INTRODUCTION

The Turkish Republic was established in 1923 on the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. Under the leadership of Kemal Atatürk, the Turks established a completely new political regime with political parties, parliament, and elected executives (Robinson, 1963). The founders of the Republic greatly revamped the Ottoman governmental system. Thus, the early years of the Republic were distinguished, inter alia, by extensive political and administrative reforms (Lewis, 1961). Turkey made a transition to multi-party politics at the end of World War II. The Democratic Party (DP) defeated the Republican People’s Party, the single party of the past 27 years, in the 1950 general elections (Karpat, 1959). The DP governments, which held office from 1950 to 1960, were characterized by the relaxation of the state’s involvement in economic and social matters, the decline of the influence of the bureaucratic cadres, and the rapid growth of private sector undertakings (Simpson, 1965).

On May 27, 1960, the last DP government was overthrown by the military officers who claimed that the political oppression by the DP governments had brought the country to the brink of civil war. Before holding new elections in 1961, the military regime introduced a host of reforms, including a new constitution (Weiker, 1963).

During the 1960s and 1970s, Turkish political life witnessed fierce political party competition, while attempts to achieve economic development were made through five-year plans (Cohn, 1970). In March 1971, the military issued an ultimatum demanding significant policy changes. The government resigned. During the 1971–1973 interregnum, a new set of administrative reforms was initiated. In 1973, the multi-party system was reinstated (Erim, 1972).
The post–1960 and 1971 patterns were repeated in the early 1980s. In September 1980, the military took power into its own hands for the third time. This time, too, intervention was followed by a series of reform programs, including administrative ones.

This chapter focuses primarily on the reform commissions that have been formed by the government to streamline the bureaucratic agencies and procedures. These commissions and their efforts to reform the bureaucracy are worth exploring, since extensive administrative reform in Turkey has always been tried through these formal institutions. This study takes up the post–1945 administrative reform efforts, that is, those made during the multi-party period in Turkey.

THE 1946–1960 PERIOD

Following World War II, administrative reform became an important issue in many of the developing countries. As a result, not only did the literature on public administration and administrative reform begin to pile up, but also the emerging international organizations, which emphasized the importance of the role of public administration in the development process, began sponsoring various programs aimed at improving the administrative systems in the developing countries. As Birkhead (1967: 14) has noted, “in the early fifties, technical assistance to the underdeveloped world was an exciting new idea. [Consequently] . . . bilateral and multilateral support for a variety of undertakings was easily obtainable.”

Turkey, which at the time again came to have close ties with the Western world, was also affected by these developments and attempted to reform its public bureaucracy beginning in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Five of the six reports produced during this period were prepared by foreign experts and commissions. Table 9.1 summarizes the functions of the commissions established at the time, the date they were formed, and the date they submitted their reports.

As Table 9.1 makes clear, the conceived scope and coverage of the administrative reforms in question were rather extensive. In almost all cases, the reform commissions were required to study and suggest reform measures regarding the entire public bureaucracy. The reform commissions were expected to seek improvements in organizational structure, administrative management and personnel administration.

All of the commissions started with similar assumptions and ended up with similar recommendations. For example, the commissions considered reorganization an effective way of improving public administration. They agreed on the principle of establishing a minimum number of functional ministries composed of similar departments, and they made their recommendations in line with this principle. Recommendations with respect to administrative management and personnel administration were also fairly similar and included the following: Introduction of O and M units, new management techniques, the centralization of staff services, the establishment of a unified civil service structure based on
Table 9.1  
The Administrative Reform Commissions in Turkey in the 1946–1960 Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission</th>
<th>Date Formed</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Date They Submitted Their Reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neumark</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Recommending measures for efficient functioning of the government agencies</td>
<td>1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conk and Savun</td>
<td></td>
<td>Recommending measures for rationalization of the bureaucratic organization</td>
<td>December 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barker Mission</td>
<td>March 1950</td>
<td>Recommending measures for the establishment of an administrative system appropriate to fulfill Turkey's development objectives</td>
<td>May 15, 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin and Cush</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Recommending measures for the improvement of administrative procedures in the Ministry of Finance</td>
<td>August 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leimgruber</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Recommending measures to reform Turkish public administration</td>
<td>December 1952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.N. Working Group</td>
<td>May 8, 1952</td>
<td>Recommending plans for the establishment and operation of a Public Administration Institute</td>
<td>September 6, 1952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaileux Dantel</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Recommending measures to improve the public personnel system</td>
<td>1958</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. In the case of studies by one or two persons, last names are given. In other cases, the name of the commission is indicated.

b. In some cases it has not been possible to obtain information about the exact date of appointment and/or completion.
merit principle, a central personnel agency, emphasis on training, and improvements in accounting and budgeting procedures. Most of these recommendations had their roots in Western public administration concepts and practices (Tutum, 1994: 87–118).

