BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
DERGİSİ

Beşeri Bilimler — Humanities Vol. 7 — 1979

FRICTION AND DISCORD WITHIN THE OTTOMAN GOVERNMENT UNDER ABDULHAMID II (1876-1909)

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the deformation of the Ottoman structure of authority in the 19th century is discussed in the light of a set of documents from the reign of Abdulhamid II (1876-1909). The documents involve the communication between the Sultan and his Grand Viziers on the demarcation of the mutual responsibilities and duties of the organs of the governmental apparatus.

INTRODUCTION

Intra-elite power struggle is common to all polities; it is a process that enables the articulation as well as the reconciliation of conflicting interests, material and ideal. Usually, there are set political norms according to which interests are reconciled, and established institutions within which the conflicting parties operate. The absence of such norms and institutions turns intra-elite power struggle into a chaotic conflict. [1]

This was exactly what happened in the Ottoman State during the last century of its existence. The Ottoman political elite (or simply the 'Ottomans' [2]) found themselves driven ever deeper into a political crisis resulting from the erosion of traditional norms and political institutions, and from the failure to create a new organizational basis for conflict resolution. As the existing principles of legitimacy faded, the rules of power distribution and struggle became increasingly disordered. The separation of the making of political decisions from the administration of those decisions turned into an issue of constant dispute. In short, the Ottoman "structure of authority" [3] lost its coherence, just as the state crumbled, failing to keep in step with the new world order that was being built under Western domination. [4]

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The acuteness of the problem is clearly observable in a set of documents from the reign of Abdulhamid II (1876-1909). These documents involve the communication between the Sultan and his Grand Viziers on the demarcation of the mutual responsibilities and duties of the organs of the governmental apparatus. In the present article, these documents will be introduced with a view to shedding some light on the deformation of the Ottoman structure of authority.

It must be made clear from the beginning, however, that the Ottoman political system had begun to deteriorate long before Abdulhamid II's reign. In fact, he had come to the throne in the midst of a grave political crisis. Financial bankruptcy, intense foreign pressure, social strife between Muslim and Christian subjects, and grievance against the central government in the provinces had almost brought about the total collapse of the state. Within the government itself, the lower echelons of the officials had grown bitter against the domination of government by the oligarchic group of pashas who, in turn, were chaotically divided by personal and factional enmities and rivalries. Reliance on the support of foreign diplomats in internal power struggles among the pashas had become customary. The conduct of even the routine business of government had turned into an arduous endeavor.[5]

At this juncture of events, the Ottomans expected to overcome the crisis by switching to a constitutional ragime. Abdulhamid himself came to the throne on the implicit condition that he 'granted' a Constitution to 'his subjects'. It was hoped that the constitution would serve as a cure for foreign diplomatic pressure and for the separatist movements in the provinces. It was also seen as a device to systematize the organization and delegation of authority. It soon became clear that these were incompatible objectives and that a constitution was no magic wand to restore the Ottoman political order. When a constitution was finally promulgated in December 29, 1876, it accomplished little more than a reinstatement of the traditional prerogatives of the Sultan.[6] As Davison puts it,

> the Sultan retained great powers. Some of them were specifically listed, but none was specifically denied him. He appointed the ministers, appointed the members of the senate, convoked and prorogued the parliament. His legislative authority rested not only on this power of appointment, but on the fact that his **irade** [decree] was required before any bills became law, and no time limit was set for the veto power implied by this provision. He sanctioned the acts of ministers. He had the exclusive authority to expel individuals considered dengerous to the state. The Sultan was also declared to be caliph, non-responsible for his acts, and his person to be sacred. Sovereignty, in short, still rested in the Sultan.[7]

This outcome was not the making of Abdulhamid. But an end result of the failure of the Ottoman pashas and other influential officials to reach a consensus on a viable basis of governmental reorganization. A popular assembly with powers of control over the government contradicted the elitist political culture of the Ottomans which was not disposed to tolerate the participation of non-officials in central policy-making. A ministerial system of checks and balances, on the other hand, ran counter to the fresh memories of the **Tanzimat** era (1839-1871), when an oligarchic group of minister-pashas had dominated the government. On the basis of this

experience, quite a few Ottomans felt reluctant to increase the ministries' authority over and against that of the Palace. Endless debates on these and similar issues finally converged on the text of the Constitution of 1876, which equipped the Sultan with the powers of a virtually omnipotent monarch. Apparently, the pashas believed that the administrative problems of the Ottoman State had grown complex and sophisticated enough to render the Sultan a powerless dilletante at the mercy of the administrative expertise of the pashas.[8]

Abdulhamid, however, was determined to make himself as omniscient a ruler as he was omnipotent. He cautiously began to centralize the government around his person in order to prevent any one of his ministers from monopolizing knowledge and expertize on the running of government. He started his drive by a systematic effort to bring the diplomatic relations of the government under his control, fully realizing how crucial a source of power expertise in diplomatic affairs had become in face of the ever increasing vulnerability of the state to outside pressure.[9] He also surrounded himself with the state's most venerable military commanders to assure the loyalty of the armed forces.[10] Soon, Abdulhamid had established firm control over the Porte, that is the ministerial headquarters of the government. He defended his position later (1903) in the following words:

> They claim that I replace the Grand Viziers frequently, but this is not a correct judgement. If our history is examined it will become clear that my predecessors replaced more Grand Viziers.
>
> Of course every now and then I feel compelled to make some changes. That depends on how obliged I feel to make a sacrifice in the field of diplomacy. Sometimes it becomes necessary that I use Kâmil in order to soothe England, other times, the old fox ["woolfe" in Turkish] Küçük Said is needed.
>
> The replacement of a Grand Vizier is really not that important from our state's point of view although it cannot be considered a desirable thing. On the other hand, it is a matter of principle for me to leave the ministers at their places as long as possible.
>
> I believe that the murmurs that arise after every change of a Grand Vizier are altogether pointless. What difference would it make that the Grand Vizier is Said Paşha or Kâmil Pasha? The real Grand Vizier is the one who dwells in Yıldız, and that is I.[11]

Obviously, Abdulhamid regarded the Grand Vizier as his instrument. This, constituted a constant course of friction and discord within the government, as the communication between the Sultan and his Grand Viziers amply indicate.

DISPUTE BETWEEN THE SULTAN AND GRAND VIZIERS

Tunuslu Hayreddin Pasha (12/4/1878 - 7/29/1879):

Tunuslu Hayreddin Pasha was the first Grand Vizier with whom Abdulhamid had a serious conflict after he began to centralize the government around his person. Tunuslu was a Circassian by birth and had been educated in Istanbul, Tunis and Paris.

He had sound knowledge of European civilization as well as thorough grounding in Islam. He had been in the service of the Tunisian Regency and was the writer of a well known book called **The Surest Path**, a Turkish translation of which circulated in Istanbul. A defender of the unity of Islam and the integrity of the Ottoman State as the major power in Islam, he staunchly rejected European intervention although his mind was open to Western influence. He pressed for economic reform to eliminate capitulations and for educational progress to catch up with the West. These could be achieved, according to Hayreddin Pasha, under the leadership of a just Sultan surrounded by enlightened councillors. A consultative assembly could assist the government's efforts to establish an enlightened rule provided that it did not contribute to dissident tendencies among the non-Muslims.[12]

Abdulhamid was impressed by Hayreddin's ideas. When the pasha fell out of favor with the Tunisian Bey, Abdulhamid invited him to Istanbul and, shortly thereafter, appointed him a Grand Vizier. Cevdet Pasha, the leading Ottoman jurist, was to assist him.[13] As soon as he was in office, Tunuslu put all his energy into the preparation of laws and regulations that would govern almost any sphere of government activity. He formed committees to discuss the regulations related to mining, construction of roads, land development, management of forests, formation of agricultural credit institutions and business corporations, attraction of foreign capital and other economic reforms.[14]

Hayreddin also prepared extensive reports and preliminary drafts on the regularization of the routine administrative work. In these reports, the rotation of officials with the rotation of their senoirs, and insecurities resulting from the unsystematic recruitment, payment and retirement of the junior officials were identified as major causes of confusion in the administration. Hayreddin Pasha argued that first, the number of positions had to be frozen according to the true needs of each office. New positions must not be installed unless there emerged an absolute necessity. Then, the most honest and competent officials must be appointed to the available positions. The remaining officials must be put on the retirement list, making clear to them that under no circumstances should they solicit the authorities for reemployment. If solicitation was not prevented firmly, then it would lead to counterlobbying among government employees and cause bitterness and the neglect of work, as was exactly the case at that time. Once a person was employed in the service of the government, however, he should be paid regularly and decently, and not be laid off unless proven guilty of a misdeed in a just trial. No official, on the other hand, who was found guilty and laid off should be reemployed in the service of any other department or office. Finally, an inspection mechanism should be created in order to control the proper conduct of the administration by rewarding diligence and punishing negligence promptly.

