Negotiating Behavior of the Ottoman Empire: A Case Study of the Methods of Conflict Resolution of an Isramic State

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Part Ⅰ

Ⅰ Cultural World, World Order and Negotiation

Before the establishment of modern international system as a genuine global system, there existed several cultural worlds, such as Western Christiandom, Byzantine world, and East Asian Confusion World. Each of such cultural worlds had its own idea of world order, its own world system, its own particular basic political unit, and its own style of inter-unit relations.

Because of the differences of value system, the idea of world order and rules of inter-unit relations, each cultural world had its characteristic methods of conflict resolution. This was true of Islamic World as a relatively self-subsistent cultural world.

Here I'll try to analyze the characteristics of the methods of conflict resolution of the Ottoman Empire as an Islamic state, focussing on the side of negotiating behavior.

Ⅱ Islamic World Order

According to the idea of Islamic world order, Oekmene or the world where human beings existed was divided, into two conflicting worlds. One was "Abode of Islam (*dār al-Islām*)" and the other was "Abode of War (*dār al-harb*)". "Abode of Islam" was considered to be a world which was already under Muslim rule and where the holy law of Islam, *sharī'a*, wholly prevailed. "Abode of Islam" was also considered to be a universal world. From the view point of Islamic world order, "Abode of Islam" was an unified political unit under the rulership of Prophet Muhammad and Caliphs. In theory and in reality till the middle of the eighth century, in "Abode of Islam", there existed only one political unit and there was no room for international relations among Muslim states.

"Abode of War" was a world which was still ruled by unbelievers and where *sharī'a* did not prevail. "Abode of War" was considered to be a world where numerous communities of unbelievers were perpetually struggling each other. "Abode of War" was in double senses concerned with war. On the one hand, wars among the communities of unbelievers were continuously going on and the other hand, it was perpetually the target of the holy war of Muslims.

In "Abode of Islam", theoretically, there was no room for wars among Muslims. In the

theory of Islamic law, the only just war was *jihād*, namely the holy war of Islam against "Abode of War". It was a holy duty for all Muslims to do their best effort in order to incorporate "Abode of War" into "Abode of Islam". This effort was called "holy war".

Jihād was the only just war in the theory of Islamic law. According to the idea of Islamic world order, *jihād* had self-evident value. Therefore, for Muslims, the military measure of conflict resolution, war had self-evident value as a method of conflict resolution with unbelievers of "Abode of Islam". Negotiation, the peaceful measure of conflict resolution could have only secondary and temporary value.

Part II Meaning of Negotiating Behavior of the Ottoman Empire

I Aspects of External Behavior of the Ottoman Empire

In historical reality, the political unity of "Abode of Islam" decisively dissolved after the waning of the Abbasid Caliphate as an Islamic universal empire. From the tenth century, there emerged a kind of "international system" of Muslim states in "Abode of Islam". The de facto basic political unit of this "intern-unit system" was called *dawla* (dynasty-state). From the eleventh century till the early sixteenth century, *dawla* system flourished. After then, the second Islamic universal empire reappeared.

In the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire conquered the major parts of the heartland of Islamic world, namely the Middle East, except for Iran, Afghanistan, a part of Arabian peninsula, and Morocco. The Ottoman Empire can be called "later Islamic Empire", if we call the Abbasid, "early Islamic Empire".

The origin of the Ottoman Empire was a band of Muslim Turkish warriors, namely *gazî*'s which appeared in North Western Anatolia in the late thirteenth century. This empire was a state of *gazî*'s by origin in the border area between Islamic world and Byzantine world. For the Ottomans, *jihād* was seemed to be their holy duty. Actually, in the periods of the rise and establishment of the empire, war was dominant measures in its external behavior.

During the fourteenth century, a little band of Muslim Turkish *gazî*'s continued to conquer the land of Anatolia (Anadolu) and then the Balkan area (Rumeli) and developed into a local empire in the North West frontier of the Islamic World. The Ottoman State was based on the idea of *jihād*.

In 1453, Mehmed II, the seventh sultan of the Ottman Empire, conquered Constantinople and incorporated almost the whole territory of the Byzantine Empire. In 1516-1517, the Ottomans defeated Mamluks of Egypt and incorporated most parts of the ancient center of the Islamic world, including two greatest holy cities of Islam, Mecca and Medina. In the middle of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire ruled over the huge area which covered over almost three-fourth of the Mediterranean world.

By this time, the Ottoman Empire had already become an Islamic universal empire. However, the Ottomans pursued *jihād*. Suleyman the Magnificent, a sultan of the zenith of the Ottoman Empire led thirteen times the Ottoman army by himself. Even in the golden age, war

was the most basic pattern of the external behavior of the Ottoman Empire.

