

Permanent Embassies and Translation Chamber in Turkish Diplomacy

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The history of Turkish diplomacy has developed mainly within the framework of the Ottoman Empire, Republic-era Turkey and modern political developments. It can be noted that many developments in this time periods have had a significant impact on the history of Turkish diplomacy. However, it can be said that with Selim III, in 1793, the state began to have permanent ambassadors in foreign countries and then the establishment of the Translation Chamber have great significance in the shaping of the history of Turkish diplomacy.

During Selim III's accession to the throne, there were quite significant developments, and the fact that he was on the verge of the French Revolution, which would cause fundamental change in Europe, is the most crucial of them. At this point, it can be suggested that the existence of different opinion movements developing in the era allows Selim III to be open to innovations. On the other side, when Selim III ascended the throne, he tried to prevent the bad course of the ongoing Russian and Austrian war, and even attempted to go on an expedition in person. He found it difficult to find competent commanders who would change the course of the war and appoint them grand viziers. It was this development that made Selim III realize the need to go to a wholesale renovation and reconstruction and gave certainty to his ideas on this issue.

Selim III initiated social, military and social reforms, including domestic and foreign policy. During this period, Selim III expressed the superiority of European institutions and the need to take an example and put it into wide application. For this reason, permanent embassies established in foreign countries have been extremely important in the development of Turkish diplomacy. An interpreter is assigned to the ambassadors who do not speak foreign languages who are assigned to important European cities such as London, Paris, Berlin, and Vienna. However, their mission ended in failure due to the inability to speak the language.

From the appointing of permanent embassies in Europe from 1793 onwards, the need for interpreters had become apparent. Divan-ı Humayun translators, who

were responsible for translating the sent by the Ottoman Empire to the foreign states, were chosen from among the Greeks from time immemorial. Due to some reasons such as misinformation, the Greeks were dismissed from work and classes were started to be taught to train interpreters so the Translation Chamber was established. The commissioning of the Translation Chamber is the first serious institutionalization step in the field of Turkish diplomacy. Due to the absence of Muslim bureaucrats with foreign policy experience and tradition, translators of engineering origin worked in the Translation Chamber. However, later, officers trained from the bureaucracy started working in the Translation Chamber. These officers had the opportunity to improve their language and increase their experience in the countries they went to with the assignment and establish relations with diplomatic circles. The Translation Chamber has also improved with the establishment of the Foreign Ministry by Sultan Mahmut in 1836. Members of the Translation Chamber were employed as interpreters in diplomatic negotiations with foreigners arriving in the empire. In this regard, over time, they have become one of the important elements of foreign diplomacy. The Translation Chamber also served as a school for the education of many bureaucrats who would be influential in domestic and foreign politics. In this aspect, it was a school where bureaucrats who directed diplomacy and reform were trained, as well as an official office where correspondence in translation in various languages.

The most basic actor in the formation and development of diplomacy is to be able to communicate. Diplomacy is the conduct of relations between states through negotiations, and it is impossible to maintain relations without the use of a common language. In the last three centuries in the Ottoman Empire, adaptation of various reforms have taken place in awareness of the developments in the West. The establishment of permanent embassies and Translation Chamber are one of these reforms and have been one of the most important developments that have guided Turkish diplomacy. These reforms have an important place, as they are also considered the beginning of Turkish diplomacy, similar to the standards of the West.

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