The Balkans and Caucasus

The Balkans and Caucasus:
Parallel Processes on the Opposite Sides
of the Black Sea

Edited by

Ivan Biliarsky, Ovidiu Cristea
and Anca Oroveanu

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS

P U B L I S H I N G

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part II: Spiritual Cross-Currents

Part III: Past and Current Challenges: Ethnic Identities and National Building

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The Orthodox-Chalcedonian Armenians from the Caucasus to the Balkans (An outline of their history and identity)

Figure 1: Old house of an Armenian–Horom family in Diavata (photo Arsen Hakobyan)

Figure 2: Old house of an Armenian–Horom family in Diavata (photo Arsen Hakobyan)

Figure 3: The Greek church in Diavata (photo Arsen Hakobyan)

Figure 4: Grave of the Armenian–Horom priest Timotheos Georgiadas in Diavata: (cemetery of the Greek Church) (inscription*: was born in Asia Minor and from 1925 to 1945 was the head of Diavata chruch*) (photo Arsen Hakobyan)

Figure 5: Grave of the Armenian–Horom priest Nikolaos Papadopoulos (photo Arsen Hakobyan)

Figure 6: Sophia Georgiadas, an Armenian–Horom woman: Diavata (photo Arsen Hakobyan)

Figure 7: An Armenian–Horom woman: Diavata. (photo Arsen Hakobyan)

Ethno-cultural Diversity in the Balkans and the Caucasus as an Objective for Comparative Research

Figure 1: Multiethnic structure: a view of thematic maps will show that the Balkans and the Caucasus are the regions with the highest concentration of ethnic and religious minorities in the whole Europe. This impression will be even clearer when referring to estimations of the minority groups instead of official census data (Source: Sergey Tarhov et alii, *Ethnic Structure of Eastern Europe and Caucasia around 1990*, Vienna, 1994).

Figure 2a: Common cultural heritage: Byzantine architecture - the Dimităr Solunski Church (12th c.) in Veliko Tărnovo (Bulgaria). (picture Thede Kahl)

Figure 2b: Common cultural heritage: Byzantine architecture - the cupola church of Ghvtismshobeli in the fortress of Ananuri (13th c., Georgia). (picture Thede Kahl)

Figure 3a: Common cultural heritage: Ottoman architecture - the Careva džamija in Sarajevo (Bosnia) (picture Thede Kahl).

Figure 3b: Common cultural heritage: Ottoman architecture - Akhaltsikhe Camii (Georgia). (picture Thede Kahl)

Figure 4a: Common cultural heritage: Jewish architecture - the New Synagogue of Sarajevo (Bosnia) (picture Thede Kahl)

Transitions and Traditions on Stage.
The Theatre for Change in Georgia

INTRODUCTION

IVAN BILIARSKY, OVIDIU CRISTEA AND ANCA OROVEANU

The volume we bring to your attention may strike its readers at a first glance by its great diversity. There are at least three main "players" – two continental territories (the Balkans and Caucasus) and an expanse of water (the Black Sea); and the topics covered by the authors range from the early medieval history of the area under scrutiny to its recent past, moving from its previous history as a contended zone to identity discourses and nation building, and to its political, social, and cultural reshaping after the end of the "Cold War". This is the result of a deliberate choice on the part of the editors: we wished to bring together researchers coming from within the region with those coming from outside it, to include young researchers alongside scholars of international repute, and we welcomed various perspectives in terms of topics, as well as of methodological approaches. The starting point of this volume was a conference organized by New Europe College - Institute for Advanced Study in May 2010 in Bucharest, *The Balkans and Caucasus: Parallel Processes on the Opposite Sides of the Black Sea. Past, Present, and Prospects*. Despite the diversity in intellectual backgrounds and the wide variety in styles and methods, the comparative and multi-disciplinary perspective this conference occasioned brought forth certain points of convergence, on which we felt we could build the present volume. We are, of course, aware that in deciding on this course we exposed ourselves to the risk of leaving aside a number of important, or simply interesting topics; we decided, however, to accept this risk, and let the main themes come out from the topics proposed by the authors, from their research concerns, rather than impose on them our own views in order to obtain a comprehensive picture. We were strengthened in this decision by the reflection that a volume covering all the aspects that would need addressing would be difficult (if not downright impossible) to achieve at present; this book should be seen as a modest step towards such an ambitious goal. We came up, as a result, with four sections: *The Historical Background: Great Powers, Small Powers*;

Spiritual Cross-Currents; *Past and Current Challenges: Ethnic Identities and National Building*; *Crossing Borders through Words and Sounds*. Both in the number of contributions, and in their tenor these sections differ. The first and the third approach what we may call predictable topics when dealing with this region: the contributors look, on the one hand, at the ways in which the countries involved in this region acted – and were shaped by – the manifold interests invested in the domination over the Black Sea, and on the other at the longer-term features that one has to bear in mind in analyzing its present and in assessing its future: its complex ethnic make-up, the provocations the countries around the Black Sea have to face within the current international setting. The second and fourth sections were conceived more like counterpoints to these very large questions: one is a foray into a territory that would assuredly need further mapping, that of "spiritual cross-currents", of their role in shaping mentalities, and of their survival – or passing away – in recent times; the other sketches the possibility of envisioning this vast region as a more coherent whole by means of music, epic and drama. Here as well, there is ample room for further inquiries. The overarching question this volume and the papers included in it address – and leave open – is to what extent we are dealing with a coherent zone, whose past, present and future can legitimately be considered as being traversed by meaningful interrelations, suggesting a shared destiny.