However, the capacity and enthusiasm of the Turkish governments “to conduct a follow-up study [of reform], communicate its results downward, gain some implementation of the recommendations” was limited (Birkhead, 1967: 8). Moreover, there were no influential groups in the polity or society which energetically pushed administrative reforms: “there was little or no systematic criticism of administration either from universities, government, or elsewhere” (Birkhead, 1967: 9).

Because it was possible to receive technical assistance for administrative reform, foreign experts were often asked to evaluate Turkish public administration and make recommendations for improvement. In fact, in the early 1950s it became rather fashionable to invite for this purpose students of public administration from abroad. However, little attention was paid to their suggestions for making improvements in the administration.

One basic reason was that gradually the priority turned out to be that of depoliticizing the bureaucracy rather than making it more efficient and effective. This was a reaction to the fact that during the single-party period of 1923–1950 the higher civil servants had continued to be part and parcel of the political elites (Evin, 1996: 49), and following the coming to power of the DP governments in 1950 the civil servants in question perceived the DP politicians as counter elites (Heper, 1985: 67–97). This particular approach on their part led to a serious conflict between them and the DP politicians. Consequently, the DP politicians tried to relegate the bureaucrats to a secondary role in the polity. Not only the DP’s national leaders but also the local politicians began to conceive their “roles in expanded terms, and came to intervene more freely in administrative matters” (Roos and Roos, 1971: 9). In the process, administrative reform as such lost its significance; instead, the politicians concentrated on rendering the administrators virtually subservient to themselves.

THE 1960–1980 PERIOD

After the 1960 military intervention in Turkey, a new constitution was drawn up, development plans were made, and the state economic enterprises were given a greater role in the economy. As a consequence, administrative reform once again came to the agenda.

The civil bureaucracy was not threatened by the military rule, since the intervention was made against their political opponents, that is, the DP politicians. In fact, the bureaucratic leaders now endeavored to regain their place in the elite structure. In any case, the establishment of the State Planning Organization (SPO) and the State Personnel Department in the early 1960s meant more say and hence more power for the civil bureaucracy.
The administrative reform attempts during the period in question sought to increase the capacity of the administrative system to undertake developmental goals, which were laid down in the development plans and programs drawn by the newly established SPO (Dodd, 1965). In fact, the First Five-Year Development Plan (1963–1967) and the subsequent yearly development programs emphasized the key role the bureaucracy would have in the development process.

In a sense, as earlier, the basic assumption behind the administrative reform strategy of the time was that the administrative system could be considered to have extensive autonomy from other social systems and, consequently one could improve administrative performance by making changes in the administrative system itself (Heper, 1971: 420). The Central Government Organization Research Project, which can be regarded as the major administrative reform attempt of the period, was commissioned in 1962 to examine the organizational structure and functions of the central government organization, and it recommended measures for improvement (see Table 9.2).

Table 9.2
Administrative Reform Commissions in Turkey in the 1960–1980 Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission</th>
<th>Date Formed</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Date They Submitted Their Reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Government Organization</td>
<td>February 13, 1962</td>
<td>Examining the distribution of the central functions among the central government organizations and making recommendations for the efficient performance of those functions</td>
<td>April 24, 1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Project</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission on the Reform of</td>
<td>June 5, 1964</td>
<td>Carrying out complementary studies on the Central Government Organization Research Project and recommending measures for the improvement of administration and administrative methods</td>
<td>November 8, 1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory Board on Administrative</td>
<td>May 29, 1971</td>
<td>Identifying priorities and strategies in administrative reform; evaluating the recommendations of previous commissions and suggesting implementation programs.</td>
<td>November 10, 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Within the framework of the Central Government Organization, the following were studied: Research Project, the general structure of the government organization (council of ministers, ministries, departments attached to the Prime Ministry, autonomous institutions); the distribution of central government functions such as common functions (e.g., planning, statistics, administrative improvement), traditional functions (e.g., justice, internal affairs, and foreign affairs), financial and economic functions (e.g., financial administration, commerce, industry, energy, agriculture), and social functions (e.g., culture, education, religious affairs). However, in the report deriving from the Project, it was pointed out that a redistribution of functions by itself should not be expected to overcome all administrative problems and deficiencies. Less than adequate personnel management, lack of administrative leadership and supervision, excessive bureaucratic procedures, and the absence of effective central direction were mentioned as other possible causes of the bureaucracy’s inability to perform its functions in an efficient and effective manner.

The Commission on the Reform in Administration and Administrative Methods, on the other hand, was expected to carry out studies complementary to those by the Central Government Organization Research Project. The latter commission was also to conduct studies on provincial and local administrations.

