur le prix qu'aurait à payer la Turquie pour ces faveurs – en termes militaires notamment, comme base pour les troupes américaines quittant l'Irak. La Turquie est une démocratie – M. Obama l'a souligné. Imparfait, mais avec quatre partis au Parlement : les « post-islamistes » du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP), au pouvoir mais en baisse de popularité ; et trois par-

tis d'opposition, qui ont progressé : les laïcs kémalistes du Parti républicain du peuple (CHP), les ultranationalistes du Parti d'action nationaliste (MHP) et les Kurdes du Parti de la société démocratique (DTP).

Rôle stratégique

A l'exception sans doute de ces derniers, tous ont été déstabilisés par la façon dont M. Obama a su gérer la question du « génocide » arménien. Sans prononcer le mot, le président américain a fait comprendre qu'il n'avait pas changé d'avis sur la réalité du génocide, mais a préféré mettre l'accent sur les discussions actuelles entre Turquie et l'Arménie. Seul le chef des ultranationalistes est monté au créneau, parlant « d'intolérable absence de courtoisie ».

Autre leçon pour l'AKP : l'insistance de M. Obama à qualifier la Turquie d'Etat laïque, à simple « majorité musulmane ». Fini l'approche de l'administration Bush qui parlait du rôle modèle des « musulmans modérés » de Turquie – expression qui mettait en rage les laïques. Ces derniers – dont les militaires, présents pour une fois au « Parlement des islamistes » – ont aussi apprécié l'hommage à « l'héritage d'Atatürk : le caractère fort, vivant et séculier de la démocratie turque ». Mais ces laïques nationalistes ont dû, eux aussi, modérer leur enthousiasme quand M. Obama « issu d'une minorité oppri-

mée » a exhorté au respect de toutes les minorités, ethniques ou religieuses. Par exemple en applaudissant au lancement par l'AKP d'une télévision en kurde, ou en appelant à rouvrir le séminaire grec orthodoxe de Halki – vieille demande des Occidentaux, mais que les dirigeants en visite ne prenaient pas la peine, jusqu'ici, de spécifier. Les Kurdes du DTP, eux, ont dû écouter M. Obama maintenir, comme son prédécesseur, que le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), leur « branche armée », est un parti terroriste comme Al-Qaïda. Déclaration vivement applaudie par les trois autres partis.

Un seul message fut applaudi partout – celui du soutien à l'adhésion de la Turquie à l'UE. Mardi à Istanbul, devant un panel de jeunes Turcs, Barack Obama l'a redit en répondant sous forme de boutade au refus indigné de Nicolas Sarkozy de le voir s'ingérer dans les affaires de l'UE. Soulignant qu'il exprimait un avis et non une injonction, il a remarqué que « les Européens ne semblent pas s'être souvent interdit de dire ce qu'ils pensent de la politique américaine ». En précisant que c'est ce que doivent faire des amis. Puis il a donné comme exemple des droits que devraient avoir les Turcs, celui de « vendre des abricots dans l'UE » – ignorant apparemment que la Turquie est depuis douze ans déjà en union douanière avec l'UE.

Mais cette erreur le rapproche, paradoxalement, de ceux qui font la même en prêchant pour un « partenariat privilégié » déjà acquis... Au deuxième et dernier jour de sa visite en Turquie, M. Obama a pris le temps de recevoir à Istanbul les chefs religieux des minorités, de parler aux étudiants et de visiter longuement mosquée Bleue et Sainte-Sophie – une façon de reconnaître le rôle stratégique de ce pays. ■

Sophie Shihab



Major Kurdish parties extend strategic pact KDP and PUK to join the elections on a unified voting list

By The Kurdish Globe

The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) plan to extend their bilateral agreement and will take part in the upcoming parliamentary elections in Kurdistan on a unified ballot list. The announcement came during a joint press conference held Wednesday in Erbil for the two party leaders, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani.

"The two parties will take part on a unified list and the list is open for others to join," stated Talabani adding that they call for the election to take place on the proposed date, May 19.

Earlier on Wednesday, the KDP and PUK politburos met to emphasize on their strategic agreement of sharing power, the coming Kurdistan Region elections and the region's relation with Baghdad.

Barzani said the two parties had no intention to postpone the ballot votes.

"The Kurdistan parliament has sent a letter to the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) in order to appoint the Election Day. This issue is not related to us,"

stated Barzani and uncovered that they are expecting the IECI's decision when to hold the election, adding, "We will not hinder or delay the date they set."

Talabani and Barzani shed light on several current issues, particularly the disputed areas, relations with federal government and the region's relations with Turkey.

The Kirkuk issue was described as a complicated subject and an accord is required among the presidency board which consists of the President and his two Vice Presidents in order to decide to reshape administrative border of the disputed areas which had been changed during the Baath era.

He explained that several towns broke away from Kirkuk such as Tuz-khurmatu that was later attached to Salahaddin, Kifri, attached to DIALA and Chamchamal, annexed to Suleimaniya.

"Because the problem is not only in Kirkuk but borders of Najaf, Karbala, DIALA, Mosul and Erbil were also changed, it makes it difficult for the presidency board to find an accordance," Said Talabani and hoped for the population census this year to pave the way for a final solution to the problems.



Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and Kurdistan President Massoud Barzani address a joint press conference. Erbil-April 4, 2009. GLOBE PHOTO/ Safin Hamed

"I am always asked about my opinion about article 140. When I became president, I swore by the Holy Quran to protect the constitution and article 140 is a constitutional article? I am 100 percent committed to the article 140," he added.

On the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) winning local elections in the Kurdish populated Diyarbakir, president Barzani said, "We congratulate Turkey's people and the people of Kurdistan in particular. We hope this opens a door to solve all the problems democratically and via dialogue."

"My statements about the PKK to drop weapon were mis-

quoted? I said that it is time for struggle in parliament and not arms and bombs. If they (the PKK) insist to continue with their weapon, their country is bigger than our and their mountains are bigger than ours," he explained. "We were in Iraq struggling in the Iraqi mountains, not in the Turkish mountains; I think this is the logical and rational choice."

During a press conference held in Baghdad between President Talabani and the Turkish president Abdullah Gul on March 23, Talabani announced that the PKK has to put down weapon or to leave the country.

TODAYS ZAMAN 09 April 2009

TODAY'S ZAMAN

The Diyarbakir Prosecutor's Office has launched an investigation into Justice and Development Party (AK Party) deputy Hsan Arslan over his alleged dissemination of outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) propaganda.

Speaking to a local television station in Diyarbakir on March 23, Arslan said: "No one who wants to solve the Kurdish problem can ignore the [pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party] DTP or the PKK and its jailed leader Abdullah calan. No one should ignore the reali-

AK Party deputy under investigation over PKK propaganda

ties. Otherwise, this problem cannot be solved, just as it has remained unsolved to this day. Not every demand from each side [Kurds and the state] can be fulfilled because while looking for solutions, every side should make sacrifices and take a step forward. That is compromise. A consensus emerges when both sides make sacrifices."

The Diyarbakir Prosecutor's Office will reportedly prepare a case against Arslan for spreading the propaganda of the PKK under Article 7/2 of the Counterterrorism Act, and it will demand that the parliamentary immunity granted to Arslan be revoked.

Hurriyet DailyNews.com 09 April 2009

by Gül Demir

ISTANBUL-Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir believes the election result in Diyarbakir means that Ankara has to re-evaluate its approach on matters involving eastern Turkey, the Kurdish issue and economic and social development policies. He says the DTP has to feature in any solution

A national government that includes Kurds and engages with them will present

Engaging the key, says Kurd mayor

opportunities for the country and the broader region, according to a leading personality in Turkey's Kurdish community who says that his party is a vital actor. Osman Baydemir, from the Democratic Society Party, or DTP, won re-election as mayor of Diyarbakir with 66 percent of the votes in the local elections. Turnout in the province was 82 percent.

Baydemir believes the election result in Diyarbakir means that Ankara has to re-evaluate its approach on matters involving eastern Turkey, the Kurdish issue and economic and social development policies.

"If [the government] includes Kurds in the process, if it begins a process that relies on face-to-face meetings and discussions, I believe these results will be an opportunity for both our region and for the whole of our country," Baydemir told the Hurriyet Daily News & Economic REview. "When I look at the provinces as a whole ? Adiyaman, Agri, Ardahan, Batman, Bingöl, Bitlis, Diyarbakir, Elazığ, Hakkari, Iğdir, Kars, Mardin, Mus, Siirt, Sanlıurfa, Sırnak, Tunceli and Van the number of valid votes cast was 1,409,891. Of these

550,984 was given to the DTP, and 536,985 was given to the AKP [Justice and Development Party]. The DTP is the top party. That is, in looking for a solution to the Kurdish problem, the DTP is an actor now," he said.

DIFFERENCES

"In Turkey as long as differences, cultural and ethnic identities, or religious beliefs turn people into 'the other,' they will be an item on the agenda. As long as the Kurdish problem isn't solved, we will be a problem. So everything we've done shows that our citizens exist with their own identities, languages, cultures and beliefs, and these riches are not a threat but wealth, and we will continue these efforts of ours without a doubt," Baydemir said. After

the local elections, the DTP dominates the Southeast while the Republican People's Party, or CHP, is dominant in the west and along the coastal areas, the Nationalist Movement Party, or MHP, in interior parts of Anatolia and the AKP in the central regions.

When asked about Turkey's political picture given these results and whether it represented a new political geography, Baydemir said: "From the point of view of solving the Kurdish problem, there's nothing to be afraid of, in fact quite the opposite. It leaves the undefined problems behind. Right now we're living through a sharpening and simplification process. It permits us to work with greater courage. In the short term and the long term, we shouldn't be frightened of such a process.

Our people want to be known and want their values known. I see it as a door that offers this."

He called for the abandonment of practices like refusing to shake hands with DTP members. "If there is a will to solve the problem, then the DTP has to be included as a partner. If there's a summit, the DTP has to be included," he said.

"Reforms up to now have been unregistered reforms, so there's no benefit at the local level. We know about the unregistered economy. During the [Recep Tayyip] Erdoğan government, we have learned about unregistered reforms and how they can't be trusted," said Baydemir.



Kurdistan Regional Government

President Barzani meets President Obama in Baghdad

Erbil, Kurdistan - Iraq 08 Apr. 2009 (KRG.org) -

PRESIDENT of the Kurdistan Region Masoud Barzani yesterday met US President Barack Obama in Baghdad. This was President Obama's first trip to Iraq since his inauguration in January 2009.

In their meeting President Barzani and President Obama discussed many issues including the latest developments in the Kurdistan Region and the overall situation in Iraq. President Barzani made clear that the Kurdistan Region remains committed to being part of the solution in Iraq and invited President Obama to visit the Kurdistan Region on a future trip.

President Barzani said, "The Kurdistan Region has always worked to be a part of the solution not the problem in Iraq. We contributed in the political process, which culminated in the creation of the Iraqi constitution. We want to emphasise our full commitment to working with all parties and abiding by the Iraqi constitution to support a democratic, federal Iraq".

With regards to the hydrocarbon law, President Barzani said that oil contracts in the Kurdistan Region were made in a legal and transparent manner in full accordance with the Iraqi constitution, stating "Oil and gas in the country belongs to all the people of Iraq and all revenues should be shared equally."

President Barzani noted that America played an important role in Iraq's liberation and expressed his appreciation for the many sacrifices made by the men and women of American and coalition forces. He fully understood that America would not stay in Iraq permanently, hence the importance of continuing to work together to resolve any outstanding issues and fight terrorism, both through military and political means.

President Obama thanked President Barzani for sharing his views. He said that he was mindful of the tragic history of the Kurds, and had good impressions of the progress in the Kurdistan Region which was the result of hard work and strong leadership.

President Obama also expressed his pleasure that relations between the Kurdistan Region and Turkey have been improving, and noted that during his recent visit to Turkey he discussed those relations. At the conclusion of the meeting, President Obama noted that strict adherence to the Iraqi constitution remains the best mechanism for peace and stability in Iraq and said he looked forward to hearing from President Barzani and working closely with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to make further progress.

President Barzani was accompanied by KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani; Dr Roj Nouri Shawis, President Barzani's Special Envoy to Baghdad; Dr Fuad Hussein, President Barzani's Chief of Staff; and Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir, Head of the KRG Department of Foreign Relations.



Accompanying President Obama were Mr Rahm Emanuel, President Obama's Chief of Staff; General James L. Jones, National Security Advisor; General Raymond Odierno, Commander of the Multi-National Forces in Iraq; and Ms Patricia Butenis, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim at the US Embassy in Baghdad as well as several other advisers and representatives from President Obama's administration.

Turkey wants U.S. 'balance'



Roger Cohen

GLOBALIST

LONDON Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey is a man of brisk, borderline brusque, manner and he does not mince his words: " Hamas must be represented at the negotiating table. Only then can you get a solution."

We were seated in his suite at London's Dorchester Hotel, where a Turkish flag had been hurriedly brought in as official backdrop. Referring to Mahmoud Abbas, the beleaguered Fatah leader and president of the Palestinian Authority, Erdogan said, "You will get nowhere by talking only to Abbas. This is what I tell our Western friends."

In an interview on the eve of President Barack Obama's visit to Turkey, his first to a Muslim country since taking office, Erdogan pressed for what he called "a new balance" in the U.S. approach to the Middle East. "Definitely U.S. policy has to change," he said, if there is to be "a fair, just and all-encompassing solution."

A firm message from Israel's best friend in the Muslim Middle East: the status quo is untenable.

How Hamas is viewed is a pivotal issue in the current American Middle East policy review. The victor in 2006 Palestinian elections, Hamas is seen throughout the region as a legitimate resistance movement, a status burnished by its recent inconclusive pounding during Israel's wretchedly named — and disastrous — "Operation Cast Lead" in Gaza.

The United States and the European Union consider Hamas a terrorist or-

ganization. They won't talk to it until it recognizes Israel, among other conditions. This marginalization has led only to impasse because Hamas, as an entrenched Palestinian political and social movement, cannot be circumvented and will not disappear.

Former Senator George Mitchell, Obama's Middle East envoy, has expressed support for reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah. I think this should become a U.S. diplomatic priority because it is the only coherent basis for meaningful peace talks. Erdogan called Mitchell "perfectly aware and with a full knowledge, a very positive person whose appointment was a very good step."

The Turkish prime minister, who leads Justice and Development, or AKP, a party of Islamic inspiration and pragmatic bent, earned hero's status in the Arab world when he walked out on the Israeli president, Shimon Peres, during a debate earlier this year in Davos. Any regrets?

"If I had failed to do that, it would have been disrespectful toward myself and disrespectful of the thousands of victims against whom disproportionate force was being used," Erdogan said. He alluded to the children killed in Gaza — 288 of them according to the United Nations special rapporteur — and asked: "What more can I say?"

Erdogan, 55, urged Obama to become "the voice of millions of silent people and the protector of millions of unprotected people — that is what the Middle East is expecting."

He went on: "I consider personally the election of Barack Hussein Obama to have very great symbolic meaning. A Muslim and a Christian name — so in his name there is a synthesis, although people from time to time want to overlook that and they do it intentionally. Barack Hussein Obama."

I suggested that synthesis was all very well but, with a center-right Israeli government just installed, and its nationalist foreign minister already proclaiming that "If you want peace prepare for war," the prospects of finding

new bridges between the West and the Muslim world were remote.

"Your targets can only be realized on the basis of dreams," Erdogan said. "If everyone can say, looking at Obama, that is he is one of us, is that not befitting for the leading country in the world?"

Dreams aside, I see Obama moving methodically to dismantle the Manichean Bush paradigm — with us or against us in a global battle of good against evil called the war on terror — in favor of a new realism that places improved relations with the Muslim world at its fulcrum. Hence

the early visit to Turkey, gestures toward Iran, and other forms of outreach.

This will lead to tensions with Israel, which had conveniently conflated its long national struggle with the Palestinians within the war on terror, but is an inevitable result of a rational reassessment of U.S. interests.

I asked Erdogan if Islam and modernity were compatible. "Islam is a religion," he said, "It is not an ideology. For a Muslim, there is no such thing as to be against modernity. Why should a Muslim not be a modern person? I, as a Muslim, fulfill all the requirements of my religion and I live in a democratic, social state. Can there be difficulties? Yes. But they will be resolved at the end of a maturity period so long as there is mutual trust."

The problem is, of course, that Islam has been deployed as an ideology in the anti-modern, murderous, death-to-the-West campaign of Al-Qaeda. But Erdogan is right: Islam is one of the great world religions. Obama's steps to reassert that truth, and so bridge the most dangerous division in the world, are of fundamental strategic importance.

Synthesis begins with understanding, which is precisely what never interested his predecessor.

Obama and Turkey

Cooperation with Turkey is essential, but a closer relationship must also encourage reforms in the country's internal politics.

President Barack Obama has wisely decided to visit Turkey during his first official trip to Europe. The United States needs Turkey's cooperation — in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as with

Iran and efforts to broker Middle East peace. But there are also very worrying trends in Turkey's relationship with Europe and its internal politics.

Obama must do all he can to help reverse those trends and anchor Turkey more firmly in the West.

The Justice and Development Party scored an impressive re-election in 2007 after pursuing market-oriented policies that brought economic growth and more trade ties with the European Union. That conservative Muslim party also expanded human rights and brought Turkish law closer to European standards.

Those reforms have since stalled — partly because of opposition from civilian nationalists and generals who still wield too much clout. (The trial of 86 people accused of plotting a military coup is a reminder of the dark side of Turkish politics.) But Prime Minister

Recep Tayyip Erdogan also seems to have lost enthusiasm for the European Union bid and the reforms that are the price of admission.

President Nicolas Sarkozy of France has been especially unhelpful, making clear that he will do all he can to keep Turkey out of the European Union. Obama must persuade Sarkozy and others that admitting Turkey — a Muslim democracy — is in everyone's interest. And he must persuade Ankara that the required reforms will strengthen Turkey's democracy and provide more stability and growth.

We are concerned about Erdogan's increasingly autocratic tendencies. His government's decision to slap the media mogul Aydin Dogan with a \$500 million tax bill smacks of retaliation against an independent press that has successfully exposed government corruption.

Ankara's willingness to help rebuild schools in Afghanistan is welcome. But the situation there is dire, and NATO also needs more troops and needs access to Turkish military bases to facilitate the transport of U.S. soldiers and equipment into Afghanistan and out of Iraq.

Ankara has played a positive role, mediating indirect talks between Israel and Syria. With Washington's encouragement, Erdogan could also use his relationships with Iran, Sudan and Hamas to encourage improved behavior.

Turkey's cooperation with Iraqi Kurds has vastly improved. There are also reports that Turkey and Armenia may soon normalize relations.

We have long criticized Turkey for its denial of the World War I era mass killing of Armenians. But while Congress is again contemplating a resolution denouncing the genocide, it would do a lot more good for both Armenia and Turkey if it held back. Obama, who vowed in the presidential campaign to recognize the event as genocide, should also forbear.

The Bush administration's war in Iraq fanned a destructive anti-Americanism in Turkey. Obama's visit is likely to soothe hostile feelings. But he must go beyond that to secure a relationship with an important ally and an important democracy in danger of backsliding.

In Turkey, Obama offers broad appeal

BY SABRINA TAVERNISE

In his speech to the Turkish Parliament on Monday, President Barack Obama spoke elegantly both to the old ruling elite that prefers to be thought of as secular and to the new economic and political elite for whom faith is essential. The American president's carefully chosen words seemed to satisfy both.

"He was giving the right message without making anyone in Turkey uncomfortable," said Yasemin Congar, deputy editor in chief of Taraf, a liberal newspaper. "The secularists will say, 'Good he emphasized secularism,' and the Muslims will say, 'Good, he talked against segregation.'"

Sedat Ergin, the editor of Milliyet, a newspaper that has been suspicious of the government's Islamic inspiration, expressed delight at Mr. Obama's frequent reference to democracy.

"The most important part of his speech was the emphasis on the secular democratic structure in Turkey," Mr. Ergin said. "He won back hearts of the secular circles in Turkey."

Those circles were irritated by the Bush administration's emphasis on Turkey as a moderate Muslim country, and felt, Mr. Ergin said, as though the United States "had sacrificed the secular tradition in Turkey in order to reach out to the Muslim world."

But that had changed in Mr. Obama's speech Monday, said Mustafa Ozyurek, deputy chairman of the secular opposition Republican People's Party.

"There have been some meaningless arguments about Turkey being a moderate Islamic country," he said. "The new administration must have realized the problems such labels have caused in Turkey."

Those who chafe at the country's being identified as a Muslim state say that the characterization reduces it unfairly and allows it to be confused, particularly in American minds, with troubled Arab autocracies. The country's centuries of Ottoman history, they argue, set it apart. It was never colonized, and it dabbled in democracy as early as the 19th century.

"If you reduce Turkey to being Muslim, you do away with 250 years of Ottoman and Turkish history," said Soli Ozel, a professor at Bilgi University in Istanbul. "You reduce the country to being Jordan or Egypt."

Besides, Mr. Ozel argued, a purely Muslim identity does not serve Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's own policy of forging new ties in the Muslim

world and mediating between it and the West as an important regional player. Turkey brought Syria and Israel into indirect negotiations last year for the first time in decades.

"What happens to your claim if you speak with only one identity?" Mr. Ozel said.

Others in Turkey took pride in the fact that Mr. Obama had chosen Turkey for his first visit to a Muslim country and said that recognition would help Turkey. Mr. Erdogan won a measure of fame in Muslim countries recently when he stalked off a stage in Davos, Switzerland, after an argument with the Israeli president, Shimon Peres.

"It makes me happy that the Islam lived in Turkey is seen as a better version compared with other countries and that the message would be sent out from here," said Samet Yildirim, 26, a sandwich shop worker in Ankara.

The speech, in fact, captured precisely the exceptional nature of Turkey as a country that is both western and eastern at once, said Oral Calislar, a columnist with the newspaper Radikal. Mr. Obama offered a nuanced description, highlighting this combination as a richness that should be admired.

"His reference of Turkey being a bridge may sound a cliché but is very

"The most important part of his speech was the emphasis on the secular democratic structure in Turkey."

important and meaningful," Mr. Calislar said. "He came up with this brand new concept and chose Turkey to stress this vision."

Turkey has long had a troubled relations with its Kurdish minority, a relationship that Turkish liberals say is essential to improve if Turkey is to deepen its democracy. Ms. Congar, the deputy editor of Taraf, expressed disappointment that Mr. Obama had not addressed that directly, choosing instead to highlight the government's introduction of a limited Kurdish-language television channel.

Turkey's relations with the United States chilled in 2003, when the Turkish Parliament voted against allowing U.S. troops to open a northern front into Iraq through Turkey's border. But relations have gradually improved, getting a boost in 2007, when President George W. Bush lent tacit support to Mr. Erdogan's military campaign in northern Iraq.

APRIL 7, 2009

An ancient sect in Iraq makes its presence felt

DOHUK, IRAQ

Yazidis, politically astute but few in number, strike an alliance with Kurds

BY CAMPBELL ROBERTSON
AND STEPHEN FARRELL

Prince Tahseen Saeed Ali, whose business card identifies him as "the Prince of the Yazidis in Iraq and the World and President of the Yazidi High Religious Council," is a confident man.

It may be an odd posture, given that his people have suffered centuries of oppression and prejudice, tarred by the false claim that they are devil worshippers and caught in a battle zone between often antagonistic powers, the Muslim Arabs and the Muslim Kurds.

But a group so small and so widely misunderstood does not survive for centuries, much of the time at the mercy of far larger forces, without learning how to play politics. And few in Iraq have played that game as well as the Yazidis, whose ability to exploit Iraq's byzantine electoral rules yielded them nearly a quarter of the seats in the government of Nineveh, one of the country's largest provinces.

"We kept telling the Americans, the Arabs, the Kurds that this is the real size of the Yazidis in this region, but nobody paid attention to us," said Prince Ali, 75, who has seen at least a dozen heads of state come and go in Iraq. "So we chose to do it this way."

Not only have they made their presence felt, the Yazidis managed to flip the power structure on its head: this small sect, which for six years existed as a client of the far more powerful Muslim Kurds to the north, now has more political sway in Nineveh than its patron.

Yazidis, by most estimates, far outnumber Muslim Kurds in Nineveh, making the Kurds dependent on their support to bolster their claims to the region. And the Yazidis have largely given it; almost all of them who won in the election were members of Kurdish political parties. In exchange for that support, the newly victorious Yazidis are demanding a greater degree of Yazidi power in Kurdistan.

"Frankly," said the prince, who wears the full beard often seen on older Yazidis, "now we feel the Kurds are more responsive to us."

But the partnership pivots on something deeper and more complex: the murky, misunderstood Yazidi identity.

Yazidis are a zealously insular group, adherents of an ancient, monotheistic

faith involving a 12th-century mystic and a peacock angel. After that, nearly everything about them is subject to debate.

Kurds, most of whom are Sunni Muslim, say Yazidis are ethnic Kurds who simply follow a different religion. Many Yazidis, too, say they are Kurds, and it is not uncommon to hear the Yazidis describe themselves as the original Kurds. Without quibbling over such distinctions, the Kurds are happy to include them.

"They are spreading rumors that we are 3 percent of the population" in Nineveh, said Layla Rikani, one of the few Kurds on the new provincial council. This election proved that "we are 33 percent of the population."

Kurds claim a chain of areas across Iraq, including Nineveh, that lie outside Kurdistan, arguing that the areas are ancestrally theirs but that they were driven from them under Saddam Hussein. Kurdish leaders are pushing for a referendum on the fate of these areas and say the strong showing of the Kurdish parties in the disputed areas serves as a sort of mini-referendum.

The Yazidis, well aware of their importance to Kurdish political success, seized on the recent introduction of an "open list" system of elections, under which voters can pick individual candidates rather than having to vote for a list as a whole.

Of the 37 candidates running on the Kurdish list in the provincial election in January in Nineveh, 10 were Yazidi. On Election Day, the Yazidis chose their candidates individually rather than voting for the list as a whole. As a result, 8 of the 12 winners on the Kurdish list were Yazidis. There is another Yazidi on the council as well, in a reserved minority seat.

That gives them 9 of the 37 seats, a proportion second only to the Sunni Arabs on the council.

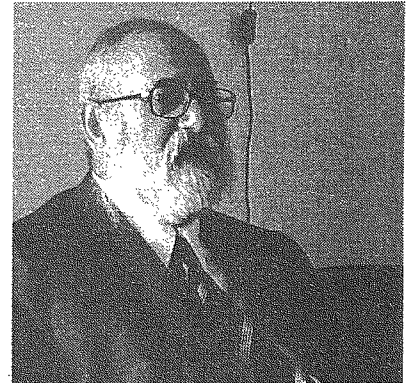
Kurdish political leaders claim the success as their own, insisting that it strengthens their case here, including helping to justify the Kurdish military presence, seen throughout the province.

The Kurdish militias were brought in to Nineveh in 2003 by the American forces in the north, and on this point Kurds and Arabs agree: it was a big mistake. "We paid a high price on that," said Khasro Goran, leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Mosul, the provincial capital.

Kurds became associated with what many Iraqis see as an occupying force and say they have reaped few benefits in return. Arabs saw the alliance as a sign that the Americans did not trust them and could not serve as honest brokers in a long-simmering conflict. Minorities

like Christians and Yazidis have come to feel like pawns, forced to alienate themselves from one side or the other.

In many of the steeple-crowded Christian towns and the Yazidi towns with their conical temples, the Kurdish forces have never left. With the Kurds provid-



JEHAD NGA FOR THE NYT

Prince Tahseen Saeed Ali, the Yazidi leader.

"Now we feel the Kurds are more responsive to us."

ing supplies and security during the most violent years of the war, many residents responded with political support. But that support has not been unanimous.

"Most of the Yazidi sheiks who joined the Kurds joined because of money," said Sheik Saeed Mendo Hammu, a member of a Yazidi political party that opposes allying with the Kurds.

Though he is fiercely anti-Kurd, Sheik Saeed said he was in contact with several of the Yazidi winners on the Kurdish list. They have indicated that they will work for Yazidi interests, he said, and he will support them if they do.

"We are not Kurd, we are Yazidi," he said. "We are fed up with fear."

Yazidi leaders who support the Kurds are more diplomatic, pledging support for Kurdish annexation even as they boast of their electoral dexterity. But the swagger is there. "We've faced so many massacres and accusations in our long history," said Karim Suleiman, head of the Kurd-financed Lalesh Cultural Center in Ain Sifni. "There were many fatwas that labeled us infidels and allowed people to control our money, property and lands. All of this gave us a foundation to use the democratic environment that was available to us."

Atheer Kakan contributed reporting.

Le Monde 10 avril 2009

Entrée de la Turquie dans l'UE : ceux qui sont pour, ceux qui sont contre

J'ai toujours été opposé à cette entrée [de la Turquie dans l'Union européenne] et je le reste", a déclaré dimanche Nicolas Sarkozy, après que Barack Obama s'est déclaré favorable à une adhésion d'Ankara. Le député européen socialiste Vincent Peillon a jugé "irresponsable (...) de décréter a priori qu'on ne veut pas faire entrer la Turquie dans l'Union européenne" ; à la droite de la droite, on reprochait au chef de l'Etat de ne pas avoir concrétisé ses convictions – de nouveaux chapitres d'adhésion de la Turquie à l'UE ont en effet été ouverts lorsque Paris présidait l'UE, et la Constitution française remaniée permet d'éviter un référendum sur un élargissement de l'UE si le Parlement l'approuve à la majorité des trois cinquièmes.

Mais à deux mois des élections européennes, de nombreux mouvements n'ont pas abordé le sujet dans leurs programmes ou orientations – alors que l'accord du Parlement de Strasbourg est nécessaire à tout élargissement. Il a donc parfois fallu les solliciter pour ce tour d'horizon.

CEUX QUI SONT CONTRE L'ADHÉSION

L'UMP, qui n'a pas encore rendu public son programme électoral, s'est félicitée que "le chef de l'Etat respecte ses engagements" ; Jean-François Copé assure que le groupe UMP à l'Assemblée est "archimajoritairement contre". Michel Barnier, longtemps partisan de l'adhésion, a expliqué au Figaro avoir changé d'avis, et prôner un "partenariat privilégié".

Pour le MoDem, dernier à nous préciser sa position, "il est primordial de fixer des frontières car l'Union ne peut que perdre en force ce qu'elle gagnerait en étendue. En revanche, nous défendons, bien sûr, l'idée de proposer à nos voisins proches (Turquie, Ukraine, ...), dont l'adhésion ne peut être acceptée car elle rendrait la construction de l'Union politique, sociale et démocratique que nous appelons de nos vœux impossible, un véritable et grand statut de partenariat

privilégié, pouvant même éventuellement déboucher sur des liens de type confédéral".

Debout la République, du souverainiste Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, prévoit dans son programme de "rompre les négociations d'adhésion de la Turquie avec l'UE". Philippe de Villiers, qui conduit avec Frédéric Nihous les listes Libertas, met en avant sur son site son hostilité à l'entrée de la Turquie dans l'UE, et entend prouver celle du fondateur du mouvement Libertas, l'Irlandais Declan Ganley. Mais l'UMP comme Nicolas Dupont-Aignan ont réaffirmé que celui-ci a précédemment exprimé des positions favorables à un tel élargissement. Au Front national, opposé de longue date à l'entrée de la Turquie dans l'UE, Jean-Marie Le Pen et les autres têtes de listes ont dénoncé le "mensonge" de Nicolas Sarkozy sur le sujet, tandis que le Parti de la France, fondé par l'ex-FN Carl Lang, a fait de son refus de la Turquie le thème d'un tract.

CEUX QUI SONT PLUTOT FAVORABLES À L'ADHÉSION

Le PS a adopté le manifeste du Parti socialiste européen, qui déclare, page 25 : "Nous sommes en faveur d'un processus ouvert de négociations avec la Turquie dans une perspective d'adhésion à l'Union européenne, sur la base de critères clairs". La prudence semble de mise. Martine Aubry s'est déclarée "favorable à ce que l'on poursuive le chemin de la Turquie vers l'Europe, même s'il est loin d'être encore terminé". Dans l'entourage de Laurent Fabius, qui avait exprimé ses réserves sur l'adhésion, en 2005 et 2006, on se dit "sur la même ligne" que la première secrétaire. Mais on refuse de "tomber dans le piège de l'Elysée, alors que la priorité, pour les électeurs, c'est les réponses européennes à la crise, et non les discussions avec la Turquie qui prendront des années".

