

The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

Edited by

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SECTION THREE

MILITARY COOPERATION BETWEEN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE
AND ITS TRIBUTARIES

THE FRIEND OF MY FRIEND AND THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY: ROMANIAN PARTICIPATION IN OTTOMAN CAMPAIGNS

Ovidiu Cristea

Political relations between Wallachia and Moldavia, on the one hand, and the Ottoman Empire, on the other, have long been a favorite subject for modern Romanian historiography. There is, however, an obvious imbalance here; although numerous studies highlight the role of these two countries as defenders of Christendom, most historians all but ignore the occasions in which they worked together with the Ottoman Empire.¹ Virgil Ciocîltan has devoted one study to Vlad II Dracul's (1436–1442, 1443–1447) participation in Murad II's Transylvanian campaign of 1438;² there have also been some references in general works of historical synthesis,³ and Mihai Maxim published some documents related to the subject, with commentaries.⁴ Other than these, though, there has never been any systematic attempt to analyze how Wallachian and Moldavian *voievods* participated in Ottoman campaigns.

¹ The theme of Wallachia's role as "the shield of Christendom" has been the object of numerous studies, especially after 1990 when the topic gained significant currency. See Vlad Georgescu, *Istoria ideilor politice românești (1369–1878)* [A history of Romanian political thought] (Munich, 1987), 77–78; Andrei Pippidi, "La Croisade au bas Danube: les Roumains comme rempart de la chrétienté," in *Histoire des idées politiques de l'Europe centrale*, ed. Chantal Delsol and Michel Maslowski (Paris, 1998), 77–89; Liviu Pilat, "Conceptul de Poartă a Creștinătății în retorica voievozilor Moldovei, 1475–1538" [The concept of the gate of Christendom in the rhetoric of the Moldavian voievods], in *Ideologii politice și reprezentări ale puterii în Europa* [Political ideologies and representations of power in Europe], ed. Alexandru-Florin Platon, Bogdan-Petru Maleon, and Liviu Pilat (Iași, 2009), 139–174.

² Virgil Ciocîltan, "Între sultan și împărat: Vlad Dracul în 1438" [Between sultan and emperor: Vlad Dracul in 1438], *Revista de Istorie* 29 (1976): 1767–1790.

³ See, for instance, Ștefan Andreescu, *Restitutio Daciae: Relațiile politice dintre Țara Românească, Moldova și Transilvania în răstimpul 1526–1593* [*Restitutio Daciae*: Political relations between Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania in the period 1526–1593] (Bucharest, 1980), 53–54, 56, 58, 67, 69, 75, 79, 82.

⁴ Mihai Maxim, *Noi documente turcești privind Țările Române și Înalta Poartă 1526–1602* [New Turkish documents on the Romanian principalities and the Sublime Porte] (Brăila, 2008).

The first difficulty comes in establishing when the two principalities began to take part in the sultans' wars at all. We might suppose that this must post-date the first tribute payments, but there are still disagreements about when and how a Wallachian or Moldavian prince first joined an Ottoman military expedition. The cause of the controversy is primarily the sources, which are often contradictory and lacking in detail. Sometimes a Romanian presence in the campaigns can only be deduced from Ottoman sources, while Christian documents ignore the Romanian aspects of the sultans' wars. Sometimes, however, the situation is reversed: Christian sources mention Wallachian or Moldavian involvement, while the Ottoman sources are silent.

In addition to this aspect, research is also needed on whether military contributions were only sought in the sultans' European wars, on whether there was a significant difference between Moldavia and Wallachia regarding the troops they sent, and on whether the Porte showed a particular preference for certain types of military units (cavalry, infantry or auxiliaries). At the same time, further study is needed on the extent to which the princes of the two realms actually responded to the Porte's requests, on whether the type of troops varied over the course of time, and on whether their military services were limited to only a few months or could last for the duration of the campaign. Equally, we might ask where exactly the Wallachian and Moldavian troops saw action, how effective they were, and what part treaty obligations played, whether they were respected or shirked.

The absence of any such analysis in Romanian historiography is all the more surprising when we consider that the vassal relationship to the Porte has never been denied, and that many older and more recent scholars have studied the Romanian principalities' duties and obligations, looking especially at the amount of tribute paid over time.⁵ The present study aims to answer some of the questions set out above, without claiming to be a complete overview of the problem. In particular I am aware that research can only yield real results in this area when it is undertaken along with a study of how military participation in Ottoman campaigns was related

⁵ The most comprehensive treatment of the subject remains Mihai Maxim, *Țările Române și Înalta Poartă: Cadrul juridic al relațiilor româno-otomane în Evul Mediu* [The Romanian principalities and the Sublime Porte: The legal context of Romanian–Ottoman relations in the Middle Ages] (Bucharest, 1993).

to other obligations toward the empire (paying tribute, giving gifts,⁶ supplying provisions and materiel,⁷ allowing troops to cross their territory, sending hostages). Thus, this article addresses only selected aspects of the topic, considering only military contributions and setting aside the fact that on many occasions Wallachia and Moldavia supplied the Ottoman Empire with oarsmen, food, and logistical support.⁸ Equally, I only consider those cases in which Romanian troops served in the sultan's army; the inverse case, where the Porte sent forces to support one or another of the Romanian princes, deserves a study in its own right, although the treaty obligations, at least theoretically, provided that the signatories would be "the friend of our friend and the enemy of our enemy."

Finally I suggest that a nuanced understanding of the military relationship also requires an analysis of the political vocabulary used in diplomatic correspondence.⁹ Although the same terms were used repeatedly from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, the Wallachian and Moldavian *voievods'* choice of certain discursive elements varied significantly depending on the ebb and flow of power relations at any given moment and according to their political objective in writing.

Termini Post and Ante Quem

Having suffered raids from Ottoman troops throughout the final decades of the fourteenth century, Wallachia became an Ottoman vassal state during the reign of Mircea the Elder (Mircea cel Bătrân, 1386–1418), even if there is no consensus as to exactly when the sultan's sovereignty was accepted. One plausible view holds that tribute was first paid immediately after

⁶ Especially horses and falcons; see, e.g., Maxim, *Noi documente*, doc. 6, 72–73, and the editor's comments, 73–80.

⁷ As was the case in 1572, when the sultan sought the aid of the Wallachian prince for the materials needed to rebuild the fleet; cf. Nicolae Iorga, "Românii și lupta de la Lepanto" [Romanians and the battle of Lepanto], *Revista Istorică* 10, nos. 4–6 (1924): 106–107; idem, "Ordinul lui Selim al II-lea către Alexandru Vodă al Țării Românești, 1572" [Selim II's orders to Alexandru of Wallachia], *Revista Istorică* 11, nos. 7–9 (1925): 153.

⁸ In 1543 Wallachia supplied 45 oarsmen to the galleys on the Danube; cf. Maxim, *Noi documente*, doc. 25–28, 157–171. This contribution was exceptional, since the oarsmen were paid a sum totaling 6,750 aspers.

