BOOK REVIEW

Fuller, Graham E., *Yeni Türkiye Cumhuriyeti: Yükselen Bölgesel Aktör* [The New Republic of Turkey: A Rising Regional Actor], çev. [trans.] Mustafa Acar, 3. basın [3e], İstanbul, Timaş Yayınları [Timaş Publications], 2008, 336 s. [pp.]

Graham E. Fuller’s latest book, entitled *The New Turkish Republic: Turkey as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World*, was published in January 2008 by the United States Institute of Peace Press. Only three months later, its Turkish translation was published in Istanbul. Enjoying positive reviews from experts in the field, the Turkish translation is now into its third edition. Four basic factors lie behind the success of the book – at least in Turkey: its aim to explain the transformation in Turkey’s Middle East policy; the quality of its translation, the meticulous work of its Turkish publisher, and the justified fame of Fuller in Turkey.

Graham Fuller is a well-known figure in Turkey, not only because he is a successful Middle East expert, but also because he used to work for the CIA and was for a while responsible for Turkey. It is for this reason that Turkish readers may harbour suspicions that if there was a message the US wanted to convey, it might be done through his writing. Aware of this fact, Fuller wrote in the preface of the Turkish publication, “please do not read this book as if there is a reason behind it. Its arguments and analyses are not ulterior motive” (p. 19), which only serves to make the book more interesting.
Despite the author's request, the fact that his research was supported by an institution financed by the USA Congress, further contributes to potential suspicion. In addition, the author states, "its title was not chosen by me, it was chosen by the USA publisher and I am afraid it may be a little deceiving ... The right title could be *The New Place of Turkey in the World*" (p. 17). Furthermore, in the Turkish version of the book Graham E. Fuller is represented to the reader as the "Former CIA Section Chief of Turkey".

Nonetheless, it is possible to agree with the author when he writes, "most of the policy makers of the USA are not going to like this book" (pp. 19-20) and "the reader will notice that I was fairly critical of US policies" (p. 17). The main argument of the book is that Turkey has been building up a new and independent foreign policy with growing speed, especially in the Middle East, and the US has to face this reality. It seems inconceivable that the US is propagating this position through Fuller. Moreover, it is obvious that the book addresses US decision-makers more than Turkish readers.

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Before explaining the shift in Turkish foreign policy, the author pays attention to the Turkish perception of the Middle East and draws interesting conclusions. He writes that the Turks have been alienated from the Middle East and feel uncomfortable when defined as Middle Easterners. As an extension of this argument, he makes an unfair judgment on Turkish diplomats: "As a result, even among Turkey's highly professional diplomatic class, the Middle East has been viewed negatively. Many Turkish diplomats are uncomfortable serving in the region and see postings there as an unfortunate reality of diplomatic life. For them, most 'real' diplomacy is conducted with the West, not with the East. Indeed, Turkish diplomats – highly educated, professional, and polished in European languages – know virtually no Arabic, nor are they taught it" (p. 44). The author ignores the fact that some Turkish diplomats have been trained to learn Middle Eastern languages early on in their careers, and parallel to this effort, the Turkish Foreign Ministry is starting to bring up expert diplomats with a strong understanding of the Middle East.
The book takes the shift in Turkey’s Middle East policy during the JDP period for granted and instead attempts to explain the consequences of the shift. Following this, the author puts forward how Turkey’s new Middle East policy is perceived and should be perceived by the US.

According to Fuller, this shift in Turkish policy was due to replacing the Kemalist understanding with an Islamist point of view. This argument is especially remarkable and controversial. Fuller explains his attribution of the JDP as an Islamist party in these words: “In my view, ‘Islamist’ is a broad term that applies to a wide spectrum of activists who believe that the Koran and the life of the Prophet offer important principles about Islamic governance and society. I do consider the JDP to be a form of Islamist party – one that is not only moderate but, more important, is also exploring the very concept of what it means to combine religious values with political life” (p. 107). This argument is in clear contradiction to the repeated self-definition of the JDP leadership as conservative democrats. The author is convinced that the JDP has a hidden agenda and is hiding its true intentions: “The JDP defines itself as a ‘democratic conservative party’ and avoids any use of the term ‘Islamic’ or ‘Islamist’ in describing itself. This stance is, of course, politically astute, given the highly negative views the military has toward Islamists” (p. 103).

Fuller believes that not only the JDP but also the Gülen movement is critically important for Turkey’s Islamist tendencies, and argues that the Gülen movement should not be confined to Turkey alone but should be a model for the entire Muslim world. The author praises the Gülen movements’ activities in education and its efforts to develop close ties with the West. Although the author is correct in his praise of the Gülen movement, he neglects its organic ties with the US. To the criticism levelled at Gülen’s ties to the US, the author responds with a simple sentence: “Curiously, Gülen is harshly criticized by both right- and left-wing nationalist circles, which portray him alternately as an instrument of foreign control, of the CIA, and of Jews and Christians, as a reactionary response to Kemalist nationalism, and as an instrument to destroy Turkish nationalism. His heavy focus on ecumenical outreach can only partly explain this peculiar virulence” (pp. 126-27).
Furthermore, Fuller contends that there is an Islamist-Kemalist struggle in Turkey. His conclusion is that an Islamic government in Ankara is much more positive than a Kemalist government for both the USA and Turkey. Beyond this, it is clear to see his special opposition to the Kemalists.

