

Chapter 2

Urbanization and Metropolitan Municipal Politics in Turkey

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Turkey has a historical legacy of an overly centralized system of government that left virtually no scope for local government. Against this background, Turkey experienced in the post–World War II period rapid urbanization and an industrialization that has not kept pace with the urbanization in question. The consequence was the increasing inadequacy of municipal services. In order to cope with this problem, two-tier municipalities were set up in the early 1980s in some selected urban centers; and these municipalities were delegated a good deal of authority and provided with substantially greater amounts of revenues. Yet Turkey’s urban problems were not quickly resolved. One major reason was the disharmony between the district and metropolitan municipalities, which basically derived from the fact that metropolitan municipalities remained jealous of their prerogatives and have not trusted district mayors; consequently they have not provided adequate powers and resources to district municipalities. A second reason was the generally conflictual relationship both between the district and metropolitan municipalities and between the metropolitan municipalities and the central government. This state of affairs was a consequence of such factors as personality clashes, the tendency on the part of each level of government to perceive its powers as absolute, the inclination of some metropolitan mayors to challenge the central government on purely political grounds, and the like. Further, particularly in the 1989–91 period, the central government and municipalities were usually headed by individu-

als belonging to different political parties. Despite these obstacles, Turkey has made significant progress in coping with its urban problems.

Historical Legacy

The Ottoman-Turkish polity did not have a tradition of local government, if by that term one essentially implies self-government. The Ottoman political system evinced characteristics neither of patrimonialism (civil society imposing its value system upon the state) nor of different versions of feudalism (the state's powers being checked by various intermediary structures). The system had unmistakable signs of bureaucratic centralism—domination, if not a smothering, of civil society by the state.¹

From the very beginning the Ottoman center was faced with powerful local notables (Turkoman *gazis*). Their descendants, who formed the old Ottoman aristocracy, threatened the very foundations of the state.² In response to this threat, the Ottoman rulers set out to subjugate their local rivals, which they succeeded in doing. Thus, during the Ottoman classical age (ca. 1300–1600)—following the abrogation of all feudal rights that had limited the state's control over land, and after the state had confiscated a large part of the land held by religious foundations—the bureaucratic center came to dominate the polity.³ During these earlier centuries the center controlled the periphery through its agents—fief holders—who ensured that peasants kept their assigned lands under cultivation and collected taxes on behalf of the state.³ Each fief holder was given a small plot of land from which he extracted his salary as long as he kept his post.

Between the second half of the sixteenth century and the nineteenth century, the fief system ceased to be effective and was replaced by a tax-farming system—that is, nonstate agents collected taxes and kept a portion of the revenues for their own income. Local notables who acted as tax farmers came to have power and influence among the polity, yet it derived from their exercise of state power and had no independent socioeconomic base. The center even developed an official description of a local notable: “A person competent, well-known, honest, and wealthy, and whose words are listened to by the people.” One, in fact, became a local notable in this sense by a special imperial decree issued by the sultan.

That local notables in the Ottoman Empire always remained in a

dependent status to the state was due to the fact that they had no interest in becoming agricultural entrepreneurs. As a consequence they could not build autonomous power vis-à-vis the central authority. They competed among themselves for official posts in the localities. Under the circumstances, they could not develop horizontal ties; instead they maintained individual, vertical relationships with the state. Each local notable tried to use his delegated powers to enrich himself as much as possible at the expense of both the state and peasants. The upshot was that, in the eyes of the Ottoman center, minimum central control always combined with “local irresponsibility.” As a result, as far as the center was concerned, the involvement of local notables in local affairs was nothing more than a stopgap measure.

During these centuries, the supervision of markets and artisans along with other municipal and police functions were carried out by *hadis*, religious functionaries of the state who had judicial powers. No difference was perceived between the administrative functions of the central government and municipal functions. When during the 1820s and 1830s the kadi’s judicial functions were differentiated from his administrative (including municipal) functions and the latter taken away from him, the municipal functions were distributed among a number of central ministries and not to a local governmental body.

The basic rationale behind the *Tanzimat* (Reform) Period of 1839–76 was to strengthen the center itself. The primary motive behind the provincial and local councils established as part of the “decentralization” policy was really to improve tax collection, for these councils were formed by an imperial edict that aimed specifically at improving tax collection within the empire. In any case, in these councils bureaucrats appointed by the center constituted more than half the membership.

During the nineteenth century, decentralization in the Ottoman Empire did not go beyond deconcentration—handing over some amount of administrative authority to lower levels within central government ministries and agencies.⁵ In fact, in 1852, the discretionary powers of the provincial governors were increased. In 1858, the powers delegated to the local representatives of the central government were designated in greater detail. Yet it was not until 1913 that provincial administration in the Ottoman Empire was endowed with a corporate status.