⁹ A first sketch on the significance of this topic is Ovidiu Cristea, "Datoria noastră creștinească: Preliminarii la o istorie a limbajului politic în epoca lui Ieremia Movilă" [Our Christian duty: Preliminaries to a history of political vocabulary in the time of Ieremia Movilă], in *Movileștii: Istorie și spiritualitate românească*, vol. 2, *Ieremia Movilă: Domnul Familia. Epoca* (Sucevița, 2006), 107–122.

the crusade of Nicopolis (1396), when Sultan Bayezid I was at the peak of his power and the Wallachian prince was in a vulnerable position.¹⁰ It is, however, hard to prove that the Wallachian ruler was bound to furnish troops to the sultan's army from this same point in time. The hypothesis that Mircea fought in Bayezid's forces at the battle of Ankara has been conclusively disproven by the Orientalist Aurel Decei, who showed that this argument was based on a misreading. Decei shows that the use of the term V-l-k/Vulkoglu in an anonymous chronicle published by Friedrich Giese refers to the Serbian Prince Stefan Lazarević rather than to the Wallachian ruler.¹¹

All things considered, it seems that we can date the first Wallachian–Ottoman military collaboration to Mircea's reign. Ottoman¹² and Byzantine¹³ sources agree that the Wallachian prince took part in the wars of Ottoman succession supporting the pretender, Musa Çelebi. After the Ottoman prince sought refuge in Wallachia, one of the *voievod*'s sons led a detachment to join Musa's troops in fighting against Süleyman for the throne. Musa besieged the citadel of Mesembria in 1409¹⁴ with Wallachian aid, and subsequently was successful in taking control of the empire's European territories.¹⁵ This joint venture probably explains, at least in part, the hostile attitude of Musa's eventually successful rival, Mehmed I Çelebi, toward the Wallachian rulers in the first years of his reign. After

¹⁰ Discussed in detail in Maxim, *Țările Române și Înalta Poartă*, 208–217; see particularly 216–217 for arguments in favor of the year 1396.

¹¹ Aurel Decei, "A participat Mircea cel Bătrân la lupta de la Ankara?" [Did Mircea the Elder fight at the battle of Ankara?], in idem, *Relații româno-orientale* [Romania's eastern relations] (Bucharest, 1978), 9–14; the same opinion is also held by Nicoară Beldiceanu, "Les Roumains à la bataille d'Ankara: Quelques données sur leur organisation militaire dans la Péninsule Balkanique," *Südost-Forschungen* 14 (1955), where he argues that the Vlachs mentioned in the anonymous chronicle were from the Balkan Peninsula.

¹² *Cronici turcești privind Țările Române* [Turkish chronicles on the Romanian principalities], vol. 1, sec. XV–mijlocul sec. XVII [Fifteenth to mid-sixteenth century], ed. Mihail Guboglu and Mustafa Mehmet (Bucharest, 1966), 84.

¹³ Laonic Chalcocondil, *Expuneri istorice* [Proofs of histories], ed. Vasile Grecu (Bucharest, 1958), 113–116. Other Byzantine and Western sources are collected and presented by Dimitris J. Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid: Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War of 1402–1413* (Leiden and Boston, 2007), 137–144.

¹⁴ Peter Schreiner, *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, vol. 1, *Einleitung und Text* (Vienna, 1975), 215.

¹⁵ Șerban Papacostea, "La Valachie et la crise de structure de l'Empire Ottoman," *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire* 25 (1986): 23–33 shows that Mircea's choice to support Musa was rooted in the existing conflict between Wallachia and the Byzantine Empire, which supported Süleyman I. In contrast, Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 135, argues that Musa acted with the support of Emperor Manuel II Paleologos.

an extensive campaign along the Danube frontier in 1419–1420,¹⁶ Mircea once more became a vassal of the Porte and was bound, according to the chronicler Şükrullah, not just to pay tribute and send hostages, but also, “whenever there is war and the sultan shall ask for their support [the Wallachians], to send troops according to the sultan’s will.”¹⁷ References to Wallachian participation in Ottoman campaigns multiply from the end of Mircea the Elder’s reign, and the practice was maintained until the end of the seventeenth century. The last Ottoman military expedition in which a Wallachian prince participated took place in 1690, when Constantin Brâncoveanu joined Ottoman forces at Zărneşti in defeating a Habsburg army led by General Donat Heissler.¹⁸

It is even more difficult to establish the exact time when this obligation started in the case of Moldavia. Clearly this must have taken place sometime after 1456, the year when tribute payment to the Ottoman Empire began.¹⁹ Recently the thesis has been revived that the principality must be counted as having come under the Porte’s hegemony as early as the rule of Voievod Petru Muşat (1375–1391), based on a catalogue entry in a Polish archive that mentions a treaty, now lost, concluded with Sultan Bayezid I in 1392.²⁰ Other sources, however, make no mention of diplomatic or military ties between Moldavia and the Ottoman polity before the fifteenth century, so unless further documents are discovered this hypothesis must be treated with some caution.

It is certainly true that indirect testimony dates the sultan’s first orders to raise troops to the reign of Stephen II (Ştefan II, 1433–1447, with

¹⁶ Viorica Pervain, “Lupta anti-otomană a Țărilor Române în anii 1419–1420” [Wallachia’s war against the Ottomans in 1419–1420], *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie Cluj* 19 (1976): 55–79; Virgil Ciocîltan, “Competiția pentru controlul Dunării inferioare, 1412–1420” [The struggle to control the lower Danube], *Revista de Istorie* 35 (1982): 1191–1203; Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, “Ottoman Diplomacy and the Danube Frontier, 1420–1424,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1983): 684–686. The last-named study has been all but ignored in Romanian historiography, despite some important conclusions.

¹⁷ *Cronici turcești*, 32; another Ottoman chronicler, Oruc, writing of the same time, does not mention anything except the tribute payment and one of the prince’s sons being sent as a hostage; cf. *ibid.*, 51.

¹⁸ Constantin Rezachevici, *Constantin Brâncoveanu, Zărnești 1690* (Bucharest, 1989).

¹⁹ Șerban Papacostea, “La Moldavie, état tributaire de l’Empire Ottoman au XV^e siècle: le cadre international des rapports établis en 1455–1456,” *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire* 13 (1974): 445–461.

²⁰ Alexandru Simon, “Bisericile Turcului: *Valahii* lui Spandounes și geneza mitropolieiilor Țării Românești și Moldovei” [The churches of the Turk: Spandounes’ *Wallachs* and the genesis of Wallachian and Moldavian metropolitan sees], *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai: Series Theologiae Orthodoxae* 17 (2010): 91–97.

interruptions). In a letter, probably dating to 1432, Wallachian Prince Alexander Aldea (Alexandru Aldea, 1431–1436) wrote to István Rozgonyi, *comes* of Timișoara, that the Ottomans were preparing a new campaign against Transylvania. The letter also mentions Stephen II as being among those called upon to supply troops to the sultan: “[The Turks] have also sought aid from Moldavia; as for that, the prince of Moldavia is of the same mind as I am toward the lord king.” The last part of the phrase is Alexandru Aldea’s assurance to the recipient of the letter that even though he and his Moldavian counterpart must perforce form part of the Ottoman troops, both were ready to switch sides and join the Christians once battle was joined.²¹