The contributions gathered in the first section – *The Historical Background: Great Powers, Small Powers* – attempt to give answers to the question why the imperial politics and policies, which aimed at conferring some sort of unity to the Pontic area, never truly succeeded in attaining their objectives. Taking as their starting point a number of case studies, the authors meet in the effort to identify the means through which the empires strove to assert their control over the Black Sea and the neighbouring zones (the Balkans, Caucasus). These two zones, though widely different in many ways, share the character of "peripheries" with respect to the centres of the various empires which controlled overtime the Pontic area. As such, they were destined to be a buffer against the clash of the empires. Both areas are at the crossroads not only geographically, but also politically, culturally and commercially, and this made them over the centuries prey to the struggles of the great political powers for supremacy in these regions. The papers included here shed some light on the role of the countries on the opposite sides of the Black Sea as participants or safeguards in the collisions between the great powers. In terms of mentalities this can generate either the vision of the "last wall" of defence of a civilization, or the opposite one, of the buffer as an "innocent victim".

Keith Hitchins studies the relationship of two small political entities – Wallachia and Georgia – with the great powers in the region. Rather than revisit military and diplomatic history, the author chose to concentrate on identifying the factors that account for the different historic destinies of Wallachia and Georgia. Professor Hitchins' analysis sets the competition for the domination over these two countries in a large perspective, that of the "Oriental Question" during the second half of the 18th century. Seen from this vantage point, the survival of Wallachia can be understood through its more favourable legal status and more advantageous geographic position, but also by locating it in its interdependence with other objectives of the great powers, such as trade in the Black Sea region and at the mouth of the Danube.

The 18th century was merely reiterating the harsh competition for the control of the Pontic area at the end of the Middle Ages. The second text in this section, "The Quest for Maritime Supremacy in the Black Sea during the Later Middle Ages" by Ovidiu Cristea, proposes an overview of the ways in which the change from a sea under the control of a maritime power (Genoa) to a sea in which the laws of navigation and trade were dictated by a terrestrial power (the Ottoman Empire) came about. The levers through which Genoa attempted to impose its domination over the Black Sea (maritime hegemony and the establishment of a network of trade centres) were undermined by the political instability of the metropolis, by its incessant conflicts with Venice for the supremacy over the Mediterranean and Black Seas, as well as by the very pragmatic policies of the Ottoman Sultans. First established during the period 1453-1484, the Ottoman hegemony over the Black Sea managed to endure until the 19th century. Much as in the 13th century, when the breakdown of Byzantium had opened the way for the confrontation between the great maritime powers over the control of the Black Sea, the weaknesses of the Ottoman Empire during the 18th and 19th centuries generated the conditions for the competition of the powers interested in trade in the region, first of all Russia and Great Britain. Constantin Ardeleanu's contribution, "The Lower Danube, Circassia and the Commercial Dimensions of the British-Russian Diplomatic Rivalry in the Black Sea Basin (1836-37)" proposes a comparative analysis of the rivalry between these two powers at the mouth of the Danube and in Circassia. The diverging results of the British diplomacy in the two areas were due, as in the case studied by Keith Hitchins, to differences in legal status between the Romanian Principalities and Caucasus.

In his paper "Understanding Intervention: Imperial Thought and Establishing Order in Ottoman Macedonia", Julian Brooks attempts to

assess to what extent the reforms initiated by the great powers in Ottoman Macedonia during the 1903 – 1908 led to significant changes. The similarities with situations present at the end of the 20th century are striking. One may however note that the interventions in Ottoman Macedonia were purely diplomatic ones, aiming to put an end to violent conflicts there. At the end of a five-year long effort, this project may be said to have failed in finding the adequate solutions to these conflicts, when faced with the complexities of the ethnic and confessional situation in this region.

The attempts of the Ottoman Empire to find its own solutions to the "Oriental Question" were concomitant with such efforts on the part of the Western powers. Ozan Arslan looks in his paper at the measures adopted by the Empire in its later stages, in comparing them to those adopted by its successor state, the Republic of Turkey. The Empire tried at first to maintain its control over the Black Sea through military means, but its defeats in 1877-1878, during the First Balkan War, and on the Caucasus front during the first years of the World War I led to a radical reconsideration. Direct control was substituted with support given to the consolidation of buffer states between the Ottoman Empire and Russia. This policy was continued and expanded by Turkey until the present day.

The idea of creating a safety zone is active in other countries within the region, which tend, however, to privilege other means in achieving it, in particular those of regional cooperation. Roland Clark provides a case study in point, by looking at the ways in which this idea took shape in the discourses of Romanian nationalists in the interwar period. The analysis of the positions of the most representative political figures during this time shows that here, much as in Turkey, this idea was not inspired primarily by cultural and religious affinities with other states in the region, but rather by the wish to strengthen Romania's position, and its capacity to withstand the hostility of some of the great powers.

