

# THE EUROPEANIZATION OF OTTOMAN DIPLOMACY: THE CONVERSION FROM UNILATERALISM TO RECIPROCITY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY<sup>1</sup>

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Continuous diplomacy, invented in Renaissance Italy to gratify the demands of the city-state system that had come into being in the peninsula, diffused in the sixteenth century through central and western Europe, where the emerging nation-states were forging a continentwide state system. Originally the rules were framed in accord with ethical principles of a generalized Christianity. But in the course of time the techniques of permanent diplomacy became wholly de-Christianized and de-Europeanized, as has most of the apparatus of modern statecraft.<sup>2</sup> The rules of resident diplomacy became the rules of common sense and in this respect resembled the technology of the West in its exportability to the non-West. Continuous diplomacy, in fact, became part of the indispensable paraphernalia of government. The process in the earlier period was one of assimilation to the European system. But as the number of non-European lands adhering to that system and adopting its code and instruments for the conduct of interstate relations multiplied, they gradually modified the character of the system itself, so that it grew progressively less European and more global.

The Ottoman Empire was the first non-Christian country to participate in the European state system and the first unconditionally to accept its form of diplomacy. The Ottoman realization of

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<sup>2</sup> The classic and indispensable study of the origin of continuous diplomacy is Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, (London, 1955).

full diplomatic reciprocity with Europe thus constituted a major step in the transformation of the European state system into a world system. It also constituted a major step in the Westernization of the Ottoman state. It is therefore surprising that the entire sweep of Ottoman diplomacy has not yet been systematically explored for its own sake. Many studies, it is true, have touched aspects of this broad subject. These by and large have been limited, however, to the consideration of substantive problems of diplomacy-international incidents, particular disputes, or special embassies. More commonly, diplomacy has received passing notice in general works on such themes as history, Westernization, law, government, and the like. Instructively, there is no entry on "diplomacy" in the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, while the article on "Tanzimat" dismisses foreign relations in two sentences. It makes no reference whatsoever to the Europeanization of Ottoman diplomacy, which undeniably was as much a product of the innovating zeal at Istanbul in that period as were the changes in military organization, education and law.

The tendency to relegate Ottoman diplomacy to episodic or incidental treatment is difficult to explain, in view of its importance. With mounting interest in the impact of Europe on the non-Western world, the study of the institutions, practices and theories of Ottoman diplomacy might have been expected to attract serious scholarly attention. The Ottoman Empire was, after all, a special case. The state, though Asian by birth, was naturalized as European by right of conquest. It thus represented a reversal of what was becoming in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the "normal" intercontinental projection of power. European influence was radiating in all directions around the globe; in this one instance Asian influence had penetrated deep into Europe and refused to be shoved back. It is relatively easy to understand how that penetration wounded the pride of Christian Europe and its sense of superiority. The tenacious Ottoman presence, moreover, served as a constant reminder of an "abnormality" that would not correct itself. Such a condition was bound to sharpen the mutual tensions and exaggerate the mutual fears and contempt that divided the Muslim state from Christian Europe. The study of Ottoman diplomacy should help clarify this general problem. It should assist us also to evaluate the rise and dec-



line of one of the great states in history and its role among the family of nations.

In exploring this ill-charted field, the investigator must seek answers to a number of basic questions. For the conclusions that he might reach would manifestly be conditioned by whether he argues that the Ottoman Empire did not participate in the European state system until 1856, as suggested by article 7 of the Treaty of Paris; or that the Ottoman Empire was already bound by the rules of the European state system at least from the time of the treaty of Carlowitz in 1699; or that the Ottoman Empire affected the balance of power on the continent from the very inception of the European state system and was to that extent at least a limited participant, through a one-way diplomatic linkage, from the birth of the system.

