In an essay written in about 1837, the Ottoman statesman Sadık Rifat Pasha uses the phrase düvel-i Avrupa hukûmetleri, in a context where these words clearly mean “the governments of the states of Europe”. The words devlet and hukûmet were already in common use at that time, but the formulation in this phrase, with the implied distinction between the state (devlet) as an abstract and permanent embodiment of authority, and the government (hukûmet) as the human and impermanent body of persons exercising that authority, is new in Ottoman and therefore in Islamic usage.

The normal word for government in modern Turkish and Arabic is hukûmet, hukûma. Used in much the same sense as English “government” or French “gouvernement”, it is standard and common throughout the Arabicspeaking lands and in Turkey at the present time so common indeed that in word-counts which have been made of modern Arabic prose, hukûma ranks among the words of most frequent occurrence, ahead of several quite ordinary prepositions. The word is old, and is attested in Arabic from the earliest of times; its use in the sense of “government” however dates only from the 19th century. In classical Arabic usage it was a verbal noun meaning the act or office of adjudication, of dispensing justice. It could be used in this sense irrespective of whether the person so acting was a sovereign, a judge, or merely an arbitrator. The frequently quoted hadith that “an hour of justice in

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3 See for example Abu‘l Faraj al-Isfahānī, Kitāb al-Aghānī, Cairo, 1345/1926-1927), xii, p. 134 “fa-imtaka qādīn bi‘l-hukūmati ‘ālim‘- “you are a qadi skilled in the administration of justice”. Other examples in Aghānī, xi, pp. 69, 165; Ibn Qutayba, Uyun al-Akhbār, (Cairo, 1383/1963) i, p. 67; Jāhiz, Kitāb al-Tarbi‘ wa‘l-Tadwīr, ed. C. Pellat, (Damascus 1955), i. 16, and in the verses cited in the classical Arabic lexica, e.g. Lisan al-'Arab, xiv, p. 95; xv, pp. 31, 177, 304, xvi, p. 41, Tāj al-'Arūs, ix, p. 68.
hukūma is better than 60 years of worship" refers clearly to the administration of justice and not-as in some modern interpretations-to the conduct of government.

The root *h.k.m.*, in Arabic and in some other Semitic languages, expresses the related basic notions of judgment and wisdom. In some Semitic languages, notably Hebrew, it is the sense of wisdom that prevailed. In Arabic the sense of wisdom or even knowledge is present, as for example in *ḥakīm*, a sage, and hence a physician, but it is the sense of judgment or adjudication that is most usual. In the course of time, the root came to connote political as well as judicial authority. Under the Seljuqs and later rulers, the term *ḥukūma*, usually in its Persian or Turkish form (*ḥukūmat*, *hukūmet*), was used to denote the office or function of the governor, *hākīm*, usually provincial or local. In Ottoman usage, while retaining its judicial connotation, it often occurs in the sense of governorship, i.e., the obtaining, holding, or tenure of office of a governor. By the 17th century the word is in common use in Ottoman texts. In addition to the specialized sense of governorship, it occurs in the more general sense of government or administration, e.g., in the expression *mahall* or *makarr-i hukūmet*, meaning the seat of government or administrative center of a country or province. It is also used when discussing different types or forms of government, abroad as for example in Kâtit Çelebi’s discussion of the different types of government or regime prevailing in Europe, namely monarchy, aristocracy and democracy.

By the end of the 18th century, we find the word *hukūma/hukūmet* used in both Turkish and Arabic in a wider and more general sense of rule, of exercising authority. It appears in this sense in the Arabic version of a letter sent by General Menou to the Diwan in Cairo, in January 1801, in which he is described as representative of the authority of the French republic (*muḥāzir hukūmatīha*)6. The term also occurs in some early Turkish and Arabic translations of European historical writings, in the broad sense of rule,

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5 Kâtit Çelebi, *Iṣrād al-ḥusayrā ilā tārīkh al-ʾUmnān waʾl-Rūm waʾl-Naṣārā*, ms. TTK library no. 19, no pagination. Other Ottoman examples in *ʾAyn-i ʾĀfī, Kavān birdi-i ʾĀl-i Osmān*, (Istanbul 1280/1863-1864), pp. 29-30, on certain hereditary sanjaks, with a measure of political and financial autonomy, called *hukūmet*; Naima, v, p. 405; Rażid, i, p. 328.
dominion, political authority, or even regime. Though common in early 19th century Turkish, the use of the word in this sense in Arabic remains comparatively rare. The Arabic translation of Machiavelli’s *Prince*, made in 1824-25, does not use the word *hukūma* for government, but prefers such words as *siyāda* and even *amiriyya*. Shaykh Rifâ‘a Râfi‘ al-Ṭahṭâwî, in his Arabic translation of the French constitutional charter, renders the word “gouvernement” by *tadbîr al-mamlaka*.