Although this document was published some time ago, it has not received the attention it deserves in the discussion of how Moldavia submitted to Ottoman hegemony. Although the text merely mentions a request from the Porte and does not say that this was met, we might suppose that no such request would have been put unless Moldavia were a vassal state in the same way as Wallachia. It is most likely that this state of affairs did not last long and that Mehmed II Fatih was able to impose a clear relationship of sovereignty on Moldavia. This relationship was established in 1456, during the reign of Petru Aron (1451–1457, with interruptions), and persisted through the first years of the reign of Stephen the Great (Ștefan cel Mare, 1457–1504), when the first joint Moldavian–Ottoman campaign is chronicled. In 1462, Moldavian troops joined Ottoman forces in the unsuccessful siege of the fortress of Chilia. Three different sources record this joint expedition: the chronicle of Laonikos Chalkokondyles, a report from the Venetian *bailo* at Constantinople dated 28 July 1462, and a letter from the Genoese of Caffa to Casimir IV Jagiello of Poland.²² The siege was part of Sultan Mehmed II’s campaign against the Wallachian prince, Vlad the Impaler (Vlad Țepeș, 1448, 1456–1462, 1476), and was intended to secure Chilia as an important operational base.²³

²¹ *Documenta Romaniae Historica D. Relații între Țările Române* [Relations between Romanian principalities], ed. Ștefan Pascu, et al. (Bucharest, 1977), 292.

²² All three sources are collected and presented by Nicolae Iorga, *Studii istorice asupra Chiliei și Cetății Albe* [Historical studies on Chilia and Cetatea Alba] (Bucharest, 1899), 124–125.

²³ For the importance of Chilia in crusade plans, see Francisc Pall, “Byzance à la veille de sa chute et Janco de Hunedoara (Hunyadi),” *Byzantinoslavica* 30 (1969): 240–248; Șerban Papacostea, “Kilia et la politique orientale de Sigismond de Luxembourg,” *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire* 15 (1976): 421–436.

Romanian historians have tried to separate Stephen's actions from Mehmed II's attempts to occupy this strategic point at the mouth of the Danube and have suggested that the Moldavian prince was even trying to prevent Chilia from falling into the sultan's hands.²⁴ Even if Stephen really was trying to incorporate the stronghold into Moldavian territory, all external sources on the period either explicitly state, or at the very least suggest, that the campaign of 1462 was undeniably the result of a pact with Sultan Mehmed II.²⁵

After 1462 Moldavia drifted further away from the Ottoman Empire's political goals and by 1473 was in open conflict with it. When this war was concluded in the truce of 1486,²⁶ the path was open once more for military cooperation, next seen in practice in 1497–1498. It is a paradox, however, that we know of no single situation in which Stephen sent help to the sultan. In contrast, in 1497, Bayezid II sent an important contingent of troops under Mesih Pasha to help Moldavia in its conflict with King John I Albert of Poland.

The peculiarities of Moldavia's status during Stephen the Great's reign led to a number of episodes in which the Porte, rather than requiring direct involvement, sought "benevolent neutrality" or more specifically, permission to cross Moldavian territory. In at least two cases, the response was far from what might have been expected from an obedient vassal.

²⁴ A fully-supported criticism of this argument is Șerban Papacostea, "Relațiile internaționale ale Moldovei în vremea lui Ștefan cel Mare" [Moldavia's international relations in the time of Stephen the Great], *Revista de Istorie* 35 (1982): 607–638; idem, "Comerț, alianțe și acțiune militară în politica lui Ștefan cel Mare la începuturile domniei, 1457–1462" [Commerce, alliance and warfare in Stephen the Great's policy at the start of his reign, 1457–1462] in *Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt: Atlet al credinței creștine* [Saint Stephen the Great: Athlete of Christendom] (Putna, 2004), 445–454. The same perspective is shared by Matei Cazacu, "Du nouveau sur le rôle international de la Moldavie dans la seconde moitié du XV^e siècle," *Revue des Etudes Roumaines* 16 (1981): 41.

²⁵ Internal sources mention the failed siege without any reference to Ottoman collaboration. This lack of reference is not surprising when we remember the "Constantinian model" used in writing these texts. See Andrei Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină în țările române în secolele XVI–XVIII* [The Byzantine political tradition in the Romanian principalities, sixteenth to eighteenth centuries] (Bucharest, 1983), 69, 146; Liviu Pilat, *Între Roma și Bizanț: Societate și putere în Moldova (sec. XIV–XVI)* [Between Rome and Byzantium: Society and power in Moldavia, fourteenth to sixteenth centuries] (Iași, 2008), 461–474.

²⁶ For the dating and conditions of the treaty of 1486, Ștefan S. Gorovei and Maria Magdalena Székely, *Princeps omni laudae maior: O istorie a lui Ștefan cel Mare* [Princeps omni laudae maior: A history of Stephen the Great] (Sfânta Mănăstire Putna, 2005), 238–248.

In 1480–1481 the Porte asked the prince's acquiescence in allowing their troops to attack Poland, though we do not know Stephen's reply.²⁷ In contrast, in 1492 the Venetian *bailo*, Ieronimo Marcello, mentioned in one of his reports that the prince had refused the sultan's request that the Tatars be allowed to cross his realm;²⁸ a similar situation dating to May 1498 should be seen as a result of the Polish–Moldavian conflict that had broken out the previous year. According to the Moldavian Anonymous Chronicle, the Moldavian prince allowed the *sancakbeyi* of Silistra, Malkoçoğlu Balı Bey, to lead his troops across the territory en route to Poland, where the Ottomans plundered the south of the kingdom as far as L'viv and even beyond.²⁹

A similar raid, with an unexpected outcome, took place at the end of the same year. The Moldavian German Chronicle (which dates the events to February 1499) records that on this occasion the invading force suffered cruelly from cold and hunger and that those who escaped were crushed on their way home by Stephen's army. However unlikely this may seem, this version is confirmed by the Polish chronicler Bielski, who also adds a new element. In order to avoid conflict with the Porte, the Moldavian prince supposedly dressed his troops in the Polish fashion. Even if this detail is merely the result of the chronicler's imagination, it is certain that this hostile act provoked no reaction from the Porte, which maintained peaceful relations with Moldavia for a long time afterward.

A comparable episode to that of 1499 took place in 1524, during the reign of Stephen the Young (Ștefan cel Tânăr, 1517–1527), when a Turkish–Tatar army that had been plundering the south of Poland was defeated at Tărășăuși on the Prut.³⁰ Such engagements seem to have been enabled by

²⁷ The document is published by Ioan Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare* (Bucharest, 1913), vol. 2, 365; for the chronological context and an assessment of its importance, see Ștefan S. Gorovei, "La paix moldo–ottomane de 1486 (Quelques observations en marge de textes)," *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire* 21 (1982): 405–421.

²⁸ *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor culese de Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki* [Documents concerning the history of the Romanians collected by Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki], vol. 8, 1376–1650, ed. Ioan Slavici (Bucharest, 1894) [henceforth *Hurmuzaki VIII*], 28.

²⁹ *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XIV–XVI publicate de Ioan Bogdan* [Romanian Slavonic chronicles of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, published by Ioan Bogdan], ed. Petre P. Panaitescu (Bucharest, 1959), 23.