Hayreddin was also concerned with problems of administrative and financial efficiency. He argued for the delimitation of the technical duties and responsibilities of each office within a department to avoid overlap and conflict. He made detailed suggestions about the improvement of the administration of funds allotted to each department and urged the necessity of the preparation of annual programs by the departments in their fields of responsibility. These programs should cover economic-infrastructural projects (such as the construction of bridges and highways) as well as reports for the improvement of service-efficiency. Hayreddin concluded his sugges-

tions with outline reports on the improvement of the court system and on the establishment of gendarmerie corps for the enforcement of public security.[15]

So far, so good. Abdulhamid accepted these suggestions wholeheartedly. Many regulations which were enacted and put to application during his reign in a genuine effort to streamline the Ottoman administration can easily be traced back to Hayreddin's programs. The same is also true for the measures taken for the improvement and elaboration of juridical and public security services, as well as for infrastructural planning and investments.[16] Abdulhamid supported these measures, for they were more technical than political in nature. It was a different story, when Tunuslu drafted a law that attempted to define clearly the mutual responsibilities and duties of the individual ministries, departments, the Grand Vizirate and the Palace.

According to Hayreddin Pasha, the harmonious conduct of government's work depended on the delimitation of the responsibilities and authorities of each main segment of the administrative machinery and on the execution of authority through hierarchical channels. These were the principle causes of the efficiency and effectiveness of all successful governments. The Ottoman government on the other hand, operated in such a confused way that even the completion of a task that could be accomplished in a matter of minutes took a long time. The initial step in the correction of this situation was the promulgation of the appropriate laws and regulations. Hayreddin Pasha took this step and presented to the Sultan a draft which was discussed in detail and approved at the Council of Ministers.

Hayreddin's draft prescribed a system where each minister had a clear cut idea about his routine work. Only the general policy and other important issues were submitted for discussion at the Council of Ministers. On routine matters that concerned more than one ministry, the relevant ministers contacted one another directly. The Council of Ministers coordinated the activities of the individual ministers, determined general policy, and dealt with important issues that concerned the future of the State and the welfare of the country. In addition, the Council also fulfilled the tasks assigned to it by the Sultan and the General Assembly when it was in session. On the other hand, neither the Assembly nor the Sultan could reach a final decision on such important matters as the declaration of war, concluding treaties, enactment and amendment of laws, and general amnesty unless the matter had previously been discussed at the Council. Under all circumstances, the final word on the decisions of the Council belonged to the Sultan. The ministers were collectively as well as individually responsible for the Council's decisions; if a minister disagreed with the majority opinion, he could either follow suit or resign. The Grand Vizier presided over the Council and communicated its decisions to the Sultan. Likewise, decrees of the Sultan on all except military matters were to be communicated to the related ministers for execution down through the Grand Vizier. Orderly conduct of government work depended on the strict observation of the formal channels of hierarchy.[17]

Abdulhamid delayed action on this draft. He questioned Hayreddin about the specific problems that had prompted him to emphasize so strongly the necessity for delimiting the duties of the ministers. Hayreddin submitted a lengthy report in return, where he touched upon several problems that he thought were crucial. The Grand Vizier was kept uninformed about the diplomatic contacts established directly by the Palace. The special committee that directed the organization of the gendarmerie worked

directly with the Sultan, while the Grand Vizier was kept in the dark about the progress of the work. The Director of the Police Forces did not even bother to come to say hello to his immediate superiors; namely, the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Grand Vizier. The governors communicated directly with the Place; the Grand Vizier was informed of their reports only at the discretion of the Sultan. A harmonious working relationship between the Grand Viziers and the ministers was obstructed by the Palace informers who kept the traffic in and out of the Grand Vizier's mansion under constant surveillance. His Majesty's final word (**irade**) on the Council's resolutions were almost always delayed, slowing down the administrative machinery. Finally, conflicts emerged between the Palace functionaries, and the Grand and other viziers, as the viziers refused to treat the protégés of the palace functionaries preferentially. The promotion of His Majesty's sacred rights and the facilitation of affairs in accordance with the necessities of the times urged prompt action on the draft that had been submitted for the Sultan's examination.[18]

Abdulhamid did not respond to Hayreddin's report; nor did he take any action on the draft. Hayreddin pressed the matter by a follow-up report.[19] Then, the Sultan convened the ministers to the Palace to suggest certain changes on the draft before him. The most important changes involved the provisions related to the collective responsibility of the ministers and the ones that bound the Sultan to consult the Council on major policy issues. Abdulhamid defended his position in terms of his concern over State's future and country's welfare. He ordered the formation of a special committee headed by the Sheikhulislam to discuss the changes he suggested. Heated debates took place among the members of the special committee. The Sheikhulislam accused Hayreddin Pasha of transgressing the Sultan's prerogatives. Hayreddin told him to "shut up!" as these were political and not religious matters; even if they were, "by God the Almighty!" he did not need assistance from the ignoramous that the Sheikhulislam was. The Sheikhulislam fainted. No consensus was likely to be reached in such discussions. Hayreddin submitted his resignation, where he stated that as his proposals did not win the full approval of His Majesty, he could no longer fulfill his duties as a Grand Vizier.[20]

Abdulhamid accepted Hayreddin's resignation, but he continued to seek his advice. Briefly, however, the Sultan's confidence in Hayreddin almost reached a breaking point when the European press interpreted his resignation as a depressing blow to the "reformists'" efforts to limit the powers of the Sultan. Abdulhamid dispatched a note to the Pasha asking for an explanation.[21] Hayreddin argued that as a loyal servant of the Sultan he could never think of limiting his prerogatives, for full sovereignty of the Sultan was the essence of the existence of the Sublime State. As a Grand Vizier, Hayreddin's sole aim had been the fulfillment and affirmation of His Majesty's sovereignty in the most effective way possible in accordance with the conditions of the times. His suggestions were not a breach of loyalty but a corollary of his legal (**şer'i**) duties as a Grand Vizier. It could not be otherwise, for, Hayreddin stated, his only source of livelihood was his political and legal (**siyâsî ve şer'i**) knowledge and experience in how to serve the interests of the leader of the Muslims (**emir ul-muminin**).[22]

Abdulhamid was convinced. He ordered the Pasha's monthly salary to be increased from 10,000 piasters to 15,000. He also encouraged him to prepare reports on the improvement of the administration. This was a robe cut exactly for Hayreddin

Pasha. He presented several lengthy reports which constituted a "Program for Rescuing the Ottoman State from Outside Pressure and Internal Difficulties". It is impossible to treat these interesting documents in any fairness here. Only certain controversial points that led to an informative debate between the Pasha and the Sultan can be touched upon.

Hayreddin argued that effective resistance against outside pressure necessitated the establishment of a just and predictable rule internally. This meant, above all, the specification of the function, mutual responsibilities and operational procedures of the higher organs of the state. Then, the Assembly had to be re-convened, so that the needs of different communities could be brought to the government's attention. A new election system could exclude from the Assembly the people whose views contradicted the State's integrity. Hayreddin furthermore argued for the necessity of earnest reforms in the Sharia Administration, under a supreme council of ten learned jurists. Once a just and predictable rule was achieved at home, the government's hand would be strengthened against outside pressure. Then the government could honor its financial obligations and further strengthen its position by allying itself to a major European power.[23]

Throughout his memorandum the Pasha could not have emphasized more that his suggestions only aimed to protect the Sultan's prerogatives. Yet, there can be little doubt about the central and powerful role he attributed to the Porte. Two of Abdulhamid's advisors among whom he circulated Hayreddin's program put their fingers exactly on this point. Hayreddin's suggestions about the formation of a supreme council of ten judges was particularly conspicuous according to these advisors. They believed that the Sharia Administration was indeed in need of reform, but the Pasha's supreme council was designed, above all, as a device that would help legitimize the Grand Vizier's independent action. Hayreddin's intention to elevate the Porte to an all-powerfull position was even more clear in his ultimate foreign policy objective. According to his critics, Hayreddin, like many other Westernized ministers, favored alliance with a major power, by which he meant Britain. In order to centralize all power at the Porte, these ministers ignored the danger that dependence on a major power could deprive the state of its diplomatic flexibility and make it even more dependent on outside forces. If this was not Hayreddin's real intention, his critics argued, then he was being utterly naive about the conditions of the Ottoman State. Hayreddin's suggestions on the administrative technicallties and on the improvement of the economic strength of the country were certainly beneficial. His views on the general political conditions of the State, however, revealed that he was really an outsider. It would be best to utilize Hayreddin's expertise in technical matters and keep him out of the state's highest political offices.[24]

Abdulhamid wondered if Hayreddin's critics were not extending his arguments. He wanted to be sure, as he was considering bringing Hayreddin back to power. He dispatched a letter to the Pasha, asking for clarification on four points. First, Abdulhamid asserted that the smooth progress of the administration of the Sultanate depended on mutual confidence and unanimity of opinion between the Grand Vizier and the Sultan. As the Sultan had the final say on all major issues, his confidence in the Grand Vizier would tend to be discrete, while the Grand Vizier's confidence in the Sultan should be absolute. Hayreddin agreed in principle with the point raised by the Sultan. He granted that a Grand Vizier could succeed in the tasks entrusted

to him only in proportion to the confidence and permission extended to him by the Illustrious Sovereign.