A **Europe écologie**, qui associe les Verts à d'autres mouvements, on résume ainsi la position commune, là encore absente du programme : un "soutien de principe aux négociations

et à l'adhésion, à terme, de la Turquie, sachant que dans 10 ou 15 ans, ce ne sera plus le même pays, et qu'elle devra remplir des conditions politiques indispensables, telles que la reconnaissance de Chypre, des droits des minorités, notamment kurdes, et la question mémorielle – le génocide arménien".

Le **Front de gauche**, qui rassemble le Parti communiste et le Parti de gauche de Jean-Luc Mélenchon, ne mentionne pas la Turquie dans son projet. L'argumentaire de campagne du PCF indique que ce parti est "plutôt favorable à l'entrée de la Turquie dans l'UE", sous plusieurs conditions, tandis que le PG renvoie au texte adopté lors du congrès fondateur, qui demande l'"arrêt du processus d'élargissement tant que les institutions n'auront pas été démocratisées et que les droits sociaux n'auront pas été garantis" (p. 13), ce qui "n'est pas dirigé contre la Turquie". Au Nouveau Parti anticapitaliste, un porte-parole indique que "c'est au peuple turc de décider, nous ne sommes pas contre l'adhésion en soi". Mais le NPA la soumet aussi à la reconnaissance du génocide arménien, aux droits des minorités et à la question des prisonniers politiques. A Lutte ouvrière, qui n'en parle pas dans ses "axes de campagne", "nous sommes absolument pour l'entrée de la Turquie dans l'UE, même si le gouvernement turc n'est pas irréprochable. Nous considérons que cela peut être un pas vers une amélioration des conditions sociales des travailleurs turcs, sur la base des acquis des pays de l'UE", précise Michel Rodinson, directeur du journal Lutte ouvrière.

Claire Ané



RÉUNION IRAK/TURQUIE/ETATS-UNIS POUR AMÉLIORER LA LUTTE CONTRE LE PKK

BAGDAD, 11 avr 2009 (AFP)

L'Irak, la Turquie et les Etats-Unis ont décidé samedi à Bagdad de mieux coordonner leurs efforts pour contrer l'activité des rebelles kurdes du PKK installés au Kurdistan irakien, a affirmé le secrétaire d'Etat à la Sécurité nationale Chirouan al-Waïli.

"Nous avons échangé des informations et décidé de coordonner nos efforts pour stopper les activités militaires, politiques et médiatiques du PKK dans le cadre de sous-comités créés à cet effet", a affirmé à la télévision d'Etat le responsable irakien.

Il intervenait à l'issue de la commission tripartite, créée en novembre à Bagdad et qui se réunit tous les trois mois.

Avant de partir pour Bagdad, le ministre turc de l'Intérieur Besir Atalay avait affirmé: "Nous attendons que le gouvernement central irakien et l'administration régionale du nord prennent des mesures concrètes" contre le PKK.

Selon lui, le travail du comité devrait "produire de bons résultats, notamment en matière d'échange de renseignements".

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, se sert depuis longtemps de bases installées au Kurdistan irakien (nord) pour lancer des attaques contre des cibles turques de

l'autre côté de la frontière.

"Nos forces ont l'autorité et le pouvoir de fermer les bases (du PKK). Notre lutte contre le terrorisme ne vise pas seulement al-Qaïda mais tous ceux qui mettent en danger la sécurité irakienne et perturbent nos relations avec les pays voisins", a ajouté le ministre irakien.

Samedi, sept membres du PKK ont été tués dans une région montagneuse de la province de Sirnak, près de la frontière irakienne, au cours d'une opération lancée par l'armée au lendemain de la mort par balles de deux soldats turcs, a affirmé l'état-major turc sur son site internet.

Depuis décembre 2007, l'aviation turque bombarde régulièrement les camps des séparatistes kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak.

Ankara a longtemps accusé les Kurdes irakiens de tolérer voire d'aider le PKK, mais, le mois dernier, lors d'une visite du président turc Abdullah Gül à Bagdad, son homologue irakien Jalal Talabani, lui-même Kurde, a appelé les militants du PKK à déposer les armes ou à quitter le pays.

Le PKK a lancé en 1984 une campagne armée pour obtenir l'autonomie du sud-est de la Turquie, une région peuplée majoritairement de Kurdes. Le conflit a fait 44.000 morts.



LE PRÉSIDENT PALESTINIEN MAHMOUD ABBAS EN VISITE AU KURDISTAN

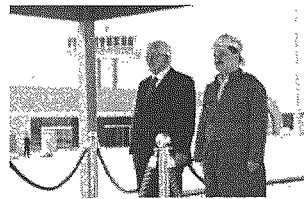
ERBIL (Irak), 13 avr 2009 (AFP)

LES PRÉSIDENTS des deux peuples privés d'Etat les plus connus du Moyen-Orient se sont rencontrés lundi à Erbil afin de cimenter les relations entre leurs deux territoires autonomes.

"Nous n'avons pas besoin d'invitation pour visiter cette nation soeur et nous avons toujours eu le sentiment que les portes (du Kurdistan) nous étaient ouvertes sans avoir besoin de prendre rendez-vous", a déclaré lors d'une conférence de presse le dirigeant palestinien Mahmoud Abbas.

"L'honorable président Barzani n'a été mis au courant de ma visite qu'à peine 24 heures avant mon arrivée et il a dit aussitôt: +Ahlan wa sahan+ (bienvenue)", a-t-il souligné.

Pour sa part, le président de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien, Massoud Barzani, a rendu hommage à son interlocuteur en notant qu'il est le premier "président" à effectuer une visite dans sa région du nord de l'Irak.



"Nous avons été habitués à voir les Palestiniens aider notre peuple, par le passé comme à présent. Cette visite cimentera les relations entre les deux peuples qui partagent la même souffrance", a ajouté M. Barzani.

"De même qu'il est le premier président à visiter notre région, nous espérons que le consulat palestinien sera le premier consulat à ouvrir à Erbil", la "capitale" du Kurdistan irakien.

Mahmoud Abbas est le président de l'Autorité Palestinienne, une entité créée par les accords d'Oslo de 1993 avec Israël qui accorde une autonomie en Cisjordanie et à Gaza.

Barzani est le président de la région autonome du Kurdistan, une région montagneuse dans le nord de l'Irak qui a vu son autonomie confirmée par la Constitution irakienne de 2005. Les 25 à 30 millions de Kurdes se répartissent entre la Turquie, l'Iran, l'Irak et la Syrie.

Il y a une semaine, M. Abbas s'était rendu à Bagdad. C'était la première visite d'un dirigeant palestinien depuis l'invasion américaine de 2003.



TURQUIE: L'ARMÉE APPELLE LE GOUVERNEMENT À OBTENIR LA REDDITION DES REBELLES

ISTANBUL, 14 avril 2009 (AFP)

Le chef de l'armée turque a exhorté mardi le gouvernement à mettre en oeuvre les dispositions nécessaires afin d'obtenir la reddition des rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), une organisation, selon lui, en "perte de sang".

"L'Etat doit procéder à des modifications afin que les dispositions légales en cours puissent devenir plus effectives en vue d'obtenir que les rebelles quittent l'organisation", a déclaré le général Ilker Basbug, lors de son discours annuel à l'académie de guerre d'Istanbul.

Sans préciser ces modifications, le chef d'état-major a affirmé que la lutte anti-terroriste ne pouvait seulement être considérée d'un point de vue militaire.

Le code pénal turc prévoit déjà une dispense de peine pour tout membre du PKK n'ayant pas commis de crime. Les résultats de cette disposition ont cepen-

dant été limités.

Les organisations kurdes réclament une amnistie totale pour les rebelles du PKK, une organisation classée comme terroriste par les Etats-Unis, l'UE et la Turquie, et dont ses leaders sont réfugiés pour la plupart dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak.

"Le nord de l'Irak n'est plus un sanctuaire pour l'organisation terroriste (...) qui perd du sang et dont les voies de communications ont été détruites", en raison des opérations menées en Turquie et contre les repaires du PKK situés dans le Kurdistan irakien en collaboration avec les Américains, a souligné le général.

Les déclarations du général Basbug interviennent alors que le PKK a prolongé jusqu'au 1er juin une trêve qu'il avait déclaré unilatéralement, l'Etat turc n'ayant jamais reconnu les précédents cessez-le-feu, rapporte le quotidien turc Taraf.

Le conflit kurde de Turquie a fait quelque 45.000 morts depuis le début de l'insurrection du PKK, en 1984.

La « méthode » d'Ankara pour adhérer à l'UE crée le malaise à Bruxelles

La Turquie se vante un peu vite d'avoir fait progresser son adhésion à l'Union européenne

Bruxelles
Bureau européen

Fort du récent soutien apporté par Barack Obama et de la négociation qu'elle croit avoir gagnée à propos de la nomination du nouveau secrétaire général de l'OTAN, la Turquie accentue sa pression sur l'Union européenne (UE).

À Bruxelles, les bruits répandus par la diplomatie d'Ankara, selon laquelle les vingt-sept afficheraient plus de « souplesse » lors des discussions sur l'adhésion turque, suscitent malaise et crispations. En écho, le président Abdullah Gül a invité les Européens, jeudi 9 avril, à taire leurs critiques « dangereuses » à l'égard de la politique étrangère de son pays, sous peine, a-t-il expliqué au *Financial Times*, d'affaiblir la nécessaire coopération sur quelques-unes des « menaces les plus importantes pesant sur la sécurité occidentale ».

L'intense négociation qui a eu lieu les 3 et 4 avril afin d'aboutir à la levée du veto turc à la nomination du Danois Anders Fogh Rasmussen, lors du sommet de l'Alliance atlantique à Strasbourg et à Kehl, a débouché sur des résultats positifs pour Ankara. La médiation du président américain dans la querelle entre Ankara et les pays européens qui soutenaient M. Rasmussen – vilipendé dans les pays musulmans pour son soutien, lorsqu'il était premier ministre, aux auteurs de caricatures de Mahomet – devrait permettre la nomination d'un Turc au poste de secrétaire général adjoint. Il serait notamment chargé des relations avec le monde musulman. Par ailleurs, des officiers turcs accéderaient à des postes importants dans le commandement militaire de l'OTAN.

Dans la foulée, Ankara a évoqué son entrée dans l'Agence européenne de défense, et l'idée que l'UE – y compris la France et l'Allemagne, adversaires d'une adhésion à part entière de la Turquie à l'UE – aurait accepté de faciliter les négociations engagées en 2005. Deux « chapitres » supplémentaires, concernant la fiscalité et la politique sociale, pourraient être ouverts avant la fin de la présidence tchèque.



« Rien n'est décidé »

À Bruxelles, ces propos ont engendré la mauvaise humeur. « Rien n'est sûr, rien n'est décidé », affirme un diplomate néerlandais. « Une telle décision suppose un accord unanime des chefs d'Etat », souligne un porte-parole de la Commission. « L'OTAN est une chose, l'adhésion en est une autre », raille un ambassadeur auprès de l'UE.

Le dossier de l'adhésion comporte 33 chapitres de négociation au total. L'un d'entre eux a été refermé provisoirement, cinq sont officieusement bloqués – par la France et par Chypre –, huit autres sont gelés. Les adversaires déclarés de l'adhésion turque avaient espéré, en 2008, que la Cour constitutionnelle turque, appelée à se prononcer sur une procédure visant à l'interdiction de l'AKP, le parti islamiste au pouvoir, conclurait en ce sens. Cela leur aurait permis de forcer l'Union à interrompre le processus de négociation. Il a manqué la voix d'un juge pour prononcer la dissolution du parti du président Gül et du premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Celui-ci a dès lors promis de s'engager en faveur d'un système laïc, et réclamé la poursuite des débats avec l'UE.

Au-delà de la polémique sur la

Le processus d'adhésion de la Croatie pourrait repartir

L'Allemagne a proposé, mercredi 8 avril, sa médiation dans le conflit frontalier qui oppose depuis 1991 la Slovanie à la Croatie et bloque les négociations qui pourraient conduire à l'adhésion de cette dernière à l'Union européenne (UE). La chancelière Angela Merkel plaide pour une entrée de la Croatie dans l'UE, après son entrée dans l'OTAN le 1^{er} avril. La Commission a annulé un cinquième tour de négociation, qui était prévu pour le 1^{er} avril, après un refus de Zagreb de répondre à une proposition de solution.

nomination de M. Rasmussen, « c'est la méthode suivie par Ankara qui pose problème », souligne un diplomate bruxellois. S'incarnant en porte-parole des pays musulmans, ce qui a aussi fortement déplu, M. Erdogan a relancé les interrogations quant à la volonté réelle de son pays de respecter la liberté d'expression, l'une des exigences les plus fortes des négociateurs européens.

« Très choqué » par la pratique de la Turquie et son évolution vers ce qu'il a appelé « une religion plus renforcée, une laïcité moins affirmée », Bernard Kouchner a, quant à lui, saisi l'occasion pour affirmer, mardi 7 avril, qu'il n'était plus favorable, désormais, à l'entrée de la Turquie dans l'UE.

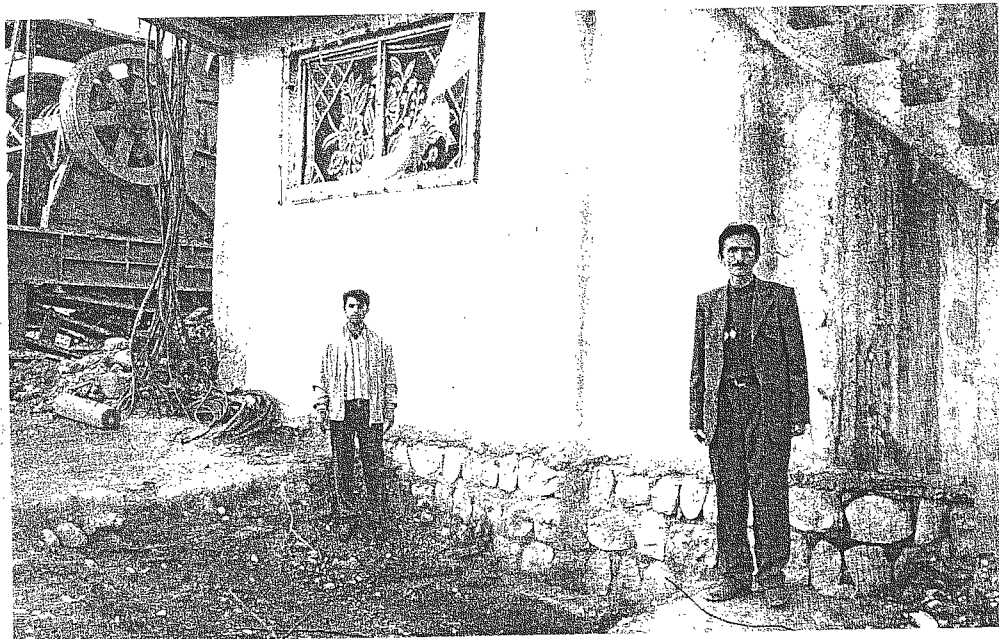
Une manière de tenter de calmer le débat national : divers responsables (Philippe de Villiers, Jean-Marie Le Pen...) ont transformé la « question turque » en argument électoral, accusant Nicolas Sarkozy de ne pas avoir interrompu les négociations d'adhésion lors de la présidence française de l'Union. En Allemagne et aux Pays-Bas, le thème de l'entrée de la Turquie a également entraîné une mobilisation des courants les plus radicaux. ■

Jean-Pierre Stroobants

Le Monde
Mardi 14 avril 2009

Turquie Les fantômes d'une « sale guerre »

La cellule clandestine de la gendarmerie turque a-t-elle commis des crimes au nom de la lutte contre les rebelles kurdes, dans les années 1990 ? Oui, assure un repent, qui s'est réfugié en Suède, d'où il distille des révélations très précises et souvent corroborées par les enquêtes de la justice turque



Des fosses ont été creusées, comme ici à Silopi, dans le sud-est de la Turquie, pour retrouver les restes de personnes portées disparues. EDU BAYER

Guillaume Perrier
et Olivier Truc

Silopi (Turquie) et sud de la Suède
Envoyés spéciaux

Reclus dans un village, « quelque part dans le sud de la Suède », Abdülkadir Aygan vit sous la protection des services secrets suédois. Et pour cause : ce réfugié fait trembler la Turquie à chacune de ses révélations. Ancien membre de la rébellion kurde du PKK, il a été « retourné » par l'armée turque dans les années 1990. Il a alors collaboré avec le Jitem, une cellule clandestine de la gendarmerie chargée de la lutte antiterroriste. Pendant dix ans, il a pris part aux crimes perpétrés dans le sud-est de la Turquie, au plus fort de la « sale guerre » menée par l'armée contre les rebelles kurdes et une population accusée de les soutenir. Abdülkadir Aygan a quitté la Turquie en 2003. Aujourd'hui, il parle.

« J'ai été embauché comme fonctionnaire civil antiterroriste en septembre 1991 avec le matricule J27299 », nous raconte-t-il, dans sa maison suédoise. Avec force détails, il passe en revue les séances de torture et les exécutions sommaires de militants soupçonnés de soutenir la cause kur-

de, dont il fut le témoin. Des centaines de meurtres et d'enlèvements, non élucidés, auraient été commis dans le sud-est de la Turquie entre 1987 et 2001. « Il y a près de 1 500 dossiers connus de disparus, estime un avocat de Diyarbakir engagé dans la défense des droits de l'homme, Sezgin Tanrikulu. 5 000 en comptant les meurtres inexplicables. »

En Turquie, les aveux d'Abdülkadir Aygan ont totalement relancé l'enquête sur ces disparitions et rendu espoir aux familles des victimes. Le corps de Murat Aslan, un jeune de 25 ans volatilisé en 1994, a ainsi été retrouvé dix ans après, brûlé et enterré au bord d'une route. « Nous l'avons enlevé dans un café après une dénonciation et amené au local du Jitem, se souvient M. Aygan. Un caporal expert en torture l'a accroché au plafond par les mains, avec des poids aux pieds. Il le battait. Il est resté trois ou quatre jours sans nourriture. Moi, j'évaluais ses informations. » Selon Abdülkadir Aygan, Murat Aslan a finalement été envoyé à Silopi, puis amené au bord du Tigre. « On lui a mis un bandeau sur les yeux et des menottes. Le sous-officier Yüksel Ugur a tiré et Cindi Salu-

ci l'a arrosé d'essence et a mis le feu. C'est grâce à mon témoignage que son corps a pu être retrouvé par sa famille et identifié grâce à un test ADN. »

Le repent décrit également les « puits de la mort », tels que les a baptisés la presse turque : des cuves de la compagnie pétrolière d'Etat Botas, dans lesquelles sept corps auraient été jetés en 1994 après avoir été dissous dans l'acide ou brûlés. Il précise aussi que trois syndicalistes, arrêtés la même année et remis par le procureur au chef du Jitem à Diyarbakir, le colonel Abdükerim Kirca, ont été exécutés par ce dernier d'une balle dans la tête près de Silvan. « Nous prenons ce qu'il dit très au sérieux », explique Nusirevan Elçi, le bâtonnier de Silopi, à l'origine de la réouverture du dossier. Après vérification, tout ce que raconte Aygan est exact. »

L'ex-membre du Jitem est loin d'avoir livré tous ses secrets. Il dit craindre pour sa vie, en Suède, où il a reçu des menaces : la Turquie réclame son extradition pour le juger pour le meurtre de l'écrivain kurde Musa Anter, en 1992. « Je suis prêt à être jugé n'importe où et n'importe quand mais pas en Turquie, s'insurge-t-il. Cette deman-

de est faite pour me faire taire. »

Depuis le 9 mars, l'enquête sur les disparitions a pris une nouvelle dimension. Sur requête des avocats qui s'appuient sur les déclarations de M. Aygan, la justice a finalement ordonné des fouilles autour de Silopi, dernière ville avant la frontière irakienne, et dans la région de Diyarbakir. Les « puits de la mort », situés à proximité de la principale caserne militaire de Silopi, et sur le site de l'entreprise Botas, ont été explorés. Ainsi que des charniers présumés dans plusieurs villages, où des dizaines de fragments d'os, un gant vert, des cordelettes nouées, des débris de vêtements, un crâne humain ont été découverts.

Le traumatisme, encore vif, des méfaits commis dans la région remonte à la surface à la faveur de ces excavations. « Ces crimes étaient connus de la population depuis

« A l'époque, la peur nous empêchait de parler. Nous risquions d'être tués à notre tour »

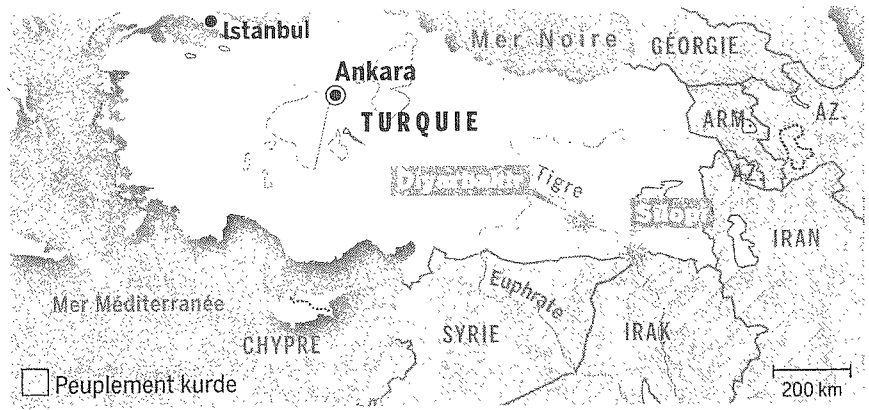
Salih Teybogan
un paysan

des années. Chaque famille a une histoire de disparu », précise le bâtonnier Elçi. Du vendeur de kebabs de la place centrale au chef local de l'AKP, le parti du premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan, tous ont perdu un proche. Rien qu'à Silopi, 15 000 habitants, au moins 300 personnes seraient portées disparues.

Ahmet s'est évaporé un matin, en 1998, en sortant de chez lui. « Il était photographe, marié et père de trois enfants. On ne l'a jamais revu », raconte son père Enver, les larmes aux yeux. Après la disparition, le vieil homme se souvient avoir été interrogé par un responsable du Jitem. « Je ne pense qu'à une chose depuis dix ans, dit-il. Retrouver le corps de mon fils. » Voyant à la télévision, depuis peu, les pelleteuses fouiller la terre, Enver a poussé la porte de l'Association des droits de l'homme : « J'ai pensé que, avec cette affaire Ergenekon qui éclate en ce moment, il pourrait y avoir de nouvelles informations. »

Les langues se délient depuis le lancement, en 2007, d'une enquête sur le réseau Ergenekon, une puissante nébuleuse militaro-nationaliste incrustée dans l'appareil d'Etat turc et soupçonnée d'avoir fomenté putschs et assassinats. Depuis octobre 2008, 86 personnes – militaires, académiciens, journalistes, politiciens et mafieux – sont jugées devant un tribunal spécial, dans la banlieue d'Istanbul, pour un complot présumé contre le gouvernement. A partir de juillet, 56 autres suspects seront traduits devant la justice. Des dizaines d'autres pourraient suivre.

L'existence du réseau Ergenekon n'est pas une surprise : les Turcs parlaient jusqu'ici d'« Etat profond » pour désigner ce réseau ultranationaliste. Décapité par les vagues d'arrestations, le réseau pourrait percer le mystère de quelques-unes des



affaires les plus sombres de l'histoire récente de la Turquie, telles que l'assassinat du journaliste d'origine arménienne Hrant Dink... ou les exactions du Jitem, dans le Sud-Est. « Les fondateurs d'Ergenekon étaient aussi des membres du Jitem, souligne Abdülkadir Aygan. Ergenekon a aussi utilisé à l'occasion des chefs de la mafia pour mener des missions. Par exemple contre des chefs d'entreprise qu'ils faisaient assassiner. Une partie des victimes dans le sud-est ont été tuées par le Jitem, mais aussi par d'autres services de police, de gendarmerie ou de l'armée, voire même par le MHP, le parti d'extrême droite nationaliste. »

« Plus de 80 familles de disparus ont rompu le silence depuis décembre, estime Nusirevan Elçi qui, chaque semaine, voit arriver de nouveaux dossiers. L'investigation sur Ergenekon a fait sortir de nouveaux témoignages et doit se concentrer sur le sud-est : on y retrouve beaucoup d'acteurs de l'histoire. » A la surprise des habitants, de nombreux anciens hauts responsables militaires en poste dans la région au moment des disparitions, entre 1987 et 2001, ont été arrêtés ces dernières semaines : le major Arif Dogan, surnommé « l'Ange de la mort », ou l'ancien général Levent Ersöz, réputé pour sa cruauté.

Le 23 mars, c'est le colonel Cemal Temizöz qui a été interpellé. Ancien chef du Jitem à Cizre, il a été désigné par des suspects comme le commanditaire de plusieurs enlèvements. Son nom fait encore

frissonner l'avocat Elçi : « Les gens se détournent de leur chemin pour ne pas se retrouver face à lui. » Personne n'osait plus emprunter la route qui traverse le petit village voisin de Kustepe. Vidé de ses habitants et surveillé par trois « gardiens de villages », les miliciens supplétifs de l'armée, il aurait également abrité un charnier. Les enquêteurs y ont découvert un grand nombre d'ossements. « Des os de chevaux, rien de plus », s'agace l'un des gardiens de village en treillis, armé d'une kalachnikov, en faisant signe de circuler. « A l'époque, la peur nous empêchait de parler. Nous risquions d'être tués à notre tour », explique Salih Teybogan, un paysan de Silopi.

Son frère, qui travaillait au poste-frontière, a été enlevé en rentrant chez lui, et sa voiture retrouvée brûlée, « à 200 m de Botas ». Quelques mois plus tard, trois

corps sont retirés d'un puits, sous un ancien restaurant, aujourd'hui désaffecté. « Nous allons faire des tests ADN, dit Salih Teybogan. Maintenant, les choses changent. Quand j'ai entendu qu'ils allaient ouvrir les charniers, je suis venu réclamer mes droits. »

L'affaire des « puits de la mort » sonne peut-être la fin de l'impunité pour ces crimes perpétrés jusque très récemment. A Istanbul et à Diyarbakir, les Mères du samedi – l'équivalent turc des Mères de la place de Mai à Buenos Aires – ont repris leurs manifestations hebdomadaires pour réclamer les corps de leurs enfants disparus. « Maintenant, il nous faut une véritable commission vérité et réconciliation, estime l'avocat Sezgin Tanrikulu. Le problème, c'est que les anciens du Jitem sont toujours là, au sein de l'armée. »

Le colonel Abdülkerim Kirca, désigné par Abdülkadir Aygan comme l'assassin d'une douzaine de Kurdes, au moins, dans les années 1990, a été retrouvé avec une balle dans la tête en janvier, avant de pouvoir être interrogé. Officiellement, un suicide. Tout le gratin de l'état-major assistait à ses funérailles. ■

Iraq intent on showing the world it runs its own affairs

BAGHDAD

BY ALISSA J. RUBIN

With the Americans leaving and security improved, the Iraqi government has been on a nonstop campaign to convince the world that it is a sovereign state, a client neither of the United States nor of Iran.

The country's emerging foreign policy was outlined in a speech that Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki gave two weeks ago to the Arab League conference in Doha, Qatar, underscoring Iraq's Arab and Muslim identity, signaling that it was not following in the secular footsteps of the United States.

"Iraq's Arab and Islamic identity and its unity and sovereignty are red lines that cannot be crossed and are not subject to compromise," Mr. Maliki said in his address to the 22-member body.

But with 130,000 American soldiers still on Iraqi soil and American advisers embedded in almost every Iraqi security institution, his message remains a tough sell — although easier than it was even a year ago, before it became clear that the Americans would withdraw.

"How do you represent a country under foreign occupation?" asked Hoshiyar Zebari, the Iraqi foreign minister. "It was an extreme challenge, an uphill challenge."

In most of the Middle East, being too close to the Americans earns leaders the scorn of Arabs who view the United States as a heavy-handed ally of Israel, a colonialist empire builder and anti-Muslim. In Europe, where many countries opposed the American invasion, the continuing presence of American soldiers coupled with Iraq's unstable security situation meant that until recently many countries remained skeptical of Iraq's independence.

It was not until last autumn, when the United States announced a sure withdrawal and pledged no permanent bases in Iraq, that countries and international organizations began committing in any

"They are trying to draw a clear foreign policy."

numbers to opening embassies and making official visits, Mr. Zebari said.

Forty countries now have ambassadors or *chargés d'affaires* in Baghdad, along with 12 international agencies, including the United Nations and the Red Cross. In February, President Nicolas Sarkozy of France made the first visit of a French leader to the country since the

2003 invasion, and Frank-Walter Steinmeier became the first German foreign minister to visit Baghdad in 22 years.

Both countries had opposed the American invasion but now seem ready to forge strong ties with Baghdad.

In an effort to prove its autonomy, Iraq has invited leaders from Syria and Iran to open embassies, although those countries have an antagonistic relationship with the United States, and Iraq has also reached out to the United States' global competitors: China and Russia.

"They are trying to prove they are independent of the United States and they are trying to draw a clear foreign policy, and we can see other countries are beginning to take Iraq seriously," said Mustapha Alani, director of defense studies at the Gulf Research Center, an independent group in the United Arab Emirates.

Harder for Iraq to demonstrate to the world is that it is free of Iranian influence. There are "some doubts in the minds and hearts of some of the Arab countries," Mr. Zebari said. The country that harbors the greatest uncertainty is Saudi Arabia, one of Iraq's most powerful neighbors. The Saudis have yet to open an embassy in Baghdad despite repeated invitations and cajoling.

Although the Saudis cite security as the reason for hesitating, the larger reason is that they have yet to trust Iraq's Shiite-led government, which they fear will favor Iran or even become an Iranian satellite.

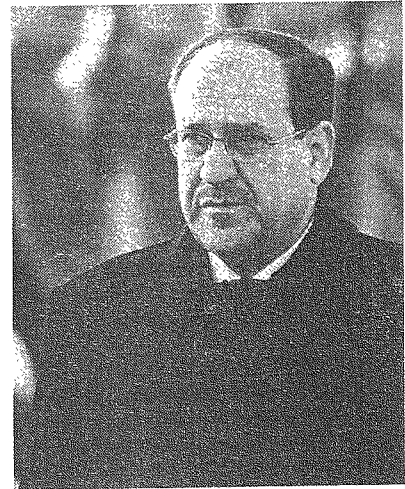
Prince Turki al-Faisal, former director of Saudi intelligence and former ambassador to the United States, said at a conference in Amman on Saturday that Saudi Arabia had told the United States previously that when it brought a Shiite-dominated government to power after

the 2003 invasion, it "handed Iraq to Iran on a golden plate," according to the Saudi daily newspaper *Al Watan*.

Iran's influence is indisputable. With a \$4 billion balance of trade, it is Iraq's second-largest trading partner, after Turkey. It helps to finance several of Iraq's Shiite political parties and sends millions of religious tourists to Iraq's shrines every year.

Mr. Zebari, well aware of Iran's effort to wield its influence in Iraq, said he had been warning the Saudis lately that if they did not help fill the vacuum as the Americans pulled back, then the Iranians would.

"We are saying to them, they should be here: 'Why do you complain about expanding influence?'" Mr. Zebari said. "They are here, and you are not."



SERGEI KARPUKHIN/REUTERS

Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki says Iraq's unity and sovereignty are "red lines."

Iran was the first country to recognize Iraq after the American invasion, and it has shrewdly reached out to politicians from all the major sects and ethnicities. With ties to the most powerful politicians, it has been able to maneuver behind the scenes, influencing Iraq's internal politics and sometimes derailing government policy.

"We've managed to conduct our relationship with them with a struggle; politically, officially," Mr. Zebari said.

Pulled between Iran and the Arab world, Iraq appears likely to become a "buffer state," said Joost Hiltermann, the senior Iraq analyst at the International Crisis Group, a research organization based in Washington and Brussels. The country's safety net, whether Iraqis like it or not, is likely to remain the United States.

"They will need to distance themselves from the United States publicly," Mr. Hiltermann said. "But at the same time they will need to keep very close connections with them. They need them for security. They will need to juggle all the time."

Sam Dagher contributed reporting.

Kirkuk power-sharing agreements in limbo

By Geoff Ziezulewicz, Stars and Stripes

Kirkuk province didn't participate in elections earlier this year, as its future continues to be debated in the Iraqi parliament. Numerous deadlines on these decisions have passed, most recently March 31. Elections might take place here this summer.