Most of the texts mentioned above focus on one country, or on a bilateral relationship. We found it fitting to close this section with Taline Ter Minassian's contribution, who reflects on the variety of historical approaches to the Balkans and Caucasus, among which she detects three main tendencies: a comparative approach, an interactive approach, and a geopolitical one, recognizable, to be sure, in the papers in this volume as well.

The failure of the imperial politics requires a renewed analysis of the political, ethnic and confessional situation in the region of the Black Sea, and in this context, the identity discourses can open some promising venues of research. Such questions are more pointedly addressed in the

third section of our volume. In-between, and in contrast with the first section, which paid attention to conflicting (or at least tense) relations between the great powers, in which "small powers" were sometimes caught, the second one is an occasion to inquire into an under-researched field, by identifying spiritual cross-currents between the Balkans and Caucasus.

Yuri Stoyanov investigates the nature and dynamics of the spiritual relationships between the Balkans and Caucasus by analyzing the heterodox movement of the Paulicians. In his view, the research focusing on the evolution of the Paulician communities transplanted from the Byzantine-Armenian border to Thrace could contribute to the understanding of the religious peculiarities of the two regions, wile providing, at the same time, a model for the analysis of other heterodoxies that spread from Caucasus to the Balkans (such as Hurufism in the early Ottoman period, e.g.).

Ivan Biliarsky looks at the ways in which the "Byzantine Commonwealth" influenced two geographically distant countries: Bulgaria and medieval Georgia. The point of departure for his study is a narrative source, the *Narrative of the Prophet Isaiah of how he was brought by an Angel to the Seventh Heaven* (known as the *Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle of the Eleventh Century*). According to Ivan Biliarsky's hypothesis, the main character of the text – King Izot – elicits striking similarities not only with King David, but also with the Georgian King Ashot, whom we find mentioned by Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus. The hypothesis of the adoption of an Old Testament model through Georgian mediation gains in persuasiveness if we bear in mind the fact that though distant geographically, both Bulgaria and Georgia were exposed to a strong Byzantine cultural influence.

In the two papers that follow, the historical background is taken into consideration in relation to field research conducted over the last few years. Arsen Hakobyan, whose field research was carried out at the settlement of Diavata near Thessaloniki, describes the fate of a religious group – that of Chalcedonian Armenians – throughout its longer history, and identifies the defining features of this community, that lent it coherence from the Middle Ages up to the recent past. According to him, events at the end of World War I brought significant changes in the identity of this group. The old distinctive features – language and religious ritual – underwent a process of hellenisation, and the community only survived by preserving the ties between the old families that were its members. Marieta Kumpilova reflects on the interplay between religion and ethnicity (and attempts to assess the role of each) in shaping distinct

group identities within a community whose members had a different historical fate: the Circassians from Kosovo, who recently migrated to the Russian Federation after having lived in Kosovo for more than a century, in their encounter with the Circassians "at home", in the Republic of Adygea, where the author conducted her research.

In focusing their inquiry on particular examples, the contributors to this section suggest continuities between distant pasts and the present, in thus making of this section an appropriate introduction to the following one, *Past and Current Challenges: Ethnic Identities and National Building*. In the redefining of the communities in the Black Sea region the past has been frequently invoked, used, misused, manipulated, and distorted. The papers gathered here attempt to look not only at the historical roots of the extraordinary ethnic and confessional diversity of the Balkans and of Caucasus, but also at the themes around which modern identities crystallized, and the means through which communities constructed their self-representations, while striving at the same time to impose them on "others". In addressing the very recent past or ongoing processes, the papers included in this section show, at the same time, how a broader historical perspective might be an aid to the research, since they share in the view that the challenges of the 21st Century are the result of the large historical processes mentioned in the previous sections. In the aftermath of the coming apart of the Soviet Union and of the fall of communism, we are confronted with an extremely complex political map, and a number of conflict zones. Although unanimously adopted as a reference point, Western values such as democratization of the society or market economy have been variously understood in the countries of the region, and this accounts, at least in part, for an increased differentiation between them. At the same time, attempts at bringing some unity to the region through a gradual process of Euro-Atlantic enlargement generated a number of problems, stemming both from the difficulties of harmonizing the relations with the Western partners in the European project, and from the very complex realities in the Black Sea region.

The papers brought together in this section address again, from a different perspective, the question of features that make comparable the Caucasus area with that of the Balkan Peninsula. Thede Kahl insists on those aspects that, in spite of differences, might favour a comparative analysis of the two areas. Beyond arguments of a geographical or historical nature, a distinctive feature is the great ethnic, linguistic, religious and social diversity of the two areas, and of the various sub-regions composing them. The paper identifies a number of directions of research that would result in an increased knowledge of the whole region,

and provides a foretaste of the kinds of results they might bring. The global analysis it proposes prepares the ground for a closer look. Mariam Chkhartishvili reflects on the modelling of Georgian identity by concentrating on a case study, the *Iveria* journal, where she adopts a critical position towards Marxist approaches to the question of identity and nation building in Georgia. One of the most influential Georgian publications at the end of the 19th century, *Iveria* "aimed to make a Georgian ethnic community or, more precisely, a Georgian ethno-nation" by promoting an idealized image of the past, in which the specific features of Georgian identity were highlighted, in contrast and opposition with the "others".