Second, Abdulhamid wanted to learn whether Hayreddin Pasha tended towards "liberalism" (**liberalizm**) or "conservatism" (**konservasyon**). According to the Sultan, "liberalism" essentially advocated "freedom and liberty" (**serbestî ve hürriyet**), which were "lawful and desirable" (**meşrû' ve matlûb**) objectives from the Islamic point of view. However, if liberalism were evaluated in the light of the "misdeeds" that its application had led to in several European countries, and in the light of the general "disposition and aptitude" (**tabi'at ve isti'dât**) of "our people", then it would become clear that a liberal policy could only cause the collapse of the Ottoman State and the total ruin of the country. "Conservatism", on the other hand, connoted "a disposition to preserve the beneficial aspects of an established order." Yet, Abdulhamid argued, there was much to repair in the existing Ottoman system, in order to secure the future of the state and to put the country on the road to progress. Neither liberalism nor conservatism then, could be beneficial for the Ottomans, who had to avoid alien creeds and policies. Abdulhamid still wondered, however, which creed the Pasha would prefer, if liberalism meant freedom within the bounds of Islam and if conservatism allowed the adoption of beneficial measures that were in accordance with the provisions of the Holy Law (**Şeri'a**).

Hayreddin acknowledged that no Ottoman vizier could adopt either conservatism or liberalism in the way they were practiced in European countries. In order to establish the general guidelines of a reform policy fit for the Ottomans, a council of select statesmen and jurists had to be formed along the lines prescribed in Hayreddin's memoranda. If His Imperial Majesty approved these guidelines, then they should be pursued stringently. This meant preferring "conservatism" to "liberalism" in the sense that these terms were defined by His Majesty.

As his third point, Abdulhamid stated bluntly that, given the current conditions, he considered convocation of the Assembly unwise. For reasons of unanimity of opinion between the Grand Vizier and the Sultan, no Grand Vizier should suggest the convocation of the Assembly, and he should resist patiently and resolutely any advice from the foreign powers to that effect. Hayreddin refused flatly to commit himself to keeping the Assembly closed, for he considered it an unconstitutional deed. Besides, he could not contradict his earlier memoranda in which he had humbly defended the Assembly in search of a reasonable course for stable government. On the other hand, Hayreddin would resist outside pressure unconditionally, on this or any other issue whatsoever.

Abdulhamid's final point was related to the sensitive issue of ministerial responsibilities. He claimed that Hayreddin's suggestions would render the ministers independent of the Sultan and centralize the government around the Grand Vizier. A puppet in the hands of unrestrained viziers, the Sultan would be obliged to consent to their demands without reservations. Had the Sultan approved of all the resolutions of the Porte, he would have caused the commission of detrimental errors. Consequently, Hayreddin Pasha had to abandon altogether his proposal for creating a plenipotentiary ministerial system.

Hayreddin defended his position in the usual terms. He argued that his proposition did not threaten the Sultan's prerogatives. The Council of Ministers would submit all

important matters (**husûsât-ı mühimme ve hutûb-ı mesime**) to the approval of the Sultan. His imperial Majesty would examine the resolutions of the Council; if he deemed them beneficial to the State, he would extend his consent, without risking the danger of failure. If the Sultan disapproved a resolution, then he could depose the ministers to form a new Council. Hayreddin concluded his remarks with a touch of bitterness. He had insisted on the necessity of a predictable government, not because he nourished secret ambitions, but because his proud servitude to the Sultan obliged him to express his views honestly.[25]

In response, Abdulhamid offered the Grand Vizirate to Hayreddin Pasha, on the condition that he did not rush the enactment of his program. The Sultan promised to see to the full execution of the Pasha's program gradually, as the times permitted. Hayreddin refused to consent; Abdulhamid's terms were unsatisfactory. Reportedly, he argued that in order to see the realization of the Sultan's promise, one needed to have the life of Noach and the patience of Job; he had neither.[26] Still, Abdulhamid continued to think very highly of the Pasha and benefitted from his advice until Hayreddin's death in 1890, especially on streamlining the administrative machinery and on improvement in the juridical and educational system. Abdulhamid even seems to have established a smooth working relationship with the Porte from 1881 to 1891. For the first half of this period, Mehmed Said Pasha ("the old fox") served as Grand Vizier with only brief interruptions. Mehmed Kâmil replaced him in September 1885, and stayed in office for six whole years until a heated debate erupted between him and the Sultan.

Kâmil Pasha (9/13/1885 - 9/13/1891):

A speech by Prime Minister Lord Salisbury in the British Parliament in August 1891 initiated the debate between the Sultan and Kâmil Pasha. Lord Salisbury had argued for the desirability of a constitutional assembly in the Ottoman Empire so that the administration of the Eastern provinces could be reformulated on the basis of greater autonomy to the Christians (Armenians) in these provinces. Abdulhamid dispatched a note to Kâmil, asking his opinion on Salisbury's speech. Kâmil argued that Salisbury's speech was tactical; it aimed to ward off pressure from the opposition party and from some politicians influenced by the Armenian propaganda. Otherwise, Britain still defended the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Kâmil also asserted that the Ottoman government would have acted wisely if it had concentrated on provincial and fiscal reforms instead of being oversensitive about parliamentary debates in Britain.

Abdulhamid was furious. He claimed that Salisbury's words represented a pledge of diplomatic support to certain Ottoman subjects if they rebelled against their legitimate sovereign. The Prime Minister's speech was an outright intervention in the internal affairs of the Ottoman State. Prompt retaliation was necessary; withdrawal of the Ambassador to London must be considered. Abdulhamid believed that the British had begun to talk about a constitutional regime for clear-cut objectives. Their policy aimed at the separation of the Rumelian and the Eastern Anatolian provinces and Syria from the Ottoman State, which would then be reduced to a small Turkish state around Konya. The British did not have in mind an Ottoman parliament similar to theirs, with an upper house of notables and a lower house of representatives of the same national-ethnic background. This type of a parliament, Abdulhamid held, would certainly help

establish a more responsible, progressive and harmonious rule. However, a multi-national and multi-religious parliament could only bring disorder and destruction in the poverty-stricken lands of the Ottoman State. This was precisely what the British wanted.

Kâmil continued to defend the British in a manner that earned him the nickname "**İngiliz**". He argued that the British still saw the Ottoman Empire as a bulwark against further Russian advance and upheld its integrity. Kâmil referred to his recent conversations with the British Ambassador, Sir William White, to verify his point. White had assured the Pasha of the good intentions of his government and had expressed his confidence in the intelligence of the Sultan, who soon would certainly realize that the wisest policy was to confide in his Grand Vizier. Kâmil fully agreed with the Ambassador, and continued his report with several examples which indicated that the Grand Vizier was not really in charge of the government. Several times the Palace had overruled the Porte's resolutions and had, thus, encouraged those concerned to pursue their business with the government directly through the Palace personnel, rather than through the Porte.

Abdulhamid, in response, cautioned Kâmil against failing to differentiate between becoming a subservient instrument of England and establishing a friendly relationship with her with the principle objective of defending the honor and independence of the Ottoman State. One had to be blind, argued the Sultan, to ignore the destructive intentions implicit in Salisbury's speech. Kâmil should know quite well that the government's objective was not to pursue Britain's footsteps in order to resist Russia, but it was to defend the integrity and independence of the State against all threats. As for the relations between the Porte and the Palace, the Sultan was willing to explain his motives on issues in which the Grand Vizier had thought himself to be unduly overruled. Yet, to hold that the Sultan was being "seduced by the earliest risers in the morning" was an inappropriate assertion. Unbelievable though it may sound, in his apologetic response, Kâmil once more hurried to Salisbury's and Britain's defense in terms of Russian hostilities. In due time, Abdulhamid asked him to resign and appointed Ahmed Cevad Pasha to his place.[27]

Cevad Pasha (9/4/1891 - 6/8/1895):

Cevad was one of the best educated commanders in the Ottoman Army and a hero of the 1877 Russo-Turkish War. Abdulhamid valued him greatly for his unquestionable merits and had a fatherly affection towards him, for he, too, was raised as an orphan. When Cevad Pasha was appointed Grand Vizier, he was only forty-one. He believed that sooner or later an all-out war would break out among the major powers. Given the geopolitical situation of the Ottoman State, it would be extremely difficult for her to stay out of this struggle. Yet, involvement in it, even on the winning side, would bring no benefits to the Ottoman State. Extreme precaution in relations with any power and constant readiness for all eventualities in order to maintain the full independence of the Sultanate should, therefore, be the guidelines of the government's policy.[28] Abdulhamid thought similarly and retained his confidence in Cevad until the eruption of armed clashes between the Armenians and the Kurds in the Eastern provinces in December 1894.