The Kurds here are the most ardent supporters of a continued U.S. presence, but Arabs and Turkmens interviewed also said a U.S. withdrawal would be bad.

Power-sharing agreements between different groups and other steps forward are in limbo here partly because there are no clear numbers on the ethnic makeup of Kirkuk province.

Sri Kulkarni, a public diplomacy officer with the State Department's Provincial Reconstruction Team, estimates the population to be between 45 percent and 55 percent Kurdish, 25 percent and 35 percent Arab and 10 percent to 15 percent

Turkmen, with a smaller Christian population.

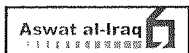
Kurds flooded the province after 2003, many claiming displacement during Saddam's forced "Arabization" of the region. Some Arabs counter that the Kurdish Regional Government to the north sent Kurds here to increase the population in order to fix power-sharing dynamics. Some claim the local population swelled from 700,000 to 1.3 million after the war's onset due to the new Kurds.

U.S. military officials say Arabs want a 1978 census used to determine population percentages, while Kurds want a 1957 count as a baseline.

Tied into that population question and the Kurdish influx post-2003 are about 40,000 property disputes, military officials said. Just one of these disputes took Iraq's Commission for the Resolution of Real Property Disputes a year to solve.

Kurds claim they were displaced, while Arabs and other groups claim they have legally binding property documents from the old regime.

"Those guys are squatters as far as the Kurds are concerned," said Lt. Col. Andy Shoffner, commander of the 4th Squadron, 9th U.S. Cavalry Regiment, which is responsible for much of the southern part of the province.



April 17, 2009

Barazani, De Mistura discuss UN proposals on disputed areas

ARBIL / Aswat al-Iraq:

Iraqi Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barazani discuss on Friday with Staffan De Mistura, the UN secretary general's special envoy to Iraq, the international organization's proposals on disputed areas, according to a statement by Barazani's office.

"De Mistura, accompanied by a delegation of envoys of the United States, Britain and the European Union (EU) represented by the Belgian ambassador, held today (April 17) a meeting with Barazani and a high-level delegation representing the autonomous region," read the statement as received by Aswat al-Iraq news agency.

"The UN special envoy spoke of proposals to deal with the problems over

disputed areas," the statement added.

According to article 140 of the Iraqi constitution, the problem of disputed areas, particularly Kirkuk, are to be dealt with over three stages.

The article provides for the normalization of Kirkuk through having back its Kurdish and Turcoman inhabitants and repatriating the Arabs relocated in the city during the former regime's time to their original provinces in central and southern Iraq.

The article also calls for conducting a census to be followed by a referendum to let the inhabitants decide whether they would like Kirkuk to be annexed to the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan region or having it as an independent province.



April 17, 2009

U.N. may propose joint administration of Kirkuk

BAGHDAD / Aswat al-Iraq:

Kurdish and Arab politicians in northern Iraq are re preparing for a potentially long and bruising fight over disputed areas as they await the release of U.N. reports expected to propose joint administration of Kirkuk and make a case for the annexation of some districts to the Kurdistan Regional Government, the Washington Post newspaper said on Friday.

"In Kirkuk, the crown jewel of the 300-mile strip of disputed territories, Arab politicians announced over the weekend the creation of a political group that includes Sunni leaders who gained prominence in 2006 and 2007 when, with financial backing from the United States, they took up arms against the group al-Qaeda in Iraq in the western part of the country," the paper said.

The Kurds, meanwhile, have been aggressively collecting signatures in the oil-rich city for a nonbinding petition with which they hope to demonstrate that the majority of Kirkuk's residents want the city annexed to the autonomous Kurdish regional government.

"The much-anticipated release of the U.N. reports, expected this month, could open a new chapter in the visceral, decades-long dispute between Arabs and Kurds over Kirkuk and other key cities and villages in northern Iraq," it added.

Many of the urban areas in the disputed territories were predominantly Kurdish until the 1970s, when Saddam Hussein razed hundreds of Kurdish villages, displacing thousands of people. He also provided incentives for

Arabs in southern Iraq to move north.

Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Kurdish regional government — which operates much like a sovereign nation and has its own armed force — has worked aggressively to restore its influence in several areas that were formerly under Kurdish control. It has spent millions on social services and deployed its militia, the Peshmerga, to parts of Nineveh, Dala and Kirkuk, the three provinces that border the autonomous regional government.

"Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and other Arab leaders have accused Kurds of encroaching in areas that are under nominal control of the Baghdad government. Maliki in recent months deployed troops loyal to the central government to stem the influence of the Kurdish regional government."

The tension over Kirkuk and other disputed areas, which some Iraqi and U.S. officials believe could escalate into armed conflict, prompted the U.S. military in January to increase its troop level in Kirkuk from a battalion, roughly 900 troops, to a combat brigade of about 3,200 soldiers," it continued.

"The threat of civil war remains real, and this threat should not be minimized," said W. Andrew Terrill, a national security professor at the U.S. Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute. "Kirkuk is often compared to Jerusalem, where different groups have exceptionally strong emotional attachments and the claims of rival groups are rarely seen as valid."

"The debate over control is linked to the still-unresolved question of how Iraq will distribute its oil wealth. Complicating matters, it is coming to a head in a politically charged year during which missteps by candidates over their

position on Kirkuk could amount to political suicide," the newspaper said.

U.N. officials this week briefed Maliki, a Shiite; President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd; and other senior Iraqi leaders on the reports. U.N. officials have refrained from discussing the reports publicly.

Iraqi analysts and politicians in northern Iraq who have discussed the issue with U.N. officials in recent weeks said in interviews that they expect the organization will outline a scenario by which Kirkuk could be administered jointly by the central government in Baghdad and the Kurdish regional government. Elsewhere, based on an analysis of the region's history, demographics and the outcome of the recent provincial election, the United Nations is expected to suggest that certain districts ought to be administered by the Kurdish regional government.

Hussein Ali Salih al-Juburi, a senior Arab political leader in Kirkuk, said local politicians decided to form the Iraqi Kirkuk Bloc to "strengthen the Arabs' position" on what he called "Kurdish intransigence." He said the group intends to deploy the paramilitary groups known as Awakening councils, or Sons of Iraq, to fight insurgent groups in villages in northern Iraq.

Kurdish politicians in Kirkuk say they won't accept any deal that prevents the Kurdish regional government from annexing the city.

The security situation in Kirkuk, which saw little violence in the years after the invasion, has deteriorated in recent months. A suicide bomber killed 50 people at a restaurant in December. On Wednesday, another suicide bomber killed 11. Iraqi and U.S. officials fear insurgent groups could seize on the political and military stalemates to make a comeback in the region.

TODAYS ZAMAN
April 17, 2009

Kurdish conference in Arbil postponed indefinitely

A conference that was to bring together disparate Kurdish groups to create a roadmap for a solution to the Kurdish problem and for the laying down of arms by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and which was expected to take place in the spring has been postponed, the Kurdish ANF news agency reported yesterday.

According to the agency, the Kurdish "national congress" was postponed to July or August following a request from Turkey, after Turkish Interior Minister Be?ir Atalay participated in a meeting of the three-party mechanism, established last year by Turkey, Iraq and the United States to fight terrorism and held in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad on April 11. Some Kurdish sources, however, said the

conference has been postponed indefinitely.

Turkey was to participate in the conference, to be held in Arbil, as an observer. Calls on the PKK to lay down its weapons were expected.

In an article published in the Radikal daily on Wednesday, Cengiz Çandar expressed disappointment over the lack of any development vis-a-vis the Kurdish conference.

"There are no developments regarding the Kurdish conference. It was highly expected to be held in Arbil in late April or early May. Putting aside April, it will be a miracle if this conference gathers in May. How do I know that? I recently went to Washington to give a presentation on Turkish and Iraqi Kurds.

The person who accompanied me was a Kurdish official from the Kurdistan Regional Administration responsible for the preparations of the conference. He said there was no preparation for the conference at the time being," Çandar wrote in his article.

In a statement made on April 1, Kurdistan Regional Administration President Massoud Barzani said he was following the developments in the Kurdish conference from the media, adding that no exact date was set for the conference.

GULF NEWS April 18, 2009

Kirkuk compromise prospects brighten

By Oxford Analytica

Despite US and UN assistance, the status of Kirkuk remains deadlocked, and tension in the disputed city is rising.

EVENT: The Article 23 Committee on Kirkuk failed to submit its recommendations by the March 31 deadline set by Iraq's parliament and is now expected to do so by late May.

SIGNIFICANCE: Despite US and UN assistance, the status of Kirkuk remains deadlocked, and tension in the disputed city is rising.

There is growing appetite among local groups for a compromise solution that involves Kirkuk being declared a special region that is neither within the KRG nor directly administered from Baghdad

A census and a resultant new power-sharing formula would then follow in time, followed by new provincial elections in Kirkuk in 2013 (ie., at the same time as the other 17 provinces)

At present, neither the Kurds nor the Arab nationalist factions appear to be willing to compromise on Kirkuk. Only after the early 2010 national elections will either side have sufficient political freedom to make painful sacrifices



Iraq's President Jalal Talabani (left) speaks to reporters during his meeting with Massoud Barzani (right), president of the Kurdistan regional government in Arbil, northern Iraq.

ANALYSIS:

A combination of interrelated issues lie at the heart of the dispute between the Arab political blocs in Baghdad and the Kurdish parties of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). They are:

- the future administration of Kirkuk, a city claimed by Kurdish, Arab and Turkmen communities
- the administration of up to 40 other Disputed Internal

Boundary (DIB) territories along the edge of the KRG;

- oil development policy and fiscal independence in the KRG

- command and control of security forces in the DIB and KRG areas; and

- provincial elections in Kirkuk and the three KRG provinces, which were both excluded from the January provincial elections held in 14 provinces.

A number of processes have been established which are moving forward simultaneously on the status of Kirkuk, the highest-profile issue:

The Article 23 Committee has seven Iraqi National Assembly parliamentarians (two each from the Kurdish, Arab and Turkmen communities, plus one Christian). The committee is charged with developing recommendations on property claims and residency rights, as well as power-sharing, that can be turned into a Kirkuk special elections law by the National Assembly. The committee is now unlikely to produce its recommendations before late May.

A parallel and informal Article 23 working group is made up of members of the Kirkuk provincial council, focused on power-sharing formulas.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) is producing studies on Kirkuk and other DIBs in mid-April, including practical steps to reduce tensions in Kirkuk and enable multi-ethnic power-sharing.

The US embassy in Baghdad has appointed a US envoy for northern Iraq affairs to support the Article 23 and UNAMI processes. The US military has scaled up its military commitment to Kirkuk province from battalion (1,000 men) to brigade-strength (3,000 men), in contrast to drawdown in most other parts of the country.

Kirkuk's main political blocs are getting increasingly frustrated with the lack of progress on the city's administrative status. Kirkuk factions perceive outside factors - notably the broader Baghdad-KRG struggle - to be a brake on resolution of the Kirkuk issue:

From 2003 to the present day, the city has been administratively isolated from the full support of the federal government.

Kirkuk city is controlled by Kurdish-led Iraqi Police forces and the federal Iraqi Army is not allowed to come within agreed city limits without police (ie., Kurdish) permission.

Kirkuk's technical directorates - local branches of federal ministries - are Kurdish-led and, as a result, have become disconnected from the federal system to an extent that is unique for a major Iraqi city. The KRG is cash-strapped and cannot bankroll the development of the city.

As a result, the city is caught in administrative limbo and cannot fully control the insurgency that continues in Kirkuk due to Kurdish unwillingness to call upon federal government reinforcements.

There is growing appetite among local groups for a compromise solution that involves Kirkuk being declared a special region that is neither within the KRG nor directly administered from Baghdad. This would require the Kirkuk provincial council to develop as a miniature government, effectively becoming the only semi-autonomous single province region in Iraq:

For Kirkuk's Arab and Turkmen residents, the idea is attractive.

There are signs that war-weary Kurdish refugees living in shanty towns across northern Kirkuk would be willing to accept the solution as long as it expedites the resettlement process and guarantees them permanent high-quality housing in the city.

UNAMI and the Article 23 Committee are now investigating the practical steps that would need to be taken to make this kind of power-sharing arrangement possible. The outlines of an interim solution are becoming visible:

Kirkuk would be named a special region until at least 2013.

A formula (probably a 32-32-32-4 percentage split) would fix the ethnic balance of Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen and Christians respectively on the 41-member provincial council.

Distribution of key provincial council positions would be fixed with a similar formula.

Provincial elections would then be held, with the results being used to decide exactly which politicians filled out the pre-arranged number of seats given to each faction on the provincial council. This would bestow a degree of legitimacy on the provincial council members, making them more capable of running the day-to-day affairs of Kirkuk.

A census and a resultant new power-sharing formula would then follow in time, followed by new provincial elections in Kirkuk in 2013 (ie., at the same time as the other 17 provinces).

While there has been incremental progress on the Kirkuk issues, there are many potential obstacles that could slow or stall the conflict resolution processes underway:

- Iraqi parliamentary politics - These could make Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki and other Arab blocs unwilling to compromise on Kirkuk. With national elections looming in early 2010, Maliki will need to build his political base as an Arab nationalist leader if he is to maximise his chances of being re-elected as prime minister by a majority of parliamentarians. Fomenting or exacerbating greater tension with the Kurds could bolster his credentials as a nationalist leader and a military leader.

- KRG politics - Elections in the three KRG provinces will probably occur in early summer 2009, and this will sharpen the political divisions that are emerging within the KRG. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) is suffering a political leadership crisis due to the failing health of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, the PUK leader. PUK weakness is boosting the influence wielded by its rival, the larger Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), both in the KRG and in Kirkuk city.

All these factors are likely to drive Kurdish leaders to compete to demonstrate their Kurdish nationalism and their unwillingness to compromise with Baghdad.

- UNAMI and the United States: Both have limited influence over Iraqi and Kurdish decision-making. UNAMI's earlier set of trial recommendations on four DIB areas leaned towards a stronger federal government role in the areas and was poorly received in the KRG. The US government, meanwhile, appears unwilling to expend considerable political capital to affect the outcome of the Kirkuk issue. However, if Washington leans in any direction, it is increasingly towards the federal government in Baghdad. These factors may make the Kurds feel more isolated and act more aggressively.

- Outlook: At present, neither the Kurds nor the Arab nationalist factions appear to be willing to compromise on Kirkuk. Only after the early 2010 national elections will either side have sufficient political freedom to make painful sacrifices. Even then, the Kurds will probably need to reduce their demands in order to win a place in whatever Arab ruling coalition emerges.

CONCLUSION:

Despite the potential for minor clashes and scares throughout 2009, a dramatic military showdown between Kirkuk's Kurds and the Iraqi Army is unlikely. Special status for Kirkuk from 2010-13 is the most likely outcome, meaning that the city will neither join the KRG nor fall fully under federal government control. The federal government and KRG will test each other's resolve on the fringes of Kirkuk city and its oilfields, but a major meltdown in security remains unlikely.

The Washington Post

April 17, 2009

Kurds, Arabs Maneuver Ahead of U.N. Report on N. Iraq

By Ernesto Londoño
Washington Post Foreign Service

BAGHDAD, April 16 -- Kurdish and Arab politicians in northern Iraq are preparing for a potentially long and bruising fight over disputed areas as they await the release of U.N. reports expected to propose joint administration of Kirkuk and make a case for the annexation of some districts to the Kurdistan Regional Government.

In Kirkuk, the crown jewel of the 300-mile strip of disputed territories, Arab politicians announced over the weekend the creation of a political group that includes Sunni leaders who gained prominence in 2006 and 2007 when, with financial backing from the United States, they took up arms against the group al-Qaeda in Iraq in the western part of the country.

The Kurds, meanwhile, have been aggressively collecting signatures in the oil-rich city for a nonbinding petition with which they hope to demonstrate that the majority of Kirkuk's residents want the city annexed to the autonomous Kurdish regional government.

The much-anticipated release of the U.N. reports, expected this month, could open a new chapter in the visceral, decades-long dispute between Arabs and Kurds over Kirkuk and other key cities and villages in northern Iraq.

Many of the urban areas in the disputed territories were predominantly Kurdish until the 1970s, when Saddam Hussein razed hundreds of Kurdish villages, displacing thousands of people. He also provided incentives for Arabs in southern Iraq to move north.

Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Kurdish regional government -- which operates much like a sovereign nation and has its own armed force -- has worked aggressively to restore its influence in several areas that were formerly under Kurdish control. It has spent millions on social services and deployed its militia, the pesh merga, to parts of Nineveh, Diyala and Kirkuk, the three provinces that border the autonomous regional government.

Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and other Arab leaders have accused Kurds of encroaching in areas that are under nominal control of the Baghdad government. Maliki in recent months deployed troops loyal to the central government to stem the influence of the Kurdish regional government.

The tension over Kirkuk and other disputed areas, which some Iraqi and U.S. officials believe could escalate into armed conflict, prompted the U.S. military in January to increase its troop level in Kirkuk from a battalion, roughly 900 troops, to a combat brigade

of about 3,200 soldiers.

"The threat of civil war remains real, and this threat should not be minimized," said W. Andrew Terrill, a national security professor at the U.S. Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute. "Kirkuk is often compared to Jerusalem, where different groups have exceptionally strong emotional attachments and the claims of rival groups are rarely seen as valid."

The debate over control is linked to the still-unresolved question of how Iraq will distribute its oil wealth. Complicating matters, it is coming to a head in a politically charged year during which missteps by candidates over their position on Kirkuk could amount to political suicide.

U.N. officials this week briefed Maliki, a Shi'ite; President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd; and other senior Iraqi leaders on the reports. U.N. officials have refrained from discussing the reports publicly.

Iraqi analysts and politicians in northern Iraq who have discussed the issue with U.N. officials in recent weeks said in interviews that they expect the organization will outline a scenario by which Kirkuk could be administered jointly by the central government in Baghdad and the Kurdish regional government. Elsewhere, based on an analysis of the region's history, demographics and the outcome of the recent provincial election, the United Nations is expected to suggest that certain districts ought to be administered by the Kurdish regional government.

Hussein Ali Salih al-Juburi, a senior Arab political leader in Kirkuk, said local politicians decided to form the Iraqi Kirkuk Bloc to "strengthen the Arabs' position" on what he called "Kurdish intransigence." He said the group intends to deploy the paramilitary groups known as Awakening councils, or Sons of Iraq, to fight insurgent groups in villages in northern Iraq.

Kurdish politicians in Kirkuk say they won't accept any deal that prevents the Kurdish regional government from annexing the city.

"We shall accept a solution for Kirkuk worked out by the parties inside the city and oppose any solution imported from outside parties that are enemies to the Kurdish people's experiment," said Najat Hassan Karim, a senior Kurdish politician.

The security situation in Kirkuk, which saw little violence in the years after the invasion, has deteriorated in recent months. A suicide bomber killed 50 people at a restaurant in December. On Wednesday, another suicide bomber killed 11. Iraqi and U.S. officials fear insurgent groups could seize on the

political and military stalemates to make a comeback in the region.

Tension between armed forces loyal to the Iraqi government and the Kurdish regional government nearly led to a shootout last fall in Khanaqin, a town in Diyala province. Conflict was narrowly averted by U.S. soldiers. Talib Mohamed Hassan, a Kurdish politician in Khanaqin, recently took visiting journalists to one of the villages razed during the 1970s. For Kurds, he said, these areas are hallowed ground.

"We don't call these disputed areas," he said, walking through chunks of cement where homes once stood. "We call these areas that were sliced off."

In Nineveh province, the recent provincial election left the council, formerly controlled by Kurds, solidly in the hands of Arabs. When the new council was seated this week, the Kurds walked out, saying they were not given a fair number of key positions.

Raid Jahid Fahmi, the leader of a committee appointed to ease tensions over Kirkuk, said a lasting solution seems unlikely in a politically charged year. National elections are expected in the winter.

"It's better to have a good solution in three years than a shaky one in one year," Fahmi said. "A durable solution might take some time. It is now proven that setting deadlines for complex political issues is not a good thing."

American officials fear the consequences of leaving the dispute unresolved as the U.S. military withdraws, and they have urged both sides to take the U.N. reports seriously.

"We need facilitators with teeth," a senior Iraqi official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to offer his candid assessment. "The U.N. has no teeth. Keeping this herd of cats together without American leadership won't happen."

But the United States has avoided taking sides.

"The United States cannot forcefully inject itself into this conflict without creating a massive number of new enemies in Iraq and worldwide," said Terrill, the professor. "I think that the United States has to contain the violence and encourage dialogue, but I do not think we can go beyond that without making things worse."

Special correspondents Dlovan Brwari in Mosul and Zaid Sabah, Aziz Alwan and K.I. Ibrahim in Baghdad contributed to this report. A special correspondent in Kirkuk also contributed reporting.

Les autorités turques durcissent le ton face aux milieux prokurdes

La principale formation kurde, menacée d'interdiction, a été la cible d'arrestations après des élections municipales qui lui ont été favorables

Istanbul
Correspondance

Deux jours de suite, des descentes de police spectaculaires menées simultanément dans plusieurs régions ont réveillé la Turquie. Lundi 13 avril, c'était pour un énième coup de filet réalisé dans le cadre de l'enquête sur le réseau Ergenekon, une nébuleuse militaro-nationaliste accusée de tentatives de renversement du gouvernement. Dix-huit personnes, parmi lesquelles plusieurs académiciens, un chirurgien et des membres d'associations laïques, étaient arrêtées.

Coincidence du calendrier judiciaire, mardi, c'est dans les milieux kurdes que la police a, cette fois, frappé. Cinquante et une personnes ont été placées en garde à vue, principalement dans le sud-est du pays, soupçonnées d'être liées à la guérilla séparatiste du PKK. Au premier rang des cibles : le Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP), dont le siège local de Diyarbakir a été perquisitionné.

Plusieurs de ses vice-présidents, le maire adjoint de la ville de Bingöl, mais aussi le rédacteur en chef d'une chaîne de télévision locale, Gün TV, et trois des avocats du leader emprisonné du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, figurent

parmi les personnes arrêtées.

Ce durcissement à l'encontre de la mouvance kurde intervient alors que la procédure d'interdiction du DTP, ouverte par le procureur de la Cour de cassation en 2007 pour des liens supposés avec le PKK, semblait mise en sommeil. « Cette opération est une démonstration claire de l'incapacité du gouvernement à encaisser le résultat des élections municipales », a commenté le président du DTP, Ahmet Türk, mardi, devant les députés de son parti.

Lors de ce scrutin, le 29 mars, le mouvement islamo-conservateur au pouvoir, l'AKP, avait en effet essuyé un revers cinglant dans la région kurde, au profit du DTP. Des rassemblements de soutien aux interpellés étaient organisés mercredi.

Fermeté de l'armée

Le cessez-le-feu décrété unilatéralement par le PKK, jusqu'au 1^{er} juin, a donc été ignoré par les militaires comme par le gouvernement. « Si l'armée turque prend le problème de manière positive et contribue à l'extension d'une période sans conflit, et si les décideurs politiques montrent une volonté de dialogue, alors une solution à la question kurde deviendrait possible rapidement », stipulait le communiqué de l'organisation, publié

mardi par l'agence de presse kurde Firat.

Mais le même jour, le général Ilker Basbug, chef d'état-major de l'armée turque, qui prononçait son grand discours annuel devant les élèves de l'académie militaire, a délivré un message de fermeté à l'encontre du PKK. « L'organisation terroriste séparatiste perd du sang », a-t-il estimé, jugeant sa fin proche, après vingt-cinq ans de guerre larvée entre la rébellion et l'armée, qui ont fait 45 000 morts, selon le décompte de l'armée. L'Irak, les Etats-Unis et la Turquie ont renforcé leur coopération et ont invité à plusieurs reprises le PKK à déposer les armes.

« Le discours du général Basbug, plus pragmatique, diffère de ses prédécesseurs sur la doctrine militaire », analyse le sociologue Levent Ünsaldi, spécialiste de l'armée turque.

Nourri de références à Huntington ou à Montesquieu, l'exposé du général Basbug, « montre qu'il a compris le changement de contexte international et insiste sur la nécessaire professionnalisation de l'armée pour éviter les interférences avec le pouvoir politique. En revanche, sur la question kurde, il demeure sur une ligne classique pour l'armée turque », estime Levent Ünsaldi. ■

Guillaume Perrier

Turquie

Nouvelle offensive contre le PKK

ISTANBUL. Le président turc, Abdullah Gül, et le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, assistaient, dimanche 12 avril, à Istanbul, aux funérailles de l'un des deux soldats tués, vendredi, dans la région de Sirmak, frontalière de l'Irak. Des combats entre l'armée et les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) y ont fait au moins neuf victimes, dont sept rebelles. Des opérations ont aussi été déclenchées dans la province centrale de Tunceli. A Bagdad, le ministre irakien de la sécurité intérieure, Shirwan Al-Waili, a invité le PKK à « déposer les armes ou quitter le territoire irakien », après une rencontre, samedi, avec son homologue turc Besir Atalay. Plusieurs milliers de membres de cette guérilla marxiste sont réfugiés dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak, dans la région autonome kurde. L'Irak, la Turquie et les Etats-Unis ont joint leurs efforts, « notamment dans le domaine du renseignement ». Les trois pays ont réactivé, en novembre, un comité de lutte contre le PKK. ■ Guillaume Perrier

IRAK

Courrier
INTERNATIONAL

DU 16 AU 22 AVRIL 2009

Un pays déchiré mais qui avance

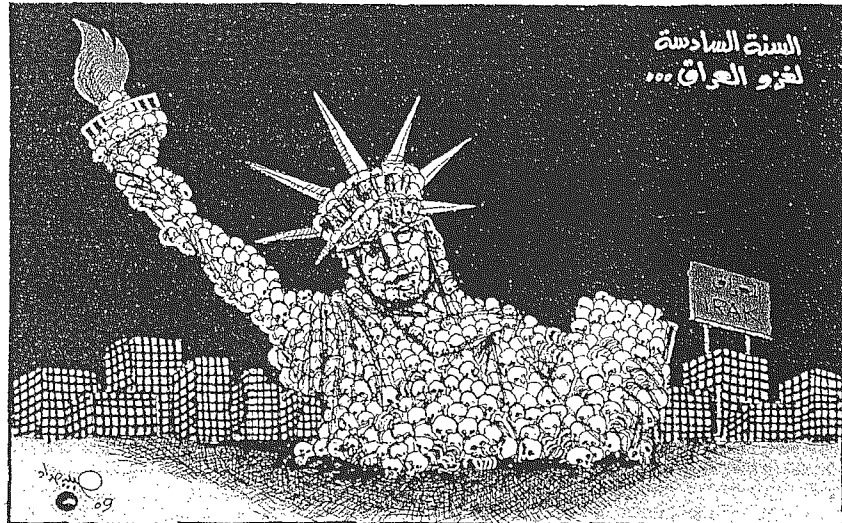
L'intervention américaine en 2003 a-t-elle marqué le début d'une libération ou celui d'une occupation militaire ? Six ans après la chute de Saddam Hussein, les Irakiens demeurent profondément divisés sur cette question.

AL-MUSTAQBAL
Beyrouth

Six ans ne sont pas grand-chose dans la vie d'un peuple, mais en Irak les six dernières années n'ont pas été ordinaires. Elles ont été difficiles à vivre, lourdes de changements et porteuses de bouleversements historiques. Saddam Hussein est tombé, le pays a été occupé, des centaines de milliers de personnes sont mortes et des millions d'autres sont parties. C'est un prix énorme à payer pour faire entrer un peuple dans une nouvelle ère. L'important est de savoir ce qui s'est transformé ces six dernières années. Ce qui est sûr, c'est que le régime a changé du tout au tout depuis le 9 avril 2003. En premier lieu, il y a le multipartisme, avec plus de cinquante partis, de l'extrême gauche aux islamistes, en passant par les libéraux et les nationalistes, sans parler de ceux dont l'orientation politique reste vague. Ensuite, il y a un Parlement, où se forment des alliances et des coalitions. C'est lui qui élit son président, le Premier ministre et le président de la République. La présidence de la République a perdu de son lustre puisqu'on lui a retiré le commandement des forces armées afin d'éviter les dérives autocratiques. Le Premier ministre ne peut pas non plus décider seul des affaires du pays puisqu'il est contrôlé par le Parlement. Celui-ci peut le renverser et le remplacer par un autre. Finalement, on a créé une

Cour constitutionnelle, dernière instance en cas de conflit entre les pôles de pouvoir. Elle est placée au-dessus de la présidence, ce qui est sans précédent dans la vie politique arabe.

Quant à la liberté de la presse, elle dépasse toutes les attentes. Aucun peuple n'aurait espéré disposer d'une telle panoplie après trente années au cours desquelles il n'y avait que trois quotidiens et deux chaînes de télévision, contrôlés par le parti unique et ne parlant que du président. Aujourd'hui, il y a des dizaines de chaînes satellitaires qui représentent les grands partis politiques, des dizaines d'autres qui sont indépendantes et d'autres encore qui appartiennent aux provinces, sans parler de celles qui diffusent depuis l'étranger. Quant à la presse écrite, les journaux et magazines



▲ Six ans depuis l'invasion de l'Irak.
Dessin de Haddad paru dans Al-Hayat, Londres.

se comptaient par centaines avant de revenir à quelques dizaines aujourd'hui en raison de la structuration du marché des médias. A cela s'ajoutent les médias étrangers qui pénètrent le marché. Ce pluralisme politique et médiatique a imposé de nouveaux rapports entre les citoyens et l'appareil de l'Etat. Il n'est plus possible que les forces de l'ordre interrogent un citoyen sur son appartenance confessionnelle ou ses orientations idéologiques.

PLUS D'UN MILLION DE PERSONNES ONT ÉTÉ TUÉES

Six années après l'éruption du volcan irakien, la rue et les politiques continuent de se déchirer sur la manière de voir les choses. Un nombre non négligeable de personnes estiment que la chute du régime a été une libération et que les Américains les ont débarrassés d'un régime barbare. Autrement dit, elles adhèrent à l'implantation de la démocratie. Cette vision est largement répandue dans le Kurdistan, la région qui a le plus bénéficié de leur intervention puisqu'elle est devenue un quasi-Etat, avec son gouvernement et son Parlement, et qu'elle a connu un essor économique. Parmi les chiites, en revanche, beaucoup rejettent cette vision optimiste des choses, à l'instar du courant de Moqtada Al-Sadr [religieux radical], qui s'oppose au projet américain. Quant aux sunnites, ils considèrent dans leur ensemble qu'il s'agit d'une occupation pure et simple, de la destruction d'un pays et d'un projet de dépeçage en mini-Etats pour des

raisons qui tiennent à la sécurité d'Israël, à la menace iranienne, à l'approvisionnement en pétrole, etc. Ainsi, le terme "occupation" reste la pierre d'achoppement de la classe politique irakienne. Beaucoup de députés et autres hommes politiques sont embarrassés par ce terme qui continue de provoquer des débats enflammés.

Il n'empêche que la sécurité s'est améliorée petit à petit, que la vie a retrouvé un rythme plus calme, que les revenus augmentent et que les libertés individuelles et politiques existent. Ainsi, à peu près tout le monde estime aujourd'hui que le renversement de Saddam Hussein était une nécessité. Toutefois, on peut se poser la question plus générale de savoir si les Américains ont réussi ou non. Selon leurs propres critères, on peut dire que oui, puisqu'ils ont renversé Saddam Hussein, éradiqué le parti Baas, établi leur présence militaire et diplomatique, combattu Al-Qaida, établi un régime démocratique et signé un traité de coopération militaire. Mais du point de vue irakien, on voit que les infrastructures ont été détruites, que l'Etat a été démantelé, que plus d'un million de personnes ont été tuées, que les séquelles psychologiques sont profondes et que le tissu social a failli se déchirer définitivement. La question qui se pose donc est de savoir s'il fallait payer un tel prix pour renverser Saddam Hussein ou s'il aurait pu y avoir d'autres façons de s'y prendre.

Chaker Al-Anbari

Ahmadinejad torpille la conférence sur le racisme

NATIONS UNIES

Le forum, qui devait s'accorder sur des dispositifs contre la discrimination, a sombré dans la zizanie après les provocations du président iranien.