The building and/or dismantling of national identities is discussed by Zaal Kikvidze through a different perspective. He outlines the ways in which Russia, and subsequently the Soviet Union, attempted to introduce different scripts in the Mingrelian region, in order to divide Georgian population. Similar measures were adopted in other parts of the Russian and then Soviet Empire, with varying, even opposing results. While in Mingrelia the "language building" policy was a failure, in Circassia it bore fruit after a fashion, resulting in no less than four "languages", all using Cyrillic script, though with significant differences in orthography.

The four contributions that follow move again to a larger comparative approach towards the two continental areas – the Balkans and Caucasus – and focus on very recent developments. Ketevan Kakitelashvili sheds light on the political instrumentalisation of historical discourses during the post-Cold War period. An analysis of school textbooks, a type of publication with a strong formative character, reaching deep and wide into all the strata of society, shows the existence, in the early 90s, of similar conceptual instruments, of similar aims, and of a shared tendency towards a dogmatic and one-sided interpretation of history. After 2000 one can notice, at least in some of the countries in this large region, efforts to go beyond an ethnocentric vision of history. This reshaping of the historical discourse seems to have been, more often than not, less the outcome of a restructuring of the education system or of history as a discipline, but rather more the result of a desire to comply with foreign policy objectives pursuing inclusion into the EU or NATO.

Such driving motives can also be felt behind the ways in which the two regions have been dealing with the sensitive question of minorities. Ana Dinescu finds that the "ready-made" solutions to this question prove unrealistic when confronted with very complex situations on the field. In her view, in devising ways and means of dealing with such questions one has to start from an in-depth knowledge of particular settings and with a

case by case approach, coupling it with a clearer definition of a European identity, and of the European priorities in the foreseeable future. An insensitive handling of the minority question could lead, one might fear, to an exponential multiplication of separatist movements; this is the subject of the paper proposed by Hanna Shelest, who pays particular attention to the reactions of the international community to independence claims in the cases of Kosovo, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. A comparative view of these cases is all the more meaningful since opposed attitudes and standpoints towards them coexist: while the three cases are seen by some experts as exhibiting significant similarities, and Kosovo may appear as a model in problem-solving, others consider the situations in former Yugoslavia as being radically different from those of Georgia, and the Kosovo "model" has in their view little or no relevance for Caucasus. The paper looks at the circumstances that led to the proclamation of independence in these cases, and analyses the arguments of both supporters and opponents of these decisions, in attempting at the same time to outline their possible short-term evolution.

The Western Balkans are the focus of a detailed study by Arolda Elbasani, who finds that the large body of contributions on post-communist transition and on the EU enlargement processes has so far paid little attention to the domestic factors that might obstruct post-Communist transitions and the path to European integration, in particular to the crucial role of historical legacies and statehood in this region. She concentrates in her paper on the receiving end of enlargement incentives and conditionalities in what she feels are largely uncharted "borderline" cases of transformation, in thus enriching the literature on enlargement.

The papers in the last section, *Crossing Borders through Words and Sounds*, look at similarities and differences between the two regions on which our volume focuses from yet another angle: that of the circulation of musical, epic or dramatic motifs within the Black Sea area. Such inquiries may lead to the identification of original motifs, bearing an indelibly local stamp, but observe, at the same time, unexpected inflections, and surprising contaminations or similarities. Drama and music may thus appear as examples of inventiveness, circulation, adaptation, blending and synthesis, that could be seen as anticipating a more peaceful and harmonious coexistence within this highly heterogeneous region.

Marcus Bauer reflects on the view "from the outside" on Caucasus and the Black Sea, by taking his examples from German culture and literature during the 19th and 20th century, and by describing the mechanisms at work through which the representation of a region is being formed, the

themes around which it coagulates, the motives that persist overtime, and those that are only passing fashions.

Zaal Andronikashvili, by contrast, is interested in how the Black Sea was seen from within, and became a theme in local literature – the Georgian one – which he uses as a lens enabling him to unveil the deep and far-reaching implications of the perception of the sea as a unifying space, or as a dividing border.

Georgia is also the setting of the next paper, in which Birgit Kuch takes theatre as a form of expression through which one may analyze how the political, social and economic transformations were assimilated by the cultural field at the end of the Cold War. Her case study – *Theatre for Change* – is all the more instructive as it was initiated by Western performers and organizations; it shows how ambivalent the reference to the West can be, even when the very idea originated in the West. While in principle the West provides the model for the states of the former Communist camp, at the level of mentalities it is frequently perceived in a negative way, as a threat to national identity and local traditions.

The last contribution compares musical themes circulating on opposite shores of the Black Sea after 1990. In studying the Armenian *rabiz* and the Romanian *manele* the authors – Estelle Amy de la Bretèque and Victor Alexandre Stoichita – show not only the close similarity between the musical scores and lyrics, but also the ways in which these genres reflect, after a fashion, the daily concerns of common people in post-communist times. *Manele* and *rabiz* configure "an enchanted world", and may be seen as imaginary playgrounds populated by characters ranging from the "fictional" to the "real."