II Negotiating Behavior as a Supplementary Method of Conflict Resolution

Negotiating behavior of the Ottoman Empire in its heyday was always supported by supreme military power. Even the Hapsburg emperors were obliged to send ambassadors "to beg peace" of the victorious Ottoman sultan. Ambassadors were compelled to kiss the bottom of Sultan's garment in a humiliated way.

Negotiation between the Ottomans and unbelievers was considered to be a unilateral favor from the part of Sultan and not to be negotiation between equals.

Even the negotiation for commercial agreements were considered to be acts of asking sultan's favors. Commercial agreements which were called *ahdname* (treaty) was actually not a treaty in Modern sense, but a unilateral favor of sultan.

Even the rules of negotiation were unilateral. The Ottoman rules of negotiation were essentially based on *sharī'a*, the holy law of Islam. Those rules were not based on bilateral agreements, but on unilateral principles of good conducts of good Muslims.

Only after the end of the seventeenth century, when the military balance between the Ottomans and Europeans drastically changed against the former, the significance of negotiating behavior in the Ottoman external behavior began to change gradually.

III From War to Negotiation

In the sixteenth century, the Ottomans kept military supremacy over Western Europeans. However, during the seventeenth century, the retreat of Ottoman military power against Europeans began, because of the rapid innovation of European military technology and the rise of new kind of states. Even during this period, the Ottomans tried to pursue military methods of conflict resolution against Europeans. As a result, the Ottomans lost more and more.

The final decisive turning point of military balance was the failure of the second siege of Vienna in 1683 and the treaty of Carlowitz in 1699. After then, even the Ottomans began to prefer negotiation to war. "Tulip Age", twelve years of peace just after the conclusion of the treaty of Passarowitz in 1718 was the best symbol of this great change of tide.

The change of the way of external behavior and the increase of the significance of negotiation began to influence on the structure of power and the functioning of the Ottoman ruling organization during the eighteenth century.

Part III   Types and Backgraounds of Ottoman Negotiating Behavior

I With whom the Ottomans Negotiated?

Islamic world system was an open system. There intercourses and negotiations with the different cultural worlds were almost always seen. The Ottoman Empire was a part of this open system. The objects of their negotiating behavior extended more and more in accordance of the growth of their political power.

At first, the Ottomans negotiated only with surrounding powers in Anatolia, namely, Rum

Seljuks, and Muslim Turkish principalities in Anatolia among Muslims and Byzantines among unbelievers. Issues over which negotiations were going on were limited and definite.

After the establishment of the Ottoman Empire as an Islamic universal empire, the range of those whom the Ottomans negotiated with was drastically extended. Among them, there were major West European powers of that period and Russia among non-Muslims and Iranians, Moroccans, Indian Muslims, and even peoples of South East Asia among Muslims.

II Types of Negotiation

As far the types of negotiation, there were several types. One was a ceremonial type. This type of negotiation was seen in the case of negotiation between the states of different prestige. In the every period, the Ottomans wished to get favor from more prestigious states, such as Rum Seljuks, Mamluks and ets., in order to rose their own prestige.

After their establishment as an Islamic universal empire, embassies from Muslim states of remote eares as such as Central Asia, India or South East Asia came to negotiate with the Ottoman Empire in order to get higher prestige in the Islamic World and among their Muslim neighbours.

Negotiation about ordinary issues were taken place mostly between the Ottomans and their neighbors who had continuous commercial relations with the Ottomans such as Venice.

Extraordinary type of negotiation was mostly concerned with *jihād*, negotiation with threat of war or negotiation after war. This last type was the most frequent one in the heyday of the Ottoman Empire.

III Negotiators

During five centuries of pre-modern Ottoman Period, there appeared many kinds of negotiators who took part of many types of negotiation. And the types and backgrounds of Ottoman negotiators also changes over centuries.

In the period of state-formation of the Ottomans from the end of the thirteenth century till the first half of the fifteenth century, in the center of the state, Ottoman rulers themselves, grand viziers *(vezirazam)* and viziers *(vezir)* were main negotiators over important political issues. Socially, grand-viziers and viziers of this period were mostly of *ulema* (scholars of Islamic law) origin. However, they played the roles of negotiators, not as scholars, but as top-level statesmen.

When the Ottomans sent ambassadors to the other states, they preferred as ambassadors, *ulema* or *seyh* (elders of Islamic mystic order). The reason was that *ulemas* and *şeyhs* enjoyed high prestige and respects among Muslims and they themselves had their own extensive networks.

In the period of imperial glory from the middle of the fifteenth century till the late sixteenth century, main negotiators in the state center were grand viziers and vizieres who were mostly from palace slaves of sultans. In this period, sultans themselves had already retired from the substantial process of negotiation because of the despotization of the Ottoman polity and of the organizational growth of the Ottoman ruling organization.