³⁰ *Cronicile slavo-române*, 94; for a commentary on this episode, see Andreescu, *Restitutio Daciae*, 54, who suggests that Ottoman difficulties in maintaining their control of Wallachia explain why Stephen the Young's action went unpunished. It was probably relevant here that Süleyman the Magnificent was preparing a campaign against Rhodes that promised to be extremely difficult. On this last aspect see Nicolas Vatin, "La conquête de Rhodes," in *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris, 1992), 435–454.

the delicately balanced regional political context. The situation changed drastically after the Hungarian defeat at Mohács in 1526.

After this point, insubordinate acts became much rarer and the duty to send military aid to the Porte became a recognized custom. The first campaigns date from June and October–November 1529, when the Moldavian prince, Petru Rareș (1527–1546, with interruption), joined the wars in Transylvania to support János Szapolyai at the Porte's request.³¹ After Süleyman the Magnificent marched on Moldavia in 1538 there are many more examples of participation in the Porte's campaigns. Hostile or insubordinate actions, such as we find in Stephen the Great's time or Stephen the Young's, became hard to imagine and implement.

The Theaters of War

Another matter for discussion is whether the obligation of the Romanian princes to be "the friend of our friend and enemy of our enemy" applied to all of the Porte's military expeditions. It seems that only neighboring realms were understood under these duties. Wallachian troops took part in the campaigns in Hungary (until 1541), the Habsburg lands, Moldavia, and Poland, while Moldavia is mentioned as taking part in expeditions against Hungary, the Habsburgs, Wallachia, and Poland. It is hard to establish exactly why these two countries only took part in campaigns in their immediate region.

It is likely that the most cogent motive was the Romanian princes' unwillingness to leave their countries undefended. Ottoman chronicles frequently report that the Wallachian *voievods* excused themselves from marching with the sultan because they feared invasions by other powers. This is given as a reason for refusing a request for military duty and for failing to appear in person with tribute.³² The Moldavian prince, Stephen the Young, offered such an explanation in 1521, invoking Tatar and Polish threats on his borders, when he refused to attack Transylvania.³³

³¹ Andreescu, *Restitutio Daciae*, 79, argues that although acting on the orders of the Porte, Petru Rareș was also following his own interests in Transylvania, in particular in securing the citadels of Ciceu and Cetatea de Baltă.

³² E.g., Aşık Paşazade in *Cronici turceşti*, 92.

³³ The document is published and annotated by Tahsin Gemil, "Din relațiile moldo-otomane în primul sfert al secolului al XVI-lea" [On Moldavian–Ottoman relations in the first quarter of the sixteenth century], *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie "A.D. Xenopol"* 9 (1972): 142.

From the sixteenth century onward this argument was strengthened by the further fear of domestic political upheaval. The absence of the prince could favor a rival boyar faction seeking to place its own candidate on the throne. A well-known example dates to 1683, when the Moldavian prince, Gheorghe Duca (1665–1683, with interruptions), returning from the unsuccessful siege of Vienna, found Ștefan Petriceicu (1672–1684, with interruptions) on the throne in Moldavia and ended by being taken prisoner and held captive in Poland.

Further research is needed on the question of whether armies from these two realms took part in expeditions farther afield. There are some hints in this direction, but only in the case of Wallachia. Although—as mentioned above—it is hard to accept the suggestion that Wallachian troops fought at the battle of Ankara (1402), nevertheless several narrative sources for the year 1473 mention Wallachians among Mehmed II's allies at the battle of Başkent. Two Oriental sources, the chronicles of Ebu Bekr-i Tihrani and Hasan-ı Rumlu, recording the Ottoman war against the Ak Koyunlu khan Uzun Hasan in 1473, report: "A great host had assembled at the imperial palace [that is, Constantinople] from the regions of Morea, Bosnia, Wallachia, Alanya, Anatolia, Menteshe, Karamania, Kastamonu, and other parts of Rum."³⁴ The reference to Wallachian troops is all the more interesting because at the time in question the principality was struggling in an ongoing war with Stephen the Great in Moldavia. In November of that year, the Wallachian prince, Radu the Handsome (Radu cel Frumos, 1462–1475, with interruptions), was defeated by his Moldavian counterpart, his capital was occupied, and his family captured.

Due to the timing, there is good reason to question the accuracy of our information, were it not confirmed by two Western sources, the *Historia Turchesca* of Giovanni Maria Angirollelo and an account of Caterino Zeno's embassy in Persia. These texts mention Wallachian participation in the campaign, give their numbers (12,000 men) and their position in the Ottoman troop deployment (on the left flank, led by Mustafa, one of the sultan's sons who later distinguished himself in the fighting at Başkent).³⁵

³⁴ The citation is from Ebu Bekr-i Tihranî, *Kitab-ı Diyarbekiriya (Akkoyunlu, Karakoyunlu ve Çagatay Dönemleri Tarihi)* [A book about Diyarbekir: The history of the epochs of Akkoyunlu, Karakoyunlu, and Çagatay], ed. Mehmet Demirdag (Istanbul, 1999), 323; Hasan-ı Rumlu, *Ahsenî't-tevarih* [The most beautiful chronicle], ed. Mürsel Öztürk (Ankara, 2006), 511, adds Trebizond to the list. I am grateful to my colleague Nagy Pienaru for drawing my attention to these passages and translating them from the original.

³⁵ Donado da Lezze, *Historia Turchesca, 1300–1514*, ed. Ion Ursu (Bucharest, 1909), 46; *Dei Commentarii del Viaggio in Persia di M. Caterino Zeno il K[avalier]e et delle guerre fatte*

Even if the number of soldiers cited is exaggerated, the reference offers solid support for the argument that the sultan's ally in this battle was indeed the prince of Wallachia, not a pretender at the Ottoman court. Such a presence on the Asian front is quite exceptional and we might suppose that the Wallachian Prince Radu the Handsome felt that he had to honor his military obligations precisely because he greatly needed Ottoman support in his own dispute with his neighbor. He hoped that by demonstrating his loyalty he might gain the sultan's effective support in the long run.

Besides this campaign in 1473, there is no mention of Wallachian contingents serving in any subsequent Ottoman campaign against Egypt or Safavid Persia. We might suppose that the Wallachian troops fighting on such a remote front in 1473 were fairly ineffective and that Mehmed II's heirs consequently decided not to call upon soldiers little prepared for the rigors of a campaign on the Eastern front.

Forces, Tactical Roles, Effectiveness

The exact number of forces from Wallachia and Moldavia fighting for the Ottoman Empire is a vexing question, with historians estimating numbers either from documents that exaggerated the two countries' military potential or by using inexact methods to calculate their figures.³⁶ For the fifteenth century, generally accepted numbers are around 40,000 soldiers for Moldavia and between 10,000 and 30,000 for Wallachia. For the following century, the sources range between 15,000 and 60,000 men in arms for Moldavia and between 10,000 and 30,000 for its neighbor. Finally, in the first half of the seventeenth century, Moldavia was able to muster between 20,000 and 37,000 men while Wallachia could furnish 30,000 to 40,000 men.³⁷ Such figures would have put the principalities on an equal footing with the great Western kingdoms, but the costs of recruiting,

nell'Imperio Persiano dal tempo di Ussuncassano in qua libri due (Venice, 1558), 16 recto: "dodici mila Valacchi condotti da basaraba lor Capitano, che venne in aiuto del Turco in quella guerra."