L'ESPOIR, affiché par l'ONU, d'effacer les séquelles de sa première conférence sur le racisme, à Durban en 2001, aura été de courte durée. À peine le président iranien avait-il commencé son discours, hier à Genève, que les représentants de l'Union européenne ont quitté la salle : Mahmoud Ahmadinejad venait de parler d'un « gouvernement raciste » au Proche-Orient.

Sans nommer Israël, qu'il avait souhaité, par le passé, « rayer de la carte », le président iranien a critiqué la création de l'État hébreu. « Après la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, ils (les Alliés, NDLR) ont eu recours à l'agression militaire pour priver de terres une nation entière sous le prétexte de la souffran-

ce juive, a-t-il déclaré. Ils ont envoyé des migrants d'Europe, des États-Unis et du monde de l'Holocauste pour établir un gouvernement totalement raciste en Palestine occupée. » Les représentants des 23 États de l'UE présents à la conférence de « Durban II » se sont alors levés comme un seul homme et sont partis, sous les huées des nombreux parti-

sans du chef d'État iranien, déployés dans les tribunes. « Des efforts doivent être faits pour mettre un terme aux abus des sionistes et de leurs supports », a poursuivi Ahmadinejad devant ses « chers amis ».

Un discours qui a sapé en quelques minutes tous les efforts du secrétaire général de l'ONU, Ban Ki-moon, qui avait pourtant mis en garde Mahmoud Ahmadinejad contre « l'amalgame entre sionisme et racisme » au cours d'une rencontre en tête-à-tête. « Je déplore l'utilisation de cette plate-forme par le président iranien pour mettre en accusation, diviser et même provo-

quer », a déclaré un Ban Ki-moon complètement désemparé.

« Hypocrite et contre-productif »

Depuis Paris, Nicolas Sarkozy a dénoncé cet « appel intolérable à la haine raciste ». La France était représentée à la conférence par son ambassadeur auprès des Nations unies à Genève, Jean-Baptiste Mattei, qui a été l'un des premiers à quitter la salle. « Il est dommage que M. Ahmadinejad tente de prendre cette conférence en otage », a-t-il déclaré à sa sortie.

L'Australie, l'Allemagne, la Pologne, l'Italie et les Pays-Bas avaient rejoint les États-Unis et Israël dans leur refus de participer à un sommet qualifié, avant le début de ses travaux, « d'hypocrite et de contre-productif » par Barack Obama. Américains et Israéliens avaient fait valoir que la conférence de Genève risquait de se transformer en un prétoire visant à faire le procès de l'État hébreu comme cela avait été le cas en 2001 en Afrique du Sud. À l'époque, Américains et Israéliens avaient quitté la conférence après que le sionisme eut été assimilé au racisme par des États arabes.

Le chef de la diplomatie norvégienne, Jouas Gahr Støre, a été l'un des seuls Européens à écouter le discours de l'Iranien, auquel il devait succéder à la tribune : il a estimé qu'il était indispensable de lui répliquer. « Rester à l'écart et laisser la tribune de l'ONU au seul président iranien, ça a un effet très limité ! s'est-il exclamé. Si on commence à se retirer parce qu'on trouve que c'est inconfortable de rencontrer nos opposants idéologiques, le monde y perd. »

STÉPHANE KOVACS
(avec AFP, Reuters)



Les représentants de 23 États de l'UE présents hier à Genève ont quitté la salle dès le début du discours du président iranien. Laurent Gillierou/EPA



TURQUIE: VAGUE D'ARRESTATIONS DANS LES MILIEUX KURDES PROCHES DU PKK

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 14 avril 2009 (AFP)

Cinquante et une personnes, dont des responsables d'une formation pro-kurde, ont été arrêtées mardi lors d'une vaste opération policière à travers la Turquie visant les rebelles séparatistes kurdes, ont affirmé des sources administratives et judiciaires.

La police est intervenue simultanément dans 12 provinces, interpellant 38 suspects dans la province de Diyarbakir (sud-est) et 13 autres dans d'autres provinces, ont déclaré dans un communiqué les services du gouverneur de Diyarbakir.

Le communiqué souligne que l'opération était dirigée exclusivement contre les rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) et précise qu'une grande quantité de documents appartenant au PKK, des ordinateurs, des disques durs et des CD ont été saisis au cours des arrestations.

L'opération, planifiée depuis un an, vise à démanteler les ramifications du PKK au sein d'organisations non-gouvernementales (ONG) kurdes et du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP), principale formation pro-kurde de Turquie, a indiqué une source judiciaire sous couvert d'anonymat.

Trois vice-présidents du DTP, deux avocats du chef rebelle emprisonné à vie Abdullah Öcalan et des hommes politiques connus pour leurs sympathies à l'égard du PKK, ont été interpellés dans le cadre de cette rafle effectuée dans les provinces kurdes du sud-est de la Turquie et dans des métropoles de l'ouest.

Les autorités ont mis hors d'état de nuire un groupe baptisé "unité de coordination", chargé de coordonner les attaques du PKK en Turquie, arrêtant ses huit dirigeants.

La police a en outre perquisitionné les locaux d'une chaîne de télévision kurde basée à Diyarbakir, principale ville à dominante kurde, arrêtant son rédacteur en chef.

Des policiers ont également perquisitionné un cabinet d'avocats à Istanbul qui s'était chargé de défendre Öcalan lors de son procès en 1999.

Le président du DTP Ahmet Türk a condamné l'opération et appelé les autorités à "libérer immédiatement" les personnes interpellées.

"Cette opération est une démonstration claire de l'incapacité du gouvernement à encaisser le résultat des élections" du 29 mars, a estimé M. Türk, cité par l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP, issu de la mouvance islamiste) au pouvoir a remporté les élections municipales avec près de 39% des voix, mais a perdu deux villes -Van et Siirt- au profit du DTP dans le sud-est anatolien, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes.

Le DTP est menacé d'interdiction par la justice pour collusion avec le PKK. Certains de ses responsables ont affiché ouvertement leur sympathie pour les rebelles et leur chef emprisonné Abdullah Öcalan.

Le PKK, une organisation classée comme terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis, a lancé en 1984 une campagne armée pour obtenir l'autonomie du sud-est turc. Le conflit a fait 45.000 morts, dont 40.000 rebelles, selon des chiffres donnés mardi par le chef de l'armée, le général İlker Başbuğ.



IRAK: LES YAZIDIS DE SINJAR DEMANDENT À ÊTRE RATTACHÉS AU KURDISTAN

MOSSOUL (Irak), 14 avril 2009 (AFP) -

- Pour protester contre la monopolisation du pouvoir par les arabes sunnites dans la province irakienne de Ninive, les élus d'un district à majorité yazidie ont demandé leur rattachement au Kurdistan voisin.

"C'est sous la pression des habitants de Sinjar qui ont manifesté dans la rue que nous avons décidé de boycotter le nouveau conseil de la province de Ninive et de transformer le district en gouvernorat indépendant qui sera une partie de la région autonome du Kurdistan", a affirmé mardi à l'AFP Kasseem Dakhil, responsable du district.

La région montagneuse de Sinjar, qui compte 240.000 habitants, est située à 400 km au nord-ouest de Bagdad, près de la frontière avec la Syrie. Les yazidis y représentent 70% de la population.

La communauté yazidie, estimée à près de 300.000 personnes, est une minorité kurdophone installée dans le nord irakien. Cette religion ésotérique considère le diable comme le chef des anges et le représente par le paon.

La composition du conseil provincial a été bouleversée lors des élections du 31

janvier.

Lors du scrutin de 2005 et en raison du boycottage des arabes sunnites, la liste à majorité kurde avait remporté 31 sièges sur 41. Mais en janvier, c'est la liste à majorité sunnite qui s'est imposée avec 19 sièges sur 37, la "Fraternité kurde" n'ayant gagné que 12.

"Ils se sont emparés des postes les plus importants et ont écarté les autres listes. Ce qui se passe est une injustice, une marginalisation et le retour de la politique du parti unique", a fustigé M. Dakhil.

De son côté, le nouveau gouverneur de Ninive, Athil al-Noujeifi, ne s'émeut pas outre mesure de cette fronde. "C'est une réaction normale après la victoire de notre liste. Cette décision des chefaillons kurdes n'est pas acceptée par les dirigeants kurdes car selon la Constitution Sinjar fait partie de la province de Ninive".

Persécutés pendant des siècles, les yazidis sont autorisés à pratiquer leur culte par la Constitution irakienne. Outre l'Irak, les fidèles sont dispersés en Allemagne, en Grande-Bretagne, en Turquie, en Russie et en Syrie.



IRAK: REPORT À FIN MAI DU RAPPORT PARLEMENTAIRE SUR LES ÉLECTIONS À KIRKOUK

BAGDAD, 15 avril 2009 (AFP)

LE RAPPORT définitif sur l'organisation d'élections provinciales dans la région de Kirkouk, où s'opposent Kurdes, arabes et Turcomans, va être reporté à la fin mai, a déclaré mercredi un député.

"La commission parlementaire chargée d'organiser les élections à Kirkouk demandera jeudi aux députés de lui accorder deux mois supplémentaires (à partir du 1er avril) pour présenter ses conclusions définitives sur l'organisation des élections dans la province de Kirkouk", a dit à l'AFP un de ses membres, le député kurde Khaled Chouani.

"Nous allons leur présenter les premiers éléments de notre étude, notre rapport d'activités, et ce que nous avons entrepris pour permettre un partage du pouvoir

et l'établissement d'une liste électorale", a ajouté ce parlementaire qui appartient à l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) du président Jalal Talabani.

Kirkouk, à 255 km au nord de Bagdad, est un concentré des défis et problèmes irakiens. Riche en pétrole, la province de quelque 900.000 habitants compte plusieurs communautés qui se disputent le pouvoir: des Kurdes, qui souhaitent son rattachement au Kurdistan irakien, des Turcomans, qui se considèrent comme ses habitants historiques, des Assyro-chaldéens (chrétiens) ou des arabes, souvent arrivés à l'occasion de la politique d'arabisation forcée de Saddam Hussein.

En raison des tensions, les élections provinciales n'avaient pu s'y tenir le 31 janvier comme dans le reste de l'Irak (hors les trois provinces du Kurdistan). Le parlement avait décidé de créer une commission pour trouver une solution avec l'aide de l'ONU.

Deux soldats turcs et sept rebelles kurdes tués dans des combats

11 avril 2009 / The Associated Press

ANKARA, Turquie - Sept rebelles kurdes et deux soldats turcs sont morts dans des combats qui les ont opposés vendredi près de Sirnak, dans le sud-est de la Turquie, a annoncé l'armée samedi, en faisant également état d'un blessé dans ses rangs.

Chaque année au printemps, les affrontements entre les rebel-

les kurdes et l'armée turque reprennent. A cette saison en effet, la fonte des neiges libère les cols de montagne, permettant aux rebelles kurdes basés dans le nord de l'Irak de s'infiltrer en Turquie.

Les rebelles kurdes combattent l'armée turque depuis 1984. Ils réclament un territoire autonome dans le sud-est de la Turquie. Ce conflit a fait plusieurs dizaines de milliers de morts.

IRAK: AU MOINS 10 POLICIERS TUÉS ET 22 BLESSÉS DANS UN ATTENTAT À KIRKOUK

KIRKOUK (Irak), 16 avril 2009 (AFP) -

Au moins dix policiers ont été tués et 22 autres blessés mercredi dans un attentat à la voiture piégée perpétré à Kirkouk, une province riche en pétrole du nord de l'Irak disputée entre Kurdes, Turcomans et arabes.

Par ailleurs, des unités de l'armée irakienne, avec un soutien aérien américain, ont lancé mercredi soir une vaste opération au sud de la ville pétrolière de Kirkouk, tuant deux chefs rebelles et en blessant deux autres.

"Il est désormais plus que probable que la voiture était garée juste avant l'arrivée du bus transportant des policiers et le terroriste qui la conduisait a réussi à s'enfuir juste avant l'explosion qui s'est produite au passage du bus", a affirmé à l'AFP le général Torhane Youssef, numéro 2 de la police de la province, assurant que "cet attentat portait toutes les marques d'Al-Qaïda".

L'attentat s'est produit peu après 17H00 locales (14H00 GMT) dans cette ville située à 255 km au nord de Bagdad.

"Dans un premier temps, nous avons été informés que l'explosion était l'oeuvre d'un kamikaze conduisant une voiture piégée", a-t-il ajouté.

"Il s'agissait d'une voiture de marque Opel bourrée d'explosifs d'une puissance équivalente à 250-300 kilos de TNT", a précisé le général Torhane.

Selon ce haut responsable, la bombe contenait également des objets métalliques (boulons, vis, etc) pour la rendre encore plus dévastatrice.

Le lieutenant-colonel Ghazi Mohammed Rachid de la police de Kirkouk, a annoncé que toutes les victimes étaient des policiers protégeant les installations de la North Oil Company, l'entreprise pétrolière publique pour le nord de l'Irak, et rentrant chez eux.

L'explosion était d'une puissance telle que le bus a été réduit à une carcasse de métal avec des sièges pleins de sang, les armes des policiers gisant au sol.

A l'hôpital de Kirkouk, le docteur Nihad Khoudr a "compté dix morts et plus de 20



blessés".

"Dix d'entre eux sont dans un état sérieux, blessés à la tête, à l'estomac ou aux jambes", a-t-il indiqué, précisant que cinq se trouvaient en salle d'opération.

"Nous étions une quarantaine de policiers à l'intérieur d'un bus Mercedes. Nous avons ressenti un grand choc puis j'ai eu l'impression qu'on montait au ciel", a déclaré un des blessés, Sarmad Hamid, 21 ans.

"J'ai réussi à sortir du bus en feu. Mes amis étaient en morceaux et d'autres criaient", raconte cet Irakien blessé à l'estomac et à une jambe.

Par ailleurs, le général Abdelamir al-Zaidi, commandant la 12ème brigade, une unité d'élite de l'armée irakienne, a affirmé que ses troupes avaient tué deux hauts responsables d'Ansar al-Sunna et blessé deux autres à 55 km au sud de la ville.

"Durant la première opération, l'aviation américaine a tué un terroriste et blessé un autre alors que nous (au sol) avons tué un terroriste et blessé un second", a-t-il dit à l'AFP.

REUTERS

Attentat contre une base militaire en Irak, 16 morts

BAGDAD -16 avril 2009 Reuters,

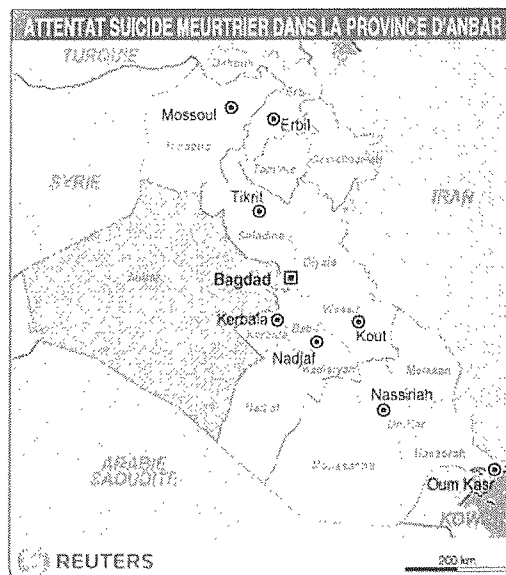
Un attentat suicide a fait au moins 16 morts et 50 blessés sur une base militaire irakienne dans la province occidentale d'Anbar.

Le kamikaze, qui portait un uniforme de l'armée irakienne, a déclenché sa ceinture d'explosifs au milieu des militaires qui se trouvaient sur le champ de manoeuvres, a rapporté un témoin. La police et l'armée ont déclaré, elles, que l'attaque avait été menée dans la cafétéria de la base. Toutes les victimes sont des soldats.

L'Irak connaît depuis quelques semaines une recrudescence des attentats à la bombe. Une attaque à la voiture piégée contre un car de police a fait 10 morts et 23 blessés mercredi à Kirkouk, dans le nord du pays.

La province d'Anbar a longtemps été contrôlée par les activistes d'Al Qaïda et des militants islamistes sunnites.

Elle est devenue une des régions les plus tranquilles du pays après le retournement en 2006 des dignitaires tribaux sunnites contre les insurgés.





RAFLE DANS LES MILIEUX KURDES EN TURQUIE: 51 PERSONNES INculpÉES ET ÉCrouÉES

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 18 avr 2009 (AFP) -

Cinquante-et-une personnes arrêtées mardi lors d'une opération de police dans les milieux kurdes, ont été inculpées tôt samedi pour "appartenance à une organisation terroriste" par une Cour de Diyarbakir (sud-est) et incarcérées, a-t-on indiqué de source judiciaire.

La Cour a décidé de relâcher deux suspects, a-t-on souligné de même source sous couvert d'anonymat.

Parmi les personnes inculpées figurent trois vice-présidents du principal parti kurde de Turquie, le Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP), accusé d'être lié aux rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit).

La police était intervenue simultanément dans 12 provinces, interpellant 53 personnes.

Selon les autorités, l'opération visait à démanteler les ramifications du PKK au sein d'organisations non-gouvernementales (ONG) kurdes et du DTP.

Les autorités auraient mis hors d'état de nuire un groupe, chargé de coordonner les attaques du PKK en Turquie, arrêtant ses huit dirigeants.

Vendredi, lors d'une deuxième vague d'arrestations, la police a arrêté une soixantaine de personnes notamment à Istanbul (nord-ouest), Ankara et Izmir (ouest), lors d'une opération visant encore le PKK.

Parmi ces personnes appréhendées figure Halil Aksoy, responsable à Istanbul du DTP.

Le PKK, répertorié comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara et la plupart de la communauté internationale, a pris les armes en 1984 contre le régime turc, un conflit qui a fait environ 45.000 morts depuis.

Si les rebelles du PKK opèrent principalement dans le sud-est du pays, à majorité kurde, ils ont perpétré plusieurs attaques à la bombe dans l'ouest.

Le DTP, qui détient 21 des 550 sièges au parlement turc, pourrait être interdit par la Cour Constitutionnelle, qui examine actuellement ses liens éventuels avec le PKK.



18 avril 2009

TURQUIE

Campagne de répression contre les Kurdes

Quelque 245 personnes soupçonnées de soutenir le PKK placées en garde à vue. L'action d'Ankara surprend alors que des ouvertures semblaient possibles.

FATMA KIZILBOGA Correspondante à Istanbul



Une histoire qui devient un classique. A deux reprises cette semaine, les milieux prokurdes ont été la cible d'arrestations policières. Mardi, des opérations menées par la brigade antiterroriste dans 12 provinces du sud-est de la Turquie, à majorité kurde, se sont soldées par l'arrestation de 51 personnes. Situé dans la ligne de mire, le Parti pour une Solution Démocratique (DTP) : plusieurs de ses vice-présidents et responsables ont été arrêtés, mais aussi le rédacteur en chef d'une chaîne de télévision locale, Gün TV, ainsi que trois avocats d'Abdullah Öcalan, le leader du PKK, le Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan emprisonné sur l'île d'Inrali.

Vendredi, les interpellations se sont étendues à l'ensemble du pays : 104 personnes ont été placées en garde à vue à la suite de perquisitions dans les locaux du DTP d'Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara et Batman, un parti politique accusé d'être la vitrine officielle du PKK, et une organisation armée considérée comme un groupe terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne. Selon les autorités, les locaux du parti auraient servi de lieux de préparations d'actions du groupe armé kurde.

Soutien à Öcalan

Une accusation que rejettent les dirigeants du DTP. Ahmet Türk, le Président du Parti dénonce "des manœuvres qui visent à supprimer les Kurdes du champ politique démocratique". Et si le DTP nie tout contact avec le PKK, cette formation politique créée en 2005 lutte activement pour la libération d'Öcalan, condamné à la réclusion à perpétuité.

Le dernier exemple en date a coûté une

enquête judiciaire à Ahmet Türk qui, lors d'un discours prononcé le 21 mars à l'occasion du Nouvel an kurde, le Newroz, a déclaré : "Mandela a été emprisonné pendant des années. Lorsqu'il a retrouvé la liberté, les Noirs et les Blancs ont résolu leurs problèmes en se réunissant. Öcalan est tout aussi important pour le peuple kurde. Si vous souhaitez résoudre le problème, il faut libérer Öcalan."

Les résultats des élections municipales du 29 mars annonçaient pourtant un climat propice au dialogue. Le DTP, qui est devenu la quatrième formation du pays, a doublé son score, atteignant les 6 pc. Un regain de légitimité et de confiance pour ce parti sous le coup d'une information judiciaire visant son interdiction, en raison de ses liens supposés avec le PKK. Cengiz Çandar, éditorialiste du quotidien Radikal, regrette que le gouvernement AKP ne fasse aucun effort pour une résolution pacifiste de la question kurde : "Cela fait déjà 25 ans que nous faisons la même chose, le résultat est là. En rencontrant en tête-à-tête Ahmet Türk au Parlement turc, Barack Obama a donné un signe fort quand à la résolution de ces pro-

blèmes. Mais au lieu de se servir de cette occasion en or, Tayyip Erdogan a choisi de tout gâcher."

Une solution politique

Mais le signal fort de la semaine est venu du chef de l'Etat-major Ilker Basbug, qui lors de son discours annuel à l'Académie militaire, a déclaré que des réformes judiciaires devaient être faites par le gouvernement, afin de permettre aux rebelles du PKK qui souhaitaient abandonner la lutte armée un retour sans peine de prison. Une grande première. La proposition a aussitôt été rejetée par le gouvernement, qui refuse toute négociation avec le groupe armé kurde.

Un regain de tension qui fait craindre un abandon du cessez-le-feu déclaré unilatéralement jusqu'au 1er juin par le PKK qui déclarait mardi, dans un communiqué de presse publié par l'agence kurde Firat, que "si les décideurs politiques montraient une volonté de dialogue, alors une solution à la question kurde deviendrait possible rapidement".

Kurdish-Arab tensions continue to grow in northern Iraq

CORINNE REILLY AND
ALI ABBAS

MCCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

BAGHDAD — In another sign of the growing tension between Iraqi Kurds and Arabs, a Kurdish political coalition in one northern province is boycotting provincial council meetings until the main Arab party there cedes council leadership positions.

Iraqis in all but four of the country's 18 provinces went to the polls in January to elect new provincial councils, which are similar to American state legislatures. The new councils held their first meetings this week.

In the northern province of Nineveh, however, where Sunni Muslim Kurds and Sunni Arabs are competing for power and territory, the Kurdish coalition, the Nineveh Fraternal List, walked out of the council's inaugural meeting.

Kurds had been in the majority on the council until the January elections, but then the main Arab party, al Hadbaa, won slightly more than half the seats, and the Kurds fewer than a third. The Kurds vowed not to return until the Arabs hand over two of the council's top three leadership positions.

"We have the second-most seats and deserve to occupy some of the executive offices," said Darman Khatari, a Fraternal List spokesman.

Members of al Hadbaa, a secular and mostly Sunni Arab nationalist party, call the Kurds' demands unreasonable, especially given the council's makeup.

Local officials in at least one predominantly Kurdish city, Sinjar in northwestern Iraq, have announced that they're cutting contact with the provincial council until the Fraternal List's demands are met.

"The people of Sinjar demonstrated yesterday in protest against the exclusion of Kurds from the administration of (Nineveh)," Dekheel Qasin Hassoun, mayor of the mostly Kurdish city, said Monday. "... we have decided not to

acknowledge or deal with the new governor."

Hashim al Tael, a Sunni Arab national lawmaker from Nineveh, said the disagreements are troubling, especially because they emerged so early.

"This is just the beginning," he said. "We may witness much more."

Tensions between Kurds and Arabs aren't new in Nineveh. But they're rising fast, and U.S. officials are worried that they could quickly explode into large-scale violence.

In many ways, the Kurd-Arab problem may be the biggest threat to Iraq's long-term stability. Leaders on both sides have suggested that they'd resort to arms to protect their interests in disputed areas.

Attention has focused on the Arab-Kurdish dispute over Kirkuk, an oil-rich city just south of Kurdistan where Kurds are fighting to reassert control after Saddam Hussein forced them out and Sunni Arabs took over.

However, Nineveh and its capital city of Mosul have remained far more violent than much of Iraq has. U.S. military commanders have said they'll keep troops there past a scheduled June 30 withdrawal date if Iraq's government agrees.

The province's northern and western borders touch Kurdistan, Iraq's semi-independent northern region, where Kurdish leaders have been struggling to gain greater autonomy from Iraq's Shiite-led central government.

Though Sunni Arabs make up the majority of Nineveh's population, Kurds are a large minority. Both Arabs and Kurds in Nineveh have been competing for the loyalty of the area's other minorities, which include Christians, Shabaks and Yazidis.

Despite the Arab majority, Kurds held most of the seats on Nineveh's provincial council before January's elections — largely because many Sunni Arabs boycotted the last provincial elections in 2005.

While in control, Kurdish leaders moved to expand their reach in Nineveh

over the past three years.

Today, Kurdish security forces, known as the Peshmerga, patrol many areas of the province. In hundreds of schools, children learn Kurdish curricula from teachers funded by the Kurdish Regional Government, despite the fact that the province is constitutionally under the control of Iraq's central government.

In January's elections, al Hadbaa candidates ran on a pledge to push out Peshmerga forces and reverse the Kurdish expansion into Nineveh.

Voters apparently liked what they heard, though Kurds fared better than many had expected given their numbers in the province.

Al Hadbaa won 19 of 37 seats. The Fraternal List took 12. The mostly Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party won three. Under required quotas, Christian, Shabak and Yazidi candidates were given one seat each.

During the new council's first meeting on Sunday, members voted to select five top leaders: a provincial governor, his two deputies, a council speaker and his deputy.

All but one of the positions went to al Hadbaa. An independent Turkoman, Hasen Mahmoud Ali, was selected as the governor's second deputy, but Fraternal List members want the selections cancelled and two of the top three positions given to Kurds.

In an interview broadcast on an Iraqi radio station Monday, Atheel al Najafi, the head of al Hadbaa and Nineveh's new governor, said the Fraternal List's requests are unreasonable.

He said he believes that coalition leaders will quickly realize that they lack the numbers to make such demands and give them up.

(Reilly reports for the Merced Sun-Star. Abbas is a McClatchy special correspondent. McClatchy special correspondent Sahar Issa contributed to this story.)

REUTERS Iraq Kurds discovered 3-4 bln barrels oil-minister

MASIF SALAHUDDIN, Iraq, April 17 2009 (Reuters) -

IRAQ'S largely autonomous Kurdish north has discovered 3 billion to 4 billion barrels of oil, and hopes for far more, a minister said.

Ashti Hawrami, Iraqi Kurdistan's natural resources minister, said in an interview that total reserves in the area now recognised as Kurdistan, where

minority Kurds have been largely independent since the end of the 1991 Gulf War, were an estimated 40-45 billion barrels.

Add to that disputed areas Kurds want to absorb into their enclave, and Hawrami said Kurdish reserves could reach 65 billion barrels.

Iraq's overall reserves are at least 115 billion barrels.

BBC NEWS

14 April 2009

Iraq Kurdish force 'beyond law

'Security forces in the Iraq's northern Kurdish provinces are operating "beyond the rule of law", a report by Amnesty International has warned.

The rights organisation details alleged abuses in the area, including arbitrary detention and torture.

It singles out the Asayish agency which reports directly to the Kurdish presidency as "a law unto itself".

A Kurdish minister pointed out that the report also noted improvements and said cases would be better monitored.

The Kurdish autonomous region "has been spared the bloodletting and violence that continues to wrack the rest of Iraq" and its regional government "has made some important human rights advances", said Amnesty International Middle East and North Africa Programme Director Malcolm Smart.

"Yet real problems - arbitrary detention and torture, attacks on journalists and freedom of expression, and violence against women - remain, and urgently need to be addressed by the government."

'Electric shocks'

The report, based on research conducted in 2008, said the number of detainees held without charge or trial had dropped from

thousands to hundreds, but some had been held as long as nine years.

It describes cases where individuals have "disappeared" and detainees have been beaten and given electric shocks while in custody.

The security agencies of the ruling Kurdish Democratic Party and its rival, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, had carried out abuses and threatened journalists, writers and academics who had spoken out against corruption, Amnesty said.

The report says new laws have been introduced to reduce so-called honour killings, where women are killed by relatives for having, or being thought to have, illicit relationships.

But it raises concerns about the number of women killed or injured with severe burns, citing reports that some women have been burned to disguise honour killings.

The Kurdish human rights minister, Shwan Mohammed Aziz told the BBC Arabic Service the report's findings were "positive" if compared with the situation three years ago.

But he admitted that "there are cases still such as those contained in the report", and he said a committee would be set up to monitor the situation.

Tensions rise in Iraq's Mosul amid Kurdish boycott

REUTERS

* Two suicide attacks against Kurdish forces

MOSUL, April 22, 2009 (Reuters) -

TENSIONS between Kurds and Sunni Arabs are rising in Iraq's volatile northern city of Mosul and the surrounding province following local elections in January which saw Sunni representation jump dramatically.

Kurdish-led provincial council members and Kurdish-run towns have vowed to boycott the now Sunni-dominated provincial council, some going as far as to say they want to join the nearby semi-autonomous Kurdish region.

There is already underlying discord between Baghdad and Arbil, the autonomous Kurdish capital, over the division of oil wealth and control of northern towns, especially the oil-rich and ethnically mixed city of Kirkuk.

On Wednesday in Zummar, one of the Kurdish towns that has joined the boycott against the provincial council, a suicide car bomber attacked a checkpoint run by Kurdish Peshmerga forces while a Peshmerga commander survived a separate car bomb attack, police said.

"The situation is going to become even more intense if there isn't political agreement," said Ahmed Qassim, 35, an Arab shop owner, reflecting widespread concern among residents.

"There are armed groups like al Qaeda that will try to exploit these disputes. There will be other explosions soon in an Arab area in response to the bombs today in Zummar," he said.

While violence has fallen sharply across most of Iraq, al Qaeda and other insurgents have made a stand in Mosul, Iraq's third largest city, and the surrounding Nineveh province, where Arabs, minority Kurds and Christians and others make for an uneasy mix.

UNREST

Mosul, and similarly mixed Diyala province, are the two areas where the U.S. forces that invaded Iraq in 2003 to topple Saddam Hussein still conduct major combat operations.

Analysts and U.S. officials had hoped that provincial elections in January would ease some of the tensions in Mosul.

Much of the violence there was fuelled by resentment among Sunni Arabs who felt disenfranchised after they boycotted the last elections in 2005. Minority Kurds controlled the previous council, despite constituting just a quarter of the population.

The Sunni Arab Al-Hadba list won 48.4 percent of the vote in January and got 19 seats out of 37 on the council.

Striking a deal with fellow Sunnis of the Iraqi Islamic Party, which won three seats, Al-Hadba ensured all positions of power and influence in the province, such as that of governor and deputy governor, went to its supporters.

Kurdish groups won 12 seats and council members from the Kurdish-led 'Brotherly List' are now boycotting council meetings.

Jabor Mohammed Abdullah of al-Hadba, who heads the council, said his party bore no enmity toward the Brotherly List and called the Kurdish-run town's actions illegal.

Kurdish authorities in about 16 towns in Nineveh said they would not obey the provincial council and instead wanted to join the nearby semi-autonomous Kurdish region.

"These (towns) announced the boycott of the new local government because Al-Hadba took over all top positions in the provincial council and marginalised the Nineveh Brotherly list," said Hassan Yermou, mayor of the disputed town of Shekhan.

"We ask the security forces not to intervene."

Dakhil Qassim Hassoun, mayor of the town of Sinjar, accused Al-Hadba of being backed by members of Saddam Hussein's former army and of his outlawed Baath party, and said they were "trying to ignite strife and division."

In Zummar on Wednesday, an attacker tried to ram a car packed with explosives into a Kurdish checkpoint. Police sources said one of the Kurdish soldiers opened fire at the car and it detonated before reaching its target.

In a separate incident, also in Zummar, a Kurdish Peshmerga commander escaped death when a car bomb exploded near his convoy. No one was hurt in the attack, police said.

Baghdad rediscovers its old vices

BAGHDAD

The signs of security:
Liquor stores, cockfights,
nightclubs and prostitutes

BY ROD NORDLAND

Vice is making a comeback in this city once famous for 1,001 varieties of it.

Gone, for the most part, are nighttime curfews, religious extremists and prowling kidnappers. So, inevitably, some people are turning to illicit pleasures, or at least slightly dubious ones.

Nightclubs have reopened, and, in many of them, prostitutes troll for clients. Liquor stores, once shut down by fundamentalist militiamen, have proliferated — on one block of busy Saddoun Street, there are more than 10.

