

## State-Administering, (*Staatsverwaltung*), Since the Times of Machiavelli

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### Abstract

The concept of administration of a state was investigated by Machiavelli as early as in the sixteenth century. The concept gradually developed throughout centuries and finally achieved a certain level of maturity in today's politics. The controversy is still going on as to how to achieve perfection. Indeed, it a process which never comes to an end.

**Key words:** Government; Politics; Power; State; Sovereign

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### INTRODUCTION

This is essentially a review article based on a work of Michel Foucault (1979) about governmentality. The hard-to-read article, a translation from Italian, was transformed into plain language without jeopardizing the meaning and also commented on, by notes. When possible, comparisons from Turkish history were provided among the provided notes.

The state is a fanciful topic. Everybody does some thinking<sup>1</sup> about it. Young, passionately committed

<sup>1</sup> The typical Turkish peasant regards that awesome entity as the "Government Father" and accordingly holds it responsible for all facets of his life, including his miserable plight in a natural drought! If anything goes wrong in his dealings with any official institution, he angrily sends out a mouthful of swearing words aimed at that

revolutionaries crave for it. Few are known to be indifferent<sup>2</sup> to it.

From the sixteenth century onwards, the art of governing came to be an important topic for whose sake it was proper to consecrate many thoughts.

*These are the times when feudalism was collapsing, giving way to big nation-states and even colonial states. The Reformation movement had its impact on the minds, questioning the former eternal bliss<sup>3</sup> visualizations* (paraphrased from Foucault, 1979).

*Up to the Middle Ages, it was common to associate the right to rule with divine causes. But during the Italian Renaissance, in Florence, Machiavelli [1469-1527] wrote the Prince, a book advising a sovereign how to rule. The book isolates the ruling authority from its spiritual and ethical connotations, founding it on sheer human*

very state. Nevertheless, he cunningly avoids a deep meditation over a complicated social problem, passing it on to those who are at the head. Let them worry about it, he would say.

<sup>2</sup> In ancient Egypt, state was so precious that the government-elite diverted political attentions of the masses by forcefully employing them in endless pyramid construction works. The Albanian writer *İsmail Kadaré* provides an insight to ancient Egypt in his historical novel, *the Pyramid*. *Those works, he argues, were deliberately started in periods of prosperity. Leisure time leads to free thought, which in turn, to politics.*

A man who stayed away from political might is the maverick, vagabond-spirited poet (and mathematician) *Omar Khayyam*. He rejected the vizierate offer of the *Seljukid* sultan *Malikshāh*. The post went to *Nizām al-Mulk*.

*Khayyam* had been right. *Nizām* would pay for it with his life under the dagger strikes of a Hashashin envoy sent out from the stronghold of *Alamut*: "On the night of Friday, the twelfth of Ramadan of the year 485, in Nihavand, the fidā'i came in the guise of a Sufi to the litter of *Nizām*, who was being born to the tent of his women, and struck him with a knife, and by that blow the vizier suffered martyrdom" (Lewis, 1967, p.47)

<sup>3</sup> *From the struggle between Papacy and empires, from the dissolving of feudalism, came into being in Europe a plurality of states with no linkages among them. They all had new characteristics. In the new sense of the word, state becomes a big political and social entity, which is stronger than the ancient states* (Alvarez, 1959, p.71).

reasoning. It advocates an omnipotent monarch for whom everything is permissible in order to maintain and even increase<sup>4</sup> his power. The book drew much attention and praise, obviously because it favored the vested interests of the rulers, themselves (Ibid.).

## 1. MACHIAVELLI'S WORK MAKES SURFACE AFTER OBLIVION

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the book made the surface again. The political conjecture was in search of guidelines about state, authority, power, absolutism, delegation or limiting of the power etc. New movements and counter-movements were constantly going on: on one side Napoleon was instigating emperorship<sup>5</sup> (and thus in a way retrieving kingdom) and rendering the revolutionary ideas ineffective for a time. On the other hand, American colonies<sup>6</sup> were revolting against the British Empire and so forth (Ibid.).