The investigator would wish to ascertain how Ottoman nonreciprocal diplomacy -not policy but institutions, practices, and processes- actually worked. He would also seek to determine its techniques and its rationale and try to differentiate between those features that were primarily Muslim or Ottoman from those that were universal. He would try to learn why Sultan Selim III's experiment with continuous diplomacy at the turn of the nineteenth century failed, and why Sultan Mahmud II's comparable efforts in the mid-1830's succeeded. He would endeavor, besides, to find out what purposes the Sublime Porte's resident diplomacy hoped to serve, once the Ottoman Empire became subordinate to the European state system after the treaty of London in 1841. Finally, he might wish to learn about the recruitment and training of a professional diplomatic service, its financing, and the extent to which the Foreign Ministry, that took recognizable -and indeed solid- shape after the Crimean War, enjoyed discretionary powers or operated at the mercy of an absolute monarchy and its unpredictable whims.

The present article does not attempt to answer all these questions. Even if there were sufficient space, the primary research has not yet been done nor will it be by a single scholar, for the field has been too long neglected, and the materials too widely strewn. This is an exploratory inquiry that merely tries to determine major lines of development. Based in part on research launched in the Prime Ministry and Foreign Ministry archives at Istanbul, the present pa-

per is only a fragment of a larger research project on international politics and diplomacy in the Middle East from 1798 to 1914. Findings at this stage remain tentative and malleable. In its still preliminary shape, the study raises many questions, suggests a few answers, and formulates a number of hypotheses.

Before the Ottoman record is examined, it might be helpful briefly to review the experiences of three other Asian lands -China, Japan, and Persia- that in the conduct of diplomacy were also integrated into the European system in the nineteenth century. China formed the center of its own East Asian system. As a universal state resting on the Confucian concept of external relations, China claimed a Heavenly mandate to rule the world and viewed as barbarian all other countries. The smaller lands along China's periphery -from Korea to Burma, including Japan for a period- took part in the system as junior members. The subsidiary governments, through *ad hoc* diplomatic missions, conducted their relations with one another as equals. But toward China, whose leadership they acknowledged, they were in a tributary status, although the tribute was ceremonial, not material, and the tributary missions periodic, not continuous. When European nationals in the pursuit of commerce and religion sought to penetrate the system, starting in the sixteenth century, their governments acquiesced in China's refusal to receive resident diplomatic missions and in their diplomatic envoys' performing the kowtow. The European governments thus, in effect, agreed to the same subordinate diplomatic rank as that accorded to China's immediate neighbors. This relationship did not begin to alter until 1842, when the United Kingdom forcibly opened what came to be called the treaty ports and extracted from China for the benefit of British merchants extraterritorial privileges. China was then compelled to receive at Peking permanent diplomatic missions from the treaty powers: Britain, France, the United States, and Russia in 1860, Prussia in 1864, and even Japan a decade later. China's conversion to diplomatic reciprocity took less than two decades, for it established resident missions in Britain and the United States in 1875, Japan in 1876, Germany, France, and Russia in 1877, and Italy in 1881. But characteristically this decision could be attributed less to Chinese initiative than to the prodding of friendly foreigners.



What is more, the extraterritorial or unequal treaties continued in operation until 1943.<sup>3</sup>

A similar sequence occurred in Japan. But the Japanese response to the shock of having the country pried open to Western trade was swift and decisive. The unequal treaties and the West's unilateral diplomacy, which resulted from Commodore Perry's expedition in 1853-54 and the coercive ending of more than two centuries of isolation, gave way by the 1870's to reciprocal diplomacy and by 1899 to the elimination of the capitulations.<sup>4</sup>