The first municipality in Turkey was established in Istanbul in 1855. The head of the municipality and the members of its “urban council,” however, were appointed by the central government. With the rapid

growth of the city, a district municipality was established in the Pera section of Istanbul, where mostly foreigners and non-Muslim minorities resided. The director of the district municipality and the members of the municipal council were again appointed by the central government. In 1869, thirteen additional district municipalities were created in Istanbul. Now the members of the municipal council were elected, but the “mayor” was appointed by the central government from among the council members.⁶

The emergence of municipalities in the Turkish region beginning in the second part of the nineteenth century was to some extent a response to pressure from the Great Powers aimed at bolstering the status of religious minorities in the Ottoman Empire. The government, however, did not trust the non-Muslim merchant entrepreneurs who constituted the bulk of the economic middle classes. (Muslims preferred other walks of life.) It suspected them of having consistently supported separatist movements in the empire. The government therefore opposed the development of the newly born municipality into a powerful societal institution.

Thus the first district municipality in the Pera section of Istanbul was established as an “agency of the central government charged with the responsibility for public works.”⁷ In 1912, the district municipalities were abolished; they were converted into nine branch municipalities of one citywide municipality.

It follows that the republic established in 1923 hardly inherited a tradition of local government; the republic in turn had its own reasons for maintaining the centralized system of government: the country’s physical and human resources were limited; a cultural revolution substituting a secular republic for a Muslim empire was to be started; the country was located in a perennially unstable part of the world; and Turkey did not have cordial relations with most of its neighbors. Consequently, a centralized system of government was maintained. The local government system, consisting of provincial local administration (an extension of the office of centrally appointed provincial government responsible for certain local functions), municipalities, and villages, was based on the principle of delegation, and not devolution, of authority. The duties of the local governmental units were delineated in great detail by numerous laws. The central government also had close control of the financial resources of the local governmental units. The Ministries of Internal Affairs and of Reconstruction and Resettlement in particular supervised these governments closely.

Under the circumstances, local government in Turkey, including municipalities, was no more than “local *administration* . . . commissioned and largely financed by the central government.”⁸ The center still adhered to the notion that the central and local governments together formed a “unified entity.” Local governments were subject to the administrative direction of a number of ministries, which developed their programs in line with their own policy preferences and in total disregard of overall strategies or general plans of urban development and change.

Post-World War II Developments

Following World War II, Turkey experienced massive urbanization. From 1945 to 1989, the average rate of urbanization was 7 percent.⁹ Furthermore, growth was concentrated in only a few urban centers. The rate of industrialization could not keep pace with that of urbanization. Push rather than pull factors were more important in drawing migrants to the cities. Although they came from rather traditional rural environments, their expectations quickly rose under the influence of mass media. The growth of the private sector also worked to heighten urban needs and ambitions. It led to demands, among other things, for new facilities for marketing and distribution of goods, communications, and transport. Added to these was the urbanites’ increased exposure to the outside world by means of books, foreign-made movies, and travel abroad.¹⁰

Municipalities could not cope with these developments. Their revenues always lagged far behind what was needed. Turkey’s municipalities have essentially had two broad categories of revenues: local shares of certain national taxes, and direct municipal revenues such as user charges, fees, and taxes. Local shares of national taxes were not substantial—5 percent of the income tax and corporations tax, 2 percent of the tax on state monopolies, 8 percent of the fuel consumption tax, and 15 percent of customs and excise duties. Municipalities received only 45 percent of the property tax, which in many countries makes up the major part of local revenues. Income from fees, license taxes, fines, municipally owned enterprises, and user charges remained low basically because the sources of revenue left to the municipalities were not the most productive ones. Their base was narrow and their rates were low, and the revenues obtained from these sources were vulnerable to inflation.¹¹ Moreover, some of these direct revenues, such as the betterment

tax and the duty for street cleaning, were difficult to collect. It must also be noted that mayors and other elected municipal officials often seemed unenthusiastic about enforcing revenue-generating rules and regulations for fear of antagonizing voters.

To make things worse, central governments did not automatically transfer to the municipalities the latter's share of the national taxes; there were delays and sometimes not all the amounts due were transferred. Also, the central governments did not always use their discretion in an equitable and bipartisan manner. Often larger municipalities did not receive funds proportional to their size, and municipalities led by mayors who belonged to the opposition parties were discriminated against. To compound these problems, central governments sometimes unilaterally increased municipal expenditures—for example, through centrally imposed salary and wage increases. (In 1977, for example, personnel costs of local governments were as high as 40 percent of total expenditures.) Conversely, they might decrease municipal revenues by, for instance, appropriating some traditionally local source of operating funds.¹²

It was, therefore, not surprising that at least compared to many industrialized countries, in Turkey the share of local government in total public expenditure remained quite low. For instance, in 1975 while the share of local governments in total public expenditure was 62.9 percent in Austria, 79.1 in the Federal Republic of Germany, 51.0 in Belgium, 54.6 in France, 71.8 in the Netherlands, 43.7 in the United Kingdom, 60.1 in Italy, 64.6 in Japan, and 61.7 in the United States, it was only 8.8 percent in Turkey.¹³ Over the years, the system of municipal revenue generation remained the same despite substantial increases in population—which geometrically increased needs—and in the number of municipalities, which further reduced the share each received from the national tax revenues. While from 1927 to 1975 the portion of Turkey's population living within municipalities rose from 23 to 57 percent, and the number of municipalities increased from 460 to 1,654, during the same period the ratio of municipal revenues to public revenues as a whole remained the same.¹⁴

Indeed, at least until the early 1960s, the central governments preferred to ignore the mounting problems facing municipalities. From the 1960s onward, central governments were interested only in what the local governments could contribute to national developmental efforts. The local governments were to lighten somewhat the heavy load

of the central governmental agencies.¹⁵ This was clearly spelled out in both the First (1961) and Second (1966) Five-Year Development Plans.