The author tries to demonstrate the Kemalists' alienation of Turkey from the Middle East with these words: “Decades of Kemalist-oriented history instruction indoctrinated the country to think negatively about the Islamic world in general and the Arab world in particular. Turks have been socialized to associate the Muslim world only with backwardness and extremism” (p. 43). The author gives examples of Kemalists' perceptions of Turkey's growing ties with the Middle East as a threat to the regime: “in the classic Kemalist view, then, Turkey is profoundly committed to facing West, and the Middle East is seen as a dangerous and subversive force from which Turkey must be protected in order to preserve the purity of Atatürk's westernizing legacy” (p. 46).

One of the most notable of Fuller's assessments is that Islamists have been trying to emancipate Turkish foreign policy from US dependency, and although they do not have the intention to Westernize, they are not necessarily anti-Western. Interestingly, for Fuller, those Kemalists who pursue a more US-oriented foreign policy are lagging behind in Westernization efforts, and their ultimate aim is to make Turkey strong enough to confront the threats emanating from the West. This in itself can be defined as a kind of anti-Westernism.

Fuller argues strongly that the Kemalists not only detached Turkey from the Middle East but also from its Islamic roots, and he states controversially, “We might say that Atatürk performed a kind of cultural lobotomy on Turkey that produced a national amnesia about the country's Islamic and Ottoman past. This was done with the aim of creating a new nationalism through a racially oriented rereading of pre-Islamic Turkish history” (p. 51).

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The message that Fuller wants to convey is how the US should react to Turkey’s new Middle East policy. Before doing so, he puts Turkey’s perception of the US in these terms: “Turkey, as an emerging regional power, is no longer comfortable with interventions by the United States, particularly when they complicate Ankara’s own initiatives and damage its own interests. In fact, today Turkey sees the United States as the chief destabilizing factor in the Middle East. As a result, there is an increasing prickliness, wariness, and even suspicion across most of the Turkish political spectrum toward U.S. policies and actions” (p. 31).

He explains the replacing of ‘old’ Turkey with a ‘new’ one in global terms: “A long succession of U.S. administrations grew comfortable with the ‘old’ Turkey; the faithful, reliable, and strongly pro-Western ally whose interests appeared to differ little from America’s, a country that was ready and willing to assist in fulfilling most every U.S. geopolitical goal in the region. But for multiple reasons, we are witnessing a gradual global reaction within the international order that seeks to restore some degree of multiplicity to the world, much at Washington’s expense... As a result, onetime faithful U.S. allies in many regions of the world can no longer be described as just that. Turkey is part of this trend” (p. 37).

He also believes that Turkey, in pursuing a policy in the Middle East independent of the US serves US interests better. For him, “If a demonstrably independent Turkey advocates certain policy courses to the Arab world, it will be listened to with greater attention than would its old strictly Western aligned self. This would not simply be a matter of the Arabs trying to neutralize Turkey but of them gaining a friendly partner who can help lessen the Muslim world’s sense of isolation and siege and who can facilitate communication with both Washington and Jerusalem” (p. 320).

Fuller asserts that Washington did not realise this until 2006, and after that time recognised it was better to allow Turkey to move freely in the region. The author explains the importance of that time: “In early 2006, as the Bush administration found itself increasingly blocked by multiple domestic and international factors in its ability to bring military force to bear against Tehran, it retreated somewhat from a policy of direct confrontation and turned to multilateral
instruments, including a willingness to let Ankara do what it could to soften Tehran’s stance... Starting in the late spring of 2006, Washington seemed to be adopting a more constructive and realistic approach toward Turkey’s foreign policy. It appeared to recognize U.S. limitations on curtailing the type of regional role Turkey wants to play and may have decided to let Ankara play the role it wants and to allow it to pursue whatever benefits might come from its role. There seems to be a belated recognition that a “new Turkey” can sometimes serve as a useful force in the region, even for U.S. interests” (pp. 145-46).

It is the contention of the author that Turkey can serve US interests as a model for Islamic countries too: “If ‘Turkish Islam’ has regional credibility, it can affect regional discussions and alter debate about the role of Islam in public life. The model would not be the old, secularist Kemalist one in which the state suppresses Islam. Rather, it would be of a vital, proud, and moderate Turkish Islam that is capable of comfortable coexistence with non-Muslim States” (pp. 320-21).

In short, we can say that the book has been written as a guideline for US decision-makers. A moderate-Islamist government in Ankara can function as a viable instrument to moderate other Middle East countries that resist the US in the region. In the same manner, a moderate-Islamic Turkish society can be a good model in the global struggle between radical-Islamists and the US.

ATAY AKDEVELİOĞLU