Cevad Pasha found himself caught between two fires during this crisis. The British Ambassador led his European colleagues in Istanbul in urging the Pasha to take swift

measures against the Kurds and to implement the long-awaited 'reforms' in the Eastern provinces. Cevad knew that this would be unacceptable to Abdulhamid. Bidding for time, he delayed any action. Meanwhile, the British began to assist the Armenians through their Consulates. Abdulhamid sent a dispatch to Cevad, rebuking him for failing to take a firm stand against the British intervention, which, he believed, intended to create not only an Armenia in Eastern provinces, but an Israel in Palestine and an Arabia in the Arabian Peninsula. Abdulhamid urged the Grand Vizier to cooperate closely with the Palace in offsetting the British pressure. He also asked Cevad's honest opinion on the type of reforms he thought were necessary for the improvement of the situation in the Eastern provinces.

Cevad submitted a memorandum in which he stated that by 'reform' the Europeans meant administrative autonomy in certain provinces of the Ottoman Empire. From the Ottoman point of view, however, reform could have only meant the improvement of the administration and judiciary in all provinces for all subjects. Considerable progress was already achieved in this realm, and more would be accomplished when better-trained officials and judges graduated in large numbers from the recently established schools.

There was, however, according to Cevad, a fundamental administrative problem that called for urgent attention. The formal lines of hierarchy should be observed more carefully. Viziers were His Majesty's trusted agents. So long as they were kept in office, they should not be by-passed under any circumstances in matters related to their area of responsibility. Otherwise, confusion and erosion of authority were inevitable. The governors, for example, communicated directly with the Palace, instead of through the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Likewise, they did not pay much heed to the orders dispatched from the Ministry. The situation was similar in other ministries. His Majesty was of course the ultimate authority in all matters; the channels of direct recourse to his justice should always remain open. This, however, should involve cases of unfair treatment, not the routine work of the government. Otherwise, it would be impossible for His Majesty to bear all the work load. Conflicting orders would emerge from the Palace, as sometimes happened, or decrees would be delayed, as happened most of the time.[29]

Abdulhamid did not comment on Cevad's letter except for requesting more detailed information. Cevad submitted a memorandum in which he emphasized the practical problems that lay before the government. Thus under Abdulhamid's rule, the existing laws and regulations had been improved upon and codified into an adequate legal basis for the most urgent improvements in the administration of the country. Also, significant progress had been made in the effective application of these laws and regulations. There was, however, much room for further progress. Equitable treatment of the subjects, fair taxation according to legal rates, the prevention of bribery and of official misconduct in fiscal matters and in the purchase of provisions, and the auditing of departmental expenditures called for more stringent application of the laws and regulations at hand. Public investments and education, agricultural credit services, the settlement of tribes, and the completion of population censuses required a more energetic approach. It was necessary to establish more effective and formal means of supervising the conduct of the provincial officials, which could be achieved by forming an inspection committee at the Porte, under the Grand Vizier. The committee could also serve as a Council of Administrative Reform.[30]

Cevad Pasha's last suggestion must be interpreted as a complaint about the Sultan's personal advisors who served as provincial inspectors responsible directly to the Sultan. Even a cursory glance at the informative reports prepared by these advisors[31] suggests that Cevad's objection must have been directed against the principle rather than the personalities involved. Indeed, his memorandum's main theme was the necessity of conducting all except military executive affairs through the Porte for reasons of efficiency. He took issue with the confusion created by the current ambiguity about the authorities and responsibilities of various departments and ministries. When some of the examples he mentioned are evaluated in the light of archival data, his point comes through more clearly. Police superintendents in the provinces, for example, communicated directly with the Director of the Police Department in Istanbul, circumventing the governors. The Director, in his turn, communicated directly with the Palace, quite frequently by-passing the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Grand Vizier. Various police reports in the archives[32] indicate that the Palace was kept informed even on trivial incidents.

What Cevad suggested was filtering the official communication at the Porte, so that only the "important" information reached the Palace. Similarly, all orders emanating from the Palace had to be communicated through the Porte. Otherwise, the officials would continue to appeal to as many as five or six superior offices on the same issue, while the ministers would still remain in uncertainty about how much authority they really had in handling any particular problem.[33]

Cevad's suggestion was unacceptable to the Sultan, as had been Hayreddin's similar proposition. The principle point on which Abdulhamid responded to Cevad was the determination of the basis on which issues would be considered "important" enough to be submitted to the Sultan's information and approval. He built his case around several examples. Cevad had acted imprudently in the face of foreign pressure during the last Armenian insurrection. He should try to persuade the Embassies that the Ottoman government needed time before its reform measures began to bear fruit. He should bring to their attention that not even their own, rich countries were quite free from the defects that they so vehemently opposed in the Ottoman State. Instead, Cevad had opted for settling various unresolved disputes between the Embassies and the government in their favor in order to silence them. The Sultan had no choice but to overrule the Porte's resolutions.

For example, upon the pressure of the British Embassy, the Porte had granted permission to a British missionary to reopen his school in Syria, which had been opportunely closed after a smallpox epidemic. Abdulhamid had overruled the Porte's decision, because he believed opening schools was a part of British tactics to eliminate the French influence in Syria, as they had done in Egypt. On the other hand, the Porte had granted concessions to French contractors for the construction and operation of the docks and tugboat line in Beirut, just to soothe the French Embassy. This could not be tolerated, Abdulhamid argued, because it would dangerously increase French influence in the area. The Porte had not forgotten the Russians either and had promised a favorable settlement of their disputed credit balance with the government. Finally, the Porte had submitted to the Sultan a resolution on the dismissal of several customs officials, as if it were an insignificant matter. Actually, these officials had confiscated jewelry illegally imported by some German and French postal officials. The French and German Embassies had pressured the Porte for the punishment of

the customs officials and for the return of the jewelry. Abdulhamid had refused to consent, for he believed this would constitute a precedent for yet another capitulatory right, throwing the administration of the customs into chaos.

According to Abdulhamid, Cevad's imprudent policy in all these incidents had placed the Palace in a difficult position. The Embassies blamed the Sultan for undoing what the Porte had done. The Sultan's sacred person came under malicious attack in the European press. Had the Grand Vizier adopted the Sultan's objectives as his own and made sure to think in similar terms with him (by putting "the happiness and salvation of the state and the nation, and the protection of the Muslim **umma**" before any other consideration), then the ambassadors would be in a weaker position to exert pressure against the government. Abdulhamid concluded his letter by stating that he had no intention to vest all the executive power in the Porte. The formation of an Inspection Council at the Porte and the concentration of all information there would cause the accumulation of undue power in the hands of the Grand Vizier, who would soon turn into a "dictator".[34]

Cevad sent an apologetic response to the Sultan. He acknowledged that the Sultan must have the final word on all issues. He also reasserted the Ottoman tradition that necessitated the attribution of good deeds to the Sultan and the bad to the ministers. Cevad argued that he had kept this tradition in mind in his relations with the Embassies. Unfortunately, no matter what the ministers said or did, every deed was attributed to the Palace, for everybody believed that the locus of power rested there. Cevad's frank but loyal suggestions had intended to alter this image for the benefit of the Sultanate.[35]

Abdulhamid no doubt felt uneasy about Cevad's words. A certain degree of panic is evident in the emotional tone of his letters to the Grand Vizier. He must have been fully aware that it was not as easy as he had suggested for Cevad to resist foreign pressure. He himself had been obliged to accept some of the concessions demanded by the powers. He blamed Cevad for his softness; in reality, he was condemning Ottoman vulnerability against foreign pressure. It was probably this realization and the Sultan's fatherly affection towards Cevad that made him keep the Grand Vizier at his post, until yet another showdown erupted between the government and the powers.