Most of the recommendations of these and other commissions were again not implemented, because these commissions produced their reports at a time of political instability. From 1961 to 1965, four coalition governments were formed in Turkey (Ahmad, 1977). None of these rapidly changing governments had a real chance to effectively pursue the recommendations of the commissions. Moreover, no central unit to coordinate and supervise administrative reform was set up. Instead, the SPO was assigned the responsibility to implement the reform measures suggested by the commissions.

Overburdened with several other tasks, the SPO was, in any case, inadequately staffed for this purpose. The SPO also suffered from the controversies over its role in the Turkish political and economic life. Then, for a while the State Personnel Department (SPD) was given the task of implementing the reform measures. Not only the SPP lacked qualified personnel, but the Department also faced great resistance from the ministries and other agencies, which at the time were in fierce conflict with the SPD with respect to personnel appointments. Under these circumstances, it proved extremely difficult to carry out administrative reforms.

Following the 1965 general elections, the Justice Party (JP) obtained the majority in parliament. However, being the successor party to the DP which the military had overthrown, the JP governments, too, were not anxious to implement the recommendations of the reform commissions. The JP governments regarded the reform commissions in question as the products of the 1961 military intervention, and, therefore, they were biased against them.

A new reform commission was appointed right after the 1971 military intervention—the Advisory Board on Administrative Reform. In its report, the Board
basically reiterated the findings of, and on the whole concurred with, the recommendations of the report of the Central Government Organization Research Project. The chances that the recommendations in question would be implemented during the 1970s were even slimmer than during the 1960s. In the 1970s, Turkish politics were more fragmented and polarized than in the previous decade. The 1970s were characterized by coalition governments that were extremely conflict-ridden, and every issue was highly politicized (Heper, 1979–1980). It was not, therefore, surprising that, as noted, in both the Third Five-Year Development Plan (1973–1978) and the Fourth Five-Year Development Plan (1979–1984), administrative reform attempts did not once again go beyond preparation of administrative reform packages, and thus failed to produce concrete and practical results.

Furthermore, not unlike the arrangement in the 1960s, during the 1970s, too, the task of coordinating and supervising the administrative reform efforts was again assigned first to the SPO and then to the SPD, and once more the followup could be no more than sluggish (Tutum, 1994: 120–122).

FROM 1980 TO THE PRESENT

Following the military intervention in September 1980, attempts were made to reform the administrative machinery. The reform aims of the military government (September 1980–December 1983) basically focused on the following:

- Redistribution of the functions, authority, and responsibility of the central government agencies in order to eliminate excessive centralization.
- Drawing of a common organizational framework for ministries, general directorates, and other large public agencies to achieve uniformity in the basic organizational structure of public organizations.
- Simplification of bureaucratic procedures in order to reduce formality and red tape.
- More efficient utilization of public personnel and hence gradual reduction of the number of public personnel.

Of these aims, the attempt to establish a uniform organizational framework was relatively more successful than the other three objectives. For ministries, the general directorates affiliated to ministries, and for the field and provincial units of ministries, the basic line, staff, and auxiliary units were identified. Thus, in each ministry, a unit responsible for “training” was established, and those units were given the same title and place in the hierarchical structure of each ministry. Similar arrangements were made for the general directorates attached to the ministries and for the field and provincial units of the ministries. The objective here was to provide organizational uniformity among the public agencies.

Relatively speaking, radical changes in the Turkish bureaucracy came to the agenda only after the Motherland Party (MP) captured power following the 1983
general elections. Above all, the MP governments adopted a policy that emphasized market forces and aimed at increasing Turkey’s exports. This policy, which had been referred to as “a liberal revolution” (Rustow, 1987: 2), was to replace the earlier economic policy of import substitution in particular and étatism in general. The export-promotion and privatization policies of the new government meant not only reducing the scope of civil bureaucracy in Turkish politics and economics, but in many cases also sidestepping the traditional economy bureaucracy since, Prime Minister Özal thought, the civil servants inherited from earlier periods could not show the dynamism of a successful implementation the new economic policies required (Heper, 1989; Atiyas, 1996).

Before 1980, whenever the governments felt compelled to carry out certain services more rationally, new agencies were created (e.g., the SPO and the SPD) while the old ones were left intact. Also, as noted, the administrative reforms were preceded by long-drawn-out studies by “technocrats” from the universities or the Institute of Public Administration for Turkey and the Middle East.