During this period, while the Ottomans send ambassadors, Ottoman ambassadors played

mostly ceremonial functions. As for substantial negotiation, the Ottomans expected to receive foreign ambassadors in their imperial capital, Istanbul, and to settle the issues as a part of Ottoman bureaucratic routine. In their notion, it was not necessary for the Ottomans to send ambassadors in order to negotiate, but keenly necessary for the foreigners to send ambassadors to the threshold of sultan.

From the end of the sixteenth century till the end of the seventeenth century, most important negotiators were grand viziers as the just previous period. However, in this period, competence of grand viziers as negotiators was not based on their personal skill as in the previous period, but on organizational and bureaucratic role of them.

During the period, the process of bureaucratization of the Ottoman ruling organization was going on. As a result, in 1654, the office of grand vizier was separated from the palace of sultan and the independent office of grand vizier, *"Bab-ı Asafi"*, later *"Bab-ı Ali* (Sublime Porte)" was established.

This period was, at the same time, the period of the retreat of the Ottoman Empire. Reflecting this situation, the significance of negotiation in general and the roles of the Ottoman ambassadors to foreign countries became more and more important.

In the eighteenth century, the office of grand vizier, *"Bab-ı Ali"* became the center of negotiation. At the same time, the institutionalization of pre-modern system of Ottoman diplomatic negotiation process was almost completed. The chief scribe *(reisül-küttab)* became the most important negotiator. The chief scribe was a civilian bureaucrat, not military. And, more the Ottomans began to rely upon negotiation as a measure of conflict resolution, more the power and prestige of the chief scribe increased. During this period, the post of the chief scribe became one of the most important posts of the Ottoman bureaucracy and there appeared even grand viziers who experienced the chief scribeship.

In this period, the importance of Ottoman ambassadors to foreign countries increased, too.

Here shortly, I'll mention about the means of mutual understanding in the process fo negotiation, namely, interpreters who were employed in negotiations.

In case of negotiation with Muslim states, common language was mostly Arabic or Persian, which Ottoman Muslim statesmen and bureaucrats could deal with. In case of negotiation with European countries, Italian or French were preferred. In case of European languages, till the sixteenth century, the Ottomans used converts to Islam from christianism or Judaism as interpreters.

In the seventeenth century, the Ottomans began to use their non-Muslim subjects such as Greeks, Armenians and Jews as interpreters. And in the eighteenth century, few elite families of Greek Orthodox subjects began to monopolize the posts of imperial interpreter and formed a kind of elite cast named "Phanariots", because of their residence in Fener district of Istanbul.

Ⅳ Institutional Backgrounds and Career Patterns of Negotiators

From the beginning of the Ottoman state to the end of the sixteenth century, main negotiators were top level statesmen of palace and military origin as a person. Between the

end of the sixteenth century and the end of the seventeenth century, bureaucratization of Ottoman negotiators went on.

As a result, in the eighteenth century, Ottoman negotiators were mostly composed of civilian bureaucrats who were trained in the office of grand vizier *(Bab-ı Ali)*. Thier recruitment was based on de facto inheritance or patronage and their training was based on apprenticeship. The top of this kind negotiators was the chief scribe *(reis ül-küttab)*. The importance of this post increased drastically during this period. The emergence of grand viziers of the chief scribe origin was a symbolic phenomena that indicated the transformation of the nature of the Ottoman state and the transformation of the external behavior of the Ottomans.

V Justification of the Result of Negotiation

In the very early period, it was not necessary to get special kind of justification of the result of negotiation, except for the authorization by the Ottoman rulers themselves.

However, in the process of organizational growth and of the establishment of Sunni Islamic orthodox ideology, in the sixteenth century, this kind of justification became keenly necessary. Such function was given, on the one hand, supreme imperial council *(Divan-ı Hümayun)* and on the other hand, the judicial decree *(fetva)* of *şeyül-Islam* (the chief of the whole Ottoman *ulemas*).

During the seventeenth century, the significance of supreme imperial council declined. And in the eighteenth century, in stead of it, semi formal council of cousult at on *(meclis-imüşeveret)* played important role. And the *fetvas* of *şeyhul-Islam* increased its importance.

Part Ⅳ Transformation of Negotiation

Before the establishment of Modern international system as a true global system, there existed plural cultural worlds and each of them had its own world order, world system, political unit, inter-unit relations and particular negotiation patterns.

Negotiation patterns transformed through human history and even in each cultural world, negotiation patterns transformed perpetually. Here I analyzed the characteristics and the process of transformation of negotiation pattern, taking the case of the Ottoman Empire as the last Islamic universal empire, in the Islamic world as a self-sabsistent cultural world.