³⁶ For the latter problem, see Radu Rosetti, *Istoria artei militare a românilor până la mijlocul veacului al XVII-lea* [A History of Romanian warfare until the mid-seventeenth century] (Bucharest, 1947), 136–137. He considers several sources claiming that Stephen the Great could field 40,000 men as credible and realistic and argues that in later fifteenth-century Moldavia there were around 2,000 villages with about 20 houses in each.

³⁷ For these figures, and the sources on which they are based, see Rosetti, *Istoria artei militare*, 333–334.

equipping, and training such armies would have required exorbitant sums of money. A well-known and well-documented case from 1599 shows the Wallachian prince invading and taking Transylvania with an army numbering 13,281 mercenaries among a total force of around 30,000 men. Accounts show that their wages amounted to almost one million thalers per year.³⁸

In the absence of any exact figures for the two countries' forces, we are equally uncertain how many soldiers the Romanian princes were obliged to supply to the Porte in time of war. There are no continuous records on the subject, and even where partial records exist for some periods, these all come from different authors. Often we do not know what sources the authors themselves were drawing from, how reliable they may have been or how we should interpret them. An anonymous history of the Ottoman Empire from 1556 gives the following figures: Moldavia was required to furnish the sultan with 35,000 cavalry (among a total of 60,000 men), while Wallachia's obligation came to 25,000 cavalry (from a total of 150,000[!]), and Transylvania supplied only 10,000 cavalry. These figures may be hard to accept, but are also found in other Western sources (diplomatic reports, travelers' accounts, chronicles).³⁹

Internal and Ottoman sources in turn are not much more informative. There are references to military participation in the Porte's campaigns, but few details on troop numbers. The orders sent to Transylvania and Wallachia in 1574 are preserved, in which the principalities were asked to join the sultan's armies on the campaign in Moldavia. The order of 25 April requires some cannon and an expeditionary force, though the size of the latter is not specified; on 18 May a plan of attack against Moldavia is worked out, marching orders are given, and the orders are confirmed on 13 June.⁴⁰ None of these documents mentions actual numbers; they only confirm that Wallachia was indeed involved in the Ottoman

³⁸ Nicolae Stoicescu, "Oastea lui Mihai Viteazul" [Michael the Brave's army], in *Mihai Viteazul: Culegere de studii*, ed. Paul Cernovodeanu and Constantin Rezachevici (Bucharest, 1975), 86.

³⁹ Andrei Pippidi, "Descrieri ale Țărilor Române din secolul XVI" [Descriptions of the Romanian principalities in the sixteenth century], in *Românii în istoria universală*, ed. Gheorghe Buzatu (Iași, 1988), 91; and *Călători străini despre Țările Române* [Foreign travelers in Romanian principalities], vols. 1–3, ed. Maria Holban, Paul Cernovodeanu, and Maria Matilda Alexandrescu-Dersca Bulgaru (Bucharest, 1968–1971), *passim*.

⁴⁰ The documents are in Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Mühimme Defteri, no. 24, doc. 474, p. 176; Mühimme Defteri, no. 24, doc. 236, p. 610; Mühimme Defteri, no. 26, doc. 36, p. 13. I am indebted for these details to my colleague, Turcologist Nagy Pienaru, who was able to locate and elucidate them for me.

campaign against Moldavia, along with Tatar and Transylvanian forces. The campaign ended in Ioan the Terrible's (Ioan cel Cumplit, 1572–1574) defeat at Cahul (10 June 1574).

In certain exceptional situations we have precise and credible data, but it is extremely risky to extrapolate from these to an entire century, let alone the whole period of the fifteenth to seventeenth century. Further research is needed on whether the two principalities were obliged to bring their armies to any given Ottoman campaign, or whether this obligation was restricted to expeditions led by the sultan himself. Finally, the role of these vassal contingents in the Ottoman army must be investigated. Did they have a well-defined tactical role? Were they simple auxiliary units? Were they merely a means for the Porte to ensure the loyalty of the two rulers? The answers vary depending on the events we examine and the sources in which they are recorded.

The first mentions of participation in Ottoman campaigns are unclear, with sources suggesting that Mircea the Elder sent only one detachment of troops, albeit led by one of his sons, to support Musa Çelebi in his fight for the Ottoman throne. The situation in 1409 is special, however. The Wallachian troops were fighting for a pretender rather than for an established emperor and thus this instance of military aid cannot be used to draw clear conclusions.

For two of Mircea's successors, Alexandru Aldea and Vlad Dracul, it seems that the prince's presence was obligatory when the sultan himself was leading the expedition. The above-mentioned letter of Alexandru Aldea to István Rozgonyi seems to suggest this: "if this [Ottoman] army arrives in Transylvania, I, too, will be with them; if not me, then I will send Albul."⁴¹ Alexandru Aldea's uncertainty as to who would lead the Wallachian detachment is not explained, but we suppose that if Murad II did not come himself then the prince would delegate leadership to his highest-ranking boyar.⁴² Six years later, Vlad Dracul rode with the same sultan's army, which laid waste to Transylvania in a lightning raid that lasted twenty-three days.⁴³ According to the chronicler Tursun Bey, Vlad Dracul had the choice of obeying the call or being attacked himself: "Call

⁴¹ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, D, 292.

⁴² For the career of the boyar Albul, see Nicolae Stoicescu, *Dicționar al marilor dregători din Țara Românească și Moldova, sec. XIV–XVII* [Dictionary of the high officials of Wallachia and Moldavia, fourteenth to seventeenth centuries] (Bucharest, 1971), 15.

⁴³ For a discussion of the chronology of the campaign, see Ciociltan, *Între sultan și împărat*, 1768–1771.

your army together quickly and come,” the sultan supposedly told him, adding: “If you do not come, I will not hesitate to seek you out.”⁴⁴ The same chronicler adds that on the return march, the Wallachian troops were in the vanguard, which the Serbian despot Đorđe Branković had taken on the outward march.

We have no data on the number of troops in any of these instances. The first numerical data are from the time of Vlad Dracul's son, Radu the Handsome, concerning Mehmed II's wars with Uzun Hasan. According to Giovanni Maria Angiollelo, the Wallachian contingent numbered no fewer than 12,000 men, a number which historians have taken as an estimate of the size of the entire Wallachian army of the period.⁴⁵ Though the number might at first sight seem greatly exaggerated, it is confirmed by another Venetian source, the account of Caterino Zeno's embassy to Uzun Hasan. This contingent supposedly formed an important part of Prince Mustafa's force, which the same author estimates at around 30,000 men, and which formed the left flank of Mehmed II's army at the battle of Başkent (11 August 1473).