Persia, on the other hand, was drawn into European politics only marginally throughout the period of the Safavi dynasty (1500-1722) by those powers most commonly at war with the Ottoman Empire (such as Venice, Austria, and Poland). The maritime states of Western Europe for their part attempted to promote trade with Persia and received for their nationals from successive shahs extra-territorial privileges. But in these earlier centuries there were no European powers whose interests in Persia were both political and economic; and for the protection of limited interests *ad hoc* diplomacy, almost wholly of the one-sided European variety, seemed to suffice until the early nineteenth century. European unilateral resident diplomacy came to Persia in 1809, when the United Kingdom first opened its legation. Russia, the second European power to set up a permanent mission in Tehran, did not follow suit until 1828 when the tsarist regime, as part of the peace settlement at Turkmanchay, also signed a commercial treaty providing in perpetuity broad extra-territorial rights to Russian subjects. This Russo-Persian instrument served as the basis for Persia's capitulatory regime under the Qajar dynasty (1796-1925). As the nineteenth century unfolded, a half dozen of the Western powers, including the United States, opened

<sup>3</sup> Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *China's Entrance into the Family of Nations: The Diplomatic Phase 1858-1880* (Cambridge, 1960); J. K. Fairbank and S. Y. Teng, "On the Ch'ing Tributary System," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 6 (June 1941) 135-246 [reprinted in Fairbank and Teng, *Ch'ing Administration, Three Studies* (Cambridge, 1960) 107-61]; and John K. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast* (Cambridge, 1953), especially pp. 1-53 and 462-68.

<sup>4</sup> G. B. Sansom, *The Western World and Japan* (New York, 1950), p. 278; and Paul M. Linebarger, Djang Chu, and Ardath W. Burks, *Far Eastern Government and Politics: China and Japan* (New York, 1954), chapter 14.

legations in the Persian capital and, under most-favored nation clauses, their respective nationals came also to enjoy extraterritoriality. Persia did not begin to send reciprocal missions to Europe until 1862-63, when a legation was opened in London. In the quarter century that followed, others were set up in Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Washington, and St. Petersburg.<sup>5</sup>

To none of the three Asian lands, it is clear, did the European states send permanent diplomatic missions before the nineteenth century. By contrast, all the major European powers and a number of the lesser ones maintained resident diplomatic missions at Istanbul before the end of the eighteenth century. Some of these permanent missions traced back to the very inception of the general European practice of continuous diplomacy in the sixteenth century. The Sublime Porte apparently made no effort before 1793 to establish a resident mission in any European capital.

Ottoman diplomacy passed through at least four phases in the four centuries following the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. At the outset, by voluntary and deliberate act the Ottoman Empire accepted resident missions from Europe but sent none to the Continent thus largely cutting itself from the European state system in that system's formative period. This unilateralism furnished the Padişahs of the day a means of expressing contempt for the emerging nation-states of Europe. What is more, unilateralism worked, as long as the empire was expanding, and even beyond, until Protestantism and Catholicism reached their accommodation in the Peace of Westphalia (1648). For nearly a century after the Peace of Carlowitz (1699), when Europe formalized its first decisive victory over the Turks, Ottoman diplomacy could best be characterized as the unilateralism of a contracting empire. In this second phase the sultans were compelled to negotiate; they did so generally from weakness and only at rare intervals from strength. This was the time, too, when unilateralism (and the contempt that persisted with it), through continuing to

<sup>5</sup> Technically, France was the first, under article 5 of the treaty of Finkenstein of 4 May 1807, but Napoleon's Minister, Brigadier-General Antoine Gardane, left Iran early in 1809. France had no resident minister in Tehran again until 1855. See J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East* (Princeton, 1956), vol. 1, pp. 77-81 and 159.



provide tactical advantages in diplomatic bargaining, nevertheless became a distortion of its classical self, with the dragomans or interpreters, who by definition should have been agents, becoming in fact principals. The third phase embraced the period of the experiment of Sultan Selim III (1789-1807) with reciprocal diplomacy, that lasted from 1793 to 1821. The fourth witnessed the progressive integration of Ottoman diplomacy into that of the European state system in the middle decades of the nineteenth century by the achievement of reciprocity and the creation of the necessary supporting machinery at Istanbul.