Abu Nawas Park, previously deserted for fear of suicide bombers seeking vulnerable crowds, has become a place for assignations between young people so inclined. It is not that there are hiding places in the park, where trees are pretty sparse; the couples just pretend they cannot be seen, and passers-by go along with the pretense.

Though a long way from Sodom and Gomorrah, it is, perhaps, part way back to the old Baghdad. The Baathists who ruled here from the 1960s until the U.S.-led invasion in 2003 were secular and more than a little sinful. Baghdad under Saddam Hussein was a pretty lively place, with street cafes open until 2 a.m. or 3 a.m. and prostitutes plying their trade even in the bowling alley of the Al Rashid Hotel.

"Everything is going back to its natural way," said Ahmed Assadee, a screenwriter who works on a soap opera.

Men gather in cafes to smoke a hookah and gamble on dice and domino games. On weekends, the Mustansiriya Coffee Shop's back room is crammed with low bleachers set up around a clandestine cockfighting ring. On one recent day, the 100 or so spectators were raucous while watching the bloody spectacle, but they placed their bets discreetly.

Gambling, after all, is illegal.

Walid Brahim, 25, a bomb disposal expert with the Iraqi Army, and his brother Farat, 20, an electrician, recently sat side by side at a table in the Nights of Abu Musa bar, working their way through a bucket of ice and a bottle of Mr. Chavez Whiskey, an Iraqi-made hooch.

"This is great," Walid Brahim said. "We used to buy alcohol and just drink secretly in our house."

The bar is men-only, as pretty much all respectable taverns are, but the brothers look forward to an even brighter future.

"If this security continues," Farat Brahim said, "within a year all the waiters will be girls."



CHRISTOPH BANGERT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

With violence on the decrease, Baghdad has returned to some its old habits, such as this liquor store indicates. It is one of many that have reopened in the Karada neighborhood.

The local police, weary of years of dodging assassins and cleaning up after car bombings, are blasé about a little vice.

"Today we are dealing with more normal things. All the world is facing such problems," said Col. Abdel Jaber Qassim Sadir, assistant police chief in Karada, a central Baghdad neighborhood.

"Prostitution, this kind of behavior cannot be stopped," Colonel Sadir said. "It's very hard to find it in public; it goes on in secret, isolated places."

Actually, not so secret. There are a half-dozen night spots in Karada now where the entry fee is \$50. With \$150 a week considered a good wage, customers would not pay that much merely for the privilege of drinking.

At the Ahalan Wasahalan Club on Al Nidhal Street one recent night, the owner, Tiba Jamal, was holding court, as she usually does, on the dais at the front of a room with a mostly empty dance floor and lots of tables.

Ms. Jamal calls herself the Sheikha, or a female sheik, an honorific title she has apparently adopted. She dresses in a head-to-toe, skin-tight black chador and adorns herself with several pounds of solid gold bracelets, pendants, necklaces, earrings and rings, her response to the financial crisis.

The female workers in the nightclub wore rather less clothing, but nothing that would be considered risqué on a street in Europe — in August. At one point in the evening, they outnumbered the men as they sat in a big group until being summoned to a table.

"It's nice to see people having fun again," Ms. Jamal said.

One regular customer said, "You can have any of those girls to spend the night with you later, only \$100." First,

though, patrons are expected to spend a few hours buying \$20 beers or even more costly whiskey.

A young woman who said she was 28 but looked 18 sat smoking and downing soft drinks while her "date" drank Scotch. A university student, she would give her name only as Baida, but she was frank about her nighttime profession. Had something happened to force her into this? "No," she said. "I go out with men so I can get money." To support her family? She seemed stunned by the question. "No, for myself."

One police detective said he would not dream of enforcing the law against prostitutes. "They're the best sources we have," said the detective, whose name is being withheld for his safety. "They know everything about J.A.M. and Al Qaeda members," he said, using the acronym for Jaish al-Mahdi or Mahdi army, a Shiite militia.

The detective added that the only problem his men had was that neighbors got the wrong idea when detectives visited the houses where prostitutes were known to live. They really do just want to talk, he said.

"If I had my way, I'd destroy all the mosques and spread the whores around a little more," the detective said. "At least they're not sectarian."

Others are uncomfortable with the prostitutes' presence.

"It is terrible to see prostitution increased like this," said Hanaa Edwar, secretary general of the Iraqi human rights group Al-Amal. "These are women from displaced families, poor people, people who have to sell themselves to get money for their families and children."

She was incensed after she raised the subject before the Iraqi Parliament.

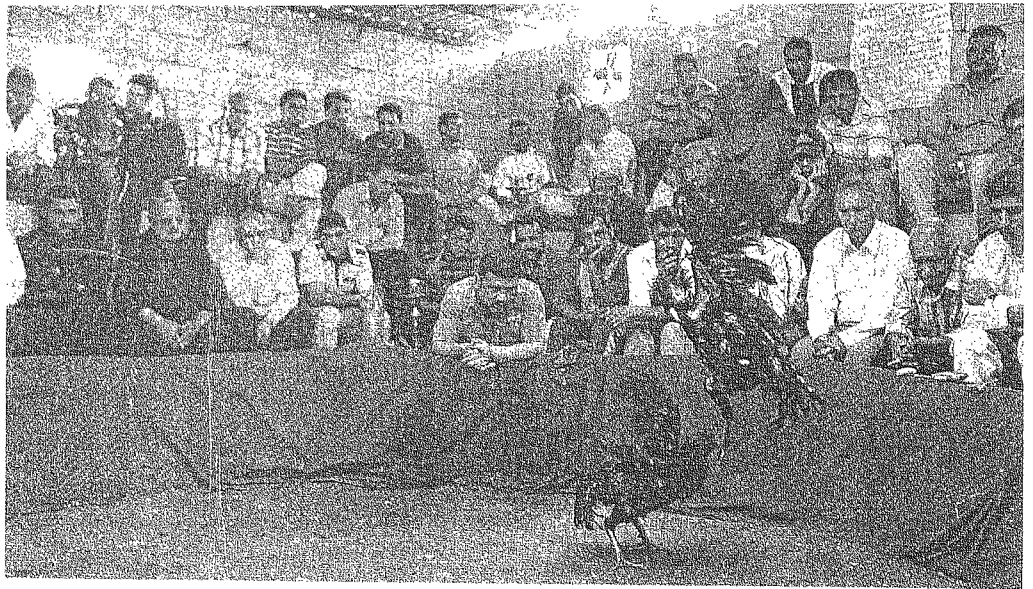
"They were shocked and didn't agree to open discussion on this issue," she said. The shock, she said, was that she dared to mention the problem.

Al-Amal commissioned a report last year that surveyed prostitutes working on the streets in Baghdad. One was a 15-year-old girl who had been thrown out of school for dressing inappropriately, then took to prostitution, the report said. Another was an 18-year-old forced to become the second wife of an older man; she ran away and had no other way to support herself. One girl was 12.

Certainly, vice often has an ugly side. During a recent undercover operation in Karada aimed at a human trafficking ring, a pimp offered a plainclothes officer an opportunity to buy a young woman to take to Syria, according to a detective, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the sting.

Drug abuse, at least, is one problem that has not shown up much, or at least has stayed well underground, the police say. "The only problems we see are some illegal pills occasionally," Colonel Sadir said.

Not surprisingly, the Baghdadis' drug



An underground cockfighting den in a suburb of Baghdad. The Iraqi capital is returning to its old ways as curfews, kidnappings and religious extremists become less of a concern.

of choice is Valium, the colonel said.

Most people have had enough excitement these past six years just staying home.

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune APRIL 20, 2009

Iraqi lawmakers end squabbling and elect new speaker

BAGHDAD

Position, reserved by law for a Sunni Arab, had been vacant for months

BY TIMOTHY WILLIAMS

The Iraqi Parliament chose a new speaker Sunday after months of political infighting that had stalled several major pieces of legislation.

The election of the new speaker, Ayad Samarrai, a Sunni Arab lawmaker who has until now headed the Finance Committee, is expected to break a legislative gridlock but could also lead to new confrontations with the government of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki.

Mr. Samarrai has been an outspoken critic of Mr. Maliki, whose party members cast blank ballots rather than vote for him or another challenger. After the vote, however, Mr. Samarrai pledged to cooperate with Mr. Maliki's government.

"Parliament should be complimentary to the executive system, not hold it up," he said. "I will work with everyone, even the members who didn't vote for me."

The position of speaker, which under Iraq's system of government is reserved for a Sunni Arab, has been va-

cant since the resignation of Mahmoud al-Mashhadani in late December.

Mr. Mashhadani had become a polarizing figure after frequent clashes with other legislators. After he resigned, he said that he had been forced to do so as part of a plot by rival political groups, including the Iraqi Islamic Party, which is Mr. Samarrai's party.

Mr. Samarrai, 63, was among the leading candidates for speaker for months, but in February he fell two votes short of the required 138 votes out of the 275-member body, reflecting the sharp political and sectarian divisions that still consume Iraq.

On Sunday he received 153 votes compared with only 36 for the runner-up, Mustafa al-Hiti. Eighty-six members either did not vote or cast blank ballots, including members of Mr. Maliki's Dawra party.

Even as Parliament voted, Mr. Maliki appeared before hundreds of uniformed commanders at the Interior Ministry and warned that factions within Iraq threatened national unity. As he has in recent days, he suggested that opponents — whom he did not name specifically — were seeking to undermine his government.

"Today we face a new war of subversion, sedition and suspicion," he said.

He added: "We have to warn

ourselves, myself and all you, of the sedition that was defeated in the battle and is being provoked in a certain problem here and another problem there."

A spokesman for Mr. Maliki did not respond to a call seeking reaction to Mr. Samarrai's election as speaker, but a member of Dawra pledged to cooperate with him.

"We will respect the choice of the members of Parliament, and we will work and cooperate with the new speaker," said the lawmaker, Kamal al-Saadi. "Even if members vote for someone we didn't select, it won't change our strategy in Parliament."

The four-month impasse over the speaker's position left Parliament unable to reach agreements on important legislation, including proposals to regulate Iraq's oil industry, the source of 90 percent of its revenue, and to offer compensation for widows and orphans.

Mr. Samarrai, an engineer by training, fled Iraq in the 1980s during Saddam Hussein's rule, but returned after the American invasion in 2003.

Violence continued sporadically across Iraq on Sunday, but the most brazen killings came in a series of robberies in the Tobchi neighborhood of Baghdad — apparently the work of a single group of gunmen. The men, using pistols with silencers, broke into several jewelry stores in the neighborhood, killing seven people and ransacking their shops.

Le 24 avril est la date anniversaire du début du génocide arménien de 1915.
Un historien turc ne craint pas de mettre en cause la responsabilité de son pays

Affronter la vérité

par **Taner Akçam**

Le Nouvel Observateur. – *L'Etat turc continue de nier le génocide arménien de 1915. Comment votre livre a-t-il été accueilli en Turquie ?*

Taner Akçam. – La presse turque, qui a fait sa une sur le sujet en novembre 2006, m'a d'abord carrément traité de menteur. Elle refusait de croire que mon titre, « Un acte honteux », était une citation de Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, le père de la Turquie moderne, parlant des actes commis contre les Arméniens. Puis les éditorialistes ont découvert que je disais vrai et m'ont fait des excuses. Le livre est aujourd'hui en vente libre et chacun peut apprendre que Mustafa Kemal a condamné les massacres dès 1919, qu'il a traité de « criminels » Talaat Pacha et Enver Pacha, les Jeunes-Turcs du Comité Union et Progrès (CUP) au pouvoir pendant la Grande Guerre. Plus tard, en 1925, il a même fait pendre une quinzaine de membres du CUP qui projetaient de l'assassiner. Dans les interviews qu'il a données alors à la presse américaine, il les a accusés d'être « responsables de l'assassinat de nos concitoyens arméniens ». Cela dit, Kemal n'est pas un militant des droits de l'homme. C'est le fondateur d'un Etat-nation, qui ne se soucie que de la sécurité d'Etat et de l'intérêt national, voire nationaliste. Mustafa Kemal a plus tard massacré les Kurdes et les Grecs pontiques. S'il avait été au pouvoir en 1915 à la place de Talaat, aurait-il exterminé les Arméniens ? Personne ne peut le dire. Mais si l'actuel gouvernement turc adoptait sa position sur 1915, nous ferions un énorme pas vers la solution du problème.

N. O. – *Vous montrez aussi que Kemal n'était pas opposé à faire juger des responsables génocidaires par les tribunaux établis après la défaite.*

T. Akçam. – Il y a été favorable dans un premier temps. Les deux gouvernements turcs de l'époque, celui de Mustafa Kemal à Ankara comme celui d'Istanbul qui menait les négociations de paix à la Conférence de Paris, espéraient qu'en jugeant les responsables du génocide la Turquie obtiendrait un traitement favorable de la part des vainqueurs. J'ai découvert, en épluchant les quotidiens de l'époque 1919-1922, que pas moins de 63 de ces procès se sont tenus à Istanbul. Mais quand les vainqueurs ont imposé le traité de Sévres qui prévoyait le démantèlement de la Turquie (avec la création d'un Etat kurde, d'une grande Arménie, d'une grande Grèce, et de protectorats français et anglais), Kemal a compris qu'il



Sociologue et historien turc, **Taner Akçam** est professeur à l'Université de Clark aux Etats-Unis. C'est le premier chercheur turc à se pencher sur le génocide arménien. Né en 1953 à Kars, il milite contre le traitement infligé aux Kurdes. Condamné à neuf ans de prison, il s'évade et obtient l'asile politique en Allemagne. Il vient de publier « Un acte honteux. Le génocide arménien et la question de la responsabilité turque » chez Denoël.

n'y aurait aucun bénéfice à faire condamner les coupables de 1915. Il a alors demandé au gouvernement d'Istanbul d'arrêter d'exécuter « les enfants de la patrie » et s'est préparé à défendre militairement le territoire sur lequel il voulait fonder l'Etat-nation turc.

N. O. – *Les visées coloniales des puissances victorieuses ont donc contribué au fait que les crimes de 1915 restent largement impunis ?*

T. Akçam. – De toutes les puissances victorieuses, l'Angleterre est celle qui a cherché le plus sincèrement à faire juger les criminels, conformément à la promesse faite pendant la guerre. Quant aux deux autres puissances occupantes, la France et l'Italie, elles n'ont montré d'emblée aucun désir de faire justice. Dès 1919, la France négociait un accord économique avec Istanbul. Elle a refusé de faire juger par des tribunaux militaires les auteurs du génocide présents dans les régions sous mandat étranger. Uniquement soucieuse de sauvegarder ses intérêts au Liban et en Syrie, elle a même fini par abandonner à la Turquie la Cilicie qu'elle avait reçue en mandat par la Société des Nations, avec tous les survivants arméniens qui s'y étaient réfugiés... Mais la thèse centrale de mon livre c'est que la cause essentielle du déni turc tient aux liens qui unissent la république kémaliste à la période ottomane. Un grand nombre de Jeunes-Turcs qui avaient participé au génocide à l'époque du CUP ont été les premiers à rejoindre Mustafa Kemal et à fonder avec lui l'Etat-nation turc.

N. O. – *Ce fait n'est pas connu de la société turque ?*

T. Akçam. – Pas suffisamment. Une des raisons de ce « trou de mémoire » est sans doute que les élites dirigeantes n'ont pas bougé depuis la fondation de la République. C'est seulement depuis l'arrivée au pouvoir du parti musulman AKP que des changements positifs sont perceptibles. Une autre raison, plus fondamentale, est qu'aucune nation n'admet facilement que ses pères fondateurs sont des assassins et des voleurs.

N. O. – *Vous avez exploité de nombreuses archives ottomanes. Sont-elles toutes cohérentes avec la thèse d'un projet génocidaire ?*

T. Akçam. – Ce livre est le premier à rassembler toutes les informations disponibles issues de toutes les sources. Elles se recourent. Il faut arrêter la querelle des sources. Le gou-



« UN ACTE HONTEUX » : C'EST
AINSI QU' ATATÜRK QUALIFIAIT LES
EXACTIONS CONTRE LES ARMÉNIENS.

vernement turc n'admet que les documents ottomans, toute autre source étant accusée de vouloir « salir » la Turquie. Inversement, côté arménien, on tient les archives ottomanes par définition en suspicion et seuls les témoignages des étrangers, diplomates et missionnaires américains, allemands et autrichiens, pour fiables. J'ai étudié de nombreuses archives ottomanes : les actes d'accusation et les verdicts des procès des génocidaires, les procès-verbaux du Parlement ottoman de 1908 à 1920, les quotidiens des années 1919-1922, ainsi que les mémoires rédigés par des acteurs ou des témoins. Il n'y a pas de contradiction entre les différents corpus d'archives, qui convergent tous et démontrent suffisamment l'intention génocidaire du gouvernement ottoman.

N. O. – *Qu'avez-vous appris de nouveau ?*

T. Akçam. – Ces documents montrent que le génocide arménien n'était pas une politique particulière visant une population précise, mais qu'il fait partie d'un vaste plan visant à homogénéiser l'Anatolie. Après la perte des Balkans, le CUP s'est lancé dans une entreprise d'ingénierie sociale et démographique en deux volets : contre les chrétiens et contre les musulmans non turcs. Les chrétiens devaient être exterminés ou expulsés. Les Grecs du littoral égéen ont été les premières victimes : en 1913-1914, ils ont été mis de force dans des bateaux et expulsés vers la Grèce. Ce nettoyage ethnique s'est arrêté pendant la guerre à la demande des Allemands qui espéraient faire basculer la Grèce dans leur camp. Mais le projet anti-chrétien a continué, cette fois contre les Arméniens et les Assyriens, déracinés de tous leurs territoires pour être exterminés. L'autre volet concernant les musulmans non turcs (Albanais, Bosniaques, Kurdes, Arabes, etc.) consistait non à les exterminer, mais à

Soldats turcs en 1915 à Alep après la pendaison d'Arméniens en place publique.

les disperser sur tout le territoire, afin qu'ils puissent être assimilés, c'est-à-dire qu'ils perdent leur langue et leur culture. Il y a eu des décrets ordonnant de disperser les Kurdes de sorte qu'il n'y en ait pas plus de 5 à 10% de la population d'une région donnée. Le génocide des Arméniens n'est donc pas un sous-produit de la Grande Guerre, mais un aspect d'une politique démographique générale visant à turquifier de force toute l'Anatolie.

N. O. – *Votre livre est dédié à la mémoire de Haji Halil, un pieux musulman qui a risqué sa vie pour sauver une famille d'Arméniens. Y a-t-il eu beaucoup de « Justes » ?*

T. Akçam. – On n'en connaît pas le nombre, le déni du gouvernement a empêché que cet aspect soit étudié. On sait que des officiers, des gouverneurs ont été exécutés pour avoir refusé d'appliquer les ordres. Le plus important, pour nous aujourd'hui, est que la résistance se soit faite généralement au nom de la foi. A Kastamonu, les villageois sont allés protester auprès du gouverneur, disant que « *ce n'est pas écrit dans le Coran. Tuer des femmes et des enfants est contraire à notre religion* ». Il est vrai aussi qu'ailleurs on a tué des « infidèles » en espérant aller au paradis d'Allah. Mais il est crucial de rappeler que la religion a pu fonder une motivation forte pour prendre ses distances avec les assassins. Aujourd'hui, au sein du parti musulman modéré au pouvoir, le génocide est perçu comme l'œuvre des nationalistes et non des religieux, et il y a des positions très ouvertes sur la question. Au contraire, dans le camp dit « laïque », celui des kémalistes purs et durs, le négationnisme est virulent, car hier comme aujourd'hui il est très facile de mobiliser les nationalistes turcs contre les Arméniens.

Propos recueillis par URSULA GAUTHIER

L'EXPRESS

22 avril 2009

Un double attentat à la bombe fait 60 morts à Bagdad

BAGDAD - Pour la seconde journée consécutive, Bagdad a été ensanglanté par un double attentat à la bombe qui a fait au moins 60 morts dans le quartier chiite de Kadhimiya.

Deux femmes kamikazes ont fait sauter leurs explosifs devant les grilles du sanctuaire de l'imam Moussa al Kadhim, un important lieu de culte chiite dans la capitale irakienne.

Le double attentat a fait en outre 125 blessés. De nombreux pèlerins iraniens sont au nombre des victimes.

Pour Bagdad, un tel bilan est sans précédent depuis juin, lorsque 63 personnes avaient péri dans l'explosion d'un camion piégé.

Le général Dhihad al Djabari, responsable de l'enquête, a déclaré à Reuters Television que les deux femmes avaient emprunté des ruelles pour parvenir sans être contrôlées à deux entrées distinctes du sanctuaire.

Elles ont placé deux sacs en cuir pleins d'explosifs au milieu des fidèles se pressant très nombreux aux entrées de la mosquée, un vendredi, jour de la grande prière. Les kamikazes ont ensuite tiré sur des fils pour faire exploser des grenades à l'intérieur des sacs.

Les premières informations selon lesquelles les kamikazes portaient des ceintures d'explosifs étaient inexactes, a dit Djabari.

L'attaque visiblement coordonnée intervient au lendemain d'une autre journée noire. Un attentat suicide à Bagdad et un autre dans la province de Diyala, dans le nord du pays, avaient fait au total 89 morts.

TENSIONS ACCRUES

Le même jour, les autorités irakiennes avaient annoncé l'arrestation du chef pré-

sumé d'un groupe affilié à Al Qaïda en Irak.

Mais ni Bagdad ni l'armée américaine n'étaient en mesure de confirmer vendredi s'il s'agit ou non d'Abou Omar al Bagdadi, censé diriger le groupe Etat islamique d'Irak (ISI) mais dont l'existence réelle est sujette à caution et qui pourrait être un personnage fictif créé de toutes pièces par Al Qaïda en Irak.

Si l'Irak a connu sur l'année écoulée une amélioration significative sur le front de la sécurité, les groupes insurgés comme Al Qaïda continuent leur lutte et les attentats restent fréquents.

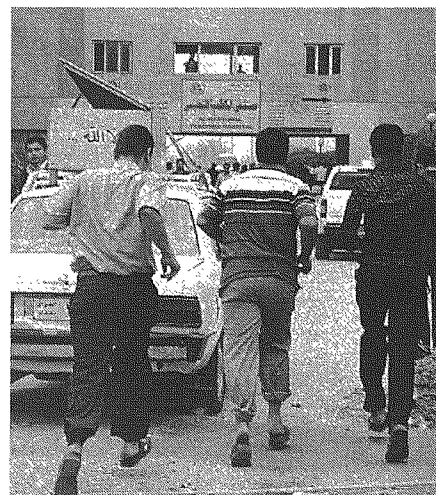
Mais le regain de violence observé ces dernières heures s'inscrit dans un contexte d'inquiétudes alors que les troupes américaines se préparent à se retirer des villes irakiennes en juin, première étape avant le retrait des forces de combat prévu avant la fin 2011.

Les élections qui doivent avoir lieu à la fin de l'année sont aussi un facteur d'accroissement des tensions.

Le fossé entre chiïtes et sunnites, dont l'opposition a fait des dizaines de milliers de morts en 2006-2007, reste béant et les contestations territoriales entre Kurdes et Arabes dans le nord du pays peuvent également dégénérer.

En Iran, d'où les croyants chiïtes peuvent désormais se rendre par millions sur les lieux saints d'Irak qui leur étaient interdits sous le régime de Saddam Hussein, les derniers attentats sont "un exemple haineux de ceux qui blessent la religion au nom de la religion", selon les termes employés vendredi par l'ancien président Ali Akbar Rafsanjani.

"Nous éprouvons de la peine pour le peuple irakien en raison de l'entrée de groupes corrompus en Irak. Nous critiquons aussi l'Amérique pour ne pas avoir la volonté sérieuse de préserver la sécurité



Habitants de Bagdad s'acheminant vers une morgue pour récupérer les corps de proches pris dans un double attentat dans le quartier chiite de Kadhimiya. Deux kamikazes portant des ceintures d'explosifs ont tué au moins 60 personnes vendredi, ensanglantant la capitale irakienne pour la seconde journée consécutive. (Reuters/Ahmed Malik)

de l'Irak", a-t-il ajouté.

Hassan Qashqavi, porte-parole du ministère iranien des Affaires étrangères cité par l'agence iranienne Irna a dénoncé "certaines personnes qui tentent d'affaiblir les liens historiques profonds et croissants entre les deux nations d'Iran et d'Irak et de justifier la présence illégitime d'étranger par le maintien de l'insécurité dans ce pays et dans la région". (Reuters)

AFP

IRAK: DEUX CHRÉTIENS TUÉS À KIRKOUK

KIRKOUK (Irak), 26 avril 2009 (AFP) -

IRAK: deux chrétiens tués à Kirkouk, "attaques terroristes" selon la police

Deux chrétiens, dont une femme, ont été tués dimanche soir par des inconnus à Kirkouk (nord), a indiqué la police irakienne précisant qu'il s'agissait d'"attaques terroristes".

Dans le sud de la ville, à 255 km au nord de Bagdad, les assaillants sont entrés par effraction au domicile de Youssef Chaba, un employé de la Compagnie pétrolière du Nord, et ont ouvert le feu, le tuant et blessant ses deux fils Bassel et Samer, a indiqué le colonel de police Adnane Abdallah.

Quelques minutes plus tard, d'autres hommes armés ont assassiné dans sa

maison Mouna Latif Daoud et blessé sa fille. Ils ont utilisé d'armes automatiques avant de poignarder les deux femmes.

"Il s'agit de deux attaques terroristes qui ont eu lieu à quelques minutes d'intervalle", a affirmé le colonel Abdallah.

L'évêque chaldéen de Kirkouk, Louis Sako, a condamné ces "crimes terroristes et lâches", affirmant que "les chrétiens sont les bâtisseurs de ce pays et nous demandons que la justice soit faite contre ces meurtriers".

Il y a trois semaines, un chrétien avait été égorgé chez lui également à Kirkouk. Avant l'invasion de 2003, près de 50.000 chrétiens vivaient dans cette ville, capitale d'une province riche en pétrole et où cohabitent Kurdes, Turcomans, Assyro-chaldéens (chrétiens) et Arabes.



L'ONU REMET SON RAPPORT SUR LES RÉGIONS DISPUTÉES DU NORD DE L'IRAK

BAGDAD, 22 avril 2009 (AFP) -

L'ONU remet mercredi aux responsables irakiens un rapport très attendu contenant ses propositions concernant les 12 régions disputées entre Arabes et Kurdes, dont la ville pétrolière de Kirkouk, où coexistent plusieurs communautés.

"Le rapport sera remis aujourd'hui (mercredi) au Conseil présidentiel, au Premier ministre et aux deux vice-Premiers ministres et au gouvernement autonome du Kurdistan", a affirmé à l'AFP un responsable de la Mission d'Assistance de l'ONU en Irak (UNAMI).

Il s'agit de douze secteurs qui se trouvent dans le nord de l'Irak: sept dans la région de Ninive dont la capitale est Mossoul, deux dans la province de Diyala, un à Salaheddine, un dans la province kurde de Souleimaniyeh et Kirkouk.

Ces régions sont l'objet de conflits, à la suite de mouvements de populations ordonnés par l'ancien dictateur Saddam Hussein dans le cadre de sa politique "d'arabisation" et de répression contre les populations qu'il jugeait hostiles.

Pour préparer les propositions de l'ONU, une équipe de 15 diplomates, universi-

taires, historiens et négociateurs, a travaillé depuis mars 2008 et examine notamment l'ensemble des décrets administratifs pris par les autorités irakiennes depuis l'indépendance de 1932.

La tension est grande entre le gouvernement autonome du Kurdistan, qui veut étendre sa région aux territoires qu'il considère comme ayant historiquement été peuplés par son ethnie, et le gouvernement central irakien, qui veut s'en tenir aux limites de ce qui constitue la région autonome depuis la première guerre du Golfe (1991).

En août, Staffan de Mistura, représentant spécial du secrétaire général de l'ONU en Irak, avait expliqué aux journalistes que la démarche des Nations unies était de "trouver un accord global" à ces questions qui enveniment la vie politique en Irak, en ne se contentant pas seulement d'une solution à Kirkouk, où un conflit oppose Kurdes, Arabes et Turcomans.

"Nous allons proposer des options pour un accord global sur les régions disputées, dont bien sûr Kirkouk, qui est le problème le plus chaud actuellement en Irak", avait-il dit aux journalistes.



INCULPATION DE JEUNES MILITANTS KURDES EN TURQUIE

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 22 avril 2009 (AFP) -

UN TRIBUNAL turc a inculpé mercredi 13 jeunes Kurdes pour liens présumés avec les rebelles séparatistes kurdes, à la suite d'un coup de filet de la police dans le sud-est de la Turquie, a-t-on appris de sources officielles.

Les suspects, qui ont été placés en détention provisoire à Batman (sud-est), faisaient partie d'un groupe de 60 personnes arrêtées vendredi pour liens supposés avec le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), mouvement armé interdit, en lutte contre le régime d'Ankara.

Tous sont membres de la section des jeunesses du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP), principal parti pro-kurde de Turquie.

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Selon la police, ils sont accusés de dégradation de bâtiments publics, d'avoir encouragé des enfants à participer à des manifestations illégales et d'avoir forcé des commerçants à fermer boutique, une manière traditionnelle de protester contre le gouvernement dans les régions kurdes du pays.

Ils ont été inculpés d'appartenance au PKK et de propagation de propagande séparatiste, selon des sources judiciaires.

Le PKK a pris les armes en 1984, et le conflit a fait depuis environ 45.000 morts. Les rebelles sont surtout actifs dans les régions montagneuses mais ils bénéficient de soutiens actifs dans les zones urbaines de Turquie.



IRAK: L'ONU REFUSE L'ÉCLATEMENT DE LA RÉGION DISPUTÉE DE KIRKOUK

BAGDAD, 22 avr 2009 (AFP) -

Il souligne l'importance de préserver l'unité de la province irakienne riche en pétrole de Kirkouk, que se disputent âprement Kurdes, Arabes et Turcomans, dans un rapport très attendu contenant ses propositions pour éviter que la situation ne dégénère en guerre civile.

"La Mission d'assistance de l'ONU en Irak (Unami) a analysé quatre options concernant le gouvernorat de Kirkouk (...). Ces quatre options traitent Kirkouk comme une seule entité et aucune ne propose une division des districts actuels", a-t-elle affirmé dans un communiqué publié mercredi.

La province de Kirkouk compte plusieurs communautés qui se disputent le pouvoir: des Kurdes, qui souhaitent son rattachement au Kurdistan irakien, des Turcomans, qui se considèrent comme ses habitants historiques, et des Assyro-chaldéens (chrétiens) ou des Arabes, souvent arrivés à l'occasion de la politique d'arabisation forcée de Saddam Hussein.

Les quatre options proposées, dont les détails n'ont pas été donnés, "prennent comme point de départ la Constitution irakienne, et (jugent nécessaire) un accord politique entre les parties et une forme de référendum de confirmation", ajoute l'ONU.

L'article 140 de la Constitution irakienne prévoit un référendum à Kirkouk, dont la province compte 900.000 personnes et recèle les deuxième plus grandes réserves pétrolières du pays après le Sud.

"Le représentant spécial du secrétaire général de l'ONU en Irak, Staffan de Mistura, a présenté aujourd'hui au Premier ministre, aux membres du Conseil présidentiel (irakien) et au président du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan, les rapports concernant les territoires disputés dans le nord du pays", explique le communiqué.

"Ce travail, qui a pris plus d'un an, fait partie du mandat de l'Unami contenu dans

les résolutions du Conseil de sécurité 1770 et 1830", précise le texte.

Outre Kirkouk, il s'agit de quinze autres "territoires disputés" dont sept dans la région de Ninive, trois dans celle de Kirkouk, trois dans le gouvernorat de Diyala, un dans la province de Salaheddine et un dans celui de Souleimaniyeh.

"L'Unami ne fait à ce stade aucune suggestion concernant les futures juridictions de ces régions. En revanche, des recommandations pour des mesures favorisant la confiance sont détaillées", ajoute l'Unami.

L'ONU s'est appuyée sur une équipe de 15 diplomates, universitaires, historiens et négociateurs depuis mars 2008, qui ont examiné notamment l'ensemble des décrets administratifs pris par les autorités irakiennes depuis l'indépendance de 1932.

"Notre espoir en présentant ces rapport fouillés et objectifs, qui analysent de manière inédite la très grande complexité des régions disputées, est que les parties l'utilisent pour entamer un dialogue concret", a affirmé M. de Mistura dans le communiqué.