The instance of 1473 is unusual. It is the only documented case of a Romanian ruler taking part in an expedition so far away from his own borders with a force representing almost the entirety of his country's army. The force of 12,000 Wallachians is also mentioned by Angiolello in connection with Mehmed II's campaign in Moldavia in 1476; in this instance, the author reports that the Wallachian contingent no longer took the Ottoman left flank, but encamped separately from the Ottoman force (“et alloggiava separatamente dietro il campo”).⁴⁶

Other fifteenth-century engagements saw smaller forces taking part in campaigns much closer to their own borders. In 1475, Laiotă Basarab (1473–1477, with interruptions) brought Wallachian troops to the army of the *beylerbeyi* of Rumelia, Süleyman, which had suffered a defeat at Vaslui (24 January).⁴⁷ Four years later, Basarab Țepeluș (1477–1482, with interruption) sent 5,000 men to join the Ottoman army that invaded Transylvania, which was defeated by István Báthory and Pál Kinizsi at Câmpul Pâinii (13 October 1479).⁴⁸ Wallachian troops also fought alongside the Ottomans

⁴⁴ *Cronici turcești*, 87.

⁴⁵ Rosetti, *Istoria artei militare*, 138.

⁴⁶ Donado da Lezze, *Historia Turchesca*, 89.

⁴⁷ Kemalpaşazade, in *Cronici turcești*, 209.

⁴⁸ A discussion of the sources for this battle can be found in Ioan Hațegan, *Pavel Chi-nezu* (Timișoara, 1994), 139.

in Moldavia in 1484–1486. Tursun Bey mentions Wallachian troops under Vlad the Monk (Vlad Călugărul, 1481–1495, with interruption) serving as Bayezid's vanguard in the expedition of 1484 against Chilia and Cetatea Albă.⁴⁹ Oruc in turn reports that the same prince aided the Ottomans in battles against Stephen the Great at Șcheia (1485) and Cătlăbuga (1486).⁵⁰ An anonymous Ottoman chronicle from the reign of Bayezid II mentions a Wallachian detachment fighting alongside Mesih Pasha's troops in the Moldavian–Polish war of 1497, although this source gives a doubtful account of how events played out.⁵¹

The situation is even more unclear for Moldavia in the fifteenth century. Other than the episode of 1432, when indirect testimony reports that the Moldavian ruler summoned his army for a campaign in Transylvania, the only occasion on which Moldavian troops supported the sultan's army was in 1462. According to the chronicler Laonikos Chalkokondyles, Sultan Mehmed II ordered Stephen the Great to attack Chilia from the land while the Ottoman fleet besieged the fortress from the water. There are no precise numbers and the Moldavian chronicles that do mention the siege offer no further details than that Stephen was wounded in the leg.

Nor is the situation regarding troop numbers much clearer in the sixteenth century. Some sources give exact numbers, but these relate only certain points in the history of Romanian relations with the Porte. Alvise Gritti's 1534 report to Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent mentions Wallachia's duty to supply 3,000 cavalry;⁵² according to a Venetian account from Constantinople, both Wallachia and Moldavia sent this number in 1532, when Gritti took part in the sultan's campaign in Hungary and the unsuccessful siege of Esztergom.⁵³ These details led the account's editor, Aurel Decei, to suppose that Wallachia and Moldavia's military obligations to the Porte in the sixteenth century came to 3,000 cavalry. It is, however, hard to generalize from the events of 1532–1534 to the whole of the first half of the sixteenth century. A comparison with Moldavia's obligations to Poland is instructive. As vassals of the Polish crown, the Moldavian princes were obliged to furnish their lords with 4,000 men in the

⁴⁹ *Cronici turcești*, 99; see an analysis of Ottoman sources and of the troops in the campaign of 1484 in Nicoară Beldiceanu, "La conquête des cités marchandes de Kilia et de Cetatea Albă par Bayezid II," *Südost-Forschungen* 23 (1964): 36–90, especially 62–64.

⁵⁰ *Cronici turcești*, 63.

⁵¹ *Cronici turcești*, 137.

⁵² Aurel Decei, "Aloisio Gritti au service de Soliman le Magnifique d'après des documents Turcs inédits, 1533–1534," *Anatolia Moderna* 3 (1992): 24.

⁵³ *Hurmuzaki* VIII, 61.

fifteenth century and with 7,000 men according to some sixteenth-century accounts.⁵⁴ Wallachia took part in several Hungarian campaigns against the Ottomans in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, although, unfortunately, there are no exact numbers. Only two years after Alvise Gritti's account, Mark Pemflinger and Boldizsár Bánffy, Ferdinand of Habsburg's emissaries in Moldavia, offer a different picture of the Romanian princes' military duties to the Porte. The Moldavian prince, Petru Rareș, apparently said that he was bound to send 6,000 men to the aid of János Szapolyai, while Wallachia was asked for only 4,000.⁵⁵

It is likely that the number of men sent as support to the Ottomans varied depending on the scale of a campaign, its strategic aims, and the other duties of the country (supplying oarsmen for the Danube fleet, paying to arm the fleet,⁵⁶ furnishing fodder and provisions,⁵⁷ etc.). Aurel Decei's figure of 3,000 horsemen represents only one occasion, which should not be used as a basis for extrapolation in a period when, as historians generally accept, Ottoman suzerainty was growing stronger and the principalities' military obligations grew correspondingly.

References abound in the seventeenth century, although without more exact figures. Internal chronicles use standard phrases which may mean

⁵⁴ For these numbers see Andrei Pippidi, "Moldavie et Pologne: la fin de la vassalité," *Acta Poloniae Historica* 83 (2001): 65–68.

⁵⁵ *Călători străini despre Țările Române* [Foreign travelers in the Romanian principalities], vol. 1, ed. Maria Holban (Bucharest, 1968), 376.

⁵⁶ In a report of 27 July 1551, the Venetian *bailo* at Constantinople, Bernardo Navagero, mentions that the prince of Moldavia, Ștefan Rareș, had been called upon to provide 10,000 ducats to arm the Ottoman fleet. The document is published in Ovidiu Cristea, "*Si e fatto Turcho: di ricco povero, di signor schiavo*: Bailul venețian Bernardo Navagero despre turcirea lui Iliș Rareș" [The Venetian *bailo* Bernardo Navagero on Iliș Rareș' apostasy], *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* 27 (2009): 97.

⁵⁷ Many sources mention that during military campaigns food was scarce in Constantinople and prices rose precipitously. There are two opposing viewpoints in recent Romanian historiography on the Romanian role in provisioning Constantinople. Bogdan Murgescu ("Did Moldavia and Walachia export grain during the 16th century?" in *Miscellanea in honorem Radu Manolescu emerito*, ed. Zoe Petre and Stelian Brezeanu (Bucharest, 1996), 190–196) argues that the two principalities did not play a significant role in supplying Constantinople in the sixteenth century, while Ștefan Andreescu ("Răscoala Țărilor Române și chestiunea aprovizionării Constantinopolului" [The Romanian uprising and the question of supplies for Constantinople], *Revista Istorică* 8 (1997): 591–614) argues the opposite. There is no such debate for the seventeenth century, although sources continue to link supply problems in the capital with Romanian obligations to the sultan's army; see, for example, the report of the Venetian *bailo*, Pietro Foscarini, of 24 February 1634, published in *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor culese de Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki* [Documents concerning the history of the Romanians collected by Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki], vol. 4, part 1, 1600–1650, ed. Ioan Slavici (Bucharest, 1884), 474.

anything or nothing: “the armies marched, and the sultan was with them with all his strength,” “the armies marched (...) together with a great multitude of Turks,” “they marched with armies at the emperor’s bidding.” We might suppose that in a period of Wallachian military decline and with the numbers of troops falling, the forces sent to the aid of the Porte fell correspondingly. Such an assumption is not, however, supported by sources that estimate Wallachian and Moldavian contingents at several thousand men.⁵⁸ The significant change was in the efficacy of these troops, which were less and less suited to the conditions of seventeenth-century warfare. Giovanni Luigi Zani, a Bolognese officer in Habsburg service, observed in 1663 that there were 4,000 Wallachs among the Ottoman forces that invaded Transylvania, armed with hand weapons but with few firearms.⁵⁹ The same observer noted that their discipline left a great deal to be desired and that these troops could not be considered as fearful adversaries.⁶⁰ This is supported by the fact that the Porte began to use the troops sent from the two principalities more often for works and corvée labor (building bridges and fortifications), although without entirely giving up on using them in battle.