Beginning in the mid-1970s, urban problems in Turkey reached crisis proportions. During the early 1970s in such major urban centers as Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir, mayors of the left-of-center-oriented Republican People's Party captured offices. However, from 1975 to 1980 Turkey was ruled at the national level largely by right-of-center coalitions. These center-right governments used all the means at their disposal to deprive the Republican mayors of resources necessary for effective governance. Whereas the central governments were formerly very much preoccupied with their own concerns and largely ignored the local problems, now a direct confrontation had begun.

In reaction, a number of mayors began demanding devolution rather than delegation of powers to the municipalities. Their motto, supported by the leftist intellectuals, was "full participation of all social classes in decision making." Their notion of municipality emphasized autonomy and democracy. Municipalities were to levy their own taxes and initiate economically productive activities. Citizens were to participate in decision making at all levels.¹⁶

In January 1978, a Republican People's Party-dominated coalition government came to power. That government attempted to restructure the municipalities along the lines of the model just described. In the economic sphere the government tried to set up a "municipal sector," the objective of which was to remove the retailers operating between producers and consumers and thus to cut costs and lower prices. The project, however, ended up in complete failure. Conflicts with civil servants in the central ministries and bureaucratic bottlenecks blocked an efficient flow of goods. Municipalities were frequently in arrears in paying the producers; they used the money thus "saved" for other purposes. In the end the municipal sector turned out not to be productive but rather redistributive. The government also attempted to simplify the bureaucratic procedures at the municipal level and to render municipalities more responsive to citizens. Here, too, no notable success was achieved.¹⁷

Faced with ever-increasing urban problems, inadequate resources, and domineering central governments, municipalities had no option but to engage in the politics of survival. They tried to play off central-government ministries and agencies against each other. They created *faits accomplis* in their dealings with the central government. For in-

stance, they made long-term commitments they could not honor and then put political pressure on the central government to bail them out. Under the circumstances, the viability of the municipalities very much depended on the political skills of individual mayors.¹⁸

Post-1980 Municipal Politics

Transfer of Resources and Authority to Municipalities

The 1980s in Turkey started with the further centralization of government, including the municipalities. Because Turkish politics had become overly fragmented and polarized during the 1970s, when the military took over the government in 1980 it placed primary emphasis on law and order. Military officials appointed the mayors of the major urban centers and suspended the municipal councils. The duties of the municipal councils were taken over by the executive committees at the municipalities, which were staffed by the appointed officials of the municipalities. Some functions previously carried out by the branch municipalities of the city halls were now concentrated in the city halls themselves.

On the other hand, during the 1980–83 military interregnum, the central government increased the municipal share of national tax revenues. As a consequence, between 1980 and 1984 the revenues of the municipalities coming from this source increased close to threefold.¹⁹ Steps were also taken to bolster the revenues of the municipalities from their own resources. The bases and rates of municipal taxes were modified to increase their productivity; new local taxes were introduced, and the residents of areas adjacent to the municipal boundaries were made subject to municipal taxes.

With the coming to power in 1983 of the Motherland Party, which aimed at decreasing the central bureaucracy's role in the economy in particular and in sociocultural life generally, the municipalities were provided with even greater resources and, additionally, significant powers were delegated to them. In 1984, two-tiered municipal governments were created in some selected urban centers. Their numbers increased in the following years. They consisted of a metropolitan municipality and a number of district municipalities. Initially, the district municipalities were granted extensive powers because the Motherland Party government did not expect Motherland candidates for mayor to

capture the mayoralties in the major urban centers; they figured that Motherland candidates could be elected mayor at least in some districts. When, however, the Motherland candidates won at metropolitan as well as district levels in all major cities, the hand of the metropolitan municipal mayors was significantly strengthened.²⁰ In effect, the metropolitan municipality began to exercise over the district municipalities many of the tutelage powers that had earlier been used by the ministries in Ankara. The tutelage of the Ministry of Internal Affairs was now restricted to approving the appointment of the secretary-general of metropolitan municipalities and to creating new civil servant posts in that municipality. Also, the Ministry of Public Works and Resettlement (formerly the Ministry of Reconstruction and Resettlement) was limited to providing technical aid and extending some funds on a project basis.