"Nous sommes tous conscients que les tensions se sont accrues récemment dans les régions disputées et qu'il s'agit de questions dépassant le simple conflit territorial. C'est pourquoi nous avons fait ce travail et nous espérons qu'un dialogue sérieux va suivre", a-t-il ajouté.

La tension est grande entre le gouvernement autonome du Kurdistan, qui veut étendre sa région aux territoires qu'il considère comme ayant historiquement été peuplés par son ethnie, et le gouvernement central irakien, qui veut s'en tenir aux limites de ce qui constitue la région autonome depuis la première guerre du Golfe (1991).

En août, M. de Mistura avait expliqué aux journalistes que la démarche de l'ONU était de "trouver un accord global" à ces questions qui enveniment la vie politique en Irak, en ne se contentant pas seulement d'une solution à Kirkouk.



TURQUIE : SIT-IN DE DÉPUTÉS KURDES AU PARLEMENT

ANKARA, 23 avril 2009 (AFP) -

UN GROUPE de 21 députés kurdes turcs ont entamé mercredi soir un sit-in au parlement pour protester contre l'arrestation la semaine dernière de plus de 100 personnes accusées d'être liées aux rebelles séparatistes kurdes de Turquie.

Les 21 députés du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP), la principale formation kurde de Turquie, ont entamé leur mouvement vers 23H00 (20H00 GMT) et annoncé leur intention de rester assis au même endroit jusqu'à 08H00 (05H00 GMT) jeudi.

Selahattin Demirtas, un responsable de DTP, a indiqué qu'ils boycotteraient également les cérémonies officielles du jour de la souveraineté nationale jeudi.

Les députés veulent dénoncer l'arrestation la semaine dernière de plus de 100 personnes, dont de nombreux membres du DTP.

"Nous voulons protester contre cette opération et (...) rappeler à tout le monde que le lieu pour trouver une solution (au conflit kurde) est le parlement", a déclaré M. Demirtas.

Selon les autorités, l'opération visait à démanteler les ramifications du mouvement séparatiste rebelle Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) au



sein d'organisations non-gouvernementales kurdes et du DTP.

Le DTP affirme qu'il s'agit d'une tentative du gouvernement de neutraliser le parti kurde après ses succès aux élections locales en mars.

Le DTP, qui détient 21 des 550 sièges au parlement turc, pourrait être interdit par la Cour Constitutionnelle, qui examine actuellement ses liens éventuels avec le PKK.

Irak: les attentats ne remettent pas en cause la stabilisation, selon Clinton



BAGDAD 25 avril 2009 (AFP)

LA SECRÉTAIRE d'Etat américaine Hillary Clinton a assuré samedi à Bagdad que la récente vague d'attentats ayant ensanglanté l'Irak ne remettait pas en question le processus de stabilisation du pays engagé depuis un an.

"Selon mon opinion et celle du général (Raymond) Odiemo (chef de la Force multinationale), il s'agit certes d'événements tragiques et terribles mais qui ne reflètent nullement une remise en cause des progrès réalisés en matière de sécurité", a déclaré Mme Clinton lors d'une conférence de presse avec le chef de la diplomatie irakienne Hoshiyar Zebari.

Ces attentats "sont certainement horribles par les pertes qu'ils ont occasionnées, mais le peuple et le gouvernement irakiens ont rejeté unanimement la violence et ont affiché leur refus de voir les Irakiens se lever les uns contre les autres, ce qui est bien sûr l'objectif" des terroristes, a-t-elle ajouté.

Plus de 150 personnes ont péri depuis jeudi dans des attentats suicide commis notamment contre des pèlerins chiites iraniens, qui rappellent les heures sombres des violences interconfessionnelles en Irak. Avril est aussi le mois le plus meurtrier en 2009 avec plus de 250 morts et près de 700 blessés.

De son côté, M. Zebari a souligné qu'en dépit de ces violences, son pays était déterminé à s'en tenir au calendrier défini par l'accord américano-irakien de novembre. Celui-ci prévoit le retrait des troupes américaines des villes irakiennes avant la fin juin et un retrait total d'Irak d'ici fin 2011.

"Nous continuerons de compter sur l'engagement et le soutien des Etats-Unis au gouvernement et au peuple irakiens pour nous permettre de faire face à ces défis", a-t-il déclaré.

Mme Clinton avait promis un peu plus tôt de fournir aux Irakiens les moyens d'assurer leur sécurité.

"Nous continuerons à travailler très, très dur pour vous donner les outils qui vous permettront d'avoir un pays sûr", a-t-elle déclaré à une centaine d'Irakiens de la société civile réunis à l'ambassade américaine.

"Nous travaillerons étroitement avec le gouvernement irakien et les forces de sécurité irakiennes pendant le retrait de nos troupes, a-t-elle assuré. Il n'y a rien de plus important que l'unité de l'Irak. Nous n'allons pas vous dire comment résoudre les questions politiques intérieures (de l'Irak). C'est à vous de le décider".



Lors de cette première visite en Irak depuis son arrivée au département d'Etat en janvier, Mme Clinton a également rencontré le président irakien Jalal Talabani et le Premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki.

"Je pense qu'il y aura toujours en Irak des conflits politiques comme dans n'importe quelle société, mais je crois réellement que l'Irak dans son ensemble va dans la bonne direction", a-t-elle souligné.

Elle s'est aussi entretenue avec le représentant spécial du secrétaire général de l'ONU en Irak, Staffan de Mistura, qui vient de publier un rapport très attendu sur la quinzaine de "régions disputées" entre Arabes et Kurdes, notamment la province riche en pétrole de Kirkouk.

La visite de Mme Clinton intervient deux semaines après celle du président américain, Barack Obama, qui avait averti que les prochains 18 mois seraient critiques pour l'Irak.

Fin février, il avait annoncé que le gros des 140.000 soldats déployés en Irak auraient quitté le pays d'ici le 31 août 2010 et qu'il ne resterait qu'une force de 35.000 à 50.000 hommes.

Le niveau des violences avait nettement baissé en Irak en 2008 à la faveur du recrutement massif par les forces américano-irakiennes de milices composées d'anciens insurgés, dont beaucoup doivent rejoindre les rangs des forces de sécurité irakiennes.

FINANCIAL TIMES

April 23 2009

UN OFFERS ROUTES TO RESOLUTION OF KIRKUK DISPUTE

By Anna Fifield in Beirut

The United Nations has suggested to the Iraqi central and Kurdish regional governments that they either share the disputed territory of Kirkuk on an equal basis, or that they allow it to become a semi-autonomous region.

The two options are the "most feasible" in a 450-page report from the UN on the northern city of Kirkuk and surrounding areas, the subject of a bitter territorial dispute which partly centres on its huge oil reserves.

With both sides claiming it as their own, the area has become a potential sectarian flashpoint, not between Sunni and Shia but between Arabs and Kurds, as security gains

are made in other parts of the country.

The long-awaited report has not been made public but the Financial Times understands that the UN has suggested four "compromise options" to the central government in Baghdad and the Kurdish regional government, based in Irbil.

Of the two most feasible options, one involves Kirkuk having a "dual linkage" to both Baghdad and Irbil. This would mean it was governed jointly by both authorities.

The second most likely option involves giving Kirkuk a degree of autonomy, which would see it become a standalone special region in the way that Kurdistan is now.

The UN report is "not prescriptive" but lays out options for the two

authorities to go away and consider. "Nobody is going to be fully satisfied because no one side is going to find that all its demands have been met," a UN official told the FT.

Staffan de Mistura, the UN's special representative in Iraq, yesterday said that the UN hoped Arabs and Kurds would use the report to start a process of dialogue. "We are all too aware that tensions have recently risen in parts of the disputed areas, and also that there are more issues than just the territorial ones that divide the parties," he said.

The area has a complicated history that has so far proven impossible to reconcile. Kirkuk was "Arabised" by Saddam Hussein, who forced Kurds to leave and moved in Arabs from Iraq's south in an effort to

change the demographics.

Kurdistan, whose people were killed by the thousands under Saddam, has long been trying to win the cities back. The Kurdistan regional government has been lobbying for a referendum to allow Kirkuk residents to decide whether they become part of the northern region but this has been repeatedly postponed. The area also has a sizeable Turkmen population, who also want a say.

Although Kurds say that Kirkuk is their ancestral capital, the allure of the area's oil reserves to both sides cannot be overestimated. It is thought to have a production capacity of about 1m barrels a day.

Uneasy calm for Iraq, Kurdish troops in disputed area

REUTERS

KIRKUK, April 22, 2009 (Reuters) - By Missy Ryan

U.S. COLONEL Ryan Gonsalves' soldiers were already on their way to their new post in Baghdad when he got news his brigade was being diverted to Iraq's tense city of Kirkuk.

The last-minute decision in January to more than double to 5,000 the number of U.S. soldiers in Kirkuk was prompted by tensions that many fear could ignite broader conflict in Iraq just as the sectarian killing of the last six years subsides.

The U.S. buildup in Kirkuk coincided with a misunderstanding that led to rumours that both Kurdish forces and Iraqi troops had gone on alert, and were potentially mobilising against each other. The situation was defused, but it left an impression.

The U.S. mission in Kirkuk now centres on building trust. "Odierno decided the most dangerous course of action would be if violence incites itself between those ethnic groups," Gonsalves said of General Ray Odierno, the U.S. commander in Iraq.

The future of Kirkuk hangs in the balance as Arabs, Kurds and Turkmen vie for control of a region with major historical importance and sits on as much as 4 percent of the world's oil.

Iraq's minority Kurds, who were killed by the thousands by former Sunni Arab dictator Saddam Hussein, claim Kirkuk as part of their largely autonomous northern region.

But Kirkuk's Turkmen and Arabs object, and complain about heavy-handed discriminatory tactics since Kurds gained control of the local government after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. On Wednesday, the United Nations handed over a new report on Kirkuk that it hopes will encourage a settlement between rival political and ethnic factions.

The report lands in an environment of tension and mistrust, reflecting larger questions dogging Iraq's fledgling democracy: How powerful should the central government be? What military role should minority players like the Kurds have?

U.S. soldiers in Kirkuk are seeking to foster communication between Kurdish troops and the Iraqi Army there, which is 85 percent Arab. Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, a Shi'ite Arab, says

weapons should be in the hands of the state alone.

ALARM

The formation last year of the 12th Iraqi Army Division in Kirkuk was met with alarm by the smaller 10th Kurdish Army Brigade, stationed in the northern parts of the province.

Since 2003, Kurdish Peshmerga have deployed in different parts of Iraq, even reaching Baghdad.

Heading the new Iraqi Army unit is Major General Abdul Amir Zaidi, an Arab who Kurds view with suspicion since he was stationed around the same area under Saddam.

"Our job is to protect Kirkuk from terrorists," said one Iraqi Army official in Kirkuk, asking to go unnamed.

Major Scott Rawlinson, a U.S. spokesman, said 'the greatest threat is that some minor incident could start a chain reaction that could lead to armed conflict ... It runs the risk of expanding into other provinces and rolling back security gains.'

In March, U.S. troops invited the Arab general and his Kurdish counterpart to a luncheon at the U.S. base in Kirkuk. Until then, Zaidi had refused to engage officially with someone he deemed a "militia" leader, U.S. officials said.

At the meeting, the two broke the ice and have since shared intelligence, said U.S. Army Major Christopher Norrie.

"Kurds have fought and died and sacrificed for this area for 80 years. It's an incredibly emotional issue," Norrie said.

Kurds are seen as perhaps more ready to make concessions than they were in the past, as the U.S. forces seen as their protectors prepare for a full withdrawal by the end of 2011. Yet many are adamant about their right to field soldiers in Kirkuk.

"I say that Kirkuk is part of Kurdistan and the Peshmerga should be present," said Mohammed Kamal Salih, a Kurdish member of Kirkuk's provincial council. "The Iraqi Army is fanning out, and we have a right to stop any problematic movements."

TODAYS ZAMAN

April 24, 2009

Ergenekon weapons site found after anonymous letter

TODAY'S ZAMAN

An excavation that started on Tuesday, which revealed munitions buried underground in a district of Istanbul, were launched after a tip-off letter was sent to the police by an anonymous e-mailer, according to a report printed yesterday in the Bugün daily.

Three military officers currently on active duty were arrested on Wednesday as part of an investigation into Ergenekon after an arms cache was discovered on Tuesday buried underground in land owned by the Istek Foundation, which was set up by a fugitive suspect in the investigation, former Istanbul Mayor Bedrettin Dalan, the chairman of the foundation. The detained included Navy Maj. Levent Bektas, Navy Lt. Col Ercan Kireçtepe and Navy Maj. Emre Onat. The police are seeking to capture yet another naval officer, Lt. Col. Mustafa Turhan Ecevit.

Earlier in the investigation, the prosecution established links between the organization and some retired military officers as well as some currently on active duty from the land and air forces. The weapons site discovered yesterday is the first link established between any naval officers and the organizations. Tuesday's excavation was launched after an anonymous e-mail sent to the Istanbul Police Department. The police continued excavations for the third day yesterday in the same area.

The e-mail was sent a week earlier to the police, who found at the end of an investigation that the message was sent from an Internet cafe. The lengthy letter included the tip-off that munitions were buried in the Poyrazköy land owned by Dalan's Istek Foundation. The location of the weapons was also described in a fairly detailed manner, according to Bugün's report. The letter also identified the names of the individuals who buried the weapons.

The police first examined land registry information regarding the property indicated by the anonymous e-mail. The land registry title confirmed the facts mentioned in the letter. After that, the police established the addresses of the individuals who, the letter said, buried the munitions. The police prepared for an operation and started excavating the territory after acquiring the necessary approval from public prosecutors. The largest weapons site ever found in the investigation emerged at the end of Tuesday's excavations.

In Tuesday's excavations on the Istek Foundation land in Istanbul's Poyrazköy district, 10 light anti-tank weapons, 20 percussion bombs, three other bombs, 250 grams of C4 explosive, 19 emergency flares, 10 hand grenades, 800 G3 bullets and a large number of bullets for revolvers were found. The discovery follows the unearthing of similar underground weapons sites earlier in January, uncovered during digs based on maps found in the homes of two suspects – former Deputy Police Chief Ibrahim Sahin and Mustafa Dönmez, a lieutenant colonel who turned himself



Ten light anti-tank weapons, tens of bombs and hand grenades and hundreds of bullets have been found during excavations on land owned by the Istek Foundation in Istanbul's Poyrazköy district.

in a few days after the initial warrant for his arrest. Dalan was in the US during the time of this wave of detentions and discoveries, which started on Jan. 7, 2009.

Dalan is also accused of being one of the 16 people who were actively involved in plotting a coup d'état. These 16, including Cumhuriyet writer Ihan Selçuk, retired generals Sener Eruygur and Hursit Tolon and former Higher Education Board (YÖK) President Kemal Gürüz, are being accused of actively planning attacks and other activities to "eradicate by force the organs of the legislative and the executive."

A search yesterday was carried out in the house and office of retired Naval Forces Maj. Bektas, a former member of the navy's Underwater Assault Teams (SAT). Bektas was one of the four officers arrested yesterday.

In a statement it issued on Wednesday, the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) denied the Istek Foundation's allegations that the weapons belonged to the military.

Meanwhile, two individuals were detained in Izmir yesterday after the discovery of two hand grenades inside an apartment. One of those detained was a former Special Operations Unit officer, the police said.

Ankara excavated for guns

The police, as part of the January investigation, carried out a series of digs at a number of sites around the capital in a search of weapons linked to Ergenekon. In Sincan, the police unearthed 30 hand grenades, nine smoke bombs and hun-

dreds of G3 rifle bullets in the garden of a deserted house.

Another arms cache was unearthed in the Zir Valley in Ankara's Sincan district, which was found based on a map found in the house of Lt. Col. Dönmez. Thirty hand grenades, nine smoke bombs and more than 800 bullets for G3 assault rifles were found there. Around the same time, two hand grenades were found buried inside a park in an industrial zone. Nearly 200 bullets were discovered also in Ankara, in early January, in a vacant lot across from a housing complex in the Oran neighborhood, formerly reserved for members of Parliament and their families.

US expresses support for Ergenekon investigation

US State Department spokesperson Robert Wood said on Tuesday in a weekly press meeting that the US administration was "absolutely certain" that the prosecutors in the Ergenekon case are conducting the investigation in accordance with the laws and the Constitution.

At a weekly press conference on Tuesday, Wood was directed a question about the recent arrests in the Ergenekon trial. Those arrested included some outspoken critics of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) government, to which the journalist raising the question referred to as "Turkey's radical Islamist government."

TODAYS ZAMAN

April 24, 2009

Pro-Kurdish DTP deputies spend whole night in Parliament

AYSE KARABAT

"THESE KINDS of protests are nothing to us," said Hamit Geylani, Hakkari deputy of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) who spent all Wednesday night in a sit-in protest in the Parliament. Geylani and 22 others, including Ufuk Uras, Istanbul deputy of the Freedom and Society Party (ÖDP), wanted to underline that the place to address the solution to the Kurdish problem is Parliament. The deputies who spent all night long chatting, exchanging jokes, reading books and eating sweets also protested about the recent arrests of more than 50 DTP members including the three deputy chairpersons of the party.

Last week security forces conducted operations in several cities and searched many places affiliated with the DTP. According to security forces the operations were targeting the urban structure of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) but the DTP is claiming that the operations are intolerant of the overwhelming success of their party in the local elections in March 29.

Ahmet Türk, chairman of the DTP, who was in London at the beginning of the week, said, on his way to Ankara that he did not have detailed information about the decision of the sit-in protest of his party's parliamentary group but later joined his friends in the late hours while having a chat with sleepless journalists. He said that the aim of the operations was actually to push the DTP out of democratic politics.

"If this is the aim, then we can return to our villages, to our people. We are not dying for the seats in Parliament. If necessary, we will go to jail, too. Anyway, it will not be the first," Türk said before he complained of his tiredness after having to wake up at three o'clock in the morning to catch his plane from London to Istanbul.

Türk, while he was a deputy of the now-closed Democracy Party (DEP), was arrested in 1994. At that time, after their immunity was stripped, the DEP deputies also had a 'night watch' in Parliament. One of them was Sırrı Sakık who was also present in this sit-in protest.

"It was 15 years ago. We were demanding a clash-free atmosphere and democracy. Since then, nothing has changed, we are still asking for the same things," he said.

But there is one difference, Sakık is now the parliamentary administrative manager responsible for order in the Parliament building. His position was the subject of jokes on Wednesday night, when the speaker of Parliament Köksal Toptan visited the DTP deputies an hour before their protest started in order to make them to give up. DTP's Van deputy Özdal Üçer replied: "Don't worry about us, the parliamentary administrative manager will take care of us."



Lawmakers of pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party speak to the media at the parliament in Ankara, Turkey, Wednesday, April 22, 2009. They said they will stage an all night sit-in protest at the parliament following the detention of more than 200 party members in a nationwide police crackdown over the past week. (AP Photo)

During the night, the Parliament, which is supposed to be closed at that time, really took care of the DTP deputies. An ambulance and a doctor were ordered to stay and contrary to parliamentary traditions, the corridors in front of the general assembly meeting room were turned into a picnic area -- not on Sakık's orders but on those of his colleague, Muhyittin Aksak, from the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party).

When other deputies were asked about the DTP's sit-in protest, they did not want to comment, although some of them, after the end of the sessions while leaving the General Assembly, shook hands with their DTP friends and gave their good wishes. But some AK Party deputies from cities in the predominantly Kurdish-populated areas -- the political rivals of the DTP - showed their disdain.

"They won the elections by threats so I don't believe in their discourse of democracy," one AK Party deputy said. Another one added that for them the DTP means Darp and Tehdit party (darp in Turkish means stroke and tehdit means threat.)

When he went out to take some fresh air, Türk reiterated these claims to the journalists around him and claimed that the AK Party deputies, in order to hide their mistakes during the local elections like pointing out the wrong candidates and advising wrong policies to the general headquarters, were trying these pretenses.

"These false claims were the messages indicating that these operations are coming," Türk said.

Just before having baklava which was brought by Ufuk Uras he added that after the local elections the PKK made a statement in which it was saying that the DTP get the support

of the people so they will not use their guns but will monitor the developments. According to Türk, the atmosphere for a solution was suitable but the operations came.

"The war lords do not want a solution," he said.

The DEP deputies all night long mentioned the stories of other sit-in protests that they had participated in, having long chats with the journalists, reading books and occasionally sleeping until 8 o'clock in the morning since they would not participate in the special sessions of the Parliament on National Sovereignty and International Children's day in order to protest about the trials of the children between 15 and 18 years old as adults in accordance with the anti-terror law.

The DTP is also planning to organize a big march on May 17 to give the same messages it was trying to deliver with its sit-in protest.

"We will change our name to the 'continues action party,'" says Osman Özçelik Siirt deputy of the DTP. All of them laughed. One of them whispered: "You know our supporters, they are young and reactionary. We decided to tell them to cool off, we will take all necessary actions and protests, we have to keep them away from provocations. This is another reason for us to be in this protest."

Election result complicates Kurdish reform

Prime Minister Erdogan's policy of moderate reform suffered a setback as voters in the southeast shunned his party in local elections, turning to the more radical Democratic Society Party.

By Ayhan Simsek for Southeast European Times

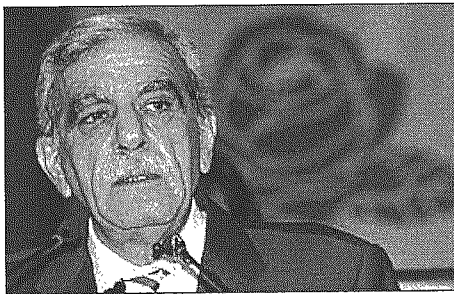
The recent local elections brought major gains for the Democratic Society Party. [Getty Images]

Turkey's local elections, held on March 29th, have shaken up the prospects for addressing Kurdish issues. The Democratic Society Party (DTP), widely seen as linked to the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), won almost all the major municipalities in the primarily Kurd-populated southeast.

The result was a major blow to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has sought to build support among Kurds for its policies of moderate reform.

The DTP won mayoral positions in the symbolically important city of Diyarbakir, as well as in seven other cities and 50 towns in southeast Turkey -- an increase of four cities and 18 towns from the 2004 local elections.

Erdogan's party had hoped to win 100 municipalities in eastern and southeastern



"This is a warning for AKP's nationalist, authoritarian, one-party rule understanding," DTP leader Ahmet Turk said. [Getty Images]

Turkey, giving the prime minister a stronger mandate for his reform programme while isolating and weakening the PKK.

AKP mobilised all its forces in pursuit of a victory. The party recently inaugurated the first Kurdish TV channel, via the public broadcaster TRT. State officials delivered prizes such as refrigerators and washing machines. Erdogan himself visited key cities in the region and promised increased investments, jobs and better social services.

The effort, which provoked considerable criticism from the opposition in Turkey, did not yield fruit. The party ended up losing 15% of the vote compared to its 2007 numbers, winning only four mayoral positions.

AKP leaders blamed the PKK. "It was not possible to carry out a successful campaign in regions where the terrorist PKK has threatened voters and party officials," Turkey's EU chief negotiator, Egemen Bagis, told reporters.

According to Milliyet columnist Taha Akyol, the result amounts to a "strong alarm signal". The identity politics of the DTP, its radical approach and the feeling of Kurds that they are under pressure were important factors that led to the election results, Akyol wrote, adding that the outcome will make it more difficult to reach a solution to the Kurdish problem in the near future.

DTP head Ahmet Turk, however, hailed the victory as a triumph of democracy and called on the AKP to change its approach.

"This is a warning for AKP's nationalist, authoritarian, one-party rule understanding. This is a warning for AKP, for its stalling on EU reforms, for its laying aside the debate on a new constitution and for its limited understanding of democracy, remembering democracy just for itself," Turk said.

The DTP wants radical changes to the Turkish state system -- including a new constitution that would recognise Kurdish autonomy -- and advocates general amnesty for the PKK militants.

Although the party is now on a more confident footing, most analysts do not expect it will win any major concessions from the AKP in the short term. To date, Erdogan has refused to consider appointing, or even holding a meeting with, any DTP member. Instead, he has blasted the party for refusing to acknowledge the PKK is a terrorist group and for not condemning its attacks.

Sedat Bozkurt, a senior journalist and Ankara bureau chief for Fox TV, says Erdogan's party fell into a political trap set by the DTP.

"To undermine Kurdish support for the AKP, leaders of the DTP adopted fiercer, radical rhetoric," Bozkurt told Southeast European Times. "They have made radical demands ... leading to harsh rebuttals by Prime Minister Erdogan and AKP leaders. This tactic served well, again uniting Kurdish voters under the DTP."

According to Bozkurt, the AKP has to address the identity demands of Kurds if it hopes to regain their trust and votes.

Erdogan has long promised a new opening towards the southeast. During a key visit to Diyarbakir in 2005, he promised to recognise "the Kurdish reality", and even suggested a new definition of citizenship. However, renewed PKK violence in the following months stirred up outrage in Turkey and led to increased political pressure from nationalists.

For years, PKK terrorists have used the mountainous part of northern Iraq as their base for attacks against Turkey. The bloody insurgency has claimed almost 40,000 lives since 1984.

The DTP leadership is still far from



Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has long promised a new opening towards the southeast. [Getty Images]

condemning the terrorist group, and still places the burden of finding a peaceful solution on the Turkish government, rather than on the PKK.

Now, all eyes are turned towards a proposed International Kurdish Conference, scheduled for early May in the northern Iraqi city of Arbil. DTP is planning a meeting of all Kurdish groups from Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran, as well as representatives of the PKK. Local media have speculated about a possible announcement by the PKK of its conditions to lay down arms.

However, Akyol sees no quick end to PKK terrorism or any solution in the short term.

"What can decrease the ethnic tension in the long term is democratic reform policies that would reflect our respect for the Kurdish identity, as well as social integration policies that would strengthen our unity," he said. "But in order to achieve this goal, all of us, including the opposition CHP and MHP [need to] make an opening, for the sake of Turkey's future."

Complicating the situation further is the often tense relationship between Turkey's ruling party and the country's military, which sees itself as the guardian of the secular state. Secularists have clashed with Erdogan and his party over an alleged "Islamist" agenda, while the military has urged a tough line on Kurdish issues.

Turkey's top military commander this week expressed support for the expansion of cultural rights as long as this is done on the basis of Turkish citizenship.

Addressing the War Academy on Tuesday, General Ilker Basbug said problems such as unemployment and lack of opportunity made young Kurds susceptible to the PKK's lure, and that fighting terrorism required a "comprehensive strategy" and possible legal changes.

He ruled out, however, the idea of recognising Kurdish identity in a new constitution, stressing that Turkey is not an ethnicity-based state.

"Turkishness is a generic identity (supra-identity) referring to the all equal citizens of Turkey, regardless of their ethnic background," Basbug said.

Guardian

27 April 2009

Turkey's main Kurdish party appeals for help after crackdown

Hundreds of activists arrested after surprise success in local elections

Mark Tran

Turkey's main Kurdish political party has appealed for international support after hundreds of its officials were arrested in a crackdown by Turkish authorities.

The Democratic Society party (DTP) has written to members of the European parliament asking them to speak out against the arrests, which follow the party's surprise success in last month's local elections. The DTP, the fourth largest party in the Turkish parliament with 20 seats, fears that the arrests will radicalise the Kurdish minority and make a solution to the Kurdish problem even more elusive.

About 40,000 people have died in the 25-year conflict between the Turkish authorities and the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK). The DTP insists that the campaign for Kurdish language and cultural rights be pursued through political means, but the Turkish military considers the party a PKK front.

The DTP almost doubled the number of municipalities under its control from 56 to 98 in last month's elections and came first in 10 provinces in eastern and south-eastern Turkey.

The results were a blow to Turkey's prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and his Justice and Development party

(AKP). The party won almost 39% of the vote, eight points less than in a general election two years ago, and lost 15 mayoralties. Erdogan had described the election as a referendum on his leadership and said that anything less than 47% of the vote would be a failure.

The poll setback came despite a strong drive against the DTP in its strongholds in the south-east. Allegations were made of unfair practices, including handing out washing machines and other gifts to voters to persuade them not to vote for the DTP. Unable to defeat the DTP at the ballot box, the AKP was now resorting to rougher measures, analysts said.

"Before the election, the AKP were talking about having good relations with Kurdish regional governments, an economic development plan and some cultural reforms," said Mesut Yegen of the Middle East Technical University in Ankara. "But they wanted to do so from a position of strength; they do not recognise the PKK and the DTP as legitimate actors. Erdogan has not grasped the seriousness of the Kurdish question."

A Turkish court last week sentenced the mayor of Diyarbakir, Osman Baydemir, and the mayor of Batman, Nejdet Atalay, to 10 months in jail for spreading PKK propaganda. In condemning a Turkish military incursion against PKK bases in neighbouring Iraq in February last year, Baydemir

had said that "neither soldiers nor guerrillas should die". For using the word "guerrillas" he was charged with "spreading PKK propaganda" and "inciting separatism" under Turkey's strict laws on freedom of speech.

The DTP is also facing the threat of being shut down in a case before the constitutional court. Analysts say it is hard to see how the latest moves against the DTP will not influence the case, even though the evidence has already been compiled.

Ahmet Turk, the president of the DTP, struck a defiant note at a talk at Chatham House in London last week. He told journalists: "They may put me in prison, they may kill me, but the struggle for Kurdish rights will continue."

Human rights groups have expressed concern at the targeting of the DTP. "The secrecy order on the investigation prevents us from knowing what the precise evidence consists of, but this is not a very constructive approach to the issue of minority rights in Turkey, an area that has seen very little progress in its negotiations on EU membership," said Emma Sinclair-Webb, a researcher for Human Rights Watch in Istanbul.

Britain, a strong backer of Turkey's EU membership bid, said the arrests were a matter for the Turkish courts, but added that it supported pluralism. ■

FINANCIAL TIMES

April 22 2009

UN SAYS IRAQ SHOULD SHARE KIRKUK OR GIVE IT AUTONOMY

By Anna Fifield in Beirut

The United Nations is suggesting to the Iraqi central and Kurdish regional governments that they either share the disputed territory of Kirkuk on an equal basis, or allow it to become a semi-autonomous region.

The two options are the "most feasible" in a long-awaited 450-page report from the UN on the northern city of Kirkuk and surrounding areas, the subject of a bitter territorial dispute which partly centres on its huge oil reserves.

With both sides claiming it as their own, the area has been the location of sectarian clashes, not between Sunnis and Shias but between Arabs and Kurds, as security gains are made in other parts of the country.

The report has not been made public but the Financial Times

understands that the UN has suggested four "compromise options" to Nouri al-Maliki's government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government, based in Irbil.

Of the two most feasible options, one involves Kirkuk having a "dual linkage" to both Baghdad and Irbil. This would mean it was governed jointly by both authorities, rather than being wholly ruled by Irbil, as the province of Dohuk is now, or wholly ruled by Baghdad, like Anbar, for example.

The second most likely option involves giving Kirkuk a degree of autonomy, which would see it become a stand-alone special region in the way that Kurdistan is now. Kurdistan has its own regional government security forces, and operates almost entirely independently of Baghdad.

The UN report is "not prescriptive" but lays out options for the two

authorities to go away and consider. "Nobody is going to be fully satisfied because no one side is going to find that all its demands have been met," a UN official told the FT.

Announcing that the UN had presented reports to the authorities in Baghdad and Irbil, Staffan de Mistura, the UN's special representative in Iraq, said on Wednesday that the UN hoped Arabs and Kurds would use the reports to start a process of concrete dialogue.

"We are all too aware that tensions have recently risen in parts of the disputed areas, and also that there are more issues than just the territorial ones that divide the parties," said Mr de Mistura.

"That is why we have done the work in the way we have, and that is why we are hoping that sustained and serious dialogue will now follow," he said in a statement.

The area has a complicated history that has so far proven impossible to reconcile.

Kirkuk and other nearby oil towns such as Khanaqeen were "Arabised" by Saddam Hussein, who forced Kurds to leave and moved in Arabs from Iraq's south in an effort to change the demographics. Kurds make up 20 per cent of Iraq's population.

Kurdistan, whose people were killed by the thousands under Saddam, has long been trying to win the cities back.

"We are confident that it's part of Kurdistan. If they [other parties in Iraq] think the Kurds have to give up on it that will not happen," Masoud Barzani, the Kurdish president, told the FT last month.