The present-day meaning - government, in the sense of the group of men exercising the authority of the State - seems to date from the second quarter of the 19th century. The changeover is gradual. Thus Sadîk Rifat Pasha, who wrote a number of political memoranda and essays, habitually uses the word *hukūmet* in the earlier sense of type of government, administration or regime. However, in the essay cited above, he uses it in a context which clearly indicates the modern meaning. The distinction he makes between the State (*dawla*, *devlet*) and the government (*hukūma*, *hukūmet*) thereafter becomes increasingly common in both Arabic and Turkish, though the use of the term in the earlier, more abstract, sense continued for some time.

In modern Turkish and Arabic the distinction between *dawla* and *hukūma* is clear and general, and usage does not differ greatly from that of English or French. In Persian the change came somewhat later. During the 19th and much of the 20th century, *dawlat* was used indiscriminately for both the state and the government, no clear distinction being made between the two either as concepts or as terms. The earlier Arabic loan word *hukūmat* was used in the general sense of political authority and sometimes of administration. Since the 1930’s, there has been a tendency by Persian journalists to use the term *hukumat* in the Anglo-French or Turko-Arabic sense but this is still far from general.

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10 For Turkish examples, see *Tarih-i Cevdet*, i, pp. 17-20; for an Arabic discussion of the term and its meaning see Ḥusayn al-Marṣâfî, *Al-Kīlam al-thamân*, (Cairo, 1298/1881), pp. 30-35.
The word *dawla*, by far the most widely used in Islamic languages in the sense of state or government, seems to date as a political term from the accession to power of the Abbasids. It comes of course from the Arabic root *d.w.l*, which has parallels in other Semitic languages and which has the basic meaning of to rotate, turn, change, alternate, or to succeed one another, as for example when speaking of the seasons. The noun *dawla* is attested at a very early stage in Arabic in the sense of turn, meaning not only a rotation, but something rather like the idiomatic English use of the word. In the Qur’an (iii, 140) we find the verbal form *nudūwiluhā* “we cause them to alternate”, speaking of the good days and the bad days, and there are many passages in ancient Arabic poetry in which the word *dawla* has the meaning of someone’s turn at success, power or good fortune. The word *dawla* is in common use in both *ḥadith* and early poetry in the sense of turn. It is not limited to the more familiar meaning of someone’s turn at success or power but is used more generally, as for example of a wife’s “turn”, in a polygamous household, with her husband. The form *dūlatan* occurs in the Qur’an (LIX, 7) in the sense of something which is held in common, i.e., the ownership of which is passed around a number of persons. These and similar expressions are based on the underlying image of the wheel of fortune, the slowly turning wheel which brings one man or group up and another down. It is, of course, an image which long antedates Islam and of which probably the best known classical exposition is that of the Greek author Polybius. Polybius, at discussing revolution (*anakyklosis*), describes the slowly turning wheel driven by the force of *tyche*, fortune, and its expression in the cycle of political changes which follow and repeat one another. Kingship leads to tyranny, tyranny breaks down into aristocracy, aristocracy gives rise to oligarchy, oligarchy splinters into democracy, democracy degenerates into mob rule, mob rule brings men back to the state of nature, out of which a new kingship emerges and a new cycle begins. This idea reappears in Islamic literature at a later date with some variation in the terms, and *dawla* is the word used for the turning of the wheel.

The word *dawla* occurs a number of times in works written by or attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffa’. In a well known passage in the *Ṣahaba*, he refers to the accession of the Abbasids in the phrase 


is certainly right in reading this not as “then came this dynasty” but rather as “then came this change” (changement, revirement). This interpretation is confirmed by several other occurrences in these texts. Thus in a passage in the Adab Şaghîr, we find the phrase “al-dunya duwal.” 13 In the context it is clear that Ibn al-Muqaffa’ does not mean that the world consists of dynasties or states, as the phrase would mean in modern Arabic. His meaning is that the world is full of ups and downs, of vicissitudes, and he continues to say: “what is for you will come to you despite your weakness; what is against you cannot be averted by your strength.” In a passage in the Adab Kabir the writer draws his reader’s attention to certain differences in the situation at the beginning of a new regime 14. This may be understood to mean: If your rule or power occurs at the beginning of a new turn or phase or regime.