Early in May 1895, Britain, France and Russia presented to the Porte a scheme of administrative reform which, if implemented, would turn the Eastern provinces into a virtually autonomous region under foreign protection. Cevad accepted the scheme and defended it as a lesser evil then the all-out rebellion of the Armenians. Abdulhamid refused to give in, planning to take full advantage of the differences between the powers.[36] He berated Cevad for his uncourageous policy and asked him to resign. The Sultan commented on the occasion that,

> God will witness that I have never thought of my own interests but those of my religion, nation and country. That is why I have made so many enemies. Had I thought of myself, I would have indulged in pleasures and would pass [a good] time by distributing favors to the people [around me]...
>
> I cannot imagine a more detrimental situation than granting near-autonomy to the Armenians on top of the privileges that they have already attained

> with the Berlin Treaty. How can I tolerate, then, a vizier who puts his approving stamp upon such a suggestion? This is a whirlpool that once one is caught in it, one will never be able to rescue himself from it. My duties towards my religion, state and country -which I must put before everthing else- obliges me to prevent this calamity... [37]

Abdulhamid appointed Küçük Said Pasha in Cevad's place. Said's Grand Vizirate did not last very long. In September 1895, the Armenians held demonstrations in Istanbul for an autonomous Armenia. Street fights broke out between the Armenian and Muslim militia. Under heavy pressure from the British Embassy, Said fell into a panic and asked in vain for the Sultan's permission to call in the army. Said resigned and Abdulhamid brought **İngiliz** Kâmil to the Grand Vizirate, in view of his intimate relations with the British diplomats.[38] Kâmil managed to bring the disorders in the Capital under control by using the regular police force, but he soon ran into trouble with the Sultan.

Kâmil Pasha (10/2/1895 - 11/7/1895):

Barely three weeks in office, Kâmil presented a memorandum to the Sultan about what must be done to deal with internal problems and external pressure. Above all, the prestige of the government had to be restored by reinstating the Porte's powers. Conspicuously, Kâmil once more based his arguments on his interviews with foreign ambassadors. According to Kâmil, the French Ambassador, M. Cambon had reasserted that his government still upheld the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. He could not guarantee, however, that this would continue forever. The course that the Ottoman government followed had disheartened its friends in the Western world, while it had created a general mood of discontentment among the Ottoman subjects, Muslim and Christian alike. Unfortunately, His Majesty the Sultan was held responsible for this situation, because the affairs were directed from the Palace.

Kâmil argued that he had promptly defended the Sultan by bringing to M. Cambon's attention that Cevad Pasha's passivity had reduced the Sultan to the level of a Grand Vizier and had thus exposed his sacred prestige to erosive criticism. M. Cambon had agreed with Kâmil. He had also expressed his confidence in the Sultan's common sense. His Majesty would surely realize the necessity of reinstating the Porte's powers, if only he shook off the influence of his misinformed and opportunistic courtiers, and had greater confidence in hiz viziers. Finally, M. Cambon had told Kâmil that there was full agreement between him and British Ambassador Currie who had gone to London to receive new instruction from his government.

On the basis of this interview with the French Ambassador and of his earlier contacts with the British Ambassador, Kâmil recommended to the Sultan a watchful policy against Russia, friendlier relations with Britain and France, and the restoration of the Porte's power to what it had been at the time of his glorious father Abdulmecid and uncle Abdulaziz (that is the time of the **Tanzimat** era). Then, Kâmil could easily deal with the internal and external problems.[39]

Upon receiving Kâmil's memorandum, Abdulhamid immediately dispatched his aides to contact the Embassies to inquire into the truth of Kâmil's words. The Sultan's Armenian policy was based on the difference between France and Britain, and on

friendly relations with Russia and Germany. If Britain and France had resolved their differences as Kâmil asserted, then the bottom of the Sultan's policy would surely have fallen out. His aides, however, came back with information that clearly indicated the isolation of the British in their drive for taking harsh measures against the Sultan. Abdulhamid concluded that Kâmil was threatening him with foreign intervention in order to get the reins of the State into his own hands. He was furious. He asked for Kâmil's immediate resignation and appointed Halil Rifat in his stead.

Halil Rifat Pasha (11/7/1895 - 11/9/1901):

Three days before his appointment, Halil Rifat had submitted a memorandum to the Sultan which read like a pledge to protect the Sultan against foreign pressure.

> The Porte's most important duty is to make the Ambassadors realize and acknowledge in all matters the sanctity, sublimity and irresponsibility **[kudsiyyet, ulviyyet ve gayr-i mesuliyyet]** of the Sultan, the Shadow of Allah. In order to protect these basic foundations of the State's and Religion's existence against even the slighest impairment, the Porte must step forward to confront with perseverance any pressure from any Embassy which is displeased by and takes issue with the deeds of the Sublime Sultanate, when the Embassy's interests are affected adversely.
>
> The present situation of the State is not as grave as some imprudent people take it to be. Many other states have gone through similar stages. The benevolent guidance of His Majesty is sufficient assurance for the elimination of the problems at hand. As already stated, it is a sacred duty upon the ministers and officials to act in a way worthy of the outstanding firmness, diligence, and perseverance of His Majesty, to stand up against all problems and foreign pressure, and to take all responsibility on their own shoulders in order to relieve the... [Sultan] from disturbance.[40]

These were the words Abdulhamid expected to hear from a Grand Vizier. Yet, it took Halil Rifat only four months in office before he submitted a draft of a decree which he wished to have Abdulhamid approve and circulate. "We have been informed", The Sultan was asked to say.

> ...that the sound and secure principle of abiding by the channels of authority **[merci'iyyet]** is not observed closely, even though the duties of the officials of all ranks are clearly defined in our laws and regulations. The supervision of this matter... [is] among the revered stewardship duties of the Grand Vizirate. As the principle of abiding by the channels of authority is an absolute necessity for the orderly conduct of the affairs of the government, we hereby reaffirm this duty and authority of the Grand Vizier. The principle of going through the authority channels step by step in all affairs in accordance with the existing regulations must be observed closely by the ministers and governors, as well as the officials who work under them...[41]

Abdulhamid was unmoved. He would not loosen his grip on the government at a time when he believed the British were hard at work to engineer his deposition and the partition of the Ottoman State.[42] Indeed, around 1895/6, Prime Minister Lord

"Salisbury felt that Abdulhamid should be deposed", while the British diplomats were busy trying to resolve the differences among the powers to bring about the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire.[43]

Abdulhamid pursued a two-fold strategy against the British drive. While he resisted foreign pressure as much as the differences among the powers allowed, wherever he had to yield, he used the Porte as a shield to thwart the commitments Britain and other powers imposed upon the government. Whenever the Porte was forced to consent to the implementation of a set of 'reform measures' after extended negotiations, Abdulhamid could instruct the provincial inspectors, governors or other officials to delay action on the formal orders of the Porte until further notice from the Sultan.[44] In this way, he could test how much of the enforced measures could be nullified, while he could always use the Porte as an excuse for inability to carry these measures out. Abdulhamid had applied this strategy sucessfully before, in the difficult years of 1878-82, and he was trying it again in the Armenian crisis of 1894-96.

Cevad had been caught unaware of the Sultan's strategy at the outbreak of the crisis, while his more experienced (and pro-British) successors, Said and Kâmil had refused to abide by it at all.[45] In his earlier memorandum, Halil Rifat had agreed to use his official powers to cover the Sultan's moves. His draft-decree, however, indicates that Abdulhamid did not always bother to brief the Grand Vizier on what he was supposed to cover. Halil Rifat found himself in the same impasse that had driven his predecessors out of office. He was expected to shoulder the enormous responsibility of facing the ambassadors' demands for 'reform' or economic concession with inadequate power and information. Unlike his predecessors, Halil Rifat survived the challenge. Before long, the Sultan and the Grand Vizier worked out their differences. Together, they successfully pulled the government through not only the Armenian crisis, but also the Greek War of 1897.

It is meaningful to notice that after 1896, the powers' attention had switched to the Far East and remained there well into 1902, leaving the Ottomans more or less alone. This must be one of the important reasons for Abdulhamid's even relationship with the Porte under Halil Rifat, who reamined in office for six years until his death in November 1901. Abdulhamid always remembered him as a "thorough Grand Vizier";[46] never again were the Sultan's relation with the Porte so smooth.

Abdulhamid's final years in power (1901 - 1909):

The first Macedonian crisis towards the end of 1902 reactivated the tension between the Porte and the Palace. Grand Vizier Küçük Said Pasha, who had been in office since Halil Rifat's death, got involved in an exchange of subtle notes and memoranda with Abdulhamid. Beneath the evasive style of his communication was a familiar story. Said insisted on the acceptance of British demands; Abdulhamid put the breaks on him through pro-German ministers in the Council by resorting to his usual delay tactics so that he could get away with minimal concessions.[47]

This time, Abdulhamid was operating from a fundamental disadvantage. Intensified hostility and rigid alliances among the major powers had begun to undermine Ottoman diplomatic maneuvarability. In a desperate effort to regain his flexibility, Abdulhamid

sought an honorable compromise with the British without losing the security of German support. He appointed the pro-German Mehmed Ferid Pasha to the Grand Vizirate. At the same time, he asked the pro-British ministers in the Council to keep an eye on Ferid. It became virtually impossible for the Council to get any work done, while the Sultan aroused Germany's suspicion without winning the British over. Meantime, Abdulhamid's desperate moves eroded the Porte's authority as well as his own.[48]

Ottoman officials and officers of various ranks and political forces that produced Abdulhamid's downfall can serve as a convenient vantage point of evaluation of the conflict between the Porte and the Palace, which in fact represented the deterioration of authority in the Ottoman State.

