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The Red Book: The Bible of Turkish Foreign Policy

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The Islamic-oriented AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi/ Justice and Development Party) achieved a clear victory in the September 12, 2010 referendum regarding a series of proposed amendments to the Turkish constitution, giving it clear hegemony over the Turkish political system. The AKP's triumph was the culmination of a long process, highlighted by the passing of the Seventh Reform Package by the TBMM (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi/ Turkish Grand National Assembly) in July 2003. In what came to be known as the quiet revolution, the Seventh Reform Package changed the balance of power in the MGK (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu/ National Security Council). The purpose of the reform package was to comply with the European Union's Copenhagen Criteria, which necessitated greater civilian control over the MGK, a body which advises the legislative and executive branches on national security issues, both domestic and foreign. With the AKP in power since 2002, control over the MGK thus passed into its hands.

On paper, the MGK can only advise the Cabinet in decision-making. In fact, since its establishment in 1961, the MGK has held the real power in Turkish politics. Its most important official task is the fashioning, once every five years, of the National Security Political Document, popularly known as the Red Book (Kırmızı Kitap). The 2010 edition is due to appear shortly, but its contents have already been

leaked to the press, and appear to constitute a major shift in official thinking regarding the country's external and internal challenges, and the appropriate policies for coping with them.

Before the enactment of the Seventh Reform Package, the Red Book reflected the orientation of the TSK (Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri/ Turkish Armed Forces). In 2005 the anti-AKP, then-President of the Republic, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, was presiding over the MGK, and the Red Book was still heavily influenced by the TSK. The AKP did not interfere with the writing of the 2005 document, which did not deviate from the country's traditional approach to national security issues.

The new Book's changes are rooted in the “zero problems with the neighbors” strategy of AKP foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, which is designed to promote friendlier relations with neighboring states in order to deepen Turkey's influence in the region.

The following is an outline of the new Red Book's assessments:

IRAN: In 2005 Iran was categorized as the greatest threat to Turkey's security due to its nuclear program and its Shihab-3 missiles, which are capable of reaching Istanbul. More importantly, the TSK-oriented 2005 Red Book perceived Iran as a threat to Turkey's secular character, in light of Iran's efforts to export its revolutionary Islamic ideology to Turkey through its support of Turkish Islamists and through the assassination of Kemalist writers. Despite the fact that the Iranian nuclear program is mentioned in the 2010 Red Book, Iran is no longer perceived as a threat to Turkey. In fact, the new document praises Iranian-Turkish cooperation against the Kurdish PKK (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan/ Kurdistan Workers Party), manifested in recent years by coordinated military operations in Northern Iraq against Kurdish guerillas.

GREECE: In the 2005 Red Book, Greece's intention to extend its territorial waters from six to twelve miles was considered a *casus belli*. In the 2010 Red Book, a war with Greece in the Aegean region is deemed unlikely and the twelve-mile issue is

no longer considered a *casus belli*. The new document also emphasizes the need for cooperation with Greece.

IRAQ: In 2005, Iraq was perceived as the source of a direct threat, owing to the PKK's presence in its northern region adjoining Turkey. That version of the Red Book stressed the need for cooperation between Ankara and the central government in Baghdad which, along with Iraq's Kurds, were viewed as potential allies against the PKK.

In the 2010 document, the PKK, still deemed a major threat, is discussed in the section treating the danger of separatism in Turkey, not in the section referring to Iraq. As had been done in the past, the latest Red Book treats the "PKK and its extensions" in a detailed way, and does not ignore the PKK's objective of participating in Turkish politics.

RUSSIA: In the past, Turkish strategic thinking emphasized Turkey's differences with Russia regarding the Caucasus region, and oil and gas pipeline routes. The new document—again, in compliance with Davutoglu's neo-Ottoman revivalist strategy—calls for cooperation and trade with Russia, as well as efforts to bring stability to the Caucasus.

ISRAEL: The forthcoming document, while avoiding specific mention of the Turkish-led flotilla to Gaza, stresses the "regional instability caused by Israel." Nonetheless, despite its criticism of Israel, the document recommends maintaining relations with it.

Another important change in the Red Book is the removal of *İrtica* (radical Islamic threat against the secular republic) from the list of internal security problems. The concept of *İrtica* views all religious Muslims as a potential threat to the secular status of the republic. The new Red Book makes a distinction between religious individuals and radical Islamist organizations, which may be seen as a threat to the government.

For the first time, the Red Book delineates new global and domestic problems that Turkey may confront in the future, such as cyber threats, global warming, energy pipeline policies, space technologies, and the future of Turkey's large youthful population.

The 2010 Red Book is evidence that a silent revolution against Kemalism has occurred. Rather than the MGK, it is now Foreign Affairs Minister Davutoğlu who is the supreme guide regarding Turkish foreign policy, with the Red Book having been redesigned according to Davutoğlu's thinking. The new version can be expected to serve as a blueprint for Turkish foreign policy in the coming years.

On October 2-3, 2010 almost half of the Turkish cabinet paid an official visit to Syria. The two countries established a joint Strategic Cooperation Council, which approved several joint Syrian-Turkish projects, such as a railway from Aleppo to Gaziantep (reminiscent of the 19th Century Ottoman Hijaz railway), construction of a "Friendship Dam" on the Asi River, student exchange programs, training of the Syrian police, energy cooperation, and the establishment of a customs union.

Davutoğlu aims to expand economic cooperation between Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan. In order to fulfill this goal, a summit will convene in Turkey in January 2011. In light of Turkey's new foreign policy orientation, it can be expected that in the long-run, Turkey may take steps toward the establishment of a regional union.¹ Here, too, we can see a correlation with the shift towards anti-Kemalism, as Turkey's orientation has become less Western and more Middle Eastern.

In an interview with *Hürriyet*, Davutoğlu described two conflicting visions of the Middle East. One vision is that of collaboration between Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and others to promote economic welfare and regional stability. The second vision referred to the "predictable other actors" (presumably Israel and Egypt),²

¹ This new regional union would undoubtedly exclude Israel, which has no diplomatic relations with Syria, Lebanon or Iraq.

² Turkey is critical of Egypt for cooperating with Israel in imposing the blockade on Gaza.

whom he said, stand for tension, conflict, and terrorism. While Turkey's vision would be expanded, that of the "other predictable actors" would ultimately fail. Since Israel's 2009 "Cast Lead" operation in Gaza, Turkey has systematically downgraded its relations with Israel. Davutoğlu's vision excluding Israel was highlighted by Erdoğan's recent speech in Pakistan, in which he declared Israel the enemy of Islam, Turkey, and Pakistan, and asserted that Israel would be isolated in the region.

The new Red Book makes it clear that the TSK is no longer an influential player in Turkish politics and that the Turkish political system is dominated by the pro-Islamic AKP. The significant changes found in the new Red Book reveal an ideological shift: the new Islam-friendly domestic policies are post-Kemalist, while the regional-oriented foreign policies indicate a revival of the Ottoman ideal. In the new Turkish thinking, other regional states must decide whether or not to play the game as it is written in the Red Book.