The Prince was a book particularly favored by the nineteenth century Germany and Italy (Ibid.).

[This is no wonder. Both were militaristic structures craving for power. Garibaldi can be considered as the Italian counterpart or "equivalent" of ferocious Bismarck].

German fascism is now interpreted increasingly as the positive completion of Prussian-German<sup>7</sup> national power politics. The

<sup>4</sup> The intent of Machiavelli was not being scientific alone. He meant to gain the favor of the new political potency. Italy should unify. Who can achieve this? A prince in whose opinion all ways are legitimate to attain the goal. Machiavelli defined antic thoughts as well as the Middle Ages' thoughts. For Aristo, for the Stoics and for the Christians the goal of the state is ethical. For Machiavelli power, aggressiveness, cunning and hypocrisy are means of obtaining the desired goals (Sarica, 1987, pp.51-53).

<sup>5</sup> During his crowning ceremony, Napoleon addressed to the audience in the following manner:

—Ladies, gentlemen, what is this fuss and uproar about? Some of you might think: "Who is this Corsican to deserve the title of emperor?" But each nobility does have its beginning and my nobility is commencing right here! (Versan, 1976)

<sup>6</sup> "Revolutions often spawn permanent presidents, emperors and kings. But the American Revolution did not end that way. Contrary to many historical examples, George Washington rejected personal power. He had no desire to become an American Caesar or Cromwell. Liberty, he said, was the basis for the American independence and the national character, 'and whoever would dare to sap the foundation, or overturn the structure under whatever specious pretexts he may attempt it, will merit the bitterest execration and the severest punishment' he proclaimed" (Maslowski, 1990, p.23).

<sup>7</sup> The military might of Prussians was admired by the Ottomans. The superstitious sultan, Mustapha III (1757-1774) once asked Frederic II to send him three astrologers (fortune-tellers) as military advisors. The emperor replied that his astrologers were his staff officers and gave the following advice: The sultan should study history, evaluate the former experiences and possess a good army (*Renkli Osmanlı Padişahları Albümü* w.d. but c. 1980s).

(This should not seem so horrifyingly a case of ignorance, for the times. Though not totally relying on fortune-telling, many kings were known to touch the concept. In a historical novel Barbara Cartland depicts Napoleon himself as a superstitious man in need of

"national community" now rehabilitated socially, politically and historically; is associated with the 'powerful state' concept and employed at home and abroad as legitimation for a new departure in politics. (Roth, 1994, p.453)

As Wit (1953, p.271) puts it, "the fundamental ideological disunity of the German people" later gives way to "the autocratic imposition of Bismarck's concept of state-unity, via blood and iron".

All criticisms of Machiavelli are not favoring him. Both Catholic and Protestant Christian circles did indeed vehemently condemn<sup>8</sup> the man (paraphrased from Foucault, 1979).

In Machiavelli's conceiving, the prince himself is not [!] An innate part of the principality. He is an outsider despite being the possessor! Moreover, how he owned the principality (inheritance, conquest, appropriation etc.) does not matter, either (Ibid.).

Besides, his possession does not pertain to his subjects or territory; rather, it is his domineering behavior over his possessions which is important. The ruler's main concern is to prolong for as long as possible the enjoyment of his rule; by defending it against any menace whatsoever, which could deprive him of this enjoyment<sup>9</sup> (Ibid.).

the advice of his astrologer).

The relationships of the Ottomans with the German military steadily grew stronger. Çetin Altan, in his autobiographical novel (the French version's title is *etroite surveillance*) narrates his memories about his pasha grandfather, who speaks German fluently with his guests. He had been trained in Germany as a young Ottoman cavalry officer. While preparing his pavilion for the reception of the German guests, the pasha engages in a frantic search for the missing small bust of Wilhelm II, a former souvenir of his days in Germany. The entire household get to work and finally they discover the tiny statue in one of the toilets. The pious grandmother had dumped that profane idol there once and had forgotten all about it.