The Kurdistan regional government has been pushing for a vote to allow Kirkuk residents to decide whe-

ther they become part of the northern region, but this has been repeatedly postponed, amid concerns that Kurds and Arabs must first agree a political settlement to prevent a conflagration.

Kirkuk was excluded from nationwide provincial polls held on January 31 because of the ongoing disputes. The area also has a sizeable Turkmen population, who want a

say.

Although Kurds say that Kirkuk, sometimes called "Iraq's Jerusalem", is their ancestral capital, the allure of area's oil reserves to both sides can not be overestimated. The Kirkuk oil field is thought to have a production capacity of about 1m barrels a day.

Under the constitution's revenue-sharing formula, Kurdistan receives 17 per cent of all Iraqi oil reve-

due, but many Kurds think their economy deserves more. Some Arab politicians, meanwhile, are calling for the Kurds' share to be reduced to 12 per cent.

Oil legislation that would ensure a fair distribution of wealth – a key to the country's long-term stability – has been blocked, with Kurdish officials unwilling to give Baghdad veto power over the development of the industry

within their territory, and the central government insisting that it must direct the oil industry's development throughout Iraq.

The KRG has signed dozens of oil contracts, which the central government has refused to recognise.

KURDISH GLOBE

25 April 2009

Globe Editorial

The future of Kirkuk will be decided through the Kurdish parliament

By Azad Aslan

The United Nations Staffan de Mistura handed over a keenly awaited report on disputed districts of Iraq on Wednesday. The copies of the report were given to top leaders in Iraq as well as Kurdistan President Massoud Barzani.

The report, which was the result of more than a year's work by a team of diplomats, academics, negotiators and constitutional experts, included separate studies of 15 disputed districts, including the whole of Kirkuk province. According to the UN statement the studies were more analytical than prescriptive. 'The UN Assistance Mission in Iraq has not made any suggestions at this time regarding the future administrative jurisdiction of these areas.' However, «On the other hand, recommendations on specific localized confidence building measures have been included in each assessment.»

De Mistura stated that «Our strong hope in presenting these very thorough and objective reports, which analyze these highly complex disputed areas in ways that nobody has ever done before, is that the parties will use them to start a process of concrete dialogue. We are all too aware that tensions have recently risen in parts of the disputed areas, and also that there are more issues than just the territorial ones that divide the parties.» De Mistura optimistically put forward that «That is why

we have done the work in the way we have, and that is why we are hoping that sustained and serious dialogue will now follow.»

The UN said its team had come up with four options for the province's future, all of which «deal with Kirkuk as a single entity.» All of these options would "use the constitution of Iraq as the starting point for handling Kirkuk, require a political agreement among the parties and then some form of a confirmatory referendum.» The UN said it had «worked closely with various Iraqi authorities at national, regional, governorate (provincial) and local levels to try to help them develop processes which could facilitate resolution of the disputed internal boundaries.»

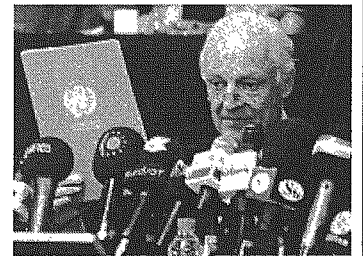
There are no further details of the report for the proposed four options. It is very doubtful that the UN has any power or sincerity to solve the question of Kirkuk. The head of UN special mission to Iraq de Mistura promised the Kurdistan Parliament at the end of 2007 that the UN role will be to help Iraq technically to carry out referendum in 6 months time. Instead of assisting and convincing Iraqi government to implement the processes of article 140 the UN engaged with so many fact finding missions and reports that most of them were not in touch with reality such as the UN early report on Akre district, a region that has long been administered by Kurdistan Regional Government.

Kirkuk question is a political question and not an administrative one. The players active in this question are not only the Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen but regional powers as well. It is a question about sovereignty and sharing power. It is a question about changing old habits with new ones. It is a question of undoing historical injustices while constructing new set of values. At the root of the problem lies the fact that our Arab partners fail to understand that the Kurds are their equal sovereign partners. Arabs must learn to share sovereignty and power with Kurds and respect their territory and rights should they wish to live together in peace.

The UN has no positive role in solving Kirkuk question but rather plays an implicit role of covering the delay for the implementation of referendum and in that sense strengthens the hands of Arab nationalism.

The road map of Kirkuk question had already been set out by the Iraqi constitution and this constitution has approval by 80% of the whole Iraqi population. Instead of forcing and providing necessary technical and political assistance to the central government to implement the article 140 the UN wasted one and half years with reports and studies of which none were prescriptive or binding.

Kurdistan Parliament must be given special authority to deal with the question of Kirkuk and other disputed areas. Further delays will make the



UN representative to Iraq Staffan De Mistura attends Kurdistan Parliament in this file photo from Iraq. GLOBE PHOTO/Safin Hamed

question more complicated and the time is not ticking in the best interest of the Kurds. The issue must have been solved long ago but the insistence of Kurdish political actors to deal with it within the democratic and legal framework with their Arab counterparts seems to be fruitless.

Kirkuk is the heart of Kurdistan and there will be no bargaining on this or other disputed territories. Either through a democratic process the article 140 is implemented - as conditioned by the Iraqi charter - or the Kurdistan Parliament must take the initiative and provide other alternative options.

At least 75 killed in 2 bombings in Iraq

BAGHDAD

Recent attacks are raising U.S. concern about effort by militants to regroup

BY TIMOTHY WILLIAMS

At least 75 people were killed and 120 wounded in two explosions in Iraq on Thursday that shook a quiet residential Baghdad neighborhood and a restive city north of the capital where Iranian tourists were attacked.

Also Thursday, a major leader of the Sunni insurgency, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, was captured in Baghdad, said Maj. Gen. Qassim Atta, the Iraqi Army official responsible for security in the capital. Mr. Baghdadi is the leader of the Islamic State of Iraq, an umbrella group of Sunni militant forces believed to include Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia.

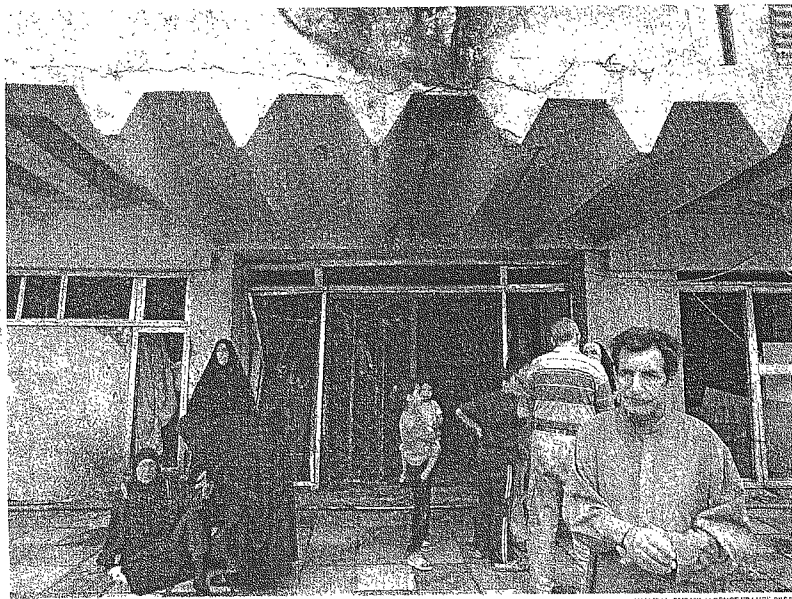
The overall level of violence in Iraq is at its lowest since the U.S. invasion in 2003. But a series of recent attacks, highly organized and carried out under tight security in recent weeks, have raised worries that Baathist and jihadist militants are regrouping into a smaller but still lethal insurgency seeking to reassert itself as U.S. troops reduce their presence in before their full withdrawal in 2011.

In the first bombing, a woman wearing a suicide belt hidden under a black cloak blew herself up in the Baghdad district of Karada as dozens of people lined up at a food giveaway being run by the Iraqi police and Red Crescent, killing 28, including 12 police officers, and wounding 50, said an official with the Interior Ministry.

Karada, a mixed Sunni-Shiite neighborhood in central Baghdad, has been relatively calm for the last several months. At the time of the bombing, dozens of women with their children were receiving handouts of canned tomatoes, bags of flour and cooking oil on the street in front of an apartment building.

In the aftermath, the street was littered with bags of flour and apples, and pieces of human flesh attracted masses of flies. One woman who said she did not know what had happened to her children sat on the sidewalk wailing. Iraqis arrived in tears to search for missing family members.

In the second attack, in Muqdadia, in Diyala Province, a bomb went off in a restaurant where a group of Iranian tourists were eating lunch, killing 47 and wounding 70, according to police officials. All but five of the dead and



Residents in the Baghdad district of Karada at the building where a suicide bomber blew herself up on Thursday, killing 28 people.

wounded appeared to be Iranians. It was not immediately clear whether the explosion had been caused by a suicide bomber.

The site of the bombing was a restaurant on a route close to the Iranian border where Iranian tourists stop on their way to visit Shiite holy sites in Karbala and other cities in Iraq. Three buses full of pilgrims — men, women and children — had just disembarked and entered the restaurant when the explosion occurred, the police said.

The insurgent leader who Iraqi authorities said they captured, Mr. Baghdadi, is a figure so shadowy that many, including the U.S. military, have doubted that he even exists. In the past, Iraqi officials have reported Mr. Baghdadi's arrest or killing, only to say later that they were wrong, news services reported.

There are no known pictures of the elusive Iraqi jihadist, and in 2007, the U.S. military said he was actually a fictional character whose declarations on audiotape were read by a man named Abu Abdullah al-Naima.

U.S. officials could not immediately confirm the arrest.

In November, after President Barack Obama's election, a man identifying himself as Mr. Baghdadi delivered a 25-minute audio message in which he argued that Mr. Obama's victory represented a victory for radical Islamic groups that had battled U.S. forces since the invasion of Iraq.

"And the other truth that politicians are embarrassed to admit," the taped

voice said, "is that their unjust war on the houses of Islam, with its heavy and successive losses and the continuous operations of exhaustion of your power and your economy, were the principal cause of the collapse of the economic giant."

U.N. delivers Kirkuk report

A long-awaited United Nations report that was presented to senior Iraqi officials proposes several options for Kirkuk Province, including making it an autonomous region, as a way to defuse tensions between Kurds and Arabs over its oil.

The U.S. military has long been concerned that the dispute over the control of Kirkuk and its resources could plunge Iraq into a new round of violence and draw Turkey and Iran into the conflict.

The United Nations provided only general details. Among them were four options, each requiring political accommodation among Kurds, Turkmens, and Sunni and Shiite Arabs. Each proposal envisions keeping the province as a single entity, and each calls for Kirkuk residents to decide with a referendum.

Iraq at critical stage as government resists making peace with Baathists

BAGHDAD

Prime minister's U-turn risks polarizing country and hurting security

BY SAM DAGHER

On April 18, U.S. and British officials from a secretive unit called the Force Strategic Engagement Cell flew to Jordan to try to persuade one of Saddam Hussein's top generals — the commander of the final defense of Baghdad in 2003 — to return home to resume efforts to make peace with the new Iraq.

But the Iraqi commander, Lt. Gen. Raad Majid al-Hamdani, rebuffed them.

After a year of halting talks mediated by the Americans, he said, he concluded that the Iraqi leader, Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, simply was not interested in reconciliation.

The U.S. appeal, described by General Hamdani and not previously reported, illustrates what could become one of the biggest obstacles to stability in Iraq. Mr. Maliki's pledges to reconcile with some of the most ardent opponents of his government have given way to what some say is a hardening sectarianism that threatens to stoke simmering political tensions and rising anger over a recent spate of bombings aimed at Shiites.

On March 28, Mr. Maliki's Shiite-led government arrested a prominent Sunni leader on charges of heading a secret armed wing of Mr. Hussein's Baath Party. A week later, the prime minister accused Baathists of orchestrating car bombings that had killed more than 40 people.

Mr. Maliki's earlier effort to reunite the country was one of Washington's primary benchmarks for measuring political progress in Iraq. The goal was to separate Baathist opponents of the government who were considered more willing to trade violence for political power from intractable extremists.

Early last year, under intense U.S. pressure, Mr. Maliki pushed through Parliament a law to ease restrictions on the return of Baath Party members to public life. But 15 months later, the law has yet to be put into effect.

Mr. Maliki's retreat risks polarizing Iraqis again and eroding hard-fought security gains. In bombings on Thursday and Friday alone, 160 people died. There is no evidence that Baathists were involved, but fears are rising that they and jihadi insurgents are increas-



CHRISTOPH BANGERT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, center, pledged to reunite Iraq, backing a law to ease restrictions on Baathists. But after more than a year, the law has not been put into effect.

ingly cooperating.

Mr. Maliki has changed his tone despite U.S. pressure to reconcile with some officials under Mr. Hussein, most of them Sunni Arabs.

"He is no different from the political and religious leaders who are driven by emotions and animosity toward anything related to the past," General Hamdani said of Mr. Maliki, in a written response to questions about his talks with the government.

The prime minister's return to a hard line appears to be motivated by a number of factors.

Despite Mr. Maliki's success in provincial elections in January and in projecting himself as a strong nonsectarian leader, his Dawa Party recognizes that it still needs his Shiite partners to govern. And his Shiite rivals, many of whom are close to Iran, have accused him of recently orchestrating a wholesale return of Baathists to bolster his standing with the Sunni minority.

Ahmad Chalabi, a Shiite politician who led the push six years ago to purge Iraq of the Baath Party, said that, despite Mr. Maliki's pragmatic efforts to court Sunni support, the prime minister retained a visceral hatred for everything associated with the Baath Party and the brutal former regime.

All of this has bewildered many Sunni Arabs who advocate reconciliation and has mobilized the hard-liners.

General Hamdani insisted that he represented only officials of the former

military and security apparatus and was not negotiating for the exiled Baathist leadership, but he said any concessions from the government would have inched reconciliation forward.

General Hamdani said that he sensed this nearly two months ago, when he met in Amman with representatives of Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, a lieutenant of Mr. Hussein who is the last high-ranking fugitive from U.S. forces, and who is believed to be helping to finance the insurgency. The two men told General Hamdani that Mr. Douri had sent them to convey approval of his efforts to regain the jobs and property rights of former officers and to relax prohibitions against Baathists.

But the hardening of the government's stance on Baathists seems to be dousing any flicker of optimism.

In a recent message, Mr. Douri rallied insurgents of all stripes to fight U.S. troops and Mr. Maliki's government.

From Washington's point of view, reconciliation with approachable Baathists would isolate extremists like Mr. Douri's followers. There lies the fundamental difference with the Iraqi side.

"The mere ideas of the Baath Party are dangerous because they are about conspiracies, infiltration and coups," Kamal al-Saedi, a member of Parliament and one of Mr. Maliki's partisans on the government's reconciliation committee, said Wednesday.

The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad would not answer questions about U.S. involvement in reconciliation talks. Gen-

eral Hamdani said U.S. and British officials had attended nearly every meeting since March 2008, in both Amman and Baghdad, with him, his associates and the Iraqi government.

Mr. Chalabi, the Shiite politician, said that Lt. Gen. Douglas E. Lute, a National Security Council adviser, received promises months ago from one of Mr. Maliki's aides to be "reasonable" concerning the Baathists. Mr. Maliki's adviser for reconciliation, Mohammed Salman al-Saady, said he knew nothing of

those promises, but he acknowledged that Mr. Maliki's government had "fundamental differences" with Washington over how far to extend reconciliation.

Mr. Saady said the talks with General Hamdani stalled because many of his demands were against government policy. But he underscored the government's readiness to engage Baathists who renounced their party affiliation and accepted accountability for crimes they might have committed.

A Baath operative in hiding north of

Baghdad said in an interview that if the government were serious about reconciliation, it would seek to amend the Constitution and let the party resume its role in public life, like the Communist Party after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Alissa J. Rubin contributed reporting from Baghdad, and an Iraqi employee of The New York Times from Salahuddin Province.

Herald INTERNATIONAL Tribune

APRIL 28, 2009

U.S. and Iraq weigh exceptions to exit deadline

BAGHDAD

Baghdad and Mosul likely to keep American combat troops in pullback

BY ROD NORDLAND

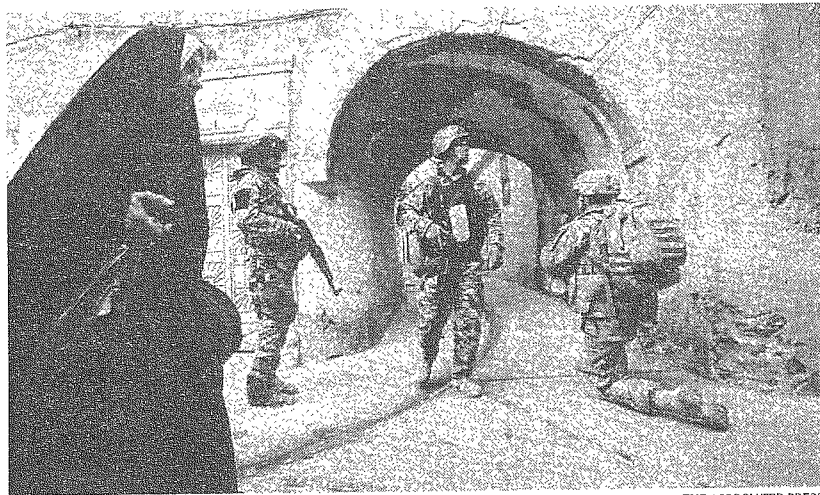
The United States and Iraq are negotiating possible exceptions to the June 30 deadline for withdrawing American combat troops from Iraqi cities, focusing on the troubled northern city of Mosul, according to military officials. Some parts of Baghdad also will still have combat troops.

Everywhere else, the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from "all Iraqi cities, villages and localities" is on schedule to finish by the deadline, and in many cases even earlier. But because of the level of insurgent activity in Mosul, U.S. and Iraqi military officials met on Monday to decide whether to consider the city an exception to the deadline in the Status of Forces Agreement, or SOFA, between the countries.

"Mosul is the one area where you may see U.S. combat forces operating in the city" after June 30, the U.S. military's top spokesman in Iraq, Maj. Gen. David Perkins, said in an interview.

In Baghdad, however, there are no plans to close the Camp Victory base complex, consisting of five bases housing more than 20,000 soldiers, many of them combat troops. Although Victory is only a 15-minute drive from the center of Baghdad and sprawls over both sides of the city's boundary, Iraqi officials say they have agreed to consider it outside the city.

In addition, Forward Operating Base Falcon, which can hold 5,000 combat troops, will also remain after June 30. It is just within Baghdad's southern city limits. Again, Iraqi officials have classified it as effectively outside Baghdad, so no exception to the agreement needs to be granted, in their view.



MAYA ALLERUZZO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Because of insurgent activity in the Iraqi city of Mosul, U.S. combat troops like these may be allowed to stay there, and in parts of Baghdad, past the June 30 withdrawal deadline.

Combat troops with the 7th Field Artillery Regiment will remain in the heart of Baghdad at Camp Prosperity, located near the new American Embassy compound in the Green Zone.

In addition to providing a quick reaction force, and guarding the embassy and noncombat troops from attack, those soldiers will also continue to support Iraqi troops who are now in nominal charge of maintaining security in the Green Zone.

The details of troop withdrawals and the handing over of facilities are negoti-

ated by the Joint Military Operations Coordinating Committee, jointly led by the top American commander in Iraq, Gen. Ray Odierno, and the Iraqi defense minister, Abdul Qadir al-Obaidi. At its meeting on Monday, the committee was to discuss a host of related issues, as well as whether to grant any exceptions to the June 30 deadline, and it planned to make recommendations to Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki for a final decision.

The spokesman for the Iraqi military, Maj. Gen. Muhammad al-Askari, who is also the secretary to the committee's

Iraqi contingent, said also that a decision on Mosul would be made at the Monday meeting, which he called "critical."

"I personally think even in Mosul there will be no American forces in the city, but that's a decision for the Iraqi government and the Iraqi prime minister," General Askari said.

General Perkins also expressed specific concerns about Mosul, noting how important the city is to Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, the homegrown group that American intelligence officials say is led by foreigners.

"For Al Qaeda to win, they have to take Baghdad. To survive they have to hold on to Mosul," he said. "Mosul is sort of their last area where they have some maybe at least passive support."

Reporting was contributed by Suadad N. Al-Salhy in Baghdad and employees of The New York Times in Diwaniya, Baqouba, Falluja, Kut, Mosul and Sulaimaniya.

REUTERS

Roadside Bomb kills 9 in Turkey, police detain 2 suicide bombers

Reuters - 29 April 2009 By Ibon Vilelabeitia

ANKARA, Turkey - Nine soldiers were killed in southeast Turkey in the worst attack in months and police detained two suspected suicide bombers in the capital on Wednesday in an escalation of tensions.

The incidents were blamed on militant groups including the separatist Kurdistan Workers Party fighting a 25-year conflict with the authorities over rights in southeast Turkey.

Police had warned regional police forces across Turkey of possible suicide attacks by groups linked to the PKK.

A woman carrying explosives and pretending to be a student detonated a bomb at Bilkent University in Ankara during a visit by a former justice minister, authorities said.

Hours after, a second suspected suicide bomber was detained in the capital, Turkish broadcaster NTV said. No further information was immediately available.

Violence blamed on Kurdish rebels and leftist groups that operate in the predominantly Muslim country have long weighed on its export-driven economy.

However, stocks and the lira currency shrugged off the attacks, posting gains as investors focussed on U.S. data pointing towards a recovery rather than violence.

The suspected suicide bomber, who had approached former minister Hikmet Sami Turk who regularly visits the university, was wounded but nobody else was hurt.

Turk was hated by left-wing groups for his policies when he was in office. He had received death threats.

"A person pretending to be a student girl entered the building. It is

obvious that this was a suicide bomber. She was wounded and is in detention now," Ankara Governor Kemal Onal said, adding she had 1 kg of explosives on her body.

PKK ATTACK?

In a separate attack blamed on PKK rebels, nine soldiers died while on patrol in the restive mainly Kurdish southeast.

Armed Forces commander General Ilker Basbug told a news conference in Ankara a powerful homemade bomb had hit a tank and an armoured personnel vehicle in the province of Diyarbakir.

The attacks raised fresh tensions in European Union candidate Turkey, where the economy has been hard hit by the global economic crisis.

Security forces are fighting PKK rebels in a 25-year separatist conflict that has claimed the lives of 40,000 people and hurt stability in the region.

The PKK, branded a terrorist organisation by Washington and the European Union, has been militarily weakened by Turkey's improved cooperation with northern Iraqi authorities against PKK guerrillas who stage attacks into Turkish territory from Iraq.

The government has recently launched a crackdown on Kurdish militants and Kurdish politicians suspected of having links with the PKK in raids that threaten to inflame tensions in the southeast.

A poor showing by the ruling AK Party in the southeast in last month's municipal elections has also put renewed pressure on the government to address the root cause of the conflict.

Kurds have long complained of discrimination against them by the state and have called for political and cultural rights.

AL JAZEERA
APRIL 28, 2009
ALJAZEERA.NET

PKK 'ready for peace' with Turkey

A KURDISH GROUP that has led an armed struggle against the Turkish government for more than two decades has told Al Jazeera it is ready for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

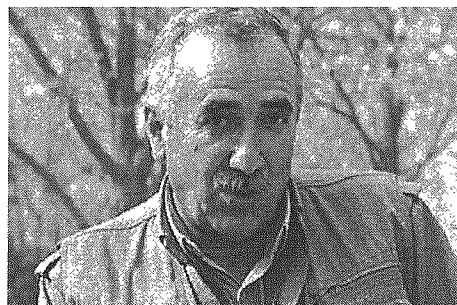
Murad Karalyan, leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), said his organisation remains on alert against the Turkish military, but is also open to resolving the conflict peacefully.

"Now, the situation is very delicate and dangerous. There are two possibilities, and we are ready for both - a big war or a peaceful resolution to the conflict," he told Al Jazeera's Zeina Khodr from a secret location in Iraq's Qandil mountains.

About 40,000 people have died in the 25-year conflict between the Turkish authorities and the outlawed PKK, which is fighting for autonomy for Kurds living in southeast Turkey.

Solution 'near'

The PKK is closer than ever before to a negotiated solution with Ankara, Karalyan said.



"Turkey wasn't able to get rid of us militarily and they also tried politically and they failed. That is why a political solution is close," he said.

The PKK has bases ranged across Iraq's Qandil mountains, in an area where the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) does not have a presence.

The group's attempts to win self-rule for Turkish Kurds has been frustrated by a lack of support from other nations in the region, who each fear that recognising their own Kurdish communities' claims for autonomy could provoke instability.

But in the Kurdish heartland in southeast Turkey, the Democratic Society Party (DTP), a party which the PKK supports, won in local elections last January.

"If they get rid of the PKK in northern Iraq, it doesn't mean we are finished because we are inside Turkey and we are strong," Karalyan said.

Turkish 'plan'

The United States and Turkey have both designated

the PKK as a terrorist organisation, and Ankara has tried to use the Iraqi Kurdish political parties to help them crush their opponents.

"Turkey's new policy is to involve the Kurdistan Regional Government," Karalyan said.

"They used to have a red line not to deal with the regional administration in northern Iraq. Now they are in direct contact with them.

"The Turkish government wants the KRG to fight us. I do not expect the KRG to use force, but they have been taking measures against us restricting our movements. The Turks want them to do more than that."

But Massoud Barzani, the president of the KRG, said that although Turkey wants his administration to move militarily against the PKK it will not do so.

"We are ready and we will not accept our land to be used to help any party to threaten and destabilise our region. We will not be part of anything to solve it militarily," he said.

"The PKK is an internal Turkish problem. We are ready to be part of trying to find a peaceful solution. Not more than that. No pressure and no military solution."

The Iraqi government, led by Nuri al-Maliki, in 2007 signed a memorandum of understanding with Ankara pledging to rid Mount Qandil of PKK fighters, but Baghdad has failed to dislodge them.

THE IRISH TIMES

April 24, 2009

UN urges dialogue between Arabs, Kurds over Tamim

MICHAEL JANSEN

AMID RISING tensions in northern Iraq, a UN commission has urged Arabs and Kurds to resolve their dispute over oil-rich Tamim province by preserving its unity and sharing power. UN special representative Staffan de Mistura has sent copies of the commission's partially leaked document to president Jalal Talabani, his deputies, prime minister Nuri al-Maliki, and Kurdish regional president Massoud Barzani.

The report, authored by a 15-member team of diplomats and constitutional experts, consists of separate studies of 14 disputed districts in Nineveh, Salahuddin, and Dyala in addition to Tamim. The Kurds claim all of Tamim and Kirkuk, its capital, as their historical homeland. But local Arab and Turkomen reject this claim, Baghdad refuses to cede control, and Ankara, the self-proclaimed protector of the Turkomen, has threatened to intervene

if the Kurds attempt to seize Tamim.

The UN put forward four options for Tamim, all treating the province as a single entity and none giving it to the Kurds. All four "use the constitution of Iraq as the starting point for handling Kirkuk, require a political agreement among the parties and then some form of a confirmatory referendum", the report says. But the UN makes no specific recommendations "regarding the future administrative jurisdiction of [the 15] areas." The UN also suggests confidence-building measures for each of the localities.

"We are all-too aware that tensions have recently risen in parts of the disputed areas, and also that there are more issues than just the territorial ones that divide the parties. That is why we have done the work in the way we have, and that is why we are hoping that sustained and serious dialogue will now follow," Mr de Mistura stated.

International Crisis Group analyst

Joost Hiltermann believes the report will be rejected. "I think it presents a brilliant opportunity for compromise, but I'm not convinced either party is ready for that. Both likely think they can win more if they fight."

The Kurdish leaders have made compromise difficult because they have "been telling their people that Kirkuk is theirs" and they cannot accept less, he says.

The Kurds have long wanted to expand beyond the borders of their three-province autonomous region into areas where the population once was Kurdish. Iraq's past rulers settled Arabs in these areas and redrew the boundaries of these provinces to ensure Arab majorities. Analysts argue that the Arab-Kurdish problem constitutes the greatest threat to the stability of the country.

WorldTribune

April 29, 2009

Kurds want U.S. forces to remain in northern Iraq

BAGHDAD — The U.S. military is stepping up efforts to head off the risk of war between the Baghdad government and the Kurdish autonomous zone in northern Iraq as the U.S. withdraws its forces.

Officials said senior U.S. officials have been urging both the government of Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki as well as the Kurdish Regional Government in Irbil to reconcile. KRG has asserted that Al Maliki was using the army to force Kurds out of Kirkuk, the oil capital of northern Iraq.

"An outbreak of violence between the peshmerga [Kurdish forces] and the Iraqi security forces would adversely impact the progress the country has made, and I told the Kurdish leaders that," U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Adm. Michael Mullen said.

KRG has quietly asked the United States, which has helped develop oil infrastructure, to retain up to 50,000 troops in the autonomous Kurdish area, including Kirkuk.

"The Kurds like us and they don't want us to leave," Lucy Tamlyn, chief of the U.S.-led reconstruction team in Irbil, said.

"We're working with the Kurds on goals they have set including essential services, rule of law issues and developing the private sector."

On April 26, Mullen toured Irbil in the highest-level U.S. visit to KRG in 2009. Officials said Mullen's visit reflected stepped-up U.S. efforts to defuse growing tension between military and security forces loyal to Al Maliki and KRG units.

"They know this must not be allowed to happen," Mullen said.

Over the last 18 months, Baghdad and KRG have been arguing over the authority of the Kurdish government. Irbil has been developing Kurdish security forces while signing contracts with Western companies to develop energy resources.

Officials said the tension between Baghdad and Irbil has focused on the future of Kirkuk. In 2009, Al Maliki security forces clashed with KRG units in Kirkuk as the Iraq Army began to dismiss Kurdish commanders.

The prospect of a conflict was expected to increase over the next year as the U.S. military withdraws from Iraq.

REUTERS

RUSSIAN VILLAGERS ATTACK KURDISH HOMES IN C.ASIA

BISHKEK, April 27, 2009 (Reuters) -

A GROUP of Russian and Kyrgyz villagers pillaged the homes of ethnic Kurds in Kyrgyzstan in protest against the alleged rape of a four-year-old Russian girl, police said on Monday.

Tensions flared in the village of Petrovka late on Sunday when local villagers accused a Kurdish man of rape and started burning cars, throwing stones and smashing windows.

"The situation is under control now," said Interior Ministry spokesman Bakyt Seitov. "No one was injured or killed. Russian and Kyrgyz men were on one side, and Kurds on the other."

He said police had detained the rape suspect and were investigating the matter. Ethnic violence is rare in Central Asia, a former Soviet region where Turkic-speaking groups live along side Persians, Russians, Chinese and others.

In the last major case, hundreds of Kazakhs clashed with Chechens near the Kazakh financial capital of Almaty in 2007. Several people were killed.

Kurdistan Region's 2009 budget to be discussed next week

The 2009 Kurdistan budget is estimated to be more than 8 trillion IQD (approximately 7 billion USD)

By The Kurdish Globe

Kurdistan Region's 2009 budget has already been drafted and ready for debate by the Regional Council of Ministers.

Sheikh Bayiz Talabani, Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) Minister of Finance, told a local Kurdish news website that the Council of Ministers was supposed to meet on Monday April 13th 2009 for discussions around the draft budget and negotiations about the ministries and other government institutions' expenditure and budgets. However, the meeting was postponed to the following week, mainly due to a visit by the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to Erbil, explained Minister Talabani.

The Finance Minister confirmed that the draft was completed and was only awaiting approval by the Ministerial Council, Parliament and finally by the Region's Presidency Council. He also said that in the ministerial council's upcoming meeting, the budgets for all the ministries would also be discussed.

According to the Finance Ministry, the exact percentage of the budget allocated for the operation budget and investment budget is still unknown.

However, it is expected that the share of the investment budget from the total budget for this year is 2.303 trillion IQD (around 2 billion USD) or 27.8% of the total. In turn the share of the operations budget is expected to be 5.979 trillion IQD (approximately 5 billion USD) or 72.2% of the overall total of 8.282 trillion IQD (7 billion USD).

Iraq's 2009 national budget, which was recently approved and went into effect approximately four and a half months after its original deadline, is 70 trillion IQD (approximately 59 billion USD). The national budget deficit for this year is 17 billion USD, according to Iraqi Minister of Finance, Bayan al-Zubaidi.