THE DETERIORATION OF THE AUTHORITY STRUCTURE

From Tunuslu Hayreddin's earlier memoranda to Halil Rifat's draft-decree and Said Pasha's communication, all fervent debates between the Sultan and the Grand Viziers took place amid diplomatic crises. Kâmil's and Cevad's cases are the most illustrative. The former waited six long years and the latter over three before they vociferated against the Sultan's intervention in the Porte's business. Obviously, the ambassadors worked harder on the Grand and other viziers at times of diplomatic crisis, while Abdulhamid's discretion intensified. Thus, foreign influence constituted a crucial dimension of the tension between the Porte and the Palace. It was the internal deterioration of the structure of Ottoman authority, however, which made that influence so detrimental as to cause the ultimate dismemberment of the State. Abdulhamid's efforts to patch up the structure were in vain.

Abdulhamid opposed the 'reforms' imposed by foreign powers, but he did advocate measures which he believed were progressive from the Ottoman point of view. His reign bore witness to respectable accomplishments in building and operating public land and water ways, railroads, the telegraph and other infrastructural public works. A considerable effort was made to improve and elaborate juridical and public security services in conformity with local needs and customs. General public education was taken more seriously than ever in Ottoman history. An effort was made to form institutions which supplied credit and technical advice to agricultural procedures. Many schools were established and the old ones improved with the specific purpose of training a corps of technical government personnel (such as doctors, engineers, veterinarians, agricultural experts, teachers, officers, etc.), and better public administrators and jurists. In addition, official statistics and filing systems were improved, while elaborate regulations governing the recruitment, promotion, retirement and dismissal of the government personnel were enacted and put to application.[49] Except in the highest echelons, the administrative machinery became highly structured, marking a fundamental improvement over the situation described in detail in Hayreddin's memoranda.

This new, "bureaucratic"[50] administrative machinery that penetrated deeper into the society, however, was plagued by vital shortcomings. There were significant differences between the salaries of the highest ranking, intermediate and lower bureaucrats, leading to considerable friction within the bureaucracy. Given the financially destitute government, payments were left in arrears quite frequently. This situation

encouraged, even justified bribery, especially among the petty officials whose salaries hardly sufficed to support a life style in keeping with their social status. Bribery became a serious problem that impaired government's image, as the frequency and variety of ways in which it came in contact with the populace intensified through the years.[51]

Intermediate bureaucrats were better off, relatively, although they, too, suffered from payment delays. The graduates of the newly established technical schools (including the young drill and staff officers) belonged to his group. It was among these technocrats that the most formidable internal opposition to Abdulhamid's regime took root. They were the ones who felt most bitterly the contradictions of the times.

At the technical schools Western sciences and languages were taught alongside a traditional view of Ottoman history and culture. Most of these schools were located in Istanbul, the cosmopolitanism of which contrasted charply with the provincial background of the majority of the students. With only a fragmented but irreversible exposition to Westernized cultural tastes, life styles and social expectations, most of the graduates were dispatched to serve in remote places, once more to confront the harsh realities of the Empire. Each bureaucrat responded differently to these divergent influences, puzzled between feelings of rootlessness and reverence toward the past, and ambivalent and romantic idealism toward the future. To whatever degree their minds converged, it reflected a general contempt for their contemporary conditions and the necessity for establishing a new sense of identity.[52]

Other contradictions that embittered these young bureaucrats were related to the politicized nature of the upper reaches of the Ottoman officialdom. Each pasha was at once an administrative expert and a political figure, susceptible to the influence of different interest groups. Petitioning, persuasion, shared profits, bribery and similar ways and means were available in influencing a pasha, according to the nature of the business at hand as well as the personality and current power of the pasha in question.

Senior Ottoman officials (including those in the **ilmiye**, law-education career) traditionally had been the political elite of the Ottoman society. Unlike the traditional order, however, the senior officials no longer adhered to a coherent political moral code. Furthermore, the enormous intensity of contradictory foreign demands caused friction among officials who articulated the interests and views of different powers as well as between themselves and officials who articulated local interests and traditional views. The emphasis here is not so much on offical corruption as on the general sense of directionless, the confussion about political objectives that reigned in the minds of most pashas. This was a direct consequence, a legacy of the era of 'reorganization' (**Tanzimat**) which had corroded the economic, political and social integrity of the Ottoman Empire, and had 'reformed' the Ottoman polity into a political **milieu** of incompatible interests and values.[53]

Despite the availability of a number of self-secrificing and extremely capable pashas, the Ottomans found it difficult to act in consort unless under a cunning arbitrator. Abdulhamid served as that arbitrator. He did not intend to alter radically the existing order of things. He carefully abstained from uprooting the semi-aristocratic pretensions that pashas had gained through the **Tanzimat.**[54] For one thing, he was

outspokenly frightened "to disturb this nest of wasps", who had well-demonstrated their capability of seating and unseating sultans.[55] For another, Abdulhamid believed that it was "the royal fountain of favor" which produced "the best harvest on the field of sovereignty."[56] By distributing and withholding his favor and the more powerful positions within the government, he played the pashas off against one another, thereby keeping their conflicting interests and views in check. He also subjected the resolutions submitted by the Porte to a thorough reexamination. In this way, he sought personally to gain a comprehensive picture as well as the certainty of being in a position to counteract or, at least, to delay the demands which he deemed contrary to the interests of the State.

Abdulhamid's acumen provided the Ottoman administrative-political leadership with a legitimate arbitrator, the absence of which had proven to create chaos as in the 1870's.[57] The solution of one problem, however, induced others. Abdulhamid's necessarily cumbersome maneuvers and his concern for thoroughness inevitably caused delays in the preparation of administrative decisions at a time when the increasing technical demands of the administration necessitated quick and unambiguous responses. Furthermore, Abdulhamid's favoritism in his relations with the senior officials contrasted sharply with the universalistic achievement values and administrative rationality emphasized for the rank and file bureaucrats. The difference in criteria represented an effort to distinguish the political from the administrative. It ran counter, however, to the Ottoman tradition which viewed the incumbents of all governmental positions as politically privileged equals ruling over the society. Accepted norms of differentiation were established along lines of the quality of one's education and seniority of service rather than family background.[58] During Abdulhamid's reign, however, sons of pashas were automatically accepted into the best schools and got leisurely commissions in the better parts of the Empire (regardless of their real success at school), and were promoted faster than the more humble graduates of the same schools. The new bureaucrats (technocrats) considered themselves deprived of advancement opportunities.[59]

This grievance and the cumbersome procedures at the helm of government reinforced the general sense of alienation among the young bureaucrats. They began to organize in opposition groups which seriously challenged the integrity and effectiveness of the entire administration as well as the armed forces. Caught up between the pressure of the junior bureaucrats from below and of the Sultan from above, the Ottoman pashas fell into desparation and abandoned whatever hopes they still nourished about the future of the State.[60]

Abdulhamid complained bitterly about the situation (1893):

> [a] highly regrettable situation is that quite a few of the leading statesmen... are very pessimistic about the survival of the Sublime State; so much so that they do not care for the future of the State. They want to enjoy their own times fully. Those from among them who by nature have a disposition towards misappropriation consider anything they can pocket a profit. They thus take the inappropriate road of the destruction of the state coffers as well as of the people and the country.[61]

The pessimism of the statesmen was ill-founded according to the Sultan. Ottoman lands were rich and potentially capable of fostering a prosperous economy and a well-financed government with the devoted application of modern technology and sciences. He believed that the examples of Greece and Bulgaria, which were once parts of the Ottoman state and which prospered in a short time thereafter, provided sufficient evidence to prove his point. If only the statesmen paid attention to such examples and felt more strongly about the future of the country, the Ottoman State could once more prosper and acquire its due position among the leading states of the world.[62]

Abdulhamid was daydreaming. Nothing illustrates the point better than the end of the Ottoman mission to Japan in 1891.[63] Two groups of Japanese businessmen and soldier-diplomats visited Istanbul in 1880 and 1886. The Japanese amazed the Istanbul people, including the Sultan, with their dignity, agility and warm smiles. Abdulhamid sent precious presents back to the Mikado with the Japanese missions. Eventually, a Turkish mission returned the visits on board the **Ertuğrul** in 1891. Osman Pasha, the youngest and the most brilliant admiral of the Ottoman Navy, was the commander of the **Ertuğrul** and the head of the delegation. The Ottoman mission's extended visit of Japan proved to be a success. Eventually, Osman Pasha sent a telegram to Istanbul, informing the Palace of the successful accomplishment of the mission and the exact date and hour of departure. When the time for the **Ertuğrul** to weigh anchor came, the Japanese experts warned the Admiral about the approach of a severe storm and begged him to postpone his departure. Osman Pasha refused, being the diligent, conscientious and courageous Ottoman officer that he was. The end of the story was sad. The **Ertuğrul** was wrecked by the storm, and only sixty-nine sailors out of 607 could be rescued. Osman Pasha was among the 'martyrs'.[64]

Osman Pasha's demise is informative. He was typical of the best that Ottoman culture could produce. One cannot help comparing him to Enver Pasha, the idolized leader of the radical officers who deposed Abdulhamid. Osman wrecked the best Ottoman warship in Japanese waters; Enver ruined the best Ottoman army on the Sarıkamış mountains in an effort to drive through a winter storm early in the First World War. Both were acting out of blind idealism and courage, and in accordance with the highest virtues of the Ottoman elite culture. The same virtues were well-known to the Japanese as well. Unlike the Japanese, however, the Ottomans were operating within a deteriorating political order in which scientific prudence figured only as a travesty of itself.[64]

NOTES

1 Based on Randall Collins, "A Comparative Approach to Political Sociology," **State and Society**, ed. by R. Bendix **et al**, Boston, 1968, 42-67, here 48-61.