As already noted, with the coming to power of the Motherland Party in 1983, resources at the disposal of municipalities began to increase substantially. The index of municipal revenues in 1985 turned out to be five times the 1981 figure.²¹ While in 1983 the municipal share in the national budget was 3.7 percent, in 1985 it rose to 4.6 percent. Further, all the revenues from the property tax now went to the municipalities.²²

In Turkey of the mid-1980s, as compared with the earlier decades, both the metropolitan and district mayors at major urban centers had ample resources at their disposal. Municipalities could thus provide an ever-increasing volume of services. In April 1986, officials at the Ministry of Internal Affairs told this author that what had been achieved since the two-tiered metropolitan municipal systems were created in 1984 had been two to three times what had been done before in a similar time period. Ministry officials thought that to a great extent district mayors were responsible for these high levels of performance.

District versus Metropolitan Municipalities

Despite the fact that within the post-1984 metropolitan system the metropolitan mayors had the upper hand both in legal and financial terms, district mayors who came to office in 1984 brought a new philosophy and dynamism to the municipal life of Turkey. This came out quite clearly in the author's interviews with Istanbul district mayors in the January-April 1986 period.²³ In the judgment of these mayors, as

well as of the metropolitan mayor (all of whom belonged to the Motherland Party), municipalities in Turkey had not served their residents for years; but now, for the first time, Turkish citizens had municipalities intent on serving them well and to which they had easy access.

These mayors, the majority of whom came from the private sector, noted that serving people well requires a municipality to function efficiently. This means costs should be brought down; the municipality should not be overstaffed. The municipality should not collect many unproductive taxes, but only a few productive ones. The mayors were critical of the nontechnical civil servants in their municipalities who could not keep pace with their own dynamism and disapproved of bureaucrats at the metropolitan level who, according to the mayors, “did their own thing”—that is, were unresponsive to the people and tried to dominate the district mayors. In reaction, district mayors often attempted to jump echelons and to communicate directly with higher authorities, including the ministries in Ankara. The district mayors, however, could not get a response from the hierarchy-conscious superordinate agencies and in the process alienated the metropolitan mayor.

All this frustrated the district mayors. Because they had been elected, they saw themselves as primarily responsible for furnishing services to the people in the manner they judged best. They thus rejected outright this author’s (gentle) suggestion that in order to deal with the inevitable fiscal shortfall, the number of functions piled upon the municipalities could be reduced in number. On the contrary, they wished to offer the people an even greater number of services because, they thought, only a “people’s municipality can give people what the state had never given them.” Besides, they argued, only they had all the facts about their districts at their fingertips.

On the same issue, officials at the metropolitan municipality pointed out to this author that if all the municipal services within the metropolitan area were carried out by the district municipalities, a uniform provision of services would be impossible. These officials also doubted that district municipalities had an adequate number of qualified personnel to carry out even the services for which they were then responsible, let alone additional ones. District mayors agreed that they needed more specialized personnel, but they were confident that in the near future they would have such personnel. District mayors insisted that they should be responsible for a greater range of services for another reason: they

pointed out that they had been quite successful in increasing their revenues from their own resources. Because they knew their districts “inside out” and thus “tax evasion remain[ed] at a minimum,” and because “people [were] now willing to pay their taxes since they [were] getting their money’s worth in municipal services,” they had increased their revenues from 300 to 500 percent from taxes directed to the municipalities.

Despite these points of disagreement between the district municipalities and the metropolitan municipality, in the 1984–89 period on the whole (except in Izmir and particularly Ankara), relations between district and metropolitan mayors were fairly harmonious. During the period in question the district and metropolitan municipalities in all major urban centers in Turkey, including Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir, were governed by Motherland mayors. What distinguished Istanbul from Ankara in particular was that in the former city the majority of the mayors had a private-sector background (and thus shared a similar philosophy) while the Istanbul metropolitan mayor (Bedrettin Dalan) seemed to have a particular skill in human relations. Many of the district mayors in Istanbul this author talked to proudly mentioned that, together with the metropolitan mayor, they constituted “a team with an entrepreneurial drive.” It seems that the metropolitan mayor always tried to unify the district mayors around the idea of “service to the people.” For instance, the metropolitan municipality in Istanbul placed emphasis on administrative rather than legal supervision over district municipalities. It established general standards and criteria for efficient and effective services and urged district municipalities to consult with the metropolitan municipality before submitting their major projects to it for approval. Thus many district mayors felt confident that if they “developed their projects carefully,” they could secure approval for them. Consequently they did not need to confront the metropolitan municipality with *faits accomplis*, as was once the case. They chose to act as “reasonable and responsible businessmen” rather than as “politicians.” They did not wish to initiate projects they could not complete, which might tarnish their reputations in the eyes of the people.

This account of relations between the district mayors and the metropolitan mayor should not suggest that there were no conflicts and tensions between the two sets of municipalities. As already noted, some district mayors objected to the condescending attitude of bureaucrats at the metropolitan level. They sought even greater autonomy from the

metropolitan municipality, and they complained that, in the last analysis, the metropolitan municipality monopolized power: "from one day to the next the metropolitan municipality decided which functions the district municipalities should carry out and which functions they should not." District mayors wished to see a clear division of labor between the district municipalities and the metropolitan municipality.