<sup>8</sup> This reaction is expected not only because of the moral nature of the religion but also because the religion's vested interest itself is at stake on such cases. Strong ideologies come like substitutes and are accordingly menacing for true religions. I remember a class discussion in my senior high school class between an enthusiastic leftist student and the American literature teacher. At one point the teacher referred to communism as this particular student's new religion and the student stopped arguing, as if struck by thunder, all of a sudden. (The Author)

As Huxley (1955, p.62) puts it; *the modern world, for its part, makes us see that traditional religious beliefs get replaced by new systems like Nazism and Communism. These movements are often called pseudo-religions. I would rather claim that they are primitive specimens of religions of a new type, based not on supernatural foundations but instead on social foundations. [Thus] they are inspired by a marked hostility toward the previous creeds.*

<sup>9</sup> Nearly two decades ago, a Turkish full-general, a man reputed to be a harsh commander and "the last representative of the Prussian style" in the words of a journalist, could not obtain one higher position, even though the khaki color tradition would have favored it. Upon his obligatory retirement, it was his wife who gave a comment, instead of the general himself. She said that their rightful morsel was taken away from their very stomachs, let alone their mouths! At a time where almost all lips claim that a post is an opportunity to serve one's people, this statement is at least free from possible hypocrisy in the sense that it dares define an official post as a personal privilege, in a rather straightforward manner. (The Author)

## 2. NEW IDEAS EMERGE WITH TIME

*This idea of clinging to power was to be challenged by the concept of the art of government, whose earliest thinker is Guillaume de la Perrière [1499/1503-1565] (Ibid.).*

*Here the word “govern” takes on a broad scope like governing any institution, large or small. Moreover; this sort of a governor is an innate, internal part of the governed entity. Besides; now; the concept includes morality, proper handling of the administration / management of all sources, including the human element [archaic understanding of economy (*oeconomy*)] and politics<sup>10</sup> (Ibid.).*

*La Mothe le Vayer [1588-1672] provides these ideas in his didactic work addressed to the heir of the ruler. One essential factor is the ruler’s worth and deserving for the position; that is, his formation<sup>11</sup> which enables him for the post. Another closely related factor is the control mechanism over the governed to make sure that they “behave themselves” (Ibid.).*

*In the eighteenth century, J. J. Rousseau [1712-1778], in an article on political economy, emphasized that wise governing would lead to the betterment of all beings (human and material) within the ruler’s domain (Ibid.).*

*Rousseau’s contemporary thinker, F. Quesnay [1694-1774] coined the phrase “economic government”. In this text; the former-*oeconomy* now qualifies for a far more complicated and on-going process, whereby all efforts must lead to convenience as the end-product (Ibid.).*

*For Machiavelli, the exertion of power was affected simply on the territory and the inhabitants living on that territory, in a very concrete manner, regardless of the high or low quality of those “assets”*

<sup>10</sup> The definition of politics is indeed, somewhat hard “There is no correct definition of politics. It seems to us best to retain an open mind and to accept the possibility of labeling as “political” a wide range of activities, institutional arrangements and ideas that might seem immediately appropriate” (Ponton & Gill, 1988, p.9).

<sup>11</sup> The Ottoman dynasty seems to have accepted this preparation and formation of future rulers from its earliest times onwards. Possible heirs to the throne were assigned to provinces (*sancak*) in Anatolia as governors at tender age. *Selim* the Grim (*Selim* the First) had ruled *Trabzon*; Magnificent *Suleiman* had ruled *Manisa* in their puberty years. The side-effect of the system of raising able *shehzades* (princes) was a dispute over the throne after the deceased father, which would lead to fratricide.