This is perhaps a fitting end – an open end, as we see it – for this volume. Neither the editors, nor the contributors presume to give definitive answers to the many questions to which this large and complex area has given and continues to give raise. Its unity – more obvious at some junctures during its history, less so at others – may remain a project, a fiction and (at least to a certain extent) a reality at the same time. It may still feed the imagination of writers, artists and musicians, and perhaps also that of policy makers. It undoubtedly remains a captivating area of study for scholars, as we hope the papers in our volume may show.

PART I:

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: GREAT POWERS, SMALL POWERS

GREAT POWERS, SMALL POWERS: WALLACHIA AND GEORGIA CONFRONT THE EASTERN QUESTION, 1768-1802

KEITH HITCHINS

I

This paper is about how two countries of modest size on either side of the Black Sea, the Principality of Wallachia, in Southeastern Europe, and the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti, eastern Georgia or, as I shall simply call it, Georgia, in the Caucasus maneuvered among larger powers in the latter decades of the eighteenth century. Between roughly the 1760s and 1800 the destinies of Wallachia and Georgia, in a sense, became linked by the growing complexities of what came to be known in European chancelleries as the "Eastern Question." The term, put briefly, referred to the continued weakening of the Ottoman Empire and the consequent need felt by the great powers of Europe to maintain international stability, or, in other words, to find a suitable successor or successors to the Ottoman polity in Southeastern Europe and the Near East, while at the same time pursuing their own interests in the region (Anderson 1966: 1-27; Schroeder 1994: 2-320). The Russia of Catherine the Great was certainly a willing heir to the Ottomans; the Habsburg Monarchy and Iran had their own territorial ambitions; and from further afield France and Great Britain could not but be concerned about the European balance of power and the promotion of their far-flung imperial interests. Wallachia and Georgia could hardly compete as equals in such powerful and aggressive company. In any case, the choice of neutrality or self-determination was not theirs to make, for they were caught up in a sometimes subtle, sometimes violent game of redrawing international boundaries and extending spheres of influence in which they themselves were treated as mere pawns.

My primary concern is with the fate of Wallachia and Georgia rather than with the general course of diplomacy and war as pursued by more powerful states. In particular, I am looking for answers to two questions:

first, why was Wallachia able to survive this great-power contest of wills and why was Georgia not?; and, second, was there a time in these proceedings when either country was, even briefly, master of its own destiny? An inquiry into these matters may shed additional light on the role of small powers in a great-power world.

II

The last three decades of the eighteenth century form a sufficiently cohesive and eventful period to allow diverse hypotheses an adequate airing and to suggest useful, if still tentative, answers to the questions raised. I begin with the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774 and end with Russia's predominance in Georgia in 1801 and in Wallachia in 1802.

To characterize this period in general terms, we may certainly call it a time of war, as all the powers in the region were engaged in self-aggrandizement and were prepared, if diplomacy failed, to use force to gain their ends. Russia was eager to open the Black Sea and the Straits to her commerce and, to the west, to extend her influence further into Southeastern Europe, and, to the east, establish a base south of the Caucasus Mountains for a further advance into the Near East when the proper time came (on Russian policy in Southeastern Europe, see Grosul 1975: 68-176, and in the Caucasus: Markova 1966: 99-200, 236-306.). None of these initiatives went uncontested. The Ottoman Empire was still a formidable power; it exercised an intrusive suzerainty over Wallachia and aggressively pressed extravagant claims of suzerainty over Georgia (on Ottoman policy toward Wallachia, see Urunga 1966: 5-10, 18-24, and Bădărău 1983-1984: 135-151, 193-202. Ottoman policy toward Georgia is covered in Ursinus 2000: 41-48; see also Köse 2006: 213-222, 226-233). Iran had similar ambitions in Georgia. From Central Europe the Habsburg Monarchy seemed increasingly ready to expand her economic and political interests across the Carpathians and down the Danube to the Black Sea. Between 1718 and 1739 Austrian troops had occupied Oltenia, the part of Wallachia west of the Olt River, and in 1788 and 1789 they again invaded Wallachia and made plans for its incorporation into the Monarchy. In both cases events on the battlefield required an Austrian withdrawal back across the Carpathians. Yet, Austrian penetration of Wallachia persisted, now by way of the Danube, as Austria sought markets for her growing manufactures and a share of the trade in the Black Sea (Docan 1913-1914: 541-706; for an overview of the foreign-policy objectives of the Habsburg Monarchy, see Roider 1982: 131-188). France in the last decade of the century, especially, pursued an activist policy in the region under the

Directory and Napoleon, and, on occasion, resorted to military force. Britain, on the other hand, while concerned about Russia's push southward to the Black Sea, preferred diplomacy as a means of keeping the Ottoman Empire intact and maintaining the status quo (Bağış 1984: 94-106). Instances of violence during these decades were frequent. On a large scale there were the two wars between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, from 1768 to 1774 and from 1787 to 1792, when Wallachia was occupied by Russian troops and, in the latter war, by Austrian troops, too. There were also wars of smaller circumferences in the Caucasus, but hardly less destructive. Noteworthy were the campaign of the Iranian Shah Āghā Muhammad Khān Qājār in the southern Caucasus and specifically against Georgia in 1795 and 1796, the almost continuous raids against Georgia carried out from the east by Lezghian tribes from Daghestan, and the constant menace of attack posed by Ottoman provincial frontier governors from the west (Ursinus 2000: 44-46).