This summary overview certainly contains numerous question marks, but nevertheless allows a few conclusions, hypothetical though these must be. Moldavian and Wallachian contingents varied in number from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, depending on the magnitude of the Ottoman campaign, the presence of the sultan, and the other services that the two principalities performed for the Porte. The size of these forces probably never exceeded several thousand soldiers and sources agree that they were most often cavalry. It is difficult to estimate exactly how effective these units were in the outcome of a campaign.

In expeditions to Transylvania or Moldavia, Wallachian troops served as the vanguard of the sultan’s army, with their local knowledge being decisive in this role. We can suppose that the Ottomans were more concerned

⁵⁸ E.g., *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor: Urmare la colecțiunea lui Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki* [Documents concerning the history of the Romanians. A continuation of Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki’s collection], Suppl. 1, vol. 1, 1518–1780, ed. G.G. Tocilescu and A.I. Odobescu (Bucharest, 1883) [henceforth, *Hurmuzaki*, Suppl. 1/1], 229: the French ambassador in Istanbul estimated the Moldavian troops sent to support the Ottomans in 1628 from 8,000 to 10,000 men.

⁵⁹ Ovidiu Cristea, “Un viaggiatore italiano nella Transilvania del Seicento: il bolognese Giovanni Luigi Zani,” in *L’Italia e l’Europa Centro-Orientale attraverso i secoli*, ed. Cristian Luca, Gianluca Masi, and Andrea Piccardi (Brăila and Venice, 2004), 290: “armati di dardi, frecce e sabla.”

⁶⁰ Cristea, “Un viaggiatore,” 291.

to secure the loyalty of the two princes than to actually reinforce their troop numbers. It is hard to say exactly how useful the Wallachian or Moldavian troops were; a source from the mid-sixteenth century seems to say that one positive feature of the sultan's troops in a battle against Ferdinand of Habsburg was the presence of Tatar, Wallachian, and Moldavian auxiliaries.⁶¹ Although we have no particular reason to doubt these words of the Venetian *bailo*, Bernardo Navagero, their relevance should not be exaggerated. The context of this discussion shows that the Ottoman dignitary was trying to extract information from his interlocutor about the Habsburg's strengths and weaknesses. Impressed by the number of ships that Charles V was able to put under sail and under arms in the Mediterranean in peacetime, the grand vizier sought to impress the Venetians in turn with the size of the sultan's land armies.

It must be said that, apart from this episode, the Ottomans seem to have doubted the loyalty of the two Romanian princes throughout the period under discussion. This distrust was not unfounded. Wallachian and Moldavian sources record the two rulers' desire to join the side of the Christian powers when they were at war with the Ottoman Empire. Alexandru Aldea's letter of 1432, quoted above, leaves no trace of doubt on this subject: "When your army arrives, I will take my army away at that same hour. The Turks have deceived me many times, and I will do the same, by the Lord, so that they may be entirely rooted out."⁶² The Moldavian prince, Stephen the Young, took a similar stance in the treaty of Hârlău (4 May 1518) concluded with King Sigismund I of Poland.⁶³ Lastly, in 1663 Zani relates an almost identical conversation with an envoy from the Wallachian Prince Grigore Ghica (1660–1664, 1672–1674):

[the messenger] told us precisely that their *voievod* was forced to fight against us, and that his troops were poorly armed and ill-disciplined. He told us that we should advise our generals to bring five or six thousand soldiers and attack decisively, and they would be sure to have the victory. And that they would all gladly die, if they knew that Christendom would keep the advantage thereby.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Cristea, "Si e fatto turcho," 94–95: "perche oltre le nostre forze havemo adesso Tartari al nostro comando Valacchi e Bogdani sogiongendo."

⁶² *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, D, 292; the same undertaking is given in a letter to the town magistrates of Sibiu, *ibid.*, 296.

⁶³ Mihai Costăchescu, *Documente moldovenești de la Ștefăniță voievod, 1517–1527* [Moldavian documents on the voievod Ștefăniță, 1517–1527] (Iași, 1943), 500.

⁶⁴ Cristea, "Un viaggiatore," 291–292.

The prince of Moldavia showed the same attitude to this campaign when he told Anna Bornemisza, wife of the prince of Transylvania, that he had ordered his armies not to cause damage in Transylvania “for we are moved by that same Christian sentiment (...) we did not come by our own will, rather others have forced us to come.”⁶⁵ An example showing that such protestations were not merely given for form’s sake is the Wallachian–Moldavian desertion during the campaign of Hotin (1673) as well as their friendly attitude to the Habsburgs during the siege of Vienna in 1683.⁶⁶

This ambiguous or even duplicitous attitude emerges in other episodes, too, when the Porte sought strength from the two countries. In such situations, the princes used various excuses for not joining the sultan’s armies. Thus, according to the Venetian *bailo* in Constantinople, Girolamo Marcello, in 1492 Bayezid II ordered the Wallachian prince, Vlad the Monk, to send troops for a campaign against Hungary, and he also required Stephen the Great to allow Tatar forces to cross Moldavian territory to join the Ottoman army. Both princes refused. Vlad the Monk claimed that if he were to obey, his country would be attacked while his armies were away in Hungary, while Stephen simply refused without explanation. The *bailo*’s report notes that the sultan thought the Wallachian ruler’s reply was justified, but does not mention what reaction the Moldavian response provoked.⁶⁷ We might suppose that Stephen the Great’s attitude was due to his comparatively privileged status in dealing with the Porte, in contrast to that of Wallachia, which is documented by both Ottoman and Western sources.⁶⁸

Such episodes were not unusual. In 1521, the Moldavian prince Stephen the Young refused to join the sultan’s army, speaking of a Polish and Tatar threat on his own borders.⁶⁹ Five years later, both Wallachia and Moldavia

⁶⁵ Andrei Veress, *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului, Moldovei și Țării Românești* [Documents on the history of Transylvania, Moldavia, and Wallachia], vol. 11, 1661–1690 (Bucharest, 1939), 40.

⁶⁶ Victor Papacostea, *Civilizație românească și civilizație balcanică: Studii istorice* [Romanian civilization and Balkan civilization: Historical studies] (Bucharest, 1983), especially chapter V, *Românii la asediul Vienei* [The Romanians at the siege of Vienna].