The Iraqi government published the final approved 2009 budget, with a decree to start its implementation on Monday April 13th.

Under normal circumstances, the new budget should have been effective from January 1st 2009, since the validity of 2008 budget ended on December 31st 2008. However, some problems contributed to the lengthy delays in its approval and implementation. The most prominent obstacle was fluctuations in the price of oil on international markets, which had a major impact on the for-

mation of the budget.

Since more than 80% of the country's budget comes from oil revenues, oil price fluctuations have significant ramifications on financial decisions by the government.

The historic crash of oil prices in the world markets has reduced Iraq's oil-dependent budget to a large extent and has therefore forced the decision-makers to make substantial cuts in the public sector's expenditures and the ministries' budgets for the year 2009.

In an interview with Sharq al-Awsat Newspaper, Minister al-Zubaidi warned about an upcoming financial crisis in Iraq in the coming year if oil prices continued to drop.

She said that her country is currently exporting 1.8 million barrels of oil per day. However, in an effort to compensate for the sharp cut in revenue inflicted by the drop in the value of oil, it is aiming to boost its oil production to 2 million barrels per day.

Beside the setbacks caused by changes in global oil prices, some other issues contributed in delaying the approval of this year's budget. The main one was the dispute around Kurdistan Region's 17% share of the budget and the expenditures of the council of presidency, council of minister and

council of representatives.

Much akin to the two previous years, Kurdistan Region was finally able to guarantee its 17% of the budget after long and tough discussions with other political groups inside the parliament, some of whom actively campaigned to reduce the Kurdish share.

The 17% share of the budget for Kurdistan had been temporarily defined by the Iraqi permanent constitution based on the results of the parliamentary elections in 2005. This rate can only be fixed by a nationwide population census, in which the actual breakdown of the countries population can be determined.

Mainly Arab political groups claim that the population of Kurdistan Region is not 17% of the total population of the country and thus the region should be allocated much less than this share. Kurds, on the other hand, while currently satisfied with the percentage, believe that they are entitled to some 22% of the budget since, according to their estimates, their population is more than 17% and the 2005 elections did not reflect the region's population accurately due to political factors that prevailed at the time of the elections.

REUTERS

TWENTY KILLED IN CLASH IN WESTERN IRAN-REPORT

TEHRAN, April 25,2009 (Reuters) -

GUNMEN killed 10 Iranian police in an attack in western Iran late on Friday, the ISNA news agency reported on Saturday.

ISNA said 10 "armed bandits" were also killed in the clash in Kermanshah province, which borders Iraq and is home to many of the Islamic Republic's minority Kurds. ISNA did not give detail on the identity of the attackers.

Iranian forces often clash with guerrillas from the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK), an offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). The PKK took up arms in 1984 to fight for a Kurdish homeland in southeast Turkey.

REUTERS

ISRAEL "TROUBLED" BY TURKISH-SYRIAN MILITARY DRILL

JERUSALEM, April 27,2009 (Reuters) -

ISRAEL is troubled by an unprecedented military exercise between its ally, Turkey, and its arch-foe Syria, Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak said on Monday.

Ankara announced on Sunday it would hold its first drill with Syria this week, using ground forces in a border area that has been the focus

of a 25-year conflict between Turkey and separatist Kurdish rebels.

Israel has extensive defence ties to Turkey, a NATO member and among the few Muslim nations to have built an alliance with the Jewish state. The Israeli and Turkish air forces and navies have held joint exercises.

"Today we see a Syrian-Turkish drill, which is certainly a troubling development," Barak told reporters. "But I believe that the strategic ties between Israel and Turkey will overcome even Turkey's need to take part in this drill."

Stakes high as Turkey talks peace



Judy Dempsey

LETTER FROM EUROPE

BERLIN For several months, the leaders of Turkey and Armenia have defied the nationalists of both countries by holding secret talks in Switzerland in a bid to end a conflict in a highly volatile region on the fringes of Europe.

Nearly a century after the Ottoman Empire's massacre of about one million Armenian Christians in 1915, Turkey's president, Abdullah Gul, and his Armenian counterpart, Serzh Sargsyan, have reached a breakthrough in their immensely delicate negotiations.

Last week, they agreed to a road map that could lead to the resumption of diplomatic relations and the reopen-

"The southern Caucasus could finally become stable and attractive for investors."

and spokesman for the Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee.

If so, the powers that will dominate in the region will be neither the United States nor the E.U., which have done little to encourage this peace process.

Instead, it will be Turkey and Russia — two former empires — that are attempting to re-establish their influence in a region rich in gas and oil and an important transit route to Europe.

The biggest winner could be Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish prime minister and leader of the pro-Islamist Justice and Development Party. Since coming to power in 2003, Mr. Erdogan has forged ahead with reforms designed to prepare Turkey for E.U. membership.

He has radically curtailed the influence of the military, which had hindered reforms, fearing it would lose its political

role. The generals supported a vigorous pro-United States foreign policy at the expense of relations with their neighbors. That undervalued Turkey's strategic role in a region sandwiched between Europe and Central Asia.

Mr. Erdogan changed all that. He devised a "Neighborhood Policy" in which Turkey's national interests would increasingly be defined by its relations with its neighbors — Bulgaria and Syria, Azerbaijan and Georgia, Iraq and Iran. And Armenia, the thorniest of all.

"The decision to seek normalization with Armenia is a Turkish initiative," said Richard Giragosian, director of the Armenian Center for National and International Studies, based in Yerevan. "It is not a plan to please the U.S. or appease the E.U. It is about Turkey's national interests."

The United States has long called for the resumption of ties between Turkey and Armenia. But successive U.S. presidents have come under pressure from the powerful Armenian diaspora and nationalists who insisted Turkey first recognize that the 1915 massacre of Armenians was a genocide before restoring ties.

But under the influence of the army, successive Turkish governments have made it a focal point of national pride

not to admit to genocide, even making it a crime to speak of the Armenian massacre as such. Mr. Erdogan already had to take a very big step to agree to establish a special historical commission with Armenia so that this issue will not derail the diplomatic efforts.

The E.U. has played no constructive role as Turkey's accession talks with Brussels have become bogged down in recriminations. France and Germany are staunchly opposed to Turkey joining the E.U. despite Turkey's strategic role in this part of Europe, and its reforms. As a result, "The E.U. is less and less popular here, which is very frustrating for a leadership that is serious about reforms," said Suat Kiniklioglu, a Turkish legislator and spokesman for the Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee.

So with the United States and the E.U. relegated to the sidelines, Mr. Erdogan has embarked on a strategy that reflects Turkey's national interests but one that carries risks.

Domestically, Mr. Erdogan has to deal with fiery nationalists and a dangerously disgruntled military, which oppose a rapprochement with Armenia.

In the region, Turkey could spoil its relations with Azerbaijan, a country linguistically and economically close to Turkey and rich in oil and gas.

Turkey supported Azerbaijan during the 1992 war in Nagorno-Karabakh — an ethnic Armenian enclave within Azerbaijan. Since a cease-fire agreement in 1994, ethnic Armenian forces have occupied at least one-eighth of Azerbaijan while Turkey has sealed its borders with Armenia, making Ar-

menia dependent on Russia for its economic survival.

With Turkey's shift in foreign policy, Azerbaijan is becoming nervous. It fears that Turkey and Armenia would normalize relations without resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

"There is now a great opportunity to link the normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia to ending the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh," said Leila Alieva, director of the National Committee on Azerbaijan's Integration in Europe. "If there is no linkage, the momentum could be lost, and it could change the direction of Azerbaijan's foreign policy." Indeed, if Azerbaijan felt betrayed by the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement, it could turn to Russia, said Ms. Alieva.

Russia, which during the Nagorno-Karabakh war had supported Armenia and even now controls Armenia's telecommunications, energy and rail networks, has already moved to set itself up as a peacemaker. With Turkey's support, it has begun to negotiate a pullout of Armenian forces from occupied territories of Azerbaijan that could allow the return of Azeri refugees.

The rewards are big. Azerbaijan would regain control of most of its territory and Russia would be in a stronger position to seek an energy deal with Azerbaijan — even though Azerbaijan is negotiating with the E.U. to supply gas to Europe's Nabucco pipeline. Russia too could become the guarantor of any peace agreement by sending Russian peacekeeping troops to Karabakh, bolstering its influence in the region.

Finally, a normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey would also weaken Georgia, which Russia invaded last August. Once the borders are reopened, Armenia could become a new transit route for energy and other goods, thus marginalizing Georgia, which is Russia's aim, according to Richard Giragosian.

For the United States and Europe, the result of this entire process could be ambiguous. The volatile southern Caucasus, a breeding ground for corruption, drug and human trafficking and miserable governance, could become much more peaceful and prosperous.

But unless Europe and the United States embrace the big changes taking place in Turkey, they could lose much influence, as Turkey and Russia, the new regional superpowers, return to their historic spheres of influence.

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Walter Posch RESEARCH FELLOW

ANALYSIS

IRAN'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

In June 2009 Iranians will go to the polls to elect their next president. Iran does not have stable party structures, but rather loose coalitions of individuals and interest groups. However, two main political camps can be identified, namely the so-called reformists and the non-reformists. Both justify their existence and their activities on the basis of Khomeini's Islamist ideology, their revolutionary credentials and the war record of their members.

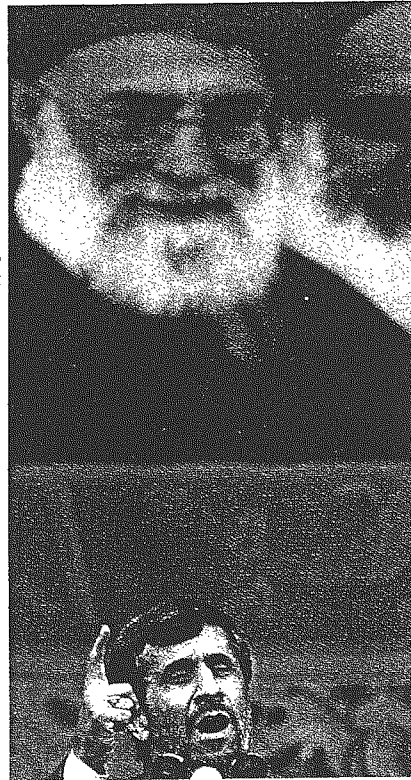
The reformists consist of the Islamic Left, who are former radicals, and the 'technocratic' or 'modern' right, who are generally pro-free market and include the circles close to former president Rafsanjani. Their traditional opposition during the 1980s and 1990s came from the conservative bloc and its aligned clerics who block reform candidates deemed too liberal and 'western'.

Although the conservatives are still powerful, their role in politics is declining. They have not recovered from their defeat at the ballot box with Khatami's election as president in 1997 and have since turned increasingly to extremist groups to derail the reform process. In addition, they face opposition from within their own ranks in the form of a new generation of war veterans who run on a service-based and technocratic agenda, feeding on popular grievances. The elections of 2004, 2005 and 2008 demonstrate this new dynamic. In 2004, former and current Revolutionary Guards were allowed to stand for the first time, and in the following year's presidential election former Guard Ahmadinejad was elected with the support of the disaffected population. The conservative elites did not regard him as a serious politician – he was expected to win populist votes and push back reformists, but then to hand the important positions both to radical fundamentalists and conservatives.

In fact, he broadly ignored the conservatives once in power although he did have to accept some as cabinet ministers. The extent to which Ahmadinejad turned the tables can be seen in the 2008 elections where the conservatives' only choice was to block reformists and accept Ahmadinejad's lead, having no strong champion of their own.

The 2008 elections were also significant because of the crystallising of two new political currents on the right in addition to the anti-reformist conservatives and the 'modern' right reformists: the hardline United

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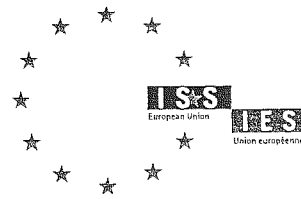


Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad speaks during a ceremony to mark the 30th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Front of Fundamentalists (pro-Ahmadinejad) and the more moderate Broad Coalition of Fundamentalists (which attracts all anti-Ahmadinejad elements within the political right and beyond). There are thus potentially four presidential candidates from the right. Both the new movements brand themselves as 'fundamentalists' – indicating the return to the revolutionary discourse of the 1980s – and are not ideologically poles apart. The United Front seems the stronger 'party', but Ahmadinejad's personal power base is becoming increasingly centralised and strengthened.

On the reformist side, the main candidates are Mir Hossein Mussavi and Ayatollah Karrubi, now that Khatami has withdrawn from the race. Reformists have had to react to the return to ideologisation, hence the return to prominence of staunch revolutionary Mir Hossein Moussavi, who also has appeal among the disenfranchised. He underscores the reformists' revolutionary credentials, and he redefines the reform movement as a return to revolutionary values – in clear contradiction to the actual policies conducted during the two reformist Khatami presidencies.

The European Foreign & Security Policy Institute



APRIL 2009

The extremist right sees the upcoming election as a make-or-break affair, and are determined to do away with the reform movement altogether, now that they already have control of the parliament. By polarising the contest, they are also squeezing the more moderate fundamentalists. The reformists' chances of success depend solely on high voter turnout, and it is by no means certain that anti-Ahmadinejad sentiment will be enough to bring the urban liberals and Sunni minorities who supported Khatami in the past out in large numbers. Besides, Khatami knew that if he were to have won the elections, the forces that derailed the reform process in the 1990s would immediately have taken action against his presidency. The worst-case scenario would have been that violence and political pressure would have forced him to resign. Hence his stepping out of the electoral process can be interpreted as a step to improve the chances for another reformist candidate. But any reformist government would face stiff parliamentary resistance as well as possible violent resistance from shadowy groups. This would force it to enlist the help of the Higher National Security Council, which already acts as an alternative to the government, and the Supreme Leader's office, the only body with the potential to rein in Iran's radical zealots – the very two institutions whose power the reformists would like to curtail.

Yet if these problems can be managed, the reform process could resume, albeit in a watered-down version and preserving Iran's Islamist identity. On the other hand, if Ahmadinejad wins, the relatively broad scope of political participation for various ideological and political trends will be dramatically reduced as the reformists are pushed aside and, most likely, purged. This would also mean the final legitimisation of the Revolutionary Guards' control over the economy, complementing the tax-free cash cows of the 'pious' foundations and further suffocating free enterprise. Finally, it would strengthen their indirect and direct control over the executive branch. Former Guard members already control most of the parliament, are present in the government and, of course, in the Higher National Security Council. The result would be some kind of 'authoritarian normalisation'. Iran would be autocratic and unarguably post-revolutionary; the intellectual and political dynamism of Khomeini and his followers, which confounded friend and foe of the regime alike, would by then have completely vanished.

Le Monde

28 avril 2009

Pétrole irakien : les étrangers indispensables mais pas bienvenus

La reprise de l'industrie pétrolière en Irak n'est encore qu'une illusion. Le gouvernement irakien a pour objectif de quasiment doubler sa production – à 4,5 millions de barils par jour – au cours des cinq prochaines années. Mais impossible d'atteindre ce niveau sans l'aide étrangère. Pourtant, pour l'instant, les étrangers ne sont pas particulièrement les bienvenus.

Certes, le groupe anglo-néerlandais Royal Dutch Shell a signé un accord préliminaire avec le ministère irakien du pétrole pour mettre la main sur le torchage du gaz dans la région de Bassora (sud du pays). Mais la commission du

pétrole et du gaz du Parlement irakien refuse toujours de donner son aval (bien que l'accord se chiffre à 3 milliards d'euros). Pour cette dernière, c'est au Parlement d'avoir le dernier mot, et non au ministère. Les députés menacent aussi d'annuler un contrat de service d'une durée prévue de vingt ans avec la China National Petroleum Company, pour développer le champ pétrolifère d'Al-Ahdab.

Et bien que la sécurité reste un sujet de préoccupation majeur, les grandes compagnies pétrolières misent sur une diminution de la violence. Pas moins de trente-deux entreprises ont déjà pris part à un appel d'offres pour développer des champs pétrolifères. Mais,

comme le prouve l'affaire Shell, sans une solide loi sur les hydrocarbures en Irak, toute action est hautement risquée. Depuis plus de deux ans, les querelles politiques ont bloqué tout projet de loi au Parlement. De plus, la division des territoires à exploiter est vivement contestée, tant au niveau national qu'entre l'Irak et les étrangers.

Cette impasse politique explique pourquoi si peu de contrats ont été lancés. Car même les contrats de services pétroliers font l'objet de controverses, alors qu'ils génèrent bien moins d'investissements étrangers que les contrats de partage de la production. Shell s'impatiente. La compagnie se dit même prête à faire équipe avec les sociétés chinoises PetroChina et Sinopec pour d'autres contrats. Mais si l'accord préliminaire avec Shell est annulé pour des raisons politiques, il est fort probable que

Sans une solide loi sur les hydrocarbures en Irak, toute action est très risquée

les autres appels d'offres – organisés par le ministère du pétrole – ne prennent jamais forme.

Il y a quelques mois, certains ont dit avec ironie que l'occupation américaine avait sécurisé le pays pour permettre à la Chine de développer ses champs de pétrole. Des paroles faciles. En effet, à moins que les hommes politiques irakiens ne se mettent d'accord sur une loi sur les hydrocarbures, l'occupation et la sécurisation des vastes réserves de pétrole du pays pourraient finalement ne profiter à personne. ■

Fiona Maharg-Bravo

(Traduction de Séverine Gautron)

la Croix

21 AVRIL 2009

La victoire des nationalistes aux législatives au nord de Chypre gêne la Turquie

L'opposition de droite nationaliste a remporté, dimanche, les élections législatives de la « République turque de Chypre du Nord », un territoire non reconnu par les Nations unies. Servi par la crise économique, le Parti de l'unité nationale (UBP) l'emporte avec 44 % des voix. Une défaite pour le président Mehmet Ali Talat (CTP, centre gauche), qui s'était déclaré favorable à une réunification de l'île, divisée depuis l'intervention militaire turque de 1974.

Est-ce la fin du processus de réunification de l'île ?

En 2008, le président en exercice Mehmet Ali Talat a engagé des discussions avec son homologue chypriote grec Demetris Cristofias, en vue d'une réunification de l'île, sous l'égide de l'ONU. Cette négociation est rendue difficile par le souvenir du rejet par référendum, en 2004, de cette solution par les électeurs chypriotes grecs. Elle est aujourd'hui menacée par l'arrivée au pouvoir du parti de la droite nationaliste. Son chef, l'ancien

premier ministre Dervis Eroglu (UBP), est connu pour son opposition à toute unification des deux parties de Chypre. Dans ces conditions, les assurances fournies par l'UBP sur la poursuite des négociations apparaissent bien maigres. D'un côté, le nouveau chef de la majorité se veut rassurant. Il a affirmé que « la poursuite des négociations de réunification est l'une

des priorités du Parti de l'unité nationale ». De l'autre, la marge de manœuvre du président Talat, qui reste chargé des négociations de réunification, pourrait être considérablement réduite. En effet, il sera dorénavant accompagné d'un membre de l'UBP à chaque rencontre avec des représentants de la partie grecque. Officiellement, les négociations entre Chypriotes turcs et grecs vont continuer. Mais en pratique, la victoire de la droite nationaliste menace de les freiner considérablement.

En quoi ce résultat peut-il gêner la candidature turque à l'Union européenne ?

Héritée d'une intervention militaire turque, en 1974, la di-

vision de l'île constitue l'un des obstacles diplomatiques majeurs à l'adhésion de la Turquie à l'Union européenne. En effet, sur les 35 chapitres des négociations d'adhésion, 8 sont directement gelés par Bruxelles en raison de la non-reconnaissance par Ankara de l'un de ses membres. Il s'agit de la République de Chypre, administrée par le gouvernement chypriote grec, et qui reste la seule reconnue par la communauté internationale. Tout ce qui pourrait retarder une unification de l'île, seule solution acceptable pour la Turquie de ce casse-tête diplomatique, retarde automatiquement toute perspective d'adhésion. Le référendum de 2004, à ce titre, apparaît comme une occasion manquée pour Ankara. Le « oui »

des Chypriotes turcs au plan de réunification de l'île n'a pas pu aboutir, à cause du rejet massif du plan par la partie grecque.

À ce jour, la Turquie n'a pu ouvrir que dix des chapitres d'une adhésion négociée depuis 2005, et le contexte reste difficile pour le premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan (AKP, droite musulmane) qui s'est engagé à faire avancer la perspective d'une Turquie en Europe. Lors

du dernier sommet de l'Otan, le 3 avril, Nicolas Sarkozy a en effet réaffirmé son opposition à l'adhésion de la Turquie, disant refléter l'opinion d'une « immense majorité des États membres ». Il s'opposait ainsi au président américain Barack Obama qui avait de son côté plaidé à Bruxelles pour une adhésion d'Ankara.

CHARLES MONTMASSON

Rencontre Union européenne-Turquie

Le ministre tchèque des affaires étrangères, Karel Schwarzenberg, dont le pays préside l'Union européenne, le ministre suédois des affaires étrangères, Carl Bildt, dont le pays assurera la prochaine présidence, et le commissaire européen à l'élargissement, Olli Rehn, rencontreront aujourd'hui à Prague le chef de la diplomatie turque, Ali Babacan, et le négociateur en chef turc, Egemen Bagis, pour discuter des relations de l'Union européenne avec la Turquie.



IRAN: DIX POLICIERS TUÉS PAR DES REBELLES DANS L'OUEST À MINORITÉ KURDE

TEHERAN, 25 avr 2009 (AFP)

DIX POLICIERS ont été tués vendredi lors d'affrontements avec des "bandits armés" dans la province de Kermanshah, une région à forte minorité kurde de l'ouest de l'Iran, a indiqué samedi la télévision publique iranienne.

"Un petit groupe de bandits armés ont attaqué hier (vendredi) soir le poste de police de Ravansar-Paveh, où 10 membres des forces de l'ordre ont été tués", a précisé la police iranienne dans un communiqué.

Le communiqué ajoute que 10 assaillants, qui ne sont pas identifiés, ont également été tués dans la fusillade.

Kermanshah, capitale de la province éponyme, est située à la frontière avec le Kurdistan irakien et abrite une minorité kurde substantielle.

La région est le théâtre d'affrontements périodiques entre les forces armées iraniennes et le groupe séparatiste kurde Pejak, basé dans le nord-est de l'Irak.

Le Pejak, acronyme du Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan, est lié au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui lutte depuis 1984 contre le gouvernement turc dans le sud-est anatolien.

L'Iran accuse les Etats-Unis de soutenir le Pejak, ainsi que d'autres organisations ethniques aux frontières de l'Iran, ce que Washington a toujours démenti.



KIRGHIZSTAN: UNE CINQUANTAINE D'ARRESTATIONS APRÈS DES ÉMEUTES ANTI-KURDES

BICHKEK, 27 avr 2009 (AFP)

UNE CINQUANTAINE de personnes ont été placées en détention au Kirghizstan après une émeute anti-kurde dans un village du nord du pays qui visait à venger le viol d'une fillette, ont annoncé lundi les autorités kirghizes qui accusent l'opposition d'avoir fomenté ces troubles.

"Plusieurs centaines d'habitants ont détruit les maisons des Kurdes. Une vingtaine de maisons ont été endommagées et une douzaine de voitures ont été détruites", a déclaré le vice-ministre de l'Intérieur, Talantbek Issaïev, lors d'une conférence de presse.

L'émeute s'est déroulée tard dimanche soir dans le village de Petrovka, à une quarantaine de kilomètres de Bichkek, la capitale kirghize. Elle a été déclenchée par le viol d'une fillette par un Kurde, a indiqué le responsable.

Deux personnes ont été légèrement blessées, a indiqué un communiqué du ministère de l'Intérieur.

De son côté, l'opposition a fait état d'au moins un mort parmi des Kurdes.

La police a dispersé lundi une nouvelle manifestation sur la principale autoroute du pays reliant le nord et le sud de ce pays montagneux d'Asie centrale, a indiqué à l'AFP un porte-parole de la police.

Selon l'opposition, les habitants du village se sont déclarés prêts à poursuivre la manifestation mardi, en exigeant "le relâchement de tous les manifestants arrêtés et la poursuite en justice contre les Kurdes impliqués" selon eux "au viol de la fillette".

Plus tard dans la journée, les autorités ont affirmé qu'aucun viol n'avait en réalité eu lieu et ont accusé l'opposition d'être derrière ces troubles, l'opposant Almazbek Atambaïev étant l'un des manifestants.

"Le soi-disant viol est à l'origine des troubles. L'expertise a montré qu'aucun viol n'a eu lieu. Ils l'ont pris comme prétexte pour organiser les troubles", a déclaré le ministre de l'Intérieur Moldomous Kongantiev à la tribune du Parlement.

M. Atambaïev, candidat de l'opposition à la présidentielle kirghize du mois de juillet, a de son côté accusé les forces de l'ordre "liées avec les criminels d'être responsables des troubles".

Le chef du district où se trouve le village Petrovka, le procureur et le chef de la police locale ont par ailleurs été limogés, a indiqué le service de presse du gouvernement.

Après la déportation des Kurdes d'Azerbaïdjan vers l'Asie centrale en 1937 et en 1944 par Staline, quelque 30.000 d'entre eux sont restés au Kirghizstan.



27 avril 2009

Turquie

DEUX ATTENTATS CONTRE DES MILITAIRES

Avec notre correspondant à Istanbul, Jérôme Bastion

Neuf soldats ont été tués et deux autres blessés mercredi 29 avril dans l'explosion d'une mine, dans le sud-est du pays. Une mine qui aurait été posée par des rebelles kurdes du PKK, selon une source militaire. Un accrochage a fait également un mort, toujours dans cette région. Ces deux attentats perpétrés le même jour mettent fin à plusieurs mois d'accalmie dans les combats entre l'armée turque et les rebelles kurdes.

Le véhicule de transport de troupes était blindé, il était précédé d'un tank qui ouvrait la route, mais les assaillants ont soigneusement choisi leur moment pour détonner la charge explosive, très importante d'après les dégâts causés.

Hormis les neuf victimes de ce guet-apens, selon un mode opératoire devenu habituel depuis quelques années, un accrochage entre une patrouille et des tireurs embusqués, dans la même région, a également fait un mort.

Il y avait longtemps qu'un tel bilan humain n'avait pas été enregistré en une seule journée en Turquie, ce qui semble indiquer que la trêve tacite qui prévalait depuis quelques mois est désormais révoquée. La rébellion avait affiché une certaine retenue à l'approche des élections municipales du mois dernier, qui



Des soldats turcs patrouillent dans la ville de Lice au sud-est du pays autour du lieu de l'attentat, le 29 avril 2009. (Photo: Reuters)

ont été largement remportées dans le sud-est par le parti pro-kurde DTP.

Seulement, la multiplication des arrestations de responsables locaux et nationaux de la formation kurde légale par les services de sécurité ces derniers temps ont été interprétés comme une « revanche » du parti au pouvoir, incapable d'emporter les grandes villes de la région.

Aujourd'hui, le DTP a publiquement désapprouvé le sanglant attentat sans doute commis par le PKK. Mais à nouveau, la tension monte dans le sud-est de la Turquie, et l'Irak est accusé de laxisme.

Le Monde
29 avril 2009

Neuf soldats turcs tués dans une explosion

DIYARBAKIR (AFP)

Neuf soldats turcs ont été tués mercredi matin par un engin explosif dans le sud-est de la Turquie, qui aurait été placé par les rebelles kurdes, a déclaré le chef de l'armée, le général Ilker Basbug.

La bombe a explosé lorsqu'un véhicule blindé de transport de troupes passait tôt le matin sur une route près du village d'Abali, dans la province de Diyarbakir, a précisé le général Basbug lors d'une conférence de presse à Ankara.

Il s'agit de la plus importante attaque du PKK de ces derniers mois, après une certaine accalmie.

Le véhicule, qui était précédé d'un char, transportait une équipe de soldats chargés précisément d'inspecter les routes, en quête d'éventuels engins explosifs et de mines, avant le passage d'un convoi.

"Le char est passé au même endroit, mais la charge a explosé lorsque le transport de troupes est passé", a ajouté le général Basbug.

Une source militaire dans la région avait indiqué précédemment que l'engin, qui aurait été installé par le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) avait blessé également deux soldats, mais le général Basbug n'a pas mentionné de blessés.

Il a précisé qu'une enquête était en cours pour déterminer le type d'explosif utilisé, et a expliqué qu'il s'agissait "probablement d'un puissant engin

artisanal déclenché à distance ou par un câble."

"Le fond du véhicule de transport de troupes a un blindage de 4 ou 4,5 cm d'épaisseur. L'explosion a dû être très forte pour avoir eu un tel effet sur le camion", a-t-il dit.

Le PKK utilise souvent des mines dans ses attaques contre les forces de sécurité turques.

"Ces incidents n'entament jamais la détermination et la volonté des forces de sécurité dans leur lutte contre le terrorisme", a ajouté le général.

Le PKK, une organisation classée comme terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis, a lancé en 1984 une campagne armée pour obtenir l'autonomie du sud-est turc. Le conflit a fait 45.000 morts, dont 40.000 rebelles, selon des chiffres donnés en avril par le général Basbug.

Selon Ankara, environ 2.000 rebelles du PKK sont repliés dans le nord de l'Irak, leur base arrière, d'où ils lancent des attaques en territoire turc. L'armée turque bombarde régulièrement leurs positions en Irak, lors de raids aériens.

En Novembre, l'Irak, la Turquie et les Etats-Unis ont formé une commission conjointe chargée d'évaluer le menace posée par le PKK.

Le général Basbug a une nouvelle fois exhorté les autorités kurdes d'Irak à chasser les rebelles de leur territoire. "Ils doivent participer activement à ce processus", a-t-il dit.

Il a aussi estimé qu'une disposition actuellement en cours pour obtenir la reddition des rebelles devait être rendu

"plus attrayant" pour les membres du PKK.

"Nous devons assurer que les terroristes soient incités à se rendre", a-t-il souligné, appelant le gouvernement à mettre en oeuvre les mesures sociales nécessaires comme des "centres" spéciales afin d'accueillir ces gens.

Le code pénal turc prévoit déjà une dispense de peine pour tout membre du PKK n'ayant pas commis de crime. Les résultats de cette disposition ont cependant été limités.

Sur 1.238 rebelles qui se sont rendus ces dernières années, 675 ont immédiatement été libérés, a ajouté le général.

Les organisations kurdes réclament une amnistie totale pour les rebelles du PKK. ■



L'AVIATION TURQUE FRAPPE LE PKK EN IRAK APRÈS DES ATTAQUES EN TURQUIE

ANKARA, 30 avril 2009 (AFP)

L'AVIATION TURQUE a bombardé mercredi soir et jeudi des positions rebelles kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak en riposte à des attaques des séparatistes qui ont coûté la vie à dix soldats turcs dans le sud-est de la Turquie, a annoncé l'état-major turc sur son site internet.

"Des cibles appartenant à l'organisation terroriste (dénomination officielle des rebelles kurdes, ndr) dans la zone d'Avasin-Basyan du nord de l'Irak ont été frappées avec grande intensité et exactitude mercredi soir et jeudi matin", souligne un communiqué en ligne.

Les appareils ayant participé à la mission sont rentrés indemnes à leur base, ajoute l'agence.

Les chasseurs turcs effectuent régulièrement des raids contre des cibles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) dans le Kurdistan irakien où quelque 2.000 rebelles sont retranchés selon Ankara.

Un porte-parole du PKK en Irak, Ahmet Denis, a souligné que trois zones avaient été bombardées, sans être en mesure de dire si les frappes ont fait des victimes ou des dégâts.

Les attaques constituent une riposte à deux attaques survenues mercredi dans le sud-est anatolien et attribuées au rebelles kurdes par les autorités turques. Elles ont fait 10 morts dans les rangs de l'armée.

"Ces incidents n'entament jamais la détermination et la volonté des forces de sécurité dans leur lutte contre le terrorisme", a affirmé mercredi le chef d'état-major turc, le général Ilker Basbug, lors d'une conférence de presse où il avait rendu public les circonstances de ces attaques, les premières après plusieurs mois de répit dans les combats entre l'armée et les séparatistes.

Le PKK, une organisation classée comme terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis, a lancé en 1984 une campagne armée pour obtenir l'autonomie du sud-est turc. Le conflit a fait 45.000 morts, dont 40.000 rebelles, selon des chiffres donnés en avril par le général Basbug.