Officials of the metropolitan municipality thought differently. They were of the opinion that services should be provided efficiently and effectively; it was not important which level of municipality furnished them. They did not oppose decentralization but thought it should take place in stages. Too rapid decentralization would lead to ineffective and inefficient government. To prove their mettle, district municipalities should first undertake such basic services as street cleaning, the supervision of markets, and the repair of local roads; later they might take on new and greater responsibilities. The metropolitan municipality should exercise close and "benevolent" administrative supervision over the district municipalities and have the last word on significant projects. The division of labor between it and district municipalities should not be drawn too strictly because that would not leave adequate space for the district municipality to maneuver.

For their part, the district municipalities preferred legal to administrative supervision; they wished to decide by themselves what functions to carry out and how to do so. In their opinion, the metropolitan municipality should come into the picture and review the legality of their actions after the fact. However, they judged the provision of social and cultural services to be beyond their means. They acknowledged that other services of a certain magnitude, perhaps involving more than one district or requiring the use of advanced technology, should be furnished by the metropolitan municipality. Yet the district municipalities also did not wish to have some three hundred unimportant functions crowded upon them. They preferred to provide only the vote-catching functions in the manner they saw fit, and they resented the fact that the metropolitan municipality tended to monopolize those functions.

Despite the differences of opinion and a fair amount of tension between the district municipalities and the metropolitan municipality, during the 1984-89 period, particularly in such urban centers as Istanbul and Izmir (but not in Ankara), there was a basic harmony between the

two categories of municipalities. The differences between them were largely the consequence of their competing to provide effective services and garner votes.

This situation changed after 1989 when most of the mayoralties at both the district and metropolitan levels were captured by individuals belonging to the Social Democratic Populist Party. During that period, "high politics" rather than the administering of services dominated the agenda of municipal politics. Conflicts between the district and metropolitan municipalities revolved around basic policy issues and were, therefore, often difficult to resolve. This was apparent in February 1990, for instance, when Istanbul metropolitan mayor Nurettin Sözen held a special meeting with district mayors to seek solutions to problems between the two sets of municipalities. Some district municipality mayors did not even participate at the meeting, where it was stressed that these officials should not come up with different conceptions of a social democratic municipality.²⁴ The following month district mayors from Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, and Kayseri met in Ankara and discussed problems they had in common arising from their relations with their respective metropolitan governments.²⁵ The district mayors stressed two points. First, they argued that democratic principles entitled them, as elected officials, to more authority than they currently enjoyed vis-à-vis the metropolitan municipality. Significantly, they did not link that notion to their ability to provide services efficiently and effectively or be responsive to citizens' needs. For them, democracy meant autonomy from metropolitan mayors and the freedom to implement social democratic policies (such as providing free milk to the needy) as they themselves interpreted those policies. This was apparent from their call to the Social Democratic Populist Party to act as an arbitrator in their ideological differences with their metropolitan mayors.²⁶

In the post-1989 period, with the coming to power of the Social Democratic Populist mayors, Turkey's municipalities became overly politicized. Providing efficient and effective services became a secondary concern. It was claimed that in Istanbul metropolitan mayor Sözen had not gotten along well even with those district mayors who were relatively more effective than others in providing services. Sözen also discriminated among recipients of municipal services on the basis of class. On one occasion he said that his municipality would demolish illegally built villas but that it was up to the state to demolish illegally

constructed squatter houses.²⁷ Another time he warned that if the better-off neighborhoods did not receive water because it had been diverted to poorer neighborhoods, the former should not complain.

As this state of affairs makes clear, the consequence of the social democratic approach in question was populism, particularly in Istanbul. When Sözen became Istanbul's metropolitan mayor, he raised the wages of the workers in Istanbul's municipalities by 200 percent. He also engaged in extensive political patronage, appointing many party stalwarts to the municipalities in Istanbul. In due course, the municipalities' coffers dried up. In the summer of 1992, refuse collectors in the municipalities of Istanbul, Ankara, Adana, and Trabzon went on strike. Municipalities, however, could not commit themselves to pay the very high pay raises demanded by the workers' unions. Finally, the central government had to intervene to end the strike.²⁸

In the post-1989 period, as a consequence of the developments outlined above, municipalities in Turkey again became overly dependent on the central government. Sözen, who earlier had very harsh words for the Motherland Party government, now had to go to Ankara and plead with then-president Turgut Özal, former Motherland prime minister, that the government should extend a helping hand to his municipality. Other Social Democratic Populist metropolitan mayors did not have such hard times. Ankara's Murat Karayalçın, for instance, turned out to be a quite successful mayor.

Intergovernmental Relations

Turkey has had a strong state tradition, and, as I have elaborated elsewhere, in recent decades the state-centered polity came gradually to be replaced by a party-centered polity.²⁹ Not unlike the intellectual-bureaucratic-military state elites and their allies among the politicians, the political elites too gave short shrift to civil societal elements and institutions, including the municipalities.