Sultan Ahmed the First abolished the tradition of being a heir to the father, directly; instead, enabling the elderly male of the dynasty (a cousin, nephew, brother) to take over the supreme position. Princes then got confined to a special spacious “cage” within the *harem* section of the Seraglio. The losers of the throne usually kept living in the cage. The ascender of the throne, a cultural product of the cage himself, was accordingly broken off from the real world and devoid of experience (*Erlebnis*), unlike the former sultans, who had been able even in their young years (Mehmet the Second conquered Istanbul and ended Byzantium at the age of 21). (The Author)

*Guillaume de la Perrière, however, furthers the exertion of this power to “the complex unit constituted by men and things”. Here, the ruler resembles the all-responsible captain of a ship sailing on the sea. He must take into account all possible happenings, strong winds and storms included. One might as well call this role the highest form of serving the ship. Size and quantity considerations are thus replaced by quality considerations, in this respect. In this context; Frederick the Second’s comparison of a big but inert land, Tsarist Russia, with a small but firm and effective one, Holland, is very meaningful, indeed (Ibid.).*

## 3. GOVERNMENTALITY CONCEPT BECOMES MORE ELABORATED

*Governing a unit thus is distinguishable from being sovereign over it. Sovereignty now involves “attaining and conserving public utility” (Ibid.).*

*As [Samuel von] Pufendorf [1632-1694] puts it, mutual respect, role division and order come into account. But, interestingly, order is established by mere obedience to law and this brings us back to Machiavelli at that particular point! Here is an unavoidable tautology! [a circulatory notion like the well-known chicken and egg issue] (Ibid.).*

*As a state of law, absolute monarchy too, may dictate the primacy of written laws, regardless of their nature<sup>12</sup> (Ibid.).*

<sup>12</sup> Again looking at the Ottoman History, when *Mehmet* the Conqueror favored fratricide and put it into a written code — stipulating that he, whom the fate favors to the throne, may put his rivaling brothers to death—he did it for the sake of the survival of the state, with a sheer governmental outlook. On the other hand, when Magnificent *Suleiman* ordered the death of his son *Mustapha*, personal vested interest was the motive. *Mustapha* had been an able burgeoning statesman, a far better candidate than *Selim* the Sot (*Selim* the Second), (who would later ascend the throne). *Mustapha* could have revolted and replaced his father successfully, moral aspect put aside.

“[During the Persian campaign *Mustapha*, governor of *Amasia*, was urgently summoned to the camp of his father]. Before he entered, he put off the dagger sheathed at his side. He awaited his father in a gorgeous tent chamber. *Suleiman* never came. Instead, closed in the executioners. The giant Negroes stealthily crept on. [To insure discretion in such a deed as this, the tongues of the castrated blacks were torn out and their ears-drums pierced] (Downey, 1929, pp.248-249).

Previously; *Suleiman*’s father *Selim* the Grim had taken the throne from his father, *Bayazid* the Second by force. (*Selim*’s army had beaten *Bayazid*’s army and *Selim* had accorded a forced retirement to his father). *Suleiman* probably took lesson in that event and chose to be too cautious and merciless against *Mustapha* in an even slightly similar probable development. (The Author)



**Figure 1**  
The Higher the Rank, the Bigger the Dilemmas in Decisions (Illustration by the Author)



**Figure 2**  
Some Statesmen in History Proved to Be Too Reckless Or Too Courageous and They Accordingly Underestimated Political Opponents (Illustration by the Author)

*In government rather than a fidelity for the written law per se, tactics<sup>13</sup> are what really counts as a perfection*

<sup>13</sup> Here too the Ottomans had similar pragmatic applications. One such practice was the possible confiscation of the assets from private persons or institutions, until the Reformation (*Tanzimat*) Era in 1839.

Fotic (1994, p.33, 39) gives an example of confiscation over an institution: “[During the reign of Selim II (1566-1574)] the central Ottoman authorities decided to confiscate all the church and monastery estates [in the Balkans] and sell them, but ensuring them the possibility of buying everything back. With this measure the state exerted strong financial pressure on the already quite impoverished church. Most of the monasteries somehow managed to buy back the largest part of their estates. [The aim was] to standardize, define and

*of the governing process. Physiocrats of the of the seventeenth century openly said that laws alone<sup>14</sup> do not suffice to attain the aims of governments (Ibid.).*

*What we now know as democratic leadership, was proposed by la Perrière in the formulation of a “patient ruler”, one who is not eager to kill or crush (like the queen-bee of a hive). la Perrière also mentions about*

coordinate with the Sharia one of the key parts of the legal system: land relations”.