2 The term "Ottomans" is used in a technical sense, denoting the Ottoman political elite. They were the incumbents of the more important governmental positions. That these people constituted the political elite of the Ottoman State is an undisputed point among the Ottomanists. All officials had the status of a privileged political group, both in theory and in practice, but among them only those who had the best education and proper connections had the chance of reaching the top governmental positions. There they formed a small elite group which wielded power dispro-

portionate to its number, Most but by no means all of them had the administrative rank of "pasha".

3 The concept of the "structure of authority" is used after Reinhard Bendix, "Introduction", **State and Society**, 9; also cf. 295-6 and 550-552.

4 For a treatment of the new world order that was closing in on the Ottomans and of the general traits of the 19th century Ottoman history see E. D. Akarlı, "The Problems of External Pressures, Power Struggles, and Budgetary Deficits in Ottoman Politics Under Abdulhamid II (1876-1909): Origins and Solutions," unpublished PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1976 (henceforth, "Problems"), 208-221, and **passim.**

5 Akarlı, "Problems", 78-98.

6 For a more detailed treatment of the debates and developments concerning the Constitution of 1876 see Akarlı, "Problems", 98-103; Roderic Davison, **Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876**, Princeton, 1963, 358-408; Niyazi Berkes, **The Development of Secularism in Turkey**, Montreal, 1964; 223-250; **idem, Türkiye'de Çağdaşlaşma**, Ankara, 1973, 269-296; Robert Deveraux, **The First Ottoman Constitutional Period**, Baltimore, 1963. For texts of the Constitution see. A.Ş. Gözübüyük and S. Kili (eds.), **Türk Anayasa Metinleri**, Ankara, 1957, 25-38, and **American Journal of International Law, Supplement: Official Documents**, II (1908), 367-387.

7 Davison, **Reform**, 386-7.

8 Said Halim Paşa, **Buhranlarımız**, ed. by M.E. Düzdağ, Istanbul, 1974, 45-71.

9 See Akarlı, "Problems", Ch. I.

10 Tahsin Paşa, **Abdulhamid: Yıldız Hatıraları**, Istanbul, 1931, 19-21.

11 Abdulhamid, **Siyasi Hâtırâtım**, Istanbul, 1974, 102-103.

12 See Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi, **The Surest Path**, tr. ed. intr. by L.C. Brown, Cambridge, Mass., 1967. Turkish text: Hayreddin Paşa, **Mukaddeme-i Akvâm ul-Mesâlik fî Ma'rifet u Ahvâl il-Memâlik**, Dersaadet, 1296 [1878]. For Hayreddin's schievements in Tunisia see Brown's Introduction and Mongi Smida, **Khereddine: Ministre réformateur, 1873-1877**, Tunis, 1970.

13 İbnülemin M. K. İnal, **Osmanlı Devrinde Son Sadrıâzamlar**, Istanbul, 1940-53, p. 900.

14 Hayreddin Pasha's report on the meeting of the Council of Ministers. c. May-June, 1879, Başbakanlık Arşivi, Yıldız Esas Evrakı (henceforth, YEE), 31/71/39/84.

15 Hayreddin's program presented to the Sultan, March 1879, summarized in İnal, **Son Sadrıâzamlar**, 905-906; Hayreddin's reports on the meetings of the Council of Ministers, June-July 1879, YEE: 24/150/162/VIII, defter V, pp. 60-72, and YEE: 31/1519/97/80.

16 See footnote 49 below.

17 Hayreddin's reports on the meetings of the Council and the Special Committee, c. May-June 1879, YEE: 31/71/39/84, XIII, gömlek, vesika vii a. For Hayreddin's draft see YEE: 31/2252/97/80, c. June 1879.

18 YEE: 31/1520/97/80, June 1879.

19 YEE: 31/1521/97/80, July 1879.

20 M. Z. Pâkalın, **Son Sadrıâzamlar ve Başvekiller**, 5 vols., Istanbul, 1940-48, IV, pp. 335-337; İnal, **Son Sadrıâzamlar**, pp. 908-9; YEE: 31/97-III/97/80.

21 YEE: 24/150/162/VIII, defter VII, pp. 478-479, Aug. 4, 1879.

22 **Ibid.**, pp. 489-494.

23 YEE: 31/1522/97/80, April 1880; YEE: 31/1523/97/80, May 1880; YEE: 31/1524/97/80, June 1880, and YEE: 31/1525/97/80, ves. I, July 1880.

24 YEE: 31/1525/97/80, ves 2 and 3. Compare these views with Namık Kemal's criticism of Hayreddin's **The Surest Path**, summarized in Şerif Mardin, **The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought**, Princeton, 1962, 394-395.

25 YEE: 31/1819/97/80, Feb. 1881; YEE: 31/1526/97/80, Feb. 1881.

26 İnal, **Son Sadrıâzamlar**, 933.

27 Records of the communication between Abdulhamid and Kâmil Pasha, March 1891, transliterated in İnal, **Son Sadrıâzamlar**, pp. 1458-1465.

28 Cevad Pasha's memorandum, Jan. 1892, transliterated in **ibid.**, pp. 1532-1534.

29 The records of the communication between the Sultan and the Grand Vizier, Dec. 1894, transliterated in **ibid.**, pp. 1485-8.

30 Cevad's memorandum, Feb. 1895, transliterated in **ibid.** pp. 1488-1492.

31 Even adverse accounts agree that Abdulhamid made a special effort to select well-trained, diligent and devoted bureaucrats for his immediate entourage, except for bodyguard positions, in which case he emphasized absolute loyalty and naivité; see Osman Nuri, **Abdulhamid-i Sâni ve Devr-i Saltanatı**, 3 vols., Istanbul, 1327, II, 499-500. Also see Halit Z. Uşaklıgil, **Kırk Yıl**, Istanbul, 1969, p. 499. Most of the reports of Abdulhamid's advisors are preserved under Kısım 14 of the Yıldız Collection.

32 See, e.g., the two registers in YEE: 38/2480/145/IX and the relevant pages of the register in YEE: 38/2587/145/IX.

33 Cevad's memorandum, Feb. 1895, transliterated in İnal, **Son Sadrıâzamlar**, 1488-1492.

34 Records of the communication between the Place and the Porte, April 1894, transliterated in **ibid.**, 1495-1498.

35 **Ibid.**, pp. 1497-98.

36 M. S. Anderson, **The Eastern Question, 1774-1923**, London etc., 1968, pp. 254-255, and İ.H. Dânişmend, **İzahlı Osmanlı Tarihi Kronolojisi**, 4 vols., Istanbul, 1947-1955, IV, 333-334.

37 Records of the communication between the Porte and the Palace transliterated in İnal, **Son Sadrıâzamlar**, 1498-1500, the Sultan's words on pp. 1499-1500.

38 **Ibid.**, 1369; Dânişmend, IV, 334-335.

39 Kâmil's memorandum, Nov. 1895, transliterated in İnal, **Son Sadrıâzamlar**, partly on pp. 1369-72, and partly on pp. 1466-68.

04 Rifat's letter dating November 4, 1895, transliterated in **ibid.**, p. 1540.

41 Halil Rifat's draft dating March 10, 1896, transliterated in **ibid.**, 1550-1551.

42 E. Z. Karal, **Osmanlı Tarihi**, vol. VIII: **1. Meşrutiyet ve İstibdat Devirleri, 1876-1908**, Ankara, 1962, p. 143.

43 Anderson, pp. 255-259, quotation p. 257.

44 See Abdulhamid's instructions to Inspector Raif Pasha, c. 1896, YEE: 9/2610/72/4, esp. op. 2-3. Cf. Stephan Duguid, "The Politics of Unity," **Middle Eastern Studies**, IX/2 (May 1973), 139-159, esp. p. 142. The intensity of foreign pressure cannot be overemphasized, see Akarlı, "Problems", Ch. I.