Despite their extensive transfer of authority and funds to the municipalities, the Motherland politicians also expected the municipalities to be "extensions" of the national government, and they sent detailed instructions as to how the municipal services should be provided. In a speech made in January 1989 in an eastern province of Turkey, then Prime Minister Özal said that he considered the municipalities to be part of a unified governmental system.³⁰

Just as metropolitan municipalities wished to use district municipalities in order to have municipal services performed the way they thought best, central governments too wanted metropolitan municipalities to function in the pattern set for them at the national level. If the metropolitan municipality was led by a mayor who belonged to a party in the opposition, the mayor had to be quite skillful simply to keep his municipality afloat and extraordinarily skillful to enjoy a successful term in office.

Thus, even during the 1984–89 period, when the metropolitan mayors belonged to the governing Motherland Party, the central government was not always cooperative. Among other things, municipalities found it very difficult to obtain authorization to hire qualified personnel. When the government did cooperate, the bureaucrats in Ankara could still pose problems. For instance, at times the Treasury staff delayed the transfer of authorized funds because of their concern over rising inflation.

Still, in the 1984–89 period, some Motherland metropolitan mayors attempted to pursue policies different from those of the national government. For instance, despite the government's emphasis on market forces, Izmir's metropolitan mayor, Burhan Özfatura, for a while continued operating the municipal department stores, where prices were subsidized; Samsun's metropolitan mayor, Vehbi Gül, lowered the water rates and bus fares below their costs. However, most mayors could not go on challenging the government for long. One exception was Istanbul's metropolitan mayor, Bedrettin Dalan, who had a dynamic personality and an entrepreneurial spirit. He managed to raise ample funds over and above what he received from Ankara by leasing the real estate owned by the municipality, obtaining foreign loans at low interest rates, and establishing three municipal foundations that received large grants from various sources.

His successes, however, made him too bold, at least for Turkish politics. He began to make forays into national politics, for instance mobilizing some leaders of the Motherland Party to prevent religiously oriented members from holding important party and government posts. His political activities elicited strong criticism, and Dalan was asked by many in the party to get on with his work "as a mayor." Disappointed, Dalan became openly critical of his party. In 1989, he lost the Istanbul metropolitan mayoralty to Sözen.

Even before winning the mayoralty, Sözen had indicated that, if

elected, he would function primarily as a politician rather than as an administrator. Specifically, he said that his mission would be “getting rid of the anti-democratic Motherland Party government.” He began his stint as mayor by preventing the prime minister from inaugurating a renovated stadium in Istanbul because the “relevant legal paperwork had not yet been completed.” He went on to investigate “past corruption and illegality on the part of the previous Motherland municipality,” placing emphasis on the “cultural development of the people” and, as already noted, adopting a partisan stance. As mayor he staffed his municipality with people who had “dependable political views.”

The Istanbul populace soon began to be frustrated that basic services were not provided on time and sometimes not at all. They complained about dirty streets and contaminated food in the markets. In a survey carried out in early December 1989 the inhabitants were asked, “If there was an election for mayor today, whom would you have voted for?”; 60.2 percent of the respondents said “Dalan” and 23.1 percent answered “Sözen.”³¹

The situation was exacerbated by the Motherland government’s uncooperative attitude toward the Social Democratic Populist municipalities. On the eve of the 1989 local elections, the Motherland government had given clear signals about its likely policy if the municipalities were captured by mayors belonging to the opposition parties: in advertisements sponsored by the Motherlanders was a man whose hands and feet were tied. The man represented the municipalities led by an opposition mayor; he was unable to move because he could not get help (from the government).

When most of the mayoralties were in fact won by opposition mayors, the government’s stance toward them was mixed but on balance seemed unfavorable. It is true that, as then Minister of Finance and Customs, Adnan Kahveci, later claimed (which was not challenged), the funds that the Social Democratic Populist Party-led mayoralties received from the government during their first one and one-half years was much higher than what the Motherland municipalities had received during their last one and one-half years. The comparative figures are 581 billion versus 370 billion liras in Istanbul, 249 billion versus 151 billion liras in Ankara, and 86 billion versus 45 liras in Izmir.³² On the other hand, the comptroller of the Bank of the Provinces reported that his bank made cuts amounting to 100 percent from the Social Democratic Populist municipalities’ shares of national taxes, while the bank

acted quite generously toward the Motherland municipality in Malatya.³³ The government made life difficult for the municipalities in other ways as well. The censuses that were previously taken every five years were now to be taken every ten years; this adversely affected the municipalities because their shares of the national taxes depended upon the numbers of people living in their municipality.³⁴ Governments almost always deferred the deadline for paying the property tax until the last possible legal day.³⁵

Sözen's harsh attitude toward the Motherland government did not improve the situation. In fact, Sözen's penchant for confrontation and the resulting deficiencies in municipal services prompted the Social Democratic Populist Party to intervene, fearing that Sözen's nonperformance would cost the party votes in future elections. Then secretary-general of the party Deniz Baykal pointedly stated that municipalities were not "political organizations" and that their function was to furnish public services.³⁶ Sözen, however, did not get the message. Five months later, on the instructions of the secretary-general, a project to solve the water problem in Istanbul was prepared and sent to Sözen. The mayor, however, remained cool toward the project. Consequently, the chairman of the party, Erdal İnönü, felt obliged to be blunt in telling the party's mayors that he would himself "criticize the President and that municipalities should preoccupy themselves with their own tasks."³⁷ In August 1992, Süleyman Demirel, then prime minister of the coalition government of the True Path Party and the Social Democratic Populist Party, also felt the need to take an active interest in the affairs of the Istanbul metropolitan municipality. When Sözen demanded funds for his several very expensive projects, Demirel reminded him that he should stop the process of demolishing what was already built. Demirel admonished Sözen to think about the future and to come up with well-thought out projects backed by careful feasibility studies.³⁸ The coalition partners, however, must have lost all confidence in Sözen, for it was reported that experts in the coalition government had been instructed to prepare "a plan to save Istanbul."