<sup>14</sup> As Versan (1976) puts it, *the more written laws there are, the more violations occur in practice. England, “the cradle of democracy” does not even possess a written constitution. A long state tradition constitutes the best remedy instead.*

“wisdom” (in the sense of efficiency, without divine associations<sup>15</sup> involved) and “diligence” (in the sense of a fatherly commitment and affection, inducing a role-model-behavior on the part of the ruler) (Ibid.).

The notion of the art of government did not pertain to sheer theory. It did find actual applications even in the sixteenth century. Its components were administrative apparatus of monarchies; quantified knowledge, i.e. statistics and mercantilism and police force. However; the concretization of the state came to a halt in the troublesome seventeenth century with wars, rebellions and financial crises. Eventually; the contract theory<sup>16</sup> emerged as a compromise between the art of government and sovereignty.

#### 4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POPULATION

What brought up the art of government to the surface once more, was the population expansion and the transformation of mercantilism into a fully grown capitalism, in the eighteenth century. It is only then that the science of government shifted to an economical structure in the current meaning of the word “economy”. Former mercantilist statistics were now employed for demographic<sup>17</sup> considerations (Ibid.).

Statistical knowledge on population behavior clarifies the fact that government affairs cannot be reduced to the level of an exemplary family. A family is merely a minute subset of the big population and can hardly represent it, as a useful model (Ibid.).

This new awareness of the significance of population, speeded up the dynamics of the art of government; collectively leading all efforts to the betterment of

population quality. The population gained priority over the ruler himself; while tactics became accordingly more sophisticated (Ibid.).

The new science of political economy focusing on the population-territory-wealth interaction, would further the art of government up to the level of political science (Ibid.).

The matter of sovereignty is still there to reckon with, as grounds for the form of governing. Rousseau’s social contract deals with that subject thoroughly. Neither is discipline omitted; it is a necessity for the management of even the pacifist masses (Ibid.).

Thus, sovereignty, discipline and government are like the vertices of a triangle, all working on population on a background of concern for security. Government, population and political economy are also interrelated in a similar manner (Ibid.).

#### CONCLUSION

The state of justice of the middle Ages incrementally made its way to a state of management ever since the sixteenth century. Machiavelli was a striking theoretician, justifying the rights of the present ruler, no matter whom, above every other priority. Other scholars improved the topic by bringing in new concepts and incorporating them into the former way of conceiving administration. Nowadays, the state; with all its complicated techniques and tools of dealing with problems (which could be briefly called “savoir-faire”) is becoming more and more a topic of political science.

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<sup>15</sup> The word “wisdom” may otherwise, have religious connotations. In fact, the equivalent of the word in Sufi Islam tradition is *hikmet*. It is a great virtue and represents a combination of *pure intuition (irfan)*, on one hand and *pure science (ilim)* on the other hand. An open-hearted but thoroughly ignorant-of-positive-sciences person may attain the former alone through spiritual love and commitment. Even an atheist scholar may obtain the latter alone through ingenuity and hard toil. (The Author)

<sup>16</sup> The first contract, in the literal sense, in the Ottoman history comes in 1808, between the provincial notables (*âyân*) and Mahmud the Second at *Kâğıthane*, as an official challenge to absolute monarchy:

“According to this Document of Agreement (*Sened-i İttifak*) the provincial governors confirmed their loyalty to the sultan and in return the sultan promised to levy taxes justly and fairly” (S. J. Shaw & E. K. Shaw, 1992, p.2). In the opinion of Üçök (1978, p.57) some Turkish Law scholars accept this document as the first (if only primitive) constitutional text.