45 It is instructive to notice that Said and Kâmil Pashas had taken asylum in the British Embassy and put themselves under British protection to avoid further pressure from the Sultan. See İnal, **Son Sadrıâzamlar**, pp. 1027-1043, 1052, and 1372-79; Pâkalın, I, 249, and Karal, VIII, 276-278.

46 Âtıf Hüseyin's conversations with Abdulhamid, Türk Tarih Kurumu Library, Y-255, defter X, pp. 103-104. Also see İnal, **Son Sadrıâzamlar**, pp. 1603 and 1615.

47 Said Paşa, **Hâtırât,** 3 vols., Dersaadet, 1328, II, 177-266, esp. 235, Cf. Pâkalın, V, 112-141. Pro-German ministers in question here were Mehmed Ferid and Mahmud Rıza Pashas.

48 İnal, **Son Sadrıâzamlar,** pp. 1603-1633 in the light of Akarlı, "Problems", Ch. I.

49 For economic measures see **ibid.**, Ch. III. For public and technical educational reforms see O.N. Ergin, **Türkiye Maarif Tarihi,** 5 vols., Istanbul, 1940-45, vols. III and IV, and A. M. Kazamias, **Education and Quest for Modernity in Turkey,** London, 1966, pp. 25-41. For public security and juridical improvements see Osman Nuri, II, 700ff. For regulations on government bureaucracy see Karal, VIII, 331-341. Also see for general improvements, Ş. Mardin, "The Modernization of Social Communication in the Ottoman Empire," to be published in **Communication and Propaganda in World History** ed. by H.D. Lasswell **et al.**

50 One can denote the order described by Hayreddin Pasha as "patrimonial", and the new order as "bureaucratic", after Weber. See Max Weber, **The Theory of Social and Economic Organization,** tr. by A. M. Henderson, and T. Parsons, New York and London, 1964, pp. 328-358.

51 YEE: 14/389/126/9, n.d., Şemseddin Sami's report to the Sultan on provincial officials; YEE: 14/1299/126/10, Hakkı Pasha's memorandum, March 1891, esp. p. 4; YEE: 14/2287/126/11, Şakir Pasha's report to the Sultan, July 1897, pp. 118-122, 129ff, and 41-43. For Abdulhamid's comments on bribery see **Siyâsî Hâtırâtım, p. 91.**

52 For an able treatment of the complex reaction of these young bureaucrats to their unenviable dilemmas see Şerif Mardin's works: **Jön Türklerin Siyasî Fikirleri,** Ankara, 1965; **Continuity and Change in the Ideas of the Young Turks,** Ankara, 1969; "Libertarian Movements in the Ottoman Empire, 1875-95," **The Middle East Journal,** XVI (Spring 1962), 169-182; "Tanzimattan Sonra Aşırı Batılılaşma," **Türkiye: Coğrafî ve Sosyal Araştırmalar,** ed. by E. Tümertekin **et al,** Istanbul, 1971, 411-458; and "Ideology, Student Identity, and Professional Role: Istanbul, 1889," unpublished paper, Dec. 1972, Princeton University.

Also see Said Halil Pasha's articles in **Buhranlarımız,** and two reports presented to Abdulhamid: YEE: 14/1187/126/9, and YEE: 14/1145/126/9, no. date. In the second report, the writer has the following comment to make: "Presently, many administrators, who know very little even about their mother tongue, let alone the language of their religion, procure the impudence of refuting the Sultanate and the State and even the prophethood of the Prophet as soon as they learn a little bit of something in Western languages." (p. 4).

53 See Akarlı, "Problems," 84-98, also 13-29.

54 Ş. Mardin, "Power, Civil Society and Culture in the Ottoman Empire," **Comparative Studies in Society and History,** XI (1969), 277.

55 Abdulhamid, **Siyâsî Hâtırâtım,** 71. Also see A. Vambéry, "Personal Recollections of Abdul Hamid II and His Court," **The 19th Century and After,** LXVI (June and July 1909), 79. For the role of pashas in deposing sultans see Davison, **Reform,** Ch. IX: "The Year of the Three Sultans" (pp. 311-357).

56 Vambéry, **The 19th Century,** LXVI, 71. Also see Tahsin Paşa, 42-44.

57 For a detailed description of the political events of the 1870's see Davison, **Reform,** Ch. VIII: "The Period of Chaos" (pp. 270-310).

58 F.W. Frey, "Patterns of Elite Politics in Turkey," **Political Elites in the Middle East,** ed. by G. Lenczowski, Washington, D.C., 1975, pp. 44-45.

59 Mardin, "Istanbul, 1889" (1972), pp. 22-29, 40-43. For numerous petitions of senior officials imploring for the Sultan's favor about their children and relatives see Kısım 15 of the Yıldız Collection.

60 See Said Pasha's comments quoted in İnal, **Son Sadrıâzamlar,** pp. 1238-1239, c. 1890. Also see Halil Rifat's memorandum quoted above. If Saffet Pasha's letter to Sadullah Pasha (transliterated in İnal, **Son Sadrıâzamlar,** pp. 889-892) in April 1879 and Nusret Pasha's memorandum to the Sultan (YEE: 14/1147/126/9), c. 1878, are evidence of the earlier state of mind of the pashas, one cannot argue that the situation had changed much for worse or better.

61 YEE: 9/1820/72/4, c. 1893.

62 Ibid., 6-7. Compare with YEE: 11/1325/120/5, the closing page, and Siyasî Hâtırâtım, 73 and 76.

63 Ziya Şakir reproduced the story from the contemporary newspapers, Sultan Hamit ve Mikado, Istanbul, 1943.

64 See Asım Şen, "The Role of Technological Change in Economic Development: The Lesson of Japan For Presently Developing Countries", unpublished PhD dissertation, New Brunswich, Rutgers University, January 1979.

II ABDÜLHAMİD DÖNEMİNDE (1876-1909) İKTİDAR BUNALIMI

ÖZET

Her toplumun siyasi önderleri arasında çatışma olması olağandır. Bu çatışmalar, çelişen maddi ve manevi çıkar ve değerlerin önce dile getirilmesini, sonra uzlaştırılmasını sağlar. Siyasi sorunlar, genellikle, çatışan tarafların daha önce üstünde iyi kötü anlaşmaya vardıkları belli ilke ve kurallar çerçevesinde ve belli kurumlar içinde sonuçlandırılır. Böyle olmazsa, siyasi mücadele kargaşaya dönüşür ve ortaya, siyaset bilimcilerinin tabiriyle, bir "yetke (otorite) bunalımı" çıkar. Bu ise siyaset makinasının gereğince işlemediğini ve yasallık taşımadığını, yani siyasi kararların toplum gözünde geçerli sayılmadığını ve saygıya ve uyulmaya değer görülmediğini ifade eder.

Osmanlılar, 19. yüzyılda işte böyle bir kargaşa içine düştüler. Batı'nın güdümünde kurulan yeni dünyada tutunabilmek umuduyla ama Batı'nın baskısı altında girişilen, yönetim ve siyaset kurumlarını yeniden-düzenleme çabaları olumlu sonuç vermek şöyle dursun, işleri büsbütün karıştırdı. Çıkar çatışmalarının büyük siyasi istikrarsızlıklara yol açmadan uzlaşmasını mümkün kılacak belli bir yetke yapısı bir türlü oluşturulamadı.

Bu durum ile toplumsal kuruluşun çözülüşü ve sınıfsal yapının uğradığı önemli değişiklikler arasında yakın ilgi vardır. Ama elinizdeki yazı, sorunun iyiden iyiye belirginleştiği II. Abdülhamid dönemindeki halini ve salt üst yapısal görünümlerini irdelemekle yetinmektedir. Sultanla sadrazamlar arasındaki tartışma ve yazışmalar ve başka yardımcı resmi belgeler ışığında, II. Abdülhamid dönemi boyunca siyasi düzenin yasallığının nasıl kemirildiği, siyasi kuvvet kavgasının ve iktidar kullanımının nasıl giderek kuralsızlaştığı anlatılmaktadır. Siyasi kararların alınma süreciyle bunların uygulanmasının, yani siyasetle idarenin nasıl birbirine karışarak dolanıp kaldığı gösterilmeye çalışılmaktadır. Çıkar çatışmalarını uzlaştırabilecek örgütlenmenin gerçekleştirilememesine bağlı olarak da Osmanlı Devleti'nin içeride ve dışarıda nasıl güçsüz düştüğüne değinilmektedir.