The present paper is essentially concerned with the last phase. But it would be helpful at first to dwell briefly on Selim's scheme for resident diplomacy in London, Vienna, Berlin, and Paris in the 1790's. This scheme is often assumed to mark the beginnings of the transformation from unilateralism to reciprocity. If judged by results, Selim's project could hardly be described as more than a false start. The Padişah's instinct was sound. He recognized the need for permanent embassies in the major capitals of Europe as essential to the welfare of the state. He experimented, however, at a time when diplomacy in Europe was temporarily breaking down as a result of the repercussions of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars which followed. At all events Selim had taken no more than half measures. His scheme made no provision for a foreign ministry that might have sought to coordinate the diplomatic activities in Europe. Instead, the innovations were superimposed on existing practices, which had come to travesty the unilateral diplomacy of the Ottoman Empire at its height.

Often the sultan took decisions simply by consulting the vezir or court favorite who happened to be close at hand. The missions in the four capitals thus frequently received conflicting instructions, when they received any instructions at all. The correspondence reaching the Bâb-i 'Âlî (Sublime Porte) from the Continent was assiduously collected; but the archivists -unlike their predecessors of the sixteenth century- had forgotten how to file, so that it became impossible to keep track of commitments, negotiations, and intelligence. Precisely because there was a good deal of communication where none existed before, the confusion was compounded. The experiment could

hardly have been expected to strike root. Three of the four embassies passed into the hands of junior members in less than a decade, as did also by 1811 the embassy at Paris, the only one that even began to resemble the European models. The last traces of Selim's program for resident diplomacy vanished after the outbreak of the war for Greek independence in 1821, when the Sublime Porte finally decided to wind up its missions in Europe, all by then directed by *chargés d'affaires* who were Greek subjects of the sultan.

Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1939) renewed continuous diplomacy nearly a decade and a half later, this time on a durable basis. He appointed special ambassadors to Paris and London in the summer of 1834 and to Vienna the next year. The special embassy to Paris was converted in June 1835 into a resident one, and Mustafa Reşid Paşa, who had headed both missions, crossed the channel to London in September 1836 as first chief of a permanent embassy in that metropolis. By then the Ottoman resident embassy in Vienna had already completed its first month. A fourth embassy was set up in Tehran in 1849, forming part of what was probably the first exchange of permanent diplomatic missions by two Muslim states. The six remaining resident missions organized at the time started out as legations: at Berlin in December 1837 (raised to embassy, March 1874); Athens in April 1840; Stockholm (also accredited to The Hague) in June 1854; St. Petersburg in March 1857 (embassy, July 1873); Turin, January 1857 (replaced by one in Rome in 1870, raised to embassy in the early 1880's); Brussels in October 1857 (in the custody of a *chargé d'affaires* until 1879, when a full-fledged minister took over); and Washington in April 1867.

Continuous diplomacy required a professional diplomatic service. Diplomats are not born career officers, unless they grow up in the tradition. But here there was no tradition to grow up in, for as was true of the Tanzimat movement as a whole, the paramount inspiration for the new Ottoman diplomacy was Muslim Turkish. In breaking with the past, the innovators seemed determined -to judge once again by results- substantially to replace Phanariot Greeks, who had figured prominently in Ottoman unilateral diplomacy after the mid-seventeenth century, by Muslim Turks. It has not yet been possible fully to tabulate -if it ever will be- the religious, educational, economic and social background of the Ottoman diplomatic corps that



was assembled and trained in service in the last two-thirds of the nineteenth century. But according to a provisional estimate the Phanariot Greeks and other non-Muslims who served as heads of mission represented altogether probably no more than a third of the total.