In contrast to Sözen, Ankara's metropolitan mayor, Murat Karayalçın, has taken a sensible and balanced approach to the responsibilities of local government. From the very beginning he made it perfectly clear that, as a Social Democrat, he would pay attention to sociocultural issues but at the same time he would run the existing system successfully. He also pledged to serve all Ankara citizens without discrimina-

tion and not to come up with excuses if he failed.³⁹ Karayalçın carefully avoided becoming embroiled in day-to-day partisan politics and quickly established cordial relations with the Motherland Party government. In his efforts to solve the water problem in Ankara, he called on all members of Parliament from Ankara for their support.⁴⁰

Karayalçın also managed to obtain funds over and above the municipalities' usual sources of revenue. For example, for his subway project Karayalçın initially resorted to the formula of build-operate-transfer,⁴¹ but later he contracted out the project. Both initiatives were supported by the central government. Then, for the first time in Turkish municipal history, he issued bonds for partially financing a sewerage project. For the latter project Karayalçın also obtained loans from the World Bank and Germany, with the support of the central government.⁴²

Not surprisingly, Karayalçın became a very popular mayor. He was well respected in Social Democratic Populist Party circles, and in September 1993 he became chairman of the party and remained in that post until March 1995.

Conclusion

Turkey came face to face with mounting urban problems while it still had an overly centralized government. For close to three decades Turkish politicians overlooked the municipal problems or tried to tackle them with inappropriate measures—either by holding all powers at the center or abruptly devolving extensive powers to the localities, at least for some limited types of activities. Beginning in the early 1980s, Turkey's rulers recognized the seriousness of the problem and took steps to deal with it. Substantial authority and resources were transferred to the localities. This led to significant increases in the volume of municipal services.

Some problems lingered, however. One was the continuing salience of the centralist ethos, despite the extensive delegation of authority and resources. Both at the governmental and metropolitan municipality levels the attitude on the whole was: "I provide you with powers and revenues so that you, instead of me, will carry out certain functions that I see fit in the manner that I tell you." Most district mayors could not do much about it, but skillful metropolitan mayors such as Dalan and Karayalçın could create for themselves some space to maneuver. A second problem was the ever-present probability of a political clash be-

tween municipalities and the central government. Prudent mayors such as Karayalçın, however, could prevent such a clash from developing into unmanageable proportions.

In the early 1980s, new resources were transferred to the localities. While initially these were adequate, later, with their needs geometrically increasing, many municipalities again faced shortfalls. Yet mayors such as Dağan and Karayalçın, who could create new resources while avoiding populist personnel policies, managed to keep their municipalities afloat.

Until recently Turkey has had an overly centralized governmental system. In little over a decade, however, the municipalities became a significant part of the government—displaying dynamism, in some cases proving capable of maintaining good relations with the central government, demonstrating skill in creating new resources, and delivering new and expanded services. The central government for its part has gradually shed its earlier attitudes and on the whole has become supportive of municipalities. Problems remain, but capable people with the right attitudes seem to be able to solve them.

Notes

1. The definitions here of patrimonialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic centralism are taken from S. N. Eisenstadt, "Strong and Weak States: Some Reconsiderations," in *The State and Public Bureaucracies: A Comparative Perspective*, ed. Metin Heper (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987).

2. Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 1: *Empire of the Gazis: The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire, 1280–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), chap. 2.

3. Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300–1600*, trans. Norman Itzkowitz and Colin Imber (New York: Praeger, 1973).

4. On the characteristics of the Ottoman government from the sixteenth through the end of the nineteenth centuries, unless otherwise indicated, I draw upon Metin Heper, "Center and Periphery in the Ottoman Empire with Special Reference to the Nineteenth Century," *International Political Science Review* 1 (1980): 81–105.

5. For this definition of deconcentration, see Dennis A. Rondinelli, John R. Nellis, and G. Shabbir Cheema, *Decentralization in Developing Countries: A Review of Recent Experience*, Working Paper No. 581 (Washington: World Bank, 1984), 10.

6. S. T. Rosenthal, "Foreigners and Municipal Reform in Turkey," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 11 (1980): 125–33.

7. Ali Erkan Eke, *Anakent Yönetimi ve Yönetimlerarası İlişkiler* [Metropolitan governance and intergovernmental relations] (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi, 1984), 116.

8. Michael N. Danielson and Ruşen Keleş, "Allocating Public Resources in Urban Turkey," in *The Political Economy of Income Distribution in Turkey*, ed. Ergun Özbudun and Aydın Ulusan (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980), 3.14.