⁶⁷ Hurmuzaki VIII, 28.

⁶⁸ Ovidiu Cristea, “Pacea din 1486 și relațiile lui Ștefan cel Mare cu Imperiul Otoman în ultima parte a domniei” [The peace treaty of 1486 and the relations of Stephen the Great with the Ottoman Empire in the last years of his reign], *Revista Istorică* 15 (2004): 25–36.

⁶⁹ See above, note 33.

excused themselves from taking part in the campaign against Hungary, explaining that they were at war with one another.⁷⁰

Another interesting case dates from 1534. Sent to demarcate the boundary between Habsburg and Ottoman territories, Alvise Gritti was also ordered to collect the Wallachian tribute and to require Vlad Vintilă (1532–1535) to send a contingent of 3,000 cavalry. Alvise Gritti's adventures and misadventures on his Wallachian journey are sufficiently known that they need not be recounted here in detail.⁷¹ Suffice it to say that in the end this emissary of the Porte did not obtain the money or the troops for which he had been sent. Of the 3,000 cavalry, the prince sent only a much smaller number and the Venetian reckoned that even these were hardly reliable. In this instance the lack of any response from the Porte may be explained by the unfolding war with Persia, or, more likely, by the intrigues in the imperial divan around Alvise Gritti and his protector, İbrahim Pasha, who lost the power and influence he had enjoyed up until that time. In turn, the refusal of Petru Rareș, prince of Moldavia, to send troops to support János Szapolyai in 1536, as ordered by the sultan, was one reason for Süleyman the Magnificent's campaign in Moldavia in 1538.⁷²

From the second half of the sixteenth century, the rise of Ottoman power seriously reduced the room for maneuver available to the rulers of the two Romanian principalities. The Porte was not inclined to allow Wallachia and Moldavia any freedom of initiative in foreign affairs, and was even less willing to see them wage war on their own account. Even in the new balance of power, though, some princes were able to take advantage of the ebb and flow of political events and refused to obey the sultan's will. In 1628, the Moldavian prince, Miron Barnovschi (1629–1633, with

⁷⁰ Andreescu, *Restitutio Daciae*, vol. 1, 56–58, considers that this was a trumped-up conflict which the two voievods used as a pretext in their dealings with the Porte. This hypothesis may be ruled out since the Porte had plenty of informants in both countries and the risk of being discovered faking a war would have been enormous. It is much more likely that this was a flare-up of ongoing conflicts that lasted through Stephen the Great's reign and throughout the first half of the sixteenth century.

⁷¹ Heinrich Kretschmayr, "Ludovico Gritti: Eine Monographie," *Archiv für Österreichische Geschichte* 83 (1897): 1–106; Decei, "Aloisio Gritti," 10–60; Cristina Feneșan and Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont, "Notes et autres documents sur Aloisio Gritti et les Pays Roumaines," *Anatolia Moderna* 3 (1993): 61–103; Ferenc Szakály, *Lodovico Gritti in Hungary, 1529–1534: A Historical Insight into the Beginnings of Turco-Habsburgian Rivalry* (Budapest, 1995); Adriano Papo, "Ludovico Gritti e i Principi Romeni," *Annuario: Istituto Romeno di Cultura e Ricerca Umanistica (Venezia)*, 6–7 (2004–2005): 353–362.

⁷² On this act of disobedience, see the account by Ferdinand of Habsburg's ambassador to Petru Rareș' court, *Călători străini*, vol. 1, 377.

interruption), failed to appear with the 8,000 to 10,000 cavalry required of him, sending instead one of his boyars with a few hundred men.⁷³

In other situations, rather than assigning an active role to troops, the Ottomans preferred to give their vassals a defensive role, especially when the Ottoman Empire was in the field against its enemies in Asia. One example of this is offered by an English document of 1585, which mentions that the garrison troops from the Danube border had been sent to join the armies on campaign against the Safavids. The Porte then asked Transylvania, Moldavia, and Wallachia to take over the role of these garrisons on the empire's frontier:

[the Sultan] hath sent [to Persia] all the people in pay, in so much as upon the borders of Transylvania, Moldavia and Wallachia there now remaineth no garrison as accustomed but they themselves are commanded to keep their and the adjoining confines against the Hungar, Jermayn, Powle and Tartar.⁷⁴

Instead of a Conclusion

The present study attempts to sketch the outlines of a problem that deserves more attention. Although Ottoman suzerainty over the Romanian principalities is not in doubt, the participation of these two countries in Ottoman campaigns—an essential aspect of the *ahdname* capitulations that the sultans granted to the Romanian princes—still needs considerable and detailed research. There is evidence for such agreements from the first decades of the fifteenth century in the case of Wallachia and from the second half of the same century for Moldavia, but they only became routine in the following century, lasting until the end of the seventeenth century. The troops fielded seem to have varied depending on total military capacity, the Porte's strategic needs, and perhaps the troops' effectiveness, which fell during the course of the "military revolution." Wallachian and Moldavian troops tended to be used in neighboring theaters of war, with the exception of 1473, when Radu the Handsome took part in the battle of Başkent. Most often the troops joined the sultan's main army, but there were also instances—especially during the reign of Süleyman the

⁷³ Hurmuzaki, Suppl. I/1, 229. The broad context is analyzed by Tahsin Gemil, *Țările Române în contextul politic internațional, 1621–1672* [The Romanian principalities within the international political context, 1621–1672] (Bucharest, 1979), 70–71.

⁷⁴ Eric Dietmar Tappe, *Documents Concerning Rumanian History 1427–1601 Collected from British Archives* (London, The Hague, and Paris, 1964), 43.

Magnificent—when they were entrusted with separate actions. We may count among such cases the order to send troops to support the khan of Crimea when the Tatars invaded Podolia in 1655.⁷⁵

The Porte seems to have preferred to draw cavalry troops from the two realms, although other categories are also mentioned (oarsmen, *corvée* labor) from the second half of the sixteenth century onward. It is hard to judge the effectiveness of the Wallachian and Moldavian troops, since the Ottomans frequently questioned their loyalty. In many cases Wallachian troops were called on to serve as the vanguard in campaigns against Transylvania and Moldavia.

All this information helps build an ambiguous picture of the two realms. The wish to survive even while surrounded by much stronger neighbors led them to develop a policy of equilibrium, where obeying the Porte's orders was balanced by a simultaneous effort to seek the goodwill of the Christian powers. This policy is admirably summed up in a conversation between the grand vizier and the chronicler Miron Costin. Asked whether the Moldavians were pleased that the sultan had conquered Kamieniec Podolski, the boyar answered, "We Moldavians are happy to see him spread out all over, though we are not glad to see him spread in our country."⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor culese de Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki* [Documents concerning the history of the Romanians collected by Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki], vol. 5, part 1, 1650–1699, ed. Ioan Slavici (Bucharest, 1885), 29.

⁷⁶ The response is recorded by the chronicler Ion Neculce, *Opere: Letopisețul Țării Moldovei și O samă de cuvinte* [Works: The chronicle of Moldavia and a collection of tales], ed. Gabriel Ștrempel (Bucharest, 1982), 221.