



What a Calamitous Report

Posted GMT 2-26-2005 15:57:8

ISTANBUL -- The negative developments in U.S.-Turkish relations are on the agenda once again. The discussions flared up after the visit of the Pentagon's No. 3 man, Douglas Feith, to Turkey.

An article entitled, "The Sick Man of Europe -- Again" by Robert L. Pollock, which he wrote in The Wall Street Journal in the wake of Feith's visit, had an effect on this. Pollock goes beyond bounds so much so that he calls Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan a "hypocrite."

Another name close to Feith, Michale Rubin, also wrote an article entitled, "Green Money, Islamist Politics in Turkey," that was published in the latest edition of the Middle East Quarterly. Rubin claims that some people in the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government made under-the-counter transactions with Saudi capital. Rubin reaches a conclusion that "Under apparent Saudi influence, such changes (referring to the National Security Council's (MGK) reforms) will likely erode Turkish secularism even more."

Feith is an influential name, especially on U.S. Iraq policies and the Middle East. In his book, "Plan of Attack," Bob Woodward quotes the following assessment by former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell: "It was a separate little government that was out there -- Wolfowitz, Libby, Feith and Feith's 'Gestapo office,' as Powell privately put it..." Powell describes the Office of Special Plans (OSP), that was established in October 2002 within the Pentagon, as the "Gestapo Office." This office affiliated to Feith became famous in producing "fabricated" news, particularly on the Iraq issue, and staging a "psychological war" to convince public opinion. As a member of the American Enterprises Institute (AEI), the castle of the Neocons within the Bush Cabinet, Michael Rubin is also among the advisers in this office.

The 51-year-old Feith is actually a name that knows Turkey very well and is a "friend of Turks". A public relations company called "IAI," established by Feith and another AEI member Richard Perle, had conducted lobbying activities for Turkey and Israel in Washington between 1996 and 1997. Perle and Feith also wrote another important report in 1996. Entitled, "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," this study was prepared for then-Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The report included very pretentious recommendations: The Oslo Peace Process should be terminated; alternatives to Yasser Arafat should be found within Palestine; Syria should be beseiged with the help of Jordan and Turkey for Israel's security; the Saddam regime in Iraq should be toppled; Syria should be dragged into instability, hence eliminating the threat to Israel; and Iraq, ruled by the moderate Shiite, Lebanese Shiite group called Hezbollah, should accept Najaf as the religious authority and should be saved from Iran's influence.

It is thought-provoking that the start of a "strategic military cooperation" between Turkey and Israel, that almost reached the brink of clashes with Syria, coincided with the period envisaged by this report. Within this process, the determining power was not the civilian governments, but the armed forces with clandestine agreements. As a matter of fact, a predominantly Jewish institution called JINSA (The Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs), in which Perle was a member of the executive board, gave the international leader award in 1999 to then-Turkish deputy chief of staff [Gen.] Cevik Bir, for his "contributions to cooperation with Israel."

This report sheds great light as to why Feith and his team today have assumed an anti-Turkey stance. Turkey did not give the desired support to the U.S. during the Iraq War. Syrian and Iranian policies are also opposite to those of the United States. Military ties with Israel have also lost their warmth. Feith and his team view the AKP's "Islamist" political preferences and the exclusion of the army from the decision-making mechanism as the origin of all these changes.

In other words, the U.S. not taking action against the [outlawed] Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK); putting sacks over the heads of Turkish officers; Israel's contact with Kurds in northern Iraq; Turkey's exclusion from the restructuring processes in neighboring Iraq; and using financial aid as a "bribe," have no positive effects!

Apparently, there is a "calamitous" report as well as a "unilateral" perception. The AKP should explicitly explain its policies to its American "friends" one more time. Otherwise, I think the process will also "erode" itself very badly. It is not very difficult for U.S. -Turkish relations to return to the "strategic partnership" level. It would be enough if the U.S. took a step forward. A joint operation against the PKK might be the "key" that will unlock the door.

Assyrian International News Agency

By ERHAN BASYURT
Zaman.com

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