9. Ruşen Keleş, *Türkiye'de Kent Yönetimi* [Urban governance in Turkey] (Ankara: Türk Sosyal Bilimler Derneği, 1988), 9.

10. These developments are studied in detail in Walter F. Weiker, *Decentralizing Government in Modernizing Nations: Growth Center-Potential of Turkish Provincial Cities* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1972).

11. Danielson and Keleş, "Allocating Public Resources in Urban Turkey," 320; Ruşen Keleş, "Belediye Gelirleri Dizgesi ve Son Yasal Çahşmalar" [Municipal revenues and recent legislative initiatives], in *XII. İskân ve Şehirçilik Haftası Konferansları (Haziran 1979-Ocak 1980): Yerel Yönetimlerde Güncel Sorunlar* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi, 1981).

12. Eke, *Anakent Yönetimi*, 135–36; Sami Güven, "Belediyelerin Akçah Sorunları" [The fiscal problems of municipalities], *Amme İdaresi Dergisi* (Ankara) 10 (1977): 27.

13. Bilal Eryılmaz, "1980'den Sonra Merkezi İdare ile Mahalli İdareler Arasındaki İlişkiler" [The relations between the central government and local governments in the post-1980 period], *Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi* (İzmir) 2 (1988): 35–58.

14. İlhan Tekeli and Yiğit Gülöksüz, "Belediye Sorunları" [The problems of municipalities], *Amme İdaresi Dergisi* 9 (1976): 17.

15. Şeref Gözübüyük, *Türkiye'de Mahalli İdareler* [Local governments in Turkey] (Ankara: Türkiye ve Orta Doğu Amme İdaresi Enstitüsü, 1967), ix.

16. Korel Göymen, "Dönemin Yerel Yönetim Anlayışını Belirleyen Etmenler" [Factors that shaped the period's philosophy of local government and planning], in *Bir Yerel Yönetim Öyküsü: 1977–1980 Ankara Belediyesi*, ed. Korel Göymen (Ankara: Özgün Matbaacılık, 1983), 20.

17. Erhan Karacemren, "Yerel Yönetim Bakanlığının İşlevleri ve Kapanmaması Yaratığı Sorunlar Üzerine Görüşler" [The functions of the Ministry of Local Government and some notes on the problems the dissolving of the ministry created], in *XII. İskân ve Şehirçilik Haftası Konferansları*, 82–83; Fikret Toksöz, "Belediyelerin Ekonomik Faaliyetleri ve TANSİ Projesi" [Economic initiatives of municipalities and the TANSİ Project], *ibid.*, 74–75; Osman Meriç, "Yerel Yönetimler ve Vesayet" [Local governments and tutelage], *ibid.*, 35.

18. Ayşe Öncü, "The Potentials and Limitations of Local Government Reform in Solving Urban Problems: The Case of Istanbul," in *Dilemmas of Decen-*

tralization: Municipal Government in Turkey, ed. Metin Hepar (Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 1986), 62 ff. Also see S. T. Rosenthal, *The Politics of Dependency: Urban Reform in Turkey* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980).

19. Ruşen Keleş, "Municipal Finance in Turkey with Special Reference to Istanbul," in Hepar, *Dilemmas of Decentralization*, 39–40.

20. For an elaboration, see Metin Hepar, "Introduction," in *Democracy and Local Government: Istanbul in the 1980s*, ed. Metin Hepar (Wilmington, U.K.: The Eothen Press, 1987), 7.

21. Ruşen Keleş, "Recent Developments in Istanbul Municipal Finance," *ibid.*, 43.

22. *Ibid.*

23. Reported in greater detail in Metin Hepar, "Municipal Government in Istanbul: A Grassroots Perspective," in *Democracy and Local Government*, chap. 3.

24. *Giney* (Istanbul), February 10, 1990.

25. *Tempo* (Istanbul), March 4–10, 1990.

26. *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), June 20, 1990.

27. *Milliyet* (Istanbul), December 16, 1989.

28. *Milliyet*, August 1, 1992.

29. Metin Hepar, "The State, Political Party and Society in Post-1983 Turkey," *Government and Opposition* 25 (1990): 321–33.

30. *Milliyet*, January 25, 1989.

31. *Hürriyet*, December 28, 1989.

32. *Milliyet*, September 1, 1990.

33. *Hürriyet*, June 22, 1990.

34. *Milliyet*, December 28, 1989.

35. *Cumhuriyet* (Istanbul), June 30, 1990.

36. *Hürriyet*, January 19, 1990.

37. *Hürriyet*, July 21, 1990.

38. *Milliyet*, August 19, 1992.

39. *Tempo*, December 10–16, 1989.

40. *Ibid.*; *Hürriyet*, November 14, 25, 1989; *Cumhuriyet*, April 13, 1992.

41. According to this formula the project is completed by a private enterprise, run by it for a period of time, and then transferred to the public agency.

42. *Tempo*, December 10–16, 1989; *Hürriyet*, October 24, 28, 1989.