Yet, this was also a time of diplomacy and interludes of peace and, occasionally, even of accommodation among rivals when circumstances allowed no alternatives. There were comprehensive treaties ending the Russo-Turkish wars: Küçük Kaynarca in 1774 and Iaşi in 1792, which touched both Wallachia and Georgia. Then, there were other kinds of agreements: the Convention of Ainali Kavak between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in 1779, the Sultan's *sened* of 1783, and the *hatti-şerif* of 1802, all of which confirmed and supplemented the provisions of Küçük Kaynarca. Finally, there were agreements reached by various of the great powers among themselves, sometimes involving territorial compensation either carried out at the expense of others, notably Poland in 1772, 1793, and 1795, or, as in the case of Wallachia on several occasions, merely contemplated.

No less important, this was also a time of internal reforms in Wallachia and Georgia, which could be viewed broadly as a means of early nation-building, an identifiable process that ran counter to the prevailing empire-building of the great powers, or, rather, empire-preservation, if we are speaking of the Ottoman Turks and the Iranians. Could we go so far as to say that Wallachia and Georgia represented a challenge of principle to the multi-ethnic empires as ethnically-based states? Probably not; it's too early. The idea of the modern ethnic nation and the emergence of national movements to create it were still some decades away. Yet, educated Wallachians and Georgians, respectively, harbored sentiments of shared traditions and history and of a common religious and cultural heritage among themselves, and though it would be premature to describe these sentiments as national feeling, they nonetheless provided some measure of

cohesion. This self-awareness, at least among the educated, may be one reason why neither Wallachia nor Georgia could be totally ignored by the great powers as they pursued their imperial ambitions.

III

Another question that needs to be asked is whether Wallachia and Georgia, on opposite sides of the Black Sea, had anything in common that would justify the attempt here at meaningful comparison? In the eighteenth century they had no direct political, economic, or cultural relations with one another. Wallachians and Georgians may well have traded with one another, but only indirectly through intermediaries such as Ottoman merchants. Yet, their destinies were joined, as the existence of both depended on how the complex drama of the Eastern Question played itself out.

The similarities between Wallachia and Georgia by no means end with their involvement in the Eastern Question. As noted above, each was, in one degree or another, subject to the suzerainty or, in the case of Georgia, to the claims of suzerainty, of larger neighbours. Wallachia was formally a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire and had been so since the fifteenth century. Its princes had thus been obliged to pay an annual tribute, provide foodstuffs, lumber, and many other products at fixed prices, and render military service when called upon to do so, but they had maintained a certain degree of autonomy. In the eighteenth century, as the so-called Greek-Phanariot[1] regime hardened, the burdens of Ottoman suzerainty became heavier. As autonomy was whittled away princes were simply appointed by the sultan, usually in return for substantial money payments. Georgia, on the other hand, was an independent kingdom, and Kartli-Kakheti had been united since 1762, when Erekle II became king of both. But Erekle could never free himself completely from the relentless claims of suzerainty pressed by the Ottoman sultan and the Iranian shah, who traced their "rights" back at least to the sixteenth century.

The social and economic structures of Wallachia and Georgia were also similar. A detailed comparison would suggest whether internal strength and cohesion may help to explain the survival of Wallachia and the lack of it may, in part, account for Georgia's loss of independence. Here it is possible merely to raise questions rather than provide a full

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[1] The term Phanariot referred to those upper-class Greek or Hellenized families from the Phanar district of Constantinople from among whom the Sultan chose the princes of Wallachia for over a century.

explanation. In both countries the nobles were the dominant estate, and in both they regularly challenged the authority of the prince and king. Peasants formed the great majority of the population, and it was they who ultimately bore the heaviest economic and fiscal burdens. Agriculture was the foundation of both countries' economies, but artisan production and commerce were also significant (Istoria României 2002: 123-137, 158-249, and Columbeanu 1974; for Georgia, Sakartvelos 1973: 518-569, and Anteleva 1977). The native middle class was relatively small, as large-scale commerce was largely in the hands of foreign merchants. There were also crucial differences between the two countries. Wallachia appears to have been the more prosperous and the more socially cohesive, whereas events in Georgia suggest less solidarity, as Erekle strove to limit the authority of provincial nobles and make political power and economic initiative royal prerogatives.

Both countries benefited from the wisdom and ingenuity of gifted rulers. For Wallachia I would propose Alexandru Ipsilanti, who was prince from 1774 to 1782 and again briefly in 1796-1797 (Țipău 2004: 87-92; Giurescu 1974: 61-69); for Georgia, it would naturally be Erekle II, who reigned from 1762 until his death in 1798 (he had been King of Kakheti since 1744) (Lang 1957: 158-225; Hitchins 1998: 541-542). Both may rightfully be included in that elite company of eighteenth-century rulers, the so-called enlightened despots: Frederick the Great of Prussia (1740-1786), Catherine the Great of Russia (1762-1796), and Joseph II of the Habsburg Monarchy (1780-1790). Both Ipsilanti and Erekle II conducted their affairs of state in accordance with principles similar to theirs.