Deductively, once more, it might be observed that non-Muslims were almost wholly barred from the pinnacle of the service, while proved ability -and reliability- in the field were recognized and used, even at the most important post. The management of the Ottoman Foreign Ministry changed hands fifty-two times between 1835 and 1899, and the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs was held by twenty-three different men. The rate of change reflected the mercurial court politics at Istanbul; and the smaller number of men, an acknowledgement of the new expertise, for almost all Foreign Ministers in this period were drawn from the professional diplomatic service. Among these there was only one non-Muslim, Alexander Karatodori, a Phanariot Greek who held office for less than eight months (December 1878 to July 1879).

The diplomatic posts at which Phanariot Greeks figured prominently in the nineteenth century were: London, where three incumbents of an over-all total of sixteen led the embassy for forty of the sixty-five years (Kostaki Muzurus established a record for longevity as chief of the same mission, serving without interruption from 1851 to 1885, thus doubling the achievement of this English counterpart at Istanbul, Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe, whose final assignment to the Sublime Porte stretched from 1842 to 1858); Washington, where two ministers among seven presided over legation affairs for nineteen of thirty-two years; Rome, where they numbered four (one serving twice) among ten mission heads in thirteen of thirty years; and Berlin, where two among fifteen held sway for eighteen of sixty-one years. For whatever meaning it may have, the sampling also establishes that Muslim Turks were rotated far more frequently than Phanariot Greeks.

Technically, the Foreign Ministry came into being on 11 March 1836 when Mehmed 'Akif Paşa, the last Reisülküttâb, was designated by imperial act the first Minister of Foreign Affairs. Archival evidence suggests that this represented at the time little more than a change of title and that at least two decades passed before the Fo-

reign Ministry established clearly identifiable procedures. Not until after the Crimean War did the Foreign Ministry create its own archives, separate from those of the Grand Vezir and -it should be noted- organized far more rationally. The advent of the telegraph, which in September 1855 linked Istanbul to the Continent, accelerated overnight the pace of Ottoman diplomacy and toned up the service, as it had been doing in Europe, by tightening the controls of the Foreign Ministry over missions abroad. The Foreign Ministry itself became a progressively bigger, busier establishment, as the communications traffic mounted, a trend that became further pronounced toward the century's close when the typewriter joined forces with the telegraph to multiply the paper work.

Also after the Crimean War, the Foreign Ministry adopted French as a -perhaps, the- principal language of communication within the Ottoman diplomatic service. The Tercüme Odası or Translation Department, created in 1823, became in effect by the sixties and seventies an adjunct of the Foreign Ministry. Clippings from the European press first began to reach the Foreign Ministry in large number during the Crimean War. It is instructive that the packets of such clippings that Muzurus sent from London at the time were seemingly left untouched by the Foreign Ministry staff. This contrasted sharply with the handling of the far bulkier load of such clippings from English, French, Austrian, and even Russian journals during the Russo-Ottoman war of 1877-78, when nearly all items were translated first into French, if they were not already in that language, and then into Turkish.

It is somewhat previous to attempt a detailed explanation why reciprocal diplomacy was finally achieved in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. These comments are therefore limited to a bare outline of some of the major considerations.

Permanent diplomacy arose in the Ottoman Empire in the way it had originated in the first place in Renaissance Italy and Reformation Europe, almost imperceptibly as a concrete response to a concrete need. The decade of Ottoman adoption of European diplomatic practices was at the Sublime Porte one of supreme crisis when the survival of the state hung by a hair. This was the period when the Eastern Question became murky, when the quarrel between Mahmud and Mehmed 'Ali interlocked with another over Ottoman



affairs between Russia and Britain, with Austria supporting Russia and France, Mehmed Ali. In the face, from within and without, of this awesome menace, Sultan Mahmud turned not alone to the drawn-out program of military modernization but also in desperation to resident diplomacy. He and his vezirs probably did not fully appreciate it at the time, but this in fact was the kind of situation in which continuous diplomacy could yield more useful and immediate results than any other means at the Sublime Porte's disposal, for clearly the sultan required outside help of a disinterested variety. Mustafa Reşid Paşa, who was in many ways the real author of Ottoman reciprocity, returned to London as ambassador in 1838-39 expressly to negotiate a defensive alliance with the United Kingdom and a loan that might enable Mahmud to step up his military preparations for restoring the integrity of this empire. Reşid's mission, narrowly viewed, proved an unmitigated flop. But the contacts and the experience in London later served the cause of his country's diplomacy immeasurably.