The self-defeating strategy of adding new agencies to the already existing system and the formulation of reform proposals “by those in their ivory towers” were now abandoned. Instead, a small task force affiliated with the Prime Ministry and headed by a minister of state was formed. This task force worked with the O and M units within the individual agencies and in particular with the critical officials in the ranks.2

The overriding theme was to encourage the exercise of initiative, which to reformers meant that everybody knew what they were supposed to do. Therefore, efforts were made to better define function, authority and responsibility. Authority had to be commensurate with responsibility, and overlaps in function and authority causing ambiguity had to be prevented. In this framework, the internal structure of ministries was reorganized by Act 3046, enacted in September 1984. Achieving a better division of labor and coordination among the various bureaus also meant that a transaction would be completed in one office, and clients would not have to run from one agency to another. These administrative measures, geared to functionality and simplification of bureaucratic procedures and trimming the bureaucracy itself, as mentioned earlier, were the result of efforts to restructure the Turkish economy so that the emphasis would be on market forces.

In the process, the traditional economy bureaucracy was sidestepped. For example, the Ministry of Finance was left basically with the duty of collecting revenues while the newly founded Undersecretariat for Treasury and Foreign Trade was authorized for making and implementing financial and monetary policies. In the same vein, the State Personnel Law was modified so as to allow the private sector managers to enter laterally into the highest administrative echelons in the public bureaucracy. Thus, new civil servants were recruited from outside the bureaucracy, of whom the majority were educated in the United States, and they were appointed as heads of such economically critical agencies as the Central Bank, the state banks, and the state economic enterprises. The
civil service posts became less secure, as many functionaries were now hired on a contract basis. Also, the appointments of civil servants such as governors, deputy-governors and police chiefs became based on loyalty to the party in power (Heper, 1990; Kozanoğlu, 1993).

The MP governments did not intend to convert the bureaucracy into a legal-rational one. Instead, the MP governments tried to inject dynamism into the economic bureaucracy by bringing in outsiders to head the critical agencies of that bureaucracy. However, the bureaucracy as a whole continued to function in its old ways. Its patrimonial characteristics remained stronger than its legal-rational characteristics, and the Motherland Party governments failed to roll back the public sector in the 1984–1990 period (Ömürgönülşen, 1995: 32).

CONCLUSION

The Turkish experience vis-à-vis administrative reform supports the orthodox wisdom: Administrative reform is not solely a technical problem involving changes in organizational charts and manuals. Administrative reform requires changes in norms, social relations, and political power configurations. It takes place in a sociopolitical context.

However high the technical quality and soundness of administrative reform attempts may be, the backing by and support of strategic leaders in government and influential socioeconomic groups are vital to the success of administrative reform. Furthermore, although governments may offer outward support for reform in order to promote their image, they may be reluctant concerning the implementation of reform if they feel that certain political and bureaucratic balances favorable to them will be upset. Similarly, bureaucrats may see to it that administrative reform is effectively circumscribed so that it will not pose a threat to their power and prestige.

One often comes across the latter situation in those countries where the public bureaucracy wields considerable political power. Political parties, parliaments, and executives may exist, but in effect, the bureaucracy performs the policy-making as well as the policy-implementing functions. The political institutions are weak in relation to the bureaucracy. Major policy decisions are shaped by intrabureaucratic politics; political issues become administrative problems. Thailand during the 1960s and Turkey during the 1930s and 1940s are examples of such bureaucratic polities.

In milieus with such a politico-administrative tradition, the attempts to transform the administrative systems in a Weberian direction—that is, into a legal-rational bureaucracy—become extremely difficult to realize. Even if the structural and functional reorganization may approximate the Weberian model, administrative norms and attitudes will remain largely unchanged; the praxis will fall far short of the ideal.

The Turkish reform experience also shows that administrative reform is closely associated with the developments that one comes across in the wake
of political crises. The experiences of some of the other countries show parallels in this regard. To cite a few examples, in Pakistan (1958), Venezuela (1958), South Korea (1961), Burma (1962), Ghana (1965), and Peru (1968), administrative reforms were launched immediately after the military takeovers (Birkhead, 1966; Berkman, 1979; Groves, 1967; Suk-Choon, 1970). The administrative reforms were also made following crisis situations, which might not have involved military takeovers—for instance, Lebanon after the 1958 crisis, Indonesia after Sukarno lost his power and position, Nigeria after the civil war, and Pakistan after Ayup Khan’s departure from power in 1969 (Crow and İskender, 1961; Siagian, 1980; Burke and French, 1970; Hogue, 1970).

Such crisis situations lend impetus to administrative reform efforts. Yet administrative reform is not a one-shot affair completed overnight. There is a need for persistent efforts to see it through. Many reform projects come to the fore following major crises; however, when the dust settles, the old ways return and the reform efforts are frustrated.

NOTES

1. Some sections of four of these reports were published by the State Personnel Department (Ankara) in 1965 under the title “Foreign Experts’ Reports Submitted to the Government between the Years 1949 and 1959” (in Turkish).

2. However, these O and M units turned out to be ineffective vis-à-vis the tasks they were saddled with since they were not fit for the job.

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