Alexandru Ipsilanti merits the epithet enlightened despot because he undertook to promote in Wallachia ideas and institutions that were transforming Europe as a whole. A Greek from one of the most prominent families of the Phanar district of Constantinople, well-educated, and with valuable experience in Ottoman administration, he undertook to reorganize Wallachia's administrative machinery, reform the courts of justice, reinvigorate higher education, and bring order to agrarian relations. Perhaps his most notable achievement was the codification of law and the restructuring of the justice system, especially his separation of it from the executive. But he also laid the foundations of a new relationship between landlords and peasants with the aim of bringing peace and stability to the countryside and thereby enhancing agricultural production and with it increased income for his treasury. He was also a pioneer in urban planning (*Pravilniceasca condică* 1957: 161-168; Georgescu 1970: 441-468; Georgescu, Popescu 1970: 58-62; Georgescu, Popescu 1975: 71-72). If his accomplishments did not match his expectations, the cause lay mainly in

the difficult circumstances of the time. His power to act was, after all, limited by his place in the Ottoman administrative hierarchy; he was appointed by the Sultan, who treated him as the governor of a province and could remove him whenever he chose.

Erekle II used methods of governing that the enlightened despots of Central Europe would have found congenial. He was intent on concentrating executive, legislative, and judicial powers in his own hands and kept a close watch over the activities of government functionaries. In internal policy he pressed forward with the centralization of government administration at the expense of local autonomies (Tabuashvili 2010: 118-178). To do so, he replaced nobles in local affairs with his own agents and relied on a modernized army to provide the force necessary to overcome aristocratic opposition, which flourished during his reign. He also strove to expand his country's "manufacturing" capacity, especially its metal-smelting and munitions "factories" as well as its numerous artisan crafts (Tabuashvili 2010: 72-99; Rogava 1974: 119-139), and he encouraged trade with Russia and the northern Caucasus and with Turkey and Iran (Ketsitadze 1992: 20-74). In all these endeavours he gave the state a major role in economic development. Like his contemporaries in Europe, he promoted the revival of cultural and intellectual life in Georgia (Sakartvelos 1973: 778-801; Salia 1977: 158-162). He was remarkably open to new ideas and together with Antoni, the Catholicos of the Georgian Orthodox Church and one of the most learned Georgians of the time, he took measures to improve the education of both clergy and laymen. Convinced that the economic and political strength of his country would ultimately depend upon the development of science and technology, he strove to create a corps of innovative scholars and scientists. If he fell short of achieving all he had hoped, it was not from lack of effort but from a lack of resources and the persistent insecurity that discouraged innovation.

Alexandru Ipsilanti and Erekle II shared similar views of Europe. Both eagerly cultivated relations with Europe and looked to Europe as a model of prosperity and progress. For Ipsilanti such a perspective is not surprising, since his education and intellectual interests were broadly European (Vlad, 1987: 997-1016). To the extent possible, he sought to extend contacts with the West, especially the Habsburg Monarchy, where he was held in high esteem (Bădărău 1988: 68). But he kept constantly in mind his own precarious position and thus avoided direct challenges to the Ottoman ruling system. Erekle II, in undertaking his own projects of economic and social reform, had as his long-term goal the Europeanization of Georgia in accordance with the enlightened ideas of the time. He was anxious to foster contacts with the West by inviting scientists and scholars

in all fields to come to his country and by sending promising young
Georgians for study to the West (Lashkaradze 1987: 71-72). He also
sought to interest European governments, especially France and the
Habsburg Monarchy, in having closer political relations with Georgia
(Tabagua, 1979: 56-76). But in neither endeavor was he successful mainly
because the European powers could discern no political or economic
advantage to themselves in fostering relations with far-off Georgia. He
turned to Russia almost as a substitute for the West or perhaps as an
intermediary between Georgia and the West. Such a view of Russia was
by no means extraordinary, since Georgia already carried on trade with
Western Europe through Russia (Ketsitadze 1992: 62-74). It was a choice
that Alexandru Ipsilanti was not obliged to make; since in the latter half of
the eighteenth century contacts of all kinds had expanded between
Wallachia and Europe as the powers became increasingly aware of the
principality's strategic importance.

   The most fateful characteristic of all that Wallachia and Georgia shared
may have been their continuously evolving relationship with Russia and
the Ottoman Empire. Neither in international relations nor in domestic
policy could Ipsilanti and his successors and Erekle afford to ignore these
neighbours, since their own countries were located precisely in the zone of
confrontation between the two powers most determined to control the
Black Sea and its approaches. The wars, the peace treaties, and the
unrelenting diplomatic sparring of Russia and the Ottoman Empire thus
linked the destinies of Wallachia and Georgia, even as the two great
adversaries treated them as useful, but always expendable, minor players
in their high-stakes drama.

IV

   A survey of Russia's policy toward Wallachia and Georgia and the
reactions of the Ottomans to it will suggest the nature of the danger
confronting both small countries. First, Wallachia. Russia was the most
consistent and aggressive of the powers in pursuing her special interests in
the principality, and by the beginning of the 19th century she would replace
the Ottoman Empire as the dominant power. The two wars she fought with
the Ottoman Empire between 1768 and 1792 greatly weakened Ottoman
suzerainty over Wallachia and increased her own influence immeasurably.
Annexation was rarely absent from the calculations of Russian statesmen,
beginning in 1770 when the Imperial Council approved as a war aim the
incorporation of Wallachia into the empire. But they were equally aware
of the international complications such a bold stroke might cause and thus

they usually limited their ambitions to exploring ways the principality could further Russia's general aims in Southeastern and Central Europe.