<sup>17</sup> Perhaps the earliest attempts of what comes close to a crude census were used for military purposes. Bertolt Brecht refers to that in a satirical manner in his play *Mother Courage and her Children* from the mouth of one of his characters. A sergeant enumerates the benefits of war and says that in war time you keep record of all goods, of all men and everything is calculated. In fact, the first census in Ottomans was realized during the reign of Mahmud the Second with military purposes and only the male population was counted.

*Renkli Osmanlı Padişahları Albümü* [The Colored Album of the Ottoman Sultans] (n.d. but c. early 1980s). Ankara: Kurtuluş Publications.

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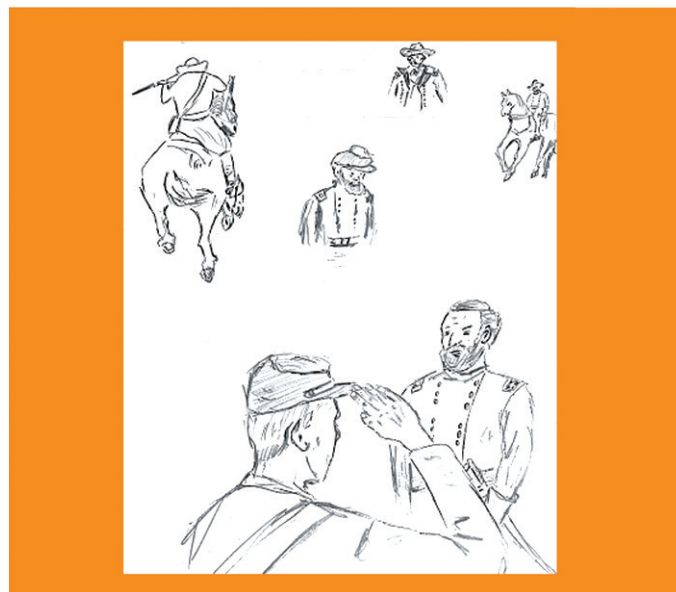
## APPENDIX: MORE VISUAL MATERIAL

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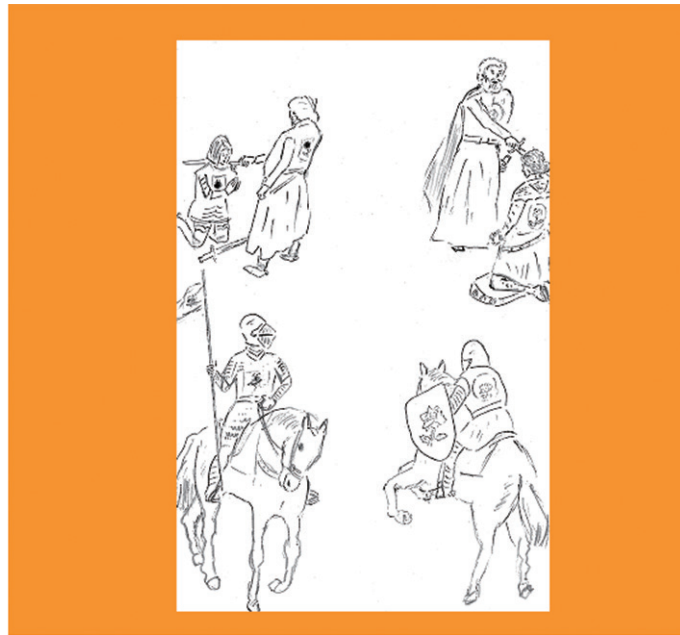
The following pictures (Figure 3, Figure 4 and Figure 5) were re-drawn with some adaptations from French comic-strips; by the author himself (S. Ç.); while studying that language intensively, in previous years



**Figure 3**  
**Political History Involves Armed Rebellions to Authority, Like the Big French Revolution**



**Figure 4**  
**Some Nations Had Gone Through Unfortunate Civil Wars, Like the United States**



**Figure 5**  
**The War of Roses in Britain Represents Another Armed Conflict Between Dynasties Competing for the Throne**