The quarrels were finally resolved, after Mahmud's death, by the intervention of the European concert and its imposed settlement in 1841. Mehmed 'Ali was fitted into a provincial strait jacket that confined him and his heirs to Egypt and the Sudan. The Sultan was made, once again, master in his own domain, but his empire became subordinate to the European state system, textually reflected in the designation of the Padişah as "His Highness," while diplomatic protocol demanded that the monarchs of Europe be addressed "Their Majesties." The interior status that came with guarantees of sovereignty to the Sultan accomplished two things: it relieved the Ottoman Government -although the Sublime Porte would doubtless have been the last to admit it- of anxiety over its survival, as distinct from the very real worry over its territorial integrity; and it provided the new diplomats with the positive challenge of devising ways to eliminate the elements of inequality in interstate relations between the Ottoman Empire and Europe.

Of no less significance was the fact that after Mahmud came passive sultans, Abdülmecid (1839-1861) and Abdülaziz (1861-1876), who left to their vezirs wide discretion in the handling of the affairs of state, external relations included. Almost without interruption for three full decades after the accession of Abdülmecid, the trio of paşas -Mustafa Reşid and his two disciples, 'Ali and Fuad- served as

Ministers of Foreign Affairs. These three men were dedicated to the creation of a professional diplomatic service and the realization of full reciprocity. So well had they laid the foundations that even an autocrat of the stripe of Abdülhamid II (1876-1909), who took an active personal interest in the management of diplomacy as of the remaining affairs of his realm, nevertheless allowed the Foreign Ministry some scope for discretionary action. More than that, the number of Ottoman missions abroad was augmented from ten at the time of his assuming power to fifteen by the end of the century.

The Concert's guarantees, in the early years of Ottoman reciprocity, were not empty ones. This was amply demonstrated by the Anglo-French intervention (1854-56) on the Ottoman side in the Crimean War and the Concert's intervention at the Congress of Berlin (1878) which softened the harsh terms of San Stefano. In the circumstances, the Sublime Porte was able in the pursuit of its defensive diplomacy to direct its efforts to the search for equal status. Thus, in the alliance with France and Britain of 1854, the Ottoman plenipotentiaries persuaded their European colleagues to drop "His Highness," as a mode of addressing the sultan, in favor of "His Majesty," a style that stuck until the demise of the Ottoman Empire in 1922. The peace conferees, gathered at Paris to draw up the formal instruments for terminating the Crimean War, accepted the Ottoman proposal -originally put forward by Foreign Minister 'Âli Paşa -in which the Concert declared (article 7) that "the Sublime Porte [is] admitted to participate in the advantages of the public law and system (*concert*) of Europe." This later confounded the international lawyers and historians because it could be persuasively argued that the Ottoman Government had participated in these "advantages" ever since it concluded treaties with European states, at least as early as 1699. At the bewilderment of later observers 'Âli Paşa would doubtless have chuckled, for the phraseology of the clause could have been used to suggest Ottoman membership not in the European state system alone but in that exclusive club of the Great Powers, the Concert of Europe.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Since this paper covers developments over a period of four centuries, there is little point in trying to provide detailed annotation. On the changes in the nineteenth century the author has leaned heavily on what he learned from his research at the Prime Ministry and Foreign Ministry archives in Istanbul. For the lists of ambassadors and foreign ministers he is indebted to *Sâlnâme-i Nezâret-i Kharîjiye* (Istanbul, 1318 A. H.), pp. 159-98.