The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, which ended the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774, promised important changes in the relations between Wallachia and her Ottoman suzerain. Although the treaty dealt mainly with other matters, it contained at least one clause, which, if carried out, would inevitably curtail the powers exercised by the Sultan and Ottoman officials over Wallachia. Article 16 gave the Russian ambassador in Constantinople the right to make "representations" on behalf of the principality "when circumstances required," and obliged the Ottoman government to give such interventions a sympathetic hearing (Druzhinina 1955: 295-300). In the next half-century Russian diplomats used their new prerogative to help lay the foundations of a new juridical status for Wallachia. Because of the pressure they exerted, the Sultan was forced to define more exactly the principality's links to the empire, and in the process he grudgingly recognized the principle of autonomy. Shortly after the signing of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca he issued a decree (*hatti-şerif*), which imposed clear limits on Ottoman political suzerainty and economic privileges in the principality. In particular, it curtailed the ability of Ottoman officials to intervene in the internal affairs of Wallachia and it forbade the Sultan to depose princes without sufficient cause (Mehmed 1976: 321-328; Alexandrescu-Dersca 1958: 319-328). But these injunctions for the most part remained on paper.

As the Ottomans persisted in ignoring their obligations under Küçük Kaynarca and the *hatti-şerif* of 1774, Russia pressed her case so forcefully that a new war seemed imminent. Yet, through the mediation of France, which was pursuing friendly relations with both Russia and the Ottoman Empire, all the matters in dispute were papered over in the Convention of Ainali Kavak in 1779. The Ottomans had been anxious to regain full suzerainty over Wallachia, but the Russian view of the matter prevailed. Ainali Kavak thus provided that all the articles in the *hatti-şerif* of 1774 be respected, a stipulation that made it an international agreement no longer subject to abrogation on the sole authority of the Sultan.

Of utmost importance for the future of Wallachia was Ottoman acquiescence in the appointment in Bucharest, the capital, of a Russian consul. After he took up his post in 1782 his main function was political – to transmit advice and admonitions from his superior, the Russian ambassador in Constantinople, to the prince and to gather information on conditions in Wallachia which could justify Russian intervention in its affairs. The consul did not hesitate to negotiate directly with the prince on all sorts of matters, an activity that violated the spirit and the letter of

treaties between Russia and Turkey (Hurmuzaki 1962: 229-232, 273-275, 352-353, 451-452, 476-477. On the activities of Russian consuls in general after Küçük Kaynarca, see Köse 2006: 189-198).

The Convention of Ainali Kavak proved to be only a truce. The issues between Russia and the Ottoman Empire were too wide-ranging – Southeastern Europe, the Crimea, the Black Sea, and the Caucasus—to be set aside lightly, and both sides continued to prepare for the next military showdown. The *sened* issued by the Sultan in 1783 extended the truce in Wallachia by reaffirming earlier agreements with Russia, and thus fundamental issues remained in dispute.

A new war broke out between Russia and Turkey in August 1787. The causes were many, but disputes over Russia's expanding role in Wallachia and the Ottoman demand for the withdrawal of the Russian consul from Bucharest had contributed greatly to the worsening of relations. Russia's aims in Wallachia gradually changed as the war ran its course and other powers seemed ready to intervene. Catherine II at first continued to favor the union of Wallachia with neighboring Moldavia into an "independent" state called Dacia under Russian patronage, and in February 1788 she urged Wallachians and Moldavians to make common cause with Russia in defence of their shared Orthodox faith (Grosul 1975: 91-99). Yet, by the end of that year, having achieved her major objectives and now concerned with Polish affairs and the possibility of war with Britain and Prussia, she was ready to make peace. So were the Turks, who had been defeated on all fronts. The resulting Treaty of Iaşi (January 9, 1792) stipulated the withdrawal of Russian troops from Wallachia and recognized Ottoman suzerainty, but it left the Russian consul in place, allowed Russia to annex the territory between the Bug and Dniester rivers, and reaffirmed the guarantees of Wallachian autonomy made since 1774. Russia's position as the dominant power in Wallachia had thus been immensely strengthened.

In the decade after the Treaty of Iaşi Russia reinforced her position in Wallachia by repeatedly intervening on behalf of princes and *boieri* (nobles) in their disputes with Ottoman authorities. The Russian ambassador in Constantinople and the Russian consul in Bucharest served as conduits for complaints and petitions from boyars (*boieri*) and high churchmen and even princes to St. Petersburg (Hurmuzaki 1962: 213-215). But at other times Russian diplomats found it expedient to play boyars off against the prince, thereby enhancing their ability to guide matters in directions favorable to their cause.

With the accession of Tsar Alexander I in 1801 Russian policy toward Wallachia became better coordinated and more forceful than it had been under Catherine's successor, Paul (1796-1801). The reason for this change