An interesting example of the use of the term occurs in the text of a sermon delivered in Mecca in the year 130/747-8 by a Kharijite rebel, and preserved by several authors. The speaker is at pains to inform his listeners, the people of Medina, that he and his companions did not leave their homes and their possessions in a spirit of wantonness or folly or frolic, nor 15 a phrase which appears to mean neither in quest of new dominion nor in search of old vengeance.

These and similar passages make it easier to interpret the term dawla as used in the early Abbasid period. When Ṭabarî and other historians of the Abbasids describe the Caliph Šaffâh and others speaking of dawlatuna, our dawla, they do not mean “our state”, nor do they mean “our dynasty”. They mean “our turn”. The implication is that the Umayyads have had their turn and now it is the Abbasids’ turn. This is confirmed by the early texts in which the same word dawla is used of persons who are not sovereigns and do not found dynasties. Šaffâh for example in one of his speeches is reported as speaking of the dawla of Abû Muslim 16 i.e., of the time when Abû Muslim was so to speak on the upturn of the wheel. Other passages speak of the dawla of the Barmakids. The term is used several times in connection with Abû

16 Ṭabarî, iii, p. 86.
Muslim. Thus, discussing the number of people killed by Abū Muslim in the course of his activities, Ṭabarī uses the phrase *fi dawlatihi wa-hurūbihi* 17. This would seem to mean something like “in the course of his career and his wars.” In another passage quoted by Ṭabarī from Madāʾinī, Abū Muslim himself is quoted as using the word in a very revealing context. Discussing which are more valiant, the Syrians or the Khurasanis, Abū Muslim remarks 18 -every people is the most valiant of mankind at the time of its “turn” i.e., when it is on the upturn of the wheel.

Since the accession of the Abbasids was the *dawla* par excellence, the word came to mean the Abbasid dynasty, which had a rather longer turn than any other, and then more generally the Abbasid state. We find it for example in such expressions as *abnāʾ al-dawla*, literally the sons of the *dawla*, meaning certain groups of persons adopted into the service of *dawla*; *‘arab al-*dawla*, the Arab tribes in the service of the *dawla*. Later it comes to mean the state or the dynasty more generally, and not merely the reigning Abbasid house.

Even as late as the 10th century, when the word *dawla* had become fairly standardized in the meaning of dynasty or state, we still encounter it in the earlier sense. Thus the authors of the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Safā*, presenting a cyclical theory of political regimes, uses the word *dawla* commonly in this sense. The affairs of this world are 19

The titulature of sovereigns and of lesser rulers is a good indication. In this *dawla* is often associated with *mulk*, kingship, and contrasted with *dīn*, religion. The best titles are the paired ones-indicating that the holder of the title holds a position in relation to *al-dawla wa-l-dīn*, which comes to mean of the state and of the faith. Such titles already contain the beginnings of the idea that these are two themes, contrasted or complementary. Titles in *al-*dawla and *al-dīn* were much used by the Buyids and their successors, probably because they felt it necessary to use something with a connotation of real authority. Titles in *al-dawla* were also used by the Fatimids in Egypt and granted by them to their viziers and other functionaries. We find the word *dawla* being used by dynasties of themselves, usually with some honorific adjective. Thus the Fatimids were *al-dawla al-hādiya*, the rightly guided

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17 Ṭabarī, iii, p. 115.
18 Ṭabarī, iii, p. 96.
dynasty. In Egypt the Ayyubids used the formula al-dawla al-‘aliya, the lofty or sublime or exalted dynasty. This was in due course taken over by the Ottomans and became their standard way of referring to themselves -devlet-i ‘aliye-i osmaniye, the high Ottoman state or dynasty. By Ottoman times we also find the word dawla (Turkish devlet) used of foreign states and even of infidel states in Europe. By this time the word dawla in the sense of state or dynasty has a plural as well as a singular form. Indeed the usual term for foreign states in Ottoman administrative usage is duvel-i ecnebiye. In other words, dawla/devlet has become the normal word for the state. It may be noted that it is however in the main limited to practical and administrative use. The word is not much used in theoretical discussions of the state, whether in the juridical or in the philosophical literature, the authors of which still prefer to use other terms when discussing the acquisition and exercise of political authority.